



THE VILLAGE REFORM DEMOCRATIC CLUB

Questions for 2021 Manhattan Borough President Candidates

Responses for Candidate (name): Brad Hoylman

1. Why are you running for Manhattan Borough President and what experience do you have that prepares you for this job?

Today, Manhattan is hurting. That's because of the pandemic, but it's also because of decades of unaddressed inequality, a lack of federal funding, a climate crisis, and hundreds of other overlapping problems that are magnifying the inequities. As Manhattan Borough President, it'll be my goal to build Manhattan back for workers, to fight for our small businesses, and to keep everyone in their homes. I have a record of getting big things done in Albany, including passing over 100 bills to address climate change, expand LGBTQ rights, protect tenants, strengthen vaccine requirements, and hold police accountable. I'll put that same energy into fighting for Manhattan as your BP. I've taken on some of the most righteous fights -- against anti-vaxxers, big tobacco, and Donald Trump -- and it's energized me to take on the toughest challenges facing our borough.

2. What do you believe are the most important responsibilities of the Borough President?

The Borough President is the person who must understand the physical space of the Borough, each of the communities in it, and how they relate to each other, and the Borough President must make sure that space provides for the needs of the borough and each of its communities. The Borough President is also a champion for borough residents, and has a vital role in oversight and accountability for the borough and introducing legislation. And finally, the BP has a critical bully pulpit that can be a powerful tool for social change and progressive reform.

3. What issues do you feel will merit your attention and why?

#1: Strengthening Our Social Safety Net

The first job of government is to take care of the most vulnerable in our community. During this pandemic, far too many of our borough's residents are struggling. We must focus on getting Manhattanites back on their feet, and that starts with reinvesting in social services and creating more supportive housing.

As Borough President, I will leverage the power and budget of the office to tackle the homelessness crisis, improve city services, protect seniors and people with disabilities, increase workforce development and fight for tenants' rights.

I will work to find creative solutions to our toughest problems to take care of our most vulnerable. To start, I will look into creatively reusing the 100 million square feet in office space that are currently vacant in Manhattan. I'm proposing a new team solely dedicated to pursuing public-private partnerships in the Borough President's office, with the goal of securing that space for affordable housing, for artists and community organizers to move here and get low-cost space in the heart of the city, and for entrepreneurs and small business.

#2: Save Small Business

Nearly a third of all small businesses are estimated to close in Manhattan this year because of the pandemic. We need an all-hands-on-deck effort to save them. That effort starts with three bills I have introduced at the state level:

- **Save Our Storefronts.** The empty storefronts across our borough are a heartbreaking symbol of our community's struggles during this pandemic. We must provide rent assistance to small businesses to ensure they survive this pandemic and can remain open.
- **Commercial Vacancy Tax.** We need to give small businesses a leg up and make rents more affordable. This tax on large landlords will disincentivize keeping their properties unoccupied, and help small businesses remain open.
- **Commercial Rent Tax Pause.** Businesses in Manhattan south of 96th Street are subject to an unfair tax of almost 4% on the rent they pay. We should provide relief to Manhattan's small and medium-sized businesses by waiving their Commercial Rent Tax obligations for the duration of the pandemic.

Working with the state and federal government, I'll be a forceful champion for our small businesses in the Borough President's office. Through public-private partnerships and creative planning, we can save and revitalize the small businesses, restaurants, creative institutions and arts that attract so many people to move to this wonderful borough.

#3: Make Manhattan Affordable With Real Affordable Housing

We need a Manhattan that is economically equitable, one that allows young people and artists to move here and senior citizens to retire here without bankrupting themselves. One of the most destructive developments in Manhattan over the last two decades has been the overbuilding of so-called luxury housing, apartments that are often bought and warehoused by out-of-town investors who won't spend more than a few days in our neighborhoods. As the prime sponsor of the pied-a-terre tax in Albany, I've been fighting a long time to counter this.

4. What will you do differently from your predecessors to represent the voices of Manhattan residents more equitably and effectively?

First, I would introduce what I'm calling Community Board Budgeting, to give community members discretion over the BP's capital budget by delegating substantial authority for capital funding to local community boards. I would also look to expand the resources available to the community within the Borough President's office, on education, public health and public spaces. I would create a Public School Parent Resource and Advocacy Center that helps parents in low-income Manhattan communities navigate the byzantine public school enrollment process while advancing strategies to integrate our public schools. I would use the office's discretionary money to fund the creation of a new Public Health Advisory Group to be on call for elected officials and community organizations across Manhattan. And I

intend to push for legislation that would require the Mayor to create a new Office of Public Space Management to speed it all along and work strategically to cut fines, fees, and red tape.

5. Regarding the Borough President's role in the Community Board system:

- How will you make the appointment and reappointment process fair and transparent?
- What is your plan to educate new and existing Community Board members on such matters as conflict-of-interest avoidance, land use education, parliamentary procedure, how to effectively use their collective voice, etc.?
- How will you help Community Boards do their work?
- Will you seek to be supportive of Community Board recommendations?

We need to further reform community boards to make them more diverse, more accessible, and fair. First, we need to remove elected official staff and lobbyists for community boards. Second, we need to ensure community board meetings are accessible to people with disabilities. And third, we should invest in training for our community board members, on conflict of interest avoidance, land use, etc. as well as diversity and inclusion and leadership, to get them up to speed quickly and ensure they're equipped to tackle challenges facing their communities.

And I think it's more important than ever that our neighborhoods have a say in their needs, which is why I'm proposing Community Board Budgeting, as detailed in question 4.

6. What land use policies do you support to increase the supply of truly affordable housing in Manhattan below 14th Street?

- How would you determine affordability, AMI bands etc.?
- Do you support adaptive reuse/conversion of existing offices and hotels (all or in part) to achieve affordable housing? If so, how would you implement and fund this?
- Do you support using MIH with FAR incentives to increase affordable housing stock? If so, where and how would this be implemented? If not, why and what programs would you seek to implement?
- What are your thoughts about zoning changes in historic districts?

We must build more supportive housing below 14th Street and across the borough. Income bands that include lower AMIs must be on the table, and MIH has to be improved to increase affordability. And I support creative solutions to our affordable housing and homelessness crises, including repurposing the tens of millions of square feet of empty office space across the borough to house New Yorkers of lower incomes.

Land use in the last two decades has focused mostly on upzoning and overbuilding luxury housing, apartments that are often bought and warehoused by out-of-town investors who won't spend more than a few days in our neighborhoods. As the prime sponsor of the pied-a-terre tax in Albany, I've been fighting to counter this. I intend to use the Borough President's planning and zoning powers to push aggressively for the repeal of 421-a, to end the failed 80/20 mix of mandatory inclusionary housing, and to mandate the construction of limited equity complexes like Mitchell-Lamas, HDFCs, or Chelsea's Penn South in any future rezonings. We have to stop believing that the market is going to solve this problem and start having government aggressively intervene.

7. Please provide contact for additional information, if our members wish to get involved with your campaign, etc.

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