

## **Case Study: Sustainability Planning in New York City**

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July 2013, Updated June 2015

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### **Introduction**

Under former Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, New York City adopted one of the most aggressive sustainability policies in U.S. government. Responding to the needs of future New Yorkers, the city analyzed its anticipated growth, the growth rate of services required to meet the needs of a growing population, and the impact of that population on aging infrastructure, and developed a sustainability roadmap that has served as a model for cities around the world.

In particular, climate change presents a number of challenges to the “future New York”. As a city with over 500 miles of coastline, New York City is vulnerable to flooding. Heat in New York City, particularly in Manhattan, is at times hotter than its surrounding area, due to a phenomenon called the “Urban Heat Island Effect,” leading not only to health risks to its inhabitants, but also to increased demand on the electricity grid. Heavy storms in urban environments pose risks to the wastewater system, sometimes resulting in overflows of sewage treatment plants. These issues, and others, are only exacerbated by climate change.

In October 2012, New Yorkers witnessed first-hand these risks in a very tangible way - Hurricane or Superstorm Sandy hit the city hard and demonstrated the potential impact of storms made more severe by global warming. However, the process for preparing New York to be more resilient to these risks and to minimize its carbon footprint began long before Hurricane Sandy. This planning and policy development was a major focus of the Mayor’s Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability (OLTPS), a special initiative of former Mayor Bloomberg. This office, through the landmark sustainability plan, “PlaNYC 2030: A Greener, Greater New York” (PlaNYC), served as a model for urban sustainability planning and fostered international cooperation on the local level, bypassing international treaties for tangible, measurable and aggressive local action promoting urban sustainability. However, after three mayoral terms with Bloomberg ending in 2013, and new Mayor Bill de Blasio taking office in 2014, the nature of sustainability planning has changed in New York City.

At the start of de Blasio’s term, it was unclear what kind of approach he would take with sustainability. De Blasio did have a history of supporting sustainability initiatives. As a city council member, he supported and sponsored legislation that encouraged green building standards, discouraged idling vehicles and trucks, created better emissions standards, and encouraged better waste management and recycling, among other initiatives (New Yorkers for Bill De Blasio, 2014). Although Mayor de Blasio stated early on that he would continue many of the city’s efforts under PlaNYC, and has continued to release progress reports as mandated in city law, de Blasio’s campaign platform was focused on creating a more equitable New York City, and decreasing the growing gap

between the rich and the poor. Then in April 2015, Mayor de Blasio released an update to PlaNYC in the form of '*One New York: The Plan for a Strong and Just City*,' (OneNYC) a plan that incorporates issues of social and economic equity with environmental and sustainability challenges. This case study illustrates the nature of sustainability planning in New York City, depicting the planning process from the beginning with Bloomberg and PlaNYC, to its current status under Mayor de Blasio and the initial reaction to the release of OneNYC.

## **The Need for Urban Sustainability**

By 2030, over sixty percent of the world's population will reside in cities (World Health Organization, 2013). Adopting sustainability practices is central to urban vitality and to making cities desirable places both for businesses and residents. Increasing consumption and car ownership has resulted in urban sprawl and the flight of the middle class to high-carbon living and working environments (Institute for Transportation & Development Policy, 2010). Cities must now turn to sustainable solutions that will attract residents, stimulate economic growth, and encourage more sustainable lifestyles.

As the provider of many important local services and operator of facilities, cities have a unique ability to take specific measurable action to reduce the use of fossil fuels and develop a more ecologically oriented waste management system. Cities have direct control over critical systems like water and wastewater, waste and recycling, building and zoning codes, among others. Many times, these initiatives also have health benefits for the community, economic benefits, and improve quality of life. For example, planning residential and mixed-use buildings around public transport, bike networks, and pedestrian facilities can reduce sprawl and carbon dependency (Institute for Transportation & Development Policy, 2010). Cities have the opportunity to redevelop existing areas through repurposing of vacant lots and urban infill - actions that return value to previously underutilized areas. Additionally, redeveloping brownfields (abandoned, contaminated industrial or commercial property) has proven to reduce crime, increase surrounding property values, create jobs, and encourage private investment (Zborel, 2011). Investment in green space and urban forestry can likewise have positive impacts not only on the environment, but also on local economies and property values. Green space reduces the urban heat island effect, reduces heating and cooling needs and costs, increases air and water quality, and provides a safe, welcoming environment for residents and visitors to enjoy (Zborel, 2011). A sustainable city is both livable and productive, and initiatives like these can result in both. City governments have been among the first to recognize that environmental quality and economic development go hand-in-hand.

