

A GREENER CITY, A BRIGHTER FUTURE

More than 50 years since the first Earth Day, our planet is in greater peril than ever, with climate change endangering coastal populations like New York City due to intensifying storms and rising seas. Yet, we are also presented with incredible possibilities to reverse the tide, thanks to the advancement of clean energy technologies and the potential of employing a new generation in a growing green economy. As a city that prides itself on its resilience and innovation, New Yorkers are primed to be global leaders at this critical moment, shrinking our carbon footprint and living more sustainably.

We also know that our city has long ignored the impacts of environmental injustice, and the impacts have been most severe in historically disenfranchised neighborhoods. From dirty “peaker plants” and underinvestments in open space to communities suffering from out-of-control waste, I am determined to once and for all tackle these upstream feeders of poor public health and unacceptable quality of life.

Here’s how I would do it.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Eric Adams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

While the City has placed a number of regulations on industries to meet necessary climate goals, our municipal government remains behind on achieving its goals for itself, particularly goals related to renewable energy use and emissions. Climate change requires the transformation of multiple sectors, including energy, transportation, and food – and these sectors will be publicly tracked and included in further measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We will decrease our City agency procurement of meat to reduce consumption – in favor of more plant-forward options – and the accompanying climate impact; according to the United Nations, meat and dairy products account for 14.5 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. To that end, we will lead a push for all corporate and government entities operating in our city to divest from agricultural industries that benefit from deforestation and the acceleration of global warming. Additionally, we will invest significantly to lead by example as a government, generating our own green energy at wastewater treatment plants as well as placing solar panels on City buildings and bus/rail yards. Further, we will invest in our ability to store energy and use it more efficiently, retrofitting City buildings to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve carbon neutrality.

INVEST IN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGH THE CITY'S CAPITAL PROGRAM

New Yorkers spend roughly \$19 billion per year on energy through the city's highly interdependent electricity, natural gas, and steam networks. This infrastructure is considered some of the oldest and most concentrated in the nation. By upgrading our electrical grid, transitioning our power source to wind and away from natural gas, and implementing traffic controls to reduce idling, we can improve the quality of life of New Yorkers and create thousands of new jobs, especially those in low-income communities facing environmental injustice. These investments are not only the moral path to take, they also make common economic sense because they will create good-paying jobs for New Yorkers and businesses will be able to rely on resilient infrastructure in the face of a rapidly changing climate.

PREPARE THE NEXT GENERATION OF GREEN WORKERS

The green revolution is not just about saving our planet — it's about creating new, good-paying jobs. We will create a green economy curriculum for our high school students, connect them to internships in this industry, and build a new career and technical education (CTE) school that will focus solely on green technologies and training for the jobs of the future. We will also create a Youth Climate Corps to offer City fellowships in green job training, real-world opportunities supporting local environmental non-profits, and an opportunity to develop and present new policy solutions to City leaders.

MAKE COMMUNITY SOLAR A CITYWIDE REALITY

In recent years, successful community solar projects in communities from Parkchester to Park Slope have shown the potential of a distributed model. It reduces greenhouse gas emissions through clean, locally-generated electricity that has little to no upfront costs, plus it generates monthly savings. We will expand education to tenants and property owners on the benefits of investing in these projects, and we will support incentives for private buildings that serve as offsite locations for panel arrays.

MAKE NEW YORK CITY THE WIND POWER HUB OF THE EASTERN SEABOARD

With waterfront assets like South Brooklyn Marine Terminal, the Red Hook Container Terminal, Port Richmond, the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and others, we have an opportunity to corner the market on wind power manufacturing and other green technologies. We must create a pipeline of education training from middle school, high school, college to educate our young people in this field using K-12 institutions like the forthcoming Harbor School Middle School and Harbor School on Governors Island, as well as universities like Kingsborough Community College.

CHARGE UP BATTERY STORAGE, DE-POWER “PEAKER PLANTS”

Fossil fuel-powered “peaker plants,” which operate when city energy demands spike, impact more than 1.2 million New Yorkers. These decades-old plants release harmful emissions into communities long burdened by air pollution and other environmental health hazards, leading to serious respiratory illnesses. We will expand our investment in battery storage to reduce emissions and reduce our reliance on “peaker plants,” which we will systematically decommission.

PAY FOR A CITYWIDE ORGANICS PROGRAM BY PARTNERING WITH PRIVATE PROCESSORS

The City cut its organics collection program as part of its deficit reduction measures for the current fiscal year. That was a mistake. The methane released from organic waste in landfills is destroying our environment and speeding climate change. And the cost of sending that waste to states far away increases in cost every year. To offset the cost of the collection program now while we face a budget crunch, we will guarantee private processors long-term contracts in exchange for picking up the cost of picking up the waste now. A citywide organics program will also go a long way to addressing one of the leading feeders of the overproliferation of vermin in many neighborhoods.

CHAMPION RECYCLING AT NYCHA TO ACHIEVE BOLD CITYWIDE GOALS

A landmark Politico investigation in early 2020 shone a light on the terrible failures to achieve recycling in our NYCHA complexes, with minimal separation of food scraps, cans, bottles, and other recyclable materials. Not only are these waste challenges an environmental imperative, they represent a quality-of-life crisis to residents who endure unsanitary conditions that impact the health and safety of their development. We will champion recycling at NYCHA not as a back-burner issue, but as a well-funded campaign of civic education and greater investment in modern waste infrastructure. This will help achieve our goal to double both residential and business recycling rates in the next five years.

