



Written Testimony Submitted to the Charter Revision Commission

March 31, 2025

From: agencymail [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 28, 2025 6:03 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-9877269 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Yana Domuschieva

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: I propose that residential landlords in NYC disclose to the public the following: LLCs they are associated with, showing the owners of each Buildings owned by each LLC This information will help us understand who our landlords are. REBNY always says new policies hurt mom-and-pop landlords but how many mom-and-pop landlords do we have in NYC? Tenants are required to provide SO MUCH information to get a lease. Landlords should not be completely anonymous and their claims should be backed up by disclosures.

From: agency@mail [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, March 1, 2025 5:40 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-8429250 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Judith Pucci

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: The Mayor SHOULD NOT be in a position to further rewrite the City Charter, which serves as our guiding constitution. The New York City Charter defines the organization, functions, and essential procedures and policies of our City government, and any proposed changes must be thoughtfully deliberated and reviewed by the people of the City of New York.

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From: agency@mail [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 2, 2025 8:20 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-3600672 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

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([REDACTED]) on Sunday, March 2, 2025, at 08:19:21 AM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Karen Schifano

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: I would like to stress the importance of local voices in discussing housing availability in NYC neighborhoods. So many tall towers are going up with small percentages for rental, whereas so many buildings, commercial and otherwise, are standing empty. Why can't renovation make these open for rentals, why must luxury housing be the only buildings being built? New York City is increasingly unaffordable for all but the very wealthy and owners from abroad parking money here. When I moved to NY in 1976, it was difficult but rental units were available. How about bringing back Mitchell-Llama Housing, for example?

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From: agencymail [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 2, 2025 8:46 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-607846 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Frank Chaney

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/frank-chaney-5719635_activity-7300985670410391552-iDN0?utm_medium=ios_app&rcm=ACoAAAEH-WUB862k3kkfEQvBCkxDifgpZ3OsLtc&utm_source=social_share_send&utm_campaign=copy_link

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From: agency@mail [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 2, 2025 8:52 AM
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Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-3799230 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Simon Jolly

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: Hello - I share some thoughts on how to improve the housing crisis in New York. 1) We should end or limit the practice of warehousing apartments/condos. If developers are going to receive tax breaks / incentives from the state they should not be allowed to artificially inflate the price by limiting the supply. 2) I have heard from many lower income people that what is considered "affordable housing" isn't attainable - affordable unit prices should be flexible to all income levels. Thanks!

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From: agency@mail [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 2, 2025 10:23 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-9245225 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Sunday, March 2, 2025, at 10:23:01 AM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Pennie Hudon

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: The rents are getting way out of control. There should be a law that predatory lenders, property owners, and landlords shouldn't have properties where they have rents so high that they prey on low income and working class citizens to keep them from renting. I've seen some apartments in Tik Tok that the places are so small and all they are doing is taking a decent size apartment and dividing it up into sections and the tiniest section they put in a sink and sometimes a half bath, and call it a one bedroom and sell it for \$3,000 a month. It's wrong!!! EVERYONE DESERVES A DECENT PLACE TO LIVE!!!! There should be a set cap limit for rent for EVERYONE. Pretty soon there is going to be an economic crisis as well as a shift in spending and NY has to get on top of the situation or there will be no jobs and no places to live because of greed and socioeconomic inequality. NY needs to regulate all new housing prices and those high rise apartments that only cater to the rich which is very few, need to accept the ones whose backs they used to get where they are and allow them in too. No one should have to either work three jobs to afford a rent that's three times what they make and not have enough for food or other necessities. It is unfair and racially and discriminatory illegal. There shouldn't be new apartments being built, the empty ones that the predators have should start there. The upscale areas that have empty housing should allow them in too. The working class works in the areas where but are not allowed to live there. Make that make sense. Get it together. Pretty soon NY is going to look like what The Orange Menace wants, oppression of the poor, the rich and only white population roaming about while the poor starve and die. This state will be a vast wasteland if you don't stop the predatory capitalism of society.

From: Steve Abramson [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 2, 2025 11:13 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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In Districts where the winner of the Democratic primary is assured of winning the general election, the electorate would be better served if the primary were Open.

Further, using the process of Ranked Choice Voting would assure that the winner in the Open Primary has consensus support, providing the public trust to govern effectively..

An Open Primary using RCV would encourage increased voter participation by including supporters of candidates who are not members of the major parties.

Steve Abramson
[REDACTED]

From: Erik Valencia [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 2, 2025 11:13 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I believe open primaries are essential to creating a more inclusive and democratic electoral system. The current closed primary system shuts out over a million voters. This exclusion weakens democracy.

Open primaries would give working-class and marginalized communities—who may not fit neatly into the two-party structure—a greater voice in choosing candidates who represent their needs. Many voters, especially young people and those disillusioned with establishment politics, do not register with a major party. Yet, they deserve a say in shaping the policies that affect their daily lives.

Erik Valencia
[REDACTED]

From: B Law [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 2, 2025 11:13 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I am an independent and tends to vote on the Working Families party line because their values and their support of working class issues align centrally to who I am and how government should work.

I am an independent who has zero choice because the Democratic Party has a monopoly on NYC and NYS politics and so we have a crowded field of candidates who compete against each other for the Party vote. Primaries should be open. Loyalty to one party has led to blind faith in candidates who no longer have a true interest in representing all voices, including independent ones.

This is a city with an electorate as diverse as the range of views held by its residents. All New Yorkers should be able to participate in choosing our leaders. Open primaries would mean that candidates for office would address the full diversity of opinions and points of view that New Yorkers hold.

We need to ensure that there is a fair and equitable election system in place in which all New Yorkers can participate. The current primary system locks out a million New Yorkers from having a say in who our leaders are. It is time to embrace open primaries that allow the full range of beliefs and perspectives to be part of the system.

I am exhausted by people who say deal with it--we have a 2 party system so fall in line or ELSE. And accept the consequences. I refuse. I absolutely will NOT willfully obey and comply to a system that is so irrefutably destructive. I want OPEN PRIMARIES so we eliminate this corrupt gatekeeping that has allowed 2 parties to destroy democracy and hand over power to oligarchs. 800 billionaires are going to run this country into the ground. Full stop. And our voices NEED to have avenues to vote power back to the people.

B Law
[REDACTED]

From: Michelle Timmerman [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 2, 2025 11:14 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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New York City's political landscape is often dominated by a small group of party leaders and insiders, leaving many voters feeling disconnected from the process. Allowing all registered voters to participate in primaries would lead to more representative candidates and ultimately strengthen our democracy.

If we truly want a political system that reflects the values of all New Yorkers, we must embrace reforms that expand voter participation. Open primaries ensure that more voices are heard, more perspectives are considered, and elected officials are accountable to the entire electorate, not just a select few.

Michelle Timmerman
[REDACTED]

From: Barbara Silverman [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 2, 2025 11:14 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Open primaries would make elections more competitive. Too often, races are effectively decided in Democratic primaries, shutting out voices from across the political spectrum. By opening the process, we can ensure that general elections feature candidates who appeal to a broader range of voters, leading to more balanced representation.

At its core, democracy thrives when more people engage in the electoral process. Open primaries foster greater participation, reduce partisan gridlock, and give voters more power in determining the future of our city and country. I urge lawmakers and fellow New Yorkers to support this critical reform for a fairer and more representative democracy.

Barbara Silverman
[REDACTED]

From: Alice Rydel [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 2, 2025 11:15 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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As a lifelong resident of New York City, I've always believed in the power of democracy and the importance of every citizen's voice. However, our current closed primary system often leaves many voters, especially independents, without a say in critical early election decisions. This exclusion diminishes voter engagement and limits the diversity of perspectives in our political discourse.

Transitioning to open primaries would allow all registered voters, regardless of party affiliation, to participate in selecting candidates. This inclusivity would lead to a more representative and responsive government, as candidates would need to appeal to a broader spectrum of the electorate. Moreover, open primaries could reduce political polarization by encouraging the nomination of candidates who prioritize common ground and pragmatic solutions over partisan extremes.

In a city as diverse and dynamic as ours, our electoral processes must reflect and embrace that diversity. Implementing open primaries would be a significant step toward ensuring that every New Yorker's voice is heard and valued in our democracy.

Alice Rydel
[REDACTED]

From: Moises Baly [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 2, 2025 11:15 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Open primaries could help break the cycle of corporate influence in politics. When primaries are closed, candidates are primarily accountable to party insiders rather than the broader electorate. By allowing all registered voters to participate, we encourage candidates to appeal to everyday people, not just party elites and big donors.

New York City is one of the world's most diverse and politically engaged cities. Our elections should reflect that diversity by ensuring that every voter has the opportunity to shape the choices on the ballot. Open primaries are a crucial step toward building a political system that is truly representative, participatory, and responsive to the needs of all New Yorkers.

Moises Baly
[REDACTED]



Outlook

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-3637899 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

From agencymail [REDACTED]

Date Sun 3/2/2025 3:39 PM

To CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Natalie Perr

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: There is a serious housing issue that does not effect a huge number on New Yorkers but is extremely devastating especially to Seniors who are dealing with exorbitant maintenance due to land rent. I live in a co-op apartment that, unfortunately, when I purchased was not advised that it has a land lease. There seems to be no law in New York as does exist in other places to prevent the landowners from increasing the land rent to whatever they please. The exorbitant rent is part of our monthly maintenance. The extremely high maintenance makes it difficult to sell apartments in this building and when they do sell, the price is far below market price. I have emptied my in order to pay the maintenance. I have been advised that with what I'd get for my apartment, I would not be able to stay here in New York where I've lived most of my life (and LOVE!) There are other elderly in this and other buildings who are facing this same problem. Is there anything that can be done to protect us from overly greedy landowners as other cities have done?

From: Alex Grover [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 3, 2025 4:57 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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New York City's political landscape is often dominated by a small group of party leaders and insiders, leaving many voters feeling disconnected from the process. Allowing all registered voters to participate in primaries would lead to more representative candidates and ultimately strengthen our democracy.

If we truly want a political system that reflects the values of all New Yorkers, we must embrace reforms that expand voter participation. Open primaries ensure that more voices are heard, more perspectives are considered, and elected officials are accountable to the entire electorate, not just a select few.

Alex Grover
[REDACTED]

From: Ben Weinberg [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 3, 2025 6:29 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Citizens Union written testimony Feb 24
Attachments: CU Testimony with report 2025 Charter Revision Commission - Government Reform Hearing 2.24.25.pdf

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Dear Charter Revision Commission,
Please see attached Citizens Union's written testimony for last week's February 24 public hearing. We testified at the hearing and provided hard copies of our recommendations, so I am now sending electronic copy of the above.

Thank you,
Ben Weinberg

Ben Weinberg
Director of Public Policy
Citizens Union/Citizens Union Foundation
[REDACTED]



CITIZENS UNION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Testimony before the 2025 City Charter Revision Commission
Public Input Session on Government Reform
February 24, 2025

Dear members of the 2025 Charter Revision Commission. My name is Ben Weinberg, and I am the Director of Public Policy at Citizens Union. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony before you again, and commend the Commission, which is focused on housing issues, for holding two hearings on government reform.

Citizens Union is a nonpartisan good government organization dedicated to making democracy work for all New Yorkers. For over a century, we have worked to foster transparency, accountability, and voter participation in local government.

Today, Citizens Union published a report outlining a series of recommended reforms aimed at strengthening democracy, enhancing ethics laws, and improving the system of checks and balances within City government. While this testimony highlights key proposals, we encourage the Commission to review our full report for additional recommendations and welcome any questions on such proposals.

The full is attached below this testimony.

Strengthening Democracy and Elections

The accompanying slide illustrates an alarming trend: Voter turnout in New York City elections has been on a steady decline for decades. In the most recent mayoral election, fewer than one in four registered voters cast a ballot—a historic low. Despite successful efforts to make voting more accessible, participation in local elections has not improved significantly. To reverse this trend, we propose two critical reforms:

First, moving city elections to even years. New York City's odd-year election cycle suppresses voter turnout up and down the ballot. That turnout is not only low, but also an older, wealthier, and whiter than New York City as a whole. Research and experience from other jurisdictions show that aligning city elections with even-year federal and state elections would significantly increase participation. The Legislature moved local elections in many parts of the state to even years, and there is an ongoing campaign to amend the state constitution to allow for this change for cities. We urge the Commission to support these efforts and to examine the necessary Charter amendments that would be required should the constitutional change be enacted.

Second, opening our primary system. New York City's closed partisan primaries exclude over one million unaffiliated voters, a number that continues to grow, as the slide presented show. Surveys indicate that these voters are eager to participate in primaries, and we should allow them to take part. To address this issue, we propose adopting a top-two primary system, as successfully implemented in California and Washington. This system would increase voter participation, enhance electoral competition, and reduce political extremism.

Enhancing Checks and Balances

A glaring omission in the City Charter has become increasingly apparent: there is no clear process for removing a mayor under exceptional circumstances involving serious misconduct. Currently, the sole authority for mayoral removal rests with the governor, who wields absolute discretion in this matter. Citizens Union strongly believes the Charter should establish a practical, fair, and balanced removal mechanism.

We acknowledge that it is easier said than done. While impeachment is traditionally a two-part legislative process, New York City's unicameral system presents unique challenges. Recall elections are often use, but those have a mixed history. Additionally, safeguards must be put in place to prevent the process from becoming overly politicized. We are developing a detailed proposal to address these concerns and look forward to engaging with the Commission on this important issue.

Improving Ethics and Oversight

Our report outlines several ways to strengthen New York City's anti-corruption regulatory framework, with a particular focus on bolstering the Conflicts of Interest Board (COIB). Despite its critical role in ensuring ethical governance, COIB has faced budget stagnation and staff reductions at a time when oversight is most urgently needed.

A fundamental issue is that COIB's funding is controlled by the very officials it is tasked with regulating. Similar tensions have led past charter commissions to grant independent or protected budgets to agencies such as the Campaign Finance Board, the Public Advocate, and the Civilian Complaint Review Board. We recommend that the Commission take similar action by providing COIB with an independent budget and a significantly increased allocation to enhance its capacity.

Furthermore, we propose expanding COIB's powers, including transferring lobbying oversight from the City Clerk's office to COIB. This would align the city's approach with that of the state, where ethics enforcement is centralized under a single agency. Additional measures to strengthen COIB's authority are detailed in our full report.

Citizens Union appreciates the Commission's dedication to improving our city's governance and democratic processes. We urge the Commission to give serious consideration to these recommendations and to explore the full range of reforms outlined in our report. We welcome any questions and look forward to continued engagement on these critical issues.

Charter Reforms for Better New York City Government

**How the 2025 Charter Revision Commissions
can strengthen accountability, democracy, and
checks and balances in our city**





Introduction

The year 2025 presents a unique opportunity to strengthen and improve New York City's government. With two charter revision commissions underway, a citywide election on the horizon, and heightened public attention on city issues due to the controversies surrounding the current mayor, now is the time to consider meaningful reforms. The combination of these factors creates an environment ripe for discussions on governance, accountability, and civic engagement.

At its core, the New York City Charter is functioning well and does not require a radical restructuring of city government, its elected officials, or the distribution of power among them. The existing system has enabled New York City to navigate significant challenges over the past decades, from rebuilding after the devastation of 9/11 to responding to the unprecedented crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, recent years have highlighted several weaknesses and areas in need of improvement. First, ethics oversight and accountability must be strengthened in response to the low ethical standards exhibited by the current administration. Second, voter participation must be dramatically improved, as historically low turnout rates undermine the legitimacy of our democratic process. Third, the City's system of checks and balances must be reformed to foster greater collaboration between branches of government, ensuring that officeholders prioritize public interest over political self-interest.

The proposals that follow are not exhaustive—Citizens Union continues to work with lawmakers to advance reform in many areas—but serve as a starting point for discussion. They aim to build a more honest, accountable, collaborative, and inclusive city government—one that truly represents and serves the people of New York City. By taking these steps, we can strengthen democracy at the local level and create a government that works more effectively for all New Yorkers.

Democracy and Elections

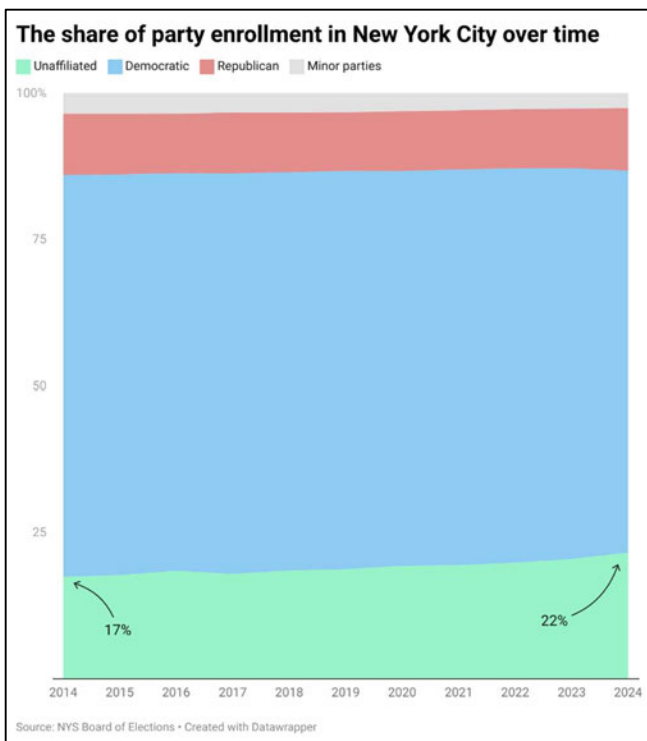
When the current City Charter was approved by voters in the 1989 mayoral general election, voter turnout was 60%. In the most recent mayoral election, only 23% of voters turned out to cast their ballot. Voter participation in New York City's municipal elections has been dropping steadily for more than three decades, and there are no signs this trend will stop. New Yorkers enjoy a very robust civic society, but only a small minority of them end up deciding the identity of the officials who control the largest, wealthiest city in the United States. Low participation rates pose a real challenge to the democratic legitimacy of our local government in the long term, and reversing the trend requires transformational changes.

Implement A Top-Two Primary Election System

New York City is one of the few large cities that still uses a closed partisan primary system.¹ Because the winner of the Democratic primary—and in some areas, the Republican primary—is essentially guaranteed to be elected in the general election, and since relatively

few voters participate in the primary, only a very small share of the voting-age population ends up deciding who gets elected to office in New York City. For example, just 9% of the overall electorate voted for Eric Adams in the 2021 primary election; former Mayor Bill de Blasio was effectively voted to office by only 6% of the electorate in the 2013 primary.

The partisan primary system is particularly exclusive of the more than 1 million “independent” or “unaffiliated” voters, who are not enrolled in any political party and are locked out of any primary. The rate of unaffiliated voters has been steadily increasing and now accounts for nearly 22% of registered voters in New York City, over twice the number of Republican voters. Younger generations tend more to identify as independent, suggesting this trend would continue.² Research by Common Cause New York has shown that unaffiliated voters are engaged in politics and believe voting is their civic duty. Nearly 90% of them stated they are likely to vote in primaries if they could.³



¹ Among the 50 largest cities in the country, only 5 other cities have closed partisan primaries in their municipal elections: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Indianapolis, Indiana; Charlotte, North Carolina; Baltimore, Maryland; and Tucson, Arizona

² Stef Knight, Axios. January 15, 2023. *Younger voters declare independence*.

<https://www.axios.com/2023/01/15/voters-declare-independence-political-parties>

³ Sarah Goff, Common Cause New York. November 2023. *Independent State of Mind: The Rise of New York's Unaffiliated Voters*. <https://www.commoncause.org/new-york/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Independent-State-of-Mind-The-Rise-of-New-Yorks-Unaffiliated-Voters.pdf>



New York City should open up its closed primary system by allowing all voters to vote in the primary. The best choice would be a top-two primary system. Candidates affiliated with all parties can run in this election, and the top two vote-getters then compete in the general election. We do not recommend a full nonpartisan primary, where voters are unaware of the partisan affiliation of candidates. Candidates should be able to note their party on the ballot, and party organizations should be able to endorse and support campaigns. A top-two system is used across Washington, California, Nebraska, and Louisiana, as well as several cities in Ohio. Alaska uses a top-four system.

A top-two open primary would complement New York City's ranked-choice voting (RCV) system. It would allow New Yorkers to enjoy RCV's benefits, like voting without the fear of "spoiler candidates," fewer negative campaigns, and greater diversity and variety of candidates. Instead of one winner, a ranked choice open primary would result in two finalists qualifying for the general election, where voters would face a clearer choice between two different campaigns in a higher-turnout election. Seattle, Washington will be using such a system starting in 2027. Many cities use Ranked Choice Voting in a general election without first holding a primary. However the election is structured, the objective should be to expand the number of voters who get a say in the election of City officials.

Research has shown that top-two primary systems make elections more competitive, reduce polarization and extremism, and encourage more voter outreach by campaigns. A key element is that when candidates from the same party face one another in the general election, as occasionally happens, they are forced to appeal to a broader electorate beyond their party's base.⁴

Voters last opined on this issue in 2003, when they rejected a proposal by a Charter Revision Commission to implement nonpartisan primaries. Voter turnout in that off-cycle election was around 15%, and entire generation has passed since. It is time to propose this option to voters again.

Move New York City Elections to Even-numbered Years

Despite significant efforts to improve our elections in recent years, turnout in municipal elections has continued to consistently decline with each cycle, regardless of the nature of the mayoral race. This problem is worsened by the uneven nature of turnout: the local electorate is wealthier, older, and whiter than the overall voting age population of New York City.⁵

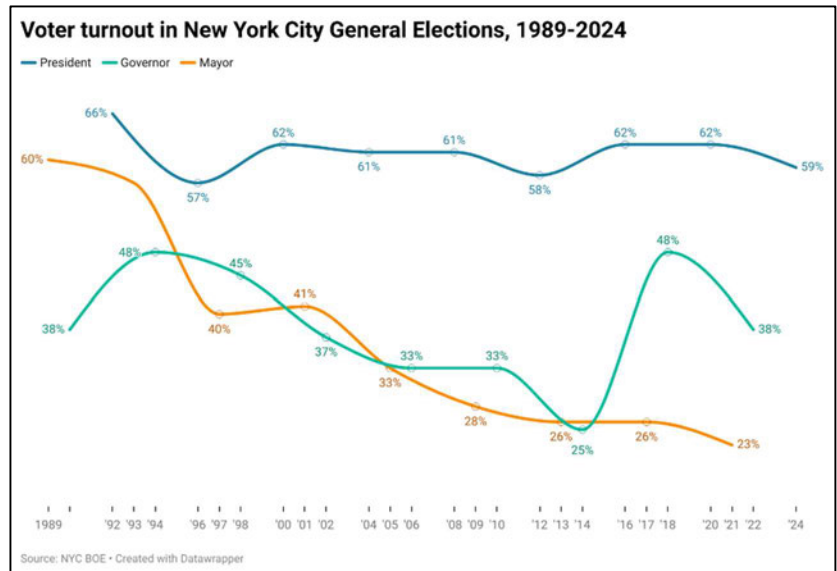
⁴ See for example: Sparks, Steven. 2019. "Campaign Spending and the Top-Two Primary: How Challengers Earn More Votes per Dollar in One-Party Contests." *Electoral Studies* 54: 56–65.; Grose, Christian R. 2020. "Reducing Legislative Polarization: Top-Two and Open Primaries Are Associated with More Moderate Legislators." *Journal of Political Institutions and Political Economy* 1(2): 267–287; Schnurr, Emily. 2019. *Competition and the Top-Two Primary in Washington State*. PhD dissertation, Northern Arizona University.

⁵ Citizens Union. December 2022. *Policy Report: Moving Municipal Elections to Even-Numbered Years*. https://citizensunion.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Moving-Municipal-Elections-to-Even-Numbered-Years-Citizens-Union-report_FINAL.pdf



A key reason for low participation is that our off-cycle election calendar depresses voter turnout. During odd-year elections, less information is available, resources for voter engagement are lower, and the majority of voters stay home. In comparison, turnout in even-year presidential elections has remained steady for about three decades, hovering around 60%. For every New Yorker who votes for mayor, nearly three vote for president.

Aligning the timing of our municipal elections with high-profile, high-turnout federal or statewide elections would dramatically boost voter turnout for local offices, from mayor to council districts. It would also reduce the gaps in participation, particularly among young voters and voters of color.⁶ And it would save the City tens of millions of dollars a year, according to the Independent Budget Office.⁷ Importantly, the measure is very popular with voters, and polls consistently see it receives widespread approval rates regardless of age, race and ethnicity, education, or party affiliation.⁸



Efforts are currently being made to remove the state constitution provision that requires city officers, including in New York City, to be elected on odd-numbered year. Chapter 741/2023, signed by Governor Hochul, had already done that at other levels of government, by moving county and town elections from odd to even years. A proposed constitutional amendment has been in negotiations in Albany, and in 2024, the State Senate passed a partial version of the reform.⁹

⁶ Election Law Clinic, Harvard Law School. December 3, 2024. *Testimony submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation*. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60a559b59cfc63389f67f892/t/674f8d5c29915c7b8d59c005/1733266780394/Letter+to+NYC+Council+re+NY+Election+Alignment+vF.pdf>; Hajnal, Z., Kogan, V., & Markarian, G. 2022. "Who Votes: City Election Timing and Voter Composition". *American Political Science Review*, 116(1), 374-383

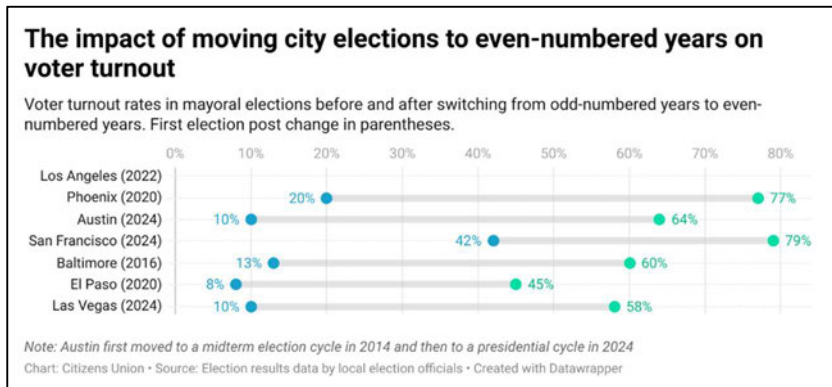
⁷ City of New York Independent Budget Office. August 15, 2024. *Fiscal Impact of Shifting Local Elections to Even-Numbered Years*. <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/fiscal-impact-of-even-year-elections-august-2024.pdf>

⁸ Manhattan Institute, Jesse Arm. April 18, 2024. *Polling NYC Survey Analysis of 2025 Likely Mayoral Voters on Politics, Crime, Migrants, and Electoral Reform*. <https://manhattan.institute/article/polling-nyc-survey-analysis-of-2025-likely-mayoral-voters>; Siena College Research Institute, 28 June 2023. *NYers Oppose Using SUNY Dorms to Temporarily House New Migrants to New York*, 54-33%. <https://scri.siena.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/SNY-June-2023-Poll-Release-FINAL.pdf>

⁹ S9126 (Skoufis)/A10466 (Walker), 2024; Bill Mahoney, Politico NY. May 2, 2024. *Moving New York City elections to even years enters end-of-session talks*. <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/2024/05/new-york-elections-even-years-00155743>



Citizens Union urges the Charter Revision Commission to support the efforts to move the City's elections to even-numbered years. Should the State Constitution's odd-year election requirement be changed, the City Charter might need to be changed in several locations. The Commission should consider addressing that factor in its deliberations. Citizens Union is willing to propose specific recommendations on the best path forward.



Maintain Ranked Choice Voting

Citizens Union reaffirms its support for the use of Ranked Choice Voting in the municipal primaries. This system has been successfully implemented in the 2021 citywide election, the 2023 City Council election, and several special elections in recent years. It has proven useful in promoting a more competitive, open, and fair election landscape. Ranked Choice Voting has encouraged more people from more diverse backgrounds to run for office. Under that system, voters elected the most diverse City Council in history, and the first ever majority-women Council.

An in-depth analysis of voter behavior by the Center for Urban Research at the CUNY Graduate Center found that voters understood the process and substantially more of them voted in the June 2021 Democratic Primary than in previous mayoral primary elections, including the open seat in 2013.¹⁰ As voters and campaigns adapt to the new system, we expect to see more benefits, like campaign cross endorsements and nuanced ranking by voters.

¹⁰ Center for Urban Research, The Graduate Center, City University of New York. July 4, 2022. *The Impact of Ranked Choice Voting on the Democratic Primary Elections of 2021*.
<https://www.gc.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/2022-07/CUR-Report-on-RCV-Final.pdf>



Checks and Balances

Recent years have been marked by a tense relationship between the legislative and executive branches, with frequent clashes over policy, appointments, and jurisdiction. While disagreements between the mayor and the City Council are not new, these moments provide an opportunity to assess whether the New York City Charter could be improved to foster collaboration rather than incentivize political self-interest. The following recommendations do not encompass all possible amendments related to checks and balances but propose significant changes.

Establish a Mechanism for Mayoral Removal Due to Misconduct

Recent events and public debate over the removal of the Mayor have revealed a major flaw in current laws governing mayoral misconduct. Currently, the governor holds absolute power to remove the mayor under Public Officers Law §33(2), which only requires that the mayor receive a copy of the charges and “an opportunity to be heard in his defense”. At the same time, the New York City Charter lacks a practical mechanism for removing a mayor under exceptional circumstances related to misconduct.

