

Thank you for agreeing to complete the South Central Brooklyn United for Progress City Council District 39 candidate questionnaire. Please be sure to familiarize yourself with how our endorsement process works - a candidate must receive $\frac{2}{3}$ of the ranked choice vote in order to win our endorsement. [More details here.](#)

Your answers to these questions will be made available to the public on our website, <http://scbkunitedforprogress.org/>, and will be promoted on our Facebook page and twitter feed.

Answers are due 24 hours prior to your scheduled interview time if you want to be considered for endorsement!

Campaign Information

What is your name?

Doug Schneider

What are your preferred pronouns?

he/him

What office are you running for?

City Council – District 39

Who is the point of contact for your campaign and what is the best way to get in touch with them?

John Wasserman, Campaign Manager – John@dougschneiderbk.com

What is your campaign address?

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What is your campaign phone number?

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What is your campaign email?

Doug@dougschneiderbk.com

What is your campaign website?

Dougschneiderbk.com

Is your campaign on social media? If so, what platform(s) and what are the names?

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram - @dougschneiderbk

Campaign Issues

What would you do to improve **health care** as a city council member?

I would make sure that the City budget reflects the importance of Health & Hospitals facilities. Health and Hospitals doctors, nurses and staff did heroic work in an unprecedented pandemic. As a city we are only as strong as our public institutions. It is crucial that the city continue to invest in Health & Hospitals. by modernizing their facilities and expanding their patient base.

I would also prioritize in the budget the City's continued public funding of abortion care to ensure that every person can make critical healthcare decisions, regardless of their income. This requires the ability to communicate with people in a language they can understand and with cultural competency.

Finally, I would address the striking perinatal mortality disparities here in New York City where Black women are far more likely than White women to die from pregnancy related causes. One contributing factor is that many medical students, residents, and doctors still believe stereotypes about Black patients, such as having higher levels of pain tolerance, thicker skin, and being more difficult to deal with. We need to make sure that all medical professionals receive implicit bias training. The City has an obligation to ensure that pregnant women have access to pre and postnatal care, access to Doulas, and public hospitals must make affirmative efforts to meet women where they are to ensure the health and safety of women both before and after birth.

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing New Yorkers and those in your district regarding **immigrant rights and access to resources** and what would you do to address them?

The 39th Council District is very linguistically diverse. Outside of English, Spanish, and Chinese, there are thousands of constituents who speak Bangla, Yiddish, Russian, and Urdu. Yet, New York City did almost no outreach about COVID in those languages. While we are keeping informed on COVID-19 related matters from the Mayor and Governor's daily briefings, a lot of that vital information isn't being disseminated to communities where language barriers are prevalent. In District 39, little to no outreach was done in the languages that so many people in the district speak, particularly Bangla, Urdu, and Yiddish.

For example, as Democratic District Leader for the 44th Assembly District, I was one of the first elected officials to host a community forum with the Department of Education about the Mayor's original school reopening plan. When the DOE refused to provide interpreters for the event, I organized community members to provide simultaneous translation in Bangla, Urdu and Russian. I have also been fighting the Board of Elections to provide increased language access at the polls.

The next City Council and Mayor must formulate a blueprint for ensuring people with limited English language proficiency are given essential information in their native language, especially during times of crisis. That means bringing together trusted stakeholders from different sectors, including elected officials, religious leaders, non-profits, and non-English media, to ensure that essential information is being delivered to people with limited English proficiency.

I am a big believer that the government must meet people where they are. This means taking affirmative steps to reach people and make sure they can take advantage of government resources. Providing resources without maximizing the ability of people to utilize them is a waste. That is why I will open a second office in the Kensington/Boro Park part of the district, staffed with multilingual and culturally competent staff to assist constituents.

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing New Yorkers and those in your district regarding **civil rights and criminal justice** and what would you do to address them?

As a civil rights and criminal defense attorney for over a decade, I have seen firsthand the systematic abuses committed by law-enforcement, particularly in the Black community. I understand the root causes, big and small, of the NYPD's unaccountable misconduct and brutality. I have taken on the NYPD in court and won. From this experience, I have a comprehensive criminal justice platform focused on creating accountability, reallocation of resources, and decarceration.

