

HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL  
232 EAST 11TH STREET  
NEW YORK, NY 10003



THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL DEVELOPED  
THE LEAGUE OF PRESERVATION VOTERS  
INITIATIVE TO BRING COMMUNITIES AND  
ELECTED OFFICIALS TOGETHER TO PRESERVE  
HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS.

# Know Your City Council

HOW THE NEW YORK  
CITY COUNCIL FUNCTIONS



Election Dates

**PRIMARY: SEPTEMBER 12**  
**GENERAL: NOVEMBER 7**



**THIS VOTER GUIDE  
EXPLAINS THREE MAIN  
ASPECTS OF THE  
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
AND DETAILS HOW  
THEY AFFECT YOU,  
YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD  
AND PRESERVATION.**

DESIGN: ONCE-FUTURE OFFICE

# BUDGET

“Through the budget, the Council establishes priorities, allocates resources and sets the policy agenda for the year. It is the single most important municipal document that affects the lives of New Yorkers. While the Mayor proposes the city's spending priorities for the upcoming year, the Council has final budget approval powers.”<sup>1</sup>

City Council Members provide funding to community groups and non-profit organizations for education and outreach—talks, tours, guidebooks, and school programs. Many local organizations depend on funding from their Council Member for services ranging from advocacy to children's education. The Council also votes on the amounts and purpose of funding for agencies such as the Landmarks Preservation Commission\* and the Parks Department.

\*THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION IS THE OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR UPHOLDING THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS LAW.

# LAND USE

“Under the 1990 Charter revision, the Council acquired the power to review land use issues and approve zoning changes, housing and urban renewal plans, community development plans and the disposition of city-owned property. This power gives the Council the most significant voice in the growth and development of our city.”<sup>2</sup>

Preservation is land use policy. Scale and context are key aspects of a neighborhood's character. How people feel and react to their neighborhood is a principal concern for community members. Without an informed and supportive City Council, neighborhood development will be driven by speculative developers seeking maximum profit. The City Council often plays a decisive role in planning decisions affecting a whole neighborhood or a single site. Council approval is required to affirm the Landmarks Preservation Commission's designations.

# LEGISLATION



“As the legislative body, the Council makes and passes the laws governing the city.”<sup>3</sup>

New York City has the strongest local preservation law in the country. In the 50 years since its passage, the City Council has amended that law several times to both expand and limit its reach. The City Council has empowered the Landmarks Preservation Commission to protect interiors and has limited its deliberative timeline. The City Council has enabled the Landmarks Preservation Commission to better enforce the law, and worked to exempt religious and non-profit institutions from it. The Council has the power to change the rules to give or deny citizens a voice in land use and development decisions that affect their lives.