

# SPEED

## Report



STREAMLINING PROCEDURES TO EXPEDITE  
EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

# INTRODUCTORY LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

To New Yorkers,

New York City’s housing crisis is the defining challenge of our time. For most New Yorkers, rent is the single largest expense in their lives. It is forcing families out of the neighborhoods they built, pushing working people further from their communities and, too often, out of this city altogether. We must use every tool at our disposal to confront this crisis – building far more housing at every level of affordability, protecting tenants and cracking down on bad landlords.

But solving this crisis is not only about political will or public investment. It is about whether government can deliver the public excellence necessary to meet the urgency of this moment.

For too long, our own systems have slowed down the creation of affordable housing. Bureaucracy and duplication have stood in the way of the homes New Yorkers need. That is why, on my very first day in office, I signed Executive Order #5 creating the Streamlining Procedures to Expedite Equitable Development (“SPEED”) Task Force. I charged two of my Deputy Mayors with examining every step of the housing approval and development process and identifying how we can move faster, smarter and more effectively.

This report lays out how we will build a system that moves at the speed of need. It reflects our simple belief: government should help solve crises, not deepen them. Our work will not end with this report. In the months ahead, agencies across our administration will begin implementing these reforms, while the SPEED Task Force continues meeting to identify additional improvements. Delivering public excellence is not a one-time effort. It requires constant focus, accountability and action.

I remain committed to building a city that working people can afford, with the urgency they deserve.

Yours in service,



Zohran Kwame Mamdani,  
Mayor of New York City

# INTRODUCTORY LETTER FROM THE DEPUTY MAYORS

Dear New Yorkers,

Our housing crisis is undeniable. At its root is a simple reality: there is not enough housing. New York City's rental vacancy rate stands at just 1.4% — the lowest it has been in more than 50 years — and affordable apartments are even harder to find.

Yet while New Yorkers struggle to find homes they can afford, our own government systems have allowed it to take nearly a decade for an affordable housing project to go from conception to move-in. This status quo is unacceptable. New Yorkers deserve a government that treats this crisis with the urgency it demands.

Over the past four months, alongside the agencies we oversee, we have examined every step of the affordable housing development process, from pre-development to lease-up. We spoke with experts inside and outside government, with advocates, with builders and with New Yorkers who have to navigate the housing development and leasing process themselves.

This report outlines seven major initiatives, alongside a series of other reforms, that will cut years off the affordable housing process and help New Yorkers move into stable, affordable homes far more quickly.

At its core, this work is about removing unnecessary barriers without compromising public safety. The recommendations are focused on creating efficiencies and supporting agency capacity where needed — including investments in new staff at key units and technology improvements — while eliminating layers of bureaucracy that have hampered progress.

Our work does not stop here. The SPEED Task Force will continue implementing these reforms, monitoring their success and meeting regularly with the builders, experts, advocates and City staff who helped craft these recommendations. We will continue bringing a culture of efficiency and public excellence to every part of City government — because New Yorkers deserve nothing less.

Yours,



Leila Bozorg  
Deputy Mayor for Housing and Planning



Julia Kerson  
Deputy Mayor for Operations

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New York City is experiencing a historic housing crisis that demands urgent action. Despite the dire need for affordable housing, affordable homes are frequently delayed by red tape, outdated technology, and redundant processes spread across roughly 15 agencies and offices. The cost of that delay is not abstract: it is measured in families unable to afford rising rents, in shelter stays that stretch into years, and in millions of dollars of additional costs to the City and affordable housing providers.

To address these challenges, on January 1st, 2026, Mayor Mamdani signed Executive Order #5 to establish the interagency Streamlining Procedures to Expedite Equitable Development (“SPEED”) Task Force. This Task Force, led by the Deputy Mayor for Housing and Planning and Deputy Mayor for Operations and made up of agency representatives, was directed to develop and recommend strategies to streamline and expedite the administrative and permitting processes for affordable housing production.

Throughout this process, the SPEED Task Force conducted roundtables with over 100 industry experts, advocates, developers, builders, and trade organizations to uncover the largest roadblocks and obstacles in the affordable housing production process; met with over 100 individual City employees involved in the administrative and permitting processes for affordable housing; and received over 500 official recommendations from roundtables, agency working groups, and online submissions to better encourage the development of affordable housing. From this expansive engagement, the SPEED Task Force was able to assess and identify the most impactful recommendations that will streamline and expedite the processes of affordable housing production.

The SPEED Task Force is recommending a package of proposed reforms, anchored by seven major initiatives, that reimagine every step required to build affordable housing, from conception to move-in:

1. Cut the city’s pre-certification timeline for many zoning actions from two years to six months so housing projects can be reviewed and approved faster.
2. Assign a dedicated central project management team to every city-financed affordable project to shepherd projects through the up to 15 agencies that are responsible for permitting, environmental review, and financing.
3. Accelerate the review process for Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans.
4. Streamline office-to-residential building conversions.
5. Improve the fire alarm inspection process.
6. Reimagine the affordable housing lottery from the ground up.
7. Launch new programs to more efficiently move homeless New Yorkers from shelters into permanent, affordable homes.

Taken together, these proposed reforms will reduce the development timeline for all affordable housing projects by eight months, and the timeline for affordable housing projects requiring a zoning change by two years. These savings will be accomplished by:

1. Reducing the pre-certification process for projects going through the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure from two years to six months.
2. Shortening permitting timelines for most new construction projects by five months.
3. Reducing permitting and lease-up for office-to-residential conversion projects by approximately five months.
4. Completely overhauling the City's affordable housing lottery to shorten the process by half, to three months, and moving lottery winners into their new homes in less than 100 days.
5. Moving homeless individuals into permanent homes faster by employing new technology and empowering nonprofit partners to match CityFHEPS recipients with affordable homes.

We must meet our city's housing crisis with the urgency it demands. These bold actions will help deliver the affordable homes that New Yorkers need, as quickly as possible.

## **Why Does New York City Need SPEED?**

For generations, New York City has offered opportunity to lifelong residents and new arrivals alike. But today, the promise that hard work can lead to a better future in the city is falling short. For too many New Yorkers, the single biggest obstacle to stability and opportunity is the cost of their home – or the struggle to find one at all.

We are experiencing a generational housing crisis. New York City's housing vacancy rate stands at just 1.4%, meaning only 1 in 70 rental apartments is available at any given time. For affordable homes, the rate is even lower. In today's market, tenants have nowhere else to go when they face harassment or steep rent increases. Families are being priced out of the neighborhoods where they grew up, where they work, and where their children go to school. New Yorkers deserve better.

