



Civic Groups Attempt to Elevate Level of Debate in Mayoral Election

*RPA, Center for an Urban Future and Center for
New York City Affairs Issue Report Describing
Key Issues That Will Confront the Next Mayor*

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NEW YORK – In an attempt to focus attention in the mayoral election to the core issues confronting the city, three leading New York civic groups today released a substantive guide to nine key policy areas. The report is designed to inform candidates and educate voters about a range of issues that New York’s next mayor will face over the next four years, from education and economic development to child welfare and homelessness. The report, titled “Framing the 2005 Mayoral Debate: Issues and Proposals for the Candidates,” was co-authored by Regional Plan Association, the Center for New York City Affairs at Milano Graduate School and the Center for an Urban Future.

“The race for our city’s most important elected office should be decided by a vigorous policy debate, but too often less important issues steal the spotlight,” said Jonathan Bowles, Research Director for the Center for an Urban Future. “The goal of this policy book is to frame the discussion and push the candidates to focus on the issues of importance to New Yorkers.”

The policy guide neither endorses any candidate nor takes any specific policy position. Rather, it provides concise descriptions of the many problems, challenges and opportunities that confront policymakers in each of the nine issue areas (economic development, transportation, workforce development, child, youth and family services, child care and early education, education, housing and community development, homelessness and environment, open space and sanitation). The guide also includes a range of possible solutions that the next mayor could take to address each of these issues, based on proposals that have been made by a wide variety of civic organizations, academics and public officials. The report challenges every candidate to provide detailed answers to fundamental questions, including:

- What will the future economy of the city be like, and how should the next mayor prepare for it?
- Where will the money come from to maintain and modernize an aging transportation network?
- How can we mold disparate employment programs into a true system of workforce development?

- What more can the city do to prevent families from falling into crises that lead to homelessness, extreme poverty or the loss of a child to foster care?
- How should New York increase its supply of safe, high quality subsidized child care?
- Why are the city's middle schools struggling so badly, and what can be done to spark a turnaround?
- How should New York City attempt to create more affordable housing?
- What can be done to help families move from shelters to permanent housing?
- Will waterfront revitalization provide open space and access for all city residents?

“All of the candidates should be able to answer these questions, because as mayor they would have to tackle these issues every single day,” said Chris Jones, Vice President for Research at Regional Plan Association. “New Yorkers deserve to know how each candidate would deal with the city's most pressing needs and problems.”

The groups have distributed the guide to each of the candidates and to the moderators of the remaining mayoral debates, and are planning to host a forum in October focusing on the issues it raises.

“We hope that the guide will be both a desk reference and a living document that is carried on the campaign trail and referred to by voters, candidates and reporters,” said Andrew White, Director of the Center for NYC Affairs.

Regional Plan Association (RPA) is an independent regional planning organization that improves the quality of life and the economic competitiveness of the 31-county New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region through research, planning, and advocacy. Since 1922, RPA has been shaping transportation systems, protecting open spaces, and promoting better community design for the region's continued growth. We anticipate the challenges the region will face in the years to come, and we mobilize the region's civic, business, and government sectors to take action. www.rpa.org.

The Center for an Urban Future is a policy institute committed to improving the overall economic health of New York City for its residents and businesses. The Center combines journalistic-style investigative research with traditional policy analysis to develop innovative and achievable agendas for policy change primarily in the areas of economic development, workforce development, higher education and the arts. www.nycfuture.org

The Center for New York City Affairs is a nonpartisan institute dedicated to advancing innovative public policies that strengthen neighborhoods, support families and reduce urban poverty. Our tools include rigorous analysis; skillful journalistic research; candid public dialogue with stakeholders and opinion leaders; and strategic planning with government officials, nonprofit practitioners and community residents. The Center's original, applied research and analysis address policies affecting immigrant communities; strategies for improving access to human services; and the reform of the city's child protection and foster care systems. www.newschool.edu/milano/nycaffairs

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