

**STATE OF THE BOROUGH ADDRESS**  
**RUBEN DIAZ JR., BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT**  
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Good morning!

I am proud to stand here today, for the fourth time, to deliver my annual “State of the Borough” address.

I stand before you, honored and humbled, to have your full faith and confidence as we lead the Bronx into a new age of success and prosperity.

I stand before you fully aware of the tremendous contributions of those who came before us, while also building for future generations.

I stand before you as the president of a borough which has taken tremendous steps towards a brighter future.

And I stand before you today at the Monroe campus, here in Soundview, where it all started for me. I never thought, so many years later, I would serve as the chief executive of my hometown.

The Bronx has come a long way in the last few decades. Crime is down, investment is high, our neighborhoods are cleaner, and our economy is growing.

In my first term we have taken every step and opportunity available to advance the New Bronx, and we are succeeding.

What is the New Bronx? The New Bronx is a place that is safe — safer, than many major cities. The New Bronx is a place where crime continues to drop to record lows.

The New Bronx is a place with stellar infrastructure, and a willing workforce.

The New Bronx is a place of diversity, where a full 40 percent of all of our residents were born in another country—and we embrace that diversity.

The New Bronx is a place where you can enjoy world-class cultural and recreational opportunities, or eat a top-notch gourmet meal.

The New Bronx is a place where we have put more than \$94 million in direct capital funding into nearly 300 projects, creating jobs, thousands of housing units, rebuilding our schools and improving our parks.

The New Bronx is a place where, together with Marlene Cintron, the president of the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation; and its lending arm, the Business Initiative

Corporation of New York; we have leveraged \$60 million in loans into over half a billion dollars in investment.

The New Bronx is a place that saw almost \$1.5 billion of new investment last year, and more than \$4.5 billion since 2009. The New Bronx is a place where we have helped to create or retain thousands of new jobs, and will create thousands more.

That, my friends, is the New Bronx.

We're outlining a new agenda in education, health and economic development, and wherever possible we are merging all three. At the same time, we're ensuring that business in our borough adheres to sustainable development standards.

We are growing by leaps and bounds. We are seeing significant progress in our efforts to make the Bronx an even greater place to live, work and raise a family. We are moving forward.

The arrival of my administration in 2009 meant a new paradigm. We would use every means at our disposal to insure that business as usual was no longer the norm.

In this New Bronx, that had to change. We needed to become more aggressive in attracting new businesses, while also encouraging those companies to hire Bronxites. We needed better wages and more local subcontractors, so that all corners of our borough could prosper.

For example, we've delivered FreshDirect and Smith Electric, and they will do business together, as the former purchases zero emission trucks from the latter. We will see major commercial hubs built in Kingsbridge and Throggs Neck, and the borough's first ever indoor mall in Bay Plaza. At every turn we are providing direct recruiting services to these companies and the many others that have chosen to make the Bronx their home.

What we accomplished this year will have a profound and lasting effect on the borough. With assistance from the New York City Industrial Development Agency, we've secured 18 projects that will result in another \$550 million in capital expenditures. These projects will retain and or create more than 5,000 permanent jobs, in addition to thousands of construction jobs.

For example, Montefiore Medical Center is building a \$230 million office tower in the Hutchinson Metro Center. This development will create hundreds of construction jobs and new healthcare jobs, and my office was proud to help make it happen.

We were also successful in expanding medium-sized businesses, such as Manhattan Beer Distributors, Smith Electric, and Baco Enterprises, which is a steel instruments manufacturer. These three projects combined will provide more than 700 jobs.

Expanding the depth of the borough's food industry, we attracted seven new retail and wholesale food businesses, including Foodfest Depot, --R Best Produce, a FineFair supermarket, --Krinos Food, --Big Farm Corporation, --a new Fairway bakery, -- and, as I mentioned earlier, FreshDirect. We've seen Bronx Brewery break ground on a new facility in Port Morris, bringing our borough its first brewery since 1968.

In partnership with Governor Cuomo's Regional Economic Development Council we secured a capital allocation of \$400,000 for a new organic produce facility and rooftop garden in Oak Point, operated by Gotham Greens. And when the Hunts Point Produce Market renovation is finally underway, the Bronx food industry will continue its undisputed role as the bread basket of the tri-state area and a super-generator of jobs.

