

# Framing the 2005 Mayoral Debate:



## Issues & Proposals for the Candidates

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Issues & Proposals for  
the Candidates

## Credits

This report was written by David Jason Fischer, Alyssa Katz and Tara Colton from the Center for an Urban Future; Chris Jones, Jeffrey Zupan and Robert Pirani from Regional Plan Association; Andrew White and Sharon Lerner from the Center for New York City Affairs at Milano Graduate School; and Norman Fruchter from the New York University Institute for Education and Social Policy. It was edited by David Jason Fischer and designed by Jeff Ferzoco. Alex Yablon, Jonathan Bowles and Mia Lipsit provided additional research and editorial support.

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## Who We Are

### **Center for an Urban Future** [www.nycfuture.org](http://www.nycfuture.org)

The Center for an Urban Future is a policy institute committed to improving the overall economic health of New York City for its residents and businesses. The Center combines journalistic-style investigative research with traditional policy analysis to develop innovative and achievable agendas for policy change primarily in the areas of economic development, workforce development, higher education and the arts.

### **Center for New York City Affairs at Milano, The New School for Management and Urban Policy** [www.newschool.edu/milano/nyc affairs](http://www.newschool.edu/milano/nyc affairs)

The Center for New York City Affairs is a nonpartisan institute dedicated to advancing innovative public policies that strengthen neighborhoods, support families and reduce urban poverty. Our tools include rigorous analysis; skillful journalistic research; candid public dialogue with stakeholders and opinion leaders; and strategic planning with government officials, nonprofit practitioners and community residents. The Center's original, applied research and analysis address policies affecting immigrant communities; strategies for improving access to human services; and the reform of the city's child protection and foster care systems.

### **Regional Plan Association** [www.rpa.org](http://www.rpa.org)

Regional Plan Association (RPA) is an independent, not-for-profit regional planning organization that improves the quality of life and the economic competitiveness of the 31-county New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region through research, planning, and advocacy. For more than 80 years, RPA has been shaping transportation systems, protecting open spaces, and promoting better community design for the region's continued growth. We anticipate the challenges the region will face in the years to come, and we mobilize the region's civic, business, and government sectors to take action.

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# Introduction

## Framing the Debate

In an ideal world, candidates in the quadrennial race for the New York City mayoralty would compete with one another to propose the best new ideas for improving the city. They would clearly state their priorities and drive an informed and interactive debate about the future. But instead of a policy debate, our mayoral elections more often play out along lines of personality, race, ethnicity, and scandal. Even in the wake of the horrific events of September 11th, the media coverage of the short general election campaign did not leave much room for argument over the issues.

Our three organizations – Regional Plan Association, the Center for New York City Affairs at Milano Graduate School and the Center for an Urban Future – have come together in an effort to elevate the conversation and frame a set of critical issues facing the city for the mayoral campaign of 2005. It is our hope that this set of concise and accurate appraisals of current problems and pragmatic options for improvement will offer a valuable tool for New Yorkers seeking thoughtful feedback on core issues from the candidates and provide a common, substance-based framework for the media covering the campaign.

We don't pretend that this Policybook covers every issue of importance to the city. The document offers no discussion of public safety, homeland security or health care costs, for example. Considerations of brevity, space, and the specific expertise of the three partner organizations all informed these decisions. The issues included are those that each of our organizations, within our areas of expertise, thought were most relevant and resonant with a large segment of the public in New York City, and with the media who do so much to shape popular perceptions of the candidates and the race.

While there was extensive collaboration on all of the material in the report, each organiza-

tion had the lead responsibility for different sections – the Center for an Urban Future for Education, Housing and Community Development, and Workforce Development; the Center for New York City Affairs for Homelessness, Child Care and Early Education, and Child, Youth and Family Services; and Regional Plan Association for Economic Development, Transportation, and Environment, Open Space and Sanitation.

Each chapter discusses both core issues and proposed solutions. The issues are presented as a series of questions that every mayoral candidate needs to answer. The solutions describe major proposals that civic organizations (including our own), academics and others have recommended to address these issues. Though we have made a conscious effort to present a range of viewpoints, we make no pretense of being unbiased. The leading proposals in each section reflect years of policy research and advocacy by all three of our organizations, as well as input from a network of experts and policy groups.

It is our hope that the Policybook will focus new and substantial discussion on the issue areas we cover, while inspiring the candidates, the press and the voters to think grand thoughts about the future of New York City. Specific policies and proposals are important, but so is vision: our city is in the midst of tremendous economic, demographic and social changes. It is up to the city's leadership to attempt to harness and guide those forces of change, and it is up to the voters – well-informed or not – to choose those leaders.

## Crosscutting Issues

A good mayor is more than the sum of his or her policy positions. Leadership, personal integrity and communication skills are just as important to many voters. This report does not attempt to provide guidance for judging these qualities in a candidate. However, there are a few common threads that link together the nine policy areas described in the following pages. How the next mayor addresses these crosscutting challenges will in large measure determine his or her success implementing solutions to issues as wide ranging as homelessness and transportation.

## Fiscal Policy

Most policy solutions eventually come back to money – how much should be allocated to specific services and programs and, by implication, where these resources should come from. The ideas we discuss in this report have a range of fiscal implica-

tions. Some, such as better coordination of the city's workforce development programs, could be implemented with little or no cost. Others, such as expanding rent subsidies to families at risk of becoming homeless, can be implemented either through cost savings or reallocating resources from other programs. Still others, including major transportation investments, would require new resources from taxes, user fees, federal and state aid or other sources, and in several instances the report identifies potential sources that could provide these revenues.

In aggregate, however, there is no getting around the fact that the needs of the city outstrip the resources available to pay for them, and that difficult choices need to be made. Most fiscal analysts agree that the substantial growth in tax and other revenues that has recently benefited the city, much of it related to a sizzling real estate market, is not likely to continue. More probable are large budget deficits, beginning in 2007, which will have to be filled through either reduced spending or higher taxes and fees. Both the New York City and New York State Comptrollers predict that the city's budget gap will average over \$4 billion per year from 2007 to 2009. Even these projections do not take into account developments that could increase the gap, such as upcoming collective bargaining with several city employee unions and additional city education spending that could be required as a result of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) court decision.

The mayor sets budget and revenue priorities and is the most important player in establishing the city's fiscal policies, but other actors also exercise substantial authority over the budget. Well over half of city expenditures are often characterized as "uncontrollable." Some of these, such as Medicaid or retirement pensions, are mandated by the state or federal governments, while others, like debt service, are the result of past spending commitments. However, as argued by the Citizens Budget Commission in "The Myth of the Uncontrollables," (May 2005), the mayor could play a role in pushing for reform of several of these items. The state legislature also has to approve of changes in income and sales taxes, leaving property taxes and fees as the only major revenue sources completely under the city's control. The City Council also has to approve the budget and usually extracts marginal changes in the mayor's proposal. Finally, the Financial Control Board established during the city's

fiscal crises in the 1970s has to certify that the budget is balanced under approved accounting guidelines.

Given the possibility that the next mayor will face a budget shortfall, it is reasonable to ask mayoral candidates how they propose to close these gaps and balance the budget. Often, candidates will not stray far beyond the least controversial or most general recommendations, such as eliminating bureaucratic waste and seeking more money from Washington or Albany. Unfortunately, administrative efficiencies can only solve a small portion of the problem and the political prospects of winning substantially more aid from the state or federal governments are slight. In contrast, organizations like the New York City Independent Budget Office and the Citizen's Budget Commission have identified more focused options for cost savings or new revenues. Some are relatively small in dollar terms, such as consolidating senior citizen centers or eliminating the tax exemption for Madison Square Garden, while others could add up to substantial sums. But nearly all would cause pain for someone and would trigger political resistance.

On the spending side, major cost reduction proposals have targeted city pensions, labor agreements and Medicaid. Advocates of pension reform have cited the relatively high pensions of city and state employees compared to other states, and proposed changes such as higher employee contributions or a later retirement age. Other proposals to hold down labor costs have focused on extracting productivity savings in exchange for salary increases, something most recent mayors have sought with only limited success. Medicaid is a particular challenge, both because the stakes are so large and the mayor's control is so limited, with costs largely dictated by state and federal policymakers. At \$4.7 billion, city Medicaid costs are one of the largest and fastest growing parts of the city's budget, rising by 45 percent just since 2001. Although the program provides a critical safety net for the poor, a rising portion goes to middle-class and even wealthy individuals for long term care. And recent reporting by the *New York Times* indicates that unchecked fraud could be costing billions statewide. The mayor's influence, however, is limited to his ability to lobby for change as the state's most powerful local government leader.

Major revenue increases from higher taxes, water rates, bridge tolls or other sources run the

risk of weakening the city's economic competitiveness, but so do deteriorating services or failure to keep up with infrastructure and other improvements being implemented in other cities. Advocates for many of the solutions we discuss in this Policybook argue that higher taxes and fees that pay for well-targeted investments in human and physical infrastructure can pay off in lower costs or increased revenues over the long run: for example, investments in early childhood education have been shown to reduce criminal activity, drop out rates and other outcomes that raise the costs of city services, and transportation investments can lead to increased economic growth and tax revenues. While reforms to control spending are needed, some tax and fee increases are also likely to be needed to maintain service levels required for a competitive economy. The next mayor will have to balance the potential risks and rewards in terms of impact on both the business climate and quality of life for city residents.

### **Management Innovation and Efficiency**

In addition to fiscal management, a large part of the mayor's job is to effectively run the vast and complicated machinery of government. While new policies and programs may get the lion's share of public attention, most of the city workforce – and the municipal budget – is taken up with the nuts and bolts of a host of city services, such as delivering clean tap water, removing snow from city streets and running city hospitals. Neglecting these basic services can lead to a failed mayoralty. Similarly, management innovations, such as those that helped decrease water rates under Mayor Dinkins, reduce crime under Mayor Giuliani, or led to the 311 service under Mayor Bloomberg, can be an important part of a mayor's legacy. To a large extent, the issues and solutions addressed in these chapters require policy decisions rather than management innovations. However, several suggest strategic reforms that could lead to more effective programs and service delivery. An incentive program that tackles the inequitable distribution of teacher quality across the city could improve educational achievement in low-income neighborhoods, for example. And the skillful reinvestment of savings from reduced use of homeless shelters and foster care in a neighborhood-based safety net could vastly improve the accessibility and quality of basic social services.

### **Openness and Transparency**

How a mayoral administration interacts with other representatives of the public – elected officials, the

media, civic and community organizations, as well as individual citizens – is another important barometer of how well it serves the public interest. The administration's willingness to share information allows the public to evaluate its performance, correct excesses and maintain trust in city government. Officials' openness to ideas, critiques and collaborations can lead to stronger policies and greater innovation. In addition, the mayor's relationships with the City Council, labor unions, state officials, and business and civic groups have tremendous bearing on his or her ability to get things done.

The structure of New York City government gives enormous authority to the mayor. Like most chief executives, the instinct of most mayors is to protect and expand the powers of the office – an instinct that generally runs counter to increasing public access to government. But openness has its benefits as well, including the political goodwill that accrues to leaders who operate in a collaborative spirit. Some of the ideas in the chapters that follow suggest ways to encourage a healthy transparency, and effective policies that have a broad base of support.

The tone of a mayoralty is established at the top and generally cuts across the entire administration, and can influence the civic spirit of the entire city. Assessing the candidates' likely approach to leadership, openness and transparency is an important part of judging the fairness and effectiveness of his or her likely policies, as well as how they will be perceived by different constituencies.

# Economic Development

## Overview

**E**conomic development involves far more than stadiums, real estate projects and business subsidies. While these actions generally define the public's perception of a mayor's economic policies, anything that helps businesses add jobs can be considered economic development.

Clearly, the national economy and regional business cycles are major factors in determining the city's economic performance, and economists have hotly debated how much difference a mayor can actually make. However, the mayor has a number of tools that can influence job growth, incomes and unemployment in both the short and long term: the dominant role in setting tax and spending policies (described in the Introduction), a leading role in setting land use policies through his or her control of the City Planning Commission, and service and incentive programs under agencies controlled by the mayor, such as the Economic Development Corporation and the Department of Small Business Services.

One way to think about political leaders' economic policies is to examine their emphasis and ideas in three areas:

**General conditions for economic growth.** These include tax policies, transportation, public safety, housing and other conditions that can influence any business or industry.

**Physical development of the city.** Land use, infrastructure and development policies create incentives (or disincentives) to build or renovate offices, research labs, factories, housing and public spaces that give the economy room to grow.

**Business development policies.** Through these actions, the city looks to add jobs and improve profitability for particular sectors, industries or firms.

Together, these policies affect not only how the city prospers, but who benefits from this prosperity – which industries, neighborhoods, and groups of people.

General economic conditions are sometimes judged by a few measures of how “business friendly” a city is – how low are the taxes, how powerful are the labor unions, how burdensome are its regulations? But this analysis sometimes misses the bigger picture: city expenditures and regulations, which can lead to improvements ranging from lower crime to safer buildings, can be just as important for improving the business climate. In considering what governmental actions have the most impact on businesses, it's worthwhile to keep in mind an important distinction between labor-intensive, low-wage industries, which tend to be more affected by taxes, rents and labor costs, and high-value, high-wage industries, which are more influenced by the quality of available workers, space and services. New York City has some of the highest taxes and business costs in the nation, but is also home to businesses that produce some of the highest incomes anywhere.

The Bloomberg administration has articulated a strategy that emphasizes quality services to maintain and grow these high-value industries. This approach has garnered praise from many in the business and civic community, but others have criticized this approach as being either too tolerant of high taxes or too insensitive to the need of creating jobs across a diverse range of education and skill levels.

In the last two areas – physical development and business development – Mayor Bloomberg has taken a different approach from his predecessors. The administration has aggressively promoted major redevelopment plans for the Far West Side of Manhattan, Downtown Brooklyn, the Brooklyn waterfront and a number of neighborhoods throughout the city. Many have hailed the scope of these plans as a long overdue effort to create more room for office expansion and new housing. Critics have noted that these policies often favor single developers, such as the Jets on the Hudson Yards in Manhattan and Forest City Ratner on Brooklyn's Atlantic Yards, and are sometimes designed to avoid the need for community input and legislative approval.

When it comes to business development, the Bloomberg administration has put greater emphasis than its predecessor on assisting particular industries and small businesses, and less on individual firms. It has entered into only five subsidy deals with corporations, compared to 38 in Rudolph Giuliani's first term. On the other hand, the Bloomberg team has devoted more attention to industries like

bioscience and film production, and has been more aggressive in promoting business improvement districts and small business services. It has recently developed a strategy for the manufacturing sector, but many of its rezoning and development policies could make it harder for industrial employers to remain in their current locations.

The next mayor will need to confront several issues to determine where the city should add more jobs and housing, which incentives it should offer to private businesses and developers, and how to balance the needs of different neighborhoods and constituents.

## Core Issues

### What will the future economy of the city be like, and how should the next Mayor prepare for it?

According to a forecast by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council, the city could add over 900,000 jobs and 1.3 million people over the next 25 years. What needs to happen for this growth to occur? Where will we put so many new residents? What kind of jobs will these be, who will benefit most from their creation and what can the city do to shape the economy? We can be confident that the broad direction of the economy will continue to evolve toward more high-skill, office-oriented industries, even if Wall Street becomes less dominant. These industries generate high incomes for the well-educated, but offer few career paths for others to attain a middle-class standard of living. It is far more difficult to predict which particular industries will grow, where they will want to locate and how quickly or slowly new development will take place. If we don't provide the space and conditions for business to grow, then the city's economy will stagnate. However, both physical and business development strategies need to provide enough flexibility to change with market conditions and city needs, and to balance future needs with those of existing businesses and residents.