At the root of this crisis is the city's anemic housing production, which trails behind peer cities, as well as behind more affordable periods in New York City's own history. There is no singular cause of our slow and insufficient housing production – layered procedural requirements, many established with good intent to ensure public participation, environmental protection, and tenant safety, have accumulated over decades. The result is duplicative steps and legacy rules that no longer reflect how New Yorkers live or how housing is built today, enabling a system that can too-frequently take over eight years between an affordable housing project's conception and the day a family can move in.

That's why Mayor Mamdani launched the SPEED Task Force via executive order on the first day of this administration. SPEED was given a clear mandate to identify and eliminate bottlenecks, roadblocks, and unnecessary regulations that slow down housing production and drive up

costs, while preserving the essential checks and protections that safeguard communities and the city's infrastructure.

This is about what city government can be at its best: effective, transparent, and working every day to earn the trust of the people it serves. The recommendations outlined in this report will help build homes faster, move families in sooner, and make our city work better for everyone.

## **Current Housing Production Timeline**

Affordable housing project timelines are highly variable and are dependent on the project type as well as individual site factors -- but in all cases, affordable housing takes too long to build. Depending on the path, a project can take anywhere from five to ten years from project conception to tenants moving in. Timelines can drag and stretch due to site-specific challenges; overly onerous review, permitting, and eligibility requirements; the complications of interagency coordination; and outdated rules and requirements. The SPEED Task Force dove deep into the development process to identify bottlenecks and barriers at each step and propose solutions that will save time, money, and most importantly, get New Yorkers into housing they can afford faster.

This report is organized around the four major phases of the development process. Each chapter explores the challenges associated with one phase, puts forward at least one major solution to expedite that phase, and provides additional recommendations that the Task Force will implement. These four phases occur roughly sequentially, but in practice they can overlap significantly, adding to the overall complexity of developing affordable housing in New York City:

### **1. Environmental Review and Planning:**

Many projects must go through a review process that requires analysis and disclosure of any potential significant environmental impacts that a project may cause. Additionally, if builders seek to change the underlying land use or allowable building size of their projects, they must go through a lengthy public review to obtain approval for these changes. However, duplicative, outdated, and ineffective processes have resulted in review requirements that stall projects for years without offering additional benefits to residents or their surrounding environment, and without considering the consequences of inaction, such as sprawled housing development away from transit.

### **2. Pre-Development and Financing:**

To obtain City financing and begin construction, affordable housing projects must undergo a pre-development process that includes design and budget approvals from more than a dozen City agencies and utility companies. Inefficient coordination and communication has resulted in a disjointed process, which creates costly delays before shovels can enter the ground.

### **3. Permitting and Approvals:**

While projects are going through environmental and planning reviews and completing financial due diligence, builders must also undergo a permitting and approvals process with multiple agencies before construction can begin. As construction nears completion, projects go through another round of permitting and approvals from a number

of agencies before residents can move in. Critical understaffing and overly onerous requirements waste time and can yield significant delays that add considerable costs as a project is being built.

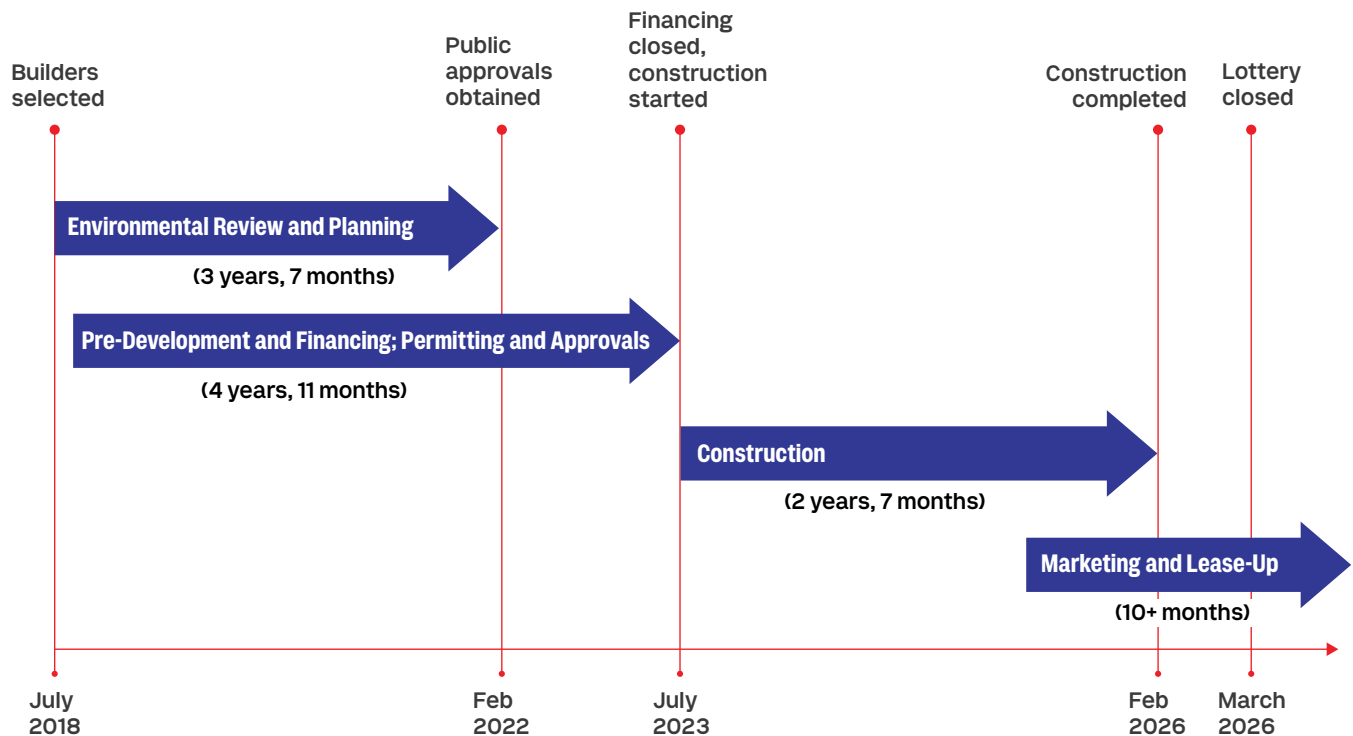
#### 4. Marketing and Lease-Up:

Once an affordable housing project is nearing completion, tenants go through a lengthy lottery process to prove they meet the eligibility requirements for the project and to obtain a new home. If a tenant is coming from the shelter system or receiving an income-based subsidy or voucher, additional steps may be necessary before they can move in.

