

New York City Council



Speaker's 2014-2015 Midterm Progress Report

RAISING THE BAR FOR NEW YORKERS

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When I became Speaker of the New York City Council, I committed to putting progressive values into action, building a more inclusive and equitable City and improving the quality of life for all New Yorkers. Two years later, I am proud of the ground-breaking work my colleagues and I have done. We have successfully passed landmark legislation and created initiatives that protect families and workers, defend immigrants, create and protect jobs, expand accountability and encourage civic participation.

During 2014 and 2015, we strengthened the paid sick leave law, boosted funding for worker cooperatives, and increased the number of public school students receiving free, nutritious meals. With the Mayor, the Council delivered a strong plan to grow jobs by investing in our manufacturing sector.

Our Unaccompanied Minors Initiative was a model for the nation in meaningfully addressing the humanitarian crisis of immigrant children fleeing violence in their countries and arriving alone in the City.

We have begun to address persistent racial disparities in our criminal justice system by introducing reforms to our bail system and an overhaul to the way summonses are issued for minor offenses. The Council also strengthened civil rights protections for job applicants with criminal records.

By working in partnership with our constituents, Participatory Budgeting has become the standard in 28 Council districts and residents of all backgrounds are deciding where to direct funding in their neighborhoods.

As you read through this Midterm Progress Report, you'll see the breadth and depth of the Council's leadership and action on behalf of all New Yorkers.

I look forward to hearing your ideas and concerns and partnering with you to help lift our city even higher.

Melissa Mark-Viverito
Speaker of the New York City Council



About the Council

There are 51 Council districts in our City and each is represented by a Council Member. Together, under the leadership of Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, we form the New York City Council—the largest municipal legislative body in the nation.

We write and pass laws that relate to nearly every aspect of City life. We also perform a robust oversight function, holding hundreds of hearings to evaluate agency performance and pressing issues affecting New Yorkers.

Creating laws and serving as an oversight body are two of our chief responsibilities. We also negotiate and pass the nation's largest municipal budget. Through this process, we work diligently to ensure that public funds are used equitably and reach each one of our neighborhoods.

The growth and development of our city is key to New York's success. This is why we also make decisions around the way land is used throughout the boroughs.

We also focus on the needs of our constituents. In our districts, we are on the ground each and every day. We respond to the individual concerns and needs of residents and to issues affecting our local communities. From Port Richmond to Sheepshead Bay and from Laurelton to Washington Heights and Soundview, we advocate for our constituents and work with them to solve problems.

Learn more about the New York City Council at council.nyc.gov/about/.



Setting a Higher Standard

Under Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito’s leadership, we have committed to raising the bar for justice and success in our City. To usher in meaningful changes for New Yorkers, we had to build a strong foundation at the Council—one that opened and strengthened internal processes.

A Member-Focused Body

To support and empower Members, the Speaker’s Office reinvested in and re-organized the Council. It implemented a legislative drafting unit to expedite requests from Members, added more staff to assist with oversight of City agencies, and positioned the Community Engagement Division to work more closely with diverse constituencies.

The Speaker also created a new division for the Council – Economic and Community Development (ECD)—to provide Members with expertise in neighborhood-based planning and design.

This groundwork has translated into a highly productive and effective Council. For example, Council Members have introduced 41% more bills and enacted 32% more local laws than through the same time period in the immediately preceding session.

Our ability to act as strong body on behalf of New Yorkers also rests on collaboration and inclusive decision-making. To this end, the Speaker and Central staff initiate regular and proactive briefings and actively engage and consult Members, borough delegations and caucuses. Members also have a meaningful opportunity to propose new budget initiatives and the Council’s Budget Negotiation Team and delegations have expanded roles in determining final proposals and outcomes.

These practices have improved the way we work and result in better outcomes for neighborhoods throughout our City.

A Commitment to Diversity

This Council better reflects this City. In the last two years, the representation of people of color, women and LGBT persons in the Council's central staff has significantly increased at the highest ranks. This is not only a matter of equity but it's also critical for developing policies that are responsive to all of our communities.

Our commitment to diversity in leadership is also evident in the budget negotiating process, which is led by three women of color: Speaker Mark-Viverito, Finance Committee Chair Julissa Ferreras-Copeland and Finance Director Latonia McKinney. This level of representation is unprecedented for the Council and our City.

We also want our nominees and appointments to boards, task forces and commissions to look like this City. In the first half of this term, we increased the diversity of people recommended to serve on these bodies.

The Council is placing more emphasis on multilingual outreach and proactively engaging ethnic and neighborhood news outlets, with the Speaker establishing a director of media diversity relations to drive this work.

We're also meeting people where they are online. The Council is implementing a plan for communicating with constituents via texting and social media; sharing data and partnering with civic technologists to further our work; and creating a website that demystifies government—all of which increase access to the Council and the diversity of voices participating in conversations around local issues.



