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## **Making New York Work: An Outline**

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By Mitchell Moss

The race for mayor is focusing on campaign strategy - who is leading and who is lagging - rather than on what each candidate will do as mayor. Just in case the voters care about what can be done to improve New York City, here are the choices that lie ahead for the next mayor:

### **The City's Economy**

The boom era for New York, in which financial and business services grew for 15 consecutive years, is over. The next mayor will confront a stagnant economic environment with fewer dollars to spend on public services. There are several strategies to stimulate economic growth: Adopt a back-to-basics approach to government services - a city that "works" is essential to retain business and foster tourism; improve roads and subways so that the city maintains its edge as hub for the region's labor force; attract entrepreneurs from China and Hong Kong who prefer the fresh air of New York to the heavy hand of Mao's heirs, and turn out high school graduates who can read, write and count.

### **The Drug Problem**

America is a drug culture, in which the middle and upper classes live on tranquilizers, stimulants and alcohol while the underclass relies on drugs not approved by the Food and Drug Administration. The problem is not only drug use per se, but the crime associated with the purchase and sale of illegal drugs. New

York has clearly lost control when innocent civilians can be murdered for trying to stop drug-dealers.

The mayor should: fight drugs with harsh penalties for suburbanites who buy drugs in the city to induce drug dealers to relocate to the suburbs: encourage groups such as the Black Muslims who do not tolerate drug use to settle in crack-infested areas; recognize that drug education is a complement to, but no substitute for, swift and certain punishment, and confiscate the automobiles and driver's licenses of drug dealers and abusers.

### **The School System**

New York continually picks an educator to be chancellor and then demands that the chancellor behave like a politician. Rather, we need a politician who cares about education and will: lead the fight to overturn state school-aid formulas that favor rural areas and shortchange the city: reorganize the school system so the mayor is accountable for the Board of Education and local school boards aren't chosen by just 8 percent of the voters; create effective incentives for kids to stay in school rather than drop out, including strong extracurricular programs, which provide an outlet for achievement while keeping kids within a school setting; extend the hours of the public schools to provide social services for children and families at risk, and identify the many, though often overlooked, schools that "work," and use them as prototypes to overhaul the schools that are failing.

### **Land Use and Development**

Few issues generate more controversy. Neither developers nor community groups are satisfied with the performance of the City Planning Commission. Further, the waterfront. New York's great unused resource, is about to be preempted by a unique blend of luxury restaurants and floating prisons.

If New York is to be more than an office park, drug haven and playground for yuppies, housing to attract and retain the middle class of all colors and ethnicity is essential. The mayor should: rezone underused manufacturing areas to create new residential neighborhoods; put additional police and civic improvements in communities willing to accept facilities such as prisons, incinerators, and homeless shelters: develop theme parks, bike paths and recreation areas on the rundown waterfront areas of Brooklyn and the Bronx, and

eliminate needless regulations and bureaucratic obstacles that impede rather than foster development.

### **The Hospital Crisis**

Just a decade ago, New York City had a surplus of hospital beds. Today, there is a shortage of hospital beds as a result of the large number of AIDS patients, many of whom belong in long-term care facilities designed to serve their needs. With hospitals at capacity, emergency rooms have become holding tanks, and the delays and crowd conditions that characterize public hospitals occur in voluntary hospitals as well.

The mayor should recognize that: New York health care industry is a vital element of the city economy that cannot be allowed to decline; national health insurance will help the city absorb the costs of caring for the poor; affiliation contracts between the voluntary and municipal hospitals should be revised to assure that appropriate care is provided in low-income areas, and, without special facilities for AIDS patients to relieve hospitals, New York will not be able to compete for medical students and residents.

### **The Job of Mayor**

Each mayor defines the job differently. A mayor is a symbol of the city to the outside world, a house guru who sets the municipal tone, and the only citywide official with control over a \$27 billion budget. In a community as large and diverse as New York, a mayor can't do everything, and so he must rely on deputy mayors and commissioners. Therefore, the success of a mayor depends on his ability to: recruit talented and trustworthy individuals; motivate the public employees who work in the urban trenches and establish an ethical climate that restores municipal morale; choose a few key initiatives and projects that he wants to be known for, and follow up on them, and remember that the mayoralty is not a steppingstone to higher office.

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