

# 2017 NEW YORK CITY **GREEN GUIDE**

A PRIMER ON SUSTAINABILITY FOR CANDIDATES



New York League of Conservation Voters Education Fund  
[www.nylcvef.org](http://www.nylcvef.org)

# INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, New York City has emerged as a national leader in the sustainability movement. Mayor de Blasio has picked up where his predecessor left off, pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050. Just over two years ago, he released OneNYC, a plan to address growth, equity, sustainability, and resiliency. At the same time, Melissa Mark-Viverito and the City Council have passed dozens of bills identified as priorities by NYLCV and its partners.

While the City has made substantial interim progress on its goals, staying on track will require steadfast leadership, continued smart planning, and utilization of the latest technologies and innovations.

All New Yorkers will be looking for candidates committed to a sustainability agenda that will make our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier and more resilient. The question is: will New York City's next generation of elected leaders be up to the challenge?

The New York League of Conservation Voters Education Fund is pleased to present this 2017 Green Guide as a resource for all candidates running for public office in New York City.



**Marcia Bystryn, President  
NYLCV and NYLCV Education Fund**

This document, released at our Environmental Candidate School, is a one-stop-shop for candidates to learn about new opportunities and approaches to persistent sustainability problems. It also provides contact information for citywide and local organizations that work on the front lines of these issues, available as a resource to any candidate. NYLCVEF developed this guide in close consultation with our environmental, transportation, public health, parks and environmental justice partners to embrace a wide range of views and perspectives.

**This guide was made possible with generous support from:**



# PROGRAM

## **Environmental Candidate School Program** **May 4th, 2017 8:30 am - 12:30 pm** **NYU Wagner Rudin Family Forum for Civic Dialogue** **295 Lafayette St, 2nd Floor**

### **Opening Remarks**

**Sherry Glied:** Dean, NYU Wagner

**Marcia Bystryn:** President, New York League of Conservation Voters Education Fund

**Melissa Mark-Viverito:** New York City Council Speaker

### **Panel I: Healthy Citizens and a Healthy Environment**

#### **Moderator:**

**Robert Kulikowski:** Senior Director of Environmental Planning, Langan

#### **Panelists:**

**Cheryl Huber:** Assistant Director of Greenmarkets, GrowNYC

**Lynn Kelly:** Executive Director, New Yorkers for Parks

**Justin Wood:** Director of Organizing & Strategic Research, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

**Eric Goldstein:** Senior Attorney and New York City Environment Director, Natural Resources Defense Council

### **Panel II: Building a More Sustainable and Resilient City**

#### **Moderator:**

**David Bronston:** Special Counsel, New York City, Phillips Lytle LLP

#### **Panelists:**

**Rory Christian:** Director, New York Clean Energy, Environmental Defense Fund

**Jessica Quiason:** Strategic Researcher, Alliance for a Greater New York

**Marco Conner:** Legislative and Legal Director, Transportation Alternatives

**Jose Soegaard:** Director of Programs and Policy, Waterfront Alliance

**Laurie Kerr:** Director of Policy, Urban Green Council

### **Panel III: Advancing an Environmental Agenda**

#### **Moderator:**

**Ken Fisher:** Member, Cozen O'Connor

#### **Panelists:**

**Council Member Costa Constantinides:** District 22

**Council Member Mark Levine:** District 7

**Council Member Rafael Espinal:** District 37

**Council Member Donovan Richards:** District 31

# INDOOR AND OUTDOOR AIR QUALITY

In large part, pollution in our air comes from particulate matter released from burning dirty fuels in trucks and buses, factories, power plants and even our buildings' boilers. Each year, air pollution from dirty fuels in New York City causes more than 3,000 deaths, 2,000 admissions for lung and heart problems and 6,000 asthma related emergency room visits for children and adults.

Over the last two decades, New York City's air quality has improved dramatically. As recently as 2012, New York City failed to meet federal standards for fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) in the air. As of 2016, the American Lung Association grades New York City an A on particle pollution.

