

Downtown Democratic Club Candidate Survey: Comptroller

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Kevin Parker

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How would you use this position to improve policing in New York? Do you support cutting NYPD funding in order to reallocate funds towards needed services and social programs? Where would you reallocate the funds, if so? What concrete policies would you advocate for to improve policing in NY? *

As Comptroller, I will guide the city on reallocating the NYPD budget into programs that will proactively reduce crime. This will include community mediation and intervention programs, jobs programs, microloans, and youth development programming. Reforms will also include reassigning some police work to civilians, because law enforcement officers are not needed or suited to be school hall monitors, traffic agents, homeless outreach street teams, or amateur social workers. As Comptroller, I will do the most comprehensive audit of the NYPD in its history. He will scrutinize every item of spending and every employee's duties to see where we can increase efficiency and find wasteful spending that should be reallocated to community programs.

How would you go about creating more affordable housing in New York? What about permanent housing for New York's homeless population? Where would you put it? How would you make sure it's actually affordable and sustainable? Would you ever support upzoning in order to create it? Will you accept money from real estate interests? Please be specific on your proposals. *

As comptroller, I would push to create rent-regulated units whose rent limits and income requirements are grounded in reality, as well as workforce Housing for essential workers (health care, transit, teachers, police etc..) to provide affordable rent to working class New Yorkers who do not qualify for existing housing programs. In addition, I would appropriate targeted pension investments for Limited Equity coops (eg. Michell LLama). The city's portfolio of real estate investment trusts must include funds creating affordable housing, and not finance aggressively forcing people out of their homes.

Do you support taxing the wealthy? What specific tax policy changes would you support in New York State and New York City to increase State and City revenue? How will you, at the same time, restore NYC's economic health, employment, tax base, and small businesses, both short-term and long? *

Yes, i support taxing the wealthy.

Secondly, A stimulus from the feds and state taxing of the ultra rich will be critical but we won't be able to Tax our way out of this situation. My office will create full time jobs with living wages and benefits, That includes using the Pension Fund to invest in businesses that invest in New York City and providing small businesses in main street with access to capital and any technical assistance they need.

How should we desegregate our schools? Do you support eliminating the SHSAT? Do you support admissions screens? What concrete changes would you make to our public school system? *

To start desegregating our schools we must begin equally funding all schools equally to ensure students have the resources they need to succeed. In addition, these resources must be extended to all teachers so they can properly educate all students – not just the ones in high-income areas. We cannot improve outcomes for our young people if our city's schools continue to fail them, particularly students of color and those from low income backgrounds. I am an alumnus of the New York City public school system, so the

issues our schools face are deeply personal. While high school graduation rates have increased substantially since the 1990s, nevertheless the four-year dropout rate was still 7.8% in 2019. Our city's public schools are also inexcusably segregated. A 2014 study found that the average white student in the system attends a school whose student body is 68% white; the average black student attends a school that is 12% white. Moreover, although 52% of public school students are low income, the average white student's school is 24% low income students, while the average Black or Hispanic student's school is 70% low income

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What is the path forward on corrections reform? Do you support closing Rikers? Do you support constructing new, borough-based jails? In all boroughs or just some of them? Do you support bail reform? Did you support the recent partial roll back of bail reform? *

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How can New York lead on climate change? Are there any green energy projects we can pursue? Do you support any of the existing pipeline proposals? How can we leverage our financial and economic power to encourage other jurisdictions to be better on the climate? *

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues we are facing in New York City and around the country. It is also an issue that we must address head on to ensure we begin making the necessary changes to save our planet. Our bond investments should include substantial holdings of green and blue bonds, which fund projects that remediate climate change and protect our oceans, respectively.

How will you improve procurement and contracting? How do we cut waste, and how do we make sure women- and minority-owned businesses get a fair shake in the procurement process? *

New York City can and must do more to provide capital to M/WBEs, which ultimately creates economic opportunities for our city's diverse communities. It is a matter of fundamental fairness: our city is 68% people of color and 52% female, yet in 2019 only 4.9% of the total value of city procurement awards went to M/WBEs, and 83% of them received no city contracting dollars. The M/WBE contracting report card from the Comptroller's office was a good first step, but a retrospective evaluation is ineffectual if agencies are not compelled to make proactive changes. This helps explain why, after seven annual reports, the citywide utilization grade has only gone from a D to a C

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What is your plan to save small businesses? How do we make sure, when we come back from COVID, our local businesses are still here? And how do we make sure the enormous amount of commercial vacancies get filled, and not just by big chains snatching up cheap leases? *

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused extreme economic pain to small business around the City. We need a recovery permeated by Economic Justice, not another jobless recovery where Wall Street speculators line their pockets while working class people barely scrape by and small businesses shutter. That is why I have developed a comprehensive agenda for the Comptroller's Office that will meet head-on the health, fiscal, and economic crises brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our businesses are also suffering. As many as a third of our currently shuttered small businesses may never reopen. M/WBEs are faring even worse: in a recent survey, 85% said they will be unable to operate for another six months. As Comptroller, I will partner with our financial institutions, including those the city pension funds utilize, to open access to capital for our small businesses and M/WBEs. This capital infusion will be carefully targeted and tailored to the unique needs of our city's many diverse communities, based on the EJC's recommendations. I will also invest pension funds in our small businesses - including, if needed, partnering with financial institutions and the philanthropic sector to co-create new financial products devoted to providing impact investments for the city's small businesses.

