



**Mayoral Candidate Name:** Shaun Donovan

## **UJA-Federation of New York's Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire**

1. Please describe the most significant challenges you believe NYC will be facing at the start of 2022, and how, should you be elected, you would address these challenges. Please provide specific plans.

The top priority for the next mayor must be the social, economic, and physical recovery of our city and its residents. The damage caused by COVID will be felt for years to come, and it will take considerable investment to not only return to what we had before, but to use this crisis to build back something better. To do this, we will need significant relief from the Federal government. My strong personal relationships with President Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and members of Congress and the Senate puts me in a unique position to get the federal support that New Yorkers need and have been cruelly denied by the Trump administration. I will work to ensure we receive the necessary business and infrastructure aid, personal protective equipment, and other essentials as we rebuild and reimagine our economy as one that works for all New Yorkers.

My second, longer-term priority is to address the systemic lack of equal opportunity and access to services that many New Yorkers face. In order to help families across New York City build economic mobility and generational wealth, I will launch Equity Bonds, which will provide \$1000 to every child in New York City and up to an additional \$2,000 based on family income. Through this program, the parents of a baby born in poverty will be able to send their child to school knowing that roughly \$50,000 will be waiting for them if they graduate.

Another landmark policy in my platform is 15 minute neighborhoods, whereby every New Yorker will have access to a great public school, fresh food, rapid transit, a good park, and a chance to get ahead within 15 minutes of their front door. We will make the necessary investments in neighborhood business corridors to support local business owners, and invest in expanding local primary care facilities so people have access to high-quality care near their homes.

Other issues that I would prioritize are vaccine distribution and housing. While we hope the COVID-19 pandemic will be over by the time the next administration starts, this is an unpredictable virus and we want to make sure we have every resource available to us to be responsive. We will focus our vaccination efforts towards the communities that need them most. This means using a neighborhood approach and getting trusted voices into those neighborhoods to help educate New Yorkers about the importance of getting vaccinated, while also listening to these communities about their reasonable concerns and fears. Doing this will help to build trust between these communities and the public health institutions that have historically overlooked them and even at times exploited them.

We also need to meet people where they are. Vaccination sites, although important, are not serving the communities that need them most. Part of this is because of a lack of meaningful outreach to these communities, but also because those who are in most need of the vaccine often do not have the time or the required to get vaccinated. That's why Shaun's administration will bring vaccines directly to the people who need them most by holding education and vaccination events at NYCHA developments, naturally occurring retirement communities, and senior centers.

I will also focus on improving our housing stock and work toward ending the homelessness crisis in the city. This would include adopting United for Housing's call for \$4 billion per year in capital funding for affordable housing

production and preservation. This involves making a historic commitment of up to \$2 billion per year in City capital dollars to accelerate repairs across NYCHA's portfolio to ensure that tenants have safe homes they can be proud of. NYCHA's housing represents the single largest portion of our city's deeply affordable housing stock that cannot be replaced, and which currently serves over 400,000 low-income New Yorkers. This funding will help fill gaps and speed the process of making critical repairs and upgrades to tenants' homes as we continue to work with our federal partners.

The other \$2 billion annual investment would provide the resources for HPD to create new affordable housing programs and to expand existing programs. While production has been at peak levels over the last several years, in order to meet demand and address the need for deeply affordable housing, overall production goals should be 30,000+ units per year

My extensive plans for addressing issues of inequity across Education, Climate, Housing, Transportation, Criminal Justice, Economic Development, and the Aging can be found on my website, with more plans rolling out each week.

2. What previous experience(s) qualify you to be an effective Mayor? Why?

I believe I am the most qualified, experienced candidate to take on these responsibilities given my long career in public service at all levels of government and engagement. My most recent positions include Secretary for Housing and Urban Development in the Obama-Biden Administration, where I managed the national response to the housing crisis, and Director of the Office of Management and Budget, where I managed the \$4 trillion federal budget.

My past service taught me what it means to lead in moments of crisis, much like the one New York is facing today. I became Housing Commissioner here in New York City after 9/11, and helped rebuild our City. During my tenure as Housing Commissioner, I helped the Brownsville, East New York, and South Bronx communities build Nehemiah, one of the most successful housing efforts in the nation, responsible for creating more than 5,000 affordable homes.

