



NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
SPEAKER ADRIENNE E. ADAMS'

State of the City Address



MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

#MOVINGFORWARDTOGETHER



INTRODUCTION

The promise of New York City lies within the people of our diverse communities and the institutions that support their success. From our essential workers, entrepreneurs and small business owners to our working- and middle-class families, everyone who calls our city home contributes to making our city special. Yet, the foundations of what allows New Yorkers to remain and succeed here have been weakening.

Our city is facing many intersecting challenges that are making it harder for many residents of New York City. The shortage of affordable homes has resulted in a housing and affordability crisis impacting every corner of our city. Coupled with the lack of affordable childcare options and uncertainty in the city's early childhood education programs, working- and middle-class families are being squeezed out.

The institutions and services that keep our communities connected, vibrant, and full of life need more support. Our city government's ability to fulfill its obligation to effectively deliver services and confront challenges is less consistent and needs strengthening. It is critical that we get back to the basics to ensure all New Yorkers have what is needed to thrive.

At the heart of any thriving city is a consistent and well-functioning municipal government that can meet the basic needs of residents and solve challenges. The pandemic created immense issues for our city. We weathered the greatest threats to our economy, but it's had a lasting impact on the strength of our city government and its ability to effectively deliver services to New Yorkers. Significant work remains to ensure it regains its ability to function at a level that New Yorkers need to achieve an equitable recovery. The pandemic only underscored the pre-existing inequities that permeate our five boroughs, and city government is critical to addressing these disparities.

New Yorkers need affordable housing, childcare, a strong education system, healthcare, and reliable government services that support communities. We need to make sure that all those who make up our city can afford to successfully live and work in the city they love.

To renew the promise of New York City, we must prioritize the core needs of our city and improve our government's responsibility to fulfill them. We must prioritize ensuring our government is equipped to confront major challenges to deliver the stronger city that we know all New Yorkers deserve. We must make New York City's government work for all.

For us to move forward together as a New York City that is a place for everyone who makes it great, we must renew our commitment to strengthening our core pillars of health, safety, and access to opportunity for all.

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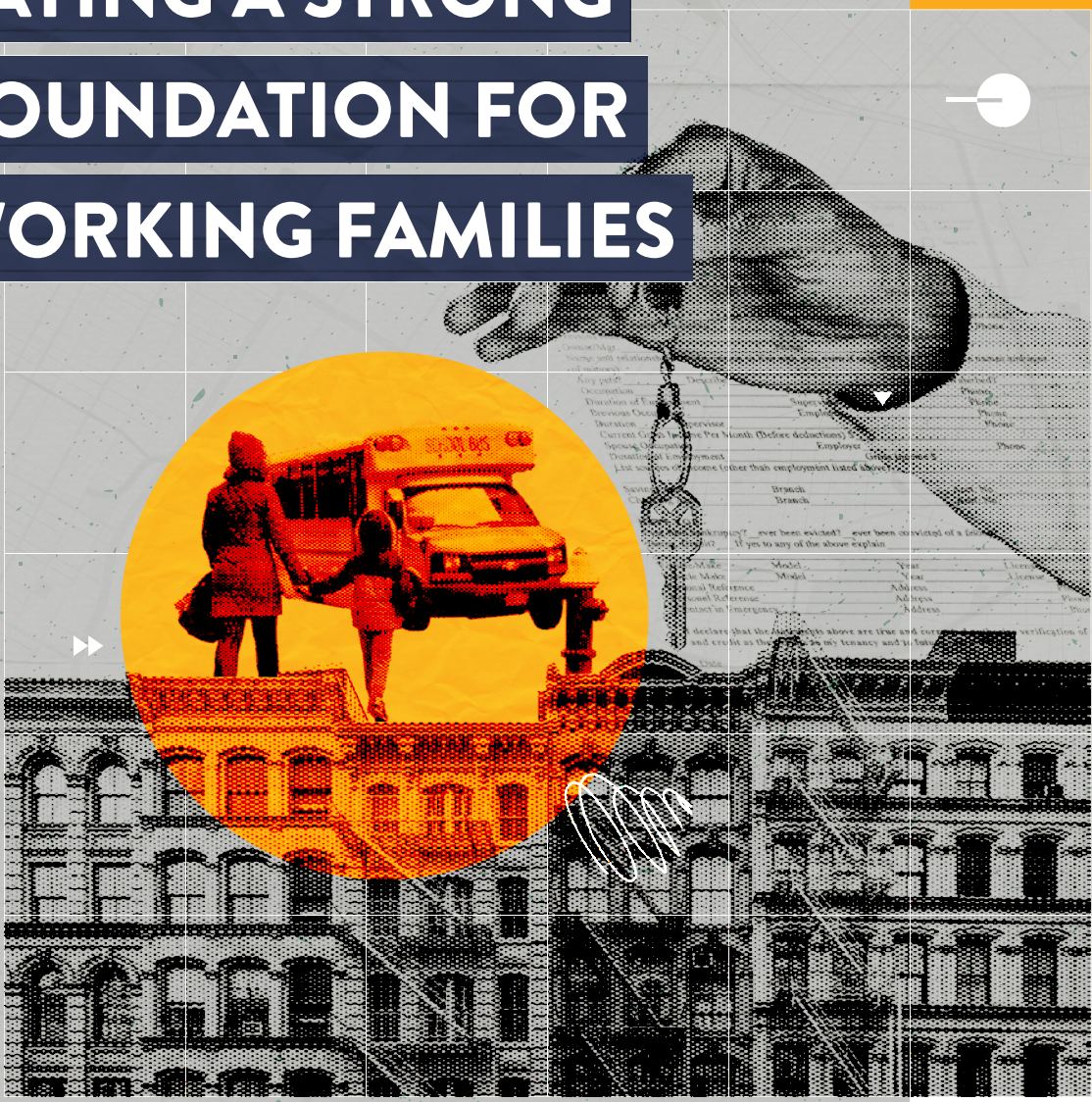
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LAYING A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR WORKING FAMILIES



LAYING A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR WORKING FAMILIES

New York City is experiencing an affordability crisis that has resulted in working- and middle-class families struggling to remain. To lay a strong foundation for all New Yorkers and families, the City must address the lack of accessible housing, bolster early childhood education programs, and prioritize investments in its public schools.

For too many New Yorkers, the housing and affordability crisis has presented an impossible dilemma: you cannot afford to live in the city, so you either struggle or you leave. The consequences of an increasing lack of affordability have disproportionately devastated middle-class families, Black communities, and other communities of color. New Yorkers leaving at the highest rates span from those with the lowest incomes to people making up to \$104,000 per year. In just two decades, our city's Black population has decreased by nearly 10 percent. That translates to 200,000 Black New Yorkers who have been driven out by skyrocketing rent prices and dwindling homeownership opportunities.

Without a path to building stability, success, and equity, longtime New Yorkers are moving elsewhere to build their legacies.

Confronting the Housing Crisis

Housing is one of the most basic elements to the foundation of healthy and safe neighborhoods, and it remains one of the greatest challenges that the City must confront. New York City is in a housing crisis, with too few homes for New Yorkers and a lack of affordable housing and homeownership opportunities. The rising rates of evictions and homelessness are the devastating consequences. The City must produce significantly more housing, ensure affordability levels meet the needs of New Yorkers, protect tenants in private and public housing, and increase homeownership opportunities.

The Council advanced Speaker Adams' Fair Housing Framework proposal from the previous State of the City, enacting it into law. The law requires the City to create a plan for equitably building and preserving housing, prioritizing affordability, and strengthening neighborhood investments in every community district across the city. By establishing local housing goals, it sets the expectation and pathway for every community to help solve the housing crisis. The law will set up an important tool of transparency and accountability for advancing the City's fair housing goals.

The Council also followed through with enacting City Fighting Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement (CityFHEPS) reform laws in the spring of 2023. The laws, which remove barriers to New Yorkers accessing the housing voucher program and improve its utility to prevent evictions and homelessness, have yet to be implemented by the Human Resources Administration (HRA), despite taking effect in January 2024. The reforms are crucial to keeping low-income New Yorkers at risk of eviction in their homes and providing pathways out of homeless shelters. The Council continues to insist that the duly enacted laws are implemented to provide urgent relief to New Yorkers experiencing housing insecurity.

