

# Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Delivers Remarks at a Safe Haven Ribbon Cutting

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**Mayor Eric Adams:** Solid, solid commentary. You know, I've joked this this morning when I was speaking with Marcia Clark and said I was the Broccoli Mayor. Because it doesn't taste good, but in the long run, there was a reason mommy used to say, "Boy, eat your vegetables." It's hard times and I think policing has taught me so much. As a cop, I've been yelled at, cursed at, called names and I just built up this level of, you know what? Don't get distracted.

**Mayor Adams:** I'm just not going to be distracted. We know we are on the right path. And so people can be critical. You should be. Because there's a lack of trust. And I got it. We've normalized this dysfunctional city. We've normalized it. We've normalized people living on the street in cardboard boxes. We walk past them every day. The human psyche has amazing ability to adapt to any type of condition and we've adapted in our city to the dysfunctionality of the presence of people not having the proper care they deserve.

**Mayor Adams:** And so I got it. I know folks are critical. I know folks are saying, "Well, there goes that po-po again, trying to think law enforcement is everything." I got all of that. But at the end of the day, when you finally notice that you're not going to have encampments everywhere, that you're not going to have people on your streets everywhere, you're going to all of a sudden take this broccoli moment and understand that I made us a healthy city. That's what this is about.

**Mayor Adams:** And my team, look at Gary. So when people say that he's not compassionate, no, my team is made up of people who have gone through a lot. So, they're helping people who are going through a lot. That's the difference between my administration and other administrations. All of those with high philosophical approaches, I want someone with a PhD of life, of living in a homeless shelter to be on

my team, to understand what I'm up against. That is why we're getting the results. We're doing. I cannot say this loud and clear enough. People are not going to live under an undignified environment in the city where I'm the mayor. We will do better and we have to do better. We were not doing better. We threw up our hands and we stated that we were not doing better. We threw up our hands, and we stated that we could not end homelessness. And I'll be damned if we are not going to try. We're going to give it everything we have.

**Mayor Adams:** And I want to thank this organization, Care for the Homeless, Lincoln Hospital, the borough president, the councilmen, the team that's coming together that's finally stating we are not just going to push the envelope or kick the can down the road. Morris Avenue Safe Haven is crucial in stabilization. There's a different type of homeless of those who are street homeless. I talked with them when I'm on the subway system. I feel their pain.

**Mayor Adams:** Gary and I have been going unannounced to homeless shelters throughout this city to see firsthand what we are giving to people. You have to examine your product. I probably visited more homeless shelters in my three months than folks who have in this office in eight years, nine years, 13 years, on the ground because generals lead from the front.

**Mayor Adams:** They don't send their people into battle and say, "How was the war?" I'm a front leading general. And that is what we are going to have to do if we are going to end homelessness. And this facility is an indicator of what's possible. It's a safe space with wrap-around services. What dysfunctional system waits until a street homeless person goes to the emergency room that costs more, just to give him medication for a day to have him come back again, over and over again, wasting taxpayers' dollars? Over and over.

**Mayor Adams:** And I have the audacity to come and say, "This is not right." Is something wrong with me?

**Mayor Adams:** This is not about dollars and cents. This is about common sense. We've lost our common sense to govern. You know why? Because the money we spend in government is not the money coming out of the pockets of people who are making these foolish decisions. It's coming out of your pockets as taxpayers. And I'm going to protect your dollars, to get a better product for you that you can be proud of to live in the

city where we are treating people with the dignity that they deserve. We have to help people in despair, people that look like Gary and his family.

**Mayor Adams:** As of this week, we are creating 350 of the promised 500 safe havens and stabilization beds. And you know what we're doing? We're creating a brochure. When we go into the subway system, we're going to show the homeless people. "We know you have a negative impact of what a homeless shelter looks like, but here's a brochure." We're treating them the way people treat me when they want me to stay in their hotel. We're showing them the product and say, "If you change your mind and you want to come into a space like this, so that you can get out of your head what you believe the congregate shelters were like, we're showing you the product we want to take you with." And we're going to rebuild that trust over and over again.

**Mayor Adams:** And you know what? We're going to let them come in and see for themselves what the environment looks like, treat them with the dignity that they deserve. 500 safe haven beds that we are going to bring people in. And we're going to look at those over 2,000 beds that are open and we never put people in.

