



## Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2021 Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

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Name of person filling out this questionnaire: Audrey Litvak

Please answer each of the following questions to the best of your ability:

1) If elected, what would be your top priority in your first term?

The top priority for the next mayor must be the social, economic, and physical recovery of our city and its residents. The damage caused by COVID will be felt for years to come, and it will take considerable investment to not only return to what we had before, but to use this crisis to build back something better. To do this, we will need significant relief from the Federal government. My strong personal relationships with President Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and members of Congress and the Senate puts me in a unique position to get the federal support that New Yorkers need and have been cruelly denied by the Trump administration. I will work to ensure we receive the necessary business and infrastructure aid, personal protective equipment, and other essentials as we rebuild and reimagine our economy as one that works for all New Yorkers.

2) What personal and/or professional experiences do you believe make you uniquely qualified to run for New York City Mayor? Attach resume or CV if desired.

I believe I am the most qualified, experienced candidate in this field because I was the Secretary for Housing and Urban Development in the Obama-Biden Administration, and subsequently served as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, managing the \$4 trillion federal budget. My past service taught me what it means to lead in moments of crisis, much like the one New York is facing today. I became Housing Commissioner here in New York City just months after 9/11, and helped to rebuild our City. Early in my career and then during my tenure as Housing Commissioner, I helped the Brownsville, East New York and South Bronx communities build Nehemiah housing, one of the most successful housing efforts in the nation that created more than 5,000 affordable homes. I also created the Center for NYC Neighborhoods, the nation's first response of its kind to the foreclosure crisis to save New Yorker's homes and preserve Black and Brown wealth. President Obama asked me to be Housing Secretary in the midst of the worst housing crisis of our lifetime and then tasked me with leading this city back after Hurricane Sandy hit our shores. As HUD Secretary, I helped families across the country rent or buy affordable homes, revitalized distressed communities, fought discrimination and dramatically reduced homelessness. Three weeks into my time as Director of the Office of Management of Budget, Ebola hit the US. And we worked to make sure that a global threat did not become a pandemic that would cost hundreds of thousands of American lives. And during my time managing the federal budget we invested in a broad range of progressive priorities, like the Affordable Care Act, while still bringing down our budget faster than at any time since World War 2.

3) List all of your endorsements, including but not limited to elected officials, unions, political clubs and community-based organizations.



**Bishop Johnny Ray Youngblood  
Rev. Patricia Malcolm  
Pastor Carl Washington  
Rev. Ian Harris  
Rev. Torrence Robinson  
Anna Vincenty, Bronx Housing Advocate  
Mayor Michael Nutter of Philadelphia  
Mayor Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans  
Mayor Manny Diaz of Miami  
Mayor Ashley Swearengen of Fresno, California  
US Senator John Hickenlooper**

4) What, if any, groups or industries will you not accept campaign contributions from? If any, please note specifically whose money you will not accept.

**On 9/23/2020 I signed the No Fossil Money Pledge meaning I will not take campaign contributions from the Fossil Fuel Industry. However, I will not take money from anyone on the Bad Landlord List put together by the Public Advocate's Office.**

5) How do you propose helping NYC recover from the COVID pandemic and resulting economic recession, particularly given the projected shortfall in city revenue?

**I have seen first-hand that those who are most vulnerable before a crisis are always hurt the most by crisis. So I was outraged, but not surprised, that Black and Brown communities have been disproportionately devastated by COVID. That is why we must measure our recovery by the progress of our most vulnerable.**

**This lesson comes from my unique experience leading through crisis: as President Obama's Budget Director, I played a leading role in the Zika and Ebola response. As his HUD Secretary, I led the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Taskforce, and I am best positioned to lead New York as it recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**During my time managing the \$4 trillion federal budget, we invested in a broad range of progressive priorities, like the Affordable Care Act, while still bringing down our budget deficit faster than at any time since World War 2. And I am the only candidate who has been clear about how to lead the city back from our fiscal challenges: I recently wrote an [OpEd](#) in the Daily News that urged the City to propose a comprehensive multi-year plan that charts a course towards fiscal stability instead of increasing its borrowing capacity, which is essentially putting our future on a credit card.**

6) What measures would you take to improve educational opportunities for all students in NYC? How do you plan to ensure that all NYC children are able to attend high-quality, integrated schools? Do you support D15's integration plan as it has been implemented? What changes, if any, would you make to the current D15 integration plan?

