



Written Testimony Submitted to the Charter Revision Commission

February 28, 2025

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimonial for the Charter Revision Commission - Nuestros Niños
Date: Friday, January 31, 2025 3:33:37 PM

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**Testimonial for the Charter Revision Commission
Presented by Ingrid Matias Chungata
Executive Director, Nuestros Niños**

Honorable Members of the Charter Revision Commission,

My name is Ingrid Matias Chungata, and I serve as the Executive Director of Nuestros Niños, an organization that has been a pillar in the Williamsburg community since its founding in 1973. For over five decades, Nuestros Niños has provided high-quality early childhood education, championing the rights of working families, immigrants, and historically underserved populations. We have operated a comprehensive network of services, including fully funded DOE programs and a Family Child Care Network, ensuring that children from birth to five receive the education, care, and support they need to thrive.

Throughout our history, we have embraced progressive early childhood methodologies, including our recent adoption of a Reggio Emilia-inspired philosophy in our Early Head Start program. We have fostered innovation through initiatives like our Pre-K Robotics program in partnership with WorkED. Our commitment has always been to nurture children holistically while supporting families in their journey toward economic stability and self-sufficiency.

Our community requests the support of this committee to aid our efforts in keeping our beloved program open. In a City of Yes, where we understand the importance of quality early childhood programming, the City has decided to close one of its model programs.

The closure of our program represents not just the loss of an early childhood education center but a dismantling of a trusted institution that has empowered generations of families. The ripple effects of this decision will be felt deeply, not just by the children and parents we serve, but by the educators and caregivers who have dedicated their careers to this mission.

Proposing more housing while slashing childcare options does not serve the city's best interest; it is in the interest of those that wish to further an agenda of slow and methodical gentrification, destroying and dismantling support systems and pushing out, paying off, and politicizing the underserved children and families in the community. Housing and early childhood education must go hand in hand—families cannot thrive in new housing developments if they do not have access to affordable, high-quality childcare. Without early education centers in close proximity, working parents are left without viable options, further destabilizing families and contributing to economic inequities. If the city truly wants to invest in its communities, it must ensure that new housing developments include essential services like childcare, rather than displacing the programs that have long supported families in these neighborhoods.

As we stand at this critical juncture, I urge the Commission to consider the broader implications of policies that impact community-based organizations like Nuestros Niños. The sustainability of early childhood programs should be a priority in the city's governance and funding structures. Families depend on stable, high-quality childcare, and children deserve to learn in environments that foster their growth and potential.

I call upon the Commission to ensure that early childhood education remains a fundamental right for all, and that organizations like ours are given the support necessary to continue their work without the constant threat of financial instability and bureaucratic hurdles. Nuestros Niños has been a beacon of hope for over fifty years, and with the right commitments from our city leadership, we can continue to be so for many more.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

Ingrid

Ingrid Chungata, M.Ed
Executive Director
Nuestros Niños Child Development School



"I have learned that people will forget what you have said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel",
Maya Angelou

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-442414 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Friday, February 7, 2025 11:11:49 PM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Alana Sivin

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: The Charter Revision commission should introduce a ballot initiative that would make it so that the Board of Correction (BOC) and the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) are automatically funded by at least 1 percent of the DOC and NYPD's budget, respectively. We applauded the 2019 charter revision that linked the CCRB budget and NYPD's budgets. As an oversight agency tasked with holding the NYPD accountable, tying the CCRB budget to the NYPD was a crucial step in ensuring the CCRB's independence and access to resources. However, the current percentage—.6 percent—is insufficient, and the CCRB remains underfunded. For example, last year, 700 cases were dismissed without investigation due to inadequate staffing and funding. Moving forward, the .6 percentage should be raised to at least 1%. And like the CCRB, the BOC's funding should also be tied to the NYPD's funding—and should also be at no less than 1 percent. Like the CCRB, the BOC was created as an independent oversight board tasked with investigating and reviewing the policies and practices of the DOC. Also like the CCRB, the BOC is severely underfunded and understaffed. But unlike the CCRB, the BOC's funding is not tied to DOC's budget. This undermines the ability of the BOC to carry out its oversight duties effectively, independently, and consistently. For the BOC to best carry out its crucial oversight duties over a jail system that is far from the public eye and that has been mired in abuse, the BOC needs increased funding, and an independent mechanism to receive funding moving forward.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-9042520 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Sunday, February 9, 2025 4:27:54 PM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Taylor Wofford

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Please enact the charter revisions suggested here:
<https://substack.com/home/post/p-156486391> A summary: 1. Amend §197-d to limit the city council's ability to disapprove or modify decisions of the city planning commission that increase housing supply, while the council has legally declared a housing emergency induced by lack of supply. 2. Amend chapter two to add 10 citywide, "at-large" council seats. 3. Amend chapter 70 to decrease the maximum size of community boards from 50 to 25 members, and bring them under the sole purview of the borough president. 4. Amend chapter 74 to right-size historic preservation by introducing a cap of 9,000 total landmarked buildings and adding a delandmarking application process. 5. Rename the office of the Comptroller to the office of the Chief Financial Officer, in chapter four and throughout the charter as needed.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Written Testimony - Brooklyn
Date: Monday, February 10, 2025 9:30:20 PM

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Hello,

My name is Alex Koziol and I live in Flatbush Brooklyn. My neighborhood is one of the many, including Jackson Heights, Flushing, Sunnyside, and Inwood, that were filled with dense "new law" 6 story apartments in the 1920s and 1930s. These apartments were once legal to build *anywhere* in the five boroughs. They are spacious, light-filled, and have stood the test of time. Most of these apartments have 2-3 bedrooms, suitable for families with children. Many of them are remarkably cheap; these neighborhoods in particular are to this day some of the most affordable and diverse neighborhoods in the five boroughs.

This affordability and diversity is not a coincidence: all of these neighborhoods are remarkably dense, many of them approaching the Upper East Side in terms of people per square mile. That means there's a lot of housing to go around! The subway is not even close to being full at rush hour (especially in Brooklyn) and schools have experienced decades of declining enrollment. Not only do we need the affordability these kinds of apartments bring - we also need the people!

To make New York affordable for working class and middle class families, the single most significant action the city government can take is to make these 6 story apartments once again legal to build anywhere. Zoning should be greatly simplified to whatever it was that enabled these apartments to be built en masse in the 1920s and 1930s.

I hope that the City Charter Revision Commission considers changes to the charter that would make this happen. If not, the least the Commission could do is to consider the very modest reform proposals by Open New York (A Charter for Housing Equity). These five reforms would at least begin to address some of the affordability issues New Yorkers are fighting with every day.

Thank you,
Alex

Alex Koziol IV

Brooklyn, NY

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-2257521 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Tuesday, February 11, 2025 10:42:53 AM

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[REDACTED] on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 10:42:28 AM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Ana Champeny

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Please see attached testimony. Link to testimony:

[https://cbcny\[.\]org/sites/default/files/media/files/CBC_TESTIMONY_NYC_CRC_02112025_0.pdf](https://cbcny[.]org/sites/default/files/media/files/CBC_TESTIMONY_NYC_CRC_02112025_0.pdf)

Link to report: [https://cbcny\[.\]org/sites/default/files/media/files/REPORT_Land-Use_09062022_0.pdf](https://cbcny[.]org/sites/default/files/media/files/REPORT_Land-Use_09062022_0.pdf)



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

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

Submitted to the New York City Charter Revision Commission

February 11, 2025

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

The Citizens Budget Commission (CBC) is pleased to submit to the Charter Revision Commission (CRC) this testimony presenting guidelines on how to improve New York City's land use decision-making process. CBC will testify at the March 4, 2025 hearing and recommend specific Charter reforms that would improve land use decisions and help advance policies to increase housing production.

CBC's 2022 report, [Improving New York City's Land Use Decision-Making Process](#), examined the reasons New York City's land use decision-making process became an impediment to progress, restricting the City's ability to spur job growth, develop housing, and become more resilient and sustainable.

CBC found that the City's land use process is:

- **Too uncertain**, with little predictability whether public actors in the review process, particularly in the City Council, would approve applications;
- **Too lengthy**; and
- **Too costly**, potentially increasing development costs by as much as \$82,000 per unit for residential projects.

As a result, the process too often stops projects that would address citywide needs. Perhaps more worrying, the land use process often discourages both the City and private landowners from proposing worthy projects or rezonings since they doubt their chances of success.

To increase jobs and housing and meet evolving environmental needs, the City's land use process should:

- Enable the City to grow and adapt over time;
- Allow flexibility to respond to economic conditions and market trends;
- Advance citywide needs and planning goals;
- Provide opportunities for meaningful local input and participation;
- Identify both the benefits and costs of proposed actions; and
- Offer predictability about timing and outcomes to applicants and the public.

While in ways well-intended, New York City's current land use decision-making process falls short of these criteria.

How the Current Process Falls Short

New York City's land use process consists of three stages:

1. **Pre-review**, an informal stage during which applicants discuss potential proposals with elected officials and other stakeholders to gauge their potential support;
2. **Pre-Certification and Environmental Review**, during which applicants refine their proposal and conduct environmental review, which is required by State law; and the
3. **Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP)**, a time-limited process established in the City Charter consisting of advisory votes of Community Boards and Borough Presidents, followed by binding votes of the City Planning Commission and City Council.

The City's zoning and land use processes have some merits. For example, ULURP has strict time limits, and the City allows projects that conform with the zoning code to be built as-of-right with just a building permit and no discretionary approvals.

However, there are also substantial drawbacks. Many of these drawbacks are because ULURP prioritizes neighborhood concerns over the ability of the City to address citywide needs through the planning process.

Four drawbacks are:

- **Public engagement is a goal of ULURP, but the complexity of the preceding environmental review encourages "overscoping" rather than collaboration and results in duplicative participation requirements.** Due to the cost and time associated with environmental review, project scopes are largely fixed by the start of the ULURP process. Shrinking a project does not require redoing environmental review, but increasing its scope or changing uses does, essentially restarting the pre-certification process. As a result, some applicants "overscope" or ask for larger projects than they intend to build. This, in turn, increases opposition from the local community, making ULURP more adversarial and less collaborative than it should be.

Notably, ULURP was created before the enactment of the State's environmental review law. ULURP was the product of a State Charter Review Commission, which initially proposed the process in 1972 and put it before voters in a 1975 referendum, before the State Legislature passed the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) later that year. ULURP was never adjusted for the impact of SEQRA on pre-certification timelines or to account for the duplicative public review requirements required under the respective review processes.

- **The City Charter does not require ULURP participants to identify and privilege projects that align with the goals of the City's Charter-mandated long-range strategic plan.** While New York City already undertakes strategic planning with some frequency, it does not formally connect these plans to the land use decision-making process. Environmental review considers only the potential adverse impacts of new development; there is no requirement to consider potential benefits. ULURP has no formal review criteria at all. The lack of formal review criteria in ULURP also increases uncertainty with respect to how the public actors in the review process will evaluate applications and whether they will approve them.

The 1975 Charter reforms were designed to reduce the Mayor's ability to plan for citywide needs by devolving planning powers to local neighborhoods. In the process of creating ULURP and an alternative community planning process (Section 197-a), the Commission intentionally eliminated the Charter's formal connection between the land use review process and a citywide master plan.

- **Multiple veto points in ULURP increase uncertainty.** The most consequential of these veto points is at the City Council. New York is one of the few cities that

requires zoning changes to secure approvals from a district-level City Council that nearly always defers to the wishes of the members who represent the areas proposed for rezoning, a practice referred to as member deference. This practice prioritizes neighborhood concerns over citywide needs and plans. Research has found that cities with district- or ward-level councils have lower rates of housing production, and particularly for multifamily housing, compared to cities with at-large councils.

- **Too many actions are subject to ULURP, creating unneeded obstacles for certain projects and an administrative burden on City agencies:** In addition to land use actions and rezonings, the City Charter subjects many other actions to public review under ULURP, including franchise agreements, housing and urban renewal plans, the siting of City facilities, the acquisition and disposition of City-owned facilities, and special permits. Subjecting these actions to a full review is a burden on City Planning and other City agencies, which oversee the applications as they make their way through the review process.

These drawbacks lead to lengthier reviews and higher development costs:

- **Review Time:** CBC found that, on average, private rezoning applications filed between 2014 and 2017 took 2.5 years to secure approvals, with little variation between large and small projects. Even ULURP reviews for as-of-right projects that do not require environmental review take a long time. For example, 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 to complete the review process, which is required before projects can close on financing and secure building permits.
- **Development Cost:** A two-year-long review process increases construction costs as much as \$82,000 per unit. Due to the high rate of construction inflation, this is much greater than the \$67,000 per unit CBC found in our 2022 report.

As a result, few discretionary applications come forward, reducing opportunities to create housing and jobs. In the four years CBC studied, only 171 private proposals came forward, of which 103, or 60 percent, ultimately were approved. That is one reason why privately initiated rezonings account for only 10 percent of new housing units completed in New York City.

Public rezoning actions also require substantial time and are highly uncertain. Citywide zoning proposals, like the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity, undergo a full Environmental Impact Statement, which includes a public review component, followed by review by 59 Community

Boards, five Borough Presidents, the City Planning Commission, and the City Council. As seen in City of Yes, the compromises demanded by the City Council to secure their approval cut nearly 30,000 potential units from the plan and effectively let some neighborhoods—many of which produce little to no new housing—off the hook from contributing to housing production, despite the immense citywide need.

Guidelines for Reform

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.

While some of the delays and uncertainty are caused by the State’s environmental review laws, the laws of New York State delegate the authority to create and amend zoning regulations to local governments. For New York City, those rules are enshrined in the Charter.

Reforming the Charter’s land-use decision-making processes would enable the City to modernize the zoning code to increase as-of-right zoning capacity, give private landowners guidance and predictability, and encourage projects that advance City priorities and goals.

Ultimately these reforms should follow three guidelines:

1. **The process should evaluate proposals based on potential benefits and alignment with the goals of its Charter-mandated strategic plan and other plans.** The City identifies goals in its Charter-mandated strategic plan, as well as plans for housing, jobs, and other priorities. However, those goals and the strategies to implement them are not binding and do not materially drive decision making in the land use approval process.
2. **Advisory reviews at the community level should be more collaborative, participatory, and productive.** Currently, advisory reviews by the Community Boards and Borough Presidents come too late to materially inform projects because they come after environmental review. Localized reviews often fail to consider citywide needs, which do not have to be balanced with neighborhood concerns. Also, given advances in technology since the Community Boards were first given a role in ULURP in 1975, there may be alternative strategies for gauging public opinion or securing public input into land use actions that are more representative of public sentiment.
3. **Balancing citywide needs and neighborhood concerns should not be circumvented by member deference.** Structural changes to better balance citywide needs and neighborhood concerns are challenging in part because member deference is a cultural

and policy choice of the Council rather than an administrative regulation or law. Still, changes are needed to accomplish this while maintaining the City Council's and individual Councilmembers' important roles in the process.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. We look forward to testifying on specific recommendations on March 4.

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From: [REDACTED] f
To: chartertestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] NYC District Council of Carpenters" Testimony to NYC Charter Revision Commission - Housing and Land Use Session - 2/11/25
Date: Tuesday, February 11, 2025 3:27:36 PM
Attachments: [KevinElkinsCharter Testimony NYCDCC 4934-7341-0585 v.1.docx](#)

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Good afternoon,

Attached is testimony that the NYC District Council of Carpenters will deliver to the New York City Charter Revision Commission this evening, February 11, 2025, at the Public Input Session on Housing and Land Use. Thank you.

Brian Krapf
Director of Communications
Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno LLC

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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Testimony to the New York City Charter Revision Commission

Public Input Session on Housing and Land Use

February 11, 2025

Good evening.

My name is Kevin Elkins, and I am speaking on behalf of the 20,000 men and women of the New York City District Council of Carpenters. Every day, we risk our lives to build New York City.


While we support efforts to make it easier to build, the devil— and, frankly, the profit for developers— is in the details. Numerous press reports have suggested that this commission is seeking to limit member deference and weaken the ULURP process.

What this commission must understand is that, while imperfect, member deference and ULURP remains the only mechanism that forces powerful real estate interests to make concessions to the community and ensures construction workers are paid enough to afford the very affordable housing they build. This job used to be a ticket to the middle class. Now? One in four New York construction workers lack health insurance. The amount of construction workers on government assistance is above average when compared to other industries. This doesn't include undocumented workers, so we are barely touching the surface of the problem.

That is why we cannot support— and will aggressively oppose— any effort to erode the power of elected officials to protect our members on projects in their districts.

If the commission wants to pursue targeted, common-sense reforms to speed up the process, that is a conversation worth having. But it cannot come at the expense of responsible development and working New Yorkers. Not only would that be bad policy, but it would also be bad politics— something Governor Kathy Hochul learned the hard way when she ignored this issue in her first, unsuccessful housing plan.

With as much humility as I can muster, I'd like to remind everyone that, whether in Albany or City Hall, every time we have engaged in a land use fight over the past four years, the Carpenters Union has won. We hope for a constructive dialogue, but on behalf of the workers of New York City— union and non-union alike— we will be ready if it is not.



From: [REDACTED]
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Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-4728939 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: William, L Flounoy Jr

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: The Leadership of Community Boards are essential to maintain institutional= legacy knowledge of the districts. To term limit the leadership of Community Boards is to also= limit the historical knowledge of the Boards. Please consider ending term limits for the= leadership of the Community Boards

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-4521791 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Daniel Golliher

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: I have attached my five recommendations for charter reform for the CRC's consideration.
Thank you for your work in improving our founding document. Yours sincerely, Daniel Golliher

Five Charter Reforms for Growth, Building, and Bridging the Democratic Deficit

By Daniel Golliher | Maximum New York

If you like these proposed changes to the New York City charter, I encourage you to drop a kind note to the charter revision commission with a link to this post. You can do that [here](#). Let me know if you do so. You can also find the original post containing these recommendations [here](#).

My recommendations to [the charter revision commission convened by Mayor Eric Adams](#) are:

1. Amend §197-d to limit the city council's ability to disapprove or modify decisions of the city planning commission that increase housing supply, while the council has legally declared a housing emergency induced by lack of supply.
2. Amend chapter two to add 10 citywide, "at-large" council seats.
3. Amend chapter 70 to decrease the maximum size of community boards from 50 to 25 members, and bring them under the sole purview of the borough president.
4. Amend chapter 74 to right-size historic preservation by introducing a cap of 9,000 total landmarked buildings and adding a delandmarking application process.
5. Rename the office of the Comptroller to the office of the Chief Financial Officer, in chapter four and throughout the charter as needed.

These changes right-size key offices and institutions, and enable them to focus on, execute on, and be accountable for their missions—all while bringing them more in line with the better angels of New York City's citizenry.

1) Amend §197-d to add emergency housing approval provisions

Unlike most traditional emergency declarations, the city council's local declaration of a rental housing public emergency does not trigger any extraordinary powers that the government can use to solve the emergency. While the declaration does enable rent regulation to go into effect while the city's vacancy rate remains at 5% or below, it does nothing to speed the delivery of new housing supply, specifically private residential construction, which state and city rent regulation laws directly note as the solution to the emergency.¹

¹ See my earlier piece, "[New York's Rent Regulation Laws Say Housing Supply Is the Answer](#)"

It is no wonder that our legally declared rental housing emergency has existed for over 50 years since the advent of rent stabilization, and 80 years since rent control. It is time for the city charter to take the city council at its legally declared word, and end this emergency by unlocking the power and procedure to do so.

Suggested reform: amendments to §197-d of the city charter

To that end, I recommend amending section 197-d of the charter to facilitate expedited approval of new housing supply in a manner commensurate with the city council's legally declared emergency. Alternatively, these changes could be added to a new section 197-e for the sake of clarity.

[My \(very\) draft changes to §197-d of the charter can be found here](#) (see also “appendix one” in this document). In summary, they make the following changes to city council review of city planning commission land use application decisions that concern adding new residential units during a city council-declared housing emergency:

- The council shall only disapprove a decision with a three-quarters vote of all council members.
- The council may approve a decision with modification with a majority vote of all council members, if those modifications do not decrease estimated housing unit production.

While the city council will likely not be pleased by these amendments, they are appropriate given: (1) the council's own declaration of an emergency for the past five decades, and (2) the council's inability to act to solve the emergency. But this is not merely because the council votes housing proposals down; the mere prospect of council review chills many projects [that would otherwise enter the land use pipeline](#):

“However, elected officials’ past resistance to new development can also have a chilling effect on future proposals by dissuading applicants from considering discretionary projects in the first place.”

Notably, even passing the very modest City of Yes for Housing Opportunity was a herculean task, which the council could not pass without first [reducing estimated housing unit production by 20%](#) and securing billions in follow-on funding for its own priorities. Until the city exits its housing emergency (declared by the council itself), the council should have limited land use approval power over new housing supply—a good incentive for them to get us out of the emergency expeditiously!

Further: these changes would make the city planning commission the primary point of approval for many land use applications, subject to the “emergency brake” of a three-quarter council

override vote. This is an appropriate arrangement for an emergency, because the CPC is already a composite entity with appointment input from the mayor, public advocate, borough presidents, and city council. It already represents the city, with more of a bias for action.²

Finally: these provisions would be protected from unilateral revision by a two-thirds majority of the city council by [§38, paragraph 16, of the charter](#).

Further recommendation 1: add legislative findings to clarify the nature of the housing emergency

The city's Rent Stabilization Law of 1969, enacted in our administrative code, presents legislative findings in [§26-501](#). Taken together with the legislative findings sections of relevant state law concerning rent regulation, [they explain the causes of—and solution to—the housing emergency](#).

Legislative findings help contextualize and explain the laws they're attached to, and reveal the force and quality of thought behind them. The charter should do the same—and it should include details that current housing emergency legislative findings sections do not, including acknowledgements that:

- The emergency has been ongoing since the second world war, and the government has not acted meaningfully to solve it.
- The city and state government [previously solved](#) a legal housing emergency between 1920 and 1929 with aggressive action, and they did it by facilitating massive new housing supply.
- The “housing emergency” has been allowed to take on the appearance of a permanent fact—so it is either not an emergency, in which case rent regulation must fall, or it must be solved with extreme expedition and all necessary action. The policy of inaction of the past half-century or more cannot be further tolerated.

These findings could be added either in §197-d or a new §197-e.

² For the current CPC appointment arrangement, see [§192 of the charter](#): “There shall be a city planning commission to consist of the chair and twelve other members. The mayor shall appoint the chair and six other members of the commission, the public advocate shall appoint one member, and each borough president shall appoint one member. Members shall be chosen for their independence, integrity and civic commitment. Appointments of all members, except for the chair, shall be subject to the advice and consent of the council.”

For an overview of the extended, detailed debate about structuring the city planning commission by the 1989 charter revision commission, see [The Policy and Politics of Charter Marking: The Story of New York City's 1989 Charter](#), pp.854-872.

Further recommendation 2: add a non-enforceable categorical exclusion for housing under SEQRA to help move the state to action

New York State's [State Environmental Quality Review Act](#) requires costly, lengthy reviews for new housing that almost certainly facilitates a better local environment. Further: [most states do not have these kinds of laws](#), and certainly not to the burdensome degree of New York; they are well-intentioned, but have a devastating, anti-building effect—even when building helps the environment through efficient and well-managed density.

To help move the state to reform SEQRA, the New York City charter should exempt the development of new housing from SEQRA review. This would not preclude review by the city, but it would preclude a second undue layer of restriction from state law. This would give rhetorical force to the ideas already manifest in the [Green Fast Track](#).

Of course, these charter provisions would be non-operative as long as SEQRA does not contain categorical exclusions for housing, but they would show that the city is actually serious about SEQRA reform. The city charter already supersedes state election law regarding designating and independent nominating petition signature requirements,³ and the city already prepared zoning districts with FAR caps beyond contemporary state law approval last year.⁴

Leaders in land use and housing policy have long been calling for SEQRA reform, and it's time for the city to press the issue. [Per Vicki Been in a 2022 panel interview with the Citizens Budget Commission](#): "...I would jump in by just saying the time is now. We've been hearing these kinds of proposals, for example, on SEQRA, for two decades, and we can't keep waiting for the perfect solution. We need to move now."

2) Add citywide voices to the city council with 10 "at large" seats

The New York City Council as we know it, with 51 voting members and the non-voting participation of the public advocate, was born after the 1989 charter revision commission in the wake of [Board of Estimate v. Morris](#).

³ See the [New York City charter, §1057-b](#), which imposes lower signature requirements than state election law, which can easily be found on [New York State's 2025 political calendar](#).

⁴ See "Adams Administration Unveils Initiative to Create Tens of Thousands of Affordable Homes in High-Demand Areas, Continues Urgent Call for Action to Address Housing Crisis," March 28, 2024. <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/232-24/adams-administration-initiative-create-tens-thousands-affordable-homes-in>

It's been about 34 years since then, and I think we have enough information to say this: many small city council districts cannot come together to legislate effectively on citywide zoning or housing supply issues. We've run the experiment [that was rigorously debated in 1989](#); and while the council has achieved, among other things, the goals of representation sought by the 1989 commission,⁵ it has not shown an ability to do citywide planning well. In this, it mirrors the now-extinct Board of Estimate.

This is due to two strong forces that operate on a council comprising voting representatives from many small districts:

- **Member deference:** when the entire council votes according to the preference of one member regarding a land use change in their district, in the hope that they will receive reciprocal treatment when development comes to their district. The most egregious example of member deference's effect came a few years ago with the defeat of [One45 in Harlem at the hands of then-Councilmember Kristin Richardson Jordan](#).
- **The constituent concerns of small districts** are heavily biased towards "build in someone else's district." Ideally, the whole council would come together and these constituent effects would be moderated by the legislative process. Given New York City's housing production rate, that has generally not happened.

The fears of Mayor Koch and the *New York Times Editorial Board* from 1989 have been realized.⁶ From the mayor:

In earlier correspondence with the [Charter Revision Commission] I have expressed my fear that an overly broad legislative power to review land use matters will lead to the transcendence of parochial concerns...and will ultimately threaten to bring rational development in the City to a halt...

From the *New York Times Editorial Board*:

The newest draft [of the city charter] makes an expanded and inevitably more parochial Council the final arbiter on most land-use issues.

Suggested reform: amend chapter 2, §22

Both member deference and small-district constituent effects can be balanced by adding new, citywide (or "at large") seats to the city council. I propose amending [chapter 2, §22 of the city charter](#) to add 10 such seats to the current council, for a total of 61 members.

⁵ See [The Policy and Politics of Charter Marking: The Story of New York City's 1989 Charter](#), pp.786-788.

⁶ See [The Policy and Politics of Charter Marking: The Story of New York City's 1989 Charter](#), p.864.

This is closely in line with proposed council sizes considered by the 1989 commission.⁷ For further discussion of how to structure these seats, see the next subsection, “further considerations with citywide council seats.”