Section 10 of the Charter outlines the composition, powers, and procedures of the Committee on Mayoral Inability, and a possible subsequent removal by the City Council. However, the structure of this provision, which requires near-unanimous agreement among Committee members, including mayoral appointees, and allows multiple opportunities for the mayor to challenge removal, suggests it is primarily designed for cases of physical, mental, or medical incapacity rather than misconduct-reflecting the 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.¹¹

To address this gap, the City Charter should establish a clear and balanced process for mayoral removal due to misconduct. Citizens Union is actively developing a proposal to present in the near future.

Several challenges must be considered in crafting such a process. First, removal over misconduct is typically done through the impeachment process. Most legislative bodies overseeing removal proceedings, including the U.S. Congress and the New York State Legislature, operate within a bicameral system, where one chamber presents charges and the other conducts the trial.¹² In contrast, New York City has a unicameral legislature, the City Council, which often finds itself at odds with the mayor. In addition, impeachment typically requires a supermajority vote to convict and remove from office, a high threshold

¹¹ Further reading: Richard Briffault, Vital City. October 10, 20204. *To Remove a Mayor: Both Too Easy and Too Hard*. <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/articles/if-eric-adams-does-not-resign-can-he-be-forced-out-of-office-its-complicated>

¹² In Nebraska, the only unicameral state, the Nebraska Supreme Court conducts the trial. Oregon does not have an impeachment clause. All other states operate based on some form of the bicameral impeachment process.



meant to reserve such unusual action to serious abuses of power, but a two-thirds vote to override a mayoral veto is not uncommon in city councils. Even a higher threshold for removal could be influenced by partisanship, considering that Democrats have always held more than 85% of Council seats, including during Republican mayors.

There are other elected offices in city government, and they could play a role in a two-step impeachment process. However, political dynamics within New York City, where borough-wide and citywide officials often have ambitions for higher office, including the mayor's office, may introduce conflicts of interest. Any removal mechanism should minimize personal political motivations.

An alternative method to hold elected officials accountable for misconduct is a recall election. Of the 15 largest cities in the country, 11 have recall provisions, typically initiated by citizen petitions (some are initiated by the local city council)¹³. However, recall elections have a mixed track record, and they are too often influenced by special interests and substantial outside spending. Additionally, New York City likely cannot adopt a recall system without explicit state authorization.¹⁴

Despite these challenges, we continue to believe that a some locally controlled process for mayoral removal due to misconduct is essential to ensuring accountability and public trust. Such a mechanism would reduce reliance on the governor's unilateral authority. Citizens Union remains committed to presenting a detailed proposal addressing these concerns.

Establish Minimum Timeframes for Future Charter Revision Commissions and Local Laws Sent to A Referendum

The process of amending the City Charter through a referendum should be open, deliberative, and provide sufficient time for meaningful public input. Recent experiences highlight the need for procedural safeguards to prevent rushed or politically motivated revisions.

The 2024 Charter Revision Commission operated on an extremely condensed timeline, making it the shortest commission since 2002. Similarly, the City Council approved a local law sending a ballot question to a referendum without adequate time for public engagement. Citizens Union criticized both efforts as inadequate.¹⁵

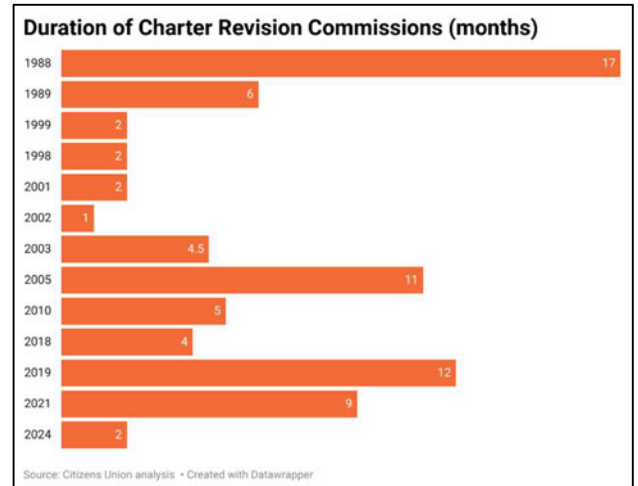
¹³ Dylan Sharkey, Illinois Policy. April 23, 2024. *Chicago among 4 of 15 largest cities unable to recall mayor*. <https://www.illinoispolicy.org/chicago-among-4-of-15-largest-cities-unable-to-recall-mayor/>

¹⁴ See Office of the New York State Comptroller, Legal Opinion 89-31. <https://www.osc.ny.gov/legal-opinions/opinion-89-31>

¹⁵ Citizens Union. June 17, 2024. *Testimony before the 2024 City Charter Revision Commission - Government and Election Reform Forum & Hearing* <https://citizensunion.org/portfolio-item/testimony-before-the-2024-charter-revision-commission-government-and-election-reform-hearing/>; Citizens Union. May 29, 2024. *Testimony before the City Council Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation on Introduction 908-2024*. <https://citizensunion.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CU-Testimony-Intro-0908-2024-Expanding-Council-Advice-and-Consent-.pdf>



To ensure a more deliberate process, reforms should prevent either the executive or legislative branches from accelerating charter revisions in ways that limit public participation and undermine our City's charter. The charter revision process is governed by the state's Municipal Home Rule Law, and Citizens Union supports proposed legislation that would establish minimum timeframes for charter revision commissions and remove the mayor's ability to bump referenda questions off the ballot.¹⁶



However, New York City has the authority to set its own procedural rules on charter revision, provided they do not conflict with state law. We reaffirm our recommendations made before the 2024 Charter Revision Commission for appropriate charter revisions:

- Require at least 180 days between a charter revision commission's first meeting and the filing of ballot proposals with the City Clerk, and at least 30 days between a commission's final report and the date of filing ballot proposals with the City Clerk.
- Require that any local law amending the Charter in a manner that requires a referendum would be voted on twice by the City Council, with 30 days between each vote, and a public hearing held in committee before every vote. This reflects the approach of the New York State Constitution, which requires amendments to pass twice before being placed on the ballot. This timeline is shorter than that for charter commissions because local laws are narrower in scope and such cases remain rare.

Make The Police Commissioner Subject to Advice and Consent

In matters of policing, as in other areas, the City Council's role is to enact laws, approve budgets, and conduct oversight through committee hearings. The Council currently has no role in the appointment of the Police Commissioner, or for that matter, in most other agency heads, except for the Commissioner of Investigation and the Corporation Counsel.

Because of the significant influence of the Police Commissioner on public safety and the impact of the NYPD on the daily lives of the City's residents, Citizens Union had previously recommended that the appointment of the Police Commissioner be made subject to the

¹⁶ S590 (Krueger)/A3665 (Simone), An act to amend the municipal home rule law, in relation to the city charter referendum process.



advice and consent of the Council,¹⁷ and we reiterate that position here. This would ensure a level of accountability and public scrutiny in the selection process of this central public official.

We do so on the assumption that the Council, in evaluating the qualifications of nominees for Police Commissioner, as it has for nominees for other positions, will do so in a responsible manner and without the introduction of extraneous political considerations.

We are singling out the Police Commissioner but do not support broadening the use of advice and consent to all agency heads, which might unduly interfere with the mayor's control over executive agencies. Council approval of the Corporation Counsel and Commissioner of Investigation are supported by the particular circumstances of each office. Any changes to advice and consent requirements should similarly be considered on a case-by-case basis, with reasoned and thoughtful debate. Past expansions of this authority have been gradual and targeted, and any future expansions should follow the same approach.¹⁸

Ethics, Accountability, and Integrity

There is perhaps no issue more pressing in the minds of New Yorkers than corruption in city government. A series of investigations, indictments, and ethical scandals in and around City Hall have raised serious concerns about the ability to hold corruption in check. However, it is important to acknowledge that many of these controversies have come to light because the system has, in some respects, functioned as intended: the Campaign Finance Board has flagged attempts to defraud the campaign finance system, the Department of Investigation and law enforcement agencies have pursued leads, and multiple indictments for corruption have been issued.

Nonetheless, gaps remain in the City Charter where misconduct has been reported but no investigation has materialized due to legal loopholes. This moment provides an opportunity to strengthen the ethical watchdogs that serve as a bulwark against the abuse of power. The following recommendations aim to enhance accountability and integrity in city government.

Make the Budget of the Conflicts of Interest Board Independent and Increase Its Size

The budget of the Conflicts of Interest Board (COIB) is determined through negotiations between the mayor and the City Council as part of the annual budget process. In recent years, COIB's budget has fluctuated and its headcount reduced. The Board has not received authorization from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to fill vacant positions due to the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) initiative, resulting in a 16% reduction in staff. As

¹⁷ Citizens Union. March 2021. *Agenda for Police Reform – 2021 Issue Brief and Position* <https://citizensunion.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/citizens-union-agenda-for-police-reform-part-1-governance-and-accountability-mar-2021.pdf>

¹⁸ Citizens Union. May 29, 2024. *Testimony before the City Council Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation on Introduction 908-2024*. <https://citizensunion.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CU-Testimony-Intro-0908-2024-Expanding-Council-Advice-and-Consent-.pdf>



a result of COIB’s small size, budget cuts impact on the Board particularly hard. The number of complaints and requests for advice has increased in the same time period.

Despite having been granted additional responsibilities—such as oversight of legal defense

trusts and affiliated not-for-profits—the COIB’s resources have not kept pace with the expanding scope of city government.

COIB’s budget is determined by the very individuals subject to its scrutiny. To ensure COIB’s independence and allow it to properly oversee the city’s ethics regime, its budget should be independent. Other oversight bodies have been given independent or protected budgets, including the Campaign Finance Board and the Civilian Complaint Review Board. And previous Charter commissions have stressed COIB’s need for independence, including shifting appointment power away from total mayoral control. Possible

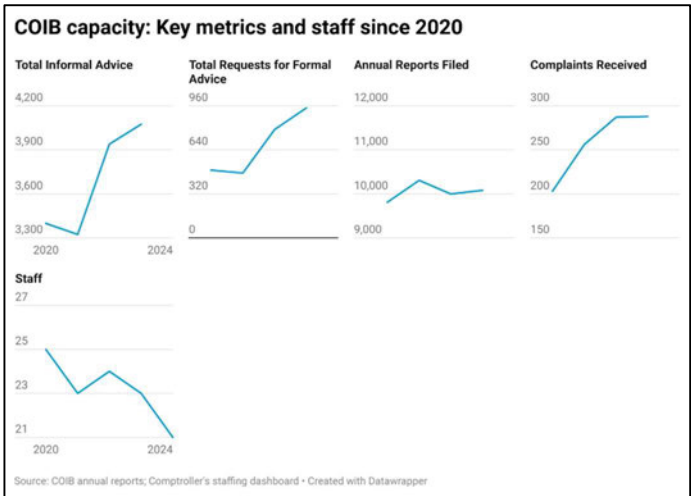
solutions include pegging COIB’s budget to a percentage of the Law Department’s budget or a fixed share of the overall city budget.¹⁹

Crucially, the COIB budget should be substantially increased to enhance the Board’s current staffing and technological capacities, but also to fulfill the new powers and authorities recommended below.

Empower COIB to Interpret & Enforce Ethics Provisions Beyond Chapter 68

Currently, COIB’s authority is limited to interpreting and enforcing Chapter 68 of the City Charter, along with specific related laws on affiliated nonprofits, lobbying gifts, legal defense funds, and annual disclosures. However, other ethics-related provisions exist outside of Chapter 68, such as Section 1 136.1, which governs the misuse of government funds and resources.

Subject to the proposed budget increase above, COIB should be empowered to interpret and enforce specific ethics-related provisions that serve similar purposes to Chapter 68 but have been codified outside of it. This would allow for streamlined compliance, reduce regulatory confusion, and improve enforcement coordination with the Department of Investigation (DOI).



¹⁹ See for example: Citizens Union, 2010. *City Charter Revision Recommendations: Increasing Avenues for Participation in Governing and Elections in New York City*. https://citizensunion.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/0610CU_Charter_Revision_ReportRecommendations.pdf; 2009 Conflicts of Interest Board proposed revisions to the City Charter, found at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/colb/the-law/past-charter-revisions-and-proposed-amendments.page>



Transfer Lobbying Oversight from the City Clerk's Office to COIB

Concerns have long been raised about the City Clerk's role in lobbying oversight and enforcement, as the office is housed within, and appointed by, the City Council—the very entity in which lobbying occurs. This arrangement creates an inherent conflict of interest.

The City Clerk's Lobbying Bureau, a small five-person unit, primarily focuses on compliance rather than enforcement. Its enforcement actions are limited to administering late fees, conducting 45 audits per year, and issuing minimal civil penalties—totaling just \$10,000 since 2018. Few violations, if any, are referred to DOI.²⁰

Lobbying oversight should be transferred to COIB, which should receive dedicated funding and staffing for this responsibility, or a future ethics agency that would encompass similar responsibilities. COIB already oversees lobbyists under the Lobbying Gifts Law and manages disclosure reporting for over 10,000 individuals. Given its expertise in ethics regulation, consolidating lobbying oversight under COIB would create a more effective system. A joint ethics-lobbying body would be analogous to COELIG on the state level, and entities with similar authority in cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Allow COIB to Correct Public Mischaracterizations of Ethics Guidance

COIB provides confidential advice to public servants who seek guidance on issues related to the city's ethics laws through informal advice, staff letters, and formal advisory board letters. Confidentiality of advice encourages public servants to seek guidance and assists with ethics compliance, but it can also be misused. In particular, senior city officials scrutinized by the public or media for questionable conduct can argue they were given COIB approval or mischaracterize the guidance given. Under current rules, COIB cannot correct these misstatements or even acknowledge it gave advice.

To address this, there should be some provision in the Charter that would allow the public to know if high-ranking public officials misrepresented the guidance they received from COIB.

One possible approach exists at the state level. New York Executive Law §94(7)(b) allows the Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government (COELIG) to correct misstatements about ethics guidance. COELIG recently affirmed this in Advisory Opinion No. 25-01, which stated confidentiality may be deemed waived by the misleading, inaccurate, or incomplete public disclosure of the nature or substance of guidance by the recipient, and detailed what information may be released.²¹ Other policy solutions should also be considered.

²⁰ Office of the New York City Clerk, *Lobbying Bureau Annual Reports; Testimony by the New York City Clerk before the Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation*. April 19, 2024.

²¹ New York State Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government. *Advisory Opinion No. 25-01*. <https://ethics.ny.gov/advisory-opinion-no-25-01-0>



Additionally, the Charter should clarify that officials are free to disclose the ethics advice they receive. While this is already the case, some officials have falsely claimed that they are prohibited from doing so to avoid responding to public scrutiny on apparent misconduct. Amending Chapter 68 to explicitly state it does not preclude the recipient of advice from disclosing the advice publicly would remove this excuse.

Forbid Public Servants to Work on Matters Relating to Former Interest

The City Charter requires incoming public servants to sever ties with businesses and organizations that have dealings with the city.²² However, it does not address potential conflicts arising from past relationships with former employers, clients, or business partners. Even after formally severing ties, officials may retain influence and connections that create conflicts of interest or perceived conflicts. Some top officials return to their old firms after completing time in office.

Recent cases have highlighted this issue. For example, when Frank Carone, a prominent attorney, was appointed as Mayor Eric Adams' Chief of Staff, he left his law firm but retained relationships with former clients. With no ongoing interests to be regulated by COIB, Carone was free to develop his own recusal policy related to former clients.²³

After leaving the administration, he started a consulting firm that represents clients with business before the city while also managing the mayor's reelection campaign.²⁴ Recently, an investigation found that a City Hall chief of staff was lobbied by a company where he formally serves as vice president on a large development deal.²⁵

Section 2604 of the City Charter should be amended to prohibit officials from engaging in particular matters related to their former interests for a defined cooling-off period. This prohibition could be modeled on existing restrictions in §2604(b)(1) (prohibited interest in firms engaged in business dealings with the city) or §2604(d)(4) (post-employment restrictions).

Establishing such cooling-off period would set clear boundaries and help create a more trusting climate inside City Hall and within agencies. The federal government has long

²² Charter §2604(a)

²³ Sally Goldenberg and Joe Anuta, Politico NY, May 17, 2022. *Adams' top aide navigates uncharted path on New York ethics issues* <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/05/17/eric-adams-frank-carone-city-hall-00032798>

²⁴ David Freedlander, New York Magazine, March 19, 2024. *The Eric Adams Smash-and-Grab*. <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/frank-carone-eric-adams-mayor-new-york.html>

²⁵ Chris Glorioso, NBC New York, January 16, 2025. *Conflicted? City Hall chief of staff lobbied by his former employer on lucrative lab deal*. <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/investigations/i-team-mayor-adams-wants-to-turn-a-historic-city-property-over-to-a-private-developer/6109941/>; Chris Sommerfeldt, New York Daily News. February 6, 2025. *Mayor Adams aide under NYC Council probe didn't recuse from ex-employer dealings due to 'miscommunication'* <https://www.nydailynews.com/2025/02/06/mayor-adams-aide-under-nyc-council-probe-didnt-recuse-from-ex-employer-dealings-due-to-miscommunication/>



imposed similar recusal rules, with Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden all issuing executive orders requiring a two-year recusal period for appointees regarding particular matters directly and substantially related to a former employer or former clients, including regulations and contracts. Waivers can be given in certain cases.²⁶

Merge The Three Police Oversight Bodies into One Police Oversight Board

A significant challenge in managing police accountability in New York City is the fragmented system of oversight. By one count, a dozen offices and agencies both inside and outside the NYPD oversee police actions, yet a lack of coordination and limited access to NYPD information undermines their effectiveness²⁷. A more effective system should be utilized.

The three external oversight agencies - the Inspector General for the Police Department (OIG-NYPD), the Mayor's Commission to Combat Police Corruption (CCPC), and the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) – should be consolidated into one unified Police Oversight Board. Combining these agencies would strengthen their collective capacity and allow for easy access to NYPD information.

The OIG-NYPD and the CCPC perform similar and somewhat overlapping functions. The CCRB serves a somewhat different purpose, but its ability to investigate complaints, obtain relevant information, and prosecute wrongdoing could be strengthened as part of a larger and more comprehensive police oversight agency.

The agency consolidation proposal was included in the 2021 NYC Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Plan²⁸ and was endorsed by then-Mayor de Blasio. The Department of Investigation recommended that idea in its December 2020 report into NYPD Response to George Floyd Protests²⁹. However, the proposal was not included in the 2021 Council Resolution implementing the reform plan. Given ongoing concerns about police accountability, this recommendation should be revisited.

²⁶ See for example: Executive Order 13490, President Barack Obama; Executive Order 13770, President Donald Trump; Executive Order 13989, President Joe Biden.

²⁷ James Yates, September 19, 2024. *Report to the Court on Police Misconduct and Discipline*. <https://www.nypdmonitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Discipline-Report.pdf>

²⁸ The New York City Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Plan, found at: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/policereform/reform-plan/reform-plan.page>

²⁹ New York City Department of Investigations, December 2020. *Investigation into NYPD Response to George Floyd Protests*. <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/reports/pdf/2020/DOIRpt.NYPD%20Reponse.%20GeorgeFloyd%20Protests.12.18.2020.pdf>

From: Sean Campion [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 3, 2025 7:52 PM
To: chartertestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Corrected CBC Testimony for 3/4 Hearing
Attachments: CBC_CRC_Land Use Recommendations_March42025.pdf

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. Forward suspect email to [REDACTED] as an attachment (Click the More button, then forward as attachment).

I have attached a corrected version of CBC's testimony for the March 4 hearing. Apologies for sending multiple copies.

Best,
Sean Campion

Sean Campion
Director of Housing and Economic Development Studies
Citizens Budget Commission





240 West 35th Street ■ Suite 302 ■ New York, New York 10001

Testimony on Recommendations for Improving New York City's Land Use Decision-Making Process

Submitted to the New York City Charter Revision Commission

March 4, 2025

Sean Campion, Director of Housing and Economic Development Studies, Citizens Budget Commission

Good evening. My name is Sean Campion, and I am the Director of Housing and Economic Development Studies at the Citizens Budget Commission (CBC), a nonpartisan, nonprofit think tank and watchdog devoted to constructive change in the finances, services, and policies of New York State and City governments. Thank you for the opportunity to offer our recommendations to improve New York City's land use decision-making process through revisions to the City Charter.

CBC's February 11, 2025 written [testimony](#) identified the limitations of the current decision-making process and offered guidelines for reform. CBC's 2022 [report on the land use decision-making process](#) found the process is:

- Too long, with private rezoning application approval taking between 2 to 3 years;
- Too expensive, adding as much as \$82,000 to the cost of each housing unit in 2025 dollars; and
- Too uncertain, with little assurance that even a well-conceived application will get approved.

Too often unfortunately, the cost, time, and uncertainty discourage projects from getting proposed at all.

Amending the City Charter can go a long way to fixing these problems. Today, we are recommending three revisions to the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP):

- 1. Merge the Community Board and Borough President advisory reviews into a single review under the Borough President;**
- 2. Allow applicants to appeal actions rejected by the City Council to a ULURP Appeals Board consisting of the City Planning Commission and Council Speaker; and**
- 3. Focus ULURP on zoning and shift review of non-zoning actions and modest rezoning applications with no adverse impacts to City agencies or commissions.**

These proposals would make the land use process simpler and faster while upholding the intent of ULURP: a time-limited review process that incorporates local and citywide perspectives.

However, any changes to the City Charter must be crafted with care, lest they make the process more complicated or introduce unintended consequences. To that end, this list of recommendations is not exhaustive, and we welcome feedback and input. CBC also continues to evaluate other possible Charter revisions that could improve the process and may review and comment on other proposals being advanced.

Merge the Community Board and Borough President advisory reviews into a single review under the Borough President

Consolidating the two advisory reviews, which together currently take 90 days, would make the advisory review stage shorter and more productive. Borough Presidents have a larger constituency, which allows them to consider Community Board-level neighborhood concerns while balancing them with boroughwide and citywide needs. Additionally, Borough Presidents have professional land use and planning staff that can support the review.

This consolidation would not eliminate the role or input of Community Boards. Borough Presidents appoint Community Board members and would consider their input. Similarly, Council Members would also look to Community Boards for input at the end of the ULURP process.

Consolidation would shorten the review process by one month, which would accelerate decisions and reduce the cost of going through ULURP.

However, consolidation is not likely to address the problem of “over scoping.” Applicants will still propose projects that are larger than what they would ultimately want to build because they need to be able to give something back in negotiations while still yielding a project that is financially feasible and large enough to justify the time and cost of going through ULURP.

Allow applicants to appeal actions rejected by the City Council to a ULURP Appeals Board consisting of the City Planning Commission and Council Speaker

The City Council and any members whose districts are affected by specific proposals play very important roles in the land use decision-making process. Adding a well-designed appeals process to ULURP would maintain those important roles, while encouraging greater balance of citywide needs and neighborhood concerns. The tradition of member deference in the City Council has meant that local concerns, especially local resistance to development, has at times overridden citywide needs to build more housing for everyone in all neighborhoods.

CBC recommends that when a ULURP project is disapproved by the Council, the applicant would have the opportunity to appeal the vote back to the City Planning Commission (CPC), with the addition of the City Council Speaker. To override the City Council, the CPC plus Council Speaker would need to approve the application by a supermajority vote—10 of the 14 members. The addition of the City Council Speaker, as a temporary 14th vote, in addition to the CPC for appeals would ensure representation of the City Council's perspective. This appeal process would be similar to the current practice of referring City Council modifications back to the CPC.

Hopefully, the appeal process would encourage the City Council Speaker to bring more projects to a vote rather than allowing them to be withdrawn in the face of defeat due to member deference. More projects coming to a vote at the City Council could encourage more applications to come forward, since in some cases, well-considered projects are never proposed due to member deference. The City Council would also need to publicly explain why it rejected an application.

Focus ULURP on zoning and shift review of non-zoning actions and modest rezoning applications with no adverse impacts to City agencies or commissions

While ULURP is technically named the City's "land use review process," the Charter requires a host of non-zoning actions be approved through ULURP. CBC proposes that ULURP be used solely for citywide and neighborhood zoning map amendments and mapping of streets and public spaces.

Review of non-zoning actions that are currently required to go through ULURP should be shifted to City agencies or commissions. These actions should not require further legislative approval by the City Council because they are individual actions being taken pursuant to already legislatively approved policies and programs. Rather, the review should be administrative, with City agencies given discretion to approve or deny based on specific findings and in accordance with City and State laws. Under this process, the appropriate agency would review the application, hold a public hearing, and publish notice of its decision in the City Record.

Action	Alternative Review Agency/Commission
Special Permits	City Planning Commission
Revocable Consents	Department of Transportation
Franchise Agreements	Franchise and Concession Review Committee and Mayor's Office of Contract Services
Major Concessions	City Planning Commission
Acquisition and Disposition of City-Owned Land	City Planning Commission
Sanitary or Waterfront Landfills	Department of Environmental Protection
Site Selection for Capital Projects	City Planning Commission
Improvements Payable by Private Parties	City Planning Commission
Housing and Urban Renewal Plans	City Planning Commission

Removing these actions from ULURP would substantially speed up the approval of projects that are otherwise as-of right, meaning they conform with the zoning code. Still, this review process should include time limits to ensure that agencies review projects in a timely manner.

Requiring these projects to go through ULURP considerably increases cost, delay, and risk. For example, our 2022 report found that the median time to approve dispositions of City-owned land through the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's Urban Development Action Area Program was 14 months. Completing ULURP is required before those projects can close on financing and secure building permits. If these projects went through a one-month administrative review instead of ULURP, the process would be at least five months shorter.

This streamlining would also reduce administrative burden on City agencies that have to manage these ULURP applications. Still, it would require some to develop and approve rules for administrative review processes.

In addition to removing non-zoning actions from ULURP, modestly sized individual rezoning applications should have a shorter review process.

Currently, all projects requesting zoning changes regardless of their size are subject to ULURP. The high cost and uncertainty of the review process particularly discourages smaller projects. CBC found that ULURP increases the cost of small residential buildings by at least 15 percent, which is more than larger projects on a percentage basis. The uncertainty also dissuades proposals in neighborhoods where the Council Member has made it clear they oppose new development, even if those projects would benefit current and future residents. Those proposals that do come forward are susceptible to demands for costly exactions that can make projects financially infeasible.

The Charter could be modified to shift review and approval of these smaller projects to the CPC. This shorter review could apply to projects that, based on their size and location, would not have an adverse impact on the surrounding community, such as proposals designated as Type II actions under City Environmental Quality Review—a standard that would include residential projects eligible for Green Fast Track— if they are limited to a single block and would only modestly increase buildable floor area.

Still, this should not replace New York City's as-of-right development system, nor should it be an alternative to neighborhood and citywide rezonings, which are necessary to create the additional as-of-right capacity needed to boost housing production.

Fixing the land use review process is urgently needed. The City should offer ample opportunity for as-of-right development while also facilitating approval of discretionary actions aligned with citywide goals for jobs, housing, and resiliency. The status quo does neither.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer your questions.

From: Schierenbeck, Alec [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 3, 2025 10:59 PM
To: Charter Testimony
Subject: Fw: [EXTERNAL] Statement for NYC Charter Review Commission
Attachments: MitchellMossCRCstatementdocx.docx

Alec Schierenbeck
Executive Director
NYC Charter Revision Commission
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: Mitchell Moss [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 3, 2025 10:54 PM
To: Schierenbeck, Alec [REDACTED]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement for NYC Charter Review Commission

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Alec: Attached is the statement I will make at the hearing of the New York City Charter Review Commission on March 4, 2025.

Mitchell Moss

--
Mitchell L. Moss
Henry Hart Rice Professor of Urban Policy and Planning
New York University
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Statement Prepared for the
New York City Charter Revision Commission

Mitchell L. Moss
Professor of Urban Policy and Planning
Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service
New York University
March 4, 2025

Members of the New York City Charter Revision Commission:

My name is Mitchell Moss and I am a resident of New York City. I attended New York City public schools from kindergarten through high school. For the past 52 years, I have been on the faculty of New York University.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening about four strategies to encourage the construction of new housing in New York City.

I propose that housing developments with 8 units or less, located in residential zones, should be excluded from the Urban Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). This exemption would allow ULURP to continue to function for large-scale projects, but small-scale development should be subject to an expedited, one-stop review

process overseen by the Borough President, of the relevant borough: The borough presidents would be assigned real decision-making power--a departure from the 1989 City Charter—with the responsibility of issuing a ruling within 60 days. The height limit on such projects should be 40 feet.

The Borough President, an elected public official, would seek local community input on each project and be the sole decision-maker. This process would reduce the time required for public review and produce new housing that could be built at a lower cost and faster than large structures with costly engineering and electrical systems. This proposal reinforces and extends the thoughtful proposal in Eric Kober's testimony to this Commission regarding housing development with up to 6 units that would not exceed 35 feet in height.

2. Neighborhood plans for housing already must comply with NYC planning requirements and building regulations. With climate change an increasing challenge for all Americans, new housing plans should explicitly recognize the impact of new housing on the NYC municipal water supply, the NYC wastewater treatment and solid waste system, and on mass transit and surface transportation systems within the surrounding neighborhoods. Rather than require assessments over the course of 20 or 30 years, such assessments should be limited to a ten-year period from the completion of such plans.

3. As a recent report by The Robin Hood Foundation stated, a serious challenge to affordable housing in New York City is the cost of construction. More than a century ago, New York City established rules that require a window in every bedroom, a major contribution to public health.