### How can we simultaneously revitalize Downtown Manhattan and build a new commercial district on the Far West Side?

For the last four years, the enormous and complicated challenges of revitalizing Lower Manhattan and building a new commercial

district on the Far West Side have dominated the economic development agenda of the mayor and other public officials. Plans for both districts now face uncertainties. In Lower Manhattan controversies over both the content and phasing of the memorial, cultural and commercial buildings continue to impede redevelopment on the World Trade Center site. On the West Side, the effective veto of the Jets stadium has removed the centerpiece of the city's plan.

There is also the lingering question of how much these two goals compete with or complement one another. While Midtown is well on its way to full recovery from New York's recent recession, Downtown is lagging badly. 16.4 percent of Downtown's office space remains vacant, compared to 11 percent in Midtown. Building owners command average rents of \$51 per square foot in Midtown, but only \$33 in Downtown, one of the largest gaps ever recorded. Goldman Sachs recently agreed to build a new \$2 billion headquarters Downtown, but only after extracting \$150 million in city and state tax credits and \$1.6 billion in federally subsidized loans. Seven World Trade Center, the first building to be built after September 11, has only recently come to agreements with its first tenant. On the Far West Side, the city has approved rezoning to allow new development, and plans to complete an extension of the Number 7 train along with an expansion of the Javits Convention Center. But without several years of strong citywide demand for office space, and completion of transportation, park, cultural and other improvements downtown, West Side development is likely to impede Downtown's recovery.

The mayor shares control over both Downtown and West Side development with the governor, but his priorities matter a great deal for how quickly development proceeds in both districts. The next mayor will face major decisions on how to allocate resources for infrastructure and neighborhood improvements, and whether to provide additional subsidies for developers and tenants in either location.

### **How can we create job opportunities in the other boroughs, and how should we allocate our economic development resources between them and Manhattan?**

Manhattan remains the engine of New York City's economy, generating 64 percent of the city's jobs and 80 percent of the wages received

by residents throughout the five boroughs. The outer boroughs, however, remain important sources of manufacturing, retail, education and health care jobs that are a vital source of entry-level and career opportunities for New Yorkers without a college degree. They also present the greatest long-term prospects for job growth as the home base for small businesses and many entrepreneurs, particularly among immigrant communities. Areas outside of the Manhattan central business district have untapped potential for back office, technology, retail, tourism and other industries, particularly in business centers like Downtown Brooklyn, 125th Street in Harlem, Long Island City, Jamaica, Flushing and the Bronx Hub.

Promoting these areas, however, as well as building more affordable housing, could require further redevelopment of industrial land and could also accelerate the decline of manufacturing. How will the next mayor address these conflicts? What types of rezonings, infrastructure investments, subsidies and other strategies will she or he pursue, and how will resources be allocated between Manhattan and the other boroughs?

### **How should the city assist particular sectors or firms?**

City support for industries or firms runs the risk of trying to pick "winners" in a fluid, unpredictable economy. Corporate retention and relocation subsidies can be particularly problematic, because it is difficult to assess whether a firm will actually move without the incentives, and to hold the company to the terms of the agreement. That said, the public sector can offer crucial supports – including workforce training, small business assistance, infrastructure investments and incentives for the development of "cluster buildings," such as a food distribution center – to important industry sectors. Public-private partnerships to support industry sectors have mixed records, and require a well-designed strategy to be effective. The city could also work to create a better environment for small business growth by removing unnecessary regulations and scaling back aggressive enforcement efforts of recent years.

### **Proposed Solutions**

#### **Harness the market in Lower Manhattan and the Far West Side.**

Lower Manhattan and the Far West Side represent two very different opportunities for the city. With over 90 million square feet of underutilized office space and a number of irreplaceable assets, Down-

town is an existing economic engine at risk. The Far West Side will take decades to develop but represents the last place in Manhattan where a new, large-scale office district could be located. In both areas, however, the current focus is to stimulate new development as quickly as possible. In Lower Manhattan, all eyes are on how fast we can build and fill new office towers. On the Far West Side, even without the stadium, the administration still hopes to build a subway extension by 2009 and plans to offer extensive subsidies to stimulate new development.

Last year, Regional Plan Association outlined an alternative strategy that would give clear priority to revitalizing Lower Manhattan in the short term while maximizing the Far West Side's long-term potential. Recent actions by the governor appeared to be restoring momentum to Lower Manhattan, but new controversies have emerged and both the pace and content of redevelopment remain in doubt. In particular, expanding and accelerating retail, hotel, parks and cultural activities, both on the World Trade Center site and other key places – Fulton Street, Chinatown and along both the East River and Hudson waterfronts – would take advantage of existing demand for these activities and create the street life and amenities to draw commercial office tenants.

On the Far West Side, the demise of the stadium and a concurrent burst of residential development reinforce the wisdom of giving the market time to transform the district. The recent rezoning will allow for the expansion of Midtown, particularly in the eastern parts of the district that are already close to transit and office buildings. The development of the new Moynihan Station between Eighth and Ninth Avenues will further spur development by improving commuter access to the district and greatly improving the architectural, pedestrian and retail character of the area. Delaying the Number 7 extension and developing the stadium site for other uses would greatly reduce the costs and pressures for commercial subsidies that would compete with Downtown, take advantage of demand for waterfront residential development, and maximize the long-term potential of the Hudson Yards.

Alternatively, Senator Charles Schumer has emphasized the need to maintain the current schedule for construction of the Number 7 line while eliminating subsidies for office development on the West Side. His strategy is intended to ensure that Manhattan does not run the risk

of having too little office space when demand materializes, and to improve the competitive position of Downtown by providing subsidies for firms locating in Lower Manhattan. Assembly Leader Sheldon Silver has recently secured additional subsidies for Downtown firms, and remains noncommittal about the Number 7 extension. (Please see the Transportation section for discussion of how to prioritize the Number 7 extension among other transit projects.) Others, such as the Fiscal Policy Institute, have questioned the need for subsidies in either location, emphasizing that infrastructure, amenity and workforce investments are the most effective use of resources to attract businesses and create jobs.

#### **Pursue a robust sector strategy.**

Several organizations, including the New York Industrial Retention Network, Center for an Urban Future and the Fiscal Policy Institute, have promoted a strategy that would organize economic development strategies around particular sectors. This could build on the sectoral and small business strategies that have been implemented by the Bloomberg administration, but would raise the level of visibility, emphasis and resources. It would include both scaling up efforts for high-growth sectors, such as new technology industries, and creating a new strategy that supports industrial activities and integrates them into the wider city economy.

The city's industrial sectors still employ hundreds of thousands of workers, provide important career and business paths for immigrants, and deliver important goods and services to offices, restaurants, stores, theaters and apartment buildings. An effective industrial strategy, these organizations argue, would include better funded and targeted business assistance, technology development and relocation assistance. Most importantly, however, it would provide a counterweight to aggressive redevelopment of industrial land with stronger zoning protections for manufacturing. Zoning changes would limit the conversion of manufacturing to other uses in thriving industrial areas, and preserve compatible industrial activities in areas that are transitioning from manufacturing to other uses.

#### **Develop and implement a new strategic plan for the five boroughs.**

The Department of City Planning, in consultation with other agencies, developed the strategic plan that has guided the Bloomberg

administration's redevelopment priorities. A new strategic plan could build on the strengths of this effort, while also addressing some of its shortcomings. A wide range of groups, including the Citizens Union, Regional Plan Association and the Community-Based Planning Task Force coordinated by the Municipal Arts Society have recommended improvements in the planning process, particularly better ways of incorporating community and public input. In response, the city could develop a new plan with greater public participation and combine the physical development, sector strategies, transportation, workforce and housing strategies outlined in this Policybook.

As a model, New York can look to the city of London, which adopted a democratically sanctioned, statutory strategic plan in 2003 following two years of public consultations and revisions. The result was a comprehensive strategy for the city's future development that had broad public support and guided robust redevelopment projects, including the city's successful 2012 Olympic bid. A New York plan could start with a fresh discussion of the city's long-term needs in a changing global economy, and incorporate input from community-based planning efforts that have been developed in recent years. The result could establish a stronger connection between physical, business and human development policies. It would also create a context for evaluating proposals from both private developers and community advocates. It could also speed project approvals and reduce costly litigation for developers by creating greater consensus at the beginning of the planning process.

### **Sources and Resources**

#### **Center for an Urban Future**

[www.nycfuture.org](http://www.nycfuture.org)

A non-partisan think tank that produces in-depth reports and workable policy solutions on economic development, workforce development, higher education and other issues critical to the future of New York. Reports include: "Beyond the Olympics," June 2005; "Engine Failure: With Economic Woes That Go Well Beyond 9/11, New York Needs a Bold New Vision to Renew the City's Economy," September 2003.

#### **Fiscal Policy Institute**

[www.fiscalfpolicy.org](http://www.fiscalfpolicy.org)

A non-profit research and education organization that investigates tax, budget, economic, workforce development and various other public policy issues in New York City and State. Reports include: "The Problem with Hudson Yards Property Tax Breaks," June 2005; "Revitalize New York by Putting People to Work: A Jobs-Based Strategy for Economic Diversification and High-Road Growth," March 2003.

#### **New York Industrial Retention Network**

[www.nyirn.org](http://www.nyirn.org)

A non-profit that seeks to promote manufacturing in New York City. Reports include industry-specific analyses and policy recommendations.

#### **Partnership for New York City**

[www.pfnyc.org](http://www.pfnyc.org)

An organization representing 200 of New York City's largest business firms that issues economic updates and research reports and advocates for a range of policy recommendations. Reports include: "2005 Priorities," describing the Partnership's advocacy agenda; "New York City Economic Update: 3 Years After 9/11," September 2004.

#### **Real Estate Board of New York**

[www.rebny.org](http://www.rebny.org)

A trade organization for New York City's real estate industry. Issues reports and press releases on real estate issues.

#### **Regional Plan Association**

[www.rpa.org](http://www.rpa.org)

A non-profit research and advocacy organization that issues reports and policy recommendations for development in the greater New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region. Reports include: "Fulfilling the Promise of Manhattan's Far West Side," July 2004; "A Civic Assessment of the Lower Manhattan Planning Process," October 2004.

## Overview

The New York City economy, and the quality of life of its millions of residents, relies upon one of the most extensive, complex and costly transportation systems in the world. Its roads, bridges, airports, ports, and particularly its intricate network of subways, bus lines and commuter rails, are an indispensable component of the city's success. Facilitating future economic growth will require new investments in transportation to handle more workers and to remain competitive with other cities.

Usually, we take this system for granted. But recent events have exposed its vulnerabilities, from September 11 to more recent disruptions, such as the January 2005 fire that damaged a 100-year-old subway signal system and severely curtailed service for 600,000 riders of the A and C subway lines. This aging system is increasingly overburdened and has not added any new capacity in over 60 years. With most bridges, tunnels, subway and commuter lines into Manhattan nearly filled to capacity at peak times, we are approaching the limit of how many jobs can be added to New York City's central business district before intolerable congestion causes workers and businesses to move elsewhere. In addition, new transit services could spur job growth in outer borough districts such as Jamaica and Downtown Brooklyn.

The mayor, governor and other officials share responsibility for transportation policy, but the mayor's leadership and priorities have a great deal of influence. The mayor is responsible for maintaining city streets, the East River bridges, and the private bus lines that carry 111 million passengers each year, mostly in the outer boroughs. The mayor also controls four of the 14 votes of the state-run Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) board, and the city makes significant contributions to the Transit Authority budget.

The mayor's MTA board appointments, frequently members of his own administration,

and the staffing and attention he devotes to coordination and cooperation with the MTA can significantly influence how the transit system operates. The amount that the city contributes to both the MTA operating and capital budgets can make a difference in how much bus and subway service is provided and what projects are implemented. Moreover, a transportation-minded mayor can be the transit system's most effective advocate in Albany and Washington. For example, vigorous advocacy by the mayor and mayoral candidates could tip the balance in favor of a \$2.9 billion transportation bond act, described below, that will be on the ballot in November.

## Core Issues

### Where will the money come from to maintain and modernize an aging transportation network?

While twenty years of investment have rescued the transit system from near-collapse, the city still faces a long backlog of deferred maintenance and upgrades on its transportation infrastructure, from bridges to bus terminals and subways. The financial demands of repairing, operating, maintaining and modernizing this vast system easily outstrip its revenues. The city's transit system, in particular, faces a long-term, structural deficit caused by a number of factors, from catching up on delayed maintenance and expansion to rising employee medical expenses.

Leading the list is a sharp rise in debt levels that have resulted from reductions in state and city capital subsidies combined with rising capital expenditures. As a result, the New York State Comptroller estimates that debt service will rise to an unprecedented 19 percent of MTA revenues by 2008 and 23 percent by 2015. City support for the Transit Authority's operating budget has also declined considerably since the early 1990s.

The needs of this century-old system are enormous. In its recently adopted budget, the state approved a \$21 billion five-year capital plan for the MTA, \$6 billion less than the MTA requested and even further reduced from the needs identified by the MTA's line agencies. This will delay station repairs, signal upgrades and other maintenance. For example, the MTA dropped 12 subway stations slated for repairs from its capital program in April, including two in Forest Hills, seven in Bensonhurst and the 47<sup>th</sup>-50<sup>th</sup> Street Rockefeller Center stations in Manhattan. The cuts will most severely impede progress on approved expansion projects, such as the Second Avenue Subway and East Side Access, which

would bring the Long Island Rail Road into Grand Central Terminal.

Though modest compared to the need, even this capital plan depends on voter approval of a \$2.9 billion bond act in November (half of which would go to the MTA), and will result in additional borrowing that will increase the strain on the MTA's already limited operating budget. According to the New York State Comptroller, the MTA is likely to be significantly short of revenue needed to balance its budget after 2007 (\$1.1 billion short in 2008 alone); the shortfall will require either fare and toll increases, service reductions or new revenues from the state or city.

### Which new transit projects and services should be given priority?

To address the need for new capacity and service, the region's transportation agencies have advanced plans for five major passenger rail expansion projects: the Second Avenue Subway, East Side Access, the Number 7 subway extension to Manhattan's West Side, a new rail tunnel between Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn that would link to the Long Island Rail Road and Kennedy Airport (Lower Manhattan-JFK link), and a new passenger rail tunnel from New Jersey to Manhattan, called Access to the Region's Core (ARC). At least two of these projects, East Side Access and the Lower Manhattan-JFK link, could also provide additional service in Queens and Brooklyn, and the Second Avenue Subway could extend into the Bronx, Queens and Brooklyn. Costs range from an estimated \$2 billion for the Number 7 extension to \$17 billion for the Second Avenue Subway. The first phase of the Second Avenue Subway is included in the MTA capital plan at a cost of \$3.8 billion, \$1 billion of which was in the 2000-2004 capital plan.

Key stakeholders differ on which project offers the most transportation and economic benefit for its cost. For example, Downtown business groups favor the Lower Manhattan-JFK link, and the Partnership for New York City issued a study that estimated higher net benefits for the Number 7 extension than for the Second Avenue Subway or East Side Access, citing its potential to support new development on the Far West Side; Regional Plan Association disputed these findings on methodological grounds, holding that the analysis did not account for the system-wide benefits of projects like the Second Avenue Subway. RPA further argued that the success of projects like the 7 extension and Lower Manhattan-JFK link depends on providing

sufficient capacity in the subway and commuter lines that would feed into these projects. Largely for these system capacity reasons, the MTA has championed the Second Avenue Subway and East Side Access, while ARC is the top priority of New Jersey Transit and the Port Authority.

In addition to these rail projects, less expensive proposals include new ferry, light rail and bus services. Bus rapid transit (BRT), for example, is a relatively inexpensive endeavor that would speed buses using new technologies along dedicated lanes. A joint City-Transit Authority BRT initiative is underway and the 2005-2009 capital plan includes \$22 million for BRT in 2007. All of these projects, both large and small, have their merits, but are competing for limited funds. Elected officials and transportation agencies will have to prioritize construction and determine how much revenue to allocate over several years.

