

NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS
NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS EDUCATION FUND

New York City Policy Agenda

2021





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The New York League of Conservation Voters and the New York League of Conservation Voters Education Fund have a long history of advocating for climate action, open space, clean transportation, and sustainable waste management. 2020 has made this advocacy work all the more important.

COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc on our health, our economy, and our communities. It also underscored the harmful effects of air pollution, in particular for people of color and those living in low-income neighborhoods, and heightened awareness of the need to take action to help avert the worst effects of climate change.

As we come out on the other side of the public health crisis, we will still have a climate crisis.

In 2019, New York City committed to a bold Green New Deal with aggressive new emissions standards for buildings—the largest source of climate pollution in the city—and expanded waste reduction efforts. On top of that, the State laid out aggressive climate standards as part of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act which includes a commitment to reduce emissions 85% by 2050. Now, the City must ensure the success of the Green New Deal and implement policies to meet all these new standards.

After buildings, transportation is the leading contributor to climate change in the city. In our Agenda, we lay out our priorities to encourage low-emission transportation. Bus and bike lanes, electric vehicles, micro-mobility, and expanding the Open Streets program can go a long way towards improving air quality and reprioritizing our street space.

The City must also illustrate its priorities by walking the walk and putting resources into the environment. While we understand that COVID-related fiscal deficits caused the City to make tough budget decisions, the environment should not be treated as a luxury. Unfortunately, the most recent budget included cuts to many environmental programs, including waste reduction and open space.

The City must take real steps to meet its Zero Waste goal as waste reduction not only reduces climate pollution but also benefits public health. We outline our waste management recommendations including restarting and expanding the organic waste collection program, avoiding single-use items, and investing in public education on recycling.

And our agenda urges the City to invest in open space. Our parks, forests, and other natural areas are one of our city's most valuable resources and New Yorkers have grown to rely on them even more due to COVID.

These are just some of the priorities included in our agenda. This publication was drafted in consultation with our New York City Chapter as well as our energy, public health, transportation, and environmental justice partners. This agenda will guide our advocacy and programs through 2021.

We look forward to working with policymakers and officials to champion these policies.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Tighe".

