

13 Bold Progressive Ideas for NYC in 2013

The political landscape in 2013 presents a unique opportunity to advance a progressive vision for New York City. By uniting around an agenda that focuses on building a livable, affordable, and sustainable city, we can promote broadly-shared prosperity, smart public investments for vital services, equal justice under the law, and good, effective, and inclusive government.

Broadly-shared Prosperity

1. Rebuild our city's public infrastructure through a forward-thinking public works program that invests in NYC, creates good jobs, and makes the City more resilient and livable.
2. Guarantee paid sick days for all workers and improve the quality of low-wage jobs.
3. Reduce inequality through smart and accountable economic development.

Smart Investments in Vital Services

4. Enact a budget that uses progressive revenue to fully fund essential services.
5. Ensure that all public school students are nurtured, engaged, and prepared.
6. Create a Department of Early Childhood Development so all children begin school ready to learn.

A Livable, Affordable, Sustainable City

7. Make NYC a model city for confronting climate change by reducing the City's carbon footprint, investing in mass transit, and increasing reliance on renewable energy sources.
8. Address the most pressing needs in NYC's ongoing affordable housing crisis.

Equal Justice Under Law

10. Pass the Community Safety Act to improve public safety by creating a culture of police accountability and partnership.
11. Make NYC the world's most immigrant-friendly city through legal protections and access to city services.
12. Confront discrimination and segregation in NYC by revitalizing the NYC Commission on Human Rights and prohibiting employment discrimination based on consumer credit history.

Good, Effective, and Inclusive Government

13. Make NYC government more accountable and democratic by reforming City Council rules and providing more avenues for meaningful public input.

Broadly-Shared Prosperity

an economic development strategy that creates good jobs & prosperity for all New Yorkers

1. **Rebuild our city.** Hurricane Sandy has highlighted NYC's long-standing need for a **public works program** that takes advantage of historically low interest rates to reinvest in the City's public infrastructure and reduce unemployment. This program should:
 - ✓ Invest in infrastructure that **creates a platform for economic growth, saves money and energy** for the long term, **strengthens neighborhoods**, and makes New York City **more resilient in the face of global climate change**.
 - ✓ Work with community stakeholders to develop and implement **a comprehensive plan for investments** in clean energy; public transit and transportation; drinking, waste, and storm water; below-grade infrastructure; storm surge adaptations; and green retrofits for public schools, housing, and buildings.
 - ✓ Make sure these investments **create good, safe jobs** and **build skills** through targeted workforce training for out-of-work and underemployed New Yorkers.
2. **Improve job quality and conditions for New York's workers.**
 - ✓ Guarantee the right of all workers to take **paid sick leave** to care for themselves or their family.
 - ✓ Support **collective bargaining** rights and **fair contracts** for all workers, particularly as many municipal contracts are up for renegotiation.
 - ✓ Support innovative **worker organizing efforts in low-wage sectors** -- including airport, bodega, car wash, construction, domestic, fast food, retail, taxi and livery, and waste management workers, as well as day laborers.
 - ✓ Ensure that workers are **protected from unsafe conditions**, are paid a **lawful wage**, and have the **right to form a union** free from intimidation by employers.
 - ✓ Promote **pathways to good jobs** and training for welfare recipients and the formerly incarcerated.
3. **Reduce inequality through smart and accountable economic development.**
 - ✓ **Set and enforce standards** for companies who benefit from economic development and affordable housing subsidies, land use actions, and City contracts to require fair labor practices, living or prevailing wages, paid sick days, local hiring, M/WBE and local contracting, and sustainable development. Further **improve transparency in reporting** on these projects to make sure New Yorkers are getting what was promised, and "claw-back" subsidies from those that fail.
 - ✓ Firmly link economic development investments to workforce development opportunities for low-income New Yorkers by developing bona fide trade apprenticeship programs and through **deep partnerships with CUNY**, community-based organizations, and career and technical high schools.
 - ✓ Strengthen the city's core blue-collar and middle-income sectors by **focusing subsidies in diversified economic clusters**. Invest in more **balanced, innovative, mixed-use development** to meet a broader range of goals developed with community stakeholders, such as preserving and strengthening **manufacturing** and **small businesses**, creative use of **waterfronts**, and the community infrastructure needed to sustain growth and share its benefits (e.g. schools, child care, open space, etc).

