

Borough Presidents



Mark Levine (Manhattan)

As Manhattan's 28th Borough President, Mark Levine is informed by decades of experience in public service and is driven by a deep care for Manhattan and its people. He is a strong believer in the power of local governance to shape lasting change and continuously improve our city for the next generation of New Yorkers.

Since assuming office on January 1, 2022, Borough President Levine has been working to create a more equitable, more resilient, and healthier city by striving to ensure the policies, solutions, and work of the Manhattan Borough President's office benefit everyday people, especially historically disenfranchised communities.

While in office, Borough President Levine has successfully launched initiatives to strengthen equity and resilience throughout the borough, including:

The Million More Trees plan, which will expand the urban canopy, especially in chronically underplanted neighborhoods.

The Manhattan Small Business Booster Loans program, which has provided \$2 million in interest-free loans to local entrepreneurs suffering from the pandemic.

Steering the effort to establish an **NYC Waterfront Protection Agency** that would lead the design, construction, management, and governance of coastal resiliency projects, currently overseen by 11 different city agencies.

The Campaign to Curb Congestion, which advocates for the implementation of two-way, variable congestion pricing, reforming e-commerce and deliveries, and expanding cycling infrastructure, especially through a dedicated bike lane on the West Side Highway.

The Borough President also strives to create a civic and political life in Manhattan that is more accessible and transparent so that all people have equal representation and a place to voice their concerns and values.

Borough President Levine leans heavily on his past experiences as a public school teacher, community organizer, and two-term member of the New York City Council.

Combined, these experiences have allowed him to encounter New Yorkers of all walks of life and instilled in him a set of values that prioritize compassion, cultural understanding, and curiosity – all of which motivate his work as Manhattan Borough President.

At the start of his career, Mark taught bilingual math and science at Junior High School 149 in District 7 in the South Bronx. During his visits with students in their homes and around the community, Mark saw first-hand the struggles of many of the families and became determined to make a lasting change.

After noticing that many of these families were being held back by the lack of financial services in the neighborhood, Mark found the Neighborhood Trust Federal Credit Union, a community development financial institution, which has made \$25 million (and counting) in small loans to low-income families and small businesses in Northern Manhattan.

Mark was twice elected to represent the 7th City Council District – one of the most diverse in New York City – covering West Harlem/Hamilton Heights, Morningside Heights, and parts of the Upper West Side and Washington Heights.

In his eight years in the City Council, Mark was a leading voice in New York City for tenants rights, public health, and equity in our schools, transit, parks, and housing.

In a historic first for the nation, Mark passed legislation guaranteeing a right to counsel for tenants facing eviction in New York City's housing courts. The data is now irrefutable – the Right to Counsel law is a core reason why New Yorkers facing eviction are staying in their homes, off the streets, and out of the shelter system.

As chair of the City Council Health Committee, Mark rose to national prominence as a leader in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. He has fought for health policy based on science and has consistently taken on the racial inequity of both the pandemic and healthcare more broadly.

While chairing the Council's Parks Committee in his first term, Mark championed greater investment in our city's green spaces – securing tens of millions of dollars in funding for neglected parks in low-income neighborhoods.

He has been a champion for improved bus service, more accessible subway stations, and streets that are safer for all, including pedestrians and bicyclists.

Mark earned a B.A. in physics from Haverford College and a master's in public policy from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

Mark lives with his family in Washington Heights. He and his wife, Ivelisse, are proud parents of their sons, Alejandro and Daniel. Mark speaks Spanish, Hebrew, and a smattering of other languages.



Vanessa L. Gibson (Bronx)

On November 2nd, 2021, Vanessa L. Gibson was elected to be the 14th Bronx Borough President to serve the over 1.4 million residents and families that call the Bronx home.

A native New Yorker, Ms. Gibson began her career serving the people of the west Bronx. In January 2001, while a student at the University at Albany, Ms. Gibson joined the New York State Assembly Intern Program and was assigned to then-Assemblywoman Aurelia Greene. As an Intern, she worked on legislation for the Assemblywoman, attended meetings and met with constituents and community groups on behalf of the office.

