It will be nearly impossible to create a more equitable economy in New York without putting the Bronx at the forefront. This report presents bold policy ideas from 50 exceptional Bronxites for what city leaders can do to create a stronger, more equitable Bronx.

by the Center for an Urban Future

The following is the introduction and full list of ideas from 50 Ideas for a Stronger and More Equitable Bronx.

Click here to explore the full report and read all of the practical and visionary ideas contributed by 50 exceptional Bronxites.

It will be nearly impossible to create a more equitable economy in New York without putting the Bronx at the forefront.

The Bronx is overflowing with opportunity. Since the pandemic, no other borough has experienced a bigger spike in new business formation, and many of these new entrepreneurs have clear potential for growth. Even accounting for the economic pullback during COVID-19, the Bronx has had a net gain of 57,000 jobs since 2000, double Manhattan’s rate of growth. The MTA has broken ground on four new Metro-North stations, which are expected to speed commutes and bring development to neighborhoods; dozens of green infrastructure projects now underway will help protect the borough from the severe weather events brought on by climate change; and there are promising signs that development of the Kingsbridge Armory will finally move forward. The Bronx’s first children’s museum recently opened in a renovated former powerhouse, and the Hip Hop Museum is coming to the South Bronx in 2025. Moreover, the new reality of hybrid work—with many New Yorkers now commuting into Manhattan offices no more than three days a week—is creating new economic opportunities for neighborhoods outside the city’s main business districts, including many across the Bronx.

Even as leaders across the borough have worked to build on the borough’s many unique assets—including a promising spurt of new development and economic growth over the past decade, a diverse ecosystem of community-based organizations and
civic groups, and rich cultural vitality—far too many Bronxites still face grave affordability challenges, as well as gaps in access to health care, open space, technology, and financial services. And too many Bronx residents experience steep barriers to obtaining the well-paying jobs that are growing in today’s economy.

There is already broad agreement that addressing the borough's biggest challenges, taking advantage of its many opportunities, and laying the foundation for a stronger and more equitable borough will require bold action and fresh ideas. However, there is much less understanding of what specific actions should be taken. This report aims to fill that gap.

The report—the first in a series of forthcoming reports by the Center for an Urban Future that set forth concrete ideas for bolstering each of the five boroughs—presents 50 bold policy ideas for what the Mayor, City Council members, the Bronx Borough President, and other city leaders can do to create a stronger, more equitable Bronx.

The 50 ideas in this report—a joint project between the Center for an Urban Future and The Bronx Community Foundation, the first and only community foundation in The Bronx, solely dedicated to delivering resources to the borough—all emanate from leaders across the Bronx. To generate fresh and achievable ideas for the borough’s future, we turned to a diverse mix of 50 exceptional Bronxites. Those contributing an idea to the report include community advocates, social entrepreneurs, heads of social service nonprofits, business owners, educators, economists, urban planners, artists, designers, public health experts, faith leaders, and more. We asked each of them to contribute a single policy idea that would help more Bronx residents get on the path to the middle class, strengthen social infrastructure, address the affordability crisis, close longstanding racial and ethnic opportunity gaps, improve the health of residents, and bolster neighborhoods across the borough. This report contains ideas both practical and visionary.

50 Ideas for a Stronger and More Equitable Bronx

1. Create a year-round career-connected learning program that builds on the success of SYEP
   Michelle Avila, Health Chair, Bronx Community Board 7 and Assistant Director of Public Policy, Children's Aid

2. Recalculate the area median income (AMI) to ensure that newly built “affordable” housing is actually in reach for most Bronx residents
   Sheila Garcia, Yoselyn Gomez, and Joanne Grell, New Settlement and Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA)

3. Create a digital equity plan for the Bronx
   Jerelyn Rodriguez, Co-Founder and CEO, The Knowledge House

4. Expand the Bronx People's Federal Credit Union from a mobile banking resource into a brick-and-mortar branch
   Kerry A. McLean, Vice President of Community Development, WHEDco

