



Friday, May 7, 2021

## Citizens Union 2021 Candidate Questionnaire - Borough President

Dear Candidate,

Congratulations on your decision to run for the office of borough president! Citizens Union appreciates your commitment to serve the public.

In the following pages, you will find questions regarding your positions on various reform issues and your plans for office. The form includes sections on functions of the borough president office, planning and capital budget, and community boards and appointments.

Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for city offices, and to issue our preference for the June primary. Read more about the method, principles, and criteria of the candidate evaluation process [here](#).

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**If you wish to be considered, please submit the questionnaire by April 17 and no later than 48 before your interview.**

If you seek our support, we will also need to schedule an interview with you as part of the evaluation process.

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If you cannot complete the questionnaire in one sitting, you can click Save and Continue Later at the bottom of every page.

Once you submit the questionnaire, you will receive a confirmation email with a PDF file containing your responses. Citizens Union will not be able to see your answers unless you submit the form. We plan to make responses to this questionnaire public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).

For any questions, please email [candidates@citizensunion.org](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org)

We thank you very much for your response.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Your Info

#### Name

Brad M Hoylman

**Seeking office:**

Manhattan Borough President

**In which primary**

Democratic

**Age**

**Education**

**Occupation/Employer**

State Senator

**Previous Offices, Campaigns and  
Community/Civic Involvement**

**Website**

bradhoylman.com

**Twitter**

@bradhoylman

**Facebook**

Brad for BP

**Affirmations**

**Have you completed the required campaign  
finance filings?**

Yes

**Have you qualified to receive matching  
campaign finance funds from the CFB?**

Yes

**Are you willing to be interviewed by Citizens  
Union's Local Candidates Committee?**

Yes

(Please note: interviews are prerequisites for Citizens Union's endorsements)

## Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'G' followed by a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line.

## THE OFFICE OF THE BOROUGH PRESIDENT

### **1. The role of borough presidents often changes depending on the office holder. How would you use the office of the borough president to impact city policies affecting the borough? What is the vision of your office?**

I often say on the campaign trail that my three priorities are affordable housing, affordable housing and affordable housing. We must build more supportive and affordable housing across the borough. I intend to use the Borough President's planning and zoning powers to push aggressively for the repeal of 421-a, to end the failed 80/20 mix of mandatory inclusionary housing, and to mandate the construction of limited equity complexes like Mitchell-Lamas, HDFCs, or Chelsea's Penn South in any future rezonings. We have to stop believing that the market is going to solve this problem and start having government aggressively intervene.

I'd also like to create collective power through the Borough President's office, pushing the envelope for the role of the job as an organizer-in-chief. Using the convening powers of the Borough President's office, which Gale Brewer has demonstrated can be so powerful, I propose the creation of the Manhattan Tenants Union, where residential and commercial tenants can join forces with the assistance of the Borough President and negotiate their rents with their landlords. The problem with landlord - tenant negotiations is always the lack of information and expertise to negotiate rents. I'd overcome that by linking up tenants with mutual landlords to begin those discussions. I'm proud of protecting tenants from eviction by passing the Tenant Safe Harbor Act and rent law reforms, but the next step is making sure tenants have the ability to stay in their apartments moving forward through re-negotiations of their leases.

### **2. The city charter was recently amended to establish an independent, minimum budget for borough presidents. If elected, how will you**

**utilize this new protected status to better serve your borough?**

The independence provided by the amended City Charter frees the Borough President to truly prioritize funding the borough’s needs without concern for other political considerations. That independence will allow me as Borough President to allocate the office’s huge capital budget in a way that gives our neighborhoods a say. I’m proposing what I call Community Board Budgeting—a form of Participatory Budgeting for the Borough President’s office. Let’s divest the Borough President’s broad discretion over capital dollars by delegating substantial authority for capital funding to local community boards.

**3. The charter requires borough presidents to directly engage with city agencies through a borough service cabinet to coordinate service delivery and issues. Yet the nature, level, and quality of collaboration with agencies varies. How will you work with city agencies to ensure meaningful engagement?**

Almost a dozen City agencies regulate our public spaces and streetscape. Their cooperation is critical for the administration of our most precious assets like parks and local transportation networks. I would build on the idea Borough President Brewer has put forward in appointing a Public Realm Czar to coordinate city services and troubleshoot when issues arise. I would also implement a tool I call BoroughSTAT to measure and visualize where city services are being administered and how the City’s budget is being spent. Using this tool we can address ongoing inequalities across Manhattan and ensure our city services are being managed in an efficient way.

