

**2005 LeftinLowell.com Lowell City Council  
Candidate Questionnaire  
Richard Douglas**

**1. Identify the specific sections of the city that you consider "problem areas".**

Every area is a "problem area." Some sections have problems that have a greater threat to a person's quality-of-life than others. Places that have a higher crime rate need attention. Places where traffic jams are likely to occur need attention. Places that are in threat of gentrification need attention...

I would say that any places, that have problems which pose an immediate threat to a person's life, need to be addressed first.

**2. What are "the problems" with those sections of the city and what specifically do you propose to correct them?**

I would say that The Acre, Highlands, and Downtown could use better community policing to reduce crimes in those areas.

The Industrial Ave. area needs more of a police presence, since drag racing usually takes place there, especially around Friday nights at 9pm (hint hint!)

Downtown could use ways to draw more business and potential customers to support existing small businesses. Promoting foot traffic and having maps of the area available at every business are some simple solutions.

**3. What specific plans do you have to attract major business/industry into the city?**

I would work with officials to try and take advantage of UML's future Nanotech lab as a selling point to attract the Nanotech industry to utilize the areas around the Gallagher/Kennedy Station and the Lowell Connector.

Also, I would have to say that with UML, Middlesex C.C., an amazing diversity, and our growing Arts District, we have the formula for attracting and producing future engineers, scientists, and other important fields that require creativity. Collaborations with the colleges and potential businesses would be the best first step to have all employers take a serious look at this city.

**4. A lot of talk circulates about the "direction" of the city. Define that "direction". Are you satisfied with it or would you take it in a different direction? If different, how and where?**

It feels like the city is going to turn into a bedroom community. People who work in NH or Metro Boston will live here because it has amenities that cater to a creative lifestyle. Newburyport is an example. Their downtown area is full of small business and retail. People that live there usually have to travel very far for work.

I am not satisfied with Lowell becoming such a bedroom community. I would seek to bring in more business and high-tech industry into the area...it would make for a more stable tax base that would be less reliant on residential property taxes.

Having more job opportunities and industry in the area would also help to shave the average commute time for the average Lowell citizen over time. Parents could use that time with their children. Students could use that time to study. Everyone could use that time to enjoy what this city has to offer.

**5. Do you support or oppose the suggestion that the planning and zoning boards should be elected, not appointed positions? Why?**

I support the idea. It would allow for more qualified individuals to work for the city through a Democratic process.

**6. What will you do to improve Lowell's image to people living outside the city who still consider it a crime ridden drug haven?**

Well, we would have to have them come here to actually see how much positive change has taken place in Lowell. We could do this through having more cultural events and promoting the arts. Eliminating litter and graffiti problems would help to stave away any old nightmares that people may have about this city.

**7. John Cox has been Lowell City Manager for over 5 years. What are his assets? What are his liabilities?**

I completely respect the fact that he has helped this city out through working with officials, unions, development plans, and various attractions throughout the city. However, he had a moment of tactlessness concerning the NEPGM Festival, which drew media from outside of Lowell to portray this city in a negative light. Also, he has created an air of collusion amongst our citizens by appointing individuals to board positions when there are many people available for those positions with higher credentials.

**8. If a motion was made to vacate the office of city manager would you support/oppose it? Why?**

That depends. If it would be to replace John Cox and install another city manager, I would currently say no. He has his strengths. As far as appointing board members is concerned, more oversight would be needed from City Councilors to make a more respectable decision.

**9. Is/should John Cox be an issue in this campaign? If so, how will you take back policy decisions that have been preempted by the city manager?**

*Did Not Answer*

**10. Other than you (if you are a present councilor), who is the most effective/hardest working city councilor?**

I would have to say Jim Millinazzo. He works in fields that have great synergy with his role as a City Councilor. His knowledge of housing and finances makes him a very professional public official.

**11. Do you feel that property taxes are high? If so, how would you start the process of lowering them?**

Yes. I'm not just saying that they are high just to make taxpayers want to vote for me, I'm saying that from an economic standpoint.

Bringing more business into the city, as well as having more events that would draw people from outside of the city, would bring more tax money into Lowell. It would lessen our reliance on residential property taxes, which would make this city a much more attractive place to live than our suburbs.

**12. Where do you feel the budget could possibly be reined in, regarding spending?**

*Did Not Answer*

**13. Do you feel televising the Planning and Zoning board meetings a good idea? What about subcommittee meetings?**

I believe that ALL Planning/Zoning/Subcommittee meetings should be televised. It gives the public a chance to observe the actions of members in those meetings, which would help improve dialogue between residents and city officials. It holds officials accountable for their actions, as well as giving a chance for the public to take note of any changes that would affect their areas.

**14. Where do you stand on the 4 and 4 plan? Do you feel this issue is getting a fair hearing in the media? If you are against the 4 and 4 plan, what other solutions would you implement to increase the police presence downtown at night?**

I was in favor of the 4 and 4 plan. It made sense for the fast growing Downtown and surrounding areas, as well as addressing a solution for problems that would rise from afternoon class dismissals and last-calls at the bars. Unfortunately, you had to be at any of the numerous neighborhood meetings that the Police Union reps had attended in order to hear their side of the plan. I felt as if the Lowell Sun was very critical about the idea, which helped to shape public opinion against the plan.

**15. Do you feel there is a conflict of interest with the city boards and developers? If so, what would you want to see happen to correct this?**

Well, people have been saying that the mill renovations into loft housing have been rather quick...

I do not think that developers should be working on city boards, at the very least because it causes suspicion amongst our citizens and reduces their faith in local government if they believe that profiteering is the reason why we are facing new problems in the city, such as finding green space to accommodate a playground in Downtown or a lack of parking spaces in the area.

**16. Do you think the following is a good idea: getting the tax rate projection for budget increases proposed in the spring before approving new budget?**

*Did Not Answer*

**17. Will you support the next phase of the School Building Plan (two new elementary schools; one to replace the old Morey school, and one to replace the Varnum and Moody schools)?**

Of course. Providing a quality education and learning atmosphere is key to ensuring that our future citizens become successful citizens. However, I would make sure that they wouldn't create another "Stoklosa School fiasco."

**18. Do you feel a recycling plan for the downtown area (businesses and residential) is needed? What steps what they take to implement such a program?**

Yes. Downtown condo residents have been talking about this for a while. Unfortunately, not all condo associations have an available recycling program. Talks are in process to create a "common" area for people to bring their recyclables. Right now, it looks like the parking garages are the best possible areas to have these recycling zones.