



## **MEMORANDUM**

To: Residents of Council District 4

From: Vanessa Aronson, Democrat for the City Council

Re: 18 Solutions for 2018

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### **Background**

Throughout my career, I have consistently put public service over politics, and I am running for the New York City Council to stand up for New York and the East Side. I bring to this position three distinct perspectives.

First, as a New York City public school teacher, I've had an on-the-ground and up-close view of many of the issues that plague our city and our community—an inflated cost of living, an unreliable and inaccessible transportation system, disappearing small businesses, and an overcrowded, under-resourced education system. These are not abstract scenarios; they are very real challenges facing my students, their families, and millions of New Yorkers.

I also bring to the table more than 10 years of government experience, not as an old political hand on the staff of an elected politician, but as a public servant and commissioned government representative. As a diplomat in the Foreign Service with the U.S. Department of State, I represented the U.S. at embassies and consulates

overseas, and served on the U.S. delegation to the U.N., right here in my home district. This policy experience at this level has taught me how to cut through bureaucratic red tape and get things done.

Finally, as a policy expert with specialized studies in economics, public budgeting, and leadership from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, I know how to analyze policy problems and produce solutions with lasting impact. From my professional experience, I have learned three essential tenets to lasting, positive change in the community:

- **All relevant stakeholders must be included in the process.** Bills and resolutions should not be drafted behind closed doors. Proposed legislation should not take advocates by surprise. Good policy makers know that their ideas only succeed when there is input, ideas, and buy-in from the people who live the issues and will live the solutions every day.
- **Policy discussions must analyze both the benefits and the costs.** New ideas rarely come without trade-offs or costs to the community. Change, even when positive, can be painful. Politicians like to ignore or sweep under the rug any potential negative consequences of the bills they are proposing, but this is irresponsible and shortsighted. Good policy makers consider both the positive and negative effects of their new ideas, and work with the community to help minimize the costs wherever possible.
- **New ideas must have identified resources.** Just as with a household or business budget, funds for additional expenditures need to come from somewhere. Great

ideas without properly identified resources for implementation remain just that— ideas. For the purposes of this memo, I will not anticipate any increase in City revenue to cover implementation costs. Rather, when on the City Council, I will advocate for a citywide, department- and agency-led review of spending. Current elected officials agree: agencies have not been asked to review their spending in four full years, and as a result, current department budgets have become bloated.

I have prepared the following memorandum in response to the conversations I have had with hundreds of Council District 4 residents regarding their concerns about the community. I apply the aforementioned three good policy tenets to 10 issues directly impacting Council District 4 and eight citywide challenges of concern to our community members.

To determine the order in which to list the issues and their proposed solutions, I solicited even more input from the community through a tri-fold board that I created and carried with me as I canvassed throughout the district for weeks. After each conversation with a voter, I placed a post-it note on the issue of most concern to them and thus the issues below are organized in order of the number of post-its collected for each issue.

## **10 Local Issues in District 4**

1. Affordable Housing Crisis (p.5)
2. Overcrowded Schools on the East Side (p.7)
3. Vacant Storefronts (p.9)
4. Impending L Train Shutdown (p.12)
5. Trump Tower Security Costs (p.14)
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10. Pedestrian Ramps in Disrepair (p.24)

## **8 Urgent Citywide Challenges**

1. Crumbling Transit Infrastructure and Inaccessibility (p. 26)
2. Homelessness (p. 29)
3. Shortage of Special Education Services (p. 32)
4. Low Rate of Residential Recycling and Composting (p. 34)
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6. Big Money Controlling Politics (p. 39)
7. Lack of Planning for an Aging Population (p. 41)
8. Inequitable Access to Reproductive Health Care (p. 42)

This list of issues is in no way exhaustive and the discussion that follows is also not as comprehensive as the issues deserve. I offer them as a jumping-off point and welcome your feedback.

## **Affordable Housing Crisis**

New York is one of the most desirable places in the world to live. With so many people eager to become our neighbors, it is no surprise that the market rate for residential rents is high. However, affordable housing legislation and government-backed incentives for developers to build affordable housing are essential for ensuring that housing stock for middle- and low-income New Yorkers remains available. In District 4, Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village stands as proud example of this commitment to middle-class families. However, in an aggressive real estate market like New York, the work of protecting affordable housing is never done and when elected to the City Council, I will make it a top priority to fight for safe, accessible, and affordable housing.

First, I will preserve and protect the current dwindling stock of affordable housing units. To do so will first require an accurate audit of existing rent-regulated apartments as well as all units that have been deregulated within the past five years. This must be done to ensure that landlords who receive J-51 and other tax benefits are not illegally deregulating units. Additionally, I applaud the recent mayoral plan to grant low-income tenants free legal representation in housing court to prevent unlawful evictions of tenants from their rent-controlled and rent-stabilized apartments. As a City Council Member, I will fight to make sure funds are appropriated to administer this legal program, guaranteeing this right to counsel is not just granted in theory, but is also put into practice.

Second, I will fight to the repeal the Urstadt Law, which wrongly denies New York City home rule on critical housing issues. There is no legitimate reason why the City of New York should not legislate on a matter specifically concerning its citizens. Finally, while I support pro-growth policies that allow for additional residential development, I will not support any development plans that do not also adequately address the following: 1) neighborhood schools have sufficient class space to accommodate an increase in population density without displacing children of current residents; 2) occupancy rates remain high, so that additional housing stock is not simply absorbed into the non-resident, pied-a-terre market; and, 3) a sufficient number of units are available at prices that middle-class tenants can afford.

## Overcrowded Schools on the East Side

The New York City Department of Education (DOE) faces an overcrowding problem that is only worsening as it adds pre-k classes. In School District 2 alone (which encompasses Council District 4), 48 schools were at or above full capacity (or had 100 percent or higher target utilization of school space), according to the most recent DOE data available.<sup>1</sup> Add the 17 schools that were 95 to 99 percent utilized (organizations such as Class Size Matters and Families for Excellent Schools contend that utilization rates are actually higher than DOE figures), and you have a total of 36,227 students in overcrowded schools in School District 2. Yet the current Five-Year Capital Plan covers expansion for only five buildings in the school district, adding a total 3,150 seats.<sup>2</sup>

According to School Construction Authority President Lorraine Grillo, one of the problems is that the City won't begin the process of considering building a new school, which takes years, until there is a five percent increase in an existing school's population.<sup>3</sup> So if a school is currently operating at 110 percent capacity, the DOE won't even consider opening a possible new school until the existing one is operating above 115 percent. What's more, the City uses outdated data for its projections. In order to make predictions of where seats will be needed, the DOE looks at housing-permit and

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<sup>1</sup> New York City Department of Education. "2015-2016 The Enrollment, Capacity, and Utilization Report."

<sup>2</sup> NYC School Construction Authority. "FY 2015-2019 Proposed Five Year Capital Plan Amendment." 2015. "FY 2015-2019 Proposed Five Year Capital Plan Amendment"

<sup>3</sup>Zimmer, Amy, and Nikhita Venugopal. "Why New School Seats Aren't Keeping Pace With City's Housing Boom." *DNAinfo New York*. DNAinfo New York, 18 May 2016. Web. 15 Aug. 2017. <https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20160518/upper-east-side/why-new-school-seats-arent-keeping-pace-with-citys-housing-boom>

household-size information from the 2000 Census.<sup>4</sup> This data paints the picture of a completely different real estate landscape in Manhattan.

In order to begin to address overcrowding, the City must use more accurate and transparent enrollment projections by independent experts. Educational organizations across the country are already using predictive analytics—statistical techniques that include data mining, modeling, and artificial intelligence. These analytics, using City data on land use and real estate development, should be used to predict future school enrollment throughout the City.

At the end of 2016, the DOE put out a call to data scientists, offering a \$15,000 award for the data model that most accurately predicts student population changes in communities. As your City Council Member, I will advocate that this type of innovative modeling become standard practice and be a regular line item in the DOE’s budget, instead of a one-off addition. The cost of implementing this type of predictive analytics to plan for the future educational needs of our city will certainly be a smart investment.

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<sup>4</sup>NYC School Construction Authority. “Quarterly Status of Projects in Process.” 2017. Web.



