



NEW YORK CITY COMPTROLLER  
**BRAD LANDER**

---

# Accounting Together for a More Thriving, Equitable, and Resilient City

Transition Committee Report  
for Comptroller Brad Lander

**JANUARY 2022**



# Contents

<b>Letter from Comptroller Brad Lander .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Letter from Transition Co-Chairs .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Transition Committee .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Transition Goals and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Building a Mission Statement for the Office .....	10
Articulating Shared Values and Our Approach to Day-to-Day Work.....	11
Strategic Initiatives for the Office.....	12
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>24</b>



# Letter from Comptroller Brad Lander



Dear New Yorkers,

On January 1, 2022, I took the oath of office atop the historic Municipal Building alongside my family, becoming the 45<sup>th</sup> Comptroller of New York City. It is a responsibility and a privilege I am embarking on with great humility and hope. Humility in recognition of both the challenges before us and the work that staff in this office do every day to serve the people of New York; and hope for the ways we can rise to those challenges to create a more thriving, equitable, and resilient city.

I come to this role with a keen appreciation for the diverse work of the Comptroller's office, having served in city government as a member of the New York City Council over the last 12 years. But as I have gotten to know my colleagues better in these early days of my tenure, my admiration for the office's more than 600 employees has deepened. Throughout a once-in-a-generation public health crisis, they have continued to show up for you, producing audits to hold City agencies accountable to their stated goals, registering contracts and resolving claims, ensuring taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, protecting the financial futures of civil servants, and championing innovative solutions to the challenges we face.

And the challenges before us are indeed great.

When I first considered seeking this office, I could not have anticipated assuming it as we enter the third year of a pandemic that has taken the lives of more than 35,000 of our neighbors, disproportionately New Yorkers of color. While our city continues on a path toward recovery and

our economy shows signs of rebounding, gender and racial disparities in employment, the threat of mass evictions, the plague of gun violence, and soaring health care costs remain, presenting very real threats to the prosperity of New York City’s families and neighborhoods. At the same time, the climate crisis looms as the single most consequential long-term risk, not only to our infrastructure and our investment portfolios, but also to the future of our city, indeed, to our very lives and those of our children.

This can and must be a catalyzing moment, one in which we commit to investing our shared public resources wisely in a fairer, more sustainable future. I have had the benefit of seeing up close the difference that big, bold government can make in people’s lives, first as a community organizer and nonprofit director and later as a Council member and founder of the body’s Progressive Caucus. One of the principles that has remained consistent for me throughout is that a participatory approach to governance, in partnership with stakeholders and directly impacted communities, produces far better outcomes than a top-down, go-it-alone style. That is why I am eager as Comptroller to create new opportunities to hear directly from New Yorkers about what government is and isn’t doing well today. Our success as an office at making government work better will be in large part dependent on what we learn from you.

I am enormously grateful to all of the members of the Transition Committee, who fully embraced the commitment to participatory governance and devoted many hours to synthesizing and strategizing around the wide-ranging feedback and concerns of New Yorkers. Special thanks to our tremendous co-chairs, Carol Kellermann and Mark Winston Griffith, who led the committee with wisdom and vision, and who embody the idea that effective government and progressive government must go together. I owe the deepest thanks of course to the dedicated transition staff (Naomi Dann, Rachel Goodman, Lucy Merriam, and especially Annie Levers) and our new leadership team for shepherding an ambitious and actionable agenda for the office. The report that follows is the product of their thoughtful work.

I also want to thank everyone who contributed their time, ideas, and words of encouragement in support of this transition. Comptroller Scott Stringer and the team in place at 1 Centre Street have been generous and welcoming. To the thousands of you who responded to the “Public Service Satisfaction Survey” and the hundreds who attended our town halls, we worked hard to listen to your voices. I pledge that we will keep doing so.

It is an honor to serve New York City as Comptroller. I look forward to hearing from you in the coming months, as we work together to hold government accountable for making good on its promises, and I trust that you will hold me accountable, too. Accountability is a shared task; there’s no way to do it alone.



Brad Lander

New York City Comptroller

# Letter from Transition Co-Chairs

As co-chairs of Comptroller Lander’s Transition Committee, we had the honor of convening a dynamic group of New Yorkers from across the boroughs to ensure a smooth transition and lay a strong foundation for the work of the office in the first 100 days and beyond. As the former president of the Citizens Budget Commission and executive director of the Brooklyn Movement Center, we brought to this work different backgrounds and experiences but a shared commitment to the project of making government work better for people – and a deep belief in the important role the Comptroller’s office can and should play in realizing this aim.

New Yorkers need a bold, active government to confront our biggest challenges, from affordability to safety to public health to the climate crisis. But that is only possible, and people will only support it, when they see government delivering effectively on its promises. Comptroller Lander has made that a priority during his time in public service, and we are confident that the Comptroller’s office, under his leadership, and with the input of fellow New Yorkers, will leverage all of the available resources and tools to support an economic recovery that does not leave anyone behind – while keeping the City on solid fiscal ground.

