

## 66th Assembly District Candidate Questionnaire

Respondents: Furhan Ahmad • Corinne Arnold • Jeannine Kiely • David Siffert • Ben Yee

### Question 1

**Tell us about your track record on preservation. What are some preservation efforts you've supported or been involved with? What specifically did you do? What were you trying to save or stop?**

#### **Furhan Ahmad**

I am a first-time candidate, so I do not have a legislative record to point to. I want to be honest about that. What I do have is a lifetime in New York and 23 years on the FDNY running into buildings across Lower Manhattan. I have been inside the tenements, the loft buildings, the row houses, and the old industrial structures that make this district what it is. I have seen which buildings hold up, which ones have been stripped of character, and which ones are worth fighting for.

Since I started this campaign, I have been on a long listening tour across the Village, SoHo, NoHo, TriBeCa, Hudson Square, Battery Park City, and the Meatpacking District. I sat with block associations, tenants in rent-stabilized buildings, longtime small business owners, seniors in Mitchell-Lama apartments, Dapolito Center users, and the staff who live this work every day. That included meetings and site visits with Village Preservation and community members fighting for the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center and for the South of Union Square Historic District.

I did not come in with pre-packaged positions. I listened for months, walked the blocks, read the plans, and then formed my views. My approach to preservation comes from that process and from a basic instinct built on the job: when something in the city is working and carries value for the people who live here, you protect it before you tear it down.

#### **Corinne Arnold**

I am a member of Village Preservation because it is essential that we maintain the character and integrity of our community. Our low-rise buildings are a driving force behind our community's quality of life. Our historic streets bring millions of visitors and billions of dollars to our neighborhood every year, which means that the character of our streets is a revenue driver. Small businesses depend on the ability to attract tourists from around the globe.

I have attended rallies organized by Village Preservation to support the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center, the "City of Yes" tower at 5 West 13th Street, etc because I feel strongly about preserving our community's identity and low-rise profile.

Further, I support investing in, maintaining and expanding green space. I served on the NYC Urban Forest Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee. I have spoken on the societal and health benefits of access to green space in the city. Green space is proven to enhance the strength of social ties between neighbors, which can lower the rates of anxiety and depression, as well as provide health benefits such as lowering blood pressure. For these reasons, I supported keeping the Elizabeth Street Garden.

## **Jeannine Kiely**

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Preservation has been a central part of my public service because in this district. My longest-running preservation effort has been Elizabeth Street Garden. I helped organize the effort to preserve the Garden and co-founded Friends of Elizabeth Street Garden to fight to make it permanent public parkland. The goal was clear: stop the City from destroying a rare 20,000-square-foot open space in Little Italy and replacing much of it with a development that could have been sited elsewhere.

I helped build the organization, organize residents, elevate the issue publicly, work with elected officials and community advocates, and push the “win-win” alternative: preserve the Garden while building affordable housing on better public sites, especially 388 Hudson Street.

As chair of Community Board 2, I also helped lead the Board’s review of the SoHo/NoHo/Chinatown rezoning. I supported CB2’s opposition because the plan failed to protect rent-regulated and artist live-work tenants, and created development incentives that weren’t in line with our goals. The Board’s resolution specifically warned that large increases in allowable square footage could encourage demolition and fundamentally transform SoHo, NoHo, and Chinatown. Preservation there meant protecting the artists, residents, and small businesses that gave those buildings their meaning. CB2 supported reducing the allowable density for other uses that would compete with housing. As a result of CB2’s advocacy, the city approved a final rezoning that prohibited dormitory uses and reduced the allowable density for office space in two out of three of the opportunity areas, where the city approved density for 12 FAR.

I have also regularly supported Community Board 2’s resolutions on Landmark Preservation Commission applications, other than resolutions prohibiting accessibility. CB2 reviews applications involving historic districts and individual landmarks, including restoration, renovation, new construction, and legalization of unpermitted work, and sends recommendations to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. During my time as chair, we pushed applicants to respect historic context, restore original features, reduce inappropriate visual impacts, and return to the community when designs were not right. For example, CB2 supported sensitive restoration work at the Cable Building at 611 Broadway because the rooftop addition was minimally visible and the plan restored important architectural elements; we also supported a storefront replacement at 54 Bleecker Street because it enhanced the historic appearance of the building.

My preservation record is practical: organize early, insist on public review, demand better alternatives, and refuse false choices between housing, parks, schools, and historic neighborhoods. The lesson from my work is that communities can preserve what matters while still building the housing and public infrastructure we need, but only when our government listens and plans honestly.

## **David Siffert**

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I led my home Democratic club, Village Independent Democrats, in trying to demand more transparency from the City of Yes proposal. VID was asked to support City of Yes, and I led VID in meeting with our Councilmember and HPD to discuss the proposal. Of course, HPD presented it as a set of very minor changes for the Village. I asked a series of questions that they were not able to answer but suggested I follow up by email, which I did. Unsurprisingly, I got no response. I followed up several times and never got the answer. Eventually, City of Yes passed without VID’s support. I also worked with VID to oppose Ballot Proposals 2, 3 and 4, which removed the NYC Council’s leverage to fight developer giveaways, and also to oppose the SoHo/NoHo rezoning, which was precisely that kind of developer giveaway, and which has resulted in a loss of affordable housing.

I was involved in the project to collect VID’s historical documents and donate them to Village

Preservation for long-term preservation and archiving.

More recently, I have rallied to save the Tony Dapolito Center, and in opposition to the new 0% affordable tower on 13th street. I also attended Village Preservation's Noguchi plaque dedication.

## **Ben Yee**

\* I have spoken out against the 90-story luxury development planned for the middle of Independence Plaza. A structure that will provide no relief for the affordability crisis facing New Yorkers and will force the closure of community centers and other amenities for seniors and affordable-rate tenants.

\* I've been involved with the preservation of the Tony Dapolito Center and the effort to restore city-funded recreation center services. I've attended rallies and been an outspoken critic of the Adams administration's plans to demolish a landmarked facility in order to replace public space with private profit.

\* I marched, rallied and spoke out at Community Board meetings against the Chinatown Mega Jail. A gigantic testament to incarceration which will disrupt one of NYC's most vulnerable ethnic neighborhoods and cast shadow onto one of its most beloved and highly trafficked parks.

\* I have joined email, letter writing, and other campaign activities to preserve the Elizabeth Street Garden as greenspace.

## Question 2

### What are some policies that impact preservation that you have supported or opposed? How and why?

#### **Furhan Ahmad**

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I have no voting record, yet. What I can tell you is where I have landed after this listening tour in our community and what I will do in Albany.

I oppose the Faith-Based Affordable Housing Act as currently drafted because it overrides local zoning and puts landmark protections at real risk while setting affordability requirements too shallow to justify that trade. I oppose the way the 12.0 FAR cap was lifted in the 2024 state budget without real, enforceable affordability guarantees tied to the new density. I support the South of Union Square Historic District proposal. I support protecting the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center from demolition. I oppose the scale of the 600-foot tower being pushed for Gansevoort Square on public land. I have concerns with the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity framework because the affordability bonus is voluntary rather than mandatory and deep.

On the production and tenant side, I support the Housing Access Voucher Program at the \$250 million level advocates have been asking for. I support protecting and recapitalizing Mitchell-Lama housing before any more developments exit the program. I support Good Cause Eviction and want to close the loopholes that have left too many tenants exposed. I support expanding SCRIE and DRIE income thresholds so seniors and people with disabilities can actually stay in their homes. I support a stronger state historic tax credit program that pairs preservation with affordable housing.

#### **Corinne Arnold**

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Following the community-first framework modeled by Assemblymember Deborah Glick, I support policies that pair preservation with accountability, and oppose blanket mandates that bypass local input. In AD 66, I will support efforts to protect the character of our neighborhoods, especially Greenwich Village, which is a living example of its historic legacy of housing the working-class immigrant history, and safeguarding sites crucial to LGBTQ+ and civil rights movements.

I strongly support city and state legislation that imposes heavier financial and legal penalties on predatory developers who intentionally neglect historic properties to bypass landmark rules via emergency demolition. Protecting these structures is critical to small-business vitalization and the quality of life for New Yorkers.

I oppose top-down, one-size-fits-all zoning changes that strip local communities of their voice. While I support building more housing where it makes sense, blanket rezoning often incentivizes the destruction of existing low-rise, affordable housing stock and small business spaces without guaranteeing proportional infrastructure investments.

It is essential that affordable housing and housing supply, in general, is expanded. It makes sense to focus on creating meaningful change in the number of apartments that are available. There are up to 50,000 units of housing that are sitting offline and completely vacant, when they could be given to a family that needs them. My plan gets these units online, keeps them affordable and increases the vacancy rate from the historic 1.4% sustained since 2023 to up to 3.5%. I see every reason to focus on getting these apartments online, before moving to other strategies that disrupt neighborhoods, take years to get more homes online, have a heightened carbon footprint and have minimal impact on creating actual affordable housing.