Although changes such as NYC Clean Heat, the Retrofit Accelerator, and regulations put in place by the Department of Environmental Protection have helped improve the City's air quality, there is still more work to be done.

Ozone "smog" pollution is still at unhealthy levels in our air. Further, low income communities and communities of color experience pollution levels higher than citywide average and thus have significantly higher asthma rates and other health conditions exacerbated by air pollution.

## Action Plan

- Reduce transportation emissions by prioritizing alternative forms of transportation: public transit, biking and walking.
- Support policies that reduce, replace, and retrofit diesel vehicles.
- Encourage the adoption of electric vehicles.
- Reduce illegal idling.
- Promote the use of cleaner-burning heating fuels or a switch to an air-sourced heating system.

## Indoor and Outdoor Air Quality Experts

### **American Lung Association of the Northeast**

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# PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

From anchor parks like Central Park and Prospect Park to neighborhood playgrounds, parks and public space are vital to the quality of life for New York City's communities. Green space, including street trees, improves air quality and biodiversity, and encourages physical activity, thus improving overall well-being and public health.

Park usage is surging to record levels citywide. However, almost two million New Yorkers still live more than a 10 minute walk from a park. Further, the cost of building and maintaining these spaces is growing, and the City's Parks Department lacks the resources to properly staff, program and maintain the City's 29,900-acre municipal parks system.

## Action Plan

- Explore innovative financing mechanisms to ensure adequate funding for the proper maintenance and operation of all city parks.
- Ensure equitable distribution of park staff and resources throughout the city's park system.
- Target underserved neighborhoods for new parks through the Community Parks Initiative.
- Utilize sustainable materials for parks equipment and infrastructure.
- Promote community involvement in greenspace through programs such as Partnerships for Parks and GreenThumb Community Gardens.
- Incorporate the inclusion of open green space into residential and commercial rezoning plans.

## Parks and Open Spaces Experts

### **Lower East Side Ecology Center**

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### **Municipal Arts Society**

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### **The Nature Conservancy**

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### **Green Guerillas**

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# SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

New York City boasts the largest transit system in the country and the only transit system that runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Efficient and timely functioning of this massive system is imperative to keep the city running smoothly. Despite this reliance on transit to keep our region's economy moving, our transit system is facing significant hurdles. As the backlog of maintenance and repair needs grow, commuters are stuck dealing with longer delays and less predictable service. At the same time, the MTA is underfunded at the state level, dealing with increasing debt taken on to finance necessary upgrades and state-of-good-repair projects, leaving millions of daily transit riders paying more for less.

A clean network of sidewalks and safe intersections for pedestrians is also an essential component of our transportation system. New York City is the most pedestrian friendly city in the United States, but we are far from the safest. Being struck by a vehicle is the leading cause of injury-related death for children under 14, and the second leading cause for seniors. On average, vehicles seriously injure or kill a New Yorker every two hours. Ensuring road safety for all users, including pedestrians and bike riders, is key to improving the quality of life in neighborhoods across the city.

## Action Plan

- Invest in Select Bus Service and urge NYCDOT to launch more routes.
- Explore opportunities to make our bus system more efficient such as all door boarding, transit signal priority, and dedicated bus lanes.
- Support policies that contribute to the city's Vision Zero goals and promote pedestrian friendly programs like pedestrian plazas, play streets, and neighborhood slow zones.
- Promote the expansion of Citi Bike to more communities.

## Sustainable Transportation Experts

### **NYPIRG**

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### **Transit Center**

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### **Pratt Center for Community Development**

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### **General Contractors Association**

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### **New York Building Congress**

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# DRINKING WATER AND WATERWAYS

Preserving the city's water supply and infrastructure is critical. The Catskill Delaware Watershed is the primary source of drinking water for 9 million residents who reside in the five boroughs of New York City and parts of Orange, Putnam, Ulster, and Westchester counties. NYC's drinking water is among the best in the world. In fact, the water is so pristine that it does not have to be filtered. Over the last ten years, the city's water ratepayers have funded more than \$1 billion to increase the city's landholdings and protect this watershed. This level of investment must continue.

