



# Questionnaire to New Haven Mayoral Candidates

## About this Questionnaire

Elm City Cycling is a nonprofit 501(c)3 nonpartisan organization. We do not endorse any campaigns, but through this questionnaire we seek information on the policies of each candidate.

Candidate responses will help ensure that our members are more informed about their choices in the upcoming election on the critical issue of transportation. New Haven has one of the highest rates of walking to work in the nation, and rates of biking to work have dramatically increased. Around 1,500 residents now bike to work every day, one in four adults say they bike in the city on a regular basis, and over 90% say they regularly go for walks in their neighborhood. Transportation is also a matter of social equity: Among city residents, Census data show that the incomes of those who drive to work are significantly higher than those of bus riders and walkers.

The questions in this document were approved by our Board of Directors, listed at <http://elmcitycycling.org/about-us/our-board-of-directors/>. They are based on the Elm City Cycling 2013 Bike and Pedestrian Plan, the City of New Haven Complete Streets Manual (adopted unanimously by the Board of Aldermen in 2010), and the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) Bicycle Friendly Community program. More information on these programs are available online.

All responses to this questionnaire should be considered public information. Elm City Cycling may disclose which, if any, candidates do not respond to this questionnaire by the deadline given below. If you refer in any of your responses to a published Web site or other document, please specify the exact text that you are referencing. By responding to this questionnaire, you give your agreement that we may publish your responses on our website or share them with the public.

## Instructions

- 1. Please limit your responses to each question to the space provided.**
- 2. Please submit questionnaire responses by August 18th via e-mail to: [elmcitycycling@gmail.com](mailto:elmcitycycling@gmail.com).**

**Candidate Name: Henry Fernandez**

### **Part I: Candidate Profile**

**During an average week last year (prior to the campaign season), how many miles would you say that you walked or biked within the City of New Haven? 3 miles**

**In the past 3 months, roughly how many times have you taken the public bus system? 0**

**Have you ever used SeeClickFix to comment on a public safety hazard? (Y/N) N**

**Have you read the New Haven Complete Streets manual? (Y/N) Y**

**Have you ever been involved in any New Haven Complete Streets application(s)? Please describe the application(s) and your role(s).**

I have never been directly involved with any New Haven Complete Streets application. However, I have been impressed with ECC's successful efforts to bring Safe Streets to New Haven since 2002, and as Economic Development Administrator, I oversaw the City Plan and Traffic and Parking Departments from 2000 to 2005. I worked with those department heads to support this initiative. Though I think it is fair to say that without the hard work of concerned citizens, the City would not have moved nearly as far as has occurred. I have been impressed by this amazing level of advocacy.

**Please describe one or two problem areas in New Haven where you have had a bad experience walking or biking. What would you like to see done to make them better?**

The intersection on Grand Ave. and Ferry St. in my neighborhood of Fair Haven is certainly a problem area in our city. My campaign headquarters is located on the corner and for that reason; we have volunteers and staff walking in and out every day and every night. There are “no turn on red” signs that drivers do not follow and pedestrians have stopped using the crosswalks. Cars park extremely close to the traffic light and regularly exceed the speed limit. There are no safe bicycle lanes and because of the high speeds and consistent stop & go, Grand Ave. is not safe for cyclists. Blatchley Ave. is a poorly paved street, with many potholes and deteriorating curbs.

New Haven streets should be designed to provide increased opportunities for walking and cycling. This section of Fair Haven is not as conducive to active transportation as it should be, which is a shame because there are frequent pedestrians and cyclists. Speed tables could be added to Blatchley Ave. and Grand Ave. Left turn only lanes would be helpful. A two-way physically separated bike path would be well-utilized and improve the safety for cyclists coming through Fair Haven. Designated parking spaces parallel to the curb could improve the parking violations near the traffic lights and allow for the possibility of a left turn only lane. As proven by the complete streets downtown, well-designed streets support economic vitality. Improving Grand Ave would not only benefit the pedestrians and cyclists, but also facilitate the local Fair Haven businesses.

**When was the last time you met with staff from the Connecticut Department of Transportation regarding a traffic safety concern in New Haven? Who organized the meeting, and what did it accomplish?**

When I was Economic Development Administrator, and when I was Director of the Livable City Initiative, I met regularly with ConnDOT staff on safety issues. In some cases I organized the meetings and in other cases I was supporting residents who had concerns about safety issues. This included safety issues on streets like Whalley Avenue and State Street. These also included issues involving sound and protecting New Haven neighborhoods during construction cycles. I also met regularly with ConnDOT and the New Haven Parking Authority on issues related to our Train Station. This included increasing the number of bike racks and the security of bikes locked at the station, as well as on strategies to increase ridership.

One of my earliest experiences working with ConnDOT was when I was director of the youth agency LEAP, which provides after school and summer programs for children in New Haven neighborhoods. We were able to convince the state to provide free bus passes to the children and counselors in LEAP so that they could get around the city during summer camp. As a result there were tens of thousands of additional rides and a new generation of young people learned to use the buses.

