



## Waterfront Alliance Mayoral Candidates Survey Submitted by Scott Stringer



**Question 1: As a coastal city, New York City will be hit by climate change especially hard (indeed, the effects have already started). What are your top priorities for adapting New York City (i.e. infrastructure, investments, ecology) to a future of extreme storms and sea level rise?**

New Yorkers are already coping with the effects of climate change as they face down more frequent and ferocious storms, suffer through intense heat, wade through sudden deluges of rain, lose power to high winds, and see monthly high tides swamp streets. My climate and resiliency plan aims to shelter the most vulnerable New Yorkers from climate risk and protect our City against the next big disaster.

My plan is centered on **identifying risk and addressing it**. I support a five borough resiliency plan that identifies the unique social and ecological conditions in every community and reorients our infrastructure and capital spending to direct resources to where they are needed.

I believe we need to accelerate progress on major resiliency infrastructure projects, such as Staten Island's South Shore Seawall and the range of onshore resiliency projects contemplated by the Army Corps HATS study. We need to bring Sandy-era projects to completion and start thinking boldly about future protections.

**I have proposed a holistic long-term floodplain restoration program which would seek to acquire land in vulnerable areas by allowing willing individuals facing outsized flooding risk to sell their property to the City for the purpose of converting waterfront land to resilient shorefront areas that can absorb both advancing high tides and future storms.**



Every dollar invested in climate mitigation and adaptation is estimated to result in six dollars in savings. We can reduce both the burden of flood insurance and prospect of future trauma by investing now to elevate homes. We must develop programs that elevate and reinforce homes, particularly in low-income areas, before the next storm arrives -- not after. I support zero-interest or forgivable retrofit programs, such as a resiliency extension of PACE, that can generate jobs and protect families.

**Question 2: New York City has 520 miles of waterfront. In the last 20-30 years, waterfronts have rapidly changed. Give one example of positive change you have seen along the waterfront**

**Growing up in Washington Heights, the Hudson and East Rivers were so choked the water was with debris, effluent, and pollution that you could practically walk on water. My sons, Max and Miles, won't know that New York. Instead, they know a New York where you can run over to Battery Park in the hopes of catching a glimpse of a swimming humpback whale. Our waterfronts used to be toxic. Now they are inviting. We have much more to do to more equitably open up waterfront space and we cannot rely on private developers to be the exclusive stewards of waterfront access.** But the progress we've made from Starlight Park to the Row New York Boat House, shows how important these investments are to building a fairer, more sustainable, and more livable city.

**Question 3: Give one example of a shortcoming or negative aspect of New York City's 520 miles of waterfront.**

As climate change accelerates and sea levels continue to rise, New York City cannot afford to forfeit any time to inaction. **We cannot pretend to be making progress on building a more resilient city if we allow projects like the redevelopment of Staten Island's Graniteville wetlands to go ahead. I stood with the Graniteville community to oppose a City sanctioned project that would pave over the naturally resilient wetland that helped buffer the North Shore of Staten Island from the worst of Sandy.** I am dismayed the project is going ahead and as a result Staten Island will be more exposed to the next storm, less able to cope with intense rainfall, and all the poorer for losing an area of great beauty. Areas guarded by wetlands and marshes suffer on average 20 percent less property damage from storms but despite their clear utility, an estimated 85 percent of the NY-NJ natural harbor estuary has been lost to development over the past century. I support amendments to State law that would better protect smaller but critical parcels of wetlands, and promise as Mayor



to marshal every City resource to protect, restore, and maintain existing wetlands, especially in areas with high risk of flooding. The City must be aggressive to protect wetlands by changes to zoning, land use regulation, or outright acquisition.

**Question 4: Covid-19 has underscored the need for quality open space and outdoor recreation. Waterfront open space is unevenly available across the five boroughs. What are your concrete recommendations for addressing disparities in quality open space access across waterfront communities?**

**Across our region, 37 percent of our waterfront is accessible to the public but in areas of high need or social vulnerability that number drops to 9 percent.** Even when waterfront access exists in low-income, marginalized communities, parks and facilities pale in comparison to the gleaming parks built as a complement to waterfront real estate developments. We must act aggressively to combat clear disparities in access to waterfront open space.

