



Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2021 CD33 Candidate Questionnaire

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Please answer each of the following questions to the best of your ability:

1) If elected, what would be your top priority in your first term?

My top priority is to make the 33rd district carbon neutral. We recently released a 10 point plan that tackles the largest sources of emissions in our district: buildings, electricity, transportation and waste. The plan is comprised of 53 concrete initiatives on how we can electrify and retrofit our buildings, prioritize efficiency upgrades for the 33rd District's seven NYCHA developments, mandate composting and recycling to reach Zero Waste, reimagine our transportation network to reduce dependence on cars, and other bold and necessary solutions.

If I'm lucky enough to be elected, our District Office will serve as a green organizing and education hub, bringing the community together and launching outreach efforts in collaboration with the impressive climate activists who have laid the groundwork to tackle these issues. Through dynamic outreach and organizing, every resident of the 33rd will have access to clear, compelling, actionable information that will enable them to reduce their carbon footprint.

With 53 specific policy solutions and a community centered organizing model, we have a serious, bold plan to help tenants organize their buildings to demand retrofits, support neighbors in launching community solar campaigns, and connect NYCHA residents to green jobs.

The climate crisis is the existential crisis of our time. There is no greater or more urgent issue facing us and future generations, but big changes are often born of small beginnings. We don't have to wait for someone else to act - we can make a difference on the ground in our neighborhoods in the 33rd.

2) What personal and/or professional experiences do you believe make you uniquely qualified to run for Borough President City Council? Attach resume or CV if desired.

I have never been afraid to take on powerful interests, from machine bosses to real estate developers to fossil fuel companies. In 2008, I helped found New Kings Democrats, and I helped lead the charge in challenging the corrupt Brooklyn Democratic Party. Two years later I won an upset election for Democratic District Leader (50th Assembly District covering Greenpoint and Williamsburg) to demand transparency, accountability, and integrity in Brooklyn politics. While District Leader is a volunteer position, it provided a platform to effect real change in my community. We attracted a supermarket to a food desert and secured more than 90% of the jobs to residents of public housing. We converted multiple empty lots into thriving community gardens. And we successfully advocated for the permanent extension of the G train deeper into Brooklyn.



I have spent most of my career as a public servant in New York City government. For a decade, I was given opportunities to create changes I believed in and to challenge policies I opposed. I have seen the underbelly of government and I know that getting big things done requires tenacity, creativity, and unwavering values. I have fought hard to deliver for New Yorkers who always seem to be overlooked by our elected officials. In 2014, I led the design and implementation of IDNYC, which can now be found in the wallets of over 1 million New Yorkers - providing the first U.S. government issued photo identification for many of our city's 600,000 undocumented residents. For "unbanked" New Yorkers, I negotiated the creation of safe, affordable bank accounts that have benefited thousands of people. I've worked tirelessly to open shelters and supportive housing developments for people experiencing homelessness, and I have successfully advanced more protected bicycle lanes and busways.

I now work at St. Nicks Alliance as the Chief Strategic Officer, which is the largest social services organization in the northern part of the 33rd and where we run job training and placement programs, provide early childhood and afterschool programs, offer quality senior services, and organize and empower tenants.

As a lifelong resident of the 33rd Council District, I have been fortunate to be a part of the organizations and institutions that make Brooklyn special. I have served as a board member of Community Board 2, the Brooklyn Public Library, IMPACCT (an affordable housing and tenant organizing group), and more.

This district has always been and I hope always will be my home. It is where I played t-ball, had my bar mitzvah, and graduated from high school. I have entirely too much Brooklyn pride and I want to be the 24/7/365 problem solver to make a real difference in our neighborhoods.

3) List all of your endorsements, including but not limited to elected officials, unions, political clubs and community-based organizations.

Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, Senator Julia Salazar, Senator Jabari Brisport, Cynthia Nixon, Zephyr Teachout, Working Families Party, TA Presidents of all 7 NYCHA developments in the 33rd District, United Federation of Teachers, 32BJ SEIU, Communications Workers of America District 1, District Council 37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO, Hotel Trades Council, AFL-CIO, New York State Nurses Association, Teamsters Local 202, VOCAL-NY, Lambda Independent Democrats, NY Communities for Change, Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club, Churches United for Fair Housing, Independent Neighborhood Democrats

4) What, if any, groups or industries will you not accept campaign contributions from? If any, please note specifically whose money you will not accept.

We capped all contributions at \$250 to ensure no large donors or special interests would hold sway on this campaign. Indeed, we have not taken a penny of money from special interests, including the real estate industry, fossil fuel companies, corporate lobbyists and PACs.

5) How do you propose helping NYC recover from the COVID pandemic and resulting economic recession, particularly given the projected shortfall in city revenue?

Revitalizing NYC's economy will hinge on saving our small businesses, and sending New Yorkers back to work in quality jobs with benefits

Small businesses, which employ approximately 1.3 million people in New York City, have been devastated during this pandemic. Too many of our favorite small businesses - bars, restaurants, and retail stores - have been forced to close their doors - which threatens the vibrant character of our neighborhoods. The demands



of COVID-19 safety protocols, in conjunction with limited government support, have only exacerbated the challenges of operating a business.

In the 33rd District, the small business landscape has been dark. Many longtime small businesses and anchor community stores have been forced to shutter their doors. On Montague Street, the primary commercial strip where I grew up in Brooklyn Heights, has 20 vacancies on just two blocks. In Greenpoint and Williamsburg, where I have lived for over a decade, there are more than 100 businesses that have closed their doors.

As we begin to see beyond the pandemic, we need a comprehensive strategy to sustain existing, reopen, and open new small businesses. I would focus on three primary areas. Firstly, we need a massive effort to expand access to low-cost capital for new and existing businesses by the New York City Economic Development Corporation and Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) that prioritizes support for women and minority owned businesses. Secondly, we need to streamline bureaucracy to expedite business opening and reduce fines by consolidating siloed, cross agency regulatory efforts with single points of contact that can help entrepreneurs navigate local government and provide free or reduced cost legal services to negotiate lease terms. Thirdly, we need a mixture of new carrots and sticks to proactively drive down commercial rent costs to incent more new small businesses to take the plunge and open up.

New York City is facing double the unemployment rate as the nation as a whole. Disproportionately, women, especially women of color, have been dislocated from the labor force during the pandemic. My background is in workforce development. I formerly served as the Executive Director of the New York City Employment and Training Coalition, which is a member based coalition of 200 community based organizations, union training funds, and community colleges that provide job training and job placement services to hundreds of thousands New Yorkers annually. Even in a difficult economic climate, there are growth areas and more resilient sectors of the economy. Accordingly, we need to invest in job training in those areas that are hiring, such as building services and healthcare.

We also need to encourage more New Yorkers to take advantage of this downturn to sharpen their skills and expand their education. Unfortunately, CUNY is experiencing a decline in enrollment, especially at community colleges. We need to expand subsidies to encourage more New Yorkers to enroll in CUNY to pursue credentials, certificates, and degrees that will position them for quality employment opportunities and significantly enhance their long term earnings potential as the economy begins to come back in 2021.

The 33rd district is the economic center of the borough. I am keen to leverage resources in Downtown Brooklyn, DUMBO, and the Brooklyn Navy Yard to maximize our recovery potential through job creation for local residents, particularly residents from nearby NYCHA developments.

6) What measures would you take to improve educational opportunities for all students in NYC? How do you plan to ensure that all NYC children are able to attend high-quality, integrated schools? Do you support D15's integration plan as it has been implemented? What changes, if any, would you make to the current D15 integration plan?