### **How can we reduce growing auto and truck congestion?**

Major thoroughfares, such as the bridges and tunnels that connect the boroughs and highways such as the Cross Bronx Expressway and Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, are already choking on auto and truck traffic. Increasingly, this congestion is spilling over onto neighborhood streets, especially in places with less subway access. Building new roads in a densely developed region like New York is not an option, so a combination of transit and better management of scarce road space are the only answers for auto congestion.

Nearly everywhere, a major contributor to congestion is the rapid increase in trucks on the road, and it's only going to get worse; truck traffic is projected to increase by 70 percent in the New York region over the next twenty years. With the rail freight network hindered by discontinuities, there are currently few other options for delivering goods or disposing of waste. This applies not only to New York City, but beyond, to all points east of the Hudson River.

### **Proposed Solutions**

#### **Allocate money for transit improvements.**

While the governor and state legislature exert the most control over the transportation budget, the next mayor can play a critical role by making transit operations, maintenance and expansion

a top priority. Management improvements and cost savings at the MTA should be part of the solution, but new revenue will have to account for most of the funding.

Specific recommendations from leading transportation and business organizations include increasing revenues for the MTA's operating and capital budgets from a range of sources. The Straphangers Campaign and other transit advocacy groups have emphasized the need to increase the city's capital contributions, which have declined from \$200 million per year in the early 1990s to \$73 million per year today. The Straphangers also argue that more federal September 11th funds be used for the Second Avenue Subway – which would serve downtown – as well as for several downtown subway stations. Other organizations have proposed a number of long-term revenue options, such as Regional Plan Association's proposal for a small, dedicated transportation tax that would apply equally to commuters and city residents. Others call for the mayor to advocate for a comprehensive restructuring of transportation funding policies. For example, the Citizens Budget Commission has proposed guidelines under which bus and subway fares, as well as tolls and auto fees, would rise gradually to cover fixed percentages of transit operating costs, and general state revenues would be increased to accelerate repairs and maintenance. One point of consensus is that the mayor should make the case in Albany and Washington that New York City must get its fair share of transportation funding.

#### **Advocate for three critical transit projects.**

The mayor can also advocate for clear priorities and long-term funding strategies for new transit expansion projects. As noted above, many constituencies and organizations have promoted individual projects. Regional Plan Association has articulated a system-wide program centered on three priority projects – the Second Avenue Subway, East Side Access, and Access to the Region's Core. These core projects would contribute more to the city's economy as a whole than other proposed improvements.

The Second Avenue Subway would improve commutes for 600,000 riders, including one out of eight New York City workers. The monetary value of the travel benefits exceeds \$1 billion per year, including time savings, reliability improvements and overcrowding avoided. The first phase of this project could be built by 2011 and serve 200,000 riders at a cost of \$3.8 billion. The LIRR's East Side Access benefits New York City as well as Long Island. It would

help maintain the pre-eminence of Midtown by saving time for Long Islanders working in Manhattan – 65,000 people saving up to 44 minutes per day – and would expand capacity for LIRR services in the Queens neighborhoods of Jamaica, Queens Village, Hollis, Kew Gardens, and Forest Hills. Access to the Region's Core would transport more commuters into Manhattan from west of the Hudson, where almost 90 percent of suburban commuter growth has come from in the last 20 years. Both New York and New Jersey would reap equivalent economic benefits. It also can help support development plans on the Far West Side by delivering more workers to Penn Station to help fill the 100,000 jobs projected for the district.

These three projects would provide additional transit connections between Manhattan, the outer boroughs and the suburbs and facilitate the eventual integration of other transportation improvements. Together, they would create the core of an expanded transit network that would add capacity for workers to commute into the Manhattan Central Business District and enhance the value of other projects, such as the Number 7 extension and Lower Manhattan-JFK link, by better connecting these projects to the rest of the system. By providing alternate routes for existing service, they would also augment the city's capacity to weather disasters or attacks that could severely disrupt service.

#### **Build a cross harbor tunnel to reduce truck traffic.**

Constructing a rail freight tunnel under the New York harbor could greatly reduce the growing problem of truck traffic. Benefits of this project are estimated to include one million fewer trucks per year on city streets; the creation of 23,000 permanent jobs and additional redundancy to deliver goods in the event that a disaster or attack damages bridges or roads. Over 130 public officials have declared their support and \$100 million for the tunnel is in the recently passed federal transportation bill. Resistance to the tunnel comes from some planners and agencies that question the high price, and neighborhood opposition from Maspeth, Queens where the project and its ancillary facilities will add to local truck traffic.

#### **Support congestion pricing to reduce vehicle use.**

The city can achieve dramatic traffic reduction

by charging drivers more for the use of clogged bridges and tunnels when demand is highest, as other major cities worldwide have done. London, for example, imposed a daily charge for entering the City Center in 2003 and experienced dramatic reductions in traffic delays and much faster bus service. As a result, the Partnership for New York City has joined long-time proponents such as Regional Plan Association and the Tri-State Transportation Campaign in calling for a serious examination of how congestion pricing could work in New York City.

Such a proposal would face significant political and technical hurdles. For one thing, any congestion pricing plan would have to charge drivers who can now enter Manhattan without expense – including the approximately 700,000 daily commuters who don't currently pay to enter Manhattan south of 60th Street. Over the last 30 years, the city's mayors, from Koch to Bloomberg, have flirted with re-tolling the four city-owned, free East River crossings, and have stopped short when confronted with opposition, mostly from residents of Brooklyn and Queens who would be asked to pay the bulk of the added tolls. A major opposition argument has been that constructing toll barriers in tight quarters would cause long queues. Technology is removing this argument; thanks to E-ZPass, tolls can now be paid without cash and without stopping. E-ZPass now accounts for 70 percent of all tolls collected in the New York region, and could be adapted to make congestion pricing possible on city streets.

## Sources and Resources

### **Citizens Budget Commission**

**[www.cbcny.org](http://www.cbcny.org)**

A nonprofit civic organization that monitors the fiscal conditions and policies of New York City and State. Reports include "Financing Transportation Services in the New York Region," March 2004.

### **New York City Independent Budget Office**

**[www.ibo.nyc.ny.us](http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us)**

A publicly funded agency that provides budget, economic, and policy analysis for residents and officials of New York City. Reports include: "The Subway System: In a State of Good Repair or Succumbing to Deferred Maintenance," April 2005; "Running on Empty: The MTA's 2005 Budget and Financial Plan," November 2004.

### **New York Metropolitan Transportation Council**

**[www.nymtc.org](http://www.nymtc.org)**

The metropolitan planning organization for the New York region, with members from each of the major transportation and planning agencies in New York City, Long Island and the lower Hudson Valley. A source of transportation data and reports, including a Regional Transportation Plan updated every three years.

### **NYU Rudin Center for Transportation**

**[www.wagner.nyu.edu/rudincenter](http://www.wagner.nyu.edu/rudincenter)**

A center based at New York University that sponsors research, conferences, and education in transportation policy and management. Reports include: "Choices at a Critical Juncture: New York's Mobility and Highway Infrastructure Needs for 2005-2010," March 2005; "At Capacity: The Need for More Rail Access to the Manhattan CBD," November 2004.

### **Office of the New York State Comptroller**

**[www.osc.state.ny.us](http://www.osc.state.ny.us)**

Responsible for audits and oversight of state fiscal policies, including those of public authorities. Reports include "MTA Can Manage Its Budget Through 2007 Without Cuts, but Faces New Fiscal Challenges Beginning in 2008," May 2005.

### **Partnership for New York City**

**[www.pfnyc.org](http://www.pfnyc.org)**

An organization representing 200 of New York City's largest business firms that issues economic updates and research reports and advocates for a range of policy recommendations. Reports include "Transportation Choices and the Future of the New York City Economy," November 2003.

### **Regional Plan Association**

**[www.rpa.org](http://www.rpa.org)**

A non-profit research and advocacy organization that issues reports and policy recommendations for development in the greater New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region. Reports include: "Financing Options for the MTA Capital Program," October 2004; "The Economic Benefits of the Second Avenue Subway," December 2003; "An Exploration of Motor Vehicle Pricing in New York," November 2003.

### **Straphangers Campaign**

**[www.straphangers.org](http://www.straphangers.org)**

A project of the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) that advocates for users of New York City's subways and buses. Issues surveys and reports on maintenance, quality of service and policy.

### **Tri-State Transportation Campaign**

**[www.tstc.org](http://www.tstc.org)**

An alliance of public interest, transit advocacy, planning and environmental groups seeking to reduce automobile dependency and sprawl. In addition to periodic reports, it also publishes "Mobilizing the Region," a weekly bulletin of transportation news and opinions.

# Workforce Development

## Overview

In terms of employment, the New York City economy is at a crossroads. The city boasts world-class companies in diverse industries from finance to the arts to aviation, and continues to attract highly skilled workers from around the country and the world. But even as these firms and their workers thrive, the city persistently suffers unemployment rates that are above the national average and struggles to reach the many thousands of New Yorkers of working age who aren't currently in the workforce and aren't counted in the jobless rate. Low-income working families in the city struggle to keep up with rising expenses, but a system that has long avoided serving incumbent workers has offered little help in connecting those workers to training opportunities. Perhaps most troubling, joblessness among African-American males throughout the city is nearly 50 percent, and the youth unemployment rate is the highest in the nation.

These trends illustrate a growing problem of inequity in the city's labor force. Through both economic booms and busts, a gulf has steadily widened between the highest and lowest income earners in the city. More and more, the city seems headed toward a bifurcated workforce in which those with abundant educational opportunities and the right credentials and skills excel, while those without are faced with limited job opportunities and lower likelihoods of professional advancement.

Most mayors have made little use of their powers to shape city workforce policy, perhaps because until very recently, all the money dedicated to job training and employment programs originated at the federal and state levels. Even so, the mayor has considerable leeway as the fiscal recipient of these funds under federal and state rules that emphasize local autonomy over how to allocate resources. The mayor also selects all members of the local Workforce Investment Board (WIB), which is charged with both setting

policy priorities and oversight of the system, and chooses which agency or agencies takes a lead role in implementing the objectives of the WIB.

In keeping with New York's history as the first city of capitalism, officials have generally allowed the job market and workers to rise or fall on their own. But the disconnect between New York's diverse, rich job sector and its chronic unemployment worries has grown to the point where it threatens not only individual workers and firms, but potentially the city's overall prosperity as well. Even companies and business associations traditionally wary of government action in the economic realm have indicated their willingness to support a clear workforce policy that would both benefit employers and provide New York workers with the skills they need to succeed.

The problem of stagnant or declining resources from federal and state government limits what city policymakers can accomplish in the workforce field. But other concerns – lack of coordination amongst providers, little coordination of funding streams and poor communication between federal, state and city administrators – are not directly related to money. These are the areas where the next mayor can make a difference, regardless of what happens in Washington or Albany.

## Core Issues

### What can New York City do to ensure that jobseekers have the skills employers require in an increasingly knowledge-based economy?

Recent years have seen increasing evidence of a "skills gap" between the jobs available and the educational attainment and credentials of those looking for work in New York. With the prospect of hundreds of thousands of Baby Boomers, many in high-skilled and/or managerial positions, transitioning into retirement over the next 20 years, this gap is growing every year.

The push to raise educational standards and school performance in New York City and State holds some long-term promise for raising the overall attainment and skill level of the workforce. In the short term, however, both workers and employers are finding it difficult to get the services they need. The different city agencies with responsibility for employment services have moved toward more comprehensive partnerships with the City University of New York and other institutions of higher learning, but workers at lower levels of job readiness – those who would most benefit from literacy services and high

school equivalency instruction – are scrambling to find assistance.

### What more can the city do to align its workforce development objectives with big-picture economic development plans?

Until 2003, New York's job training and business and industry assistance programs existed in effective isolation from one another. Corporate retention and local economic development were top priorities for virtually every city mayor during the 20th century; workforce programs, funded solely through federal pass-through dollars, were at best a political treat to dispense and at worst a total afterthought. A year after taking office, Mayor Bloomberg followed the example of city leaders in Boston, Chicago and other urban centers by shifting responsibility for adult training dollars to the Department of Small Business Services (DSBS), which provided a fresh perspective to the programs and promised to make them much more responsive to the needs of local employers and made workforce leadership answerable to the deputy mayor for economic development. The administration has followed this first step by offering training and support services for workers as part of the standard package of economic enticements it offers relocating companies. These are initial, but very positive steps; many experts believe the next mayor should institutionalize this connection.

### How can we meld the disparate programs and priorities of the different agencies responsible for employment services into a true system of workforce development?

On this issue as well, New York City has made some recent advances after many years of stagnation. DSBS has moved quickly to establish a network of one-stop career centers that aim to coordinate all of the training programs under one roof and create closer linkage with the city's major job creation initiatives. The recently relocated fish market in Hunts Point; the opening of the Atlantic Terminal Mall; new movie studios at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and the proposed expansion of Columbia University in West Harlem all include substantial employment components.

But despite these positive steps, the city still has not publicly articulated or championed an established plan for the entire system; employ-

ment services for younger New Yorkers remain weak despite the city's worst-in-the-nation youth unemployment rate.

The division of responsibilities for workforce development among multiple agencies – DSBS for adults and dislocated workers, the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) for school-age and young adult New Yorkers, and the Human Resources Administration (HRA) for those on or transitioning off of public assistance – makes coordination and cooperation of paramount importance. But while all three agencies have taken action to clarify and improve the programs and services they support for their respective populations, inter-agency communication is inadequate and confusion and duplication persist. DSBS and DYCD share responsibility for jobseekers aged 18 to 24, but have yet to determine how best to serve this crucially important group. HRA and DSBS serve overlapping groups as well, but take distinctly different policy approaches while often competing with each other to fill employer-provided job openings.

### **What can city government do to address the specific employment problems of groups that suffer chronically high unemployment?**

Unemployment in New York City has become disproportionately concentrated among specific subsets of the population, notably African-Americans and young adults, and in a number of neighborhoods across the five boroughs. Analysts have offered a number of explanations for this phenomenon, including changes in the economy from manufacturing toward a service- and information-based economy; lack of educational attainment or social networks in the affected communities; and “spatial mismatch” between where jobseekers live and where jobs are physically located. The City Council recently allocated \$10 million to provide services targeting high-need groups and communities, and private funders have signaled interest in similar efforts.

### **Proposed Solutions**

Building a coordinated citywide workforce system requires both creative policymaking and political muscle, particularly after decades of bureaucratic turf battles and a long-standing culture of unaccountability on the part of providers. Even though resources are well below

the need, this primary objective does not entail additional funds. The following recommendations, long championed by the Center for an Urban Future and other groups, are premised upon the idea that city officials, program leaders, and employers themselves must first unite around a common vision for the workforce system. With that vision in place, policymakers can then examine how to coordinate the disparate parts within the system for improved utilization by job seekers and employers.

### **Tie economic development aid to workforce priorities.**

The city has achieved significant advancements integrating its workforce development programs into economic development activities. But the Fiscal Policy Institute has argued that more can be done, including a mandate from City Hall that every company or industry receiving economic development support from the city submit a workforce investment plan detailing how it will support New York City's workforce priorities of better pay, career ladders and lifelong learning for city residents. As a major direct and indirect employer in its own right, the city can lead here by example through its contracting, construction efforts and agencies.

### **Create industry targeted employment programs.**

New York has over a half dozen large-scale industries including health care, finance, light manufacturing and the arts. The Center for an Urban Future, among others, has argued that if the city is to develop strategies to support the workforce needs of key sectors, it must take an approach that examines these sectors on their own terms, developing deeper understandings of the obstacles and opportunities they face.

Industry targeted strategies entail sustained close collaboration with industry leaders through focus groups, surveys and ongoing input from advisory councils. Once employers have “bought in” on this approach and helped to document a clear understanding of industry-specific workforce needs, service providers can design training in consultation with the sector – preferably with workers from the industry as the eventual instructors. This approach to workforce has become fairly commonplace across the country and the Department of Small Business Services, working with local funders and the nonprofit organization Public/Private Ventures, has begun a demonstration project supporting targeted job training for employers in the health care and aviation sectors.