With modern ventilation and electrical systems, it is safe to work in buildings with windowless offices or with windows that do not open. The Pew Center for Research has recently identified the opportunity to incorporate technological advances in ventilation systems and eliminate the requirement for windows that open in residential buildings.

New York City's requirement for a window in every bedroom impedes the conversion of modern office buildings to residential purposes. Certainly, New York City should allow windowless bedrooms in structures located within 1000 feet of bridges and tunnels, as well as warehouses and truck terminals that are major sources of vehicular emissions.

4. Finally, New York City should allow residential apartments to be designed and built without home baking ovens. Simply put, the modern kitchen should require internet access, plumbing for a kitchen sink with hot and cold running water, and electrical systems to accommodate a microwave oven and electrical appliances.

In Japan, where housing space is limited and home cooking is principally done by steaming and boiling, not with baking ovens, the oven is not an essential part of the kitchen infrastructure. In New York City, where households increasingly rely on prepared foods and meal delivery systems, it is time to treat the oven as an option, not a requirement that takes space and adds to the cost of a dwelling unit. Furthermore, sharing kitchen facilities would be allowed in such structures, for households that will, from time to time, require a fully equipped kitchen.

I want to thank you for allowing me to share these proposals with you and would welcome your questions or comments.

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Alonzo Henderson

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Testimony Presented by: Alonzo Henderson Date: 3/4/2025 To: The New York City Charter Revision Commission Distinguished members of the Charter Revision Commission, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the urgent need for updates to the New York City Charter. As a political consultant, business strategist, and community advocate, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges New Yorkers face due to outdated policies and bureaucratic inefficiencies. The Charter serves as the city's governing foundation, and to meet the evolving needs of our communities, it must be modernized to enhance accountability, equity, and responsiveness. Key Areas for Revision 1. Fiscal Responsibility and Stability New York City's economic resilience is vital, especially in the wake of financial uncertainties and budget constraints. The Charter should be revised to: • Strengthen oversight mechanisms for city spending and financial planning. • Establish clearer fiscal responsibility measures to prevent budget shortfalls. • Implement stronger transparency and accountability for taxpayer funds. 2. Public Safety and Sanctuary Policies The balance between public safety and New York's status as a sanctuary city requires careful reevaluation. While protecting immigrant communities is essential, the city must also ensure law enforcement agencies can effectively address crime. Proposed revisions include: • Clarifying policies regarding cooperation between local law enforcement and federal immigration agencies. • Implementing protocols that prioritize community safety while safeguarding immigrant rights. • Enhancing communication between city officials and law enforcement to address public concerns. 3. Land Use and Zoning Reforms Affordable housing and equitable development remain pressing issues. The Charter must evolve to: • Streamline the rezoning process to facilitate affordable housing initiatives. • Introduce greater community input mechanisms to

ensure fair urban planning. • Reduce bureaucratic barriers that hinder housing development in underserved areas. 4. Empowerment of Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) Economic inclusion is critical for a thriving city. The Charter should be revised to: • Increase the percentage of city contracts awarded to M/WBEs. • Enhance funding opportunities and streamline application processes for small businesses. • Strengthen oversight to ensure equitable distribution of economic resources. 5. Modernization of City Policies Many city policies remain outdated, leading to inefficiencies. Recommended updates include: • Reforming film permitting to attract more productions and boost local economies. • Revising waterfront development policies to promote sustainability and economic growth. • Updating sanitation enforcement policies to improve public health and city cleanliness. 6. Strengthening the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) The CCRB plays a crucial role in police oversight but suffers from delays due to unfilled commissioner positions. To improve its effectiveness, the Charter should be revised to: • Mandate timely appointments to the CCRB. • Ensure sufficient funding for investigations. • Establish stricter timelines for resolving complaints. Conclusion Updating the New York City Charter is not just a bureaucratic necessity—it is a moral and civic imperative. The proposed revisions will ensure that city government remains responsive, equitable, and efficient. I urge the Commission to act decisively to modernize the Charter, fostering a city that is prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the future. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am available for any questions or further discussions. Alonzo Henderson PS below please find a Comprehensive Summary of Proposed Charter Revisions The New York City Charter, the legal framework guiding the city's governance, requires critical updates to ensure it reflects the needs of an evolving metropolis. The area I've identified areas for revision include: 1. Fiscal Responsibility and Stability – Strengthening financial oversight to enhance transparency and prevent budget crises. 2. Public Safety and Sanctuary Policies – Clarifying law enforcement protocols to balance crime prevention and immigrant protection. 3. Land Use and Zoning Reforms – Updating regulations to promote equitable housing and streamline development. 4. Empowerment of M/WBEs – Expanding economic opportunities for minority- and women-owned businesses. 5. Modernization of City Policies – Revising outdated regulations to improve efficiency in industries like film, sanitation, and real estate. 6. Strengthening the CCRB – Addressing inefficiencies in police oversight to improve accountability. These revisions aim to modernize city governance, promote equity, and enhance operational efficiency, ensuring New York City remains a leader in progressive and effective urban management.

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Jessica Walker

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Please see attached testimony. The Manhattan Chamber of Commerce is calling on the Commission to include a ballot question that would expand the duties of the City's Independent Budget Office to include the preparation of economic assessments of City Council legislation before being voted upon.



**WRITTEN COMMENTS TO
THE NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
MARCH 4, 2025**

The Manhattan Chamber of Commerce is the convener, voice, and advocate of the 125,000+ businesses across the borough of Manhattan, which is the heart of New York City's economy. We're focused on advancing the economic vitality of our region by building a strong and thriving climate for the broad business community, including solo-entrepreneurs, small businesses, startups, and larger companies.

Our city's economy is in a precarious place, burdened by inflation and slowing growth triggered by world events that are largely beyond our control. The federal government's imposition of tariffs on goods imported from our top trading partners will likely drive-up consumer costs. These uncertain times remind us of the immense impact that government actions may have on the economy.

Shockingly, New York City does not currently have a formal process to analyze the impact that proposed legislation might have on jobs and the economy. The City Council's Finance Division examines the possible impact that bills might have on the city's budget, but generally not their broader economic implications.

By contrast, San Francisco has an Office of Economic Analysis that identifies and reports on all legislation introduced at the Board of Supervisors that might have a material economic impact on that city. The Office analyzes the likely impacts of legislation on business attraction and retention, job creation, tax, and fee revenues to the City, and other matters relating to the overall economic health of the City. The Office is part of the Controller's Budget and Analysis Division and is staffed with three economists. The Office submits its analysis to the Board of Supervisors within 30 days of receiving the subject legislation from the Clerk of the Board, unless the Board grants an extension for legislation of unusual scope or complexity. The Office's analysis is submitted to the Board of Supervisors prior to the legislation being heard in committee.

New York City must develop a similar capacity for economic analysis of legislation. Policymakers and the public must understand the potential consequences of bills before they are voted upon.

In 2021, legislation (Int. 2480-2021) was introduced in the City Council to create such a function. It called for the City Comptroller to establish an Office of Economic Analysis, which would be staffed by at least three economists who would prepare an economic analysis of any proposed local law likely to have a material impact on the City's economy. The analysis would examine the legislation's likely impacts on:

- Business attraction and retention.
- Jobs, unemployment, and wages.
- The cost of living.
- The poverty rate.
- Income and wealth inequality.
- Tax and fee revenues to the city.
- Any other measures related to the economic health of the city the office deems relevant.

This framework is a useful starting point for discussion. Our recommendation is that the Charter Revision Commission include a ballot question that would expand the duties of the city's Independent Budget Office (IBO), enabling the agency to prepare economic impact assessments of City Council legislation at the request of the City Council Speaker, a committee chair or committee ranking member, or a borough president. IBO currently has the duty to prepare *fiscal* impact statements upon such request, but these are focused narrowly on the impact to the city's budget. We need a broader understanding of the economic impacts.

Expanding the agency's responsibilities will require a corresponding increase in its budget to hire needed personnel. This could easily be achieved by amending the Charter's formula for determining IBO's budget, which was about \$7.8 million in fiscal year 2024. The current formula in the Charter requires that IBO's appropriated budget not be less than 10% of the budget level appropriated to the City's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in a fiscal year. That percentage could easily be amended in the Charter to ensure IBO has the staffing necessary to carry out its new function.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal. As always, we stand ready to work with you to strengthen New York.

From: George Walker [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 4, 2025 11:19 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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As a lifelong resident of New York City, I've always believed in the power of democracy and the importance of every citizen's voice. However, our current closed primary system often leaves many voters, especially independents, without a say in critical early election decisions. This exclusion diminishes voter engagement and limits the diversity of perspectives in our political discourse.

Transitioning to open primaries would allow all registered voters, regardless of party affiliation, to participate in selecting candidates. This inclusivity would lead to a more representative and responsive government, as candidates would need to appeal to a broader spectrum of the electorate. Moreover, open primaries could reduce political polarization by encouraging the nomination of candidates who prioritize common ground and pragmatic solutions over partisan extremes.

In a city as diverse and dynamic as ours, our electoral processes must reflect and embrace that diversity. Implementing open primaries would be a significant step toward ensuring that every New Yorker's voice is heard and valued in our democracy.

George Walker
[REDACTED]

From: Erik Lattimore [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 4, 2025 11:19 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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This is a city with an electorate as diverse as the range of views held by its residents. All New Yorkers should be able to participate in choosing our leaders. Open primaries would mean that candidates for office would address the full diversity of opinions and points of view that New Yorkers hold.

We need to ensure that there is a fair and equitable election system in place in which all New Yorkers can participate. The current primary system locks out a million New Yorkers from having a say in who our leaders are. It is time to embrace open primaries that allow the full range of beliefs and perspectives to be part of the system.

Erik Lattimore
[REDACTED]

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Alicia Vaichunas

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: See attached.

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ALICIA VAICHUNAS FOR CITY COUNCIL • 65-02 HULL AVENUE, MASPETH, NY 11378 • (347) 558-3720 • ALICIAVFORNYC@GMAIL.COM

March 4, 2025

Charter Revision Commission
253 Broadway, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Members of the Charter Revision Commission,

I write today to urge the Charter Revision Commission to place the repeal of New York City's sanctuary city laws on the ballot for this year's election. This is one of the most urgent and consequential issues facing our city, and it is long past time for the voters to have a direct say in whether these laws should continue.

For the past three years, New York City has borne the brunt of the federal government's open border policies — a crisis made exponentially worse by the city's sanctuary laws and the court-imposed right to shelter.

Together, these policies have turned New York into a global magnet for migrants, with no real plan to absorb the cost or impact on our neighborhoods.

The result has been devastating. This crisis has already cost New Yorkers more than \$9 billion and counting. City services are declining across the board. Our parks are dirtier, our streets less safe, our schools overwhelmed, and our housing system in chaos. Families who have called New York home for generations are now choosing to leave because they no longer recognize the city they love.

Despite this, the City Council refuses to listen. They have ignored community boards, neighborhood leaders, and everyday residents who are pleading for change. That's why the Charter Revision Commission must step in and let the people decide. The repeal of sanctuary city laws is too important to be left in the hands of out-of-touch politicians — it must go directly to the voters.

New Yorkers deserve the truth. They deserve a choice. And they deserve leadership that puts their quality of life and safety first. I urge the Commission to do the right thing — give the people of this city the chance to decide their own future. Thank you for your consideration and commitment to ensuring New Yorkers' voices are heard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alicia Vaichunas".

Alicia Vaichunas

Civic Leader and Candidate for Council District 30

Paid for by Alicia V for NYC

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-6060961 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Laura Adler

Email:

Phone:

Comments: One of the ways to have more affordable housing is to stop the glut of corporations purchasing homes and apartments that either sit empty or get rented at exorbitant rental fees. On my small block alone, 3 houses have been purchased by the same corporation who rents them. This is happening all across the city. It's not that we don't have enough housing. Do a count of the percentage of apartments that are vacant because people buy them for a weekend place or because nobody can afford them. When you have corporations purchasing properties for investments, the prices sky rocket.

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-2796037 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

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Date Wed 3/5/2025 7:02 AM

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<https://www.nyc.gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter.page>

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Anno

Email:

Phone:

Comments: There is no small landlord wants to rent to anybody when a deadbeat tenant doesn't pay and take years to evict! This is a losing cost for small landlord who works hard their entire time to just give away their money! No court should take 6 months just to get a trial when the money burden is all on the landlord!!!

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NYHC Testimony

From Schierenbeck, Alec <[REDACTED]>

Date Wed 3/5/2025 10:43 AM

To Charter Testimony <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

 1 attachment (151 KB)

NYHC Testimony 2025 Charter Commission Bronx 3.4.2025.pdf;

Testimony of Brendan Cheney, New York Housing Conference

New York City Charter Revision Commission

March 4, 2025

Good afternoon. My name is Brendan Cheney. I am Director of Policy and Operations at the New York Housing Conference (NYHC). I would like to thank the Commission for the opportunity to testify about land use and housing issues related to the City Charter in New York City.

NYHC is a nonprofit affordable housing policy and advocacy organization. As a broad-based coalition, our mission is to advance City, State and Federal policies and funding to support the development and preservation of decent and affordable housing for all New Yorkers.

My testimony today will show the extent of the housing crisis and how unequal our housing supply is distributed, highlighting the need for change.

We are currently working with our partners to come back with recommendations for change at the charter commission hearing in Manhattan next month.

We are very clearly in a housing crisis. Rents and homelessness are at record highs and keep growing. And in 2023 we the lowest rental vacancy rate in more than 50 years at just 1.3%. We do not have enough housing to meet demand.

As rents are rising, incomes are not keeping up. As this chart shows, rents are rising much faster than income and wages since 2007. Which means New Yorkers are paying a greater share of their income in rent.

In fact, more than 850,000 households in New York City are paying more than 30% of their income in rent – a common measure of rent burden. And nearly 500,000 are paying more than half of their income in rent.

The main causes of the crisis are a lack of housing supply and the lack of affordable housing. New York is not building enough housing to keep up with demand. In fact, we are building less new housing than many comparable metro areas.

The way to address the housing crisis is to increase overall housing supply and increase affordable housing resources.

But we need to make sure we add housing more equitably across the city than we have been. As you can see in this map, most of our affordable housing is being built in a small number of Council districts.

Over the past 10 years, 10 City Council districts financed more than 3,500 units of affordable housing each.

The bottom 10 districts financed just 200 units or less.

And we can see that the districts that are building more housing have certain things in common. They are more likely to be communities of color and more likely to have lower average incomes.

In the neighborhoods building the most affordable housing, 70 percent of the residents are Black or Latinx while in the neighborhoods building the least affordable housing only 30% of residents are Black or Latinx.

And in the top-building neighborhoods the average income is \$67,000, compared to \$87,000 in the neighborhoods with the least new affordable housing.

Housing and affordable housing are assets to all communities. Every neighborhood can and should add more housing. But neighborhoods that are whiter and higher income are opting out, choosing not to allow new housing. This needs to change. Especially in a housing crisis, neighborhoods cannot opt out.

When we come back with recommendations for the Commission, it will be to make changes to make it easier to build housing in every neighborhood.

Testimony of Anti-Discrimination Center

From Schierenbeck, Alec [REDACTED]

Date Wed 3/5/2025 11:37 AM

To Charter Testimony <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

 1 attachment (781 KB)

AntiDiscrimination Center to CRC 3.4.25.pdf;

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION CENTER, INC.

"ONE COMMUNITY, NO EXCLUSION"

Testimony of Craig Gurian, ADC's executive director, at the Charter Revision Commission Hearing of March, 4, 2025

Good evening. I have been a civil rights lawyer since 1988 and, since 2003, the executive director of the Anti-Discrimination Center.

I'm one of the few lawyers in New York City whose consistent focus has been on housing discrimination and housing segregation.

I've been a principal drafter of the structural amendments that make the City Human Rights Law what it is today, starting with the comprehensive 1991 amendments, continuing with the 2005 Local Civil Rights Restoration Act, and including a series of 2016 amendments to broaden the law and protect it from federal rollback.

I've taught the history, demographics, law, and remedies of housing discrimination and housing segregation, and invented and brought the landmark federal lawsuit against Westchester County that brought the concept of affirmatively furthering fair housing back from the dead.

It pains me to say that, while the depth of the pathology is not as deep as it was decades ago, New York City still very much runs on residential segregation.

That segregation remains, among other things, the backbone of our politics, our educational system, and our delivery of healthcare.

"Diverse" New York City is 20.2 percent Black, non-Hispanic overall. It has 59 community districts. But in 18 of those districts, the Black, non-Hispanic population is less than 5 percent; in 11 of those 18, less than 3 percent.¹

Where is affordable housing is being built? Looking at the 51 City Council districts, 14 of those districts had fewer than 50 units built in the period from 2022 to 2024 (by contrast, there were more than 1,000 units built in each of nine Council districts). Of those 14 lowest producers, 10 have Black, non-Hispanic populations of less than 5 percent.

How about where public housing is located? 15 Council districts have more than 100 NYCHA locations. But, in the 14 lowest producing districts for affordable housing, seven apparently have zero NYCHA residential addresses; another has but one, and two have only 10.

So, the pattern is unmistakable; any serious effort in the direction of fair housing must tackle those disparities head on.

One last preliminary point. There are unique and critically important data that were obtained in the (happily) now-resolved lawsuit brought against the City for its outsider-restriction policy in

¹ 2020 decennial Census data.

affordable housing lotteries (where community district incumbents had preference for 50 percent of the units). We gathered data on millions of lottery applications made by several hundred thousand unique households. It turns out that, whether the household was Asian, Hispanic, Black, or White, approximately 85 percent of the unique applicants applied for housing *outside of their community district* – AT LEAST 75 percent of the time.

Thus, there is a huge gap between what you hear from hyper-local advocates who proclaim the importance of maintaining the status quo, and the choices actual New York families are seeking to make.

So, in two minutes, what is to be done?

I've sketched a variety of proposals in the document circulated to you and I'll just mention a few before I take your questions. As others have and will tell you, Member deference has been a fair-housing disaster here and everywhere else it has existed. The question isn't whether to get rid of it, but how. City of Yes² took some important steps but faltered – especially when it comes to the most exclusionary neighborhoods that have built least. The Fair Housing Framework³ is also important but lacks any mechanism for enforcement of targets.

The most concrete solution means tangibly reducing the Council's ability to block affordable housing construction. That should mean expanding beyond the City of Yes the scope of affordable housing permitted as of right in districts that remain highly segregated on at least one dimension (especially, given our history, districts with a disproportionately low percentage of Black, non-Hispanic residents); that lag significantly in affordable housing units built; and that have disproportionately few public housing units. It could also mean applying a multiplier to the housing production targets of community districts that are most segregated and least contributing.

It may be that the Commission would prefer an alternative or supplemental solution that is more case-by-case, with City Planning approval required, but where the giving of that approval is dispositive absent an override by a Council super-majority within 30 days.

A final thought: You can't solve the City's affordable housing and fair housing crises without recognizing the regional element. Suburban exclusionary zoning and segregation has been intense and unrelenting for decades. Look at the percentage of households in the five surrounding suburban counties with household income below \$35,000/year: 13.0 percent. New York City? 25.7 percent, essentially double.⁴ *No one* is currently tasked with trying to vindicate the City's fair-housing interest in suburbs taking on their fair share of affordable housing production (an interest which, conveniently, is remediable not only under federal law, but under state law as well).

I'd be happy to take your questions.

² Resolution 689 of 2024.

³ Local Law 167 of 2023.

⁴ 2023 five-year American Community Survey data.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION CENTER, INC.

"ONE COMMUNITY, NO EXCLUSION"

March 4, 2025

For Charter Revision Commission Consideration

We invite the Commission to consider the following and are happy to discuss each item in further detail.

1. City of Yes and the Fair Housing Framework did not go far enough. From a fair housing point of view (or, indeed, in relation to any problem of longstanding that one seeks to remedy), it is not enough to end a problematic set of practices (*e.g.*, the set of mechanisms by which some community districts find themselves with little or no affordable housing existing or under construction, little or no public housing existing or under construction, and a population where Black, non-Hispanic New Yorkers continues to be deeply underrepresented).¹ To create an effective remedy, one needs to *counterbalance* a history of failing to create opportunity. In other words, simply proceeding in the future not to worsen the problem does not actually *redress* the underperformance and exclusion of the past.

Unfortunately, despite its many positive features, City of Yes does not even place the worst actors on a level playing field going forward, let alone account for the need for those worst actors to "catch up." Likewise, the Fair Housing Framework² improves on planning that should have been done for decades anyway pursuant to federal affirmatively furthering fair housing mandates. Strikingly, however, the housing production targets at the community district level make no mention of existing levels of residential racial segregation as a factor to be considered.³

¹ Less than 5 percent, the figure I have adverted to elsewhere, would mean that Black, non-Hispanic population of a community district was less than 25 percent of the share of New Yorkers citywide who are Black, non-Hispanic.

² The Fair Housing Framework was incorporated by Local Law 167 as Section 16-a of the Charter.

³ *See* Charter § 16-a(d)(2). Even the "equitable development data tool" is referenced *not* for its demographic data, but rather for data on "access to transit, employment opportunities, open space, and other neighborhood amenities and public services." *Id.* at Charter § 16-a(d)(2)(c). The items referenced are important, but there remains reluctance to state unambiguously that "we want to reduce segregation." More generally, the framework was able to be specific when it wanted to be (for example, the fair housing plan must contain policy goals and strategies to address "discrimination based on lawful source of income"), *Id.* at Charter § 16-a(b)(2)(d), but is not in key places. There is a required goal and strategy relating to "facilitating equitable housing development" which, as is often the case with phrases that become ritual incantations, can mean anything (certainly there are many I have encountered over the years who treat the term "equitable" in the housing development context to mean "that which maintains existing demographic composition"). It is true that the term "segregation" does find its way into the law *once*, as part of a cluster of policy goals: making "public investments to address discrimination, segregation, and

The timing of the City's fair housing planning described in Charter § 16-a(b):

- a fair housing plan must be presented to the Mayor and the Council by October 1st of this year.
- Long-term housing needs assessment and housing production targets at the citywide and community-district level are due within a year after that.

As such, any Charter proposal approved by the voters would occur between the time that the fair housing plan was submitted and the time for the housing needs and housing production targets are due (unless, of course, the production of the fair housing plan was delayed).

A stronger fair housing approach to the Charter would move from the historic and unfortunate fair-housing-world focus on analysis over action; use a formula to identify the 10 community districts who combine the lowest percentage of Black, non-Hispanic residents,⁴ the poorest records on affordable-housing production, and the lowest concentration of NYCHA housing; and then assign either a raw number of units at different levels of affordability that would need to be developed in a fixed number of years or else a multiplier that would increase the housing production target otherwise arrived at⁵ and either: (a) command the making of such broad zoning changes that would enable that number to be achieved; or (b) identify the scope by which developments of the specified type could vary from existing zoning. Option (a) would require further action; option (b) would be self-executing if identified in the Charter.

2. Reduce the Council's ability to veto development that includes an affordable-housing component. As a matter of understanding the political landscape, the closeness of the vote on City of Yes and the compromises that had to be made on its substance; the compromises made in the language of the Fair Housing Framework; and a long history of vociferous opposition to reasonable development all tell us that the current allocation of authority is not working in the interest of New Yorkers.

Whether it's a matter of a single, standalone affordable housing proposal that doesn't fit into the as-of-right framework established by City or Yes; or whether the Commission is favorably inclined to place in a favored-review category developments with an affordable housing component located in the three-prong, "worst performer" districts specified in Item 1, above, but is not prepared to go further; or whether the Commission is not prepared to amend the charter to specify the scope that affordable projects could vary from existing zoning in "worst performer" districts but is prepared

poverty." *Id.* at Charter § 16-a(b)(2)(f). Hardly specific guidance as to what to do or as what to the desired end point is.

⁴ The inclusion of Item 4, below, is an important means by which to insulate this approach from challenge.

⁵ In either case, and for a variety of reasons, it is important – except for a pilot program of new public housing – to have these developments combine subsidized, affordable units with market-rate units.

to amend the Charter to impose a requirement that inclusion on the list triggers a rezoning requirement sufficient to allow the target to be reached, Council participation is currently required.

Rather than the current requirement whereby affirmative Council approval would be needed, one or all the scenarios above could be placed in a different procedural posture, one where City Planning approval would be the end of the matter unless the Council affirmatively exercised a veto by vote of a two-thirds super-majority within 30 days of City Planning approval.⁶ Getting two-thirds Council alignment has been achieved on a host of matters, so the veto – while appropriately difficult to secure – is not illusory.

3. Designate an agency or agencies to vindicate New York City’s rights under fair housing law against suburban jurisdictions who refuse to take on their fair share of affordable (and hence desegregating) housing. As the City acknowledged when resolving the fair housing lawsuit concerning the outsider-restriction policy in affordable housing lotteries, “for decades, suburban counties in the New York metropolitan area, as well as many of the municipalities therein, have not produced sufficient housing to meet regional affordable housing needs, which in turn has exacerbated the City of New York’s housing affordability crisis and reduced opportunities for residential mobility.” Stipulation and Order of Settlement and Dismissal, *Noel et al. v. City of New York*, 15-CV-5236 (Jan. 22, 2024), at 5, ¶ 13. That suburban refusal to permit the construction of adequate affordable housing – largely a function of powerfully exclusionary zoning that, in many towns and villages, makes it almost impossible to build multiple-dwelling housing as-of-right – constitutes a clear violation of both fair housing laws and two longstanding New York State legal doctrines that operate as limitations on the principle that local zoning decisions are final: *Berenson* (which obliges towns to take into account in their planning regional housing need) and *County of Monroe* (which weighs the importance of the competing interests that two different units of governments are trying to vindicate).

There is no indication that New York City – who bears disproportionately high costs compared to suburban municipalities for housing and providing other services to disproportionately large numbers of people needing subsidized housing – has acted on the recognition that its residents who wish to move into affordable housing in an exclusionary suburb experience barriers that translate into both race-based disparate impact and perpetuation of segregation. Nor is there any indication that New York City has explored its legal rights in relation to its municipal neighbors, either under fair housing law, *Berenson*, or *County of Monroe*.

Normally, the task of exploring development possibilities, the barriers to those possibilities, and the legal rights associated with the City and its residents being on the receiving end of exclusionary zoning would be assigned in the Charter to HPD and to the Law Department. Given the Law Department’s performance in connection with another affirmative civil rights responsibility (*see* Item 8, below), it may well make sense to assign the exploration of legal rights and conduct of any

⁶ It is well to point out that, while it is more likely that a Mayor will have citywide needs top of mind as compared with individual Council Members, history shows this is not necessarily the case. A future charter revision commission might well have to examine the circumstance where it was the Mayor who was resistant to affordable-housing development and whether charter changes were necessary to empower the Council to overcome that mayoral resistance.

follow-on litigation to the replaced or redesigned Commission on Human Rights, discussed in Item 9, below).

4. Specific admission of New York City’s historical participation in practices that intentionally created or perpetuated residential racial segregation. The Charter was amended in 2022 to add a preamble that, sadly, bears a striking similarity to what a rightwing caricaturist might have penned in poking fun at the required language and locutions of “woke.”⁷ Not surprisingly, there is nothing in the preamble that constitutes a specific recitation or finding about the *specific* history and role of New York City in creating and perpetuating residential racial segregation. In other words, nothing that has useful legal meaning.⁸ Given the composition of the Supreme Court that may be in place for a very long time, these failures are quite consequential. This is a Court that has already placed significant limitations on the consideration of race. A statement of New York City’s own role in creating and perpetuating residential racial segregation⁹ would provide a more solid foundation on which the focus a defense of pro-integrative actions as designed to remedy intentional¹⁰ conduct.

5. Reconsider the role of community boards in the process. There is a wide range in how 59 community boards conduct themselves. But it is well understood that it is the rare community board that is interested in furthering fair housing. Many (most) community boards unreasonably try to restrict development. There is often an enormous amount of time and effort that goes into trying to negotiate with community boards. Those who show up at community board meetings are often unrepresentative of the views of the “silent majority” in the community district. And a borough president, in his or her advisory capacity, can and should strike a balance between and among hyper-local concerns, borough-wide concerns, and citywide concerns.¹¹ I know in a city that, counterintuitively, has as many taboos as a 18th century Puritan town, this is a true longshot, but consolidating the land-use advisory function with the borough presidents would: (a) be more efficient; (b) better rationalize the existence and function of those offices; and (c) protect against counter-productive pro- status quo hyper-localism *while at the same time allowing of the voice of*

⁷ New Chapter 78 of the Charter (“Equity”) is similarly afflicted.

⁸ Indeed, Section 1151-a was added to the Charter at the same time as the preamble and provided that the preamble and the authority and requirements to consider the values of the preamble are “not intended to create a direct or indirect right of action to enforce its terms of the terms of any other provision of law.”

⁹ To assuage any concerns about future litigation, the admission would cover a period ending sufficiently long ago – 2013, say – to be beyond the statute of limitations (to the extent that New York City actually stopped engaging in such practices).

¹⁰ Intentional conduct in the perpetuation of segregation context includes not only actions reflecting a desire to maintain segregation, but also though actions or failures to act that stem in significant part from responsiveness to the influence of those – constituents, advocates, legislators, community board members –

¹¹ See, e.g., Reynoso, The Comprehensive Plan for Brooklyn (October 2023), at 131-34, available at <https://bit.ly/3FguJWI>.

anyone who had concerns or objections to a project to continue to be heard in the context of his or her borough president's process.

