NEW YORK CITY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

2024 NEW YORK CITY CLIMATE JUSTICE AGENDA

PRIORITIZING JUST TRANSITIONS

NEW YORK CITY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE
nyc-eja.org

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“Transition is inevitable; justice is not.”

—MOVEMENT GENERATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA) has been actively monitoring and pushing City and State government efforts to address the climate crisis in a meaningful and equitable manner, informed by the experiences and insights of our member organizations.

Together, we have developed the **2024 New York City Climate Justice Agenda**, which serves as a critical research and advocacy platform addressing the need for comprehensive, community-based approaches to climate action across New York City.

This year's NYC Climate Justice Agenda (following previous versions released in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2020) comes at a moment of impasse. Since our 2020 report, there has been some progress in funding and implementing New York State's landmark Climate Act, along with other advancements in the climate justice movement as a whole. However, the past four years have also been marked by intensified attacks and aggressive pushback from both fossil fuel interests and State actors, who have sought to undermine legislated climate mandates while co-opting the language of climate justice for their own benefit. Most recently, on September 5th, 2024, Governor Hochul hosted an energy summit where she promoted a climate "all-of-the-above approach" that includes false solutions like low-carbon fuel and hydrogen combustion. As a result, NYC-EJA's campaigns are now navigating the dual challenge of advancing our climate goals while simultaneously countering these regressive efforts.

This year the Mayor's Office for Climate and Environmental Justice released EJNYC: A Study of Environmental Justice Issues in

New York City and the EJNYC Mapping Tool. In September 2024, the Governor also announced the much-delayed mandated New York State Energy Plan planning process, which is now required to incorporate the Climate Action Council Scoping Plan. We present the 2024 NYC Climate Justice Agenda as a blueprint for both the upcoming EJNYC Plan as the City considers solutions for implementation, and the variety of State climate proposals being considered by the Hochul Administration. State and City climate justice initiatives should amplify the voice and power of communities and be responsive to our experience, visions, and priorities as described in the NYC Climate Justice Agenda.

This Climate Week (September 22–29, 2024), NYC-EJA presents our fifth edition of the NYC Climate Justice Agenda. It provides a vision and guide on how to operationalize the just transition, and it assesses and reviews several City and State climate efforts along three central themes:

1) Transitioning to Clean Energy and Economic Justice,
2) Reimagining Our Built Environment and Harmful Land Uses, and
3) Strengthening Community Care and Grassroots Power.

For each area, we analyze major progress and challenges and discuss solutions that have been developed at the grassroots level with input from our member organizations and allies (see partial list of summary recommendations below). We also share a range of campaigns and projects nurtured and developed by NYC-EJA member organizations as grassroots-led frontline solutions that address environmental burdens and the climate crisis.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the historic People's Climate March, New York stands at a crossroads. Our State and City has a little more than five years to meet their 40% emission reduction mandates set out by the Climate Act and Climate Mobilization Act, respectively. We are also on the brink of the 2025 New York City municipal elections and the gubernatorial elections in 2026. With the 2024 Climate Justice Agenda, we offer both the City and State Administrations strategic recommendations aimed at dismantling historic environmental burdens for frontline communities. Our recommendations aim to intersect and address the multi-faceted challenges of climate change with equity and health at the forefront.

RECOMMENDATION HIGHLIGHTS

1

TRANSITIONING TO CLEAN ENERGY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Implement our State's ambitious climate goals under CLCPA.

- Protect the integrity of the CLCPA goals and mandates.
- As a new major dedicated funding stream for climate, ensure that the State's cap-trade-and invest program invests in and does not disproportionately burden disadvantaged communities.

Reduce emissions and co-pollutants from power plants.

- Rapidly ramp up investments for renewable energy and battery storage.
- Grow publicly owned renewable energy, energy storage, and electricity transmission capacities.
- Study and scale demand-side management for New York to responsibly balance electricity demand with supply.
- Decrease emissions cap, fully account for co-pollutants, and close all cap-and-trade loopholes in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

Develop new economic and community ownership models.

- Incentivize community-owned energy resource development.
- Ensure that investments in the green energy transition prioritize the needs of environmental justice communities.

2

REIMAGINING OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND HARMFUL LAND USES

Decarbonize and adapt our buildings to climate change.

- The City must draw down State and Federal funding opportunities to ensure that building owners, especially low-income buildings, have access to programs and incentives that support building decarbonization efforts (to comply with LL 97).
- Invest in NYC's public school buildings, so that they are electrified and retrofitted to move off fossil fuels, starting with those in EJ communities.
- Avoid the use of false solutions like carbon capture technology and unlimited offsets to encourage LL 97 compliance.

Decrease emissions from the transportation sector.

- Build on the 2022 electric school bus mandate by mandating a transition of all public transit fleets to zero emissions by 2040, coupled with dedicated funding and labor provisions.
- Establish a special permit process that defines and addresses the siting and operations of last-mile warehouses and an indirect source rule to address the emissions associated with new and existing last-mile warehouse operations.

- Enact the congestion pricing tolling program to generate dedicated funding for our public transit network.
- Create a corridor-wide plan for the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway that centers environmental justice, does not generate new harms or exacerbate previous harms, and helps us meet our State climate mandates.

Undo historic harms and operationalize restorative justice.

- Ensure that NYC is working toward closure of all jails on Rikers Island by 2027.
- Transfer unused parcels of land and unused buildings on Rikers Island from the control of the NYC Department of Corrections to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services.

Create waste equity.

- Require the City to accept commercial waste at publicly owned Marine Transfer Stations, which are currently underutilized.
- Invest in local composting infrastructure to process yard waste and food scraps (per LL 85).
- Equitably implement Commercial Waste Zones city-wide, emphasizing waste reduction/diversion and recycling (per LL 199).

Green our neighborhoods.

- Equitably expand both the NYC tree canopy to reach 30% by 2035 and the installation of green infrastructure projects to help mitigate a variety of climate hazards.
- Create and implement an equitable Urban Forest Plan for NYC (per LL184).

3

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CARE AND GRASSROOTS POWER

Characterize and mitigate air and heat risks.

- Improve and expand access to cooling resources for vulnerable New Yorkers by adopting a max indoor temperature policy and expanding access to cooling centers.
- Expand green infrastructure solutions to reduce the urban heat island effect, air pollution, and other climate impacts, prioritizing communities with high HVI scores and those most impacted.
- Expand air quality monitoring at the hyperlocal level, better enforce existing air quality regulations, and improve existing standards and processes to reduce disproportionate air pollution burdens in disadvantaged communities.

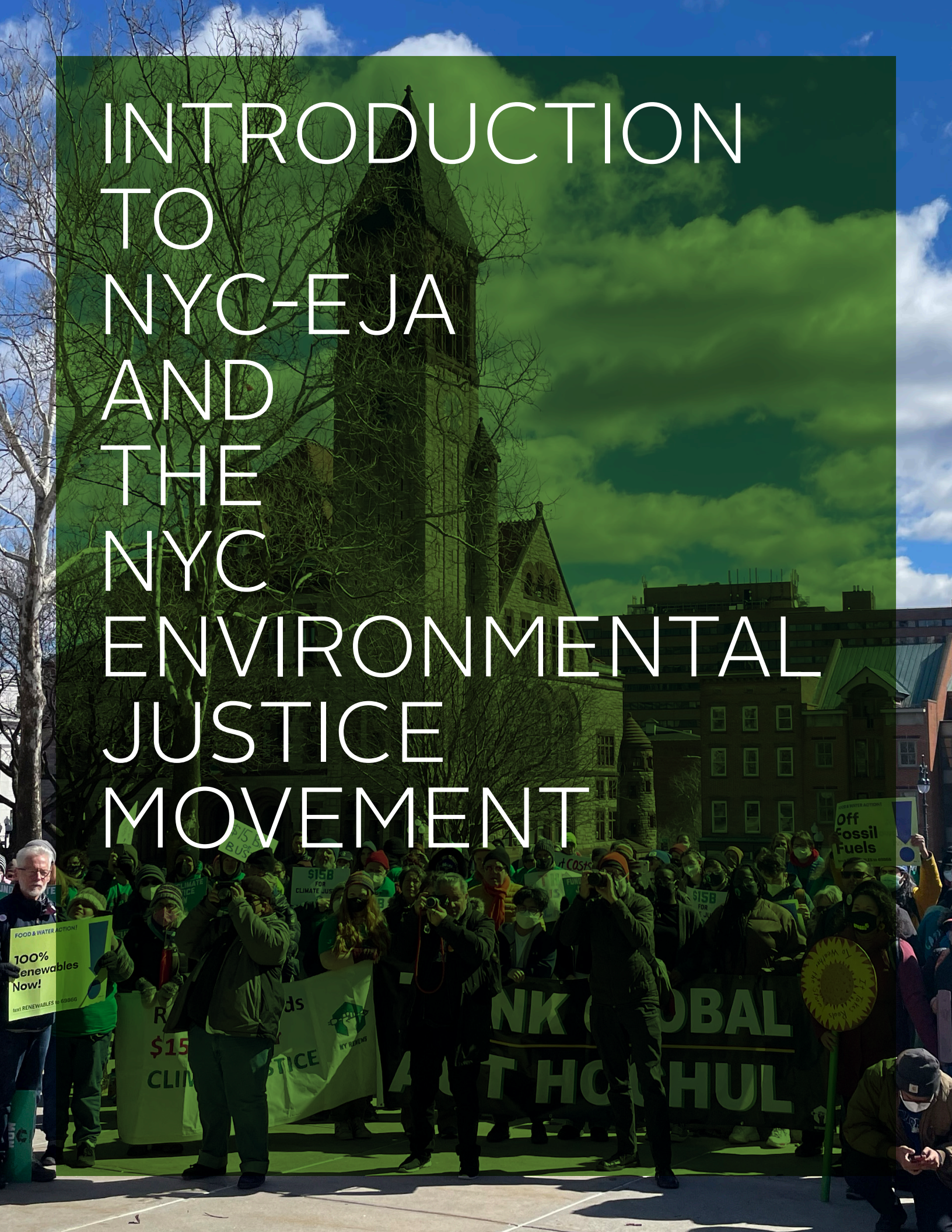
RECOMMENDATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Identify and implement targeted air pollution mitigation strategies in disadvantaged communities.
- Improve government response to air quality and heat emergencies.

Protect our coastal communities.

- Improve community engagement in coastal resilience planning processes to ensure that residents' needs and desires are prioritized, and that their experience and expertise is highlighted and incorporated appropriately.
- The City and State should take a more community-centered approach with their advocacy in relation to the USACE NYNJHATS process.
- The City should embrace new flood resilience and mitigation initiatives to protect all New Yorkers against all types of flooding, possibly by exploring the Sponge City concept.
- Expand existing flood-adaptation measures such as the cloudburst program, bluebelts, green infrastructure, and permeable pavements.

INTRODUCTION TO NYC-EJA AND THE NYC ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT



The New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA) was founded in 1991. An organically developed grassroots movement and member network, NYC-EJA was created when community-based organizations (CBOs) from across the City's most environmentally burdened neighborhoods noticed parallels between their circumstances, and their struggles for cleaner air and better living conditions. NYC-EJA was founded with two clear charges: to identify the systemic reasons why communities of color were environmentally and economically overburdened—and to develop strategies to dismantle those inequitable systems.

By the late 1960s and into the 1970s, New York City was in crisis: massive disinvestments, redlining, the infamously destructive building fires, and the War on Drugs plagued and decimated low-income communities of color. In the 1980s, the focus shifted to issues of land-use, housing development, and rebuilding the City, amidst rampant racism, police brutality and violence. Issues of environmental racism also became prevalent; toxic and harmful infrastructure were planned for and brought/expanded in these communities, including incinerators, sewage treatment plants, highways and truck routes, brownfields, and polluting power plants, to name a few.

By 1991, the mainstream environmental movement was dominated by large environmental groups often called "big greens," that were seemingly unconcerned by local environmental impacts. Communities of color were drawing connections between infrastructure and environmental health and were understanding the role of environmental racism as an extension of decades of oppression. As organizers from different neighborhoods started fighting these battles against polluting infrastructure, they bumped into each other repeatedly at City Council offices and agency permit hearings, realizing that they were opposing the same threats in their respective communities. It was from this recognition of collective struggle, grassroots community organizing, and resistance that NYC-EJA was born, created by CBOs in devastated neighborhoods who were determined to fight for their rights to clean air and a better environment.

Rooted in the civil rights movement and the struggle for racial and social justice and equality, the environmental justice (EJ) movement developed in sharp contrast to the mainstream environmental movements, which failed to center racial and social injustice adequately. The EJ movement emphasized bottom-up organizing, centered the voices of those most impacted by environmental harm, and prioritized shared community leadership.[1]

For over 30 years, NYC-EJA has united CBOs from across NYC's five boroughs and NYS. These member organizations are at the core of NYC-EJA's work, driving and anchoring our priorities and campaigns through their on-the-ground grassroots efforts. Guided by the CBOs we support, NYC-EJA collaborates

with our member organizations and other allies to advocate for improved environmental conditions and address inequitable environmental burdens by coordinating campaigns designed to inform City and State policies. Our collective work addresses critical issues that threaten the well-being and future of low-income communities of color.

While member organizations have evolved over the years, the Alliance remains a vital network for low-income neighborhoods and communities of color to organize and advocate around issues affecting their communities. Notable examples of NYC-EJA's early impactful campaigns included the *Organization of Waterfront Neighborhoods* and *Transform Don't Trash NYC* coalitions, which developed the most ambitious proposals to overhaul NYC's waste management system in decades; the *Minority Workers Training Program*, NYC's first green worker job training program; the *Open Space Equity Campaign*, the first advocacy campaign documenting open space funding disparities in communities of color; and the *Waterfront Justice Project*, NYC's first city-wide community resiliency campaign. These pioneering efforts created the modern templates for environmental justice advocacy in NYC.

Another landmark moment for the EJ (and the nascent climate justice) movement in NYC occurred in 2014 with the historic People's Climate March. Coordinated by grassroots organizations across the city, the March was the largest climate mobilization in history, drawing an estimated 400,000 participants in NYC alone, 1,500 organizational sponsors, and over 2,000 solidarity marches and rallies that mobilized millions across the world. The People's Climate March marked a pivotal day for climate action, as then-Mayor Bill de Blasio issued and signed an executive order—after some prodding from March organizers—committing to reduce NYC's city-wide emissions by 80% by 2050. As a direct outgrowth of this extraordinary event, NYC-EJA, alongside other key climate and environmental allies, co-founded city- and state-wide coalitions, including Climate Works for All (CW4A) and NY Renews. These coalitions emerged out of the pressing need for comprehensive strategies to lower greenhouse gas and co-pollutant emissions in NYC and New York State (NYS). They focus on creating effective campaigns, platforms, and policies aimed at decarbonizing our economy and advancing environmental and climate justice.

CITY AND STATE CLIMATE MANDATES AND PROGRESS

MAJOR NYS AND NYC CLIMATE MANDATES

EMISSIONS REDUCTION
CLEAN/RENEWABLE ENERGY
EV TRANSPORTATION

NEW YORK STATE

NEW YORK CITY

2025

6GW Distributed Solar

40% Reduction in City Government Emissions

50%

ZERO EMISSIONS
All Light- and Medium-Duty Vehicles Purchased by the City

All Heavy-Duty Vehicles Purchased after July 2028

2030

NYPA FOSSIL FREE

70% Renewable Grid

10GW Solar

6GW Energy Storage

70% Renewable Energy Sources

40% Reduction in Large Building Carbon Emissions below 2005 Levels

2035

9GW Offshore Wind

100% Electric School Bus Fleet

ZERO EMISSIONS
- All State-Operated Light-Duty Non-Emergency Vehicle Fleets
- All New Passenger Vehicles and Trucks Sold in NYS

100% Electric Zero Emissions School Bus Fleet

100% ELECTRIC
Light-, Medium, and Non-Emergency Heavy-Duty Vehicles Converted to Electric with All Heavy-Duty Vehicles to be Zero-Emission by July 2035

2040

100% Zero Emissions Electricity Grid

100% ZEV State-Operated Medium- and Heavy-Duty Fleet

100% Electric Municipal Fleet

2045

100% ZERO EMISSIONS
All Medium- and Heavy-Duty Vehicles Sold, Leased or Registered in the State

2050

100% Carbon Neutral

80% Reduction in Large Building Carbon Emissions below 2005 Levels

The year 2019 was pivotal for advancing groundbreaking climate legislation in NYC and NYS, including the passage of the NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA or the "Climate Act", touted as the most ambitious climate action law among the states) and the NYC Climate Mobilization Act (CMA).

Since the publication of our 2020 NYC Climate Justice Agenda, many City and State policies have passed or gone into effect. However, the subsequent leadership charged with the implementation of these policies, Governor Hochul and Mayor Adams (who took office in 2021 and 2022, respectively), have made notable shifts in policy focus and implementation. Despite some progress made with new laws and policies, there remains a critical need for increased, sustained funding and accelerated climate action to address the climate crisis at an effective scale and in a timely manner.

NYS is in the implementation phase of the Climate Act**,** which sets ambitious climate goals, such as reducing economy-wide emissions across NYS by 2050, among other objectives. It also mandates that 70% of the State's energy come from renewable sources by 2030, with 6 Gigawatts of distributed solar energy capacity by 2025 and enough offshore wind to power 6 million homes by 2035. The Climate Act seeks to achieve 100% zero-emissions electricity for the state by 2040. Importantly, it also requires that air pollution like GHGs and co-pollutant emissions be reduced and not disproportionately burden disadvantaged communities (DACs). In addition, the Climate Act mandates that at least 35% to 40% of NYS's clean energy investments and billions of dollars allocated to clean energy/energy efficiency programs be directed to DACs. In fact, the Biden Administration's Justice40 initiative was inspired and modeled after the NYS Climate Act, including a commitment of 40% of clean energy federal investments to federally defined DACs.

Since 2019, the State has embarked on a lineup of initiatives and policies intended to address the emissions and renewable energy goals of the Climate Act, but has failed to come up with funding, botched the execution, and/or fallen into the same tropes and traps of community engagement and the illusion of shared decision-making. Two of these State initiatives—the Community Air Quality Monitoring Initiative and Extreme Heat Action Plan—are being led by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), to measure air quality and extreme heat conditions in disadvantaged communities and then identify solutions to mitigate the impacts of pollution and heat. Environmental and climate justice groups who have been engaged have various concerns and skepticism about these initiatives and plans, as there is no committed funding attached to the findings or recommendations. This is true of the NYS Extreme Heat Action Plan, among others.

Some of the more ambitious CLCPA implementation policies at the State level are a result of the tireless efforts from advocacy groups and support from the Legislature. For example, the All Electric Buildings Act will require buildings seven stories and under, and commercial buildings 100,000

square feet and over, to be built with electric heat and appliances after 2026. The Act takes a phased approach, with requirements for larger buildings coming into effect in 2029. In addition, the Build Public Renewables Act, a version of which passed as part of the 2023 NYS Budget, requires the New York Power Authority to provide customers with only renewable-sourced energy by 2030, and by 2035, all municipal- and state-owned properties will require the same.

While the climate policies and legislation guiding New York State are ambitious, they are commensurate with the urgency and scale of the climate crisis. Meeting these goals as required by law is both possible and necessary. Yet the State is floundering to implement these policies and is not on track to meet the Climate Act mandates. The New York State Public Service Commission noted in their Draft Clean Energy Standard Biannual Review in July 2024 that the state is likely unable to meet the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act's 70% renewable energy grid by 2030 mandate, and that delaying the timeline to 2033 or beyond could be "unavoidable."[2,3] This anticipated failure is part of a systemic series of actions by the State to blow past key climate milestones. Power plants scheduled to shut down have had their permits extended, and State plans for an energy transition blueprint and regulations for a cap-trade-and-invest program have also been delayed. The only climate law deadlines that have been met or are on track are the Climate Action Council's Scoping Plan, the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) community air monitoring program, and the 6 GW distributed solar mandate.[4] It is, therefore, troubling to hear the State openly discuss modifying the statutory targets instead of focusing their energies on complying with the Climate Act.

At the City level, we see similar patterns of lacking climate leadership, implementation, and action, although the appropriate goals and mandates are in place. New York City's CMA represents one of the most ambitious municipal climate policies in the nation, aiming to cut city-wide emissions 40% by 2030 through Local Law 97 of 2019. The CMA was designed to target NYC's most polluting sector—buildings—by limiting and reducing emissions from large buildings 25,000 square feet and over. Other facets of this act include green roofs and solar power requirements, wind energy, and building energy data transparency. All of these aspects contribute to meeting the 80% emissions reduction goal by 2050 that was set out by the City's 1.5°C Climate Action Plan.

The Adams Administration has released some legally mandated climate and environmental initiatives, such as PlaNYC, AdaptNYC, and PowerUp, which require the City to comprehensively plan for sustainability, resiliency, and adaptation. PlaNYC and AdaptNYC address different climate risks facing New Yorkers and identify recommendations to prepare and protect New York's infrastructure, economies, and communities from climate change. However, the plans lack new, sustained sources of revenue, timetables, and milestones. For example, PlaNYC listed the goal of 30% tree canopy city-wide, but failed to provide a target year. Meanwhile, the Forest for All NYC coalition has been advocating for 30% tree canopy cover by 2035. Initiatives touted as ambitious in these plans are largely modest proposals achievable today if NYC exercised political will and commitment. Furthermore, despite the ambitious objectives and the committed funding of initiatives like Leading the Charge—a victory successfully fought for by Climate Works for All through their Green Healthy Schools campaign—the administration's implementation has lacked rigor and effectiveness.

