Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2025 Candidate Questionnaire

- Candidate Name: Maya Kornberg
- Office Sought: City Council Member for District 39
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- Name of person filling out this questionnaire: Maya Kornberg

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?

1. Centering Constituents: The job of a City Council Member is to engage with local constituents and represent their interests. I've spent my career working on creating more responsive governance, and I know the number one rule is that people want to be heard, and government works better when it listens. We need the basics - a continuously open district office and constituent requests that are answered in a timely manner. But I will do more than that. I will start monthly town halls that meet people where they are, with virtual engagement options for those who cannot join in person. In a diverse district, I will work to create culturally competent and varied engagement opportunities that are created together with those with different lived experiences. As a Council Member, engaging with the community will be my number one priority.

2. Protecting our democracy: President-elect Trump has threatened to eliminate our checks and balances and take away basic rights. I've spent my career fighting for democracy, and I'll bring this expertise to City Hall. As a Senior Fellow at the Brennan Center, I work on combatting political violence and misinformation, strengthening oversight and legislative processes, and bolstering our checks and balances and democratic institutions. We need to strengthen oversight and processes locally. And we need to stand up to Trump's national plans to strip away basic rights to healthcare, infrastructure, and other things.

3. Building an Affordable and Sustainable District: My son Liam was born in October 2024 and we want the best future for him. My partner is an elementary school teacher and I have worked as a college professor. We believe that investing in children and young people is the most powerful way to make the world a better place. We face a crisis in early childhood education. We need more public funding for childcare assistance programs and we need it now. As a City Council Member, I will fight for more public funding for education, including for our littlest constituents. Affordable housing is at a historic low across New York City. American cities where rents are going down are cities where more housing is being built. We desperately need more housing units in this city, and development must prioritize affordability and community engagement. As a City Council Member, I will work with the community to address this crisis and create responsive solutions. Environmental sustainability is crucial to a healthy community. The recent fire in Prospect Park is a reminder that climate change poses new challenges and we need to invest in the necessary infrastructure. Flooding is one major environmental issue throughout the district that may get worse with climate change. Working with community boards, the

Parks Department, residents and other organizations, we could take straightforward steps to address this issue.

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

1. I've spent my whole career working on making democracy work better for the people it is meant to serve. I worked at the UN helping parliaments around the world understand how to engage with their citizens more effectively. As a Senior Fellow at the Brennan Center, I work on combatting political violence, creating policy solutions that keep big money out of our politics, and making Congress and local governments work effectively. I'm proud of my research and advocacy leading to changes in campaign finance and legislative procedure nationally. My PhD, which I later turned into my first book "*Inside Congressional Committees*", was published in 2023 and explores our legislative system and how to make it more representative and responsive to ordinary Americans. I know how government works and how to fight for it to work more effectively. And my experience teaching graduate and undergraduate students about politics prepares me to explain how government works and inspire people to get involved.
2. I believe that community starts with family, those we are born into and those we create. In October 2024, I became a mom to our beautiful baby boy Liam. My spouse and I love being parents and connecting with other parents and families in the district. I am a sister, daughter, spouse, friend, and ally and I am proud to add the role of "mom." As a mom raising a child in District 39, I want to fight to make sure my son has the best possible start.
3. In Brooklyn, I've dedicated myself to local activism. I spend weekends campaigning for Democratic candidates at our farmers markets and subway stations and knocking on doors. I love being an active member of local political clubs, the food coop, and other groups that bring together the community in this wonderful district.

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**?

1. We face a global crisis of climate change, and Trump's plans to undo some of Biden's infrastructure are terrifying. Without federal support, the Council needs to be doubling down on plans to build the infrastructure we need.
2. The Trump administration has vowed to attack immigrants. I'm proud that my grandparents came to the Bronx and Brooklyn as asylum seekers and refugees and we must preserve NYC's sanctuary status.
3. The Trump administration is attacking women's rights to reproductive care and basic women's health. As someone who lives with a chronic autoimmune illness called Sjogrens, I know how complicated it can be to navigate our broken healthcare system. And as a pregnant individual with a high-risk pregnancy, I found that even with all my access, I had to fight for the care I deserved. Healthcare is a

basic human right and it should be accessible to all. As a City Council Member, I will fight for more funding for patient advocates and interpreters to ensure that everyone can get the care they need. Amidst a crisis of maternal health, particularly for women of color, I will fight for more funding for women's health, including for programs that track differences in women's health outcomes, research, and abortion care.

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?

1. The current numbers are 162 in district donors, 361 total donors, $55,700 total raised and I received $116,804 in matched funds from NYC in December. My average contribution was $140. I'm proud to run a small donor driven campaign and I'm not taking any money from corporate PACs, lobbyists, or real estate developers.

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.

