

Third Council District Candidate Questionnaire

Please return by June 1. No limit on the length of responses.

If helpful, feel free to include links for further information.

Landmarks

Name a historic preservation battle with which you've been involved — what was your role, why were you involved?

I, along with others in our neighborhood, have fought hard to preserve and protect the Windermere on 57th & 9th. It is a beautiful residential building with touches of Victorian Gothic and Romanesque architecture built in 1881 as one of NYC's first apartment buildings. Its story is not as beautiful as its appearance. In the 1980s the owner harrassed tenants to force them to vacate in the most extreme and violent ways. It is one of the only such cases where the landlord served jail time for his harassment. The building was landmarked in 2005 but had fallen in disrepair and remained vacant for many years.

We have been alert and vigilant throughout and have advocated for the preservation and refurbishing of the building. After decades behind scaffolding, we are now reviewing plans from a new owner for new use.

Would you like to see more buildings or areas landmarked in City Council District 3, especially Greenwich Village, less, or would you keep it as is? If you would like to see more or less, where would you expand or decrease landmark designations?

I would like to see more buildings designated for landmarks, especially in Greenwich Village. Many residents choose the neighborhood they build their homes and lives in because of the unique character of that neighborhood. For Greenwich Village in particular, the neighborhood is iconic and many proposed new zonings and builds would look uncharacteristic. We need to expand landmark designations in this area, and in historic slices of Chelsea, not just because we need to prevent out of place development but also to preserve the history of New York City. We live in a city that continues to grow while also preserving those historic homes and streets, and that combination of old meeting new is unlike anywhere else in the country.

How would you evaluate the job the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) has done in regulating District 3, especially Greenwich Village? Have they done a good job with approving or

not approving changes to existing buildings? With approving or not approving proposed demolitions and new construction? In considering and approving new landmark designations?

They have not done their jobs well, in my opinion. The recent decision, around the demolition of 14-16 5th Avenue, is a perfect example of their capitulation to developers. They regularly approve changes that are out of character with the neighborhood, and side with developers for drastic new builds more often than not. LPC has gotten better over the years but the objective of preservation has not been safeguarded as it should be.

Landmarks (continued)

If there are changes you would like to see with the LPC, how as a City Councilmember would you help effectuate that?

I would like to see the LPC take more community input into consideration. The discussions over landmark status should be done in careful consideration with regards to both historic areas and neighborhood character. I highly value resident voices and transparency in land use matters. I would strongly advise and fight for more community input to be given in these discussions. I think Village Preservation, and other preservation organizations are critical in garnering community support for these potential landmarked areas and I would like to see those efforts expanded and supported.

What would you tell a property owner who was opposed to their property being landmarked, given that you as City Councilmember must ultimately uphold the landmark designation when it comes before the City Council?

I would point to what I think is the most impactful and widespread effect of landmarking: Gansevoort Market. The success of that project completely changed the economic landscape of that area without affecting much of the building and architecture. It is a shining example of the work and advocacy that Village Preservation has done and continues to do while helping our neighborhoods grow. It is a useful example for reluctant property owners, because it proves that you don't need to raze existing buildings to create a prosperous and beautiful space.

Zoning

What sort of changes to zoning in Council District 3, and especially Greenwich Village, would you support or advocate for? Would you support upzoning (i.e., increasing the allowable density of development as compared to current rules), and if so, where and/or under what circumstances? Would you support contextual rezonings (i.e., limiting the height of new development and limiting the transfer of air rights) or downzonings (i.e., reducing the allowable density of new development as compared to current rules), and if so where and/or under what circumstances?

Of these options, I would support contextual rezonings the most. Like most issues facing city government, these alterations often need to be considered on a

case-by-case basis, and I'm always a big proponent of attempting to align priorities. My belief is that if you give residents and smaller landlords an opportunity to expand their spaces (the equivalent of doing upzoning with a laser vs. buckshot) while requiring them to allot some of that expansion to affordable housing, for example, or pay into the fund, you'd be much likelier to accomplish consistent expansion, with community buy-in and development in scale with the neighborhood.

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Zoning (continued)

Do you support the City's current mandatory inclusionary housing program, and if not, why (and be specific — do you oppose all mandates for affordable housing? The fact that it requires a very large upzoning? The breadth or depth of affordable housing it requires)?

I do not support the City's mandatory inclusionary housing program (MIH). In theory, MIH can be an effective tool to balance big builds and market rate housing but additional loopholes the City has currently implemented neuter its impactful objective. My main two objections are

- 1) We are undervaluing our position with the negotiated percentage of affordable to market rate housing in new builds.**
- 2) There is no guarantee there will be the appropriate affordable units built under the current plan.**

I would argue, specifically with the SoHo/NoHo upzoning plan, that the additional amount of market rate units would make the neighborhood less affordable, not more. This plan is a perfect example of why we need representation that currently has no obligation or ties to the real estate industry.

When it comes to affordable housing my preference is adaptive reuse and same-scale development. Wedging big towers into a neighborhood with currently none will negatively change the character and atmosphere forever.