Now, big projects may make the news, but in fact we are assisting businesses of all sizes.

The BOEDC continues to give microloans to smaller companies, and in August I was proud to stand with our U.S. Senator, Kirstin Gillibrand, to call for new tax breaks for start-up companies.

Perhaps the best way to help small business is to bring customers through their doors, which is why we hosted our second annual "Savor the Bronx" restaurant week in partnership with the Bronx Tourism Council, an important event following the incredible loss of business they saw in the wake of Superstorm Sandy.

Tourism remains a great way to help our small businesses grow, and this year we expanded on many of our existing programs while also introducing new ones. We launched a new tourism publication, *The Bronx Now!*, aimed at bringing visitors from the entire region to the great attractions in our borough. We will see an expanded *Salsafest!*, new Spring tours, and an even bigger Bronx Week.

And there's more. 2014 will mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bronx County...an occasion I'm sure we will all want to celebrate. In the coming weeks, I will announce the formation of a commission that will help guide a year of events commemorating this milestone.

None of this is possible without an active Bronx Tourism Council, and its dedicated director. With that said, I would like to officially introduce everyone to Olga Luz Tirado. Ms. Tirado is an award-winning communications professional, and I am thrilled to have her as part of our team.

And let me explain how we all work together. In October, one of our borough's most well-known eateries, Tony's Pier, was destroyed by Superstorm Sandy. The day after the storm, I saw the damage firsthand, and directed my office to assist them. The BOEDC has been coordinating with the City's Economic Development Corporation and other federal agencies, like FEMA, to make sure they get help. Once they've rebuilt, the Bronx Tourism Council will be there to bring them a crowd. And I'll be first in line.

This is all part of our conceptual master plan, a plan we have put into motion in my first term...a plan that leads to complementary development and good job opportunities for the people who live here.

Such a model offers significant benefits for the entire City, especially in our commitment to "sustainable" development. Superstorm Sandy has pushed climate change, and the need for environmentally-friendly development, to the forefront. As I've said before, I will not fund a project unless it contains a comprehensive "green" design.

Since taking office we have put more than \$25 million of our capital budget into 35 different housing projects, creating thousands of construction jobs and housing units in the process. For example, we are revitalizing Borinquen Court in partnership with the Westside Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing. We are replacing the roof, rebuilding apartments and assisting with a total green renovation.

Another approach we have utilized to achieve cleaner housing and reduce unhealthy emissions has been through our Solar Thermal Initiative, which we kicked-off this year with a \$400,000 capital allocation. This pilot program helps residential buildings install Solar Thermal Hot Water systems, reducing the costs of heating domestic hot water in multi-family buildings.

Such efforts have garnered us national and international attention. In fact, this year the prestigious Big Apple Brownfield Awards recognized three major Bronx projects for their environmentally-friendly components, while also presenting me with their distinguished service award, for my longtime commitment to sustainable development.

These programs are just the beginning of our plan to retrofit the Bronx while hastening green job creation. That's why today I am proposing that we create a fund that will leverage our capital dollars with existing programs at the federal, state and city level, so that more residences can take part in what we are doing. We have to be smarter with how we spend vital tax dollars so we can create more sustainable housing, so that everyone can recoup the remarkable savings that come over time.

We're not just greening our buildings and our commercial vehicles, we're also working to green our mass transit system as well.

That's why this year we took on another project, one that has been contemplated in the Bronx for more than 40 years, and moved it further along than ever before. Today, we are closer than we have ever been to expanding Metro-North in the eastern corridor of the Bronx.

We've always heard that the people of the Bronx were united in their deep desire to see this happen. But that support was made clear this fall, when hundreds of residents of Hunts Point, Parkchester and Morris Park—and over a thousand residents of Co-op City—showed up at public hearings to support this plan.

Last year, I spoke about how transformative this project would be...how it would open our borough up to new development, employment and housing opportunities. That has not changed. We need this. Over the past year, I have been in constant contact with our borough's elected officials on this proposal, and everyone agrees. In fact, the governor's NYS 2100 commission, formed in the wake of Superstorm Sandy, has recommended this project as a critical component in hardening our transit infrastructure.

