



2025 Primary Candidate Questionnaire – Borough President

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name	Keith Powers
Seeking office:	Manhattan Borough President
In which primary	Democratic
Age	41
Education	University of Dayton (B.A); City University of New York (M.A)
Current job, position, or occupation	New York City Council Member, District 4
Previous jobs or positions	Chief of Staff to Assembly Member Jonathan Bing

Contact Information

Website	www.keithpowers.nyc/
X	@KeithPowersNYC
Facebook	facebook.com/keithpowersnyc
Instagram	@keithpowers

INTRODUCTION

1. What are your top three campaign promises or goals, and what action will you take to achieve them if elected?

1. Drive Down the Cost of Housing and Build Affordable Housing
2. Expanding Child Care and After School Programs
3. Improving Public Transportation

Affordable Housing

I'm proud to have a longstanding record as a champion for tenants. For my affordable housing plan at Waterside Plaza, I was praised by the New York Times, who called it a "rare happy outcome for renters in today's real estate market."

On the Council, I've been committed to preserving and developing affordable housing for Manhattan residents and their families. Specifically, I've fought to preserve rent regulation for nearly 6,000 units in Stuyvesant Town, just one of the myriad victories I've secured to advance affordable housing.

My advocacy has saved hundreds of renters from displacement and high-rent increases, and as Borough President I'll continue to fight for tenants' safety and security in Manhattan and throughout NYC.

As Borough President, I'll tackle affordability head on. I want to bring my work on housing to create a master housing plan for the entire borough and to give the Borough President the tools to implement it. We shouldn't have to wait for City Hall to tell us what we're getting, we should act on our own plans and vision.

This should include a comprehensive audit of city and state owned property, with an eye towards building deeply affordable housing on government-owned land. I'll also utilize the appointment process on community and planning boards to elevate voices with strong records on housing. And I'll take the lead on identifying sites that are ripe for growth and move urgently to build housing.

Expanding Child Care and After School Programs (and tackling the cost of living):

On the City Council I've fought to expand access to child care, and as Borough President I will continue to look for innovative ways to ultimately achieve universal childcare for all New Yorkers.

First, as Borough President I'll fight to restore any and all of Mayor Adams' cuts to child care. These cuts are damaging and unacceptable—hurting working and middle class New Yorkers at a time when they're feeling squeezed more than ever.

We must also make sure that our commitment to 3-K and pre-K is real, meaning not only should we offer these services, but make sure New Yorkers know about them through extensive outreach programming.

I'll also be a major champion in the fight to deliver more resources to NYC from Albany and Washington so we can fulfill our obligations when it comes to child care.

Improving Public Transportation:

As a lifelong New Yorker, I proudly ride the subway and the bus every single day—so I have a deep understanding of the importance a well functioning public transit system is to the daily lives of our communities.

On the City Council, I've been a strong supporter of Fair Fares legislation as a means to maintain and expand economic equality when it comes to transit access.

I've also worked to make the 14th Street Busway a reality for New Yorkers, speeding up public transit and reducing congestion to keep our communities safe along critical corridors.

As BP, I'll work to bring this success to 34th Street as a way to further improve public transit in one of the most congested and dense corridors in the City.

2. What experience have you had with good government and reform issues? (e.g., voting and election reform, campaign finance, ethics, police accountability, government transparency). If you've worked to advance these goals, we'd love to hear about it.

I've introduced and passed legislation to allow candidates to use campaign funds to pay for childcare expenses, thus breaking down a common barrier for parents, particularly women, to run for office. I'm proud of this accomplishment, which will allow more working people, and parents to run for office.

I've sponsored legislation that transfers approval of press passes away from the NYPD and to the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment. This was critical toward ensuring that our system for distributing press credentials is fair, equitable, and accessible.

I've led efforts to strengthen our whistle blower protection laws.

I've introduced a package of legislation to help first-time candidates run for office. The package of bills would lower qualifying thresholds for public matching funds, increase matchable contributions, create a pilot for special elections, empower small campaigns, and close a doing business loophole.

ELECTIONS AND VOTING

3. Do you support moving New York City's elections from odd-numbered years to even-numbered years, and will you publicly support efforts in Albany to implement this reform?

Yes

Comments (optional) This is an idea that New York City should seriously consider, and I would be open to this form of election system.

ETHICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN GOVERNMENT

5. The recent indictments and resignations surrounding City Hall have exposed serious ethical problems in City Government. Borough Presidents are involved in land use projects, where the nexus of money and lobbying is most apparent. Given that role, please describe how you will maintain the highest ethical standards in office.

One of the key issues at City Hall over the last few years has been the ethical dilemmas that have arisen – leading to investigations and key resignations. I was one of the elected officials who helped expose the conflicts at DCAS with allowing individuals with inside relationships to steer contracts to specific entities.

Every office can use more transparency and more guard rails to uphold the higher ethical standards. As Borough President, I pledge to use an independent process to appoint community board members (especially with term limits ahead) to remove the politics from the process. My office will place all of our budget items online in an easy to find manner – so the public can see what organizations were funded. I also have proposed legislation that would require any land use applicant to have to enter the doing business database at the earliest moment that paperwork is filed with City Planning to lower their contribution limits at the outset of conversation about a rezoning or land use action.

For ALL of city government to work best, we should have a truly independent Department of Investigations that can operate without needing to ask the Mayor or OMB to approve their budget. We should also strengthen COIB to have the resources that it needs to perform its duties.

6. Borough Presidents allocate funding for capital projects in their borough and provide grants to nonprofits. For incumbents: are the projects and organizations receiving such funding made public and are accessible on your website every year? For non-incumbents: How would you ensure transparency of capital and discretionary funding as Borough President?

Yes. BP Levine does this and I would continue that tradition.

But importantly, it's essential that every community is included in the process of receiving funding – not JUST those institutions that have access to a lobbyist or most familiar with the process. So, I am going to direct my budget team to do an annual analysis to make sure that we are distributing funding evenly throughout the borough.

*** In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve ethics and accountability in New York City government.**

I've introduced and passed legislation to allow candidates to use campaign funds to pay for childcare expenses, thus breaking down a common barrier for parents, particularly women, to run for office. I'm proud of this accomplishment, which will allow more working people, and parents to run for office.

I've sponsored legislation that transfers approval of press passes away from the NYPD and to the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment. This was critical toward ensuring that our system for distributing press credentials is fair, equitable, and accessible.

I've led efforts to strengthen our whistle blower protection laws.

I've introduced a package of legislation to help first-time candidates run for office. The package of bills would lower qualifying thresholds for public matching funds, increase matchable contributions, create a pilot for special elections, empower small campaigns, and close a doing business loophole.

PLANNING AND LAND USE

7. Please describe the most pressing land use issues in your borough and what would you do, or have done, as borough president to address them?

Right now, the most pressing issues are around the building of more housing and driving down the cost of living. We have a number of big land use items ahead – mostly led by City Planning – to do that: Midtown South rezoning, a number of EDC projects in downtown Manhattan, the redevelopment of adjacent sites in Tribeca, a library-housing project at Bloomingdale Library (to name a few). The Borough President needs to help ensure that many of them get completed, while also helping to drive the conversation about how much affordability is in each one.

We also have the continued need for economic growth – and my current district has been central to that conversation, including the recent Kips Bay Life Sciences project and the on-going East Midtown rezoning projects.

The Borough President has to lead from the front on these issues. BP Levine has provided a good roadmap by identifying 200+ sites that are available to be built and pledging to help move those projects forward.

8. Do you believe the borough president's role in land use and zoning processes should change? If so, what role do you believe the Borough President should have?

Yes. I believe it should be strengthened. I believe that the Borough President should be more central to the conversation around planning in the borough. First of all, it's my belief that Borough President should have the ability to initiate certain land use actions – not just City Planning or the private actors. Second, in the longstanding debate about the role of member deference in the City Council – we should explore allowing the Borough President to play a larger role in the final outcome or be the final ULURP actor.

9. As Borough President, how would you balance the interests of specific community boards and the borough-wide housing needs in your land use recommendations?

I was a Community Board Member on Community Board 6 prior to serving in the City Council, so I understand well the importance that community boards serve as the most grassroots form of city government and as a voice for community members throughout the borough.

There are four essential tools in the hands of the Borough President to tackle housing:

1. Their role in the ULURP process

2. Appointment and management of community boards
3. Appointment to the City Planning Commission (CPC)
4. The platform and bully pulpit to help influence policy and decisions.

