



Photo courtesy of the Mayor's Office

Cupid's bow has pierced the core of the city. Storefront windows abound with heart-shaped mobiles and chocolates packaged in red velvet boxes. Long-stemmed roses overflow the buckets lining the street corner markets. Flower delivery men scurry across town, their faces hidden behind big bouquets. Finely dressed businessmen clutch their briefcases in one hand, and swing small pink Victoria's Secret bags in the other. As an ebullience of amity overtakes the ever-hectic Manhattan on Valentine's Day, one of its better-known citizens also celebrates his birthday, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. How apropos that the man who restored the pulse to a city once victimized by hate was born on a day that pays tribute to love. And as the mayor receives good wishes for his own special day, he whispers to his special Valentines—his denizens of the five boroughs—"I love New York."

In an age where love is measured by the "What have you done for me lately?" quotient, Bloomberg has truly proven his affection to the eight million citizens for whom he works. Certainly no other mayor, and perhaps no other contemporary American leader, assumed their post during such an uncertain time as did Bloomberg post 9/11. But New York's 108th mayor was up to the task. Bloomberg has moved the city from the ashes of anguish to what he calls "a city of opportunity." The State of the City is strong.

# MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG

## city of opportunity

BY ALIZA DAVIDOVIT

"Will we be able to come back? Can we recover? Will we be safe? Would we ever be the same?" were questions that plagued all New Yorkers after September 11th, Bloomberg points out. Three years later, in his 2005 State of the City address, he affirms that all those questions have been answered.

"We are safer today than we have ever been in modern memory. We have taken our city from fiscal crisis to fiscal stability. We are building new buildings. We are buying our first homes. We are reopening our waterfront." He goes on to say, "We are creating new jobs. We've redoubled our commitment to fighting disease and to ending homelessness. We are making our school system the best in the nation. Where once there was doubt, New Yorkers believe again."

And the numbers speak for themselves. Under this pragmatic mayor, crime has dropped 15% citywide in

three years. 2004 was the third year in a row with fewer than 600 homicides, a feat which has not been achieved in 40 years. According to the FBI, New York is the safest large city in America.

Bloomberg doesn't view this drop as mere percentage points, but rather, appreciates it on a humanistic level: It's one less family, one less mother, one less child who will suffer at the hand of crime. Instead of looking over their shoulders with apprehension, New Yorkers and its visitors can turn their attention to lovelier sights as Bloomberg and his men in blue are watching their backs.

New York City also leads the nation in homeland security. A fearless Bloomberg has taken on the federal government, urging it to allocate its homeland security dollars based on risk. And on the homeland, where many have no homes at all, 28,000 homeless men, women and children were placed in permanent homes in 2004 alone because of Bloomberg's efforts. He's also launched the biggest affordable housing initiative New York has seen in 20 years. Since December of 2002, over 25,000 units of affordable housing have been completed in neighborhoods across the city. Bloomberg's goal is to bring that number up to 65,000. And if things proceed according to his plan, by 2008, a total of 200,000 New Yorkers will have benefited from the additional units. As for those homeowners who helped bail the city out of its fiscal crisis, the mayor offers them, once again, a \$400 property tax rebate and thanks them for being there when the city needed them most.

Bloomberg is adamant that New York is

indeed open for business. Why question the business acumen of this self-made billionaire? In 2004, the economy grew in every quarter. The mayor has focused his five borough economic strategy on industries well beyond Wall Street, such as tourism, biotechnology, and film production—areas he feels are ripe for growth. He has further enticed big-spending movie and production companies to come back to New York by offering them tax credits. He has



Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg (center) and his mother, Charlotte, attend the dedication ceremony for the Charlotte R. Bloomberg Mother and Child Center at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.

Queens Plaza, from the Bronx Terminal Market to the Fulton Fish Market, to launching new incentives to bring businesses to Lower Manhattan. Since Bloomberg became mayor, New York City's unemployment rate has dropped to 6.1%. (For the first time in 16 years, New York's unemployment rate is as low as the entire nation's.) In 2004 alone, 40,000 private-sector jobs were created and an additional 50,000 are expected to be created in 2005. And with a genuine concern for all New Yorkers, he has also created a commission to make sure that as the economy grows, every New Yorker has the opportunity to benefit.