**Mayor Adams:** Sometimes I feel like this is a comedy show, but it's so serious that you can't laugh at this dysfunctionality and this betrayal of New Yorkers.

**Mayor Adams:** And so, when I released the subway safety plan, I said something very simple. Too long, we have treated these New Yorkers as unseen. We're not going to allow that to continue to happen. We're not going to abandon homeless people in our city. We're going to give them the support, the housing, and the healing that they deserve. And this is an indicator of what's possible, and it's the beginning of what we're going to do.

**Mayor Adams:** And so I understand the nay-sayers. I understand the critics. I understand the people who said it's not possible. I understand that people don't believe, trust. I understand that people have a feeling of abandonment. I got it. But I know that there are a team of people, like in this room, who are committed to homelessness. They're committed to the work they're doing. And they have a partner in this mayor.

**Mayor Adams:** We are going to address this issue, like we're going to address gun violence, like we're going to address the failure of education, like we're going to address the dysfunctionality of nutritional issues that's feeding our healthcare crises, like we are

going to address our housing crises. We're going to tackle it head on. And while we're doing it it's going to be a little uncomfortable for folks. But at the end of the journey, we are going to get the product that we deserve as New Yorkers. Your tax dollars deserve more. And I'm going to make sure we get the product that you paid for.

**Mayor Adams:** And so, I thank this organization. I thank my partners that are here in government. And we're going to do a series of things together. I have been in the Bronx how many times? I think by now, I earned my BX. And I'm going to continue to be up here. This borough has been denied for far too long. And I'm going to spend time here in this borough, because if we lift up the Bronx, we could lift up every other borough in this city.

**Mayor Adams:** And so I'm proud to be here and cut this ribbon and say congratulations to not only the organizations, all of you who are here, who work in this space, but to those men and women who are going to benefit from the love, the nurture, and care that they deserve. You can't get this on the A train overnight. You can't get this sleeping in Times Square. You can't get this sleeping in a cardboard box. You can't get this sleeping in a tree in a park. You don't deserve that. You deserve this.

**Mayor Adams:** We're open to any questions.

[Crosstalk]

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, you said that you visited many homeless congregant settings throughout your first three months. Wondering how many locations have you visited within your first three months in office? And also on the homelessness encampments, you said that you have an announcement tomorrow, but wondering in the first 11 days, how many people have you removed from these encampments and connected to services?

**Mayor Adams:** Tomorrow, we'll be going over those exact numbers. So all I could do is do like they did on Batman, stay tuned. And I've visited five shelters, one in each borough, to get an idea of what's going on.

**Question:** The contract for this safe haven was first awarded in 2020. It's just opening now. How are you going to streamline these types of openings to meet the need and get those additional 150 sites open?

**Mayor Adams:** Great question. I don't know what previous administrations used for their three letters, but my three letters are simple. Get stuff done. Get stuff done. We're going to get it done. A delay in another place is not going to be a delay in this administration. We're going to get stuff done.

**Question:** Well, how are you going to counter the type of community backlash to safe havens that you're seeing elsewhere in the city?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, number one, 8.8 million people, 30 million opinions, but one mayor. I'm the mayor. And I'm going to put places that I need them, and everyone is going to share the housing crisis. We have oversaturated certain communities, and that is not going to be on my administration. We all will share the housing crisis.

[Crosstalk]

**Question:** Mr. Mayor. I was speaking with somebody with the Coalition for the Homeless yesterday who said that the city needs more Safe Haven beds. You promised 500. She was saying 3,000. I think you mentioned before unused supportive housing, right, and the prospect of using that, which conceivably would open up Safe Haven beds, but could you, I guess, address those concerns that this person from coalition expressed to me and just lay out how this is going to work as far as the puzzle with supportive housing.

**Mayor Adams:** We're going to fill the 500, and we're going to continue to build based on the need. I'm a big believer in retrofitting and changing hotels into housing. We could also do so for Safe Haven beds. We are going to continue to identify the need and fulfill the need. Of course, we're dealing with financial crises as well. We have a real budget issue and we all know that, but I believe if we streamline, if we become more efficient, and we stop wasting taxpayers' dollars, we will have more than enough to provide the services to the people of this city.