6. Rethinking the composition of the City Council. The 1989 charter revision was a watershed in empowering a one-person, one-vote City Council. But that now 35-year-old 51-member Council has largely clung to the pernicious custom of Member deference. As intended, the districts created are small enough to have (in many cases) both a dominant racial or ethnic group and limited types of housing. Sometimes, there are relatively few residents in need of deeply affordable housing. As such, Council Members have additional incentive not to try to balance interests of different constituencies, let alone the interests of the city.¹² If there were fewer districts, the number of districts where the Council Member would have a broader range of constituent interests to serve would increase. A collateral benefit would be the ability, without budgetary impact, to hire more experienced and more deeply qualified staff.¹³

Prior to 1989, the infirmity with at-large districts was the fact that having them borough-based violated the principle of one-person, one-vote. At-large members elected citywide would not create that problem.

A City Council composed of 35 members elected in districts and five members elected at-large (citywide) would help to create a beneficial shift in focus away from hyper-local concerns to cross-community and citywide ones.

7. Require the Department of Buildings to identify common area barriers to accessibility in housing accommodations and places of public accommodation. Under the federal Fair Housing Act, a housing provider is only required to *permit* a resident to modify premises to make those premises accessible. Under the federal Americans With Disabilities Act, there are also limitations on the requirements imposed on the covered entity. Under the City Human Rights Law, by contrast, housing providers as well as places and providers of public accommodation must *themselves* make and pay for modifications. Contrary to widespread belief, the City law applies to structures regardless of when constructed. The burden is on the covered entity to show that the modification sought would cause it an undue hardship. NYC Admin. Code § 8-107(15).

These amendments came into effect in 1991, yet there are still examples everywhere of apartment buildings where the entrances, exits, and common areas are not accessible. Same with office buildings and retail stores. Even in times when the Commission on Human Rights is, relatively speaking, eager to investigate and prosecute violators, it lacks the eyes and ears to go out and affirmatively identify violations.

¹² Section 22 of the Charter could usefully be amended by adding a new paragraph (c): "It is the responsibility of each council member to include in that member's deliberations on land-use and other legislative matters full consideration of citywide interests, including the citywide interest in reducing residential racial segregation."

¹³ As with other things, there is a wide range in staffing quality. Legislative Directors provide a good illustration. Some are deeply versed in both the legislative and oversight processes. Others are not. Some Members do not even have a legislative director.

This proposal would build on the inspections that DOB performs in buildings containing either more than 10 dwelling units or in places or providers of public accommodation.

DOB would be required, in the course of those inspections, to take note of and report to the Commission on Human Rights or successor entity¹⁴ the existence of entrance, exit, or common areas barriers to entry or use by a person using a wheelchair or similar mobility device.

Rigorous enforcement of the law is long overdue, and this requirement would significantly enhance detection of barriers to accessibility.

8. Transfer authority to enforce Chapter 4 of the City Human Rights Law away from the Law Department. Chapter 4 of the City Human Rights Law (Sections 8-401 to 8-404) authorizes the Law Department to investigate and prosecute pattern-and-practice violations of the City Human Rights Law (for example, a realtor who persistently steers Black applicants away from buildings in White neighborhoods). Since getting this authority in 1991, I am unaware of the Law Department using it. A decades-long record of nonfeasance under administrations of a variety of ideological flavors tells us definitively that the Law Department is not where this authority ought to be.¹⁵

Authority needs to reside in an entity that sees this kind of enforcement as central to its mission.¹⁶

9. Replacing or reimagining the Commission on Human Rights. Over its long history, the Commission (as distinct from the substantive provisions of the City Human Rights Law) has had many more downs than ups. Staffing is often wholly inadequate. From a high point in City-funded staffing in 1991, City-funded staffing levels dropped and dropped and dropped until, during the Bloomberg administration, the level was about 90 percent below what it had been. Some restorations have been made, but underfunding remains a constant problem.

And the Commission is structurally a very weird animal. It combines a “community relations” function (sometimes helpful but sometimes only window dressing) with both a law enforcement function (investigations and prosecutions, with results varying widely depending on funding and on administration interest or lack of interest) and an adjudicatory function (the initial level of which has been long been farmed out to administrative law judges in OATH¹⁷ who have little experience

¹⁴ See Item 9, below.

¹⁵ It is true that the Commission on Human Rights has independent authority under Chapter 1 of the City Human Rights Law to initiate investigations (something it does infrequently), and Section 8-402(c) allows the corporation counsel to designate Commission attorneys or others to prosecute cases investigated pursuant to Chapter 4. But I believe that this authority either not been used or used extremely rarely.

¹⁶ See Item 9, below.

¹⁷ Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings.

in civil rights matters; and with final decisions made by lay members of the Commission itself, aided by a professional General Counsel's office).

The Commission tends to get little bang for our buck because: (a) its work is overwhelmingly individual complainant initiated; and (b) a very significant percentage of those complaints are clearly without merit.¹⁸ As things stand now, the statutory commands that complaints are filed as-of-right and are all investigated are honored in the breach. Over the decades, a variety of stratagems have been used to obstruct complaint filing and/or to make cases going away after filing.

Before proceeding to articulate an alternative, I should note that the Commission's funding problems are about to get a lot worse because it depends, in part, on federal funding from HUD. That funding almost certainly in jeopardy: not-for-profit fair housing organizations have just in the last several days been getting notices that their contracts are being terminated.

It would make sense for Charter (which already deals with the Commission in Chapter 40) to be amended to create a new structure, more in line with an office devoted solely to investigations and prosecutions:

- (a) The revised agency (Department of Human Rights?) would shed its adjudicative function completely (including the part that has been turned over to OATH) and instead all adjudications would be vested in State Supreme Court.¹⁹
- (b) Likewise, community relations functions would be eliminated or transferred to other entities (for example, the Mayor's Office of Community Affairs).
- (c) The new Department would have full authority to initiate investigation and prosecutions of all violations of the Human Rights Law, including pattern-and-practice complaints under Chapter 4. An open question is whether a baseline number of investigations and prosecutions needs to be established. Normally, one would not do this with a prosecutorial office, but it is worth considering given the City's longtime history of neglect. *Proceeding in this way would also eliminate the built-in conflict whereby the same Law Department that is responsible for defending the City in Human Rights Law claims is also responsible for investigating and prosecuting any instances where the City itself has engaged in an illegal pattern-and-practice of discrimination.*

¹⁸ I say this as someone who has in his career only represented civil rights plaintiffs. To be sure, something *bad* has happened to almost everyone who files a complaint, but that is very different from the bad thing having occurred *because* of discrimination, let alone from the bad thing *provably* having occurred because of discrimination.

¹⁹ It is outside of the City's authority – whether via the Charter or the Administrative Code – to make any changes to the organization of State Supreme Court, but it would be useful if, in conjunction with this proposed Charter change, the state court system created a specialized, citywide part to hear all City Human Rights Law complaint (especially in light of the prospect that it will be getting more anti-discrimination business as the doors to federal court are effectively slammed shut to these kinds of claims).

- (d) I remain convinced that as-of-right filing (without cheating on the part of the agency, including informal resolutions that tend to limit the relief that a complainant is given) is the appropriate way to go. If nothing else, that formal step helps document a claim and, very importantly, establishes whether the statute of limitations is tolled during the pendency of the complaint at the Commission.

The open questions, in my mind, are whether the new Department should get (above-board) prosecutorial discretion to decline to investigate and prosecute some cases and, if so, should there be limits placed on that discretion. The argument against is a powerful one: victims of discrimination *should be able* to have their rights vindicated without having to hire a lawyer or trying to navigate the judicial system. But the argument in favor is a powerful, one too: (i) too many resources are wasted on clearly non-meritorious cases or those with low prospects to prevail; (ii) doing some investigation on all matters compromises the depth of investigation into those matters that need more intensive work; (iii) the time spent on likely non-meritorious matters is time not spent in higher-yield agency-initiated investigations; and (iv) those complaints not investigated as a matter of prosecutorial discretion would be permitted to be brought in court under existing Chapter 5 of the Human Rights Law.

So, my conclusion is that it does make sense to try a prosecutorial discretion model. I do, however, think that it makes sense to combine this approach with: (a) an end to the practice of “pre-complaint resolutions,” with the filing of a complaint being the trigger for agency action on an individual matter in all circumstances; and (b) the maximum number of dismissals for prosecutorial discretion initially capped at 200 per year²⁰ and subject to change by Council action via the Administrative Code.

In addition to the foregoing, a reimagined Department of Human Rights would be the logical place to locate the legal functions referenced in Items 3 (suburban exclusion) and 7 (DOB referrals), above.

10. Give the State Attorney General concurrent authority to enforce the City Human Rights Law. Doing so would provide another potential means by which the expansive fair housing provisions of the City Human Rights Law could be enforced. One might initially think of vesting such concurrent jurisdiction with the State Division of Human Rights, but that entity has, for decades, been even more persistently and egregiously dysfunctional than the City Commission.

²⁰ This represents about 20 percent of annual complaints filed a generation ago, and approximately 23 percent of what the Commission on Human Rights now calls “matters initiated” (FY 2024 data). Important note: a separate problem is the number of people who are improperly turned away. According to the Preliminary FY 2025 Mayor’s Management Report at 103, available at <https://bit.ly/3DbNqKN>, the agency received 13,630 inquiries in FY 2024.

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-2929102 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Basha Gerhards

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: Please see attached written testimony from my remarks delivered at last night's March 4th hearing on housing and land use. Thank you!

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REBNY Testimony | March 5, 2025 *revised submission*

The Real Estate Board of New York to 2025 Charter Revision Commission regarding Housing and Land Use

The Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY) is the City's leading real estate trade association representing commercial, residential, and institutional property owners, builders, managers, investors, brokers, salespeople, and other organizations and individuals active in New York City real estate. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this evening on the issue of housing and land use.

New York City is in the throes of a housing crisis marked by a severe lack of new production and an absence of sufficient affordable housing needed to meet the city's diverse socioeconomic needs.¹ New York City's affordability crisis will persist without tools that allow supply to match demand.²

Unfortunately, recent positive efforts such as the [City of Yes for Housing Opportunity](#) do not change the fact that today the New York City development process is up to three times longer than anywhere else in the country and costs up to twice as much on a per unit basis, with costs estimated up to \$800,000 per unit.

The length of time between a project starting and a tenant moving in is driven by a multi-agency permitting process and then exacerbated by a discretionary environmental and land use process that is long and costly. Moreover, even after this long and costly discretionary process, the result is too often a reduction in the amount of housing for the final project. This regular result therefore fails to adequately take into account the fact that the need for more housing is a matter of urgent citywide concern, a challenge discussed at length in February 11th testimony before this body.³

¹ Reaching the Mayor and Governor's goal of 500,000 new units in the next decade in New York City to address this crisis would require a significant increase in housing production over historic levels. According to REBNY's most recent [Construction Pipeline Report](#), in Q4 2024 there were 4,309 proposed dwelling units spread across 97 proposed multiple dwelling buildings, significantly short of the 12,500 units per quarter required to meet the 500,000-unit goal over the next decade.

² Increased housing development is a proven way to slow rent growth. According to [research conducted by Furman Center faculty](#), increases in housing supply decrease or slow rent growth across a given jurisdiction and sometimes reduce rents in the surrounding area. A [study by the Pew Charitable Trust](#) echoed this finding. In addition, the Furman study shows the generation of new market rate housing allows for higher-income households to move, which frees up older, generally less expensive units for new households. A [Rand Research Report](#) focused on supporting housing affordability echoed that increased housing production will lead to increased affordability.

³ Referring to [testimony](#) by NYU Furman Center Co-Faculty Director Vicki Been and remarks and [report](#) by Howard Slatkin, Executive Director of CHPC.

Costs of the Current Development Process

There are several key considerations in the “to build or not build” decision that a developer must make before it can secure financing to start construction. In addition to determining whether a proposed project will generate enough revenue to cover the costs of construction, operations, and maintenance, the developer must conduct due diligence around zoning and tax program requirements. A developer will not choose to build if its project will not generate a sufficient return to compensate for the high risks and large up-front costs of development. Nor will a lender provide the debt needed for development unless the project’s revenue is sufficient to support the size of the loan.

City government process has a significant role in this calculation. For example, the design of City agency approval processes drives costs.⁴ City agencies including DOB (Department of Buildings), FDNY (Fire Department of New York), DSNY (Sanitation), DEP (Department of Environmental Protection), DOT (Department of Transportation), LPC (Landmarks Preservation Commission), PDC (Public Design Commission) and DPR (Parks) each have permitting authority – and a project that is as of right under zoning will nevertheless need to obtain permits from some or all of these agencies. Each of the permitting agencies has a different pathway for permit filing, review and issuance. While some agencies have timeframes associated with permit review, those timeframes may not be short enough to address time sensitive deadlines such as financing closings.

A related challenge is the fact that the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) applies to all projects that require land use approval – such as a rezoning, zoning text amendment, or special permit – regardless of project size or the amount of housing proposed, and without a distinction between those projects with the potential for environmental impacts. By treating modestly sized housing projects much the same as larger more complex projects, the process adds costs and delays to smaller projects that are not able to face those burdensome costs. All too often, this dissuades many developers from even entering the process. As a result, we continue to fall further behind in the delivery of necessary affordable housing.

Principles for Considering Changes to the NYC Charter

The Charter should establish a government framework for land use that can address critical City needs. Unfortunately, our current land use processes delay, hinder, or outright forestall the creation of the new housing that is desperately needed. The Commission’s proposed charter changes in the area of land use should be designed with a goal in mind of finding better ways to stimulate housing production.

⁴ It can take two years for energy calculations, one of three principal components for new building plan approval. Fire alarm plan approval, the second principal component, takes four months per floor. The Zoning Resolution requires street trees as part of a new building, but DOB is not the sole permitting authority – the Department of Transportation and Department of Parks must also sign off. If those street trees are near infrastructure controlled by the Department of Environmental Protection, they too must weigh in. Soft costs, which cover permitting, engineering and design, are pegged at 30% of hard costs in the NYC market, versus 20% or less in the rest of the country.

The construction of affordable housing is inherently constrained by the City capital budgets, federal policy, availability of municipal land, and staffing levels at the relevant City and State housing agencies. The Charter alone cannot solve those issues. But it can play an important part in increasing the affordable housing pipeline by building a framework focused on increasing production.

Changes to the Charter should consider whether projects that vary widely in size, complexity and in the potential for environmental issues should continue to be treated alike in the approval process. Housing projects – regardless of their size or environmental profile – are serving a Citywide need. The ability of these projects to move forward should not be determined under a process that elevates local perspectives above citywide concerns. This may not require a re-imagined process all together but instead a new determining threshold for what enters ULURP in the first place. And, finally, all permitting should be predictable and time certain. The Charter may have a role to play in making those changes, and it is worth further discussion.

Recent State and City efforts demonstrate positive momentum toward building more housing. However, the size of the need to house New Yorkers and the protracted duration of our housing crisis require more structural changes. This Commission should not hesitate to take advantage of this historic opportunity to make them.

Thank you to the members and staff of this Commission for undertaking this necessary work, and for consideration of the points I shared with you all today.

CONTACT:

Basha Gerhards

Senior Vice President of Planning

Real Estate Board of New York



From: Reva Egdal [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 5, 2025 5:19 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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This is a city with an electorate as diverse as the range of views held by its residents. All New Yorkers should be able to participate in choosing our leaders. Open primaries would mean that candidates for office would address the full diversity of opinions and points of view that New Yorkers hold.

We need to ensure that there is a fair and equitable election system in place in which all New Yorkers can participate. The current primary system locks out a million New Yorkers from having a say in who our leaders are. It is time to embrace open primaries that allow the full range of beliefs and perspectives to be part of the system.

Reva Egdal
[REDACTED]

From: Dawn Celestine [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 5, 2025 5:19 PM
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Dawn Celestine
[REDACTED]

From: Margaret Hoffman [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 5, 2025 5:19 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I believe open primaries are essential to creating a more inclusive and democratic electoral system. The current closed primary system shuts out over a million voters. This exclusion weakens democracy.

Open primaries would give working-class and marginalized communities—who may not fit neatly into the two-party structure—a greater voice in choosing candidates who represent their needs. Many voters, especially young people and those disillusioned with establishment politics, do not register with a major party. Yet, they deserve a say in shaping the policies that affect their daily lives.

Margaret Hoffman
[REDACTED]

Russell, Jacob

From: Timothy Liebe [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 5, 2025 5:20 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I support open primary elections in New York City because they encourage broader participation, promote political competition, and ensure that candidates are accountable to all voters—not just party insiders. The current closed primary system limits participation to registered party members, excluding independents and those who may align with a party's values but choose not to register under its banner. This system is outdated and does a disservice to democracy.

Open primaries would benefit the Democratic Party by ensuring that candidates appeal to a wider range of voters, including moderates and independents, rather than just the most progressive wing of the party. As someone who believes in fiscal responsibility, public safety, and pragmatic governance, I want to see candidates representing a broader coalition—not just those catering to the most vocal activists.

Timothy Liebe
[REDACTED]

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-9048219 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

From agency@mail [REDACTED]
Date Wed 3/5/2025 11:30 PM
To CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, at 11:30:38 PM

This form resides at
<https://www.nyc.gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter.page>

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Madeline Andrews

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: I write to urge the commission to increase housing density in landmarked historic neighborhoods like mine. I am a 30-year-old woman living in a rent stabilized apartment in Brooklyn Heights. Even though I am a young professional in tech, my rent-stabilized rent still takes up a very high portion of my income, and the lack of any housing in my neighborhood has kept me in my apartment for years. While I enjoy the 19th-century streetscape that is my neighborhood, I have a far greater concern for the crisis created by turning large swaths of our city into a museum instead of place for people to live. Allowing neighborhoods like mine to block all new housing means that young New Yorkers are pushed elsewhere, causing gentrification and displacement. There are many non-historic buildings and vacant lots that could be turned into housing but are not because of endless red tape. I urge the Commission to consider voices like mine—young renters who are not as politically active but who bear the brunt of the city's shocking lack of housing availability. And I urge them to think of the countless thousands of young people, especially non-professionals, who want to move to or stay in New York but are priced out. This conversation is far too often dominated by community members who already own property and do not have to contend with the total lack of new housing development in landmarked districts, which has contributed to the crisis-level 1.4% vacancy rental vacancy rate.

From: Sophie Riese [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 6, 2025 10:58 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Open primaries would give working-class and marginalized communities—who may not fit neatly into the two-party structure—a greater voice in choosing candidates who represent their needs. Many voters, especially young people and those disillusioned with establishment politics, do not register with a major party. Yet, they deserve a say in shaping the policies that affect their daily lives.

Sophie Riese
[REDACTED]

From: Grisel Olivo [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 6, 2025 10:59 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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As a lifelong resident of New York City, I've always believed in the power of democracy and the importance of every citizen's voice. However, our current closed primary system often leaves many voters, especially independents, without a say in critical early election decisions. This exclusion diminishes voter engagement and limits the diversity of perspectives in our political discourse.

Transitioning to open primaries would allow all registered voters, regardless of party affiliation, to participate in selecting candidates. This inclusivity would lead to a more representative and responsive government, as candidates would need to appeal to a broader spectrum of the electorate. Moreover, open primaries could reduce political polarization by encouraging the nomination of candidates who prioritize common ground and pragmatic solutions over partisan extremes.

In a city as diverse and dynamic as ours, our electoral processes must reflect and embrace that diversity. Implementing open primaries would be a significant step toward ensuring that every New Yorker's voice is heard and valued in our democracy.

Grisel Olivo
[REDACTED]

From: Amanda Naseem [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 6, 2025 10:59 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Amanda Naseem
[REDACTED]

From: Eleanor Milburn [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 6, 2025 11:00 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Eleanor Milburn
[REDACTED]

From: Michael Niamehr [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 6, 2025 11:00 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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This is a city with an electorate as diverse as the range of views held by its residents. All New Yorkers should be able to participate in choosing our leaders. Open primaries would mean that candidates for office would address the full diversity of opinions and points of view that New Yorkers hold.

We need to ensure that there is a fair and equitable election system in place in which all New Yorkers can participate. The current primary system locks out a million New Yorkers from having a say in who our leaders are. It is time to embrace open primaries that allow the full range of beliefs and perspectives to be part of the system.

Michael Niamehr
[REDACTED]

From: Steven Snachkus [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 6, 2025 11:01 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Open primaries would make elections more competitive. Too often, races are effectively decided in Democratic primaries, shutting out voices from across the political spectrum. By opening the process, we can ensure that general elections feature candidates who appeal to a broader range of voters, leading to more balanced representation.

At its core, democracy thrives when more people engage in the electoral process. Open primaries foster greater participation, reduce partisan gridlock, and give voters more power in determining the future of our city and country. I urge lawmakers and fellow New Yorkers to support this critical reform for a fairer and more representative democracy.

Steven Snachkus
[REDACTED]

From: Mordechai Schwarz [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 6, 2025 11:01 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Mordechai Schwarz
[REDACTED]

From: Judy J Bonds [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 6, 2025 11:02 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Open primaries could help break the cycle of corporate influence in politics. When primaries are closed, candidates are primarily accountable to party insiders rather than the broader electorate. By allowing all registered voters to participate, we encourage candidates to appeal to everyday people, not just party elites and big donors.

New York City is one of the world's most diverse and politically engaged cities. Our elections should reflect that diversity by ensuring that every voter has the opportunity to shape the choices on the ballot. Open primaries are a crucial step toward building a political system that is truly representative, participatory, and responsive to the needs of all New Yorkers.

Judy J Bonds
[REDACTED]

From: Labadie, Madeline [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 6, 2025 2:55 PM
To: David Gellman; Charter Testimony
Cc: Dowe, Alina
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Charter Comm: My Housing Testimony

Thank you David! Received.

From: David Gellman [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 6, 2025 9:57 AM
To: Charter Testimony <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Cc: Labadie, Madeline [REDACTED]; Dowe, Alina [REDACTED]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Charter Comm: My Housing Testimony

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Madeline,
As requested, below is my testimony, from the end of your Public Hearing.
--

Sincerely yours,

David Gellman
=====

[REDACTED]

My name is David Gellman, a Bronx Community District #8 resident, a Community Board Member, and its Budget Chair. Though I don't speak here on behalf of the Board - whose district is about a half-mile NW of this location, my comments are representative of our Board's resolution and debate, as well as the majority of the Community Boards across the city.

City of Yes is the closest analog for me to comment on here, so while we are not opposed to the increased density put forward by City of Yes, it:

- 1) Tends to favor opportunities for developers to increase density, without necessarily any material increase in affordable housing... Or any at all!
- 2) Is not properly concentrated immediately around well-suited mass transit
- 3) And while the concept of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) suggests a backyard outbuilding for Grandma, there are no residential requirements after the original owner, so in reality it will become a vehicle for quick-turnover, non-residing investors and thus become a significant force for blockbusting - not unlike the 1970s!

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-4604442 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

From agencymail [REDACTED]
Date Fri 3/7/2025 9:34 AM
To CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Friday, March 7, 2025, at 09:30:39 AM

This form resides at
<https://www.citycharter.nyc.gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter.page>

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Drew Johnston

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Hello, I am writing to submit testimony about the Charter Revision Commission that is now considering changes to the city charter, particularly as it pertains to land use. I am writing to encourage the Commission to pursue changes that facilitate development citywide, particularly by fast-tracking certain non-controversial applications that now require a full ULURP review and by creating an appeals process where a city-wide body can reconsider applications that are rejected in the council due to member deference. Thank you, Drew Johnston

This email, including any attachments, may contain confidential, privileged, or otherwise legally protected information

From: Reed MacNaughton [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 7, 2025 10:21 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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At its core, democracy thrives when more people engage in the electoral process. Open primaries foster greater participation, reduce partisan gridlock, and give voters more power in determining the future of our city and country. I urge lawmakers and fellow New Yorkers to support this critical reform for a fairer and more representative democracy.

Reed MacNaughton
[REDACTED]

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-7027492 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

From agencymail [REDACTED]

Date Fri 3/7/2025 11:23 AM

To CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

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[REDACTED] on Friday, March 7, 2025, at 11:23:42 AM

This form resides at
<https://www.nyc.gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter.page>

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Brennan Ortiz

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: The Affordable New York Housing Act (421-a Replacement Proposal) I. Program Structure & Eligibility A. Affordability Requirements Developments receiving tax benefits must meet strict affordability guidelines: Minimum Affordable Unit Requirement: - 30% of units must be affordable for households earning at or below 80% of AMI. - At least 15% of units must be designated for 30%-50% of AMI. - Projects receiving deeper incentives must provide at least 10% of units at 30% AMI (extremely low-income). Rent-Stabilization Requirement: - All affordable units must remain rent-stabilized for a minimum of 50 years. - Units receiving deeper subsidies must be permanently affordable via deed restrictions. Eligibility Adjustments for Luxury Areas: - In high-rent areas (e.g., Manhattan below 96th Street, Downtown Brooklyn, Long Island City), developments must meet stricter affordability tiers—with at least 40% of units at or below 80% AMI to qualify. II. Geographic Equity & Incentive Adjustments A. Zoning and Location-Based Incentives Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Bonuses: - Projects within ½ mile of major transit hubs receive enhanced tax benefits if they include 40% affordable units. Outer Borough & Low-Income Area Focus: - In lower-cost areas (e.g., The Bronx, Eastern Brooklyn, Southeast Queens, Upper Manhattan), developers receive greater tax benefits for deeper affordability (e.g., more units at 30%-50% AMI). Luxury Market Disincentives: - Developments in high-rent zones can only receive tax incentives if at least 50% of units are affordable. III. Labor & Wage Protections Prevailing Wage & Union Labor Mandate: - Projects over 50 units must pay prevailing wages to construction workers. - Developers must submit certified payroll reports to ensure compliance. Local Hiring Requirement: - At least 20% of construction jobs on tax-subsidized projects must go to NYC residents from economically disadvantaged communities. IV. Tax Benefits & Funding

Structure A. Performance-Based Tax Abatements Baseline Abatement: - 20-year property tax exemption for developments meeting the 30% affordable housing requirement. Deep Affordability Bonus: - 25-year tax exemption for projects where 40% of units are below 80% AMI, including 10% below 30% AMI. Luxury Market Penalties: - Developments in high-rent areas only get 10-15 years of benefits, unless they significantly exceed affordability targets. B. Affordable Housing Trust Fund Contribution Alternative - Developers may opt to pay into an affordable housing trust fund instead of receiving direct tax breaks. - Funds would go toward publicly financed affordable housing projects and NYCHA capital repairs. V. Compliance & Enforcement Annual Affordability Audits - NYC Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) conducts randomized compliance checks. - Penalties for failure to maintain affordability include forfeiture of tax benefits. Transparency Measures - All tax-abated projects must publish affordability breakdowns and rent-stabilization data in an online public database. Expected Outcomes ✓ More deeply affordable housing: By setting higher affordability thresholds and tying tax benefits to actual affordability outcomes, this policy would create thousands of units for lower-income households. ✓ Equitable distribution: Unlike past versions of 421-a, this framework prevents over-subsidization of luxury developments in high-rent areas and instead focuses resources on outer-borough neighborhoods and transit-rich zones. ✓ Stronger worker protections: With a focus on prevailing wages and local hiring, this policy ensures that workers benefit alongside residents. ✓ Greater accountability: By requiring annual audits and transparency measures, the policy would reduce developer abuse and ensure affordability remains intact.

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Outlook

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-7105585 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

From agency mail [REDACTED]

Date Fri 3/7/2025 11:57 AM

To CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

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[REDACTED] on Friday, March 7, 2025, at 11:57:34 AM

This form resides at
[https://www\[.\]nyc\[.\]gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter\[.\]page](https://www[.]nyc[.]gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter[.]page)

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: August Schultz

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Please see my testimony about the housing shortage in Lower Manhattan.

[REDACTED]

I write to advocate for more housing and the end of single member deference—in particular, much more housing in landmarked neighborhoods like mine. The city's landmark laws have frozen my neighborhood's architecture in time, but they've replaced its young artists and a diversity of characters with a homogenous, ultra-rich class.

I am a 25-year-old who lives with my father, an author, in the West Village. I'm not sure where I will go when I move out, but I know for sure that I'll have to leave the neighborhood my father has called home for 50 years—in no small part because the city has allowed it to effectively ban all new housing for decades. I grew up hearing stories about my dad moving to the village as a penniless artist in the 1970s, to the apartment I still call home, and making a career in the community of young artists that lived here. Now, every time I walk around, I am reminded that I could never afford to live here if not for the happenstance of being his son. This ideal, that selling out to make an embarrassing amount of money each year is the only way to afford to stay in my neighborhood is existentially saddening. In fact, when I tell my colleagues and friends where I live, I'm embarrassed of both the reputation the village has grown into and the amount of money they assume I pay to live here.

There are no young artists left; the only young neighbors I have are beneficiaries of generational wealth, in finance, and often both. I hope the Commission can find a better balance between historic preservation and housing opportunity in neighborhoods like mine, because for every incumbent property owner that opposes new development in their backyard, there are hundreds of young people—the same artists, families, and citizens who made these neighborhoods worth preserving in the first place—that are shut out. Please end neighborhood-wide landmark status and restore my neighborhood to a community for people, not a museum for the ultrarich.

From: Kelly Hagerty [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 9:10 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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New York City's political landscape is often dominated by a small group of party leaders and insiders, leaving many voters feeling disconnected from the process. Allowing all registered voters to participate in primaries would lead to more representative candidates and ultimately strengthen our democracy.

If we truly want a political system that reflects the values of all New Yorkers, we must embrace reforms that expand voter participation. Open primaries ensure that more voices are heard, more perspectives are considered, and elected officials are accountable to the entire electorate, not just a select few.

