



30 Broad Street – 30<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10004  
212-361-6350

[politics@nylcv.org](mailto:politics@nylcv.org) / [www.nylcv.org](http://www.nylcv.org)

## 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:** Keith Powers

**Office sought & district number:** City Council District 4

**Campaign e-mail:** [keith@keithpowers.nyc](mailto:keith@keithpowers.nyc)

**Campaign phone:** 917-836-1745

**Website:** keithpowers.nyc

**Facebook page:** @KeithPowersNYC

**Twitter handle:** @KeithPowersNYC

**Campaign manager's name and email:** Kaye Dyja, [kaye@keithpowers.nyc](mailto:kaye@keithpowers.nyc)

**Press Secretary's name and email:** n/a

**Scheduler's name and email:** Kaye Dyja, [kaye@keithpowers.nyc](mailto:kaye@keithpowers.nyc)

## 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.

During my time on the City Council, I've been strongly committed to advancing a pro-environment agenda that benefits all New Yorkers. I've supported legislation such as Local Law 97, which was one of the most ambitious in the world to tackle building emissions, along with the Renewable Rikers Program. As the Chair of the Criminal Justice Committee, I think this would be a particularly great use of Rikers as we reimagine its role in the city moving forward. I've also supported the legalization of e-scooters and e-bikes here, and am one of the sponsors of a bill to increase composting and recycling in the city. I strongly believe that the city needs to continue making these investments, even during the fiscal crisis.

In my district, I've made critical investments in the fight against climate change, such as working alongside major property owners, including those in Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village, to make sure they green their properties by installing solar panels on all of their buildings. I've also allocated part of my City Council budget to a new composting center in Stuyvesant Town, so we don't lose composting services during the pandemic, and have been a strong supporter of Solar One, which is a solar educational center on the East River that's investing in renewable energies.

Additionally, I've been a vocal advocate of clean and healthy transportation options, including being one of the earliest proponents of the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Busway, supporting bike lanes across the district including on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and crosstown, and pushing for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue gap to be fixed. I've also called for increasing CitiBike access and bike parking in my district, which has become increasingly important as more and more New Yorkers rely on biking as their primary mode of transportation.

Most importantly, I joined my colleagues in a historic storm resiliency plan on the East River to protect our waterfront against the next superstorm and make critical investments to mitigate the next disaster. We're also gaining new green space, parks, tree planting, and other green infrastructure.

My philosophy is that Council Members must think green in every aspect of their lives. I've been proud to work towards pro-environment goals in my district and as a part of the legislative and budget process on the City Council.

## 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)

Highly committed.

I strongly support finding ways to disincentivize the use and the infrastructure around cars, such as halting new highway developments. During my time on the City Council, I've been a strong advocate for increasing investments in a more reliable and robust public transportation network and expansions of bike infrastructure throughout the city. As we emerge from the pandemic and

people return to work, we have a major opportunity to invest in modernized transportation options.

In November, I wrote [an Op-Ed in Crains New York](#) that outlines steps we can take in my own district for safer and healthier ways to get to Midtown as we return to work. This includes increasing CitiBike stations and bike parking as well as building more accessible subway stations for the disabled community, who are too often overlooked in the conversation about equity and environment. I've also been an avid supporter of new innovative transportation ideas—like the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Busway—that have tremendous payoff in the long run.

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)

Highly committed.

In my second term, one of my primary goals is to expand access to the waterfront for recreational use along the East River. My district is one of the last remaining unusable parts of the waterfront on the river, and I am strongly committed to fixing any gaps in usable access.

Along with the storm resiliency plan mentioned earlier, we're also developing new, more robust green spaces, parks, and infrastructure in my district, so in the future we don't lose critical outdoor areas every time there's a storm.

Lastly, during the pandemic, we really learned the value of open space as a critical necessity in our lives. I'm a strong advocate for the Open Streets program, and think it should be expanded and made permanent.

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)

Highly committed.

I'm fully committed to moving the city to its Zero Waste goal by 2030, and believe this should be a top priority for the next administration and City Council. Achieving this milestone requires a major investment in infrastructure and education, but ultimately, the city needs to focus on ways we can meaningfully change people's mindset and behaviors. When it comes to waste, we know that nothing is more important to changing human behavior than making that change easy and

accessible. This is why we need to bring back the citywide composting program and invest in community composting. We also need to start looking more at commercial waste, school waste, and other opportunities to influence people's behaviors to lower our footprint.

### 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)

Highly committed.

The city has to stay committed to Local Law 97, which is a radical change in cutting building emissions in New York City and a major investment in the fight against climate change. Moving forward, we have to fight against any efforts to undercut it and provide funding to make sure it is implemented effectively.

