

Mike Bloomberg's Greenwood Initiative

Many people in America suffer discrimination, but the African American experience is unique. For centuries, Black people were enslaved and forced to endure conditions worse than inhuman. Where slavery ended, mass incarceration began: to this day, one of the most notorious southern plantations, Angola, remains one of the country's most brutal prison camps. Where generous federal housing subsidies created a white middle class, Black Americans were expressly excluded, instead crowded into neighborhoods where they were denied credit, starved of public investment and subject to financial predators — and to a large extent still are. The enduring legacy of this unconscionable history is reflected in the fact that, despite progress in closing education and employment gaps, the typical Black household remains almost ten times poorer than the typical white household.

Mike Bloomberg recognizes that the divide between Black and white represents a deep, tragic flaw in the fabric of American society, one that must be addressed not only because it is morally unacceptable, but because it is preventing our whole nation from truly prospering. The Black community is not a liability -- it is one of the country's greatest assets. To that end, Mike is making Black Americans the focus of the first in a series of policies aimed at reversing the systematic discrimination that far too many Americans endure, based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. And while Mike recognizes that each group has its own unique history, the solutions he offers are not exclusive: They are primarily intended to benefit all disadvantaged groups.

1. Defend civil rights.

Basic freedoms are a prerequisite for realizing one's potential. Black Americans cannot fully participate in society if they are disproportionately incarcerated, politically disenfranchised and subject to systematic discrimination.

As mayor of New York City, Mike looked out for the interests of all his constituents. For Black New Yorkers, his policies had a measurably positive effect on health, education, employment and income -- and reduced the city's incarceration rate by 39% (at a time when the national rate increased). He also recognizes that he made mistakes: most notably, an over-reliance on the policing strategy known as stop-and-frisk, which -- in an effort to reduce gun violence -- ended up disproportionately targeting and traumatizing people of color. As president, Mike will demonstrate that he can learn from his mistakes and do an even better job for all Americans. This will start by defending their civil rights. He will:

- **Support the creation of a commission to study reparations for Black Americans**, with the aim of developing actionable policies.
- **Reinvigorate the civil rights division of the Justice Department**, and reorient it toward defending the rights of protected groups.
- **Shed greater light on discriminatory practices** by requiring transparency. For example:
 - Support SEC rulemakings to make companies report on hiring, pay and procurement by



race and other characteristics.

- Collect the data needed to monitor racial bias in consumer and business lending.
- **Enforce HUD rules, such as Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing**, that tie federal funding to progress in reducing segregation.
- **Support legislation to limit mandatory arbitration agreements**, so employees have the power to take employers to court for discrimination and harassment.
- **Require all federal institutions and contractors to conduct implicit bias training** with a focus on racial inequities.

Mike has rolled out a plan to protect all Americans' voting rights. He will:

- **Eliminate discriminatory laws and practices**, such as voter ID requirements and voter roll purging, and allow people with criminal records to vote.
- **Prevent partisan gerrymandering**, by requiring states to set up independent redistricting commissions.
- **Encourage people to vote**, by easing voter registration, making voting more convenient and educating people about their rights.

Mike has a plan to reform America's overly punitive criminal justice system. He will:

- **Cut youth incarceration by 50%**, by rebuilding sentencing, reforming clemency and expanding alternatives to imprisonment.
- **Reduce unnecessary detention by ending federal cash bail**, barring federal court fees, ensuring fines are reasonable and banning jail for failure to pay.
- **Invest in community and smart policing**, including implicit bias training and methods to reduce the use of deadly force.
- **Curb police abuses**, by restarting "pattern or practice" investigations, funding oversight boards and collecting data on use of force.
- **Restore the balance between prosecution and defense**, by increasing funding for public defenders, providing the defense with access to prosecution files and curbing abusive prosecution.
- **Focus probation on preventing recidivism** and moving people out of the justice system.

2. **Launch a national initiative to address concentrated disadvantage.**

Too many Black Americans start out behind from day one. They disproportionately grow up and live in

neighborhoods where they face unacceptably low odds of emerging healthy, educated and employed -- the result of generations of segregationist federal policy, systematic discrimination and neglect.

