

MAKING NEW YORK CITY GOVERNMENT WORK BETTER

New Yorkers know that bold government action will be needed in the daunting years ahead, to end the Covid crisis, restore our economy, save mass transit, fix NYCHA, address the housing crisis, transform how we achieve public safety, and confront rising seas and temperatures.

But city government can't meet any of those obligations when city agencies are run poorly, when money is wasted, when the results aren't clear, when projects aren't completed on time, when there's no accountability for mismanagement, when corruption goes unchecked.

NYC's response to the Covid-19 crisis has accelerated frustration with government, in a time of deep distrust. As progressive champions Elizabeth Warren and Zephyr Teachout have taught us, corruption in government—the placing of private interests over public ones—is one of the central democratic challenges we face. When contracts go to campaign contributors, when city-owned property is disposed for profit rather than public good, when corporations are able to take advantage of tax loopholes, our capacity to deliver services and protect our collective future is further diminished.

Progressive politicians too often promise the moon, but fail to deliver the goods. They aren't focused enough on what's necessary to make government work or telling the truth when it doesn't.

Brad is committed to bold, ambitious, progressive city government. But he knows that must come along with doing the hard work to make sure it delivers, and to telling the truth when it doesn't. In his time as a city Council Member, Brad has exposed weaknesses, demanded change, and won real improvements in how our city manages its schools, streets, housing, parks and more.

As New York City Comptroller—our city's chief government watchdog—Brad will make our city's government work better, and more in sync with our shared values. Through sharp, honest, data-driven, and transparent audits, he will root out waste, fraud, and abuse, target programs that aren't meeting our goals, and show what's needed to fix them. He will create new

audit teams that focus on performance, equity, sustainability, accessibility, and infrastructure. By organizing together with New Yorkers who know the problems first-hand and are hungry for change, Brad will make sure that we save money, solve problems, and deliver services better.

BRAD'S TRACK RECORD

During his time in the City Council, Brad has repeatedly exposed inefficiencies and injustices in City government and led campaigns to fix them. His hard-hitting reports on schools, housing, traffic safety, infrastructure and capital projects have won tangible results:

+ Air Conditioning for NYC Schools:

After Brad's 2017 report exposed that nearly one-quarter of NYC's classrooms (10,984) were "Too Hot to Learn," he worked with public school families to fight for the installation of an air conditioner in every single NYC classroom. As a result, thousands of those classrooms had air conditioning and better ventilation when Covid-19 hit.

+ Affordable Housing Accountability:

Long before he was in the Council, Brad was a watchdog on affordable housing. In 2005, he launched an investigation of suspect practices in granting NYS housing finance bonds that led to the prosecution of the developers, and an overhaul of the State program. His 2006 report was one of the first to identify gaping loopholes in the 421-a tax abatement program. In the Council, Lander's 2013 audit of New York City's inclusionary zoning policies showed that few affordable units had been created in most neighborhoods where the policy had been applied, and helped lead to a major overhaul of the program. Brad used this and other housing research to win more robust mandates on developers to build affordable housing, the first major expansion of the city's "Certificate of No Harassment" program to protect tenants, and the City's first pilot to legalize basement apartments in NYC.

Brad's report (along with Council Member Vanessa Gibson) revealed that New York City was making "A Capital Mistake" in cutting the City's capital budget

this year, going against the advice of economists about how the city can best recover from the Covid crisis. The result: restoration of \$466 million in funding for affordable housing.

+ Data for Desegregation:

Brad passed legislation in 2014 (the School Diversity Accountability Act) to require the City's first-ever annual public reports on school segregation. Advocates have used this annual data to win policies that will create diverse classrooms and ensure that all our kids have access to high-quality public education. Brad has continued to work closely with advocates and bring data to the fight to desegregate NYC.

+ Street Safety Data:

Since launching a survey of over 3,000 residents that helped protect the installation of the Prospect Park West bike lane, Brad has consistently brought data to his work for greater street safety. His Reckless Driver Accountability Act takes a data-driven, restorative justice approach to reducing reckless driving.