Kelly Hagerty
[REDACTED]

From: Thomas Farrell [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 9:10 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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At its core, democracy thrives when more people engage in the electoral process. Open primaries foster greater participation, reduce partisan gridlock, and give voters more power in determining the future of our city and country. I urge lawmakers and fellow New Yorkers to support this critical reform for a fairer and more representative democracy.

Thomas Farrell
[REDACTED]

From: Aniello Callari [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 9:11 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Aniello Callari
[REDACTED]

From: daniel ambrosio [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 9:11 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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daniel ambrosio
[REDACTED]

From: Scott Alper [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 9:12 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Open primaries would give working-class and marginalized communities—who may not fit neatly into the two-party structure—a greater voice in choosing candidates who represent their needs. Many voters, especially young people and those disillusioned with establishment politics, do not register with a major party. Yet, they deserve a say in shaping the policies that affect their daily lives.

Scott Alper
[REDACTED]

From: Michael O'Connor [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 9:12 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Michael O'Connor
[REDACTED]

From: Rosemary Jordan [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 9:13 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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In a city as diverse and dynamic as ours, our electoral processes must reflect and embrace that diversity. Implementing open primaries would be a significant step toward ensuring that every New Yorker's voice is heard and valued in our democracy.

Rosemary Jordan
[REDACTED]

From: Rebecca Feldman [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 8:35 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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New York City's political landscape is often dominated by a small group of party leaders and insiders, leaving many voters feeling disconnected from the process. Allowing all registered voters to participate in primaries would lead to more representative candidates and ultimately strengthen our democracy.

If we truly want a political system that reflects the values of all New Yorkers, we must embrace reforms that expand voter participation. Open primaries ensure that more voices are heard, more perspectives are considered, and elected officials are accountable to the entire electorate, not just a select few.

Rebecca Feldman
[REDACTED]

From: Evan Altshuler [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 8:36 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Open primaries would give working-class and marginalized communities—who may not fit neatly into the two-party structure—a greater voice in choosing candidates who represent their needs. Many voters, especially young people and those disillusioned with establishment politics, do not register with a major party. Yet, they deserve a say in shaping the policies that affect their daily lives.

Evan Altshuler
[REDACTED]

From: Linda DiGusta [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 8:36 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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New York City's political landscape is often dominated by a small group of party leaders and insiders, leaving many voters feeling disconnected from the process. Allowing all registered voters to participate in primaries would lead to more representative candidates and ultimately strengthen our democracy.

If we truly want a political system that reflects the values of all New Yorkers, we must embrace reforms that expand voter participation. Open primaries ensure that more voices are heard, more perspectives are considered, and elected officials are accountable to the entire electorate, not just a select few.

Linda DiGusta
[REDACTED]

From: Alex Hackworth [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 8:37 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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We need to ensure that there is a fair and equitable election system in place in which all New Yorkers can participate. The current primary system locks out a million New Yorkers from having a say in who our leaders are. It is time to embrace open primaries that allow the full range of beliefs and perspectives to be part of the system.

Alex Hackworth
[REDACTED]

From: Barry Altshuler [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 8:37 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Barry Altshuler
[REDACTED]

From: Nicole Etienne [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 8:38 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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As a lifelong resident of New York City, I've always believed in the power of democracy and the importance of every citizen's voice. However, our current closed primary system often leaves many voters, especially independents, without a say in critical early election decisions. This exclusion diminishes voter engagement and limits the diversity of perspectives in our political discourse.

Transitioning to open primaries would allow all registered voters, regardless of party affiliation, to participate in selecting candidates. This inclusivity would lead to a more representative and responsive government, as candidates would need to appeal to a broader spectrum of the electorate. Moreover, open primaries could reduce political polarization by encouraging the nomination of candidates who prioritize common ground and pragmatic solutions over partisan extremes.

In a city as diverse and dynamic as ours, our electoral processes must reflect and embrace that diversity. Implementing open primaries would be a significant step toward ensuring that every New Yorker's voice is heard and valued in our democracy.

Nicole Etienne
[REDACTED]

From: Marc Mechanic [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2025 10:24 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Open primaries would make elections more competitive. Too often, races are effectively decided in Democratic primaries, shutting out voices from across the political spectrum. By opening the process, we can ensure that general elections feature candidates who appeal to a broader range of voters, leading to more balanced representation.

At its core, democracy thrives when more people engage in the electoral process. Open primaries foster greater participation, reduce partisan gridlock, and give voters more power in determining the future of our city and country. I urge lawmakers and fellow New Yorkers to support this critical reform for a fairer and more representative democracy.

Marc Mechanic
[REDACTED]

From: Wayne Ngai [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2025 10:25 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I support open primary elections in New York City because they encourage broader participation, promote political competition, and ensure that candidates are accountable to all voters—not just party insiders. The current closed primary system limits participation to registered party members, excluding independents and those who may align with a party's values but choose not to register under its banner. This system is outdated and does a disservice to democracy.

Open primaries would benefit the Democratic Party by ensuring that candidates appeal to a wider range of voters, including moderates and independents, rather than just the most progressive wing of the party. As someone who believes in fiscal responsibility, public safety, and pragmatic governance, I want to see candidates representing a broader coalition—not just those catering to the most vocal activists.

Wayne Ngai
[REDACTED]

From: Sherrise Palomino [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2025 5:51 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Sherrise Palomino
[REDACTED]

From: Eric Giles [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2025 5:51 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Political parties have become special interest groups standing between the government and the electorate. It is time that we allowed all New Yorkers to participate in elections. Open primaries mean New Yorkers can participate in primary elections regardless of whether they have registered with a political party.

New Yorkers should be able to participate directly in choosing their leaders. They should not have to choose to be affiliated with a party if they do not want to. We should make it as easy as possible for all New Yorkers to participate in elections, and open primaries do just that.

Eric Giles
[REDACTED]

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-6429303 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

From agency@mail [REDACTED]
Date Tue 3/11/2025 2:59 AM
To CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at 02:58:31 AM

This form resides at
<https://www.nyc.gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter.page>

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Steven Wolinsky

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: The New York City charter should be modified to make construction of new housing easier.
1. The zoning code should be amended to allow higher density near train stations and major streets. 2.
The zoning code should be amended to remove restrictions on the minimum sizes of apartments, rear
yards, and parking. 3. The ability of the city council to prevent the construction of new housing should
be restricted. 4. Housing should be permitted in all commercial districts.

From: Sandra Florez [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:12 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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At its core, democracy thrives when more people engage in the electoral process. Open primaries foster greater participation, reduce partisan gridlock, and give voters more power in determining the future of our city and country. I urge lawmakers and fellow New Yorkers to support this critical reform for a fairer and more representative democracy.

Sandra Florez
[REDACTED]

From: P Redd [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:12 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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P Redd
[REDACTED]

From: Steven Hernandez [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:13 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Steven Hernandez
[REDACTED]

From: Jeremiah Martin [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:13 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Jeremiah Martin
[REDACTED]

From: Sean Palomino [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:14 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Sean Palomino
[REDACTED]

From: Sade Council [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:14 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Sade Council
[REDACTED]

From: Maryanne Ravenel [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:14 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Maryanne Ravenel
[REDACTED]

From: Thomas Wilkie [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:15 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Open primaries would benefit the Democratic Party by ensuring that candidates appeal to a wider range of voters, including moderates and independents, rather than just the most progressive wing of the party. As someone who believes in fiscal responsibility, public safety, and pragmatic governance, I want to see candidates representing a broader coalition—not just those catering to the most vocal activists.

Thomas Wilkie
[REDACTED]

From: Rocio Perez [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:15 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Rocio Perez
[REDACTED]

From: Lorraine Albanese [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:16 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Lorraine Albanese
[REDACTED]

From: sal albanese [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:16 AM
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Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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sal albanese
[REDACTED]

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To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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sal albanese
[REDACTED]

From: Alyssa Restaino [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:19 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Alyssa Restaino
[REDACTED]

From: Wesley Davis [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:20 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Wesley Davis
[REDACTED]

From: Gina Bonilla [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:20 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Gina Bonilla
[REDACTED]

From: Andres Smith [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:21 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Andres Smith
[REDACTED]

From: Gina Bonilla [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:21 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Gina Bonilla
[REDACTED]

From: Karen Johnson [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 9:22 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Karen Johnson
[REDACTED]

From: Andrew Ferrer [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 12, 2025 11:42 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Andrew Ferrer
[REDACTED]

From: Josh Abramson [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 12, 2025 11:42 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Josh Abramson
[REDACTED]

From: Jason Blum [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 12, 2025 11:42 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Jason Blum
[REDACTED]

From: Andrew Bellas [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 12, 2025 11:43 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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This is a city with an electorate as diverse as the range of views held by its residents. All New Yorkers should be able to participate in choosing our leaders. Open primaries would mean that candidates for office would address the full diversity of opinions and points of view that New Yorkers hold.

We need to ensure that there is a fair and equitable election system in place in which all New Yorkers can participate. The current primary system locks out a million New Yorkers from having a say in who our leaders are. It is time to embrace open primaries that allow the full range of beliefs and perspectives to be part of the system.

Andrew Bellas
[REDACTED]

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-6728320 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

From agencymail [REDACTED]
Date Wed 3/12/2025 10:45 PM
To CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at 10:44:49 PM

This form resides at
<https://www.nyc.gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter.page>

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Victoria Karen Alexander

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: In Support of a New York City Agency for Maritime Affairs To the esteemed members of the Charter Revision Commission, Resilient Red Hook submits this testimony in strong support of the creation of a dedicated New York City Agency for Maritime Affairs. As a community organization committed to strengthening the historic Red Hook waterfront and ensuring a resilient future for all who live and work here, we believe that a specialized agency is essential to effectively manage, protect, and develop the city's vast waterfront resources. Why NYC Needs an Agency for Maritime Affairs For too long, New York City's waterfront has suffered from fragmented oversight, divided among the Economic Development Corporation (EDC), the Department of Small Business Services (SBS), and various other agencies. This lack of cohesive leadership has weakened our working waterfront, delayed critical resiliency projects, and left maritime industries struggling to grow in one of the world's most important port cities. New York City once had a dedicated maritime agency for over a century, but after the closure of the Department of Ports & Trade in 1991, oversight of our ports, piers, and maritime businesses became scattered across multiple agencies with conflicting interests. The result has been neglect, lost economic opportunities, and a decline in the city's maritime fluency. It is time to restore strong leadership to our waterfront. Stronger Support for Maritime Businesses & Boaters New York's waterfront is not just a scenic attraction—it is a vital economic engine for the entire city. However, without a dedicated maritime agency: Piers and port facilities have fallen into disrepair, limiting opportunities for waterborne freight and industry. The ferry network, a key part of the city's transit future, lacks centralized oversight and planning. Visiting vessels—including historic ships, cultural boats, and even major international maritime events—struggle to find berths due to

excessive red tape and lack of coordination. The city's growing offshore wind and green maritime industries lack the support and infrastructure needed to thrive. A dedicated Agency for Maritime Affairs would provide consistent support and strategic oversight for all maritime users—commercial, recreational, and industrial alike—ensuring that the sector remains a cornerstone of New York City's economy. Improved Resiliency & Coastal Protection Red Hook has been on the frontlines of climate change since Superstorm Sandy, and the need for a comprehensive, citywide resiliency strategy has never been greater. However, under the current system: EDC spent years delaying flood protection planning, leaving communities like Red Hook vulnerable. EDC has delayed the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal shore power for 15 years without accountability. Critical maritime assets, such as emergency barge ports that could aid in future disasters, have been removed instead of maintained. The city has lacked the maritime expertise necessary to incorporate resilient infrastructure into redevelopment projects. A dedicated maritime agency could ensure that coastal protections are prioritized, funded, and efficiently implemented—not just in Red Hook, but across all five boroughs. Better Management of Public Piers & Infrastructure Under EDC's management, piers have literally collapsed into the harbor before decisions were made about their future. Now, the Brooklyn Marine Terminal (BMT)—one of the last remaining working waterfronts in Brooklyn—is at risk of losing industrial space to residential development, despite its crucial role in reducing truck congestion and pollution. The Port of NY & NJ recently became the busiest in the United States, yet the EDC's current plan would shrink the Brooklyn Marine Terminal's working waterfront footprint by half, prioritizing housing instead of maritime growth. This decision ignores the vital role of BMT in our supply chain, especially in light of disasters like the recent bridge collapse in Baltimore, which highlighted the need for redundancy in our port infrastructure. Local maritime businesses are already being forced to relocate due to a lack of space and long-term investment in maritime facilities. New York City must protect, maintain, and modernize its waterfront infrastructure—not allow it to be displaced by private development. Learning from History: A Better Path Forward The framework for such an agency already exists within the Maritime Contract that originally transferred port functions from the Department of Ports & Terminals to SBS and later to EDC. However, this fragmented approach has not worked. It is time to restore a maritime-focused agency that can oversee: Port and terminal infrastructure—ensuring long-term investment and planning. Ferry services and waterborne transit—expanding NYC's blue highways. Dredging and waterway maintenance—keeping our waterways navigable. Economic development—supporting maritime businesses and workforce growth. Environmental sustainability—integrating clean energy solutions and resilient design. Disaster preparedness and security—ensuring that our waterfront can aid in emergency response. New York Must Follow New Jersey's Lead New Jersey has a successful Office of Maritime Resources that manages port infrastructure, dredging, economic development, and resiliency. New York City has no equivalent entity, leaving our maritime industries without clear leadership or advocacy. The lack of an official maritime agency has directly harmed NYC's ability to compete, plan, and respond to changing economic and climate conditions. A Maritime Future for a Resilient NYC New York City's waterfront must be more than a real estate opportunity. It is a lifeline for our economy, our climate resilience, and our emergency preparedness. A dedicated City Agency for Maritime Affairs would: ✓ Ensure accountability and transparency—replacing the opaque system of EDC control with direct City Council oversight. ✓ Streamline permitting and regulations—reducing red tape for commercial boats, working waterfront industries, and visiting ships. ✓ Strengthen emergency preparedness—by incorporating maritime expertise into the city's disaster response planning. ✓ Support economic development—protecting and expanding maritime industries, which provide stable, well-paying jobs. ✓ Integrate maritime infrastructure into resilience planning—ensuring that waterfront redevelopment includes working piers, ferry landings, and flood protection. Conclusion New York City is defined by its waterfront. Yet, for decades, it has lacked the leadership necessary to protect and enhance this invaluable resource. It is time for the city to restore maritime expertise to its government and establish an Agency for Maritime Affairs—one that will work for the people,

businesses, and communities that depend on our waterfront. We urge the City Council Charter Revision Commission to take bold action and establish a dedicated NYC Agency for Maritime Affairs. This is a critical step toward securing a resilient, economically vibrant, and environmentally sustainable future for our city. Thank you for your time and consideration. Submitted by: Victoria Alexander
Interim Chair Resilient Red Hook

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-7471058 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

From agencymail [REDACTED]

Date Sat 3/15/2025 5:22 PM

To CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
(t.duvivier@pratt.edu) on Saturday, March 15, 2025, at 05:22:30 PM

This form resides at
<https://www.nyc.gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter.page>

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Tara Duvivier

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: Please see written testimony from Pratt Center for Community Development attached.

New York City Charter Revision Commission

Written Testimony,
March 14, 2025

Commission Chair Richard R.
Buery, Jr.

Note: This reflects the position of Pratt
Center for Community Development
and not necessarily Pratt Institute

Thank you, Chair Buery and all the Commissioners for the opportunity to submit testimony to this Charter Revision Commission. Pratt Center for Community Development works for a more just, equitable and sustainable New York City through participatory planning, applied research, and policy advocacy in collaboration with community-based organizations. Our land use and housing justice work ranges from facilitating community plans for neighborhoods across the city to policy reports on strategies to ensure that value created by city rezonings is captured for public good. We call on this Commission to prioritize democracy, participatory planning, and racial and economic justice as it considers revisions to our city's charter to improve government transparency and responsiveness and to address our city's housing crisis.

Specifically, we urge this Commission to consider revisions to the City Charter that **mandate the City develop and maintain a comprehensive plan** that centers racial, economic, health, and climate equity and ensures intentional, robust, and representative community engagement. Pratt Center is a member of the Thriving Communities Coalition (TCC), a citywide movement of more than 15 grassroots organizing, advocacy, policy, and technical assistance groups advocating for a more equitable, participatory, and comprehensive approach to city planning. We echo the testimony of our TCC partners, including the Association for Neighborhood Housing and Development (ANHD), in the recommendations to mandate an enforceable, equity-based comprehensive plan and **enforce the city's Fair Housing Plan**.

New York City has never adopted a comprehensive plan to guide land use and resource allocation decisions for present and future needs. The City instead takes an ad hoc approach to planning through neighborhood and developer-initiated rezonings subject to Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), which limits consideration of broader community contexts and needs. Communities and elected officials must respond to these proposals without any coherent guiding framework, with inadequate resources, and under a highly contentious process. Our communities, including Community Boards and grassroots groups, are under-resourced in evaluating these proposals; they rely on each other and, in some cases, outside consultants to assist in understanding and evaluating these applications. The role of the public in land use processes, while advisory, do have an impact—particularly with their City Council representatives, who are elected by and serve these communities. Community input has helped deepen projects' affordability levels and secure funding for schools, parks, public housing, and tenant protections. Communities should not have to rely on piecemeal negotiations to secure public resources, but absent comprehensive and equitable planning, ULURP is the best tool for communities to inform and advocate for their future.

Several of the proposals before this Commission focus on streamlining ULURP to reduce the role of Community Boards or the City Council, or to fast-track projects on City-owned land or with income-restricted housing. Given the lack of resources and other community issues that volunteer Community Board members must attend to, communities are already working on a tight timeline in the public review process. For example, with City of Yes for Economic Opportunity and Housing

Opportunity rezoning proposals, less than half of the Community Boards submitted recommendations before the City Planning Commission hearings for these proposals. Further, public review plays an important role in improving income-restricted “affordable” projects, which do not always match the affordability or unit size needs of the city’s diverse communities and neighborhoods. Proposals that point to public disclosure processes as the reason for delays to zoning changes do not address the underlying problem: ULURP and environmental review were designed to add transparency to discretionary decisions, not drive neighborhood or city planning. Weakening public disclosure requirements or reducing checks and balances on executive power would be an anti-democratic, inadequate response to the City’s failure to plan.

A Comprehensive Plan for New York City that centers racial, economic, health, and climate equity and ensures intentional, robust, and representative community engagement would work to build trust and achieve fairer, more informed, and more democratic outcomes citywide and in our neighborhoods. Ensuring land use proposals comply with our Fair Housing Plan will also reinforce community priorities around affordable, equitable housing. These changes to the charter would also address concerns around the length of land use approval processes, as proposed projects would meet equity goals outlined in the plan and would align with community needs from the start.

Finally, to meaningfully tackle our housing crisis, comprehensive community-based planning must be paired with deep investments in the preservation and creation of low-income housing, public and collective stewardship of land for permanent affordability, and strong tenant protections. Zoning policy and accompanying review processes are parts of a much larger housing policy toolbox, and cannot on their own meaningfully improve housing affordability for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers.

This Commission has an opportunity to implement solutions that can create more just and fair processes for a more just and equitable City. We invite the Commission to work with the Thriving Communities Coalition, which has spent years developing policy proposals for comprehensive planning, to explore a Charter revision proposal to create a community-informed, equitable, comprehensive plan.

For more information, contact

Tara Duvivier
Senior Planner
Pratt Center for Community Development

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

From Felix Stetsenko <[REDACTED]>

Date Sun 3/16/2025 7:49 PM

To CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. Forward suspect email to phish@oti.nyc.gov as an attachment (Click the More button, then forward as attachment). Political parties have become special interest groups standing between the government and the electorate. It is time that we allowed all New Yorkers to participate in elections. Open primaries mean New Yorkers can participate in primary elections regardless of whether they have registered with a political party. New Yorkers should be able to participate directly in choosing their leaders. They should not have to choose to be affiliated with a party if they do not want to. We should make it as easy as possible for all New Yorkers to participate in elections, and open primaries do just that. Felix Stetsenko
[REDACTED]

From: Michael Allegratti [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 16, 2025 7:50 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Michael Allegratti
[REDACTED]

From: Richard Ronner [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 16, 2025 7:50 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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We need to ensure that there is a fair and equitable election system in place in which all New Yorkers can participate. The current primary system locks out a million New Yorkers from having a say in who our leaders are. It is time to embrace open primaries that allow the full range of beliefs and perspectives to be part of the system.

Richard Ronner
[REDACTED]

From: David Ball [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 16, 2025 7:51 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Open primaries would make elections more competitive. Too often, races are effectively decided in Democratic primaries, shutting out voices from across the political spectrum. By opening the process, we can ensure that general elections feature candidates who appeal to a broader range of voters, leading to more balanced representation.

At its core, democracy thrives when more people engage in the electoral process. Open primaries foster greater participation, reduce partisan gridlock, and give voters more power in determining the future of our city and country. I urge lawmakers and fellow New Yorkers to support this critical reform for a fairer and more representative democracy.

David Ball
[REDACTED]

From: Bernice Brief [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 16, 2025 7:51 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Bernice Brief
[REDACTED]

From: michael seri [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 16, 2025 7:52 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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As a lifelong resident of New York City, I've always believed in the power of democracy and the importance of every citizen's voice. However, our current closed primary system often leaves many voters, especially independents, without a say in critical early election decisions. This exclusion diminishes voter engagement and limits the diversity of perspectives in our political discourse.

Transitioning to open primaries would allow all registered voters, regardless of party affiliation, to participate in selecting candidates. This inclusivity would lead to a more representative and responsive government, as candidates would need to appeal to a broader spectrum of the electorate. Moreover, open primaries could reduce political polarization by encouraging the nomination of candidates who prioritize common ground and pragmatic solutions over partisan extremes.

In a city as diverse and dynamic as ours, our electoral processes must reflect and embrace that diversity. Implementing open primaries would be a significant step toward ensuring that every New Yorker's voice is heard and valued in our democracy.

michael seri
[REDACTED]

From: michael seri [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 16, 2025 7:52 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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If we truly want a political system that reflects the values of all New Yorkers, we must embrace reforms that expand voter participation. Open primaries ensure that more voices are heard, more perspectives are considered, and elected officials are accountable to the entire electorate, not just a select few.

michael seri
[REDACTED]

From: Jermaine Honess [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 16, 2025 7:53 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Jermaine Honess
[REDACTED]

From: Sean Palomino [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 16, 2025 7:53 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Sean Palomino
[REDACTED]

From: Sean Palomino [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 16, 2025 7:54 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Sean Palomino
[REDACTED]

From: Brandon Robles [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 8:48 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Brandon Robles
[REDACTED]

From: Nancy Lovell [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 8:48 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Nancy Lovell
[REDACTED]

From: Alana Gaymon <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 8:49 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Alana Gaymon
[REDACTED]

From: michael seri [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 8:50 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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michael seri
[REDACTED]

From: Sarah Brauer [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 8:50 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Sarah Brauer
[REDACTED]

From: Grisel Olivo [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 8:51 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I believe open primaries are essential to creating a more inclusive and democratic electoral system. The current closed primary system shuts out over a million voters. This exclusion weakens democracy.

Open primaries would give working-class and marginalized communities—who may not fit neatly into the two-party structure—a greater voice in choosing candidates who represent their needs. Many voters, especially young people and those disillusioned with establishment politics, do not register with a major party. Yet, they deserve a say in shaping the policies that affect their daily lives.

Grisel Olivo
[REDACTED]

Written copy of HPD testimony at March 4th hearing

From Ouyang, Eric (TEMP) <[REDACTED]>
Date Tue 3/18/2025 1:59 PM
To CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Cc Schierenbeck, Alec <[REDACTED]> Labadie, Madeline <[REDACTED]>

 1 attachment (380 KB)

HPD CRC Testimony March 4 2025.pdf;

Please find attached a copy of the remarks we delivered and corresponding slides for inclusion in the published written testimonies. Thanks!



**Testimony of the
New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development
to the Charter Review Commission
March 4, 2025**

Good evening, Chair Buery, Vice Chair Greenberger, Secretary Bozorg, and members of the Charter Revision Commission. I am Adolfo Carrión, Jr., Commissioner of the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). I am joined by my colleague Lucy Joffe, Deputy Commissioner for Policy & Strategy. Thank you for the opportunity to be here to discuss HPD's fair housing work and its important relationship to the Charter Revision Commission's work. We believe that a fair housing lens is critical to this discussion because housing discrimination is not just a historical matter: these issues remain present and prevalent in New York City.

Through its work in housing development, preservation, subsidization, and neighborhood health, HPD is working to ensure all neighborhoods are accessible, available, and appealing, giving New Yorkers the power of choice to stay in their current homes or to move, depending on their needs and preferences. But the City has a long way to go; discrimination, the lack of available housing, and the dearth of low-cost and affordable rental housing, all deny New Yorkers the *choice* in where they live.

HPD was a primary architect of the City's Where We Live NYC plan. Where We Live is an unprecedented and comprehensive set of commitments to undo New York City's legacy of discriminatory housing practices and replace it with justice and equity for those who make New York City home. The plan was completed at a moment when the federal government was backing away from its commitment to the federal Fair Housing Act. Five years on from its release, Where We Live is recognized as a landmark: it continued to hold strength through both the pandemic and an administration change, and it was an inspiration for the historic city-wide zoning reform, City of Yes. Just to create Where We Live, HPD and its partners spent countless hours examining data, holding community conversations with more than 700 New Yorkers, and considering exclusionary housing practices from every angle. We heard from New Yorkers that their experiences around segregation and integration are complicated but, above all else, we took from those interactions the message that New Yorkers need *choice* in where they live.

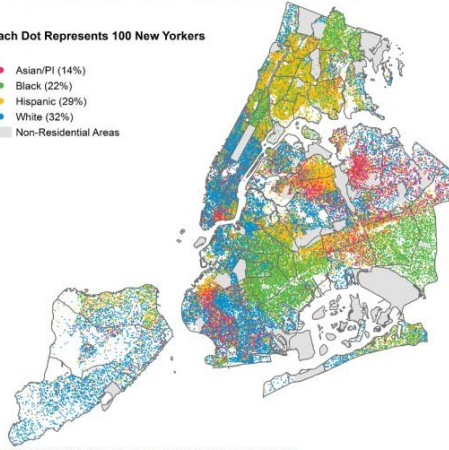
As part of Where We Live, we looked at multiple approaches to understanding the city's residential patterns and how those patterns have changed since 1990. Taken together, the data showed that the city is increasingly diverse yet still segregated by race and ethnicity by most measures.

Despite increasing citywide diversity, NYC remains segregated by race and ethnicity

Figure 5.14 NYC Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2012-2016

Each Dot Represents 100 New Yorkers

- Asian/PI (14%)
- Black (22%)
- Hispanic (29%)
- White (32%)
- Non-Residential Areas

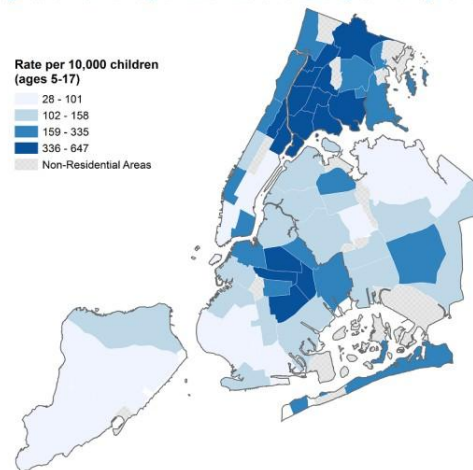


Source: ACS 2012-2016, five-year estimates, Table B0300 tract level data.

We also identified that life outcomes based on race, disability status, and other characteristics protected by fair housing laws correlate strongly with the city's patterns of segregation. Asthma rates in the predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods of Mott Haven and Melrose, for example, were outsized compared to those from lower-density, more affluent and Whiter parts of Queens and even parts of Manhattan. Similarly, in neighborhoods with the highest ratios of pawnshops and check cashers to banks and credit unions—all areas with predominant populations of people of color—most neighborhood residents had subprime or unscorable credit. Taken as a whole, the data in *Where We Live* reveals that the neighborhoods we call home affect our access to essential resources, including affordable transportation, quality education, safe streets, and various goods and services that enhance well-being.

