

RIGHT TO THE CITY

— NEW YORK CITY —

POLICY PLATFORM

2009



RIGHT TO THE CITY-NYC POLICY DEMANDS

The Right to Federal Stimulus Funds

The federal government has responded to the recent economic crisis, in part, by passing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). RTTC-NYC's policy recommendations will ensure that low-income communities of color play a central role in determining the allocation and monitoring of these funds, and have priority access to jobs created as a result of ARRA funding.

Community Decision-Making

- » Establish a City Stimulus Board with substantial representation of low-income, youth, immigrant, and homeless people. The Board will oversee the allocation, implementation, and monitoring of Federal Stimulus funds and other federal money allocated in New York City.

Shovel Ready Construction Projects and Hiring

- » The Mayor must ensure that a minimum of 30% of all new hires for each stimulus-funded construction project are low-income prior to their hire. Additionally, at least 30% of the people hired through these construction projects must be local residents. The mayor must also provide all people hired as a result of this requirement with adequate job training.
- » The Mayor must ensure that a minimum of 30% of the workforce in public housing construction projects are residents of public housing;
- » The Mayor must create a technical assistance unit to support community-union partnerships that connect low-income people with union apprenticeship programs and provide education and career ladder training for jobs created through the stimulus funds.

Community Development Block Grant

- » The Mayor must ensure that funds allocated through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) are allocated to projects and programs that have the greatest impact in communities with the highest levels of poverty. The mayor must establish a committee composed of representatives of CDBG-eligible communities to determine allocation and to monitor spending of CDBG funds.

Monitoring, Evaluation Environmental Impact

- » NYC must fund ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Federal Stimulus projects to track the overall impact of stimulus funded projects and programs on low-income communities. This must include numbers, types, and wages/benefits of jobs created, units of affordable housing built or maintained, and environmental impact.

The Right to Community Decision-Making Power

In New York City, most of the policy decisions that affect the lives of low-income people of color are made behind closed doors among the City's political and business elite. The RTTC-NYC alliance identified the following policy recommendations as ways to meaningfully expand community decision-making power.

Enfranchisement

- » Expand voting rights for all local elections to all NYC residents age 16 and over, regardless of immigration status.
- » Lift all felony restrictions on voting to allow prisoners, convicted felons, and parolees to vote in local elections; this is currently provided for probationers at the state level.

Community Boards

- » The Mayor and the City Council must amend the City Charter to create elections for Community Board Members. The City Charter must be further amended to make all Community Board decisions binding.

STIMULUS MONEY

HOW MUCH IS THERE AND WHO CONTROLS IT?

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will total \$787 billion and will involve allocations to all 50 states.



New York State will get \$25 billion. Some of this funding is set by federal rules, but some is flexible and will be allocated by the Governor and State agencies.