### **Increase and unite higher education efforts.**

In the 21st century, all roads lead to education. With very few exceptions, it's all but impossible to earn a family-supporting income or move up the ladder without a post-secondary boost – especially in a knowledge-driven city like New York. According to the College Board, a full-time worker with a college degree earned over 60 percent more than a high school graduate in 2003. The Center for an Urban Future has argued that the entire workforce system must reorient itself to our local institutions of higher learning. Colleges, including private campuses such as Columbia and NYU as well as the public university system, CUNY, have to be not just part of the mix, but rather the end goal, the point on the pyramid. New York City boasts over 85 institutions dotted throughout the five boroughs, the highest density of post-secondary institutions in North America.

This greater emphasis on educational achievement does not mean marginalizing nonprofits and other traditional training providers, but it does mean better aligning them to prepare job seekers for better education, the Center argues. For their part, the campuses themselves could work with policymakers and community-based programs to develop more flexible class schedules including evenings and weekends; adjusted curricula with more offerings of certifications and other intermediate benchmarks; aggressive, sustained outreach to private sector businesses to better gauge what employers need now; and networks of support services to help customers navigate personal obstacles in the way of their educational goals. The Center for an Urban Future has long advocated for the mayor to create a new liaison within City Hall to work with and coordinate both workforce and economic development efforts with all institutions of higher learning.

### **Support transitional employment.**

Many jobseekers find that their skills and workplace readiness aren't quite where they need to be for long-term employment. Currently, neither DSBS nor the Human Resources Administration are well situated to assist this sizeable portion of the jobseeker pool, as contractors are rewarded only for actual job placements and retention benchmarks. Groups such as the Fiscal Policy Institute and the NYC Central Labor Council

have called on the city to support a publicly supported, time-limited transitional employment effort, possibly modeled on the city's Parks Opportunities Program, that could serve as an effective "halfway house" for those almost but not quite ready for the job market.

## Sources and Resources

### National Organizations

#### Government Accountability Office

[www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov)

A series of technical and survey reviews of all aspects of federal training programs including the link between welfare-to-work and traditional job training.

#### Rockefeller Institute of Government

[www.rockinst.org](http://www.rockinst.org)

Research institute based at the State University of New York that has produced some of the most thorough reviews of workforce programming in other states.

#### The Workforce Alliance

[www.workforcealliance.org](http://www.workforcealliance.org)

National policy and advocacy organization tracking federal legislation and best practices.

#### Workforce Strategy Center

[www.workforcestrategy.org](http://www.workforcestrategy.org)

National consulting organization that works in many regions, including New York, to better align workforce programs. Also issues reports specifically on working closely with community colleges.

#### Working Poor Families Project

[www.aecf.org/initiatives/fes/workingpoor](http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/fes/workingpoor)

National initiative tracking the circumstances that struggling workers face and policies to assist them in a number of states, including New York.

### New York City

#### Center for an Urban Future

[www.nycfuture.org](http://www.nycfuture.org)

A non-partisan think tank that produces in-depth reports and workable policy solutions on economic development, workforce development, higher education and other issues critical to the future of New York. Workforce development has been a focus of CUF research for the last five years, with reports focusing on the role of the City University of New York, labor-affiliated job training efforts, and the federal and state resources available for job training and employment services across New York State.

#### Community Service Society

[www.cssny.org](http://www.cssny.org)

One of New York's largest charities that has produced a number of studies about specific cohorts including youth and African-American men and their challenges in today's labor market.

#### Fiscal Policy Institute

[www.fiscalpolicy.org](http://www.fiscalpolicy.org)

A non-profit research and education organization that investigates tax, budget, economic, workforce development, and various other public policy issues in New York City and State.

#### New York City Employment and Training Coalition

[www.nycetc.org](http://www.nycetc.org)

The city's trade organization for training service providers, which produces a timely and informative newsletter of workforce issues and offers information on workforce development research, funding and resources on its website.

# Child, Youth & Family Services

Even so, all of this government investment can't change the basic economic reality: in the United States, and certainly in New York City, childhood and poverty often occur together. Despite the fact that welfare reform and changes in the city's economy have dramatically increased the number of single mothers earning paychecks in the workforce, more than one-quarter of the city's children live in families with incomes below the federal poverty line (\$16,090 for a family of three), including the large majority of the city's black and Latino children.

argues that as baby boomers near retirement, New York does not have nearly enough skilled workers to replace them in the local economy, and calls for a massive new investment in programs that prepare teens and young adults for jobs.

## **Can the city prevent thousands of New York families each year from falling into crises that lead to homelessness, extreme poverty, or the loss of a child to foster care or the juvenile justice system?**

Family crises cost city taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars each year and leave many families irreparably damaged. The city and philanthropists fund an array of community-based organizations that provide frontline safety net programs designed to help support parents and reduce the need for crisis intervention. But analysts point to large gaps in services in many neighborhoods and a tremendous lack of coordination between and within agencies, including those with specialized programs like drug treatment, domestic violence advocacy, legal services, and health and mental health care. In most neighborhoods, there is no single place where a parent can find straightforward help dealing with problems that may drive their family apart, whether it's a troubled teen, a housing crisis or something else.

## **What more should the city do to sustain and improve upon the far-reaching transformation of the city's child protection system?**

The reconstruction of child protective services at the Administration for Children's Services was one of the most extensive reforms in city government during the late 1990s. Agency leaders raised pay scales, overhauled training for line staff, and put into place new management and accountability systems. By 2000, the number of children placed in foster care began a steep decline, from 10,000 to fewer than 5,000 annually, even as the number of child abuse and neglect reports called in to authorities by members of the public remained constant. One major change is that investigators began to refer far more families to support programs, rather than removing the child to foster care.

Meanwhile, the courts have forced the city to pay more attention to how children are removed, leading to changes in ACS policy for certain types of situations: for example, a child's having

### Overview

New York City has become increasingly youthful in recent years, thanks in large part to the immigration of young adults from all over the world, many arriving with their children or starting families soon after. The 2000 Census found 2.1 million New Yorkers aged 19 or younger (out of the city's total population of more than 8 million), a number that increased steeply during the 1990s and has only recently begun to level out.

In addition to the public schools and subsidized early childhood programs, many city-funded programs work with young people and their parents to provide a range of services, including foster care and after school programs. The city manages most of these through contracts with nonprofit organizations, including more than \$650 million annually allotted to agencies that provide foster care services. The city's Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) spends more than \$100 million each year on contracts for after school and other youth programs. Families at risk of losing their children to foster care can turn to parent counseling programs and other support services funded with about \$120 million in contracts through the Administration for Children's Services (ACS).

ACS staffs the child protective services system as well, deploying investigators to respond to hundreds of allegations of child abuse and neglect every week. The city also operates a juvenile justice system with group homes and secure detention centers, as well as probation programs that supervise about 2,500 young people under age 17. The health department, the libraries, even the police and fire departments each have extensive programs geared to serving the city's young people. In most of these areas, the mayor and his agencies have wide leeway in setting and implementing the policies that affect young people, as long as they comply with state and federal mandates protecting children from harm.

### Core Issues

#### **Can the city make better use of government funding for after school child care and youth development programs?**

The Bloomberg administration has pursued a dramatic restructuring of after school programs, seeking to impose greater coordination on what has long been a crazy quilt of youth programs and after school child care, coupled with promises to distribute them more equitably across the city while also improving the evaluation of DYCD-funded programs. The consolidation will lead to deep funding cuts – about \$15 million. The city aims to serve more children with less money, and indeed several neighborhoods are likely to be better served. But the cuts will force many child care centers that have long received city funds for school-age children to close those programs. Some will compensate by shifting classrooms to serve preschoolers and toddlers, others may have difficulty staying in business without the institutional support provided by current funding for their school-age programs.

#### **What can city workforce development programs do to ensure that more young people graduate from school with skills they need in the workforce?**

Few after school programs in New York City neighborhoods are designed specifically for teenagers, despite the skill needs of the city economy and a great deal of anecdotal evidence that too many city teens are poorly prepared for the world of work. A recent study by the Community Service Society found that about 170,000 young adults in New York City, or one of every six young people aged 16 to 24, are neither employed nor attending school. They are the growing legion of the city's "disconnected youth," and for young men, the author says, the trend is worsening. A June 2005 paper by the Young Adult Task Force, a coalition of nonprofit organizations, private sector executives and government officials,

witnessed domestic violence between adults is no longer a valid reason for placing him or her in foster care.

Attorneys representing parents in Family Court say that today, most child removal cases are backed up with better evidence than many of those filed just a few years ago. In other words, they say, child protective services is doing a more thorough and discerning job. And with fewer children in foster care, the city now has the opportunity to significantly improve the quality of the foster care system itself, which had long been stretched beyond its ability to assure safe and nurturing homes for the children in its care.

Even so, some observers, including some parents and preventive service practitioners, continue to assert that many investigators are overly hostile in their methods and unwilling to collaborate with community organizations to assist families. They argue that if the system is to continue to rely heavily on preventive strategies and family support programs, greater collaboration will be essential.

## Proposed Solutions

### **Scale up investments in model programs for teens and young adults.**

Youth programs for teens are a basic element of strong communities: kids of all ages from middle class and wealthy families in New York spend much of their spare time participating in after school activities. Kids from working class and poor families can benefit as much or more from these same opportunities. An investment in teen programs that includes skillful outreach by community organizers and substantial, varied activities would benefit thousands more young New Yorkers every day. The Young Adult Task Force and other groups hold that the city can more explicitly target expanded investments and strategic reforms in youth programming toward economic and workforce development goals.

Current levels of investment in job training and employment services for youth, however, are far below what the Task Force's June report estimates will be needed. And even the programs currently serving this need – most notably the city's popular and well-regarded Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) – are routinely on the budget chopping block. Though studies have found that teenage employment experience is the single best predictor of long-term success in the workforce, insufficient political support and

tight city and state budgets force SYEP to scramble for state funding on an annual basis. Due largely to changes in federal workforce development law and appropriations, the program serves some 15,000 fewer city youngsters today than it did in past years.

Even school dropouts can be successfully encouraged to reconnect with the education system and job opportunities. Models for alternative high schools for older teens – such as the South Brooklyn Community High School in Red Hook – are templates for bringing students who have given up on school back into a degree program that builds skills and encourages them to define and pursue their own lifetime objectives.

### **Improve existing income support programs for low-income families with children.**

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a powerful vehicle for the redistribution of wealth to poor families. Altogether, the federal, state and city EITC can add about \$6,000 to the annual income of a low-wage working family. A coalition of local child advocates and political leaders has proposed a broad expansion of the city's own EITC that would devote \$55 million to increase the maximum city tax refund for low-wage workers to \$301 per year. They have also proposed a \$22 million local Child and Dependent Care Credit, which would provide a tax refund of \$98 per year to more than 200,000 city families.

Greater information about and utilization of current programs is another way to assist these at-risk families. The city currently supports efforts by community-based organizations to help low-income workers file for the existing EITC as well as food stamps and other benefits. These education and participation-boosting projects have brought hundreds of millions of dollars into the city economy, easily offsetting their cost.

### **Reinvest savings from foster care to vastly expand the "safety net" of neighborhood-based preventive family support services.**

Since 1999, the number of New York City children in foster care has dropped by over 50 percent, from 38,440 foster children to 18,040 today. This dramatic decrease has cut annual city foster care costs by \$158 million, according to a December 2004 Child Welfare Watch report. Many credit the greater emphasis on preventive family support services; ACS now plans to boost preventive spending by about \$30 million in the 2006 fiscal year, in order to keep still more children out of foster care.

Many more families now utilize city preventive services than are involved with the foster care system. The savings from a smaller foster care system are substantial even after subtracting the new funds shifted into preventive family support. Still, funding for many preventive services is inflexible. These services often are only available to parents on public assistance, and many programs cannot provide truly individualized services, instead sorting families into pre-existing, cookie-cutter programs. Some new, small city government projects, such as HomeBase in the Department of Homeless Services and a series of Neighborhood Networks organized by ACS, are creative experiments aimed at overcoming this inflexibility and bringing about better services.

Recent reports from the Center for New York City Affairs at the New School explain how City Hall could reduce New York's dependence on expensive crisis intervention services by shifting funds saved from the shrinking foster care and homeless shelter systems to the development of a larger neighborhood-based family support safety net in working class and low-income communities. Such programs would be more broadly accessible than current preventive programs, assisting tens of thousands of parents and children and having major impacts on family stability. They would operate under contracts with existing neighborhood organizations that show a commitment to quality programs and ongoing evaluation and a capacity for building trust with local residents.

### **Expand home visiting programs for new mothers to promote maternal and infant health and safety.**

Statewide, fewer than 10 percent of eligible new mothers receive home visits from a nurse or family worker when they are pregnant or after leaving the hospital, according to the advocacy group Prevent Child Abuse New York. (City numbers are not available, but experts believe them to be similar or worse than the state figures.) Many of these programs are respectful, non-intrusive, voluntary programs that help new mothers learn important information about child development and health while opening doors to valuable support services and benefits.

Home visiting programs have been shown to improve basic parenting knowledge and child health and safety. Indeed, these programs are standard practice in most other industrialized nations. The most comprehensive program, the

Nurse Family Partnership, targets high-risk mothers in neighborhoods with high rates of poverty and costs \$4,500 or more per family per year – yet a Rand Corporation study calculates that this program ends up saving five times as much in health care, foster care and other dollars that would have otherwise been spent by the time a child is 15. A city investment in this or more modest programs, combined with existing federal and state supports, could reach several thousand more new mothers each year.

**Prevent child abuse and neglect by further strengthening child protective services and boosting community involvement in child welfare in low-income neighborhoods.**

More than 90 percent of the children entering foster care each year are black and Latino, and most are from poor families. Many parents and community leaders from black and Latino neighborhoods charge that the city's child protective investigators are frequently too adversarial and disrespectful of parents, despite recent reforms. ACS is currently training frontline workers to collaborate with families and community organizations while experimenting with techniques that could promote more community involvement in child abuse prevention and response. The city could also use savings from the foster care system to support short-term respite care for children to stay with neighbors or relatives, and to help fund the creation of a cadre of parent advocates and community support workers linked to local nonprofits and ACS, with a mission to provide support to families identified by investigators and preventive programs. The foundation-funded Bridge Builders project in the Highbridge neighborhood in the Bronx is one example of such an effort.

## Sources and Resources

### Center for New York City Affairs

[www.newschool.edu/milano/nyc affairs](http://www.newschool.edu/milano/nyc affairs)

University-based institute that provides reporting and analysis on family and child policy and neighborhood issues. Publishes reports including "Pivot Point: Managing the Transformation of Child Welfare in NYC," Child Welfare Watch 10, Winter 2004 - 2005 (with the Center for an Urban Future) and "Community Collaboration: Charting the Course for a Neighborhood-Based Safety Net," March 2005.

### Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

[www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org)

Liberal-leaning think tank providing legislative analysis, research and advocacy on many issues including income security, tax policy, earned income tax credit and food stamps.

### Citizens' Committee for Children

[www.cccnewyork.org](http://www.cccnewyork.org)

Advocacy organization that mobilizes influential New Yorkers, lawmakers and others to protect children's rights and strengthen child and family services. Publishes reports including "Using Out-of-School Time to Create Opportunities for New York City Youth: A Briefing Report," July 2004 and "Checking-up on Children in New York City Foster Care," February 2005, about health and mental health services for foster children.

### "Protect Kids, Reduce Crime, Save Money – Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect"

[www.fightcrime.org/ny/CAN/NYCAN.pdf](http://www.fightcrime.org/ny/CAN/NYCAN.pdf)

A 2004 report by the New York office of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, focusing on the research data on the benefits of home visiting and related family support programs.