As Borough President, I would use these tools and work closely with community boards to make sure that their voices are heard, while also recognizing the role and function of each actor in the ULURP process.

COMMUNITY BOARD AND APPOINTMENTS

10. Borough presidents are charged with making hundreds of appointments. What criteria would you use for appointments to positions appointed by the borough president (the Panel on Educational Policy, City Planning Commission, community boards, etc.)? What processes would you put in place for advertising open positions and recruiting qualified candidates, and how would you assure that appointments represent the diversity of the borough's neighborhoods?

With term limits to community boards approaching, we have a tall task ahead of us: recruit, appoint, and train hundreds of new community board members. I pledge to use an independent, merit-based process.

My priorities would include: ensuring a diverse array of perspectives and backgrounds that reflect each community, a demonstrated commitment to community engagement, a clear guarantee of time-commitment, background/subject matter expertise when appropriate, and more. Similar to the current process, I would use a vast array of tools to make sure that we increase the pool of applicants and get the best of the best.

11. Borough presidents are charged with providing training and assistance to community boards on land use issues. How would you use the office to help community boards fulfill their charter mandated responsibilities to provide feedback on land use proposals, while enabling the boards to make decisions independent of the borough president's office?

My goals are the following:

Perform extensive outreach in every community district to recruit the best individuals to serve on our community boards;

Hold extensive and on-going training for new members in areas like land use, budget, legislation, and more;

Create a new mentorship program where we utilize former and term-limited Community Board members to work with new members to train and educate them on best practices and talk about larger community needs;

Strengthen the resources of each community board to provide the district offices of each community board with more staff to handle the transitions.

We also need to make sure that Manhattan is receiving its fair share of capital funding dollars. As the cultural and tourist hub for the entire world, Manhattan is still receiving less dollars than it should be to address needs throughout the borough. That needs to change.

As Borough President, I'll always respect the independence of community boards in their recommendations, while maintaining an active and engaged dialogue with members' concerns and points of view.

ADDITIONAL INFO

12. Please provide any other info you would like us to know about you and your candidacy.

I'm running for Borough President because in the world's greatest city, you shouldn't have to win a lottery to find an affordable place to live.

I'm a lifelong New Yorker. When I was growing up here, it was a place where folks who own small

businesses, where a nurse, could raise a family. I know that because those are my parents, and they were able to do that because we provided good housing, a safe neighborhood, good schools and a good way to make a living. As Borough President, these issues will be my top priority.

Recently, the Council passed my bill to overhaul the city's archaic scaffolding laws so that New Yorkers will see less and less scaffolding on our sidewalks. A recent poll found that 77% of New Yorkers felt scaffolding negatively affected their everyday lives.

I'm proud to have sponsored the bill to supercharge the city's transition to a zero-emissions fleet that'll leave all New Yorkers breathing cleaner air. The bill puts New York on track to eliminate gas-powered vehicles from its fleet of around 30,000 cars and trucks over the next 15 years. It also requires the city to exclusively purchase light- and medium-duty vehicles that run on electricity and other zero-emission fuels beginning this year.

My campaign is also focusing intently on speeding up our buses and creating additional miles of new and existing bus lanes. Buses on 34th street can move as slow as 3 miles per hour on some sections. New York City's buses are some of the slowest in the country - and I'm committed to making that a thing of the past.

I've also rolled out proposals that would give New Yorkers an on-going report card on the state of their neighborhoods. It would measure things like clean streets, quiet neighborhoods, removing unsightly scaffolding, responding to public safety complaints and more.

Our campaign has recently been endorsed by Congressman Adriano Espaillat, former Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso, Council Member Diana Ayala, former Council Member Helen Rosenthal, Council Member Carmen de La Rosa, Assemblyman Manny De Los Santos, Council Member Kevin Riley, Council Member Eric Dinowitz, Council Member Selvena Brooks Powers, former Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, and more.

Our campaign has also been endorsed by organizations and unions such as 32BJ, the Hotel Trades Council, Teamsters 237 and 817, NYU Democrats, Abundance NY, Communications Workers of America (CWA) and seven Democratic Clubs: El Nuevo Caribe Democratic Club, Democratic Club of El Barrio, Four Freedoms Democratic Club, Eleanor Roosevelt Independent Democrats, Samuel Tilden Democratic Club, Lexington Democratic Club, and the Coalition for a District Alternative (CoDA).