In January, Bloomberg announced the creation of the Mayor's Office of Industrial and Manufacturing Businesses to support New York City's industrial sector. The Office will manage the creation of new Industrial Business Zones (IBZs), in addition to carrying out a number of initiatives to assist the

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also designated business improvement districts in order to assist small business, which he values as the lifeblood of New York's communities. In addition, he has put emphasis on transforming Lower Manhattan from a canyon of business to a more diverse neighborhood, currently the fastest-growing residential area in the city.

Bloomberg's five-borough plan is creating jobs throughout the city. The Administration is investing in communities from the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal to the new business district in

manufacturing sector such as relocation tax credits, enhanced sanitation services and employee training programs. He is creating new incentives to encourage long-term investment in manufacturing, warehousing and other industrial businesses throughout the five boroughs.

But even as Bloomberg focuses on the needs within the boroughs, with acute peripheral vision he also sees the silver lining at the city's perimeter—the 578 miles of waterfront. Bloomberg has committed to revamping the shoreline that is the interface between the most dramatic

skyline in the world and one of its greatest cities. Where there are now crumbling piers and abandoned factories, Bloomberg is working to create recreational and residential opportunities. In the Greenpoint/Williamsburg area of Brooklyn, an elegant riverside promenade, fresh parks and 8,000 new apartment townhouses will replace the current decrepitude. In Manhattan, the mayor is creating a greenway around the entire island, thus transforming the waterfront into an inviting, delightful experience for those who will take to the trail.

In a further initiative to make New York more competitive, Bloomberg has proposed a project that has bred both accolades and controversy: the New York Sports and Convention Center. Bloomberg aims to land major conventions and trade shows at the proposed center, opportunities that New York currently cannot accommodate. The proposed center would be 4,413,203 square feet and would include a domed stadium with 75,000 seats, an extension of the Jacob K. Javits Center and also housing and parks. Advocates of the stadium feel it would bring in millions of dollars to the city and create 230,000 jobs. Its staunchest supporters are the New York Jets, which would contribute \$800 million toward the \$1.4 billion project. In addition, the N.F.L. has indicated it is ready to award the 2010 Super Bowl to New York if the West Side stadium is ready. The mayor's bid to host the 2012 Olympics as well is only viable if the center is built. Among the detractors are his political opponents and those who are concerned about traffic problems and the allocation of public funds. One leading Democrat, however, who came out in support of Bloomberg's project, is Congressman Charles Rangel. He says that he supports the project because it is needed to attract the Olympics and would create jobs for minorities in the

construction industry.

Bloomberg feels very strongly about bringing the 2012 games to his city. He says that for him, New York represents the Olympic movement. "We have the diversity that is the essence of the Olympic movement," Bloomberg has said in a recent interview. "It is an inclusive, worldwide movement. That's what New York is about in a way probably no other big city in the world is. The Olympic movement is about competition and meritocracy. New York is known for that."



Mayor Bloomberg hosts a Chanukah holiday reception as Bettie Cohen, age 6, lights the Chanukah menorah.

Bloomberg has also made New York known for its 311 hotline that he created for the city's citizens to interact with their local government. The 311 line offers one-stop shopping for all nonemergency questions and complaints about city government—from requesting the repair of potholes to inquiring about health care services. "Before 311, city government listings took up more than 4,000 entries on 14 pages of the phone book," Bloomberg says. "People just didn't know where to get their questions answered." The call center is staffed 24/7 and provides service in more than 170 different languages. In only its second year of operation, it has handled 11.5 million calls. Some of those calls came from the mayor himself, who anonymously reported potholes and then used his service request number to check on the status of his call. With 311 handling

nonemergency complaints, 911 can better focus on responding to emergency calls. The net result is that all New Yorkers are safer.

