

# Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Announces Steps to Transform New York City Into Global Hub for Digital Games Industry

May 16, 2022

**Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer:** All right. We are going to get going in just a few seconds, if everyone can take a seat.

[Crosstalk]

**Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer:** All right. Well, good afternoon, everyone. It is fantastic to see all of you. Welcome to City College. I'd first like to thank President Vincent Boudreau for hosting us today in this amazing location, and it's going to be a very exciting day, given what we're about to share with all of you.

**Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer:** My name is Maria Torres-Springer. I'm the deputy mayor for economic and workforce development, and I have to say nothing makes me more excited than to speak with young people and see not just how they are having fun, but really, the types of ways we can connect young people to our growing economy, to jobs, to prosperity, because that is what we are all about in this administration.

**Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer:** I really do want to thank all of you for joining us here today. We have such amazing partners and guests here, leadership, of course, from CUNY and from City College, industry leaders in the game development space, of course, our amazing students who are here with us today. Thank you for joining us in today's announcement about the city's investment in the digital game sector. You will hear from many of our partners here today, but I want to make sure that I give a particular shout-out to Stan Altman of the Harlem Gallery of Science for all of his incredible work and inspiration and all of his efforts.

**Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer:** So earlier in the spring, the mayor announced and revealed our blueprint for our economic recovery, and that blueprint outlined many different strategies for the future of our economy. It's been really important to us that our economic recovery is rooted in equity and economic mobility, and we know that we have to look to the future to solve the problems and challenges of today. That is why we are so committed to supporting the digital games industry, which plays a major and growing role in our city's economy.

**Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer:** It supports close to ... change lives across our city, because we know that investing in different sectors of our economy isn't just about investing in companies. It's really about investing in our young people. It's investing in New Yorkers who really have an opportunity to connect to those meaningful and good paying jobs in our growing sectors. So to kick us off, I would like to introduce Matthew Diaz, a student right here at CUNY, and the president of the CUNY eSports community. Matthew.

[...]

**Mayor Eric Adams:** Glad you're not running for office. Just a few moments that I spent in the back, watching the game, something came over me. I think it was the second game, where you were caught up in the excitement. We were watching the ... Was it soccer? Ringing the bell, and you're caught up in the moment. You don't even realize how much you get caught in the game, and I used to see my son spend eight hours playing the game. Now I know why.

**Mayor Adams:** But it was also another game I saw that taught critical thinking. This is an unbelievable opportunity to use gaming. We think of gaming, all I thought about, I thought I was going to walk here and see Pacman, and it's so much more. It is. We could almost treat gaming to help people who are dealing with dementia, to remember things, gaming for people who want to learn financial literacy, how to buy a house, how to pay for college, gaming to deal with some of the hate crime we see in this city, the anti-Asian violence, antisemitism, attacks on the LGBTQ community. There can be games that's developed to teach us how to enjoy our diversity.

**Mayor Adams:** So this is a great moment, and then eSports, those who never played a sport physically, you could almost master it in eSport. This is going to become a multi-billion-dollar industry that you are going to be part of. So the jocks of yesterday that

were only good at sports, those days are over. Gaming is the great equalizer. Any and every one could play in one way or the other and lean into those things that are important.

**Mayor Adams:** So chancellor and the entire team that's here, I'm really happy for this moment. We thought of this. We talked about it. How do we not only become consumers, but developers? Everyone wants to sell a product to you. Now you're in the position of saying, "We want you to buy my product." Your product is no longer someone designing something that you have to participate in, and it's not reflective of who you are. Now you are able to create a game that is really reflective of what you think, what you see, and the universe that you are in. So today with CUNY, City College, with the students, the CUNY leadership, and the gaming industry, we're here today, and I'm excited about this. We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the visionary of the amazing Deputy Mayor of Economic and Workforce Development Maria Torres-Springer. We've been hanging out the whole week, rolling out some good stuff, and she just knew this was the right thing to do as well as the team from the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, just the right team to make our city the center of innovation of all levels.