At the same time, though New York City has significantly reduced the amount of combined sewer overflows, more than 27 billions gallons of raw sewage ends up in New York Harbor each year. We must do a better job of restoring and protecting these waterways, many of which are home to vibrant ecosystems, such as Jamica Bay.

## Action Plan

- Push DEP to conduct a study and develop recommendations on water rate restructuring options that promote equitable generation of needed revenues, water conservation, and widespread use of green infrastructure.
- Develop more aggressive strategies to reduce impacts of combined sewer overflows. To the extent possible, incorporate green infrastructure strategies, e.g., permeable concrete and asphalt pavement, green roofs, and bioswales.

## Drinking Water and Waterways Experts

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# GREEN BUILDINGS

Meaningful action on the city's carbon footprint requires new sustainable and resilient building standards, as well as improvements to existing buildings since they are responsible for 75% of greenhouse gas emissions. New York City has been a leader on scaling up energy efficiency in buildings, in large part due to the groundbreaking Greener, Greater Buildings legislation which establishes audits, benchmarking and retrofits of buildings.

## Action Plan

- Reinforce New York's competitive position by adopting policies that reflect the latest thinking on the future of sustainability in New York City and build to Net-Zero, Passive House, or LEED Platinum city building standards.
- Support policies that create incentives for developers and building owners to upgrade their spaces to energy efficient standards.
- Develop, preserve, and upgrade affordable housing in New York City to minimize energy costs, clean indoor air, and improve their resiliency in the face of storms, heat waves, and utility outages.

## Green Buildings Experts

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# SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

The way the city manages its solid waste determines a significant portion of our carbon footprint. It is imperative that the city include solid waste management as an integral part of its overall sustainability plan. A sustainable waste management plan requires a comprehensive set of policies that consider environmental, economic and equity impacts at each step of the solid waste management process – waste reduction, collection, transport and disposal.

## Action Plan

- Implement a more robust recycling and waste prevention program to move the city towards our goal of zero waste to landfills that includes significant investment in public education.
- Improve the cost-effectiveness, sustainability and equity of New York City's solid waste management system.
- Explore new and emerging technologies that can better manage solid waste.
- Explore the implementation of franchise zones for commercial waste hauling.

## Solid Waste Management Experts

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# CLEAN ENERGY

We are at both an economic and environmental crossroads with energy in New York City. New York City's heating and cooling runs on a complex system that includes oil, natural gas, steam, nuclear power, and an emerging renewable energy portfolio. It is critical that our elected officials examine these systems to promote efficiency, facilitate the development of small- and large-scale renewables, and ensure that the system is protected from extreme weather.

## Action Plan

- Explore opportunities to build on the transmission of renewable energy into the city.
- Support policies that reduce consumption of energy in existing buildings and eliminate dirty heating fuels.
- Encourage the development of clean distributed generation.
- Foster the market for renewable energy in NYC.
- Ensure the reliability of New York City power delivery.
- Develop a smarter and cleaner electric utility grid for New York City.

## Clean Energy Experts

### **Association for Energy Affordability**

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## ACCESS TO FRESH AND HEALTHY FOOD

An estimated 750,000 New York City residents live without reasonable access to well-stocked grocery stores, while about three million people live in places where stores that sell fresh produce are few or far away. This issue is especially persistent in low-income communities and communities of color, and is manifested in several ways including disproportionate rates of obesity and heart disease. Food equity and security for all New Yorkers is a critical component of the sustainability agenda that will make our people and our neighborhoods healthy and strong.

### Action Plan

- Ensure all New York City neighborhoods and schools have access to fresh produce and healthy foods. This can be achieved by supporting programs and policies that expand fresh food retail in underserved areas of the city and by improving the nutrition of school meals.
- Require relevant New York City agencies to procure locally-grown food, which would preserve threatened farmland, protect our natural resources, grow the local economy, and improve the health of New Yorkers.
- Enhance the city's food distribution system by modernizing the Hunts Point Distribution Center, including a new regional food hub in Hunts Point.
- Incentivize the purchase of healthy foods by increasing access to programs like Health Bucks.

## Fresh and Local Food Experts

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