

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

KEITH POWERS



February 2019

Dear Neighbor:

From affordable housing deals and legislation that protects small businesses, to upcoming community events and opportunities, it has been a productive start to the new year.

On January 24, the City Council unanimously approved a groundbreaking housing agreement for Waterside Plaza in my district. Under the agreement, 325 units will remain in the City's affordable housing stock through 2098. All tenants who lived at Waterside during the middle-income Mitchell-Lama program will become eligible for a rent reduction, rent freeze, or limited rent increases, determined based on their income. This is a meaningful deal to the hundreds of families that have and will continue to call Waterside Plaza their home. I was glad to work together with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Waterside Plaza, and my colleagues in government to create such a beneficial deal. Learn more in [Curbed](#).

Last month, I introduced legislation that would provide relief to more small businesses of the Commercial Rent Tax (CRT). The CRT applies only to businesses south of 96th Street in Manhattan, which creates an unequal playing field with neighboring boroughs without the tax. Building on the work of my predecessor Dan Garodnick, this legislation would continue to raise rent thresholds to include businesses that pay up to \$750,000 a year in rent. Around 1,300 businesses would see relief, demonstrating a commitment to helping small businesses. You can read more in [Crain's](#).

I will be hosting Mobile District Office Hours sessions at the Yorkville Library on Friday, February 15 at 12:00 P.M. and on February 28 at the Stuyvesant Town Community Center at 12:00 P.M. where my staff will be available to answer questions and assist with issues in the district. Finally, there is still time to apply to be a member of your Community Board at manhattanbp.nyc.gov; applications are due on February 25.

I look forward to staying in touch and sharing updates throughout 2019. Please remember my office is a resource for you, and to call or email me at any time.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith".

Keith

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Affordable Housing at Waterside Plaza

On January 24, the City Council approved an agreement to protect tenants against growing rent increases and preserve affordable housing at Waterside Plaza for 75 years. The landmark deal comes with groundbreaking tenant protections and rent relief that will ensure existing tenants in certain units can remain in the community. I was proud to help lead negotiations on this monumental deal that will restore affordability to residents who had once benefited from the Mitchell-Lama program. The deal is part of a lease extension between Waterside Plaza and New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD).



Peter Davis of Waterside Plaza, Dan Garodnick, Janet Handal of WTA, Assembly Member Harvey Epstein, and Borough President Gale Brewer join Council Member Powers to celebrate the Waterside housing deal.

Calling for Safer Streets in Midtown in Midtown

Five years ago, Community Board 5 passed a resolution calling for a study of pedestrian islands, curb extensions, bus lanes, and bike lanes on 5th and 6th Avenues. Despite unanimous support, the plans for these two corridors that are in need of safety improvements have only been partially addressed. Last month, I urged the Department of Transportation to deliver on the 2013 resolution and provide a safe and continuous safety plan for pedestrians and cyclists in Midtown on 5th and 6th Avenues, and extend that to include a 7th Avenue safety redesign.

Queens-Midtown Tunnel Construction

I have heard from many residents in Murray Hill regarding the impact on quality of life based on ongoing construction of the Queens-Midtown Tunnel. I recently met with the 17th Precinct, the NYPD Transportation Bureau, and NYC Bridges and Tunnels to discuss the honking problem near the tunnel. As a result, a new traffic pattern has been implemented during the hours when one lane of the south tube of the tunnel is closed for construction. Barricades have been placed at three locations during these construction times in order to limit the volume of cars traveling through the most congested area. Based

on the feedback my office has received so far, this change has been successful in minimizing some of the congestion that causes noise. This will be an ongoing conversation, so I encourage you to reach out to my office with feedback on what you are seeing and hearing.



Council Member Powers joins colleagues and transit advocates to call for accessible subways.

L Train Update

We continue to wait for more details regarding Governor Cuomo’s announcement about the L train in early January. Even without a full shutdown planned, the current proposal will significantly alter the schedule to reduce train service at night and on the weekends for the foreseeable future. While I hope to receive an update on the latest developments in the coming weeks, I will continue to advocate for improvements to public transit near the 14th Street corridor, a reduction in construction hours and noise, and common sense solutions to the flow of traffic. I also met recently with the Department of Transportation regarding the redesign of East 20th Street between 1st Avenue and Avenue C and hope to receive further news about the plans there once the L train proposals become more developed.



During National Mentoring Month, Council Member Powers honored a Big Sister from Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City.

