



BRIEFING PAPER

**Off Target:
A Progress Report on Mayor Bloomberg’s Five-Year Homeless Plan**

June 23, 2008

Four years ago, Mayor Bloomberg released “Uniting for Solutions Beyond Shelter,” his plan to reduce New York City homelessness by two-thirds over five years. While the ambitious goals of the plan were praised by a wide array of advocates, service providers, and community groups, many were concerned that the Mayor and his administration did not commit sufficient housing resources and had failed to craft the right policies needed to achieve the goal.

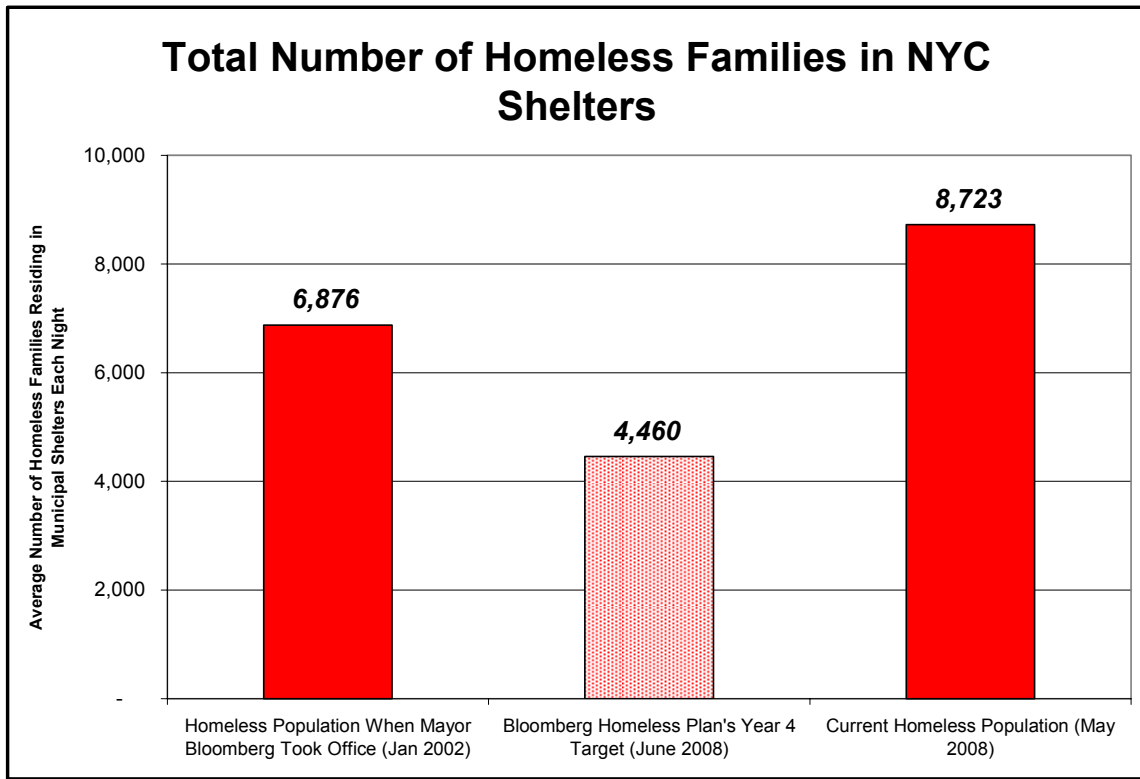
In recent years, those fears were sadly realized as the Bloomberg administration stumbled through a series of flawed approaches to homelessness – from the administration’s decision to cut off homeless New Yorkers from Federal housing assistance (beginning in the autumn of 2004), to the disastrous “Housing Stability Plus” program (which was finally abandoned by the City in early 2007), to the City’s ongoing and accelerating use of illegal boarding houses to shelter homeless adults living with mental illness and other disabilities.

Most troubling, ***New York City’s homeless population has continued to rise dramatically in recent years***, beginning with the record-breaking increases that occurred during Mayor Bloomberg’s first term. In 2007, the number of homeless families in municipal shelters reached all-time record levels (more than 9,000 families in shelters each night) while the number of homeless children in shelters also rose (more than 14,000 children each night). ***All in all, the current decade has proven to be the worst for New York City homelessness since the Great Depression of the 1930s.***

