

NYC Apollo statement on PlaNYC 2030

Dear NYC Apollo Friends and Allies:

On April 22nd Mayor Michael Bloomberg issued his long-awaited plan to improve New York City's environmental sustainability over the next 25 years while adapting to the impacts of global climate change and accommodating a projected 1 million more residents. PlaNYC 2030¹ is a comprehensive blueprint with 127 separate initiatives addressing 10 major goals – from reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30% to assuring every New Yorker has access to a park within a 10-minute walk to achieving the cleanest air quality of any major US city.

We applaud Mayor Bloomberg for the scope of his vision. PlaNYC addresses many of the demands summarized in the NYC Apollo Alliance 10-Point Plan for the 21st Century. We are especially pleased to see concrete proposals to promote solar energy, clean up brown fields and bolster energy distribution systems. PlaNYC also estimates 5,000 new green collar jobs in the energy sector alone. Here are some *immediate* commitments worth celebrating:

- The city will commit 10% of its *annual* energy costs – beginning with \$81.2 million in next year's operating budget -- to retrofit municipal facilities, conduct regular energy audits and improve building maintenance with the goal of reducing consumption and greenhouse gas emissions 10% by 2017.
- Schools with boilers burning dirtier, heavy No. 4-6 fuel oil will begin to be upgraded with a goal of fixing 100 (of 478 total) by 2017. Schools in high-asthma neighborhoods of the Bronx, Harlem, central Brooklyn and along Jamaica Bay will be given the highest priority. This action added to the School Construction Authority's recent move to finalize "[green](#)" design, construction and performance standards for new schools and capital improvement projects represents a major advance for students, parents and teachers.²
- The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene receives \$2 million this year (and a similar allocation for the next four) to launch a comprehensive, long-term study of air quality mapped to specific neighborhoods – the first investigation of localized impacts in the nation.
- "Priming the pump" for renewable energy, the mayor proposes to issue an RFP to contract with a solar energy company to mount, maintain and operate photovoltaic arrays on public buildings. The city will buy the power generated under a long-term contract. PlaNYC also calls for property tax abatements for private solar installations beginning with a \$400,000 budget commitment this year.

¹ PlaNYC 2030 may be downloaded at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/home/home.shtml>

² Local Law 86 now requires all municipal capital construction conform to standards no less stringent than USGBC's "green" building certification standard Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design (LEED).

- “Green roofs” receive a boost starting with \$ 1million this year to pilot a property tax abatement program for private building owners that, according to the PlaNYC, will cover up to 35% of the cost of installation.
- The Parks Department will receive major new capital dollars for eight regional parks (\$386 million), reforesting existing parks (\$118 million), public plazas (\$134 million), and for upgrades to expand public access to school athletic fields and playgrounds (\$174 million). The city commits to planting a million new street trees and has allocated an additional \$8.1 million for 15,000 more trees next year.

Proposals for new governance structures:

Mayor Bloomberg holds that big-ticket investments needed to improve the city’s infrastructure such as replacing older, polluting power plants and extending public transportation to underserved, outer-borough neighborhoods will require new governance structures. Three such entities are proposed to coordinate planning, raise dedicated revenues and fund incentive targeted programs.

- *A New York City Energy Planning Board* would be governed by a board with state, city and utility representatives to coordinate energy infrastructure planning that can be tailored to New York City’s particular urban environment. The NYCEPB would have authority to enter into long-term contracts with energy suppliers that would stabilize the supply market and improve the climate for greater private investment in new cleaner power plants.
- *A New York City Energy Efficiency Authority (NYCEE)* would collect a new surcharge on consumers’ utility bills to help fund public infrastructure improvements, encourage clean distributive generation, transition to smart meters and lay the ground work for broad adoption of real-time pricing over the next decade. NYCEE would also fund public education and tax incentives to building owners to upgrade their property for improved energy efficiency.
- *A new Sustainable Mobility and Regional Transit Authority (SMART)* would establish a pilot congestion charging program to collect fees from car and truck operators driving into Manhattan below 86th Street during weekdays. SMART would use the funding stream to back additional capital investment for expanding Express Bus service, completing subway and rail infrastructure projects, and to bring the entire transportation system – including bridges, roads and tunnels -- into a state of good repair. By encouraging drivers to use public transportation and lessening traffic, congestion pricing would, the mayor argues, shorten commuting times, reduce carbon emissions from traffic, and improve public health.