In New York City, there seems to be [a strong correlation](#) between the size of an elected official’s jurisdiction and their willingness to support new housing on a citywide basis; the same person often changes their views in a pro-supply direction as they move to “larger” offices. The city council could use more of this perspective baked into its structure, and it would help make the body [more representative of the city as a whole](#) too.

Finally, citywide seats would help to counterbalance the constituent severance effects of New Yorkers moving throughout the five boroughs. Many are forced to do so to chase affordable leases (myself included), and this limits their ability to form a connection with their district-based council member. For many New Yorkers, this means they will never have a chance at an enduring familiarity and relationship with any council member, let alone the district itself (this is ironic, given the role that those council members probably played in creating this quasi-disenfranchising situation). But citywide seats are not subject to this dynamic; like the mayor, the citywide council seats represent everyone, and connections to them are not severed at the district’s edge.

Further considerations with citywide council seats

- Citywide seats would not be subject to redistricting.
- Citywide council members would need more resources and staff than district-based council members. The extent of these would depend on, among other things, whether the seats are added in an *ex officio* capacity to the same roles that their district-based counterparts are, like community board membership.⁸ The charter revision commission would need to consider how much these seats resemble citywide offices like the mayor, and how much they resemble, and have obligations similar to, their district-based counterparts.
- City ballot complexity would increase with 10 citywide council seats. But I don’t think [the extent of it would make a functional difference to most New Yorkers](#).
- Another way to increase the citywide voice on the council is to give citywide seats two votes each, but I think a more prudent balance would keep them with one (unless the commission thinks otherwise).
- These seats would be a good opportunity to experiment with [non-partisan primaries](#). Since voters would be voting for the “top 10” in the general election, they should probably just vote for the “top 15” in the primary, regardless of party affiliation. Among

⁷ See [The Policy and Politics of Charter Marking: The Story of New York City’s 1989 Charter](#), pp.786-788.

⁸ See [Chapter 70. §2800\(a\)\(2\) of the New York City charter](#).

other things, this has the salubrious civic effect of allowing everyone in the city to vote in the same primary.

- Restructuring the city council is curtailed by [MHR §10 1\(ii\)a\(13\)\(f\)](#): “...no local government may restructure its local legislative body (pursuant to provision of this chapter or any other provision of law) more than once in each decade commencing with the year nineteen hundred seventy...” This means that whatever change is made by this charter revision commission will be locked in for the next ten years—this is a great moment to cement citywide voices.⁹

I recommend adding these seats effective as of the upcoming 2026 election, to serve for three years, after which they would serve four-year terms elected on the same cycle as the mayor beginning in 2029. This allows the seats to get the extra input of the higher turnout year of 2026’s gubernatorial election, and then stay on the relatively higher turnout years of mayoral elections.

Historical concerns about changing city council composition

- Review by the Justice Department. This doesn’t seem to be a large problem for the at-large seats, not least because New York City’s legislature—and government generally—is not in danger of losing minority representation.¹⁰
- The fear that these citywide seats will be “Manhattan dominated.” Again, reference to the recent and present city government show that these fears are unfounded. If anything, the council is currently dominated by Queens.¹¹

⁹ This assumes that “...more than once in each decade...” does not literally mean once per demarcated decade (e.g., 1970-1979, 1980-1989, etc). I assume it means a ten-year rolling period, otherwise you could change a local legislature in 2029 and again in 2030. But I’ve seen stranger twists of seemingly obvious statutory construction than this.

¹⁰ Even the 1989 charter revision commission (with the benefit of hindsight) overestimated the amount of structural reform needed to increase minority electoral opportunity. [For example \(p.731\)](#):

First, writing ten years after the events in which we were such central participants, we may be tempted to speculate on what might have been the outcome of the process had we been able to predict the occurrence of certain events. For example, in the fall of 1989, David Dinkins was elected mayor, the first minority to hold a citywide elected office. We saw the dearth of elected minority officials and the sense by minorities of exclusion from the City’s political processes as a problem with the City government structure. This supported several Commission changes. What would we, or the Commission, have done had we known that, within several short months, a minority would be elected mayor? We will not attempt to answer this or any similar speculative “what if” questions for two reasons. First, our focus is on what was done and why. Second, the Charter revision process was too complex and interrelated to speculate on how a particular change in facts might have affected its outcome.

¹¹ For concerns about “Manhattan domination,” see [The Policy and Politics of Charter Marking: The Story of New York City’s 1989 Charter](#), p.778.

3) Right-size community boards to enable functionality

Any regular spectator and casual participant in New York City politics will quickly learn the following about many community boards:

- Borough presidents and their staff struggle to fill all of their seats with qualified, interested, well-tempered, punctual individuals. The “talent pipeline” is broken, and has essentially never existed in a functional way. This produces and magnifies every difficulty listed next.¹²
- Community boards almost universally fail at training their members in their own bylaws and parliamentary practice. Most members are not aware of their own rights and privileges, and never learn, because they are never taught. This is a civic dereliction, although one that is so common as to be rendered unshocking.
- Community boards struggle with conducting meetings in an expeditious, efficient, and minimally interesting fashion. Most members are not engaged most of the time.
- Community boards [struggle with attendance](#).
- Community boards are generally not representative of their communities in the way that borough presidents would want. [This is changing, but slowly](#).

These problems are not new, and have plagued community boards for decades. My intention is not to speak ill of the many talented individuals who have dedicated their time and brilliance to community boards over the years. They have made a difference, and the city would be worse off without their work. But the structure of community boards, especially their size, has forced these individuals to “drive with the parking brake engaged.” It would be a disservice to the lessons of their experience—readily observable by most people—not to address one of the structural roots of community board dysfunction.

You could sum up their challenges as: talent, training, procedure, and attention. These are all downstream of structural features that can be changed.

What can charter revision do to remedy these thus-far intractable problems in our community district layer of government? While nothing can absolutely guarantee functional community boards, charter reform can give them a structure that is more functional by default.

¹² Borough presidents are not required to appoint 50 members to each board. [Per §2800\(a\)\(1\)](#), the boards are made up of: “...not more than fifty persons appointed by the borough president...” In practice, however, borough presidents appoint as many as they can, not least because of soft-power pressures throughout their borough, or more durable soft-power threats if a longstanding board member isn’t reappointed. This is made even more difficult by council member nomination slates, which further diminish the borough president’s ability to right-size community boards.

Suggested reform: amend chapter 70

I recommend the following changes to the structure of community boards, which would require changes to chapter 70 of the charter:

- Reduce maximum board size from 50 to 25 per community board. This could be done on a variety of timelines to give boards a chance to adjust, and could mesh well with incoming turnover from term limits that will become active in 2027 and 2028.¹³
- Incorporate the text of [Introduction 1065-2024](#) into the charter, setting terms of four years for district managers, with borough president removal authority.
- Remove council member nomination authority as present in [§2800\(a\)\(1\) of the charter](#). Of course, council members are free to still submit recommendations, and should. But borough presidents should hold the exclusive pen—it's their corner of government, and this makes the make-up of boards electorally accountable in a straightforward way.

These changes right-size community boards to help address the challenges they've had since their inception.

Smaller boards make it easier for the borough presidents and their staff to fill an entire board with ready, willing, and capable individuals, in addition to removing all the frustrating overhead from sourcing and dealing with less-capable appointees.

Smaller boards are also easier to train, easier to manage staff-side, easier to liaise with as an agency, and easier to find space for. Smaller community boards would likely find that they suddenly have useful slack in their budgets for technology, programming, and robust training that goes beyond a Zoom call that no one pays attention to.

A common objection to smaller boards is that they can't be representative of a community district. Well—why are 50 people representative, instead of 100? Or 200? There is no perfect number. **The right number is one that enables a functioning community board that accommodates the grass-roots concerns of the community through borough president-appointed stewards.**¹⁴

¹³ For further discussion of community board term limits, see the "[Final Report of the 2018 New York City Charter Revision Commission](#)," pp.75-96.

¹⁴ [Per §2800\(a\)](#), borough presidents must (among other things) "...assure adequate representation from the different geographic sections and neighborhoods within the community district," and "consider whether the aggregate of appointments fairly represents all segments of the community."

This can be done with 25 people, and likely done better, especially as they are free to appoint as many public members to their committees as they see fit. Consider: 50 people is about the same size as the current city council! Community boards should be right-sized to reflect reality, and even their name: *board*. A board of 50 is not workable, and 25 might still be too large (but seems to balance functionality with representation).

Further recommendation: combine land use advisory reviews conducted pursuant to sections 197-c and 200

[The Citizens Budget Commission recommended this change in their 2022 land use report as well](#) (all of their city charter recommendations seem reasonable):

Option 4a: Consolidate advisory reviews into a single process led by Borough Presidents. Community Boards are already appointed by Borough Presidents; consolidation of their reviews would allow communities to benefit from the Borough Presidents' centralized planning staff and resources. While Community Boards and Borough Presidents may not always agree, local reviews could benefit from the Borough Presidents' broader perspective. Consolidation would also reduce the time and expense of holding multiple meetings, though its benefits would mostly accrue from improving engagement. A more incremental version of consolidation would be allowing the advisory reviews to occur concurrently instead of sequentially in order to encourage collaboration between Community Boards and Borough Presidents. This would require changes to the City Charter.

Smaller, better trained community boards would make the process above much easier to implement—it's worth right-sizing them in order to reap the efficiencies of further procedural reforms that rely on community boards.

4) Right-size historic preservation to prioritize vital landmarks and historic districts

When the city [Landmarks Law was passed in 1965](#), it embodied a great compromise.¹⁵ Shocked by the destruction of the old Penn Station, the political constituencies of New York City came to an agreement: the city would have historic preservation, but it would be limited to historic priorities, and respect the rights of property owners and the need of the city to keep evolving.

¹⁵ See "[Landmarks Bill Signed by Mayor: Wagner Approves It Despite Protests of Realty Men](#)" in The New York Times, April 20, 1965.

In order to legally instantiate this compromise, the following provisions (among others) were included in the Landmarks Law of 1965:

- The Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) could only landmark the exterior of buildings.
- After an initial operating period of 18 months, the LPC would take a 36-month break. After that, it would alternate between six-month periods of landmark designation and 36-month breaks. The idea here was that if the LPC sat perpetually, it would landmark too many things. When the LPC was first established, it and its proponents had 700 buildings in mind to landmark.¹⁶

This compromise was soon retired for a new paradigm, and the landmarks law was amended to permit interior landmarks, scenic landmarks, and for the LPC to sit perpetually without breaks.¹⁷

Whatever one thinks about the different kinds of landmarks (they seem fine), one undoubtable consequence of abandoning the moratorium period was an increase in the amount of landmarked buildings in the city. Today there are about 38,000 that stand individually and as part of historic districts.

This expansion has no real limiting function, and it undermines historic preservation itself; it imposes no need to truly prioritize history balanced against the present and future—this is how you get the surprisingly common headline about [“historic parking lots.”](#) The LPC chair herself has affirmed that the commission does essentially no delandmarking (“de-designation”), ensuring a continued monotonic rise in “historically preserved” New York:

There is no application process for removing [a landmark designation] but, as part of the Landmarks Law, there is a hardship provision, which is a safety valve when designation may cause an undue hardship or burden to a property owner and so that's a really important part of the Landmarks Law, and it strengthens the Landmarks Law, and it does require robust analysis, including an economic analysis. They're very rare. We've had less than 20 in our 60 years of existence, and they really don't happen that often, but we do take them very seriously. Other than that, we might... In the case of a fire or sort of a catastrophic event that results in the demolition or collapse of a building, we have in those cases de-designated the site, and a dedesignation process is the same

¹⁶ See [“Landmarks Bill Signed by Mayor: Wagner Approves It Despite Protests of Realty Men”](#) in The New York Times, April 20, 1965.

¹⁷ Most of these changes were affected by [Local Law 71 of 1973](#). For a summary historical view, see [The New York Preservation Archive Project's timeline](#).

as the designation process. We initiate it and, ultimately, it would come to the City Council.¹⁸

The hardship provision mentioned above [is essentially never granted by the LPC](#), and cannot be thought of as a proper means of right-sizing historic preservation.

Suggested reform: amend chapter 74

To correct the original deficiencies in the city's landmarks law, right-size historic preservation in New York City for the future, and ensure the prioritization of true historic landmarks, I recommend the following changes [to chapter 74 of the New York City charter](#):

- **Insert a cap of 9,000 total landmarked buildings across all individual landmarks and buildings within historic districts.**
- **Add a formal delandmarking application process, which does not currently exist.** No application must necessarily be approved, but the LPC and the public need to have a good idea of delandmarking pressure. Many people would certainly apply, especially those whose buildings were landmarked against their will.¹⁹
- **Provide a 24-month period after the landmark cap becomes effective where no more landmark applications will be accepted, but those in process already can proceed. During that period, the LPC will bring their total landmark portfolio into compliance with the cap.** If, at the end of 24 months, their portfolio exceeds 9,000, then: all landmarks will be considered in chronological order, and the first 9,000 will retain landmark status, the rest will not. Historic districts will be considered as individual units for the purposes of this analysis, and will be removed as a whole until the portfolio is at 9,000 landmarks or below. For example: if, at the expiration of 24 months, there are 10,000 landmarked buildings, and the most recently landmarked item was a historic district with 2,000 buildings, then that whole district would be removed, rather than automatically cut in half somehow.

Finally, the section into which the cap of 9,000 is inserted must be added to [§38, paragraph 17](#) of the charter. If it is not, it runs the risk of becoming a political football in the city council like the federal debt ceiling has been in Congress in recent years—constantly up for revision.

¹⁸ [New York City Council, Land Use Committee, March 21, 2024](#); committee transcript, p.54(21:25)-55(1:14).

¹⁹ The chair of the LPC [affirmed the lack of a delandmarking process in a March 2024 city council land use committee hearing](#).

For a recent example of an involuntarily landmarked building, see [The Strand Bookstore](#).

These changes would have the following effects:

- Incentives would be aligned in the direction of true historic prioritization.
- The monotonic increase in historically preserved NYC would stop.
- The city's historically preserved portfolio would become more administratively feasible for the LPC and staff, and reduce application and consideration timelines.

While some proponents of historic preservation do not want it to be limited in any fashion (which implicitly leads to a future where the whole city is landmarked), **voters will almost certainly embrace a common-sense cap of 9,000 landmarked buildings—many will be shocked that they are being asked to approve a cap that high in the first place!**

5) Change the title of the office of “Comptroller” to “Chief Financial Officer”

I gave this recommendation to a previous charter revision commission in June 2024, and I reiterate it here. [For my full testimony on the subject, see here.](#)

The following is an abbreviated version of that testimony:

Change the title of the city's Comptroller to the Chief Financial Officer, or CFO.

While this suggested change might seem trivial to some, it would serve the interests of a free and democratic electorate as well as the city. It also fits the spirit of the “modernization” section of this commission's preliminary report. Why?

Because almost no New York City resident or voter knows what “Comptroller” means; it is an archaic term.

...While they do not understand the manifold audit and control functions the office performs, this is understandable, and arguably not their job. The actual problem is that they do not even vaguely understand what that role does, which means they can't do their job of effective voting, among other things.

Comptroller inscrutability means that the general public cannot possibly vote for the office in anything resembling good faith. This is quite distinct from the mayoral race: while citizens will not know the full job description of the mayor, they directionally understand that the mayor operates as an executive, and is “in charge of getting things done.” If the Comptroller were the CFO, citizens would directionally understand that the

office was in charge of overseeing the city's money, and that itself is already a huge leap in understanding.

Changing the name of the Comptroller to Chief Financial Officer serves the interest of voter education and electoral legitimacy, and would do more for these causes than millions spent in any kind of broader citizen education effort. It is, in fact, how those in the civic sphere already explain what the Comptroller does: they say it's "New York City's Chief Financial Officer," and this includes the Comptroller's website itself.

On the candidate side of the equation, the title "Chief Financial Officer of New York City" is a much more compelling title, and would change the rhetorical and competitive landscape of Comptroller elections. People would be more inclined to vote for the office on the basis of sound financial experience and competency in money management, and prospective candidates in the worlds of accounting, banking, and finance would be more compelled to run.

This suggestion is not without precedent. In 1993, in the wake of the Board of Estimate's dissolution, the City Council passed Local Law 19, which changed the name of the President of the City Council to the Public Advocate. Legislative testimony in favor of this law highlighted the confusing nature of the Council President's title, and the need to clarify its role relative to the Speaker of the Council.

Although there are obvious considerations when changing the name of a principal city office in the law, including the many references to it in state law, I urge the Commission to study this potential charter change as expeditiously as possible, with an eye to implementing it in time for the city's 2025 election. Thank you for your consideration.

Appendix One: Suggested Changes to §197-d

Section 197-d. Council review.

a. The city planning commission shall file with the council and with the affected borough president a copy of its decisions to approve or approve with modifications (1) all matters described in subdivision a of section [one hundred ninety-seven-c](#), (2) plans pursuant to section [one hundred ninety-seven-a](#), and (3) changes in the text of the zoning resolution pursuant to sections [two hundred](#) and [two hundred one](#). Any such filing of a decision pursuant to section [one hundred ninety-seven-c](#) shall be completed prior to the expiration of the sixty-day period for action by the commission. Any such filing with the council shall include copies of all written recommendations of community boards, borough boards and borough presidents with respect to the decision being filed.

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 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;

(2) 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](#), if (i) both an affected community board (after holding a public hearing) and the affected borough president, within the time periods allotted for their reviews pursuant to section [one hundred ninety-seven-c](#), have recommended in writing against approval and (ii) the affected borough president, within five days of receiving a copy of the decision of the commission, files with the commission and the council a written objection to the decision; and

(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](#), 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.

c. Within fifty days of the filing with the council pursuant to subdivision a of this section of any decision of the city planning commission which pursuant to subdivision b of this section is subject to review by the council, the council shall hold a public hearing, after giving public notice not less than five days in advance of such hearing, and the council, within such fifty days, shall take final action on the decision.

(1) The term “rental emergency covered decision” shall refer to any decision of the city planning commission which pursuant to subdivision b of this section is subject to review by the council, that occurs during an active rental emergency as define in § 26-520 of the administrative code, that relates to increasing residential building development or mixed building development as defined in ZR §§ 12-10.

(2) If such decision is a rental emergency covered decision, the affirmative vote of three-quarters of all the council members shall be required to disapprove such a decision. The affirmative vote of a majority of

all the council members shall be required to approve with modifications such a decision. The council shall otherwise be deemed to have approved the decision.

(3) If such decision is not a rental emergency covered decision, the affirmative vote of a majority of all the council members shall be required to approve, approve with modifications or disapprove such a decision.

(4) If, within the time period provided for in this subdivision and, if applicable, in subdivision d of this section, the council fails to act or fails to act by the required vote on a decision of the city planning commission subject to council review pursuant to subdivision b of this section, the council shall be deemed to have approved the decision of the commission.

d. The council shall not approve with modifications a commission decision if the commission has determined pursuant to this subdivision that additional review of the modifications is required. And the council shall not approve with modifications a commission rental emergency covered decision if the commission has determined pursuant to this subdivision that such modifications would decrease the commission's estimated production of residential units in such decision. Prior to approving a decision of the commission with modifications, the council shall file the text of any such proposed modifications with the commission. Within fifteen days of such filing, the commission shall file with the council a written statement indicating whether such proposed modifications are of such significance that additional review of environmental issues or additional review pursuant to section one hundred ninety-seven-c is required, and whether such proposed modifications decrease the commission's estimated production of residential units in a rental emergency covered decision. If no additional review is required, the commission may include in such statement its advisory recommendation concerning the proposed modifications, together with any proposed amendments to the proposed modifications. If the proposed modifications are determined by the commission to decrease estimated production of residential units in a rental emergency covered decision, the commission shall submit proposed amendments in such statement to keep production of residential units at least equal to the commission decision with no modifications. The council may thereafter approve such proposed modifications, with or without the amendments proposed by the commission, unless the modifications decrease estimated production of residential units in a rental emergency covered decision as determined by the commission, in which case the council may only thereafter approve such proposed modifications with the amendments proposed by the commission. The time period for council action shall be tolled during such fifteen-day period; provided, however, that proposed modifications may be referred to the commission pursuant to this subdivision only once with respect to each application or group of related applications under review by the council.

e. All actions of the council pursuant to this section shall be filed by the council with the mayor prior to the expiration of the time period for council action under subdivisions c and, if applicable, d of this section. Actions of the council pursuant to this section shall be final unless the mayor within five days of receiving a filing with respect to such an action of the council files with the council a written disapproval of the action. Any mayoral disapproval under this subdivision shall be subject to override by a two-thirds vote of all the council members within ten days of such filing by the mayor.

f. The mayor shall have the right to file a written disapproval of any approval deemed to have occurred pursuant to subdivision c of this section as a result of a failure of the council to act or to act by the required vote. Any such written disapproval must be filed within five days of the expiration of the time period for action by the council under subdivisions c and, if applicable, d of this section. Any mayoral disapproval under this subdivision shall be subject to override by a two-thirds vote of all the council members within ten days of such filing by the mayor.

g. If a decision of the commission approving an application is not subject to council review pursuant to paragraph one of subdivision b of this section or is not made subject to council review pursuant to paragraphs two or three of subdivision b of this section, the mayor may nonetheless file with the council a written objection to such decision of the commission within five days of the expiration of time for the council to act under paragraph three of subdivision b of this section. Any mayoral objection under this subdivision shall be subject to override by a two-thirds vote of all the council members within ten days of such filing by the mayor.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-4079856 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Thursday, February 13, 2025 3:36:50 PM

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Julio Pena III

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: Please see attached for testimony.

Testimony for Reforming the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) to the Charter Revision Commission

My name is Julio Peña and I have the honor of Chairing Brooklyn Community Board 7 representing Sunset Park and Windsor Terrace.

The current ULURP process, while designed to give members of the public review on land use proposals, has significant shortcomings that strongly favor developers over local communities. When Community Board 7 began discussing the Industry City proposal back in 2018, we were able to hold over 20 community meetings and visioning workshops and to hire land use experts only because we had access to private resources through a nonprofit. Without these funds, this massive rezoning proposal would have only had one or two public meetings to review, which would have been wholly insufficient for a proposal of that size.

If community boards and residents are to vet complex proposals properly, they should be given the resources to do so, especially in immigrant communities like ours. To address these imbalances and enhance community involvement, I make the following suggestions to reforming ULURP:

1. Implement a mandatory pre-certification community input and/or visioning meeting before the official ULURP process begins and require developers to present an initial proposal at least 30 days before they plan on certifying with DCP. This would allow for:

- Meaningful and early community engagement in shaping proposals
- Incorporation of local knowledge and preferences
- Potential reduction in conflicts during later stages of review
- Proposal adjustments based on community input and thereby streamlining later stages of ULURP

2. Increase funding and staffing for community boards to effectively and meaningfully participate in ULURP and begin to bring equity to the process. This would:

- Provide technical assistance to analyze complex proposals
- Ability to hold the multiple meetings needed to analyze complex land use proposals
- Afford to provide childcare, food, transportation, and language & interpretation services at community meetings
- Ability to hire consultants to provide comprehensive and neutral analysis so boards can make an informed decision
- Level the playing field between developers, who may have vastly more resources, and local communities

3. Alternatively, in-lieu of funding from the city for Community Boards, requiring developers and applicants of the land use proposals to set aside funds that would go towards community engagement, managed by either a nonprofit agency/sponsor, community board, or other agency to achieve the goals outlined above.

Revised Timeline and Structure

1. Adjust the ULURP timeline to allow for more meaningful community input. This could include:

- Extending the community board review period from 60 to 90 days
- Allowing for a second round of community input after initial revisions

- Allow for community workshops, town halls, and other participatory methods designed to center the voices of community residents, especially those from historically excluded groups

These reforms are essential steps toward ensuring equity in the land use decision-making process, particularly in communities that have historically been excluded from meaningful participation. These recommendations are also a good step forward in leveling the playing field between developers with almost unlimited resources, and historically disinvested communities. By implementing these reforms, we can begin to create a more balanced ULURP process that truly serves the needs of communities, leading to better land use decisions for New York City's future.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-2691259 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Thursday, February 13, 2025 6:47:51 PM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: DOM PETERS-dey

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: sec f of 1038 i believe the section related to employees and oath of office is missing and i wanted to consult with the Mayor's office before bringing a claim against the municipality of NY.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Citizens Union written testimony Feb 11 hearing
Date: Friday, February 14, 2025 8:47:48 AM
Attachments: [CU Testimony 2025 Charter Revision Commission - Housing and Land Use Hearing 2.11.25.pdf](#)

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Dear 2025 CRC,

Please see attached Citizens Union's written testimony for the February 11 hearing on land use and housing.

Thank you,

Ben

Ben Weinberg

Director of Public Policy

Citizens Union/Citizens Union Foundation

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



CITIZENS UNION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Testimony before the 2025 City Charter Revision Commission
Input Session on Housing and Land Use
February 11, 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. Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to speak before you today.

Citizens Union is a nonpartisan good government group committed to reforming New York City and State government by fostering accountability, honesty, and the highest ethical standards, and advocating for political reform and fair and open elections.

Throughout its more than 125-year history, Citizens Union has supported periodic comprehensive reviews of the New York City Charter absent a political agenda via the appointment of an independent Charter Revision Commission to ensure that city government is operating effectively, efficiently, and in the public's best interest. We have advised every Charter Revision Commission over the years, and many of our recommendations have been adopted into the City Charter, from creating community boards through abolishing the Board of Estimate and expanding the City Council to implementing Ranked Choice Voting and the public campaign finance program. This experience informs our recommendations today.

New York City is facing a serious housing crisis. It has a severe shortage in housing units overall and in affordable housing in particular. It needs to produce more housing and provide better opportunities for New Yorkers to obtain, and remain in, reasonable housing.

We appreciate the Commission's goal to review sections of the City Charter addressing planning, housing, and development, and recommend changes that would improve the state of housing in our City. We are not opining at this time on individual changes you may be considering to these sections.

However, we wish to comment on the recent proposals to substantially alter the powers of city officials on land use matters. Specifically, the Commission would likely receive proposals aimed at shifting final decision-making power on land use matters from the City Council to the Executive Branch, the City Planning Commission, or other entities. This raises fundamental questions about the structure of City Government and the system of checks and balances established by the 1989 City Charter, which has been in place for the past three and a half decades.

As a general matter, Citizens Union believes that the problem of New York City housing is not a problem of the New York City Charter, but rather of the lack of a more comprehensive vision and of coordination

between the Executive and Legislative branches. Our housing shortage is not the result of flaws in the structure of government, but how these branches of government operated and the politics that drove, and still drive, their decisions.

In the past decades, the City has taken a piecemeal approach to dealing with housing and planning. For the most part, the City Planning Commission has not engaged in citywide zoning reform or a more general planning program to achieve housing objectives that take into account the housing needs of our entire city of over 8 million people. Administrations have generally pursued neighborhood-based or single-site proposals to increase housing.

