



2026 Special Election Candidate Questionnaire - New York City Council

Citizens Union - Local Candidates Committee

Congratulations on your decision to run for a seat on the New York City Council! Citizens Union appreciates your commitment to serving the public.

For over 125 years, Citizens Union (CU) has been devoted to holding our local government accountable with the highest ethical standards and fighting for political reforms that improve New York democracy (<https://citizensunion.org/issues/>). To promote a competitive and diverse political culture, a fair and open political process, and accountable and responsible government, we evaluate candidates running for office and back those who strongly support reform. Our evaluations are done through questionnaires, independent research, and interviews conducted by our Local Candidates Committee. (<https://citizensunion.org/citizens-union-evaluation-process/>).

As a prerequisite for receiving the support of Citizens Union, please complete the following questionnaire and submit your response by Sunday, March 29, 2026. As you complete the form, you can click "Save" and return to the form later. Once you have completed the questionnaire and submitted your response to us, you will receive a copy of your submission. Your submission will be posted on our website (with the exception of contact info).

Upon receipt of your submission, we will reach out to you or your staff to schedule a virtual interview with members of our Local Candidate Committee. The interview will be recorded. Shortly thereafter, we will announce our support in key priority races to our members and on our website and other channels. Given time constraints and the limited capacity of a member-based organization, we may not be able to evaluate all contests or candidates in this election cycle.

Please feel free to reach out to Citizens Union with any questions or comments at candidates@citizensunion.org.

Thank you very much. We look forward to your response.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Candidate info

Name	Carl Wilson
Age	35
Education	Bachelor of Arts from NYU Tisch
Current job, elected office, or occupation	Candidate

Other elected offices

Chief of Staff to then-Council Member Erik Bottcher & Community Board 4 Liaison for Former Council Speaker Corey Johnson

Previous jobs or positions

Director of External Affairs at The Fifth Avenue Association, Executive Board of Hell’s Kitchen Democrats, & Executive Board of Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club.

Campaign contact information

Website	www.carlwilsonnyc.com
X	@CarlMichaelW
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INTRODUCTION

1. What are your top three campaign promises or goals, and what action will you take to achieve them if elected?

1. Commit to developing deeply affordable housing: accelerate the creation of permanently affordable homes, protect tenants from displacement, and ensure new development actually serves the people who live and work in District 3.
2. Build out accessible and reliable public transit options and infrastructure.
3. Deliver on quality-of-life issues: take a hands-on, accountable approach to sanitation, street conditions, public safety, and other everyday concerns that directly impact New Yorkers’ daily lives.

2. How long have you lived in the district in which you are running, and do you have any achievements or involvement in your district you are particularly proud of?

I have lived in District 3 for the past decade, and this community has shaped both my personal and professional life. When I first moved to Hell’s Kitchen, I helped organize with local activists to build the Hell’s Kitchen Democrats into a strong, progressive voice on the West Side. That early grassroots work grounded me in the neighborhoods I now serve.

Throughout my time in government, I am most proud of the hands-on constituent work I’ve led. From answering phones to resolving complex issues with City agencies, I’ve worked every day to make government more responsive to our neighbors. Whether helping a tenant facing eviction, supporting a small business, or navigating city services for seniors, this on-the-ground work is at the heart of public service.

I have also contributed to major policy and planning efforts that will shape the future of our district. I helped author and pass first-in-the-nation gun violence prevention legislation requiring warning signage at

firearm retailers. I played a role in advancing the City's Urban Forest Master Plan to expand tree canopy and combat extreme heat, and I have been engaged in the Midtown South Rezoning to create new housing opportunities. Additionally, I served as Chair of the Community Advisory Committee for the Times Square casino proposal, where I worked to ensure a transparent, community-driven review process.

These experiences reflect my deep commitment to this district and to delivering results that improve life for the people who call it home.

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

Throughout my time working in the New York City Council, I've had direct experience advancing and implementing good government reforms focused on transparency, accountability, and expanding civic participation. I supported legislation like Intro 441-A, which helps ensure New York City public school students receive voter registration materials, an important step in strengthening civic engagement and building lifelong participation in our democracy.

Beyond any single bill, my experience has been grounded in the day-to-day work of making government more responsive and accountable to the people it serves. As Chief of Staff to Erik Bottcher, I have overseen constituent services and worked closely with City agencies to resolve issues ranging from housing and public safety to sanitation and infrastructure. That work requires navigating bureaucratic systems, pushing agencies for transparency, and ensuring New Yorkers get clear and timely answers from their government.

