



Greenwich Village

SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

232 East 11th Street
New York, NY 10003

City Council District 1 Candidate Questionnaire

Please email the completed form or any questions to andrew@gvshp.org

No character/word limit

Candidate Name

Margaret Chin

1. Do you support the Small Business Jobs Survival Act? Though the bill has support from a majority of City Councilmembers, it has never been given a hearing, much less a vote. If you support it, what have you done or would you do to help get the bill a hearing and vote? If you don't support it, why not?

I support the SBJSA. I believe this legislation should receive a City Council hearing to give advocates and the public an opportunity to discuss the growing crisis facing our small business owners, employees and neighbors who rely on the vital services these establishments provide. I was lead sponsor of the bill in the last Council session, a co-sponsor this session, and I will always be an advocate in the Council to push this important legislation forward.

2. What other measures have you supported/would you support to help small businesses survive in our neighborhood? Would you support a special zoning district for certain areas that limits the size of stores and the number or placement of chain stores?

I am a strong supporter of a repeal of the Commercial Rent Tax, which has caused many small businesses to close below 96th Street and is a burden to many others who struggle to remain open. I am in support of special zoning districts, particularly in SoHo where illegal large-scale retail is a growing threat to this historic and iconic City neighborhood. As Council member, I have helped lead efforts to urge the Department of Buildings to enforce the law against large-scale retail, and at a City Council hearing I recently expressed my strong opposition to plans for a 45,000-square-foot retail space at 462 Broadway.

3. Many preservationists and New Yorkers feel that the Landmarks Preservation Commission has become increasingly lax in its regulation of historic districts and landmarked properties, in that it has allowed increasingly out-of-context changes to landmarked buildings and new construction within historic districts. Do you agree with this assessment, and if so, what have you done/would you do as Councilmember to help address this?

I see a troubling trend of out-of-context changes appearing in historic districts in our communities, and have expressed those concerns to Commission members. I strongly believe that not only the letter, but the spirit of landmarks regulations must be honored to protect the integrity of our historic neighborhoods. I will continue to push LPC to honor those regulations and act forcefully to protect and expand our historic districts.

4. The Mayor has made clear that he is opposed to any rezoning of any area UNLESS it involves a very significant upzoning (increase in allowable size of development), EVEN if the proposed rezoning would introduce affordable housing incentives or requirements where none currently exist. What do you think of this? And if you are not in favor of the Mayor's position, what would you do/have you done as Councilmember about it?

Though I support the Mayor's goal of creating and preserving 200,000 affordable units over the next decade, I strongly believe that every rezoning proposal must maximize the opportunity for advocates and the public to engage and substantively shape proposed changes to their communities. Our City faces a growing crisis of affordability that affects almost every neighborhood. But that reality does not mean that our City should be enforcing a "one size fits all" policy that seeks to upzone areas where such an action is inappropriate or out of character. I believe strongly in using every tool available to promote deeper affordability tailored to neighborhood needs, which includes the rehabilitation and preservation of existing housing stock. Density-linked affordable housing is not the only option. When it comes to any proposal that seeks to rezone a part of my Council District, I will continue to draw from my experience and long record as an effective community activist to fight to give the people a greater voice in decisions that affect themselves and their families.

5. How have you worked/would you work as a City Councilmember to reduce the inordinate influence of the real estate industry over policy in New York City and in city government?

I am a strong supporter of our City's public financing system that allows independent voices to run for public office without being beholden to special interests to fund their campaigns. As a longtime community activist, I could not have launched a successful campaign for City Council without the assistance of this incredibly important program. However, the influence of special interests has persisted in too many quarters of our political system. That is why I supported legislation to reform our system by prohibiting donations above \$400 per year from lobbyists, have City contracts, or who otherwise do business with the City to political nonprofits that are controlled by elected officials.

6. Some, including the Real Estate Board of NY, have tried to make the argument that historic preservation and preserving and promoting affordability are incompatible. Do you agree or disagree with this perspective? Please explain why.

I couldn't disagree more with that argument. We can and must do both. In order to achieve the goal of preserving and creating 200,000 badly needed affordable housing units in the next decade, we must collaborate as elected officials, advocates and the general public to find neighborhood-centric solutions to the growing crisis we face. Arguments like this one are meant to divide our communities precisely at the moment when we need to unite and fight to keep low-income, working families and seniors in the unique and beautiful neighborhoods they helped preserve.

7. Where does/would preserving neighborhood scale, character, and historic resources fit into your priorities, and how have/would you go about achieving it? What obstacles or conflicts have you encountered/would you anticipate, and how have you dealt with/would you deal with those?

I grew up in a tenement in Little Italy as part of a tight-knit community of mostly Italian and Chinese immigrants. That early exposure to different languages and cultures shaped me as a future community leader and public official. Unfortunately, those places and experiences are fast disappearing in our City, along with the historic buildings that housed generations of families and rooted our neighborhoods in time and place. Preserving the scale, character and history of our communities remains a top priority for me as Council Member, and I remain committed to strengthening and expanding protections across my Council District -- from TriBeCa to the Lower East Side. To accomplish these goals, I don't see obstacles or conflicts in our way -- just a great amount of work to be done to bring people together. As someone with the experience and record of getting things done, I believe I am the right person to rally advocates, property owners and the public around the effort to protect our neighborhoods.