

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Announces "Hunts Point Forward"

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Andrew Kimball, President and CEO, New York City Economic Development

Corporation: In this just glorious park, in this amazing borough of the Bronx to unveil the Hunts Point Forward Plan which, when it comes to community planning, I'm not sure I've seen anything better than this. I think this is really a national model that we're celebrating here today. We're celebrating it because it's a plan by the community, for the community. We at EDC, were privileged to be able to play a role in it and thrilled to be part of this announcement today. I, of course, want to thank my colleagues at EDC who worked very hard, but alongside and with a lot of guidance and direction from amazing community leadership, most particularly the Hunts Point and Longwood Community Coalition, Council Member Salamanca, Community Board 2, but a whole slew of key elected officials have been involved in this project, a number of whom you are going to hear from today.

Kimball: I want to make a special shout out also to Urban Health Plan, The Point CDC, Casita Maria, Greater Hunts Point EDC, and many others who provided input and feedback and worked with us through the height of the pandemic to come out with a product that I think we can all feel really proud about. This is a 15-year commitment to improve the quality of life and spur equitable economic activity right here in Hunts Point, home to 12,000 New Yorkers. Now, it is my pleasure to introduce my amazing boss, the Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer.

Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer, Economic and Workforce

Development: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you, Andrew. Thank you to all the incredible partners in government, and of course, community leaders who are not just with us here today, but have been so central to what the Hunts Point Forward Plan represents and reflects. Now we were in the Hunts Point peninsula when the mayor unveiled our plan to accelerate our economic recovery. It was important to us that that wasn't just one day in the Bronx, in Hunts Point to talk about the work, but that

this is the type of work that we have to do on a continual basis. Of course, we're back in the Bronx. Of course, we're back at Hunts Point, and that is extremely important to us.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: The plan is a good one and a meaningful one for a number of reasons. One, because it starts with the people. If we are truly going to reinvest, rebuild, reinvent our economy, we cannot do that just within government. We cannot come up with or develop a community plan. Without it, in fact, being driven and shaped and influenced, not just through the printing of the document, but in its implementation by the community organizations who know this community so well and, of course, have always been there not just to seize opportunities, but to also meet different gaps that might exist in the community. The second is that this is a plan. It's a 15 year plan, but we know that a plan is only as good as the execution of it. We have to put our money where our mouth is. And so, this administration and partnership with the City Council, of course, and so many partners in government, we're investing in Hunts Point. We're investing in this plan tens of millions of dollars in addition to a historic investment in the produce market in Hunts Point.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: And that's just the beginning because we know this work is not over. There's some critical, short term investments that we have to make, and then we have to keep going. That is the third point that I wanted to make sure we talked about during this event. That we know that the challenges of this community, some of them are historic and entrenched and therefore the interventions, what we do, can't just be a flash in the pan. That we have to tackle long-term issues of environmental justice, long-term issues of sustainability, long-term employment issues, and do that in a way that honors the incredible work done and led by the community.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: And so, thank you all for being here today, for all of your partnership. A special shout out to the team at EDC. I know they learned a lot through this community planning process, and that there's a way to do it where it's not just about outreach, where it's not just about projects happening to communities, but really where it's true engagement, and that these are projects that are developed with community and will continue to be implemented with community. So thanks to everyone for being here today, and congratulations.

Kimball: Thank you, deputy mayor. It's now my pleasure to introduce somebody who grew up just down the block, who knew this space before it was a spectacular park, and

has really fought for so many improvements over the years, and that's Assembly Member Septimo. Please come up. Thank you.

[...]

Kimball: Thank you, Assembly member. It's now my pleasure to introduce one of your colleagues in the legislature. Another great champion for the Bronx in this neighborhood,

[...]

Kimball: Great. Thank you, Assembly member. It's now my great pleasure to introduce one of our key partners in the City Council, the chair of the city's Economic Development Committee, Council Member Amanda Farias.

[...]

Kimball: Department of Transportation Commissioner Ydanis Rodriguez, I want to introduce, and Parks Commissioner Sue Donoghue. Thank you so much for your partnership. I'm now really pleased to bring up a key member of our working group in this plan, somebody who's really a visionary in her own right, a visionary for this community. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the executive director of the Point Community Development Corporation, Maria Torres.