The City Council, in approving or disapproving these narrow proposals, has generally deferred to the one (or two) Council Members representing these sites—members whose positions are often (and somewhat understandably) strongly focused on the particular interests of their specific community rather than on citywide needs.

It is therefore gratifying to see some recent shift in the political winds, with the Mayor and Council working together to pass the City of Yes—a program that updated the zoning laws across the city, not just in a single neighborhood. This and similar, or even more comprehensive, efforts can be achieved under the current Charter.

We believe that the keys to such further successes are the willingness of the Executive Branch to develop and present housing and other development programs of a broad scope wherever possible, and the willingness of the Mayor and Council to coordinate from an early stage in such programs. Continuing the political jockeying between the City Planning Commission and the Council on narrow proposals is a steep price to pay for the millions of City residents who cannot find or afford a place to live.

We also note that, as a general principle, zoning is a law which determines how land may be used, and thus changes to that law should rest in the hands of the Council as the legislative body. The Mayor has a strong role in this process, through the City Planning Commission, which has the sole power to introduce plans, controls the land use agenda, and decides what proposals to bring before the Council. As the recent experience with the City of Yes has shown, this structure has the capacity to produce positive change and more housing.

In sum, the Executive and Legislative Branches must work together on more general zoning provisions and more comprehensive planning, under the current structure of government. This approach would prioritize the needs of the City as a whole over the politics of a single neighborhood or a specific development site. And it would provide New Yorkers with more certainty as to the future of housing in their community and the built environment around them.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony from Vicki Been
Date: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 11:49:09 AM
Attachments: [NYU Furman Center Charter Revision Commission Framework Testimony.pdf](#)

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Hello,

Please find attached the testimony to the City Charter Revision Commission from Professor Vicki Been, which she presented on 2/11/25.

Please let me know if you have any questions, thanks!

Hayley

--

Hayley Raetz (she/her)
Policy Director
NYU Furman Center

[REDACTED]

Testimony of Vicki Been
Judge Edward Weinfeld Professor of Law
Faculty Director, Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy
New York University

Before
New York City Charter Revision Commission
Richard R. Buery Jr., Chair
February 11, 2025

Thank you to the Charter Revision Commission, for convening this hearing, and for the enormous public service you are doing. To have a Commission, and staff for the Commission, with so much knowledge, experience, and creative thinking is a benefit to New Yorkers.

Over many decades, New York City has made housing a central focus of city government. The city has invested an enormous amount of federal, state, and city resources to address the city's housing needs and worked to make the city's housing stock high quality and affordable to people of all income levels. Yet the housing affordability problem persists, and indeed has reached crisis proportions. There are a number of red flags.

More people are leaving the city than coming in: between April 2020 and July 2023, the city's population declined by an estimated 546,155 residents (6.2%), in one of the largest sustained population declines in recent history, largely due to declines in net domestic migration (Figure One).¹ After a period of sustained growth in domestic migration that limited annual net losses, since 2011, more people have been leaving the city for other parts of the country than moving here. The pandemic exacerbated that trend, but it was already well underway.

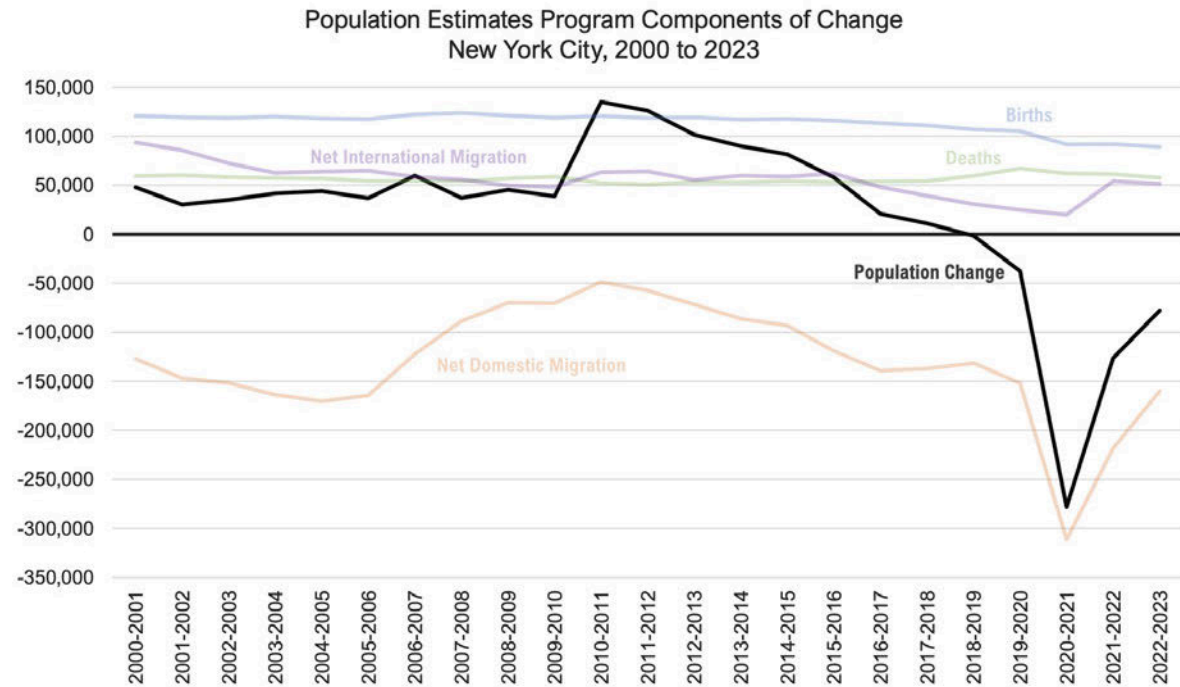
One of the major reasons people are leaving is the cost of living.² The share of the city's renters paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing expenses has hovered stubbornly around 50 percent for decades, with more than 27 percent of households – mostly the lowest income households in the city – paying *more than half* of their income for housing (Figure Two).³

¹ Department of City Planning (2024, June). *Population Estimates for New York City and Boroughs, Vintage 2023*. Pages 3-4, 6. NYC.gov. Retrieved February 10, 2025, from <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/planning-level/nyc-population/population-estimates/current-population-estimates-2023-June2024-release.pdf?r=1>

² Campion, S. (2024, June). *A Building Crisis: The Quality-of-Life, Population, and Economic Effects of Housing Underproduction*. Citizens Budget Commission. Retrieved February 10, 2025, from https://cbcny.org/sites/default/files/media/files/CBCBRIEF_NYC-Housing-Underproduction_06252024.pdf; see also Higham, A. (2024, June 3). Why New Yorkers Want to Leave. *Newsweek*. Retrieved February 11, 2025, from <https://www.newsweek.com/why-new-yorkers-want-leave-poll-1906757>

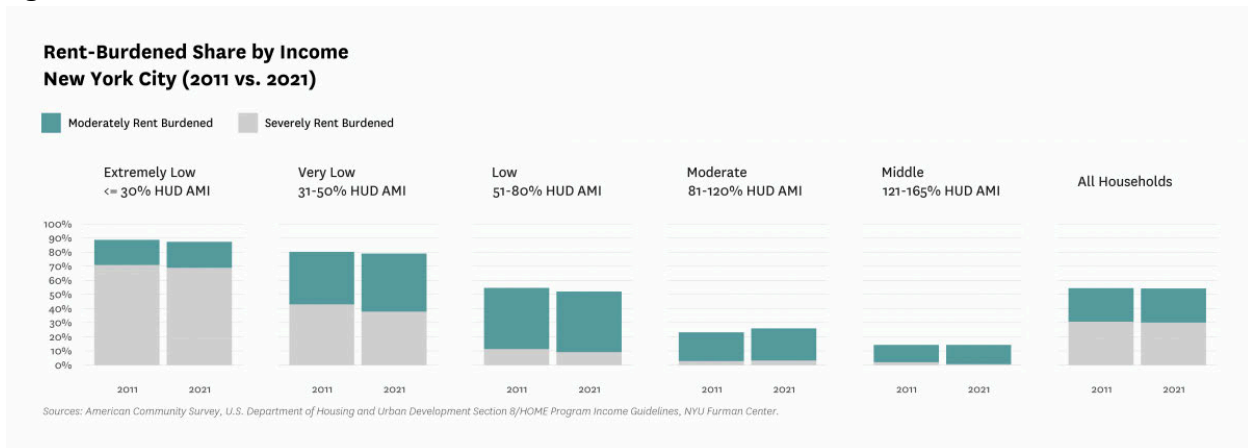
³ Gaumer, E. *The 2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey: Selected Initial Findings*. Pages 10-12. New York, NY: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development; 2024. see also NYU Furman Center (2023, May). *State of Renters and Their Homes*. Retrieved February 10, 2025, from <https://furmancenter.org/stateofthecity/view/state-of-renters-and-their-homes-2023>

Figure One: Net Domestic Migration⁴



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program (Vintage 2010, Vintage 2020, Vintage 2023); Cornell Program on Applied Demographics

Figure Two: Share of Households of Different Incomes that Are Rent Burdened⁵

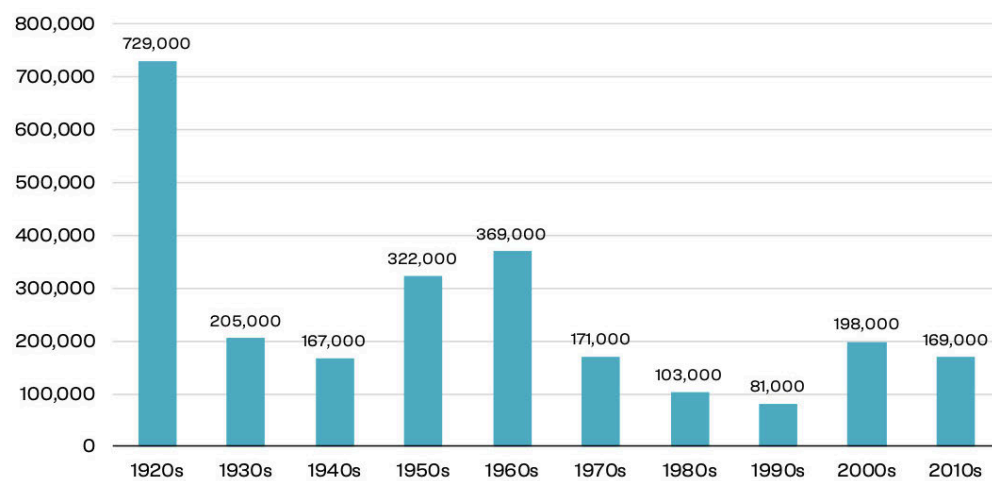


⁴ Department of City Planning (2024, June). *New York City's Current Population Estimates and Trends*. NYC.gov. Retrieved February 10, 2025, from <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/planning-level/nyc-population/population-estimates/population-trends-2023-Jun2024-release.pdf>

⁵ NYU Furman Center (2023, May). *State of Renters and Their Homes*. Retrieved February 10, 2025, from <https://furmancenter.org/stateofthecity/view/state-of-renters-and-their-homes-2023>

One of the primary causes of the high cost of housing is the low rate of residential construction in the city. A great deal of research shows that when supply increases within a city, rents fall or the growth in rents decreases.⁶ The city built considerably less housing than needed in the 1980s and 1990s and has been unable to make up that deficit ever since, as Figure Three shows. The result is that we have become accustomed to a very tight housing market over the past few decades, and the issue has worsened: the last time it was measured, the share of the city’s rental housing that was vacant and available for rent was just 1.41 percent – the lowest in modern history, and far below the 7 or 8 percent that most economists consider a healthy market.

Figure Three: Housing Production Has Fallen and Isn’t Keeping Up with Population Growth⁷



Source: NYC Department of City Planning, 2019.

The City’s land use system is one reason for the inadequate production. While we have the best and brightest urban planning, housing planning, and economic development professionals staffing city agencies, we also have a land use system that makes building housing extraordinarily risky, costly, and time consuming.

We say that unlike many other cities and most suburbs, most of what gets built in the city is built “as of right” – without having to secure rezonings or other discretionary land use approvals. But that claim hides the uncomfortable fact that much of what is considered “as of right” today can only be described that way because the land was rezoned in the recent past to allow for today’s development. Indeed, our study of housing units completed between 2010

⁶ Been, V., Ellen, I. G., & O’Regan, K. (2024). Supply Skepticism Revisited. *Housing Policy Debate*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2024.2418044>

⁷ Department of Housing, Preservation, and Development (2020). *Where We Live NYC*. City of New York. Retrieved February 10, 2025, from <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/wwl-plan.pdf>

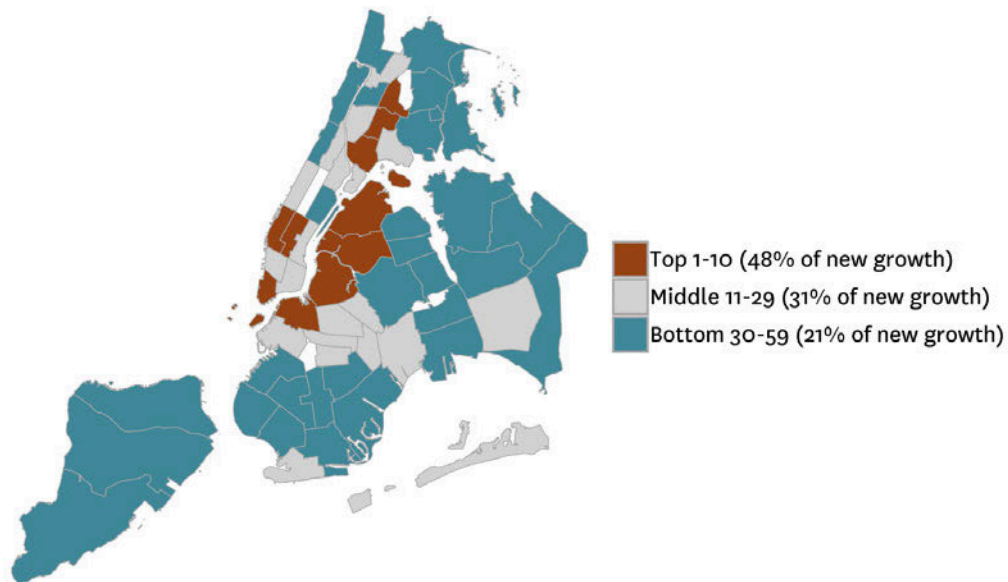
and 2023 showed that almost one-third of all built units were on land that had been recently rezoned.⁸

The other uncomfortable fact is that some neighborhoods shirk their obligation to allow housing to be produced. As a stark example: just ten of the city's 59 community districts, with only 13 percent of the population, housed 48 percent of the housing stock growth between 2010 and 2023, while half of the city's community districts, with 57 percent of the population, added only 21 percent of the housing stock growth between 2010 and 2023. (Figure Four).⁹ The disparity in which neighborhoods contribute to alleviating the city's housing shortage and which do not is unfair, and makes every neighborhood less willing to allow for the necessary growth.

Figure Four: Per Capita Housing Completions by Community District

Per Capita Housing Completions

by Community District (2010-2023Q2)



Sources: Decennial Census 2010, NYC Department of City Planning's PLUTO and Housing Database (23q2), NYC Department of Finance's Property Tax System (2021), NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development's Housing New York data (2021), NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development and Housing Development Corporation's NYC Housing Connect (2016-2021), NYU Furman Center

⁸ NYU Furman Center (2021, May). *The Geography of New Housing Development*. Retrieved February 10, 2025, from <https://furmancenter.org/stateofthecity/view/the-geography-of-new-housing>

⁹ Been, V., Willis, M., Murphy, M., & Miller, N. (2024, April 12). *Principles to Guide an Improved Tax Exemption to Secure New Rental Housing: Fostering Affordability and Equitable Development in New York City*. Retrieved February 10, 2025, from https://furmancenter.org/files/publications/Principles%20to%20Guide%20an%20Improved%20Tax%20Exemption%20to%20Secure%20New%20Rental%20Housing_508.pdf

Hence, the charge of this Commission: How do we improve upon a system that has produced vibrant new neighborhoods, allowed existing neighborhoods to grow graciously, and preserved the rich diversity that makes New York City so dynamic and living here so fulfilling – yet still falls short in meeting today’s housing needs, particularly for affordability?

You will hear many proposed changes, from folks today, and over the next several months. Although the NYU Furman Center stands ready to contribute to the solutions, I want to use my remaining time today to suggest a framework for your deliberations.

Improving upon the system requires that you examine every step in the timeline of development, and interrogate which features of the land use review procedures and other agency reviews are contributing to delay, uncertainty, and cost at each step. That focus will allow you to prioritize the major sources of delay and uncertainty, and may open up new ways of thinking about how to solve those problems.

To bring a housing development from an idea to a building that can provide a family a home requires five major steps: Site Selection & Concept Development; Pre-ULURP; Formal ULURP; Financing, Affordable Subsidy Allocation, and Construction; and Lease-up and Operations.¹⁰ I’m going to focus only on the first three steps -- all the things that must be accomplished informally and procedurally before a shovel ever goes into the ground -- because that is where the provisions of the charter are most relevant.

Summary of ULURP Process and Associated Risks

Phase 1: Site Selection & Concept Development

Estimated Time: 12-18 months (varies based on site control, financing, and feasibility challenges)

- Identifying a viable site (zoning, environmental conditions, purchase terms, financial feasibility)
- Assembling the development team (architects, legal counsel, financing, community engagement)
- Engaging early with elected officials and community stakeholders
- Conducting preliminary financial modeling and zoning analysis

Key Risks:

- All these activities require the developer to invest capital, based upon assessments about the feasibility of approvals that are complex and uncertain
- If the local council member signals opposition, the developer is likely to abandon or delay a project, even though the City’s overall interests might favor going forward

¹⁰ See, e.g., LISC (2019). *The Affordable Housing Process*. Retrieved February 10, 2025, from https://www.lisc.org/media/filer_public/c8/67/c8679790-7bda-484b-9810-9e504a1caf95/the_affordable_housing_development_process_english.pdf

- Because the process assumes that developers will meet some of the local demands, the proposal is likely inflated to give room for that bargaining, which distorts the discussion

Phase 2: Pre-ULURP Certification Process & Environmental Review

Estimated Time: 12-36 months (can extend due to agency coordination, community engagement, environmental review requirements)

- Coordination with DCP, HPD, DOB, DEP, DOT, and MTA (if applicable)
- Pre-Application Statement (PAS) submission
- Environmental Review (CEQR Process):
 - Environmental Assessment Statement (EAS) to determine if a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required
 - If the potential for significant impacts is found, a positive declaration is issued, requiring a Draft EIS (DEIS) before ULURP certification
 - Scoping Meeting: Held before the DEIS is prepared to define the environmental analysis needed and gather public input

Key Risks:

- Developer must pay high upfront costs before elected officials must commit
- Uncertain timelines for inter-agency coordination lead to potential delays
- Environmental reviews and mitigation requirements may result in unexpected expenses and litigation risks
 - Communities can use this process to litigate in the hopes of stalling a project until its supporters give up
 - CEQR process delays ULURP certification, especially if an EIS is required

Phase 3: Formal ULURP Process

Estimated Time: 6-7 months (after certification, which can take years to achieve)

- Solicit feedback on draft EIS through public hearing (if ULURP applies, this hearing is combined with the City Planning Commission's ULURP hearing)
- Complete Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) before City Planning Commission vote
- **Structured Review Timeline:**
 - 60 days – Community Board review
 - 30 days – Borough President review
 - 60 days – City Planning Commission (CPC) review & vote
 - 50 days – City Council review & vote
 - 5-day period for Mayoral veto (rare)

Key Risks:

- Council member deference often results in projects being rejected or cut back due to local opposition, even when they meet citywide needs
- Approval of ULURP actions may be de facto conditioned on demands outside the land use review scope (e.g., labor requirements, community benefit agreements)

- Developers often have limited leverage in final negotiations after significant capital has already been invested; “walking away” from a project risks losing millions of dollars in sunk costs

Total Timeline Estimates (Timeline between project conception and public approvals)

- **Best Case:** ~2.5 years (small-scale rezonings, minimal opposition, HPD approves the EAS)
- **Typical Large Developments:** 4-6 years (complex reviews, extensive negotiations, environmental studies)
- **Significant Opposition or Infrastructure Needs:** 6+ years

Additional Key Risks:

- Given the long timelines, regulations, market conditions, or affordable housing appropriations can change drastically, creating an overall risk that what would have been feasible to develop earlier in the process might no longer work. The longer the timeline, the greater the risk that the project won’t be viable once the project is certified.

Key Takeaways:

There are several key lessons from that timeline:

1. **Length of the process:** It’s too long! A 2024 study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta showed that across the nation, on average across all years and geographies, it takes 15.3 months from when a project is first proposed to when construction begins.¹¹ The time in New York City for just that pre-development period is likely 2.5 to 4 times longer than that.
2. **Cost:** The time required adds enormous cost – carrying the land or the option to buy the land, tying up capital to use for the environmental review, pre-ULURP and ULURP legal, design, and other costs, can add up to millions of dollars, which makes every unit more expensive.
3. **Risk from late decision-making:** Too much money has to be put at risk long before the local council member must make a political decision to support or oppose the project. A developer has to buy the land and pay for the analysis necessary to determine whether environmental review is necessary and if so to conduct the environmental review, pay for the pre-ULURP and ULURP professional fees and other costs, and engage with the community before a council member actually has to commit whether or not to support the project.
4. **Lack of attention to city-wide needs:** Too little attention is paid within this process to the needs of the city as a whole. An individual council member can veto proposed housing even after many years and millions of dollars have been devoted to the project, without ever taking into account the needs of the city.

¹¹ Cunningham, C., & Orlando, A. W. (2024, June). *How Long Does It Take to Build Multifamily Housing?* Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. Retrieved February 10, 2025, from <https://www.atlantafed.org/-/media/documents/research/publications/policy-hub/2024/06/18/04--how-long-does-it-take-to-build-multifamily-housing.pdf>

5. **Some neighborhoods shirk:** Indeed, council members whose constituents are opposed to growth can simply dissuade developers from even trying to build in the area, resulting in the starkly disproportionate distribution of new housing across the city.
6. **Environmental review is misused as a tool for delay:** Environmental review is exploited to delay the development, and pays less attention than is warranted to the harms of not providing the housing, and to the actual mitigation of environmental harms themselves.
7. **Pre-development risks are only a beginning:** This timeline only gets you to a whole additional round of delay, as well as risk and additional costs that would have been good to have resolved before the investments that are required to get to this point. Once land use approval is in place, the developer has to line up financing (on terms that might have caused the developer to reject the project from the beginning had the developer been able to predict changes in interest rates). The developer has to take the project through the housing agencies' term sheets, which again may be far different than when the project was first proposed, and not allow the project to go forward. Not just the agencies, but also OMB has to approve the financing, with OMB essentially negotiating every deal to try to stay within the City's budget and its allocations from the federal and state governments (which also may have changed). And even if the developer can cut this or that corner, or value-engineer this or that expense down, to make the development pencil under the terms imposed after ULURP, the developer then just gets in a pipeline at HPD or HDC – a pipeline that when I left government at the end of 2021 was six years long. Once the agencies reach a development in the pipeline, any changes in interest rates, term sheets, OMB or other agency or mayoral policies, have to be revisited. And, at any point, litigation can be filed that results in further delay and puts the project in jeopardy. That's an enormous amount of risk!

Therein is the fundamental problem: too many projects require ULURP, which requires developers to put too much money at risk for too many years before they even get to the point that the local council member has to decide whether to support the project. That council member has considerable negotiating leverage, given the investments already made. Further, that council member has a powerful incentive to take only the interests of their district, not the interests of the entire city, into account in those negotiations and in the final decision. Given the informal deference to the local council member, the legislative process does not clearly have a champion for the city's overall interests, and allows many neighborhoods to escape their obligations to contribute to the city's growth.

There are many ways to change the dynamics I've outlined. Each potential solution has its pros and cons, and over the course of the next few months, you'll hear from many of us about those considerations. But at this stage, correctly diagnosing the problem is critical. Being humble about the very real risks of unintended consequences from any change, and curious about how to avoid the mistakes of past reforms also is critical. I've tried to give you a framework to meet those challenges, and the Furman Center stands ready to help in whatever way we can going forward. Thank you for your dedication to the city, and for your attention tonight.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-7598585 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 12:56:24 PM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Christopher Hammett

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: The past year has made clear the weaknesses of the city charter when it comes to replacing a mayor who is unfit for office. Regardless of what one may think of the current mayor, the confusion and debate over whether or how to replace him is amplified by a charter which is unclear and inadequate regarding the measures available to the city and its people. Here are some recommendations: 1) Clarify the role and process of the "Inability Committee" There are three problems with the Inability Committee as currently spelled out in the charter: - As I understand it, there is no clear mechanism for convening the committee. The charter neither specifies a triggering event nor who can invoke the committee, whether committee members are compelled to participate once it is invoked, etc. As such, it leaves open the possibility of disputes regarding the legality of the committee's actions, whether from participants, outsiders, or the sitting mayor or their allies. - The circumstances when the committee can act are unclear. I have been told by one potential member of the committee that it is really intended for actual inability, such as a medical emergency or other occasion when the mayor cannot carry out the duties of the office. But this is not spelled out in the charter. Again, it leaves open the possibility of disputes regarding the committee's actions, as well as potentially leaving the city without a mechanism for removing a mayor who is able but either is not exercising their duties or is acting in a corrupt manner. - The committee's membership as currently established is inherently political. If the purpose of the Inability Committee is truly to determine whether the mayor is capable of carrying out their responsibilities, it would be possible to compose a committee of more independent members, such as medical personnel or others who are more independent. The charter should be revised to specify when and how the Inability Committee may be invoked, and possibly to depoliticize it. For example, perhaps a majority or supermajority of the City Council could invoke the committee. 2) Eliminate the special election process There is no reason to hold a special election to replace the mayor for the duration of their term. The charter specifies that the Public Advocate will replace the mayor, and citizens vote for the Public Advocate knowing that this is an important responsibility of the position. We can assume, just as with the vice president or the lieutenant

governor, that the city has elected a public advocate it assumes is capable of fulfilling the responsibilities of the office of mayor, should the occasion arise. In contrast, the special election process is more disruptive and more open to abuse. It does not follow the format of any of the city's regular elections. It is rushed and prone to favoring those with celebrity status. It will likely result in very low turnout if it ever occurs. And, in the current situation, I have been told that political officials are reluctant to act toward removing the mayor because of fears of a special election. This sort of delay would be unacceptable in the case of a mayor who is corrupt or compromised by legal or other concerns. Instead of the current process, the Public Advocate should simply serve as mayor for the remainder of the term, with a process to replace the Public Advocate as needed. 3) Create a process for citizens to recall elected officials New York City and State are un-progressive in lacking a process for recalling corrupt or ineffective public officials. In the absence of action by the Governor or the Inability Committee, the people should have the ability to replace the mayor (and other elected officials) by calling a special election and voting for a recall. There are legitimate concerns about overuse or inappropriate use of such a process, but safeguards could be put in place to prevent abuse. For example, indictment of an elected official could serve as a necessary condition for a recall (there could be others, of course, such as repeated absence from required duties or other malfeasance). Or, a high bar could be set for triggering an election, such as requiring 20% of voters in the last election to sign petitions. As it currently stands, voters are powerless to act in the face of corrupt or incompetent elected officials, other than waiting for the next election to roll around. The ability to recall elected officials, including the mayor, the public advocate, council members, borough presidents, and any other citywide or local elected officials, should be made available to voters. Thank you for your consideration. regards, Christopher Hammett Brooklyn

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-9660652 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Annemarie Grey

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: Comments attached.



