



2025 Primary Candidate Questionnaire - New York City Council

Citizens Union - Local Candidates Committee

GENERAL INFORMATION

Candidate info

Name	Sarah Batchu
City Council District #	2
In which primary	Democratic
Age	31
Education	Barnard College - Bachelor of Arts; Columbia University - Masters of Public Health
Current job, position, or occupation	City Council Candidate
Other positions or offices	Recent - Director of Programs at Fifth Avenue Committee
Previous jobs or positions	Director of Programs at Fifth Avenue Committee Interim Director - Center for Wellbeing and Happiness Policy Analyst - Mayor DeBlasio's Office

Campaign contact information

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INTRODUCTION

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

Promise 1: Fight for affordable housing and tenant protections - Housing is a human right. I will fight to expand tenant protections, preserve affordable housing, and hold landlords accountable for harassment and neglect. This includes supporting state action to expand good cause eviction protections to more tenants, pushing for a rent freeze for rent-stabilized tenants, and investing in deeply affordable housing options to ensure everyone has a place to call home.

Promise 2: Advocate to increase reliable, safe, and accessible transit options for all - As a daily bus rider and cyclist, I know how critical reliable, efficient, and accessible transit is for New Yorkers. I will fight for expanded bus lanes, improved subway accessibility, and protected bike infrastructure—especially in transit deserts like the one I live in—so every New Yorker has affordable and safe ways to get around. By investing in public transit and pedestrian safety, we can create a more connected, sustainable, and equitable city.

Promise 3: Expand accessible healthcare for all – Health is the foundation of a thriving city. In my own community and across New York City, we are seeing the systematic destruction of community-based hospitals, a disturbing trend I have been at the forefront of fighting. I will advocate for expanding access to affordable healthcare services, including mental health care and preventive programs, through the public hospital system. I will also work to address healthcare inequities and ensure every New Yorker can get the care they need without fear of financial ruin.

2. If elected, what is the first piece of legislation you would introduce? Why is that your top priority? If you are an incumbent, please also state what legislation you have passed which you are most proud of.

If elected, my first piece of legislation would be the Community-Level Assessment and Equity in Planning Act, a good-government reform that ensures transparency, accountability, and fairness in how New York City makes decisions about land use, housing, and infrastructure.

Right now, our planning process is reactive, driven by private interests rather than comprehensive public needs. This legislation would require the City to conduct thorough, community-level assessments—grounded in both quantitative data (on affordability, transit access, health outcomes, and displacement risk) and qualitative input from residents—to guide planning decisions. Every community district would have a data-driven, participatory process that prioritizes historically excluded voices—low-income renters, immigrants, and people of color—ensuring that growth and investment actually serve the people who live here.

This is a fundamental good-government reform because it establishes clear standards for public engagement, strengthens accountability measures, and prevents backroom deals that prioritize

speculation over stability. It would also strengthen community boards, require borough-level Steering Committees for oversight, and mandate transparent disclosure of how planning decisions impact communities.

New Yorkers deserve a planning process that is fair, transparent, and equitable—one that tracks whether city policies are actually improving people's lives. By shifting power to residents and creating real oversight, this legislation would be a major step toward a city that works for everyone.

3. In your view, what are the major needs of your district's constituents?

The biggest issue facing District 2 is that City Hall isn't working for everyday New Yorkers. People feel abandoned—by a government that ignores their struggles with affordability, transit, and climate resilience, and by leaders more focused on self-preservation than delivering results.

Housing costs keep rising while deeply affordable options remain out of reach. Public transportation is unreliable, especially for those who depend on buses and accessible transit. Extreme heat and flooding threaten our neighborhoods, yet the city's response is slow and inadequate. These crises aren't just policy failures—they reflect a broader problem: a government that isn't accountable to the people it's supposed to serve.

District 2 needs leadership that will fight for a city that actually works for its residents. That means making housing truly affordable, fixing transit so that every neighborhood has reliable access, and investing in climate solutions that protect our communities. But it also means structural change—ensuring that residents have power over the decisions shaping their future. My campaign is about putting people back at the center of government and ensuring that New Yorkers no longer feel like an afterthought in their own city.

4. How long have you lived in the district in which you are running, and do you have any achievements or involvement in your neighborhood you are particularly proud of?

I have lived in District 2 for eight years and have called New York home for thirteen. This isn't just where I live—it's where I've built community, fought for meaningful change, and worked alongside my neighbors to make life better for all of us.

After my time in City Hall, I joined the Lower East Side Girls Club as Chief of Staff and helped lead the launch of the Center for Wellbeing & Happiness, an intergenerational community space dedicated to transforming self-care into community care. In just two years, we built a thriving hub with over 1,000 members, offering resources that directly address the needs of working-class families, seniors, and young people in the Lower East Side.

In addition to my work in government and community organizing, I have served on Community Board 3 (CB3), where I've worked to ensure that land use decisions prioritize affordability, equity, and community input. I've also helped shape CB3's positions on saving our local hospital, making our transportation system more accessible, and supporting our local small businesses.