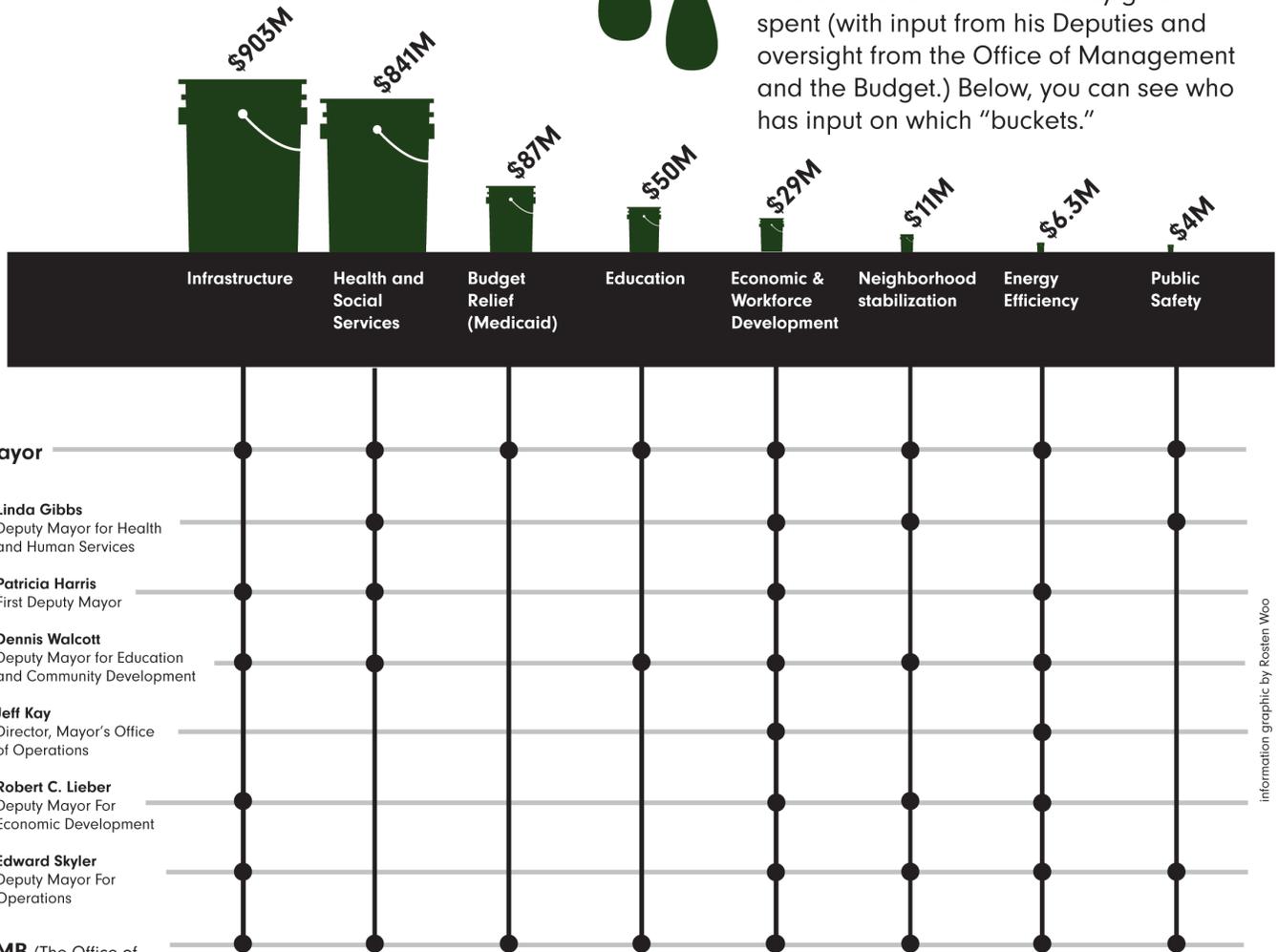
Over the next two years, New York City expects to receive more than 5 billion in stimulus funds (much of it through the State).



SO FAR, THE MAYORS OFFICE HAS INDICATED THAT THE MONEY WILL BE ALLOCATED INTO THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:



The Mayor has almost complete discretion over how this money gets spent (with input from his Deputies and oversight from the Office of Management and the Budget.) Below, you can see who has input on which "buckets."



* These buckets don't represent all the stimulus money in NYC.

- » The City Council must provide stipends for Community Board members to facilitate low-income participation.
- » New York State must establish a community structure to govern public education in New York City.

Participatory Budgeting

- » The New York City Housing Authority's Board must set aside 10% of NYCHA's budget to be allocated through a participatory budgeting process that involves public housing residents.
- » City Council members must set aside their discretionary funds (member items) for a participatory budgeting process for their City Council District.

The Right to Quality, Low-Income Housing

In New York City, the current housing crisis has disproportionately displaced and affected low-income people of color, both homeowners and renters. RTTC-NYC believes public officials must respond to the growing demand for low-income housing in New York City by carrying out the following policy recommendations.

- » The City must purchase vacant luxury condominiums and properties that are in or at risk of foreclosure and must develop these properties into affordable housing.
- » Mayor Bloomberg and the City Council must pass the Housing, Not Warehousing legislation to create a citywide census of vacant properties and fine landlords for warehousing their property.
- » Mayor Bloomberg and the City Council must fully fund the City built NYCHA developments, and NYCHA must fill all vacancies immediately. The City must stop payment by the Authority to the New York City Police Department and Sanitation Department.
- » Mayor Bloomberg and the City Council must halt foreclosures and evictions on homes financed through subprime loans.
- » The New York State Assembly and Senate must pass the Good Cause Eviction Bill and Clean Hands Bill to prevent the evicting of tenants without good reason.
- » Housing Court judges must address repair issues raised in non-payment cases, and all cases involving repairs must be monitored until conditions have been corrected.