We urge the Adams Administration to reflect and include many, if not all, of our 2024 NYC Climate Justice Agenda principles and policy recommendations in the forthcoming EJNYC Plan.

Other efforts, such as a rezoning effort called the "City of Yes," will help codify the climate goals in the energy, building, and transportation sectors through three city-wide zoning text amendments for Economic Opportunity, Housing Opportunity, and Carbon Neutrality. Although these zoning text amendments help reduce some bureaucratic barriers for certain government actions, they often do not provide incentives for climate actions. Furthermore, they rely on private interests, raise questions about enforcement, and fail to center climate and environmental justice communities. Despite these efforts, the Adams' Administration's overall progress on addressing the climate crises does not reflect the urgency of the moment, with approaches often appearing fragmented and undermining the potential benefit of these crucial climate policies on low-income communities of color in particular. In fact, the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services publicly admitted in December 2023 that the City is not on track to comply with the City's climate law by the required 2025 deadline.[5]

In addition, this year the Mayor's Office for Climate and Environmental Justice released the EJNYC Report and Mapping Tool. In accordance with Local Laws 60 and 64 passed in 2017, New York City is mandated to identify environmental justice areas, to study environmental burdens and disparities across the city, and to develop a plan (the EJNYC Plan) that includes actions to address these environmental injustices. The EJNYC Report presented information—mostly public City data, although the law's intent was for the City to share and analyze non-public agency program and policy data—on environmental pollution and climate hazards that EJ communities already intimately know and experience.

NYC-EJA eagerly awaits the next critical phase—the EJNYC Plan—in which solutions and actions will be identified and recommended. We urge the Adams Administration to reflect and include many, if not all, of our 2024 NYC Climate Justice Agenda principles and policy recommendations in the forthcoming EJNYC Plan.

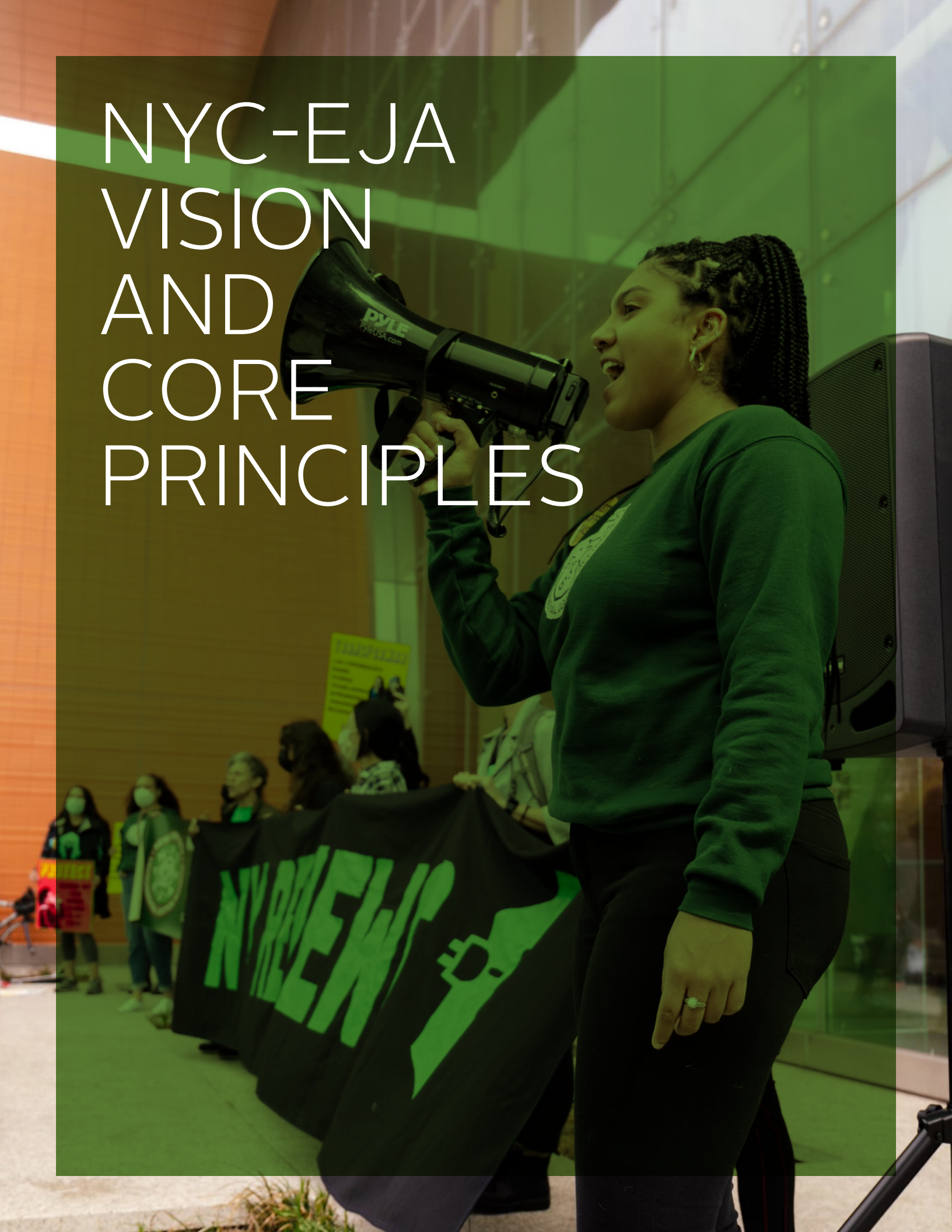
We are seeing the State and City lean toward false solutions, including but not limited to carbon capture technology, "renewable diesel," biogas, and low-carbon fuel. Industry interests—and now government officials—are ratcheting up the promotion of these "techno-fixes" that purport to reduce GHG and co-pollutant emissions and selling them as bridge solutions, when research and evidence shows that full electrification of our buildings, vehicles, and transportation systems will provide the greatest GHG and co-pollutant emission and health benefits.[6,7,8] Finally, the

NY Renews rally for more urgent climate action at Times Square, November 2021. PHOTO: KEN SCHLES

City and State are organizing budgets in a way that does not prioritize climate and environmental funding in a moment when climate justice *needs* to be at the forefront. Although the City released NYC's first-ever Climate Budgeting publication in April 2024, this process merely evaluates actions and spending that have already been made toward our climate targets and mandates rather than incentivizing, or even requiring, agencies to incorporate climate considerations proactively in all their actions and spending. These band-aid false solutions and misallocated funding fall extremely short of their policy promises and mandates, and EJ communities will continue to be disproportionately affected by climate change and poor government decisions and inaction.

The CLCPA, CMA and subsequent climate-forward policies are a testament to New York's visionary environmental and climate justice movements that have defined and helped catapult us closer to the benchmarks of our bold climate policy mandates. Now it's up to the State and City to not falter in meeting these mandates and making New York City—our home—climate habitable. NYC-EJA's 2024 NYC Climate Justice Agenda provides a glidepath to operationalizing just transitions in New York. We must uphold the commitments to DACs that we have made, glistening with promises to prioritize mitigation and funding and boasting equity/justice outcomes for these perpetually excluded communities that are bearing the brunt of climate impacts. We urge the State and City to embrace the challenge and opportunity this moment presents and marshal their resources, capacity, and imagination to reduce NYS's emissions and undo the legacy of pollution and harm forced on communities of color and low-income communities in the name of profit, growth, and extraction.

NYC-EJA VISION AND CORE PRINCIPLES



NYC-EJA's work is deeply grounded in the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing and the Principles of Environmental Justice. These principles identify the core tenets of environmental justice and building trusted relationships with partners. They provide a foundation for the broader environmental justice movement—local, national, and international—and serve not just as guidelines but as critical touchstones for NYC-EJA and our members.

While these two sets of principles guide NYC-EJA as an organization in the context of the larger movement, NYC-EJA's policy advocacy, organizing, and research are also driven by other key frameworks and values. One critical framework that guides our work is *just transition*, which the Climate Justice Alliance describes as a "a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy".[9] The just transition framework emphasizes that it is not only about where we end up, but also about the transformation itself and how we collectively get there. The visionary economy and system that need to be built must be completely different from the one we have today. This new economy must be built on principles of resource regeneration rather than extraction, deep democracy instead of militarism, and worker cooperation rather than labor exploitation, and its purpose must be ecological and social well-being rather than the consolidation of wealth and power.

"Operationalizing the just transition" (a frame often cited by our member UPROSE) requires challenging and changing bad regulations, policies, and systems that keep us dependent on fossil fuel infrastructure and extractive systems that harm EJ communities. We must change the rules to redistribute resources and power to local communities. Just transition initiatives are shifting from dirty energy to energy democracy where communities can build and own their renewable energy sources, are not burdened by their energy bills, and have access to good, green, union jobs.

Capitalistic excesses poison our land, air, and water, privatize these resources for profit, and thrive off the exploitation and oppression of people, especially low-income communities of color, through racism and classism. These systems result in policies and decisions that discriminate against low-income communities of color, often resulting in disparities and quality of life burdens, such as negative health outcomes, substandard housing, and underfunded schools. While our work is expansive and cross-cutting, the core of our policy and advocacy platform can be summed up in the following values/principles:

- **False solutions are extractive and rely on fossil fuel infrastructure.** The fight to reduce our emissions has become a big business and profit opportunity. Companies and governments are selling and incentivizing "techno-fixes" that purport to reduce GHG emissions, such as carbon capture, biogas, and hydrogen blends.

But they actually increase co-pollutant emissions, perpetuate the use of fossil fuel infrastructure, create unsafe and potentially dangerous structures, and increase costs for ratepayers. The consequences may be severe, from increased levels of asthma hospitalizations to rising energy bills and higher fire risks.

- **Shared decision-making and co-governance are key.** Co-governance goes beyond early and consistent consultation and requires government to share some of its power with communities so that they can help set priorities, budgets, policies, and strategic direction. Agencies need to change how they operate and move away from the usual community engagement models, which typically involve advisory boards, public hearings, stakeholder input sessions, and public comments, during which input is collected and then often ignored, dismissed or cherry-picked. Instead, government must share decision-making power about policies and funding. Co-governance will not look the same for every community, and each model will vary based on factors like history, locality, and more.
- **Climate solutions must create and support community ownership and wealth-building.** Too often, a project in a community of color or low-income community will produce revenue and benefits that are not invested in the community, but instead are invested outside the neighborhood. Climate solutions must be frontline solutions, and local communities must be given the capital, resources, and ability to build and own their own projects (e.g., community solar) and invest that revenue back into their communities. Environmental justice communities should decide for themselves the climate solutions they need, and solutions should be driven from a grassroots rather than a grasstops approach.

NYC-EJA recognizes the importance of rooting our work and relationships in vision, community, and integrity. Collectively, these frameworks and principles, in addition to providing a foundation and vision, drive and explain NYC-EJA's agenda and purpose. Our goals, priorities, and partnerships are made in accordance with these principles and keep our campaigns and coalitions accountable to local EJ communities and the broader movement.

1 TRANSITIONING TO CLEAN ENERGY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

New York's dependency on fossil fuels and unchecked energy consumption continues to have dire environmental justice implications. From the siting of power plants to inequitable energy financing, low-income communities of color are overwhelmingly burdened by energy infrastructure and regulations, and they disproportionately suffer from high energy bills, healthcare costs, and other consequences of an extractive and polluting energy system.

NYC-EJA's Just Transition campaigns build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative process while redressing past harms and creating new relationships with our energy systems for the future.

IMPLEMENTING OUR STATE'S AMBITIOUS CLIMATE GOALS UNDER CLCPA

Five years after the passing of the CLCPA, NY Renews continues to organize and advocate for the funding and implementation of the Climate Act, which remains an uphill battle. The fossil fuel industry and related interests continue to pour money and resources into disinformation and fear tactics to hold onto existing fossil fuel infrastructure and oil/gas dependence—with increasing success. The Governor herself, for example, attempted in her 2023 executive budget to undermine New York State's definitions and directions regarding climate policy and goals by altering the State's emission accounting standard from measuring methane's impact over a 20-year standard to a 100-year standard. Additionally, while certain regulatory agencies like DEC and NYSERDA are making efforts to implement the CLCPA and are issuing guidance and drafting emissions reduction regulations, other agencies flout the CLCPA and make budget and policy decisions that directly contradict the law and its mandates. Actions like these move New York away and distract from strong standards, definitions and mandates and allow for administrative conveniences like "linking" with other states and aligning with potentially less stringent Environmental Protection Agency standards and other federal standards. Through all of this, NY Renews pushes with a clear-eyed approach for the bold policies and investments that we know the State needs to make.

NY Renews, a multi-sector coalition of 320+ organizations co-founded by NYC-EJA and other partners following the People's Climate March in 2014, brings together organizations from across New York State to build sustained action for climate, jobs, and justice. The NY Renews coalition championed the Climate and Community Protection Act to mandate a transition to a just and renewable energy economy in New York State, which ultimately became the CLCPA (NYS's Climate Law). Achieving the mandates of the CLCPA requires that the State simultaneously reduce emissions and increase climate justice funding and initiatives and their proper allocation. One of the targeted objectives of the CLCPA is to ensure that New York's transition to

a clean energy economy addresses health, environmental, and energy burdens that have disproportionately impacted marginalized or disadvantaged communities (including people of color, Indigenous populations, and low-income individuals) and find solutions to ease burdens. These objectives are also reflected and affirmed in the NYS Climate Action Council's scoping plan.[10]

NY Renews advocates for the equitable implementation of the Climate Law. Every agency and entity of the State is legally required to act on and enforce obligations on climate and equity screening requirements under sections 7(1), 7(2), and 7(3) of the CLCPA.[11] Enforcing and implementing key provisions within the CLCPA and final scoping plan will require guidance and expert knowledge from State agencies and key players. These decisions must not increase the burdens on frontline communities and worsen climate calamities. To that end, the CLCPA established the NYS Climate Justice Working Group (CJWG), which is charged with creating criteria to identify DACs for targeted climate funding and emissions reduction initiatives. The Working Group includes representatives from NYC-EJA, as well as NYC-EJA member UPROSE.[12] The Environmental Conservation Law Sec. 75-0117, part of a 2019 amendment to the CLCPA, provides that "disadvantaged communities shall receive no less than thirty-five percent of the overall benefits of spending on clean energy" programs. NY Renews continues to lead public comment and implementation analysis of the various funding streams suggested to reach DACs across New York State.

NY Renews mass mobilization in Albany, March 2024. PHOTO: KEN SCHLES

NY Renews also works to ensure the State is making progress to meet the CLCPA every budget and legislative session, as well as in other regulatory and policy proceedings and opportunities. The coalition has successfully advocated for measures like the Build Public Renewables Act and Climate Superfund Act. In 2023, NY Renews also pushed for the Climate Action Fund, which was included in the Governor's Fiscal Year 2024 State Budget and established a climate funding mechanism to support climate action, affordability and investments. About 67% of the proceeds would go to the Climate Investment Account for climate action and funding; 30% of the proceeds would go to the Consumer Climate Action Account for rebates to offset any consumer cost increases that could result from the program; and about 3% of the proceeds would go to the Small Business Climate Action Account, which would support affordability for industrial small businesses. Governor Hochul's yet-to-be released cap-trade-and-invest program (CT&I) would provide the funding for the Climate Action Fund.

As announced in her 2023 State of the State, the Hochul Administration is developing a CT&I program to reduce GHGs and co-pollutant emissions economy wide across NYS. The New York CT&I program (referred to by the State as "NYCI" or cap-and-invest) is an economy-wide proposal to help NYS achieve its targets of 40% emissions reduction by 2030 and 85% emissions reduction by 2050. The program will set an annually declining limit on the amount of GHG emissions emitted in New York and require certain emitters that are obligated under the program to buy an allowance for each ton of GHGs attributed to their operations and activities. The program is required to prioritize investments and reduce pollution in EJ communities as described in the CLCPA. At least 35–40% of the cap-trade-and invest revenue will go to DACs.

EJ advocates have deep concerns about the CT&I program as described in the State's pre-proposal outline. EJ communities have been historically concerned about cap-and-trade systems and policy designs such as trading allowances that can result in pollution hotspots and/or lower, slower rates of air quality improvements in DACs compared with non-DACs (see *Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative* section on p. 25). There are currently no protections in DEC and NYSERDA's pre-proposal outline for DACs, other than not including any provision for offsets. Moreover, DEC has already publicly stated that there will be trading of "allowances" in this program (in which an emitter can sell its unused allowances to other emitters who do not have enough allowances to cover their emissions). This is troubling since EJ advocates on the West Coast have seen problematic aspects of cap-and-trade systems contribute to increased pollution in certain sectors and slower, lower rates of air quality improvement for DACs compared to non-DACs.[13] While DEC is considering GHG and co-pollutant emission caps for facilities in and adjacent to DACs, NY Renews and NYC-EJA do not think this guardrail alone–which should be a given–is sufficient to make sure the CT&I program lives up to the CLCPA and keeps its commitment to EJ communities.
In addition, the three price ceiling scenarios analyzed by the State would not drive down emissions sufficiently to meet the Climate Act emissions reduction targets. The issue of the price ceiling unit and amount is especially troubling because the amount will determine the amount of revenue that the program generates. Not only is the State potentially leaving emission reductions on the table, but it is also potentially forgoing billions of dollars in revenue that could be invested in communities to reduce energy bills; eliminate air and water pollution; build greener, healthier homes and schools; make energy clean and resilient; and build community wealth and power. The State could be using the extra revenue generated from a higher price ceiling to help make the energy

transition more affordable for New Yorkers and direct it to low- and moderate-income households.

It is worth noting that the issue of trading and the price ceiling are only a couple of several priority issues and guardrails regarding CT&I that are important to NY Renews and NYC-EJA. There are other concerns with the proposed program and other guardrails we would like to see incorporated in the State's final regulations. Any CT&I program must prioritize GHG and co-pollutant emission reductions in DACs. Recognizing this clear requirement in the Climate Act, we request that the State formally consult the NYS Climate Justice Working Group and seek their approval on the investment plan and draft regulations.

Last but not least, to ensure that any climate and energy funding is equitably, transparently, and thoughtfully distributed, as mandated by the Climate Law, NY Renews is developing our own version of an investment plan for the revenues anticipated by the Governor's CT&I program, as well as other revenues (e.g., the Environment Bond Act) that outline targeted funding. Through NY Renews, NYC-EJA will help identify the gaps and steps needed in the State's approach in emissions reduction, renewable energy, and DAC mandates as highlighted by environmental justice members in NY Renews and recommend that the State prioritize these solutions.

ELIMINATING EMISSIONS AND CO-POLLUTANTS FROM POWER PLANTS

THE PEAK COALITION ↗

In New York City, nearly a million people live within one mile of the state's dirtiest, oldest, and least efficient power plants, and the overwhelming majority of them are people of color.[15] The CJWG identifies most communities adjacent to power plants as DACs. Fossil fuel-fired "peaker" plants are among the oldest, costliest, most polluting, and least efficient facilities in the state's oil and gas energy generation fleet. Peaker plants only turn on during specific hours of the year to supply surges in energy demand, most commonly during summer heat waves when air pollution is already high. Peaker plants generate some of the highest NOx emissions per megawatt-hour of energy produced. They also charge egregiously high "capacity payments," which are costs billed to electricity consumers for having generating facilities on stand-by for times of need without actually producing any energy. From 2010 to 2019, the

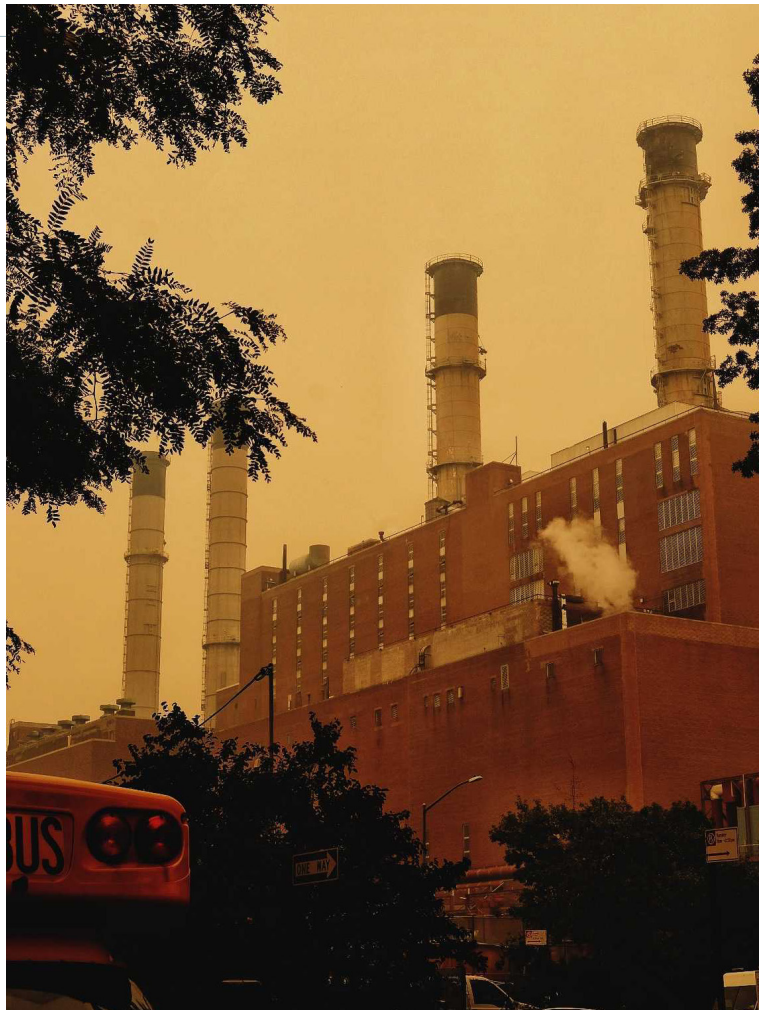
WHAT ARE FALSE SOLUTIONS?