## Vacant Storefronts

While the economy has begun to bounce back from the 2008 recession, the recovery effort is far from complete. Proof of this: the many empty storefronts still darkening the city. One of the hardest hit areas disproportionately experiencing this epidemic is the east side of Manhattan. A New York Times article from this past March noted that there are 37 vacant storefronts between 57<sup>th</sup> Street and 77<sup>th</sup> Street on Madison Avenue.<sup>5</sup> Senator Brad Hoylman's "Bleaker on Bleecker" study further found nearly 6 percent of storefronts on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue between 10<sup>th</sup> Street and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street are vacant.<sup>6</sup> These numbers are striking and antithetical to the basic economic principle that as the supply of vacant storefronts increases, the price of those units should decrease. The fact that this has not been the case represents a market failure and signals that there is a place for local government intervention to reverse this trend. Vacant stores are detrimental to the economy because they decrease both job availability and consumer spending. What's more, they suck the life out of the neighborhood. We must work to fix these issues to revitalize the local economy and make New York City the epicenter for small business commerce.

In order to begin to address this problem, it is important to understand the reasons underlying it. Many people like to point to the booming online retail market and overall decline in brick and mortar businesses. While this may explain a decrease in

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<sup>5</sup> "A Sign of the Times: More For-Rent Notices in Manhattan." The New York Times. 07 March 2017. Web. 04 Aug. 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/07/realestate/commercial/for-lease-vacant-storefronts-manhattan.html>.

<sup>6</sup> "IT'S BLEAKER ON BLEECKER STREET: NEW REPORT EXAMINES HIGH-RENT BLIGHT IN GREENWICH VILLAGE & CHELSEA." NY State Senate. 24 May 2017. Web. 04 Aug. 2017. <https://www.nysenate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/brad-hoylman/its-bleaker-bleecker-street-new-report-examines-high-rent>.

demand for storefront space, it does not explain why prices remain so high. Currently, the commercial real estate market rewards the patient landlord who can keep a space empty for up to two or three years holding out for a 10- to 20- year lease with an established national brand who can write off their Madison Avenue rent as a marketing cost for their other revenue-producing locations. Similarly, landlords with a large portfolio of properties worry that dropping prices will cause a ripple effect on the rest of their portfolio. There are a small number of tax breaks available when a commercial space is left vacant, so landlords can take a loss from the vacant property and shelter other income.

First and foremost, we need to ensure that there are no financial incentives to landlords who inflate their rents and keep their spaces vacant. While commercial real estate owners currently cannot deduct lost potential rental income from vacant properties (as is often falsely reported), they are able to currently receive deductions for depreciation of the property and operating expenses. Therefore, I will fight to remove any and all such tax breaks for landlords with persistent vacancies lasting over one year. An additional carrot to incentivize landlords to fill vacant spaces would be to explore possible tax deductions to those who take a risk on renting shorter-term leases to first-time small businesses and pop-up shops.

Second, I advocate for following in the footsteps of San Francisco, a similarly expensive city but one which boasts the lowest retail vacancy rates in the country, to implement two policies: the creation of Business Legacy Registry, which would track and maintain a public registry of small businesses that have been in New York City for

at least 30 years<sup>7</sup>, and the introduction of formula retail zoning restrictions to limit the number of chain stores lining our streets.<sup>8</sup>

Third, I agree with the numerous local elected officials and policy experts who advocate for the full elimination of the Commercial Rent Tax. The tax essentially subjects commercial tenants to double-taxation – a government levy on rent before the business has even made its first dollar. And because it only applies to tenants in buildings below 96<sup>th</sup> Street, this tax disproportionately puts businesses in District 4, and particularly small business, at a competitive disadvantage. In this case, New York State grants New York City its taxing authority, which means it can also eliminate that authority, and that will be an absolute priority when I am on the City Council.<sup>9</sup>

To prevent local mom and pops from becoming future vacant storefronts, I fully support the Small Business Jobs Survival Act (SBJSA), which proposes ending the rent gouging of small business owners by guaranteeing them access to 10-year leases with the right to renew—terms that large corporations often receive as a matter of course. The SBJSA further states that if a fair lease cannot be reached, third-party arbitration can determine a fair price and contract. These changes are all designed to revitalize the economy and encourage small business expansion in the city.

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<sup>7</sup> "Vote Yes on J - Preserve SF's Legacy Businesses." *Preserve Legacy Businesses in SF*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Aug. 2017. <http://legacybusinesssf.com/>

<sup>8</sup>ILSR Admin. "Formula Business Restriction - San Francisco, CA. *Institute for Local Self-Reliance*. Institute for Local Self-Reliance, 09 Dec. 2010. Web. 15 Aug 2017. <https://ilsr.org/rule/formula-business-restrictions/2321-2/>

<sup>9</sup> Holyman, Brad. "Bleaker on Bleecker A Snapshot of High-Rent Blight in Greenwich Village and Chelsea." New York State Senate, May 2017. Web. 15 Aug. 2017. [https://www.nysenate.gov/sites/default/files/press-release/attachment/bleaker\\_on\\_bleecker\\_0.pdf](https://www.nysenate.gov/sites/default/files/press-release/attachment/bleaker_on_bleecker_0.pdf)

## Impending L Train Shutdown

Five years after Superstorm Sandy hit New York, we are still recovering from the massive destruction left in its wake. In particular, the Canarsie Tunnel—which links Brooklyn and Manhattan under the East River with L Train service—suffered significant salt water damage and must undergo substantial repairs and upgrades to ensure long-term safety and reliability. The MTA and the City of New York have announced a plan to begin reconstruction in April 2019 and expect the project to last approximately 15 months. While these repairs to the Canarsie Tunnel are imperative, the L train shutdown between Bedford Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue stations poses a great challenge to the 400,000 New Yorkers who use the L train every day.<sup>10</sup> In addition to being a major artery for transporting people between Brooklyn and Manhattan, the L train is one of few Manhattan lines that travels crosstown, connecting uptown/downtown subway routes. The closure of the L line will undeniably cause major and far-reaching disruptions in travel.

Before the L train closure begins, the City must have a well-developed alternative transportation and commuting plan in place. First and foremost, any such plan must address how to move people along the 14<sup>th</sup> Street corridor in the absence of the L train. One proposed plan, the PeopleWay, advocates for the closure of 14<sup>th</sup> Street to passenger and commercial vehicle traffic and calls instead for designated lanes for bus, bicycle, and pedestrian use in order to transport people between the 4/5/6, N/Q/R, 1/2/3,

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<sup>10</sup> New York City MTA. "Fixing the L Line's Canarsie Tunnel." New York City MTA, 2017. Web. 15 Aug. 2017. [http://web.mta.info/sandy/pdf/Canarsie-6-08-17\\_website.pdf](http://web.mta.info/sandy/pdf/Canarsie-6-08-17_website.pdf)

F/M, and A/C/E lines at stops on 14<sup>th</sup> Street, as well as to destinations above ground.<sup>11</sup> I support the goal of this plan to reduce inefficient, single-passenger car traffic and replace it with more buses, bikes, and pedestrians, which will not only increase the number of people who can transit the area but will also promote the environmental and health benefits of walking and cycling. However, it is essential that any proposal that calls for a change in the current traffic use of 14<sup>th</sup> Street also address three key concerns of area business owners and residents, as well as New Yorkers who use 14<sup>th</sup> Street to transit through Manhattan. First, any plan must ensure that north-south avenue traffic continues to flow unimpeded so that these major traffic routes continue to connect upper and lower Manhattan. Second, proposals must adequately ensure that businesses along 14<sup>th</sup> Street will still be able to receive deliveries and engage in commercial transportation. Third, any plan must show that traffic diverted away from 14<sup>th</sup> Street will not turn the narrower, residential side streets into parking lots of noise and exhaust fumes.

The impending L line shutdown is a top issue for many New Yorkers and I plan on making the implementation of a sound alternative transportation plan one of my highest priorities when elected to office.

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<sup>11</sup>"14th Street PeopleWay: A New Way Across Manhattan." *Transportation Alternatives*. Transportation Alternatives, n.d. Web. 15 Aug. 2017. <https://www.transalt.org/getinvolved/neighborhood/manhattan/14th>

## Trump Tower Security Costs

Residents of New York City should not be held responsible for the massive expense of protecting the President and his family who choose to stay in his gilded residence at Trump Tower. While the security costs burden the entire city, not just District 4, I have found in my many conversations with community members that because Trump Tower is located in our district, it is top of mind for many District 4 residents.