**As we work to recover from COVID-19, we must rebuild and reimagine our educational system, tackling long-standing inequities to create real pathways to economic opportunity for all public school students; valuing NYC's diversity by creating integrated and inclusive opportunities for all**



**students; carefully rebuilding trust and partnering with families and educators to reimagine together, and creating pathways to economic opportunity, from early childhood through postsecondary. As mayor, I would make permanent each of the changes the current administration is proposing, but go further to put in place admissions policies that foster integration; reinvest in the community integration planning process, ensuring all families are at those tables, to support the best ideas for diverse schools and classrooms that roll up from local communities; and ensure our efforts to build integrated and inclusive schools don't stop with demographic diversity, to ensure more students are learning in integrated and inclusive schools and classrooms from educators who reflect their backgrounds.**

**We would do this by improving educator diversity; promoting and providing leadership for integration and inclusion across the system; expanding the number of seats in high-performing, integrated schools and support community-driven integration plans; rethinking school admissions policies; tapping into and celebrating NYC's linguistic and cultural diversity; and utilize high-quality, culturally responsive materials, curated and developed by NYC's best educators.**

**I support the D15 middle school policies that have been put in place. They go beyond eliminating screens to weighted lotteries to support integrated schools; they were developed by and with families, and are already making a difference. These are the right principles as we look to integrate schools around the city. At the same time, we should ensure we are supporting educators through making these transitions, through professional development or sharing of best practices.**

7) How would you have handled the reopening of schools for the 2020-2021 academic year? How would you prepare for a second wave of this pandemic? How would you propose to ensure that the needs of highly vulnerable children with special needs, who are homeless, come from poor families, and/or live in households without adults who could aid their learning are not left further behind when remote learning has to be relied on?

**I would have prepared for a more targeted re-opening that gives substantial priority to the most vulnerable including children experiencing homelessness, English Language Learners, special needs students, and our youngest. We should have started planning for this in the spring, to ensure educators had time to prepare. We had time to better understand the ventilation and safety issues in our buildings, and we could use outdoor spaces more creatively for students and educators. This should have been an all hands on deck effort, with the private sector and other city agencies trying to help.**

**At the same time, we also should improve the quality of remote learning, as well as family engagement services, and provide improved professional development and high-quality materials to every educator and administrator. We can't expect educators to change their practice overnight without support. We knew over the summer that even if some families were in person, many -- disproportionately those of color -- would choose remote, and we owed it to them to do better.**

**To ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are met, we need to improve remote instruction and family engagement. To do that, we plan to: 1) improve tracking and data about student engagement with remote instruction, disaggregated by student demographics. This can include assigning school staff to conduct socially distanced wellness checks to families at or near their homes; 2) identify and make available digital high-quality, culturally-responsive, standards-aligned curriculum and materials for educators and administrators to use in their classrooms; 3) improve the accessibility of communications and materials for families, including multilingual materials for families for whom their first language is not English; 4) provide more multilingual virtual (and in-person when**



necessary) training and materials to help families better support their kids around online learning, and, 5) close the digital divide, ensuring every student actually has both a functioning device, and broadband connection.

As we look towards the city's recovery, we need to acknowledge the additional social, emotional and academic needs our students and educators will face, and support them. This should include an Education Corps, that puts local CUNY graduates to work meeting the needs of the students in their communities; and an Investing in Student Success Initiative, that brings together public and private funds to support educators that want to use evidence-based practices to improve students' academic and non-academic health.

8) Do you support allowing non-citizen New York City residents to vote in City-based elections? Why or why not?

**Yes. My father came to this country as an immigrant and held a green card for many years, not achieving citizenship until reaching advanced age. He lived and worked in his community, provided for his family, and I believe he should have also had the right to vote for his representatives.**

9) Do you support any campaign finance reforms for NYC? If so, please describe.

**New York City has some of the strongest campaign finance laws in the country, and I am proud to be participating in our matching fund system.**

10) Now that the State government has passed the Reproductive Health Act, what steps would you have the Council and City Hall take to increase reproductive healthcare access, including maternal healthcare, and to do so equitably?