False solutions do not directly address the root causes of the climate crisis and are industry-supported "techno-fixes" that promise to reduce emissions. False solutions are distractions that are often presented as bridges to longer term solutions, when research and evidence show that the needed climate solutions and investments that will support grid reliability and consumer affordability are building out renewable energy, improving battery storage, and fully electrifying. Research shows that false solutions often do the opposite, and often do not reduce the pollution burden on environmental justice communities.[14] Some commonly discussed false solutions include "renewable natural gas," waste-to-energy, carbon capture and storage, and hydrogen blends.

15 peaker power plants in New York City cost ratepayers an average of over $450 million a year in capacity payments alone.[16]

The 2019 Climate Act promised to change the landscape of how our energy system functions. The Climate Act mandates that the State achieve a 100% zero-emissions electricity grid by 2040. Among the interim mandates, the State must achieve a 70% renewable energy grid by 2030 and install specific minimum capacities for solar, offshore wind, and energy storage. Some of these goals have been further increased through executive action by Governor Hochul. Also in 2019, the NYS DEC issued new environmental regulations (6 NYCRR 227-3), fought for by the PEAK Coalition, that drastically ramp down the allowable NOx emissions from power-generating facilities by 2025, known as the "Peaker Rule."

Despite these necessary laws and regulations, peaker plants are still facing a difficult pathway to transition away from using fossil fuels. Efforts underway to electrify the transportation and buildings sector will put significantly more stress on the energy grid. While this process will reduce overall energy demand by making the system more efficient, it can jeopardize the phase-out of fossil fuel power plants by concentrating economy-wide energy supply to these polluting facilities and harming communities nearby. To avoid this, the State must undertake a rapid effort to develop clean energy infrastructure. However, the State has canceled dozens of renewable energy generation and transmission projects due to supply-chain disruptions and ratepayer protection, spurred by over 90 developers' requests to increase State incentives to ensure project viability or increase profits.[17] The New York Independent Systems Operator, charged with maintaining the operations and reliability of the power grid, has already requested the extension of operations for two peaker plants in Sunset Park–Gowanus Generating Station and Narrows Generating Station–for energy reliability purposes, weakening NYS DEC's Peaker Rule.



The Con Edison 14th street steam & power plant on the day the Canadian wildfires turned NYC's skies orange. PHOTO: DANIEL CHU.

The PEAK Coalition was launched in 2019 as the nation's first comprehensive effort to reduce the negative and racially disproportionate health impacts of a city's peaker plants by replacing them with renewable energy and battery storage solutions. The coalition was co-founded by NYC-EJA, The POINT CDC, UPROSE, Clean Energy Group, and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. The PEAK Coalition combines organizing, planning, technical, and legal expertise to end the long-standing pollution burden from power plants on the city's most climate-vulnerable people.

To date, the coalition has issued four major

independent reports detailing the challenges and pathways to phasing out all peaker plants in New York City. The coalition has also issued a joint report with the New York Power Authority (NYPA), after three years of close deliberation and collaboration, that confirmed and catalyzed the ability of NYPA to phase out its New York City and Long Island peaker plants with only currently available battery storage technologies by 2030. This is five years faster than NYPA's initial company-stated commitment. The report led to the inclusion of key text of the Build Public Renewables Act in the 2023 New York State Budget, enabling NYPA to develop and operate renewable energy for the first time in decades while legislatively mandating the phase-out of publicly owned peakers by 2030.

Although brownouts and blackouts are relatively rare in New York City, their impact on vulnerable residents can be severe. New York must incentivize, invest, and build new clean energy faster than ever to ensure supply remains reliable. Gigawatts worth of renewable energy and energy storage capacities are required to support the planned and mandated phaseout of power plants and prevent similar situations like permit extensions for Gowanus and Narrows from repeating. State government should accelerate the issuing of distributed solar, offshore wind, and utility-scale storage contracts. We must also learn from past mistakes and ensure that these contracts do not continue to solely emphasize bidding costs. We need a full balance between ratepayer protection, project maturity, and emissions reduction in DACs. NYPA should fully mobilize its bond-making, technical, and development capacities to build renewable energy and battery storage while supporting its government and nonprofit customers in decarbonizing their operations.

Beyond building enough supplies for the energy transition, the ability to meet and manage changes in energy demand should outpace the mandatory rate of retiring power plants fired by fossil fuels. Demand-Side Management (DSM) can significantly reduce load on the electricity grid during peak demand or in times of supply constraint. DSM programs can take many forms, such as distributed energy resources, demand response, or virtual power plants. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's 2020 Assessment of Demand Response and Advanced Metering report found that NYS is the only regional grid that decreased DSM participation since 2018. While New York has not even studied the potential benefits of a scaled-up DSM system, the 2025 California Demand Response Potential Study published by Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory found that it has the potential to shed over 10 GW of electricity generation capacity—more than 10% of the State's total supply.[18]

To manage peak load on the grid, the Public Service Commission should issue orders for ConEdison and other transmission utilities to implement system-wide opt-out demand response programs. The State should also be more careful in evaluating and approving large load-demanding customers such as data centers or cryptocurrency mines, which were among the most significant factors in load growth in New York according to the 2024 Draft Clean Energy Standard Biannual Review. Incentivizing virtual power plant-capable infrastructure like smart switches, rooftop solar, or vehicle-to-grid charging could help better balance electricity demand with clean energy supply. Critically, DSM programs and infrastructure can be implemented much faster than building utility-scale renewable energy and battery storage because they do not come with as much permitting or supply chain constraints. It is irresponsible for New York to continue to lag behind in understanding and controlling electricity demand. PEAK Coalition's forthcoming report in October 2024, *Demanding a Better Grid: Peaker Transition through Demand-Side Management*, will focus on rising demand and

how New York can responsibly manage it as a core obligation to EJ communities.

REGIONAL GREENHOUSE GAS INITIATIVE

Despite the efforts of the Biden Administration and Congressional leaders, the advancement of federal climate policy has been stymied by Supreme Court decisions like West Virginia v. EPA and Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo, as well as a lack of political momentum in Congress. It is clear that the states, at least in the near term, must continue to lead on addressing the climate crisis and to ensure equity for frontline communities. With climate policy stalling at the federal level, New York has a responsibility to successfully implement its bold policies to provide the nation with a roadmap for a just transition away from fossil fuels.

New York must also lead by inserting its climate and equity policies into regional agreements. The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, Inc. (RGGI, Inc.) is a nonprofit run by Northeastern state governments since 2009 with the objectives of reducing carbon dioxide emissions through least-cost planning while generating revenue to invest in alternatives to fossil fuels through a cap-and-trade program. This is a concern for environmental justice communities, because cap-and-trade programs have a history of creating landscapes of disproportionate emissions reduction, stalling much-needed climate progress, and misusing or abusing program revenues. Researchers, working in collaboration with community organizers, have found that a similar cap-and-trade program in California led to comparatively slower emissions reductions in environmental justice communities.[19] While NYC-EJA continues to oppose cap-and-trade systems, we are working with allies across the Northeast to fight for guardrails within the existing RGGI program to protect the environment and public health of the communities impacted by RGGI power plants.

NYC-EJA led a successful campaign with Environmental Advocates NY to ensure that New York amended its RGGI emissions regulations and spending plans to align with the equity and environmental justice provisions in the CLCPA. New York is the only state that has a lower eligibility capacity threshold for RGGI participating power plants at 15 MW from the regional 25 MW threshold. This means that smaller and less efficient power plants in New York are captured under the RGGI program and encouraged to decrease their emissions. We have also successfully prevented the "raiding" of funding for the RGGI program (i.e., the transfer of these funds to New York State's general fund), guaranteeing that hundreds of millions in revenue are actually used to invest in infrastructure aimed at fighting pollution. Our work on a regional level, led by NYC-EJA and other Northeast members of the national Climate Justice Alliance, has actively engaged in designing the next iteration of the program for 2030 and beyond.

Our demands on the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative include the following:

- Calling for RGGI to reduce the emissions cap, in line with statewide climate goals,
- Improving the emissions containment reserve, price floor, cost containment reserve, and banked allowances,
- Assessing and reducing cumulative burdens in environmental justice communities,
- Lowering the compliance thresholds and closing program loopholes,
- Expanding qualifying polluters and rejecting false solutions,
- Eliminating offsets to drive real emissions reductions,
- Investing directly in power plant communities to advance a just transition, and
- Prioritizing community air quality monitoring.

RGGI, Inc.'s Third Program Review process began in 2021 and was set to go into effect in 2022, but it has been delayed for over a year and has not yet been finalized. It is unclear whether any of the guardrails for which EJ communities across the Northeast are calling will be incorporated into the program design. Currently, the RGGI emissions cap is not slated to be reduced beyond 2030. This means that the allowable emissions for power plants will not decrease any further without concrete program changes. Even if RGGI, Inc. substantially incorporates the demands of Climate Justice Alliance members and allied organizations, communities must continue organizing for individual state governments in charge of spending RGGI proceeds to actually direct the funding toward emissions reduction and a just transition for power plant communities, rather than using RGGI revenues as additional sources of funding for each state's pet projects. NYC-EJA is also carefully monitoring ideas and proposals to link the RGGI program with other cap-and-trade regimes, such as sector-specific or economy-wide programs in California, Washington, Pennsylvania, and New York, many of which have concerning implications for environmental justice communities.

DEVELOPING NEW ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP MODELS

REVITALIZE PARTNERSHIP

The energy transition is dominated by large, private corporations that are taking advantage of the "green gold rush." State and federal governments are pouring hundreds of millions of dollars through contracts, grants, and incentives into the energy transition each year. Although renewable energy production and storage do not have the same public health impact as traditional fossil fuels, they may nevertheless perpetuate the negative model of extraction from EJ communities through undermining local land use priorities and directing profits to historic and currently polluting facilities in the same communities, thereby decreasing energy access and affordability. Since 2016, the State's Reforming the Energy Vision (REV) program (Department of Public Service Case 14-M-0101) has focused on driving the benefits of solar development to corporate developers and property owners in order to achieve a scalable solar industry, largely leaving behind community organizations, nonprofit housing developers, and renters. These efforts have grown the solar sector by 3,000% since 2011. Even though efforts are funded by taxpayers and ratepayers, it is difficult to track where within the renewable energy industry the billions of dollars in federal, State, and City incentives have flowed in the past, or continue to flow. In Buffalo, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, low-income communities of color continue to grapple with disproportionate energy burdens and negative health impacts. Many low-income families are energy cost–burdened, compared with only a small fraction of non-low-income families in New York City.[20]

Compounding the disproportionately affected energy burden mentioned above, the median annual energy bill of low-income residents in New York City is only 10% lower than that of the city's average, $1,155 and $1,275 respectively.[21] This example shows an apparent disconnect between NYS's energy generation, transmission, and oversight priorities with the actual hardships residents in New York are facing. According to the United States Energy Information Administration, NYS's average cost of electricity is the ninth highest in the United States.[22] In poor and working class neighborhoods like those in Buffalo, where renter occupancy is high and residents are responsible for heating and electricity costs, nearly three times more households are energy burdened than that of statewide average.[23]

In Buffalo, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, low-income communities of color continue to grapple with disproportionate energy burdens and negative health impacts. Many low-income families are energy cost–burdened, compared with only a small fraction of non-low-income families in New York City.

The REVitalize Partnership, formed in 2016 between NYC-EJA, PUSH Buffalo, The POINT CDC, We Stay/Nos Quedamos, and UPROSE, saw the inadequacies of New York's REV program. Together, we work to strengthen the capacity of EJ communities to carry out local clean energy projects, planning efforts, and regulatory engagement that improves community resiliency and establishes co-ownership of energy assets while dismantling prevailing energy, health, and economic burdens throughout NYS. The Partnership envisions and establishes innovative energy development models that drive the uptake of community co-owned renewable energy infrastructure projects and community-led energy planning initiatives in Melrose, Hunts Point, Sunset Park, and West Buffalo. REVitalize Partners serve the needs of their respective communities and seek to dismantle existing hurdles in renewable energy generation that can be overcome by developing strong, equitable partnerships between grassroots organizations, public agencies, and other organizations. In the long term, REVitalize seeks to demonstrate the community and resiliency benefits of locally led community energy ownership.

The REVitalize Partnership has made substantial progress to date in reaching our overall goal to further develop and establish community-owned solar projects throughout New York State. Hundreds of kilowatts of community co-owned solar panels are being constructed in Buffalo and Brooklyn, with some already in operation. Megawatts worth of community co-owned solar and battery storage power are in various pre-development stages. These projects and accomplishments illustrate the importance of an innovative grassroots partnership, which continues to influence and shape the growing momentum toward comprehensive energy planning initiatives targeting DACs.

NEW YORK CITY OFFSHORE WIND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TABLE

The CLCPA mandates the development of 9 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity in NYS by 2035. Offshore wind is particularly important for NYC and Long Island, because large renewable energy projects upstate only have a narrow, congested corridor around the Hudson River to deliver clean energy down to NYC. On top of the reliability mandate that requires approximately 80%

of expected energy consumption to be generated within the same "zone" of the electricity grid, downstate zones in New York overwhelmingly rely on fossil fuels to satisfy their energy demands. However, New York is uniquely positioned to potentially receive offshore wind energy from more current federally designated offshore wind lease areas than any other state because of Long Island's geography. When properly connected and paired with energy storage systems, offshore wind turbines will be the main sources of energy supply for New York City and Long Island.[24]

Since the Climate Act passed in 2019, New York still has less than 1 gigawatt of offshore wind capacity, and there have been repeated project cancellations due to a variety of contract errors, program failures, or economic circumstances that halted the effective scaling of a critical offshore wind industry. Major offshore wind projects have also been led by major oil-producing companies that have a history of ignoring, undermining, or harming EJ communities in New York and across the world. Their demand for guaranteed profit despite having insufficient development and community engagement teams have been a factor in the hundreds of millions worth of contract cancellations since 2022.[25]

Despite these challenges, the offshore wind industry is still taking off in NYC. A variety of marginalized groups with differing needs and priorities stand to benefit from this industry as it takes root and grows. The current industry convention for working with communities is Community Benefit Agreements, which are extremely limited in reach and impact. They often fail to reflect the concept of community co-governance. There is an urgent need to modify the conventional thinking around industry investments and community benefits and the relationships between industry, the climate and environmental justice communities, and organizations, particularly in areas that will host offshore wind infrastructure. With billions more set to be poured into this industry, a frontline community vision for this new industry needs to happen ahead of discussions on spending community benefit funds, and to go beyond traditional industry approaches and practices.

NYC-EJA, co-leading with UPROSE, has been convening frontline environmental and climate justice organizations and allies in the NYC region. They include many environmental justice organizations impacted by offshore wind development, as well as academic and workforce development partners and programs. The group serves as a focal point of collaboration and discussion on how communities can equitably benefit from the emergence of the offshore wind industry in New York City. Participants will share knowledge and strategies, identify local priorities, and build power to ensure that offshore wind companies are held accountable to these communities. The Offshore Wind Environmental Justice Table will help different communities and organizations organize to develop and present a unified voice and demands to ensure that benefits for disadvantaged communities, co-governance, and racial justice are priorities, not afterthoughts, for the offshore wind industry in the New York City Metropolitan region.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

IMPLEMENT OUR STATE'S AMBITIOUS CLIMATE GOALS UNDER CLCPA.

- Protect the integrity of the CLCPA goals and mandates.
- As a new major dedicated funding stream for climate, ensure NYS's cap-trade-and invest program invests in and does not disproportionately burden disadvantaged communities.

REDUCE EMISSIONS AND CO-POLLUTANTS FROM POWER PLANTS.

- Rapidly ramp up investments for renewable energy and battery storage.
- Grow publicly owned renewable energy, energy storage, and electricity transmission capacities.
- Study and scale demand-side management for New York to responsibly balance electricity demand with supply.
- Decrease emissions cap, fully account for co-pollutants, and close all cap-and-trade loopholes in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

DEVELOP NEW ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP MODELS.

- Incentivize community-owned energy resource development.
- Ensure that investments in the green energy transition prioritize the needs of environmental justice communities.

2 REIMAGINING OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND HARMFUL LAND USES

New York City's built environment is immense and varied, which in many cases amplifies risks to hazards. While NYC's intricate network of underground infrastructure, transportation systems, and buildings provides vital services to New Yorkers, today's built environment contributes to complex systems that burden many frontline communities. As a result of historic racist and inequitable city planning practices, low-income communities of color are forced to bear the brunt of decades-old noxious infrastructure such as wastewater treatment plants, fossil fuel–burning power plants, and waste transfer stations.

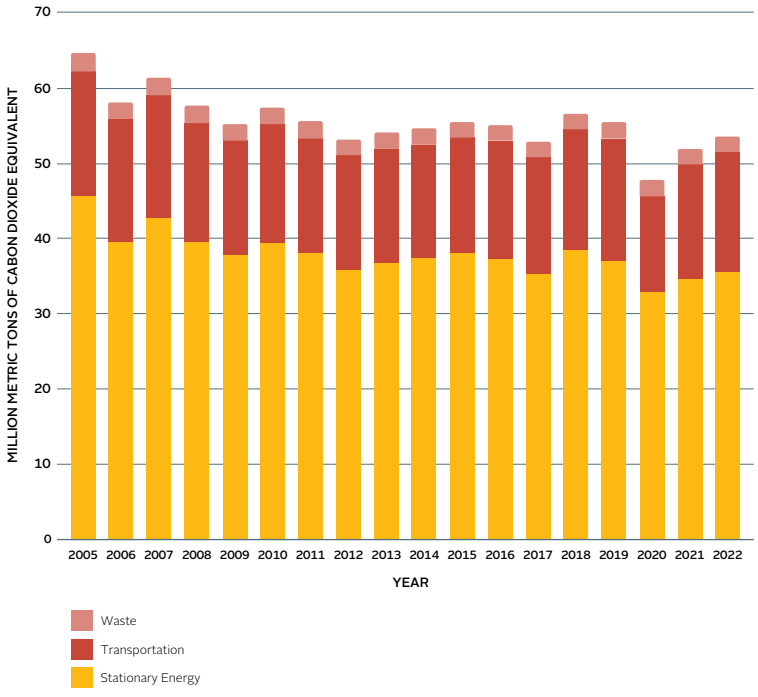
In addition, the three main sectors that are the largest contributors to city-wide GHG emissions in New York City are buildings, transportation, and waste (Figure 1).

Building on our work to shift NYC away from fossil fuel use and toward clean renewable energy, NYC-EJA's campaigns that relate to NYC's built environment aim to reimagine harmful land uses, lower our dependance on burning fossil fuels so we can have cleaner air, and use nature-based solutions rather than gray infrastructure to address a range of issues such as flooding, extreme heat, and air quality.

DECARBONIZING AND ADAPTING OUR BUILDINGS TO CLIMATE CHANGE

A majority of GHG emissions in NYC are produced by buildings. Approximately 66% of city-wide GHG emissions are generated from the energy used to power buildings, heat spaces in the winters, and provide hot water.[26] While this includes emissions from burning fossil fuels to generate electricity to the central grid, the majority of GHG emissions attributed to buildings are from

FIGURE 1: ANNUAL GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IN NYC



Source: NYC Greenhouse Gas Inventories—NYC Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice

the on-site burning of fossil fuels like natural gas and oil to produce heat and hot water (Figure 2). The on-site burning of natural gas in boilers is the biggest contributor of GHG emissions from buildings.[27]

NYC has made some progress addressing our dirty building stock. Over the last two decades, many buildings have moved away from using heating oil as a result of the City's efforts to phase out No. 6 and No. 4 fuel oils. But we have a lot more to do.