Addressing our housing crisis requires increasing our housing supply, deepening affordability, preserving existing units of affordable housing, protecting tenants and preventing evictions, ensuring stability for public housing residents, and expanding and preserving homeownership.

Increasing Housing Production

Development of new affordable housing is a critical part of addressing New York City's housing shortage. According to the most recent Housing Vacancy Survey, New York City's housing vacancy rate has dropped to a mere 1.4 percent – the lowest since 1968. Housing production has failed to keep pace with New Yorkers' need for homes, contributing to a growing affordability crisis. From 2010 to 2020, New York City built only about 200,000 new housing units, while gaining nearly 630,000 new residents and nearly 1 million jobs. This rate of production lags far behind most other large growing cities.

The City must produce more housing of all types to reduce the shortage of homes for New Yorkers. Following the enactment of the Fair Housing Framework law, the Council will work with the Administration on its proposed Zoning for Housing Opportunity text amendment to update decades-old zoning laws that have maintained racial segregation and impede housing creation throughout the city. It will require all neighborhoods to contribute to producing housing and innovative solutions to solve this crisis.

PROPOSAL: Re-Envisioning the Aqueduct Racetrack into Housing

The Aqueduct Racetrack in Queens is temporarily being used by the New York Racing Authority (NYRA) in place of Nassau County's Belmont Park, which is currently being renovated. Once completed in an estimated three-to-four years, horseracing will return to Belmont as the only facility to be used as part of a longer-term plan to consolidate downstate New York horseracing. This plan presents a generational opportunity to redevelop the nearly 200-acre site of the Aqueduct Racetrack, which is in a part of Queens that consists of a dynamic, growing community, but with crowded housing stock and a severe lack of open space.

The Aqueduct Racetrack site and an adjoining 26-acre city-owned lot offer unparalleled potential to deliver new housing and homeownership opportunities, open space, economic opportunities, and other community amenities. In anticipation of State decisions regarding use of the land, Speaker Adams will work with state partners, including state legislators, to ensure local stakeholders help in seizing the benefits from unlocking these possibilities.

The adjacent city-owned property is one of the largest parcels of vacant, city-owned land remaining in New York and is immediately adjacent to a subway station, making it a valuable site to consider for transit-oriented housing and mixed-use development. Queens Community District 10, where the properties are located, has produced fewer than 200 new units of housing since 2018, with almost no HPD-developed affordable housing – the lowest amount of development of any community district in Queens.

By supporting a planning process for significant housing development in this part of her district, Speaker Adams is leading by example and demonstrating that every community district must help solve New York City's severe housing shortage.

PROPOSAL: Planning for Housing on Libraries and City Land

New York City's housing crisis demands innovative solutions and the consideration of all possible avenues to produce new homes. The city's more than 200 libraries are a cornerstone of communities across the five boroughs. The City has been exploring opportunities to leverage libraries for potential housing development.

Speaker Adams will prioritize support for this effort by engaging with the city's three library systems, planners, and offering support for the City to gauge potential housing development opportunities on existing library branches that can also facilitate required upgrades. Additional city-owned property should also be considered for opportunities to produce housing. While limitations may exist, the Council can help convene stakeholders and develop opportunities to support the production of new homes, modernization of library branches to better serve New Yorkers, and creation of new community spaces, like early childhood education centers.

Housing development, paired with library renovation, has already proven to be successful. In September 2016, the Fifth Avenue Committee and Brooklyn Public Library partnered to build an eight-story affordable housing project and expanded library space in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Sunset Park Apartments provides 49 units of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income residents who earn between 30 percent and 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), including eight units for Section 8 subsidy recipients. The preexisting Sunset Park library branch, one of the most heavily used in Brooklyn, was completely rebuilt and expanded to be nearly double the size.

Planning and partnership can yield positive outcomes for housing production and our library systems. By further recognizing them as central institutions in our communities, the City can identify opportunities for investment into facilities – which may need improvement, modernization, building upgrades, and repairs – that contribute to addressing our citywide housing challenges.

City & State Action to Support Housing Production

State government plays an essential role in the City's ability to produce homes, and increasing housing supply to address the city's crisis requires collaboration with the governor and state legislature.

Specifically, the City and State must take the following steps to increase housing supply:

- **State Funding & Housing Development Incentives:** The inclusion of funding and a new financial incentive program for affordable housing production in the state budget is vital to remove the barriers to most housing production in the city, which has stagnated in its absence.
- **12 Floor-to-Area Ratio (FAR) Cap:** The state must enact legislation that eliminates the outdated 12 FAR cap that has restricted the City's ability to even consider pursuing land use decisions that could unlock housing development in certain areas.
- **Office-to-Residential Conversions:** State legislation to enable the conversion of commercial buildings to housing, accompanied by financial incentives that facilitate their creation of affordable housing, is critical.
- **Restoring Vacant Units:** The City must expedite its restoration of vacant units under the control of the New York City Housing Authority, which has slowed during the past two years. Additionally, it is important that the New York State Division of Homes and Community Renewal has the appropriate staffing levels and improved policies, procedures, and enforcement to prevent rent-regulated units from remaining vacant.

Deepening Housing Affordability

New York's citywide median household income is approximately \$71,000. However, this figure masks severe racial and ethnic disparities that have only grown. Over the past decade, median white household incomes in New York City grew by nearly 20 percent to over \$100,000, while Black and Latino household median incomes have stagnated below \$55,000.

This stark inequality is exacerbated by the housing affordability crisis. The impact of the housing crisis is particularly severe for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers. According to the 2024 New York City Housing Vacancy Survey (NYCHVS), the typical renter with household income below the median of \$70,000 pays a rent that meets the threshold for being severely rent-burdened – spending more than half of income on rent. Nearly all low-income New Yorkers are rent-burdened, allocating more than 30% of their income towards rent. Among households who earned less than \$25,000 and do not live in public housing or have a housing assistance voucher, 86% were severely rent-burdened. This has led more New Yorkers to experience financial challenges, resulting in an alarming increase in missed rent payments and arrears since the last NYCHVS.

Yet, the inventory of the lowest cost apartments (\$1,500 per month or less) is nearly non-existent, with a vacancy rate well below 1 percent. Apartments priced at \$2,400 per month or less also have a one percent vacancy rate. While the housing needs of New Yorkers at the lowest incomes are severe, the methods for producing units of affordable housing do not match the affordability levels required. While overall rent burden among all households in the city has plateaued, it is increasing and severe among households making less than \$75,000, and Black and Latino households are disproportionately rent-burdened.

To combat the housing affordability crisis, the Council will seek to:

- **Revise Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH)** to permit a deep affordability option that requires an average of 40% area median income (AMI) as one of the required options through the ZHO citywide text amendment. By establishing a new required MIH option for deeper affordability, affordable housing units produced will better meet the needs of low-income New Yorkers. The deepest option of affordability currently permitted to be required in MIH (Option 1) no longer serves those in greatest need, because the incomes targeted at 60% AMI have significantly inflated over time. They have gone from \$40,080 for a one-person household to \$61,860 for a five-person household in 2017, to \$59,340 for a one-person household to \$91,500 for a 5-person household in 2023. The enactment of an affordable housing tax credit program by the state is necessary to support this goal, just as it is important to support development within the current MIH guidelines.
- **Explore Voucher Incentive in ZHO:** The Council will explore a zoning tool to incentivize the use of vouchers as part of the ZHO text amendment. Such a zoning mechanism could dedicate a proportion of additional allowable units to be set aside for voucher-holders, helping to reach New Yorkers with deeper affordability needs.
- **Recalibrate and Lower Target AMI Levels for City-Financed Affordable Housing:** Given the inflation of AMI, the Council will pursue policy change to ensure that 50% of affordable housing units financed by the City each year be allocated for households making 60% AMI or below, and that 40% of these units be restricted to households making 40% AMI (approximately \$40,000 for

one person) or below. Currently two-thirds of the affordable housing financed by the City is not affordable to the average Black and Latino household, which is disproportionately rent-burdened. Between 2014 and 2023, 65% of the affordable housing financed by the City was for households making 80% AMI and higher (above \$79,000 for one person), yet the median income for Black households is \$54,000 and for Latino households is \$48,000.

