

New initiatives for an even greater, greener New York

Written by MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG
Friday, 06 May 2011 10:03



“TGE Earth was not given to you by your parents. It was loaned to you by your children.”

We cited this Kenyan proverb four years ago when we launched PlaNYC — our ambitious strategy for creating a greener, greater New York for our children and grandchildren.

In that same spirit, we have updated PlaNYC with new initiatives — and new strategies for reaching our goals even more quickly.

That work begins with a big step towards a key PlaNYC goal: Giving New York the cleanest air of any major American city.

Earlier this month, we issued new city rules to phase out the use of the dirtiest and most polluting heating oils, which contribute to serious respiratory diseases.

These low-grade fuels produce more soot pollution every year than all the cars and trucks in New York City combined.

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Eliminating these dirty fuels from our buildings will save up to 1,500 lives over the next two decades — the single biggest step we have taken to save lives since banning smoking in restaurants and bars.

And over the long run, burning cleaner fuels will also save money on energy costs.

To help us achieve all of this, we have launched a public-private partnership called “Clean Heat.”

Working with Con Edison and National Grid, we will help buildings that now burn heavily polluting fuels convert to cleaner fuels.

We’ll bring property owners together to use their collective purchasing power to lower the cost of conversions.

And NYC Service volunteers will join forces with the Environmental Defense Fund to teach co-op and condo boards about converting their buildings to cleaner fuel.

To reduce our city’s carbon footprint, clean our air, and create more parks and green spaces, we’re depending on help from our city’s most valuable natural resource: New Yorkers.

Our PlaNYC successes have shown how important it is for government to make big investments in a greener future, such as the nearly completed Third Water Tunnel, the extension of the Number 7 Subway line, and the wastewater system upgrades that have made our rivers and bays cleaner than they have been in a century.

But equally important are the investments and actions of individuals.

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We cannot underestimate the collective power of more than 8 million New Yorkers greening their homes, businesses and neighborhoods.

The updated PlaNYC — with its 132 initiatives — focuses on how we can all create a greener, greater New York.

For example, we'll strengthen community partnerships that maintain parks and playgrounds and care for the million new trees we're planting across the city.

And we'll create hundreds of new community gardens at schools, public housing developments, and other sites that will grow more fresh produce for New Yorkers.

We'll continue to engage volunteers in such efforts as painting building roofs with heat-reflective coatings that cut energy costs.

We'll also provide community groups with grants for green projects — like tree pits on our streets that will diminish the storm runoff that causes floods, overloads waste treatment plants and pollutes our waterways.

To help us mobilize communities, we'll be creating a new social networking platform.

Called "Change By Us," it will connect New Yorkers to dozens of non-profit groups and more than 20 city programs and resources to green their neighborhoods, and our entire city.

This new platform will also enable New Yorkers to connect with each other to turn their own ideas into action.

To learn more about the updated PlaNYC goals, and how you can help us achieve them, visit

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us at www.nyc.gov