Charter Revision Committee Testimony – February 11, 2025

My name is Annemarie Gray and I am the Executive Director of Open New York, an independent, grassroots, pro-housing nonprofit with hundreds of volunteer members across New York City and State. New York City's housing affordability crisis is rooted in the fact that we simply do not build enough homes. Displacement, exclusion, tenant harassment, and homelessness are all exacerbated by our dire housing shortage. For far too long, many of the most well-resourced parts of the city have been essentially off-limits to new homes, driving up rents and reinforcing long-standing patterns of segregation.

The City's Charter shapes the frameworks for how and where housing is built. With housing production at historic lows, we must seize the opportunity to reform the Charter to help make New York more livable for all. Yesterday, we at Open New York released a policy brief titled "A Charter for Housing Equity: Five Reforms for a Fairer, More Affordable NYC," which I encourage you to review in full. Our recommendations include:

One: Create a Fast-Track for Fair Housing. We need a new approval process for proposals that would advance fair housing in our most transit-rich, climate-resilient, and low-growth neighborhoods, in line with the implementation of Speaker Adams' Fair Housing Framework. In these well-resourced neighborhoods, we must fast-track approvals and remove the ability for the local Council Member to block new homes. Such reforms are common in other states, often known as "builder's remedies," but New York is behind.

Two: Streamline Advisory Reviews in ULURP. Local input into the City's land use review process prioritizes those with the most time, money, and connections. Many places around the country have adopted better community engagement practices that are more representative and less reactionary. We should combine the separate Community Board and Borough President advisory reviews in ULURP, bringing them together with additional BP oversight, improved engagement techniques, and a borough-wide lens.

Three: Make Public Land Work for Affordable Housing. The City is by far the largest landowner in the five boroughs, but turning underutilized, city-owned land into affordable housing is bureaucratic and slow. We should establish an expedited process to build HPD-financed affordable housing on city-owned land.

Four: Factor Housing Needs into Landmarks Decisions. The Landmarks Preservation Commission is limited by the Charter in what factors it can consider in making critical decisions. The impact is especially severe in the City's most well-resourced, low-growth neighborhoods.

We must make sure that housing affordability and availability are part of the discussion when LPC creates new historic districts and allows building consolidations in existing districts.

Five: Strengthen City Agencies for Better Results. The Charter has not updated the roles and responsibilities of agencies to face 21st century challenges. We should allow stronger oversight and accountability that would increase effectiveness in solving our housing challenges and reduce potential for corruption.

We have a rare chance to reform the Charter so every New Yorker has a fair shot at living where they choose. We look forward to continuing to work with the Commission in the coming months. Thank you for your time.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Charter Testimony](#)
Subject: Fw: [EXTERNAL] Charter Revision Commission testimony
Date: Friday, February 21, 2025 2:10:09 PM
Attachments: [C2_signature_logominewt_8999f118-f219-41a6-80fa-1f7515c2b67c.png](#)
[ERIC KOBER TESTIMONY.docx](#)

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 21, 2025 1:51 PM
To: Schierenbeck, Alec <Alec.Schierenbeck@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Charter Revision Commission testimony

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Please find attached the testimony I have prepared for Monday's public session.
Eric Kober



T
W manhattan.institute

ERIC KOBER TESTIMONY, NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

FEBRAURY 24, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Eric Kober. I retired in 2017 as director of housing, economic and infrastructure planning for the New York City Department of City Planning and am now Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute. I am speaking tonight as a private citizen.

I'm here today to offer some suggestions for reforming the Charter's land use provisions. I have followed the proceedings of this Commission and the public discussion with interest. I perceive two widely expressed concerns: The length and cost of entering the land use process, which deters many private applicants; and the evolution of the process in recent years towards "member deference" -- a de facto veto held by the local councilmember. I'll address each of these two problems in turn.

The primary time and cost issue with the land use process is environmental review, which this Commission can't address -- state legislation is needed. However, there are constructive Charter changes to consider. In 1989, borough president review was added to ULURP, extending the public review timeline by 30 days for applications involving a single community board. The current ULURP schedule now lasts seven months or more, anachronistically assuming borough presidents and borough boards must wait to receive community board resolutions through U.S. mail, whereas constant electronic communication now occurs between borough presidents, board members, and the community. The extended review window increases applicants' costs without providing meaningful improvement in the quality of borough presidents' and borough boards' comments on applications. Section 197-c of the City Charter should be amended to combine the community board, borough board, and borough president ULURP review into a single 60-day period. This would prevent further unnecessary delays in rezoning applications, allowing housing to be built faster and at lower cost.

Another change this Commission should consider is taking categories of applications out of ULURP, where the City Planning Commission adds no useful input. These include dispositions of City-owned property pursuant to zoning and minor changes to legal street grades.

On the "member deference" problem, Charter change creates an opportunity to achieve by citywide referendum what could not be accomplished by considering individual zoning applications. One possibility is to create, at the Department of City Planning, a Zoning Administrator position. The Administrator would be charged with review and approval of minor waivers of zoning rules. Building on the testimony at the Brooklyn hearing of my former DCP colleague Vishaan Chakrabarti, I'd suggest the Charter amendment specify that one of those waivers be permitting buildings of up to six housing units, not to exceed 35 feet in height, on any lot zoned for residences. That's naturally occurring affordable housing, needing no public subsidy. The City Planning Commission, by rule, should be empowered to specify additional waivers.

Thank you, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony
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Hi,

I just wanted to give 48 hour notice that I will be providing testimony and I want to ask what the proper procedure is to be a person who is heard on February 24th, 2025.

Thank you for the public hearing as we are in unprecedented times and need to use hindsight and foresight when altering our New York City Charter during these very unprecedented times.

Best,
Kimberly Cruz
Founder of Kinetic Civic Education
Yale University B.A. Political Science
The Bronx High School of Science

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

"Civics is defined as: the study or science of the privileges and obligations of citizens."

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries
Date: Friday, February 21, 2025 4:48:17 PM

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Additionally, 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.

Frank Ricci
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
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.

Chris Kaykaty
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
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.

Lindsay Rodriguez
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries
Date: Friday, February 21, 2025 4:49:15 PM

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Jonvieve Ratel



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Andi Rodriguez



From: [REDACTED]
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.

Allison Rodriguez
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
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.

Nora Cronin
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
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.

Charles Aidinoff

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries
Date: Friday, February 21, 2025 4:51:08 PM

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Since I moved to New York City, I've always wondered why as an unaffiliated or independent voter, you cannot vote in the primaries. 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.

Kara Meyer



From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-2811467 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 7:08:58 AM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Susan Micari

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: I'd like to testify to the housing crisis in NYC. I left NYC after 44 years, during 2020, much against my will, because I could see that my landlord was stockpiling empty apartments, and their relationship with me, which had always been cordial, had changed. They gave me a month or two of free rent every year of the 6 years I stayed at the Mercedes House after I sold my condo in Hell's Kitchen to supply my retirement funds. I should not have sold it. In looking for an affordable apartment to buy, there were few in my range of 600-700K and all of them were small. Still I wish I had taken one, just to have a foothold in our wonderful city again. Rents then were 3500 for a one bedroom, but in my building, the Mercedes House, rents were going up to 5000 a month. Both figures would have been difficult for me. I was concerned with having enough money in the bank to retire, in case I should live to my 90's like my grandparents and mother have done. As I have looked for a way to return, I cannot see one. I miss New York, and while I still give my support to NY Live Arts and the Metropolitan Museum, I miss so much that is rich and wonderful and that I just can't get to NY to see. Hotel rooms are very expensive. I know I am privileged, but realize that many middle class people like me--a retired reading specialist who had a thriving practice in the city for many years, would love to be there again. I will always love my city, and I hope that you can make it easier for middle class people to return to NY and to live there. Our experience of NY is long. Mine was 44 years of adventure, hardship, success, loss and triumph. NYC is unique and I miss it. Sincerely, Susan Micari, MS. Ed.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-9083506 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 7:49:29 AM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Mary Madsen

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: We are fortunate to have bought our home in 1995. But our son is renting a room in a 3BR apt in Crown Heights for \$1600, \$4800 total. The apartments in this building were cut in half doubling the number of units. These apartments are about 10 feet wide. If you think these landlords aren't making enough money you all need to have your heads examined. These rents would be outrageous even if the apartments were a normal size. Force the buildings with rent controlled apartments to bring them up to code rather than letting them sit empty. And regulate ALL rents as they do in Vienna, where a huge portion of the population rents and no landlords are starving, they make a perfectly good living. Greed is the problem, as it is with most things.'

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-4271386 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: KATHRYN KONKLE

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Feb 23, 2025 Letter to the Charter Revision Commission I agree we need more affordable housing, but do not feel the new buildings that have a small number of apartments set aside for low-income, elderly, disabled people like me are actually affordable long-term. Most are not protected under rent stabilization, or SCRIE, so the "affordable" rents will go up until I would be forced to leave and go WHERE? I worked my entire life, and am NOT asking for a "handout." If you push me out of my apartment, the city will pay much more to house me in a shelter. If real estate developers create enough empty apartments to end rent stabilization, we need to EXPAND SCRIE and rent stabilization to protect low-income seniors and disabled people who will be hurt and cost the city the most since we can't work or move. I could have been moved to a wheelchair accessible apartment by my landlord but he had managed to jack that rent up, before the laws were changed to prevent that, until it is "market rate" and then SCRIE wouldn't cover it even if he would give me preferential rent. That available ground floor apartment went to some young, rich, able-bodied girl while I live as a shut-in due to two flights of stairs. It's cruel and inhuman the way the city treats people like me who ALWAYS worked and paid OUR taxes but failed to get rich, or got old or sick. Adams is trying to go back on the city's word that certain community gardens, like the ones I helped to create 38 years ago, would be permanent parks and our contract with the city says into PERPETUITY. Adams is a criminal liar, and this is a land grab to force out more low-income people and ruin what little sense of community we have left. The gardens are meeting and performance spaces for all of us, not just green oasis used by a few who like to garden. The East Village was mostly rubble when I moved here in the 80s and helped clean it up. My reward is to be tortured by rich people who do NOT deserve to take over and push us out. Protect the gardens, expand SCRIE and rent stabilization, and build REAL affordable housing. I NEVER earned as much as \$70,000 even when I was young enough to work so that is NOT affordable level of income. We need housing for people who earn less than \$30,000 per year. You can't have a vibrant city without the artists, performers and support staff that make it happen. Shame on ALL the rich, entitled and over-privileged that shirk paying their fair share of taxes and take it out on the vulnerable citizens. Kathryn Konkle [REDACTED] Retired disabled technical, medical and scientific illustrator

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-4171816 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 9:42:10 AM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Louis Fratino

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: To whom it may concern at the Charter Revision Commission, My name is Louis Fratino and I live in an M-1 Industrial zone in East Williamsburg bordering Newtown Creek. I know this city is in dire need of new spaces to house people and I am writing to implore this commission to revisit the outmoded zoning that keeps neighborhoods like mine in a substandard quality for the people that are living there. I think tweaking some of the rules in M-1 zoning could maintain the opportunity for light industries while allowing people more space to live in these zones, such as housing units above commercial light industrial spaces. I also think more rules limiting the use of space for large tractor trailers would help improve quality of life and provide new opportunities for people to live in this area. An opportunity for new land use in this area may help mitigate the number of numerous scrapyards that degrade the quality of the all public space surrounding them. An increase of residents living in these zones would also help fulfill the need for more green public spaces, more food, and lighting. There is no need for the city to maintain zoning policy from 1960 that has likely ignored the populations of people living in and on the fringes of these zones. With rising housing costs, more and more people like myself find themselves in these parts of the city that must address and improve their qualities of life as dignified citizens of New York City. Thank you for your time and consideration, Louis Fratino

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-6897307 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 10:07:32 AM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Charles S La Punzina

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: There is agreement lack of affordable housing is great concern for all residents of NYC. The city government is correct to take up this issue through the Charter Revision Committee. There needs to be consideration for multiple approaches to this problem. In doing so, I urge the Committee to be sensitive to certain qualities of traditionally residential neighborhoods. Specifically, changing zoning to allow increased units where infrastructure doesn't support such will be detrimental to the quality of life of those already living there. Increasing occupancy purely for the sake of doing so, will not benefit anyone. The character of historically residential neighborhoods needs to be maintained while dealing with housing needs. Thank you for your consideration.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-4852536 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Graham Pierce

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: I am not sure to what extent NYC has control over property tax, and to what extent that is controlled at the state level, but it would be an excellent idea to tax all residential properties that are not primary residences, and that are not rented out at affordable rates, at a rate of, let's say, 1000% or more. People who hoard space in our city but do not actually live here are driving up housing costs for people who do live here. Plus, if they do not live here, then they are not spending money in our local economy--and as a result not paying local sales tax--and they are also not paying income tax. Why should people who contribute nothing to our city be encouraged to sit on properties they are not using when we have people with no homes, and people who are rent stressed to the tune of half of their income every month? Additionally, the default answer to all new housing development with at least 80% affordable units should be "yes", with NO space given for busy-body local neighbors to veto such proposals. Getting community input has the window dressing of being democratic. But because it prioritizes the desires of whoever happens to be a current resident at the time over the desires and needs of potential new residents--not to mention the needs of our overall city, and even beyond our city borders--it's actually incredibly undemocratic. Housing, like transportation, utility services, and other infrastructure, is too important to let it be swayed by small numbers of people who have adopted the attitude of, "Well, I got my house, so why should I care about anyone else?"

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Susye Greenwood

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: City Charter On Housing: Take the profit motive out of housing development The city should contract with Not For Profit housing developers to create truly affordable housing. Further, the city should not be allowed to give away any parcel of land owned by the city to private developers. That is just a give away to developers and we all know that does not lead to building truly affordable housing. Finally, affordable housing rates should be based on the federal poverty line, not on the area AMI.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-2657090 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 10:54:59 AM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Alex Moir

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: As a city of the future our housing needs must be looked at based on existing housing and new housing in all boroughs. Existing housing is struggling to keep up with the increase in taxes and costly new local laws which makes renting out existing homes expensive. We need help with those costs. We also need to make it easier to build new affordable housing in all areas. Some people may not want new developments in their neighborhoods but a few shouldn't hold up progress for the many. It isn't an easy task but we must evolve. Thank you for working on ways to improve our community.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL]
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 11:25:22 AM
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Attached please find a copy of my testimony before the Charter Revision Commission scheduled for Monday February 24, 2025.



Frederick Shack
Chief Executive Officer



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**Testimony Before the NYC Charter Revision Commission
Presented by Frederick Shack, CEO, Urban Pathways**

Good evening and thank you to the Commission for the opportunity to provide testimony on this critically important issue.

My name is Frederick Shack, I am the Chief Executive Officer of Urban Pathways, where I have had the privilege of working for the past twenty years. In addition to my role at Urban Pathways, I am the co-chair of the advisory committee to the Mayor's Office on Nonprofit Services and the former co-chair of the Mayor's Nonprofit Resiliency Committee under the previous administration. For over a decade, I have worked in partnership with the City of New York to improve its procurement and contracting systems, from the establishment of Accelerator during the Bloomberg administration to the introduction of Passport under the current administration.

As you have already heard, New York City's procurement, contracting, and payment processing systems are fundamentally broken—designed in a way that almost ensures failure. What I would like you to understand today is that the single greatest threat to the solvency of the nonprofit sector doing business with the City is contract registration delays and late payments. These issues have only worsened in recent years, putting essential services and the organizations that provide them at risk. The failures of FEGS and Sheltering Arms serve as stark warnings of what can happen when an industry's primary patron lacks transparency and accountability.

You have, or will, hear the troubling statistics—how an overwhelming percentage of City contracts with nonprofits are not registered on time and the crushing burden this places on our sector. The nonprofit community is the backbone of the City's social safety net, providing critical services that New Yorkers rely on every day. Yet, the very organizations tasked with delivering these services are forced to operate in an environment of financial uncertainty due to the City's failures.

Rather than reiterate the problem, I want to use my remaining time to focus on solutions—solutions that must be framed around three core principles:

Accountability, Transparency, and Fairness.

Accountability

- The Comptroller office accountability measures include a 30 day timeframe for registering contacts once received. The Charter should set clearly defined timeframes for contracting, invoice processing, and payment by city agencies.
- The Charter should require through the PPB that new services should **not** begin until the contracts are legally registered, budgets are activated, and initial advances are paid.
- For contract renewals, where service disruptions are not an option, the City should be required to pay late fees and interest to cover the costs nonprofits incur when borrowing money to continue providing services due to delayed payments.
- MOCS should be granted the authority to hold City agency leadership accountable for ensuring timely contract registration and invoice processing.

Transparency

- Performance data on contract registration and payment processing should be collected and reviewed by the Mayor's Office of Contracts.
- This data should be shared with the Mayor's Office of Nonprofit Services, its appointed advisory board and made publicly available to the sector through MONS and the public via the Mayor's Management Report.

Fairness

- As a City committed to racial and social justice, we must ensure that nonprofit service providers are funded at levels that support **fair and equitable wages** for the dedicated workforce that carries out this vital work.
- The well-trained, talented, and committed nonprofit workforce should not be forced into poverty due to **chronic underfunding** of City contracts.

- Wages for those doing work on behalf of the City must reflect the true cost of living in New York, ensuring that nonprofit employees can afford to live in the communities they serve.

I want to thank the Commission once again for this opportunity. I hope that through this process, we can finally make the necessary changes to the City Charter to address these longstanding challenges. Nonprofits and the New Yorkers who rely on our services cannot afford further delays. It is time for real, systemic reform.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-236703 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Charlie Friedberg

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Loosen restrictions on development so we can increase the supply of housing. It would also be nice if developers were compelled to respect the architectural style of the area instead of erecting ugly glass monstrosities. We need to think big about how to increase access to public transit. I would love to see more green in the city - more trees, small parks, narrowed roads with malls, etc. There is no reason NYC needs to be so grey and dreary. Thank you for your consideration.

From: [REDACTED]
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Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-7404568 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Bonnie Maloney

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: This is about housing in NYC. Thank you for reading!

To Whom It May Concern:

I've never been moved to submit my comments regarding life in the city or urban policy. However, after nearly 24 years in NYC, and on the brink of leaving like so many others, I need to speak to the issue of housing.

I am 43 years old and make over six figures. My salary is a tremendous privilege and positions me with more economic flexibility than many others. And yet, after decades of working in the independent school system as an educator and administrator, I have very little to show for the hard work I've put in. I am in no position to purchase property here or anywhere else. As rents continue to increase, staying in a city that I love becomes less feasible with each passing year.

I was recently approved for an "affordable housing" rental building through NYC Housing Connect. The quote marks there are purposeful. I've applied to this program for years like many others, and it is exciting to finally be selected for a chance at a building that would greatly increase my quality of life here. I have never lived in a new construction, had access to laundry facilities in my own building, or lived in a unit with a dish washer and new appliances. However, as a single person trying to make it in this city, I can't afford the rent that is deemed "affordable" for me.

I wonder: when did "affordable housing" become so out of reach? If someone is single and trying to make things work on their own, they undoubtedly have debt. Student loans, credit cards...and all the other ways we've "borrowed from Peter to pay Paul" through the years. This is clearly not considered when the affordable rent rates are set and creates a further inequity in access to housing.

At the same time, riding the 2-train uptown yesterday morning, there were no fewer than eight unhoused individuals who came on the train asking for food, work, and or money during the trip. One man carried a large bag filled with boxes of toothpaste that he was trying to sell to commuters. I look at these folks and think about their reality up against mine. *Where are things going?* I see more unhoused individuals than ever, and as a wage earner with a generous salary I am on the edge of making ends meet every month.

If there's a way to help this conversation move forward, I'd love to be a part of solution-oriented thinking. I don't think the answer here is more towers in the sky made of glass and concrete, with a few units set aside for those who need access to rent that is "affordable." I propose more intentionally developed co-housing, rent vouchers and housing incentives for folks working in non-profits, and adjusted rent rates for single tenants who aren't splitting their rent with partners or roommates.

Please feel free to reach out if you are looking for thought partners in considering this issue from multiple perspectives.

Best,
Bonnie Maloney
NYC resident of 24 years

From: [REDACTED]
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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Alexander Brebner

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Regarding the Mayor's Charter Commission, I would like to add an urgent voice to the issue of limited housing in NYC, especially for those of us entering seniorhood with less earned income and fixed resources. I am, sadly, making an exit plan after over 40 years of living and working here.

From: [REDACTED]
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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Heather Weston

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: NYC has a persistent housing shortage. We all need to support housing development EVEN when it is in our neighborhoods and even if it requires changing or waiving landmark provisions. It is far more important to provide homes for current NYers than it is to obey design requirements that hark back a hundred years. Say yes to middle income housing. Say no to requiring so many parking spaces. And, consider a "non-occupancy tax" for the international wealthy investors who are using our limited housing to launder money or park their money in the US.

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Paula Speer

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: I would like to recommend the approach taken by Vishaan Chakrabarti in "How to Make Room for One Million New Yorkers," a guest essay for the New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/12/30/opinion/new-york-housing-solution.html> It's an interactive, so I'll list the main points here: - Develop housing on vacant lots, unused parking lots, and convertible office/retail buildings. - Focus on sites near transportation hubs. - Avoid flood-prone zones. - Build to a height that is in proportion to the surrounding structures. Governor Hochul seems to have taken this approach herself, and I don't know of any specific convincing argument against it. Thank you.

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Jeff Katz

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: Perhaps part of the solution is a multiple step process. Step 1 identify businesses that are occupying space in buildings that can be used instead for residential purposes or more easily converted than other modern office space can. Step 2 incentivize business to move into business space that is not so easily converted and vacant. Step 3 convert and backfill the convertible spaces into residential spaces. Meanwhile, commercial landlords that have vacant space and continue to warehouse it for years on end, perhaps put a time limit on the tax breaks and write offs they get for keeping useful space scarce. Hopefully, at some point the economics of using space will outweigh the economics of making it sit empty. You'll also need to prevent banks from enforcing loan provisions that reward keeping space empty at high asking prices by penalizing renting it at a lower going rate.

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Allan Krumholz

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: I am an owner and manager of several rent stabilized apartment buildings in Queens, New York. My buildings are in Flushing and Sunnyside. In two of my buildings I have 3 units that are now spaces for commercial tenants such as doctor offices or other offices. But it is very hard to find tenants for these offices and they sit empty and unused - what a waste. Those units would be very easy for me, with no expense to the City, to them to nice rental apartments for residential tenants, with minimal construction and renovation because they already exist - they are just sitting empty. But zoning (parking) and other such city rules prevent me from putting those into the affordable housing pool or market for New York City. I would very much want to do so because offices are very hard to rent at present, while there is a tremendous demand and need for affordable rental apartments in New York City, as you know. There is another unit in one of my buildings that was previously set up as a rental apartment for over 20 years, but when the last tenant moved out, we realized it was actually approved only for use by a porter and was not officially a legal apartment. So, we no longer can rent this. It would be a great affordable rental unit, as it was, but we need City approval to be able to use it legally. I am sure that many existing Rent Stabilized Apartment Buildings and their owners and managers have similar situations in which existing structures such as offices and units that are not legal as apartments could be safely and quickly converted (in a matter of weeks) and at very modest cost to affordable apartment rentals in all the boroughs. I bet the numbers would be substantial! I see this as a quick fix (essentially immediate) and easy homerun for New York City. It is a win/win situation for renters needing affordable housing, landlords in New York City (giving them new apartments that they can rent instead of offices and other space that sits empty or is not legally occupied), and the City that will get more in taxes when these units are rented and increase the value of the buildings in which they are now empty.