Strengthening Homeownership

Homeownership is a critical tool for families to build equity and to close the wealth gap. The lack of affordable homeownership opportunities is resulting in families departing the city. It has disproportionately impacted moderate-income families and communities of color in neighborhoods where gentrification is rapidly transforming communities and eroding affordability. Currently, HPD's homeownership program is excessively limited. Recent research indicates that if Black and Latino families were as likely to own their homes as white families, median Black wealth would grow by \$32,000 and median Latino wealth would grow by \$29,000 – this would shrink the wealth gap for Black and Latino households by 31 and 28 percent, respectively.

Black and Latino homeowners have also historically faced challenges, because of redlining, predatory lending, and other discriminatory practices and treatment. They have disproportionately been subjected to threats that can result in the loss and transfer of wealth. Recently, there has been a rise in real estate speculators engaging in acts of deed theft through predatory practices, targeting homeowners and heirs in communities of color. Although the practices can sometimes be technically legal, they are predatory, increase the racial wealth gap, and exacerbate gentrification.

To increase homeownership opportunities and combat deed theft and its predatory practices to preserve homeownership, the Council will:

- **Propose policy changes to double the City's production of affordable homeownership opportunities,** so that 5 percent of affordable housing units financed annually by the City are dedicated to creating affordable homeownership opportunities for families earning less than \$130,000 per year.
- **Propose legislation requiring speculators to disclose the fair market value of a property** to protect people from being exploited and losing their assets. In many instances, real estate speculators understate the value of a property so that an heir will sell their stake of the home for below what it is worth. The legislation would prevent this by ensuring people are fully aware of their assets' value.
- **Require the City to Create Support Program for Asset Protection & Inheritance Management:** The Council will propose legislation that requires the Office of Financial Empowerment in the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, in partnership with relevant community-based organizations, create a program to assist people with protecting their assets and managing an inherited property. Sometimes, when someone successfully inherits a valuable property, their inclination is to immediately sell it because the thought of navigating tenant agreements, property taxes, and other bureaucratic processes seems burdensome, even if keeping the property would be financially beneficial. Building on the Council's existing priority of strengthening financial literacy programs, it will propose specific education and assistance be developed to help guide people through their decision to sell or keep an inherited property to serve their long-term financial interest.

- **Establish an Estate Planning Initiative** to host estate planning days where property owners 65 years of age and older can receive free legal advice on their estate planning needs. A will is a key tool in keeping a home within a family. The Council will partner with various New York City law schools and community organizations to offer free estate planning support events.

Prioritizing Education Programs for Students

For families to remain in the city, they need to believe that their success and their children's futures are being prioritized by city policies. For working- and middle-class families, it is vital that the City invests in its public education system, and this begins with early childhood education. As the entry point to the school system, quality early childhood education programs play a critical role in preventing families from leaving the city and can be a safeguard against a vicious cycle that depletes our student population and school funding. Investments must also be made in student support programs, which are essential to our students' successful development and helping to combat the historic levels of learning loss since the beginning of the pandemic.

With the expiration of federal stimulus funds that were used to support many key programs, all levels of government need to increase investments in education to sustain their continued operation and strength. Due to budget cuts and continued bureaucratic challenges, early childhood education programs like 3-K are being weakened and are not able to meet the needs of families. Proposed budget cuts will only further weaken the program and other critical services for students. The Administration must prioritize investment and effective management that protects and strengthens these programs to ensure families can afford to stay in our city, and that our children have the resources they need to grow, learn, and thrive.

Protecting 3-K and Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education programs, like 3-K and Pre-K, support long-term development in children and enable parents to pursue greater career opportunities. They are especially critical for working women, who overwhelmingly shoulder the responsibility of caregiving. Our city must deepen its commitment to 3-K and other early childhood education programs. Fixing the challenges in these programs' administration can help maintain capacity and prepare them for growth, rather than reducing their availability when so many families are in dire need of childcare. These solutions must include ensuring the demands of families for the types of seats in the program and their location are matched in the supply of available seats, which has been an ongoing problem. It also remains critical that inequities faced by community-based providers and their staff, compared to school-based programs, are addressed. The need for greater education and outreach to connect families with information on the programs is another persistent challenge that must be confronted with meaningful changes and investments.

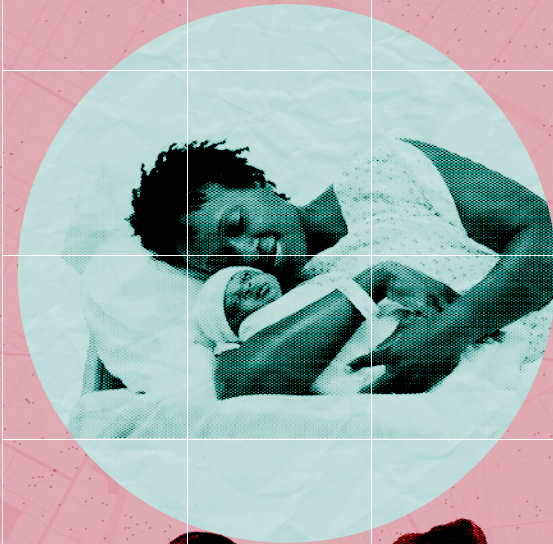
The Council secured \$15 million in the Fiscal Year 2024 budget for a pilot program to address some of these challenges and better meet the needs of families by converting 1,800 school-day/school-year 3-K seats to extended-day/extended-year seats. The success of these efforts and implementation of additional solutions are needed to resolve challenges in this critical program. The City cannot turn its back on working families who are struggling to afford the rising cost of childcare. Protecting and strengthening early childhood education programs will require improved management and reforms that address bureaucratic challenges, as well as an unwavering commitment in the budget.

Sustaining Education Support Programs

Disruptions in learning over the past several years have set students back, particularly those historically impacted by achievement gaps – those in low-income communities, living in temporary housing, requiring special education services, and English Language Learners. There are a range of education programs that have specifically supported these students, which the Mayor’s budget has not provided support to adequately sustain. Community Schools, preschool special education, restorative justice, services for English Language Learners, and students in temporary housing are among many critical programs that the Council has supported and must be a priority to maintain with adequate funding.



ADVANCING A HEALTHY AND SAFE CITY



ADVANCING A HEALTHY AND SAFE CITY

One of city government's core functions is to protect the health and safety of all New Yorkers. By allocating funding and support towards initiatives related to healthcare infrastructure, mental health programs for young people, and community safety programs, the City can help to ensure all New Yorkers have the resources to thrive.

Ensuring the Physical and Mental Health of New Yorkers

The physical and mental health of New Yorkers is core to the vitality of our communities. Health disparities were exposed and exacerbated during the pandemic, as inequities in access to care left the well-being of certain communities more threatened than others. Our government is responsible for ensuring access to quality healthcare for all New Yorkers, which helps eliminate disparities in health outcomes. The Council is committed to advancing solutions to help achieve these goals.

New York City, like areas across the country, faces a mental health crisis that was worsened by the pandemic. Yet, the crisis predates the pandemic, created by decades of inadequate public investments and ineffective policies. Decades of neglect and disinvestment have left too many New Yorkers without appropriate, holistic mental healthcare, and our systems overburdened and ill-equipped to respond to the current crisis.

Roughly one in five New Yorkers experiences mental illness in any given year, according to City metrics, and hundreds of thousands of these New Yorkers are living without adequate care. Addressing and correcting this deeply rooted challenge requires investments in comprehensive, proven solutions, particularly within communities that have often lacked sufficient resources. Success will also require all levels of government – city, state, and federal – to coordinate solutions to increase access and remove barriers to mental health care and services.

The Council's Mental Health Roadmap is an approach focused on expanding preventive, evidence-based solutions in communities that can improve mental health outcomes. The Council has already made strides to increase the number of crisis respite centers, clubhouses, and other proven mental health care models as part of the roadmap's first phase. The ongoing plan will continue to advance solutions with stakeholders to address gaps in services, and its next phase will focus on improving youth mental health outcomes.

