

D.C. real estate icon Don Peebles talks possible NYC mayoral bid

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R. Donahue Peebles, developer and a native of Washington, is pondering a possible mayoral challenge against New York's Bill de Blasio in 2017.

Michael Neibauer

Real estate bigwig R. Donahue Peebles, unhappy with the current direction of his city and its leadership, is weighing a run for mayor. The Democrat hasn't made up his mind, but he is "absolutely" interested and says if he does run, he'll fund his own campaign.

This sounds familiar.

Peebles, a Washington native whose development company is active in D.C., Miami, Boston, Philadelphia and New York, is eyeing a 2017 mayoral run in the Big Apple. You may recall, Peebles was actively considering ([and then not considering](#), and then considering again) a 2010 D.C. mayoral bid until his mother-in-law's terminal cancer diagnosis forced him to [rule it out](#). She died days after the primary.

The 55-year-old Peebles, who honed his real estate and political skills during the [Marion Barry](#) administrations and now has [an estimated net worth of \\$700 million](#), appears to have first floated a potential New York City run against Mayor Bill de Blasio [in a January interview](#) with The Real Deal, a New York real estate publication. He said it again in August and again in September and again in October — [to Fox News](#), to [Bloomberg](#), to [New York's ABC affiliate](#) and [to the New York Post](#), among others. The news section on the **Peebles Corp.** website is dominated by recent articles about the developer as a possible challenger.

"He's the mayor of the city," Peebles told me Wednesday, speaking about de Blasio. "He's going to be mayor for the next two-plus years and he doesn't get a pass. He needs to be held accountable for performance, and he needs to start performing."

In 2010, Peebles called out then-D.C. Mayor [Adrian Fenty](#) for dividing the city, for creating a class of haves and have-nots, for failing to lead and provide basic services and opportunities to all residents no matter their location or status or race. While he didn't run, [he was on the stump](#) and spending money on anti-Fenty ads. He said Wednesday he believes "for good or bad, I created the environment for [Vincent] Gray to actually run" and win.

Fast forward to 2013, and Peebles, now active in New York real estate, threw his support to de Blasio for mayor. But that support, following de Blasio's victory, quickly waned. On school choice, minority contracting, public safety, Peebles said de Blasio has failed the voters.

Peebles told Neil Cavuto during a recent Fox News appearance: "de Blasio is left of being a Democrat. He's more of a socialist. I'm a Democrat with a responsible approach to management."

Whether or not he runs, Peebles he is committed to fully advancing his projects, including those in the District. [Fifth and Eye in Mount Vernon Triangle](#), he said, "would be well underway by the time I take office." Other Peebles Corp. developments in the pipeline include the Viola Back Bay in Boston, 108 Leonard St. in New York, 1801 Vine Street in Philadelphia and several blocks of downtown Miami.

"I'm giving it a lot of thought," he said of the race. "I'm continuing to have discussions with people in the community, business leaders, religious leaders civic leaders. I probably spend a third of my day doing that. And it tends to grow."

Candidate or not, Peebles has the microphone (and this is New York, so it's turned up to 11) and he's running with it.