

Scott Rechler: Welcome to Recalibrate Reality, the future of New York. Our guest today is Gary LaBarbera, the president of the New York City and the New York State Building and Construction trades, one of New York's largest unions with over 200,000 workers in the construction industry. In this episode, we discuss how Gary and his members navigated COVID-19, and how to train the next generation of workers, particularly from underserved areas, to create new pathways to the middle class. We'll also get Gary's take on some of the lessons learned from the most recent elections. And so now let's recalibrate reality with Gary LaBarbera.

Gary, welcome to Recalibrate Reality.

Gary LaBarbera: Hi Scott, thank you very much for having me. It's a pleasure to be with you today.

Scott Rechler: No, it's just thrill to have you on, and it's been great working with you for all these years, and I'm glad to have the opportunity to start sharing and get some of your insights as to where the world's going. But before we jump into that discussion, I thought it'd be helpful for viewers to get a little bit of your background and how you ended up today as the heads of the New York State building trades. And what was sort of that route and what it's like to be there today?

Gary LaBarbera: Sure. Thank you, Scott. So my story is, I guess, a very common story. I grew up in a very modest household. Both my mother and father lived through the Depression and World War II, so they knew what challenge was. And my brothers and I were raised with some very fundamental principles about how we conduct ourselves throughout our life, which were: Whatever you do, you do to the best of your ability. Work hard. Always be honest and always keep your word. So I joined the Teamsters union in 1981, February 2nd, 1981. I'll never forget the date. So it's over 40 years ago. And that was a pivotal moment in my life because I became a part of a union. My father before me, after World War II, he joined the Teamsters union in 1947.

So I grew up, around the the kitchen table, listening to many stories and the virtues of what unions bring to the middle class. And so in my generation, people coming from the middle class, you always thought about a few options, right? You were either going to become a fireman. You were going to become a police officer, sanitation or get in the union, right? Because you wanted that steady paycheck and you wanted that pension and the medical coverage. So, that was kind of my thought process. So, as I say, in 1981, it was a pivotal moment, a transition in my life where I got into a union and I was making, good family-sustaining wages, and I had medical coverage. I had just gotten married, and working towards a retirement.

And in late 80s, early 90s, I actually went back to school and went through the Cornell ILR labor studies program, which was, I think, very instrumental in preparing me for a leadership role. And then in 1994, I was brought on as a

business agent for local 282. This is local 282 of the Teamsters, which is the construction union in New York's City that delivers ready-mixed concrete and building material supply to construction sites. And from there 1994, '95, I became the trustee president, business manager, local. And I served in that capacity for 14 years. During that time, I was also elected in 2000 as the president of Teamster's joint council, which represented about 50 unions and 120,000 Teamsters in New York City. And then in 2007, while serving in both at those positions, I was elected as the president of the New York City Central Labor Council, which represented 400 unions and 1.4 million members in the city.

And then in 2009... Now I had three jobs in 2009. My predecessor, Edward Maloy, he had asked me if I would consider heading the building trades. And at that moment in my life, I thought it was the right option for me, and I was honored to do so. So in 2009 I became the president of the New York City building trades. And actually just in January of 2021 is when I was elected as the president of the state building trade. So today I currently serve as the president of the New York State building trades council, as well as the New York City building trades council, combined representing over 200,000 unionized construction workers in the state of New York. So I'm deeply honored to be in both those positions as the state and city president of the building trades. And I work hard every day. I do the best that I can do. I'm honest. And I keep my word. So, thanks dad.

Scott Rechler: It was good advice. And you talked about having to wear many hats, and one hat that I've seen personally up close is you also really being an advocate for the state and the city. Right? And not just for your members, but for the long-term vitality of our state and our region. And so as you've gone through this great history of the 40 years that you laid out, I mean, you lived through 9/11, we lived through Superstorm Sandy, you lived through a lot of other stuff along the way. 2020 hits and we have COVID, right? Which is something, obviously none of us could really have imagined.

And so I'm curious from your vantage point, with your historical perspective, your responsibility for your 200,000 members and your many partners that you have out there today, how did you respond, what was your initial reaction? And with all the noise about people are going to be leaving New York, fleeing New York, will New York survive, did you, in any time, sort of doubt the long-term sustainability in New York? And what were the signals you were seeing from your members and your clients at that time?

