

2018 New York City Policy Agenda



NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

NYLCV EDUCATION FUND

INTRODUCTION

The New York League of Conservation Voters NYC Chapter works closely with leading environmental, energy, conservation, public health, environmental justice, and transportation organizations to identify and advocate for solutions to New York City's most pressing environmental issues. The 2018 NYC Policy Agenda is the result of that work and will guide NYLCV's advocacy in New York City throughout the year. It will also inform the bills we ultimately select for our annual NYC Council Environmental Scorecard.

In his first term, Mayor de Blasio made action on climate change and environmental protection top priorities for his administration. The Mayor's OneNYC Plan established ambitious goals to address growth, equity, sustainability and resilience including an 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and sending zero waste to landfills by 2030. There have been significant achievements including: the Community Parks Initiative, expansion of residential and commercial organics waste collection, benchmarking of all large buildings, and hardening of critical infrastructure. Under the leadership of Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, the New York City Council also played an important role in pushing the administration to do more, passing dozens of bills with significant benefits for the environment.

If we are to reach our ambitious goals, however, four more years of progress at the same pace will be insufficient to keep us on track. Our leaders in New York City will need to think bigger and do more. Last summer, we held a four-part policy forum series called Getting NYC to 80 x 50, evaluating the medium- and long-term impediments to reaching our goals and what it will take to overcome them. A number of the ideas that came out of this series made it into our agenda for this year.

While we recognize what we are asking will not be easy to accomplish, we look forward to



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working with the de Blasio Administration and the Council every step of the way. Although there are forty-two specific directives in this year's agenda, there are three key areas we will focus on: making our climate goals real, planning for the future of mobility, and removing toxics from the environment, all of which you can read more about on the following page.

With a challenging political environment in Washington undermining years of environmental progress, cities and states are showing they can not only fill the void but also chart the path forward. As our nation's largest city and a major global metropolis, our successes and failures in building a strong, healthy, and sustainable city carry unique weight. When we demonstrate how innovative policies can be implemented on a large scale, our sister cities watch closely and often follow our lead. We do not take this lightly and we know our elected leaders do not either. We look forward to making sure New York City remains on the cutting-edge of environmental policy in 2018 and beyond.

TOP PRIORITIES

Making our Climate Goals Real: Mayor de Blasio's "Roadmap to 80 x 50" plan detailed how we can achieve our ambitious climate goals through advances in four key sectors: buildings, energy, transportation, and waste. While we are pleased with the Mayor's commitment to seeing our climate goals through, the City will face significant challenges in achieving the goals set out for each of the four sectors. After years of studying solutions, planning, and addressing so-called low-hanging fruit, the next round of policies will be more complex and disruptive, requiring an increased investment in political willpower. If we are to show we are serious about meeting our goals, however, it is necessary and it must begin this year.

Planning for Future Mobility Systems: New technologies are coming and they will change the way we get around the city. Some bring hugely positive benefits for the environment, while others could derail progress without thoughtful planning and regulation. We cannot solely focus on the transit debates of past decades, particularly in the outer borough transit deserts where expanding the subway network as quickly as demographics are shifting is not practical. New York City must adapt and quickly plan for transformative technological changes such as, autonomous vehicles, zero-emissions vehicles, advances in signal and sensor technology, and ride and bike share programs.

Removing Toxics from the Environment: From legacy lead-based paint in NYCHA properties, corroding waterlines in our buildings and schools, and everyday products on store shelves, exposure to toxic chemicals is a risk to New Yorkers, especially young children. New York City must adequately enforce current testing and mitigation laws, including Local Law 1, create a plan to address concerns about lead in water infrastructure and indoor air pollutants, and pursue a policy requiring disclosure of toxic chemicals in children's products.



Advocates are pushing the upcoming L Train shutdown as an opportunity to use 14th Street as a case study for testing creative uses of street space. Photo credit: Cricket Day/Chris Robbins/Becca Groban/Kellen Parker

URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

A successful strategy to fight climate change must address both mitigation and adaptation. New York City needs to better protect both our infrastructure and our people from sea level rise and extreme weather. The City must also enact policies that lead to cleaner energy generation and consumption as well as significant advances in building efficiency and solid waste management.

