New York Circular City Initiative
Summary
What is the New York Circular City Initiative?

The New York Circular City Initiative brings together representatives from the mayor's office, city agencies, multinational corporations, foundations and academic institutions to reimagine the way New York's economy works by proposing circular solutions that transcend industry sectors and the public/private divide thus supporting the city's economic recovery from the pandemic.

The vision of the initiative is to help create a New York City where no waste is sent to landfill, environmental pollution is minimized, and thousands of good jobs for people of all social and economic backgrounds are created through the intelligent use of products and raw materials. In other words a city that is thriving, green and just.

Why creating a circular New York economy could be transformational

Shifting from a linear to a circular economic model requires rethinking how goods and the traditional producer/consumer relationship to be replaced by one of service provision and use. While this is a significant undertaking, the size of the prize is enormous. Today, cities consume 78 percent of the world’s energy and produce 60 percent of its emissions. Two-thirds of people globally are expected to live in urban areas by 2050 (up from just 14 percent in 1990), meaning that unless we act now their impact will only intensify. Achieving circularity in one of the great cities of the world has the potential to be transformational.

How the initiative can tackle the city’s biggest challenges

The New York Circular City Initiative’s report spotlights the greatest challenges facing New York. First, the impacts of climate change, which are putting the city’s physical infrastructure, public health and future growth at risk. Second, waste disposal, which despite great strides in recycling costs the municipal government billions of dollars a year and we most garbage buried in the ground. And, third, the longstanding systemic issues around racial and social justice, which are reflected in the limited economic opportunities for people of color and the lack of well-paid jobs across a wide range of skill levels.

The circular economy can help address all of these while supporting the city’s economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

A unique undertaking that can deliver jobs, growth and environmental benefits

To deliver circularity will require a clear vision and coordination among key stakeholders, and the New York Circular City Initiative has taken a key first step in convening partners from diverse sectors and interests to commit to transitioning New York City from a linear to a circular economy. Together, the initiative partners have identified the measures that will have the greatest positive impact on job creation, economic growth and the environment. At a conservative estimate, a circular New York economy could deliver $11bn in economic benefits, create over 11,000 jobs across the income spectrum and reduce to zero the amount of waste sent to landfill.

Participants in the New York Circular City Initiative

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THE REPORT: Complex challenges, circular solutions

The report researches 10 key levers and recommends actions that the city, its businesses and financial institutions could take, individually and collaboratively, to drive the shift to circularity and support the city’s economic recovery. They range from policy measures and procurement guidelines to the development of materials marketplaces and financial incentives, as well as a series of enablers levers such as innovation, communication and education that help the others to work effectively.

THE 10 LEVERS

**Markets**
- Build on, develop and promote existing materials marketplaces around the city.

**Procurement**
- Develop procurement guidelines and set a target for circular public procurement.

**Extended producer responsibility (EPR)**
- Ensure manufacturers take financial or physical responsibility for the treatment or disposal of post-consumer products.

**Jobs**
- Develop a jobs plan to identify, facilitate and promote circular jobs around the city and boost net employment.

**Planning**
- Incorporate circular economy principles into zoning and land development policy.

**Finance**
- Develop mechanisms and policy incentives to support the financing of circular economy (CE) technologies, projects and start-ups.

**Policy**
- Develop policy to incentivize good (e.g. reduced sales tax, circular goods marketplaces) and disincentivize bad (e.g. “pay-as-you-throw”) practices.

**Innovation**
- Promote circular innovation in product design, production processes and business models and through bespoke projects and ideation programs.

**Communication**
- Develop campaigns to communicate the benefits of circularity to residents and businesses and highlight the good work already being done.

**Education**
- Integrate circular thinking into the curriculum for vocational training and at universities and business schools.

**FOR THE CITY**
- Develop and implement circular procurement guidelines
- Ensure planning processes and applications integrate circular principles for industrial, commercial and residential developments
- Develop a city-wide communications campaign to inform, inspire and engage residents and businesses about the benefits of the circular economy in NYC
- Identify areas where extended producer responsibility can reduce waste streams while providing economic opportunities

**FOR BUSINESSES**
- Develop and implement circular procurement guidelines
- Identify and commercialize “product-as-service” opportunities
- Develop and purchase from materials marketplaces
- Equip current workforce with skills needed to better prepare for the circular economy

**FOR FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS**
- Mobilize capital toward circular economy investments
- Recognize resilience to resource scarcity and climate change as factors in assessing value and risk of financing and investment
- Develop financial products that are appropriate for non-traditional circular behaviors and business models

**FOR ALL**
- Identify opportunities to collaborate through multi-stakeholder partnerships geared toward achieving the circular economy in NYC

Realizing the vision of a circular New York City requires concerted effort and collaboration, and the leadership of policymakers, businesses and financial institutions. The recommendations outlined below provide some guidance on how this can be achieved. Each of these recommendations mutually supports the others in achieving a circular New York City.

We would also like to invite all candidates in the 2021 mayoral election to support our vision for a circular New York City.