

# Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso's 2025 State of the Borough Address

April 10, 2025 – Boys and Girls High School in Bed-Stuy

Good evening, Brooklyn!

Thank you for being here tonight.

[PERSONAL THANK YOU TO FAMILY]

I love you all:

[NAMED SHOUT-OUTS]

My fellow BPs: Donovan Richards, Mark Levine, Vanessa Gibson, and Vito Fossella.

The Council Members, State Senators, and Assembly Members,

Our community board members, local leaders, and neighbors here with us,

Our performers – Suleila Clarke, the Nelson Mandela Drumline, and Borough Hall's own DJ Specialist.

Our hosts Principal Harrison and Boys and Girls, partners like BRIC and Chem Creative, and our ASL interpreters,

And of course, my team at Borough Hall who puts in the work every day for Brooklyn.

Tonight, tonight I want to tell you a story.

A Brooklyn story.

It starts with a boy and a girl from the Dominican Republic who came to New York and fell in love.

And it ends with a kid from Brooklyn who succeeded because this city bet on him, his parents, and his future.

My name is Antonio Reynoso, and before I became your borough president, I was just a Brown boy from the Southside of Williamsburg.

I grew up in Section 8 housing, eating family dinners paid for by food stamps, and playing basketball with my friends over at Rodney Park.

My family was poor, but we were happy.

My parents felt like the life they wanted – for me – for us – for themselves – it was in reach.

They didn't mind how far they had to go to get there.

The promise of it all – it was strong enough.

It could be theirs if they just put in the work.

And they did.

Things weren't great in Williamsburg – it was the 80s.

But our family was doing okay.

We were figuring it out.

And I used to say it was luck.

And some of it was.

But a lot of it wasn't.

Section 8 housing, food stamps, school scholarships, welfare, WIC.

That's not luck.

It's government.

It's all the resources New York and this country used to take a bet on me.

Brooklyn backed me.

And now it's my honor and responsibility to back Brooklyn.

**Because what it really comes down to is opportunity.**

The thing about a borough, a neighborhood, a block – it's not just a geographic location.

It's a gateway to a suite of resources – to schools, to jobs, to trains, buses, healthcare facilities, parks, libraries – all of the things that shape our daily lives and our future possibilities.

And which neighborhoods have opportunity and which don't – that's not luck either.

It's public policy; it's government – it's layers and layers of decisions that have been made over decades and centuries to create the communities we live in today.

And as much as we wish they were, most of these decisions were not motivated by the public good.

In fact, quite the opposite.

The chronic disinvestment of poor, immigrant, and working-class neighborhoods was no mistake.

And it's why today we're left with such a stark pattern of inequities.

Two years ago, I announced my Comprehensive Plan for Brooklyn – the largest, borough-specific planning effort in our city’s history.

Tonight, I’m proud to announce that The Plan is getting bigger.

With over 250 pages and over 150 maps:

I’d like to introduce you to my 2025 Comprehensive Plan for Brooklyn.

And there’s one part I’m particularly excited to tell you about: the Access to Opportunity Index.

This tool weighs five major elements – jobs, health, education, transit, and climate risk – to paint a picture of where opportunity is and isn’t in our borough.

What we see comes as no surprise:

The neighborhoods with the highest scores include parts of Greenpoint, Williamsburg, Downtown Brooklyn, Park Slope, Carroll Gardens, and Boerum Hill.

While the neighborhoods with the lowest scores include Coney Island, Canarsie, and Red Hook.

It’s a snapshot into the way our city has chosen to back some neighborhoods and leave others to fend for themselves.

And I want to be clear: where government is absent, neighbors are picking up the slack.

They’re doing the work.

The areas with less built-in access to opportunity are also the birthplace of some of the most innovative, community-led efforts to improve the daily lives of Brooklynites.

Like East New York Farms – where in the face of record-high food insecurity, residents are teaching one another how to garden, how to grow and sell their own fruits and vegetables.

What this index makes clear is not where Brooklyn is failing, it’s where government is failing Brooklyn.

And we can use this index as a tool of advocacy, accountability, and planning to build opportunity into the neighborhoods long deprived of it.

Like in Canarsie and Bed-Stuy, where my office prioritized green space investments into neighborhoods with underfunded, neglected, and insufficient parkland.

