



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: **Donghui Zang**

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?

I have met with and spoken with small business owners and they tell me they have not been doing well even before the pandemic. Rising commercial rents have forced small businesses to close. Adding to that, there has been very little foot traffic during the pandemic but rent and utilities are still due. Small business owners are hurting and need help to survive, commercial rent control would be one way to help. Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) is another way but many shopkeepers who do not speak English well or may not know how to apply for PPP will need help. My office, if elected, will hire bi-lingual staff who will be able to help translate and maneuver through such applications and ensure they are dealing with reputable banks/loan institutions.

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?

I do not agree with eliminating Gifted and Talented programs. They have provided a pathway for many high achieving immigrant children to attain admission to selective middle and high schools. The G&T programs should be expanded into all districts around the City and each school should have at least one G&T class with multiple grade entry points. All children should be offered this opportunity.

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 have been out on the street with a foldable table distributing boxes of healthy food from USDA. Some of my fellow candidates have joined me in this endeavor as well. Residents in the community, from all different backgrounds have stood in line. I have even personally delivered boxes of food to seniors who were unable to physically collect the food in person. Food pantries should definitely get more funding. We



might encourage more students to help by promoting such volunteer work in their schools for class credit, and also the satisfaction of giving back to one's community.

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?

I would take them to Austin Street and stop by Martha's Country Bakery to pick up freshly baked desserts on the way home.

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 ask them to prioritize hiring and training people from 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?

Bail reform laws need a second and third look. There have been too many assaults from people who have multiple prior charges for violent crime out on bail or released with no bail to await their court appearance. Public safety is one of my biggest concerns, especially in light of the recent increase of attacks on Asian Americans.

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?

I have personally delivered \$10,000 worth of PPEs to several hospitals in the City including Mount Sinai West, NY Presbyterian Cornell, Elmhurst Hospital and FLushing Hospital at the height of the pandemic. We need to protect our essential healthcare workers and make sure they are safe so that they can continue to save lives. I would recommend making use of our hospitals and local pharmacies to administer vaccines as they become available instead of relying on mass vaccination sites. Many people (and particularly our senior citizens) may feel more comfortable going to their local hospital or pharmacy than traveling to York College or Citifield and waiting on line with thousands of other people.

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 believe we should open a senior citizen center that will provide services for our grandparents and parents. We should build this instead of a skyscraper jail.



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?

There needs to be a common sense approach to housing homeless individuals. Congregate shelters without adequate security or services are not the best solution for single men who may have a history of violence, mental illness or addictions. Public safety has always been a top concern for me. We should work with landlords with vacant apartments and provide vouchers to homeless families. Families with children deserve to be in a home, not in shelters.

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?

Shelters for homeless women running away from domestic violence and families who have suffered from financial setbacks should be provided with temporary housing vouchers so they may find affordable apartments.

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?

I would ask that there be diverse representation on boards and open the community board meetings to engage more people.

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 did a short, random self-initiated study on the use of the bike lane along Queens Boulevard. Granted that it was not very extensive but I did observe that not too many people used the bike lane. I have also spoken with several small business owners along Queens Boulevard and they told me that they hardly see any bicyclists and that their businesses have been negatively impacted even before the pandemic. While I believe in bike lanes and the potential health benefits from exercise as well as the reduction of carbon monoxide, I also believe that we must explore further if the lanes should be extended along Queens Boulevard so that it works for everyone in the community, including seniors or people who are physically unable to bike.

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?



Urban renewal plans and zoning map changes must first be thoroughly scrutinized, studies will be needed to determine impact on the community, and then there must be community engagement. Development is welcome as long as there is also a certain number of units set aside for lower income families. Also, impact on already overcrowded schools must be taken into consideration.

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

I do not support the continuation of the proposed Kew Gardens jail plan. NYC is currently fighting to recover from this unexpected and unprecedented pandemic, resulting both in the loss of loved ones and in revenue loss. Back in 2019, hundreds of residents, myself included, protested in front of Queens Borough Hall against the plan to erect a skyscraper jail in Kew Gardens which would cost us, roughly, \$2 billion. This is not fiscally responsible.

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

Allocation of funds for food pantries, small business recovery, funding schools so that they may fully open safely.

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

The Mayor revealed that the City incurred \$5.9 billion of unexpected costs relating to the pandemic and unemployment is at 20%, all while losing \$10.5 billion in tax revenue from fiscal year 2020 to fiscal year 2022. Some federal aid will help the city to recover but we must be fiscally responsible and use our resources wisely. We must prioritize helping our local small businesses and restaurants stay open (25% indoor capacity does not provide a lot of income) because their employees, suppliers, shoppers, diners and delivery services are all connected in a circle.

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

I believe that we could all benefit from knowing our neighbors and exploring our differences and our commonalities. I believe everyone wants equality and justice and the ability to raise their families in peace and to prosper. Conversations around issues of race should be centered around the things that we have in common and our goals for the future. It is not the different languages that we speak, it is about our shared values. This begins with knowing each other's stories and understanding that we must work to dispel racism and stereotypes. My office, if elected, would be open to all people. Come in and talk to me.

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



It is too early to make the decision now. I am looking forward to hearing from all the candidates.