## **Sustainability in New York City Under PlaNYC**

During his tenure as mayor, Michael Bloomberg assumed a central role in the development of global urban sustainability policy by advocating action at the local level. Bloomberg made sustainability and climate adaptation key priorities of his administration. The PlaNYC agenda and actions taken by the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability set an example for other cities to follow.

In 2005, the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group was created by former Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, and forged a partnership in 2006 with President Clinton's Climate Initiative. The organization has since expanded to include 75 cities across six continents. Mayor Bloomberg was the Chair of C40 from 2010 to 2013. His international engagement on climate change did not begin there, however. In 2007, Mayor Bloomberg addressed the UNFCCC in Bali, Indonesia, criticizing the lack of action at the federal level in the U.S., and the failure of the U.S. government to develop a comprehensive energy policy (Fuller, 2007). Bloomberg acknowledged the potential cities had already been unlocking in the move toward sustainable actions and policies:

"It is the cities, not just in the United States but around the world, that are making the changes," he said in Bali. "America doesn't seem to want to have the national government manage its streets and traffic flow. It's going to be up to the mayors to find a way to do that with less pollution and less strangulation on the economy. The public doesn't seem to want the national government to dictate what kind of heating unit you use or how you can get rid of your sewerage." (Fuller, 2007)

An outspoken proponent of climate action at the local level, Bloomberg led the C40 to adopt its current emphasis on accountability through outcome-driven performance metrics. Mayor Bloomberg's close relationship to businesses and private sector actors combined with his ability to tap into federal policy circles was an important factor in his ability to direct climate and sustainability actions.

### *The Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability*

From 2006 until 2013 when Bloomberg left office,, the Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability led an effort to define sustainability for New York City, putting that vision into a plan, and implementing the steps outlined in the plan. According to the Sustainability Office's mission statement:

The Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability, City of New York, was created in June 2006 and was charged with developing and implementing PlaNYC, the City's long-term sustainability plan. The Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability is responsible for developing and coordinating the implementation of policies, programs and actions to meet the long-term needs of the city, with respect to its infrastructure, environment and overall sustainability citywide. The Office is also charged with developing measurable sustainability indicators to assess the city's progress in achieving sustainability citywide and is responsible for taking actions to increase public awareness and education regarding sustainability and sustainable practices (ICLEI, 2010, pp. 2).

The Sustainability Office was part of the Mayor's Office and became formally recognized under local law in 2006. Its main purpose was to advance PlaNYC, the sustainability plan unveiled by Mayor Michael Bloomberg in 2007, and to ensure its

continued implementation.

*PlaNYC 2030: A Greener, Greater New York*

PlaNYC 2030 brought together over 25 agencies across the city to incorporate sustainability and develop a “greener, greater city”. It targeted each sector through specific initiatives and milestones that measured progress and success. Bloomberg consistently demonstrated his affinity for data-driven policy and analytics to drive measurable results, known for the Peter Drucker axiom, “if you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.” It was with this spirit that PlaNYC was developed. However, the initial plan was created by the Mayor’s office team and did not publicly consult constituents and community groups. Some of these groups were offended and some neighborhoods, like the South Bronx, felt they were not properly represented. Additionally, all initiatives that required upgrades and investments met opposition as they were expected to make investments during the height of the recession.

The plan (updated in 2011 and more recently in 2015 as OneNYC) detailed 132 initiatives and more than 400 milestones. The plan included initiatives in: housing and neighborhoods, parks and public spaces, brownfields, waterways, water supply, transportation, energy, air quality, solid waste, and climate change. One of its primary goals was to reduce the city’s greenhouse gas emissions 30% by 2030 – an ambitious goal for a city that was already considered one of the U.S.’s most carbon-efficient, primarily due to its high density and extensive use of mass transit. The central achievement of PlaNYC was its success in integrating environmental protection and quality of life initiatives into an overall effort to promote urban economic development. At its heart, the plan was not designed to protect the environment, but to make the city better able to attract and retain economic growth. The plan maintained that a clean environment makes the city a more attractive place to live in and invest in.