Bloomberg is very proud of the 311 hotline. "It has helped our Administration perform more effectively and efficiently," the mayor says. "It has also given us an invaluable tool to improve quality of life." With the data collected from 311 calls, the city can determine how well it responds to citizen concerns and then direct resources more efficiently.

This pragmatic Mayor is simply not a typical smoke-and-mirrors politician. In fact, he helped blow the smoke right out of New York in July of 2003 with the initiation of a statewide smoking ban. In a huff, many protestors feared that the ban would puff business away. Nonetheless, visitors are flocking to New York. In 2004, New York hosted a record-breaking 40 million tourists.

And when Bloomberg looks toward the future, he cannot help but focus on those who comprise it: New York's 1.1 million school children. "I don't think there is a social problem that we have that we couldn't eliminate or ameliorate by changing the school system and providing better public education," Bloomberg tells *Lifestyles*. It is for that reason that he himself took control of the city's school system and abolished the cumbersome and inefficient Board of Education. Because of Bloomberg students in the third and fifth grades are no longer socially promoted from one grade to the next regardless of their performance, but rather, they learn and earn their way through school. As a result of his many initiatives, school safety has increased, parents are more involved, new schools have been built and more are in the works, thousand of new classroom seats have been created and students are

receiving more individualized attention. And with a \$13.1-billion five-year plan, Bloomberg, a former Wall Street guru, will invest soundly in the future custodians of New York City and America. In spite of his winning track record, Bloomberg says, "We're just getting started!"



Indeed, looking back at where he got started gives insight into the man who will soon be seeking a second term. Bloomberg was born in 1942, in Medford, Massachusetts, to a loving middle-class family. He can't recall ever seeing his parents argue. His father was a bookkeeper, who worked seven days a week for a local dairy. His mother was a dedicated homemaker, who ensured that her family remained a tight unit and insisted they always eat dinner together. She also became the breadwinner after Bloomberg's father passed away. If he learned a solid work ethic from his father, from his mother he says he learned that you do what you have to do in life, and you do it without complaining.

"It really was a cohesive, happy, sharing unit," Bloomberg wrote about his family in his autobiography, *Bloomberg by Bloomberg*. "If I screwed up my life, I can't blame my mother, father or sister."

But Bloomberg was as far from screwing up his life then as he is now. As a young boy, he joined the boy scouts, which combined for him his sense of community with his ambitions of personal accomplishment. "I savored earning every merit badge, took pride in achieving every rank," he tells.

Never one to be idle, even when in high school, Bloomberg took jobs after school and on weekends. One of his mentors recognized his interest in science and suggested that he apply to

Johns Hopkins University. Although most of Bloomberg's peers had no academic ambitions and never attended college, he chose to apply. Bloomberg soon became the big man on campus. Although he was studying engineering, he never really thought that he would invent anything. What he did discover was that he was a people person.

Perhaps his political ambitions were born at Johns Hopkins. He became president of his fraternity, president of the Inter-Fraternity Council and class president. "I learned how to campaign for



Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg hosted a meeting at City Hall with prominent members of the *Moetzes G'Dolai HaTorah* (Council of Torah Sages). The Mayor met with them in advance of the 11th Siyum HaShas Celebration, which marks the culmination of the study of the Babylonian Talmud by participants of the Daf Yomi program.

office while seeking elected school positions," Bloomberg writes in his autobiography. Sadly, Bloomberg's beloved father did not live long enough to see his son graduate or to enjoy all he would achieve. "I'm really sad my father was not around to see my success," Bloomberg tells *Lifestyles*. "He would have loved every minute of it." To this day, Bloomberg has a photo of his father displayed in his bedroom.

After graduating from Johns Hopkins, Bloomberg was not certain what he wanted to do. Most of his fellow graduates were seeking higher education, so Bloomberg, too, decided to apply to graduate school. When the big, bulky envelope finally arrived from Harvard, he did not even open it. He

knew he was accepted—rejections came in very thin letters. When he called to share the good news with his mother, she said, "Don't let it go to your head." It was that kind of upbringing that has always kept him well-grounded. In 1966, Michael Bloomberg graduated from Harvard University with a master's degree in business administration.

