



Making New York Work for Everyone

December 2022



Table of Contents



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LETTER FROM THE GOVERNOR AND MAYOR	3
LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS	4
THE PANEL	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
BACKGROUND	23
New York City's Economic Context Leading up to the COVID-19 Pandemic	24
New Challenges for New York City and Its Business Districts Due to COVID-19	27
Key Considerations for the Future	29
The Role of Public Safety	42
Other Related Efforts	45
THE PLAN	48
Overview	49
Goal 1: Reimagine New York's Business Districts as Vibrant 24/7 Destinations	51
Goal 2: Make It Easier for New Yorkers to Get to Work	85
Goal 3: Generate Inclusive, Future-Focused Growth	106
NEXT STEPS	132
APPENDIX	134
A. Panel Goals and Target Metrics	135
B. Implementation Table	136
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	145
ENDNOTES	148

Letter from the Governor and Mayor



New York City never stands still. Even at the lowest point of the COVID-19 pandemic, when our streets were empty and our businesses shuttered, New Yorkers were working and creating and innovating like never before.

Some served on the front lines keeping us safe, treating the sick, and making sure our communities continued to function. Others adjusted to a different way of working and set off starting new ventures, creating opportunities for their neighbors and people around the world. As it became safer for people to leave their homes, this creative energy exploded out into every community and commercial corridor in the city—one in ten businesses currently operating in New York City launched in the past year.

All around us we see signs of resurgence—yet many questions remain. How is the nature of work changing, and how can our business districts evolve to meet these new needs and changing preferences? What are the jobs of the future that will drive our economy and help us maintain our status as a global center of commerce and culture? How can the city and the surrounding downstate region with which it is inextricably connected chart a shared path to equitable growth? And how do we leverage this moment to address long-standing problems that others have failed to solve and reimagine a city that works for all New Yorkers?

To answer these questions, we convened some of our city’s top business and community leaders, under the stewardship of two former Deputy Mayors—Rich Buery and Dan Doctoroff—who have helped guide the city through previous moments of transition and potential. Ultimately, we hope to leverage their expertise for a shared city-state agenda of investments, legislation, development projects, infrastructure, and long-term, transformative initiatives to maintain New York’s global leadership.

The following report reflects their best thinking and expert recommendations on public sector actions that also unlock private investment. But more than that, it represents a new era of collaboration between New York City and State.

We are grateful to all those who contributed their time and ideas to this plan. We invite all New Yorkers to work with us to advance these recommendations and to build on this vision, abandoning old ways of thinking and moving fearlessly into the future with a “New” New York.

Sincerely,

Governor Kathy Hochul

Mayor Eric Adams

Letter from the Co-Chairs

When we accepted the call six months ago to lead a panel of civic leaders and industry experts to rethink the city's business districts, we understood the stakes of the assignment.

It was clear that New York was at a crossroads. The COVID-19 pandemic upended how and where we work, damaged our business districts, and laid bare harmful disparities among the city's residents, which had been ignored by too many for too long.

We knew that New York's success over the centuries has been defined by its ability to adapt and convert crises into opportunities. We also knew that too often these responses have failed to equitably distribute the benefits of success to all New Yorkers—and failed to give all the city's residents a real chance to participate.

While our initial charge was reviving business districts, we quickly realized that the solutions would need to address a wider range of challenges affecting all New Yorkers. If we want to improve commutes, then we must strengthen the transportation network across the city. To create a stable, secure workforce, we must confront the city's housing crisis and make sure that parents have safe, affordable, high-quality care for their children.

Together, with the 57 other civic leaders and industry experts on the panel, we developed a three-part formula to make New York the best place to work in the world.

First, we must reimagine our business districts—especially Midtown Manhattan—as vibrant, 24/7 destinations anchored by spectacular new public spaces, transforming them into places where more people *want* to be—workers and companies, residents, locals, and tourists alike.

Next, we must make it easier for New Yorkers to get to work—whether that means ensuring faster commutes into Manhattan, developing economic hubs across the outer boroughs, or creating new remote work options for New Yorkers whose homes are not equipped to take advantage of these new, more flexible opportunities.

Finally, we must generate inclusive, future-focused growth that positions New York to lead the emerging industries of the 21st century and to finally unlock the potential of all its residents.

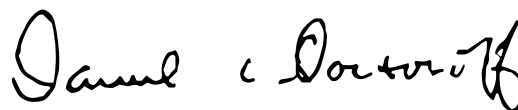
This is not a plan designed to sit on a shelf, but rather an actionable blueprint for transformative change. These recommendations have been adopted and strengthened by New York City Mayor Eric Adams and New York Governor Kathy Hochul. While the panel was not unanimous on every recommendation, every member of the panel is committed to advancing its work in their roles as private citizens. Additional, complementary ideas have been added by Governor Hochul and Mayor Adams that have strengthened the plan's ambition and impact. In our experience as deputy mayors, we have never seen stronger alignment between the Mayor and Governor on a shared commitment to achieve real change.

This is a living document. The plan put forward here is not perfect and does not fully address every problem or opportunity. It does not resolve every question or detail. But it is bold, specific, and actionable. The initiatives outlined in this report will improve New York's ability to thrive in a multitude of potential futures and Governor Hochul and Mayor Adams are committed to the continued evolution of these plans as we learn more. This collaborative effort will help to ensure that all New Yorkers will succeed together.

Sincerely,



Richard R. Buery, Jr.



Daniel L. Doctoroff

The Panel

CO-CHAIRS

Richard R. Buery, Jr., *Chief Executive Officer, Robin Hood Foundation; formerly, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives, City of New York*

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Executive Summary

Together, we are determined to make New York the best place to work in the world—no matter what you do—that can fuel a new generation of inclusive growth.



Photo credit: Julienne Schaer, NYC & Company

INTRODUCTION

New Yorkers have always made it work.

Over the past 400 years, New York’s economy has experienced a series of pivotal transitions that changed the course of the city’s history, the lives of its workers, and the fate of its industries.

Today, we are facing one of those moments. The way we work is experiencing a profound transition, with changes coming from all directions. Workers are discovering different priorities for where and how they want to work. City-builders are realizing that the old models for isolated business districts dilute what everyone loves most about urban life. Companies are navigating a slew of new options for how and where their employees work—from hybrid to in-person, to work-from-home—that are complicating their location and leasing decisions. And we have all finally voiced, loudly, what everyone understood to be true: commutes as we currently know them take too much time for too many people. The collective national reckoning with racial and social justice has also elevated long-standing inequities in work: without intentional, ambitious plans to make work accessible to everyone, it won’t be. And so far, it hasn’t been.

As we take stock, we have the opportunity to chart a new direction—one that carries our city forward and, for once, leaves no one behind. But the immensity of the challenge will require a collective effort; it cannot be solved by New York City alone.

That is why New York State and New York City partnered to convene the “New” New York (NNY) Panel, a coalition of 59 New York civic leaders and industry experts chaired by former Deputy Mayors Richard R. Buery, Jr., and Daniel L. Doctoroff. After five months of intensive analysis, their work informed the joint action plan presented here by New York Governor Kathy Hochul and New York City Mayor Eric Adams. **The extraordinary alignment between the Governor and Mayor on these ambitious initiatives represents one of the strongest partnerships between these two levels of New York’s government in at least half a century.**

The NNY Panel’s work began with the charge to reimagine the city’s still-struggling business districts,



NNY Panel Co-Chairs Rich Buery and Dan Doctoroff. Photo credit: Dan Derrico

where office vacancy rates still average nearly 50 percent on an average weekday.¹

It quickly became clear that reviving these business districts would require a much broader effort that looked beyond the borders of these neighborhoods.

Take commuting. Long or unreliable commutes have become a hurdle to convincing people to return to the office; however, since commuters are distributed across the region, a successful plan would need to address transportation in all five boroughs and across our regional rail systems.

Other barriers include unaffordable housing, lack of childcare, and an ongoing failure to connect New Yorkers from disadvantaged communities to opportunities. These are social problems and moral injustices; they also dramatically reduce the size of the city’s workforce and cost the city billions of dollars each year. A serious plan for inclusive growth would need to address these broader societal challenges.

Then there is the fact that not all neighborhoods need the same solutions. In fact, many parts of the city have flourished, exceeding their pre-pandemic foot traffic and retail spending even as our biggest business districts have struggled to recover. A true economic recovery plan would need to simultaneously foster this new vitality across New York and respect new ways of working, while supporting the recovery of Midtown and Lower Manhattan.

It’s clear that the old model of everyone commuting daily into a business district is not coming back. But we can’t predict exactly where these changes will take us—that’s why we need to be flexible, preparing

the city to flourish in its many possible futures.

Fundamentally, when growing numbers of people can work from anywhere, we must answer the question: why should they come here?

In short, the charge evolved from improving our business districts to transforming New York into the best place to work in the world—no matter what you do or where you work from—and a place that can fuel a new generation of inclusive growth.

The following plan—reflecting the united will of New York’s Governor and Mayor—will position the city to enact the bold changes necessary to meet the challenges of this unique moment.

A HISTORY OF ECONOMIC REINVENTION

Success will require drawing on New York’s long history of economic transformations, while correcting injustices of the past. **New York has continually reinvented its economy to meet the challenges of each new age, but it has never fully unlocked the potential of all its people.**

In the early 1900s, New York transitioned from a port economy to a city of factories, then office buildings, crowding the streets with workers. As overcrowding threatened to choke the city’s newly burgeoning business districts, we built a subway system that allowed workers to spread out while still efficiently getting them to jobs in the city’s center—unlocking two generations of growth. As the era of the automobile emerged, we complemented mass transit with a road network that made the city’s employment centers more accessible from all parts of the metropolitan region.

Massive public investment in infrastructure helped grow New York into the economic capital of the world. In 1900, the city’s population was 3.4 million. By 1950, it had soared to 7.9 million,² as bustling factories proliferated along the waterfront, employing nearly one million New Yorkers on assembly lines and industrial floors, and New York became the office capital of the world. However, investments frequently included an embedded structural racism—in the form of redlining, the uncompensated destruction

of vibrant communities to make way for new roads, exclusionary land use policies, and uneven investment in and access to public amenities—that created segregated neighborhoods and drove highly inequitable outcomes that continue to affect communities around the city.

Over the next few decades, New York went into decline as waterborne commerce and manufacturing jobs left the city, first to less expensive, more accessible locations around the United States and then to other parts of the world. As businesses left, the tax base shrank, and quality of life deteriorated, prompting a vicious cycle of decline. In the 1970s alone, the population of the city declined by 800,000 people. It took more than two decades to get them back.³

By the time terrorists attacked New York on September 11, 2001, there were only 160,000 manufacturing sector jobs in the city,⁴ which left large swaths of land underutilized or abandoned. Along the waterfront, there were unused wharves, factories, and warehouses; railyards and unused rail lines sat like open scars adjacent to New York’s business districts. Manufacturing had offered good-paying jobs to New Yorkers from a wide variety of educational backgrounds; as the city increasingly concentrated on developing its finance and information sectors, many of those workers were left behind.

In the aftermath of the attacks, with our city bleeding and the economy ripped bare, things looked bleak. Headlines speculated that the city would spiral, just as it had in the 1970s, when citizens and businesses fled the city, depressing tax revenues, which in turn undermined the city’s ability to keep itself clean and safe—hastening more flight.

Instead, New York reinvented itself for the 21st century by reimagining Lower Manhattan as a place where people lived, worked, visited, and raised families, restoring the city’s original business district to international prominence. The city reclaimed its waterfront and transformed underused areas into stunning recreational anchors for new neighborhoods across the city. New York diversified its economy across sectors and geographies so that business districts thrived in Downtown Brooklyn, Greenpoint and Williamsburg, Harlem, Long Island City, Flushing, Jamaica, and others, driven by job growth in life sciences, film and television production, technology,

and tourism, as well as investments in housing and infrastructure. New businesses followed.

From 2002 to the start of the pandemic, the number of jobs in the city grew from 3.6 million to 4.7 million, a growth rate that was over 1.5 times the national average.^{5,6} The economy also continued to diversify—while the number of finance jobs as a proportion of total non-farm jobs in New York City fell from 12.3 percent to 10 percent, the city’s tech ecosystem experienced a phenomenal surge of growth, powering a new wave of innovation in sectors across the economy. Over that same period, new business formation was more geographically distributed across the city—the number of establishments in all industries grew at an annual rate of 3 percent in Brooklyn compared to 0.9 percent in Manhattan.⁷ In effect, over the span of less than two decades, the city’s economy was reimagined.

This is what we do. New York has always converted emergencies into opportunities, using crises as a chance to take stock and emerge stronger than before. This spirit of possibility has been ingrained in our foundation from the very beginning.

Around 60 percent of New Yorkers are immigrants or children of immigrants.⁸ This means that New York is fundamentally a city of optimists—a place people come to because they believe their lives can be better here. This constant arrival of new optimists drives New York forward, generating a unique energy that has fueled the city for centuries and gives it a foundational sense of ambition.

People come to New York because they want to make and build things; they want to contribute, create, and perform. Their greatest ambition might be to build and support a family, or to earn enough money to live with dignity in a home they love. They come to New York to find jobs that will pave a pathway to that future.

They have come, and keep coming, because they believe that the city will offer them a chance and they are prepared to take it. This ambition and bravery have powered the city for centuries, creating a unique place defined by its openness, energy, and ability to take risks, to achieve big things, and to turn moments of crisis into great leaps forward.

Today, New York is facing another great economic transition.

In 2019, our economy was flourishing, with 4.7 million jobs, the lowest citywide poverty rate in over 20 years (14.5%) and unemployment at an all-time low (3.7%).⁹

These bright numbers concealed cracks. The truth is that we have rarely, if ever, distributed the benefit of our growth fairly, and the disparities are particularly stark across racial lines. In the past 25 years, the city has grown in terms of the number of jobs and residents—but it has also grown more expensive and therefore less affordable, primarily because housing production failed to keep pace with population and job growth in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. Twenty-four percent of households—and 26 percent of those who rent—spent more than half of their income on housing.^{10,11} Licensed center-based childcare was unaffordable for a staggering 93 percent of households, according to federal guidelines.¹² In 2017, New York City ranked second to last out of 121 cities for providing jobs that pay more than \$46,000 per year without requiring a college degree.¹³

While the achievement gap between white and Asian children and Black and Latino children narrowed, segregation in educational opportunities remains. Critical safety net programs, including those that provide rental assistance to the poorest New Yorkers and certain after school programs, have been cut. During the city’s recent growth, many of the highest profile parks and development projects seemed to benefit wealthier communities. Even a core foundation of that growth, public safety, was built partly on ineffective criminal justice policies, especially the city’s overreliance on stop-and-frisk policing, which sent a chilling message that Black and Brown people were not welcome in their own neighborhoods.

Then came the COVID-19 pandemic.

This global catastrophe upended the life of virtually everyone on earth, sending whole economies tumbling in its wake. New York was no exception. As the city shut down, stores and restaurants shuttered, companies went dark and we huddled in our homes, staring down at empty streets, silent except for sirens. Some of us set up makeshift offices in our bedrooms and tried to work without childcare; others didn’t have the option to stay home, forced onto the frontlines as essential workers keeping the city and public health system running; still others lost their jobs entirely.

Tens of thousands of us didn't survive at all. People of color were disproportionately represented on the frontlines, becoming sick and dying at higher rates than all other New Yorkers.

In the months and years since those dark first days, we've patched together new systems and ways of doing things. Our economy is beginning to churn again, with jobs finally nearing pre-pandemic levels. In many neighborhoods, new ecosystems are sprouting and wounds are starting to heal. Other neighborhoods and New Yorkers continue to struggle. Those first bad days are behind us, but the effects still linger—here, and everywhere else.

All we know is that it will look different from before. And it should.

The pandemic has pried open long-held discontents, failures, and problems many of us had not realized existed—but when we paused for a moment they became manifest. We've grown too accustomed to things that are not actually acceptable. We have all dismissed problems of our daily lives—buses that are too slow, streets that are too dirty, housing that is too expensive, terrible traffic—as the price one pays for living in a city like New York. It does not have to be.

The pandemic has brought long-standing questions to the fore and demanded all New Yorkers confront them. Who is prevented from participating in our economy—not because they can't do the work, but because they can't find housing, or childcare, or the right connection to even start a conversation?

The paradox is that New York needs to grow in order to be able to afford its transformation into a more equitable, inclusive city. But without a clear vision, intentional action, and full-throated political and civic will, this same growth can also make the problem worse.

By revealing and exacerbating deep economic and racial inequalities, the COVID-19 crisis is both a reckoning and an opportunity, demanding that we interrogate the structural flaws of our earlier recoveries and challenging us to reimagine what truly inclusive growth and shared prosperity can and should be.

THE PLAN

These are complex challenges that require ambitious solutions. The “New” New York (NNY) Panel worked over five months, including four full-panel meetings with hybrid in-person and remote attendance, and five panelist working group sessions, to identify opportunities, propose new ideas and collaborations, and develop policies that could drive the transformative change that the moment demands. The process also included interviews with over 200 local and global expert stakeholders, tours of core business districts with local leaders, and a literature review of best practices.

The “New” New York Panel focused on the following categories of business districts:¹⁴

- **Core Employment Hubs:** established commercial anchors that have generated much of the city's economic growth and activity
 - Midtown Manhattan (34th Street to 60th Street)
 - Midtown South (Canal Street to 34th Street)
 - Lower Manhattan (Below Canal Street)
 - Downtown Brooklyn
 - Long Island City
- **Other Downtowns:** well-positioned and growing commercial anchors
 - Flushing
 - The Bronx Hub
 - 125th Street
 - Jamaica
- **Emerging Employment Hubs:** areas that are poised for future growth
 - Forest Hills
 - DUMBO
 - Fordham Plaza
 - Broadway Junction
 - St. George / Stapleton
- **Other Business Improvement Districts (BIDs):** supporting the hundreds of local commercial corridors that serve communities across the city

While the NNY Panel's initial charge may have been to revive the business districts, it quickly became clear that we can't do that without examining a

FIGURE 1

The Plan Framework

GOAL	STRATEGY	INITIATIVE	
Reimagine New York's Business Districts as Vibrant 24/7 Destinations	Create flexibility to repurpose space and fill vacancies with a variety of uses	1. Make Midtown and other business districts more live-work-play	
		2. Update zoning to provide flexibility for businesses to thrive	
		3. Align incentives to help maintain vibrant business districts	
	Invest in beautiful, permanent public space	4. Create a world-class network of public space in Midtown	
		5. Make public realm improvements across all five boroughs	
		6. Update zoning to facilitate green energy investments and energy efficiency retrofits	
	Improve quality-of-life issues across our business districts, such as sustainability and cleanliness	7. Support innovative financing mechanisms for green building retrofits	
		8. Reimagine waste containerization and collection	
		9. Create a permanent Open Restaurants Program	
		10. Create Director of Public Realm position within City Hall	
		11. Invest in public space maintenance to achieve clean streets	
		12. Make sidewalk shed reforms	
		13. Launch City-affiliated public-private partnership to build capacity of local organizations to support commercial corridors and spur innovation	
		Offer new reasons to go to business districts	14. Activate storefronts
			15. Expand Open Streets
			16. Enliven public space with programming, art, and tactical transformations
			17. Invest in culture, supporting artists, artist spaces, and artist organizations
Make It Easier for New Yorkers to Get to Work	Increase supply of mass transit options	18. Create a sustainable operating budget model for the MTA	
		19. Maintain Peak Subway Service and Improve the Frequency and Reliability of Subway Service During Off-Peak Hours	
		20. Create an affordable and integrated regional rail network	
		21. Increase bus speeds	
		22. Make transit more accessible for people with disabilities	
		23. Advance key transit service enhancement and system expansion projects	
		24. Invest in protected bikeway infrastructure and improve access to bikes, e-bikes, and bike storage	
	Reduce demand for cars and trucks	25. Firmly support congestion pricing	
		26. Develop a new approach to curb management	
	Strengthen employment hubs and workspaces across all five boroughs,	27. Enable widespread use of sustainable alternative freight	
		28. Invest in employment hubs around transit, industry clusters, and anchor institutions	
		29. Leverage City agency office space to anchor commercial hubs	
	Generate Inclusive, Future-Focused Growth	Establish New York City as a hub for future industries and innovation	30. Accelerate modernization of libraries to support remote work across the city
31. Make New York the hub for urban innovation			
32. Invest in future-focused sectors where New York has a competitive advantage			
Ensure that workers have access to housing by dramatically increasing our supply, with a “moonshot” goal of meeting the need for 500,000 units over the next decade		33. Develop regional strategies that foster mutually beneficial connections between NYC and the surrounding region	
		34. Make regulatory and legislative changes to reduce barriers to housing growth	
Ensure that growth and access to opportunity is fair and equitable		35. Update zoning code to increase the supply of supportive housing	
		36. Ensure that all New York families have access to affordable, high-quality childcare	
		37. Reduce barriers to entering the workforce for people with disabilities	
		38. Connect workers and students to jobs of the future through a workforce infrastructure that is simple, transparent, and coordinated with industry and academia	
		39. Improve access to capital and technical assistance for BIPOC entrepreneurs with a one-stop program	
		40. Reduce the burdens required to establish and maintain M/WBE certification	

broader set of problems that affect all New Yorkers. Governor Hochul and Mayor Adams have channeled the results of the Panel's work into 40 recommendations, which collectively reflect an **integrated vision for how New York can establish itself as the best place to work in the new world of the 21st century.**

The ideas in this report are multi-dimensional and interconnected, impacting the ways New Yorkers work, live, and play. That's because work has never been separate from the rest of our lives. This was true before the pandemic, and the line is even less clear now. So in addition to traditional focuses like office vacancy rates, incentives for businesses, and strategies for job creation, this plan also addresses more fundamental questions, from transportation and housing to public space and childcare. **To truly establish New York as the world's best place to work, we need to make New York the best place, period.**

Transforming our business districts into more vibrant, complete neighborhoods will simultaneously create more homes, which will address our housing crisis, and enliven public spaces, which will improve public safety. The people attracted to these great new destinations will help lower retail vacancy rates and attract new employers, while also supporting local retailers and generating new jobs.

Confronting the city's affordable housing crisis will support a stable employment base for companies looking to locate or expand in New York, while addressing one of the city's most urgent equity issues, as well as one of the most significant barriers to the city's continued growth.

When we support families in finding safe, accessible, high-quality, and affordable childcare, we are not only increasing access to rich early learning opportunities, but also making it possible for more New Yorkers, especially women, to enter or return to the workforce.

These initiatives are not only essential for equity. They are smart investments in our collective future.

In all of these efforts, we must remember that safety is a foundation of our prosperity. The steady reduction in crime over the last few decades was a key factor propelling the city's growth to record heights. Although post-pandemic, New York City remains the safest big city in the United States, the rates of several categories of major crime have risen over the



NNY Panel Meeting. Photo credit: Katherine Dalldorf, Four Corners Media

past two years, and an uptick in shootings and violent crime have put many New Yorkers on higher alert in their day-to-day lives. Meanwhile, more recent increases in certain types of property crimes have caused concern among business owners and led them to worry about the safety of their employees. New York State and New York City have responded with public safety initiatives that have had some impact, especially in driving down shootings and murders. The City and State will continue to invest in these efforts, while also embracing efforts that tackle the underlying causes of crime, including underemployment and unemployment, economic inequality, and deserted public spaces.

This plan advances those efforts by connecting more New Yorkers with high-quality, family-sustaining jobs, reinvigorating our public spaces and transit systems, and implementing targeted strategies to reduce economic inequality across the city. These combined efforts can help keep New York the safest big city in the America,¹⁵ creating the foundation for growth. Together, the initiatives in this report support three main goals.



NNY Panel breakout groups. Photo credit: Katherine Dalldorf, Four Corners Media

Reimagine New York's Business Districts as Vibrant 24/7 Destinations

Around the world, our business districts have historically become a shorthand for the energy and ambition driving the city forward, featuring crowded streets filled with people from everywhere, varied storefronts, and leading global companies, who draw on this extraordinary concentration of talent across industries to fuel their own innovation and productivity.

The COVID-19 pandemic threatened this vibrancy. Weekday foot traffic in business districts dropped 13 percent in 2020.¹⁶ At the same time, tourism plummeted to 22.3 million visitors compared to the 66.6 million who visited in 2019.¹⁷

But while traditional forms of street vibrancy were restricted, New Yorkers were creative and resilient. They developed new formal and informal ways to gather, build, create, and experience together in the early years of the pandemic, whether through new neighborhood Open Streets and Open Restaurants or impromptu performance art in the public realm.

And in the three years since the start of the pandemic, slowly but surely, street vibrancy in New York City's business districts has largely recovered. Foot traffic across business districts has returned to 90 percent of 2019 levels, and consumer spending on retail and entertainment is at 107 percent of 2019 levels on an average weekday. Restaurant and bar spend, however, remains at 78 percent on an

average weekday.¹⁸ But the type and nature of recovery has varied across business districts.

Virtually all of the city's business districts outside of Midtown and Lower Manhattan have surpassed pre-pandemic consumer retail spending, including Midtown South (up 13%), Fordham Plaza (up 68%), Bronx Hub (up 59%), Broadway Junction (up 55%), Long Island City (up 35%), Jamaica (up 21%), Flushing (up 11%), Downtown Brooklyn (up 20%), Forest Hills (up 19%), and DUMBO (up 17%).¹⁹

But even with that growth, the city has yet to recover 12 percent of total private sector jobs lost during the pandemic²⁰ and Manhattan office vacancies increased by 94 percent from Q1 2020 to Q3 2022.²¹ That's because Midtown, Midtown South, and Lower Manhattan together represented 45 percent of NYC jobs and 80 percent of all NYC office space,^{22,23} which as a sector generated 25 percent of the City's property tax revenues²⁴ and two-thirds of the city's total GDP.²⁵ And while other business districts have recovered in terms of retail spend and foot traffic, Midtown and Lower Manhattan have not. Midtown and Lower Manhattan are still 9 percent and 1 percent below their pre-pandemic retail spending levels and 35 percent and 36 percent below pre-pandemic restaurant and bar spend, with foot traffic still down by 23 percent and 18 percent respectively.²⁶

Why should New Yorkers across all five boroughs care if Midtown and Lower Manhattan are struggling, especially if they've seen their own local commercial corridors rebound and even thrive in the last year? The answer is that even if your

job is located somewhere else, Manhattan's business districts are New York City's hubs for global business dominance, generating 58.5 percent of the citywide office and retail property tax revenues and 18 percent of overall citywide property tax revenue.²⁷ This tax base powers the government spending on physical and social infrastructure that touches every New Yorker, whether it's paving roads, providing public education, or running senior centers and libraries. Simply put, we must stabilize our Manhattan business districts so that we can continue to invest throughout the five boroughs.

The significance of Midtown and Lower Manhattan resonates beyond the city. Before the pandemic Manhattan welcomed 664,000 regional commuters per day on average—the majority in Midtown, Midtown South, and Lower Manhattan.²⁸ These commuters, if they work from home, may spend their dollars in other states. Meanwhile, international business travelers rely on a central, convenient destination for meetings to make business trips worthwhile. Companies chose to locate in Midtown because they knew it would position them to compete globally, offer access to a concentration of industries across sectors, and attract workers from around the world.

The city's transportation infrastructure has been designed to support this influx of workers, with a combined 28 subway service lines, 25 commuter rail lines, and 11 ferry routes, plus a dense bus network and a robust Citibike system with over 1,500 stations. Much of this infrastructure is designed to connect people to the city's Core Employment Hubs, which also makes these the most sustainable places to focus our commercial density.

Over the years, the extraordinary commercial concentration in Midtown and Lower Manhattan especially has provided exponential value, fueling an ecosystem that spans the most far-flung business travelers to the local owners of a corner deli, while producing revenues to fund services across the entire city. That's why, before the pandemic, when workers were simply required to show up in Manhattan's business districts every day, we could gloss over an inconvenient fact: a lot of people don't really like it there. Now that workers have more choices, an overwhelming number—still more than 50 percent—are deciding not to make the daily trek into the office.²⁹ The sleek but anonymous streets that empty out every night and weekend lack the life, interest,

energy, and beauty that brought many to New York in the first place. In this new world of choice for many employers and businesses, we need to entice people to come by creating a place they want to be.

That means we cannot simply revive Midtown and our other business districts: We must reimagine them.

THAT MEANS CREATING FLEXIBILITY TO REPURPOSE SPACE AND FILL VACANCIES.

We will remove barriers that have kept Midtown and other business districts stagnant **by making it easier to convert and redevelop outdated office buildings to other uses, including residential**, thereby empowering the market to create more vibrant, mixed-use districts. We will also update old-fashioned regulatory codes that have prevented small businesses from locating, expanding, and innovating in those districts, **providing zoning flexibility for businesses to thrive**. And we will unite our business districts behind a shared goal of vitality by **aligning incentives for businesses to help maintain vibrant business districts**.

WE WILL CREATE NEW EXTRAORDINARY PUBLIC SPACES TO ANCHOR THESE REVITALIZED DISTRICTS.

Transforming Midtown into a vibrant destination will require reimaging its public spaces. That is why we will **pursue new public realm improvements in Midtown and a comprehensive public realm vision to establish the district as one of the world's best places**, with striking new signature parks and plazas, widened sidewalks, safer intersections, faster buses, improved and expanded bike lanes, and new inviting landscaping. And, in Lower Manhattan, we must build on the investments from the first two decades of this century and further transform this walkable neighborhood into a truly pedestrian-friendly destination for office workers, residents and tourists alike. We won't stop there—we will **pursue public realm improvements across all five boroughs**.

WE WILL IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES.

We must continue strengthening the growth we've seen in other business districts and make plans to confront persistent citywide challenges related to the public realm. Despite strides in recent years toward rebalancing the streets toward pedestrians, the data remains stark: While a minority of New Yorkers own cars, approximately 75 percent of our street space is dedicated to driving and private car storage.³⁰

Additionally, New York City streets are increasingly not meeting public expectations for cleanliness. In September 2022, there was a 52 percent increase citywide in 311 complaints about “dirty conditions, missed collections, and rat sightings.”³¹

That is why we will take steps to **reimagine waste containerization and collection** through better designed containers, smarter pick-up schedules, and other strategies. We'll also **create a permanent Open Restaurants program** with design standards and better enforcement, **create a new Director of Public Realm position** at City Hall, while **focusing on public space maintenance** to achieve clean streets. Finally, we will address the scourge of sidewalk sheds by **decreasing the number of long-standing sheds and improving the designs of new ones**.

Our business districts do not share these burdens equally. Even before the pandemic, New York's commercial corridors were not equally resourced. While BIDs are uniquely designed to address neighborhood quality-of-life issues with nimble, locally customized services, smaller BIDs, often in lower-income neighborhoods, are often severely constrained by lack of resources that prevent them from making more transformational change. COVID-19 exacerbated these disparities. That's why we will **pursue a City-affiliated public-private partnership to help build the capacity of local organizations and support innovation in neighborhood commercial corridors**.



Albee Square, Brooklyn. Photo Credit: Downtown Brooklyn Partnership

WE WILL STRENGTHEN THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR BUSINESS DISTRICTS.

New York has become a global leader in sustainability and our business districts must exemplify this commitment. That means ensuring buildings are cleaner, smarter, more efficient, and more cost-effective to operate, while also targeting emissions reductions that help tackle the climate crisis. That's why **we will update zoning to facilitate green energy investments and energy efficiency retrofits** and pursue a **retrofit financing strategy for building decarbonization**.

AND WE WILL OFFER NEW REASONS TO GO TO THEM.

The sense of excitement and connection that draws people to New York lives in our dynamic open spaces and unique retail and cultural experiences. That's why we want to **activate vacant storefronts with pop-ups that drive immediate new foot traffic** and **support zoning changes for more sustained flexibility in the future**. We will also want to build on the innovations that New Yorkers embraced during the pandemic, by continuing to **expand Open Streets**. These streets and others can be filled with new **unique programming** and **art and tactical transformations to attract foot traffic**, which can be reinforced by **investments in culture that support artists, artist spaces, and artist organizations**.

Improving the vitality of our business districts can form the heart of a strategy to make the city the world's best place to work.

That's why we must make these neighborhoods more flexible to respond to evolving neighborhood needs, while prioritizing more space for pedestrians, improving safety and cleanliness, accelerating street maintenance and repair, and encouraging more equitable, local stewardship of commercial corridors across the city. Anchored by world-class sustainable buildings, these steps will help us build on the gains we've made outside of Manhattan, while enabling Midtown and Lower Manhattan to not only recover, but thrive.

GOAL 2

Make It Easier for New Yorkers to Get to Work

New York City's vast public transportation network has been integral to the city's economic success and the strength of New York's business districts: the more people who can easily reach their jobs, the more the economy can grow. Prior to the pandemic, 8 million people in the New York region—including over 50 percent of the city's population—rode public transit every weekday.³² New York City's subway is the most heavily used system in the United States, comprising 72 percent of all subway trips across the country pre-pandemic.³³ In the lead-up to COVID-19, nearly 3.9 million people entered Manhattan's business districts on weekdays,³⁴ enabling them to become the most job-dense large business districts in the country.³⁵

But despite having the most extensive mass transit infrastructure, New Yorkers have lengthy commutes. Within the city, the sheer number of commuters and geographic spread have meant that New Yorkers have had longer average commute times than residents in peer cities (40 minutes for NYC versus 30 minutes in peer cities such as San Francisco and Seattle).³⁶ Regional commuters into NYC similarly face long commutes at 65 minutes, in comparison to 55 minutes in peer cities.³⁷ Differences in worker commuter times also persist by race. Black New Yorkers on average have the longest commutes in NYC, at 47 minutes—23 percent longer than the 38-minute average commute of white New Yorkers.³⁸

Now that New Yorkers increasingly have choices about where to work, many

are opting out of their daily commutes. Ridership has plummeted across almost every regional system during peak commuting hours. Across all weekdays in November 2022, subway use averaged 62 percent of pre-pandemic levels, and bus use averaged 64 percent.³⁹ Regional rail fared slightly better, with Metro-North Railroad and Long Island Rail Road weekly ridership averaging 68 and 67 percent of pre-pandemic levels over the same period.⁴⁰

People are not averse to using the system to travel through the city: weekend trips on the subway (including Staten Island Railway) have recovered to over 70 percent of their pre-pandemic levels.⁴¹ But the specific grind of commuting has emerged as a major hurdle for getting people back to our major commercial districts.

Furthermore, some workers have sought—or been forced to seek—housing farther away from New York City's Core Employment Hubs. The crisis of affordable housing has pushed more people, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged New Yorkers, to the edges of the city or to the inner ring of suburbs, requiring longer and more complicated commutes than before.

This dynamic has exacerbated a cycle where New Yorkers who live farther away and increasingly desire remote work have fewer incentives to come in person to the workplace, ultimately jeopardizing to an even greater degree the future recovery of the city's business districts and transit ridership.

NYC's business districts are in a global competition for a potentially leveling or shrinking pool of the kinds of office work

and office workers that drive our economy. Service quality and reliability matter more now that commuting to the office in an NYC business district is discretionary for some of those workers.

In short, improving commutes is a matter of equity; it is essential to our global competitiveness; and it is a critical component to our successful economic recovery.

This report embraces strategies and initiatives that strengthen our transportation systems to improve commutes and reduce traffic, and bringing jobs closer to where people live, to ensure the challenges of commuting are not a barrier to growth.

WE WILL EMBRACE A BROAD RANGE OF TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS SO PEOPLE AND GOODS CAN GET TO THEIR DESTINATIONS FASTER, MORE RELIABLY, AND MORE SUSTAINABLY.

This includes working together with the State Legislature and other local government entities throughout the state to **develop a sustainable operating budget model for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)** that minimizes negative impacts to customers and increases the supply of mass transit options, and maintaining peak subway service and over time **increasing the frequency and reliability of off-peak subway service**. Metro-North and Long Island Railroad are an untapped resource for many New Yorkers, which can be unlocked by creating **a new, 24/7 \$5 CityTicket for commuting on regional rail networks within the city**. We will also **speed up buses, expand the accessibility of the system, and bolster our cycling network**—all while reducing demand for cars and trucks through **congestion pricing, new curb management strategies, and expanding the use of sustainable alternative freight**. These measures will improve commutes and reduce traffic so people can get to their workplaces faster and more reliably.

WE WILL ALSO STRENGTHEN EMPLOYMENT HUBS AND WORKSPACES ACROSS ALL FIVE BOROUGHES SO PEOPLE CAN WORK CLOSER TO THEIR HOMES.

For those who prefer working closer to home, we must continue to **accelerate job production at employment hubs in all five boroughs by investing in industry clusters and anchor institutions next to transit**. That includes **leveraging City office space to anchor these emerging commercial hubs**. We will also pursue reducing regulatory barriers so that we can **increase housing production close to transit hubs**, putting shorter, easier commutes within reach for more people.

Some companies and employees have embraced a hybrid schedule, and we must provide more equitable options for remote workspaces. That's why we will seek to **accelerate the modernization of libraries to support remote work** across the city. Whether it's improving commutes, creating new outer borough job clusters, or supporting work-from-home, **we must make it easier for New Yorkers to get to work**.



GOAL 3

Generate Inclusive, Future-Focused Growth

In order to fill our office buildings and restore vibrancy to the streets across the five boroughs, New York City needs to grow, but that growth needs to be more inclusive than it has been in the past.

Inclusive growth is essential to becoming a more equitable city. We need more jobs in industries and occupations of the future, that are accessible to more New Yorkers across the city. Growth also helps generate the necessary revenues to provide resources that can improve the lives of New Yorkers in other ways. These investments can ensure that we don't simply recover from the COVID-19 crisis but emerge stronger than before, with new resources to invest in our quality of life, education, healthcare, and other essential services.

Today this calculus is more urgent than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing challenges into new relief and accelerated disparities across the city. The pandemic has taken a massive and disproportionate toll on the lives and livelihoods of the city's most vulnerable. And, unsurprisingly, the recovery of these same communities has been slower and harder. Our success will be defined by the number of New Yorkers who are able to participate in the future-focused economy working jobs with family-sustaining wages.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect economic mobility, the lack of quality jobs, overall employment levels, and social support systems for already disadvantaged New Yorkers. Twenty percent of the almost one million New Yorkers who lost employment income during the pandemic

were already in poverty, and only 9 percent of New Yorkers in poverty were able to work remotely and sustain employment income.⁴²

New York City still lags behind the rest of the state as well as the nation both in restoring pandemic job losses and in rebounding to pre-pandemic levels of unemployment. While the United States as a whole recently regained all of the jobs it lost since the beginning of the pandemic, as of October 2022, New York City had yet to recover 117,000 jobs or about 12 percent of jobs lost during the pandemic.⁴³

The city's overall unemployment rate remains above the national average, at 5.9 percent compared to 3.7 percent for the country as a whole,⁴⁴ with especially high rates estimated for Black (9.4%) and Hispanic (9.2%) New Yorkers.⁴⁵ There is also a disparity in employment rates across boroughs. For example, the Bronx unemployment rate was estimated at 7.4 percent in October 2022, compared to 4.2 percent in Manhattan.⁴⁶ Additionally, the slow return to in-person work has stunted job growth for restaurants and other businesses that previously served office workers in city centers.

This uneven recovery has exacerbated disparities in employment, income, and business ownership across groups of different race, gender, and ability, as described herein:

People with Dependent Care

Responsibilities: The pandemic placed an outsized strain on parents of young and school-age children when remote schooling and childcare closures affected parents' ability to work. In 2021, more than

half a million people could not seek employment as a result of childcare responsibilities.⁴⁷ Even before the pandemic, only 7 percent of NYC families could afford center-based childcare,⁴⁸ and 57 percent of the city was officially declared a childcare desert, according to federal guidelines.⁴⁹ Given these challenges, even parents who are able to work may not be able to return to in-office positions and may be discouraged from longer commutes to business districts.

Rent-Burdened Households: The increased prevalence of hybrid work due to COVID-19 put an outsized strain on already disadvantaged New Yorkers. While some New Yorkers were able to seek out larger homes that facilitated remote work, 53 percent of New Yorkers are now rent burdened and may not be able to afford additional space or an at-home work setup⁵⁰—a burden disproportionately impacting Hispanic and Black New Yorkers.⁵¹ A further compounding factor is broadband access. Today, 15 percent New Yorkers do not have any access to broadband, with even higher rates among Black (18%) and Hispanic (19%) New Yorkers.⁵² As a result, the full range of available jobs, as well as the other benefits from at-home work, may not be accessible to all New Yorkers.

Low-Wage Sector Workers: Sectors with larger concentrations of high-wage occupations have fared better than those with larger concentrations of low-wage, in-person occupations.⁵³ For example, the Accommodation and Food services sector is still missing over 51,000 jobs as of October 2022 compared to February 2020 levels.⁵⁴

People without College Degrees: Those without a college degree have faced greater challenges finding jobs, with unemployment rates among those workers rising to 12.9 percent in 2021, more than twice the rate of those with degrees. Even before the pandemic, New York's job market failed to provide adequate options for people without college degrees. In 2017, New York City ranked 120th out of 121 among the country's largest metro areas by share of jobs that don't require a college degree but pay above the regionally adjusted US median wage.⁵⁵

Black and Brown New Yorkers: Unemployment is especially high for Black (9.4%) and Hispanic (9.2%) New Yorkers,⁵⁶ in part because they are disproportionately represented in sectors hit hard by job

loss and have historically been overrepresented in low-wage industries.⁵⁷ As a result of historic inequities and disinvestment, Black and Brown New Yorkers may also have less financial cushion to bear economic shocks. For example, before the pandemic, 27 percent of Black residents held student debt, in comparison to 11 percent of white residents.⁵⁸

Small and Minority-Owned Businesses: Ninety percent of the approximately 26,000 businesses that closed permanently between April 2020 and March 2021 were small businesses with fewer than 10 employees.⁵⁹ Black-owned businesses were over twice as likely to close shop than white-owned businesses.⁶⁰ Minority and female New Yorkers were already underrepresented before the pandemic—representing 60 percent and 47 percent of the city's workforce, respectively, but only 40 percent and 33 percent of New York City's entrepreneurs.⁶¹

People with Disabilities: People with disabilities have also been disproportionately impacted during the pandemic. Unemployment among the nearly 1 million New Yorkers with disabilities was still at 17 percent as of 2021 (versus 8.6% in 2019), compared to 9.6 percent unemployment in the general NYC population.⁶²

Seeing these long-standing challenges laid bare, the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on the city's most vulnerable, and the ongoing struggle in these communities to recover, compels us to reckon with an uncomfortable but foundational truth: New Yorkers of color bear a heavier burden when the city is facing a crisis, just as they have been less likely to benefit when the city is booming.

Our post-pandemic recovery must avoid the pitfalls of the kind of growth that followed previous crises, which too often disproportionately benefited whiter and wealthier communities and left too many New Yorkers behind. The success of any growth agenda must be measured by its quantity and quality: a kind of growth wherein all New Yorkers have an equity stake in the city's investments, in our collective human capital and potential, and in our future.

We propose a new economic model for inclusive growth and economic mobility: a "shared prosperity" model that is both pro-growth and explicitly anti-racist, and which asserts that equity and inclusion must have an equal seat at the table in the creation of the blueprint for the city's future, in order to ensure that

participation in the future economy reflects the diversity of New York.

To imagine this new economy, we must prepare for the future. New York can lead in a changing world where climate change, technological advancements (e.g., increased automation), and changing consumer preferences (e.g., growth of e-commerce and experiential retail) are fundamentally shifting the global economy. By strategically embracing and leading this change, we can ensure that diverse businesses and workers are able to create and capture new ideas, industries, and economic value for decades to come.

WE WILL ESTABLISH NEW YORK CITY AS A HUB FOR FUTURE INDUSTRIES AND INNOVATION.

That means **investing in new future-focused sectors where New York has a competitive advantage**, like the emerging green economy, life sciences, and tech. Embracing these new industries can help **transform New York into a global hub for urban innovation**. We also recognize that our competitive strength goes beyond the borders of New York City; that's why we will **develop regional strategies that foster mutually beneficial connections between NYC and the surrounding region**.



TO SUPPORT THIS GROWTH, WE WILL DRAMATICALLY INCREASE OUR HOUSING SUPPLY, WITH A “MOONSHOT” GOAL OF MEETING THE NEED FOR 500,000 UNITS OVER THE NEXT DECADE UNITS.

New York's crisis of affordable housing is a major barrier to growth and equity. That's why we will work to correct the decades-long imbalance between supply and demand through **regulatory and legislative changes to reduce barriers to housing growth and by updating the zoning code to increase the supply of supportive housing**.

ABOVE ALL, WE WILL ENSURE THAT THIS GROWTH AND ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY IS FAIR AND EQUITABLE.

That means ambitious action to remove some of the steepest barriers to inclusive growth, such as lack of childcare and access to opportunity. That's why we will build on the Mayor's Childcare Blueprint to **make childcare accessible, affordable, and high-quality**, empowering tens of thousands of parents to join the workforce and offering companies a wider and more stable talent pool. We will **reduce barriers to entering the workforce for people with disabilities**. We will also take steps to ensure this growth is accessible to all New Yorkers, including workers, students, and entrepreneurs from our more vulnerable communities. We will **streamline and expand workforce infrastructure to make it simple, transparent, and coordinated with industry and academia; improve access to capital and technical assistance for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) entrepreneurs with a one-stop program; and reduce the burdens required to establish and maintain M/WBE certification**.

This inclusive, future-focused growth will establish a model that can propel New York into the next century.

IMPLEMENTATION

Successfully implementing these recommendations will require an effective and motivated government, with appropriate and clear accountability and organizational structures in place. At all stages, we will take a foundational long-term partnership between the State and City as the rule, not the exception.

The implementation of the Making New York Work for Everyone Action Plan will be led by the “New” New York Leadership Steering Group, a cross-governmental convening hosted by the Director of State Operations and the First Deputy Mayor and led by the Deputy Secretary for Economic Development and Workforce and the Deputy Mayor for Economic and Workforce Development. This group will meet on a regular basis to develop, refine, and review implementation of the action plan.

This team structure will drive the implementation of these recommendations and ensure accountability for the goals, with authority to drive interagency action and a defined comprehensive reporting structure and tracking procedures.

At the City level, an interdisciplinary and multifaceted team will be convened at City Hall, coordinated by the Mayor’s Office of Policy and Planning, reporting directly to the First Deputy Mayor of the City of New York, as well as the Mayor’s Office of Operations, reporting to the Chief of Staff to the Mayor. A new Senior Advisor in the Mayor’s Office of Policy and Planning will be solely focused on the execution of the action plan. This coordinating committee will work closely with the Deputy Mayor for Economic and Workforce Development, the Deputy Mayor for Operations, and other senior leaders at City Hall. Each relevant City agency responsible for the implementation of action items in the plan will designate an action plan lead, who will be the primary point of contact for the action plan and facilitate interagency coordination.

At the State level, implementation of the action plan will be the charge of the Deputy Secretary for Economic Development and Workforce, under the Director of State Operations. The NYS Executive Chamber will facilitate coordination with each relevant State agency responsible for implementation and designate points of contact as needed.

Agencies key to implementation of State initiatives include the Department of Homes and Community Renewal, Empire State Development, and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, each of which will designate personnel to work on efforts related to implementation.

Achieving the vision outlined in this report will require extraordinary collective will, commitment, and collaboration, not only from the City and State leadership, but also from the private sector, nonprofit community, philanthropic community, thought leaders, advocates, the public sector, and everyday New Yorkers.

The action plan is just the beginning step for creating a “New” New York. The action items in this report are the down payment on New York City’s future and were developed with input from the NNY Panel and over 200 expert stakeholder interviews. As the action plan is implemented, stakeholder engagement will continue. The City and State will continue outreach to everyday New Yorkers, local leaders and global experts on an ongoing basis to ensure that implementation is aligned with local needs and best practices, and future action plan updates will develop further items in response to their input.

The NNY Panel will continue to serve as an advisory board to the City and State, convening semiannually for updates on progress and new ideas. The City and State will also cultivate a larger network of leaders, organizations, and everyday New Yorkers to form coalitions to support the implementation of individual action items from the plan.



CONCLUSION

The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for the city and its business districts. The pandemic affected New York’s economy, budget, vibrancy, and the lives of its residents, commuters, and visitors. It cast a stark light on the city’s long-standing rifts and inequities, and not all of us survived.

The need for change is creating a generational opportunity for action and investment. This plan uses the crisis as an opportunity to harness the energy of this moment, to build the city we want to be today and into the future. That means not simply reverting to the pre-pandemic status quo but seizing this unique moment to enact transformative change.

The “New” New York initiatives will help New York reimagine its future to make the city work for everyone—and make it the best place to work in the world.



NNY Panel Co-Chair Dan Doctoroff addresses the panel at a meeting. Photo Credit: NYCEDC

Background

New York has continually reinvented its economy to meet the challenges of each new age, but it has never fully unlocked the potential of all its people.



Photo Credit: NYCDOT

NEW YORK CITY'S ECONOMIC CONTEXT LEADING UP TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

New York City's economy was in a position of strength leading up to 2020. This economic strength was underpinned by the dynamism and vibrancy of the city's people, places, and businesses.

In the years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, New York City experienced unprecedented population and job growth.

By 2020, the city's population had reached a historic peak of approximately 8.8 million residents,⁶³ steadily growing as New York City welcomed millions of domestic and international migrants⁶⁴ who made this city their home. In the 1980s and 1990s, the city experienced rising levels of in-migration from abroad, reversing the out-migration trends seen in the 1970s.⁶⁵ From 2000 to 2020, New York City's population grew by over 794,000 people. Most of this net growth, at 629,000 people, occurred in just the last decade—the result of dynamic flows that led a total of 2.5 million new people to become New Yorkers—bolstered by record numbers of migrants coming to the city from across the US.⁶⁶ This population growth spanned all five boroughs and nearby transit-oriented centers.⁶⁷

As New York City's population grew, its economy thrived.