Those are a few of the ways Brad has made city government work better as 1 out of 51 Council Members, with just one staffer dedicated to policy work. As New York City Comptroller, Brad would lead a team of 150 people devoted to auditing City agencies, to telling the truth about how they're working, and making sure they work better.

BRAD'S PLAN TO IMPROVE NEW YORK CITY'S GOVERNMENT

Brad will bring this aggressive watchdog approach to the Comptroller's office. He will use first-rate data analytics, stakeholder engagement, whistleblower reports, in-depth auditing, and research to identify shortcomings and solutions.

Brad won't shy away from asking tough questions about our City's operations that we need to answer in order to improve them: Which agencies are wasting money? Is there a private interest or personal connection behind it? Which agencies complete their contracts on time, and which don't? Which agencies provide the best customer service, and which the worst? Which build our infrastructure to the highest standards? Which have lowered their carbon footprint? Which have the highest rates of diversity and professional development? And how can we bring these high-quality services to all agencies, citywide?

And Brad won't let the audits sit on shelves (or websites) gathering (virtual) dust. Through strategic

action, by involving New Yorkers in the audit work, by partnering with stakeholders working for change, Brad will fight to make sure that City Hall makes the changes needed.

1. AUDITING TO SAVE MONEY AND IMPROVE CITY AGENCY PERFORMANCE

The Comptroller audits some aspect of the work of every City agency at least once every four years. That auditing mandate covers more than 330,000 public employees working across more than 100 agencies and \$25 billion dollars in contracts paid out to over tens of thousands of non-profits and for-profit companies, citywide. Here's Brad's plan to make sure they work better:

+ Stronger use of data analytics:

The New York City Comptroller's office has been conducting audits for over 200 years, but the power of data analytics to do it well has only been around for a small fraction of that. Making better use of data analytics upfront—to identify those areas that need the deeper dive of an audit—will go a long way to making better use of scarce resources. In addition to strengthening the data analytics team in the Comptroller's office, he will work closely with the civic tech community to help analyze a far broader range of the City's open data than the office could get to alone (and consider establishing prizes and rewards, as appropriate, for civic technologists who identify problems that lead to savings and improvements).

+ Comptroller's watch list for waste, fraud, and abuse:

Brad will continue to aggressively audit the agencies on Comptroller Stringer's "watch list" (Corrections, Buildings, NYCHA, Homeless Services). He will also ensure more frequent auditing of those agencies that have especially large footprints (e.g. Department of Education, NYPD).

+ Demand reforms based on claims against the City:

In recent years, New York City has paid out approximately \$1 billion annually in taxpayer dollars in settlements for claims against the City. The Comptroller settles claims against the City where there is a monetary component, so the office has a responsibility to identify recurring problems and demanding reforms. The largest areas of preventable claims are police misconduct, traffic crashes caused by City drivers, and medical malpractice suits. Brad will audit each of these areas aggressively, combining data from claims with agency auditing to win reforms

that save lives and money.

- **Police misconduct accountability:**

In recent years, the City has paid out between \$175m - \$338m for claims of false arrests, warrantless searches, strip searches, denial of medical attention, physical abuse, lewd conduct, and arrests without probable cause. Before the New York State Legislature repealed Article 50-a, the Comptroller could not transparently compare claims against NYPD officers with that officer's track record of CCRB complaints. Brad is committed to providing transparency so that claims settled by the Comptroller's office can be matched to other disciplinary records, and to making sure that this data is used by the NYPD as an "early warning system" to identify officers who repeatedly engage in misconduct.

