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District 2 Questions and Responses

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Question 1. Do you support the proposed rezoning of the University Place/Broadway and 3rd/4th Avenue Corridors put forward by GVSHHP and City Councilmember Rosie Mendez which Mayor de Blasio and the Department of City Planning have thus far opposed? If not, why?

Ronnie Cho: I support the proposed rezoning of University Place/Broadway because the most pressing problem of our time is affordable housing. We cannot develop without restrictions and we need buildings along the University Place, Broadway, Third and Fourth Avenues corridors to have more affordable housing units and height and design restrictions so that these buildings do not ultimately change the character of our neighborhood.

Carlina Rivera: Yes, I support the proposal to rezone University Place/Broadway, as well as the 3rd/4th Avenue Corridors. A contextual rezoning that spans Third to Fifth Avenues from 8th Street & Astor Place to 14th Street is desperately needed to stop the proliferation of commercial out of scale development that is currently taking place. I believe that the Bowlmor Development Site is proof that a rezoning is needed since the out-of-context and over-scaled building that is currently going up actually could have been taller under the existing zoning. Furthermore, the current zoning incentivizes commercial development and that threatens our existing residential buildings. The proposal to lower the commercial FAR to 2.0 would dissuade such speculation, stabilize the residential housing and preserve existing residential units.

Jasmin Sanchez: I support the rezoning plan put forward by GVSHHP because the most pressing problem to me is preserving the character and history of our district. As the next City Councilwoman, I will not allow development without the GVSHHP proposal implemented. Council member Mendez is a strong advocate. I will continue that fight once elected. I have stated that I would have wanted to see decent, integrated, and permanently affordable housing where the Tech Hub is slated. I will fight to pass the rezoning plan and preserve the character of our district.

Mary Silver: Yes, I support rezoning in anticipation of the proposed "tech hub." Any future neighborhood developments should match the character of the neighborhood and be sensitive to the needs of the community.

Jorge Vasquez: The current zoning of the area dates back to the 60s, where the times were drastically different. I have many problems with zoning in our district, but I am in full support of the proposed rezoning because it preserves the contextual, historical integrity of the neighborhood- and increases the Community Facility FAR. My main concern is keeping a low Residential FAR that isn't just limited to one bedroom luxury units, and make way for potential growing families. We must make New York City, especially in D2 where we are seeing this rapid change, a place families are comfortable planting their roots indefinitely.

Question 2: The City is proposing a Tech Hub for 124 East 14th Street. Whatever the merits of the proposed



project, under current conditions it is extremely likely this project will accelerate the extension of "Silicon Alley" south from Union Square down to Astor Place, and through the University Place/Broadway/3rd Avenue/4th Avenue corridors, vastly increasing pressure for out of scale and commercial development in this largely residential area. Community groups and Councilmember Mendez have said that the City should be required to approve the proposed zoning protections for the University Place to 3rd Avenue corridors in order to get City Council approval for the Tech Hub. Would you be willing to use your leverage as a City Councilmember to condition your support for the Tech Hub upon the city approving zoning protections for the adjacent residential area? If not, why?

Ronnie Cho: I would support having the Tech Hub at Union Square in exchange for zoning protections around the proposed corridor south of Union Square. While I support job growth and I see coding as a pathway to success for many young people, we do not need this community to become a mirror of Silicon Valley and turn our diverse neighborhood in a homogenous place. I will not pass any development unless it meets the needs of the community. We need to protect the remaining land we have to ensure that we are building affordable, middle class housing for our families and provide resources that benefit the surrounding community.

Carlina Rivera: Since the NYC Council has to vote to approve or disapprove any ULURP (Uniform Land Use Reform Procedures) matters and other Councilmembers have successfully negotiated zoning changes and benefits for their district in exchange for the support of a Mayoral Administration project, then I would use my leverage as Councilwoman to condition my support for the Tech Hub upon the city approving zoning protection for the adjacent residential area. While I understand that the Tech Hub will bring valuable training and job opportunities to the district, without the needed zoning protections for the neighborhood, it would lead to acceleration in out of scale development for the surrounding residential neighborhood. The district deserves both a contextual rezoning and job development, and the Administration can make that happen.

