

# Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Announces Redevelopment of One Times Square

May 6, 2022

**Mayor Eric Adams:** Thank you very much, what a pleasure. Thank you. Thank you so much. The congressman, the senator, the entire team here, we know the importance of this place, and there were several other major events that have taken place here, particularly on January 1st, when I was sworn in to become the mayor, we did that. And I was in Los Angeles the other day, I was in Chicago a couple of weeks ago, I was in Miami, we are going to span the globe and let people know how good this product is, called New York City. For far too long, we have not really appreciated this product and what Times Square means to all of us and how this is the center of the universe for America. And when the lights are on, on Broadway and Times Square, the lights are on in America and the comeback of America starts here in this square for these times.

**Mayor Adams:** I'm so proud to be here with this group and welcome One Times Square, this \$500 million investment. \$500 million investment. There's no better way to say we believe this is something that those of yesteryears, over 118 years ago, this location was for the New York Times building, not access to the public, now is access to the public, it's a place we witnessed the ball drop over and over again. The museum that is going to be here to chronicalize our history, to show how we got here in the first place. Way back in 1907, when the decision was made to have this great experience of having a New Year's Eve celebration here, that famous picture of watching the sailor kiss a person here. I think that's when we started kissing someone on New Year's Eve, but it is here, all of these memories, year after year, millions of people coming here to bring in the New Year to see the ball drop.

**Mayor Adams:** This is going to be a modernizing of the building, making it more accessible, providing different opportunities for people to enjoy Times Square. And it is really an iconic location where you come to celebrate in the energy, the excitement, the experience. When I was a police officer, this was part of my footprint and you would come here and see people from all over the world enjoy Times Square and all the excitement of watching Mickey and Donald Duck fight for each other for a tourist. That is

just part of New York. That's part of New York, of all the experience that come with New York City. And so we want to remind the world that the heart of New York still beats and it beats stronger than ever. That is what this city represents and that's the message we want to get out.

**Mayor Adams:** I don't know what has happened that we've become such a boring place. This is the foundation of excitement and COVID is not going to stop us. Crises won't stop us. We're not going to be defined by those obstacles we must knock down to show the resiliency of this great city. And so I just really want to thank you for this investment Jamestown, the Times Square Alliance, no matter what happens in the city, they continue to move forward and forge forward. Let's get it done together. A safe, clean, affordable city to attract tourism back to this city, a multi-billion dollar industry, and each time we invest in this area, we are investing in everyday New Yorkers. Congratulations, let's have the party continue. Thank you.

[...]

**Question:** Rent Guidelines Board vote last night, regards to a pretty significant rent increase. I saw your statement didn't really take a position one way or another on that increase. Would you be supportive of that increase?

**Mayor Adams:** No, it's so important, independence is independence. That's an independent board. I made it clear that we have to find the right position to look after those small property owners, which is – they've been decimated by the increase in fuel, property taxes, so many other things. And at the same time, those New Yorkers who were hit hard with, through COVID. That's why we're doing so much to put money in their pockets, from the lottery system to earn income tax credits. That's the combination we need. Because if we lose those small property owners, you're going to have major developers come in and then we're going to have a real problem.

**Mayor Adams:** That's the balance. Let this independent board do their job. And I have made it clear that 9% you were hearing about was just too extreme. We need to focus on finding the right balance. Now, there's a footnote that people should realize. I'm a small property owner. I never raised the rent of my tenants since they lived in my building. When they signed a lease, they signed a lease with me signing I would never raise your rent as long as you're there. So we can show the compassion. At the same time, I understand what the families are going through on both ends of the spectrum,

**Question:** But it's not quite an independent board because you appoint the members of that board. How do you square that when you're saying you're independent of this entire process?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, when you appoint members of the board, that's your role to do. But the next thing you should do is get out of the way. And it is my job to put in the universe and state what I'm looking for and hope that the boards respond accordingly. I was very clear, we must find that balance of those small property owners and tenants who are suffering, not only dealing with their rent, but with my policies and my allocation of my budget has gone through to help everyday New Yorkers. I am – that's an independent board.

