



Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2021 Borough President Candidate Questionnaire

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Office Sought: Brooklyn Borough President

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Person filling out this questionnaire: Kimberly

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 first priority is affordable housing. Nothing is possible without a home.

The office of the Brooklyn Borough President has significant influence over how we use our land, and I want to use that influence to benefit the people of Brooklyn. Instead of prioritizing the wishes of real estate developers, I will prioritize the needs of Brooklynites.

As president of the East New York Housing Development Corporation, I have developed almost a thousand units of 100% affordable housing by working with community organizations to help them develop their properties and acquire new properties to develop. I also developed my own church's parking lot into 100% affordable housing for seniors as the executive director of the Berean Community and Family Life Center.

For-profit developers are not going to meet our housing needs – they are corporations, and their first priority is making money. I know firsthand that the best way to build affordable housing is by helping community organizations partner with developers to meet their communities' needs. As Borough President, I'll make community nonprofit development a focus.

Lastly, I'll demand that any new affordable housing be truly affordable.

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

When the hospital in my community closed, I worked with my church nonprofit to create an affordable health clinic that provided preventative care services.

When the federal government threatened to take over the state's juvenile justice system because it was so poorly run, I joined the committee tasked with creating and implementing reforms, and helped make a number of very positive changes to our juvenile justice system.

When our seniors needed affordable housing where they could grow old in the community they helped build, I worked with my church to turn our parking lot into homes for them.

When small businesses in our community needed support, I helped create programs for them, as vice chair of the Local Economic Development Corporation of East New York.

The problems that we're facing right now aren't new – they're problems I've been working on for a long time. Right now, we don't need politicians who pander, we need leaders who have real-world experience rolling up their sleeves and fixing those problems.



See attachment.

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

State Senator Velmanette Montgomery

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.

I will not accept money from the Real Estate Board of New York, any union or organization that opposes police reform, or the fossil fuel industry.

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

We're in a crisis, and there isn't one simple solution. We need financial support from the federal government, we need to increase taxes on New Yorkers who make over \$400,000 per year, and we need to make some changes in our budget. I support redirecting funds from the NYPD in order to ensure that essential social services are funded.

Our small businesses provide an overwhelming amount of the city's tax revenue, and helping small businesses survive and thrive will be essential in order to maintain the city's services. I will also advocate for the passage of the Small Business Jobs Survival Act, which will protect small businesses from being forced to pay their landlords' property taxes and help them negotiate lease renewals.

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?

The state of our public schools makes me angry. Every student deserves a good education and access to arts, music, and extracurricular activities. Instead, many schools have replaced art and music with armed police officers. I will advocate for every school to have fully funded academics, arts, and extracurricular programs. I will also advocate for the state government to fully fund New York City's schools.

I support District 15's integration plan and I would like to see other districts in Brooklyn replicate District 15's success.

7) How would you have handled the reopening of schools for the 2020-2021 academic year? How would 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?

One of the biggest problems to our schools' pandemic response is that the decision of what to do has been in the hands of a handful of people. No one person can figure out the solution by themselves. We need to bring together parents, educators, administrators, union reps, even students, to work together and figure out solutions, and then commit ourselves to implementing those solutions.

We also need to make sure that our communications with parents are made available in every language they speak, and that social workers are actively reaching out to parents to ensure they are informed and understand how to best help their children, and how to obtain childcare if they need it.

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

Yes. Non-citizens make valuable contributions to our communities and they deserve a say in our communities.

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

I think the New York City matching funds program is an excellent program that doesn't require significant adjustment. I am troubled, however, by the fact that many political consulting firms are also lobbying firms. This system enables candidates to raise funds from their consultants' lobbying clients, at the cost of an IOU. As a result, many new councilmembers enter office already beholden to an expansive array of clients. I think these firms should be forced to split up in order to continue working for New York City candidates, and I do not have any such firms working on my campaign.

That being said, we need to make serious changes at the Board of Elections. BOE employees must be held to the same standards as any other civil servants, and BOE contracts must be held to the same standards as other government contracts.

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?