Jasmin Sanchez: With de Blasio's stance on creating and increasing affordable housing throughout the city, I would have thought that this 258,000 square foot site would have been ideal for decent, permanently and integrated housing. However, since it is slated as a Tech Hub, I would support the proposed Tech Hub if and only if the rezoning put forth by GVSHP is implemented. I have seen other elected officials negotiate successful zoning to benefit their districts and I will do the same.

Mary Silver: Yes, absolutely. District 2 deserves a City Council Member who will stand up to real estate developers and politicians and represent the needs of the community. New developments should be in line with the character and history of the neighborhood.

Jorge Vasquez: Upon assuming office in City Hall, I would definitely make sure that certain provisions are added before the Tech Hub (and by extension) Silicon Alley have my support. First and foremost, they must take every precaution not to crowd out residential buildings in the surrounding area. Being the area it is in, I'm not overwhelmingly concerned with the architectural disturbance it presents. My main concern is whether these mega-organizations are utilizing the workforce from right here, within the district. Whether that entails jobs for future college graduates, or at the very least summer opportunities for those still in school to keep up with families' growing expense to income ratio.

Question 3: 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 would you do to help get the bill a hearing and vote? If you don't support it, why not?

Ronnie Cho: Small businesses bring growth and innovation as well as employment opportunities to local communities—they are an important investment for our community. A variety of solutions have been proposed to address the current affordability crisis from zoning restrictions on chain stores to the provision of below-market commercial space in city-sponsored developments. Still many argue there's only one real solution: establishing a right to lease renewal. The law does not even strip real estate groups of profits, but rather sets agreements in place that prevents landlords from engaging in dishonest business practices. Sometimes the less economically empowered need a government advocate to ensure they're not being taken advantage of. SBJSA is an important law because it both protects and empowers small business owners where they otherwise be powerless.

Walking around District 2, I see many empty storefronts, previously occupied by small businesses run out by landlords. These empty storefronts, on which landlords receive tax breaks, diminish the local economy and let national corporation swoop in and make a profit. City Council has the votes. Now it needs the political will to take action and push this bill through.

Carlina Rivera: Yes, I support the SBJSA and the opportunity it creates to put power back into the hands of small business owners when they go to the negotiating a lease renewal with their landlord. While on the Community Board, I helped issue a Small Business Guide to Lease Negotiations to provide a resource to local operators. Additionally, while legislative director for Councilwoman Mendez, I worked to help secure funding to support small businesses and job creation. Preserving local small businesses that provide a diversity of goods and services at affordable price points is important to maintaining the culture and diversity of the community.

As Councilwoman I will use my knowledge and relationships to build a diverse coalition of support to demand a hearing and the passage of this bill. This will be one of the many things I will factor into my decision on choosing the next NYC Council Speaker.

Jasmin Sanchez: I do support the Small Business Jobs Survival Act. If this bill is passed it will provide a lifeline to many businesses that are being forced out. The Small Business Jobs Survival Act will provide our small business community with a fighting chance to negotiate in good faith with the property owner by insuring a commercial lease renewal that is equitable to all parties concerned. My grandfather worked at a hardware store on Clinton Street when he arrived from Puerto Rico in 1959. I know first hand how important that job was for my family's stability and survival.

I will stand with Councilwoman Palma and vote in favor of this bill. I don't understand why it hasn't passed. Elected officials stand tall and say that they fight for and support small businesses yet this bill has never been given a hearing. We have a democratic mayor, speaker and the majority of seats in the council, so what's the issue?