**Mayor Adams:** We want to be the center of innovation. We've had a history of innovating, from skyscrapers to the subway system to so many things happening right here in New York. From Bitcoin to blockchain, all of the things, they start here, and they continue to grow here. If they don't start here, they grow here, because we get it right all the time, and it's based on the diversity of the people that live in this city, because they bring all of their energies and spirit to the innovation that's needed. It's time for us to lead in this industry of digital gaming space. New York City is a leader in so many areas, tech, film, finance. So many different areas we're leaders in, but not here yet, and when it comes to gaming development, we are outside of the top five.

**Mayor Adams:** We want to change that in the next few years. We want to be number one. How the heck do we follow anyone? We're New York City. We don't follow people. We lead. So the goal is to use CUNY to start the pipeline of ensuring that we are going to start building out our gaming industry. We know that we have the highest concentration of augmented and virtual reality gaming jobs in the nation, highest number, and we have so much talent here every day, just some of the games that we were discussing earlier. So we want to make the city the hub.

**Mayor Adams:** Two months ago, we launched the Blueprint for Economic Recovery coming out of the deputy mayor's office, and we spoke about building a future-focused economy and how we must stop and step into innovations in order to do so and create the entrepreneurs, the new thinkers, and come up with a real good product that everyone globally would like to duplicate or to purchase. Any one of you in this room could become the creators of the next Rockstar Games company or the developers of the next Rocket League or NBA 2K. I assume that's 2,000. I didn't play any of those games. But you could clearly become the next head of that.

**Mayor Adams:** So today we are going to really level up. We are investing in our future, in the future of New York City gaming development with some big announcements today that I'm really happy for. This is something we wanted to do. I'm proud to announce the funding and creation of City College bachelor's degree program in game design, an actual degree in game design. We're investing \$2 million into this program. I was a computer programmer as a young person. I know how powerful it is, the skills you take forever, and so these \$2 million we believe is going to help reach over 1,000 students over the next three years and is aimed at increasing diversity and equity in the digital game and field. Far too often, you're not seeing the diversity in this field. We want to increase that diversity, so those who play the game will look like the people who are also designing the games. That's the match that we are looking for.

**Mayor Adams:** This complements the work that so many in the industry are already doing, including New York XL's recent announcement of their Young Creators Program, providing fellowships to the next generation of content developers.

**Mayor Adams:** Wherever we go, wherever the deputy mayor and I go, if it's at Google, if it's at Netflix, wherever we go, we talk about paid internship programs and building a pipeline for those young people to fill those jobs. That is the goal here. If you don't get exposed, then you don't see the possibilities out there. We are focused on telling all of these large companies that you patronize it's time to hire from the communities that are actually purchasing your product. We're on a mission to accomplish that.

**Mayor Adams:** This is the part that I like a lot. We are going to put in place the first ever Digital Games Industry Council. We are bringing together the top digital game companies, nonprofits, and industry leaders, and young people to sit down and advise a city on how to grow this important industry right here in New York, as well as partner with educators to create pathways from classroom to careers and game designs.

**Mayor Adams:** You can do this not only in college, you could do this in high school. You could do it in junior high school. You have in your heads already as young people the type of games that could be designed. We want to bring you to the table and clearly set the standard on how this industry must grow. Using public and private partnerships, we could obtain the level of gaming that we want.

**Mayor Adams:** And so, I want to finish with this. Today we are going to push forward. We begin this quest together. This is how we're going to get stuff done in the city and accomplish a fair and equitable city. We're not leaving anyone behind. This is a great city, but it's not great because of the tall buildings. It's not great because of the museums, the theaters, and all of that stuff. It's great because of the people.

**Mayor Adams:** Too many people did not feel and reach their greatness and their full potential. We say no to that. Not only are you going to be successful gamers, but you're going use the tools to help those who have been left far behind in the past. Thank you. Amazing announcement. I'm happy to be here.

**Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer:** Thank you, Mayor Adams. Now I'd like to introduce someone who's been a fantastic partner and will continue to be. We could not do this without the partnership of amazing institution. There's a lot at stake here. The jobs in an industry like this really run the gamut, from game development to all of the occupations within publishing, to data science, to research, to marketing, to the financial services that need to be part of the ecosystem. In my mind, there is no reason why CUNY can't be the number one pipeline to all of those jobs. And so, with that, let me welcome our amazing chancellor, Felix Matos Rodriguez.

