

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Unveils Blueprint for NYC's Economic Recovery

March 10, 2022

Mayor Eric Adams: Good job, Franklin. Oh, man. You walk up in here and you can feel the energy. Someone called me this morning and they said, "Eric, I was at the ferry, it was crowded. This was the first week where I had to wait on an elevator because it was so full." And there's one important title of my administration that I want you to always remember whenever you hear that we drop the ball. We're perfectly imperfect. There's nothing perfect about us, but we're committed. Some people have not caught on to the message. We are resilient, we are strong, we are dedicated. We are generations of people who have eked out a living.

Mayor Adams: From time to time, we're not going to get it right. But we're going to do right by you. And all I need for you to do is block out all the naysayers, block out all the noise, all the rhetoric, all those that want us to stay where we were. Stay with me and stay focused. We're moving forward, New York. We're moving forward and you got to believe. You got to believe. And it's because we have the right team.

Mayor Adams: When you listen to these stories of Salamanca and his dad working here – when you listen to the stories of three and four generations of pushing food carts. As I hear about these stories, you see the similarities. We may be coming from different communities, different cultures, different languages, different backgrounds, but you know what? We're all New Yorkers. We're all New Yorkers. And so I want to really thank my team up here in the BX. Headed by my good friend, our president, Vanessa Gibson. I'm surprised she's not here among us. Oh, where is she? She's there. And just a solid, solid brother who I really love always being around him, Councilman Salamanca who's here. As we can't wait to blow up that barge, Salamanca.

Mayor Adams: We have Assemblymember Amanda Septimo. We have Assemblymember Kenny Burgos. Kenny. Stand up, Kenny. This is the sharpest guy in Albany. And my girl, Councilwoman Marjorie Velazquez – doing some good things around the outside dining. State Senator Luis Sepulveda. Good to see Councilmember

Amanda Farias – everything she touches turns to gold. Councilmember Julie Menin – some good things with small businesses that are here. We have our chamber partners in Queens and Brooklyn. Just the whole team.

Mayor Adams: They are here because we are excited on what we are going to do for the city of New York. This is such an important moment. And Frank, I want to thank you and everyone here at Hunts Point. I learned today that my dad was a butcher. I thought it was here, but he was up in this area. I was just asking my brother who's around somewhere. My brother looks so much like me, people yell and say, "Man, you're doing a good job." He says...

[Laughter]

Mayor Adams: This team shows up every day. We try to figure out sometimes – why do we walk and see our fruits and vegetables in our shops? Because they're here. No matter what the weather is, they are here providing the services. And they are part of the essential workers that we have been talking about. Yes, police and fire and nurses and doctors. But you cannot telecommute their jobs. Onions are not in your stores because someone texts them over. They're in your stores because those trucks delivered them here. And I want to applaud them for their commitment and being part of the team of essential workers that we know. The recovery is not going to be about getting back to the old ways. It's going to get back to the new ways of doing things.

Mayor Adams: We are going to take this opportunity to reboot our entire system and make changes that are going to include equity and inclusiveness. How do we do it together? That's what we must do to move our city forward. And our amazing Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer put together the plan Rebuild, Renew, Reinvent. A blueprint for New York City's economy and recovery. Deputy Mayor, thank you so much for the work and commitment that you put into it. Marvel has a Wonder Woman. I have five wonder women. And they're doing their thing every day. And our moment is here. This blueprint for New York city economies, recovery is imperative for us. 70 action steps will be taken to revitalize our economy and move our city in the right direction. This is more than just a to-do list. This is about moving us in the right direction and hearing from all of our leaders. I saw Kathy Wylde, who's here, who's continuously talked about the growth between our communities and our business corporate sectors. Far too long we've had a wall between our corporate communities and government.

Mayor Adams: We are going to borrow from Ronald Reagan and tear down that wall. We are tearing down that wall and building the partnerships. Tearing down the barriers. Building a strong and resilient future with five pillars. Our first one is to restart our economy and economic engine. It's almost two years since COVID and we've come to a stall. It's time to recover and move towards restarting our economy from businesses to Broadway. It's time we get our city back in order to a pre-pandemic employment place, especially in the hard hit areas like tourism, hospitality, and our creative economy.