Increasing Transparency

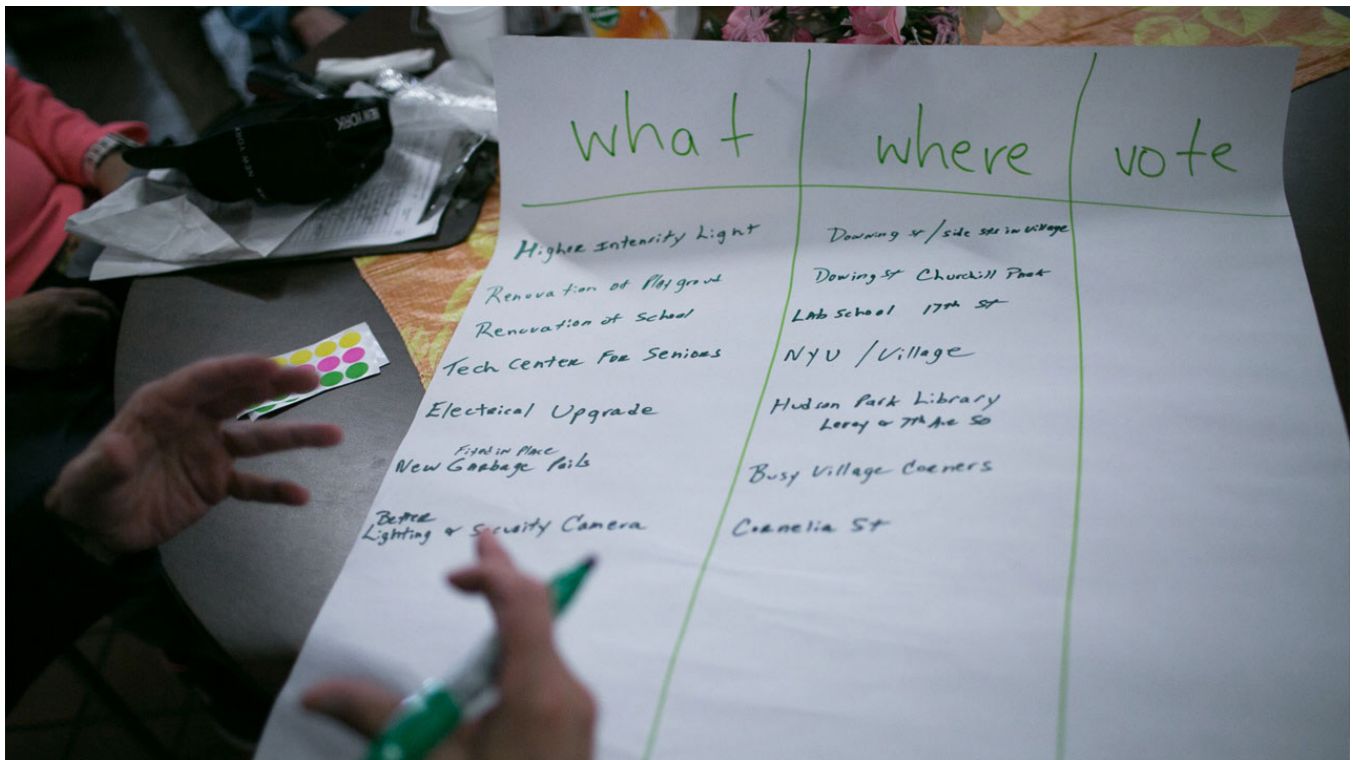
In the first year of our session, the Council ushered in a sweeping reform package that has made this legislative body more transparent in how it operates and more fair and inclusive for all members, and in turn, the constituents they serve.

For the first time ever, we established a fair and objective formula for the distribution of Member Item funding. Member Items are now equally allocated across districts, with an increase determined by the number of people living in poverty in each district. As a result, higher-needs neighborhoods now receive expanded resources to support local community groups.

Access to information and accountability are pillars of good government. This is why we added discretionary funding awards and capital projects to the City's Open Data Plan, implemented legislative open data provisions, and produced a public technology plan to increase engagement and access. We also mandated that organizations that receive grants provide a short report on the use of these funds.

Another centerpiece of these historic reforms is a series of changes that allow for fair consideration of proposed legislation. These changes include the creation of a dedicated unit charged with preparing legislation requested by Members, on an equal and transparent basis, and a "supermajority bill sponsorship" rule, providing that bills with 34 co-sponsors must have Council committees decide whether to hold a hearing on the bill. We also increased public access to information by requiring that every bill submitted for introduction include a plain language summary of its provisions.

We empowered chairs and committees to lead and work more effectively. We reduced the burden of meeting requirements to allow Members to focus more on oversight; made it clear that chairs retain the right to select topics and schedule hearings; and limited the removal of chairs, which may only be done through a two-thirds uncoupled vote by the full Council.



Securing an Equitable Budget

The City's budget represents not only the priorities and goals of all the boroughs, but also outlines a plan to achieve them. Working with the de Blasio Administration, the Council has adopted budgets that are transparent, progressive, and equitable, and that aim to ensure access, opportunity, and justice for ALL New Yorkers.

With the first budget this Council negotiated with the Administration, we ended what was known as the "budget dance." In the past, the Administration would propose deep cuts to various services, which would trigger budget hearings and negotiations, only to then produce financial plans with funds restored. This once predictable dance weakened Council oversight and made planning difficult for City agencies and not-for-profit organizations that provide critical services to New Yorkers.