Trump Tower was not designed—as the White House or Camp David were—to protect the President and First Family. As a result, the City spent about \$308,000 per day on security during the transition period following Trump’s election victory, and \$130,000 per day since his inauguration and until this summer, when the First Lady and their son moved to the White House.<sup>12</sup> These figures, submitted to Congress by NYPD Commissioner James O’ Neill, are clearly unfair to city taxpayers and should be repaid by the federal government.

In May, Congress passed legislation designating \$60 million in reimbursements for New York City, Palm Beach, and other locations where the President spends time and owns property.<sup>13</sup> This appropriation of funds is certainly a step in the right direction, but we must continue demanding reimbursement for NYPD’s services as long as President Trump is in office. Trump Tower and the ballooning costs of protecting his family are an important issue in Council District 4, and when elected as your City

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<sup>12</sup> O’Neill, James. New York City Police Department, 21 Feb. 2017. Web. 15 Aug. 2017. <http://www.politico.com/states/f/?id=0000015a-681d-dad1-a55f-ed7f90ea0001>

<sup>13</sup>Fandos, Nicholas. "Congress Allocates \$120 Million for Trump Family’s Security Costs." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 01 May 2017. Web. 15 Aug. 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/01/us/politics/secret-service-trump-protection.html>

Council Member, I will ensure that this financial burden rests with the federal government and not with local taxpayers.

## Unsafe Bike Lanes

Getting around New York City, home to one of the largest urban populations in the world, can often be difficult, which makes commuting by bike an increasingly popular solution that is good for both the planet and personal health. U.S. and European cities with higher rates of bicycling also have lower rates of vehicular crashes,<sup>14</sup> but we need to increase bike accessibility in a logical way for cyclists, drivers, and pedestrians and doesn't impede traffic or parking. 2016 saw a tragic 18 deaths from cycling accidents, which were all caused by accidents with motor vehicles.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, many District 4 pedestrians feel that the bicyclists are a threat to their safety. I've met dozens of constituents who have been hit or almost hit by speeding bicyclists ignoring traffic laws. Earlier this year, a 62-year old woman was critically injured after she was hit by a bicycle while walking around two parked cars on 14<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>16</sup> Less than two years ago, a mother in Central Park was killed by a bicyclist who hit her in a crosswalk.<sup>17</sup> Our goal is to ensure that vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians all safely share the street.

First, we must improve education for drivers and cyclists alike on how to safely share the streets. Many cyclists either do not know or choose to ignore traffic laws, leading to accidents and dangerous situations. The rights and responsibilities of

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<sup>14</sup>Welle, Ben, Qingnan Liu, Wei Li, Claudia Adriazola-Steil, Claudio Sarmiento, and Marta Obelheiro. Cities Safer by Design. Rep. Washington DC: World Resources Institute, 2015. Web. [https://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/CitiesSaferByDesign\\_final.pdf](https://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/CitiesSaferByDesign_final.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> New York City Department of Transportation. Bicycle Crash Data Report. 2016. Web. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/bicycle-crash-data-report-2016.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Gardiner, Aidan. "Woman Suffers Life-Threatening Injury as Bike Hits Her on 14th Street: NYPD." Dnainfo. 9 Mar. 2017. Web. <https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20170309/greenwich-village/cyclist-hits-pedestrian-critical-injury-nypd-14th-street>

<sup>17</sup> Golding, Bruce, Larry Celona, Erin Calabrese, and Kirstan Conley. "Woman Brain-dead after Getting Hit by Cyclist in Central Park." New York Post. 18 Sept. 2014. Web. <http://nypost.com/2014/09/18/cyclist-slams-into-pedestrian-in-central-park/>



bicyclists should be taught in NYC classrooms, very clearly printed on all Citibike docks and bicycles, part of driving safety in the DMV handbook, and emphasized on the DMV permit and road test. For cyclists, I want to launch education initiatives on safe riding practices such as wearing helmets and obeying traffic laws. At the same time, we need to hold bicyclists accountable to obeying traffic laws. NYPD Traffic Enforcement Agents must crack down on individuals who ride the wrong way down one-way streets, run red lights, or weave through cars to get around them faster.

Additionally, as the City continues to develop “protected” bike lanes, lanes designated for bikes that are separated from vehicular traffic by planters, curbs, parked cars or posts, it needs to also consider pedestrian safety and education. Although the addition of protected bike lanes across the City has resulted in 17 percent fewer crashes with injuries over three years,<sup>18</sup> many constituents are confused, overwhelmed, and frustrated by the additional lanes to watch while crossing.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, before the City begins work on new bike lanes, it should look to fill in the gaps that exist in current routes.<sup>20</sup> In District 4 alone, there are a number of places where the bike lanes end abruptly, confusing everyone on the road. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue has a number of gaps, including at the corner of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 48<sup>th</sup> Street. Routes running across Manhattan are notorious for ending abruptly or skipping back and forth on

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<sup>18</sup>*Protected Bicycle Lanes in NYC*. Rep. New York City Department of Transportation, 2014. Web. <http://www.streetsblog.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014-09-03-bicycle-path-data-analysis.pdf>

<sup>19</sup>*Protected Bicycle Lanes in NYC*. Rep. New York City Department of Transportation, 2014. Web. <http://www.streetsblog.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014-09-03-bicycle-path-data-analysis.pdf>

<sup>20</sup>Walker, Alissa. "It Will Take More than Bike Lanes to Make Biking Safe." *Curbed*. Vox Media, Inc., 16 Sept. 2016. Web. <https://www.curbed.com/2016/9/16/12944148/bike-lanes-streets-safety>

opposite sides of the street, such as on 51<sup>st</sup>, 49<sup>th</sup>, 44<sup>th</sup>, and 39<sup>th</sup> Streets.<sup>21</sup> Finally, bicyclists and pedestrians alike will rejoice when the East River greenway is finally completed.<sup>22</sup>

As your City Council Member, I will fight to continue New York's strong cycling tradition by making the city better for pedal-pushers and car drivers alike, while also improving pedestrian safety.

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<sup>21</sup> "Manhattan Bike Paths, Bike Lanes & Greenways." *NYC Bike Maps*. NYCBikeMaps.com, n.d. Web. <http://www.nycbikemaps.com/maps/manhattan-bike-map/>

<sup>22</sup>Michael, Bloomberg R. *Manhattan Waterfront Greenway Map*. Digital image. *The Official Website of the City of New York*. The City of New York, n.d. Web. [http://www.nyc.gov/html/edc/pdf/greenway\\_mapside.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/edc/pdf/greenway_mapside.pdf)

## Illegally-parked Tour Buses in Dag Hammarskjold Plaza

Located just north of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjold Plaza is a 1.5-acre municipal park occupying the entire south side of the block between 1st and 2nd Avenues on East 47th Street in Turtle Bay. It is a convenient meeting place for neighbors and students, as well as a popular destination for U.N. visitors. However, Friends of Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, a local community group, has reported seeing dozens of tour buses each day illegally parking and idling next to the plaza while passengers visit the U.N.

The presence of these buses poses a number of challenges for the community. 47<sup>th</sup> Street is a narrow, one-way street that is already congested with a taxi stand and Citibike docking station outside of the Trump World Tower building. When large buses turn off of 1st Avenue onto 47<sup>th</sup> Street, they cause a bottleneck which is only made worse when they park and block traffic. Additionally, idling buses pollute the air and are shown to cause significant respiratory and cardiovascular disease,<sup>23</sup> with the highest risk for children and seniors. These buses are also a source of unnecessary noise pollution in the community, which can cause negative physiological and psychological consequences and significantly reduce young students' vocabulary retention.<sup>24</sup> This is particularly concerning as there are three schools within one block of Dag Hammarskjold Plaza and the students often use the plaza for outside activities.

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<sup>23</sup>"Diesel Soot Health Impacts." *Clean Air Task Force*. N.p., 1 Jan. 1979. Web. [http://www.catf.us/methane/black\\_carbon/diesel/dieselhealth/](http://www.catf.us/methane/black_carbon/diesel/dieselhealth/)

<sup>24</sup>Khazan, Olga. "How Noise Pollution Impairs Learning." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, 21 July 2016. Web. <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2016/07/toddlers-and-noise/492164/>

When elected to the City Council, I will demand that the parking ban on 47<sup>th</sup> Street be enforced. Rather than skirting our local laws and polluting our public spaces with exhaust fumes and unnecessary noise, tour companies must use designated drop-off and parking locations. Cracking down on this problem will ensure children in nearby schools and neighbors in the community can once again use and enjoy the park safely.