I am a member of Women of Faith Advocating Change, an organization dedicated to raising awareness of the racial disparities of maternal mortality. As Borough President, I will continue to raise awareness of racial reproductive health disparities. I will also work with community organizations to open reproductive health clinics in healthcare deserts, and to inform women where they can obtain affordable reproductive healthcare. I will also dedicate myself to ensuring that Brooklyn has enough hospitals and to raising the standards in our hospitals. The sad reality is that many of our hospitals are sub-par, and many Brooklyn residents prefer to go to Manhattan if they are ill. This is healthcare redlining. In order to put an end to it, we need to take a hard look at how our hospitals are funded.



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?

I will advocate for the continued expansion of bike lanes, especially protected bike lanes, throughout Brooklyn. It should be possible to go anywhere in Brooklyn safely by bicycle. I will also advocate for the implementation of traffic-calming measures borough-wide in order to discourage speeding. I also support the creation of more dedicated bus lanes in order to speed up mass transit. Lastly, I support a federal bailout of the MTA.

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?

As Borough President, I'll push companies that operate in Brooklyn to diversify their leadership and create opportunities for women and minorities. I'll raise awareness of workers' rights and of opportunities to join unions.

I believe that membership in a union can change a person's life, and that as many people should have access to this opportunity as possible. I'll encourage unions to focus more of their organizing efforts on Brooklyn, and I'll support their organizing drives.

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?

First off, all of my community board appointments will be demographically representative of Brooklyn's communities. I am committed to gender parity and full inclusion of gender non-conforming people.

Secondly, I will encourage city agencies to restructure their programs to benefit communities that are most in need. Many programs are designed for a "typical" citizen that is white, male, cisgender, and privileged. This is true in everything from our public education system to housing court. By restructuring our approach, we can better serve everyone.

I will also work within our community to combat distrust of government. Many programs go underutilized because people – especially people of color and immigrants – don't trust our government. We are already seeing this with the COVID vaccine. As a preacher, I know how to communicate with people and win their trust.

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?

We must stop using the federal AMI to determine affordability, and develop our own formula. I'll also prioritize the development of 100% affordable housing by community nonprofits instead of relying solely on for-profit developers to meet our housing needs.



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?

We have to stop looking to for-profit developers to solve our problems, and solve our problems ourselves.

NYCHA has two problems: It has been massively underfunded for a long time, and it is very poorly run. In order to address the backlog of repairs and maintenance, we are going to need a substantial investment from the federal government, and we shouldn't be afraid to ask for it.

NYCHA also needs a complete overhaul. This overhaul should be overseen by a committee that includes NYCHA residents, to ensure that the new NYCHA puts their needs first. This overhaul needs to include the development of better processes for addressing situations that cannot be immediately remedied, and that may require alternate housing or additional services.

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 must proceed with closing Rikers, but we need to take a hard look at the costs of new borough-based jails. If we build smaller jails, we will incarcerate fewer people, and that is the goal.

I support the creation of an alternative first responder corps that is dedicated specifically to mental health emergencies. The police should not be responding to these crises, and the mentally ill need to be housed in facilities that are designed for them, not jails. We need to invest in facilities that can support and care for the mentally ill people who would otherwise be filling our jails.

I also support re-implementing the bail reforms that were repealed.

16) 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?

I support the creation of an alternative first responder corps that is dedicated specifically to mental health emergencies. I also support requiring new officers to live in New York City. I will advocate to implement a program similar to what exists in Washington, D.C., in which all police officers must undergo training in which they learn the history of police oppression of minorities in the United States.

I also support the demilitarization of the NYPD, and restructuring the NYPD's budget so that we stop purchasing military-grade weapons and equipment.



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

Our zoning decisions should be made with people in the community working together to develop a consensus on how that community should evolve. It should take into account concerns like access to transit, schools, the electrical grid, stormwater runoff, and other environmental concerns. It should be thoughtful and thorough. And once that rezoning is implemented, developers should stick to the plan.

Instead, we upzone communities to accommodate developers' greed, and then every time a developer purchases a new property, we let them upzone it some more. This means that communities are always on defense and the fight never ends.

I support making site-specific zoning changes dramatically more inconvenient. We need to send a message to developers that they need to stick to the plan. And I support putting neighborhood-wide rezonings in the hands of community members, not City Hall.

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

First, we need to get people out of shelters and into permanent homes. I will work with community organizations to develop new affordable housing that prioritizes shelter residents. I'll also raise awareness of programs that assist people in buying their first homes, which will open up rental housing stock for more people.

I also support expanding programs that provide assistance to people who are on the verge of eviction, and I will use the office of the Borough President to raise awareness of these programs.