Improving Safety at East 79th Street and Madison Avenue

Over the past year, I have heard from many of you concerned with the dangerous conditions at the intersection at East 79th Street and Madison Avenue. My office has taken steps to improve pedestrian safety in this area after numerous accidents at this location. I am pleased to announce that changes are coming. I recently asked the Department of Transportation (DOT) to create a plan that will calm traffic and protect pedestrians when crossing this intersection. In response to concerns, they presented a capital project design that will improve safety conditions at the intersection. One of the core elements of DOT's plan is the installation of "curb extensions," which have many benefits, including slowing turning vehicles and emphasizing the right of way of crossing pedestrians, among others. This year, a painted curb extension will be added on the southwest corner of the intersection to provide temporary relief as permanent curb extensions are installed over the next few years.



Council Member Powers addresses community organizations and nonprofits with Council Member Rivera during a budget forum.

CITY HALL

Commercial Rent Tax Reform

Currently, businesses south of 96th Street in Manhattan that pay \$500,000 or more in rent are required to pay a Commercial Rent Tax (CRT). This puts businesses in Manhattan on unequal footing with businesses located in hotbeds like downtown Brooklyn, Williamsburg, Long Island City, and more. That is why I introduced a bill last month that would exempt more Manhattan businesses from the tax to put them on an even playing field. Building on the work of my predecessor Dan Garodnick, this legislation would raise rent thresholds to include businesses that pay up to \$750,000 a year in rent and help up to 1,300 Manhattan businesses. As mom-and-pop shops across our city struggle with affordability, I hope that this legislation will provide a form of relief.

East Side Coastal Resiliency Project Update

The East Side Coastal Resiliency (ESCR) project is designed to protect Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village, the East Village, and the Lower East Side from rising sea levels and dangerous storms. Unfortunately, construction of the sea walls, flood gates, and berms along the East River from 25th Street to Montgomery Street will involve the temporary closure of several parks in the area, including Asser Levy Playground, Stuyvesant Cove, East River Park, and Murphy Brothers Playground. I have been

coordinating with the City's Department of Design & Construction (DDC) and the rest of the project team to ensure that the ESCR plans properly phase construction around these three parks to limit the loss of greenspace for the surrounding neighborhoods as much as possible. I recently attended a hearing held jointly by the City Council Committee on Parks and the Committee on Environmental Conservation to hear further details and community feedback. I will continue to engage with the DDC project team and stakeholders in the community in the coming months as we get closer to the formal public review process. You can see the latest presentation here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/escr/progress/meetings-workshops.page>.

Addressing Zoning Loopholes

The Department of City Planning (DCP) recently released a zoning text amendment to address the issue of excessive mechanical voids – used to boost heights of various buildings – in certain residential districts. The proposed amendment would modify high-density residential areas of the city to discourage mechanical voids taller than 25 feet, end the practice of clustering void spaces together to boost height, and to look at mixed-use buildings as well. While I am encouraged the City is looking at closing this zoning loophole, there is still much more to be done. The current amendment excludes many parts of the city, including Midtown Manhattan in my district, along with Hudson Yards, and parts of Lower Manhattan. While DCP is planning to address a broader geographic scope later this year, we must include all areas of the city to create a fair standard. The proposed amendment will go through the public review process this year, and I will be sure to keep you updated on its status; you can testify at your local Community Board through March.

Criminal Justice Hearing on Complaints in City Jails

On January 29, my Criminal Justice Committee held a hearing to examine the Department of Correction's response to all complaints and grievances made by incarcerated individuals in New York City's jails. It is important that complaints made both through the Department's formal system and through 311 calls are adequately responded to and investigated. I also introduced legislation to ensure that complaints made via 311 are addressed, as those complaints have increased in recent years. We must make sure that individuals are treated fairly and humanely throughout their incarceration.

IN THE NEWS

January 25, [Waterside Plaza tenants get rent relief due to city deal](#), *Curbed*

...“It's the culmination of a year or more of work to make this happen,” City Council member Keith Powers, whose district stretches along Manhattan's east side, told *Curbed*. “Our goal was to help the tenants who have a rent burden and ensure their homes remain affordable—and we achieved both.”

January 24, [Councilman seeks to chip away at commercial rent tax](#), *Crain's*

More Manhattan businesses would be exempt from the commercial rent tax under a new City Council bill that aims to ease the financial burden on mom-and-pop shops.

January 16, [Opening Bell, January 16, 2019](#), *CNBC*

Ringin today's opening bells are Mothers Against Drunk Driving with Steven Benvenisti, former national board member, at NYSE and NYC council member Keith Powers who represents New York City Council District 4 at the Nasdaq.

