

MAKING WESTERN QUEENS FAIRER AND SAFER



Keeping the playing field level for all New Yorkers is vital during this time of violent rhetoric against various communities. We must watch out for our neighbors to ensure they have

the same opportunities as us, even when it comes to the little things like parking.

Earlier this year, multiple elected officials took part in an awareness campaign for the upcoming 2020 U.S. Census. An accurate count of how many people live in western Queens is crucial. These results influence how our neighborhoods are represented over the next decade, as well as determine our access to federal dollars things such as housing and infrastructure.

Extending government's helpful hand to our newest Americans is also crucial to our resistance against bigotry. I was proud to host our first District 22 Multicultural Resource fair in Jackson Heights this December. The various

communities in our district met face-to-face with representatives from agencies such as the NYPD, the Department of Transportation, Department of Buildings and the finance division of the New York City Council.

We continued celebrating diversity this February with an International Mother Language Day celebration at Lexington School for the Deaf. Inspired by the Bangladeshi sacrifice in 1952 to preserve the Bangla language from being silenced, this holiday recognizes the beauty of multilingualism and diversity. We were honored to be joined by leaders of the Bangladeshi, Nepali, and Chinese communities — and to recognize all they have done to make western Queens even greater.

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NEWS FROM COUNCIL MEMBER

2019

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PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

New Yorkers voted last fall to make Participatory Budgeting a citywide initiative, ensuring residents get a say in how some discretionary funding is spent. I am proud to say more than 2,500 District 22 residents cast their ballots from March 30 to April 7 both electronically and at polling stations throughout our community. For the second year in a row, an impressive two-thirds of those votes were done online. We had 13 terrific options this year that embodied the idea of government for the people, by the people, as they

were crafted at neighborhood assembly meetings last fall.

In the end, we will be able to fund the five projects with the most votes in the Fiscal Year 2020 budget this fall. Together, they account for about \$1.1 million to enhance our district's schools, improve transportation, and upgrade our vital public works. Thank you to the more than 50 District 22 residents who volunteered at various points in this budget cycle. I cannot wait until this process starts up again in the fall!

- **Water Bottle Refilling Stations at Elementary Schools, \$285,000**
Some drinking fountains at P.S. 2, 17, 84, 85, 151, 171 and 234 will be converted into rapid bottle filler stations.
- **Real Time Passenger Information, \$180,000**
More countdown clocks will be installed throughout District 22 to keep passengers up to date on the next arriving bus. The Department of Transportation will determine their location based, in part, on community input.
- **Improving the Astoria Library, \$250,000**
This allocation supplements improvements to the Queens Library at Astoria branch so it can become a state-of-the-art, 21st Century facility.
- **Classroom Upgrades at P.S. 70, \$150,000**
Eleven classrooms on the third floor will get electrical upgrades so they can support window-unit air conditioners.
- **High-Speed WiFi at The Young Women's Leadership School, \$250,000**
This will improve wireless internet connectivity for laptops at The Young Women's Leadership School.



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COSTA CONSTANTINIDES

Dear Residents,

I'd like to update you on the work we're doing to keep District 22 a strong, clean, resilient place to live and work. Construction is underway to improve Astoria Park, renovate Steinway library, and enhance our infrastructure throughout the district. Citywide, we've introduced legislation to target the carbon footprint of large buildings, take power plants out of residential neighborhoods like ours, and abolish the parking ticket discount program that's fostered an era of unsafe streets.

Yet with more than 22,000 District 22 seniors waitlisted for appropriate affordable housing, we can by no means rest on our accomplishments over the last year. As your Council Member, I remain committed to my pledge of creating 500 units for our aging neighbors by 2021. I am proud to continue to serve on the City Council Budget Negotiating Team, ensuring New Yorkers get the fully funded services they deserve. Thanks to Speaker Corey Johnson for continuing to put his trust in me.