## **Proposed Brookdale Sanitation Garage**

The New York City Department of Sanitation's plan to construct a garage to house over 150 sanitation trucks and street sweepers on the site of the Hunter-Bellevue School of Nursing (located on 1st Avenue, between 25th and 26th Streets) has understandably upset many District 4 residents. The Department of Sanitation has argued that without this new location, sanitation workers will continue to make inefficient trips across the city, causing increased wear and tear on the equipment.<sup>25</sup> Many community members, however, are dismayed by the lack of input the public has had in the planning process. They believe there are better solutions and more suitable initiatives that should be considered before undertaking the costly construction of a new garage.

One serious concern about the proposal for the garage is that it lacks a comprehensive plan for the whole block. This is particularly worrisome to Waterside Plaza residents who use 25th Street as a main pedestrian corridor from the pedestrian bridge over FDR Drive to buses and transportation on 1st Avenue. As currently planned, this block of 25<sup>th</sup> Street will be the back of the sanitation garage, perhaps a windowless brick wall along the sidewalk, which will make walking alone at night an unpleasant and potentially dangerous experience.

Additionally, if the plan for the garage moves forward, the proposal must include a plan to widen 26<sup>th</sup> Street in order to accommodate the influx of garbage trucks from the FDR drive, as well as traffic from Waterside Plaza's access road and the trucks from

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<sup>25</sup> Brookdale. New York City Economic Development Corporation, 12 Sept. 2016. Web. <https://www.nycedc.com/project/brookdale>

the adjacent firehouse. This would be the least-worst option, rather than having the trucks approach the garage from 1st Avenue, which would be a safety hazard for the families and children at the nearby schools and parks.

Finally, the current proposal states that trucks would be returning to the sanitation garage empty, except “in the case of an emergency.”<sup>26</sup> Sanitation emergencies should be defined to the fullest extent to ensure that an “emergency” is not interpreted as a traffic jam that will require sanitation employees to work overtime if they do not return immediately to the Brookdale Garage.

In light of these concerns, Manhattan Community Board 6 and consulting firm BFJ Planning have proposed either creating more green space or constructing a garage partially underground with the above-ground space dedicated to affordable housing, senior housing, or health-related projects.<sup>27</sup> Although both ideas are improvements on the department’s plan, the latter option satisfies both the need for space for sanitation equipment while responding to the needs and desires of the community. When I am elected to the City Council, I will advocate for comprehensive planning of this entire block, prioritizing community input and perspective.

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<sup>26</sup> Brookdale. New York City Economic Development Corporation, 12 Sept. 2016. Web. <https://www.nycedc.com/project/brookdale>

<sup>27</sup>Community Board 6 Land Use Committee. Brookdale Site. New York City Economic Development Corporation and, 4 Feb. 2015. Web. [https://www.nycedc.com/sites/default/files/filemanager/Projects/Brookdale/CB6\\_land\\_use\\_comm\\_PPT\\_presentation.pdf](https://www.nycedc.com/sites/default/files/filemanager/Projects/Brookdale/CB6_land_use_comm_PPT_presentation.pdf)

## **Incomplete East Side Coastal Resiliency Plan**

The East Side Coastal Resiliency Plan is a proposal to protect low-lying areas on the East Side of Manhattan along the East River from 25<sup>th</sup> Street to Montgomery Street. Hurricane Sandy brought massive flooding and property damage to this area, exposing the many flaws in the City's outdated flood protection system. While it is certainly in everyone's best interest for the City to fix crumbling flood prevention infrastructure, the project, as proposed, has community concerns that must be addressed.

One component of the proposal is the construction of a flood protection wall along the East River.<sup>28</sup> As currently planned, however, this wall would cut off one of only two access roads to Waterside Plaza. At best, the proposed wall along this access road would allow the passage of small passenger vehicles, but not larger emergency vehicles such as ambulances or fire trucks. Before any plans are put into effect, it is crucial that the City work at length with the residents of Waterside Plaza to determine how best to protect them from potential flooding while maintaining the same level of access to the community for both emergency and non-emergency vehicles.

Additionally, the community deserves to have a seat at the table as debate continues over which of the proposed protective mechanisms, including deployable walls, flood walls, and berms or levees, is best suited for this infrastructure project. When elected to the City Council, I will strongly advocate for increased East Side community member involvement in all aspects of the planning process and for funding from all levels of government - local, state, and federal.

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<sup>28</sup>Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency. *East Side Coastal Resiliency Project*. Web. <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/lmcr/index.page>

## Pedestrian Ramps in Disrepair

Damaged or otherwise unsafe pedestrian ramps or “curb cuts” are such a common complaint that Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer commissioned a study in 2014. It found that of 1,209 curb cuts surveyed, only 9.5 percent were accessible as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The rest were entirely missing ramps or were unsafe because they lacked warning bumps, were too steep or crumbling, or led directly into a pothole,<sup>29</sup> to name a few problems. The disrepair of these ramps affects people with disabilities, an estimated one in every nine New Yorkers,<sup>30</sup> as well as parents pushing strollers or anyone with a shopping cart or suitcase.

Despite the fact that the NYC Department of Transportation budgets \$60 million toward the installation and repair of new pedestrian ramps each year,<sup>31</sup> many ramps are still in disrepair for two reasons. First, the Division of Roadway Repair and Maintenance prioritizes repairs where pothole and street resurfacing are needed.<sup>32</sup> Generally, that has been in areas isolated from the pedestrian community, while pedestrian ramp upgrades are mainly needed near highly trafficked pedestrian and public transit hubs. Second, many private businesses are not regularly maintaining their curb cuts to ensure that they are still up to standard. The Department of Transportation is responsible for

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<sup>29</sup>"Manhattan Borough President, Gale Brewer." *Manhattan Borough President*. The Office of the Manhattan Borough President, 2017. Web. <http://manhattanbp.nyc.gov/html/policy/accessible-manhattan.shtml>

<sup>30</sup> De Blasio, Bill. *AccessibleNYC: An Annual Report on the State of People with Disabilities Living in New York City*. Rep. The City of New York, n.d. Web. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/mopd/downloads/pdf/accessiblenyc2017.pdf>

<sup>31</sup>"Pedestrian Ramps." *NYC DOT*. The City of New York, 2017. Web. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/pedestrians/pedramps.shtml>

<sup>32</sup>"Current and Projected Populations." *NYC*. The City of New York, 2016. Web. 16 Aug. 2017. <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/data-maps/nyc-population/current-future-populations.page>



regularly inspecting pedestrian ramps, but is not consistent about holding private businesses accountable when they are not compliant. As a result, many of the areas most in need of effective pedestrian ramps, including areas with senior centers, hospitals, and public social service buildings, have pedestrian ramps that are in substandard conditions.

One way to improve the situation is to pass a City Council bill currently sitting in committee that would increase property owners' responsibility for maintaining pedestrian curb ramps in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The bill, Introduction 840, would couple with section 7-210 of the New York City Administrative Code,<sup>33</sup> passed in 2003, which moved liability for sidewalk maintenance away from the City and onto the relevant property owner.<sup>34</sup> The Department of Transportation is responsible for installing and inspecting the curb ramps and the property owner must maintain them. If a property owner fails to comply, they are subject to fines and the City may hire a private contractor and bill the property owner. This legislation would allow the City to efficiently repair the pedestrian ramps, so that our sidewalks can be navigable by all residents, without the City having to bear the full cost of such repairs. It also incentivizes property owners to proactively take responsibility for the maintenance of their ramps and perform immediate repairs.

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<sup>33</sup> "New York City Administrative Code Sidewalk Rules." *NYC DOT*. The City of New York, 2017. Web. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/infrastructure/19-152.shtml>.