We need to pass laws that hold NYPD officers accountable for their conduct in the streets and their perjury in the courts. The final decision on disciplinary issues must be removed from the NYPD Commissioner to a truly neutral body; Section 50-a should be abolished and the public should have full access to officers' disciplinary records; and we need a system to track officer's whose testimony was found incredible in court and impose real consequences for their perjury.

We need to eliminate the agencies and institutions that incentive arrests and over-policing. One of the prime examples is the office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor. Not only was the Special Narcotics Prosecutor created as part of the racist "war on drugs," but it also has no place in a city that has dramatically changed its understanding and approach to narcotics and other drugs.

We need to ban the NYPD's participation in military surplus programs and eliminate its stockpile of military grade weapons. This summer we all were witness to a heavily militarized NYPD brutalizing peaceful protestors who were marching for justice after the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. This creates violence, it doesn't stop it.

We must significantly increase the use of alternatives to incarceration programs. These successful programs keep people out of jails and provide them with services instead. I have appeared in drug courts throughout New York City, but particularly in Brooklyn's Screening Treatment Enhancement Part ("STEP"), which was, and is, the national model for treating addiction as a sickness and not a crime, of giving people medical care instead of jail time.

We must end the school to prison pipeline, the single most destructive force in education. New York City must stop treating normal adolescent defiance as a crime. Educators and parents, not law enforcement, should be the people responsible for handling routine school discipline. The guiding principle of school discipline should be positive behavioral support, counseling and regular forms of discipline like detention (but not suspension which has shown to have similar negative impacts as arrests).

Finally, reforming the NYPD must include a massive reduction to its budget. I support reallocating resources from the NYPD budget to agencies and programs that will help the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, particularly in communities of color. This should include, but not be limited to, Summer Youth Employment Programs, investments in affordable housing, education, homeless services, mental health, aging, local community groups, and small business, particularly minority/women owned businesses.

In addition, our approach to the NYPD budget should have as a goal eliminating the stranglehold Pat Lynch of the PBA and Ed Mullins of the SBA have on the City. These two men are the most destructive forces in New York City politics and oppose any police reform whatsoever and are propped up by the most senior, predominantly White and Republican officers, most of whom live outside NYC. In order to reduce the size of the NYPD, our approach to the budget must be done very carefully. Because it is unionized, any reduction in staff would be based on "last in, first out." This means it would be the newer officers, who predominantly live in NYC, and better represent NYC's diversity, who would be let go, while the predominantly white officers who live outside NYC and represent the heart of the problem, would be strengthened.

A better approach is to achieve the reduction in the NYPD's numbers by attrition. Implement policies that incentivize those NYPD officers living outside NYC to leave the force. I believe the best approach is to require NYPD officers to live in, or within a small proximity of New York City. If passed, I believe a large number of the officers who live outside of NYC would retire. Not only will this result in a police force that better represents NYC, but it will break the control these officers have over the police unions, and the City. This should be accompanied by a hiring freeze on new officers.

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing New Yorkers and those in your district regarding **public schools and education** and what would you do to address them?

As a proud public school parent, my top priority is to reinvest in our public schools, with a focus on equity and desegregation. After decades of underinvestment, I will fight to reinvest in our public schools with an equitable distribution of resources that prioritizes schools in communities that have been neglected or ignored for a long time, particularly in Black and Latino communities, immigrant communities, and lower income communities. This not only means investing in the physical plant of our schools, but also reinvesting in our children.

In my family, I became the parent responsible for supervising remote learning (and still am). I know from that experience, that remote learning is bad for our children, especially elementary school students, English language learners, students with special learning needs, and students in unsafe or unstable living environments. It hurts them academically, socially and mentally, and increases the achievement gap between wealthier, predominantly white students, and poorer, predominantly students of color. Once the COVID-19 crisis ends, and students begin to return to school we are going to need to invest heavily in academic programs to remedy the academic deficits caused by COVID-19. As important, we need to invest in staffing schools with social workers, child psychiatrists, social workers, and other experts to address students' mental health, emotional and social development, and in many communities, trauma from COVID-19.