Gary LaBarbera: We'd been through many challenges in the city. And I think it's important that I note that I am very deeply concerned about the city of New York, and the state of New York and the region. And there's a reason. The building trades unions rely on a strong and vibrant economy, as you know. If we don't have a safe, clean city, we don't have a city that welcomes business, puts the doormat out for business, we cannot grow as a city, and the building trades cannot survive as

an institution. So we rely on New York's economy being robust and strong. I never doubted that New York City would come back because I've had the real privilege and the honor to work with people such as yourselves in the real estate community and in government, and know that there is such a deep commitment to this city.

The reality is New York City, New York State, but in particular New York City, I mean you know, is a unique place. It's really, I think, the greatest city in the world. There is so much the city offers in terms of opportunity, in terms of culture, entertainment. It's just a great and vibrant city. And again, the economic opportunity, Wall Street is the economic engine of not only the city, but the country and the world. So I never really doubted that New York would come back.

And another reason why Scott, and you'll recall this as well, after the tragic events of 9/11, we responded. Building trades members, thousands of them, on that day and every day since then, when people were fleeing lower Manhattan, we literally ran to lower Manhattan to assist. And we assisted from the very moment the towers came down through the clean up and the rebuilding. We did all that, the building trades and union contractors.

But I remember vividly so many people saying "Lower Manhattan is dead. Lower Manhattan is dead. It's never going to come back. It will never come back." And I remember when I saw, and we began, and the shovels went into the ground on the first tower, which was Silverstein's Tower Seven, I said to myself, "You can knock us down, but you can't keep us down." And you look at lower Manhattan today. I mean, again, pre-pandemic, but you look at lower Manhattan today, it's a thriving, vibrant place, and it will be a thriving, vibrant place. I know there's two more towers that are going to be built down there, and then the whole World Trade Center campus will be complete.

And so, because we lived through that we heard it. "We'll never come back." Superstorm Sandy, same thing eight years ago, devastation. And, I recall Mayor Bloomberg calling me on a Sunday morning saying, "Look, we need to have plumbers fitters, carpenters, laborers. Can we marshal people tomorrow morning, 8:00 AM at Floyd Bennett Field?" "How many do need?" I said. He said, "I need maybe 600." 1200 showed up. And there was a same thought process. "We'll never be able to rebuild. We'll never..." And we rebuilt.

So my belief is the resiliency of New York City is unique, and this city is going to continue to grow and thrive, and that it needs to grow and thrive to really create the opportunity to lift people up, to create a strong middle class. All of the indicators are pointing in a direction that New York City's going to come back and we're going to continue to thrive, and it's going to continue to be the epicenter of not only the United States, but in my opinion, of the world. And the state as well. I mean, in other areas of the state, which I'm becoming more familiar with, we are really starting to see things rebound. So I'm very bullish on

New York City and certainly New York State, and I believe that great opportunity lies ahead.

Scott Rechler: Yeah. And I couldn't agree more with you. And I think it's interesting that when you talk about 9/11 and living through that experience and Superstorm Sandy, it embedded in our character as New Yorkers this the sense of resiliency, this sense that we will overcome, and the sense of optimism that we're going to come together as a community and push forward and plan for that better and brighter day ahead. And I think what was interesting is, as the COVID crisis happened, it's almost like all of us who have watched or lived through those experiences immediately went into that crisis management mode and of "We're going to find a way to beat it." Right? And whether that was bending the curve and our healthcare heroes and our essential workers that kept things moving while that was going on was key.

But the other key as we've come to the later stage of this crisis was the vaccinations, right? Which was that we've had this incredible saw scientific miracle happened faster than anyone could have anticipated happening. Today, 87% of the adults in New York City are vaccinated. And I know that you and your union, like we did at RXR and our company, we mandated got it done. And you, I know, took a big push to get your members vaccinated. Talk about that, because that's been controversial. And so I can imagine some of your members felt that they didn't want to be forced to do it. But I'm curious to how you got them to do it.