Abandoning the budget dance has allowed the Council freedom to engage with agency leaders and with the public to analyze and discuss real operational issues. As a result, last year's budget included items the Council had called for: such as more police officers on the street, free lunch for thousands of students, and six-day library service in all five boroughs. The Council also introduced and strengthened a number of initiatives, including senior arts programming, a bail fund, increasing the availability of life-saving defibrillators, energy retrofits for old homes, and many others, some of which are outlined throughout the rest of this report.

At the same time, we pushed to strengthen accountability to ensure that these programs are effective and meet targets. We did this by adding and adjusting units of appropriation, and terms and conditions. Units of appropriation (or U/A) are the basic building block of the budget and represent strict spending guidelines for the City, and terms and conditions require the reporting of data associated with spending in key areas.

Over the past two years, the Council has included a number of new and reformed U/As, other budget presentation changes, and a record number of 30 terms and conditions that will allow the public to better able understand the impact and spending in a number of agencies.

Last year, the Council also initiated two task forces that will improve the efficiency and equity of our tax system. The Lien Sale Task Force focused on how the City can continue to collect taxes, while keeping residents in their home when possible. The Task Force on Economic Development Tax Expenditures will allow the City to better understand how well tax breaks given to developers promote economic development.

We have also been able to spend more time on local needs:

Participatory Budgeting expanded to 28 districts, allowing more communities to directly decide how to spend over \$32 million in capital funding.

The Council also reformed the way discretionary funding was distributed. This process takes advantage of Council Members' localized knowledge to better target services to residents. All districts received the equal amount of \$400,000 to distribute to local not-for-profits, with additional funds of up to \$100,000 allocated to districts based on their levels of poverty. The Council also equally distributes core discretionary amounts for aging and youth services.



Protecting Immigrants

New York thrives when its immigrant communities feel safe and integrated in this City we all call home. This is why we have taken the lead to keep families together and support some of the most vulnerable immigrants—children.

In response to the humanitarian crisis of unaccompanied immigrant children fleeing extreme violence in their countries to seek refuge in our City, the Council established a public-private partnership in 2014 to provide free legal consultations and representation to those children who were facing deportation. This initiative has taken on more than 745 cases directly, screened more than 1,600 immigrants and successfully concluded 147 cases; with 37 children granted asylum and 11 children having obtained lawful permanent residency through Special Immigrant Juvenile Status.

We provided \$4.9 million to the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project— the nation's first public defender program for immigrants facing deportation. By providing free, high quality legal representation, the project ensures that New Yorkers in immigration custody have a meaningful chance to present their immigration case. As a result, more than 115 individuals have, with the help of their attorneys, successfully proven their eligibility to remain in the United States legally.

The lack of a government-issued form of identification presents special challenges for many New Yorkers, especially those who are undocumented, homeless, or are gender non-conforming. Recognizing that many immigrants did not have the type of government-issued identification needed for daily transactions like seeking police assistance, entering their child's school to meet with teachers, and signing a lease or opening a bank account, we passed the landmark IDNYC Municipal ID program. Today, more than 700,000 City residents have a municipal ID card, making it the largest program of this kind in the nation.

In the first year of our term, we also passed two bills that significantly limit the City's cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The bills prohibit the Department of Correction and the Police Department from honoring civil immigration detainer requests issued by ICE unless a federal judge has issued a warrant and the individual has been previously convicted of a violent or serious crime or is a possible match on a terrorist watch list.

In the last budget, we included \$1.5 million for the new Immigrant Health Initiative with the goal of reducing health disparities among immigrants. This funding will support community-based organizations in their outreach and education efforts as they inform immigrant communities about language access resources and health care coverage options.

We also...

Provided \$1 million to the CUNY Citizenship Now program, which sends an attorney to Council Member's district offices to provide free immigration legal advice and services to constituents.

Allocated \$250,000 for the "Key to the City" Initiative (KTTC), which since 2011 has served over 25,000 New Yorkers. More than 16,000 immigrants have benefited from the consular identification and passport processing services at these events. Additionally, the events provide immigrant communities with direct access to resources that can help individuals overcome barriers to education, provide financial services and empowerment, and provide other resources based on the needs of the community.

Included \$3.3 million in the last budget for the Immigrant Opportunity Initiative, which provides funding for community-based organizations to provide legal services and assist immigrants with applications for citizenship or permanent residency, and various other immigrant-related legal services.

Allocated \$1.38 million in funding for community-based organizations to provide adult basic literacy services including English for Speakers of Other Languages and Graduate Equivalent Degree classes for adults who cannot read, write or speak English. This funding is in addition to resources allocated for supportive services such as counseling and case management for immigrant New Yorkers.



Defending Workers

In the first two years of this session, the Council enacted several pieces of legislation to protect the health and wages of New York City's workers. These included expanding Paid Sick Time and creating an Office of Labor Standards.

In the first year of our term, we strengthened the Earned Sick Time Act ("Paid Sick Time") by expanding the number of businesses covered by the law to those with five or more employees, eliminating some exemptions, providing for a grace period for fines against newly covered businesses, and calling for proactive investigations by the City.

Last fall, we created the Office of Labor Standards, which will study and make recommendations for worker education, safety and protection; educate employers on labor laws; create public education campaigns regarding worker rights; and collect and analyze labor statistics. The Office also has the authority to enforce paid sick time and the commuter benefits program, in addition to other responsibilities that may be added over time.

