

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

KEITH POWERS



December 2019

Dear Neighbor:

As we reflect on the year and prepare for 2020, I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for serving as your Council Member over the past two years.

My office has continued to focus our efforts on making life a little better for all New Yorkers. This year, we served over a thousand constituents on issues including housing, transportation, quality of life, benefits and services, and more. We have a lot to celebrate—and a lot of work still to do—and I want to thank all of you for your continued partnership and care for our community.

In that spirit, I wanted to share a year-end victory: beginning last month, both 49th and 50th Streets surrounding Rockefeller Center were closed off to traffic at peak hours for the holiday season. This was a request I had made to the Department of Transportation in the summer. I am glad to see the positive results of New Yorkers enjoying the scene with more space.

I also want to thank those of you who have participated in our successful coat and toy donation drives, helping to make the season a little brighter for those in need. Donations are welcome through December 18.

Please remember that my office is a resource for you, and I encourage you to call or email me at any time, at (212) 818-0580 or kpowers@council.nyc.gov.

Happy Holidays and all the best in the new year!

Regards,

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

Keith



NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

New Open Space at Rockefeller Center

This past month, the Mayor announced that the City would implement a plan that I proposed with Borough President Gale Brewer to address overcrowding around Rockefeller Center during the holidays by temporarily closing 49th and 50th Streets between 5th and 6th Avenues. As the holiday season drew closer, we recognized that the same old strategy of funneling pedestrians into tight spaces was ultimately untenable and proposed the area be pedestrianized. The plan put in place by the Department of Transportation and the Police Department closes 49th and 50th Streets around Rockefeller Center at the most congested times, between 2:00 P.M. and midnight from Monday to Thursday, 1:00 P.M. to midnight on Friday, and 10:00 A.M. to midnight on the weekend. It also includes increasing pedestrian space on 5th Avenue by eliminating a lane of traffic on each side of the avenue during highly congested times, as well as increasing space on 6th Avenue during the most crowded conditions. This is an important step forward to address the safety of New Yorkers and visitors during the holiday season, as well as repurpose our street space. I look forward to determining if this set up can be implemented year-round.



Council Member Powers spends an afternoon at the Senior Center at St. Peter's Church.

East Side Tap Water Update

Earlier this month, some New Yorkers noticed a change in the quality of their drinking water, specifically the taste. I wanted to provide an update regarding information I received from the Department of Environmental Protection: Neighborhoods in New York City receive their drinking water from reservoirs of the Croton, Catskill, and Delaware Systems, or often a combination of all three. The Water Distribution Map (<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dep/water/current-water-distribution.page>) shows which system supplies water to various parts of the city. Water from different systems can taste different to some New Yorkers. The changes in taste are temporary and they do not mean there is a problem with the safety of drinking water. DEP's scientists test the City's tap water hundreds of times each day to

ensure safety. Decisions about the City's water supply—including the proportion of water from the three systems—are often made on an hour-to-hour basis, as well. If you do notice a difference in the taste of your water, do call 311 or file a report online as it helps to track these trends.

New Lenox Hill Hospital Development Task Force

On December 10, my office joined the first Lenox Hill Hospital Development Task Force meeting convened by Borough President Gale Brewer. This task force was created to bring community stakeholders, the hospital, and elected officials together to talk more in-depth about Northwell Health's redevelopment proposal and work toward solutions for the concerns expressed by many of you. There will be four more task force meetings between now and March 2020. My office will keep the community informed of updates from the task force. I welcome your continued feedback on Northwell's proposal.



Council Member Powers with coats donated in partnership with New York Cares for those in need.