Gary LaBarbera: I will tell you that the building trades leadership, you're right. We took a very strong position here. And our position was that we urged our members to be vaccinated. And there were, and there are, certain agencies and some owners that have mandated that. For example, the school construction authority, you cannot work on a project unless you have a vaccine. The same thing, obviously with health and hospitals, and we're doing a lot of work with health and hospitals right now. They have immunocompromised patients, we have workers that go in and work in the hospitals and you can't risk having someone having COVID. You have to be vaccinated.

And many of owners, private owners, who have right to say, "No, I want everyone vaccinated." In our position with our members, and by the way, we're over 80% right now, vaccinated. And our position, I give a lot of credit to the leadership with the members, was, "Listen, if there's a site that requires a mandate and you're not vaccinated, guess what? You're not going to work." And I think that was quite a incentive for many to go and get the vaccine.

Scott Rechler: And to that point, for us for example at RXR, we had a situation where about 40% of the trades that we're working, on our projects, were vaccinated back in June. And we said, "Okay, by September, everyone's got to be vaccinated." And we started to do the donuts, coffee, education, vaccination on site. And now we're 99%. Some of it was, people swapped out people that were against it and

brought people that weren't. But I think this is a carrot and stick approach that we need to take, because this is a pandemic of the unvaccinated. And now the more that we get people vaccinated, the more we can get back to beginning that recovery to the new normal as we described.

Gary LaBarbera: No question about it Scott.

Scott Rechler: So I want to pivot to infrastructure. There's a lot of projects, whether the airports, we had obviously Moynihan Station that was redeveloped, and the train hall redeveloped. There's now, coming out of the federal government, right? The \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill, \$550 billion of new spending. New York alone's going to get something like \$170 billion of that infrastructure capital. From your vantage point with all the private sector work going on, you have JP Morgan's headquarters, Google's headquarters, all the Hudson Yards, Grand Central, all this new activity, the airport work being done. Now we bring on these new infrastructure projects. Do we have the manpower and the resources to actually execute on this front?

Gary LaBarbera: I give, again, a lot of credit to the trades and their training directors. They have recognized that with all of this additional work, we need to ramp up apprenticeship classes. AND we really are focusing now on underserved communities. I'll tell you real quickly, if you don't mind. I mean, as part of the project labor agreements we negotiated in 2020 with the City of New York, we think that workforce development is a key to the future of our economy, and a key to the future of rebuilding communities. So what we did is, and it was historic, the amount of capital expenditure, including what I just mentioned, the 8.7 for the borough-based jails, which are design built. It's almost \$40 billion worth of construction activity over the next four years. It's enormous.

And so what we did was, along with the city, we are focusing now on communities, and we're working with the city's Workforce1 to go into communities, certain zip codes, where have 15% or more of the population is under the federal poverty line. And this is an all five boroughs. Now, as part of these negotiations, this is really staggering. I had asked the city if they could produce a map for me during the negotiation so I could just get a sense of: What are we talking about here? And I have to that when you look at... Again, this is all outer boroughs. It was a little over 50% of communities fell into that category. And the South Bronx being by far the worst, the most impoverished community of all of our communities in the five boroughs.

So, I mean, there really is institutional poverty. So we see all of this opportunity that's going to come with work as the future, as a way to really address those concerns, really to help people, lift people out of institutional poverty, lift people out of the dire struggle that they're in and bring them up into the middle class. And we do this through pre-apprentice and direct entry programs.

Real quickly, we have four major programs we work with. One is the Edward J Maloy Construction Skills Initiative, which really has been around for two decades. We brought thousands of people in. That's solely and primarily focused on high school students. We work with New York City vocational high schools. We have a program which is known as Pathways to Apprenticeship, which we focus on justice involved individuals, which really gives them a second chance at being a productive citizen. We have our Helmets to Hardhats program, which is our veterans program, which again, we're very, very proud of. And we brought well over a thousand and veterans in just in the last several years. And then finally Nontraditional Employment for Women, which is focused on bringing more women into the trades.

So these are pre-apprentice direct entry programs. And so we use these as a vehicle to kind of move people from these underserved communities to the head of the line, if you will, during recruitment, and they get placed into unions. The numbers are fantastic. Of all of these programs, some programs are 100% New York City residents, but combining them all, 88% of members coming into the building trades now are New York City residents, which was always historical criticism that most of the people in the New York City building trades didn't live in New York City. So that's changed dramatically. Of our apprentice apprentices, 69% of those apprentices are minorities. So almost 70% percent of people coming into trades are minorities. And as of 2017, which the numbers have gone up, the last time we actually studied it, 56% of all membership were minority. So we're really lifting people up and really starting to expand diversity in the trades, and all this work opportunity is going to really be able to facilitate creating these opportunities for these underserved communities.