**4. Do you support empowering borough presidents to require the appearance of borough commissioner of city agencies for the monthly interagency “cabinet” meetings led by the borough presidents?**

Yes

**5. Borough presidents can hold hearings on any matter of public interest and are charged with establishing a borough-wide complaint program to report public complaints to better service**

**delivery by agencies. How would you use these powers and the position of the office to amplify the concerns of borough residents? What issues might you focus on to improve agency performance or draw public attention?**

First, I would hold a hearing on the outstanding climate resiliency projects in Manhattan. Nine years after Hurricane Sandy, we still only have a piecemeal plan to address flood risk and storm surging in Lower Manhattan. In fact, the West Side above Chambers Street is currently without any plan at all. The City needs to reset the conversation around climate resiliency, and I am prepared to use the Borough President's power to convene a hearing to do that.

Second, I would address the issue of noise pollution. Between traffic congestion and tourist helicopters, Manhattan doesn't have a comprehensive plan to reduce noise pollution. New York is the city that never sleeps, but that doesn't mean it's residents shouldn't be able to get some shut eye. Noise pollution is a serious climate and quality of life issue that I believe the Borough President's office is best positioned to address.

**6. The borough presidents have the authority to introduce legislation yet few borough presidents in recent years have exercised this authority. Would you utilize this power, and, if so, what legislation would you introduce?**

Yes, absolutely. In nine years in the Senate, I passed over 120 bills, so I understand and appreciate the power that legislative proposals can have, and I plan to work closely with the Council to push forward progressive reforms. Here's an example of legislation I plan to introduce shortly after taking office: I believe it is essential that the City start to think of public space and street space as priorities for our future, and as part of that work, I would advance legislation to create an Office of Public Space Management. I've heard from many stakeholders in my district, from Times Square to the East Village, who have shared plans to hold cultural events on a block, invite food carts to mark a holiday, or to host public art or public services on the street, only to have to deal with 7 or 8 agencies at a time. This kind of segmented decision making can make basic improvements to our streetscape multiyear affairs, and we need government to take a holistic approach if we want to see transformation.

# PLANNING AND CAPITAL BUDGET

**7. Developers argue ULURP should be streamlined while community groups and advocates believe more opportunities for input should be provided or that voting thresholds should be changed for application approval. The pandemic has cast further disruption to the process. What reforms to ULURP do you support?**

Having now served as a local activist, a Community Board Chair, and a State Senator, I've had the chance to see a lot of land-use processes in action. I believe there's a lot of room for improvement -- and for less contentious development, in ways that create good new union jobs that serve community residents -- if there's a fulsome conversation up front, before a project is so far into development that there is only room to tinker at the margins. I'd work on a precertification requirement to encourage developers to engage with the community and discuss what the real needs are before a plan is baked. And I will always seek to ensure any ULURP project uses union labor and pays prevailing wages.

**8. The borough presidents make recommendations to the mayor on capital projects as part of the budget process. All of the boroughs combined additionally receive 5 percent of the appropriations in the mayor's capital budget divided between the boroughs based on formulas related to land size and population. What would be your priorities for capital projects in the borough?**

As I mentioned in a previous response, I plan to institute Community Board Budgeting to identify and prioritize capital needs identified by community members. I just did this for discretionary capital funds made available to my State Senate office and as a result, our local community leaders were able to recommend recipients for \$1.5 million in capital funding. Selected projects included gym equipment for a public school and new park fence in Community Board 2, improvements to a community center in Community Board 3, replacing sump pumps for NYCHA in Community Board 4, new laptops for a high school in Community Board 5, and playground improvements in Community Board

7.