Or consider the Interborough Express, for example.

The Interborough Express, or the IBX, would get you from Bay Ridge, to Midwood, through Flatbush and Canarsie, up to Broadway Junction, and into Queens in only 40 minutes.

Built atop an existing 14-mile freight line, it would connect southern and eastern Brooklyn with 17 subway lines and the Long Island Rail Road.

And it's not just an urban fantasy.

It's a plan within reach.

And when we look at how it stacks up alongside our Access to Opportunity Index, it's a no-brainer.

The IBX would radically change the lives of 900,000 residents and 260,000 workers who are currently underserved by our transit system.

It would connect people to people, kids to schools, neighbors to jobs, and most importantly, New Yorkers to opportunity.

That's what this is all about.

Opportunity is everything. And our city understood that for a minute.

But we've lost our way.

Instead of a system based in possibility and hope, we've stumbled into a spiral of enforcement and fear.

But we can't fear or enforce our way to progress.

No – we get there when we can look out the window and dream up the small business we'd put in that long-vacant storefront;

Or when we can save a little extra money each month knowing it won't be too long until we can move into our favorite neighborhood.

Because if there's one thing I know for certain – it's that when New Yorkers are given the chance, we don't take it for granted.

You give us an inch, and we do the impossible.

We get it done.

This year we did things no one thought we could do.

We brought down the scaffolding on Magnolia Tree Earth Center.

We established the nation's first-ever Congestion Relief Zone.

We broke ground on South Brooklyn Health's brand new, state-of-the-art women's health center and NICU.

We implemented our very first commercial waste zone.

We kept our beloved childcare centers open for at least one more year.

And we won our very first WNBA Championship.

This city can do amazing things – we can do amazing things – but at some point, at some point we started doubting it, doubting each other. Believing what everyone else said about us.

We became so obsessed with keeping things the same, keeping people out – that we forgot that we became great because we've always led from the front.

We set the standard.

We welcome new people, we embrace new ideas, we challenge the status quo, and we do it first.

But we got complacent. We let hate creep into our hearts and elected leaders who indulged our deepest fears.

And now, we're sitting here celebrating a handful of wins when there should be too many to count and watching as everyone else does what we claimed we couldn't – what we said would never be possible.

In the early 2000s, the City of Seoul in South Korea tore down a busy, elevated freeway. They dug up the river long buried beneath it, and they built a three-and-a-half mile long pedestrian promenade alongside it.

From a colossal highway carrying 168,000 cars every day to a beloved public park and tourist destination keeping flooding at bay, cleaning up the air, and cooling the city.

And they did it in just 27 months.

But the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway?

Nah, that behemoth? We're stuck with it.

In 2016, the City of Medellin in Columbia began growing a network of 30 "green corridors," planting millions of pollution-eating plants and hundreds of thousands of trees.

They've already brought the city's average temperature down by 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit.

But one million more trees for New York City – a city twice the size of Medellin? No chance.

It doesn't matter that every year we lose about 350 people to extreme heat.

And don't get me started on housing.

Last year, I told you about Minneapolis: how the midwestern city managed to drive down rents unlike any other city in the region by building more.

Well, this year, I'm going to tell you about Austin.

Because I have the unfortunate responsibility of delivering the news that once again, New York has been upstaged.

In less than three years, Austin has brought rent prices down a whopping 22%.

How?

Austin followed in Minneapolis' footsteps – eliminating parking minimums and allowing single-family lots to become multi-family homes if they so choose.

In 2023 and 2024 alone, the city added almost 50,000 new rental units.

If New York City – a city with 8 times as many residents as Austin – were to keep pace, we would have had to build more than 400,000 units over that same span of time.

Well, we didn't do that – in fact we barely crossed the 60k line over the same span of time.

Because here in New York City we're ready to throw a ticker tape parade for a whole... 80,000 units over 15 years.

It's embarrassing. It's shameful. And it's certainly not New York.

Here's the thing – New York City is a belief system.

And too many out there have lost the faith.

Not me though.

I didn't – I won't forget that we can do big things too.

We can build the IBX.

We can reimagine the BQE.

We can make childcare universal.