Mayor Adams: This is what this blueprint and plan is going to do. And is doing it by having a safe, clean, reliable, non-bureaucratic city. That is what we're going to do. This means expanding and intensifying citywide clean up efforts. We have to have a clean city, in every part of this city. It's a reflection of how we feel about ourselves. When we move through our city and see encampments on the sidewalks, on highways, when our streets are not clean, it sends the wrong message. And cleanliness is next to what?

Audience: Godliness.

Mayor Adams: Oh boy, we all went to church.

[Laughter]

Mayor Adams: So we're going to do a massive new promotional campaign to bring tourism back. A multi-billion dollar industry, we want it here in the city. Second, we have to fully support our small businesses. Many of these onions and other products are going to small businesses, to local bodegas and local shops and restaurants. We have to be there for them. So we're going to overhaul our city government, how it interacts with small businesses. It is just too challenging and bureaucratic to deal with government in our city. We have to stop that. You have to almost be sadistic to go into an agency to just get basic support for small businesses. Unacceptable. Unacceptable. We're going to gauge our small businesses not based on how many citations you give out, but how many businesses you open and continue to evolve in our city. That is our focus for them.

[Applause]

Mayor Adams: We're going to create new services. One type, one-stop shopping, navigating. You should not have to go from agency, to agency, to agency. We should do the navigating for you so you can be inside your small businesses, serving your customers and providing the tools that are needed to move forward. And it includes expanding on those new businesses that we think should grow in the city. Thirdly, we're going to open up new job markets and new opportunities. Everything from renewable energy to digital game development. It's something that some of you are familiar with, but you try to act like you're not. We're going to have cannabis growth here in the city. Y'all know what that is.

[Laughter]

Mayor Adams: You can sell it right here.

[Laughter]

Mayor Adams: We're going to dramatically expand our booming life science industry. More jobs, more opportunities. In the last two years, federal funding and venture capital investments in New York City life sciences have expanded. We want it to happen here. And we intend to make sure this industry has the space, the infrastructure of development, and not only be centralized in Manhattan. Here in the Bronx, you have amazing hospitals. We want to talk about Lincoln Hospital and some of the other hospitals up here to create the life science industries and have the space and infrastructure for it.

Mayor Adams: Four. We must connect New Yorkers to jobs. Far too many New Yorkers are not experiencing opportunity with jobs. Our young people and parents and communities must have jobs. And when we say employing people with jobs, we are including those living with disabilities. We are including them. They must be part of our job growth and removing the barriers that prevent that from taking place. And so that is the goal and responsibility that we have in accomplishing this task. And it's investing in skill development.

Mayor Adams: We're putting together a great workforce team that is going to invest in the development and expansion of jobs and expanding in childcare. My Assembly and Senate delegation, I really need you for childcare and how we get universal childcare. If you want to lift up a family, you lift up the opportunities of having safe places for their

children. My Assembly and Senate delegation, they understand that. I'm excited about how we move forward. The earned income tax credit and childcare.

Mayor Adams: Fifth. We must actively plan to build for a better future. The pandemic has really – we responded to the crises and we were just basically dealing with the current time and not looking towards the future. Our goal is to do so. So we're going to assemble a new New York. We can't stumble into post-COVID. We must start to think about the redefinition of what our city is going to look like around education, around remote learning, around remote employment. Around all of these new ways – our city. Telemedicine. How do we have a new New York?

Mayor Adams: We're going to partner with the Governor's office and put together a blue ribbon commission and define New York. By using what we learned to show our entire country how we move forward in a post-COVID era, we will never be the same. COVID has changed the game and we must be prepared to win in the game post-COVID. That is our goal. And that economic future is going to be one that supports all five boroughs. All five boroughs. I have spent more time in Staten Island, in the Bronx, out in Queens. I am not a Manhattan centered mayor. I'm a mayor of every borough in the City of New York. And you need to see your mayor in your borough. I'm going to spend as much time in the boroughs that need the support of this administration as much as possible. It's crucial for us to do so, particularly around employment.

