



THE VILLAGE REFORM DEMOCRATIC CLUB

Questions for 2021 Mayor Candidates Responses from Candidate: Art Chang

GENERAL

1. Why are you running for Mayor?

I am running for Mayor because Our City isn't working for everyone. I will transform our City to work for all of us.

- I may look like an outsider because I'm a first-time candidate, but actually have over 30 years of practical experience in government, policy, and the private sector bringing "impossible" ideas to fruition.
- I have fresh ideas that demonstrate my experience in solving complex, intertwined, and structural problems in both my private and public career.
- Unlike other candidates, I have a history of working between the public and private sectors, always in the service of moving the public interest forward. And ultimately, that's how a city runs: with collaboration between public entities and private businesses.
- And through it all, I've raised a family here in the city, so I know how this relationship affects each of our families individually. That's where the tentpole of my platform comes in: [Universal Childcare](#) will utilize partnerships between public and private businesses.
- Lack of fear and not beholden - I don't owe anyone anything.
- This is not a career change into politics - this is a continuation of what I have always done, which is to believe deeply that a better way for us all is possible, and to pursue that with all of my energy.

2. What experience do you have that has prepared you to become Mayor?

I have experience building this city from the ground up and prioritizing the needs and safety of all New Yorkers. My experience has included:

- Working with Queens West to bring New Yorkers housing and broadband; Safe Horizons bringing victims of domestic violence to safety; the Brooklyn Public Library, to bring literacy and education to within half of mile of every NYC resident's home

- Building many aspects of the City with a focus on climate resiliency, broadband & power access, and increasing greenspace
- Breaking silos with integrated services delivery and technology integration. Because of this experience, I know that details matter -- and technology matters because it helps collect data, which informs the details of how all of these systems should work.

3. What do you believe are the most important responsibilities of the Mayor?

My job as Mayor will be to redesign the city government to work for everyone. A good mayor needs both the skills of an excellent manager and the vision to elevate public needs above the private interests of a few. The current Mayor demonstrates what happens when career politicians are elected to operate the largest city in the nation. If we believe that structural change is necessary, we can't change it with the same mindset that we used to build it. Here's what I think our next Mayor needs:

- The next Mayor needs to bring confidence: proven experience innovating across the breadth of government services; experience in finance and management; the ability to organize and motivate people to accomplish the impossible.
- The next Mayor needs to have empathy: life experience building trust and uniting people across the broadest spectrum.
- The next Mayor needs to tell it like it is, to be clear, authentic, and trustworthy.

4. Would you seek to change the current Land Use system, including CEQR, the ULURP process and the use of current Mandatory Inclusionary Housing to create affordable housing?

Yes. The entire land use system needs to be revisited to consider two major needs: first, the City's need to have [a massive increase in low-income housing](#) and the reallocation of underutilized land like City-owned golf courses for this purpose, and second, planning for adaptation to the rising seas, 10' sea rise by 2100.

EDUCATION

1. New York City's public school students are not academically competitive with other major industrialized nations in math and science (STEM). How do you plan to address this disparity?

In my DOE, every student will have an individual education plan so that the educational system can meet every student where they are, regardless of where they live, their learning or developmental differences, and the interruptions that happen in life. It shouldn't matter whether a student graduates from high school in 12 years, or 10 years, or 16 years. A digital school will allow students with different paths to have continuity in teaching and learning, with flexible in-person schooling, and guidance counselors and peers who really know them.

2. How do you plan to implement high speed internet access to all school children throughout NYC?

I will install universal broadband so all students have high-speed wifi and the devices they need to connect. The first thing we have to do is immediately deliver high speed internet and internet-connected devices to students who do not have internet access—including students in homeless shelters, juvenile detention centers, and other areas with low access. Over the long term, we need to have an aggressive buildout of high-speed broadband for the entire city. We can do this through a combination of enforcing MSO agreements and creating municipal broadband.

3. Less than half of the budget for New York City's public schools reaches the classrooms, while more goes to administrative costs. If you believe this is a problem, how will you correct it?