Our City and State budgets are moral documents. No investment is more consequential than in our public schools. The quality of our public education determines the potential for economic mobility for our youth. For decades, the City and State have severely short changed our public schools as the



Campaign for Fiscal Equity has never been fully achieved. We are owed billions of dollars in State aid and I will actively advocate, along with my counterparts in Albany, to secure the billions of dollars in Foundation Aid we never received. At the local level, I will push for finally attaining 100% Fair Student Funding to ensure an equity-informed approach to resourcing all public schools in New York City. I will work closely with local principals and teachers to regularly visit every school in the district and frequently attend PTA meetings. Engaging directly with school communities about their policy and funding needs will guide my office's priorities in advocating for solutions.

We need to promote and fund community-based organizations that are doing important work to supplement education in our neighborhoods. I am proud to work at St. Nicks Alliance, which offers supplemental literacy training to students and support to parents to help reinforce skills at home. Brooklyn Navy Yard's STEAM center offers opportunities for students to get hands on experience and creates a pipeline for technology and manufacturing jobs.

I would also allocate Council funding to the highest need schools, in order to fill the gaps that their PTAs don't have the resources to fill, and I would work with my colleagues, PTAs, and parents to develop solutions for making PTA giving more equitable. I strongly support redirecting a percentage of funds raised by PTAs at wealthier schools to lower-income schools in other parts of New York City.

I strongly support the recommendations of the School Diversity Advisory Group. When I worked at City Hall, I was proud to help secure diversity planning grants for District 13 and 14. I will actively help advance integration efforts across Districts 13, 14, and 15, which collectively comprise the 33rd Council District. The middle school integration plan in District 15 is a great model that merits emulation in other districts. As it relates to changes to the D15 plan, I do think that DOE should provide additional transportation assistance to 6th grade students that are traversing against the full length of the district from Cobble Hill to Sunset Park.

7) How would you have handled the reopening of schools for the 2020-2021 academic year? How will you prepare for a second wave of this pandemic? How would you propose to ensure that the needs of highly vulnerable children with special needs, who are homeless, come from poor families, and/or live in households without adults who could aid their learning are not left further behind when remote learning has to be relied on?

School reopening, like every aspect of the pandemic response and recovery, must be grounded in equity. With relatively limited in-person school capacity, prioritizing serving students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), students in temporary housing, and English language learners is essential. Beyond high needs populations, I would prioritize in person learning for youngest children.

Remote learning is inherently inequitable, and it is a disgrace that many thousands of students still lack tablets or laptops. We need to dramatically improve the quality of remote learning curricula and ensure that each student is equipped with devices and internet access to help students make the best of this challenging year.

Starting next school year, we need to provide expanded educational supports and extended learning opportunities for kids who have fallen behind as a result of the pandemic to help them catch up from this school year.

With equal urgency, we need to address the systemic factors underpinning the inequitable reopening.



Every classroom must prioritize culturally responsive education to elevate the histories of people of color and other marginalized communities in our curricula. It is vital for our students to learn about the struggles and triumphs of historically marginalized populations here in Brooklyn as well as the places that are major sources of New York City's immigrant populations.

More broadly, to better support historically marginalized student populations, I want to deepen our focus on literacy. By deploying literacy coaches for targeted interventions with students who need support, we can help students with disabilities, students in temporary housing, English Language Learners and others get the support they need at a young age to avoid falling behind, get on a pathway to success, and find joy in learning.

We need to completely eliminate policing in schools. We need to hire more counselors and social workers who are trained in anti-racist principles to provide students the wide-ranging support system they actually need, to take pressure off of teachers and get to the root of challenges that our students are facing. We must implement restorative justice models to replace disciplinary procedures that fortify the school-to-prison pipeline every day.

Finally, we need to dedicate new deeply affordable housing for families exiting the shelter system and we must increase voucher subsidies so homeless families can compete in the rental market. In a city of eight and a half million people, we can and must solve for the housing needs of 13,000 families and sustainably eliminate child homelessness altogether.

8) Do you support allowing non-citizen New York City residents to vote in City-based elections? Why or why not?

