#buildCOMMUNITIES PLATFORM

JANUARY 2019

CLOSErikers

JLUSA

jlusa.org
Vision

For the members of JustLeadershipUSA and our partners, our demand to #CLOSERikers has always been tied to a vision for shifting funds to investments that will build communities. We reject the reliance on a race- and poverty-based system of policing and punishment that characterizes the current failed approach to 'safety' on a city, state, and national level. We know that true safety is fostered in well-resourced communities, and that New York City is undoubtedly capable of providing that support to our communities. New York City is often touted - by the Mayor and others - as services- and resource-rich. It is true that resources exist, but the struggles of too many New Yorkers show us clearly that what we have now is still not enough. Certainly, services and resources at the community level have never been funded at the levels that law enforcement agencies are (and long have been).

Here, we have drawn on the work and vision of over 60 partners and advisors from more than 30 partner organizations and groups, along with more than 200 individuals representing families and communities worst impacted by incarceration. Our conversations about these investments started with thinking about the money that will be saved by closing Rikers -- $540 million per year, as estimated by the Lippman Commission. However, we quickly recognized that it is not only the Department of Corrections that is over-resourced, but all elements of law enforcement, including the New York City Police Department, the New York City Department of Probation, and our courts. Our City pumps over $7.3 billion dollars annually into these agencies and charges them with solving problems they will never be equipped to address. And in doing so, our City applies law enforcement solutions to problems of public health, poverty, and inequality. It is a square peg in a round hole. It will never work. It hasn't worked.

We are proud and excited to present this #buildCOMMUNITIES platform as a roadmap for New York City to make a bold shift from the status quo to a city that lives our values of equity and justice by acknowledging the vast resources that decades of mass incarceration have extracted from Black, Brown, and poor communities, and starting today to address that legacy by investing in all of the things that we know work to create true safety.

Process

This platform was built by a collaboration of directly impacted people and communities, as well as a range of partner organizations and advisors. We are grateful to all of them for their invaluable contributions to this vision.

- From June to July 2018, over 50 members of more than 30 partner organizations (formal and informal) met in eight issue-based subcommittees (Employment & Economic Development; Housing; Mental Health & Counseling; Substance Use; Conflict Mediation & Alternative Accountability; Education & Schools; Youth, Family & Recreational
Services; Health, Wellness & Environmental Justice), and offered insight in additional subcommittee meetings. These partners include:

- Arab American Association of NY
- Bronx Defenders*
- Brooklyn Movement Center
- Brotherhood/Sister Sol*
- Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services
- Center for Educational Equity
- Center for Health Equity, New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene
- Center for Justice at Columbia University
- Children’s Defense Fund
- College and Community Fellowship
- Community Access
- Community Service Society of New York
- Cooperative Economic Alliance of New York City
- Corporation for Supportive Housing
- CUNY School of Public Health
- DriveChange*
- Drug Policy Alliance
- Dyslexia Plus Task Force
- Getting Out and Staying Out
- Grand Street Settlement
- Harm Reduction Coalition*
- John Jay College, From Punishment to Public Health*
- Legal Action Center
- Legal Aid Society, Prisoner Rights Project
- Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts of New York
- Neighbors in Action*
- New Economy Project
- New York City Employment and Training Coalition
- New York City Environmental Justice Alliance
- New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives
- New York Harm Reduction Educators
- New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, Disability Justice Program
- New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, Environmental Justice*
- Open Society Foundations
- Safe Horizon
- St. Ann’s Corner of Harm Reduction
- Supportive Housing Network of New York
- United Community Centers
- Urban Justice Center Mental Health Project*
- VOCAL-NY
- West Side Commons*

*Indicates an organization that convened a subcommittee
- From June to August 2018, 210 individuals joined in assemblies in eight communities most impacted by mass incarceration (Bed-Stuy/Crown Heights, Stapleton, Jamaica, Brownsville/East New York, Hunts Point, Mott Haven, Tremont, Harlem). Partners who hosted these assemblies include:
  - Brooklyn Movement Center
  - East Harlem Health Action Center
  - Grand Street Settlement, Unity Plaza Community Center
  - Mott Haven Reformed Church
  - Neighborhood Benches
  - New York Public Library, Stapleton Branch
  - The Point CDC

- JLUSA’s membership of formerly incarcerated people and their loved ones have for years amplified the need for community reinvestment. They weighed in formally and informally with their ideas and vision throughout this process.

- In Fall 2018, a working group convened to review all of the input gathered through this process, and synthesize it into a set of clear and urgent demands for reinvestment from the City government. This working group and set of co-authors includes:
  - Ashley Viruet, The West Side Commons
  - Darren Mack, JLUSA and #CLOSErikers launching member
  - Halimah Washington, JLUSA member
  - Marco Barrios, JLUSA member
  - Marsha Jean-Charles, Brotherhood/Sister Sol
  - Megan French-Marcelin, JLUSA
  - Monica Novoa, JLUSA
  - Rosa Jaffe, Urban Justice Center Mental Health Project
  - Sarita Daftary-Steel, JLUSA
  - Shana Russell, Humanities Action Lab at Rutgers University
  - Theresa Sweeney, JLUSA and #CLOSErikers launching member
  - Vidal Guzman, JLUSA and #CLOSErikers launching member

In the following pages, we outline our demands for investments in the areas of Public Health, Housing, Employment & Economic Development, Education & Schools, Community Programs & Services, and Conflict Transformation & Alternative Accountability, as well as ways in which the Structure of Investments must be transformed.