Smart Public Investments in Vital Services

access to great schools, jobs, parks, transit, libraries, cultural institutions & basic services

4. Enact a fair City budget that relies on progressive, sustainable revenue streams and avoids cuts to essential social services.

- ✓ Push for reform in Albany to **address long-term inequities in NYC's property tax system** and promote a more progressive tax system. Currently, the wealthiest 1% of New Yorkers earn 44% of the City's income, but pay only 34% of total taxes.
- ✓ **Close corporate tax loopholes**, and end subsidies to big banks, needless property tax giveaways, and residential parking tax abatements.
- ✓ After ten rounds of budget cuts, we must **restore and reinvest** in New York City's public schools, CUNY, safety, seniors, child care and protective services, libraries, and primary care.
- ✓ **Increase transparency** by widely publicizing New York City's budget, taxes, tax expenditures, and off-budget subsidies.
- ✓ Work with the Municipal Labor Council to establish **innovative health-care approaches for the City's workforce** under the Affordable Care Act that emphasize preventive care, improve health outcomes, and share cost-savings with workers.
- ✓ **Leverage City resources to improve access to the middle class for women and people of color.**
 - ▶ Promote **equality in public sector jobs** by supporting the competitive civil service system and by requiring more frequent testing for competitive job titles by the City.
 - ▶ **Strengthen M/WBE contracting** policies by developing a robust program that is prioritized by the City and holds the administration accountable for results.

5. Set a new course in public education.

- ✓ **Develop an integrated vision** for the City's public education system that extends from early childhood to higher education.
- ✓ Emphasize **well-balanced evaluation** of students, teachers, and schools, rather than relying on low-quality, high-stakes tests.
- ✓ Develop a **rich curriculum** at every level of education that focuses on learning and includes arts, music, health, and physical education. Ensure that the curriculum is inclusive of the **diverse histories** of New Yorkers, including the rich contributions of LGBTQ people to our society.
- ✓ **Reduce class size** for all students, from early childhood through higher education.
- ✓ Provide **meaningful venues** for parents, teachers, students, and community members to provide real input and be involved in their schools.
- ✓ **Cultivate a safe, healthy learning environment.**
 - ▶ **End the school-to-prison pipeline** by reforming school safety and discipline policies, so that students are not arrested for behavior that can best be addressed by school officials.
 - ▶ **Improve public health and promote sustainability** through operations and maintenance, and by retrofitting existing schools and building new ones that avoid the use of toxic chemicals.

- ▶ Ensure that students receive **health education and services** by growing the number of school-based clinics, and that the NYC sex education mandate is implemented soundly by adequately training teachers in age appropriate, comprehensive sex education curriculum.
- ✓ **Prioritize public schools over charter schools.** Turn challenged schools around instead of closing them, and promote innovative models for reform, such as the **community schools model**, in which schools become community centers by integrating academics, health and social services, youth development, and community engagement.
- ✓ **Ensure public high school graduates are ready for college.** Fund innovative and successful initiatives for all students who need them. Provide resource-intensive programs for the 70% of NYC public school graduates who enter CUNY but are deemed not college ready,
- ✓ **Keep higher education accessible and affordable** so that students in New York City can attend CUNY without putting themselves deeply in debt.

6. Create a Department of Early Childhood Development to coordinate and enhance programs so all children show up for school ready to learn.

- ✓ Unify and increase investments in City programs currently spread across multiple agencies, in order to improve focus and accountability, **expand capacity and access**, provide more holistic services to low-income families, and achieve greater impact.
- ✓ **Simplify the process** for Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Providers by streamlining regulations and approval for new childcare sites, making it simpler to integrate subsidized and market-rate child care.
- ✓ Develop, implement, and fully fund a cohesive plan to best **prepare children for kindergarten.**
- ✓ Promote and support **professional development** and pay equity for the current child care provider workforce to improve skills while retaining institutional knowledge.