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From what types of assets that NYC currently holds would you divest? *

I would Divest from fossil fuels, private prisons, firearm manufacturers, tobacco companies, and any others whose operations do not reflect our values.

Other than divestment, how would you use the Comptroller's office to push progressive change within NYC and beyond its borders? Give some concrete examples.

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Other than divestment, how would you use the Comptroller's office to push progressive change within NYC and beyond its borders? Give some concrete examples. *

While divesting from these holdings, we must also reward socially responsible corporate practices by investing in companies committed to environmental sustainability, providing capital to underserved communities, addressing income inequality, respecting human rights, and providing equal opportunities to women and people of color. In addition, for the billions that the city invests in funds, we must prioritize funds independently certified as sustainable and socially responsible. The city's portfolio of real estate investment trusts must include funds creating affordable housing, and not finance aggressively forcing people out of their homes. Our bond investments should include substantial holdings of green and blue bonds, which fund projects that remediate climate change and protect our oceans, respectively.

The NYC budget has an enormous amount of waste. That money could be used to provide better services for New Yorkers. Why are you the right person to find that waste and cut it down? *

I am the right person to handle NYC's budget and ensure our money is properly allocated because I truly understand the inequality that exists in our current budgetary system. Income inequality in New York City is stark. The city's poverty rate ranges from 6.3% in Manhattan's Upper East Side to 37.1% in parts of the Bronx – a difference of almost 600%. Government can and must do more to address this inequality. This includes an equitable distribution of investment so that there is programming for job creation and economic development in lower income neighborhoods. Even though the City Charter enshrines a Fair Share doctrine for equitable distribution of physical city-owned facilities, there is none with regard to programmatic funding. As Comptroller, I will institute an annual Fairness Audit of the proposed city budget to evaluate whether there is funding to provide economic opportunity and stability in New York City's lower income neighborhoods. The finalized 2020 Census will be an invaluable resource in determining what areas of the city, as well as demographics, need the most help. Funding must be

targeted toward vocational training, education, food assistance, small business loans, healthcare, and housing. In addition, I will also advocate for the MTA to equitably serve lower income communities.

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How do you plan on continuing to build NY City's funds in the midst of a potential economic downturn? Is there a way in which you can do this while pushing the progressive ideologies that we value in NYC and the surrounding metro area? *

The COVID-19 pandemic has left New York City in one of the most tumultuous crises in history. Yet with proper leadership, our city can not only survive this pandemic, but emerge stronger than we have ever been. Wall Street may have already recovered, but we will fail as a city unless Main Street recovers, too. I am running for Comptroller to bring his leadership, experience, and expertise to the office to implement Economic Justice for All New Yorkers. Economic Justice means a number of things must happen in our city. Firstly, New Yorkers need jobs. Second is jobs. And third is jobs.

But an equitable recovery means more than merely having a job. It means living wage jobs with benefits and an opportunity to build generational wealth. It means affordable housing. It means public safety intertwined with a fair criminal justice system. It means investment in our youth, both in and out of the classroom. It means NYCHA tenants having decent living conditions and a real say in their futures. It means a healthy populace, where we address the Social Determinants of Health instead of waiting for people to get sick and hospitalized. And it means financially literate New Yorkers.

In regards to the NYC pension plans, what is your commitment to awarding City business/contracts to supporting women and minority-owned financial businesses - trading, asset management, auditing, accounting, etc? What about using the pension plans to make environmentally/ESG-friendly investments?

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First, we must invest pension fund dollars in our small businesses. As Comptroller, I will partner with our financial institutions, including those the city pension funds utilize, to open access to capital for our small businesses and M/WBEs. Our pension funds must engage in socially responsible investing, using our investment dollars to send a message to the private sector of what must and must not be their priorities. New York City pension funds have a history of responsible investing, including being some of the first funds in the 80's to divest from apartheid South Africa, and we must continue to set an example to the world. I understands that the Number 1 job of the pension funds is to make money, but we do not need to entertain a false dichotomy between profit and responsibility. He will ensure that pension funds continue to be at the forefront of social value investing.

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?

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