

Location Focus: Park Slope (Brooklyn Community District 39)



NYC Civics 101

Please complete this survey before
the presentation if you haven't
already!



Government Positions and What They Do

Mayor, New York State Governor,
Comptroller, City Council Member, Public
advocate, Borough President, District
Attorney

Government Agencies and What They Do

NYPD, Department of Education, Department
of Housing Preservation and Development,
Department of Social Services

How to Stay Informed, Get Involved, and Influence NYC Government

Key Questions

- Who does what in NYC government?
- Why does local government matter for the issues I care about?
- How can I find information online and in-person about events related to the local government issues that I care about?

Goals of this Pilot Program

1. Show that local government affects our lives in many ways that make it relevant beyond the national level.
2. Provide a tour of local government and how you can engage in these areas to solve problems, protect your rights, and increase your level of civic action.
3. Provide some new skills in navigating a complex information environment and using your voice in ways that can have a real impact.
4. Develop a model for civic education that can travel while drawing on the wisdom, institutions, and residents of different NYC communities.
5. Build some community through civic discussions and engagement.

NYC Civics @ Old Stone House

**July
14**

LOCAL GOV 101

Learn how NYC local government works and how residents can influence its decisions.

**July
21**

HOUSING

Understand why housing costs are rising and how residents can shape housing policy and advocate for their interests.

**July
28**

MEDIA LITERACY

Learn how to navigate local news in the age of AI and social media, identify credible information, and avoid misinformation.

**Sept
23**

CAMPAIGNS AND ADVOCACY

Learn how issue campaigns, primaries, and elections work and how to effectively mobilize voters and participate in campaigns.

**Oct
14**

POLICING & PUBLIC SAFETY

Learn what authority NYC has over policing and how residents can advocate for greater police presence or stronger accountability.

**Oct
21**

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

Learn how services – from libraries and sanitation to parks – are funded and how residents can advocate for improvements.

NYC Civics Modules in July

**July
23**

HOUSING

Understand why housing costs are rising and how tenants and residents can shape local housing policy.



**July
28**

HOW TO BE AN INFORMED NYC RESIDENT

This session provides an overview of local news in NYC; equips participants with tools to know misinformation when they see it; and provides some understanding of local information in the AI age.



Does local government matter?

If you have considered questions like...

- Can I afford to stay in NYC?
- Do I have rights to demand heat and repairs in my building?
- Can my landlord evict me?
- Can I demand police patrols to keep my street safe?
- Can the police stop and search me without reason?
- Can I afford childcare?
- Can I get support for my mental and physical health between jobs?
- Is my neighborhood clean? Can I demand services to improve the sanitation of my street?
- Is my child receiving a quality education?
- Can I advocate for local public goods from libraries to after school programs?



Why local government matters

- Local government directly controls the services you use every day.
- Local officials are often more accessible than national or state officials because you can actually reach them (but state reps in NYC are also close by).
- Given low turnout in local elections, your voice, vote, and volunteering time can have real impact.

NYC Civic Mythbusters

Thumbs up = True 

Thumbs down = False 

1. The Mayor controls the subway and its fare increases.
2. NYC controls its schools
3. The mayor can raise taxes on the rich if he wants to.
4. Negligent landlords cannot have their buildings taken away from them.
5. The Mayor can cut funding for the police on his own.
6. Ranked choice voting lets people vote more than one time on election day.
7. NYC services do not rely on federal dollars.
8. Local news is dead.

The Difference Voting Makes: 2025 NYC mayoral candidates



Zohran Mamdani

Democratic socialist platform
centered on affordability; rent
freeze for stabilized tenants



Andrew Cuomo

Centrist platform: crime,
antisemitism, public safety



Curtis Sliwa

Tough-on-crime, right-wing
critic of both opponents

Why Voting in Local Elections Matters

2025 Primary Election for Mayor

The Democratic primary usually determines who becomes mayor. Primary turnout is typically only 20–25% of registered Democrats but reached about 40% in 2025, when Mamdani was elected.