With his degree in hand, he did what most MBAs did not do at that time: He went to work on Wall Street. He had student loans to pay off and he figured a good job was a good job. So

Photo courtesy of Ed Reed

owning only one suit at the time, he took a job with Salomon Brothers (today's Citigroup) for \$11,500 a year. While most of his fellow graduates had positions as research analysts and investment bankers and had finely appointed offices, Bloomberg was sweating it out in an overheated bank vault counting billions of dollars' worth of securities by hand. He was embarrassed to tell his friends the true nature of his job. He had spent many a day putting tiny slips of paper into alphabetical order, or making sure that the firm's partners had their No. 2 and 3 pencils

sharpened. One day Bloomberg decided to play a prank on the partners by swapping their pencils and breaking off all the lead tips. While one of his bosses laughed it off, the other started screaming that Bloomberg should be fired.

Consequently, Bloomberg was transferred to the equities desk—the stock side of the business—where he proved that he, himself, was "the sharpest pencil in the box." He was a born salesman. In his book he tells how he and his teammate were able to sell anything to anybody. "If you wanted to dispose of a block of stock, we could have even convinced your spouse to buy it," he reflects.

Bloomberg was a rising star. He'd start his day at 7 A.M. before everyone else other than Bill Salomon. He loved

his job; he loved Monday mornings, and within seven years he became a partner. Quoting Woody Allen, Bloomberg philosophizes that 80% of life is just showing up. "The more you work, the better you do. It's that simple," he feels. "I always outworked the other guy."

After 15 years at Salomon, because of internal politics, Bloomberg was fired. He walked away with \$10 million, but his spirits were crushed. With too much creative energy to just take it easy, Bloomberg decided to start something on his own. From his early days on Wall Street, he had always been surprised at the primitive manner in which trading information was recorded. If one wanted to compare stock prices, one would have to search through ledgers or peruse back issues of the *Wall Street Journal*. He had the innovative idea to create a computer that would collect and analyze data and would provide real-time pricing and immediate information to the user. Over two decades later, Bloomberg LLP employs more than 8,000 staffers and has more than 100 offices around the world, including Israel. In 1982 it sold 20 subscriptions; today it has over 165,000 subscribers worldwide. Eventually, the company branched out into radio, TV, the Internet and publishing. Its annual revenues are estimated at around \$2.5 billion. Bloomberg himself is now worth approximately \$4.5 billion.

Even while busy making a living, Bloomberg did find the time to marry and raise two terrific daughters, Georgina and Emma. Married from 1976 to 1993, he and his wife eventually grew apart and decided to divorce, but they still remain the best of friends. Bloomberg tells *Lifestyles* that he encourages his girls to work hard. "Don't worry what people think about

you," are his words of advice to them. "You learn what you need to know by doing, so just do!" His daughters have to some degree become Bloomberg's own moral compass. "If I'm not ashamed to tell my daughters what I did at work today, then I know I've done nothing wrong," Bloomberg says.

His daughters have apparently heeded their father's advice and are accomplished young women in their own right. Emma used to work with her dad at City Hall, but is now studying for her MBA at Harvard. Georgina is a rising, young



Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg shops for Rosh Hashanah along Avenue J in Brooklyn.

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international equestrian in show jumping, and is a top candidate for the United States Equestrian Team. Her hopes are to compete in the next Olympic Games. She is also an undergraduate at the Gallatin School at New York University.

And though Bloomberg is a workaholic who puts in 15-hour days and often works on weekends, he has also found time throughout his life for a little fun. He flies airplanes, plays golf, skis and also gets in a daily jog. But even recreation has its risks. On two occasions Bloomberg's aviation equipment failed mid-air and he himself manned the planes to safe crash land-

ings. Another incident where fun nearly turned fatal was when one of Bloomberg's skiing buddies got swallowed by an avalanche. Bloomberg was the only one from a group of friends and rescue team who by deduction was able to isolate the victim's location. Perhaps it is with those survival skills that Bloomberg was able to resuscitate and invigorate a city with a broken heart.