Illustrations by Crystal Clarity
PUBLIC HEALTH

Invest in the well-being of our communities to address ill health exacerbated by systemic racism, poverty, discrimination, criminalization, and gentrification.
Our bloated criminal punishment system reflects a historical and continuing lack of investment in the health and well-being of people and communities. While our public health system and institutions are starved for resources, we use incarceration to ‘treat’ mental health needs, substance dependency, physical health needs, and violence. Punitive responses will never address the root causes of these issues. Punitive responses are not even effective in ‘managing’ or ‘containing’ these problems, as interaction with our dehumanizing criminal punishment system leads to further deteriorating of mental and physical health.

Demands

1. Provide free, quality, community-based mental health services that are preventative and responsive to mental health crises. Services should be provided both in brick-and-mortar centers (like community trauma or healing centers), and in ways that proactively reach the community through canvassing, training, and awareness raising. Mental health treatment and services must be provided outside of the carceral system, and should prioritize peers (people with lived experience) and local community members in paid roles. 
   a. Build the two diversion centers already planned, and provide additional funding for a minimum of two centers in each borough. 
   b. Sustain funding for peer-run mental health Crisis Respite Centers, and provide funding for at least six more centers, spread across New York City. 
   c. The City can utilize existing, vacant Department of Health buildings, or invest in existing community-based organizations, to develop the above-mentioned centers.
   d. Include ThriveNYC funding in the baseline City budget, and increase transparency to share data on which neighborhoods are receiving these services.
   e. Expand investment in Mobile Crisis Teams, at a sufficient level to enable to them to replace the police as first-responders to calls involving mental health crises.

2. Expand effective housing options for people with acute mental illness and other supportive housing needs [see ‘Housing’ section for more detail].

3. Support and expand prosocial programs like clubhouses with supportive employment, which do not require individuals to be in active recovery.

4. Further invest in harm reduction.
   a. Fully fund the implementation of Local Law 225 to provide naloxone training to shelter staff and residents.
   b. Pass and fully fund Intro 1190 to provide Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) in NYC shelters.
   c. Fund mobile medical teams to provide MAT to people living on the streets.
   d. Establish at least one safer injection site in each borough, and limit law enforcement interaction around them.
   e. Continue and expand support for community education campaigns to de-stigmatize substance use, people who use substances, treatment, and harm reduction services. Include education across a spectrum of safer use, managed use, and abstinence. Also include education on the details of the 911 Good Samaritan Law.
   f. Create funding streams to promote focus groups and one-on-one interviews with participants/clients of harm reduction and treatment programs (and other people
who use drugs), to learn what they need in order to avoid law enforcement interaction and build trust with community members and providers.

g. Create funding streams specific to harm reduction programs, including funding that allows for the hiring and professional development of directly impacted people.

h. Expand funding to harm reduction services (including health hubs), on-demand treatment services, and community healthcare clinics.

i. Expand, improve, and destigmatize methadone clinics and reduce law enforcement interaction around them. Support initiatives that help methadone clinics to be seen as clinical providers, such as including them in referral networks and health-resource directories.

5. Invest in workforce development to appropriately staff all supportive or treatment facilities, including recruiting Black and brown leaders in the healthcare industry.

   a. Negotiate with payers (State Medicaid and insurance companies) to reimburse for the work of community health workers at a higher rate.

   b. Support initiatives to provide Black and brown leaders with the necessary education and training to attain leadership positions in the healthcare industry.

6. Provide access to low- or no-cost healthcare at a community level, offering a holistic range of services including mental health, sexual health, dental health, wellness (including mindfulness and meditation), and preventative services.

   a. Expand Neighborhood Health Action Centers, including the three pending (in Central Harlem, Morrisania, and Bedford-Stuyvesant), and establish one each in Queens and Staten Island as well.

   b. Expand school-based wellness centers.

   c. Invest in mobile health clinics, and more & improved hospitals throughout the City.

7. Remove and address environmental burdens.

   a. Redesign the water treatment system so the South Bronx plant can be relocated on Rikers Island.

   b. Invest money to build a large anaerobic digester to work in tandem with water treatment plant, expanding City’s capacity to process organic waste without burdening any community. No other waste-to-energy facility should be sited at Rikers Island other than the anaerobic digester.

   c. Build a marine transfer station at Rikers, and modernize Hunts Point Marine Transfer Station, so barges can bring organic waste directly from Hunts Point market, and from other municipal marine transfer stations, to Rikers Island without use of trucks.

   d. Expand existing composting on Rikers Island.

   e. Build a solar farm on Rikers Island.

   f. Where land in the South Bronx is made available by closing The Boat and relocating its water treatment plant, invest in developing this land as parks or green space that adds to physical activity opportunities and overall wellness.

   g. In all living wage green jobs created by these initiatives, prioritize hiring residents of communities most impacted by mass incarceration and most excluded from employment.

8. Better access to fresh food, water, and health promoting resources.

   a. Further invest in community gardens by halting all sales of gardens for private development, expanding supports available through the New York City Parks Department’s Green Thumb Program (infrastructure, supplies, and technical assistance), and establishing a land trust to purchase land for active gardens that are operating on privately owned land.
b. Expand economic assistance and incentive programs for bodegas and family owned stores to offer healthier options, such as establishing a subsidized delivery service to help small stores source healthier options.

