

VID Candidate Survey: City Council

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Name: *

Leslie Boghosian Murphy

In which Council District are you running? *

City Council District 3 ▼

City Council District 1

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

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

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

.....

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

.....

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? *

.....

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? *

I believe in all neighborhoods sharing affordable housing, across all income bands. We cannot keep creating these islands of poverty. When affordable housing is spread out, it helps solve other urban problems such as school segregation, crime and general race relations. This is known.

Upzoning is not the answer to these problems and is not the exclusive avenue to produce affordable housing, especially in areas such as the Village and Soho which has a plethora of historical and landmark buildings. It's also hard to justify upzoning when the major majority of new units are market rate. This is not an affordable housing project; this is a developer project that squeezes in their required affordable units. I understand arguments for the tradeoff but we must expect more "bang for our buck" if we are to make such drastic, lasting changes to a neighborhood. I support exploring conversions of existing buildings and same-scale builds. I also support examining current non-residential Village buildings being switched to residential use.

Upzoning creates a dangerous opportunity for resident displacement and we must highlight consequences such as this.

Yes, every neighborhood should provide broad income bands housing but each neighborhood is different and room for development must be considered. Not every neighborhood can handle a giant influx of people and that should be considered, as well.

Luxury development is not the answer for creating affordable housing.

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? *

I understand and support outdoor dining during COVID to provide relief, however small, to our restaurants. But as we have seen with many policies supported by our Mayor and local representatives, long term vision has been absent and unintended consequences abound. The major culprits are the dependence on self-regulation and the lack of enforcement, which is difficult by nature when the guidelines are seemingly flexible.

Since this is best served on a case-by-case basis, I would strongly encourage robust community participation, whether by a Community Board or other body, and strong city oversight. These concerns must be addressed:

Sidewalk space - there must be enough clearance for wheelchair access and two-way traffic. Anything less is unsafe and unacceptable.

Structure enforcement - without oversight, some of these outdoor structures have quickly become indoor structures, defeating the safety intention of outdoor dining.

Noise - we must take into account ground or second level residents living in close proximity to these outdoor setups.

Community supervision will not only directly and quickly attend to problems, but it will allow for nuanced and thoughtful decision making.

I am also on the record calling for the Mayor and City Hall to reexamine the decision to make the current outdoor dining situation permanent. We cannot give away public land thoughtlessly and certainly not without proper and thorough review.

The same lack of enforcement we see with outdoor dining we see with bike rules but with much more dangerous consequences. And again, the absence of forethought has contributed. Without a comprehensive bike lane grid, we're finding the crisscrossing and undisciplined behavior of cyclists. In order for biking to become a successful mode of urban transportation, cyclists must adhere to vehicular rules - stopping at red lights, traveling the assigned way, giving to the pedestrian right of way, etc. The danger a bicyclist poses to the elderly, the disabled, children, pet walkers and others cannot be overstated.

I do support enforcement for serious offenses. I would like to examine some type of identification for delivery workers and bike messengers and tie mandatory education to that. I would also look to expand the dedicated bike traffic signals that have worked well in Chelsea and beyond.

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? *

I would like to examine the NYPD's Strategic Response Group as a whole. When looking at serious police reform, this is one of the units I would start with. First, we must separate the functions of terrorist incidents and special events and concentrate on isolating the civil unrest response. This group must be specifically trained. Study after study has shown us that when police respond to protests with force, the situation gets worse, not better.

Kettling, we surmise, has been a tactic of the NYPD at recent protests. Not only is it aggressive policy but it doesn't work. By pinning people with no exit, it heightens anxiety and fear and actually increases the likelihood of conflict. To correct this we have to deeply understand the chain of command and the training used for this scenario. This is not a hard fix. These actions originate from directives up the chain of command. Discussing this with various ranked members of the NYPD, these are not spur of the moment decisions. The Police Commissioner works at the Mayor's behest. Every tactic used is examined and discussed at the highest levels. It is up to our representatives to insist on transparency regarding police procedure and have a strong voice in what actions should and shouldn't be used in specific scenarios.