The candidates represented different governing visions and were supported by different coalitions of voters—including many business leaders and higher-income voters on one side and younger, middle and working-class voters on the other.

2021 Comptroller Primary Election

A narrow contest between Brad Lander and Corey Johnson. Lander won by 24,000 votes – a margin of .5% of all registered voters in NYC.

This determined how aggressively corruption was investigated and how to invest NYC's \$250 Billion pension funds.

2018 State Senate Primary Election

Primaries often attract only 10,000–15,000 voters. In 2018, Andrew Gounardes won by just 2,476 votes.

This shifted Senate control, leading to major changes in tenant protections, voting laws, criminal justice, and climate policy.

Why Participation Between Election Matters

- Contact elected officials and the local or state levels
- Report problems on Neighborhood Services through 311
- Attend and speak at public meetings
 - E.g., Community Board meetings; City Council hearings; City Planning Commission hearings; Community Education Council (CEC) meetings; NYPD Precinct Community Council meetings.
- Serve on a Community Board or volunteer for one of its committees
- Join a local organization
 - E.g., Tenant association; Block association; PTA; Neighborhood or advocacy group.
- Volunteer for a political campaign or issue campaign.
- Protest (e.g., BLM protests about police reform, days of action)

When Have NYC Voters Made a Difference Beyond the Ballot Box?

Civic Society Advocating to Protect Library Funding

In 2022, community members – including the libraries themselves – organized rallies, contacted elected officials, testified at hearings, and campaigned against proposed budget cuts.

City Council preserved library funding.

Tenant Activism Impacting State Tenant Policies

Tenant groups built a statewide coalition through years of lobbying and staging protests.

The result was the 2019 Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act, which strengthened rent regulation.

Blocking Amazon in LIC

In 2019, Amazon pulled out of its HQ2 plan in Long Island City.

This followed intense opposition to corporate subsidies from activists, union leaders, and local politicians like Alexandria Ocasio Cortez.

More Ways NYC Voters Have Made a Difference Beyond the Ballot Box?

311 Calls and Initiatives on Heat and Rats

311 allows residents to report neighborhood problems. These reports help city agencies identify where problems are concentrated and prioritize inspections and enforcement.

Impact: 311 rat complaints helped identify infestation hotspots and informed the city's Rat Pack initiative.

Gowanus Development and Affordable Housing

Tenant organizations, Community Board 6, city council, and other organizations advocated for affordable housing.

Impact:

Approximately 950 affordable apartments in Gowanus Green.

- Roughly 2,000 additional affordable units required through the broader rezoning.

The Impact of Activism

Residents, restaurants, and neighborhood organizations successfully advocated to make outdoor dining a permanent part of New York City.

Black Lives Matter protests increased pressure for police reform, contributing to New York's ban on police chokeholds and greater public access to police misconduct records.

What Was Your Last Interaction with NYC Government or NYC Politics?



OR... What Issue You are Facing Involves the NYC Government (But you haven't taken that step)?

NYC Civics Modules in July

**July
21**

HOUSING

Understand why housing costs are rising and how tenants and residents can shape local housing policy.

