

John Liu

Candidate For Mayor

1 – Housing

What is your plan for preserving and adding additional units of affordable housing in New York City?

A recent report released by my office on skyrocketing rent shows, along with low income households, middle income households (those with annual incomes between \$35,000 and \$75,000), are also being significantly affected by the escalating cost of housing. The decline in affordability has been particularly severe during the past decade under Mayor Bloomberg's watch from 2000 to 2010.

Middle income households in New York City are almost 50 percent more likely to be burdened by high housing costs than other households in the U.S. While housing policies have provided some safety net for low income households, the most recent data underscores an urgent need to implement and expand policy to focus on the housing needs of middle income households as well.

The delay in bringing new affordable housing to the market raises concerns as higher housing costs continue to impact an increasing number of City households. In addition to delays and failures on the part of the Mayor's policies to address the needs of middle income households, federal programs that are targeted primarily at low income households have been ineffective in addressing housing affordability. As Mayor, I would press for changes and broaden federal policies to provide benefits to more City households, as would a more aggressive implementation of local policies to help stabilize the middle class.

I plan to create or preserve 100,000 units of affordable housing over the next four years. An affordable housing plan is in many ways a question of budgeting priorities. My commitment to create more affordable units is part of my People's budget that was recently released. In that budget, we have accounted for new revenue that allows for the more than \$2.5 billion capital investment over four years that will make this magnitude of affordable housing possible.

Do you support or oppose 421 tax abatements for developments in already highly desirable neighborhoods?

The City must be careful with tax abatements and subsidies. Too often they are abused or used in the wrong manner. On the other hand, affordable housing should

be encouraged in all neighborhoods in the City. Mandatory inclusionary zoning should be applied to encourage development of affordable housing across the City.

As a public official, what actions would you take to promote the continuation and improvement of rent stabilization in NYC?

I do support rent stabilization laws because they are necessary to maintain our middle class. I have travelled many times to Albany to lobby for the continuation of these laws and would continue to do so as Mayor. While a council member, I was a sponsor of a resolution calling for the repeal of the Urstadt Law and I will continue to fight for the City's right to enact its own housing laws.

How would you provide housing and mental health services to the homeless?

The Bloomberg administration's record on homeless issues is appalling. In recent years, homelessness in New York City has reached the highest levels since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Studies show that the large majority of street homeless New Yorkers are people living with mental illness or other severe health problems.

As Mayor, I would have a holistic approach to help people who face the most complex challenges - individuals and families who are not only homeless, but who also have very low incomes and persistent issues that may include substance use, mental illness, and HIV/AIDS.

I will provide section 8 style housing vouchers for up to 10,000 homeless families. These will be helpful for families that have hit hard times and need to use the social safety net to get stabilized and back on their feet.

We must work with community partners to ensure homeless individuals with mental illness and families get the assistance they need to become stable, develop their ability to live independently and move into permanent housing.

*What is your position on the selling off of NYCHA property to private developers?
What is your position on the leasing of open space that is currently occupied by public schools to private developers?*

I am against privatization of NYCHA property and the Bloomberg administration's so-called infill proposal. I am against leasing public school space to private developers, as well as co-location of charter schools which don't pay rent.

What would you do to improve the Rent Guidelines Board?

Currently the Rent Guidelines Board has nine members -- two tenant members, two landlord members and five members of the public. Although this is supposed to

balance the many interests involved with rent stabilization, the current Mayor's five public members have leaned toward landlords. I would appoint a more balance board. Also, the rent guidelines recommended by the board affect residents in all five boroughs, from the wealthiest Manhattan neighborhoods, to the poorest Bronx neighborhoods. This one size fits all approach doesn't work with rent guidelines. It makes sense to have different guidelines for the boroughs of the City to account for the different economic conditions in our large and diverse City.

What measures do you support to address the high rate of homelessness and hunger in New York City?