The following case studies illustrate the variability of the affordable housing development timeline and the ways in which roadblocks at every stage can slow projects down. A detailed description of each project’s timeline can be found in the appendix of this report:

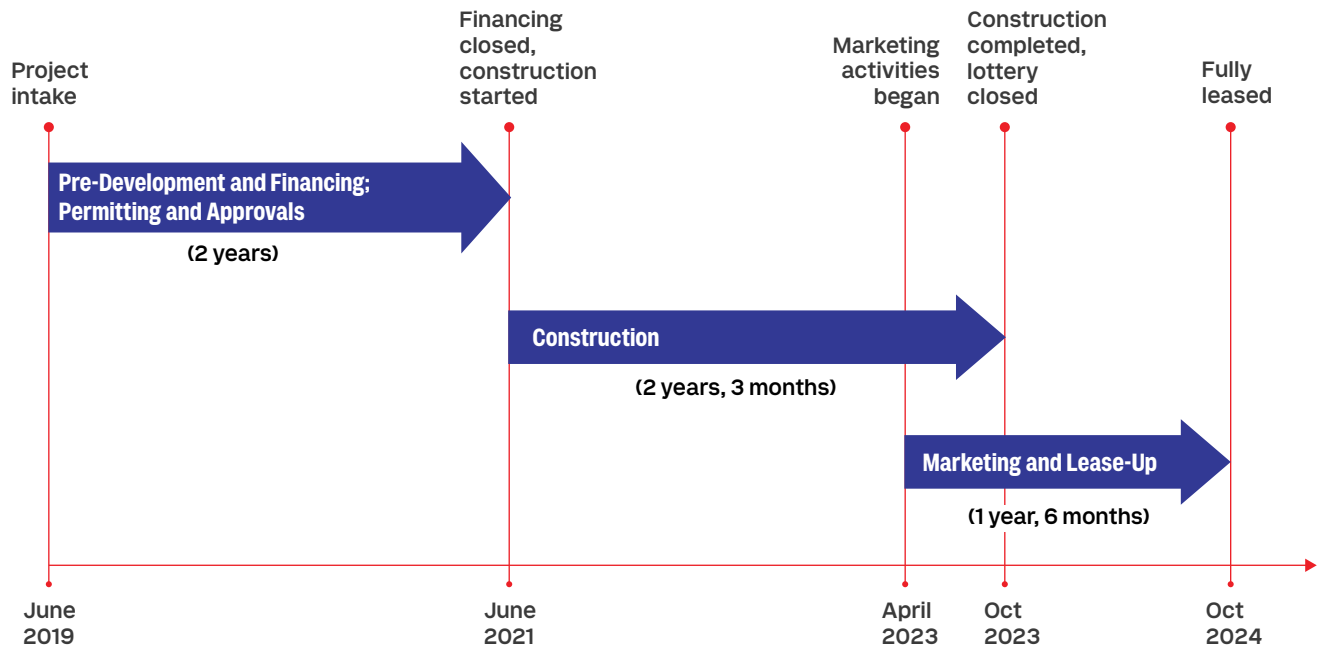
## GLENMORE MANOR: PUBLIC SITE WITH REZONING

8 years, 233 apartments



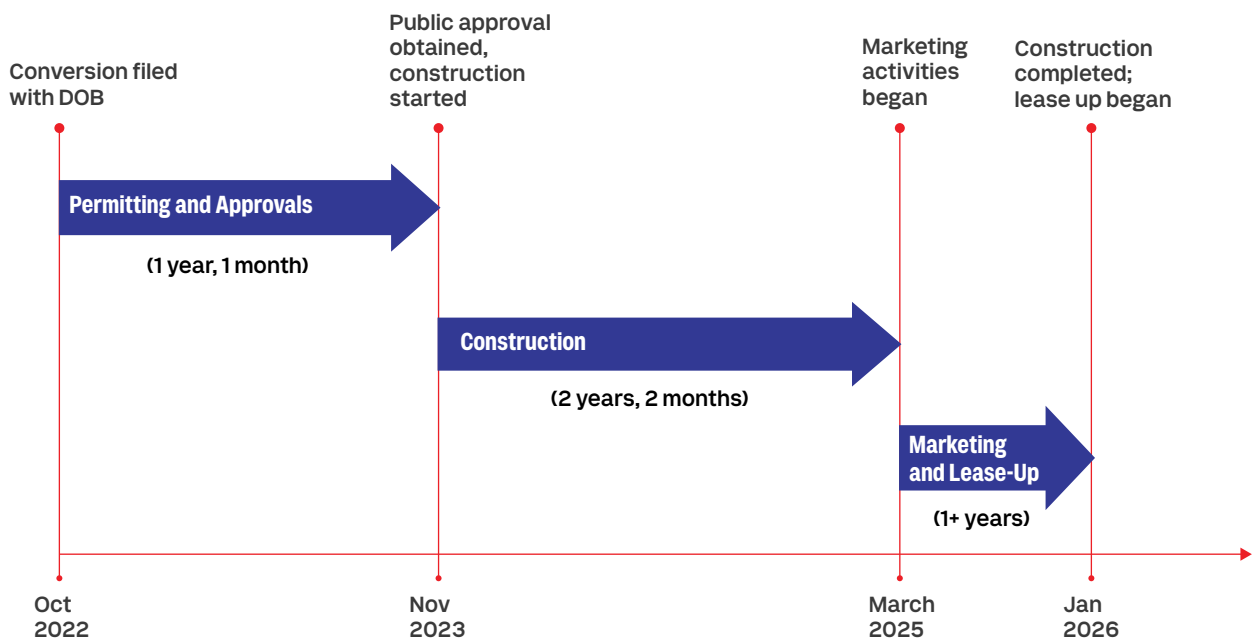
# GARDEN TOWERS SENIOR APARTMENTS: PRIVATE SITE, NO LAND USE ACTIONS

5 years and 4 months, 150 apartments



# 55 BROAD STREET: OFFICE-TO-RESIDENTIAL CONVERSION

3 years and 6 months, 571 apartments





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# ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND PLANNING

## CHAPTER 1

# ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW & PLANNING

### **MAJOR SOLUTION:**

**Simplify and expedite the environmental review process to reduce pre-certification review of eligible zoning proposals to under 6 months.**

The State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) was enacted in 1975 to study large projects likely to have environmental impacts, such as major industrial developments. Over time, it has come to operate against the very outcomes it was designed to achieve. Today, even modest actions that advance housing and climate goals – including conveying public land to a builder to build affordable housing or changing zoning to allow modest housing to be built in dense, walkable neighborhoods – must undergo a lengthy and expensive environmental review process. SEQRA review covers a huge array of areas of study, including some that bear little connection to environmental sustainability, such as shadows and neighborhood character.

Environmental review is one of the longest parts of pre-certification — the process by which the Department of City Planning (DCP) prepares projects involving land-use changes to begin public review. Pre-certification has historically taken an average of two years, even for modest housing projects like a proposal to build a four-story building with just six apartments.

This two-year process carries significant costs. For a building with 500 apartments, a two year pre-certification process adds an estimated additional \$41 million in costs (\$82,000 per apartment) — costs that are often passed onto future building residents or absorbed by the City, according to the Citizens Budget Commission. The impacts of that two year pre-certification are significant: of the 87,905 affordable homes built since 2016, 63% involved a zoning change that required environmental review, per DCP’s “Housing Development and Zoning Change” report.