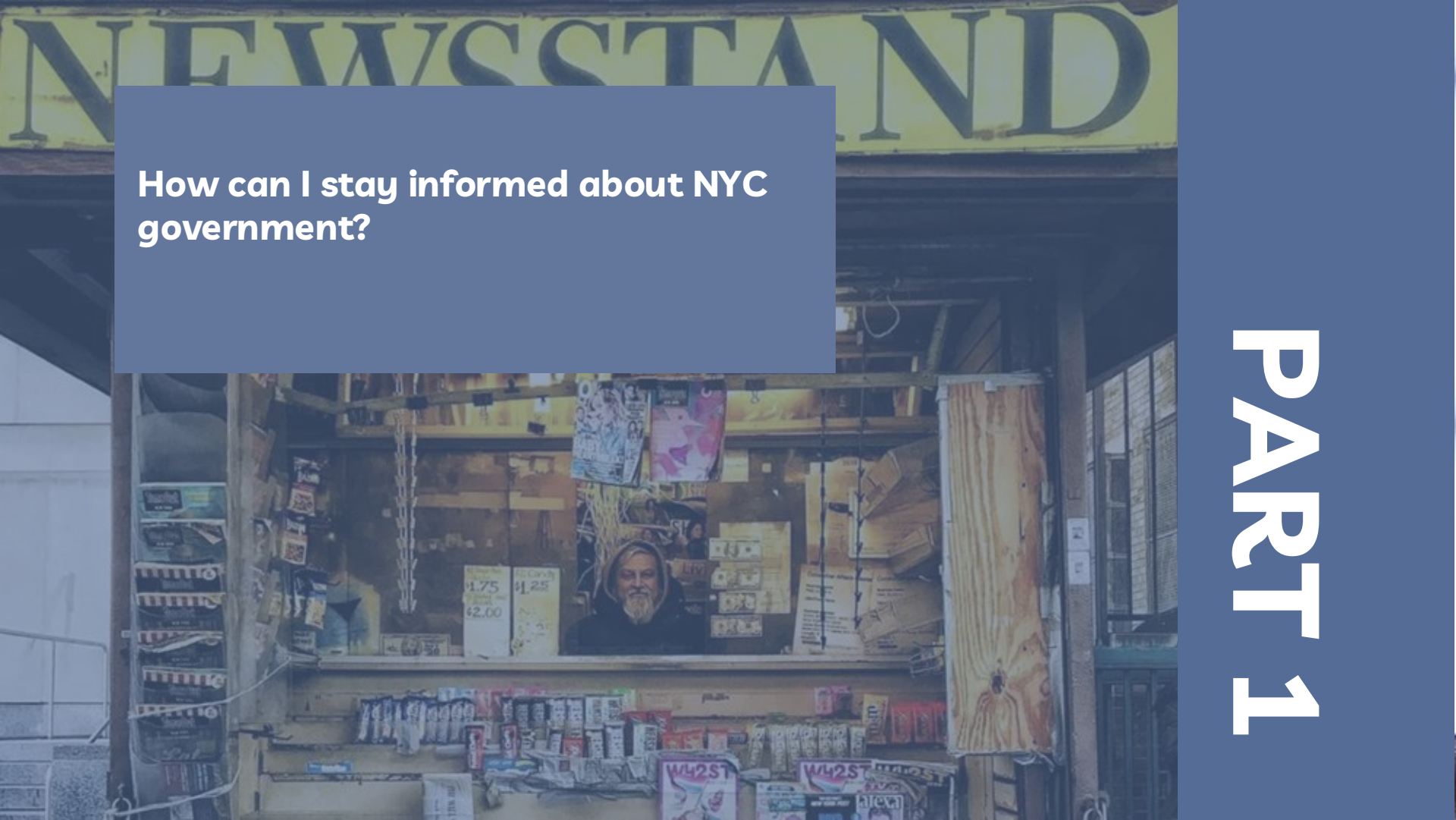


**July
28**

HOW TO BE AN INFORMED NYC RESIDENT

This session provides an overview of local news in NYC; equips participants with tools to know misinformation when they see it; and provides some understanding of local information in the AI age.



A photograph of a newsstand with a man behind the counter. The man has a grey beard and is wearing a dark hoodie. The newsstand is filled with various newspapers and magazines. A large sign above the entrance reads "NEWSSTAND". A blue semi-transparent box is overlaid on the top left of the image, containing the text "How can I stay informed about NYC government?".

How can I stay informed about NYC government?

