

Thank you for the opportunity to seek the endorsement of the Village Independent Democrats.

As a third generation Lower Manhattan resident and a new mom – the future of our neighborhood is always on my mind. I have spent my entire adult professional life advocating for change, working as a counselor/advocate for children and families impacted by domestic violence, organizing rallies at City Hall and in Albany to expand summer jobs for youth, and serving on the Mayor’s taskforce to expand the City’s afterschool system and design UPK NYC.

Motivated to serve on the community level, I applied and was appointed to serve on Manhattan’s Community Board 3 in 2009, and was elected to serve as board chair from 2012-2016. The ten years I spent on CB3 cemented the importance of government accessibility and accountability. After all, it was my frustration with the government policies and bureaucracy that led me to become a social worker.

My priorities include fighting for affordable housing and protecting existing affordable housing, preserving caregiving services in the challenging budgets ahead of us – for children and seniors, and economic recovery from COVID. My commitment to serve the residents of LES remains steadfast, with a proven track record - leadership role in planning of Essex Crossing, fighting against NYCHA infill, navigating resiliency & recovery efforts, preserving childcare capacity and expanding SYEP capacity Citywide, and locally.

Lower Manhattan deserves a candidate that can bring diverse coalitions together to achieve common goals, a candidate that will unify our neighborhoods. I am committed to working hard for your support and fight for a community my family has been proud to call home – and for our future generations to have the opportunity to raise their families here.

My extensive experience in both the nonprofit and government sectors, also serving as a chief of staff to a NYC Councilmember for the past two years has prepared me to fight for you starting on day 1. I would be honored to have your support.



# VID Candidate Survey: City Council

Email address \*

gigiliforny@gmail.com

Name: \*

Gigi Li

In which Council District are you running? \*

City Council District 1 ▼

City Council District 1

Do you support SoHo/NoHo rezoning? Is there a version of it you would support? \*

Yes

Do you support the borough-based jail in Chinatown? \*

Rikers Island has long been central to criminal injustice for New Yorkers who are Black, Brown, poor, immigrants and otherwise marginalized, and should have been shut down years ago.

I wholeheartedly supported closing Rikers and I support the intent of the borough-based jail approach. However, jails that are proposed in Manhattan or elsewhere should be held under intense scrutiny on its impact to the community, including the local economy and environmental impacts in the short and long term.

I have serious questions about the current jail proposed for construction in Chinatown, including the lack of community input throughout this process, and I believe much more must be done to address the concerns of the community surrounding the proposed site before the City can consider moving forward in good conscience.

Do you support replacing the Elizabeth Street Gardens with the proposed senior citizen development? \*

Yes

Do you support the Two Bridges developments? What changes would you make to them? \*

I do not support the developments, as the size and bulk of the proposed buildings would have to be similar to the surrounding buildings, and there would have to be significant community benefits. Based on my conversations with community members, these considerations would make the developments significantly more welcome in the neighborhood.

City Council District 2

Do you support the phased closing of East River Park for the current coastal resiliency project? If not, how would you ensure LES and EV residents are safe from future storms and flooding? \*

Do you support the move and downsizing of Beth Israel by Mount Sinai? Have you considered the effect on your constituents and do you have a different proposal? \*

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City Council District 3

Would you support upzoning parts of the Village to create affordable housing? What is your plan to protect existing affordable housing and create more, in the Village specifically? \*

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Many residents of District 3, particularly our elderly and people with disabilities, have complained that lax bike rule enforcement, increased outdoor dining, and other factors have made the Village less walkable and more dangerous for elderly and disabled pedestrians. What would you do to improve the situation? \*

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There have been several clashes between NYPD and protesters in past months. How would you work with the NYPD to ensure that peaceful protesters are not subject to kettling and other police practices that are harmful to the protesters? \*

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VID Candidate Survey: City Council

How would you use this position to improve policing in New York? Do you support cutting NYPD funding in order to reallocate funds towards needed services and social programs? Where would you reallocate the funds, if so? What concrete policies would you advocate for to improve policing in NY? \*

I wholeheartedly support significantly decreasing the scope and size of the NYPD. As a social worker, I know that there are many situations, especially when interacting with individuals experiencing mental health crises, where the first encounter should not be with a police officer. Furthermore, many functions within the NYPD's purview, such as providing school safety and addressing noise complaints, should instead be transferred to trained professionals.

In addition, while I believe that the budget for the NYPD should be reduced, it should not come from accounting tricks and gimmicks, which is unfortunately what happened with the most recent City budget. I strongly support re-investing these resources in programs and social services that enhance community well-being, particularly in neighborhoods that have been historically overpoliced.

We need to go much much further in reforming the NYPD, and this includes the creation of an Elected Civilian Review Board that can impose disciplinary actions on police officers that are found responsible for misconduct. In addition, as a Councilmember, I would push for my colleagues and I to hold more regular oversight hearings that involve testimony from senior police department officials, including the Police Commissioner.

How would you go about creating more affordable housing in New York? What about permanent housing for New York's homeless population? Where would you put it? How would you make sure it's actually affordable and sustainable? Would you ever support upzoning in order to create it? Will you accept money from real estate interests? Please be specific on your proposals. \*

I would take significant steps to protect existing affordable housing, such as passing and expanding rent stabilization, guaranteeing a right to counsel for aggrieved tenants, and supporting tenants in housing court. Furthermore, I would fully fund public housing, and support more avenues for affordable home ownership, such as Community Land Trusts, and mutual housing models, which have proven to be successful in the Lower East Side.