<sup>34</sup> "File #: Int 0840-2015." *The New York City Council*. N.p., 2015. Web. <http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=2364112&GUID=77FCCE84-5EB3-4A8A-B53B-5A28F855F293&Options=ID%7CText%7C&Search=>

## **Crumbling MTA Infrastructure and Inaccessibility**

Any subway user can attest to the continuing decline in the quality of transportation service in New York City. The New York City Comptroller's office recently found that when facing subway delays, which have increased 267 percent from just five years ago, 50 percent of riders have been forced to take a taxi or other for-hire vehicle to work, 42 percent have walked to work, 40 percent took the bus, 10 percent drove and six percent biked.<sup>35</sup>

The situation is even worse for people who require stair-free access to the subway. New York has the least accessible major subway system in the country. Nearly 30 years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, only 23 percent of the city's subway stations have elevators<sup>36</sup>—and more often than not, many are out of service, leaving even fewer stations accessible to those with mobility impairments.

While the Metropolitan Transit Authority recently embarked on a program to rehabilitate stations, adding stair-free access to currently inaccessible stations was not part of the plan. At the current pace of installing new elevators, New York City will not reach 100 percent accessibility until 2100. Meanwhile, both Chicago and Boston with similarly aging train<sup>37</sup> systems are on track to reach 100 percent accessibility in the next 20 years.<sup>38</sup> We cannot continue to ignore the more than 10 percent of the population

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<sup>35</sup> Gelinas, Nicole. The MTA's Escalating Cost Crisis: Issue Brief July 2017 Answers to Questions About the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Finances. Rep. Manhattan Institute, July 2017. Web. (p. 4) <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/sites/default/files/IB-NG-0717.pdf#page4>

<sup>36</sup> "Access Denied." Access Denied. Transit Center, 20 June 2017. Web. <http://transitcenter.org/publications/access-denied/>

<sup>37</sup> Chicago Transit Authority, Infrastructure Accessibility Task Force Report, Fall 2012, [http://www.transitchicago.com/riding\\_cta/accessibilitytf.aspx](http://www.transitchicago.com/riding_cta/accessibilitytf.aspx)

<sup>38</sup> Chicago Transit Authority, "All Stations Accessibility Program," <http://www.transitchicago.com/accessibility/asap.aspx>.

who have disabilities and the 13 percent who are older than 65 and might find the stairs prohibiting. There is currently a lack of strong leadership and policy when it comes to providing access to all New Yorkers.

As advocacy group Transit Center recommends, the MTA should pick up the pace and take a more adaptable approach to accessibility and build accessibility into the 2020-2024 capital program. If the MTA committed to adding 15 newly accessible stations a year, New York would be on track to reach 100 percent accessibility in 25 years. One easy step toward meeting this goal is prioritizing work at stations that already have elevators but still aren't completely accessible (e.g. by adding ramps at short staircases), such as at the 181st Street, 191st Street, 28th Street, and Clark Street stations.<sup>39</sup>

Second, the MTA should follow the lead of Boston and Chicago and create offices with authority and resources that serve as clearinghouses for accessibility initiatives and maintenance. This would allow accessibility to become a priority, with clear targets and standards. As the Transit Center says, "a centralized accessibility office is necessary to monitor elevator performance, negotiate vendor contracts, determine station priority for accessibility, and ensure capital improvements are implemented."<sup>40</sup> This office could also spearhead the overhaul of maintenance and management practices, which is crucial to keeping stations accessible, but also necessary to keep an aging system out of general crisis mode.

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<sup>39</sup> "Access Denied." Access Denied. Transit Center, 20 June 2017. Web. <http://transitcenter.org/publications/access-denied/>

<sup>40</sup> "Access Denied." Access Denied. Transit Center, 20 June 2017. Web. <http://transitcenter.org/publications/access-denied/>

Finally, the MTA should take advantage of long-term shutdowns of lines or stations to make more stations accessible. Last year, the governor announced that 30 stations would be closed for up to 12 months for revamping, yet the proposed New York City Transit Subway capital program for 2015-2019 includes ADA-compliant elevators for only 19 stations overall.<sup>41</sup> This is a huge missed opportunity to upgrade our transportation system to serve all New Yorkers.

As the Manhattan Institute has pointed out, the Governor and other policy makers have blamed a lack of funding for the current state of the MTA, despite the fact that the MTA is taking in a record amount of revenue that has more than kept pace with inflation and with the costs associated with ridership growth. In turn, City Council Members and the Mayor regularly blame the Governor and state-elected officials. Instead, we should show real leadership and hold the MTA accountable for the \$10.1 billion we provide as what Comptroller Scott Stringer has called an “invisible fare,” including \$612 million from the City budget.<sup>42</sup> In addition to holding regular oversight hearings to closely examine areas where the MTA has fallen short, the Mayor and City Council should demand that more funds in the MTA capital plan be put toward infrastructure maintenance and ADA compliance.

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<sup>41</sup>“8th Proposal of Governor Cuomo’s 2016 Agenda: Bring the MTA into the 21st Century to Dramatically Improve the Travel Experience for Millions of New Yorkers and Visitors.” NYC. N.p., 11 Jan. 2016. Web. <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/8th-proposal-governor-cuomo-s-2016-agenda-bring-mta-21st-century-dramatically-improve-travel>

<sup>42</sup>Scott, Stringer M. *The “Invisible Fare”: Revealing NYC’s Full Contribution to the MTA*. Rep. Office of the Comptroller, n.d. Web. [http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/MTA\\_Report\\_Invisible\\_Fare.pdf](http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/MTA_Report_Invisible_Fare.pdf)

## Homelessness

In recent years, New York's homeless population has soared to levels not seen since the Great Depression. According to the Coalition for the Homeless, there are 60,717 homeless people in New York City, one-third of whom are children (as of June 2017). In addition, the number of New Yorkers sleeping in shelters is a massive 75 percent greater than it was 10 years ago, before the 2008 recession began.<sup>43</sup>

Mayor de Blasio's recent plan to open an additional 90 shelters over the next five years will not keep pace with the demand as rates of homelessness continue to rise and will not provide New Yorkers experiencing homelessness the stability they need to find permanent housing.<sup>44</sup> A more comprehensive, long-term approach to finding permanent housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers is going to be necessary to stop this crisis in its tracks.

Housing First policy, a homeless assistance approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing without preconditions to people experiencing homelessness, has been found to be a cost-efficient and effective solution for reducing homelessness when implemented in Australia, Canada, Finland, France, and Japan.<sup>45</sup> Local advocacy organization Picture the Homeless has outlined a three-pronged plan, created in

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<sup>43</sup>"Basic Facts About Homelessness: New York City." *Coalition For The Homeless*. N.p., n.d. Web. <http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/basic-facts-about-homelessness-new-york-city/>

<sup>44</sup>Stewart, Nikita. "New York Adding Shelter Options for Homeless Victims of Domestic Abuse." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 14 June 2017. Web.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/14/nyregion/new-york-domestic-violence-homeless-shelters.html>

<sup>45</sup>Gulcur, Leyla, Ana Stefancic, Marybeth Shinn, Sam Tsemberis, and Sean N. Fischer. "Housing, Hospitalization, and Cost Outcomes for Homeless Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities Participating in Continuum of Care and Housing First Programmes." *Wiley Online Library*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 09 Apr. 2003. Web. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/casp.723/abstract>

collaboration with non-profit housing developers, that aligns with the characteristics of Housing First policies, called the Gaining Ground Pilot Program.

First, the Gaining Ground Pilot Program calls for the conversion of thousands of current cluster-site shelter units into rent-regulated housing, which would create over 3,000 new units of affordable housing. Second, the plan calls for the rehabilitation of thousands of units of City-owned vacant property and the development of City-owned vacant land into housing for homeless and extremely low-income populations. Finally, the Gaining Ground Pilot Program urges the City to re-evaluate its protocol around city-owned and partially vacant properties, particularly buildings in the NYC Housing Preservation and Development's Tenant Interim Lease and Affordable Neighborhood Cooperative programs, to preserve existing low-cost housing for tenants.<sup>46</sup>

While these proposals will likely be costly to the City in the short-term, Housing First policies implemented around the world, like the Gaining Ground Pilot Program, have been found to be cost efficient in the long-term. Providing access to housing generally results in cost savings for communities because housed people are less likely to use emergency services, including hospital and emergency shelters, or be put in jails, than those who are homeless. One study found an average cost savings on emergency services of \$31,545 per person housed in a Housing First program over the course of

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<sup>46</sup> *The Gaining Ground Pilot Project*. Rep. Picture The Homeless, n.d. Web. <http://picturethehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Gaining-Ground-Pilot-Project-Executive-Summary.pdf>

two years.<sup>47</sup> Another study showed that a Housing First program could cost up to \$23,000 less per consumer per year than a shelter program.<sup>48</sup>

With the rates of people experiencing homelessness in our city continuing to skyrocket, investing in data-driven, cost-effective, policies with long-term solutions, such as Housing First policies like the Gaining Ground Pilot Program, will be a priority for me in City Council.

