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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: Sandra Ung

Office sought & district number: City Council, District 20

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Campaign manager's name and email: Alexander Hart / alexandercasehart@gmail.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.

After graduating Columbia law school, I devoted my life to public service. I became a nonprofit attorney at Sanctuary for Families working to support victims of domestic violence. After entering government nearly 15 years ago, I served as a Chief of Staff in the Assembly, a special assistant to the NYS Commissioner on Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation; a Legislative Assistant to former New York City Comptrollers Bill Thompson and John Liu and currently work as a Special Assistant in Congresswoman Grace Meng's office.

As a member of the Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation team, I was always working with agencies and local activists to explore ways of educating people about the environment.

Throughout my time in the public sector, I have seen the effects of climate change and environmental injustice in my community. Residents in my neighborhood, especially seniors, often lack air conditioners and live in small apartments, forcing them to wait for

cooling centers to open. Smog and air pollution continue to harm life expectancy, especially in communities of color. I am running for office to elevate issues like this in the City Council and make sure NYC acts to build the resilience of its coastline and communities.

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 support moving towards high efficiency transit options. I don't own a car and rely completely on New York City's public transit network and my own two feet for getting around so I understand firsthand the struggles of those trying to get around without a vehicle.

We need to reimagine our streets to be safer, especially for individuals with mobility limitations, and pursue street design that centers accessibility and pedestrian/bike safety. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of preventable deaths in New York City, with speeding as one of the top contributors. The city should continue its rollout of speeding cameras. Things like lane narrowing can reduce traffic speeds while taking back critical real estate for pedestrians, shortening the crossing distance and heightening visibility. Pedestrians in my district are also often forced to walk around piles of garbage, which attract rodents, harm the walkability of the area and take away from the community as a whole. I support the city's Clean Curbs program, and would be excited to work with my district's Flushing Main Street BID, small businesses, local residents and transportation/climate activists on identifying locations for sealed, on-street and rodent-proof containers - Flushing residents have long complained

about filthy streets and sidewalks, and this would make it easier for pedestrians to get around downtown Flushing. Something that I am particularly passionate about is sidewalk snow clearing. My district has an extremely large senior population, many of whom live in apartments in a dense part of the district. These seniors must leave their apartments to go grocery shopping or visit the doctor, and generally don't have cars. When it snows, sidewalks (including publicly-owned sidewalks over the LIRR tracks), curb cuts and crosswalks prove treacherous terrain for these individuals - the city needs to take a greater role in clearing these paths.

We need to expand our bike lane network in a community-focused process, especially protected bike lanes, and I support investing in bike parking across the city. I support the Queens Greenway, which would link the parks in eastern Queens in a pedestrian and bike-friendly route with clear lane markings. A priority of mine in constructing the Queens Greenway is community input - too often, the city has announced plans without first finding out what the community actually wants. For example, a priority in the Queens Greenway should be making sure that paths have plentiful seating and well maintained paths so that seniors/individuals with disabilities can utilize the shared space and rest if needed.

We also need to fully fund the MTA and invest in capital projects. My district is at the end of the subway line, but it's overcrowded and many stops need to be made accessible. We also need more funding for our buses, many of which are in a state of disrepair.

I supported the legalization of e-scooters as a means of getting people out of cars and onto more environmentally sustainable transportation options. While I support CitiBike and similar ideas in principle, I think it's important to note that there is not a single CitiBike docking station in my entire district, or in any of the neighboring districts. This points to a critical flaw in the city's approach to building a more environmentally sustainable city: communities of color like mine have once again been left behind. As we try to achieve buy-in from all New Yorkers on plans to move towards a carbon-neutral transportation network, we must actually include all New Yorkers.

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)

District 20 is surrounded by parks and green space, and we're better for it. Whether it's Flushing Meadows Corona Park on the west side, Kissena and Kissena Corridor Park through the

middle or our famous Botanical Gardens, we need to preserve and improve these spaces. I support making them more accessible to residents by ensuring accessible and well-maintained paths. A particular concern of mine is growing complaints about garbage in our parks, and I would make fixing that a priority. We also need to make sure our green spaces are safe; many residents are afraid to enter sections of Kissena Corridor Park where there has been a history of muggings and crime - I'd work with local residents and the Parks Department to find creative ways to make sure locals find green spaces to be warm and inviting.