The Council allocated \$500,000 to the Day Laborer Initiative for the expansion and development of centers for these workers. These funds provide for dignified meeting spaces for day laborers, referrals to job or support services, legal help to address problems such as wage theft, as well as workforce training and development.

We also passed legislation that requires employers with 20 or more workers to offer a commuter benefits program. Commuter benefit programs allow employees to set aside part of their pre-tax paycheck for transit expenses, saving them hundreds of dollars per year. With this new legislation, as many as 450,000 more New Yorkers will have access to these benefits.



Strengthening Families

New York has a special responsibility to care for our most vulnerable, including kids in foster care, the economically distressed, the homeless and those in danger of becoming homeless, the food insecure, and survivors of domestic violence. This Council is committed to providing these New Yorkers with the resources they need to get back on their feet.

Youth who age out of foster care tend to experience worse outcomes than their peers in a variety of critical areas—but it is a challenge to understand the extent of these outcomes and develop tools to combat them. That's why we passed three bills requiring the Administration for Children's Services to report information such as whether youth in care have government-issued identification, their high school graduation rates, and outcomes after they leave care, including their housing situation, educational attainment, and employment.

No one should have to worry about losing a paycheck or a job because of illness or caring for a sick family member. That's why one of the first pieces of legislation we passed this session strengthened the paid sick time mandate by expanding the number of people covered, increasing the City's enforcement authority, and adding more protections for employees.

Under New York State law, the maximum stay at domestic violence shelters is 180 days, after which survivors who still require temporary shelters must enter the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter system. Previously, these families had to go through another eligibility assessment before being admitted to the DHS system. But now, under a bill we passed in 2014, survivors who have reached the maximum length of stay for domestic violence shelters are automatically deemed eligible for DHS shelter.

Last year, the Council allocated \$1 million for a new initiative to support children and families in the homeless system. The program supports six organizations that provide innovative, specialized services in the five boroughs to children and families in shelter. These services incorporate trauma-informed care, evidence-based practices, aftercare programs, comprehensive case management, and other strategies to prevent child maltreatment in high-risk cases.

In the last budget, we negotiated with the Administration to include an additional \$1.8 million to expand the City's Emergency Food Assistance Program and enhanced baseline funding to support food pantries throughout the boroughs. This funding covers direct food purchase, capacity expansion efforts through the Food Bank, and technical assistance grants to automate food stamp enrollment at pantries, soup kitchens and other appropriate locations.

We continue to support the Citywide Homeless Prevention Fund, most recently with an \$820,000 allocation for emergency grants to families in crisis and at risk of eviction, with the goal of keeping them in their homes and out of the shelter system.

In the 2016 budget, we provided \$250,000 to the Food Bank's EITC Assistance Program, which offers free income tax preparation services to low-income working individuals and families, helping them obtain the refundable Earned Income Tax Credit that they are entitled to but often miss out on.

The City Council is committed to ensuring that every working parent has access to affordable child care and that children enjoy safe, nurturing environments. That's why we allocated more than \$12 million to support child care programs that did not receive an EarlyLearn contract or received an insufficient contract. The funding supports 200 family child care slots and over 500 center-based child care slots.

Last year, we added \$4.4 million to the \$12.6 million in baselined funding for low-income child care vouchers. As of December 2015, these funds have already supported child care for 1,315 children, with additional children and families expected to benefit.



Investing in Students

The Council is committed to improving educational outcomes as a pathway to equality and opportunity for our 1.1 million public school children. In the past 2 years, we have focused on improving school safety and on increasing equity and access to essential resources.

In July 2014, we passed Avonte's Law, named for Avonte Oquendo, a 14-year-old autistic teenager who went missing from his Queens school in October 2013. This law is designed to improve school safety by increasing the number of audible alarms on public school doors. As a result, 97% of the 1,263 school buildings surveyed have requested and received door alarms, along with training for staff on student safety protocols.

In our first year, we dedicated \$6.25 million to provide schoolwide free lunch to approximately 170,000 middle school students in 290 schools. Through the Council's strong encouragement, the following year's budget included \$11.25 million for free lunch in all stand-alone middle schools and added \$53.1 million over four years to fully implement Breakfast-in-the-Classroom in all stand-alone elementary schools by 2019.

We provided greater access to school sports for students attending small high schools by allocating \$825,000 to the Small Schools Athletic League for 2015. That allocation has been increased to a total of \$1 million in the current budget to improve access to sports and enrichment services in schools participating in the League.

In the last budget, we allocated \$200,000 to support the Department of Education (DOE) in hiring a dedicated staff person as the LGBT liaison for schools to specifically address the needs of LGBT youth and address the interconnection of race, sexual orientation and gender identity. This allocation will also support additional professional development for public school teachers through the Lambda Literary Foundation.

Research indicates that racial and economic diversity has a positive effect on all students. For that reason, we passed legislation requiring the DOE to report annually on student demographics and on efforts to encourage diversity within schools. We also passed a resolution calling on the DOE to set diversity as a priority as it relates to admissions policies and other key decisions.

Transparency is a high priority for the Council, and to the parents and children served by our public schools. That's why we passed legislation requiring the DOE to provide reports on environmental inspections and reports; data regarding students receiving special education services; guidance counselors and social workers; and physical education in schools.



