

NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS EDUCATION FUND

New York City Policy Agenda 2022





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As New York City looks ahead to a new administration and Council this New Year, we must be realistic about the progress we have made and the urgent need for climate action. From the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic to extreme weather events in Hurricanes Henri and Ida, New Yorkers saw the real-life impacts of climate change and public health crises.

There are already ambitious goals ahead of us, 80x50, to reduce emissions 80% by 2050 on top of the state target of net zero emissions economy-wide as outlined in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, and 0x30, or achieving near zero waste to landfills by 2030.

Now is the time to seize this opportunity and work with Mayor Eric Adams' administration and a largely new City Council to actually get things done, not just set goals and produce reports. We need climate action now that addresses our most pressing issues in a way that reinvigorates the economy with good, green jobs.

We need overarching upgrades in our transit system so that New Yorkers have safe, low emission alternatives to cars. For the city, that means building out our system of bus lanes and bike lanes, expanding programs like Citibike and the e-scooter pilot, and transforming our streets to be more pedestrian friendly. Just as we provide more space for alternative forms of transportation, we must also take care of our invaluable green spaces. Investing in parks will help us fight climate change and protect public health by promoting resiliency, clean air, and recreational space for all residents and reducing heat. Waste management must be reimaged; a citywide organic recycling program is long overdue and, if implemented, will yield a multitude of emissions and quality of life benefits.

All of these actions will take true leadership and swift action to achieve. With Congressional passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and (hopefully!) the Build Back Better Act, New York City is poised to receive a massive influx of federal funding to improve and modernize infrastructure, fight climate change, put thousands to work and jumpstart the transition to a green economy. New York City must seize this opportunity.

Every year, NYLCV and NYLCV Education Fund collaborate with leading environmental, conservation, energy, public health, transportation, and environmental justice organizations to identify the most urgent priorities. This agenda is the result of these efforts.

The 2022 New York City Policy Agenda will focus much of our work and advocacy throughout the next 12 months, guiding bills for selection in our Legislative Scorecard and directing our educational programming. We look forward to working with the new Mayor and Council to build upon our progress and make 2022 another big year for the environment.



Top Priorities for NYC 2022

■ CLEAN TRANSPORTATION FOR ALL

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 which often run through low-income communities and communities of color. 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. This includes more busways, bus lanes, and bike lanes that are protected and enforced and wider use of low carbon fuels. It is equally important that the City take a comprehensive approach to reimagine street space, by implementing the NYC Streets Plan and 25x25, so that there is adequate infrastructure in place to meet the growth in sustainable transportation. 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.

■ INVESTING IN PARKS, NATURAL AREAS, AND GREEN SPACES

Parks and green spaces make up 14 percent of the city's lands yet receive less than one percent of the city budget. And not every neighborhood has the green space they want and need. It's time to recognize parks as the critical infrastructure they are, providing numerous environmental and public health benefits. Nature helps to mitigate climate change, fight extreme urban heat, absorb stormwater, and provide clean air and habitats for native wildlife. It is imperative that the City invest in the health and sustainability of parks and greenery. This will ensure that these valuable

resources benefit New Yorkers for generations to come and continue to be an outlet as people crave access to the great outdoors and fresh air. Beyond our existing green spaces, New York City must invest in green infrastructure beyond our parks and forested areas to fight climate change and worsening climate hazards.

■ ACHIEVING ZERO WASTE

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. With the new Adams administration, we need to reevaluate our approach to organic recycling, look at potential opportunities for public-private partnerships, and dedicate the necessary resources to act on the commitment to zero waste.

■ CENTERING EQUITY AS WE FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

We cannot talk about any of these important environmental issues without discussing the importance of equity. Years of environmental racism against low income communities and communities of color have forced them to live with high levels of pollution and inadequate access to green spaces. Furthermore, as climate hazards worsen, these communities feel the impacts the most and lack the resources to adequately protect themselves. Environmental Justice communities deserve specific attention and prioritization when it comes to investing in green spaces, resilient infrastructure, transportation, and emissions reduction. NYLCV will ensure that environmental justice is an important aspect of our climate policy priorities and our advocacy work.



Fighting Climate Change

The time to act aggressively on climate is now. The United Nations' 2021 Emissions Gap Report clearly states that the world is not on track to meet our emissions reduction targets set forth in the Paris Climate Agreement. We will work to advance policies that decrease emissions from all sectors, reduce waste, and foster a strong green economy. These policies should strive to meet our current goals while also setting the stage for accelerated emission reductions. We must also ensure the changes we make to tackle emissions benefit disadvantaged communities and provide for a just transition.



ENERGY

1. Ensure the speedy and effective implementation of NYC's nation-leading buildings emissions law (Local Law 97), including the rollout and expansion of supporting programs such as property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing options, the Retrofit Accelerator, 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. 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 and statewide collaboration to achieve goals such as the energy storage goals set forth in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA).
6. Ensure that city-owned buildings, including New York City House Authority Buildings (NYCHA), are on track to meet emissions reduction targets and procurement commitments for renewable energy.
7. Retrofit our schools with green technology such as solar panels and upgrade current systems to be more energy efficient to make our schools cleaner and reduce emissions.
8. Spur clean energy innovation and investment by implementing programs like Community Choice Aggregation (CCA), 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. Adopt legislation that continues 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.