This year, we will push for its full funding in the MTA's upcoming five-year capital plan. The dream of Metro-North service in the East Bronx must become a reality now.

Metro-North service to the East Bronx is not the only long-awaited projects that are coming to life in our borough. After years of advocacy, we will finally see a first-class hotel opened in our borough next year.

I am pleased, and I am sure you all are as well, to welcome the Marriott hotel chain to the campus of the Hutchinson Metro Center, where the company has announced plans to build a 125-room Residence Inn. In the past, those visiting family and others in our borough have found themselves looking for places to stay in Westchester and Manhattan. This hotel will keep them in the Bronx.

Our development interests extend to our schools, as well. Since 2009 we have funded nearly 150 education projects at nearly \$21 million, helping to rebuild infrastructure and bring new technology to the borough's public education institutions.

Without great schools, we would not have national chess champions at the Bronx Center for Science and Mathematics, or one of the nation's top debate teams at the Bronx High School for Law, Government and Justice.

Without great schools, we would not see success stories like the Green Bronx Machine at Discovery High School, where teacher Steve Ritz has built a citywide model for green education. In December Steve was honored with a Chevrolet GREEN Educator Award, and I was thrilled to present it to him.

Also in December, we named a longtime parent advocate as our borough's new representative to the Panel for Educational Policy. Robert Powell is a resident of Wakefield and a parent at Lehman High School, which I attended. Over the years he has demonstrated a serious commitment to the betterment of our public schools. Welcome to our team, Robert.

Robert and I—and all of you—have more to do. We have an aggressive agenda to improve our schools, and we have put forward serious ideas for the future of public education. Last March, we teamed up with Truman High School and Mercy College to launch the Bronx Achievement Pact, an innovative new educational initiative that aims to raise high school graduation rates, enhance college readiness and maximize college enrollment by pooling resources and offering high school students a chance to earn early college credits.

We are also working to make the specialized high school admissions process more equitable, and in May we released a report highlighting Bronx students' severe underrepresentation in Specialized High Schools as a consequence of inadequate test preparation and other factors.

This report called for the Department of Education to expand test preparation options in our most disadvantaged communities. It also called for increased gifted and talented programs and the creation of alternative methods of admission to specialized high schools. Two of the best public high schools in the United States—the Bronx High School of Science and the High School of American Studies at Lehman College—sit within our borders. Yet our kids are unable to take advantage of the wonderful opportunities such schools offer.

That must change, and that change must begin right here. Already, this report was used in the lawsuit filed by the NAACP seeking to bring equity to the City's admissions process for these schools. We know that some of the brightest middle school students in the City, if not the nation, live here in the Bronx. It is time for the Department of Education to give those kids the resources with which to succeed.

Bronx children must have access to great education opportunities, ones that lead to high-paying careers.

The facts are clear. We have a significant disconnect between the skills needed to compete in the economy and those available in the workforce. In 2010, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—or STEM fields accounted for 64 percent of all specialty-employer visa requests nationally. Locally, that translated in 50,000 jobs.

Can you imagine if just half of those jobs were filled by Bronxites? Our borough needs a new school that can prepare our children for these careers. A school like the P-TECH school in Brooklyn. It is a six year high school, grades 9 to 14, where the curriculum is driven by professionals from IBM and the students graduate with a degree from New York City College of Technology.

They are doing college level work in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. We need a school like this in the Bronx and we cannot afford to wait.

The Bronx is ripe for growth in this field, and we have all the essential parts for a vibrant tech start up sector to take hold and expand. In fact, it is our goal to partner with Hostos Community College so that their plan to build a new Allied Health and Science Building becomes a reality. We will work with the next mayor to see that happen.

It is also time for all of us to ensure that our kids—and our adults for that matter—are physically able to succeed. That is why this year we will host our first-ever health summit. Like our education and economic development summits before it, this event will help us outline a path forward on the major challenges that face us, such as asthma and obesity.

