



# Greenwich Village

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### District 1 Questions and Responses

[Margaret Chin](#)  
[Aaron Foldenauer](#)  
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**Question 1. Do you support the Small Business Jobs Survival Act? Though the bill has support from a majority of City Councilmembers, it has never been given a hearing, much less a vote. If you support it, what have you done or would you do to help get the bill a hearing and vote? If you don't support it, why not?**

**Margaret Chin:** I support the SBJS. I believe this legislation should receive a City Council hearing to give advocates and the public an opportunity to discuss the growing crisis facing our small business owners, employees and neighbors who rely on the vital services these establishments provide. I was lead sponsor of the bill in the last Council session, a co-sponsor this session, and I will always be an advocate in the Council to push this important legislation forward.

**Aaron Foldenauer:** Yes. I support the Small Business Jobs Survival Act. Unfortunately, my opponent, Margaret Chin, claims to support it but has failed to even ask that it be brought up for a vote. On my first day in office, I will make known that I will not support any candidate for Speaker unless he or she promises to bring the SBJS up for an up-or-down vote.

**Chris Marte:** I am a strong supporter of the Small Business Jobs Survival Act, and have been endorsed by The Small Business Congress. As the son of a bodega owner, and the mentor for 3 entrepreneurs, I know first hand the challenges small businesses face. One of the major setbacks this bill has faced is despite the verbal support from City Councilmembers, many of its backers have received money from the Real Estate Board of New York. Because REBNY does not approve of this legislation, the bill has been unable to move forward so long as their hand-picked candidates remain in office. I have not accepted any money from large scale developers so I will be a true and active advocate for this bill.

**Question 2. What other measures have you supported/would you support to help small businesses survive in our neighborhood? Would you support a special zoning district for certain areas that limits the size of stores and the number or placement of chain stores?**

**Margaret Chin:** I am a strong supporter of a repeal of the Commercial Rent Tax, which has caused many small businesses to close below 96th Street and is a burden to many others who struggle to remain open. I am in support of special zoning districts, particularly in SoHo where illegal large-scale retail is a growing threat to this historic and iconic City neighborhood. As Council member, I have helped lead efforts to urge the Department of Buildings to enforce the law against large-scale retail, and at a City Council hearing I recently expressed my strong opposition to plans for a 45,000-square foot retail space at 462 Broadway.

**Aaron Foldenauer:** I believe that we must encourage landlords to rent to more small- and mid-sized business, through a program that incentivizes property owners. This program will include a similar incentive being offered to property owners, provided that they offer affordable housing. Additionally, developers can afford to pay almost every tax and fee imaginable, but small businesses cannot. We must reform the Commercial Rent Tax, as well as Property Tax laws. In my district, property taxes have skyrocketed, as a result of improper valuations that are inconsistent with zoning laws.

The preservation of small business is crucial, otherwise every city council district will turn into Madison Avenue or a suburban Mall of America. Again, we can only accomplish this with independent leadership, not cronyism or lip service.

**Chris Marte:** I will help small businesses in my neighborhood modernize so that they can best use technology, and explore ways to repurpose their shops to appeal to a broader base of consumers. Whether it's through partnering them with independent theaters, or upstart restaurants, I will facilitate more community events in collaboration with small businesses, especially those that are struggling. I will support special zoning districts and fight to defend those that are already in place. I believe that too many exceptions can lead to the disintegration of these crucial zoning policies that



preserve the history of the oldest part of Manhattan.

**Question 3. Many preservationists and New Yorkers feel that the Landmarks Preservation Commission has become increasingly lax in its regulation of historic districts and landmarked properties, in that it has allowed increasingly out-of-context changes to landmarked buildings and new construction within historic districts. Do you agree with this assessment, and if so, what have you done/would you do as Councilmember to help address this?**

**Margaret Chin:** I see a troubling trend of out-of-context changes appearing in historic districts in our communities, and have expressed those concerns to Commission members. I strongly believe that not only the letter, but the spirit of landmarks regulations must be honored to protect the integrity of our historic neighborhoods. I will continue to push LPC to honor those regulations and act forcefully to protect and expand our historic districts.

