



Second 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.

South of Union Square/Tech Hub

What is your position on the commercial upzoning approved by the City Council at Councilmember Carlina Rivera's direction for the Tech Hub on 14th Street? Do you believe, as was stated by Councilmember Rivera when she ran for office in 2017, that without comprehensive neighborhood protections, it would increase development pressure on the directly adjacent East Village and Greenwich Village neighborhoods?

Answer: I strongly disagree with using city-owned property for the private development of office space. That site, in the amenity-rich area to the east of Union Square, should have been used by the city to build housing that was permanently affordable through a provider of affordable housing, not MIH. I believe that the Tech Hub has increased development pressure on the directly adjacent East Village and Greenwich Village neighborhoods, as seen by the office tower slated for 3 St. Marks Place and the attempted transfer of air rights from 4 St. Marks Place to 3 St. Marks Place. I would not have approved the commercial zoning for the Tech Hub without comprehensive neighborhood protections.

What is your position regarding the deal brokered by Councilmember Rivera for the Tech Hub upzoning as it regards protections for the neighborhood to the south? It included the proposed landmark designation of seven non-endangered buildings out of 193 requested for designation (a historic district) or about 3.5%, and no zoning or tenant protections whatsoever as promised at the time of passage. More progress within the Second Council District on landmark designation was also promised, but never materialized. Do you think campaign promises were broken? Do you think the only and best opportunity to force the City to grant those protections to this neighborhood was sacrificed with that deal?

Answer: Campaign promises were broken. Councilmember Rivera did not obtain any protections for any part of the area surrounding the Tech Hub. I do think that the best opportunity to force the City to grant those protections to this neighborhood was sacrificed with that deal, but I hope it was not the only opportunity. I believe that I will be able to find another opportunity if elected councilmember, although it may not be as straightforward and obvious. One of my first priorities will be to brief the new mayor on the necessity of protecting the affordable housing that remains in the area and adding more, which is extremely unlikely to happen with the current zoning which incentivizes commercial buildings, including hotels.

What would you do to help push for comprehensive landmark protections for the area South of Union Square and its many civil rights, social justice, and architectural and historic landmarks, as proposed by Village Preservation and supported by community boards, elected officials, community groups, etc.? How would this differ from what you have done in the past three years since the approval of the Tech Hub? Have you written to the Mayor and the Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission stating that you support this proposed historic district, and urging them to move ahead with designation?

Answer: One of my first priorities will be to meet with the new mayor to discuss the many land use issues in District 2 and to convey the importance and urgency of protecting the area against overdevelopment and speculation. The area South of Union Square is the ideal place to showcase adaptive reuse while preserving and creating housing. I will immediately convene a working group to consider a community-driven rezoning proposal or 197a process for the area. I will write to the Mayor and the LPC to urge the landmark protections and would continue to build and strengthen the coalition of other elected officials who also represent the area as well as the Manhattan BP and other Councilmembers. I will speak in favor of it at press conferences and rallies. I have written to the Mayor and the Chair of the LPC in support of the designation of the area South of Union Square as a historical district to urge them to move ahead with it. I have also rallied the hundreds of residents in my building to write letters and emails to the Mayor and current Councilmember on this and other land use issues. I have hosted VP in my building to speak to residents of my and neighboring buildings.

Zoning

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 throughout the Second 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 and very

expensive market-rate housing, which has the opposite effect of the purported increase in affordability and diversity?

Answer: I do not support the proposed SoHo NoHo rezoning. It will lead to destruction of housing in the area currently occupied by low-income New Yorkers in favor of the building of glass towers that will almost certainly contain commercial space and no housing at all. It will also destroy a historically-significant area of New York City, one that is a prime destination for tourists who bring revenue to the small businesses in SoHo and NoHo. I fully support the community alternative plan as well as the Chinatown Working Group plan. I do believe that upzonings increase pressure for demolition of existing rent-regulated housing and create a huge amount of new and very expensive market-rate housing, which will lead to displacement, but I think that the SoHo NoHo rezoning will actually result in more office space and less housing overall.

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?)

Answer: MIH has not worked and will not work in New York City where luxury apartments can be investments just as easily as housing. It has produced a fraction of the affordable apartments promised by the current mayor while incentivizing the building of market rate housing in neighborhoods where most residents live in below-market-rate apartments. MIH leaves the creation of affordable housing, which the city and its residents desperately need, to corporations which, due to the nature of corporations, have an inescapable profit motive. I would support a mandate for affordable housing in the conversion of existing commercial buildings to residential uses, only if the definition of affordable is based on the rent currently paid in the area, not AMI. I will not support any upzoning for the foreseeable future until the effect of COVID on our residential and office stock is fully understood, and I will never support any large upzoning.

What sort of changes to zoning in Council District 2 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?

