



NEWS FROM COUNCIL MEMBER

SPRING 2015

# COSTA CONSTANTINIDES

22nd District, Queens

22nd Council District, Queens

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BUDGETING   

Through participatory budgeting, you can decide how to invest public funds into community improvements to parks, schools, libraries, streets, and more. Come out and make your voice heard by voting during the week of **April 13 – 19** on which projects should win funding this year.

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## MAKING OUR STREETS SAFER



Keeping our streets safe has been a top priority for me this year, particularly 21 Street. Over the past 10 years, there have been 8 deaths on this corridor and hundreds of injured parties as a result of a street that functions more like a highway. Twenty-First Street is home to schools, senior developments, community centers, and multiple residential buildings. A new traffic signal will be installed at 29 Ave. to help reduce speeding. New Leading-Pedestrian-Interval lights

have been installed at intersections along 21 Street. They will provide pedestrian-only walk time before vehicles in either direction get a green light. Crosswalks will be upgraded to high-visibility markings and parking lane stripes will be painted to better define moving lanes and calm traffic. Curb extensions will be painted to help reduce crossing distance for pedestrians. Those extensions will be maintained and cleaned by The Doe Fund with funding from my office.

### DEAR RESIDENTS OF THE 22ND COUNCIL DISTRICT:

We've been busy working around the community and in City Hall over the past few months. We'd like to keep everyone updated on our projects in this district and citywide. Please visit our website [Council.NYC.gov/Costa](http://Council.NYC.gov/Costa) for more information on these important issues.

I look forward to working with you as we move forward in this session.

Sincerely,

**Costa**

## MAKING OUR DISTRICT MORE ENGAGING



This year I have set aside \$1 Million in discretionary funds for district residents to vote on how to spend as part of Participatory Budgeting. That \$1 Million will be allocated to capital projects within the district.

We held neighborhood assemblies in October and November throughout Astoria and Jackson Heights where hundreds of residents attended and almost 250 project ideas were suggested. Close to 100 people volunteered to be Budget Delegates and they broke into

groups that transformed the list of project ideas into a ballot of several fully-formed projects with details and costs. From April 13-19, residents will vote on which projects they want to see funded. Voting will take place at several locations throughout the district and will be open to all residents 16 or older. Voting locations and times are not finalized yet but you can email [pbnycc@council.nyc.gov](mailto:pbnycc@council.nyc.gov) to get updates or visit [council.nyc.gov/pb](http://council.nyc.gov/pb) as the dates get closer. This is the first time that anyone in our district can directly make decisions about how taxpayer money is spent. Residents have been extraordinarily engaged throughout all our assemblies and budget delegate meetings. Participatory budgeting allows community members to experience the city budget process on a hands-on basis and learn more about how our government works. Most importantly, community members become more interconnected and have shared their mutual love of their neighborhood.



## MAKING OUR CITY GREENER



This past November, the City Council unanimously passed my bill, INT. 378, to reduce carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2050. INT. 378, now Local Law 66, is an integral part of Mayor de Blasio's pledge to make our city greener and the City Council's forward-thinking policy platform to strengthen this city's commitment to a more sustainable and environmentally friendly future.

There is probably no greater threat to our global civilization than climate change. Climate change also affects us locally. Parts of this district are in hurricane evacuation zones and we have one of the highest asthma

rates in the city due to pollution. By reducing our carbon emissions, we are taking the necessary and bold steps to improve our resiliency, encourage public and private sector innovation, improve our air quality, and impact public health. I'm also proud of my other pieces of legislation that will help us move toward this 80 percent emissions reduction goal. I introduced a bill that encourages use of geothermal power in buildings citywide, INT. 609. The bill would create a regulatory framework for installing geothermal systems as well as provide information to the public about where it's best to install them and their monetary and environmental benefits. We also held a robust hearing on my bill that would mandate more energy efficient biofuel in our city's ferries. I'm excited to see both these bills continue to move forward. We are a city faced with 21st century challenges that require 21st century solutions. New York leads the way on housing, public health, and transportation policies, so we must continue to lead the way on long-term sustainability and resiliency. I am proud that we are the largest city to codify the goal 80 percent emissions reduction into law.