It is more important than ever to put equity at the center of school policy. While equity includes schools with greater needs getting greater funding, equity goes well beyond money. Equity includes universal access to childcare, free before and after school programs, and enrichment programs. It means an equitable distribution of teachers. We need a comprehensive review of our school funding and teacher allocation formulas to ensure that we prioritize funding for schools in communities with historically marginalized students. In addition to funding, incentives should be offered to encourage experienced teachers to teach in schools with greater needs.

I support elimination of screened admissions for all but one (LaGuardia HS) middle and high schools. The 39th Council District is home to the District 15 Diversity Plan, which eliminated screened admissions altogether and gave students from low-income families, in temporary housing, and English Language Learners, priority for 52% of seats at each school. Although data is limited, one study concluded that in the first year there was a 55% decrease in economic segregation and 38% in racial segregation. In addition, New York City must make ending segregation a focus of its affordable housing plan and in rezoning.

Especially for elementary schools, segregated neighborhoods result in segregated schools.

I strongly believe that it is essential that we restore arts curriculum to every school. People often ask me what class is the most important to becoming a good litigator. My answer is always theater, which teaches not only public speaking, but empathy. Likewise, study after study has concluded that students who play musical instruments perform better in math, science, and English, than their peers. Finally, lack of funding of the arts is particularly inexplicable when performing arts are an economic driver of NYC's economy, generating billions of dollars in revenue and creating tens of thousands of jobs.

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing New Yorkers and those in your district regarding **housing** and what would you do to address them?

District 39 is a microcosm of New York City. We're not building enough quality affordable housing, but when it does get built, it's on the terms of real estate developers. We're squeezing as little affordable housing as possible into buildings whose primary purpose is to make landlords rich. And when housing is built, we're overlooking the needs of the local community and how neighborhoods can address issues that are plaguing the city as a whole such as climate change, racial equity, and our crumbling infrastructure.

To make sure that all New Yorkers have access to permanent affordable housing we obviously have to make sure that we prioritize low and very low-income New Yorkers when we build affordable housing. I believe that at least 25% of new units should be set aside for homeless New Yorkers. In addition, I believe we need to increase the amount of money that the City can give each person for their rental voucher.

The ULURP process is broken. We should shift to a system of comprehensive planning where we start the process with community input and set clear and bidding standards to prevent displacement and gentrification. I support the requirement for a racial impact study for all rezonings.

If we are going to take on NYC's land use history, then we have to ensure that all newly proposed projects promote racial and social equity. This comprehensive plan should be formulated with communities in mind. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed decades of underfunding of our public hospitals, schools, and public spaces in our most vulnerable neighborhoods that have been negatively impacted by discriminatory and predatory policies. We need to ensure the most marginalized of our society are at the forefront of land use conversations and have a greater stake in shaping land use decisions.

I also support a public bank, which would provide an alternative path of funding needed to invest in crucial infrastructure projects and the public good. Currently, New York City banks with for profit banks. If it withdrew a portion of that money

and placed it in a public bank, this is money that could be lent, for example, to non-profit developers to build truly affordable housing.

What is your opinion on **the Gowanus Green development** and on how the city should handle **development and rezoning** generally?

I don't support it the way it is. It checks a lot of boxes, but I would insist on improvements to the Gowanus, Wyckoff and Warren NYCHA buildings as part of the Gowanus rezoning.

We also have to confront the environmental racism here. It cannot be lost on anyone that where are we building affordable housing? On a toxic waste dump. I have real concerns about the long term safety of residents and would not approve it unless I was absolutely comfortable that we are not going to end up with Brooklyn's version of the love canal.

The Gowanus rezoning also exposes why we need to entirely reimagine how housing is built in NYC. We have to get of the model where we trade away public space and our skyline to developers in exchange for a pittance of affordable housing and replace it with a model that uses public banks, or land banks, or non-profit developers, allowing us to build truly affordable housing. We should shift to a system of comprehensive planning where we start the process with community input and set clear and binding standards to prevent displacement and gentrification. I support the requirement for a racial impact study for all rezonings.

Given the role of community boards in the ULURP process, it is vital that they are diverse in terms of race, age, socio-economic status, and geography. We must also provide community boards with resources, such as urban planners, so that they are equipped to push back on developers.

What would you do to improve **transit and street (pedestrian/bicycle/car) safety** for New Yorkers in your district?