So why would this man who has it all choose to step aside from running a successful company, forsake the full mayoral salary for \$1 a year, take on the burdens of a complicated city, spend \$74 million of his own money to run for mayor—and then want to do it all over again?

"I want to make a difference," Bloomberg says. "If you don't run for eight years, then a lot of the things we've changed and worked so hard for will be rolled back. And that will be tragic for the kids."

When asked how being in pol-

itics differs from the business world, Bloomberg has said, "In the business world it was dog-eat-dog. In politics, it's the complete opposite."

Bloomberg a Republican mayor who is pro-choice, pro-gay rights and pro-gun control, guarantees he will never seek any other political posts. He says that he has the best job in the world. "There's no other job in government where cause and effect are so tightly coupled, where you can make a difference every day in so many different ways and in so many different people's lives."

And Bloomberg is indeed a man of the people. He rides the subway to work with his constituents every day, only one of whom screamed at him, saying, "Fix the Knicks." He loves to dine with the locals at the American Grill in Staten Island or Enzo's in the Bronx. And when there's no time for meals, he'll chow down his favorite snack: popcorn. He likes it so much that his staff gave him an authentic, old-school popcorn maker for his birthday.

Always trying to stay connected with the citizens he serves, Bloomberg studies Spanish every day and also reads the daily Spanish newspapers. At City Hall, he sits in a cubicle among his staffers and only uses his office for ceremonial purposes. What mayor is better suited for the job than one who can tear down walls in such a multiethnic and diverse city such as New York? For Bloomberg, there is no me or you, it's us. Success is a collaborative effort. Where two towers once fell, now one Freedom Tower will rise, a fitting symbol for a united city.



Bloomberg may have come a long way, but he hasn't forgotten where he came from. Although he doesn't wear his Judaism on his sleeve, he carries it in his heart. He says that he is very proud of his heritage. Bloomberg has visited Israel four times since he was elected mayor. In December of 2001, he traveled there as mayor-elect with Governor Pataki and Mayor Giuliani after a slew of suicide attacks. "The suicide bombings in Israel remind us that democracy comes at a very high price," Bloomberg states. "We must continue to fight terrorism." In August of 2003, he made a nine-hour trip to show solidarity with the people of Israel after an attack on a #2 Egged bus

caused the deaths of 21 Israelis. He also visited the survivors and participated in a candle-lighting memorial at the spot where the attack occurred. In honor of the Mayor's solidarity visit, American friends of the Mayor donated an "Ambucycle"—a first-response motorcycle for medics—to Hatzolah Jerusalem. Less than 10 hours after the ceremony, the Bloomberg "Ambucycle" was put into use as Hatzolah Jerusalem volunteers rushed to the scene of a severe car accident, where a car catapulted into a valley 500 meters from where the bombing had occurred.

In November 2003, he once again found his way back to the Holy Land



Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg exchanges flying stories with Israel Air Force Col. Zeev Raz.

when he traveled there with his mother and sister to dedicate a new wing at Hadassah Hospital in honor of his mother's 95th birthday. The trip was a life fulfillment for his mother, who always dreamed of traveling to Israel with her two children.

Most recently, in March 2005, Bloomberg was asked by President George W. Bush to lead a presidential delegation to the State of Israel to attend the inauguration of Yad Vashem's New Holocaust History Museum. The delegation included Professor Elie Wiesel, Nobel laureate, author and founder of the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity; The Honorable Daniel Kurtzer, ambassador of the U.S. to the State of Israel; The Honorable Fred S. Zeidman, chairman

of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council; Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis, founder and president of Hineni International; Mrs. Norma Lemer, owner of the Cleveland Browns, and Rabbi Isaac Neuman, rabbi emeritus of Sinai Temple. The opening ceremonies were attended by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as well as presidents and senior representatives from some 53 countries, including French prime minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin and German foreign minister Joschka Fischer. Bloomberg used that opportunity before world leaders to say that the atrocities of the Holocaust "must always remind us why the State of Israel must always endure.