PART 1

Stay Informed: Local News Outlets Covering NYC (Citywide)

The New York Times

(<https://www.nytimes.com/section/nyregion>)

NYC coverage and investigative reporting on city politics and government decisions alongside national & global coverage

The City

(thecity.nyc)

Nonprofit news reporting on NYC government, housing, schools, and municipal issues with a focus on accountability

Gothamist

(gothamist.com)

Daily digital news site from NY Public Radio - reports on NYC culture and government news with broad city coverage

Hell Gate

(hellgatenyc.com)

Independent “irreverent” reporting on NYC news and city policy

Columbia Spectator

(<https://www.columbiaspectator.com/>)

Student newspaper covering Morningside Heights and West Harlem issues

NY1 & WNYC Radio

(<https://wnyc.org/browse/shows/wnyc-news>)

24-hour local news channel and NYC's public radio station (93.9 FM)

Stay Informed: Local News Outlets Covering Brooklyn

News 12 Brooklyn

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLLI5tv_yVQDNcOeXaEc8haZSdT_c2wCpF&si=wx1WFci2UKtZULj

Branch of News 12 with hyper-local to Brooklyn cable news

Brooklyn Reader

<https://www.bkreader.com/>

Smaller, grassroots digital news outlet with a focus on community and neighborhood news

Brooklyn Paper

<https://www.brooklynpaper.com/>

Covers neighborhood politics, community boards, development projects, crime, schools, and local events.

The City

thecity.nyc

Nonprofit news reporting on NYC government, housing, schools, and municipal issues – including Brooklyn.

Brownstoner

<https://www.brownstoner.com>

Reporting on Brooklyn housing and real estate (development, historic preservation, and neighborhood property trends)

Brooklyn Eagle

<https://brooklyneagle.com/>

Oldest paper in Brooklyn (1841) - Covers local local government, business, real estate, and neighborhood issues

Following Your Reps and Local Officials on Social Media and Sign Up for Their Newsletters

Mayor

IG & Twitter: @NYCMayor
YouTube: @NYCMayorsOffice

City Council

IG & Twitter: @nycouncil

City Council Member (Park Slope)

Shahana Hanif (39th district)
IG & Twitter: @shahanafrombk

Governor

IG & Twitter: @govkathyhochul
(for NYC issues)

State Assembly

IG & Twitter: @nysa_majority
(for NYC issues)

Senator & Assembly Rep

Assembly member: Robert C. Carroll
(@am_robert.carroll)
State Senator: Andrew Gounardes (District
26 @agounardes) and Zellnor Myrie (District
20 @zellnormyrie)

Department-Specific Office Holders (Policing, Housing, Education)

IG & Twitter: @nycschools, @NYCHousing, @nycdsscommr, @nypdpc

What Can You Do with 311?

NYC311 is the non-emergency service that connects residents to city agencies and information



Report Issues

Request service to fix problems like dirty sidewalks, noise, etc

Discover Services

Get help navigating city services like SNAP, trash collection, etc

Check Status

View the latest status of your service requests

[Click here to report problems](#)

[Click here to browse services](#)

What Issues Warrant Calling 311 and What Changes When You Do?



Kathleen-Corradi “rat czar”

Report problems:

- Potholes
- Broken streetlights
- Missed trash collection
- Damaged sidewalks
- Fallen trees
- Tenant complaints

311 complaints are used by government to measure problems and identify high-risk areas

Example: Complaints around rat infestations led to a city-wide effort to combat infestations in the Adams administration.

Government Positions

Who does what in NYC government?

PART 2



Who Has Power in NYC? [Not Exhaustive]

Mayor (Elected)

Borough President (Elected)

**New York State Governor and State
Reps (Elected)**

District Attorney (Elected)

City Council Member (Elected)

Police Commissioner (Appointed)

Comptroller (Elected)

Schools Chancellor (Appointed)

Public Advocate (Elected)

**Department of Housing Preservation and
Development Commissioner (Appointed)**



IG & X (Twitter): @NYCMayor
YouTube: @NYCMayorsOffice
Website: www.nyc.gov/mayor

Mayor

Current: Zohran Mamdani

- Chief executive of NYC (oversees all city agencies)
- Proposes the city budget (~\$100+ billion)
- Appoints commissioners of major agencies (NYPD, Sanitation, Buildings, etc.)
- Sets citywide policy priorities
- Represents the interests of the city and all New Yorkers



Example of Mayoral Power: Affordable Housing

Bloomberg:

- Rezoned Williamsburg/Greenpoint, Downtown Brooklyn, and other areas to advance new developments.