CLIMATE WORKS FOR ALL ↗

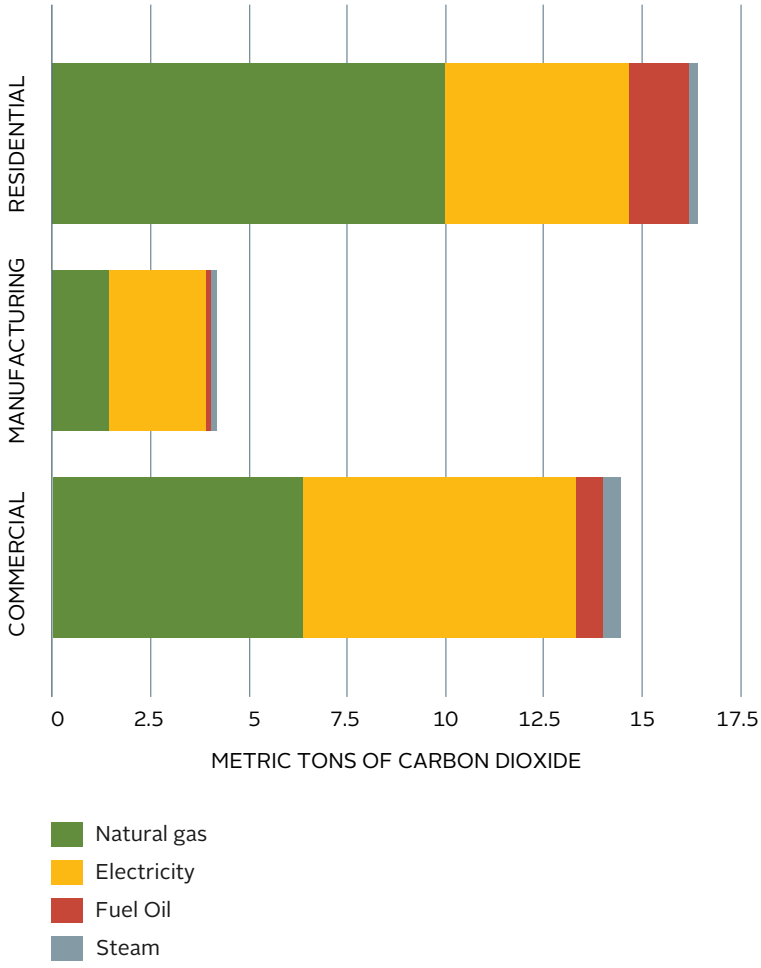
In 2014, NYC-EJA, alongside ALIGN NY and labor partners, formed the Climate Works for All (CW4A) coalition, a direct outgrowth of the People's Climate March and the effort to implement the City's 80x50 executive order (which organizers like NYC-EJA successfully convinced then-Mayor de Blasio to adopt the morning of the March). The coalition emerged out of the need to comprehensively lower NYC's emissions and focused on creating a 10-point program for how NYC could decarbonize.

After five years of advocacy, the CW4A coalition successfully persuaded the New York City Council to pass Local Law 97 in 2019 (LL97), the cornerstone of the NYC Climate Mobilization Act (CMA). This legislation mandates that large buildings (25,000 square feet and above) be retrofitted to meet emissions reductions standards that become progressively more stringent over time, reducing their emissions by 40% by 2030 and 80% by 2050.

LL97 is the most ambitious municipal legislation passed by any major U.S. city to reduce GHG emissions. Reducing these emissions can improve air quality, enhance buildings' efficiency, and create new green jobs in the process. While past research has shown that the complete implementation of LL97 could lead to the creation of approximately 141,000 direct jobs in the NYC metro area to implement building energy efficiency upgrades and improvements,[28] there is a need for newer research and data collection on LL97-related workforce development. In collaboration with labor partners, CW4A is working to advance targeted training and workforce development programs for high-quality, career-track employment opportunities, prioritizing communities that were historically burdened by air pollution.

Since this law's passage in 2019, the coalition has closely monitored the City's implementation progress, especially as

FIGURE 2: CITY-WIDE EMISSIONS IN NYC BUILDINGS IN 2022



Source: NYC Greenhouse Gas Inventories—NYC Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice

we entered the first compliance period on January 1, 2024. This oversight is crucial, particularly in light of recent testimony by NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services officials stating that the City would not meet its interim decarbonization goals for 2025. The City expects that these goals will not be met until fiscal year 2026.[29] While we recognize that the City has undertaken efforts to decarbonize, the public sector must do more to avoid missing deadlines to set a strong example for the private sector.

There have been several serious attempts to either water down LL97 by allowing the use of false solutions as compliance pathways or render it completely void through new legislation. CW4A has consistently defended the law during all these attempts and continues to explore ways for the public and private sectors to overcome barriers to implementation. The coalition's current priorities regarding LL97 include:

- Avoiding false solutions, such as carbon capture technology in buildings and carbon trading as compliance pathway, among others;
- Ensuring that tenants, especially low-income households, are protected throughout the implementation of the law;
- Establishing a Green Affordable Housing Fund to support affordable housing compliance with LL97;
- Expanding green job training and workforce development programs; and
- Tracking State and federal funding opportunities to aid building weatherization and decarbonization.

Almost a year into the first compliance period of LL97, there remains a critical discrepancy between the high upfront costs of retrofitting buildings and the amount of subsidies available to building owners. In addition to drawing down additional State and federal

Climate Works for All rallies for Green Healthy Schools, December, 2023. PHOTO CREDIT: ALIGN

funds to support building decarbonization, CW4A has been advocating for the City to establish a Green Affordable Housing Fund to support the capital needs of the housing sector, described in greater detail in Cap the Credits, a report released by the NYC Comptroller's Office in collaboration with the coalition. Furthermore, after years of advocacy, CW4A is glad to see that in this year's adopted City Budget, the Department of Buildings (DOB) has funding for increased staff positions who will be working on LL97 implementation. While we acknowledge that this is a much needed step, DOB must ensure that building decarbonization is a high priority moving forward.

Simultaneously, CW4A is advocating to implement Green Healthy Schools across NYC. The campaign calls on the City to install solar panels and conduct deep energy retrofits in all 3K–12 public schools, prioritizing those located in environmental justice communities. These retrofits can help the City comply with LL97, create more green career-track jobs, and foster safe learning spaces for young New Yorkers. Building on CW4A's advocacy, in 2022, Mayor Adams announced the Leading the Charge initiative to electrify 100 schools and make other necessary upgrades to school buildings. While this is a good start, two years after this announcement, only about half the money has been allocated and there has been no transparency on which schools have been identified for electrification.

DECREASING EMISSIONS FROM THE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR

In New York City and State, the transportation sector is the second largest contributor to GHG emissions.[30,31] While GHG emissions in multiple sectors have declined since 1990, transportation GHG emissions have *increased* 10% between 1990 and 2019[32] and have continued to increase since 2020, despite an initial and dramatic decrease due to the COVID-19 pandemic.[33] To improve air quality and health, and reduce the impacts of climate change, transportation-related policies to reduce vehicle miles traveled and emissions at the local and state level are critical.

Through multiple campaigns and coalitions, NYC-EJA's transportation work focuses on reducing tailpipe emissions in low-income communities of color that have historically experienced inequitable transportation systems and infrastructure, and giving them priority for electrification.

ELECTRIFYNY ↗

Co-founded by NYC-EJA, ElectrifyNY is a state-wide coalition of advocates for environmental justice, public transportation, social justice, and good jobs that strives to establish a clean and equitable transportation system by advocating for state-wide tailpipe emissions reduction policies. The coalition prioritizes electrification and a green transition approach to policies to ensure improved health outcomes for environmental justice communities. Furthermore, the coalition supports a just and fair transition for workers by advocating for policies that create community-sustaining jobs with good wages, benefits, and training, and solutions for a just and equitable transition to zero emissions that are attainable and affordable for everyone.

Green Transit, Green Jobs

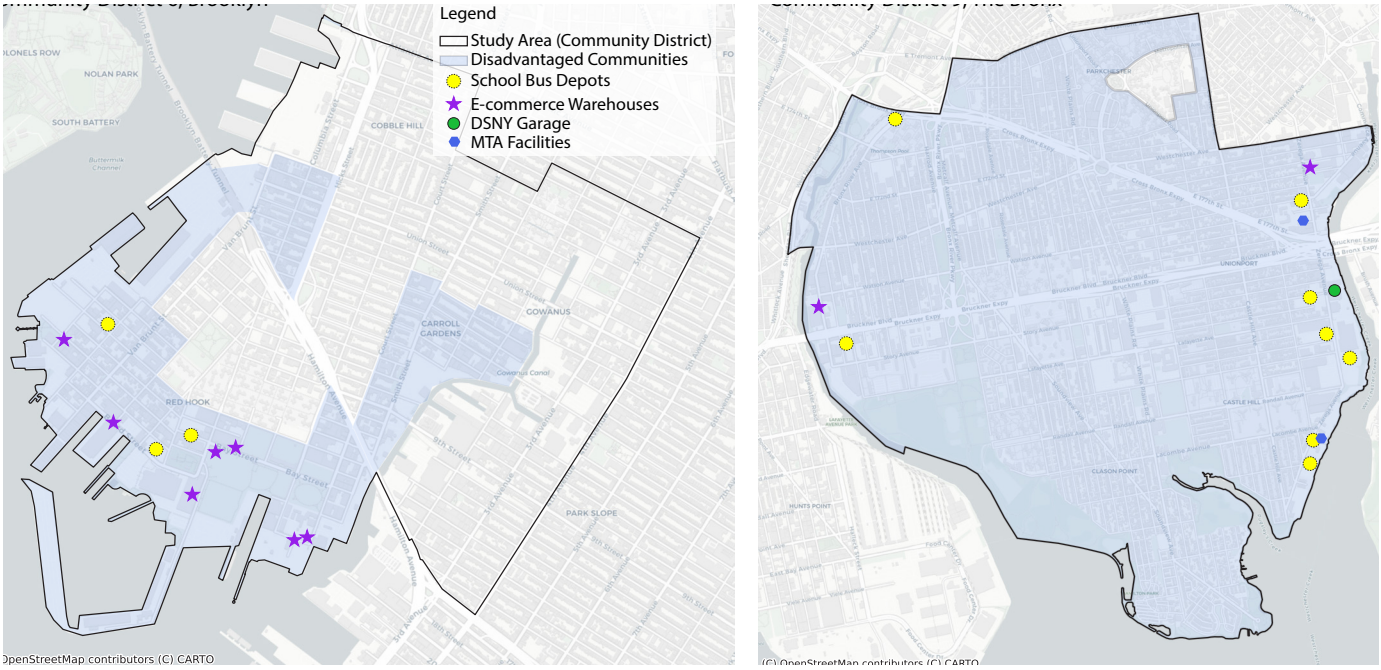
The coalition launched in 2019 with calls for New York State to commit to a swift, just transition to a zero emissions transportation future for New York by 2040 and for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to release a detailed plan and timeline for a 2040 all-electric fleet. The launch came a year after the MTA announced its plan to transition its entire 5,000+ bus fleet to fully electric, following successful campaigns by NYC-EJA and other transit allies.[34]

Although cars and trucks contribute significantly more to GHG emissions than buses,[35] reducing our state's reliance on fossil fuels by improving public transit and vehicle electrification are necessary and feasible steps to meeting our climate goals. It is estimated that less than 1% of all public transit buses in New York are electric, and like school buses and other heavy-duty vehicles, the majority of transit buses in New York operate on diesel fuel, which creates more toxic pollution than gasoline.[36] Furthermore, New York State public transportation authorities, including the MTA, make up the majority of bus procurements in the country. By adopting legislation, such as Green Transit, Green Jobs (S.6089/A.6414), New York can follow California in phasing out fossil fuel–operated buses and reducing tailpipe emissions from the public transportation system.

Electric School Buses

Following New York City's adoption of Local Law 120 of 2021, which requires the City to ensure that all school buses are electric zero-emission by September 1, 2035, the coalition scored a major victory in 2022 after launching a campaign for the state to adopt a similar mandate. Starting in 2027, all new bus purchases state-wide must be zero-emissions electric, and by 2035, school districts are required to shift their entire fleet from diesel to electric school buses. NYSERDA's Electric School Bus Roadmap highlights that switching to electric school buses will save the state at least $1.5–2.8 billion in avoided health impacts from diesel and fossil fuel combustion.[37] The coalition continues to monitor the transition to ensure that there is available funding at the State and federal levels for buses and charging infrastructure and that there is no weakening of the State's mandate. Just as the majority of MTA bus depots are located in low-income communities of color in New York City, many school bus depots are also found in the same communities that have historically been overburdened by polluting infrastructure (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: TRANSPORTATION-RELATED POLLUTING INFRASTRUCTURE IN DACS



Source: Garcia, K. 2024. Data from New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), NYC Department of Sanitation, Metropolitan Transportation Authority, NYC Department of Education.

In fact, the Office of the NY Attorney General found that four school bus companies violated New York laws by allowing school buses to idle for extended periods of time at their bus yards.[38] Furthermore, although the mandate is in place, a recent report found that in New York City, 20–25% of school buses violated local law by being parked outside schools across the city and idling their engines for longer than one minute.[39] As the State continues to make funds available from the earmarked $500 million dollars for electric school buses and charging infrastructure through the Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act, it will be important for the State to prioritize school districts that serve disadvantaged communities and work with federal and local governments to guarantee that school districts achieve the mandate.

LAST-MILE COALITION

The Last-Mile Coalition was co-launched by NYC-EJA, UPROSE, El Puente, The POINT CDC, Red Hook Initiative, and Earthjustice in response to the unregulated growth of last-mile e-commerce warehouses in New York City. The rise in e-commerce over the past several years, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, led to a massive increase in the siting and operation of last-mile warehouses nationwide. These facilities receive a high volume of goods and sort them for direct delivery to consumers. The rise in last-mile warehouses has increased daily truck trips and tailpipe emissions in the neighborhoods where they are located. Local zoning has not kept pace with the rise of e-commerce. Currently, New York City's Zoning Resolution permits "warehouses" in all manufacturing districts and C8 commercial districts as-of-right (Figure 4). However, the Zoning Resolution does not distinguish between last-mile and traditional warehouses. Last-mile facilities tend to be much larger than traditional warehouses and often have multiple levels with many more loading bays. Many of the new last-mile facilities constructed or planned in New York City have involved new construction rather than reuse of existing warehouse space in order to meet the demands of the industry.

Today, about 90% of the City's goods move into and around the city by trucks,[40] and by 2045, it is projected that more freight will move throughout our city.[41] The operations and impacts of last-mile warehouses are fundamentally different in scale from traditional warehouse uses due to the high volume of product loading and unloading and product flow velocity, involving many more truck trips to and from these facilities than traditional warehouses. Given this lack of oversight, the City has no opportunity to plan for the installation of last-mile warehouses, and there is no public or environmental review for these facilities. This, coupled with the clustering of these facilities in allowed districts, has led to an unaccounted-for increase in truck traffic and air pollution. Thus, residents of neighborhoods where these facilities are permitted must now live with many more environmental, health, noise, and safety impacts.

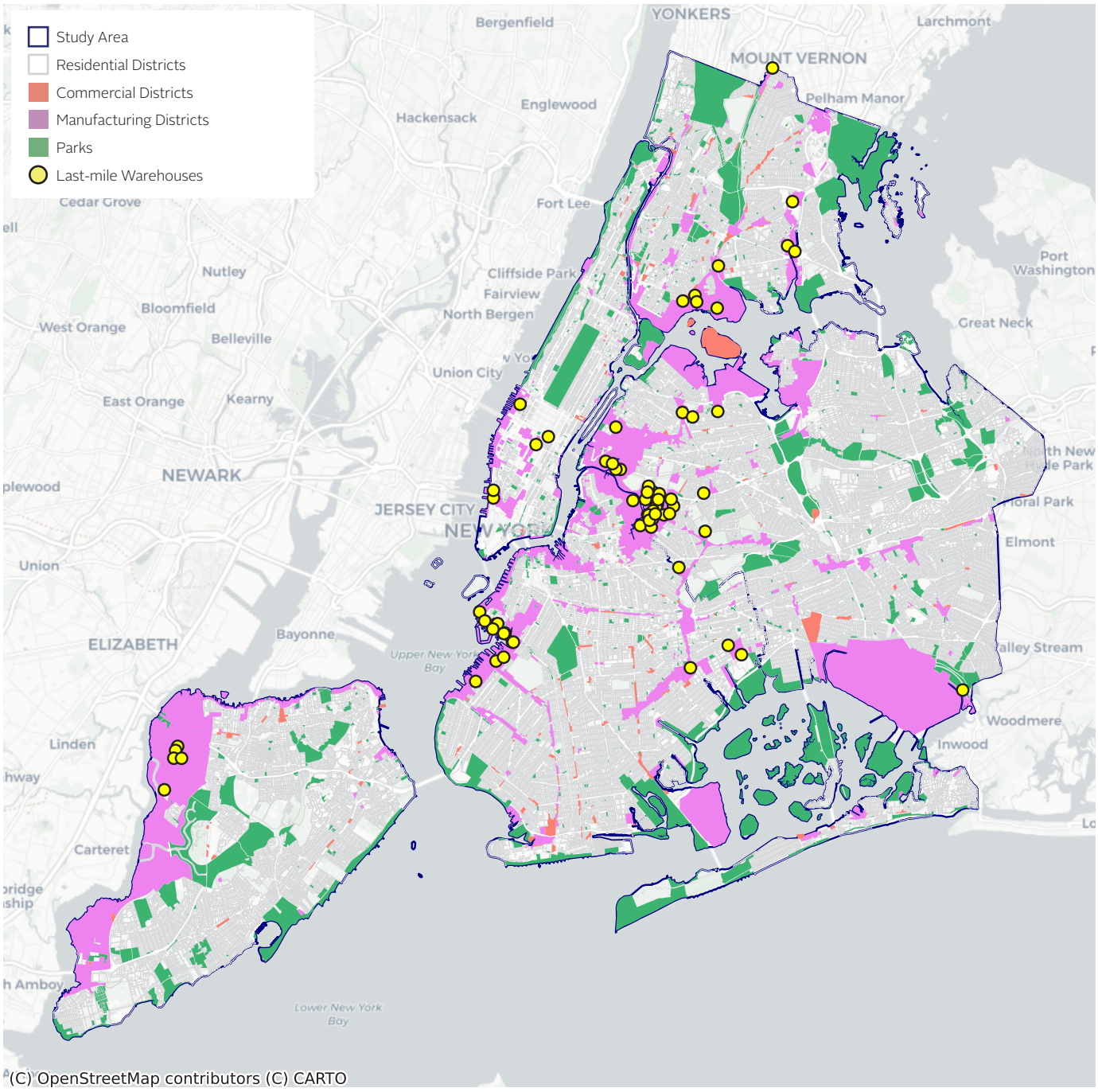
In response to this, the Last-Mile Coalition has submitted a zoning text amendment application to the NYC Department of City Planning to regulate the siting and operation of last-mile e-commerce warehouses. The proposed text amendment would update the zoning resolution to require long-overdue public health protections, such as setting buffers from sensitive receptors and requiring findings that the proposed facility would not increase air pollution and vehicular traffic congestion in nearby communities. All new last-mile warehouses would have to go through a public, environmental review before being allowed to operate.

While zoning is only able to address new last-mile warehouses, the coalition is cognizant of

the impacts of existing last-mile warehouses. In New York, one in four New Yorkers lives within half a mile of an e-commerce warehouse (Figure 5).[42] Furthermore, Black, Latino, and low-income populations live near warehouses at rates that are more than 59%, 48%, and 42% higher, respectively, than would be expected based on state-wide statistics.[43]

To address this, the coalition, in partnership with the ElectrifyNY coalition, has called on our state's elected leaders to adopt the Clean

FIGURE 4: LOCATIONS OF IDENTIFIED E-COMMERCE WAREHOUSES IN NYC, 2022

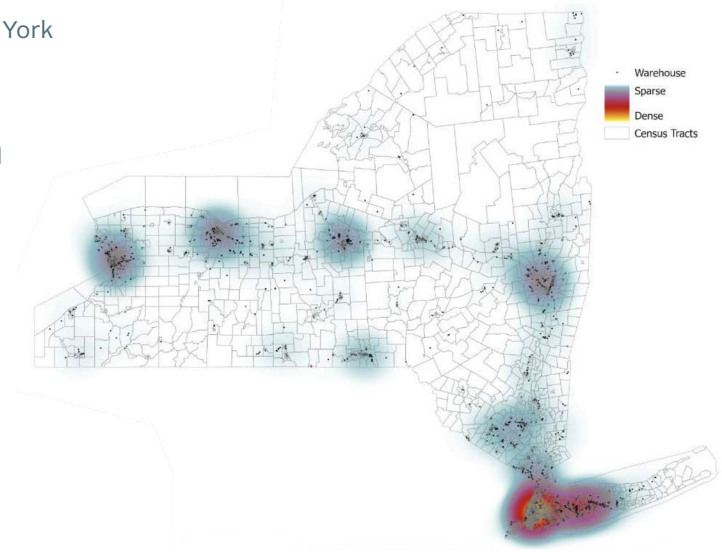


Source: New York City Department of City Planning, 2024

FIGURE 5: E-COMMERCE MEGA WAREHOUSES IN NEW YORK STATE

Warehouse density is higher around New York population clusters and highways

WAREHOUSES: 2,421
WAREHOUSE NEIGHBORS: 4.8 MILLION



Source: NY Proximity Mapping report

Deliveries Act (S2127C/A1718C), an indirect source rule for transportation to address the emissions associated with the operation of last-mile and mega e-commerce warehouses. The bill would require a review of emissions from all qualifying e-commerce warehouses and a site-specific emissions reduction plan and mitigation plan. To minimize air pollution, warehouse operators would have a menu of options to implement, including acquiring zero-emissions vehicles and charging infrastructure, installing solar panels and battery storage on sites, and considering alternative modes of transportation to bring goods to and from the warehouse. This state-wide program would address the emissions from both new and existing qualifying warehouses and would provide relief to communities where these facilities currently exist.

The coalition continues to monitor the implementation of other initiatives that address the impacts of last-mile warehouses. Local Law 171 of 2023 requires the NYC Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) to improve safety, increase visibility, reduce traffic congestion, and reduce vehicle miles traveled across the five boroughs via a truck network redesign.[44] The New York City Truck Route Network was established in the 1970s. Its goal is to provide the shortest travel times between major freight and destinations, typically commercial and industrial areas, and is a critical component of moving goods throughout the city. However, New York City has vastly changed since the 1970s in terms of economic development, zoning and land use, and population growth. Within EJ communities, redesigned truck routes can implement street safety measures like daylighting of intersections, and avoid sensitive community sites like schools, senior centers, health centers, and parks where particularly vulnerable populations like children and seniors are located.