### United Neighborhood Houses

[www.unhny.org](http://www.unhny.org)

Federation of New York City settlement houses and community centers serving families and youth.

### The Urban Institute

[www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org)

Washington-based think tank providing detailed analysis on many social issues, including child welfare and family well-being.

### Youth Communications

[www.youthcomm.org](http://www.youthcomm.org)

Publishes *New Youth Connections* and *Represent!*, two magazines by and for young people that take

on meaningful issues shaping the lives of the city's teenagers.

### Youth Today

[www.youthtoday.org](http://www.youthtoday.org)

A national monthly newspaper that covers youth development.

# Child Care & Early Education

## Overview

Parents in New York City are hard pressed to find safe, high-quality early child care and education while they work. Not only is good, safe care in short supply, it comes with a high price tag. A family of four with two full-time jobs earning just over \$10 per hour, at an income of \$38,300 – the city’s median household income at the time of the 2000 census – can expect to spend nearly half their pay on full-day child care for their two children.

New York City subsidizes child care for about 100,000 children each year. While state and city funding has dropped significantly over the last several years, recent infusions of federal money have allowed this number to stay constant. But while overall public support has held steady, the placement of more children in minimally regulated care has raised a new set of issues for parents and policymakers. While only about 1,000 children with subsidized care were in informal, unlicensed settings ten years ago, today about 40,000 children spend their days with neighbors and acquaintances who are paid with government vouchers for the care they provide, but who often have no formal training and little oversight.

In part, this surge in informal care is the result of federal welfare reform mandates, which require that families on public assistance get priority in child care subsidies. The city has to be sure it is able to meet that responsibility as well as its work participation guidelines. But the mayor and his agencies have discretion in determining how to meet those federal guidelines, which child care programs to contract with and how to regulate them.

As a result, recent child care tragedies have taken on political overtones. A 19-month-old boy, Jaylen Robinson, endured abuse and suffocation by his Brooklyn babysitter in March 2005. And the inadvertent suffocation of seven-month-old Matthew Perilli in city-subsidized

care revealed problems in the regulation of family day care providers, who care for up to six children in their own homes. Although the health department requires that at least one worker be present for every two infants and that they always keep children within sight, journalists reported that Perilli’s caregiver violated these rules by leaving two toddlers alone with the infant in an upstairs bedroom. These and other recent well publicized cases of uninspected and unsafe child care situations have generated political urgency around the issue.

One alternative to full-time subsidized day care is government-funded preschool. In 1997, Governor George Pataki and state legislative leaders rolled out an ambitious plan to implement Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) for all four year olds by 2003, at an annual cost of \$500 million. Since 2002, however, the state has maintained funding at less than \$200 million per year, and only about 40 percent of the city’s four year olds are enrolled. What’s more, unless it is combined with additional funding and programming to provide full day care, UPK is of little use to most working families. The New York City Department of Education and its many nonprofit and government partners have patched together all-day care and education for thousands of children by blending UPK funds with money for other programs, such as Head Start and child care.

## Core Issues

### How should New York increase its supply of safe, high-quality subsidized child care?

For the last decade, the city’s Administration for Children’s Services has had a child care waiting list in the tens of thousands. But any attempt to substantially increase the capacity of center-based child care inevitably bumps up against the current shortage of certified child care teachers, which is in part a result of their low pay relative to comparable positions in the city schools.

One-third of city children receiving government-subsidized care now get it from informal providers, who work in their own homes. These providers are required to fill out a health and safety checklist in order to receive reimbursement, but are less closely regulated than other forms of child care. Formal family child care programs are subject to home visits and staff must be fingerprinted and cleared through the child abuse registry. The Perilli case has spurred popular pressure for more rigorous standards and inspections, and the city has been

more aggressive in its enforcement efforts since the tragedy.

### Can the city overcome the pressing shortage of child care for infants and toddlers?

Just over 9,000 New York City children aged 2 or under were taking part in subsidized, regulated programs in 2003, the most recent data available. Several thousand more are in subsidized informal care, but advocates claim a large majority of eligible families with infants and toddlers do not receive any type of subsidized care. With many child care programs funded to care for only children aged two and older, parents of infants have an especially difficult time finding appropriate care near their homes, which can undermine their ability to work in the first years of their children’s lives. Only 19 percent of the infants needing care – subsidized or not – take part in regulated programs. A four year old in New York City is four times as likely as a one year old to receive city-subsidized care.

It is, however, very expensive to provide care to infants. The number of teachers per child required for infant care is greater than for older children and special equipment and training are needed. As a result, the market rate for infant care is currently \$267 per week – more than the entire weekly salary of a minimum wage earner, and a quarter of the salary of someone earning \$30,000 a year.

### Should the city devote more resources to subsidized care for working families?

The law requires New York City to provide child care subsidies to parents in public assistance work programs and for a full year following their transition to employment. But it does not guarantee low-income working families the same help. These families often remain on long waiting lists for financial assistance. Child care costs are most often the single largest expense for a working family, outpacing the cost of food, rent and taxes, but so far the city’s child care subsidies have been reserved primarily for the very poor or those on public assistance. Ninety percent of families of three receiving subsidized care, for example, have annual incomes below \$24,000.

### **Should city agencies place greater emphasis on expanding early education, not just child care?**

Across the country, elected officials are beginning to recognize the educational and political benefits of quality early education programs. Governors in both liberal and conservative states, from Georgia to Oklahoma to Hawaii, have begun to invest in early education programs for children that also work with parents on skills development and literacy.

These programs are often geared toward children who grow up in poverty, who have proven to be at greater risk of poor academic performance, low graduation rates, high rates of involvement in special education and, ultimately, involvement with the criminal justice system. Researchers have found that when educational programs directly confront the barriers laid by poverty in the early years of a child's life, rates of academic success increase substantially. The most effective strategies include not only high quality preschool education and after school programs, but also parent outreach, involvement of parents in literacy and reading workshops and their own completion of high school or its equivalent. Such programs often include health and mental health services as well as other social services and family supports. And some integrate services and supports that continue from preschool through 3rd grade.

Extensive, long-term research, much of it published by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, has shown the tremendous effectiveness of such comprehensive, integrated and family-connected educational strategies: they vastly increase high school graduation rates and reduce involvement with the criminal justice system.

In New York, many child care advocates and some political leaders have adopted the goals of early education to guide the future of early childhood programs in the city. Enrolling all four year olds in UPK would yield savings in remedial costs and other services that would later pay back between 41 and 62 percent of the initial investment, according to research conducted by early education specialist Clive Belfield at Columbia University. But efforts to expand the UPK programs to reach more four year olds have run up against state budget restraints.

### **Proposed Solutions**

#### **Increase pay for child care workers.**

The low wages child care workers earn is the biggest reason for the field's chronic high turnover rates. In particular, after becoming certified, many early education teachers leave their jobs to work for the Department of Education, which pays nearly twice as much to teach in the public schools. The city took a step toward raising child care workers' pay to bring it closer to that of DOE employees in January, granting a 14 percent pay increase to about 7,000 members of District Council 1707 who work at child care centers that contract with the city.

Family day care workers – and those who depend on them – also suffer because of the low pay scale. Family day care providers, more than 10,000 of whom are working mothers themselves, receive low wages and few, if any benefits, contributing to a 30 percent turnover rate in the field. Advocates at Child Care, Inc. point out that if the city hopes to focus more heavily on the educational components of child care, workers will have to be paid as though they are teachers – not babysitters. With this in mind, the state of Rhode Island recently began providing benefits to family day care providers.

#### **Direct money from the Campaign for Fiscal Equity education lawsuit to ensure access to early education.**

The New York State courts have ruled that the government does not spend sufficient funds on providing “access to a sound basic education” for all children, and a substantial increase in state funding is expected in the coming year. Mayor Bloomberg has called for using some of this money to pay for Universal Pre-Kindergarten for three and four year olds, but he has not yet offered greater detail on how this would be achieved. Child Care, Inc. estimates that providing full-day Pre-Kindergarten to all four year olds and three year olds in high-need areas with low performing schools, as well as half-day slots for all other three year olds, would cost roughly \$859 million.

#### **Expand child care and early education programs for infants and toddlers.**

The most substantial gap in the entire child care system may be the lack of subsidized care for the youngest children. Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC) estimates that there are about 23,000 children aged 0 to 3 whose families are eligible for subsidies and need child care. Cur-

rently children not receiving subsidized care tend to move frequently from one caregiver to another as parents scramble to find coverage. It would cost the city about \$47 million to add 5,000 slots in a mix of child care centers, preschool programs, and family day care, according to CCC. This year, the city is shifting thousands of school-age children into programs outside of city-contracted child care centers, opening up substantial classroom space for full-day care for younger children – but only if funds are made available to cover the cost of providing care noted above.

#### **Reorient the city's center-based child care programs to serve more working families.**

Currently the city's subsidized, center-based child care programs are located primarily in high-poverty neighborhoods, as well as in some districts that have had substantial demographic changes during the last 20 years. Many working class and immigrant communities also have a great need for such centers, but there are few in large parts of Queens and Brooklyn. Bloomberg administration officials say that realigning child care resources with the needs of low-income workers as well as very poor districts will increase the availability of subsidized care to low-wage working families.

## Sources and Resources

### **“All Together Now: State Experiences in Using Community-Based Child Care to Provide Pre-Kindergarten”**

[www.clasp.org/publications/all\\_together\\_now.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/all_together_now.pdf)

A report by the Center for Law and Social Policy on innovative approaches to delivering Pre-Kindergarten programs.

### **“Between Hope and Hard Times”**

[www.nycfuture.org/images\\_pdfs/pdfs/Between\\_Hope\\_and\\_Hard\\_Times.pdf](http://www.nycfuture.org/images_pdfs/pdfs/Between_Hope_and_Hard_Times.pdf)

Report from the Center for an Urban Future and Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy exploring the conditions and policy responses to low-income working families in New York State, November 2004.

### **Child Care, Inc.**

[www.childcareinc.org](http://www.childcareinc.org)

An advocacy and referral organization working to expand and improve child care in New York City. Annually publishes “A Child Care Primer,” a comprehensive statistical summary of child care and early education policy in action in New York City. See also “Investing in New York City: A Financial Analysis of the Early Care and Education Sector,” which argues that child care is part of the city’s infrastructure for economic development.

### **Citizens’ Committee for Children**

[www.cccnewyork.org](http://www.cccnewyork.org)

Advocacy organization that mobilizes influential New Yorkers, lawmakers and others to protect children’s rights and strengthen child and family services. CCC puts out “Keeping Track of New York City’s Children,” a compendium of information on children.

### **“From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development”**

[www.nap.edu/openbook/0309069882/html/](http://www.nap.edu/openbook/0309069882/html/)

A comprehensive overview of the relationship between recent findings in the science of early childhood development and public policy on youth, families and early education. Edited by the Board on Children, Youth, and Families of the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, National Academies Press, 2000.

### **“Long Hours, Few Options: Child Care for Working Immigrants”**

[www.newschool.edu/milano/nycaffairs/immigrant/Hardship.pdf](http://www.newschool.edu/milano/nycaffairs/immigrant/Hardship.pdf)

An article on the struggles of immigrant families to find child care in “Hardship in Many Languages: Immigrant Families and Children in NYC,” a report by the Center for New York City Affairs (p.8), January 2004.

### **“New York’s Action Plan for Young Children and Families”**

[www.winningbeginningny.org](http://www.winningbeginningny.org)

A report published by the Center for Early Care and Education at the Albany-based Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy.

### **New York State Child Care and Development Fund Plan 2006 – 2007**

[www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/beccs/stateplan/default.asp](http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/beccs/stateplan/default.asp)

The state’s plan for using federal funds to increase the availability and quality of child care.

### **“Oversight – Child Care in New York City”**

[www.nycouncil.info/issues/report\\_act.cfm?mtfile=T2005-1061](http://www.nycouncil.info/issues/report_act.cfm?mtfile=T2005-1061)

A report from the New York City Council on oversight of child care in New York City, July 2005.

**Overview**

No issue of city policy has been more intensely debated over the last three years than public education. Since Mayor Bloomberg secured control over city schools – a goal that had eluded many of his predecessors – in 2002, city officials have made school reform and improved student performance their top priority; indeed, the mayor has explicitly stated that he should be judged on his performance in this area of policy.

The 2002 legislation effectively transformed public education in New York City from semi-independent public service to a citywide agency under the near-total control of the mayor. The new law empowers him or her to directly appoint the chancellor; allocate the school system budget, with the collaboration of the City Council; and appoint the citywide Panel on Education Policy, with members serving at the pleasure of the mayor.

Whether these new powers have yet translated into material gains in student performance is not yet clear, but supporters of Children First, the system-wide public school restructuring effort launched by the mayor and Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, point to the recently reported improvement in reading and math test scores as an indication that the reform is succeeding. Before this year, both city and state test scores, which were on a steadily increasing curve throughout the terms of Chancellors Rudy Crew and Harold Levy under Mayor Giuliani, had been stagnant since Children First was launched in 2002. This year's gains, however, were not only quite large, but also consistent across ethnic groups and regions; most important, the lowest achieving students made remarkable progress.

Additional results will confirm or question these dramatic gains. Many urban districts across the state also produced very high gains, and indeed out-performed New York City, on the state's 4th grade reading tests. It remains to be seen whether the state's math testing and the

city's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) will produce similar results. Moreover, there is some disjunction between the high test scores registered on the city's 7th grade testing, and the poor results turned in by city students on the state's 8th grade reading test. Since the state will administer next year's tests, time will indicate whether this year's results signaled the start of a dramatic upward trend or just an anomaly.

But whether or not the testing gains hold up, the schools present a number of thorny challenges for city leaders to grapple with over the next four years and beyond.

**Core Issues****How can NYC schools reverse the trend of rising dropout rates and better serve the more academically troubled/at-risk students?**

High school graduation rates have been trending slightly upward for the past five years, since the new Regents examination requirements were mandated; almost 55 percent of the school system's students now graduate from high school in four years. But while more students are graduating, more are dropping out as well: over the same five-year period, more than 20 percent of the city's high school students have dropped out before graduation. The percentage of students who stay in school past a fourth year to attempt to achieve a high school diploma has also dropped dramatically. Critics point to the particularly poor outcomes of non-native English speakers and children receiving special education services, who together comprise approximately a quarter of the school population. These two groups graduate at lower-than-average rates – around 50 percent for English language learners, and a striking 12 percent for children receiving special education.

In addition to the troubling news on dropout rates, the system's low-performing schools are still producing unacceptable outcomes for their students. Depending on the performance cut-offs one chooses, between 200 and 400 out of almost 900 elementary and middle schools are reporting academic performance so dismal that their students will reach high school far below grade level in basic skills. The Bloomberg-Klein reformers chose a lift-all-boats strategy rather than concentrating resources on the worst-performing schools. They imposed a universal curriculum in reading and math, allocated instructional coaches to every school, administratively reorganized the system into ten regions rather than 32 community school districts,

and created a separate administrative structure to handle operations in order to focus educators' energies on instruction. Early evidence suggests that this approach might be insufficient to significantly raise achievement in the system's worst-performing schools.

**What is the proper balance between security concerns and an environment conducive to learning?**

The Bloomberg-era reforms have included the creation of small high schools and the deconstruction of large, failing high schools. Some 150 small high schools have opened in the last three years, and many more are planned. Moreover, in addition to the 35 charter schools already in operation, the chancellor has committed to establishing an additional hundred charter schools, and has begun the planning for at least a dozen of these. Supporters of small schools report a higher rate of success, stronger relationships between students, teachers and administrators and greater accountability for quality teaching. But the formation of many of these new schools has exacerbated some chronic problems; the new schools seem to have contributed to increased overcrowding in existing high schools, particularly some large, already troubled ones. Accompanying this overcrowding is the imposition of high-visibility security measures – metal detecting scanners, phalanxes of security guards and, in "Impact" schools selected for their high risk levels, an intensive police presence. Critics charge that the tense atmosphere thus created is not conducive to student learning.