In my remarks as the next City Councilwoman, I would present to my colleagues that the SBJSA is legal and bring forth the review conducted in 2010 which indicates this. The SBJSA doesn't coincide with the Berkeley bill. I will also launch

a small business assessment for every city council district. This will detail the number of businesses that have closed, number of residents that depend on small businesses for employment or daily goods, and the ones that have been unsuccessful in negotiating their leases and have been priced out.

The small business community has waited long enough. Each day that passes brings them closer to extinction.

Mary Silver: Yes, I strongly support the Small Business Jobs Survival Act. This act is an example of politicians in New York City saying all of the right things, but failing when it comes time to act. Both the Mayor and the Speaker need to be held accountable for their inaction on this bill, and Council Members should have used more political capital to push the bill forward, instead of just paying it lip service. To get this bill passed I would make sure that the issue of the bill's legality is put to rest once and for all. There is no legal issue with the bill, it is a canard maintained by the bill's opposition.

Our City is in the midst of an affordability crisis, but our representatives have let this important bill fall by the wayside. We must demand better.

Jorge Vasquez: I completely support the SBJSA. As a candidate endorsed by the Small Business Congress here in the city, and the byproduct of small business shop owners, this issue is extremely close to my heart. This bill will see its way to the floor, even if it takes tireless lobbying on my part. As a "non-traditional" politician, without the connections to the machine many of the other candidates have, I have no problem standing up to Council and other elected officials throughout the City to put more and more pressure on Council to take action or at LEAST justify this inappropriate delay. Our small businesses are the underlying determinant of our rents, and even the presence of crime on our streets. This act must be codified by City Hall as soon as possible.

Question 4: What other measures would you support to help small businesses survive in our neighborhood? Would you support a special zoning district for the East Village that limits the size of stores and the number or placement of chain stores?

Ronnie Cho: Additionally, I support a repeal of the commercial rent tax. This arbitrarily added tax puts business owners in District 2 at a disadvantage and makes it difficult for community institutions to keep their doors open. Additionally, I would go a step further and enact commercial rent stabilization for small locally owned businesses, especially for women and minority-owned businesses. Small businesses should not be subjected to the arbitrary rent increases as large commercial tenants; it is punitive toward their business success.

Additionally I would support a special commercial zoning district to limit store sizes with the exception of grocery stores (because parts of the the East Village and the Lower East Side are food deserts that lack access to grocery stores) and downzone the size of storefronts and ground floor space in new buildings with mixed zoning.

I will work alongside small business owners to protect and bring back local cafes, restaurants, professional creatives and boutiques to our many neighborhoods that have lost them over time.

Carlina Rivera: While I believe that some competition can be healthy in terms of giving consumers options, too much of anything, especially chain stores, can make it difficult for retailers to thrive. This is why since 2011, and as a member of CB3, I have supported a Special Zoning District for the East Village that limits size of stores and the number or placement of chain stores. As Councilwoman, it will be my priority to support diverse local retailers, entrepreneurs, and remaining Mom and Pop shops that have weathered the changes and stayed true to the community. Additional measures worth exploring include legislation that calls for fair commercial rent setting practices, funding in the form of low interest rate loans or grants, technical support and resources to help small businesses compete with online retailers, and supporting shop-local programs, incentives, merchant associations and MWBE initiatives.

Jasmin Sanchez: I have publicly proposed the creation of the Loisaída Business Improvement District. For the record, the Loisaída is east of the East Village and negatively referred to as Alphabet City. The catchment area for the proposed BID is East Houston Street to 14th Street, Avenue A through Avenue D. This area was chosen because it is the most economically deprived.

By forming a Loisaída BID it will result in a cleaner, safer and more attractive business district, a steady and reliable funding source for supplemental services and programs, the ability to respond quickly to the changing needs of the business community and give is a district that is better able to compete with nearby retail and business centers.

I am further proposing that the current Lower East Side/East Village Historic District be expanded to cover a much broader area and that it include an expansion or creation of the "special zoning district" that passed the City Council several years ago.