Scott Rechler:

Yeah. That is terrific to hear, because I know when people think of labor, they historically have thought of almost a little bit like your story. There's the lineage of the father to the son, and there's been this sort of inability to actually attract a broader spectrum of New York, and particularly the underserved communities, minority communities, women. And I think attacking all that is critical. And listening to you speaking about this, it makes me think about, in this post-COVID world, we're probably going through the greatest transformation that we've gone through as a country, probably since World War II. And we've already, pre-COVID, were seeing this dislocation as technology was coming in and that this inequality and inability for people to have that upward mobility that your father had and you were able to have in the middle class.

So to be able to have programs like you described are critical, because you really need new playbooks and new plays for this post-COVID world to get people into that middle class. And then hopefully it doesn't end with the trades. This is something we should be thinking about for other types of industries, that people don't necessarily have to go get four-year degrees, that they can learn a skill, put that skill to work, and become productive and have that chance for upward mobility, and have the same lifestyle and grow their family like you did.

Gary LaBarbera: I completely agree with you, Scott. I think it's a very good model.

Scott Rechler: So we talked about a lot of construction, right? And one of the things that has always been a sticking point, and particularly in New York, is the cost of construction, and public projects in particular. We have this reputation for being the most costly city to execute projects. Even when we're able to sort of bring the budget to normal, we tend to be over budget and delayed along the way. And you've seen it at your time serving publicly whether with the MTA, the Port Authority. I've seen it in my experiences of this. And one of the byproducts of that is that the public then doesn't want to vote to provide money for public projects anymore, because I think it's going into a black hole versus actually creating an outcome. In your role, and working with your colleagues, is there any thoughts that you have in terms of ways that we could ensure that we're not just reinvesting in our infrastructure, but we're reinventing how we invest in our infrastructure so that it actually is something that people think that every dollar that they give is being spent wisely and efficiently and productively?

Gary LaBarbera: I do recall very vividly, there was that whole New York Times expose right on the MTA and some of the projects, and it was very critical of the MTA, and frankly of the construction industry as a whole. I think that that was, in a way, kind of a wake up call to agencies and authorities, and to the industry. And I know at the Port Authority, where I served as a commissioner, and you did as well. And I know with your involvement in the MTA. We as an agency or an authority, are more highly focused than ever before on essentially monitoring progress, monitoring budget as we go along. I think what really needs to happen, certainly in the public sector, is I think they need to take a page from the private sector.

And what I think part of that problem, Scott, is, is that, whether it's the MTA or the Port Authority, and I don't say this in a critical way. It's just from what I've learned from my experience is these are very large bureaucracies. And what we see in bureaucracies and frankly we've seen it in state agencies and city agencies is often there's this kind of siloed approach, and there's a lot of territorialism in each silo. And so I think it's a combination of things. I think that there needs to be more oversight on projects, there needs to be some more accountability, candidly. And when I say that, I don't just mean of contractors. I mean, across the board. The cost, that's our major competitor, frankly, in the union market.

We often say, and I've often said to the union leadership, "When you go to negotiations and sit across the table from your contracting association, you're not really negotiating the contractors. You're negotiating with the market, right?" And that, to me, is a very fundamental business approach. And so, we have to understand and recognize that we have to bring value to a project. We have to bring speed and efficiency to a project. And we have to be able to deliver a project that's within budget. And one of the things that we have an ongoing conversations with the real estate board is "Look, we know, in the private sector, there's non-union competition out there." We have all

recognized at this point. I mean, it took time, but simply put it's what I say to everybody: It's the math. But if the budget doesn't work, it makes it impossible.

So we realize it's about the math. And so I give a lot of credit again to the leadership of the trades. They're coming up with very innovative ways to become more competitive, to become more efficient. And I think it's just the overall combination of things, Scott, that the industry is evolving. We need to evolve with the industry. And the other thing I will say is, I think one of the problems in the industry, candidly, is more transparency. I think we have to have a more transparent industry. When unions make adjustments, they do this within a collective bargaining relationship, but we don't really ever know. Does the end user really get through those savings? If you are building a project, is Scott Rechler getting those savings? Or any developer? Because we're not in the final negotiations, we don't have any place to be there legally. So again, I think transparency is important as well.

