

What We Need to Hear About New York's Recovery: A Wish List for Candidates

By Wendy Diller

Three Parks is maintaining an ongoing and fruitful dialog with candidates for political leadership positions about fiscal issues. Given the significance of this year's elections, we need to press candidates as hard as possible beyond the slogans about their vision for New York's economic recovery.

This means asking about complicated, sometimes conflicting priorities, such as taxing the rich while also encouraging businesses and residents to stay here. Job creation policies that promote a healthy and just working environment while addressing the concerns of employers who are weighing their options on whether to remain in New York or relocate

are critical to preserving the economic foundations that New Yorkers rely on.

I am hoping that New Yorkers in general, most of whom do not keep up with politics in depth, can be reminded of the importance of this year's elections to their future. Moreover, with the advent of ranked-choice voting, all New Yorkers need to know more about the nuances of policy proposals beyond slogans as they consider their options for ranking not just one, but up to five candidates in order of preference.

So I've compiled a list of questions that I hope will help shed light on candidates' priorities. Our questions should include the following:

- What is your comprehensive vision for New York City's economic recovery in ways that push hard for economic equality as well as job creation, corporate civic responsibility and community

engagement,
entrepreneurship and
sustainability?

- Do you support proposals for increasing taxes on the super-wealthy?
- How would you use tax policy to encourage this vision and a more equitable recovery for all New Yorkers without chasing companies away? What are your thoughts on corporate tax breaks as incentives? As an example, how would you have handled the Amazon fiasco in Long Island City?
- How do you envision working on economic recovery with various divisions of the private sector? Do you see New York's economic strengths changing as a result of the pandemic, and if so, how would you emphasize the good ways and discourage the bad?
- Is it possible to have a government-led WPA program of the kind that the federal government initiated during the Great Depression,

especially for small business owners and groups in the arts, who have taken such a huge hit in the pandemic?

- To what extent is borrowing an option and a risk for NYC?
- What should be done about real estate issues? Of course a moratorium on residential evictions is a must, but it also wreaks havoc on small landlords – and on big ones too, although they can better withstand a temporary dip.
- What do you see as the root cause of the vacant storefront crisis (beyond the pandemic and online retailers) and how will you address it? Do you adhere to the belief that landlords are keeping stores vacant because they do not want to fill them with tenants that pay lower rents? What can be done to put these storefronts to work?

Candidates must present visions that balance the need to address tax inequalities and the importance of “giving back” versus proposals

that stimulate job creation and corporate civic responsibility – visions that support the reasons why New York flourishes– *i.e.*, talent, innovation and diversity. Our next mayor and other electeds need to explain how they can make this happen.