"As we approach the 60th anniversary since the end of one of human history's darkest chapters, we must never forget the atrocities that were committed," Bloomberg said. "Sadly, we have entered into a period where we will lose many of the last remaining eyewitnesses to the Holocaust, and soon the burden will rest on future generations to honor and preserve the memory of the six million Jewish

souls who were murdered. Yad VaShem's new Holocaust History Museum will serve an important role in honoring that memory, confronting history and teaching one of the most important lessons, if not the most important lesson, we as human beings can learn: tolerance."

Among the many who were happy to see Bloomberg go to Israel was New York's DA Robert Morgenthau, who said that he was delighted that President Bush sent the Mayor to represent the U.S. as New York City has more Holocaust survivors than any city in the western world. It is also the home to the largest population of Jews outside of the State of Israel, with 1.1 million Jews living in the five boroughs. Of course, the trip prompted many reporters to ask the Mayor about controversial issues

Photo courtesy of Gabriel Eren

facing Israel, but Bloomberg declined, saying he would rather leave such matters to the experts. Bloomberg did say to *Lifestyles* that all Americans have a special affinity for Israel “because we all love the things that Israel stands for and America stands for...They both stand for freedom.”

Back on the home front, Bloomberg can often be found at Chanukah candle-lighting ceremonies, Holocaust memorials and numerous other Jewish events. In 2004, Bloomberg hosted a reception at Gracie Mansion in honor of Jewish Heritage Month, celebrating 350 years of Jewish life in America. And most recently, he could be found among a sea of 30,000 men in black—Orthodox Jews with black hats and *kippas*—when he attended the Siyum HaShas, the completion of the seven-year cycle of studying the Talmud.

Although he grew up in a kosher home—and his mom still maintains one—Bloomberg himself is not especially religious. “I’ve always believed that God will, number one, look at you based on what you did, not whether you followed a set of ceremonies laid down by somebody else,” he said in a recent interview. He does, however, keep one fundamental Torah mitzvah, the giving of *tzedakah* (charity), and he does so in a true Torah way: as anonymously as possible.

Bloomberg, however, may be more religious than he thinks, for according to the Talmud, the giving of *tzedakah* is equal to keeping all the other commandments combined. He ranks number six on a list of America’s top-60 donors. In 2004 alone, Bloomberg gave \$138 million to more than 600 organizations that deal with the arts, education, health care and social services, including the American National Red Cross, in Washington; the Carnegie Corp., in New York; Dance Theater of Harlem, in New York, and the New York City Department of Education’s Fund for Public Schools.

Bloomberg says that he learned to be diverse in his philanthropy from his parents. When he was just a young man, he had asked his father why he was giving money to the NAACP, and his father wisely replied, “If we don’t help people being discriminated against, we will be discriminated against.”

One of Bloomberg’s favorite charities is his alma mater, Johns Hopkins University, where he donated \$55 million in 1996. He believes Hopkins gives him the chance to be involved in a diverse array of things and to help many different kinds of people.

Bloomberg feels that private philanthropy is also very much an American tradition. “[It is] one of our unique contributions to humanity, and one of the reasons for our country’s great success.”

Michael R. Bloomberg, New York’s third Jewish mayor in 336 years, indeed knows something about success. Perhaps inspired by his Hebrew name, Mordechai, which means “warrior,” Bloomberg wages battles to fight for what he believes in, whether it be taking on the federal government, an underperforming school system or working toward philanthropic goals. Bloomberg’s next big battle will be to win the upcoming mayoral race. He believes that all he can do is continue to do a good job and the public will decide. He says that at his age, 63, he is not going to be steered by the poll numbers, but rather, he will continue to do what he was elected to do—what he thinks is right. And though the campaign may have its turbulence along the way, Bloomberg has already walked away from two plane crashes in his life. If good things really do come in threes, Bloomberg will once again be the last man standing. Restyles