For the homeless population, I am in support of converting vacant hotels into transitional housing throughout the City. Where appropriate, I would support upzoning to create affordable housing.

I believe in running a grassroots, people powered campaign, and one of my first public pledges was to not accept contributions from real estate developers, their spouses, and anyone employed by a real estate developer.

Do you support taxing the wealthy? What specific tax policy changes would you support in New York State and New York City to increase State and City revenue? How will you, at the same time, restore NYC's economic health, employment, tax base, and small businesses, both short-term and long? \*

To increase state revenue, I support a wealth tax on millionaires, the pied-a-terre tax, and increasing corporate taxes. Large corporations - many of which have increased their profits during the pandemic - should be forced to pay their fair share. I would strongly advocate investing some of that revenue into creating relief funds for our small businesses and for additional unemployment benefits, as the federal government has not provided nearly enough assistance. On the City level, I would support borrowing money to stabilize NYC's economic health.

How should we desegregate our schools? Do you support eliminating the SHSAT? Do you support admissions screens? What concrete changes would you make to our public school system? \*

The Council should fund and implement programs to desegregate and integrate our schools and classrooms, and expand models such as Beacon community schools, which are school-based community centers that are "one-stop shops" for families, linking mental health services, health services (including vision and dental), and other supportive services to our schools. I also encourage the Department of Education to hire more teachers of color, so that our teachers better reflect the diversity of our public school classrooms. The pandemic has made all too clear the educational inequities faced by low income families who do not have the same resources as families in wealthier zip codes. As a new school year begins concurrent with a resurgence of Covid-19 cases in New York, I strongly advocate for all families and students to have access to the technology necessary for the best possible learning environment achievable remotely.

I also believe that students need a culturally responsive education. Adding ethnic studies into the curriculum would allow students to learn about the diverse cultural histories that come together to make our city unlike any other in the country.

Until a viable alternative is established, I do not support eliminating the SHSAT. Instead, I support more SHSAT schools, free and universal test prep for SHSAT, and more gifted and talented programs, particularly in communities underrepresented by SHSAT seats. For highly specialized schools, such as LaGuardia High School for the Performing Arts, I do believe admissions screening is warranted - but in general, I believe admissions screens are inherently inequitable.

What is the path forward on corrections reform? Do you support closing Rikers? Do you support constructing new, borough-based jails? In all boroughs or just some of them? Do you support bail reform? Did you support the recent partial roll back of bail reform? \*

Rikers Island has a well documented history as a blight on New York's criminal justice system, and should have been closed years ago. I strongly believe that we should have a decarceral approach to criminal justice, where more investments in social services, gun violence prevention programs, afterschool programs, summer youth jobs and other community resources will lead to more public safety for our city, and reduce injustice for New Yorkers who are black, brown, poor, immigrants, or otherwise marginalized. I support the borough-based jail approach, and believe every borough should share the responsibility. While I believe there is a present need for jails for those who commit violent crime, in the long run, I believe in working toward a future with no new jails and that the goal of abolition is achievable and realistic. As a Council Member, I will also pressure our courts, District Attorneys, state legislators, and other stakeholders to end pretrial detention and implement real cash bail reform, which are among the largest reasons our jails are overpopulated and disproportionately filled with New Yorkers of color and marginalized backgrounds. I supported the bail reform legislation passed in 2019, and I did not support the recent partial roll back of bail reform, as we should have allowed more time to study the effects of the law, instead of giving in prematurely to sensationalist arguments.

How can New York lead on climate change? Are there any green energy projects we can pursue? Do you support any of the existing pipeline proposals? How can we leverage our financial and economic power to encourage other jurisdictions to be better on the climate? \*

I support eliminating greenhouse gas emissions, and investing in renewable energy. Our food should be locally sourced, particularly when we have large scale vendor purchasing power. In addition, we should mandate recycling and composting, and eliminate single use plastics. I would also advocate for more comprehensive low-carbon transit options, reducing dependency on cars. We should fully divest from fossil fuel companies, and have a citywide, locally based effort for communities working in partnership to develop plans against the growing number of climate-driven disasters. I also support the Green New Deal and Green New Deal for Public Housing. I do not support any fossil fuel pipeline proposals, existing or future. New York must lead by example and set the standard for urban sustainability for cities around the country and the world.

How will you improve procurement and contracting? How do we cut waste, and how do we make sure women- and minority-owned businesses get a fair shake in the procurement process? \*

Currently, our City's procurement process heavily favors the lowest bidder, often resulting in low-quality work. The City government should regularly audit the procurement and contracting process to identify patterns of wasteful spending and best practices that save taxpayer money. A subset of contracts should be available exclusively for bidding by MWBEs.

What is your plan to save small businesses? How do we make sure, when we come back from COVID, our local businesses are still here? And how do we make sure the enormous amount of commercial vacancies get filled, and not just by big chains snatching up cheap leases? \*

In the short term, we need to extend the eviction moratorium on commercial spaces. Small businesses need more immediate relief from paying their commercial rent and utilities, as the current federal government is not providing nearly enough assistance. I would also advocate for the new administration and Congress to provide another round of PPP funding - with the vast majority of the funding going toward small businesses this time.

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?

My current endorsements include: Councilmember Ayala, Councilmember Chin, Councilmember Rosenthal, former Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, and 21 in '21.

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