



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The road to a Sustainable New York City

Commissioned by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency

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International.*



Introduction

In 2015, De Blasio released OneNYC, a comprehensive resiliency and sustainability plan for New York City. It builds on former Mayor Bloomberg’s PlaNYC 2030, New York City’s first sustainability strategy, which integrated environmental goals into the city’s economic development goals. This year OneNYC will be updated, after New Yorkers were given the chance to offer suggestions on challenges the updated strategy should address and solutions that the strategy should include.

This document outlines OneNYC’s history and will give an overview of the goals it established. It will also give some examples of interesting OneNYC projects. The document also outlines other developments surrounding Sustainability in New York City. Furthermore, it gives a critical reflection on NYC’s sustainability policy and gives information of the Consulate General’s role in helping Dutch sustainability companies expand to the US. Lastly, it provides an overview of relevant events and newsletters related to NYC’s sustainability policy.

History & policy implementation

In 2007, former Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg launched [PlaNYC – A Greener, Greater New York](#). Its purpose was to manage the City’s economic and population growth in ways guided by the principles of long-term sustainability which presented 127 initiatives in the areas of housing and neighborhoods, parks and public spaces, brownfields, waterways, water supply, transportation, energy, and climate change and detailing implementation roadmaps and milestones for each one of them.

In 2011, PlaNYC was updated: solid waste was added as a new area of focus and the number of initiatives was expanded to 132. After Hurricane Sandy in 2012, causing an estimated \$71 billion in damages, the policy focus shifted from sustainability to resiliency. In 2013, the City released another document, [A Stronger, More Resilient New York](#), which laid out 188 resiliency initiatives. At the end of Bloomberg’s term, he released a new important PlaNYC report: [New York City’s Pathways to Deep Carbon Reductions](#), which mapped out a pathway to the “80 by 50” target – an ambitious goal of reducing citywide greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent below 2005 levels by 2050 compared to 2005.

In 2014 the new Mayor De Blasio released the [One City: Built to Last](#) report, which built on the work Bloomberg’s [Pathways to Deep Carbon Reductions](#), a 10-year roadmap to improve the energy efficiency of the City’s buildings. In 2015 a PlaNYC update was released as [One New York: The Plan for a Strong and Just City](#), with a stronger focus on social justice and equity.



OneNYC presents four Visions, each including a number of goals, specific [initiatives](#)¹, and detailed [indicators](#) to address the social, economic and environmental challenges New York City faces²:

¹ In the back of the report is a long table listing all the initiatives from the 2011 PlaNYC update and the 2013 Resiliency report indicating for each of the 320 initiatives if it has been completed or is still in progress and for each targeted 2014 milestone whether or not it was in fact achieved.

² The report also has a more regional perspective: it calls on neighboring municipalities and the state and federal governments to do their part toward the achievement of many goals that are ultimately regional in character.

- [Vision 1 – Our Growing, Thriving City](#): Includes 30 initiatives categorized in the areas of industry expansion & cultivation, workforce development, housing, thriving neighborhoods, culture, transportation, infrastructure, and broadband.
- [Vision 2 – Our Just and Equitable City](#): Includes 22 initiatives categorized in the areas of early childhood, government & social services, healthy neighborhoods & active lifestyle, healthcare access, criminal justice reform, and traffic fatalities reduction.
- [Vision 3 – Our Sustainable City](#): Includes 29 initiatives categorized in the areas of emissions reduction (80 x 50), waste reduction, air quality, brownfields, water management, and parks & natural resources.
- [Vision 4 – Our Resilient City](#): Includes 13 initiatives categorized in the areas of neighborhoods, buildings, infrastructure, and coastal defense.

