

VID Candidate Survey: City Council

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Name: *

Phelan Dante Fitzpatrick

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. There is no doubt that affordable housing and housing security are critical issues for the next City Council Members to address. With stringent regulation, there can be benefits associated with upzoning, namely, the depreciation of housing costs and the redesign and reorganization of existing physical spaces. Historically, upzoning has increased the power of real estate developers and landowners to the detriment of working-class New Yorkers and the public.

Community development and the creation of affordable housing for working-class New Yorkers is a critical issue. We can no longer ignore the root causes of this issue. Housing security is directly correlated with job security and with race. Given appropriate regulation, private investment in land use can be beneficial; however, most of the investment should be in the public domain.

New Yorkers deserve more than the presentation of false choices between creating affordable housing and maintaining our historic neighborhoods. As the elected Council Member for District-3, I will always place the well-being and housing security of working-class New Yorkers ahead of corporate real estate interests. We can preserve our neighborhoods and provide housing security for all New Yorkers.

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? *

Aging and differently-abled New Yorkers deserve to feel safe walking in their neighborhoods and traveling freely throughout our community and city. We must engage all of our community members and listen to their needs and concerns as we envision the future of New York City, a New York City that fully honors and supports all New Yorkers.

The statistics related to the over-policing of Black and brown New Yorkers are staggering. In New York City, more than 89 percent of tickets issued last year for crossing the street midblock or against the light went to Blacks and Latinos. We can only extrapolate that the increased enforcement of city sidewalks and roadways will result in the disproportionate policing of Black and brown bodies. To solve complicated long-standing problems, which have been exacerbated by the current public health crisis, we need transformational policy initiatives driven by an ethical and visionary NYC Budget. Consider that the NYPD annual budget is more than five times the DOT annual budget, and yet, police are only making arrests in about 1 percent of all hit-and-run crashes each year, a rate that has not changed since 2013. Policing our streets does not make them safer. Investing in the Department of Transportation and designing safer streets, bike lanes, and educational programs for community members will make our neighbors and commuters safer. I also support legislation that would end the long-standing corruption of NYPD placard abuse and fraud, in which drivers use their city-issued permits to park illegally, most often eating into pedestrian and cyclist space. I can't tell you how often, as a parent, I have to move my daughter's stroller into the street (often into bike lanes) to maneuver around illegally parked cars with NYPD placards. The illegal and reckless abuse of NYPD placards not only affects pedestrians and bikers but creates dangerous situations when this abuse occurs, especially in front of fire hydrants.

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? *

The United States Constitution establishes in the First Amendment the right to assemble. All US citizens have the right to protest peacefully. I have observed first hand the intimidation tactics and abuses inflicted by the NYPD on peaceful protestors. Consider that in 2019 alone, police misconduct filings against the NYPD settled with the city's comptroller's office cost taxpayers 220.1 million dollars. These settlements are not paid out of the NYPD's budget. There is a long and well-documented history of NYPD intimidation, abuse, and violence in NYC. It's time to hold the force accountable.

In a dangerous and threatening political stunt the New York City Police Union (NYCPBA) endorsed Donald J Trump in the 2020 presidential election. Given the racial tension and community violence that our country experienced in the summer of 2020 and that we are still contending with and trying to process, the NYCPBA should not have endorsed either candidate. This decision would have been in the public good, in the service of peace and reconciliation. Instead, NYCPBA endorsed a candidate who as President, ordered the gassing of peaceful protestors by Capitol Hill and other unmarked and unidentified law enforcement officials outside of the White House. In doing so, Donald J Trump assaulted the Constitutional right to assemble. The NYCPBA endorsement of this candidate who repeatedly called for the violent policing of peaceful protest is abhorrent. The racist policing practices of the NYPD are awful. It is time for the NYPD to be held accountable to the taxpayers that fund it. It is time for the NYPD to listen to the community and commit with alacrity to transformational organizational change.

Evidence-based changes to policy around policing can reduce deaths at the hands of the police. Police department data should be accessible through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), allowing citizens to request records from public agencies. But FOIA requests often come up empty, in many cases because police decide they simply do not want their department's data scrutinized. The two most significant changes that need to occur: demilitarization and changing police culture.

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 believe that the NYPD must be restructured, and the NYC budget is the blueprint and accountability mechanism for its restructuring. A shift in consciousness around the idea of safety needs to happen. We are safer when we are better educated, when we are healthier, when we have jobs that we take pride in. We are safer when our children go to school together at their neighborhood public school! We are safer when mental health professionals handle incidents involving individuals struggling with their mental health. We must fund the social services required to help our neighbors and their children. We make our communities safer when we do.