SAVE THE DATES

Events with Council Member Powers

Clothing Drive for those Reentering the Workforce

January 28 - February 28, 2019
Office of Council Member Keith Powers
211 E. 43rd Street, Suite 1205
Drop-off Hours: Monday - Friday, 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Mobile District Office Hours

Sit down with representatives from my office to talk about the issues in the district you care about, and work toward solutions. This is a great opportunity to meet in-person with our constituent services team and get to know my office a bit better.

All mobile district office hours will be held from 12:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M.

Yorkville Library, 222 East 79th Street

Friday, February 15, 2019
Thursday, March 21, 2019
Thursday, April 18, 2019

Stuyvesant Town Community Center, 449 East 14th Street

Thursday, February 28, 2019
Thursday, March 28, 2019
Thursday, April 25, 2019

Property Tax Event with NYC Department of Finance and Council Member Carlina Rivera

I am partnering with the Department of Finance and the office of Council Member Carlina Rivera to host a property tax workshop. This workshop will focus on property value and is a great chance to ask the Department of Finance questions about topics like market value, assessed value, and exemptions. Make sure to bring your Notice of Property Value (NOPV).

Wednesday, February 27, 2019, 6:30 P.M.
P.S. 59, 233 East 56th Street

Community Events

Community Board Applications: Deadline extended to February 25

Being part of a Community Board means serving as an advocate for your neighbors. Members are appointed by Borough President Brewer and myself. Apply: <https://manhattancommunityboards.wufoo.com/forms/manhattan-community-board-2019-application/>

New York Society Library Family Fun Day
Saturday, February 2, 2019, 2:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.
The New York Society Library, 53 East 79th Street

Families for Safe Streets: Finding Meaning After Loss
Wednesday, February 6, 2019, 6:30 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.
Hartley House, 413 West 46th Street

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House: A New Way to Look at Aging:
A Conversation with Ashton Applewhite, John Leland and Dr. Ruth Finkelstein
Saturday, February 9, 2019, 1:30 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.
Lenox Hill Neighborhood House Auditorium | 331 East 70th Street

CB6 Full Board Meeting
Wednesday, February 13, 2019, 7:00 P.M.
433 1st Avenue (NYU School of Dentistry), Room 220
CB5 Full Board Meeting

Thursday, February 14, 2019, 6:00 P.M.
Xavier High School, 30 West 16th Street | 2nd Floor Library

Muslim Volunteers for New York (MV4NY) "Sweet Dreams" Book and Pajama Drive
Proceeds to benefit the Pajama Program and Room to Grow
Donations can be made here: <https://fs27.formsite.com/MV4NY/form3/index.html>

NYRR Run for the Future
Those who fulfill the program requirements will receive a \$2,000 college scholarship.
Spring season applications are due February 17, 2019. Summer season applications are due April 14, 2019

CB8 Full Board Meeting
Wednesday, February 20, 2019, 6:30 P.M.
Ramaz School, Auditorium 125 East 85th Street

New York City Ballet. "A Timeless Tale: The Sleeping Beauty,"
Saturday, February 23, at 11:00 A.M.
Discounted tickets for \$5 (normally \$22-\$32) to community groups and members of the district (\$5 promo code GOVFAM19).

February 2019 Special Events at Woodstock Senior Center
February 5, 1:30 P.M. – Name that Tune: Black History Month
February 9, 12:00 P.M. – Valentine's Day Party
February 23, 12:00 P.M. – Oscar Gala Party
February 26, 1:00 P.M. – Chinese New Year Celebration

New York Public Library Money and Finance Programs: nypl.org/moneymatters
Various dates and times, Midtown Manhattan and across New York City

Manhattan VA Hospital Military Mondays Free Legal Clinic
First Monday of Each Month (except holidays) 1:00 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.
423 East 23rd Street | 1st Floor Atrium

Did you know you can qualify for free tax prep? AARP and Ariva provide tax services to those in need:
AARP Tax Aide
58th Street Branch Library
127 East 58th Street, 2nd Floor
Open January 30 through April 13
Wednesdays 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM; Saturdays 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Open to all taxpayers, with special attention to those 60 and older

Ariva
Mexican Consulate
27 East 39th Street
Open January 25 through April 12
Fridays 8:30am-4pm
Appointment only: call (212) 217-6424
For all filers: Income below \$55,000. Individuals without dependents: \$30,000, Families with dependents: \$55,000