



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

Name	Michael Hollingsworth
Council District number and neighborhoods represented	Council District 35: Bed-Stuy, Clinton Hill, Prospect Heights, Fort Greene, and Crown Heights
How long have you lived in the above district?	My whole life!
Why do you want to serve as a member of the NYC Council?	<p>I want to serve because I'm tired of seeing my neighbors—people who built this district, nurtured it, sustained it, raised their families, and fought through Reaganomics in the '80s and the crack epidemic of the '90s—being priced out, bought out, or harassed out of the neighborhoods we love. I'm tired of seeing new residents who would like to put down roots, contribute and perhaps start a family here as my parents did in the '70s unable to do so because of the unaffordable and unstable rental market, because real estate investors have decided that the district is now trendy. I'm tired of being presented every election cycle with establishment candidates and being told that this is the best person for the job. I'm tired of candidates who have been part of the structures that have harmed our community, now being recast as fighters against the system.</p> <p>I want to serve because I believe that we who live here, not corporate outsiders, should control our future. And as a member of the City Council, I will always make sure that the people who live in District 35 (not outside monied interests) will have the first and final say in deciding our future.</p> <p>I want to serve because the Black and brown people of this district have been under siege by poverty and lack of</p>

	<p>opportunity for generations, with electeds who give us lip service and nothing more.</p> <p>I want to serve because I believe working people like cashiers, waitresses, healthcare professionals, educators, and MTA employees who are the heart and blood that keeps this city moving should represent us in the halls of government, not those with professional and personal ties to the governmental structure and political class that have laid us low.</p>
<p>What civic and political organizations are you involved with in the district?</p>	<p>Partnerships/alliances I have within the community include but are not limited to the Crown Heights Tenant Union, Central Brooklyn DSA, Community Boards 8 and 9, New York Communities for Change, Friends of 920 Park, Movement To Protect The People, Flower Lovers Against Corruption, and Preserve Our Brooklyn Neighborhoods.</p>
<p>What have you accomplished in public life that you are most proud of?</p>	<p>I am most proud of my record fighting against displacement and for the rights of my neighbors. This record began during my first year organizing with the Crown Heights Tenant Union, when I proudly fought with my neighbors against the luxury development and give-away of public land at the Bedford Union Armory. I am proud of the organizing I did to unite <u>Pinnacle</u> tenants throughout Crown Heights to fight back against our management’s notoriously bad practices.</p> <p>I am proud of my work in the <u>Housing Justice For All</u> coalition fighting for universal rent control in 2019. During the campaign, I helped lead trainings, direct actions, and events throughout the state, which culminated in the historic <u>win</u> in <u>June</u> 2019, when we passed the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act ensuring new protections for tenants across the state of New York. I am proud of the organizing I did with the Rent Justice Coalition to win the 2020 rent freeze for millions of rent-stabilized tenants.</p> <p>I am proud of my legal and organizing work to stop luxury rezonings along Franklin Avenue. This began in 2019, when I joined with my neighbors in a lawsuit against Councilmember Laurie Cumbo, a group of city agencies, and Cornell Realty Management LLC to defend my community against the rezoning of franklin Ave, which would allow the development of luxury towers at 931 Carroll Street and 40 Crown Street. In late</p>

	<p>2020, we also engaged in legal proceedings to stop a monstrous development at 960 Franklin Ave. If the developers are successful, my neighborhood would become the home of Brooklyn's largest luxury development. The 39-story tower would continue the rapid displacement of Black people that has been happening for the past 7 years and cast shadows that will destroy the Brooklyn Botanic Garden forever.</p>
<p>What are the greatest opportunities and challenges facing the district?</p>	<p>The biggest challenges are the years of displacement driven by real estate interests and now COVID-19, both wreaking havoc on poor and working-class Black and brown residents of District 35, as well as decades of disinvestment in working class neighborhoods and it's people.</p> <p>The biggest opportunity is that our community is getting organized--whether as tenants going on rent strike, neighbors fighting against luxury developments, or all of us who marched against police brutality and for Black lives.</p>
<p>Why do you want New Kings Democrats' endorsement?</p>	<p>I share NKD's desire to make the Brooklyn Democratic party more transparent, more inclusive, and less corrupt than it has been for my whole adult life. I recognize the negative effects that machine politics have had on our representation at the city, state, and federal level, including the judges who defend property over people and feed mass incarceration in a city whose leaders almost all claim to be progressives. I am also interested in NKD's endorsement because I know that most NKD members are engaged community organizers, like myself, and I welcome the opportunity to share my platform and my vision with them.</p>
<p>If elected, what will your top three legislative and budgetary priorities be while in office?</p>	<p>Housing justice--fighting displacement; education justice--fighting privatization and segregation; policing--ending police brutality and reinvesting funds in public services.</p>
<p>What is one thing you would do to make New York City government more transparent, accountable, or inclusive?</p>	<p>I support a complete overhaul of Land Use Review procedures to prevent corruption and prioritize people over profits. A new process should incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community benefit agreements that must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Publicly accessible ○ Legally binding and transferable from applicant-to-applicant or owner-to-owner