[...]

Kimball: Thank you so much, Maria. Our next speaker is somebody who's got some very important responsibilities in this borough, somebody who very early on, within, in fact, I think the first week and made it clear that not only Hunts Point, but Kingsbridge and Bronx Parking, and I can go on and on and on and on, were her key priorities on economic development. And I really love that as somebody who has to deliver is somebody who's demanding results along the same lines of what we hope to deliver at EDC. So it's really my pleasure to introduce Borough President Vanessa Gibson.

[...]

Kimball: All right. Thank you borough president. And now I'm lucky enough to introduce a lawmaker who probably needs no introductions, although he just got one, and worked on this plan with us tirelessly throughout the pandemic and since the time I started at EDC has been a consistent partner in getting things done in this district and particularly in the broader Hunts Point area. And that's Council Member Salamanca.

[...]

Mayor Eric Adams: Oh, man. And I'm going to be brief. I wanted to sit in the stands and just allow the real heroes and sheroes that made this happen, this is their moment. I am up here and spending time in the Bronx, because the Bronx is back because they had my back, and I'll never forget the commitment and dedication. You have been ignored for far too long; highest number of students, lowest number of graduations, access to school, healthcare issues. You look at all of the negatives and you keep seeing the Bronx.

Mayor Adams: Well, we are going to turn that around with real partnerships and listening to what's on the ground, this coordination, this effort, this continuation of what was put in place and having a Bronx borough president that has a real passion and vision for the Bronx on all ends. This is how we're going to get stuff done. I look forward to it, Borough President Gibson. Look at this park. This is a beautiful park, and just to come here and walk through and enjoy the waterway and enjoy what we are doing. The Hunts Point community fed the city during COVID. Fed the city during COVID, continued to operate, made sure that we had the resources we needed.

Mayor Adams: And we're pressing go on a complete reset for not only the Bronx, but for our entire city, and the indicators are there. People will start understanding we are winning. We're winning. 40% of business returned in our city, outpacing the nation. 100,000 new jobs. 30% decrease in shootings. 30% decrease in homicides in April and May. Yesterday, I was in Times Square. Over 350,000 people came to visit on Monday, just 2,000 away from the top numbers typically on Monday. We are seeing an unbelievable return to our city through tourism, but we're not going to make the mistakes we made in the past, where certain parts of the city benefit from our prosperity and we're leaving out the outer boroughs in general, but specifically, this great borough called the Bronx.

Mayor Adams: We are investing in Hunts Point and the entire neighborhood, so that both can reach their full potential. We already committed \$100 million to Hunts Point to improve the market's infrastructure. Hurray to you, Councilman Salamanca, who was clear and focused. And people will say, "You're always hanging around with Salamanca." That's my guy. That's my guy. These Bronx electeds are so solid about helping people on the ground, and another \$40 million into parks and improvements of the neighborhoods.

Mayor Adams: Hunts Point forward is a 15 year plan, but it has short-term and immediate benefits for us all. Although we talk 15 years, there are things we're going to do right away, expanding access to healthcare through pop-up health clinics and screenings with a permanent facility in the peninsula redevelopment. This is good stuff that we want to do to deal with the healthcare crisis. Right here in this amazing park, we restored a portion of the shoreline, making the park more resilient and providing more park space for visitors. That is on top of the list of my amazing, amazing Park Commissioner Sue Donoghue. We are blessed to have her as part of this amazing team. She has you on our radar. You should all be proud, because the Bronx is on our radar.

Mayor Adams: We're seeing too many crashes also. We're not just in one area, because safety is safety. Vehicle crashes that lead to fatalities or serious injuries are just as important as a gunshot that leads to fatalities or serious injury. So, what are we doing? We are going to improve pedestrian traffic safety at many intersections by making crossings shorter, addressing signal timing, and improving bike connections. The Bronx should not be let out of dealing with these traffic fatalities. When we do an analysis, the highest numbers are in the Bronx. Think about that. You're being hit on all ends, and people are not acknowledging because of our lack of investment in infrastructure changes that this is taking place. We're making real improvements for street lighting as well.