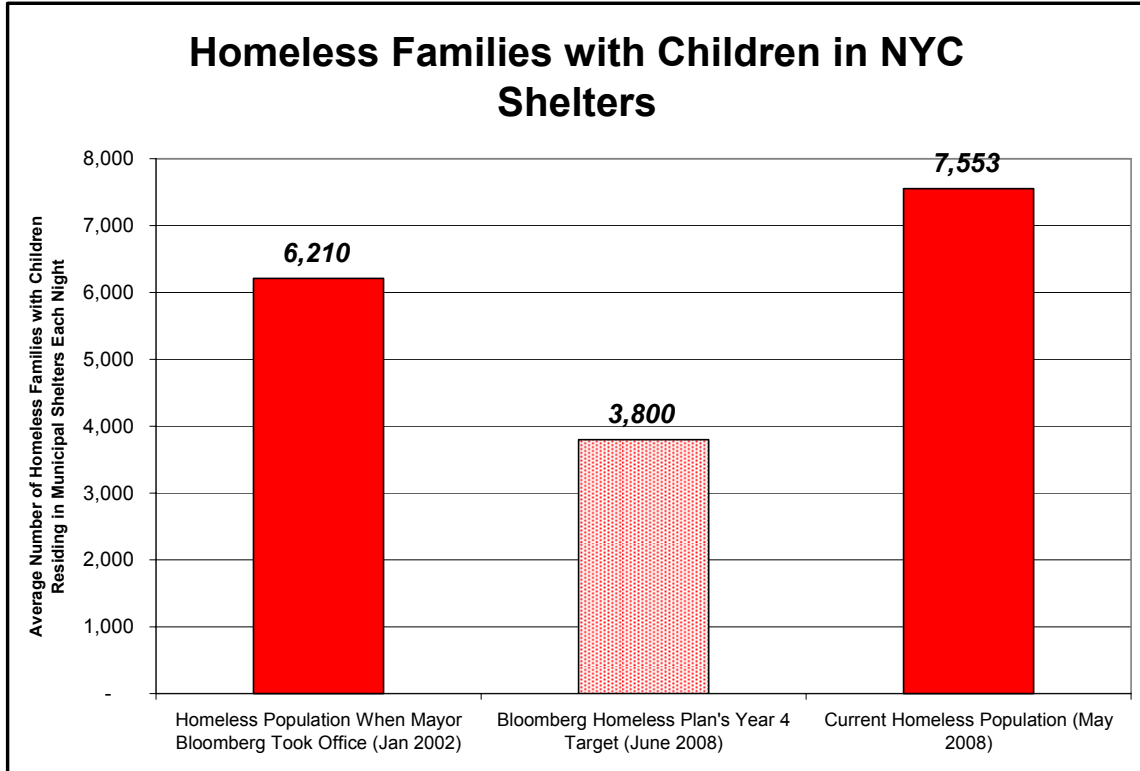
Four years after Mayor Bloomberg announced his homeless plan, New York City’s homeless population is dramatically larger than the targets in the plan, and more New Yorkers are homeless than when the Mayor took office.

The following charts illustrate the number of homeless people sleeping in New York City shelters when the Mayor took office and currently, and contrast that actual data with the plan’s “Year 4” target. Finally, this brief assessment concludes by outlining some immediate steps that Mayor Bloomberg and his administration can take to reduce New York City’s homeless population.

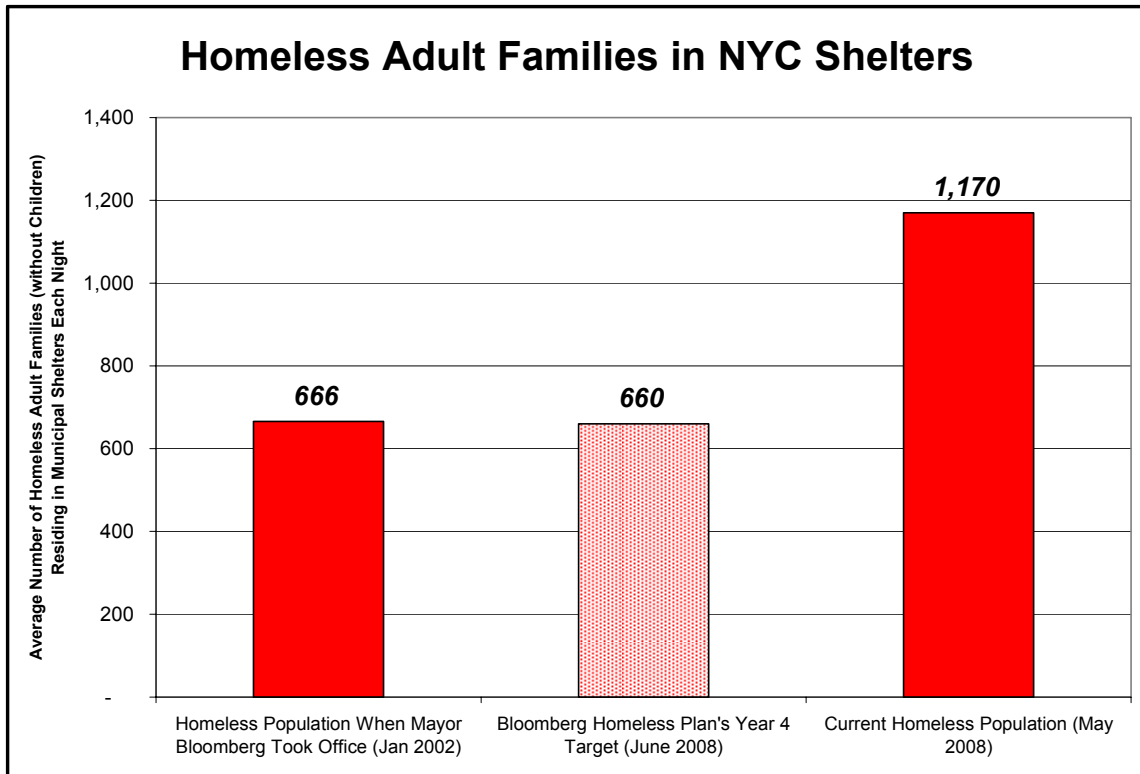
	Total Homeless Families	Homeless Families with Children	Homeless "Adult Families"	Homeless Single Adults
NYC Homeless Population When Mayor Bloomberg Took Office (Jan 2002)	6,876	6,210	666	7,867
Bloomberg Homeless Plan's "Year 4" Target (June 2008)	4,460	3,800	660	5,000
Current Homeless Population (May 2008)	8,723	7,553	1,170	6,792