And even beyond zoning changes, SEQRA-mandated environmental review can slow the delivery of housing. When the City finances affordable housing, or when

it gives land to a non-profit to build affordable housing, environmental review is typically required. In many of these cases, environmental review is required even if the exact same proposed project could be built on the site as-of-right without City financing for affordable housing. In other words, a builder that chooses to construct the same exact building for market rate housing would not be required to undergo environmental review, while a builder that works with the City to construct affordable housing on the very same site is required to go through environmental review.

Fortunately, there is broad recognition of the need for reforms to this process to speed affordable housing creation. At the time of writing, the 2026 New York State budget is widely expected to include reforms to SEQRA to help address these challenges. The reforms are likely to exempt housing projects under a specific size and in particular locations from the need for environmental review. One version of this proposal covered projects in New York City that contain up to 250 or 500 new homes depending on existing zoning, are located on previously disturbed land, and are connected to water and sewer systems upon occupancy, among other requirements.

By streamlining review for smaller housing projects and modernizing outdated rules, these reforms will allow DCP to take actions that will reduce the pre-certification timeline for most housing proposals from two years to six months. And for larger projects still subject to environmental review, the City will modernize its procedures to accurately identify environmental impacts – without unnecessary paperwork and delay.

The City will make environmental review faster and simpler by taking the following actions:

- 1A) Leverage anticipated changes by the State to environmental review to streamline the pre-certification process at DCP from 2 years down to 6 months for most eligible projects. This will include the establishment of a new, dedicated review team exclusively focused on advancing these projects into public review.
- 1B) Modernize transportation, air quality, and construction analysis. The City will reimagine the way environmental review looks at traffic, air quality, and construction impacts. Opportunities include adopting new methods for traffic analysis for neighborhood-scale changes; updating how the City analyzes and identifies impacts for site-specific traffic and parking analysis; and modernizing review of construction and mobile air quality.
- 1C) Invest in agency capacity. The City will invest in agency environmental review capacity, to ensure that agencies have the expertise needed to carefully and efficiently study impacts. New staff at the DCP, Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) will help move environmental review faster and ensure communities are protected.
- 1D) Make it easier for builders and the public to navigate environmental review. The City will create new tools to help builders and the public understand environmental review. New tools include a new online pathway to help quickly determine a project's eligibility for streamlined review; new transparency and access to transportation data and a plain-language guide to the environmental review process.

## **Additional recommendation to streamline environmental review and planning:**

- 1E) Develop systems and establish a process to validate new sources of traffic volume data to build a City-managed Transportation Baseline Data Fusion Library. A validation process will set traffic volume baselines using aggregated data analysis where appropriate rather than requiring manual calculations conducted or reviewed by agency employees.



# 2

## PRE-DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCING

## CHAPTER 2

# PRE-DEVELOPMENT & FINANCING

### **MAJOR SOLUTION:**

**Expedite  
permitting  
approvals needed  
for construction  
loan closing and  
construction  
completion.**

Most newly-built 100% affordable housing projects in New York City receive subsidies from the HPD and must receive approvals from a variety of agencies to close on loans that will allow them to begin construction. Projects go through lengthy pre-development processes prior to and concurrent with receiving various agency approvals. The typical pre-development time average 5-7 years from agency intake, partially due to the City's budget constraints and federally imposed bond caps, which are beyond the scope of the SPEED Task Force's work.

Critically needed affordable housing developments are delayed by lack of coordination among the city agencies that have approval authority over different aspects of every individual construction project. Project delays can cost builders – and thus the City, which subsidizes building costs – millions of dollars. Those costs can also deter builders from building entirely. When these delays stack up, the impact is felt not just by the families in need of stable, affordable housing, but also by the City, which is required to invest millions of additional dollars per project and therefore has less funding to support future affordable housing.

In 2025, the City piloted an interagency task force to increase coordination between the permitting offices at all agencies and public utilities involved in the final signoffs needed to complete affordable housing construction. This pilot successfully expedited the completion of almost 4,000 affordable homes. Now, the City will expand this work by widening its scope to include all approvals needed before a building can receive a financial loan and by adding additional HPD-financed affordable housing projects nearing the end of construction. This expanded scope means fewer City dollars will be spent on delayed projects, less financial strain will be placed on affordable housing builders, and City agencies will have greater capacity to build additional affordable homes.

These recommendations will reduce the time affordable housing builders must wait before their new construction projects can receive funding:

- 2A) Create a new team at HPD and the Mayor’s Office to manage the ongoing inter-agency coordination** needed for pre-financial closing approvals, construction completion approvals, and the provision of supportive housing services. This will increase the speed at which the City can finance and construct more affordable housing by reducing approval bottlenecks and development delays.
- 2B) Expand the Department of Buildings’ Affordable Housing HUB Program** by providing a Department of Buildings (DOB) project advocate to help HPD-subsidized new construction projects on City-owned land navigate DOB’s permitting process.
- 2C) Create a new team at the Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI) to coordinate the creation of Application Programming Interfaces** to link the back-end data located within the permitting portals of multiple agencies involved in housing permitting to improve customer experience and transparency, provide clear metrics detailing review timing and queue length to applicants and agencies, and automate project approval management across agencies.

## **Additional recommendations to expedite the pre-development stage:**

- 2D) Streamline the licensing process on vacant City-owned property** to make it easier for builders to access City-owned land ahead of construction for site testing and site prep work, including demolition.
- 2E) Add staff to HPD’s Office of Development** to more quickly review affordable housing project proposals and assist builders in creating and refining their proposals so projects are ready for financial closing earlier.
- 2F) Create a template site access agreement** to simplify negotiations with neighboring property owners to facilitate access and site protection features like scaffolding.
- 2G) Create an acquisition policy with transparent guidelines** to determine how value is calculated and underwritten in HPD affordable housing projects.
- 2H) Create a targeted violation amnesty policy** that removes building code violations and clears title hinderances on City-owned property to allow designated builders that were not responsible for the violations to begin construction faster.
- 2I) Allow nonprofit owners to underwrite the cost of third party financial, design, and construction staff** to build more capacity and shorten predevelopment timelines.
- 2J) Allow designated builders of projects on city-owned sites to sign filing applications as “owner”** across permitting agencies.



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**PERMITTING AND APPROVALS**

## CHAPTER 3

# PERMITTING AND APPROVALS

Before a project can begin construction, it must receive approvals from up to 15 City agencies – a process that takes 16 months on average. Including the actual time of construction, it takes an average of over four years from the initial filing of a new building permit at DOB to officially complete construction and all inspections. This delay – largely due to the huge volume of applications that permitting agencies review – extends the time before a family can move into desperately-needed housing.