I oppose the unchecked rollout of industrial-sized street infrastructure, such as the massive

32-foot LinkNYC 5G towers, within or directly adjacent to historic districts like Greenwich Village and Stonewall. These decisions should not be made without deep conversation with local stakeholders.

Ultimately, my legislative approach is rooted in balance. I will oppose any policy that treats our historic neighborhoods as disposable, while supporting practical measures that protect the everyday New Yorkers, small businesses, and long-term residents who give the 66th Assembly District its unique character.

## **Jeannine Kiely**

I opposed the version of the SoHo/NoHo/Chinatown rezoning as reviewed by Manhattan, Community Board 2. As chair of CB2, I led the Board's public review of that ULURP and supported CB2's formal opposition. The issue was not whether SoHo and NoHo should evolve; it was that the City's plan created large new development incentives while failing to guarantee affordable housing, failing to protect rent-regulated and Loft Law tenants, and incentivizing office, dormitory, and large retail development. CB2's resolution also warned that the rezoning could encourage demolition pressure in and around historic districts and undermine the very character the Landmarks Law was meant to protect.

I have supported housing policy that uses public land for deeply affordable housing instead of pitting housing against irreplaceable open space. That is why I supported the 388 Hudson Street alternative in the Elizabeth Street Garden fight. CB2's position was that 388 Hudson, a city-owned site, could support up to five times as much affordable housing than could be built on the Elizabeth Street Garden site but only if the Garden was preserved in its entirety. That was the correct planning principle: build more affordable housing and preserve open space.

I opposed the City's attempt to dispose of Elizabeth Street Garden and designate it as "blighted." The Garden is a heavily used open space in a neighborhood underserved by open space. CB2 rejected the application as presented, called for the Garden to remain wholly intact, and urged the City Planning Commission to reopen the process with a full Environmental Impact Statement because the Environmental Assessment Statement failed to account for serious open-space, environmental, and neighborhood impacts. Ultimately, the city dropped the "blighted" argument for destroying the Garden and focused simply on the disposition of the city-owned site.

I have supported stronger environmental and land-use review when preservation impacts are real, especially where the City tries to move major projects through with inadequate analysis. In the Elizabeth Street Garden case, that meant calling for an EIS. In SoHo/NoHo, it meant objecting to a rezoning that did not adequately address historic and cultural resources, open space, displacement and small businesses impacts nor guarantee a minimum amount of affordable housing. In addition, the rezoning imposed a punitive flip tax on resident owners.

I have also supported contextual development policies: preserve historic context, protect and build affordable housing, incentivize small businesses rather than big-box retail, and require public infrastructure such as schools, parks, and recreation space when rezonings create new density. I made that position explicit in my district-leader work, including on Hudson Square, Elizabeth Street Garden, and preliminary SoHo/NoHo rezoning proposals.

## **David Siffert**

I support affordable housing at 388 Hudson but oppose the proposed demolition of the Tony Dapolito Center, and I oppose the construction of 100% luxury housing on 13th street.

I deeply value preservation of our historic districts and historic buildings, but, like many of us, I am not reflexively anti-development or anti-change. I acknowledge our housing crisis, and

our need to build both affordable housing and also facilities to serve our community. But I am committed to ensuring that any changes in our neighborhood truly benefit the community by way of increasing affordability and livability, limit their impacts on historical districts, and uphold the historical character of the neighborhoods we love.

For any development proposal, we must go in understanding that for-profit developers are out for one thing: profit. They will only provide community benefits if we force them, and even still they will try to wriggle out of them. Our job as policymakers is to use public money in combination with the resources of private industry to try to benefit our community.

## **Ben Yee**

I fought against and urged people to vote down the recent Charter revision changes which handed more unilateral power to the Mayor in zoning and gave communities less say over what happens in their neighborhood. As part of this I traveled around the city, giving presentations in multiple boroughs, and in virtual meetings, about the danger of shifting more power to the Mayor's office. I also wrote a detailed breakdown of the Charter Proposals which was read by several thousand NYC voters.

From 2016-2020 I ran regular civic workshops educating New Yorkers on topics such as ULURP and the role of community boards and engagement with elected officials to help them organize to influence "city planning" in their own neighborhoods. Several of these were at NYCHA complexes facing threat of RAD developments that tenants opposed.

### Question 3

**How would you describe the role you think preservation should play in our city, state, and neighborhoods? How does it fit into the broader picture of your vision for serving as a NYS Assemblymember for the 66th AD?**

#### **Furhan Ahmad**

Preservation is not a hobby for rich homeowners. In AD66, it is how working people stay in their homes, how small businesses survive, and how this city keeps a memory of itself.

When you protect a rent-stabilized tenement in the Village, you are preserving a building and preserving the nurse, the bartender, the retired teacher, and the immigrant family who live in it. When you protect a landmarked rec center like Dapolito, you are preserving the pool a kid learns to swim in and the gym a senior uses to stay mobile. When you protect a historic district, you are preserving the scale, the light, and the streetlife that make people want to stay. Preservation is housing policy. It is public health policy. It is climate policy.

On climate, the math is simple. The Preservation Green Lab study found it can take 10 to 80 years for a new energy-efficient building to make up for the carbon released when you tear down the existing one and build it. The built environment is roughly 42 percent of global carbon emissions. The greenest building really is the one that already exists, as long as we invest in making it efficient, accessible, and safe.

My vision for this seat is simple. Stop the false choice between preservation and housing. Use the state to protect the buildings and blocks that hold this district together, strengthen the tenant protections that keep people in them, and drive genuine affordable housing to the sites where it actually makes sense.

#### **Corinne Arnold**

I view historic preservation not only as the protection of old buildings, but as a vital, practical tool for safeguarding the quality of life, stability, and character of our neighborhoods. Preservation plays a fundamental role in ensuring that neighborhoods develop thoughtfully rather than haphazardly, protecting the light, air, and public spaces that make Lower Manhattan livable.

True preservation is also about honoring our shared cultural and social history. The 66th Assembly District is a cornerstone of historic labor, immigrant, civil rights, and LGBTQ+ movements. Preserving the physical spaces where these histories occurred is essential to keeping the unique soul of our neighborhoods intact. It is also a necessary economic driver to bring tourists and visitors to the area that small-business owners rely on.

As an Assemblymember for AD66, preservation is deeply intertwined with my commitment to practical, balanced leadership. We are often told we must make a false choice between building new housing and preserving our communities. I reject that extreme. We can and should support building more housing where it makes sense, but it must be done responsibly. This is through targeted, strategic zonings rather than developer-driven construction that displaces long-term tenants, small homeowners, and historic rent-stabilized tenements.

Preservation is also a tenant protection and affordability issue. When we protect our neighborhoods from overreaching luxury development, we protect the everyday New Yorkers—including seniors who wish to age in place—from being priced out of the communities they built.

In Albany, I will bring stakeholders, residents, and preservationists to the table early and often. I will advocate for stronger accountability and oversight for city and state agencies to prevent 'demolition by neglect,' ensuring that our laws protect existing neighborhood character while

delivering common-sense, practical solutions that keep our community livable, stable, and accessible.

## **Jeannine Kiely**

To me, preservation means protecting what gives communities their public value: historic buildings, open space, artist communities, small businesses, rent-regulated homes, and neighborhood character.

As Assemblymember, I would support preservation policies that work alongside affordability, tenant protection, climate resilience, and adaptive reuse. I would oppose efforts to weaken landmark protections, bypass meaningful public review, eliminate open space, or use the housing crisis as an excuse to displace existing communities while building unaffordable luxury real estate.

The 66th Assembly District includes more than 20 NYC historic districts and approximately 65% to 70% is landmarked.

Historic districts are one of the core economic engines of 66th AD because they create the physical character that draws visitors to neighborhoods like Greenwich Village, SoHo, NoHo, Tribeca, and the Meatpacking District. In many ways, the district's landmarked streetscapes are the "brand identity" of downtown Manhattan. Our neighborhoods are globally recognized and drive tourism that support restaurants, retail and nightlife, provide a backdrop for film, television and other media, encourage walking tourism and increase hotel demand.

While there is no single number that measures the economic impact in the 66th AD, historic preservation is a major part of NYC's economy and our landmark districts generate major economic and tourism value for NYC, specifically in Greenwich Village, in and around the Stonewall National Monument, SoHo, Tribeca and the Meatpacking District/Gansevoort. Our landmark districts are not museums frozen in amber. They are living neighborhoods that support tourism, small businesses, culture and jobs. Within this framework, preservation is part of my broader vision to build the affordable housing we need, but do it with real planning, infrastructure, tenant protections, parks, schools, and respect for the history and people that make our neighborhoods unique while welcoming new residents who will add to the character of our neighborhoods.

## **David Siffert**

Cities and neighborhoods are not just places to live – they are environments with history and character. Preservation is an essential part of urban planning. Preserving the history and character of a city and neighborhood makes the city better and more vibrant. This is particularly true in AD66, which is the site of so much of New York's most significant history.