Caring for Seniors

New Yorkers 60 and older make up 18% of the City's population and will account for more than 20% by 2040. They overwhelmingly wish to remain in their City. Under Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, the Council has taken a number of steps to make it easier for New Yorkers to age in their homes and communities safely, comfortably, and with dignity.

In response to the spread of unregulated social adult day care programs providing inadequate services and exploiting vulnerable seniors, the Council passed legislation to bring accountability and transparency to these programs. We required that they register with the City and follow proper standards, and provided New Yorkers an opportunity to bring complaints about improper practices. Over 200 programs across the five boroughs have registered with the Department for the Aging (DFTA).

Affordable housing is one of the most significant challenges facing older adults and people with disabilities. In 2014, the Council increased the income limits to qualify for the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) programs, which protect individuals from unaffordable rent increases and allow them to remain in their homes. As a result, an additional 10,317 senior households and 3,086 households led by persons with disabilities are eligible for this benefit.

New Yorkers overwhelmingly express the desire to age-in-place. However, many face increased safety risks within their homes that make it difficult to remain. This is why the Council passed legislation creating a guide for landlords that will assist them in making age-friendly modifications and improvements to apartments to help keep older tenants safe.

Adult Protective Services (APS) provides adults with mental and physical impairments, 62% of whom are 60 and older, with the supports and services necessary to live safely in their homes. In 2015, the Council passed legislation that will make it easier to identify and refer individuals who may benefit from APS by collecting better data on referrals to APS and providing training to employees of agencies such as the NYPD, DFTA, and the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Thousands of older New Yorkers suffer from elder abuse, often without access to the help needed. To address this issue, the Council advocated for an unprecedented \$2.8 million in baseline funding for citywide elder abuse services.



Aiding Veterans

New York is home to more than 200,000 veterans, representing service eras from World War II to Iraq and Afghanistan. We have a moral obligation to recognize their brave service to our country by ensuring that they can live independent, rewarding lives upon their return to the City and civilian life. With the Council leading the way, New York City has established itself as a national leader in serving veterans and their families.

In 2015, we passed historic legislation to establish an agency specifically dedicated to supporting service members and their families. The Department of Veterans' Services will be a one-stop shop for veterans in New York City and will connect military families with benefits and programs designed to help veterans transition back to civilian life.

For too long, veterans' services were critically underfunded. Under Speaker Mark-Viverito, we successfully negotiated with the Administration to double funding for the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs, which supported the hiring of Veterans Service Officers to serve all five boroughs and connect veterans with the benefits and resources earned through their service.

To address the wide ranging needs of veterans and their families, the Council allocated \$940,000 for our Veterans Services Initiative. This funding supported programs for homeless prevention, job placement and transition services, legal help, mental health support, and community development.

The Veterans Advisory Board provides a vital link between our veterans' community and City government by lending an ear to their concerns and advising the Mayor and the Council on how to address their needs.

In 2015, to make the Board more accessible and accountable, the Council passed legislation which brought the Board into local communities by requiring public meetings in each borough and giving each member a publicly available email address to allow them greater engagement with veterans.



Reforming the Correctional System

Speaker Mark-Viverito and the City Council are committed to reducing violence in our City's jails, upholding the civil and human rights of people confined in them and ensuring the safety of jail workers.

In 2014, we passed a law requiring detailed reporting on the use of solitary confinement, including the number of inmates placed in solitary, their length of stay, and important information on the quality of life in solitary, such as the number of inmates who are assaulted and whether inmates receive basic services like showers and phone calls.

Last year, we passed six bills to increase the transparency of City jails. These new laws require the Department of Correction to report on use of force guidelines, inmate demographics, and visitations. They also create an inmate bill of rights and responsibilities that must be given to all inmates.

To better understand the population at Rikers Island, we passed legislation requiring comprehensive reporting on information never before seen by the public, including how many people are in jail, what they are charged with, their bail amounts, how long they are incarcerated pre-trial, how often bail is posted, and how bail affects the outcome of cases.

Our jail system needs enhanced oversight. That's why we increased the budget of the Department of Correction's watchdog, the Board of Correction, by 44%.



Ensuring the Public's Safety

New York is the safest big city in America. But gun violence and crime are still destroying families and undermining communities. The Council has taken critical steps to make sure more New Yorkers are safe.

To keep our streets safe and encourage community-based policing, the Council successfully fought for 1,297 new police officers in last year's budget. We also used our oversight authority to push for appropriate police training and retraining after the tragic death of Eric Garner, proving that support for the police and reform can go hand in hand.

We have also supported our law enforcement officers by allocating \$7.3 million for new bulletproof vests and increased capital funding to renovate three precincts (40th precinct, Brooklyn North, and the 13th Precinct).

The Council continued its support of the Anti-Gun Violence Initiative by adding \$8.8 million this fiscal year to 17 neighborhoods with the highest incidences of gun violence. The Council and the Administration have invested a total of \$19.9 million to provide a comprehensive and community-based approach to addressing gun violence. The wrap-around services include cure violence programs, community therapeutic services, school based conflict mediation, legal services, youth employment, job readiness training, arts programing, and a peer leadership committee.

We increased funding by \$18.9 million for our district attorneys' offices to ensure our prosecutors have the resources they need to combat crime. In addition, we allocated \$750,000 to support victims of human trafficking.