Mayor Adams: Now, you will feel the efforts in terms of safety, better access to healthcare, and improved green space, because every New Yorker deserves a safe, clean community. It's something that I believe in and that's something that we are going to produce. And so I want to acknowledge all of our partners, NYCEDC, Councilman Salamanca, as I stated, for being a real push on this, The Point CDC, Urban Health Plan, Casita Maria, Greater Hunts Point's EDC, Rocking the Boat, Hunts Point's Alliance for Children, the HOPE Program, Neighborhood SHOPP, Community Board 2,

the Business and the Food Distribution Center, and all those who are coming together to make this happen, and the countless others who are saying that we can do this.

Mayor Adams: We can rebuild. We can renew. We can reinvent, and it starts right here in the Bronx. And so thank you for all being a partner in this. Amazing, amazing things are happening in this great borough. We've always had some of the greatest people living right here in the Bronx. Now we're going to give them the greatest level of support that they deserve. I'm happy to be in the Bronx. You're going to see a lot of me. You know?

[Crosstalk]

Question: This is about this, but it's about a few other things too. In March, you made the announcement at the Terminal Market talking about revitalization to the community. I remember asking at that press conference for some more details about what that would mean. And today, I looked at the report and I'm hearing what you guys say, I'm seeing action items and a bunch more details. So what I want to ask is, at other press events, yesterday, which I wasn't at, and there was one, I think it was last week with Andre Mitchell, when you're asked for more details, like yesterday with the housing, sorry it's taking so long, you said, "Well, we're not going to give it now." My understanding with the housing question is it's going to be on pace with what de Blasio set out. Is that right, the goal for affordable units at 25, 30,000? Also, do you plan to put out more details as things develop, as you did here?

Mayor Adams: This is what I learned. Those of you, like you in the media, you criticize Bill de Blasio for focusing on units. Do you remember that?

Question: I didn't criticize him.

Mayor Adams: Okay. I read it a lot, because you guys were right. Everyone was talking about units. That is not what we should be talking about. Don't talk about when you signed the deal to build units. Talk about how many are allowing people to be in. That's our focus, how many people are going to be in those apartments. So no matter how many numbers I throw out there, you are going to judge me on my end results, and that's what I'm saying to you. Watch my end results. I'm going to, one of you brought up yesterday, we're heading to Houston to see the plan that Mayor Turner is doing. We're

not leaving any stone unturned. We want to get this right. And so what you've done with previous mayors, I got it, but I'm not previous mayors.

[...]

Question: Yeah, this is for Council Member Salamanca.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: As we know, the South Bronx is already so saturated with these projects and construction. The traffic and parking is already a nightmare here. How do you plan to carry out these projects without further disrupting the residents here?

[...]

Kimball: Okay. We have other on-topic questions?

Mayor Adams: Well, why don't we do it when you do off-topic, so we can free everyone from the heat? I don't want to put y'all through this, so you could bounce. You could bounce while I deal with Michael and his off-topics.

[Crosstalk]

Question: Likewise. So, this plan you're talking about today, has this started? I walked over here from the bus, and this street, I noticed there's trash all over. Have you guys started, and when do you expect to see some of the results on some of the short-term action items on the list you got?

Mayor Adams: Can you talk about the starting place? But even if we weren't doing the project, you should not be seeing trash on the streets and that's why we're putting money in the budget, because our streets must be clean. There's no excuse to have dirty streets.

Kimball: Yeah. As the mayor said and the Council member, there are short-term initiatives and there are long-term initiatives. Just a couple on the short-term initiatives,

we're going to be adding to this spectacular park a half an acre of additional waterfront access, a really important thing. That's going to happen in the relative short term. We're going to be improving crosswalks for safety, absolutely critical. The mayor talked about traffic fatalities. We've got to improve safety crossing the streets. We're going to be adding bike lanes in the short term. And then there are longer term projects. Many of them connected with the food distribution center for how we bring trucks in and out, and rebuilding streets completely to create additional safety measures. There's also a slew of immediate short term health initiatives in terms of supporting our not-for-profit partners in the community, both of their capacity building around health delivery, but also in terms of workforce development.

Question: Yes, two questions. First, on the issue of the lifeguard shortage right now, and you've got the Parks commissioner there. How is it that we could be entering the summer at a time when this administration has promised to do the most possible for the poorest children in this city that you won't be offering free swimming instruction? How can you not solve this problem? Then I have a second question for the mayor about his endorsement.