What’s Working

**The Arab American Association of NY’s Mental Health Services** program is operated in collaboration with Connections to Care (C2C) Program. C2C, part of ThriveNYC, partners with community-based organizations to provide culturally and linguistically sensitive mental health services. All AAANY staff are trained on Mental Health First Aid, Screening, Motivational Interviewing and Psychoeducation, and paired with trained mental health providers at NYU Lutheran to address mental health needs beyond the capacity of staff.

**VOCAL-NY’s Care Coordination** services connect people who use drugs to health and wellness services that they need and deserve. They offer referrals to trustworthy, respectful providers for services: HIV, STI and hepatitis C testing and treatment, housing placement and assistance, insurance enrollment, food pantries and soup kitchens, drug treatment including methadone and suboxone, medical services, mental health services, and legal services. By providing caring, individualized support from a team of people with training and lived experience (including staff, social workers, peers, and partners in medical institutions) VOCAL has helped many people lead more stable lives and avoid contact with the criminal legal system. It has meant that they have the ability to accompany people to court and advocate for programs that would actually benefit them; to walk people through the process of applying for NYC’s housing lottery; and when someone is taken into Department of Corrections custody, to contact Correctional Health Services and advocate for them. With more funding, they could expand their team to ensure that case managers work with no more than 30 clients, and to bring on team members who specialize in helping people access specific services.
HOUSING

Invest in safe, stable, and dignified housing as a human right for all New Yorkers.
Stable housing is a critical pillar of a stable life, yet in New York City, it is increasingly out of reach. Discrimination and skyrocketing housing costs have combined to make it nearly impossible to find housing in the private market, while lack of investment and oversight at all levels of government have made subsidized or regulated housing increasingly hard to secure and to live in comfortably. Worse yet, the working class people of color who endured decades of disinvestment, abandonment, and extraction of human and financial resources through mass criminalization and incarceration, are now being priced out of their neighborhoods as inequitable development projects accelerate across the City. This has produced the worst homelessness crisis since the Great Depression. In addition to being dehumanizing, homelessness is incredibly expensive. We must commit to making the kinds of proactive investments in true affordable housing that will enable all New Yorkers to find stable homes and stay in them.

Demands

1. Create, preserve, and maintain true affordable housing.
   a. Invest in crucial improvements in NYCHA, including fixing elevators and lighting, upgrading heating equipment, and addressing lead contamination.
   b. Double the number of permanent affordable housing units set aside for homeless New Yorkers in the Mayor’s Housing New York 2.0 Plan, from 15,000 to 30,000, with 24,000 of these units created through new construction. This plan set forth in the House Our Future NY campaign will require the City to build roughly 2,500 new units of homeless housing each year between now and 2026.
   c. Expand construction of housing which is not owned by for-profit entities, and without restrictions that exclude people with prior convictions.
      i. Fund the Community Land Trust Citywide Budget Initiative, to provide start-up funding to a group of organizations to establish and manage community land trusts.
      ii. Create a housing trust fund with a dedicated revenue stream to support the creation and preservation of permanently affordable housing for the lowest income New Yorkers. This fund could be supported by a dedicated revenue stream generated by increasing the property taxes on vacant and luxury properties.
   d. Affordability levels should reflect the Area Median Income of the neighborhood in which the buildings exist (not the City as a whole or the NY metro area).
   e. Develop programs to restore vacant properties to active uses that contribute to the supply of affordable housing for low-income New Yorkers, as called for in the Housing Not Warehousing Act.
   f. Every development, new or renovated, regardless of subsidies, should have a portion of low-income housing available

2. Expand and improve services that help people to stay in their homes, such as representation in housing court, rental assistance and arrears programs, and programs to help property owners make repairs & prevent foreclosure.

3. For people with mental health needs and substance dependencies, prioritize long-term Supportive Housing
   a. Develop all Supportive Housing using a Housing First approach to quickly and successfully connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety,
treatment, or service participation requirements.

b. Allocate funding to accelerate the development of units under the 15/15 Supportive Housing Initiative to at least 1,500 per year

c. Fund at least 1,000 Justice-Involved Supportive Housing Units, which, through the use of City funds, will not be subject to the homelessness chronicity requirements of units funded by Department of Housing and Urban Development. For this funding to be most effective, the City must increase funding levels for scatter-site housing, or provide for central-site housing, as the current vouchers are insufficient to find housing in the private market

d. Expand housing options for runaway and abandoned youth, by allocating funding to accelerate the development of the 1,700 supportive housing units for youth through the 15/15 Supportive Housing Initiative.

e. Allocate increased funding to expand training for staff to use harm reduction, trauma-informed and motivational interviewing approaches in supportive housing residences, so that providers do not screen out higher-needs individuals in the interview stage, and also increase oversight of the interview and screening process for supportive housing clients.

f. Allocate increased funding to attract and retain staff in supportive housing residences.

g. Provide funding and training for 24-hour crisis-response staff at supportive housing sites to prevent unnecessary calls to 911 and involvement of police. We must invest in facilities with the capacity to serve clients refusing to take medication and actively demonstrating aggressive and violent behaviors.

h. Include childcare and income supports as part of supportive housing arrangements.