As mayor of New York City, Mike launched innovative programs to expand opportunity for people in all of the city's five boroughs, with a relentless focus on evaluation aimed at building on what worked and ending what didn't.

- The Center for Economic Opportunity, a precursor to the federal Social Innovation Fund, focused on funding and evaluating anti-poverty programs and expanding those that worked. One example: The Young Men's Initiative -- which focused on improving, among other things, education and employment outcomes for young men of color -- became the model for the national My Brother's Keeper program.
- He undertook an ambitious school reform that doubled funding overall and increased the graduation rate for Black students from 41% in 2005 to 61.2% in 2013. A separate school discipline reform program reduced suspensions by 23% and school-based arrests by 34%.
- The City University of New York's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs, a program of financial support and intensive advising, nearly doubled the three-year graduation rate¹ for low-income, predominantly minority students, and has been replicated² in California, Ohio and Tennessee.
- NYC Opportunity launched the first city-funded Jobs-Plus site in East Harlem in 2009. According to the Urban Institute, participants in the program for one year were 72% more likely to be employed and earned an added 32%.
- He introduced a Child Care Tax Credit to help low-income families while enabling parents to maintain full-time jobs. Between 2007 and 2013, the credit put \$108.7 million in the pockets of New York families.
- He addressed food deserts with the "Green Carts" program, which increased the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables in targeted neighborhoods by more than half.³

As president, Mike will take his efforts to the next level, launching a \$70 billion initiative to identify and turn around 100 of the country's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. He will:

- **Create an independent Neighborhood Equity and Opportunity Office (NEO)** to lead the initiative, coordinate the efforts of various federal agencies and imbue a more evidence-based approach to public policy.
- **Spend at least 10% of the NEO budget on regular evaluation of programs**, ending those that don't work and shifting funding to those that do.

¹ <https://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/app.20170430>

² <http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/replication/>

³ [AIMS Public Health](#)

- **Provide the 100 communities with technical assistance to develop revitalization plans**, which they can devise themselves or create using a menu of evidence-based programs.
- Require the revitalization plans to address four key areas:
 - **Health and education**, including early childhood development, maternal health, quality food options, mental health and trauma.
 - **Environment and infrastructure**, including public spaces, lighting, transportation, clean water and air.
 - **Employment and wealth**, including training, apprenticeships, career navigation, home ownership and entrepreneurship.
 - **Justice**, including alternatives to detention and incarceration, and reentry support.
- Examples of programs that can be piloted:
 - **Address the school-to-prison pipeline** with comprehensive programs -- such as Young Men's Initiative and My Brother's Keeper -- that combine tailored services such as mentoring and mental health with policy reform in areas such as justice and education.
 - **Address Black women's reproductive health** issues through comprehensive policies and services that screen and treat women at risk for preterm birth, improve access to maternity care, train providers to address racism and build a more diverse health care workforce.
 - **Provide down-payment assistance to help small business owners** purchase their premises.
 - **Apply housing vouchers to mortgage payments**, so recipients can build equity instead of remaining renters.
 - **Providing land grants, technical assistance and federally subsidized financing** for people willing to restore derelict homes and rebuild blighted neighborhoods.

More broadly, Mike will seek to address inequities on many levels and at many stages in people's lives.

In early childhood:

- **Expand Early Head Start and Head Start**, to ensure that all children get the early support they need. He will also work with states to ensure that the programs cover more than the fraction of eligible kids that they currently serve.
- **Pilot free pre-K programs** for low and moderate-income families as part of the 100 communities plan.
- Encourage communities to ensure that Head Start, Pre-K and child-care facilities are located in close proximity, to make them easier to use.
- **Expand the Child Tax Credit**, to make parenting more affordable.

In high school:

- **Elevate the teaching profession**, by raising pay and providing more funds for professional development.
- **Set and pursue clear goals for diversifying the teaching profession**, so educators look more

like the student body.