[...]

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you very much.

**Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer:** Thank you, chancellor. You're going to be very busy, Matthew, in the years and decades to come. We're very excited to watch your continued success. Now I'd like to introduce Philip Courtney, who is the CEO of Urban Arts to share a few words.

[...]

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you.

**Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer:** Thank you, Philip. Really love the brilliant work that you're doing. It's important that this work start really early. The work in the K through 12 system is just so critical to building the diverse pipelines that will really make all our collective efforts as meaningful as possible.

**Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer:** And so, finally, I would like to introduce the CEO of NYXL, James Frey, and welcome one of New York City's favorite teams and two-time conference – its champions as well, and New York Excelsior. Thank you, and welcome.

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you.

[...]

[Crosstalk]

**Mayor Adams:** We'll open up to the questions. You got more? Hmm? If you have any on-topics before anybody moves in.

**Question:** Mayor Adams, or deputy mayor, what's the timeline for the availability of the degree? I think that, I deduced that Matthew will graduate with a poli sci degree. What's the first class that will be able to graduate with a bachelor's degree?

**Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer:** Please. So generally speaking, this fall, the four-year program will start, and also at City College, but there's also a great arrangement and partnership with Hostos. The students who are in the two-year program there, there will be a transition as well. And that will start, I think, graduating by 2024. Please correct me if any of that is inaccurate.

[...]

**Mayor Adams:** Perfect, perfect, perfect. Any more on-topic? Okay, so we're going to free you guys up. Y'all don't want to be part of off-topic. Real pleasure, man. Good luck to you.

[Crosstalk]

**Question:** [Inaudible] COVID high alert. Who are these messages for?

**Mayor Adams:** The?

**Question:** The COVID high alert we're expressing today, what is your message to New Yorkers?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, one thing we're not going to do is use old methods to fight an old war, to fight a new war, I should say. We have new tools, new methods, new things that are available for us, and we're going to constantly analyze them and make the right decision. I said this over and over with COVID. COVID pivots and shifts. If we're rigid, we won't defeat it. And so, we're sending New Yorkers, we are urging people, indoors, wear a mask indoors. If you are in settings, on the subway system, like it's already in place, just make the smart decisions.

**Mayor Adams:** Boosters, vaccinations is crucial. When you look at our hospitalizations, it is now. The reason of our hospitalization is heavy on people who are non-vaccinated. So it's crucial to do so. So, we're not going to panic, we're going to continue to be prepared. That's the key.

**Question:** Mayor Adams, can I ask you for more clarity on what you just said? Does that indicate that there won't be a return to the old restrictions, but a new approach because we're in a new stage?

**Mayor Adams:** Nope, it doesn't. When we get off our morning calls, we make a decision on how we're going to move forward. We're not at the point of mandating a mask. We're not at that point yet. We're not at the point of doing anything other than urging New Yorkers, while you're indoors, in large settings, social settings, wear your mask.

**Mayor Adams:** Continue to lean on that. Lean in on our clear message of vaccinations, boosters. We're going to do more advertisement, we're going to really start reaching out to our faith-based institution to give them tests.

**Mayor Adams:** We've done an amazing job. We have a testing system in place that no else in the country is able to do. So what does that mean? Someone gets COVID, they stay home. They're not doing what we were doing before, going out and infecting others. They're staying home. We now have the anti-virals. We didn't have that before. We have more tools, so we don't have to fight the war we had before. This is a new war and we're going to use all those tools to do.

**Question:** How would you describe your readiness to mandate anything that we had previously, or are you hesitant?

**Mayor Adams:** No, it's not hesitant. It's we're wiser, we're smarter. And because of we're wiser and smarter, you are not seeing our hospitals going through the state of emergency that we were at. This is not the numbers like when we were starting out COVID. We're not like that anymore, where hospitals were overburdened.

**Mayor Adams:** We're speaking with H+H, we're speaking with our privates, we're speaking with our schools. They're all saying the same thing. They say, "Listen, we got this. We're not overwhelmed. We have it, the number of cases in our hospitals are small, the number of deaths are small." My H+H team, my medical team are all saying, "Let's drill down on the message of indoors, wear masks, get boosters, vaccinations." We're not at the point that we have to put the mandates in place.