#### 6. Transportation (p. 5)

Highly committed.

During my time on the City Council, I've been an avid supporter of sustainable transportation options, including developing the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Busway, 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Busway, and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue bike lane, fixing bike gaps in my district, investing in CitiBike, and finding other ways to ensure that New Yorkers have a safe and healthy way to get around the city. I joined my colleagues in voting for the City Council's bill that requires a master plan when it comes to bike lanes, busways, and infrastructure, and have been a supporter of the legalization of e-bikes and e-scooters. As we emerge from the pandemic and people begin to return to work, we have a major opportunity to make a massive and historic investment in public transportation and bike infrastructure.

However, it's critical that these investments in public transportation extend to the outer boroughs where many communities face transit deserts. We must ensure that the changes we make to tackle the climate crisis address the specific needs of disadvantaged and underserved communities.

#### 7. Resiliency (p. 6)

Highly committed.

In my district, we made a major investment in coastal resiliency, and it's critical that we also do this in all the other boroughs to make sure they don't flood as a result of the next superstorm. To effectively achieve this goal, we need to develop a citywide plan to tackle long-term resiliency—

with a specific focus on vulnerable communities and waterfront infrastructures—and strengthen zoning codes to protect homes in at risk areas. Investing in resiliency and storm protection is the best thing we can do to proactively address the effects of climate change.

#### 8. Solid Waste (p. 7)

Highly committed.

We need to address our waste stream, which includes heavily investing in diversion through composting and recycling. As mentioned above, we have many opportunities in front of us to invest in waste management initiatives that will meaningfully change people's behavior.

### 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)

Highly committed.

As mentioned, one of my top goals in my second term is to expand access to the waterfront for recreational use along the East River. I also strongly support the development of more resilient green spaces, parks, and infrastructure, which includes waterfront parks and the protection of public access to the waterfront.

The pandemic has really shown us the importance of parks and open spaces within our communities. Moving forward, I think it's critical that we increase investments in these open spaces, particularly in communities underserved by parkland, and actively work to expand access to natural areas.

#### 10. Lead Poisoning Prevention (p. 9)

Highly committed.

While I don't represent any public housing complexes in my district, it's shameful that this administration has neglected this issue. The City Council has played an instrumental role in uncovering the malpractices around lead poisoning, but we have to continue making sure that the city isn't putting families and children in harm's way. This includes encouraging increased collaboration between city agencies to avoid exposure, pushing for investigations by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene of any report of elevated blood lead levels in a

minor, and strengthening tenant notifications as well as increasing building inspections.

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

Highly committed.

As rising temperatures increasingly threaten the health of all New Yorkers, it's imperative that we address heat vulnerability and protect those most at risk. As we know, heat-related health risks are greatest in communities without adequate shade protection and those with higher poverty rates. As such, it's critical that we not only protect and grow our urban forest to maximize shade, but also ensure the implementation of the Cool Neighborhoods program. Additionally, as we inch closer to our second pandemic summer, we need to work to diminish increased heat exposure of children, families, and elderly New Yorkers who are spending more time in their homes.

#### 12. Clean Air for All (p. 10)

Highly committed.

Despite improvements in recent years, air pollution in our city is still a significant environmental and public health threat, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis. To tackle this issue, the City Council and Mayor must uphold their commitment to electrify the city's vehicle fleet and mandate full electrification of all New York City school buses by 2040. We also need to push for the MTA to operate more electric buses on our streets—this is especially important for communities that suffer from bad air quality.

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

Highly committed.

Simply put, all New Yorkers deserve clean water. As such, I support NYLCV's push for the DEP to establish a reporting process tracking progress on the Long Term Control Plans for the city's waterways and the collaboration between city agencies to implement more green infrastructure projects beyond the DEP. I also support increasing incentives for installing green infrastructure and stormwater source controls on private property to further prevent stormwater from entering our sewer system.

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

Highly committed.

I strongly support encouraging better health and eating habits by advocating for more healthy, plant-based food options for New Yorkers, particularly at an early age. I believe there are strong opportunities ahead to improve healthy and plant-based options in our city schools, including expanding the number of youth education programs on sustainability and healthy eating. I also think the expansion of both community and urban agriculture is critical.

Additionally, I support the fight to ensure that every family, individual, and child has access to healthy, local, and affordable food options through the expansion of programs like SNAP, FRESH, GrowNYC Youthmarkets, and Health Bucks. However, in terms of the FRESH program, I'm interested in looking at the parameters of the current program to make sure it's addressing its intentions and goals, such as protecting existing supermarkets and ensuring that there are good jobs associated with the benefits of the program.