**In keeping with the idea of 15 minute neighborhoods, I'd ensure everyone has access to a public health clinic in their neighborhood where they can be seen by a primary care doctor. Primary care is essential to prevention, diagnosis and treatment, but suffers from lack of investment. One additional primary care provider per 10,000 people yields 5.5% fewer hospitalizations, 11% fewer emergency department visits, reduces premature mortality and improves health outcomes.**

**One of the starkest examples of the inequities in our health system is the gross disparity in maternal health outcomes between communities in our city. Black and Latina women are more likely to die and more likely to experience severe complications related to pregnancy and childbirth than white women, even when they deliver at the same hospital, controlling for socioeconomic and insurance status.**

**Addressing this gap requires a comprehensive approach that involves making high-quality prenatal care available to everyone, including those in the shelter system, justice system, and public schools. Every New Yorker who visits NYC Health + Hospitals for prenatal care should be screened by a social worker to identify needs and address social determinants of health, and group prenatal care programming should be expanded in all NYC Health + Hospitals locations.**

**An important part of ensuring that every person receives the prenatal care they need is making sure that healthcare providers have tools that help them meet the needs of each patient. Therefore, we must promote and invest in quality improvement programs, cultural competency, and simulation training for our providers.**



**Additionally, we must expand supportive services for those most in need. This involves increasing access to doulas and community health workers in underserved areas and expanding prenatal outreach programs to at-risk mothers, linking existing programs like Growing Up NYC and Healthy Start and building our local outreach and community health workforces. Associated with NYC Health + Hospitals sites, these services would follow mothers throughout pregnancy, as well as pre- and post-partum monitoring.**

11) The MTA is facing a significant revenue shortfall and many parts of the city lack access to reliable public transportation. What measures would you implement and/or enforce, to promote safe, efficient, and accessible transportation options for mass transit users, pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers in Brooklyn and in the City as a whole?

**As the MTA is experiencing a major financial deficit, aid from the federal government is more important than ever. Downstate New York accounts for 8% of the country's GDP, which translates to great bargaining power. We can use that power to bring funding to the MTA by lobbying for federal tax dollars and ensuring that the sources of funding are dedicated to City priorities. I am the only candidate who has worked with both the incoming President and Vice President as well as the Senate Majority Leader and will be able to use those relationships to ensure NYC gets the money it needs to save the MTA.**

**Although ridership has plummeted during the pandemic, millions of New Yorkers still rely on transit every day. 55% of all frontline workers use the subways as the primary mode of transportation for New Yorkers. A robust system is critical to the recovery of New York. The MTA's \$51.5 billion Capital Plan is estimated to generate 350,000 jobs total for the five years with close to 80% of the jobs in New York City. My team will partner with the MTA on key priorities, collaborate on bringing new financing, and install more effective and high-level communication channels. We need to be at the table as it comes to decision-making at the MTA.**

**The mayor has the opportunity to use their bully pulpit to encourage collaboration between the city, state, and federal governments. As the MTA is experiencing a major financial deficit, aid from the federal government is more important than ever. Downstate New York accounts for 8% of the country's GDP, which translates to great bargaining power. We can use that power to bring funding to the MTA by lobbying for federal tax dollars and ensuring that the sources of funding are dedicated to City priorities.**

**We must come up and explore new ways to increase funding. Some examples include value capture, the Transportation and Climate Initiative, and a Marijuana Tax. State law allows for value capture but we will recommend that every future expansion project use value capture as part of its funding.**

12) How would you ensure fairness in employment, salary, workplace conditions, and promotion? What is your position on strengthening and increasing access to union membership?

**All my life I have fought on behalf of working people, and I believe that unions are an integral part of this city, and of democracy as a whole. I have had the honor to work closely with labor unions on the local level and the federal level.**

**I fully understand and know the responsibility the Mayor has as a manager and employer, and also a consumer of goods and services. It is with this responsibility that I would approach every decision with equity and fairness at the forefront.**



**To ensure fairness in employment, the first thing we must do is make sure there are accessible jobs in every neighborhood. I would invest in building vibrant, relevant & up-to-date neighborhood business centers—in every neighborhood across the five boroughs of New York City to support widespread job creation & support at-home workers. Then leverage successful strategies in the city’s commercial core.**

13) How would you ensure that underserved communities receive fair and equitable treatment from city government? What policies do you support that would level the playing field for historically marginalized groups?