Neighborhood asthma hospitalization rates differ dramatically

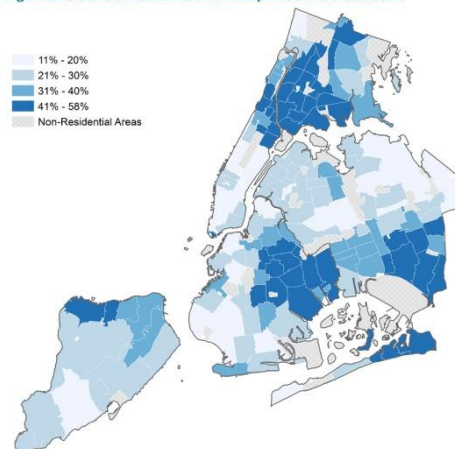
Figure 5.67 Asthma Hospitalization Rate for Children by Community District



Source: NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Bureau of Vital Statistics, 2013–2015. From the "Community Health Profiles" public use dataset, available here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/data/data-publications/profiles.page>

A majority of the population in some neighborhoods has subprime credit or is unscorable

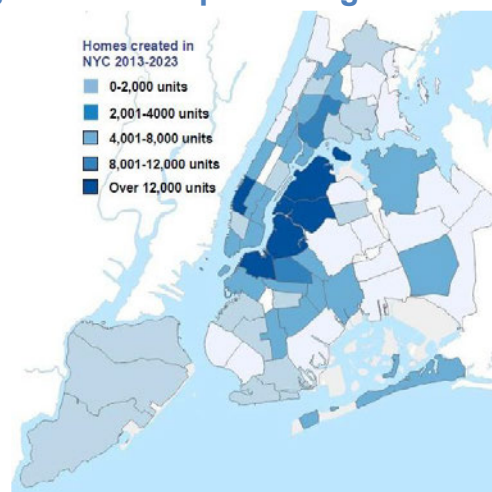
Figure 5.73 Share of Residents with a Subprime or No Credit Score



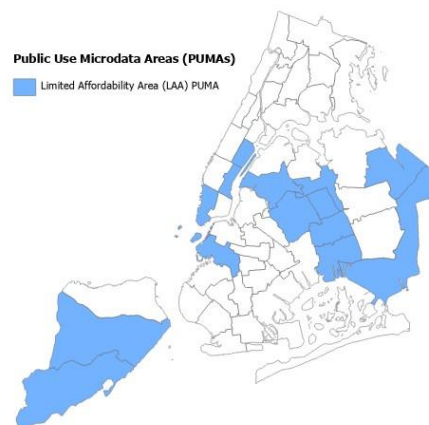
Source: New York City Comptroller, "Making Rent Count: How NYC Tenants Can Lift Credit Scores and Save Money," (Oct. 2017), <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Rent-and-Credit-Report.pdf>

Undoing the city’s legacy of segregation requires various interventions and investments. We must address the uneven distribution of housing production, especially the production of low-cost housing, so that New Yorkers can choose to live in the neighborhoods that are best for them. Currently, however, new housing production is highly concentrated. In recent years, some neighborhoods have added virtually zero housing, and some are even losing homes: Specifically, in 2023, 10 community districts produced as much housing as the other 49 combined, a factor that contributes to the existence of Limited Affordability Areas. Limited Affordability Areas, or “LAAs”, are neighborhoods that fall below the 30th percentile citywide in terms of the number of homes that would be affordable to the median income New Yorker. Because of the lack of low-cost housing, low-income New Yorkers cannot choose to move to LAAs and are, effectively, excluded from these communities.

New housing production is concentrated in a few neighborhoods, with others producing almost no new housing



LAAs are neighborhoods that lack affordable rental housing, effectively excluding low-income New Yorkers



HPD is working to make sure that there is more housing, especially low-cost and affordable housing, in every neighborhood. Since the release of *Where We Live* in October 2020, HPD has incorporated its principles its work and made good on its commitments. HPD and its partner agencies have met 50% of the planned commitments, with over 90% in progress toward completion.

But HPD cannot truly unlock the power of housing development toward a more equitable and just New York alone. Key to our progress, and to greater housing equity, are the zoning practices and policies that make it possible to develop affordable housing in all neighborhoods. In addition to the commitments the City has made as part of *Where We Live* (and consistent with the spirit of those commitments), Local Law 167 of 2023 requires the City to set community district housing production targets and to conduct an assessment of unique community housing needs. To meet those targets, the City will need more tools to dismantle the obstacles to fair housing that have existed for generations.

HPD has continued to sound an alarm: Barriers to housing and neighborhood choice are not just part of our city's history, they are a deeply unfortunate part of its present. And there is a version of the future in which we allow policies of discrimination and exclusion to persist. The watchword, from HPD's perspective, is choice: The choice that all New Yorkers *should* have to live in the types of buildings, neighborhoods, and communities that suit the needs of their families, health, and identities. HPD views choice as our commitment to New Yorkers, and we believe it is our obligation to raise awareness of this commitment at every chance. We hope that the Commission shares this commitment, and that the changes to the Charter reflect it. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and to you all for your service to the City of New York as part of this Commission.

From: Steven Snachkus [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 3:06 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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This is a city with an electorate as diverse as the range of views held by its residents. All New Yorkers should be able to participate in choosing our leaders. Open primaries would mean that candidates for office would address the full diversity of opinions and points of view that New Yorkers hold.

We need to ensure that there is a fair and equitable election system in place in which all New Yorkers can participate. The current primary system locks out a million New Yorkers from having a say in who our leaders are. It is time to embrace open primaries that allow the full range of beliefs and perspectives to be part of the system.

Steven Snachkus
[REDACTED]

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-8923801 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

From agencymail [REDACTED]
Date Fri 3/21/2025 2:22 PM
To CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Friday, March 21, 2025, at 02:21:36 PM

This form resides at
<https://www.nyc.gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter.page>

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Thriving Communities Coalition

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: We are submitting these comments on behalf of the Thriving Communities Coalition



Testimony for the New York City Charter Revision Commission from the Thriving Communities Coalition

Thank you Chair and Commissioners for the opportunity to submit testimony before this Charter Revision Commission. We are submitting this testimony on behalf of the Thriving Communities Coalition (TCC) - a citywide movement of grassroots organizing, advocacy, policy, and technical assistance groups working across issue areas and neighborhoods. TCC's members are united in the belief that our current ad-hoc approach to planning and land use in New York City does not effectively deliver for most New Yorkers, and that we need meaningful reform to ensure a more equitable distribution of development and investment to truly overcome inequality, exclusion, and displacement.

TCC has long called for a comprehensive planning approach for NYC. We believe such an approach can better align and coordinate existing plans, while centering racial, economic, health, and climate equity alongside intentional and representative community engagement, to help build trust and achieve fairer, more informed, and more democratic decisions and outcomes citywide and in our neighborhoods.

To help advance a more equitable and comprehensive approach to planning we call on this commission to:

1. Amend the charter to mandate that NYC create a comprehensive plan on a recurring timeline, with the following essential components:

- Establishment of **equity goals**, including
 - Ensuring an equitable distribution of development and investment
 - Increasing access to affordable housing
 - Promoting social, economic & racial integration
 - Advancing environmental justice, open and green space
 - Through the coordination of existing plans' goals and mandates (such as the Fair Housing Plan, Long-term sustainability plan)
- Establishment of **citywide and Community District level targets** across a host of issues, including for
 - Housing
 - School seats & community facilities
 - Open space
 - Infrastructure & Resiliency



- Through the coordination of existing plans' quantifiable targets (such as the Fair Housing Plan)
- Committing all 59 Community Districts to create ***Community District level plans*** to achieve these targets, with the necessary resources to conduct this process with robust, deliberative and inclusive community engagement, including budgetary and technical assistance needs to achieve this
- Requiring land use, annual expense budget, capital budget and policy decisions to detail how they ***are in accordance with the comprehensive plan*** so as to achieve its goals and targets

This is also an opportunity to advance one key component and outcome of comprehensive planning by better aligning land use and budget decisions to achieve the targets set by the Fair Housing Plan (Charter, Section 16-a). The Fair Housing Plan already requires the setting of 5-year housing production targets for each Community District - a goal we would seek to require for a host of additional issues through our Comprehensive Planning proposal above.

To begin to advance one crucial component of the outcomes we seek with comprehensive planning, we call on this commission to:

2. Make the Fair Housing Plan more enforceable by amending the charter to

- **Encourage and advantage certain ULURP proposals found to be in compliance with reaching Fair Housing Plan targets, by moving them through an expedited process**
 - This would be done in a tiered fashion where:
 - 100% affordable developments with deeply affordable units could be expedited in all geographies
 - Mixed-income affordable developments could be expedited only in those geographies deemed both “low-affordability” and not a “high displacement risk area” by the Fair Housing Plan and that did not reach their housing production targets in the most recently completed five year time period
 - Such projects would not receive an automatic Council hearing and vote unless a majority of the Council voted to do so
- **Require that the capital budget details how it is advancing and addressing the goals, targets, and obstacles established and identified by the Fair Housing Plan**



We call on this commission to take bold, systemic steps that begin to move NYC away from a land use and zoning regime that not only has held back equitable housing production but has deepened inequity across a variety of issues that impact every New Yorker.

We have included as **Appendix A** the specific changes to the charter that we are seeking to achieve these proposals. We believe our proposals strike the right balance between meeting citywide needs and empowering local communities to have more meaningful involvement in the planning process. To build a more just and fair city, we call on this Commission to amend the charter to advance comprehensive planning and fair housing so as to better align and consolidate our planning processes, center them in equitable goals to achieve equitable targets, and empower everyday New Yorkers to plan and build neighborhoods where they and future generations can thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We welcome the chance to work with this commission and its staff to realize these recommendations. Please contact Chris Walters, Senior Land Use Policy Associate at ANHD at christopher.w@anhd.org for any questions or follow-up.



Appendix A Proposed Charter Amendments

1. Comprehensive Planning

Add a comprehensive planning mandate by creating a new Chapter 8-A as follows

Chapter 8-A: Comprehensive Plan

Section 207. Comprehensive Plan

a. *Definitions.* As used in this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

Community engagement: The term “community engagement” means outreach to and input from a broad, representative group of people from each community district, and the city as a whole, to provide them the opportunity to influence policy decisions, by following best practices for outreach and robust, deliberative participation, through varied methods including but not limited to surveys, education and outreach materials, online platforms, interactive mapping tools, and community meetings facilitated to stimulate dialogue and deliberation involving varied views and interests.

Policy decisions: The term “policy decisions” means choices made by city agencies, commissions, bodies and elected officials as to how best to achieve the equity goals established pursuant to paragraph one of subdivision a of this section.

b. Commencing not later than February 1, 2027 and not less than every ten years thereafter, such agency or inter-agency working group as the mayor shall designate, shall conduct a comprehensive planning process for New York City. Such process shall be conducted in consultation with the appropriate city and state agencies and bodies, and with community engagement, and shall include:

(1) the establishment of equity goals, including but not limited to goals to reducing and eliminating disparities across race, geography, and socioeconomic status in access to opportunity and the distribution of resources and development, increasing access to affordable housing, promoting social, economic, and racial integration, and advancing environmental justice and access to healthy environments, with such goals incorporating those goals developed by existing plans including but not limited to the fair housing plan pursuant to section sixteen-a, and the long-term sustainability plan pursuant to subdivision e of section 20.

(2) the establishment of quantitative citywide and community district level targets including but not limited to targets for housing, school seats, community facilities, open space, and infrastructure and resiliency, with such targets incorporating those targets



required by existing plans including but not limited to the fair housing plan pursuant to section sixteen-a.

(3) the creation of community district level plans detailing how best to achieve these targets, including but not limited to through the use of, zoning, capital budgeting, expense budgeting, and policy decisions, designed in coordination with community boards and with the necessary resources provided for community boards to fulfill this role, including community engagement.

c. No later than February 1, 2029, and no later than every tenth February 1 thereafter, the council shall adopt a single resolution establishing paragraphs one, two, and three of subdivision b of section two hundred seven as together encompassing the comprehensive plan for New York City.

d. Once adopted the comprehensive plan shall be considered the “well considered plan” for New York City pursuant to section 20(25) of the state’s General City Law and must be considered by all city agencies, commissions, bodies and elected officials, in future decisions including but not limited to zoning, capital budgeting, expense budgeting, and policy decisions, and such decisions must detail how they are in accordance with the plan.

2. Fair Housing Plan

1. Amend Section 16-a. Fair housing plan and housing reports, by adding a new subdivision as follows

g. *Achieving housing production targets.* Pursuant to section one hundred ninety-seven-c and section one hundred ninety-seven-d, special consideration shall be given to applications going through the uniform land use review procedure where:

1. The application proposes new affordable housing where one hundred percent of the proposed dwelling units are affordable housing dwelling units, and where the weighted average of all income bands for such units does not exceed fifty-five percent of the area median income adjusted for the size of the household.
2. The application proposes new affordable housing within a community district that has been deemed a low affordability area and is not concurrently within a community district that has been deemed a high displacement-risk area, provided that the housing production targets for the community district established pursuant to subdivision d of this section were not met during the most recently completed five-year period

2. Amend Section 197-c. Uniform land use review procedure. as follows



b. The following documents shall be filed with the department of city planning: (1) applications under this section, (2) any amendments thereto that are made prior to approval of such applications pursuant to this chapter, (3) any written information submitted by an applicant for purposes of determining whether an environmental impact statement will be required by law, [and] (4) documents or records intended to define or substantially redefine the overall scope of issues to be addressed in any draft environmental impact statement required by law, and (5) a statement of alignment determining if the application matches the criterion established pursuant to subdivision g of section sixteen-a. The department of city planning shall forward a copy of any materials it receives pursuant to this subdivision (whether or not such materials have been certified as complete) within five days to each affected borough president, community board or borough board.

c. The department of city planning shall be responsible for certifying that applications pursuant to subdivision a of this section are complete and ready to proceed through the uniform land use review procedure provided for in this section. The department shall promulgate rules to determine whether such applications align with the criterion established pursuant to subdivision g of section sixteen-a. Upon certification of an application, the department shall give notice of such certification to the council. If an application under this section has not been certified within six months after filing, both the applicant and, if the land use proposed in an application is consistent with the land use policy or strategic policy statement of the affected borough president, the affected borough president shall have the right at any time thereafter to appeal to the city planning commission for certification. The commission shall promptly, but in any event within sixty days of the filing of such an appeal, either certify the application or state in writing what further information is necessary to complete the application. If such an appeal is brought by an affected borough president, the affirmative vote of five members of the commission shall be sufficient to certify the application.

3. Amend Section 197-d. Council Review. as follows

b. The following decisions filed with the council pursuant to subdivision a of this section, shall be subject to review and action by the council:

(1) any decision of the city planning commission to approve or approve with modifications a matter described in paragraph three of subdivision a of section one hundred ninety seven-c, except where it has been deemed to match the criterion in subdivision g of section sixteen-a pursuant to subdivision b of section one hundred ninety seven-c, a matter described in paragraph [or] eight of subdivision a of section one hundred ninety-seven-c, a disposition of residential real property (as defined in this paragraph) pursuant to paragraph ten of subdivision a of section one hundred ninety-seven-c (except for dispositions to companies that have been organized exclusively to develop housing projects for persons of low income), a plan pursuant to section one hundred ninety-seven-a, or a change in the text of the zoning



resolution pursuant to sections two hundred or two hundred one. For purposes of this section, residential real property shall mean real property improved by structures, whether or not occupied, built for or converted to a use which is primarily residential, but shall not include property subsequently converted to non-residential use;

(3) any other decision of the city planning commission to approve or approve with modifications a matter described in subdivision a of section one hundred ninety-seven-c, including a matter described in paragraph three of subdivision a of section one hundred ninety-seven-c, that has been deemed to match the criterion in subdivision g of section sixteen-a pursuant to subdivision b of section one hundred ninety-seven-c if within twenty days of the filing of such decision pursuant to subdivision a of this section, the council resolves by the majority vote of all the council members to review the decision of the commission.

4. Amend section 215 Ten-year capital strategy. as follows

c. Any project included in the ten-year capital strategy which addresses the goals and strategies of the fair housing plan pursuant to subdivision b of section sixteen-a or which advances the housing production targets identified at both the citywide and community district level pursuant to subdivision d of section sixteen-a or which addresses the obstacles identified in the most recent strategic equity framework pursuant to subdivision e of section sixteen-a, shall be so identified in the ten-year capital strategy.

[c] d. In the preparation of the preliminary ten-year capital strategy, the department of city planning and office of management and budget shall consider (i) the strategic policy statements of the mayor and the borough presidents pursuant to section seventeen, (ii) relevant citywide, borough and community plans adopted pursuant to section one hundred ninety seven-a, and (iii) the reports pursuant to section two hundred fifty-seven comparing the most recent ten-year capital strategy with the capital budgets and programs adopted for the current and previous fiscal years.

From: Sherrise Palomino [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 5:46 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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As a lifelong resident of New York City, I've always believed in the power of democracy and the importance of every citizen's voice. However, our current closed primary system often leaves many voters, especially independents, without a say in critical early election decisions. This exclusion diminishes voter engagement and limits the diversity of perspectives in our political discourse.

Transitioning to open primaries would allow all registered voters, regardless of party affiliation, to participate in selecting candidates. This inclusivity would lead to a more representative and responsive government, as candidates would need to appeal to a broader spectrum of the electorate. Moreover, open primaries could reduce political polarization by encouraging the nomination of candidates who prioritize common ground and pragmatic solutions over partisan extremes.

In a city as diverse and dynamic as ours, our electoral processes must reflect and embrace that diversity. Implementing open primaries would be a significant step toward ensuring that every New Yorker's voice is heard and valued in our democracy.

Sherrise Palomino
[REDACTED]

From: Ashley Fontanilla [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 5:46 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. Forward suspect email to [REDACTED] as an attachment (Click the More button, then forward as attachment).

New York City's political landscape is often dominated by a small group of party leaders and insiders, leaving many voters feeling disconnected from the process. Allowing all registered voters to participate in primaries would lead to more representative candidates and ultimately strengthen our democracy.

If we truly want a political system that reflects the values of all New Yorkers, we must embrace reforms that expand voter participation. Open primaries ensure that more voices are heard, more perspectives are considered, and elected officials are accountable to the entire electorate, not just a select few.

Ashley Fontanilla
[REDACTED]

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-4272801 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

From agencymail [REDACTED]

Date Wed 3/19/2025 2:53 PM

To CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Wednesday, March 19, 2025, at 02:52:28 PM

This form resides at
<https://www.nyc.gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter.page>

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Chris Walters - ANHD

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: I am submitting on behalf of the Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development (ANHD) - thank you Chris Walters



Testimony for the New York City Charter Revision Commission from the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD)

Thank you Chair and Commissioners for the opportunity to submit testimony before this Charter Revision Commission. We are submitting this testimony on behalf of The Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development (ANHD). ANHD is a membership organization of NYC neighborhood-based housing and economic development groups, including CDCs, affordable housing developers, supportive housing providers, community organizers, and economic development advocates and service providers. Our mission is to build community power to win affordable housing and thriving, equitable neighborhoods for all New Yorkers. We believe housing justice is economic justice is racial justice.

ANHD also convenes the Thriving Communities Coalition (TCC) - a citywide movement of grassroots organizing, advocacy, policy, and technical assistance groups working across issue areas and neighborhoods. ANHD and TCC are united in the belief that our current ad-hoc approach to planning and land use in New York City does not effectively deliver for most New Yorkers, and that we need meaningful reform to ensure a more equitable distribution of development and investment to truly overcome inequality, exclusion, and displacement.

ANHD and TCC have long called for a comprehensive planning approach for NYC. We believe such an approach can better align and coordinate existing plans, while centering racial, economic, health, and climate equity alongside intentional and representative community engagement, to help build trust and achieve fairer, more informed, and more democratic decisions and outcomes citywide and in our neighborhoods.

To help advance a more equitable and comprehensive approach to planning we call on this commission to:

- 1. Amend the charter to mandate that NYC create a comprehensive plan on a recurring timeline, with the following essential components:**
 - Establishment of *equity goals*, including
 - Ensuring an equitable distribution of development and investment
 - Increasing access to affordable housing
 - Promoting social, economic & racial integration
 - Advancing environmental justice, open and green space

- Through the coordination of existing plans’ goals and mandates (such as the Fair Housing Plan, Long-term sustainability plan)
- Establishment of **citywide and Community District level targets** across a host of issues, including for
 - Housing
 - School seats & community facilities
 - Open space
 - Infrastructure & Resiliency
 - Through the coordination of existing plans’ quantifiable targets (such as the Fair Housing Plan)
- Committing all 59 Community Districts to create **Community District level plans** to achieve these targets, with the necessary resources to conduct this process with robust, deliberative and inclusive community engagement, including budgetary and technical assistance needs to achieve this
- Requiring land use, annual expense budget, capital budget and policy decisions to detail how they **are in accordance with the comprehensive plan** so as to achieve its goals and targets

This is also an opportunity to advance one key component and outcome of comprehensive planning by better aligning land use and budget decisions to achieve the targets set by the Fair Housing Plan (Charter, Section 16-a). The Fair Housing Plan already requires the setting of 5-year housing production targets for each Community District - a goal we would seek to require for a host of additional issues through our Comprehensive Planning proposal above.

To begin to advance one crucial component of the outcomes we seek with comprehensive planning, we call on this commission to:

2. Make the Fair Housing Plan more enforceable by amending the charter to

- **Encourage and advantage certain ULURP proposals found to be in compliance with reaching Fair Housing Plan targets, by moving them through an expedited process**
 - This would be done in a tiered fashion where:
 - 100% affordable developments with deeply affordable units could be expedited in all geographies
 - Mixed-income affordable developments could be expedited only in those geographies deemed both “low-affordability” and not a

“high displacement risk area” by the Fair Housing Plan and that did not reach their housing production targets in the most recently completed five year time period

- Such projects would not receive an automatic Council hearing and vote unless a majority of the Council voted to do so
- **Require that the capital budget details how it is advancing and addressing the goals, targets, and obstacles established and identified by the Fair Housing Plan**

In addition to these proposals to forward a more equitable and comprehensive approach to planning, we also urge this commission to address the on-going contracting backlog crisis for nonprofit providers - to better ensure on-time payments and contract approvals. This is an existential crisis for the nonprofit sector, with close to 100% of ANHD’s members experiencing registration delays, and some contracts dating back to FY23 still unregistered, forcing organizations to front expenses for these programs with their own limited resources while waiting years for payment. To address this issue we ask this commission to consider amending the charter to address:

- **Late contract registration and delayed invoice processing - to ensure payments continue when there are gaps and delays**
- **Redundant and tedious contracting processes - including unnecessary public hearings**
- **The establishment of a “multi-year” contract mechanism**

In conclusion, we call on this commission to take bold, systemic steps that begin to move NYC away from a land use and zoning regime that not only has held back equitable housing production but has deepened inequity across a variety of issues that impact every New Yorker.

We have included as **Appendix A** the specific changes to the charter that we are seeking to achieve these proposals. We believe our proposals strike the right balance between meeting citywide needs and empowering local communities to have more meaningful involvement in the planning process. To build a more just and fair city, we call on this Commission to amend the charter to advance comprehensive planning and fair housing so as to better align and consolidate our planning processes, center them in equitable goals to achieve equitable targets, and empower everyday New Yorkers to plan and build neighborhoods where they and future generations can thrive.



Thank you for your time and consideration. We welcome the chance to work with this commission and its staff to realize these recommendations. Please contact Chris Walters, Senior Land Use Policy Associate at ANHD at [REDACTED] for any questions or follow-up.

Appendix A Proposed Charter Amendments

1. Comprehensive Planning

Add a comprehensive planning mandate by creating a new Chapter 8-A as follows

Chapter 8-A: Comprehensive Plan

Section 207. Comprehensive Plan

a. *Definitions.* As used in this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

Community engagement: The term “community engagement” means conducting outreach to gather public input from a representative sample of the city population, following best practices for robust and deliberative outreach through varied methods including but not limited to surveys, education and outreach materials, online platforms, interactive mapping tools, and community meetings.

Policy decisions: The term “policy decisions” means choices made by city agencies, commissions, bodies and elected officials as to how best to achieve the equity goals established pursuant to paragraph one of subdivision a of this section.

b. Commencing not later than February 1, 2027 and not less than every ten years thereafter, such agency or inter-agency working group as the mayor shall designate, shall conduct a comprehensive planning process for New York City. Such process shall be conducted in consultation with the appropriate city and state agencies and bodies, and with community engagement, and shall include:

(1) the establishment of equity goals, including but not limited to goals to reducing and eliminating disparities across race, geography, and socioeconomic status in access to opportunity and the distribution of resources and development, increasing access to affordable housing, promoting social, economic, and racial integration, and advancing environmental justice and access to healthy environments, with such goals incorporating those goals developed by existing plans including but not limited to the fair housing plan pursuant to section sixteen-a, and the long-term sustainability plan pursuant to subdivision e of section 20.

(2) the establishment of quantitative citywide and community district level targets including but not limited to targets for housing, school seats, community facilities, open space, and infrastructure and resiliency, with such targets incorporating those targets required by existing plans including but not limited to the fair housing plan pursuant to section sixteen-a.

(3) the creation of community district level plans detailing how best to achieve these targets, including but not limited to through the use of, zoning, capital budgeting, expense budgeting, and policy decisions, designed in coordination with community boards and with the necessary resources provided for community boards to fulfill this role, including community engagement.

c. No later than February 1, 2029, and no later than every tenth February 1 thereafter, the council shall adopt a single resolution establishing paragraphs one, two, and three of subdivision b of section two hundred seven as together encompassing the comprehensive plan for New York City.

d. Once adopted the comprehensive plan shall be considered the “well considered plan” for New York City pursuant to section 20(25) of the state’s General City Law and must be considered by all city agencies, commissions, bodies and elected officials, in future decisions including but not limited to zoning, capital budgeting, expense budgeting, and policy decisions, and such decisions must detail how they are in accordance with the plan.

2. Fair Housing Plan

1. Amend Section 16-a. Fair housing plan and housing reports. by adding a new subdivision as follows

g. Achieving housing production targets. Pursuant to section one hundred ninety-seven-c and section one hundred ninety-seven-d, special consideration shall be given to applications going through the uniform land use review procedure where:

1. The application proposes new affordable housing where one hundred percent of the proposed dwelling units are affordable housing dwelling units, and where the weighted average of all income bands for such units does not exceed fifty-five percent of the area median income adjusted for the size of the household.
2. The application proposes new affordable housing within a community district that has been deemed a low affordability area and is not concurrently within a community district that has been deemed a high displacement-risk area, provided that the housing production targets for the community district established pursuant to subdivision d of this section were not met during the most recently completed five-year period

2. Amend Section 197-c. Uniform land use review procedure. as follows

b. The following documents shall be filed with the department of city planning: (1) applications under this section, (2) any amendments thereto that are made prior to approval of such applications pursuant to this chapter, (3) any written information submitted by an applicant for purposes of determining whether an environmental impact statement will be required by law, [and] (4) documents or records intended to define or substantially redefine the overall scope of issues to be addressed in any draft environmental impact statement required by law, and (5) a

statement of alignment determining if the application matches the criterion established pursuant to subdivision g of section sixteen-a. The department of city planning shall forward a copy of any materials it receives pursuant to this subdivision (whether or not such materials have been certified as complete) within five days to each affected borough president, community board or borough board.

c. The department of city planning shall be responsible for certifying that applications pursuant to subdivision a of this section are complete and ready to proceed through the uniform land use review procedure provided for in this section. The department shall promulgate rules to determine whether such applications align with the criterion established pursuant to subdivision g of section sixteen-a. Upon certification of an application, the department shall give notice of such certification to the council. If an application under this section has not been certified within six months after filing, both the applicant and, if the land use proposed in an application is consistent with the land use policy or strategic policy statement of the affected borough president, the affected borough president shall have the right at any time thereafter to appeal to the city planning commission for certification. The commission shall promptly, but in any event within sixty days of the filing of such an appeal, either certify the application or state in writing what further information is necessary to complete the application. If such an appeal is brought by an affected borough president, the affirmative vote of five members of the commission shall be sufficient to certify the application.

3. Amend Section 197-d. Council Review. as follows

b. The following decisions filed with the council pursuant to subdivision a of this section, shall be subject to review and action by the council:

(1) any decision of the city planning commission to approve or approve with modifications a matter described in paragraph three of subdivision a of section one hundred ninety seven-c, except where it has been deemed to match the criterion in subdivision g of section sixteen-a pursuant to subdivision b of section one hundred ninety seven-c, a matter described in paragraph [or] eight of subdivision a of section one hundred ninety-seven-c, a disposition of residential real property (as defined in this paragraph) pursuant to paragraph ten of subdivision a of section one hundred ninety-seven-c (except for dispositions to companies that have been organized exclusively to develop housing projects for persons of low income), a plan pursuant to section one hundred ninety-seven-a, or a change in the text of the zoning resolution pursuant to sections two hundred or two hundred one. For purposes of this section, residential real property shall mean real property improved by structures, whether or not occupied, built for or converted to a use which is primarily residential, but shall not include property subsequently converted to non-residential use;

(3) any other decision of the city planning commission to approve or approve with modifications a matter described in subdivision a of section one hundred ninety-seven-c,

including a matter described in paragraph three of subdivision a of section one hundred ninety-seven-c, that has been deemed to match the criterion in subdivision g of section sixteen-a pursuant to subdivision b of section one hundred ninety-seven-c if within twenty days of the filing of such decision pursuant to subdivision a of this section, the council resolves by the majority vote of all the council members to review the decision of the commission.

4. Amend section 215 Ten-year capital strategy. as follows

c. Any project included in the ten-year capital strategy which addresses the goals and strategies of the fair housing plan pursuant to subdivision b of section sixteen-a or which advances the housing production targets identified at both the citywide and community district level pursuant to subdivision d of section sixteen-a or which addresses the obstacles identified in the most recent strategic equity framework pursuant to subdivision e of section sixteen-a, shall be so identified in the ten-year capital strategy.

[c] d. In the preparation of the preliminary ten-year capital strategy, the department of city planning and office of management and budget shall consider (i) the strategic policy statements of the mayor and the borough presidents pursuant to section seventeen, (ii) relevant citywide, borough and community plans adopted pursuant to section one hundred ninety seven-a, and (iii) the reports pursuant to section two hundred fifty-seven comparing the most recent ten-year capital strategy with the capital budgets and programs adopted for the current and previous fiscal years.

From: Alexandra Ording [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 19, 2025 5:26 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. Forward suspect email to [REDACTED] as an attachment (Click the More button, then forward as attachment).

I support open primary elections in New York City because they encourage broader participation, promote political competition, and ensure that candidates are accountable to all voters—not just party insiders. The current closed primary system limits participation to registered party members, excluding independents and those who may align with a party's values but choose not to register under its banner. This system is outdated and does a disservice to democracy.