Shortly thereafter, President Obama asked me to be Housing Secretary in the midst of the worst housing crisis of our lifetime, and then tasked me with leading this City back after Hurricane Sandy hit our shores. As HUD Secretary, I helped families across the country rent or buy affordable homes, revitalized distressed communities, fought discrimination, and dramatically reduced homelessness. In 2014, I was named Director of the Office of Management and Budget, charged with balancing a \$4 trillion budget. Three weeks into my time as Director of the Office of Management of Budget, Ebola hit the US, and we worked to make sure that a global threat did not become a pandemic that would cost hundreds of thousands of American lives.

During my time managing the federal budget we invested in a broad range of progressive priorities, like the Affordable Care Act, while still bringing down our budget deficit faster than at any time since World War 2.

This city needs a strong Mayor who knows how to lead in a time of crisis while also centering equity and fairness through their policy. First, I recognize the importance of involving everyone affected by an issue in crafting its solution; recovery and growth shouldn't happen to a community, but rather for and with a community. While I was Housing Commissioner here in New York City, we created Via Verde, an affordable housing development in the South Bronx that utilized community input and truly was by the community, for the community.

Where there is a challenge, there is an opportunity not just to return things to the way they were, but to set a higher standard, to reimagine the way people interact with each other and their city or state or country to ensure healthier and more secure lives for all.

Everything must be viewed through a lens of equity. For too long, the benefits of our successes have not been distributed equitably, if they were distributed at all. It is vital that each solution we come up with be assessed in terms of who it is helping and how it can improve equity among New Yorkers.

3. Please share your personal experience with managing organization(s). How does this management experience translate to your proposed management of New York City's 300,000+ workforce and associated operational complexities and challenges?

I have managed several organizations throughout my career - most notably I was Director for the US Office of Management and Budget, Secretary of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Commissioner of the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development where I managed over 10,000 employees. The Office of Management and Budget oversaw the \$4 trillion federal budget. I will use this management experience to guide how I manage New York City's budget and workforce and ensure that we are governing efficiently and responsibly.

4. How do you intend to work with other sectors of New York City, including business and not-for-profit, to move your Mayoral agenda forward?

I believe that in order to have the most effective and equitable policies for the city, all relevant stakeholders must be brought to the table including not-for-profit and for-profit institutions. Especially when it comes to innovation for the city, partnerships help advance the economic development of the city. We will partner with the business community on a broad-based public-private initiative to upskill New Yorkers and significantly reduce racial economic inequality in NYC. We will establish a City-led program, in partnership with employers and non-profit leaders, to recruit and train candidates across New York City and match them to jobs in high-skilled industries where economic growth, incomes, and future opportunities are greatest. Building on past successes, we will bring apprenticeship, job, training opportunities to scale, making them available to many more New Yorkers in every borough.

Although we are hopeful that the COVID-19 pandemic will be behind us by the time the next mayor takes office, there is a very real possibility that COVID-19 could threaten public health every year. Therefore, we will partner with primary care providers and community-based organizations in each 15 minute neighborhood to ensure that if needed, getting a COVID-19 vaccine is as easy as getting a flu shot. The Donovan administration will dedicate the necessary resources to ensure we are prepared for a COVID-19 vaccination booster campaign to increase overall immunity.

We must also invest in community-based housing and support programs to build on crisis response. People in crisis often need transitional and supportive housing programs, primary health care, community-based mental health and social services like Fountain House, and help with substance use challenges as a next step to help stabilize during and after a crisis, and to create on-ramps to longer-term recovery. These programs must focus on those too often unheard and unseen, like the elderly, who have specific mental health needs.

Additionally, we will increase funding for community-based organizations to identify and enroll low-income families and seniors in critical benefits including SNAP. We will also increase funding for emergency food providers, including food pantries and soup kitchens as well as call on the Federal government to boost SNAP benefits and extend eligibility.

5. What is your philosophy in approaching how to balance New York City's \$90+ billion budget? Please be very specific on if/when to raise taxes; what do you see as other cost saving methods such as efficiency, reducing headcount, cutting services, etc.

Finding effective, sustainable solutions to our City's economic and budgetary crisis will be a key priority for our next mayor. As Director of the Office of Management and Budget, I worked to make the tax code more progressive, and I will continue these efforts as Mayor. This means collaborating with the federal government to end the Trump tax cuts and asking the wealthy to pay a fairer share.

