



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NYC COMMISSION ON GOVERNMENT
EFFICIENCY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
JULY 8, 2026**



Testimony of Commissioner Ahmed Tigani, NYC Department of Buildings:

Good evening, Chair Gaspard, Executive Director Cheng, and distinguished members of the Commission. My name is Ahmed Tigani, and I serve as Commissioner of the New York City Department of Buildings. I want to first thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today on these important issues.

Before I begin, I'd also like to acknowledge the dedicated efforts of the DOB team and the first responders who are currently on site at 235 East 42nd Street. As many of you know, construction crews working through the night have made significant progress in stabilizing the impacted building, and this work has continued today. DOB inspectors and engineers will remain on site to monitor the progress ongoing work and continue their investigation into the structural failure. We are continually assessing the progress being made by the contractors to make this building safe and will look to remove further restrictions in the area when it is safe to do so. Now I will transition into why I'm here tonight – to speak

about DOB's work related to efficiency, and ideas for how we can do better for New Yorkers.

For years, DOB has approached its work with intention and a focus on results, striving to improve the experience of applicants, licensees, and members of the public by making our systems more accessible, and refining our protocols, our systems and our guidance. The purpose of these efforts is to boost confidence and clarity in navigating the process.

New Yorkers deserve a local government that lives up to our well earned reputation as the "Best City in the World." While we have made significant strides in improving our services in recent years, this agency recognizes that there is still much more we can do to strengthen the way we build and maintain our city. This includes rethinking how we operate within DOB to better support responsible development, enhance public safety, and improve quality of life.

Throughout this process, and even before it began, we have benefited from the valuable ideas and feedback shared by members of the public and industry on how we can improve and deliver better results. We are listening carefully and actively evaluating these recommendations to determine how they can help strengthen the agency and better serve New Yorkers.

The mandate of the Commission on Government Efficiency, improving efficiency, modernizing city government and ensuring government keeps pace with New Yorkers' needs, deeply aligns with DOB's mission under this Mayor and in this Administration as we pursue increasing safety, economic opportunity, and equitable growth in the work we pursue day-to-day.

In our recent history, the Department has demonstrated this objective through several initiatives and accomplishments. We recently adopted the Existing Building Code in January 2026, providing a modern, streamlined framework for renovation and alteration work. We are advancing important reforms to Local Law 11 façade inspection regulations that will protect New Yorkers while reducing unnecessary compliance burdens on building owners.

We are implementing new rules and educational materials to facilitate more building typology options from office to residential conversions to easing the ways to build new basement apartments. We are adopting reforms through the SPEED Task Force, and as recently announced in the Mayor's Housing Plan, Block by Block, we will soon lead on an Affordable & Efficient Code Reform Task Force to identify areas of the Construction Codes that can be reformed to encourage more and better housing development without compromising safety.

And we are pursuing legislative priorities that would modernize New York State's Multiple Dwelling Law, and align it to modern New York City code standards. This is all while giving

no ground in our responsibilities to keep workers and the public safe, and in fact seeing injuries on job sites decrease over 50% over the last 6 years. In these ways, and many more, we believe it is a core responsibility of the Department to help eliminate obstacles to development, and we are proud to partner in that effort.

Today, in that same spirit, I want to share with the Commission three Charter reforms that would directly accelerate safe construction across New York City. Before I dig in, I want to note that I am joined here by my colleague Seth Bynum from the Deputy Mayor's team who will be giving a more detailed review of the SPEED task force's permitting recommendations and the work we are all undertaking to improve permitting. But for now, I'll start with the DOB-specific charter proposals. After my colleague testifies, we are both happy to take any questions you have about the SPEED task force work or about the DOB proposals I am about to detail.

Consolidating Waterfront Construction Permitting Within DOB

Waterfront construction permitting is currently split between the Department of Small Business Services and the Department of Buildings. Responsibility for waterfront-related reviews has evolved over many decades as new regulations, agencies, and policy priorities were added. While each agency's role serves a distinct purpose, the resulting framework often requires coordination between multiple agencies on construction-related matters. The current system is one in which many waterfront approvals involving construction, engineering, and building code issues are formally administered by SBS, though in practice, SBS and DOB frequently work in tandem to evaluate and support project review for waterfront permits, creating parallel review timelines. This creates a structural redundancy: DOB's engineers and inspectors do the substantive technical work, but the formal decision-making authority rests elsewhere, requiring coordination between agencies before approvals can be issued.

We are in support of a Charter amendment consolidating waterfront permitting within DOB subsequent to the implementation of a Waterfront Code, which is currently being developed. As the City pursues an ambitious waterfront resiliency and infrastructure agenda, this reform will more create a more efficient review process for applicants and place technical decisions where the expertise actually sits.

Code by Rule: Modernizing Construction Code Updates

While DOB continues to make routine technical amendments to the Construction Codes to incorporate evolving industry standards, these updates must still proceed through the local legislative process, which extends implementation timelines. The more structured and cyclical code revision process introduced in recent years was an important and forward-looking investment designed to support a rapidly evolving urban development environment. However, ongoing experience has demonstrated that even well-designed processes must adapt to changing circumstances. As the needs of our communities and

stakeholders continue to evolve, we must consider whether our current approach enables us to deliver the level of service and responsiveness they expect.

In practice, the length of the current, limited option for adoption of new regulations has constrained our ability to adopt emerging best practices at the speed required by the industry. The 2022 Construction Codes took seven and a half months to go through the legislative process. The Electrical Code update took nine months, and neither timeline includes the years of technical work that preceded introduction. The result is that New York City consistently lags behind peer cities in adopting more modern standards, which includes safety enhancements.

We support a Charter amendment allowing routine technical code amendments to be adopted through the City's existing administrative rulemaking process, under which public notice and comment provisions would be preserved. The Council would also retain its authority to direct specific changes to the codes. This reform simply removes delays on the backend of code adoption for code updates that are technical and routine, which would more promptly improve the regulations governing construction work.

Aligning with Modern Operations

And finally, the Department of Buildings historically operated through geographically based borough offices and the Charter's provisions reflect that earlier organizational model. Over time, however, DOB has evolved. For example, the agency has created centralized units to review certain construction projects, including increasingly complex projects, bringing consistency, depth of expertise, and institutional knowledge to the review process for those projects. Because the Charter does not recognize current operations, certain processes, including issuing Certificates of Occupancy may require routing through geographically assigned borough offices even when a project's substantive review has been completed by a centralized unit that has developed extensive familiarity with the application, project history, and technical issues.

A Charter amendment to recognize current organizational structure and operations and to allow the Commissioner to designate other senior officials to issue final determinations would streamline DOB operations.

Fewer administrative steps will reduce unnecessary delays in the delivery of housing, infrastructure, resiliency, and economic development projects, while still ensuring that the Department's experts are providing appropriate oversight and accountability.

Conclusion

The Commission on Government Efficiency, its mission and pillars, were created for this moment, and the Department of Buildings is proud to stand alongside the administration in

our pursuit of increased efficiency, safer standards, and building more. Our proposed reforms to the Charter will meet the moment and deliver on that mandate. We thank you again for this opportunity to weigh in and thank you for your service to this Commission and these high ideals. Happy to answer any questions.