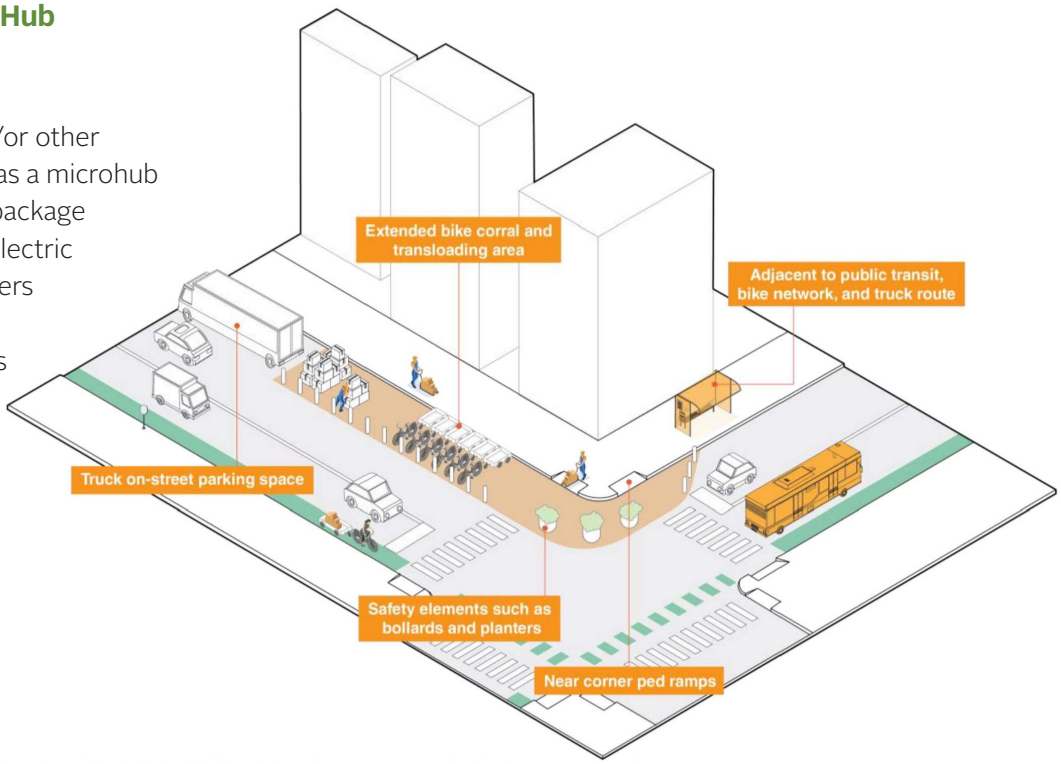
The City has proposed other initiatives to advance alternative modes of transportation for transporting goods, such as the Blue Highways initiative, and to reduce the negative environmental and safety effects of truck deliveries, such as piloting micro-distribution hubs (Figure 6). While these may help with reducing truck dependency and vehicle miles traveled, these initiatives do not address the clustering, siting, and operation of last-mile warehouses throughout the city.

FIGURE 6: POTENTIAL CONCEPTUAL OPTIONS FOR DELIVERIES FOR MICROHUBS

Conceptual On-Street Hub

On Street Hub Features:

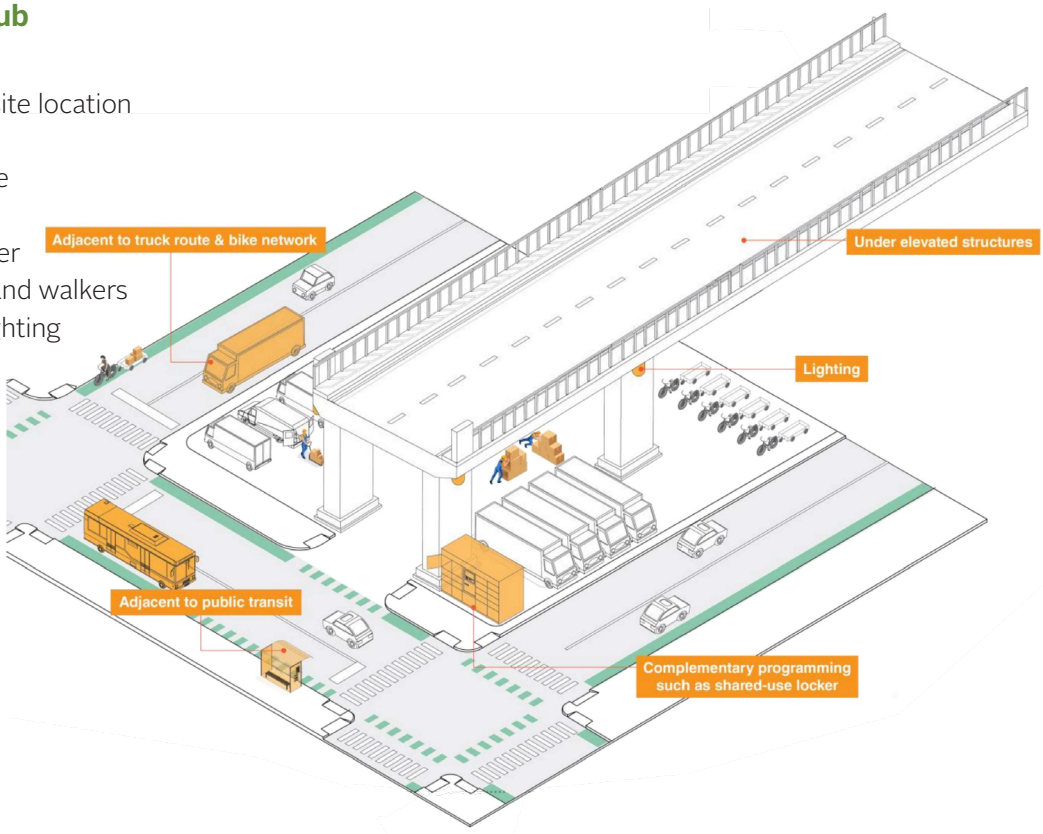
- 80-100 feet in length
- Regulatory signage and/or other markings designating it as a microhub
- Transloading space for package sorting and transfer to electric vehicles, bikes, and walkers
- (Cargo) bike corrals
- Upgraded safety barriers (flexible delineators, bollards, armadillos, planters, etc.)



Conceptual Off-Street Hub

On Street Hub Features:

- Variation in size based on site location
- Vehicle and goods storage
- Vehicle repair/maintenance
- Transloading space for package sorting and transfer to electric vehicles, bikes, and walkers
- Weather protection and lighting
- Opportunities for additional amenities and programming



Note: This conceptual image is included for illustrative purposes only and does not reflect the final design of the microhub.

Source: NYC Department of Transportation Microhub Pilot

Launch of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway Environmental Justice Coalition in April 2024.

Recently, the City has worked to update zoning regulations to support small businesses, create affordable housing, and promote sustainability. In partnership with the City Council, in conjunction with the adoption of the City of Yes for Economic Opportunity initiative, the coalition secured a major victory with an agreement from the City to enact a municipal indirect source rule to regulate emissions associated with warehouse operations. In addition, the Department of City Planning is charged with proposing and advancing a zoning change application to regulate last-mile warehouses via City Planning Commission special permit processes, with stakeholder engagement beginning in 2024, and issuing a 30-day scoping notice by end of March 2025.[45] Once these regulations are adopted, NYC will become the largest city in the nation with a municipal indirect source rule program and last-mile facility zoning regulations.

BROOKLYN-QUEENS EXPRESSWAY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COALITION

The Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE) is an important transportation artery in New York City but a relic of the destructive planner Robert Moses. The corridor is an environmental injustice that has harmed our communities from its inception by displacing families and businesses. At present, nearly 130,000 trucks and cars travel along the highway every day, leaving behind toxic fumes in surrounding communities.[46] The City has begun a reimagining process for the BQE Central (or triple cantilever) section of the corridor. In response to this, NYC-EJA co-launched the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway

Environmental Justice Coalition (BQE EJC), along with El Puente and UPROSE, to call on the City and State to create a comprehensive community-led plan centered on racial justice and equity. The plan must address the environmental and health impacts of air pollution, reconnect our communities, and meet our climate targets. Congress and federal agencies are allocating major funding to once-in-a-generation investments in infrastructure. Instead of using these funds to widen the highway to maintain the status quo or increase vehicular traffic, the coalition is urging the City and State to invest new resources in our communities and repair the historical and ongoing public health harms caused by the BQE, such as investing in BQGreen, the Sunset Park Greenway-Blueway, zero-emission modes of freight distribution, public transportation, pedestrian and cyclist safety, and mobility for all.

As the coalition awaits the traffic analysis for proposals from NYC DOT, the group is working on community learning circles to gather input and drive community members to NYC DOT's public forums.

CONGESTION PRICING

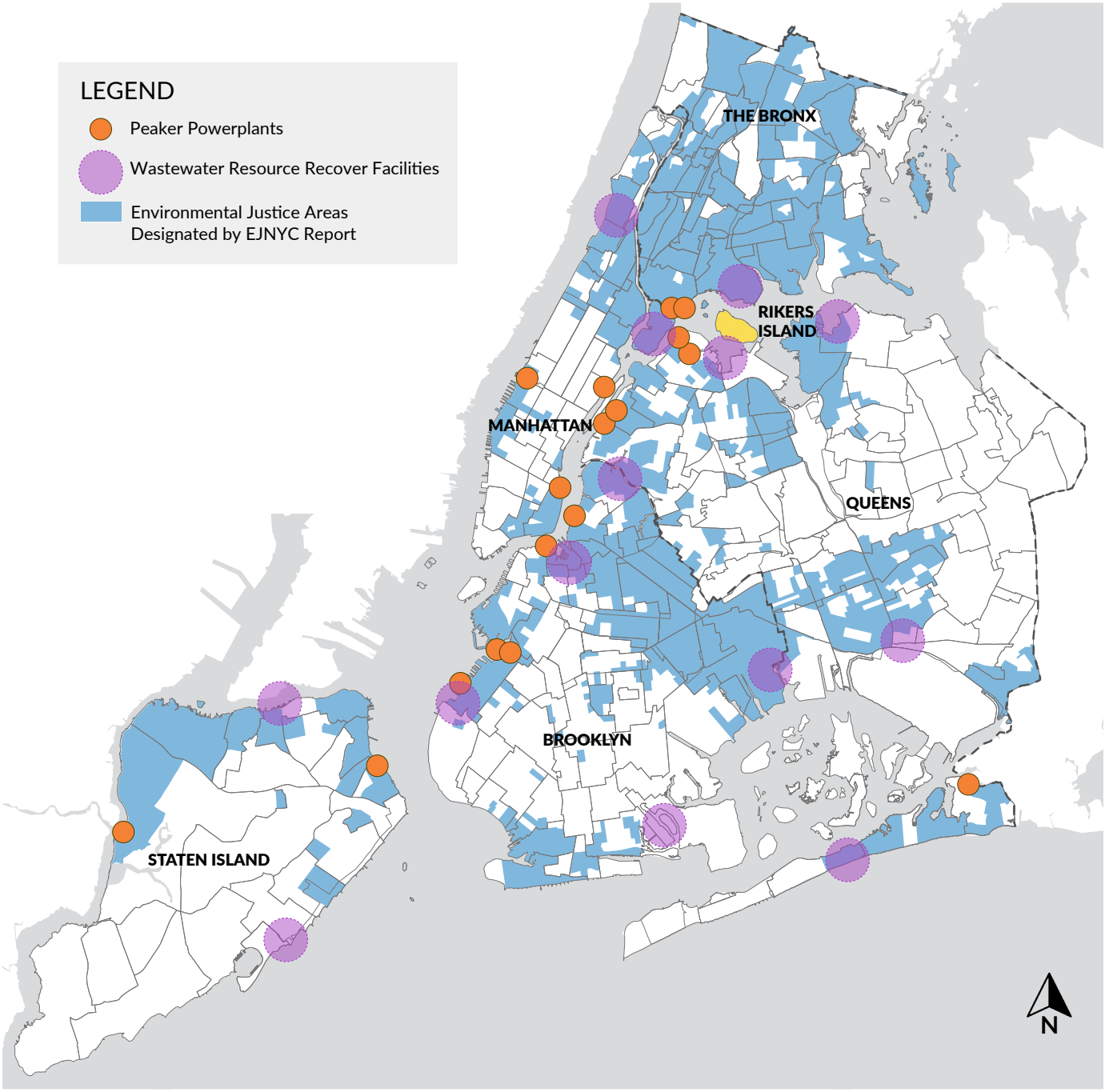
NYC-EJA and other EJ advocates have supported the concept of congestion pricing for over 17 years. Our members reflect the 75% of New Yorkers of color who rely on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) buses, and the 66% who rely on subway service to get around. NYC-EJA participated in the program's Environmental Justice Technical Advisory Group and helped push for a "net-positive" mitigation approach (i.e., reducing emissions over-and-above a project's projected emissions for already overburdened communities) to address the projected increase in truck traffic and emissions in the South Bronx, which then led to $155 million in pollution mitigation investment commitments for EJ communities city-wide.

Following an extensive environmental assessment and the MTA Board's adoption of final congestion pricing toll rates and exemptions in March 2024, the MTA announced that the program would begin on June 30, 2024. However, on June 5, 2024, Governor Hochul announced an "indefinite pause" to the congestion pricing plan. This impetuous decision has blown an enormous $15-billion hole in the funding for the MTA's 2020–2024 Capital Plan and future capital plans, which will delay capital projects to improve and expand the system, including the procurement of electric buses and bus depot electrification, Second Avenue Subway expansion, and track and signal upgrades. Furthermore, this "pause" threatens the MTA's state of good repair and may cost the agency even more in the long run as older equipment, subway cars, and buses cause more service disruptions and the agency continues to operate polluting buses for longer than originally planned. NYC-EJA joined ally organizations in suing Governor Hochul's decision to pause congestion pricing based on the State's Climate Law and the recent Green Amendment to the NYS Constitution guaranteeing every New Yorker a right to a clean environment.

UNDOING HISTORIC HARMS AND OPERATIONALIZING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Shutting down all jails on Rikers Island has the potential to permanently transform the justice system in NYC, as well as to make NYC a resilient and more environmentally just city. From 2018 through 2019, hundreds of community conversations with people directly impacted by the horrors of Rikers, convened by organizers at JustLeadershipUSA and partners in the Close Rikers campaign, led to the unveiling of the Build Communities platform. In addition to calling for focused investments outside the criminal legal system, the platform shared a consensus that any

FIGURE 7: EXISTING PEAKER POWER PLANTS AND WASTEWATER RESOURCE RECOVERY FACILITIES IN NYC



Source: Kanekal, S. 2024. Data from US Energy Information agency, power plants with capacity factor less than or equal to 15%; NYC Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice and NYC Department of Environmental Protection.

future use of the island after the closure of jails should benefit the communities that have been most harmed by mass incarceration, environmental injustice, and disinvestment.[47] With environmental justice advocates, lawyers, and criminal justice activists, a collective community vision emerged to use Rikers Island for green infrastructure and sustainable purposes through the Renewable Rikers vision. This included redesigning and relocating various polluting infrastructure from surrounding communities like the South Bronx to Rikers, once the jails were closed. As mentioned earlier in this report, across NYC a number of low-income communities of color like the South Bronx are home to "peaker" power plants, waste transfer stations, and other noxious infrastructure that emit particulate matter and other toxins linked to respiratory and other illnesses (Figure 7). The Renewable Rikers vision is also a crucial piece of the puzzle to achieve NYC's ambitious climate goals both at the city and state level, by reducing waste transport and landfill usage, building a more efficient state-of-the-art wastewater resource recovery facility, and facilitating clean energy generation and storage, while creating green jobs during a time of economic and ongoing climate crisis.

In 2019, in response to the organizing of formerly incarcerated people, the Campaign to Close Rikers, and the work of the City Council-appointed Independent Rikers Commission, the New York City Council approved a plan to close the 10 jails on Rikers Island, shrink city-wide jail capacity by 75%, reduce the number of people in jails by more than 50%, and ensure improved conditions for anyone still detained by housing them in modern borough-based facilities to be built in Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and the Bronx. Following this progress, the Renewable Rikers Coalition, led by Freedom Agenda, NYC-EJA, The POINT CDC, Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Independent Rikers Commission, came together in 2019 to advance the plan for renewable infrastructure on Rikers Island following its closure. After two more years of ferocious advocacy by the Renewable Rikers Coalition, in February 2021, the Council passed the Renewable Rikers Act, legislation that sets 2027 as a deadline for jails to cease operations on the island.

By transferring Rikers Island away from the control of the NYC Department of Correction (DOC) to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) for greener infrastructure uses, as outlined in the Renewable Rikers Act, NYC can further solidify the end of the Rikers Island jail complex. Installing renewable energy and wastewater treatment infrastructure on Rikers will also enable NYC to close and/or reduce the capacity of noxious peaker power plants and aging wastewater treatment facilities that have disproportionately burdened many communities of color like the South Bronx, Northwest Queens, and North Brooklyn. In 2022, the coalition released a report supported by the Regional Plan Association, which for the first time provided further detail on the possibilities of the Renewable Rikers vision.

The biggest challenge in advancing this work has been the willingness of Mayor Adams to support the Renewable Rikers vision of decarceration and clean renewable energy deployment. Local Law 16 of 2021 (part of the Renewable Rikers Act) requires the administration to assess and transfer unused land away from DOC to DCAS every six months. Beyond the initial transfer of 43 acres of unused land on Rikers authorized by former Mayor Bill de Blasio in December 2021, Mayor Adams has not authorized any other land to be transferred away from DOC, even though buildings like the Anna M. Kross Center are lying vacant and in disrepair. As of fall 2024, the Adams Administration has missed the last five land transfer deadlines, without as much as a statement acknowledging the same. The Rikers Energy Feasibility study, mandated by Local Law 17 of 2021 and expected to have

been conducted in parallel to the City's energy plan "PowerUp NYC," was delayed by over a year. Furthermore, the City has not convened the Rikers Advisory Committee per Local Law 16—which is required to be comprised of persons directly impacted by incarceration on Rikers and those from EJ communities, as well as sustainability experts—which is a key component to ensure that those who were most affected are the ones guiding the future uses of the island. What's worse is that the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice failed to even mention Renewable Rikers in the 2023 PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done report. Mayor Adams has also proposed adding hundreds of beds to the designs for the borough jails, including tripling beds for women, which in turn has led to skyrocketing cost estimates for the new borough jail system. And despite the law mandating the closure of Rikers by 2027, the construction contracts for the new facilities in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens have unacceptable completion dates ranging from 2029 to 2031.

In addition, earlier this year, the NYC DOC applied to the NYS DEC for a Title V Air Facility Permit renewal and modification for the power plant located on Rikers Island. This permit application fails to account for the timelines outlined in the Renewable Rikers Act for the reduction in population and complete closure of the jails (2027) since there is indication that if permitted, the application will be granted for the typical five year period (2024–2029). Moreover, there is also a request to remove the nitrogen oxide (NOx) and particulate matter (PM10) emissions limits for the facility's eight boilers. Not only is the draft permit inconsistent with the City's Renewable Rikers laws and the State's Climate Law, it also goes against the decarceration and environmental justice goals of the Renewable Rikers coalition. NYS DEC must deny this permit application in an effort to protect vulnerable communities on and around Rikers Island.

Given the lack of progress on implementing the Renewable Rikers Act, the Renewable Rikers coalition has been calling for oversight measures to determine what steps the City is taking to abide by the laws. The Rikers Island jails have no place in a city that aspires to uphold equity and justice. The Administration must prioritize reducing the jail population by investing in care and support rather than perpetuating criminalization. While it will likely take generations to address and repair the deep-seated harm Rikers has inflicted on Black, Brown, and low-income New Yorkers, we need to start with meaningful action now.

CREATING WASTE EQUITY

Transform Don't Trash NYC (TDT) is a long-standing coalition of environmental justice, labor, and environmental organizations working to transform New York City's sprawling solid waste management systems to be far more equitable, efficient, sustainable, and safe for workers and the communities most affected by solid waste infrastructure. Since 2013, TDT has worked toward reformation of the solid waste industry, in a campaign that culminated in the City Council passage of the Commercial Waste Zones Law (Local Law 199) in October 2019.

The most ambitious overhaul of NYC's commercial waste system in a generation, LL199 intended to create a safe, efficient, and green commercial waste collection system centered around worker and labor protections, environmental justice, and emissions reduction. In fact, NYC's Department of Sanitation (DSNY) found that implementing the law would decrease vehicle miles traveled associated with commercial waste collection by 50% city-wide, reducing both the number of trips and the lengths of collection routes for commercial waste. This would have corresponding reductions in air pollutant emissions and noise, as well as improvements in traffic safety.

NYC produces over 24,000 tons of residential and commercial garbage daily, leading to massive transportation and pollution impacts as this garbage moves to and from privately owned and operated waste transfer stations along the waterfront. While the total amount of waste handled at private transfer stations has decreased by approximately 17% since the implementation of the Waste Equity Law in 2018 (Local Law 152, also championed by NYC-EJA), newly released data from the Department of Sanitation shows that the system remains grossly unfair. Just four community districts still handle 75% of all NYC's private waste. The vast majority of this garbage generated by businesses and buildings city-wide passes through communities with some of the highest rates of asthma, such as North Brooklyn, the South Bronx, and Southeast Queens.

