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## 2021 Environmental Questionnaire for New York City Candidates

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the New York League of Conservation Voters Questionnaire.

To ensure your responses address the issues NYLCV and its partners are most concerned about, please consult [NYLCV's 2021 New York City Policy Agenda](#) when answering the questions.

The New York League of Conservation Voters is the only non-partisan, statewide environmental organization in New York that fights for clean water, clean air, renewable energy, and open space through political action. This questionnaire is designed to elicit your views regarding what environmental, public health, clean energy and transit, and environmental justice groups consider to be the most important issues of the day. Responses may inform NYLCV's educational and legislative programs and actions NYLCV takes in the election cycle.

Responses should be considered public. Although NYLCV may choose not to publicize the responses to every question, verbatim responses may be reproduced and distributed publicly. If so, your responses may be shortened, if necessary, but will not be edited in substantive ways. If you choose to refer us to a position paper or website, please indicate exactly what text you would like us to cite. For candidates choosing not to respond to the questionnaire, NYLCV will note as much in its public materials.

NYLCV and its partners in the environmental policy arena believe that New York's voters are determined to make the environment a voting issue this year. Candidate positions on issues such as protecting public health, building a clean energy future, and mitigating climate change will help voters decide how to cast their ballots this election cycle. This questionnaire is one of the primary ways the public will get this information.

Here are a few guidelines:

- ☒ Questionnaires are due **Friday, February 26, 2021**.
- ☒ The completed questionnaire is mandatory for endorsement consideration and must be submitted via e-mail as a Microsoft Word file to: [politics@nylcv.org](mailto:politics@nylcv.org)
- ☒ Questions or extension requests may be directed to Joshua Klainberg ([jklainberg@nylcv.org](mailto:jklainberg@nylcv.org))
- ☒ After receipt of the completed questionnaire, candidates will be invited to participate in a formal interview with a local Chapter Board.



Candidate endorsements will be made by the NYLCV State Board on April 29, 2021.

### CAMPAIGN CONTACT INFORMATION

Candidate name: **Erik Bottcher**

Office sought & district number: **City Council, District 3**

Campaign e-mail: **Info@ErikBottcher.com**

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Campaign manager's name and email: **Ben Hoffman, Ben@ErikBottcher.com**

Press Secretary's name and email: **N/A**

Scheduler's name and email: **N/A**

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Please share your accomplishments or experiences that indicate your commitment to advancing a pro-environment agenda. These experiences may be professional or personal.

Over my 11 years in city and state government I have been a proud advocate for green policy and a pro-environmental agenda. During my time with Speaker Corey Johnson's office, I am proud to have worked on both large-scale and localized solutions to improve our environment.

In 2016 I conceived the idea of using City Council capital discretionary funds to plant every empty tree pit in Council District 3 with a new tree. Since that time, Speaker Corey Johnson's office has planted 511 street trees across the district in previously empty tree pits. This has very positive environmental implications as street trees remove and store carbon while releasing oxygen back into the air, manage stormwater and keep pollutants out of waterways, filter fine particulate pollutants out of the air and protect biodiversity, among other benefits.

I'm extremely proud of the bill that requires new construction to install bird-friendly glass. I worked with NYC Audubon and the Council's legislative division on this legislation, and it is now law. NYC Audubon estimates that 90,000 to 230,000 birds are killed every year from flying into the city's buildings.

One of my longtime priorities has been increasing organic waste collection in Council District 3. Organic waste in landfills generates methane, a potent greenhouse gas. In 2016, I invited to my office the Department of Sanitation's organic waste leadership team and the general managers and resident leaders of three of the largest housing complexes in our district: Manhattan Plaza, Penn South and Westbeth. Within a year all three complexes, representing nearly 5,000 housing units, were signed up for DSNY's curbside organic waste program. We promoted this program heavily across the district, signing up other buildings for this service as well. Our office then funded the Hudson River Park Trust to establish new organic waste drop off sites throughout the park, which are very popular, and established new drop off sites by the Lower East Side Ecology Center in other parks and near subway entrances.