Mary Silver: The East Village is a very unique neighborhood; creating a special zoning district to preserve its character will help local small businesses survive.

Jorge Vasquez: I think special zoning limiting one chain store to a block would be hugely beneficial. I can witness directly what is happening to my neighborhood in the LES. Empty storefront after empty storefront, one just to recently be filled by a Starbucks. There's another Starbucks in a much more understandable area half a mile away, and those living in the area certainly were not looking forward to this new implant. A zoning limit like this is the first step to taking away incentives from landlords to leave these storefronts open, sometimes for YEARS, waiting for retailers who can afford a 200-300% rent hike.

Question 5: Do you support having the former P.S. 64/Charas-El Bohio Cultural Center at 605 E. 6th Street returned to a true community use, rather than converted to a dorm, as the current owner/ developer has sought to do? If so, given the owner's opposition and the City's resistance to taking a more active and helpful role, how would you achieve this?

Ronnie Cho: The building has now sat empty for almost two decades, and the owner Gregg Singer appears unable to give up on the idea of a college dormitory or somehow developing the space for for-profit use. At this point, he needs to move on and allow the City to purchase and repurpose the space. At our urging the City should repurchase the land and repurpose it as a community center, as it was from 1970s to 2001, or some other sort of public good. The space is too valuable and too central to remain unused and in development limbo.

Carlina Rivera: Yes I support having the former P.S. 64/Charas-El Bohio Cultural center be returned for true community use. As a resident, I have followed this issue for many years, and as District Leader I have spoken publicly in support of a model that addresses our needs. While at Councilwoman Mendez' Office, I worked with the DOB to expose Singer's use of permits without being in compliance with City rules and as required by the deed restrictions.

There is clear ongoing investment in this process as shown through efforts by local leaders and groups over the past 17 years. As Councilwoman I will support and lead these efforts and continue to petition the mayor for true community use as defined by the stakeholders and residents who have been fighting for justice for so long. I will engage community supporters in a public campaign that will show others how important this building is to the community and how the current developer/building owner is attempting to push his own agenda with no regard to the deed restrictions, current laws or community ask.

Jasmin Sanchez: I believe that the Loisaيدا community lost a hidden treasure when former City Council Member Antonio Pagan had the Giuliani Administration auction off the old Public School 64. Mr. Gregg Singer, who purchased the building at a restricted auction, had no idea of the politics behind the issue and the community backlash that would occur.

However, I will say, that former City Council Member Lopez and the incumbent Mendez spent their tenures in office fighting to wrestle this jewel away from Singer. Aside from the fact that they failed, this property is legally owned by Singer.

PS 64 was landmarked in 2006, thus limiting what Singer can do with this building. If Singer is abiding by the deed restrictions and is proposing to convert this building into dorms, then I would propose that the winner of the Democratic Primary sit down with him and try and resolve the issue for all parties concerned and move forward.

This building has been sitting vacant for close to two decades and with so many services and resources being lost to the youth and families in our community, this should not be one of them. A compromise needs to be reached by Singer, the elected officials and interested parties. I am more than able and willing to facilitate this conversation and bring this issue to rest finally.

Mary Silver: The PS 64/Charas-El Bohio building is under private ownership, which means that the community will have to work with the current owner. I am willing to set aside political differences to find the best possible plan for the community. I don't believe the community is served by allowing the building to sit abandoned for another 20 years.

Jorge Vasquez: It's no secret that this area is losing its communal resources. I grew up on these resources. I am an attorney today due to the resources I was provided as a child, here in the city. So, in that vein, I absolutely support the City's efforts against this landlord to preserve the cultural center and improve communal access. It's important that the City tracks this progress from start to finish, and makes sure no corners are cut. This city does not need another dorm, which at this point are essentially luxury buildings for a transient community. This, in turn, will turn surrounding retailers into stores that are mainly geared towards supplying goods to the kids moving in and out. This is absolutely counterintuitive to community building.