Private waste transfer stations are more likely to be sited in communities with a higher percentage of people of color living below the poverty line. These clusters of transfer stations generate truck traffic, noise, and health-harming emissions, according to the NYC Comptroller's recently released audit report on the City's Fair Share compliance. While there are 24 waste facilities crammed into these handful of overburdened community districts, a total of 45 other community districts have no waste facilities at all. The Waste Equity and Commercial Waste Zone Laws were written to address these environmental and quality of life disparities and issues, yet communities of color are still forced to shoulder the burden of waste transfer sites and waste collection services.

TDT is increasingly concerned about how DSNY is implementing the Commercial Waste Zone Law and about the lack of transparency, specifically with regard to how DSNY is evaluating and selecting the contractors. LL199 laid out 14 distinct clear criteria to be used in the evaluation process, including requiring applicants to submit plans for recycling, composting, and using clean-burning and zero-emission vehicles; plans for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; and a history of compliance with health, safety, and worker protections. However, it is not clear how and whether the criteria were used, how plans were evaluated, or how awardees and plans were selected. The reasons and motivations for implementing commercial waste zones first as a pilot program are unclear, as are the implications for implementation and the timeline for the rest of the zones. Some of the contractors who were awarded contracts have BIC violations or troubling histories, which are difficult to track given company mergers and acquisitions.

Mayor Adams and the City Council should be taking immediate steps to relieve EJ communities of excessive truck traffic, pollution, and odors, while reducing the miles that dangerous and polluting waste trucks drive on all New York City Streets. We call on the Administration to take the following steps.

First, DSNY needs to fully implement commercial waste zones (CWZ) as required by Local Law 199 of 2019. During this implementation, DSNY needs to follow the legislative intent of Local Law 199 and prioritize reductions in truck miles, adherence to recycling and waste reduction practices, support of labor and worker rights, and use of clean truck fleets alongside price considerations. We also support Int 0352-2024, which would establish a working group and include EJ representatives.

Second, expand the City's operations and capacity to begin accepting commercial waste at publicly owned Marine Transfer Stations, thereby reducing the number of dirty, dangerous diesel garbage trucks driving on local streets. EJ communities have long advocated for this measure, which is required by the Solid Waste Management Plan passed by the City almost 20 years ago but still has not been implemented by DSNY.

Third, the City needs to get as close to zero waste as possible, using various strategies, so that less trash is being handled and shipped to landfills in EJ communities in other states. One way to do this is to invest in extensive local organic composting infrastructure to process yard waste and food scraps that must be separated and recycled under Local Law 85 of 2023. As such, NYC-EJA supports Int 0696-2024, Councilmember Nurse's bill that would establish composting facilities in each borough and decrease the polluting dangers that come with inadequate anaerobic digestion (a false solution). Anaerobic digestion produces biogas and methane flare from the City's organic waste and is how a majority of New Yorkers' compost is "composted." Despite the recent failures of the Newtown Creek Digester Eggs, the City is prioritizing construction of a new anaerobic digester complex at Hunts Point Wastewater Resource Recovery Facility in the South Bronx.

The fight for waste equity, cleaner air, and healthier and safer communities continues as we work to ensure that the City not only handles its trash and siting of waste transfer stations more equitably, but also reduces its greenhouse and co-pollutant emissions by transitioning to greener, alternative modes of solid waste management and investing in zero waste strategies such as organic composting.

GREENING OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

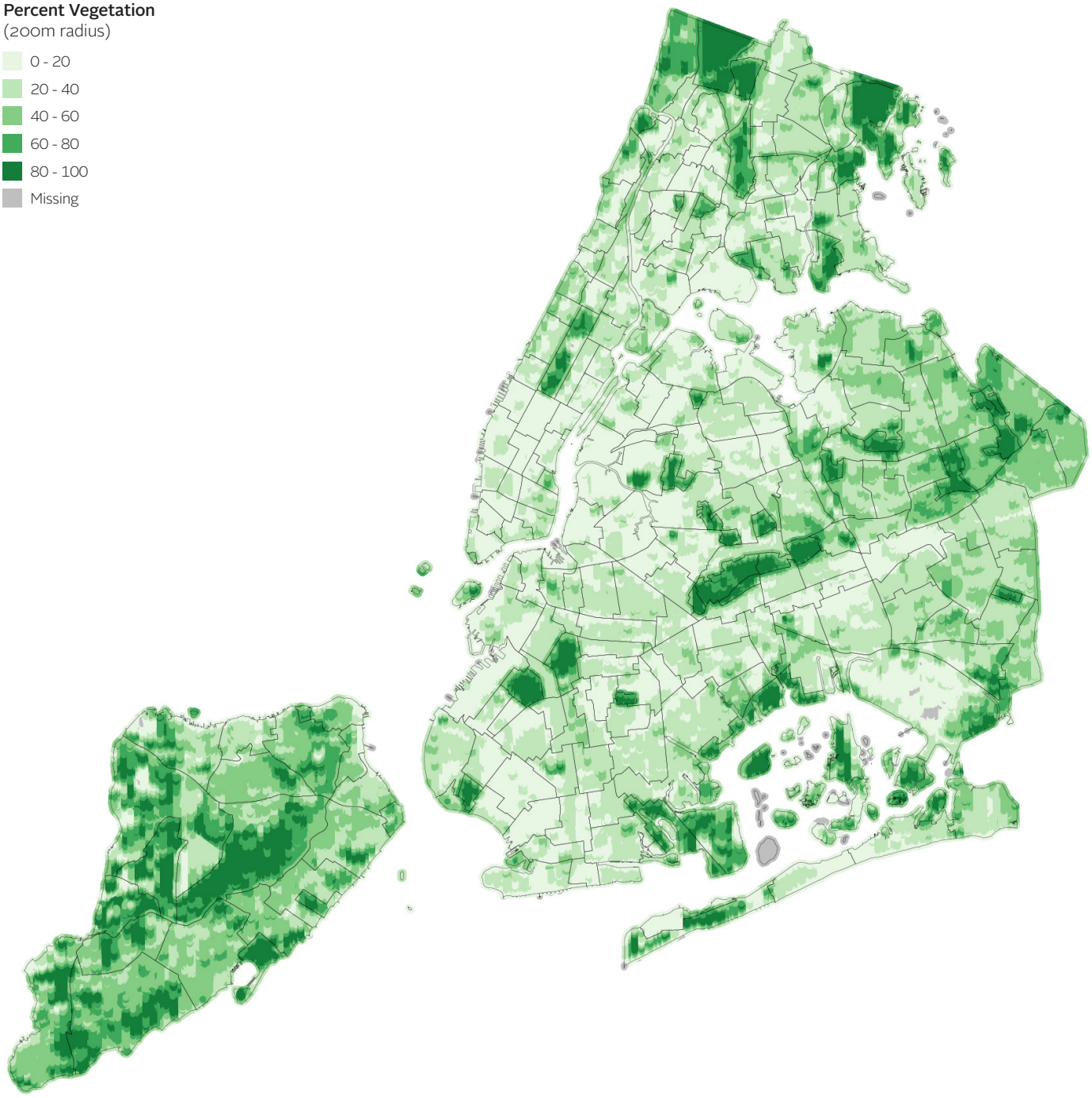
The long history of underinvestment in low-income communities of color includes a lack of funding for the growth and maintenance of nature-based features, such as parks, waterfront access, vegetation, and street trees. This historic trend has led to an ongoing lack of equitably distributed green space in NYC, with communities of color having access to 33% less park space than residents in largely white neighborhoods (Figure 8).[48] There have been efforts to better understand the challenges and needs to close this equity gap, with a variety of stakeholders looking at ways to increase funding, planting, access, and jobs. Some past efforts such as Million Trees NYC have shown limited success, but have also demonstrated, in hindsight, a need for a more refined approach and intentionality in fostering equity and sustainability of planning.

These gaps eventually led to the creation of the Forest for All NYC Coalition (FFANYC), of which NYC-EJA is a leading member. The goal of the coalition is "a healthy, biodiverse, robust, accessible, well-understood, and resilient urban forest that justly and equitably delivers its multiple benefits to all residents of New York City and helps the City adapt to and mitigate climate change."[49] Through its work, FFANYC has helped pass several key pieces of legislation including Local Law 35 of 2023, which amends the City Charter to include trees and tree canopy in its long-term sustainability planning, and Local Law 148 of 2023 (LL148), which requires the City to create the first city-wide Urban Forest Plan to reach 30% tree cover (up from 22% today)

WHAT IS THE NYC URBAN FOREST?

New York City's urban forest encompasses every tree in the city, including those along streets and greenways and in public parks, community gardens, cemeteries, yards, and other spaces, both publicly and privately owned.[50] The urban forest provides multiple benefits that include improving human and environmental health, mitigating climate change impacts, and increasing community resilience, particularly in communities that generally lack green and open space.[51]

FIGURE 8: PERCENT VEGETATION COVER IN NEW YORK CITY



Source: Treglia, M.L., N.C. Piland, S., Kanekal, S., et al. 2023. Vegetation density across NYC: Analysis of land cover data (2017) within 200 meter buffers of points (1.0.0) [Data set]. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8370381

and requires regular monitoring of the urban forest canopy. There is a wide breadth of work happening through the coalition, but NYC-EJA's greatest areas of involvement are the implementation of the Urban Forest Plan (LL148), policy and funding aspects of green infrastructure, and ensuring the prioritization of equity in all green infrastructure distribution.

In addition to our FFANYC coalition work, NYC-EJA also promotes green infrastructure through Just Nature NYC, a partnership between NYC-EJA and The Nature Conservancy's New York Cities Team. The goal of Just Nature NYC's work is to advocate for more nature-based solutions, especially trees, across the city to support climate justice and equity. These investments must be targeted strategically in frontline neighborhoods to help improve well-being and resilience, especially in the most heat-vulnerable communities of our city. The partnership aims to provide analyses and resources to CBOs and propose solutions that are rooted in and elevate community leadership. By creating a space for our organizations to collaborate, share knowledge and skills, and broaden the networks of people, organizations, and institutions with which we work, we can analyze data related to open/green space in NYC. In combination with data on social and demographic factors and environmental hazards, this can help us understand city-wide inequities in access to nature and its benefits. Our research is intended to be leveraged by local EJ communities to advocate for their needs, while highlighting trends throughout NYC and informing the broader policy landscape to help realize a city where nature and people can both thrive.

The Just Nature NYC team at a rally ahead of the passage of Local Law 148.
PHOTO: THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Our ongoing work with FFANYC and Just Nature NYC is becoming increasingly robust as we deepen our understanding of community needs through research and community engagement. However, we are severely limited by a variety of challenges, most noteworthy of which is the lack of dedicated funding that has been allocated to parks and greening. We have continued to advocate for increases in funding in the City budget each year, but the Mayor's Office has been resistant to supporting any of the

WHAT IS GREEN GENTRIFICATION?

Green gentrification refers to the introduction of green amenities such as parks, gardens, or other green spaces to an area with the intention of improving environmental conditions and community aesthetics, which inadvertently leads to increases in property values. This in turn can lead to the displacement of low-income and marginalized community members.[55] Low-income communities and communities of color have the right to enjoy these amenities in their own backyard without being constantly priced out from their neighborhoods.

financial investments that are necessary to make these improvements. We are also closely tracking how the City moves forward with the implementation of LL148, as an equitable and effective Urban Forest Plan will be critical to move NYC toward our larger goals for the future of the city's green infrastructure. This goal of equitably expanding and better maintaining the NYC Urban Forest needs both thought and dedicated financial investment.

The highest priority for this work is to better understand, and by extension equitably solve, the current inequitable distribution of green space and the benefits such spaces provide. Green infrastructure and vegetation help with air quality, the effects of extreme heat, mental health, rain-driven flood resilience, and so much more. The City needs to understand and embrace the multi-hazard benefits that increased greening can have and incorporate it more effectively into city-wide resilience planning efforts. Addressing compounding climate hazards with thoughtful and effective multi-hazard planning is the best way to optimize dollars spent on resilience, dollars saved by avoiding future damage, and benefits of interventions.

Vegetation and green infrastructure are important indicators of community heat resilience and they can actively decrease the urban heat island (UHI) effect, improve air quality, and address water management issues related to runoff and combined sewer overflows. For example, some of NYC's green infrastructure projects collect stormwater from various hard surfaces before it can cause flooding and overwhelm the sewer system.[52]

Given the potential benefits of green infrastructure projects, their geographical distribution must be examined to assess areas with heat-vulnerable populations. Hunts Points in the Bronx, for example, has a score of 5 on the Health Vulnerability Index (HVI) map, the highest score possible, whilst also lacking adequate green infrastructure that could help address resilience to heat. From a policy perspective, using green infrastructure projects to address multiple objectives, including heat risks, air quality, and flood management, is highly strategic. Like many strategies, vegetation is not a perfect solution on its own, but planning with care can help optimize outcomes and the multiple benefits that can be realized with vegetation: heat mitigation, biodiversity, cleaner air, improved mental health, and more.

Evidence shows that reaching the 32% canopy threshold has a tangible beneficial impact on heat mitigation efforts.[54] However, the emphasis on equity is critical to ensure that EJ communities receive investments that can help expand canopy, without causing unintended consequences like green gentrification. It is imperative that local perspectives and concerns are represented in policy changes; the communities with whom NYC-EJA members work have called for increased vegetation, green infrastructure, and natural spaces.

WHAT IS THE URBAN HEAT ISLAND (UHI) EFFECT?

The urbanized built environment, including buildings, houses, roads, and infrastructure systems, is made of materials that absorb and retain the sun's energy and then re-emit it in a way that results in higher localized temperatures compared with rural or natural environments that have high levels of vegetation.[53] This phenomenon is known as the urban heat island effect and is primarily caused by human activities and urban infrastructure.

SUMMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

DECARBONIZE AND ADAPT OUR BUILDINGS TO CLIMATE CHANGE.

- The City must draw down state and federal funding opportunities to ensure that building owners, especially low-income buildings, have access to programs and incentives that support building decarbonization efforts (to comply with LL 97).
- Invest in NYC's public school buildings, so that they are electrified and retrofitted to move off fossil fuels, starting with those in EJ communities.
- Create a Green Affordable Housing Fund to support affordable housing buildings to weatherize and retrofit for energy efficiency.
- Avoid the use of false solutions like carbon capture technology and unlimited offsets to encourage LL 97 compliance.

DECREASE EMISSIONS FROM THE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR.

- Build on the 2022 electric school bus mandate by mandating a transition of all public transit fleets to zero emissions by 2040 coupled with dedicated funding and labor provisions.
- The NYC Department of City Planning must establish a special permit process that defines last-mile warehouses and addresses the siting and operation of these facilities through a special permit process to address the disproportionate clustering in environmental justice communities.
- Establish an indirect source rule to address the emissions associated with new and existing last-mile warehouse operations that complement the City's special permit zoning text amendment and the soon-to-be established program at the state level via the Clean Deliveries Act.
- Enact the thoroughly analyzed approved congestion pricing tolling program to generate dedicated funding for our public transit network.
- Create a corridor-wide plan for the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway that centers environmental justice, does not generate new harms or exacerbate previous harms, and helps us meet our State climate mandates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

UNDO HISTORIC HARMS AND OPERATIONALIZE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.

- Ensure that NYC is working toward closure of all jails on Rikers Island by 2027.
- Transfer unused parcels of land and unused buildings on Rikers Island from the control of the NYC Department of Corrections (DOC) to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS).
- NYS DEC should deny the Title V permit application for the Rikers Island power plant requested by DOC, which is inconsistent with the laws in the Renewable Rikers Act and the CLCPA.

CREATE WASTE EQUITY.

- Require the City to accept commercial waste at publicly owned Marine Transfer Stations, which are currently underutilized.
- Invest in local composting infrastructure to process yard waste and food scraps (per LL 85).
- Equitably implement Commercial Waste Zones city-wide emphasizing waste reduction/diversion and recycling (per LL 199).

GREEN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS.

- Equitably expand the NYC tree canopy to reach 30% by 2035.
- Create and implement an equitable Urban Forest Plan for NYC (per LL184).
- Equitably expand the installation of green infrastructure projects across NYC to help mitigate a variety of climate hazards.

3 STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CARE AND GRASSROOTS POWER

NYC-EJA's work focuses on uplifting the lived experience, expertise, advocacy, and leadership of EJ communities: what we call *grassroots power.* Through our work we try to learn from these reservoirs of knowledge and use them to identify leverage points for adaptation, mitigation, and intervention. By doing this, we unveil the true scope of the environmental and climate burdens that disproportionately impact EJ communities and can start to properly address those burdens through planning, policy, and preparation.

This approach can be relevant to a variety of environmental and climate concerns, but in our work it primarily involves heat and air quality, as well as flooding and coastal resilience. By leveraging and amplifying grassroots power, we can better characterize and understand how these climate impacts are impacting NYC at varying scales, from city-wide, to the neighborhood level, to the individual. Seeing issues from these varying perspectives can be challenging, but it is critical to ensure that solutions are appropriate and responsive to real needs, from the bottom up, rather than through top-down assumptions.

CHARACTERIZING AND MITIGATING AIR AND HEAT RISKS

Historic, unjust, and racist policies have created economic, healthcare, and housing systems that have disadvantaged people of color and exacerbated heat and air quality inequities. Studies have shown that historically redlined areas (predominantly lower income communities of color) experience hotter temperatures and greater air pollution than their non-redlined counterparts.[5][6] In addition, in NYC, low-income communities of color tend to live close to sources of noise, air, and water pollution, including power plants, waste transfer stations, wastewater treatment plants, highways, and industrial sites. They also tend to have less access and proximity to mitigating infrastructure like parks and green spaces.

Due to this uneven distribution, NYC-EJA and environmental justice activists have worked to better understand how this history of discrimination is impacting present day New Yorkers. To understand this, we embarked on two research projects, the Community Air Mapping Project for Environmental Justice (CAMP-EJ) and the Community Heat and Air Mapping Project for Environmental Justice (CHAMP-EJ). These two research projects focused on hyperlocal, community-driven data collection to map air quality and heat impacts in several neighborhoods that our member organizations represent. This work allowed us to better characterize the experiences of residents at the human level, showing what people are breathing as they walk around their neighborhoods and where heat is most dangerous due to the urban heat island effect during the hot months. At the height of the COVID pandemic in 2020, NYC-EJA also successfully advocated for the adoption of Local Law 84 and Local Law 85, laws that

Volunteers supporting heat and air quality data collection for CHAMP-EJ. PHOTO: NYC-EJA

mandated NYC's first-ever heat monitoring and planning initiatives.

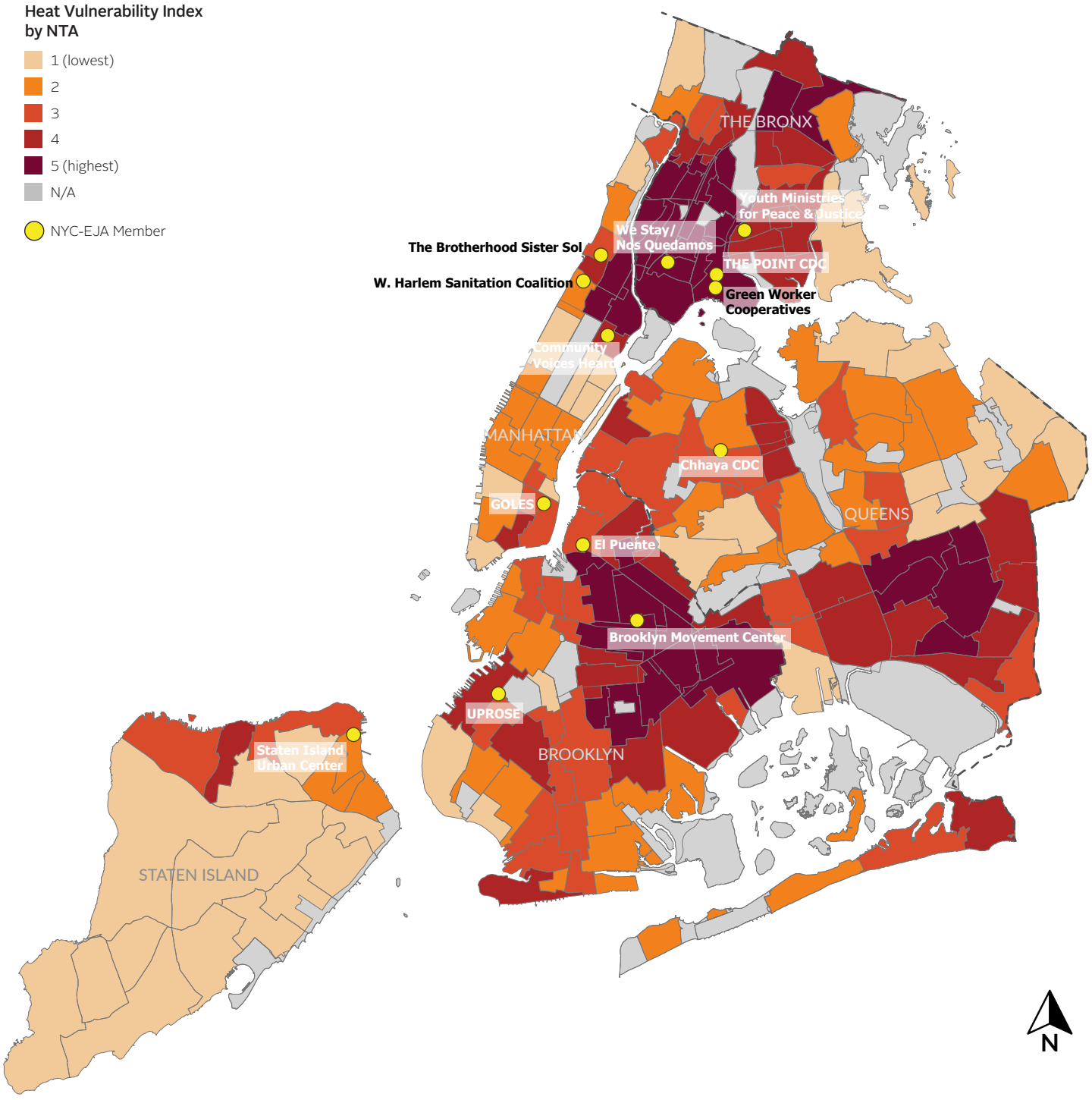
The Urban Heat Island (UHI) Index is a measure of the difference in temperature between an urban area and a reference rural area.[57] A recent study by Climate Central estimated the UHI Index for cities across the United States and reported that NYC has the highest UHI Index in the country, with about 78% of the city's population experiencing an UHI Index of 8°F or higher.[58] This temperature differential puts NYC's vulnerable populations at risk of heat-related public health impacts, placing them in the high heat vulnerability index (HVI) categories (Figure 9). Understanding current and projected risks from heat is critical for resilience planning.