What’s Working

Through their integrated housing model, Community Access provides permanent supportive housing that mixes families with low income and people with mental health concerns. The model they pioneered brings together different populations, including individuals with psychiatric disabilities, families with low income, veterans, and youth aging out of foster care. The supportive services provided, like counseling, and a range of wellness resources - such as urban farming, exercise and cooking classes, discounted bike-share, and pet adoption - are available to all residents of the building. Community Access currently has units in 21 buildings, with three more in development. Together, there will be 1,732 total tenants; of that 1,140 are tenants with a mental health diagnosis. Eventually, seven properties will have a mix of singles and families, including all the properties currently in their development pipeline. The buildings operate on a Housing First model, and do not require that applicants meet requirements like being substance-free, or taking medications. Their oldest integrated housing project, in the East Village, provides an example of the personal and community stability. Of the original 28 families that moved in in 1993, 17 are still there. Community Access maintains a robust tenant advisory group that advises senior staff and creates tenant-led initiatives.

The Mutual Housing Association of New York (MHANY) program began as a response to squatters that occupied vacant, city-owned sites in the East New York neighborhood of Brooklyn, where the community was confronting an epidemic of landlord abandonment, withdrawal of city services, and illegal evictions by landlords. The Department of Housing Preservation and Development created the program to dispossess abandoned buildings and turn illegal squatters into legal homesteaders. Through negotiations with the squatter population,
the city created a separate entity called MHANY and sold the properties to it. MHANY retained land titles to existing sites, and had the legal right to transfer ownership to homesteaders that had worked on the rehabilitation of buildings they occupied. Under HPD rules, homesteaders that chose to sell their property received a limited portion of the resale price. To encourage long-term affordability, MHANY has the first option to purchase the unit and then resell it to a household on the waiting list at a restricted sale price. In addition to the vacant buildings, HPD provided technical assistance, permanent financing, and a portion of construction financing to MHANY cooperatives.
Invest in programs that support people to achieve economic independence and stability, especially for the people who have been most excluded from opportunities to generate income and build wealth.
In neighborhoods subject to racist policing practices and mass criminalization, vast numbers of people are unemployed, underemployed, and not in the workforce at all. Research has shown that at least 27 percent of formerly incarcerated people are persistently unemployed as a result of structural barriers such as occupational licensing restrictions as well as pervasive racial discrimination. Where Black and brown communities are concerned, levels of unemployment for people with criminal convictions is closer to 40 percent. Communities ravaged by mass criminalization are the same communities that continue to suffer not just from higher rates of unemployment, but lack of access to apprenticeships, employment with meaningful benefits, and wages that ensure the capacity to not simply live check-to-check but build stability within their family and community. Where racial wealth gaps persist and are in many places growing, communities are now subject to further disinvestment and displacement. To maintain and build healthy communities, neighborhoods that have historically been most marginalized from the economy must have pathways into living wage employment and entrepreneurship with real opportunity for mobility.

1. Help New Yorkers to enter skilled trades and living wage, sustainable employment through paid workforce development, including but not limited to training for new roles as mental health workers, credible messengers and other roles needed to expand critical social services and reduce reliance on the criminal justice system; and training for jobs in tech, in healthcare, and green jobs that could be created on Rikers [see Public Health recommendations].
   a. Implement and fully fund Career Pathways for all New Yorkers
   b. Embed workforce training into all economic development initiatives
   c. Streamline oversight of the workforce system
   d. Make tax credits to new industries contingent on offering set-asides of at least 15% for members of the local community.
   e. Set aside a portion of all City jobs for people with barriers to employment like a prior conviction, unstable housing, or attendance at underperforming schools.
   f. Provide funding to cover fees for occupational licenses.
   g. Provide all workplaces with resource guides and posters to help employees connect to services they may need to be consistent in their jobs, like reduced-price MetroCards, free mental and physical health services, applications for HousingConnect, and more.

2. Establish a Universal Summer Internships and Youth Jobs program, to expand summer job opportunities to accommodate all young people who want to work, while improving the structure and effectiveness of the program.

3. Expand supports for small businesses, particularly focused on historically excluded people and communities in particular.
   a. Increase funding for the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative, and add this funding into the baseline City budget. Provide specific funding for a targeted approach to support formerly incarcerated people to start and join cooperatives.
   b. Support small businesses by paying 30% of their employment taxes.
   c. Help people with barriers to employment to attain business permits and licensing, including providing workshops and grants for associated fees.

What’s Working
The **Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative**, established with support from City Council in 2014, offers innovative ways to address economic and social inequality in New York City. Worker cooperatives are businesses that are run and operated by the people who work in them (worker-owners). Worker cooperatives allow New Yorkers to build businesses together, therefore allowing all the workers to gain access to upward mobility and better working conditions. The initiative funds a network of more than a dozen organizations to help New Yorkers to start cooperatives, to grow and sustain existing cooperatives, to convert existing businesses to cooperatives, to access financing support, and to navigate their legal needs. This initiative, most recently funded at $3.5 million per year, has helped to triple the number of jobs in cooperatively owned businesses, many of them owned by women of color.