- **Traffic crash savings:**

In reviewing settlement data from 2013 to 2019, Streetsblog NYC found that the City paid out over half-a-billion dollars in settlements for traffic crashes caused by City-employed drivers. The bulk of these crashes were caused by drivers with five agencies: NYPD, FDNY, Sanitation, Parks, and DOT. One of these agencies (DOT) implemented Vision Zero training, education, and driver accountability protocols that reduced crashes by its drivers annually from approximately 125 down to fewer than 25, and reduced payouts from \$5 million to almost zero. However, none of the other top five agencies implemented similar programs or saw similar reductions. Brad will deploy Comptroller office audits as part of an effort to require the other City agencies with the highest dollar amount of settlements for traffic crashes (NYPD, FDNY, Sanitation, Parks) to follow the lead of DOT. Brad also proposes to audit and reduce the City's vehicle fleet, much of which is unnecessary and duplicative, in order to save money, reduce carbon emissions, and reduce crashes. Read Brad's plan for transforming traffic safety.

- + **Capital projects reform:**

The City spends over \$10 billion each year on capital projects. Research by Brad's office found that about half of the larger projects (over \$25 million) go over budget and fall behind schedule. And that information is only even available on 2% of the City's projects. Yet past Comptroller's offices have not focused on capital projects management reform. Brad has been the City Council's lead crusader for improving capital projects management. He created the first capital projects

tracking system at the City Council district level, pushed the Parks Department to create its Parks Capital Tracker, and analyzed where the City was over-budget and behind schedule on major projects. In 2020, he passed legislation requiring a universal capital projects tracking system. He will set up a team that focuses exclusively on capital projects management across agencies, to overhaul our faulty systems in order to save hundreds of millions of dollars and produce projects on time.

- + **Best practice audits:**

Most audits focus on things that aren't working, and identify ways to fix them. But plenty of times, agencies are doing good work that other agencies could learn from and implement. DOT dramatically reduced crashes caused by DOT drivers, saving the City millions of dollars. A "best practice" audit could help other agencies do the same, build a culture of improvement, and strengthen badly-needed trust in City government.

2. AUDITING FOR EQUITY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND ACCESSIBILITY

In addition to audits that root out waste and improve agency performance, Brad will establish new audit teams that make sure we are "accounting for our values." Brad will restructure the Audit Bureau to include teams that focus strategically on the following types of audits. More strategic audits will also enable agency leaders to focus on improving their performance in key areas.

- + **Performance audits:**

To improve the delivery of citywide services, improve coordination, and reduce waste and duplication with a focus on measuring real outcomes for New Yorkers, not just outputs and numbers that look good in a press release.

- + **Equity audits:**

To identify and reduce disparities across race, gender and ethnicity citywide, in how our city agencies deliver services, pay and treat their workers, and hire contractors. Brad will soon be releasing a plan to bring equity auditing to the NYC comptroller's office.

- + **Climate audits:**

To increase the City's resilience in the face of climate change by monitoring the City agencies' efforts to combat and prepare for climate change, from assessing city agencies' energy use and waste management practice to ensuring they have implemented sufficient efforts to reduce emissions

and prepare for emergencies, including climate-induced disasters. [Read Brad's ambitious plan for confronting the climate crisis.](#)

+ Accessibility audits:

To ensure our agencies are doing everything in their power to improve accessibility for people with visible and invisible disabilities, and meeting the needs of our City's thriving senior populations citywide.

Infrastructure audits to assess the City's delivery of critical capital infrastructure projects, including their ability to remain on-time and on-budget and coordinate across agencies to ensure local government is doing everything it can to increase our resilience, equity and fairness across all of New York City's neighborhoods.

+ Public health audits:

To assess the City's delivery of critical public health services and development of infrastructure to handle both persistent public health problems and imminent public health crises, including in their stocks of vital medical supplies, protections for medical workers, and emergency preparedness, as well as in their accounting for the disproportionate impacts of public health crises on low-income and historically marginalized communities.

All of these audits will be conducted with an eye toward short and long-term crisis management, so that the City will be well-prepared to tackle new and ongoing crises from climate change to potential future disease outbreaks.

3. AUDITING FOR THE RISKS WE FACE:

The Covid-19 crisis has shown how catastrophic it can be when we are unprepared for the risks we face. Under Brad's leadership, the Comptroller's office will assess the major risks facing New York City, and identify the policies, technologies, and infrastructure we need to mitigate them. We witnessed Hurricane Sandy, and we know the climate crisis poses far more massive risk than anything we've seen so far. We've experienced the impact of 1970s fiscal crisis, the attacks of 9/11, and the subprime mortgage crisis. We can now more easily imagine future public health crises.