Synthetic cannabinoids, more commonly known by street names like “K2” or “spice,” have hit our streets hard and are causing significant health problems for many users, including hospitalizations. While synthetic cannabinoids are illegal, manufacturers have found and exploited numerous legal loopholes to keep their products on the street. Last year, we passed three bills that crack down on businesses caught selling synthetic cannabinoids, providing for both criminal and civil penalties, while not criminalizing users themselves.

Finally, we proposed reforming our broken summons system to reduce penalties for low-level, nonviolent offenses. By doing so, we moved to create a proportional system in which the punishment fits the crime.



Supporting Small Business

New York is a city built on the creativity and hard work of its entrepreneurs and small business owners. We are working to make it is easier than ever for them to get the information and assistance they need to start and grow their businesses and to exercise their rights during inspections.

Immigrant business owners have frequently faced unnecessary difficulty dealing with City inspectors. To address this, we passed legislation requiring that City inspectors be trained to follow specific protocols when interacting with non-English speakers, ensuring that such inspectors provide language translation services during inspections.

Last summer, we passed a bill requiring the Department of Small Business Services to create dedicated advocates to help business owners obtain services from City agencies.

Small business owners are often too busy running their businesses to visit City agencies that offer assistance. That is why we allocated \$400,000 to establish Chamber On-The-Go. This initiative deploys mobile vans around the City, staffed with personnel from City agencies and borough chambers of commerce, to bring City and chamber services directly to those they serve.

Violations should only be given to small businesses when there are clear offenses. We passed legislation requiring City tribunals to analyze which violations are ultimately dismissed so that the Department of Consumer Affairs can target its efforts to reduce the number of unnecessary and invalid violations.

Getting feedback on performance is important to small businesses around the City, and should be important to City government as well. That's why we passed legislation requiring agencies that inspect small businesses to get feedback on the inspection process.

To support the small businesses of tomorrow, we provided \$1.4 million to launch new technology incubators at community colleges in the outer boroughs to support technology entrepreneurs.



Spurring Job Growth

Good, stable jobs are essential to ensuring the livelihood of the City and its residents. Under Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito's leadership, the City has seen an increase in average overall wages, job growth rates above the national average, and the lowest unemployment rate since before the recession.

The Council allocated \$2.1 million to the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI), which funded a citywide effort to assist cooperative entrepreneurs with start-up capital, training, skills development, and outreach to unemployed, underemployed and discouraged workers in high-needs neighborhoods. Since its inception, the Initiative has worked with 141 worker-owners to establish 21 new cooperatives, trained 938 entrepreneurs, and provided technical assistance or business support to 24 existing worker cooperatives. The Council also passed legislation requiring City agencies to study how cooperative businesses contract with the City, and highlight opportunities to further integrate worker cooperatives into City contracting.

While many emerging industries in the City have seen consistent growth since the recession, the City's manufacturing sector has struggled to develop its technical workforce and expand the market for its products. In the FY2016 budget, we allocated \$750,000 to expand the Made in NYC brand in coordination with the Pratt Institute to support manufacturers and industrial entrepreneurs in the City. Made in NYC provides local manufacturers a platform to showcase their products and increase public awareness of their sector.

The Neighborhood Development Grant Initiative (NDGI) was created by the Council to provide community-based organizations with funding for a variety of local economic development activities, ranging from developing public art spaces to forming Business Improvement Districts. In the FY2016 budget, we allocated

nearly \$1.3 million to the Initiative, which resulted in the establishment of 57 separate projects throughout the City.

The Council renewed funding for Minority and Women-Owned Business Leadership Associations to ensure that the City's minority and women-owned entrepreneurs (M/WBEs) have guidance on submitting bids for government contracts, resources for marketing services to connect with potential customers, and project assistance in securing financing and developing proposals. Eight leadership associations were funded in the FY2016 budget, connecting M/WBEs throughout the City with business development training and support.

In 2015, we launched the Young Women's Initiative (YWI), which brought together community, government, academic, and business leaders to address the many obstacles that young women of color face in overcoming economic and workforce disparities, among others. For four months, YWI's Economic and Workforce Development Working Group met in bi-weekly meetings with the objective of crafting policies and legislation to enable young women of color in the City to find meaningful career opportunities. We are eagerly awaiting the policy recommendations of the Initiative's working groups.



Balancing Land Use

New York is constantly changing and evolving but as we grow we can't lose those qualities that make our neighborhoods such an important part of our identity. The Council's work in land use strikes this balance between recognizing our City's need to adapt and our desire to protect its diversity and energy.

Building on our Engines of Opportunity report on strengthening the manufacturing and industrial sector in 2015, the Speaker and Council unveiled with the Administration an Industrial Action Plan, a critical investment that will boost our local economy and provide jobs for thousands of New Yorkers. The plan protects our core industrial areas by strengthening restrictions in our Industrial Business Zones, among other support.

The Council's work in negotiating developments over the last two years resulted in significant outcomes such as Astoria Cove, the first project in our City that integrated a mandatory inclusionary housing component, and the Vanderbilt Corridor, which includes over \$200 million of transit investment and a new generation of office buildings for Midtown.