**GOSOWorks**, is a program of Getting Out and Staying Out, and helps young men with a history or risk of justice-system involvement to connect to meaningful employment, while also assessing the individuals’ capacities and strengths, and addressing their developmental needs and emotional well-being. GOSOWorks has established partnerships with a number of business and institutions, which benefit not only GOSOWorks participants, but also their families and their communities. They also can greatly benefit employer partners. Because GOSO prepares participants well for the workplace, provides them with continued support after they are employed, and encourages them to continue to pursue their education and training, they become outstanding employees, ready to grow with the challenges of the job. GOSOWorks’ staffing solutions free, but our Internship-to-Employment (I2E) program can subsidize participants’ employment for up to 240 hours. GOSOWorks currently partner with a range of employers including restaurants and bakeries, like Ovenly, Maman, Dos Toros, and The Ravioli Store; non-profits like CAMBA, CDSC, Hour Children, and The Horticultural Society of New York; and businesses like Intersection, ERH Contracting, and ABC Worldwide Stone.
EDUCATION & SCHOOLS

Invest in schools as spaces for students, families, and the broader community to access education for success and for liberation, to connect to the resources they need, and as places where transformative and restorative justice is taught and practiced.
One of the most direct ways to reinvest in our communities is to reinvest in our schools and education. Only in so doing may we restore to directly impacted neighborhoods and families the preparation, supports, and access needed to secure their futures. History has shown that both educational achievement and college completion are critical to ending cycles of oppression negatively impacting our communities. Rather than expecting marginalized students to successfully navigate a biased education system and cheering the few that miraculously do, we must make schools places where all youth learn in their varied ways and get the supports they need to thrive. In doing so, we have the opportunity to change the primary institution of socialization - our schools. Failure to reinvest in education and schools is a choice to continue to harm those directly impacted by criminalization, incarceration, and dehumanization.

Demands

1. Enhance structural supports and connections to key services.
   a. Increase the ratio of social workers to students to at least 1:250, while assessing ways to provide a higher ratio in schools with large high-needs populations such as students with disabilities, homeless students, or English Language Learners.
   b. Increase staffing ratios for therapists, career advisors, mentors, resource liaisons, health services, and attorneys.
2. Implement and resource transformative and restorative justice initiatives to replace punitive justice, with a focus on processes informed by students.
   a. Commit $70 million annually (equivalent to only 18% of the NYPD school safety budget) to implement transformative and restorative practices in schools with particularly high suspension rates.
3. Revamp school curriculum.
   a. Implement culturally responsive curriculum (culture and gender affirming, Rites of Passage), and recruit and train teachers who can relate to and address needs of students. This could be achieved with a $60 million initial investment.
   b. Expand and improve curriculum to support preparation for meaningful and living wage careers including trades education, access to technology and tech careers, and college preparation. The city should invest $15 million to support existing Student Success Centers, to establish these centers in 40 new high school campuses and to implement year-round College Bridge programs.
   c. Integrate more non-traditional education, including out-of-classroom learning experiences up through high school.
4. Draw on City resources (in addition to State reforms) to make equitable resources available to all NYC schools.
   a. Provide essential school supplies for all students.
   b. Renovate school buildings to be structures that are welcoming and nurturing.
   c. Increase the number of teachers in classrooms and create smaller classroom sizes.
5. Support additional enrichment programming.
   a. Allocate increased funding to support extended hours programming including access to libraries and librarians; arts programming; financial literacy; sports; and student-led programs in which youth support each other to avoid and manage risk and conflict.
6. Expand investments to provide free, public, quality higher education at CUNY.
   a. Work with the state to allocate the $812 million needed to make CUNY free for
all students.  
7. Make reparative investments for justice-impacted youth and families.  
   a. Ensure what is provided for students in schools is also provided for youth who  
      are incarcerated or out-of-school.  
   b. Fund scholarships for children of incarcerated parents.  
8. Create more opportunities for students and families to have a meaningful voice in their  
schools.

What’s Working

The Center for Court Innovation’s Restorative Justice in Schools initiative has  
implemented restorative justice programs in five New York City high schools aimed at  
strengthening relationships school-wide. In partnership with New York City’s Department of  
Education, the project operates in schools with elevated suspension rates whose students  
overwhelmingly come from communities of color. Using restorative justice practices, the  
program works with school staff and students to build relationships, to address conflicts, and to  
reduce exclusionary discipline. A dean at one school, the Urban Action Academy, noted not just  
a large drop in suspensions in their first year with the program, but also a shift in the way that  
students interact and the respect they demonstrate for each other. Researchers from the Center  
for Court Innovation are currently conducting a more in-depth evaluation of the initiative’s  
effectiveness through a randomized controlled trial, assessing whether it improves overall  
school climate and culture and reduces inequities.

In 2015, NYC made an investment of $23 million in new funding for Arts Education in  
schools. Funds were allocated to hire 120 new arts teachers at middle and high schools that  
are underserved, improve arts facilities across the City, and foster partnerships with some of  
the City’s cultural institutions. The investment would increase access to arts education for  
thousands of students with new classes and activities in music, dance, visual arts and theater.  
Further funding could expand the program reach for a greater portion of NYC’s 1.1 million  
public school students.
COMMUNITY PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Support and expand resources that all of NYC’s diverse residents can access in their communities to relax, learn, thrive, and lead.
In order to best support individuals and their communities, investments must be made in accessible, wrap-around services that fulfill the needs and hopes of the specific community where those programs and services take place. Services should focus on the health and well-being of all community members inclusive of age, race, sexuality, gender, ability, education, employment status, immigration status, and other factors that are often used to exclude people, intentionally or unintentionally. To support the people in our City who have been most marginalized, not just to survive but also to thrive, we have to consider the type of investments that can improve quality of life, bring people together, and bring them joy. Investing in New Yorkers’ ability to live their fullest lives and in the leadership of residents to build community together, we can support safety and stability in our neighborhoods.