Question 6: 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 would you do as Councilmember to help address this?

Ronnie Cho: Given the sheer volume of landmark requests, its weekly hearings, and the variety of requests the Landmarks Preservation Commission regulates, LPC is clearly understaffed and underfunded. LPC's Enforcement Department has only enough resources to respond to illegal work rather than being proactive to seek out out-of-context changes and construction within historic districts. As your next council member, I would fight to earmark more money toward LPC so that it can more proactively and more substantially protect against building and modifications violations. We need to stop having a complaint driven system and enact more proactive solutions especially when preserving the architecture and history of our city.

Carlina Rivera: Yes I agree. As Councilwoman, I will work with my colleagues and advocates to hold the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) accountable in following the regulations for historic districts and landmarked properties. Through hearings and research, I will work with colleagues and advocates to explore new policies, regulations, and reforms that give the public more tools and resources to ensure that the LPC follows its mandate to preserve our historic districts and landmark properties. To that end, notice on public hearings to ensure the public's ability to weigh in on projects before they are destroyed or dramatically altered is key. Preservation is an important tool for understanding, learning from, and celebrating our past. This is especially critical in communities with historic assets that are constantly attracting developers and where even minor changes can jeopardize architectural integrity.

Jasmin Sanchez: I agree with the assessment. Overtime agencies have become lax in the way they regulate. They are underfunded and understaffed which is the problem with most city and state agencies. The New York City Council may not appoint the members of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), but their budget, like everyone else's, is determined and approved by the City Council.

As the next City Councilwoman, I will work to establish the Landmarks Preservation Commission as a body independent of the City Council. With so many real estate entities financing elected officials and candidates, this is the only way to ensure the preservation of our landmarked properties and historic districts.

Mary Silver: Obtaining landmark status for buildings has always been a tremendous challenge. That challenge is increased exponentially because New York City is experiencing the greatest construction boom in 50 years. City Council members need to make preservation a priority-- which means ensuring that developers of new construction are not destroying architectural treasures. To do so, council members need to invoke their investigative and oversight responsibilities. They also need to reduce the influence and impact of real estate developers on local policy--and within the campaign fundraising itself.

Jorge Vasquez: I do agree with this assessment. Many City agencies are becoming increasingly less effective over time. What's important is that people continue to file official complaints that I can review once I am in City Council. I need that data to go directly to the Mayor and show what the community needs- and by extension, what the City needs. There

are areas of NYC that can afford these major changes, but District 2 in its essence is not one of them. It's not why people live here currently, and it certainly diminishes the worth of the neighborhood to potential implants relying on the reputation of a diverse and historic East Village.

Question 7: 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 about it?

Ronnie Cho: I agree with the Mayor that we need more affordable housing stock and we need to build units but I disagree that we need to upzone developments to do so. We have plenty of luxury condos and co-ops housing stock overall. When developing and constructing new developments, we should be debating increasing the minimum ratio of affordable to market-rate housing from 80:20 to possibly up to 50:50. We can preserve our historic neighborhoods from upzoning but increase our affordable housing stock.

Carlina Rivera: I am in favor of responsible growth where possible and don't believe that upzoning is the only way to incentivize the creation of affordable housing. Zoning should be used as a tool to plan for well-balanced neighborhoods where preservation, affordability, character and culture are prioritized.

The problem with the Mayor's model is that it does not allow enough community-based planning and as a result the Mayor's recent rezoning efforts have been met with opposition across neighborhoods. Communities understand the local needs best and can more appropriately determine what areas can sustain an upzoning and what areas cannot. As I understand, the successful community-led plan that was passed in 2008 to do a contextual rezoning of the Lower East/East Village encountered problems as housing advocates opposed voluntary inclusionary zoning as a result of the proliferation of construction and large-scale buildings. Community leaders came together and reviewed block by block the proposed rezoned area. The detailed, thoughtful, and responsible act of reviewing each block led to substantial areas that have voluntary inclusionary zoning and larger swaths of the community that does not since it could not sustain more height.