Mamdani:

- Proposed adding new units and preserving existing units using city own land.
- Appointed board members that sets annual increases for rent-stabilized apartments & freeze rent increases

RENT GUIDELINES BOARD

PROPOSED RENT INCREASE

1-YEAR LEASE: 0 TO 2%

2-YEAR LEASE: 0 TO 4%

How can I Engage with the Mayor's Office?



- Vote for mayor in city elections (every 4 years)
- Attend town halls and events related to the Mayor's agenda.
- Join civic groups related to city policies and administration (e.g., Communities United for Police Reform).
- Share your experience directly with city officials through public hearings and listening sessions.

Example of Citizens Reversing a Mayor's Decision by Pressuring City Council and the Mayor



Mayor Eric Adams proposed major cuts to the budgets of the New York Public Library, Brooklyn Public Library, and Queens Public Library. This would reduce hours, classes, and the services offered.

In response, library workers and the community organized rallies, protests, signed petitions, and testified at the City Council budget hearings.

In the end, the City Council made restoring library funding a major budget priority. Negotiations with the Mayor's Office led to the restoration of most of the proposed cuts.

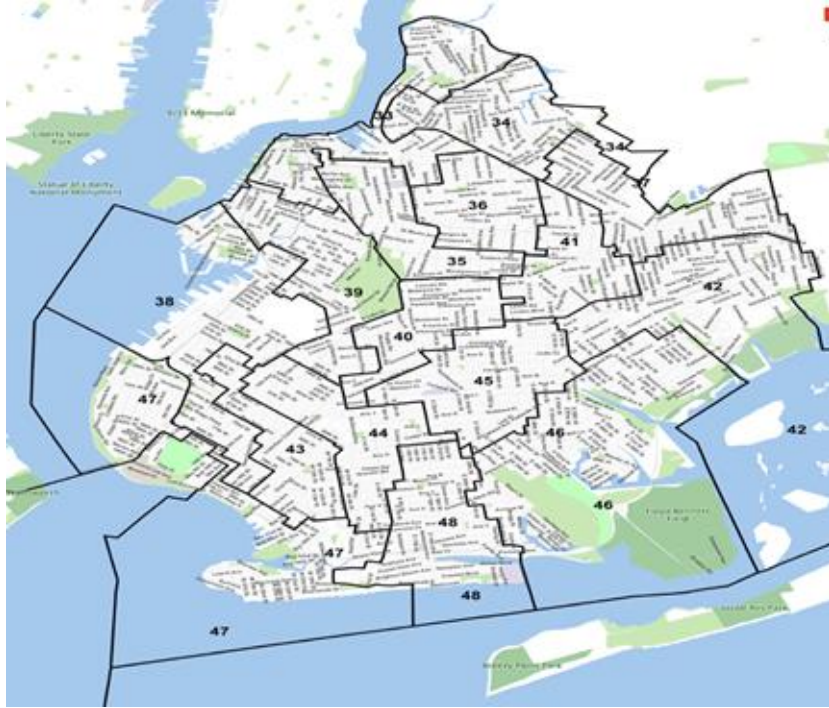


IG & X (Twitter): @NYCCouncil
Website: council.nyc.gov

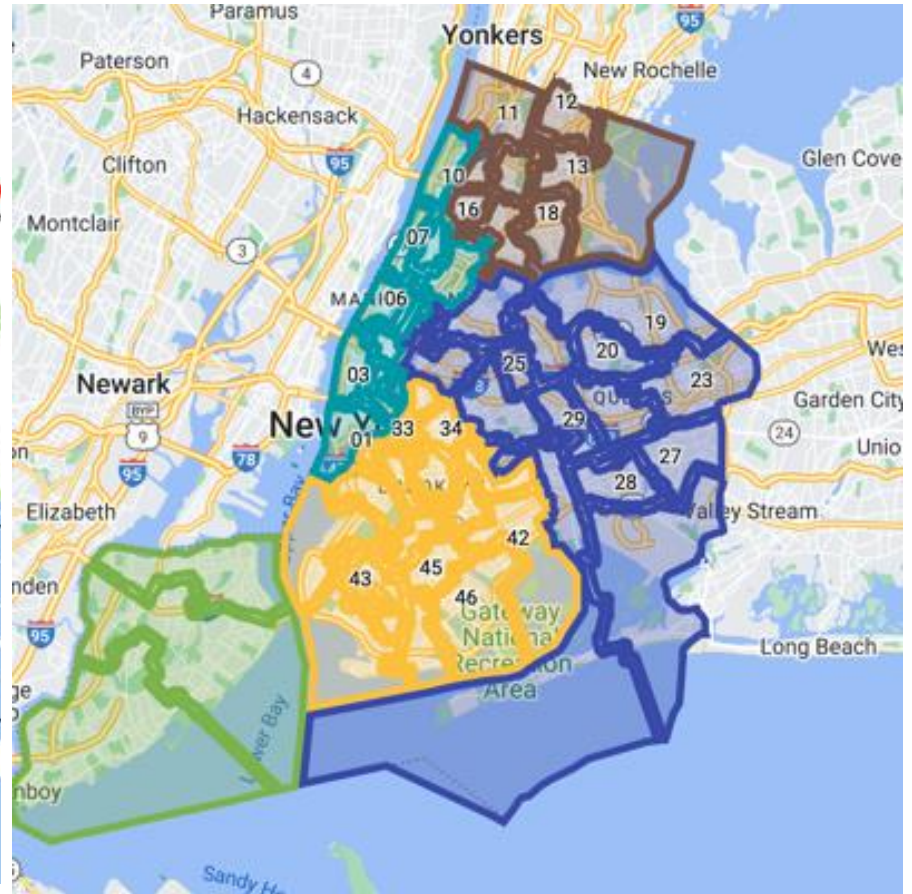
What Does City Council Do?

- Approves the city's annual budget (over \$100 billion), deciding how much funding goes to schools, policing, parks, sanitation, housing, and social services
- Passes local laws that affect housing, public safety, business regulation, and quality of life across NYC.
- Hold oversight hearings that investigate city agencies