Employment in the city reached a record high by the end of the last decade, capping the most significant jobs expansion since World War II. Following a decrease of approximately 30,000 jobs from 2000 to 2008, over 900,000 new private sector jobs were created between 2009 and 2019,⁶⁸ largely concentrated in sectors such as healthcare, business services, social assistance, and technology.⁶⁹ Nearly half of these jobs (48%) were in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island—a larger share than in any jobs expansion since 1975.⁷⁰ And by the end of the period, in 2019, New York City's unemployment

rate had fallen to 3.7 percent, the lowest level since when the State began collecting data in 1976.⁷¹

The city also cemented its reputation as a global destination, while maintaining its status as a preeminent economic powerhouse.

From 2000 to 2019, the number of tourists visiting New York City nearly doubled. In 2019, the city saw 66.6 million visitors, generating \$47.4 billion in revenue. Nearly 80 percent of these visitors were leisure travelers who came to the city to shop, dine, see friends and family, visit top-notch cultural institutions, explore unique neighborhoods, or partake in the city's entertainment and nightlife; meanwhile, the millions of business travelers who came to the city for meetings and conferences tended to stay longer and spend more—making them an important part of the city's local economy. Over this period, the number of international visitors—who spend over three times as much as domestic visitors on average—also rose sharply, even as day-trippers from the greater New York City region still made up about half of all visits to the city pre-pandemic.⁷²

In addition to maintaining its status as the undisputed capital of global business and investment, New York also grew its brand as a hub for innovation and future-focused industry. Even as 47 Fortune 500 companies call New York City home,⁷³ the city became a top destination for startups, startup talent, and venture capital (VC) funding. Between 2008 and 2019, venture capital funding to the NYC-based startups increased from under \$1 billion to \$7.6 billion, with exponential year growth in the last five years.⁷⁴

This economic growth and dynamism drove revenue for the City and State that we could equitably reinvest in our people and places. Between 2000 and 2019, city tax revenue grew by 81 percent in inflation-adjusted terms⁷⁵—as did the City's investment in New Yorkers' quality of life. Investments tripled in education and housing, nearly doubled in social services, and grew by 149 percent in parks, recreation, and cultural activities. Much of this revenue is generated in New York City's business districts.

Finally, in the years before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were signs that the economic inequality gap was beginning to narrow, in an aggregate sense, for the first time in many years. From 2014 to 2019, households in the bottom half of the income distribution gained a higher share of total NYC wages, up 1.4

percentage points,⁷⁶ in part driven by policies like the increase in the minimum wage. Nonetheless, significant economic disparities remained, particularly when comparing the outcomes or earning potential of Black and Brown New Yorkers relative to other groups, as measured by, for instance, heightened unemployment and poverty rates and lower postsecondary education attainment rates.

New York City's business districts have been economic engines for the entire region.

New York City's growth in recent decades is emblematic of the nationwide trend of re-urbanization,⁷⁷ reflecting the advantages of proximity, agglomeration, and urban living sought by many. Since 1980, the New York City metropolitan area has seen job growth shift from the suburbs back to the city.⁷⁸ New York's Core Employment Hubs—Midtown Manhattan, Midtown South, Lower Manhattan, Long Island City, and Downtown Brooklyn—are areas with the most concentrated economic activity that have captured much of that growth. In 2020, Core Employment Hubs together comprised approximately 50 percent of jobs in New York City⁷⁹ and serve as anchors of the city's thriving tourism industry.

The Core Employment Hubs embody the New York City success story across many dimensions. They provide highly concentrated sources of talent and business,⁸⁰ which help attract global businesses

that are drawn to concentrated downtowns with a density of organizations and services. These areas offer opportunities to workers with a broad range of skills and various levels of education. The city's robust transit infrastructure is also largely oriented around moving people into, out of, and around the Core Employment Hubs. Approximately 8 million New York City metro area workers live within 90 minutes of Midtown Manhattan, and over half of New York City's 4.7 million workers commute from other New York City boroughs or from elsewhere in the metro region.⁸¹

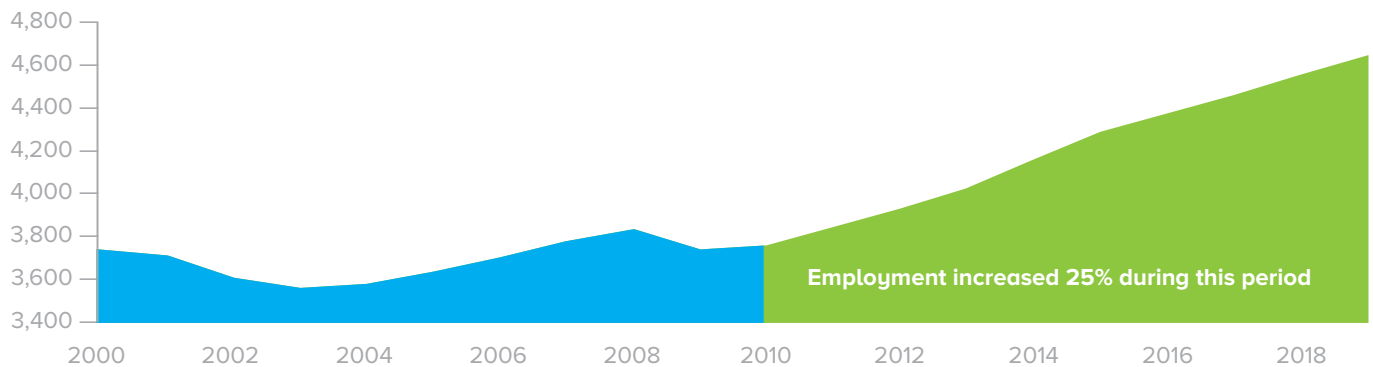
Other New York City business districts, including Flushing, Bronx HUB, Jamaica, Harlem, and DUMBO represent an increasingly important component of New York City's economic diversity and dynamism. In 2019, 64 percent of business establishments in the city were located outside of the four Core Employment Hubs, with establishment growth outside of employment hub areas outpacing growth in the Core Employment Hubs almost every year for the last decade.⁸²

Not only do these growing business districts add capacity for future economic development, but they do so in or near more residential parts of the city—allowing shorter commutes for local workers while bringing a dynamic mix of amenities, resources, and services closer to home for many. The patterns of

FIGURE 2

Before the pandemic, NYC employment reached a record high, capping the most significant jobs expansion since WWII

Total nonfarm employment in New York City, 2000–2019 (thousands)



Source: NYSDOL

New York City's development over time have also shaped the nature of these tradeoffs.

While the city, anchored by its business districts, thrived prior to COVID, entrenched equity challenges remained.

It is not inevitable that a rising tide lifts all boats. In 2015, the top 1 percent of the population received 41 percent of total income in the city—four times greater than the share received 30 years ago.⁸³ Despite modest improvements in income inequality before the pandemic, the city's labor force was still stratified, with persistent disparities across the city and demographic groups.

The legacies of historic disinvestment and structural racism have had generational impacts that continue to influence the level of economic opportunity accessible to non-white New Yorkers.

For instance, in 2019, Black and Hispanic/Latino New Yorkers experienced twice the poverty rate of white New Yorkers, with the median Black and Hispanic/Latino households receiving half the household income as the median white household.^{84,85} Similarly,

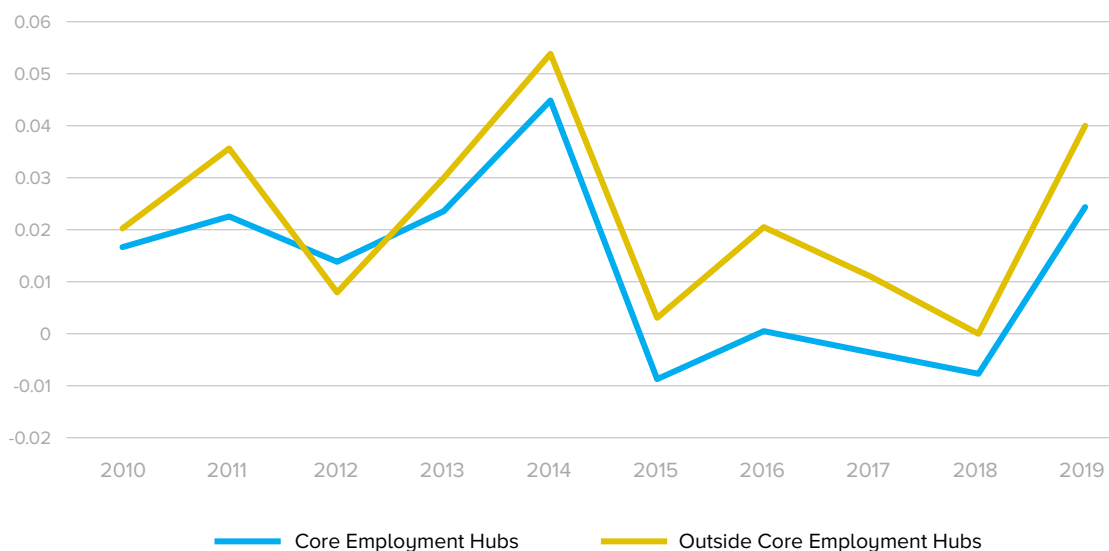
whereas nearly 60 percent of white, non-Hispanic New Yorkers held at least a Bachelor's degree, only 24 percent of Black, 19 percent of Hispanic/Latino, and 42 percent of Asian New Yorkers held Bachelor's degrees.⁸⁶

Nationwide, the unemployment rate for high school graduates was nearly 8 percent higher than that of college graduates with a Bachelor's degree,⁸⁷ and the poverty rate was 3.5 times higher.⁸⁸ Well-paid opportunities for those without Bachelor's degrees are particularly limited in NYC, which ranked 120 out of 121 among the country's largest metro areas by share of jobs that don't require a college degree but pay above the regionally adjusted US median wage.⁸⁹

New Yorkers also experienced disparities along the lines of gender and disability status. Working age people with a disability were over twice as likely to be unemployed, while women continued to face gender pay gaps and perform a disproportionate share of unpaid labor.^{90,91}

FIGURE 3

Rate of establishment growth in and outside of Core Employment Hubs



Source: QCEW microdata, 2002-2019

NEW CHALLENGES FOR NEW YORK CITY AND ITS BUSINESS DISTRICTS DUE TO COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic—and the subsequent lockdown, extended state of emergency, and resulting public health and economic impacts—temporarily diminished one of New York City’s greatest assets: the unparalleled ability of people to gather, build, create, and have experiences together. The pandemic also introduced new challenges while exacerbating existing inequities affecting the lives and livelihoods of all New Yorkers.^{92, 93}

In the early days of the pandemic, some observers declared NYC “over.”⁹⁴ Those who could work from home to help contain pandemic spread began to do so, and USPS data indicated that some residents left the city altogether; as the net number of people who changed their address exiting the city versus entering

increased by approximately 130,837 in the first 15 months after the start of the pandemic (compared to pre-pandemic trends). Residents from the city’s most affluent neighborhoods were the ones most likely to leave and the ones most likely to have their moves recorded as temporary.⁹⁵ Tourism also declined dramatically as many international borders closed and public health experts advised against unnecessary travel. 44.3 million fewer visitors came to the city in 2020 than in 2019, driving a 73 percent reduction in tourism spending. The steep decline in international tourism—from 13.5 million visitors in 2019 to 2.4 million in 2020—was particularly impactful on tourism spending.⁹⁶

Without regular cashflow from people working in the city’s offices or consuming entertainment and culture, over 66,000 businesses closed at least temporarily over the course of the pandemic.⁹⁷ As businesses closed, revenues became uncertain, and health risks became more dire, unemployment surged, peaking at 21 percent in May 2020. Job losses

FIGURE 4

The COVID-19 pandemic has made underlying inequities worse, especially for some demographic groups

	Prior to COVID-19 pandemic			Most recent data
	Median household income (\$K), 2019	Poverty rate (%) ¹ , 2019	Unemployment rate (%), 2019 ¹	Unemployment rate (%), September 2022 ³
Black	\$49.1	21.1%	9.4%	9.4%
Hispanic/Latino ²	\$44.3	24.7%	7.7%	9.2%
Asian	\$70.8	16.3%	4.8%	5.3%
White	\$97.2	11.1%	4.0%	3.8%
NYC	\$66.6	17.9%	6.3%	5.6%
NYC MSA	\$78.8	12.8%	5.5%	3.7%

Source: NYSDOL; ACS 5-year estimates, Current Population Survey

1. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates

2. Hispanic population is not mutually exclusive from Black, Asian, and White populations

3. Seasonally adjusted citywide and MSA rate from NYS DOL, by race/ethnicity from the Current Population Survey

were concentrated in the lower wage, “in-person” sectors, including Accommodation and Food Services, Arts and Entertainment, Health Care and Social Services, and Retail Trade, that disproportionately employ women and people of color.⁹⁸ Twenty percent of the New Yorkers who lost employment income in 2021 were already in poverty.⁹⁹ Job loss also disproportionately impacted students¹⁰⁰ and people without college degrees.¹⁰¹

In the face of devastating economic uncertainty, New Yorkers were creative and resilient, developing new formal and informal ways to support our communities. We formed mutual aid groups, created new neighborhood Open Streets and Open Restaurants initiatives, and worked across sectors to manufacture critical personal protective equipment (PPE).

Now in 2022, as we recover and adjust to a world shaped by COVID-19, New York City’s fundamental economic advantages—our density, our diversity, and our talent—remain. Demand for living in New York City is strong, based on rapidly rising residential rental rates¹⁰² and normalizing levels of domestic in-migration.¹⁰³ Tourism is also rapidly recovering and expected to surpass 2019 levels by 2024.¹⁰⁴

But the recovery has been uneven. Unemployment remains disproportionately high for Black and Brown New Yorkers, and while nearly 88 percent of the private sector jobs lost during the pandemic have been recovered,¹⁰⁶ this varies significantly by industry and geography.¹⁰⁷

Today, the lingering impacts of the pandemic are most notably impacting, or playing out in, the city’s business districts.

As the city’s Core Employment Hubs represent nearly 50 percent of total New York City jobs,¹⁰⁸ and over half of the city’s tourism jobs are located in Manhattan,¹⁰⁹ the impacts of lower office occupancy and reduced international tourism were also disproportionately felt in those areas. Manhattan’s Core Employment Hubs, in particular, continue to see less foot traffic and consumer spending. Foot traffic in Midtown Manhattan was still at 77 percent of pre-pandemic levels in September 2022, and at 82 percent in Lower Manhattan.¹¹⁰ In turn, lower foot traffic has dramatically impacted the businesses that serve these workers—from restaurants to retailers—with concomitant job losses in those sectors.¹¹¹ In contrast, business districts with more integrated residential communities have been more resilient, with foot traffic having largely recovered from, and often exceeding, pre-pandemic levels.¹¹²

Zooming in on storefront availability¹¹³ in the 11 Manhattan high-activity retail submarkets, between Q3 2019 and Q3

NYC POPULATION TRENDS¹⁰⁵

- In 2020, New York City reached a historical population high of 8.8 million, an increase of about 600,000 from 8.2 million in 2010, as reported by the U.S. Census.
- The 2020 Census count, however, corresponded to the onset of the pandemic, which spurred a novel and short-lived population shock.
- By mid-2021, NYC’s population is estimated by the Census Bureau to have declined to about 8.5 million, with change from 2020 driven largely by domestic out-migration, but also due to slowed immigration, lower than usual births, and a COVID-related spike in deaths.
- However, since mid-2021, NYC’s population trajectory has returned to growth trends similar to what we saw before the pandemic:
 - COVID-19-related deaths have substantially decreased, while national-level data on births indicate a rebound in the number of children being born.
 - Total migration into the city in 2021 was roughly on par with the years leading up to the pandemic, comprised of higher-than-typical domestic in-migration and lower-than-typical international flows.
 - Net change-of-address filings with the United States Postal Service returned to pre-pandemic levels by mid-2021, suggesting a return to typical levels of domestic out-migration; however, other data indicate that domestic outflows remained elevated in 2021.
- While most indicators suggest a return to a trajectory of population growth since mid-2021, the Census Bureau’s Population Estimates Program will release an update in March 2023 providing additional information on New York City’s recent population changes.

2022, availability rates decreased in five submarkets and increased in six. When comparing the year-over-year trend between Q3 2021 and Q3 2022, the availability rate declined in 10 of the 11 submarkets. As of Q3 2022, the lowest availability rates are outside the Manhattan business districts, in residential neighborhoods on the Upper East Side (Third Avenue between East 57th and East 79th Streets, 11.3%) and the Upper West Side (Broadway and Columbus Avenues, 12.9%). The highest availability rate is in the heart of the commercial office area in Midtown West (Herald Square/West 34th Street between Fifth and Seventh Avenues, 40.7%).^{114,115}

Similarly, while transit ridership has rebounded on a number of lines and routes, in November 2022, overall subway use averaged 62 percent of pre-pandemic levels, and bus use averaged 64 percent—held down by slower weekday ridership recovery in the Core Employment Hubs, even as ridership in more residential areas and on the weekends has recovered faster.¹¹⁶ Lower ridership is both an existential challenge for the financial stability of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)—a critical infrastructure system for the region—and a symptom of changing patterns of work.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Hybrid work is here to stay.

Hybrid work is a significant driver of the diminished transit ridership and foot traffic in the Core Employment Hubs, and as the city's economy continues to rebound from the shock of the pandemic, it is proving to be a sticky trend. After inching up steadily for several months, NYC office attendance has started to stabilize just shy of 50 percent of pre-pandemic levels, as measured by swipe card data. This places NYC's office occupancy ahead of six of the nine other metro areas included in Kastle's Back to Work barometer, all but the three of which are located in Texas¹¹⁷ Given the ability to work more flexibly, employee and employer preferences appear to be converging at two to three days per week in person as a new normal, at least for now.^{118,119}

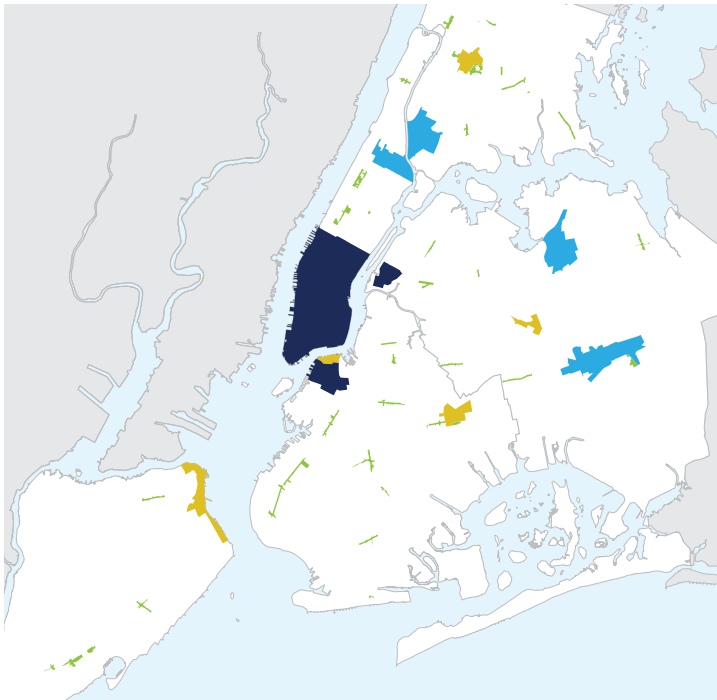
Learning from global peers: New York is a global city and financial center unlike any other in the US. To chart a path to recovery, we have to look to what's working and what's not in other metro areas, not only across the country but also within our international counterparts like London, Paris, or Tokyo where COVID-19's acute impacts—and potential solutions—more closely mirror the reality on the ground in our Core Employment Hubs. Like New York, these cities' economies are fueled by dense urban centers reliant on international connectivity, two dynamics fundamentally challenged by a global pandemic. They're similarly defined by high costs of living justified by the perks that come with living in a financial and cultural capital.¹²⁰ In normal times, the growth of global cities tell us the trade-off is good value for money. When confronted with a new reality where jobs can be performed remotely and quality of life concerns are compounded by COVID-19's many impacts, the calculus can change for some people—at least temporarily.

In 2022, Tokyo's population decreased for the first time in a quarter-century;¹²¹ according to estimates by the Greater London Authority, the city's population saw its first annual decline in over three decades during the first year of the pandemic, and, while this trend reversed in 2021, London's growth rate remained below pre-pandemic levels.¹²² The unique competitive advantages that come with being a global city like New York also present pitfalls when the assumptions underpinning that success come into question. In re-imagining our business districts—one of the city's defining assets—it's critical we learn from other global cities that more closely resemble New York in terms of their governing economic realities and the resulting impact of the pandemic.

While acknowledging that hybrid work is here to stay, we still have a role to play in incentivizing workers toward the higher end of the range of likely outcomes. As an example, cities in Texas are seeing office occupancy trend toward 60 percent.¹²³ Each additional day per average week that regional commuters work from home could result in as much as a \$1.6 billion reduction in annual spending on daytime items (lunch, after-work drinks, etc.), and each additional day that NYC residents work from home is projected could result in a \$0.7 billion to

FIGURE 5

54% of New York City’s jobs are in its business districts, with the vast majority of those in three core employment hubs. NOT EXHAUSTIVE



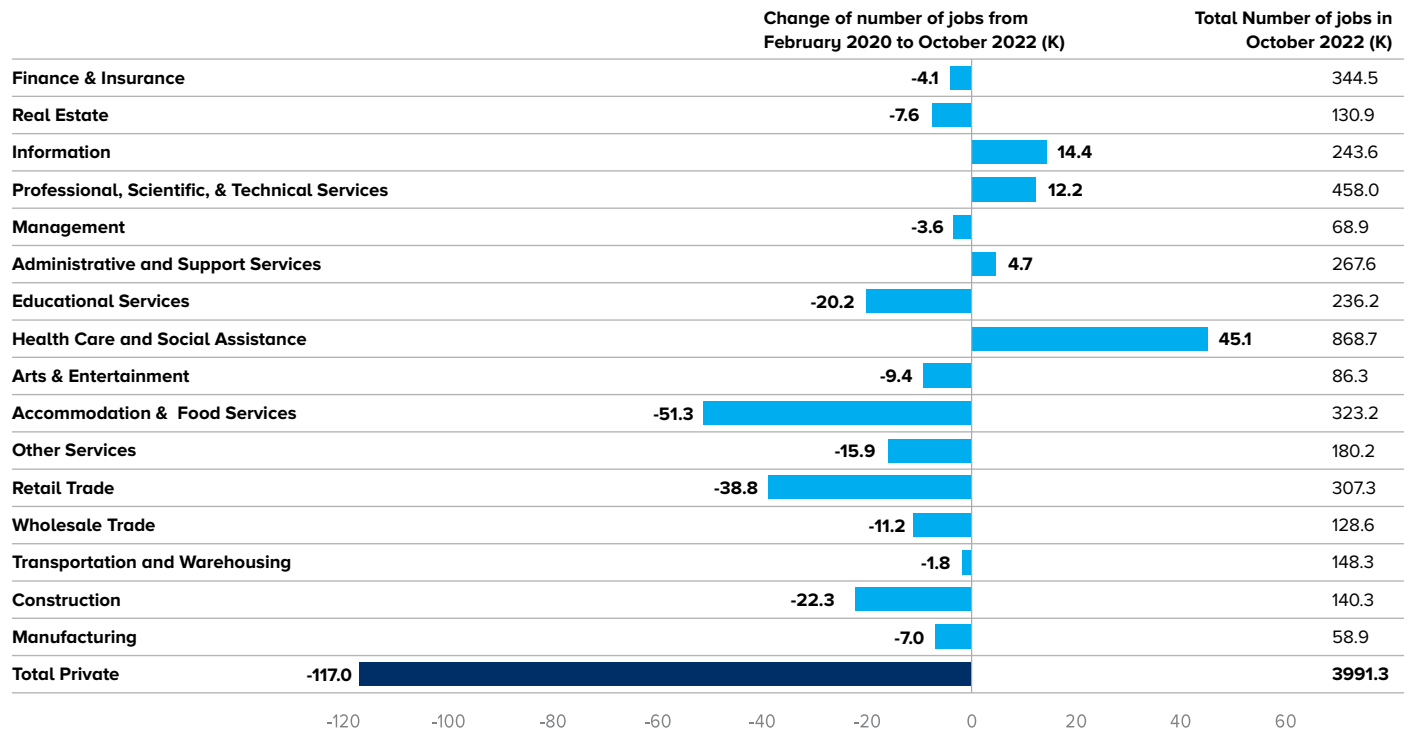
Business Districts	Locations	Number of Jobs	Number of Residents
Core Employment Hubs (49% of total jobs in NYC)	Midtown Manhattan	894,659	170,978
	Midtown South Manhattan	693,134	411,857
	Lower Manhattan	340,173	99,615
	Downtown Brooklyn	112,137	64,012
	Long Island City	72,518	40,885
Other Downtowns	Flushing	45,732	92,571
	Bronx Hub	35,095	69,859
	125th Street	25,612	67,663
	Jamaica	28,867	71,156
Emerging Employment Hubs	Forest Hills	14,901	13,512
	DUMBO	10,420	5,975
	Fordham Plaza	13,092	31,212
	Broadway Junction	9,927	18,835
	St. George / Stapleton	8,608	17,866
Other BIDs		34,988	
Total in Business Districts		2,339,864	1,175,996
Total in NYC		4,294,391	8,804,190

Source: QCEW Microdata, Q4 2019; 2020 Census, U.S. Census Bureau

FIGURE 6

Accommodation & Food Services and Retail Trade are two of the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic

Seasonally adjusted New York City private employment, by industry

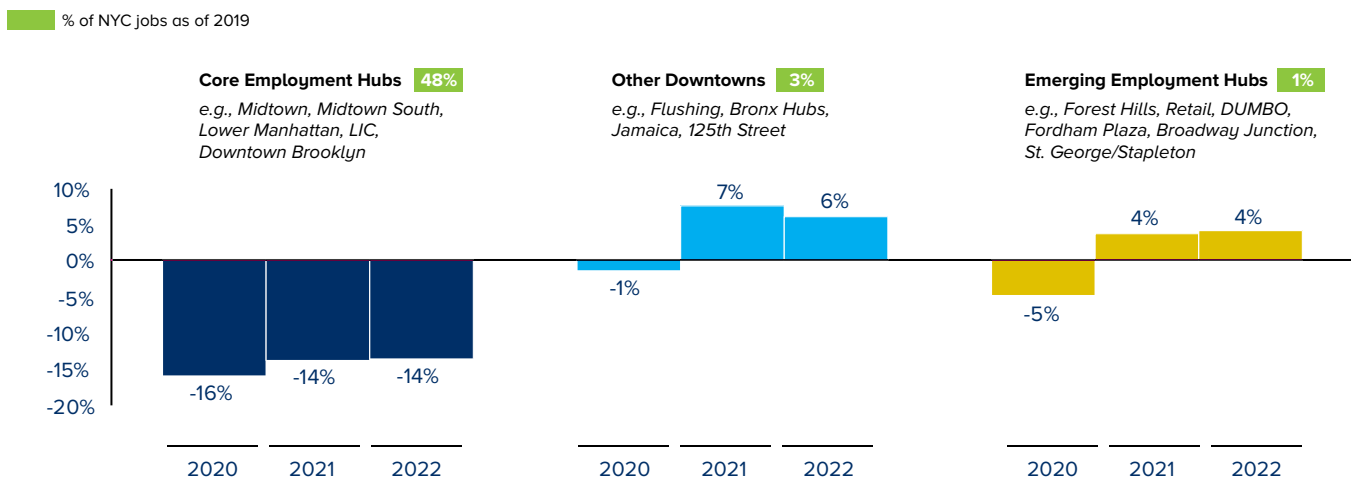


Source: NYCEDC analysis of NYSDOL and NYC OMB data

FIGURE 7

Trajectory of foot traffic recovery since 2019 has varied by type of NYC business district

Average weekday walking foot traffic, by type of business district and year^{1,3}



Source: Replica

1. The Panel's scope includes other BIDS that are not shown on the map. However, the Replica data extracts are unable to capture information on activity for these regions given that the geographic area is too small to yield a representative sample size.

2. Based on NYCEDC analysis of QCEW microdata Q4 2019

3. Over 24 hours

Note: Trends estimates are based on a composite of data sources, including but not limited to mobile location and financial transaction data. For spending data, advanced modeling and statistical weighting methods are applied to generate a representative weekly total estimate of consumer spending activity. Consumer spending data shows the estimated consumer spending that occurred in the selected geography in a given week. Consumer spending includes all transactions — including credit card, debit card, and cash transactions — that take place at a point of sale, such as at retail stores, supermarkets, restaurants, taxis, and bars. The dataset informing the Panel's analysis is based on data, for each geography, of all spending that takes place at brick and mortar locations in a given census tract, regardless of where the purchaser lives. Spend data does not account for inflation.


FIGURE 8

Foot traffic recovery 2020-2022

Average weekday walking trips within / into business districts

% change in daily average for Jan-Sept '20-22 vs. Jan-Sept '19

		2020	2021	2022
Core Employment Hubs 49%	Midtown	-23%	-25%	-23%
	Midtown South	-9%	-4%	-6%
	Lower Manhattan	-23%	-23%	-18%
	Downtown Brooklyn	-12%	-8%	-8%
	LIC	-7%	-3%	5%
	Overall Core Employment Hubs	-16%	-14%	-14%
Other Downtowns 3%	Flushing	-11%	-2%	3%
	Bronx Hub	8%	20%	14%
	125th Street	4%	11%	3%
	Jamaica	-8%	-1%	3%
	Overall Other Downtowns	-1%	7%	6%
Emerging Employment Hubs 1%	Forest Hills	0%	11%	16%
	DUMBO	-8%	-5%	-6%
	Fordham Plaza	-7%	5%	4%
	Broadway Junction	8%	14%	13%
	St. George / Stapleton	-12%	-8%	-6%
	Overall Emerging Employment Hubs	-5%	4%	4%
	Overall Across Areas	-13%	-10%	-10%

 % of NYC jobs as of 2019²

Source: Replica

1. The Panel's scope includes other BIDS that are not shown on the map. However, the Replica data extracts are unable to capture information on activity for these regions given that the geographic area is too small to yield a representative sample size.

2. Based on NYCEDC analysis of QCEW microdata Q4 2019

3. Over 24 hours

Note: Trends estimates are based on a composite of data sources, including but not limited to mobile location and financial transaction data. For spending data, advanced modeling and statistical weighting methods are applied to generate a representative weekly total estimate of consumer spending activity. Consumer spending data shows the estimated consumer spending that occurred in the selected geography in a given week. Consumer spending includes all transactions — including credit card, debit card, and cash transactions — that take place at a point of sale, such as at retail stores, supermarkets, restaurants, taxis, and bars. The dataset informing the Panel's analysis is based on data, for each geography, of all spending that takes place at brick and mortar locations in a given census tract, regardless of where the purchaser lives. Spend data does not account for inflation.


FIGURE 9

Consumer spend recovery by category in 2022

Weekday consumer spend by category in business districts^{1,3,4}

% change in daily avg for Jan-Sept '22 vs. Jan-Sept '19

		Retail 2022	Restaurant / bar 2022	Entertainment 2022
Core Employment Hubs 49%	Midtown	-9%	-35%	1%
	Midtown South	13%	-9%	21%
	Lower Manhattan	-1%	-36%	-17%
	Downtown Brooklyn	20%	-7%	20%
	LIC	35%	-9%	-1%
	Overall Core Employment Hubs	3%	-23%	6%
Other Downtowns 3%	Flushing	11%	5%	101%
	Bronx Hub	59%	-33%	39%
	125th Street	-4%	-41%	-27%
	Jamaica	21%	-2%	11%
	Overall Other Downtowns	22%	-17%	19%
Emerging Employment Hubs 1%	Forest Hills	19%	-9%	68%
	DUMBO	17%	-18%	-30%
	Fordham Plaza	68%	-26%	88%
	Broadway Junction	55%	-0%	-10%
	St. George / Stapleton	2%	-37%	-4%
	Overall Emerging Employment Hubs	44%	-20%	15%
	Overall Across Areas	7%	-22%	7%

 % of NYC jobs as of 2019²

Source: Replica

1. The Panel's scope includes other BIDS that are not shown on the map. However, the Replica data extracts are unable to capture information on activity for these regions given that the geographic area is too small to yield a representative sample size.

2. Based on NYCEDC analysis of QCEW microdata Q4 2019

3. Over 24 hours

Note: Trends estimates are based on a composite of data sources, including but not limited to mobile location and financial transaction data. For spending data, advanced modeling and statistical weighting methods are applied to generate a representative weekly total estimate of consumer spending activity. Consumer spending data shows the estimated consumer spending that occurred in the selected geography in a given week. Consumer spending includes all transactions — including credit card, debit card, and cash transactions — that take place at a point of sale, such as at retail stores, supermarkets, restaurants, taxis, and bars. The dataset informing the Panel's analysis is based on data, for each geography, of all spending that takes place at brick and mortar locations in a given census tract, regardless of where the purchaser lives. Spend data does not account for inflation.

\$1 billion reduction in annual revenue for major transportation providers, including the MTA and car / taxi cabs,¹²⁴ which are the lifeblood of the region's economy.

The commute is a key barrier.

Commute length and diminished experience are two factors contributing to sustained lower levels of ridership.

New York metropolitan area commuters typically spend approximately 40 minutes in transit one-way, the highest US average, a combination of both slow mass transit speeds (the city's buses are among the slowest in the nation¹²⁵) and the farther distances that separate many New Yorkers' homes from their jobs—a choice in some cases and a necessity in many others, due to unaffordable housing costs closer to the city's Core Employment Hubs or lack of housing units close to transit hubs (a consequence of post-1920s housing growth in the region being driven by new highways and bridges rather than accompanying mass transit infrastructure).¹²⁶

Without other reasons to travel into the business districts, high-income office workers with long commutes may be particularly inclined to work

remotely when possible. Notably, nearly half of Manhattan workers who have commutes of more than 30 minutes and make more than \$100,000 a year live outside NYC.¹²⁷ These workers also generate the greatest economic impact when they do commute into the business districts. While remote work within the city may have some distributional benefits to other neighborhoods, frequent remote work outside the city can take a toll on tax revenues that support citywide infrastructure and services. More than half of all high-income commuters outside the city also live outside New York State.¹²⁸

The negative consequences for mass transit revenues and system-wide services will particularly affect the many New Yorkers who cannot work remotely, such as those in sectors like Construction, Accommodation and Food Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance, where less than 50 percent of jobs may be highly telework capable. It also stands to increase commute inequities for groups already facing disproportionately long commutes. For example, Black New Yorkers spend 46 minutes commuting on average—10 minutes more than the average white New Yorker.¹²⁹ Meanwhile, those with disabilities may need to go farther out of their way to use the transit

FIGURE 10

NYC office attendance lags pre-pandemic rates, but is recovering on pace with peer cities

Average weekday office attendance for NYC metro area vs other metros,

% attendance based on key fob swipes as a share of typical office attendees in February 2020



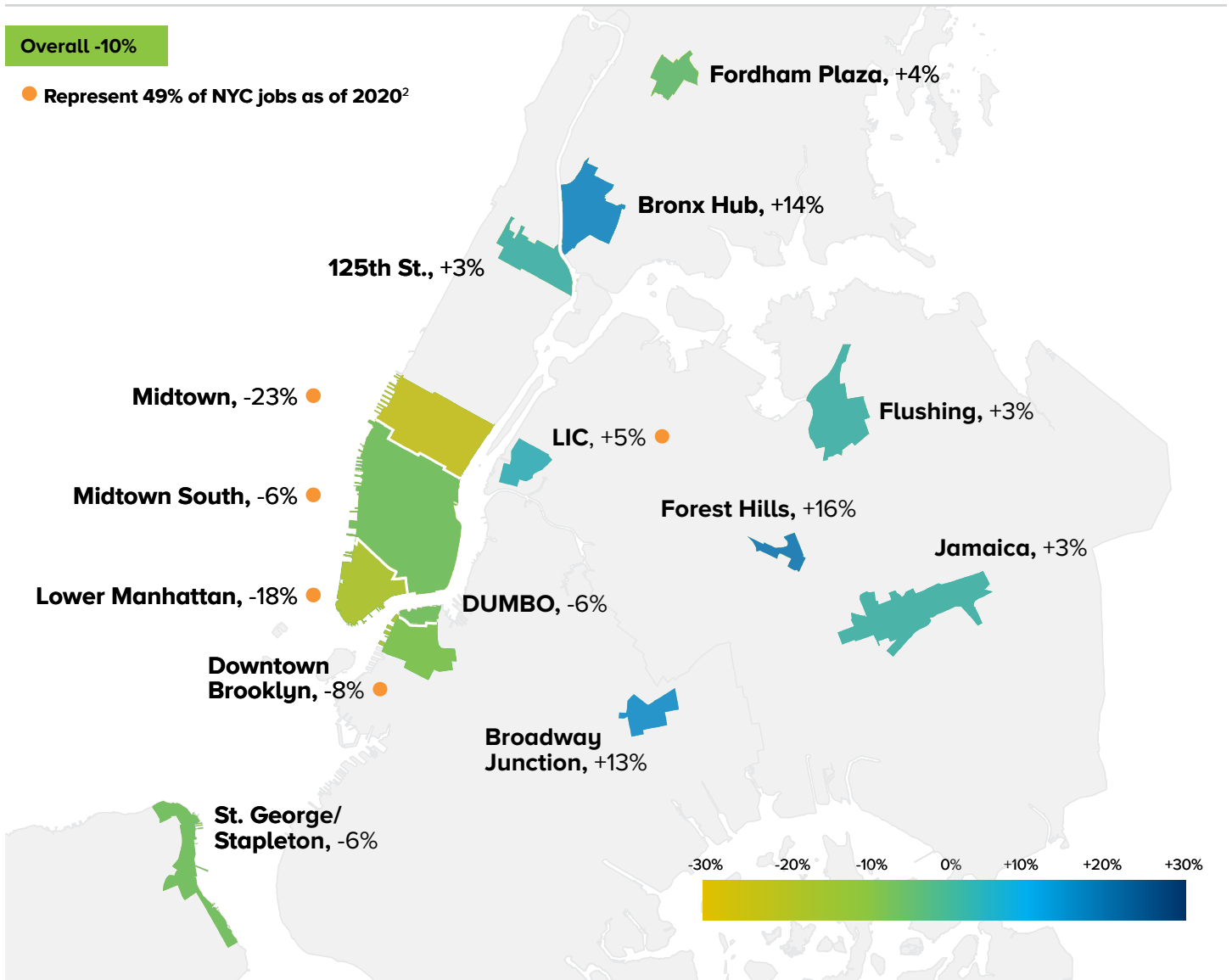
Source: Kastle Back to Work Barometer

FIGURE 11

While most business districts have recovered to 2019 pedestrian volumes, recovery in Midtown and Lower Manhattan has been slower

Average weekday foot traffic in business districts^{1,3}

% change in daily average for Jan-Sept '22 vs. Jan-Sept '19



Source: Replica

1. The Panel's scope includes other BIDS that are not shown on the map. However, the Replica data extracts are unable to capture information on activity for these regions given that the geographic area is too small to yield a representative sample size.

2. Based on NYCEDC analysis of QCEW microdata Q4 2019

3. Over 24 hours 2020

Note: Trends estimates are based on a composite of data sources, including but not limited to mobile location and financial transaction data. For spending data, advanced modeling and statistical weighting methods are applied to generate a representative weekly total estimate of consumer spending activity. Consumer spending data shows the estimated consumer spending that occurred in the selected geography in a given week. Consumer spending includes all transactions — including credit card, debit card, and cash transactions — that take place at a point of sale, such as at retail stores, supermarkets, restaurants, taxis, and bars. The dataset informing the Panel's analysis is based on data, for each geography, of all spending that takes place at brick and mortar locations in a given census tract, regardless of where the purchaser lives. Spend data does not account for inflation.

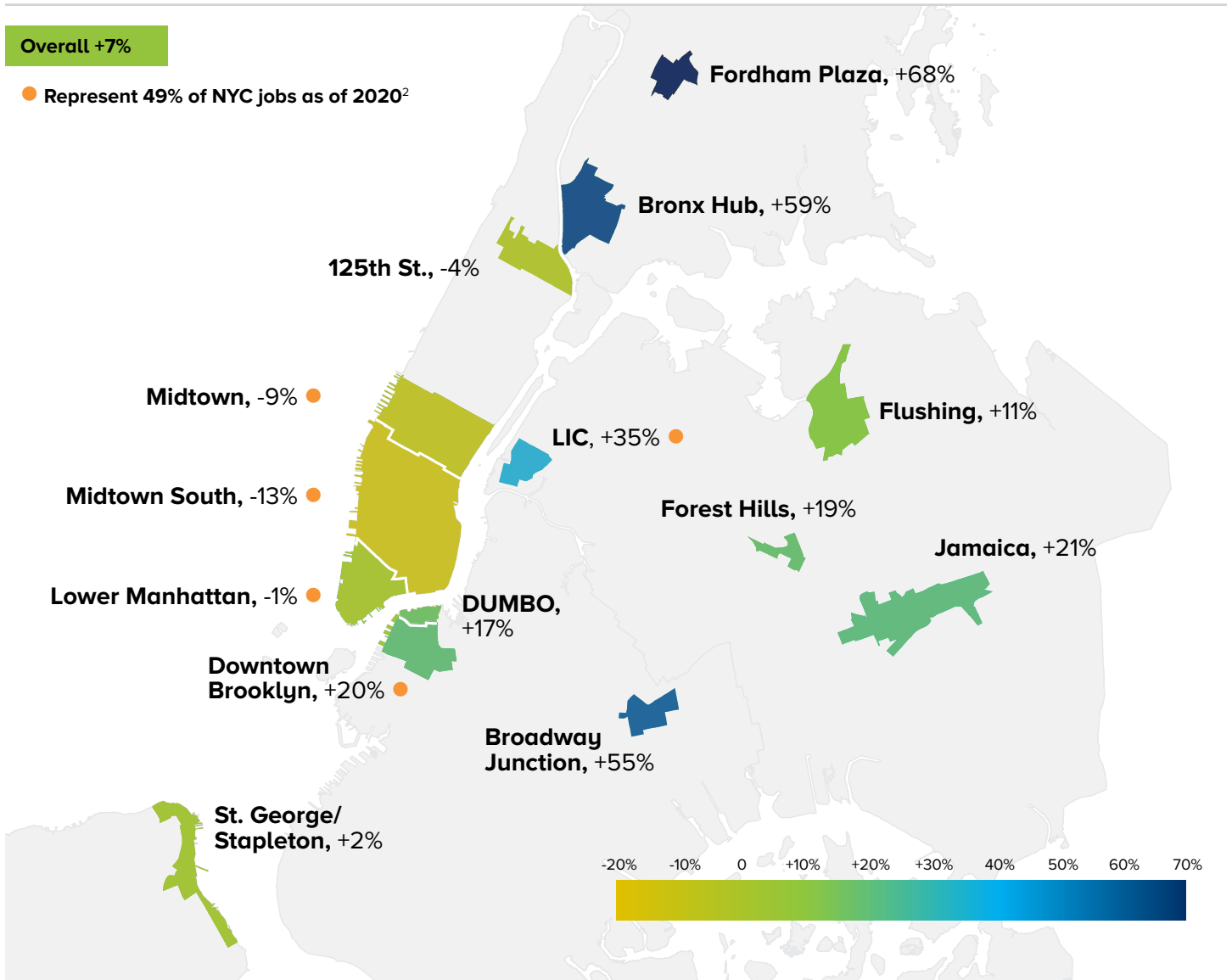
FIGURE 12

Midtown / Lower Manhattan have not fully recovered to 2019 consumer retail spend levels

Average weekday consumer retail spend in business districts^{1,3,4}

% change in daily avg for Jan-Sept '22 vs. Jan-Sept '19

Weekdays only



Source: Replica

1. The Panel's scope includes other BIDS that are not shown on the map. However, the Replica data extracts are unable to capture information on activity for these regions given that the geographic area is too small to yield a representative sample size.

2. Based on NYCEDC analysis of QCEW microdata Q4 2019

3. Over 24 hours 2020

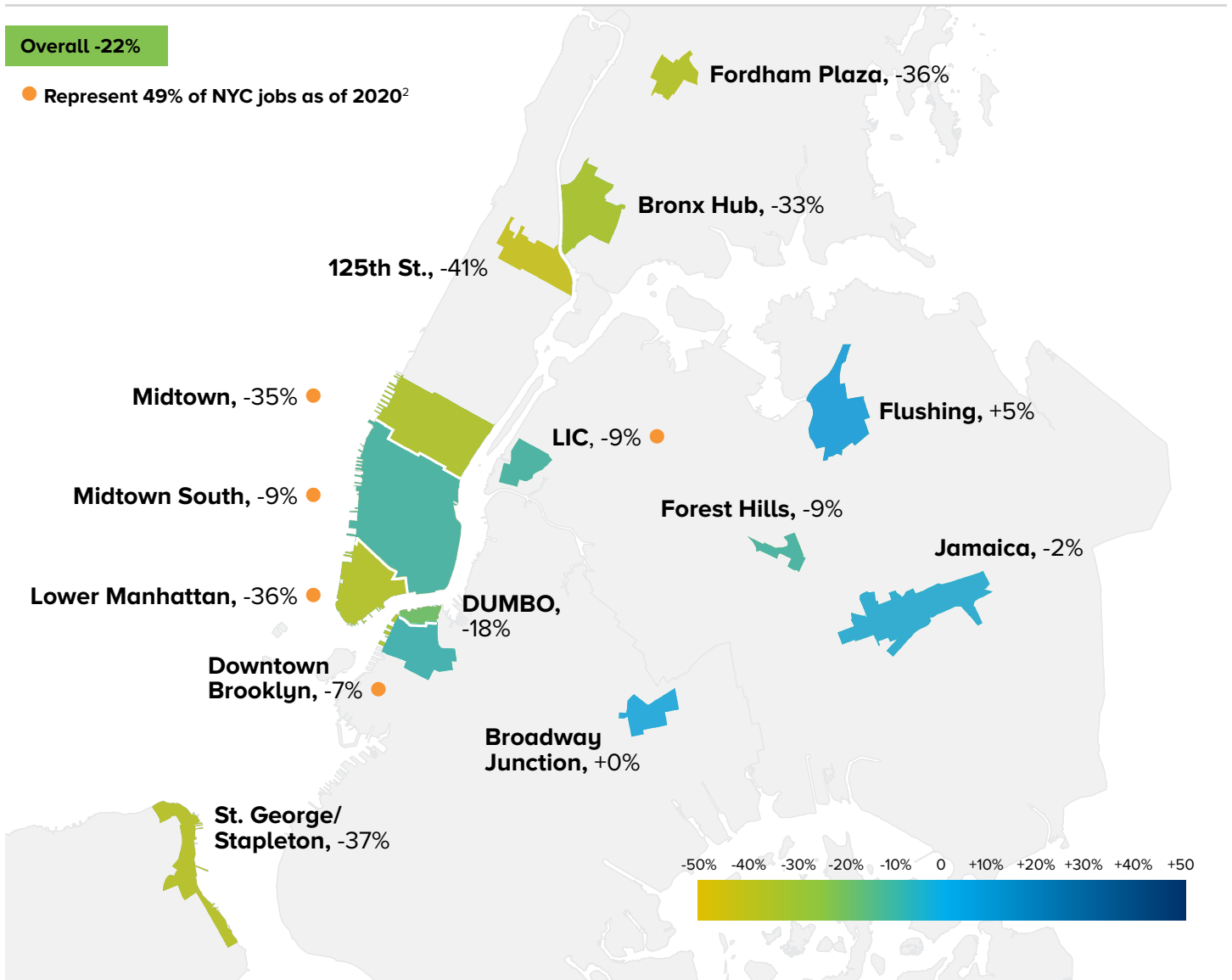
4. Does not account for inflation

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FIGURE 13

Most business districts have not fully recovered to 2019 consumer restaurant / bar spend levels

Average weekday consumer restaurant / bar spend levels in business districts^{1,3,4}
% change in daily avg for Jan-Sept '22 vs. Jan-Sept



Source: Replica

1. The Panel's scope includes other BIDS that are not shown on the map. However, the Replica data extracts are unable to capture information on activity for these regions given that the geographic area is too small to yield a representative sample size.

2. Based on NYCEDC analysis of QCEW microdata Q4 2019

3. Over 24 hours

4. Does not account for inflation

Note: Trends estimates are based on a composite of data sources, including but not limited to mobile location and financial transaction data. For spending data, advanced modeling and statistical weighting methods are applied to generate a representative weekly total estimate of consumer spending activity. Consumer spending data shows the estimated consumer spending that occurred in the selected geography in a given week. Consumer spending includes all transactions — including credit card, debit card, and cash transactions — that take place at a point of sale, such as at retail stores, supermarkets, restaurants, taxis, and bars. The dataset informing the Panel's analysis is based on data, for each geography, of all spending that takes place at brick and mortar locations in a given census tract, regardless of where the purchaser lives. Spend data does not account for inflation.

system, as only 126 of 472 NYC subway stations, or 27 percent, are fully accessible.¹³⁰

Improving transit times, quality, and accessibility would directly benefit workers in essential, in-person industries—and encourage those that do have flexibility to visit the business districts more frequently.