Some of the major goals outlined in OneNYC consist of:

- Making New York City home to 4.9 million jobs by 2040;
- Creating 240,000 new housing units by 2025, and an additional 250,000 to 300,000 by 2040.
- Lifting 800,000 New Yorkers out of poverty or near-poverty by 2025.
- Reducing the city's greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050, over 2005 levels.
- Sending zero waste to landfills and reducing waste disposal by 90 percent relative to 2005 levels, by 2030.
- Ensuring New York City has the best air quality among all large U.S. cities by 2030.
- Reducing risks of flooding in most affected communities.
- Reducing annual economic losses from climate-related events;
- Continued investment as part of Bloomberg's \$20 billion plan, *A Stronger, More Resilient New York*, that includes a range of physical, social, and economic resiliency measures.

The City also proposed a 10-year capital strategy within its executive budget that allocated \$22 billion in capital funds to OneNYC initiatives. Some areas such as housing, flood mitigation and energy efficiency received generous allocations, while other goals, like improving power plant efficiency or expanding wind energy received less attention, according to a budget chart prepared by the city.

Last year De Blasio announced that he will launch an updated OneNYC strategy in April 2019. The updated OneNYC will reassess key challenges and develop the goals and associated initiatives to address them. Via the [OneNYC website](#) New Yorkers were able to offer suggestions on challenges that the updated strategy should address and solutions that the strategy should include.

Examples of OneNYC projects

1. *The BIG U (Vision 4, goal: coastal defense)*

The [BIG U project](#) was designed to protect Lower Manhattan from floodwater, storms, and other impacts of a changing climate. It is the winning proposal of the U.S. (HUD) [Rebuild by Design Competition](#), initiated by the Dutchman Henk Ovink. The BIG U would act as a 10-mile-long "protective ribbon" that wraps around Manhattan's most flood-prone neighborhood, including plant-topped berms, public parkland, artist-decorated flood walls and other element to avert catastrophic flooding.

The Big U project has since been broken down into separate neighborhood-based projects. One major part is the [East Side Coastal Resiliency Project](#) (black line on picture). Construction on this project was supposed to begin in 2017, but in September 2018 De Blasio



Construction on this project was supposed to begin in 2017, but in September 2018 De Blasio

announced drastic changes to the project. Construction of the new \$1.45-billion-plan will not start before the spring of 2020.

Another major part is the [Lower Manhattan Coastal Resiliency project](#) (blue line on the picture). In March 2019, De Blasio announced [changes to the original concept of this plan](#), including an extension of the existing shoreline into the East River. Construction of the \$10-billion-plan is expected to begin in 2021.

Criticism

Some critics of the Big U project outline that vulnerable waterfront communities outside of Lower Manhattan are not receiving the same amount of attention from the mayor's office. Also, a number of architects and urban planners have said that the BIG U's high cost and level of complexity could hinder its construction. There are also concerns about the impact of pushing an entirely new land mass into an already narrow section of the East River, will have on marine life.

2. [The North River Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade Project \(Vision 3, goal: 80 x 50 and Vision 4, goal: infrastructure\)](#)

The [North River WRRF Upgrade Project](#) is a \$300 million initiative to install new, cleaner engines at the North River Wastewater Resource Recovery Facility in West Harlem. The plant provides wastewater treatment for hundreds of thousands of people in New York. The upgrade, which is expected to be done in 2022, will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 50 percent.



The North River WRRF experienced significant flooding during Hurricane Sandy. Therefore, the project will include resiliency upgrades to harden the plant against a changing climate and future storms. For example, it will raise facility openings to the Hudson River and installing floodgates and barriers to protect critical equipment. This work is a part of the [NYC Wastewater Resiliency Plan](#).

Read more about this project, [here](#).

3. [Solarize NYC \(Vision 3, goal: 80 x 50\)](#)

[Solarize NYC](#) is a citywide program administered by the NYC Solar Partnership, which consists of New York City Mayor's Office of Sustainability, the City University of New York's [Sustainable CUNY](#), and the [New York City Economic Development Corporation](#). Its goal is to make solar energy more affordable.



The City's goal is to have 250 MW of solar capacity on private property by 2025. As of January 31, 2017, the installed solar capacity was over 140 MW citywide across more than 10,000 installations.

An additional goal of Solarize NYC is to reduce barriers for communities that historically had limited access to clean energy. They do this by providing informational resources, simplifying the process, and offering discounted pricing.