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<sup>47</sup>Perlman, Jennifer, and John Parvensky. *Denver Housing First Collaborative Cost Benefit Analysis and Program Outcomes Report*. Rep. Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, 11 Dec. 2006. Web. [https://shnny.org/uploads/Supportive\\_Housing\\_in\\_Denver.pdf](https://shnny.org/uploads/Supportive_Housing_in_Denver.pdf)

<sup>48</sup>Stefancic, A., and S. Tsemberis. "Housing First for Long-term Shelter Dwellers with Psychiatric Disabilities in a Suburban County: A Four-year Study of Housing Access and Retention." *National Center for Biotechnology Information*. U.S. National Library of Medicine, July 2007. Web. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17592778>

## Shortage of Special Education Services

Nearly 20 percent of New York City public school students have Individualized Education Plans, or IEPs, which indicate that these students are entitled to special services in school, such as extended time on standardized tests or speech pathology services.<sup>49</sup> These students are entitled to these services by federal law, more specifically, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). However, a recent report by the NYC Department of Education (DOE) showed that as many as 40 percent of the students who should be receiving these services may not be getting them in New York City.<sup>50</sup>

This is not a new problem. The federal Department of Education has given NYC public schools one of its lowest ratings, “Needs Intervention,” in regards to the services provided to students with special needs.<sup>51</sup> In fact, over the past decade there have been a number of class action lawsuits against the NYC DOE for failing to provide services to students with special needs.<sup>52 53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Part B State Performance Plans (SPP) Letters and Annual Performance Report (APR) Letters. U.S. Department of Education, 28 June 2016. Web.

<https://www2.ed.gov/fund/data/report/idea/partbspap/allyears.html#ny>

<sup>50</sup> Local Law 27 Of 2015 Annual Report on Special Education. NYC Department of Education, 29 Feb. 2016. Web. <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/6035782C-F95D-4224-8372-F2B1F7E9A226/0/LocalLaw27of20152292016FINAL.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> Hung, Chienyi Cheri, Nirvi Shah, Christina Samuels, Rachael Delgado, and Ruth Lincoln. "State Ratings in Special Education." *Education Week*. Editorial Project in Education, 20 July 2015. Web.

[http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/infographics/36idea\\_map.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/infographics/36idea_map.html)

<sup>52</sup> Cheng, Pei-Sze. "Class Action Lawsuit Alleges City's Department of Education Fails Special Needs Students." *NBC New York*. NBCUniversal Media, LLC., 5 Nov. 2014. Web.

<http://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/New-York-City-Department-of-Education-Lawsuit-Students-With-Disabilities-281687471.html>

<sup>53</sup> Ohlandt, Kevin. "New York City Parents File Class Action Lawsuit Against NYC Department of Education." *Exceptional Delaware 2017*. N.p., 02 Oct. 2015. Web.

[https://exceptionaldelaware.wordpress.com/2014/11/06/new-york-city-parents-file-class-action-lawsuit-against-nyc-department-of-education-dedeptofed-destateboarded-kilroysdelaware-ed\\_in\\_de-apl\\_jax-netde-delaware-edchat-edude/](https://exceptionaldelaware.wordpress.com/2014/11/06/new-york-city-parents-file-class-action-lawsuit-against-nyc-department-of-education-dedeptofed-destateboarded-kilroysdelaware-ed_in_de-apl_jax-netde-delaware-edchat-edude/)



One reason for the deficit is the shortage of teachers in New York with a certification in Special Education. While there is a general shortage of teachers in New York City, there is a critical shortage of special-needs educators.<sup>54</sup> In fact, there's a shortage across the country. NPR recently reported that it's partly due to burnout: on top of meeting their students' needs, special ed teachers have to contend with long hours and endless paperwork.<sup>55</sup> This leads to high turnover, especially when there aren't enough special ed teachers to begin with.

In order to serve the growing population of students with special needs in New York, the DOE must embark on an aggressive campaign to recruit and retain teachers with Special Education certification. This should include subsidies or grants for the continued training and support of current teachers as well as for the expenses of certification. This prioritization should be reflected in a shift in the DOE's budgetary priorities. Currently, the DOE allocates only four percent of its budget to servicing students with special needs, which is incongruent with the percentage of the student population with IEPs.<sup>56</sup>

The bottom line: any teacher can tell you that special education training is not a waste of time or resources. When teachers are trained and supported, we are wisely investing in the future of our city.

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<sup>54</sup>Saunders, Sylvia. "Severe Teacher Shortage Looms for New York State." *NYSUT*. New York State United Teachers, 20 May 2017. Web. <https://www.nysut.org/news/nysut-united/issues/2017/june-2017/severe-teacher-shortage-looms-for-new-york-state>

<sup>55</sup>Hale, Lee. "Behind The Shortage Of Special Ed Teachers: Long Hours, Crushing Paperwork." *NPR*. NPR, 09 Nov. 2015. Web. <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/11/09/436588372/behind-the-shortage-of-special-ed-teachers-long-hours-crushing-paperwork>

<sup>56</sup>2016-2017 School Budgets & Fair Student Funding. NYC Department of Education, n.d. Web. [http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/d\\_chanc\\_oper/budget/dbor/DFPM\\_Home\\_Page/cec\\_fsf\\_deck.pdf](http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/d_chanc_oper/budget/dbor/DFPM_Home_Page/cec_fsf_deck.pdf)

## Low Rate of Residential Recycling and Composting

As a city, we are failing to effectively manage New York's residential trash. In particular, we are simply not recycling enough household materials. In 2014, the EPA estimated the national recycling average to be 34.6% of residential solid waste.<sup>57</sup> San Francisco manages to keep 80 percent of their household waste materials out of landfills,<sup>58</sup> while New York comes in at a dismal 17 percent.<sup>59</sup> This failure to keep more of our trash out of landfills is a detriment to the environment and our wallets. Trash in landfills creates environmental harmful methane gas and the City pays unnecessary transportation costs, \$315 million dollars in 2015,<sup>60</sup> for shipping solid waste to landfills that can be up to 600 miles away.

As a member of City Council, I will work to greatly expand the rate at which New Yorkers recycle at home. A first important step is to consolidate all of the recycling, reuse, and composting programs into one comprehensive city-wide program. Currently, there are two composting programs and not all sections of the City collect the same types of recyclable materials. It is no wonder that New York's recycling rate is so low when we use a confusing, incomplete, and irregular system. We can do better, and if we do, we will see economic benefits, in addition to protecting the environment.

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<sup>57</sup>"Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: Facts and Figures." *EPA*. Environmental Protection Agency, 10 Aug. 2017. Web. 16 Aug. 2017.

<sup>58</sup>"Zero Waste Case Study: San Francisco." *EPA*. Environmental Protection Agency, 12 June 2017. Web. 16 Aug. 2017.

<sup>59</sup>Fiscal Year 2017 Report New York City Municipal Refuse and Recycling Statistics. New York City Department of Sanitation, 02 July 2017. Web. [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/docs/about\\_dsny-collections-FYTD.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/docs/about_dsny-collections-FYTD.pdf)

<sup>60</sup>Calder, Rich. "It's Getting Expensive to Ship NYC's Garbage to Landfills." *New York Post*. NYP Holdings, Inc., 24 Mar. 2017. Web. <http://nypost.com/2017/03/24/its-getting-expensive-to-ship-nycs-garbage-to-landfills/>

## Anti-immigrant Federal Practices

According to a report released in May 2016, immigrants represent 37 percent of the city's population, 45 percent of the workforce and 49 percent of small business owners. An estimated 500,000 of these immigrants are undocumented.<sup>61</sup> While New Yorkers understand that immigrants are a vital part of our city, the first half of the year has proven the Trump administration to be hostile toward immigrants. NYC's status as a sanctuary city still stands, thanks to Mayor de Blasio and the City Council, but this status alone may not be enough to protect the rights of New Yorkers who are targeted by anti-immigrant practices of federal agencies.