Preventing SantaCon Disturbances

SantaCon, which draws thousands of revelers dressed in Santa suits, has historically created challenges for New Yorkers who live on the event route. This month, it came to my office's attention that the Skyport Marina at 23rd Street and the East River would be serving as an event site for over 2,000 partygoers as part of the annual pub crawl. Given this particular venue's close proximity to Waterside Plaza, Murray Hill, and Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village, as well as its location next to the FDR Drive and the bike path along the East River, I had serious concerns about the disruption it was likely to create for those who live in and travel through the area. Together with my colleagues in the State legislature, I sent a letter to NY Waterway, the operator of the marina, asking them to provide clear plans for security, crowd control, and managing traffic during the full-day event. Following the letter, NY Waterway and its partners decided to cancel the SantaCon event at this particular venue. I am grateful to NY Waterway for its responsiveness to community concerns.



Council Member Powers addresses the crowd at the East Midtown Partnership Annual Meeting.

CITY HALL

Improving the Pedestrian Experience in Times Square

Every day, more than 330,000 people travel through Times Square. Unfortunately, in recent years, we have heard a number of complaints about quality of life in the area. Last month I introduced a bill to improve the pedestrian experience in Times Square by:

- Clarifying ambiguities in the existing law around vendors;
- Establishing pedestrian flow zones where commercial activity will not be allowed;
- Reviewing sight-seeing bus stops and street closures in the area; and
- Allowing the Department of Transportation to set up rules addressing safety concerns.

Pedestrian flow and safety zones will make it so that those looking to pass through Times Square can do so quickly and allow passersby the open space to take in the sights. In recent years, visitors and residents alike have noted an uptick in touching without consent by costume characters in Times Square. According to data from the Times Square Alliance, 1 in 2 New Yorkers personally had unpleasant experiences, while 1 in 5 have been touched without consent. Whether a lifelong New Yorker or tourist enjoying the greatest city in the world, people should be able to move through Times Square freely and safely, without threat of harassment.

Cracking Down on Placard Abuse: New Laws Passed in the City Council

In the beginning of 2019, there were more than 124,000 city-issued parking placards on our streets. While these placards can serve a necessary purpose, the city has had no centralized way to track parking placards issued by city agencies. That is why earlier this year I introduced legislation (Intro. 1422) that mandates a centralized application process and tracking system for city issued placards. In November, the City Council passed this legislation, alongside eight other bills related to reducing the use and abuse of parking placards. These bills will provide clarity into how many placards are issued, the reasons for issuance, and assist with enforcement of illegal parking.



Council Member Powers questions the administration during a Criminal Justice hearing on Raise the Age.

Hearing on the Implementation of Raise the Age

This month, as Chair of the Council's Committee on Criminal Justice, I held a hearing on the implementation of Raise the Age, which raised the age of criminal responsibility to 18-years-old and moved 16 and 17-year-olds off of Rikers Island and into the Horizon and Crossroads youth facilities, operated by the Administration for Children's Services. One year into implementation, we pressed the administration on lengthy arrest-to-arraignment times and reports of increasing use of force incidents at Horizon, and heard from advocates about changes that need to be made. In the coming year, the Committee will continue to focus on improving the justice system for all individuals—from addressing conditions in jails to diverting people from the system in the first place.

IN THE NEWS

December 12, [NYC SantaCon Gets Shipwrecked After Party Boats Canceled Before Weekend Festivities](#), *Newsweek*

SantaCon has canceled plans for five party boats offered as part of the annual bar crawl, citing concerns from local politicians and a lack of planning from the event's organizers.

December 2, [NYC begins process to make Rikers Island into a public space](#), *Daily News*

The city has taken the first step in converting Rikers Island into a public space, officials announced on Monday.

November 29, [Holiday Car Ban Goes Into Effect At Rockefeller Center](#), *Patch*

Thanksgiving has come and gone, which means that cars will be banned at Midtown Manhattan's Rockefeller Center for the rest of the year.

SAVE THE DATES

Events with Council Member Powers

Waterside Plaza Town Hall with Council Member Powers, Assemblymember Epstein, and State Senator Hoylman

Wednesday, December 18, 2019, 6:00 P.M.-7:30 P.M.