## KEEPING THE CITY HAPPY AND WARM DURING THE HOLIDAYS



This winter, we collected over 300 toys and nearly 100 coats from community donations. I'm proud that we were able to help those in need, especially during the holiday season of giving. Many in our city do not have a place to keep warm or clothing to cover themselves during the harsh winter months. Many children in New York grow up without the opportunity to open Christmas or holiday gifts and we were happy to give hundreds of children that opportunity this year. I appreciate all who donated. The toys collected were donated to two toy drives: St. Michael's Cemetery toy drive to benefit Toys For Tots, as well as Urban Upbound and Zone 126's toy drive to benefit children living at NYCHA Astoria Houses. The coats were collected in collaboration with State Senator Michael Gianaris and Assembly Member Aravella Simotas and were donated to New York Cares.

## ENCOURAGING SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD



Our small businesses are the backbone of the neighborhood. We have been working with the Department of Small Business Services to spread the word about resources that are available to small business owners that help start, operate and expand businesses. We're also working with the Department of Consumer Affairs on its Small Business Relief Package. The package includes two-dozen reforms that reduce the number and cost of violations for small businesses, increase transparency and fairness, and expand business outreach and education. Owners will have more money to invest in their own small businesses. I recently walked throughout the neighborhood to remind business owners about these resources and programs so that we can maintain the community's small business character. We also helped strengthen small business this fiscal year through our discretionary funding allocations to the Central Astoria Local Development Corporation and the Queens Chamber of Commerce to promote business growth. Funding was also used to enhance the appearance of business thoroughfares through graffiti removal.

## BRINGING NEW AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING TO OUR KIDS



An arts curriculum encourages kids to develop critical thinking skills, discipline, and strengthen reading skills – tools they will take with them throughout life. This past fiscal year, the City Council expanded its Cultural After School Adventures (CASA) initiative with an additional \$2 million in the budget, which means that there are now seven CASA programs available in this district. With discretionary funding from my office, we also added even more after-school arts programming at our Queens Library branches. ProjectArt offered hands-on drawing lessons for children that don't have adequate access to arts education. The Little Orchestra Society offered interactive music education workshops in which teaching artists weaved storytelling into the musical activities using popular children's books available at the library. I recently had the opportunity to visit a CASA program, where the students performed Hairspray!

## MAKING OUR CITY MORE AFFORDABLE AND INCLUSIVE



This past year our neighborhood proved that 21st Century development can be affordable, contextual, and inclusive to all with our agreement on Astoria Cove, a future development along Astoria's East River waterfront on Halletts Peninsula. For the first time in city history, a developer will be required by law to provide permanently affordable housing. Our agreement includes a record 27% of the development that will be permanently reserved for low- and

middle-income households, with one-bedroom apartments renting as low as \$940 per month. The agreement also includes good jobs, increased transit options and community benefits. There will be a fully-funded ferry dock. It would be used for East River Ferry service, which will unite the peninsula to parts of Manhattan and Brooklyn for the first time in nearly a century. This will make Western Queens better connected to the growing technology corridor and new tech jobs in Downtown Brooklyn and the upcoming Cornell-Technion center at Roosevelt Island. Astoria Cove will feature diverse retail, a new school, upgraded park, a renovated local library, an upgraded senior center at NYCHA Astoria Houses, and supermarket in an area that has seen no new supermarket constructed in 20 years. Several of the businesses will be worker cooperatives. Employees at these businesses will also be small business owners able to build equity and wealth in the company and the community. This agreement shows what we can achieve when the private and public sectors work together. It provides real benefits to the neighborhood and will help further link our booming communities along the East River. I am proud that we have helped to build a better connected, and more affordable, City of New York.