**Question:** Here's my question. [Inaudible].

**Mayor Adams:** I'm sorry, I can't hear you.

**Question:** [Inaudible].

**Mayor Adams:** Yes.

**Marsha:** [Inaudible]. Why are you not sounding the alarm? Why are you not [inaudible]?

**Mayor Adams:** No, we say that every day. I think that the reason we are here and we are not seeing drastic actions is because we've done an amazing job of telling people vaccines, boosters. When I was hit with COVID, it was just a tickle in my throat. I was still able to exercise, didn't have any breathing issues, no pain. And so we're very clear. And the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is going to continue to go up on air, social media, communication in different languages. We're coming out with a major plan to do so.

**Mayor Adams:** The reason we are able to manage this, hospitalizations, deaths, people are diagnosing themselves because of the millions of tests we're giving people at home. They're diagnosing themselves, they're staying home when they find that they're positive. That has been our success. And so if we switch to the next level, then we would take those actions based on that, but we're not there yet.

**Question:** [Inaudible] numbers. Are you afraid to do it? Are you worried about the workforce [inaudible]?

**Mayor Adams:** No, there's a duality here that we are facing. Number one, we must make sure, in a smart way, based on the health team, that we are giving the right calls of action, recommending people strongly indoors to wear masks, masks on our subway system. We did not abandon that. The governor and I have been on the same page. And at the same time, we have to get the economy up and operated, so we are doing a proper balance, but we will never put public safety in front of any other issue. Public safety is first, and making sure that people are safe, the numbers are at the place that we're managing it, because of what we have done previously. And so I think we need to really commend New Yorkers for doing the right thing.

**Mayor Adams:** And then we have the other tools. Those antiviral medicines are really helping us deliver at home, giving the test at home, making sure our schools are open. We are just doing it right. We can't control what this virus is doing, but we can control our response. And we're doing that.

**Question:** [Inaudible].

**Mayor Adams:** Because yes, we are concerned. The question was, "Are we concerned about the number?" Yes, we are. But preparation, not panic. Preparation, not panic. We are prepared as a city, and we're not going to panic.

**Question:** Two part question on schools. One, are you considering bringing masks back in K through 12? And how are you thinking about a vaccine mandate for public schools for the fall?

**Mayor Adams:** First, let's peel it back. The first, we're not there yet. Our medical team is advising us every morning, 8:30 AM. They're up right and shine to update us. When they do, we'll announce it. We're not there yet. Second, the mandate. I'm going to sit down with the medical team, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Dr. Vasan. We're going to spend the next couple of weeks, and look at that, and make a determination. When we do, we'll roll it out, and let everyone know.

**Question:** But has your thinking changed at all? Last fall you said that you supported a vaccine mandate for public schools, once it had full FDA approval.

**Mayor Adams:** Yeah. No. My position has not changed at all. I'm the mayor now. And I have a Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. I'm going to bring my opinion to the table. They're going to bring their opinion to the table. And then we're going to make the ultimate decision.

[Crosstalk]

**Question:** So first on L.A.

**Mayor Adams:** Yes.

**Question:** You got crime stats not where you want them. Your poll numbers took a little bit of a hit. Can you explain why you prioritized a trip out to Los Angeles, where I guess there is some fundraising, as I understand, going on, when you've got all these issues at home to deal with? Can you weigh that out for us?

**Mayor Adams:** Okay. First of all, your paper is unique with this headline, but we ignore that. This is what I must do. I must do what other mayors are doing. They're coming to my city, in our city, encouraging businesses to go to their city. They're learning from our ideas. And if I'm going to sit home while other people are coming, taking our businesses, that's a big mistake. I'm going to crisscross the globe. And I'm going to show people our product.

**Mayor Adams:** I need businesses here. We want to be the center of life sciences, cybersecurity, of bitcoin, blockchain. And then we must go and learn what other cities are doing. That is what we want to do.

**Mayor Adams:** So, I don't know. The poll I saw this morning that says 63% approval. That people approve my housing, approve my homeless plan, approve my gun-safety plan. Polls go up and down. Those are you who followed me on the campaign, you heard three things, stay focused, no distractions, and grind. I am less than six months into my administration. And so throughout these six months, it's going to be a rollercoaster. But at the end of it, we're going to turn this city around.