**Question:** So mayor, you just said that we're not at the point of putting mask mandates in place, but the matrix from the City Health Department says we are at that point; that's one of the recommendations at the high level. So it kind of begs the question, what's the point of the matrix if none of the recommendations are going to be followed?

**Mayor Adams:** Look at the ... Remember what was part of the matrix? Part of the matrix looked at hospitalizations. The hospitalizations we were looking at was based on the hospitalizations we dealt with before. Old war, new war. So if we just go straight, hear the numbers and let's just respond just to the numbers, then we're not pivoting, like COVID. COVID pivots, it doesn't follow any rules.

**Mayor Adams:** So, if those hospitalization numbers, we're dealing with people on ventilators, people dying, of people tying up our emergency rooms, we would have looked at those numbers and said, "Okay, we're fighting that old battle again", but we're not. Not the ventilation crisis, not the old emergency rooms being overwhelmed, not our



hospitals being overwhelmed. Our hospitals are telling us, "Hey, we're not at that place we were before." So the matrix is right, but we're looking deeper at the numbers and doing a real analysis on the ground so we can make the smart decisions.

**Question:** Let me follow-up on another topic, what are your top priorities heading to Albany tomorrow?

**Mayor Adams:** Mayor accountability is important. I mean, we see the great things we're doing, from dyslexia screening, with all of our students, to the investments and college funds, to building out the pipeline with gaming, mayoral accountability. I said it over and over again, if two Boston fans can have control of our school system, then darn it, the Knicks and Mets and the Nets fans should have control of it also. We're the right combination to control our school system, that's important. We would love to get some of the other important items. We need the NYCHA funding, which is crucial. That is something we want to talk about. On 421A, we would like to see an extension of 421A. So there's time til the end of the session to get some of this stuff passed and I just think it's important that we get it done.

**Question:** Speed cameras, where are we on that?

**Mayor Adams:** We would love to get speed cameras. The head of the committee in assembly stated he didn't hear enough from us, which I don't quite understand. The way it's done in Albany, you speak to your colleague that's sponsoring the bill. I don't vote on the bill. We have some great allies out there. Senator Gianaris is there. He believes in the bill. Others believe in the bill. Bring it to the floor of your committee and let the committee vote on it. We're hoping they have a second thought, because this bill's speed cameras save lives. We see the rash of crashes, fatalities and lives being lost. We should not play politics with saving lives. Let's get this bill to the floor. Let's get an up or down vote. Yes.

**Question:** Can you speak to why—

**Mayor Adams:** Are you wearing a Miami shirt? Somebody give her a New York shirt. What's up with that?

**Question:** I had a fun time there. On a more serious note...

**Mayor Adams:** Yes.

**Question:** ... can you speak to why the health commissioner is issuing an advisory on indoor masking if transmission is so high rather than issuing a commissioner's Order?

**Mayor Adams:** Because, and I can't say this enough, there is no straight one and one equals two. I'm a computer programmer in binary, one and one doesn't equal two. The goal is to come up with a master plan and shift like COVID has shifted. And our team of experts is taking in everything to make the determination on what the next steps are going to be with COVID. And so we're going to continue to lean in to tell New Yorkers while indoors to wear the mask. I try to do it as much as possible and we're going to continue to encourage people to do so.

**Question:** How many meetings do you have scheduled tomorrow in Albany? Do you plan on meeting with Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Carl Heastie? And then also, afterwards, do you plan also joining leaders up in Buffalo with President Joe Biden, of course, in the wake of the shooting?

**Mayor Adams:** So let me answer that in levels. First, the number of meetings, the team is putting that together to make sure we can speak with as many of my former colleagues and new colleagues as possible. And anytime I go to Albany, I like to sit down with Andrea and Carl, and even outside of Albany, so we don't know the exact number. Tonight, we're having a vigil right here in the city dealing with that awful tragedy of 10 innocent people were assassinated by this terrorist act, and three people were also shot. But the pain is going to cascade throughout Buffalo and this entire country. And we're going to try to see if the schedule will allow me to go to Buffalo as well. But we're also going to do our vigil here and we're encouraging everyone to come out tonight and just really show our support for the family members.

