

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 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?

Kenya Handy-Hilliard

What are your preferred pronouns?

She/Her

What office are you running for?

City Council 40

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

Nikiesha Hamilton

What is your campaign address?

60 Clarkson Avenue City Brooklyn, NY 11226

What is your campaign phone number?

(917) 719-6581

What is your campaign email?

Kenyaforthepeople2021@gmail.com

What is your campaign website?

<https://www.kenyaforthepeople.com/>

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

Twitter: Kenya4thepeople

FB: Kenyaforthepeople2021

IG: Kenyaforthepeople2021

Campaign Issues

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

I will champion viable healthcare options that fully fund and streamline our delivery infrastructure; expand non-employer based healthcare coverage. Options should include supporting the NY Health Act's passage at the state level, and revamping our emergency preparedness for healthcare so the chaos of COVID never happens again). I will monitor the implementation of the One-Brooklyn Health transformation and consolidation to ensure that the community is represented and that the needs of District 40 are always with me at the negotiating table. I will also monitor the residential development aspects, working with my state colleagues on the construction industry, ensuring that it adopts local union hiring Project Labor Agreements (PLA). We will also negotiate more workforce housing, rent subsidies and prioritize actions for homeless families and seniors.

I will also look to work hand-in-hand with healthcare professionals and their respective unions to ensure we create greater worker safety protections and protocols. This includes increasing access to adequate PPE and vaccine distribution. It also means investing in the long-term mental health and wellness resources for frontline workers who have PTSD. I will also expand front line worker compensatory standards for their sacrifices during the pandemic and support practical efforts to reduce Central Brooklyn's health disparities. I'll also work with health care professionals to address the systemic racism that affects the equitable distribution of health care. I will also invest in professional development and rely on those closest to the problems to develop the blueprint that will revolutionize our healthcare system.

Lastly, I will work with local hospitals and healthcare professionals, using my legislative, budgetary, investigative authority, as well as my bully pulpit to ensure that policies coming out of the birth justice movement are at the forefront of the City Council's health agenda and budgetary plan.

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?

I think some of the biggest challenges facing New Yorkers regarding immigration rights and access to resources are addressing the needs of those trapped in the shadows of society because of our broken immigration system. There are mixed families in my district and throughout the City who live in constant fear of ICE and government intervention, especially after the Trump Administration's wrath. Though protected by the state, Dreamers are still stunted because they cannot move beyond the protection of our "sanctuary laws." Additionally, there are many Haitian nationals and their families in

District 40 who are living precariously on Temporary Protected Status (TPS), which every life cycle, becomes a political football in the immigration conversation. A discussion that has left many TPS recipients and their families without the foundation to live full and secure lives.

Language access is also a significant issue for immigrant communities throughout the City, especially in District 40. City resources translated into the 11 recognized languages produce communications that are not sensitive to dialect, nuances of communities, and how they communicate or receive information. The translations are often the work of h businesses that are known to use overseas translators. I am a big proponent of contracting with immigrant community members and non-profits that are from the respective nations, who speak the dialect and know how to convey information. This allows the City to streamline the process, maximizing investment and to ensure that marginalized communities receive critical information.

Most importantly, we need better enforcement protections, housing, and mental health resources for domestic violence victims and sexual assault victims. Those living in the shadows caused by our broken immigration system leave victims, especially during COVID, even more, vulnerable to perpetrators. I realize that the NYPD has been working with community organizations to create ways to give victims greater access to help during quarantine, but we need to do more. As Councilwoman, I intend to fully support organizations in District 40 that need the resources to assist victims and the vulnerable, in the languages or dialects they need. I will stand with Congressional colleagues working to extend the U-Visa parameters and streamline the process at the local level.

As lead staffer on the Congressional Black Caucus' Immigration Task Force, I was charged with negotiating the legislative language that represented Black immigrants' issues into the 2013 Comprehensive Immigration Reform Bill. As Councilwoman, I will continue that fight as it will be essential to support our Congress Members and help Congress finally pass a progressive, humane, comprehensive immigration reform bill that provides a pathway to citizenship and full self-determination.

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?

COVID has illuminated society's fissures, showing the racial and economic fault lines that still exist decades after the Civil Rights Movement. With that, our criminal justice system needs to change. As Councilwoman, I will use my legislative, investigative and

budgetary authority to provide both funding and the will to support such investments. I will start by stripping the recommended \$1.1 billion from the NYPD budget to invest in effective anti poverty and crime programming. I will also advocate for increased taxes on millionaires and billionaires, such as a pied-a-terre tax and stock transfer taxes to support true anti-poverty and anti-crime investments.

The NYPD's management and accountability structure is disorganized and bureaucratic. There needs to be a more extensive public safety infrastructure focused on crime prevention, one not centered around enforcement. The entire criminal justice system must be reformed. We should integrate more violence interrupter programs (i.e., Elite Learners in District 40) into a larger citywide system. We need more public-nonprofit partnerships that allow violence interrupter groups to have greater accountability while those groups focus on creating the wrap-around services and intervention tactics that reduce dangerous interactions.

Moreover, I will fight to remove mental health non-violent and non-criminal matters away from police oversight. I also believe that we need to remove the NYPD and metal detectors from our schools. I appreciate that the Mayor's preliminary budget looks to invest in capital improvements, including schools. However, I want to ensure that we build schools that facilitate learning instead of doubling down on the prison-like infrastructure that mutes the creative learning experience. We need to rethink school construction and design, especially as the State negotiates stimulus funding from the Federal government.

Finally, I want to reduce the NYPD's harassment of WOC and LGBTQIA+ communities. We need to decriminalize sex work and protect minority and women and LGBTQIA+ owned restaurant and nightlife businesses burdened with unnecessary fines to the point of closure. Their closures impact the local economies in communities of color.

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 mother of school-aged children, I understand the challenges of educating students in the district from daycare to high school. District 40 public schools have the potential to be Blue Ribbon schools like others in the City. However, for far too long, our schools had to do the best they can with what little they received. They have been on the front lines fighting the effects of our district's issues, such as serving our homeless student population, dealing with the inequities in funding and budget cuts, and inadequate and inconsistent engagement with the DOE.

Our children, teachers, and administrators deserve better. I will work with the DOE, schools, and the community to expand funding and resources to our school districts. We also need more enrichment programming throughout the district. District 40 has an extensive professional class, many of whom are health professionals, lawyers, accountants, carpenters, creatives, and more. Many of us would help teach their skill sets and knowledge base to the kids in our communities. I will create better community networks and collaborations to address our achievement gaps adequately. also have a large retired educator population that could help with tutoring and reinforcing basic and remedial learning. I will also work diligently to make daycare, weekend care, and after school programming, emphasizing STEAM programming, more widely available and preferably free or subsidized.

Lastly, I will support the full subsidization of a CUNY education. We need young and aging residents to quickly access higher education courses, skill sets, and credits to increase their portfolios and access to a rapidly changing and globalized world.

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?

Housing insecurity is a public health issue, and the people of our district must have a concrete say in how development happens and who it benefits. The current system diminishes the voices of residents over the profits of developers. It is paramount that the district's communities decide the type of development, how renters are protected, and how the community should preserve its existing landscape.

My priorities for homeowners are preserving and stabilizing the housing stock in the community, addressing housing scams by creating harsher punishments for falsifying City documents, and putting fail-safe mechanisms into place to catch these documents before they are approved.

Since the City is fighting for an influx of cash to help close the existing deficit and make key investments into our economy, I will lead the charge to create new and innovative affordable housing models. Models that prioritize our homeless residents and create responsible and quality wrap-around services as they transition. This includes workforce housing and affordable homeownership opportunities, like a Mitchell-Lama model. We'd achieve this by either using existing City-owned property or merely seriously enforcing violations by known large-scale bad actors or by outright purchasing land that nonprofit developers would then develop.

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

I think 1620 Cortelyou is a creature of Mayor de Blasio and the City government's divestment from our housing issues. They are giving private developers and their financial bottom lines through the Zoning for Quality and Assurance (ZQA) and Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) laws. Instead of creating space for communities to have a greater say in how our they are developed and giving us more leverage points for negotiation, the City created a vacuum and land grab for the private sector.

I fundamentally believe that community should be central to development, rezoning and City planning. Therefore, as Councilwoman I will repeal or reform ZQA/MIH. I will also fight for a shift in the City's culture of EDC determining the use of public land (i.e., the proverbial affordable housing mantra) instead of communities deciding how public land will be used. There should also be more significant public investment in affordable homeownership and incentives for local union hiring and apprenticeships for local at risk youth.

In the meantime, understanding that the current Council Speaker is looking to revamp ULURP, I will also ensure that development gives the Community Board more power in approving and rejecting zoning requests and public land projects. I will also support giving boards better technical assistance and expertise to empower their ULURP committees once again. I also believe that the Environmental Impact Studies should be more thorough and should have in-depth data on a project's impact on density, schools, transportation, cost of living, commercial rent, and more. Community Benefit Agreements should be legally binding. There should also be greater demand for open space, environmentally sustainable design, and financial investments in schools, parks, and open spaces.

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

First, I would restore the \$100+ million excised from the Sanitation budget and work with the Commissioner of Sanitation to address the garbage pile-up and dumping plaguing District 40 even pre-COVID. I will also fight to expand compost and other organic collection throughout the district. I will fight for funding to expand bikeshare options (where it makes sense) throughout the district, as there is only one at the district's north end. I will be working to address the parking issues, which has only

increased since COVID. Yet, I will be looking to invest more in our business corridors to reduce the need to drive out of the community for basic necessities and attractive activities. With that, I am committed to solidifying more open streets and spaces, especially as we look to the future when COVID is normalized and more people will be out in the street.

As for transit, I will be calling for a real restructuring of the MTA. The Governor has too much power and it is also often politicized in budget battles between the City and State. I will support our Congress Members and State legislators to ensure that the MTA gets the infrastructure funding from the Biden Administration to fully invest the \$60+ billion needed to transform our transit system altogether.

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?

I think the biggest environmental challenges the City is facing is committing to making the proper financial investments into creating a new green economy. That includes, ensuring that we have a consistent commitment to realizing the goals of the City's Green New Deal, and Climate Justice Agenda. In District 40, this looks like creating more green spaces, leveraging public investment in revitalizing existing parks, parking lots and streetscapes with eco-friendly and conservation centered equipment. Additionally looking to expand our composting and urban farming capabilities and much more.

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

Making District 40 an arts and cultural destination is integral to my agenda. Our district has a big creative community that we do not want to see pushed out like other communities. Therefore, I'm focused on creating a local economy around the arts, culture and small businesses within the district. I've been working with stakeholders in our district to create partnerships that will develop into exciting artistic endeavors.

For fun (answers to these questions are not required)

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

It would be a mashup of Hamilton's "My Shot," Barbara Streisand's "Somewhere,"
Beenie Man's "Jump & Whine," and Public Enemy's "Fight the Power."

What is your favorite restaurant in your district?

Golden Krust on Flatbush Ave. has raised me and my family.