This is a problem in every mayoral agency. We have to have a significant reduction in headcount, because these administrative costs are largely headcount. We need to have more integrated and coordinated management across the DOE. At the same time, we need to give more of a voice to parents, teachers, and principals. One of the significant investments would be in educational technology.

4. There are 50+ school districts in the five boroughs, with large staffs, performing largely the same administrative functions. How would you address this in your administration?

We need to look for duplication of efforts in the DOE and elsewhere in the city with the goal of consolidating administrative functions to lower costs and streamline processes.

5. Many larger city schools have been broken up into smaller schools, each with its own principal and staff, often in one building sharing a cafeteria, gym, library, auditorium, etc. Do you believe smaller schools can provide the kinds of services available in one larger school, such as sports, art and music, foreign languages, drama and theater, etc.?

There needs to be a fundamental rethinking of the definition of “a school.” I believe in common resources for all the schools in the NYC public school system. There is no reason that schools such as MS88 and New Voices in Park Slope are not sharing the same resources. We should have social integration of students—you can get economies of scale through sharing resources like libraries and theaters. Especially in primary education, but even through high school, many students benefit from smaller classrooms and school environments. We must balance these two competing needs.

What COVID has also shown us is that there is a need for a school that isn't necessarily a physical school. I am a proponent of a digital school where students who are suffering physical dislocations or the inability to go to school, for various reasons (including housing insecurity, illness, and injury) are able to have continuity in their education. The guidance counselors, teachers, and classmates can stay the same, even as students may physically move.

6. What are your feelings about the current state of racial equality for teachers? What, if anything, would you do differently from current policy and practice?

Students deserve teachers who are more reflective of the student body. Statistics from 2019 report that only [42% of New York City's teachers are people of color while over 80% of students are people of color](#). This needs to change. This problem also exists at the school leadership level. There must be greater development of potential teachers beginning in college, especially at CUNY. CUNY is majority-minority, majority-women, and it should be a feeder of teachers to the city school system.

7. Would you expand specialized schools like Stuyvesant, Bronx Science, and Brooklyn Tech, to open more of these programs throughout the city?

We don't need to expand specialized high schools to achieve a huge expansion of advanced academic programs throughout the city. There is a huge opportunity to make the transition from high school to college more fluid, specifically by incorporating CUNY, online education, and workforce development.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

1. What solutions do you propose for the increasing number of homeless people in our city?

The solution here requires a two-step process. First, we must ensure that people who are currently housed are not made homeless due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This requires extending eviction and foreclosure moratoriums to March 31, 2022, and then using the city's influence with banks to extend mortgage terms by up to two years, payment free. This will allow us to provide mortgage extensions to landlords who will pass the benefits on to their tenants; which will in turn allow us to cancel tenants' accrued debt.

Second, we need to ensure that the homeless are housed in a sensible, safe and humane manner. To do this, we will need to partner with the city's many thought leaders and practitioners to generate new solutions for temporary emergency housing, and consider all possible resources to bring people to safe shelter swiftly. We also need to coordinate delivery of services for the supportive housing essential to high-need populations. We must invest in and scale existing community based models (like Community Solutions, Bailey House, and the Jericho Project) that show we can successfully reintegrate those NYC residents without homes into communities.

But these are short-term solutions to a long-term problem. In order to truly solve our city's housing crisis, we must take on a major initiative to build truly affordable housing.

Finally, we can't forget that homelessness is also driven by pre-existing conditions to the onset of COVID-19. Nearly 50% of homeless families are fleeing domestic violence, and nearly 50% of homeless teenagers are fleeing gender-based violence in their own homes. As Mayor, I would review everything that the City can do to stop violence in the home, asking how we can better support families in this kind of trouble.

2. "Affordable housing" especially in Manhattan is becoming exceedingly rare. How would your administration address this?