Energy and Infrastructure

1. Promote research and innovation in the renewable energy sector by supporting green energy startups, the expansion of EDC programs such as the Urban Future Lab, and actively piloting these technologies in city owned spaces.
2. Plan proactively for policy and regulatory changes in anticipation of emerging green technology such as battery storage and microgrids.
3. Ensure that the City can meet its procurement commitments for renewable energy by removing existing barriers to siting and permitting projects.
4. Demonstrate national leadership by supporting deep retrofits to improve buildings' energy efficiency.
5. Spur clean energy innovation and investment by implementing programs like Community Choice Aggregation, a shared purchasing model, which can serve as a vehicle for increased procurement of renewables as our energy source.
6. Develop a dedicated funding stream to support targeted, community-led, residential solar campaigns to spur the growth of renewable energy projects in low-income communities across the city.

Resilience

1. Reform the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) Environmental Review process to include considerations of sea level rise, risk of storm surge, and other climate change impacts when reviewing a proposed development.
2. Strengthen zoning codes to protect homes in vulnerable areas against the threat of climate change, including the use of most recent projections on storm surge, flood plains, and sea level rise. These projections should also be used to consider exclusionary zones for future development.
3. Support the development and protection of strong natural barriers along the coast with restored wetlands and salt marshes, oyster reefs, dunes, and other living shoreline approaches to resiliency.
4. Pursue the creation of a new regional resiliency commission and adaptation trust fund to raise revenue for critical coastal adaptation infrastructure.
5. Ensure the steadfast implementation of the Mayor's Cool Neighborhoods program that will protect New Yorkers against the urban heat island effect via mitigation, adaptation, and monitoring programs, including deployment of green roofs, strategic street tree plantings, and reforming the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program.
6. Develop a citywide plan that tackles the long-term security of critical infrastructure along our waterfronts including airports, wastewater treatment plants, and power generating stations, that are vulnerable to sea level rise, power outages, and storm surge.

Solid Waste

1. Promote the equitable siting of regional capacity for processing organic waste.
2. Explore incentive programs for large producers of organic waste to install micro-digesters on site.
3. Advance a "Save-as-you-Throw" program for residential waste, charging for trash collection based on the amount being thrown away.
4. Utilize Zero Waste Design Guidelines in our buildings, planning for separation, movement and storage of waste in a way that maximizes waste diversion and minimizes use of space.
5. Invest in a robust recycling and waste diversion public education program to bring New York City closer to its Zero Waste to Landfills goal.
6. Push for sustainability measures to be adopted in implementation of commercial franchise zones.



Left: Waterfront greenways can both supply much-needed open spaces and provide resilience features to help protect communities from rising sea levels and flash flooding. Right: The Newtown Creek Wastewater treatment plant co-digests a portion of New York's organic waste. More regional processing capacity is needed as organic waste collection ramps up.

HEALTHY NEW YORKERS

For years, low-income communities have unfairly borne the brunt of New York City's worst environmental impacts. The City should take steps to mitigate these disparities and improve public health by addressing air and water quality, the cleaning up of contaminated land, reducing exposure to toxic substances, and ensuring universal access to fresh and healthy food.

Clean Air

1. Launch a program within the Department of Housing Preservation and Development to review the annual inspection of homes for indoor asthma triggers such as mold or pest infestations. The program should also support the remediation of indoor pollutants when landlords fail to mitigate these public health issues.
2. Support the transition from home heating oils to cleaner heat such as electric, natural gas, or biofuels.
3. Reduce emissions from truck traffic by piloting alternative policies for residential deliveries, including off-peak hour incentives and neighborhood distribution centers.
4. Ensure the City meets its zero emissions vehicle goals for rapid charging infrastructure in all 5 boroughs and electrification of the city's vehicle fleet.
5. Protect the health of NYC's children by advocating for the transition away from diesel school buses.