Over 97% of the original 127 initiatives proposed in 2007 were launched within one year, and according to the City close to two-thirds of the initial 2009 milestones were achieved or mostly achieved (City of New York h, 2013). Progress to date includes the development or preservation of 64,000 housing units, the building of new neighborhoods that have access to transit, a greater array of transportation options for New York residents, laws requiring more efficient buildings, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions 19% below the levels in 2005 (City of New York c, 2014). PlaNYC generated direct greenhouse gas reduction results.

During Bloomberg’s term in office NYC was able to point to a number of measureable sustainability results. Some of PlaNYC’s successful milestones include planting over 830,000 trees, improving air quality, and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 19% (City of New York, 2014b). The following examples of initiatives depict the depth and breadth of the plan.

The *MillionTreesNYC* program aimed to plant one million trees in the five boroughs over the next ten years, increasing the “urban forest” by 20%. The main goal of this

initiative was to cool the city and reduce storm water runoff (City of New York f, 2013). 70% of trees would be planted in parks and public spaces, while 30% would be from private organizations, homeowners, and community organizations. 220,000 of the trees would be street trees, 530,000 would be in parks (reforestation and landscape), and the last 250,000 would be with private partners. The lead sponsors of this initiative are Toyota and TD Bank (MillionTrees NYC, 2015). Though 20,000 trees were uprooted during Hurricane Sandy, causing setbacks, over 830,000 trees have been planted as of the 2014 PlaNYC Progress Report, which was 27% ahead of schedule (City of New York j, 2014).<sup>1</sup>

The *Select Bus System* is a transit initiative that has provided buses to areas underserved by the subway system. The Municipal Transit Authority (a state-run organization) has partnered with the city on this and improved reliability and convenience for several routes. Traffic Signal Priority systems are used to reduce bus idling time by giving buses green lights along heavily traveled routes. Now, commuters in boroughs outside Manhattan have reduced both their commute times and their walking times to the nearest subway station (City of New York i, 2013). This solution is a low-cost alternative to the capital-intensive extension of subways and is an adaptable solution. The City has also taken steps to prepare the transportation system to be able to quickly restore service after an interruption. The Department of Transportation and Office of Emergency Management have developed an emergency playbook, which holds multiple strategies for temporary transit services (City of New York j, 2014).

*The Mayor's Carbon Challenge* was established to help the city to meet its carbon reduction goal by engaging with the private and nonprofit sectors. Because building stock is a large source of carbon emissions out of the direct control of the city, the plan employs this voluntary approach, incentivized through promoting cost-reduction and competition. "In 2007, the City launched the Mayor's Carbon Challenge, inviting 17 local universities to match City government's GHG reduction target of 30% over ten years, and in 2009 the 11 largest hospital systems, composed of more than 50 individual hospitals, joined the Challenge. Together, these participants occupy 120 million square feet and account for 3.5% of the city's emissions. The university and hospital participants have achieved impressive results: five Challenge participants already reached their target—reducing annual citywide emissions by more than 86,000 metric tons and saving roughly \$20 million in annual energy costs. In April 2013, ten global corporations joined the Challenge, representing 20 million square feet of space and employing 70,000 people" (City of New York f, 2013). The corporations include AIG, BlackRock, Bloomberg L.P Credit Suisse, Deutsche Bank, Goldman Sachs, Google, JetBlue, JP Morgan Chase, and PVH as of April 2013 (City of New York g, 2013). To lead by example, Mayor Bloomberg set an even higher standard for the city's own portfolio of buildings in the 30x17 plan, which aimed to cut GHG emissions from municipal sources 30% below the fiscal year 2006 levels by 2017.<sup>2</sup> Also under this initiative, the city started the Broadway Green Alliance as a way to encourage Broadway theaters to decrease emissions and educate the audiences. The most recent expansion of the program has started to include multi-family buildings, and 14 property

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<sup>1</sup> As of May 27, 2015, 970,022 trees have been planted (MillionTrees NYC, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Mayor de Blasio has since committed to more stringent reductions – 80% below 2005 levels by 2050.

management firms have joined the challenge, pledging to reduce GHG emissions by 30% over the next 10 years, for a select 200 to 500 buildings that they manage (City of New York j, 2014). While this effort is constructive, measureable, and actionable, it requires both voluntary participation and constant assistance and support to a variety of entities. The Mayor's Sustainability Office coordinates the effort by keeping track of progress, but the effort and success is largely left to the individual participants.

