

How're You Doing, Mayor Mike? Here's Your Report Card

Excerpt from LW!
Spring 2004
Newsletter

In February 2003, after a year in office, Mayor Michael Bloomberg issued a personal report card listing the status of his campaign promises. This is undoubtedly a laudable exercise because one of the most frustrating aspects of advocacy is witnessing the inevitable slippage in commitment once a candidate becomes an elected official.

How is Mayor Mike doing on the landmarks front? The links between historic preservation and the public good resonated well from the campaign trail. Too often in the past, however, landmarking and preservation issues have yielded to the budget-cutters – not to mention the pleas and contributions of high-roller developers – once the ballots were counted.

Prior to the election, LW! led a coalition of 125 neighborhood and city-wide preservation advocacy groups in mounting a Preservation Platform that called for a range of meaningful reforms. Each of the 5 mayoral candidates received the Platform and a briefing with advocates. Each then attended a breakfast hosted by LW! to present their views on historic preservation and respond to questions from the audience.

200 people met Candidate Bloomberg at a breakfast forum on August 1, 2001, at the Empire Hotel. A transcript of the proceedings is posted on our website. **Let's compare Candidate Mike with Mayor Mike:**

At his breakfast, Candidate Mike said...

Regarding the LPC budget: "You really do have to give them some money and it's not going to be in the grand scheme of things anything that's going to bust the budget."

Regarding the selection of the LPC Chair: "I think that you have to have somebody running Landmarks that has the respect of the constituency that they serve."

Regarding zoning: "We've got to make sure that zoning laws of this City are consistent with what organizations like Landmarks want to do."

Regarding tax incentives: "You've got to give tax rebates ...You've got to find an incentive for people to do what we'd like them to do."

Regarding accountability: "We've got to constantly measure and make sure that the policies that we're trying to implement are actually working."

Mayor Mike has done...

Froze Landmarks Commission's already miniscule \$3-million budget (<.0001 of the City's entire budget, equal to **1 week of overtime in the NYC Police Department**)

Kept Giuliani-appointed acting chair in place until January 2003, one year into his administration. When it comes to architecture and preservation, new chair Robert B. Tierney, a corporate attorney, has a steep learning curve.

Grassroots advocacy groups – not the Mayor or the LPC – have led the charge for zoning reform to protect neighborhood identity.

No progress. Instead, at Bloomberg's charge, the LPC has proposed *permit filing fees*, which would force owners of landmark properties to pay extra when applying to work on their buildings.

2 Columbus Circle? Towers Nursing Home? Only **1** inspector to ensure landmark compliance throughout the entire city? It doesn't take a scientific study to show that the process too often **DOES NOT WORK!**

**Does Mayor Bloomberg deserve a passing grade on preservation?
Let's just say we're inclined to agree with him on the issue of social promotion.**