The Right to Environmental Justice & Public Health

Low-income communities are affected by a multitude of public health concerns due to environmental racism. RTTC-NYC developed the following recommendations to ensure that any green economic plan that is developed accounts for the inequitable distribution of pollution and associated health concerns facing low-income communities.

- » The New York City Council and Mayor must prohibit the building of toxic facilities in low-income people of color communities, which are already overburdened by hazardous waste and polluting industries. A formal standard must be adopted to prevent the over-concentration of hazardous waste and polluting industries in low-income areas and ensure possibility of placement in under-concentrated areas.
- » The New York City Council and Mayor must offer grants to help small grocers stock and maintain affordable fresh fruits and vegetables, along with low-fat milk and real fruit juices. This should be coupled with policies that ensure healthy school lunches and improve student nutrition through initiatives such as the farm-to-school program.



- » The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, along with the City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, must make community gardens permanent to ensure low-income communities access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables.
- » New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) must invest in energy efficient, green, and affordable housing for low and moderate income residents and families.
- » The City Council must ensure that new fast-food restaurants may not be built within a tenth of a mile of schools.

The Right to Jobs & Workforce

The recent collapse of the economy and rising unemployment rates has made it nearly impossible for low-income people of color to work, live in and enjoy New York City. In rebuilding the economy, the City must enact the following policy recommendations to ensure efforts at job creation are meeting the needs of all New Yorkers.

- » Governor David Paterson and the incoming Commissioner of the New York State Department of Labor must index the maximum weekly insurance benefits that an unemployed worker can receive to the cost of living.
- » Mayor Bloomberg and the City Council should institute local hire and living wage requirements for any developer receiving public subsidies. Further, they should establish a wage and benefit floor that ensures an adequate standard of living for their employees.
- » Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Robert Doar of the Human Resources Administration must end the unpaid Work Experience Program and outlaw unpaid work. The paid transitional jobs program should replace all WEP activities.
- » Governor Paterson and Commissioner David Hansel of the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance must index welfare grants to cost of living to ensure that those who cannot work are able to maintain an adequate standard of living.
- » Undocumented workers should receive education and services that help them to enforce their legal right to minimum wage, prevailing wage, overtime, and workers' compensation.

The Right to Public Space

Low-income people of color with strong roots in New York City neighborhoods have increasingly been displaced from the public spaces in their communities. RTTC-NYC developed the following policy recommendations to ensure all New Yorkers have a right to enjoy public space in New York City.

- » The New York City Council should ensure that all private entities and public/private partnerships that manage and develop public space in the City be accountable under the law to the public in their management of these spaces.
- » The New York City Council should make Quality of Life Citations non-arrestable, non-summonsable, and punishable by a fine of no more than \$50.
- » Certain behavior should not be punishable through quality of life citations, and these behaviors should be removed from the penal code.
- » New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg should end NYPD "vertical sweeps" in public housing





www.righttothecity.org

Right to the City (RTTC) is a national alliance of base-building, community organizations from eight cities across the country as well as researchers, academics, lawyers, and other allies. The alliance formed in January 2007 to build a united response to gentrification and drastic changes imposed on our cities. We stand together under the notion of a Right to the City for all. We offer a vision for a City that meets the needs of working class people. We connect our fights against gentrification and displacement to other local and international struggles for human rights, land, and democracy. We are coming together under a common framework to increase the strength of our community organizations and to grow our collective power. Our goal is to build a national urban movement for housing, education, health, racial justice, and democracy.

Right to the City NYC is a local chapter of Right to the City national alliance. We came together in the summer of 2006 under the name of NYC Anti-Gentrification Network (NYCAGN) and formally became a part of the RTTC alliance in September 2007.

RTTC-NYC Member groups include:

- CAAAV/Chinatown Tenants Union
- Community Voices Heard (CVH)
- Fabulous Independent Educated Radicals for Community Empowerment (FIERCE)
- Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE)
- Mothers on the Move (MOM)
- Picture the Homeless (PTH)
- Make the Road New York
- New York City AIDS Housing Network (NYCAHN)/VOCAL Users Union
- Center for Immigrant Families
- Fifth Avenue Committee (FAC)
- Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES)
- Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ)
- Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side (PHROLES)
- Queers for Economic Justice
- Red Hook Initiative (RHI)
- St. Nicks CDC/UNO
- Teachers Unite
- WE ACT
- Urban Justice Center Community Development Project
- Center for Social Inclusion (CSI)
- NYU Gallatin School
- The Planners Network
- CUNY graduate Center R2C Reading Group

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