



Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2025 Candidate Questionnaire

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

1) If (re-)elected, what would be your **top 3 priorities** in your term?

- Fighting back against the cruel policies of the Trump-Musk administration that threaten all New Yorkers; protecting New Yorkers
- Fully investing in public goods and services, and demonstrating that government can not just function, but can work for the many, not just the wealthy
- Making New York City affordable for working people and families and prioritizing stable, safe housing for the working-class

2) What **personal and/or professional experiences** do you believe make you uniquely qualified to run for City Council?

Council Member Alexa Avilés is currently serving in her third term on the New York City Council representing the 38th District neighborhoods that include Red Hook and parts of Park Slope, Sunset Park, Borough Park, Dyker Heights, Bensonhurst, and Bath Beach. She is a proud Boricua mom, Brooklynite, and democratic socialist dedicated to public service and ensuring all people have what they need to thrive. Council Member Avilés serves as the Chair of the Committee on Immigration and is a member of the Economic Development, Public Housing, Housing and Buildings, General Welfare, Environmental Protections, Resiliency and Waterfronts Committees, as well as, on the Council's Taskforce to Combat Hate.

Before her election to the City Council, Avilés's career spanned almost three decades in the not-for-profit and social justice philanthropic sectors. Most recently, Avilés served as Program Director at the Scherman Foundation, where she supported local and national social justice organizations that included work to protect human rights, autonomy, and dignity of all people. She has supported state and national efforts to reduce the incarceration of juveniles and adults, fought discrimination across multiple government systems, and supported the empowerment of marginalized communities.

For nearly a decade, as a PTA President, Avilés partnered with parents, staff and students to improve academic and recreational programs. She championed quality education, language access and an inclusive and supportive community for all. She has had the privilege of serving on multiple local and national nonprofit boards including Brooklyn Community Board 7 and as Chair of the NYC Youth Board.



3) Given the role and responsibilities of the City Council, how would you use the office to **combat harmful policies that the Trump administration rolls out?**

As the chair of the New York City Council's Immigration Committee, I am leading the fight against mass deportation and forced family separations that are at the core of the second Trump administration. Mass arrests and deportations are threatening millions in our city — with essential workers quitting jobs over fears of being detained at work, children fearful of going to school, and working people avoiding their houses of worship and being out in the community. This makes life for all New Yorkers — regardless of immigration status — worse.

We must strengthen protections for our immigrant neighbors. We must defend our sanctuary laws from Mayor Adams, and fight for budget increases for services that keep families together and workers safe on the job and in their communities. Earlier this month, I co-sponsored Res. 708 with CM Cabán, condemning Donald Trump's threat to carry out mass deportations against immigrants in the United States. I co-sponsored and am expecting to pass two resolutions supporting two state bills, the NY For All (Res. 0714) and Access to Representation Act (Res. 0717), both of which will expand resources to immigrant communities who are under dire threat under this administration. In 2023 with CM Hanif, we passed Int. 569, a worker bill of rights with outreach requirements for immigrant workers to ensure immigrant workers have equal access to and knowledge of vital worker protections that allow people to keep their jobs and provide for their families and communities. There are many avenues we can — and must — take in the coming weeks and months to protect our neighbors, including, but not limited to: providing legal representation (currently, just a quarter of folks facing deportations have access to legal representation and support), establishing immigration integration centers and ensuring language access in city services.

Trump's threats also expand beyond our immigrant neighbors. At the city level, we must strengthen broader worker protections, deeply invest in our public services and goods, and demonstrate to New Yorkers that we can have dependable public goods and services that are not subject to cruel and haphazard cuts that worsen lives for working people and cut jobs.

4) How much money has your campaign raised - both in district donations and overall donations. Are there donations that you have and/or would refuse, and why?

So far, we have raised \$22,357 before matching funds and have met all the thresholds to unlock full matching.

In my campaigns for City Council, past and present, I have never taken money from corporate PACs, the real estate industry, fossil fuel companies, police unions, or corporate lobbyists. We need leadership that is free from the influence of monied interests and their power brokers. That is why I depend on the small donations of many everyday New Yorkers to fund my campaign.

5) How have you, or will you, commit to constituent services and **local quality of life issues**? How will you advocate and organize for community services, such as food stamp applications, immigration applications, sanitation issues, etc.