As stated above, I will create 10,000 section 8-style vouchers for homeless families and I would increase funding to Senior Centers to help feed our growing elderly population that finds themselves in need.

Additionally, hunger and homelessness should be addressed holistically. I propose policies such as an increase of minimum wage to \$11.50, paid sick leave and family leave insurance that will address the root of homelessness and hunger.

2 – Education

Indicate whether you support or oppose the following education proposals:

Continuation of mayoral control of schools? Answer = Yes

Having the mayor appoint a majority of the members on the Public Education Panel (PEP) Answer = Yes

Would you support the reappointment of Dennis Walcott as Chancellor? Answer = No

Ending tenure protection for teachers? Answer = No

A moratorium on school closings? Answer = Yes

A moratorium on co-location of charter schools in public school buildings? Answer = Yes

A moratorium on creation of new charter schools? Answer = No

Giving local Community Education Councils greater power in determining use of school space? Answer = Yes

3 – Environment and Energy

How can you use your office to encourage use of renewable energy?

There are many ways that the City can encourage the use of renewable energy including:

- adjusting the property tax to provide a tax credit or other type of tax break to landlords who adopt renewable energy;
- work with the City's over \$130 billion pension funds to invest in renewable energy companies; and
- work with local power companies to adopt renewable energy sources.

Are you in favor of the closing of Indian Point? If so how will you use your office to support IP's closing?

I would support the closing of Indian Point when we are able to identify other sources of energy to replace the loss from Indian Point. I have a plan called Green Apple Bonds to finance the cost of expanding our infrastructure to harness renewable sources of energy. The debt service on the Green Apple Bonds would be more than paid for by reduction in energy cost.

What would you do, if anything, to require or encourage the use of solar and wind energy in NYC?

As discussed above, property tax breaks for landlords who use renewable energy and work with energy companies to adopt more renewable energy sources.

Under what conditions, if any, would you support hydraulic fracturing in New York State?

I would not support fracking because I can't support anything that might endanger New York City's water supply and the environment as a whole.

Because of the shortage of EPA staff would you favor giving some of these regulatory functions to city agencies.?

We should monitor environmental conditions with or without EPA attention but the City should not take over important functions of the federal government.

4 – Land use & zoning

Do you favor or oppose commercial rent control?

I would favor some type of regulation to strike a fairer balance between commercial landlords and tenants. While a council member, I was a sponsor of the Small Business Survival Act, a bill that required commercial tenants and landlords to agree to binding arbitration if they cannot agree to the terms of their lease renewal. This is fair. Many small businesses have to close because their landlords dramatically raise their rents even though it was the business tenants that made the landlord's property more valuable in the first place. We can do more to help small businesses, which really are the jobs creation engine and backbone of our economy.

Do you support zoning regulations that discourage the use of commercial properties to rent to large banks and chain stores?

Large banks and chain stores have their place in our City. It becomes a problem when small businesses are forced to close because only the banks and chain stores can pay the higher rents. I would support some reasonable zoning regulations that help to preserve our small businesses.

Do you support or oppose the leasing of public parks to raise revenue such as private tennis courts in Central Park or private development of the Hudson River Park?

Parks should not be privatized any further. As it stands now, parks in lower income neighborhoods and the non-Manhattan boroughs have been neglected. I would double the funding for outer-borough park maintenance instead of selling off our parks piece-by-piece.

Do you think the power of eminent domain has been abused within the city? If so, what examples would you cite.

Eminent Domain is a powerful tool that must be used very carefully. Only in cases where the economic development case and public benefits are extraordinary should it be considered. Eminent Domain should not be used to expedite real estate deals for connected developers. Examples where even the threat of eminent domain has been problematic are the developments of Atlantic Yards and Willets Point.

What changes would you make concerning land use in Manhattan?

Unfortunately, Manhattan is becoming a place where only the very wealthy can live and where only large businesses, many times, chain stores, can afford to operate. I would work, through changes in zoning, to make Manhattan more representative of the City in terms of the economic diversity of its residents and the variety of small businesses it has.