Considering potential commercial real estate impacts

Left unmanaged, these trends, when considered together, raise important long-term questions for the commercial real estate market in the city's business districts. Lower office occupancy, resulting from widespread remote work and the lack of activation of business districts for other uses, could lead companies to downsize their footprints—in turn driving higher commercial vacancy rates and reduced investment from property owners.

The Midtown, Midtown South, and Lower Manhattan office markets represent about 80 percent of all NYC office space.¹³¹ As of Fall 2022, the reported vacancy rate for direct and sublet office real estate in Manhattan is 21.9 percent,¹³² the highest since the mid-1970s when data was first available. While the relatively high vacancy rate is partially driven by the normal ebb and flow of real estate cycles and the

significant increases in office space supply pre-pandemic, it remains double the pre-pandemic rate.¹³³ The vacancy rate has also had an effect on real estate values, with office real estate decline making up 54.9 percent of the reduction in overall billable values (5.2%), and more than half of the \$1.7 billion decline in property taxes in FY 2022.¹³⁴ But office real estate values have since rebounded in FY 2023, with property tax levy exceeding the pre-pandemic levels by \$0.5 billion. Office market billable values are now at 96 percent of the pre-pandemic levels.¹³⁵

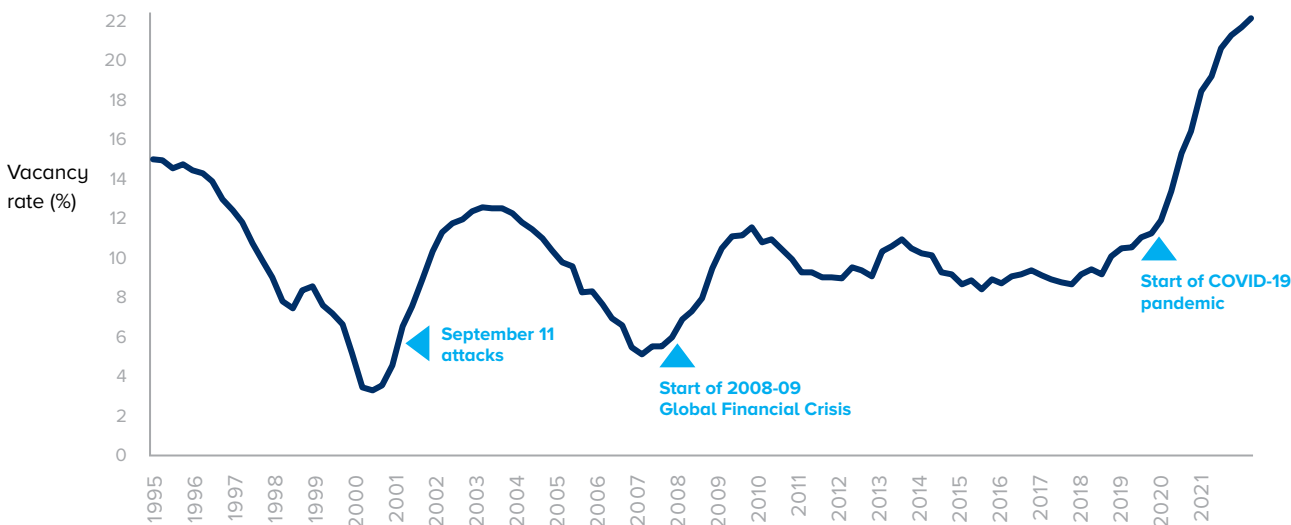
An analysis completed as part of the NNY Panel suggests that Manhattan below 60th Street could potentially experience 7 to 64 million square feet in excess office space (2-14% of supply) by 2037, on top of the 39 to 45 million square feet of space that is typically structurally vacant (approximately 10% of demand).¹³⁶ These ranges reflect the uncertainty of the situation in New York City.

In the lower-bound scenario, a nominal 2 percent oversupply in Manhattan's office real estate below 60th Street by 2037 would imply that the market could stabilize on its own over the next 15 years. Adjustments in supply could reduce or even eliminate any market oversupply by 2037. Potential adjustments could include new developments being

FIGURE 14

Manhattan office vacancy rates are now at a historic high

Manhattan All Classes Office Real Estate Vacancy Rate (1995-2022 Q3) % vacant, direct and sublet



Source: Cushman & Wakefield NYC Manhattan Office Vacancy Rates, provided as of October 20, 2022

canceled, delayed or shifted to residential uses, and/or portions of the existing stock being converted to residential or institutional uses. Approximately 10 million square feet of office space have been converted to residential uses in the last 10 years without significant policy interventions.^{137,138}

By contrast, a 14 percent oversupply of office space in that same area might have more long-term and structural implications. In the short term, the dip in office worker foot traffic, along with only partially recovered tourist foot traffic, could continue affecting the retail landscape and overall streetscape of the city’s business districts.¹³⁹ Reduced spending at local businesses would directly affect tens of thousands of workers across the city, many of whom are low-income people of color.^{140,141} In the long term, elevated office and retail vacancy rates could exacerbate these impacts, as well as negatively impact the city’s tax base.

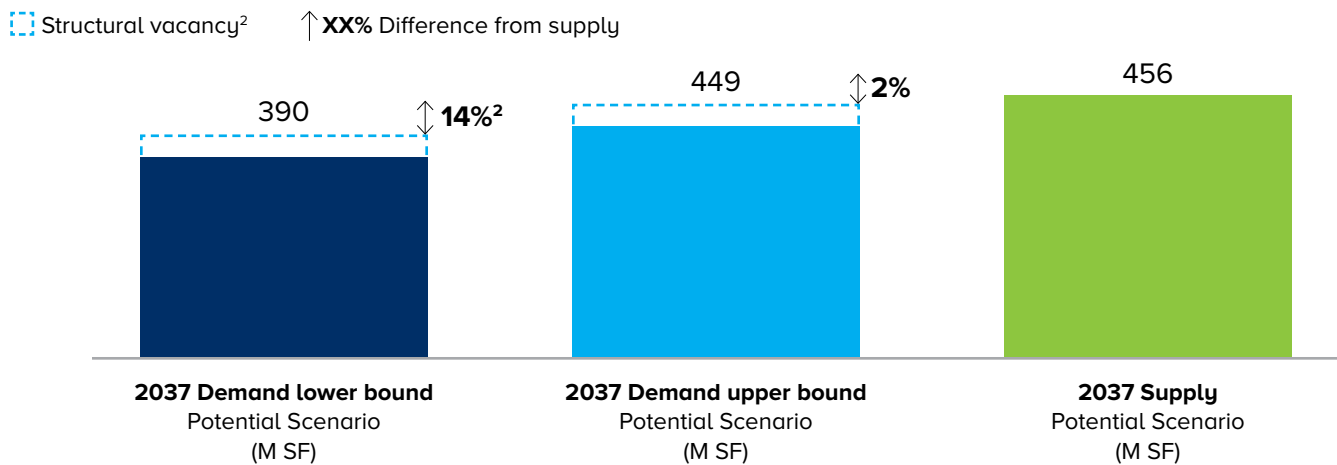


FIGURE 15

Estimated ranges for potential demand and supply may imply potential 2-14% excess supply in the Manhattan office market by 2037, above structural vacancy

Potential demand and supply of office real estate in 2037¹

M SF



Source: Based on 15-year scenarios for potential office space demand and supply using recent leasing data on rentable SF per employ (from Co-Star data for Midtown / Downtown Manhattan, 10/21/2021 - 7/28/2022 and 1/6/2019 - 12/23/2019), employee growth scenarios (from U.S. Census, NYC OMB, NYCEDC, and NYC DCP), and Manhattan office real estate data (from Cushman and Wakefield Manhattan Q3 Office report)

1. Analysis assumes price held constant at 2022 level; NYC OMB Executive Budget Employment Forecast — April 2022, U.S. Census Bureau 2014-2019, NYC Economic Development Corporation analysis of office employees 2014-2019
 2. Highest recorded overall office vacancy in Midtown + Lower Manhattan pre-COVID-19 pandemic was around ~17% around 1992 according to Figure 16 in Office of the New York State Comptroller: The Office Sector in New York City, October 2021

ESTIMATING POTENTIAL 15-YEAR EXCESS IN OFFICE SPACE IN MANHATTAN BELOW 60TH STREET

Recognizing the wide range of uncertainties and risks that the city faces in estimating future demand scenarios over the long term, such as interaction with secondary markets, interaction among various property classes, and role of office rent pricing on supply and demand, the NNY Panel estimated the potential 15-year excess in office space in Manhattan below 60th Street using the following approach:

Demand side

The estimate assumes that demand for office space in the short and longer term will be driven by three primary factors: the growth in the total number of New York City office workers, the rate of in-person return to the office, and changes to the density and use of office space as a result of hybrid work.

- **Growth in the total number of New York City office workers:** In 2019, 1.19 million office employees worked in Manhattan below 60th Street.¹⁴² While private sector employment declined during the pandemic, it is now only 3 percent below its pre-pandemic peak.¹⁴³ Assuming annual growth rates of ~1 percent¹⁴⁴ to ~2 percent,¹⁴⁵ the total number of office employees in 15 years (2037) could range from 1.5 million to 1.6 million.
- **Rate of in-person return to the office:** Surveys indicate that two to three days per week in office is the most common model implemented by employers today.^{146,147} However, given that employees may all come in on the same set of days, average in-person office attendance could still be as high as 80 percent on certain days,^{148,149} similar to peak office attendance pre-pandemic.¹⁵⁰ Thus, trends around the rate of return to the office on its own may not sway office demand significantly, and companies could continue to lease space accounting for the same levels of peak occupancy as before the pandemic.¹⁵¹ These form the upper and lower bounds of the excess office space analysis.

- **Change in density and use of office space as a result of hybrid work:** Prior to the pandemic, there had been a multi-year trend of decreasing office square footage per employee.¹⁵² The pandemic may have accelerated this trend, with employers optimizing spaces for a future of hybrid work by adding more flexible seating, more co-working spaces, and even shared offices while reducing the number of spaces for individual work.¹⁵³ Conversely, it's possible that some companies will factor more space per worker into their planning—for example by choosing to preserve (or even expand) individual workstations and offices as an extra incentive for employees to return to the office, or by adding more phone rooms and conference rooms to facilitate a mix of remote and in-person work.¹⁵⁴ Further, if companies require 100 percent of their workforce to come back to the office on key weekdays, as indicated by some recent announcements by major New York City financial employers, they will need to plan their space around these maximum occupancy days.^{155,156,157,158} Given the variety of potential outcomes, we estimate that square footage per employee could range from the reported 2021-2022 level of 240 square feet per employee on the low end to 255 square feet per employee at the high end, a return to pre-pandemic levels.^{159,160}

Supply side

While the recent rate of office space construction in Manhattan has been relatively high, growing 0.74 percent annually between 2016 and 2020,¹⁶¹ growth has been slower over a longer time horizon. Between 2002 and 2021, office real estate supply in Manhattan grew just 0.47 percent annually.¹⁶² There are some indicators that the recent trend of faster office supply construction may continue in the short term, despite record-high vacancy rates in Manhattan, as 13 million square feet of office space were still under construction in Q3 2022.¹⁶³ On the other hand, the rate of future construction may be negatively impacted by recent trends such as an increase in construction costs in New York City, rising inflation and interest rates, supply chain challenges and plateauing office rent per square foot. As a result, the estimate for long-term office supply is informed by the more conservative 20-year inventory growth rate of 0.47 percent, which accounts for peaks and troughs in growth.¹⁶⁴

The future will—and must—be different.

Maintaining NYC's competitive advantages will require addressing the historical barriers to living and working in the city, to avoid eroding the city's attractiveness to diverse talent.

The revelation of work flexibility can be a great boon for many. For some, it could also call into question the relative advantages of NYC as a place to work, live, or raise a family. The pandemic's disproportionate toll on the lives and livelihoods of the city's most vulnerable signals the failure of our city's safety nets and springboards. Revitalizing our business districts and preventing excessive vacancies is not enough to ensure that a "New" New York is one that supports all. Equitably recovering from the pandemic will require a radically different type of growth.

Even pre-pandemic, global trends were driving evolutions in our economy. The urgency of the climate crisis, for example, has sparked new industries and sub-industries centered on developing and scaling renewable energy, green buildings, and sustainable transportation. Meanwhile, increasing automation and changing consumer preferences were beginning to disrupt legacy sectors like manufacturing and retail trade.

The pandemic compounded some of these changes, particularly in sectors where revenue and workforce challenges were pronounced. For example, the Food Services & Accommodations, and Retail Trade sectors experienced significant employment loss due to COVID-19, while adjusting to changing consumer

FIGURE 16

Recent office real estate trends and key statistics across boroughs



Midtown and Lower Manhattan continue to make up the vast majority of office space in New York City

- As of Q4 2021, Midtown and Lower Manhattan made up ~80% of office space inventory in New York City
- The other two largest boroughs in terms of office space inventory are Brooklyn at 8.6% and Queens at 6.5%



However, inventory growth in Brooklyn and Queens outpaces growth in Midtown and Lower Manhattan, particularly for Class A inventory

- Total office inventory increased by 1.0% and 1.1% CAGR in Brooklyn and Queens respectively, between 2013-2021, compared to Midtown + Lower Manhattan by 0.2% CAGR
- Class A inventory in Brooklyn and Queens grew at 3% and 4% CAGR, respectively, from 2013-2019, while Class A inventory in Manhattan grew at 0.6% CAGR over the same time period



Demand for Class A inventory in Brooklyn and Queens has lagged supply, with vacancies increasing every year for the last decade

- Class A office vacancy in Brooklyn and Queens grew at 19% and 54% respectively over 2013-2019, then at 28% and 38% between 2019-2021



In comparison, vacancy of Class A space in Manhattan has decreased y-o-y pre-pandemic and still remains lower than Class A vacancies in Brooklyn and Queens

- Vacancy of Class A space in Manhattan decreased at 4% CAGR between 2013 and 2019
- While Class A vacancy in Manhattan increased by 28% between 2019-21, it still remains 17 p.p. and 11 p.p. lower than Brooklyn and Queens Class A vacancy rates respectively

behaviors (e.g., declines in corporate travel, an accelerated shift to e-commerce, etc.).^{165,166, 167}

Diversifying the industry mix is an important buffer to economic shocks and downturns. The New York metro area's industry mix has been steadily diversifying since the 2008 recession. Industries like Health Care and Social Assistance, Accommodation, and Food Services began to make up more of the city's employment, and Information and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services drove more of the city's output. Still, the region remained less industrially diverse than other large metro areas in the US pre-pandemic.¹⁶⁸ The critical issues of our time are evolving rapidly and require the scaling of coordinated, innovative solutions.

Housing could become a critical bottleneck for inclusive growth and overall competitiveness. Over the past 10 years, the city's population increased more than twice as much as the number of new housing units.¹⁶⁹ Historically low-income and middle-class neighborhoods faced displacement pressures as housing supply—particularly in higher-income neighborhoods—remained suppressed.

In 2021, 53 percent of New York City households were either severely or moderately rent-burdened (i.e., spending 50% and 30%, respectively, of total household income on housing costs) with especially high rent-burden rates among Hispanic (59%) and Black households (55%).¹⁷⁰ Homeownership—historically a crucial tool for wealth-building—was also off the table for many. While the overall NYC homeownership rate in 2019 was 31.9 percent, only 26.6 percent of Black households and 15.9 percent of Hispanic households owned homes.¹⁷¹ These disparities stem, in part, from federal programs starting in the 1930s that offered low-interest, government-backed mortgages but were overwhelmingly denied to people of color. As white families built intergenerational wealth through homeownership in the city's suburbs, communities of color faced disinvestment as the city's tax base shrank and redlining artificially suppressed creditworthiness and property values.

Decades of exclusionary zoning in wealthier areas have entrenched these barriers to homeownership and wealth-building through overly restrictive regulations (e.g., on building heights, parking minimums, etc.) that continue to limit housing growth. Between

2010 and 2018, fewer building permits were issued per capita in Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, and Putnam counties than in any suburban county in Southern California or the Bay Area, and most other suburban counties in the Northeast.¹⁷²

The city's housing crisis, aided by inflation, has grown more acute since the pandemic. In August 2022, the median citywide asking rent reached approximately \$3,600—up 24 percent from pre-pandemic highs.¹⁷³ While rising prices indicate that demand for living in NYC is stronger than ever, it diminishes the availability of choice that is promised by remote work. NYC's diverse talent pool is a key competitive advantage that attracts employers—ultimately feeding a virtuous cycle between job opportunities and talent. If housing pressures—driven by inadequate supply—remain high, they could disrupt this virtuous cycle by pushing out current residents and detracting new talent.

Ensuring that NYC is the best place to work—regardless of who you are and what you do—will also require clearing the hurdles to economic opportunity and closing disparities that create inequitable outcomes.

For example, the pandemic underlined the essential role that childcare plays for working parents—particularly as schools closed to prevent the spread of the virus. The high cost and low supply of licensed care exacerbated the difficult tradeoffs that families had to make as an estimated 350,000 NYC parents left or downshifted their jobs because of COVID-19 and the lack of access to quality childcare.¹⁷⁴

It was also a stark reminder of the entrenched disadvantages that people of color have faced for generations, which have led them to bear more of the lingering economic impacts. Black and Hispanic workers are overrepresented in low-wage industries,¹⁷⁵ many of which were hit hard by job losses. In addition to disproportionately high unemployment rates,¹⁷⁶ Black New Yorkers were hit harder by business closures. Approximately 26,000 businesses closed permanently between April 2020 and March 2021, with Black-owned businesses more than twice as likely to close than white-owned businesses.¹⁷⁷

A more equitable future will need to tear down barriers to economic mobility and actively create strong pathways to good jobs of the future.

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Public safety is a foundational consideration as we move toward a vibrant and prosperous “New” New York. Concerns about safety and quality of life can stymie economic prosperity in terms of investment, revenue, and overall economic activity. We must acknowledge that many residents, commuters, and business owners have been increasingly concerned for their safety and that of their employees as they move around the city.

Tackling public safety means both reversing some of the trends of increased crime in our city and addressing lingering perceptions that New Yorkers might have about how the city has become less safe. It also requires both upstream and downstream interventions, from investing in youth employment and broader social infrastructure to increasing patrols in hotspot areas and removing illegal guns from the street.

What is happening with respect to crime in NYC?

In 2019, the latest available year of FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) data, New York City had the lowest per capita rate for each of the seven major crimes¹⁷⁸ among the six largest cities in the US. Among the top 100 most populous cities in the country (the smallest of which has a population of

215,000), New York had particularly low rates for property crimes (burglary, lowest; motor vehicle theft, 3rd lowest; grand larceny, 10th lowest), and it is among the top 50 safest jurisdictions for the four major types of violent crime as well (rape, 16th lowest; murder, 20th lowest; robbery, 40th lowest; aggravated assault, 44th lowest).¹⁷⁹

In the last few years, crime has been rising across the country in all types of communities, with crimes involving gun violence seeing the most significant jump, with the number of gun-related homicides rising nationally by 45 percent from 2019 to 2021.¹⁸⁰

In New York, comparing 2022 data through November and the same period in 2020, complaints were up for six of the seven major crime categories, and total crime complaints is up 27 percent comparing to the same period in 2021 and 31 percent compared with the same period in 2020.¹⁸¹ Notably, the city has experienced an uptick in gun-related crimes and murders, although those increases are in line with national trends, and the city’s homicide rate in 2021 remained less than a fifth of the rate in 1990.¹⁸² Property crimes also rose in 2021 after falling in 2020.¹⁸³ These system-wide increases, coupled with several high-profile incidents and the historic lows in crime pre-pandemic, have led to public perception that the city is less safe.



How the NNY agenda supports public safety more broadly

The three core goals of the NNY plan enhance public safety by reinforcing important virtuous cycles, especially as they relate to property crimes in our business districts:

- **Bringing more vibrancy back to our business districts, streets, and neighborhoods** that were affected by pandemic-driven lockdowns and the proliferation of hybrid work.

Recovering foot traffic in business districts and making them more populated 24/7 unlocks the virtuous cycle of the “eyes on the street” approach to creating vibrant, safe places. The presence of residents, commuters, and tourists creates an inherent “neighborhood watch” that deters illicit behavior and, in turn, attracts even more social and economic activity.

Bringing more workers back to the office also helps employment to recover among businesses in the retail, restaurant, hospitality, and entertainment sectors that depend on that foot traffic and have seen persistently high unemployment. These sectors also disproportionately hire young people and low-wage workers.

- **Supporting the overall employment recovery** through future-focused economic development that creates good jobs in industries of the future, support for the diverse small businesses that employ a significant portion of the city’s workforce, and support for hard-hit industries like the cultural sector.

There is robust research showing that employment is an important deterrent for property crimes, especially among adults over 35 and formerly incarcerated individuals, and recidivism. Property crimes can also concentrate in neighborhoods with high unemployment rates. One recent study found that the decline in unemployment explained about 30 percent of the fall in crime rates from 1992 to 1997.¹⁸⁴

- **Promoting more inclusive access to opportunity** with a robust and coordinated workforce development system that creates pathways to family-sustaining jobs for all, while reducing barriers such as a lack of access to childcare.

A number of studies also point to a correlation between a city’s measure of economic inequality and its rates of both property and violent crimes. New York’s recent history fits the pattern—the reversal in the last decade of the historic trends of growing inequality correlates with declining property and violent crime rates overall over the same period, and notably, a decline in the youth crime rate.

Compared with before the pandemic, youth are experiencing some of the lowest rates of employment in the city; young males have experienced the largest employment drop and now see an employment rate below 40 percent.¹⁸⁵ It is critical that we connect at-risk New Yorkers—including those dislocated by the pandemic, formerly incarcerated, and disconnected youth—to stable, good-quality jobs as a public safety strategy.

A joint public safety agenda

Alongside the actions highlighted in this plan, the Mayor and the Governor are taking targeted and aggressive action to address crime and make sure New Yorkers feel safe:

- **Removing guns from our streets and other upstream solutions**

As part of [The Blueprint to End Gun Violence](#), the City has invested in the following:

- **Implementing more detection efforts at city entry points for the “Iron Pipeline:”** The NYPD has worked with State law enforcement to implement spot checks at entry points like Port Authority and other bus and train stations to help curb the flow of illegal guns coming into NYC.
- **Creating an anti-gun unit** of the NYPD, which has been overwhelmingly successful in removing illegal firearms from city streets.

The City has also invested in addressing street and subway homelessness, and in connecting those in need:

- **Creating a multi-agency street encampment removal task force:** In March 2022, the NYPD partnered with the City’s DHS and DSNY to create a multi-agency street encampment removal task force. Through late November

2022, this task force has conducted 3,660 visits at 3,566 unique sites around the city.

- o **Addressing New Yorkers suffering from serious mental illnesses, left untreated and unsheltered on city streets and subways:** In November 2022, Mayor Adams announced a new vision to address the ongoing crisis faced by these individuals. As part of the plan, the Mayor issued a directive to outreach workers, City-operated hospitals, and first responders clarifying that they have the legal authority to provide care to New Yorkers when severe mental illness prevents them from meeting their own basic human needs to the extent that they are a danger to themselves or others. New clinical co-response teams have also been deployed in New York City’s subways to respond to those with serious mental health issues, and enhanced training is being offered in partnership with New York State for all first responders to compassionately care for those in crisis and connect them to help. The City will also be developing a tele-consult line to provide police officers in the field with direct access to clinicians who can support officers in dealing with individuals in distress and ensure a compassionate response.

- **Ensuring neighborhood safety**

New Yorkers must feel safe in their communities and in the places where they work, especially from the threat of violent crime. To that end, the City has invested in a number of areas:

- o **Enhancing existing Public Safety Units with new Neighborhood Safety Teams:** The NYPD has allocated additional resources and support to Public Safety Units in precincts across the five boroughs, including the creation of Neighborhood Safety Teams, which focus on gun violence. The department launched these teams with a special focus on the 30 precincts where 80 percent of violence occurs.
- o **Placing more officers on patrol:** The Administration has prioritized utilizing existing resources to place more officers on patrol in key neighborhoods throughout the city.
- o **Rolling out a citywide crime and quality-of-life enforcement initiative:** In response to community complaints and concerns, this

initiative addresses the violent crime patterns officers and detectives are confronting.

- **Business district safety and supporting retailers and employers**

The NYPD has focused vigorously on ensuring the safety of the city’s busy commercial areas, bringing its intelligence-driven enforcement approach to the mission.

- o **Business Improvement Deployment Teams:** Beginning in March 2022, the NYPD rolled out a new initiative known as the Business Improvement Deployment Team (BIDT). Uniformed officers are specially assigned to this detail and are dedicated to the enforcement of quality-of-life offenses—often precursors to criminality—within business districts in the city. They are also assigned to oversee vendors and ensure that those deemed homeless are connected with the services they need and deserve.
- o **Retail theft:** The NYPD is equally focused on non-violent property crimes, given the concerns raised by the city’s business community and property owners. It works in tandem with its district attorney partners on retail theft; recently, the Manhattan DA has instituted a retail theft strategy that singles out recidivists who often prey on businesses. The City will explore opportunities to advocate for federal and state legislation to both prevent and prosecute larger-scale, organized theft operations that often involve online resale.

- **Subway safety**

New York City subways are the lifeblood of our city. They connect millions of working people to their jobs, homes, and neighborhoods every day, and help visitors from all over the globe explore the greatest city in the world.

There have been unprecedented steps to increase coordination among the MTA, New York City, New York State, and Federal partners who all play significant roles in keeping our subways and communities safe. Public safety and justice are the highest priorities, and they go hand-in hand.

- o In February 2022, Mayor Adams announced his Subway Safety plan, which has effectively connected more than 2,000 people

experiencing homelessness in NYC subways to wraparound services—including mental health professionals and counselors—so that they are able to get off the subway system and access the care they need.

- o In late October 2022, Mayor Adams joined with Governor Kathy Hochul to announce major actions to keep subways safe and address transit crime by adding an additional 1,200 police officers to more than 300 subway platforms and trains per day. Additionally, the MTA is in the process of expanding subway surveillance camera coverage to the inside of more than 6,500 subway cars. And the NYS Office of Mental Health (NYS OMH) is creating two new dedicated units at psychiatric centers to help provide those experiencing serious mental illness with the assistance they need, building on progress since Governor Hochul deployed Safe Options Support crisis intervention teams.

These efforts are starting to work, particularly as they relate to murders and violent crime—per the NYPD, through November 2022 compared to the same period last year, shooting incidents are down 16 percent and murders are down 11 percent. Since January, we have seen a double-digit decrease in both homicides and shootings, a 27-year high for felony arrests, and more than 5,000 guns removed from NYC streets.¹⁸⁶ The work is far from over, however. The Mayor and Governor are closely tracking the data and will continue to adapt the public safety strategy to drive down crime and restore confidence among residents, business owners, and visitors that New York City is the safest big city in America.

OTHER RELATED EFFORTS

The NNY Panel has been working in parallel with other efforts to address related challenges in New York City, including:

- **[Housing our Neighbors: A Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness](#)**. The Mayor’s plan outlines a comprehensive approach to addressing New York City’s affordable housing crisis and providing New Yorkers safe, high-quality, affordable homes.
- **Building and Land Use Approval Streamlining Task Force (BLAST)**. This task force was convened by Mayor Adams to streamline processes and remove administrative burdens that could be slowing down the city’s economic recovery. BLAST published its recommendations in [Get Stuff Built](#) in December 2022.
- **Capital Process Reform Task Force**. The Mayor convened this group in April 2022 to undertake a comprehensive review of the City’s capital process, from project initiation to closeout. The task force developed [initial recommendations](#) for reforming capital project delivery with the goal of reducing completion times, saving taxpayer dollars, and increasing the diversity of New Yorkers who participate in the capital process.
- **Commercial Corridor Recovery Task Force**. This task force will support and strengthen our commercial corridors, especially addressing quality of life. This effort is a part of the Adams administration’s [Rebuild, Renew, Reinvent: A Blueprint for NYC’s Economic Recovery](#) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Future of Workers Task Force (FWTF)**. The FWTF is charged with rebooting the city’s approach to talent and workforce development. The task force will develop a framework and action plan, building off of the findings and recommendations of other efforts, including the NNY Panel. The FWTF will continue to advance workforce development efforts described in this report.
- **Office Adaptive Reuse Task Force**. This group is exploring opportunities to convert obsolete office buildings to other potential uses, such as housing, schools, labs, and more. This work complements

the NNY Panel's work and informs the NNY recommendations.

- [**Rebuild, Renew, Reinvent: A Blueprint for NYC's Economic Recovery**](#). The Mayor's plan outlines a path toward a more equitable and inclusive economic recovery and a vision for the future of the city's economy. In particular, its recommendations aim to accelerate the return to pre-pandemic employment levels while creating a foundation for the city's economic future by restarting the city's economic engines and reactivating the public realm; supporting small businesses, entrepreneurship, and a more equitable economy; driving inclusive sector growth and building a future-focused economy; connecting New Yorkers to quality jobs and in-demand skills; and planning and building for inclusive growth now and in the future.
- [**Small Business Advisory Commission**](#). The Adams administration launched a commission composed of small business leaders from neighborhoods across the five boroughs and representing the diverse sectors that comprise New York City's economy. It is charged with providing input on new policies, laws, and regulations, as well as on existing rules, fines, fees, and violations. It will serve as a critical link between business leaders and City officials—ensuring we effectively support business growth while preserving public health and safety.
- **New York State COVID-19 economic recovery.** New York State is investing in several programs to accelerate business recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, including:
 - [**New York State COVID-19 Pandemic Small Business Recovery Grant Program**](#). This \$800 million initiative has provided flexible grant assistance to more than 35,000 small businesses and micro-businesses that experienced economic hardship.
 - [**New York State Seed Funding Grant Program**](#). A \$200 million program aimed at supporting early stage small businesses and micro-businesses started just before or during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - [**COVID-19 Capital Costs Tax Credit Program**](#). This initiative offers \$250 million in tax credits, providing financial assistance to small
- businesses burdened with a range of costs stemming from the pandemic, from structural changes and building upgrades to health supplies and materials.
- **Small business tax relief.** The FY 2023 New York State budget provides relief to small businesses by increasing the small business subtraction modification from 5 percent to 15 percent of net business income or net farm income and expands the benefit to include pass-through entities with less than \$1.5 million in NY-source gross income. The initiative is aiding an estimated 195,000 small businesses through one of the most challenging business climates in modern history.
- [**"Bring Back Tourism, Bring Back Jobs" Inclusive Recovery Package**](#). An initiative aimed at supporting New York State's hardest-hit tourism sector workers and revitalizing the state's tourism industry, through:
 - > **New York State Tourism Return-to-Work Grant Program.** A \$100 million program aimed at assisting and encouraging tourism businesses that suffered job and revenue losses to rehire workers.
 - > **New York State Meet In New York Grant Program.** A \$25 million program focused on helping convention centers and conference spaces generate and support new business-focused travel.
- **Upgrades to critical infrastructure.** New York City and the surrounding region's economy rely on resilient, world-class infrastructure. New York State is making several investments to modernize and strengthen the region's transit hubs, including:
 - **John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK).** In January 2017, [A Vision Plan for JFK](#) was announced to transform JFK into the world-class airport that New Yorkers deserve. The plan provides a strategic framework for the Port Authority and its partners to completely redevelop, modify, and expand existing facilities and infrastructure. The new Terminal 6 builds on the momentum of the other three major components of the airport's transformation already underway. The \$9.5 billion development of a state-of-the-art New Terminal

One that will anchor the airport's south side broke ground in September 2022. The \$1.5 billion expansion of Terminal 4, led by Delta Air Lines and JFK International Air Terminal, was approved in the spring and is now under construction. Additionally, work began in December 2019 on the \$400 million modernization of Terminal 8, led by American Airlines, which operates the terminal, and British Airways, which will be relocating to Terminal 8 from Terminal 7, once the project is complete by the end of this year.

- o **LaGuardia Airport (LGA).** The total \$8 billion transformation of LGA makes it is the first new major airport built in the United States in the last 25 years. In 2015, [a comprehensive plan to construct a whole new LGA](#) was unveiled with the goal of creating a world-class, 21st century passenger experience featuring brand new terminals and gates, two stunning new arrivals and departures halls, modern customer amenities, state-of-the-art architecture, more spacious gate areas, and a unified terminal system. The project, two-thirds of which is funded through private financing and existing passenger fees, broke ground in 2016.
- o **Penn Station.** In November 2021, Governor Hochul unveiled [a new plan to transform Penn Station](#)—the busiest transit hub in the Western Hemisphere—into a modern, spacious, light-filled facility that is easy to navigate, while also revitalizing the surrounding neighborhood to prioritize the public realm and social services, invest in affordable housing, increase transit access and shared streets, and create a pedestrian-friendly streetscape. In June 2022, Governor Hochul and New Jersey Governor Murphy announced that the MTA, in partnership with Amtrak and NJ TRANSIT, was issuing a request for proposals from architecture and engineering firms to guide the station's reconstruction. Penn Reconstruction will modernize the concourse experience for passengers with improved platform connectivity, streamlined wayfinding, and enhanced amenities, and the future expansion of Penn Station will add track and platform capacity.
- o **Port Authority Bus Terminal.** In early 2021, the Port Authority unveiled [a new plan for the](#)

[Midtown Bus Terminal replacement project](#)

that reflected public feedback from extensive community outreach, following the 2019 release of a planning-level draft scoping document that analyzed alternatives and employed specific screening criteria. The proposal was updated to reflect the needs of bus riders and the neighborhoods immediately surrounding the bus terminal, based on extensive community feedback. The 2021 plan, which will form the basis of the design of the proposal, includes demolition of the existing bus terminal and construction of a completely new state-of-the-art main terminal at its current location, with a capacity increase of nearly 40 percent for commuter and intercity buses. It also includes a separate storage and staging facility that would move commuter buses out of street-level storage lots and accommodate intercity buses that now pick up and drop off on city streets in the vicinity of the existing terminal. An enclosed ramp structure linking the Lincoln Tunnel with the bus terminal will be covered by a deck and transform into nearly 3.5 acres of new public green space. The proposal would take no private land as it will be built on existing Port Authority property.



The Plan

The “New” New York initiatives will help New York reimagine its future to make the city work for everyone—and make it the best place to work in the world.



OVERVIEW

New York has continually reinvented its economy to meet the challenges of each new age, but it has never fully unlocked the potential of all its people. The COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to interrogate the structural flaws of our earlier recoveries and reimagine what truly inclusive growth and shared prosperity can and should be.

The “New” New York (NNY) Panel worked over five months, including four full-panel meetings with hybrid remote and in-person attendance, and five panelist working group sessions, to identify opportunities, propose new ideas and collaborations, and develop policies that could drive the transformative change the moment demands. The process also included interviews with more than 200 local and global expert stakeholders, tours of core employment hubs with local leaders, and a literature review of best practices.

The Panel’s initial charge was to examine strategies for reviving the city’s business districts, but it quickly became clear that the solutions must address a broader set of problems that affect all New Yorkers.

Improving long commutes requires strengthening transportation networks across the city. To fulfill the potential of our workforce and compete globally for business, the city’s workforce must be stable—a condition that is currently undermined by the city-wide housing crisis and lack of affordable, high-quality childcare.

That’s why in addition to traditional areas like office vacancy rates, incentives for businesses, and strategies for job creation, this plan also addresses more fundamental questions, from transportation to housing to the need for great public space to child-care. The Panel’s work informed the joint action plan presented here by New York Governor Kathy Hochul and New York City Mayor Eric Adams.

The following 40 initiatives from Governor Hochul and Mayor Adams reflect an integrated vision for how New York can pioneer a new model of inclusive growth and establish itself as the best place for work in the new world of the 21st century. They represent a shared understanding that to truly establish New York as the world’s best place to work, we need to make New York the best place period.

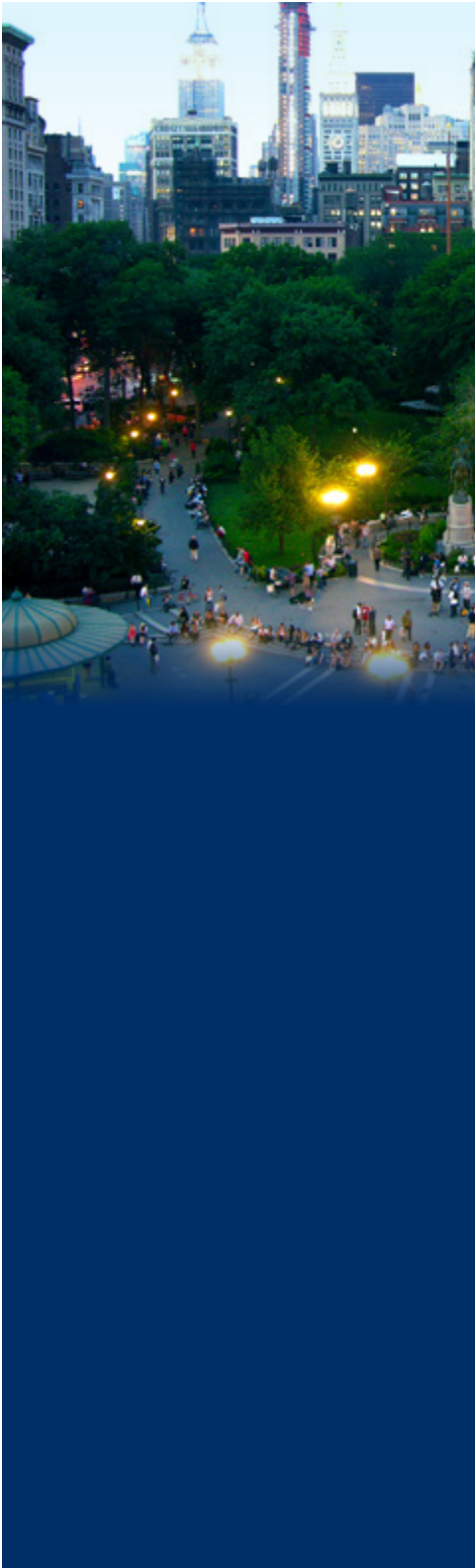


Collage Photo Credit: Dan Derrico, Katherine Dalldorf, Four Corners Media, NYCEDC

FIGURE 1

The Plan Framework

GOAL	STRATEGY	INITIATIVE		
Reimagine New York’s Business Districts as Vibrant 24/7 Destinations	Create flexibility to repurpose space and fill vacancies with a variety of uses	1. Make Midtown and other business districts more live-work-play		
		2. Update zoning to provide flexibility for businesses to thrive		
		3. Align incentives to help maintain vibrant business districts		
	Invest in beautiful, permanent public space	Improve quality-of-life issues across our business districts, such as sustainability and cleanliness	4. Create a world-class network of public space in Midtown	
			5. Make public realm improvements across all five boroughs	
			6. Update zoning to facilitate green energy investments and energy efficiency retrofits	
			7. Support innovative financing mechanisms for green building retrofits	
			8. Reimagine waste containerization and collection	
			9. Create a permanent Open Restaurants Program	
			10. Create Director of Public Realm position within City Hall	
			11. Invest in public space maintenance to achieve clean streets	
			12. Make sidewalk shed reforms	
			13. Launch City-affiliated public-private partnership to build capacity of local organizations to support commercial corridors and spur innovation	
	Offer new reasons to go to business districts		14. Activate storefronts	
			15. Expand Open Streets	
			16. Enliven public space with programming, art, and tactical transformations	
			17. Invest in culture, supporting artists, artist spaces, and artist organizations	
Make It Easier for New Yorkers to Get to Work	Increase supply of mass transit options	18. Create a sustainable operating budget model for the MTA		
		19. Maintain Peak Subway Service and Improve the Frequency and Reliability of Subway		
		20. Create an affordable and integrated regional rail network		
		21. Increase bus speeds		
		22. Make transit more accessible for people with disabilities		
		23. Advance key transit service enhancement and system expansion projects		
		24. Invest in protected bikeway infrastructure and improve access to bikes, e-bikes, and bike storage		
		Reduce demand for cars and trucks		25. Firmly support congestion pricing
				26. Develop a new approach to curb management
				27. Enable widespread use of sustainable alternative freight
Strengthen employment hubs and workspaces across all five boroughs, so that people can work closer to their homes		28. Invest in employment hubs around transit, industry clusters, and anchor institutions		
		29. Leverage City agency office space to anchor commercial hubs		
		30. Accelerate modernization of libraries to support remote work across the city		
Generate Inclusive, Future-Focused Growth	Establish New York City as a hub for future industries and innovation	31. Make New York the hub for urban innovation		
		32. Invest in future-focused sectors where New York has a competitive advantage		
		33. Develop regional strategies that foster mutually beneficial connections between NYC and the surrounding region		
	Ensuring that workers have access to housing by dramatically increasing our supply, with a “moonshot” goal of meeting the need for 500,000 units over the next decade		34. Make regulatory and legislative changes to reduce barriers to housing growth	
			35. Update zoning code to increase the supply of supportive housing	
	Ensure that growth and access to opportunity is fair and equitable		36. Ensure that all New York families have access to affordable, high-quality childcare	
			37. Reduce barriers to entering the workforce for people with disabilities	
			38. Connect workers and students to jobs of the future through a workforce infra-structure that is simple, transparent, and coordinated with industry and academia	
			39. Improve access to capital and technical assistance for BIPOC entrepreneurs with a one-stop program	
40. Reduce the burdens required to establish and maintain M/WBE certification				



GOAL 1

Reimagine New York's Business Districts as Vibrant 24/7 Destinations

Around the world, our business districts have historically become a shorthand for the energy and ambition driving the city forward, featuring crowded streets filled with people from everywhere, varied storefronts, and leading global companies, who draw on this extraordinary concentration of talent across industries to fuel their own innovation and productivity.

In recent decades, New York City's growing, diverse population was reflected in the vibrancy of its street life, which featured workers, residents, and tourists from across all five boroughs, the greater metropolitan region, and the world. During this time, New York developed a series of new business districts that embraced this dynamic diversity. These districts became known for their vital mix of offices, active retail stores, restaurants, and public spaces—offering unique value to employers and employees alike.

The COVID-19 pandemic threatened this vibrancy. Weekday foot traffic in business districts dropped 13 percent in 2020. At the same time, tourism plummeted to 22.3 million visitors compared to the 66.6 million who visited in 2019.¹⁸⁷

But while traditional forms of street vibrancy were restricted, New Yorkers were creative and resilient. They developed new formal and informal ways to gather, build, create, and experience life together in the early years of the pandemic, whether through new neighborhood Open Streets and Open Restaurants or impromptu performance art in the public realm.

And in the three years since the start of the pandemic, slowly but surely, street vibrancy in New York City's business districts has largely recovered. Foot traffic across business districts has returned to 90 percent of 2019, and consumer spending on retail

and entertainment is at 107 percent of 2019 levels on a typical weekday. Restaurant and bar spend, however, remains at 78 percent on an average weekday.¹⁸⁸ But the type and nature of recovery has varied across business districts.¹⁸⁹

Virtually all of the city's business districts outside of Manhattan have surpassed pre-pandemic consumer retail spending, including Fordham Plaza (up 68%), Bronx Hub (up 59%), Broadway Junction (up 55%), Long Island City (up 35%), Jamaica (up 21%), Flushing (up 11%), Downtown Brooklyn (up 20%), Forest Hills (up 19%), and DUMBO (up 17%).¹⁹⁰

But even with that growth, the city has yet to recover 12 percent of total private sector jobs lost during the pandemic,¹⁹¹ and overall office vacancies have increased by 94 percent.^{192,193} That's because Midtown, Midtown South, and Lower Manhattan together represented 45 percent of NYC jobs and 80 percent of all NYC office space,^{194,195} which as a sector generates 25 percent of the City's property tax revenues¹⁹⁶ and two-thirds of the city's total GDP.¹⁹⁷ And while other business districts have recovered in terms of retail spend and foot traffic, Midtown and Lower Manhattan have not. Midtown and Lower Manhattan are still 9 percent and 1 percent below their pre-pandemic retail spending levels and 35 percent and 36 percent below pre-pandemic restaurant and bar spend spending, with foot traffic still down by 23 percent and 18 percent respectively.¹⁹⁸

Why should New Yorkers across all five boroughs care if Midtown and Lower Manhattan are struggling, especially if they've seen their own local commercial corridors rebound and even thrive in the last year? Because even if an individual's job is located somewhere else, Manhattan's business districts are New York City's hubs for global business dominance, generating 58.5 percent of the City's office and retail property tax revenues and 18 percent of overall citywide property tax revenue.¹⁹⁹ This tax base powers the government spending on physical and social infrastructure that touches every New Yorker, whether it's paving roads, providing public education, or running senior centers and libraries. Simply put, we must stabilize our Manhattan business districts so that we can continue to invest throughout the five boroughs.

The significance of Midtown and Lower Manhattan resonates beyond the city. Before the pandemic,

Manhattan welcomed 664,000 regional commuters per day on average—the majority in Midtown, Midtown South, and Lower Manhattan.²⁰⁰ These commuters, if they work from home, may spend their dollars in other states. Meanwhile, international business travelers rely on a central, convenient destination for meetings to make their trips worthwhile. Companies chose to locate in Midtown because they knew it would position them to compete globally, offer access to a concentration of industries across sectors, and attract workers from around the world.

The city's infrastructure has been designed to support this influx of workers, with a combined 28 subway service lines, 25 commuter rail lines, 11 ferry routes, a dense bus network, and a robust Citibike system with over 1,500 stations. Much of this infrastructure is designed to connect people to the city's Core Employment Hubs, which also makes them the most sustainable places to focus our commercial density.

Over the years, the extraordinary commercial concentration in Midtown and Lower Manhattan have generated abundant returns, fueling an ecosystem that supports the most far-flung business travelers and the local owners of a corner deli, while producing revenues to fund services across the entire city. That's why, before the pandemic, when workers were simply required to show up in Manhattan's business districts every day (and did), we could gloss over an inconvenient fact: a lot of people don't really like it there. Now that workers have more choices, an overwhelming number—still more than 50 percent—are deciding not to make the daily trek into the office.²⁰¹ The sleek but anonymous streets that empty out every night and weekend lack the life, interest, energy, and beauty that brought many to New York in the first place. In this new world of choice for many employers and businesses, we need to entice people to come by creating a place they want to be.

That means we cannot simply revive Midtown and our other business districts. We must reimagine them.

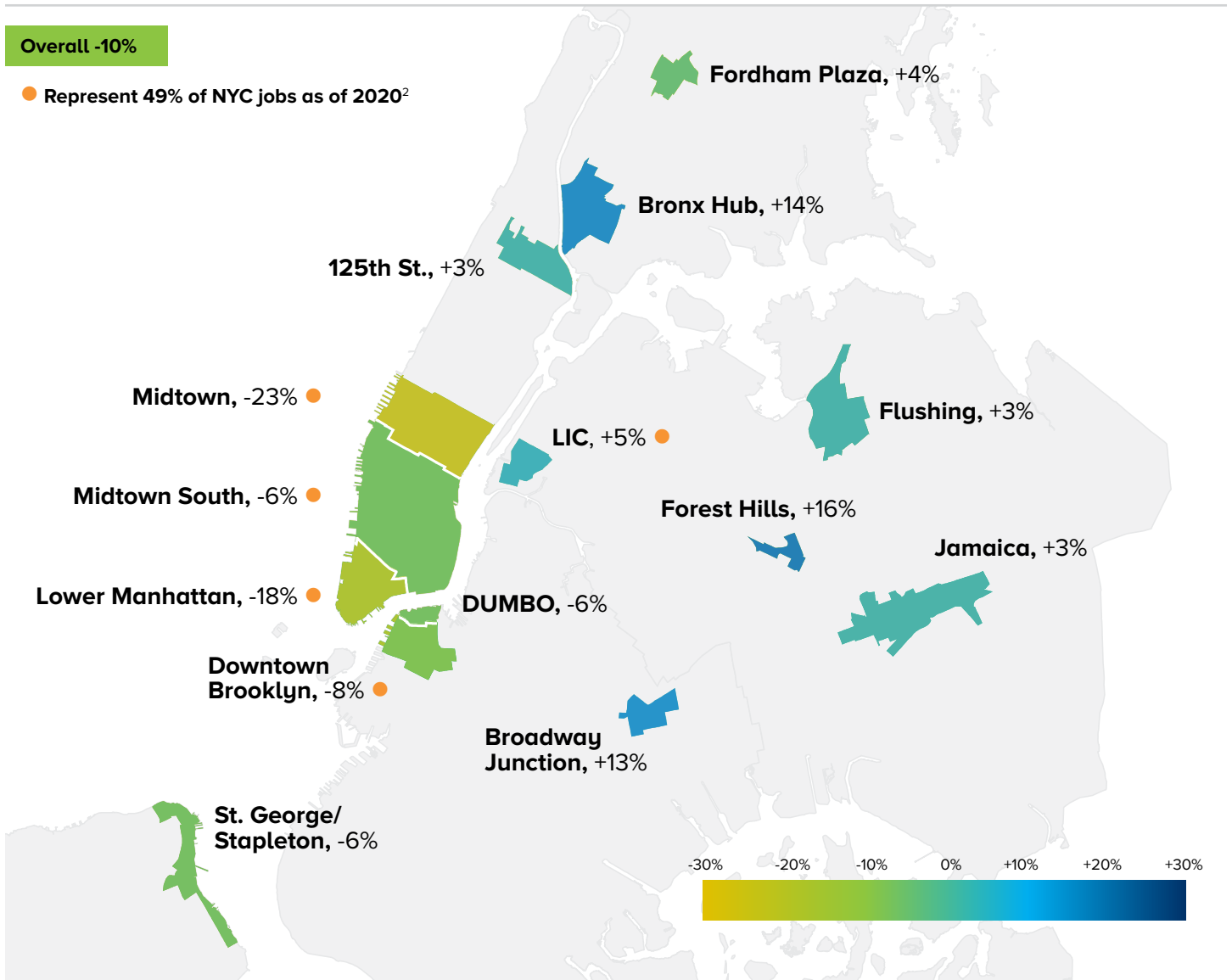
That is why we will pursue public realm improvements and a comprehensive public realm vision to establish Midtown as one of the world's best places, with striking new signature parks, new plazas, widened sidewalks, safer intersections, faster buses, improved and expanded bike lanes, and inviting landscaping.