4. [e-CycleNYC program \(Vision 3, goal: zero waste\)](#)

The [e-cycleNYC residential e-waste collection program](#) is a public-private partnership between the New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY) in conjunction with Electronic Recyclers International (ERI). The e-cycleNYC program is fully funded by electronics manufacturers, and is free for NYC taxpayers and participating buildings. As a result, New York City's total improperly disposed electronic waste has decreased by nearly 60 percent from 2005 to 2017.



Other NYC Sustainability developments

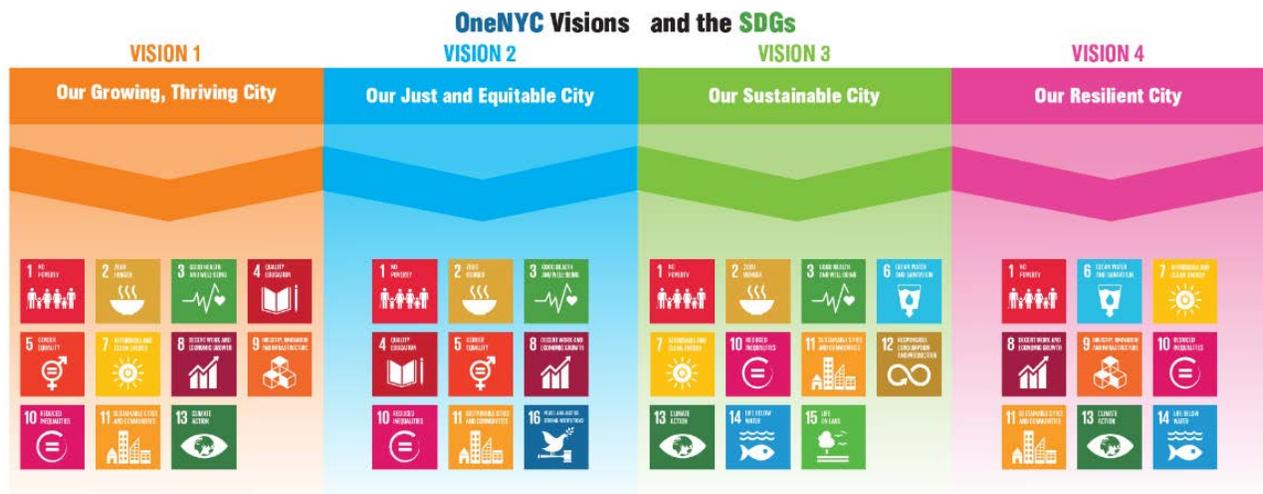
NYC and the Paris Climate Agreement

In 2017, after President Trump announced his intention to withdraw the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement, De Blasio [signed an order](#) committing to the Paris accord goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Later that year he published the report [‘Aligning New York City with the Paris Climate Agreement’](#). The 1.5°C action plan accelerates the City’s 2014 Roadmap to 80x50 to reduce greenhouse gas emission by 80% by 2050. It outlines the pace, scale and impact of the work needed to meet the [C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group goal](#) of peaking city emissions by 2020.

Together with other mayors, De Blasio started the ‘We Are Still In’ coalition to keep up the U.S. commitment under the Paris accords and also launched the [‘We Are Taking Action’](#) initiative to push local climate action.

NYC and the Sustainable Development Goals

In 2018, New York became the first city to submit a report on how it was meeting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, highlighting resiliency efforts to adapt to climate change. The report, produced by the [Global Vision | Urban Action programme](#) of the Mayor’s Office for International Affairs in close collaboration with relevant NYC agencies, presented existing New York City’s data and programs. The report also identified links between the SDGs and the 2015 OneNYC. Read it [here](#).



New York State’s influence on NYC’s sustainability laws

Owing to a provision in the state constitution, every New York City Law is subject to overrule by the state Legislature and governor.