- **Ensure consistent quality of teaching**, to prepare all students for a 21st Century economy.
- **Tie federal funding to equitable investment in public schools** at the state and local levels.
- **Reform school discipline procedures**, and provide implicit bias training for teachers, so minority students are not needlessly disciplined or kept out of school.
- **Measure and reduce achievement gaps** among students by race and gender.
- **Encourage states to reform textbooks to accurately tell the history of slavery and institutional racism in the U.S.**⁴

In college:

- **Make a quality public higher education effectively free for the lowest-income students** by increasing and restructuring federal funding to -- a policy that will primarily benefit students of color.
- **Promote practices that advance enrollment and graduation rates** for these students.
- **Increase funding to historically black colleges and universities** with a focus on enhancing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs.
- **Forgive debts** in egregious cases where for-profit colleges have conferred worthless degrees.
- **Promote diversity** by supporting colleges' efforts to make their student bodies reflect the racial composition of the broader population.

In training:

- **Streamline the government's 43 employment and training programs**,⁵ pool their resources and pay for performance, rewarding models and providers that demonstrably improve outcomes for participants.
- **Make training more affordable**, for example by extending federal funding to short-term certificate programs and providing extended unemployment benefits for more people in training.
- **Revive the Social Innovation Fund**, which combines public financing with rigorous evaluation. Focus on expanding career navigation programs that help people without strong networks -- disadvantaged kids, returning citizens, the long-term unemployed -- connect with meaningful training, work experience and jobs.
- **Track and report on outcomes for specific disadvantaged groups such as Black women**, and encourage states to include racial equity goals in their workforce development plans.⁶ Lift up and expand the most successful practices -- particularly those that connect Black Americans with non-diverse occupations such as IT.

At work:

- **Create tens of thousands of additional service jobs** -- through organizations like AmeriCorps, in partnership with local nonprofits -- to enable people to work within local communities. Jobs can include teaching, managing after-school programs, maintaining neighborhood infrastructure.
- **Raise the federal minimum wage to \$15**; reward work by expanding the Earned Income Tax

⁴ [The New York Times](#)

⁵ <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/698080.pdf>

⁶ [National Skills Coalition](#)

Credit and paying it monthly.

- **Provide an added incentive for businesses to locate and employ people in distressed communities**, through a place-based Earned Income Tax Credit that lowers costs for employers.
- **Help more Black mothers and other mothers of color enter the workforce** by making quality child care more accessible and affordable.
- **Mandate paid sick and family leave.**
- **Defend and expand the right of all workers** -- including gig, contract and franchise employees -- to organize and bargain collectively.
- **Support national “Ban the Box” legislation**, which would prohibit employers from asking about criminal history at the initial stages of a job application.

At home:

- **Protect people from lead** by requiring testing on homes receiving FHA-backed loans, requiring states to submit lead exposure data to the EPA, providing homeowner tax credit for lead abatement and incentivizing local authorities to replace lead service lines.
- **Increase incentives for weatherizing** and replacing appliances in homes and commercial buildings -- and provide rebates and trade-in incentives for cars -- with a focus on lowering energy bills and air pollution in disadvantaged communities.
- **Invest in rail, biking and pedestrian infrastructure** -- as well as in freight and bus electrification -- to improve quality of life and reduce pollution in disadvantaged communities.
- **Invest in floodplain improvement** -- and in park and waterfront restoration -- with an emphasis on making disadvantaged communities more resilient to climate disasters. He founded a financial technology company that provides about 20,000 people with challenging, rewarding jobs.
- **Increase funding for the New Markets Tax Credit**, designed to encourage investment in low-income communities, and encourage states to employ it to establish more grocery stores in underserved communities.⁷
- **Include Green Carts in the menu of evidence-based programs** offered to the 100 Communities.

3. Reduce disparities in homeownership, entrepreneurship and investment.

Ultimately, wealth is the key to achieving racial equity in America. The next generation of Black Americans will not have equal opportunities if the typical Black family remains almost 10 times poorer than the typical white family.