5. Adopt ideas from the grassroots Bronx-wide economic development plan developed by Bronx communities
   Dariella Rodriguez, Director of Community Development, The Point

6. Enable more of the Bronx’s parks to become edible forests to combat food insecurity
   David Shuffler, Executive Director, with Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice Staff

7. Develop a multi-year plan to get every Bronx student to read on grade level
   Sarah Johnson, CEO, Teaching Lab

8. Improve the quality of life in the South Bronx by implementing the Mott Haven-Port Morris Waterfront Plan
   Mychal Johnson, Founding Member and Advisory Board Member, South Bronx Unite

9. Create a Bronx Training Hub to help more residents get into the workforce and advance into better
paying jobs
Andre White, Executive Director and CEO, Phipps Neighborhoods

10. Bolster the borough’s many small nonprofits by streamlining the City Council’s funding process for grants under $5,000
Chrys Napolitano, President, Northeast Bronx Community Farmers Market Project

11. Create a cross-cultural apprenticeship that pairs emerging immigrant artists with established Bronx-based artists
Sandie Luna, Executive Director, ID Studio Theater Performance and Research Center

12. Address the older adult housing crisis by turning under-used NYCHA apartments into shared living spaces for seniors
Dr. Anderson Torres, President and CEO, R.A.I.N. Total Care

13. Create a physical hub in the Bronx that helps connect local small businesses to existing assistance programs and resources
Jessica Betancourt, Owner of Bronx Optical Center and President of BJT Bronx Merchant Association

14. Boost the availability of mental health care for parents and guardians
Emily Lopez, Senior Director for Community Leadership Development, Graham Windham

15. Expand the city’s free broadband initiative to all NYCHA developments in the Bronx
Kathleen Carrasco, Borough Director for Bronx Neighborhood Library Networks, New York Public Library

16. Cap the Cross Bronx Expressway and ensure surrounding communities will benefit
Nilka Martell, Founder, Loving the Bronx

17. Expand the window for households with newly earned income to retain benefits like affordable housing
Christina Hanson, Executive Director, Part of the Solution

18. Support mutual aid groups in providing legal services to new immigrants
Terry Lawson, Co-Founder, Bronx Immigration Partnership

19. Develop an international food market on Jerome Avenue to address food insecurity and bolster economic development in the West Bronx
Fernando Tirado, Director of New Initiatives, Bronx District Public Health Office, NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene

20. Integrate hands-on work experience into classroom learning at schools across the Bronx
Lisa Sorin, President, Bronx Chamber of Commerce

21. Set up accessible veteran centers in the four corners of the Bronx
Amjad Mujaahid, Bronx Neighborhood and Veteran Services Health Promoter, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

22. Create more small business co-working spaces in the Bronx to help small business owners overcome rent hurdles and language barriers
Cristy Moya, Director for Bronx Women’s Business Center, Business Outreach Center Network

23. Create a free Very Important Bronx Kids (VIB Kids) card to provide free entry—and free transit access—to NYC museums and cultural institutions
Maria Panora, Director, South Bronx Rising Together

24. Expand NYPL’s TechConnect program to offer digital literacy education in more languages
Diya Basu-Sen, Executive Director, Sapna NYC

25. Use zoning tools to encourage new developments in the Bronx to include health clinics and wellness centers
Sandra Piggée, President, Bronx Community Health Network (BCHN)

26. Establish and fund arts curriculum as a core subject in public schools to provide a gateway for students into viable careers in the arts
Judith Insell, Executive Director, Bronx Arts Ensemble

27.
Improve the quality of jobs for the 75,000 Bronx residents working in direct care
Jodi Sturgeon, President and CEO, PHI

28. Launch a major initiative to beautify the Bronx
Yasmin Cruz, Executive Director, Westchester Square Business Improvement District

29. Expand access to affordable internet for all Bronxites, not only NYCHA residents
Nicole Carter, Director of Resident Services, Crotona Park West