A Livable, Affordable, Sustainable City

protecting the environment, improving quality-of-life & promoting socio-economic diversity

7. Make NYC a model city for confronting climate change.

- ✓ **Reduce New York's carbon footprint by requiring energy retrofits of large buildings.**
Promote green buildings through incentives that encourage cleaner energy, better water use, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Use these retrofit opportunities to create good jobs, and provide support for training in best practices for **green operations and maintenance**.
- ✓ Invest in significant **public transportation improvements** that facilitate sustainable growth, preserve affordability, and improve access for underserved communities and people with disabilities.
 - ▶ Create NYC's next high-capacity public transit option through a **city-wide network of bus rapid transit** lines that connect the boroughs.
 - ▶ Build an inclusive consensus for implementing **fairer toll pricing** that reduces car trips and environmental impacts on neighborhoods, makes driving between the outer boroughs less burdensome, and shores up funding for the city's transit system.
 - ▶ Support "**livable streets**" policies city-wide that proactively engage communities in the planning process to bring well-planned bike lanes, pedestrian plazas, and traffic calming measures to all neighborhoods.
- ✓ **Rapidly increase the share of electricity that comes from renewable sources** by shifting away from utilities that use gas, coal and oil and towards rooftop solar, tidal, wind and geothermal energy.
- ✓ **Divest New York City's pension funds from fossil fuel companies** that are contributing to climate change.
- ✓ **Raise the recycling rate** above 30% by establishing a comprehensive, citywide composting and waste diversion program.

8. Address the most pressing needs in New York City's ongoing affordable housing crisis.

- ✓ **Cut NYC's record-high homelessness in half** by prioritizing placement of homeless families into permanent housing (e.g. Section 8, NYCHA and HPD-subsidized housing), restoring City-subsidized transitional vouchers, and investing in homelessness prevention.
- ✓ Implement **mandatory inclusionary zoning**, requiring developers who build multi-family buildings to include a percentage of permanently affordable units.
- ✓ **Maintain and enhance the City's historic commitment to affordable housing investment.** Improve the targeting of these subsidies to emphasize deeper levels of affordability, a wider range of family and unit sizes, sustainability targets, neighborhood benefits, and permanent affordability. Provide greater transparency on subsidies, developments, and contracting.
- ✓ **Reform the governance of the New York City Housing Authority**, to make it more accountable both to City Hall and to NYCHA residents. Prioritize public housing repairs as a means to preserve the city's housing stock and create jobs for local residents.

- ✓ Preserve and **strengthen rent regulations** that protect 3 million New Yorkers. Press Albany for **Home Rule** to allow New York City to govern our most important affordable housing preservation program.
- ✓ **Stem the continuing impact of the foreclosure crisis.** When possible, use the City's business with major banks to require that they offer New Yorkers sustainable long-term loan modifications and eliminate fees that have accumulated once a modification is requested.
- ✓ Aggressively implement and build on the **NYC Responsible Banking Act** so that the City's deposits require banks to offer the credit products our communities need.
- ✓ Protect **supportive housing** programs and affordable housing options for people living with HIV/AIDS.
- ✓ Conduct an annual survey of **vacant units** and put them into productive use as affordable housing.
- ✓ Make room for a **wider array of safe, legal housing options** for the diverse households in 21st-century NYC through creative approaches to underground housing and building code reform.

9. Advance the health and well-being of New Yorkers across the income spectrum.

- ✓ Guarantee the right of all workers to take **paid sick leave** to care for themselves or a family members.
- ✓ **Address health care disparities** through preventive approaches (such as the Nurse-Family Partnership) and better access to primary care in the city's most disadvantaged communities.
- ✓ Protect **access to reproductive health** and abortion services, and prevent any limitations such as ability to pay, parental consent, waiting periods, etc. Bolster the reproductive health care workforce by continuing to train culturally competent and multilingual reproductive health providers and continuing abortion training as required curriculum in medical residency programs in NYC.
- ✓ Create a NYC Food Policy Council to implement **comprehensive food policy** that reduces hunger, improves nutrition and reduces obesity, requires City purchasing of local and sustainable products, improves working conditions for food workers, and reduces waste. Strengthen EDC's FRESH initiative to bring **supermarkets to underserved, low-income communities** through more proactive planning, neighborhood involvement, and standards to create good jobs for local residents.
- ✓ Prepare for a city with nearly 50% more seniors by truly implementing the recommendations of **Age Friendly NYC** to better enable seniors to access the social, consumer, transportation, health, and housing resources they need to participate fully in the life of our city.
- ✓ Prioritize the needs of New Yorkers with **disabilities**, by improving access to public transportation (including taxis and liveries) and health services, expanding accessible, affordable housing options, and developing effective means of communication particularly regarding public services.
- ✓ Provide **quality care and support across generations**, with good jobs and dignity for the workers who provide it through home care and in nursing homes. Offer a career ladder for home care workers by upgrading training for personal care aides and creating an advanced aide role to provide coordinated care to clients and save taxpayer dollars.
- ✓ Stop the privatization of **hospital services** and focus on the development of a **strong public health infrastructure** based on a community-driven assessment of need.