The Lewis Davis Pavilion, 25 Waterside Plaza

Hear updates from your local elected officials and discuss community issues that matter to you.

Council Member Powers' Coat and Holiday Toy Drive

My office is running a coat drive in coordination with New York Cares. Through December 15, you can stop by my office to drop off new or gently used coats, as well as new, packaged socks, which will be donated to vulnerable New Yorkers.

Together with Room to Grow, I am hosting a holiday toy drive to collect high-need items for families, including stack-up cups, blocks, interactive toys, newborn toys, Spanish language board books, and baby blankets. I want to thank the Grand Central Partnership for their support of these efforts.

Drop-Off Location

Office of Council Member Keith Powers

211 East 43rd Street, Suite 1205, from 10:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.

Coats and socks accepted through December 15

Toys accepted through December 18

Budget Information Session with Council Members Keith Powers

If you are a non-profit organization that qualifies for City contracts, come to our information session to learn about the budget application process and important deadlines, as well as best practices for outreach to offices of agencies and elected officials.

Wednesday January 15, 2020

6:30 P.M. - 7:30 P.M.

14th Street Y

344 East 14th Street

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.

Yorkville Library, 222 East 79th Street

Third Thursday of Every Month

12:00 P.M. - 2:00 P.M.

Stuyvesant Town Community Center, 449 East 14th Street

Thursday, January 30, 2020

12:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M.

Drag Queen Story Hour, sponsored by Council Member Keith Powers

Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH) captures the imagination and play of the gender fluidity of childhood and gives kids glamorous, positive, and unabashedly queer role models. In spaces like this, kids are able to see people who defy rigid gender restrictions and imagine a world where people can present as they wish, where dress up is real.

Epiphany Library
Friday, February 21, 2020, 2:00 P.M.

96th Street Library
Wednesday, April 22, 2020, 4:00 P.M.

Community Events

CB5 Full Board Meeting
Thursday, December 12, 2019, at 6:00 P.M.
SGI-USA NY Culture Center
7 East 15th Street

CB8 Full Board Meeting
Thursday, December 18, 2019, at 6:30 P.M.
New York Blood Center, Auditorium
310 East 67th Street

Census 2020 Hiring Forum, sponsored by Council Member Keith Powers
Saturday, December 14, 10:00 A.M.
East 58th Street Library
127 East 58th Street

Tree Lighting at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza
Thursday, December 19, 2019, 5:30 P.M. - 6:30 P.M.
East 47th Street between 1st and 2nd Avenue

Grand Central Holiday Fair, November 18 - December 24, 2019
Monday - Friday, 10:00 A.M. - 8:00 P.M., Saturday, 10:00 A.M. - 7:00 P.M., Sunday, 11:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.
89 East 42nd Street

Menorah Lighting at Tudor City Greens North Park
Sunday, December 22, 2019, 6:30 P.M. - 7:30 P.M.
24-38 Tudor City Place

Menorah Lighting in Stuyvesant Town
Sunday, December 22, 2019, 5:30 P.M.
Stuyvesant Oval

Lighting of the World's Largest Menorah
Saturday, December 22, 2019, 5:30 P.M.
Grand Army Plaza, 5th Avenue between West 58th and West 59th Streets

"First Fridays" Free Admission at The Frick Collection
6:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.
1 East 70th Street

"First Fridays" Free Admission to the Neue Galerie Museum for German and Austrian Art
5:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.
1048 5th Avenue at 86th St

Free Friday Evenings at the Morgan Library & Museum
7:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.

225 Madison Avenue at 36th St

“Free Saturdays” Free Admission to The Jewish Museum

11:00 A.M. - 5:45 P.M.

1109 5th Ave at 92nd Street

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

New York Public Library Money and Finance Programs: nypl.org/moneymatters

Various dates and times, Midtown Manhattan and across New York City