I would immediately move to disband the NYPD VICE squad. VICE is a hotbed of corruption, zero transparency, and rampant abuse of sex workers. I would reallocate part of the funding for VICE to the City Sex Worker Service Center to provide services for sex workers and survivors of trafficking. I would work with the State to eliminate qualified immunity for police officers. The repeal of Section 50-A, which prevented the release of police officers' personnel records, is the type of reform that is needed to build public trust in the NYPD. I would work tirelessly to decarcerate our public schools. The school-to-prison pipeline must be dismantled.

As noted earlier, the DOT would be well served by a budgetary increase. Residents in the Village and in District 3 are worried about traffic safety, bike safety, and pedestrian safety—they should be. We must invest in the creation of effective and equitable transportation. Reallocated funds can help reform and build community health programs, youth summer employment opportunities and training, and the refunding of the LGBTQ+ Unity program.

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. *

Fixing the housing crisis requires prioritizing it and meaningfully investing in solutions. I would work with state leaders to create modern, comprehensive, and sustainable programs similar to the Mitchell-Lama program. Another possible solution for creating more affordable housing is the abandonment of Midtown office space. With just 10% of Manhattan workers returning to office space in October, the question of when and how those offices will be able to sustain themselves is serious. We can approach the problem and opportunity with the 421-G program, a series of tax breaks for commercial-to-residential conversions, which was launched in the mid-1990s to revitalize Lower Manhattan. A similarly conceived plan to transform Midtown Manhattan could work well to solve a lot of our housing issues. This is not the first time this has happened in NYC. In the last decade a record 96,000-plus units nationwide have been created by transforming 778 schools, factories, offices or other nonresidential space into new homes, with 23% including units affordable to low-income renters, and midtown in particular would be extremely ideal, especially with prime transit access. This could also solve the problem of higher end neighborhoods and pushback against upzoning, especially when there are issues of gentrification. Development like this in the past has provided certain tax exemptions for developers, such as a 12-year exemption from the increase in real estate taxes resulting from the new work, and was successful in creating thousands of new units.

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? *

Yes. To pay for the emergency response to COVID-19 and build a permanent social safety net that protects New Yorkers through crises in the future, we should tax wealthy New Yorkers. There are countless sensible measures put forward by progressive and working-class movements that fall under the “taxing the wealthy” umbrella. Most New Yorkers will hear these policy recommendations as quite sensible. For example, the Billionaire Wealth Tax (S.8277/A.10414) impacts only the 118 New York billionaires. This measure would prevent NY billionaires from using tax havens to avoid taxation to establish a more robust unemployment benefit system. The Billionaire Wealth Tax alone would generate 23 billion in the first year and 1.2 billion yearly afterward.

Take, for example, the Restore: Yachts & Jets Tax (S.7135/A.9053)! Most working-class New Yorkers do not have the pleasure of ever traveling by, and certainly not ever owning a yacht or a jet. This proposal simply seeks to re-impose a tax on the yachts and jets of the ultra-rich. This tax could generate more than 250 million dollars per year or more. Another sensible tax reform that most working-class people will agree with is the Pied-A-Terre (S.44/A.4540). This straightforward tax reform simply seeks to impose a sliding-scale on non-primary residences with over five million dollars. This reform would generate over 650 million dollars a year.

Let me be very clear; we can find the resources needed to enact transformational public policy— policy that can change the lives of working-class New Yorkers and their families for the better. The real question is, can we muster the political will to do so.

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? *

Sadly, NYC public schools and public schools across the US generally are socioeconomically and racially segregated. One concrete step that NYC can take to desegregate the nation's largest public school system is to eliminate the Specialized High School Admissions testing. This test privileges students with the resources to engage in months-long, expensive test prep, often including group classes and individual tutoring. I also support extending priority admissions for middle and high school students in NYC. We should immediately grant all students who live in Community School District 1 the same priority for admission into Community School District 2 as those received by students who live in District 2.

The funding of public schools contributes powerfully to school segregation. We must commit to equitable, progressively distributed funds for New York public schools based on total collected property taxes and wealth taxes. Our unequally and under-funded public school system perpetuates the systemic oppression of working-class people and people of color. Harsh disciplinary policies—applied disproportionately to students of color—and police in our schools feed the school-to-prison pipeline. I will work tirelessly to fight for an education system that supports its workers and ends the reproduction of social inequalities.