## **Ben Yee**

Preservation is a critical tool for keeping the history, livability and culture of New York State alive. New York State is one of the original 13 colonies, New York City has been the country's pre-eminent city and destination for immigrants for hundreds of years. This legacy is woven into the built-environment and neighborhoods in a way that cannot be captured by museums and film.

AD 66, in particular, is one of the oldest and most historically dense parts of New York. It was part of New Amsterdam's early development, a destination of immigrants arriving during the industrial revolution, the seat of artistic innovation in the 50s and 60s, and a mecca for intellectual experimentation in the modern era. The iconic landmarks that define these eras, that are recognizable around the world, the cozy atmosphere that people dream of when they think of New York — all of these things are contained in our physical structures.

The history of New York holding the new alongside the old. Some of it is natural — we take a building that has stood the test of time and put it to a new use. Much of it is by design — we save the look of a building or neighborhood but allow new construction behind the walls. And some of it is about making room for growth — we protect areas that embody a certain aspect of our history so that we can build entirely new things in other places. These tradeoffs are the consequence of being in one of the most dynamic cities in the world for two centuries and, for my part, my vision for AD 66 is one that strives to rehabilitate old structures for new purposes and, when building, places great emphasis on preserving contextual design so that the aesthetics of our district aren't destroyed when we add new structures. When evaluating new construction, how it fits into our existing visual fabric will be an important consideration alongside how it improves affordability, creates opportunity in our local economy and improves the accessibility of lower Manhattan as a place where people from all of the world yearn to live and visit.

#### Question 4

**How would you compare the approach you expect to take on preservation and development issues to that of the current Assemblymember, Deborah Glick? Are there other recent New York City elected officials you would compare or contrast your approach on these issues to?**

#### **Furhan Ahmad**

Let me start with Deborah Glick. She has represented this district for 35 years. Her preservation record is long and real. She stood up on NYU 2031, on South Village designation, on Sullivan-Thompson, on Tribeca historic district expansions, on Pier 40, and she signed the 2018 letter calling for South of Union Square designation. She was vocal against lifting the FAR cap. I respect that record. The community knows what she fought for.

What I bring is a different life experience and a different lens. I am a 23-year firefighter. I was an EMT before that and an NYPD officer before that. I am the son of a Pakistani immigrant cab driver who came here fleeing religious persecution. I went through CUNY. I grew up in a working-class immigrant family in Queens and I have spent my adult life inside the systems that either catch people or drop them. I see preservation as inseparable from housing affordability, from the condition of our community infrastructure, from climate resilience, and from the lived experience of the working-class and long-term residents who built this neighborhood.

On the other electeds: Chris Marte has been the strongest preservation and anti-upzoning voice on the Council and I think he got it right voting no on City of Yes. Erik Bottcher and Brad Hoylman-Sigal have supported individual landmark fights and tenant protections, but I part company with them on the broader zoning overhaul direction and on the scale of some of the towers being green-lit in this district. I want to be an Assembly Member who works with all of them but is not afraid to push back when Albany is about to do real damage downtown.

#### **Corinne Arnold**

I am running to continue the proud tradition of community-first, holistic preservation modeled by Assemblymember Deborah Glick. Like Glick, I believe that a neighborhood's architecture is linked to the well-being of its residents, and I share her fierce commitment to the protection of Lower Manhattan from unfettered luxury development. Sadly, Assemblymember Glick's time in office is also marked by the fact that our neighborhood has become out of reach and unaffordable to many of its own long-time residents.

My approach is very practical and based on lived experience as a small business owner and the President of a 500-unit coop, where I make financial and quality of life decisions for hundreds of families. I understand the economic realities faced by New York City's middle class. My proposed solutions are focused on low-hanging fruit that open up 50,000 units of housing across the city in order to increase the historically low vacancy rate of 1.4% sustained since 2023 to up to 3.5%. This is the kind of practical leadership New York needs right now. It's not theoretical, it's completely grounded in reality and creates win-wins that benefit everyone.

I bring a practical, solution-oriented approach to governing that will focus on balancing affordability with preservation. I will ensure that every day New Yorkers in Assembly District 66 have a real voice in the future of our neighborhoods and their ability to stay here.

#### **Jeannine Kiely**

I would describe my approach as strong continuity with Assemblymember Glick's best work on preservation, with my own emphasis on proving that preservation and affordable housing can be planned together. Assemblymember Glick has been a consistent supporter of Elizabeth Street Garden, opposed the SoHo/NoHo rezoning as written, and sponsored legislation with Senator

Brian Kavanagh to protect SoHo/NoHo joint live-work residents from displacement.

I would compare my approach favorably to officials like Council Member Christopher Marte and Senator Brian Kavanagh where they have insisted on community review, anti-displacement protections, and alternatives that do not sacrifice irreplaceable neighborhood assets. I would contrast it with the de Blasio-era City Planning approach to SoHo/NoHo and Elizabeth Street Garden, which treated major neighborhood changes as top-down exercises and too often framed community preservation as an obstacle rather than a planning value.

## **David Siffert**

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I expect to be more dedicated to building affordable housing than Deborah Glick. Overall, I respected her skepticism of developers and refusal to cave to their financial pressures. I appreciate that she never trusted developers. However, I think her opposition to development sometimes made it more difficult to build affordable housing at scale in the neighborhood, which has led to a more homogenous, less diverse neighborhood.

I appreciate the work of Julie Won, for example, in the OneLIC redevelopment, to win thousands of units of affordable housing for her community. I also appreciate the work of Christopher Marte to save Elizabeth Street Garden while finding an alternative site where we could build an even larger amount of affordable housing.

In cases like the SoHo/NoHo rezoning and subsequent developments, which have allowed for significant luxury developments and decreased the overall affordability of the neighborhood, I would be very aligned with Deborah Glick in opposing them.

## **Ben Yee**

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New York, like much of the country, is going through an affordability and housing crisis. There are not enough affordable units to meet demand and construction costs are too high. Concurrently, our governments underinvest in mass transit to move people from low-cost areas in the urban periphery to high-cost areas in the denser urban core, and they largely ignore regional planning at the municipal or state level.

This approach has deep implications for preservation because it creates a huge incentive to concentrate new, large developments around preexisting transportation hubs — especially in Manhattan. Combined with NYC land prices, this leads to the popularity of luxury mega-towers and constant fighting about individual plots of lands.

As a State Assembly member, my approach is multi-fold:

1) Use state power to incentivize citywide and regional planning. By creating block grants and other programs, NYS can push localities to collectively plan upzoning, preservation, green space allocation and public infrastructure placement in a way that distributes the costs and benefits equitably and democratically.

The Elizabeth Street Garden is a great example of how expanding the conversation beyond a single lot can result in preservation of public goods alongside needed development.

2) Have state transportation undertake meaningful regional planning between MTA, Port Authority, NYS DoT and NYC DoT to better integrate and expand the metro area.

3) On an individual level, elected officials are responsible for organizing the community, and that's exactly what I plan to do. I will turn the Assembly Seat into a hub for civic engagement with workshops, salons and educational programming in concert with local groups. In doing so, I will work to build consensus on how, where and why our communities want development to take place and use the bully pulpit of the office to fight for projects in-line with those desires.

4) As affordability is at crisis levels in NYC, I will also be working with our entire community and neighboring communities to do the work of proactive planning. Lower Manhattan is already a densely developed area, but development pressure will continue unabated and it is also only fair that we do our part. I will make it a priority to work with constituents and local organizations to identify the opportunities and standards of development that could add meaningful high-density, non-luxury units in our district so that we can more strongly make the case for preserving those areas whose historic and cultural value should be preserved.

## Question 5

**What is your position on the proposal to demolish the landmarked Tony Dapolito Recreation Center? Do you oppose demolition of this landmarked structure? Would you pledge to oppose any effort to use the land on which the Tony Dapolito recreation center sits for any purpose other than public parks and recreation?**

### **Furhan Ahmad**

I oppose the demolition of the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center. Full stop.

The Dapolito is not replaceable. It is the Carmine Street bathhouse that opened in 1908, designed by the Renwick firm. The outdoor pool is a 1939 WPA structure by Aymar Embury II. The Keith Haring mural on that pool wall is a piece of New York. The whole complex sits inside the Greenwich Village Historic District Extension II, and the South Village Historic District is on the National Register. It is the only city-run recreation center in Greenwich Village. Kids learn to swim there. Seniors work out there. Families rely on it. FOIL documents released by the Coalition to Save the Public Recreation Center and Village Preservation show the building is repairable. The city's own internal communications back that up.

The current Hudson Mosaic plan at 388 Hudson would demolish Dapolito and hand it off to a developer whose principal has been on the Public Advocate's worst-landlord list with hundreds of open HPD violations. I do not accept that trade.

Here is my pledge on the Dapolito site land use. As the Assembly Member for this district, I will use every state tool available to prevent demolition of the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center. I will support and, if needed, introduce state legislation to block any parkland alienation that would allow the site to be converted to a private development use. I will press the Mamdani administration to honor its campaign commitment and direct city capital to repair and reopen Dapolito instead of tearing it down. I will not accept a demolition-first plan dressed up as affordable housing.

