

Thank you for agreeing to complete the South Central Brooklyn United for Progress City Council District 38 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? **Alexa Avilés**

What are your preferred pronouns? **She, her, hers**

What office are you running for? **City Council, District 38**

Who is the point of contact for your campaign and what is the best way to get in touch with them? **James Neimeister, james@alexaforcouncil.com, 347-403-9645**

What is your campaign address? **215 31st Street, #N10, Brooklyn, NY 11232**

What is your campaign phone number? **917-885-8122**

What is your campaign email? **info@Alexaforcouncil.com**

What is your campaign website? **www.Alexaforcouncil.com**

Is your campaign on social media? If so, what platform(s) and what are the names? **Twitter, Instagram and Facebook: @Alexaforcouncil** across all platforms

Campaign Issues

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

Medical care is a human right. I believe in comprehensive health care, free at the point of service, for every New Yorker, regardless of their immigration, employment, (dis)ability status, or financial needs.

I believe in greatly expanding NYC Care and taxing wealth to greatly expand offerings for ensuring the quality of life and health for all of us -- particularly those of the highest need.

We need mental health care and trauma informed care for New Yorkers. The outcomes of ThriveNYC are negligible and left out immigrant communities for most of its existence. I would ensure that public hospitals and community health clinics are invested in mental health care, which has been decimated over the years. There is a profound need for culturally competent services that are community-based. We must build an anti-racist health care system in this city.

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?

Survival and recovery are the critical issues facing our community, in particular our immigrant community members who have been left out of government aid and support. We must #FundExcluded workers and ensure immigrant workers who have been on the frontlines are properly designated as essential workers who can access vaccinations, in addition to, other supports like canceling the rent, accessible healthcare and childcare.

Alongside these communities, my campaign is focused on three major issues: economic equity, quality education, and fair housing. The best way to support this community is to organize at all levels, including working from the inside through the city council. In my role as a council member, I will work to tax the wealthy to distribute essential services to our immigrant neighbors, continue to integrate District 15 schools along with the rest of my district, and fight for housing for every New Yorker, regardless of their place of origin. We will ensure our office is staffed by

community members who speak the languages within our district and will understand the cultural nuances and ways to reach our diverse communities.

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?

Criminalization and throwing police at every challenge we face (i.e. poverty, mental health, youth behaviour) in Black and Brown communities are some of the greatest challenges we face. A first step is to demilitarize schools, ending punitive measures against schools serving high-need low-income communities of color, and funding innovative approaches to reducing suspensions and handling in-school behaviors, like UFT's Positive Learning Collaborative. Rather than expanding police presence in school buildings, I believe in staffing schools with Board Certified Behavior Analysts and Behavior Specialists, trauma experts, and expanding professional learning for educators and school staff to improve adult/student relationships and student behavior. This is particularly important, given the current trauma students and staff are holding as a result of the pandemic and all the ills and challenges that have been exacerbated by it.

We must stop the collaboration between the criminal (in)justice agencies (at local/state and federal levels and the immigration system. In particular, passing the New York for All Act would provide protections that bars all local law enforcement and state agencies from conspiring or participating with ICE. In addition to the policy change, we must shift the culture to make this kind of collaboration frowned upon behavior. We must also create a statutory right to a lawyer that would ensure due process for immigrants and provide an additional layer of protection from abuse from the system and well and unsavory neighborhood actors like predatory employment agencies or lawyers.

As a city, we need to commit to defunding the NYPD budget by AT LEAST \$3 billion and reinvest those funds into vital community services like school social workers, community mental health professionals, immigration services, and employment programs. One of the biggest priorities for my campaign and office will be to reinvest heavily in public education to end racial and economic school segregation, increase the number of social workers and teachers in the school system, and disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline. We can accomplish more, but only if we push for a radical People's budget in the City Council, where working people drive the priorities of what we fund as a city.

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?

Quality education is the right of every child in NYC. We must unapologetically redirect public education funds from private corporate interests to where they belong – public schools. We must demand full funding from the State and the City for K-12 schools, CUNY, and adult education. Full funding will allow us to hire more teachers, ensure language access, expand culturally responsive classrooms and school environments, and empower parent and student voices in decision-making. While funding and a significant portion of education policy is controlled at the state level, the Council can push forward significant changes within budgeting, legislative, and oversight powers.

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?

No one should lose their home during this pandemic. Housing is a human right, and every New Yorker deserves a safe and dignified home. We must demand a renter and small homeowner recovery plan and funding package. We are in a crisis and continue to invest in temporary, ineffective approaches like shelter rather than building the social housing that we need. We must direct public land for social housing, community land trusts and other models that will protect affordability. We must bring back homeownership opportunities for working-class New Yorkers. Our district is home to the second largest public housing development in NYC which is one of our city's greatest assets—we must expand it, improve it, and protect it from private greed. I will fight for full funding, timely repairs, and preserve Public Housing, which must be done with union labor. I will oppose RAD/PACT and advocate for the development of a resident-driven preservation blueprint. We must demand safe housing for homeless New Yorkers and public support to live and thrive. We will need to improve, and the way city programs support NYCHA residents and homeless people.

What is your opinion on **the 4th Avenue Dunkin Donuts development** and on how the city should handle **development and rezoning** generally?

The property on 4th Avenue that is currently a Dunkin Donuts could be an ideal site for real affordable housing or another use that is responsive to actual community needs.

We need to ask ourselves, how genuinely “affordable” those units will be under the developers’ proposed plan and under the incredibly flawed ULURP and MIH programs. 75% of these units will be unaffordable to the diverse, working class residents of my district, and the 25% set aside as affordable have an income floor that is still unaffordable for many. The 25% set aside will not replace the secondary displacement risks that will occur, potentially impacting hundreds of families, in the area. These developments continue to push values/prices up and always lead to a net loss of truly affordable units in communities.

I am not comfortable with a plan for that development, or other similarly large ones, that are less than 100% affordable for the working people of this district. I believe our next city council member should use their authority to fight for the best possible deals for the residents of this district. We have the highest numbers of homeless people and families with children in our city’s history. We will never address this need at the pace of 10-20 “affordable” units for every 100 market rate units built. Our next council member should work to replace the flawed ULURP and MIH policies, as well as the City Planning Council, with democratic structures and systems that represent the interests of working people of this city, not of commercial real estate.

I support abolishing the ULURP process in favor of a system that encourages more democratic and community participation. I think it is the role of the relevant council member to be transparent about issues of development and ensure that they are constantly listening to the input of community members. Their decisions around development proposals should be based on the will of their community and no other factors. NYC needs a comprehensive plan, as do the boroughs, that will support neighborhoods with resources and technical assistance to engage residents in visioning and developing plans that are enforceable.

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

District 38 has been plagued by either lack of infrastructure, adequate service, and sporadic investment in improving transit and street safety. I am deeply concerned about Third Ave where there has been a horribly consistent number of bike/pedestrian deaths over the years that remains unaddressed. Third Avenue needs a complete redesign with better crosswalks that include reflective crosswalk signs, flashing lights and nighttime lighting. The Brooklyn Greenway must be completed, as informed by the local community residents, to give pedestrians and cyclists a safe path. The bike lanes

installed along fourth avenue desperately need signage for pedestrians, bikers and cars/trucks, as well as, the lanes being properly paved and adequately connected to the bike network. With the pandemic, we have seen an increase in cars, which we will need to continue to disincentivize by investing in our public transit system and ensuring it remains accessible to all New Yorkers, especially the most vulnerable (poor and low-income, elders, and differently abled people).

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 support putting the power to shape and share our neighborhood resources in the hands of our neighbors. This means democratizing access to the public spaces and resources of our community through the implementation of a Director of the Public Realm. This department which would be under City Council oversight, is a streamlining of the complex public departments that currently mystify local restaurant, arts, and community organizations. In cities across the country (Seattle, Portland) and the world (Bogota, Paris) the Director of the Public Realm has had positive effects on the social needs: housing support, reclaiming public space, climate change, et al. As we face the COVID-19 crisis together we saw the critical role open and green space plays for our physical and mental health. We need to remember that urgency and the gaps and lean into protecting and expanding our green space, especially for those community members with the least access. As a district that includes industrial manufacturing areas and waterfront, we need to ensure that we protect our working areas, remediate the pollution from old structures/uses, and reclaim what we can for public benefit. As the legislative body and the most local form of government, the City Council is the bridge between what constituents are experiencing and how government can better support healthy, safe, and vibrant communities.

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

Frontline Black, Indigenous & People of Color (BIPOC) communities like ours face the greatest threat from climate catastrophe, which is why I'll be working consistently to address how rising temperatures, oceans, and pollution affect every aspect of our lives from housing and education to healthcare and employment. I will address the impact of the climate crisis by working with individuals and organizations that have developed programs and methods that have helped mitigate the effects on BIPOC frontline

communities, including working with organizations to decrease emissions from municipal facilities; working with housing advocates to encourage energy conservation; working with unions to create jobs and training programs in solar, wind power and related renewable energy industries and upgrading public transportation with zero-emission vehicles; demanding the best healthcare, housing and access to clean air, water, and healthy affordable food.

A local environmental justice advocate, UPROSE, has put forward an innovative plan called the GRID proposing a green manufacturing district with the potential to realize thousands of climate jobs, promote local sustainable manufacturing, and address climate mitigation, adaptation, and recovery needs. The GRID aligns with the Climate And Community Stimulus Platform developed by the Climate Works for All coalition as an ambitious and forward leaning plan to support New York's recovery and our transition to a cleaner and more just economy. These efforts would help New York meet its climate goals which are fundamental to our survival.

For fun (answers to these questions are not required)

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

"Vivir mi Vida" by Marc Anthony - a salsa song about living life to its fullest and enjoying all that is around you. Our neighborhood is filled with lovely, vibrant people and my hope is they get to thrive and enjoy their lives to the fullest.

What is your favorite restaurant in your district?

This is like asking someone to choose among their children. As a community abundant in delicious ethnic food, some of my favorite restaurants/small businesses are the Tacos El Bronco Food truck, Luigi's & Johnny's Pizzeria, and La Parada.