This is the kind of leadership I bring—turning vision into action, delivering results, and centering the voices of the community in decision-making. It's also the approach I'll bring to City Hall: working side-by-side with my neighbors to build a city that truly serves its people.

5. 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.

During my time in City Hall, I had the opportunity to directly engage with initiatives aimed at improving government transparency, accountability, and accessibility. I led efforts to create and manage "Get Help NYC," the city's central hub for information about the COVID-19 pandemic, which provided New Yorkers with timely updates and resources during a critical period. This initiative was key in ensuring that essential information was easily accessible to everyone, especially vulnerable communities.

Prior to the pandemic, I supported Open Data Week, organizing and fundraising for workshops that taught community members how to use publicly available government data for advocacy and informed decision-

making. This work was grounded in the belief that government information should not only be available but truly actionable and accessible to all residents. Through our efforts, we fostered transparency and empowered New Yorkers with the tools they need to advocate for their needs and hold their government accountable.

As a future Council Member, I will continue to fight for policies that strengthen government transparency, improve police accountability, and ensure that government systems are built with the people in mind—upholding honesty and integrity in every decision. I am deeply committed to fostering an accessible and inclusive government that enfranchises all New Yorkers, much like the mission of Citizens Union, and I will work tirelessly to ensure that government serves the public good with the highest ethical standards.

6. What do you think the role of the City Council is in city government this upcoming term?

I believe that our City Council serves the dual role of A) championing legislation to improve our constituents’ lives and B) keeping our mayor accountable to New York voters.

ELECTIONS AND VOTING

7. Do you support moving New York City’s elections from odd-numbered years to even-numbered years, and will you co-sponsor a Council Resolution supporting that measure?

Yes

Voter turnout in New York City elections is exceptionally low, as they are held “off-cycle” in odd-numbered years. To boost local voter turnout and reduce participation gaps, the Legislature passed and Governor Hochul signed a law that moves county and town elections to even-numbered years, and lawmakers are supporting a constitutional amendment that would do the same for city elections, including New York City’s. Citizens Union is [leading a coalition of groups advocating](#) to move New York City’s elections to even-numbered years, and the City Council is considering a [Resolution in support](#) of that shift.

8. The New York City Board of Elections (NYC BOE) has been a source of frustration for voters and candidates for years. The City Council appoints NYC BOE members and has the power to appoint commissioners who are committed to reform, but the most recent commissioners have been appointed behind closed doors. Do you commit to request a public hearing for BOE nominees, and to only vote for individuals who are publicly committed to reducing party-based patronage and supporting open hiring practices?

Yes

9. Do you support maintaining the use of Ranked Choice Voting in New York City’s elections?

Yes

10. New York City is one of the few cities that maintains a closed primary system, in which only registered party members can vote in the primary election. Do you believe New York City should shift to a form of completely open primaries, allowing all registered voters to vote in one primary where the top two candidates, regardless of party, move on to the general election?

Yes

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

As a City Council member, I will introduce legislation to mandate comprehensive language access at all NYC polling sites to ensure that every voter can fully participate in the democratic process, regardless of their language proficiency. While New York City is required to provide language assistance in select languages, the current system often falls short in providing consistent, effective support across all neighborhoods. My bill will expand language assistance to cover all languages spoken by significant populations in our city, increase the number of bilingual poll workers, and ensure all election materials are available in the appropriate languages. This legislation will ensure that New Yorkers who speak languages other than English have the resources and support they need to cast their votes confidently, strengthening our democracy and ensuring our elections are more inclusive and representative of the city's diverse population.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

11. Individuals with business ties to city government and registered lobbyists can bypass their donation limits by “bundling” donations from other people. Do you support limiting bundling by people on the Doing Business with the City database?

Yes

12. Are you a supporter of the City's public campaign matching funds program, and do you commit to protecting the independence of the program and ensuring that the Campaign Finance Board has sufficient resources to run the program?

Yes

*** In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve New York City's campaign finance system.**

I plan to sign onto Int 0742, which would prohibit individuals or organizations involved in fundraising or political consulting for certain candidates from lobbying them for two years after the election. This legislation is a crucial step toward ensuring transparency, reducing conflicts of interest, and promoting integrity in our political system. By limiting the ability of campaign insiders to influence elected officials immediately after they take office, we can help restore the public's trust in government. As Council Member, I will continue to support and advocate for reforms that make our campaign finance system more accountable and accessible to all New Yorkers.

ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT

13. The recent pattern of indictments and resignations surrounding City Hall has exposed serious ethical problems in City Government. Please describe how you will maintain the highest ethical standards in office.

Working to instill the highest possible ethical standards in our City Hall will be one of my top priorities as Council Member. I will lead with integrity, ensuring that transparency and accountability are at the heart of every decision made in my office.

To restore the public's trust and ensure ethical governance, I will:

Increase constituent engagement by holding regular town halls, where residents can ask questions directly and provide feedback on City Council decisions. I will also maintain an active digital presence through social media, a dedicated newsletter, and open office hours, ensuring that every resident can have their voice heard.