Equal Justice Under Law

an emphasis on protecting the civil rights of all New Yorkers

10. Improve public safety by creating a culture of police accountability and partnership.

- ✓ Reform the NYPD's **stop, question, and frisk policy** through community-driven legislative and legal solutions.
- ✓ Pass the **Community Safety Act** to **end racial profiling** in policing, establish an independent **inspector general** for the NYPD, and make sure that NYPD searches respect New Yorkers' constitutional rights.
- ✓ Build upon the Gun Violence Task Force, community justice centers, and restorative justice initiatives that create **community-police partnerships** to reduce the human and financial costs of crime.
- ✓ Ensure that the NYPD does not conduct **unlawful surveillance** of Muslim, LGBTQ, and other communities or political groups exercising their First Amendment rights.
- ✓ Improve the NYPD's inadequate **traffic safety enforcement and crash investigation**, and expand neighborhood "slow zones" to save the lives of New Yorkers lost to dangerous driving.
- ✓ Train NYPD officers on the current regulations regarding abortion clinic protesters and patients' rights.

11. Make NYC the world's most welcoming city for immigrants.

- ✓ Introduce the **Big Apple Card: a municipal identification option for New York City residents**, including undocumented immigrants, which could also serve as a library card and a NYC SafeStart Account banking card. Train the NYPD to recognize and accept the identification.
- ✓ **Protect more New Yorkers from unjust deportations** by fighting efforts to bring dragnet programs like the Secure Communities immigration enforcement to New York City, placing limitations on the role of local law enforcement in complying with immigration detainer requests, and supporting funding for legal services for immigration defense.
- ✓ Expand **voting rights** in municipal elections to non-citizen permanent immigrants who are legally living in the United States.

12. Confront severe, ongoing discrimination and segregation in New York City.

- ✓ Prohibit discrimination in employment based on **consumer credit history**.
- ✓ **Revitalize the moribund-NYC Commission on Human Rights** to identify, publicize, propose remedies, monitor, and enforce plans to address race-based and other discriminatory disparities in public services.
- ✓ Launch a **new fair housing program**, utilizing matched testing to identify and prosecute illegal housing discrimination (including race, ethnicity, immigrant status, LGBTQ, and source-of-income discrimination) by landlords.
- ✓ Develop and track targets to **reduce public school segregation** and disparities in admissions, discipline, and graduation rates.
- ✓ **Fix NYC's "fair-share" system** for siting City facilities (e.g. waste-transfer stations, detention centers, etc.) to provide transparent, objective information, and make it more difficult to site facilities in neighborhoods where they are already most concentrated.
- ✓ Fight for equal treatment of transgendered people by working to support passage of the **Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act** (GENDA) on the state level.

Good, Effective, and Inclusive Government

a new approach to government that is proactive, transparent & accountable

13. Make NYC government more accountable and democratic.

- ✓ **Reform the New York City Council rules.** Take the politics out of “Member Items” by giving all Members an equal amount (or amounts determined by need-based formulas) and insisting on full transparency. Ensure timely consideration of legislation or oversight supported by a majority of Council Members.
- ✓ Amend the New York City Charter to **improve transparency and better balance budget powers** of the Mayor and the City Council by insisting on the final revenue estimate before budget negotiations are finalized, narrowing the Mayor’s impoundment powers, requiring more specific “units of appropriation” and service level information in the budget, and more detailed capital project budgeting.
- ✓ Dramatically expand participation by New Yorkers in government processes through innovative tools such as **participatory budgeting** and new technologies to integrate customer service, data for City decision-making, and **meaningful and inclusive public input**.
- ✓ Implement recommendations from the **Campaign for Community-Based Planning** to achieve a better balance of comprehensive and community-based planning, empower and reform community boards, and more genuinely engage communities in the planning process.

A project of the Progressive Caucus of the New York City Council.
Thanks to all who shared their feedback and expertise.
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