



Furhan Ahmad for AD 66
Responses to DID Candidate Survey

1. Why this seat, why now?

a) What motivates you to run for AD-66 at this moment, and what in your background best prepares you to represent the district effectively in Albany?

I'm running in AD-66 because this district sits at the intersection of housing pressure, mental health and substance use crises, climate risk, and Albany decisions directly shape how those challenges are experienced on the ground. With long-time leadership stepping aside, this is a moment for representation grounded in real world judgment.

I've spent my adult life in public service as an EMT, firefighter, and police officer responding when systems failed people. Those experiences shaped how I understand government's role: not as ideology, but as systems that must work before people reach crisis. I'm running to bring that practical, accountability driven perspective to Albany.

b) How have you been involved in the community/district over the past two years? Name some of the organizations, community work, coalitions, etc., that you've taken part in.

Over the past two years, I have been serving full time as a New York City firefighter, which has limited my ability to participate in formal political or civic organizations. My primary focus during this period has been frontline public service and mentoring.

In my role, I've focused heavily on training and mentoring younger firefighters helping them develop the skills, judgment, and community-centered mindset needed to serve New Yorkers safely and professionally. That mentorship work is a form of community involvement: it directly shapes how public servants show up for residents in moments of crisis, including here in Lower Manhattan.

In addition, my work as a firefighter has brought me into regular contact with residents across the city, including within this district, responding to emergencies that reflect broader systemic challenges such as housing instability, mental health crises, aging infrastructure, and climate-related risks. Those experiences have informed how I listen to constituents and how I think about the role of government in preventing crises before they occur. As I transition from full time service into this campaign, I'm intentionally deepening my direct civic engagement across AD-66 to complement that frontline experience with sustained community presence.

2. District triage.

What are the three most urgent issues facing AD-66 specifically (not New York State in general), and why do they rise above others?

1. Mental health and Substance use Crisis response. Lower Manhattan experiences a high concentration of mental health and substance use emergencies in public spaces, transit, and housing settings. The core gaps are operational insufficient treatment capacity, weak hospital to community handoffs, and crisis systems that default to ERs or law enforcement without follow through

2. Affordable Housing & Tenant Protection for rent stabilized tenants, Mitchell Lama residents, and seniors on fixed incomes. Rising costs, slow repairs, and regulatory gaps threaten housing stability for long-term residents.

3. In AD-66, aging in place depends on stable housing costs, safe streets, and access to health care. Many older residents live on fixed incomes in rent-stabilized housing, where programs like SCRIE and DRIE are essential tools that prevent displacement by freezing rent increases. However, enrollment barriers, lack of outreach, and administrative complexity leave too many eligible residents unprotected. State policy can strengthen aging in place by improving outreach, simplifying enrollment, and ensuring these protections actually reach the people they are designed to serve. These issues rise above others in AD-66 because they are immediate, interconnected, and determine whether residents can remain safely housed and supported.

3. Intellectual honesty.

Name one position you held in the last five years that you have since changed your mind about. What evidence, experience, or reasoning caused the shift?

Earlier in my career, I believed that calling 911 was generally a sufficient response to mental health and substance use emergencies. Experience on the front lines changed that view. I saw that emergency response alone especially when it defaults to police or emergency rooms often stabilizes a moment without addressing the underlying crisis.

What works is a humane, health-centered continuum: trained mental health professionals responding to crises, followed by access to 24-hour stabilization, treatment, and recovery options with real follow-through. Without continuity of care, people cycle through crises repeatedly. That experience convinced me that relying on police to resolve health crises is neither effective nor humane.

4. Independence in practice.

What concrete actions in your career demonstrate independence from party leadership, political machines, or entrenched interests?

In my career, independence meant exercising judgment and ethics even when institutional pressure pushed in other directions. For example, during my brief time as a police officer, stop question and frisk practices were broadly encouraged. I chose not to engage in stops that I did not believe were legally or constitutionally justified.

5. Campaign finance and ethics.

What specific reforms would you champion to strengthen New York's campaign finance and ethics system (e.g., coordination rules, disclosure, enforcement, ethics oversight)? Please be concrete.

I would champion reforms that strengthen enforcement, transparency, and independence. That includes tightening coordination standards between candidates and outside groups, closing remaining bundling and disclosure loopholes, and giving ethics and election enforcement bodies real audit and subpoena power with clear timelines.

I also support stronger revolving-door restrictions, real-time and machine-readable disclosure so voters can actually follow the money, and safeguards to protect public financing systems from abuse. Campaign finance rules only work if they are enforceable and understandable.

