



**THE VILLAGE REFORM
DEMOCRATIC CLUB**

Questions for 2021 City Council District 2

Responses for Candidate (name): Carlina Rivera

1. What do you believe are the most important responsibilities of a Councilmember and how will/have you handled them?

I describe the responsibilities of a Council Member as first and foremost a dedication to your constituency, so it is important you have a great team to respond to constituent services. In addition, oversight and investigation, introducing and passing legislation, and land use decisions are all very important as well. That said, I would say negotiating the City's budget with the Mayor and approving its adoption is the most significant power as it affects the services, projects and initiatives that affect all New Yorkers.

2. What do you believe are the major issues facing this district and how would you address them?

Right now the biggest issue facing our district and New York City is equity in healthcare, especially as we roll out the vaccination process. As Chair of the Committee on Hospitals, I have held our health and hospital systems accountable for protecting frontline workers and vulnerable New Yorkers during this pandemic. I have been working to make the implementation of NYC Care, a free/low-cost supplement to our costly healthcare system a success, and I will continue to push for the passage of the NY Health Act in Albany. I am constantly monitoring to make sure the COVID vaccine is accessible to all, and that through all of these experiences, we work to dismantle the systemic racism present in our healthcare sector.

3. Regarding the Councilmember's role in Community Boards, how would you make the appointment/reappointment process more fair and transparent? Will you support Community Board recommendations on land use, licensing, etc.?

As someone who previously served on her local community board, I hold in great esteem the resolutions passed by the four boards that overlap my district. I also take the recommendation process to the Borough President very seriously, and I try to recommend to the Borough President a balanced mix of seasoned veterans and diverse perspectives. I believe transparency in the process is key, and each applicant should be able to know the underlying reason for the Borough President's decision.

4. What policies do you support to increase the supply of truly affordable housing in the district?
- What are your thoughts about changing the zoning in historic districts?

This is a situation I am facing today with the Soho/Noho rezoning of which I represent a few blocks at the northern end of the proposal's map. Neighborhood context and preserving New York history is important. As we all know, much of this area is already protected under historic districts, and some buildings, like the Merchant's House, are landmarked. These existing protections will remain in the rezoning and ensure that context remains an important part of the discussion in the process. Providing more affordable housing in New York, especially in

neighborhoods central to transit and commerce, is critical, and I am looking to great housing advocates working on this plan, like Cooper Square Committee, to provide recommendations on the community benefits and depth of affordability the rezoning should contain.

- 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?

Yes, I do support this proposal and am willing to start any pilot program within my district. I am hopeful that the new mayor and a city council with a class of progressives enthusiastic for implementing bold ideas will work together to fund initiatives like these to provide more affordable and supportive housing.

- Do you support using MIH with FAR incentives to create affordable housing stock? If so, where and how would this be implemented? If not, why and what could be done instead?

Right now this is one of the tools we have to create affordable housing to address the homelessness crisis. The economics of MIH were originally designed for higher-priced markets to encourage deeper affordability, but even in those areas, we need to make sure the tradeoffs are worth it. Our goal should be to yield the deepest affordability for the most amount of units we can muster. To do this, I have championed legislative proposals that include the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (COPA). COPA would give affordable housing and community developers a right of first refusal on any new properties listed in the hypercompetitive New York City real estate market. This will give non-profit affordable housing developers, Community Land Trusts, and other organizations critical time and flexibility they need to put together the financing needed to make a fair market offer on these properties. The need for this legislation can be seen in the wide range of groups in support - planning organizations, major and minor players in the non-profit affordable housing sector, Community Land Trusts, and neighborhood advocates.

- How would you determine affordability, AMI bands, etc.?

AMI bands for determining affordability are necessary to work within existing federal affordable housing programs like Section 8, but the City should do more to target communities most in need of housing by incentivizing housing for these groups - such as more supportive housing, more senior housing and more housing for young working-class families hoping to raise their family in New York. In addition, laws like COPA can encourage deeply affordable housing development, as well as affordable commercial spaces, help to partner nonprofits with responsible seasoned for-profit housing developers and is just one piece of a larger platform to approach land use planning comprehensively.

5. What is your position on the new environmental plan to build a sea wall along the east side of Manhattan extending from Montgomery Street to East 25th Street to offset flooding threats? Do you feel this plan will adequately protect your district and the services citizens rely upon, including East Side hospitals?

