

Candidate Statement, Marni Halasa, City Council, District 3

My name is Marni Halasa and I'm running for the third council district. I am a lawyer, journalist, former small business owner of a coffee shop and figure skating coach. I am running because we are in a crisis and there is a failure of leadership. I don't need to tell you that in District 3, we are in a homelessness crisis, a low income housing crisis, an unemployment crisis and a small business closure crisis. And we're in the situation because City Council has emphasized gentrification without any worry for a social safety net. And I'm running to restore that social safety net.

As someone outside the political establishment, I offer real solutions to problems that have been ignored for so long. And I believe that at this moment in time, I am the right choice for the Council because the current administration has demonstrated they are incapable of responding to the needs of average people, due to the role of money in politics. And I am here to change that.

Even though I am a daughter of Jordanian and Phillipino immigrants that came to this country, I am not running on identity, I am running on policy — on a genuine economic agenda that can put our city back on track.

So what are my ideas?

I offer solutions like rent vouchers for tenants and small businesses that been hit hard by the pandemic and cannot pay the rent. The rent voucher -- if accepted by a landlord — would then become the new legally-regulated rent, which in turn, would reset market rents. This system would eliminate any trigger for eviction so people can stay in their homes.

I also want to repurpose abandoned hotels and empty office buildings into single room occupancies (SROs) with permanent leases for the homeless. With nearly 80,000 people without a home in New York City, this would be an excellent use of vacant space. I'm also here to push existing legislation in the council, the Small Business Jobs Survival Act (SBJSA), which would ensure small businesses get a long-term affordable lease with renewal rights so landlords would not be able to hike up the rents during the lease renewal process. With a majority of support in the council, there is no good reason not have an emergency vote on the SBJSA to protect jobs and vulnerable businesses against displacement — especially since our city lost nearly 1 Million jobs due to the pandemic.

I'm also fighting to keep public housing public. In 2019, I worked with other activists to organize the NYCHA Fulton Houses tenants against RAD, rental assistance demonstration. Evidence shows that developments that are converted to RAD have high evictions rates when compared to non-RAD buildings. My work contributed to stopping the demolition of two public housing buildings in the Chelsea area. Such organizing was significant because our failure would have set a city-wide precedent for demolishing NYCHA buildings. I continue to work with tenants, helping them organize protests and social media campaigns that call out elected officials for not doing more to protect tenants against such privatization schemes.

Real leadership is dealing with issues, not ignoring them.

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