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NYLCV FY2020 NEW YORK CITY BUDGET PRIORITIES

The New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV) strongly supports budget priorities that will advance New York City's sustainability agenda and make our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier and more resilient. With ambitious goals set under OneNYC in the energy, buildings, transportation, and waste sectors, it is imperative that the city's budget reflects a concerted effort to make progress toward realizing its goals. After consulting with coalition partners made up of NYC's leading environmental, transportation, and public health organizations, NYLCV recommends the following investments in the Mayor's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2020:

SANITATION AND WASTE

The Department of Sanitation's FY20 Executive Budget invests heavily in personnel, exporting waste, and general administration. However, only a fraction of the Department's budget -- \$55.1 million, or about 3.1% -- is dedicated to waste prevention, reuse, and recycling. This number represents a 9% decrease from the FY19 adopted budget and is in stark contrast with the 23% of the budget being used to export our waste.

Moreover, these figures are inconsistent with the City's stated goal of Zero Waste to landfills by 2030 (0x30). In FY19 the total curbside and containerized recycling diversion rate was 17.6%, an increase of just 2% from FY14. If we continue at this pace, diversion will be a meager 24% in 2030. DSNY's waste prevention budget should reflect a more aggressive effort to achieve our 0x30 goal.

Reaching the City's zero waste goal will require work from all New Yorkers--cooperation of city officials, private industry, and buy-in from the general public. In light of the current state of the international recycling markets, it is more critical than ever that New Yorkers recycle right. Given that, and if we are to reach our goal of Zero Waste to landfills by 2030, ***NYLCV believes the City must invest \$10 million in public education and engagement around the organic waste and recycling programs available to residents.*** It is imperative that New Yorkers know not only the options available to them, but also the environmental significance of participation and instructions on proper disposal of organic waste and recyclable materials.

In addition to traditional marketing, the City should expand its targeted outreach. In particular, maintenance staff in large buildings should be seen as key ambassadors to the City's zero waste goals. Sustainability training for this sector could have an exponential impact on diversion rates.

Finally, child and youth engagement is key. The earlier we can instill the importance of eco-friendly behaviors, the more likely they are to carry it into adulthood. The City should continue to expand its educational programs in schools and encourage better source separation in cafeterias, particularly of organic waste.

Diverting organic waste from landfills is perhaps the most critical component of 0x30, as organics represent 31% of the residential waste stream. Further, when this waste ends up in landfills, it releases significant quantities of methane as it decomposes. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas. It absorbs heat from the sun at *32 times* the rate of carbon dioxide, trapping that heat in our atmosphere and contributing to global warming.



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Unfortunately, instead of growing the residential organics program to keep more of this waste from landfills, last year DSNY “paused” their expansion. It is especially disappointing that the FY20 Executive budget does not include funds to expand the residential organics program, despite a recent announcement by Mayor de Blasio that DSNY would be moving towards mandatory collection citywide this year - an announcement we praised. NYLCV recognizes the complexity of sustaining (and growing) a program of this size. However, if Zero Waste is truly a goal of this administration, the budget figures should reflect an investment significant enough to bring the organics program to scale citywide and stimulate demand in the market for regional processing capacity of this waste.

ENERGY

Given the recent passage and adoption of Intro. 1253, the city budget should reflect resources needed for the new Office of Building Energy Performance as well as other relevant agencies to increase staffing with qualified architects and design professionals to oversee compliance, offer outreach and technical assistance to owners and administer newly-created programs and offices. ***We propose that the city allocate \$13.5 million in Fiscal Year 2020 to energy efficiency-related programs, prioritizing the following areas:***

- Staffing the Office of Building Energy Performance - \$2 million
- Workforce development and Green Jobs Corps - \$1 million
- Pre-retrofit Measures in Targeted Areas - \$0.5 million
- Outreach and Education - \$10 million.

We applaud the inclusion of \$60 million in the FY20 Executive Budget to retrofit city buildings to be more energy efficient, however, more needs to be done to ensure the City is ready to implement the law as it applies to all other covered buildings.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

NYLCV supports the passage of a city budget in FY20 that secures progress on many of the environmental, transportation, and public health priorities Mayor de Blasio has called for in OneNYC 2050 and beyond. Our city is staring down a crisis of existential importance, and it is incumbent upon our elected leaders to invest our tax dollars in climate action and solutions. New York City’s Department of Parks and Recreation plays a critical role in that fight.

The Department of Parks and Recreation FY20 Executive Budget totals \$540.3 million, just over one half of one percent of the city’s overall \$92.2 billion budget. That’s 0.58% for an agency that oversees 14% of NYC’s land.

Parks and other green spaces are one of the city’s most valuable environmental assets. Preserving these spaces is a top priority for NYLCV. Parks are a major source of the City’s urban canopy. In fact, the Parks Department is responsible for over 2.6 million street and park trees. This canopy mitigates climate change,



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provides clean air and habitats for native wildlife, and contributes to the well-being of our residents and our economy.