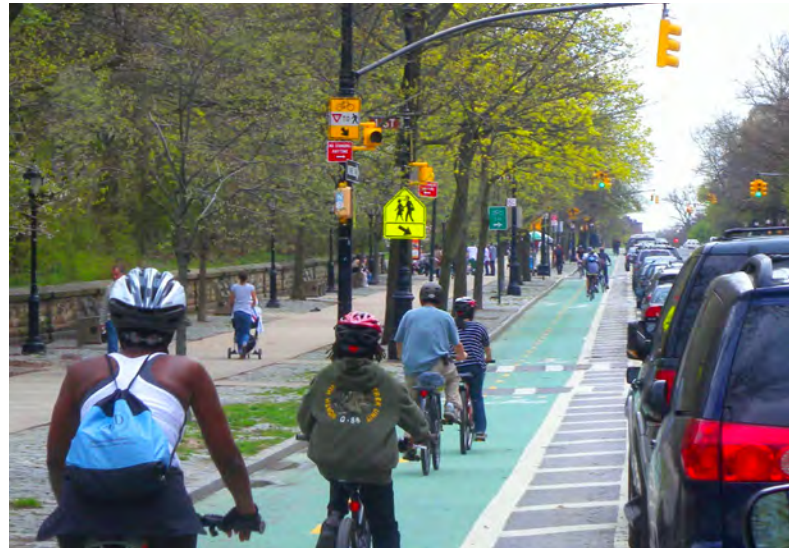
Top Priorities for NYC 2021

ENCOURAGING SHIFTING TO HIGH EFFICIENCY, LOW EMISSION FORMS OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation isn't only the number one source of greenhouse gas emissions in our state—it is also a major source of air pollution, causing respiratory and other public health issues. This is particularly the case near New York City's many major highways where too often, these communities are low-income and communities of color. As we have seen with COVID-19, pollution leaves these communities especially vulnerable to adverse health outcomes. The upcoming congestion pricing plan makes it critical to provide sustainable alternatives to driving. Moving New Yorkers out of single-occupancy vehicles via improved and efficient public transit and micro-mobility programs are all part of the solution for a greener transportation sector and reducing harmful emissions. The incredible drop in air pollution over the past year from reducing traffic shows that reducing congestion can lead to cleaner and healthier air. It is equally important that the City take a comprehensive approach to reimagine street space so that there is adequate infrastructure in place to meet the growth in sustainable transportation. The Open Streets initiative is a crucial step in the right direction, however, the program must connect more of its open streets and reach more low-income neighborhoods that desperately need the space. As with any other major transition, the Administration must lead by reducing the size of the City's fleet and more aggressively transitioning the remainder of the fleet to zero-emission vehicles.

CONSERVING NEW YORK CITY'S PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS

More than ever, New Yorkers realized the value of our parks and open spaces in 2020 as our cultural institutions were closed and we had to practice social distancing. Open green space is one of the City's most valuable environmental assets but also contributes to the well-being of our residents and our economy. The urban canopy and open spaces help to mitigate climate



change, provide clean air and habitats for native wildlife, and absorb stormwater. It is imperative that the City invest in the health and sustainability of both parks and natural forested areas. This will ensure that these valuable resources are there to benefit New Yorkers for generations to come and continue to be an outlet as people crave access to the great outdoors and fresh air.

COMMON SENSE WASTE MANAGEMENT

Reaching the City's Zero Waste goal by 2030 will require work from all New Yorkers—cooperation of city officials and private industry, and buy-in from the public. Stimulating behavioral change is critical to meeting this goal, as is ensuring the City has programs in place that promote waste reduction, diversion, and sustainable waste management. To improve diversion rates for recyclables and organic waste, the City must invest in a public education campaign, advance a mandatory residential organics program, avoid the use of unnecessary single-use items—particularly plastics—and implement its commercial waste zone plan. Especially given Mayor de Blasio's assertion in the Spring of 2019 that the City would move to a citywide mandatory organics recycling program, we need to reevaluate how to achieve this, look at potential opportunities for public-private partnerships, and dedicate the necessary resources to act on this commitment.



Combating Climate Change

The time to act on climate is now. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report makes it clear that we must make radical changes in short order to avoid catastrophic climate change. We will work to advance policies that decrease emissions from all sectors, prepare us to meet the unavoidable impacts of climate change, reduce waste, and foster a strong green economy. We must also ensure the changes we make to tackle climate change benefit disadvantaged communities and provide for a just transition.

ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Ensure the speedy and effective implementation of NYC's nation-leading buildings emissions law, including the rollout and expansion of supporting programs such as property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing options, the Retrofit Accelerator, a carbon trading study, and green jobs training programs. Explore legislation for an expansion of the law to reduce emissions in smaller buildings to bring us closer to the goals established by the city and the state.
2. Take action to upgrade the City's wastewater treatment plants to process organic waste into renewable energy, including exploring the feasibility of public-private partnerships.
3. Work to remove barriers to siting and permitting renewable energy projects citywide including transmission siting. Support offshore wind development, including opportunities for supply chain manufacturing and use of port facilities.
4. Advocate for the creation of green jobs to reinvigorate the economy and grow green projects with a prioritization placed on environmental justice community members for employment.
5. Proactively change policies and regulations, especially in regard to new technology, to encourage growth and implementation of emerging green technologies such as battery storage and microgrids, and encourage interagency collaboration.
6. Adopt legislation to ensure the use of Rikers Island for environmental purposes such as wastewater treatment plants, energy storage, and renewable energy generation.
7. Ensure that city-owned buildings, including NYCHA, are on track to meet emissions reduction targets and procurement commitments for renewable energy.
8. Spur clean energy innovation and investment by implementing programs like Community Choice Aggregation, a shared purchasing model that can serve as a vehicle for increased procurement of renewables as the City's energy source.
9. Develop a dedicated funding stream to support targeted, community-led, residential solar and energy efficiency retrofit campaigns to spur the

growth of renewable energy projects in low-income communities across the city.