Scott Rechler: No, it's good to hear. And I think you used the word silos, and I think one of the things that I've seen in my experience is that it's not just silos internally in the bureaucracies, but how they approach each of the stakeholders. Rather than approaching this as a partnership between the government, business, and labor, and saying, "How do we come together and work to put the best project forward for the best price on time?" It's a little bit of "This person's on the other team. That person's on the other team." Versus, "We're one team, and we're going to get this done." Right? And I think that and the transparency would go a long way on that front.

So another area that you've referred to before is thinking about sustainability and renewable energy. And there's a lot of desire by the private sector, by the public sector, to focus on creating more sustainable buildings in terms of existing product, as well as building new products. And so I'm curious from your perspective and your vantage point, what initiatives are you doing? How are you partnering with the private sector, with government, to actually help move us forward to meet some of these new goals?

Gary LaBarbera: So this is, again, just a great topic. And it's something that really we, and I, have been very invested in probably now going on three years. And so just let me tell you where we're at with this whole renewable issue. First of all, we recognize that climate change is real, and we recognize that it has to be addressed, certainly for the future of our planet and for our kids' and grandkids' future. And I have now five grandchildren and look at these little guys and girls running around when we're all together. And I'm madly in love with each one of them. But I often think about what will the world look like in 20 or 30 years from now, right? What will the world look like?

So I feel that, our generation, we have a real responsibility to ensure that we turn to the next generation, a better environment in a cleaner world. And certainly in New York State, well in the world, but certainly here in the state,



there's been a lot to focus on the CLPCA, which is getting to certain benchmarks goals by 2030 and by 2040. And the focus right now has primarily been on wind and solar, right? Now, this is the issue. What's very important here is just transition, right? Because you're going to be transitioning from a fossil fuel industry in terms of energy production, to a new industry, solar, wind, I'm going to mention hydrogen and biofuel in a minute. And so there's going to be a shift in employment, and many of those jobs, in particular in New York State, are highly unionized jobs. Good middle class family sustaining stay job.

So we've been working three years with [inaudible 00:28:29], with the governor and now the new governor on this issue. And what we did was we ensured number one, we got this codified statute, that on large scale renewables, five megawatts are more for solar and wind, onshore and offshore wind and solar, that there would be prevailing wage and PLA requirements ensuring that these are going to be good middle class jobs. We also got labor peace agreements for the permanent operation of maintenance jobs, an incentive to buy American and an incentive for developers, offshore wind developers, to buy from New York facilities components.

Now, the problem is, is this the chicken or the egg, right? Or the cart before the horse. Where we stand now, I think we're challenged to meet the goals by 2030. And we look at local 197, it's not reality because... And you know, this, I'm sure, very well, and many of your listeners will know this very well. It's just not a reality. Now we're talking about gas bans. The problem is we are not going to have the renewable or zero net emissions available to meet some of the goals in two or three years on the local 197. It's not there. So I think it has to be phased in. And I think that wind and solar alone is not going to do it. I think we have to really focus on hydrogen, which is being used widely in Europe and in certain parts of the country on the West Coast, and biofuel, which are not necessarily renewable, but they're zero net emissions.

Because there's an enormous amount of pressure being put on, as you know, on building owners to get into compliance when there isn't the existing renewable, or clean energy available. I've tried to use my voice to the extent I can and will continue, and I've been partnering with other individuals and organizations like Remedy to try to raise the flag up, right? And say, "Wait a minute, we understand your goals. And I appreciate the environmentalists and I understand. But isn't as simple as, two years from now, everything's got to be a certain way in terms of renewable energy." Because it's not going to be there.

So I think that, while it's very well intentioned, I think people like myself and others in the real estate industry, and we are doing that now, we really have to try to talk some common sense here to the environmentalists. Again, we understand. We all agree climate change is real, and we need to move away from fossil fuel and into renewable and clean energy. But we have to do it in a mature and intelligent way. And again, it can't be ideology. It can't simply be ideology.