Open primaries would benefit the Democratic Party by ensuring that candidates appeal to a wider range of voters, including moderates and independents, rather than just the most progressive wing of the party. As someone who believes in fiscal responsibility, public safety, and pragmatic governance, I want to see candidates representing a broader coalition—not just those catering to the most vocal activists.

Alexandra Ording
[REDACTED]

From: Chris Whitney [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 19, 2025 5:27 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Political parties have become special interest groups standing between the government and the electorate. It is time that we allowed all New Yorkers to participate in elections. Open primaries mean New Yorkers can participate in primary elections regardless of whether they have registered with a political party.

New Yorkers should be able to participate directly in choosing their leaders. They should not have to choose to be affiliated with a party if they do not want to. We should make it as easy as possible for all New Yorkers to participate in elections, and open primaries do just that.

Chris Whitney
[REDACTED]

From: Gregory Christopher Baggett [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:25 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Non-partisan, special elections are nothing new and are a proven way to choose the best candidate from a field representing several different viewpoints. These elections have been one by candidates across the ideal spectrum. It is time that we applied this proven method to all citywide elections.

Special elections have been taking place in New York City for as long as I can remember. They are an effective way to let voters express their preference from a range of candidates and save the City the cost of running multiple different elections.

Gregory Christopher Baggett
[REDACTED]

From: Mary Fridley [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:53 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Hi,

As an independent voter (and yes, really an independent - not a "swing voter" in New York City for over 45 years, I am deeply concerned that political parties have become special interest groups standing between the government and the electorate, and we're seeing the negative impact in our communities and in our policies. I strongly feel that this is the time for ALL New Yorkers to participate in elections because OPEN PRIMARIES mean everyone can participate in primary elections regardless of whether they have registered with a political party, especially since it is our tax dollars that help for party primaries.

New Yorkers should be able to participate directly in choosing their leaders. They should not have to choose to be affiliated with a party if they do not want to. We should make it as easy as possible for all New Yorkers to participate in elections, and open primaries do just that.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Mary

Mary Fridley
[REDACTED]

From: Thales Protopapas [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:53 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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As an American who just this year became of voting age, I believe in the value of a fair democracy. The purpose of democracy is to give the people a voice in their government, and the system we currently have in New York fails to do that. Almost every race is decided by the Democratic party primaries, with a weak Republican candidate or sometimes no one at all. This forces voters who want a say in choosing their representatives to join a particular political party or be silenced. Open primaries would eliminate this issue, allowing all voters to select the candidates who go to the general election, providing more competitive elections.

Thales Protopapas
[REDACTED]

From: Diana Finch [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:53 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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As a longtime poll worker, I am very familiar with voter turnout in our elections, and the dismay that so many voters feel every year when they realize they are unable to vote for their favorite candidate in a primary election, just because of New York's restrictive and poorly communicated laws.

As a result, New York City's political landscape is often dominated by a small group of party leaders and insiders, leaving many voters feeling disconnected from the process.

Allowing all registered voters to participate in primaries would lead to more representative candidates and ultimately strengthen our democracy.

If we truly want a political system that reflects the values of all New Yorkers, we must embrace reforms that expand voter participation.

Open primaries ensure that more voices are heard, more perspectives are considered, and elected officials are accountable to the entire electorate, not just a select few.

Diana Finch
[REDACTED]

From: Alice Paquette [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:54 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Open primaries are the only way to hold fair elections and elect the best candidates. Many voters don't even realize what registering with a party actually means and unwittingly disenfranchise themselves!

We need common sense election rules that include all citizens, not just those who are willing to associate themselves with one party or another. That is a totally unnecessary step that subverts democracy.

Alice Paquette
[REDACTED]

From: Ann Kottner [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:55 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Political parties have become special interest groups standing between the government and the electorate. It is time that we allowed all New Yorkers to participate in elections. Open primaries mean New Yorkers can participate in primary elections regardless of whether they have registered with a political party.

New Yorkers should be able to participate directly in choosing their leaders. They should not have to choose to be affiliated with a party if they do not want to. To demand otherwise disenfranchises voters and is not democratic. We should make it as easy as possible for all New Yorkers to participate in elections, and open primaries do just that.

Ann Kottner
[REDACTED]

From: Sophie Ferrer [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:55 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Hello,

I believe open primaries are essential to creating a more inclusive and democratic electoral system. The current closed primary system shuts out over a million voters. This exclusion weakens democracy.

Open primaries would give working-class and marginalized communities—who may not fit neatly into the two-party structure—a greater voice in choosing candidates who represent their needs. Many voters, especially young people and those disillusioned with establishment politics, do not register with a major party. Yet, they deserve a say in shaping the policies that affect their daily lives.

Thank you!

Sophie Ferrer
[REDACTED]

From: James Thompson [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:56 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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As a 25 year resident of New York City, I've always believed in the power of democracy and the importance of every citizen's voice. However, our current closed primary system often leaves many voters, especially independents, without a say in critical early election decisions. This exclusion diminishes voter engagement and limits the diversity of perspectives in our political discourse.

Transitioning to open primaries would allow all registered voters, regardless of party affiliation, to participate in selecting candidates. This inclusivity would lead to a more representative and responsive government, as candidates would need to appeal to a broader spectrum of the electorate. Moreover, open primaries could reduce political polarization by encouraging the nomination of candidates who prioritize common ground and pragmatic solutions over partisan extremes.

In a city as diverse and dynamic as ours, our electoral processes must reflect and embrace that diversity. Implementing open primaries would be a significant step toward ensuring that every New Yorker's voice is heard and valued in our democracy.

James Thompson
[REDACTED]

From: Ricky Van Veen [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:56 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Hello. I say the following as a New Yorker who no longer feels a direct connection to either political party.

I think it has become quite apparent that political parties have become special interest groups standing between the government and the electorate. It is time that we allowed all New Yorkers to participate in elections.

Open primaries mean New Yorkers can participate in primary elections regardless of whether they have registered with a political party.

New Yorkers should be able to participate directly in choosing their leaders. They should not have to choose to be affiliated with a party if they do not want to. We should make it as easy as possible for all New Yorkers to participate in elections, and open primaries do just that.

Ricky Van Veen
[REDACTED]

From: Bridget Fox [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:57 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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As New York City resident, I've strongly believe in the power of democracy and the importance of every citizen's voice. However, our current closed primary system often leaves many voters without a say in critical early election decisions. This exclusion disenfranchises voters and limits the diversity of perspectives in our political discourse.

Prior to settling in New York, I lived in multiple other cities that have successfully run elections with open primaries for years. When I arrived here, I felt completely shut out of participation in the electoral process, as I had not initially registered within the dominant two party system. It was frustrating and discouraging to feel coerced into changing my voter registration just to participate in local democracy. I know this system can be better, and I believe that New Yorkers deserve a more functional voting process.

Transitioning to open primaries would allow all registered voters, regardless of party affiliation, to participate in selecting candidates. This inclusivity would lead to a more representative and responsive government, as candidates would need to appeal to a broader spectrum of the electorate.

In a city as diverse and dynamic as ours, our electoral processes must reflect and embrace that diversity. Implementing open primaries would be a significant step toward ensuring that every New Yorker's voice is heard and valued in our democracy.

Bridget Fox
[REDACTED]

From: Madeleine Sutherland [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:57 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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The two-party system makes it so that I have less representation in government sometimes, compared to people who feel like they can affiliate with one or the other of the ruling parties, Democrat or Republican. Even though I'm a left-leaning Independent and my mom's a registered Republican, she sympathizes with my plight, and she sometimes votes for third-party candidates too. I lived in Massachusetts the primary system was a little more fair; I could show up to the polling place for the primary, they'd look me up in the registry and see that I was independent, and ask me which primary race I wanted to vote in. I voted in the Democratic one because it's more fair to vote in the party that I align a little better with, even if I still abhor them enough that I can't sign my name with them. And with that process, everyone votes in exactly one primary race. Here in New York I don't get to vote in primaries at all, unless I register with one of the ruling parties, which I don't want to do. My life history has been all about not having my name associated with any organization that doesn't share my moral values. That's why I support opening primaries, as this letter campaign advocates for.

Open primaries would make elections more competitive. Too often, races are effectively decided in Democratic primaries, shutting out voices from across the political spectrum. By opening the process, we can ensure that general elections feature candidates who appeal to a broader range of voters, leading to more balanced representation.

At its core, democracy thrives when more people engage in the electoral process. Open primaries foster greater participation, reduce partisan gridlock, and give voters more power in determining the future of our city and country. I urge lawmakers and fellow New Yorkers to support this critical reform for a fairer and more representative democracy.

Madeleine Sutherland
[REDACTED]

From: Claire Lanyi [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:58 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I support open primary elections in New York City because they encourage broader participation, promote political competition, and ensure that candidates are accountable to all voters—not just party insiders. The current closed primary system limits participation to registered party members, excluding independents and those who may align with a party’s values but choose not to register under its banner. This system is outdated and does a disservice to democracy.

As someone who believes in fiscal responsibility, public safety, and pragmatic governance, I want to see candidates representing a broader coalition—not just those catering to the most vocal activists.

Claire Lanyi
[REDACTED]

From: Thomas Whidden [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:58 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Choosing to support a political party in our dystopian duopoly is a choice. Every New Yorker is forced to make if they want to have any influence at all on the direction of our state politics. It is an open secret that the primary is the election in the majority of state races. I demand the opportunity to help shape the policies of my state government without having to swear all allegiance to a party that has never represented me or my community.

Open the primaries now. Give all New Yorkers a fair shot at using their vote to shape the future.

A disaffected voter who decides to support a candidate in a primary should be welcomed and encouraged. Instead, many find out that they are unable to support their chosen candidate because they don't identify with a political party and are not registered affiliated with one. I struggle to see why a voter turned away at the polls would ever attempt to reengage again.

Closed primaries are voter suppression full stop. End it now.

Open primaries could help break the cycle of corporate influence in politics. When primaries are closed, candidates are primarily accountable to party insiders rather than the broader electorate. By allowing all registered voters to participate, we encourage candidates to appeal to everyday people, not just party elites and big donors.

New York City is one of the world's most diverse and politically engaged cities. Our elections should reflect that diversity by ensuring that every voter has the opportunity to shape the choices on the ballot. Open primaries are a crucial step toward building a political system that is truly representative, participatory, and responsive to the needs of all New Yorkers.

Thomas Whidden
[REDACTED]

From: Ruby Lunsford [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:58 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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To Whom it May Concern,

This is a city with an electorate as diverse as the range of views held by its residents. All New Yorkers should be able to participate in choosing our leaders. Open primaries would mean that candidates for office would address the full diversity of opinions and points of view that New Yorkers hold.

We need to ensure that there is a fair and equitable election system in place in which all New Yorkers can participate. The current primary system locks out a million New Yorkers from having a say in who our leaders are. It is time to embrace open primaries that allow the full range of beliefs and perspectives to be part of the system.

Ruby Lunsford
[REDACTED]

From: Lauren Diehlmann [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 9:59 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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New York City is one of the world's most diverse and politically engaged cities. Our elections should reflect that diversity by ensuring that every voter has the opportunity to shape the choices on the ballot. Open primaries are a crucial step toward building a political system that is truly representative, participatory, and responsive to the needs of all New Yorkers.

Additionally, registered independents deserve to have a say in our primaries!

Lauren Diehlmann
[REDACTED]

City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-5876989 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

From agencymail [REDACTED]

Date Fri 3/21/2025 4:42 PM

To CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Friday, March 21, 2025, at 04:42:28 PM

This form resides at
[hxxxs://www\[.\]nyc\[.\]gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter\[.\]page](https://www[.]nyc[.]gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter[.]page)

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Jacob Kayen

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: EDC does not seem qualified to manage city housing projects. They are too influenced by larger real estate interests. Housing should be managed by an entity not beholden to making money for the city, but providing the best services for constituents first, not businesses.

From: Aurelie Fournier-Harp [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 24, 2025 5:51 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I have been forced throughout my life to enroll in a political party if I want my vote to matter. Neither of the two largest parties reflects my values and beliefs. I am excited to be supporting open primaries. This change will mean that I am no longer forced to make a choice that does not reflect my values.

Being able to vote in an open primary would mean that I could choose and rank the candidates who best reflect my values, regardless of their affiliation with a political party. Moving to this system will not only open primary elections to a larger electorate but also help diversify the kinds of opinions and candidates appearing on the ballot.

Aurelie Fournier-Harp
[REDACTED]

From: Vincent Ragosta [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2025 9:45 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I understand the importance of allowing all people, especially the newest New Yorkers, to participate in our electoral and civic life. Open primaries eliminate barriers to voting and would mean that all New Yorkers, particularly immigrants, would be able to participate in all our elections.

It is key to the very fabric of our city that we make our civic life one that all people can participate in, regardless of political preference or personal history. The people we elect to represent us should represent that shared belief in an open and inclusive city.

Vincent Ragosta
[REDACTED]

From: PC or Pak-Cheung Wong [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2025 9:46 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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New York City has always been at the forefront of democracy, and it is time that we continue to evolve. Having recently adopted Ranked Choice Voting, it is time that we take the next step and move to a system of open primaries. As a New Yorker, I am proud to be from a place known for innovation, and the time has come for us to take the next step.

This evolution will strengthen our democracy and bring more New Yorkers into the process. By continuing to evolve and adapt, we show the world we are leading the way. New York has been, and should continue to be, the world's most creative and innovative city. There's no reason that shouldn't be true for our elections.

PC or Pak-Cheung Wong
[REDACTED]

From: James Fong [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2025 9:46 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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James Fong
[REDACTED]

From: Christopher Athineos [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2025 9:47 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Christopher Athineos



From: Natalia Bonanno [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2025 9:47 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Non-partisan, special elections are nothing new and are a proven way to choose the best candidate from a field representing several different viewpoints. These elections have been one by candidates across the ideal spectrum. It is time that we applied this proven method to all citywide elections.

Special elections have been taking place in New York City for as long as I can remember. They are an effective way to let voters express their preference from a range of candidates and save the City the cost of running multiple different elections.

Natalia Bonanno
[REDACTED]

From: agency@mail [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2025 11:55 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-62532 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Wednesday, March 26, 2025, at 11:54:48 PM

This form resides at
[https://www\[.\]nyc\[.\]gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter\[.\]page](https://www[.]nyc[.]gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter[.]page)

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: LaDawn Haglund

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: I am submitting the attached testimony in support of altering the city charter to create a dedicated maritime agency for New York Harbor and waterways. Thank you!

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LaDawn Haglund
Associate Professor of Climate Justice
Department of Political Science
John Jay College
City University of New York (CUNY)

Testimony on Governance and Maritime Authority

March 26, 2025

To: The New York City Charter Revision Commission

I am providing testimony in support of **altering the city charter to create a dedicated maritime agency for New York Harbor and waterways**. As a social scientist who studies effective governance, I was actually quite surprised to learn that one does not already exist. Nodal agencies are crucial for improving coordination, reducing bureaucratic fragmentation, and enhancing policy implementation, all key elements of effective governance. New York Harbor is a busy and complex maritime hub, but projects and decisions are fragmented across federal, state, and local agencies with overlapping responsibilities and no singular coordinating body. A nodal agency could harmonize policies, enhance navigational safety, and reduce conflicts—such as those between commercial shipping lanes and expanding ferry services—minimizing congestion and accident risks.

Beyond safety and efficiency, a dedicated maritime agency would support innovative infrastructure projects like the Blue Highways initiative, which expands waterborne freight and passenger transport to reduce congestion and emissions. By streamlining permitting, coordinating infrastructure expansion, and aligning water transport with safety and environmental regulations, such an agency could promote more sustainable development. It would also strengthen climate resilience by providing a coordinated, multi-agency response to rising sea levels, intensifying storms, and industrial pollution. Currently, efforts like the Billion Oyster Project and NYC's climate adaptation initiatives tend to operate in silos. A dedicated maritime agency could integrate these with broader regional goals, ensuring seawalls, living shorelines, and green port projects are implemented harmoniously.



LaDawn Haglund
Associate Professor of Climate Justice
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City University of New York (CUNY)

The absence of a centralized maritime agency leaves New York Harbor vulnerable to inefficiencies, conflicts, and missed development opportunities. Aligning diverse stakeholders and streamlining decision-making heightens state capacity, facilitates resource allocation, and increases accountability across maritime, urban, and environmental sectors. The idea is not to replace existing authorities but create a unifying entity to align regulation, investment, and the public good. If New York Harbor is to remain a global leader in maritime commerce while advancing environmental and climate goals, establishing such an agency is not just beneficial—it is imperative.

I appreciate the important work you are doing for our city and hope that these comments will be useful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read "LDH", written over a light blue horizontal line.

LaDawn Haglund

Email: [REDACTED]

From: Amy Bruce [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 5:33 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I understand the importance of allowing all people, especially the newest New Yorkers, to participate in our electoral and civic life. Open primaries eliminate barriers to voting and would mean that all New Yorkers, particularly immigrants, would be able to participate in all our elections.

It is key to the very fabric of our city that we make our civic life one that all people can participate in, regardless of political preference or personal history. The people we elect to represent us should represent that shared belief in an open and inclusive city.

Amy Bruce
[REDACTED]

From: sab mallick [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 5:33 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Non-partisan, special elections are nothing new and are a proven way to choose the best candidate from a field representing several different viewpoints. These elections have been one by candidates across the ideal spectrum. It is time that we applied this proven method to all citywide elections.

Special elections have been taking place in New York City for as long as I can remember. They are an effective way to let voters express their preference from a range of candidates and save the City the cost of running multiple different elections.

sab mallick
[REDACTED]

From: Anthony Mone [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 5:34 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Like many New Yorkers, I have spent much of my life being unable to vote in competitive elections. Too often, the winning candidate is a foregone conclusion by the time of the general election. New Yorkers like me find themselves locked out of the races where the winning candidate is chosen simply because we do not choose to or want to belong to a political party.

By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Anthony Mone
[REDACTED]

From: Vincent Ragosta [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 5:34 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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It is too hard to vote in New York City, and voter turnout does not reflect the city as a whole. Open primaries address this by fixing one of the major impediments to voting and empowering a million New Yorkers to participate in the most competitive and consequential elections. Reducing the number of non-competitive elections will incentivize more people to participate in the democratic process.

Addressing our abysmal voter turnout rates should be a key priority of the Charter Revision Commission. I hope that the city does not miss this opportunity to ensure that we have competitive elections in which all registered voters can participate. This will mean that New York City has a healthier and more robust democracy than ever before.

Vincent Ragosta
[REDACTED]

From: Andrea Ragosta [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 5:34 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Andrea Ragosta
[REDACTED]

From: Robert Lee [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 5:35 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Robert Lee
[REDACTED]

From: Robert Lee [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 5:35 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
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Being able to vote in an open primary would mean that I could choose and rank the candidates who best reflect my values, regardless of their affiliation with a political party. Moving to this system will not only open primary elections to a larger electorate but also help diversify the kinds of opinions and candidates appearing on the ballot.

Robert Lee
[REDACTED]

From: Schierenbeck, Alec [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 6:07 PM
To: Charter Testimony
Subject: Fw: [EXTERNAL] Additional written Charter Revision Commission testimony on comprehensive planning and CPC's role in the capital budget
Attachments: FOLLOW-UP TESTIMONY TO THE NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION CO v2.docx

From: Eric Kober [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 4:34 PM
To: John Mangin (DCP) [REDACTED]; Mangin, John [REDACTED]
Schierenbeck, Alec [REDACTED]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Additional written Charter Revision Commission testimony on comprehensive planning and CPC's role in the capital budget

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Please find attached my response to Carl Weisbrod's questions at the February 24 public meeting. I'm happy to answer any questions, or testify again to the commission.

FOLLOW-UP TESTIMONY TO THE NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

Eric Kober

March 27, 2025

This follow-up testimony addresses two questions put to me by Commission member Carl Weisbrod when I testified at the February 24, 2025 public session:

1. Should there be a comprehensive planning requirement in the Charter?
2. Should the City Planning Commission's co-responsibility for the capital budget be restored?

Summary of Recommendations

I suggest that this Commission consider the changes to the City Charter outlined below. These changes would create a workable process to develop a comprehensive land use planning framework for New York City, updated periodically. The proposed changes would also give more structure and purpose to the City Planning Commission's role in capital planning by relating that role to the oversight of capital improvements necessary to implement the comprehensive land use framework.

- Repeal § 192(f) (relating to preparation of a Zoning and Planning Report by the City Planning Commission).
- Amend § 197-a(a) (relating to plans for the development, growth, and improvement of the city) to require that by December 31, 2027, and not less than every eight years thereafter, the Department of City Planning propose for public review (pursuant to the provisions of this section) a comprehensive land use framework for the city. Such framework should include forecasts of expected population and employment growth, quantification of expected citywide needs for additional housing units and nonresidential space, identification of areas where residential and non-residential land use changes are appropriate in response to those needs, and analysis of changes in public facilities and supporting infrastructure necessitated by such changes.

- Create new §197-e that specifies a special abbreviated process for reviewing zoning map changes (and any zoning text change limited in effect to the area proposed for rezoning) identified in an adopted comprehensive land use framework pursuant to §197-a.
 - Referral of a complete application (including any environmental review required by law) to Community Board, Borough Board (if relevant), Borough President, and City Council Land Use Committee.
 - These entities may solicit public comment through a public hearing (in which the community board, borough board and borough president may hold a combined hearing) or by soliciting public comments through an online portal for a period of not less than one week.
 - These entities each have 30 days to submit a recommendation to the City Planning Commission.
 - CPC has 60 days to hold a hearing and vote.
 - New body, Zoning Change Review Panel, consisting of mayor, council speaker and borough president, or their designees, may review the CPC's decision.
 - Create new §191(d) specifying that DCP will provide staff support to the Panel as needed.
 - Panel can call up a rezoning application approved by CPC upon request of one member.
 - Panel must consider the existing record, and may request additional testimony, in person or online, from DCP, the community board, borough board, borough president, city council members or land use committee staff, and from other persons who have testified for or against the application.
 - Panel must vote within 30 days, with a majority (two members) needed to approve, disapprove or modify. If the panel modifies an application, clock is tolled for 15 days for the Planning Commission's comment as per §197-d(d).

- If no Panel vote within 30 days CPC vote stands.
- Amend § 215(b) (relating to the contents of the ten-year capital strategy) to include a narrative, drafted by the Department of City Planning, relating the proposed capital commitments by applicable city agency to the needs identified by the comprehensive land use framework approved by the City Planning Commission and City Council.
- Amend § 228 (Draft ten-year capital strategy) to change the date of submission to not later than January 16th of each odd-numbered year, which reflects actual practice.
- Amend § 234 (relating to the City Planning Commission’s hearing and comment on the draft ten-year capital strategy) to move the date of the hearing to not later than February 15th of each odd-numbered year, and submission of the comment to March 1; and to explicitly relate the subject of the hearing and comment to the relationship of the draft ten-year capital strategy to the comprehensive land use framework approved by the CPC and Council.

My analysis leading to these recommendations is presented below.

Comprehensive Planning

There is a widespread view among elected officials and activists that New York City’s failure to undertake “comprehensive planning” results in “zoning without planning,” e.g., City Planning Commission actions that induce growth without adequate attention to the provision of supporting infrastructure and adequate local services. There is some truth to this, particularly in neighborhoods like Long Island City where the pace of growth has far outstripped planners’ original projections.

However, “comprehensive planning” is no panacea, for several reasons. First, New York City is very large, and budgets are always tight. There will never be the resources to plan on a granular basis across the city. Second, local politics are contentious, and consensus on desirable changes will always be elusive. Third, the city is always evolving faster than

planners, elected officials and the public can readily comprehend. Plans that do achieve consensus may have a short shelf life.

The inclusion of “master plan” requirements in the City Charter has its origins in the Standard City Planning Enabling Act, published in 1928 under the auspices of then-Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover.¹ Many of the members of the drafting committee were New Yorkers, including Edward M. Bassett and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. The Standard City Planning Enabling Act reflects its drafters’ view that cities could be planned with scientific precision.²

Consistent with the Standard City Planning Enabling Act, both the 1936 and 1961 Charters required the City Planning Commission to adopt a “Master Plan.” The 1936 provision seemed to envision the form of an extraordinarily detailed map:

§ 197. a. The commission shall prepare and from time to time modify a master plan of the city which shall show desirable streets, roads, highways and the grades thereof, public places, bridges and tunnels and the approaches thereto, viaducts, parks, public reservations, parkways, squares, playgrounds, roadways in parks, sites for public buildings and structures, building zone districts, pierhead and bulkhead lines, docks and wharves, waterways, routes of railroads, omnibuses and ferries, locations of drainage systems, sewers, sewage treatment plants, incinerators, water conduits and other public utilities privately or publicly owned, and such other features, changes and additions as will provide for the improvement of the city and its future growth and development and afford adequate facilities for the housing, transportation, distribution, comfort, convenience, health and welfare of its population.

¹ Scanned online at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-C13-955faaa3558a7c44c6a9edbbc01f5cd5/pdf/GOVPUB-C13-955faaa3558a7c44c6a9edbbc01f5cd5.pdf>.

² See Section 6, General Powers and Duties, p. 13.

The 1961 provision seemed to envision, in contrast, a document, or series of documents, that would include descriptive matter and not simply a map.

§ 197. a. The city planning commission shall prepare and adopt, in one or more parts, and from time to time modify a master plan for the physical development of the city, which shall provide for the improvement of the city and its future growth and afford adequate and appropriate facilities for the housing, business, industry, transportation, distribution, recreation, comfort, convenience, health and welfare of its population.

The Lindsay administration, shortly thereafter, decided to produce such a plan. The *Plan for New York City* was published in draft form in 1969, in five volumes.³ The plan was never adopted. In 1971 an additional report, *Planning for Jobs*, was published;⁴ that ended the master planning effort. The *Plan for New York City* was largely descriptive and backward-looking; it failed to address both the factors leading to the city's rapid decline in the 1970's and the structural changes in the city's population and economy that subsequently drove recovery. It was viewed as a costly failure, and that resulted in the removal of the master plan requirement in the 1975 Charter.

The 1975 Charter Revision Commission replaced the "master plan" requirement with a provision that allows the Planning Commission to adopt "plans for the development, growth and improvement of the city,"⁵ which could be proposed by the mayor, borough boards and community boards as well as DCP and the CPC. Such a plan could be comprehensive, or local. That provision remains. The Department of City Planning lists 13 CPC reports since 1976 for "197-a" plans. Two

³ The five volumes are scanned online at <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/c42cb93f-8f3d-ca65-e040-e00a18064e5c/book?parent=8b252450-c603-012f-14f1-58d385a7bc34#page/1/mode/1up>.

⁴ Scanned online at <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans-studies/nyc-industrial-plan/planning-for-jobs-1971.pdf>.

⁵ N.Y.C. Charter § 197-a.

are citywide updates to the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, and the rest are neighborhood plans.

The 1989 Charter added a requirement that the Planning Commission prepare, every four years, a “zoning and planning report.”⁶ Only one such report was ever prepared, in 1993.⁷ It had little impact. One major problem with this provision is that the report is authored by the CPC. The part-time commission is not well-suited to engage in authorship of a meaningful citywide plan, and no subsequent Chair has wanted to repeat this experience.

The Charter still contains language from the one-time “master plan” provision, stating that the “city planning commission shall be responsible for the conduct of planning relating to the orderly growth, improvement and future development of the city, including adequate and appropriate resources for the housing, business, industry, transportation, distribution, recreation, culture, comfort, convenience, health and welfare of its population.”⁸

Consistent with this language, and the ideals of rational planning that have persisted for 97 years—despite repeated failure to achieve them—my recommendation is that this Commission consider deleting § 192(f)’s zoning and planning report requirement and substituting a workable comprehensive planning requirement.

Some American cities have used comprehensive planning well to accommodate a growing population. As a scholar, I have been impressed by the example of Seattle.⁹ Washington State’s comprehensive planning requirements are found at

⁶ Ibid., § 192(f).

⁷ The report is scanned online at https://www.nyc.gov/html/rabrc/downloads/pdf/dcp_shaping_the_citys_futuresmall.pdf.

⁸ N.Y.C. Charter § 192(d).

⁹ The *Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan* can be found at <https://www.seattle.gov/opcd/current-projects/seattle-2035-comprehensive-plan#whatwhy> and the proposed 2025 update, *Mayor Harrell’s One*

RCW 36.70A.070.¹⁰ This specifies that a city’s comprehensive plan include various elements: land use, housing, capital facilities, and so forth. Some of the elements, such as sustainability, are covered by other NYC plans already mandated in the Charter.¹¹

Another exemplary local comprehensive plan is *Minneapolis 2040*.¹² The requirements for Minnesota municipalities’ comprehensive plans are found in §473.859 of the state statutes.¹³ Like Washington state, the statute specifies a land use plan and a public facilities plan.

Both Seattle and Minneapolis are much smaller than New York City, likely making achieving consensus on a comprehensive plan far easier. However, the need for at least a high-level comprehensive framework for New York City is compelling. The current mayor, for example, set a “moonshot” goal of producing 500,000 new housing units in ten years but has not asked city agencies to produce a plan to reach that goal. The city needs to debate, and ideally agree on, both the goal and the route to achieving it.