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? *

Yes, I believe in cutting the NYPD budget and support a comprehensive and thoughtful analysis of not only the internal finances of each unit and department but the approach of each and the costs associated with those approaches.

To be successful in reimagining the NYPD we must reduce the role of policing in addressing societal problems. Last year NYC estimated 911 received one mental health related call every three minutes. Police officers are not adequately trained nor have the manpower to successfully address these calls. We need an alternative that can address these situations appropriately but with similar urgency. The Mayor recently announced plans for a pilot program which would allow mental health professionals and crisis workers to be dispatched through 911 for mental health emergencies. The 911 component is very important because until now, people have been directed, unless it's an immediate, violent episode, to call 311, which is not an immediate response platform. I strongly support a program such as this one and support reallocating funds to ensure its success.

I am on both Midtown North and Midtown South Precinct Community Councils actively working towards better community policing. Working with our local police I ensure the dialogue always contains a progressive position. This is what brings voices together and makes change.

In forming new policing I would like to first examine these units for immediate reform:

SRG (Strategic Response Group, mentioned in more detail above)

B&B (Buy & Bust)

VICE (sex work undercovers)

AntiCrime (plain clothes)

These units have been known to use controversial methods and are susceptible to corruption.

I would like to recalibrate the CCRB (Civilian Complaint Review Board) for a more fair and prominent role. We need to develop better independent accountability and oversight mechanisms and a reformatted CCRB, with potency, can act as such. This is particularly important not only to hold bad actors accountable but because unfettered misconduct leads to mistrust.

Long before our most recent conversation of police reform, I have proposed a greater civilian presence in the NYPD. This may not create deep budget cuts (though civilian replacements are less expensive) but it does achieve some of the same goals. Now, police officers often spend much of their time behind a desk doing paperwork.. Filling these clerical jobs with civilian administrative aides will,

Decrease the police force

Make the "paperwork" system more efficient and error-free

Save money

Create more community-based jobs

Create a natural community/police relationship

To improve policing we first have to actually know what we're policing.

Mapping officer activity will allow us to analyze where crime and enforcement intersect. Studies have shown that identifying police contacts that are not related to public safety, and where those happen, will

allow us to reduce them. Mandatory implicit bias training should also affect these results.

There is no doubt we need to invest and use community resources in order to reduce the policing footprint. Supporting a wide range of social services and social partnerships will carry a long-term impact.

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. *

Our district will be in a unique situation over the next few years with the next City Councilmember presiding over three new affordable/public housing projects. Those of us working on getting more affordable living spaces for our neighbors are excited about these new additions.

In accordance with the 2009 Western Rail Yards rezoning, the community secured two off-site affordable housing development commitments, in addition to the 80/20 inclusion at Hudson Yards. Both sites are located in northern Hell's Kitchen and our district will add almost 300 permanently affordable units. This is creating more affordable housing.

The latest NYCHA negotiations on Fulton and Chelsea Elliott is preserving over 2,000 low income units and adding 640 new affordable units. This is also creating more affordable housing.

We are in talks to develop the former slaughterhouse site which will be another affordable housing site, also in Hell's Kitchen.

I am proud of my community which has never wavered from our commitment to balanced income housing across the board, of which I have been an ardent supporter and advocate. These examples of affordable housing new builds demonstrate the advantages of community participation and thoughtful, deliberate planning.

I do not generally support upzoning, and I especially don't support it in historic districts, but I examine everything on a case-by-case basis. What may be good for one neighborhood may not be for another and we must make every attempt to avoid unintended consequences, something I feel is lacking with recent decision making by our elected officials.

Permanent housing for transitioning homeless requires additional layers of planning due to the necessary supportive element. We must keep providing social services for those moving out of shelters. The most successful examples of homeless housing includes:

Supportive services

Strong and accountable operators

Integrated into broad band income housing

These are points I would fight to require as Councilwoman.