**9. If elected, would you post on your website all applications received by your office for capital and expense discretionary funds, as well as groups which ultimately received funding?**

Yes

## **COMMUNITY BOARDS AND APPOINTMENTS**

**10. Borough presidents are charged with establishing a planning office that, among other functions, provides training and technical assistance to community boards on land use issues. The recently formed Civic Engagement Commission is also tasked with providing professional assistance to community boards, in consultation and coordination with borough presidents. Using the planning resources available, how would you use the office to help community boards fulfill their charter mandated responsibilities to provide feedback on land use proposals, while enabling the boards to make decisions independent of the borough president's office?**

Over the last twenty years, as we have responded to successive crises, we have seen communities affected by half-baked plans that have only worsened fears of displacement and disinvestment. It's important that we engage in a real, city-wide process where local stakeholders are consulted and the scale of need across Manhattan is considered. This would be my approach, as I've served as a chair of a community board and was a member for ten years. I plan on instituting community-led rezonings (197-a) with community boards within the first year of my office.

This will require community boards to have access to policy and issue-area expertise to combat corporate messaging. I will invest in training our community board members, on everything from conflict of interest avoidance to land use to diversity and inclusion, and more, to ensure they're equipped to tackle challenges facing their communities. Beyond training, the Borough President must make resources available to community boards on an ongoing basis, so they

can consult specific issue-area experts to prevent them from being outgunned by corporate interests. As Borough President, I will hire dedicated urban planners for community boards to consult when reviewing development proposals and will create a Housing and Development Economist position with the Borough President's office to help community boards determine whether development projects are economically sound and will bring benefits to the community at what cost to the public.

**11. Borough presidents are charged with making hundreds of appointments. What criteria would you use for appointments to positions appointed by the borough president (the Panel on Educational Policy, City Planning Commission, community boards, etc.)? What processes would you put in place for advertising open positions and recruiting qualified candidates that represent the diversity of New York City, and how would you assure that appointments represent the diversity of the borough's neighborhoods?**

I commit to appointing qualified individuals who will be effective at the job to which they will be appointed and I commit to ensuring better diversity across all of my appointments.

We need more NYCHA residents, labor representatives, public school parents, people without college degrees as well as greater gender and racial diversity in the various other positions for which the Borough President makes appointments.

One process I would like to implement is to create a version of the NFL's Rooney Rule for our appointments, to ensure that the office does robust and effective recruitment and that we do not appoint any person without interviewing qualified candidates who reflect the diversity of our borough, from a series of criteria ranging from education level to race to gender identity.

Setting goals is only half of the work where diversity is concerned – we need a renewed effort on recruitment of diverse candidates, and the cultivation of a culture on every Community Board where any person who might serve feels welcome. I would work with the City Council to provide substantial funding in every upcoming city budget for staff and grant money specifically dedicated to



diversity efforts at the Community Board level, and expand the Borough President's reporting to include an annual assessment of the culture of Community Boards according to best practices in diversity and inclusion.

**12. Do you support granting the borough presidents the ability to make an additional appointment to the Board of Standards and Appeals, who would only vote on matters affecting that borough?**

Yes

**13. Do you support establishing independent budgeting for community boards?**

Yes

## MISCELLANEOUS

**14. What experience have you had, if any, with good government and reform issues? (e.g. voting and elections, campaign finance, ethics, police accountability, government transparency and oversight). If you've worked to advance these goals, we'd love to hear about it.**

I am running on my record of progressive reforms. Since first being elected to the State Senate in 2012, I have been an outspoken voice for reforming the way business is done in Albany. I introduced more than a dozen bills to strengthen ethics rules for elected officials, curtail the outsized influence of special interests, and crack down on public corruption – including legislation to limit the outside income that State Legislators were allowed to earn while in office. I was also the sole no vote in the Senate on the 2014 state budget bill that defunded and disbanded the Moreland Commission to Investigate Public Corruption. And I passed groundbreaking reform to strengthen New York's laws against secretive sexual harassment settlements and ensured that the Child Victims Act we passed applied to public institutions, to ensure that there was accountability in the public sector as well as the private sector..

Last summer's protests against police violence and systemic racism made clear how much work remains to address racial injustice in New York. I'm proud to say that in the State Legislature, we passed

historic reforms that responded to the calls of our constituents—including the repeal of 50-a, a ban on police chokeholds, and my Police STAT Act, which requires law enforcement to collect and publicly report demographic information ranging from low-level arrests to in-custody deaths. Believe it or not, we didn't have this information as lawmakers or as the general public before this summer. Because of this legislation, we'll finally have the data necessary to identify and root out the systematic and discriminatory policing practices that law enforcement uses to target Black and Brown New Yorkers. I've also passed legislation to require public reporting of demographic data among New York's judges, so that the public and policymakers have a better sense of the extent to which the men and women enforcing New York's laws reflect our diverse population. And I currently sponsor a bill that's passed the Senate and is pending passage in the Assembly to require more transparency and disclosure around hate crimes reporting.