**As I stated in response to Question 1, ensuring that underserved communities receive fair and equitable treatment from city government is going to be a top priority in my administration. In addition to appointing a Chief Equity Officer on day 1 of my term, I would also work on updating the 311 system so that it is responsive to every resident in the city.**

**At the individual issue level, my campaign has committed to including equity-focused recommendations within each one of our comprehensive policy platforms, from establishing a School Diversity and Integration Office within the Department of Education and applying a equity review to short-term budgetary and staffing reductions and adjustments within schools to ensure each New York City student has a chance at a good education, to the launch of Equity Corporate Commitments meant to drive substantially higher Black, Latinx, and Asian job participation in high-wage and middle-income work.**

**Underlying all of these efforts is a deep belief that collaboration and open conversation are vital to helping a community thrive. I look forward to discussing specific policy questions and partnering with you to address your community’s most pressing challenges.**

14) What policy and practice changes are needed for NYC government to ensure sufficient quality housing that actually is affordable for existing residents in Brooklyn neighborhoods?

**Increasing density needs to be a shared action across all neighborhoods. Whether by increasing allowable zoning or allowing homeowners to build accessory dwelling units, New York City needs to find equitable and inclusive ways to meet our housing needs because population growth is critical to a strong city. Housing policy cannot focus only on production and must enhance affordability for more than those chosen by the lottery. We plan on advocating for an expansion of the housing choice voucher program, expanding access to rental assistance for very low income NYers, and aligning our housing and homeless strategies to provide a path to permanent housing for those experiencing homelessness.**

15) What policies would you pass or enforce to ensure public housing/NYCHA repair, upkeep and security, and access to alternate housing and services when lacking essentials such as heat, gas and hot water? What is your position on “privatization” of public housing/NYCHA, and on City government sale of public housing “open areas” (outdoor seating & recreation plots) and air rights to private developers?

**The capital needs of NYCHA’s public housing portfolio are now estimated to total over \$30 billion. Preserving these developments is critical to the health and safety of the more than 170,000 New**



**Yorkers who live in these developments and essential to ensuring that New York City and its neighborhoods remain diverse and inclusive. I would advocate on a state and federal level the need for this funding to make capital improvements.**

**I would adopt RAD 2.0 that improves physical and financial conditions but better incorporates resident needs, recognize NYCHA as asset manager rather than a property manager by outsourcing property management and day-to-day operations, decentralize property management to be more responsive to residents and unique needs of each campus, accelerate energy-efficiency and resiliency investments through use of energy performance contract, and incorporate community and resident input.**

**16) Given the City's Covid and post-Covid economic crisis, how would you approach your role in addressing the city's carceral system, including the plan to close Rikers?**

**The pandemic has hit Rikers hard, like jails and prisons across the country. The damage that COVID has done to corrections staff and incarcerated people puts an increased emphasis on the dangers of mass incarceration. But the problems that we face go way beyond this virus.**

**My approach to incarceration starts from two basic truths. First, the system of incarceration that we have is inextricable from racial injustice in our society, both the way that the justice system too often targets neighborhoods of color and the decades-long legacy of disinvestment and discrimination in these same neighborhoods. The numbers are shameful and staggering: 90% of the people at Rikers today are Black or Latinx.**

**Second, putting people in jail can do serious harm to them and their families and communities and is often counterproductive. Removing people from their lives, work, educational opportunities and family and subjecting them to the chaos and brutality of Rikers usually only worsens the problems that led them into trouble in the first place.**

**The brutality of New York City's jails is well-documented and is all the more unacceptable given the vast amount of money that we spend each year to operate those jails--nearly \$500,000 per incarcerated person per year--a level of dysfunction and waste driven in part by the massive penal colony on Rikers Island.**

**As Mayor, I will focus on reducing incarceration so that jail is used only as a last resort, in situations where there are no other alternatives. We know from experience that we can do this and keep the City safe. I will invest in communities and programs to prevent violence and instability, work with the DAs and courts so that only the most serious cases go to jail, and build mental health resources and capacity so that we stop using our jails as a warehouse for people with mental illness.**