We extend our thanks to Comptroller Lander for asking us to guide this transition, to the members of the Transition Committee for sharing their expertise and for their dedication to ensuring government is more responsive to New Yorkers’ needs, and to the staff of the Comptroller’s office, who have worked seamlessly on behalf of New Yorkers throughout this change in leadership. We look forward to continuing to partner together to advance our common goals in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Carol Kellermann and Mark Winston Griffith

# Transition Committee

**Tahanie Aboushi, Esq.**, Aboushi Law Firm

**Rohit T. Aggarwala**, Senior Fellow, Cornell Tech

**Sasha Ahuja**, National Director, Strategic Partnerships at Planned Parenthood Federation of America

**Eddie Bautista**, Executive Director, New York City Environmental Justice Alliance

**Vonda Brunsting**, Program Manager, Initiative for Responsible Investment, Harvard Kennedy School (fmr. SEIU Capital Stewardship)

**Richard Buery**, Chief Executive Officer, Robin Hood

**Victor Calise**, Commissioner of the New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities

**Sean Campbell**, Founder, Capital for Communities (fmr. Macquarie Group, Marathon Asset Management, D.E. Shaw & Co.)

**Ahsan Chugthai**, Pakistani American Youth Society

**Eduardo "Eddy" Castell**, Managing Partner, MirRam Group

**Rafael E. Cestero**, President & CEO, Community Preservation Corporation

**Hae-Lin Choi**, New York State Legislative and Political Director NY, Communications Workers of America, District 1

**Louis Cholden-Brown**, Deputy Counsel to the Speaker, New York City Council

**Ashley Cotton**, Principal, MAG Partners

**Elisa Crespo**, Executive Director, The New Pride Agenda

**Henry Garrido**, Executive Director, DC37

**Matt Gewolb**, Associate Dean & General Counsel at New York Law School

**Megan Golden**, CEO & Co-founder, Mission: Cure

**Colvin Grannum**, President and CEO, Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation

**Elizabeth Guernsey**, Senior Program Officer, Open Society Foundations

**Ezra Friedlander**, CEO, The Friedlander Group

**Eric Horvath**, Director of Capital Strategies, Common Future

**Maura Keaney**, First Vice President, Amalgamated Bank

**Carol Kellermann**, Co-Chair, Former President, Citizens Budget Commission

**Carol Kostik**, Former Deputy Comptroller for Public Finance, City of New York

**Bill McKibben**, Founder and Senior Adviser Emeritus, 350.org

**Hon. Ruth Messinger**, Global Ambassador, American Jewish World Service & Former Manhattan Borough President

**Carlos Naudon**, President and CEO, Ponce Bank

**Sochie Nnaemeka**, State Director, New York Working Families Party

**Theo Oshiro**, Co-Executive Director, Make the Road New York

**Randolph "Randy" Peers**, President & CEO, Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce

**Andrew Rein**, President, Citizens Budget Commission

**Amy Rutkin**, Chief of Staff, Rep. Jerry Nadler

**Hon. Max Rose**, Former Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense Senior Advisor for COVID-19 of the United States of America, Former U.S. Representative

**Tom Sanzillo**, Director of Financial Analysis, Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis

**Nick E. Smith**, First Deputy Public Advocate, City of New York

**Roy Swan**, Director, Mission Investments, Ford Foundation

**Hon. Bill Thompson**, CUNY Board Chair, Partner at Siebert Williams Shank & Co.; Former NYC Comptroller

**Maf Misbah Uddin**, Treasurer District Council 37 and President AFSCME Local 1407

**Katie Unger**, Cofounder, The Jewish Vote (Jews for Racial and Economic Justice); former Deputy Commissioner, Mayor's Community Affairs Unit

**Javier Valdes**, U.S. Director of Civic Engagement and Government, Ford Foundation

**Carra Wallace**, President, MBE Capital Partners

**Mark Winston Griffith**, Co-Chair, Executive Director, Brooklyn Movement Center



# Transition Goals and Recommendations

Comptroller Brad Lander was elected to serve as the 45<sup>th</sup> Comptroller of the City of New York on November 2, 2021 and formally assumed leadership of the office on January 1, 2022. With a team of more than 600 dedicated public servants, the Comptroller serves as the City of New York's Chief Financial Officer and Chief Accountability Officer. Core responsibilities of the office include:

- Conducting performance and financial audits of all City agencies;
- Serving as a fiduciary to the City's five public pension funds;
- Providing comprehensive oversight of the City's budget and fiscal condition;
- Financing the capital budget and managing City debt cost-effectively and efficiently;
- Reviewing City contracts for integrity, accountability and fiscal compliance;
- Resolving claims both on behalf of and against the City;
- Enforcing the City's prevailing wage and living wage laws; and
- Promoting policies that enhance City government's commitment to efficiency, integrity, and performance for all New Yorkers.



Comptroller Lander ran a campaign focused on using the tools and powers of the office to ensure an inclusive economic recovery, make City government work better, tackle the city's gender and racial disparities, and confront long-term challenges, especially the risks to the city's future posed by climate change. On November 3, 2021, Comptroller Lander announced a 43-member Transition Committee reflecting a diverse range of relationships, backgrounds, experiences, and professional expertise to help guide and set the foundation for the office's work in those areas.

Comptroller Lander tasked the civic, community, and business leaders on the Transition Committee, co-chaired by Carol Kellermann, former President of the Citizens Budget Commission, and Mark Winston Griffith, advocate, journalist, and Executive Director of the Brooklyn Movement Center, with informing the office's priorities, conducting outreach to and soliciting feedback from stakeholders, and recruiting a strong team to lead the work of the agency. Over the course of three months, from November 2021 to January 2022, Transition Committee members engaged in rich conversation about how best to deploy the tools of the office to have the greatest positive impact.

Informed by the input of his Transition Committee and leadership team and their collective assessment of the existing capacity and needs of the agency, this report summarizes Comptroller Lander's draft mission statement for his administration, the values and principles that will guide leadership and the day-to-day work of the bureaus, and strategic priorities for the office in both the short and long term.