Improving Youth Mental Health Outcomes with Peer-to-Peer Programs

With one in six children experiencing a mental health condition and suicide being the second leading cause of death, New York City's young people face a similar mental health crisis as their counterparts across the nation. To best serve young people's mental health needs, they must be met where they spend most of their time – in schools. The City must invest in school-based solutions, and Governor Hochul's proposed investment in mental health clinics for schools provides an important opportunity to support the City's students.

Mental health providers have increasingly urged for expanding investments in peer-based mental health models, including for young people, as an effective way to ensure access to support. The existing mental health system is not meeting the needs of young people, particularly those from

underserved communities, including racially and ethnically marginalized communities, LGBTQIA+, and low-income individuals. The stigma associated with mental health issues also remains a barrier to young people accessing support, and peer-based programs can provide a more comfortable environment to access help.

As the mental health system also experiences a significant workforce shortage, it is critical that the City provide young people with the tools and support needed to access care and manage their own mental health effectively. Young people who engaged with the Council through its Young Women's Initiative 2.0 expressed support for peer-to-peer support programs, and several cities and states have already initiated these types of programs for young people and within schools. In recognition of this need, the Council will pursue a set of initiatives to support more peer-to-peer mental health programs within schools.

To address youth mental health challenges and support peer-to-peer programs in schools, the Council will:

- **Propose legislation requiring the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), in collaboration with community-based organizations, to develop and make publicly available a "How to Start a Wellness Group" toolkit.** Wellness groups have been established in schools across the country to support access to care and reduce stigma. The creation and distribution of a formal toolkit can help guide schools and students to create and strengthen these groups as an important mental health resource for students.
- **Propose legislation requiring the distribution of informational materials at New York City schools on the availability of the toolkit and how to access it.**
- **Propose legislation that requires the City to develop and offer "peer-to-peer mental health training" for New York City public schools and students.** The training would focus on helping students identify and assist peers experiencing mental health struggles and how to recognize the signs of mental distress in others and themselves.
- **Propose legislation to develop a pilot program for CUNY Social Work students to support wellness groups in schools** where they have been established and need professional and/or clinical supervision.
- **Pursue city funding to support a new Youth Peer Support program** for young people between the ages of 14 and 24 who live with a mental illness. The program will target this age range, because 50% of all mental illnesses within a lifetime begin by age 14 and 75% begin by age 24.

Enhancing Reproductive and Sexual Health Education in Schools

Comprehensive sexual and reproductive education is vital for the health and well-being of young people in our city. Providing accurate information about reproductive health and bodily autonomy promotes healthy relationships, reduces stigma, and empowers young people to make informed choices about their bodies and sexual health.

During last year's Young Women's Initiative (YWI) 2.0 convening, youth leaders noted the lack of information around reproductive health and bodily autonomy, and their lack of involvement in the creation of what information is shared through sexual education in schools. They called for the City to

revamp its sexual education in public schools, and an examination of whether recommendations from the 2018 Sexual Health Education Taskforce have been implemented as a follow-up to the Mayor's 2023 announcement relaunching the task force. In response to their requests, the Council will examine comprehensive sexual health education in public schools through oversight and consider legislation requiring DOHMH to conduct an education and outreach campaign, coordinated with young people, on reproductive health and bodily autonomy.

Revamping Nutritional Health Education

Youth leaders, who participated in the YWI 2.0 convening, also raised issues with the lack of information provided in schools about food nutrition that is not solely focused on physical appearance. They expressed the desire for nutrition education information that is considerate of different cultural backgrounds and the unique experiences of young people, while focusing on the development of healthy relationships with food. As a result, the Council will examine nutrition education in schools through its oversight.

Improving Maternal Health with Doula Care and Post-Partum Support

The first women-majority Council prioritized addressing the significant maternal health disparities, characterized by high rates of maternal morbidity and mortality that disproportionately harm Black women and birthing people of color. In New York City, Black women are eight times more likely than white women to die from a pregnancy-related cause, and nearly three times more likely to experience severe maternal morbidity. To address these longstanding racial inequities, the Council passed an 11-bill legislative package in 2022 to expand access to free doula care in under-served neighborhoods, require the City to conduct public education on standards of respectful care at birth, and provide outreach to low-income New Yorkers and those without health insurance regarding reproductive health. These remain pressing issues for women, birthing people, and families across our city, and continued solutions are required to confront them.

The local law (Local Law 85 of 2022) in the legislative package that established a program to train doulas and provide their services to residents in the city's marginalized neighborhoods sunsets on June 30, 2024, when a legally mandated report on the program is due. Doula care can be the difference between life and death because of the individualized, culturally competent care it provides. These services are particularly important for Black New Yorkers and other communities of color, given the well-documented racial disparities in medical pregnancy care.

To ensure continued access to doula care and progress in confronting maternal health disparities, the Council calls for:

- The Administration to punctually deliver the required report when it is due in June and use its recommendations to improve the permanent program, so that vital services continue without any delay.

Fourth Trimester Support

Becoming a parent is a transformative experience. For many, its joys can come with grief and uncertainty. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 1 in 8 new mothers experience mood and anxiety disorders during pregnancy or postpartum, and rates are higher

among low-income individuals. Half of pregnant women with depression were not treated, which puts them and their families at risk of harm. Maternal mortality data analyzed by the CDC reveals that mental health conditions are among the most common underlying causes of maternal death, and the leading underlying cause of maternal death for many segments of the population. As reported in the New York State Report of Pregnancy-Associated Deaths in 2018, released in April 2022, mental health conditions were the third leading cause of pregnancy-related deaths statewide. The State's Maternal Mortality Review Board determined that all these deaths were potentially preventable and occurred post-pregnancy, with the majority occurring between 43 and 365 days after pregnancy ended. Mental health conditions were considered contributing factors in 19.5 percent of pregnancy-related deaths, including cases where mental health conditions were not considered an underlying cause of death.

The Council will pursue the following solutions to address fourth trimester mental health issues:

- Propose legislation requiring the creation of a pilot program for post-partum support groups.
- Consider legislation requiring DOHMH to create a toolkit identifying mental health resources available to individuals experiencing pregnancy loss, and conduct an outreach and education campaign on the availability of the National Maternal Mental Health Hotline.
- Pursue city funding for each NYC Health + Hospital (H+H) hospital to have at least one maternal health-focused psychologist within their maternal health department.
- Pursue increased city funding for the NYC Nurse-Family Partnership program that provides nurse home-visits to low-income first-time mothers.
- Propose a resolution calling upon the State to enact legislation that would require OB-GYNs to screen for maternal health disorders, and for New York State Medicaid to reimburse screening during pregnancy by an OB provider, as well as postpartum mental health screening by an OB provider or pediatrician.
- Consider a resolution calling for New York State Medicaid to require managed care organizations to collect the "prenatal depression screening and follow-up" Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) measure and the "postpartum depression screening & follow-up" HEDIS measure.
- Propose declaring the month of May as "Maternal Mental Health Awareness Month."

Prioritizing Community Safety Efforts

Achieving public safety requires investing with clarity and intentionality into solutions that strengthen communities most impacted by violence and support their resilience. These solutions should respond efficiently to urgent and persisting safety concerns, while addressing the root causes of violence and harm. The Council is committed to comprehensively addressing the diverse needs of our city while paying special attention to the legacies of harm that have impacted generations of New Yorkers, particularly in underserved Black and Latino communities. The Council will continue to take a multi-pronged approach to ensuring that calls for safety from every district are heard and answered.

Expanding Mental Health Interventions and Diversions from the Criminal Legal System

The failures in providing sufficient mental health care have made it far more likely for individuals with mental illness to be incarcerated or arrested than to receive treatment. In fact, Rikers Island is now counted as one of the three largest providers of psychiatric care in the United States, with approximately half of those detained diagnosed with a mental health issue. The criminal justice system and incarceration are evidenced to worsen health outcomes, with dangerous and devastating impacts on those with mental health challenges. Our current mental health crisis has starkly demonstrated how this approach undermines public health and safety.

The City has relied too much on emergency and crisis responses when it is a strong, grounded infrastructure to prioritize prevention, care, and treatment that is needed. The former approach is expensive, dehumanizing, and ineffective. In too many cases, the results have been fatal. New Yorkers are falling through the cracks, bouncing between systems that are ill-equipped to help them. When this happens repeatedly, it yields the common results experienced in our city – instead of mental health care, struggling New Yorkers are being repeatedly cycled in and out of the criminal legal system. They are released worse off after not receiving the help they need, and without any progress towards addressing their root issue.

