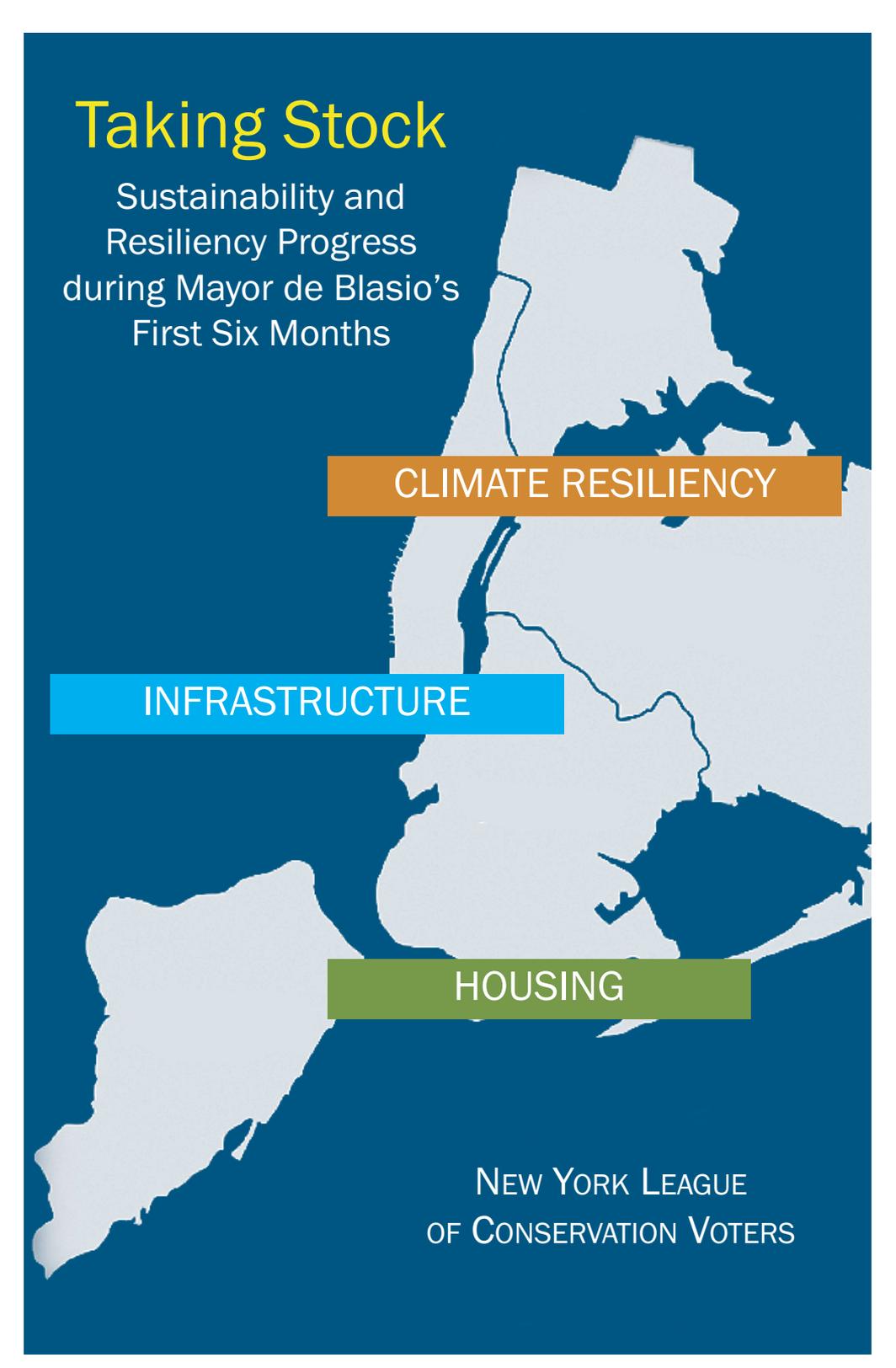


Taking Stock



Sustainability and
Resiliency Progress
during Mayor de Blasio's
First Six Months

CLIMATE RESILIENCY

INFRASTRUCTURE

HOUSING

NEW YORK LEAGUE
OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

Executive Summary

On April 10, 2014, a broad coalition of City Council members, business leaders and advocates from transportation, environmental and health organizations joined the New York League of Conservation Voters to call on Mayor Bill de Blasio to make sustainability and climate resiliency high priorities for his administration.

The coalition announced an Action Plan with three clear milestones to help address some of New York City's most pressing environmental and resiliency challenges.

This document examines the mayor's actions on these milestones and in related policy areas.



Milestone #1:

On May 5th, Mayor de Blasio announced a plan, called *Housing New York*, to add and preserve 200,000 affordable housing units over the next 10 years.

Our goal: Incorporate climate resiliency and sustainability into the mayor's plan. Every effort should be made to make that housing environmentally sustainable and climate resilient. Beyond simply building green through materials and energy-efficiency measures, this new plan must think comprehensively by prioritizing transit-oriented development, integrating parks and more.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ✓ *Housing New York* embraces a holistic vision for affordable housing that extends from water and energy conservation, to comprehensive neighborhood and resiliency planning.
- ✓ The plan focuses on retrofitting existing housing for energy and water savings.
- ✓ *Housing New York* also ensures that the city's affordable housing plan will coordinate planning and public investments with the city's ongoing recovery and resiliency initiatives. Housing recovery and capital investments in coastal protections and other infrastructure will be coordinated together with neighborhood planning efforts.
- ✓ The plan takes a comprehensive approach that will create new housing near transit hubs and encourage infrastructure upgrades and new parks, alleviating many hidden environmental costs that burden low-income New Yorkers.