**Why are the city's middle schools struggling so badly, and what can be done to spark a turnaround?**

For decades, New York City's middle schools have been most desperately in need of systemic reform. State test score results indicate that less than 40 percent of the city's 8th grade students are reading at grade level, and this year's scores have fallen closer to 30 percent, strongly suggesting the success that Children First has achieved in city elementary schools has not yet carried over into the middle grades. Attendance and test scores plummet in the middle school years, almost half the entering 9th grade students are over-age for the grade, and more than 60 percent demonstrate reading and math skills significantly below grade level.

Until recently, policymakers have said and

done little about how they plan to improve education in the middle grades other than declaring an intention to reorganize schools to serve grades K-8 or 6-12. Their reorganization plan depends on finding additional space for the reconfigured schools, but adequate and sufficient space is another Achilles heel of the system. In July, the mayor announced that he would end “social promotion” of seventh graders as he has in lower grades, and provide more remedial services.

### **How important should charter schools be in New York City’s school reform efforts?**

Currently some 35 charter schools operate in New York City, most of them outside the jurisdiction of the chancellor and the Department of Education. The chancellor plans to expand this number threefold, and to operate the new charters within the city’s public school system. Whether city-operated or independent of the city and responsible only to a state-level authorizing agency, charter schools are exempt from many of the rules, procedures and regulations under which most public schools operate – including curriculum mandates, union contracts, fiscal regulations and personnel restrictions. Though some studies indicate that charter schools outperform comparable city schools, other researchers argue that when all intervening factors, such as student demographics, are controlled for, charters do no better, and perhaps worse than comparable city schools. It is also not yet clear whether charter schools have developed breakthrough instructional or organizational innovations that can be effectively adapted in public schools.

### **What is the proper balance between administrative expertise and robust participation of parents, teachers, students and community leaders in the management of the schools?**

The mayor and the chancellor’s reforms also radically centralized decision-making and dramatically reduced, if not eclipsed, democratic participation in school governance. Students, teachers, parents and community representatives all have less involvement in system governance, system correction, or system change than had been the case for the past 35 years. If the systemic changes that Children First introduced are to be sustained across time, it will be necessary to do more to structure the genuine participation of parents, teachers and community representatives.

### **Is there a way to solve the entrenched problems of uneven teacher quality, the high attrition rate among new teachers, and gaps in school leadership?**

It is a point of near consensus that the allocation of teacher quality throughout the system is the single biggest factor explaining poor performance in city schools. The combination of administrative procedures, union seniority policies and teacher preferences has created an almost perfect correlation between teacher quality and student socioeconomic background. In other words, the most qualified teachers educate the most advantaged students, while the system’s poorly performing schools, which desperately need high quality teachers, are staffed with young, inexperienced teachers – who either transfer to an easier assignment or leave the field altogether.

The Bloomberg-Klein administration has recognized this mismatch as a major problem and has made some tentative moves, such as the Lead Teacher Program sponsored by the Community Collaborative to Improve District 9 Schools (CC9), to address it. This program introduces master teachers who split their time between teaching and mentoring in the network of ten CC9 schools. But thus far, there has been no systemic effort to confront the problem.

The teacher quality issue is exacerbated by the school system’s chronic inability to retain an effective teaching force. Though estimates vary, it’s certain that the school system loses between one third and one half of its newly recruited teachers over their first five years on the job. In response to a state mandate to provide mentors to new teachers, the Bloomberg-Klein administration has implemented a nationally recognized mentor program, but critics charge that each mentor is working with too many novice teachers for the initiative to yield the desired results.

The need for effective school leadership is another critical problem. The school system is hemorrhaging principals; between retirement and the lure of higher paying jobs in the suburbs, more than a third of the city’s principal corps leave the system each year. The mayor’s team has implemented a citywide Leadership Academy to recruit and train new principals, but the academy’s graduates meet less than a third of the system’s annual principal needs. And as more new schools open, the demand for new, effective school leaders rises accordingly.

## **Proposed Solutions**

### **Renew the focus on strategies to upgrade the performance of the hundreds of poorly performing elementary and middle schools.**

Urban districts across the country are using the model of the Chancellor’s District, first developed in the 1990s by Chancellor Rudy Crew in New York City, to target poorly performing schools and impose a standardized improvement regimen that mandates school organization and staffing changes, as well as standardized reading and math curricula and intensive after-school support. The Children First reform terminated this effort in favor of a more universal approach to school improvement, but the persistent problems in the worst-performing schools suggest it may well be necessary to revisit the more targeted approach. The chancellor has already instituted an Autonomy Zone for successful schools; an Improvement Zone for poorly performing schools – possibly supported with funds the city is likely to receive from the settlement of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit – could facilitate improvement where it’s most needed.

### **Address the inequitable distribution of teacher quality across the system.**

Both the school system and the teachers’ union have already accepted the principle of differentiated pay for differentiated service, and have implemented it through experiments such as the Lead Teacher Program discussed above. Advocates say that the school system could develop a comprehensive incentive program to encourage large numbers of experienced and effective teachers to accept Master Teacher or Lead Teacher positions in poorly performing schools and districts. The teacher quality program put forward by the recent City Council report on how to use the CFE settlement funds presents a useful set of recommendations for a citywide reform, by focusing on a differentiated career ladder that features incentives for master teachers who agree to serve in poorly performing schools.

### **Reduce class sizes in middle schools as well as early grades.**

New research indicates that K-3 class size reduction in the Tennessee Star Program made a significant contribution to improved high school graduation rates, which is explained in

detail in the work of Jeremy D. Finn and Charles M. Achilles. The New York City school system has tended to limit class size reduction efforts to the early grades. But given the unsatisfactory outcomes in the middle grades, class size reduction may be appropriate in those settings as well. Parents groups, the teachers union, and most education advocacy organizations have made class size reduction one of their major objectives for reform.

### **Reform teacher instruction.**

More than class size reduction is necessary to remedy the dismal performance of the city's middle schools: there is a broad consensus that they need better-qualified teachers. Many of New York City's middle schools currently have no teachers licensed in math or science; a high percentage of these instructors lack deep knowledge of the subject matter or training in how to teach it. A citywide incentives program to redistribute teacher quality equitably throughout the system's middle schools would help, but would not solve the critical shortage of math, science and bilingual teachers. Only wide-ranging reform of the teacher preparation pipeline, which would involve rethinking and reorganizing the higher education programs that recruit and prepare teachers for the city system, or establishing new ones, will lead to the larger numbers of well-trained teachers the city needs.

### **Overhaul the school system's governance and accountability systems.**

Neither the citywide Panel on Education Policy nor the district-level Community Education Councils currently provide meaningful parent or community voice or participation. Moreover, the elimination of the central Board of Education and the local district boards has centralized not only governance but also accountability: no bottom-up accountability procedures remain to check or balance what is now a totally top-down accountability system. Even if this centralized, hierarchically driven reform vision produces more than short-term gains, long-term prospects for success under such a tightly controlled management system will remain in question. Although the school system's governance system is not scheduled for state legislative review until 2009, it may well prove beneficial to the future of the city's children to reconsider the current governance and accountability arrangements sooner.

## **Sources and Resources**

### **Advocates for Children**

**[www.advocatesforchildren.org](http://www.advocatesforchildren.org)**

A group that works on behalf of children from infancy to age 21 who are at greatest risk for school-based discrimination and/or academic failure. Reports include: "Leaving School Empty Handed: A Report on Graduation and Dropout Rates for Students Who Receive Special Education Services In New York City" and "Losing Our Future: How Minority Youth are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis."

### **Campaign for Fiscal Equity**

**[www.cfequity.org](http://www.cfequity.org)**

A coalition of parent organizations, community school boards, concerned citizens and advocacy groups that seeks to ensure adequate resources and better educational system performance in New York City. CFE's New York Adequacy Study suggests benchmarks for what New York City schools should provide for all children. The organization's trial materials critique the New York City school system, in terms of both inputs and performance.

### **Educational Priorities Panel**

**[www.edpriorities.org](http://www.edpriorities.org)**

A coalition of 24 organizations that seeks to improve the quality of public education for New York City's children by seeking reforms of federal, state and city budget and administrative practices affecting children. Reports include "Castles in the Sand: Why School Overcrowding Remains A Problem In NYC," April 2002.

### **"High Time for High School Reform: Early Findings from the Evaluation of the National School District and Network Grants Program"**

**[www.glf.org/nr/downloads/ed/small-schools/Small\\_schools\\_eval\\_2003.pdf](http://www.glf.org/nr/downloads/ed/small-schools/Small_schools_eval_2003.pdf)**

Early analyses of the New Visions project suggest both the potential and the difficulties of the new small high schools starting up across New York City.

### **National Center for Communities and Schools at Fordham University**

**[www.ncscatfordham.org](http://www.ncscatfordham.org)**

The Center supports and reinforces grassroots organizing to win better public schools in low-income communities and communities of color. Among their reports is "Equity or Exclusion," a study on the relationship between discipline problems in schools, resource allocation, space availability and teacher quality.

### **New York City Council Commission on the Campaign for Fiscal Equity**

**[www.nyccouncil.info/pdf\\_files/reports/05\\_11\\_cfereport.pdf](http://www.nyccouncil.info/pdf_files/reports/05_11_cfereport.pdf)**

The commission has put together two reports – one already issued, one to be released shortly – that make recommendations for systemic change, particularly on improving teaching quality and targeting poorly performing schools.

### **NYU Institute for Education and Social Policy**

**[www.nyu.edu/iesp](http://www.nyu.edu/iesp)**

The Institute seeks to strengthen urban public schools, particularly those serving low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, through research and direct support for organizing. Its recent report, "Virtual District, Real Improvement: A retrospective evaluation of the Chancellor's District, 1996-2003," sets out the levels of improvement that intervention managed. Another report, "Constituents of Change," analyzes how community organizations carry out school reform.

# Housing & Community Development

## Overview

Measured in capital investment and quality of life, New York's neighborhoods are thriving to a degree unimaginable not long ago. Residential real estate has more than doubled in value in the past three years, reflecting the widespread faith of the market in the worth and stability of the city and its communities. The burst of development has extended beyond Manhattan and into every pocket of the city. Unsubsidized residential construction is now the norm in parts of Brooklyn and the Bronx that less than a decade ago required heavy subsidies for anything to get built at all.

But the same factors that have fueled the sharp rise in real estate values are making it harder for all New Yorkers to find safe and affordable housing. For anyone considering a move to New York City, or looking to move to better housing within the city, the "sticker shock" of high prices and rents can be a major deterrent. While homeowners benefit from rising property values, about two-thirds of New Yorkers still rent. With average rents rising much faster than the rate of inflation or growth in wages, low-, moderate- and middle-income tenants are all being squeezed. Rent burdens are becoming particularly acute for poor households, which the Community Service Society recently found spend an average of 57 percent of their income on rent.

The mayor of New York exercises significant power over housing policy. He or she can propose changes to the zoning code that alter land usage policies, and appoints six of the 12 members of the City Planning Commission, which must approve any proposed changes. (The City Council appoints the rest.) The mayor also signs off on building code changes, which further determine how property may be constructed and used. City-funded capital expenditures can add to the stock of affordable housing. Finally, mayoral control over local taxation can create incentives for favored types of real estate development, such

as new rent-regulated apartments.

Like other hot real estate markets, New York City has seen an influx of speculative investment. Community development and affordable housing advocates have become particularly concerned about a sharp spike in purchase prices on multifamily, rent-regulated buildings, far greater than what their rent rolls may be able to sustain. The wave of speculation, coupled with a shortage of vacant property, has also driven up the price of building sites, putting them beyond the reach of developers seeking to construct affordable housing or supportive housing for special-needs groups.

The next mayor will deal with these issues in the context of a federal cap on the growth of the Section 8 rent subsidy program as well as cuts to the operating funds of the New York City Housing Authority – two programs that together account for nearly 10 percent of the city's rental housing. City Hall will have to figure out how to encourage private investment in housing while pursuing innovative strategies to develop and preserve affordable homes.

## Core Issues

### How should New York City attempt to create new affordable housing?

From the 1970s until the 1990s, mayors had a ready source of new affordable housing: thousands of buildings and vacant lots it had seized from owners who had failed to pay taxes. But years of reconstruction by the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and non-profit groups has almost entirely depleted the city's stock of "in rem" housing. Large vacant tracts are gone as well. With the exception of the most derelict properties, the city is no longer acquiring new sites; instead, the Department of Finance has sold the liens to private companies, which then collect on the liens. There's hot demand for these and other once-marginal properties in the private sector. New York City is experiencing a housing construction boom, with more than 13,000 new units certified in 2003 alone.

The centerpiece of the Bloomberg administration plan to develop new affordable housing is the New Housing Marketplace plan, a framework for promoting private investment with the goal of building 68,000 new units by 2008. To date, developers have produced approximately 26,000 new units, through a variety of mechanisms supported by the plan. The city's Housing Development Corporation (HDC) offers a portfolio of bond-financed programs that help

developers create housing for low-, moderate-, and middle-income occupants. A large proportion of the units are targeted at middle-income households, who require smaller subsidies. The city also continues to administer tax credits and incentives that produce housing for low-income renters.

The past year has seen the creation of two important new sources of affordable housing. The city has cleared the way for the development of thousands of low-cost apartments by rezoning formerly industrial areas of Manhattan and Brooklyn and offering tax and land-use incentives to builders. Meanwhile, a new affordable housing trust fund, created with Battery Park City surplus revenues, will help pay for new housing for the homeless and allow affordable housing developers to purchase sites for new construction. Both changes hold promise to improve the situation, though additional measures will be needed as well.

### What can the city do to minimize the loss of existing affordable housing?

Even as the city struggles to create new affordable housing, its current stock of affordable units is at risk of dwindling. Changes to state rent regulations made in 1997 allow many landlords to free their properties from rent regulation or impose large rent hikes on still-regulated properties.

At the same time, thousands of units created through state and federal subsidy programs in the 1960s and 1970s are increasing in cost as their mortgages or subsidies expire, or as owners elect to pay off loans early. Other federally subsidized buildings are falling into disrepair as a result of owner neglect. After the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) auctioned several of these subsidized properties to new landlords with histories of poor management, HPD stepped in to negotiate acquisitions by HPD-sponsored owners, and is currently in discussions with HUD to take responsibility for troubled properties on an ongoing basis.

There's not much likelihood of help from Washington. Congress has limited the availability of subsidy vouchers under the Section 8 program. (Please see the Homelessness section for more discussion of this issue). Legislation now before Congress, the State and Local Housing Flexibility Act of 2005, would freeze Section 8 funding at current levels, regardless of actual market rents, and restrict to one year Section 8 vouchers for residents of HUD buildings that

move to market rate. Planned cuts and administrative changes to the Community Development Block Grant threaten the city's chief source of funds for enforcing its housing code.

### **How can New York City promote stable homeownership?**

Homeownership is not only a personal goal for many New Yorkers; it's also an important means for stabilizing and improving communities. Yet despite an up-tick in the last several years, fewer than one-third of New Yorkers own their homes. The rising price of housing in both the city and suburbs has put home ownership farther out of reach for working and middle-class families. As properties have increased in value, homeowners – particularly elderly residents living on modest incomes – have been targets for “predatory” loans that charge high interest and are burdened with hidden costs. The ultimate cost of these loans is so high that owners frequently lose much of the value of their homes, and are at risk of forfeiting the homes themselves. Homeowners also face schemes to directly defraud them of their property. The proliferation of poorly regulated financial products threatens to undermine the potential of homeownership to help families build wealth and provide stability in communities.