Mental health issues are becoming intertwined with public safety, because of the lack of health interventions that address underlying issues of mental health. Too often, individuals with mental health challenges can have high rates of recidivism because they are not being diverted from the justice system into effective treatment. After arrest, they are released due to the minor nature of the offense or detained in jail for a period before trial and subsequently released in a condition worsened by their period of incarceration. They are repeatedly arrested and sometimes detained, but their underlying mental health issue goes unaddressed. The effective interventions that can help break this cycle are too often unavailable, because they do not have the investments to operate at the scale necessary. Mental health courts and their associated programs, which have been shown to reduce the likelihood of re-arrest by diverting people into treatment and increasing coordination of care, lack capacity to fulfill the level of need. The average wait time for appropriate placement can extend multiple months.

The City and State must increase investments into mental health courts to expand their capacity to effectively serve New Yorkers with serious mental illness, who enter the criminal justice system. The related programs that collaborate with these problem-solving courts to serve this population, like Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) teams, must also be expanded and strengthened. FACT teams are evidence-based solutions that provide coordinated behavioral health and social services for individuals who are justice-involved, have serious mental illness, and have not been successfully engaged by the traditional mental health treatment and rehabilitation system. They provide holistic, wraparound services in close coordination with criminal justice agencies to help clients avoid further justice involvement. Therapeutic hospital beds are also an important solution that must be implemented without further delay.

Without adequate access to care, individuals with mental illness are unlikely to break free of the hospitalization-discharge-arrest-incarceration cycle. These mental health care interventions are pivotal to securing positive health and safety outcomes in our city.

Supporting Survivors of Violence and Trauma Recovery

Too many communities that experience the highest levels of violence have the least access to victim services. It leads many victims of violence in communities impacted by systemic inequities – communities of color, low-income victims, and others – to face the greatest challenges in getting support. Experiencing interpersonal violence, such as physical or sexual assault, or a gunshot wound or stabbing, can cause devastating, lifelong psychological and/or physical consequences, especially if the survivor does not receive timely and effective support services. The unaddressed trauma that victims, their families and communities are left with can lead to chronic emotional distress and perpetuate cycles of violence.

Speaker Adams and the Council have prioritized addressing these disparities by expanding support for underserved victims of violence, whose trauma is often overlooked – gun violence victims in communities of color are often disregarded as victims and blamed for their victimization. The Council has provided the initial funding to establish New York State's first trauma recovery centers in New York City, within the Bronx and Brooklyn. Trauma recovery centers (TRCs) are designed to reach survivors of violent crime who are unlikely to engage in mainstream mental health or social services, providing wraparound services and coordinated care that includes mental health, physical health, psychological and legal services, and support accessing victim services. They have been proven to increase economic, health and social outcomes of those served, and they improve public safety by interrupting cycles of violence in communities that experience violence the most.

TRCs have been expanding across the country, with many states and some cities investing in them as innovative safety solutions. Most TRCs are funded at the state level and using Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding, but New York City's nascent centers have been entirely funded by the City Council. Funding to sustain these centers, and potentially expand them, requires the City and State to commit resources to support them.

Speaker Adams also established a citywide Council budget initiative – Community Safety and Victim Services Initiative – to allocate \$100,000 to each Council District for community safety and victim services programs that make communities safer. The Council will continue to prioritize support for efforts that promote safety and remove barriers to recovery for crime victims and communities.

Confronting Hate with Proactive Solutions

For years, the Council has consistently sought to prevent and respond to hate crimes targeting communities in New York City. The Council has taken some of the most significant actions in the nation to fund educational programs that help young people recognize hate in the online spaces they frequent, teaching them to respond in a responsible way.

Speaker Adams has funded programs for young people, who are targeted by digital hate, as a critical way to fight hate in online spaces and educate towards its eradication. The program has conducted more than 450 workshops in public schools to reach nearly 15,000 students, educating young people about the personal and societal consequences of engaging in this negative online activity, and how to be an upstander. Council Members have added their own discretionary funding for an additional 250 workshops to reach another 9,000 students, totaling nearly 25,000 young people who are being empowered to be responsible contributors towards stopping the spread of hate. In addition, the Council has allocated \$5 million in the city budget for community-based hate crime prevention and response programs.

To further address the rise in hate crimes in New York City and nationally directed at various communities, Speaker Adams formed the Council's first-ever Task Force to Combat Hate. The Task Force will engage New Yorkers across the City in the development of policies and initiatives to bring people together in fighting hate and make communities safer.

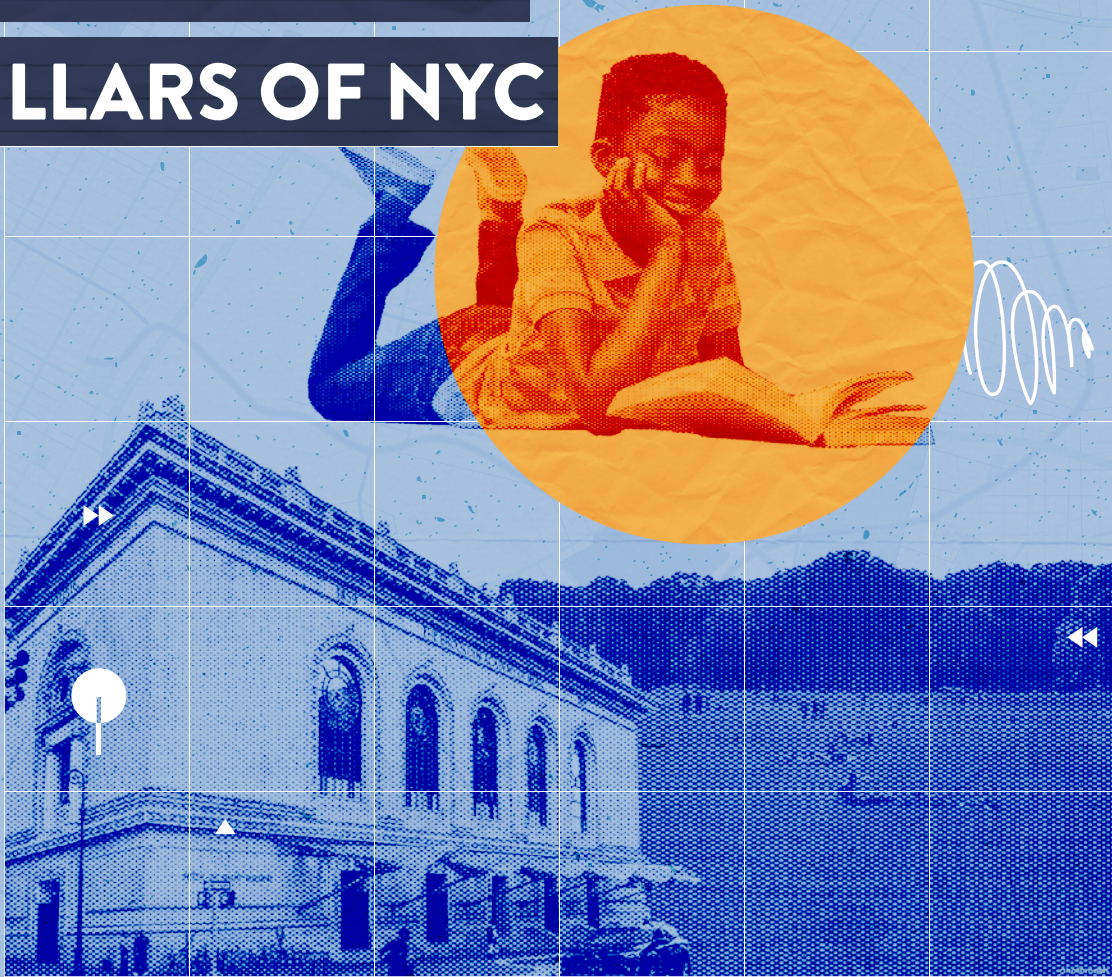
Advancing Fire Safety to Save Lives

Lithium-ion battery fires are an increasing safety concern, having recently become the leading cause of fires and fire deaths in New York City. This rise in incidents is largely due to the widespread circulation of uncertified lithium-ion batteries for micromobility devices, such as e-bikes and scooters. These lithium-ion batteries can overheat and ignite, posing a significant risk to public safety because they are highly combustible and can lead to extremely dangerous fires.