## Building a Mission Statement for the Office

Chapter 5 of the New York City Charter assigns responsibility to the Comptroller's office for an extraordinary range of work: conducting audits that help municipal agencies better serve the needs of all New Yorkers, telling the truth about the City's finances and fiscal health, guaranteeing retirement security for public sector workers, issuing the bonds that invest in our infrastructure, enforcing the prevailing wage law, resolving claims against the city, and many more critical functions. Being the City's budget watchdog, its long-term fiduciary, and especially its chief accountability officer is not an individual function: it's a team project. And the pandemic has made clear that the city needs this team more than ever.

While the City Charter assigns the Comptroller's responsibilities and powers, it does not frame them within a succinct mission statement. So, to ensure that all members of this team can see their work as contributing to shared goals, Comptroller Lander engaged the Transition Committee in a process to draft an overarching mission statement for his administration. The purpose of a mission statement is to help teams prioritize what matters most and see the value of their day-to-day work by connecting it to its broader purpose. To develop that mission statement, Transition Committee members shared their visions of what it would look like for the office to fulfill its Charter-mandated duties under Comptroller Lander's leadership. Following a series of robust discussions, transition staff synthesized the Committee's recommendations into a draft mission statement:

---

*“The New York City Comptroller’s office works to secure the financial integrity, operational effectiveness, and public trust in New York City government, in order to build a more just, equitable, and resilient city and secure a thriving future for all New Yorkers.*

*“We utilize the tools and responsibilities that the City Charter assigns us to ensure that City government is budgeting wisely, investing strategically, living up to its promises and obligations, and keeping a sharp eye on the long-term challenges to come.”*

---

While Comptroller Lander made an initial presentation of the draft mission statement to all staff in two virtual town halls during his first week in office, the leadership team will further refine the statement in additional conversations with staff during the first 100 days of the administration, providing team members across all the bureaus of the office the opportunity to shape our shared priorities and goals.

## Articulating Shared Values and Our Approach to Day-to-Day Work

Even outside a pandemic, managing the daily operations of a workplace as large as the Comptroller’s office comes with a particular set of challenges. Given the scope and breadth of the work of the agency, and the shift to a hybrid remote and in-office work schedule, a core responsibility of the new leadership team – and a top priority of the transition – has been and will continue to be managing and caring for its people.

What are the expectations for how staff will work together and in collaboration with stakeholders outside of the agency? How will the Comptroller support the wellbeing of employees and, in turn, the success of the office, especially as the city continues to navigate the health, social, and economic risks of the pandemic?

The process of developing a mission statement for the office revealed a set of values that will inform answers to these questions and guide the office’s day-to-day work. As with the mission statement, the Comptroller’s leadership team will work with staff across the bureaus to further develop these values, and to talk about what they mean in practice:

- **Accountability:** We work hard to live up to our commitments, our responsibilities, and our word. Working to hold City government accountable requires being worthy of trust ourselves.
- **Collaboration:** City government is large and complex. Only by working together – within the Comptroller’s office, with Mayoral and other government agencies, and with New Yorkers themselves, through innovative strategies for participation – can we create the greatest impact.
- **Efficiency:** We rely on evidence as we work to make the most strategic use of the public resources entrusted to us.

- **Equity:** We look squarely at disparities based on race, gender, or identity, listen to those who have been excluded, prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable, and promote inclusion and accessibility – all in pursuit of a fundamentally more equal city.
- **Long-term oriented:** The Comptroller’s office is called on to take the long-term view, to hold today’s actions accountable to the needs of future generations.
- **Principled:** We model and promote the highest ethical standards, even when no one’s watching.
- **Transformative:** It is often our job to confront and challenge the status quo. We are not stuck with the way things have always been. We believe that meaningful change is possible.
- **Transparency and truth-telling:** New Yorkers should be able to see clearly how their government operates. We aim to be a consistent, credible, and data-driven resource.

Alongside these values, Comptroller Lander will prioritize the following in implementing his vision for the Comptroller’s office on a day-to-day basis:

### **Co-governance and participation**

The Comptroller is committed to infusing new and meaningful public engagement and participation strategies into the work of the office to inform the performance of its core duties, with the understanding that accountability must be a collective task to be successful. To that end, the Comptroller’s office will work closely with community members and external stakeholders, including colleagues in government, to advance equity and justice priorities through the office’s policy research, public engagement, and communications arms. Adopting a highly collaborative approach to internal decision-making processes will offer the additional benefits of connecting more New Yorkers to their government and of increasing transparency around the workings of an office that remains to many an arcane bureaucracy (if they are even aware of it).

### **Strong and inclusive workplace culture**

With attention to the challenges of a leadership transition, returning to the office during a pandemic, the pursuit of work-life balance and flexibility, and the goals of building a high-performing team, Comptroller Lander will work to meaningfully engage all levels of staff on strategic initiatives, as well as on the implementation of best practices for internal diversity, inclusion, leadership and professional development, anti-harassment and nondiscrimination. Additionally, as attitudes and expectations around our relationship to work change in response to the pandemic, and employers seek to adapt to meet the needs of their employees, Comptroller Lander will aim for the Comptroller’s office to be a resource and model public workplace.

## **Strategic Initiatives for the Office**

The Transition Committee worked with Comptroller Lander and his staff to align the office’s mission, leadership, staff, organizational structure, and workplace culture around a set of strategic initiatives.