These trees remove 1,300 tons of pollutants from the atmosphere and store one million tons of carbon per year. Trees are vital for mitigating urban heat island effect and can lower temperatures by up to nine degrees, cut air conditioning use by 30%, and reduce heating energy use by a further 20-50%. NYC's parks contribute to our resiliency by capturing almost 2 billion gallons of stormwater runoff. We should be investing more, not less, in protecting these green asset.

Further, with soaring population growth, and over 100 million visitors each year, park use in New York City is surging to record levels. It is imperative the Parks Department budget keep pace with these trends. That's why NYLCV is proud to join with New Yorkers for Parks and DC 37 as founding members of the Play Fair for Parks campaign.

We all agree that parks are critical city infrastructure. One does not have to look further than the environmental benefits I pointed to earlier as proof. But these green benefits could not be realized without the Parks employees, particularly gardeners, horticulturalists, and maintenance workers, who work tirelessly to ensure the health of these spaces.

The Play Fair Coalition is asking the City to commit \$100 million in additional funding for FY20 to support much-needed maintenance and operations needs citywide.

NYLCV and the entire Play Fair Coalition request this funding be allocated in the following ways:

- \$10M to permanently baseline positions for 100 City Park Workers and 50 Gardeners so that once and for all, these workers will have secure, stable green jobs.
- \$4M for investment in urban forests to help protect NYC from climate change.
 - Beyond this investment, we request \$3.74M in additional capital funding to implement the first year of the 25-year *Forest Management Plan for New York City*.
- \$65M for more parks of all sizes to have full-time, dedicated staff to help keep things clean and green.
- Just over \$8M towards improvements for every GreenThumb community garden in the City. This amount would help provide new soil, raised beds, and other features to ensure urban gardeners in all 550 gardens have the resources they need for the gardens to thrive.
- \$4M to ensure more seasonal after-school and other programming for children and families from every neighborhood.
- \$9M for the preservation, safety, and protection of our natural areas and parks with 50 new Urban Park Rangers and 80 additional Parks Enforcement Patrol Officers citywide.

The City Council included many of these asks in its official response to the FY20 Preliminary budget, but none were included in the Executive Budget. As critical environmental infrastructure that can help in the fight against climate change, we urge the Mayor to play fair with the Parks budget in FY20.



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TRANSPORTATION

Maintaining safe and walkable streets, enhancing safety infrastructure for cyclists, and improving bus service are critical strategies that promote low or no-carbon transportation alternatives, thus contributing to emissions reductions in our transportation sector.

Investing in bus efficiency, in particular, is one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to enhance the city's mass transportation system. We are grateful that the Mayor is taking the concerns of bus riders seriously and committed to improving our bus system in his State of the City address. Increasing the pace of bus lane installation, transit signal priority (TSP), and expanding bus lane enforcement is necessary to make riding the bus an attractive transportation option, instead of a last resort.

That's why we are grateful to see \$2.7 million in the Department of Transportation's FY20 Executive Budget to install TSP at 300 additional intersections this year. We are also encouraged by the allocations for Vision Zero, including \$70 million in baselined funding to support the initiative. A sustainable city is a city that prioritizes walking, cycling, and mass transit, and we are encouraged that the FY20 Executive Budget reflects the Mayor's commitment to these issues.

PUBLIC HEALTH

We thank the Mayor and the City Council for the attention they have given to lead hazards in our communities. Though rates of lead poisoning in children have declined steadily since the passage of Local Law 1, New York City's children remain at risk.

We are very grateful to see several commitments the Mayor made in his LeadFreeNYC Roadmap reflected in the FY20 budget. Between FY19-FY23 there is nearly \$40 million spread across several agencies for the LeadFreeNYC program. Investments include a campaign to encourage the reporting of lead hazards and unsafe work practices, additional resources for coordinated care and updates to the immunization registry at DOHMH, as well as \$5.2 million to the Department of Environmental Protection for a pilot program to replace lead service lines for some low-income, single-family homeowners.

Moreover, as we believe the single most effective way to eliminate childhood lead poisoning is through increased enforcement of Local Law 1, NYLCV is grateful for funds allocated to the Department of Housing Preservation and Development. This investment includes nearly \$9 million for lead testing, abatement, enforcement, and compliance of hazards in private housing from FY20-FY23. However, we note that the LeadFreeNYC Roadmap called for up to \$25 million for HPD and investments will need to ramp up, not slow down, in the coming years in order to meet this measure.

If fully funded and properly enforced, the LeadFreeNYC Roadmap has the potential to greatly reduce lead exposure in children. ***We believe the City should fully fund its LeadFree NYC roadmap, with a particular focus on increased enforcement of Local Law 1.***