In my three years in office, I have prioritized serving my constituents to the fullest extent, and organized for expanding and strengthening vital community services. In 2024 alone, my office closed over 1,389



constituent cases, connecting our district's residents with housing, assistance in applying for public benefits and social services, and connecting constituents to immigration services. In addition to services in our Sunset Park office, we worked to expand accessibility to our office, and created mobile offices in Red Hook, Dyker Heights, and Bensonhurst. We also hosted 155 community events in 2024, as part of our mission to build a more responsive and community-led government. We also funded 111 organizations in District 38, investing more than \$2.1 million on services for our constituents — from after-school programs to park cleanup initiatives.

In the council, I've fought to expand funding for vital social services and investing in core city functions, from sanitation to investing in our libraries, schools, childcare, and parks. I've rejected budgets from Mayor Adams that cut these vital services, and stood with constituents who want dependable public services.

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?

At a moment when the federal government is attacking public education and endorsing re-segregation, the nation's largest school system must be firm on the belief that a high-quality education is a human right.

First, we must fully invest in our education system, and make sure all students have the resources and support they need to learn in school. I've stood firm against Eric Adams' cuts to education in his budget proposals and rallied with parents, students, and educators to call for an end to defunding our city's future. I will continue to call for our city's budget to deepen investments in our city's education system. We must invest in programs that reach all students, regardless of income or immigration status — from universal 3K programs to fully funding programs like CUNY ASAP and ACE, which allow New Yorkers to attend our public universities tuition free. These programs not only connect New Yorkers with critical education opportunities, but they also take the financial burden off of struggling New York families.

We must also stand firm that quality schools mean schools that are open to all students to attend, and are not segregated by race and class. The Adams administration has moved the city backwards on desegregation by ignoring the recommendations from the School Diversity Advisory Group, and walking back desegregation policies advanced by the previous administration. We must fight for an alternative. Within my council district, the integration efforts of school District 15 shows us a better way is possible. Six years after District 15 adopted an ambitious plan to desegregate schools, the district has had lower declines in enrollment compared with other districts in the city, and has seen major drops in segregation. Moving forward, we must remove screens related to attendance, grades, and language competence. I will continue to strongly support school equity, inclusion, and diversity planning in our school community and district and beyond.

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

I support strengthening our public finance systems and both the city and state level. Our public financing programs at the city and state level help counteract the role of corporations and the wealthy in our elections — which is extremely vital in the decade and a half since the *Citizens United* decision. With an unelected billionaire wreaking havoc on our federal government's ability to function and threatening the jobs of millions of hard-working Americans, we must defend and build on these programs in the years to come. Money is not



speech — New York City and New York State must continue to defend these programs and provide a counterweight to the mega donors who think they can buy our democracy.

8) The existing plan to **Close Rikers Island** involves closing the Rikers Island jails (including the Boat in the Bronx), reducing the jail population to approximately 4,200 people in custody or less, and establishing four borough based jails as well as therapeutic housing units in three city hospitals. **How would you support this implementation? Is there anything you would do to improve on this plan?**

I grew up in East New York and came from a family deeply impacted by incarceration. I have seen firsthand how dangerous prisons like Rikers are. In the last three years, more than 30 people have died while in custody on Rikers — conditions which a federal monitor described as “dangerously unsafe” and “trapped in a state of persistent dysfunction.” This is why I urgently believe in complying with the federal timeline of closing Rikers, and across the city, banning widely condemned practices like solitary confinement.

Since taking office, Mayor Adams has done everything in his power to fuel detention at Rikers. We must figure out how to decrease Rikers’ population and close this dreadful facility. We need to push for a new mayor who agrees with this basic principle of human dignity. We must also revisit the effective and safe strategies that moved people out of Rikers during the COVID-19 pandemic, among other effective interventions that prevent people from languishing and dying in the city’s largest mental health provider and most notorious prison. I support policies that connect New Yorkers with meaningful jobs, education, the health and wellness services and housing — policies that are shown time and time again to reduce crime and thus reduce the need to throw people into jails.

9) What policy and administrative changes are needed for NYC government to ensure sufficient **quality housing that is actually affordable** for existing residents in Brooklyn neighborhoods? Do you have a plan to **reduce and prevent homelessness** in Brooklyn and NYC? Explain your plan.

The purpose of housing is to keep working people and their families stable, safe, and housed — not an investment vehicle for big corporations and Wall Street firms. New York City is a safer and more vibrant city when none of us struggle with housing insecurity and homelessness.