**Aaron Foldenauer:** My opponent, Margaret Chin, has been part of the problem. We must be vocal and ask tough questions: Why did the City Council vote 49-1 to repudiate the Landmarks Commission's decision to grant historic status to 135 Bowery? Why did executives at First American International Bank, the owners of the property, subsequently donate thousands of dollars to my opponent, Margaret Chin, when she reversed her position and came out against the Landmarks Commission?

In other words, I would not cast all the blame on the Landmarks Preservation Commission. After all, what good can the Landmarks Preservation Commission do if its decisions can be vetoed by the City Council? The Landmarks Preservation Commission must have the final say regarding the Landmarking process, not the City Council. With real estate pay-to-play scandals plaguing too many of our City Council members, even our Mayor, I will work to establish the Landmarks Preservation Commission as a body independent of the City Council.

**Chris Marte:** I agree with this assessment. This lapse has meant that even when the community organizes a solution, it is still often overshadowed by real-estate interests. One of the examples of this issue in District 1 is when the LPC approved an additional 70,000 extra square feet of interior space in exchange for the developers constructing two subway elevators at 45 Broad St. This type of quid-pro-quo does not respect the historic nature of the District, and allows developers to propose compromises that cause the community more damage than good. I will be a vocal opponent of these types of negotiations and will not agree to compromises that shortchange the community.

**Question 4. The Mayor has made clear that he is opposed to any rezoning of any area UNLESS it involves a very significant upzoning (increase in allowable size of development), EVEN if the proposed rezoning would introduce affordable housing incentives or requirements where none currently exist. What do you think of this? And if you are not in favor of the Mayor's position, what would you do/have you done as Councilmember about it?**

**Margaret Chin:** Though I support the Mayor's goal of creating and preserving 200,000 affordable units over the next decade, I strongly believe that every rezoning proposal must maximize the opportunity for advocates and the public to engage and substantively shape proposed changes to their communities. Our City faces a growing crisis of affordability that affects almost every neighborhood. But that reality does not mean that our City should be enforcing a "one size fits all" policy that seeks to upzone areas where such an action is inappropriate or out of character. I believe strongly in using every tool available to promote deeper affordability tailored to neighborhood needs, which includes the rehabilitation and preservation of existing housing stock. Density-linked affordable housing is not the only option. When it comes to any proposal that seeks to rezone a part of my Council District, I will continue to draw from my experience and long record as an effective community activist to fight to give the people a greater voice in decisions that affect themselves and their families

**Aaron Foldenauer:** I disagree with the Mayor. Not all development, on its face, is bad. However, when unchecked, it becomes a disaster for low- and middle-income New Yorkers and benefits only non-residents and the ultra-wealthy. Since some development is inevitable, I want it to serve all citizens. Our current land-use and zoning processes are filled with loopholes that are designed for developers and wealthy investors to exploit. Band-Aids are no longer satisfactory. Top-to-bottom reform is required.

**Chris Marte:** I am opposed to the Mayor's blanket policy of upzoning. I believe that through preservation of not just the buildings, but the hundreds of thousands of apartments that were illegally converted from rent stabilized to market rate, there are other ways to increase affordable housing. There is a need for more senior housing, and housing for people with disabilities. However new buildings should not be built on sites where older buildings are still operational. New buildings must be built to scale in relation to the rest of the neighborhood. I will pass community-based zoning that preserves height limits and the culture of my District, such as the Chinatown Working Group plan.

**Question 5. How have you worked/would you work as a City Councilmember to reduce the inordinate influence of the real estate industry over policy in New York City and in city government?**

**Margaret Chin:** I am a strong supporter of our City's public financing system that allows independent voices to run for public office without being beholden to special interests to fund their campaigns. As a longtime community activist, I could not have launched a successful campaign for City Council without the assistance of this incredibly important program. However, the influence of special interests has persisted in too many quarters of our political system. That is why I supported legislation to reform our system by prohibiting donations above \$400 per year from lobbyists, have City contracts, or who otherwise do business with the City to political nonprofits that are controlled by elected officials

**Aaron Foldenauer:** Yes. Unlike my opponent, Margaret Chin, I have not been supported by the real estate industry. When elected, I will owe no favors. I will fight to make sure the Landmarks Preservation Commission is allowed to do its job. It is stunning that New York City is one of the most progressive cities in the world, but has such backwards land use policies and pay-to-play politics in City Hall.