10. Eliminate mandatory parking minimums for new developments in transit-rich neighborhoods. Consider replacing parking space requirements with electric vehicle charging stations and shared bike or scooter opportunities in other neighborhoods, with a prioritization on transit deserts and low-income communities.

TRANSPORTATION

1. Support the continued rollout of the Better Bus Action Plan with a focus on transit deserts within the five boroughs for bus rapid transit technology, such as transit signal priority, dedicated bus lanes, and all-door boarding.
2. Embrace new multimodal strategies to bolster the public transportation system in NYC, including support for bike-share programs and bike infrastructure, scooters, light rails, and ferries with prioritization of low-income, and transit desert communities. This includes the implementation of the shared electric scooter pilot program that is required by law to be implemented by March of 2021.
3. Adopt legislation to ensure that mobility via bus and bike is dependable by increasing enforcement of dedicated lanes and assessing stricter penalties for violations.
4. Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the use of street space, particularly for parking in predominantly residential neighborhoods. This will study the feasibility of a residential parking permit system and assess common road blockage issues such as with delivery trucks and vehicles. The study should also look at how recaptured public space can be turned into green infrastructure and used for pedestrian plazas, bus and bike lanes, and playgrounds.
5. Expand the Open Streets program to protect cycles and pedestrians, and provide more continuous open spaces, especially in communities underserved by parks.
6. Implement a comprehensive citywide bike plan. This plan should provide infrastructure for protected,



continuous, high-capacity, priority bikeways and bike paths to ensure cyclists can travel safely through and between all five boroughs.

7. Reform the parking placard system and increase enforcement against placard abuse by city workers and officials.
8. Support the rollout of the Streets Master Plan and encourage the evaluation of the plan's progress and success every five years.

RESILIENCY

1. Develop a citywide plan and Rise to Resilience to tackle long-term resiliency, particularly in frontline, vulnerable communities and for critical infrastructure along our waterfronts including airports, wastewater treatment plants, NYCHA campuses, and marine transfer stations that are vulnerable to sea level rise, power outages, and storm surge.
2. Strengthen zoning codes to protect homes in

vulnerable areas against the dangers of climate change, including the use of the most recent projections on storm surge, flood plains, and sea level rise. A priority should be placed on at-risk environmental justice communities. These projections should also be used to consider exclusionary zones for future development, strategic retreat, and retrofit incentive programs.

3. Pursue regional collaboration to facilitate intrastate resilience planning, and raise funds for critical adaptation infrastructure that protects residents from coastal and inland flooding.
4. Support robust natural buffers along the coast including restored wetlands, oyster reefs, dunes, maritime forests, and other living shoreline approaches. This includes exploring opportunities to enlist communities on these projects to educate and engage local residents.



SOLID WASTE

1. Adopt legislation to advance a citywide program for mandatory residential organic waste recycling. This must include the reinstatement and expansion of the curbside collection program, investments in community compost drop-off centers, and localized organic waste carting and management to reduce refuse truck emissions.
2. Invest in robust recycling, composting, and waste diversion public education programs, with emphasis on reduction and reuse, to bring New York City closer to its Zero Waste to Landfills goal laid out in OneNYC.
3. Adopt legislation to reduce unnecessary waste, including non-recyclable packaging from deliveries and single-use plastics such as straws, utensils, and containers.
4. Utilize the RFP timeframe for Commercial Waste Zones implementation to incentivize and implement more designated trucks for organics and recyclables and electric or clean-fuel powered green trucks.
5. Promote the equitable siting of regional capacity for processing organic waste.
6. Advance a “Save-As-You-Throw” study for residential waste, charging for trash collection based on the volume of waste being thrown away.
7. Promote the use of Zero Waste Design Guidelines in buildings, planning for separation, movement, and storage of waste in a way that maximizes waste diversion and minimizes the use of space.
8. Expand product stewardship programs for items such as packaging used for residential deliveries and carpeting.
9. Adopt legislation requiring city agencies to source materials for projects from the City’s own waste stream where possible. For example, using recycled glass for the Department of Transportation’s concrete needs and compost from DSNY for landscaping needs by NYC Parks and Environmental Protection.