Mayor Adams: As I see Jose Ortiz – we're just really happy to have him on our team as he's dealing with workforce development. Before I hand it over to our amazing deputy mayor, as I shared today with our union members and representatives here, we're going to put our money where our mouths are. We're going to invest – \$140 million in investments in Hunts Point Market. \$100 million in the redevelopment of the market itself and \$40 million for what these electeds have been stating so long – \$40 million into parks and infrastructure, green space.

[Applause]

Mayor Adams: Vanessa, Councilman, my State and Assembly delegation – they have been advocating for so long that they want to make sure that they have the quality that they deserve. I want to say to them, I want to say to Salamanca and the rest of you, you would never have a mayor that's going to ensure you have the power you deserve. You are strong, I am strong. You must tell me the agenda for your communities. Not I dictate

to you. And so Julie, and all of you, Vanessa, I'm going to hear from you so that you can say, "Eric, this is what we need on the ground." For far too long, you have been ignored as local electeds. No one is picking up your calls. Everyone is trying to dictate to you. Since I was a local elected, I'm not going to allow that to happen to you. You will lead your borough in the way that it's supposed to.

Mayor Adams: This is the largest wholesale food distribution facility in the country. So we have to be the best. It employs thousands of New Yorkers. Produces the fresh fruits and vegetables. It is 55 years old, and it is treated in a way that it's not receiving the respect that it deserves. We want to be part of building out this critical infrastructure of growing, producing the jobs for the future. We want to make sure that people live here and experience having the produce that are produced from here and go throughout our city – is healthy and is connected to the overall structure of producing food for the people of New York. And for my smoothie in the morning, I have a box of strawberries and it's only symbolic of what is produced every day in this city. This is an amazing gem that we have in this city. It has been ignored. And all we have to do is just give it a little polish, a little love and a little care, and it will shine for many more generations to come. And so I want to bring up my amazing deputy mayor, Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer.

[Applause]

Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer, Economic and Workforce

Development: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Good morning, everyone. As the mayor has mentioned, it is truly fitting that we are all here in Hunts Point to make this announcement. The produce market is responsible for 25 percent of New York City's produce. And the distribution center accounts for 12 percent of all of the food entering the city. And it's one of the biggest investments we are making in this plan. Importantly, however, it's also a community that has historically suffered from disinvestment. One that was heavily impacted by the pandemic. So we are committed through this plan to begin correcting those disparities in this community and in every community.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: Our mission is to bring opportunity to every New Yorker. And I'm extremely proud to be working with the mayor and our incredible economic recovery team to make this blueprint a reality. Now we're particularly humbled to be with so many partners in government, in business, labor, the not for profit sector, the philanthropic sector. And I thank you all for being here today.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: We know of course that delivering on the vision will require not just a whole of government approach, but truly a whole of society one. So I'm particularly grateful to have our amazing elected leaders joining today. There's also an incredible team that really stepped up to the plate and very, very quickly when the Mayor gave us his mandate to develop a blueprint, really did this work wholeheartedly. Completely leaned in. Never forgot what was at stake. Which is not just to the wellbeing of New Yorkers today, but really it's about the future of our city.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: So huge thanks. It's going to take me a second, but they all work really hard and so I want to name them each. Andrew Kimball, President of EDC (Economic Development Corporation). Kevin Kim. We can clap for them in the end, otherwise we'll never get out of here. Andrew Kimball, President of EDC. Kevin Kim, Commissioner of Small Business Services. Dan Garodnick, Chair, and Edith Hsu-Chen ED (Executive Director) of the Department of City Planning. Vilda Vera Mayuga, Commissioner of the Department of Consumer and Worker protection. Anne del Castillo, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment. Fred Dixon, President and CEO of NYC & Company. Clare Newman, President and CEO of the Trust for Governors Island. Lindsay Greene, President and CEO of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Chris Neale, Acting Director of the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development. Keri Butler, Executive Director for the Public Design Commission. Sarah Carroll, Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Sheelah Feinberg, Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Cultural Affairs. And the amazing presidents of our three library systems, Linda Johnson, Tony Marks, and Dennis Walcott. Thank you so much. Thank you so much.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: Now to understand our current economic reality. We first need to look back to the years and months before the pandemic. So two years ago, around this time in 2020, our overall economy was strong and it was growing. Unemployment was at an all time low of 3.7 percent. The citywide poverty rate was about 17.9 percent. Still way too high, but the lowest in 20 years. Now much has changed since then. New York has 400,000 fewer jobs today than we did two years ago, and close to 30,000 businesses have closed permanently. So we believe that the investments and the initiatives in this blueprint will accelerate the economy and help us more quickly to return to the pre-pandemic employment rates of our city. But as the Mayor said, if all we do is return to the economy that existed in February of 2020, we will not have truly delivered for all New Yorkers.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: That's because the pre-pandemic prosperity was really not shared equally. Unemployment for example, was over twice as high for Black residents as white residents, and over 1.5 times as high for our Latino residents. Now these gaps have only gotten worse with unemployment among Black New Yorkers currently at 15 percent – more than three times the national average.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: So with that in mind, we have designed this blueprint for an intentional, equitable and comprehensive economic recovery. As the Mayor mentioned, there are more than 70 initiatives in this blueprint, and I encourage everyone to go to nyc.gov/economicblueprint and view the entire plan. But I did just want to highlight a few more initiatives in addition to what the Mayor mentioned that we believe will have a strong impact for our communities.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: Of course, we have to start by reinvigorating our culture and hospitality industries. We will do that by providing support for artists and small cultural institutions, by developing a new cultural district in Governors Island, and expanding our marketing campaign to attract tourists back to the city, workers back to the offices. We will advance a very aggressive package of small business supports. This includes cutting opening times in half, waving fees, reforming licensing requirements, and eliminating the city's 25 percent surcharge on liquor licenses, which will really benefit venues and restaurants across the city.

[Applause]

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: We're going to make long overdue changes to the city's MWBE (Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise) program so that we can increase both the size and the number of city contracts going to our city's diverse firms. We're also focusing, as the Mayor mentioned, on emerging and rapidly growing industries, whether that's building out an advanced manufacturing industry, expanding our tech training education programs, strengthening and diversifying our city's film and TV industry, increasing supports for life sciences, tech, or green economy. But we all know that there is no growth if we don't invest in our workers.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: We will do that by embracing a citywide early education to adult approach to talent development by providing better financial empowerment and worker protections. It's going to be no small feat, but our goal is to revamp our public workforce system so that it works harder and better for New Yorkers

looking for skilled training and for jobs. And finally, we will be planning and building the future city in ways that center inclusion and resiliency. As the mayor mentioned, we'll be convening a blue ribbon panel with the State to tackle some of the biggest questions about our future city and also, align on the actions that we have to take together. We will speed up, this is one of my favorites, we will speed up our internal city processes around planning and building in the city.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: We're going to launch a new program called the NYC SEED Fund. This is Dan Garodnick's brainchild, which stands for Strategy for Equity and Economic Development. It's really a new capital investment framework to address our infrastructure needs to support growth and really prioritize equity outcomes across the five boroughs. And finally, I, too, am extremely excited about this. So much work has gone into – where's Clare Newman? There you are Claire. We'll be releasing this spring a request for proposals for a new academic anchor for the Center for Climate Solutions on Governors Island. We will do for Governors Island and the city and climate what the Cornell Technion campus on Roosevelt Island has done for applied sciences and for our city.