## Part 2: Prioritization Scale

Please indicate the degree to which each of the following is, or is not a priority for your administration, using the following scale:

- 1 = This issue would not be a priority for me during my first or second term as Mayor.
- 2 = I would like to see this happen during my first or second term as Mayor, if possible.
- 3 = This is important to the city. I will take steps to make progress on it at least once every month.
- 4 = This issue will be a top priority for me, and I will focus on it every week until it gets done.
- 5 = My first term as Mayor will have been a failure if we do not accomplish this.

**Cut in half the number of serious collisions that involve injuries to pedestrians and bicyclists each year. Commit to measuring this information on a quarterly basis using incident and hospitalization records.**

Scale (1-5): 4

**Negotiate right-of-ways, secure funding, design, and begin construction on a two-way, off-street multi-use trail connecting the future trail terminus at Orange and Grove to Union Station and the harbor – the so-called “Phase V” of the Farmington Canal Trail.**

Scale (1-5): 3

**Complete a master plan for a two-way, physically-separated bike path along Whalley Ave., Elm Street through Downtown, and Grand Ave., and construct at least one mile of the total four-mile route. This would create an east-west bicycle route along key commercial arteries, which themselves need to be accessible to cyclists of all ages and abilities.**

Scale (1-5): 4

**Implement a citywide “Safe Routes to School” program that includes safety improvements to crosswalks near schools and bicycle education in nearly every school.**

Scale (1-5): 5

**Ensure that Elm City Cycling has a consistent liaison at the New Haven Police Department, who regularly attends Elm City Cycling’s monthly meetings.**

Scale (1-5): 5

**Hire a bicycle program manager to coordinate efforts between Transportation, Traffic and Parking, the Engineering Dept, City Plan, NHPD, NHPS, ECC, and other groups.**

Scale (1-5): 5

### Part 3: Policy Questions

**Elm City Cycling, neighborhood management teams, and other groups have called for 20 mile per hour speed limits on New Haven's residential streets. To make walking and bicycling more feasible, particularly for children, cities from Portland, OR to New York City to Paris have made it a priority to roll out these lower speed limits on hundreds of miles of streets. Would you support 20 mile per hour speed limits on residential streets, and what would you do to make them happen here?**

Yes, I would support 20 mile per hour speed limits on residential streets in New Haven. Lowering vehicle speeds directly impacts the severity and number of crash related injuries and fatalities. Considering that this is a primary goal for Complete Streets, as mayor it will be one of my top priorities to ensure this is accomplished. Every New Haven street should be designated not only with a target speed, but also roadway classifications and street type. Residential street speed limits should be set to 20 miles per hour. Many of these residential streets can be classified as "slow streets" which make extensive use of traffic calming measures to discourage vehicular through traffic, reduce vehicle speeds, green and beautify the streetscape, and create a comfortable environment for pedestrians and cyclists. "Home Zones" can be implemented as well, and are perfect for local residential streets and streets adjacent to schools. 20 MPH sign postings, speed tables, and speed trackers will help to enforce the lower speed limits. Many of our neighborhood streets cater to commuters, not residents. The width of car lanes can be reduced to bring down driving speeds and neighborhood teams can be assisted to plant trees to help slow traffic and foster pride in our neighborhoods.

**Many residents and advocates called the recent redesign of Route 34 at the 100 College Street site too automobile-centric, and Elm City Cycling ultimately opposed the design. At the heart of the controversy is research showing that to increase walking and bicycling, major roadways must be made safe enough so that residents of all ages, from age 8 to age 80, will feel more comfortable using them. Do you agree with the current designs for Route 34, and if not, what would you have done differently?**

The current designs for Route 34 meet certain city goals but not others. The city needs to invest in infrastructure and increase economic development to lower our rising property taxes. However, this development should not occur at the expense of the safety of our citizens. More people walking and cycling reduces crime and pollution, while improving health and reducing the need for parking lots. As a city, we need to be both pro-growth and pro-safety as these are so closely tied.

The current designs for Route 34 do not meet city safety standards. The design moves highway traffic to our city streets, creating higher-traffic local roads. The project neglects to focus on sufficient street development to ensure walking and cycling will be safe for New Haven residents young and old. Although there will be some crosswalks and bike lanes, not enough was proposed to keep speeds down on what will be a wide, five-lane street in an area which has seen traffic fatalities. Studies show that the risk of injury increases every time a street is widened. Other efforts should have been made to narrow the street and increase the number of crosswalks. Discussions about speed table implementation and other efforts to ensure the posted speed limit of 25 miles per hour should have occurred as well.

