

Downtown Democratic Club Candidate Survey: Mayor of the City of New York

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Mayor of the City of New York • Section 1

How would you use this position to improve policing in New York? Do you support cutting NYPD funding in order to reallocate funds towards needed services and social programs? Where would you reallocate the funds, if so? What concrete policies would you advocate for to improve policing in NY? *

We need to put the Public back in Public Safety. This means a top to bottom restructuring of the NYPD, beginning with strong civilian oversight at the front end of policing -- policies that make clear what policing is and is not, what conduct will not be tolerated, as well as the priorities of policing, which I believe must be problem-oriented, rather than punitive. When I am Mayor, I will do the following: run a full audit of the NYPD's budget -- including the out of budget expenses such as settlements -- to assess the facts and make necessary cuts, including to the number of uniformed officers. Move mental health calls, routine traffic violations, and school safety out of the NYPD. Assert civilian oversight of all policies and priorities of the NYPD on the front end. We cannot only assert civilian oversight to engage in discipline. We must prevent the nefarious acts from happening at the outset. Hire a police commissioner that has not just moved up the ranks of the NYPD rank and file. We need a new model of leadership to work as a partner with the people to transform policing. Require collaboration and partnership between the NYPD and other agencies through "problem solving policing." Too often the NYPD responds to problems of poverty, not of crime. We need to ensure that if the NYPD receives a call about a poverty problem, the right city agencies are involved and the NYPD is not. We must rightsize the NYPD and, yes, that includes reducing the number of uniformed officers in the force. I believe in investing in community driven solutions to crime. As laid out in the Gun Violence Prevention Plan that I released, I will invest in a Participatory Justice Fund to support these solutions, increase the money going to violence interrupters and invest in creating education and employment opportunities that prevent crime by addressing its root causes.

How would you go about creating more affordable housing in New York? What about permanent housing for New York's homeless population? Where would you put it? How would you make sure it's actually affordable and sustainable? Would you ever support upzoning in order to create it? Will you accept money from real estate interests? Please be specific on your proposals. *

If elected, my administration will fight for affordable housing in every borough on multiple fronts. First, we need rent subsidies to address the immediate eviction crisis facing our families while standing up with fellow advocates to fight in Albany for universal rent protections and to preserve affordable rentals. Next, we need to change the City's approach to land use and re-zonings in ways that create and maintain affordable housing, with a focus on deep and permanent affordability over simple unit production. All land use and housing plans should include a fair distribution of resources, prioritize the construction of affordable housing, and take into account community needs while correcting for historic disinvestment and displacement. We must rethink our planning processes and economic development programs to be based on key principles and include real community and stakeholder engagement, so people have a real say and control over the destiny of their neighborhoods, without abandoning fair share principles. I would only support upzoning in order to create affordable housing if the zoning changes were supported by the community that they would affect. Currently, our land use process provides inadequate opportunity for substantive community input. I oppose upzoning our City's historic districts. We can address our city's affordable housing needs without changing the character of our City's neighborhoods.

Also, my administration will pursue homeownership strategies and innovations such as nonprofit development, ways to increase access to credit, and community land trusts. Additionally, communities should have the opportunity to acquire their own housing. This means exploring programs where distressed properties, including commercial buildings, are acquired by the City for use as permanently affordable housing to be managed by nonprofit affordable housing developers, investing in community land trusts, keeping housing built on public land permanently affordable, and exploring measures like TOPA/COPA at the city level to put housing in the hands of residents. I will work to implement creative solutions to expand our affordable housing stock by converting tax liens, buying up vacant properties left behind in the wake of COVID, and stimulating more non-profit housing development. For too long affordable housing and homelessness have been viewed as completely separate issues. My administration will not make that mistake. I have learned that all New Yorkers are housing ready and I will work to create permanent housing for New York City's homeless population. There are currently around 100 hotels that will likely go bankrupt due to the pandemic. As Mayor, I will explore ways for the city to acquire these properties to convert them into permanently supportive housing. My campaign has not and will not accept money from real estate interests.