[Applause]

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: And as the mayor said, we're perfectly imperfect. So, for it's 70 initiatives, we hope it is a strong start. We will keep adding, of course, to the blueprint and look to all of you for new and innovative ways to drive our city's recovery. I want to end by just reiterating that I'm extremely excited about this work, and I'm really grateful to the Mayor for entrusting all of us with not just developing some of these ideas, but working in partnership with many people in this room and across the city. More than 300 stakeholders were part of the ideas embodied in this blueprint. We all know that and hope and believe that this is a plan that is not just about putting the entire force of city government, but really the entire force of leaders across different sectors behind this mission to accelerate our recovery.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: It's a plan that invests in our workers, in our buildings, in our neighborhoods, and in our companies. It's about strengthening the economic security of our people and the economic future of our city. We all know that we have experienced considerable struggle and loss over the last two years, but there has never been a more urgent time for New York to serve as a model for equitable recovery. And what better time to take up this mantle than now as the city continues to reopen and re-

emerge from the pandemic. And so, we have to bring our full resources to bear, and we have to call on every New Yorker to be a drum major for our recovery. So thanks to all of you. Let me turn it back to the Mayor.

[Applause]

Mayor Adams: Good job. So before we open for questions, we want to turn it over to our Councilman to speak on behalf of the electeds here in the Bronx, we're in his district. And he just wanted to say a few words before we open to any questions you may have.

[...]

[Applause]

Mayor Adams: I don't know if you can tell right now, because it's only been about three months. I'm not sure if you could really notice, but I love being mayor.

[Laughter]

Question: I'll keep it quick because it's chilly in here. So you saw our series of stories on the shelters and the problems. The holes in the shelter system and the shocking things that people who lived there were telling us, that the basics weren't available. Security was a real problem. I'm sure you've read those stories, right? So what these people were telling us was – the most shocking was that health, mental health services are not available on site in none of the ones I went to and talked to people, but specifically, in the Safe Haven ones. Those are the shelters for chronically homeless people. Fewer than half of those shelters have any mental health services and just three out of the 200 family shelters have one onsite. And when I was asking them, "Well, what do you do when you go to them and say, 'I'm having a mental health crisis here, I'm out of medication and I need to see somebody.'" He said, they gave him a Metrocard, which most of these people –

Mayor Adams: You redefine the definition of a short question. But seriously, unacceptable. And I'm going to visit some of those sites. I'll speak with you after so you can identify some of those locations for me and I'm going to do some pop-up visits.

Unacceptable. We have to do better, but let's be clear, our shelters must be a safe haven. We believe that the countless number of them are doing a great job. I'm really proud of the leadership there.

Mayor Adams: I don't want people sleeping on the side of the roads. As I drove up here, I saw people having encampments on the side of the roads. That's an indictment and we have to do better. There's no getting around it. We have to lean into places that we are failing and we must improve on them. And every time you and other men and women of the media point these issues out, we are going to address them. We are not going to run away from our failures. We must do better.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor Adams: Yeah, you should have asked that.

[Laughter]

Question: How dependent are these 70 points and the city's broader economic recovery? How dependent is this on a return to five day work weeks in places like Midtown and Lower Manhattan?

Mayor Adams: That was part of what the Deputy Mayor stated that cycling out of COVID is going to be a different work week. We're not clear what it's going to look like, particularly some of the men and women in the tech industry, they're operated differently. I had a meeting with about 20-something business leaders talking about how to get people back in office space. So I think your question is a good one. It is going to take us some time before we define what COVID is going to look like. But five day work week or not, we have to look at the 70 items that the Deputy Mayor outlined and talk about, "How do we assure everyone enjoys the prosperity of this city opening?" And no matter if you're in the office or not, you're going to need the onions, you're going to need the cantaloupe, you're going to need the food that comes out of Hunts Point Market. But we're going to factor all of this in, on what the new work environment looks like.

Question: I got a couple of quick off-topics. First on the \$100 million in infrastructure, could you just drill down a little bit and give us some more detail on that? And, I got one more question, [inaudible] you mentioned weed distribution or marijuana distribution

[inaudible] new opportunity. I wanted to ask you, do you think that people with weed convictions in the past should be kind of first in line for getting licenses to do that? And does that present a political problem?