Protecting People and Natural Resources

All New Yorkers deserve indoor and outdoor environments that are free of contamination and pollution. We will promote policies that provide access to healthy air, land, and water, protect our open spaces, and improve the well-being of all New Yorkers.



PARKS, NATURAL AREAS, AND ACTIVE WATERFRONTS

1. Play Fair with the City's parks budget by increasing investments, with particular focus on construction and maintenance of parks in communities underserved by parkland. Explore alternative funding models such as public-private partnerships and a tax to ensure dedicated funding for parks.
2. Increase the efficiency of the NYC Parks Department's Capital Division with a clearly defined process and deadlines for design, more expedient and transparent decision making on individual projects, standardized project management tools, and increased accountability for completing projects on-time and on-budget.
3. Support waterfront parks as a vital component of resiliency, and continue the expansion and protection of public access to the waterfront on both public and private property.
4. Expand access to natural areas by maintaining, improving and connecting land through trails and parkland extensions, including by implementing a comprehensive forest management framework.
5. Protect parkland and jointly-operated playgrounds

from alienation, a process by which these spaces can be sold or leased to be used for another purpose.

LEAD POISONING PREVENTION

1. Adopt legislation that encourages increased collaboration between City agencies, especially around construction and renovation work in residential buildings, to prevent exposing children to construction dust in buildings known or presumed to have lead paint.
2. Push legislation that requires in-depth and thorough investigations by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in any report of an elevated blood lead level in a person under the age of 18.
3. Improve tenant notification, interagency cooperation, number of inspections conducted, and issuings of stop-work orders in connection with lead paint and construction work.

REDUCE AND MITIGATE HEAT VULNERABILITY

1. Ensure the continued implementation and expansion of the Cool Neighborhoods program



to protect New Yorkers against urban heat island effect through mitigation, adaptation, and monitoring.

2. Evaluate and mitigate the increased risk of extreme heat exposure on children who are spending more time in their homes and learning virtually.
3. Protect, maintain, and expand the city's urban forest, especially in environmental justice neighborhoods, to reduce the urban heat island effect.

CLEAN AIR FOR ALL

1. Ensure the city honors its pledge to electrify the City's vehicle fleet by 2040 and continues to implement cleaner technologies as it transitions. Cleaner vehicle technology should be prioritized for those with the highest average vehicle miles traveled and highest emissions, and those that largely operate in environmental justice communities.
2. Mandate full electrification of all New York City

school buses, publicly and privately owned, by 2040. Expand the current DOE pilot program to provide more electric school buses for environmental justice communities.

3. Advocate for the MTA to introduce and operate more electric buses on New York City's streets, focusing first on depots and buses in environmental justice communities with historically bad air quality, and urge the MTA to stay on track to transition to a fully electric fleet no later than 2040.
4. Support the transition from heating oils to cleaner heat sources such as electric heat pumps or renewable biofuels with a prioritization on buildings in communities with high pollution and emission rates.
5. Support efforts to mitigate traffic and reduce emissions from trucks by piloting alternative policies for residential and commercial deliveries, including off-peak hour incentives, green loading zones, e-cargo bikes, water freight transportation, and neighborhood distribution centers.



CLEAN WATER FOR ALL

1. Push for NYC's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to implement a formal, transparent reporting process on the progress of the Long Term Control Plans for the city's waterways. The process should include a public comment period with an opportunity for community engagement.
2. Expand New York City's Green Infrastructure program with a more robust grant or other incentive programs to catalyze installation on private property in targeted communities where benefits can be maximized.
3. 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 and installation of bioswales and rain gardens wherever possible.
4. Urge DEP to conduct a study and develop recommendations on water rate restructuring

that promotes the equitable generation of needed revenues, water conservation, and widespread use of green infrastructure. The process should include a robust public engagement component.

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 the expansion of critical food access programs such as SNAP, FRESH, GrowNYC Youthmarkets, and Health Bucks redeemable at farmers markets across the city.
3. Aggressively expand the number of NYC schools that provide youth education programs on sustainability and healthy eating through workshops and school gardens.



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NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

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.

NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS EDUCATION FUND

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