Exemplary is New York City’s 2017 proposal that would have imposed a 5-cent fee on plastic. Cuomo signed a bill that effectively killed this law, saying it was “deeply flawed” because it allowed merchants to keep the 5-cent fee as profit. New York City’s fee had also been opposed by a number of state lawmakers, saying that the bag fee would put an undue financial burden on poor New Yorkers.

Less than two years later, in March 2019 New York State lawmakers agreed to [impose a statewide ban on most types of single-use plastic bags](#) from retail sales. The plan will have an additional element allowing counties to opt in a 5-cent fee on paper bags, revenue that would go to the state’s Environmental Protection Fund as well as state fund to buy reusable bags for consumers.

Critical reflection on NYC's Sustainability plans

Mayor De Blasio has developed a comprehensive set of proposals to tie growth further to equity, sustainability and resilience in New York City since coming to office. He has shown to be a leading force in addressing environmental issues. At the same time, the OneNYC has drawn criticism:

Lack of community engagement

In 2016, The New York City Environmental Justice Alliance, conducted an exhaustive analysis of OneNYC. It concluded that the implementation of the OneNYC goals remained primarily a top-down effort and lacked a genuine community engagement process. City's community boards were not drawn in to the planning, and several were unaware it had even been released months prior. For the 2019 update, however, New Yorkers were also able to offer suggestions on challenges that the updated strategy should address and solutions the strategy should include.

Slow progress/too ambitious

In 2019 it was announced that three key OneNYC initiatives — single-stream recycling, curbside organics expansion and "save-as-you-throw" — are on hold indefinitely. The initiatives would contribute to the goal "zero waste" to landfills by 2030. Now, some are beginning to wonder if this political promise was ever feasible in the first place. The path to achieving this 2030 target is looking increasingly complex. Read more about this [here](#).

Also in other areas progress has been slow. Seven years after the ambitious resiliency project "Big U" was announced, construction still has not begun. Many critics think the OneNYC goals, including the overarching goal of reducing citywide greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent below 2005 levels by 2050 are too ambitious.

How the Dutch Consulate General in New York can help

The Economic Department of the Dutch Consulate General in New York creates collaboration opportunities and facilitates Dutch companies wanting to do business in the US market. More specifically, the Dutch Consulate focuses on the following priority sectors:

- Life Sciences and Health
- Offshore Wind & Clean Energy
- Water/Resilience
- Startups and Scale-ups
- Creative Industries
- Urban Farming/AgTech/FoodTech

Dutch companies that are interested in expanding to the US, wanting to connect to the NYC Sustainability ecosystem or simply are looking for more information about the US market, are welcome to connect to the Economic Department via nyc-ea@minbuza.nl.

Events

In New York City, a number of interesting events surrounding Sustainability are organized every year. Some of the larger events include:

- [2019 Waterfront Conference](#), New York City, May 7 2019
- [4th Annual Sustainability Investment Conference](#), New York City, May 9 2019
- [Smart Cities New York](#), New York City, May 13-15 2019
- [Climate Week NYC](#), New York City, September 23-29 2019, New York City
- [The Responsible Business Summit New York](#), New York City, March 16-18, 2020

Smaller events can also be very valuable, since you have a bigger chance to meet with the panelists and speakers. However, these events often are not announced more than 2-4 weeks in advance. Many of these events will be listed on [Eventbrite](#).

Newsletters

Another way to connect with the NYC ecosystem is by signing to newsletters. The following are all valuable for sustainability companies expanding to NYC:

- [NYC.gov Sustainability and Resiliency Updates](#) – Updates about NYC’s developments on Sustainability and Resiliency
- [Solar in the City Bulletin](#) - A bulletin for solar installers and contractors working in New York City
- [Smart Dives Newsletter](#) - A daily newsletter with the latest news and trends impacting urbanization and sustainability. The newsletter covers Energy, Green Building, Transportation, Waste Solutions, Connectivity, Policy.

This overview is an internal document and is by no means intended to provide a complete overview of the sustainability in the New York area. This report serves as a basic initial guide for Dutch companies exploring the option of entering the New York sustainability market.

Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York, 2019.

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