**For those who are incarcerated, my administration will recognize that nearly everyone who is incarcerated, even those accused of the most serious charges, will ultimately return to their communities. We will be committed to the safety, health, and welfare of the staff and people who remain confined in jail. Removing all incarcerated people from Rikers Island will be a high priority, because the location of the majority of the jails there contributes to the dysfunction and incredible costs of the jails. Closing Rikers is the only acceptable path forward for our city and will ultimately save hundreds of millions of dollars, if not more, that can be reinvested in communities.**

**16) Describe your vision for public safety in New York City? What, if any, functions would you like to see**



removed from the police department? What agencies assume the functions removed from the NYPD?

**The NYPD faces a crisis of legitimacy triggered by brutality and over-policing, primarily in communities of color. This is not just a problem of police violence and racial injustice--it is also a problem of public safety, because police cannot do their job effectively when victims, witnesses, and whole communities view them as illegitimate and out of control.**

**To solve this crisis, we have to recognize that today's broken relationship between communities and the police occurs in the context of more than a half century of disinvestment in, and abandonment of, many communities of color. For decades, when there was instability and crime in these neighborhoods, the City called in the police, instead of answering their real needs.**

**So when we talk about addressing aggressive policing, we need to have accountability for the police, but we also have to reimagine how we achieve public safety.**

**As Mayor, I will begin at the root of the problem by prioritizing community investment as the best solution for instability and crime, rather than turning to the police as the answer to every problem. I will bolster community-based anti-violence initiatives, youth programs, and housing services. I will stop asking police to do too much, and instead refocus police resources on guns and serious crime rather than schools, mental health, and homelessness. For example, to prevent harmful police contact, my administration will establish a system of non-law enforcement responders to help people dealing with mental health crises.**

**To put an end to NYPD misconduct and brutality, I will demand accountability by appointing a commissioner who shares my vision, building a leadership team at the NYPD that represents the city's diversity, and holding individual officers responsible for bad acts that too often go unpunished today. My administration will collect and publicize data on police interactions and public perceptions of safety and policing, including racial disparities, so that communities can hold me and the department fully accountable for the results we deliver.**

17) Do you support changes to the ULURP process and to other NYC zoning mechanisms? If so, what specific changes do you support?

**The ULURP process codifies the City Charter and requires the participation of many participants including: the Department of City Planning (DCP) and the City Planning Commission (CPC), Community Boards, the Borough Presidents, the Borough Boards, the City Council and the Mayor. I will work with these entities to ensure that ULURP promotes the development of supportive housing in every way possible.**

**Every community must do its fair share to host supportive housing. In the longer-term, I would work to change ULURP to exempt 100% affordable housing. Research refutes the claim that new supportive housing depresses property values. Supportive housing and other affordable housing are good neighbors as long as they are well managed. I'd also propose a zoning budget that would coordinate land use policy citywide, engage housing advocates to lobby Council members, reduce the power of parochial neighborhood interests, and facilitate productive horse-trading between City Hall and the Council as well as among Council Members.**

18) Do you have a plan to reduce and prevent homelessness in Brooklyn and NYC? Explain your plan.





**We must fundamentally alter the City's homeless strategy to reimagine the right to shelter as a right to housing. When Michelle Obama and I led the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, we managed to END veteran's homelessness in 80 cities and states across the country. Building on my record of dramatically reducing homelessness nationally, I would scale up production of supportive housing and negotiate a New York/New York V agreement with the State. I would also ensure every New Yorker leaving incarceration or mental health facilities is matched with housing and services through comprehensive discharge planning and better interagency coordinating and data-sharing.**

**In the short-run, to provide decent living conditions for the homeless on the streets or in shelters, the city must provide more smaller, low barrier shelters like Safe Havens that provide private rooms. These have been effective at getting people, especially single adults, into more permanent housing. Additionally, many shelters are in old buildings that have been repurposed - these buildings are in need of serious capital improvements like internet access, heating and cooling, and roof repairs. Safety goes beyond physical design and we must hire professional staff that are trained in trauma-informed care as well as offer services on nights and weekends at shelters.**