WHAT'S MISSING

- X The plan is short on details regarding the rollout process and neighborhood-to-neighborhood implementation timeline. Since the release of *Housing New York*, City Planning Commission Chair Carl Weisbrod announced that the city will target 15 communities for new building, beginning with Brooklyn neighborhoods.

- X *Housing New York* can benefit from some more explicit requirements and criteria for affordable housing and sustainability. Enterprise Community Partners, one of the country's leading experts in financing affordable housing, has a "Green Communities" certification that outlines specific criteria for development projects that can deliver significant health, economic, and environmental benefits to low-income families. It provides a clear, cost-effective framework for all affordable housing development types, including new construction and rehabilitation in multi-family as well as single-family buildings. The mayor's affordable housing plan can be strengthened with these requirements that would make New York City a leader in not just building and preserving affordable housing, but green affordable housing for all.

Milestone #2:

June 1st marked the beginning of the 2014 Atlantic hurricane season.

Our goal: A comprehensive and concrete plan from the de Blasio administration that will make sure New York is prepared for the next big storm and a changing climate.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ✓ Mayor de Blasio created a new Office of Recovery and Resiliency (ORR) to reform and expedite the rebuilding process and to implement and expand the comprehensive climate resiliency plan, *A Stronger, More Resilient New York*. In April 2014, Mayor de Blasio released *One City: Rebuilding Together*, which details Sandy recovery efforts to date and Build It Back Program reforms.
- ✓ According to the 2014 PlaNYC Sustainability & Resiliency Progress Report, of the 257 initiatives outlined in the resiliency plan, 29 have been completed and 202 are in progress. ORR is expanding staff capacity to strengthen the city's ability to deliver on these initiatives.
- ✓ The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) launched a "Know Your Zone" public awareness and education campaign to improve preparedness for future flooding events and help New Yorkers understand their risk level for floods. On June 27, 2014, Mayor de Blasio appointed a new OEM Commissioner.
- ✓ New York City debuted the nation's first urban post-disaster housing prototype, testing a new paradigm for temporary housing that provides more suitable living spaces for New Yorkers displaced by disasters.

WHAT'S MISSING

- X While Mayor de Blasio has made a commitment to the expansion and implementation of *A Stronger, More Resilient New York*, he has yet to articulate his vision for how exactly he will expand and build on the plan created by the Bloomberg administration. At the time of the plan's release in June 2013, the city identified a \$4.5 billion funding gap that, if left unmet, would put a number of the critical projects and initiatives on hold. We encourage the administration to provide a full accounting of the current funding status as well as the strategies to fill these gaps. Given the urgency of this issue, we strongly encourage Mayor de Blasio to elevate climate resiliency to the level of his other signature issues.

- X While we were pleased to see “community preparedness” included in the 2014 PlaNYC Sustainability and Resiliency progress report, it is the least specific in details on actions, initiatives or programs the city will undertake to develop local community capacity and improve emergency planning at the local level. San Francisco, for example, has a Disaster Council run by its Office of Emergency Management that is chaired by the mayor and composed of key department heads and city officials, representatives of private organizations appointed by the mayor to share information and ensure full participation by member agencies in the emergency planning activities of the city.

- X While there has been a commitment from Mayor de Blasio to prioritize recovery and resiliency by creating a new office dedicated to implementing strategies and initiatives that strengthen the coastline, upgrade buildings, protect infrastructure and more, New York must adapt to the full spectrum of future challenges by climate change — including reducing our city's carbon footprint and making sure the city remains a model of sustainability. The ongoing lack of a director for the Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability (OLTPS) raises questions about the administration's focus on this unit's important work. Local Law 17 of 2008 requires that PlaNYC2030 be updated every four years. The next quadrennial update is due April 22, 2015. Updating the city's comprehensive sustainability and resiliency plan is no small feat and is staff and resource intensive which makes appointing a director to OLTPS to work with ORR even more urgent.

Milestone #3:

New York City's budget offers an opportunity to invest in the future by ensuring infrastructure investments.

Our goal: New York City should integrate sustainability and resiliency planning into its \$75 billion budget, and to maintain capital investments to ensure that roads, bridges, schools, parks and environmental facilities are in a good state of repair.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ✓ The final adopted budget provides a robust capital program, with total commitments of \$12.8 billion for FY15, of which \$9.9 billion will be city-funded.
- ✓ The budget will extend the city's Clean Heat Program, a \$1.35 million program to improve air quality.

WHAT'S MISSING

- X While the final FY15 budget does include a \$16.3 million increase to the Parks Department budget to address maintenance inequities at neighborhood parks, that sum is half of the commitment sought by City Council Parks Committee Chair Mark Levine and parks advocacy groups.
- X With the exception of a targeted capital infusion to extend the #7 line to support the redevelopment of the Far West Side, the city has not adjusted its capital contribution to keep pace with inflation and, more importantly, the needs the transit system that is so critical to its economy. The city's five-year capital contribution provides for core system maintenance and upgrades, such as stations, signals and structures – all of which are being underinvested in due to insufficient resources.
- X There is no funding for a retrofit technical assistance program for building owners. Building off the success of the NYC Clean Heat program, the city should invest in a similar program to help building owners drive the completion of energy-efficiency projects recommended through Local Law 87 benchmarking compliance process. The \$1.5 million program would go a long way to help building owners take on retrofit projects based on the recommendations they receive from energy audits. The city is currently applying for a state grant to fund this program.



*The New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV)
is the only statewide environmental organization
in New York that fights for clean water, clean air,
renewable energy and open space through political action.*

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