There have been many proposals that would allow for the preservation and/or the creation of affordable housing that does not require a very significant upzoning. I believe these are the kind of zoning proposals that should be supported and championed. As Councilwoman, I will work with residents, leaders, local organizations, elected officials, and the community board to stand united in pushing forward proposals that achieve these goals. I will work within the NYC Council to explore legislation that provides for more community oversight and meaningful input opportunities. There is too much power consolidated within the corresponding agencies and not enough mechanisms to ensure the community has a real role and say in the rezoning process.

Mary Silver: I would only support upzoning in the case of a 100% affordable housing building, if appropriate. We are facing an affordable housing crisis, which means that the city will have to expand its housing stock in order to keep up. However, new super-tall luxury units will only serve to make the problem worse.

Jasmin Sanchez: I am opposed to the Mayor's policy for upzoning. What we don't want or need are mega towers in exchange for affordable housing. What we do need is to maintain the character of our neighborhoods for the good of those who currently reside here and for those who will eventually call this neighborhood home.

I believe that by declaring areas historic districts, we will be able to preserve the current units and by having community based zoning, preserve the height limits and culture of my district.

What we need is a Council Member who understands this and is prepared to fight the Mayor, someone who isn't afraid to stand and state "My district is not for SALE."

Jorge Vasquez: I think the Mayor is completely misguided in his assumptions. I always ask myself what will provide a longer lasting, community-oriented New York City. The answer to this is rezoning when rezoning is due. I can speak from the stance of my district; we need no more upzoning. We need less ICON and Kushner in our neighborhoods. We need less luxury one bedrooms. We NEED people to see their rent and be assured they'll be able to pay for it for years to come. We NEED people to have the option to buy space they can own and pass down through their future generations. I am not a voice for developers, I am a voice for the people in this city I talk to daily- struggling individuals, working 2-3 jobs, who don't know if their next rent hike will be the last one they can afford.

Question 8: How would you work to reduce the inordinate influence of the real estate industry over policy in New York City and in city government?

Ronnie Cho: First, politicians should stop taking money from greedy real estate developers like Jared Kushner and Donald Trump. Second, with zoning and land use being such a large part of the City Council's overall powers and priorities, it is inevitable that real estate industry would want to have some say. But as city council members, we need to have the political courage to stand up to the industry when they are circumventing the law to get around building affordable housing, when they take advantage of tax abatements like 421-A or J-51, when they make conditions unsafe for or under pay construction laborers, and build on our precious green space.

Carlina Rivera: The real estate industry and their lobbyists have amassed too much power over our city and government. This is almost entirely made possible by campaign contributions, PAC's that are supported by the real estate industry, and unfettered access to Elected Officials from paid lobbyists. The biggest abuse in this kind of pay-to-play behavior is at the State level, where officials have no limitations on campaign contributions and where the LLC loophole is exploited, resulting in bankrolled candidates friendly to developers without our best interest as priority. Moreover, upstate elected officials have no real stake in what happens in New York City, but are making decisions about various laws affecting us while accepting large campaign donations from big money industry. As Councilwoman, I will support legislative measures that limit this unfair access and leverage by setting stricter disclosure requirements, capping contributions, larger monetary fines and restricting access by lobbyists for both City and State officials.

Jasmin Sanchez: After "following the money" for all candidates, I would work on campaign finance reform. I feel that contributions to a candidate should solely be from members in the district they are looking to serve. I am a grassroots candidate and my contributions have been from residents in the district and Lower East Side. This is the way to finance

a campaign and until this happens, I will not participate in the CFB's Matching Funds program.

My district and neighboring districts have seen developments rise from the Lower East Side to midtown. What we haven't done well is hold our elected officials accountable. We voted them in and that is who they should serve.

