



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?

Housing:

In my second term as Borough President, I will prioritize expanding affordable housing, protecting tenants, and preventing displacement. I will push for increased housing production across Brooklyn, opposing downzonings that restrict development, and advocating for policies to create more homes.

Central to this effort is the Comprehensive Plan for Brooklyn, which I developed to guide our borough's growth in a way that prioritizes equity, public health, and sustainability. This plan examines the relationship between land use, housing, and health outcomes—because your zip code shouldn't determine your life expectancy. With over 200 recommendations across four key frameworks—Housing Growth and Parking Demand Management, Resilient Infrastructure and Jobs, Health and Wellness Economy, and Healthy Streets and Environment—this plan provides a roadmap for ensuring that development benefits all Brooklynites, not just the wealthy. In my next term, I will use this vision to push for policies that expand affordable housing while improving quality of life for all residents.

To strengthen tenant protections, I will continue hosting Tenant's Rights Forums, connecting renters with legal resources, and championing policies that prevent displacement. I will also advocate for a Tangled Title Fund to protect homeowners from deed theft and work to secure capital funding to close financing gaps for supportive housing projects. Additionally, I will connect residents with estate planning resources to help them safeguard their homes from fraudulent transfers and ensure they have access to legal services if they are experiencing deed theft.

By expanding supply, strengthening renter protections, and preserving affordability, we can build a more just and livable New York for all.

Supportive Housing & Mental Health:

As Borough President, I will continue to prioritize supportive housing and mental health, ensuring Brooklyn's most vulnerable residents have access to stable housing and essential services. I believe in a Housing First approach—treating housing as a right, not a privilege—by expanding permanent supportive housing instead of criminalizing homelessness and mental illness.

To make these initiatives possible, I will advocate for increased capital funding to close financing gaps for supportive housing projects. Stable housing and accessible mental health services are key to public safety and community well-being, and I will ensure Brooklyn invests in these solutions.



Food Insecurity:

As someone whose family utilized government assistance to keep food on the table I know all too well that too many neighborhoods are food deserts where fresh, affordable groceries are out of reach. Frequently, these conditions disproportionately impact low-income communities and communities of color.

I would work to fund land acquisition and support cooperative or nonprofit-owned supermarkets that reinvest in the community rather than extract from it. I will also use the office of Borough President to fund and organize initiatives that increase SNAP enrollment with the help of local organizations, ensuring eligible families receive the support they need. Additionally, I will expand cold storage access for our partner nonprofits through a shared network, improving distribution and storage efforts to better serve our communities.

Addressing food insecurity requires systemic solutions, and I am committed to making sure all Brooklynites have access to healthy, affordable food.

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

My leadership is shaped by both my lived experience as well as my 12 years of elected public service, as both a City Councilmember and Borough President. I grew up in Section 8 housing with immigrant parents. I understand the struggles working-class Brooklynites face just to make ends meet. Being a father of two young children, including one with a developmental disability, has deepened my commitment to advocating for better education, healthcare, and support systems so that all families have the resources they need to succeed. This experience influences everything that I do as an elected official and it is why I fight every day to make Brooklyn a place where everyone—no matter their background—has the opportunity to thrive.

I'm running for re-election because my work is far from over. I've demonstrated that the Borough President's office can drive meaningful change, and I will continue to maximize its impact—pushing for policies that improve the lives of everyday New Yorkers and make Brooklyn stronger, more equitable, and more livable for all.

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

As Brooklyn Borough President, I will actively resist harmful policies from the Trump administration, especially those targeting immigrants. Under my leadership, we've already opened a Satellite Asylum Application Help Center at Borough Hall, completing over 5,000 work authorization applications to help migrants build stable lives in our borough. I am committed to keeping New York a sanctuary city and will never cooperate with ICE, ensuring that immigrants feel safe and supported.

In response to threats from the Trump administration to cut critical funding for programs serving workers, students, and seniors, I will use the Borough President's budget strategically to minimize these impacts. As it stands, the potential freeze of funding alone will have disastrous effects on marginalized communities and could affect everything from shelters for domestic violence survivors, summer youth opportunities, and senior centers. By prioritizing funding for community-based services and direct support programs, I will protect essential resources for our most vulnerable populations. This includes expanding work authorization assistance, supporting immigrant rights organizations, and ensuring that senior services and educational



programs are fully funded. I will work tirelessly to safeguard our communities from federal budget cuts and continue advocating for Brooklyn's future.

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?

Over the course of the campaign we have publicly reported \$243,024 privately raised funds raised, which has already qualified us for matching funds. We anticipate this to result in over \$750,000 post-match. As a matter of principle I do not accept contributions from organizations or individuals who I am not morally and ethically aligned with, nor do I take contributions from groups or individuals who I believe have a negative effect on our communities.

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.

As Brooklyn Borough President, I have made constituent services and quality of life issues a top priority by ensuring that my office delivers real, tangible, support to residents. From improving public spaces to expanding essential services, I am committed to making Brooklyn a more livable, accessible, and equitable borough for all.