*The Greener, Greater Buildings* plan was an internationally recognized initiative that started in 2009 with the goal of increasing energy efficiency in large buildings in New York City. There were four parts of the plan: benchmarking, energy code updates, conducting energy audits, and sub-meter provisions (City of New York d, 2013). Local Law 84 requires large building owners to annually measure their energy consumption through benchmarking as a means of comparing their usage to buildings that are similar. Local Law 85 requires that buildings meet the most current energy code for any renovation or alteration project. Local Law 87 requires buildings that are 50,000 gross square feet or greater to undergo periodic energy audit and retro-commissioning measures. The City collected Local Law 87 energy efficiency reports for the first time at the end of 2013 (City of New York j, 2014). The goal of this mandate was to lead cost and energy savings for buildings, and the detailed information from these reports would provide insight into which properties stand to benefit from financial and technical assistance. Local Law 88 requires non-residential buildings to upgrade lighting to meet NYC Energy Conservation Code standards. Electrical sub-meters must be installed in large non-residential tenant space with monthly energy statements. This law brings together requirements for lighting updates and sub-metering that will help buildings achieve large energy savings (City of New York d, 2013). If implemented, this plan should, in ten years, reduce greenhouse gases by 5%, result in \$7 billion in savings, and create 17,800 construction related jobs (City of New York d, 2013).

*NYC Clean Heat* is a program that helps building owners meet new regulations that entered into effect in July 2012, that aim to reduce air pollution from heating fuel. Through a phase-out approach, the regulations aim to reduce fine particulate matter emissions by 50% by eliminating the heaviest, dirtiest types of fuel oil (City of New York a, 2013). The NYC Clean Heat provides help for buildings in understanding conversion options, coordinating with utilities, and assembling financing (City of New York a, 2013). In a period of a few years, the Clean Heat program upgraded over 3,000 buildings and cut sulfur dioxide pollution by 69%, while improving building efficiency (City of New York c, 2014). NYC now has the cleanest air quality in over 50 years, and is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> cleanest air nationally, up from 7<sup>th</sup>. A September 2013 air quality report showed that both sulfur dioxide concentrations and levels of nickel in fine particulate matter have fallen, and that neighborhoods with the greatest reductions in emissions from boiler conversions and fuel sulfur restrictions saw the greatest improvement in air quality (City of New York j, 2014).

Not all PlaNYC initiatives were implemented with ease. Some programs, like congestion pricing, met political opposition and were not implemented. Another contentious project was a proposed waste-to-energy plant. On March 6, 2012, Mayor Bloomberg made a request for a proposal for a waste-to-energy plant as part of PlaNYC,

which was due June 5, 2012. The proposal “asks private sector firms to submit plans for a pilot facility using reliable, cost-effective, sustainable and environmentally sound waste to clean energy technology, which will help the City meet its goal of doubling the amount of waste diverted from landfills” (City of New York e, 2012). Overall, the goal of the proposal was to seek the cleanest energy options, eliminating any “mass burn” proposals. While environmentally conscious, a waste-to-energy plant may incite “Not In My Backyard” reactions from constituents, as well as equity issues depending on the location and populations affected. However in August 2013, Covanta, the largest owner and operator of Energy-from-Waste facilities in North America, announced a 20-year agreement with the New York City Department of Sanitation to turn 800,000 tons of municipal solid waste a year into electricity. The contract is scheduled to take effect in mid-2015, and garbage will be transported from a marine transfer station in Queens, with service from a Manhattan marine transfer station to follow in 2016 (Goossens, 2013).<sup>3</sup>