FIGURE 11

While most business districts have recovered to 2019 pedestrian volumes, recovery in Midtown and Lower Manhattan has been slower

Average weekday foot traffic in business districts^{1,3}

% change in daily average for Jan–Sept '22 vs. Jan–Sept '19



Source: Replica

1. The Panel's scope includes other BIDS that are not shown on the map. However, the Replica data extracts are unable to capture information on activity for these regions given that the geographic area is too small to yield a representative sample size.

2. Based on NYCEDC analysis of QCEW microdata Q4 2019

3. Over 24 hours

Note: Trends estimates are based on a composite of data sources, including but not limited to mobile location and financial transaction data. For spending data, advanced modeling and statistical weighting methods are applied to generate a representative weekly total estimate of consumer spending activity. Consumer spending data shows the estimated consumer spending that occurred in the selected geography in a given week. Consumer spending includes all transactions — including credit card, debit card, and cash transactions — that take place at a point of sale, such as at retail stores, supermarkets, restaurants, taxis, and bars. The dataset informing the Panel's analysis is based on data, for each geography, of all spending that takes place at brick and mortar locations in a given census tract, regardless of where the purchaser lives. Spend data does not account for inflation.

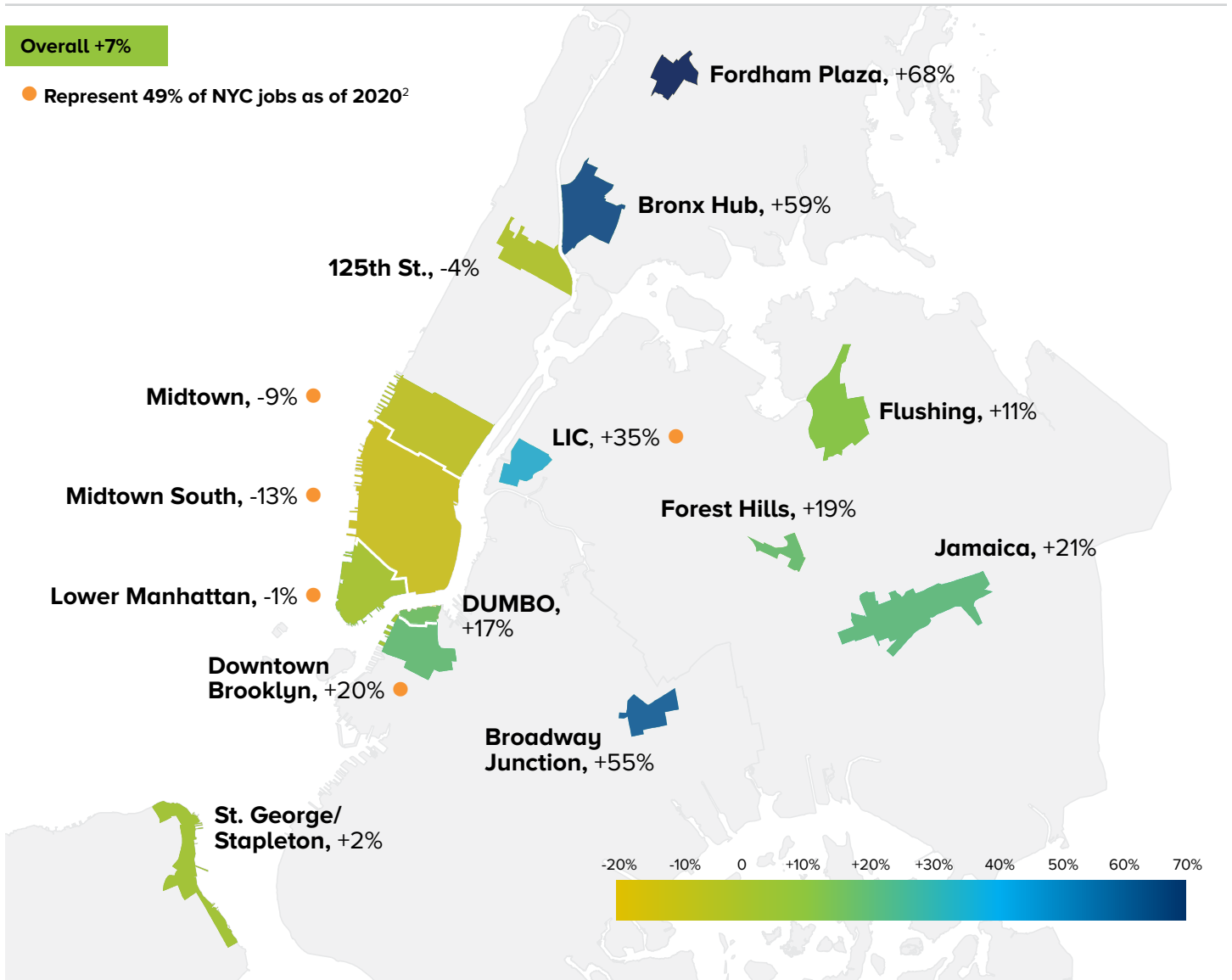
FIGURE 12

Midtown / Lower Manhattan have not fully recovered to 2019 consumer retail spend levels

Average weekday consumer retail spend in business districts^{1,3,4}

% change in daily avg for Jan-Sept '22 vs. Jan-Sept '19

Weekdays only



Source: Replica

1. The Panel's scope includes other BIDS that are not shown on the map. However, the Replica data extracts are unable to capture information on activity for these regions given that the geographic area is too small to yield a representative sample size.

2. Based on NYCEDC analysis of QCEW microdata Q4 2019

3. Over 24 hours

4. Does not account for inflation

Note: Trends estimates are based on a composite of data sources, including but not limited to mobile location and financial transaction data. For spending data, advanced modeling and statistical weighting methods are applied to generate a representative weekly total estimate of consumer spending activity. Consumer spending data shows the estimated consumer spending that occurred in the selected geography in a given week. Consumer spending includes all transactions — including credit card, debit card, and cash transactions — that take place at a point of sale, such as at retail stores, supermarkets, restaurants, taxis, and bars. The dataset informing the Panel's analysis is based on data, for each geography, of all spending that takes place at brick and mortar locations in a given census tract, regardless of where the purchaser lives. Spend data does not account for inflation.

And, in Lower Manhattan, we must build on the investments from the first two decades of this century and seek to further transform this walkable neighborhood into a truly pedestrian-friendly destination for office workers, residents, and tourists alike.

At the same time, we must recognize and address the growth we've seen in other business districts and plan to confront persistent citywide challenges related to the public realm. Despite strides in recent years toward rebalancing the streets toward pedestrians, the data remains stark: 75 percent of our street space is devoted to driving and private car storage²⁰² even though only 4 percent of outer borough commuters to Manhattan drive.²⁰³

Additionally, clean streets are essential to commercial growth in the business districts. Yet New York City streets increasingly fail to meet public expectations for cleanliness. In September 2022, there was a 52 percent increase citywide in 311 complaints about “dirty conditions, missed collections, and rat sightings.”²⁰⁴

Our business districts do not share these burdens equally, and COVID-19 exacerbated these disparities. Even before the pandemic, New York’s commercial

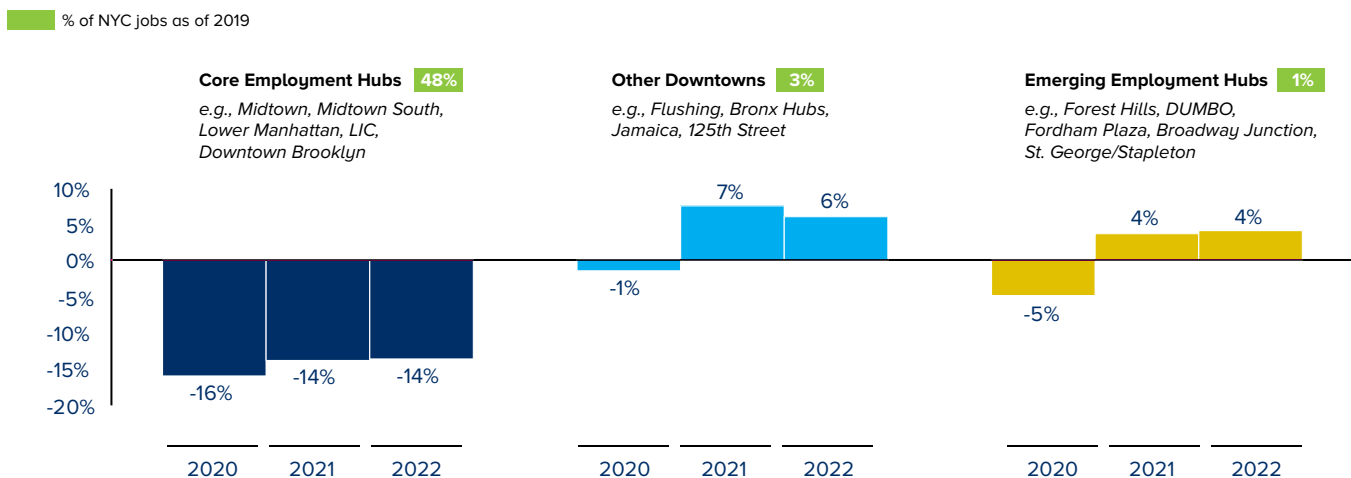
corridors were not equally resourced. While Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are uniquely designed to address neighborhood quality-of-life issues with nimble, locally customized services, smaller BIDs, often in lower-income neighborhoods, are often severely constrained by lack of resources from making more transformational change. The brunt of the closures associated with the pandemic impacted small business owners and Black business owners. Of the approximately 26,000 businesses that closed permanently between April 2020 and March 2021, approximately 90 percent were small businesses with fewer than 10 employees. And Black-owned businesses were more than twice as likely to close than white-owned businesses.²⁰⁵ Pedestrians with disabilities can also face challenges in these districts, which are not always designed and resourced to be fully inclusive.

New York’s public spaces can form the foundation of a strategy to make the city the world’s best place to work, especially in the Core Employment Hubs. That’s why we must prioritize more space for pedestrians, improve safety and cleanliness, accelerate street maintenance and repair, and encourage more equitable, local stewardship of commercial corridors

FIGURE 7

Trajectory of foot traffic recovery since 2019 has varied by type of NYC business district

Average weekday walking foot traffic, by type of business district and year^{1,3}



Source: Replica

1. The Panel’s scope includes other BIDs that are not shown on the map. However, the Replica data extracts are unable to capture information on activity for these regions given that the geographic area is too small to yield a representative sample size.

2. Based on NYCEDC analysis of QCEW microdata Q4 2019

3. Over 24 hours

Note: Trends estimates are based on a composite of data sources, including but not limited to mobile location and financial transaction data. For spending data, advanced modeling and statistical weighting methods are applied to generate a representative weekly total estimate of consumer spending activity. Consumer spending data shows the estimated consumer spending that occurred in the selected geography in a given week. Consumer spending includes all transactions — including credit card, debit card, and cash transactions — that take place at a point of sale, such as at retail stores, supermarkets, restaurants, taxis, and bars. The dataset informing the Panel’s analysis is based on data, for each geography, of all spending that takes place at brick and mortar locations in a given census tract, regardless of where the purchaser lives. Spend data does not account for inflation.

across the city. These steps will help us build on the gains we've made outside of Manhattan, while enabling Midtown and Lower Manhattan not only to recover, but to thrive.

To make New York a more walkable city, with world-class open space, and vibrant, diverse street life, we are prepared to take the following steps:

STRATEGY

Create flexibility to repurpose space and fill vacancies with a variety of uses

The pandemic has revealed the rigidity of the zoning governing our business districts. With the office market in flux, we have a prime opportunity to revisit some of the rules that currently restrict where businesses and homes can be located. By making these regulations more flexible and responsive to market needs, we can responsibly allow our business districts to evolve into more dynamic mixed-use neighborhoods that draw workers, residents, and tourists. Particularly in Midtown, these tools can help property owners reimagine their spaces to meet the ever-growing need for housing; create more energy efficient, amenity-rich spaces that meet the needs of a more demanding workforce; and explore innovative new models like colocating offices with childcare or educational and training spaces.

INITIATIVE 1

MAKE MIDTOWN AND OTHER BUSINESS DISTRICTS MORE LIVE-WORK-PLAY

Today, outdated regulations artificially stifle the natural evolution of New York City's business districts into more dynamic places where people live and work—particularly in Midtown. Many of the city's other business districts were intentionally designed with the flexibility to integrate housing, office, retail, and public space—enlivening the streets at all hours with the energy of a great New York neighborhood.

But Midtown was designed in a different age, when it was more common to separate where people lived from where they worked. The result is a dense

business district that has grown into a global center of commerce—but also into a place where, except in a few subdistricts like Times Square, near Madison Square Garden, and the Theater District, side streets and stretches of avenues are empty at night and on weekends. During the week, Midtown is filled mainly with workers who swarm in during the morning, flood the streets at lunch, and then leave at the end of the day. Now, with average daily office occupancy rates still at 47 percent,²⁰⁶ nearly half of those workers are gone, too, and the stores and restaurants that depended on them are suffering.

Midtown will always be a global center of commerce, but there is an opportunity for it also to become more mixed use, with more space for housing and more residents enlivening the neighborhood during nights and weekends and supporting local stores. With office trends still in flux, it would be hasty to definitively recalibrate the balance between office space, housing, and retail based on today's snapshot of office demand. Policy interventions that are overly aggressive and would cause an overcorrection away from office space could pose real risk to the future of our city. But it would be equally imprudent for us to allow our existing outdated regulations to prevent the market from evolving itself. Today, even if all stakeholders—companies, developers, and workers—aligned behind a more dynamic mix of uses in Midtown to match the energy and diversity that has fueled economic growth in other neighborhoods—our current zoning framework stands in the way of that transition.

Other outdated rules impact the growth of our entire city, from limits imposed by a State-level law on the amount of high-density housing New York City can build to archaic regulations that impose bizarre constraints on the kinds of stores and businesses that can co-exist on a street, hampering retail growth and the success of small businesses. These regulatory constraints are not carefully crafted rules that serve useful purposes—they are relics from another time that we have never gotten around to updating. In 2022, as the city endeavors to recover from the effects of a global pandemic, they are barriers to economic recovery and growth. The time for change is upon us.

That is why in the next State legislative session and in City zoning text amendments in 2023 and 2024, we will seek to modernize outdated regulations that

prevent our business districts from evolving to meet the needs of today's companies, employees, residents, and retailers. This effort will include:

Modernizing regulations around office building conversions

Converting outdated office buildings to homes is one tool to soak up excess supply of commercial office space while also helping to tackle the housing affordability and supply crisis that we face as a nation. It has been 25 years since the City reassessed its guidelines around potential office conversions in portions of Manhattan's business districts. Back then, as part of an effort to address persistent vacancy and establish a new residential community in the Financial District, the City instituted a regulation that buildings in the district built 20 years earlier, before 1977, would be eligible to convert to housing under more permissive regulations than would normally have been allowed. These conversions played a major role in Lower Manhattan's recovery from the tragic events of September 11th—and its evolution into a mixed-use, around-the-clock neighborhood.

Despite the success we have seen downtown, conversion regulations have not been updated elsewhere. Office buildings in Midtown must now be more than half a century old, built before 1961, to qualify for the most lenient regulations for conversion to housing. This hasn't prevented some Midtown and other business district buildings constructed more recently from becoming outdated or obsolete; it has just limited the options available for reusing them to add to the overall vitality of the district.

We will refresh these regulations to allow more conversions of a broader range of office buildings within New York City's business districts. Office buildings built before December 1990 should have the same flexibility to convert to residential afforded to pre-1961 buildings today. Historically, a limited share of buildings eligible to convert actually do so, because of physical, financial and market factors. Policy can help to address some of these factors. Allowing conversions to move forward where appropriate and viable can ensure that older buildings do not add distress to an area and instead contribute to its vitality.

We will pursue statutory changes in the 2023 State legislative session that would enable these



conversions, and additional changes will be made through a City zoning text amendment that will follow.

In addition, the potential for residential conversion presents an opportunity to add affordable housing in neighborhoods with vast economic opportunity and few existing affordable units. Historically, while tax incentives have existed for new mixed-income construction, there have been no similar incentives for mixed-income residential conversions. An incentive to induce affordable housing in conversions should be considered.

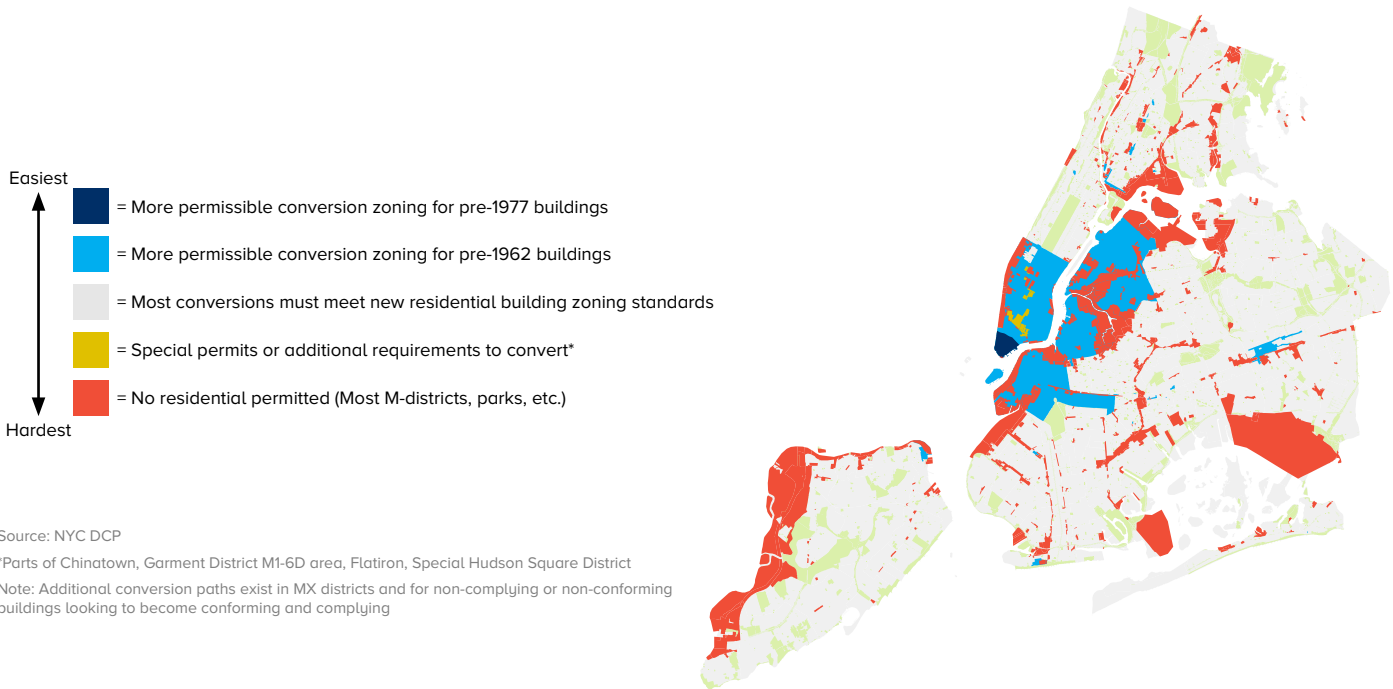
Empowering New York City to control its own housing density

When it comes to commercial buildings, and nearly all other types of buildings, New York City has the authority to regulate how tall and dense they should be, considering neighborhood context, sunlight and air, and other quality-of-life issues.

But when it comes to housing, New York City is arbitrarily and harmfully limited as to how much housing it can build. We can build dense offices but cannot freely build all of the homes our people need. This is because the State's Multiple Dwelling Law bars any residential development from exceeding 12 in its Floor Area Ratio (FAR), the ratio of total building area to area of the lot that it is on. As a result, fewer homes are built than are needed, rent is high, and an affordability crisis festers and threatens growth.

FIGURE 17

Permissibility of office to residential conversion under current zoning



Why was residential development limited in dense business districts in the first place? When the Zoning Resolution was adopted in 1961, standard business districts topped out at 15 FAR, with housing allowed at up to 12 FAR, reflecting the idea that these districts should be primarily commercial in nature even though residential uses would be allowed. In the more than half-century since, commercial FARs well into the 20s have become common in Midtown, but State-level regulations have left residential FARs stuck at 12. While these business districts should remain primarily commercial in nature, there is ample room to allow higher FARs for residential buildings to help catalyze business districts that are more mixed use.

Large office floor plates with vast amounts of interior space are not always well suited to residential conversions. Sometimes, a better option would be tearing a vacant and outdated building down and replacing it with modern construction better suited to residential housing. But these State law-imposed limitations on density may make the financial considerations of new buildings untenable and artificially constrain the city's housing supply.

We will work in 2023 to restore New York City's ability to control its own housing supply by amending the

State-level Multiple Dwelling Unit Law to remove the 12 FAR cap on residential buildings.

INITIATIVE 2

UPDATE ZONING TO PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY FOR BUSINESSES TO THRIVE

We will advance the NYC Department of City Planning (DCP)'s [City of Yes for Economic Opportunity](#) text amendment to provide local businesses with the flexibility they need to thrive in a post-pandemic city. That includes removing outdated limitations that put anachronistic constraints on where certain businesses can be located and how thriving local businesses can evolve and expand.

Currently, restaurants are allowed along every commercial street—and they can deliver large orders of food—but catering businesses are restricted in many of the same areas. Clothing stores are allowed in any retail space, but clothing rental businesses are not. Aerobics classes are allowed everywhere, but dance studios are limited. While many retail streets allow bike shops, rules frequently forbid bike repair services or rentals.

We will review and modernize these regulations with common-sense updates that support entrepreneurs seeking to start businesses, local stores seeking to expand, and developers who would like to rent their spaces but are hampered by these outdated, arcane, unnecessary, or confusing restrictions. This includes reforming rules on where certain businesses can be located, simplifying government rules that contribute to keeping storefronts vacant, and lifting regulations that keep businesses from evolving and expanding. Specifically, the City of Yes for Economic Opportunity initiative will:

- Identify and remove unnecessary limitations on which types of businesses are allowed in business districts.
- Allow for small-scale production space using clean technologies along commercial corridors.
- Ensure that buildings can evolve over time, including removing requirements to provide additional loading berths with building conversions.
- Make consistent and easier-to-understand ground floor urban design regulations.
- Create new zoning districts to allow for modern industrial loft buildings to accommodate job growth.

The DCP will certify City of Yes for Economic Opportunity into the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure in mid-2023.

INITIATIVE 3

ALIGN INCENTIVES TO HELP MAINTAIN VIBRANT BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Amidst an environment of elevated office vacancies, it is imperative that the City and State globally promote the virtues of doing business in New York City and make it easier for businesses to move or grow here.

In addition to leveraging the Mayor and Governor and their teams as key champions of New York City as the home for global industries and companies, the City will continue to expand the efforts of its Business Development Office, housed at New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), which

serves as a single point of contact to City government for medium and large businesses looking to stay in or expand to New York City. The team currently promotes New York City as open for business via its “Why NYC” marketing campaign and makes the city more inviting by working one-on-one with business leaders throughout their location decision-making process—helping them identify sites for their future space, supporting their HR and talent needs, and connecting them to other parts of City government. The expanded efforts will focus business attraction on sectors the NNY Panel has identified, including urban innovation, tech, life sciences, and offshore wind, and will leverage the power of the Mayor and other City and State leaders to drum up new leads via business development trips, pitching NYC at marquee conferences, and directly speaking with high-potential prospects.

Tax incentives are an important lever that the City and State use to drive business and real estate investments in targeted ways. While incentives alone may not drive decision-making, they can, when paired with other investments, lead to business expansion in New York City and building-level investments by property owners.

The City and State’s suite of tax incentives include both discretionary benefits (e.g., New York City Industrial Development Agency industrial and commercial programs, Excelsior Jobs Program) and as-of-right benefits (e.g., Industrial and Commercial Abatement Program, Relocation and Employment Assistance Program). These programs were developed over multiple decades and, as a result, they were not designed to support the investments that are needed to meet the current economic moment. To address this gap, the City and State will look to update these programs where appropriate to:

- Modernize the building stock by encouraging (re-)development of flexible-use and sustainable buildings.
- Support growth of businesses in high-priority sectors to create attractive jobs.
- Balance long-term growth across the boroughs, given that most programs today offer limited support for Midtown and Lower Manhattan.

First, the City and State will coordinate to promote utilization of existing discretionary programs citywide,

with a focus on high-priority sectors like technology and entertainment. The City will support New York City Industrial Development Agency (NYCIDA) program initiatives to provide incentives to property owners looking to improve office space in Manhattan. These efforts will help address office vacancy and improve street vibrancy in New York City's business districts.

Then the City and State will assess existing as-of-right programs to better align them with the City and State's policy goals, making appropriate program updates upon their respective expirations over the next 2-3 years. These efforts will make it easier for businesses to access, apply for, and benefit from multiple as-of-right programs.

STRATEGY

Invest in beautiful, permanent public space

The sense of connection, inspiration, and wonder fueled by New York's public spaces remains one of the city's greatest competitive advantages. But for too long Midtown has failed to realize the potential of its public realm. While ideas for improvement have been bandied about for decades, the implementation has been piecemeal—and the cost of that inaction is becoming clear. Now that employees have more choices, they are embracing other livelier places to do their work. Only 77 percent of weekday foot traffic has returned to Midtown in the first nine months of 2022, even as other business districts have nearly matched or exceeded their pre-pandemic levels of foot traffic—and the associated retail spending that comes from livelier streets.²⁰⁷ If we want Midtown to remain a global hub, it must be reimagined into an incredible place where people want to be. That transformation will be anchored by spectacular new public spaces that include striking signature parks, new plazas, widened sidewalks, bolstered cycling infrastructure, and inviting landscaping. We will also enhance public spaces in other commercial districts across the city to create a world-class public realm.

INITIATIVE 4

CREATE A WORLD-CLASS NETWORK OF PUBLIC SPACE IN MIDTOWN

In the aftermath of 9/11, one of New York's first rebuilding investments was to create pocket parks across Lower Manhattan. That's because the city recognized that parks and public space drive neighborhood vitality by drawing people outside and generating a sense of connection, safety, and joy. As employees ventured outside to new plazas to sit and drink coffee, friends picnicked on new lawns, children laughed as they ran through new playgrounds, and workers held meetings and wrote memos under the shade of new trees, life came back to Lower Manhattan. Great public space became the foundation of a comprehensive reimagining that within 10 years had drawn more than 10,000 new housing units, created 800,000 square feet of new retail space, and generated more than 12 million square feet of new office space, with vacancy rates dropping faster than in the rest of the region.²⁰⁸

The plans for Lower Manhattan had existed for decades. But until 9/11, we lacked the political will to get them done.

Today, Midtown is facing a similar moment of transition. We know what needs to be done to strengthen Midtown as one of the city's great mixed-use neighborhoods. We must reclaim street space for public plazas, build new pedestrian promenades and cycling paths, and create a network of world-class parks that knit the neighborhood into the rest of the city. And, in concert with a new approach to curb management (as outlined in Initiative 26), we can create new public spaces that can be used dynamically and flexibly depending on the time of day, season or year—whether for eating, public arts programming, pop-up retail, or commercial loading, to name just a few.

As part of the "New" New York Plan, we must reshape Midtown's public realm, while creating a master plan for Midtown that stitches together decades of ideas into a comprehensive vision for its future as another great pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use global center of commerce, alongside Lower Manhattan.

A new grand square on Vanderbilt Avenue at Grand Central Terminal to greet commuters, local workers, residents and visitors as they experience new public space that marries an iconic landmark building and key piece of regional infrastructure with the most modern new office buildings in the city. A plaza embedded within a new set of interlocking pedestrian spaces, sidewalk enhancements, and transit corridor upgrades. The possibility of further connectivity through the Grand Central viaduct to a future linear park stretching for nearly a mile up Park Avenue, where people could stroll through the canyons of buildings along grassy fields and settle next to bright riots of tulips with a book and a picnic.

Or imagine stepping out of Central Park into Columbus Circle and experiencing one of the world's greatest new promenades on a reimagined Broadway, featuring wide sidewalks, lush plantings, ample seating, and new public plazas leading you through the city's most iconic sites: into Midtown, past Bryant Park, across Herald Square, through the Flatiron District and Madison Square Park all the way down to Union Square.

And, layered on top of these interventions, a comprehensive vision in a new master plan for a further network of public spaces that will blossom across

East and West Midtown, including plazas, broader sidewalks, more seating, lovelier landscaping, safer crossings, and expanded bike lanes.

People from all over the world will be drawn here to gather, sit, stroll, meet, read, picnic, and work in a network of welcoming, beautiful public spaces that draw from the energy of the surrounding city and concentrate it in one unmissable place. This in turn will attract more companies, who understand the value of economic hubs that cut across industries and appeal to large numbers of employees. By reimagining the public realm, we can create the foundation for the city's next generation of economic growth.

We can pursue some of the existing project concepts for East and West Midtown to build immediate momentum for change. These build on the existing framework of the East Midtown Governing Group's Public Realm Improvement Concept Plan, which is a priority list of improvements to bolster and enhance East Midtown's status as a premier business district,²⁰⁹ and would accelerate certain improvements.

East Midtown

The East Midtown business district is one of the highest-profile job centers in the world, home to New



Conceptual Diagram of Potential East Midtown Public Realm Network, for illustrative purposes only. Rendering by FXCollaborative

York's iconic Grand Central Terminal, many Fortune 500 companies, tens of millions of square feet of office space and hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Yet, despite serving as a gateway to New York for 750,000 commuters and tourists every day,²¹⁰ the public realm is dominated by narrow sidewalks and streets for cars. As the Public Realm Vision Plan for East Midtown noted, "East Midtown deserves a public realm as iconic as its buildings."²¹¹

The opportunity is there. Streets and sidewalks make up 30 percent of East Midtown, representing a full 60 acres;²¹² claiming even a fraction of that land for public space would transform the experience of the neighborhood and help drive New York's economic recovery.

While ideas on delivering this new vision for East Midtown have existed for years, the funding has not. The moment to summon the will and the budget is now, alongside certain contributions from private stakeholders, to kickstart the neighborhood's renewal. And we will collaborate with local partners and stakeholders on all appropriate further study, public engagement, and review processes.

Together, the projects described below will create world-class public space in the district around Grand Central, with new plazas, widened sidewalks, better lighting, space for cyclists, and safer intersections. They complement studies for the long-held dream of a world-class linear park stretching for almost a mile up Park Avenue, from East 40th Street all the way to 57th Street, which will be implemented in coordination with the Metro-North rebuild of the underlying

train shed; the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) is currently procuring the landscape architect to guide this process for the Park Avenue linear park.

We will pursue:

- Expanding the Pershing Square Plaza to East 40th Street to create more space for people.
- Creating shared streets on Vanderbilt Avenue from East 43rd Street to East 47th Street, East 44th Street between Lexington Avenue and Park Avenue, and East 41st Street between Fifth Avenue and Lexington Avenue, to create more public space and make these streets safer for pedestrians, vehicles, and bicyclists.
- Making Third Avenue, Lexington Avenue, Park Avenue, and Madison Avenue safer with intersection improvements.
- Making Fifth Avenue from Bryant Park to Central Park a vibrant corridor for pedestrians by expanding sidewalks, improving lighting, and adding more seating.

In addition to these projects, we will continue to study and advance these project concepts:

- Turning the Grand Central Viaduct around Grand Central Terminal into public space, creating a key link in a grand promenade beginning at the Pershing Square Plaza, and connecting to the expanded Park Avenue malls.
- Widening the Park Avenue malls between East 46th Street and East 57th Street to create linear



Conceptual Rendering of Shared Streets, for illustrative purposes only. Rendering by FXCollaborative



Conceptual Rendering of Greeley Square, for illustrative purposes only. Rendering by FXCollaborative

park space along this key corridor and bring the “park” back to Park Avenue.

West Midtown

West Midtown is poised for considerable private and public sector investment and features its own iconic buildings such as Moynihan Station, legendary sites like Times Square, and essential gateways like Penn Station and the Port Authority Bus Terminal. But like East Midtown, this district features limited or under-built public spaces.

As a result, despite being surrounded by some of the city’s most dynamic places, including Central Park, Rockefeller Center, and the Flatiron district, West Midtown’s lack of landscaped streets, public plazas, or a network of shared streets and parks can make the area feel isolated and unwelcoming.

By creating a thriving public realm that forges new connections to the surrounding neighborhoods, we can transform West Midtown into an essential destination that helps fuel the city’s economic recovery.

Pursue the Broadway Vision Plan

The dramatic improvements of the Broadway Vision Plan transform this 2-mile corridor into a grand promenade passing through some of the city’s most iconic sites, including Central Park, Herald and Greeley Squares, Madison Square Park, and Union Square. The plan makes the street safer for pedestrians,

cyclists, and vehicles, while also providing more public space.

Along the route, temporary plazas in the Flatiron district become permanent fixtures; Herald and Greeley Square public plazas are redesigned to provide more public space and bike lanes and improve the flow of traffic; and public space around Union Square is expanded.

Improve public realm around major transit hubs

Today, the walk between Times Square and Penn Station can feel crowded and unpleasant. The walk between Penn Station and Hudson Yards can feel desolate and uninviting. By widening sidewalks, introducing more pedestrian islands, completing gaps in the bike network on the avenues, and studying a range of tools that prioritize pedestrians on 33rd Street between Herald/Greeley and the Hudson River Waterfront, we can strengthen seamless, sustainable connections between these critical locations and make the experience of traveling between them more inviting.

This would complement existing projects that are funded and in design, which will dramatically improve the area’s public realm. Around Penn Station, there will be a new 8-acre park that forms the heart of a new public realm around the nation’s busiest transit center. Shared streets will help to establish a better balance between pedestrians, cyclists, and cars; the vision also includes more protected bike lanes and parking and a new station entrance on 33rd Street.

The area around the Port Authority Bus Terminal is particularly intimidating for travelers, with wide streets clogged with traffic, torrents of commuters hurrying to and from their destinations, and meager public space. DOT has recently reconfigured Eighth Avenue with widened sidewalks and bike lanes, but the limitations of temporary measures like street paint and new planters are clear. Recognizing these challenges, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has proposed a 3.5-acre park over an enclosed ramp structure that links the Lincoln Tunnel with the bus terminal. The creation of this new public green space will provide beauty, a respite for travelers, and relief from crowding.

Complete Hudson Yards signature park

Hudson Park and Boulevard was always envisioned as the public heart of the city's new Hudson Yards district. The proposed park spans six city blocks, with four segments already complete and two funded and in design. Together, this completed park will fulfill the vision for spectacular new public space as the anchor for the city's newest premier business district.

Strengthen river-to-river corridors

We will also explore ways to improve some of Manhattan's most important—but congested—streets

running across the island from river to river, to improve pedestrian travel, bicycling, and transit access along 14th Street, 34th Street and 42nd Street.

We will pursue:

- Completing the Broadway Vision Plan, by making the Flatiron plazas permanent through capital construction; redesigning the Herald and Greeley Square public plazas to provide more public space and bike lanes and improve the flow of traffic; and expanding the public space around Union Square.
- Implementing pedestrian improvements (wider sidewalks, more pedestrian islands, closing gaps in the bicycle network) on Seventh Avenue and Eighth Avenue and key north-to-south corridors that link Times Square and Penn Station.

In addition to these projects, we will continue to study and advance these project concepts:

- Additional pedestrian plaza space on Broadway around Macy's.
- Improvements on 14th, 34th, and 42nd Streets, key east-to-west corridors, to make pedestrian travel, bicycling, and transit safer and faster, river to river.



Conceptual rendering of Aerial View of Flatiron Plaza and Worth Square looking south from West 25th Street and Fifth Ave. for illustrative purposes only. Credit: NYC DDC / AECOM and MNLA



Conceptual Rendering of Fifth Avenue. Credit: Fifth Avenue Association

INITIATIVE 5

MAKE PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS ACROSS ALL FIVE BOROUGHS

While Midtown is the largest business district in the city, other business districts remain key commercial centers, employment hubs, mixed-use downtowns, and transportation gateways. As we are investing in Midtown, we will also explore public realm plans in other business districts. While these districts, with a combined total office space of approximately 115 million square feet,^{213, 214, 215} are more modest compared to the total commercial office market of more than 500 million square feet,²¹⁶ they are key business districts serving dense populations of residents, workers, and commuters.

The City will pursue public realm interventions in key pedestrian-focused locations of the Financial District, Downtown Brooklyn, and Long Island City, to bolster foot traffic and retail spend recovery in these Core Employment Hubs:

Lower Manhattan

- Upgrade the Stock Exchange District to create identity and a sense of place, enhance the pedestrian environment and improve mobility, rationalize deliveries, and separate trucks from pedestrians.

Downtown Brooklyn

- Reinvigorate Fulton Street to support its active commercial uses by adding street trees, improving tree pits, and adding seating, all of which will create a more attractive streetscape. Leveraging ongoing private development within the neighborhood will expand the reach of these treatments.



Conceptual rendering of Fulton Street, Brooklyn. Credit: Downtown Brooklyn Partnership

Long Island City, Queens

- Introduce pedestrian safety improvements and new public space around Court Square, including the construction of a shared street on Court Square West, reconstruction of Thomson Avenue from Jackson Avenue to 44th Drive, with additional public space on both sides, and a new pedestrian crossing at the intersection of Jackson

Avenue and Pearson Street. This Vision Zero project will modernize the local street network in this dynamic outer-borough growth center to better meet the needs of its expanding residential population and workforce.

- Complement recently completed protected bike lanes on 44th Drive (from 23rd Street to Vernon Boulevard) with additional protected bike lanes on 11th Street (44th Drive to Jackson Avenue) and Jackson Avenue (from 11th Street to Vernon Boulevard).
- Make additional pedestrian improvements on Thompson Avenue, including traffic calming, sidewalk extensions, new public space, and signal timing upgrades on Thompson Avenue between 44th Drive and Jackson Avenue between 44th Drive and Court Square.

The City (DOT, NYCEDC, DCP and other relevant agencies) will collaborate with other public sector players, where applicable, and local stakeholders to continue to explore additional potential public realm projects in these Core Employment Hubs, as well as in other borough downtowns and key transportation gateways that have strong foot traffic and a deep need for public realm investment to prioritize the pedestrian experience. We will also explore potential investments in emerging employment hubs. Future investments in these places would further catalyze private investment in new commercial development

in these locations outside of the traditional Midtown business district and continue to bring jobs closer to where people live. The list of potential projects below is exploratory, and further refinement would happen in collaboration with local partners and stakeholders on all appropriate study, public engagement, and review processes.

Lower Manhattan

- Strengthen identity and a sense of place by creating iconic spaces and gateways into and through the Financial District (FiDi) neighborhood. Take advantage of the irregular and tightly knit street network by creating a series of pedestrianized and shared streets. Enhance the pedestrian environment by upgrading long-standing interim materials and finishes with permanent features such as new lighting, seating, planters, and other amenities that enhance the public experience. Minimize the visual appearance of and pedestrian conflicts related to security infrastructure by integrating with amenities that benefit the public to exude a less hostile and more welcoming image throughout the neighborhood.
- Establish vibrant, flexible public spaces for recreation and future programming at key areas underneath and around the Brooklyn Bridge in Lower Manhattan. The project, which would follow the completion of ongoing repairs to the bridge, also seeks to revitalize the streetscape along



Conceptual Rendering of Broad Street. Credit: Downtown Alliance

portions of Park Row, Frankfurt, Pearl, and Rose Streets to create a 21st-century gateway between Chinatown, the Seaport District, and the Financial District.

- Ensure that ongoing resiliency projects along the waterfront remain integrated with a robust public realm vision for the neighborhood.

Park Avenue and 125th Street, Manhattan

- Transform the intersection of Park Avenue and 125th Street into vibrant public space with a new plaza, improved lighting, more seating, wider sidewalks, and safer crossings.

Downtown Brooklyn

- In the short term, continue to focus on developing a pedestrian priority district with an expanded set of shared streets with limited vehicular access, making the streets safer and friendlier to pedestrians, including expanded sidewalks.
- Unite both sides of Flatbush Avenue with clear gateways and pedestrian-forward crossings. In addition, pedestrian safety improvements and protected bike lanes will be enhanced at the intersection of Flatbush Avenue, Atlantic Avenue, and 4th Avenue.
- In the long term, connect the new Brooklyn Bridge bikeway in a stronger way to Downtown Brooklyn to enhance the pedestrian and cyclist experience for tourists and residents using the Brooklyn Bridge. Steps toward this goal include expanding the linear park and widened sidewalks along Adams Street with a two-way protected bike lane median.
- Improve the Ashland Place corridor public realm with upgrades for safety, connectivity, and access to jobs. Steps towards this goal include renovating University Place on Flatbush Avenue to enhance its connections to the Long Island University (LIU) campus, strengthening pedestrian and bicycle connections to Fort Greene Park from the Brooklyn Hospital Campus, improving north-to-south pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Navy Yard, and providing stronger pedestrian safety and amenities in the area of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE), which is a deleterious barrier to neighborhood safety and connectivity.



Photo Credit: Downtown Brooklyn Partnership

- Improve bicycle connections throughout the neighborhood by adding new lanes and converting existing on-street lanes to protected lanes.
- Leverage the Old Fulton Street corridor as a gateway to the business district's commercial core by making temporary plaza spaces permanent.

Broadway Junction, Brooklyn

- Improve the transfer from the subway station to the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) Station by improving streetscape conditions on Van Sinderen Avenue, installing wayfinding and better lighting, and improving sidewalk conditions.
- Build a Broadway Junction public plaza and work to develop a strong local maintenance partner.
- Improve the conditions under the elevated structure with better lighting and more public space.

Bronx Hub

- Create a neighborhood plan focused on River Avenue/Harlem River Waterfront/Civic Center.
- Expand sidewalks in and around the Hub where pedestrian traffic is the highest and where other infrastructure constrains mobility.
- Improve the streetscape to make the Hub and sidewalks safer and more enjoyable.
- Implement pedestrian and bicycle safety projects on the portion of the Grand Concourse to the south of 161st Street.
- Continue to build out a series of pedestrian priority streets and shared streets throughout the neighborhood.

- Improve Third Avenue and 138th Street and the 138th Street Corridor; advance the next phase of the Grand Concourse.

Morris Park, the Bronx

- Create a new plaza and associated maintenance plan on Morris Park Avenue at the Station landing to serve as a gateway and community gathering space.
- Ensure key intersections and corridors throughout the neighborhood are safe for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles.
- Improve neighborhood wayfinding to help pedestrians reach the station and local institutions.

Long Island City, Queens

- Help improve pedestrian and streetscape conditions underneath the elevated train structure and along key streets, such as 44th Drive, Vernon Boulevard, 11th Street, and 21st Street. The improvements, where feasible, could explore features like plantings, fixed and movable seating, lighting, perimeter treatments such as fencing where necessary, and green infrastructure (to manage stormwater runoff from bridge surfaces).
- Create better pedestrian and bike infrastructure and new open spaces with green infrastructure around Queens Plaza and within Court Square.
- Make key intersections on Jackson Avenue, Thompson Avenue/Queens Boulevard/Van Dam/Jackson Avenue around LaGuardia Community College safer for all users.
- Build out a robust bike network across LIC with innovative approaches to keep lanes clear of motor vehicle intrusion.
- Redesign Vernon Mall/Borden Avenue to enhance pedestrian safety and experience.

Jamaica, Queens

- Conduct street and sidewalk repairs and reconstruction with standard materials on Jamaica Avenue between Sutphin Avenue and 169th Street.
- Improve the Archer Avenue bus hub, including the “teardrop” and the sidewalk bus terminal area.

- Improve pedestrian connectivity and comfort throughout the neighborhood with a particular focus on north-to-south connections across the LIRR and subway tracks, lighting, and safety, as well as east-to-west connections to and from York College.
- Repair and expand sidewalks where appropriate with standard materials.
- Improve the bicycle network and expand it neighborhood wide, including a network of low-stress bike boulevards, informed by robust community engagement.
- Improve the public realm and streetscape on key corridors such as Jamaica Avenue, Sutphin Boulevard, Liberty Avenue, and Hillside Avenue.
- Invest in additional public/open space with a defined maintenance plan.

Flushing, Queens

- Improve pedestrian safety and comfort through intersection improvements, sidewalk widenings and other measures as advised by the Citywide Pedestrian Mobility Plan, and increase neighborhood wayfinding, particularly to transit.
- Improve the bicycle network and expand it neighborhood wide, informed by robust community engagement.
- Improve the medians on Northern Boulevard from Prince to Union Streets.
- Beautify and enhance maintenance at the existing plaza at Prince Street and 37th Avenue.
- Better connect Flushing Creek to new public spaces created by development. Invest in environmental improvements (green infrastructure, resiliency) to the creek to increase the attractiveness of development.
- Conduct a curb management study to reduce idling and alleviate vehicle congestion.
- Create new and improved parks and public space with amenities and improve the wayfinding between existing parks.

STRATEGY

Improving quality-of-life issues such as sustainability and cleanliness across our business districts

No matter how beautifully public spaces, streets, and sidewalks are designed and constructed, they cannot be fully appreciated by their intended users unless they are clean, well-maintained, and free of obstructions like trash and sidewalk sheds, and not jammed with competing uses. At the same time, it is imperative that we design our buildings, public spaces, and neighborhood infrastructure to meet our sustainability targets and reduce the emissions polluting our shared environment.

INITIATIVE 6

UPDATE ZONING TO FACILITATE GREEN ENERGY INVESTMENTS AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY RETROFITS

According to the Mayor's Office of Climate & Environmental Justice, about 68 percent of NYC's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions come from the city's 1.1 million buildings.²¹⁷ These emissions are caused by the burning of fossil fuels to heat, cool, and power appliances and lighting. Almost half of those emissions come from just 2 percent of buildings.²¹⁸ Since over 90 percent of existing NYC buildings will still be in place for several decades,²¹⁹ and new construction is emissions-intensive, accelerating decarbonization retrofits for existing buildings will be essential to meeting the City's and State's climate goals, as well as reducing pollution in our shared environment.

Together, the City's [Climate Mobilization Act \(CMA\)](#) and the State's [Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act \(CLCPA\)](#) form a comprehensive legislative basis for reducing buildings' carbon emissions and making energy efficiency and resiliency improvements. The CLCPA requires 100 percent clean electricity by 2040 and an 85 percent reduction in overall GHG emissions by 2050 while one of the cornerstones of the CMA, Local Law 97, helps advance toward these targets by requiring buildings larger than 25,000 square feet to meet greenhouse gas

emissions limits starting in 2024, with stricter limits coming into effect in 2030 and beyond.

As one initiative to put us on the path to achieving these State and City mandates, the City will pursue the Department of City Planning's "[City of Yes](#)" for [Carbon Neutrality](#) text amendment to provide building owners and homeowners with the flexibility they need to make crucial and urgently needed retrofits to their building systems. This will also make it easier for owners to add rooftop solar, energy storage, and electric vehicle charging to existing and new buildings.

To achieve a carbon neutrality, and do our part to achieve the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 2°C,²²⁰ we must reduce our energy needs by retrofitting our buildings to be efficient, clean our grid to decarbonize the sources of electricity, and electrify buildings and vehicles so that all remaining energy needs are powered by the clean energy grid.

Building on the City and State climate plans and regulations since 2012, City of Yes for Carbon Neutrality will make sure that zoning rules are not hindering the installation of new wind, solar, or energy storage; fix existing incentives to encourage the development of new buildings that perform "better than code"; and promote solar and storage to support City and State goals.

This initiative will expand opportunities for decarbonization projects in four key areas:

- **Energy:** Support the greening of our grid by broadly allowing for distributed generation (wind + solar) as well as critically needed energy storage. For example, resolving the current challenge where building owners who are looking to add solar to their roofs hit zoning limitations when trying to site them in combination with other equipment that competes for space on the rooftop, such as HVAC or recreation areas.
- **Buildings:** Get out of the way of making our buildings clean and efficient by accommodating a wider range of building retrofits and supporting R&D that makes clean technologies more scalable. For example, building owners today are unable to add critical energy storage because of restrictions in the fire code and zoning rules, which don't address this emerging technology to allow them as-of-right in many places. And

building owners may be limited by current zoning restrictions when trying to retrofit buildings with thicker high-performance facades that achieve better energy efficiency.

- **Transportation:** Support the growth of electric vehicles and micromobility by removing restrictions on where this infrastructure can be placed. Today, electric vehicle owners can't find places to charge them because of zoning limitations in many business and residential districts.
- **Waste and Water:** Complement other City efforts to reduce our solid waste and stormwater output by updating and clarifying related zoning regulations. For example, updating zoning requirements for new development to reflect the new streetscape prototypes for connected tree pits and rain gardens developed by DOT and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection.

The Department of City Planning will certify City of Yes for Carbon Neutrality into the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure in Spring 2023.