Do you support taxing the wealthy? What specific tax policy changes would you support in New York State and New York City to increase State and City revenue? How will you, at the same time, restore NYC's economic health, employment, tax base, and small businesses, both short-term and long? *

Given the budget shortfalls this economic crisis has created, raising more revenue is a must. We need strategies that call us to come together and ask the wealthiest New Yorkers to step up and contribute what they can. This includes revenue options such as a millionaires tax, a mansions tax, a pied-a-tier tax, a vacancy tax on commercial properties, and halting the stock transfer tax rebate. Some of these are taxes that would be resolved in Albany, but there is a new progressive wind in our capitol so the chance to pass these types of taxes has never been higher.

The cornerstone of my economic recovery agenda is New Deal New York, an ambitious plan to invest \$10 billions dollars in New York City through a capital investment program that centers on both job growth and needed infrastructure investments. As part of New Deal New York we will invest in resilient infrastructure and developments on public land that addresses climate change, transforms NYCHA, and modernizes our city's digital and physical infrastructure. My plan will also put the City's artists and performers back to work by providing performance and studio spaces, and through other capital expenditures that support arts and culture in the City.

New Deal New York has been constructed with an eye toward supporting Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprises and small neighborhood businesses. A smart recovery is an equitable recovery and relies on investment in a sustainable economy, not on austerity measures that tell hungry people to simply tighten their belts. We cannot just rebuild our economy; we need to transform it. We can and will place economic justice and equity at the center of our response and ensure an economy that works for all New Yorkers. This means addressing the racial wealth gap, pay gap for women, and economic security for all.

How should we desegregate our schools? Do you support eliminating the SHSAT? Do you support admissions screens? What concrete changes would you make to our public school system? *

As a Co-chair of Mayor de Blasio's School Diversity Advisory Group, with Hazel Dukes and Jose Calderon, I co-led a process with 40+ stakeholders that included parents, students, community leaders, advocates, and academics to present a series of proposals, including integration goals, to tackle the structural inequalities and racism that exists in our school system. These proposals included integration goals, supporting district, borough, and ultimately city-wide integration and school-level innovations, and ending racially discriminatory admissions testing. The SHSAT has insufficient validity and a segregative effect and, therefore, I do not support it. I continue to support the SDAG recommendations and am committed to doing the hard work to make integration a reality. A transformed school system must tackle the structural inequality in our society that is also embedded in how our schools are organized and operate – inequality that cheats our students of color, low-income students, students with learning differences, and those experiencing housing insecurity. This includes resources and, in this age of technology, we must address the digital divide, including broadband access and equipment, so that all students and families can fully participate in educational opportunities.

Integration advances school excellence. It's also undeniable that COVID-19 has created new challenges and opportunities for transformation. The challenges include hundreds of thousands of kids who have lost perhaps a year in educational outcomes due to COVID, so we have to develop innovative strategies that support our children's recovering the year and engaging in accelerated learning where appropriate. COVID also means that we have the opportunity to rethink many things about how schools and education are organized to address our challenges and create new learning opportunities for our children that can also create diverse learning environments. We must be open to adjustments in the way we achieve integration to make sure we're taking advantage of new opportunities, while keeping our eyes on the prize of making up for this lost year of school.

What is the path forward on corrections reform? Do you support closing Rikers? Do you support constructing new, borough-based jails? In all boroughs or just some of them? Do you support bail reform? Did you support the recent partial roll back of bail reform? *

Closing Rikers Island is a moral imperative. Rikers Island has long been a disgrace to New York City and closing it needs to happen. I support the #CloseRikers plan and understands that even as we aim to lower incarceration rates, we will need places to humanely house those who are still incarcerated. We must make these holistic environments that help rehabilitate individuals and ensure they are ready to re-engage upon release. I support alternatives to incarceration and their application to the greatest extent possible. Such as, the construction of new borough-based facilities that can house those who we lack appropriate alternatives to incarceration and that transform how those who pose some threat to the safety of others are housed and supported. All boroughs should have alternatives to incarceration and facilities for those who require them. The current borough jails are not in the condition necessary to provide a humane environment for housing the city's inmates and do not have sufficient capacity necessary to close Rikers Island. I strongly support bail reform. For years I spoke out in favor of and lobbied for bail reform.