In the wake of the Twin Parks fire that took the lives of 17 New Yorkers, including eight children, in 2022, the Council approved a package of bills to address problems with self-closing doors and ban the sale of portable space heaters without safety features. In 2023, the Council passed six bills to begin addressing the fire hazard posed by lithium-ion battery-powered devices, including the city's first battery swap program to help remove uncertified batteries from circulation. This year, the Council enacted legislation requiring all businesses that sell e-bikes to post safety information materials in stores and online, and to enhance enforcement efforts regarding the sale and rental of uncertified powered mobility devices. Moving forward, the Council will continue to pursue solutions that combat the safety risks of lithium-ion batteries to keep New Yorkers safe.



STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL PILLARS OF NYC



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The magic of New York City comes alive in its parks, libraries, and cultural institutions, which are fundamental pillars of our neighborhoods. These spaces are where New Yorkers of all backgrounds come together for recreation, an array of services, and to experience arts and culture. These institutions have an indispensable impact on our city's economy and communities. Yet in recent years, they have received less city support, which has negatively impacted their services and operations. Additional proposed funding reductions in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget to some of these institutions threaten to further reduce their ability to serve and enrich New Yorkers. It is imperative for the City to prioritize funding in the city budget that ensures their stability and accessibility to people within our city.

Prioritizing Cultural Institutions

New York City is home to some of the most renowned cultural institutions in the world, which are integral to the enrichment and growth of our neighborhoods and city economy. These institutions and their resources are accessed by everyone from New York City schoolchildren and their families to international audiences, and they provide cultural enrichment that advances understanding across diverse communities. These institutions also contribute enormously to the city's economy, generating \$110 billion in annual economic activity as major employers and drivers of increased patronage of local businesses. To remain the world's cultural capital, the City must protect the diverse institutions of the cultural sector and prioritize necessary investments for them, rather than continuing to reduce funding.

Funding Libraries

Libraries are an essential presence in every neighborhood of New York City, providing a wide range of indispensable services in safe and reliable spaces to all New Yorkers, including families, immigrant communities, seniors, and young people. These neighborhood pillars are not only for borrowing books and multimedia materials – libraries are information hubs and information centers that provide access to resources and opportunity. From Toddler Time for our youngest New Yorkers, to after-school homework help for teens, adult education classes, workforce development, free internet access and older adult programs, public libraries are critical to the success of every community. While additional proposed cuts to libraries have been abandoned, previous rounds of spending reductions have eliminated Sunday library service. The Council will continue to champion libraries as a funding priority in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget to ensure all New Yorkers can benefit from their local libraries and the essential services they provide.

Prioritizing Parks and Open Spaces

Parks are vital contributors to the physical and mental well-being of New Yorkers and communities. They improve the physical health of surrounding residents by providing venues for recreational activities and open spaces that promote wellness. They also act as necessary green havens, providing a respite from our city's bustling infrastructure. Proximity and access to parks have been linked to

reducing stress levels, lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels, decreasing health complaints, and generally improving mental health. These spaces are also crucial to our city's ecological resilience and strengthening our communities. They provide necessary defense against urban heat, alongside improving air quality and aiding with the absorption of carbon dioxide. Parks also foster social interaction between residents of diverse backgrounds, serving as a platform for events and gatherings that are at the heart of community building.

All neighborhoods in our city deserve access to quality parks and their proven benefits. Yet, inequities remain in accessibility and quality, with disparities for low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. In 2022, the Council's Committee on Parks and Recreation held an oversight hearing to examine persisting inequities in parks and playground maintenance and accessibility. The Council subsequently passed legislation to require the Department of Parks and Recreation to develop standards to rate the quality of parks and playgrounds, and to develop a public plan to address features of them deemed to be in unacceptable condition.

The City's Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) also operates public pools, which are a source of relief and recreation in the summer months. Yet, there are also inequities in access to public pools for many communities, which hampers residents' ability to learn to swim. Speaker Adams proposed expanding access to public pools and free swimming lessons in last year's State of the City. The Council subsequently passed laws to advance these proposals, requiring free swimming lessons and water safety instruction to public school second graders. The package of laws also requires DPR to identify locations for new pools in communities lacking access, and to create a plan to open school pools to the public that can also offer free swimming lessons.

New York City dedicates a smaller proportion of its budget to parks than many of the nation's big cities. The Council will continue to prioritize greater funding for parks and equitable access across neighborhoods.



STRENGTHENING OPPORTUNITY AND SERVICES. CONFRONTING CHALLENGES



STRENGTHENING OPPORTUNITY AND SERVICES. CONFRONTING CHALLENGES

City government has a responsibility to facilitate greater opportunities for New Yorkers, while protecting the essential services relied upon by communities and effectively confronting the array of challenges often faced in the nation's largest city. Yet, there have been significant issues with the ability to successfully achieve these core responsibilities. The job recovery has been uneven and primarily in low-wage jobs, the ability to deliver essential city services has been weakened by continued bureaucratic inefficiencies and job vacancies across city agencies, and the City has struggled to respond to many of its most recent, vexing challenges. The City must get back to basics and be strengthened to support an improved ability to address these issues. Creating the future that New Yorkers deserve will require smart, bold solutions and the necessary investments to ensure New Yorkers' success.

Creating Opportunity

The City must consistently focus on unlocking access to opportunity for New Yorkers, helping more reach their full potential, strengthening our workforce, economy and communities. At a time when the city's economic recovery has proven to be uneven, with low-wage jobs dominating our job recovery, increasing access to opportunity is critically important.

The Council has advanced several initiatives and priorities over the past year to support economic opportunity and mobility, which was a focus of Speaker Adams' last State of the City. Increasing access to civil service careers as a pathway to the middle class and economic stability for New Yorkers, particularly those in Black and Latino communities, has been a central focus. The Council passed laws to expand civil service pipelines to disadvantaged New Yorkers and address pay disparities in the municipal workforce, and hosted hiring halls in local neighborhoods with Mayor Adams' administration. The Council also secured funding in the city budget to establish more vocational training programs at public housing developments for young people and support equitable opportunity programs at city-owned industrial campuses, like the Brooklyn Navy Yard. It further expanded opportunities by passing a law to help strengthen the industrial sector, which provides mid-to-high wage jobs that do not require a college degree and overwhelmingly employs people of color. In order to strengthen access to capital for Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs), the Council passed a law requiring the distribution of informational materials on Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs). It also convened M/WBEs and these lenders to foster strong working relationships. In recent years, the Council also helped expand the City's Summer Youth Employment Program, offering 100,000 job opportunities for 14- to 24-year-olds to explore potential career pathways.

Investing in CUNY as Engine of Social Mobility

The City University of New York (CUNY) has long been an incubator of opportunity for New Yorkers, and must be a priority for the City to adequately support in its budget. A CUNY education has been shown to be amongst the nation's leaders in promoting economic mobility for students from low- and moderate-income families. CUNY educates and creates pipelines of opportunity for people of all backgrounds, which is why providing adequate support for our public colleges and universities must be a priority.

A focus on protecting investments in CUNY, as an engine of economic mobility, guided the Council's efforts to restore proposed cuts to the city's public higher education system during last year's budget process. Expanding upon CUNY's essential role at the forefront of the Council's budget priorities, the legislature expanded CUNY Reconnect, an initiative established by Speaker Adams to help working-age New Yorkers re-enroll in CUNY to finish their college degrees and improve their earning potential. The Council increased funding for the program from \$4.4 million in the Fiscal Year 2023 budget to \$5.8 million in Fiscal Year 2024, supporting its expansion to reach 25,000 students. Most of the students in the program are women and people of color, who previously left school because of family and work obligations.

CUNY remains a city and state budget priority of the Council's, so that it can continue to be a beacon of economic opportunity and mobility, particularly for communities of color and immigrant, low-income and working New Yorkers.