The City will take a number of actions to increase capacity and resolve conflicting policies in order to expedite permitting and approvals for housing production:

### **MAJOR SOLUTION:**

#### **Streamline the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan approval process.**

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) requires stormwater management for construction on public and private properties (1) to help protect City infrastructure from polluted stormwater runoff generated from construction activities, (2) to reduce or slow down stormwater entering sewers during wet weather, and (3) to help improve the quality of NYC’s waterways. This regulatory structure, the Unified Stormwater Rule, is required by the City’s Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit, issued by the State pursuant to the federal Clean Water Act, and also incorporated into the City’s commitments to reducing combined sewer overflow. The City’s stormwater regulations allow new developments to be built while ensuring the City’s compliance with our permit obligations and reducing the flow into our sewer system during larger storm events.

Pursuant to the City’s Unified Stormwater Rule (and as required under the State’s Construction General Permit) development projects that disturb 20,000 square feet or more of soil, or that add 5,000 square feet or more of hard surfaces that can’t absorb stormwater, need to submit a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) to DEP. Depending on the type of development, the SWPPP may require permanent stormwater management controls on site as well as erosion and sediment control during construction.

While a SWPPP is supposed to take 45 days for DEP to review, the time for review varies depending on project complexity and the quality of the submission. DEP cannot issue a Stormwater Construction Permit, a permit required before the start of construction, until a project's SWPPP is accepted.

Typically, DEP reviews and responds to a submission in 45 days and the total SWPPP acceptance process takes 5-7 months. About half of that time is for DEP's review, and the other half is for the applicant's revisions based on DEP's feedback. These recommended actions, while ensuring compliance with the City's legal commitments described above, will reduce the time-frame for SWPPP review and acceptance:

- 3A) Clarify what activities constitute a covered development project**, including how to determine whether a covered development project is greater than or equal to 20,000 square feet and therefore subject to the Unified Stormwater Rule.
- 3B) Develop a process by which initial stormwater construction permits** can be issued for limited preliminary development activity.
- 3C) Add additional staffing and front-end IT improvements** to maintain or to improve the current 45-day review time and give applicants and agency staff more tools to better communicate comments and revisions.

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## **MAJOR SOLUTION:**

### **Streamline office conversions.**

Thanks to zoning changes as a part of City of Yes for Housing Opportunity and the enactment of the 467-m tax exemption in 2024, older, vacant office buildings can be converted into new affordable housing. While estimates vary, the City expects to see at least 12,000 new apartments from office-to-residential conversions in the coming years. Many of the older office buildings that are the best candidates for conversion to housing require asbestos remediation. In New York City, this process requires DEP Technical Reviewers in the Asbestos Technical Review Unit (ATRU) to review asbestos remediation plans in order to ensure workers and future residents are protected during and after asbestos removal.

Currently, the ATRU is a small team (seven Technical Reviewers) with limited capacity. This team must not only review complex plans, but also respond to applicants and review emergency notifications that need to be prioritized to protect public health. Furthermore, the ATRU's workload has grown significantly: the number of applications it receives has nearly doubled since 2010, with a peak of almost 14,000 applications in 2023. Of these applications, the number of complex, multi-part applications has increased 300%, from 1,477 in 2010 to a peak of 4,415 in 2023. The current waiting time for review and approval of multi-part applications can be as long as five months.

Separately, a DEP Procedural Variance (V2), a process to approve relief from the Asbestos Control Program (ACP) rules for a specific project, is currently valid for six months, after which the applicant must stop all work that is associated with the variance and submit a new application for renewal. This work stoppage causes delays in abatement work progress and impacts the timing of DOB permits for renovation, demolition, or alteration.

These recommended actions will improve oversight and allow for faster and safer conversion of offices into housing:

- 3D) Increase staffing for ATRU Review** to reduce the average workload (new assignments) by 50%. This will allow reviewers more time for multi-part project applications. Adding the additional staff would reduce the time it takes to review and approve permits by two months.
- 3E) Increase the term of procedural variance V2 (ACP-9) from 6 months to one year** in order to align with the expiration date on the ACP-7. This change will facilitate abatement projects to proceed without work stoppage.
- 3F) Create an Asbestos Reporting & Tracking System (ARTS) public facing portal** to eliminate the need for non-asbestos contractors to sign up for an ARTS account if they need “read only” access. This will facilitate the flow of information by allowing building owners to gain important information without needing to rely on asbestos contractors with ARTS access. This means owners without ARTS accounts will be able to monitor and track application review status in ARTS and plan abatement and construction schedules to meet project deadlines.

## **MAJOR SOLUTION:**

### **Improve the fire alarm inspection process.**

Fire alarm system inspections and Emergency Plan approvals are often one of the last approvals needed before a new housing development can obtain a Certificate of Occupancy, thus allowing the building to lease-up with new residents. Inspections and approvals of this critical life safety system in buildings have been delayed – which leaves fully constructed affordable housing projects unable to complete inspections and begin the lease-up process on time.

These recommended actions will increase capacity in the NYC Fire Department’s (FDNY) Bureau of Fire Prevention (BFP) and assist in the leveraging of modern technology to support efficiency and promote fire safety in residential buildings:

- 3G) Create a third party testing procedure in advance of FDNY final inspections.** In an effort to reduce defects and violations that delay sign-off and approval of the system, the FDNY will accept third party testing as an indicator of full readiness for inspection, increasing sign-off success rates.
- 3H) Enhance the FDNY receipt, review, and processing of applications** by allowing applicants to digitally submit and receive comments for fire alarm system and emergency action plans through the FDNY Business Portal.

- 3I) Add additional staffing and positions at FDNY's Fire Alarm Plan Review and Inspection Unit** to reduce wait times to a one-to-two-week turnaround time for application reviews and inspections.
- 3J) Add additional plan examiners to FDNY's Emergency Planning and Preparedness Unit** to address the 12-week wait time for initial emergency plan review.

## **Additional recommendations in the construction permitting and approval stage:**

Building affordable housing requires coordinating multiple permits and approvals across and within dozens of government agencies and offices using digital service delivery systems. These IT systems are currently siloed within their respective agencies, which creates redundancies and inefficiencies that cause builders of affordable housing to waste time, money, and effort as they wait for the right permit or approval to allow their project to proceed. These recommended actions will update how the City tracks, communicates, and issues housing permits and approvals.

- 3K) Create a single, easily understood document that lists and describes the process of obtaining the most common permits needed to begin and complete construction.**
- 3L) Invest in critical geospatial mapping upgrades** that will allow building permits to be pulled and tax records to be assigned more quickly.