Credit: NYC Department of City Planning

INITIATIVE 7

SUPPORT INNOVATIVE FINANCING MECHANISMS FOR GREEN BUILDING RETROFITS

Complementing these zoning changes, the City released the Decarbonization Capital Investment Strategy Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) to surface innovative financing models and industry tools for accelerating building decarbonization and the growth of other green industries.

Building on this effort, NYCEDC will lead the development of a comprehensive green building retrofit financing strategy to support startups, small businesses, and building owners in executing building retrofits that reduce building emissions and improve energy efficiency and resiliency. The initiative's core mission would be to:

- Catalyze economic growth and recovery through the building decarbonization and green economy industry in NY.
- Facilitate access to capital to support and accelerate environmental outcomes and meet critical sustainability and resiliency goals and targets.
- Ensure capital that drives the green transition is directly tied to equity outcomes including the creation of green jobs and deploying decarbonization technologies in environmental justice areas.

In order to ensure that the generational investment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the “green transition” also act as opportunities for a “just transition,” the strategy will include a broad range of tools to ensure capital is available to all stakeholders (building owners, contractors, vendors, etc.) across the value chain required to deliver building retrofits to reduce emissions and improve resiliency and energy efficiency.

REIMAGINE WASTE CONTAINERIZATION AND COLLECTION

The NYC Department of Sanitation (DSNY) collects and disposes of 24 million pounds of institutional and residential refuse and recycling daily, among its other responsibilities for promoting the quality of life in New York City, such as cleaning streets and responding to snowstorms.²²¹ While DSNY has delivered high-quality essential services reliably for decades, waste collection in New York City relies on bags of trash set out for collection on the curb overnight. This leaves highly visible piles of trash on city sidewalks that can be eyesores, disrupt pedestrian flow, and proliferate the presence of rats.²²² Rectifying this issue could accelerate the city's recovery from the economic crisis brought on by COVID-19 by improving the attractiveness of the city's public realm.

The City has already communicated a vision for a citywide, centralized approach to containerization—a method of keeping waste off the streets using sealed, rodent-proof bins—to achieve cleaner streets and a better quality of life in every neighborhood. This year, DSNY is advancing a five borough [“Clean Curbs” pilot](#) of curbside containerization. These pilots are a small, but meaningful, step in this direction.

Furthermore, in October 2022, the City announced the reduction of time between waste set-out and pickup. Previously, waste was allowed to sit on the sidewalks between the set-out time—4 p.m. the night before pickup—and pickup times, which start around 6 a.m., which amounts to more than 14 hours each night. That put piles of trash bags on the sidewalk for the evening commute, which sometimes remained through the morning commute the next day. DSNY announced changes to set-out times that limit the amount of time trash bags sit on the sidewalk and establish uniform standards for residential and commercial properties alike. These new rules move the residential set-out time back to 8 p.m. (or 6 p.m. if set out in a closed receptacle), while also moving the pickup time to start at midnight—reducing the time between set-out and the start of pickup from 14 hours to four to six hours. DSNY is also changing the rules for commercial set-outs to prohibit trash bags on the

sidewalk before 8 p.m., aligning this standard with new rules for residential properties.

Still, more needs to be done to eliminate the visible piles of trash on sidewalks, which result in a disruption of pedestrian flow and proliferation of rats. To this end, the City will:

Plan for a global gold-standard waste containerization program that rivals best practices in peer cities, such as Paris and Barcelona, which have a similar size and scope of trash collection and have already implemented the citywide containerization of curbside waste disposal. The City will immediately work to develop a uniform, scalable waste containerization program that is adaptable to the needs of all of New York City's diverse communities. This approach will consider neighborhood-specific challenges while also building a standardized model that allows for efficient, equitable, and effective collection operations, including from residential buildings. When considering the elements of this program, DSNY will consider first-mile waste collection, subsurface storage in the right-of-way, smart sensor technology that informs dynamic routing, and updated trash collection vehicles that can fully or semi-automate collection from bins.

Evaluate zoning and code changes to encourage waste containerization.

Residential buildings over 150 units are already required to file waste management plans with DSNY, but existing zoning and code requirements discourage the construction of waste containerization systems in new buildings. The City will explore potential changes to regulations to encourage or require containerization, including potential changes to zoning, via a City of Yes for Carbon Neutrality text amendment to address potential conflicts with other requirements and to provide that the interior space required for waste containerization in these buildings doesn't count against FAR.

Roll out a new standard litter basket citywide.

Today, there are several kinds of litter baskets on NYC streets, from the simple wire basket to higher-end models, but performance characteristics and the lack of uniformity detract from neighborhood character. DSNY has worked with designers to develop a new model litter basket that is rat resistant and that might also improve the quality of life and efficiency of collection. DSNY will move quickly

to deploy these to replace all existing litter baskets, starting in the first half of 2023.

INITIATIVE 9

CREATE A PERMANENT OPEN RESTAURANTS PROGRAM

Born during the height of the pandemic in 2020, the Open Restaurants program transformed the streets of New York City with active uses that helped save a struggling hospitality industry when indoor dining was not an option. The Open Restaurants program saved an estimated 100,000 jobs²²³ and brought back foot traffic and vibrancy to commercial corridors. This creative use of the streets and sidewalks sparked the imagination of New Yorkers, inviting them to think about what other interventions could bring life back to our streets. The initial Open Restaurants program remained an important lifeline for restaurants and restaurant workers throughout the pandemic, and it has laid the groundwork for a permanent Open Restaurants program.

In February 2022, the New York City Council passed a zoning text amendment removing the geographic restrictions on where sidewalk cafes can locate within NYC, paving the way for the City to establish a permanent citywide Open Restaurants program. In August 2022, Mayor Adams announced that the program was here to stay.²²⁴ Mayor Adams is committed to working with the City Council to advance legislation to establish a permanent Open Streets program that creates safe, accessible, and attractive restaurant sheds in all neighborhoods across the city. A permanent Open Restaurants program can be a component part of the new approach to curb management, as outlined in Initiative 26.

The City's vision for the permanent program includes a streamlined application process that allows outdoor dining on the sidewalk and in the curbside roadway space, available citywide.²²⁵ The permanent program will balance the needs of everyone using NYC streets and sidewalks, while ensuring the streets and sidewalks are safe and vibrant.²²⁶ Furthermore, the program would have detailed, upfront design guidance (such as an Open Restaurants "kit of parts") to make it easy and accessible for restaurants to participate in the permanent program. The permanent

program would also have a full NYC Department of Transportation enforcement unit, in coordination with other City agencies, to enforce roadway structures, ADA compliance, clear paths, and amplified noise devices.²²⁷

Abandoned Open Streets restaurant sheds can be a blight and a hazard and work against the larger Open Restaurants goal to keep NYC's streets active and vibrant. In August 2022, Mayor Adams announced a new, multiagency enforcement initiative to move abandoned sheds that were formerly part of restaurants that have now shut down. Since the start of the initiative, 165 abandoned structures have been removed. This is an important step toward a permanent Open Streets program that will have clear shed design guidelines and strong enforcement.²²⁸

INITIATIVE 10

CREATE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC REALM POSITION WITHIN CITY HALL

During the pandemic, public space took on new importance as a respite from the mental and physical challenges of shelter-in-place lockdowns and as grounds for passionate democratic expression and civic engagement. Thanks to the collaborative efforts of community advocates, City officials and agency staff, planners, engineers, and others, in the last year we have seen how pedestrianized streets—through initiatives like Open Streets and Open Boulevards—can promote healthier living, while supporting small businesses.

Now more than ever, New Yorkers are aware of the value of the public realm and the way it connects us physically and socially. Just as efficient transit or a reliable electrical grid are part of the nuts and bolts that propel cities, so too is our public space network a vital piece of infrastructure that is necessary for a high quality of life. This public space network comprises streets and sidewalks, bike lanes, waste management, green infrastructure in the public right-of-way, parks, playgrounds, plazas, outdoor dining, and street trees, among many other elements.

Each of a myriad City agencies has jurisdiction over a slice of our public realm. New York City currently lacks a central position within its government for

envisioning, planning, and maintaining the multiple dimensions of its public realm across this wide range of agencies. Instead, the oversight of these essential services of urban infrastructure is segmented across a vast array of agencies.

The City will create a Director of Public Realm position within City Hall to provide a centralized and holistic approach to public realm policy, public communication, external stakeholder engagement, and the coordination of all City agencies engaged in public realm projects and programs that touch roadways, curb space, and green space. From Open Restaurants to Commercial Corridors, there are many existing interagency efforts led by staff from the Deputy Mayor for Operations and Deputy Mayor for Economic and Workforce Development to activate and reimagine the public realm. The new Director of Public Realm position will prioritize areas not covered by existing efforts:

- Engage and amplify the Mayor’s vision for the public realm, serving as the primary point of contact for external inquiries, meetings, and requests related to the public realm.
- Create and manage a new Public Realm Advisory Council, composed of key stakeholder groups that meet quarterly to discuss projects, programs, and policies.
- Advance reforms that improve the user experience (e.g., permitting and maintenance agreements) for all New Yorkers and entities using the public realm and drive innovation and public realm best practices across the city.



Open space at 300 Ashland Place. Credit: Downtown Brooklyn Partnership

INITIATIVE 11

INVEST IN PUBLIC SPACE MAINTENANCE TO ACHIEVE CLEAN STREETS

To have great public spaces, it’s necessary to construct dynamic, lively, and transformative public spaces; but this isn’t enough. These spaces must be properly funded for maintenance and operation to be sustained as a truly world-class public realm that attracts people, drives foot traffic to local businesses, creates safety in numbers, and transforms our districts into neighborhoods where people want to be. The City can improve the maintenance and cleanliness of its public realm by:

Consolidating and standardizing the City’s range of “maintenance agreements” with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and other nonprofit groups, so that the City is not unduly shifting the costs and risks of maintaining its plazas, curb extensions, green streets, and open streets onto local partners and can incentivize more Community-Based Development Organizations (CBDOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to enter into these maintenance agreements.

The City currently has a variety of maintenance agreements in place for BIDs and/or CBDOs across the city. These organizations also must navigate disparate permitting processes with different City agencies that deal with the public realm or public space amenities, including DOT, Parks, Small Business Services (SBS), and others. In addition to the administrative burden of managing multiple permits and agreements, BIDs and CBDOs must take on substantial liability for their organizations on behalf of the City. Additionally, these organizations are required to indemnify the City. The number, complexity, and indemnification terms of these multiple agreements can deter smaller organizations from participating in the programming and/or maintenance of public space. To that end, the City will review the variety of maintenance agreements, consolidating agreements into a single contract where appropriate, modifying liability terms to be less cumbersome, and aligning requirements across City agencies where feasible.



Credit: Downtown Alliance

Expanding DOT’s Public Space Equity Program.

This program addresses the needs of Open Streets, Street Seats, Shared Streets, Plazas, large sidewalks, bike parking amenities, and other streetscape spaces in under-resourced neighborhoods where community-based partner organizations struggle to maintain a high-quality public space. To achieve the goal of equitable public space throughout the city, the program provides horticultural care, maintenance services, financial subsidies, and a host of technical assistance tools to local partner organizations.

Increasing funding for SBS’s Neighborhood 360 grant program to activate, program and improve public spaces. Grants are awarded to CBOs in eligible neighborhoods for organizations to staff, plan and implement customized commercial revitalization programs. SBS can align this grant program with public space needs and provide grants to organizations that manage and steward the public realm for maintenance and activations. This may include supplemental sanitation, markets, events, minor streetscape improvements, and horticulture services.

Creating new revenue streams devoted to public space stewardship for local economic development organizations. Dynamic and vibrant public spaces require sustained investment for consistent and reliable programming and maintenance. Ongoing, operational funding is crucial to the public’s perception of the public realm, but it is often the most difficult for local organizations to secure. The City will consider how it can help organizations unlock additional funding opportunities by creating new mechanisms, as feasible, that direct new revenue streams to local organizations for the sole purpose of public realm

enhancements and maintenance. Examples include revenue from parking meters, street vendors, outdoor dining, scaffolding fees, sales taxes, etc.

Increasing funding for DSNY litter basket collection to continue to clean our streets and improve the vibrancy of our commercial corridors. In 2020, budget constraints caused DSNY to cut litter basket service frequency by nearly two-thirds. In summer 2022, the City announced additional funding for litter basket collection service, bringing service levels to the highest in city history. The City will continue and expand this additional service to keep NYC streets and commercial corridors clean.

Increasing DSNY enforcement personnel and camera infrastructure to better deter illegal dumping and littering. Illegal dumping and improper disposal have increased, from the dumping of a truckload of construction debris to the use of corner baskets for household and commercial waste. While DSNY has realigned its enforcement focus on these quality-of-life and cleanliness violations, staff cuts have hampered enforcement efforts. Meanwhile, recent efforts to use cameras in illegal dumping hotspots have been highly effective in catching perpetrators in the act and deterring illegal activity. The City will invest in additional DSNY enforcement staff to step up these efforts and create a broader network of cameras to fight illegal dumping.

INITIATIVE 12

MAKE SIDEWALK SHED REFORMS

Sidewalk sheds are temporary construction equipment that cover New York City sidewalks to protect pedestrians and property against falling debris. Generally, sidewalk sheds are erected to protect pedestrians on two occasions: 1) during building construction or general maintenance, and 2) during the inspection and maintenance of building facades per New York City’s Façade Inspection & Safety Program (FISP).²²⁹ FISP regulations require owners of properties greater than six stories in height to have their exterior walls and appurtenances inspected every five years, which could result in repairs being needed based on conditions that are observed during such inspections.²³⁰

LAUNCH A CITY-AFFILIATED PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP TO BUILD THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS TO SUPPORT COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS AND SPUR INNOVATION

According to the NYC Department of Buildings (DOB), there were 9,541 sidewalk sheds across the city as of August 25th, 2022.²³¹ Of those, 3,435 sheds, or 36 percent, were established due to façade inspection and repair, and the remaining sheds are up in connection with construction or general maintenance.²³² Sidewalk sheds can stay up for multiple years, due to ongoing construction or uncompleted façade repairs. On average, the 9,541 sidewalk sheds in New York City have been erected for 223 days.²³³ Sidewalk sheds perform an important public safety function. However, sidewalk sheds might be a nuisance to New Yorkers as they block light, narrow the sidewalk, obscure business signs, and collect garbage and grime,²³⁴ especially when the sidewalk sheds become semipermanent due to uncompleted façade repairs or lack of access to adjacent properties for the purpose of conducting repairs.

To minimize long-term sidewalk shed use that may blight properties and create unsafe street-level conditions, the City will explore:

- **Mandating new sidewalk shed designs:** DOB will engage in a competitive design process to generate new sidewalk shed designs, including exploring new materials such as netting, to increase street openness and vibrancy without sacrificing safety.
- **More robust enforcement against expired sidewalk sheds:** DOB will prioritize and expand enforcement against unauthorized sidewalk sheds by reducing the time between the expiration of authority to be on the street and agency action and explore imposing financial penalties against building owner violators.
- **City Legislative reforms:** The City will pursue legislation to codify uniform sidewalk shed designs.

While Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are uniquely designed to address neighborhood quality-of-life issues with nimble, locally customized services, smaller BIDs, often in lower-income neighborhoods, are often severely constrained by a lack of resources from making more transformational change: 38 BIDs out of 76 in NYC are located in low- and moderate-income (LMI) neighborhoods; 17 BIDs have budgets under \$250,000; and 35 BIDs have budgets under \$500,000.²³⁵ In addition, the neighborhood development field lacks a citywide partner entity that agencies such as Parks, NYPD, DSNY, and the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) have, each of which uses and leverages non-taxpayer funds to address structural inequities, facilitate innovative agency practices, and empower neighborhood and nonprofit partners.

Further, BIDs have had to double-down on “clean and safe” programming emerging from the pandemic, leaving little funding or bandwidth for change-making or innovative approaches or ideas. The City has often relied on BIDs to pilot or troubleshoot new programs (e.g., the inaugural DOT Plaza Program in 2008, *Weekend Walks* programming, waste containerization, etc.), but smaller BIDs are often solely focused on standard services, such as sanitation, with limited capacity to partner with the City to test new tools or approaches to commercial revitalization.

This exacerbates the inequitable and uneven outcomes across the city’s business districts. NNY Panel expert interviews and focus groups yielded a strong call to increase resources and more equitably distribute resources for local stewardship of neighborhood commercial corridors and encourage catalytic projects and community-led innovative ideas, especially in lower income, immigrant, BIPOC, and/or underserved neighborhoods that have little or no BID presence.

The City can launch and seed an independent, City-affiliated public-private partnership—modeled on other organizations such as the City Parks Foundation and Fund for Public Housing—focused on creating and building the capacity of local economic development organizations to serve as catalysts for small business recovery, public realm enhancements, and hyperlocal pilot projects that prototype innovative solutions to common urban challenges that improve quality-of-life conditions for residents, workers, and visitors.

The partnership would have the flexibility, nimbleness and risk-tolerance to fund and evaluate innovative solutions that could then be scaled and replicated in business districts citywide, and the independence to pursue and secure private and philanthropic matching funds for projects at the neighborhood, borough, and citywide scales.



Credit: Edwin J. Torres, Mayoral Office of Photography

STRATEGY

Offering new reasons to go to business districts

New York City’s unparalleled street life thrives on unique in-person experiences like public art and cultural experiences, as well as distinctive storefronts and authentic retail that drive foot traffic—whether it’s the newest pop-up gallery or the annual window displays that the city’s major retailers put out on Fifth Avenue. We will bring that creativity and excitement to the streets and storefronts of our business districts, which are currently struggling with high vacancy rates in retail and office space. We will pair unique only-in-NYC public space programming with an expanded Open Streets program that gives New Yorkers and visitors alike more street space to enjoy our mixed-use neighborhoods.

INITIATIVE 14

ACTIVATE STOREFRONTS

Storefronts are important to the vibrancy of neighborhoods. According to the NYC Comptroller’s analysis of retail vacancy trends and causes from 2007 to 2017, the citywide retail vacancy rate increased 45 percent between 2007 and 2017.²³⁶ Online shopping, rising commercial rents, changes in commuting patterns, and regulations are associated with the rise of storefront vacancies.²³⁷ The COVID-19 pandemic had an additional negative impact on New York City’s retail storefronts. For example, according to New York City Council Storefront Tracker data, there were 8,542 vacant storefronts as of Dec. 31, 2020, a 23 percent increase from Dec. 31, 2019.²³⁸

Zooming in on storefront availability in the 12 Manhattan high-activity retail submarkets—between Q3 2019 and Q3 2022, availability rates decreased in five submarkets and increased in six. When comparing the year-over-year trend between Q3 2021 and Q3 2022, the availability rate declined in 10 of the 11 submarkets. As of Q3 2022, the lowest availabilities are outside the Manhattan business districts in residential neighborhoods on the Upper East Side (Third Avenue between East 57th and East 79th Streets, 11.3%) and the Upper West Side (Broadway

and Columbus Avenue, 12.9%), with the highest availability in the heart of commercial office Midtown West (Herald Square/West 34th Street between Fifth and Seventh Avenues, 40.7%).²³⁹

To address rising storefront vacancies, the City is implementing a suite of programs to get more businesses into more storefronts more quickly and exploring others to drive foot traffic to retail corridors now.

One-Stop-Shop NYC Business Portal

Outlined in Mayor’s Adams’ *Renew, Rebuild, Reinvent: A Blueprint for New York City’s Economic Recovery*, SBS is building a one-stop-shop Business Portal that will allow every business in New York City to execute and track all interactions with the City in real time. The portal will ensure greater accessibility and transparency, enable more predictability of processing times, and facilitate compliance with City rules and regulations. The buildout of the portal is underway, with SBS, the New York City Office of Technology and Innovation, and the Mayor’s Office of Efficiency spearheading an interagency task-force earlier this year. This tool builds on legislation introduced by NYC Councilmember Julie Menin and signed by Mayor Adams in October 2022,²⁴⁰ which requires SBS to build this portal to offer all applications, permits, licenses, and related documentation needed to open and operate a small business in the city in a single, easily accessible and easy-to-navigate location. Users can expect to be able to submit and check on the status of applications, permits, and licenses through this portal as well as settle or pay any outstanding balances on notices of violation. The portal will be live in mid-2023.



City of Yes for Economic Opportunity

As further detailed in Initiative 2, the City will adopt a package of zoning changes to minimize barriers for commercial businesses to activate unused storefront space and allow small businesses to repurpose vacant spaces by removing outdated limitations that keep them from getting filled. This might include:

- Reforming antiquated rules on where certain businesses can be located.
- Simplifying government rules that might contribute to keeping storefronts vacant.
- Lifting regulations that might keep businesses from evolving and expanding.

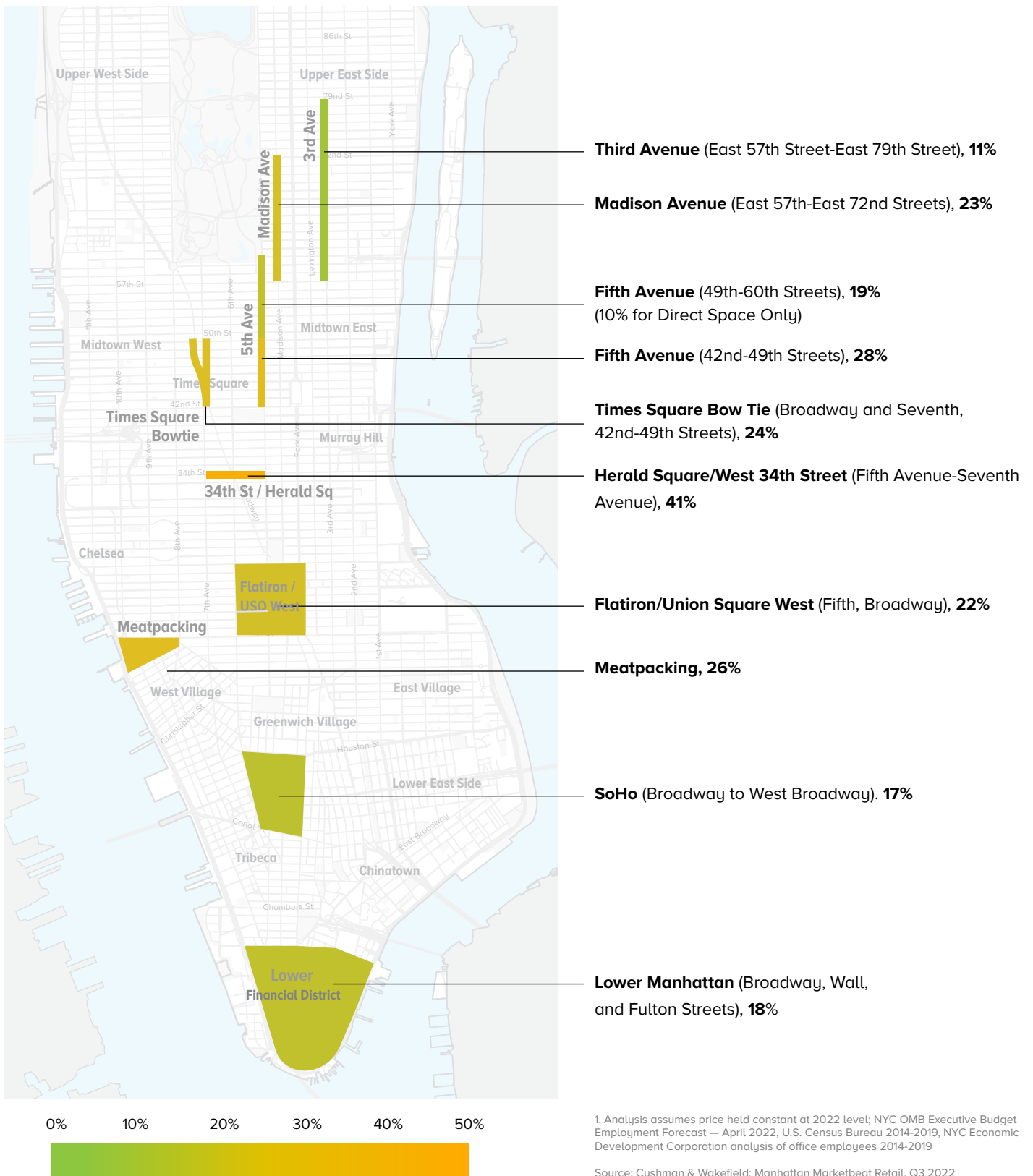
Storefront Startup Competition

The City will explore launching a “Storefront Startup” program to activate 100 storefronts throughout key business districts with experiential ground floor uses (e.g., culture, arts, makerspaces, creative businesses, interactive experiences, and other foot-traffic-inducing uses) funded through a public-private partnership with property owners. BIDs would help with outreach to eligible property owners. Property owners with vacant storefronts would identify themselves through a Request for Qualification (RFQ), and potential activation operators would then apply based on available spaces. Activations could span three months through the program, with extra points given to activations that plan to stay beyond the competition period with private funding. Efforts should be made to create a dense concentration of activations, with an initial focus on the Core Employment Hubs (e.g., Midtown, Midtown South, Lower Manhattan, Downtown Brooklyn, Long Island City) and Other Downtowns (e.g., Jamaica, the Bronx Hub).

FIGURE 19

Retail spaces in core employment hubs, including Midtown, Midtown South, and Lower Manhattan, have high availabilities

Retail vacancies in Manhattan by submarket, 2022 Q3. Availability rate, %



EXPAND OPEN STREETS

Designing streets that prioritize space for people to walk, bike and gather supports local business in neighborhoods across the city. The Open Streets Program was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and local businesses to use streets for outdoor dining, programming and outdoor learning/recreation for schools. Then, in 2021, the Open Streets Program became permanent. Open Streets have provided a vital economic boost for NYC restaurants and bars during the pandemic, as detailed in DOT’s October 2021 report, [Streets for Recovery: The Economic Benefits of the NYC Open Streets Program](#). Open Streets corridors have significantly outperformed nearby control corridors on sales growth, growth in the number of restaurants and bars, and keeping businesses open.²⁴¹

However, there are challenges with keeping the Open Streets robust and active (e.g., streets off-limits to cars during planned operating hours). Challenges include providing and/or raising sufficient maintenance support by each local community street, distributing available resources across all communities, and ensuring local businesses and residents support Open Streets. While the program formally started with 83 miles of streets, many of these streets might not have been well-resourced and struggled to maintain their programming.²⁴² According to an August 2022 analysis by the *New York Times*, there are now only 20 miles of active Open Streets around the city.²⁴³ These 20 remaining miles have been more successful because they are better resourced and programmed.

To expand the Open Streets program equitably and ensure the streets are well-maintained, the City will explore several dimensions of capital construction and programmatic investment to bolster this innovative program.



Credit: Street Lab



Credit: Street Lab

The City will continue to make improvements as we make Open Streets permanent, which could include capital upgrades, and set a goal of having Open Streets in every community and business district across the five boroughs lacking in open space. To ensure success, these new Open Streets will leverage best practices from popular Open Streets (e.g., 34th Avenue in Queens, Vanderbilt Avenue in Brooklyn, Avenue B in Manhattan, Arthur Avenue in the Bronx) to choose locations with strong, strategic anchor elements such as universities, existing street festivals, favorable urban design, strong local organizations, and dense commercial strips with restaurants. The City will also seek to work with local partners to develop robust weekly programming to ensure that the Open Streets are well activated and that local communities understand the vision and benefit of the road closures.

The City will also seek to increase the Open Streets program staff headcount over time, to further help oversee in-person and on-the-ground outreach related to the program (e.g., neighborhood BIDs, compensated community outreach specialists). The responsibilities of this additional staffing may include communicating all Open Streets design, planning, and programming processes to local residents and stakeholders; recording stakeholder engagement feedback and reporting to DOT; and/or measuring the impacts of the Open Streets based on metrics.

The City will also seek to increase City support for the operation and maintenance of Open Streets over time, such as extending and expanding the Open Streets Program grant that provides technical and funding assistance for community-based development organizations (CBDOs) that support, operate,



Credit: NYCDOT

maintain, and enhance DOT-designated Open Streets locations on commercial corridors.²⁴⁴ Over time, this could also include dedicated City funding for maintenance and management to support more Open Streets and local management groups outside of areas with already-established partnerships. The City will also explore developing streamlined mechanisms to get funding to partners; the current processes limit the amount that can be given without a complex funding mechanism. Lastly, the City will explore raising more private funding and sponsorships to more equitably distribute Open Streets across New York City.

INITIATIVE 16

ACTIVATE PUBLIC SPACE WITH PROGRAMMING, ART, AND TACTICAL TRANSFORMATIONS NOW

The reduced foot traffic in the city's business districts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic offers an opportunity to reimagine the activation of public sites that would bring transformative changes promoting unique in-person experiences. Such experiences encourage more people to visit business districts, and in turn, support businesses and foster vibrancy.

To catalyze the long-term activation of public space, the City will pursue temporary installations and programs that drive foot traffic now to business districts:

- **Tactical Transformations** allow DOT and its partners to use low-cost, light-touch materials to deliver innovative street designs in the short term, delivering benefits to the public while catalyzing support and funding for longer-term change. Examples include Open Streets, Street Seats, and Street Improvement Projects. These could include expanded sidewalks and cycling infrastructure, shared streets and pedestrian plazas, and short-term concessions such as flower shows and night markets. These tactical transformations allow planners, designers, and policymakers to test new ideas that make business districts more inviting and accessible and justify long-term interventions to the public realm.
- **Artwork Interventions** have the potential to create attractive corridors, activate public space, and foster community partnerships.²⁴⁵ Temporary

beautification efforts such as murals, sculptures, and projections improve the public realm and may allow pedestrians to feel safer in a given community, driving foot traffic toward the local economy. Artwork interventions may encourage people to visit business districts and drive spending. These interventions can also be an attraction and destination in and of themselves for locals and visitors.

- **Cultural Programming** in the public realm encourages the positive use and development of public spaces. Regular and recurring programming creates new venues and economic opportunities for artists and educators of all kinds, while providing access to cultural, artistic, and educational experiences for the public. Effective programming drives foot traffic to local businesses and creates an opportunity for surprise and delight. New York City’s arts community turned to the streets during the height of the pandemic and found viable venues in which to survive and thrive. Planned and impromptu performances (including music, dance, theater, and more) brought much-needed vibrancy to the public realm and seeded long-term relationships between cultural organizations and the public. These interventions also allowed access to the

arts for neighborhoods that previously had little to none. Using public space as a cultivator of culture will serve as a draw to business districts, increase foot traffic, and improve the visibility of businesses. Furthermore, it can be scheduled to draw people to business districts during times of day and days of the week when foot traffic has not recovered to or exceeded pre-pandemic levels (e.g., Mondays and Fridays in concentrated commercial office districts).

The City can leverage existing procurement mechanisms through DOT to achieve these additional temporary art installments and recurring cultural programming in business districts (via micro-purchases administered to partners). And it can build off DOT’s existing Art Program, which provides artists, community-based organizations, and nonprofit partners up to \$20,000 for art installations, depending on the project’s scope and DOT’s Public Space Programming initiative, which provides artists, arts organizations, and community partners with funds to program public spaces.

The City, through the Street Activity Permit Office (SAPO), will continue to provide arts and cultural organizations permitted access to public streets across the five boroughs.



Credit: NYCDOT

INITIATIVE 17

INVEST IN CULTURE, SUPPORTING ARTISTS, ARTIST SPACES, AND ARTIST ORGANIZATIONS

New York City is a global cultural capital whose creative economy—including film and television, music, theater, publishing, architecture, fashion design, digital game development, and more—employs hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers and accounts for 13 percent of the city’s economic output.²⁴⁶

Millions of tourists come to New York City each year to attend Broadway shows and diverse live performance venues, visit world-class museums and cultural institutions, experience vibrant nightlife offerings, and visit iconic sites seen in movies and on television. The creative economy is directly tied to New York City’s tourism and hospitality industries, acting as an amplifier of overall City tax revenues. However, the pandemic brought immediate closures to much of this industry. The prolonged pandemic and reduction of tourism led to fewer patrons and has exacerbated structural inequities in access to resources for the city’s creative class, especially those rooted in communities of color.

The City will continue to directly support both arts organizations and individual artists to strengthen the local economy, attract visitors to support our cultural institutions, support the city’s recovery, and protect the spirit and identity of our city:

The City will strengthen New York City’s creative economy to increase the number of New Yorkers and visitors in our business districts, by:

- **Creating new funding sources to promote tourism and drive visitors to our arts and cultural institutions.** New York City is exploring state legislation to create a Tourism Investment District (TID), a public-private partnership with the city’s hotel community designed to fund marketing and capital improvements to drive visitors across the five boroughs. The TID would add a nominal assessment to each room night that could then be reinvested in marketing, advertising, partnerships, and other creative opportunities to promote NYC tourism. The City hopes to leverage this tool to draw visitors to drive traffic to local arts and cultural institutions and explore funding partners directly in the creative economy.
- **Providing more flexible grants for operating expenses.** Cultural organizations continue to recover slowly and need dollars in hand to pay rent, utilities, and employees. Using New York State Council on the Arts and the Massachusetts Cultural Council as models, the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) will explore how to leverage City grantmaking to provide essential funding for operating expenses.
- **Advocating to increase support for arts organizations and individual artists** by expanding the Cultural Development Fund, which currently supports nearly 1,000 arts organizations annually.²⁴⁷ With additional funds, the City can support more organizations and provide additional funding directly to Borough Arts Councils so



Credit: NYCDOT



Credit: NYCDOT

that they can continue supporting individual artists, performers, arts collectives, and arts organizations.

The City will explore opportunities to identify clusters of affordable work and rehearsal space for working artists that can counter the damage caused by the pandemic, and address the long-standing affordability challenges facing the city’s creative sector, by:

- **Opening up City-owned buildings to local artists.** New York City public schools, for instance, have over 3,000 theaters, music rooms, dance studios, and auditoriums—most of which sit empty during the nights, weekends, and summer. These spaces are located in every neighborhood of every borough. The City, in partnership with the Department of Education, will explore a pilot program to open up these spaces for rehearsals, exhibitions, and performances by local musicians and dancers, and other artists. As articulated in [Rebuild, Renew, Reinvent: A Blueprint for New York City’s Economic Recovery](#), the City will continue to build a cultural district on Governors Island where arts organizations can host studios, arts education events, rehearsal space, and community events.
- **Opening up underutilized private buildings for local artists.** The City will explore working with a third-party operator to serve as a matchmaker for spaces—like empty storefronts, religious institutions, and empty commercial office spaces—to be used by visual artists, performers, writers, and other artists. These spaces could be designated for rehearsal space, arts education, and community events to both activate empty spaces and address the pressing need for low-cost arts space across the five boroughs. This could particularly apply in business districts that have not seen a full return to the office, given the availability of private space there.



Credit: Kreg Holt

The City will continue to invest in arts education and workforce development by:

- **Increasing the number of Summer Youth Employment Positions (SYEP) in the arts and media, and other creative fields.** Along with increased apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, the expansion of SYEP will increase exposure and career pathways within the cultural sector and help diversify these fields.
- **Ensuring that all public schools are sufficiently funded to provide all students the opportunity to exercise their voice through the arts under the guidance of a certified arts teacher.** The arts have the power to inspire young people, to engage them not only in their academic pursuits but also in making meaning of themselves and the world around them. To achieve this, the City will continue working to ensure that all schools provide this opportunity by having at least one certified arts teacher, thereby closing the equity gap and exposing students to arts careers and pathways. Bridging the current gap in certified arts teachers may be achieved by hiring certified dance, music, theater, or visual arts teachers from the established City University of New York (CUNY) pipeline.
- **Doubling the number of New Yorkers trained in the creative industries.** The Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment (MOME) provides educational and workforce development programming for thousands of New Yorkers annually in the creative sectors of film and television production and post-production, animation, music production, podcasting, and more. The City, in partnership with industry leaders, will grow these programs with a focus on building career pipelines for local New Yorkers and diversifying the industries.



GOAL 2

Make It Easier for New Yorkers to Get to Work

New York City's vast public transportation network has been integral to the city's economic success and the strength of New York's business districts: The more people who can easily reach their jobs, the more the economy can grow. Prior to the pandemic, 8 million people in the New York region—including over 50 percent of the city's population—rode public transit every weekday.²⁴⁸ New York City's subway is the most heavily used system in the United States, comprising 72 percent of subway trips across the country pre-pandemic.²⁴⁹ In the lead-up to COVID-19, nearly 3.9 million people entered Manhattan's business districts on weekdays,²⁵⁰ enabling them to become the most job-dense large business districts in the country.²⁵¹

But despite having the most extensive mass transit infrastructure, New Yorkers' commutes are lengthy. Within the city, the sheer number of commuters and geographic spread have meant that New Yorkers have had longer average commute times than residents in peer cities (40 minutes for NYC versus 30 minutes in peer cities such as San Francisco and Seattle).²⁵² Regional commuters into NYC similarly face long commutes, at 65 minutes in comparison to 55 minutes in peer cities.²⁵³ Differences in worker commuter times also persist by race. Black New Yorkers on average have the longest commutes in NYC, of 47 minutes, which is 23 percent more than the 38-minute average for white New Yorkers.²⁵⁴

Now that New Yorkers increasingly have choices about where to work, many are opting out of their daily commutes. Weekday ridership has plummeted across almost every regional system. Across all weekdays in November 2022, subway use averaged 62 percent of pre-pandemic levels, and bus use averaged 64 percent.²⁵⁵ Regional rail fared slightly better, with Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) and Metro-North Railroad (MNR) weekly ridership averaging 67

percent and 68 percent, respectively, compared to February/March 2020.²⁵⁶

People are not averse to using the system to travel through the city: Weekend trips on the subway (including the Staten Island Railway) have recovered to nearly 70 percent of their pre-pandemic levels.²⁵⁷ Weekend recovery is stronger for regional rail (though weaker for buses).²⁵⁸ The specific grind of commuting has emerged as a major hurdle for getting people back to our major business districts.

Furthermore, some workers have sought—or been forced to seek—housing farther away from New York City’s Core Employment Hubs. The crisis of affordable housing has pushed more people, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged New Yorkers, to the edges of the city or to the inner ring of suburbs, requiring longer and more complicated commutes than before.

This dynamic has exacerbated a cycle where New Yorkers who live farther away and increasingly desire remote work have fewer incentives to come in person to the workplace, ultimately jeopardizing to an even greater degree the future recovery of the city’s business districts and transit ridership.

NYC’s business districts are in a global competition for a potentially leveling or shrinking pool of the kinds of office work and office workers that drive our economy. Service quality and reliability matter more now that commuting to the office in an NYC business district is discretionary for some of those workers.

In short, improving commutes is a matter of equity; it is essential to our global competitiveness; and it is a critical component of our successful economic recovery.

This report embraces strategies and initiatives that strengthen our transportation systems to improve commutes and reduce traffic, and bring jobs closer

to where people live, to ensure the challenges of commuting are not a barrier to growth.

We will work together with the State Legislature and other local government entities throughout NYS to develop a sustainable operating budget model for the MTA. We must also make our regional rail systems affordable for more New Yorkers, increase service on mass transit, speed up buses, expand the accessibility of the system, and bolster our cycling network—while also reducing the demand for cars and trucks—in order to improve commutes and reduce traffic so people can get to their workplaces faster and more reliably.

For those who prefer working closer to their homes, we must continue to accelerate job production at employment hubs in all five boroughs. We can increase housing production close to transit hubs, putting shorter, easier commutes within the reach of more people.

Some companies and employees have embraced a hybrid schedule, and we must provide more equitable options for remote workspaces. New neighborhood co-working spaces can provide viable options that draw people out of their houses and into walkable or bikeable local commutes, so they can enliven their neighborhoods when they are not in the office.

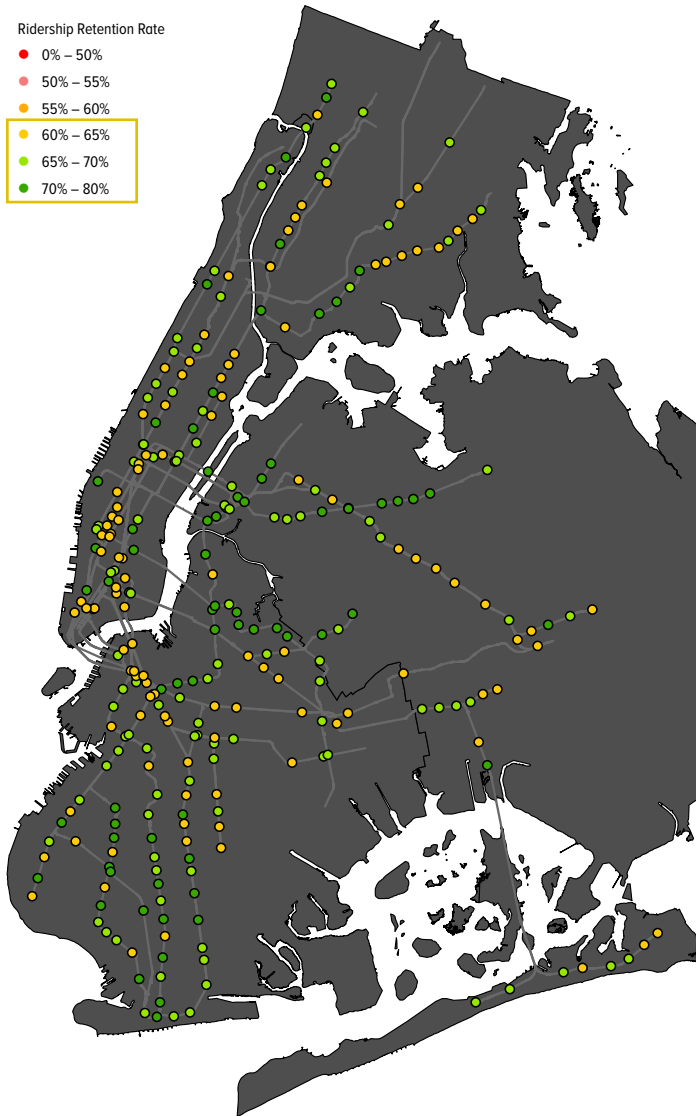
Whether it’s improving commutes into Manhattan, creating new outer-borough job clusters or supporting work-from-home, we must make it easier for New Yorkers to get to work.

FIGURE 20

The COVID-19 pandemic altered transportation patterns

Weekday ridership has seen stronger recovery at outer borough subway stations...

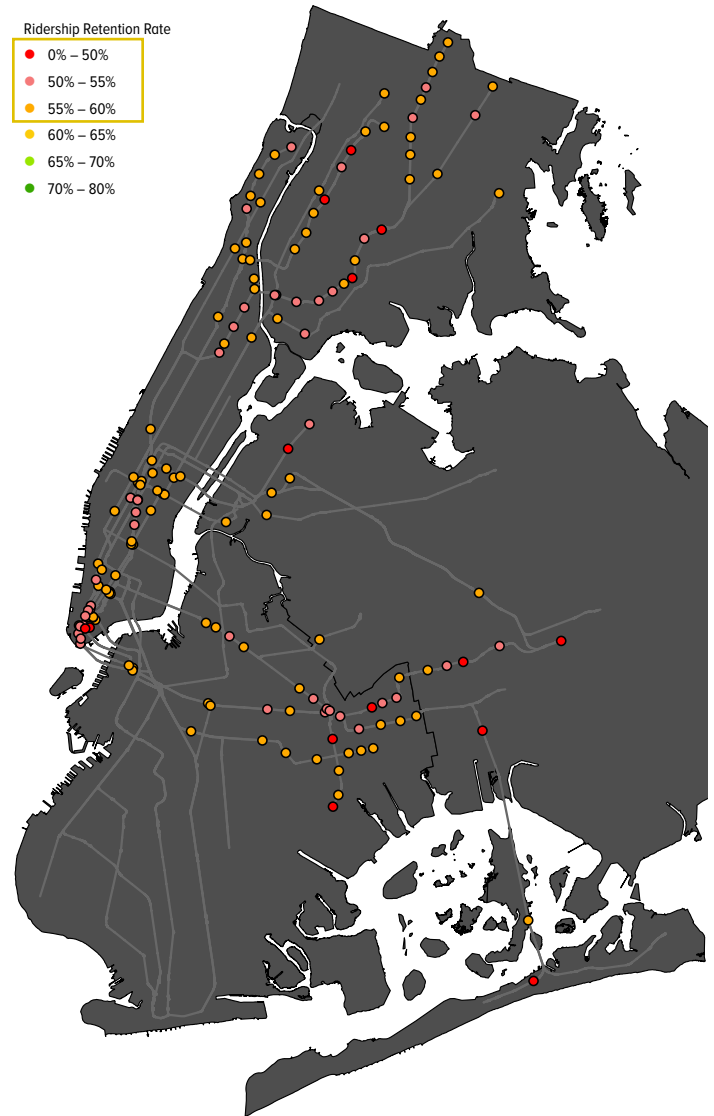
Weekday subway ridership
May 2019 vs. September 2022



Source: MTA

...but remains below 60% of pre-pandemic levels at most stations in Midtown and Lower Manhattan

Weekday subway ridership
May 2019 vs. September 2022



STRATEGY

Increasing the supply of mass transit options

Millions of New Yorkers rely upon mass transit to get them where they need to go. Yet depressed ridership triggered by COVID-19 has strained the MTA's revenues, threatening service levels further. As a result, in an era when more people have the flexibility to work from home and may be on the fence about going into the office on any given day, commutes are a major barrier to workers returning to in-office work in the business districts. By advancing a set of strategies to make commutes more affordable, efficient, and accessible to all New Yorkers, we can improve transit equity and the quality of life for all commuters within the city.

INITIATIVE 18

SUSTAINABLE OPERATING BUDGET MODEL FOR THE MTA

The MTA is expecting to run out of federal COVID aid in 2024, leaving the agency's operating budget with a deficit of approximately \$3 billion a year, starting in 2025.²⁵⁹

Fast, reliable and affordable transit is inextricably linked with business district recovery and prosperity. Investments in MTA service and infrastructure enhancements are necessary at this critical juncture to bolster NYC's recovery—outsize fare increases or service reductions to address MTA's fiscal cliff would be counter to these goals.

The MTA is an outsized economic and equity force in the region and the State, providing not just mobility in the region but also economic opportunity through contracting and manufacturing throughout New York State. However, the MTA relies much more heavily on farebox revenue than other transit systems throughout the country. The MTA has always been expected to have fares make up half or more of the operating budget, but farebox recovery is expected to be closer to 30-35 percent for the coming years—more in line with where domestic peers were pre-pandemic.²⁶⁰

During the pandemic, despite a dramatic reduction in ridership, State leadership and MTA leadership made the joint decision to continue providing full service on subways and buses. MTA employees drove buses and conducted trains throughout the pandemic, to allow the region's other essential workers to get to work.

Although only about two-thirds of all riders have come back to the MTA, there are many communities in which 80 percent, 90 percent, or more of residents are back to transit.²⁶¹ For those New Yorkers—and for the economy that they help support—frequent and reliable service is indispensable. In this region with dense populations centers and low car ownership, public transportation must be available, and it is an essential service.

The MTA is on track to run out of the federal aid funds received by the MTA in 2024. The Governor, State legislature, and local government entities throughout New York State should commit to working together to develop a sustainable operating budget model for the MTA that minimizes negative impacts to customers, such as outsized fare increases and service cuts that would hamper NYC business district recovery,²⁶² and that facilitates the implementation of the recommendations in this report, such as increases to off-peak and weekend service.

INITIATIVE 19

MAINTAIN PEAK SUBWAY SERVICE AND IMPROVE THE FREQUENCY AND RELIABILITY OF SUBWAY SERVICE DURING OFF-PEAK HOURS

Subway ridership has stalled at about 60 percent of pre-pandemic rates, with off-peak and borough recovery stronger than that during peak and in business districts.²⁶³ However, even today, the city's business districts and workers predominantly rely upon the subway for commuting. Further recovery of these districts may depend on the subway, as street traffic has largely recovered to pre-pandemic levels and the subway remains the easiest, cheapest, and most efficient way to get to business districts. Now that commuting to work in person is increasingly a choice rather than a given for many workers, the quality and reliability of the commute take on new importance—both for peak and off-peak commutes.

CREATE AN AFFORDABLE AND INTEGRATED REGIONAL RAIL NETWORK

The subway network is built around the primary and secondary business districts. Improving frequency and reliability effectively increases the number of people able to access jobs and attractions in the business districts, which in turn could support business district recovery and global positioning. For example, according to the first MTA Monthly Pulse Survey in July 2022, shorter wait times on weekdays and shorter wait times on weekends are two of the top five reasons that would encourage customers to use the subway more often.²⁶⁴

While ridership is lower during the hours between 1 and 5 a.m. (1-3% of the daily total),²⁶⁵ subway service is critical for many lower-income employees and New York City's economy. It supports restaurants and entertainment businesses, hospitals and health facilities, and the delivery service industry (e.g., UPS, FedEx and Amazon), among other industries. Off-peak service improvements benefit these workers who commute outside of traditional business hours and would help make business districts places where people want to “live and play,” not just work. Long waits for trains can lead to platform and train crowding, lengthening trips and increasing time on platforms.

The MTA, subject to developing a sustainable operating budget model as described in Initiative 18, will develop an approach to:

- **Maintain frequent service during traditional commuting hours** (e.g., commit to maintaining 2022 peak service levels).
- **Increase off-peak subway frequencies.**
- **Optimize the scheduling and utilization of service outages to minimize customer impacts**, and compensate customers with additional service on buses or parallel lines during service outages.