At the same time, I will push for a real inventory of underused public and private sites across the district where affordable housing can actually be built without destroying a landmarked community asset. Protect Dapolito and find genuine affordable housing elsewhere. That is the work.

### **Corinne Arnold**

I strongly support preserving the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center. I stood with protestors in March and am committed to defending the center. The center itself is a part of the fabric of our community. Visiting the center encourages health and fitness while helping residents find community. During a time of record loneliness, we need community centers such as the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center to ground us. It is for these reasons that I support investing in rehabilitating the center and oppose efforts to use the land for anything other than public parks and recreation. Our public lands should remain open for public use and enjoyment.

### **Jeannine Kiely**

I support the restoration and repair of the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center to provide modern outdoor swimming and recreation facilities, as well as provide other community space in a safe structure with a restored facade.

I understand the importance of this issue on a personal level. The Center provided a cold winter venue where my children could play basketball all weekend long in the packed Dapolito gyms. In the summer of 2019, our family enjoyed the outdoor pool on a hot, steamy day, for what would be the last time before the city closed the entire facility for safety reasons.

I will hold the city to its commitment to share the next engineering study with the public – with zero redaction – which our NYC Parks Commissioner, Tricia Shimamura committed to when she presented to Manhattan Community Board 2 in August 2025. Previously, the City never publicly shared any engineering studies on the Dapolito Center.

### **David Siffert**

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I oppose the demolition of the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center, and I fully commit to ensuring that the land be used exclusively for parks & recreation purposes.

### **Ben Yee**

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I oppose the demolition of the existing building, pool and the amazing Keith Herring mural. I further support the rehabilitation and reopening of a fully public recreation center — these services should not be lost. To the extent that a refurbishment would allow for a mid-rise, high-density affordable housing extension to be added in a similar architectural style, I would support such a plan as well.

## Question 6

**The plan to develop 388 Hudson Street is an enormous tower in a woefully out-of-context design, sitting on top of a huge base that's intended to replace the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center. The number one piece of feedback about the proposed project during the "public engagement" process was to keep the planned building low and squat, step it back from JJ Walker Park to preserve light, and keep the scale and design contextual. The chosen design ignored all this design-related input, the City has still not offered any specifics around how permanent affordability will be guaranteed for the project, and the chosen developer has been named one of the "100 Worst Landlords in NYC" for over 1000 HPD violations and evicting dozens of tenants. What is your position on this development and specifically around these aspects of the plan?**

### **Furhan Ahmad**

I oppose the 388 Hudson Street project as currently proposed.

The plan is a roughly 335 to 400 foot tower, around 31 to 35 stories, designed to be the tallest building in Greenwich Village. It would tower over J.J. Walker Park and over a historic district. The facade has been described by neighbors as an office tower with measles. The project sells itself as 100 percent affordable, but the AMI band runs up to 100 percent AMI, which is roughly 110,000 dollars a year for a household. That is not what most of my neighbors hear when they hear the word affordable. There is no restrictive deed locking in the affordability permanently. The city has refused to attach one.

The development team is led by Camber Property Group. Its co-founder was ranked number 17 on the Public Advocate's 2024 Worst Landlords Watchlist, with reports of over a thousand open HPD violations and dozens of evictions across its portfolio. Camber was also a partner in the ownership of the Twin Parks building in the Bronx where 17 people died in the 2022 fire. That is not a track record I want stewarding hundreds of families in Greenwich Village in perpetuity.

Finally, the design sacrifices the Dapolito Center to make the math work. It does not have to. What I want instead: reopen and repair Dapolito on its current site, redesign 388 Hudson at a scale that fits the neighborhood, require an ironclad restrictive declaration for permanent deep affordability, bring AMIs down so the units match actual Village and downtown incomes, and pick a developer whose record I can defend to my neighbors.

### **Corinne Arnold**

Considering the plans largely go against the interest of constituents, I am very concerned that the development, as currently planned, will negatively impact the community. I am opposed to injecting tall buildings that are out of step with the character of our neighborhoods and block access to natural light for our community. Further, our low-profile buildings are economic drivers for our small businesses, which command billions of tourist dollars annually. Any development should compliment the aesthetics and character of the neighborhood.

### **Jeannine Kiely**

Regarding the development at 388 Hudson Street, I have supported 100% affordable housing at this site since 2015. While I generally support the plan to develop nearly 280 units of affordable housing and a public recreation center, I have consistently advocated for design modifications to respect the neighborhood context. As a member of Community Board 2, I successfully pushed the city to define the dividing line between the development lot and adjacent open space and successfully pushed the city to eliminate the setback from the open space, allowing the city to

increase the building footprint. Without these changes, we would either have a taller buildings or less affordable housing. I firmly believe this community deserves state-of-the-art recreation facilities—whether at the Dapolito Center or 388 Hudson—that are affordable and available to everyone.

As background, in 1988, the city began the process to acquire 388 Hudson and committed to develop the site for open space after completion of City Water Tunnel No. 3. In November 2015, NYC DEP presented a plan to build fences around the three water tunnel sites in CB2, including 388 Hudson Street. I've held on to the handouts from this meeting and DEP's thoroughly misguided plan.

In December 2015, I voted with CB2 to reject building fences around three vacant lots and to build affordable housing and indoor recreation space at 388 Hudson Street using the square footage of the entire water tunnel site. From December 2015 to date, I have supported seven CB2 resolutions in support of this position. For CB2's March 11, 2026 meeting on the proposed development, I prepared a summary of CB2's positions for the board to share at the meeting and to frame the discussion. (View at [bit.ly/388Hud](http://bit.ly/388Hud).)

As with all rezonings, I will continue to push for the best possible proposal for our city – including guarantees of permanent affordability for 278 units of housing, strong protections for future tenants and clear covenants to ensure that the selected developer delivers and maintains clearly defined high standards for construction and tenant services and is financially penalized, and if necessary, replaced if chosen developer does not meet these covenants.

### **David Siffert**

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I support the development, because the proposal for the tower is 100% affordable housing, with 15% of the units set aside for people who are formerly homeless. If we want to address housing affordability and street homelessness, some projects like this will be necessary. However, if possible without decreasing the number or size of the affordable units being built, I would push for some changes in the design. I agree that the design is ugly, and I would see if we could get a new design. I also would inquire about whether we could keep the same amount of floor space by making a shorter and squatter building, and I would inquire about choosing a developer who is not on the worst landlords list. However, given our desperate need for affordable housing in the neighborhood, my priority would be to make sure the housing is built.

### **Ben Yee**

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The current plan for 388 Hudson provides much needed housing in the Greenwich Village area. As someone who grew up in, and lives in the neighborhood, I support the use of this lot for this purpose.

Insofar as the specific aspects listed, it would be preferable to have a building with setbacks that is aesthetically more in-tune with the surrounding neighborhood. And, it would be significantly preferable to not reward a bad landlord with management of the property, especially without a legally binding commitment to keeping all units affordable in perpetuity. That said, I believe the balance is in favor of building the 280 affordable units with an additional public recreation center and to continue to fight for the reopening of the Tony Dapalito center, ideally with an additional few stories of affordable units as well.

In truth, this is another example of how the lack of holistic planning ends up pitting communities against each other, privileging developers and depriving communities a real say in what gets built. If there were any sort of holistic process, our elected representatives should be balancing the rehabilitation and expansion of the Tony Dapalito Center with a shorter location at 388 Hudson. Instead, the community is pit against itself as uncertainty about the future, and about whether promises will be kept, are navigated. This is exactly why the proposals I made in

question 4 stand to be so impactful for the future of how we share the burden of growth in our city and state.

## Question 7

**What is your position on the so-called “Faith-Based Affordable Housing Act”? The bill would override all future landmark designations, and at least one version of the bill would override present landmark designations, to allow demolition and new construction. It would also override local zoning regulations to allow construction in many cases many times larger than existing rules allow. The only requirement is that the new construction include as little as 13% of what it calls “affordable“ housing, but that housing can require incomes well above the median for New York City, and the bill explicitly prohibits localities from requiring more or deeper affordability.**

### **Furhan Ahmad**

I oppose the Faith-Based Affordable Housing Act as drafted in S3397-B and A3647-B. I want to be clear about what I do support. I support helping houses of worship build affordable housing on their land. Many congregations across this district and this city are sitting on underused parcels and would love to put them to work housing their neighbors. That is a good idea. I am not against the goal.

My problem is with how this bill gets there. It preempts local zoning. It forces ministerial approval in 60 days with no real discretionary review. The sponsors say landmark protections are preserved, but the preservation community reads the preemption language differently, and so do I. The affordability requirements are the MIH options, which means AMI levels that can reach 80 percent of the HUD New York metro median. The HUD metro number for a family of three is already north of 127,000 dollars because it sweeps in wealthier suburban counties. NYC median renter household income is closer to 50,000 dollars. In practice, a big share of the units this bill would produce are not affordable to the New Yorkers in greatest need.