The City has a range of environmental protections that ensure housing does not reduce the quality and safety of our City's living environment as it is built. However, the systems that support these protections have grown increasingly complex over time, creating procedural steps that can be difficult for applicants to navigate. These recommended actions will streamline the permitting processes that are triggered by the construction of housing and improve agencies' abilities to exercise oversight efficiently and transparently:

- 3M) Increase staffing for DEP's Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations** that will lead to faster permit review for construction and Certificate of Occupancy reviews for construction closeouts.
- 3N) Install mobile field technology for DEP staff** to automatically create daily staff routes to minimize travel times for water and sewer line inspections.
- 3O) Create a centralized Permit Education Hub website** to offer plain-language guidance, checklists, and diagrams to assist applicants in applying for DEP permitting. This will reduce the number of inquiries that are submitted to DEP staff and allow them to focus on reviewing and approving permits.
- 3P) Allow builders to put down a refundable deposit for existing tree preservation**, in addition to planting, allowing a more streamlined path to final Certificate of Occupancy without the dependence on Street Tree Signoff.

- 3Q) Add staff to DOT's Traffic Engineering and Planning Unit** to cut the review time of curb cut applications to two weeks.
  
- 3R) Collaborate with EXPRESS NY**, a new statewide initiative from Governor Hochul to tackle outdated policies, regulations, and practices and make it faster and more affordable to deliver the critical housing and other infrastructure projects that New Yorkers need.



4

## TRANSFORMING HPD'S LEASE-UP PROCESS

## **CHAPTER 4**

# **TRANSFORMING THE LEASE-UP PROCESS**

The goal of New York City’s affordable housing “lease-up” system, supported by the Housing Connect lottery, is to match eligible New Yorkers with affordable homes fairly, quickly, and transparently.

Despite these admirable goals, the current process is not working for any party in the lease-up process: building owners, prospective tenants or homeowners, or the City. The median time to complete applicant approvals for lottery projects in FY25 was 210 days – delays that deny housing opportunities to New Yorkers who need them most and make projects more expensive.

The burden of these delays falls especially hard on those living in shelters, where coordination between HPD and the Department of Social Services (DSS) to identify and qualify households coming out of shelters is complex and burdensome, adding to unacceptable lease-up delays in the 15% of affordable homes set aside for formerly homeless New Yorkers. These delays could mean a New Yorker missing the opportunity to celebrate a holiday with family, or prevent a child from starting the school year in a permanent home.

Recognizing that these barriers are simply unacceptable, HPD and DSS engaged applicants, advocates, marketing agents, housing experts, and government partners to understand where the lease-up process is breaking down and to solicit recommendations for improvement.

The improvements detailed below will create a lease-up process that is faster and clearer. While there are short-term improvements that can make an immediate difference for New Yorkers, the current Housing Connect technology will need to be migrated to a new and more flexible technological system. The new technology will be designed to be easy to update without major overhauls, with adaptability as a core principle, so it can evolve over time as technology changes.

The following recommendations, sorted into short- and long-term fixes, represent a holistic reimagining of the lease-up process. The result will be a system that is faster, fairer, and built to meet today’s affordable housing challenges.

## **Immediate Process Reforms to Current System**

The process changes outlined below will be implemented by the end of 2026 and will significantly speed up the leasing process while preserving the fairness that is core to the housing lottery’s purpose:

- 4A) **Shorten the lottery application period from 60 to 21 days** for all lotteries, a timeline already in place for many projects.
- 4B) **Simplify income verification** by establishing a prioritization of acceptable income documents to reduce the amount of documents applicants need to submit, focusing first on the easiest documents to provide, such as proof of benefits or rental assistance.
- 4C) **Shorten the period during which marketing agents must select applicants from the randomized lottery pool** in sequential order. The shortened timeline will ensure all potential applicants have adequate time to complete applications but will move serious applicants through the process more quickly.
- 4D) **Streamline and/or centralize the submission of paper applications for Housing Connect.** Paper applications take much longer to collect and enter into the system, which in turn slows down the process for all applicants.
- 4E) **Clarify the process and timelines for applying for affordable housing** by issuing simplified guidelines for both property managers and applicants. HPD will make supporting materials and resources about the application process and decision timelines available through multiple formats and channels.
- 4F) **Extend current waiver policies for apartments** that had been rented before and are now available for rent again (aka “re-rentals”) during this period of transition to an updated system. The City will extend the current waiver allowing marketing agents to advertise these apartments outside of Housing Connect to people across the city, including on widely known commercial platforms and the HPD website.
- 4G) **Pilot a new homeless lease-up program, Making Accelerated Transitions to Coordinated Housing (MATCH),** for two years starting in fall 2026, for targeted developments, allowing landlords and marketing agents to work directly with shelter providers to match clients with available homes faster.
- 4H) **Launch a new integrated interagency system, Stability Through Entry and Placement (STEP),** in fall 2026 to expedite, automate, and better connect all partners in the formerly manual homeless placements process across HPD, the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), and the Human Resources Administration (HRA). STEP will improve how housing and client information is tracked, as well as help the City measure progress, identify delays, and step in quickly when issues arise.
- 4I) **Expedite or eliminate duplicative apartment inspections to allow CityFHEPS voucher holders to move into homes more quickly.** Under the current process, buildings financed by HPD or HDC most often do not require a physical inspection before a household with a CityFHEPS voucher can move in. HPD and DSS will reinforce this policy for all marketing agents and agency staff. In addition, the City will create a third-party inspection process for lease-ups by homeless households who use CityFHEPS, allowing approved organizations to inspect and approve vacant apartments prior to occupancy in all newly constructed buildings.

- 4J) Launch an internal working group with staff who oversee supportive housing placements from HRA, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), and HPD to focus on reducing the number of vacant supportive housing apartments. The working group will focus first on reducing vacancies in ready-to-be-leased supportive housing apartments.**

## **Building a More Effective System for the Long-Term**

The process reforms described above will drive meaningful improvements in the short term, but incremental fixes will not go far enough. Many of the issues that the SPEED Task Force heard in its work stem from processes and technology that are too inflexible to support the scale of change that is needed.

By addressing these interconnected issues and making deeper process and operational changes, the City will cut the median lease-up time down from 210 days to fewer than 100 days.

These changes will simplify overly complex processes and modernize the lottery system's technology so that it is easier to use, and flexible enough to adapt over time.