We can close Rikers.

And we can bring back outdoor dining.

It just takes some political will, a bet on Brooklyn, and an investment into opportunity.

And you know us in Brooklyn – we do it big. We do it all the way. From cradle to classroom to career; from casa to community to culture – we got us.

**So, let's start there – cradle – and talk maternal health.**

When I became Borough President, my experiences as a Brooklyn dad and husband came with me.

In 2017, my beautiful wife Iliana gave birth to my first son: Alejandro.

It was one of two best days in my life – matched only by the day my second son Andres was born.

And while these were joyful days, they were fearful ones too.

See, I wasn't lucky enough to stay ignorant on the challenges Black and Brown women face during pregnancy until after my wife was safely through it.

No, our midwife at Woodhull Ms. Helena Grant wasn't going to let me off that easy.

She made sure I knew from day one just how bad things were – that as an Afro-Caribbean woman, my wife was about eight times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than her white counterparts.

And as she explained the many reasons why Black and Brown women face such disastrous outcomes, one thing became clear: the maternal health crisis could not be solved by tinkering around the margins.

So, I came into office with a promise to Brooklyn: to do whatever I could to make the borough the safest place in the city to have a baby.

And tonight, I'm excited to announce our latest efforts to do just that.

In my first year, it was all about the funding: I invested the entirety of my capital funding – a total of 45 million dollars – into Brooklyn's three public hospitals for maternal healthcare improvements.

In my second year, it was all about the baby showers: after hosting our very own Brooklyn Community Baby Shower for 100 new and expecting mothers at the Van Dyke Community Center in Brownsville, we decided to spread the love.

Not too long ago, we launched the Brooklyn Community Baby Shower Fund. We set aside 50,000 dollars to help Brooklyn nonprofits host their own community baby showers in high-risk neighborhoods.

And we've already announced the first six awardees.

Well now, we're adding another chapter to our effort to solve the maternal health crisis: and for this, we're turning to our schools.

I'm so excited to announce to all of you tonight a new collaboration with Brooklyn College.

We're partnering to establish New York State's first credit-bearing Advanced Certificate program in Perinatal Mental Health.

Mental health is the reason the majority of new mothers are dying in New York City – did you know that?

This rigorous, year-long program is designed to train healthcare workers and caregivers to prevent that, to keep new and expecting parents safe and healthy throughout the entirety of their pregnancy experience.

The curriculum features 120 in-person clinical hours and was carefully crafted with the help of my Maternal Health Task Force.

And Brooklyn won't have to wait too long to get started in this work.

Brooklyn College is piloting two of the program's courses this spring and will host their first full cohort this fall.

I'm so proud to be working with Brooklyn College's President Michelle Anderson to bring maternal mental health to the forefront.

Because whether we're talking higher education or pre-K and 3K: what happens in our schools matters.

And I know this well.

**I learned it in the classroom.**

I am a proud graduate of Nuestros Niños Day Care Center.

It's where I learned everything from my ABCs to how to tie my shoes.

And it's this early education that made it possible for me to attend LaSalle Academy in Manhattan on a full scholarship.

Which was a good thing – because my family certainly didn't have the money.

And that education changed everything for me and my family – I was able to graduate and get another scholarship – this one from the State – to go to LeMoyne College all the way up in Syracuse.

That's where I met Mr. Thomas, my mentor and college advisor, and learned that kids like me didn't get to make excuses, we didn't get to live life without a plan, without concrete goals.

The schools we go to – our classrooms, our teachers, the friends we make and the resources we have to learn – it can change everything.

And my administration has turned an eye toward making sure our students have what they need to get the most out of their schools.

Last year, we invested over 15 million dollars into our K-12 public schools and more than 5 million dollars into CUNY.

We even teamed up with Council Member Chi Osse to bring computer lab upgrades to every single K-12 public school in Superintendent Mims' district in Bed-Stuy.

All 19 schools received the money they need to get new computers, tablets, laptops, and more.

And while we can't say much right now – District 16 won't be the only school district in Brooklyn seeing this type of targeted tech investment.

There's a lot in the works for our schools right now – a lot my team won't let me talk about (and trust me, I tried) until this budget season is officially closed.