On that note, I have not accepted or sought out any contributions from real estate boards, small property owners, or any other unaffiliated real estate developers. I would pass legislation and/or referendums that would limit campaign contributions from the real estate industry, thus decreasing their influence in NYC government. Any candidate that accepts these contributions or contributions from elected officials who accept real estate contributions should not be trusted because favors will be owed at the expense of our community.

Mary Silver: We need to open up the democratic process in New York, so that political insiders do not have complete control over the process. There are 7 "open seats" this year for City Council, and every single seat has a political staffer or former politician as the frontrunner. In a city with so many extraordinary people with all kinds of backgrounds and professional experience, some cross-fertilization would benefit the city council.

I would like to introduce legislation that bans elected officials from donating to or "bundling" for other campaigns. Unfortunately, under our current system, new City Council Members arrive on day one with significant political debts. This ban could help break the cycle of special interest influence.

Jorge Vasquez: I, as a councilmember, can continue to speak about this issue. But when it comes down to it, we need more transparency, and our constituents need to be able to delineate between politicians who have accepted money from either developers directly through PACs, or other politicians who have done the same. The system is rigged in favor of those willing to take money and owe a favor, to those willing to make compromises on behalf of their constituents without their voters knowledge. Transparency is key.

Question 9: 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.

Ronnie Cho: We need more affordable housing stock and we need to develop some places to increase that stock, but not at the complete cost to the preservation of some of most valued historical sites or needing to change the character of our neighborhoods. We need to take a look at what space is available to build affordable housing and ensure that all new buildings fit the character of the neighborhoods from masonry and stone facades to height restrictions. Every space should be carefully for its historic value and later every new building erected should follow certain architectural and design principles to better fit the character of our neighborhoods.

Carlina Rivera: I do not believe that historic preservation and affordable housing are at odds. It is my opinion that developers embrace that position so that they can make larger profits by flipping or demolishing buildings at proposed development sites. While it is true that doing renovations in historic districts or landmarked buildings is more expensive since permits have to be reviewed by LPC and DOB, contractors have to be diligent and knowledgeable in landmarks law and preserving physical structure.

An example of a building that GVSHP and Councilwoman Mendez were unsuccessful in landmarking, but ultimately successful in that the building was renovated and not demolished is Congregation Mezritch Synagogue located at 415 East 6th Street. The then developer Jarod Kushner said the structure's only option was to be demolished and constructed with a new synagogue inside. GVSHP, Councilwoman Mendez and the community fought for landmarking and, in the interim, a new developer approached the Rabbi with a plan to use the existing architecturally-significant structure and return important priceless religiously significant artifacts to the synagogue, while also including some residential units in the upper floor of the synagogue. Today that building's existence, its renovation and the restoration of the synagogue were possible because one developer has the moral backbone and skill to complete a project and save an important structure.

Jasmin Sanchez: I disagree with this perspective. I believe that historic preservation and decent, integrated and permanently affordable housing are compatible. This is when community based zoning comes into play and declaring historic districts.

I think the real issue is determining what is truly affordable and for who. Residents that have lived in the district are being priced out of their community and cannot afford to live in these "affordable units". I am against how the Area Median Income (AMI) in NYC is calculated. Currently, our AMI is determined by the 5 boroughs, Rockland and Westchester counties. Westchester and Rockland have amended their housing acts to reflect the income within their community. This means that NYC is no longer calculated in their AMI, however, Rockland and Westchester are still calculated in NYC's AMI, inflating it. This, to me is the real problem when trying to justify affordability.

Mary Silver: I do not believe they are incompatible. It is possible to build new housing units in line with the character of a neighborhood. It is true that in order to address the affordability crisis, we will need to build more affordable housing units. That inherently means more development. However, these units can be in buildings that match the history of a neighborhood. The kinds of buildings that preservationists usually oppose - super-tall glass luxury buildings - are often making the affordability crisis worse by accelerating gentrification and development.