How can New York lead on climate change? Are there any green energy projects we can pursue? Do you support any of the existing pipeline proposals? How can we leverage our financial and economic power to encourage other jurisdictions to be better on the climate? *

New York City must be a leader on climate change. My climate platform (ADEPT) is based on five pillars because we can be adept at creating climate justice:

ADAPT: Seek carbon neutrality or negativity through community owned alternative sustainable, renewable energy sources including offshore wind, solar, and geothermal energy.

DISPOSE: Transform waste management systems to improve efficiency and reduce emissions, including borough-based composting.

EQUITY: Address environmental injustice, including the root causes of poor air quality. Create more transit equity opportunities which can reduce automobile emissions while helping to solve other inequities.

PLAN: Create a 5-borough resiliency plan to protect the City's shoreline, with a focus on low income communities of color in the outer boroughs.

TRAIN: Create job training programs and living wage green color jobs targeted to NYCHA residents and residents of coastal communities at the frontlines of climate change.

I do not support any of the existing pipeline proposals because they move the city in the wrong direction on fossil fuels and carbon emissions. As Mayor, I will work with environmental justice advocates, community members, labor advocates, and policy makers to determine the best plan for achieving 100% renewable energy and carbon neutrality while creating good jobs. I support the Green Rikers initiatives which would turn the island into a hub of green infrastructure and produce renewable energy for our city.

As Mayor of New York City, I would use my profile to fight for passage of climate change policy at the State and Federal level including the Green New Deal and would share our initiatives with cities across the country so they can copy our success. I was very pleased to see that recently three of our city's pension funds divested from fossil fuels. If elected, I would work with the boards of the remaining two funds to make sure they follow suit. I would also use the city's billions of dollars in contracting and procurement to encourage progress fighting climate change in the private sector.

How will you improve procurement and contracting? How do we cut waste, and how do we make sure women- and minority-owned businesses get a fair shake in the procurement process? *

It is clear that there is waste and inefficiency in City government. My administration will treat procurement as a strategic priority. We will move aggressively to identify bureaucratic bloat, waste, mismanagement and other opportunities for savings. I will give each agency -- including the NYPD -- an efficiency target and hold my Commissioners accountable to meeting it. Too often in the past contract management has consisted largely of processing invoices and change orders, with little attention paid to monitoring quality. We will take advantage of information technology to track performance and manage vendor relationships in real time, and pursue a flexible approach to procurement and contracting, diversifying who we do business with so we can guarantee that we're getting the best possible price. These efforts, combined with modernization, space purchasing, and digitization programs will provide additional savings.

In 2014, I was named the head of the MWBE program at City Hall. When I started the role, there was no program to speak of. The City had \$500m worth of MWBE contracts but no coordination, oversight or vision for expansion. In my first year in the role, we doubled that amount to \$1.6B and hit the goal in my second year as well. In order to reach the goal, I brought all city agencies to the table, had them provide quarterly reports on progress toward the goal, and worked with them to remove any real or perceived barriers in their way. In addition, I helped negotiate a Project Labor Agreement that allowed for the expansion of MWBE work on city construction projects while protecting the interests of our union brothers and sisters. As Mayor, I will devote staff and resources to enacting a robust MWBE program to build on what I was able to accomplish at City Hall. New York City's vendors should be as diverse as the city.