Clean Water

1. Create standards to test in-building drinking water for contaminants, especially in buildings used by vulnerable populations, such as child-care and senior centers.
2. Ensure that the City's Combined Sewer Overflow Long Term Control Plans meet federal health standards for safe contact with water, and prioritize CSO mitigation and capture instead of diversion to another waterway. Updates to the LTCP should also include a transparent process with opportunities for community engagement.
3. Expand New York City's Green Infrastructure program with a more robust grant program to catalyze installation on private property.
4. Encourage more collaboration between city agencies to increase the adoption of green infrastructure in projects beyond DEP, including urging the Departments of Transportation and Parks and Recreation to use pervious pavement where possible.
5. Urge DEP to study restructuring water rates to develop revenue neutral recommendations that equitably generate needed funds, and promote both water conservation and widespread use of green infrastructure.

Sustainable Food Systems

1. Support the expansion of both community and commercial urban agriculture in New York City with a comprehensive plan. This plan should examine amendments to the zoning code that clearly define permissible urban agriculture practices in each zoning district.
2. Fight to ensure every family has access to healthy, local, and affordable produce through expansion of critical food access programs such as SNAP, FRESH, GrowNYC Youthmarkets, and Health Bucks redeemable at farmers markets across the city.



Photo credit: Heath Alseike / Flickr



Photo credit: GrowNYC

Left: Street trees provide myriad benefits to urban communities and the MillionTreesNYC initiative helped to plant a lot more of them. Now we must do a better job of maintaining these trees and ensuring they reach maturity. Right: GrowNYC's Youthmarket program brings farm-fresh local produce to low-income communities with staffing from local youth.

STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS

A comprehensive growth strategy that incorporates affordable, reliable mass transit and walkable neighborhoods that connect people to jobs and education is needed to address threats to livable, sustainable communities. Sustainable development requires not just denser, transit-oriented development but also strategies such as pocket parks in developed areas and aggressive protection of undeveloped natural areas.

Mobility

1. Urge the City to plan ahead about the role of autonomous vehicles. The Department of Transportation should begin to integrate this technology into their long-term plans and consider how AV's can complement existing public transportation infrastructure, and contribute to progress toward complete streets and the city's sustainability goals.
2. Support the implementation of a fair congestion pricing plan that will create a dedicated funding stream for critical transportation infrastructure and reduce both emissions and traffic congestion.
3. Focus on transit deserts within the five boroughs for bus rapid transit technology, such as: transit signal priority, dedicated bus lanes, next generation fare payment, and all-door boarding.
4. Embrace new multimodal strategies to bolster the public transportation system in NYC, including support for bike share programs and bike infrastructure, light rail, and ferries.
5. Push for clarity in e-bike laws that would make a distinction between commercial/non-commercial use and allow for pedal-assist technology to make cycling attainable to a larger group of New Yorkers.
6. Ensure that mobility via bus and bike are dependable by increased enforcement of dedicated lanes and stricter penalties for violation.
7. Deploy at least 50 rapid charging stations for electric vehicles in every borough, while continuing to explore other clean vehicle technologies.

Parks, Waterfronts and Natural Areas

1. Advocate for a fully-funded parks budget, with particular focus on construction and maintenance of parks in communities underserved by parkland.
2. Increase the efficiency of the NYC Parks Department's Capital Division with a clearly defined process and deadline for design, more expedient and transparent decision making on individual projects, standardized project management tools, and increased accountability for making projects on-time and on-budget.
3. Baseline funding for core maintenance functions such as landscaping, repairs, waste collection, and facilities cleaning.
4. Prioritize conservation & restoration of natural areas across the city by supporting a long-term management plan that includes strategies to adapt to climate change & combat invasive species and illegal dumping. The plan should also encourage natural regeneration of plant species.
5. Support waterfront parks as a vital component of resiliency, and continued expansion of public access to the waterfront on both public and private property.
6. Protect parkland and joint-operated playgrounds across the city from alienation.



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NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS, INC.

NYLCV is the only nonpartisan, statewide environmental organization in New York that fights for clean water, clean air, renewable energy and open space through political action.

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NYLCVEF educates, engages and empowers New Yorkers to be effective advocates for the environment.