Absolutely. There are so many New Yorkers keeping this City running every day, especially during this pandemic, who are entirely disenfranchised from our election system. Their voices are critical to policymaking and need to be heard.

Continuing to expand voting rights is imperative for the integrity of our government. Ensuring everyone has access to the polls is absolutely critical, particularly for addressing pervasive systemic racism and inequality. When Democrats reclaimed control of the State Senate, the legislature was able to dramatically improve New York State's election laws, which were some of the worst in the country. However, there is still work much more work to do to expand access to our elections.

The NYC Council can use its legislative authority to impact how our municipal elections work. I am excited by the introduction of Ranked Choice Voting into the mix this year, and look forward to supporting legislation in the Council that lowers the voting age, extends voting rights to Green Card holders, and expands translation and language access services.

9) Do you support any campaign finance reforms for NYC? If so, please describe.

The New York City Campaign Finance Board system is a national model. I strongly support the matching funds systems and was proud to help design the proposal to expand matching funds from a 6:1 to an 8:1 and increase availability of matching funds earlier in the campaign cycle.

I think we should consider further disincentivizing candidates from opting out of the campaign finance system by expanding matching compensation for competitors in a race where a competitor self finances or does not participate in CFB system.

10) Now that the State government has passed the Reproductive Health Act, what steps would you



have the Council and City Hall take to increase reproductive healthcare access, including maternal healthcare, and to do so equitably?

One of the pillars of this campaign is the expansion of protections and benefits -- including reproductive healthcare -- for all workers. I am committed to lean into the Council's broad legislative authority over worker protection and benefits to ensure that each worker in New York has access to strong healthcare services, including reproductive healthcare, for themselves and their families.

A person's right to choose must never be denied. Every New Yorker should be able to access the birth control they want, whenever they need it. Racial and socioeconomic disparities in reproductive health, similar to public health indicators more broadly, are stark and must be directly addressed.

Expanding access to comprehensive reproductive health counseling and all FDA-approved forms of birth control is a critical priority. When I worked in the de Blasio administration, I was able to help make free long-acting reversible contraception (LARCs), such as intrauterine devices (IUDs), more widely available. We secured the funding for NYC Health+Hospitals, the largest public hospital system in the country, to stock more IUDs at their 11 public hospitals and six of their largest ambulatory clinics. One of the key elements for providing LARCs is ensuring they are available the same day they are requested by the patient.

Moving forward, I would prioritize ensuring access to all forms of contraception without barriers. In particular, I would support Council Member Rivera's legislation to require same day access to IUDs at DOHMH facilities and would expand that effort to also include Federally Qualified Health Centers and all H+H ambulatory sites. I think the primary challenge would be overcoming the skepticism of LARCs that stems from our nation's sordid history of coercive birth control practices. Accordingly, medical professionals would be responsible for consistently making clear this is one of many FDA approved options.

I believe that abortion is generally safe, affordable and accessible in New York City, but I would support efforts to expand availability of these procedures and creatively subsidizing the procedures, so they are free for patients as needed. The City of New York can dedicate capital dollars to H+H and FQHCs to expand their ambulatory care capacity, to ensure convenient access to reproductive healthcare.

The dramatic racial disparities regarding maternal morbidity are profoundly disturbing. One recent study found, among New York City women giving birth over a five year period, Black women were 52% more likely than white women and Latinas were 44% more likely than white women to have severe complications during childbirth. These statistics are reflective of the deep structural racism that pervades our society. We must impose accountability on the medical professionals responsible and invest in ongoing training to address implicit bias, expanded access to prenatal care, and increased utilization of midwifery and doulas. Lastly, as it relates to STIs, I am deeply committed to Ending the Epidemic. Thanks to the advocacy of amazing organizations like VOCAL-NY, Housing Works, and others, we are making great strides in New York City toward our goal of zero new HIV+ cases. My top priority in this area is to guarantee stable housing with access to quality, affordable healthcare for every HIV+ person in need. DOHMH has been a national leader in reducing transmission of STIs and I would be eager to replicate their successful Sexual Health Clinic model in more communities and support their work more broadly.