■ TRANSPORTATION

1. Ensure the City honors its pledge to electrify the City's vehicle fleet by 2040 and works towards the law mandating an all electric school bus fleet by 2035. Cleaner technology should be prioritized for vehicles with the highest average miles traveled and highest emissions, and those that largely operate in environmental justice communities.
2. Adopt policies and legislation to reclaim twenty five percent of our street space from cars by 2025 through an expansion of transportation alternatives, open streets, and continuous open spaces.
3. Support the continued rollout of the Better Bus Action Plan with a focus on transit deserts and busy routes within the five boroughs for bus rapid transit technology, such as transit signal priority, busways, dedicated bus lanes, 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, scooters, light rails, and ferries with prioritization of low-income and transit desert communities. This includes expanding the shared e-scooter pilot to serve more neighborhoods and other boroughs.

5. Ensure that mobility via bus and bike is dependable by increasing enforcement of dedicated lanes and assessing stricter penalties for violations. Ensure that New Yorkers are fully educated on road safety and enforcement rules to ensure effective progress towards safety and reliability.
6. 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 we can reform the placard system and improve enforcement around placard abuse.
7. Implement the new NYC Streets Plan and encourage the evaluation of the plan's progress and success every five years.
8. Build upon Mayor Adams' commitment to 300 new miles of bike lanes by establishing a comprehensive citywide bike network that provides infrastructure for protected, continuous, high-capacity, priority bikeways and bike paths to ensure cyclists can travel safely through and between all five boroughs.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. Encourage swift implementation of congestion pricing to fight congestion, reduce emissions, and invest in our public transportation.
12. 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, neighborhood distribution centers, and a low carbon fuel standard for heavy duty vehicles.



■ SOLID WASTE

1. Adopt legislation to advance a citywide program for mandatory residential organic waste recycling. This must include the 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 items such as utensils, napkins, condiments and containers. Ensure that enforcement of these policies are carried out and participating businesses comply.
4. Ensure timely Commercial Waste Zones implementation while incentivizing and implementing 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. 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.
7. Expand product stewardship programs for items such as packaging used for residential deliveries and carpeting.
8. 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 the Department of Sanitation for landscaping needs by NYC Parks and Environmental Protection.
9. Support efforts to containerize waste in order to keep our sidewalks clean and streamline collection.



Resilience Through Nature

Recent extreme climate events have made it abundantly clear that climate change is doing exactly what we knew it would. Summers are getting hotter, storms are intensifying, and flooding is becoming a more frequent occurrence. While we work to reduce emissions to prevent a hazardous future, we also need to invest in resiliency so that we are protecting people now. Natural and green infrastructure are some of the best ways to make our city more resilient while also providing other public health and community benefits.

■ PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS

1. Play Fair with the City's parks budget by committing to 1% of the City budget for parks, with particular focus on construction and maintenance of parks in communities underserved by parkland. Explore alternative funding models and public-private partnerships 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, such as by implementing the comprehensive forest management framework and the strategic trails plan.
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.
6. Develop a plan to protect, expand, and ensure robust funding for our urban forest. Such a plan should increase canopy cover thirty percent by 2035 and ensure an equitable distribution of urban forest resources.

■ INLAND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Explore ways to reduce Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) including through building out green infrastructure to absorb stormwater.
2. Repurpose the Cross Bronx Expressway as greenspace to connect the community and reduce transportation pollution.
3. 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. This includes expanding the city's green roofs program and exploring public-private partnership opportunities to fund expansion.
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

permeable pavement and installation of bioswales and rain gardens wherever possible.

5. 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.

■ COASTAL RESILIENCY

1. Issue and implement the five borough resiliency 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. 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 resiliency 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 and implementing comprehensive plans such as the wetlands management framework.

■ 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 and seniors.
3. Expand green spaces and our urban forest to areas underserved by green infrastructure to increase cooling.



Health and Quality of Life

All New Yorkers deserve indoor and outdoor environments that are free of contamination and pollution. While many of the priorities already mentioned will substantially improve public health and quality of life, we will also work to protect people from acute environmental hazards and invest in healthy living styles.



■ LEAD POISONING PREVENTION

1. Pass legislation that expands protections for children against lead poisoning such as including common areas with units in hazard violations and considering hazard violations a public nuisance.
2. Establish stronger standards for lead testing and abatement such as establishing a date for all lead to be eliminated from friction surfaces in private dwellings and piloting an inspection program to annually test 200 private dwellings for lead hazards.
3. Require the Committee on Special Education to evaluate children exposed to lead poisoning for special needs services.




■ SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

1. Support the expansion of both community and commercial urban agriculture in New York City as outlined in the City's Urban Agriculture Report.
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. Expand funding for programs that help to achieve this goal.



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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.