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? *

Yes, I support closing Rikers. No, I do not support the construction of new, borough-based jails at the taxpayer cost of 9 Billion dollars. Yes, I supported the historic changes to bail reform in 2019, and I opposed the partial rollback of bail reform this year. Cash bail perpetuates existing racial inequality in the criminal justice system. At the height of the pandemic, New York jails and prisons had, and still have, the highest rates of COVID-19 infection in the country. The COVID-19 pandemic made clear that the decarceration of individuals for non-violent drug offenses and the elimination of cash bail is not only criminal justice issues but public health issues as well.

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? *

Climate change is an existential threat to the planet. Coastal cities like New York City are already experiencing the impact of climate change. The Green New Deal and the creation of sustainable green jobs are necessary to revitalize the NYC economy and build a sustainable economy and city. The creation of union jobs, increasing public spaces, and fortifying our city's waterfront spaces will improve the lives of working-class New Yorkers. NYC can be an international hub of green and sustainable urban design. We can incubate creative partnerships between academic and design disciplines; we can bring together the public and private sectors to envision and create a greener, more equitable NYC.

When I think of my daughter and the challenges that she will have to face, it keeps me up at night. Will the consequences of investment and reliance on fossil fuels, the resulting carbon emissions, and general apathetic leadership towards our environment seriously impinge on her ability to live a happy and healthy life. Climate change impacts different communities differently. As is often the case, the hardest hit is the most marginalized and poorest among us. We can build a more sustainable and resilient 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? *

The New York City council plays a central role in awarding contracts for services. As the Council Member for District 3, I will commit to searching for and securing contacts from M/WBEs service providers in NYC. On December 2 Comptroller Scott Stringer released the annual Making the Grade: New York City Agency Report Card on M/WBEs report. The report reveals the pattern of underinvestment in the city's many diversely owned businesses. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated what Stringer himself called, "A long history of systemic inequality and exclusion...". One of the greatest downfalls of the procurement and contracting process in NYC is that it takes too long. The lengthy process has negative consequences for both the City and our vendors. There are a number of procurement process simplification strategies that have been argued for in the past. These simplification strategies will reduce redundancy. The procurement process must be more agile and responsive. We must generate the political will to enact the transformational policy that New York City and New Yorkers deserve.

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? *

Progressive economic policy put forward in the NYC Budget by the City Council, supported by the New York State Legislature and Governor, can generate funds to create an emergency relief program for NYC small businesses. As discussed above, wealth tax bills on the floor in Albany could generate more than 50 billion a year in revenue. Future Federal relief for States will augment the emergency relief fund supported through wealth taxes. We all must do our part to support and care for New York City in these uncertain times. The resources are there if we can generate the political will to procure them.

I approach questions like, "how do we make sure the enormous amount of commercial vacancies get filled, and not just by big chains snatching up cheap leases?" in a very straightforward manner. We make sure that big chains do not snatch up cheap leases by preventing them from doing so. The question is how to create the political will to demand transformation change. Apple, Google, and Twitter have all already capitalized on the current economic crisis in NYC to snatch up cheap commercial leases. Regulation, oversight, and enforcement are necessary to ensure that working-class New Yorkers and small businesses can also benefit from opportunities that emerge, as we confront and defeat the current COVID-19 economic crisis.

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

First, thank you for the opportunity to share a bit more about myself, my candidacy, and my campaign with the Village Independent Democrats. I'm a single dad to an amazing daughter, her name is Artemis, and she is the light of my life. I'm also a member of the LGBTQ+ community, and I am running to become the first Black Council Member ever elected in District 3. This fact astounds and hurts me, but given where we are, not entirely surprising when you think about it. I appreciate the opportunity to share my voice and be heard by our community leaders like you, and to also consider that there are so many more of us who do not feel that they have a voice. They do not think that their worries are taken into consideration. We must invite and include all of our community members into conversations about the well-being and maintenance of our city—our home. With your help I can be the candidate that builds the political will to make the transformational changes we need. To demonstrate to the most vulnerable and marginalized that public services, and public servants are here to help, and not to serve their own interests. With your help I can be the candidate that bridges understanding between business leaders, and community members, who are so often never in conversation with one another. I live in both of these spaces. At the same time, knowing every day that my daughter is looking to me to protect her, keep her best interest, and the interests of all our kids at heart. As a City Council Member, I need the help of my community to make good decisions, with equity always being the driving force in the choices we make. Together. I want to be a Council Member that is accessible. One that you can actually call when we have a problem in our community, not wait days to receive an email back. (917)-545-3477. We must build support, generate energy, and include as many of our neighbors and community members in our movement as possible. Together we can create a more equitable and sustainable home for our children and our grandchildren.

With my Sincerest Respect.

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