As mayor of New York City, Mike launched initiatives to build wealth in all the city’s communities.

- The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development launched the HomeFirst Down Payment Assistance Program while Mike was mayor in 2004. This provides a forgivable loan of as much as \$40,000 to qualified home buyers earning up to 80% of Area Median Income.⁸

⁷ [Reinvestment Fund](#)

⁸ <https://furmancenter.org/coredata/directory/entry/homefirst-down-payment-assistance-program>

- He signed legislation creating the New York City Banking Development District Program, which helped establish bank branches in 20 underserved neighborhoods through nearly \$200 million in below-market deposits.
- The city also created Financial Empowerment Centers, which offered free, one-on-one professional counseling, helping more than 23,000 clients reduce their debts by more than \$12 million and increase savings by more than \$2.2 million.⁹
- He mounted an early and aggressive response to the subprime lending crisis, which was concentrated in minority neighborhoods. The Center for New York City Neighborhoods provided free advice and legal aid to help people avoid foreclosure.
- New York City pioneered the Homebase program, aimed specifically at reducing homelessness by providing counseling, eviction prevention and even short-term emergency funding to pay arrears. The [program reduced](#) shelter use by 20% for those who participated, generated enough savings to offset its cost, and became a model for other cities.
- He undertook the nation's most ambitious effort to expand affordable housing. The New Housing Marketplace Plan was the largest affordable housing program in the country, building or preserving 175,000 units. This plan led to a \$23.6 billion investment in affordable housing across the city.
- He created New York City's Department of Small Business Services,¹⁰ which set up one-stop shops in the city's five boroughs to help entrepreneurs identify opportunities, craft business plans, get access to capital, navigate government bureaucracy and even find employees.
- His Economic Development Corporation established incubators¹¹ to provide entrepreneurs with inexpensive space and access to advice and funding. As of 2013, the incubators hosted more than 600 startups that had raised more than \$100 million in venture funding.
- He created the New York City Entrepreneurial Fund, the first city-sponsored seed and early-stage investment fund located outside of Silicon Valley, which makes up to \$22 million available to New York City-based technology startups.
- His Department of Small Business Services focused on getting minority and women-owned businesses certified to compete for city contracts, and in 2005, Mike signed Local Law 129, creating goals for the city to buy from minority and women owned businesses. The efforts resulted in the awarding of more than \$3.4 billion in contracts to certified firms.¹²

As president, Mike will take direct aim at the black-white wealth gap, seeking to triple the net worth of the typical Black family within 10 years. To that end, he will set two goals:

⁹ [Mayor's Management Report 2013](#)

¹⁰ [NY Daily News](#)

¹¹ [ICIC](#)

¹² [Mayor's Office of Contract Services](#)

- **Create 1 million new Black homeowners**, reversing a decline that has brought the Black homeownership rate to its lowest level since the 1960s, when racial discrimination in lending was federal policy.
- **Create more than 100,000 new Black-owned businesses** with employees, doubling their current number.

The down payment is a fundamental prerequisite for buying a house. Yet due to the lack of generational wealth, too many potential Black homeowners lack the necessary resources. Existing down-payment assistance programs are fragmented, unduly complicated and hence too burdensome for realtors and lenders to bother with. So Mike will:

- **Provide federal matching funds to offer all residents of the 100 Communities down-payment assistance.** The assistance will come in the form of conditional loans, which will gradually amortize and be forgiven completely if the borrower stays in the home for 10 years.
- **More broadly, standardize down-payment assistance programs, so they won't slow down loan origination.** Integrate them into the lending process at the Federal Housing Administration, so low-income borrowers will automatically become aware of them.