Mayor Adams: Well, let me touch that. The shortage of lifeguards is a national problem. Previous administration did not do swimming training also because of the shortage. We want to think outside the box and see what we can do. Our high school students that are in swimming classes or on swim teams. We're going to push the envelope and see, is there a way we can do it? I'm a big believer... I was in strong support of Swim Strong when I was the borough president. We don't want the drowning numbers that we've witnessed. Were surrounded by water. I believe our young people should get swimming lessons. And I'm going to sit down with the commissioner and say, "What are some other ways we can do it?" I'm going to reach out to the chancellor and see if there's ways we can do it. And I'm going to look at the laws. We want to give instructions for swimming. But if we don't have the lifeguards, that's impacted nationally. It impacted the previous last year, they didn't do training as well. We want to see if there's a creative way that we can get it done.

Question: Anything that the Parks commissioner wanted to add on this?

Commissioner Susan Donoghue, Department of Parks and Recreation: No. Obviously the mayor covered it.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: Then my other question, mayor, you endorsed Kathy Hochul today. Tom Suozzi put out a statement where he said, "Eric Adams is still a brother, but if he wanted a governor who was going to help on crime, he would pick me because I'm the one who's going to fix bail." So what is your answer to why you didn't choose Tom Suozzi?

Mayor Adams: We're still a brother. And brothers realize that, hey, sometimes your brother does something differently, but if you're part of the same family, you still love each other. I love Tom. I just made a decision on who I was going to go for governor. It's a tough choice. Sometimes I have to pick my other brothers. Even the one that looks like me act like he's the mayor all the time. But that's just the life we live. Good luck to Tom.

Question: Mr. Mayor. I had a couple other questions. But on lifeguards, would the problem be at all helped if the pay was better for lifeguards and would follow up through on your promise to fund your city budget with one percent of money going to parks.

Mayor Adams: No.

Question: So pay would not improve the situation at all?

Mayor Adams: No.

Question: Why not?

Mayor Adams: Because people who are lifeguards, they do it because of the love of the swimming. They do it because of the love of protecting people. They do it because several different incidents. It's not about dollars and cents. It's about having people that enjoy being lifeguards. Like I do this job because I love it.

Question: Well, not everyone has that luxury, though.

Mayor Adams: But it's a salary that comes with it. It's a union salary that comes with it. And so it's important to make sure that we always pay our union employees correctly.

And we believe we do a good job, but there's a national shortage. I think that's going to be missing from the stories. There's a national shortage of lifeguards. And so what we need to do is build out a better feeder system and really get people engaged in it. But there's a national shortage. So I hope that's in the sentence of the story.

[Crosstalk]

Question: On the Rent Guidelines Board, I know you've addressed this before. There's a final hearing this week, a vote coming next week. Would you still characterize yourself as neutral on where the rent increases are going?

Mayor Adams: Well, that's why we have a board. They have to make the right decisions based on reviewing all the evidence, and we have to respect the outcome. I think it's a cross section of people on the board. And they must make the right decision for New Yorkers. And you know I'm a big believer in small property owners. You have a 13 family building, now they're hurting too. And sometimes we forget them in this conversation. And I think we can find a balance on both ends.

[Crosstalk]

Question: Do we get credit when we have your bite saying it's a national shortage?

Mayor Adams: Yes, you will.

Question: For you, for you and for Ms. Donoghue, one more on lifeguards. What do you say to senior swimmers? What do you say to lap swimmers, particularly lap swimmers who are experienced swimmers, who... They're not going to get the programs they've had, and they're going to see pools opening at 11 o'clock, when in past summers they've been open much, much earlier.

Mayor Adams: Yeah. No one wants to be here. But when you're dealing with a national shortage, these are the cards we are dealt. And if anyone can find ways of trying to solve this problem, I just have a lot of faith and confidence in Sue. If it's possible to do, we're going to do it. We're going to look under every stone to try to find how do we create a safe environment. Now, one thing we're not going to do. We're not going to put New Yorkers in an unsafe environment. If we don't have the lifeguards in areas where

there have to be, we are not going to allow people to endanger themselves. That is not going to happen. But we are not happy about not being able to get lifeguards like the rest of the country. We're not happy... Last year they couldn't do training. So we're not happy for that. We're going to try to do something different to solve the problem.