So, I'll keep the focus on what I can talk about: and this is a fun one.

Who here has seen Hamilton?

Well, if you know Hamilton, you know Anthony Ramos – the Bushwick-born-and-raised actor and arts advocate who starred in the Broadway show beloved by so many.

This year, Anthony and I teamed up to bring free, year-round after-school theater education back to Bushwick Campus.

Together, we gave 40,000 dollars to Opening Act, a Brooklyn-born nonprofit that brings inclusive theater education to our city's public schools.

The arts are and always have been an engine of social change, and in our city, they should be an essential part of our students' education.

Because man, these kids give us a run for our money. They are talented.

They're smart, they're passionate, they're creative.

And they care – deeply – about the city that raised them.

This year, we kicked off our first ever Youth Advisory Council to try and channel that energy, give young people a platform from which they could affect the changes they want to see happen.

It's made up of twenty high schoolers from Brooklyn's public schools who with the help of the Sadie Nash Leadership Project are working together to develop policy-based solutions for our city's problems.

And next month, the Youth Council is hosting their very own Teen Summit in the people's house at Brooklyn Borough Hall.

They're going to be convening hundreds of their peers to talk about something they're particularly worried about: mental well-being, essential life skills, and personal growth.

Because it's tough out there, especially for our young people.

And some of them land on their feet, but some of them need a little bit more help.

**So we can't stop in the classroom, we've got to take it up to the career.**

And for this next initiative – we're bringing together three Brooklyn powerhouses – Riseboro, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, and St. Nick's Alliance.

I'm excited to announce tonight the Bushwick 1000, a multi-year effort with one clear goal: to secure employment for 1,000 unemployed young adults from Bushwick.

We'll be recruiting young residents who are looking for work and connecting them with the training, coaching, and programs that can help them achieve employment.

Because in the promise of New York City is the sweat New Yorkers are willing to put in for it.

That's what makes a New Yorker: it's not where you grew up or what language you speak. It's not how long you've been here or where you went to school. It's the hustle. It's the grind, grit, and determination.

Real New Yorkers – we aren't just born, we're made.

And this is important – because some people out there, some quote-unquote leaders want you to think different.

They want to pit those with little against those with less.

And they do it by selling us this narrative – this story of people outside coming in to take what's ours, what they don't deserve.

But that's not how we do it here in New York City.

We won't fall for that.

The hundreds of thousands of people and families who are seeking to put down roots here – we treat them as our neighbors because they are our neighbors.

Last year, I was proud to open up Brooklyn Borough Hall's doors as a satellite Asylum Application Help Center – the only one of its kind.

And until the city closed the site just a couple weeks ago, thousands of people came through to receive support with their work authorization applications.

Nearly 6,000 applicants over the course of a year – nearly 6,000 people who just want the same shot we all have at working hard, providing for our families, and building a life in the best city in the world.

That's what I call a New Yorker.

Jobs, jobs have always been the gateway.

Ask almost anyone – whether they've been here for a generation or four or more – about who they are, and they will trace their story back to one thing: work.

An Italian seamstress.

A Bengali shipworker.

A Caribbean barber.

A Jewish baker.

A West African engineer.

They'll point out the bridge they worked on, the office building where they had their first desk job, the hospital where they spent the night shift.

Stories like those – they're in all of us. They're in me.

When my dad first came to the US, he worked on a golf course and as a cook before opening his own pizzeria and a bodega.

The pizzeria didn't work out, and when my abuela got sick with cancer, my dad had to sell the bodega to pay for her treatment.

My mother, she was a home health aide until she got a job at a cheesecake factory – not the restaurant but an actual factory that distributed cheesecakes.

When she worked there – that's when we really felt like we'd made it big.

She didn't have a college degree, her English wasn't the best,

But she finally made enough money to be able to move our family out of poverty and toward the middle class.

That is, until she lost her job when factories started closing down, residential development took over, and she had to go back to working as a home health aide – a job she still has to this day.

It was a big blow to my family – the loss of manufacturing.

And it continues to be a big blow to this city.

Manufacturing has always had a special place in New York – offering a path to the middle class for immigrants that no other career could.

Last year, I talked a bit about this when I talked about the history of our waterfront.