It's hard to buy a house without a bank account. But Black Americans disproportionately lack access to traditional financial services. As of 2017, about 17% of Black households had no savings or checking account.¹³ They are also targeted by various kinds of financial predators, including payday lenders and subprime auto lenders. Mike will:

- **Offer a curated selection of financial services through the U.S. Postal Service**, which has a physical presence and a good reputation in communities where such services are most needed.¹⁴
- **Pilot a program to provide free checking accounts** (with direct deposit) to recipients of the Earned Income Tax Credit.
- **Update the Community Reinvestment Act** to cover all lenders, and improve enforcement to ensure that banks are serving all communities in their assessment areas.
- **Enhance financial-literacy education** at critical junctures, including high school.
- **Restore the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's payday lending rule**, which would have curbed the business's more predatory aspects but was reversed by the Trump administration. Empower the CFPB to oversee auto lending.

People need credit scores to qualify for mortgage loans. But through its mortgage-guarantee programs, the federal government effectively requires lenders to use credit-scoring models that disproportionately

¹³ [EDIC](#)

¹⁴ [Bloomberg Opinion](#)

exclude Black Americans.¹⁵As a result, millions of Black householders are “credit invisible.” Mike will:

- **Urge regulators to update credit-scoring requirements** at federally controlled and mandated mortgage guarantors, insist that scoring models be tested for racial and gender bias and encourage the use of alternative models that employ information such as bank account history, rental payments or mobile-phone payments to assess creditworthiness.¹⁶

More than 50 years after the adoption of the Fair Housing Act, mortgage lenders still discriminate against people of color,¹⁷who experience higher denial and interest rates (all else equal). Yet Congress and the Trump administration have been moving to weaken enforcement, including by curtailing the data collection needed to monitor fair lending.¹⁸ Mike will:

- **Enforce fair lending laws**, and keep collecting the data needed to do so.

It’s too difficult to get financing for inexpensive homes. Research shows that below a threshold of \$70,000, lenders lose interest due to the fixed costs of making mortgage loans. Only about a quarter of home purchases in that price range are financed, compared with three quarters for more expensive homes.¹⁹ Mike will:

- **Introduce streamlined regulatory requirements for smaller loans**, to reduce the fixed cost of making them.
- **Encourage Community Development Financial Institutions**, which receive federal grants to focus on underserved communities, to increase lending for the purchase of homes costing less than \$70,000.

Homeownership is unduly precarious for Black Americans. Those who own their homes are four times as likely as white homeowners to return to renting.²⁰Too many families are just one small crisis away from eviction. Mike will:

- **Encourage counseling agencies that receive federal funds to do more outreach**, helping homeowners address issues such as tax liens and loan modifications.
- **Invest in the evaluation and expansion of non-profit programs that support homeownership**, by helping people establish clear title to their homes.²¹
- **Expand federal grants to cities that implement effective eviction prevention programs**, which work to keep people facing crises in their homes, including with temporary financial assistance.

¹⁵ CFPB

¹⁶ CFPB

¹⁷ <https://apnews.com/ae4b40a720b74ad8a9b0bfe65f7a9c29>

¹⁸ [Bloomberg Opinion](#)

¹⁹ [Urban Institute](#)

²⁰ [Urban Institute](#)

²¹ <https://www.westsidefuturefund.org>

Housing is scarce and hence too expensive. New construction is running an estimated 300,000 units a year short of demand -- and most of what's getting built is aimed at relatively affluent buyers. Meanwhile, affordable housing programs are directed mostly at renters. Mike will:

- **Encourage the construction of housing for purchase rather than rental**, by modifying federal housing programs and tax credits, such as the Low Income Housing Tax Credit.

Zoning rules, which stipulate minimum lot sizes or maximum building heights, prevent the construction of affordable housing and often lock minorities out of desirable neighborhoods (and often were designed specifically to do so).²² The Trump administration has been reversing efforts designed to break down such barriers to mobility.²³

- **Set aside \$10 billion for a competition to reward municipalities** that offer the best solutions to restrictive zoning and other obstacles.
- **Enforce HUD rules, such as Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing**, that tie federal funding to progress in reducing housing segregation.
- **Collect and standardize data nationwide**, to better understand where zoning changes will have the most beneficial effect.