Upon graduation, Ms. Gibson served as Legislative Aide, and then advanced to District Manager, overseeing the Bronx office. In this position, she was responsible for the

day-to-day operations of the district office, supervising the staff and all administrative and constituent services. Ms. Gibson would serve as the District Manager for several years until Assemblywoman Aurelia Greene resigned from office in May 2009 after twenty-eight years in the Assembly. With community and family support, Ms. Gibson decided to run for the New York State Assembly and was elected to this position in a special election on June 2, 2009 to represent the residents and families of the 77th District in the Bronx.

Ms. Gibson served for two terms in the NYS Assembly and then ran for an open seat in the New York City Council in 2013, to replace the term-limited Council Member Helen Diane Foster. Ms. Gibson was elected to the New York City Council in November 2013. As a Council Member, Ms. Gibson was a leader in education, affordable housing, public safety and criminal justice reform. Ms. Gibson was also an advocate for alternatives to incarceration, tenant protections, increased training for our police officers and held the distinction of being the first African-American woman chair of the New York City Council Public Safety Committee.

In 2017, she joined then-Council Member Mark Levine in passing the landmark Right to Counsel Legislation, which provides free legal representation for income-eligible tenants facing eviction in Housing Court. Ms. Gibson has also championed legislation mandating the Mayor's Office of Food Policy create a ten-year food strategy for the City of New York that identifies food policies, access to healthier food options, using community gardens, urban agriculture and access to Health Bucks to address food deserts.

In 2020, she announced her run for Bronx Borough President with a mission to move the Bronx forward with a focus on public safety, food equity, housing insecurity, health and wellness, gender equity, support for the LGBTQIA+ community and a myriad of other issues. Ms. Gibson won her primary election in June, the general election in November, and now proudly represents the borough of the Bronx as the first woman and African-American Bronx Borough President. Despite several challenges during the

beginning of her first term, Ms. Gibson is optimistic for better days ahead in the Bronx, and is honored and thankful for the opportunity to serve in elected office for such a time as this.



Donovan Richards (Queens)

Donovan Richards Jr., a lifelong resident of Southeast Queens, was elected Borough President in November 2020 and sworn in one month later.

As a child, he attended Jamaica High School and Redemption Christian Academy before studying communications, radio, and TV at Nyack College. He later received a degree in Aviation Management from Vaughn College in East Elmhurst.

Following the tragic killing of a close friend during his teenage years, the Borough President got involved in his community and the fight against gun violence, holding numerous positions in the City Council before being elected in 2013 to represent District 31, serving Southeast Queens and the eastern Rockaway Peninsula.

As a Council Member, he chaired influential committees on Environmental Protection and Public Safety, while also leading the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises, resulting in historic citywide investments in affordable housing, police oversight, clean energy and infrastructure — including a \$2 billion investment in new sewer and water infrastructure to alleviate chronic flooding issues across Southeast Queens.

As Queens Borough President, he has been a tireless advocate for **The World's Borough**. Over the course of his administration, Borough President Richards has

allocated more than \$100 million dollars across Queens' schools, cultural institutions, hospitals, libraries, parks and more.

In the wake of Hurricane Ida, the Borough President formed Operation Urban Sustainability to combat climate change, while continuing to push for the installation of new grey and green infrastructure to make Queens a more resilient borough.

To better support the more than 1 million immigrants who call The World's Borough home, he created the Immigrant Welcome Center at **Queens Borough Hall** in 2021, which has served hundreds of individuals over its first two years.

To help rebuild the Queens economy, Borough President Richards created the Queens Small Business Grant program to connect Queens entrepreneurs impacted by COVID-19 with more than \$15 million in no-strings grants, while also securing a commitment from JetBlue to keep its headquarters in Queens and overseeing the massive redevelopments of both LaGuardia and Kennedy airports.

The Borough President has also empowered numerous historically disadvantaged communities through initiatives such as the Youth and Young Adult Council, Downtown Jamaica Improvement Council, the Queens Tech + Innovation Challenge and Borough Hall on Your Block, as well as task forces to support the communities of Corona and College Point.

Borough President Richards lives in Rosedale with his wife, Tameeka, and his son, Donovan III.



Antonio Reynoso

Elected as the first Latino Brooklyn Borough President, Antonio Reynoso is a native Brooklynite, born and raised along with two sisters in South Williamsburg to Dominican immigrants. Antonio's early life was one of financial insecurity and reliance on social benefits while he also worked and contributed to his family's livelihood. However, he found opportunities through education.