I would like to update you on all of the progress we've made together in the last year, as well as all that we can accomplish in 2019. Thank you for continuing to let me represent one of the most engaged, dedicated communities in New York City.

Sincerely,

Costa Constantinides
Council Member
22nd District

MAKING ASTORIA PARK INTO A 21ST CENTURY GREEN SPACE



Last fall, we broke ground on the new soccer field and eight-lane running track at Astoria Park. This is the first leg of a historic \$30 million investment from the Mayor's Anchor Park program, which invests capital funds into traditionally neglected parks in high density areas. No longer will oddly placed trees stop our children from playing soccer on this field, which will be completed in Spring 2020.

This is just a taste of the great things coming to Astoria Park. A new Charybdis Playground will

provide generations of children with a constructive, safe place to play. Astoria Park will also receive desperately needed infrastructure upgrades to make walking paths safer and ensure our lawns aren't flooded for days after a little rain. Astoria Park has for generations been a refuge for people looking to cool off in its pool, enjoy breathtaking views, and lounge under its trees. Work we're undertaking now ensures that generations will be able to do the same — if not more — at this jewel of our Parks system.

RESTORING OUR NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS AND CREATING NEW ONES

In the last year, we have reopened a newly improved Astoria Heights Playground as well as a reenvisioned Louis C. Moser Park in Jackson Heights. These parks have state-of-the-art equipment for everyone, whether you're 5 years old or 95 years old. Since taking office in 2014, we have invested in almost every District 22 park, with the goal of improving all 22 of our green spaces by the end of 2021.

We're also ensuring new ones are also created in what little land we have. This spring, construction is set to wrap up on a new \$1 million dog run at 23rd Street and Hoyt Avenue. Dog owners will finally have a safe place for their four-legged family members



to play, thanks to our partnership with the Parks Department and Borough President Melinda Katz.

SECURING QUALITY AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR OUR SENIOR NEIGHBORS



I was proud to join Speaker Johnson last October to announce a senior affordable housing development at Broadway and 31st Street was fully funded under last year's budget. The site is currently a municipal parking lot, but will soon yield more than 100 units for District 22 seniors in need of quality apartments. Just a little more than a year after I pledged to create 500 of these units by 2021, I can proudly say we're over halfway to that goal.

And it's exceptionally important when you consider our waitlist for senior affordable housing is the longest in New York City. More than 20,000 District 22 elders are in need of apartments to suit the needs of getting older. No one should have to worry about being priced out of the neighborhood they've spent their entire life, nor should they have to climb four flights of steps to get home.

EMPOWERING OUR STUDENTS WITH NEW TECHNOLOGY IN CLEANER, GREENER SCHOOLS



We are continuing to improve the 17 schools in Council District 22, both in and out of the classroom. As part of my Science 2050 initiative, we've opened up new hydroponic science labs at I.S. 126 and P.S. 84 to join the ones at P.S. 122 and P.S. 70. The Fiscal Year 2019 budget funded these hands-on learning tools at another six schools, and my hope is to fund the remaining six schools this upcoming cycle. These labs teach students about biology, nutrition, agriculture, and technology by growing plants and herbs inside their schools.

Students also deserve to experience these labs, as well as English, math, and history classes, in clean buildings that aren't falling apart. Construction will begin later this year to replace the trailers at P.S. 2 with a permanent extension, so another generation of East Elmhurst student's won't have to shiver in what 20 years ago was

promised as a temporary measure. At my State of the District in January, I also laid out my plan to make P.S. 2 carbon neutral by retrofitting it with solar and geothermal energy. Students will breathe cleaner air, costs to power the building will drop, and we will be the beacon for how you power a school in the 21st Century.

Six other schools will receive solar panels within the next two years, thanks to a partnership with Speaker Johnson, Borough President Katz, the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, and the School Construction Authority. Students at I.S. 141, P.S. 151, Junior High School 10, I.S. 126, P.S. 171, and P.S. 122 will have a first-hand lesson on how clean, renewable energy directly impacts their daily lives. I.S. 141, for instance, will emit 31 fewer metric tons of greenhouse gases each year, which is the equivalent to charging 3.9 million smartphones.