**Question:** You also, I got to ask about this.

**Mayor Adams:** You know me.

**Question:** I'm having a broccoli moment here, how long do you envision the city going through this broccoli moment?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, mom said you should eat broccoli your entire life. I'm plant based. I'm eating more broccoli now than ever. We have to constantly inspect ourselves. That's what happens. We rest on a success of one thing. We must be in a perpetual state of reevaluating ourselves. Are we meeting our targets and our expectation not to fall back. We made that mistake during the CompStat era. CompStat should have continued to evolve in law enforcement, and it didn't evolve because we felt we were successful so we could rest on what we were doing. We can't, we evolve as human beings. Cities evolve. Private industry evolves. It's time for government to have that evolution, so we are never going to lead the broccoli moment. We'll always be evolving.

[Crosstalk]

**Question:** You said there's 350 beds that are going to be launched this week? Besides just the 80 here, where are the rest going to be? When you guys are looking at clearing out homeless encampments, what next areas are you guys going to be targeting?

**Mayor Adams:** I'm sorry. First, I'm going to answer the beds. We'll give you the exact location to all of the beds. A total of 350, a total of 350 out of the 500 that we will reach. Gary will get that information to you. Okay? Now I didn't understand the second part, your second question.

**Question:** When you guys are clearing out homeless encampments over the next two weeks, what are some of the other big areas that you guys will be targeting? I know yesterday was underneath the expressway. What other areas are you guys going to be targeting next?

**Mayor Adams:** We'll announce all that tomorrow. As I say in my Batman moment, stay tuned. Okay. We're going to do it off topic so you guys can bounce so you don't get caught up in the crossfire off topic. Whenever you see Michael here you know something is going on.

[Crosstalk]

**Question:** You mentioned that you're very concerned with the 2,000 additional open apartments, and you said you have a plan. What is that plan? Again, that's a really high number. What is the [inaudible].

**Mayor Adams:** Well, first of all, I wake up every day and read the paper. Some of my best ideas come from some of the good reporting in this city. When this was placed on my radar, I immediately kicked into action and we are going to roll out a formal plan of filling those beds. We're going to roll out and show you how we're going to accomplish it, that I'm going to be very much engaged in just as I'm engaged in the cleanup of the encampments. In the next few days, we're going to roll out that plan.

**Question:** How long do you envision that process will take filling 2,000 beds?

**Mayor Adams:** It should not take as long as it has taken. This is something that has been brought to my attention, and I'm going to fix it. When we roll out the plan, we'll give you an exact time, a timetable.

**Question:** We reported last week about some subpoenas issued by the southern district regarding Lieutenant Governor Brian Benjamin. What are your thoughts on this? I mean, you used to be in the state senate. This is stuff having to do with this time in the state senate appears with disbursements taken from state funding. Also, if you could, from your perspective, what implications might this have on the governor's race, which is scoping increasingly likely former Governor Cuomo might throw in on?

**Mayor Adams:** I don't have any views on it. Prosecutors will do their job. I think they will make the determination of any wrongdoing. The mere fact that inquiries are made, that's not an indicator of wrongdoing and let's let the prosecutors do their job.

[Crosstalk]

**Question:** I'll draw a line saying I think if one ends up with some celebrities at a party it looks like.

**Mayor Adams:** I love the summit.

**Question:** Were you worried about the offense of that? Considering the homeless encampments, are you worried, or how could you speak to how that helps improve the city health, reopens the city, supports the city's economy?

**Mayor Adams:** Okay. First of all, we need a level of accuracy. I was not just at the Summit. I was at a Broadway opening. I also went to a few restaurants that I popped into. I walked the street. I was in a subway system last night. My belief, if you're going to hang out with the boys, you got to get up with the men. Up early this morning doing my job. I have to get this city up and operated. While I deal with the homeless crisis, I must deal with my economy that can't create homelessness because we don't have people back to work. We have the largest unemployment numbers. We're leading the nation. That's unacceptable for me. And nightlife, believe it or not is a multi-billion dollar industry. When they see the mayor out enjoying our city, it sends the right message and the right signal. I can multitask. This is the city of New York. I'm not drinking out of a garden hose. I'm drinking out of a fire hose, and I can handle every drop of the water because I'm made for this moment.

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