New York City cannot function without safe and efficient transportation. Unfortunately, the 39th Council District has seen an epidemic level of pedestrian and biker deaths over the last ten years. We suffer from dangerous street designs that cause unnecessary crashes with fatal consequences and our indifference to the conditions of our sidewalks too often make it impossible for the disabled, elderly, or strollers to get around our City. Our mass transit is inaccessible to thousands of New Yorkers, and our biking infrastructure is poor.

We need to eliminate the traffic behaviors that put bikers and pedestrians at risk such as midday truck deliveries, double parked trucks, and the constant obstruction of bike lanes. We need to expand the use of red light and speed cameras to slow down traffic, and we need to make our sidewalks and crosswalks safer and more accessible, especially for people with mobility issues.

We need a comprehensive plan to expand the amount of open streets that are in one cohesive network instead of randomly strewn throughout the City. We need to turn some open streets into permanent play spaces and make them entirely car and bus free, the prime example being 4th Street between 4th and 5th Avenues. Likewise, we need to protect bikers and pedestrians by creating a cohesive network of protected bike lanes.

Finally, we need to ensure public transportation is 100% accessible for everyone. I will fight to build elevators at subway stops in District 39. I will also work to significantly reform access-a-ride transportation services.

What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing New Yorkers and those in your district regarding **the environment, including access to, maintenance, development and preservation of parks and other open spaces** and what would you do to address them?

Climate change is an existential threat to New York City. Sea levels are rising, temperatures are getting increasingly hotter, and New York City is now considered a subtropical zone. Streets flood in Gowanus every time it rains. Large swaths of New York City will be underwater by 2100 unless we take immediate action.

I will continue to advocate for divestment from oil, gas, coal and pipelines. I am proud to have provided pro bono representation on multiple occasions to activists arrested protesting BlackRock and Goldman Sachs and demanding they stop investing in climate destruction.

NYC's "Green New Deal" was a great start to slashing climate pollution in buildings by requiring upgrades to high energy efficiency. This law will create thousands of well-paid, union jobs through 2030. Now it is time to expand the law to apply to medium and smaller buildings, creating even more good jobs and further reducing pollution. In addition, I will fight for further investment in public transport, restoring New York City's composting program, and investing in clean, renewable energy.

For decades we have failed to invest in green policies in low income and communities of color. This has led to higher rates of asthma in low income and Black and Brown communities, and aided the disproportionate number of deaths due to the COVID-19 pandemic compared to wealthier White communities. To tackle climate change and climate resiliency we need to invest in renewable energy, housing infrastructure, and public waste management while prioritizing investment in low income communities and communities of color.

Green space is also a part of combating climate change. We need to invest in building more public parks and maintaining existing ones. We need to invest in

and support community gardens. Again, we need to prioritize the communities with the least amount of green space, typically communities of color, community gardens should prioritize food insecurity, and street trees should act as pedestrianizing, traffic calming mechanisms.

What other issues do you consider important and how will you address them?

As someone who owns a small business, and represents several small businesses in Park Slope and Windsor Terrace, such as Slope Cellars and Krupa Grocery, I know the thin line between profit and failure. I have both seen and experienced the ways that the City makes it hard for small businesses to survive, from escalating rents to excessive fines and fees.

Now is the time to finally pass a bill to control rent for small businesses. They are the driving force of New York City's economy. If they can't stay open, people are out of work. I also believe the City should focus regulatory enforcement on the most vital health & safety enforcement, and should avoid putting additional financial pressure on businesses through excessive fines. Finally, small businesses would significantly benefit from a reduction in the cost of utilities.

For fun (answers to these questions are not required)

If your district had a musical anthem, what would it be and why?

The Power of Equality by Red Hot Chili Peppers.

"Mix like sticks of dynamite; Red black or white, this is my fight; Come on courage, let's be heard; Turn feelings into words."

The power of equality; Is not yet what it ought to be; It fills me up like a hollow tree; The power of equality.

The 39th Council District is an activist district. It leads by example by centering the experiences of communities that are marginalized and unserved. It is a district that shows up for immigrants, workers, Muslims and Jews, and communities of color. It is a district that saw a problem with segregation in schools and created the D15 Diversity Plan.

What is your favorite restaurant in your district?

Krupa Grocery.