Would you seek zoning changes that would require new affordable housing in parts of the 3rd Council District and especially in Greenwich Village? If so where and under what conditions (upzoning? subsidies)?

For the most part, the only rezoning I would consider in my district for affordable housing would be the switch from industrial/commercial to residential, if applicable. This type of rezoning reflects the times and natural evolution of a neighborhood and not changing its character through zoning itself (like upzoning). This will also allow adaptive reuse to come into play, which I believe is a good opportunity to create affordable housing stock.

What is your position on the proposed SoHo/NoHo rezoning, which the Mayor and leading Mayoral candidates have said they would seek to replicate in other historic neighborhoods with median incomes above the city average, such as those in the 3rd Council District? Do you support the approach in the plan or any elements of it? If so, which? What is your position on the SoHo/NoHo community alternative plan? Do you believe that upzonings increase pressure for demolition of existing rent-regulated housing and create a huge amount of new very expensive market-rate housing, which has the opposite effect of the purported increase in affordability and diversity?

I am against the proposed SoHo/NoHo rezoning and if elected would vote “no” if any related proposal came to a vote. I do not believe big towers are the saving grace for affordable housing and actually believe it would do more harm than good in the long run in terms of keeping a neighborhood affordable. I do support the community alternative plan, specifically the as-of-right development, more guaranteed affordable units and safeguards against big box stores.

Yes, I strongly believe this upzoning plan creates a huge amount of new very expensive market-rate housing. This is clearly a plan that does not consider long-term consequences. A big part of my campaign is stressing that projects must be planned thoughtfully with an eye towards long-term impact and limiting unintended consequences.

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Third Council District Candidate Questionnaire

Zoning (continued)

In general, are there changes to our zoning and planning system you would seek to implement or support, and if so, what are they? What is your position on the City Council’s proposed “Planning Together” framework?

The City needs a comprehensive plan mainly to combat climate change and to avoid our current piecemeal approach to zoning but the current proposed framework for “Planning Together” goes against much of what my campaign is about. I am running to put resident voices first and encourage more community participation. This plan supports a top down approach and curbs public engagement. Communities must have a hand in proactively planning for their own neighborhoods. As with most issues, I do not believe in a “one size fits all.” This plan encourages that.

Small Businesses

The City has implemented a plan to make permanent the outdoor dining allowed during the pandemic. Do you agree with this move? If not, how would you seek to change it, and what system

and allowances for outdoor dining would you support?

Our restaurants, along with our Arts community, are the hardest hit due to COVID-19, especially in our district where so much of that business is dependent on tourism. The temporary outdoor dining set ups (and relief of restrictions like allowing propane heaters) were a necessary move to give restaurant owners some sort of ability to continue operation in some fashion during the pandemic. This helped keep restaurants afloat under strict COVID safety measures.

But making them permanent post pandemic without any studies or community input is concerning. In order for this to move forward, it has to go through a careful and considerate process and definitely with heavy community participation.

We have very little public space here in Manhattan, specifically our district, and we cannot give it away for free, especially to commercial real estate interests. Supporting small businesses is a cornerstone of my platform and we have to ensure steps we take now will not harm our business owners long-term. What we're already finding is now the developers and landlords are starting to ask more in rent because they can offer an outdoor space (which they don't own) and it's becoming a hardship on smaller businesses. We have to look at the broader effects and how we can shift to benefit the restaurants and, by extension, the workers.

Another snag right now is with DOT. I am a proud environmentalist and believe in (non-diesel) public transportation. We need dedicated/separated bus lanes and the outdoor dining set ups have impacted those plans for now.

This is a good example of why I'm running. We need leadership that is thoughtful and can identify possible unintended consequences and look further down the road at unwanted results. We need solutions that work long-term.

What sort of measures would you support or propose to help small businesses? Do you support the implementation of zoning restrictions on chain stores in certain locations, and if so where? Do you support the Small Business Jobs Survival Act? Any other measures?

I support the Small Business Jobs Survival Act. Growing up, my parents owned a small, family run cheese shop. I understand the sweat equity and razor thin margins that go into keeping these businesses afloat. COVID recovery is my #1 priority and bringing back small businesses post-pandemic is a big part of that.

One of the biggest impediments to the success of brick and mortar businesses in NYC is the commercial lease renewal process. We need to pass the Small Business Jobs Survival Act. We see empty storefronts not because commercial real estate can't get anyone, it's because they are holding out for a bank or a pharmacy who will pay top dollar for a long amount of time, not a mom and pop store. And these smaller stores make a neighborhood. They make up the character of a neighborhood, which is so important. That's why SBJSA is needed. It's to help level the playing field and give the smaller proprietors the resources of negotiation terms when dealing with landlords.

I want to create a (financial) incentive for commercial landlords to limit the time they keep their spaces empty - the mirror image of an empty storefront tax. We should also inhibit big, box, chain stores from expanding and I am currently exploring a tax on those stores which expand over a certain amount of locations in a set area. This will help offset large corporate tax breaks and impede the proliferation of these types of stores which will, in turn, allow more opportunity for mom & pop stores to enter the neighborhood.

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Thank You for Your Answers