**Mayor Adams:** Guns, guns, guns, too many in the hands of the wrong people, too violent. And then you add that to what I've been saying for a long time, the hate on social media, they must start taking responsibility for their actions. I've said it over and over again, and I'm happy to hear the governor, the A.G. and others are now understanding what I'm saying. This person, according to his manifesto, stated that what he learned about this hate he did not get it from his friends, families, and associates. He got it from social media. That's a serious message for us. We need to analyze what is on social media that's destroying the people in this country.

**Question:** Thank you. Back on the high alert level and being expected to enter that, under the current level, the DOH guidelines urged you to consider re-implementing T2 NYC. You're now saying under the high level that you're not looking to re-implement a mask mandate for indoor spaces. I'm just wondering, if all these guidelines are there and recommending these things and you're saying that you're not going to follow them, at what point are you going to be ready to follow those guidelines? What would be the trigger for you to actually start mandating [inaudible]?

**Mayor Adams:** So we're going to do this again, because you may have missed what I was saying. First, let's start with the foundation. There are no clear rules dealing with COVID. There are no clear rules. You go across the country and people are giving their best effort, professionally, medical advice. Everyone is trying to figure out this new entry into our lives called COVID. We put in place rules based on what COVID did previously and how we responded to COVID based on the tools that we had. Now, we're moving into a great delivery service of medicine. We're moving into a vaccine, of booster shots, of our hospitals saying, "Eric, we're not overwhelmed. We're not overwhelmed." So to just say, "Well, you wrote this on paper so now you must follow it," that's not how I govern. I govern based on what's in front of me and how to win the battle.

**Mayor Adams:** So if I'm stagnant with an enemy that's not stagnant, I'm going to lose the war. I have to win the war and we made the decision, and if there comes a time that our hospitals are now in a state of emergency or we are trending that way and my doctors that run the hospitals tell me, "Eric, this is what we need to do," I'm going to listen to them. Right now, they're telling me, "No, we don't need to do that. We have this under control. We don't have this crisis in our hospitals that we had previously. We don't have that anymore." So I'm listening to the team as I win this battle of COVID for all of us.

**Question:** Quickly on a different topic, your administration expected tomorrow to release your plan for replacing Rikers Island. I'm wondering if you can give us a little bit of a preview of what's going to be in that plan. And, secondly, there's a new group out today calling for a federal receivership. I'm wondering, is there any circumstance under which you think of federal receivership would be a good idea for Rikers Island?

**Mayor Adams:** So let me do it in two levels. First, am I going to give you a little part of it? No. Second, no. Listen, don't let anybody kid you, people talking about federal receivership, they're going to come in, everything's going to be alright. Rikers is

dysfunctional. It's broken. It has been for generations. I come in five months later and everyone is asking why isn't Rikers fixed completely yet? If not, let the feds come in to do so. We have the first Latino commissioner in Rikers, who's amazing. He's doing a great job. That's my faith. I have faith in Molina. I have faith in the team he's putting together. I have faith in what he's going to accomplish. When you feed that into things that we're going to do by having every agency participate in helping fixing Rikers, never before, all the agencies are now coming together to say, "How do we deal with this problem?"

**Mayor Adams:** We're going to eventually do dyslexia screening in Rikers to find out those young men and women who are dyslexic so they don't have to come back to Rikers. We're going to create a new way of dealing with those who are violent there. We're getting crisis management teams to participate. We're doing for Rikers what no one else did before. So if anyone believes that just because receivership comes in that all of a sudden something that was dysfunctional for generations is going to change, I doubt that. All I can do is what's within my span of control. We're going to fix Rikers. I need an opportunity to do so. And if they're not willing to give me the opportunity to do so, there's nothing I could do about it. But I do find it strange that the people who are calling for receivership, some of them, they had Rikers, they didn't fix it then so now they are vociferous about receivership. Why didn't they fix it when they had it? That's a good question. Thank you. Got to bounce.

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