**Question:** So, on small landlords, we're talking about the rent guidelines, where you've raised that a couple times. Do you think a different increase, or different range, should be applied to large landlords? Small landlords are what you're concerned about. Large landlords have more means. Should we apply a different standard to them?

**Mayor Adams:** And that's what this independent board should examine. We will continue to raise our voice to find the balance, but this independent board, that is put in place to look at this, the Rent Guideline Board, these are all the things they should take into account.

**Question:** I had a separate question, but I want to clarify your answer on the COVID question. When you said, "As we go to the next level, we'll do those measures." Does that mean only if we go the high risk? Are you going to do the vaccine mandate in restaurants—?

**Mayor Adams:** No, we're going to pivot. We're going to pivot and shift. Like COVID pivots and shifts. Every morning we meet. And based on that outcome of our meetings, we'll make an announcement where we're going to go. If it stays at this level, we may pivot and shift and still do mandates. If we see an increase in hospitalization and deaths, that is alarming. We may shift. COVID pivots and shifts. I'm going to pivot and shift. And so that question can't be answered because no matter what happens, we're going to make the determination after we have our morning meetings.

**Question:** Okay. And then I want to ask what the Delrawn Small case – the decision was made to allow the CCRB to proceed, which the union had objected to. Hoping you could just speak to the reasoning behind that decision. And also if you could speak to the meeting that you had in April with families of people who were killed by police, how that is informing the balance you're trying to strike between safety and accountability.

**Mayor Adams:** So, let's peel it back in layers. First, let's deal with that one specific case. We have a CCRB for a reason. We thought that at this time, that case in specifically, should have found a full resolution within the CCRB. The police commissioner made that determination. I support her. And I commend her for using her authority to state if it should stay in CCRB or come into the Police Department. And she made that decision. I support that.

**Mayor Adams:** The meeting with those families, I don't know why it's a secret to everyone. I meet with everyone. That is what I do. I want to hear from all New Yorkers.

**Mayor Adams:** The families reached out to me and stated they wanted to speak with me. And I did just that. They were on Zoom. If they wanted to discuss what happened on the Zoom, they can do that. I'm not going to do that. I had some very personal and private conversations that they shared with me, and I don't want to violate those conversations. They have the willingness to do that. They shared their opinions. I gave them my opinions. Some of their opinions were that we should not have the antique neighborhood safety teams. I gave my opinion. So, we both shared our opinions, and they have the right to share what their thoughts were. I don't want to go against what they shared with me in confidence.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, yesterday you were supposed to have an event on mayoral control. What is your administration doing to push your agenda on that in Albany?

**Mayor Adams:** We are going to take a trip up to Albany. And I want to thank my supporters, those elected officials up there who clearly believe that Chancellor Banks and Eric Adams should have mayoral control. And we're going to go to Albany and continue to highlight that conversation on why we should have mayoral control. Many of the colleagues up there support us, and we're going to rally that support. So, we were going to have an event yesterday, where we will have all our union supporters who are standing with us, to do so we're going to continue to push forward before the end of the session.

**Question:** We've seen six New Yorkers die in three days as a result of traffic violence. I know you rolled out an initiative recently to combat that, but what do we have to do at this point to keep our streets safe?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, it's a combination. Listen, I am angry over losing the lives of loved ones to... Violence is violence. And there's several things we want to do. Number one, we're going to lean into what's called traffic stop stats, because we need to monitor in real time, and apply the resources where they're needed. We are reshaping a thousand intersections. The commissioner has been clear on zeroing in on where those dangerous intersections are.

**Mayor Adams:** But then we have to be proactive. When you look at the numbers, the number of people driving while under the influence, the reckless driving, speeding, hit and runs, that's something many people have ignored for a long time. People who are participating in hit and runs, we have not investigated them as thoroughly as we should. I called on this when I was a State Senator. And I'm going to go back to Albany in state. Those who create an accident and flee the scene, many times to have to create an accident and flee the scene, many times to have suspended license, under the influence, reckless drivers. We need to treat them with the level of severity that's needed. And then lastly, enforcement. We have to do proper enforcement to really go after those who are making our roadways dangerous.