Many of the interim process changes outlined above will remain in place even as the City makes longer-term improvements, allowing the City to achieve additional efficiencies. These longer-term improvements include:

- 4K) Establish a clearer way to confirm income eligibility earlier in the lottery process so people are better and more quickly matched with apartments they are eligible for.**
- 4L) Verify income through trusted government data systems so that many applicants no longer need to submit repetitive documents.**
- 4M) Create a targeted geographic prioritization system that will allow applicants to affirm where they want to live and opt out of lotteries that do not align with their preferences.**
- 4N) Revise appeals processes to retain a mechanism for New Yorkers to seek relief when lottery processes are in dispute but allow qualified applicants to accept apartment offers quickly.**
- 4O) Simplify requirements for LIHTC applicants by using eligibility information from other federal programs, reducing the need for a separate, repetitive income verification process.**
- 4P) Expand Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) for CityFHEPS rental payment subsidies to reduce potential delays and increase visibility for all government payments in Current Rent, the CityFHEPS subsidy portal.**

- 4Q) Streamline income verification in the Cash Assistance (CA) and rebudgeting process** by increasing the rebudgeting threshold to \$125, which will reduce the number of recipients who will need to reverify their income.
- 4R) Implement a new reinspection protocol**, following a HRA pilot, that permits minor, non-life-safety repairs to be cleared virtually. This will allow apartments to be approved for CityFHEPS voucher holders rapidly, while confirming the safety of all homes.
- 4S) Expand CurRent access to marketing agents, property managers, and owners by 2027** to have a more active role in subsidy applications with additional insight into application statuses to enhance coordination and visibility.



5

**RECOMMENDATIONS  
THE CITY WILL  
CONTINUE TO EXPLORE**

## CHAPTER 5

# RECOMMENDATIONS THE CITY WILL CONTINUE TO EXPLORE

The SPEED Task Force discussed many compelling ideas that could not be fully developed in three months. The Task Force will continue to meet regularly to implement the proposals outlined above and to continue to workshop additional proposals .

Some of the most promising ideas the City will continue to explore include:

1. Explore alternative methods for efficient issuance of New Building Permits for HPD-financed affordable projects.
2. Engage the State to explore shifting the structure of State-generated Cash Assistance rental assistance payments by DSS to arrive once per month rather than in disbursements throughout the month to align rent payments with market rate tenants' schedules.
3. Allow nonprofit owners to underwrite the cost of third party financial, design, and construction staff to build more capacity and shorten predevelopment timelines.
4. Allow third-party inspectors to certify fire alarms have been installed correctly to receive final approval.
5. Expand the types of environmental designations applied to projects to indicate the presence of an environmental protection requirement.
6. Expand DEP's unified online permit portal to streamline all water and sewer related permits into a single platform.
7. Modernize the environmental review process for shelters.
8. Create a digital system that allows the Public Design Commission (PDC)'s commissioners and staff to review drawings in real time, making the commenting and approvals process more efficient.
9. Create a technical advisory panel to provide additional technical support to complete the review of PDC projects.
10. Create an IT Fellows program imbedded within agencies and NYC Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI) to increase the City's talent pool and provide technological support to update systems.
11. Expand the Housing & Planning Fellowship and create a Permitting and Approvals Fellowship at non-housing agencies to bring new staff members focused on housing into more City agencies, broadening the City's talent pool.

# APPENDIX

## PROJECT TIMELINE DETAILS:

### GLENMORE MANOR: PUBLIC SITE WITH REZONING

Glenmore Manor Apartments is a newly constructed, 230-apartment affordable rental building in Brownsville, Brooklyn. The building includes 150 apartments subject to the housing lottery. This affordable housing development was built on land previously owned by the City and with subsidy provided by HPD's Extremely Low- and Low-Affordability (ELLA) Program. Rents in this building are affordable to tenants making up to 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). The project took approximately 8 years, from assigning a builder to tenants moving in.

Glenmore Manor demonstrates how much time and energy goes into just getting a public site project ready for construction. HPD selected the builder for this project through a competitive review process in July 2018. It then spent more than 3 years in the Environmental Review and Planning stage, with much of the time spent on preparing the project for public approval via the City's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). Before it could even begin ULURP, Glenmore Manor spent 2 years and 9 months completing both environmental review and pre-certification reviews, which happened in parallel. Both processes required multiple rounds of duplicative review across several agencies. Once these steps were complete, the project faced the seven-month ULURP review, followed by an additional three months to get final land use approvals in February 2022.

The builders of Glenmore Manor then spent more than a year assembling financing and preparing for the start of construction, which began in July 2023. During this period, the builders completed due diligence activities for financial closing and worked across more than a dozen agencies to obtain all permits and approvals necessary for construction. Due to limits on available financing, HPD is not always able to close on a project as soon as it is ready, and shovel-ready projects like Glenmore Manor must wait for financing.

Construction for Glenmore Manor took just under three years, from July 2023 to February 2026. Starting in May 2025, the builders began preparing for the marketing and lottery process. As the project neared construction completion, HPD opened a two-month lottery application period between January and March 2026, for a total pre-marketing and advertising timeline of 10 months. Tenants will begin moving in within a couple of months, as the building's marketing agents follow HPD and HDC's procedures to review lottery applicants for eligibility and match them with apartments.

## **GARDEN TOWERS SENIOR APARTMENTS:**

### **PRIVATE SITE, NO LAND USE ACTIONS**

Built on the site of a former one-story office building and parking garage, Garden Towers Senior Apartments is now home to 150 apartments of affordable senior housing in the Morrisania section of the Bronx. The development team first approached HPD about this proposed project in the summer of 2019, after demolition of the existing structure. Under existing zoning, the team was able to design two eight-story buildings containing 150 apartments, with 30% of the apartments set aside for formerly homeless older adults who receive light-touch support from a social services provider. All apartments are paired with federal Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers, which allow very low-income older adults to access and age in place in affordable, accessible, service-supported housing. Garden Towers took 5 years and 4 months to build, from initial intake to being fully leased.

Because the project needed no zoning changes, it began in the Pre-Development and Financing phase, which ran in parallel to Permitting and Approvals. After completing predevelopment due diligence and securing competitive financing from all three levels of government – City, State, and Federal – the project closed on construction financing at the end of June 2021. Project construction took approximately 27 months, and the project completed construction on time in early October 2023.

The project faced delays due to technical challenges during the Marketing and Lease-Up phase. The builders began pre-marketing activities in April 2023 and advertised the lottery in August 2023. All 150 apartments were leased up by October 2024, 12 months after the building received its Temporary Certificate of Occupancy.

## **55 BROAD STREET:**

### **OFFICE-TO-RESIDENTIAL CONVERSION**

Formerly the headquarters of Goldman Sachs, the development team converted 55 Broad Street into a 571-apartment rental building with 143 affordable homes. Rents for the affordable apartments in this building are affordable to tenants making 40% to 100% of the Area Median Income. 55 Broad Street took approximately 3 years and 6 months to convert and lease-up.

In the wake of the COVID pandemic, office conversions have become more popular in New York City, using existing vacant offices to help tackle the housing crisis and significantly shortening the development lifecycle.

The development team purchased the building in July 2023 with the intention to convert it into housing. The project was able to pivot to also providing affordable housing and become one of the first office conversions under the new Affordable Housing from Commercial Conversions (467-m) tax exemption program. The builders did not receive any financial support from the City; instead, they will receive a 35-year tax exemption in exchange for ensuring that 25% of the building's apartments are permanently affordable.