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developed with current residents at the table, along with grassroots orgs and tenant unions with years of local history. ● Minimize developer influence over the Department of City Planning, Economic Development Corporation, and other city agencies and instead increase cooperation with residents and communities ● More transparency about changes in plans mid-process ● A longer timeline with more opportunities for the community to review
<p>Please review NKD's voting rights platform: https://www.newkingsdemocrats.com/voting_rights. 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>I support the NKD voting rights platform. I support simplifying the voter registration process, lowering the voting age, enfranchising those with a criminal record, and also enfranchising immigrants who are part of our communities. I will legislate to make this platform a reality and when these issues require state action, I will organize and advocate for their passage in the legislature.</p> <p>One major infringement on voting rights in Brooklyn is the abject failures of the Board of Elections over the years, which led to an unacceptable number of faulty absentee ballots and discarded ballots this year. When people can't trust the voting apparatus, that's voter suppression. I will press state legislators to amend the NYS constitution to create a nonpartisan BOE, but at the local level, I will call attention to the failures of the Brooklyn Democratic Party to ensure a functional system within the bipartisan BOE structure. When our borough is the only county without a Dem commissioner, when our county has the highest percentage of absentee ballots thrown out in the whole state, and thousands of people get thrown off the voter rolls, the responsibility lies with the party leadership who benefit from their control over appointments to the BOE, and who let political favoritism trump competence.</p>
<p>What criminal justice reforms would you like to see the Council implement?</p>	<p>My long term goal for NYC would be for us to be a city that doesn't need an armed police force, especially one whose main priority has been to protect property and police Black folks rather than promoting real safety. I want a city in which hopping a turnstile or getting caught with weed doesn't trap young people into a carceral system for the rest of their lives. I want a city in which young people who make a mistake in</p>

school, just like I did numerous times, get a second, third, and fourth chance and not be put on the school-to-prison pipeline. I also want us to decriminalize adult sex work. I know that my vision of a police-free city will take time, but until we get there here are some reforms I would like to see the 2021 Council prioritize:

- Get NYPD out of public schools
- Freeze the hiring process and re-evaluate how officers are recruited
- Refuse any donations of military-grade supplies from the federal government and destroy the ones we already have
- Establish an Elected Civilian Complaint Review Board with 100% elected by citizens; end reliance on NYPD approval for disciplinary recommendations
- Cut and cap overtime
- Bodycams: for officers who “forget” to turn on their cameras when interacting with the public we need a 3 strike rule:
 - 1st time 30-day suspension without pay
 - 2nd time 90-day suspension without pay
 - 3rd time automatic firing
- Officers who fail to provide their name and badge number when asked by a citizen should be fired
- Require liability insurance for police to help remove the most violent officers
- Residency requirement: Officers should be required to live in the communities they serve
- Officers who lie under oath and on official reports should be automatically terminated, including those who corroborate lies
- Use the repeal of 50-A and the release of NYPD service records to remove problem officers from the force
- No partnerships with private surveillance companies that produce:
 - Racially biased facial recognition software
 - Racially biased predictive algorithms
- Limit the ability of officers who are on modified duty to receive raises
- Limit the ability of officers with numerous complaints to be promoted