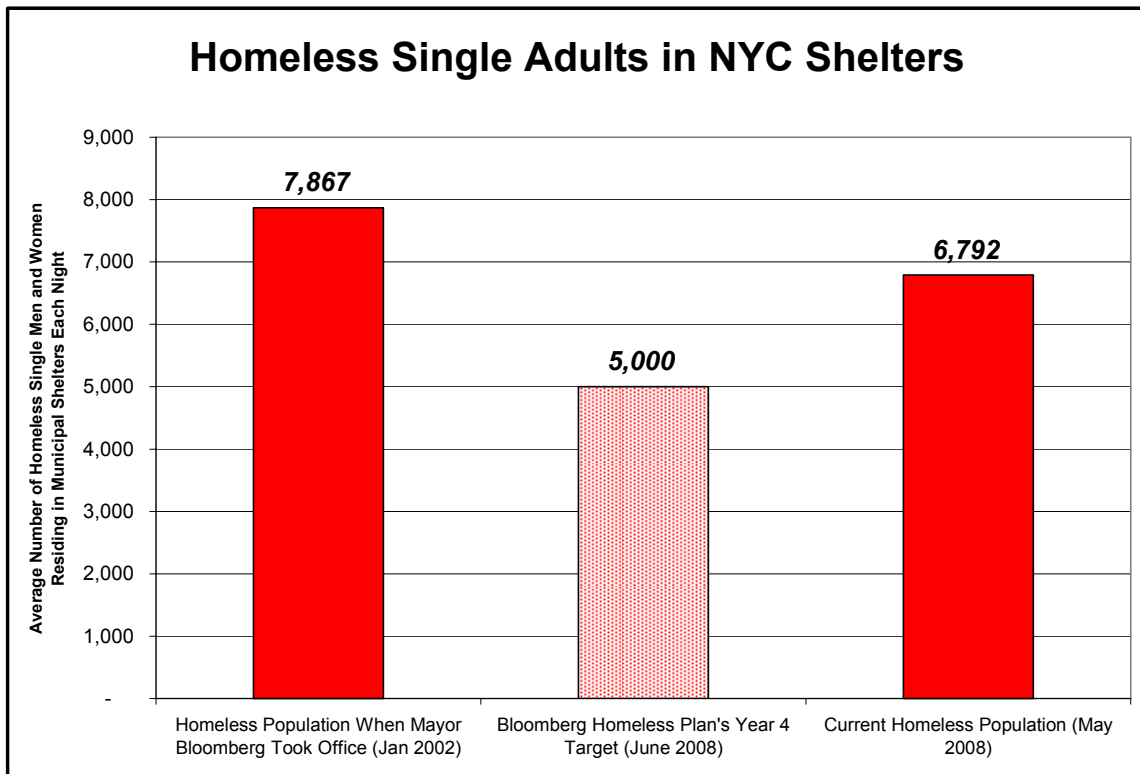
The current number of homeless families in New York City shelters is 27 percent higher than when Mayor Bloomberg took office, and is nearly double the “Year 4” target for the Mayor’s homeless plan.