6. Outside employment.

Should state legislators be allowed to hold outside employment? If yes, under what limits (type of work, income caps, conflicts rules, disclosure)? If no, why not?

Yes with strict limits. Outside employment should be allowed only when it is fully disclosed, capped, and clearly separated from industries that interact with or are regulated by the state. Legislators should not engage in lobbying, consulting, or work that creates conflicts of interest. Public service should also be accessible to people who are not independently wealthy. Limited, well regulated outside employment paired with strong enforcement can protect independence without compromising public trust

7. Judicial selection.

Should New York reform how judges are selected, including the judicial convention system for State Supreme Court? If so, how?

Yes. New York should reform its judicial selection system particularly the Supreme Court judicial convention process to increase transparency, merit, and public trust. The current system concentrates power in party leadership and offers little meaningful role for voters.

I support moving toward a more open process, such as contested elections or a hybrid model that combines merit screening with voter choice, while protecting judicial independence through fundraising limits and clear qualification standards.

8. Strengthening democracy.

a) Should ranked-choice voting be expanded beyond NYC? Why or why not? (in brief)

Yes. Ranked choice voting better reflects voter preferences, encourages coalition building, and reduces incentives for negative campaigning. Any statewide expansion should be paired with voter education and transparent implementation.

b) Are there any changes to the New York Constitution you support? Why?

Yes. I support limited updates to the New York Constitution where outdated rules make it harder for government to function effectively especially around local decision making, voting access, and climate resilience. The Constitution should protect fundamental rights while still allowing government to respond to modern challenges through narrow, transparent changes.

9. Zoning and housing supply.

Do you support statewide zoning reforms to increase housing production (e.g., by-right housing, transit-oriented upzoning, legalization of multifamily housing)?

If yes, what model and guardrails do you favor?

If no, what scalable alternative do you propose?

Yes. I support statewide zoning reforms to increase housing production, particularly near transit and job centers. The housing shortage is regional and cannot be solved one neighborhood at a time. State action should come with guardrails: affordability requirements, anti-displacement protections, labor standards, and infrastructure coordination. Local input should shape design not function as a veto over housing that meets objective standards. This includes transit oriented development standards, by right approval for multifamily housing that meets objective rules, and legalization of modest multifamily housing paired with clear affordability requirements, anti displacement protections, labor standards, and infrastructure coordination.

10. State vs. local authority. (1,479/1,500)

When, if ever, should the state override local zoning and land-use rules?

The state should override local zoning when local decisions cause clear regional harm such as constraining housing supply, reinforcing exclusion, or undermining climate and transit goals. If a project meets objective statewide standards for safety, affordability, and environmental review, local discretion should not function as an indefinite veto. The goal is alignment, not elimination, of local control.

11. Preservation vs. homes.

How should New York balance historic preservation with housing needs in Manhattan?

If a project meets objective standards but faces organized neighborhood opposition, how would you approach the decision?

Historic preservation and housing are not mutually exclusive. Decisions should be guided by objective standards, equity, and public benefit not volume of opposition alone.

If a project meets clear standards but faces organized opposition, I would weigh preservation value against housing need, climate impact, and displacement risk using transparent criteria.

12. Rent regulation philosophy.

Is New York's housing situation best served by expanding tenant protections and rent control regulations, reforming them, or rolling them back? What evidence informs your view, and what would change your mind?

New York's housing crisis is best served by strong tenant protections paired with targeted reform not rollback. Rent regulation prevents displacement, particularly for seniors and long-term tenants, but it must be paired with enforcement, capital investment, and housing production. I would change my view if credible evidence showed that rollbacks reduce displacement without increasing homelessness or rent burden. To date, the evidence points in the opposite direction.

13. Elizabeth Street Garden

Elizabeth Street Garden is now officially designated parkland. Under the public trust doctrine, land formally dedicated as parkland cannot be sold, leased, or used for non-park purposes without express legislative authorization. If elected, would you vote to remove Elizabeth Street Garden as parkland if that vote came up? Why or why not? (In brief)

No. I would not vote to remove Elizabeth Street Garden's parkland designation. Once land is formally dedicated as parkland, the public trust doctrine should be respected.

Public space is essential public health infrastructure especially in dense neighborhoods and housing solutions should not depend on weakening established public trust protections.

14. Making it easier to get stuff done.

a) Briefly state your diagnosis of what most impedes housing delivery in New York and how that diagnosis informs your policy approach.