The NYC Panel on Climate Change (NPCC) has projected an increasing frequency of heat waves and a higher number of days with temperatures above 90°F and above 95°F for the rest of the century.[59] Table 1 shows the NPCC's most recent projections for the 2050s compared with a 1981–2010 baseline. Based on these estimates, the number of days with temperatures reaching 90°F or higher in 2050 could increase by up to four times, and the number of heat waves could double or triple, compared with the baseline value.

While NYC-EJA's recent work has helped improve some air and heat public policies, risks to public health continue to rise, particularly to NYC's most vulnerable residents. According to City estimates, between 2011 and 2019, there were on average 350 premature deaths annually in which heat played a role, either directly or by exacerbating an underlying health condition.[60] Meanwhile in NYC, $PM_{2.5}$ (a measure of particulate matter) is linked to an estimated 2,000 premature deaths each year.[61] In addition, the combination of heat and air pollutants increases health risks even more during the summer, as ground-level ozone and particulate pollution increase due to higher temperatures, causing air quality to worsen during heat waves.[62]

Combined with the aforementioned increased heat impacts projected by the NYC Panel on Climate Change, heat and poor air quality risks loom large. While the City and State have been taking steps to address the risks

FIGURE 9: HEAT VULNERABILITY INDEX FOR NEW YORK CITY



Source: Data from NYC DOHMH. Environment and Health Data Portal. Climate. https://a816-dohbesp.nyc.gov/IndicatorPublic/data-explorer/climate/?id=2411#display=map

TABLE 1. PREDICTED HEAT-RELATED EVENTS IN NYC FOR THE 2050s

Heat-Related Event	Baseline (1981–2010)	Low estimate (10th percentile)	Middle range (25th–75th percentile)	High estimate (90th percentile)
Number of days/year with max temp at or above 90°F	17	32	38 to 62	69
Number of days/year with max temp at or above 95°F	4	10	14 to 32	35
Number of heat waves/year	2	4	5 to 8	9
Mean heat wave duration (in days)	4	5	5 to 6	6

Source: Braneon, C., L. Ortiz, D. Bader, et al. 2024. NYC climate risk information 2022: Observations and projections. Interim Report for Public Release https://climateassessment.nyc. Page 24.

of poor air quality and dangerous heat in EJ communities, their efforts fall alarmingly short. The NYS DEC/NYSERDA Extreme Heat Action Plan process pulled expertise and ideas from all corners of the state, but it fails to meet the urgency of the moment, nor does it offer any dedicated funding or codification. Meanwhile, NYS DEC's Community Air Monitoring process aims to locate some of the worst pollution sources in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the state, but its mitigation plans are still under construction, with a complicated community engagement process outlined to help create a community-centered mitigation plan.

One of NYC-EJA's goals is to greatly improve the City and State's response to heat during the warm months, as well as during air quality emergencies. Hot conditions and air emergencies are increasing in severity and frequency, and we must ensure that NYC is adequately prepared for the risks. To that end, we are working to advance additional legislation to further protect and prepare New Yorkers for these escalating risks. Some of the key improvements we would like to see include:

- **An expansion of access to and improvements in running of Cooling Centers.** Several of the most disadvantaged areas of NYC have the fewest number of cooling centers available to their residents,[63] who are also at highest risk of negative health impacts and most likely to lack air conditioning (or the means to use it) in their homes. Having a cooling center nearby would be especially beneficial to the elderly and those with mobility issues who may find it difficult to reach existing centers further afield. In addition, cooling centers lack dedicated funding and have limited oversight from the City (particularly with recent proposed City budget cuts that have forced many buildings that often function as cooling centers, such as libraries, to decrease their already limited hours). While the City has created and consolidated some hot weather resources (such as the creation of the Cool Options Map) for New Yorkers, there is still a lot of room to improve the way the City responds and prepares New Yorkers for heat, such as how cooling centers currently function and are distributed across the city. Several years ago, when NYC-EJA canvassed cooling centers in some of our member communities, we discovered some were closed, lacked AC themselves, or didn't even know they were designated cooling centers; none offered evening access and many were closed on weekends. Meanwhile, the State has more work to do when it comes to preparing and protecting

New Yorkers from heat. For example, it does not require municipalities to make cooling centers available, meaning that many parts of the state have no designated cooling centers at all.

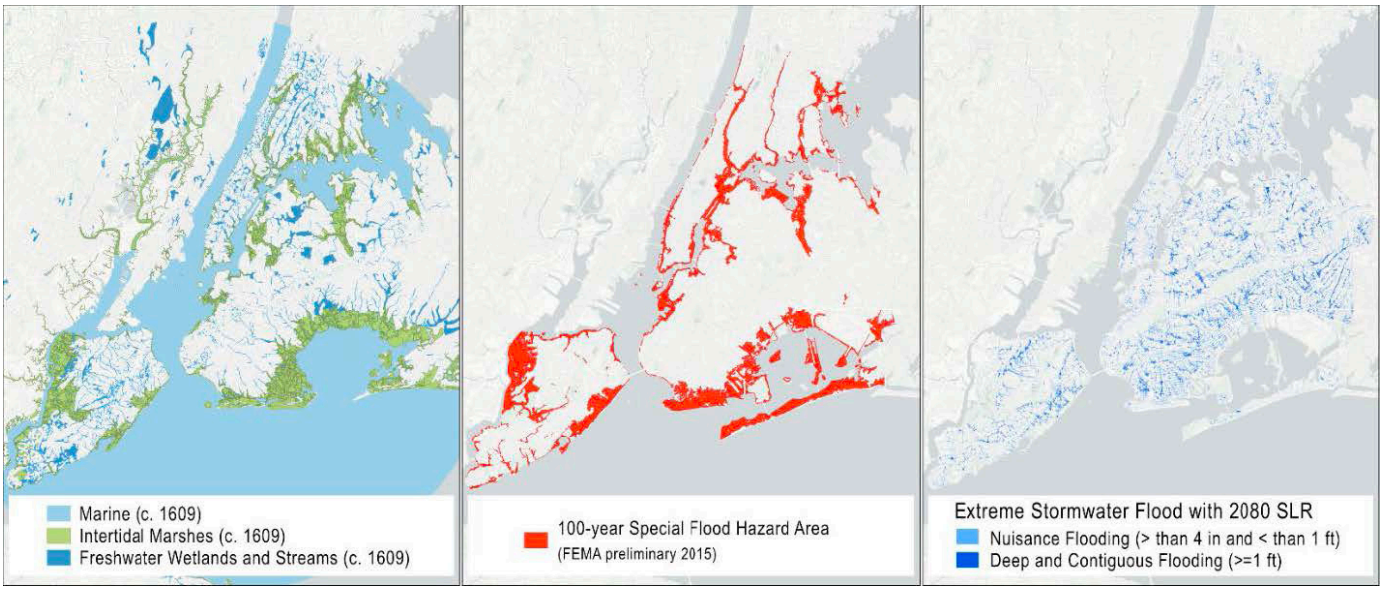
- **A comprehensive heat action plan that is updated every three years.** We would like to see comprehensive heat action plans at both the City and State levels created and codified into law, with dedicated funding sources to implement them. One of the issues with heat preparedness and protection for residents is a lack of organized, pre-planned, response structures that address the needs and concerns of the community, particularly those who are most at risk in disadvantaged parts of the city and state. We would also like to see an expansion of green infrastructure, which offers multiple benefits in mitigating the negative impacts of air pollution, the UHI effect, and even flooding.
- **A maximum indoor temperature policy.** Just as there is a winter minimum indoor temperature law, which ensures that residents have the means to stay warm during the cold months, EJ advocates would like to see a counterpart in the warm months to mitigate negative heat-related health impacts. A natural step to enable such a policy to be effective and equitable is to increase funding for the NYS Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) and expand its usage to offer low- and moderate-income households utility assistance during the summer months (as NYC-EJA and others successfully lobbied State and City officials to do at the height of the pandemic). In addition, HEAP should include energy-efficient technology like heat pumps as allowable equipment under the program. Historically, this program has primarily been used for winter energy burden relief.
- **Improved hyperlocal air quality testing and mitigation.** We would like to see air quality regulations further refined, as recent studies show that there is no safe level of fine particulate matter, and other pollutants are also harmful to human health.[64] We hope to see New York State and City take a firmer stance against harmful emissions and aim for even greater emissions and pollution reductions. In addition, we would like to see more air quality monitoring at the hyperlocal level to better understand and respond to the risks EJ communities face on the ground in their communities.

For more information about these studies and recommendations, please see our recently released CHAMP-EJ report.

PROTECTING OUR COASTAL COMMUNITIES

NYC-EJA's current work to protect our coastlines and promote coastal resilience and flooding adaptation is informed by several key events and past findings. NYC has over 520 miles of coastline and many low-lying communities that are located in floodplains.[65] In addition, NYC is the second most vulnerable city in the United States to storm surge.[66] This makes us especially vulnerable to flooding as sea levels rise, extreme storms and rainfall become more common, and we continue to use outdated flood infrastructure that cannot withstand these compounding issues. The combined sewer overflow system of NYC is only designed to handle 1.75 inches of rainfall per hour, but recent storms have frequently surpassed this limit by a significant amount, causing flooding to become a regular occurrence (Figure 10).[67] Standout storms such as Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Ida, and Tropical Storm Ophelia demonstrate the worst case scenarios for storm surge, rain-driven flooding, and chronic tidal flooding. But New Yorkers are also experiencing flooding during less extreme storm events and even on non-rainy days, with what is commonly called "sunny day" flooding. No matter how you look at it, flooding is becoming an

FIGURE 10: FUTURE 100-YEAR FLOOD ZONES IN NEW YORK CITY



Source: New York City Panel on Climate Change 4th Assessment, Climate Risk and Equity: Advancing Knowledge Toward a Sustainable Future

expected, regular occurrence in NYC and the interventions to prevent it have yet to be scaled up to match the severity of the problem. In addition, flooding not only causes harm from the rising waters themselves, it can also cause property and infrastructure damage, increase the risk of harmful mold growth, expose residents—particularly those living in or adjacent to manufacturing and industrial areas—to toxic pollutants that are swept into the waters, and damage vegetation and green spaces (primarily due to coastal salt water inundation. See the NYC government's Flood Hazard Mapper tool to see how the risk affects different parts of the city.

To better understand and address these concerns, NYC-EJA has partnered with Columbia University's Center for Sustainable Urban Development, part of the Columbia Climate School, to create the Resilient Coastal Communities Project (RCCP) partnership. This partnership "aims to address the challenges of coastal resilience through a combination of iterative engaged scientific research, community engagement and innovation; academic and clinical support for enhanced community participation in public planning; communications initiatives to build public awareness and support effective action; classroom instruction; and workshops, conferences & other convenings. In short, the job of the [RCCP] is to support learning and foster effective solutions, developed in partnership with frontline communities, governments and other stakeholders, to climate-related threats."[73]

Working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), RCCP joined the New York/New Jersey Harbor and Tributaries Study (HATS) in 2021. This research has focused on understanding coastal and flood planning in the NYC Metro region, particularly in relation to community engagement and leadership. We interviewed people in communities across the region about their experiences in this space and what they'd most like to see in these processes moving forward. We then collated their expertise and recommendations into a working paper[74] and an academic article. We use the findings

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FLOODING AFFECTING NYC?

COASTAL/STORM SURGE

An abnormal water level rise generated by a storm over and above the predicted astronomical tide. This rise in water level can lead to extreme flooding in coastal areas, especially when it coincides with normal high tide, resulting in storm tides reaching up to 20 feet or more in some cases.[68]

RAIN-DRIVEN/PLUVIAL FLOODING

Flooding caused by heavy rain in low-lying, poorly drained areas that have insufficient stormwater infrastructure systems.[69] Flooding can occur throughout a region, even in inland areas. "Rain-driven flooding can occur suddenly and intensely, but flood conditions may subside more quickly compared to coastal surge flooding."[70] This type of flooding also occurs when increased rainfall creates a flood independent of an existing body of water. These floods can occur in any location, even without nearby water bodies. Pluvial floods come in two forms: surface water floods and flash floods.[71]

CHRONIC TIDAL FLOODING (AKA SUNNY DAY FLOODING)

Flooding that occurs when water from regular tides breaches the land, even without storms. Impacting low-lying coastal communities, tidal flooding is expected to cause greater impacts in the future due to sea-level rise. "Sea level in New York City has already risen at least 18 inches since the 1850s and could rise by as much as another 5.4 feet by 2100. Sections of the city's coastline will be subject to daily tidal flooding by the 2050s. Some low-lying neighborhoods are already experiencing chronic tidal flooding due to astronomical high tides."[72]

as guiding principles as we move forward in our work. The HATS process, which is set to bring an unprecedented $52 billion dollars of investment into coastal resilience in the NY/NJ region, lacked meaningful community engagement and leadership before RCCP became actively involved in 2021. Since then, we have worked to advance the concerns of EJ communities (both in process and content) through public comments, sign-on letters to USACE and elected officials, and engagement with USACE directly. We want to improve the HATS plan so that it is supported by a majority of EJ communities, addresses their needs and concerns, prioritizes people over property, and incorporates local perspectives and existing plans. These changes will enable self-determination in communities, allowing them to dictate what they evolve into and ensuring that the final projects reflect their goals and desires for their homes.

NYC-EJA recommends that the City, State, and federal governments prioritize taking EJ community expertise, leadership, and planning seriously by deferring to and incorporating their plans into the governmental strategies and capital projects. Coastal resilience should be implemented in the image of the people it is created to protect. We would like to see New York City become a "Sponge City," following a newer urban planning model to install green areas and replace concrete with permeable surfaces throughout the city,[75] at a large enough scale to handle the most recent rainfall and flooding projections. According

Alongside waterfront resilience allies, NYC-EJA meets with the Assistant Secretary of the US Army Corps of Engineers to discuss local climate and environmental justice priorities in the NY-NJ HATS plan.

to the NPCC4, sea level is projected to rise along the New York State coastline and the tidal Hudson by 7 to 11 inches by the 2030s, 14 to 19 inches by the 2050s, and 25 to 39 inches by the 2080s (relative to a 1995–2014 baseline period). The high-end estimate (the 90th percentile) for sea-level rise by the 2080s is 45 inches. By 2100, sea levels are projected to rise by as much as 65 inches (5.4 ft).[76] In addition, the NPCC4 projects that inland and coastal flooding will increase, particularly in light of the sea-level rise projections, but updated FEMA maps for 100- and 500-year floods with the newest sea-level projections are still under construction.[77]

To move toward this larger goal of a flood-adapted city, we need to expand the cloudburst program, bluebelts, green infrastructure (such as rain gardens, bioswales, and natural coastline conversions), and permeable pavement and green roofs. These programs are currently piecemeal and fragmented in funding and implementation, preventing us from seeing the widespread climate resilience benefits that a more comprehensive flood-mitigation program like the "Sponge City" approach might enable. A more comprehensive approach would explore and use many different types of flood mitigation tools (e.g., capital projects, policies, and programs) that are targeted for specific neighborhoods needs across the entire city.

The NYC Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner recently said that New Yorkers need to decide how much flood mitigation they are willing to pay for, and that the City cannot mitigate all flooding.[78,79] We disagree and feel that we need to find more creative ways to plan and pay for the protection of NYC residents—starting with not entering the planning process with a fatalistic expectation of failure. While protecting against all flood types and events will be difficult, deciding that it isn't possible is unacceptable, especially when so little has been done to try. This will be a long process, but every New York resident deserves to be better protected from flooding.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

CHARACTERIZE AND MITIGATE AIR AND HEAT RISKS.

- Improve and expand access to cooling centers, prioritizing neighborhoods with the highest HVI scores.
- Adopt an indoor maximum temperature policy for buildings.
- Expand green infrastructure and other solutions to reduce the urban heat island effect, air pollution, and other climate impacts, prioritizing communities with high HVI scores and those most impacted.
- Expand air quality monitoring at the hyperlocal level to accurately account for air pollution and its impacts.
- Better enforce existing air quality regulations and adapt existing standards and processes to reduce disproportionate air pollution burdens in disadvantaged communities.
- Identify and implement targeted air pollution mitigation strategies in disadvantaged communities.
- Improve government response to air quality and heat emergencies.

PROTECT OUR COASTAL COMMUNITIES.

- Improve community engagement in coastal resilience planning processes to ensure that residents' needs and desires are prioritized, and that their experience and expertise is highlighted and incorporated appropriately.
- The City and State should take a more community-centered approach with their advocacy in relation to the USACE NYNJHATS process.
- The City should embrace new flood resilience and mitigation initiatives to protect all New Yorkers against all types of flooding, possibly by exploring the Sponge City concept.
- Expand existing flood-adaptation measures such as the cloudburst program, bluebelts, green infrastructure, and permeable pavements.

FRONTLINE SOLUTIONS

NYC-EJA is an alliance of 13 Black- and Brown-led community-based organizations who, among a number of essential local services and offerings, develop frontline solutions to address the climate crisis within their neighborhoods and beyond. In this chapter we present campaigns and projects championed by NYC-EJA member organizations as grassroots-led solutions designed to address environmental and climate challenges at the local level.

FIGURE 11: NYC-EJA MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

NYC-EJA MEMBER

EL PUENTE ↗

El Puente is an arts and human rights organization located across North Brooklyn and Puerto Rico. Founded in 1982 by Luis Garden Acosta, Dr. Frances Lucerna, Gino Maldonado, and a coalition of community members, El Puente was created to address the issue of disinvestment, drugs, gangs, and gun violence in the Southside of Williamsburg, a historic predominantly Puerto Rican community. Early environmental justice campaigns included the fight against a proposal for a 55-foot incinerator, and fighting the operation of a radioactive waste storage and transfer facility in the community, which led El Puente to become a founding member of NYC-EJA. With a mission to inspire and nurture leaders for peace and justice, El Puente utilizes arts activism, cultural organizing, and youth leadership development to support, organize, preserve, and celebrate the community, amidst rampant displacement from intense gentrification over the past two decades. El Puente's office in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, the Latino Climate Action Network, focuses on environmental and climate justice, organizing efforts for solar energy, environmental education, and more across the island.

BQ GREEN

BQ Green is part of a larger vision to transform the Brooklyn–Queens Expressway (BQE) into an ecologically and socially just spine by introducing recreation space, nature-based strategies, and infrastructural improvements. It is one of several historical community-led planning initiatives within El Puente's Green Light District to mitigate harms and assert the right to well-being in the Los Sures community. Updated project plans will integrate community ownership and maintenance measures to ensure that community remains and thrives in the neighborhood.

The decking of the BQE in the Southside of Williamsburg is a community-led vision that has been in the works for the past 15 years. This project was envisioned by the community and championed by El Puente with partner CBOs in North Brooklyn, with a goal of transforming this section of the highway into a green open space that reconnects communities historically plagued by air pollution and segregation. BQ Green has received the political backing of former and current elected officials across multiple levels of government, including council members, assembly members, senators, and federal representatives.

This project encapsulates the resilience of a community determined to heal from a historically divisive infrastructure. It will reconnect divided neighborhoods and mitigate the negative environmental, economic, and social impacts of an urban highway artery. Notably, the creation of a 3.5-acre green space would improve air quality in a park-poor area of New York where asthma rates are double the city-wide average. It is a testament to the power of community-driven design and its potential to transform overlooked spaces into sustainable urban landscapes. Community Land Trusts will be designated to prevent green gentrification.

In order to complete BQ Green, additional resources are needed. One potential source of funds is State funding for BQE capital projects; another is federal funding filed by the NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) to cap the Southside of Williamsburg. Furthermore, we need the NYS Director of State Operations, NYS DOT Commissioner, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Governor Hochul, NYC DOT Commissioner, NYC Parks Department, and NYC Mayor Adams to enable and streamline this project.

NYC-EJA MEMBER

GOOD OLD LOWER EAST SIDE ↗

Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES) is a neighborhood housing and preservation community organization founded in 1977 amid arson, abandonment, and economic crisis. GOLES began with the simple idea that tenants could organize to exercise their legal rights, defend their homes, and preserve their neighborhood. GOLES is dedicated to tenants' rights, homelessness prevention, economic development, and community revitalization. GOLES accomplishes its mission by working with community residents to advocate and to organize, with the long-term goal of building the power of low-income residents to advocate and organize, with the long-term goal of building the power of low-income residents on the Lower East Side to address displacement of the neighborhood, ensuring a clean and healthy environment for people to live, work, and play.