30. Encourage parents on public assistance to participate in their children’s education by funding parent engagement
Beverly Emers, Policy Associate at the Welfare Rights Initiative at Hunter College, in collaboration with the Economic Justice Project at CUNY LAW

31. Help Bronx high school students navigate the college application process by creating a mandatory college prep course
Roselyn Grullón, Co-Founder, Bronx Native

32. Cap segments of the Cross Bronx Expressway with parks to improve public health across the borough
Alexander Levine, Director and Co-Founder, Bronx One Policy Group

33. Reduce barriers to creating more arts-oriented charter schools in the Bronx
Flora Montes, Founder, Bronx Fashion Week

34. Incentivize Bronx businesses to hire local high school students as interns
David Noah, Founding Principal, Comp Sci High

35. Increase the minimum wage to pull people out of the cycle of poverty
Eileen Torres, Executive Director, BronxWorks

36. Require digital literacy training for all city employees
Natasha Green, CEO & Founder, Hidden Gems Archery and We Intervene

37. Introduce a mandatory financial literacy course in every public high school
Carlos Moreno, Co-Executive Director, Big Picture Learning

38. Develop a year-long internship or work-study program for CUNY students in the Bronx
Daisy Cocco De Filippis, President, Hostos Community College

39. Provide stipends that help Bronx residents afford to enroll and persist in skills training programs
Plinio Ayala, President & CEO, and Debbie Roman, New York Managing Director at Per Scholas

40. Incentivize Bronx businesses to hire residents from their community
Wilma Alonso, Executive Director, and Albert Dalipi, Director of Marketing, Communications & Outreach at the Fordham Road Business Improvement District

41. Increase the number of waste bins across the Bronx, and boost the frequency of trash collection
Anthony Ramirez II, Founder of Mainland Media, From The Bronx, and The Bronx Beer Hall

42. Pilot a "Shoot Cameras Not Guns" program to channel young Bronx residents into film careers and reduce violence
Rocky Bucano, Founder and Executive Director, The Hip Hop Museum

43. Support paid internships for high school and college students in nonprofit organizations
Klaudio Rodriguez, Executive Director, The Bronx Museum of the Arts

44. Simplify the process for health professionals to refer patients to food pantries
Judy Secon, Deputy Executive Director, New York Common Pantry

45. Equip the Bronx office of the City Planning Department with a team of architects, urban planners, and developers to conceptualize major projects for the borough’s future
George Ranalli, Principal-In-Charge, George Ranalli Architect

46. Require the city to fund a living wage for all workers on city-funded contracts
Eric Rosenbaum, President & CEO, Project Renewal

47. Build on the momentum of the Hip Hop Museum, and establish other institutions that celebrate the
Bronx’s unique place in history
Willy Rodriguez, Co-Founder and Executive Director, International Salsa Museum

48. Make the borough’s schools safer and more welcoming outside of normal school hours
Artemis Diaz, Parent of two children and Co-Chair of the Parent Council of South Bronx Rising Together

49. Launch a borough-wide vocational work-and-learn program in partnership with leading Bronx employers
John Calvelli, Executive Vice President of Public Affairs, Wildlife Conservation Society

50. Create a plan to expedite the clean-up of trash, abandoned cars, and high grass that mar too many Bronx roads and highways
Stephanie Ehrlich, Executive Director, Van Cortlandt Park Alliance

Click here to read the full report diving into 50 practical and visionary ideas for the Bronx’s future.


This report was supported by a grant from The Bronx Community Foundation, the first community foundation in the Bronx with a mission to support and invest in community power to eradicate inequity and build sustainable futures for all Bronxites.

Center for an Urban Future (CUF) is a leading New York City-based think tank that generates smart and sustainable public policies to reduce inequality, increase economic mobility, and grow the economy.

General operating support for the Center for an Urban Future has been provided by The Clark Foundation and the Altman Foundation.

We are also grateful for support from Fisher Brothers Foundation for the Center for an Urban Future’s Middle Class Jobs Project, and ongoing support from a number of other philanthropic funders.

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