## ISSUES

Each year, NYLCV works closely with New York's leading environmental, public health, conservation, energy, environmental justice, and transportation organizations to identify the most pressing priorities on fighting climate change, conserving land and water, and protecting public health. These issues drive NYLCV's advocacy work throughout the legislative session, influence the bills we select for NYLCV's Environmental Scorecards, and informs the decision on the candidates we choose to endorse. To ensure your responses are in alignment with the issues NYLCV and its partners are most concerned about, please review [NYLCV's 2021 New York City Policy Agenda](#) when formulating your responses.

Please indicate your level of commitment to, and if applicable your recent personal and professional activity concerning, all the policy priorities of our partners per the following issues:

### Top Priorities

Transportation isn't only the number one source of greenhouse gas emissions in our state—it is also a major source of air pollution, causing respiratory and other public health issues. This is particularly the case near New York City's many major highways where too often, these communities are low-income and communities of color.

2. Encouraging the Shift to High Efficiency, Low Emission Forms of Transportation (p. 3)

I am a strong supporter of increasing access to green transportation, including increased access to biking, the continued expansion of electric buses, and the conversion of all city vehicles to electric power.

To highlight biking, even before the pandemic, cycling was becoming a more and more popular way to get around New York, with a third of all adults riding a bike at least once a year. The past year has shown an explosion in growth and the City needs to protect cyclists by creating more truly protected bike lanes. These lanes save lives and my district has the second highest number of cyclist injuries in the entire city.

To expand the use of the City's bus system and reduce use of gas-guzzling cars, I will promote the creation of a rapid bus transit network that is within a 5 minute walk of all residents. Millions of New Yorkers rely on the bus to get to work, go to the doctor, or attend school but we have the slowest buses in the country and the decline in bus service has left riders waiting longer and longer. This especially hurts New Yorkers of color, who make up 75% of all bus riders.

New York City deserves a modern, accessible and safe subway system. Many people have turned to services like Uber and Lyft because of the unacceptable conditions of our subways. Public transportation needs to be made as fast and convenient as driving if we are truly going to break the car culture.

More than ever, New Yorkers realized the value of our parks and open spaces in 2020 as our cultural institutions were closed and we had to practice social distancing. Open green space is one of the City's most valuable environmental assets but also contributes to the well-being of our residents and our economy.

### 3. Conserving New York City's Parks and Natural Areas (p. 3)

I will support the conservation and expansion of our City's parks and natural areas if elected to the City Council. In Speaker Johnson's office, I led the efforts to create the first new park in East Chelsea in 40 years, plant over 400 trees across District 3, renovate every park and playground in the district, and help secure funding for the buildout of Hudson River Park. From these experiences, my appreciation for the role our parks play in making our communities better places grew exponentially. When elected, I would seek to serve on the Parks and Recreation Committee to continue this valuable work to improve the lives of my constituents and all New Yorkers.

Reaching the City's Zero Waste goal by 2030 will require work from all New Yorkers—cooperation of city officials and private industry, and buy-in from the public. Stimulating behavioral change is

critical to meeting this goal, as is ensuring the City has programs in place that promote waste reduction, diversion, and sustainable waste management.

#### 4. Common Sense Waste Management (p. 3)

In my [Clean District 3](#) plan I detail the critical actions that New York needs to take to become a zero waste city. Three areas I highlight are the need to remove single-use plastics from our day-to-day lives, expand food recovery programs, and create universal organic waste collection.

Plastic waste is killing our marine ecosystem and littering our neighborhoods. I will fight for the phasing out of single-use plastics in New York, including plastic straws, stir sticks, and single-use water bottles. The NYC Department of Sanitation collected roughly 36 million pounds of single-use plastics from homes each year across the five boroughs in 2017. The department estimates that commercial establishments contribute additional tens of millions of pounds. To help reduce our reliance on single-use water bottles, we should pilot reusable water bottle refilling stations at fire hydrants as they have done in Montreal. While banning plastic bags and polystyrene foam were positive steps I was proud to be a part of, we need to go much further if we are to save our ecosystem.

We must also do a better job of recovering leftover food from restaurants and other food establishments to both help address food insecurity and divert food from our waste stream. Currently, 68% of all food waste that is discarded in New York City is still edible. I will push the next mayoral administration on this issue and introduce legislation if necessary. In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, when more and more New Yorkers are experiencing food insecurity, it is essential that we expand our food waste and recovery practices.

