



Queens Central Democratic Club
Candidate Endorsement Questionnaire 2021
New York City Council District 29

Thank you for applying for the Queens Central Democratic Club (QCDC) endorsement. If you have any questions about this document or the endorsement process, feel free to email us at qcdcny@gmail.com. Please email us the completed questionnaire by Friday, March 12.

Full Name: Edwin K. Wong

1. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a large number of businesses closed their storefronts in our district. As Council Member for CD29, what is your plan to bring back businesses to our storefronts? Additionally, how do you plan to support the storefronts that already exist?

As Councilmember, my primary focus will be on rebuilding the small businesses, the economic pillars of communities, in the District.

To bring back businesses to closed storefronts as well as supporting existing storefronts:

- In the form of financial incentives – designed to boost job creation and business investment such as Grants, low/no interest loans, and business tax incentives. We need to increase funding for small business grants and or no/low interest loans. Grants would assist with operating expenses such as rent and payroll so that business can stay open. I will connect business owners and banks and work with City, State and Federal government to make that happen. I will also make sure that the grants and loans are available for all small businesses not just by zip codes, because all small businesses in every zip code need assistance. Also that minority businesses are inclusive of Asian American businesses. We do not need any more empty storefronts.
- Work with State government to have local areas designated as Enterprise Zones where businesses receive a range of tax breaks when they locate and hire in the designated area.
- Prioritize businesses that offer good jobs that can help direct economic gains to community members.
- Make available business opportunity by increasing City contracts signed with Minority/Women-Owned Business Enterprises quickly. Designated these closed storefronts for minority and women-owned businesses expressly.
- Drive more customers to the storefronts by having more programs, such as extending the outdoor dining programs, and not charging a fee.



- provide support services so that businesses have an online presence that will drive more online orders.
- Specifically for restaurants and retail. asking for a moratorium on Covid-related fines, and a credit back for fines already paid. Small businesses should be given a warning before a fine is levied. It is hypocritical for the current administration to say they support small business, then turn around and fine them. Covid-rules are not always clear and always changing, and businesses should be given the opportunity to fix and address the issue. Unless there is a blatant violation.

2. The Mayor and DOE Chancellor just announced that they will be disbanding the gifted and talented program in NYC Public Schools. Do you agree with this cut? Why or why not?

Do not agree with the disbanding and cut of the gifted and talented program in the NYC Public Schools. We should be expanding G&T programs so that students that excel, can excel further, and be alongside other students who can push one another to be the next Albert Einstein or Stephen Hawking. The G&T programs would also help with preparation and build a pipeline for competitive high school entrance exams as well as college entrance exams. We need to increase awareness about G&T programs in all districts and provide G&T programs in all schools and provide the opportunity for students who chose to excel, to have that opportunity. Our public school students will become the same individuals who can help us recover from a future financial or global health crisis. Our educational system needs to be one that provides challenges for our students so that their intellect can be peaked. Having a one size fits all school system does not help those who have an accelerated ability to learn.

3. We have seen our neighbors suffer from food insecurity unlike any other point in recent memory. How will you work with NYC to provide emergency food services to our neighbors (particularly seniors) and support to our food pantries such as Masbia, Queens Community House, and Commonpoint Queens?

I will work to find funding from city, state and federal budgets/sources to allocate to local organizations that serve our neighbors and seniors. Also to encourage private donations from individuals, corporates and organizations including private foundations. It also has to start with the individual council members themselves. They have to set an example and contribute.

Specifically for seniors, I would implement Universal home care, so that all seniors have a home health aide to assist them with their needs including ensuring that they have food delivery if needed.



4. We have a couple of citywide races coming up - if a citywide candidate wanted to see some of the best food and shops CD29 had to offer, where would you take them on a tour?

Start in Forest Hills at Restaurant row on Queens Blvd and 70th Rd and walk south. Show that the variety of food choices available on that street is representative of the variety of food choices across the district. (Thai, Asian Fusion, Cuban, Japanese, American, Mediterranean) Then walk along Austin street heading east towards Ascan Avenue and visit the retail stores, restaurants and bars, hair salons along the way. Then go to 108th street Commercial district between 65th Avenue and 63rd Road and introduce Kosher restaurants. Then go over to the Rego Center Mall and the businesses along 63rd Road. After Rego Park, go to Kew Gardens and walk along Lefferts Blvd by Austin Street and the LIRR and explain why we need support to keep the shops open on Lefferts. Then would go to Richmond Hill to the intersection of Jamaica Avenue and Lefferts and show them around the commercial corridor there.