I talked about how the New York Harbor was the world's largest, best-known port, how in the '40s over 70,000 people worked at the Brooklyn Navy Yard alone.

Well, our harbor doesn't work like that anymore.

We don't have the piers we used to at Brooklyn Bridge Park; we lost them in Williamsburg.

But we still have Red Hook. We still have the Brooklyn Marine Terminal.

Just a couple of months after my last State of the Borough, Mayor Adams announced something exciting: that he, along with Governor Hochul, EDC, and the Port Authority had come to an agreement that would allow the Brooklyn Marine Terminal to become the 21st-century working waterfront of our dreams.

The city committed to investing tens of millions of dollars into the waterfront.

And for me, the child of manufacturing and someone who understands the potential of our waterways to move freight through our city more safely, more cleanly, and more effectively – I had high hopes.

I still do.

But I'm getting a little worried.

Because some of the people working on this project – they seem to be missing the point.

They're starting to talk housing when they should be talking about one thing and one thing only: how to double down on what makes the site one-of-a-kind.

Red Hook is Brooklyn's last working waterfront.

Our last.

And this infrastructure, it's a public good – generations of New Yorkers relied on our manufacturing districts for well-paying, high-quality jobs that provide a path to the middle class.

We can't afford to lose it – not to housing.

Because there is no scarcity of opportunities to build housing across the borough, but there is a scarcity of manufacturing.

**And some of you may be surprised to hear me say that – you know where I stand on housing – that we should be building more, building everywhere – adding homes of all kinds for families of different sizes and incomes.**

So, I won't spend tonight reminding you.

Instead, I'll take a second to thank the New Yorkers who have been standing up with us in this fight – working with us to connect neighbors with homes or help homeowners keep them if they have them.

New Yorkers like Churches United for Fair Housing, who my office partnered with when the City reopened NYCHA's Section 8 waitlist to help neighbors with their applications.

Or the Flatbush Tenant Coalition and the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit, who teamed up with us for a SCRIE and DRIE enrollment and renewal support clinic, helping older adults and people with disabilities freeze their rents.

Or Brooklyn Legal Services, Grow Brooklyn, and the city agencies that joined us at Medgar Evers last fall and Restoration Plaza this spring to help hundreds of Brooklynites learn about deed theft, access free one-on-one consultations, and receive support with living wills, power of attorney, and healthcare proxies.

But there's one group – one group I want to give a special shout out to tonight.

These are the six faith leaders who answered our call to be a part of the solution, who are coming to Brooklyn Borough Hall and working with my office and Bricks and Mortals to add housing right on their own land – in their unused parking lots, where an extra building may be sitting unused and unoccupied, wherever they can.

I'm calling these Divine Dwellings.

This is why I love Brooklyn.

Because we got us.

We step up; we help out; we find a way even when it's not obvious and especially when it's not easy.

And rarely is it easy.

**I want to talk about our community boards for a second.**

Because they're a perfect example.

This year, we received the most community board applications since I took office.

It was a show of force.

Yet it's frustrating – because every year, more and more Brooklynites are knocking at our door – trying to get in at the grassroots level of their local government.

And what are they met with?

Chronic underfunding, unusable tech, little-to-no resources, and certainly not enough staffing.

They're totally disempowered to do what they are Charter-mandated to do.

But they do their best, and it's time for our city to do them better.

This year, I testified before the City Charter Revision Commission and asked for something new: I asked for the City to create a Community Board Central Office, an independent agency tasked with supporting our 59 community boards that have for far too long been forced to figure everything out on their own.

The Community Board Central Office would be charged with providing boards with land use and planning expertise,

With communications and technology support,

With space needs, HR assistance, and even help with FOILs.

Community boards have an important job to do – and we need to make sure they have what they need to do it and do it right.

Because this happens too often – our local organizations are forced to focus on everything but their primary mission just to survive, just to keep the lights on.

We see it with our nonprofits.

That's why I announced my Nonprofit Acquisition Fund two years ago, committing to prioritizing capital funding to nonprofits looking to buy permanent homes – so they can focus more on serving our residents and less on paying their rent.

This year, I'm so excited that two nonprofits successfully received funding to do just that:

Mixteca – an immigrant women-led nonprofit in Sunset Park – and the Arab American Association of New York – a nonprofit in Bay Ridge that provides all kinds of support to our Arab and immigrant neighbors.