GETTING ANSWERS ON THE ASTORIA BOREALIS

Astoria became a national sensation on Dec. 27, 2018, not for our amazing food or rich diversity — but for a mysterious blue light beaming into the foggy night sky. Thankfully no one was hurt when malfunctioning equipment sparked an arc flash that became known as the “Astoria Borealis.” Sadly, many residents were unsure for hours if the air around the Con Edison substation was safe. There were serious questions about how Con Edison and the City communicated with people who live a stone's throw from this facility.

I raised that issue in February during the Environmental Protection Committee hearing on what sparked the Astoria Borealis as well as making our electrical grid greener. Even though there were no injuries this time, I want to make sure we don't even get to a next time. Western Queens residents have lived for generations with power infrastructure looming over them — a constant risk to their health. I will continue to ensure Con Edison and the various energy plants in our district are good neighbors who communicate directly with the public.

ENACTING THE BOLDEST CARBON REDUCTION EVER MANDATED BY A CITY

Climate change is one of the most defining issues of our time, and New York City must act before our famous shores sink into the sea. With nothing but apathy on this national security threat coming out of the Trump White House, the City Council is working to ensure the Big Apple set the standard on fighting rising sea levels, greenhouse gas emissions, and violent weather.

That's why the New York City Council recently passed the Climate Mobilization Act, which is a downpayment on a brighter, greener, safer future for New York City. At the center of this legislative package is a bill to shrink the carbon footprint of large buildings 40% by 2030. It's shocking to hear just 2% of New York's building

stock, those over 25,000 square feet, emit 30% of our greenhouse gases. Requiring our worst emitters to clean up their act will make our air cleaner, reduce energy costs, and ensure our City will still be here. This is the largest carbon reduction ever mandated by any city – anywhere.

We are reimagining how we live and work in New York City for the 21st Century in the process. The Climate Mobilization Act includes several bills to promote green roofs – with renewable energy and natural plantings – as well as wind and solar energy. This is a watershed moment in our five-year-old effort to curb greenhouse gases, protect our coastal communities, and restore our once beautiful waterways.



But New York City also needs a bona fide agency with the intellectual and budgetary power, however, to follow through on these policies once they're enacted. In February, I introduced a bill to combine the Mayor's Office of Sustainability with the Office of Resiliency and

Recovery to form the New York City Department of Sustainability. This agency will be the conduit for all climate change-fighting efforts, because this historic phenomenon stretches beyond environmental concerns into our economy, our parks, and our homes.

CREATING A RENEWABLE RIKERS ISLAND TO CLOSE OUR DIRTY POWER PLANTS

The certain closure of the jails on Rikers Island presents a unique opportunity for New York to shut down nearly a dozen power plants in environmental justice communities. Of course, the detention centers in this often forgotten part of our district should close in favor of smaller jails to prevent violence and abuse. How we use these 400 acres going forward should be part of the conversation as we transform Rikers into something that actually serves New York City.

The CUNY Center for Urban Environmental Reform estimates that dedicating one quarter of Rikers Island for solar energy can close power plants downwind from us in Long Island City and across the East River in the Bronx. These facilities were built over the last 20 years against communities' wishes and certainly overstayed their welcome. It's time we do right by these communities, the same ones ripped apart by our broken criminal justice system, and create a sustainable New York City.



We can also close some of these power plants in the meantime in favor of solar energy, which would be required under a bill passed by the Council in April. New York City must create a roadmap by 2021 of which facilities could be feasibly closed in favor of clean, affordable renewable energy.

There are a total 24 plants within City limits, many of which loom over residential neighborhoods and spew harmful toxins into our air. We have a golden opportunity to capitalize on new technology that will allow us to power New York City in a cleaner, more efficient manner.