

## 2020 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Completed questionnaires will be public documents available on our website, so put your best foot forward. If we ultimately hold an endorsement vote in your race, we will circulate your questionnaire to our members before the vote.

Contact with questions: Jessica Thurston, NKD's VP of Political Affairs, [politics@newkingsdemocrats.com](mailto:politics@newkingsdemocrats.com)

Name	Jennifer Gutierrez
Council District number and neighborhoods represented	34- Bushwick and Williamsburg in Brooklyn and Ridgewood in Queens
How long have you lived in the above district?	1 year
Why do you want to serve as a member of the NYC Council?	I'm running because our local administration is failing us and this last budget proves that empowering New Yorkers, protecting bodies of color, supporting the working poor, and a transparent and equitable government is far from reach. I feel a deep responsibility to my neighbors and the families of this district, to our livelihoods, to our post COVID recovery, and to achieving social and economic justice. I am committed to this movement no matter where I do it from. We have an opportunity in 2021 to change the way our government looks by electing more women and people of color, prioritizing people over profits, and dismantling the stronghold real estate has had on our communities. Running for office was a decision I made in community with neighbors, friends, and stakeholders- all people that I've worked and organized with in this community. I want to serve as Council Member to the 34th District because I have built and been a part of coalitions in this community- I know what we can accomplish together, and I look forward to it.
What civic and political organizations are you involved with in the district?	I'm not involved with many besides NKD, but I do work with members of various clubs in different capacities.
What have you accomplished in public life that you are most proud of?	PB at its core, is a wonderful process that aims to open up government to its residents. It empowers residents by funding their vision for a better community. I have been the coordinator for the 34th district since 2014, the same year we introduced it to the community. Every year, we have consistently seen an increase in voter turnout, primarily with Spanish speaking and young residents. In our first cycle, we secured 3k votes and in our last cycle in 2019 we secured over 8k votes, coming in 2nd for the entire City. This was really meaningful for me.

<p>What are the greatest opportunities and challenges facing the district?</p>	<p>I think the greatest challenge will continue to be housing and how we protect tenants. Opportunities are expanding on the Right to Counsel legislation, and investing in community land trusts to ensure that housing remains affordable. Another challenge is related to our COVID response moving forward. The 34th Council District has some of the lowest amount of park space per resident. We have an opportunity as part of our response to rethink how we use our public spaces and redesign them to create more parks and open spaces to better serve our neighbors.</p>
<p>Why do you want New Kings Democrats' endorsement?</p>	<p>I think NKD has done a tremendous job of raising the bar for a more transparent and effective democratic party. When I think of how real base building can bring about the change we need, I think about their Rep Your Block campaign and the massive movement to include more residents in our Democratic Party. So much of what I've dedicated myself to on behalf of the 34th district in the last eight years has been to achieve greater access, engagement, and transparency for residents. I believe we are aligned in these core values and an endorsement would support our campaign's mission to continue this effort for Williamsburg, Bushwick and Ridgewood.</p>
<p>If elected, what will your top three legislative and budgetary priorities be while in office?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.) Increase capital spending on housing by both expanding construction subsidies to develop more affordable units and to purchase land (which will be more economical during the current recession) to place in community land trusts that would prioritize affordability in perpetuity.</li> <li>2.) Expanding the "community school model" which, through strategic community partnerships, ensures schools are providing comprehensive services to students and families.</li> <li>3.) Passing Comprehensive Planning to prevent displacement and gentrification in communities of color.</li> </ol>
<p>What is one thing you would do to make New York City government more transparent, accountable, or inclusive?</p>	<p>I'd like to expand the participatory budgeting process to use it as a tool to bring my constituents into the overall City budget process. The budget is a very opaque process even within the Council and is of course even less so to the general public. I strongly believe that my constituents should have an understanding about how their tax dollars are being spent and how that spending is aiding our community.</p>
<p>Please review NKD's voting rights platform: <a href="https://www.newkingsdemocrats.com/voting_rights">https://www.newkingsdemocrats.com/voting_rights</a>. In what ways would you like to expand voting access, and how can you do this as a member of the NYC Council?</p>	<p>So much of the reason why I am a huge supporter of Participatory Budgeting is because of its mission to reduce barriers to voting. This includes lowering the voting age and voting rights for the formerly incarcerated and non-citizens. I am supportive of NKD's voting rights platform and will commit to exploring the aspects of the platform that can be legislated at the City level, including allowing undocumented folks to vote</p>

