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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
- ✓ Questions or extension requests may be directed to Joshua Klainberg (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: Mariya Markh

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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.

I have been working for the City for over a decade, including during Hurricanes Irene/Sandy, which were the first wake-up calls to my district that climate change has a direct impact on our neighborhoods, and that our environmental policies must reflect our community's risk.

I have been an advocate for mitigation of the effect of climate change and participated in building the resiliency framework of our area through the Governor's NY Rising program. Unfortunately, few of the necessary projects identified by stakeholders have been implemented.

I've organized community cleanups in partnership with civic groups in Manhattan Beach and Sheepshead Bay. I've been working to fight a development in my district that, without remediation, risks exposing the community and 170 homeless individuals to potential lead and petroleum exposure.

I have been the lead staffer to partner and coordinate with DEP to distribute rain barrels to the residents of my district.

And I have made resiliency a key part of my platform.

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)

We need a balanced transportation network that improves “last mile” options as well as regional travel. Investment in public transportation as a priority, as well as “share” options, means fewer people will rely on cars for medium-distance trips. We must also set goals, such as 15-minute neighborhoods, that reduce the need for transportation even more, and use tools such as zoning and planning to meet those goals.

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)

The City needs to utilize State-authorized design-build for Parks Department projects, which allows us to improve and expand our green spaces quicker and at lower cost. We should also use

design-build authorization for resiliency projects that are not limited to parks themselves, but for shoreline protection and rainwater reservoirs.

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)

We need to bring back the composting program, but we also must have a broader education program and better planning for composting programs in multi-family buildings. I worked with DSNY when they started rolling out the program in Community Board 15 in Brooklyn and a lot of people were confused about what to do and why it was important. We must bring the issue closer to home by appealing to people's self-interest and remind them that our waste management costs are increasing because the waste we produce is "dirty" in its composition (having non-compostable items, plastics mixed into organics, etc.) If our waste cannot find future investment beyond being waste, we will have to raise taxes and get fewer services for more money.

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)

In my district, for the sake of resiliency, we need to move utilities underground as they are in Manhattan and other affluent parts of the City. We need to invest more in cool roofs, solar panels, and other sources of renewable energy such as offshore wind and geothermal. In our public universities, we need to develop vocational training programs in green energy and we can develop public-private-labor partnerships to bring green energy training to the skilled trades to keep them not only competitive but at the leading edge of using green technology.

6. Transportation (p. 5)

Expanding on my answer in question #2, I am committed to making public transportation fully accessible. Currently, there are thousands of trips a day taken by seniors and people with disabilities for whom public transportation is not viable both due to access and an outdated,

Manhattan-centric bus network. Though I have skepticism of the MTA's bus redesign network, I believe there is hope that the future may yield a more interconnected outer-borough bus network.

7. Resiliency (p. 6)

A large part of the district is in a 100-year floodplain, and in 2050 it is expected to see flooding as a common occurrence. We must start planning for this by implementing changes to zoning and building codes that encourages resilient design. One such plan is City Planning's current Zoning for Coastal Flood Resiliency, which may only see review and passage in the next term. I believe it is a necessity to keep our communities not only resilient and affordable, but livable.

Likewise, we must also address the ancillary dangers of rising tides. During Sandy, much of the damage was caused not by the overflow of the waterways but by water and sewage returning into people's homes. Neighborhood infrastructure such as backflow prevention valves can help mitigate those risks.

8. Solid Waste (p. 7)

As a former staffer for Council Member Lew Fidler, who passed the expanded styrene (Styrofoam) ban in the City, seeing its positive impact, after almost a decade of lawsuits, is inspiring. The naysayers who believed it would usher in the end of take-out were proven wrong and the market adapted. This shows that when it is a necessity, we can make changes.

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)

We need to fund parks and plant more trees, including the thousands upon thousands still not replanted after hurricane Sandy. These trees could be cleaning the air and combatting heat island effect. We need to plant strategically, such as having species that can mitigate the effects of floods so that our waterfronts are not destroyed by climate change. We must increase reservoir plantings, set requirements for permeable concrete so that water can reach the earth, and find ways of permitting access to our waterfronts for recreation that is not simply yachts and party boats, but smaller activities with lower impact on the environment.

10. Lead Poisoning Prevention (p. 9)



We need to have inspections of all properties in NYC with children that were built before 1978 and increase education to tenants (in multiple languages) so they know about the risks of lead poisoning. In addition, the City can take an active approach and do a thorough review of locations with increased risk of lead contamination, such as pre-EPA gas stations. I have been actively fighting a development in my district that is attempting to shelter homeless individuals in a potentially contaminated site that was a gas station from the 1930s-1960s, has had no remediation, and the City was not aware of its historical use. The City's regulations are happy to address findings of lead but do nothing to proactively illuminate its blind spots.

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

We need to remove the additional fees in building (like NYCHA) that charge tenants for using air conditioners. This is especially necessary when we see that the people most impacted are low-income seniors and people with health issues, especially asthma. We can encourage green roofs, including for urban gardening both on private and City-owned property where solar is not feasible. Expanding on #9, strategic planning of trees would help mitigate heat vulnerability as well, as these are all interconnected issues.

12. Clean Air for All (p. 10)

We need to incentivize and partner with manufacturers to install more electric charging stations throughout the city and increase options for alternative transportation methods like e-scooters. Without electric infrastructure, we cannot reduce vehicular emissions. Simultaneously, we need to invest in carbon-neutral or -negative electricity generation because although a power station burning fuel is more efficient than a car, it still produces harmful pollutants.

13. Clean Water for All (p.11)

NYC relies largely on our state's aqueducts and reservoir system for drinking water, but we have opportunities to use rainwater to address our water needs locally. We can incorporate designs to capture rainwater for use such as washing agency vehicles (e.g. DSNY). We can also push residential and commercial rainwater collection and incentivize using non-potable water when possible.

14. Sustainable Food Systems (p. 11)

A big part of my platform for improving community health is the need to expand Health Bucks (which rewards healthier food choices) to grocery stores. In addition, we need to study whether

our zoning and building codes can promote urban farming — such as vertical farming and aquaponics — that can meet local, healthy, and sustainable food demands in underserved areas.