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: John Dereszewski

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: This was a piece that I recently posted on Facebook, which discusses the ULURP process, which will clearly be a focus of the Commission's work. I believe it raises points that will be of interest to the Commission. For the record, I am a current member of Queens CB 6, though these are my personal views. I was also the District Manager of Bushwick's CB 4 during the 1970's and was also a member of Brooklyn's CB 1 from the mid 1970's through, when I was not a DM, 1998. During that time, I chaired the Williamsburg/Greenpoint board's Land Use Committee for many years. During most of the 1990's I led a unit that developed housing for persons with AIDS at the Human Resources Administration and, from 1996 to 2000, managed the Contracts Office at HRA's Division of AIDS Services, the current HASA. Currently, I am a manager at HRA's Fiscal Office. So I bring a lot to the table. I hope you will find these comments helpful. AS IT APPROACHES ITS 50TH YEAR, TWO CHEERS FOR ULURP Although they were not officially promulgated until 1976 and did not go into actual operations until the following year, 1975 marked the year when the proposal to establish the Uniform Land Use Procedures (ULURP) were approved by the voters as part of the Goodman,Commission's City Charter revisions. Thus we are not jumping the gun by recognizing its anniversary this year, especially when issues regarding it, some new and some old, remain before us. The concept behind ULURP was a fairly radical one, since it created a uniform process through which a variety of previously uncoordinated land use actions, including street and zoning map changes, special permits, site selection, the disposition and acquisition of City owned property, among other things, would now be addressed under a uniform, time limited, process. It also established a formal, albeit advisory, role for Community Board (CB) review, which had previously been asked for their input in an uncoordinated, scatter shot, fashion. Now, once the specific proposal had been deemed "complete" by the City Planning Department, the boards would have 60 days to hold a public hearing and provide its advisory recommendations. The matter would then similarly move forward first to the City Planning Commission (CPC) and finally to the Board of Estimate, where the final reckon would occur. (A similar process was also enacted regarding zoning

variance proposals, where the CB recommendations would be forwarded to the Board of Standards and Appeals, whose decisions would be final.) With only a few changes, the most significant of which occurred in the late 1980's, when the Board of Estimate was dissolved and its role assumed by the City Council, the basic process has remained in place. At the time, the "merely advisory" nature of the CB's role was criticized as being too weak, but, if anything, I have always found it to be a plus. Given the City's disastrous experience with the former and unmented local school boards, providing actual decision making authority to local groups is all too often an invitation to arbitrary actions and even corruption. Making the CB's actions advisory encourages the boards to justify their recommendations with well stated and documented arguments and attach conditions and revisions to the proposals that can serve the community well during the bargaining that occurs during the subsequent phases of the process. While different Mayoral administrations have been more or less receptive to the CB's input in this process, at least the boards are encouraged to argue their recommendations on the merits given their "merely advisory" role. Another criticism that was initially voiced and remains a concern involves the frequently inordinate length of the pre certification period, the time it takes before City Planning determines that a proposal is "complete" and that the ULURP clock can start. When developers complain of ULURP's undue length, this is the period that they are speaking of, something that gives the actual process a bad rap. Although certain items, such as the required environmental reviews, must be completed before certification occurs, and could make such controversial proposals as the City of Yes vulnerable to non frivolous challenges if they were not, these are hardly the only items that drag out this pre-process. Another concern with pre-certification that I voiced at the initial public hearings, it got me my first citation in the NY Times and they almost spelled my name right!, is that it often involves a bargaining session between CPC and the proposer over the substance of the proposal the former would approve. A particularly blatant example of this recently occurred with the City of Yes proposal. Although many CB's, including my own, had offered numerous recommendations and conditions that could have addressed many of the legitimate concerns the proposal had raised, CPC I ignored just about all of them and basically rubber stamped the initial package. Besides being a pretty insulting rebuff to the CB's, this left all the heavy lifting to the City Council. Although a recent Charter amendment does give CB's the opportunity to obtain information regarding the status of proposals in the pre-certification stage, the language is vague and, as far as I am aware, has not been tested. So, pre-certification remains a problem. When the Supreme Court ruled the Board of Estimate to be unconstitutional, the effects that this had on ULURP was obvious. Something had to replace the final decision maker in this process. While some efforts were suggested to revamp the Board in a constitutionally complying way, the proposed "solutions" were just too confusing to survive serious analysis - or so I opined to my not very sympathetic Brooklyn colleagues. In any event, the only practical solution was to assign the task to the City Council. Given the inherently legislative nature of this process, it only made sense to provide this role to the City's legislature. At the same time, a proposal was made to eliminate several items from ULURP review. One such item concerned the disposition of City owned property. Since this was a significant concern in my Greenpoint/Williamsburg district, although it might be of minor interest other CB's, I argued that review of such items not be eliminated but made discretionary. In the end, something like this was adopted, although it appears that the boards make use of their discretion far less frequently than they should. (The importance of the Land Disposition issue unfortunately became far less significant due the the Giuliani administration's terrible decision to sell off, often at bargain prices, as much City owned land as possible. This deprived many communities of a valuable resource that could support the development of affordable housing.) As it approaches its half century mark, ULURP remains a vibrant and entrenched presence on the City scene and has provided those communities that make the effort to play a

meaningful role in the development process. This is not to say that problems still exist. Besides the previously mentioned pre-certification issue, a major concern is the Council member's veto. While, in the old Board of Estimate, the five BP's often joined in opposing a matter strongly condemned by one of their number, they could only prevail if they were joined by one of the three Citywide members. Today, however, a single Council member can block an item by announcing his or her opposition and getting the other members to join. This occurs all too often. Now, it is important to note that a significant degree of deference is due to the strongly held view of the local Council member over an item situated in the district. This is particularly the case where (1) the item is strictly local in nature; (2) the local CB has strongly raised and argued objections to it; and (3) the CB's view had been ignored by the CPC in its rubber stamped approval of the initial proposal. In such situations, the Council members should take heed of their colleague's objections and be willing, within limits, to follow that member's lead in modifying or even opposing the proposal. But this deference often is given without any due limits. While the Council did reject a veto involving the expansion of a highly financed hospital on the Upper East Side, this was an exception that proved the rule. A particularly egregious example of the abuse of the Council member veto occurred with the Industrial City proposal in Sunset Park. While the location was local, the economic benefits that it would generate went far beyond the district's boundaries. To make matters even worse, the local Council member had already negotiated a compromise that eliminated the proposal's most problematic components, including two hotels before reneging on the deal, announcing his opposition and getting most of his colleagues to fall into line. This was simply not how ULURP should work. (To his credit, then Council member and now Congressman Richie Torres refused to go along and called out his fellow members on their undue deference.) Even more strictly local proposals can be the subject of council member veto abuse. In a situation involving housing development in Harlem, the then local council member urged - and received - the opposition of the full body - even though the developer had bent over backwards to accommodate her demands. Her reason for opposing the project - "There are too many White people moving into Harlem"! (Fortunately, this member's actions proved too bizarre for even her constituents, causing her to forego reelection in order to avoid what would have been an embarrassing defeat.) The question of how to deal with an out of control Council member veto is a perplexing one, since it will require the members to say no to a colleague whose support they may need on a matter that is important to them. Hopefully this is a question that the press and public will raise with the members vying to be the Council's next Speaker. But the prospects are not bright. The Mayor's recent appointment of a Charter Commission that, among other things, will be tasked to accelerate the development of affordable housing may potentially pose a new challenge to the ULURP process. While no one can deny the current housing crisis that the City faces, cutting corners in ULURP, especially with the scope of CB review, is not the answer. One can only hope that the Commission produces proposals that effectively address the housing crisis while maintaining the current balance and be ready to oppose them if they do not. In balance, despite its imperfections and the challenges that may lie ahead, ULURP has served the City, and its communities well. Two cheers for it are well deserved.

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Philip Yanos

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: New York City should be implementing Housing First to address homelessness among vulnerable adults. Housing First is the only evidence-based model to addressing homelessness among vulnerable adults (see the Executive Summary of Canada's multi-site At Home/Chez Soi randomized controlled trial here: https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/At2520Home2520Final2520Report2520-2520Exec2520Summary2520-2520ENG_0.pdf), yet it is not practiced in New York City, where people typically have to wait 6 months to a year to obtain a housing placement. This model is both more effective and less expensive than what New York City practices.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-2579494 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 6:49:49 PM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Ira Fuchs

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: This is a comment regarding the availability of real estate for high density housing in Queens. There is a half-mile strip on Queens Boulevard between 51st Avenue and 67th Street that is undeveloped. It contains numerous used car lots and businesses on small lots. This can be seen here:https://www.google.com/maps/search/used+cars/@40.7376584,-73.8833029,1352m/data=!3m1!1e3?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI1MDIxOS4xIKXMDS0ASAFQAw%3D%3D This area is a short distance from Manhattan and other sections of Queens. The Grand Avenue-Newtown train station is in this vicinity where the E,F,M & R lines are available. Bus service on Queens Boulevard is fast. This is a perfect area for development of low to mid cost, high density housing.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-5690912 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 4:47:19 AM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: BROOKE NADELL

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: To increase housing supply, NYC can copy a successful high-quality housing model where the city pre-entitles and pre-approves (optional) architectural drawings for the housing it wants, where it wants it. The city identifies available and under-utilized land that we want developed (ie, located in area that are walkable, high-opportunity, job centers, near transit etc). Then instead of an antagonistic process – the city creates a smooth and welcoming process for developers to build the housing the city wants, where we want it. This is how much of Europe has brought down housing costs so rent in Vienna is half of that of NYC. How it works: Every underutilized parcel (such as one story commercial buildings, vacant lots, surface parking, etc) is reimaged with a building that matches the height and mass of the block. This can be through an open submission process, or a contest or competition with the jury being stakeholders and experts. Most of NYC has standardized lot sizes – for miles the parcels are identical. So the same building can be built on any parcel. When it involves a parcel size with multiple development opportunities, the city can pre-entitle and fully approve any number of “Standard Plans.” Imagine Brooklyn Brownstones – it’s the same set of plans replicated. This model is working its way through the Los Angeles City Council – and can be a model for NYC: <https://commonedge.org/a-radical-and-totally-practical-rethinking-of-u-s-housing-construction/> The city can further streamline using another proven model from LA: <https://www.livablecommunitiesinitiative.com/streamlining> Ideally the Standard Plans can be required to be high quality, starter homes, small and tiny units, zero carbon buildings, with no parking for zero carbon mobility. Finally, if developers are building the housing we want – fees can be eliminated. One way to offset those fees is the estimated > \$3 billion NYC leaves on the table by not managing parking – and using a city-wide, high performing Parking App – so every driver can immediately find parking and it’s priced – according to the late Professor Donald Shoup. Speed cameras can further help smooth traffic (fewer accidents, less friction creates more through-put) while raising revenue.

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Susan Jonas

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: 40,000 warehouses rent stabilized apartments in NYC. HOW IS THAT LEGAL? I was able to apply for one but was required to invest \$200,000 in renovation just to make it LIVEABLE! (I declined.) The walls were crumbling. The stove was from the 30s. Wiring antiquated. How is THAT legal? Compelling landlords to maintain their properties and to make apartment designated as rent stabilized rentable would be a start.

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To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-9643710 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 9:02:47 AM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Warner Wada

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: I have lived in at first illegal, now due to the loft law and our lawyer, C of O loft in the Garment Center since the late 70's. Much PR has been noted on planning efforts to convert vacant office/commercial space to apartments. Artists have been doing that since before SoHo was SoHo. The key is making the converted spaces 'cool' which means keeping the big windows, new codes for bedrooms (8' corner spaces in 11' high lofts work fine), anything to avoid cookie cutter box like living 'spaces'. Artists in Chicago were converting storefronts to live work apartments in the 70's, can u do that in LIC or the Bronx? The problem with 'central planning' for where you want to live is that it looks so boring, I guess if it's really cheap you don't care?

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Charter Revision Commission Testimony
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 10:15:33 AM
Attachments: [New York City Charter Revision Commission Feb 2025_HSC.pdf](#)

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Good morning,

My apologies, please use the attached testimony instead.

Thank you,
Gloria Kim

From: Gloria Kim [REDACTED]
Date: Friday, February 21, 2025 at 2:30 PM
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov <CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Cc: Michelle Jackson [REDACTED]
Subject: Charter Revision Commission Testimony

Good afternoon,

Please see attached for the Human Services Council of New York's testimony.

Thank you,
Gloria Kim | *Director of Policy, Research, and Impact*
Human Services Council of New York

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

HSC strengthens New York's nonprofit human services sector, ensuring all New Yorkers, across diverse neighborhoods, cultures, and generations reach their full potential.



New York City Charter Revision Commission 2025
February 2025
Testimony by the Human Services Council of New York

On behalf of the Human Services Council of New York (HSC), I would like to thank the Commission for this opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Michelle Jackson, and I am the Executive Director of HSC. HSC is a membership organization representing over 170 human services providers in New York. HSC serves our membership as a coordinating body, advocate, and intermediary between the human services sector and government. We take on this work so that our members can focus on running their organizations and providing critical direct support to New Yorkers. These are the nonprofits that support our city's children, seniors, those experiencing homelessness, people with disabilities, individuals who are incarcerated or otherwise involved in the justice system, immigrants, and individuals coping with substance abuse and other mental health and behavioral challenges. We strive to help our members better serve their clients by addressing matters such as government procurement practices, disaster preparedness and recovery, government funding, and public policies that impact the sector.

City of Yes

New York's human services providers – nonprofits providing services related to homelessness, mental health, disability, child welfare, and workforce preparedness on behalf of government – are contracted by City agencies to deliver programs helping New Yorkers thrive and weather life's storms. To combat the City's generational housing crisis, the City of Yes is an ambitious proposal to create new homes and invest in critical infrastructure, housing, and other needs. However, to deliver as much affordable housing to New Yorkers and their families and to make our city more affordable, the City needs human services organizations to provide these critical services such as child care, food security, and workforce development, through a transparent and equitable procurement system. The City of Yes cannot succeed without a real partnership between the city and nonprofits, and essential to that partnership is for the City to pay providers the full cost of services in a timely manner.

The procurement process, substantially defined in the New York City Charter, is the prime mechanism for creating, funding, and awarding contracts to human services providers. The City of New York contracts \$7.8 billion annually to nonprofit organizations employing about 80,000 workers, with human services contract spending growing 60 percent faster than the overall City budget over the past decade.¹ The contracting system is complex, and a lack of collaboration and transparency in the development of request for proposals, coupled with this complex process creates an inadequately funded set of programs and extensive delays in contract registration and payment.

The New York City Comptroller's Fiscal Year 2043 Annual Summary Contracts Report demonstrates that much more needs to be done – and quickly – to improve the timeliness of

¹ (Parrott, 2025)

human services contract registration. Although the City procures over \$12 billion in human services, more than 91% of total contract value for human service and non-profit contractors were registered late in Fiscal Year 2024.² Registration delays can be financially ruinous, as services are expected to begin on the first day of a contract, even if the contract has not yet been registered by the relevant agency. Providers cannot wait to begin services, like other contractors. A construction project could be delayed until documents are in order, but a summer youth program must start in the summer, and parents rely on a particular start date. For contract renewals, which are also delayed, providers cannot close a program while waiting for renewal documents; closing a domestic violence shelter for 2-3 months each year would be extremely problematic, and the fabric of social services would fall apart. Even if the City provides quarterly advances, providers do not have access to the money until the contract is registered. Thus, the City puts human services organizations in a position where they continue to provide services before they are paid.

Nonprofits continue to incur substantial costs for service delivery before they have a legal right to be paid and are often forced to borrow to meet payroll. This means providers take enormous fiscal and legal risks by signing leases, hiring staff, and starting programs without a contract, or continuing to operate services on the verbal agreement that things will get sorted out. Retroactivity also creates cash flow issues for providers, who have to put off paying vendors, take out lines of credit that they must pay interest on or utilize the loan fund, because providers cannot get paid until the contract is registered. The City and its residents ultimately bear the brunt of these problems, when highly qualified providers cannot afford to take on City contracts, or when those providers must close programs or go out of business altogether because of the financial strains imposed by the City's late payments. The result is that communities lose access to cherished neighborhood institutions and essential services, and the City is unable to carry out its human services programs. For instance, Sheltering Arms, a 200-year-old nonprofit, closed its doors because of challenges from the pandemic, chronic underfunding, and late government contract payments.³

The Charter

New York City's procurement options are defined in the first instance by state law. Within the state framework, the Charter establishes the basic structure of the City's procurement process, including the methods that agencies can use to make procurements. Under the Charter, the Procurement Policy Board is responsible for promulgating rules to effectuate the Charter's procurement requirements, and for periodically reviewing those rules to ensure that they are achieving their intended purpose. The Charter gives the City Council an oversight role, too. It requires essential procurement documents to be publicly available, so that the public can conduct oversight as well.

The Charter Revision process presents an opportunity to tackle some of the issues human services providers face in late contract registration, as well as with procurement overall. Below we have presented a set of recommendations to amend the City Charter.

Recommendation 1: Require Prompt Contracting Timeframes

² (New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, 2025)

³ (Madison Hunt, 2023)

It has been clear for years that most City contracts with nonprofit human services providers are registered months or even years after the nonprofits have begun providing services. According to SeaChange Capital Partners' report, ContractStat, 86% of human services contracted started in Fiscal Year 2024 were registered late.⁴ System improvements, most notably PASSPort, have been put in place but nonprofits still report significant delays in contract registration, and HSC's membership have stated that delays are getting worse, and they are having a more difficult time working with City Agencies towards registration.

The City Charter creates a timeframe for the Comptroller to register a contract (30 days) and we believe that Chapter 13, Section 311 of the City Charter should be amended to require the Procurement Policy Board (PPB) to set contracting timelines for each step of the procurement process, and regularly report on the compliance of the contracting agencies. There are many steps from the announcement of the award to registration, and with the data acquired through PASSPort, there must be mandated timeframes to hold the contracting agencies accountable for the delayed procurement processes resulting in human services providers waiting months and sometimes years to be paid for the services provided.

To implement this first recommendation, the Charter should also mandate a PPB rulemaking prohibiting contracting agencies from asking any vendor to perform any services without a registered contract. As mentioned above, late contracting issues puts human services providers at financial risk and operational uncertainty because payments are often made very late. Late contracts and late payments increase costs for nonprofits because they must spend time and money chasing the dollars they are owed and shifting resources to fill temporary gaps.

Recommendation 2: Interest on Late Payments

Building off recommendation one, there needs to be a mechanism to hold the City to a timeframe for registration. The Comptroller has 30 days to approve a contract package, or the contract is deemed registered, but an incomplete contract package from a City agency would be rejected by the Comptroller and would not serve the public interest. For too long nonprofits have incurred substantial costs for service delivery before they have a legal right to be paid and are often forced to borrow to meet payroll. Interest payments on such borrowings are not reimbursable, except in rare cases, and must therefore be paid from reserves already stretched to the breaking point. And that assumes that an organization can find a willing lender.

We also suggest amending the Charter so that nonprofits can actually collect interest when the City pays late. While the goal is that no contracts should ever start before payments are made, nonprofits should not bear the cost of any late payments. According to a moment in time survey of HSC members, 48% of respondents had to take out loans or a line of credit, valued at \$87 million and almost \$6 million in interest payments.⁵ Current City policies around the payment of interest simply do not work; providers are almost never granted interest for late payments. Therefore, we recommend that Section 332 (payment procedure) includes a requirement that the City is responsible for interest on late payments, including late payments due to late contract registration. This could be implemented by requiring appropriations for interest on late payments to be included in agency contract budgeting. If the agencies do not spend the allocated reserves,

⁴ (Macintosh, 2024)

⁵ (Human Services Council of New York, 2024)

the money could be spent to support other agency initiatives, for instance in the case of PEGs, which would incentivize agencies to pay invoices on time.

Recommendation 3: Mayor's Office of Contract Services

The Charter should establish a mandate describing the specific responsibilities for the Mayor's Office of Contract Services. It is crucial for MOCS to have charter authority to ensure city agencies meet contracting deadlines and be able to improve procurement processes across programmatic agencies. MOCS should have charter authority not just over procurement, but invoicing and payment, to ensure consistent policies across agencies. Many of the payment issues nonprofit providers face are not just from registration, but payment issues throughout the span of the contract, and payment practices vary and change from agency to agency. This could be accomplished by establishing an office in the executive office of the mayor, the director of contract services appointed by the mayor, that has the authority to take actions are needed to ensure that agencies comply with contract laws and regulations, invoicing, and payment. The Office should also have the power to survey each agency and furnish data and information and to answer inquiries pertinent to the exercise of any of the director's duties regarding procurement-related matters.

Recommendation 4: Transparency

Solving this late registration problem requires public access to information about which City agencies have the longest contract delays, and which types of contracts are delayed the most. Chapter 1, Section 12(b)(5) of the City Charter should be amended to require the Mayor to include in the Mayor's Management Report a statement of the number and percentage of client services contracts that are registered before the contract's start date, one day to three months after the start date, three months and one day to six months after the start date, six months and one day to nine months after the start date, nine months and one day to one year after the start date, and more than a year after the start date.

In addition, the Charter should provide for the PPB and City Council to review this information and seek remedies. Thus, chapter 2, section 30 of the Charter should be amended to add timeliness of client services contract registration to the City procurement policies and procedures that the City Council will periodically review. Similarly, chapter 13, section 311(c) and 311(g) of the Charter should be amended to require the Procurement Policy Board to take such registration delays into account in its annual review of compliance with its own rules, policies, and procedures, and in its recommendations to the Mayor and Council regarding the organization, personnel structure, and management of the agency procurement function.

Recommendation 5: Procurement Policy Board

The Procurement Policy Board (PPB) is a critical regulatory body for contracting and ensuring that regulations are relevant and effective. Yet there is no guidance on how often the PPB must meet, or any mechanism for transparency of PPB decision making. Some of the issues HSC presents to the City could be appropriately addressed by the PPB, but the Board does not regularly meet in a way that the public can engage and address critical issues. Therefore, we recommend amending Section 311 to include a requirement that the PPB meet four times per year and hold public hearings.

Additionally, as detailed below, the underfunding of human services contracts is the most pressing issue impacting the sector. The PPB should be the body to address this issue. Charter

section 311, sets out principles for the PPB and should be amended to include language requiring that procurements reimburse providers for reasonable costs by adding language to Section 311.d “(iv) rules requiring all agencies to reimburse nonprofit client services providers for at least the reasonable cost of providing the contracted services.”

Underfunding of the Sector

While the Charter is not a document structured to set rates, the nonprofit sector has struggled for decades with how competitive procurements impact the systemic underfunding of programs, to the detriment of the financial health of nonprofits. There are ways that the Charter could structure procurements to better ensure equitable rates, and while this Commission has many recommendations before it, there are real and insurmountable financial hurdles that the current system has placed on providers. Nonprofits provide a myriad of services on behalf of the government – many of them mandated – and the sector is able to leverage private and philanthropic dollars and funding from the City, State, and federal government, to create dynamic programs at a bargain. Providers are experts who are uniquely qualified to create cost-effective and impactful programs directly catered to their communities. The City is not getting a deal by chronically underfunding homeless shelters, foster care agencies, food pantries, and senior centers; it is directly harming those who rely on government for help. The nonprofit human services financial crisis must be addressed:

- Contracts are generally underfunded for the program with a low rate per service unit, where providers must make up the difference.
- Contracts neither provide for cost escalations on the OTPS (other-than-personal services) side, nor cost-of-living increases on the PS (personnel services) side. Contracts with government are often for five-to-seven-year terms, and even longer when RFPs are delayed, but providers are unable to account for unforeseen rising costs, such as a spike in electricity and water prices or an exceptionally cold winter, nor is there a mechanism to accommodate rising rent, health insurance, or other costs when contracts need to be extended. Policy changes also add unfunded mandates to contracts, whether it is professional training that requires out of office time or increases to the minimum wage, where nonprofits must make staffing and salary changes that impact how much the program costs to operate. These are not new issues, nor is government unaware that these are real concerns with which nonprofits grapple each month. A string of recent reports outlines this underfunding clearly, with survey data, anecdotal information from the sector, and by looking at the numbers in actual contracts and financial reports.

The sector’s health is in severe crisis, and providers report that underfunded contracts are the main driver of their financial struggles. According to the report “A National Imperative: Joining Forces to Strengthen Human Services in America,” nationally government funding covers only 70 cents on the dollar for direct program expenses.⁶ As government is the predominant funder of human services making them the primary driver of human services salaries, current contracts have resulted in the essential human services workforce being some of the lowest paid workers in New York’s economy. This government-sanctioned “poverty pay” has resulted in nearly one in six human services workers lives at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level,

⁶ (Oliver Wyman, 2018)

compared to just one in ten public sector workers.⁷ The underfunding of human services impacts a workforce of over 80,000 workers in which two-thirds are women and 52% are women of color⁸, making this a gender and racial equity issue.

Recommendation 6: Sample Budget

Human services providers compete for contracts that contain scopes of work proposed by government that are typically developed without a market survey of costs or input from providers. This results in contracts that do not cover the real cost of services and inadequate compensation for a highly educated workforce, which are all essential to implement a high-quality program. Chapter 13 of the Charter instructs the City on the procurement process, the City should include a rationalization, through a sample budget, for the rates set forth in the RFP. Chapter 13 of the Charter should include language that “Prior to issuing an invitation for bids, requests for proposals, or other solicitations that set forth proposed rates, the agency shall undertake an analysis of the costs associated with performing the service, including employee costs, and include the analysis as a sample budget in the bid or request for proposal documents.”

Recommendation 7: Survey of Current Vendors

New York City outsources the bulk of human services programs to nonprofit vendors, and many of these providers compete for contracts for programs in which they have previously held contracts at the City level, as well as from other levels of government and private funders. When the City develops a request for proposal for a set of contracts that are expiring or developing a new RFP that is substantially similar to existing contracts, the City should survey current vendors to receive information on rates, deliverables, and outcome measurement. Current contractors hold vital information on the real costs of running programs, what works and what does not in the current program design, and what deliverables are being met and move towards the outcomes the City seeks when designing a program. A market survey should be conducted to justify the cost allocations put forward in the creation of rates or overall budgets offered on human services programs. Additionally, if the RFP did not reflect market research, the agency should have to defend why crucial services and equitable wages were not fully funded. Forcing transparency in average costs versus proposed funding would help move procurements away from a place of scarcity where government budgets are balanced on the backs of nonprofits and frontline workers. The rate setting methodology should be transparent to the public, especially for per-client or per-service rates and should document the components and calculation of the rate.

The City charter should include in Section 312 language requiring City agencies to survey current vendors, or vendors who hold substantially similar contracts, when creating a bid or request for proposal. “Prior to issuing an invitation for bids, requests for proposals, or other solicitations, the agency shall undertake a survey of vendors who currently hold a contract for the service being bid, or those who hold substantially similar contracts, to assess the current rate structure and costs associated with the service, and the measurement of deliverables prescribed to the contract.”

⁷ (Parrott, Moving Beyond COLAs to Salary Parity for New York City’s Nonprofit Human Services Workers, 2025)

⁸ (Parrott, Moving Beyond COLAs to Salary Parity for New York City’s Nonprofit Human Services Workers, 2025)

Conclusion

Human services providers play the essential role in the City's complex human services delivery system, and they face many challenges in the contracting process. They operate in the context of a broken contracting system. Only if we address the underlying causes of contractor instability—problems at the government level—will we be able to ensure a robust nonprofit community that can continue to deliver quality services to our community. The Charter Revision Commission is an important opportunity for the City to correct issues with procurement, and to standardize good practices undertaken by some agencies.

Thank you for your work and for providing us with this opportunity to share our recommendations with you.

Michelle Jackson
Executive Director
Human Services Council of NY


From: [REDACTED]
To: [Charter Testimony](#)
Subject: FW: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-4530564 CRC Contact Form - General Inquiries
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 11:20:27 AM

From: agencymail <agencymail@customercare.nyc.gov>
Sent: Sunday, February 23, 2025 12:29 PM
To: Charter Info <CharterInfo@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-4530564 CRC Contact Form - General Inquiries

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[REDACTED] on Sunday, February 23, 2025, at 12:28:59 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: General Inquiries

Name: Eva Mok

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: Re: Housing crisis 1- There is a lot of high-end housing/luxury apartments being built, bought by people who do not live in the city, and these apartments remain vacant for months. There should be a "vacancy tax". Tax on the apartment if someone not living in the apartment for 6 months or more during the year. 2- Current laws hurt "mom and pop" landlords, causing them to be very picky and cautious who they rent to. My parents had to bribe a non-rent paying tenant \$10,000 to leave the apartment because housing court case was going to take 10+ months to evict him, and it was less of a loss to pay the guy and get a new tenant than to wait for court and formal eviction process. This caused them to be extra cautious in the future, not renting the apartment that easily, waiting for the "right tenant" that is the least risky. 3- There should be incentives to convert fully or partially the empty office buildings into housing.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-3686147 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 1:30:03 PM

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by [REDACTED] on Monday, February 24, 2025, at 01:29:33 PM

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

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Michael Gareth Johnson

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: I am a resident of Flushing, Queens. I have lived here for 11 years. I am writing to urge the commission to make significant changes to the city's restrictive zoning. I believe it is arbitrary and it limits the potential of New York City. For example, my 2-family home is zoned for R-4. Behind our home is a rent-stabilized building and a formerly stabilized building that has been converted to condos. Across the street is a condo building. If I tore down my home, I could not build a multifamily building. Even after the passage of City of Yes, the zoning changes still limit the density I can build. If I could build an 8-unit walkup building, which wouldn't hurt the character of the neighborhood at all. Allowing even simple density additions like this, which have been approved in many other cities in the United States, would create a lot of opportunity for me and my family. For example, my son has special needs and will need family to care for him his entire life. Additional housing will allow me to move several family members closer to make sure he is cared for. Also, the additional housing density would allow me to secure the capital necessary to demolish and rebuild a larger and more energy efficient home. The rental income from the building would allow me to have financial stability and build generational wealth to make sure my children are taken care of. The increased housing capacity would also create homes for several other New Yorkers in our community, which is deeply needed. As for specific charter recommendations, I would like to see a measure that allows for as-of-right building of housing up to a floor-to-area-ratio of 3.0 for all lots in the city that are within 0.5 miles of an MTA station or a LIRR station. In addition, and potentially as a separate proposal, parking minimums should be eliminated as part of the City Charter changes. These simple changes would unlock tremendous potential for increased housing supply and would dramatically impact affordability in the city. In most places, it would have limited impact on the overall character of neighborhoods. I believe letting the voters decide this matter is the fairest approach. I think they would overwhelmingly support these measures if the public good that accompanies them is explained.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 2:09:43 PM

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Hello,

I cannot attend today's public meeting in Queens. My written testimony is as follows:

Public input and the role of Community Boards are crucial pieces of ULURP. Please maintain these vital elements of community input and control. We know our communities best. Do not revise the city charter to wipe out our role in the future of our own neighborhoods.