The biggest barrier is not safety or environmental standards themselves, but layered discretionary approvals, duplicative reviews, and unclear accountability. Projects that meet the law still face years of delay, driving up costs and reducing supply.

b) Name one specific approval, review, discretionary power, or program you would limit, reform, or eliminate—for housing or transit—while preserving safety and environmental review.

I would limit discretionary land use approvals for housing projects that already meet objective zoning, affordability, and environmental standards. Review should be rigorous up front but predictable once standards are met.

15. Disruption tradeoffs.

Would you support policies that allow more short-term construction disruption (noise, street closures, visual impact) in exchange for faster and cheaper delivery? What limits would you impose?

Yes with limits. Short term construction disruption can be justified for long-term public benefit, but only with enforceable timelines, strict noise and accessibility protections, and clear communication. Disruption should be temporary and managed not open ended.

16. Infrastructure cost crisis.

New York infrastructure projects often cost multiples of peer regions. What specific reforms would you support to reduce costs and timelines (e.g., standardization, procurement reform, in-house capacity, limiting late scope changes, narrowing veto points)? What tradeoffs are you willing to accept?

New York's infrastructure costs are driven by fragmented oversight, late design changes, over customization, and weak in house capacity not standards. I support standardizing designs, locking scope early, rebuilding public sector expertise, modernizing procurement, and publishing clear cost benchmarks.

The tradeoff is less bespoke design and less late stage political tinkering worth it to deliver projects faster and cheaper.

17. MTA governance and accountability. (1,302/1,500)

What is one governance or accountability reform you would pursue for the MTA (board structure, transparency, capital oversight, procurement, labor rules, or operations), and what problem would it solve?

I would strengthen capital project accountability by requiring clear timelines, cost benchmarks, and public reporting, with designated leadership responsible for delivery. When projects miss targets, there should be mandatory public explanations and corrective plans.

18. Congestion pricing.

What, if any, specific changes do you support to the existing congestion pricing model, and why?

I support the goals of congestion pricing reducing traffic, improving air quality, and funding public transit but I do not support the current implementation.

As designed, congestion pricing places a new cost burden on residents and workers without sufficient guarantees around equity, accountability, or delivery of promised transit improvements. In a district like AD-66, where many people already rely on transit but also face rising housing and living costs, policy design matters as much as intent.

Before moving forward, I would want clearer safeguards for low and moderate income New Yorkers, stronger transparency and accountability at the MTA around how funds are used, and measurable commitments to service improvements riders can actually see. Without those conditions, I am concerned that the policy risks eroding public trust while failing to deliver its full benefits.

19. Street safety authority.

Would you grant NYC broader authority to use automated enforcement (speeding, blocked crosswalks, bus and bike lanes), subject to due-process and privacy safeguards? What else can be done to improve street safety for pedestrians in New York?

Yes. I support broader use of automated enforcement for speeding, blocked crosswalks, and bus and bike lanes paired with due process protections, data minimization, and privacy safeguards. Street design improvements should accompany enforcement, especially to protect seniors, people with disabilities, and children.

20. State vs. city climate power.

Should the state remove obstacles to city-led climate policies (e.g., building electrification, performance standards, clean-energy siting)? Where should statewide uniformity prevail, and where should local flexibility apply?

Yes. The state should remove obstacles that prevent cities from advancing climate policies beyond statewide minimums, particularly in building standards and resilience. Statewide uniformity should remain where systems are shared such as grid reliability and environmental justice protections.

21. Climate strategy.

Should New York incorporate explicit carbon pricing (tax or fee), or rely primarily on regulation and targeted investments? Why? (in brief)

New York should rely primarily on regulation and targeted public investment to reduce emissions in the near term, because those tools deliver predictable results and protect vulnerable communities. Carbon pricing can be a useful long term tool, but only if it includes strong safeguards such as rebates or offsets to prevent regressive impacts on low and moderate income households.

22. Environmental review reform.

Should New York's environmental review process explicitly assess the environmental costs of *not* proceeding with a project (such as increased emissions, sprawl, or displacement) alongside the impacts of development? If so, what changes would you support?

Yes. Environmental review should assess the environmental and social costs of not proceeding with a project such as increased emissions or displacement alongside development impacts. This improves decision making without weakening environmental protections.

23. Schools: outcomes vs. process.

How should Albany approach NYC public school governance, funding formulas, class-size mandates, and charter school policy to prioritize student outcomes and family needs? Where should flexibility increase, and what accountability should accompany it?

Albany should prioritize student outcomes and equity, not micromanagement. That means fair funding, transparency around results, and flexibility for educators to meet student needs.