I have favorite restaurant names, but feel that we shouldn't name specific locations in this response as candidates we should be impartial and not show favoritism towards specific businesses and should focus more on the areas that should be visited.

5. Business is a lifeblood to any community, and that also translates to jobs. If a major commercial business (i.e. Target or Key Food) wanted to come and open shop in CD29, what requirements would you ask of them in order to bridge them into our community?

I would require the business to hire a percentage of staff from the areas and neighborhoods to which they market too. Would also require that they make a commitment to the community in donations to local not for profits. For example, donating to our local food pantries such as Masbia, Queens Community House, and Commonpoint Queens to help address food insecurity in the neighborhoods to which they market to. These businesses should also work with not for profits and schools to develop internships and training programs that provide the skillsets so that they can be employed in the local businesses so that the money earned can be spent back in the community.

6. In your view, what are the biggest criminal justice concerns in CD29? What changes, if any, need to be made, and how?

At this time there has been an increase in burglaries of some of the commercial stores. There are also some attempted home burglaries too. So we need to have additional patrols, and build better community relations with the local precinct. Potentially have a volunteer neighborhood community watch, and partner with local precinct and auxiliary officers.

7. Forest Hills Hospital provides front line, life saving work on a daily basis, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. What reforms need to be implemented for our healthcare workers, and what recommendations would you provide to help streamline vaccine distributions?



We need to speak with the nurses and doctors directly to learn what their needs are. Whether it be PPE or more staff / help from other hospitals where the patient volume is less. Then we can speak with the hospital administrators to ensure the doctors and nurses are provided what they need.

To streamline vaccine distributions would have a combination of efforts. First an online database which shows the # of total vaccines available, how many appointments have been scheduled and how many appointments are available. Then have appointments scheduled so that residents can show up at their designated time and receive their shot. This online database would also be connected to a system whereby if someone calls in via telephone, the telephone operator would be looking at the same system and can schedule an appointment on the phone.

Some in the community do not have access to the internet and English may not be their primary language spoken at home, so we would have to mail them and distribute information in multiple languages at locations such as at libraries, post office, community based organizations and at senior centers when they re-open. We need to have active engagement with all members of the community both online and offline.

8. CD29 has a large senior population, and Queens as a whole has one of the fastest growing senior populations in NYC. How would you work with the Department for the Aging to provide more resources to our district and support our seniors?

I will work to find funding from city, state and federal budgets/sources to allocate budget and implement universal home care, so that our seniors have someone there to care and watch over them. Would also fund local senior centers and organizations that serve our seniors. Also to encourage private donations from individuals, corporations and organizations including private foundations.

9. According to the Bowery Mission, there are nearly 80,000 homeless individuals in NYC, with over 60,000 of those individuals utilizing a public shelter and 4,000 that live on the street. How would you as a Council Member help stem the tide of homelessness in New York City?

Focus on economic recovery so that we can provide employment to reduce unemployment which drives homelessness. Infrastructure revitalizations can employ the unemployed. Work with the state and federal government to improve the city infrastructure. Create jobs. Reduce unemployment.

Provide funding for free 3K citywide. Many homeless are families and single parents and this would help alleviate some of the financial burden and money saved can be used to pay rent and reduce homelessness.

Some may need mental health services so programs should be provided to them so that their mental health does not impact their ability to be employed and remain employed.



Convert hotels to housing units instead of homeless shelters.
Convert empty commercial building into affordable housing

I would work to allocate funding and pay existing landlords the rent for families and individuals, so that they do not have to go homeless. It is more expensive to pay for the same families and individuals when they are in the shelter system or to house them in hotels, then if the city were to just pay the rent for these families and individuals. Some rents could also be subsidized from State and federal funding. Implement a voucher system so funds can be received so that residents can stay in their homes.

10. Our district is one of the few in Queens without a homeless shelter. What are your feelings on homeless shelters to address NYC's growing number of homeless individuals? Should a shelter be developed in this area?

We do not need anymore homeless shelters. The city should be able to provide funding to the landlords to pay rent for the tenants so that they are not homeless. It costs less for the city to pay a landlord vs. having to pay to be housed in a homeless shelter. A shelter should not be developed in the area. Homeless prefer not in shelters as its safer. Need to fix the fundamental issues of the shelter system. Again have to create employment too.

