

FOOD AND THE NYC MAYOR'S RACE

FOOD POLICY AS AN ECONOMIC, HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND LABOR INITIATIVE

A COMPREHENSIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE FOOD POLICY PLATFORM

The next mayor has an unprecedented opportunity to realize the transformative potential of food policy to drive economic growth, improve health outcomes and promote sustainability.

We urge the next mayor to support the following initiatives:

HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL FOOD

School food should be a mayoral priority: it is crucial to the health and academic success of NYC's 1.1 million students and can provide an economic engine for sustainable and responsible economic development. More students eating healthier school lunch and breakfast means more kids ready to learn and more good jobs. Spending the DOE's many food dollars within our region can build the economy, employ more people in good jobs, reduce transportation costs and effects on the environment, and provide our students with fresher, healthier food and improved academic performance.

✓ **Here's what we ask our next mayor to do about school food:**

1. Make healthier, free lunch and breakfast available for all of our children.
2. Increase procurement of local and regional food sources.
3. Provide food workers with training to upgrade their skills, improve their pay and benefits, and require fair labor standards.
4. Incorporate food in the school curriculum: nutrition, cooking, school gardens, health, etc.
5. Minimize school food waste and compost food scraps to the largest extent possible.

HUNGER IN NEW YORK CITY

It is time to end hunger in New York City. Unemployment, low wages, and inadequate public assistance have exacerbated food insecurity and hunger. A new mayor needs to increase employment opportunities, support a higher minimum wage, and install an administration that is more responsive to the needs and realities of low income New Yorkers. The federal nutrition programs bring much needed federal dollars into our local economy and the next mayor should work to expand these programs.

✓ **Here's what we ask our next mayor to do about hunger in New York City:**

1. Reduce barriers to SNAP by simplifying the application process and extending the recertification time period.
2. Expand media/public education campaigns to increase participation in SNAP, summer meals, and other food related programs.
3. Take full advantage of federal waivers to extend SNAP benefits to unemployed adults.
4. Strengthen the senior center congregate meals and home delivered meals programs for seniors and homebound people.
5. Provide adequate funding for emergency food programs.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD THROUGH RETAIL & COMMUNITY GROUPS:

Too many New Yorkers live in neighborhoods where it's easier to find the foods that contribute to diet-related diseases like diabetes than fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Too many small businesses have trouble stocking and selling healthy food.

Discouraging the promotion of unhealthy food, and making healthy food more accessible and affordable can help reduce hunger and disease in New York City and lower the high costs, in both human and financial terms, of preventable illnesses and premature deaths associated with a poor diet.

✓ **Here's how our next mayor can improve access to healthy food through local retail:**

1. Expand food access programs such as Greenmarkets and other farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture programs, Green Carts, and Shop Healthy Bodegas, particularly in low income communities.
2. Modify New York City food assistance programs to emphasize health through increasing distribution of fresh produce and providing nutrition and culinary education opportunities.
3. Expand and promote usage of EBT terminals for fruits and vegetables.
4. Make it easier for small businesses and grocery stores to favor selling healthy foods and beverages.
5. Support establishment of public markets, food business incubators and community kitchens that promote community economic development and make healthy food more available.

URBAN AGRICULTURE & LAND USE

Urban Agriculture-Community Gardens (UACG's) play valuable social, cultural, environmental, and economic functions in our society at a very low cost. UACG's are a tool for communities to proactively address the challenges of poverty, hunger, and unemployment that help supplement vital anti-hunger programs like food stamps and healthy local food markets by offering communities a means of some direct, independent access to local, healthy food. The vast majority of UACG's are found in poor areas of the city, which have much higher rates of chronic diseases like asthma and lower rates of open agricultural land use. They also offer communities steps at self-sufficient access to healthy food and spur economic activity.

✓ **Here's what we ask our next mayor to do to promote urban agriculture in New York City:**

1. Permanently preserve Urban Agriculture-Community Gardens in NYC as Urban Agriculture conservation easements.
2. Integrate UACG's into future economic development initiatives and commensurate re-zoning plans as per the *FoodWorks* policy initiative and the current F.R.E.S.H. (Food Retail Expansion to Support Health) supermarket initiative.
3. Develop business incubation opportunities that link UACG's food production to the city's food processing and food manufacturing industry such as the New York City Economic Development Corporation's sponsored food business incubator currently operating at La Marqueta in El Barrio.

LABOR

It is a sad predicament that the people who pick, grow, process, transport, sell, cook, and serve us our food are often paid very low wages, can't afford to eat, lack access to benefits, and face discrimination and unsafe workplaces

✓ **Here's what we ask our next mayor to do uplift food workers in New York City:**

1. Ensure living wages for food workers, and lobby the state legislature to allow NYC to set its own minimum wage.
2. Expand the NYC paid sick days law to cover all food workers, and eliminate the "changing shifts" provision of the law, which creates a barrier for shift workers to access their paid sick days.
3. Incorporate transparent processes in economic development programs, such as a public comment period in advance of loan decisions for the Food Manufacturers Growth Fund, so that only food companies that abide by the law are eligible for City support.
4. Protect workers' right to organize and to speak out against injustices in the workplace.

This policy platform is a collaborative effort by a rapidly growing list of organizations, including:

Bed Stuy Campaign Against Hunger

Bronx Health REACH

Brooklyn Food Coalition

Cafeteria Culture

Coalition for Asian American Children and Families

Community Food Advocates

Food & Water Watch

NYC Food Policy Center at Hunter College

United Community Centers/East New York Farms

United Community Centers

Veggiecation

Wellness in the Schools

West Side Campaign Against Hunger

WhyHunger

To endorse this document or for more information, contact info@brooklynfoodcoalition.org