Scott Rechler: No, no. And it's very well said and thoughtful. And I think for the viewers, right? Local 197's a law that the city put in place that set guidelines as to greenhouse emissions that buildings have to get to in different periods, 2025, 2030. And I think the thing that your point is, that's well taken, is that we need a bridge, a rational bridge, to get to the point where we actually have renewable energy alternatives to do that. It doesn't mean we actually have to go the fossil fuel, but there's natural gas. There's other alternatives. There's other ways to get there, but we have to not let this be simply "We have to stop."

And I think one of the things that people don't focus on is there's trade offs, right? I mean, we've talked a lot today, about job opportunities. There's affordable housing, there's economic development, and when you think about having social impact and impacting people's lives, obviously having an environmentally sustainable community is critical, but so is housing. So is jobs. So is healthcare. And you got to balance them all because if you're just going to say, "We're going to stop building housing, because we can't have enough energy, that's renewable energy to do it," all of a sudden our housing crisis becomes this much worse. Right? And so I think that this is more nuanced.

And you used the word, that this can't just be ideological, right? And I think that's an important point generally, because I think over the last number of years, we've had these ideological positions taken by some elected officials that have taken very complex nuanced issues, like the ones we just were talking about, and trying to simplify them into slogans and ideology, rather than trying to deal with the complexity in a way that addresses all of the issues. And the recent election that we just had over the last week. I think there was some pushback. And I kind of feel like that was a little bit of a pushback of, "Okay, put aside ideology in favor of tangible progress. We want to see results. Let government do its job as we go forward."

So I'm curious, in your membership, you have a broad base of ideology and different people from different backgrounds. When you hear from them, what do they expect out of government, A? And B, going into this environment right now, for someone like Eric Adams, who's going to be our next mayor in New York City, what advice would you give him to guide through this specific period?

Gary LaBarbera: So in terms of our membership, I would say that our membership would be moderate to centrist. That is a fair assessment. Not all are Democrats. Certainly not all are Democrats. But I would say the large majority of our membership is really in the center. And so when we see the type of gridlock that goes on, and one of the things that I think, to your point, what we saw an election day, I think it's a referendum in a way, that is very telling. I think when you realize that we have in the Democrats, and I'm a proud Democrat, have the executive, we have the Senate, and we have the House, and you look at the gridlock, what I refer to right now, what's happening in the Democratic party with this, if you want to call it this DSA or the far left it's cannibalization of the party.

So our members get very frustrated, and I think that's why we saw what we saw, because we're saying "Now, wait a minute. We worked so hard. We were told we need to support Democrats. We got to vote in our interests. We got to do all these things. We did all those things, and we're in gridlock." And what we saw just happen, when you think about, we mentioned in the earlier portion of the show, the infrastructure bill, and you think about that, if it weren't for six Republicans, this wouldn't have happened. And you think about in New York where you had Congress member Bowman vote, no. And you had obviously AOC vote no, that was ideology. That was ideology. And I'm just going to have to say this while I have the opportunity, because I'm not ashamed to say what I'm going to say, because I've said it publicly and I'll continue to say it publicly.

The far left, or progressives, are talking about bringing people out of institutional poverty. They're talking about, we got to reduce crime, and we got to do things to reduce addiction and the sense of hopelessness. We got to build communities. Okay? The best way, and I will say to Scott, I have said this for 30 years, from the very first day I became a labor leader in this city 30 years ago, I would say the best anti-crime and anti-poverty program is a job that leads to a career. And the reason is, in talking to so many different communities and stakeholders from these communities, all everyone wants, regardless of the color of their skin, or their background, is they want to be able to have dignity and a sense of self worth, right?

And we all want the same thing. We want to have at least that middle class existence, right? We want to be able to have a home. We want to be able to raise a family. We want to be able to provide for our family. And when our kids are sick, we want to have a job and a career that we can take them to the doctors. And when we are done with our careers, we want to be able to retire with some level of dignity. We all want the same thing.

Now, job creation is how we do that. When we saw the WPA with Franklin Delano Roosevelt, that's why that program went into place. We saw the federal highway system with Eisenhower that's why we saw that program go into place. And that's what we've just seen with the infrastructure bill. But the reality is, is that when you have people that say on one hand that they want to change this and help people in these blighted and disadvantaged communities, but then don't vote for job creation. That's the problem. That's a problem for our membership and the buildings trades, because that's what we solely focus on.