I've partnered with Downtown Brooklyn Partnership and Council Member Lincoln Restler to support the redesign of Columbus Park, making it a more inviting space for residents and workers. Through my Air Quality Advisory Committee, I've worked with the State Department of Environmental Conservation to monitor air pollution in impacted neighborhoods and develop mitigation strategies to improve public health. I've also distributed 500 "Born in Brooklyn" baby boxes with postpartum supplies through a \$100,000 grant to Met Council, ensuring new families receive the care they need.

I've prioritized funding for nonprofits that provide critical services, allocating millions in capital funding to organizations like Mixteca, the Arab American Association of New York, and Life of Hope so they can secure permanent space and expand their work. I also launched a Nonprofit Acquisition Fund to help community-based organizations avoid displacement and continue serving Brooklynites. To address financial inequities, I've partnered with Spring Bank to reactivate the Red Hook Banking Development District, bringing much-needed banking services to underserved communities, and I will work with Ponce Bank to expand this initiative to Community District 18.

Recognizing the need for direct assistance, I opened a Satellite Asylum Application Help Center at Borough Hall, which has completed over 5,000 work authorization applications since March 2024. I've also provided over \$240,000 in discretionary funding to NYCHA Tenant Associations to support community programs, hosted annual Thanksgiving food distributions providing 30 tons of fresh food to local organizations, and led community listening roundtables in neighborhoods across Brooklyn to ensure residents' concerns are heard and addressed.

Moving forward, I will continue expanding these efforts, including launching the "Light up the Hood" initiative to install streetlights in East New York and investing in nonprofit capacity building. My office will remain a hub for services, whether it's helping residents access food stamps, secure immigration assistance, or improve



sanitation in their communities. I am committed to making government work for the people and ensuring that Brooklyn's resources serve those who need them most.

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?

As a proud parent of two public school students and a firm believer in strengthening New York City's public education system, I have consistently prioritized investing in our public schools. During my time in Borough Hall, I have directed over \$40 million to fund non-charter public schools and CUNY, and I remain committed to ensuring every student has access to high-quality education. I oppose the expansion of network charter schools and I will continue fighting to ensure public dollars are invested where they belong—into our public school system.

I am dedicated to expanding funding and support for District 75 schools, which serve students with significant disabilities, ensuring they receive the resources they need. I will also continue investing in critical infrastructure and technology upgrades, including funding tech improvements for District 16 and 17 schools and installing hydroponics labs in every middle and high school in District 19. These initiatives will enhance student learning, foster innovation, and ensure all public school students—regardless of zip code—have access to modern educational tools. Strengthening our public schools is not just a policy priority; it's a personal commitment. I will continue using my role to fight for a well-funded, equitable public education system that supports all students.

In office, I will also continue fighting to protect and expand publicly funded childcare programs, ensuring they remain open and adequately resourced. I will work to secure increased city and state investments in early childhood education, expand subsidies for working families, and advocate for better wages and benefits for childcare providers to attract and retain a skilled workforce. Strengthening our childcare infrastructure is essential for economic stability, allowing parents—particularly mothers—to remain in the workforce and ensuring that children receive the early education they need to thrive.

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

New York City's campaign finance system is among the best in the country, setting the standard for transparency and accountability in elections. I strongly support our public financing system and have worked to strengthen it during my time on the City Council where I helped pass reforms to improve the system, ensuring it empowers grassroots candidates and reduces the influence of big money in politics.

While no system is perfect, we should be proud of what we have built. Moving forward, we must strike the right balance between increasing access to public financing and maintaining safeguards that prevent abuse. We must ensure that thresholds for matching funds are set at a level that encourages serious candidates with real community support, rather than opening the door to tax dollars funding campaigns without genuine viability. Our campaign finance system should continue to uplift diverse, community-driven candidates while maintaining the integrity of our elections.

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 am deeply committed to ensuring that Rikers Island closes as close to the mandated deadline as possible. Unfortunately, this administration has made that difficult by increasing jail populations instead of reducing them, while leaving Alternatives to Incarceration programs underfunded. For Rikers to close on time and to ensure that people are not being held unnecessarily behind bars, we must do much more to support these programs.

I also believe that a Housing First approach is essential to reducing incarceration, particularly for women with children who often face unique barriers to reentry. That's why I am working to develop a supportive and transitional housing facility specifically for women with children exiting the carceral system. This facility will provide stable housing, job readiness programs, mental and physical health care, and housing readiness services, ensuring that these women and their children have the support they need to successfully reintegrate into their communities. This program is currently in development and I would be happy to talk in greater detail about it during an endorsement interview.

Expanding these types of programs is key to reducing the jail population and ensuring that vulnerable families are not trapped in a system that prioritizes punishment over rehabilitation.

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.

I am committed to expanding affordable housing, protecting tenants, and ensuring that all New Yorkers—especially low- and moderate-income residents—have access to safe, stable housing. My approach includes increasing housing supply, strengthening tenant protections, and preserving affordability in our communities.