Would you change the appointments and directives for the City Planning Commission?

Yes, I would make new appointments to the City Planning Commission.

5 – Labor

How do you define a living wage?

A living wage is a wage where someone, if working full time, should be able to support themselves with a decent standard of living.

Should it apply only to NYC contracts or should there be a city minimum wage – living wage pegged to cost of living in New York city?

The minimum wage in New York City should be \$11.50, it should be indexed to the Consumer Price Index and should be phased in over five years.

Would you support the establishment of a city department of labor for complaints of violation of fair labor standards?

Yes to the extent that it does not duplicate the efforts of the USDOL, NYSDOL, and the City Comptroller's office which enforces prevailing wage laws in the City.

Do you believe there should be mandatory paid sick leave in New York City?

Yes. I have advocated on behalf of paid sick leave. I have also advocated for an expansion of Temporary Disability Insurance and the creation of Family Leave Insurance. Families should not be forced to send sick children to school, should not go bankrupt due to illness and should be able to be present for their newborn children.

Because of the shortage of OSHA staff would you support giving city agencies responsibility to protect worker health and safety?

Once again, the City is probably preempted from enforcing OSHA, but I would lobby vigorously for more funding for OSHA enforcement.

6 – Police – criminal justice and civil liberties

Under what circumstances short of probable cause should a police officer be able to stop and frisk someone?

The NYPD policy of 'Stop and Frisk' should be abolished.

Would you continue or change the stop and frisk policy of the police department?

I would abolish 'Stop and Frisk'. Instead I will direct an NYPD that is more community oriented and less antagonistic.

Who would you appoint or support as police commissioner?

I would appoint a police commissioner with top credentials and a track record of working with diverse communities to reduce crime. I would look from within the force rather than conduct national searches.

7 – Health

What would you do improve city and community mental health services?

I would expand our social services so that we can properly care for those that need mental health services. People that need care should not be turned to the street. Public schools should be augmented into full-service community centers open from early morning through the late evening.

8 – Transportation

Would you encourage Bloomberg’s policy of increasing the number of bike lanes?

As Comptroller I released a Bike Safety report that outlined a plan that would allow the City to embrace bicycle use and incorporate them in a safe manner. It recommended amongst other things to:

- Properly maintain cycling infrastructure (Fix most dangerous intersections)
- Educate road users (drivers and bikers through free classes and ad campaigns)
- Enforce the rules of the road (riding in sidewalks, wrong way on streets, car speeding)

How would you protect transit fares?

The City must lead by example and increase funding to the MTA. I would increase the City’s contribution the MTA capital budget by \$100 million.

Do you support congestion pricing?

I support tolling all non-city residents for the use of currently free bridges that enter Manhattan. This would raise \$410 million that can be used for capital investment in roads, bridges and transit.

Whom would you want to head the MTA?

The MTA head should be a transit professional with a proven record of keeping the trains and buses moving and also with a record of working with labor and addressing rider issues.

9 – Campaign finance?

What changes, if any, do you think should be made to NYC’s campaign finance laws?

To level the playing field, even candidates who self-finance their campaigns should be required to participate in public debates and adhere to the spending limits.

10 – Taxes and Revenue

Do you favor an increase on income taxes for city residents making more than \$250,000 per year?

I would lower the Personal Income Tax for everyone earning less than \$500,000 per year and increase it for everyone else. We need to get away from the flat tax that currently exists in NYC and replace it with a far more progressive set of tax rates.

Do you favor or oppose an increase in the city sales tax?

Oppose.

Would you support a financial transaction tax on trading?

No.

Should non-profits, including religious institutions, be taxed when such institutions make a profit from selling their property or air rights?

No.

What kind of a commuter tax if any would you support?

I support tolling non-city residents for use of bridges than enter Manhattan. I also support restoration of the former commuter tax.