Toward developing a new generation of buildings:

To improve new buildings, PlaNYC calls for introducing design and construction standards through “greening the code” over the *next* three-year cycle which is due for completion by 2010.³ This proposal is prudent, but we urge the mayor to convene a task force to begin drafting revisions as soon as the 2007 Code upgrades are approved. We feel certain that the city’s experience building green -- now required under Local Law 86 – over the next few years will provide valuable experience to speed adoption of higher standards by the construction industry at large.

To reduce demand and carbon emissions from existing buildings that, by the city’s own calculation account for 79% of all the carbon emissions generated here, PlaNYC would establish incentive programs to reduce peak demand and improve the energy efficiency through funding collected by the New York City Energy Efficiency Authority described above. Owners of large residential and commercial building would be given first priority to encourage them to audit and retrofit or recommission their property. We urge the Administration to consider targeting a percentage of these incentives to affordable housing developments since driving down energy costs would reduce operating costs. The plan also proposes financial incentives for replacing lighting and installing efficient appliances. Mandatory requirements, according to the plan, would follow by 2015.

While we find merit in this approach, we think the city should also move sooner to require greater accountability from private building owners and coop boards for their buildings’ energy use, and support the suggestion mentioned in PlaNYC to encourage building owners to use EPA’s free Energy Star Portfolio Manager software⁴ to track energy use. Doing so would alert building owners, building managers and coop boards about how much energy their buildings are using and encourage them to make improvements more quickly.

Job growth in a sustainable economy

As noted above, new sustainability programs already funded will require more workers in a wide array of occupations: laborers, tree pruners, foresters, gardeners, carpenters, roofers, engineers, urban planners, solar installers, building inspectors, electricians, truck drivers, school maintenance workers and Traffic Enforcement Agents to name just a few. New industries such as the anaerobic digester plant the mayor proposes to pilot at Hunts Point⁵ could create hundreds more jobs.

Many of the jobs needed in the transition to a new energy economy will require workers to acquire additional skills and training. An area of particular and immediate need is to expand the numbers of skilled trades, engineers, technicians and others capable of performing energy audits and making recommendations to building owners on how to improve building energy efficiency. We are pleased to

³ Changes to improve environmental sustainability in the version of the Building Code anticipated this summer will be modest. “While the new code will include a number of green elements—including rebates for some green building features, requirements for cool (white) roofs and energy code certification, and more stringent ventilation standards—more can be done.” Energy Initiative 5, page 107.

⁴ Energy Initiative 7, page 110.

⁵ Energy Initiative 11, page 113.

see this mentioned in PlaNYC, but hope to see a more detailed program for training and job development – especially for developing entry-level jobs -- in the next phase.

The mayor maintains that adding one million more residents over the next 25 years will add over 700,000 new jobs to the local economy. According to PlaNYC estimates that in the energy sector alone, “new strategies will also result in new economic opportunities as new industries swell around installation, renovations, and production; the retro-fit and retro-commissioning program alone could result in 5,000 new jobs.” We wholeheartedly concur. It is our strong belief that improving the city’s environmental sustainability and providing a transition away from dependence on foreign oil will create thousands of new jobs and stimulate new economic growth.

However, we caution the city will fail to capture the full benefit of these developments if it does not have sufficient land for industrial use and manufacturing, and suggest the city adopt a more balanced approach. Some of the solutions proposed in PlaNYC such as decking over rail yards will make more land available, but do not solve the problem. By placing such a high premium on rezoning existing land from mixed use to residential land especially along the waterfront, New York City – and New York State -- will lose the opportunity to capitalize on incubating new production of “green” materials and processes that will be needed in transforming the city. Imagine the high-paid production jobs, such as assembling sophisticated building emission controls or processing construction waste (which New York City produces in such high volumes) for resale that could be created here. Diversifying – as well as growing – New York City’s economy will help improve its social sustainability and provide a greater buffer against the inevitable ups and downs of the financial sector.

In summary:

New York City Apollo salutes Mayor Bloomberg for making a huge leap forward to improve the environment and prepare New York City for the impact of global climate change. We pledge to continue to work with the mayor and City Council to move the proposals included in PlaNYC as quickly as possible.