I will support this bill when it is rewritten to require deep, genuine affordability tied to NYC incomes, explicit carve-outs preserving landmark designation authority and historic district jurisdiction, real tenant and community review, and clear rules keeping out-of-scale buildings from dropping onto narrow residential side streets. I will not support a bill that uses faith and affordability as a wrapper for a zoning override.

### **Corinne Arnold**

I have serious concerns regarding the “Faith-Based Affordable Housing Act” as I do not feel that it will single handedly solve the affordability and vacancy rate crisis throughout the city. It makes sense to focus on creating meaningful change in the number of apartments that are available. There are up to 50,000 units of housing that are sitting offline and completely vacant, when they could be given to a family that needs them. My plan gets these units online, keeps them affordable and increases the vacancy rate from the historic 1.4% sustained since 2023 to up to 3.5%. I see every reason to focus on getting these apartments online, before moving to other strategies that disrupt neighborhoods, take years to get more homes online, have a heightened carbon footprint and have minimal impact on creating actual affordable housing.

### **Jeannine Kiely**

The “Faith-Based Affordable Housing Act” (S.3397A/A.3647A) is a proposal I am continuing to evaluate with a focus on how it balances our critical need for housing with the preservation of neighborhood character and local oversight. I recognize that many religious organizations want to address the housing crisis by building new homes on underused land. My position has always been that we can and must navigate both increasing housing affordability and preserving our landmarked districts without sacrificing one for the other.

I am critical of any state framework that allows for “as-of-right” development while bypassing meaningful public review or weakening the Landmarks Law. My experience on Community Board 2 and in leading preservation efforts like Elizabeth Street Garden has taught me that housing density is most effective when it is part of a transparent, community-led planning process rather than a top-down mandate. I am particularly cautious about legislation that might prohibit localities from requiring deeper affordability or more robust community benefits, as I believe rezonings must be leveraged for the maximum amount of permanent and deeply affordable housing.

Ultimately, I support a pro-housing agenda that prioritizes building 100% affordable projects on government-owned land and expands supply near transit hubs with appropriate guardrails. I will continue to fight for state-level changes that produce real homes for working families without dismantling the historic and cultural resources that define our neighborhoods.

### **David Siffert**

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I oppose this bill.

### **Ben Yee**

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This program should not rely on MIH for developments in NYC. In other states where similar laws have been passed like California and Washington they have steep affordability requirements, it should be similarly for New York. Religious institutions are already tax exempt, and while the housing developments will not be exempt, the State has an imperative to ensure that organizations which receive benefits for operating in the public good use the resources they've accumulated for that purpose.

## Question 8

### What is your position on “City of Yes” and policies like it, which increase the allowable height and bulk of very expensive market rate development with no affordability requirements?

#### **Furhan Ahmad**

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I have serious concerns with City of Yes for Housing Opportunity and I would have been skeptical voting for it in the form that passed the Council 31 to 20 in December 2024.

The plan’s Universal Affordability Preference is voluntary. A developer can take the bonus, build 100 percent of the added floor area at an average of 60 percent AMI, and call it a day. Or they can skip the bonus and build purely market-rate. In practice, the market-rate path has been attractive. City of Yes also created R11 and R12 zoning districts, which unlock 15 and 18 FAR residential, and the bill lets those districts be mapped as the city sees fit.

My concerns, in order: the affordability mandate is too weak to justify the scale of upzoning enabled; contextual zoning and landmark protections get chipped away; enforcement is thin; and downtown neighborhoods already carrying a lot of new luxury development will carry more.

What I would have fought for instead: mandatory, not voluntary, deep affordability bonded to the new density; real protections for historic districts and contextual zones; a firm cap on how UAP interacts with FAR in areas like AD66; and a production strategy weighted toward publicly owned sites, vacant office conversions with genuine 40-plus percent affordability, and Mitchell-Lama recapitalization rather than speculative upzoning.

I support building more housing. I support building more affordable housing. I do not support a framework that mostly gives developers bigger buildings and gives neighbors a press release.

#### **Corinne Arnold**

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I have serious concerns regarding the “City of Yes” as I do not feel that it will single handedly solve the affordability and vacancy rate crisis throughout the city. It makes sense to focus on creating meaningful change in the number of apartments that are available. There are up to 50,000 units of housing that are sitting offline and completely vacant, when they could be given to a family that needs them. My plan gets these units online, keeps them affordable and increases the vacancy rate from the historic 1.4% sustained since 2023 to up to 3.5%. I see every reason to focus on getting these apartments online, before moving to other strategies that disrupt neighborhoods, take years to get more homes online, have a heightened carbon footprint and have minimal impact on creating actual affordable housing.

#### **Jeannine Kiely**

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I opposed the “City of Yes” and similar policies that increase the allowable height and bulk of market-rate developments without requiring a meaningful increase in affordable housing. The stated goal of such initiatives is often to “build a little more housing in every neighborhood,” but in practice, I have seen these policies used to produce roughly the same—or even fewer—homes than previously projected at lower densities. For example, at the 375 Lafayette development in NoHo, the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) increased from 9.7 to 10.8 under these amendments, yet the project is yielding essentially the same number of affordable units as earlier city projections. This suggests that the additional density is not being used to solve our housing crisis, but is instead going toward larger, parking, or retail space or some other use.

My position is that additional density must be used strictly for the public good, particularly for the creation of deeply and permanently affordable housing. I am critical of “as-of-right” square footage increases that allow developers to bypass public review while ignoring the need for

residential affordability. The 66th AD is home to the most controversial “City of Yes” tower at 5 West 13th Street. The 538-foot structure will include 36 luxury condos but zero affordable housing in a neighborhood where most buildings range from three to 15 stories. The “City of Yes” zoning text either lacks the proper guardrails to prevent this type of luxury out-of-context development or was falsely sold to the public, and I will work with local and city leaders to demand administrative corrections to the zoning rules to prevent similar towers.

Furthermore, I have fought against “design gimmicks” where developers use these density bonuses to build massive projects but then split them into separate smaller buildings on the same tax lot to avoid paying higher wages to construction workers.

Ultimately, rezonings must include mandatory affordability and financial incentives that ensure units are actually built for working families. I will continue to advocate for a state framework that prioritizes evidence-based production, such as 100% affordable projects on government-owned land, rather than allowing for the expansion of expensive market-rate development with no real community benefit.

### **David Siffert**

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I don’t have a uniform position on all upzoning policies. I opposed City of Yes, because I did not believe it was well-targeted to making housing more affordable in New York, and certainly did not believe it would do so in our neighborhood. However, in many parts of the city, there is a huge need to increase the allowable height and bulk of market rate development – specifically, parts of the city where market-rate development is accessible to every day working New Yorkers. However, in neighborhoods like the Village, where 100% of market-rate housing is luxury housing, increasing allowable height and bulk of buildings gives a public good – air rights – to developers for free. In exchange, they will build luxury units that don’t benefit everyday New Yorkers. Any time valuable air rights are given to developers, those developers must “pay” for those air rights by producing an equivalent public value to the community. This should usually take the form of permanent, accessible, deeply affordable housing.

### **Ben Yee**

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City of Yes included a number of provisions, some of which were bad and some of which were good. The ability to increase height and bulk are by and large not good. But policies like those allowing additional stories on single story commercial buildings, converting basements and garages and allowing for SRO style developments offer benefits in our constrained housing market.

## Question 9

**What is your position on the city’s current “Mandatory Inclusionary Housing” program, which allows for massive increases in the allowable size of primarily market-rate developments in exchange for setting aside a fraction of the development with income and price restrictions, though those units may still, overall, be unaffordable to the majority of NYC renters and about half of NYC residents? Do you think this is a worthwhile tradeoff, given that the large increases in allowable size of development encourage the demolition of existing older housing stock, which often contains more affordable housing than the new development?**

### **Furhan Ahmad**

MIH as it exists today is a compromise that has not delivered the way it was sold.

When MIH passed in 2016, New Yorkers were told we would get 25 to 30 percent affordable in rezoned areas. What we actually got is an average AMI structure pegged to the HUD New York metro area median, which is inflated because the region includes wealthier suburbs. Option 2 produces units at an average of 80 percent AMI, which can mean rents of 2,500 dollars or more for a one-bedroom. The city’s median renter household earns around 50,000 dollars. The math does not match the people.

Performance has also been uneven. Large rezonings have produced real affordable units, and I do not want to dismiss that. But in Manhattan below 96th Street, MIH has produced very little until very recently. The deep affordability option, which is the one that actually reaches low-income families, is used the least because it is the hardest to finance without public subsidy.

What I want Albany and the city to do together: make the deep affordability option the default in neighborhoods with higher-income baselines and stronger market rents; peg AMI to a NYC-specific standard rather than the inflated HUD metro figure, through state-level direction where possible; require MIH on any zoning action that materially increases residential capacity, including actions triggered by the new FAR tools; and build the public subsidy stack, including HAVP at \$250 million and expanded state historic and housing tax credits, so deep affordability can actually pencil out.