My proposal would require DCP to propose a “comprehensive land use framework” for public review through the “197-a” process. That would provide a high-level identification of citywide residential and nonresidential land use needs and of areas proposed for growth to meet those needs. There would also be a discussion – again, at a high level – of the public facilities and infrastructure needed to support that growth. Addressing these issues at a high level keeps the costs and time frames of the plan within reason. Having DCP prepare the plan avoids the impracticality of assigning the zoning and planning report to the CPC. The CPC

Seattle Plan, at

<https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OPCD/SeattlePlan/OneSeattleComprehensivePlan.pdf>.

¹⁰ <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=36.70a.070>.

¹¹ See, e.g., N.Y.C. Charter § 20(e).

¹² <https://minneapolis2040.com/>

¹³ <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/473.859>.

would review the plan and propose modifications based on public testimony, which is its typical role.

Once the City Council approves a comprehensive land use framework, an abbreviated process is appropriate for approval of future rezonings pursuant to the framework. The alternative of subjecting such rezonings to the normal ULURP process would give individual council members who object to a specific rezoning undue leverage to pick apart a plan approved by the entire council as being fair and equitable in its distribution of community impacts. The proposed Zoning Change Review Panel would preserve the oversight of elected officials while maintaining a focus on an individual rezoning's role within an overall land use framework.

As an aside, I would note that the Zoning Change Review Panel, once created, may have utility beyond the implementation of a comprehensive land use framework. Some recent commentaries on the Charter have suggested replacing the current mayoral veto of City Council land use decisions with a new override mechanism that might be more effective.¹⁴ The Zoning Change Review Panel as outlined in this testimony may represent another potential avenue for revising final review of City Council zoning actions.

Capital Budget

The history of the City Planning Commission's role in the capital budget is one of continuous failure to achieve meaningful input. One obvious issue is that once the city urbanized to its edges, stopped building new bridges, tunnels, and highways, and transferred responsibility for the subways to the MTA, there was little demand for planning input into the capital budget. Most of the capital budget is comprised of capital maintenance, such as bridge reconstruction, or scheduled replacements,

¹⁴ The mayoral veto is found in §197-d(f). Alternative suggestions include the Citizens Housing and Planning Council, "Allow the City Planning Commission to override or modify Council votes on land use actions with a supermajority vote," [Key Charter Reforms for Housing and Land Use - CHPC New York](#); and the Citizens Budget Commission, "Allow applicants to appeal actions rejected by the City Council to a ULURP Appeals Board consisting of the City Planning Commission and Council Speaker," <https://cbcny.org/advocacy/cbc-makes-3-bold-proposals-improve-nycs-land-use-decision-making-process>.

such as purchasing fire trucks. The proportion which might interest the CPC – new or improved infrastructure to support growth – is small, relative to the overall program.

One can see how successive Charters pushed the CPC to the side as the domain of the Bureau of the Budget (later Office of Management and Budget) grew. The 1936 Charter had the CPC preparing the proposed capital budget with the assistance of the Bureau of the Budget.¹⁵ The 1961 Charter had the CPC prepare a “draft” capital budget that would then be superseded by an “executive” capital budget submitted by the mayor, making the entire CPC exercise superfluous.¹⁶ The 1975 Charter, recognizing the futility of this arrangement, replaced the draft capital budget with a CPC “statement of the city’s capital needs and priorities.”¹⁷ With no dedicated staff, this became a pro forma document that had no meaningful impact.

The 1989 Charter eliminated the statement of capital needs and priorities but created a new document, the ten-year capital strategy, with the draft prepared jointly by DCP and OMB and the final by OMB only.¹⁸ The CPC is required to hold a public hearing and issue a report on the draft strategy.¹⁹ The ten-year capital strategy has no specific planning content and has evolved into part of the Mayor’s preliminary budget submission in early January of odd-numbered years. The CPC hearing and comment are, at best, pro forma and have no impact.

One advantage of the comprehensive land use framework, as I envision it, is that it provides land use planning content that the Ten-Year Capital Strategy can reference. This in turn potentially provides the public with a reference point for the CPC hearing and makes the Commission’s comments more meaningful.

¹⁵ N.Y.C. Charter § 216 (1936).

¹⁶ N.Y.C. Charter §§ 216-19 (1961).

¹⁷ N.Y.C. Charter § 214(d) (1975).

¹⁸ N.Y.C. Charter §215 (1989).

¹⁹ Ibid., § 234.

From: Helen Protopapas [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 8:18 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Being able to vote in an open primary would mean that I could choose and rank the candidates who best reflect my values, regardless of their affiliation with a political party. Moving to this system will not only open primary elections to a larger electorate but also help diversify the kinds of opinions and candidates appearing on the ballot.

Helen Protopapas
[REDACTED]

From: Dimitrios Protopapas [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 8:18 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I understand the importance of allowing all people, especially the newest New Yorkers, to participate in our electoral and civic life. Open primaries eliminate barriers to voting and would mean that all New Yorkers, particularly immigrants, would be able to participate in all our elections.

It is key to the very fabric of our city that we make our civic life one that all people can participate in, regardless of political preference or personal history. The people we elect to represent us should represent that shared belief in an open and inclusive city.

Dimitrios Protopapas
[REDACTED]

From: Isabelle delalex [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:14 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Like many New Yorkers, I have spent much of my life being unable to vote in competitive elections. Too often, the winning candidate is a foregone conclusion by the time of the general election. New Yorkers like me find themselves locked out of the races where the winning candidate is chosen simply because we do not choose to or want to belong to a political party.

By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Isabelle delalex
[REDACTED]

From: William Korchak [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:14 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Political parties have become special interest groups standing between the government and the electorate. It is time that we allowed all New Yorkers to participate in elections. Open primaries mean New Yorkers can participate in primary elections regardless of whether they have registered with a political party.

New Yorkers should be able to participate directly in choosing their leaders. They should not have to choose to be affiliated with a party if they do not want to. We should make it as easy as possible for all New Yorkers to participate in elections, and open primaries do just that.

William Korchak
[REDACTED]

From: AARON WEBER [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:15 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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AARON WEBER
[REDACTED]

From: Tom Williams [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:15 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Like many New Yorkers, I have spent the last 25 years registered as an independent, and thus unable to vote in competitive elections. Too often, the winning candidate is a foregone conclusion by the time of the general election. New Yorkers like me find themselves locked out of the races where the winning candidate is chosen simply because we do not choose to or want to belong to a political party.

By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Tom Williams
[REDACTED]

From: Judith [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:16 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I am an African American woman who resides in NYC and I have been a longstanding registered Democrat. However, I do remember that when I first voted in my early twenties, I thought I could register as an Independent voter but it was suggested that I could have more influence if I registered as a Democrat. But" times they are a changing."

Political parties have become special interest groups standing between the government and the electorate. It is time that we allowed all New Yorkers to participate in elections. Open primaries mean New Yorkers can participate in primary elections regardless of whether they have registered with a political party.

New Yorkers should be able to participate directly in choosing their leaders. They should not have to choose to be affiliated with a party if they do not want to. We should make it as easy as possible for all New Yorkers to participate in elections, and open primaries do just that.

Judith White
[REDACTED]

From: Sandro Makaj [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:16 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I understand the importance of allowing all people, especially the newest New Yorkers, to participate in our electoral and civic life. Open primaries eliminate barriers to voting and would mean that all New Yorkers, particularly immigrants, would be able to participate in all our elections.

It is key to the very fabric of our city that we make our civic life one that all people can participate in, regardless of political preference or personal history. The people we elect to represent us should represent that shared belief in an open and inclusive city.

Sandro Makaj
[REDACTED]

From: Jacob Schraeter [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:17 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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It is too hard to vote in New York City, and voter turnout does not reflect the city as a whole. Open primaries address this by fixing one of the major impediments to voting and empowering a million New Yorkers to participate in the most competitive and consequential elections. Reducing the number of non-competitive elections will incentivize more people to participate in the democratic process.

Addressing our abysmal voter turnout rates should be a key priority of the Charter Revision Commission. I hope that the city does not miss this opportunity to ensure that we have competitive elections in which all registered voters can participate. This will mean that New York City has a healthier and more robust democracy than ever before.

Jacob Schraeter
[REDACTED]

From: Anita MacDougall [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:17 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I have been forced throughout my life to enroll in a political party if I want my vote to matter. Neither of the two largest parties reflects my values and beliefs. I am excited to be supporting open primaries. This change will mean that I am no longer forced to make a choice that does not reflect my values.

Being able to vote in an open primary would mean that I could choose and rank the candidates who best reflect my values, regardless of their affiliation with a political party. Moving to this system will not only open primary elections to a larger electorate but also help diversify the kinds of opinions and candidates appearing on the ballot.

Anita MacDougall
[REDACTED]

From: Bipin Mathew [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:18 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Like many New Yorkers, I have spent much of my life being unable to vote in competitive elections. Too often, the winning candidate is a foregone conclusion by the time of the general election. New Yorkers like me find themselves locked out of the races where the winning candidate is chosen simply because we do not choose to or want to belong to a political party.

By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Bipin Mathew
[REDACTED]

From: Marisa Bonnet [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:18 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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New York City has always been at the forefront of democracy, and it is time that we continue to evolve. Having recently adopted Ranked Choice Voting, it is time that we take the next step and move to a system of open primaries. As a New Yorker, I am proud to be from a place known for innovation, and the time has come for us to take the next step.

This evolution will strengthen our democracy and bring more New Yorkers into the process. By continuing to evolve and adapt, we show the world we are leading the way. New York has been, and should continue to be, the world's most creative and innovative city. There's no reason that shouldn't be true for our elections.

Marisa Bonnet
[REDACTED]

From: Edward Sinclair [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:18 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Edward Sinclair
[REDACTED]

From: Andrew Latsko [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:19 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I understand the importance of allowing all people, especially the newest New Yorkers, to participate in our electoral and civic life. Open primaries eliminate barriers to voting and would mean that all New Yorkers, particularly immigrants, would be able to participate in all our elections.

It is key to the very fabric of our city that we make our civic life one that all people can participate in, regardless of political preference or personal history. The people we elect to represent us should represent that shared belief in an open and inclusive city.

Andrew Latsko
[REDACTED]

From: Thierry Bonnet [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:19 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Thierry Bonnet
[REDACTED]

From: Maria Passannante-Derr [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:19 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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It is too hard to vote in New York City, and voter turnout does not reflect the city as a whole. Open primaries address this by fixing one of the major impediments to voting and empowering a million New Yorkers to participate in the most competitive and consequential elections. Reducing the number of non-competitive elections will incentivize more people to participate in the democratic process.

Addressing our abysmal voter turnout rates should be a key priority of the Charter Revision Commission. I hope that the city does not miss this opportunity to ensure that we have competitive elections in which all registered voters can participate. This will mean that New York City has a healthier and more robust democracy than ever before.

Maria Passannante-Derr
[REDACTED]

From: Ilan Rabinovitch [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:20 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Addressing our abysmal voter turnout rates should be a key priority of the Charter Revision Commission. I hope that the city does not miss this opportunity to ensure that we have competitive elections in which all registered voters can participate. This will mean that New York City has a healthier and more robust democracy than ever before.

Ilan Rabinovitch
[REDACTED]

From: Frederick Wiener [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:21 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I have been forced throughout my life to enroll in a political party if I want my vote to matter. Neither of the two largest parties reflects my values and beliefs. I am excited to be supporting open primaries. This change will mean that I am no longer forced to make a choice that does not reflect my values.

Being able to vote in an open primary would mean that I could choose and rank the candidates who best reflect my values, regardless of their affiliation with a political party. Moving to this system will not only open primary elections to a larger electorate but also help diversify the kinds of opinions and candidates appearing on the ballot.

Frederick Wiener
[REDACTED]

From: Gerard Mchugh [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:21 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Being able to vote in an open primary would mean that I could choose and rank the candidates who best reflect my values, regardless of their affiliation with a political party. Moving to this system will not only open primary elections to a larger electorate but also help diversify the kinds of opinions and candidates appearing on the ballot.

Gerard Mchugh
[REDACTED]

From: Laurena Torres [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:22 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I have been forced throughout my life to enroll in a political party if I want my vote to matter. Neither of the two largest parties reflects my values and beliefs. I am excited to be supporting open primaries. This change will mean that I am no longer forced to make a choice that does not reflect my values.

Being able to vote in an open primary would mean that I could choose and rank the candidates who best reflect my values, regardless of their affiliation with a political party. Moving to this system will not only open primary elections to a larger electorate but also help diversify the kinds of opinions and candidates appearing on the ballot.

Laurena Torres
[REDACTED]

From: Sheryl Williams [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:22 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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One of the best things about special elections is that they are nonpartisan. I pay taxes too. As a lifelong independent, I no longer want to be barred from participation. Let all registered voters vote in every round of voting—no more closed primaries. Or to put it another way, no more exclusionary primaries!

Special elections have been held in New York City for as long as I can remember. They are an effective way for voters to express their preferences among a range of candidates and save the City the cost of running multiple different elections.

I understand the importance of allowing all people, especially the newest New Yorkers, to participate in our electoral and civic life. Open primaries eliminate barriers to voting and would mean that all New Yorkers, including new citizens (once registered), could participate in all our elections.

It is key to the very fabric of our city that we make our civic life one that all people can participate in, regardless of political preference or personal history. The people we elect to represent us should represent that shared belief in an open and inclusive city.

Sheryl Williams
[REDACTED]

From: Gwen Lowenheim [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:23 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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It is too hard to vote in New York City, and voter turnout does not reflect the city as a whole. Open primaries address this by fixing one of the major impediments to voting and empowering a Imillion New Yorkers to participate in the most competitive and consequential elections. Reducing the number of non-competitive elections will incentivize more people to participate in the democratic process.

I work with students in Higher Ed and many are disengaged from the political parties. They are looking for more varied options. Opening our "closed primary" election system - to all registered voters - can invigorate all of us to be part of the democratic process

Addressing the current abysmal voter turnout rates should be a key priority of the Charter Revision Commission. I hope that the city does not miss this opportunity to ensure that we have competitive elections in which all registered voters can participate. This will mean that New York City has a healthier and more robust democracy than ever before.

Gwen Lowenheim
[REDACTED]

From: Ann Korchak [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:23 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I have been forced throughout my life to enroll in a political party if I want my vote to matter. Neither of the two largest parties reflects my values and beliefs. I am excited to be supporting open primaries. This change will mean that I am no longer forced to make a choice that does not reflect my values.

Being able to vote in an open primary would mean that I could choose and rank the candidates who best reflect my values, regardless of their affiliation with a political party. Moving to this system will not only open primary elections to a larger electorate but also help diversify the kinds of opinions and candidates appearing on the ballot.

Ann Korchak
[REDACTED]

From: V McCalla [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:23 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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New York City has always been at the forefront of democracy, and it is time that we continue to evolve. Having recently adopted Ranked Choice Voting, it is time that we take the next step and move to a system of open primaries. As a New Yorker, I am proud to be from a place known for innovation, and the time has come for us to take the next step.

This evolution will strengthen our democracy and bring more New Yorkers into the process. By continuing to evolve and adapt, we show the world we are leading the way. New York has been, and should continue to be, the world's most creative and innovative city. There's no reason that shouldn't be true for our elections.

V McCalla
[REDACTED]

From: Shahd Khidir [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:24 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Addressing our abysmal voter turnout rates should be a key priority of the Charter Revision Commission. I hope that the city does not miss this opportunity to ensure that we have competitive elections in which all registered voters can participate. This will mean that New York City has a healthier and more robust democracy than ever before.

Shahd Khidir
[REDACTED]

From: Allen Cox [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:25 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I am a community health outreach worker and have worked with various organizations to promote healthy lifestyles and disease prevention in the poor communities.

I am a longtime independent activist, and an organizer with CICA (Committee for Independent Community Action). I also am a basketball referee with the PSAL.

As a registered independent voter for decades, I believe it is unjust for NYC to prevent independents from voting in the all important city Council and Mayoral and citywide primaries. There are over one million independents across our city, and our tax dollars pay for the primaries. So, essentially it is a form of taxation without representation. No American should be forced to join a political party to be able to vote in a primary.

I believe it is time for NYC to open its primaries and allow all voters to have equal voting rights, as so many of our major cities do (like Chicago, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Dallas, Boston, etc).

This is especially important as young people are registering without a political party at a rate of 50%. We need to have a political process that welcomes their participation.

I believe that opening the primaries would foster more participation and encourage our elected officials to represent all their constituents.

Allen Cox
[REDACTED]

From: Barbara Silverman [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:25 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I was a long time independent and then finally resented that I could not vote in the primaries so I switched to Democrat which, again, I resented having to do. Political parties have become special interest groups standing between the government and the electorate. It is time that we allowed all New Yorkers to participate in elections. Open primaries mean New Yorkers can participate in primary elections regardless of whether they have registered with a political party.

New Yorkers should be able to participate directly in choosing their leaders. They should not have to choose to be affiliated with a party if they do not want to. We should make it as easy as possible for all New Yorkers to participate in elections, and open primaries do just that.

Barbara Silverman
[REDACTED]

From: LAUREN FEINER [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:26 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I have been forced throughout my life to enroll in a political party if I want my vote to matter. I have done so, even though neither of the two largest parties reflects my values and beliefs. I am excited to be supporting open primaries. This change will mean that I am no longer forced to make a choice that does not reflect my values.

Being able to vote in an open primary would mean that I could choose and rank the candidates who best reflect my values, regardless of their affiliation with a political party. Moving to this system will not only open primary elections to a larger electorate but also help diversify the kinds of opinions and candidates appearing on the ballot.

LAUREN FEINER
[REDACTED]

From: Caroline Donnola [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:26 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I've been an independent voter for more than 40 years. When I lived in California in the early 2000's, I worked on a successful initiative, Prop 14, which called for nonpartisan primaries. It enabled every independent to vote in the first round of voting. As we know, that first round is critical. In many jurisdictions, it determines the outcome of the election.

I moved back to NYC in 2011, and I have been deeply disturbed by my inability to significantly impact on NYC's elections because of my status as an unaffiliated independent voter.

Voting in an open primary would give me a chance to voice my concerns through the ballot box in the first round of municipal elections. I want to have the option of voting for my candidate of choice, not necessarily a candidate chosen by one of the parties. I believe that if the primaries were open we would have more choices, better choices, and more participation. The percentage of Republicans and Democrats who vote in their primaries is very small. And, by the way, we, the taxpayers, fund those primaries which are closed to us unaffiliated folks. Thus, our elected officials represent a small segment of the city. Open the primaries and we will see a serious increase in voter participation. Isn't that what democracy is supposed to be about?

Caroline Donnola
[REDACTED]

From: Deborah Green [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:26 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I am writing to urge the Charter Commission to put a referendum on open primaries on the NYC ballot this November.

I am a registered Democrat, but I strongly believe that closed primaries have had a negative effect on our political system. No system that excludes the 50% of registered voters who are independent or unaligned from participating in the most important and decisive phase of candidate selection can truly be considered a democratic system. The current system of closed primaries disenfranchises voters, plain and simple. In today's highly polarized political environment, closed primaries force candidates to narrow their message to appeal only to those they think are most likely to vote in the primary. This depresses turnout, favors special interests, and degrades representation.

More than 20 years ago, under the Bloomberg administration, a referendum on open primaries was placed on the ballot, and lost after fierce opposition from the major party establishment, which was clearly not disturbed by voter disenfranchisement. Two decades later, the proportion of independent voters has increased from about 35% to over 50% -- larger than either of the two major parties -- and dissatisfaction with both parties is rampant. We must not lose this chance to allow all registered NYC voters to participate in a renewal of our political system. The Charter Commission must put open primaries on the NYC ballot for this November.

Deborah Green
[REDACTED]

From: June Hirsh [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:27 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Listen up! This statement, being sent to you by many-I hope millions, comes from my heart and soul!!!!
It is too hard to vote in New York City, and voter turnout does not reflect the city as a whole. Open primaries address this by fixing one of the major impediments to voting and empowering a million New Yorkers to participate in the most competitive and consequential elections. Reducing the number of non-competitive elections will incentivize more people to participate in the democratic process.

Addressing our abysmal voter turnout rates should be a key priority of the Charter Revision Commission. I hope that the city does not miss this opportunity to ensure that we have competitive elections in which all registered voters can participate. This will mean that New York City has a healthier and more robust democracy than ever before.

June Hirsh
[REDACTED]

From: Louis Hinman [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:27 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I've been an independent voter most of my adult life. In 2003, Michael Bloomberg's CRC put a resolution on the ballot for open primaries,, and I campaigned for it. That resolution was defeated, but now, 22 years later, there are movements to replace closed primaries with open primaries in many states, and about half of all registered voters nationwide call themselves independent. It's time!

Louis Hinman
[REDACTED]

From: Jessica Marta [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:28 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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My name is Jessica Marta, I have been forced throughout my life to enroll in a political party if I want my vote to matter. Neither of the two large parties reflects my values and beliefs, and in fact, this limits democracy for everyone.. I am excited to be supporting open primaries. This change to the NYC charter would mean that the people of New York City, would no longer be forced to make a choice that often does not reflect their values.

Being able to vote in an open primary would mean that I could choose candidates who best reflect my values, and opinions, regardless of their affiliation with a political party. Moving to this system could may encourage more voters to participate in elections and increased voter participation is a good thing.

Jessica Marta
[REDACTED]

From: Jessie Fields [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:28 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I am a long time independent leader and a physician in the Harlem community. There are a million New Yorkers who are independents and unaffiliated with a political party, a majority of them are young people and people of color. No one should be forced to join a political party in order to have the right to vote. New York City should have equal voting rights for all registered voters. We need to expand voter participation. Open primaries address this by fixing one of the major impediments to voting and empowering a million New Yorkers to participate in the most competitive and consequential elections. Reducing the number of non-competitive elections will incentivize more people to participate in the democratic process.

Addressing our abysmal voter turnout rates should be a key priority of the Charter Revision Commission. I hope that the city does not miss this opportunity to ensure that we have competitive elections in which all registered voters can participate. This will mean that New York City has a healthier and more robust democracy than ever before.

Dr. Jessie Fields

Jessie Fields
[REDACTED]

From: Harriet Hoffman [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:29 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Like many New Yorkers, I spent much of my life being unable to vote in competitive elections. Too often, the winning candidate is a foregone conclusion by the time of the general election. New Yorkers like me find themselves locked out of the races where the winning candidate is chosen simply because we do not choose to or want to belong to a political party. I was forced to join a party when I decided I wanted to vote in a primary race.

By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Harriet Hoffman
[REDACTED]

From: Elyse Mendel [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:29 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I've been an independent all of my life and it is too hard to vote in New York City, and voter turnout does not reflect the city as a whole. Open primaries address this by fixing one of the major impediments to voting and empowering a million New Yorkers to participate in the most competitive and consequential elections. Reducing the number of non-competitive elections will incentivize more people to participate in the democratic process.

Addressing our abysmal voter turnout rates should be a key priority of the Charter Revision Commission. I hope that the city does not miss this opportunity to ensure that we have competitive elections in which all registered voters can participate. This will mean that New York City has a healthier and more robust democracy than ever before.

Elyse Mendel
[REDACTED]

From: Elyse Mendel [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:29 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I've been an independent for most of my life and have been excluded from the primaries and I'd like to exercise my democratic right to participate in the primaries and open primaries would allow me to do that. Too often, the winning candidate is a foregone conclusion by the time of the general election. New Yorkers like me find themselves locked out of the races where the winning candidate is chosen simply because we do not choose to or want to belong to a political party.

By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Elyse Mendel
[REDACTED]

From: Victoria Wallace [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:30 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I've been an independent over twenty-five years and like many New Yorkers, I have spent much of my life being unable to vote in competitive elections. Too often, the winning candidate is a foregone conclusion by the time of the general election. New Yorkers like me find themselves locked out of the races where the winning candidate is chosen simply because we do not choose to or want to belong to a political party.

By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Victoria Wallace
[REDACTED]

From: Richard Ronner <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:30 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Like many New Yorkers, I have spent much of my life being unable to vote in the early, often decisive, round of voting. Too often, the winning candidate is a foregone conclusion by the time of the general election. New Yorkers like me find themselves locked out of the races where the winning candidate is chosen simply because we do not choose to or want to belong to a political party.

By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Richard Ronner
[REDACTED]

From: Christine Helm [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:31 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I don't like being forced into a party in order to participate in competitive elections which are decided in the primaries. I think this feeds the polarization we face in the country today. New Yorkers like me find themselves locked out of the races where the winning candidate is chosen simply because we do not choose to or want to belong to a political party.

By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Christine Helm
[REDACTED]

From: Delphine Protopapas [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:32 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I believe that New Yorkers have the right to vote in competitive elections where candidates are motivated to deliver for voters because they face a fair challenge. Too often, the winning candidate is a foregone conclusion by the time of the general election. New Yorkers like me find themselves locked out of the races where the winning candidate is chosen simply because we do not choose to or want to belong to a political party.

By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Delphine Protopapas
[REDACTED]

From: Marian Rich [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:32 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I am a lifelong resident of Manhattan. I became politically active in 1968 at the age of 12. I have always been an independent, and have never registered in a political party. I have been a community organizer on behalf of independents voters for 40 years and worked on the issue of opening the primaries during Mayor Bloomberg's tenure.

New York City has recently adopted ranked choice voting, we also adopted terms and a system of public campaign financing. It is time we take the next step and move to a system of open primaries.

There are over one million New York City voters who are not registered with a party. Our primaries are tax payer funded and should include all voters. No New York City Voter should be forced to join a political party to be able to vote in our often definitive primaries.

Let all voters vote.

Marian Rich
[REDACTED]

From: Anthony Protopapas [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:33 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I support a system of open primaries for New York City elections.

I think the move to ranked choice voting is great, but we can do better. Too many general elections end up with polarized candidate choices driven by the political margins. Opening primaries to all registered voters will produce candidates who are accountable to a greater fraction of the city's population and result in a more representative and responsive leadership for the city.

Anthony Protopapas
[REDACTED]

From: Diane Buscemi [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:33 AM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I am a lifelong New Yorker and I have been an independent since the 1980's. That's a long time to not be able to vote in primary elections that my tax dollars pay for!

I have been a reading and ESL teacher for over 50 years, right now teaching at a community college in the CUNY system.

There are over one million New Yorkers like me who find themselves locked out of crucial elections because we do not wish to join a political party. We are not allowed to vote in primaries, which all too often are definitive.

By opening the primaries, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity. No American should be forced to join a political party in order to vote.

Diane Buscemi
[REDACTED]

From: Carrie Lobman [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 6:49 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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New York City has always been at the forefront of democracy, and it is time that we continue to evolve. Having recently adopted Ranked Choice Voting, it is time that we take the next step and move to a system of open primaries. As a New Yorker, I am proud to be from a place known for innovation, and the time has come for us to take the next step.

This evolution will strengthen our democracy and bring more New Yorkers into the process. By continuing to evolve and adapt, we show the world we are leading the way. New York has been, and should continue to be, the world's most creative and innovative city. There's no reason that shouldn't be true for our elections.

Carrie Lobman
[REDACTED]

From: Gayle Weintraub [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 6:50 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I have been forced throughout my life to enroll in a political party if I want my vote to matter. Neither of the two largest parties reflects my values and beliefs. I am excited to be supporting open primaries. This change will mean that I am no longer forced to make a choice that does not reflect my values.

Being able to vote in an open primary would mean that I could choose and rank the candidates who best reflect my values, regardless of their affiliation with a political party. Moving to this system will not only open primary elections to a larger electorate but also help diversify the kinds of opinions and candidates appearing on the ballot.

Gayle Weintraub
[REDACTED]

From: David Belmont [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 6:50 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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I am a lifelong independent voter and a lifelong resident of NYC. As such, I am effectively invisible in our electoral process. Since New York has closed primaries, I cannot vote in the first round of elections. And that round, in almost all cases, determines the eventual winner of the election. The major parties have never spoken for me and I resent being told that I must join one of them to participate in the first round of elections. I favor nonpartisan elections for a simple reason. I think ALL voters should be allowed to participate in ALL rounds of our electoral process. I think either a Top Two or Top Four nonpartisan primary would be the best solution, but anything that opens up the full process to all voters would make a huge difference.

David Belmont
[REDACTED]

From: Bernice Brief [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 6:51 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Political parties have become special interest groups standing between the government and the electorate. It is time that we allowed all New Yorkers to participate in elections. Open primaries mean New Yorkers can participate in primary elections regardless of whether they have registered with a political party.

New Yorkers should be able to participate directly in choosing their leaders. They should not have to choose to be affiliated with a party if they do not want to. We should make it as easy as possible for all New Yorkers to participate in elections, and open primaries do just that.

Bernice Brief
[REDACTED]

From: Nancy Green [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 6:51 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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As a taxpayer in NY, I pay for primaries that I am excluded from as an independent. This longstanding undemocratic process must end. Independents are a significant part of the electorate and must be premitted to vote.

Other states and cities in the USA have figured out how to include all voters in every step of the election process.

Like many New Yorkers, I have spent much of my life being unable to vote in competitive elections. Too often, the winning candidate is a foregone conclusion by the time of the general election. New Yorkers like me find themselves locked out of the races where the winning candidate is chosen simply because we do not choose to or want to belong to a political party.

By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Nancy Green
[REDACTED]

From: Bryan Liff [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2025 3:21 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries

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Like many New Yorkers, I have spent much of my life being unable to vote in competitive elections. Too often, the winning candidate is a foregone conclusion by the time of the general election. New Yorkers like me find themselves locked out of the races where the winning candidate is chosen simply because we do not choose to or want to belong to a political party.

By opening this system, many New Yorkers will be newly enfranchised and will vote in far greater numbers. It is my hope that the Commission will not miss this opportunity to allow many New Yorkers of all political stripes to fully participate in our democratic process.

Bryan Liff
[REDACTED]