I also would like to reexamine SROs as a transitional home option. The city's large stock of these units years ago provided affordable housing in especially high-coast areas. Unfortunately, due to targeted regulations, SROs here in NYC are virtually nonexistent today. These buildings provide affordability and are attractive to nonprofits who provide the needed social services. They also provide privacy and independence, yet not isolation, to those making the transition. I want to look at modifying New York City regulations that prohibit the development of SROs and in turn close loopholes for misuse.

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? *

I do support taxing the wealthy. I fully support the pied-a-terre tax which according to a 2017 survey could result in up to \$650 million in annual tax revenue, a huge potential boost to our city economy. I also support an increase in taxes on those who make over \$1 million in income. I also support amending and increasing the New York City and State's capital gains tax, which allows income received from the sale of investments to be taxed at a lower rate than the same amount received from salaries and wages.

Long-term, I also support the NY Health Act which has been the potential to save New Yorkers almost \$11 billion. This could directly translate into more spending power in the pockets of individuals who help keep our small businesses alive.

In the short term, I understand that we desperately need federal funding. I would join many others in petitioning with city and state officials to help bring funding such as PPP to our city. Additionally, we need to encourage our residents to shop small and shop local.

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? *

Desegregation of schools is sociologically intertwined with group economics and affordable housing. True school desegregation policy has to be coupled with school economic parity. This will only be successful when we first address the educational compromises schools in lower income communities are forced to make due to lack of finances, and we have to do this early, in the lower grades.

NYC elementary schools are not starting off equal. The DOE curriculum is bare bones. Almost all supplemental learning, including art, music, environmental studies, dance, cultural education and in-depth science exploration, are derived from PTA funds, fundraising and/or grants. Unfortunately, most schools are only getting teachers aides, reading and writing specialists, and the like, if they can procure the funds for it. This early inequity is the original impetus for separation in later years. I want to examine ways to help create a uniform starting line including PTA sharing and program sharing. Resistance to integration is due to fears of lessening the level of education. That is not an accurate assessment. Study after study has shown integration, especially amongst the youngest, increases academic performance of the financially in-need student population without detracting from the level of education overall. Further studies have shown, all children benefit from learning in diverse classrooms.

I generally do not support admission screens for lower grade schools except for intensive arts based schools, such as Special Music School. While I do think standardized testing provides baseline information on a student's level and progress, it should not be the main factor determining a child's education trajectory. If anything, it should be used to identify areas that need specialized attention but not for admissions.

I do not support eliminating the SHSAT. I also do not support it being the sole decider on admission to specialized high schools. SHSAT placement is not the cause of lack of diversity, it is the result. Unlike elementary and junior high school where the curriculum is broad, high schools can start to become more discipline focused whether science based, vocational based, arts based or otherwise. Some sort of admissions criteria is needed to provide strong offerings to those who wish to pursue those special disciplines.

To strengthen our school system I would examine:

Social workers for each school

Early screening and specialized teaching for dyslexia and other special learning needs

Fresh and healthy food for all schools

Incorporating environmental education and field trips for all elementary and middle schools

Incorporating culturally responsive lesson plans and curriculum

Incorporating LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum

COVID related

Prioritizing attention to the Learning Bridges program

Strengthening virtual, synchronous learning

Free wifi for those in need

And of course, better communication!

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? *

There will be no substantial correction reform without reducing recidivism. I believe there must be major investment in rehabilitation strategies, both emotional/behavioral and educational. Our prison systems must commit to creating or strengthening:

A comprehensive substance abuse treatment program

A multipronged mental health program including a strong cognitive behavioral therapy approach

A female and sexual identification-responsive program

Appropriate placement & protection for the LGBTQ/GNC population

A "school system" complete with in person and online learning

An extensive job skills program, including green jobs and certification requirements

We must truly commit to the rehabilitation and constructive culture facet of incarceration which will reduce crime, dependency, joblessness and homelessness. It will also, by connection, create safer prisons.

I will vote yes on strengthening inmate rehabilitation policies using evidence-based approaches.

I also strongly support prison alternatives for non-serious offenders and especially youth. We must alter the circumstances of incarceration to reduce our prison population. For this to work, we must have alternative methods in place, such as home monitoring programs, mental health courts, serious treatment programs and restorative justice. I do not believe in a fine & restitution system unless Day Fines and restorative justice options are considered.