Education was the key to making it in life, and his parents instilled that belief in a young Reynoso. He attended La Salle Academy on a full-scholarship and received a BA in Political Science from Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York, also on a scholarship. After graduation, he returned to Brooklyn and began working for the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), an international collection of autonomous community-based organizations that advocated for low- and moderate-income families.

In 2009, he joined the staff of City Councilwoman Diana Reyna, working in constituent services and quickly rose to become Chief of Staff. When the term-limited Councilwoman stepped down Antonio Reynoso, for the first time, ran for elective office as a candidate to replace his former mentor as City Council Representative for Council District 34, representing portions of Bushwick, Greenpoint, and Williamsburg in Brooklyn, and Ridgewood, Queens.

As a member of the City Council, Antonio Reynoso demonstrated his commitment to advocating for the residents he represented, and the thousands more throughout the city with similar needs. He focused his energy on quality-of-life issues, including waste-management, policing, tenant safety, transportation, and land-use where he took the lead in advocating for the rezoning of Bushwick, Brooklyn.

Experiencing and witnessing injustices in multiple facets of everyday life, he has dedicated his career to advocating for bold, progressive legislation citywide that improves the lives of his family, friends, neighbors, and constituents.

As two-time Chair of the Sanitation Committee, he had a resounding impact on a major concern that affected both the environment, and health of New Yorkers, as he led the charge to reduce the tonnage of trash in Northern Brooklyn by 50 percent. As thousands of Black and Latino New Yorkers were arbitrarily being stopped and frisked by members of the NYPD, Reynoso was instrumental in the passage of the Right to Know Act. Witnessing the rise of harassment of building tenants by unscrupulous landlords using construction and repairs as modes of harassment by making residency untenable, Reynoso had a crucial role in passing the Tenant Safety Act to protect tenants' rights.

Now, Reynoso is serving Brooklyn to make the borough the progressive capital of the world by building on his extensive record in the City Council. Reynoso's twin guiding principles throughout his life, have always been the concepts of justice and equity, and he has vowed to fight each and every day to give all Brooklynites the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

Antonio Reynoso lives in Williamsburg with his wife and two sons.

Vito Fossella (Staten Island)

In March 2021, Fossella announced that he was running for Borough president of Staten Island. He was endorsed by Donald Trump and won the Republican nomination in July 2021. He was elected borough president after defeating opponents Mark Murphy and Leticia Remauro. Fossella won the November general election. He took office in January 2022.

Early life, education, and family

Fossella was born on Staten Island into a Roman Catholic family of Irish and Italian descent. Fossella's great-grandfather James A. O'Leary represented Staten Island in Congress from 1935 to 1944. One of his uncles, Frank Fossella, was a prominent Staten Island Democrat who was a City Council member in 1985. His father, Vito John

Fossella Sr., served in various appointed positions in the city administrations of Democratic Mayors Edward I. Koch and Abraham D. Beame, then became a successful construction engineer.

- Democrat-turned-Republican
- Positions
 - Council
 - House of Representatives
 - Staten Island Borough President

Fossella's council initiatives included:

- Authoring the legislation that led to the agreement to close the [Fresh Kills Landfill](#) permanently
- Conceiving the idea of the South Richmond Rezoning Study, a comprehensive rezoning initiative on Staten Island
- Securing funding for constructing P.S. 56 and P.S. 6, the first new schools built on Staten Island in over a decade.

Family scandal and congressional retirement

Before Fossella announced that he would not run in 2008, he was included in the National Republican Congressional Committee's list of Republican candidates who qualified for fundraising help because they were considered particularly vulnerable.

Steve Harrison hoped to run against Fossella again in the 2008 election, but New York City Council member Domenic Recchia also began seeking the Democratic nomination.

Fossella became mired in controversy in May 2008. He was, first, arrested in Alexandria, Virginia. Details of his arrest led to the revelation that Fossella, a self-proclaimed "family values" politician, had kept a secret second family in Washington, D.C., including a three-year old child that he had fathered out-of-wedlock. Fossella, at first, indicated that he might run for re-election despite these problems. On May 20, however, he dropped out of the race. Fossella was succeeded by Democrat Michael McMahon.