Some sustainability projects require people to change their behavior. Composting and recycling are examples of a solution to a problem – waste that could be diverted from landfills – but requires both infrastructural capacity and behavioral shifts. The city opened a new Materials Recovery Facility, and expanded the curbside recycling program to include all rigid plastics—the first expansion of the program in more than 20 years. In 2013 the Department of Sanitation also launched a voluntary residential organics recycling program in parts of Staten Island, Brooklyn and the Bronx, and aimed to serve 100,000 households by June 2014 (City of New York j, 2014). The school food waste composting pilot was also expanded to 400 schools in all five boroughs. It will take a cultural change in New York to encourage and eventually require food sorting, however, institutionalization is an important part of long-lasting achievements in the face of changing priorities and administrations. These composting initiatives were made possible through Local Law 77 of 2013, which amends the NYC Recycling Law and requires the Sanitation Department to pilot a composting initiative between October 2013 and July 2015, at select schools, residences and institutions (NYC Department of Sanitation, 2013). In addition, the City Council enacted a law in December 2013 requiring large-scale commercial generators of organic waste to have a separate collection of organic streams beginning in 2015 (City of New York j, 2014).<sup>4</sup>

In December 2012, following Hurricane Sandy, the Office introduced the *NYC Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency* to focus on rebuilding and improve climate resilience. The program sets out to improve infrastructure and resiliency in the medium and long term, as well as local rebuilding and resilience in communities that were hardest-hit by the storm. The initiative released a new report, “A Stronger, More Resilient New York,” which addresses how we rebuild New York City to be more resilient, not only in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, but also with a long-term focus on improving citywide

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<sup>3</sup> The Department of Sanitation has not commented on how this contract is impacted by the city’s recent plans to send zero waste to landfills by 2030. Waste-to-energy facilities typically reduce waste by 75% (Rosengren, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> In July 2015, the City will determine which types of large food service establishments will be required to recycle their food waste under this law.

infrastructure and building resilience. In developing the report, the SIRR team investigated three key questions: 1) What happened during and after Sandy and why? 2) What is the likely risk to NYC as the climate changes and the threat of future storms and severe weather increases? 3) How do we rebuild post-Sandy and prepare for a future with climate change? (City of New York b, 2013). Under the PlaNYC umbrella, “A Stronger, More Resilient New York” describes projected climate risks for the city from heat waves and cold weather events, intense precipitation and droughts, and coastal floods and storms. The plan outlines \$20 billion of recommended projects and policies, across 250 recommendations.

### **PlaNYC to OneNYC – Sustainability in a Post-Bloomberg NYC**

What has begun to happen to the initiatives under PlaNYC without the drive, money, and power of Mayor Bloomberg himself? Forbes listed Bloomberg in 2013 as the world’s thirteenth richest person, with a net worth of \$27 billion. Given his wealth, he was a mayor that wasn’t beholden to donors or interest groups and did not need to spend time fundraising. It is difficult to imagine that Mayor de Blasio will have the same level of political independence. Considering de Blasio’s focus on equity and a more vibrant middle class, it is also difficult to imagine him prioritizing the same big-ticket sustainability items as Bloomberg. For instance, the Climate Adaptation Plan Bloomberg released in early 2013 has a price tag of \$20 billion with detailed plans to create floodwalls and levees, institute new building codes to build buildings higher and more resilient, and provide incentives for moving existing electrical equipment farther from the ground (The Economist, 2013). Another initiative out of PlaNYC was the revitalization of public spaces such as the Governor’s Island, the Chelsea High Line, and Brooklyn Bridge Park projects. A former parks commissioner commented that the aforementioned projects were so expensive and capital intensive that they could be financed only by the mayor’s office (Foderaro, 2013). While the mayor’s office did not finance the projects, the idea that Bloomberg could mobilize support through his network of wealthy individuals and corporate connections was singular to someone of Bloomberg’s status. Additionally, he was willing to publicly defend these issues and demonstrate their importance.

Environmental issues never topped de Blasio’s talking points during his campaign for mayor or during his first year in office. He talked mostly about the decline of the middle class, and cited priorities such as reforming stop and frisk, fighting inequality, and taxing wealthy New Yorkers to fund pre-K and after-school programs (Dionne Jr, 2014). He criticized Bloomberg for his hands-off approach as the gap between the rich and poor grew. In addition, out of the 19 topics listed in his “issues” section on his campaign website, resiliency came in last (Foster, 2014). However, it is clear that de Blasio recognizes the connection between addressing inequality and addressing the environmental and climate change issues that will disproportionately impact the city’s poorest people.

