

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

KEITH POWERS



January 2020

Dear Neighbor:

I am continuously grateful for the opportunity to serve you in the City Council. In 2020, I look forward to working together to resolve our community's issues. Below is a list of 2020 priorities that my office is working on:

- **Improving quality of life in the district.** Construction, noise, and sanitation remain the top issues that constituents contact me about. My office is working toward finding solutions to what goes on right outside our front doors. In 2020, I am focused on improving the quality of life through legislation and the City budget:
 - I am a co-sponsor of legislation with Council Member Carlina Rivera that would limit overnight construction permits (Intro. 1737). Overnight construction causes a burden on neighbors that have to live through noisy work. Our bill would limit the issuance of overnight permits to allow New Yorkers to get a better night's sleep.
 - I have introduced legislation that would improve the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) ability to measure construction-related sound (Intro. 1043). The bill would allow a resident to request the DEP to measure noise levels inside their apartment or home, in addition to street-level noise.
 - I also hear from many of you regarding litter and refuse, of which a citywide overhaul is needed. My office has allocated additional funds to new garbage cans and trash pickup routes throughout the district. As a result new, upgraded trash cans will replace wire baskets. If you have a suggested location for a new trash can where a wire basket currently is, [please log it here](#). If you have a proposal or would like to share how your building manages trash, recycling, or composting, email me at kpowers@council.nyc.gov.
- **Helping small businesses.** Small businesses are the lifeblood of our community. I have introduced a bill (Intro. 1371) that would exempt neighborhood businesses from the Commercial Rent Tax (CRT), which unfairly burdens businesses in Manhattan. Currently, businesses south of 96th Street in Manhattan that pay \$500,000 or more in rent annually are required to pay an extra tax on their rent. As mom-and-pop shops across our city struggle with affordability, this legislation would help nearly 1,300 businesses by providing them with the ability to invest more in their business and cover their rising costs.
- **Improving our City's elections.** The election process should be easier and more accessible for all New Yorkers. I have three bills in the City Council that would improve our democratic process:
 - One bill (Intro. 1734) would streamline special elections in the city. Currently, the process results in a confusing myriad of expensive, low-turnout elections. One example of this is the Public Advocate race in 2019, where voters had to vote three times before selecting

the Public Advocate. Under my proposed legislation, the City would streamline the special election process to save the city money, improve voter turnout, and increase representation.

- Another bill increases campaign finance limitations for entities “doing business” with the City (Intro. 773). In practice, this legislation would require that companies or individuals that seek a rezoning or land use action to enter into the doing business database from the moment that they first file paperwork.
- Finally, a bill that allows candidates to have contributions as low as \$5 qualify for matching funds (Intro. 774), a program in which the City matches smaller contributions New York City residents make to candidates. The bill would reduce the per-donor amount required for the public funding threshold for eligibility from \$10 to \$5. I am proud to have the support of good government groups on these pieces of legislation.

Lastly, I am working with the Board of Elections to identify additional poll sites in our neighborhoods to make it easier for New Yorkers to vote. I have heard from voters about the inconvenient location of poll sites, as well as the challenge of elementary schools serving as early voting sites. I am actively working to find more suitable poll sites for both early voting and the regular election period.

- **Lowering the cost to rent an apartment.** Most New Yorkers can identify with the high costs associated with renting an apartment. Building on the rent reforms in Albany, I have been working with my colleagues in the Council on long-term solutions to lower the upfront cost of renting in New York City. This includes addressing the upfront fees renters are tasked to pay, security deposits, the application process, and other measures to make the process more transparent.
- **Protecting consumer rights.** Last year, I introduced a simple yet impactful piece of legislation that would allow New Yorkers to cancel gym memberships online (Intro. 1798). This bill stems from complaints that my office has received from constituents about the difficulty of ending contracts. Many gyms and fitness studios have outdated policies for cancellation, forcing consumers to either cut ties in person or through certified mail. As we welcome 2020, we should welcome more modern and simple ways for consumers to interact with businesses.

My office will continue to work with you on community issues and making New York City an even better place to live. Please read on below for what is top of mind this month. I encourage you to call or email me at any time, at (212) 818-0580 or kpowers@council.nyc.gov.