- What is your opinion on adaptive reuse of commercial buildings to create affordable housing?**
- What is your position on rezoning in historic districts?**

We need to create the most ambitious program to build truly affordable housing, leveraging the inventory of city-owned land to achieve the goal of eliminating housing insecurity for all New Yorkers.

The government's job is to correct market imbalances; there is a massive undersupply of housing for low and lower income New Yorkers, relative to the demand. With the median income of New York City residents being \$55,000 per year, the current situation of overpriced rents is untenable. We must explore how to leverage alternative models of occupancy and home ownership such as the Housing Development Fund Corporation cooperatives.

I will implement a moratorium on luxury development. First, the city needs to build a real registry of affordable housing units and track for compliance. If public-private partnerships do continue for affordable housing, we need to ensure that more than half the units are not priced at market rate and are affordable for New Yorkers making the median income and below.

I am a huge proponent of adaptive reuse to create affordable housing and mixed-use communities. The city is going to have to densify, and how it does that is a challenge. Rezoning in historic districts is complicated. I was opposed to the historic designation of my neighborhood, because it increased costs and accelerated the gentrification of my neighborhood. But I also recognize the importance of maintaining a neighborhood feel and architectural cohesion—and the historic designation is currently the only tool that the city has to preserve the architecture of their communities.

It is also worth considering, however, that the contrast of historic and modern architecture has worked successfully in other global cities where the historic character of a neighborhood can coexist harmoniously with new development. For example, Kyoto and Barcelona have both achieved this balance.

3. Landlords cannot currently evict tenants for non-payment of rent due to the COVID-19 pandemic and are still required to pay real estate taxes, sewer and water fees to the city. What are your thoughts on this?

Landlords should be able to have a pro rata deferral on real estate taxes and other fees without onerous interest penalties.

4. Do you have specific plans to make NYCHA housing more habitable, efficient, and accountable to its tenants and the city? What is your position on NYCHA infill?

There needs to be a system to fully understand the gross neglect of NYCHA's buildings. The accumulated repair estimate is reported to be \$40 billion. NYCHA should not be selling open

areas, they should be using those open areas to build more housing, if it is needed. We need to think creatively about places like city-owned golf courses, to perhaps fill in the need for housing. In addition, we need to measure what RAD is doing and is not doing.

CRIME/NEW YORK POLICE DEPARTMENT

1. What are your thoughts on the current number of police officers on the street, and how would you address crime prevention going forward?

The fundamental question that we need to ask is: does more policing equal more safety? I do not think so. I believe that we need to minimize the number of militarized police officers, redirect non-violent 911 calls to social workers and other trained de-escalation professionals, and increase oversight and accountability on officers who are armed.

2. How would you deal with Black and Hispanic communities being subjected to allegedly unnecessary and/or illegal police arrests and try to change the culture of our police force?

Policing in this country is rooted in racism and we're merely living in its shadow legacy. We need to redefine what safety and policing means to fully address racial equity. Without this, racism will only perpetuate itself in new ways into the future.

A fundamental tenet of democracy is based on civilian control over armed forces. The democratic process includes checks and balances, which means more funding for the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB). It is the job of city leadership to ensure that police use force only when necessary and appropriate. DeBlasio turned down the CCRB budget request to fund 16 more investigations into police abuses. That cannot happen.

We also need to integrate unarmed police into our communities better. We do not need more militarized police when 96% of police calls nationwide are non-violent. We must reduce the amount of surveillance that police do, and hold abusive officers accountable. We can reshape how officers respond to 911 calls by sending in rapid response teams for de-escalation with officers available only as back-up.

3. The NYPD seems top heavy with highly paid personnel and extensive administrative redundancies. Will you attempt to resolve this, and, if so, how?

The NYPD has experienced an unprecedented growth in non-uniformed personnel that needs to be reversed. Within the NYPD, as within the DOE, we must significantly reduce headcount, because these administrative costs are largely headcount. We need to have more integrated and coordinated management within the organization.