<p>What specific racial justice issues are impacting the district and how would you address them as a Council Member?</p>	<p>My district has historically redlined neighborhoods so I assume you all know what that means. The BLM protests this summer made it clear what Black people have always known: racist policing is still a primary obstacle to racial justice for Black Brooklynites like myself (more on my policing platform below). But what some elected officials have lost sight of is how the protests happened in the wake of COVID-19's devastation of marginalized communities: Black and brown NYers died at a higher rate than any other group, and were also a major part of the frontline workers fighting to save New York, now we are overrepresented in the population that faces the greatest threat of losing our homes with the avalanche of evictions poised to hit New York, and our kids are suffering the most from the switch to remote learning. Progress towards racial justice in my district is going to take a comprehensive approach where we fight for housing justice, health justice, carceral justice, economic justice, and educational justice. These fights require taking action against the real estate and corporate interests that view our communities as opportunities for plunder, and for that reason I believe that we need council members with a record of fighting back at the City and State level. Some of these issues require immediate action from City Council, like ending racist luxury rezonings and reinvesting the NYPD budget in social services and job programs. However, many of these projects will require State-level action, which is why I will use my large office staff to organize our community for these State-level priorities.</p>
<p>What is your perspective on, and what would be your plan regarding, the funding of the NYPD?</p>	<p>I support the Defund 2 Refund movement. Their 2020 budget didn't grow to 10.9 billion overnight but instead accumulated over decades. I envision myself cutting as much as possible every year that I'm in office, and instead diverting those funds to the same historically underfunded redlined communities that have been overpoliced for decades, into our schools, housing, healthcare, job training, and job creation. This is crucial when Black male unemployment is twice as high as that of our white male counterparts. People and neighborhoods that receive meaningful investment are less likely to need and have police interactions.</p> <p>Not only is the NYPD's budget bloated, but so are their ranks. BIPOC communities are living under an occupying force, with numbers not seen even during the 70s when crime was far worse. For far too long we've been treating the symptom</p>

	<p>(crime) and not looking for ways to cure the disease (poverty/lack of opportunity). I know from my lived experience, people who have full-time jobs with benefits that allow them to provide for themselves and their families, keep a roof over their heads, and know that a medical emergency won't bankrupt them aren't out in the streets committing crimes. Unless they work on Wall Street.</p> <p>I would support shifting the responsibility for responding to mental health crises, noise complaints, and other non-violent "quality of life" complaints to other city agencies and or community groups better equipped to handle them. I would support returning traffic enforcement to the Department of Transit. I would support returning funding to youth-outreach programs that have been proven to reduce youth participation in crime, gang-related, or otherwise. I would support shifting funding and other resources to homelessness prevention since the trauma of homelessness is another pipeline to the carceral system; it's unacceptable that NYC's justice system treats the (often illegal) displacement of families as less worthy of investigation than crime perpetrated by the poor. I want us to invest in community-based anti-violence organizations like Save Our Streets Brooklyn. From my lived experience, I know that a lot of times young people get into trouble because of idle hands, so I'd like to see a re-investment in Richard Green's Crown Heights Youth Collective and other youth-focused organizations that give young people a safe place to go and something constructive to do.</p>
<p>What housing issues specific to your council district concern you most, and how would you address them if elected?</p>	<p>We are going to make a complete 180 from the incumbent's approach to housing, land use and rezoning, because we know that giving developers everything they want has created our housing crisis, and doing more of the same won't cure it. We will fight against environmentally damaging luxury developments that fail to offer housing for poor and working class people. Instead, we'll fight for housing that benefits our marginalized neighbors, focus on repairing NYCHA, and fight to make our buildings less dependent on fossil fuels. Some of the points in our platform that will distinguish us include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An immediate moratorium on all rezonings (spot and district-wide), with exceptions for justice-centered, community-produced plans ● A ban on real estate or finance executives holding leadership positions within any City agency or office

	<p>with authority over housing or land use decisions, for a period of 10 years following their last day of such employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Real enforcement of the housing and building codes to ensure the safety of tenants and to hold unscrupulous landlords accountable, as well as returning robust penalties for fraud; a “Clean Hands” bill to prevent slumlords from evicting tenants. ● A complete overhaul of the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing program in order to mandate true affordability ● Building a movement to force federal and state governments to build more social housing for poor and working people ● Fighting for funds to make existing residential units energy efficient and no longer depend on fossil fuels ● Fighting to end counterproductive tax breaks provided to luxury developers ● A complete overhaul of Land Use Review procedures to prevent corruption and prioritize people over profits ● A ban on selling or leasing city-owned property to private entities, including any privatization of NYCHA ● Creating pathways for communities to control their homes, whether through older programs like TIL or newer ideas like Community Land Trusts ● Ending the Tax Lien Sale (which privatizes a debt to the public), and instead steering distressed properties towards social housing models
<p>Do you support cancelling rent for tenants and small business owners during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p>	<p>Absolutely. I’ve been fighting alongside the CHTU and Housing Justice for All since the start of the pandemic to push our state legislators to sign onto the Cancel Rent and Eviction Moratorium bills, on the ground at housing court, marches, actions, and eviction defenses. After experiencing the horror show of COVID’s effect on our whole city’s health and finances, it’s baffling to me that my fellow-tenants and I have had to keep shutting down housing court over and over to get some of our elected officials to realize how bad the crisis has gotten, and a lot of them still don’t get it. The way I see it, we can’t afford to not cancel rent for tenants and small business owners for the duration of the pandemic: an avalanche of evictions leading to mass homelessness and shuttered storefronts is a seriously bleak future.</p>