1. Constituent services will be my number one priority as a council member. The first step I'll take is to make myself and my office more accessible to constituents. I'll do this by opening up a constituent services table at public spaces (parks, playgrounds etc.) throughout the district once a month so that those who can't come to my office can still voice concerns and share issues they need resolved. I'll also have monthly town halls throughout the district to meet people where they are and share with them about the work of the office and listen to them about their opinions.
2. I will advocate for immigration, sanitation, safety, infrastructure, transportation, food security, and other issues by building relationships with the different City agencies, as well as with other state and national level from the district so that my staff and I can help constituents get issues resolved
3. I will hire expert staff with diverse lived experiences and relationships with agencies and the council in order to build culturally competent and effective engagement.
4. I will continue our wonderful public budgeting programs to make sure we are spending money in the way constituents would most like.
5. My staff and I will be present throughout our diverse district at community boards, clubs, civic organizations, school events, community gatherings, celebrations, and other events where people gather so that I can get to know and learn from people in our district.
6. I will support and lift up the work of amazing local organizations like CHIPS, which I live near and donate to, and others fighting food insecurity in the district.

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?

1. As we face a climate crisis, I will use discretionary funds to ensure schools in the district have AC units and other accessibility and sustainability infrastructure they need
2. After a cut to education spending in the budget, I will fight to increase the amount of money the city invests in schools, as well as in ELL and special education programs.
3. I will support the creation of a robust d15 diversity plan and recruitment of culturally responsive and talented pedagogy
4. I will work to protect students from Trump's immigration policies
5. As a mother of a baby, I know that education starts before age three. I will advocate for universal childcare and investment in infant care centers, as well as more accessible pre-K for all programs for all toddlers.

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

1. I am very proud to be fundraising with New York City public financing. It's a program that I have supported for many years as a democracy advocate. I think it's a great equalizer, especially for young people running for office, for women running for office. I think we need to continue to invest in public financing, in making the program more accessible for candidates and constituents, easier for candidates to navigate, and more efficient and effective. It is and can continue to be a model for other parts of the country as we fight for national public financing.
2. As a researcher and advocate in the money in politics space, I believe that we should repair the horrible distortions created by Citizens United and work to reinstate limits on PAC money in politics.

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 believe our incarceration system in this country is shameful and in many cases inhumane. I support the plan to close Rikers Island and instead build more humane borough based alternatives. I will be a dogged representative who can take on any mayoral administration to hold their feet to the fire while also working with them to get a concrete new timeline and revised plan.

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.

1. I'm from Northern California and grew up volunteering at Glide memorial church in San Francisco and seeing the heart-wrenching homelessness pandemic facing California (the state with the largest homeless population in America.) The homelessness epidemic facing this country is a result of a number of systemic issues. First of all, as a result of a broken and inaccessible healthcare system, individuals with mental health and physical health issues often face astronomical medical bills and no social safety net to help them from becoming housing insecure. A key part of fixing homelessness is fighting for better and more accessible healthcare. A second part of the homelessness epidemic is the housing crisis. Around the country, cities where rents are coming down are cities where housing is being built. I'm excited that we passed City of Yes, and think it is a first step in addressing the housing crisis. We need to build more and more affordable housing throughout the city. And we need more public funding for shelters and soup kitchens throughout the city, including the ones in the district.

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?

1. Medicare Advantage program is an essential resource for retirees in this district and in this city. We should invest in tools to help seniors access this and other healthcare resources like patient advocates and interpreters. And I promise to confer with NYC retirees before proposing any future changes to health care coverage and other benefits. People with lived experience of an issue must be partners in crafting policies to address the issue.

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?

1. Amidst rising racially motivated hate crimes against religious and racial minorities, we must take a stand. There is no place for discriminatory violence, vandalism, and other acts of hate in this community. I know from my work that the key is fostering collaboration between local law enforcement and communities. At a time where the 78th precinct and police stations across the country are understaffed, and 911 calls are either not made or not answered in time as a result, calls to defund the police are only hurting local communities' safety. Amidst rising division, we must create more spaces for local dialogue, centering shared humanity and restorative justice instead of megaphones.

2. We also need to think about reforming and improving law enforcement and public safety. That means investing in programs like crisis intervention first responders, Brooklyn Justice Initiatives and Brooklyn Mental Health Court.

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?

1. I'm a big proponent of the City of Yes program. As a renter in this district, I feel the housing crisis. We desperately need more housing in this city. I especially applaud the way the plan centers sustainability and takes a creative approach to mixing residential and commercial building and fitting this city to modern needs. The way to balance affordable housing and zoning that empowers developers is to make sure that we aren't applying a one-size-fits-all approach to housing. Each community and each construction project requires a community engaged process that prioritizes finding developers that the community trusts and building a community responsive and sustainable way.