Thinking back to the trauma and devastation of Hurricane Sandy, I remember calling seniors, making sure they were ready for the storm, and delivering meals and medication to trapped residents in NYCHA when the 8 feet of water on Ave C finally receded. But the truth was no one was ready - and we can't let that happen again. The East Side Coastal Resiliency Project (ESCR) is the first of its kind in the City, a project that will protect our communities for the next 100 years against the effects of climate change and provide a world-class park and recreation area for everyone. This is the only fully funded protection plan in NYC, and it is moving forward despite the fiscal crisis, because we fought to guarantee those budgetary commitments. The design of the park is in line with what the community always wanted, particularly NYCHA residents, which was to keep our

ballfields, tennis courts, and amenities in place, to secure better bridges for the people with disabilities (including over the ConEd “pinch point”), plant ecologically appropriate trees and shrubs and include investments in other nearby park spaces as the park construction is phased in. This plan will not only protect the +100,000 who live in the floodplain but includes design for flood protections for East 25th to East 30th Streets, connecting with flood barriers for our east side hospitals, including Bellevue and the VA hospital.

6. Would you change anything about public schools in the district? What are your thoughts on alternative schools such as charter and private options, including funding, co-location, etc.?

The history of inequitable funding of our public school system is something I have tried to address as a Council Member, and something I hope will change. To help bring in resources, I have helped organize countless informational and educational meetings including ones on integration, Census, and COVID-19. I have brought public and private partners into schools serving low-income neighborhoods in order to support families with food and personal items. Using Council discretionary funds and as part of the Participatory Budgeting process, I have funded tech, accessibility upgrades, park spaces, multipurpose studios, gymnasiums, security measures, and day-time, afterschool and weekend programs ranging from the academic to culinary, arts, and programming for students with disabilities in schools across the district. Currently, charter schools have taken funding from our public school system, which should be our first priority when it comes to funding education. I am opposed to co-locations, where retrofitting or upgrading schools for the use of these co-locations can become costly, and every dollar invested in our public school system is precious and must be used to enhance the quality of the education our students receive.

7. While recognizing the needs of bicyclists, what will you do to help ensure the safety of the public - especially our senior citizens? Would you be in favor of a licensing and insurance requirement for electric bicycles that can exceed NYC speed limits and why/why not?

I have been working to create a comprehensive and responsible network of infrastructure because it is proven that protected bike lanes protect both cyclists and pedestrians. I believe the city can do more to enforce speed and bicycle safety laws and hold businesses accountable for ensuring their workers adhere to the rules of the road. Creating a safe pedestrian-bicycle culture is critical as we move to using more bicycles to deliver our meals, medication and groceries to reduce traffic and emissions.

8. The next few years may see a drastic decrease in the amount of funds which the City Council will have available to allocate. How will you ensure that constituent needs are met?

We are facing the worst fiscal crisis in decades, and since our last budget, we saw cuts to programs like geriatric mental health programs and homelessness prevention that I believe should be restored, especially in light of the mental and economic toll taken by the pandemic. Tough choices lie ahead, but I have worked diligently for the past three years to visit and review many local programs, looking at both data and anecdotal evidence of their success. Many pivoted successfully to reach individuals during this pandemic and many have prepared diligently to be ready to open to the public once New Yorkers are vaccinated. As a leader in the Council, I am prepared to fight for those programs. I have approached every budget even pre-pandemic with priorities that start with the basic human rights of access to food, housing, healthcare and education. This includes taking care of our seniors, LGBTQ community and people with disabilities.

9. What are your positions during the COVID-19 pandemic on rent relief and considerations for landlords who are still paying the full amount of taxes owed?

Recent estimates show that New York tenants owe over \$1 billion in unpaid rent as the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to rage. We're poised to be dealing with an unprecedented eviction crisis later this year, one the likes our City has never seen before. In order to address this imminent reality and with an understanding of this concern of taxes due, it's imperative that our federal and state governments take action to support tenants and small landlords financially during the pandemic. There are currently bills in the State legislature that I support which will provide much needed rent relief while assisting struggling small property owners who are faced with mounting mortgages, tax and utility payments.

10. Please provide contact info for questions, to get involved with your campaign, etc. My re-election campaign, Carlina 2021, can be reached at community@carlinarivera.com.

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