<p>What will you do to help reach more gender equity within the NYC Council?</p>	<p>I support any measure that helps women and non-binary people become more politically active. In my district, that means understanding that the role of a public servant is not to take center stage or increase my own power, but to spread that power among the constituency, with the most marginalized voices taking center stage. Southern Crown Heights is run by Caribbean women, a large percentage of whom are nurses working all over the city. That's who I'm used to taking my cue from, and that is not going to change. I also support hiring more women and non-binary people into positions of power, and if elected, this would be an important priority in hiring my staff.</p> <p>This also means campaigning for powerful women running for office, even when they're running against establishment incumbents--this is what I did together with my neighbor and Assemblywoman elect Phara Souffrant Forrest. I'm proud to be running on the DSA slate alongside three powerful women candidates Tiffany Caban, Jaslin Kaur, and Alexa Avilés, and will do everything that I can to help them get elected.</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 am for reducing the NYPD budget and for increasing spending on job programs for the unemployed, especially those shut out of the labor market by racism. I also believe in the power of preventative medicine, literally and figuratively: we need accessible health care to lessen its financial and human costs; by taking action to prevent people from losing their homes, for example, we prevent a massive increase in spending on our shelter system; and by investing the necessary resources to keep kids from disappearing from our public schools in the remote-learning era, we avoid losing crucial per-student federal education funding.</p>
<p>What are your recovery priorities for the district related to the COVID-19 pandemic?</p>	<p>If elected, I expect to have to fight off calls for austerity and privatization using the pandemic as their rationale, and I am prepared to do battle for the resources we need. We will need to invest resources in helping NYC children return to regular schooling and in compensating for the inequality in education that the pandemic took to a new extreme. We will need to fight to prevent thousands of evictions of tenants who fell behind on rent during the pandemic, so we need to expand Right To Counsel and fight to Cancel Rent, extend the Eviction Moratorium, and get our homeless neighbors out of the streets and shelters and into housing. We will need to fight to prevent</p>

	<p>more small businesses from going under, and commercial rent stabilization could go a long way in this. We also need to abolish the Tax Lien Sale and impose the Rezoning Moratorium immediately, because we can't afford for this crisis to become the real estate industry's golden opportunity to expand their stranglehold on our communities. And while the state has control over our revenue, I would use my position as council member to push our NYS legislature to tax the rich.</p>
<p>What would you do to reform the Land Use process to promote racial and social equity?</p>	<p>I'm running because I've identified a particular issue – land use and, more specifically, zoning – that has been misused and has led to the displacement and disenfranchisement of our neighbors, and the corporate colonization of our neighborhoods. For far too long, council members have outsourced their land use power to the real estate industry, the Department of City Planning, and the Economic Development Corporation. They have been blindly rubber-stamping whatever plan those entities decide is best for our communities while dismissing justifiable community concerns. These neighborhood-altering decisions shouldn't be made behind closed doors between unelected members of the DCP, the EDC, and the real estate industry. Communities who have to live with the decisions made by this cabal should have a say in what happens in their neighborhoods, and not just in courtesy community engagement meetings where the final decision has already been made. I've always believed that you can find out the best solutions for a street by speaking to the people who actually live on it. I want to return transparency to this process and accountability to the office. As a real member of the housing movement, we have been working hard to chart a new course for our land use process, and some of the most important pieces are listed in the earlier answer about housing: a moratorium on all rezonings, a ban on privatizing any public land, getting real estate out of the driver's seat of the relevant city agencies, and charter revisions to create comprehensive city planning <i>and</i> community-based planning.</p>
<p>What is your vision for the Brooklyn Democratic Party?</p>	<p>This is hard for me, because I have been disillusioned for so long with a party that has propped up elected officials who have sold out my community at every opportunity to the real estate industry and other monied interests, who have claimed to speak for my community without actually wanting to hear us speak. But recent wins by real left-wing challengers (AOC, Julia, Emily, Phara, Jabari, Shaquana) showed that machine</p>