Around the country, there have been numerous reports of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) sending plainclothes agents to local courts to apprehend litigants making court appearances.<sup>62</sup> By April of this year, ICE had issued to the New York Police Department more than twice as many detainer requests as they had in all of 2016.<sup>63</sup> In New York City, ICE has made arrests in courthouses in all five boroughs,<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>"A Budget For The City Of Immigrants." *Make The Road New York*. N.p., n.d. Web. <http://www.maketheroad.org/report.php?ID=4279>

<sup>62</sup>Semple, Kirk. "Advocates Seek to Make Courthouses Off Limits for Immigration Officials." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 26 May 2014. Web. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/27/nyregion/advocates-seek-to-make-courthouses-off-limits-for-immigration-officials.html>

<sup>63</sup>Robbins, Liz. "New York's City Council Seeks to Bolster 'Sanctuary City' Status." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 26 Apr. 2017. Web. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/26/nyregion/new-york-city-council-sanctuary-city-bills.html>

<sup>64</sup>Letter to Judge DiFiore and Judge Marks. 04 May 2017. *Immigrant Defense Project*. Immigrant Defense Project, 04 May 2017. Web. <https://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org/wp-content/uploads/Letter-to-Judges-DiFiore-and-Marks-05042017.pdf>

despite the fact that two city laws, Introductions 486-A and 487-A, were passed in 2014 prohibiting the presence of ICE at Rikers Island and all City facilities.<sup>65</sup>

As a result, many immigrant communities are currently living in fear and distrust. Many are avoiding local law enforcement because of rumors of ICE enforcement occurring after interaction with various government agencies, particularly the NYPD. As a result, immigrants are far less likely to trust law enforcement and to report crime or cooperate in the investigation of criminal activity. In particular, given the NYPD's history of surveillance of the Muslim community, which includes blanket suspicionless surveillance of entire mosques, there is particularly deep distrust of local law enforcement amongst Muslim New Yorkers.<sup>66</sup>

Now, more than ever, it is important that the public know what kinds of data the NYPD collects and disseminates, and with whom that information is shared. According to testimony by New York Immigration Coalition's Immigration Policy Manager, Munza Ansari, before the New York City Council Committee on Public Safety, "New Yorkers do not know if the NYPD shares information gathered through surveillance with ICE."<sup>67</sup> While federal agencies routinely disclose information about new surveillance

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<sup>65</sup>"Mayor Bill De Blasio Signs into Law Bills to Dramatically Reduce New York City's Cooperation with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Deportations." NYC. The City of New York, 14 Nov. 2014. <http://www.pr.com/press-release/592845>

<sup>66</sup>*Statement Of Albert Fox Cahn, Esq.* Rep. Council on American-Islamic Relations, 14 June 2017. Web. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57db6af7f7e0abec41695d80/t/596ccbaac534a563924501c0/1500302251083/2017-6-13\\_Post+Act+Testimony+v6+-+FINAL.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57db6af7f7e0abec41695d80/t/596ccbaac534a563924501c0/1500302251083/2017-6-13_Post+Act+Testimony+v6+-+FINAL.pdf)

<sup>67</sup>*Testimony Of The New York Immigration Coalition: Int. 1482.* Rep. New York Immigration Coalition, 14 June 2017. Web. <https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/New%20York%20Immigration%20Coalition%20Testimony%20Before%20NYC%20Council-%20June%2014%202017%20%283%29.pdf>

technologies, there is currently no requirement or incentive for the NYPD to disclose this information to local lawmakers who oversee our police forces.

I support the Public Oversight of Technology (POST) Act, which was introduced by Council Members Dan Garodnick and Vanessa L. Gibson and is currently laid over in committee. In short, the POST Act requires the NYPD to develop impact studies and use policies about its surveillance technology -- much like what's already done by the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security for tools like facial recognition software, drones, and stingrays,<sup>68</sup> (fake cell towers that collect sensitive location and communications data).

According to Council Member Dan Garodnick, the POST Act would provide New York City lawmakers with "a meaningful opportunity to understand and oversee decisions about the NYPD's acquisition and use of new surveillance technologies and provides an opportunity for public engagement."<sup>69</sup> The Brennan Center, a nonpartisan law and policy institute that seeks to improve our systems of democracy and justice, states that the POST act is "a thoughtful approach to balancing the need for democratic oversight and transparency with the NYPD's legitimate need for operational secrecy."<sup>70</sup>

In the face of anti-immigrant policies, undocumented New Yorkers' last line of defense is often an attorney. Only three percent of those who are detained and facing deportation receive favorable outcomes in their cases, but individuals who have a lawyer are six times more likely to prevail in a case, according a 2010 study conducted

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<sup>68</sup>Garodnick, Daniel R. "Surveillance." 21 June 2017. E-mail.

<sup>69</sup>Garodnick, Daniel R. "Surveillance." 16 August 2017. E-mail.

<sup>70</sup>"The Public Oversight of Surveillance Technology (POST) Act: A Resource Page." *The Public Oversight of Police Technology (POST) Act: A Resource Page | Brennan Center for Justice*. N.p., 14 July 2017. Web. <https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/public-oversight-police-technology-post-act-resource-page>

by the Study Group on Immigrant Representation convened by Judge Robert Katzmann of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.<sup>71</sup> New York has shown leadership in securing counsel with its Immigrant Family Unity Project, which provides lawyers to low-income people in immigration detention.<sup>72</sup> In its current iteration, the project is funded by the City, except in the defense of anyone convicted of the 170 crimes deemed serious or violent by city law, whose defense is funded by anonymous private donors.<sup>73</sup> As your City Council member, I will work to continue this program and ensure it is fully funded in the future so that no New Yorker facing deportation goes to immigration court without qualified representation.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *Accessing Justice II: Model for Providing Counsel to New York Immigrants in Removal Proceedings*. Rep. New York Immigrant Representation Study Steering Committee, n.d. Web. [http://www.cardozolawreview.com/content/denovo/NYIRS\\_ReportII.pdf](http://www.cardozolawreview.com/content/denovo/NYIRS_ReportII.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> *Accessing Justice: The Availability and Adequacy of Counsel in Immigration Proceedings*. Rep. New York Immigrant Representation Study Steering Committee, n.d. Web.

<sup>73</sup> Jorgensen, Jillian, and Erin Durkin. "De Blasio, City Council Reach Deal in Immigrant Legal Aid Limits." *NY Daily News*. NYDailyNews.com, 01 Aug. 2017. Web. <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/de-blasio-city-council-reach-deal-immigrant-legal-aid-limits-article-1.33732>

<sup>74</sup> Fertig, Beth. "When ICE Shows Up in Human Trafficking Court." *WNYC*. WNYC News, 22 June 2017. Web. <http://www.wnyc.org/story/when-ice-shows-court/>  
Meminger, Dean. "Advocates Call for Federal Immigration to Get Out of State Courthouses." *TWC News*. Charter Communications, 23 June 2017. Web. <http://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2017/06/22/immigration-advocates-push-back-against-ice-raids-after-queens-courthouse-incident.html>

## Big Money Controlling Politics

New York City may be ahead of other cities when it comes to good governance reform, but we still have a ways to go. First, the NYC Campaign Finance Board's Matching Funds Program – which incentivizes candidates to raise money from ordinary citizens, rather than relying on a few wealthy donors, and empowers grassroots candidates like myself to run – has been found to be transformative to the campaign fundraising process.<sup>75</sup> However, even when candidates raise enough in small donations to receive the full amount of matching funds available, there still exists a significant gap between the money in their coffers from the matching funds and small donations and the spending limit, which must be reached to be competitive. I support Introduction 1130, which proposes increasing the cap on public funding available to campaigns so that it aligns in a full match with the expenditure limit. The bill, which is currently laid over in committee, would encourage candidates to continue seeking small donations, instead of relying on large donors who will “max out” their contribution at \$2,750 or \$4,950, depending on the office sought.<sup>76</sup> This would better ensure that elected officials are listening to all constituents voices equally, not just those with fat wallets.