I support the idea of closing Rikers but this is mostly symbolic. What we need is true reform. Harsh treatment and poor conditions are not isolated to the buildings on Rikers. Lengthy detainments, solitary confinement, violent incidents and lack of accountability define Rikers but are not due to it.

The cost to build four new NYC jails is over 8 billion dollars. I would argue it would take a fraction of this to successfully implement the above mentioned programs and spark wholesale change. This summer highlighted the discussion of shifting monies into social, community and preventative services. I strongly believe that. I agree with a vote to close Rikers based on moral weight. I do not support the building of new jails but concentrating on the reduction of current ones.

Yes, I support bail reform. The size of one's bank account should not determine if one is held in custody or not. This particular element of our justice system is a glaring spotlight on the inequities of that system. Bail reform will also reduce the prison rate and population. 6 of 10 people in jail are awaiting trial, a situation that disproportionately impacts low income individuals and people of color.

Yes, I support the recent, partial roll back of the reform law. Judges' discretion on a case by case basis allows for fairer and more accurate determinations. I also support the short extension for evidentiary disclosures recognizing the ill-equipped nature of certain government offices.

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? *

Our district has registered some of the dirtiest air in NYC. Our district, which includes the Manhattan Cruise Terminals, is already experiencing deleterious climate effects. Those terminals, combined with Port Authority, have made our air quality unbearable. Getting cruise ships on shore power, transitioning to an electrified bus fleet, and installing more electric charging stations are all actions we can take now to immediately improve our district. Climate justice is social justice. When any measure is instituted we must ensure that the burden on our poorest and most vulnerable residents is not too great.

I am currently spearheading the effort to bring electric shore power to the Manhattan Cruise Terminals bringing Con Edison, city agencies and other officials to the table. We are taking the first steps to realizing shore power on the west side. This would drastically reduce the emissions from those ships and better our air.

I support the Climate Mobilization Act, specifically Local Law 97. Over 70% of New York's greenhouse gas emissions come from our buildings and I support all measures to reduce that number drastically. I do think that the fines system is a good starting point, as many smaller businesses and landlords will comply in order to avoid fines. But as with any fiscally punitive system, the law stops applying after a certain monetary threshold. The management company for my building may not afford the fines for going over their caps, but international corporations can, many times over. They may choose to pay the fine rather than make the updates asked of them to cap their emissions. We cannot let them buy their way out of capping their emissions. I would like to close this loophole.

A major part of my platform is transportation equity and pushing for a 100% electric bus fleet. Almost 60% of people who ride public transit are work commuters. But even pre-COVID, bus ridership was trending downward. We must invest in a more comprehensive, efficient and greener public transportation system. In prioritizing city mass transit we will invest in infrastructure that services our mostly working and lower income residents. We will also reduce the commuter carbon footprint by reaping the obvious benefits of vehicle reduction.

Recently, the NYCHA working group has come to an agreement for new plans for both Chelsea Elliott and Fulton Houses. This is our opportunity to make very sure public housing plans embrace and incorporate environmentally responsible and resource efficient elements. We cannot forsake our lower income population in the push toward a greener city. I will make sure these intentions are considered and implemented.

I do not support any existing pipeline proposals. Furthermore, I support decommissioning any existing fossil fuel infrastructure and banning the creation or expansion of any fossil fuel infrastructure.

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? *

I support Mayor de Blasio's Executive Order signed in July 2020, which expands the pool of eligible M/WBE contractors and establishes a Chief Diversity officer in all City agencies. The city goal for contracts awarded to M/WBEs was raised by \$5 billion and the city is targeting \$25 billion by 2025 to those minority and women owned businesses. I believe that committing to and supporting this goal is imperative and would support it in office. A bright spot in this process is the support and education the city provides. I will continue to support promotion and outreach, casting a wider net for M/WBEs.

In order to reduce waste, I would like to address the following.