11. Our community boards are considered the first line of local government interaction. Similarly, the Council Member has a say in nominating community board members. If elected, how would you work with our community boards and strengthen them?

As a current Community Board member I have observed how our current electeds and their offices have interacted with the Community Boards. As they have currently done, I would assign a constituent liaison to attend Community board meetings in the district and as Council Member I would also attend to provide updates and listen to concerns of the community board. I would also have the constituent liaisons participate in some of the committee meetings (eg . Land use, economic development) and consider ideas proposed by community board members on how to help small businesses, seniors, families, and all residents in our district. Many residents have issues and sometimes the solutions can come from other residents. I would build that connection so that with every problem, we would have multiple solutions. Community Boards can empower the community to fix issues with solutions that the community comes up with. Hold Quarterly town halls to hear from community

12. Bike lanes were installed along Queens Boulevard as part of Vision Zero, resulting in the removal of parking spots. Are you in favor of extending bike lanes along Queens Boulevard?



I would re-evaluate the impact of extending bike lanes along Queens Boulevard , and if there is a negative impact to small businesses along Queens Boulevard, I would not extend. Make the bike lanes safer for bicyclist and pedestrians as well seniors who are crossing the boulevard

13. The City Council reviews certain parts of the ULURP process, including housing and urban renewal plans and zoning map changes. What are the factors that would lead you to go against the recommendations of the local community board in the ULURP process? How do you view the tradeoffs between the affordable housing that new construction can bring against the impact of potential overdevelopment?

If community board did not have complete transparency in their decision. How many public meetings have been held to provide the community enough information? What research was done to conclude their recommendations? As long the community board is impartial and not influence by outside developers and real estate interest.

For development, there need to be affordable units for the community as wells seniors and veterans. Overdevelopment will result in displacement of many current residents and secondary displacement where High end stores will price out existing mom and pops. Current displaced tenants should have priority in the new developments.

14. What is your long-term plan for the Kew Gardens jail?

Opposed to Kew Gardens and borough based jail plan. We need to reduce the # of incarcerated who need mental health services, drug prevention programs, and employment opportunities. Some can be referred to do community service and volunteer for a not for profit that might be able to employ them after. There should be city funding for free vocational and trade schools for those who seek them. Employment is what is needed not new jails. If you can build in the boroughs you can rebuild on Rikers and fix the current system it will save a \$Billion. We do not need new jails.

15. What are your three priority budget items for our Council district?

1.Small business grants funding that provides support for rent and operating expenses.



2.Citywide funded 3K will save money for parents, including single parents so they can use funds meant for childcare to pay for rent, food, medicine, clothing and other necessities.

3. Universal homecare (UHC), for home attendant visits to check in & care for our seniors, our most vulnerable.

16. How would you propose closing the City's budget gap?

Look for overspending in all agencies budget especially vendors who can reduce their pricing to save the city money. There is no shortage of vendors who want to do business with the city. However, the approval process and the time it takes for the city to pay their vendors, sometimes makes it prohibitive for some vendors. I would automate the process and make it more transparent.

Evaluate the possibility of having additional gaming such as casinos in the city which will create jobs and produce much needed tax revenues for the city.

No longer provide Stock transfer tax credits. This would provide a Billion in tax revenues to the city.

17. How will you use your position to initiate a district-wide conversation about race and racial injustice?

18.

I would have both in person (when safe to do) and virtual town halls and broadcast on zoom and online social media so that everyone in the community can speak about how they feel. I would also have written statements from those who are not comfortable speaking in person or appear online to a live audience, and have them read out loud. I would also invite a panel of guest speakers from a cross section of organizations that can discuss race and racial injustice and explain and educate to those who may not be aware why there is racial injustice. I would also include in a newsletter or mailer the highlights of the town and panel so that those who were not able to participate in person or online virtually can read in print form what was discussed. To illicit the help of community leaders to form an advisory board to create programs to engage the community to work and interact together to build relationships with individuals that they can build trust with one another and build a symbiotic relationships.

19. When filling out your ranked choice ballot, which candidate will you rank second and why?

Petitioning to be on primary ballot just started on March 2nd. Candidates to be determined pending signature collection, which will determine if they get on the ballot. We will make decision once ballot candidates are finalized.