Publish accessible data on the City Council's legislative activities and budget allocations. I will work to make Council-related documents publicly available, including voting records and detailed spending reports.

Establish a strict code of conduct for myself and my staff, including regular ethics training. I will support policies that strengthen conflict-of-interest rules and ensure elected officials are fully transparent about outside business ties.

By leading with these clear actions, I will restore trust and ensure City Hall is once again working for the people. New Yorkers deserve a government that is honest, transparent, and accountable, and that is exactly what I will deliver.

14. Incoming public servants must sever ties and divest from companies or other interests that have business dealings with the City, but they are not required to recuse themselves when working on matters involving their former business partners, clients, employer, etc. Do you support forbidding public servants to work on matters relating to their former business partners, clients, employers, and other interests for a set period of time?

Yes

15. Some campaign consultants also work as lobbyists. Do you support restricting campaign consultants from lobbying the candidates they served for two years after the candidate won elected office?

Yes

16. Do you support moving lobbying oversight and enforcement from the City Clerk's Office to another agency charged with ethics issues, like the Conflicts of Interest Board?

Yes

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

To improve ethics standards in New York City government, I am committed to prioritizing transparency, accountability, and integrity in all aspects of governance. As Council Member, I will advocate for stronger oversight of city agencies, empowering bodies like the Department of Investigation (DOI) with the resources and authority needed to effectively monitor and address misconduct.

I also plan to introduce the WEINER Act (The Withholding Eligibility in NYC Elections for Restricted Individuals Act), which would bar registered sex offenders and individuals convicted of sexual harassment, abuse, or rape from holding public office in the city. Public office is not a right; it's a privilege. This measure is not about criminal records but about ensuring that those who have committed offenses that undermine public trust are not given power or influence over our communities.

Additionally, I will push for stricter penalties for violations of ethical standards, including financial penalties or removal from office, to deter misconduct and reinforce the importance of maintaining the public's trust. These actions will foster a government that is truly accountable and transparent, ensuring that New Yorkers can trust their elected officials to serve with the highest ethical standards.

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

17. Who do you think should have the final say on discipline in the New York Police Department? (i.e., Place the final decision with the Police Commissioner; the Civilian Complaint Review Board; the Mayor; the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety; or another individual or entity).

The final say on discipline in the NYPD should rest with the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB), provided it is properly strengthened and empowered. The CCRB offers independent, impartial oversight, ensuring accountability and transparency in policing. Given that internal NYPD disciplinary decisions have historically lacked consistency, placing the authority with the CCRB will help ensure that misconduct is addressed fairly and consistently. This approach also builds public trust by providing an external body, free from internal biases, to oversee police conduct and make decisions that align with justice and fairness.

CHECKS AND BALANCES

18. The Mayor currently has the power to block charter revision ballot questions (proposed by the City Council, other charter commissions, and citizen petitions) by establishing their own Charter Revision Commission. Do you support removing this Mayoral power?

Yes

19. Do you support allowing bills with strong support to go through the committee process and be put to a vote on the floor without needing the permission of the speaker?

Yes

20. Please provide your views about the New York City Council's "advice and consent" powers. In what cases, if any, should a mayor need the Council's approval for an appointment of a high ranking Mayoral official, such as an agency commissioner?

As a firm believer in transparency, accountability, and the importance of checks and balances, I support expanding the City Council's 'advice and consent' powers in certain cases, particularly when it comes to high-ranking Mayoral officials like agency commissioners. These appointments are critical because they directly influence how city agencies operate and the services they provide to New Yorkers. Given the significant impact these officials have on the daily lives of residents, it is important that their

appointments reflect not only the Mayor’s priorities but also the needs and concerns of the broader community.

The advice and consent process should be applied thoughtfully to provide meaningful oversight without hindering the city's functioning. I believe positions that directly impact public safety, such as the Police Commissioner, should be subject to Council approval. This ensures that the selected officials reflect a broader set of interests and values, contributing to stronger governance and better service to all New Yorkers.

*** In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve the system of checks and balances in New York.**

I believe our City Council serves as a crucial check to keep the mayor accountable to New Yorkers. I believe that while the current City Council has taken steps in the right direction to improve oversight of our mayor, these steps can be expanded on. As Council Member, I will sponsor and support legislation such as Resolution 740, which advocates to protect ballot access for charter revision proposals being blocked by mayoral-enacted charter revision commissions and increase transparency requirements for commissions. I also support additional reforms to the Rent Guidelines Board to make it more responsive to tenant needs. I will fight tirelessly to improve transparency and accountability out of the mayor’s office via more stringent reporting requirements and more frequent interface with the City Council.

ADDITIONAL INFO

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

My political philosophy is rooted in the belief that government should be a vehicle for justice, equity, and collective liberation. I believe in a democracy where working people have power and where our policies reflect the needs of our communities rather than the interests of the few. I am committed to fighting for housing as a human right, universal healthcare, a just transition to a green economy, fully funded public schools and childcare, and a government that invests in people over policing and incarceration.