Because 55 Broad Street was built in an existing building and did not use any City financing, it was able to skip the Environmental Review and Planning and had an abbreviated Pre-Development and Financing phase. Instead, 55 Broad Street worked simultaneously on Permitting and Approvals as they negotiated construction financing. The builder filed plans to convert with the DOB in October 2022, as the sale of the building and financing transaction progressed. The conversion received full approvals 13 months later, in November 2023, and immediately began construction, which completed in early 2026, 26 months later. Permitting and construction were complex, as some original commercial tenants remained in place during construction, so work, such as asbestos remediation, needed to be completed in stages around the existing tenants.

Ahead of construction completion, the builders began preparing for the marketing process in March 2025. The advertisement went live in June 2025 and ended after the allotted 60 days in August 2025. Lottery applicants and New Yorkers referred through the homeless placement process were able to begin moving in once the building received its Temporary Certificate of Occupancy in the first quarter of 2026. As of April 2026, 20 of the 143 affordable apartments are fully leased and occupied.

# REQUIRED PROCEDURES AND PERMITS

## The following is a list of the procedures and permits required to build affordable housing in NYC:

1. Zoning District Amendments (if needed) – DCP
2. Waterfront Zoning Certifications (if located on waterfront block) – DCP
3. Tax Lot Subdivision (if needed) – Department of Finance (DOF)
4. Construction Fence or Sidewalk Shed Permit - DOB
5. Demolition Permit – DOB
6. Certificate of No Harassment (based on location) – HPD
7. Asbestos Abatement Plan approval – DEP
8. Utility Disconnect – Con Edison, National Grid
9. New Building Address Assignment – Borough President Topographical Office, changing to DCP in 2028
10. Certificate of Appropriateness (if in a landmark district or designated) – Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC)
11. Final Design Approval (if located on City Owned Property) – PDC
12. Building and Land Development Services design acceptance (if financially subsidized) – HPD
13. New Building Permit – DOB
14. Site Safety Plan filed with DOB (if more than 7 stories or 75' tall) – DOB
15. Energy Code Plan Review – DOB
16. Boiler Permit – DEP
17. Drilling/Pile driving permit (requirement based on depth and location) – DEP
18. Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) External Partner Program Adjacency review (if within 200' of subway) - MTA
19. Construction Crane Permit (depending on crane size) – DOB
20. Hoist Plan approval and permit – DOB

- 21.** Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Notification (Cranes or structure above 400' or near airports) – FAA
- 22.** Fire Alarm Plan Approval – FDNY
- 23.** Fire Protection Plan – FDNY
- 24.** Site Fire Safety Manager (if required based on building height) – FDNY
- 25.** Auxiliary Radio Communication System (if more than 150' tall) – FDNY
- 26.** Pedestrian Ramp Approval (if located on corner) – DOT
- 27.** Street Opening Permit – DOT Office of Construction Mitigation and Coordination (OCMC)
- 28.** Lane or Sidewalk temporary closure permit – DOT OCMC
- 29.** Vault Plan approval – ConEd National Grid
- 30.** Builders Pavement Plan Approval Variance (if needed) – DOT
- 31.** Sewer System Site Connection Permit – DEP
- 32.** Sewer & Water Main records request – DEP
- 33.** Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (if 20,000 sf soil disturbance or more) – DEP
- 34.** Fire Hydrant water pressure test – DEP
- 35.** Notice to Proceed (if environmental-designation per CEQR ) – Mayor's Office of Environmental Remediation (MOER)
- 36.** Notice of Satisfaction - MOER
- 37.** Street Tree Preservation and Planting Plan – DPR
- 38.** Tree work permit (if required by zoning or proximity to existing trees) – DPR
- 39.** Parkland Construction permit (if adjacent to parkland) – DPR
- 40.** Bathing Establishment permit (if there is a pool in the building) – NYC Health Department (DOH)

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## **Agencies:**

Fire Department of the City of New York  
New York City Board of Standards and Appeals  
New York City Department of Buildings  
New York City Department of City Planning  
New York City Department of Design and Construction  
New York City Department of Environmental Protection  
New York City Department of Finance  
New York City Department of Homeless Services  
New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development  
New York City Department of Parks and Recreation  
New York City Department of Social Services  
New York City Department of Transportation  
New York City Health and Hospitals  
New York City Housing Authority  
New York City Housing Development Corporation  
New York City Human Resources Administration  
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission  
New York City Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination  
New York City Mayor's Office of Environmental Remediation  
New York City Office of Management and Budget  
New York City Public Design Commission

## Organizations:

Abundance NY  
Ailanthus  
AKRF  
Alloy Development  
American Council of Engineering Companies of New York  
American Institute of Architects, New York  
Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development  
Apex Building Group  
Beacon Communities  
Breaking Ground  
Bricks and Mortals  
Bronx Pro Group  
BRP Companies  
CAMBA, Inc.  
Camber Property Group  
Center for Building in North America  
Charney Companies  
Citizens Budget Commission  
Citizens Housing and Planning Council  
Community Access Inc.  
Community Preservation Corporation  
Comunilife  
Curtis Ginsberg Architects  
Dattner Architects  
DCAP Architects  
Devine & Co.  
Douglaston Development  
Enterprise Community Partners  
Environmental Contractors Association  
Fasterhousing.org  
Fifth Avenue Committee  
Fish Plate Development, LLC  
Foxy Development  
Genesis Companies  
Georgica Green Ventures, LLC  
GFP Real Estate  
Gilbane, Inc.  
Gotham Organization  
Habitat for Humanity New York City and Westchester  
HNTB  
Hudson Companies  
iAfford NY  
IMPACCT Brooklyn  
Kalel Companies  
L+M Development Partners  
Langan  
Lemle & Wolff, Inc.  
Lettire Construction  
Mega Contracting  
MGNY Consulting  
Milestone Development, LLC  
MLappin & Associates, LLC  
Monadnock Development  
M Squared  
New Destiny Housing  
New York Building Congress  
New York Housing Conference  
New York State Association for Affordable Housing  
New York Real Estate Chamber  
NRP Group  
NYU Furman Center  
Open New York  
Pembroke Companies  
Pennrose  
Phipps Houses  
Pronto Housing

## **Organizations (continued):**

Real Estate Board of New York

Regional Plan Association

Related Companies

Reside New York

Services for the Underserved

Settlement Housing Fund

Silver Bullet Consulting

Slate Property Group

Supportive Housing Network of New York

Taconic Partners

TF Cornerstone

The Delaine Companies

Tredway

Two Trees Management Company

Urban Homesteading Assistance Board

Urban Builders Collaborative/Lettire Construction

Vanbarton Group

VHB

Volunteers of America-Greater New York

VPH Management

Wavecrest

WXY

Xenolith Partners