This is a paradox. How is it that our borough's largest employer is the healthcare industry, that we are home to some of the most prestigious medical institutions and centers of care in the world, that we house a medical school conducting life-changing and life-saving research, but yet we have some of the worst health indicators in the nation?

We have a number of questions that need to be answered, and we won't be able to accomplish everything in one day. But together, we will organize a day of substantive discussion on the topic of healthcare, and outline a blueprint for change for our constituents.

Speaking of our constituents, my office's constituent services unit, last year alone, helped Bronxites with more than 3,400 individual cases. Since 2009, the unit has handled more than 12,000 cases.

This is what it means to be an elected official—to help people—be it the community that’s asking for help with traffic improvements, or the father who needs to register his child for school, or the mother who needs a job.

This is what we’re in it for, and I’d like to take a moment to thank my constituent services staff for all they do.

Economic development is growing. We’re creating new jobs. We’re getting healthier. Good things are happening in our schools. At every turn, the New Bronx has seen dramatic improvement. Yet we are still fighting the stereotypes of a previous generation. It is time we bury the idea that the Bronx is unsafe.

In January, my office released statistics that showed a dramatic reduction in violent crime. In 2012, the Bronx saw its lowest murder rate since 1963. In fact, we are dramatically outpacing cities like Boston, Newark and Philadelphia in preventing violent crime. And we of course want to thank Commissioner Ray Kelly, Assistant Chief Carlos Gomez and the entire NYPD for their efforts to make the Bronx safer.

It is so important that we use these statistics to show the world how far we have come. It is time for us to take greater ownership of our brand --to elevate the Bronx brand.

When individuals or groups seek to invoke the past to describe our hometown, let them know that it is not the truth.

Yes, the Bronx has improved, and violent crime has dropped dramatically. However, we do not live in a vacuum. The national conversation on gun control needs to address the culture around gun ownership. Isn’t it incomprehensible that no one questions regulations for toy guns, but we do for real guns? Why does any Bronxite—in fact any American—feel the need to own a gun?

Does it make sense... that someone who has been convicted of a violent misdemeanor is eligible to own a gun? Why do the youth of our city think that a gun can solve their problems? Maybe they need to visit the morgue, to see exactly what this trajectory leads to!

I support the President and our Governor in their efforts to ban assault weapons. I also introduced a resolution, which passed unanimously, calling for a full study of our City’s pension investments, so that we can identify just how much of those funds are fueling gun profits.

And we must thank our State delegation for moving so quickly to pass the NY SAFE Act, putting our state at the forefront of tougher gun laws. New York always leads the way, and they proved it last month. Take a bow!

We cannot stop there. We must work with our partners in government at all levels to make sure that the President’s plan to require criminal background checks for all gun sales becomes law.

We must support microstamping, allowing police to match ammunition used in crimes to the gun it was fired from. It’s also time to limit the number of guns and amount of ammunition an individual can purchase at any given time, and to require a drug test to get a gun license.

We must also be willing to help the police take guns off of our streets by seeing criminals put in jail. And we did that, continuing our “Peace in our Streets” campaign this year, reaching out directly to Bronx residents to encourage them to report illegal guns in their neighborhoods.

Solving the gun problem goes hand in hand with lower recidivism rates in our borough and our City. Statistics show us that we have a significant population of repeat offenders.

My office is dealing with this issue on two fronts. In June, we received funding from the State Department of Criminal Justice Services to implement the first ever Bronx Reentry Taskforce. I would also like to thank the Governor, Senator Gustavo Rivera, Senator Hassel-Thompson, and Assemblyman Eric Stevenson. As a result of our advocacy, the Fulton Correctional Facility will be transformed into a unique and comprehensive one-stop-shop for services for those released from prison. Through these initiatives we will help these individuals lead a productive life, and do our best to keep them from returning back to prison.

We must also ensure that those who engage in gun violence are not allowed to escape the spotlight. Today, I propose the creation of a new gun crime registry, with reporting requirements similar to those as sex offenders. The registry would be available online, and would require perpetrators of gun violence to keep updated records with the police regarding their living and employment arrangements. Law-abiding citizens ought to know who among us is responsible for gun violence, and this initiative will do just that.