To create 100,000 businesses, Mike will:

- **Provide funds and toolkits for cities to set up the most effective possible one-stop shops** -- or enhance existing one-stop shops -- to support entrepreneurs.
- **Make funding flexible, so cities can innovate to meet local needs** -- for example, by creating pop-up one-stop shops in high-need communities, or developing mobile apps that allow entrepreneurs to set up businesses quickly from anywhere.
- **Invest in local ideas that work**, by focusing funding on programs that deliver real, measurable results -- particularly for underrepresented groups. Elevate the best local models nationally, providing pilot funding to help more cities roll them out.
- **Create a national corps of business mentors**, building on the SBA's SCORE model. Emphasize connecting people from underrepresented groups with mentors who can help them start and expand their businesses. Use technology to connect mentors nationally with entrepreneurs in underserved communities.
- **Offer targeted matching funds to create or expand small-business incubators** and affordable shared workspaces. Encourage specialized services for underrepresented groups.

²² [Century Foundation](#)

²³ [HousingWire](#)

- **Increase funding for the SBA’s Small Business Investment Company program**, which licenses private providers of equity capital -- such as private-equity and venture-capital firms -- and offers subsidized financing.²⁴
- **Through the SBIC, provide incentives for private investors to focus on underrepresented groups** and underserved communities. For example, partner with university incubator programs, offering added SBIC support for startups in nearby distressed neighborhoods.
- **Increase federal investment in Community Development Financial Institutions**, which focus on lending in underserved communities.²⁵
- **Support Black-owned banks** by increasing federal deposits, and by providing a streamlined process to qualify as CDFIs -- allowing them to issue government- guaranteed bonds whose proceeds can be used for community investments.
- **Require financial institutions to report data on small-business lending**, including relevant characteristics of borrowers such as race and gender -- as mandated in the Dodd-Frank Act of 2010.²⁶
- **Improve enforcement of the Community Reinvestment Act** by applying it to all relevant lenders, conducting assessments where those lenders actually do business and providing more information on community-development investments.²⁷
- **Encourage local one-stop shops to certify underrepresented businesses** -- such as those owned by minorities, women and veterans -- to bid for government contracts. Ensure fair access, providing capacity-building support to help businesses compete for larger contracts.²⁸
- **Encourage “anchor institutions,”** such as universities and hospitals, to purchase goods and services from businesses in their local communities.²⁹
- Support the promulgation of **an SEC rule requiring public companies to publish information on the racial composition of their procurement**, including aggregated data on number, value and sector of contracts. Include a requirement that pension funds report on the composition of the asset managers they employ.

Mike will also reform opportunity zones, which were introduced in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act -- commonly known as the “Trump tax reform” -- to provide incentives to invest in low-income communities. Transparency and accountability have been lacking, and the process of designating zones has been too political. As a result, much of the investment has gone to high-end apartments and hotels --

²⁴ <https://www.sba.gov/partners/sbics>

²⁵ [CDFI Fund evaluation](#)

²⁶ [Mayer Brown](#)

²⁷ [Bloomberg Opinion](#)

²⁸ [Small Business Administration](#)

²⁹ <https://democracycollaborative.org/greater-university-circle-initiative>

and in one case, a superyacht marina³⁰ -- instead of developing the local communities that the bill was supposed to improve.³¹ He will:

- **Establish non-partisan commissions to select opportunity zones** based on objective, observable metrics, removing politics from the selection process.
- **Designate the 100 communities as opportunity zones.**
- **Establish reporting criteria to track effectiveness of opportunity zone investments**, including on job creation and wealth creation.
- **Provide incentives for lenders** (e.g., assume partial risk for loans) to accelerate lending in opportunity zones.
- **Pilot added incentives** -- such as shorter payback periods or the place-based EITC -- for investing in businesses that employ people in these communities.
- **Prioritize federal infrastructure investments in opportunity zones** with structurally deficient infrastructure. Repurpose federally owned real estate in these communities and invest in renewable energy deployment.
- **Eliminate opportunity zones that were politically established** and fall above 120% of national median family income.

³⁰ [ProPublica](#)

³¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/31/business/tax-opportunity-zones.html>