We don't have a crystal ball to identify future crises, but we can conduct smart analyses of the risks our city is facing. As philosopher [Toby Ord](#) has shown in [The Precipice](#), the number of existential and catastrophic threats we face is growing. By confronting them honestly, we can take steps now to be more prepared. Under Brad's leadership, the

Comptroller's office will bring stakeholders together and utilize data-driven analysis to identify catastrophic risks facing New York City. Based on this "catastrophic risk audit," Brad's team will identify financial resources, public policies, investment strategies, agency audits, infrastructure and personnel toward the efforts necessary to minimize those risks and to prepare us to face them in the future.

4. PEOPLE-POWERED AUDITS THAT PRODUCE REAL CHANGE:

Too often, government audits identify problems and suggest solutions, but nothing changes. The audits sit on dusty shelves or unviewed web-pages, agencies react defensively, and nothing gets done. Brad knows that change happens when good ideas are combined with organizing. Whether the issue is street safety, affordable housing, poor working conditions, or delayed capital projects, Brad has always worked closely with stakeholders, workers, community organizations, advocates and engaged New Yorkers to get to the root of the problem, collaborate on a solution, and fight to win real change. As Comptroller, Brad will take the same approach, engaging New Yorkers in the fight to make government work better, and more in sync with our values.

+ NYC Resident Feedback Survey:

Building on work done by Mayor Bloomberg in 2008, and the Citizens Budget Commission in 2017, Brad will look to have the Comptroller's office engage in the city's third [resident feedback survey](#), to gauge NYC residents satisfaction with municipal services and the quality-of-life in their neighborhoods. The survey will provide a valuable tool for performance management, focus on disparities, identify priority audits, and recruit New Yorkers from every neighborhood interested in helping hold their city to account.

+ Implement Participatory Audits:

New Yorkers are the consumers of all of our City's critical services — from sanitation, to transportation, to education. As Comptroller, Brad will work with real New Yorkers to make our city better. He wants to know: What would improve your morning commute? What could the City do to make composting, recycling, and waste reduction a part of your daily routine? How can we make you feel safe staying overnight at a City shelter? Under Brad's leadership, the city's workforce and human service contractors will play a role in identifying areas for improvement and workable solutions. As part of his commitment to

equity, the office will center the voices of our most vulnerable community members in participatory auditing work.

+Partner With Agencies Upfront, Hold Them to Account When Needed:

Where appropriate, Brad will work with agency commissioners upfront, with the goal of identifying areas of their organization that need improvement, and agreeing on audit approaches so that commissioners are empowered to implement recommendations. The goal is not to release “gotcha” reports, but to help drive real change. Brad will keep track of where agencies have implemented his recommendations to ensure that New Yorkers’ voices are not just heard but acted upon.

+ Fight to Win:

Brad knows there’s only so much a comptroller can do alone. From fighting stop-and-frisk, to passing the Reckless Driver Accountability Act, to winning a fair work week for fast-food employees, Brad has always worked closely with coalitions of advocates, experts and constituents to build sufficient power to make change happen. Brad will bring that same people-powered approach to the Comptroller’s office. Where agencies are recalcitrant, Brad will collaborate with stakeholders in sustained efforts to win the reforms that will make a real difference in the lives of New Yorkers.

CONCLUSION

Making city government work better is hard work all by itself. It can be challenging to find the right measures, be honest about shortcomings, make hard calls about what’s not working, and make meaningful recommendations that can actually be implemented to make it work better.

But it’s worth it. Our ability to end wasteful spending, improve performance, confront disparities, reduce our carbon footprint, and make sure government programs are aligned with our values and achieving our goals is not just a core responsibility of the New York City Comptroller’s office. It is critical to the well-being of our residents, the health of our democracy, and the very future of our city.

