

STRINGER

DEMOCRAT FOR MAYOR

PLAY NYC

Public **L**and and **A**ctivities
for **Y**outh in **N**ew **Y**ork **C**ity

**Scott Stringer's Plan for
Summer in the City**

“There is nothing in the world like summer in New York City. After months spent shuttling through the cold or cooped up inside, New Yorkers get to enjoy the city’s finest and most precious resource: one another. But city government also has a role in this—a role it has largely failed at fulfilling over the last decade or more. We must provide our kids and parents with the infrastructure and personnel—paid and, where necessary, professional staff—to allow everyone a free and equal shot at enjoying the best and most innovative public programs the city has to offer.” - **Scott Stringer**

OVERVIEW

New York City’s kids deserve a city that offers them every opportunity to have fun, stay safe and make memories that will last a lifetime.

Especially during the summer.

As mayor, Scott Stringer will use every lever of government to make the city a more dynamic, vibrant and productive place for children, young adults, and their parents during the summer months. His comprehensive PLAY NYC agenda, Public Land and Activities for Youth in New York City will establish a universal free day camp program, introduce summer mobile parklets for kids living in what have been described as “play deserts,” and radically increase access to public pools, providing teens and young adults with new job opportunities.

The best part: So much of what we need to make this a reality is already in our grasp. Or right under noses. Disused public lands are an eyesore today. But together we can transform them not only into affordable housing, but the very best in modern play spaces for our children.

Pay-fors that go beyond what is already budgeted will come from our “1% for Kids’ Futures” initiative, which guarantees no less than 1% of the city budget is dedicated youth-centric public space improvements.

This plan overlaps, both on policy and implementation, with Scott’s growing suite of plans to revitalize the city for families that are feeling squeezed by high costs, ignored by city leaders and worried that they – or their kids – will not be able to stay in the city long-term because of economic and quality-of-life concerns.

A city that works for kids works for everyone.



The Problem

For too long, city leaders have treated summertime like a vacation—for themselves. For our kids, though, this can be—and should be—some of the most rewarding and enjoyable times of their lives. Unfortunately, the city is not meeting the moment.

There are too many “play deserts,” where parks, pools and public programs are either entirely unavailable to neighborhood kids, based in run-down, uninviting “rat parks,” or simply too far away from home to be a realistic option for meeting up with friends – or making new ones.

The result is that our children’s needs—to play, socialize and learn—go unmet when school is out. This is a failure of administration, but also of imagination. And it ends now.

By-the-Numbers

- 68% of New Yorkers live more than a 15-minute walk from a public pool in 2021, according to NYC Council data. (This figure varied by borough, with 65% of Manhattan residents being within a 15-minute walk of a pool, but only 12% of Queens residents able to say the same.) ([NYC Council data](#))
- In 2024, approximately 139,000 families applied for Summer Rising, but only 110,000 seats were available, leading to a shortfall of around 29,000 applicants being left without spots. ([Chalkbeat](#))
- 33% of New Yorkers do not have a park within a five minute walk ([New Yorkers for Parks](#))
- Among the 100 largest U.S. cities, New York City ranks 48th in playgrounds per capita. It has fewer than 2.5 playgrounds per 10,000 residents, far behind many other major cities ([2019 Comptroller Report](#))
- New York City spends only a tiny fraction of its budget on parks and playgrounds. In the latest budget, NYC Parks received \$618 million out of \$112.4 billion – just 0.55% of the city budget, the lowest share in at least a decade. By comparison, other large cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago dedicate around 1.5% to 4% of their budgets to parks ([The City](#)).
- City data show about 1 in 4 NYC children cannot swim, and the rates are worse for Black and Asian children – roughly 1 in 3 Black and Asian youth lack swimming skills. In stark terms, only 8.7% of white NYC youth cannot swim, versus 35.6% of Black youth and 34.3% of Asian youth. This disparity is linked to the lack of pool access and lessons in many neighborhoods. ([Curbed](#))
- The NYC Parks Department operates 65 public pool facilities across the five boroughs (this includes both outdoor summer pools and indoor pools at recreation centers). For a city of 8.8 million people, this is a relatively small number. In summer 2023, only 50–58 pools were actually open to the public (others remained closed for repairs or due to staffing shortages). By comparison, 16 out of 51 NYC City Council districts have no public pool at all – meaning residents in roughly one-third of NYC neighborhoods cannot access a local public pool. ([citymeetings.nyc](#))

The Solution

Scott Stringer's "Summer in the City" proposal addresses New York City's summertime fun deficit with three integrated plans aimed at unlocking the best of the city for our kids during their time outside the classroom.