Thank you,
Hannah Berson
Astoria resident

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Citizens Budget Commission Testimony for February 24, 2025
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 2:17:24 PM
Attachments: [CBC_CRC-Testimony-February2025.pdf](#)
[CBC_CRC-Memo-Recommendations-July2024.pdf](#)

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Dear New York City Charter Revision Commission Staff,

Please find attached a written copy of testimony to be delivered by Citizens Budget Commission President Andrew S. Rein at the NYC Charter Revision Commission Queens Public Input Session on Government Reform today, February 24, 2025.

Additionally, attached is a memo that fully details CBC's recommendations to the Commission, including draft charter language, that may also be found on our website [here](#).

Best,

Katie Jennings

Katie Jennings
Vice President for Strategy and Communications
Citizens Budget Commission

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



Testimony on Improving City Finances and Resident Input

Submitted to the New York City Charter Revision Commission

February 24, 2025

Andrew S. Rein, President, Citizens Budget Commission

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Andrew S. Rein, President of 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.

Tonight, I will discuss three City Charter changes that would improve how City government serves New Yorkers—both today and in the future—by ensuring it can better understand and respond to New Yorkers’ needs, save sufficient funds to protect New Yorkers during a recession, and accurately present the City budget and fiscal condition. CBC’s report, [Refined Recommendations to NYC Charter Revision Commission](#), provides a more detailed discussion of these proposals and draft Charter language.

First, Require a Resident Feedback Survey That Is Statistically Representative of All New Yorkers

The Charter should require the City to conduct and publish a statistically valid resident feedback survey at least every five years, with results at the Community Board level and disaggregated by key demographic groups. To respond to New Yorkers’ needs and improve agency management, the City needs feedback straight from New Yorkers, the customers of City government. Everyone deserves a voice, and this would ensure that feedback is not dependent on having money or power. This proposal was considered by the last Commission, and we encourage you to move the question to the voters.

Second, Create Rainy Day Fund Deposit, Withdrawal, and Balance Rules

The Charter should require the City to deposit money into its Rainy Day Fund (RDF) when the economy is growing and preserve the fund for its intended purpose—to protect New Yorkers from dramatic cuts during a recession or short-term emergency. Specifics should be determined in local law that would be required by the Charter.

We and others have extensively analyzed how best to structure the fund. At minimum, the local law should: require mandatory formula-determined deposits; limit withdrawals to a recession or severe emergency; and set a target size. These proposed Charter changes will help ensure wise stewardship of the RDF.

Third, Improve the Accuracy of Financial Plan Estimates

The Charter's requirement that revenue and expenditure estimates be "reasonable and appropriate" is critically important and needs to be bolstered. The City has increasingly underbudgeted for planned expenses, reaching unprecedented levels, distorting the City's fiscal picture, and compromising the accuracy of its financial plan, which serves as the foundation for budget decisions. This fiscal year's quarterly budget modifications added \$3.6 billion to support current year spending, not for unanticipated costs, but for expenses that were predictable and likely when the budget was adopted last June.

The City budget process should be grounded in accurate revenues *and* expenses estimates. Specifically, CBC recommends that the Charter require detailed explanation of the causes of significant annual changes or estimation differences when:

1. Tax revenues or major program expenditures are projected to change more than 10 percent in any year; and
2. Executive expense budget estimates vary more than 20 percent from estimates by the City or State Comptrollers.

I'm happy to answer any questions and thank you again for the opportunity to be here today.

###



MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 8, 2024

TO: Members of the New York City Charter Revision Commission

FROM: Andrew Rein, CBC President, and Ana Champeny, CBC Vice President for Research

RE: Refined Recommendations to NYC Charter Revision Commission for Improving Finances and Resident Feedback

The Citizens Budget Commission (CBC) is pleased to provide the Charter Revision Commission (CRC) with a refinement, including draft charter language, of five of our [preliminary seven proposals](#). These proposals would:

- Strengthen legislative Fiscal Impact Statements;
- Improve accuracy of Financial Plan estimates;
- Require a statistically valid resident feedback survey;
- Create Rainy Day Fund deposit, withdrawal, and target size rules; and
- Cap Debt Service at 15% of tax revenues.

The sections below outline the proposed changes and how they would improve the City's financial management and resident feedback. Draft Charter language is in the Appendix.

While the CRC Preliminary Report did not mention proposals to improve financial plan estimates, we include them here because they are a critically important companion to proposed improvements to legislative fiscal impact statements. Together, these reforms would substantially improve the integrity of the budget process.

We also again recommend Charter revisions to improve the Rainy Day Fund and cap debt service, since both are important to improve City finances. The Rainy Day Fund rules have long been considered and have been the subject of substantial research, while the debt service limit has been policy for decades and is relatively simple to add to the Charter.

We do not provide more detailed recommendations or draft Charter language on two of CBC's preliminary proposals—to establish the Retiree Health Benefits Trust fund and a comprehensive

performance management system. However, we stress the importance of both for the City's fiscal and managerial success. The long-term liability for other postemployment benefits is substantial, around \$100 billion, and the City needs a sustainable and affordable approach to meet that challenge.

Additionally, recent data and news reports have drawn attention to service delivery issues, and [CBC's 2023 Resident Survey](#) found that most New Yorkers rate government services as fair or poor; a robust performance management system is critical to delivering effective, efficient, and high-quality services that New Yorkers need and deserve.

Strengthen Legislative Fiscal Impact Statements

Issue: The Charter-mandated legislative Fiscal Impact Statement (FIS) is not released until a few days prior to a local law's enactment; the budgetary impact of proposed laws is rarely substantially considered during deliberations, and local laws with major fiscal impacts may be enacted without appropriations being budgeted.

Recommendations: These are designed to improve the timeliness and quality of the FIS, require an independent fiscal assessment for high-cost proposals, increase transparency on the budgetary status of high-cost enacted local laws, and ensure the alignment of laws and appropriation authority.

It is our considered opinion that this makes sense as good policy and is reasonable to have in the Charter. However, given the CRC's timeline, CBC was not able to explore whether there were legal issues that needed to be considered, and we hope the CRC's staff is conducting the appropriate due diligence as it refines proposals to put on the ballot.

For all proposed local laws receiving an initial City Council Committee hearing, revise the Charter to:

- Require publication of the City Council FIS at least 72 hours prior to the initial Committee meeting;
- Require the FIS to identify the operating and capital budget impact of the proposed law in each fiscal year of the financial plan and the annual impact when fully implemented;
- Require the FIS to identify the data, methods, and assumptions used in its preparation; and
- Require the FIS to specify whether and, if so how, the proposal can be accommodated within the current budget in each fiscal year of financial plan.

For proposed local laws that have a fiscal impact of more than \$100 million in any single year—a threshold to be adjusted annually by the year-over-year change in total City funds—revise the Charter to:

- Require the Independent Budget Office to either release its own FIS, including all the components required in the City Council FIS, or certify the reasonableness of the Council estimate, within 30 days;
- Require the Office of Management and Budget to publish, with each financial plan, a list of all such local laws enacted in the past four years and to identify whether each law is funded in each year of the financial plan; and

- Allow local laws beyond this threshold to take effect once adequate appropriations have been modified into the budget or negotiated during budget adoption.

Improve Accuracy of Financial Plan Estimates

Issue: Despite the Charter requiring “accurate estimates of revenues and expenditures and provide estimates of all current programs at current service levels,” the City’s financial plan routinely understates by billions of dollars the funding needed to maintain current service levels, thereby masking the City’s true fiscal position.

Recommendations: The intent is to increase the accuracy and transparency of the budget’s estimates by requiring the financial plan to include a detailed explanation for significant year-over-year variation in projected tax revenues or program expenditures, or where they vary substantially from estimates made by the City or State Comptrollers.

Specifically, the Charter should be revised to require that each financial plan include:

- An explanation of any tax revenue change greater than 10 percent from the prior fiscal year, detailing the underlying factors including economic conditions, and changes in state, federal or local laws; and
- An explanation of any expenditure change in any major program or unit or appropriation greater than 10 percent or \$10 million from the prior fiscal year, detailing the underlying factors including service or caseload volume, costs of each unit of service, and the factors that led to these changes.

Additionally, the Executive Budget Message should include:

- An explanation of any major program or unit of appropriation expenditure for the ensuing fiscal year where the estimate by the Office of the City Comptroller or the Office of the New York State Comptroller varies 20 percent or more, detailing the reasons for variance including a) service or caseload volume, b) costs of each unit of service, and c) factors that lead to these differences.

Require a Statistically Valid Resident Feedback Survey

Issue: The City is currently not required to collect statistically valid ratings from residents about City services and programs and does not have the opportunity to improve programs and policy based on feedback about the quality of City services directly from those services’ “customers,” as well as insight into how residents feel about the quality of life in the city and their neighborhood.

Recommendation: The intent is to routinely collect statistically valid and representative resident ratings of services and programs to inform management and improve service quality.

The City Charter should be revised to:

- Require the City to conduct resident survey at least once every five years, starting in calendar year 2025, with statistically valid and representative results published at the Community Board level, and by key demographics such as race, ethnicity, and household income.

Create Rainy Day Fund Deposit, Withdrawal, and Target Size Rules

Issue: Current laws governing the use of the Revenue Stabilization Fund (RSF, also referred to as the Rainy Day Fund) are inadequate because they do not a) mandate deposits to help ensure the fund's balance is substantial enough to provide relief during a recession or emergency, b) restrict withdrawals to ensure funds are only used in a recession or emergency, and c) provide for the target size needed to adequately protect the City's long-run finances.

Recommendations: The goal is a sufficiently robust and well-protected Rainy Day Fund (RDF) with sufficient resources to cushion the City through the typical two-year revenue loss during a recession.

Specifically, the Charter should be revised to:

- Require the Mayor and City Council to enact a local law that details the City's RDF deposit, withdrawal, and target size policy, with withdrawals from the RSF prohibited until such a law is in effect;
- Require the local law:
 - Identify the minimum target size that is 16 percent or more of tax revenue;
 - Require deposits when tax revenue growth is at least 3 percent, year-over-year, on a common rate and base, and define the formula to be used to calculate the minimum deposit;
 - Limit withdrawals to a recession or severe emergency;
 - Define a recession based on economic factors;
 - Define a severe emergency as one that is temporary and causes an increase in expenditures or decrease in revenues equal to or greater than 2 percent of total City funds; and
 - Limit the first withdrawal following the occurrence of a recession or severe emergency to two-thirds of the balance of the fund; and
- Require the City Comptroller to issue, prior to vote, an opinion on the proposed law as to the reasonableness and appropriateness of the target size, mandatory deposit, permitted withdrawal, and definitions of a recession and a severe emergency.

Cap Debt Service at 15 Percent of Tax Revenues

Issue: The New York State Constitution and State law limit the amount of long-term debt the City can have outstanding, but not debt service. The City has a policy of keeping debt service below 15 percent of tax revenues, but it is not binding and could be changed.

Recommendation: The intent is to codify the current policy of keeping debt service below 15 percent of tax revenue to ensure debt service is affordable and does not crowd out other expenditure priorities.

The Charter should be revised to:

- Set the maximum debt level in the Executive Budget certificate of indebtedness to a level that ensures debt service remains below 15 percent of the tax revenue forecast in each year of the financial plan; and
- Add to the budget and financial plan standards a provision that debt service payments may not exceed 15 percent of projected tax revenue in any year of the financial plan.

APPENDIX

For each proposed change detailed in this memo the following sections of the New York City Charter should either be amended or added.

Strengthen Legislative Fiscal Impact Statements

Chapter 2: Council

Section 33. Local laws and budget modifications; fiscal impact statements.

a. No proposed local law or budget modification shall be ~~voted-placed~~ on ~~an agenda~~ by a council committee, ~~or voted on by a council committee~~ or the council unless it is accompanied by a fiscal impact statement ~~published and available publicly at least seventy-two hours prior to the meeting and~~ containing the information set forth in subdivision b of this section, ~~and the additional documents described in subdivision c of this section, if required.~~

b. A fiscal impact statement shall indicate the fiscal year in which the proposed law or modification would first become effective and the first fiscal year in which the full fiscal impact of the law or modification is expected to occur; ~~and~~ contain an estimate of the fiscal impact of the law or modification on the revenues and ~~capital and operating~~ expenditures of the city, during the fiscal year in which the law or modification is to first become effective, during the succeeding ~~three~~ fiscal years, and during the first fiscal year in which the full fiscal impact of the law or modification is expected to occur; ~~and identify whether and how the proposed law or modification can be supported by the current appropriation or budget.~~

~~c. For any proposed local law whose fiscal impact estimate is greater than one hundred million dollars of city funds, indexed in accordance with subdivision g of this section, in any year of the financial plan the independent budget office, created in chapter 11, shall either (a) publish its own fiscal impact statement including all of the components required in subdivisions b and e of this section within 30 days of the initial fiscal impact statement being publicly posted, or (b) publish a statement affirming the reasonableness of the council's fiscal impact statement.~~

~~ed.~~ All agency heads shall promptly provide to any council committee any information that it requests to assist it in preparing a fiscal impact statement.

~~de.~~ Each fiscal impact statement shall identify the sources of information, ~~data, methods, and assumptions~~ used in its preparation.

~~ef.~~ If the estimate or estimates contained in the fiscal impact statement are inaccurate, such inaccuracies shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the local law or budget modification.

~~g. The fiscal impact threshold of one-hundred million dollars established in subdivision c of this section shall be updated annually by the year-over-year growth in total city funds.~~

Chapter 2: Council

Section 50. Local laws; funding.

~~A local law deemed to have a fiscal impact greater than the dollar amount established in~~

subdivision c of section 33 of this chapter in any single fiscal year of the financial plan shall be implemented once, when funds are appropriated, in the amount (a) deemed required by the office of management and budget, or (b) of the funding level identified in the fiscal impact statement, whichever is lower, either through a budget modification or in the adoption of the budget.

Chapter 10: Budget Process

Section 259. Annual listing of cost of adopted laws.

Not later than thirty days after the budget is adopted, the mayor shall publish a list of laws that (a) were passed, in accordance with Chapter 2, in the past four years; and (b) have a fiscal impact greater than the dollar amount established in subdivision c of section 33 of this chapter within the fiscal years of the financial plan. This list shall identify if funding required to implement each law is included for each fiscal year in the adopted budget financial plan.

Chapter 11: Independent Budget Office

Section 260. Powers and duties.

a. It shall be the duty of the office to provide to the comptroller, the president of the council, the members and committees of the council, the borough presidents, and the community boards information which will assist such officials and bodies in the discharge of their responsibilities which are related to the budgetary process, including:

- (1) information with respect to the budget, appropriations bills and proposed local laws with fiscal implications;
- (2) information with respect to estimated revenues and receipts and changing revenue conditions; and
- (3) to the extent practicable, such other information or analyses as may be requested by such officials and bodies.

b. The director, upon the request of a borough president or the president of the council for a proposed local law introduced by such official, or the chair or ranking minority member of a committee of the council for a proposed local law being considered by such committee, **or as required by section thirty-three, subdivision c**, shall complete a fiscal impact statement of such proposed local law consistent with the requirements of section thirty-three.

c. The director shall from time to time publish such reports as may be appropriate to enhance official and public understanding of the budgetary process and of the budget documents published in accordance with the provisions of chapters six, nine and ten. The director shall from time to time publish such reports as may be necessary or appropriate to provide such information, data, and analysis as will enhance official and public understanding of matters relating to city revenues, expenditures, financial management practices and related matters.

d. The director may procure, for the office, up-to-date computer equipment, obtain the services of experts and consultants in computer technology, and develop techniques for the evaluation of revenue projections and budgetary requirements.

e. The director shall make all information, data, estimates, and statistics obtained under subdivision c of section ninety-eight, and all studies and reports prepared by the office, available

for public inspection and copying during normal business hours and shall, to the extent practicable, furnish a copy of any such information or report to any person upon request at a reasonable cost.

Improve Accuracy of Financial Plan Estimates

Chapter 10: Budget Process

Section 250. The budget message.

The budget message, which shall not be deemed a part of the budget, shall include:

1. An explanation, in summary terms, of the major programs, projects, emphases and objectives of the budget, the general fiscal and economic condition of the city, the tax and fiscal base of the city, and intergovernmental fiscal relations.
2. Itemized information and supporting schedules of positions, salaries and other than personal service expenses, anticipated for the ensuing fiscal year.
3. Recommendations for any changes in the revenue sources and fiscal operations of the city, including intergovernmental revenue and fiscal arrangements.
4. An itemized statement of the actual revenues and receipts and accruals of the general fund and of all other revenue sources, including state and federal aid and revenues for specified purposes, for each of the four preceding fiscal years, and for the first eight months of the current fiscal year, and the estimated amount of such items for the balance of the current fiscal year, and for the ensuing fiscal year. In preparing such information the mayor shall consult with the comptroller.
5. An estimate of the probable amount of (1) receipts into the city treasury during the ensuing fiscal year from all the sources of revenue of the general fund and (2) all receipts other than those of the general fund and taxes on real property.
6. A listing of the sources and amounts of all revenues and other monies of a nonrecurring nature that are being proposed to be utilized during the ensuing fiscal year and that are not expected to be available or used in subsequent fiscal years.
7. An update of the four-year financial plan, as set forth in section two hundred fifty-eight of this chapter, containing, (a) for each agency, for all existing programs, forecasts of expenditures for the ensuing fiscal year and the succeeding three fiscal years at existing levels of service; (b) forecasts of revenue by source from existing sources of revenue for the ensuing fiscal year and the succeeding three fiscal years; (c) for each tax revenue source, an explanation of the forecast, as set forth in paragraph 8 of this section, shall be required when revenue projected for the ensuing fiscal year varies from the prior year by more than ten percent, with each explanation detailing the underlying factors including, but not limited to: economic conditions, changes in state, federal or local laws; and (ed) for each new or expanded program, an indication of when such program is projected to be fully implemented and a forecast of the annual recurring costs for such program or program expansion after it is fully implemented.
8. For each agency, a comparison of the proposed appropriations for the ensuing fiscal year with

(i) the amounts appropriated in the current expense budget as originally adopted and as modified through the first eight months of the current fiscal year, (ii) the amounts actually expended in the previous fiscal year and (iii) the amounts actually expended through the first eight months of the current fiscal year and the estimated expenditures for the balance of the current fiscal year.

9. For each major program or unit of appropriation, an explanation of proposed appropriations or planned spending when the ensuing fiscal year's appropriation or planned spending varies by more than ten percent from the previous fiscal year and is greater than ten million dollars. Each explanation shall detail the cause of variation including changes in (a) service or caseload volume, (b) costs of each unit of service, and (c) underlying factors that lead to these changes.

10. For each major program or unit of appropriation, an explanation of proposed appropriations for the ensuing fiscal year where projected expenditures as reported by the comptroller or the Office of the New York State Deputy Comptroller vary by more than twenty percent. Each explanation shall detail the cause of variation including changes in (a) service or caseload volume, (b) unit costs, and (c) underlying factors that lead to these changes.

~~911.~~ For each agency that has local service districts within community districts and boroughs, a statement of proposed direct expenditures in each service district for each unit of appropriation and a statement of the basis for the allocation of direct expenditures to local service districts of each such agency.

Require A Statistically Valid Resident Feedback Survey

Chapter 1: Mayor

Section 21. Resident feedback survey.

The mayor shall at least every five years, starting with the calendar year 2025, produce and publish the results of a representative survey of New York City residents that rates quality of life and city services, with statistically valid results presented on a community board level and by key demographics, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, and household income.

Create Rainy Day Fund Deposit, Withdrawal, And Target Size Rules

Chapter 58: Department of Finance

Section 1528. Revenue stabilization fund.

1. The city ~~may~~ shall maintain a revenue stabilization fund to serve as a year-to-year reserve account, subject to the New York state financial emergency act for the city of New York as amended from time to time or any successor statute.

2. Such fund shall be created and operated in accordance with any applicable state law.

3. The mayor and council shall enact a local law to set the fund's target size, the timing and amount of required deposits, and permitted withdrawals. Funds shall not be withdrawn from the fund until such local law is enacted.

4. The local law shall conform to the following standards:

- a. The fund's target size shall be at least sixteen percent of the prior fiscal year's tax revenue.
- b. Deposits to the fund shall be mandatory when tax revenue growth, compared to the prior fiscal year, as measured on a common rate and base by the office of management and budget, exceeds three percent annually. The local law shall specify the mandatory deposit amount as a share of the tax revenue that exceeds three percent annual growth.
- c. Mandatory deposit amounts in excess of what is needed to meet the target size shall be used to fund capital projects on a pay-as-you-go basis, defease debt, or be deposited into the retiree health benefits trust.
- d. Withdrawals shall be limited to a recession, defined by economic indicators in the local law, or a severe emergency, as defined in the local law, which shall be limited to a temporary emergency that causes a significant revenue loss or expenditure increase in excess of two percent of city funds.
- e. The first-year withdrawal, once a recession or emergency has occurred, as defined in this section, shall not exceed two-thirds of the fund's balance.
- f. The comptroller shall issue an opinion, at a minimum, as to the reasonableness of definition and appropriateness as to the levels of the target size, timing and amount of mandatory deposits and allowed withdrawals, the definition of a recession, and the definition of a severe emergency, in the proposed local law, and any future amendments, prior to a vote by council.

Cap Debt Service At 15 Percent Of Tax Revenues

Chapter 10: Budget Process

Section 250. The budget message.

The budget message, which shall not be deemed a part of the budget, shall include:

1. An explanation, in summary terms, of the major programs, projects, emphases and objectives of the budget, the general fiscal and economic condition of the city, the tax and fiscal base of the city, and intergovernmental fiscal relations.
2. Itemized information and supporting schedules of positions, salaries and other than personal service expenses, anticipated for the ensuing fiscal year.
3. Recommendations for any changes in the revenue sources and fiscal operations of the city, including intergovernmental revenue and fiscal arrangements.
4. An itemized statement of the actual revenues and receipts and accruals of the general fund and of all other revenue sources, including state and federal aid and revenues for specified purposes, for each of the four preceding fiscal years, and for the first eight months of the current fiscal year, and the estimated amount of such items for the balance of the current fiscal year, and for the ensuing fiscal year. In preparing such information the mayor shall consult with the comptroller.

5. An estimate of the probable amount of (1) receipts into the city treasury during the ensuing fiscal year from all the sources of revenue of the general fund and (2) all receipts other than those of the general fund and taxes on real property.

6. A listing of the sources and amounts of all revenues and other monies of a nonrecurring nature that are being proposed to be utilized during the ensuing fiscal year and that are not expected to be available or used in subsequent fiscal years.

7. An update of the four-year financial plan, as set forth in section two hundred fifty-eight of this chapter, containing, (a) for each agency, for all existing programs, forecasts of expenditures for the ensuing fiscal year and the succeeding three fiscal years at existing levels of service; (b) forecasts of revenue by source from existing sources of revenue for the ensuing fiscal year and the succeeding three fiscal years; and (c) for each new or expanded program, an indication of when such program is projected to be fully implemented and a forecast of the annual recurring costs for such program or program expansion after it is fully implemented.

8. For each agency, a comparison of the proposed appropriations for the ensuing fiscal year with (i) the amounts appropriated in the current expense budget as originally adopted and as modified through the first eight months of the current fiscal year, (ii) the amounts actually expended in the previous fiscal year and (iii) the amounts actually expended through the first eight months of the current fiscal year and the estimated expenditures for the balance of the current fiscal year.

9. For each agency that has local service districts within community districts and boroughs, a statement of proposed direct expenditures in each service district for each unit of appropriation and a statement of the basis for the allocation of direct expenditures to local service districts of each such agency.

10. An explanation of principal changes in performance goals and indicators from the date of submission of the preliminary management report to the submission of the proposed executive budget.

11. An itemized statement, covering the city's entire capital plant, except for those portions of the capital plant which have been committed to the care and control of the board of education or officers or employees thereof, by agency and project type and, within project type, by personal services and other than personal services, of the amounts appropriated for maintenance of such capital plant in the previous and current fiscal years as originally adopted and as modified through the first eight months of the current fiscal year, and of the amounts actually expended for such maintenance in the previous fiscal year and through the first eight months of the current fiscal year and the amounts estimated to be expended for such purpose during the balance of the current fiscal year; and, for each agency, an explanation of the substantive differences, if any, between the amounts actually expended for such maintenance in the previous fiscal year or projected to be expended for such purpose in the current fiscal year and the amounts originally appropriated for such purpose for such years.

12. A presentation of the maintenance activities proposed by the mayor to be completed during the ensuing fiscal year for all major portions of the capital plant, as such terms are defined in subdivision a of section eleven hundred ten-a, categorized by agency and project type; an explanation of the differences, if any, between such proposed activities and the activities

scheduled to be undertaken during such fiscal year pursuant to subdivision c of such section; an explanation of the differences, if any, between the proposed appropriations for such activities and the estimates of the amounts submitted, pursuant to subdivision f of such section, as necessary to maintain such portions of the capital plant; and a presentation and explanation of the differences, if any, between the maintenance activities for all major portions of the capital plant proposed by the mayor, in the budget message for the previous fiscal year, to be completed during such fiscal year and the activities actually completed during such fiscal year.

13. A statement of the extent to which the executive budget incorporates the revisions to the preliminary budget suggested by the borough presidents, in accordance with subdivision a of section two hundred forty-five and the reasons why any other suggested revisions were not incorporated in the executive budget.

14. A statement of the modifications, if any, which the mayor recommends that the council make in the appropriations submitted by the borough presidents pursuant to sections one hundred two and two hundred eleven.