Jorge Vasquez: I don't think these two things should be considered in conflict at all. There are ways to increase area density without tearing down buildings and watching high-rises soar. We can reuse our existing housing stock and create more multi-family units, which can be affordable AND promote family resiliency. It's a two bird, one stone situation: not only preserve the historic integrity of the buildings themselves, but the culture and nature of the community. At least that is what I would love to see in District 2, and fully believe can happen.

Question 10: Where would preserving neighborhood scale, character, and historic resources fit into your priorities, and how would you go about achieving it? What obstacles or conflicts would you anticipate, and how would you deal with those?

Ronnie Cho: I believe it is necessary to preserve our historic neighborhoods and its historic sites and it is one of my top priorities. In a city council that seems to roll over to developers time-and-time again, I anticipate push back from those city council members and their developer backers but I am ready and willing to fight back against developers to preserve

the unique character of our neighborhoods, bring back small local businesses, and demand any development include more affordable housing.

Carlina Rivera: The East Side has experienced significant changes over the past few decades that have threatened the character, scale, historic resources, and much more. This change is causing gentrification, displacement, and a loss of our community businesses and assets. Working to curb this change is high on my list of priorities. I will work to explore legislative and policy measures that would promote and require local oversight, preservation measures, affordable housing development incentives, resources for real community engagement, and stronger protections. I will work with advocates, resident leaders, and the community at large to develop strategies, policy measures, and community initiatives that help us get ahead of the curve and help us preserve and protect our assets, diversity, and culture.

Jasmin Sanchez: Fighting to preserve the East Side's rich history is on the top of my priorities. I reflect back on Washington, D.C. and how beautiful it is. Seeing the blue sky, open green spaces, small businesses (no chain stores), little restaurants from locals and hearing that people can walk to work proves to me that this is not an illusion and can happen here, with the right City Council member. This is how I envision our district. I do not want to feel as if I am walking in the game of Tetris with mega towers landing in our community and businesses that try to fit into our community.

I do not have real estate backing and I can see that there will be opposition to my plan of creating height restrictions, tenant protections, open spaces, character and cultural preservation but I am fearless, vocal and a great negotiator. I strongly believe that preserving the diverse neighborhoods in our district is key to addressing numerous issues. Some of our elected officials have been bought and so have our candidates. In doing so, they have made deals and promises that have not and will not benefit our community.

For me, if a developer wants to build in my district I will demand 50% - 100% decent, integrated and permanently affordable housing. I will request that they rent their store fronts to mom and pop shops and that they invest in the needs of the district, i.e. if we need urgent care units, more schools, open spaces, then they need to build or provide space for us.

We have gotten the short end of the stick time after time after time. I am tired of candidates that have been "groomed", you aren't going to see any change if you elect them. They may have excellent lip service and say the right things but their best interest is not our community.

I am tired of lavish development coming at the expense of our city's most economically disadvantaged and we cannot lose the character of our District by losing our residents and history.

Mary Silver: Preserving the character and history of District 2 is a top priority for me. I believe that preserving our neighborhoods is also key to addressing the affordability crisis. For too long, our elected officials have paid lip service to these issues, while quietly allowing developers to do as they please. We must exact more from developers by demanding more affordable housing units and greater investment in the communities that they are changing, like contributing to subway station repairs, local public schools, and public parks.

Jorge Vasquez: Like I've said, if these resources didn't exist when I was a kid, I wouldn't be an attorney- let alone a candidate in competition for this lucrative seat. My plans rely on primarily opposing rezoning that falls on the wrong side of community building. I want to be a tireless advocate for those community centers that do exist, and play tough negotiator as developers enter my office hoping their projects get approved. I promise you that these negotiations will have the further accessibility of community resources at the forefront of our efforts.

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The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation : 232 East 11 Street, New York, NY 10003 : 212 475 9585 : info@gvshp.org

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