I have also been deeply engaged in oversight and intergovernmental coordination, working with agencies and community stakeholders to track implementation of policies, ensure compliance, and elevate community concerns. Whether advocating for clearer communication from agencies, helping residents access services, or supporting reforms that expand access to the democratic process, I have consistently approached public service with a focus on openness, fairness, and accountability.

4. What do you think the role of the City Council is in city government this term?

The New York City Council plays a critical role as both a legislative body and a check on the executive branch, particularly in a time of economic uncertainty and growing inequality. This term, the Council must not only pass laws, but also assert its oversight authority to ensure that city agencies are transparent, accountable, and responsive to New Yorkers' needs. That means holding rigorous hearings, demanding data, and pushing back when policies fall short.

At the same time, the Council has a responsibility to be proactive, advancing bold legislation that addresses the city's most pressing challenges, from affordable housing and public safety to education and worker protections. It must also serve as the closest link between constituents and City Hall, elevating community voices and ensuring that policymaking reflects the lived experiences of everyday New Yorkers.

ELECTIONS AND VOTING

5. New York City is one of few cities that maintains a closed primary system, in which only registered party members can vote in the primary election. Over one million independent (“unaffiliated”) voters are excluded from participating in the primary election, and their number is growing. Do you believe New York City should shift to a form of open primaries, allowing all registered voters to vote in one primary, where the top vote-getters, regardless of party affiliation, move on to the general election?

Yes

6. Do you support maintaining the use of Ranked Choice Voting in New York City elections?

Yes

7. The New York City Board of Elections (NYC BOE) has been a source of frustration for voters and candidates for years. The City Council appoints NYC BOE members and has the power to appoint commissioners who are committed to reform, but the most recent commissioners have been appointed behind closed doors. Do you commit to press for a public hearing for BOE nominees and to only vote for individuals who are publicly committed to reducing party-based patronage and supporting open hiring practices?

Yes

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

8. Individuals with business ties to city government and registered lobbyists can bypass their donation limits by “bundling” donations from other people. Do you support limiting bundling by people on the Doing Business with the City database?

Yes

9. Are you a supporter of the City's public campaign matching funds program, and do you commit to protecting the independence of the program and ensuring that the Campaign Finance Board has sufficient resources to run the program?

Yes

ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT

10. The recent pattern of indictments and resignations surrounding City Hall in the previous administration has exposed serious ethical problems in City Government. Please describe how you will maintain the highest ethical standards in office.

I will lead with transparency, accountability, and zero tolerance for corruption. I will refuse contributions that present conflicts of interest and strengthen oversight by supporting independent watchdogs and robust enforcement of ethics laws. I will ensure my office operates with clear guidelines, regular ethics training, and open communication with constituents. Public service is a public trust, and I will work every day to earn and protect that trust by putting New Yorkers first.

11. The ban on using City resources for electioneering has been eroding in recent years - particularly when the legislative and executive branches are on opposing sides of a ballot referendum. This activity is clearly prohibited by the City Charter, but no government agency has stepped in to regulate or put a stop to it. The City Council spent millions of dollars on mailers and a campaign opposing the housing ballot questions proposed by the 2025 Charter Revision Commission, after conducting a similar campaign in 2024. Do you support closing the loophole that allows public officials to violate the electioneering ban without facing consequences by empowering the Conflicts of Interest Board to enforce existing restrictions?

Yes

12. Incoming public servants must sever ties and divest from companies or other interests that have business dealings with the City, but they are not required to recuse themselves when working on matters involving their former business partners, clients, employer, etc. Do you support forbidding public servants to work on matters relating to their former business partners, clients, employers, and other interests for a set period of time?

Yes

13. Some campaign consultants also work as lobbyists. Do you support restricting campaign consultants from lobbying their former clients for a period of two years after their client has won elected office?

Yes

14. Do you support moving lobbying oversight and enforcement from the City Clerk's Office to another agency charged with ethics issues, like the Conflicts of Interest Board?

Yes

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

15. Who do you think should have the final decision on discipline in the New York City Police Department? (i.e., Place the final decision with the Police Commissioner; the Civilian Complaint Review Board; the Mayor; the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety; or another individual or entity).

I believe the Police Commissioner should have the final decision on discipline in the New York City Police Department, but they need to work closely with the Civilian Complaint Review Board, and I am very interested in working with Mayor Mamdani on starting the Department of Community Safety. No job comes without oversight, however, so we need to make sure there are checks and balances in place to the Commissioner to ensure an equal share of power.