This issue affects me so greatly, because I love the Bronx so much. I often tell school groups how inspired I am to be borough president, having grown up in the Bronx and spent my entire life here.

In this borough, we have the most kindhearted, caring citizenry anyone could ask for, and nowhere was that more clear than in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy.

The Bronx was not hit as badly as other communities. Yet those who were affected found a comforting shoulder and a ready hand in their neighbors. Bronxites went to Staten Island to help homeowners dig through the wreckage, while delivering toys at Christmas to children in Rockaway Beach. This borough’s response in the face of Hurricane Sandy, the charity and love we showed our neighbors in the wake of this devastation, made me more proud than anything else to be your borough president.

We are doing great things. We are ushering in new development, and seeing long-coveted projects come to life right before our eyes. We have encouraged companies to move to the Bronx, not only from other boroughs but from other states and countries, while strengthening the economy for businesses that are already here.

We’ve fundamentally transformed the way our City does business with our tax dollars and passed a “living wage,” in partnership with Council Members Annabel Palma and G. Oliver Koppell.

We have outlined real reforms for our public schools, and for restoring the promise of our specialized high schools for all students, all while providing tens of millions of dollars in funding to our schools for equipment upgrades and new technology.

We have leveraged tens of millions more into thousands of new housing units.

We have seen major developments--and new jobs they bring--in every corner of the Bronx.

We have outlined a plan, together with the MTA, to bring Metro-North service to the east Bronx, and will work with State Senator Jeff Klein to make that happen.

We have realized the promise of a major hotel chain making its home in our borough.

And we do all of this with an eye towards sustainable development, ensuring a healthier environment while also preparing our borough for the economy of tomorrow.

And the best is yet to come. In my next term we will continue to offer a bold, progressive agenda for the future of the borough, one that will see long-held dreams become reality and new ideas come to life.

In my next term we will continue to make the Bronx a greener place, as our businesses switch their truck fleets to electric, our buildings convert to cleaner fuel, and solar power become ubiquitous.

In our parks, we will continue to join companies like AT&T to bring wi-fi to more outdoor spaces. With Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz we will bring access to the Jerome Park Reservoir, and reopen the High Bridge for public use with Assemblywoman Vanessa Gibson.

We will see the completion of the renovation of the Hunts Point Produce Market, so that this economic engine has the new home it deserves.

We will push to see our state's minimum wage increased, and work to pass "paid sick leave" legislation in our City.

With Councilman Fernando Cabrera and Mayor Bloomberg, we will bring responsible development to the Kingsbridge Armory.

We will continue to help our most vulnerable population—our seniors—having already put over \$4 million into 116 senior centers across the borough for daily meals, fitness training, tax assistance and even a new van at the James Monroe Senior Center with Assemblyman Marcos Crespo.

We will bring the PGA to our new golf course at Ferry Point Park with Councilman Jimmy Vacca, and a state-of-the-art tennis center to Crotona Park with Majority Leader Joel Rivera.

We will streamline our community board offices, using my task force's report as a guideline for greater productivity.

We will continue to support our libraries, which have seen their usage double in the past decade.

We will advance our "health impact assessment" legislation, together with Council Member Maria del Carmen Arroyo.

We will help our very own public television network—Bronxnet—as it expands in programming and capacity, opening its new studio operation in conjunction with Mercy College.

We will continue to pressure the City to clean our public schools, and to remove toxic PCB's from them.

There is so much to do, and so much I am proud of. Abraham Lincoln, perhaps one of our greatest presidents, once said that, "The best thing about the future is that it comes one day at a time." Every single day we are working to build a new future for the Bronx.

Each day in our Bronx—the New Bronx—represents a great step forward to a better and more future. Good things are happening here, and there's more to come. We spent many years, many decades, building our borough. We've taken past successes and built upon them. Generation after generation of Bronxites—including many of you here today and our mayor Ed Koch—put in the hard work to make this borough what it is.

Look around you. Look at how the work has paid off. The seeds we planted so many decades ago are bearing fruit. And it doesn't stop there. We have to keep going. We must persevere. We must push forward. During the next four years we will—together as "One Bronx"—as a New Bronx, bring about meaningful change to our borough.

God bless you, God bless the Bronx and God bless America!