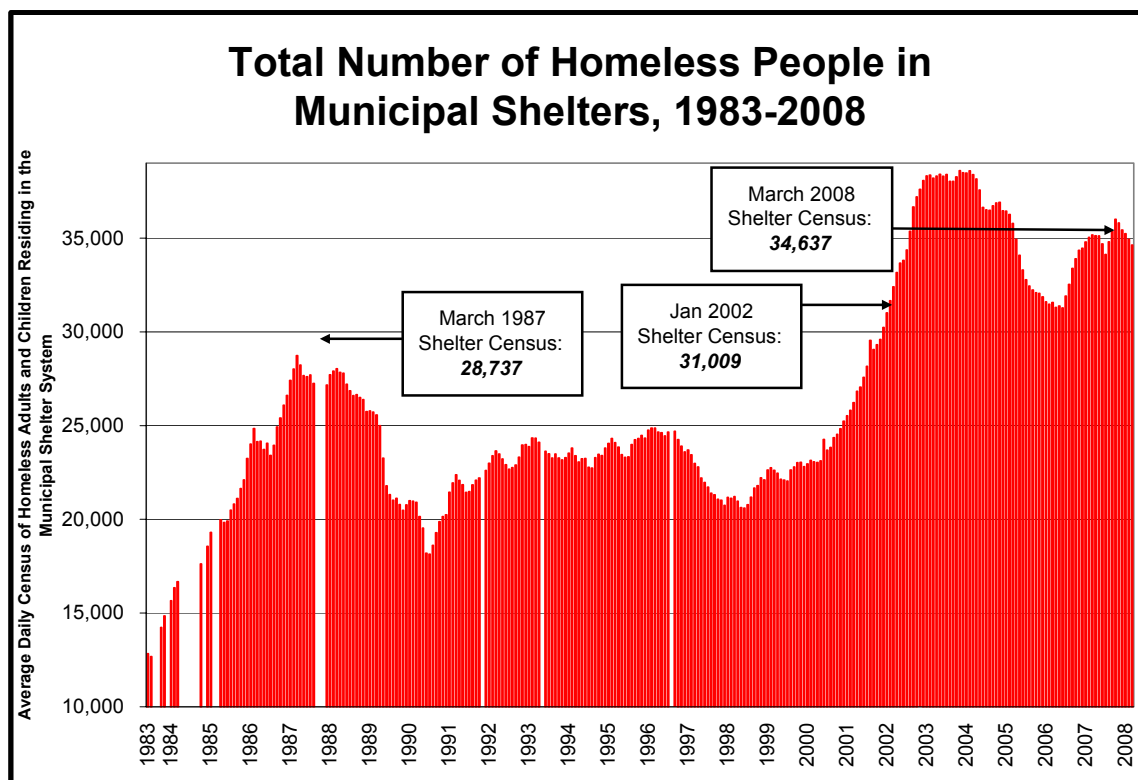
The number of homeless children in New York City shelters – currently more than 14,000 children each night – is 9 percent higher than the number of homeless children when Mayor Bloomberg took office.



The number of homeless “adult families” (i.e., families without minor children) has soared to record levels this decade, and is currently nearly double the number when the Mayor took office.



Homeless single adults represent the only segment of the New York City homeless shelter population that has declined in recent years, but advocates and service providers are concerned that much of this decline is due to the City moving homeless adults to unsafe, illegal boarding houses.



During the past decade, the number of homeless children and adults residing each night in New York City shelters has been the highest since modern homelessness began in the late 1970s. More New Yorkers have experienced homelessness during the current decade than since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Immediate Steps the City Can Take to Reduce Homelessness

During the last two economic recessions (1990-91 and 2001-02), homelessness worsened dramatically as low-income New Yorkers struggled to keep their homes amid job losses. Facing another economic downturn, the City can take the following immediate steps to reduce homelessness.

1. Target Federal Housing Aid to the Homeless:

- In late 2004, the Bloomberg administration cut off homeless New Yorkers from longstanding priority for Federal housing programs, including Section 8 vouchers and public housing.
- In January 2007, Mayor Bloomberg announced that the City will give out 22,000 new Section 8 vouchers – none to the homeless.
- Reversing the City's misguided policy will move thousands of homeless families to permanent housing – and will save City taxpayer dollars spent on emergency shelter.

2. Accelerate Construction of Supportive Housing:

- In 2005, the City and State signed a ten-year agreement to provide supportive housing for homeless people living with mental illness and other special needs.
- However, more than half of the newly-constructed supportive housing – 3,276 units of the planned 6,250 new units – will not be built until at least 2011.
- City and State officials should accelerate the development of supportive housing for homeless people with special needs.

3. Halt Referrals of Homeless Adults to Illegal Dwellings:

- City has referred hundreds of homeless adults – including many living with mental illness – to more than 65 unsafe, illegal boarding houses.
- City inspectors have issued vacate orders to at least 11 illegal boarding houses due to health and fire safety risks – forcing the residents to return to shelters or the streets.
- City officials should halt referrals of homeless adults living with mental illness or other disabilities to illegal boarding houses.

Note: All homeless population data and information about the Mayor's homeless plan is from the New York City Department of Homeless Services.

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For more information, please visit www.coalitionforthehomeless.org.*