Regards,



Keith

Building Safety: Facade Inspections

In December 2019, a tragic accident occurred in Midtown, where a piece of building facade fatally struck a Manhattan resident. After the incident, it was found that the building had been cited with several violations for repairs. Even worse, it was found that hundreds of buildings across the city were also deemed unsafe for failure to maintain external facades. As a result, I have been working with the Department of Buildings (DOB) to ensure buildings are better maintained to prevent accidents. A few weeks ago, we announced new measures that will increase enforcement and focus on proactive inspections for unsafe buildings. These measures include doubling the inspection team at DOB and requiring inspectors to take a more proactive role in identifying and inspecting unsafe buildings. This announcement is a positive step to ensuring that facades are kept up to code and accidents are avoided. As a city, our principle responsibility is to ensure the public's safety.

Fighting Against Anti-Semitism

Closing out 2019 and into the new year, New York has experienced a spate of despicable attacks and hate crimes against the Jewish community. Everyone should be able to live their lives without fear of being targeted for who they are or what they believe in. In a time of rising anti-Semitism, we need to call out hate when we see it in our everyday lives.

In response to the recent crimes, I joined my colleagues in asking the NYPD to create a new "hate crime" category in the city's crime tracking system, Compstat. The NYPD has agreed to add this category to help us have a clearer picture of the rise in hate crimes. I will continue to work with my colleagues in the City Council and at City Hall to root out these actions, and thank the Mayor for working to find solutions to prevent hate crimes.



Council Member Powers reads to children at the Pajama Program, a nonprofit in his district.

Limiting Helicopter Flights Across the City

My office has received a high volume of complaints regarding excessive helicopter flights over residential areas of my district, including the Upper East Side and Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper

Village. In response to these concerns, I authored a letter with City and State colleagues to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) asking that the agency impose special flight rules and restrictions on sightseeing and charter helicopters over New York City. A significant number of our residents contacted our offices with serious concerns about the virtually non-stop flights above residential buildings and public space. These concerns relate to both safety and quality of life. My colleagues and I believe that current regulations are insufficient to ensure safety for those in and around New York City, and request that the FAA respond promptly.



Council Member Powers conducts a walkthrough with DOT and Community Board 6 of East 35th Street and the surrounding area to examine safety improvements near the River School.

Preserving the Demarest Building

New York City's buildings and structures are an undeniable part of its culture and history. Last month, I joined City and State officials in calling for the preservation of the Demarest Building, a historic building at 335-339 Fifth Avenue. This building, designed by the preeminent architect James Renwick and built in 1890, features dramatic arched windows and an iron-spot brick facade that provides historical integrity to the bustle of Midtown. The Demarest--which once showcased A.T. Demarest & Company's horse carriages and boasted what is considered the country's first electric elevator--is a true gem that should be granted landmark status. I have recently met with the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to urge them to grant landmark status to this building.



Council Member Powers donates toys from community members to local nonprofit Room to Grow.

Infrastructure Improvements in Tudor City

My office has heard frequently from Tudor City residents concerned about the condition of the stairs leading from Tudor City Place to 42nd Street. Working with the Parks Department, we were recently able to fix the lighting on the stairs and unclog the drains on the platforms, which had been causing water to pool on the landings of the stairs whenever it rained. Particularly in the midst of winter, it is essential to keep these drains open to prevent the stairs from icing over. I am glad to see these improvements installed in Tudor City, and encourage you to reach out to my office if you are experiencing similar issues in your neighborhood.

Cleaning Up the 72nd Street Subway Station

Many of you have reached out to my office regarding the unsanitary conditions surrounding the 72nd Street subway station on Second Avenue. This subway stop is a high-traffic location that requires constant attention due to an accumulation of trash and litter. I am pleased to announce that my office has funded extra sanitation services in this area, and will be serviced multiple times a week moving forward. Our clean-up crew will be on site Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays to pick-up litter from the sidewalks, tree pits, and benches that have plagued this area for too long. I look forward to receiving your feedback on how conditions improve.