- Allocate millions of dollars to neighborhood projects and organizations
- Review major land-use decisions, including rezonings and large development projects through the ULURP process

Who is my city council member?



Brooklyn City Council Map





IG & X (Twitter): @shahanafrombk

What City Council Members Do

Represents district interests at City Hall by advocating for local priorities and introducing legislation.

Helps residents solve problems with city agencies like housing, sanitation, benefits, and street safety.

Holds town halls and meetings to hear directly from residents.

Your City Council Member Serving Constituents (BK)



In 2024, Council Member Shahana Hanif enacted Local Law 45, providing survivors of domestic violence with free lock changes, personal safety alarms, and door and window repairs.

Council Members assist constituents with issues like housing and social welfare, such as addressing landlord violations and demanding repairs.

How can I Engage with my City Council?

- Vote in local elections for city councilor (every 4 years)
- Attend office hours of your local rep.
 - Shahana Hanif: 197 Bond Street, 1st Floor Brooklyn, NY 11217
 - (718) 499-1090
 - Open from 9:00am - 5:00pm
- Attend city council meetings and register complaints.
 - Hearings are also live-streamed on the website
<https://council.nyc.gov/livestream/>





Example of NYC Voters Influencing City Council Decisions

In April 2021, Los Deliveristas Unidos (group of food delivery workers) rallied for increased wages, bathroom access, and protected bike lanes. For third-party app delivery services, workers also wanted to be recognized as employees, which would allow them to join unions.

Impact: Paved the way for a series of City Council laws protecting delivery workers.