## Strengthening and Reinforcing the Core Duties of the Office

All of the Comptroller’s core duties serve critically important functions and will continue to be prioritized by the dedicated public servants working in the office. The following areas reflect places where the Transition Committee, Comptroller Lander, and his leadership team believe it is strategic at this moment to strengthen and focus:

### Solving Public Problems

The Comptroller’s office plays a critical role in helping to solve public problems, particularly through its audit functions. The Comptroller’s audit mandate covers more than 140 city entities employing 330,000 public employees, as well as \$25 billion dollars in contracts registered for more than ten thousand nonprofit organizations and for-profit companies annually. These audits help root out waste, fraud, and abuse, target programs that fail to meet their goals, and identify what is needed to fix them.

The Comptroller’s office has been conducting audits for over 200 years, but the power of modern data analytics has only been available for a small fraction of that time. Prior comptrollers have made great strides in the effective use of data, pulling together the tremendous amount of data made available to the office’s bureaus in breakthrough transparency tools like [Checkbook NYC](#), [Claimstat](#), and the [Agency Watch List](#). Comptroller Lander will build on that critical work by identifying ways to strengthen and expand the office’s strategic use of data internally across its bureaus and externally to increase public transparency.

### Public Service Satisfaction Survey

As one model for adopting a participatory approach to governance and meaningfully engaging New Yorkers to identify and solve public problems, CUNY’s Center for Urban Research conducted a “Public Service Satisfaction Survey” in 2021 to better understand New Yorkers’ views on their quality of life and experiences of City services. The survey, modeled on past work by the Bloomberg Administration (in 2008) and the Citizens Budget Commission (in 2017) and released in early January, revealed that New Yorkers have clear ideas about what problems need to be fixed and how to fix them. The survey showed, for example, that while New Yorkers are concerned about street homelessness as a safety issue, when asked what would make them feel safer, more stable housing and mental health services ranked above additional policing. The survey also found support for greater investments in street lighting, traffic enforcement, and substance use prevention. Unsurprisingly, the survey revealed that experiences of City services are uneven across race and ethnicity, with individual responses strongly associated with race and ethnicity, income, educational attainment, and neighborhood. Comptroller Lander welcomed the survey results and committed to taking a collaborative approach to his role as Chief Accountability Officer, by creating opportunities like this survey for New Yorkers to take part in the process of evaluating the policies and services of City government.

Making better use of data analytics upfront—to identify those areas that need the deeper dive of an audit—will go a long way to making better use of our collective resources. But quantitative data only tell part of the story. Bringing a “people-powered” focus to the office and creating more innovative opportunities for public engagement in and across all the office’s bureaus will enable Comptroller Lander to better understand what matters most to New Yorkers – what problems are most salient and demand the office’s attention and how these problems are disparately felt across lines of gender, race and ethnicity, income, age, disability, education, and zip code.

With better use of data analytics and more direct input from the public—worthy aims in and of themselves—Comptroller Lander’s team will work to take a more strategic approach to the office’s audits. At the beginning of each audit, the office should ask why the proposed audit will matter to the lives of New Yorkers and how the audit would help to bring about necessary changes. While transparency is essential, it is not always sufficient for change. The goal is for the office’s audits to be consequential.

The Comptroller’s audits will identify problems and recommend solutions, but there is only so much a Comptroller can do alone. Where appropriate, Comptroller Lander will partner up-front with agency Commissioners to identify areas of their organization that need improvement and agree on shared goals so that Commissioners are empowered to implement recommendations. The goal is not just to release reports that garner fleeting headlines, but to help drive real, sustained change. Where agencies are recalcitrant, Comptroller Lander will collaborate closely with organizers and stakeholders in communities in sustained efforts to win the reforms that will make a real difference in the lives of New Yorkers. Comptroller Lander will keep track of where agencies have implemented his recommendations to ensure that New Yorkers’ voices are not just heard but acted upon.

Finally, in addition to audits that root out waste and improve agency performance, the Comptroller’s office during Comptroller Lander’s tenure will audit to ensure we are accounting for the values of equity and sustainability, two keys (as outlined below) for New York City’s future thriving.

Equity-focused audits will identify and make recommendations to reduce disparities across race, gender and ethnicity citywide, with a focus on how City agencies deliver critical services. They will also include audits that work to ensure City agencies are doing everything in their power to improve accessibility for people with visible and invisible disabilities, meeting the needs of thriving older adult populations citywide, and fulfilling our City’s commitments to language access.

Sustainability-focused audits will work to increase the City’s resilience in the face of climate change by monitoring the City agencies’ efforts to combat and prepare for climate change, from assessing city agencies’ energy use and waste management practices to ensuring they have implemented sufficient efforts to reduce emissions and prepare for emergencies, including climate-induced disasters.

## Responsible Fiduciary Investing

As a fiduciary to New York City’s five public pension funds – which, with approximately \$270.7 billion in assets under management as of November 2021, ranks among the largest public pension plans in the country – the Comptroller has a solemn responsibility for safeguarding the retirement security of more than half-a-million public sector workers and retirees.

On behalf of these workers and retirees, the public pension funds have the responsibility and opportunity, consistent with their fiduciary duties, to lead efforts for transformational improvements in our financial system. Comptroller Lander will work with the trustees of the five pension funds and the Bureau of Asset Management to undertake a proactive and strategic approach to the city’s investment portfolios to ensure funds are invested prudently and effectively. He will do so by building a world-class team – led by a Chief Investment Officer for whom a national search will be launched imminently – that takes a strategic and integrated approach to maximizing risk-adjusted market returns, determining and adjusting asset allocations, managing risk, minimizing fees to outside investment managers, and investing for the long-term, while remaining attentive to the fund-level and systemic risks posed by dangers including climate change and inequality.