### **Corinne Arnold**

When we discuss new developments, it is important that we talk about neighborhood disruption, air quality, carbon emissions and long-term impact, including access to light and quality of life. It makes sense to focus on creating meaningful change in the number of apartments that are available. There are up to 50,000 units of housing that are sitting offline and completely vacant, when they could be given to a family that needs them. My plan gets these units online, keeps them affordable and increases the vacancy rate from the historic 1.4% sustained since 2023 to up to 3.5%. I see every reason to focus on getting these apartments online, before moving to other strategies that disrupt neighborhoods, take years to get more homes online, have a heightened carbon footprint and have minimal impact on creating actual affordable housing.

### **Jeannine Kiely**

The city’s current Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) program is a flawed framework that often fails to deliver the deep and permanent affordability that New York City residents actually need. While I support expanding our housing supply to address the affordability crisis, MIH too frequently allows for massive increases in market-rate development in exchange for a fraction of units that remain out of reach for the majority of renters.

My experience with the 2013 Hudson Square rezoning serves as a cautionary tale; in that instance, the city approved optional rather than mandatory bonuses, resulting in only 17% of the projected affordable units being built because developers prioritized more profitable uses like office space. We must move toward a system of mandatory deep affordability, ensuring that any increase in allowable density is leveraged strictly for the public good rather than serving as an incentive for luxury real estate.

I am particularly concerned that the large increases in allowable development size encouraged by MIH often lead to the demolition of older housing stock, which frequently contains more affordable, rent-stabilized units than the new developments provide. To protect our existing community fabric, I support the passage of “Net Loss Provision” legislation, similar to policies enacted in California. This would mandate the one-for-one replacement of any residential units—including affordable and rent-restricted homes—that are demolished or converted through redevelopment. By requiring developers to replace lost housing capacity, we can prevent the erosion of our affordable housing stock and ensure that new density actually results in a net gain of homes for working families.

Ultimately, the most effective way to achieve real affordability is to prioritize 100% affordable housing on government-owned property, such as at 388 Hudson Street, Gansevoort Square, and 5 World Trade Center. We must also modernize the enforcement of existing rent laws to stop the illegal deregulation of our current housing and fight for a state framework that prioritizes evidence-based production. My commitment is to ensure that rezonings in our district deliver permanent, deeply affordable homes and protect the tenants who already call these neighborhoods home.

### **David Siffert**

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I think it’s a bad trade. Developers are underpaying for a public good. Air rights are extremely valuable in the Village, and the small amount of affordable housing created with these programs is simply not a fair price to pay for those air rights.

### **Ben Yee**

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Not good enough. MIH needs an overhaul to ensure more affordable units, deeper affordability and fewer luxury apartments that take up an inordinate, inefficient amount of space. In reality the city only addresses a single facet of the problem and ignores the root causes. We need to mandate affordability in many cases because of a housing market that:

- 1) Over produces large luxury units to for investment instead of housing,
- 2) Pushes all development around a limited number of transportation hubs.

MIH attempts to solve the former by mandating affordability while, as mentioned, larger buildings may actually remove more affordable units from the market than they create. The city and state could more effectively address this problem by:

- 1) Increasing density allowances and incentivizing a larger number of smaller units per structure,
- 2) Disincentivizing holding residential property for investment only purposes with policies like a pied-a-terre tax,
- 3) Expanding transportation hubs with bus rapid transit to low-density areas like deep Brooklyn and SE Queens where single family, detached homes with garages are common.

## Question 10

**What was your position on the state legislature allowing the lifting of the floor area ratio cap for residential development in NYC, which enabled the possibility of developments like the planned 600-ft.-tall tower on Little West 12th and West Street at “Gansevoort Square,” and will allow much additional ultra-tall, ultra-dense development in residential neighborhoods?**

### **Furhan Ahmad**

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The way the 12.0 FAR cap was lifted in the April 2024 state budget was wrong, and I would support reexamining it.

I am not ideologically opposed to adjusting density in the right places. What I am opposed to is how it happened. The lift was dropped into the budget without a real floor-by-floor conversation about affordability, historic context, or infrastructure. The affordability hook written into the state law says new zoning above 12 FAR must mandate affordability equivalent to or exceeding MIH. We already know MIH's ceiling. That is not a real safeguard.

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The consequences are now visible on the ground. The City of Yes framework built new R11 and R12 districts on top of this authority. The first mapping in Midtown South went through in August 2025. In AD66, we are already seeing what happens when this permission structure meets downtown real estate, from the proposed 600-foot tower at Gansevoort Square on public land, to a 538-foot ultra-luxury condo tower at 5 West 13th Street with zero affordable units, to the tower proposed at 388 Hudson. Whether or not each project formally invokes the new FAR tools, the political signal from Albany has been clear, and developers have heard it.

In Albany, I will support revisiting the FAR cap lift to attach real conditions: deep, permanent affordability tied to NYC incomes; no use inside or adjacent to historic districts beyond what is already forbidden; clear environmental review; mandatory community benefit agreements on public-land sites; and a hard look at whether supertall residential towers in already dense Manhattan neighborhoods are actually producing the affordable housing we were promised.

### **Corinne Arnold**

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New build residential buildings should fit into the character of the neighborhood and focus on uplifting the community and its residents. Ultra-luxury towers do not uplift the community. New housing should focus on affordability and preserving the quality of life, such as access to sunlight for the residents who already live in the neighborhood.

### **Jeannine Kiely**

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I have long maintained that for affordable housing to be viable, rezonings must include mandatory affordability alongside specific zoning and financial incentives. While I support expanding our housing supply to tackle the affordability crisis, my position on the State Legislature allowing the lifting of the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) cap for residential development is centered on ensuring that such density is used for the public good—specifically the creation of deeply affordable housing—rather than simply enabling more luxury development.

Regarding the possibility of ultra-tall towers like the 600-foot-tall proposal at Gansevoort Square, I believe we must leverage density to solve our affordability crisis. I support building 100% affordable housing at Gansevoort Square and firmly believe the City and State can produce a better-designed project that generates more affordable units than the current plan. The current NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC) proposal for Gansevoort Square allocates 75% of the footprint to the Whitney Museum and only 15%—roughly 10,000 square feet—for housing, which is an unacceptable trade-off for such a valuable public resource.

I have proposed several “win-win” solutions for the Gansevoort Square project to make it more efficient and beneficial for the community. First, NYC could eliminate the construction of separate buildings by having the City provide bridge financing for the Whitney expansion, which would permit a single, more efficient building on the site that could potentially offer more housing with less overall height. The city also can convert Gansevoort Street to an Open Street or Plaza to allow additional public space for Whitney events. Finally, the State should demap 10th Avenue and contribute it to the site, increasing the overall footprint and creating more opportunities for affordable housing without necessitating extreme height. Ultimately, I will fight for a framework that ensures rezonings actually produce the units they promise and prioritize permanent, deeply affordable homes for working families.

### **David Siffert**

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As above, I oppose the giveaway of valuable air rights to developers without requiring that they pay the community back in the form of deeply, permanently affordable housing.

### **Ben Yee**

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I do not support simply removing the residential FAR cap. Increases in FAR must be paired with stronger affordability and housing density requirements. FAR regulates building bulk, but it does not regulate the things that actually matter to New Yorkers, like the availability of homes or affordability.

Lifting the FAR cap without additional guardrails risks creating exactly the wrong incentives. A very tall luxury building with enormous apartments can comply just as easily as a building that houses hundreds of working New Yorkers. In practice, many ultra-luxury towers contain relatively few units despite their enormous size because so much floor area is devoted to oversized residences and luxury amenities.

Who owns our land and who lives here (or leaves their pied-a-terre vacant) defines the nature of our city. If the public is going to grant significant additional development rights, there should be a clear public benefit in return. Taller buildings should come with requirements for:

- substantially more housing units,
- denser residential use,
- meaningful permanent affordability.

I support building more housing, including in transit-rich parts of Manhattan, but I do not support a model where we effectively subsidize luxury speculation without ensuring that new density actually translates into housing accessibility for ordinary New Yorkers.

## Question 11

### **Would you support current preservation campaigns in the district for which you are running, including the proposed South of Union Square Historic District?**

#### **Furhan Ahmad**

I support designation of the South of Union Square Historic District.

The district proposed by Village Preservation, roughly 14th Street to 9th Street between Fifth and Third Avenues, covers about 200 buildings that tell a real New York story. This is where cast-iron lofts meet the early labor movement, where American publishing grew up, where the NAACP and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom kept offices, where the first Labor Day parade marched, where the first film studios operated, where artists from Willem de Kooning to Andy Warhol worked. It is also a living, walking-scale neighborhood that people still call home.

The threats are concrete. The 2018 Tech Hub rezoning was approved on the promise of neighborhood protections that never arrived. Demolition permits have been filed on buildings on Broadway dating to the 1850s. Interiors and exteriors have been stripped. The city has responded by designating fewer than a dozen individual buildings out of about 200, citing architectural heterogeneity. That is exactly backwards. The variety is the point. It is what makes the district a district.