**Question:** The first question is let's just talk about crime and where the numbers are in the latest polling. I mean, like to your point, you've been in office less than six months, anecdotally, however New Yorkers see the crimes happening every day. So let's talk about the execution of your crime plan. What is a realistic timetable that New Yorkers should realistically expect? To your point, it doesn't happen overnight, right? So in terms of how this planning typically goes structurally, can you kind of speak to that as well? And since I had to fight to be acknowledged, I do have to point out, I am the only person of color here asking you questions today. And you run out that there are no people of color covering the mayor's office, and I was like, acknowledge. So let's talk about those things, very separate things. Thank you.

**Mayor Adams:** One, you did not have to fight to be acknowledged because I would not have bounced until I got to your question. Okay? Second, you know, we are doing our job. We've remove, I don't know if people realize this, we've removed 2,500 illegal guns off our street in the last five months. I mean, when you think about that number, it's unbelievable. And then when you look at the number of arrests of dangerous people that we are doing, and then you look at the other side, they go to court and judges are letting them out. So the police officers are catching the guns, catching the bad guys, and by the time the police officers get back on patrol, they see the guy that they just caught. It's as though who's on our team? Who's on the team for innocent New Yorkers and the police department? Who's on our team that's part of the other part of the apparatus?

**Mayor Adams:** So we are going to continue to do our job, but we need help from a bottleneck criminal justice system. We need help from those who believe that people who carry guns should not stay in jail. We need help to stop the flow of guns in our city. We need help to make sure that the laws that we are passing are sending the right



message, that it's not acceptable to carry guns. The NYPD is going to continue to do their job. We're going to continue to take these guns off the street. We're going to continue to make our subway system safe so we don't have encampments and those who are dealing with mental health issues are not pushing people on the subway.

**Mayor Adams:** We're going to continue to do what we're doing and you can't pinpoint and say by Tuesday of this day, you're going to see this. That is not what crime is about. The rivers that feed the public safety crises all over this country, what I'm seeing in Chicago, Los Angeles, all over this country, we're seeing the over-proliferation of guns. They are destroying our cities. We are going to do our job here, but we need help from others that are in the way of preventing us from damming the river of violence.

**Mayor Adams:** I know we are going to turn this around because I know the department and I know the meters and things we've put in place, our real plan that we put in place. So this is going to be a safe city, but we have a lot of battles and fights. Every time we have to fight with people that say we should not have a gun safety team. Every time I have to fight with people that say I should not take people with mental health illnesses off our subway system. Every time we try to take these steps, we have others who are trying to prevent us from protecting innocent New Yorkers. Who's on the side of innocent New Yorkers? I'm on their side. Other people need to join us.

**Question:** Just last, follow up, if I may. So specifically, does this mean that there needs to be a more urgent reevaluation of the bail reform legislation, in your position?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, whenever we talk about the many rivers that feed the sea of violence, people focus on bail reform, but in my blueprint to end gun violence, there were so many other indicators and we won some of them and people thought it was impossible for us to make inroads in Albany and we did. On our criminal justice plan, what people thought was impossible, we were able to make some inroads in those areas, and we're going to continue to have those conversations when I go to Albany. But there's other aspects of stopping this violence and we want help in all of those aspects. We need the ATF appointment confirmed. That's crucial. We need more ATF agents. 2,400 in the country, only 80 in New York. There's so many other things we can do. And I don't want to have bail reform take all the oxygen out of the room, because there are other things that we need to do that we may be able to find a middle ground on.

**Question:** [Inaudible]... that lawmakers did not bring you [inaudible] in the budget because they were holding over your head your insistence on bail reform as well as other criminal justice reforms?

**Mayor Adams:** I served in Albany. I served in Albany, and you know, Albany, as a lawmaker, you want to have an opportunity to dig into these, have conversations. I don't think it was about, Well, we're going to hold it over Eric's head." They want to sit down. They want to dig into the plan. I would love to have had it in the budget. And if it's not, we're going to go up to Albany. We have a good product. I have a good product and a good chancellor with a good plan. David is loved up in Albany. We are looking forward to going up there and selling our product. I know that we have one of the best plans of reforming our educational system. And we look forward to going to Albany and selling the product. That's my responsibility.