### **What can the city do to alleviate the high cost of owning large residential buildings?**

While landlords aren't generally figures of sympathy to the New York City electorate, the disproportionate expense of building ownership should be of concern to all New Yorkers. The city imposes property taxes on large apartment buildings at a rate five times that levied on one-, two- and three-family homes, and water and sewer charges tend to be far higher as well—particularly in low-income communities in which people in overcrowded apartments use more water. Ultimately, landlords pass much of these expenses along to tenants, but rent regulations limit annual increases on more than half of the city's privately owned rental housing stock. Some landlords recoup lost revenue by minimizing important maintenance. The city seeks to address these problems through various incentives and code enforcement, but has not addressed inequities in the property tax system and water and sewer costs.

## **Proposed Solutions**

### **Rezone communities for mixed-income housing production.**

The inclusionary zoning plans the mayor and City Council recently approved for Hudson Yards and Greenpoint/Williamsburg will give builders in those communities strong incentives to include housing for low- and moderate-income households. These efforts should create thousands of new units of affordable housing provided that New York City's real estate market remains strong. The likely future rezoning of other formerly industrial areas will present additional opportunities to coax developers to include affordable as well as market-rate housing in their projects. This “cross-subsidy” model would need to be tailored to market conditions and opportunities in each neighborhood, but Housing Here and Now has argued that policymakers can apply the same principle – combined with city financing programs and federal tax credits – to all rezonings that involve change in use from industrial to residential and/or increased density.

As in Greenpoint/Williamsburg, where a new \$20 million fund from the City Council will help finance the purchase of industrial space for businesses at risk of being priced out of the market, the New York Industrial Retention Network argues that the city could balance its goal of new housing development with measures to prevent displacement of industry. Similar measures to preserve jobs would include stronger zoning protections for existing industrial areas that still have high concentrations of manufacturing firms.

### **Preserve affordability of subsidized and regulated housing.**

It is often much less expensive to ensure that a subsidized unit remains permanently affordable than to create a new unit of affordable housing. Given budget constraints, city officials should look to investments and creative strategies for preservation, say advocates and community development groups who supported the City Council's recent passage of Intro. 186, a measure that gives tenants in state and federally subsidized buildings the right to purchase properties put up for sale by owners who elect to leave affordable housing programs. Under the new law, which passed over the mayor's veto, tenants will get a year's advance notice, allowing them time to find developer partners. The administration had argued that the law will not stand up in court and could undermine affordability instead of promoting it.

Even if an owner wishes to continue providing

affordable housing, many abatements, credits and incentives expire after a period of 15 to 40 years, including federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit and the local J-51 tax break. Losing these benefits makes it difficult to maintain affordability over the long term. Andrew Reicher of the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board argues that the city should offer longer-term tax relief, zoning incentives and other tools aimed at keeping units permanently affordable, and the HPD should continue working with HUD to transfer distressed federally subsidized apartment buildings to responsible new owners. The city will need to invest in their rehabilitation and maintenance.

### **Ensure stable homeownership.**

Although much of the city's new housing is for condominiums and other owner-occupied housing, most existing subsidy programs—as well as the inclusionary zoning on the far West Side and Greenpoint/Williamsburg – are designed for rental housing. The Citizens Housing and Planning Council has called for government to create more flexibility in tools normally used for rental units such as density bonuses, to promote homeownership for those who would not otherwise have opportunities to buy. This will require reforms to make programs work financially for both developers and purchasers of owner-occupied housing, and to address the issue of whether and how to make these units permanently affordable.

Regional Plan Association argues that the city could also offer a tax credit to employers who provide homeownership incentives for their lower- and moderate-income employees, as Senator Hillary Clinton has recently proposed in a Senate bill for federal tax incentives. The city and state could also use tax incentives to employers to cover items such as closing costs, down payment assistance, contributions to an employee homeownership savings account, and other qualified expenses.

Neighborhood Housing Services and other groups argue that preservation of homeownership is also essential, and have been working to educate and counsel homeowners who are targets of predatory lending. Other organizations are helping them refinance their loans when necessary and litigating in some cases. Starting this summer, city government is getting involved in their efforts. Under the Community Equity Protection Project, HPD will ask nonprofits

that hold contracts under its Neighborhood Preservation Program to provide education and counseling to homeowners and buyers, and the city will use its 311 hotline to field requests for assistance. The administration can take steps to ensure that neighborhood development groups provide effective homeowner counseling services as a condition of renewing their NPP contracts, and that the groups receive the training and support they need to carry out the work.

#### **Revisit tax breaks.**

Brad Lander of PICCED also calls for considering changes to the city's use of real estate tax benefits and incentives for the development and preservation of housing. Tax breaks available to developers must be adjusted to reflect the real estate market – in particular the 421-a program, which is currently available to virtually all development projects in the outer boroughs without any requirements to build affordable housing. In the strongest outer-borough markets, 421-a is subsidizing market rate housing that would have been built with or without the tax benefit. Instead, Lander says, developers must have to produce some affordable housing in order to receive 421-a.

### **Sources and Resources**

#### **Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development**

**[www.anhd.org](http://www.anhd.org)**

Trade organization for nonprofit community development corporations, and lead organization of the Initiative for City Wide Organizing, an effort to promote neighborhood activism on housing issues.

#### **Citizens Housing and Planning Council**

**[www.chpcny.org](http://www.chpcny.org)**

Independent, non-profit research and policy institute, focusing on housing, economics and planning. Reports and policy briefs include "Inclusionary Boroughs," Summer 2005, and "Out of Balance: the Housing Crisis from a Regional Perspective," co-authored with Regional Plan Association, May 2004.

#### **Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy**

**[www.law.nyu.edu/realestatecenter](http://www.law.nyu.edu/realestatecenter)**

Provides in-depth research and analysis, including annual report "State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods" and the study "Reducing the Cost of New Housing Construction in New York City."

#### **Housing First!**

**[www.housingfirst.org](http://www.housingfirst.org)**

Advocacy coalition uniting financial institutions and citywide advocacy groups seeking increased government investment in affordable housing.

#### **Housing Here and Now!**

**[www.housinghereandnow.org](http://www.housinghereandnow.org)**

This citywide coalition of dozens of affordable housing, tenant, labor, community development, civic and neighborhood groups presses elected officials to preserve and develop affordable housing.

#### **Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project**

**[www.nedap.org](http://www.nedap.org)**

Lead organization in predatory lending partnership with city government.

#### **New York Industrial Retention Network**

**[www.nyirn.org](http://www.nyirn.org)**

A non-profit that seeks to promote manufacturing in New York City. NYIRN has sought strategies allowing housing to coexist with industry.

#### **New York State Association for Affordable Housing**

**[www.nysafah.org](http://www.nysafah.org)**

Trade association of for-profit affordable housing developers

#### **Pratt Institute Center for Community and Environmental Development**

**[www.picced.org](http://www.picced.org)**

Policy institute supporting advocacy on housing and community development; has done extensive work on inclusionary zoning.

#### **Real Estate Board of New York**

**[www.rebny.org](http://www.rebny.org)**

A trade organization for New York City's real estate industry. Issues reports and press releases on real estate issues.

#### **Urban Homesteading Assistance Board**

**[www.uhab.org](http://www.uhab.org)**

UHAB helps tenants in distressed buildings form cooperatives and advocates for government and private policies to convert and sustain viable co-ops.

#### **University Neighborhood Housing Program**

**[www.unhp.org](http://www.unhp.org)**

Bronx community development corporation addressing real estate speculation through research and strategic partnerships.

## Overview

The era of extreme urban blight in New York's poorest neighborhoods may have passed into history by the end of the 1990s, but that doesn't mean other consequences of poverty have disappeared. In fact, homelessness has become an even more significant problem for the city. At the end of June 2005, more than 7,800 single adults and 8,070 families were living in New York City's shelter system, including more than 13,000 children. The number of families in the system is more than 10 percent higher than when Mayor Bloomberg took office in January 2002, and up 50 percent since the summer of 2000, when Rudy Giuliani was mayor.

In June 2004, Mayor Bloomberg committed his administration to reducing the number of people in city shelters by two-thirds by the end of 2009, freeing up some of the hundreds of millions of dollars the city spends on shelters and related services for investment in long-term solutions to homelessness. The mayor's strategy includes a substantial increase in capital funds for affordable housing preservation and development and an intensification of homelessness prevention and diversion efforts. (Please see the Housing and Community Development section for discussion of these issues and other solutions tied directly to the expansion of low-income housing.)

Today, the city houses most homeless families in apartment-style non-profit shelters, hotels or scatter-site apartments rented from private landlords. Single men and women are housed in a variety of rooming houses, specialized programs and dormitories. The quality of the nonprofit shelters is mostly good, with better maintenance and services than the for-profit hotels and other facilities. Yet the policies that govern the shelter system remain controversial, largely because of the rapidly growing cost of managing such a sprawling system and the question of who is deemed eligible for shelter and, ultimately, for housing subsidies.

The annual cost of operating shelters and services for homeless people in New York City has increased by nearly \$200 million since the Giuliani administration's final budget, adopted in June 2001. In FY 2005, the city budgeted \$703 million for the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). This includes \$301 million funded directly from city tax revenues – an increase of nearly 50 percent in just three years.

The federal and state governments provide the remaining funds. While the state has regulatory authority over the city's management of its shelter system, the mayor and DHS retain broad leeway in devising and implementing policy and programs on homelessness.

The state's highest court has interpreted the New York State constitution to include a right to shelter, and state judges have been the arbiters during more than two decades of litigation over the city's treatment of the homeless. In 2003, the city and the Legal Aid Society agreed to a temporary halt to litigation regarding the family shelter system, allowing the city to pursue its new reform efforts. Their agreement expired this spring, however, and it is unclear whether the parties will reach a resolution in the foreseeable future. City Hall argues that court oversight complicates its reform efforts, but advocates charge that without judicial oversight, the city would be under little pressure to respect the rights of the homeless.

## Core Issues

### With affordable housing in such short supply, what can the city do to address the homelessness problem?

Public policy on homelessness in New York City is integrally linked to trends in the rental housing market and to government's use of affordable and low-cost housing resources. The tight housing market has made finding permanent homes for homeless people extraordinarily difficult, particularly given the current shortage of federal rent subsidies. (Please see the Housing and Community Development section for more detail on this subject.)

Other factors that have spurred higher usage of the shelter system include:

**Slow growth in the development of new housing**, with just 50,000 more rental apartments in New York City in 2002 than in 1993, an increase just over two percent – even as the city's population

grew by nearly ten percent;

**Strong local economic growth** in the late 1990s and again today, spurring rising property values and higher rents in formerly low-rent communities;

**Overcrowded conditions** in more than 220,000 New York City households in 2002, according to the federal Census Bureau;

**Persistent high rates of poverty**: more than one fifth of city households have incomes below the federal poverty line, and over half a million city households spend more than half of their total income on rent;

**Extremely limited housing resources** for very poor, mentally ill or physically impaired adults, and for men returning to their communities from prison.

### How can government equitably discourage use of the system?

Much of the public policy debate on homelessness revolves around who is allowed to enter the shelters, and who becomes eligible for ongoing rental subsidies after a period in the shelter system. Most people in shelters are either already on public assistance or are found eligible for it after they become homeless, although a substantial number manage to remain employed even while they are in the system. Most parents in the shelters are single mothers.

Entry to the family shelters requires proof that there is nowhere else a family can go for help, including the apartments of family members or friends. The city recently opened a new office to process families' entry into the shelter system. This new access center is set up to provide a more comprehensive assessment of families' needs than in the past, and it streamlines access to public benefits and other programs that might help families find alternatives to shelter. Observers report, however, that few safety net services are available for families deemed ineligible for shelter.

### What is being done to help families move from shelters to permanent housing?

For low-income families in less than adequate housing, entry into the shelter system long provided a shortcut to the top of the waiting list for public housing or federal Section 8 rent

vouchers, which cover the difference between 30 percent of a family's monthly income and an apartment's fair market rent. But in November 2004, hoping to end this incentive, the city Department of Homeless Services eliminated priority access to Section 8 vouchers for homeless families and domestic violence survivors. Federal limits to Section 8 program growth, however, have meant that very few Section 8 vouchers are available for anyone.

In the place of Section 8, the city created Housing Stability Plus (HSP), a temporary rental voucher that provides a family of three or four that is already on public assistance with \$925 in monthly rent for the first year, then declines steeply in value until it expires after five years. The city intends to provide HSP vouchers to about 6,500 families per year, at a cost of about \$60 million. A heated debate is underway regarding this program between administration officials and the non-profit organizations that help families leave shelter and find apartments. The practitioners argue that this temporary, shrinking subsidy will leave families incapable of paying their rent after a year or two, only to return to the shelters.

### **How can the city prevent people from becoming homeless?**

The state provides approximately \$4.2 million to about two dozen New York City non-profit organizations to provide eviction prevention and post-shelter aftercare services to about 4,200 households. The city spends about \$50 million per year on long-term rent supplements to prevent evictions, and another \$80 million on one-time emergency grants for the same purpose.

Since last year, the Department of Homeless Services has boosted its own community-based homelessness prevention efforts, including point-of-crisis interventions, such as one-shot rental arrears payments, landlord-tenant mediation, Housing Court representation and family support services. DHS has set up six new "HomeBase" contracts with neighborhood-based organizations in communities with high rates of family homelessness. These groups are establishing comprehensive homelessness prevention programs aimed at supporting families and single adults who are doubled up with friends or relatives, and finding isolated families who might never have otherwise sought help before entering the shelter system.

### **How can the system address chronic homelessness?**

Most single residents in the system are very poor and often disabled adults who use the system as a temporary, short-term way-station between places to live. On average, single men and women use the shelters for about three months over the course of a year – but this is skewed upward by a relatively small number of long-stay shelter residents, most of whom suffer from mental illness, who have been in shelter for at least two of the last four years. Such long-stay shelter residents are the primary target population for the development of supportive housing, a movement that has created more than 7,500 units of housing linked to on-site or nearby social services, including mental health care, in New York City since 1991.

### **Proposed Solutions**

#### **Establish more homelessness prevention services in communities, targeting outreach and supports to doubled-up and other isolated families.**

Several studies have shown that a majority of families – anywhere from 55 to 77 percent – in the city's shelter system have recently left a crowded, doubled-up situation with relatives or friends. One recent survey also found that a very high number of families in shelters had not sought help from government or community institutions as they tumbled toward homelessness. The city's current \$12 million HomeBase program is a modest effort in six communities to identify and serve about 2,400 such families in order to prevent their entry into shelter.

The Center for New York City Affairs published a report in June 2005 describing how a larger neighborhood-based safety net program for families – set up in communities with high rates of poverty, poor housing conditions, a high percentage of single-mother households and high rates of families entering the shelter system – could link temporary rent supports, legal assistance, benefits advocacy and extensive family services with community and tenant organizing to stabilize thousands of families. Such a safety net would be more far-reaching than the HomeBase initiative, and would bridge the preventive and support services of several agencies, including DHS, the public schools, the Department of Youth and Community Development and the Administration for Children's Services.

Five large community districts account for more than one-fourth of all recent eligible entrants to the family shelters, and 18 districts account for nearly 70 percent. If New York City were to shift up to one-

quarter of its current family shelter expenditure – about \$100 million – to cultivate an accessible network of family services in these districts, community-based organizations could assist as many as 25,000 additional families in these neighborhoods and reduce the shelter population by as many as 3,000 families. If successful, the savings would greatly exceed the cost, many families would be better off and neighborhoods would have stronger community services.

#### **Maintain the recent de-linking of the shelter system and permanent rent subsidies, while reinvesting savings in the expansion and improvement of the new Housing Stability Plus temporary rent subsidy program.**

During the four months beginning in November 2004, DHS reported that the number of families applying for shelter had declined by nearly 15 percent compared to the previous year. The city's move to cut off access to Section 8 rent vouchers for shelter residents may be a factor in this decline. If the trend holds true into the summer months, when the number of families entering shelters usually increases, Bloomberg administration officials believe the city will achieve significant cost savings. The total cost of providing shelter will decline substantially if the number of families in the system shrinks to a level that allows for the closure of expensive scatter-site apartments and hotels.