15. A statement of any substantive changes in the methodology and assumptions used to determine the revenue estimates presented pursuant to subdivisions four, five and six of this section from the methodology and assumptions presented in the preliminary budget.

16. A statement of the implications for the orderly development of the city, its community districts and boroughs of the capital projects included in or contemplated by the capital budget and program.

17. A certificate setting forth the maximum amount of debt and reserves which, in the mayor's opinion, the city may soundly incur for capital projects during the ensuing fiscal year and during each of the following three fiscal years, and the maximum amount of appropriations and expenditures for capital projects which the city, given such maximum amount of debt and reserves, may soundly make during each such fiscal year. **This maximum shall be set to ensure that debt service is less than fifteen percent of the tax revenue forecast in each year of the financial plan.**

Section 258. Standards for budget and financial plan.

a. The operations of the city shall be such that, at the end of the fiscal year, the results thereof shall not show a deficit when reported in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles unless such deficit is offset by funds withdrawn for such purpose from the revenue stabilization fund established pursuant to section one thousand five hundred twenty-eight. The mayor shall take all actions necessary in accordance with the provisions of the charter, including but not limited to section one hundred six, or other applicable law to ensure that the city is in compliance with this subdivision.

b. Pursuant to the procedures contained in subdivision c of this section, each year the mayor shall develop, and from time to time modify, a four-year financial plan. Each such financial plan and financial plan modification shall comply with the requirements of subdivision d of this section and shall conform to the following standards:

(1) For each fiscal year, the city's budget covering all expenditures other than capital items shall be prepared and balanced so that the results thereof would not show a deficit when reported

in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, unless such deficit is offset by funds withdrawn for such purpose from the revenue stabilization fund established pursuant to section one thousand five hundred twenty-eight, and would permit comparison of the budget with the report of actual financial results prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

(2) The city shall issue no obligations which shall be inconsistent with the financial plan prepared in accordance with this section.

(3) Provision shall be made for the payment in full of the debt service on all bonds and notes of the city and for the adequate funding of programs of the city which are mandated by state or federal law and for which obligations are going to be incurred during the fiscal year.

(4) Debt service payments in the four-year financial plan may not exceed 15 percent of projected tax revenues.

(45) All projections of revenues and expenditures contained in the financial plan shall be based on reasonable and appropriate assumptions and methods of estimation. All cash flow projections shall be based upon reasonable and appropriate assumptions as to sources and uses of cash (including but not limited to the timing thereof), and shall provide for operations of the city to be conducted within the cash resources so projected.

(56) A general reserve shall be provided for each fiscal year to cover potential reductions in projected revenues or increases in projected expenditures during each such fiscal year. The amount provided for such general reserve shall be estimated in accordance with paragraph four of this subdivision, but in no event shall it be less than one hundred million dollars at the beginning of any fiscal year.

(67) In the event that the results of the city's operations during the preceding fiscal year have not comported with subdivision a of this section, the first fiscal year included in any financial plan shall make provision for the repayment of any deficit incurred by the city during the preceding fiscal year.

c. The financial plan shall be developed and may from time to time be modified, in accordance with the following procedures:

(1) The mayor shall, in conjunction with the preliminary budget prepared pursuant to section one hundred one, prepare a financial plan covering the four ensuing fiscal years (the first year of which is the year for which such preliminary budget is being prepared) as well as updating the current fiscal year.

(2) After the preparation by the mayor of a financial plan in accordance with the preceding paragraph, the mayor shall reexamine, at least on a quarterly basis, the projections of revenues and expenditures and other estimates contained in the financial plan, and shall prepare modifications in accordance with the following procedures:

(a) The budget message, issued pursuant to section two hundred fifty of this chapter, shall include an update of the financial plan covering the four ensuing fiscal years (the first year of which is the year for which such budget message is being prepared) as well as an update for the current fiscal year.

(b) Not later than thirty days after the budget is finally adopted, the mayor shall issue an update of the financial plan covering the four ensuing fiscal years (the first year of which shall be the year for which such budget has been adopted) as well as an update for the fiscal year that is ending or has just ended. Such update shall reflect changes which were made in the budget in accordance with sections two hundred fifty-four and two hundred fifty-five; provided, however, that the budget adopted in accordance with such sections shall be consistent with the standards applicable to the financial plan set forth in this section.

(c) During the second quarter of the fiscal year, the mayor shall issue an update of the financial plan covering the fiscal year in which such quarter occurs and the three ensuing fiscal years.

(d) In addition, on such schedule as the mayor deems appropriate, the mayor may issue further updates of the financial plan during the fiscal year.

d. The financial plan shall include projections of all revenues, expenditures and cash flows (including but not limited to projected capital expenditures and debt issuances) and a schedule of projected capital commitments of the city. In addition, each financial plan and financial plan modification shall include a statement of the significant assumptions and methods of estimation used in arriving at the projections contained therein.

e. When the mayor issues modifications to the financial plan pursuant to subdivision c of this section, and such modifications would require the mayor to make a notification or submission to the council pursuant to subdivision b or e of section 107, the mayor shall make such notification or submission within 30 days of issuance of such modifications to the financial plan.

f. Notwithstanding any inconsistent provision of this charter, in the event of any change in generally accepted accounting principles, or change in the application of generally accepted accounting principles to the city, if the mayor determines that immediate compliance with such change will have a material effect on the city's budget over a time period insufficient to accommodate the effect without a substantial adverse impact on the delivery of essential services, the mayor may authorize and approve a method of phasing the requirements of such change into the budget over such reasonably expeditious time period as the mayor deems appropriate.

g. The powers, duties, and obligations set forth in this section shall be subject to the powers, duties, and obligations placed upon any state or local officer or agency, including but not limited to the New York state financial control board, by or pursuant to the New York State Financial Emergency Act for the City of New York, while such act remains in effect.

RESOURCES

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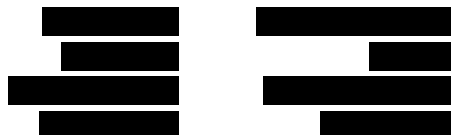
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To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: Charter Revision Commission - IBO Testimony 2/24/25
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 3:35:27 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[testimony-of-ibo-director-louisa-chafee-to-the-charter-revision-commission-february-2025.pdf](#)

Good afternoon,

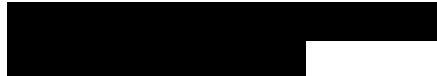
Louisa Chafee's full written testimony is attached for the record.

Best,
Sarita

**New York City
Independent
Budget Office**



Sarita Subramanian
Senior Research & Strategy Officer



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THE CITY OF NEW YORK
INDEPENDENT BUDGET OFFICE
110 WILLIAM STREET, 14TH Floor
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**Testimony of IBO Director Louisa Chafee to
the New York City Charter Revision Commission
February 24, 2025**

Good evening, Chair Buery, Vice Chair Greenberger, Executive Director Schierenbeck, members of the Commission. I am Louisa Chafee, Director of the City's Independent Budget Office (IBO).

IBO is a nonpartisan, independent government agency mandated by the New York City Charter (Charter). IBO's mission is to enhance public understanding of New York City's budget, public policy and economy through independent analysis. Our vision is to empower New Yorkers to engage with their government and shape the future for their families and their communities, armed with budget and policy information that is accessible, transparent, and timely.

As the Mayor's press release states, your charge is "to ensure that the city's municipal government works efficiently and remains responsive to all New Yorkers." I am pleased to be here as you focus on government reform, to discuss three areas: first, the need to strengthen and clarify the City's budget framework; next, the critical need to ensure fairness and efficiency in contract spending; and finally, the importance of improving budget transparency by aligning units of appropriation with well-understood definitions of programs and services.

Protecting the Framework for Sound Budgeting

While the scope and scale of the changes on the federal horizon remain uncertain, New York City is likely to experience significant budget challenges. To that end, IBO suggests that this Commission strengthen the City's budgetary framework by moving more of the protections from the state Financial Emergency Act into the Charter and by tightening the Charter provisions concerning the Revenue Stabilization Fund, commonly called the Rainy Day Fund. IBO supports:

- Charter language to ensure that all relevant information is made available to enable City fiscal monitors, including IBO, to analyze the City's budget and fiscal health.
- The inclusion in the Charter of more details on the transparency, usage, and implementation of all of the City's reserve accounts, including but not limited to the Rainy Day Fund.

Ensuring Cost-Effective Services to New Yorkers and Fairness to City Service Providers

Fiscal responsibility is not merely a theoretical ideal. New Yorkers are not well-served unless City agencies administer the budget effectively and efficiently, ensuring the City gets real value for its spending. It is not enough to give New Yorkers access to information so they can see how much is budgeted for programs they care about. The budget must also be administered in a way that ensures efficient delivery of those programs. In other words, *how* the City spends its money matters.

Most services for vulnerable New Yorkers are provided by nonprofit providers whose financial stability depends on timely payment on their City contracts. As any household knows, sound fiscal management means one pays the bills on time. Yet, the City often does not. Nowhere does this present more of a fiscal and programmatic risk than for human services programs such as pre-K, senior centers, and services for the unhoused. IBO urges the Commission to consider some targeted reforms in contract-based spending, which exceeded \$34 billion during fiscal year 2024.

While most Charter Revision Commissions since 1989 (eight out of ten) have looked at contracting, none have put forth proposals to address timeliness. Two Commissions proposed various minor changes that went down to defeat, mostly because they were tied to other controversial proposals. Six Commissions, including last year's, looked at procurement—in most cases the same late payment issues we see today—and ultimately passed on the opportunity for a proposal. Several members of this Commission have significant expertise in the nonprofit sector, and one member leads an organization that administers a loan fund devoted to helping nonprofits navigate the cash shortages caused by City practices. This Commission is thus uniquely positioned to develop meaningful reforms.

Prior to joining IBO, I was proud to serve on Mayor Adams' and Comptroller Lander's *Joint Task Force to Get Nonprofits Paid on Time*, which focused attention on how the City's late payment practices present huge operational challenges for providers. IBO has identified several key opportunities for Charter changes in this area, including provisions aimed at:

- Reducing payment gaps,
- Shortening processing time frames,
- Elevating the oversight and accountability role of the Mayor's Office of Contract Services (MOCS), and
- Establishing time limits for emergency contracts.

Paying Bills on Time—Why the City Doesn't and How to Fix This

Why aren't the City's bills paid? Sometimes it is because a contract ends and the responsible City agency does not complete the process of registering a new contract soon enough. Meanwhile, the agency expects services to continue uninterrupted, even though it knows that a lapse between when the existing contract ends and a new one starts means, by definition, that payment will stop.

The Charter established the Procurement Policy Board (PPB), with members appointed by the Mayor and the Comptroller, as the regulatory body here. The PPB has the authority under the Charter, although not yet a mandate, to establish rules to fix this problem. This Commission should mandate that the PPB establish such rules.

Local Law 169 of 2023 began a process that envisions the PPB eventually writing new rules. That statute resulted in [an October 2024 report](#) from the Director of the Mayor's Office of Contract Services (MOCS) evaluating each step of the procurement process, with recommendations to the PPB for timeliness standards. The PPB is now required to establish such standards by October 2025. But the problem here is not simply the absence of timeliness standards: it is the absence of an effective remedy for when such standards are not met.

Late Registration: Problems and Solutions

The MOCS report focused on new RFP awards. The timeline it outlined—including agency review of proposals, vendor selection, and final awards—is between 90 and 120 days, plus 30 days for registration. This means that for a contract that is intended to start July 1st, timely registration is possible only if the agency starts processing the new award by February 1st, which is *150 days* before the contract start date. But RFPs are complicated and agencies are often not ready to process their awards so early in the contract year. As a result, they often fail to complete registration before the prior contract ends. Merely setting a standard for RFP timeliness will not offer a real solution for the nonprofits impacted by failure to meet that standard.

The process for registering contract extensions tends to be much more streamlined, resulting in more timely registrations, but agencies do not always offer extensions to their vendors. To provide one example, IBO reviewed registration data for human services contracts from the Department of Youth and Community Development with start dates in fiscal year 2025. The agency's RFP awards were registered an average of 84 days late, whereas contract extensions were registered an average of 34 days late. For a struggling vendor, that difference is the equivalent of three or four payrolls.

This Commission can consider mandating the PPB to make a rule that would automatically require agencies to process extension contracts for their existing vendors. This rule could be triggered whenever agencies are unable to begin processing new RFP awards at least six months prior to the end of the existing contract. This is critical because—as shown in the MOCS report from last October—without that cushion of time, agencies are unlikely to achieve timely contract registration.

Delayed Invoice Processing: Problems and Solutions

Even when contracts are registered, providers still often experience payment lapses. This typically occurs because the agency raises one or more concerns about an invoice and holds up payment on that obligation, even though the bulk of the amount on the invoice is undisputed. Thus, the nonprofit vendor is often deprived of reimbursement for its largest costs, such as payroll or rent, while relatively minor items are questioned by the agency.

The scale of this issue is revealed by a review of the spending data for human services contracts that ended last June 30th (the end of fiscal year 2024). As of February 19th, less than 70% of the total value of those contracts—which all ended over seven months ago—had been received by those vendors. While some of that difference may reflect work that was not completed, it is likely that much of it relates to disagreements over invoices. Unlike commercial vendors, who tend to discontinue services if their bills are not paid, human service providers are relatively powerless to require City agencies to resolve such issues in a reasonable time frame. These providers generally have payrolls that are exclusively assigned to City contract work and vulnerable clients who depend on their services.

Again, the PPB already has authority, though not a mandate, to address the timeliness of invoice payments. This Commission should mandate the PPB to establish rules that require City agencies to pay (very soon after receipt) a minimum percentage for each invoice from a human services contractor in good standing. Agencies could then resolve the disputed portions of invoices within a longer mandated timeframe without putting the fiscal stability of their nonprofit partners at risk.

Other Contracting Changes: Public Hearings, MOCS, and Emergency Contracting

IBO also supports several other readily achievable Charter changes to advance the goal of ensuring a financially responsible business partnership between the City and vendors that provide services to millions of New Yorkers. These changes include:

- Raising the Charter’s threshold for when public hearings are required on individual contracts, so as to shorten the contract registration process.
- Ensure real accountability by setting out a clear Charter mandate and responsibilities for MOCS, similar to those already in place for other critical Mayoral functions, such as the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Operations.
- Limit the extended use of emergency contracting, which is often expensive, by requiring the Mayor and the Comptroller to renew their joint determination that emergency procurement remains appropriate, after such a contract has been in place for two years.

Enhancing the City Budget’s Structure to Promote Transparency

Finally, I would like to focus on an important reform from the 1989 Charter that merits further attention by this Commission. For the 2026 fiscal year that starts on July 1st, the Mayor’s proposed budget totals \$116.3 billion. The City’s budget is larger than all but a handful of state budgets. Crafting a process that ensures that this budget is transparent and fiscally sound is an important undertaking, with significant consequences for all New Yorkers.

Each year, when the City Council adopts the budget, it authorizes spending in categories which are termed as units of appropriation—commonly known as U/As. Under section 100 c of the Charter, a unit of appropriation is supposed to reflect the budget “for a particular program, purpose, activity or institution.” That definition was one of the key reforms instituted by the 1989 Charter Revision Commission. As described by the Chair of that Commission, the clear intention “was that a unit of appropriation . . . could not extend beyond a single program, purpose, activity, or institution, unless the Council adopted (either on the recommendation or with the approval of the mayor) a resolution ‘setting forth the names, and a statement of the programmatic objectives, of each program, purpose, activity or institution to be included in such a Resolution, a proposed unit of appropriation.’”

In practice, however, units of appropriation have not corresponded at all to what the public—or even knowledgeable organizations that receive funding—would consider to be a single program. The goal of providing clear, understandable information as to how the City allocates its resources to the public has simply never become a reality.

Beyond the lack of budget transparency, the use of huge, mixed-purpose U/As runs counter to the goal of effective oversight. Large mid-year shifts in spending between one U/A and another require City Council approval. In practice, though, because a single U/A encompasses such a wide range of programs, Council review of major shifts in spending does not occur as envisioned. While more granular information is found in “budget codes” within U/As, funds can be shifted among various programs within a U/A. The result is that one or more of them can be substantially increased or decreased, without City Council review or approval, and thus, with little room for public advocacy.

Some agency budgets include readily understandable U/As that allow the public to clearly see how various programs are funded. For example, the Department of Social Services (Human Resources Administration) has several clearly distinct U/As, such as one for legal services programs, one for emergency food assistance, one for the Fair Fares program, and so on.

But the budgets for many agencies are more opaque. Some small agencies have only two U/As, one for “personnel costs” and one for “non-personnel” costs, even though the agency itself provides several distinct services. In some large agencies, the U/A categories are so huge that no useful information at all is communicated to the public.

Two examples within the Department for the Aging (DTFA) and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) highlight the inability to track specific programs effectively. DFTA’s budgets for home-delivered meals, homecare, and older adult centers are parts of a larger U/A that conflates these programs. Likewise, DYCD combines the budgets for after-school, adult literacy, and assistance to immigrants in a single U/A. These programs serve different constituencies and are provided by a different mix of vendors—but it is impossible to track agency spending plans at the U/A level.

But this situation is greatly exacerbated in the City’s larger agencies, with budgets in the billions, like the Department of Education (DOE). Parent groups that wish to advocate around school spending concerns are stymied by the fact that DOE places almost \$8 billion—over 23% of the agency’s \$33 billion budget—in a single U/A entitled “general education instruction and school leadership.” This U/A encompasses many different educational programs, and funding can be shifted easily by DOE without requiring City Council approval and transparency to the public.

Similarly, with so much attention focused on the need to target public safety resources to ensure community safety, the budgets for all 123 police precincts are combined into a single “operations” U/A. This large U/A also includes the NYPD’s boroughwide offices, and various response units or divisions such as detective work, forensic investigation, narcotics, and strategic response. The budget for all of these NYPD functions is \$1.6 billion for the 2025 fiscal year, a quarter of the \$6.4 billion agency budget. Such a large U/A does not convey useful information to the public or to the Council.

While new U/As can be, and often are, added each year as part of budget negotiations, there has not been a systematic approach to the dual challenge of ensuring both transparency and managerial flexibility. This Commission can and should refine the description of units of appropriation. U/As should be distinct when an agency’s programs serve different groups of New Yorkers or provide distinctly different kinds of services. Perhaps a threshold can be applied such that a single U/A cannot exceed a certain percentage of the agency’s total budget. Such changes will truly enable the public to identify how each key program is funded.

IBO welcomes the opportunity to work with you and your staff around these and other ideas for enhancing financial responsibility and increasing transparency. I’m available if you have any questions this evening, or in the weeks to come.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-7908811 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 3:52:47 PM

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by

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on Monday, February 24, 2025, at 03:52:05 PM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Rachael Fauss

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]



Testimony to NYC Charter Commission on Government Reform

Re: Restoring Public Trust After Massive Scandals Requires New, Strong NYC Ethics Commission

February 24, 2025

Good evening, members and staff of the Charter Commission. My name is Rachael Fauss, the Senior Policy Advisor for Reinvent Albany. We advocate for transparent and accountable government in New York.

We urge you – the members of this commission – to set your sights high. Show New Yorkers you are truly independent and ready to propose the major ethics reforms needed to restore public trust after the massive damage caused by the scandals that have rocked city government to the core. Citizens Union reports that [two times as many senior city officials have resigned](#) due to the corruption of the Adam's administration as did under the four previous mayors. Corruption at City Hall is the issue of the day, and this commission has to rise to this moment or risk losing a generation of New Yorkers to cynicism about government and apathy about their right to vote.

Unfortunately, it's obvious that the federal sheriff has ridden out of town and New York is on our own. We have to strengthen the City's front line ethics and anti-corruption agencies.

We urge this commission to do the following three things:

1. Create a New York City independent ethics commission
2. Make ethics guidance far more transparent
3. Study and propose a removal mechanism for the mayor

Create a New York City Independent Ethics Commission

Our main recommendation today is that you propose a ballot initiative creating a New York City independent ethics commission that puts the functions of the Conflicts of Interest Board (COIB) and Lobbying Bureau under one roof, and is funded via independent budgeting and governed by an independently-appointed board. New York's watchdog groups and independent ethics scholars strongly support the basic responsibilities of the state's Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government (COELIG), which includes ethics and lobbying regulation together under a single commission.

Ethics laws are meant to prevent corruption, hold public officials accountable for misconduct, and protect against the appearance of misconduct. When the people believe their government is corrupt they lose confidence in the ability of the government to solve their everyday problems, become cynical about democracy and apathetic about voting.

In working with our watchdog colleagues and legal experts, we have helped to advance improvements to New York State's ethics commission, the Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government (COELIG), and recently [submitted an amicus brief](#) seeking to uphold its constitutionality before the NYS Court of Appeals. That body has a number of features that should be replicated at the NYC level to improve independence:

- 1. Lobbying and ethics regulated under one roof** – Lobbying and ethics are regulated together by the state commission. There is not only logic to this arrangement given the intersecting moonlighting, post-employment, and gift laws, but it also ensures that regulators have access to information necessary to conduct enforcement actions.
- 2. Independent budgeting** – Any NYC ethics commission must have a protected budget so that it can perform its mission with adequate resources and no fear of retaliation from the executive. The current Conflicts of Interest Board is down 5 staff from 10 years ago, and its budget has essentially remained flat despite huge increases in inflation and an expanded mission – including regulation of legal defense funds. We strongly support providing COIB and any future ethics commissions an independent budget. See our analysis at the end of this testimony regarding the staffing and budget of COIB.
 - a. COIB has [proposed past charter revisions](#) that would peg its budget to the total net expense budget of the city** – with a higher amount if it is given the authority to conduct investigations. Under the City Charter, the Independent Budget Office's appropriations must not be less than ten percent of the appropriations available to pay for the expenses of the Office of Management and Budget.
- 3. Independent, balanced appointments** – The NYS Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government has three main ways in which its appointment process increases independence:
 - a. Screening panel for nominations** – The state's law school deans approve nominations sent by the appointing authorities to ensure that candidates are qualified and will serve with independence and integrity.
 - b. Balanced appointments** – The Governor does not have a majority of appointments, but rather appoints 3 of the 11 members; the remainder are appointed by the legislative leaders, Comptroller, and Attorney General. The current Conflicts of Interest Board has a majority of mayoral appointments, with the mayor appointing 3 board members, with one each from the Comptroller and Public Advocate.
 - c. Selection of chair by commission, not appointing authority** – The chair is selected by the commission itself, and is not appointed separately by the governor. This is a crucial mechanism to ensure that the body operates by consensus, and with independence.
- 4. Independent investigators** – COELIG is not reliant on the NYS Inspector General – who like the Department of Investigations is appointed by the executive – for investigations, but rather has its own independent investigative staff. We also note that the standards for ethics investigations are different than for criminal investigations; the appearance of misconduct can constitute a violation, not just the intent to commit misconduct.

Make Ethics Guidance Far More Transparent

We also strongly support ensuring that there is greater transparency of written guidance provided to senior officials by any ethics commission, including the current COIB – particularly when this guidance is acknowledged publicly by the official. A continual issue at the city and state level is senior officials stating that guidance was provided to them that allows certain actions, yet the press and public are unable to verify the contents of that guidance and whether the official is acting within the limits set by COIB. There are a number of ways to ensure that there is no “black box” around these decisions – particularly for high-ranking officials:

- 1. Waiving confidentiality when an official provides misleading, inaccurate, or incomplete public disclosure regarding contents of guidance** – NYS’s Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government recently [adopted an advisory opinion](#) that allows the commission to waive confidentiality and release information related to the guidance they provided, if not the opinion in its entirety.
- 2. Requiring disclosure of written opinions when they are publicly cited by officials** – The Charter could be amended to require public disclosure of guidance provided by COIB when its existence is acknowledged in public.

Study and Propose a Removal Mechanism for the Mayor

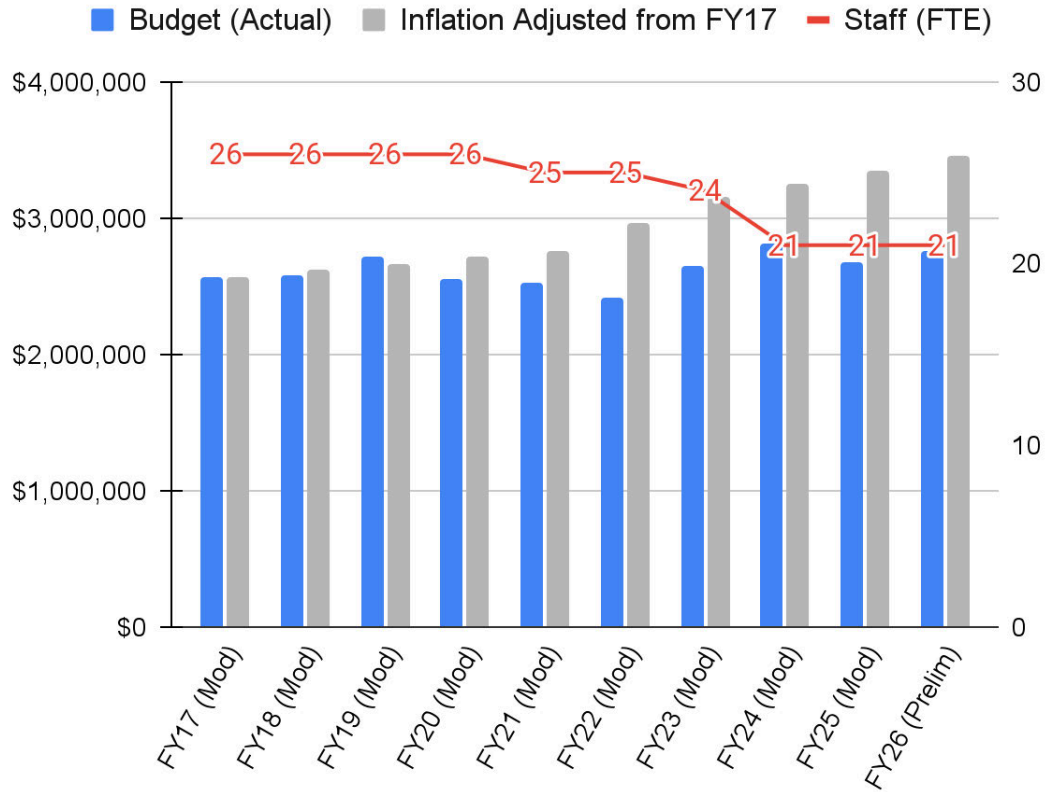
We urge the commission to study and propose a removal mechanism for the mayor. Any proposal should be made in consultation with legal scholars and experts; the commission could invite such individuals to testify about this issue at your April 9th hearing on government reform, or have its staff meet with experts. We also encourage you to review [Citizens Union’s report](#) on Charter Reforms, which includes a discussion of this issue and some considerations for developing a locally-controlled process for removal.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters. I am available for any questions. We are also available to meet with commission staff to discuss these in further detail.

