

What You Need to Know About the Borough President Races

They are like mini-mayors (with a lot less power) who serve as cheerleaders for their borough and arbiters of certain community services. Here we explain exactly what the office is about and why you should pay attention to the race in your borough.

BY RACHEL HOLLIDAY SMITH, THE CITY

The boroughs are about to get a slew of new official cheerleaders.

Four of the five borough presidents in New York City are about to leave office due to term limits, and the race is on to fill their empty seats.

In The Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Staten Island, voters will soon choose replacements for the current office-holders: respectively, Ruben Diaz Jr., Eric Adams (who is running for mayor), Gale Brewer (who is running for her old seat in the City Council) and James Oddo.

Donovan Richards was sworn in recently as the first Black man to hold the position of Queens Borough President after winning a special election last year. And he'll have to win another race in 2021 to keep the role.

But before we get to the candidates in the running, let's back up to go over the basics of the office. We'll update this guide as the campaign moves forward:

What is a borough president anyway, and what do they do?

A borough president is an advocate for their borough in a number of ways.

First, they have a sizable chunk of change at their disposal to fund local initiatives, groups, and projects like buying technology for public schools, renovating local parks or spearheading community health outreach.

Borough presidents share about 5% of the city budget to fund things in their borough — about \$4 billion among them, according to the city's Campaign Finance Board.

Borough presidents can also introduce bills in the City Council, though they do not get a vote.

They weigh in on land use proposals — in other words, development projects that need public approval — with an advisory vote and written decision. Their input is not binding, but it can be quite influential if they are staunchly for or against a project and lobby Council members or the mayor.

Working with local City Council members, Borough presidents also appoint all members of community boards, the local bodies that weigh in on everything from new bike lanes to liquor licenses for restaurants. With that power, the borough presidents can exert significant sway over neighborhood-level politics and projects.

In addition to their formal powers, the borough presidents play an important role as a champion and booster for their borough, calling news conferences to shed light on issues they believe need attention and making appearances at ribbon cuttings, groundbreaking, and cultural events.

Who's running for borough president?

Here, in alphabetical order, are the candidates for each of the races as of January, according to CFB records:

The Bronx

- [Fernando Cabrera](#)
- [Nathalia Fernandez](#)
- [Vanessa Gibson](#)
- [Victor Gutierrez](#)
- [Samuel Ravelo](#)
- Luis Sepulveda

Brooklyn

- Robert Cornegy
- [Kimberly Council](#)
- [Khari Edwards](#)
- [Robert Elstein](#)
- Mathieu Eugene
- [Pearlene Fields](#)
- [Anthony T. Jones](#)
- [Shanduke McPhatter](#)
- [Robert Ramos Jr.](#)
- [Antonio Reynoso](#)
- [Jo Anne Simon](#)
- [Lamor Whitehead-Miller](#)

Manhattan

- [Lindsey Boylan](#)
- [Elizabeth Caputo](#)
- [Brad Hoylman](#)
- [Benjamin Kallos](#)
- [Mark Levine](#)
- [Kimberly Watkins](#)

Queens

- [Elizabeth Crowley](#)
- [Danniel Maio](#)
- [Stan Morse](#)
- [Donovan Richards](#)
- [Diana Sanchez](#)
- [Jimmy Van Bramer](#)

Staten Island

- Lorraine Honor
- [Steven Matteo](#)
- [Leticia Remauro](#)

The NYC Board of Elections has resources on how to register to vote [here](#), and you can find important dates and deadlines [here](#) (state BOE) and [here](#) (city BOE).