Through the use of our zoning powers and our ability to grant tax exemptions, the Council has advocated for and approved applications which will facilitate the development of thousands of new units of affordable housing and preserved the affordability of thousands of units of existing affordable housing for another generation of New Yorkers.

Ground-up planning is critical for ensuring that communities are shaping development. When the Administration decided that East Harlem and other communities would be targeted for a rezoning as part of an affordable housing plan, the Speaker launched a ground-up planning process that prioritizes community

needs and that serves as a model for other districts. This process included a series of public meetings that engaged hundreds of community members in the development of the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan.

During 2014–15, we also designated individual landmarks and new historic districts across the boroughs, including buildings such as the Stonewall Inn, for their architectural merit and cultural and historic importance.



Preserving Affordable Housing

There has never been a more critical time to preserve our City's affordable housing stock. That's why we've taken steps to protect tenants' rights, health, and safety, with a particular focus on seniors and public housing.

We created the Affordable Housing Preservation Task Force to take advantage of the invaluable understanding Council Members have of their districts, and efficiently link that understanding with the knowledge of community-based organizations and the preservation programs of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). The Task Force works to preserve affordability by creating new policies and implementing localized strategies in Council districts.

In the second year of our term, we enacted laws to protect tenants from unscrupulous landlords, including bills to protect rent-stabilized tenants from overly aggressive buyout offers. Under this legislation, it is unlawful for owners making buyout offers to provide false information to tenants or to contact tenants at odd hours. The legislation also requires that owners inform tenants of their rights in connection with buyout offers, including their right to stay in the apartment, seek an attorney's advice, and not be offered any new buyout offers within 180 days.

Throughout the first half of our term, we have passed legislation to protect our most vulnerable populations, including seniors and other tenants with mobility issues. The bills we passed require landlords to provide occupants with 72-hours-notice prior to performing work that interrupts elevator service and require the Department of Buildings to refer immediately hazardous elevator-related violations to HPD for action under the emergency repair program.

In the first year of our term, we updated the City's energy code to stricter standards that could yield energy savings of more than 18% to buildings across the City.

Although crime in the City has reached historic lows, violence in public housing remains unchanged. This Council, under the Speaker's leadership, is committed to keeping NYCHA residents safe. That's why, in the first two years of our term, we allocated \$68.8 million in capital funds to NYCHA for security enhancements and infrastructure upgrades that include closed circuit television cameras, exterior lighting, door replacements, and renovation and reconstruction of common areas.

NYCHA senior centers provide critical services, including recreational, social, educational, and cultural programming for thousands of housing residents, but funding shortfalls have threatened them several times. In the first year of our term, we provided \$17.1 million to fund the ongoing operation of 24 community centers and 33 senior centers under NYCHA management, and we continued this commitment last year with \$3 million to fund the ongoing operation of 15 more senior centers.

This Council, under the Speaker's leadership, is committed to ensuring that the voices of the more than 400,000 New Yorkers who live in public housing are heard in City Hall. Over the first two years of our term, we held four Council hearings in public housing developments to amplify the voices of NYCHA residents—something that had never been done in the history of the Council. We continue to place NYCHA residents front and center in Council-driven community planning and engagement efforts.



Improving Transportation

New York needs a safe, reliable, affordable transportation network in order to thrive in the twenty-first century. The Council is committed to both maintaining the infrastructure we already have and building out the transportation networks of tomorrow, protecting New Yorkers' safety and pocketbooks.

Over the past two years, this Council under the Speaker's leadership passed 22 bills as part of Vision Zero, an ambitious initiative to improve traffic safety and, ultimately, eliminate pedestrian and cyclist fatalities. These bills have improved street safety by protecting the right of way for pedestrians and cyclists, requiring side guards on trucks, installing slow zones throughout the City, making more crash data publically available, improving accountability of taxi and for-hire-vehicle drivers, and lowering the Citywide speed limit to 25 mph.

In January 2016, legislation passed by this Council took effect requiring employers with 20 or more employees to offer a commuter benefits program. Commuter benefit programs allow employees to set aside part of their pre-tax paycheck to pay for transit expenses, saving hundreds of dollars per year. With this new legislation, as many as 450,000 more New Yorkers now have access to these benefits.

As part of our 2014 Comprehensive Platform to Combat Climate Change, we passed legislation requiring the City to reduce its fleet of almost 27,000 vehicles by at least 9% through strategies including car-sharing programs and requiring the creation of the City's first comprehensive plan for the implementation of Bus Rapid Transit, which makes bus service faster, more reliable, and more convenient.

Trucks on City streets raise a host of environmental, traffic congestion, road maintenance, and pedestrian safety issues, especially when they don't comply with the City's designated truck route rules. That's why we

passed a pair of bills requiring the City to study truck route compliance and pedestrian and cyclist safety along truck routes.

In last year's budget, we secured a \$103.4 million increase to baseline funding for Citywide street resurfacing, which will go a long way toward keeping our streets safe and reliable. We also allocated \$2.5 million to support Vision Zero education initiatives, maintaining a real and lasting commitment to pedestrian safety. Children are among our most vulnerable pedestrians—that's why we added 80 new school crossing guards.



Inspiring Arts & Culture

For many New Yorkers, the arts are a central feature of civic, social and economic life in our City. The City Council under Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito's leadership is dedicated to supporting and strengthening New York City's vibrant cultural life.