**Reinvent Albany Analysis of NYC Conflicts of Interest Board
Budget and Staff (FTE), FY 2017- FY 2026**

Fiscal Year	Appropriation	Inflation Adjusted from FY17	Staff (FTE)	Source
FY26 (Prelim)	\$2,760,750	\$3,450,867	21	https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/jan25/perc1-25.pdf
FY25 (Mod)	\$2,681,491	\$3,350,341	21	https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/jan25/perc1-25.pdf
FY24 (Mod)	\$2,811,286	\$3,252,743	21	https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/adopt24/erc6-24.pdf
FY23 (Mod)	\$2,642,753	\$3,155,219	24	https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/erc6-23.pdf
FY22 (Mod)	\$2,417,773	\$2,965,149	25	https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/erc6-22.pdf
FY21 (Mod)	\$2,528,196	\$2,758,794	25	https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/erc6-21.pdf
FY20 (Mod)	\$2,558,291	\$2,720,711	26	https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/erc6-20.pdf
FY19 (Mod)	\$2,716,011	\$2,654,700	26	https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/erc6-19.pdf
FY18 (Mod)	\$2,580,410	\$2,614,148	26	https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/erc6-18.pdf
FY17 (Mod)	\$2,561,120	\$2,561,120	26	https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/erc6-17.pdf

Reinvent Albany Analysis of NYC Conflicts of Interest Board Budget and Staff (FTE), FY 2017- FY 2026



From: [REDACTED]
To: [Charter Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] My support for Open Primaries
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 6:23:37 PM
Attachments: [Screenshot 2025-02-24 at 6.22.00 PM.png](#)

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New York City is an outlier when it comes to Closed Primaries. In the US, 39% of cities allow all voters to vote in primary elections. There are over 1 million independent voters who lose their vote every primary election. Simply put: Every registered voter should be allowed to vote in the primary elections. All voters should be considered when it comes to solving the issues in our city.

All primary elections are tax-funded elections. Yet not all tax payers are allowed to vote in them. This needs to change. Every registered voter should be allowed to vote in a primary. This will lead to a more balanced representation and solutions to everyday problems facing New Yorkers.

In New York City, Democratic primaries are the elections that really matter! This is where the candidates will be chosen. Right now, the extreme voices in the party get an outside advantage. We need democratic candidates to listen to the majority of voters, not just the extreme in their parties that are swing an election. Our elected politicians will better understand what the majority of it's citizens want or need and enact the much needed changes in our city.

Open Primaries can help break the cycle of corporate influence in our politics. With closed primaries, candidates are more accountable to party insiders than they are to the majority of their voters. By letting all registered voters to vote, political candidates will need to appeal to the average voters vs the party elites and big donors.

I hope these talking points help and thank you again for your support on this important measure. If you want more talking points — there is a link at the bottom of this email directly from Open Primaries.

Thank you.

Zena

Zena Saunders Schlossberg

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] ULURP Changes are not equitable
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 7:27:12 PM

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Mayor Adams' Charter Reform commission will gut the entire ULURP process so community boards and community members have less of a chance to speak up and protest if rezonings are inequitable. The plan will also introduce a mechanism to override "member deference," which is a major avenue that community members utilize to pressure their local council members. These measures will further handover more land to developers instead of the city subsidizing housing that will house the people who need it the most, low income, hard working New Yorkers.

I am very much against these changes.

Andrea Mungo, MSW
Diaconate Coordinator
Astoria Community Church

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Open Primaries
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 7:29:06 PM

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am an independent voter. I feel that as tax payer and registered voter in New York, my voice in our elections (and over 1 million other independent New York City voters) is not heard. All primary elections are tax funded elections. Yet not all tax payers are allowed to vote in them. I do not think party affiliation, or lack of, should prevent anyone from voting in a primary election. New York is an outlier when it comes to closed primaries. In the US, 85% of cities allow all voters to vote in primary elections. Our great city of New York certainly needs to get up to speed. Simply put: Every registered voter should be allowed to vote in the primary elections. All voices should be considered when it comes to solving the issues in our city.

Regards,
Laurie Bliss

Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-6505941 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 8:13:26 PM

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
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This form resides at
<https://www.nyc.gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter.page>

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: James Moy

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Re: Housing I identify as a NYer. I was born on Bedford St in the Village during the 70's before it was unaffordable, and lived in Queens for years during that critical period in one's life when you first become an independent young adult. I left for a job opportunity in my 30's, but all my old, real friends live in the city still. I'd desperately like to move back - I feel like an expat anywhere in America other than NY. But now there are barriers to entry. My friends were all able to play the waiting game and eventually have the luxury to find rent-controlled apts or co-ops in nice neighborhoods that fit their budget, but I'd be paying through the nose for a place where I'd be a gentrifier, and rightfully viewed with resentment by my new neighbors. Think white middle aged dude in East New York. There's no ancestral Brownstone for me - my late parents were immigrant lifelong renters. I guess my proposal would be a hardcore law to reduce the rent to \$500/month per bedroom in all buildings effective immediately, both to help the renters, and as a vindictive get-back at the landlord class, who'd hopefully pay the piper for their sins, and be themselves impoverished.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony for Charter Commission
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 8:27:24 PM

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Like many New Yorkers, I am most concerned about NYC's affordable housing crisis. But it's painfully obvious that the solution to this crisis is not to simply open the floodgates to allow more overwhelmingly unaffordable housing to be built. Two major recent studies show that NYC neighborhoods with major development and upzonings lose affordable, regulated apartments at a heavy rate—and Black, Latino and low-income populations shrink. There is no evidence that building more mostly unaffordable apartments brings rents down *at the low end,* where most of us are. It's therefore hard to understand the suggestion to bypass and override displacement-based critiques of development projects that can be voiced during ULURP. This override would give developers carte blanche to build even more housing all over our city that most New Yorkers can't afford, by muffling the voices of community boards and community members. The ULURP process is one of the few ways that the voices of community members can be heard. It's not as though developers are being denied: most ULURP applications are approved, even in the face of widespread community opposition, so these proposed changes are a solution in search of a problem. It's crucial to keep the community boards' and local council members' voices alive in this already pro-developer process. And if we are talking about mandating housing approvals by neighborhood, why not mandate 100% deep affordability on all publicly-owned land, built by nonprofit entities like municipalities, nonprofits, and Community Land Trusts?

I am also deeply concerned about this commission seeming to be in conflict with earlier charter changes proposed by the City Council. We are at a critical moment for NYC, where our corrupt mayor is doing the bidding of Donald Trump. This is the wrong time to approve charter ballot proposals that undermine the authority of the city council, at the behest of the discredited Mayor Adams. Permanent changes to our city charter should be undertaken coequally with the city council, and should include robust community engagement and voter education: one meeting per borough is not nearly enough. I have enough concerns about this to believe that the members of this commission should step down, rather than enabling Mayor Adams any further.

Jenny Dubnau
Jackson Heights, Queens

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Asian Wave Alliance Testimony 2/24/2025
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 8:55:43 PM

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Dear Charter Revision Commission,

Please accept our testimony in support of putting open primaries on the 2025 ballot.

My name is Yiatin Chu, I am the president of Asian Wave Alliance, a nonpartisan political club advocating for the Asian community that supports open primaries. I am asking for the Charter Revision Commission to put Open Primary on the November 2025 ballot. Our local elections are consequential to the daily lives of New Yorkers – laws and resources that govern our public safety, transportation, schools and businesses. All voters should have a say, not just ones who want to register with a party. As we know, NYC leaders are often decided in the Democratic primary. This leaves many voters, especially independents, without a say. This exclusion discourages voter participation and limits the diversity of perspectives in our political discourse.

Closed primaries hurt the Asian community where many are new to democracy and for a variety of reasons are not registered with a party. In district 1 – lower Manhattan and Chinatown, one quarter of the voters are unaffiliated with a party. In district 20 Flushing Queens which has the highest population of Asians at 72% and in district 43, the newly created majority Asian district in south Brooklyn, one third of the voters are unaffiliated. NYC's closed primaries disenfranchises the Asian community and silences our representation in local elections. 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

our needs. That's why I hope the Commission will seriously consider adding a measure for Open Primaries to the ballot in 2025. Thank you.

[Asian Wave Alliance](#)

Subscribe: <http://eepurl.com/h1thsT>

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From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Environmental review
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 9:00:46 PM
Attachments: [Hope Cohen CRC testimony 24Feb2025.docx](#)

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Please see attached for written testimony as delivered at the hearing of 24 February 2025 in Queens.

Best regards,

Hope Cohen

[REDACTED]

Good evening, Members of the Commission.

I'm Hope Cohen, here to offer some ideas on how to make the New York City environmental review process – known as CEQR – more efficient, less expensive, and more useful. In 2007, I published these ideas in [*Rethinking Environmental Review: A Handbook on What Can Be Done*](#).

Charter Section 192e assigns to the City Planning Commission responsibility for rule-making regarding environmental reviews. You, the Charter Revision Commission, may choose to leave all as is, to assign the responsibility to a different entity, or, through amendment to the Charter, to impose guidance that supersedes CPC's authority.

Over the decades, environmental reviews have become big business for lawyers and specialized professionals. All too often Environmental Impact Statements and even the less detailed Environmental Assessments range well beyond analysis of impacts on the natural environment, infrastructure, or municipal services. They are protection against litigation rather than true planning documents. We should be using this tool to focus on projects that will require additional infrastructure and/or services. Currently the requirements for environmental review encompass too many projects **and** too many topics.

As the rules stand, virtually any development that involves government funding or some kind of special approval must go through the CEQR process. We can filter out many of those as clearly **not** having any negative impact – that is, by declaring them to be “Type II Actions”:

- Projects that require review **only** because they include government funding or subsidy – a significant problem for affordable housing
- Projects where height and/or bulk are redistributed, but density is not increased
- Very small residential projects that do not increase demands on city infrastructure

It is entirely within the City's power to make these changes.

In fact, just last year the City took a step in the right direction by creating “Green Fast Track for Housing.” This program defines as Type II those projects that are of a certain size, use clean energy, and meet standards for siting, hazardous materials, emissions, and noise.

The City should also streamline the **topics** for review. Environmental reviews need not include policy discussions or descriptions of socioeconomic conditions. The review should examine **only** topics that implicate infrastructure and/or municipal services, including those needed to protect the natural environment.

Finally, there is the question of whether required mitigations are actually implemented. From my experience serving on Manhattan Community Board 7, I know that it falls to community boards and local advocates to monitor a developer’s compliance with mitigation requirements. (Until 2018, this was the case with City-sponsored rezonings as well, but New Yorkers can now use the NYC Rezoning Commitments Tracker to check progress on promised sewage upgrades, park improvements, and advocacy for increased bus service.)

By concentrating on the mitigation of negative impacts, we can facilitate development while ensuring that projects receive the public resources they require.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] R.Fox 2/24/25 Gov Reform Pub Input Testimony
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 9:28:06 PM

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Good Evening,

I am emailing to submit a proposal for government reform policy for the city charter.

Policy Proposal:

Direct funds to expand the Animal Welfare Department in chapter 23 of the city charter so that the Animal Welfare Department can effectively enforce the NYC animal cruelty laws that prohibit harming, neglecting or abandoning animals. This is necessary to protect all animals under human care, especially from cruel business practices. In pursuit of strongly mitigating animal cruelty in our city, the funds should also allow the Animal Welfare Department to expand pet shelters throughout the city so that the city can attain a 100% or nearly 100% no kill rate.

I hope this reform is put into place to help improve and save the lives of the most vulnerable animals under our care. Thank you.

Best Regards,
Richard Fox

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-9078230 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2025 5:33:26 AM

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

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Frank Lancellotti

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: I would like to have the city charter revised to make it easier to build apartments or condominiums on the vacant lots that are scattered throughout the city. Some of them stand on corner lots that look like prime opportunities to build on. The permitting process should be streamlined and expedited. Some consideration should be made to tax incentives as well.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-9209721 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2025 10:03:17 AM

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[REDACTED]

on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, at 10:02:55 AM

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

Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Brandon Huang

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone:

Comments: I would like to endorse the five charter reforms outlined in the post below (and attached) written by Daniel Golliher. <https://www.maximumnewyork.com/p/five-recommendations-for-nycs-crc>

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-5375056 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2025 10:42:29 AM

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on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, at 10:41:46 AM

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[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: Jennifer Geiling

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: Please find written testimony about aligning client services contracts with the True Cost of Living. Thank you.



**New York City Charter Revision Commission
Monday, February 24, 2024
Testimony for Submission
BUMP Campaign**

The BUMP Campaign would like to thank Charter Revision Chairperson Richard Buery and Commission members for the opportunity to submit testimony on a proposal to amend the New York City Charter to require funding – and maintaining – human services contracts at a true cost of living.

Background – BUMP

BUMP – The Bring Up Minimum Pay Campaign – is an anti-poverty initiative focused on establishing – and maintaining – base wages for human services workers at a true cost of living. The campaign was launched in the fall of 2023 by leaders in the government and nonprofit sectors to address the poverty-inducing wages of nonprofit, government-contracted human services workers.

BUMP is a data-driven campaign. BUMP commissioned the City University of New York’s Institute for State & Local Governance (CUNY ISLG) to identify the demographic and economic characteristics of the human services nonprofit labor market, the gap between current wages and a true cost of living and the return on investment to government and communities with increased human services wages. These analyses rely on publicly available data sources, including data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), namely, the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) and the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS), as well as the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). The data cited in this testimony is based on this research. [Data reports and analyses are available online.](#)¹

New York City Charter True Cost of Living

In 2022, 80% of voters passed a New York City Charter amendment to establish and annually report on “a citywide measure of the average amount necessary to cover the cost of essential needs at an adequate level.”² This measure is called the True Cost of Living. It is comprised of, but is not limited to, the costs of housing, childcare, food, transportation, healthcare, clothing and shoes, menstrual products, general hygiene products, cleaning products and telephone and internet service.³ In other words, the true cost of living measurement is the absolute very minimum set of expenses that residents incur just to live and take care of their families and achieve economic security in New York City. The ballot initiative further explained, the true cost of living “measurement is intended to focus on dignity.”⁴

¹ Critical Services, High Growth, Low Wages, Employment and Wage Trends Across New York’s Human Services Workforce, February 2025. <https://islg.cuny.edu/resources/critical-services-low-wages> (ISLG Report)

² https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/11/08/us/elections/results-new-york.html?action=click&pgtype=Article&state=default&module=election-results&context=election_recirc®ion=RaceLink

³ See Section 16c.1.(c), The New York City Charter, <https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/newyorkcity/latest/NYCcharter/0-0-0-5697>

⁴ <https://racialjustice.cityofnewyork.us/ballot/proposal-3/>



Dignity is the foundation of BUMP's NYC Charter amendment proposal.

Fifteen percent (15%) of New York City private sector employees – approximately 600,000 people - work in a human services-related industry.⁵ It is a workforce funded and directed by New York City government contracts. Every day, these individuals are motivating, supporting, advocating and caring for New York City's most vulnerable communities in every borough and every neighborhood. This workforce delivers physically and emotionally challenging services that support child welfare, behavioral health, homelessness, intellectual and developmental disabilities, special education, older adults and high risk youth, to name a few.

While this workforce assists and supports people living in poverty, nearly 90% of these workers are earning poverty-inducing wages. A single-adult New York City human services worker earns an annual wage of approximately \$40,000.

This human services workforce is dedicated to assisting and supporting individuals and families living in poverty. **It's a startling fact that nearly 90% of New York City single-adult human services workers earn below the true cost of living themselves.**⁶

A single-adult New York City human services worker earns an average annual wage of approximately \$40,000.⁷ This is significantly below the cost to live in New York City, as evidenced by the fact that **nearly 30% of this workforce receive SNAP benefits.**⁸ Based on Urban Institute's True Cost of Economic Security Measure and findings for New York City, a salary of \$40,000 means that **a single person household is under-resourced by as much as \$63,000.**⁹ **The wage gap between human services-related industries and overall private sector wages in New York City is approximately -\$78,000.**¹⁰

Prior efforts to address low- and poverty-level wages in the human services sector, primarily cost of living adjustments (COLAs), have not raised wages to a true cost of living. While a COLA will always be necessary to keep wages in step with inflation. On its own, a COLA is not sufficient to lift human services workers out of poverty and into dignified economic and professional positions. Currently, COLAs are discretionary in value and application. Moreover, if base wages are at or below poverty levels, a COLA is limited in its impact. For example, a 3% COLA on the average single-adult New York City human services wage of \$40,000 only adds an additional \$1,200 per year – less than 2% of the \$63,000 necessary to realize economic security.¹¹

New York City Charter rights and systemic harms

In 2022, voters also ushered in a New York City Charter preamble that sets “the collective values” to “guide the operation of our city government and inform and shape how the city carries out the duties, obligations, and authorities, and upholds and protects the rights set out in the charter.” Such rights include “having the resources necessary to prosper economically and build wealth.”

⁵ CUNY ISLG analysis of data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor and U.S. Census Bureau.

⁶ See ISLG Report, page 16.

⁷ CUNY ISLG analysis of data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor and U.S. Census Bureau.

⁸ CUNY ISLG analysis of data from U.S. Bureau of Labor and U.S. Census Bureau.

⁹ Urban Institute's True Cost of Economic Security (TCES) measure and data capturing costs and resources for all five New York City boroughs.

¹⁰ CUNY ISLG analysis of data from U.S. Bureau of Labor and U.S. Census Bureau.

¹¹ Urban Institute's True Cost of Economic Security (TCES) measure and data capturing costs and resources for all five New York City boroughs.

A key city authority is contracting for human services, referred to as “client services contracts” in the Charter – it is nearly two-thirds (2/3) of the city’s annual procurement portfolio.¹² The city essentially contracts-out all of its human services delivery to nonprofit organizations. Accordingly, the nonprofit human services workforce is effectively an extension of city government.

As the foregoing data illuminates, the current level of human services contract wages is not only inadequate to pay a true cost of living, but impossible for the workforce to realize their right to economic prosperity and wealth building.

The residents impacted by New York City’s under-resourcing are people that the Charter identifies as “historically marginalized.” The human services workforce identifies as approximately 80% people of color, 87% female and 63% foreign born.¹³ It is for these individuals that the New York City Charter’s preamble demands that we “act intentionally” to reverse the loss of economic opportunity and intergenerational wealth for our human services workforce of 600,000 people.

Occupation Profile for the New York City Human Services Workforce

	New York City
Average Wage for Human Services Occupations*	\$41,663
% Asian/Pacific Islander	15%
% Black	33%
% Hispanic	33%
% White	14%
% Female	87%
% Foreign Born	63%
% Asian/Pacific Islander and Foreign Born	13%
% Black and Foreign Born	19%
% Hispanic and Foreign Born	21%
% White and Foreign Born	6%
% Below Poverty Line	16%
% No Health Insurance	7%
% SNAP Recipient	29%

*Only available for New York metro area.

Sources: Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (2023); CUNY ISLG's calculation of US Census Bureau's American Community Survey microdata accessed via IPUMS USA (2022). Measures are aggregated for all human services-related occupations including: Child, Family, and School Social Workers; Childcare Workers; Community Health Workers; Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors; Healthcare Social Workers; Home Health Aides; Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers; Nursing Assistants; Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education; Probation Officers and Correctional Treatment Specialists; Rehabilitation Counselors; Social and Human Service Assistants; and Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors. The OEWS and IPUMS do not differentiate between private and government sectors.

¹² 2024 Citywide Indicators Report, Mayor’s Office of Contract Services.

https://www.nyc.gov/assets/mocs/images/2024reports/2024_Indicators_Citywide.svg

¹³ See ISLG Report, page 13 for example.



Now Is The Time To Act!

With the introduction of a true cost of living measure in 2022, the City now has a standard on which to base human services contracted wages to uphold the right of New Yorkers to economic prosperity, to dignify the critical services provided by more than 600,000 New York City workers and stop ongoing inequitable, systemic harms.

In Section 16 of the Charter, the mayor must report on social indicators and equity including “budgetary resources allocated to reduce poverty.” The city’s current under-resourcing of human services contracts is poverty-inducing; not poverty reducing. **We respectfully submit that the Charter should require human services contracts to be funded at a true cost of living, and such funding be reported annually.**

Once human services contract wages are tied to the Charter’s true cost of living measurement, this wage level must be maintained in multi-term contracts. New York City Charter Section 2-04 outlines requirements for multi-year client service contracts, including contracts for nine-plus years. A human services contract that does not foster economic prosperity in year one, certainly erodes personal wealth and generational wealth by year nine. **We respectfully submit that Charter Section 2-04 should be amended to require that multi-term client services contracts include annual wage escalators that maintain contract wages at a true cost of living.**

Thank you for your time and consideration. The BUMP Campaign looks forward to working with the Commission and other key stakeholders to address wage justice for human services workers. If you have any additional questions, please contact the campaign at bumpwages@gmail.com or Yolanda McBride at yolanda.mcbride@nyfoundling.org.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-3032477 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2025 10:53:48 AM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: robert A ginzberg

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: NYC has dozens, if not hundreds of 3-4 story public school buildings spread out in desirable neighborhoods. I propose tearing down these schools and rebuilding 20 story (or so) buildings in their place. The bottom 4-5 stories would be reserved to rebuild brand new, 21st century public schools with STEM labs, technologically advanced classrooms, theatres, art, music etc. for our kids. The middle 10 stories or so would be reserved for income restricted 1 and 2 bedroom apartments and the top floors would be rented or sold to help offset the cost of redevelopment. Maybe issue bonds secured by the rents from the apartments to help offset the cost. 1) Sure parents/neighbors will scream for the 3-4 years to rebuild but brand new schools... badly needed to replace these 1950-1960's buildings. 2) Kids would need to be dislocated for a few years but there are probably big box stores/office buildings in most neighborhoods we could use during construction. 3) increases affordable housing in desirable neighborhoods. 4) increases the long term tax base for the city. Short term pain for long term gain.

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-3409753 CRC Contact Form - Submit Written Testimony
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2025 11:22:09 AM

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Topic: Submit Written Testimony

Name: Kathy Leichter

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: I have lived in New York City all my life. My father, Franz Leichter, who died in 2023, (<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/12/nyregion/franz-s-leichter-dead.html>) was an Assemblyman and a State Senator representing Washington Heights and the Upper West Side for 30 years. He, along with many others, fought long and hard for affordable housing in the five boroughs of NYC. I am writing to carry his voice and all of the work done over many years by him and so many others to create and maintain a vibrant, economically, racially, and age diverse city, which means having places where everyone, of any income, race, age, background can live healthily and well. Please address the issue of affordable housing in the five boroughs--including Manhattan!! (and green space!) in your commission meetings. Thank you sincerely for your efforts. Kathy Leichter

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Charter Testimony
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2025 12:08:13 PM

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I registered to speak at the hearing on February 25, 2025 in Long Island City but unfortunately was unable to wait for my name to be called.

I am a resident of New York City (Long Island City at present, and Union Square/Gramercy Park areas previously). I am a retired attorney as well as a retired New York City and New York State public sector employee.

I thank the Commission members for your service and respectfully offer the following comments:

On **housing**, I believe the Charter should require that all areas of New York City share in the placement of housing but emphasize that New York City should move away from shelters and towards the provision of actual housing, which should include a mixture of market and affordable housing as well as SROs and small studio apartments with supportive services for persons with special needs.

More broadly, I believe it is time to work to make New York City government more democratic, transparent and open in order to maximize citizen participation and voting.

On this front, I urge the Commission to consider the following ideas:

- Consolidation of city and state election dates so New York City elections take place at the same time as New York State elections. Not only would this consolidation increase dismally low voter turnout, it would end the cynical practice of elected officials campaigning for two offices at the same time and not completing their terms in office if they are elected to a second position. Charter revision may be a more realistic way to accomplish this goal than a state constitutional amendment.
- Recall, referenda and initiative should be permitted to the extent permitted by state law.
- Primaries should be open to unaffiliated voters or eliminated entirely. Although I am an active member of the Democratic Party, I nonetheless believe that it is unfair to effectively disenfranchise voters who decline to enroll in the two major political parties which dominate New York City's political process.
- Mayoral removal and succession should be revisited. The person who is next-in-line to be mayor should be elected on a ticket with the mayor as is the case on the federal level with the election of a president and vice president.

Furthermore, declared candidates for mayor should be barred from participating in any process to remove the sitting mayor in order to avoid an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

- New York City should replace winner-take-all election of City Council members with a proportional system in which Council Members are elected on a proportional basis to represent geographic areas within each Borough while complying with one-person one-vote equal protection requirements; this change would help to ensure that voters are represented on the City Council even if their preferred candidate doesn't receive a majority of votes.

Thank you for considering my ideas.

Respectfully,
Scott Caplan



From: [Charter Info](#)
To: [Charter Testimony](#)
Subject: FW: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-4818475 CRC Contact Form - Accessibility Request
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2025 4:52:37 PM

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2025 3:46 PM
To: Charter Info <CharterInfo@citycharter.nyc.gov>
Subject: City of New York - Correspondence #1-1-4818475 CRC Contact Form - Accessibility Request

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hxxxs://www[.]nyc[.]gov/site/charter/contact/contact-charter[.]page

Topic: Accessibility Request

Name: Holly Kane

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Comments: We need housing for young adults with Autism. There is nothing that I can find for my son who could thrive living on his own with minimal support. There are many apartments for moderate and low income people why cannot there be units set aside for the tsunami of young people with autism who will need safe and affordable housing when their parents die?

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2025 9:12:33 PM

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I am a resident of New York City for fifty-plus years and 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



From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2025 9:13:06 PM

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Good evening,

I attended your most recent public hearing via Zoom in support of Open Primaries but unfortunately had to hop off at about 8:15pm before being able to give my testimony. I appreciate that you stayed until you heard all the available testimony for the evening. I hope you will give this written testimony the same consideration you gave to everyone there that night.

I am a lifelong New Yorker, born and raised in Brooklyn. Since taking a constitutional debate class in my public high school, I have been invested in local politics, the power of democracy and the importance of every citizen's voice. During the pandemic, I decided to take it one step further and run for local office. I was really devastated to discover how desperately NYC government needed electoral reform. During my campaign, there was a tremendous amount of gatekeeping, and I had to tailor my entire campaign to a very narrow group of people who would vote in the primaries. It felt terrible not to be able to campaign to everyone in my district and to not have the support of my party in getting to the primaries. That experience taught me that we can do better than having our elections decided at a closed primary, that isn't even open to all candidates of that party.

New York City has the opportunity to lead other cities across the country in democracy and equality, when it comes to open primaries. This current system leaves too many voters without a say. This exclusion diminishes voter engagement and limits the diversity of perspectives in our political discourse and is a disservice to our democracy. 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. As a result, we would have a real chance of solving the issues that most New Yorkers care the most about, increasing the quality of life for all.

That is why I hope the Commission will seriously consider adding a measure for Open Primaries to the ballot in 2025. Thank you.

Samantha Adler
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2025 9:13:38 PM

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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.

Sarah Prinsloo

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: CharterTestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Open Primaries
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2025 9:12:06 PM

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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.

Mark Picard

