

VID Candidate Survey: City Council

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Marni Halasa

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? *

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

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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? *

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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? *

No. We don't need any neighborhood rezoning. My coronavirus recovery plan includes a proposal to offer people rent vouchers if they cannot afford the rent due to income loss due to the pandemic. Another key part of my housing plan is to fully fund NYCHA. Any genuine affordable housing plan must protect and expand public housing. When the city pushes through a rezoning, the community is never consulted and has no real voice in the process. Because the community never has final say, affordable housing is never truly affordable, and we are left with gentrification which leads to secondary displacement of tenants and small businesses. This ruins the character of our neighborhoods.

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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? *

I have a plan to propose a new Public Safety Agency that is independent of the NYPD. This agency, with a focus on pedestrian, bike and driver safety, can regulate high traffic areas with Public Safety Officers to monitor and guide the public. Outdoor dining was very important because it saved jobs and businesses. Nevertheless, it must go through a robust public review, which must address accessibility issues.

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? *

If elected, I would sponsor legislation to de-militarize the NYPD. I would also make harsher consequences for police officers who engage in brutality, especially to protesters expressing their first amendment rights. For disciplinary procedures, we need an independent CCRB, and have a robust public debate on how to create that independence.

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 do support cutting the NYPD budget. I believe that that money should be reallocated towards funding public housing, social services and youth programs. The creation of a new Public Safety Agency, staffed with mental health professionals and social workers, could handle the thousands of 911 calls the NYPD receives for those experiencing non-life threatening situations and distress. This would allow crisis professionals to handle these calls, give people the care they need and keep our communities safe.

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. *

The city needs deeply affordable housing, such as social or low income housing. With tourism gone and a paradigm shift in people working from home, there is an abundance of vacant space in our district -- with many landlords considering selling their buildings. The city should purchase these properties such as existing hotels and office buildings, and repurpose them as Single Room Occupancies with permanent leases, to give the homeless permanent homes. It is possible to create affordable housing without requiring any rezoning. And no I do not take money from real estate.

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 support a 1% tax surcharge on corporations with over 1,000 employees that do business in New York City. This tax does not target individuals, is not punitive and is reasonable. I have a small business jobs recovery plan that will offer rent vouchers to small businesses so they can keep their spaces to welcome back their employees once the pandemic is over. I also support the original Small Business Jobs Survival Act, which would give small businesses a long-term affordable lease and the right to renew. Small businesses are an important employment driver in the city.

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? *

Schools are very highly segregated and this is a function of how our neighborhoods are not integrated. These circumstances exist because our housing policy has never been equitable for people of color. Once we save public housing, and stop the gentrification stemming from rezonings, we can stop concentrations based on race and income that form from unaffordable housing policies. I support efforts to move away from standardized tests because they reflect the performance of children that attend private schools who have the resources to focus on test-prep. I do not support admissions screens because they will penalize children who attend schools who do not have resources to prepare them for testing. I would increase funding, decrease class size and introduce more laboratory learning, which is experienced-based and not performance based. This would be augmented by after school programs to instill a culture of learning.

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? *

I do support the closing of Rikers without having to build borough-based jails. Bail reform and my plan for a new Public Safety Agency will decrease arrests and keep people out of jail. Other efforts such as helping people in need of mental health and providing supportive housing in homeless shelters and SROs will lead to intervention that will prevent the need to criminalize people. For people charged with serious crimes like murder, there are existing jails that could detail someone if a judge denies bail. Our overarching direction must be to end the era of mass incarceration. Yes I support bail reform because of extreme examples of constitutional rights violations as were experienced by the late Akeem Browder. I do not support the recent partial roll back of bail reform.

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? *

Any efforts to pursue climate justice must begin with playing to our strengths. New York City government must divest itself of the entire fossil fuel industry, defense contractors, and to the greatest extent possible, the automobile industry. That means that New Yorkers public pensions should be not invested in these industries. Also, the city must not do business or award contracts to these industries. We also want to explore the use of a public utility that can begin by building wind farms off the coast in safe areas near Staten Island. We don't support any pipeline proposals, especially any that crisscross New York City.

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 would increase transparency in every contract process that the city engages in. All records will be made online, and would link all lobbying records to this new transparent portal so there could be fairness and accountability in the process. This process will also flag the WMBE applicants so we can publicly track everyone's progress in the contract procurement process.

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? *

When the pandemic subsides, nearly 520,000 jobs will be lost when one-third of the city's 240,000 small businesses close in January, according data from the Partnership for New York City, as published in the New York Times. I have a small business jobs recovery plan that will offer rent vouchers to small businesses so they can keep their spaces to welcome back their employees once the pandemic is over. I also support the original Small Business Jobs Survival Act, which would give small businesses a long-term affordable lease and the right to renew. The SBJSA can be tailored to small businesses, which are under 100 employees, according to the definition put forth by the city's Small Business Services. This will help support small businesses and not large chains. Small businesses are an important employment driver in the city.

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

My background as an activist who participated in Occupy Wall Street, was that the issue of income inequality was paramount. I saw how the 2008 financial crisis devastated the people around me, and many people didn't experience a recovery. Occupy succeeded in shaping public opinion about income inequality, which inspired many Democrats including Senator Bernie Sanders to run for higher office. I also became inspired to run, but we still have work to do. The pandemic revealed what we already knew -- that racial and income disparities exist in our society. But I'm here to do something about it. My campaign reflects the effort of an average person, an activist outside the political establishment, running for office to heal these disparities.

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