As part of this effort, the Comptroller will establish an Office of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Investing in the Bureau of Asset Management. The Office of ESG will knit together previously separated silos areas of work as well as engage in new initiatives to foster sustainable improvements in the companies in which the pension funds invest. The goal is to build on the pioneering work that past NYC Comptrollers and the Boards of Trustees of the pension funds have been doing for decades, to generate changes in corporate behavior that will have a direct impact on the city, the country and the world as a whole and improve long-term sustainable investment returns to fund the pensions of the participants, retirees and beneficiaries of the New York City Retirement Systems, consistent with the fiduciary duties of the pension fund Boards and the Comptroller.



The Office will work with the trustees of the five pension fund Boards in a process to develop a fiduciary-led blueprint under which it will operate. The process will include gathering best ESG practices from peers, and collaborating with the City’s unions to engage with members as well as other stakeholders. The result will be recommendations for a strategic and proactive, approach to investing that incorporates ESG across the investment process.

## Investing in a Just Transition to a Renewable Future

The NYC Retirement Systems have already taken a leading role in multiple initiatives to help mitigate the risk of climate change under the leadership of the previous Comptroller and current Trustees. After extensive research and deliberation, two of the five funds (NYCERS and BERS) have divested their portfolios from fossil fuels, and a third (TRS) is working to do so. The three boards adopted far reaching climate action plans in 2021 that set ambitious goals, including reaching Net Zero in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2040, \$50 billion in climate change solutions investments across NYCERS by 2035, and annual carbon footprint analyses.

The Office of ESG will work with the trustees of those Boards to develop implementation plans to achieve these goals as part of a broader strategy for the climate transition, continuing to provide bold leadership, consistent with fiduciary duty. Elements of this strategy will include deepening proxy voting, engagement and shareholder activism efforts to push companies to reduce their carbon footprint, increasing investments aligned with Net Zero pathways, adopting interim goals for reducing GHG emissions by 2030 or earlier, and advancing a just transition to a decarbonized economy that does not come at the expense of workers and under-represented communities.

## Improving Contracting and Procurement

A core responsibility of the Comptroller’s office is to review City contracts for goods and services, ensuring a high degree of fiscal compliance and integrity by identifying and preventing procurement abuses. The office’s Bureau of Contract Administration, which oversees the registration of contracts, is responsible for completing the final oversight step in the City’s procurement process. It cannot be ignored that the City’s procurement process has long been mired in delays, with too many contracts arriving at the Comptroller’s office *after* the contract start date. This has especially wreaked financial havoc on cash-strapped vendors in the nonprofit sector, who the City contracts with to provide essential human services every day, from educating our children and caring for older adults to providing job training and safe shelter for families, as well as M/WBEs and small businesses. Comptroller Lander and the transition team believe that procurement reform holds great potential for improving City governance and service delivery. By resetting the relationship between the Comptroller’s office and City Hall around contract registration, Comptroller Lander will empower the Bureau of Contract Administration and put the office in a position to achieve shared goals, while preserving appropriate oversight to prevent abuses.



In line with Comptroller Lander's commitment to work together in good faith with City Hall to address challenges facing New York City, strong joint efforts are already underway to improve procurement. Comptroller Lander and Mayor Eric Adams first co-convened "A Better Contract for New York: A Joint Task Force to Get Nonprofits Paid On-Time" in December 2021 to collaborate on the design and implementation of procurement reforms. The Task Force brought together over 40 representatives of nonprofit organizations, City agencies that contract with nonprofits, oversight agencies (MOCS, OMB, the Law Department, and the Comptroller's Office) and held over a dozen focus group sessions with additional stakeholders to identify problems in the contracting system and make concrete recommendations for improvement. The forthcoming Task Force recommendations will establish a strong, ongoing platform to improve the procurement process for nonprofit organizations – the first step in an effort to streamline and strengthen City procurement more broadly.

To preserve appropriate oversight and prevent abuses as NYC streamlines the procurement process to ensure timely contract registration and prompt payments to responsible contractors, the Comptroller's office will shift its oversight functions toward a risk-based approach, auditing a small number of contracts post-award that raise legitimate concerns of waste, fraud, or corruption. Moving forward, the Comptroller's office will remain focused on ensuring the City's nonprofit vendors are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve and will prioritize improving our contracting and procurement systems more broadly to better deliver essential services, goods, and infrastructure to New Yorkers.

## **Infrastructure and capital projects**

New York City invests nearly \$10 billion each year on infrastructure projects, but too often we get far less for these investments than we should. The federal infrastructure bill represents an opportunity for New York City to dramatically improve our state of good repair through investments in our roads, bridges, water and sewer infrastructure, and regional transportation systems while creating jobs and supporting our City's recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. But without a plan for how to spend those dollars in line with our values and long-term goals alongside a sustained effort to reform our capital project delivery processes, we risk those dollars going to waste.

Comptroller Lander has been a strong champion for improving the management of capital projects to maintain and improve the City's infrastructure. The Comptroller's office will use its tools to continue to work for the overhaul of the City's capital project management systems to support greater public transparency, better prioritize our infrastructure dollars to address our most critical needs and prepare our City for the risks ahead, identify bottlenecks, waste, and funding shortfalls, and achieve meaningful reforms to keep projects on-budget and on-time. Comptroller Lander will strengthen the office's oversight of the City's capital process to prioritize assessments of the City's State of Good Repair, better organize the capital plan to be a more strategic plan mindful of current conditions and projected challenges, ensure New York City has sufficient resources to fund critical infrastructure projects, and attend to other short- and long-term questions of financing infrastructure responsibly.