Credit: Gus Powell, NYC & Company

New York's regional rail system was designed to carry commuters into the city from its outlying suburbs—however, in addition to Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal, 39 stops are within New York City itself. This extraordinary network creates a fast and direct line into the city's core. However, the regional rail system has steep costs—up to \$10.75 per trip, or up to almost four times as much as the subway at \$2.75.

For many New Yorkers, being priced out of this option can extend their commutes significantly. For example, a trip from the Rosedale neighborhood in southeastern Queens to Penn Station can take up to 1 hour and 35 mins by bus and subway, compared to 48 minutes on the LIRR. Similarly, a trip from the Wakefield neighborhood in northern Bronx to Midtown can take up to 1 hour and 18 minutes by subway and bus, compared to 42 minutes by MNR. This dynamic is repeated across the city, with commuters to the city's core taking buses to subways or express buses or cars rather than the LIRR and MNR.

Today, major investments and changing commuting patterns have created an unprecedented opportunity to leverage this incredible asset and create affordable, shorter commutes for tens of thousands of New Yorkers. Soon, the new East Side Access tunnels bringing the Long Island Railroad into Grand Central Terminal will open, expanding LIRR capacity into Manhattan by 50%.²⁶⁶ At the same time, these networks have room even without gaining new capacity, because weekday ridership remains down more than 30% from 2019.²⁶⁷ In 2027, Metro-North will be opening four new stations in the Bronx for routes into Penn Station, which will cut travel times from the Bronx to Manhattan by as much as 50 minutes.²⁶⁸

To capitalize on this unique moment and promote a more affordable regional rail system, the MTA will implement a \$5 CityTicket all day every day—including during peak travel times—for trips that begin and end within New York City.

INCREASE BUS SPEEDS

Buses play an important role in getting New Yorkers to and from business districts. In 2019, 276,000 people, or 7 percent of those who entered Manhattan south of 60th Street,²⁶⁹ did so via bus on a business day,²⁷⁰ and around 11 million passengers traveled from other boroughs to Manhattan on MTA express buses.²⁷¹ Within Manhattan, 120 million passengers traveled via MTA local buses.²⁷² In 2021, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, ridership dropped across these groups, with 5 million passengers commuting on express buses into Manhattan and 64 million on local buses within Manhattan.²⁷³ Recent weekday bus ridership was around ~63 percent of comparable pre-pandemic levels for the week of October 3, 2022.

Shorter wait times and more reliable service would encourage more ridership. For example, according to the first MTA Monthly Pulse Survey in July 2022, shorter wait times on weekdays, more reliable service, and shorter travel times are three of the top five improvements that would encourage customers to use the bus more often.²⁷⁴ Currently, New York City buses average around eight miles per hour.²⁷⁵ In addition, there are variations in speed by route. For example, NYC's M102 bus line, running from the East Village to Harlem, has an average speed of 4.6 miles per hour.²⁷⁶ The potential causes include frequent stops, delays while passengers board, traffic congestion, and traffic lights.²⁷⁷



Credit: Molly Flores, NYC & Company



Credit: John Muggenborg

This will dramatically expand the MTA's existing CityTicket program, which currently applies during off-peak hours and weekends. This new, more affordable peak travel time option will save many riders up to an hour or more compared to long bus and subway commutes, and it will induce some commuters to switch from traveling by car. This may also generate net new commuting trips, for instance, New Yorkers who decide to take new jobs in Manhattan's business districts because their commute will be shorter and/or more affordable.

Additionally, the MTA has opportunities to continue building on this context and promote a more integrated and affordable regional rail system, by:

- Integrating technology and fare systems for metro area transit, including One Metro New York (OMNY) expansion and route planning tools, by ensuring the rollout of OMNY for Metro-North and the LIRR as soon as possible; developing inter-modal fare pricing and packages; and encouraging further improvement (e.g., providing data) to existing transit-planning tools across all agencies that could plan trips across all regional transportation operators with accurate, live information.
- Integrating modes at regional rail stations in collaboration with NYC DOT and other agencies to provide better bus and bike connections and provide standard and secure bike and scooter storage at regional rail stations in the five boroughs. This could help support additional demand for access caused by lower peak fares.

To increase commuting into business districts, the City, State, and MTA will increase bus speeds and reduce travel times by:

- **Redesigning the bus network:** New York City has changed drastically since the last time the MTA examined the bus network. Over the years, the five boroughs have developed rapidly, and current travel needs are not met by the existing network. The MTA is taking a comprehensive look at bus service patterns in each borough to better match service with current and future travel demands. The MTA will improve and simplify the current network to get travelers where they want to go more quickly and efficiently. The MTA is partnering with NYC Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) and the public to make sure all affected residents have a say in their redesigned bus networks. DOT also partners with MTA in supporting redesign with bus priority lanes, as well as having responsibility for changes to bus stops that will occur with the rollout of the new borough designs.
- **Exploring replicating the 14th Street busway design** on additional major crosstown routes in Manhattan, on slow but highly used bus routes across NYC, with a focus on borough commercial hub connections.
- **Introducing “All Door Boarding” citywide** so that riders can enter from the front or back door with tap-and-go fare payment.
- **Committing to the principles in the NYC Streets Plan** to improve speed and reliability by implementing dedicated bus lanes on the corridors identified in the plan, implementing transit signal priority, strengthening bus lane enforcement via automated stationary and mounted cameras and via traffic enforcement agents, and installing more real-time information signs and seating at bus stops.
- **Building and publicizing a frequent bus route network** with routes/corridors that offer service every ten minutes or better throughout the day and evening, strengthening connections to and through NYC business districts. As an example, the Queens Bus Network Redesign is proposing a frequent bus network that will be a model for other boroughs.

- **City and MTA to discuss the future of MTA Bus Company** (a historical amalgamation of once-private bus routes) in light of bus network redesigns that reallocate service fluidly between New York City Transit and MTA Bus.
- **Advancing planning efforts to collaboratively design a “bus of the future”** (trackless tram) to look at streetscape, technology, infrastructure, and route improvements that would unlock the full potential of street-level public transit to address our core equity, sustainability, accessibility, and resiliency challenges.
- **Seeking greater camera enforcement authorization:** MTA buses often find their path impeded by vehicles illegally in bus lanes, parked at a bus stop, or double-parked and blocking the travel lane. That’s one of the reasons that bus speeds across the city average only 8 miles per hour. Implementing a series of improvements, including camera enforcement, is expected to improve speeds by at least 10 percent.

DOT has operated a bus lane camera enforcement program for many years, and New York City provides the final processing of all bus lane violations. The MTA’s Automated Bus Lane Enforcement (ABLE) program, enabled in 2019, has been a great step in expanding camera enforcement in partnership with DOT. The MTA has already installed cameras on 123 buses across seven routes. By the end of 2023, cameras will be installed on an additional 900 buses, covering 80 percent of bus lanes. Unfortunately, the State-level ABLE law sunsets in 2024.

State legislation to expand the camera enforcement program would further increase bus speeds across the system. Authorizing the MTA and DOT to allow stationary or bus-mounted cameras to enforce certain NYC Traffic Rules would result in fewer illegally parked vehicles that negatively impact bus operations, whether those vehicles are parked in bus lanes, at bus stops or double-parked in travel lanes. The existing bus lane enforcement program demonstrates that behavior is corrected, as only 19 percent of people receive a second bus camera ticket and only 8 percent receive three or more.²⁷⁸

INITIATIVE 22

MAKE TRANSIT MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

New York City's infrastructure design often acts as a barrier for people with disabilities. In recent years, the MTA and DOT have made commitments to improve accessibility at subway stations and on the city's public and private right-of-way.

In June 2022, the MTA committed to adding elevators or ramps to create a stair-free path of travel at 95 percent of the currently inaccessible subway stations through improvements completed or in procurement by 2055, up from just 27 percent of stations today.²⁷⁹ Making the streetscape more accessible complements the MTA's efforts to make subway stations more accessible, given that compliance with the ADA at subway stations may have little impact if barriers exist en route to subway stations. Subway station work triggers and must include making the relevant nearby pedestrian ramps compliant. Additionally, DOT's Pedestrian Ramp Program upgrades and installs pedestrian ramps as part of resurfacing or other DOT projects, which are important for all pedestrians and especially people with disabilities.²⁸⁰



To improve access to business districts for people with disabilities, the City and State, through the MTA and DOT, will:

- Fund and complete existing accessibility commitments made by the MTA in June 2022.
- Update DOT's ADA Transition Plan, including a self-evaluation of the accessibility of its public facilities and improvement methods where feasible.
- Partner with and solicit input from organizations serving people with disabilities, including those specializing in physically and neuro-diverse experiences, when developing Street Design Guidelines and other public realm improvements.
- Ensure that design standards for the public right-of-way always incorporate appropriate accessibility for all users of the streetscape, and that work performed by government agencies (including the City and MTA) and by private contractors always meets these standards.
- Improve enforcement of NYC's Building Code Chapter 11 accessibility standards.
- Explore additional modes of transportation for those with limited abilities, such as accessible bike or scooter share with adaptive vehicles.

INITIATIVE 23

ADVANCE KEY TRANSIT SERVICE ENHANCEMENT AND SYSTEM EXPANSION PROJECTS

Many of MTA's major capital projects will create significant savings in commute times and increase access to jobs for large communities that have been historically underserved by transit. These projects will strengthen connections between New Yorkers in the region and business districts of different scales in NYC, in addition to opening up opportunities for reverse commuting in the region.

The MTA is working on several improvements in its bus network to increase bus speeds, including redesigning the bus networks in each borough and working with DOT to implement bus lanes and busways, increased enforcement of bus lanes, and transit signal prioritization. If bus times could be reduced by

INVEST IN PROTECTED BIKEWAY INFRASTRUCTURE AND IMPROVE ACCESS TO BIKES, E-BIKES, AND BIKE STORAGE

10 percent, bus commute times could be reduced by up to 5.5 minutes/trip, on average.²⁸¹

The MTA is working on several improvements in its subway network to reduce runtimes, including correcting signals to clear at fastest safe speed, additional training for train operators and supervisors, installing timer countdown clocks in targeted locations, removing unnecessary slow speed limit signs that are not governed by the signal system, resetting switches faster to move through the area more quickly, upgrading signal technology, and replacing fleet with new train cars that accelerate faster. If subway times could be reduced by 4 percent, subway commute times could be reduced by up to 3 minutes/trip, on average.²⁸²

The MTA will complete East Side Access and the new Grand Central Madison Terminal, along with other LIRR improvements by the end of 2022. With these enhancements, along with a second phase of Jamaica capacity improvements, LIRR customers going to East Midtown from Long Island could save up to 21 minutes/trip in their commute time and up to 40 minutes/trip for reverse commute times from Midtown to Long Island. Jobs reachable within a 45-minute inbound transit trip will increase on average by 120,000 from Queens and Long Island.²⁸³

The MTA will break ground on Penn Station Access, which will result in commute trips to/from the new Bronx stations decreasing 16 minutes on average for inbound commute trips and 12 minutes for outbound on MNR. Jobs reachable within a 45-minute transit trip from the project area will increase on average by up to 314,000. Construction started on Penn Station Access in 2022 and is expected to be complete in 2027.²⁸⁴

The MTA will break ground on Second Avenue Subway (SAS) Phase 2 in 2023 (pending confirmation of a full funding grant agreement with federal partners), which will result in up to a 7-minute reduction of commute times to/from East Harlem and an average increase of 300,000 additional jobs reachable within a 30-minute transit trip from the project area.²⁸⁵

The MTA will advance Interborough Express (IBX), which could result in an 8-minute reduction of travel times per rider on average, with an average increase of 165,000 additional jobs reachable within a 45-minute transit trip from the project area. Environmental review for IBX will begin in 2023.²⁸⁶

New Yorkers are increasingly taking trips by bicycle, electric bike (e-bike), scooter, and electric scooter—also known as micromobility modes. For example, trips taken by Citi Bike increased by 33 percent between 2019 and 2021.²⁸⁷ Micromobility is a flexible option to connect residents, visitors, and employees throughout business districts and helps fill gaps in the transit system. E-bikes could be a game-changer for New York City—reducing congestion, reducing the carbon footprint of those who switch from cars or for-hire vehicles, and reducing commute times for those who switch from walking or human-powered bicycles. E-bikes are increasing in popularity, and their usage has surged in recent years.²⁸⁸ Furthermore, micromobility modes are also important work vehicles for some essential workers like delivery workers.

Combined, these factors indicate that investments in micromobility infrastructure (including investment in electrification of e-bike docks), amenities, and access could ensure that a greater number of New Yorkers can access business districts, navigate within them, and complete work trips, in turn benefitting the bottom line of businesses.

The City and its business districts can maximize on these benefits by retrofitting city streets for safe and accessible use of bikes, e-bikes, and other micromobility devices. Investments in the following will



encourage more people to use micromobility, which would generate activity in business districts.

Continuing to expand the City's Low-Stress

Bicycle Network. As of November 2022, the city had just over 1,500 bike lane miles, including over 600 protected miles.²⁸⁹ The City has committed to upgrading the physical protection of 20 miles of existing bike lanes by the end of 2023. The City is also investigating the use of new materials for adding protection to future bike facilities. In 2019, the City Council mandated that DOT implement an additional 250 miles of protected bike lanes between 2022 and 2026 through Local Law 195. These investments in protected bikeway infrastructure are a critical path to increasing activity to and within business districts. The City and State will support DOT in implementing mayoral and council mandates for expanding the city's Low-Stress Bicycle Network.

Providing 2,000 publicly available bicycle parking

racks annually. Bike lanes alone will not generate activity in business districts. Plentiful, publicly available bicycle parking at destinations will encourage more New Yorkers to use micromobility for trips to business districts. Currently, there is one bicycle parking space for every 116 bikes in the city. The availability of bicycle parking comes with an economic impact: converting a vehicle parking space to a bicycle parking space generates 3.6 times more spending.²⁹⁰ Recognizing the critical need for bicycle parking across the city, and the economic implications on business districts, the City will build 2,000 bicycle parking racks annually to meet the increasing number of trips taken by bicycle.

Improve e-bike affordability and infrastructure.

The State will pursue S380a/516 or similar legislation to create a 50 percent e-bike rebate, creating parity with electric vehicles. Such a State program may include provisions to:

- Enable third-party benefits providers and/or employers to access rebates to create low monthly rent-to-own benefits for employees, similar to those adopted in Germany, the UK, and elsewhere in Europe.
- Enable working cyclists and delivery workers, who may be unbanked or have low/no credit and cash flow, to access low-interest credit components, provisions for subsidized certified battery replacement, and new bikes. This could minimize

the use of off-market battery repair and substandard battery replacement responsible for dangerous fires.

Enacting a rebates program could be complemented by a marketing strategy to ensure subsidies reach both commuters and delivery workers who are increasingly using subpar and modified bikes and batteries.

Changes will also be pursued to be able to use federal funding for infrastructure for e-bike charging.

Expand access to Citi Bike. The increase in Citi Bike ridership in recent years, combined with its ability to fill transit gaps and facilitate short trips within the City's business districts warrants continued improvement of the program to serve even more New Yorkers. Expanding the availability of electric and human-powered Citi Bikes across the city, with additional staffed stations and balanced distribution of fleets and docks, can enable consistent and reliable connections between residential districts of all income levels and business districts.

STRATEGY

Reducing demand for cars and trucks

Reducing demand for cars and trucks allows for the vehicles that do need to be on the road to travel more quickly and efficiently while opening up more of our street space for public space, pedestrians, and more sustainable modes of transportation. Specific proposals for reducing demand, like congestion pricing and more sophisticated pricing for curb use, can also raise critical revenue for other key policy priorities.

INITIATIVE 25

FIRMLY SUPPORT CONGESTION PRICING

The Central Business District Tolling Program for vehicles entering Manhattan south of 60th Street, also known as congestion pricing, was authorized by the State legislature in 2019. The goal of the program is to reduce driving in the Manhattan business districts and raise a dedicated revenue stream for needed transit repairs and upgrades.

DEVELOP A NEW APPROACH TO CURB MANAGEMENT



The MTA, New York State Department of Transportation, and NYC DOT are co-sponsors of the draft environmental assessment document, which was released for public review and comment on August 10, 2022. The environmental assessment found that the charge would cut traffic, improve air quality, make buses more reliable, and increase transit use by 1-2 percent. The toll would generate \$1-1.5 billion a year and support \$15 billion in debt financing for mass transit improvement.²⁹¹

Following the environmental assessment public comment period, the Traffic Mobility Review Board, a six-member panel primarily appointed by the MTA, will recommend a toll plan to the MTA Board. If the environmental assessment is approved by the Federal Highway Administration, the program will go live in 2024.

The City and State firmly support the MTA implementation of the Central Business District Tolling Program.

At the same time, we are cognizant of the unique mobility needs of people with disabilities, some of whom do not have the option of using the transit system. The legislation creating the Central Business District Tolling Program rightly provides an exemption for vehicles carrying people with disabilities.

There is intense demand for limited curb space in New York City, and the number of uses competing for space has increased significantly in recent years. In the second half of the 20th century the curb became largely a place to store automobiles (usually at no cost to the driver). But the world has changed, with e-commerce driving a huge increase in delivery activity, and other uses, such as bike share, Open Restaurants, loading zones, public art, and waste containerization, have revealed how the curb can be transformed into much more than a storage space. This has necessitated a re-thinking of how to use this valuable public space. Congestion caused by double-parking at the curb comes at a cost: It delays deliveries and ultimately business operations. Moreover, the cumulative effects are simply that it takes longer for people to get from point A to point B.

Leveraging data, technology, and demand pricing will improve mobility, economic and cultural activity, and overall quality of life, resulting in a more equitable distribution of our shared asset. The curb of the future will look different from today. The vision for the future will prioritize:

- **Cutting-edge technology** to digitize the curb, including accurate and ongoing knowledge of parking availability, such as bookable parking and loading zones, performance-based pricing of curb space, and consistent and fair enforcement of all curbside activities.
- **Non-motorized uses**, including prioritizing bike, micromobility, and walking usage, with increased cost of storage for long-term on-street storage of private automobiles, particularly in transit-rich parts of the city.
- **Quality of life**, including public realm improvements, greenery, improved waste management, and supporting low-traffic streets and neighborhoods.
- **Efficiency**, including prioritization of public and shared mobility services, better delivery management, and encouragement of smaller and non-motorized delivery services.

- **Safety**, including using appropriate regulations to reduce double parking, using pricing mechanisms to encourage safer vehicles and activities, and redesigning streets to reduce vehicular crashes.
- **Business growth and job creation**, including improving curb availability for business customers, improving access for deliveries at businesses to reduce the cost of services, and using space in appropriate locations for business uses like dining and vending.
- **Equity**, including differential pricing of curbs in different neighborhoods, using revenues generated by curb uses to improve the delivery of transportation-related services locally and city-wide, and reducing the distribution of special government-issued free parking permits to make parking fairer.

To better manage this competition for the curb while prioritizing the City’s transportation, equity, and environmental goals, the City will develop and release a curb management plan that includes strategies to improve curb operation in several areas, such as:

- **Regulations:** Updating regulations in a context-sensitive way to make the curb function better for different types of streets and neighborhoods. Examples include:
 - Freight management: using increased loading zones, as well as managed spaces like micro distribution centers and low-emissions zones.
 - Shared mobility services: expanding Citi Bike and other non-motorized services, as well as carshare promotion.
 - Time of day management, with parking or deliveries allowed at certain times of day, and public space, dining, or other similar uses allowed at other times of day.
 - Legislation to ensure that delivery workers, whose office space is the roadway, have workplace safety protections.
 - Pursue legislation to allow DOT greater flexibility to set fees for construction and street-occupancy permits and for shared micromobility service operators.
- **Pricing:** Utilizing pricing to make parking function better, accommodating other uses pursuant to the City’s goals, and reflecting the high value of

curb space in a dense urban environment. This includes both using performance-based pricing in business districts to ease parking, increase turnover, and reduce unneeded circling, and also beginning the pricing of long-term residential parking in transit-rich parts of the city. This also includes pricing the curb for all users, not just cars, to decrease the current free-for-all that allows for use of our sidewalks for on-demand deliveries.

- **Programming:** Expanding or introducing uses beyond vehicle storage, such as Open Restaurants, waste containerization, loading, bike share, bike parking, vending, public spaces, and pedestrian safety enhancements.
- **Enforcement:** Improving compliance with curb regulations, including better use of automated enforcement. Enforcement should be data-driven, with public-facing transparency about where enforcement activity is and is not occurring.
- **Technology:** Implanting best-in-class technology to more responsively and accurately manage, program, and enforce curb uses. New York City should be a world leader in maximizing new technology to manage public curb spaces.
- **Data:** Leveraging data to better understand demand at the curb and support more dynamic regulations and pricing to improve performance.

Certain curb management initiatives could be piloted in partnership with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) or other neighborhood organizations before implementing them citywide.

As next steps, DOT will:

- Release a curb management plan to comprehensively improve the way curb uses are regulated, priced, programmed, and enforced in New York City.
- Work with BIDs or other neighborhood organizations to pilot model curb management strategies that can be replicated throughout the city.
- Implement a data-driven and technology-based enforcement and reservation system.
- Partner with technology leaders to explore and pilot digital solutions such as real-time use catalogues and demand-based vehicle pricing.

INITIATIVE 27

ENABLE WIDESPREAD USE OF SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE FREIGHT

90 percent of the goods that move into and around the city are transported by trucks, a result of the shift from rail and water networks to highways in the second half of the 20th century and containerization concentrating port and warehouse distribution facilities in New Jersey increasing the use of trucks for freight delivery into New York City.²⁹² Dependency on diesel-fueled trucks to meet an increasing demand for goods stresses aging infrastructure, pollutes air with particulate matter, and exacerbates traffic congestion, with harmful end consequences for both New Yorkers and our businesses.

Trucks produce significant greenhouse gas emissions. In New York City, the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) estimates that the transportation sector is responsible for roughly 25 percent of GHG emissions annually.²⁹³ Nationally, the EPA estimates that medium and heavy-duty trucks make up about 83 percent of all transportation sector GHG emissions annually.²⁹⁴ In addition to making deliveries less efficient, truck activity congestion can also make streets less safe for pedestrians and cyclists when they occupy curb space and bike lanes for unloading goods.

The City has committed to exploring and advancing bold solutions, as described in [Delivering Green: A vision for a sustainable freight network serving New York City](#), to green the last mile by supporting the

use of electric cargo bikes and to reduce truck trips into NYC by shifting freight movement from trucks to water, which, in combination, are emerging as viable last-mile solutions. Other global waterfront cities have already developed maritime services to move last-mile freight into business districts by transferring goods from a small marine vessel to a zero- or low-emission vehicle, such as cargo bikes. 'Each operating cargo bike removes approximately seven tons CO2 per year—the equivalent of over 100 planted trees.'²⁹⁵ NYC stands to benefit greatly from such a service due to the volume of cargo coming from across the Hudson, which generates an inordinate amount of truck activity, congestion, and pollution. But the city needs to overcome market and infrastructure barriers. These sustainable freight system strategies are a key part of the City's broader greenhouse gas emissions reduction strategy and support the City's and State's ambitious climate goals.

DOT and NYCEDC will continue to explore policy changes, incentive programs, infrastructure investments, and partnerships with package-delivery companies to help overcome these barriers and enable the widespread use of low-emission transportation for last-mile distribution in business districts, including the following:

- **Catalyze the use of cargo bikes for deliveries in business districts.**
 - **Pass State legislation** to increase the width limit of electric cargo bikes from 36 inches to 48 inches in NYC. The extra width makes



Credit: NYCDOT

the cargo bikes more stable and safer, for the benefit of riders and pedestrians.

- o **Expand the Commercial Cargo Bicycle Pilot** from Manhattan to the entire city and increase installation of cargo bike corral infrastructure to allow for seamless loading and unloading at the curb.
- o **Expand the width of bike lanes on key north-south thoroughfares in business districts** to support both micromobility (electric bikes) and micro-distribution (electric cargo bikes). This would enable more commuters to bike to work, increasing equitable access to business districts, and would encourage a freight mode shift from delivery trucks and vans to cargo bikes for last-mile distribution.
- o **Establish last-mile “micro hubs”** to create dedicated space for the transfer of goods from trucks to cargo bikes and hand trucks while providing on-site electric chargers at strategic locations in and adjacent to business districts.
- o **Launch cargo bike incentive programs** to give small businesses the financial support needed to purchase cargo bikes used for last-mile delivery.
- **Expand the use of City and privately owned waterfront landings and terminals for low-emission last-mile deliveries into Manhattan business districts.**
 - o **Reconfigure City-owned piers, ferry landings, and DockNYC sites** through infrastructure investments to directly support the use of vessels for cross-harbor and inter-borough transportation of electric vehicles into Manhattan, replacing diesel truck trips into business districts.
 - o **Activate smaller ferry and marine terminals** for private marine highway initiatives by partnering with local maritime companies and shippers to retrofit sites to enable vessels carrying delivery trucks, cargo bikes, electric hand trucks, and palletized cargoes to reach their final destinations more efficiently by water.
- **Support the transition to electric trucks.**
 - o **Advocate to pass a local law** requiring 40 percent of parking spaces in existing garages

and lots to be capable of EV charging by 2030.

- o **Explore opportunities to allocate additional funds to and modify provisions of existing incentive programs** for the purchase of clean trucks, like the NYS Truck Voucher Incentives and the NYC Clean Trucks Program, as well as the creation of other incentives for clean delivery vehicles.
- o **Work with industry to identify publicly accessible charging sites** for medium and heavy-duty electric trucks.

STRATEGY

Strengthening employment hubs and workspaces across all five boroughs so people can work closer to their homes

As critical as Manhattan’s business districts are to the city’s economy, other employment hubs in all five boroughs offer New Yorkers the opportunity to work closer to home, allowing them shorter commute times and greater flexibility in balancing work and home responsibilities. We have also seen the benefit of this dispersed economic development as business districts outside of Manhattan like Long Island City and the Bronx Hub have met or exceeded pre-pandemic levels for foot traffic and retail spending. To continue fostering this vitality and support more diverse options for workers and businesses, we will support the development of these neighborhoods into true live-work communities that provide economic opportunities for local residents, including facilitating more office space development outside of Manhattan. Long-standing neighborhood institutions like the local branches of the city’s three major library systems also offer potential for workers who would like to take advantage of remote options but don’t have the space or resources in their homes.

INITIATIVE 28

INVEST IN EMPLOYMENT HUBS AROUND TRANSIT, INDUSTRY CLUSTERS, AND ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic, and its economic impacts, highlighted the need to diversify New York City's economy through a five borough economic development strategy and bring jobs closer to where people live. Anchor institutions—universities, hospitals, and government agencies—have been key partners in transforming business districts and other employment hubs in all five boroughs into mixed-use, job-intensive industry clusters. For instance, anchor institutions have been at the center of Downtown Brooklyn's redevelopment over the last decade, accounting for 20 percent of job growth and 30 percent of the district's economic base.²⁹⁶ This is also true in Long Island City, Jamaica, Flushing, Harlem, and other neighborhoods.

A number of neighborhoods throughout the city have key characteristics that support anchor-oriented development opportunities, such as:

- The presence of high-capacity, frequent transit services.
- Proximity to existing vibrant neighborhoods offering an array of amenities such as dining, shopping, services, and parks.
- Land owned by the City, State, or anchor institutions.
- Mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood design.

Lower Manhattan and the 125th Street corridor are notable examples in Manhattan. Within Lower Manhattan, the Financial District and the Water Street corridor are home to thousands of jobs, a rich transit network with connections throughout the city and to New Jersey, a growing residential community, and connections to the waterfront. The 125th Street corridor stretches across the entire borough, and on its east side the next phases of the SAS will provide another transit connection, bolstering the existing Metro-North connections, while on the western end is an emerging life science cluster around Columbia University and the recent Taustee Lab Building project. Within Queens, Long Island City is thriving, with



Kingsbridge Armory in The Bronx. Credit: NYCEDC

new development throughout the business district and opportunities for growth on the waterfront; Jamaica has an important jobs center and borough downtown; and Willets Point has a new neighborhood development and business district. Within the Bronx, Morris Park has the densest concentration of jobs in the borough and is poised to grow with the coming of new Metro-North service. Hunts Point is home to the nation's largest food distribution facility, one that fed New York through the pandemic but one that also requires continued investment to remain modern. In the western Bronx, investment in the Kingsbridge Armory will help to support and grow the Kingsbridge Heights neighborhood. In Brooklyn, Downtown Brooklyn, Central Brooklyn, Broadway Junction, and Sunset Park are important job centers, each with varying needs, and a set of City and State investments could help to support their growth. Finally, Staten Island's West Shore is poised to reinvent itself as a green economy hub.

The City and State will continue to make place-based and programmatic investments in these communities, building off key assets to advance public-private partnerships and spur long-term development of business districts and employment centers in all five boroughs. The City and State will invest in workforce access and economic mobility as part of these clusters to build the city's entrepreneurship network, ensure opportunities for local residents, and foster more equitable development outcomes. This effort will advance initiatives within each of the following important job and business centers:

Manhattan

125th Street: In East Harlem, the transit hub at Park Avenue and East 125th Street connects three Metro-North lines with the Lexington Line, LaGuardia Link bus, and the second phase terminus of the SAS. Yet for decades the neighborhood has suffered from unsafe and unattractive conditions along East 125th Street and under the Park Avenue Viaduct. In recent years, a new merchants association and public plaza have made some progress, but chronic issues of pedestrian safety, traffic management, and quality of life continue to plague the station area and depress its potential. Now, with SAS Phase 2 in design, the MTA has approached the City seeking to build on previous planning studies and advance transformative investments in coordination with the new station. In addition to supporting local businesses along 125th Street and making life better for residents and commuters, the Park/125 Public Realm Project would support development of large adjacent private sites as well as large-scale City-led developments, such as One East Harlem and 126th Street Bus Depot. In West Harlem, the recent ribbon cutting at the Taystee Lab Building heralds the continued growth of a life science cluster around Columbia's Manhattanville campus and City College.

Lower Manhattan: Lower Manhattan is both a destination and a gateway, serving as a transit hub, a thriving residential community, a business district, and home to dozens of cultural institutions. This area has 14 subway lines, 17 ferry routes, 510,000 commuters, 290,000 workers, 62,000 residents, and 55,000 students. It is a driver of the city's economy, bringing \$6.5 billion in estimated tax revenue in 2019 and is home to 1 in 10 of NYC's jobs. However, this area is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The stretch of shoreline between the Battery and the Brooklyn Bridge is expected to see frequent flooding due to sea-level rise starting in the 2040s, and daily tidal flooding by the 2080s. This poses a threat to the city's economic vitality, with impacts to transit, businesses, and residents. The FiDi-Seaport Master Plan lays out a conceptual design to protect this area, creating a resilient 21st century waterfront that serves future generations of New Yorkers to come. The City will work closely over the next three years with a technical team of engineers and architects, along with local and citywide advocates and elected officials, to refine the design and begin the permitting

process. It's expected that this project might take 15 to 20 years to build out in its entirety, and early estimates project costs of \$5-7 billion.²⁹⁷

Penn Station District: In July 2022, the State approved a redevelopment of Penn Station and the surrounding area that includes a plan to dramatically improve Penn Station, in addition to a large public plaza and 10 office towers around the station. This redevelopment builds on Moynihan Train Hall, the Gateway Program, Penn South, and Hudson Yards. With 18 new entrances, taller ceilings, more natural light, and more underground space to navigate between rail and subway, it will substantially improve the experience of Amtrak, LIRR, NJ Transit, and soon MNR passengers, as well as improve the adjacent subway stations. These improvements could transform Manhattan's appeal for workers and visitors located across the region. A better Penn Station will ensure that the Manhattan business district continues to have rail options that are attractive to the region's labor force and that the labor force includes workers interested in living in a diverse set of communities, including lower-density single family homes and suburbs.

Port Authority Bus Terminal: The redevelopment of the Port Authority Bus Terminal in Midtown may include a new terminal facility and commercial development around the new facility. This project builds off Hudson Yards to the west and the planned Penn Station redevelopment to the south. It will further transform Midtown into a space for technological innovation by leveraging the presence of an existing tech base and anchor institutions, ensuring a safe, efficient, modern experience for the 337,000 projected daily bus commuters at the terminal. Consequently, it could improve and expand access for the growing labor force in New Jersey.²⁹⁸

Governors Island: Governors Island offers proximity by ferry from Manhattan and Brooklyn while feeling like an escape from the city. The region offers flexibility for adaptive reuse of buildings and access to a built-in talent pipeline. The Center for Climate Solutions is a groundbreaking initiative designed to further New York City as a global leader in efforts to respond to the climate crisis. At full completion, the Center is envisioned to create more than 7,000 jobs and may serve as a space for research and innovation, for a public living laboratory, for organizations, nonprofits, commercial innovation, and much more.²⁹⁹

Queens

Jamaica: Downtown Jamaica is an important employment hub, retail center, and transportation hub, with a growing residential population and proximity to JFK. Identified as an opportunity in the 2007 Jamaica Plan and reaffirmed in the 2015 Jamaica Now Action Plan, the Station Plaza project is an investment in Downtown Jamaica to increase safety and improve circulation at key intersections around the Jamaica Long Island Railroad station. The creation of new public open space; widening of sidewalks; and redistribution of bus stops, taxi zones, and crosswalks will improve wayfinding, traffic flow, safety, and the pedestrian experience for this important transit hub.

Long Island City: Between 2010 and 2020, jobs and residents in Long Island City grew more than twice as fast as New York City overall.³⁰⁰ The redevelopment and reuse of underutilized land and buildings along the Long Island City waterfront, along with public and private investments in infrastructure and workforce training, can further drive growth in key sectors and boost the neighborhood's transformation into an economically dynamic, job-rich business district.

Willeys Point: The future of Willeys Point as a new neighborhood and business district will be anchored by the largest 100 percent affordable housing project since the 1970s and a 100 percent privately financed soccer stadium. These projects build on Phase 1 investments in significant environmental remediation of the contaminated site, a new 650-seat public school, new public open space, and critical infrastructure upgrades. Together, this will result in 2,500 100 percent affordable homes; 1,550 permanent jobs and 14,200 jobs; approximately 80,000 square feet of public open space; and \$6.1 billion in overall economic impact to NYC over the next 30 years.³⁰¹

Brooklyn

Downtown Brooklyn: The Ashland Corridor planning effort is a step toward tying Downtown Brooklyn closer together with the surrounding neighborhoods. Long Island University (LIU) and Brooklyn Hospital are located east of Flatbush Avenue, just outside of the Downtown Brooklyn core. Both institutions are engaged in plans to redevelop their respective sites into a mixed-use neighborhood that would add housing and jobs around the institutions. These projects have the potential to add more jobs, expand Downtown Brooklyn toward Fort Greene

Park, and activate physical and workforce access to nearby NYCHA residents if designs are advanced to implementation. When combined with potential development opportunities at nearby City-owned sites, there is an opportunity to strategically align land-use policy and economic development efforts with the area's residents, businesses, and institutions, all toward expanding affordable housing, promoting economic development, and creating job opportunities.

Broadway Junction: The area around Brooklyn's third-busiest transit station could be activated with new commercial uses and critically needed public-realm improvements, which would connect East Brooklynites to the public transit hub. Implementation includes the City Agencies Revitalizing the Economy (CARES) project, which will create new office development anchored by the NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA), bringing up to 1,200 new employees to the area, generating active ground floor retail uses, and making office space for rent available to the public. A series of strategic public-realm improvements would bolster this project by revitalizing the degraded area around the station and providing better access to transit like LIRR at East New York Avenue.

Bed Stuy Restoration: A new campus between New York Avenue and Brooklyn Avenue in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood would create an ecosystem of innovative economic mobility programs, alongside major industry anchors and cultural organizations, to address the racial wealth gap. The project would include a new Billie Holiday Theatre and two commercial towers with space for corporate tenants and mission-aligned organizations. Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, an established community development corporation, currently leases the property from the State and anticipates exercising a purchase option to acquire the fee interest in the property.

South Brooklyn/Sunset Park: The Brooklyn Army Terminal and the new Made in New York Campus at Bush Terminal anchor a cluster of traditional manufacturing, advanced manufacturing, food manufacturing, film/television/media production, and garment manufacturing in the southern portion of the Sunset Park waterfront. Together with investments in the City's Brooklyn Wholesale Meat Market, the new offshore wind port at the South Brooklyn Marine

Terminal on the waterfront, and Industry City's campus to the north, continued and future investment in the Sunset Park waterfront will support the area's potential as a major employment center in South Brooklyn.

Bronx

Morris Park: Morris Park is the Bronx's employment center, providing over 23,000 jobs in the healthcare and education sectors. The MTA is implementing Metro-North service through the East Bronx, providing connections to Penn Station, which would likely reduce travel times between the East Bronx and Midtown. In conjunction with the recommendations in the Department of City Planning's Bronx Metro-North Station Area study, City and State investment could support the growth of healthcare and educational institutions, accelerating the neighborhood's transformation into a mixed-use community with a range of job-intensive life science and healthcare uses.

Kingsbridge Heights: The Kingsbridge Heights neighborhood includes a cluster of established educational institutions, including Lehman College, Fordham University, Bronx High School of Science, and Bronx Community College. The neighborhood is also served by the Major Deegan Expressway, the 4 train, and the B and D train stops. The neighborhood is also home to the Kingsbridge Armory, the country's largest, and a City-owned landmarked building with over 500,000 square feet of space. In fall 2022, the City launched an engagement process to understand the community's priorities for the future of the Armory, with a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the redevelopment of the site expected to follow in late 2023. The redevelopment could support economic development



Workshop attendee and volunteer discussing history of the Armory in the local community. Photo Credit: NYCEDC

in the Bronx and bring new investment, good jobs, and overall benefits to the neighborhood.

Hunts Point: Hunts Point is home to 12,000 residents and close to 19,000 workers. Hunts Point will also have a new Metro-North station, which will provide convenient access to Bronx job centers like Morris Park and job centers in the region. The neighborhood is also home to the city's Food Distribution Center (FDC), which is the largest of its kind in the US. Over 4.5 billion pounds of food are distributed annually through the FDC, 50 percent of which is bound for NYC. The businesses within the FDC employ over 8,000 workers, many of whom are Bronx residents.³⁰² Governor Hochul recently announced the completion of Phase One of the State's \$1.7 billion Hunts Point Access Improvement Project on time and under budget. This major milestone marks the full completion of new and improved access to Edgewater Road for motorists, taking thousands of trucks off local streets every day and improving access to the Hunts Point Terminal Market. New York State and New York City have also supported the NYS Regional Food Hub in Hunts Point, a 60,427-square-foot facility that will include a wholesale farmers' market, a cold storage facility for farmers, a food-processing center and other infrastructure to support local farmers and underserved New Yorkers when complete in 2023. New York State invested \$19 million and New York City invested \$14.05 million in the Regional Food Hub's new \$40 million facility. The City is committed to continuing to invest in the FDC, ensuring it remains the preeminent food distribution hub in the nation and continues to be a place for good jobs. To this end, the Mayor recently announced \$100 million toward the redevelopment of the Produce Market.

Staten Island

West Shore: Staten Island's West Shore has historically been a quality job hub. It has the potential to reinvent itself as a major green economy cluster anchored by offshore wind facilities at the City's Rossville property. Private investment at the City-owned 80-acre Teleport Campus and at surrounding private sites would support and complement these efforts. Continued City and State infrastructure investment will help to unlock West Shore Staten Island's potential as a green economy hub.

INITIATIVE 29

LEVERAGE CITY AGENCY OFFICE SPACE TO ANCHOR COMMERCIAL HUBS

The City currently leases 22 million square feet of commercial space from private parties for agency use, and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) owns and manages 55 buildings that are primarily occupied by City agencies.³⁰³

The City will relocate certain City agencies from outdated facilities upon lease expirations. Relocation will then create an opportunity through public-private partnership to redevelop or convert the existing assets to meet policy goals, such as increasing affordable housing and creating more mixed-used neighborhoods.

Specifically, the City is committed to **relocating City agencies through the existing City Agencies Revitalizing the Economy (CARES) program**, which is designed to catalyze new commercial development in emerging and potential business districts outside of the Manhattan core by leveraging long-term commercial leases of City agencies to bring jobs closer to where New Yorkers live. Through the CARES program, City agencies serve as anchor tenants for new commercial developments in targeted neighborhoods that have demand for more office space but have a hard time attracting the type of larger tenant necessary to anchor a new building. The program is also intended to help the City plan for future space and tenancing needs in a cost-effective manner.

The City may also explore **using vacant private office space available in "soft office markets"** to relocate City agencies, via the DCAS, within the Manhattan Core Employment Hubs (e.g., from Financial District to Midtown or within the Financial District). This would take advantage of space that may have been vacated in the past several years due to current trends in office market leasing and help to bring office workers back into central office spaces well served by transit. This office space may be available at a discount from prior rates, making it more attractive than it was prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this instance, these City agencies might serve as a different type of anchor, bringing foot traffic and potential retail spending back to traditional business districts.

ACCELERATE MODERNIZATION OF LIBRARIES TO SUPPORT REMOTE WORK ACROSS THE CITY

In addition to making the city's employment hubs as accessible and desirable as possible, staying competitive in a hybrid world also means supporting the talent that needs to, or chooses to, work closer to home. While many people, particularly caretakers, may value the flexibility and time saved from not having to commute into the office five days per week, working at home also may not be ideal due to:

- **Lack of space or proper work setup:** While some New Yorkers opted for larger apartments to facilitate working from home,³⁰⁴ 53 percent of New Yorkers are rent burdened³⁰⁵ and may not be able to afford additional space or an at-home work setup.
- **Lack of internet access:** Over 26 percent of NYC households, disproportionately those from historically marginalized communities of color, do not have access broadband at home (not including cellular data plans).³⁰⁶
- **Distractions at home:** Of 1,000+ remote workers surveyed across the US, 53.1 percent of respondents believed working remotely had made it more difficult to separate their work and non-work life.³⁰⁷

For some hybrid or remote employees, local co-working spaces can be good options, as they offer a productive and quiet workspace with opportunities for community building and team interaction.³⁰⁸ However, these spaces may be inaccessible or unaffordable for many, and 33 out of 55 census-defined neighborhoods currently do not have formal co-working space options.³⁰⁹

Many of those neighborhoods, however, do have libraries. Libraries are already effective public commons offering a variety of spaces, including those that often serve as workspaces. With targeted investments and renovations, more libraries could have the space and technology to serve as universally accessible local hubs for remote/hybrid work. They are geographically dispersed and already serve diverse community needs, including free services and

resources for digital literacy, career counseling, and small business development.³¹⁰

However, many libraries in NYC are not yet equipped to serve as hubs of remote work. Over 50 locations are over 100 years old, and many are too small to accommodate remote work while also providing the range of services that patrons require.³¹¹ These challenges often stem from reliance on discretionary funds from City Council or Borough Presidents for capital work.

Modernizing the libraries across NYC could allow more branches to have the flexible space necessary to support remote work while ensuring they remain unique spaces with programming tailored to local needs. Investments to support remote work may include quiet desk space with charging stations, comfortable collaboration space, or meeting and phone rooms. The Brooklyn Heights Library and Inwood Library projects are two notable New York City examples of modernized libraries with these types of amenities. Both projects involved cross-sector partnerships to achieve successful redevelopment. Other examples of libraries supporting hybrid work include:

- *Richland Library, South Carolina:* A 2013 redesign included a Coworking Center with collaborative meeting spaces, comfortable seating, and other facilities with professionals and entrepreneurs in mind.³¹²
- *Scottish Coworking Network:* A network of business hubs within Scottish public libraries with facilities for entrepreneurs available for low membership fees.³¹³
- *Toronto Public Libraries:* Existing branches, and plans for renovation, include a variety of coworking amenities such as an in-house coffee shop, modern meeting pods, and diverse and comfortable seating options. Toronto Central Library also has a dedicated Entrepreneurs Space and Digital Innovation Hub.³¹⁴

We can leverage a multitude of approaches to create accessible spaces for remote work and continue to invest in new technology and programming that allows library systems to support more people in a hybrid work environment.

The City will convene the library systems to explore opportunities to:

- **Accelerate library modernization**, focusing first on under-resourced neighborhoods and branches, by:
 - Identifying and advancing other opportunities to leverage private capital to modernize old and under-resourced libraries, for example by granting developers ground leases for mixed-use development on public library land.
 - Working with philanthropic partners to secure funding that helps libraries modernize for a new era, in recognition of philanthropy's key role in building the first libraries.
 - Identifying opportunities in the City's 10-year capital plan for library modernization where public-private partnership or philanthropic support is not an option.

The redevelopment of the [Inwood Branch](#) of the New York Public Library (NYPL) is a striking example of how the City, NYPL, and philanthropy can come together to develop housing, build community, and modernize libraries. The new two-level library is being developed in the same building as 174 deeply affordable housing units, community learning space, and a NYC Department of Education-operated universal Pre-Kindergarten program through this partnership between Robin Hood, the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development, the NYC Housing Development Corporation, and NYPL.

- **Activate spaces outside of current library premises**, including by:
 - Identifying appropriate development opportunities that would result in a new or renovated library, with separate space set aside for co-working that would be accessible to library users.
 - Leasing and fitting out excess commercial spaces in underserved neighborhoods that can be operated by libraries as outposts.
- **Enhance library programming**, including by:
 - Funding near-term operational support programming for remote and hybrid workers that utilizes existing floor space (e.g., additional laptop access, other new technology, Zoom training).
 - Creating a dedicated maintenance fund for state-of-good repairs.
 - Extending library hours to support off-hours needs.
 - Better integrating City career and workforce services into library programming (e.g., Workforce1 pop-up, entrepreneurial support) to enable greater access to and awareness of resources.



Credit: NYCEDC



GOAL 3

Generate Inclusive, Future-Focused Growth

To fill our office buildings and restore vibrancy to the streets across the five boroughs, New York City needs to grow, but that growth needs to be more inclusive than it has been in the past.

Inclusive growth is essential to becoming a more equitable city. We need more jobs in industries and occupations of the future, that are accessible to more New Yorkers across the city. Growth also helps generate the necessary revenues to provide resources that can improve the lives of New Yorkers in other ways. These investments can ensure that we don't simply recover from the COVID-19 crisis but emerge stronger than before, with new resources to invest in our quality of life, education, healthcare, and essential services.

But there is reason for skepticism. While New York has historically rebounded after crises, a more painful truth is equally true: We have rarely, if ever, distributed the benefit of that growth fairly. In the past 25 years, the city has grown in terms of the number of jobs and residents, but it has also grown more expensive and, therefore, less affordable for the vast majority of New Yorkers. Hence, the paradox: New York needs to grow to be able to afford to become a more equitable, inclusive city, but without a clear vision, intentional action, and full-throated political and civic will, this same growth can also make the problem worse.

Today this calculus is more urgent than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing challenges into starker relief and accelerated disparities across the city. The pandemic has taken a massive and disproportionate toll on the lives and livelihoods of the city's most vulnerable. And, unsurprisingly, the recovery of these same communities has been slower and harder. Our success will be defined by the number of New Yorkers who are able to participate in

the future-focused economy working jobs with family-sustaining wages.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect economic mobility, the lack of quality jobs, overall employment levels, and social support systems for already disadvantaged New Yorkers. Of the almost one million New Yorkers who lost employment income during the pandemic, 20 percent were already in poverty, and only 9 percent of New Yorkers in poverty were able to work remotely and sustain employment income.³¹⁵

New York City still lags behind the rest of the state as well as the nation both in restoring pandemic job losses and in rebounding to pre-pandemic levels of unemployment. While the United States as a whole recently regained all of the jobs it lost since the beginning of the pandemic, as of October 2022, New York City had yet to recover 117,000 private sector jobs or about 12 percent of jobs lost during the pandemic.³¹⁶

The city's overall unemployment rate remains above the national average, at 5.9 percent compared to 3.7 percent for the country as a whole,³¹⁷ with especially high rates estimated for Black (9.4%) and Hispanic (9.2%) New Yorkers.³¹⁸ There is also a disparity in employment rates across boroughs. For example, the Bronx unemployment rate was estimated at 7.4 percent in October 2022, compared to 4.2 percent in Manhattan.³¹⁹ Additionally, the slow return to in-person work has stunted job growth for restaurants and other businesses that previously served office workers in city centers.

This uneven recovery has exacerbated disparities in employment, income, and business ownership across groups of differing race, gender, and ability, as described herein:

People with dependent care responsibilities: The pandemic placed an outsized strain on parents of young and school-age children when remote schooling and childcare closures affected parents' ability to work. In 2021, more than half a million people could not seek employment as a result of childcare responsibilities.³²⁰ Even before the pandemic, only 7 percent of NYC families could afford center-based childcare,³²¹ and 57 percent of the city was officially declared a childcare desert, according to federal guidelines.³²² Given these challenges, even parents who are able to work may not be able to



Credit: BioBus

return in-office and may be discouraged from longer commutes to business districts.

Rent-burdened households: The increased prevalence of hybrid work due to COVID-19 put an outsized strain on already disadvantaged New Yorkers. While some New Yorkers were able to seek out larger homes that facilitate remote work, 53 percent of New Yorkers are rent burdened and may not be able to afford additional space or an at-home work setup³²³—a burden disproportionately impacting Hispanic and Black New Yorkers.³²⁴ A further compounding factor is broadband access. Today, 15 percent of New Yorkers do not have any access to broadband, with even higher rates among Black (18%) and Hispanic (19%) New Yorkers.³²⁵ As a result, the full range of available jobs, as well as the other benefits of at-home work, may not be accessible to all New Yorkers.