Advocates have called for these savings to be reinvested in a more far-reaching rent subsidy program, one that allows recipients who leave public assistance in order to work, to retain the subsidy for a full five years. Others have argued that the priority access to Section 8 and public housing apartments should be preserved for survivors of domestic violence and others who do not qualify for the new Housing Stability Plus rent subsidy.

The Coalition for the Homeless has called for creation of a permanent city- and state-funded rent subsidy to offset Bush administration caps in the Section 8 voucher program. If the city can reduce the shelter budget by just half the total increase since 2002, or \$100 million, the savings would be sufficient to cover an ongoing rent subsidy for about 9,000 families – more than the entire population of the city family shelters at any one point in time, the coalition reports. Bloomberg administration officials counter that city poverty rates are such that tens of thousands

of households would be deemed eligible for the subsidy, and argue that the expense would spiral.

**End the city's reliance on private landlords providing extremely expensive temporary shelter in scatter-site apartments.**

Currently the city contracts for more than 1,500 scatter site apartments, paying landlords more than \$3,000 per month per unit and spending a total of more than \$50 million per year. These funds could provide annual rental subsidies for 4,500 families in permanent apartments, or cover the annual debt payments on the development of thousands of permanent apartments.

For two years, city officials have said they hope to end their reliance on these extremely expensive apartments, but add that there is no other alternative to the immediate need to shelter families already in the system. Critics argue that one alternative, at least until these apartments are phased out of use, would be to reduce the direct payment to landlords and fund a more rigorous inspection program to assure better quality housing.

**Invest new funds in supportive housing for singles and families with mental illness and other disabilities, to overcome chronic homelessness.**

During the real estate development boom of the mid-1980s, the destruction of 50,000 units of single-room occupancy apartments in the city and the release of thousands of mentally ill men and women from state hospitals led to a sharp increase in street homelessness. Beginning in 1990, the city and state began to invest savings from state hospital closures in development of more than 7,500 supportive housing units for these chronically homeless individuals. Mayor Bloomberg has promised to develop 12,000 more such units by 2014, although independent budget analysts question whether his capital budget plans include such a large investment.

There are also 457 supportive housing units for families, managed by dozens of non-profit organizations in New York City with city and state funding; another 109 such apartments are scheduled for completion by 2007, according to the Supportive Housing Network of New York. Many advocates and supportive housing providers have called for the city to more aggressively pursue a new agreement with the state to begin financing thousands of new supported units for singles and families.

## Sources and Resources

### Coalition for the Homeless

[www.coalitionforthehomeless.org](http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org)

An advocacy and service organization that assists homeless individuals and families in New York through litigation, public education and direct services. It publishes policy briefs on homelessness and related issues, available on its website.

### “Ending Chronic Homelessness in New York City”

[www.nyc.gov/html/om/html/2004a/pr157-04\\_speech.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/html/2004a/pr157-04_speech.html)

A speech by Mayor Michael Bloomberg to the Association for a Better New York, June 23, 2004. The mayor's major address outlining the city's plan for preventing and ending homelessness.

### NYC Department of Homeless Services

[www.nyc.gov/html/dhs](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dhs)

The city agency responsible for overseeing the single and family homeless shelter systems. Its current policy agenda, “Uniting for Solutions Beyond Shelter: The Action Plan for New York City,” aims to bring together the public, nonprofit, and business sectors in a coordinated campaign to address homelessness, and is available on the DHS website.

### Partnership for the Homeless

[www.partnershipforthehomeless.org](http://www.partnershipforthehomeless.org)

An advocacy and direct service organization that partners with faith- and neighborhood-based organizations, business and government to address homelessness in New York City. It publishes position papers and a monthly advocacy newsletter, available on its website.

### “Spanning the Neighborhood: The Bridge Between Housing and Supports for Families”

[www.newschool.edu/milano/nyc affairs/childwelfare/Spanning.pdf](http://www.newschool.edu/milano/nyc affairs/childwelfare/Spanning.pdf)

A report on community strategies for preventing homelessness and family crisis, published by the Center for New York City Affairs, June 2005.

### Supportive Housing Network of New York

[www.shnny.org](http://www.shnny.org)

An association of providers of supportive housing. Its publications include a white paper titled “Supportive and Service-Enriched Housing for Families,” published with the Task Force on Housing and Services for Families, and the “Blueprint to End Homelessness.”

### U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation

[www.aspe.hhs.gov/homeless/index.shtml](http://www.aspe.hhs.gov/homeless/index.shtml)

The federal agency overseeing homeless policy in the United States. It has extensive resources on prevention and creative strategies from other cities and states.

# Environment, Open Space & Sanitation

## Overview

The ecology of New York City is among the most complex on earth: the city's location in the Hudson River estuary and the high density and diversity of its human population make for an extraordinary set of challenges and opportunities. Working under authorities and mandates from a variety of state and federal regulators, the mayor controls a series of agencies that manage the city's land use, natural resources and waste materials, and protect human health. He or she manages a 28,800 acre park system that is one of the largest and best known in the world. In addition to setting the budgets of specific city agencies and authorities, the mayor also advocates for hundreds of millions of capital dollars available from federal and state sources.

State and federal mandates, changes in economic activity, and advancements in technology and science help drive the City Hall agenda. These forces narrow a mayor's ability to set new policy directions. But even within these limits the mayor has tremendous ability to set and address priorities. Budget allocations of scarce capital and operating dollars, agency focus and direction, and the tone and goals of negotiations with private sector developers are important ways that the mayor can manifest improvements to the environment, quality of life, and public health. These responsibilities will be of tremendous importance to whoever sits in City Hall.

## Core Issues

### Will waterfront revitalization provide open space and access for all city residents?

The Bloomberg administration has made waterfront revitalization a priority, encouraging new residential development and commercial development on waterfronts throughout the city. In most of these new developments, private developers must provide and maintain public ac-

cess along the thirty-foot strip immediately next to the waterfront. The city's reliance on the private sector to provide public access to the waterfront has yielded mixed results. While some owners, designers, and building managers have built and managed high-quality public spaces, others have skirted the spirit if not the letter of the law. Sometimes the public spaces that are created are not truly public; many have restricted access and few improvements. In other developments, the amenity has not been realized on the original timetable, as developers wait until occupancy and cash flow make the public space affordable to build and maintain.

The city – often in partnership with the state – has also embarked on a campaign to create a series of waterfront parks and public spaces along the waterfront. But ensuring this legacy will require a substantial public commitment: To complete Hudson River Park, Brooklyn Bridge Park, and Governors Island, the three largest projects, will cost approximately \$500 million. The Waterfront Park Coalition, an alliance of civic groups led by the New York League of Conservation Voters, recently requested \$90 million to move forward ten local projects in places like Sunset Park, Hunts Point, and the Hudson and Harlem River waterfronts at 125<sup>th</sup> Street. In all, the city and state will have to allocate \$1 to \$2 billion over the next decade for the more than 100 projects now on the drawing board along the city's 578 miles of coastline.

### How can the city control the costs and impact of its garbage?

The 2001 closure of the Fresh Kills landfill removed a major blight on the environment and communities of Staten Island. But inadequate planning and the steep rise in the cost of exporting our trash to out-of-city landfills has resulted in record costs for solid waste disposal; the city now pays about three times what it did when phase out began in 1998. The city now depends upon high-polluting diesel trucks to move both trash and recyclables, and relies upon clusters of garbage transfer facilities in overburdened, low-income communities in Brooklyn and the South Bronx. In addition, the 2002 cutbacks to the city's recycling program (which were restored in April 2004) reduced recycling rates. The lower volume and variable amount of materials helped push the city into a series of short-term, low price contracts with vendors.

Mayor Bloomberg's Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) proposes several specific solutions to address these issues: greater reliance upon barge and

rail to move residential and commercial waste, a state-of-the-art recycling facility on the Brooklyn waterfront in Sunset Park to help process much of the city's recyclables, and stricter regulation of private facilities to curb abuses at existing transfer stations. The plan, however, contains few details on both reducing the city's overall waste loads and promoting recycling.

### Can we clean up the air we breathe?

City residents continue to suffer from poor air quality. Since 1991, all of New York City, and the surrounding counties, have not met federal standards for ozone pollution. Of more recent concern are the particulates discharged by diesel engines used to power trucks, school buses and heavy-duty construction equipment.

Poor air quality is unhealthy for lung or heart disease sufferers, children, seniors, pregnant women, or anyone who exercises outdoors. But the situation is most dire in low-income communities, where asthma rates are nearing epidemic levels. According to the NYC Department of Health, one million city residents – including 300,000 children – are suffering from asthma. Columbia University researchers found that children in Harlem have more than a 25 percent incidence of asthma, the highest in the nation. Poor air quality carries a fiscal cost, too. Environmental Defense, a national environmental organization, reports that the city spent over \$242 million for asthma hospitalizations in 2000 alone.

### Can the city maintain parks in every neighborhood?

The city's parks system has never recovered from the budget crisis of the early 1990s, when its appropriation was slashed by 25 percent. Since then, full-time staff has been cut in half. New York City currently ranks near the bottom among large cities in parks maintenance funds per capita, spending about \$25 a year compared to a national average of \$44; national leaders like Seattle, Minneapolis and Chicago spend more than \$100 per resident on park upkeep.

Private philanthropy has helped make up the shortfall in wealthier neighborhoods, particularly those in Manhattan. Other communities, however, have not fared as well. This year's third annual Report Card issued by New Yorkers for Parks, a nonprofit advocacy group, found that 40 percent of parks citywide scored Cs, Ds and

Fs, while conditions at the lowest-scoring parks continue to deteriorate.

## Proposed Solutions

### **Invest in waterfront open spaces.**

An attractive and accessible waterfront will benefit not just the current owners of waterfront lots, but property owners in waterfront neighborhoods and the city's overall vitality for generations to come. Responding to community residents and advocacy organizations, elected officials have called for the capital investments necessary to create regional and neighborhood parks such as Hudson River Park, Brooklyn Bridge Park and new parks on Governors Island, in North Williamsburg and along the Harlem River. These political and planning commitments will have to find a place in upcoming budgets.

Current policies that require private owners to build and manage public spaces at the water's edge also merit reconsideration. These new open spaces must be well integrated with the city's system of public parks; this requires physical connections such as contiguous walkways and greenways, like the Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway. This could be accomplished by having the city manage any privately created open space rather than leaving the responsibility to the maintenance staff of private buildings. The recently adopted zoning text for Greenpoint and Williamsburg enables a voluntary system by which developers can turn over privately built open spaces to the city for long term management and programming. But if this voluntary system is to become a model for other private waterfront development in the city, officials would need to provide enough capital funding and political backing to induce private landowners to cooperate.

### **Commit to recycling and waste prevention.**

Cutting the costs and environmental impacts of the city's solid waste management system will require following through on the barge and rail based management system proposed in the Solid Waste Management Plan. In addition, given rising disposal costs, working with residences and businesses to encourage waste prevention and recycling is an important step the city could take to reduce solid waste management costs and realize environmental benefits.

A coalition of the city's leading environmen-

tal groups, including the Natural Resources Defense Council and the New York League of Conservation Voters, has set forth ten concrete recommendations for improving the recycling program. Of particular importance is reforming the current structure of the city's recycling program by establishing a more business oriented and higher level recycling office that will improve the price the city receives for recycled materials by ensuring a higher quality and stable supply; siting the new materials processing facility proposed for Sunset Park; streamlining routes and schedules and changing collection practices to reduce the costs of collecting materials; and, perhaps most importantly, strengthening the public education program to increase efficiency in collecting more and cleaner materials. Another, related priority is to reduce the commercial waste burden in low-income communities by moving forward on the rail and barge transportation system and regulatory proposals outlined in the mayor's proposed solid waste management plan.

### **Reduce diesel emissions through better technology and rail service.**

Recent legislation passed by the City Council in 2003 and 2005 requires that all city-owned or operated diesel-powered vehicles – including garbage trucks, school buses and construction vehicles – utilize cleaner-burning diesel and the best available technology for reducing emissions. Additionally, the legislation requires the city to purchase the cleanest cars possible when adding new vehicles to its fleets. But city agencies have made uneven progress toward these goals, indicating a need for a comprehensive, well thought out strategy to ensure compliance with the law.

The city also needs to identify ways to reduce New York's reliance upon diesel-powered trucks to move freight. Investment in a Cross Harbor Tunnel (promoted in particular by the Move New York coalition and detailed in the Transportation section) and following through on commitments to a rail and barge system for our solid waste, as included in the mayor's solid waste management plan and described above, would substantially reduce New York's extraordinary high levels of truck traffic.

### **Ensure adequate levels of park funding.**

New Yorkers for Parks has called upon city leaders to make New York's parks the best in the nation by working toward dedicating one percent of the city budget to the Parks Department. Currently the Parks budget comprises only 0.48 percent of the city's overall budget. Such an increase could

reduce crime and make all parks family-friendly by adding Parks Enforcement Patrol officers; ensuring cleaner and better maintained parks and playgrounds through additional neighborhood gardeners and Playground Associates; and helping to grow more, healthier, and larger shade trees to cool city streets, filter air pollution and beautify neighborhoods. A first step toward this goal would be to enable the Parks Department to retain revenue from concessions on parkland, rather than returning such revenue to the general fund.

In addition to supporting increased public allocations, Regional Plan Association and other city park advocates have suggested that the city could explore a range of alternative revenue sources. It is well established that parks and open space increase property values. Residents and businesses throughout the metropolitan area have voted to tax themselves to establish dedicated funds to purchase open space or improve the quality of street life. A similar set of initiatives – such as local park improvement districts, city-wide dedicated real estate transfer taxes, and special assessments – could enable New York City parks to directly benefit from the property value and property tax increases generated from well-tended parks and green spaces. Such funding could be allocated to the Parks Department and/or to local development corporations or business improvement districts.

## Sources and Resources

### Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy

**[www.bbpc.net](http://www.bbpc.net)**

A non-profit organization pushing for the creation, support, and enjoyment of a Brooklyn Bridge Park.

### Environmental Defense Fund

**[www.environmentaldefense.org](http://www.environmentaldefense.org)**

A national research and lobbying membership organization concerned with environmental problems. Reports include: "Trash and the City: Toward a Cleaner, More Equitable Waste Transfer System in Manhattan," June 2004; "Rebuilding Lower Manhattan: A Clean Air Initiative," January 2002.

### Friends of Hudson River Park

**[www.friendsofudsonriverpark.org](http://www.friendsofudsonriverpark.org)**

A non-profit organization that advocates for funding for the completion of the Hudson River Park.

### Governors Island Alliance

**[www.governorsislandalliance.org](http://www.governorsislandalliance.org)**

A coalition of civic, environmental, and preservation organizations seeking the return of Governors Island to the city of New York and its development as a public space. The June 2004 report of findings from the Governors Island Park Planning Workshop is available on their website.

### Natural Resources Defense Council

**[www.nrdc.org](http://www.nrdc.org)**

A national environmental advocacy group with New York City programs and reports, including: "Smoke Out: 3 Measures for Cleaning Up Diesel Air Pollution in New York City," April 2005; "Recycling Returns: 10 Reforms For Making New York City's Recycling Program More Cost Effective," April 2004.

### New York League of Conservation Voters

**[www.nylcv.org](http://www.nylcv.org)**

A New York State non-partisan group that endorses candidates based on their environmental policies, as a means of educating voters. Reports include: "New York Waterfront Blueprint," prepared as part of the Waterfront Park Coalition and the "2005 New York City Legislative Agenda."

### New Yorkers For Parks

**[www.ny4p.org](http://www.ny4p.org)**

A non-profit organization that advocates preserving the city's parks, and issues a report card on the state of the city's parks, individual park profiles and testimony on park and open space issues.

### Regional Plan Association

**[www.rpa.org](http://www.rpa.org)**

A non-profit research and advocacy organization that issues reports and policy recommendations for development in the greater New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region. Reports include: "Draft Plan for the Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway," with the Brooklyn Greenway Initiative, February 2005.