It's time to mandate universal composting services for all residents and businesses. The State of California did so a year ago, and I will sponsor City Council legislation to make this happen in New York. Lastly, the City should use organic waste to generate clean energy locally, which could be done at a new green energy hub on Rikers Island.

#### Combating Climate Change

The time to act on climate is now. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report makes it clear that we must make radical changes in short order to avoid catastrophic climate change. We will work to advance policies that decrease emissions from all sectors, prepare us to meet the unavoidable impacts of climate change, reduce waste, and foster a strong green economy. We must also ensure the changes we make to tackle climate change benefit disadvantaged communities and provide for a just transition.

5. Energy and Infrastructure (p. 5)

We must create more microgrids in our neighborhoods. Penn South, limited equity cooperative, has its own cogenerator and operates its own microgrid. Neighborhood-wide microgrid electric networks have been established in other parts of the city and we should replicate their success here. We can make large scale blackouts and borough-wide power outages a thing of the past.

I oppose existing pipeline proposals and favor the decommissioning of existing fossil fuel infrastructure. Offshore wind power is our best opportunity to replace the energy currently generated by fossil fuels. On the City Council, I will fight to have these projects fast-tracked and sited off New York City's shores.

Lastly, I will work to solarize Council District 3. The city, state and federal government must incentivise solar collectors on the roofs of our district's apartment buildings and brownstones. This is the future; not fossil fuel infrastructure.

6. Transportation (p. 5)

For too long, New Yorkers have been forced to live among streets clogged with honking cars and trucks, breathing exhaust fumes and navigating dangerous intersections. While the rest of the world modernized its mass transit, our subway system and bus network were allowed to deteriorate. This is because for decades, our city planners prioritized cars over people.

I will fight for a 21st century transportation system that is fast, accessible, affordable to all, and green. I will push for the restoration of 24/7 subway service, universal ADA accessibility. and a rapid bus transit network that is within a 5 minute walk of all residents. In Council District 3, I will lead the charge to make our streets safer and better for users of all forms of transportation, especially pedestrians, public transit riders, and cyclists. I will fund bike safety lessons for the community, and prioritize the installation of protected bike lanes on Tenth Avenue and Lower Sixth Avenue and more bike parking.

The 14th Street Busway has drastically improved the quality of life for so many New Yorkers, both those who use it for transit and those who call 14th Street home. Hearing from lifelong residents who opened their windows for the first time because they could breathe cleaner air and not hear the clamor of traffic was all the proof I needed that this project was a success.

## 7. Resiliency (p. 6)

Weather-related catastrophes and rising sea levels not only endanger lives and property of those living in low-lying areas, they endanger our entire economy and the City's essential infrastructure. Superstorm Sandy showed us what damage sea level rise can cause, and sadly we did not fully learn the lessons needed.

Council District 3 is a shoreline community that was flooded during Superstorm Sandy. The City must expand its program of building storm surge barriers and other mitigators on the shoreline to protect against rising waters. While some projects on the Lower East Side and Lower Manhattan are proceeding, full resiliency measures must be expanded to include all areas of Manhattan that were originally envisioned in Rebuild by Design's "Big U". I also support legislation requiring the City to implement a five borough resilience plan.

We must 'harden' our infrastructure in low lying areas in anticipation of flooding. Smaller building owners must be given assistance with the installation of barriers that can be erected to protect from rising waters. Larger property owners must be encouraged to install such systems as some are already doing. We must strengthen existing mandates that any new construction in low-lying areas be built with resiliency features adapted to this new reality. Natural storm protections, such as oyster beds and tidal marshland, must be restored.

Emergency preparedness training must be ongoing so that New Yorkers are prepared for future emergencies, natural or otherwise. When I was with Governor's Cuomo's office I organized emergency preparedness trainings with the National Guard for a year after Superstorm Sandy. I organized trainings for approximately 10,000 residents of Manhattan.

## 8. Solid Waste (p. 7)

As discussed in my answer to Question 4, the management of solid waste is a major priority of my campaign and is captured in my [Clean District 3](#) plan. In addition to my plan, I support NYLCV's proposal to adopt legislation to reduce unnecessary waste, including non-recyclable packaging and utensils from deliveries, and to require city agencies to use recycled materials for projects. Additionally, the City should invest in robust recycling, composting, and waste diversion public education programs.