We can start by thinking and planning holistically about the waterfront. I support the creation of a five borough resiliency plan that does not myopically focus on just the risk posed by flooding but instead on how we can better protect our communities from a range of social vulnerabilities, including the need for open spaces that can benefit public health. That planning process must be the basis for distributing capital investments to the neighborhoods that need it the most. Oftentimes, highways and freeways cut off community access to waterfront spaces” which is why scaling back highway infrastructure is also a piece of my climate and transportation agenda. By operating with a holistic definition of resiliency, we can invest in projects like pocket parks or greener streets that will both fend off flooding and provide greener spaces for New Yorkers to enjoy.

Ultimately we have to do much more to invest in our parks system, including directing funding to encourage maintenance, better support community stewardship of natural areas, and allow for acquisition of new space. I will reorient resources in the expense and capital budgets to make parks a priority.

**Question 5: Historically, many neighborhoods have suffered from environmentally racist policies from power plant siting to housing in the floodplain to industrial waste in communities and waterways. What are your concrete recommendations for policies that will turn the tide and provide climate just solutions to our City’s most vulnerable populations?**

Unless New York City makes combating climate change a core component of its recovery from COVID-19, we will only end up exchanging one crisis for another.



Investing in a more sustainable future for our City will not only help protect our planet, it will allow us to address systemic disparities in environmental justice communities by creating economic opportunity and alleviating the disproportionate burden of choking air pollution on communities of color. I have released a comprehensive agenda to green our City, which environmental activist Bill McKibben has said would amount to the most progressive municipal climate action in the nation.

**My plan would address air quality, deadly heat, and create a pathway towards 100% renewable energy by 2035.** I have set ambitious but actionable goals to halt the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure within the City; retire half of all New York City based peaker plants by 2028 and the rest by 2035; scale back our urban highway network; eliminate the use of polluting number four heating oil by 2025; jumpstart solar installations by doubling the solar tax abatement; drastically reduce building emissions by successfully implementing Local Law 97; transform **Rikers Island** into a hub of renewable energy; monitor and police indoor air quality; green **NYCHA** buildings by fighting for the the **Green New Deal** for **public housing**, outlined by Rep. **Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez**; and task agencies with measuring and monitoring and minimizing air pollution in areas with high rates of asthma.

I have spent my career fighting for a more sustainable future. That continues when I get to City Hall.

**Question 6: How do you see the harbor and the maritime sector playing a central role in the City's economy and recovery in the years ahead?**

Our harbor, waterways, and the New York Port all play a crucial role in that recovery. I believe our six urban ports are areas of enormous potential for the City and for many environmental justice communities that surround them. I will seek to revitalize and remake our ports into hubs of sustainability that can host new manufacturing centers for wind turbines and create green jobs. We must invest new resources into port electrification and ship plug-ins, especially at the Brooklyn and Manhattan cruise terminals where cruise ship emissions spew noxious exhaust fumes into neighborhoods already burdened with poor air quality. Scott will set ambitious goals to reduce emissions stemming from ports while also encouraging their goals.

Offshore wind promises to be a key driver in the city's progress towards a greener grid. I will support the development of offshore wind and to make New York City into a green manufacturing hub that can facilitate the construction of wind farms across the Atlantic coast. I will double down on investments at the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal and will offer support to staging areas at Arthur Kill to help make New York City a regional wind powerhouse. We must fight to ensure that New York City is home to the manufacturing



infrastructure that can support the creation of an innovative offshore wind base that can help create thousands of good union jobs.

**Beyond wind, we must do more to support our maritime economy which connects our City with the rest of the globe. I will work with our congressional delegation to bring more resources to modernizing infrastructure to support new classes of ships, new storage, and warehouse facilities.**