Expanding Job Opportunities to Support City Government

Bolstering economic opportunity for all New Yorkers facing different circumstances has been a consistent and core goal of Speaker Adams and the Council's towards building a more robust and inclusive economy and workforce.

In partnership with DC37, Speaker Adams is proposing an employment initiative with two tracks – one focused on career advancement and another on entry job opportunities. The first track would invest in creating a pathway from CUNY programs, like CUNY Reconnect, and other programs to careers in city government. It would support working New Yorkers to be prioritized for advancement to better jobs through access to civil service careers, and it would include civil service exam prep, subsidized exam fees, and other support. Participants in worker-focused CUNY programs constitute a stable pool of potential candidates that could be drawn upon to fill City jobs that are persistently vacant across several City agencies. This pathway would have the dual benefit of helping the City mitigate vacancies and attrition of certain hard-to-hire titles by tapping into CUNY programs, as well as giving those students a clear path to the long-term security of a career in City government. One of the biggest issues the city's government has faced in addressing challenges with the delivery of city services has been the continued high level of vacant positions in agencies, caused by challenges to attract and retain workers. As of September 2023, there were over 20,000 vacant municipal positions citywide.

The second track would help underemployed communities and populations enter the workforce initially through seasonal positions at city agencies to build work experience that increases their employment prospects. During the pandemic, the Departments of Parks, Sanitation, and Transportation were able to implement the City Cleanup Corps program, with roughly 10,000 participants of which over 3,200 staff

were hired, trained and fielded in just months by the Parks Department. This newly proposed program would operate similarly, targeting young people, eligible asylum seekers, and other under-employed New Yorkers to access the initial employment opportunities they need to succeed. Implementing such a program could connect young people aged 18-24 from the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and Work Learn Grow (WLG), or those disconnected from opportunity and transitioning from the justice system, with City jobs. Investing in these pathways would have the triple benefit of aiding longtime New Yorkers and asylum seekers, supporting City services, and benefiting the public. In addition to the example of City Cleanup Corps for participants, the youth portion of this program can be modeled on the Fiscal Year 2012 expansion of the Young Men's Initiative (YMI) with the Successful Scholars at Work and the Young Adult Internship programs, which included paid internships and sector-specific training, or programs like SYEP and WLG.

Protecting Essential Services

New Yorkers rely on city agencies to provide essential services. The lack of focus and investment into the city's social services agencies and programs over the course of years has disastrous effects for New Yorkers – from the rise of evictions and homelessness to the chronically delayed processing of cash and SNAP food assistance, which has left families hungry and our local economy without the federal dollars that they inject. While hunger and poverty have risen in the city, a lack of capacity within our city's social services agencies has undermined the access to assistance that families and individuals need to meet basic needs. The City must protect services for older adults, families experiencing food and housing insecurity, and New Yorkers living in poverty or with significantly low incomes.

Meeting the Needs of Older Adults

There are 1.8 million older city residents, and the population of older adults is continuously increasing across the city. Older adults deserve to age in place with dignity and live full, independent lives, because their contributions have shaped New York City and our communities. It's critical that the City's investments and policies ensure their diverse needs are met. The Council prioritized funding for seniors in the Fiscal Year 2024 budget, securing restorations to meals delivered to their homes and served in older adult centers. Programs that support seniors remaining physically active, emotionally and socially supported, and cared for in their homes are essential for the City to fund in its budget. In the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) budget, the Council will advocate to restore and secure investments that ensure older adults have access to nutritious meals, case management services, and programming at older adult centers. Current proposals in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget reduce funding for some Department for the Aging services, but older adults will remain a top priority for the Council throughout the FY25 budget process.

Providing Timely SNAP Food Assistance and Cash Assistance

The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides food assistance for 1.8 million low-income New Yorkers, including families, older adults, and people with disabilities. The Cash Assistance program provides eligible low-income families up to 60 months of federally funded cash assistance. These programs provide vital support to New Yorkers in need and infuse the city's economy with federal dollars, but the programs have experienced severe delays. The Preliminary Mayor's Management Report showed that the timeliness rate of processing remains subpar at 41.6 percent

and 35.6 percent for SNAP and cash assistance, respectively. The Administration recently announced a reduction in Human Resource Administration's (HRA) extensive backlog of SNAP and cash assistance applications as part of a court-ordered process. It must be one of the highest management priorities of the Administration to fix the failure to process these benefits on time, because delays have a direct and devastating impact on low-income New Yorkers' access to food and other basic necessities.

Tackling Food Insecurity

Food insecurity continues to deepen, with child hunger rising 44 percent nationally over the past year. Last year's statistics were already troubling, showing nearly 15 percent (1.2 million) New Yorkers lived in poverty and 1 in 5 children faced hunger. With 1 in 4 children now living in poverty, it is likely that child hunger and food insecurity has only increased.

School meals must be a budget priority as they are the foundation of many students' daily nutrition. The administration of Summer EBT benefits must also be a priority, given the City's challenges with processing SNAP benefits. New York State opted into the new federal benefit program that will provide \$120 for eligible children starting this summer. The Council is committed to helping connect eligible families with this benefit through promotional campaigns and outreach. The City must also strengthen emergency food networks through greater support for community pantries and other access points.

Supporting Human Service Providers and Workers

New York City's human services workers have been significantly underpaid for years. This workforce, predominantly made up of women and people of color, kept the City afloat throughout the pandemic and consistently serves on the frontlines in our communities. The wages of these workers have remained stagnant despite the rising cost of living in the city, and they deserve wage increases and pay parity on par with unionized municipal workers. The Council helped secure wage enhancements for the sector's workforce with \$100 million baselined in the Fiscal Year 2024 budget and an expected \$50 million addition for Fiscal Year 2025 for a total of \$150 million. The Council will continue to advocate for pay parity, and for human services contracts to be paid on time, to ensure providers can continue supporting the health and safety of all New Yorkers.

Helping Low-Income New Yorkers Access Public Transit

In 2019, the New York City Council launched Fair Fares, a program that offers a 50 percent discount on the city's subways and buses for New Yorkers with incomes up to 100% of the federal poverty level. In last year's State of the City, Speaker Adams announced support for expanding eligibility for the program to 200% of the federal poverty level to help more low-income New Yorkers benefit from access to the transit system through reduced-fare subway and bus rides. In the adopted Fiscal Year 2024 budget, the Council reached an agreement with the Administration to expand eligibility to New Yorkers with incomes up to 120 percent of the federal poverty level. However, New Yorkers with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level are similarly struggling with transit affordability that blocks their ability to access opportunity. At the current benchmark, the Fair Fares program has a long way to go in order to fully address the need for affordable transit access among low-income New Yorkers. The Council will continue to push for expanded Fair Fares eligibility to 200% of the federal poverty level, a worthy investment to expand transit affordability.

Solving Challenges through Effective Governance

While the major challenges facing New York City are often different and sometimes unexpected, New Yorkers rely on city government to effectively solve them. This responsibility is crucial to protecting the city's residents and neighborhoods, as well as preserving trust in government. However, the City's ability to resolve vexing challenges has weakened and it has reduced confidence in the ability to overcome major obstacles. The Council is committed to restoring the City's ability to address longstanding issues and new challenges that may be unexpected by increasing operational effectiveness and efficiencies. As the largest city in the nation, our government must lead by example in our readiness to resolve a wide breadth of issues, both long-standing and unanticipated, with care and precision.

Fixing Inefficient and Dysfunctional Bureaucratic Processes to Access Social Services

The processes for New Yorkers to access essential social services have long been highly inefficient and sometimes dysfunctional, serving as an obstacle to people in urgent need of support. This is only exacerbated when problems with the agency's administration of programs, like delays to application processing for SNAP and cash assistance, add to the bureaucratic hurdles. The New Yorkers who rely on these programs do not have the luxury of time to sink into inefficient processes to access these vital resources, which can often come at a cost to their employment income and security. These problems of inefficiency and dysfunction have been highlighted most regarding the administration of CityFHEPS housing vouchers. This was part of the impetus behind the Council's efforts to enact laws to reform the program by removing eligibility rules that serve as barriers to New Yorkers accessing the program. Yet, there are fundamental issues that remain within the application processes and administration of CityFHEPS and other benefits programs that must be addressed to dismantle barriers for low-income New Yorkers.