## Protecting People and Natural Resources

All New Yorkers deserve indoor and outdoor environments that are free of contamination and pollution. We will promote policies that provide access to healthy air and water, protect our open spaces, and improve the well-being of all New Yorkers.

## 9. Parks, Natural Areas, and Active Waterfronts (p. 9)

I stand with NYLCV in their mission to preserve the beauty and safety of our open spaces including our parks, natural areas, and active waterfronts. Having help lead the efforts to



create the first new park in east Chelsea in 40 years, plant over 500 trees across the third district, renovate every park and playground in the entire district, and help secure funding for the buildout of Hudson River Park as part of Speaker Johnson's office, I am excited to continue this critical work.

10. Lead Poisoning Prevention (p. 9)

I support NYLCV's calls to adopt legislation that encourages increased collaboration between City agencies to protect children from exposure to lead paint. This includes increasing inspections, ensuring that tenants have greater ability to report potential lead paint exposure, notifying tenants when they may be exposed, and putting in place stricter guidelines for stop work orders when there is a reported exposure. The City Council made inroads in this area under Speaker Johnson but much more needs to be done. The presence of lead in NYCHA housing is unconscionable and must be addressed immediately

11. Reduce and Mitigate Heat Vulnerability (p. 9 – 10)

I will promote the installation of green roofs and solar panels throughout Council District 3, which reduce heat absorption into our buildings. Underutilized rooftops account thousands of acres of surface area that can be utilized for these purposes. Government can do more to incentivize this and give property owners and residents the tools to make it happen. I've been working with a coalition of local stakeholders on this project and will prioritize this as a member of the City Council.

In 2016, I conceived of using City Council capital discretionary funds to fill every empty tree pit in our district with a new tree. Since that time, we have planted over 500 street trees across the district in previously empty tree pits. The positive environmental implications include the removal of carbon and release of oxygen, absorption of stormwater, and filtration of fine particulate pollutants out of the air. These trees make our neighborhoods more liveable, and help reduce and mitigate New York's natural heat. I will continue this program and will have new tree beds created throughout the district to continue to make our neighborhoods more livable and cooler. Additionally, I will push for the planting of street trees in neighborhoods across New York City that are currently underserved by green space. We should create an 'urban forest' across all neighborhoods to help mitigate the effects of climate change.

12. Clean Air for All (p. 10)

Throughout the campaign, I have repeatedly called out the need to convert and expand the City's bus fleet to be fully electric to both reduce our carbon footprint and clean our air. We also need to expand protected bike lanes and bike parking options to reduce vehicular trips.



Congestion pricing must be implemented as soon as possible to reduce the number of vehicular trips into Manhattan daily. We have to disincentivize unnecessary car and truck use, which contribute greatly to air pollution.

The cruise ship terminal in Hudson River Park is not currently served by electric shore power. As a result, these ships are running when in port, generating tons of noxious chemicals, which pollute the air in Hell's Kitchen. I will work with my partners in state, federal and city government to achieve the installation of shore power for the cruise ship terminal.

I look forward to working with NYLCV on new and innovative ways to make sure our air quality continually improves across the entire city.

### 13. Clean Water for All (p.11)

I stand with NYLCV to protect our waterways as I have always been proud to do in the past. While working with Speaker Johnson's office, we led the charge on banning the single-use plastic bags and styrofoam that clog up our waterways.

We should install "trash wheels" in our waterways that will collect garbage from the Hudson River, East River and New York Harbor. A trash wheel in Baltimore has collected millions of pounds of garbage from Baltimore Harbor.

The effects of the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) and the methodologies of separating wastewater and rainwater runoff require immediate attention. CSOs contribute to river and ocean pollution after each significant rainfall.

Plastics are killing our oceans. It is time to phase out the use of non-essential single use plastics such as straws, stir sticks, six-pack rings, cutlery and many kinds of foodware.

### 14. Sustainable Food Systems (p. 11)

I will push the City to use its purchasing power to move away from industrial farming. Corporate industrial farming is the main cause of deforestation, a major polluter of waterways, a top source of carbon emissions, and known for highly inhumane practices. Additionally, New York City has phased out processed meat in public schools and is reducing beef purchases by 50%, but I favor phasing out beef purchases altogether in our public schools. The high carbon footprint of livestock is well established and these are the kind of actions we will need to take if we're serious about addressing climate change.