4. Is it legally possible and reasonable to require all members of the NYPD to be legal residents of NYC?

Yes. Police officers cannot be expected to protect a community if they have no relationship with that community. And they cannot build a relationship with a community that they view solely as a part of their job—we must foster the integration of officers with community members by ensuring that they feel equally connected to the neighborhoods they are charged with protecting.

I believe that this should also be true for principals of New York City schools.

THE ECONOMY

- 1. Due to the pandemic, more than a half million people have moved out of NYC. Many corporations that maintained large office spaces are operating remotely all or in part. How will your administration deal with this? Do you plan to attract new residents and if so, how? How would you entice companies and professionals to lease commercial space in the city?**

As a first order of business, we must protect and heal the communities presently living in NYC. We have to bring back the arts, small businesses, restaurants, and other things that make New York City a healthy, safe, prosperous, and joy-filled city. Tech companies are looking forward, not backwards—they know that New York City will continue to boom as people decide to move here, and new developments will attract companies that are currently existing in old buildings to move to the newer buildings, because they are more eco-friendly. The old buildings which are left behind will therefore have to be repurposed.

Enticing companies to lease commercial space requires the assumption that NYC will return to the same normal as pre-pandemic, which I don't believe is true. We should be striving to achieve a new New York that allows for work-from-anywhere and encourages new workers to live in walkable communities in the outer boroughs.

- 2. Do you expect to raise taxes? If so, on who/what? If not, how will you make up the pandemic shortfall?**

The city's budget has grown by over \$20 billion in the past 8 years. The "pandemic shortfall" seems to presume that a smaller budget means a reduction in services, but it doesn't have to.

I believe in taxing the wealthy. I believe that the wealthy are willing to pay more in taxes with a clear rationale and defined use of funds. The process and reasoning for tax increases must be transparent to garner support. But tax increases are controlled by the State, requiring a productive working relationship between the mayor and the governor. Other tax changes need to happen at the Federal level; for example, carried interest should be taxed like any other income and corporate taxes need to return to historical norms. Hugely profitable corporations like Amazon and Apple should be unable to avoid paying income taxes.

In order to protect our small businesses locally, I will freeze an increase on taxes and other fees on small businesses, extend a two-year eviction moratorium for these small businesses, and extend street dining programs until the end of 2022.

3. What kinds of businesses and commercial activities do you expect to attract to the city? How?

Small business is the engine of economic growth. New York City will become the best place to start and grow a small business in partnership with all of the abundant resources we have in the city to do this. The creative industries will be a major component of this growth.

4. Do you expect your administration to rely more on virtual (remote) activity that could lower or eliminate the need for the city to rent and maintain large office spaces. For example, adjudicating Traffic Court summonses remotely to reduce the need for courtrooms.

Yes. I am the only candidate who has actually designed and implemented such a digital solution for the government.

TRANSPORTATION

1. How will you address the issues of MTA cost overruns, inflated overtime, and inefficiencies?

The MTA is controlled by the governor. The mayor has to be a vocal advocate for fiscal responsibility in the MTA, as well as provide flexible alternative transportation modes.

2. Do you have any plans for changes to the current transit system, roadways, parking, bike lanes, etc.?

I support making NYC a more bike-friendly city, and I believe that reasonable enforcement of bicycle traffic is key to that. In European cities where bicycles are the primary mode of transportation, hordes of cyclists stop at red lights and wait patiently for green while pedestrians cross. There is no reason we cannot have this too, but we need the infrastructure first.

I also support open streets in key areas where foot traffic is heavy, similar to European cities. Lyft and Uber receipts show us that the most common routes traveled by car are routes between boroughs, highlighting the need for improved inter-borough transit options and supporting micro-commutes. And with more public options outside of subways and buses - like bikes, scooters, walkable streets, and other creative options - we will reduce car use and carbon emissions in the city.

CAMPAIGN CONTACT

If our members have any additional questions or wish to get involved, what is your campaign contact information?

art@chang.nyc (Candidate) or danielle@chang.nyc (Campaign Manager)

THE VRDC THANKS YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSES.