

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. [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? Josue Pierre

What are your preferred pronouns? He/Him

What office are you running for? City Council - 40th District

Who is the point of contact for your campaign and what is the best way to get in touch with them? Kyron Banks, [Kyronbanks@gmail.com](mailto:Kyronbanks@gmail.com)

What is your campaign address? N/A

What is your campaign phone number? 917-684-8505

What is your campaign email? [info@pierre2021.com](mailto:info@pierre2021.com)

What is your campaign website? [www.Pierre2021.com](http://www.Pierre2021.com)

Is your campaign on social media? If so, what platform(s) and what are the names? We are on twitter, facebook, and instagram at @VotePierre2021

## Campaign Issues

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

I support Universal Healthcare and that the city should invest more money in our healthcare system. Since the pandemic, the health needs of the people have exponentially increased and we have not provided the necessary investment and resources for our frontline workers who are risking their lives every single day.

Additionally, as someone who once worked in the healthcare sector, I understand the value of preventative medicine. Not enough is being done on that front in terms of mental health, I would push for a robust presence of mental health professionals in our public schools rather than over-policing our kids. We cannot ask the NYPD to do the jobs of mental Health Professionals.

I support an expansion to the Office of a School Nurse that is the build out of a school-based health center. These are medical centers in schools that help students manage their health, and serve as a great option for busy students with busy parents who cannot always make it to a doctor's office. School-based health centers are run by neighborhood hospitals, medical centers, and community organizations.

Additionally I would support city and state legislation to require acute care facilities and nursing homes implement certain direct care nurse-to-patient ratios in all nursing units and impose penalties for violations of these ratios.

Lastly, the most critical part of all this is the funding. By taxing the millionaires and billionaires to raise revenue to support more equitable proposals in many areas such as healthcare, housing, education, and social services.

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?

My family came here from Haiti and experienced many of the challenges faced by immigrant families today. I can tell you that the first issue is the knowledge gap of existing resources and knowing how to access them as immigrants who are learning english and adjusting to a new and very tech savvy society. We must proactively inform people about the resources available for housing, education, food, legal protections, and aid them in accessing them. That is why I host a weekly civic education and program in Haitian Creole on the radio.

As council member I will work to ensure that any City-based relief efforts and other programs do not consider immigration status so that all our neighbours are taken care of. I am also supportive of the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project, and would support increasing funding for this program.

Food, housing and healthcare are basic human rights that should be available to all regardless of immigration status. For this reason and more, I am joining the focus on taxing the ultra-wealthy and ensuring that we can adequately fund social services, especially for historically neglected diverse communities. We can start by initiating a new City Food Analysis to help guide our decision making with up to date information. All New Yorkers should have access to healthcare through a single-payer system.

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?

Criminal Justice in New York City should become fully rehabilitative and shouldn't rely solely on punitive measures to keep us safe and administer justice. The Council has to shift funding away from the NYPD and invest those funds back into our communities so that we can have more affordable housing, stronger schools, and better job opportunities. The Council must take an active role in reimagining policing in our city, including mandating that social services and mental health workers respond to the homeless and people in crisis, not armed officers who are not trained to work with the mentally ill. We must take greater steps to prevent crime before it happens, not just punish perpetrators after the fact, and we must protect and empower oversight organizations like the Civilian Complaint Review Board to hold the NYPD accountable for misconduct.

I fully support changes to the scope and size of the NYPD, and I believe the NYPD's budget needs to be cut and reallocated. I believe that the armed officers, untrained in de-escalation, are not the people to address complaints about the homeless, disputes, and issues where one of the people involved suffers from a mental illness, and that social service agencies would be better able to respond. Further, I would look to reduce the budget of the NYPD's PR division. The NYPD will have to find a way to get their overtime bills under control, they must ensure these transitions are seamless, as well as get used to a smaller discretionary budget fund.

The City should be able to personally hold police officers accountable for violating the rights of its citizens. We need to strengthen and expand on the authority of the current Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB), and furthermore, we should move towards an Elected Civilian Complaint Review Board (ECRB), with an independent prosecutor. The theme of accountability should also be expanded to other parts of city government to ensure that working class people have the access to better resources that they deserve. City government should no longer be a source of trauma for black and brown communities.

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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?

Public schools in our city are severely underfunded. First the Governor should release the funds that are already due to our underfunded schools. Second, we need more revenue, which is why I fully support things like the stock transfer tax. If necessary, let's agree to have those revenues go directly to our education budgets. I would overhaul the Fair Schools Funding formula: selective schools would not receive extra funding since they have few working class, immigrant, and Black/brown students, and I would fully fund all schools instead of allowing well-resourced schools to receive their historical funding levels at the expense of other schools. This will go a long way in addressing the damages done by a de facto segregated school system.

I would also advocate for NYS to fully fund and increase foundation aid, and I would want to make sure that the most well-off schools receive no state funding from this program (in part by using the most updated demographic and socioeconomic data in calculating aid). I would also support adding additional metrics to the foundation aid formula, e.g. student poverty, English proficiency, etc. to make sure that the schools most in need receive the most aid.

The council must lead on this issue. Our segregated schools system helps to perpetuate poverty and other social injustices. We need to look at how funds are allocated from zip code to zip code.

We must provide better starting salaries to teachers so as to attract more talent to our school system. NYC has some of the most segregated schools in the country, and we need wide scale reforms to integrate our schools. First and foremost, I would support immediate implementation and enforcement of the 5Rs framework. I would create a Deputy Chancellor for Integration and Equity in NYCDOE responsible for integration and with the power to develop and enforce integration policies. Additionally, I would want the DOE to commit to stricter and explicit poverty target rates for socioeconomic integration, establish a comprehensive audit of funding and resource equity across all schools (and make the results available to the public), commit to providing translation services to ALL students with IEPs, and move School Safety Agents out of the DOE. I would also want to overhaul our admissions and screenings processes in our public schools.

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?

Eviction rates will soar as soon as the moratorium on evictions end. This will disproportionately impact Black and Brown Communities, as it has for the last couple of decades. It will also show its impact on newer tenants who had to share the over priced apartments that the black and brown communities are being kicked out of. We must do more to enforce the laws on the books, Albany did its part, now the ball is in our court in the city. [See Op-ed](#)

The next step is building more affordable housing. We cannot continue to use AMI - the inclusion of Westchester in NYC's AMI creates an inaccurate representation of many NYC neighborhoods. I believe that we should base affordability on average incomes within zip codes. In addition to affordability, we must also prioritize desegregation and racial integration in our land use policies. ULURP's process is open, transparent, and requires the developers to go through various steps which include community input. With that said, the process needs to be reformed so that we prioritize more racial equity and prevent displacement of residents and gentrification. I would be more than open to do this, and I see this as a priority for the next City Council.

I have also proposed that, moving forward, all public land converted to residential use be 100% affordable - and truly affordable for NYC residents. Whatever money the City receives by turning over land to the highest bidder is a pittance compared to the benefits of creating more housing for New York families who desperately need it.

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

I recently testified at the NYC Council Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises and spoke in staunch opposition to the currently proposed upzoning of the entire block facing Cortelyou Road between east 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> streets. I asked that the plan be voted down and taken back to the drawing board. The focus of any new development projects seeking upzoning, especially in a district and a city where we are in an affordable housing crisis, should be to prioritize increasing real affordable housing units through a robust community engagement process that puts the community front and center early-on, not after the fact. This is not an affordable housing project, this is a luxury project with some sprinkles of affordable housing.

In District 40, and throughout our city, there is clearly a massive need for real affordable housing in the district, and throughout the city. In many cases, developers get significant upzoning rights, in exchange for minimal affordable housing units, and what amounts to a handshake when it comes to community benefit agreements.

I believe in a highly community-based zoning model that prioritizes local voices and concerns as well as racial / economic equity. Zoning changes are one of the few tools we have as a community to control what our local neighborhoods look like; they affect everyone in the neighborhood, from renters and homeowners to schools and small businesses. As a result, it is critical for community groups and local residents to lead every zoning process.

Furthermore, I believe that there are some specific policy initiatives and commitments that NYC's next City Council should make. First, residential development being considered on publicly-owned land should be 100% affordable. Second, the city should adopt its own guideline for measuring affordability. Third, we must house the homeless and provide individuals / families that are homeless with permanent affordable housing. We have a rapidly growing homeless population of working families and shelters bursting are at the seams. Rather than investing in more shelters we should provide those families with housing by increasing the number of units set aside for homeless New Yorkers in new affordable housing developments from 5% to 15%. Fourth, the City's housing plan needs to focus on building at or below the area median income for the zip code. Fifth, the City should also consider using a landbank. Finally, we must also boost homeownership rates, especially in historically marginalized communities like our district. Homeownership has historically been one primary method of building wealth, and it's critical that marginalized Black and Latinx communities are able to access homeownership in a way that they've historically been denied.

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

The roads belong to all of us, pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. This is why we need safety infrastructure, such as traffic calming measures and bike lanes, to protect all of us. I have spoken out in favor of these measures at community Board 9, to help push for the lane running along Prospect Park on Flatbush Avenue and will aggressively work towards it's completion into the rest of Flatbush/Ditmas Park.

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 will affect us all, but it is already disproportionately impacting communities of color and working-class communities both locally and internationally. The health impacts of a worsening environment will hit seniors and those who have limited or no access to quality healthcare, from asthma to cancer rates. We already know that areas like Flatbush have higher rates of both. This is why I will take a holistic approach pushing both proactive climate protecting/mitigation policies, and healthcare policies to address the damage that has already been done.

The city must bolster its climate resiliency and practices now to ensure that when the crisis worsens, the public and our industries are prepared. We must make massive investments in climate infrastructure both in the public and private sectors, which will mean more "Green New Deal" type jobs across all sectors.

In terms of specific initiatives, I would support the five borough resiliency bill, the Renewable Riker's bills, the expansion of alternative modes of transportation such as public transportation and bicycles, increased green spaces and equitable access to public parks in NYC, the expansion of composting in NYC, strict building emissions caps, the expansion of lead poisoning investigations (especially in BIPOC communities), and phasing out diesel vehicles as fast as possible.

The lack of green space has always been an issue in our district. Just as in many other Black communities and communities of color around NYC, our community does not have equitable access to public, open green space. As we consider new developments in Flatbush, we must consider the opportunity to include community space, environmentally friendly energy consumption and green jobs.

As the next Council Member for our district, I would support significantly expanding the amount of green space in our communities. We should take stock of the number of publicly owned vacant lots remaining in the district as potential spaces for community gardens, dog runs, and other greenspace.

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

Our small business and retail corridors are rapidly declining, you can see it on Cortelyou Road and along Flatbush Avenue. This is why I will do more to support our Business Improvements Districts and Merchants Associations. We need a well subsidized sanitation, beautification and marketing plan to address this issue. Yet, we cannot ignore the realities of a changing economy, we must keep our eyes open to new ways to make use of our retail spaces. I look forward to hearing from the community members about this.

### **For fun (answers to these questions are not required)**

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

"There aint no party like a Flatbush Party, Cause a Flatush Party Don't Stop" - Set to a caribbean beat. If you've lived here for over 12 months, it's a cultural Mecca for Caribbean culture.

What is your favorite restaurant in your district?

It changes every other month, but my last three favorites have been Fisherman Cove, Zanmi, and of course Golden Krust, check out the hashtag: #SaveGoldenKrust on Facebook.