Charter schools should meet the same accountability and civil rights standards as district schools, with decisions guided by evidence not ideology.

24. Mental health and addiction capacity.

What state-level changes would you support to expand the supply of effective mental health and addiction care in lower Manhattan, beyond simply creating new programs?

The core issue is capacity and continuity. I would expand 24/7 crisis stabilization and treatment options, strengthen the workforce, and require clear follow through from crisis response to ongoing care.

Funding and oversight should focus on measurable outcomes reduced repeat crises and successful treatment engagement.

25. Critical health infrastructure.

Lower Manhattan lost a major hospital (Mount Sinai Beth Israel) after years of financial struggles and legal challenges, despite efforts by community advocates to keep it open. What specific actions should state government take to ensure that critical health care access is preserved in high-need neighborhoods when major hospitals seek to close? How would you tailor these actions to suit the medical needs of downtown Manhattan? Be concrete.

The state must intervene earlier when hospitals seek to close requiring independent impact assessments and enforceable service replacement plans before approvals. In Lower Manhattan, access to care should be treated as essential infrastructure, not optional.

26. Public order and civil liberties.

What role should **New York State law, funding, and oversight** play in keeping streets, transit, and public spaces safe and functional, and how should the state set standards for policing and public safety that protect civil liberties while allowing effective enforcement?

At the state level, public order should be supported through systems and standards, not over reliance on criminal enforcement. This includes expanding non-police crisis response models, setting clear statewide standards for when enforcement is appropriate, and investing in outreach, and public space management so enforcement is not the default response. The state should also require transparency and reporting on enforcement outcomes, with strong civil liberties protections and oversight to ensure actions are targeted, lawful, and effective.

27. Oversight muscle.

What is **one** area where the Assembly should use oversight more aggressively, and what would be the first hearing, audit, or information request you would push for?

The Assembly should more aggressively oversee mental health, addiction, and hospital capacity. My first action would be hearings on bed loss, ER cycling, and continuity of care failures, particularly in Lower Manhattan.

28. AI, privacy, and civil rights.

As New York increasingly uses AI systems and large-scale data processing in government and the private sector, what guardrails should be required to protect New Yorkers' rights and democratic accountability?

Please discuss your view of the recently enacted RAISE Act, and describe the core principles you would prioritize—such as limits on data use, transparency and oversight for high-risk systems, meaningful notice and human review for consequential decisions, and effective enforcement—along with how those principles should be applied in practice.

I support the core principles of the RAISE Act: limits on data use, transparency for high risk systems, meaningful notice and human review, and real enforcement. AI should not make life altering decisions without accountability.

29. Do you support: Treatment Not Jail Act, prioritizing community-based treatment and services over incarceration.

Yes

30. Do you support: Ending Qualified Immunity (S1991/A4331)

Yes

31. Do you support: Fair & Timely Parole (S7514/A4231A) and Elder Parole (S15A/A3475A)

Yes

32. Do you support: Daniel's Law (S4814/A4697), which would remove police officers as first responders to most mental health and substance use crises and instead deploy trained mental health professionals, peers, and other health workers

Yes

33. Do you support: Any further rollbacks of New York's bail reform laws? If so, please explain (in brief)

No

34. Do you support: Any rollbacks of Raise the Age? If so, please explain (in brief)

No

35. Do you support: Any rollbacks of New York’s discovery reform laws? If so, please explain (in brief)

No

36. Do you support: Eliminate Mandatory Minimums Act — eliminating mandatory minimum sentences, including New York’s two- and three-strike laws, to allow judges to consider individual circumstances

Yes

37. Do you support: Second Look Act — allowing judges to review and reconsider excessive sentences based on demonstrated transformation or changes in law and norms

Yes

38. Do you support: Earned Time Act — expanding and strengthening earned time, good time, and merit time programs to support rehabilitation and family reunification

Yes

39. Do you support: The full decriminalization of sex work? Please explain (in brief)

Decriminalizing consensual adult sex work so that people are not criminalized for their own survival, and so they can access health care, legal protection, and services without fear. At the same time, decriminalization should not mean the absence of rules. Strong enforcement must remain against trafficking, coercion, exploitation, and violence, and policy should address harms to surrounding communities through zoning, public health standards, and community-informed regulation.

40. Constituent accountability.

How will you maintain ongoing, transparent communication with constituents?

I will maintain regular public updates, accessible office hours, multilingual outreach, and clear explanations of my votes and priorities. Constituents should be able to understand not just what I support, but why and have real opportunities to engage and hold me accountable.