Rampant fraud - There are many, many well documented cases of "shell" or "pass-through" companies that pose as M/WBEs but are actually connecting back to main contractors. Or a husband will try and put his wife's name on the owner certificate. There must be thorough oversight and serious enforcement.

Streamline the bidding process - Once a company is certified they must go through separate, complicated registration processes for each city agency, through separate portals. (To add another layer of complication, the NYCSCA has their own M/WBE certification process). This process is cumbersome and prohibitive for many of the small M/WBEs the program is intended to help. We have to consolidate the process and combine portals.

I also believe that we should look at the dollar limit for the City to publish an RFP. Many small businesses, including M/WBEs are denied the chance to sell to the city because RFPs under \$100,000 are not published. Lowering that limit to \$20,000 would increase opportunities for small businesses. In order to cut waste, I believe we should utilize an online marketplace as well. Oftentimes, a business will receive a call from the City inquiring about services they don't provide. A more robust and in-depth marketplace indexing system would prevent time and energy wasted in this regard.

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? *

Small businesses, along with our arts and live performance community, have been economically hardest hit by the COVID pandemic. Individually, we've warmly seen efforts to buy local and sit in cold temperatures to support our neighborhood restaurants. Or, as my family has done, up our take out orders (to my pleasure). But we will be seeing a seismic shift in our commerce landscape.

I have been crisscrossing the district talking to small business owners on their greatest concerns and their greatest needs, which, not surprisingly, is the same - MONEY. Much of the relief packages depend on either federal or state assistance. We must receive a second round of PPP. The exclusion of such relief prohibits the continuation of the conversation.

These owners need cash to keep their businesses afloat. Our district is inextricably tied to tourism. We need cooperation between landlords and businesses to understand current rent values and adjust accordingly. In doing so, we must also consider the property holders financial obligations and provide mortgage and property tax relief. The continued normal rate of property taxes allows politicians to say one thing and do another. (The same can be said for co-ops and condos, which is often left out of the "cancel rent" discussion.)

I wholeheartedly support suspension of the Commercial Rent Tax. This is an action City Council can take that will directly affect mom and pop stores. I also support capping third party fees.

The City should explore zero interest loans to qualifying small businesses.

The City should reexamine the burden of unnecessary fines.

The City should eliminate BOB expeditors or "filing representatives."

We can also provide assistance for small business owners with organized resources from both city agencies and public/private organizations. This includes:

Web development and tech support

Navigating available applications for loans and subsidies

Legal council

Business education

The supply and demand chain is at its most extreme right now for commercial space which exacerbates our empty storefront problem. I would like to look at a vacancy tax disincentivizing landlords letting spaces go unoccupied for long periods of time. Coming back from COVID we must pay special attention to non-food and service businesses - the stores that sell items. These businesses are the ones most disrupted by the Amazon effect. We must make local products more accessible and convenient to purchase with website sharing, promotion and a local delivery network.

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

I am honored to have the opportunity to represent the residents and businesses of our district. As a 16-year resident raising a daughter, I am fully committed to working hard and fighting for the betterment of our neighborhoods.

I spent over 20 years as an investigative journalist fiercely defending the first amendment - asking hard questions, getting to the root of problems and giving a voice to those who do not have one. These same qualities also make for a good representative and part of the reason I am uniquely qualified for this position. As my daughter started to grow, I acutely recognized the need for community involvement and shifted from journalism to neighborhood advocacy. For the past years I have fully dedicated myself to the betterment of my community.

I serve on both Midtown North and Midtown South Community Councils, I am a member of the Hudson River Park Trust Task Force, our district's Budget Task Force, and Community Board 4's Executive Committee. In addition to serving on boards and committees, I get the greatest joy from my community boots-on-the-ground work. From almost 20 years ago when I started as an in-class teacher's aide for the Children's Aid Society to more recently as a shelter volunteer at Homes for the Homeless, I contend the best way to serve your community is to know your community. Although I'm proud of my volunteer work, I don't expect you to elect me because of it. I'm certain all of us do good work and give back to our communities; that is the best quality of New Yorkers. I hope you elect me recognizing my commitment to getting problems fixed, experience with complex issues and full hearted love for my community.

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