In March 2014, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the new Office of Recovery and Resiliency to carry out the city’s climate resiliency efforts in areas such as coastal protection and building upgrades. In April 2014, the administration released a report showing the progress thus far, which includes: major progress on the city’s first



comprehensive coastal protection plan for the 520 miles of coastline; securing reforms to the national flood insurance program to keep insurance available and affordable; upgrading city building code and operations to protect buildings in the floodplain against floods, wind, and prolonged power outages; and expanding efforts to ensure that post-Sandy rebuilding and hazard mitigation efforts lead to economic opportunities for all New Yorkers (City of New York c, 2014).

De Blasio has shown that he recognizes that resiliency to climate events is a large part of sustainability:

“A more sustainable, more resilient New York is a stronger and safer New York... from the cleanest New York City air in 50 years and a real reduction in greenhouse gases, to major progress on coastal protection, building code upgrades, and other key resiliency measures, we are setting a global example for an urban future. That’s why we continue this critical work to ensure a city that is equitable, sustainable and resilient for all” (City of New York c, 2014).

De Blasio announced over \$300 million in federal funding for post-Sandy resiliency efforts, and the adoption of a Hazard Mitigation Plan. Since taking office, he has also announced a food resiliency study, a southern Manhattan coastal protection study, flood risk campaign, and Coney Island flood protection study (Foster, 2014). He has pushed a ‘Build it Back Program,’ which reallocated \$100 million to assist residents in building homes that were destroyed during Sandy, and has engaged communities in the rebuilding process (Turkewitz, 2014). Mayor de Blasio plans to use the rebuilding and recovery process to expand economic opportunity and create job pathways for more New Yorkers, and improve coordination within the city and across levels of government (Goldstein et al., 2014). He also plans to update New York City’s infrastructure to rebuild a stronger, more resilient New York to protect against future extreme weather and climate change. Since he has taken office, the Housing Recovery Office has made several improvements to serve New Yorkers more effectively (Goldstein et al., 2014).

In September 2014, Mayor de Blasio announced a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent over 2005 levels by 2050, starting with a sweeping Green Buildings Plan to reduce emissions from buildings (see Figure 1). Most of the city’s greenhouse gas emissions can be traced to the energy needed to power electrical, heating and cooling systems in buildings. De Blasio revealed ‘*One City, Built to last: Transforming New York City’s Buildings for a Low-Carbon Future*,’ an effort to retrofit the City’s private and public buildings, by making direct investments to increase the efficiency of public buildings, and spurring private building owners to invest in efficiency upgrades. This makes New York the largest city to commit to the 80 percent reduction by 2050, and charts a long-term path for investment in renewable sources of energy and a total transition from fossil fuels. Then in December 2014, Mayor de Blasio appointed Nilda Mesa as the Director of the Office of Sustainability, a new office merging the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability with the Office of Environmental Coordination.

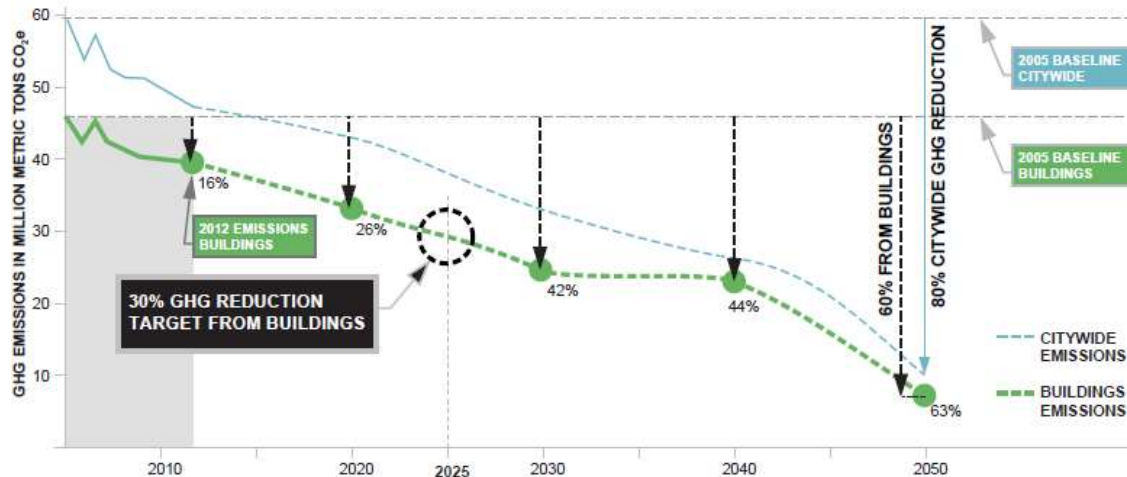


Figure 1. GHG Reduction Target from Buildings. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/builttolast/pages/strategies/strategies.shtml>