By the same token, the increasing influence of lobbyists, particularly on behalf of business and real estate interests, on city government is continuing to increase each year. Lobbyists in New York City have raked in record earnings in the past decade and

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<sup>75</sup>Migally, Angela, Susan M. Liss, and Frederick A.O. Schwarz, Jr. "Small Donor Matching Funds: The NYC Election Experience." *Brennan Center for Justice*. N.p., 17 Sept. 2010. Web. <https://www.brennancenter.org/publication/small-donor-matching-funds-nyc-election-experience>

<sup>76</sup>"File #: Int 1130-2016." *The New York City Council*. N.p., 22 Mar. 2016. Web. <http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=2637108&GUID=11C13B83-99DB-4671-AA99-CF5B5827BBF4>

the number of hours per week City officials spend meeting with lobbyists also keeps rising.<sup>77</sup> A number of steps can be taken to bring more transparency to the lobbying process and decrease the influence of big money in government. First, the City Council should disclose lobbying meetings, just as they disclose monetary contributions, so that the public can judge what influence lobbyists have on the actions of the Council. Second, lobbyists should be required to disclose not only their client list, but also the elected officials with whom, as well as the legislation about which, they are meeting. Finally, in New York City, former elected officials are currently prohibited from any lobbying of their branch of government for one year after leaving government, with many good governance advocates pushing to increase the moratorium to two years. What is not restricted, however, is current lobbyists seeking elected positions in government. That means that individuals currently accepting money to influence policy on behalf of special interests can soon thereafter be at the helm of government themselves. This type of trajectory needs to be taken seriously and monitored closely by government watchdog organizations and constituents alike.

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<sup>77</sup>Durkin, Erin. "Lobbying Blitz: Businesses Spent a Record \$62 Million to Influence New York City Government Last Year." *NY Daily News*. NYDailyNews.com, 06 Mar. 2013. Web. <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/record-62-million-spent-lobbying-nyc-government-article-1.1280918>



## **Lack of Planning for an Aging Population**

New York City's senior population is growing. By 2020, Manhattan alone is projected to become home to more than 250,000 senior citizens.<sup>78</sup> This is an increase of almost 15 percent from 2010.<sup>79</sup> As our senior population increases, we must make sure that older New Yorkers remain active, healthy, and housed in the communities where they live.

First and foremost it is vital that we involve older adults in the policy planning process, as no one knows better the challenges seniors face. In addition, older adults have extensive professional and personal experience to draw upon for crafting solutions. We must also invest in job training, technology training, and job placement for seniors through age smart employment practices to value and retain older workers. We must also promote programs that allow older New Yorkers to age in place. As your City Council Member I will actively support social programs and technology investments that allow seniors to remain in the homes that connect them to family, friends, and their communities. Specifically, I will work to increase access to mental health services for isolated seniors through tele-health video-counseling, as well as the City's parks and recreation resources. Finally, as discussed in the transportation section of this policy memo, I will work to make the subway system more accessible to older New Yorkers.

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<sup>78</sup> *Civitas-Zoning for Quality and Affordability: Recommendations for Manhattan Community District 8 and 11*. Rep. BFJ Planning, 11 Sept. 2015. Web. (p.5) <http://civitasnyc.org/live/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CIVITAS-ZQA-RECOMMENDATIONS.pdf>

<sup>79</sup> *Profile Of Older New Yorkers*. Rep. NYC Department of Aging, n.d. 14 Nov. 2013. Web. (p.47) [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/downloads/pdf/demographic/profile\\_olderNYRS\\_0911\\_newsummaries\\_update.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/downloads/pdf/demographic/profile_olderNYRS_0911_newsummaries_update.pdf)

## **Inequitable Access to Reproductive Health Care**

Women's rights are human rights, and women's access to reproductive health care should be the rule, not the exception. In New York City, however, access to reproductive health care is currently not equitable, while at the federal level, we are faced with a Republican threat to funding for reproductive health care providers. A recent report by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene showed that women of color are 12 times more likely to die in childbirth than white women in New York City and for every woman who dies in childbirth in New York City, 100 face life-threatening childbirth complications.<sup>80</sup> Nationally, the rate of these complications increased from 74 to 163 per 10,000 deliveries between 1998 and 2011.<sup>81</sup> In New York City, the numbers are much worse. A recent Maternal Morbidity study by the New York City Health Department found the life-threatening complication rate climbing from 197 to 253 per 10,000 births between 2008 and 2012.<sup>82</sup>

The City must ensure that all women—regardless of income, age, race, immigration status, or marital status—have access to the family planning and reproductive health care services they need. Reproductive health care cannot be

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<sup>80</sup>Jensen, Rita Henley. "NYC Reports Black Moms' Risks 12 Times Above Whites." *Women's ENews*. Women's ENews, 23 Feb. 2016. Web. <http://womensenews.org/2015/09/nyc-reports-black-moms-risks-12-times-above-whites/>

<sup>81</sup>Creanga, Andreea A., Cynthia J. Berg, Jean Y. Ko, Sherry L. Farr, Van T. Tong, F. Carol Bruce, and William M. Callaghan. "Maternal Mortality and Morbidity in the United States: Where Are We Now?" *Journal of Women's Health*. Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., 01 Jan. 2014. Web. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3880915/>

<sup>82</sup>*Severe Maternal Morbidity in New York City, 2008–2012*. Rep. New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2016. Web. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/maternal-morbidity-report-08-12.pdf>

separated from the overall health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. Affordable and accessible family planning services are essential to women's health, wellbeing and economic stability. According to the Guttmacher Institute, more than six in 10 women obtaining care at a publicly funded center providing contraceptive services consider the center to be their primary source of health care. For four in 10 women, that center may be their only source of health care.<sup>83</sup> I support an investment in family planning, which will provide vital healthcare services to New York City families.

Additionally, as a New York City public middle school teacher, I witnessed firsthand the importance of sexual health education. Currently there is no consistent, comprehensive nor mandatory sex education curriculum in NYC public schools. At a time when rates of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) have dramatically increased, and two-thirds of all infections occur among adolescents,<sup>84</sup> I support the creation of a comprehensive, age-appropriate reproductive health and sexuality education program to start in kindergarten and progress through the 12th grade.

In 2016 New York City Council unanimously passed a set of bills providing free menstrual hygiene products to public schools, prisons, and shelters, making New York

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<sup>83</sup>"Publicly Funded Family Planning Services in the United States." *Guttmacher Institute*. Guttmacher Institute, 10 Oct. 2016. Web. <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/publicly-funded-family-planning-services-united-states>

<sup>84</sup>Walcott, Dennis M., and Kathleen Grimm. *HIV/AIDS Curriculum: A Supplement to a Comprehensive Health Curriculum*. Rep. Board of Education of the City of New York, 2012. Web. <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/F90600AF-4A31-44D9-8AAE-1416681CC6CD/0/HIVAIDSEntireBook2012.pdf>

the first city in the nation to pass “menstrual equity” legislation.<sup>85</sup> The City now budgets for tampons and sanitary pads just like it does for toilet paper and hand soap.<sup>86</sup> This is a huge step in the right direction for the women of New York City, however, a gap still exists for girls in middle and elementary school. When elected to the City Council, I will advocate for expanding this program into our middle and elementary schools, so that it can serve all girls, and in particular those for whom menstruation at an early age might be particularly sensitive issue.

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<sup>85</sup>Rinkunas, Susan. "We're One Step Closer to Free Tampons and Pads in NYC Public Schools, Prisons, and Shelters." *The Cut*. New York Media, LLC., 22 Mar. 201. Web. <https://www.thecut.com/2016/03/new-york-city-bill-free-tampons-pads-in-public-schools-shelters-prisons.html>

<sup>86</sup>Rinkunas, Susan. "We're One Step Closer to Free Tampons and Pads in NYC Public Schools, Prisons, and Shelters." *The Cut*. New York Media, LLC., 22 Mar. 201. Web. <https://www.thecut.com/2016/03/new-york-city-bill-free-tampons-pads-in-public-schools-shelters-prisons.html>

## **Conclusion**

These 18 points are only a beginning to the critical work that we, as New Yorkers, know we must do to build a better future for ourselves and generations to come. Some of these ideas are first steps to solving deep-rooted problems that will require long-term change, and others are broader visions of what urban living can be like as we approach the third decade of the 21st century. Looking beyond political ideologies and boilerplate slogans, I feel that we, as New Yorkers, have an opportunity right now to come together again; to continue building a city that is more than the sum of its parts. I want to be your champion in that process.