What is your plan to save small businesses? How do we make sure, when we come back from COVID, our local businesses are still here? And how do we make sure the enormous amount of commercial vacancies get filled, and not just by big chains snatching up cheap leases? *

Small businesses employ more than half of City residents. They are absolutely vital to New York City's economy, community vibrancy, and quality of life. The effects of COVID have been devastating. Even before COVID commercial rents for small business were too high and unregulated increases threatened the ability of too many of them to keep their doors open. That's why I support City Council Intro 1796, which would enact rent control for commercial space used by small businesses. Early in the pandemic I worked to help small businesses in my neighborhood apply to the federal Paycheck Protection Program. Unfortunately, by the time they applied, it was too late. The new PPP is welcome but nowhere near enough. I support a vacancy tax, as well as other measures to provide financial and regulatory relief to small businesses (particularly in relation to rent). In the coming weeks I will be releasing a more detailed plan to support our small businesses and will share it with you when I do. I can say that I will take this same hands-on and collaborative approach as Mayor--working together with our small businesses to fashion solutions that meet their needs -- as I did as a volunteer in Flatbush during the pandemic.

Mayor of the City of New York • Section II

What rules will you put in place to prevent lobbyists and corporate interests from having the type of influence with you that they have had with the past three administrations? *

In order for us to reimagine New York, we must rebuild trust in government. I do not come from the political machine and do not have political ambitions beyond my mayoralty. This is why I have and will continue to have People's Assemblies, to ensure that regular New Yorkers are part of the decision-making process. In addition, I am not accepting contributions from real estate developers, lobbyists or corporations. My decisions will always be based on principles and delivering for residents - not accepting contributions means that no one need doubt that. I also participate in the public campaign finance program that caps donations and helps keep big money out of politics. No New Yorker should be able to gain access or influence based on the relationships they have or the money in their pocket.

What are your top budgetary priorities? Do you have one signature, expensive plan that could be your legacy? *

My number one priority is to address our revenue crisis in a way that both ensures that our trash is collected, and other basic services are delivered to ensure basic quality of life issues are addressed for every resident. Simultaneously, we must transform how government supports job creation and small businesses, ensures more safe and affordable housing, and reins in the NYPD so that it protects and serves, rather than surveils and abuses residents. That means taking a hard look at how the City is spending its money to ensure that we do so more efficiently and effectively.

To address the revenue crisis, we must ensure that the economy is coming back from COVID- 19 for communities hardest hit by the pandemic. The economy itself must be restructured so that we are stimulating revenue by spending capital on needed infrastructure that brings more opportunities to New York City, and we must ensure that our residents, including undocumented immigrants, are able to work safely and meet the needs of their families. It's not enough to just return to the New York that predated COVID, though we must rebuild. We must reimagine our city and use this crisis to face structural inequality, actual racism, and finally fix what has been broken for far too long for Black, Brown, LGBTQ, Indigenous, Immigrant, other marginalized communities and women of all races.

My signature plan is called New Deal New York and it is the centerpiece of my economic recovery program. A \$10 billion Works Progress Administration-style infrastructure, stimulus and jobs program, New Deal New York will provide a shot in the arm of our City's economy—putting residents back to work and investing in the future of our communities. It will create up to 100,000 new jobs for New Yorkers. 30,000 will be new jobs through projects that will employ artists, construction, technology, and engineer workers, along with approximately 70,000 indirect jobs for childcare workers, librarians, home healthcare workers, and manufacturers. As part of this initiative, we will invest in resilient infrastructure and developments on public land that addresses climate change, transforms NYCHA, and modernizes our city's digital and physical infrastructure. My plan will also put the City's artists and performers back to work by providing performance and studio spaces, and through other capital expenditures that support arts and culture in the City. New Deal New York has been constructed with an eye toward supporting communities of need, Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprises, and small neighborhood businesses. A smart recovery is an equitable recovery and relies on investment in a sustainable economy, not on austerity measures that tell hungry people to simply tighten their belts.