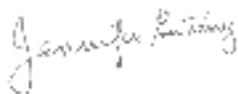
	<p>in municipal elections. I am also committed to working to expand voter registration in my district in advance of legislative action.</p>
<p>What criminal justice reforms would you like to see the Council implement?</p>	<p>My biggest priority is reducing New Yorkers' contact with the justice system as much as possible. For me, this means reducing the number of low level criminal offenses, fighting to preserve and expand bail reform, and removing the NYPD from our schools, homeless outreach, and mental health crisis response.</p>
<p>What specific racial justice issues are impacting the district and how would you address them as a Council Member?</p>	<p>I think the majority of issues facing our district are racial justice issues. Whether discussing environmental justice, equity in our schools, policing, housing, or access to economic opportunity, race plays a role in all of them. I believe pursuing a comprehensive plan for NYC will be an important step in overcoming issues related to segregation, inequitable distribution of resources to communities of color, and addressing environmental disparities. I will also be working to bring more community health services to my district to address the health disparities that have led to tragic outcomes during the COVID crisis. I also want to significantly reduce the activities that the NYPD engages in throughout our City and redistribute that funding to a variety of educational and social service programming for communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the justice system.</p>
<p>What is your perspective on, and what would be your plan regarding, the funding of the NYPD?</p>	<p>I believe we need to significantly reduce the number of activities the NYPD engages in, including school safety, homeless outreach, and mental health crisis response. This would result in a reduction in the NYPD's budget that I believe should be redistributed to a variety of educational and social service programs.</p>
<p>What housing issues specific to your council district concern you most, and how would you address them if elected?</p>	<p>My biggest priority is keeping people in the homes they're already in, which is a difficult task in a rapidly gentrifying community like mine where landlords are financially incentivized to displace rent-regulated tenants. We have seen that legal representation in housing court is effective at combating evictions and I would fight to expand Right to Counsel to ensure that all tenants have a lawyer in housing court free of charge. Additionally, we need to expand the stock of new affordable housing and I plan to work with my constituents to identify opportunities to do this, including implementation of the Bushwick Community Plan.</p>
<p>Do you support cancelling rent for tenants and small business owners during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>What will you do to help reach more gender equity within the NYC Council?</p>	<p>I believe we need to focus on a plan that provides employment and permanent opportunities for trans New Yorkers and</p>

	<p>legislation that decriminalizes sex work. We know that the existing laws disproportionately affect women of color and trans New Yorkers so we need programs and pathways to increase their safety, rather than put them at risk of being incarcerated.</p>
<p>In reviewing the NYC Budget, what specific categories do you think should be either cut or increased to help the city's current economic predicament?</p>	<p>I believe we need to conduct full efficiency reviews of all agencies to identify areas where we can achieve budget savings. For example, we should look at energy efficiency in our city buildings and how we can reduce energy costs, delaying procurement of new City vehicles if they are still functional, and cutting services that serve a wealthier constituency such as the ferry system. I am also a big proponent of identifying new revenue streams, such as selling residential parking permits and increasing parking meter fees.</p>
<p>What are your recovery priorities for the district related to the COVID-19 pandemic?</p>	<p>I am incredibly concerned about our undocumented population who have received no government support during the entire pandemic. For these folks, as well as many others in my district, getting people back into the labor force is a major priority. People simply will not recover if they're not financially stable and I plan to implement a robust jobs program in my district to connect people to economic opportunities. Furthermore, I will be advocating to secure more community health centers as well as preserving NYC Care to ensure that my constituents have access to primary care. We saw how COVID impacted those with underlying conditions with increased severity and that was exacerbated by the lack of adequate healthcare before the pandemic hit in communities like mine.</p>
<p>What would you do to reform the Land Use process to promote racial and social equity?</p>	<p>Currently, ULURP allows minimal leverage from the community to get what they need and makes it way too easy for real estate to do the same. A comp plan would assess the overall needs of the City, while accounting for the unique conditions in each community. Perhaps most importantly, it would provide an opportunity to correct for past injustices and place an equity lens on future decisions. A fair share, segregation, and access to opportunity analysis would all be part of the planning process, ensuring that there would be equitable distribution of open space, transportation infrastructure, housing, economic development projects, healthcare facilities, as well as burdensome facilities such as waste transfer stations.</p>
<p>What is your vision for the Brooklyn Democratic Party?</p>	<p>The Brooklyn Democratic Party needs wholesale reform. I want to see a party that actually works to engage Brooklynites in the democratic process and works to elect candidates that reflect their communities and effectuate policies that reflect the priorities of local residents. This means working to get more folks to run for County Committee, encouraging progressive District Leader candidates to run against entrenched county incumbents, and generally encouraging more public</p>

	participation in party activities. As we build a progressive bloc, I believe we can achieve the rules changes outlined in NKD's rules changes platform.
New Kings Democrats has proposed several <a href="#">rules changes</a> to be considered by the County Committee. Do you support the proposals? If elected, will you advocate for these and other reforms that democratize power within the County Committee?	Absolutely!
How much money have you raised for this campaign? What are the major sources?	I have a little over \$20k and I'm actively fundraising. They are all small donations, the average being \$58 and close to half are from in district donors.
Are you accepting campaign contributions from law enforcement unions?	No
What endorsements have you received from publications, electeds, community leaders, or political organizations?	For organizations, I have received endorsements from the WFP, Road to Justice Coalition (Make the Road Action, Community Voices Heard Power, and 1199), NYCC, and 21 in 21. For electeds (not public) I have received the endorsements of Council Members Antonio Reynoso, Carlina Rivera, Ben Kallos, State Senator Julia Salazar and State Senator Jessica Ramos and Assemblywoman Maritza Davila and Assemblywoman Catalina Cruz.
Of the elected officials in the NYC Council, who do you admire most and why?	I'm going to say my boss- Antonio Reynoso. I think he's remained true to his values and has made equity the core of his tenure.
What are some of the best ways you think New York City residents can best participate in civic life?	I think engaging locally is a solid start. PB is near to my heart and so I would suggest getting involved in your district or part of the city-wide committee. Community Boards are also a good place to capture your communities needs and make connections with stakeholders. Finally, volunteer for a political campaign in your neighborhood.
What is one fun fact about you?	I was on Reading Rainbow when I was 9 and the book I read for the episode was "Taxi, Taxi".

I have reviewed this questionnaire and agree that the responses set forth in this document are accurate:

Candidate Signature:



Date: 12/4/2020

**You must sign this questionnaire! When complete, please email your signed and scanned questionnaire as a PDF to [politics@newkingsdemocrats.com](mailto:politics@newkingsdemocrats.com)**