+URVOICE

The +UrVoice project is an initiative in partnership with CUNY to identify gaps in knowledge around climate change and environmental hazards and to strengthen the protection measures our community needs for the urgent environmental challenges confronting the Lower East Side community, exacerbated by climate change. GOLES will do this by surveying residents and using the data to lead long-term planning in partnership with other neighborhood stakeholders.

The Lower East Side is a frontline, waterfront, BIPOC community that was and is directly impacted by the climate disaster of Superstorm Sandy. The neighborhood is bound by highways, borders the Con Edison East River Generating Station, and has the highest density of public housing in NYC—which creates high carbon emissions. Our community consists of mostly people of color, low-income families, and older adults who are historically disproportionately impacted by climate and environmental disaster events.

This initiative aims to empower this community to become a knowledgeable leader in environmental justice policy and community planning, resulting in more sustainable, grassroots, long-term environmental resiliency. By drawing broadly and deeply on community feedback and creating dialogue to shape organizational priorities and actions through community surveys, GOLES is able to put BIPOC folks at the forefront of decisions, planning, and policy making—which is core to GOLES' mission.

+UrVoice would benefit from more funding for educational materials and outreach initiatives. Additionally, thoughtful collaboration with local and State agencies, including the NYC Department of Environmental Protection and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is essential. Support from elected officials can further help to speed up project implementation and policy advocacy, resulting in much-needed changes for the community.

The results from the survey will help to build an informed public education curriculum around environmental justice, inform decision-making and policy formulation, raise community awareness, and help to advocate for better environmental protections and resiliency measures. The +UrVoice project hopes to effectively address environmental justice and climate resiliency challenges, fostering a more resilient Lower East Side community, particularly for residents of public housing and other low- and moderate-income BIPOC residents.

NYC-EJA MEMBER

STATEN ISLAND URBAN CENTER (SIUC) ↗

The Staten Island Urban Center is a multi-generational CBO located on the north shore of Staten Island. Founded by Kelly Vilar in 2016, SIUC focuses on youth and community development through involvement, to strengthen the built environment and social/municipal services of Staten Island's neighborhoods. Its mission is to inspire, educate, and uplift the voices of intergenerational and diverse communities, by way of arts activism and community programming.

STATEN ISLAND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CENTER

SIUC's vision is to create an EJ center for public engagement, education and action dedicated to advancing community-driven and just solutions for disadvantaged communities of Staten Island. The goal is to utilize the synergy of a center and collaborative work with community groups and partnering organizations to share information, resources, and opportunities for action. SIUC's work is grounded in community development through community involvement, engaging local residents in seeking solutions to local problems. We have worked on projects to make our waterfront accessible, provide public education resources, and lift the voices of families affected by floods and other climate disasters.

The disproportionate death toll of Hurricane Sandy, extreme heat events, high rates of asthma and cardiopulmonary disease, and the pandemic left our communities unempowered on environmental justice. After SIUC led the first EJ Symposium in 2022, it resulted in the formation of the Environmental Justice Coalition of Staten Island, aimed in part at locally achieving promises made by the 2019 New York Climate Act. NYS laws stipulate that North Shore Staten Island is an opportunity zone entitled to government reparations for generational harm to the environment and economy. NYC's largest landfill (Fresh Kills) closed in 2001 and today is being reclaimed as a park 30 times larger than Central Park; yet a few miles north is a neighborhood whose residents are predominantly Black and Brown low-income families who are economically segregated and hemmed in by cross-sectional interstates, last-mile deliveries, industrial border fences, foreclosed properties, a decommissioned railway, and 21 federally registered contamination sites.

The Center aims to introduce thousands of residents of underserved communities to EJ through workshops and community activations. The Center will create a platform and advance agendas representing disadvantaged communities to advocate for just solutions (e.g., wind energy, brownfield remediation, elimination of peaker plants, electrified buses and ferries, saving valuable wetlands). The Center will provide a permanent home for continuation of EJ education and activities that include exhibitions and demonstrations that SIUC produces at Governors Island and Snug Harbor Cultural Center. Other options are development site tours and ecological boat excursions. For too long, industrialization and failed development have disconnected and disenfranchised the people of Staten Island and other disadvantaged communities of color. The Center would provide a place for community action to reassert our people's demands for a thriving, healthy, and adaptive waterfront community.

The Center needs support for private and public funding to maintain the brick-and-mortar building and programming. SIUC would like to use an organizations-in-residence model to house local groups with missions that align with EJ principles and offer educational opportunities and community activations. SIUC also would like to strengthen the relationship of Staten Islanders with City and State agencies that handle various environmental issues (i.e., Departments of Health and Environmental Protection) to address the environmental damage of 22 contaminated sites in a 5-mile radius.

NYC-EJA MEMBER

THE BROTHERHOOD SISTER SOL ↗

The Brotherhood Sister Sol (BroSis) is a youth-centered CBO located in Harlem. It was co-founded by Jason Warwin and Khary Lazarre-White in 1995, childhood friends who returned to their community after college to create a program to combat the effects of poverty on young men of color in the community. Three years later, Dr. Susan Wilcox became a third co-founder to expand programming to young women in the community. Their focus areas sit at the intersections of education, organizing, and "in the field" training for Black and Latinx youth from low-income families, to support their development into critical thinkers and community leaders. BroSis has received national recognition for their model and impact, as they provide comprehensive, holistic, and long-term support for youth aged 8–22 through a diverse set of social, environmental, and political programs.

THE BROTHERHOOD SISTER SOL

1K COMPOSTING SYSTEMS IN NYC

BroSis is actively campaigning to install 1,000 local composting systems across every borough of New York City. The goal of this campaign is to help reach NYC's Zero Waste 2030 goal to help combat climate change. While the City is undertaking anaerobic digestion, the amount of food waste generated across the city requires us to do more in order to sustainably handle and process our organic waste. We need the full support of the administration, instead of threats to cut existing funding for community composting (which we saw in the most recent City budget cycle).

New York CIty residents have been composting locally for years, and composting has been proven to help create and sustain green spaces in our neighborhoods. Collecting, managing, and processing organic waste into compost locally creates more opportunities for local micro businesses, creates more local jobs, keeps natural resources and equity local, and supports efforts to grow and maintain street trees and the urban forest, among other benefits.

Spearheaded by Nando Rodriguez working alongside a number of allies, this effort involves recruiting as many individuals, community groups, community gardens, and City agencies as possible to find funding and raise awareness to develop 1,000 local food waste processing sites across every borough of NYC. We need to demand that the NYC Department of Sanitation permanently create a line of funding for community composting.

Members of the Environmental Internship Program at the Goatham Festival, with Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine, promoting the 1K Composting Systems NYC initiative.

NYC-EJA MEMBER

THE POINT CDC ↗

THE POINT Community Development Corporation is a South-Bronx based community organization located in Hunts Point, founded in 1994 in response to a neighborhood in crisis struggling with declined investment and tarnished morale. THE POINT serves a neighborhood of predominantly low-income Latinx/Black residents dealing with multiple environmental justice burdens. Through a multi-faceted approach of providing multi-award winning arts/cultural programming and environmental and business-oriented services, THE POINT is committed to asset-based youth and community development, and the economic/cultural revitalization of the community. They are highly active in multiple arts and environmental justice coalition organizing spaces, contributing to strong activism and organizing across the South Bronx.

HUNTS POINT COMMUNITY NETWORK (HPCN)

The Hunts Point Community Network was launched in 2017 to provide a free WiFi mesh network and to establish a program to train community members to install and maintain network access points. The goal is to fill a gap in digital access in Hunts Point and to empower community members with skills that will strengthen their resumes when they are seeking employment. The project aligns with THE POINT's mission to use principles of asset-based community development to challenge the history of extraction in Hunts Point by collaborating with members of the community to build our own opportunities and infrastructure. HPCN will also bolster the community's resilience when climate change events (e.g., heavy rains from a storm) disrupts telecommunications by providing a separate network that does not rely on the electrical grid for community members to contact and coordinate with each other during a climate emergency.

The network offers free internet to more than 1,000 individuals per month throughout the neighborhood. Furthermore, our Digital Steward Training Academy has trained and paid over 200 individuals to take part in workshops that demystify the internet and prepare them for employment opportunities in technology. Our staff and our

Digital Stewards have installed 24 nodes and 28 access points throughout Hunts Point, working with small businesses and residents to host equipment.

Our vision for the next 10 years is to transition HPCN into an ISP that can cover the entire area and that sustains itself by prioritizing free and/or low-cost access for the most vulnerable populations. We envision digital stewards on each block that are employed and available to troubleshoot the immediate needs of their neighbors, including providing resources during climate emergencies. We also envision transitioning our network off the main providers and being able to provide our own signals connected to long-term service agreements.

We recently reached the end of two large, multi-year grants that provided most of the funding for this project, so we are researching and applying for new sources of funding to keep it going.

NYC-EJA MEMBER

UPROSE ↗

Founded in 1966, UPROSE is Brooklyn's oldest Latino community-based organization. An intergenerational, Black, Indigenous, women of color-led, nationally recognized community organization, UPROSE builds intergenerationally-led, frontline community power to advance climate justice and a Just Transition in Sunset Park Brooklyn through organizing, leadership development, popular education, arts and culture, policy, and participatory research/planning.

GRID 2.0—THE GREEN RESILIENT INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

GRID 2.0—The Green Resilient Industrial District
The GRID is Sunset Park's transformational community Just Transition plan. It was first created in 2019 as an alternative vision to a corporate-sponsored rezoning plan that would have led to widespread displacement of residents and small businesses. UPROSE launched GRID 2.0 in August 2023. Organized around the following seven core goals, GRID 2.0 will drive a Just Transition in Sunset Park; protect its maritime, industrial, and working-class character; comprehensively decarbonize the community; and place Sunset Park on a more racially and environmentally just footing by 2035.

Goal 1: Strengthen the working-class character of Sunset Park through the preservation of maritime and industrial land uses and neighborhood jobs.

Goal 2: Support just green and clean energy economy innovation by leveraging the unique assets and synergies of the neighborhood's economic ecosystem and by integrating circular economy and clean industry strategies in all local businesses.

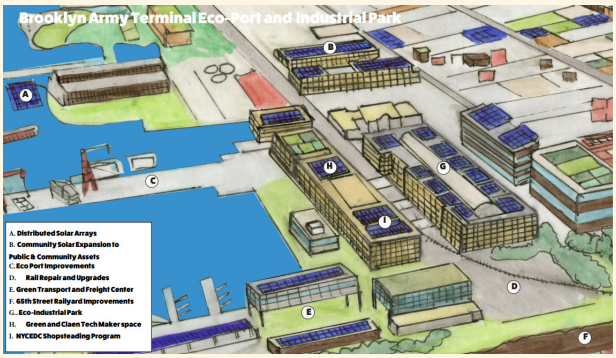
Goal 3: Support BIPOC and Frontline Organizations and institutions to create and attract new business activity in climate and clean energy manufacturing and services.

Goal 4: Create workforce development pathways for immigrants and working-class people of color living in Sunset Park into just living wage employment in emerging green and clean energy industries.

Goal 5: Build grassroots and institutional capacity to decarbonize all sectors of the community and support a just energy transition in Sunset Park.

Goal 6: Promote transportation justice to reduce environmental health disparities and align infrastructure plans and investments with community goals for a Just Transition.

Goal 7: Respect, honor, and expand transformative decision-making that is matriarchal, intergenerational, and rooted in ancestral knowledge.



GRID 2.0 builds on decades of environmental justice organizing and planning. UPROSE has led or collaborated on community planning initiatives to advance the community's environmental and climate justice goals, including the Sunset Park Community Greenway Plan (2009), the Brooklyn Community Board 7 New Connection/New Opportunities Sunset Park 197A Plan (2011), and the Sunset Park Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Nomination (2013), leading to NYS BOA designation in 2015.

Now, UPROSE issues a call to NYC to formally designate Sunset Park as a GRID Special Purpose District. The GRID Special Purpose District protects and tightens the current maritime and industrial zoning of Sunset Park's industrial waterfront, which has long been a target for gentrification. It incorporates targeted financial and other incentives for activities that advance the GRID's goals. GRID designation is the key first step to operationalizing a Just Transition in Sunset Park through the green re-industrialization of its waterfront, serving the region's climate needs and producing good-paying jobs in the emerging clean energy economy for Sunset Park's underpaid and under-employed working-class community.

NYC-EJA MEMBER

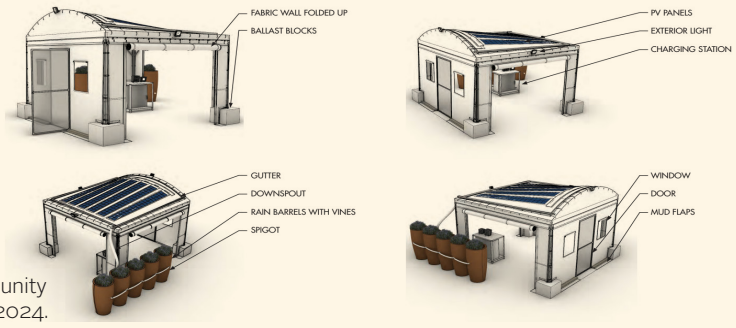
WE STAY/NOS QUEDAMOS ↗

We Stay/Nos Quedamos is a community development corporation in the Melrose neighborhood of the South Bronx. Founded in 1993 by Yolanda García, Nos Quedamos began as a successful people-led housing movement composed of local residents, activists, and home and business owners in an area that was experiencing severe population loss. Together, they led the historic fight against the designation of Melrose Commons as an urban renewal area that threatened mass displacement, a landmark win allowing Nos Quedamos to lead the redrafting of the plan by community stakeholders. The new plan was legislated in 1994. Serving the surrounding low-income Latinx/Black residents and the greater South Bronx region, Nos Quedamos is committed to fighting for their rights to self-determination and ability to remain and thrive in a healthy community. Their focus areas include: policy and advocacy, development and housing, culture and civic engagement, and environmental justice/resiliency.

SOUTH BRONX COMMUNITY LAND AND RESOURCE TRUST

The goals of this trust are to provide the Melrose community with long-lasting self-determination for housing, energy, food, and youth organizing. It will achieve this by constructing resilience hubs at three sites, which will provide broadband, solar power, and rainwater harvesting. Staff will offer programs on culture, food and land, emergency preparation, and green jobs workforce development. The trust will also establish a community land trust (CLT) structure to preserve deeply affordable housing, preserve community gardens, and keep land off real estate speculative markets, as well as establishing the Melrose Commons' historic community-driven urban renewal plan as a blueprint for future sustainable development through declaring it a special district. Further goals are to decarbonize the buildings and establish community-owned rooftop solar via a CLT over four of the buildings as well as possibly further developing solar on Boricua College and other local sites. Finally, there will be a rigorous youth EJ and housing justice hyper-local organizing curriculum developed with CUNY and NYC-EJA.

Various pieces of the project have been in development, piloting, and implementation phases between 2013 and 2024. The long-term goals include preserving deeply affordable housing; developing housing and infrastructure sustainably through a community-owned-and-led lens; reducing energy burden, heat burden, food injustice, and air quality issues in Melrose through solar and green space activation; and seeding Melrose and Bronx youth to continue the fight for the future of their neighborhoods for the years to come.



The latest renderings of the forthcoming Resilience Hubs, coming to We Stay/Nos Quedamos's office and two community gardens in the South Bronx. Construction is slated for Fall 2024.

NYC CLIMATE JUSTICE HUB ↗

Launched in September 2023, the NYC Climate Justice Hub is a partnership between CUNY, the nation's largest public urban university, which serves over 240,000 degree-seeking students annually across 25 campuses, and NYC-EJA. By uniting CUNY and NYC-EJA, the Hub strengthens and fortifies "just transition" efforts led by New York City's frontline communities of color—those of the Hub's member organizations—and leverages CUNY expertise to provide NYC-EJA with technical assistance and marshal CUNY resources. Simultaneously, the Hub provides CUNY students, faculty, and staff with practical on-the-ground experience, playing a supporting role in advancing frontline solutions while growing the environmental justice and climate justice movements on, across, and off CUNY campuses.

The Hub's mission is to support NYC-EJA's efforts to advance climate justice for New York City's underserved, working-class Black and Brown communities. It accomplishes this through the creation and activation of new and existing trans-disciplinary systems and cross-sectoral networks that ensure CUNY robustly supports NYC-EJA—and the coalitions of organizations and campaigns it brings together—in their efforts to accelerate "just transitions" across the five boroughs. The Hub uses five key strategies: (1) developing research teams to support the research agendas of NYC-EJA member organizations and NYC-EJA campaigns, (2) connecting classes with NYC-EJA member organizations to generate data and materials in support of NYC-EJA and integrating the existing work of NYC-EJA and the Hub's member organizations into the curriculum, (3) establishing and maintaining a yearly Climate Justice Fellowship for undergraduate and graduate students to conduct outreach across CUNY campuses and to support NYC-EJA member organizations, (4) building communications infrastructure to facilitate and disseminate the work of the Hub, and (5) coordinating public programming to engage frontline community members; CUNY students, faculty, staff, and workers; and the broader public.

Participants at the CUNY Climate Just Hub Academy, June 2024.

Participants at the CUNY Climate Just Hub Academy, June 2024.

In its inaugural year, the Hub matched each of its participating member organizations with teams of researchers—faculty and graduate student assistants—to provide technical assistance to further the development of frontline solutions, including several mentioned in the previous section. The member organizations and their researchers have been working together since the beginning of 2024. In addition, researchers have begun working with NYC-EJA staff to address specific research questions of our campaigns and coalitions. During the spring 2024 semester, the first cohort of classes integrated the work of NYC-EJA and Hub member organizations into syllabi and invited staff from NYC-EJA member organizations as guest speakers, and a couple of classes collaborated with member organizations to produce a podcast and a series of four short documentaries. In June 2024, the Hub launched the Climate Justice Fellowship, starting with an inaugural cohort of 25 students to develop a leadership "vine." In the coming year, the Hub will continue to build on these strategies and will roll out a series of public programming to engage the broader public. Through all of this, the Hub prepares a new generation of CUNY students to enter the workforce as climate leaders, operationalizes climate justice infrastructure at CUNY, and advances NYC-EJA's transformative research, policy, and planning agenda.

The NYC Climate Justice Hub is one of several "Climate Hubs" that have been established around the country through a series of generous grants from the Waverley Street Foundation. This initiative supports minority-serving institutions–Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges, and public universities that predominantly serve students of color–to work with place-based environmental justice organizations to advance the interests and aspirations of frontline communities most impacted by the climate crisis. The current grant under which the NYC Climate Justice Hub is operating is funded for three years, with opportunities for future funding.

CONCLUSION

The climate crisis is here. The costs of climate inaction and catastrophe are already too high. Children in the Bronx suffer from record high asthma rates and hundreds of New Yorkers die prematurely from the heat every year. Homes, schools, and subways are damaged by heat waves, heavy rain, and floods leaving people stranded and unable to get to work, school, family events, medical appointments, and leisure activities with friends.

Unfortunately, it will only get worse, making it more difficult for families to recover as infrastructure and services also further deteriorate and erode from the rising level of climate disruptions. Low-income communities of color face the most disruptions to their daily lives and health with the least amount of resources, access, and opportunities. For example, evacuating from a coastal storm for a low-income family looks very different from a family with a car, second home, or money to buy a flight to stay with a relative.

New York City and New York State need to make addressing climate change a top priority of government and evaluate and view all issues (e.g., health, education, housing, economic development, governance, service delivery, etc) from the perspective of climate and environmental justice. No funding or policy decisions should be made without incorporating the impacts of such decisions on climate change, the environment, and racial and social justice. This means taking a comprehensive and intersectional approach to effectively tackle and undo the entrenched policies and institutions that disproportionately harm frontline EJ communities.

Challenging and changing the systems that birth and maintain consolidated power, pollution, and environmental devastation are essential to addressing the root causes of environmental, climate and social injustices. We need visionary, courageous, and committed City and State leadership—and willingness and imagination from the whole of government—to transform business as usual and realize the equitable and just implementation of the groundbreaking climate and environmental legislation that advocates have fought years to pass. The strategies and recommendations laid out in this report are intended to help guide how NYC and NYS progress toward operationalizing just transitions. In this decisive moment—as the climate crisis escalates—we call on both City and State Administrations to adopt our vision, principles, and recommendations, and shift and share power with grassroots organizations to achieve a just future for all New Yorkers.

Climate and environmental justice efforts at the City and State level must be intentionally coordinated with grassroots organizations that are deeply embedded in their communities and understand their unique needs. Instead of a top-down approach, NYC and NYS should consider solutions that emerge from those who live the realities of environmental challenges and have developed effective, localized strategies. Sharing decision-making power with and resourcing grassroots organizations like NYC-EJA's members will ensure that interventions are not only relevant but also reflect the genuine

needs, leadership, and expertise of the communities they serve.

Looking forward, NYC-EJA will remain focused on building momentum toward meaningful climate action, combating attempts to roll back genuine progress, and ensuring that the principles of environmental justice and equity remain at the forefront of climate action. With the 2025 and 2026 elections around the corner, we have critical opportunities to hold our elected leaders accountable in the Mayor's Office, City Council, State Legislature, Governor's Mansion, and other key positions, and challenge them to champion and advance climate justice. New Yorkers deserve nothing less.

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