

Thank you for agreeing to complete the South Central Brooklyn United for Progress City Council District 40 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.

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.

Campaign Information

What is your name?

Cecilia Cortez

What are your preferred pronouns?

She, Her

What office are you running for?

NYC Council District 40

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

Cecilia Cortez

What is your campaign address?

541 Marlborough Rd, Brooklyn, NY 11226

What is your campaign phone number?

917-450-6777

What is your campaign email?

Ceciliacortez2021@gmail.com

What is your campaign website?

Ceciliacortez.com

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

FB, Twitter, and Instagram

@CCortez4NYC2021

Campaign Issues

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

Health care is very important in the community. When people have access to health care the community stays healthier and chronic diseases are more preventable. By providing access to clinics and doctors I will make sure the community can stay healthier. A healthy, robust, and educated community also allows for cost saving for other community needs.

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

At the present time, COVID-19 dominates all aspects of our lives. The first thing we need to do is make sure everyone can get vaccinated. Immigrant communities are afraid to ask for resources. They think they are going to be punished for asking for services. As a NYC Councilperson I will make sure that my district gets access to the vaccine or any other medical services and immigrants are included in the process, and at the forefront of outreach and engagement.

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?

We cannot separate civil rights and criminal justice issues from the impact that COVID-19 has had on the district. People are suffering: economically with job losses and mentally from the deaths of family members and the isolation and fear created by the pandemic. This has led to an increase in interpersonal violence including gun violence and shootings. Arrests have gone up, doubling from 228 last year to 484 this year, but this hasn't fixed the issue. While I believe doing things like partnering with the District Attorney to have gun buyback programs will help, there has to be a holistic approach. We have to think about other ways to address criminal justice issues besides just the police. Getting through COVID-19 will be the most important thing.

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?

Students in my community are doing remote learning due to COVID-19. They are staying at home. It is known that 40% of students in the community do not have full access to tablets, ipads, WIFI, and broadband. As a NYC Councilperson, I would get a list of schools whose students do not have access to the tools necessary to keep up with remote learning. I will make sure that teachers get trained in all the existing platforms. They are the ones who will help students to reach their full potential even remotely.

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?

The number of the homeless has grown in district 40. The way to stop this is to create permanent housing and create affordable housing. There has been an explosion of luxury apartments in the last few years in district 40. There are many buildings that remain empty because residents can't afford the rent. We need to make sure that people who live in the district can afford the existing housing projects. I do not believe that we need to change the zoning in our district. This is what has led to all the luxury apartments. We need to build within the current code and create new apartments with very low barriers to entry.

New York City has a rental voucher program which does not work. Many people have vouchers but because they are not market rate, landlords reject them and people cannot use them. At city council I would make sure that vouchers are market rate, so that people who are homeless can use them to pay rent.

What is your opinion on **the development at 1620 Cortelyou road** and on how the city should handle **development and rezoning** generally?

In my opinion, and in the opinion of many other community members who attended various community meetings on the subject -- this building would be a monstrosity. Not only will it block the sunlight for other buildings around it, but this massive building would bring a serious parking-issue to the area due to the increased density of people. The apartments that would fill the building itself would be too expensive for community members to afford to live. Many of the apartments discussed would be one-bedroom apartments -- where the need for families in this community is two- and three-bedrooms apartments. Neighbors who spoke at the meeting said they themselves have already been displaced from other communities and worry that the same situation will occur in this neighborhood. Rezoning in Williamsburg occurred, for example, and as a result, rent went up.

Currently, 1620 Cortelyou Road is home to a Key Foods supermarket. While the owner claims the supermarket will stay open during construction, there is no guarantee. Due to construction that could last two years, it is uncertain if other small businesses in the area will survive. It is unclear if the laundromat, which is located on the site, will remain open even though it is crucial to the local community. Furthermore, the Cortelyou Road train station platform is also very narrow and cannot be widened to accommodate an increasingly crowded platform.

Ditmas Park West, is a historic neighborhood known for its Victorian homes that are often 100 years old. We have already seen some of these homes torn down and replaced with big buildings. We have been fighting for 30 years for landmark designation in order

to preserve the character of our neighborhood. We want this community to retain a level of historical significance. We want to preserve our community.

As a community member of 30 years, I am standing against this project. It is not in the interest of the community and would destroy what is now a long shopping corridor with nice small restaurants and local shops.

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

Many people in District 40 mainly use public transportation. As a NYC council person, I would like to be a member of the Transportation Committee and ensure that buses and trains are more well funded. We need to have a viable bus and train system that people can depend on. Bikes lanes will be protected. The community has to be educated on the issue.

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?

Garbage on the streets is one of the biggest challenges in my community. There is garbage on every corner. Garbage also brings rats. We have rats galore. We need to have the garbage collected, especially now that we have COVID-19. It is very important that people have clean spaces. The department of sanitation was cut by 106 million dollars. I will work to restore the sanitation budget so we can have regular garbage pick up, more garbage containers in the streets, and more recycling collection. I would also bring back the municipal compost program and ensure that District 40 is included.

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

We don't have enough public spaces for people and for children in District 40. It is very important, especially in times like these where we have to be indoors all the time, to have a place to go to relax. The pandemic has shown us the importance of having outdoor space available for the community.

I will investigate empty lots and consult with the community to create spaces where adults, teenagers, and children can enjoy the outdoors.

For fun (answers to these questions are not required)

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

For something that appeals to many and is uplifting I would go with "Stand By Me" by Ben E. King.

What is your favorite restaurant in your district?

I live in Ditmas Park West two blocks away from Cortelyou Rd. Cortelyou Rd has grown tremendously in the last 10 years. It has a variety of small restaurants. One can visit those restaurants and be transported to different lands. It is enchanting. But my favorite is Don Burrito in Newkirk Plaza.