Low-wage, in-person workers: High-wage occupations have fared better than low-wage, in-person occupations.³²⁶ For example, the Accommodation and Food services sector is still missing ~51,000 jobs as of October 2022 compared to February 2020 levels.³²⁷

People without college degrees: Those without a college degree have faced greater challenges finding jobs, with unemployment rates among those workers rising to 12.9 percent in 2021—more than twice the rate as those with degrees.³²⁸ Even before the pandemic, New York's job market failed to adequately provide options for people without college degrees. In 2017, New York City ranked 120th out of 121 of the country's largest metro areas by share of jobs that don't require a college degree but pay above the regionally adjusted US median wage.³²⁹

Black and Brown New Yorkers: Unemployment is especially high for Black (9.4%) and Hispanic (9.2%) New Yorkers,³³⁰ in part because they are disproportionately represented in sectors hit hard by job loss and have historically been overrepresented in low-wage industries.³³¹ As a result of historic inequities and disinvestment, Black and Brown New Yorkers may also have less financial cushion to bear economic shocks. For example, before the pandemic, 27 percent of Black residents held student debt, in comparison to 11 percent of white residents.³³²

Small and minority-owned businesses: Ninety percent of the approximately 26,000 businesses that closed permanently between April 2020 and March 2021 were small businesses with fewer than 10 employees.³³³ Black-owned businesses were over twice as likely to close shop as white-owned businesses.³³⁴ Minority and female New Yorkers were already underrepresented before the pandemic, representing 60 percent and 47 percent of the city's workforce, respectively, but only 40 percent and 33 percent of New York City's entrepreneurs.³³⁵

People with disabilities: The population of people with disabilities has also been disproportionately impacted during the pandemic. Unemployment among the nearly 1 million New Yorkers with disabilities was still at 17 percent as of 2021 (versus 8.6% in 2019), compared to 9.6 percent of the general NYC population.³³⁶

Seeing these long-standing challenges laid bare, the disproportionate impact of the pandemic and the ongoing struggle in these communities to recover compels us to reckon with an uncomfortable but foundational truth: New Yorkers of color bear a heavier burden when the city is facing a crisis, just as they have been less likely to benefit when the city is booming.

Our post-pandemic recovery must avoid the pitfalls of the kind of growth that followed previous crises that too often disproportionately benefited whiter and wealthier communities and left too many New Yorkers behind. The success of any growth agenda must be measured by its quantity and quality: a kind of growth in which all New Yorkers have an equity stake in the city's investments in our collective human capital and potential—and in our future.

We propose a new economic model for inclusive growth and economic mobility: a “shared prosperity”



model that is pro-growth, explicitly anti-racist, and asserts that equity and inclusion must have an equal seat at the table in the creation of the blueprint for the city's future, in order to ensure that participation in the future economy reflects the diversity of New York.

To imagine this new economy, we must prepare for the future. New York can lead in a changing world where climate change, technological advancements (e.g., increased automation), and changing consumer preferences (e.g., growth of e-commerce, experiential retail) are fundamentally shifting the global economy. By strategically embracing and leading this change, we can ensure that diverse businesses and workers are able to create and capture new ideas, industries, and economic value for decades to come.

That means embracing new future-focused industries like the emerging green economy, as well as life sciences and tech. It may also be an opportunity to address disparities in employment rates in areas of the city that have lagged behind other neighborhoods by promoting job growth in new emerging areas that have potential as future employment hubs.

It also means ambitious action to remove some of the steepest barriers to inclusive growth, such as lack of childcare and affordable housing. These initiatives are not only morally just, they are smart investments in our collective future. When we make childcare more accessible and affordable, we empower hundreds of thousands of parents to join the workforce and offer companies a wider and more stable talent pool. When we improve housing affordability, we address one of the most urgent challenges facing New Yorkers and increase the city's appeal for potential employers by removing one of their greatest challenges in hiring and retaining talent.

This inclusive, future-focused growth will establish a model that can propel New York into the future.

STRATEGY

Establishing New York City as a hub for future industries and innovation

New York's rise as a global leader has been powered by its constant innovation and ability to adapt its economy to the challenges of each new age. Today, as forces like new technologies and the climate crisis are reshaping world economies, New York can leverage its status as a knowledge capital, its diverse industries, its unparalleled talent pool, and its standard-setting record of sustainability to become a leader in the 21st century. This future-focused economic development can position New York as the capital for urban innovation.

INITIATIVE 31

MAKE NEW YORK THE HUB FOR URBAN INNOVATION

With its uniquely dynamic built environment, density, and diversity, New York City presents complex urban challenges. Over time, we have developed robust infrastructure and other systems that enable New Yorkers to move and thrive—from the subway system to green infrastructure networks to public WiFi via LinkNYC. Today we are facing new urban challenges and seeing rapid technological evolution, creating new opportunities that the city's diverse ecosystem of innovators—including startups, academic researchers, and other R&D institutions—are poised to address. Urban innovation traverses the ambitions described in the “New” New York plan—sustainability, mobility, smart public space management, improved access to government and its services for New Yorkers, and more—and opportunities abound to test new technologies and approaches in places like the Brooklyn Navy Yard, Governors Island and even Midtown Manhattan and to pilot new innovations first within government.

New York City has more tech-enabled startups (over 25,000) than any city outside the Bay Area and offers more than 300 ecosystem support spaces—including incubators, accelerators, and coworking facilities—to help support entrepreneurs as they develop their big ideas and gain a foothold in the market.^{337, 338} In 2021,

NYC startups saw more than \$50 billion in venture dollars, helping spur and scale innovative new solutions across a range of industries.³³⁹ Combining the startup ecosystem with the strength of our academic institutions and the dynamism of our built environment, New York City has immense promise as a global leader of urban innovation.

By streamlining processes, collaborating with the private sector, nonprofits, and academia, and tapping into the creativity of New Yorkers, we can enable the physical city to become one of the world's most important test beds to pilot and scale urban innovations and solve for urban challenges, attracting future-focused industries and creating a more livable city in the process.

To enable this, the City will formalize and streamline interagency coordination to operationalize pilots that utilize the suite of City-owned and managed assets as potential testing environments, by:

- **Creating an interagency working group within City government** with a clear remit to cultivate urban innovation and efficiently coordinate and streamline policy, rules, and regulations to allow for testing and piloting within the urban environment while creating procurement opportunities for successful pilots to scale to advance ideas to implementation.
- **Developing a single digital “front door”** to streamline and amplify ongoing opportunities for startups and other innovators to pilot with the City.
- **Developing a real-time database** of challenges City agencies face, setting annual pilot throughput targets across City agencies, and partnering with diverse entrepreneurs, startups, and academic researchers to pilot potential solutions.



Credit: NYC Media Lab

- **Conducting public engagement around how new technologies will affect New Yorkers** to inform how they should be implemented more broadly.
- **Convening a coalition of public, private, and nonprofit organizations** that offer opportunities for startups and researchers to share best practices, improve coordination, and jointly define a shared set of success metrics that can help startups avoid “pilot purgatory.”
- **Facilitating project-based experiential workforce development opportunities** by placing City University of New York (CUNY) and State University of New York (SUNY) students and NYCHA Section III eligible residents into all City-led urban innovation pilots.
- **Identifying other strategies that can enable NYC to effectively commercialize research** and development efforts that can solve urban challenges at scale.
- **Ensuring digital strategy and innovation is at the core of government function and leadership through continuous learning** on emerging technology, collaboration with urban tech leaders in the private sector, and recruitment of volunteer engineering support from big tech companies.
- **Training the next generation of public sector leaders in innovation**, design thinking, and cross-discipline collaboration.

Midtown could be used as an Innovation District to pilot and test new ideas for buildings and property technologies, public space, mobility, infrastructure, and sustainability, including other recommendations of the NNY Panel, such as alternative freight movement, curb management, and waste containerization, before they are rolled out at scale. Given that its recovery trajectory has been slower than other business districts, transforming Midtown or a sub-district of the neighborhood into a center for innovation could accelerate investment in and modernization of Midtown and propel it into the future.

In addition, the City will continue to bridge the **digital divide** by accelerating rollout of and equitable access to 5G networks (e.g., Link5G) and broadband infrastructure (e.g., Big Apple Connect), upon which innovators, small business owners, students, and everyday New Yorkers depend.



Credit: Tory Williams

INITIATIVE 32

INVEST IN FUTURE-FOCUSED SECTORS WHERE NEW YORK HAS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

New York City is undoubtedly a global economic powerhouse and capital for innovation. Nonetheless, continued diversification and evolution of New York City’s industry mix is critical to the resilience and competitive growth of the city’s economy. With our range of both legacy and emerging industries, our status as a global financial capital, our deep bench of diverse talent, our infrastructure, and our thriving innovation ecosystem, no other city is better poised to drive continued innovation and expansion in future-focused sectors like tech, the green economy, and life sciences:

- We are home to the global industry leaders in almost every sector. In all, New York City is headquarters to more than 10 percent of the Fortune 500.³⁴⁰
- We have an extremely large, well-educated, and diverse workforce, with over 4 million employed residents,³⁴¹ 2.3 million with a bachelor’s degree or higher,³⁴² and nearly 70 percent residents of color.³⁴³
- We have over 243,000 undergraduate and graduate students across the 25 post-secondary institutions in the CUNY system, with many more students enrolled in private universities across the city.³⁴⁴

- We have the infrastructure to support world-class enterprise and talent, including three airports, one of the world’s largest public transit systems,³⁴⁵ nearly 7,000 miles of mobility infrastructure, the country’s second-largest container port,³⁴⁶ and more than 1 million buildings collectively valued at over \$1 trillion.³⁴⁷
- We are the world’s center of gravity for financial capital, being home to the world’s largest stock exchange and headquarters of the world’s largest investors and asset managers.

We are not new at this. Throughout the city’s history, New York innovators have been looking toward the future and leading the way. In the 1900s, NYC advanced innovations such as electricity, the telegraph, satellites, and high-speed computers that changed the way people lived and worked.³⁴⁸ A hundred years later, innovators in NYC’s technology sector are advancing cutting-edge hardware, engineering new sustainable materials, and advancing cybersecurity and blockchain solutions for some of the most sophisticated users in the world. And we will keep this track record going to power the next chapter of the city’s growth by prioritizing investments that:

Support and accelerate the equitable growth of future-focused sectors

Growing emerging industries—those that are new to the world and/or new to NYC—is essential to the city’s continued competitiveness far into the future. Critical to ensuring this growth is equitable is the proactive development of a diverse workforce and diverse entrepreneurship to ensure that New Yorkers who have traditionally been left out of growing industries, especially BIPOC individuals and women, are not left out of the next generation of opportunities. In this way, economic growth for NYC can translate into economic mobility for all New Yorkers.

While NYC has already begun making important progress, the City will double down on the following priority, future-focused sectors:

Life sciences is well-poised to grow and create meaningful jobs for a diverse range of New Yorkers, with many roles requiring in-person functions. LifeSci NYC is the City’s \$1 billion investment in life sciences R&D and innovation. With this investment, the City has supported the creation of over 1.7 million square feet of life science space, four life science incubators,

and over 11,000 jobs; launched a Pandemic Response Institute; expanded BioBAT, Inc.; and continues to make commitments to innovation infrastructure and workforce.

New York State has also made strides in advancing the growth of life sciences through its \$620 million Life Science Initiative. Through the initiative, Empire State Development (ESD) helped bring IndieBio, a leading biotech accelerator to New York, which, since launching in May 2020, has graduated 36 startup companies, and facilitated more than \$59 million in external funding for these companies. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the State also launched a \$40 million New York State Biodefense Commercialization Fund to accelerate the development and commercialization of life science research innovations that address serious infectious disease health threats while creating jobs and encouraging continued growth across New York State’s expanding life science industry.

Together, the City, State, and CUNY are also partnering to create the Science Park and Research Campus (SPARC) Kips Bay, an innovation hub that aims to create a pipeline from local public schools to careers in life sciences, healthcare, and public health.

To further strengthen the value proposition of New York for life sciences companies, following the lead of New Jersey and Massachusetts, the City will:

- Explore reinstating the NYC biotechnology tax credit.
- Advocate for an Angel Investor Tax Credit for life sciences, biotechnology, and related fields (as done in NJ and MA).
- Advocate for Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) matching funds for Phase 1 and 2 (as done in NJ and MA) and “Phase 0” funds that support scientists who are applying for the first time.

Tech is a big part of NYC’s industry diversification story and continues to grow, fueled by local talent that wants to be here, making NYC the second-most valuable tech ecosystem in the world. The City has helped establish many accelerators and incubators and recently launched Venture Access NYC, a suite of programs to build a more inclusive and representative startup ecosystem. To continue to build NYC’s position as a diverse global tech hub—including within the artificial intelligence/machine learning,

fintech, blockchain, Web3, cybersecurity, gaming, and famtech subsectors—the City will:

- Take a proactive approach to retaining existing companies in New York City as well as attracting new ones.
- Continue to support diverse and underrepresented entrepreneurs and investments in the tech sector with the Venture Access initiative.
- Develop local talent pathways, including apprenticeship opportunities, in partnership with NYC Department of Education (DOE) and CUNY career pathways.
- Advocate to increase the Digital Game Development Tax Credit to drive more production to New York City and the region. The current \$5 million per year does not currently provide substantive support for growth in the sector.

The transition to a low-carbon and resource-efficient world presents a tremendous opportunity to grow a new **green economy** in NYC, while enabling greater economic mobility for our diverse workforce and community of entrepreneurs. To catalyze growth of this sector, the City will:

- Identify priority strategies to decarbonize the construction sector, leveraging City projects and major infrastructure initiatives as opportunities to demonstrate innovative low-carbon or circular construction materials and methodologies (e.g., tall timber, recycled concrete, modular construction). This includes implementing and building on the City's Clean Construction Executive Order 23 to strengthen City- and State-level action on low embodied carbon municipal construction standards, establish embodied carbon reduction targets for all construction, and allocate funding for innovation.
- Spur innovation in renewable energy and battery storage by developing space to support wet lab R&D space and exploring relief for regulatory barriers - e.g., working with Fire Department of New York (FDNY) and DOB on adapting the fire and building code to enable more battery storage in buildings.
- Work with New York Power Authority (NYPA), New York State Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA), and Con Edison to

modernize the energy grid, leveraging authorized federal dollars and incentives to ensure electrification is supported by underlying electrical infrastructure.

- Identify the skills and occupations needed to support the rapid jobs growth in the green economy and work with DOE, CUNY, and other workforce providers to ensure all New Yorkers, especially those who have been most impacted by environmental justice issues and climate change, have access to the training and career pathways needed to secure these jobs.
- Create a world-leading capacity-building program that trains M/WBE companies in green construction to ensure that investments drive top social equity outcomes.

Offshore wind (OSW), a major subset of the green economy, is at a moment of growth in NYC that is critical to achieving the City and State's ambitious greenhouse gas commitments.

New York State's nation-leading offshore wind project pipeline currently has five projects in active development, a nation-leading portfolio that will bring 4.3 gigawatts (GW) of energy online to power more than 2.4 million New York homes, generate \$12.1 billion in economic impact, and create more than 6,800 jobs across the supply chain. Achieving the State's goal of 9,000 megawatts of offshore wind by 2035 will generate enough energy to power approximately 30 percent of New York State's electricity needs, equivalent to nearly 6 million homes, and spur approximately 10,000 jobs.³⁴⁹

In January 2022, Governor Hochul announced finalized contracts for Equinor and BP's Empire Wind



2 and Beacon Wind projects off the coast of Long Island and the unlocking of an unprecedented \$644 million in public and private funding commitment toward state port infrastructure, including more than \$287 million for the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal.

The City's aspiration is that every wind turbine installed within 250 miles of NYC is supported by New York City's project development, maritime, and manufacturing sectors. With the right investments, this could create over 13,000 direct and induced jobs locally and generate \$1.3 billion in investment.³⁵⁰

In March 2022, NYCEDC announced a sublease between its tenant, Sustainable South Brooklyn Marine Terminal, and Equinor Wind to transform South Brooklyn Marine Terminal into an offshore wind port—a major step in securing NYC's role in the regional OSW supply chain and operations and maintenance infrastructure. NYCEDC is also seeking to transform the Rossville Site in Staten Island into a maritime and manufacturing facility for OSW. As it develops City sites for offshore wind, the City is also actively positioning local talent and businesses for opportunities in the growing sector and promoting local innovation with academic and industry partners.

To accelerate the growth of OSW and ensure that the growth accrues to local businesses and residents, the City will:

- Advocate to increase statewide goals for OSW power generation to keep up with California's target of 25 GW by 2045, to provide a strong market signal to global companies and innovators.
- Drive NYC as a national hub for offshore wind innovation, in partnership with leading research institutions and industry.
- Invest \$10.5 million in CUNY Central and Kingsborough Community College to create facilities and programs needed to train future OSW workforce, and support workforce initiatives led by the private sector.

The next frontier: The City will also continuously monitor industry trends and evaluate opportunities to strategically support and grow new future-focused sectors—for example, a new frontier of innovation that leverages material science and biotechnology to create green new materials that helps legacy

industries become more sustainable and contribute to the growth of the city's green economy.

Facilitate the growth and evolution of legacy industries

To stay globally competitive for decades, New York's legacy industries have also had to have innovation in their DNA—from the fashion, media, and publishing industries reinventing themselves for an increasingly digital world; to the manufacturing industry being at the forefront of advanced manufacturing, industrial processes, and tool innovation; to the financial industry being among the first to embrace emerging technologies, like blockchain. More recently, we saw this on display when, faced with widespread supply shortages, the city's manufacturing and garment industries quickly pivoted to making personal protective equipment—retaining jobs while creating life-saving products.

Future-focused economic development not only seeds new industries that do not yet exist at scale in NYC, but also supports our foundational industries in evolving to meet the challenges of the future. The City will strategically support key foundational industries in this evolution, particularly those that will create accessible, family-sustaining jobs for New Yorkers and spur activity that supports the recovery of the city's business districts.

For example, industrial sectors, including manufacturing, are industries that help NYC function. They represent over a quarter million middle-class, private sector jobs³⁵¹ and, for NYC to have a significant presence in many emerging industries, having local manufacturing capabilities is integral to capture as much of value chain as possible. From components and services in growing sectors including offshore wind, energy efficiency, and biotechnologies, life science therapeutics and devices to foundational sectors like transportation & supply chain, building & construction, film & television, and fashion—local manufacturing will be important for enhancing the R&D and innovation activities that will drive future business and jobs growth. Continued support for manufacturing and industrial sectors is critical and to help drive and continue growth in these sectors, the City will:

- Support and invest in a diversified, innovative industrial ecosystem to ensure that NYC's industrial commons remains strong and ever present.

- Ensure there are specific geographic areas within the city that are suitable for and conducive to industrial and manufacturing uses.
- Working with SBS, strengthen business support and streamline business interactions with government.

Additionally, specific creative industries like fashion, media, and film & TV are critical markets that drive not only the city’s economy, but also the city’s identity as a cultural and creative hub. To increase and support the foundational creative industries, the City will:

- Continue to develop City properties including but not limited to the Made in New York Campus for affordable space and events.
- Advocate for the continuation of the New York State Film Tax Credit Program, that was started in 2004 to drive film and television production growth and was responsible for 75 percent of the direct industry jobs added since its inception.³⁵²

Furthermore, tourism and food have been critical legacy industries for New York City and are important levers for regaining the jobs lost during the pandemic. The City will explore creating new funding sources to promote tourism via a Tourism Investment District (TID), as further described in Initiative 17, and other strategies to support the growth of these sectors.

INITIATIVE 33

DEVELOP REGIONAL STRATEGIES THAT FOSTER MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN NYC AND THE SURROUNDING REGION

New York City’s ties to the surrounding region are myriad and deep. Twenty percent of the city’s workforce lives outside of the five boroughs.³⁵³ Hundreds of thousands of others commute into the city on a regular basis, whether to take advantage of its cultural and culinary offerings, obtain medical services, or access transportation hubs.

The region and NYC are in fact one interconnected housing market. The availability of regional housing options supports the growth of business-district jobs. However, across the region, job growth has outpaced

housing growth with approximately 273,000 more jobs than new housing units created from 2001 to 2019 (~1.3 million new jobs vs. ~1.0 million new housing units).³⁵⁴ This, in turn, drives up prices and makes moving from across the metro area, the state, the US, and the world more costly for those seeking to become part of the NYC economic engine.

The surrounding region is, on its own, rife with talent and ripe for economic growth. The New York suburban portions in Long Island and the Mid-Hudson alone are home to over 50 colleges, universities, and major research facilities, creating a strong, diverse workforce pipeline and contributing to life-changing technological advances. Home to 12 Fortune 1000 companies, the region has also proven itself to be fertile ground for private sector growth.

In short, it is essential that efforts in the city’s recovery consider and address the ways in which the surrounding region both contributes to and has a stake in the city’s success. This work will include developing regional growth strategies that foster mutually beneficial connections between New York City and the surrounding region.

Transit-oriented development

In order to decrease commute times, it is not enough to increase service. We must also ensure that people live closer to transit stops throughout the downstate region, making their commutes faster and more direct. In some of New York’s neighborhoods and surrounding suburbs, current zoning regulations make this impossible.

Some zoning restrictions prevent anything but a single-family house from being built across the street from a train station, consigning everyone beyond the immediate area to take alternative transportation—frequently cars and buses—to make their transit connection. In many neighborhoods, families are prevented from even converting space over their garage to house relatives, nannies, or anyone else who would benefit from access to additional, convenient housing. Even this small change—allowing a single additional residence over a garage or in a backyard—would double the density around these transit stations.

This is a lost opportunity to promote land-use patterns that are sustainable, convenient, and facilitate shorter commutes and greater quality of life for

more New Yorkers. That’s why we will support State legislation to limit single-family zoning restrictions, enable accessory dwelling units (ADUs) like garage apartments, prohibit exclusionary zoning, establish appropriate minimum densities near transit, and reduce parking requirements near rail transit stations (as further described in Initiative 24).

Explore “live-work-play” development models to adapt to new modes of working

To remain competitive in the post-pandemic era, it is critical that New York City and the surrounding region rethink where and how people live and work.

To retain and attract new residents, the region must adapt its infrastructure to support the needs of New Yorkers who work from home one or more days a week. New multifamily housing development should prioritize the inclusion of amenities like coworking space and childcare. New transit-oriented development should build housing close to reliable transit, as this access is more important than ever in a hybrid-work world where workers may be in New York City part of the week but working from home the rest of the week. Investments that expand access to fast, reliable broadband will also be key to supporting the metro region’s ability to make a “live-work-play” model appeal to future residents.

Leverage regional assets and talent to attract and promote the growth of key industries, including but not limited to:

- **Life Sciences:** Bolster New York City’s commercialization pipeline by forging connections between NYC-based companies; Long Island’s life sciences research corridor—buttressed by institutions like the Feinstein Institutes for Medical Research, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Brookhaven National Laboratory, and Stony Brook University, among others; and shovel-ready manufacturing sites across the Mid-Hudson region. Leverage new investments in Penn Station Access to connect the Bronx, including the growing life science cluster in Morris Park, to the industry in Westchester and Connecticut.

- **Cyber:** Protect and preserve New York City’s standing as the financial capital of the world by growing the cybersecurity industry in the surrounding region and fostering partnerships with neighboring institutions, like the New York Institute of Technology’s [Long Island cybersecurity lab](#).
- **Clean Tech/Green Tech:** With New York-based businesses and buildings looking to rapidly adopt green technology to comply with the City’s Local Law 97 and State’s CLCPA goals, support the growth of clean manufacturing in the metro region.
- **Film:** Build upon New York’s standing as a hub for TV and film by supporting the construction and expansion of production facilities and soundstages in the surrounding region, like Lionsgate’s 500,000-square-foot [Yonkers studio complex](#), opened earlier this year and set to double in size through a \$500 million expansion.³⁵⁵
- **Tourism:** Strengthen and diversify New York’s appeal as the premier tourism destination by highlighting regional attractions that draw major events, business travel, and recreational visitation to New York State.
- **Manufacturing and industrial:** Work in partnership with regional businesses and research institutions to grow R&D and small batch manufacturing activities in NYC and scale regional ecosystems. Local businesses are creating the next generation of essential items on a daily basis in New York City and offshoring or nearshoring larger productions runs outside of the city. The City and State have an opportunity to help local businesses scale their operations and connect them to local talent, decreasing our reliance on overseas manufacturing and reducing supply chain strains during times of crisis.

STRATEGY

Ensuring that workers have access to housing by dramatically increasing our supply, with a “moonshot” goal of meeting the need for 500,000 units over the next decade

A decades-long imbalance between housing demand and supply have sent prices soaring, significantly outpacing wage growth, forcing too many New Yorkers to struggle with housing costs they can't afford, pushing others out of the city and even the region, and deterring some people from moving here at all, despite the potential job opportunities. All of this harms New Yorkers and undermines New York's global competitiveness by making it harder for companies to attract and retain talent. In short: Housing affordability has become a primary barrier to the city's continued growth. Through ambitious action, we will increase the city's housing supply at all income levels to ensure New York remains a livable city and magnet for global talent for generations to come.

INITIATIVE 34

MAKE REGULATORY AND LEGISLATIVE CHANGES TO REDUCE BARRIERS TO HOUSING GROWTH

Over the past 10 years, New York City's population increased at a rate that outpaced housing growth; in some districts, population grew more than twice as much as the number of new housing units.³⁵⁶ The city is experiencing a housing crisis, with the number of people living in the shelter system hitting an all-time high in the fall of 2022.³⁵⁷ In 2019, 22 percent of New Yorkers were paying more than they could afford in rent or mortgage payments, and in 2021, 32 percent of renters were paying more than 50 percent of their income in rent.³⁵⁸ Average rents across the city have risen 19 percent over the last year³⁵⁹ and an astonishing 40 percent since 2010.³⁶⁰

In addition to hurting New Yorkers, the housing affordability crisis has also become a key challenge in attracting companies to New York City and preserving the relevance and viability of New York's



business districts. Employers need to know that they can attract and retain talent in New York City and that this talent will be stable and secure. The precarious housing situation of New York's workforce weakens this confidence.

The roots of the problem are clear. As described in the Adams administration's plan [Housing Our Neighbors: A Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness](#), "A primary reason for our affordability crisis is that New York City's housing stock has not kept up with the rapid population and job growth that our city has experienced in recent decades. Even as the population surged throughout the 1980s and 1990s, housing was built at a much slower pace than was necessary to meet the need. These trends have created a cumulative housing shortage from which the city has yet to recover. Although housing construction picked up in the 2000s, a lot less housing is being built today than during the first three-quarters of the 20th century, adding too few units to keep up with job and population increases."

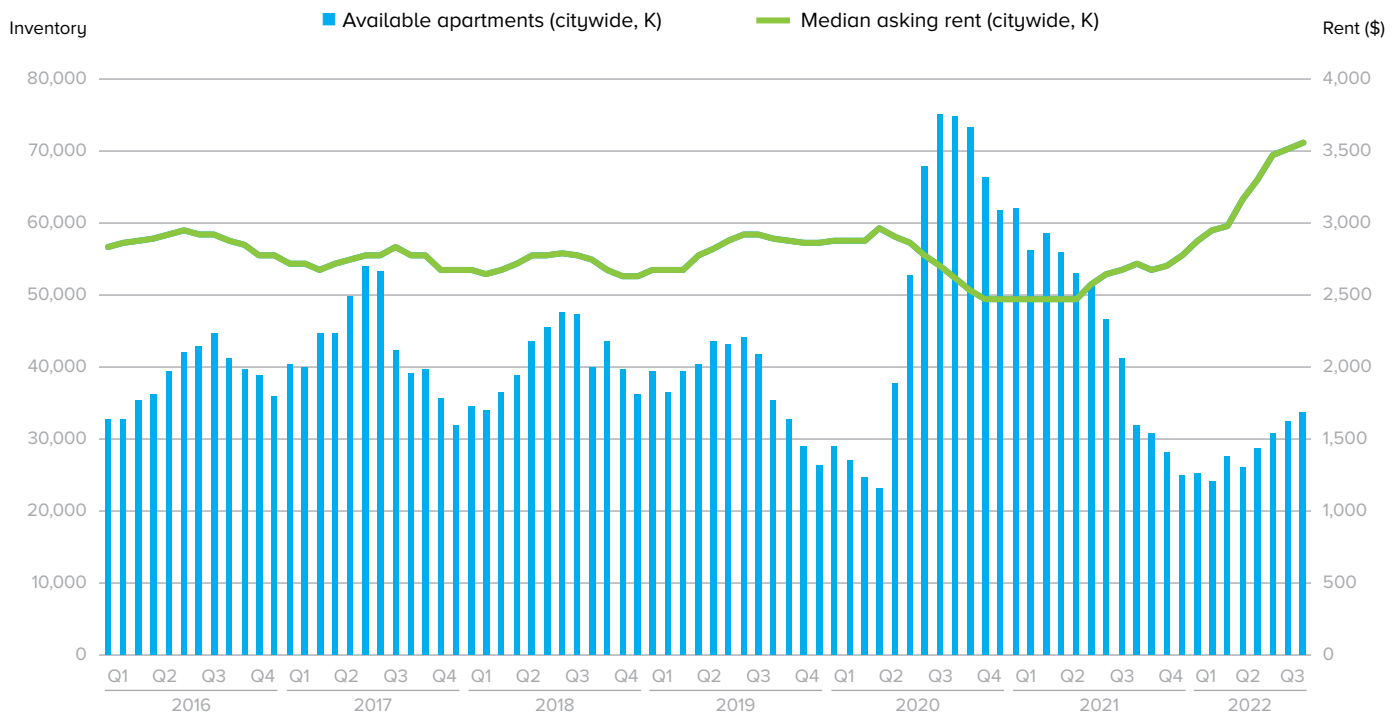
The increase in rental housing costs is outpacing inflation. In 2000, the median gross rent for a New York City apartment was \$700 (\$1,156 when adjusted to 2021 dollars).³⁶¹ As of 2021, median gross rents in the city were \$1,650.³⁶² That represents a 43 percent increase, adjusted for inflation.

That's why the Adams administration plan calls for "changing the trajectory of housing growth in New York City" by addressing the decades-long imbalance that has radically skewed a once-reasonable market. This includes making critical investments in

FIGURE 21

NYC residential rent prices have increased significantly, up 24% from pre-pandemic highs

NYC apartment rental inventory and median asking rents, January 2016 – August 2022



Source: NYC rental inventory and median asking rents aggregated from StreetEasy, provided as of October 20, 2022

the city’s affordable housing stock, while simultaneously pursuing policy reforms, state legislation, tax incentives, and a suite of other tools to help new housing get built faster across all market segments and increase overall capacity for new supply.

The City and State commit to supporting these efforts by eliminating additional regulatory barriers to housing growth.

Empower New York City to control its own housing density

In virtually every kind of land development—commercial, industrial, retail—New York City has the full authority to regulate the maximum amount that can be built on any lot inside its borders. There is one glaring exception: housing.

The New York State Multiple Dwelling Law limits the amount of housing on every potential development site across New York City, regardless of neighborhood context. Instead of allowing the City to conduct a nuanced assessment of housing potential

in collaboration with local communities, this law imposes the exact same limit everywhere: No housing development in New York City can exceed a 12 FAR density.

While this density is appropriate for many neighborhoods, in places like Midtown, commercial towers frequently exceed 12 FAR. Enabling housing developments to seamlessly integrate into their surrounding neighborhoods has the potential to meaningfully contribute to reducing the city’s devastating housing imbalance. Removing the State-level 12 FAR cap would also help enable some office-to-residential conversions that are not already exempt from the cap.

When it comes to the city’s business districts, the law also deters housing and mixed use in ways that will persist even after expanding eligibility for more flexible conversion regulations detailed in Initiative 1. Although the FAR limits don’t apply to projects that turn most older office buildings into residential, many of the vacant buildings in Midtown are not suitable for conversion to housing because of large floor plates

that create significant interior space without access to windows, curtain walls that are costly to replace with operable windows, or other factors. In some of these cases, a rational market would give developers the choice to tear down vacant and outdated office buildings and replace them with residential towers—but the statutory limitations mean that new residential buildings would need to be drastically smaller, making many projects financially unviable.

A blanket law that is impervious to context and controlled at the State level is inappropriate under any circumstances, but it is particularly unacceptable when it prevents the City from addressing one of its most urgent crises. Just as New York City is empowered to make other land-use decisions within its jurisdiction and have densities controlled by local zoning and public review processes, it must be allowed the same authority when it comes to housing.

That is why the City and State will partner to lift this cap and amend the State Multiple Dwelling Law. That will enable the City to plan for the construction of more housing in the densest residential and business districts, including as a potential replacement for outdated office buildings.

Create new tax benefits to facilitate housing production

Tax benefits have historically played a critical role in facilitating multifamily rental development and affordable housing in New York City. In the decade leading up to 2020, 90 percent of multifamily housing units built in the city relied on some form of property tax relief.³⁶³

In June 2022, one of the City’s most effective multifamily production programs expired. The 421-a program was used in 68 percent of the multifamily housing units constructed between 2010 and 2020, generating a total of 117,000 units with more than 5,066 units still in the pipeline.³⁶⁴ Changes to the program since its inception required the inclusion of more income-restricted units over time,³⁶⁵ although some still criticized the former program for not inducing enough affordable units.³⁶⁶ At a time when accelerating housing production is critical to the city’s economic recovery, we cannot afford to lose one of our most powerful tools to build multifamily housing units. The State and the City will seek to replace this essential resource with a new tax benefit that

enables multifamily rental development while requiring affordable housing.

This new program is part of a set of City and State legislative changes that will encourage housing production targeting all income levels; collectively, the proposals listed below support incremental housing growth across the entire city. Small changes across a wide geography can make a significant difference without jarring changes to any one neighborhood.

State legislation

- Amend State Multiple Dwelling Law to remove 12 FAR cap on residential buildings.
- Amend State Multiple Dwelling Law to make office-to-residential conversion easier.
- Support State legislation to limit single-family zoning restrictions, enable ADUs, prohibit exclusionary zoning, establish appropriate minimum densities, and reduce parking requirements near rail transit stations.
- Legalize or allow City to legalize existing noncomplying basement units and other ADUs.
- Replace 421-a program with tax benefit that enables multifamily rental development while requiring affordable housing.
- Create incentive to preserve housing quality and ensure healthy, safe living conditions for tenants. The J-51 preservation program had played this critical role in promoting the health and quality of the city’s multifamily housing stock for decades; it expired in June 2022.
- Implement uniform system for collecting housing and housing production data statewide.
- Implement state appeals process for local denial of land-use actions and project approvals meeting enumerated criteria.
- Reform State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) to reduce obstacles to achieving housing goals and promote transit-oriented development and housing equity.
- Affordability Plus: Modernize NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Developments loan authorities to finance and preserve more affordable housing, encourage affordable home

ownership, promote climate resiliency, and enable affordable housing to include critical resources like childcare and senior centers.

Citywide housing text amendments

- Allow a higher floor-area ratio for affordable housing citywide.
 - Give affordable and supportive housing preferential treatment under the zoning, allowing them to have larger maximum floor areas than market-rate housing, similar to how existing Affordable Independent Residence for Seniors (AIRS) program provides for senior residences.
- Amend NYC zoning to allow addition of units in low-density areas and a wider range of unit types throughout the city.
 - Amend existing low-density districts to enable these districts to produce appropriate housing. These changes include amendments to minimum parking requirements, minimum unit sizes, and yard regulations, and could allow two-family and low-density multifamily districts to produce two-family houses and small apartment buildings respectively.
 - Create a framework for incremental growth in lower-density areas by allowing a wider range of unit types. Options may include the addition of ADUs in single-family districts or allowing an additional unit in transit-accessible two-family districts.

- Remove/reduce parking minimums citywide.
 - Explore a range of options related to existing parking requirements across the city. These options range from removing the parking rules for ground-floor commercial in mixed-use buildings to making parking optional beyond the Manhattan Core in areas with strong transit access.
- Expand universe of obsolete office and hotel buildings that are eligible to convert to housing, as recommended by the Office Adaptive Reuse Task Force.
 - Refresh regulations to allow office buildings built during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s the same flexibility to convert to residential afforded to other buildings. This refresh will be pursued in the 2023 State legislative session, and any remaining necessary changes will be resolved through a City zoning text amendment that follows.

DCP will certify City of Yes for Housing Opportunity into the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) in 2024.

- **Following action on State legislation, enact zoning that would enable new, residential buildings exceeding 12 FAR in appropriate locations**, which would subject areas to Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) and spur additional affordable units.
- Continue to pursue **zoning that enables mixed-use, transit-oriented development in New York City**, such as Bronx Metro-North Station areas and M-Crown/Atlantic Avenue in Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

INITIATIVE 35

UPDATE ZONING CODE TO INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Supportive housing is a critical tool for providing permanent, affordable homes to New Yorkers who may also need social service support to remain stably housed. [Housing Our Neighbors: A Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness](#) proposes to create 15,000 units of supportive housing by 2028.

The Blueprint outlines a plan to grow the supply of supportive housing through the following: 1) streamline and expand access to supportive housing; 2) expand housing stabilization services for formerly homeless households; 3) leverage zoning to encourage more affordable and supportive housing city-wide; and 4) fill in the housing service continuum to serve a wider range of at-risk populations. In addition to these measures, the City will consider furthering the goal of growing supportive housing in New York City with “AIRS FAR Everywhere,” as described below.

In 2016, the City created a new tool—AIRS—to replace “nonprofit residences for the elderly” in the zoning. Generally, AIRS allows developments to benefit from around 20 percent greater FAR than what is otherwise permitted for other residential development, as well as greater height limits to facilitate the additional FAR. In addition, dwelling unit factor limitations—which can limit the number of units in a building—do not apply to AIRS, and AIRS developments located in the Transit Zone are relieved from parking requirements.

At present, AIRS is limited to affordable units serving New Yorkers aged 62+ who earn less than 80 percent of area median income. Going forward, the City will:

Expand AIRS beyond senior housing to embrace all affordable housing (including accessible affordable housing) and supportive housing.

- An expanded AIRS could give a powerful incentive for as-of-right projects located outside of areas designated for mandatory or voluntary inclusion housing.
- Under this proposal, the maximum height and FAR in most zoning districts would not increase. Instead, more developers and projects would

be able to take advantage of the greater maximums that are already available under the AIRS program.

Giving supportive housing developments the ability to receive a community facility FAR benefit without requiring a special permit. Under current rules, supportive housing is classified as a community facility but is subject to residential FARs unless a special permit is obtained through a full ULURP. This change would lower the cost of developing supportive housing at a higher FAR, providing more units at a lower cost.

STRATEGY

Ensuring growth and access to opportunity is fair and equitable

We will not fulfill our promise as a beacon of opportunity unless we can connect more New Yorkers to family-sustaining careers. That means providing the support they need to thrive, like affordable, high-quality childcare; access to opportunity through new workforce infrastructure and partnerships; and ensuring that our entrepreneurs and small business owners—who tend to be immigrants or people of color—can access the resources they need to build and grow successful businesses in the city.

INITIATIVE 36

ENSURE ALL NEW YORK FAMILIES HAVE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, QUALITY CHILDCARE

Ensuring New York families have accessible, affordable, and quality childcare is not only the right investment in the future of the city’s children, it is also essential economic infrastructure that helps working families realize their economic potential and expands the potential workforce for companies.

For too long—even before the pandemic—too many parents, particularly women in our most vulnerable communities, have been forced to make impossible choices between earning a livable income and caring for their children. During the pandemic, an estimated 350,000 New York City parents left or downshifted

their jobs because of COVID-19 and lack of access to quality childcare,³⁶⁷ and in 2020 the existing gap in labor force participation between working-age parents and non-parents widened to a more than 5 percentage-point difference.³⁶⁸ The loss for these employees, who forfeited not only wages but potential career growth opportunities to stabilize their families, and their employers, who lost the value of their contributions, can be immense—estimated at a \$5.9 billion reduction in disposable income, \$23 billion less in economic output, and \$2.2 billion in tax revenue in FY22.³⁶⁹

Since 2020, labor force participation among parents has been recovering to pre-pandemic levels—driven largely by women. Still, there has not been a significant increase in the overall participation of parents with children under five, and the gap in participation among parents and non-parents persists.³⁷⁰ To drive an equitable economic recovery for all New Yorkers and transform New York City into the best place to work in the world, we must solve the underlying crisis.

The Childcare Crisis in NYC



In New York City, demand for affordable, quality childcare far outstrips supply.

There are simply not enough seats for the city's 500,000 children under five (especially for children under three),³⁷¹ too many of these seats are unaffordable to households, and the childcare options that exist do not meet the full set of families' childcare needs. These gaps force families—especially working mothers who are often the primary caretakers of a family—to make difficult decisions that leave them underemployed, cause them to pass on career advancement opportunities, and prompt them to leave the workforce altogether.

- Nearly 60 percent of census tracts in New York City are considered “childcare deserts” by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, defined as three or more children under five for every available childcare slot within half a mile (or places where no seats exist at all).³⁷²
- The City's historic expansion of universal pre-K and 3-K has helped create more options for children over three, but the shortage is particularly acute for children under three. Even before the pandemic, almost 80 percent of New York City children under three—more than 170,000 babies and toddlers—lacked a seat in a regulated childcare program.³⁷³
- The seats that do exist are unaffordable for the overwhelming majority of New York City households. The federal government considers childcare unaffordable if it exceeds 7 percent of income. Using that standard, 93 percent of city households cannot afford to enroll their children in a childcare center, and 80 percent can't even afford less-expensive home-based care.³⁷⁴ Existing subsidies help many working families and families looking for work or engaged in education and training, but certain eligibility requirements—including both minimum and maximum income thresholds—can preclude many others from getting the support they need to pay for childcare.
- Existing licensed seats often do not address the needs of parents in NYC who work nights or weekends and need childcare during nonstandard hours. Only 5 percent of licensed daycare providers operate between 6 p.m. and 8 a.m.,

despite 780,000 NYC parents—320,000 with kids aged five or younger—working those hours.³⁷⁵

- Finally, given their lack of alternatives, parents cannot “vote with their feet” and choose to exit a daycare that does not provide their ideal of quality care.

Based on the massive market and overwhelming demand, one might predict that childcare would be one of the city’s fastest growing sectors. The opposite is true.

Even as the childcare crisis has come into sharper relief through the pandemic, the city continues to lose childcare providers at an alarming rate, and many of the 7,000+ licensed childcare providers are struggling to stay afloat. While margins in the industry have always been thin and worker turnover high, especially for smaller providers, the pandemic has also created a particularly acute worker shortage, as childcare workers—overwhelmingly BIPOC women and often working mothers themselves—left an industry that had long failed to provide them a livable wage or opportunities for economic mobility. In 2020, the childcare sector lost more than 20 percent of its workforce, with losses concentrated in the family-based care model that serves most of the city’s children under three and predominantly low- and medium-income families.³⁷⁶ And no wonder. The median full-time childcare worker earns only \$25,700, a wage that ranks 289th out of 294th among occupations, above only cashiers, dishwashers, tour and travel guides, fast food and counter workers, and laundry and dry-cleaning workers.³⁷⁷

The Roots of the Crisis

What has gone wrong? Why are there so few providers given the scale of the need? Why are childcare workers paid so little, given that their services are in such demand?

In short: the economics of childcare in New York City simply don’t add up for many working families and the vast majority of smaller childcare providers and workers that serve families in low- and middle-income neighborhoods.

Childcare is inherently expensive, high-touch work. Childcare centers are costly to build, regulated by strict safety requirements around the allowable size, design, and siting of their facilities (e.g., programs for infants are required to be ground floor), and childcare

centers are also costly to operate given the staffing ratios needed to care for children, especially infants and toddlers. This leaves quality childcare to be a significant cost burden for many low- and middle-income families.

In New York City and New York State, government leverages federal, state, and city funding to subsidize childcare for families that are most in need of it. However, as a nation, the US childcare system receives far less government or private (employer) subsidy than in many other countries.³⁷⁸ There is simply not enough money in the system to cover the cost of care for all families, causing providers (especially the backbone of smaller providers) to survive on thin margins, workers to make substandard wages, and families to suffer the consequences.

Where it is available, government subsidies also come with administrative burdens, limited reimbursement rates, and contracting challenges that squeeze providers who already have tight cashflows, particularly as enrollment declined during the pandemic. They can also be difficult for families to navigate and access, as is the case with many other forms of social assistance.

Finally, childcare, especially for infants and toddlers, is largely provided by a constellation of small, often female-owned, owner-operators³⁷⁹ whose work on day-to-day business operations and navigating contracting and process in a highly regulated industry leave them little time to invest in professional development for their workers or identify other potentially cost-saving or business-streamlining innovations.

Existing Efforts

Recognizing both the importance of access to affordable, quality childcare for families and the broader economy and the growing crisis, the City and State have taken meaningful steps to improve the city’s infrastructure for childcare and early education. In June 2022, the Adams administration released [*Accessible, Equitable, High-quality, Affordable: A Blueprint for Child Care and Early Childhood Education*](#), which included \$800 million in new funding across nearly two dozen strategies to expand the accessibility, affordability, and quality of childcare in the city. These efforts build on the City’s earlier investments in pre-K and 3-K, which increased the number of full-time seats for four-year-olds from

19,000 in 2014 to 70,000 before the pandemic and the number of seats for three-year-olds from 11,000 in 2017 to 55,000 today.^{380,381} At the State level, the FY22 and FY23 Budgets were historic for childcare.

City and State actions continue to be deeply rooted in equity and prioritize expanding options in childcare deserts and increasing access for some of our highest-need families. The FY22 State Budget allocated \$100 million to expand childcare access in childcare deserts across the state. The City's Blueprint for Child Care and Early Childhood Education also focuses on expanding childcare options in childcare deserts and for nontraditional hours, expanding eligibility to subsidized care for undocumented families, and driving enrollment for eligible families in 17 high-need neighborhoods. In its FY23 Budget, New York State allocated over \$1.2 billion to support raising the state income threshold for childcare assistance from \$55,500 for a family of four (200% of the federal poverty level) to \$83,250 (300%), which is projected to put childcare within the reach of nearly 400,000 children.³⁸²

The City and State are also focused on holistic support for providers, from addressing the administrative and regulatory burdens and barriers that they face to stabilizing their operations in the near term, increasing their compensation longer term, and providing professional development supports for their workforce. The City's Blueprint highlights a number of actions that City agencies will take to cut the red tape for providers that work with the City, help stabilize providers by clearing contracting backlogs, and supporting the providers' workforce. In its FY22 Budget, the State awarded \$901 million in stabilization grants to nearly 15,000 providers—nearly half of which was awarded to providers in NYC. In its historic FY23 Budget, the State increased the market rate for childcare provider reimbursements from the 69th to 80th percentile, invested in providing childcare on all SUNY and CUNY campuses, and made key investments in the childcare workforce by dedicating 75 percent of the additional \$343 million allocated for provider stabilization grants to workforce supports.

In addition to targeting interventions at families and providers, City and State actions also engage the private sector in new ways to add seats, help pay for care, and scale innovative solutions. A new business income tax credit makes \$25 million available per year through 2025 for New York City employers who

make new childcare seats available and provide them for free or at reduced cost to their employees; this credit is expected to create an additional 6,000 seats. In FY23, \$25 million was allocated for a property tax abatement for New York City property owners who retrofit or build out space for childcare centers, which is expected to generate up to 11,000 additional seats.³⁸³ These investments build on funding in the FY22 State Budget that supported enhancements to the Excelsior Jobs Program for employer childcare and employer-provided childcare credit. The city has also entered a \$100 million partnership with the Robin Hood Foundation on a Child Care Quality and Innovation Initiative to explore innovative solutions that can support tens of thousands of children, with the goal of impacting over \$1 billion in public funding each year.

What's Next

We can and must do more to capitalize on the momentum of the recent investments detailed above and the broader coalition across sectors who are awakened to the childcare crisis in New York City. Every partner has a role to play—from government continuing to challenge itself to streamlining the way it interacts with families and providers, to philanthropy that can help government and the private sector pilot new funding models for care, to entrepreneurs who are creating new platforms and products that help families connect to care more easily and providers streamline their business operations.

That is why we will:

Aggressively implement and cement existing initiatives

As part of the panel's recommendations, the City will aggressively implement the City's Blueprint for Child Care and Early Childhood Education, particularly over the next two years. Particular attention will be placed on:

- Standing up a central Childcare and Early Childhood Education leadership team at City Hall that will drive implementation and accountability against the City's Blueprint.
- Coordinating efforts across government to streamline regulation and reduce friction for both families and providers.

- Driving uptake of the two new tax incentives described above that seek to mobilize the private sector toward the goal of adding seats.

Continue to support families-in-need in accessing care

Critical legislative and budgetary wins have begun to remove barriers to childcare assistance for families. However, some of the most in-need families still may not be eligible for certain childcare assistance. At the same time, innovative models have started to be tested in other jurisdictions for helping families afford care. The City and State will:

- **Explore creating categorical eligibility for SNAP recipients, Medicaid recipients, and childcare workers to receive childcare vouchers.** Automatically qualifying these individuals for childcare subsidies can streamline access and circumvent other barriers.
- **Expand the Empire State Child Tax Credit.** This program provides a personal income tax deduction for individuals or married couples making under \$75,000 and \$100,000, respectively—but is only available for families with children over four years. Expanding eligibility for this credit to include care for children under four years will enable growing families to receive much-needed support for new expenses related to care.
- **Identify, pilot, and/or develop novel non-predatory financial supports that help families afford care.** These could include buy-now-pay-later models, tuition assistance models, reverse 529s, and other initiatives.

Advance additional strategies to holistically support providers

To address the lack of accessible childcare, the City and State should explore a holistic set of strategies to stimulate the creation of new childcare centers, particularly by looking at ways to lower the cost of space—like for many other businesses in NYC, a major expense for childcare providers. The City and State can also better connect providers to innovations in the private sector that lower the cost of care, as well as additional forms of business and financial support.