11) The MTA is facing a significant revenue shortfall and many parts of the city lack access to



reliable public transportation. What measures would you implement and/or enforce, to promote safe, efficient, and accessible transportation options for mass transit users, pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers in Brooklyn?

The Open Streets and Open Restaurants programs were a silver lining of the pandemic. The City took concrete steps to prioritize pedestrians over cars, and as a Council Member, I would build upon these programs. We must find more ways to create additional space for pedestrians through street closures, plazas, and sidewalk expansions. Similarly, we must fortify our intersections with all of the necessary infrastructure to minimize crashes and keep pedestrians safe while crossing.

We should also create a network of protected bike lanes, so we have reliable and safe routes for cyclists. I will work with my counterparts at the state level to advocate for authorization for camera enforcement of bike lanes, so we can rely less on NYPD to keep the lanes clear. Additionally, I support legislation to hold drivers accountable. We should ensure that the recently-created Dangerous Driver Abatement Program is fully funded, and work with our state counterparts to pass more rigorous legislation creating mechanisms to keep drivers accountable and take dangerous ones off the road.

One of my favorite ways to get around is on a Citi Bike and I am proud to have racked up 2,736 miles to date. Cycling has been a life-saver for so many of us during the pandemic, particularly essential workers. We should find ways to further expand affordable access to purchase E-Bikes and increase discounted accounts for Citi Bike for low-income New Yorkers and City workers.

While we anticipate the MTA will be in a precarious financial state for years to come, I plan to work with state elected officials to demand that 24/7 subway service is restored, and that subways and buses in the 33rd District do not face service cuts. I would also advocate for investments in key locations in the district, particularly adding an egress to the York Street F subway station, increasing access to the Brooklyn Navy Yard area, and adding busways and bus priority to multiple key corridors.

12) How would you ensure fairness in employment, salary, workplace conditions, and promotion? What is your position on strengthening and increasing access to union membership? What do you think about the unionization push by City Council Staff?

I have spent my career in the government and nonprofit sectors working to advance opportunities for all New Yorkers to access quality employment and to have the benefits and the security they need to live healthy and fulfilling lives. As a Council Member, I would support legislation that protects whistleblowers who call out unsafe working conditions. I would strongly support protections for all essential workers to be spared from termination without "just cause." This way every worker would feel more confident that they have recourse and protections to demand safe working conditions during a pandemic without being fired. I would also expand enforcement efforts by the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection to swiftly investigate any and all allegations of unsafe working conditions to help protect the wellbeing of workers.

If I am elected, I would pursue every possible avenue to expand the ranks of organized labor and to hold bad employers accountable who are short changing their workers. I would use my bully pulpit to show up at rallies and picket lines and put active pressure on the employers. I would demand the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection and other relevant city and state agencies pursue



every possible enforcement tool at their disposal. And in concert with my colleagues, I would strive to craft legislation that could help pressure the key employer(s) in the given industry. Each campaign is different, but you can count on me as a committed, strategic partner to help make sure we are successful.

I strongly support the unionization of City Council staffers. By unionizing, we will empower workers to know their rights and create a strong entity to support and guide workers who may be mistreated.

13) How would you ensure that underserved communities receive fair and equitable treatment from city government? What policies do you support that would level the playing field for historically marginalized groups?

As Michelle Alexander has written, the justice system serves as the new Jim Crow and controls the lives of far too many black men and women. From racist policing, to unfair sentencing, to discriminatory policies prohibiting formerly incarcerated individuals from access to housing and employment, the entire system needs serious work. Combatting systemic racism also means breaking down the barriers that exist for New Yorkers of color and identifying opportunities to enhance their chances of succeeding and living healthy lives. This includes creating mentorship opportunities and professional pipelines for people of color to advance into the highest level in all industries; ensuring child care is available to give folks every opportunity to work -- I would advocate to expand universal Pre-K to 0-3 year olds; making sure healthcare is available to all New Yorkers and focusing on issues like maternal mortality that disproportionately impacts Black women; promoting culturally and racially sensitive education in our schools and our workplaces; enhancing support for and increase thresholds for contracting with MWBEs.