- **The Council will propose policy changes that aim to simplify the process for low-income New Yorkers to access CityFHEPS and other vital benefit programs, eliminating inefficient and dysfunctional bureaucratic processes that block New Yorkers from the support programs for which they are eligible.**

Establish City Agency Report Cards

The Council is a co-equal branch of government and has a charter mandate to pass laws and conduct oversight of city agencies. The city's laws are only as effective as their implementation. While the Mayor's Management Report (MMR) provides important data about city agencies, its metrics don't always show the full picture. The Council currently examines the MMR and PMMR, often holding hearings on them as part of its oversight role. To provide further insight into agency performance, the Council will begin conducting its own performance evaluations of city agencies, issuing report cards for individual agencies on their delivery of services to New Yorkers with recommended action steps to remedy underperformance. These evaluations will likely occur on a rolling basis for selected agencies and allow New Yorkers to better understand how a particular agency is performing and where improvements need to be made to better meet the city's needs.

Increasing Transparency to Track Streets Plan Transportation Projects for Safer Streets

The Department of Transportation (DOT) developed and released the NYC Streets Plan in 2021, as required by local law enacted by the Council in 2019 (Local Law 195 of 2019), to advance infrastructure projects that promote increased public transit use, street safety, accessibility, and reduction of emissions. DOT has indicated it is far short of the plan's goals in the legally mandated annual report, but the City lacks any transparent tracking of specific projects that contribute to meeting the goals.

To increase transparency about the agency's progress and allow all stakeholders to hold it accountable, the Council will:

- **Propose legislation requiring DOT to create a capital tracker of Streets Plan projects that would contain monthly status updates of each project** connected to the plan from conception to construction to finalization. This could provide transparency on the number of projects DOT plans for each year, as well as their progress.

Working Together to Advance Solutions for Asylum Seekers and Our City

Immigrants have consistently played a foundational role in shaping both the cultural vibrancy and economic strength of New York City. As economic, climate, and political crises have given way to humanitarian emergencies worldwide, global migration has surged. Tens of thousands of people have made the dangerous and arduous journey to our southern border, desperately seeking refuge in our city and across the country. Each generation has figured out how to integrate immigrants and refugees with the help of government, and we have become a stronger nation because of it. In fact, our better-than-expected national economic recovery from the pandemic has been attributed to recent migration.

The response to the recent migrant has not been easy, and greater collaboration is needed to strengthen the City's response. Developing a strategic plan to guide and support newcomers is crucial for unlocking and optimizing their ability to contribute to NYC's fiscal, social, and cultural fabric. Prioritizing their inclusion into our diverse city not only boosts our standing as an economic powerhouse and global leader in arts and culture, but also upholds the identity of NYC as a beacon of hope and possibility. Despite the substantial resources allocated by the City to address the basic needs of recent arrivals, a comprehensive and compassionate evaluation is necessary to pinpoint areas for improvement and long-term planning.

PROPOSAL: New Arrivals Strategy Team

With an honest acknowledgment of our city's and nation's immigrant history and an awareness of the present-day obstacles and challenges facing migrants, the Council proposes the creation of a New Arrivals Strategy Team. It will consist of seasoned government and non-profit professionals, supported by Council staff, and will collaborate with a cross-section of service providers, advocates, and directly impacted people. The work of the New Arrivals Strategy Team will help ensure that our newest New Yorkers, like so many before them, can trust in the city's ability to provide refuge and opportunities for those seeking a better life.

The New Arrivals Strategy Team will develop a comprehensive roadmap of best practices. Crafted for our city, this roadmap will be an in-depth model that outlines specific best practices and approaches for new arrivals, rooted in the experiences of both grassroots organizations providing direct services and migrants themselves. Given that New York City is one municipality among many managing a surge of people seeking asylum, the roadmap will be incorporate learnings from and be adaptable to other municipalities across the U.S. It will be guided by two primary objectives: 1) The team will outline proven approaches – in detail – for welcoming and stabilizing new arrivals; 2) It will focus on identifying lasting structural solutions essential for empowering migrants to achieve self-sufficiency and safety.

By developing a comprehensive plan for the integration and independence of migrants, it aims to identify the short- and long-term tools necessary for them to build a better life.

Creating a More Sustainable City

The effects of climate change are already impacting our most vulnerable communities. With extreme weather events inundating our city's old and dilapidated infrastructure that cannot handle even modest levels of rainfall, our city must act with urgency to protect New Yorkers. As the impact becomes more severe, it is critical for the City to advance solutions to make our neighborhoods more sustainable and prepared for climate emergencies, including rising sea levels, extreme heat, and flash floods.

Over the past two years, the Council has taken important steps to create a greener, more sustainable city. The Council passed historic legislation to make the New York City the largest municipality in the nation to require its municipal fleet to consist of zero emission vehicles by 2035—exceeding the goals of the United Nations Climate Change Conferences of the Parties (COP27) in its international agreement. The Council also enacted the Zero Waste Act, a legislative package that advances the City's efforts to divert organic waste from landfills. A decrease in the use of unnecessary plastic waste was advanced by enacting the "Skip the Stuff" law to reduce the provision of plastic utensils and containers in food orders and allowing reusable beverage containers to be used at sporting venues.

Additionally, the Council has advanced an Urban Forest Master Plan for New York City, built on the City's efforts to increase the size of its tree canopy, and expanded education on new solar and green roofs. The legislature also passed the City of Yes for Carbon Neutrality, a historic set of citywide zoning changes that will facilitate climate action, clean energy, and resiliency by removing barriers to greener and more efficient energy systems, buildings, transportation, and water and waste systems. To create cleaner air and reduce the negative health outcomes felt in environmental justice communities, the Council expedited the phasing out of oil grade No. 4, which is the most harmful heating oil still used in city buildings. It also required the City to redesign its truck route for the first time in more than four decades to improve safety and health outcomes.

However, the City must do more to protect New Yorkers from inevitable extreme weather events by investing in flood resiliency. With the Department of City Planning's proposed Zoning for Housing Opportunity citywide text amendment entering public review this spring, the Council will push for the Administration to prioritize resiliency infrastructure investments in conjunction with the text amendment. Infrastructure investments are a critical way to ensure our homes and neighborhoods are prepared for climate emergencies that are becoming more frequent.

PROPOSAL: Create Higher-Ground Centers to Protect New Yorkers during Flooding

As extreme weather events become more common, New York City is on track to experience more life-threatening floods. Last summer, the City was again hit with severe rain, with more than seven inches falling within less than a day. Even when people receive advanced warnings about these flood events, some have few options for where to take shelter, and people in basements are particularly vulnerable. 13 New Yorkers died during Hurricane Ida in 2021, some of whom were in basement apartments. The Council will propose legislation to require the Administration to create 'higher ground' centers to keep people safe during flooding events. These would be similar in concept to the City's cooling centers, which offer much-needed relief for New Yorkers who are unable to be in their homes during extreme heat events.

Listening to New Yorkers

New Yorkers can and should offer critical input on their priorities to guide government actions. The Council's collaboration with the Communities Speak survey will offer deeper insight into the challenges New Yorkers are facing across several key issues, including newly developed modules on hunger, asylum seekers, and education. Through the data collected in Communities Speak bi-annual surveys, the City Council will be better equipped to develop policies that accurately reflect the needs and desires of our constituents.

Since 2020, Communities Speak has conducted biannual surveys of New York City residents, gathering individual and neighborhood-level data. In partnership with community-based organizations, nonprofits, and elected officials, these surveys offer detailed insights into the impact of socioeconomic changes on the city's diverse populations and neighborhoods. Through data-driven dialogues with community leaders and constituents, Communities Speak promotes collaboration and informed decision-making. By closely working with community organizations and leaders, they share survey data and co-develop policy briefs in support of evidence-based policymaking. This approach not only improves resource targeting but also enables the evaluation of policy effectiveness based on real community needs.

Communities Speak was founded by Columbia University researchers during the height of the COVID pandemic, with the support of Bloomberg Philanthropies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all the staff and partners who contributed to Speaker Adams' 2024 State of the City address.