TAX CREDITS FOR INNOVATIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT AND ENERGY-EFFICIENT DESIGN

Volunteer-driven neighborhood groups across the five boroughs are stepping up all the time to clean up their streets and parks, without proper support and appreciation from their city. The “Love Your Block” grant program through NYC Service is an ideal initiative to robustly expand to 200 awards citywide to spread civic pride, build community bonds, and incentivize grassroots beautification that makes for safer places to raise healthy children and families. We will also establish stipends to fund sustainability coordinators in our public schools, educating students on green practices and improving school-wide recycling efforts.

SUPPORT GRASSROOTS CLEANUPS

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RETURN TO URBAN AGRICULTURE

Centuries ago, New York made its own food and the agriculture industry was one of its largest employers. Today, we rely almost entirely on out-of-town, out-of-state, and out-of-country producers for everything from the apple we buy at the bodega to the meals served to our kids in school; among other environmental costs, this adds significant truck traffic and exhaust to our streets. By creating a new set of building codes, business rules, and tax programs for urban farmers — and supporting local producers with guaranteed City contracts — we will create jobs by building vast in-city sites that produce food for restaurants, schools, and food-insecurity programs through cutting-edge techniques such as vertical farming and hydroponics, often sharing space with renewable energy plants and other sustainability infrastructure. Additionally, we will establish new farms on Governors Island and Roosevelt Island, as well as greenhouses on NYCHA complexes, as educational, career development, and innovation hubs.

STEP UP ON RESILIENCY, ESPECIALLY IN OUTER BOROUGHS

It is only a matter of time until the next major superstorm overwhelms our coastal communities, threatening the homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure of countless New Yorkers. We need to move boldly forward on resiliency projects across our city, with a particular focus on communities in the outer boroughs that are vulnerable to flooding. We will also seek to bury overhead power lines and utilities where feasible to reduce outages.

MAKE OPEN STREETS PERMANENT, EQUITABLE, AND SUSTAINABLE

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how essential open space in our city is to so many New Yorkers. The Open Streets program proved to be popular with residents and businesses alike in the neighborhoods that applied for it last year, and we must deepen our commitment to equity this year and going forward, ensuring all communities who want to participate are able to do so. Particular attention will be paid to expansion in communities of color and lower-income areas — particularly those that face environmental health challenges as well as are underserved by spaces for active and passive recreation. We will also establish a dedicated maintenance funding stream for Open Streets to ensure the program is sustainable and does not solely rely on volunteers.

DOUBLE DOWN ON GREEN MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

Focusing on the infrastructure that New York City controls, namely our street network, we will act quickly to improve the commutes, quality of life, and environmental health for millions of New Yorkers through re-envisioning our streetscape and investing in green modes of transportation. This means striping more bus lanes, building an interconnected Bus Rapid Transit system starting on roadways with service roads in transit deserts, and creating more busways throughout New York City. We will increase the number of electric vehicle charging stations in every borough, including redesigns of City street furniture, wayfinding signs, LinkNYC kiosks, muni-meters, and street lamps to incorporate electric charging capacity.

We are also home to the only bike share system that does not receive public subsidy, so to quickly expand our bike and scooter share system to neighborhoods across New York City that are transit deprived, we will upfront capital costs for private providers. In addition to building out protected bike lanes throughout the city, we will also find unused space such as road space under elevated highways and railways that can become bicycle superhighways.

SPEED UP OUR CONVERSION TO ALL-ELECTRIC BUSES

To both protect the environment and make an investment that will save the City money on fuel and maintenance savings, we will significantly speed up our conversion to an entirely electric bus fleet. This can be achieved by raising money through the City's capital program to pay for the higher up-front cost of the vehicles against the long-term benefits. The deployment of electric buses will be prioritized for communities facing the most serious environmental health risk.

COMMIT TO “PERCENT FOR PARKS”

Considering that parks cover 14 percent of New York City's land, it just does not add up for the Department of Parks and Recreation's allocation to be less than one percent of the total City budget. A “Percent for Parks” would ensure we can fund long-deferred maintenance projects while achieving vital goals identified by the Trust for Public Land and other open space advocates, including making sure 100 percent of New Yorkers live within a 10-minute walk of a park by opening dozens of new public spaces, closing the park equity gap in high-need, underserved neighborhoods, and transforming 100 asphalt schoolyards into new green community playgrounds. Also, in partnership with the Department of Transportation, our “Safe Routes to Parks” program will build out protected bike and pedestrian infrastructure to safely connect neighborhoods far from large open spaces or destination parks; initiatives like these have been successfully implemented in cities such as Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Los Angeles.

COMMISSION GREEN ART

We will commission artists to paint murals with paint that turns pollutants and harmful compounds into harmless nitrates and carbonates in the atmosphere, beautifying our city as we rejuvenate it. As an example, one public mural created with photocatalytic paint in Warsaw, Poland has the air pollution-cleaning power of 780 trees.