Most importantly, it means letting people of color dictate policy and guide our framework for dismantling the white supremacist systems that need to be uprooted.

14) What policy and practice changes are needed for NYC government to ensure sufficient quality housing that actually is affordable for existing residents in Brooklyn neighborhoods?

Affordability is one of the central pillars of our campaign. More than a quarter of tenants in our district pay a majority of their income in rent. Every year, it gets harder and harder for more and more tenants to afford to live here. We need to tackle the affordability crisis by taking power from real estate and giving it to tenants in order to generate the truly affordable housing we so desperately need. I have proposed a plan called Lower NYC Rent to do just that, which would drive down rents of apartments that have been vacant for extended periods of time. I would introduce local law for the Department of Finance to track vacant units and Assembly Member Emily Gallagher and Senator Julia Salazar have agreed to introduce the corresponding state legislation that would reduce the rents of long vacant units to make them more affordable to working families.

As Council Member, I will also use my influence over the land use process to demand that a majority of housing built in newly rezoned developments be affordable to our communities. It is time for development to begin meeting the needs of longtime community residents.

Additionally, we need to add supportive and transitional housing units, as well as shelters, in every district.

15) What policies would you pass or enforce to ensure public housing/NYCHA repair, upkeep and security, and access to alternate housing and services when lacking essentials such as heat, gas



and hot water? What is your position on “privatization” of public housing/NYCHA, and on City government sale of public housing “open areas” (outdoor seating & recreation plots) and air rights to private developers?

First and foremost, we must center the voices, perspectives, and priorities of NYCHA residents in every decision about their developments. No decision about them should ever be made without them. As Council Member, I will do everything in my power to elevate and amplify their needs. I am profoundly honored to have the support of each of the seven NYCHA Tenant Association Presidents from the developments located in the 33rd Council District, and, if elected, I fully intend to prioritize transforming the conditions of those constituents.

The outdated \$32 billion dollar physical needs assessment across the NYCHA portfolio is both daunting in its scale and speaks to the disgraceful disinvestment that has occurred in NYCHA over decades. The current conditions in NYCHA represent a serious threat to the health, safety, and well-being of residents. From the persistent, pernicious presence of lead paint, to the widespread public health issues relating to mold, rats, and waste management, to the frequent outages of boilers and elevators, we cannot understate the fierce urgency with which bold action must be taken. While there is no magic bullet, we must immediately address the deplorable conditions that people are currently living in.

When heat is not provided or gas is not working, tenants should receive rent relief. If there are extended outages of elevators or boilers for extended periods of time, NYCHA should be responsible for emergency housing for individuals who cannot reasonably live in such conditions.

As Council Member, I will do whatever it takes to improve the conditions of the seven NYCHA developments in the 33rd District. Furthermore, I will use my bully pulpit to demand the City, State, and Federal Governments each step up in dramatic ways to not only invest in NYCHA, but streamline the bureaucratic structures and regulatory frameworks that have slowed NYCHA down for too long. We need to impose real time transparency and accountability on the conditions in our NYCHA developments from gas outages to broken elevators. Every level of government, most of all Washington, must make addressing the conditions in NYCHA a key part of the stimulus and recovery plans and I hope they will incorporate the framework of the Green New Deal for NYCHA into the next major stimulus legislation.

I am intrigued and encouraged by the recently proposed NYCHA Preservation Trust model, which is a superior approach to RAD. It preserves the public ownership of our public housing and provides sustainable funding streams and more efficient operations to achieve and maintain decent conditions. RAD is not the right approach. I am ideologically concerned about privatization and believe that the RAD model has insufficient protections in place for tenants.