One in five New Yorkers are now out of work. As a direct result, the city is staring down a fiscal pandemic. The response ought to begin with the president and Congress sending back just some of the \$26.6 billion more that our state pays than it draws down each year.

We cannot borrow our way out of this crisis. This will take collaboration and a commitment to smart investments that give everyone a fair shot at economic opportunity and security, while driving down the deficit. Instead of posing a choice between borrowing or 22,000 layoffs, we should propose smarter options, such as attrition and a real hiring freeze, reducing prescription drug costs by increasing city bargaining power with insurers and pharmacy benefit providers, improving health-care quality and lowering costs through delivery system reform with strategies we used in the Affordable Care Act.

With a spotlight on racial inequity, we should focus on policing reform, but also look more broadly to reduce the cost of corrections, where we spend over half a million dollars per incarcerated prisoner each year. We are not starting with assumptions that solving the budget will require a general increase in property or income taxes. Any tax proposals will be viewed through the lenses of equity and the short- and long-term needs of the City, in particular looking to protect working people and small businesses.

6. Please share your understanding of the relationship between nonprofits, and human service provision on behalf of the City of New York. Is the current relationship sustainable? What are the largest barriers to success and how will you address these to ensure the long-term viability of the provision of services and non-profit sector?

Non-profits help satisfy a need for supplying human services throughout the city with the biggest anticipated challenge being a 26% decrease of funding from the state. As part of my 15 Minute Neighborhood plan, I'd ensure everyone has access to essential services in their neighborhood. This would ease the burden on the human services sector created by the cut.

All City contracts, especially human service contracts, should be tied to strategic outcomes and vendor performance, and grounded in true partnership with our human services providers. This ensures that every dollar the City spends is used to support citywide priorities and meet the needs of New Yorkers, and that we are being good partners and working to achieve shared outcomes. This also holds the City accountable for the contracts that we sign.

Agencies should continue to have a designated Agency Chief Contracting Officers (ACCOs), but the responsibilities of the Department of Consumer Affairs should be increased to ensure that the development and review of solicitations and bids along with the issuing of contracts is housed within a central enterprise procurement office.

I would also work to solve the issue of pay parity for the nonprofit side of human services delivery. For example, Pre-K teachers that work outside of the DOE do not make as much money.

7. We've seen a dramatic increase in hateful rhetoric and acts of violence in recent years, including a rise in anti-Semitism and, most recently, an escalation of attacks against Asian Americans. There has been much debate about how to address hatred and increase individual and community security. "Defund the police" has become a rallying call for some – but what it translates to in policies varies widely. What's your response to those who call

for “defunding the police,” and how do you envision ensuring safety and security for all New Yorkers?

We will use police and incarceration as last resorts and will focus on solutions that get at the heart of New Yorkers’ needs, empowering our residents instead of obstructing their paths toward better lives.

As a starting point, we will invest at least \$500 million annually in these solutions, including community- and health-based anti-violence efforts, reentry and supportive housing programs, and other initiatives aimed at providing communities with the resources to build safe neighborhoods. These investments will be funded primarily through savings from reduced corrections and police spending.

These initial commitments will set the floor for a broader effort to direct roughly \$3 billion—at least 20% of our City’s public safety budget—to community-focused initiatives that advance public safety and racial justice, guided by a process of public input and an advisory committee that will include directly impacted people and community representatives.

8. The New York City government has had a tradition of supporting Holocaust survivors, from providing case management to vaccinations. As Mayor, would you commit to continuing to ensure that New York’s low-income Holocaust survivors remain cared for?

Yes.

9. Feeding those in need is central to many New York City human service programs – from seniors to Universal Pre-K, to school-based meals. However, specialized food supports, such as kosher and halal, are too often not incorporated in the service provision. As Mayor, would you commit to have your food insecurity policies always include kosher and halal food?

Yes! You can read more about my culturally inclusive food policy at [shaunfornyc.com/issues/food](http://shaunfornyc.com/issues/food)

10. To gain the Democratic Socialist of America (DSA) endorsement for local office, DSA asked candidates to complete a questionnaire, including a question asking candidates to commit to not travel to Israel. Have you and/or will you reject any candidate questionnaires that ask you to commit to refusing to travel to Israel? More broadly, do you commit to opposing the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement against the state of Israel?

I oppose the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and support a two state solution. If asked, I will not commit to refusing to travel to Israel.