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)

I absolutely support the City's Zero Waste goal. First, we must move quickly and efficiently to start up composting programs as soon as possible. As we start it up, it should be paired with a robust public education project; many residents got used to composting, but they have fallen out of the habit since composting was halted. The education materials should be in multiple languages.

We also need more education on the city's recycling program, and the city should move to curb the waste production of city agencies.

The city also needs to commit to moving away from single-use plastics.

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)

First and foremost, we must move quickly to expand renewable energy production across New York City. I support solarizing public buildings wherever possible, and would work with the

state government to build off-shore wind development. We should pair these with a robust jobs program that places union labor and prevailing wages at the center.

I also support Renewable Rikers, the Climate Mobilization Act and retrofiting NYCHA.

6. Transportation (p. 5)

We need to update our transit system, especially by investing in expanding bus service in low income communities of color. I support expanding protected bike lanes across the city. I support increasing enforcement against placard abuse. I support expanding the number of speeding cameras. The city should lead and purchase electric vehicles wherever feasible for its own fleet.

7. Resiliency (p. 6)

This is incredibly important to me. We need a citywide plan that includes all five boroughs, and focuses on building up resilience in the communities that have borne the brunt of the effects of climate change.

In my district, there are a large number of immigrant seniors living in apartments without air conditioning. Increasing heat during the summers is leading to more deaths. The city needs to expand the number of cooling centers to protect vulnerable populations like this, and lower the temperature at which the cooling centers open.

We need to improve our sewage system and prepare it to deal with increasing amounts of stormwater. As it is, our sewers overflow and dump raw sewage into Flushing Creek. As climate events increase, this will only get worse. We should update our sewage system and expand green spaces that can absorb some of the increased rainwater we can expect over the next few years.

Our coastline is also incredibly vulnerable, and many residents live in flood zones. New York City and State need to act proactively to revitalize our wetlands, oyster reefs and other natural barriers that reduce the impact of storm surges.

8. Solid Waste (p. 7)

Through a public education campaign, we need to move quickly to restart our composting program. We also need to increase education on recycling efforts and invest in waste diversion 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)

We need to protect and expand our parks, natural areas and waterfronts. We must prepare them for climate change while also making them accessible to local residents, especially communities of color and immigrant communities. We also need to divert more funding to our parks, especially on maintenance and sanitation; there should never be overflowing garbage cans in our city parks. We must also defend our public spaces - they should not be sold or leased out.

Where possible, I also support expanding pedestrian pavilions and other green spaces.

10. Lead Poisoning Prevention (p. 9)

I support legislation to end the exposure of families to lead. This is a matter of environmental justice - we need to make sure that all residents are promptly notified of potential lead exposure and increase the number of inspections for lead.

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

I support planting more trees across New York, expanding the number of cooling centers and identifying other means of reducing the heat island effect in NYC.

12. Clean Air for All (p. 10)

I support electrifying the city's vehicle fleet by 2040, support moving the city's buses to being electric and support the transition from fossil fuels. I also support exploring options to reduce emissions from commercial traffic.

13. Clean Water for All (p.11)

I support expanding clean water initiatives, both to make sure our waterways continue to become cleaner and to ensure all New Yorkers have access to clean drinking water. I support expanding the use of pervious pavement and the number of bioswales and rain gardens - critically, we need to increase the maintenance of these gardens so that they're not becoming full of garbage or dead plants, which reduces support in the community.

14. Sustainable Food Systems (p. 11)

I am a supporter of the Good Food Purchasing program (GFP), which seeks to use New York City's considerable purchasing power to serve both our population and our planet. I would seek to expand this program and make sure our economy works to support our values, including building a more dignified workplace that respects animal rights and prioritizes sustainability and resilience. The divide between "agricultural" and "urban" environments needs to break down - we should utilize space within the city for urban farms and encourage residents to plant their own gardens through programs like GrowNYC.

We also need to improve the nutrition of our city residents by continuing to expand programs like school lunches/breakfast for students and Grab and Go meals, which have helped combat hunger in our city.