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De Blasio Offers Goals for Environmental and Economic Makeover of NYC

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By Matthew Chayes

Mayor Bill de Blasio unveiled an ambitious plan to transform New York City environmentally and economically, with goals to lift 800,000 New Yorkers from poverty within 10 years and eliminate all landfill waste in 15 years.

"This is going to be a game changer in this city," he said in releasing his 332-page "One New York: The Plan for a Strong and Just City," to coincide with Earth Day.

De Blasio offered limited details on how he'll accomplish some formidable goals and no overall price tag, saying some answers would come in his budget plan next month. He declined to comment on a renewed push by advocates to toll East River bridges to reduce congestion and generate transit dollars, saying he still hasn't read the report issued in February.

De Blasio's plan is a rebranding of PlaNYC, a 9-year-old environmental sustainability blueprint by his predecessor, Michael Bloomberg, and a widening of its scope to set economic goals. De Blasio called his plan "the antidote to the tale of two cities," a theme of his 2013 mayoral campaign that focused on the gap between rich and poor.

As part of the latest plan, de Blasio said he wants to reduce most commutes to work to 45 minutes and improve transportation in underserved parts of the city.

He wouldn't take a position on the proposal for tolls and congestion pricing in Manhattan, saying only it is "one of the ideas on the table." A Bloomberg effort for another version of congestion pricing died in Albany.

De Blasio said that essential to his anti-poverty goal is the state's agreeing to hike the minimum wage past \$8.75; he has so far unsuccessfully lobbied to get the minimum wage to \$13 next year for the city and \$15 by 2019.

"Even though I don't control it, if people say, 'Hey, you all fought like hell and other people in Albany didn't get it,' that's one thing. But we're going to fight like hell," he said.

De Blasio said he wants to offer the city's organics recycling program, under which food scraps are composted, to the entire city by 2018; currently the Sanitation Department is running a pilot program only in certain neighborhoods.

"I think a lot of people, as they experience it, find it is a great thing. But we're going to figure out, if we're not getting where we need to go, what kind of other tools we need," de Blasio said, refusing to rule out compulsory composting if enough New Yorkers don't decide to do it on their own.

Maria Doulis, head of city studies at the business-backed Citizens Budget Commission, said the plan was a departure from the Bloomberg team's plan, which focused mainly on environmental sustainability.



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"They were pretty specific in identifying where the funding would come from and what the agencies were that would be responsible," she said. "They included benchmarks and milestones that said, 'OK this is our long-term goal, to accomplish X, and here are the benchmarks and milestones.'" She added: "This seems to be broader without the meat on the bones."