**15. What are the top three campaign promises or goals, and what action will you take to achieve them if elected? Feel free to reference an answer above rather than restate it.**

First: Increase affordable housing

Second: Create more opportunity for communities of color

Third: Strengthen our social safety net and communities

**16. If you have not addressed this already, in what major ways would your priorities as borough president differ from the incumbent?**

I would like to build on much of the incredible work that Borough President Brewer has done. I would also like to use the office creatively, as I've mentioned throughout the questionnaire, to push forward progressive reforms. An example: Last month I released a new policy proposal to ensure that the benefits of recently-passed marijuana legalization are distributed equitably to communities of color in the borough. The Working to Ensure Equity in Development (W.E.E.D) plan will create a new Cannabis Resource Center to promote and facilitate opportunities for participation in the industry for those who were most harmed by prohibition. The plan aims to foster economic empowerment, community reinvestment, and education.

**What else would you like us to know about yourself?**

Some people have speculated that I want to be Borough President to be closer to my family. But in reality, I want to be Borough President because I want to be closer to the work.

Across the United States and here in New York City, we are experiencing three overlapping crises: the immediate public health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, to which we have lost far too many neighbors; economic devastation of our small businesses, arts and cultural institutions, and accompanying mass unemployment and increasing inequality; and a crisis of structural and systemic racism. These issues have only exacerbated and laid bare existing inequities in Manhattan.

The stakes for New York City's next class of elected leaders are extraordinarily high. They will not only determine whether we recover from these crises, but how it happens, and whether that recovery is broadly shared. Manhattan, in particular, has become increasingly inaccessible to New Yorkers without excessive wealth or small businesses without billion-dollar backers, and those who are working class and have remained are far too often forced to make unreasonable sacrifices to make ends meet. I am running for Manhattan Borough President because this is my home, the people who are suffering are my neighbors and friends, and my

two young daughters' future depends on where we go from here. Manhattan's recovery is our own.

Over the course of my career in Albany, I've passed over 120 bills – I'm proud to say some of them are considered to be the most progressive and consequential in decades. I took on the issue of child sexual abuse by passing the Child Victims Act with Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal. I passed the Police STAT Act, which for the first time requires the NYPD and police departments across the state to share data on the demographics of the people they are arresting and ticketing. I passed GENDA, for the first time establishing statewide anti-discrimination protections for transgender and non-binary New Yorkers. I passed the Protect Our Courts Act, which bars ICE from arresting immigrants in and around our state's courthouses. I helped to pass 2019's rent reforms. I even took on anti-vaxxers by strengthening vaccine requirements for our kids. That one I'm really proud of –especially now during the pandemic– even though I've endured months of crazy protests and even death threats to me and my family. I've also used my power as a State Senator to ban the floating billboards we used to see on the Hudson and East Rivers, to require the State Liquor Authority to create an online database of all of its licenses and their stipulations, and I delivered a major new public space to Manhattan by forcing the NYPD Tow Pound to leave Pier 76 on the West Side's Hudson River Park. I've taken on a lot of fights and made some righteous enemies like the Insurance Industry, Big Tobacco companies, the NRA and the Real Estate Lobby, but if anything, it's energized me to take on the daunting tasks ahead of us in Manhattan.

The work that needs to happen to recover in an equitable way is going to happen on the ground, in our communities, and we need a Borough President who will be an organizer and unwavering resource to the people doing the work. That's why I'm choosing to leave the Senate and run for this office.

**Please feel free to attach any additional information such as resume, campaign brochures, or issues statements.**

Please review your answers by clicking PREVIEW ANSWERS below. You can submit the questionnaire at the bottom of the preview page by clicking SUBMIT.

Once you click SUBMIT, you will receive a confirmation email with a PDF file containing your responses. If you don't see the email, please check your spam box.

If you have any further questions, you may contact us at [candidates@citizensunion.org](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org).