- **Unlock second-floor and basement spaces for safe, affordable childcare.** Second-floor commercial real estate rents per square foot were 27

percent lower than first-floor commercial rents and tend to have lower demand for other uses,³⁸⁴ but those spaces are often passed over by center-based care providers due to the unclear approval processes. The Departments of Fire, Buildings, and Health and Mental Hygiene will develop additional guidance on siting childcare, including on higher floors and basements, to help property owners market their space and childcare providers open new programs.

- **Explore models that decrease the cost of building and maintaining space.** Emerging models such as modular construction of childcare centers and landlord revenue shares instead of rent have the potential to significantly decrease overhead costs for center-based providers.
- **Connect vacant sites with potential childcare providers** by working with building owners and developers to identify affordable space in vacant buildings that meet childcare regulations.
- **Explore partnerships that provide financial support** (i.e., microgrants, loans) for capital improvements and maintenance on existing childcare facilities.
- **Explore opportunities to provide additional technical assistance and other business supports** to childcare providers (including by creating forums for them to learn from each other), helping them understand their operating costs, navigate administrative challenges, market their programs, and develop and share their curricula.
- **Support the creation of mechanisms that facilitate connections** between childcare providers and providers of innovative solutions and technologies.

Support the overall economics of the system by broadening the base of payers for care

There is simply not enough money in the system to cover the cost of care for all families that need it while fairly compensating workers and providers without increasing both the number and contributions of payers into the system—from government to philanthropy to employers.

- **Modify existing formulas to pay childcare workers the true cost of care.** New York City currently reimburses childcare providers that serve low-income families receiving childcare assistance

based on market rates set by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, informed by a market-rate study. These rates do not reflect the true cost of care for many providers. The State recognized the importance of this lever to drive worker pay when they increased the market rate from the 69th to the 80th percentile earlier this year. Building on this win, the City and State will partner to evaluate alternative methodologies for establishing a more adequate reimbursement rate for childcare providers that serve children receiving subsidies. The City and State will also factor in recent and future inflation, which has further impacted margins across the provider continuum, as it looks at future contracts and models.

- **Identify new public funding streams for providers.** Zoning, linkage/impact fees, and taxes can be leveraged and/or braided together with various existing funding streams to help providers, especially home-based ones, improve their business operations, lower their costs, fill seats, and standardize/improve quality.
- **Advance the practice of employers being a payer of care and support employers who want to lead in this area.** Encourage employers of all sizes to join coalitions that inspire action and help build the collective case for employers to invest in childcare as an employee benefit.
- **Explore amending the new business credit so that it not only supports** the creation of new childcare seats (which likely only larger employers have the resources to do) but also incentivizes small businesses to offer childcare stipends for their employees to use at existing, licensed childcare providers.
- **Develop new public-private funding models** that share the cost of childcare across government, employers, and employees; help accelerate the emerging childcare innovation sector; and help de-risk adoption of innovative childcare models (including those that support nonstandard-hours care needs).

Mobilize a broad set of partners to develop innovation and policy solutions

The childcare crisis in New York City is complex, and government doesn't have all the solutions. The City and State will convene their agencies with policy leaders and innovators across sectors to advance efforts exploring, piloting, and scaling innovative solutions. This includes:

- **Identify ways to improve outreach and enrollment processes** that make it less burdensome for families to find and enroll in childcare, with a focus on assisting families who are eligible for childcare assistance. This includes exploring opportunities to create better digital tools and directories for parents to identify childcare locations and options for their children, as well as childcare subsidy options that they may be eligible for.
- **Identify deeper solutions to the childcare wage crisis.** Partner across institutions to better understand the childcare wage crisis and identify potential legislative, policy, and programmatic solutions.
- **Analyze ways to expand childcare options for nontraditional schedules.** The City will seek to better understand the prevalence and needs of families who rely on off-hours and informal care, as well as the barriers that keep providers from providing this service (e.g., staff availability, financial concerns). With this information, the City can take a coordinated approach to identify policies and develop solutions to help providers increase options for care outside of standard hours.

INITIATIVE 37

REDUCE BARRIERS TO ENTERING THE WORKFORCE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Two-thirds of people with disabilities (PWD) are jobless in New York—either because they are unemployed or because they are not even in the labor force.³⁸⁵ People with disabilities are often confronted with the difficult choice of receiving Medicaid benefits or obtaining employment—due to Medicaid income eligibility requirements, which often disincentivize people with disabilities from entering the workforce. Removing this barrier would increase labor force participation among people with disabilities.

Currently, New York State has a Medicaid buy-in program for working people with disabilities. This allows people with disabilities who require the essential services provided only under Medicaid, particularly home care, to work without giving up the services they require to live in the community. However, there is an income cap and asset limit on this program, limiting the potential earning ability of people who rely on home care and other Medicaid-funded services.

New York State can prioritize ensuring people with disabilities who need Medicaid and are working can get it regardless of their income by expanding eligibility and charging a premium on a sliding scale based on the individual's household income. This approach is based on the successful Massachusetts model, CommonHealth.³⁸⁶

Under this approach, working people with disabilities will be eligible for Medicaid regardless of their income and would eliminate the resource limit. People who are still working after 65 will be able to maintain their Medicaid eligibility for as long as they continue working.

Additionally, the City is developing additional infrastructure to better position people with disabilities for employment including potentially:

- Launching PR campaigns targeted on PWD and employers and expanding as well as expanding financial empowerment counseling to change perceptions among and about PWD.

- Providing training and technical assistance to employers to make their workplaces more accessible and inclusive, including setting an example by expanding staff capacity and strategies to connect more PWD to City jobs.
- Identifying strategies and programs that focus on connecting PWD to work, including embedding trained staff in Workforce1 Centers to increase the accessibility and inclusion of PWD in their programs.
- Working in concert with NYC Department of Education and CUNY to provide targeted career exploration, internships, and college and career planning to students with disabilities.
- Exploring the feasibility and potential impact of a Center for Workplace Accessibility and Inclusion with dedicated staff that convenes public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders, as well as people with disabilities and their families, to tackle the many policy, program, and perception barriers faced by people with disabilities who are seeking employment.

INITIATIVE 38

CONNECT WORKERS AND STUDENTS TO JOBS OF THE FUTURE THROUGH A WORKFORCE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT IS SIMPLE, TRANSPARENT, AND COORDINATED WITH INDUSTRY AND ACADEMIA

The talent and diversity of New York City's workforce is foundational to the city's economy, and it is a major selling point for companies creating opportunities in our business districts. However, there are significant disparities today in access to these opportunities along the lines of race, gender, and educational attainment—which threaten both the vision of an equitable city and the overall economic health of the city.

These gaps start with lower rates of employment and greater rates of underemployment among Black and Hispanic/Latino workers and workers with less than a college degree, as well as other sub-populations like out-of-school, out-of-work (OSOW) youth and young men in particular—trends that have exacerbated during the pandemic. For young men, employment



Liquid Tech. Credit: Tory Williams

rates from April to September 2022 were over 11.3 percentage points lower than pre-pandemic.³⁸⁷

Among employed New Yorkers, wage gaps also persist across demographic lines. The gender and racial wage gaps in particular are well-documented and exacerbated by increasing credentialization of opportunity.^{388,389,390} In 2017, only 15.3 percent of jobs in the New York Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) paid above the regionally adjusted US median wage (\$45,830) but did not require a bachelor's degree—the second lowest of 121 MSAs analyzed by the Federal Reserve Bank.³⁹¹ During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, workers without a college degree, heavily concentrated in service and retail occupations, were more likely to find themselves unemployed because of stay-at-home orders.³⁹² Unemployment among those without college degrees increased to 12.9 percent in 2021 (versus 6.2% for those with a college degree), doubling the gap from 2019.³⁹³ Meanwhile, higher education alone does not always lead to opportunities, and this is especially true for students in the CUNY system—a system of unparalleled scale and diversity and a proven engine for economic mobility, yet one with significant potential to drive stronger career outcomes for its students. As an example, CUNY produces more Black and Hispanic graduates in technology degrees in one year than Columbia University produces across its entire undergraduate population, yet only half of CUNY's computer science graduates from 2017 to 2021 were employed in their field of study a year after graduation, and their median salary was nearly over \$20,000 less than the average NYC entry-level wage in a computer science occupation.³⁹⁴

As the City and State seek to diversify and grow the local and regional economies, it is critical that we support the city's local talent in finding living-wage jobs and family-sustaining careers in the economy, and employers in evaluating their current hiring practices to better tap diverse talent. This is particularly important for populations that have faced historic disparities or barriers to employment and training.

Our public education systems in DOE and CUNY have incredible scale for transformative change to meet the needs of the city's employers while propelling thousands of young people into family-sustaining careers. The public workforce system also offers critical infrastructure and support for individuals who have faced historic disparities or barriers to employment and training—including individuals on social assistance, people with disabilities, OSOW youth, and the formerly incarcerated.

Yet these systems are part of a much broader apparatus that includes the city's employers, large and small, its social services sector, its workforce training providers, and the broader funding community—all of which have to march in unison to help local New Yorkers reach their full potential while meeting the needs of the city's businesses. That is why the City has stood up the [Future of Workers Task Force](#), staffed by the Mayor's Office of Talent and Workforce Development, in partnership with CUNY and the NYC Department of Education, with participation from all key actors across the City's system of talent developers and talent absorbers (employers) to advise the City on the roadmap ahead.

The Opportunities

- **Redesigning a coordinated and collaborative system.** As a first step, the City will coordinate the existing mechanisms to support and develop the city's workforce, which are today siloed, disorganized, underfunded, and disconnected from target industries. Reimagining the existing public workforce infrastructure (and building on it) to be simple, transparent, and coordinated (both among itself and also with industry, other funders, educators, and the broader system of talent developers and training providers) is a necessary step toward a more inclusive, diverse, and resilient local economy.

Where possible, the City will leverage existing infrastructure and retool it to maximize

collaboration between sectors and facilitate co-investment and co-design from all participants (especially employers) into NYC's talent development system. As an example, in the coming months, the Future of Workers Taskforce will explore repositioning the **Workforce Development Board** as one that plays a more central role in establishing and scaling public-private partnerships across industry, educational institutions, and public agencies. It will also look at more strongly connecting the Workforce Development Board to the city's industry-aligned workforce teams, DOE, and CUNY to encourage co-developing training curricula and providing paid, work-based learning opportunities (e.g., internships and apprenticeships) in occupations that support economic mobility. The task force will also look at **establishing a public-private fund** to identify and expand best practices for workforce training programs and curricula, especially in NYC public schools and in CUNY degree programs, with a particular focus on growth sectors and the most in-demand occupations that provide economic security and upward mobility.

The Future of Workers Taskforce will also look at opportunities to better leverage and resource federally required **Workforce1 Centers** to connect New Yorkers to opportunities in occupations that drive the city's business districts, including with: a well-funded public-private matchmaking service that connects jobseekers to job openings and training programs, including those that drive the city's business districts; targeted business outreach and public marketing; and visible workforce centers and outposts in business districts and local downtowns, with hub centers in highly transit-accessible locations in business districts.

- **Centralizing the job-seeking experience for both jobseekers and employers.** As first described in the City's [Rebuild, Renew, Reinvent: A Blueprint for New York City's Economic Recovery](#), the City will also create a **centralized hiring hub for local jobseekers and employers in the form of a digital job portal**. Created with talent developers, talent absorbers, and jobseekers in mind as users, this portal will provide essential system-wide career infrastructure that makes a variety of job and training opportunities available to local talent and vice versa, and will be integrated

into MyCity, the City's broader infrastructure for engaging New Yorkers. Through this portal, NYC jobseekers, including students, will be able to find jobs, apprenticeships, and internships, as well as opportunities to upskill themselves through post-secondary and skills training programs offered by CUNY and other workforce training providers. Additionally, employers will be able to connect to resources to help them hire the talent they need to sustain and grow but also opportunities to develop and train talent in partnership with educational institutions, public agencies, and nonprofit providers

- **Strengthening experiential learning opportunities for public education students.** Local talent often doesn't reach their economic or career potential in their desired field even when they pursue and complete the relevant course of study and credentialing because they lack the experiential learning opportunities that employers value, even for entry-level hires. As an example, a significant majority of CUNY students graduate without having participated in an internship program.³⁹⁵

The City will examine expanding access to apprenticeships and internships by working closely with **DOE and CUNY to ensure apprenticeships, internships, and other experiential learning opportunities are woven into student degree pathways**, including through DOE's recently announced Career Readiness and Modern Youth Apprenticeship program.

The City will also look at expanding the **Summer Youth Employment Program** to offer year-round opportunities. Summer youth employment programs, along with coaching and mentoring, are effective ways to improve high school graduation rates and long-term earning potential. The City as a large employer will also leverage the programs and initiatives above, as well as others, to strengthen the long-term pipeline for NYC's public sector workforce.

The State will also seek to **increase access to apprenticeships and internships** by establishing a State-level policy framework to enable New Yorkers to participate in apprenticeships or pre-apprenticeship programs. Further, while the State has pushed to boost apprenticeship

programs statewide in recent years, few of its more recent investments have targeted New York City. The State will seek to expand its apprenticeship programming to NYC by establishing a goal of launching new or expanded apprenticeship programs in NYC and setting targets for training NYC residents in 25 in-demand occupations through apprenticeships; directing the Department of Labor and ESD to recruit NYC employers into registered apprenticeship programs; and allocating funding for the development and expansion of apprenticeship programs in NYC, particularly in occupations in technology, finance, and other occupations that provide significant economic security and upward mobility.

The City and State will also look to create more opportunities to partner with industry to extend learning beyond institutes of K-12 and postsecondary education and leverage the **city itself as a classroom**, co-locating training and experiential learning spaces in business districts and other “innovation” campuses around the city.

The task force will examine facilitating partnerships between higher-education institutions, industry groups, and workforce providers that enable **access to technology and use of existing facilities in business districts** for workforce training with faculty support that provides educators better visibility into industry needs.

- o **“Innovation” campuses** around the city—where industry, academia, and education collocate to both advance innovative technologies and train the next generation of talent—are another model by which local New Yorkers, and especially our young people, can both learn and apply their learning in dynamic educational facilities integrated with the surrounding workplaces.

An existing example of this type of facility is the Brooklyn STEAM center in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. This model can be expanded to other neighborhoods across the boroughs with strong industry anchors, such as:

- > The Science Park and Research Campus (SPARC) in Kips Bay, a recently announced collaboration between the City and State, which will transform Hunter College’s Brookdale campus into a state-of-the-art

hub with commercial office and wet lab space for biotech companies, educational and training space for DOE and CUNY, and modern facilities for the city’s local public health institutions.

- > Montefiore Medical Center in Morris Park, which is the Bronx’s largest employment center and an emerging cluster for life sciences.

Finally, the City and State will work with industry to **pair public-private investments in physical infrastructure with professional development programming** for CUNY and DOE students, such as paid and for-credit internship/apprenticeship opportunities, mentorship resources, and networking opportunities.

- **Providing comprehensive and accessible workforce training and support to young people as well as people facing historic barriers to employment.**

CUNY and DOE will continue to build a bold joint vision and plan for a **K-BA Pipeline to Career Success** that puts all DOE students that enter pre-kindergarten on a path to a postsecondary credential valued by local employers and the broader labor market. This will be facilitated by greater emphasis on **occupations as an organizing framework** for guiding educational curricula and workforce training programs (e.g., apprenticeships, CTE programs). Specifically, the City will seek to develop a taxonomy of occupations that drive the economy, particularly in business districts, and that are growing and in-demand—those that pay a good living wage and present attractive, long-term career options (“lifetime”); those that may offer modest pay but put people in a position to advance (“springboard”); and finally, those that may not pay well or offer job security but are critical for the economy and business districts (“static”) and, as a result, may need strategies to convert those jobs to better jobs. Particular attention will be paid to entry-level occupations that pay a livable wage and do not require a BA.

The City will also work to improve the **wrap-around services** that adult and OSOW New Yorkers often need to be in a position to seek and then be successful in pursuing training or

upskilling programs. These services reduce barriers to program entry as well as barriers to program completion, specifically for vulnerable population groups such as youth, veterans, people with disabilities, single parents/caretakers, and individuals who are formerly incarcerated, and include childcare, transportation, housing/cost of living expenses, assistance with documentation and other administrative burdens (e.g., IDs, expungement, debt relief), and one-on-one counseling and ongoing support.

- **Establishing pathways for equitable community hiring.**

Utilizing the City’s purchasing power to connect New Yorkers to good jobs can be a powerful vehicle to accelerate an equitable economic recovery for communities that are historically marginalized and/or disproportionately impacted by the health and economic effects of the pandemic.

The City will work with public and private champions including City and State elected officials, business leaders, building trade unions, and talent development organizations to pass legislation to facilitate community hiring requirements focused on connecting New Yorkers from low-income neighborhoods to job openings.

INITIATIVE 39

IMPROVE ACCESS TO CAPITAL AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR BIPOC ENTREPRENEURS WITH A ONE-STOP PROGRAM

Throughout the lifecycle of their small business, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) entrepreneurs struggle to access appropriate and affordable capital to establish and grow their enterprises. This results in BIPOC small businesses that are smaller, younger, and less resilient—on average—than businesses owned by white entrepreneurs.^{396,397} The City and State are working to address this disparity and have recently announced several efforts to make it easier for small businesses to access resources.

New York State has made unprecedented investments in the state’s small businesses, with a

particular focus on minority and women-owned enterprises. In the past year, more than \$1 billion has been targeted toward small business relief in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the \$250 million COVID-19 Capital Costs Tax Credit; the \$800 million Pandemic Small Business Recovery Grant Program that supported more than 35,000 small businesses, with approximately 90 percent of funding going to Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs); and the first-in-the-nation \$200 million Seed Funding Grant Program to support early stage, micro, and small businesses that opened shortly before or during the pandemic. The State is also investing more than \$500 million in funding through the federal State Small Business Credit Initiative to support programs for small businesses, including socially and economically disadvantaged (SEDI) businesses, including a mix of initiatives focusing on capital access, loan guarantees, loan participation programs, collateral support, venture capital (VC) for fund managers and startups, and technical assistance. The City will launch the NYC Small Business Opportunity Fund to meet the financing needs of local businesses and address critical gaps in accessing capital. This \$75 million fund will offer loans to both early stage and long-standing businesses, including the many BIPOC and immigrant entrepreneurs who did not receive federal financing assistance, along with entrepreneurs from historically underserved communities.

The City has also committed to overhauling the NYC Business Portal into a one-stop shop, allowing every business in New York City to execute and track all interactions with the City in real time. This portal will be live in mid-2023. The improved portal will provide



small businesses with seamless and sequenced access, guiding the user across multiple agencies. The portal will also enable businesses to track their transactions with the City (including filings, permits, and inspections) to allow greater accessibility and transparency, enable more predictable processing times, and facilitate compliance with City rules and regulations.

The City will explore building on these critical efforts by:

Adding a single entry point to the overhauled portal for any small business seeking capital resources.

The City will work with state, federal, and private partners (e.g., Community Development Financial Institutions, business support organizations, chambers of commerce, banks, etc.) to compile products and resources into one system where entrepreneurs can apply, preferably with a single application, and receive case management throughout their cycle. Partners would have access to more customers and resources, while small businesses would expend less time and energy navigating a complicated system. The City will investigate what additional efficiencies could be achieved through a common portal and what incentives it could offer to encourage participation. Preliminary incentives could include collaboration grants, marketing resources, access to funds, partnerships with funders, and other to-be-determined tools.

Developing tools that improve the ability of institutions to meet the needs of BIPOC entrepreneurs.

Research shows that BIPOC entrepreneurs face systemic challenges in accessing affordable microloans (less than \$100,000) with terms designed to meet their needs. Racist approaches to assessing risk combined with disparities in wealth result in disproportionate loan denials or unaffordable interest rates. Institutions that do offer affordable interest rates on microloans often find it difficult to cover the cost of originating and servicing the loans. The NYC Small Business Opportunity Fund, launching early next year, is tailored to address the borrower's needs and the institution's operations with a below-market interest rate. Longer term, the City will continue to develop tools that build on the design of the fund and catalyze private and philanthropic capital to meet the needs of BIPOC entrepreneurs. For example, preliminary tools may include:

- Establishing or participating in a secondary market for small business microloans.
- Investing in products (revenue- or milestone-based financing, crowdfunding, lines of credit, recoverable grants, etc.) that meet the needs of BIPOC entrepreneurs.
- Non-dilutive equity.

INITIATIVE 40

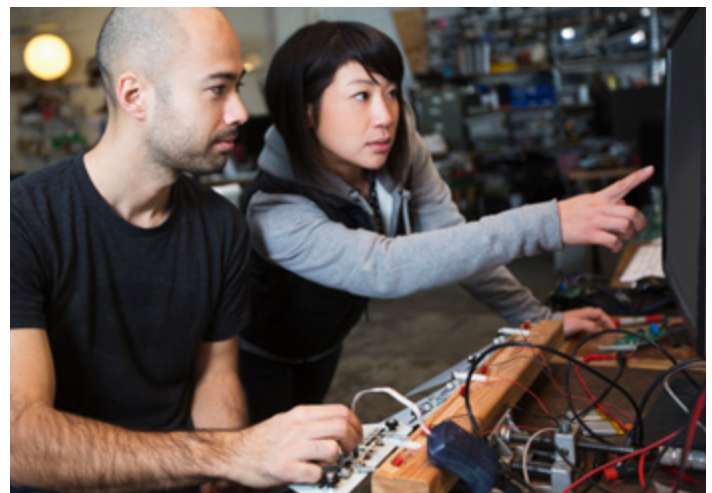
REDUCE THE BURDENS REQUIRED TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN M/WBE CERTIFICATION

The City and the State recognize that private sector partnerships are essential to accomplishing the work of government and that government contracting can be a valuable source of revenue for small businesses that gain access to this market.

The City and the State share a commitment to maximizing the diversity of our respective vendor pools by ensuring utilization of M/WBEs in our respective procurements.

The City and the State commit to working in partnership and strategically to reduce the burdens required to establish and maintain M/WBE certification by:

- Supporting the development and use of a common application to allow M/WBEs to apply to multiple certifying entities simultaneously.
- Exploring legislative and administrative law changes to align certification requirements and advance the goal of reciprocity.



Next Steps

Achieving the vision outlined in this report will require extraordinary collective will, commitment, and collaboration, not only from the City and State leadership, but also from the private sector, nonprofit community, philanthropic community, thought leaders, advocates, the public sector, and everyday New Yorkers.



Successfully implementing these recommendations will require an effective and motivated government, with appropriate and clear accountability and organizational structures in place. At all stages, we will take a foundational long-term partnership between the State and City as the rule, not the exception.

The implementation of the Making New York Work for Everyone Action Plan will be led by the “New” New York Leadership Steering Group, a cross-governmental convening hosted by the Director of State Operations and the First Deputy Mayor and led by the Deputy Secretary for Economic Development and Workforce and the Deputy Mayor for Economic and Workforce Development. This group will meet on a regular basis to develop, refine, and review implementation of the action plan.

This team structure will drive the implementation of these recommendations and ensure accountability for the goals, with authority to activate interagency action and a defined comprehensive reporting structure and tracking procedures.

At the City level, an interdisciplinary and multifaceted team will be convened at City Hall, coordinated by the Mayor’s Office of Policy and Planning, reporting directly to the First Deputy Mayor of the City of New York, as well as the Mayor’s Office of Operations, reporting to the Chief of Staff to the Mayor. A new Senior Advisor in the Mayor’s Office of Policy and Planning will be solely focused on the execution of the action plan. This coordinating committee will work closely with the Deputy Mayor for Economic and Workforce Development, the Deputy Mayor for Operations, and other senior leaders at City Hall. Each relevant City agency responsible for the implementation of action items in the plan will designate an action plan lead, who will be the primary point of contact for the action plan and facilitate interagency coordination.

At the State level, implementation of the action plan will be the charge of the Deputy Secretary for Economic Development and Workforce, under the Director of State Operations. The NYS Executive Chamber will facilitate coordination with each relevant State agency responsible for implementation and designate points of contact as needed. Agencies key to implementation of State initiatives include the Department of Homes and Community

Renewal, Empire State Development, and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, each of which will designate personnel to work on efforts related to implementation.

Achieving the vision outlined in this report will require extraordinary collective will, commitment, and collaboration, not only from the City and State leadership, but also from the private sector, nonprofit community, philanthropic community, thought leaders, advocates, the public sector, and everyday New Yorkers.

The action plan is just the beginning step for creating a “New” New York. The action items in this report are the down payment on New York City’s future and were developed with input from the NNY Panel and over 200 expert stakeholder interviews. As the action plan is implemented, stakeholder engagement will continue. The City and State will continue outreach to everyday New Yorkers, local leaders and global experts on an ongoing basis to ensure that implementation is aligned with local needs and best practices, and future action plan updates will develop further items in response to their input.

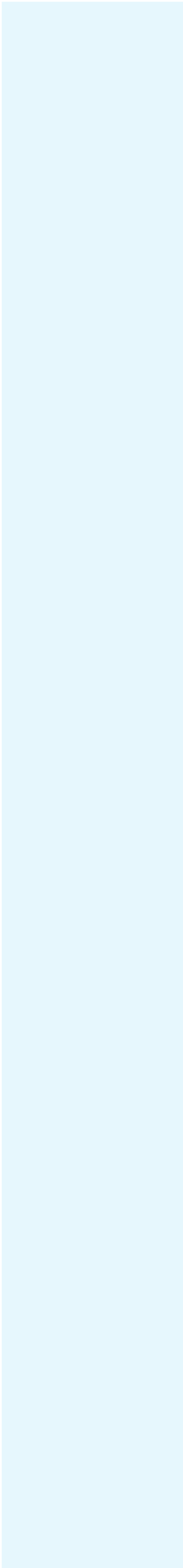
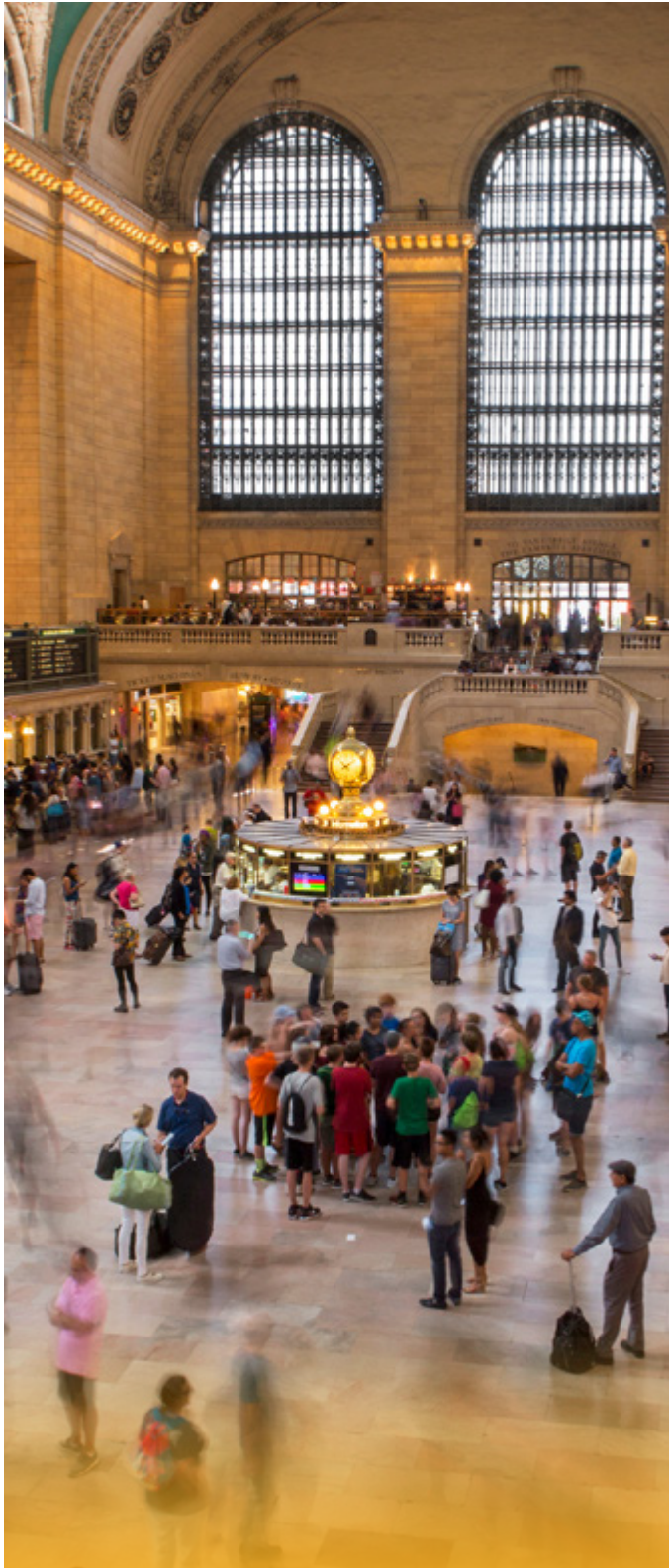
The NNY Panel will continue to serve as an advisory board to the City and State, convening semiannually for updates on progress and new ideas. The City and State will also cultivate a larger network of leaders, organizations, and everyday New Yorkers to form coalitions to support the implementation of individual action items from the plan.

The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for the city and its business districts. The pandemic affected New York’s economy, budget, vibrancy, and the lives of its residents, commuters, and visitors. It cast a stark light on the city’s long-standing rifts and inequities, and not all of us survived.

The need for change is creating a generational opportunity for action and investment. This plan uses this crisis as an opportunity to harness the energy of this moment, to build the city we want to be today and into the future. That means not simply reverting to the pre-pandemic status quo but seizing this unique moment to enact transformative change.

The “New” New York initiatives will help New York reimagine its future to make the city work for everyone—and make it the best place to work in the world.

Appendix



A. PANEL GOALS AND TARGET METRICS

GOAL	METRIC	TARGET	AS OF FALL 2022
Reimagine New York's Business Districts as Vibrant 24/7 Destinations	Overall Manhattan office vacancy rate	~10% Manhattan office vacancy rate by 2025	22% Manhattan office vacancy rate (as of Q3 2022) ³⁹⁸
	Emission from large commercial and residential buildings (based on Local Law 97 goals)	40% below 2005 levels by 2030 80% below 2005 levels by 2050	—
	Foot-traffic levels in business districts	Exceed 2019 foot-traffic in each business district by 2025	See Figure 8 for each business district
	Consumer spend in business districts	Exceed 2019 consumer spend in each business district by 2025	See Figure 9 for each business district
Make it Easier for New Yorkers to Get to Work	Average commute times for New York City residents	30-minute commute for NYC residents	41-minute commute for NYC residents (5-year estimates 2016-2020) ³⁹⁹
	Average commute times for regional New York residents	55-minute commute for regional residents	66-minute commute for regional residents (5-year estimates 2016-2020) ⁴⁰⁰
	Gap in commute times between demographic groups (i.e., longer commute times for Black, Asian, and Hispanic residents relative to the city overall)	Closed gap in commute times for Black, Asian, and Hispanic residents relative to City residents overall	6 minutes in additional commute time for Black New Yorkers and 1 minute in additional commute time for Asian and Hispanic residents relative to City residents overall (5-year estimates 2016-2020) ⁴⁰¹
Generate Inclusive, Future-Focused Growth	City-wide unemployment rate	3.7% unemployment rate by 2025	5.9% unemployment (as of October 2022) ⁴⁰²
	Private sector employment growth (once once it recovers to pre-pandemic levels)	2.1% annual growth by 2025	—
	Gap in labor force participation rate between Black and Hispanic New Yorkers relative to the overall population ⁴⁰³	Closed gap in labor-force participation rates between groups	3pp lower for Black New Yorkers (60%) and 2pp lower for Hispanic New Yorkers (61%) relative to overall labor-force participation levels (63% as of 2021) ⁴⁰⁴
	Gap in unemployment rates between New Yorkers with disabilities and the overall unemployment rate	Closed gap in unemployment rates between groups	7pp higher for New Yorkers with disabilities relative to overall unemployment as of 2021 (annualized monthly data) ⁴⁰⁵
	Gap in labor-force participation rate between NYC women and men	Closed gap in labor-force participation rates between NYC women and men	6pp lower for NYC women relative to NYC men per 2021 1-year estimates ⁴⁰⁶
	Gap between the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) proportion of total NYC population and proportion of businesses owned by BIPOC New Yorkers	Closed gap between the BIPOC proportion of total population and proportion of businesses owned by BIPOC	27pp lower proportion of BIPOC-owned businesses relative to BIPOC proportion of total population (as of October 2021) ⁴⁰⁷

B. IMPLEMENTATION TABLE

Strategy	#	Initiative	Key Agencies <small>(Lead Agency)</small>	Key Outputs	Next Steps	Milestones: Within 3 Years	Milestones: Within 7 Years	Implementation Needs		
								Funding	Leg	Other Actions
GOAL 1: Reimagine New York’s Business Districts as Vibrant 24/7 Destinations										
Allow flexibility to repurpose space and fill vacancy	1	Make Midtown and other business districts more mixed-use	DCP, HPD, OMB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modernized regulations around office building adaptive reuse to expand eligibility for the most flexible conversion regulations Exploration of incentive to induce affordable housing in office conversions Removal of the 12 FAR cap on residential buildings 	Pursue amending the Multiple Dwelling Law in the 2023 NYS Legislative Session to remove the 12 FAR cap and make office-to-residential conversions easier	Approve City zoning text amendment to allow for more conversions				★
	2	Update zoning to provide flexibility for businesses to thrive	DCP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zoning amendment to enable City of Yes for Economic Opportunity 	Certify into ULURP in mid-2023	Approve City zoning text amendment				★
	3	Align incentives to help maintain vibrant business districts	EDC, ESD, DOF, OMB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYCIDA program initiative for landlords who improve office space in Manhattan Promotion of existing City and State discretionary programs for high-priority sectors citywide City and State assessment of existing as-of-right incentives to make them consistent and bring them up to date with policy goals Strategy to effect recommended change to as-of-right incentives within the next 1-3 years 	Promote existing discretionary incentives for high-priority sectors and NYCIDA program initiative for landlords who improve office space in Manhattan	Expand use of discretionary incentives Assess and modify existing as-of-right incentives		★	★	
Invest in public space	4	Create a world-class network of public spaces in Midtown	DOT, DCP, EDC, DDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of public-realm projects in East and West Midtown Master-plan effort for a public space network across East and West Midtown 	Pursue Midtown public-space master plan and certain projects in East and West Midtown Pursue Midtown public-space master plan	Fund and begin capital projects process for certain improvements in East and West Midtown Complete Midtown public-space master plan	Complete certain capital projects in East and West Midtown, pursue others		★	
	5	Make public-realm improvements across all five boroughs	DOT, DCP, EDC, DDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investments in pedestrian access and safety, public space, bicycle infrastructure, and streetscape in business districts across the city: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower Manhattan-FiDi Downtown Brooklyn Long Island City Other business districts in the boroughs 	Pursue certain upgrades in Lower Manhattan, Downtown Brooklyn, and Long Island City	Fund and begin capital projects process for certain upgrades in Lower Manhattan, DBK, and LIC Study other potential public-realm projects in Core Employment Hubs, other boroughs’ downtowns, and key transportation gateways	Complete certain capital projects and fund and implement other potential public-realm projects		★	

Strategy	#	Initiative	Key Agencies (Lead Agency)	Key Outputs	Next Steps	Milestones: Within 3 Years	Milestones: Within 7 Years	Implementation Needs		
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GOAL 1: Reimagine New York's Business Districts as Vibrant 24/7 Destinations

Improve quality of life issues such as sustainability & cleanliness	6	Update zoning for green retrofits	DCP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zoning amendments to enable City of Yes for Carbon Neutrality 	Certify into ULURP in mid-2023	Approve City zoning text amendment				★	
	7	Support innovative financing mechanisms for green building retrofits	EDC, MOCEJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green building retrofit financing strategy centered around assembling a financing consortium or similar mechanism 	Review responses to Decarbonization Capital Investment Strategy RFEI Assemble consortia of interested investors	Develop and implement green building retrofit financing strategy			★		
	8	Reimagine waste containerization and collection	DSNY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of a world-class waste-containerization program Exploration of regulatory changes to encourage or require containerization Rollout of a new standard litter basket citywide 	Develop scalable waste-containerization program Assess potential zoning and building-code changes to encourage or require waste-containerization Deploy new standard litter baskets by mid-2023	Design and begin implementation steps for recommended waste-containerization plan			★	★	★
	9	Create a permanent Open Restaurants program	DOT, CH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New permanent Open Restaurants program with detailed design guidance and enforcement unit 	Work with City Council to advance legislation to establish permanent program	Implement new permanent program			★	★	
	10	Create a Director of Public Realm	CH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create Director of Public Realm position in City Hall 	Further scope and fill role for Director of Public Realm	New Director of Public Realm within City Hall			★		★
	11	Invest in public-space maintenance to achieve clean streets	DOT, SBS, DSNY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidation and uniformity among City's maintenance agreements with BIDs and other nonprofit groups Expansion of DOT's Public Space Equity Program and SBS's Neighborhood 360 grant program New revenue streams devoted to public-space stewardship for local economic development organizations Increased funding for DSNY litter-basket collection Increased DSNY enforcement personnel and camera infrastructure 	Consolidate maintenance agreements into a single contract	Fund expansion of DOT Public Space Equity and SBS Neighborhood 360 grant programs Further expand litter-basket collection service Hire additional DSNY enforcement personnel	Operationalize new revenue streams for public-space stewardship		★		★
	12	Make sidewalk shed reforms	DOB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New mandated sidewalk shed designs More robust enforcement against expired sidewalk sheds Potential legislative reforms to codify new sidewalk shed designs 	Release RFP to solicit new sidewalk shed designs Fund additional enforcement for unauthorized sidewalk sheds	Determine and mandate new sidewalk shed designs Expand enforcement for unauthorized sidewalk sheds			★	★	★
	13	Launch City-affiliated PPP to build capacity in local commercial corridors and spur innovation	SBS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new organization whose goal is to create and build capacity in local economic development organizations 	Evaluate potential models and engage potential partners	Secure seed funding and launch partnership			★		

Strategy	#	Initiative	Key Agencies (Lead Agency)	Key Outputs	Next Steps	Milestones: Within 3 Years	Milestones: Within 7 Years	Implementation Needs		
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GOAL 2: Make It Easier for New Yorkers to Get to Work

Increase the supply of mass transit options	18	Implement a sustainable Operating Budget Model for the MTA	MTA, State Legislature, local governments across NYS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Operating Budget Model for MTA that minimizes negative impacts on customers and facilitates the implementation of NNY recommendations, such as increased off-peak and weekend service 	Develop approach with key stakeholders	Develop sustainable Operating Budget Model for MTA			★	★	
	19	Maintain peak subway service and improve its frequency and reliability during off-peak hours	MTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent and reliable subway service during traditional commuting hours Increased off-peak subway frequency and reliability 	Evaluate and identify target peak-hour and off-peak frequencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement approach for maintaining peak-hour frequency Implement approach for increasing off-peak frequency 			★	★	
	20	Create an affordable and integrated regional rail network	MTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$5 all-day, every-day CityTicket program Rapid rollout of OMNY for MNR and LIRR Development of intermodal fare pricing and packages Mode integration at regional rail stations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement 24/7 \$5 CityTicket program Begin rollout of OMNY for MNR and LIRR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete rollout OMNY for MNR and LIRR 	Strengthen intermodal connections at regional rail stations			★	★
	21	Increase bus speeds	MTA, DOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redesigned bus network Exploration of opportunities to replicate 14th Street Busway on key crosstown corridors Introduction of All-Door Boarding citywide Commitment to principles of NYC Streets Plan Construction and promotion of a frequent bus route network City and MTA to discuss the future of MTA Bus Company Planning effort to design “bus of the future” / “trackless tram” Increased camera enforcement of bus-lane violations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Bus Network Redesign Facilitate discussions between the City and MTA on the future of MTA Bus Company Pursue State legislation to expand ABLE program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement All-Door Boarding Continue to implement the NYC Streets Plan Implement service changes identified by bus network redesigns Begin planning efforts to study “bus of the future” 	Implement service changes identified by bus network redesigns		★	★	★
	22	Improve transit accessibility for people with disabilities	DOT, MTA, PDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of existing accessibility commitments made by MTA Updated DOT ADA Transition Plan Partnerships with innovative firms specializing in physically and neuro-diverse design to guide Street Design Guidelines and other public-realm improvements Ensuring that design standards for the public right-of-way always incorporates appropriate accessibility for all users and work performed by government agencies (including the City and MTA) and private contractors always meets accessibility standards Improved enforcement of NYC’s Building Code Chapter 11 accessibility standards Exploration of additional modes of transportation for those with different abilities, such as accessible bike- or scooter-share programs using adaptive vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advance funded-transit accessibility programs Evaluate opportunities to improve enforcement of building code accessibility standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate considerations for physically and neuro-diverse individuals into Street Design Guidelines Evaluate additional modes of accessible transport 	Ongoing implementation of accessibility commitments			★	

Strategy	#	Initiative	Key Agencies (Lead Agency)	Key Outputs	Next Steps	Milestones: Within 3 Years	Milestones: Within 7 Years	Implementation Needs		
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GOAL 2: Make It Easier for New Yorkers to Get to Work

Increase the supply of mass transit options

23	Advance key transit expansion projects	MTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of East Side Access, Grand Central Madison Terminal, and Penn Access Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 Advancement of Interborough Express (IBX) 	Complete East Side Access and Grand Central Madison Terminal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Break ground on Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 Advance IBX into environmental review 	Complete Penn Access	★			
	24	Invest in protected bikeway infrastructure and improve access to bicycles, e-bikes and bike storage	DOT, EDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Low-Stress Bicycle Network Annual buildout of 2,000 new bicycle parking racks Passage of S380a/a516 or similar legislation to create a 50% e-bike rebate Expansion of availability of electric and human-powered Citibikes across the city, adding new staffed stations and balancing the distribution of fleets and docks Changes that enable the use of federal funding for e-bike charging infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build out bicycle parking racks Pursue S380a/a516 or similar e-bike rebate legislation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade physical protection of 20 miles of existing bike lanes by end of 2023 Build 6,000 new bicycle parking racks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build 250 miles additional miles of protected bike lanes Expansion of Citibike docks across the city and increased staffing support 	★	★	★
		25	Firmly support congestion pricing	MTA, DOT, NYS DOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the Central Business District (CBD) Tolling Program Exemption from tolling for qualifying vehicles transporting People with Disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage Traffic Mobility Board to recommend toll plan to MTA board Continue outreach and advocacy 	Activate Central Business District Tolling Program			★

Strategy	#	Initiative	Key Agencies (Lead Agency)	Key Outputs	Next Steps	Milestones: Within 3 Years	Milestones: Within 7 Years	Implementation Needs		
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GOAL 2: Make It Easier for New Yorkers to Get to Work

Reduce demand for cars and trucks	26	Develop a new approach to curb management	DOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and implement a curb-management plan with strategies to better manage curb competition while prioritizing the City's transportation, equity, and environmental goals 	Develop and release curb-management plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot aggressive strategies and models, in partnership with BIDs or other organizations and evaluate success Design a data-driven, technology-based enforcement system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procure curb management equipment and implement curb-management system Explore and pilot digital solutions like real-time use catalogs and demand-based vehicle pricing 	*		
	27	Enable widespread use of sustainable alternative freight	DOT, EDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State legislation allowing e-bike cargo wider than 48 inches in NYC Expansion of Commercial Cargo Bike delivery program and launch of other cargo bike-incentive programs Dedicated micromobility lanes on key north-south thoroughfares in business districts Last-mile "micro hubs" to support transloading of goods and install electric chargers at strategic locations citywide Reconfiguration of City-owned piers, ferry landings and terminals, and DockNYC sites to support goods movement by water and local micromobility Additional funds available to private sector to fund clean truck lease and purchase Additional publicly accessible charging sites for electric trucks 	Advocate for state legislation to increase allowable e-bike width	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand Commercial Cargo Bike program citywide Launch cargo-bike incentive programs Partner with maritime companies to begin activating smaller ferry and marine terminals Secure additional funding for clean truck programs and identify locations for more electric vehicle charging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconfigure City-owned piers, ferry landings, and DockNYC sites Establish last-mile "micro-hubs" at strategic regional locations 	*	*	*
	28	Invest in employment hubs around transit, industry clusters and anchor institutions	EDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place-based and programmatic investments in employment hubs around transit nodes, industry clusters, and anchor institutions across the city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue implementing ongoing and/or funded efforts at Kingsbridge Armory, Hunts Point Produce Market, Governors Island, PABT, and FiDi-Seaport Further evaluate and scope potential new projects in key hubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek additional funding to advance key projects Release RFP to redevelop Kingsbridge Armory Begin permitting process for FiDi-Seaport Climate Resilience Plan 		*		*
Strengthen employment hubs and workspaces across all five boroughs so people can work closer to home	29	Leverage city agency office space to anchor commercial hubs	DCAS, EDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocation of certain City agencies from outdated facilities upon lease expirations 	Identify additional potential agencies to relocate			*		
	30	Accelerate modernization of libraries to support remote work across city	CH, NYPL, BPL, QPL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of opportunities to accelerate library modernization through PPP, philanthropic partnership, or City funding Identify potential opportunities to activate spaces outside of current library premises Near-term operational support programming for remote and hybrid workers Create a dedicated maintenance fund for state-of-good repairs Extended library hours to support off-hours needs Better library integration with City career and workforce services 	Convene library systems to identify opportunities for private investment, priority branches for modernization, and near-term programmatic support priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue partnerships leveraging private or philanthropic capital Evaluate potential to activate spaces outside current library premises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish stable funding mechanism for state-of-good repairs 		*	

Strategy	#	Initiative	Key Agencies (Lead Agency)	Key Outputs	Next Steps	Milestones: Within 3 Years	Milestones: Within 7 Years	Implementation Needs		
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GOAL 3: Generate Inclusive, Future-Focused Growth

Ensure growth and access to opportunity is fair and equitable	37	Reduce barriers to entering the workforce for People with Disabilities	DOH, MOPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal or reduction of Medicaid's income-eligibility requirements for People with Disabilities Develop additional City infrastructure to better position People with Disabilities for employment 	Develop an approach based on the Massachusetts CommonHealth model			★	★	★
	38	Connect workers and students to jobs of the future through workforce infrastructure, coordinating with industry and academia	WKDEV, DOE, CUNY, SBS, EDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A newly reconstituted Workforce Development Board Better funded and leveraged Workforce1 center system Creation of a new fund that facilitates collaboration between sectors around funding priorities and encourages employers to co-invest in and co-design NYC's talent development system Increased number and quality of experiential learning opportunities (e.g., internships and apprenticeships) for DOE and CUNY in particular Activation of additional workforce spaces, including in Midtown, to colocate training and educational users Legislation to facilitate community hiring 	<p>Drive the Worker Task Force toward final recommendations and proposals</p> <p>Continue to convene the City's interagency talent cabinet to coordinate efforts across the city</p>	<p>Reimagine the Workforce Development Board</p> <p>Scale experiential learning programs</p>	Build career pathways programming into innovation districts citywide	★		★
	39	Improve BIPOC entrepreneurs' access to capital and technical assistance via a one-stop program	SBS, EDC, OTI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overhauled portal for small businesses seeking capital resources, with a single entry point and additional efficiencies and incentives built in to encourage participation Enhancements to the Small Business Opportunity Fund that catalyze additional private and philanthropic capital 	<p>Further due diligence on a single-entry point portal for capital resources and potential participation incentives</p> <p>Launch Small Business Opportunity Fund</p>	<p>Complete overhaul of NYC Business Portal</p> <p>Evaluate additional enhancements to build on the Small Business Opportunity Fund</p>		★		★
	40	Reduce barriers to establishing and maintaining M/WBE Certification	SBS, OM/ WBE, MOCS, ESD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a common application for certifying entities Administrative law and/or legislative changes to align certification requirements and advance the goal of reciprocity 	Engage private-sector partners, including certifying agencies	<p>Identify and advocate for administrative law and/or legislative changes to support full reciprocity</p> <p>Launch common application for certifying entities</p>				★

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NYC Public Design Commission

NYS Executive Chamber

NYS Department of State

Empire State Development

Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Port Authority of New York and New Jersey

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NYC Department of Education

NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development

NYC Department of Sanitation

NYC Department of Small Business Services

NYC Department of Transportation

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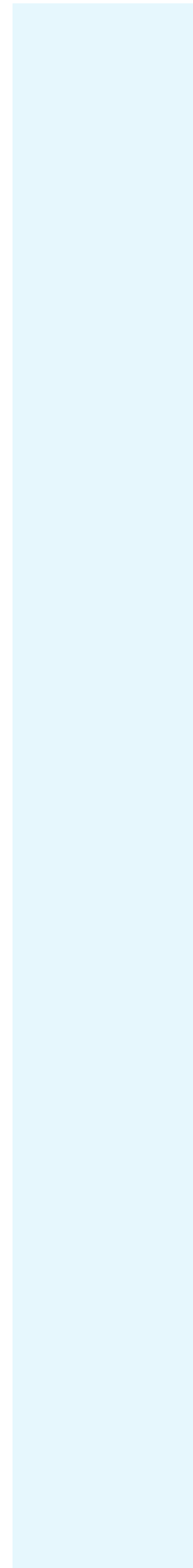
ANALYSIS AND REPORT

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Endnotes



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