Margaret Chin champions the mantle of progressivism, when she is in fact a disingenuous corporatist, ready to sell out every single sector of the community, so long as it serves her political interests. We need our elected officials to be as progressive as the rest of New Yorkers who put them in office.

**Chris Marte:** My top legislative priority is passing campaign finance reform. Since the Real Estate Board of New York invested \$250,000 in the incumbent's re-election campaign in 2013, we have seen developments rise from the Lower East Side to Tribeca. Our elected officials should be accountable to those that voted for them, not those that financed

their election. My campaign has not accepted any money from developers, and has been transparent in disclosing our contributions and expenditures through charts that are publicly available. I will work to close loopholes surrounding campaign finance that allow those that do business with the City to contribute to campaigns they have a vested interest in, and increase the City's matching funds program to level the playing field for grassroots campaigns like my own.

**Question 6. Some, including the Real Estate Board of NY, have tried to make the argument that historic preservation and preserving and promoting affordability are incompatible. Do you agree or disagree with this perspective? Please explain why.**

**Margaret Chin:** I couldn't disagree more with that argument. We can and must do both. In order to achieve the goal of preserving and creating 200,000 badly needed affordable housing units in the next decade, we must collaborate as elected officials, advocates and the general public to find neighborhood-centric solutions to the growing crisis we face. Arguments like this one are meant to divide our communities precisely at the moment when we need to unite and fight to keep low-income, working families and seniors in the unique and beautiful neighborhoods they helped preserve.

**Aaron Foldenauer:** I disagree. New York has a vibrant, historic nature that must be preserved. The demand to live and do business in New York City will always exist, and many of our residents actually derive significant value out of living in a historic area.

People come to New York City because it is special and not generic. We must not be short-sighted. If we lose what's special about this City and its architecture, then we will all lose in the long-run--even the real estate industry!!

**Chris Marte:** I believe that historic preservation and affordable housing are completely compatible. The Governor released a study that identified thousands of rent stabilized apartments that had been illegally hiked up to market rate pricing by the building owners. I will be proactive in finding these units in my District, and making them available to those who most need housing. Historic preservation is not at odds with the current plan to increase affordable housing by building higher buildings, particularly because this has not been an effective solution. When the AMI does not reflect the actual income of the neighborhood, many of the long-term residents that are most in need of housing cannot afford the new "affordable" units.

**Question 7. Where does/would preserving neighborhood scale, character, and historic resources fit into your priorities, and how have/would you go about achieving it? What obstacles or conflicts have you encountered/would you anticipate, and how have you dealt with/would you deal with those?**

**Margaret Chin:** I grew up in a tenement in Little Italy as part of a tight-knit community of mostly Italian and Chinese immigrants. That early exposure to different languages and cultures shaped me as a future community leader and public official. Unfortunately, those places and experiences are fast disappearing in our City, along with the historic buildings that housed generations of families and rooted our neighborhoods in time and place. Preserving the scale, character and history of our communities remains a top priority for me as Council Member, and I remain committed to strengthening and expanding protections across my council District -- from TriBeCa to the Lower East Side. To accomplish these goals, I don't see obstacles or conflicts in our way -- just a great amount of work to be done to bring people together. As someone with the experience and record of getting things done, I believe I am the right person to rally advocates, property owners and the public around the effort to protect our neighborhoods.

**Aaron Foldenauer:** Fighting to preserve Lower Manhattan's rich history is one of the top items on my agenda. I anticipate quite a backlash once elected. I welcome new investment in my District, as well as in all of New York City. However, that investment cannot come at the hands of our city's most economically disadvantaged and we cannot lose the character of our City. I will ensure that development is for all New Yorkers, by increasing affordable housing requirements for new construction, making it easier for small business to survive and reforming tax codes that are putting small business out of commission. Preserving the unique character of the neighborhoods in Lower Manhattan will be one of my top priorities.

**Chris Marte:** These are among my top priorities. In the City Council, I will pass the Chinatown Working Group rezoning plan in its entirety. This plan includes height restrictions, tenant protections, and historic and cultural preservation -- all of which are critically needed in Lower Manhattan. The plan has faced opposition from the Mayor and the DCP, however without the influence of real-estate in my campaign, I will be a more forceful advocate of its passing. It is not unprecedented in scale, as evidenced by the rezoning of the East Village and Harlem. I will use these examples to promote its viability to the mayor and City agencies.

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