	<p>candidates aren't invincible, and the machine leadership doesn't have the same power that they used to.</p> <p>Ideally, I would like the party to be taking its direction from the grassroots, and for leadership to see themselves more as organizers than as patronage brokers. If the party were actually aligned with the preferences of voters, they would reject all contributions from the real estate industry and police unions and encourage all candidates to do the same, they would actively solicit the direct participation of everyday Brooklynites in party business and decision-making ("small d" democracy), and they would provide an impartial forum for robust primary debates without tipping the scales towards corporate favorites.</p> <p>However I do think that the party should have some basic standards, and should not enable or support candidates who have serious ethical or legal problems, who are themselves anti-democratic (exclusionary, untransparent, etc.) or anti-Democratic (i.e. undermining our legislative agenda by caucusing with the Republicans). I won't be able to get my council agenda done if the party keeps propping up turncoats like Jesse Hamilton at the state level, for example.</p>
<p>New Kings Democrats has proposed several rules changes 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?</p>	<p>As someone who got into this race specifically because establishment Democrats kept selling out the communities that elected them and dismissing their critics as outsiders, I will always side with reformers. I enthusiastically support all of these reform proposals, because they would make the party more transparent and more democratic, by limiting the ability of a single person to consolidate power and abuse it. I know that the party isn't government itself, but when a single party wins all of the elections in our borough, that party functioning like a corrupt autocracy is a serious problem. I think that these common sense rules changes will make it easier to push the party (and our candidates) towards the policy positions that most Brooklynites actually favor, and in turn that will make Brooklynites more likely to trust the party itself.</p> <p>If elected, I would advocate for these rule changes in my interactions with KCDC leadership, and I would be willing to call out leadership whenever they make anti-democratic decisions (i.e. egregious power grabs). I would also be willing to support reformer candidates for District Leader; I was happy</p>

	<p>to vote for Shaquana Boykin when she challenged the AD57 DL, and I'm looking forward to working with the other reform-minded DLs whose districts overlap with mine, like Kristina Naplatarski and Jesse Pierce. Additionally, if NKD and other reformer organizations run real left-wing challengers to the DLs who have rubber-stamped the party bosses' abuses, I would be happy to support that.</p> <p>I also support the creation of ADCs, like the new one in the 57th, and I would be willing to meet regularly with the members of the ADCs in my council district, or if a district doesn't have an ADC yet, I will meet with the county committee members, and support their efforts to form one. I see ADCs like the one in the 43rd as more legitimate representatives of AD43 than their DL who was appointed behind closed doors and has maneuvered to shut them out of decision-making.</p>
<p>How much money have you raised for this campaign? What are the major sources?</p>	<p>After not starting fundraising until this October due to my battle with COVID, we are on track to raise enough funds to utilize the full \$190,000 spending allowance in the Primary period. We have relied on small donors and people I've met through years of organizing.</p>
<p>Are you accepting campaign contributions from law enforcement unions?</p>	<p>Absolutely not. I doubt they would even be offered, but if they were, I wouldn't accept them.</p>
<p>What endorsements have you received from publications, electeds, community leaders, or political organizations?</p>	<p>I recently won endorsements from NYC Democratic Socialists of America and New York Communities for Change. I have also recently been endorsed by Alejandra Caraballo, the CB9 Housing Committee chair who recently dropped out of the CD35 race.</p>
<p>Of the elected officials in the NYC Council, who do you admire most and why?</p>	<p>Wow! Have you taken a look at this council? I admire the actions of city council members when they have said no to racist luxury developments and fought gentrification. But we need to elect new members who do this consistently.</p>
<p>What are some of the best ways you think New York City residents can best participate in civic life?</p>	<p>Do something. Do anything. Big or small it doesn't matter. Join or create a TA if you're a tenant. Go to community board meetings. Join or help create an organization, political or otherwise. Find out who your electeds are, remember that they work for you and don't be afraid to hold them accountable. And then pass on your knowledge and bring other people into your circles.</p>

What is one fun fact about you?	I make a mean cheesecake.

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



Candidate Signature:

Date: Monday, December 7, 2020

You must sign this questionnaire! When complete, please email your signed and scanned questionnaire as a PDF to politics@newkingdemocrats.com