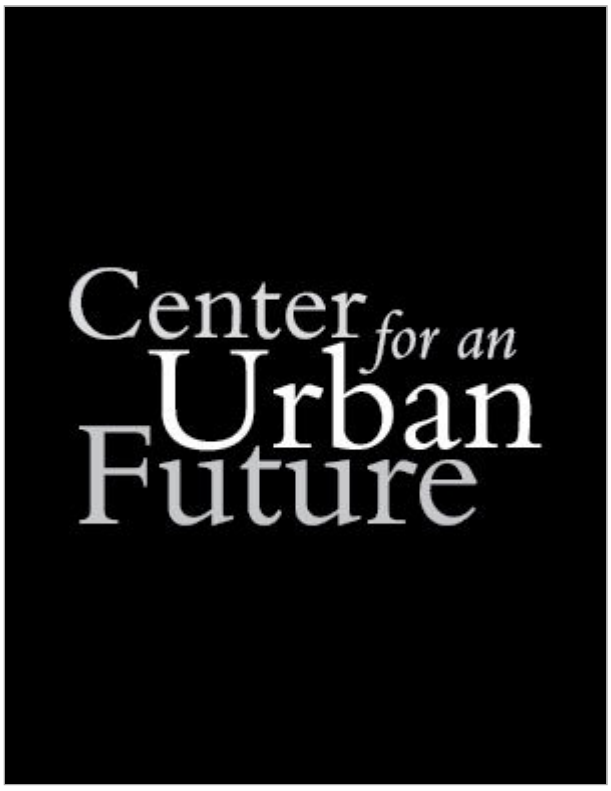


Commentary/Op-Ed - November 2005

What the Next Mayor Must Do

In this op-ed from the Nov. 9 *Daily News*, CUF director Jonathan Bowles highlights a number of important issues that Mayor Bloomberg will have to address in his second term. For a more detailed look at the most pressing issues facing the mayor, please check out "Framing the 2005 Mayoral Debate," a recent study issued by the Center for an Urban Future, the Regional Plan Association and the Center for New York City Affairs.

by Jonathan Bowles

You thought you heard it all during the mayoral campaign, but you didn't. Other pressing issues face New Yorkers over the next four years. Here's a guide:

Economy - The city has added jobs at a decent clip over the past year, but there are more than 200,000 fewer jobs thanthere were in 2000. Despite aggressive efforts by the Bloomberg administration to broaden support to industries like life sciences and film, the city is more dependent on the financial sector than ever.

This job will be far tougher if the national economy or local housing market cool down. The best opportunity to stimulate new growth lies with small businesses and entrepreneurs. Many of these small companies, unfortunately, are being squeezed by rising real estate prices and higher energy costs.

Transportation - The city's subway system is overburdened and hasn't added new capacity in more than 60 years. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority cannot expand if it's swimming in debt. And not taking action makes it harder for New York to compete against other cities. Even if voters okay the Transportation Bond Act, it's not enough. More sources of money must be found.

Poverty - The percentage of poor people in New York City went from 19% in 2003 to 20.3% in 2004, according to the U.S. census. The ranks of the working poor are increasing, and a growing number of teenagers and young adults are neither employed nor attending school.

Failing to address these issues could lead to higher rates of homelessness and crime. The Bloomberg administration's focus on improving city schools is a good first step, but more must be done to prepare teens and young adults for jobs. Subsidized

child care should be expanded and decent-paying jobs for low-skilled workers must be retained.

Budget - The deficit could soar as high as $4 billion a year from 2007 to 2009. And don't count on significant aid from Albany or Washington, which are in even worse shape. The mayor has to devise new revenue streams and rein in such costs as pensions and Medicaid. City pension contributions are expected to climb by an average of 9.9% ayear over the next four fiscal years, including a whopping $1.4billion increase next year. The city's Medicaid share will cost nearly $5 billion this year, eating up 14% of locally raised revenues.

Billions can be saved by closing underused city hospitals. This could hurt the delivery of health care services in the five boroughs, so the mayor must make sure that health care for the poor does not suffer.

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