

# The Clean Heat Transition in New York City



Healthy City

Built Environment

## Climate Issue: Building Heating Pollution

- In New York City (NYC), building heating systems have historically been powered by burning residual fuel oils
- Residual fuel oils are what is left after gasoline has been extracted from crude oil
- These fuels are cheaper, but their combustion leads to more air pollution than other fuel types and hundreds of premature deaths annually
- In 2007, about 10,000 buildings citywide burned the fuel types that generate the worst environmental impacts.

## Clean Heat Program

The Clean Heat Program (CHP) is an initiative launched by New York City to improve air quality by decreasing emissions from buildings' boilers. The policy mandates a transition from residual diesel fuel oils to cleaner-burning alternatives. However, not everyone has been included in the process.

## An Incomplete Transition

- The majority of buildings that have not fully transitioned to clean fuels are located in Uptown Manhattan and the Bronx
- Many buildings have only switched from the worst fuel to a marginally better option that will become illegal in 2030
- Uptown's residents are mostly lower-income and people of color. They have some of the nation's worst asthma rates.

## IN A NUTSHELL

- Building heating systems contribute significantly to air pollution in NYC. The city has pursued a clean transition by banning fuels with the worst environmental impacts.
- Although air quality has improved, there are still residential buildings using the worst fuels. A disproportionate pollution burden falls on marginalized communities.
- To fully transition to clean heat citywide, more support is necessary through better outreach, infrastructure improvements, and expanded financing options.

## Causes of Unequal Policy Implementation

The unequal clean fuel transition in NYC has been driven by uneven awareness, infrastructure, and financing options.

- Residents in Uptown demonstrate limited awareness of the connection between building heating and air pollution
- Landlords do not have a clear understanding of conversion options, causing reluctance to upgrade their heating systems
- Financing remains a concern due to high upfront costs, perceived market risks, and insufficient incentives
- Infrastructure limitations mean that disadvantaged communities have fewer options for potentially cleaner fuels like natural gas.

## A Vision for Citywide Clean Heat

NYC's Clean Heat Program has successfully built an innovative public-private coalition that can work toward more inclusive implementation. This should include:

- Adopting a more transparent, data-driven approach to policy design to ensure all residents' needs are considered
- Simplifying and expanding financing options to make fuel conversion accessible and affordable for all residents
- Implementing a building-level energy rating system to empower building residents with information that holds landlords accountable

## WHAT CAN YOUR CITY DO?

**CONSIDER** how residential energy transitions can yield different results across different communities.

**DEVELOP** detailed assessments of existing infrastructure inequalities

**PROVIDE** clear, transparent information about new regulations

**OFFER** customized financial solutions to ensure widespread access to clean fuel conversion

**ENSURE** that residents have access to technical assistance as they upgrade their heating systems.