

CANDIDATE NAME:
CONTACT NAME & EMAIL:

COMMUNITY GARDENS

- 1. Do you support the permanent preservation of all community gardens in NYC? How will you achieve this as mayor (zoning, public private partnership, municipal land trust, etc.)?**

I support working with neighborhoods to make community gardens permanent, though given the diversity of circumstances across the City, I cannot commit to permanency in all cases. I will use a mix of all of the above options to achieve this goal.

- 2. A number of longstanding community gardensⁱ are being threatened with destruction; will you protect these gardens by transferring them into the Parks Department? How will you balance the transfer of the gardens to the Parks Department while still encouraging city agencies to allow communities to start new gardens?**

I am committed to preserving community gardens and providing a voice for stakeholders in the process.

- 3. Do you agree that all community gardens transferred to Parks Department under the 2002-10 Community Garden Agreementⁱⁱ are permanently preserved?^{iii,iv}**

I will revisit community garden rules and identify ways of better supporting and maintaining community gardens.

- 4. How would you ensure that community gardeners become the majority decision-makers over community garden policy? How would you increase the transparency of and public participation in community garden policy?**

One of my core principles is inclusion. You can see it in my work in education where I've made including parents a major part of everything I've done. As Mayor, I would apply the same principle to community gardens and work to ensure that people from the community, not just the organized community gardeners, but other community representatives,

are involved in preserving, building, and expanding and all the key decisions around our community gardens. I would also work with the organized community garden community to develop the best means for not just permanently protecting the gardens we have, but expanding them and developing the best possible governance model that, again, makes inclusion fundamental. Green space of all kinds is essential to making a city livable.

5. What actions would you take to create more community gardens and urban farms?

I support neighborhood efforts to promote and expand community gardens and urban farms. We need to make better use of underutilized and vacant space across the city, while pushing for expanded green space with new developments. I will actively identify underutilized city-owned land and assess whether it should be converted to community garden and urban farms.

PARKS

6. As mayor, will you increase funding for the Parks Department? Will municipal funds be used to support the Greenthumb program of the Parks Department, which currently operates on funding from federal Community Development Block Grants?*

While it is certainly true that Parks have been underfunded for many years, given the City's current financial condition and the still weak economy, it may not be possible to increase funding at this time. I will hold the line on further budget cuts to Parks. I think we have to continue to be creative about finding new ways to find financial support for the parks. However, I am also troubled by the fact that some parks in more affluent areas have strong private support, other parks suffer from the lack of such support. While we certainly don't want to discourage private support, we should try to find a way to share that support with more parks. Given our limited resources, any time we can receive federal funds for City projects we should happily accept them.

7. How will you increase safety, long-term employment, and maintenance in public parks?

Having parks doesn't mean much if people can't use them. Protecting the parks has to be an integral part of the PEP and NYPD's overall crime fighting efforts, but the NYPD still does not report crime in parks consistent with Local Law 114. I will change this, while pushing for greater interagency coordination in the interest of safety, employment, and maintenance. And as noted above, we also need to hold the line on budget cuts for the Parks Department and continue to seek other creative ways to finance park operations.

8. How will you increase public green open spaces in [underserved neighborhoods](#), which are many times below the City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) [open space recommendation](#)^{vi} of 2.5 acre per 1000 persons?

First, I will preserve community gardens that are already established in communities. Second, I will identify unused city properties that might be viably converted into parks, gardens, or open space. Third, when there are rezonings in the area, I will look to use density bonuses for providing open space – similar to the plaza program that we already have.

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OPEN SPACE

There have been successful creations of community gardens and urban farms with the collaboration of [private low-income housing](#) and [public buildings](#), built on [public land \(HPD\)](#) such as [Via Verde](#).

9. How do you envision new housing incorporating accessible community green open spaces and encouraging green initiatives? How would you make policy to integrate community gardens, urban farms, green roofs and other green initiatives in all housing, especially in low-income neighborhoods where it is most needed?

Via Verde shows that this model can work. As Mayor, I would work with developers and architects and other experts to figure out the best way to incentivize this type of new construction and also how to best add these kind of elements whenever possible when renewing existing buildings.

10. The Bloomberg administration has sold and still is selling off parks and key public spaces to developers (Yankees, Ratner,

Private Restaurants, NYU, USTA,...) during his reign. What would your policy be towards selling or alienating city-owned land that is currently being used as parks, community gardens, NYCHA public open spaces and other passive and active open spaces?

Land is obviously a limited resource and that is especially true for parks and green space. I don't think you can say you will never ever sell any park or green space, but I would have a firm policy that says 1. The first principle is that park and green space must be preserved; 2. Any proposal to build on current park or green space would have to result in not just the same amount but more park or green space that was just as or more useable to the same community; and 3. Even if a project would result in more park or green space there would have to be a compelling reason why the project had to be built on that space, solid evidence of a search to find alternate space, and clear and compelling benefits specifically to the community affected.

FOOD ACCESS

11. How would you use public open space for both economically developing our food sector and providing healthy food access for our people? What policies would you pursue that would advance this idea, especially in areas that lack food access?

By combining community gardens with farmers markets it will be possible to provide more access to fresh foods – and I believe we need more urban agriculture projects particularly in low-income areas that have limited green space and access to healthy food. I am also inspired by recent innovations in public parks that focus on learning gardens and expanded food access, such as Seattle's Food Forest.

SCHOOL GARDENS

12. How will you encourage partnership between schools and community gardens, as well as the establishment of new [school gardens](#), for use in public curriculum and in school lunches?

As Mayor, I would encourage every school that can include a garden on its grounds to create one. Gardens are a great means for educating children and getting them interested and excited about eating fresh food. In addition, school gardens should be open to parents and other community members so they can care for the gardens during the summer and school

holidays. This should be part of a broader effort to connect schools with communities.

ⁱ List of gardens under HPD: [HPD Community Gardens](#)

ⁱⁱ [2002-2010 Community Garden Agreement](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Christopher Amato, the lead attorney in 2002 for the State Attorney General, gave [testimony](#) that all 198 community gardens offered for preservation were to remain permanently protected, including all those transferred to Parks during the 2002-10 settlement.

^{iv} Mayor Bloomberg issued a [press release](#) in which he stated, "... In addition, we are providing permanent protection to hundreds of community gardens throughout New York City, and establishing a fair process for reviewing future proposals to develop other garden properties." However, in contradiction to the Garden Agreement and their prior promise to extend it, the Bloomberg administration in 2010 created the [parks rules](#) with its new community garden licenses. The [press release](#) states that the administration can dispose of any community garden at any time, although they would generally choose to keep them as long as they are in good standing.

^v Details: More than 5.5% of [Chicago's](#) total operating budget is spent on Parks compared to less than 0.5% in NYC. In 1960 NYC spent 1.6% of its budget on the %14 of the land it had under Parks.

^{vi} CEQR [Open Space Index](#)