To ensure quality, affordable housing for Brooklyn, we must end Mayor Adams’ rent hikes on rent-stabilized tenants via a citywide rent freeze. Since taking office, Mayor Adams raised the rent on 2.5 million New Yorkers. This is devastating in a moment when New Yorkers are struggling with the skyrocketing cost of living and low-income residents face stagnating wages. We must also give tenants a stronger voice on the Rent Guidelines Board and make sure board members understand their role is to keep New Yorkers housed and curb homelessness in the city. Relatedly, I support strengthening the rights of tenants, and have done so throughout my time on Council. In 2024, I introduced and passed legislation that requires tenant education and outreach on residential vacate orders due to damage caused by devastating fires (Int. 0006). I’ve also endorsed expanding the Right to Counsel to cover all renters citywide, giving everyone fighting eviction the same legal representation at no cost to them, and preventing more increases in homelessness.

As a member of the City Council’s Progressive Caucus, I’ve also worked with my colleagues to win significant investments in the city budget for affordable housing. Through our caucus’s City For All housing plan, we secured significant capital for deeper affordability, investments to expand the city workforce,



expanded homeownership opportunities for working class New Yorkers, invested in housing vouchers and restored NYCHA vacant unit readiness, while adding several hundred million for repairs to Section 9 NYCHA units. In my next term, I will continue to fight for policies that keep Brooklyn housed, including a city-level Homes Guarantee which will preserve existing affordable public and social housing, stop rent increases for rent stabilized tenants, and include plans to build new - much needed low-income - social housing units.

10) If elected, how would you support a **Medicare Advantage Program that supports retirees**? Do you promise to **confer with NYC retirees** before proposing any future changes to our health care coverage and other benefits?

The Medicare Advantage program undermines the city's long-standing commitment to the free healthcare guaranteed to its retired public servants, and makes our aging population vulnerable to high medical costs and rising medical debt. I have stood against efforts to amend the city's administrative code to cut healthcare services for the elderly via Medicare Advantage, and supported retirees who have fought against these cuts that threaten the health and well-being of retired public servants. I have long stood for Universal healthcare and believe it is a human right. This is a problem created and easily solved by the Mayor. There is discord with the new bill that we are trying to work through. I will confer with the city's retirees (there are many distinct groups with distinct proposals).

11) 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 would assume the functions removed from the NYPD? How would these changes be funded?

If we want to be serious about addressing public safety we must invest in social programs that give New Yorkers the stability, security, and dignity needed to thrive in this city. The current mayoral administration disagrees with this, and prioritizes keeping Rikers, the country's most notorious jail, open, at the expense of keeping childcare centers and libraries open. I support shifting funding away from the bloated NYPD budget, including wasteful and dangerous expenses like the recent doubling of the NYPD's press department and the continued expansion of the NYPD's Strategic Response Group, which has been condemned by human rights organizations for its violations. I have stood for the ending of the gang database and other harmful and racist police tactics that discriminate against black and brown people.

I also believe the NYPD needs to be held accountable, just like any other public agency, and that the police are not above the law. In 2024, I led the charge for the How Many Stops Act, which requires the NYPD to report on all levels of police street stops and investigative encounters, including where they happen, demographic information on the person stopped, the reason for the encounter, and whether the encounter leads to any use of force or enforcement action. I have stood with families who have been murdered by the NYPD calling for accountability and justice. No one is above the law and all New Yorkers deserve safety and dignity.

12) What is your view of the **City of Yes decision** and your views on how it may impact zoning changes in the district? How do you view the balance between additional affordable housing needs and zoning that could give more power to developers?



I voted in favor of the City of Yes package. When the Mayor introduced the City of Yes housing package, it was clear that the proposed zoning changes alone were not enough to save New Yorkers from the city's dire housing crisis. For far too long, the real estate industry has had too much power in our city, and leveraged their money and power to pass policies that push working New Yorkers out of their neighborhoods and leave them with too few rights to push back against unaffordable rent hikes, unsafe living conditions, and neglected home repairs that put families and their children at risk.

That being said, the New York City Council negotiated the City for All housing plan as part of the City of Yes proposal, and secured important wins in the City of Yes negotiations. These include \$200 million investment towards investigating and reducing vacancy rates in NYCHA public housing, \$187 million to expand CityFHEPS rental assistance to house folks struggling with housing insecurity and reduce homelessness in New York City, and committing an additional \$2 billion towards investing in parks and public infrastructure needed to make neighborhoods strong and vital communities where the working class can stay.

The struggle between expanding affordable housing and giving power to developers suggests a real need to not just pass packages like City of Yes, but to address the structural power imbalances between the real estate lobby and the 69 percent of New York City residents who rent their homes. We must put more tenants on the Rent Guidelines Board, expand tenant rights and protections, and fight for housing that is designed to keep people housed — not enrich millionaires and billionaires.