To get that work done, Comptroller Lander will put together a dedicated team within the office to focus on how best to use the existing capital plan and federal infrastructure dollars to invest in our communities equitably, create high-quality jobs for New Yorkers, prepare New York City for the future, and reduce the waste and delays that too often plague our City's capital program.

## **Focusing on Strategic Priorities: Recovery, Equity, and Resilience**

This is a moment of profound crisis and opportunity for New York City. The COVID-19 pandemic has shined a searing spotlight on gaping inequalities in our health care, our economy, and our social safety net. Economic growth with far greater equity and inclusion is therefore the only acceptable response to the echoes of ambulance sirens, the harrowing scenes at Elmhurst and New York City's other public hospitals, the dangers faced by essential workers, the massive loss of jobs, the shuttering of so many small businesses, as well as the burgeoning mental health crisis and acts of violence in recent months. Those inequities are not only a moral failure, but significant constraints on New York City's economic flourishing. This means that creating a more equal economy also offers the best path to a dynamic future. If we can create a city where New Yorkers across race, across background, across neighborhoods can better share opportunities to create new businesses, to work with adequate pay, protections, and dignity, to live without fear of eviction, to send their kids to schools that will help them achieve their full potential, then we will secure a brighter future for all New Yorkers.

The pandemic also revealed how catastrophic it can be to face a crisis without adequate preparation. The desperate scrambling in those early months to secure masks and PPE for our health care workers, the failure to better isolate vulnerable seniors, the delay in decisions to shut down as the first wave was raging, the lack of adequate testing cost the lives of thousands of our neighbors. New York City cannot be ready for crises on our own – we rely on a strong national response. And we can't foresee every potential crisis. But New York City government has a critical role to play in evaluating, mitigating, and preparing strategically for the dangers most likely to disrupt the lives, economy, and infrastructure of our city.

In the coming months, that means stabilizing pandemic response for the duration of this public health crisis, in a manner that both protects New Yorkers and allows us to return the city to economic health. It means preparing now for future crises that we are likely to face, addressing public health, public safety, disasters like the recent Bronx fire, with a risk-based, resilient approach to readiness. And it means especially preparing for the existential crisis of our time, one that is not only coming but is already here and getting worse: the climate crisis.

In light of this moment of crisis and opportunity, the Transition Committee identified and worked with Comptroller Lander's team to align its work around three primary strategic priorities:

### **1. Charting an inclusive recovery**

By many measures, New York City's economy shows signs of economic recovery, with job growth continuing and new businesses opening, though this has been slowed by the Omicron variant. But we have a long way to go to recreate or replace hundreds of thousands of lost jobs, bring back

tourists and cultural institutions, restore confidence in our city's economy and its public transit system, and address the disruptions facing neighborhoods from Midtown to Morris Heights.

The impacts of the pandemic were not felt equally by all New Yorkers, and neither have the benefits of recovery efforts to date. Unemployment is still high, particularly among Black and Latino New Yorkers. Thousands of workers were shut out of unemployment benefits and federal stimulus checks due to immigration status, and the statewide Excluded Workers Fund was depleted before all eligible New Yorkers could apply. Traditional indicators of the economy's health fail to capture all of the ways in which the dislocation and disruptions of the pandemic have upended New Yorkers' lives and livelihoods. From the small business owners unable to access relief through the federal Paycheck Protection Program, to the childcare providers facing closure due to rising costs and the parents desperately seeking care in order to hold on to their own paid work, to families facing eviction as the pandemic moratorium expires with neither protections for half of the city's tenants nor funding in the ERAP program – far too many New Yorkers are hurting. Comptroller Lander is dedicated to securing a strong economic recovery that is inclusive of all New Yorkers and meaningfully addresses the policy roots of the inequities we see today, which in many cases long preceded the pandemic and were compounded by it. Through budget analysis, audits, policy reports, and convenings, the Comptroller's office can help to envision and achieve a recovery that serves all of New York City's neighborhoods.

Comptroller Lander will rigorously monitor City and State budget priorities to ensure our collective resources are spent strategically, transparently, and with accountability. His office will analyze federal COVID relief spending (through the American Rescue Plan (ARP), the CARES Act, and FEMA reimbursement) to evaluate where resources have been left on the table, and where we are making effective and ineffective use of those dollars. With approximately half of ARP funding dedicated to public schools, which continue to face a range of serious challenges, the Comptroller's office will look especially at how the Department of Education is spending its ARP funds to keep students and staff safe, and support academic, social, and emotional learning through these challenging school years. As the City prepares its Fiscal Year 2023 budget, the Comptroller's office will analyze where one-time federal spending has been allocated for recurring uses, creating potential budget cliffs as that money expires. The office will continue to look at the question of long-term fiscal readiness, including the adequacy of the city's "budget cushion."

An inclusive recovery must also address the present challenges of public safety. All of New York City's communities need and deserve to feel safe. Recent high-profile acts of violence, and the rising levels of violence that cities across the country have seen through the pandemic contribute to a sense of anxiety, amplify the trauma of this crisis, diminish public health, and demand a thoughtful and strategic response.

But a reflexive push for more policing is not the solution. New York City already spends more on the NYPD than we do on the Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene, Homeless Services, Housing Preservation and Development, and Youth and Community Development combined. In our streets and in our communities, we are seeing the consequences of spending more on policing than on healthy neighborhoods, mental health services, affordable housing, and youth programming. New Yorkers understand this. When asked what would make them feel safer, the majority of respondents to the 2021 CUNY Public Service Satisfaction Survey referenced above,

across neighborhoods and demographics, listed investments in mental health, supportive and affordable housing, and youth jobs above additional policing.