**Demands**

1. **Make public transportation accessible to everyone.**
   a. Fully fund the Fair Fares\(^{12}\) reduced price Metrocard program, including single-ride and pay-as-you-go fares, and implement fare capping.  
   b. Make all student metrocards unlimited, so that students can participate in after school activities beyond the current timeframe (8pm) and beyond one additional ride a day. Students who live near their schools should also get metrocards so they can participate in programming in other neighborhoods.
2. **Support universal child care that works for working families.**
   a. Expand afternoon hours beyond the existing UPK and 3-K programs.  
   b. Implement salary parity for all early childhood educators, through compensation in alignment with those in the Department of Education, as called for in Resolution 0358\(^{13}\).  
   c. Provide support for parents who seek training and parenting resources.
3. **Invest in public libraries to expand educational and recreational services.**
   a. Add an additional $16 million into the baseline City expense budget to more adequately fund six-day service and programs in NYC’s three library systems, and increase capital funding for urgent facility maintenance.  
   b. Expand services like ESL classes, computer skills training, TASC (formerly GED) preparation, and career counseling.  
   c. Offer expanded free resources through libraries, like meeting space and printing.  
   d. Expand the diversity of library offerings, including programs and materials in multiple languages, increasingly representative of NYC communities.  
   e. Invest in learning centers focused on activism & social justice.
4. **Establish creative spaces & cultural hubs in communities for all creative disciplines.**
   a. Increase funding to expand creative spaces & cultural hubs that are accessible to the entire community, and support and sustain community institutions that serve as creative spaces & cultural hubs, such as libraries, schools, museums, small businesses, and community organizations.
5. **Invest in youth leadership training, Rites of Passage/identity development (inclusive of LGBTQ and gender non-conforming youth) and other non-traditional programs that support youth to have a voice in community institutions.**
   a. For these programs to be most effective, they cannot be subject to the requirements of the Department of Youth and Community Development’s current COMPASS programs\(^{14}\), which allocate a maximum cost-per-participant that is insufficient for running quality programs.
6. **Invest in community-led community centers, recreational parks, and community spaces**
with accessible facilities for the entire community, and especially those 18-26 years old.

a. Provide funding for community-driven research projects to assess local neighborhood needs and strengths and for the development of neighborhood specific community centers.

b. Utilize and re-develop vacant or underutilized buildings for community uses.

c. Help non-profits to buy their own buildings and support incubators sites for the development of new non-profits.

d. Expand hours, diversity and quantity of programming, and locations of Parks and Recreation Centers, including expanding service in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens to establish at least one center per 125,000 residents.

e. Expand and improve parks with facilities for young children, working public bathrooms, and upgraded sports facilities.

f. Create more spaces for mentoring and peer mentoring.

g. Support positive events to help people connect with their neighbors out in the community (block parties, street festivals, etc).

7. Expand access to City agencies, legal services, and civic engagement in neighborhood based facilities.

8. Increasing funding allocations to several of the City Council’s NYC Initiatives, including Digital Inclusion, Anti-Poverty Funding, Young Women’s Initiative, and Anti-Violence Youth Programs.

What’s Working

**Inclusive Services at Brooklyn Public Library** (BPL) provides unique programs for children and teens with and without disabilities. Fostering an inclusive environment, the libraries open their doors to all children, parents, caregivers and educators. Dedicated equipment makes the library experience accessible to children with different abilities. Cube chairs, mats for floor play, positioning cushions, and adaptive toys, are available. Inclusive Services is located in five barrier-free libraries in Brooklyn, and with further funding, could be expanded to more of the BPL’s 60 branches.

**The Brotherhood/Sister Sol’s Rites of Passage Program** (ROP) is designed to empower youth through discovery and discussion of history, culture, social justice and the political forces surrounding them. In partnership with secondary schools and within the community, The Brotherhood/Sister Sol (BroSis) develops chapters, each consisting of 10 to 18 youth members and two adult Chapter Leaders. The Chapter Leaders facilitate weekly sessions and serve as mentors, supporters, confidantes, counselors, teachers, and more. They build trusting relationships and offer guidance to the chapter members as they face the challenges of young adulthood.

During the intensive four- to six-year ROP process, members learn to think critically and act ethically through workshops, cultural excursions, community service opportunities, retreats, college trips, and in engaging in the multitude of other programming at BroSis. Each chapter develops a Mission Statement and collectively defines what it means to be a sister/brother, woman/man and leader. Members also create individual Oaths of Dedication—personal testimonies to how they will live their lives with which the create pathways through which to live their lives on their own terms. The BroSis curriculum for all programming is structured around twelve curriculum focus issues, incorporating topics such as Pan African and Latinx History, Dismantling Sexism and Misogyny, LGBTQ Justice, Environmental Justice, Political Education, Sexual Education & Responsibility, and Educational Achievement and more. The impacts of this collective work are clear. In NYC the general high school graduation rate is
70%; while research has found that the graduation rate of Black and Latino boys is 34%. Over 40% of Black men between the ages of 18-65 in New York City are unemployed. 90% of BroSis alumni have graduated from high school, 95% either graduated from high school or earned their GED and 95% are working full time or enrolled in college. Harlem’s teen-aged pregnancy rate is 15% – but BroSis members have a rate of less than 2%.
CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION & ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY

Support communities to manage conflict so that it does not escalate to harm, and when harm has happened, to intervene with models that focus on restoration rather than punishment.
We can and must do much more to prevent the kinds of conflict and harm that we *can* prevent through investments in all of the areas we have named above. We must also recognize that conflict and harm will still occur, and we must develop models for responding that do not rely on violence and punishment (which continue the cycle of trauma and harm), but rather on interventions that aim to address and make amends for the harm that was caused, involving all parties in creating a solution. While this may be a more compassionate way to deal with people who have caused harm, that is not main reason to pursue it. We need to invest in all levels of alternative programs (diversion, alternatives to incarceration, violence interruption, mediation, and restorative justice) because they work. On the contrary, our system of punishment - with the deprivation it relies on, and the trauma it fosters - has not made us safer.

**Demands**

1. Invest in the capacity of communities to respond to conflict, prevent violence and harm, and to address and heal from it in sustainable ways.
   a. Support or develop community mediation, trauma and healing centers in all of the neighborhoods most impacted by mass incarceration, with a particular attention to needs of youth, use of arts-based therapy, and engagement of peers in providing programming. Integrate within these centers restorative justice initiatives. To be truly safe community spaces, these centers must have no affiliation with the police.
   b. Create paid opportunities for community members to learn and apply skills related to social-emotional support and civic engagement, such as conflict de-escalation techniques for themselves, their family and their neighbors.
   c. Increase programming for trauma-informed healing work for those who have been violent or have been affected by violence.
   d. Increase funding for the Anti-Gun Violence Youth Employment Program and increase support for mentorship of young people.

2. Invest in the capacity of government agencies and workers to better respond to harm and violence, and promote healing.
   a. Provide trainings for government workers and government funded programs in trauma-informed care.
   b. Train employees throughout the ranks of government agencies in restorative justice philosophies and practices. This work requires a paradigm shift, so training is important at all levels of government.

3. Expand investment in diversion and alternatives to incarceration (ATI). The Lippman Commission has recommended a $270 million annual investment in diversion and ATI programs.
   a. Sufficiently expand investment in diversion and ATI programs to eliminate all City sentences (sentences of less than 1 year).
   b. Include programs for those with domestic violence charges, focused on addressing root causes of intimate partner violence.
   c. Prioritize programs which use a trauma-informed approach and are proven to provide those involved not just with an alternative sentence, but with skills and resources to lead more stable lives.

4. Support alternative models of responding to community violence and fostering safety
   a. Expand funding for Cure Violence programming to include civic engagement, mobilization, political education, and creation of youth public health workers.
Each site should be funded at 1.5 million for services, not including the cost of space.

b. To be trusted and effective in their communities, these programs must have no affiliation with the police.

What’s Working

The Women’s Prison Association’s JusticeHome is a trauma-informed, gender-responsive, community and home-based alternative to incarceration program for women of all experiences. It is designed for women who have been charged with a felony and are facing a minimum of six months’ incarceration, and aims to support them so they can stay in their communities rather than serve time in jail or prison. The JusticeHome team works with participants to enhance stability and overall well-being by addressing specific needs that may have contributed to criminal justice involvement. JusticeHome strongly believes in honoring each participant’s resilience, strengths, and voice. The program team works collaboratively with every participant to create an individualized change plan to help identify needs and achieve goals. The programs has led to increased stability for approximately 100 women and their families, and costs much less than incarceration, at $10k-$20K per participant per year. in the lifetime of the program, 90% of our graduates have remained free of future involvement with the legal system. The program is currently in the process of expanding to also serve women with misdemeanor charges.

Make It Happen (MIH) is a program of Neighbors in Action, and is part a program funded by the Office of Victims of Crime and run in partnership with the Center for Court Innovation’s Domestic Violence department. Its mission is to give young men between the ages of 16 and 24 who have experienced violence, the tools necessary to overcome traumatic experiences, and enable them to succeed in spite of those experiences. Make It Happen is a trauma-informed and culturally competent program that provides mentorship, intensive case management, clinical interventions and supportive workshops. Participants are challenged to think about how their definition of manhood is intertwined in trauma and gender roles. Through group workshops and client-driven individual sessions, people are able to recognize and process their own trauma. Make It Happen also works to engage traditional victim service providers on the needs of male crime victims, with the goal of making victim services compensation available to young men of color who have been victims of crime. Since the program’s inception in 2012, Make It Happen has served close to 400 young men in and around Brooklyn. Within the past two years, MIH has developed a peer mentor program called CHAMPS (Community Healers And Mentors for Personal Success). To date, Make It Happen has 16 CHAMPS that provide informal supportive services to middle school students. Participants have said that the program helps them to better understand and express their feelings.
STRUCTURE OF INVESTMENTS

Restructure the methods by which funds are distributed in order to better support grassroots groups and avoid replicating systems of oppression.
Grassroots groups constitute the social fabric of local communities in NYC. They know best how to meet the needs of people who the City and larger organizations are often less effective in reaching, and they reflect the culture and ideals of the neighborhoods they work in and with. Yet the mechanisms of City investment have for decades put these groups at a disadvantage. Future investments must be made in a way that recognizes and supports the brilliance of these groups, reflects a belief in the knowledge and wisdom that communities and residents have about their own needs and solutions, and demonstrates commitment to meet people where they are at.