Lastly, the promise of Section 3 must finally be realized. I will prioritize investments in high quality sectoral training programs for NYCHA residents that yield quality employment at NYCHA, with NYCHA contractors, and in other growth areas of the economy.

16) Given the City’s Covid and post-Covid economic crisis, how would you approach your role in addressing the city’s carceral system, including the plan to close Rikers?



We need to implement new approaches to advance public safety that will contribute to a reduction in the size of our detained and incarcerated populations. We need to legislate the creation of a new public safety agency made up of social workers, mental health professionals, and credible messengers trained in the community centered Crisis Management System (Cure Violence) model, all of whom must follow anti-racist principles and be experts in deescalation. Our goal is to defuse every situation, avoid violence, and get New Yorkers the help they need. Creating a new Public Safety Agency requires reallocation of a share of NYPD's outsized \$6 billion budget to this new approach.

The Council should incent changes in the offices of District Attorneys by limiting funding for DA offices that refuse to advance programs and policies that reduce incarceration. I want to prioritize expanded funding for alternatives to incarceration programs, supervised release, restorative justice programs, and other diversion initiatives to expeditiously drive down the number of people incarcerated in New York City. At the same time, we should be resourcing neighborhood based and credible messenger led organizations to do this work, so that our solutions to reducing the footprint of the criminal legal system are actually building up infrastructure at the community level.

It's a failure that we have yet to move people out of the 10 jail complex on Rikers Island. It's a moral imperative and we act now and do everything in our power to immediately get people off that island and shutter the largest jail complex in the United States. Beyond Rikers, every existing jail facility in New York City is dehumanizing and must be closed.

If elected to the City Council, I would work to dramatically shrink the number of jail beds being constructed in the four new borough based jails. They are too large. By prioritizing investments in alternatives to incarceration, diversion programs, and supervised release, and ensuring their utilization by the Courts, we can dramatically scale back the size of the proposed new facilities without entering into another land use process. I would also prioritize expanded, dedicated capacity for people with physical or mental health issues at H+H facilities, so that people in need of more acute care can actually receive it rather than have their conditions deteriorate in a detention facility. We also must ensure that the culture change problems that have plagued DOC are not replicated in any new facilities, as we know that the brutality of our jails goes beyond bricks and mortar solutions. The Council plays an essential role in oversight and accountability of the city's plan for the closure of Rikers, including how any proposed new facilities are run and ensuring that directly impacted individuals are guiding the plans.

17) Describe your vision for public safety in New York City? What, if any, functions would you like to see removed from the police department? What agencies assume the functions removed from the NYPD?

2020 bore witness to the largest and most diverse national protests for racial equity and Black Lives Matter in U.S. history, led by Black and Brown Americans who are demanding a better future. Our government must respond by instituting reforms that address systemic racism and reimagine our approaches to public safety.

In particular, as it relates to policing, we can and must transform our criminal justice system to reduce the number of summons, stop, question and frisks, arrests, and people who are incarcerated in New York City. We need to more narrowly define the role of the NYPD to end the era of mass incarceration now. This means removing police officers from areas where they don't belong, like shelters and social services, transit



investigations, schools, and as the November elections demonstrated, polling sites. The relevant agencies operating these sites should assume these functions (i.e. DHS/DSS, DOT, DOE, etc.).

In the immediate, the Council has broad legislative authority and must act urgently to reduce the scope and scale of policing, to demilitarize the police force, to eliminate problematic units and practices in the department, to impose new disciplinary processes and true accountability for police officer misconduct, and craft new approaches to achieving public safety. The Council needs to use its legislative, oversight, and budgetary authority to wholly transform the NYPD and to envision a safer city for our communities, free from the fear of over-policing.

We ask cops to respond to every issue under the sun. That's wrong and we should divert resources from the police to those trained to defuse specific tension-filled situations. When a family member has a severe mental health or substance use episode, you should be able to call someone for help who will not bring a gun into your home, but who will provide expert 24/7 real time assistance.