A generation ago, in response to earlier fears about rising crime, policymakers turned to a set of “tough on crime” policies, including stop-and-frisk, three-strikes, and the Rockefeller drug laws that fueled the era of mass incarceration. The results were devastating for communities of color. We cannot return to that model.

Instead, Comptroller Lander will bring the tools of the office to identifying evidence-based approaches that partner with communities to advance public safety. That includes increasing funding, resources, coordination, and evaluation for Cure Violence and other community-based violence prevention programs that have been shown to reduce incidences of violent crime. The City has increased investment in these programs in recent years; however, such funds, which flow primarily through the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice, still represent a tiny fraction compared with NYPD spending. Additional investments are also needed in proven mental health services, supportive housing, and gender-based violence prevention. With an eye toward data and evaluation, the Comptroller will make the case for civilianization and reinvestments into community strategies that are proven to be more effective than policing and incarceration.



## 2. Advancing equity and racial justice

As we envision New York City’s post-pandemic economy, building a fundamentally more equal and inclusive city must be New York City’s path forward. The pandemic shined a harsh spotlight on racial and gender inequities that have long been pervasive – in housing and homeownership, good jobs, access to capital, public safety, health care, income and wealth.

But equity and inclusion are not only a matter of justice; they can be New York City’s core competitive advantages as we face the future. In a city where a majority of our young people are people of color, where immigrants continue to play a key role as workers and entrepreneurs,



where the new City Council has a strong majority of women and BIPOC members, where international networks and neighborhood diversity are core economic drivers, we have the opportunity to build a genuinely inclusive multiracial democracy that inspires people to want to live, work, and create here. Greater equality and inclusion can provide a platform for greater economic flourishing not only for those who have been excluded, but for all New Yorkers.

To move steadily toward that goal, however, we must look squarely on existing inequalities, provide an honest accounting, and then develop strategies commensurate with the task of righting them. A top focus of Comptroller Lander's office will therefore be to bring an "equity lens" to the work of city government. The Comptroller will establish audits for gender and racial equity to ensure local government agencies are living up to our shared ideals of diversity and inclusion as a city. Equity audits will identify disparities in procurement for example, building on the office's "Making the Grade" reports that have identified severe shortcomings in the city's M/WBE contracting and identified strategies to increase it, service delivery, public goods, infrastructure, access to opportunities and more. Taking an equity lens to city government will require a focus on agencies whose footprint especially raises or reflects racial disparities, including the Department of Correction (given the crisis on Rikers Island and long-term plans to close it), NYPD, NYCHA, and the Department of Homeless Services. After identifying those disparities, the Comptroller's team will develop recommendations and work to partner with City agencies to take real action.

## Advancing the Rights and Well-Being of NYC's Workers

One way of advancing equity and racial justice in New York City is to advance the rights and well-being of NYC's low-wage workers, who are overwhelmingly women and people of color. The Comptroller's office has both statutory authority over issues like prevailing and living wage and a broader mandate to ensure that all working families in New York City get the dignity and respect they deserve. Its Bureau of Labor Law is responsible for setting and enforcing prevailing wage and benefit rates for workers employed on public works projects and building service contracts for New York City government agencies. This bureau plays a critical role in protecting and advancing workers' rights through its determination of prevailing wage and benefits rates, investigations of alleged violations, calculations of underpayments, interest and civil penalties, and enforcement proceedings at the New York City Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH).

Comptroller Lander is eager to build on this critical work to put the office at the forefront of local workers' rights policy and identify ways to expand the office's footprint in advancing workers' rights more broadly through the office's audits, administration of City contracts, asset management, and policy research. Comptroller Lander will work directly with workers and organizers on the ground to better support compliance, shine a light on the issues and injustices facing our City's most vulnerable workers, advance stronger workplace protections where needed, and support new pathways to organize workers more broadly. Through an expansion of the office's footprint around worker protections, Comptroller Lander will better support the City's recovery from the COVID-19 crises and help set the city on a path toward an inclusive recovery.

### 3. Confronting the climate crisis with bold and sustained action

Record-breaking temperatures and cataclysmic storms are proven signs of the climate emergency New York City is facing. The climate crisis poses grave risks for the health of our communities, the soundness of our infrastructure, the stability of our finances, the capacity of our democracy, the possibility of a just and equitable city, and the very lives of New Yorkers.

The New York City Comptroller is responsible for taking the long-term view on our city and confronting our biggest risks. The climate crisis poses the most catastrophic long-term risks to New York City. It also holds immense economic opportunity to create high-quality green jobs that can steer us out of this recession towards a just recovery. So the climate crisis should be the office's top long-term priority.

One grim lesson of COVID-19 is how deadly it can be when we fail to prepare for a crisis. We've already seen climate devastation from Superstorm Sandy. We already know the deadly racial inequity of asthma-inducing air pollution and heat waves. If we don't act boldly now, climate change will multiply that devastation and inequity many times over.

Facing up to our climate risks also offers a generational economic opportunity, and our best bet to recover strongly from the COVID-19 economic crisis in a way that confronts racial and economic inequality. Vastly reducing our economy's reliance on fossil fuels and building a resilient city will create tens of thousands of good, green jobs in NYC and reduce energy costs for millions of struggling families.