The State Historic Preservation Office issued a Determination of Eligibility for state and national register listing in September 2021. That is a foundation to build on. As Assembly Member, I will push the state to move the nomination forward to full listing, use that listing to unlock the state historic tax credit for property owners in the district, and publicly press the Landmarks Preservation Commission to calendar the full district for local designation. I will work with Village Preservation, the Historic Districts Council, the Preservation League of New York State, and neighbors to make that happen.

#### **Corinne Arnold**

I support current preservation campaigns when they are consistent with the values of my constituents. I am in favor of preserving the look and feel of our communities, while keeping our neighborhoods affordable and livable. Our district is a significant economic driver for the city as a whole, brings in millions of visitors each year and represents billions of dollars of tourist money, which is especially important for our small businesses. Maintaining the look and feel of the South of Union Square Historic District, as well as other Preservation priorities, works towards the goal of maintaining our high quality of life and preserves our economic vitality in the District.

#### **Jeannine Kiely**

Yes. I would support the proposed South of Union Square Historic District and would urge the Landmarks Preservation Commission to move it forward.

That area is tied to labor history, civil rights, social justice movements, publishing, the arts, and the development of New York's garment and manufacturing economy.

The City has already acknowledged some of the area's importance by designating seven Broadway buildings south of Union Square as individual landmarks in 2019, but individual designations are not enough. A district-wide approach is needed because the historic value is in the streetscape, the concentration of buildings, and the layered social history of the neighborhood.

I would also support other serious preservation campaigns in the 66th District where the facts show historic, cultural, environmental, or neighborhood significance: protecting historic districts, preventing demolition of significant buildings, preserving open space, and defending artist and Loft Law communities.

My standard would be clear that preservation campaigns should be evaluated on the record, but when a campaign is well-documented, locally supported, and aimed at protecting irreplaceable neighborhood assets, I will be an ally. South of Union Square meets that test.

### **David Siffert**

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I support preservation efforts south of Union Square, though I would want to make sure that the proposed historic district does not prevent development of deeply affordable housing. Preservation and affordability can absolutely go hand-in-hand.

### **Ben Yee**

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While I agree there are several landmark worthy buildings in the area, I do not think that freezing such a large swathe, of such a dynamic area, in time meets the needs of the community, or the spirit of New York City.

## Question 12

**Most recent anti-preservation initiatives and proposals for oversized developments are premised on the claim that we're not building enough housing in NYC, and that the lack of housing is a major cause of unaffordability. But in fact New York has more housing than ever, more housing per capita than ever, and is building housing much faster than our population is growing (which has in fact shrunk since 2020, according to the census). We argue that the problem is we're building unaffordable housing, and losing existing affordable housing, in some cases due to these anti-preservation and pro-upzoning policies. Do you support or oppose policies premised on the need to stimulate more and larger market-rate housing development beyond the generous amounts current rules allow? Do you believe we need to increase those rates of production, even when the housing produced is unaffordable to most New Yorkers, and may replace more affordable housing?**

### **Furhan Ahmad**

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Do I support upzoning policies premised on the idea that the only answer to the housing crisis is more market-rate housing? No.

I believe New York has a housing crisis. I have seen it from the driver seat of an ambulance and from the front seat of a fire truck. I have responded to people living in illegal basements, elderly tenants terrified of a rent hike they cannot absorb, and families priced out of the neighborhood they raised their kids in. That is real. The question is what the crisis actually is.

The crisis is not primarily a shortage of luxury towers. Look at what is leasing in Lower Manhattan at the top of the market. The crisis is a shortage of homes that working people can afford to pay for out of the incomes they actually earn. The answer to that crisis is not a framework that hands developers more air rights and hopes the supply argument works its way down to the family making 60,000 dollars. In a city where the median renter earns around 50,000 dollars, trickle-down housing is the same promise we have heard from Washington about trickle-down everything else. It has not delivered.

I reject the binary. You do not have to choose between preservation and housing. You can defend historic districts and produce new deeply affordable homes at the same time. The real levers are funding HAVP at 250 million dollars, protecting and recapitalizing Mitchell-Lama, converting underused office space with real 40 percent-plus affordability floors, using public land for public benefit rather than luxury cross-subsidy, pairing the state historic tax credit with deep affordability, and tightening Good Cause and SCRIE and DRIE so the people already here stay here.

More housing, yes. More of the right housing, in the right places, with real protections attached. Not a blank check to upzone.

### **Corinne Arnold**

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In general, I have serious concerns with how top-down, developer-driven upzonings impact our historic communities. While a healthy housing ecosystem requires responsibly increasing our housing supply, blindly building luxury housing fails to solve our affordability crisis and frequently displaces long-term residents, while wiping out existing affordable housing.

Instead, my approach is rooted in balance and practicality. We must focus on re-activating the up to 50,000 units of housing that are sitting offline and ensuring long-term residents and seniors can safely age in place. I will work collaboratively with preservationists and local

stakeholders to ensure future development in the 66th Assembly District is very targeted and respects neighborhood residents, so our communities can remain historic, livable, and affordable.

When we discuss new developments, it is important that we talk about neighborhood disruption, air quality, carbon emissions and long-term impact, including access to light and quality of life. It makes sense to focus on creating meaningful change in the number of apartments that are available. There are up to 50,000 units of housing that are sitting offline and completely vacant, when they could be given to a family that needs them. My plan gets these units online, keeps them affordable and increases the vacancy rate from the historic 1.4% sustained since 2023 to up to 3.5%. I see every reason to focus on getting these apartments online, before moving to other strategies that disrupt neighborhoods, take years to get more homes online, have a heightened carbon footprint and have minimal impact on creating actual affordable housing.

### **Jeannine Kiely**

I do not support blanket policies whose only purpose is to stimulate more and larger market-rate development beyond what current rules allow, especially where that development may replace existing affordable housing, rent-regulated units, historic buildings, or open space.

New York has been producing a significant amount of housing. In 2024, the city completed nearly 34,000 new residential units in new buildings, the highest annual total since 1965. But production alone has not solved affordability. From 2010 to 2024, nearly two-thirds of multifamily units completed citywide were market-rate, while only about 27% were income-restricted for low-income households.

I reject the idea that the answer is simply to upzone neighborhoods and hope that more luxury or near-luxury development eventually becomes affordable. That approach is especially harmful when it creates demolition pressure, displaces tenants, weakens landmark protections, or trades away existing affordability for new units most New Yorkers cannot afford.

At the same time, New York has a housing crisis. The vacancy rate is extremely low, especially for lower-rent apartments, and that is a real problem for renters. But the lesson I draw is that we need the right kind of housing policy: permanent affordability, preservation of rent-regulated and naturally affordable housing, public and nonprofit housing, adaptive reuse, vacant-unit recovery, stronger tenant protections, and targeted development on appropriate sites.

I would support new housing where it produces clear public benefit: permanently affordable homes, no net loss of affordable units, contextual design, infrastructure, schools, parks, and enforceable anti-displacement protections. I would oppose rezonings or state policies that treat market-rate development as an affordability strategy by itself.

### **David Siffert**

I believe we need more market-rate housing in areas where working-class New Yorkers can afford market rate housing. This is particularly true outside of New York City, where I believe we need more housing of every kind, including market-rate housing along public transportation corridors. In areas where the “market rate” for housing is luxury housing, like the Village, I believe the focus should be on building permanent, accessible, deeply affordable housing.

### **Ben Yee**

I do not believe New York’s affordability crisis can be solved by allowing unlimited luxury development and hoping affordability trickles down. We have spent decades producing extremely high-end housing while continuing to lose naturally affordable apartments, artist spaces, small mixed-use buildings, and working-class communities. The market, left entirely to itself, optimizes for the highest return on land, not affordability.

The problem is not simply whether New York has enough buildings. The problem is whether we are building homes people can actually live in, in a system that distributes growth fairly.

Right now, our housing market is distorted in three ways:

1) Luxury housing is over-incentivized. In the most expensive parts of the city, developers often make more money building large, high-end units for wealthy buyers and investors than building the smaller, denser homes most New Yorkers need. Sixty floors of floor-through apartments is not a housing plan. It is a luxury asset class. We should build homes, not just structures.

2) The city and state have failed to do serious regional transportation and development planning. Because we have underinvested in fast, reliable transit to lower-cost areas, development pressure gets concentrated in a handful of already expensive, transit-rich neighborhoods like Lower Manhattan. At the same time, enormous portions of the outer boroughs and surrounding region remain low-density transit deserts dominated by detached single-family housing and poor transit access. We have created a system where growth gets forced into a small number of hyper-expensive neighborhoods while areas with far more room for housing remain disconnected from economic opportunity.

3) We force communities to fight over individual lots instead of negotiating a real plan. Without comprehensive planning, every project becomes a zero-sum battle: affordable housing versus green space, schools versus supermarkets, shelters versus neighborhood opposition. That benefits the wealthy and connected because they are best positioned to navigate and exploit the process.

So no, I do not support policies that simply stimulate larger market-rate development beyond current rules without affordability, density, anti-displacement, and planning requirements. More luxury square footage is not the same as more housing affordability.