In the last budget, the Council provided a total of \$15.7 million for cultural initiatives, including three new ones focused on seniors, young filmmakers and gun violence prevention. Through the newly-introduced Immigrant Cultural Initiative, we also allocated \$3,187,500 to support cultural organizations providing programming focused on the history and traditions of the City's immigrant communities.

Within that same budget, we were able to get the Administration to restore library funding to 2008 levels. This resulted in a historic increase of \$343 million in expense funding for the City's library system, ensuring citywide six-day service.

Legislatively, the Council required the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs to prepare a comprehensive cultural plan for the City that analyzes our City's current cultural priorities and assesses how to improve on the delivery of cultural resources.

We also passed a local law that aimed at strengthening community outreach and increasing public participation in the Percent for Art program.

Finally, the Council passed a series of resolutions recognizing significant cultural cornerstones, including one declaring January 15th-22nd of each year as Peace Week in the City of New York; one commemorating the

70th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps; and one praising Pope Francis for his lifelong pursuit of peace among all peoples and commending him on his historic visit to New York City.



Promoting a Healthy NYC

A healthy New York is a strong New York. From affirming the basic human rights of transgender New Yorkers to working towards ending the AIDS epidemic, our health achievements are as diverse as the City itself.

In December 2014, we passed legislation to eliminate an antiquated requirement that made surgery a precondition for transgender New Yorkers to correct the gender marker on their birth certificates. Now, New Yorkers are able to amend their birth certificates by visiting an expansive pool of medical and mental health professionals who can attest to an individual's gender, increasing access for transgender people, a group that has historically been discriminated against and disenfranchised.

In the first year of our term, we passed a package of legislation to regulate the sale of animals in pet shops. Taken together, these laws strengthen the City's shelter system, empower consumers, decrease the number of unwanted litters, increase the number of lost animals returned to their owners, and make us part of the nationwide effort to keep bad actors out of the pet supply chain.

We provided a total of \$1 million in the current budget to improve access to health care, address cultural and language barriers, and target resources and interventions for underserved populations. The Access Health NYC Initiative provides funding to 17 culturally and linguistically competent community-based organizations in all 5 boroughs to do outreach and public education about options for health care access and coverage.

In our second year we allocated \$975,000 for Hepatitis B and C outreach, screening, and detection efforts. We also passed legislation requiring an annual report on Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C to help better target our efforts in the future and ensured the Health Department's budget included 11 new positions to support the expansion of outreach, evaluation, surveillance, and reporting related to viral hepatitis, a silent killer.

To help end the AIDS epidemic in New York, we have committed \$6.6 million to community-based prevention and supportive services. We also successfully negotiated with the Administration to include an additional \$1.1 million to expand prevention services.

Last summer, we were confronted with an outbreak of Legionnaire's disease, a pneumonia-like illness, in the South Bronx. We responded with legislation requiring cooling towers, which were breeding grounds for the bacteria that caused the outbreak, to be registered, inspected, and tested regularly, with the goal of preventing future outbreaks and protecting New Yorkers.

The Council passed two resolutions to raise awareness about the human papillomavirus (HPV)—one declaring January Cervical Health Awareness Month in New York City and another calling on the state to clarify that young people under the age of 18 can consent to an HPV vaccine, which the New York State Department of Health has recently moved to do through rulemaking. The Speaker's open discussion of her HPV diagnosis has helped destigmatize this very common cancer-causing sexually transmitted infection and brought attention to prevention and screening.



Making NYC Greener

Perhaps no challenge poses a greater long-term threat to our City than climate change. In the last two years, the Council has set an aggressive new goal in New York's fight against climate change and has taken steps to improve the environment and support green programs for our constituents.

In the first year of this session, we passed a bill setting a bold new goal of reducing citywide greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050. New York is the largest city in the world to commit to this goal, cementing our status as a world leader in combatting climate change. This also sets the stage for the City to take aggressive steps to address climate change going forward.

Last year, we made sweeping changes to the Air Pollution Control Code, which had not been comprehensively updated since its creation in the 1970s. The revised Code will reduce emissions from char broilers, fireplaces, food trucks and refrigeration vehicles, which contribute to both lung diseases and global climate change.

In our first budget we established a new initiative, "A Greener NYC," that funds 16 organizations operating environmentally-focused programs. The funding supports programs related to environmental education, advocacy, community service; and green-job training, contributing to the improvement and conservation of the City's air, land, energy, open spaces, and other resources.

Last summer, expanding on previous legislation, we extended and expanded a prohibition on stores propping open their doors while operating air conditioners. This addresses energy waste, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and, by reducing the strain on the electric grid during times of "peak energy," helps defend the City against the threat of summer blackouts.

In 2015, we passed a bill that will ensure the Department of Environmental Protection inspects, unclogs, and repairs catch basins more frequently, with no community neglected. The bill was passed in response to long-standing concerns about local flooding triggered by improperly maintained sewers and catch basins.

We recently passed a bill that promotes the use of geothermal energy in New York. Geothermal energy uses the constant heat beneath Earth's surface – which is 50-65 degrees Fahrenheit in the City – to either heat or cool the buildings above-ground. Using geothermal energy in buildings instead of burning fossil fuels can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve local air quality, and create green jobs locally.