To address the city's housing crisis, I have supported ULURP approvals that increase housing capacity across Brooklyn, ensuring we build more homes for those who need them. I have also championed the creation of affordable housing, including senior housing, supportive housing, and housing for vulnerable populations such as youth aging out of foster care and the formerly incarcerated. Additionally, I have been a strong advocate for the City of Yes initiative and have opposed rollbacks on ADUs to expand housing options citywide. My advocacy has included providing testimony and official recommendations to help move these policies forward.

Alongside increasing housing production, I have worked to strengthen tenant protections and prevent displacement. My work in housing preservation and protection includes hosting Tenant's Rights Forums to educate renters on their rights and connect them with legal resources and creating a six-month development cohort program for faith-based institutions in Brooklyn to help them enter the HPD pipeline and create new affordable housing. Additionally, I have hosted deed theft workshops to protect Black and Brown homeowners from fraud and displacement. Moving forward, I will advocate for the creation of a Tangled Title Fund, modeled on Philadelphia's program, to help homeowners resolve legal and administrative barriers to homeownership and prevent deed theft. I will also work to secure capital funding to close financing gaps for organizations developing supportive housing projects in Brooklyn.

Housing is a human right, and in a second term as Borough President I will continue to fight for policies that expand affordability, protect tenants, and prevent displacement. By increasing housing supply, ensuring stronger protections for renters, and preserving existing affordable housing, we can create a more just and livable New York for all.



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 issue of retiree healthcare is deeply complex and one that I want to learn more about by engaging directly with all affected members, including retirees. I respect the collective bargaining process and believe that decisions about healthcare coverage should be negotiated between unions and their members, rather than dictated by elected officials.

While I am not intimately involved in the details of the Medicare Advantage Program, I recognize its significant impact on retirees and believe it warrants further discussion. If re-elected, I will listen to retirees, learn more about their concerns, and ensure that any proposed changes to healthcare coverage are approached with transparency and fairness.

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?

True public safety is not simply the absence of crime, but the presence of a healthy, well-resourced, and well-planned community. In other words, we get to safer communities by planning for them and investing in them. We prevent crime by preventing the conditions that necessitate illegal activity and introduce violence.

All too often, however, our leaders react to incidents of crime or New Yorkers' experiences of fear by resorting to increases in police presence. While more police officers may offer some neighbors the appearance of safety, it is more so an admission from our city and state that they have given up on addressing the root of these issues. Take a look at the neighborhoods with the highest rates of crime and violence, and you'll find more police officers, not fewer. Take a look at the safest neighborhoods, and you're hard pressed to find a officer but will see ample transit, healthcare, education, jobs, and other opportunities. That's why I believe we need to remove police from areas such as traffic enforcement, mental health crisis response, homeless outreach, and our schools.

The real issue we're having is seeing the homelessness and the mental health issues that have become worse and worse over the years. Rather than invest in a good homelessness support system, fully funding mental health services, connecting young people to afterschool programs, and focusing on housing-first models to public safety, our leaders focus on band-aid, superficial solutions like increased police presence.

Not only is this short-sighted and ineffective, it also places unrealistic expectations on our police officers – asking them to moonlight as social service providers and mental health experts. Instead, what we would be doing is allowing police officers to focus on policing by building on efforts to have mental health professional first responders, well-resourced social service providers, and holistic investments into healthy communities.

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 have been a strong advocate for the *City of Yes* initiative because expanding housing options citywide is essential to addressing our affordability crisis. I have provided testimony and official recommendations to advance these policies and have opposed rollbacks on ADUs, which would allow homeowners to add units and create more housing choice. However, I've also been clear that *City of Yes* did not go far enough—we need a citywide comprehensive plan that ensures every neighborhood contributes to development in a way that prioritizes public health, open space, transportation, climate resiliency, and economic opportunity alongside housing. Simply put, we have seen the consequences of development not keeping pace with population growth. A lack of supply makes the city more expensive for everyone.

Balancing the need for more affordable housing while ensuring developers don't have unchecked power requires thoughtful policy. *City of Yes* does not eliminate public review—developers must still go through ULURP for zoning changes, and the initiative actually increases opportunities for nonprofit and mission-driven organizations to build affordable housing by easing restrictive zoning regulations. The new Unified Affordable Housing Program (UAP) bonus is also not a giveaway to developers; any additional density must be dedicated to affordable housing.

Where *City of Yes* fell short was in addressing long-standing zoning inequities. For too long, low-income communities of color have borne the brunt of rezoning, while affluent areas have been exempt from doing their fair share. We've seen this in Williamsburg and East New York, where aggressive rezonings have led to displacement and rapid gentrification. *City of Yes* was a chance to correct past mistakes by ensuring all neighborhoods contribute to new housing, and while we made progress, carve-outs like those in the ADU proposal show that we still have work to do. I remain committed to fighting for policies that create a fairer, more affordable Brooklyn for everyone.