**Demands**

1. Establish a staffed and funded oversight committee or committee to decentralize funding decisions, improve inclusion in City services, address structural racism in City agencies, and improve accountability. The committee(s) would be tasked to
   a. Oversee how justice reinvestment funds are spent.
   b. Ensure that funds better reach grassroots organizations and community leaders, including through organizations led by and accountable to the people they exist to serve: Black and brown people, women, NYCHA residents, youth, elderly, non-native English speakers, the differently-abled, mental health recipients, people who use drugs, and LGBTQ people.
   c. Advise the City on structure of Request for Proposals to remove potential barriers for grassroots organizations.
   d. Support small organizations to build capacity.
   e. Develop a plan for all executive and leadership-level staff at City agencies and publicly funded social service agencies to participate in anti-racism and racial justice training.
   f. Assess the City’s cut taken from State funds to identify opportunities to direct more resources to the groups delivering programming.
   g. Institute real enforceable consequences to deter City agencies from late payment of contracts that strain small organizations and harm communities.
   h. Recommend ways to make City agencies more flexible in the way they provide services, for example, offering video appointments.

2. Improve flexibility and effectiveness of funding.
   a. Funding structures should support quality not quantity. Cost per participant models must be completely revamped to account for the full cost of providing quality services, and with consideration for what types or program structures best serve communities and the specific people & groups organizations serve.
   b. Eliminate the delays in payment for City contracts faced by many non-profits that serve the most marginalized New Yorkers. Assign a specific timeframe to each City agency with a role in contract oversight for their contract review work, and create a public-facing tracking system to allow vendors to monitor the progress of their contract through each stage of the contract process.
   c. Provide sufficient funding and technical assistance to help grantees implement language justice principles and effectively serve undocumented people.
   d. Establish mechanisms for groups without 501c3 status to apply for and receive funds.

3. Make funds and services more accessible to the people and communities that have been most criminalized, most marginalized and most divested from. Pay reparations to entire impacted communities, in addition to individuals. Work to document and address the
legacy of Rikers Island, such as the Rikers Public Memory Project, should also be encouraged and supported.

What's Working

**Participatory Budgeting** is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. It’s based on the idea that the people who live in a community best know its needs. Through Participatory Budgeting in NYC (PBNYC), community members directly decide how to spend at least $1,000,000 of the public budget in participating Council Districts (currently, 32 districts). Community members can propose and vote on projects like improvements to schools, parks, libraries, public housing, and other public or community spaces. After ideas are submitted, community volunteers, called Budget Delegates, work to turn ideas into real proposals for a ballot, with input from city agencies. Through a public vote, residents then decide which proposals to fund. People can vote for projects if they live in the district and are at least 11 years old or are in 6th Grade (immigration status is not considered). There’s a PBNYC Citywide Committee — made up of individuals, community organizations, and Council Members — which helps guide the process and supports PB across the city. The Committee proposes rules for the process each year, which are formalized into a Rule Book adopted by the City Council. For the time being, PBNYC only deals with capital money, and a fairly limited portion of the total City budget.

The **Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition** (CCJRC) has made major strides in securing investments for the communities that have been most criminalized, and also charting a new path for how those investments will be made to best support those communities and their own leaders and institutions. In 2013, the tragic murder of Tom Clements, the executive director of the Colorado Department of Corrections, represented a crucial turning point. Executive Director Clements had come to Colorado from Missouri to implement a reform agenda in corrections policy. Colorado leadership and legislators initially contemplated reactive and punitive measures to reduce the likelihood of a similar tragedy, but CCJRC and several community reentry organizations saw an opportunity to continue the reform work started by Executive Director Clements. CCJRC worked to highlight the importance and impact of community-led public safety strategies and to ensure budget priorities aligned. Since 2014, CCJRC has passed three bills that will invest over $50m in communities for new community-led, community-centric safety strategies. Furthermore, each grant program is being run by an intermediary — not a government agency. The Latino Coalition for Community Leadership, two community foundations, and two Community Development Financial Institutions are managing the various grant programs created through these investments. Through this model, Colorado’s justice reinvestment strategy has prioritized using existing infrastructure in the communities and driving the money much deeper into community ownership.
Endnotes


2. One such a program is Howie the Harp, a peer-run program that trains people with mental health recovery experience to work in Human Services. Since 1995, HTH has been led by people of color who ensure that cultural competence is maintained among staff and participants. [https://www.communityaccess.org/our-work/educationjobreadiness/howie-the-harp](https://www.communityaccess.org/our-work/educationjobreadiness/howie-the-harp)

3. Currently 267 Justice-Involved Supportive Housing (JISH) units have been promised - only 120 of which have been funded

4. HUD chronicity exclusions force all individuals returning to the community from jail or in-patient hospital stays of more than 90 days to wait another 12 months in the shelter system until they are eligible for the higher level of services available through supportive housing.


8. As called for by the Urban Youth Collaborative in “The $746 Million a Year School-to-Prison Pipeline”

9. As called for by the Urban Youth Collaborative in “The $746 Million a Year School-to-Prison Pipeline”

10. As called for by the Urban Youth Collaborative in “The $746 Million a Year School-to-Prison Pipeline”