Mayor Adams: The Deputy Mayor is going to talk about the – she's going to give you a short version of the 100 million, and she'll do a follow up, and it's in the blueprint. But I want to talk about those who are sort of part of the legacy project, those who have prior conviction because of heavy handed policing in many of the communities. Yes, they should be front in line to receive some of the licensing. But we need to go throughout the entire process. We don't want just to be – those individuals to be part of selling. They should be front in line growing, front in line in every aspect of it. We unfairly targeted Black and brown communities during the marijuana heavy handed arrests that I fought against when I was a police officer, and we can't go back to those days. They should be front in line. We should also improve their credit reports if they were arrested. We should have job training for them. We need to make them whole, and it's more than just, "Are you front in line for it?"

Question: Are you concerned at all about money, corporate types, using those folks as kind of a front to get to the front of the line to get those?

Mayor Adams: Yes I am. I'm going to continue to speak with Tremaine Wright, who has a major role. I'm going to speak with my lawmakers in Albany. I don't recall one corporate executive being stopped on Tremont Avenue and have someone going through their pocket and pulling out a joint, and then locking them up. So they were not front in line in the perp walk, they should not be front in line and benefiting from the cannabis industry. It needs to go back in the communities that were hurt the hardest, and that is what we need to focus on.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: So the \$100 million is a contribution towards what will be the ultimate full redevelopment of the produce market. It's a 55 year old facility, it's amazing, it's really important for our food security. It is a job anchor. And it's outdated. And so our work ahead with our local elected leaders, with the amazing leaders of the produce market, both labor and management, and other levels of government is to put together the right type of plan that finally, finally unlocks the true potential of this facility. So more to come in the months ahead, but it has taken more than a generation for the stars to align to have the will, to have the funding. We're going to make it happen.

[Applause]

Question: Okay, so I wanted to ask you about the [inaudible]. I mean, you're aware of this case – a kid got arrested on a gun charge, the gun went off, shot himself, shot the cop. Are you still outraged that he was released on bail given kind of what's come out [inaudible]? And do you feel misled at all by the NYPD on the circumstances surrounding his arrest? And do you feel like – sorry for the run-on sentence. Does this case still serve to you as a justification to include a dangerousness [inaudible] bail laws?

Mayor Adams: Let's peel this back in layers. That young man was shot because he had an illegal gun. That's why he was shot. That police officer was shot because that young man had an illegal gun, for the second time. Let's be clear, this was not the first time, this is the second time he had an illegal gun. Now, it may be me, but I have a problem with that. What we're doing today is we're saying, instead of that young man having an illegal gun, we want to give him a legal opportunity to be in our society. So if anyone states that my police officers are going out, putting their lives on the line, to remove illegal guns off the street, is at fault, I challenge that. It's a dangerous job removing illegal guns off our street. And here in the Bronx, the number of illegal guns on the streets of the Bronx, what these elected officials are trying to stop, it's horrendous. And we're going to get it right, we're going to have the right resources, we're going to have the right training, we're going to get it right. We can have public safety and justice, and that is what I'm going to do as the mayor.

[Applause]

Mayor Adams: Hold on, hold on, hold on. Because I don't want him writing saying that I avoided his question. You know?

Question: Does the illegal gun – now the judge suggested that the arrest – that the stop was flawed. Does the illegal gun justify a flawed stop? And I don't know –

Mayor Adams: No, no. We have to follow... A police officer can't break the law to enforce the law. I don't believe those officers broke the law. I think those officers were aware from a previous arrest of that young man. And there are steps to take to ensure you protect yourself, and protect the public. And so we will never say breaking the law is a way of enforcing the law. But those officers that put their lives on the line to remove illegal guns off the street should not be demonized. They were shot, the young man was

shot, the police officer was shot, because that young man had an illegal gun. That is why he was shot, and that is why the police officers were shot. We need to be clear on that. That's the core of what we're trying to stop, illegal guns from taking the lives of young people and young people feeling like they need to carry an illegal gun. That's what we're doing. Are we going to always get it right? I say we better get it right, because lives depend on it.

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