### *One New York: The Plan for a Strong and Just City*

On Earth Day, April 22, 2015, Mayor De Blasio released his update of PlaNYC with a new name: *‘One New York: The Plan for a Strong and Just City,’* a plan that expands on prior sustainability plans to address the social, economic and environmental challenges the City is expected to face. OneNYC, as the plan is called, establishes goals and targets for a strong, sustainable, resilient and equitable city. It rebrands the city’s eight-year-old sustainability agenda PlaNYC, with a new emphasis on economic justice. According to de Blasio:

“Environmental and economic sustainability must go hand in hand – and OneNYC is the blueprint to ensure they do. Today, we are laying out specific goals to make sure that as we build a stronger, more sustainable, and more resilient city, we are also creating a more equitable one. From our unprecedented goal of lifting 800,000 New Yorkers out of poverty, to sweeping environmental initiatives such as Zero Waste, the cleanest air of any large city, and a dramatic reduction in emissions, this is a bold and ambitious plan – and New York City requires nothing less. OneNYC builds on the strong foundation created by the Bloomberg administration, and ensures that our city can meet the challenges we face today and in the future, while inspiring others around the world to do the same” (City of New York k, 2015).

The plan is divided into four visions for a stronger, more equitable, more sustainable and more resilient New York City. Some notable goals and targets include:

- Making New York City home to 4.9 million jobs by 2040.
- Creating 240,000 new housing units by 2025, and an additional 250,000 to 300,000 by 2040.
- Enabling the average New Yorker to reach 25% more jobs – or 1.8 million jobs – within 45 minutes by public transit.
- Lifting 800,000 New Yorkers out of poverty or near-poverty by 2025.

- Cutting premature mortality by 25 percent by 2040, while reducing racial/ethnic disparities.
- Reducing the city's greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050, over 2005 levels.
- Sending zero waste to landfills and reducing waste disposal by 90 percent relative to 2005 levels, by 2030.
- Ensuring New York City has the best air quality among all large U.S. cities by 2030.
- Reducing risks of flooding in most affected communities.
- Eliminating long-term displacement from homes and jobs after future shock events by 2050.
- Reducing the city's Social Vulnerability Index for neighborhoods across the City;
- Reducing annual economic losses from climate-related events.
- Continued investment as part of an over-\$20 billion program that includes a range of physical, social, and economic resiliency measures.

Many environmental groups applauded the Mayor for laying out a vision of a city that combines environmental progress with social equity, as there is a strong correlation between better economic conditions and better environmental conditions. However, the initial reaction of many of those groups was to reiterate the need for a clear roadmap that allows progress to be measured. OneNYC is heavy with goals, but light on the specifics of how those goals will be met. For example, Mayor de Blasio wants to consider building a subway line down Utica Avenue in Brooklyn, but does not have a plan for how such a project would be funded (Barkan, 2015). The New York League of Conservation Voters suggested that the de Blasio administration quickly follow up OneNYC with an implementation plan that includes funding sources, a timetable, baseline indicators to track progress, and an agency responsible for implementation (New York Environment Report, 2015).

The Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability has helped New York City reach its environmental and economic goals, and reduce emissions. The strength of the Office can be attributed to the fact that former Mayor Bloomberg was not content with existing rules and regulations and decided to take a step forward- an initiative not seen in many other cities (Kellermann, 2013). His leadership was critical to the success of PlaNYC. Its progress can also be attributed to the fact that the plan sets sustainability indicators and requires regular updates to account for the changing needs of the city and the continual need for improvements (FindLaw, 2013). The institutionalization of many of the initiatives, and of the plan itself, will likely prove important for the continuity of the program going forward. Although de Blasio has succeeded in showing support for a sustainable city, in releasing a sustainability plan that incorporates issues of equity, and has a record of supporting many environmental initiatives, "the extent to which the various concepts in the framework will be adopted no doubt depends on the time, the priorities, and the resources available for a sustainability program, and the effort that the mayor and his team will devote to it... many eyes, and pocketbooks, await the new mayor's decisions" (Biblow, 2014).

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