

# CITIZENS BUDGET COMMISSION

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## CBC ISSUES REPORT ON NEW YORK CITY'S GREEN POLICIES

### How Competitive Are They Really?

**New York, NY – April 4, 2011** – The Citizens Budget Commission (CBC) today released a report that examines New York City's "green" policies from the perspective of urban competitiveness, not exclusively in terms of promoting environmental sustainability. The report – "New York's Green Policies: Too Much or Too Little – A Competitive Perspective" – builds upon the City's *PlaNYC*, a comprehensive plan for the next quarter century of New York City that was unveiled on Earth Day 2007. The CBC report assesses how New York compares to other cities in pursuing green objectives and suggests how New York's leaders can set priorities for taking additional steps to promote environmental goals in ways that align with goals of economic growth and urban competitiveness. The report's findings and recommendations include the following:

#### HOW GREEN IS NEW YORK?

Three major dimensions of environmental quality – air, water, and solid waste – provide a basis for assessing the competitive position of New York City in terms of being "green":

- **Air** – With respect to greenhouse gas emissions, New York ranks 13<sup>th</sup> among 21 international cities and 2<sup>nd</sup> among 16 large U.S. cities. On measures of air pollution, New York ranks 12<sup>th</sup> of 21 internationally cities and 22<sup>nd</sup> of 34 large U.S. cities.
- **Water** – International comparative data are not available, but among large U.S. cities, New York ranks 13<sup>th</sup> of 27 in terms of water quality and 11<sup>th</sup> of 23 in terms of conservation.
- **Solid Waste** – New York lags internationally and domestically, generating nearly as much waste as London and diverting less of it to recycling programs and waste-to-energy plants than most European nations.

#### GUIDELINES FOR GETTING GREENER

Four recommended guidelines to help clarify municipal decision-making are:

- Limit municipal government activities to those appropriate to the local level of government;
- Give preference to practices that support and encourage consumer choice and responsible consumer behavior;
- Elevate the use of cost-effectiveness as the basis for decision-making, and rethink existing subsidies and regulations (both mandates and prohibitions) with an aim of revising or eliminating those financial incentives which are too generous and changing those regulations which are too burdensome;

- Assess innovative ideas before citywide adoption through evaluation of efforts in other localities and/or pilot programs within New York City.

## **AN AGENDA FOR GETTING GREENER**

Consistent with these guidelines, the report identifies specific measures that could enhance New York’s competitiveness in terms of getting greener. The proposed agenda items include the following:

- Three current initiatives that should be dropped because they appear to fall short in terms of cost-effectiveness: the local tax credits for solar energy and for green roofs, and the requirement for recycling of certain types of plastic;
- Three initiatives currently underway that are candidates for acceleration to gain greater benefits: enhanced metering of electricity use and of water consumption, and facilitating deployment of Combined Heat and Power (CHP) facilities;
- Four new initiatives, which appear to be desirable in order to enhance New York’s competitive position:
  - Vigorous implementation of the newly enacted Greater, Greener Buildings Plan (GGBP) which seeks to promote greater energy efficiency in existing commercial buildings in ways consistent with the CBC guidelines;
  - A renewed effort to adopt congestion pricing to stimulate mass transit use and raise funds for its improvement;
  - Reduction of solid waste generation and promotion of recycling by pilot testing a “pay to throw” program in selected neighborhoods;
  - Planning new “waste to energy” facilities in New York City to gain the combined benefits of cleaner electricity sources and reduced reliance on landfills for waste disposal.

“PlaNYC was an historic step forward in terms of long-range planning for New York City,” said CBC President Carol Kellermann. “This report augments it by raising crucial policy issues that New York must consider if it is to be both economically competitive and environmentally sustainable.”

“This report suggests ‘green’ priorities for the City and specific actions that align with those priorities,” said CBC Executive Vice President and Research Director Charles Brecher. “In tough economic times, it’s especially important that environmental sustainability and economic competitiveness be pursued jointly, with great attention to ensuring the most cost-effective use of resources.”

The full report is available at [www.cbcny.org](http://www.cbcny.org). For further information, contact Kevin Medina at 212-279-2605 x342 or [kmedina@cbcny.org](mailto:kmedina@cbcny.org).

*Founded in 1932, the Citizens Budget Commission is a nonpartisan, nonprofit civic organization devoted to influencing constructive change in the finances and services of New York City and New York State governments.*