Working closely with communities who are facing the brunt of the climate threat and mobilizing to demand change, Comptroller Lander and his team will deploy the tools of the office in a bold, strategic, coordinated fashion to confront climate change and accelerate a just transition to a clean energy economy.

As fiduciary of the pension funds, the Comptroller will complete responsible divestment from investments associated with oil, gas, and coal reserve owners, provide investment for the transition to clean energy to help address financing gaps and accelerate adoption, and join and lead strategic alliances of shareholders to compel bold climate action by publicly-traded corporations (e.g. utilities, banks, car, and technology companies).

As the city's chief fiscal officer, the Comptroller will assess the financial risks that the climate crisis poses for our city's future, and use that analysis to transform the city's spending, contracting, banking, and infrastructure to mitigate climate risk and create economic opportunities.

As the city's chief accountability officer, the Comptroller will establish a new, dedicated audit team to focus on agency sustainability and environmental justice performance, hold public- and private-sector actors to NYC's ambitious clean energy targets (including championing the implementation of Local Law 97, which requires energy retrofits with aggressive targets for buildings over 25,000 square feet), and bird-dog the City's oft-neglected investments in coastal resilience and climate readiness.

As an innovator in public engagement, Comptroller Lander will work in partnership with NYC's communities to build democratic and equitable solutions from the ground up, and offer accessible ways for New Yorkers of all backgrounds to participate in the transition to a sustainable economy.

## Public Solar NYC

In order to fight climate change and meet our City and State climate goals, New York City needs to dramatically scale up its installation of rooftop solar citywide. Installing solar panels on just a fraction of the City's 1.6 billion square feet of rooftops can reduce strain on our electricity grid, cut energy costs for homeowners and tenants, and create thousands of high-quality jobs for New Yorkers. But the pace of installation has been far too slow – at an average of only 40-50 MW annually in the last few years. Buildings and homeowners face complex barriers to solar installation, including fronting costs, accessing capital and financing, and navigating the City's uniquely slow and complicated permitting process. For many small, private building and homeowners, it's simply not worth the hassle. To meet our solar energy goals by 2030, we need to address these barriers to more than double our current pace of installations and install 1,000 MW of new capacity citywide in the next eight years. Yet there remains no systematic, consumer-friendly approach to support the dramatic expansion of solar.

Public Solar NYC would be a City-created entity charged with spurring the installation of at least 600 MW of capacity over the course of 8 years to generate 100% renewable energy. As a municipally sponsored entity, Public Solar NYC would be positioned to work with city agencies to simplify New York City's complex and time-consuming permitting process and front the costs for New York City's buildings. Public Solar would lead with culturally appropriate, multi-lingual outreach to prioritize the needs of low-income communities to make the process of installing solar panels simple and straightforward without any upfront costs or responsibility to research tax breaks or hoops to jump through to get the right permits. The program would aim to contract with existing solar installers active in the five boroughs while advancing high-road job opportunities for New Yorkers, including through apprentice and pre-apprenticeship programs, training, and high job standards. Comptroller Lander will continue to develop and advocate for the creation of this entity to help reach our climate goals, prepare our City for the future, and put the City on a path towards a just transition.

# Conclusion

Comptroller Lander ran for office on a platform to help build a more equitable City and secure a better future for all New Yorkers by budgeting wisely and investing strategically—not just to confront the challenges we already face, like climate change, housing affordability, and racial injustice—but to better prepare our City for the crises that will face generations to come.

New York City was not adequately prepared for the COVID-19 crisis and tens of thousands of people died. The lives of families and children have been impacted for an entire generation, and too many of our elderly and vulnerable are no longer with us. At the same time COVID exposed the weaknesses of our health and human service systems, it reminded us of the ways we are responsible for and committed to our neighbors. We came together to find and serve those in need, we celebrated the sacrifice of our frontline workers, and we were reminded that our future depends on our ability to respond quickly, together. We saw a similar response when Hurricane Sandy struck our shores—New Yorkers coming together to overcome a disaster we weren't prepared for. But the storm and the pandemic were anticipated—why weren't we ready? And what was the cost of not being prepared?

We do not have to wait for the next crisis to prepare for the events we anticipate and to create the future we want. Whether it is weather-related crises such as flash flooding or fires, or the social stress caused by growing inequality, unaffordable housing, or social isolation, we know that our city government must be, and can be, ready to respond to future crises.

By orienting the Comptroller's office to take the long-term view, Comptroller Lander will help build a just and durable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, better hold New York City's government accountable to its promises, mitigate the risks we face, and invest in the more equitable, resilient, and innovative future that both we and future generations deserve.

## Contact the Comptroller's Office

The Community Action Center is the constituent services arm of the City Comptroller's Office and assists New Yorkers with complaints or inquiries about government services. You can contact the Community Action Center with questions on topics ranging from NYCHA repairs to City pension payments, tenant harassment, or filing a claim against the City.

If you're in New York City, call (212) 669-3916; if you live out of state, call (800) 800-6385; for our TTY line, dial (212) 669-3450. You can also send an email to [action@comptroller.nyc.gov](mailto:action@comptroller.nyc.gov) or write to us at 1 Centre Street, Room 517, New York, NY 10007.

Please visit our website for more information on how to suggest an audit, file a claim, inquiry about settlement payments, submit a Freedom of Information Law request or report waste, fraud and abuse: <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/>.







NEW YORK CITY COMPTROLLER  
**BRAD LANDER**

---

1 Centre Street, New York, NY 10007

[www.comptroller.nyc.gov](http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov)

 @NYCComptroller

(212) 669-3916