The work Brooklyn does for Brooklyn – it’s one of a kind – and it’s something I’m committed to using my administration to elevate.

Our NYCHA Tenant Associations, for example.

Our tenant associations are an integral part of life in Brooklyn – every year, they’re organizing backpack giveaways, putting together programming for families, and so much more.

This year, we built on last year’s work and gave every single tenant association in our borough thousands of dollars to support community programming – a total of 132,000 dollars.

Money they're going to use the same way they always do: to make magic happen.

Why?

Because that’s Brooklyn.

It’s who we are.

Everything we have, we give it right back.

**It’s our culture.**

And tonight I want to tell you about someone special who gets that.

Renowned multi-disciplinary artist and fashion designer Colm Dillane, though you might know him better as KidSuper.

Colm – who spent his days as a student at Brooklyn Tech making and selling t-shirts – started KidSuper only a few blocks away from the Barclays Center.

But by 2021, he was receiving the coveted Karl Lagerfeld Prize.

By 2023, he was guest-designing for Louis Vuitton.

And just this past year, he was collaborating with the Brooklyn Nets.

In fact, that’s where I met him – at KidSuper Studios in Williamsburg, where Colm has built a hub for creatives – there’s an art gallery, a recording studio, a screenprinting shop, and I’ve even heard a rumor he’s building a soccer field on the roof.

Well tonight, tonight I’m proud to name him our very first Brooklyn Arts Ambassador

In fact, he guest-designed that Limited Edition Brooklyn pin you all got on your way in.

It’s the same font he used to doodle all over his notebook while in class at Brooklyn Tech.

And you better hold onto that – because there aren’t many to go around, and the only way you can get your hands on one is if Colm or I give it to you ourselves.

As Arts Ambassador, Colm will be helping my office celebrate the creative community at the heart of our borough.

This initiative is designed to spotlight emerging artists, connect creatives with opportunities, and build a Brooklyn-based mentorship network in the arts.

And we want all of Brooklyn to see themselves in this.

Not too long from now, we'll be launching an annual competition inviting all of you – all of Brooklyn – to submit your own designs for the official pin.

And this time next year, it just might be your design that serves as the new symbol of Brooklyn pride.

Now this initiative – it doesn't start or end with the Brooklyn pin. No, it's bigger than that.

You'll also be hearing from us about a public art show – a chance for new artists to bring Brooklyn to the stage.

**Because that's where we belong.**

That's where we've been.

The whole world looks to Brooklyn, to New York.

What we do here, it matters everywhere.

And everyone knows it.

Even Donald Trump.

In fact, it scares him.

It's why he's so keen on killing congestion pricing, defunding our social safety net, and dismantling the opportunities that we had and that we hope the next generation will have too.

It's why when he began taking immigrants with valid visas as his political prisoners, he started here.

He'll do anything he can to prove that his power is absolute, that he can beat the Unbeatable.

But we're stronger than he knows.

And we see right through him.

We know him for the liar, the cheat, and the scam artist that he is.

So when he says they're "criminals" and "gang members," we don't fall for it.

When he says they're "terrorists" and "paid agitators," we know what he really means.

Because we know what he really fears: who really scares him.

We are a city of 8 million people.

8 million teachers and taxi drivers, nurses and shopkeepers, engineers and artists.

8 million New Yorkers.

Our influence reaches far and wide; our well of resources runs deep; our communities are creative, resilient, and unyielding.

Together, we are powerful.

And he knows that the only shot he has at beating us is by picking us off one by one; by dividing and distracting us; by convincing us it's not our family that he's after.

But we know better.

We know that if today it's them, tomorrow it's you.

We know that if he comes for one of us, he's coming for all of us.

We know that it's not really about Venezuelan men, international students, or trans girls.

It's about him: Donald Trump.

It's about his power, his wealth, his regime.

But he is not our king.

And we are not a city of paper tigers.

We are New York.

We are Brooklyn.

We are a county full of Kings.

And we got us – even if no one else does.

Thank you for being here tonight.

Get home safe.

And don't forget to spread love, it's the Brooklyn way.

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