Answer: We must have a moratorium on all upzonings until we have been able to quantify the effect of COVID on our residential and office stock. After that, I will only support increasing allowable density related to adaptive reuse of commercial space. In the interim, in District 2 I will support and advocate for thoughtful designations of

historic districts, such as South of Union Square and the proposed Madison Square North/Tin Pan Alley Historic District Extension, as well as the Chinatown Working Group plan and the community alternative in SoHo and NoHo. I will also support and advocate for the Perlman Place community planning project of Community Board 6.

Would you seek zoning changes which would require new affordable housing in parts of the Second Council District, and if so where and under what conditions (upzoning? subsidies?)?

Answer: I would seek the zoning changes described in the Chinatown Working Group plan that impact areas in District 2. These zoning changes would require that new developers guarantee on-site housing which is permanently affordable to those in the neighborhood, which is the lowest band of AMI. With regard to the sale of 1 and 10 Nathan Perlman Place, if CB6 and a developer came to an agreement on building the affordable, supportive senior housing CB6 desires, I would seek the zoning changes necessary for that project. I understand from many meetings with tenant leadership at Campos Plaza that there is interest in developing a parking lot to build supportive senior housing for NYCHA residents to downsize so that larger apartments can be made available for families. I would support zoning changes necessary to accomplish that at Campos or any of the NYCHA developments in District 2 where there is informed buy-in by the tenants.

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?

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Small Businesses

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?

Answer: Small businesses need a thoughtfully-crafted package of legislation at the state and city level. This includes measures that would require state action, such as rent relief for small businesses impacted by the COVID crisis and a packaging fee like the plastic bag fee to be paid by online companies such as Amazon. I support the creation of special districts limiting chain stores in the areas where the local community has demanded them, such as the East Village and the areas covered by the Chinatown Working Group plan and SoHo NoHo community alternative. I am a strong proponent of the Small Business Jobs Survival Act. It would be a high priority to be placed on the Committee on Small Business, and I would publicly resist any effort by the Speaker to remove me from the Committee. I would seek to be the sponsor of the bill in the new Council term, and I would work with the Speaker and like-minded fellow Councilmembers to hold an open, honest hearing and pass the bill.

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?

Answer: I agreed with the plan to help bars and restaurants survive the pandemic, but I do not agree with the permanent transfer of public space to private landlords. This will inevitably fuel even higher rent prices for commercial space as landlords with viable street seating areas demand even higher rents. Now as landlords refuse to renew leases and leave storefronts vacant hoping for a higher rent, the dining sheds of the prior tenants will remain empty in the street, as we have already seen occurring in the Village. I would work to repeal local law 114 and return to the pre-pandemic system of permitting sidewalk seating where appropriate through the Department of Consumer Affairs.

Landmarks

Would you like to see more buildings or areas landmarked in City Council District 2, 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?

Answer: I will follow the lead of established local preservation groups as they identify

additional buildings and areas in City Council District 2 to be landmarked. I would not seek to decrease landmark designations.

How would you evaluate the job the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) has done in regulating District 2? 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?

Answer: Although there have been recent notable successes, such as 827-831 Broadway, the Landmarks Preservation Commission has been too slow to grant District 2 landmark and historic designations it needs. The failure to designate the historic St. Denis building allowed it to be demolished and replaced by an out-of-context office building, and the LPC has not granted the area South of Union Square the protections it needs to resist real estate speculation. The LPC has landmarked a number of buildings, but most were not under any development pressure. In terms of approving changes to existing buildings, the LPC has denied very few applications in the neighborhoods of District 2 compared to neighborhoods to the west.

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

Answer: I would like to see the LPC be more proactive in designation of sites and areas related to African-American history across the city, although many are in District 2. Only about two percent of all of the sites contained in the National Register of Historic Places concern African-American experiences and history, and New York City must do its part to ensure that any sites or areas within our borders are designated and preserved. As the Councilmember for District 2, I would meet with senior LPC staff to urge landmarking of sites within District 2, but I would also create a coalition of Councilmembers to meet collectively with the LPC to press them on this issue.

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 tell the property owner that I was listening and that I understood the apprehension and opposition. I would express my gratitude, nevertheless, for the historical and community contribution that the building would make and for the property owner's maintenance of the building in such a condition that it was a candidate for landmarking. I would stress how important the building is and how remarkable it is that

this building would live on beyond us both carrying its history with it. I would explain that designation of buildings has not been shown to result in burdensome regulations. Property owners have the ability to make repairs, and landmark designation only seeks to ensure that alterations are appropriate. Although a very involved alteration may take much longer as it is reviewed by the LPC, the vast majority of repairs do not require interaction with the LPC or are approved very quickly, and the LPC has recently unveiled a new e-filing system to make applications easier for property owners. There may be state and federal tax breaks available to your landmarked building which can offset additional expenses in maintaining a landmarked building, and there is evidence that a historic building can be more attractive to creative firms and even tech companies, which can result in higher rents and occupancy levels.

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Thank You for Your Answers