TAKE ACTION

Apply to Your Local Community Board

Do you want to be more involved in our neighborhood? Being a New Yorker means playing an active role in shaping your local community. One way to do this is to get involved with your local Community Board. Community Board members are appointed by Borough President Brewer and Council Members.

Application deadline is February 14: <https://www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov/cbapplication/>

Apply for Funding from the City Council

If you work with a non-profit organization that supports work in District 4, you may be eligible for city funding. The City Council is now accepting applications for expense and capital funding:

- The deadline to submit an expense funding application is Tuesday, February 18, 2020. More information about the application can be found on [the City Council's budget website](#), and the link to start the application is [here](#).
- The deadline to submit a capital funding application to Council Members is Tuesday, March 24, 2020, at 5:00 P.M. The deadline to submit a capital funding application to Council Members *and* the Borough President is Wednesday, February 19, 2020, at 5:00 P.M. The application for capital funding can be found [here](#).

Thank you to those of you who have already contacted my office about applications, and please don't hesitate to reach out to my budget staff member, Kana Ervin at kervin@council.nyc.gov with any questions about the process.

IN THE NEWS

January 7, [New York City Leaders Say Rockefeller Center Street Closures Should Be Permanent](#), *Wall Street Journal*

Some officials are pushing the city to make the holiday street closures around Rockefeller Center permanent, saying the recent experiment to limit the crowded block to pedestrians has been a success.

January 3, [One-On-One With Council Member Keith Powers](#), NY1

In his time in office, Powers has introduced and passed legislation relating to the topics of more affordable housing, government reform, and social issues. The council member recently introduced a bill to manage pedestrian flow in Times Square to make individuals feel safer and travel through the area more efficient. He joined Pat on Mornings On 1 to discuss these 2020 initiatives and more.

January 3, [Bike Safety Improves On UES Amid Deadly Year For City, Pols Say](#), *Patch*

Bike safety measures taken on the Upper East Side in recent years have reduced the number of cyclists hurt and killed in collisions in the neighborhood despite an uptick in cyclist deaths in 2019, local elected officials announced this week.

December 19, [Analysis Shows 14th Street Busway Has Slashed Commute Times On Notoriously Congested Route](#), *Gothamist*

The 14th Street busway is making the notoriously slow cross street bus routes run faster, and riders are taking notice, according to a new report released by City Hall on Wednesday.

SAVE THE DATES

Events with Council Member Powers

Street Skills 301: Rules of the Road with Bike New York, sponsored by Council Member Powers

A **free** evening presentation and discussion for adults and mature teens who want to better understand the rules of the road, as well as their rights and responsibilities on the road. Topics covered include how to avoid common road hazards, basic traffic principles, where to ride on the road, how to safely change lanes, how to utilize bike infrastructure, and more.

Wednesday, January 29, 2020

5:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.

Yorkville Library, 222 East 79th Street

Register here: <https://www.bike.nyc/education/classes/street-skills-class/>

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

Thursday, February 20, 2020

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

Stuyvesant Town Community Center, 449 East 14th Street

Last Thursday of Every Month

Thursday, January 30, 2020

12:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M.

Open Data Training: Essentials of NYC Open Data for Community Insight, sponsored by Council Member Keith Powers

Manhattan Community Board Members, Block Associations, Residents and Neighbors: Come learn NYC Open Data and improve your technology skills at a community workshop with BetaNYC.

Wednesday, February 12, 2020

5:00 P.M. – 7:00 P.M.

NYPL Webster Library, 1465 York Avenue, at 78th street

Learn more and RSVP: opendata-12feb.eventbrite.com

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

CB8 Full Board Meeting
Wednesday, January 22, 2020, at 6:30 P.M.
New York Blood Center, Auditorium
310 East 67th Street

Musical Kabbalat Shabbat in honor of Martin Luther King Jr.
Friday, January 17, 2020, 6:30 P.M.
Or Olam, the East 55th Street Synagogue, 308 East 55th Street

Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) Count
Monday, January 27, 2020, 10:00 P.M. - 4:00 A.M.
Convene at P.S. 116, 210 East 33rd Street
To learn more about HOPE 2019 and to sign up to volunteer, visit nyc.gov/hope or call 311

"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