1. We will meet people where they are—literally—and **transform under- or disused public properties into temporary mini-parks** to fill a void and offer every kid a chance to hang out and have fun in a safe setting.
2. **Make public pools as accessible as swings, slides and monkey bars.** Pools are game-changers for communities and there's no reason every New York child shouldn't have one within walking distance of their homes. When they get there, let's offer them first-rate learn-to-swim programs.
3. **Universal free day camp for every NYC public school student.** This option gives all kids an opportunity to keep up a routine during the summer—while giving their parents some peace of mind during the workday. The funding is already there. **Let's break the bureaucratic inertia and make it happen.**
4. Create **thousands of good-paying jobs** for youth counselors, lifeguards and educators.

1. Mobile Parklets for Every Borough

We will transform underutilized lots—already a pillar of my plan to expand affordable housing—and sidewalk space into temporary, pop-up green spaces that serve as flexible play areas, learning hubs, and community gardens.

- **Every parklet will be community-designed:** Local residents and youth will help choose the features (e.g., a small slide, a water mist feature, an arts and crafts table) to reflect local needs. They will also choose the locations.
- **We will begin with five mobile parklet units, prioritizing neighborhoods and park districts with the fewest playgrounds per capita.** We estimate a \$1 million startup cost and an annual operating cost of \$500,000 for the five units. We will seek corporate or philanthropic sponsorships to offset some costs.
- Initially target high-density, park-poor neighborhoods in the South Bronx, Eastern Brooklyn and parts of Queens. **In all, the plan will activate over 500,000 square feet of new public space annually via mobile parklets.**
- Mobile parklets will be modular units outfitted with—in accordance with community input—play equipment, seating, and turf & shade **that can be towed and set up in a matter of hours at a curbside parking space, on a quiet street, or in a NYCHA courtyard.**

2. Pool Expansion for NYC Kids

Public pools are a critical outlet for people who don't have the time or means to leave the city when it heats up. Studies show they have a multiplier effect—for public safety, health and community bonding at a time when too many neighbors struggle to connect.

- **The city will pilot a "Pop-Up Pools" initiative,** working with communities to bring "mobile" pools into neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by heat and lacking in green spaces
- **Increase access by 75% for young swimmers** within three years via these portable swimming pools in schoolyards and public housing complexes.
- The Parks Department already provides free swim lessons for thousands of New Yorkers, **but demand has outpaced capacity. This plan would expand free swim classes by providing additional funding to community groups offering free and affordable lessons.**
- Build out three or more "+Pools" along our waterfronts to give New Yorkers unprecedented access to our bodies of water. **The "+Pool" model would use water filtration technology to create an Olympic-size floating pool in the middle of New York City's waterways**

3. Universal Free Day Camps

For some families, summer is a time for outdoor activity and a break from necessarily strict school schedules. But for too many of our kids, especially in working class communities, summer can be isolating and uncomfortable. That's why Scott will provide every NYC child, regardless of income, access to enriching, full-day summer programs that support physical, emotional, and academic growth.

- **Expand the existing Summer Rising program** into a universal free day camp model available to all K-12 students. (SR currently serves only K-8.)
- **The city will partner with community-based organizations (CBOs) with deep roots and real records in our communities**, to expand free day camps and other summer recreational activities.
- **The city will pilot a volunteer "NYC Tutoring Corps"** that connects younger students with college students or high-school seniors proficient in specific subject areas for one-on-one tutoring, either in-person or online.

A City That Works for Kids Works for Everyone

Scott Stringer believes that building a better, more livable New York starts with investing in its youngest residents. PLAY NYC is not just about parks and pools—it's about providing every child a city that values and supports them. And when our kids are treated right and given these kinds of resources, everyone benefits. Streets are safer, the city is more attractive to residents who might consider leaving for the suburbs, which keeps our tax base robust and creates new and exciting opportunities for kids—and peace of mind for our parents.



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