The answer is to change the incentives and plan holistically. I support vacancy and pied-à-terre taxes to discourage warehousing homes and treating housing as an investment vehicle. I support stronger affordability requirements, including higher mandatory affordability for projects receiving public benefits or tax breaks. I support requiring state-controlled land used for development to produce deeply affordable housing. I support funding the rehabilitation of rent-stabilized apartments, public housing, and new Mitchell-Lama-style social housing. I support replacing AMI with cost-of-living measures that reflect what New Yorkers can actually afford.

But critically, we also need to expand the geography of opportunity. That means dramatically improving bus rapid transit, commuter rail integration, and regional transit planning so that more housing can be built in lower-cost areas within commuting distance of economic centers. If we want to reduce destructive development pressure on historic Manhattan neighborhoods while still making the city affordable, we cannot ignore transportation. Housing and transit are inseparable problems.

New York does need to grow. But growth should mean more people can live here, not just more capital can park here.

### Question 13

**What sort of state legislation or state programs would you support or have you supported to strengthen preservation? Are there programs you support like tax incentives or direct aid for maintenance/renovation of historic properties, and/or making them accessible and green? Given that the greenest building is the one that already exists — preserving that embedded energy and not creating the pollutants and carbon which come from demolition — what role do you think the state legislature can play in encouraging preservation and reuse of the existing built environment?**

#### **Furhan Ahmad**

Here is what I will push for in Albany.

First, expand and deepen the New York State Historic Tax Credit program. Extend the program past its current 2029 sunset and make it permanent. Restore the homeowner credit cap to 50,000 dollars and restore refundability for lower-income filers, which was allowed to expire in January 2025. Pass the transferability legislation that has been introduced by Senator Kavanagh so nonprofit affordable housing developers can actually use the credit. Pair it with low-income housing tax credits to drive deep affordability in historic buildings.

Second, fund direct aid for maintenance and renovation of historic buildings. I want a dedicated state grant stream for repair and stabilization of landmarked community assets like Dapolito, for houses of worship willing to build affordable housing without overriding zoning, and for tenants and small owners in historic districts who need help with code, accessibility, and weatherization work that preserves character.

Third, make historic buildings accessible and green. I will support a state program to retrofit historic buildings for ADA accessibility and for decarbonization, coordinated with SHPO so the work respects historic fabric. The embodied-carbon argument is real. It can take 10 to 80 years for a new energy-efficient building to work off the carbon released in demolishing an existing one and building a replacement. State policy should recognize that the greenest building is the one that already exists, and should put dollars behind that recognition, including tax credits or grants for adaptive reuse that meets deep affordability and deep energy standards.

Fourth, strengthen the preservation floor in state housing legislation. Any state housing law that touches local zoning, including the Faith-Based Affordable Housing Act, should have explicit carve-outs preserving landmark and historic district authority.

Fifth, recapitalize Mitchell-Lama. Before any more developments exit and are converted to market rate, the state needs a real preservation package, not the 110 million dollars in the current cycle, but a multi-year commitment at a scale that matches the loss we have already absorbed in AD66 alone, from Southbridge to Independence Plaza.

Preservation and affordable housing are not opposites. In Albany, I will treat them as one agenda.

#### **Corinne Arnold**

It is essential that the state legislature be a part of the solution when it comes to preservation. The costs of preservation cannot fall squarely on homeowners and cannot act like an extra tax for property owners. Preservation drives tourist and local resident dollars, the city and state are invested in preserving the fabric and vitality of our communities.

I am a huge advocate of green infrastructure. As a board member of my building, I was instrumental in making a \$22 million investment to upgrade critical infrastructure and comply with energy efficient laws. I regularly attend environmental conferences about upgrading to greener mechanics. I understand exactly what it takes to have a greener future and as someone who will directly absorb the cost, I understand the price tag that goes with green energy.

The carbon cost of building demolition and getting the resources to build new ones is very significant. We have plenty of housing in the city, we just need politicians willing to do the work to activate the 50,000 units of offline housing. That's how we keep housing affordable. We put tax incentives in place to get the units online, mark those properties low income and ease the supply side issues with housing. This means more people will be empowered to stay in their homes, neighborhoods and in NYC.

This is the fastest, lowest carbon foot print, most environmentally friendly, least disruptive way to put people in homes, and keep people in their homes.

If we want to ensure a greener future, we need the government to help fund the upgrades. Further, there is no green future if we can't solve for green energy. Today, most of the city's energy comes from ConEd burning fossil fuels. We must re-activate the paths to renewable energy to truly become the sustainable city we strive to become.

## **Jeannine Kiely**

As Assemblymember, I would support strengthening New York's existing historic rehabilitation tools. New York already has state historic tax credits for income-producing historic properties, owner-occupied historic residences, and historic barns; income-producing properties can qualify for an additional 20% to 30% state credit when paired with the federal historic tax credit, while owner-occupied historic homes can qualify for a 20% state credit. I would support making those programs more accessible, especially for small owners, nonprofits, affordable housing projects, and middle-income homeowners who often cannot use complex tax incentives without technical help.

I would also support more direct aid: grants, low-interest loans, and technical assistance for façade repair, structural stabilization, accessibility upgrades, electrification, energy efficiency, and climate resilience in historic buildings. Programs like New York Main Street already fund façade, commercial, and residential upgrades and allow eligible accessibility and green-building work. That is the right model, and it should be expanded in dense urban neighborhoods like ours, not only traditional downtowns upstate.

I would support state funding through the Environmental Protection Fund and related programs for historic properties, parks, and heritage areas. The EPF already provides matching grants for acquisition, planning, development, and improvement of parks, historic properties, and heritage areas, and I would fight to make sure lower Manhattan receives its fair share.

On climate, the state should treat adaptive reuse as a climate strategy. Demolition destroys embedded energy and creates major construction waste and carbon emissions. Before public dollars or discretionary approvals support demolition, the state should require serious analysis of reuse, rehabilitation, deconstruction, material salvage, and lifecycle carbon impacts. I would support embodied-carbon standards for major projects and incentives for reusing existing buildings rather than replacing them unnecessarily. New York is already moving toward embodied-carbon reporting for state construction materials, and active legislation would require large buildings and renovations to meet embodied-carbon standards.

I would also support adaptive reuse legislation, including office-to-residential conversion

incentives, but only with guardrails: permanent affordability where public subsidy is used, tenant protections, landmark protections, accessibility, union labor standards, and no net loss of existing affordable housing.

## **David Siffert**

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I support a dramatic reform of property taxes, and I believe that reform could both incentivize affordable housing and also incentivize maintenance and restoration of historic properties.

I also support funding the conversion of existing buildings into affordable housing. One example of how we could do this is through Assemblymember Gallagher's proposed Social Housing Development Authority (A6265/S5674). The authority would have the power and resources to buy up property that is unappealing to the private market, including underutilized and abandoned properties, and invest in them to bring those housing units back online, with tenants' rent being capped at 25% of their income. Publicly-funded programs like this have historically led to the preservation of historical sites—take Westbeth Artists Housing for example, which was a publicly-funded renovation of an existing building into a permanently-affordable limited-equity co-op, just like what is proposed by Assemblymember Gallagher's bill. The renovation of Westbeth into Artists Housing saved the Bell Laboratories building while creating permanently affordable housing. I would be proud to co-sponsor this bill on my first day in Albany.

## **Ben Yee**

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I strongly support adaptive reuse and rehabilitation policies that preserve the historic character of neighborhoods while allowing buildings to evolve for modern needs. Some of New York's best urban projects have come from reimagining existing structures rather than demolishing them outright — projects like The High Line or the redevelopment of Tammany Hall near Union Square show how older buildings can be preserved, modernized, and given entirely new life.

I think cities work best when they are allowed to evolve organically over time. Some of the world's most iconic buildings are beloved precisely because they reflect layers of history rather than a single frozen moment. Notre-Dame de Paris was built, expanded, restored, and modified across centuries in different architectural styles, and the result is one of the most recognizable and meaningful buildings in the world. The power of the structure comes from that accumulated history.

New York should embrace more of that philosophy. We should create stronger incentives for:

- rehabilitating vacant or underused properties,
- converting obsolete office or industrial space into housing or community uses,
- preserving historic facades and architecturally significant elements,
- and allowing thoughtful additions of height or density where they help finance preservation and create public benefit.

Too often, our system creates a false choice between freezing buildings in place or demolishing them entirely. Cities are living systems. We should preserve what is historically and culturally valuable while still allowing buildings to adapt to changing economic realities and housing needs.

That means making it easier to:

- add housing above older buildings where structurally feasible,
- modernize interiors for accessibility and energy efficiency,
- convert obsolete commercial buildings into residential use,
- and use zoning and tax incentives to encourage preservation-oriented redevelopment instead of speculative demolition.

In many cases, adaptive reuse is also more environmentally sustainable than tearing buildings down and rebuilding from scratch. The embodied carbon already exists in these structures. Preserving and upgrading them can simultaneously support climate goals, neighborhood character, and housing production.