18) Do you support changes to the ULURP process and to other NYC zoning mechanisms? If so, what specific changes do you support?

Our approach to land use isn't working. It is controlled by developers and the City and we need significantly more community input. Everyday people feel left out of the decisions about what happens in their neighborhoods, while others leverage access to power to keep uses our city needs, like housing for the homeless, out of their backyards. We need a comprehensive planning framework that outlines citywide needs, ensures an equitable approach where every neighborhood does its part, and guarantees real, meaningful community engagement in its implementation. On a rotating basis, every single neighborhood should undergo a comprehensive community planning process to identify its needs.

Overall, there is too much power concentrated in the executive branch as it relates to land use. I support enhancing the Council's authority so that members can effectively advocate for appropriate land use actions in their communities, along with commitments for affordable and supportive housing, schools, jobs, and tailor these asks to the needs of their communities. If elected to the Council, I will require developers seeking zoning changes to first meet with key community groups and local stakeholders to ground their proposal in the needs of our neighborhood.

I agree with members of the Council who have long emphasized the need for racial impact studies of rezonings, to make transparent the effects of major land use decisions on communities of color and outline how we can avoid these impacts moving forward. These studies need to be essential components of major rezoning decisions.

19) Do you have a plan to reduce and prevent homelessness in Brooklyn and NYC? Explain your plan.

Our objective as policymakers must be to end homelessness. In one of the wealthiest cities in the world, nothing less is acceptable. During my time in City government, I worked on opening dozens of homeless shelters, including for runaway and homeless LGBTQ+ youth, and supportive housing developments. I was targeted by anti-shelter opponents with protests at my home and harassed in the press and on social media by local and national white supremacists, but it only strengthened my resolve to do whatever I can to help every New Yorker experiencing homelessness have a permanent, affordable home.

Relatively small numbers of residents of the 33rd Council District enter the Department of Homeless



Services system, but we do have concentrations of individuals who are living on the street in Downtown Brooklyn, the Williamsburg BQE area, and around Greenpoint. There are few shelters in the district and several commercial hotels are currently being utilized during COVID to accommodate DHS clients.

While the 33rd District is not a primary driver of the shelter census, thousands of neighbors are struggling to hold on. Even before COVID, we had thousands of students living in unstable, doubled up households. More than one quarter of tenants were paying a majority of their income toward rent, which is not sustainable. Now with the onset of the pandemic, large swaths of every community across the City are on the brink of eviction and homelessness.

Every district must play an active role in providing transitional housing, such as traditional shelters and safe havens, and permanent housing opportunities for people who have experienced homelessness. As a Council Member, I would work with my colleagues to site new shelters, create supportive housing units, and create more affordable units.

To end homelessness, I would prioritize the following approaches:

- 1) Increase the value of vouchers by either advocating for the passage of Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi's Home Stability Support Plan or Senator Kavanagh's Housing Access Voucher proposal in Albany, or funding this increase out of the City budget. The current value of housing vouchers simply does not compete in the ever-rising residential real estate market.
- 2) We need much greater ongoing accountability and transparency around the City's and State's failures to reach and fund their supportive housing commitments, which should include quarterly reporting on progress and annual reports on how they will achieve their goals in the year ahead. As a Council Member, I would ask each of my colleagues to identify multiple sites in their district that would be optimal fits for dense supportive housing developments.
- 3) We need to build upon the recent victory to further expand homeless set-aside requirements to generate more new housing each year earmarked for formerly homeless individuals.
- 4) I would pursue re-legalization of Single Room Occupancy housing at the City and State level to facilitate conversions and new construction of SRO housing that would be affordable to single adults and adult families exiting shelter.
- 5) Lastly, I would like to pursue a mass conversion of properties underutilized and devalued as a result of the pandemic, such as limited service hotels, into supportive housing developments.