**To improve neighborhood safety, Elm City Cycling's 2013 Bike & Pedestrian Plan envisions improved monitoring of citywide information on traffic crashes, motor vehicle enforcement, and walking and biking activity through comprehensive surveys. What would you do to make sure that information is gathered and used in a timely manner to address citizen requests and improve safety?**

An accurate and consistent system to monitor and evaluate cycling and walking activity must be implemented in order to improve our city's bike and pedestrian friendliness and accessibility. Instead of annual reports, I propose quarterly reports detailing bike counts and pedestrian counts. These reports will be made available online to ensure ultimate transparency and allow for city residents to track the improvements being made. If reports on traffic crashes and motor vehicle violations are listed in one, easy-to-find location online, citizens can make effective requests for safe street improvements.

Traffic safety and enforcement data should also be consistently reported on and made available to everyone on the city website. If New Haven sets visible public goals, citizens can more easily identify the problem areas and stand behind efforts to complete unfinished cycling routes, implement traffic calming, and address narrow or broken sidewalks, among other needs.

Fundamentally, the City needs to have solid data to determine what is working, where to make improvements and to set a tone of progress towards making the city more walkable and usable for cyclists.

**New Haven has a Complete Streets program. What aspects of this program would you improve? What would you do to involve Community Management Teams and Elm City Cycling prior to the redesign or repair of local streets?**

The Complete Streets program is well known, with a design manual that has been nationally recognized. The program could be improved by increasing its collaboration with the findings of Elm City Cycling at the initial phases of local street repair and redesign. Monthly meetings between these two groups would be beneficial. Community Management Teams would then review the findings and goals set by these two groups and add to them as needed, making suggestions based on their own findings and surveys. For example, a 2010 survey conducted by the New Haven Community Management Teams interviewed over 1,000 residents in nine different neighborhoods. The survey indicated that more than 25% got around by bike at least once per week, and more than 90% took neighborhood walks at least once per month. This kind of information is a testament to the attraction to walking or biking around New Haven and is invaluable to the Complete Streets program as well as to the Mayor when making decisions about citywide infrastructure and public safety.

Overall, we need to commit to having data on cycling and walking which are at a level and quality of the kind of data that we have on car usage. For instance we know how many parking spaces there are in the city and how often they turn over daily but have no similar data on secure places to park a bike. This means we cannot make good decisions about location, safety, etc. Similarly we need much better data to prioritize sidewalk repairs, and much better information in order to advocate with the State for users of public transit (as well as to encourage increased public transit use).

**What would you do to improve 'end of trip' facilities throughout the city, such as bicycle shelters, racks, bike corrals, showers, and lockers?**

End-of-trip facilities are designated places that support cyclists, joggers and walkers in using alternative ways to travel. I think this is an essential element to include in new development in the city – particularly as we move to encourage new business development. Outside of development, I think we can also work with our largest employers, and institutions (colleges, hospitals, arts organizations, grocery stores, etc.) to see this as an important amenity for their workforce, customers and visitors.

**Do you believe that drivers who speed, run red lights, ignore stop signs, and drive while using their cell phones are a serious public safety problem in your own neighborhood? What should be the city's role in addressing this issue? What will you do in your first term to decrease these behaviors?**

Yes. Drivers who speed, run red lights, ignore stop signs and drive while using their cell phones directly impact the public safety problem in New Haven. When coupled with fear of crime, parents often no longer feel safe allowing their children to walk through our neighborhoods alone. This public safety problem is directly related to our problems with childhood obesity and health.

Improving upon our community policing and building on the concept of legitimacy will be a priority in my first term as mayor. Drivers in New Haven need to know that there are policemen and policewomen consistently walking the beat and patrolling our city on the lookout for traffic violations.

Two things I will tackle immediately to improve this will require strong advocacy with the State of Connecticut. First, the City receives far too little in monetary benefit for issuing a moving violation ticket to a driver – the overwhelming majority of the fine goes to the state. It actually costs the City more to issue the ticket than it gets back. If the City made even 50% of the ticket value, we would see far more enforcement (just as we do with parking where the city gets 100%). Second, I believe red light cameras can be an important part of an overall traffic calming and enforcement strategy.

**Would you periodically close down a 2-3 mile stretch of city streets for an "Open Streets"-type event, for the exclusive use by bicyclists, walkers, bladders, etc?**

Yes. I love this idea. Cambridge, Massachusetts does this along the Charles River once a week and thousands of people of all ages come together to use this public resource.

**What League of American Bicyclists Bicycle Friendly Community rating would you hope to achieve as mayor?\***

Gold. But this is because I do not plan to serve forever! I would like the next mayor to achieve Platinum.

**\*Guide**

**Platinum** (example: Fort Collins, CO—pop 143,986/home to Colorado State University)

**Gold** (example: Cambridge, MA—pop 105,162/home to Harvard, MIT)

**Silver** (example: Ann Arbor, MI—pop 113,934/home to University of Michigan)

**Bronze** (status quo trajectory of New Haven—pop 130,741/home to Yale University, SCSU)