Question: Yeah. Mr. Mayor, I want to ask you a question about traffic safety around schools.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: [Inaudible] analyzed more than five years of city data recently and found that streets near schools actually have far higher rates of car crashes and injuries than average city streets.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: And that streets are especially dangerous outside schools with majority students of color, majority poor students. Two questions. First, what's your reaction to those disparities? And second, do you think the Department of Transportation should come up with a new plan to prevent drivers from running into and injuring children outside their schools?

Mayor Adams: First, I don't know what the period of that study is.

Question: That was from July 2015 through November of 2021.

Mayor Adams: Okay. Okay. So that was during the previous administration. Okay. Number one, we're going to redesign a thousand intersections. Ydanis Rodríguez who has been a strong supporter of safer streets, and particularly in those poorer communities that have historically been denied the same level of street redesign. I advocated hard with Andrew Gounardes to have 24 hours of the speed cameras around schools. We need to do more. And I'm going to look at that report, see what streets we're talking about, and zero in on those streets. But I think our plan that we're rolling out from the advertisement campaign to the streets redesign to education in schools, a lot of people miss that part. We need to be educating children in school, on field trips, how to properly cross the street, how to look both ways, how not to be distracted. We

don't do those basic things anymore. There are things that government must do, but there are also things that we must empower children to do. And that's what we're going to do.

Question: These are all programs that were already in place. Don't you think the city should be doing more to specifically try to protect children outside schools?

Mayor Adams: I think we're doing a great deal, and we would never stop at doing more. And if there are any ideas that you have that we should be doing, or street, blocks that we should be doing, we listen to all great ideas. We don't turn away any great ideas. So if there's something specifically street block put in place, we're welcome to sit down and listen. And DOT commissioner would do so as well.

Question: Mr. Mayor, Crain's recently reported that you're asking the governor to veto a bill that would put a two year ban on crypto mining. Have you been lobbied on this issue since becoming mayor? And why are you taking this position?

Mayor Adams: Well, outside of taking my first three paychecks in crypto, because I wanted to attract industries to this city to say we're open for business, I believe that when you speak with Assemblyman Vanel and others, they realize that we could ensure that the industry protects our environment. But at the same time, we are the industry leaders. When you look at the billions of startup and money that's invested in crypto, it's in New York. And so we continue to put barriers in place, then we are going to hurt the bottom line. I want this industry to grow. Crypto, blockchain, all of these new technology, we want them to grow here in the city. Now, we didn't ban automobiles because they were burning lead gas. We gave them clear criteria with a timeline. Let's do the same thing with crypto. Anything that is hurting our environment, this is an opportunity to say, "We want you to improve on your product to make sure that you don't destroy our environment." And I am not going to support or advocate for something that's going to take away from the growth we're seeing in crypto in New York City.

Question: Are you still receiving your paychecks in Bitcoin?

Mayor Adams: No, only took three. But we're going to keep rocking.

[Crosstalk]

Question: The New York City public school data's out, and we've lost 19,000 kids this past year. How do you keep parents from turning away from the city schools? And why'd you choose to cut their funding in the city's budget?

Mayor Adams: Okay. One, we're doing the things that parents were troubled about. Gifted and Talented programs in every district. We're going to ensure our schools are safe. And we're also going to create a better experience in our schools. That's why once again, great pick, Chancellor David Banks is there. We're going to change that environment. Now, here's another thing I need you to include in your story. We did not cut funding. Can someone put that in a sentence? As you just indicated, we had a drop in students. 100% of the Fair Student Funding is still in place. 100%. And so whoever is given this false narrative because it's a good sound bite that we cut... No, we didn't. We allocated the funding according to the Fair Student Funding, 100%. Not one child is going to lose money from the Fair Student Funding. We are investing in our schools. Dyslexia screening, 100,000 summer youth employee jobs. What we're doing with Summer Rising. We have so many children signing up for Summer Rising. This administration is focusing on giving children what they need. And so adjusting based on the Fair Student Funding is not a cut. We did not cut. I'm going to make a t-shirt saying we did not cut.

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