We always say "Vote in your interest. You got to vote that's going to create opportunity for us." So to answer to that part of your question, that's the reaction is this sense of frustration. And I think we're seeing it beyond just union members. We're seeing across the board. A lot of Democrats stayed home. And I think a lot of Democrats are a little bit frustrated with the direction of the party. And that's why we saw what we saw an election day.

Now, as far as Eric Adams goes, look, I think Eric's going to be a great mayor. Just two weeks ago we had the opportunity to have him join our executive board for resume. That's the last conversation, actually in-person conversation, I've had with him. Very excited about his thoughts for the future. One is he recognizes that the first and foremost, we need a safe, clean city. And again, that goes back to where we talked earlier about if we don't have that, nobody's one going to want to come to work in New York City, therefore there's going to be no commercial development. We're not going to get big institutional commercial clients to come here, because if people feel it's unsafe to come here... So that thwarts economic development and thwarts construction. So I'm thrilled about that. But I think one of the things that I really like what he's saying, and I'm hopeful he's able to do it. He said after the election, "Now we're going to take off the intermural jerseys and we're going to put on one jersey, Team New York."

And he continues to say he wants to bring all stakeholders in. He did say that to us as well. He wants to find a way to really bring people together in the interest of building back a better New York City. And my advice to him would be just keep to your word. Like my dad said, keep your word, and really endeavor to do that because I think there are so many people in this city that are so hungry for that, Scott, that really want to work together and really want to put the city first. I think there's an enormous opportunity here for Eric Adams to really, really make a difference in New Yorkers' lives and the future of New York.

So, if he can do what he says he's going to do. address the safety issues in the city, address the crime issue, and also bring so many stakeholders together. If he could stick true to his words, and I believe he will. I see him as fearless. I mean, he's very open about, the far left. He has said, and I mentioned this to him in my conversation, he sees himself as the face of the Democratic party. And I think he's right. I think that the far left is the numerical minority. And I think when you looked at the primary, when you saw Catherine Garcia and Eric was so close, they were running on really the same issues, right?

"We're going to have to address the safety issues in the city. We have to address crime. We're going to have to make sure it's a clean city. We got to put the welcome mat out for business." That's where we are today. So if he can follow through on those things, I think there's a bright future for the city of New York. And we're certainly going to support him. And, we made it very clear to him that he can count on us in any way possible to work with him, especially in the workforce development side, and certainly on these other broader issues. I think we're very like-minded.

Scott Rechler:

If you think about the last number of years, we've been told this is a tale of two cities. And rather than being united to solve the challenges that each part of the city was facing, whether that was equity or giving everyone the opportunity or education or housing, it was divisive. And to your point that there's a thirst for us to come together as partners, as one New York, to overcome these

challenges, and a window of opportunity to reimagine the future of New York as a renaissance in a post-COVID world where we can all partner together, whether that's business, government, labor, civic groups, the charitable organizations to say, "How do we make it better for everyone?"

How do we create a more sustainable, more equitable, more prosperous community for everyone that lives to the standards that you set forth, which is that they can live with dignity and opportunity. They work hard, they can excel, take care of their families and, and live a proud life in a great city. So I look forward to working with you, Gary, hand in hand, on doing this as we have in the past. And I'm leaving this conversation more optimistic about what we have ahead of us in the days and months and years ahead. So thank you for taking the time and thanks for all your leadership.

Gary LaBarbera: And Scott, thank you very much for having me and giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts. It was really a pleasure to be with you.

Scott Rechler: Great, thanks Gary. Be well.

That concludes this week's episode of Recalibrate Reality. One of the biggest lessons that we've learned throughout this series is that we must put progress over ideology if we're going to forward in creating a region that's more prosperous and more sustainable than before. And we're fortunate to have Gary and his members more than ready to build the next version of New York and to train the next generation of workers. Thank you again to Gary LaBarbera and the New York building construction trades. And thank you to the Regional Plan Association, the 92nd Street Y and to the team for making this week's episode possible. I'm Scott Rechler from 75 Rockefeller Plaza in New York. Have a great Thanksgiving, and I'll see you in two weeks.