Will you continue and expand the Black Entrepreneurs NYC (BE NYC) initiative? *

As Mayor, I will continue and expand the Black Entrepreneurs program. While the Black community currently makes up 22% of New York City's population, just 2% of NYC businesses are owned by Black entrepreneurs. Black entrepreneurs still face challenges of structural racism that makes it harder for them to get access to capital and investment. With more direct attention from city government and by increasing the program's partnership with the private sector we can make BE NYC more effective and support a greater number of Black entrepreneurs. When I was head of the MWBE program at City Hall, I was able to more than double the worth of the city's MWBE contracts in a single year. That is the type of impact I will have on the BE NYC program.

How will you engage parents and families that are traditionally excluded from education policy decisions? *

Over 100,000 of our NYC public school students live in temporary housing or shelter. Over 154,000 NYC students are English language learners. Far too often, these students and their families are left behind both in the school building and out. As Mayor, I would engage families, teachers, and community leaders in their home language through both the formal parent networks such as the CEC and PTAs and direct outreach and engagement via my people's assembly model. Additionally, I will direct the DOE to use technology and communication tools such as WhatsApp and texting to communicate with and engage families on an ongoing basis. Community-based partnerships can also be valuable in reaching and engaging parents and families who have been traditionally excluded. The Community Schools Model is a good one in that it includes community relationships and building on that model can support more effective engagement.

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?

I'm running for Mayor because I am a change-making leader. We need to do more than just rebuild New York City; we need to reimagine it. I am committed to building a New York City where every New Yorker can afford to live, get a decent job, get a good education and have a decent quality of life while doing it. That is- with the dignity every New Yorker deserves. I will fight for New Yorkers of all races, all religions, all classes, all types; so that no matter who we are or how we see ourselves, we can find a home here. My vision is a New York that rises from the ashes of twin pandemics – coronavirus and systemic racism that denies investment to people of color. New York must rise together; rising above hate, rising from joblessness to dignity, rising from homelessness to hope, rising from an affordability crisis to communities that sustain all of us. This is within our reach, but it requires bold leadership that fearlessly confronts the realities New Yorkers face. Leadership that marshals all of the government's resources to make history, not deals; and that transcends the business-as-usual governmental tinkering to make truly transformational progress.

I possess a unique collection of qualifications for the job that I believe set me apart from my rivals and will allow me to be more effective at leading New York through this time of crisis. I am the candidate in this race who has worked as a change-maker outside and inside government, knows how it works, and has a track record of moving big ideas, removing barriers, and doing it in a way that listens, learns, partners, and performs. During my career I have been a leader in city government, non-profit advocacy, higher education and in spurring democratic change. As Counsel to the Mayor, I have delivered for New York City on civil and immigrant rights, women and minority owned business contracts, and universal broadband access. I created the first-ever capital construction budget line in NYC history and I helped unblock a city government log jam to get the City's first sanctuary city law passed. After leaving City Hall, I held police accountable as Chair of the Civilian Complaint Review Board and got the case of the police officer who killed Eric Garner over to the police department, finally beginning the process of getting him fired. I also worked to improve public education as a Co-Chair of the School Diversity Task Force, where in less than two years we met with over 800 New Yorkers and generated two reports with comprehensive recommendations for fair and equitable schools.

Unlike my opponents, I am a nationally recognized racial justice and equity advocate with 25 years of experience creating change by bringing people together to develop and implement ideas to dismantle structural racism. I am a veteran of both the ACLU and the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund and was the founder and president of the Center for Social Inclusion (now Race Forward). I was also Senior Advisor on Race and Poverty at the Open Society Foundations, the largest funder of human rights work in the world. At the New School, I served as a University Professor and the Senior Vice President for Social Justice, founding the Digital Equity Laboratory on universal and inclusive broadband, building on what I was able to achieve in the Mayor's office. In these times of crises, with our futures uncertain, New Yorkers cannot afford the same old tired politics of least resistance. New Yorkers need and deserve leadership that will beat a path to shared prosperity – to become one city, rising together, out of the ashes, and into a future we build and live together.

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