IG & X (Twitter): @govkathyhochul
Website: www.governor.ny.gov/

State Government

Governor: Kathy Hochul

- NY State Controls state budget (provides 30-40% of NYC's revenue)
- Approves tax increases (e.g., rejected income tax increase on high earners)
- Appoints the MTA Chair and nominates the majority of the MTA Board members.
- Can override NYC laws and policies through state legislation
- Declares states of emergency (COVID, weather) that supersedes Mayor

State-City Cooperation

When the Mayor Gets the Governor to Cooperate

- Mayor Mamdani's proposal of placing a tax on second homes was supported by Governor Hochul. In May of 2026, New York State lawmakers passed this pied-a-terre (secondary residence) tax for homes valued at \$5 million or more.
- The universal child care initiative for 2-year olds has been supported by both Mayor Mamdani and Governor Hochul to provide free childcare for all two-year-olds.
- Mayor Mamdani and Governor Hochul support congestion pricing, which charges vehicles \$9 to enter Manhattan below 60th St.

When the Governor Blocks the Mayor's Agenda

- One of Mayor Mamdani's campaign promises was the creation of free and fast buses, but Governor Hochul has not supported this plan so far, stating, "Not at this time."
- Rejected Mamdani's plan to increase local income taxes on the wealthy.
- Under Mayor Bloomberg, the state blocked congestion pricing in NYC.

City vs. State Power

City (Mayor + City Council)

Governor + State Legislature

- Provides daily services (trash, parks, libraries)
- Runs city agencies (NYPD, FDNY, Dep of Education, Parks)
- Controls zoning and land use.
- Adopts the city budget

- Homelessness (city services + state funding)
- Public schools (NYC administration + state funding and follows state rules)
- Housing Development (Mix of local and state laws and tax incentives)

- Authorizes new NYC taxes and sets limits on local taxation.
- Controls transit fares (MTA)
- Sets most housing laws (rent rules, tenant protections)
- Legalizes or regulates drugs
- Sets minimum wage.
- Makes state criminal and election laws.

How can I Engage with NY State Government?



Assemblymember Robert Carroll

- **VOTE!**
 - Governor, State Senator, State Assembly Member
- Email or attend office hours
 - State Assemblymember Robert Carroll:
CarrollR@nyassembly.gov - 416 Seventh Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11215
 - State Senator Andrew Gounardes:
gounardes@nysenate.gov - 497 Carroll St Suite 31
Brooklyn, NY 11215
 - Pressure lawmakers to support a bill by sharing
your personal story and perspective
- Pressure state reps to prioritize NYC issues and concerns

Who has the authority to do something about this?

Mayor, City Council, the State, All of the above, or something else?

Scenario 1

NYC public schools need more funding. The mayor proposes raising taxes on high-income New Yorkers to pay for it. **Who needs to approve this?**

Scenario 3

There is too much traffic and pollution in midtown Manhattan. The mayor calls for a new toll to disincentivize driving. **Who has authority?**

Scenario 2

Your apartment has a leak in the ceiling and holes in the walls. Your landlord refused to pay for repairs for over a year. **You are ready to file a complaint.**

Scenario 4

ICE agents arrest a neighbor outside their apartment building. Residents want to respond. **Who can they turn to?**



IG & X (Twitter): @MarkLevineNYC

Website: comptroller.nyc.gov

Comptroller

Current: Mark Levine

- NYC's chief financial officer and corruption "watchdog"
- Audits city agencies to expose waste, fraud, and mismanagement
- Audits city contracts (~ \$40 million)
- Manages public pension funds (~\$250 billion) and decides how to invest it.
- Issues reports on city financial health

Three top candidates from the 2025 NYC comptroller election



Mark Levine

Democrat – affordable housing via pension funds, defending city finances from federal cuts, restoring trust in government.



Justin Brannan

Democrat – universal free childcare, divestment from Tesla, more spending to protect low-income New Yorkers



Peter Kefalas

Republican – fiscal conservatism and restraint on city spending

Consulate at Heart of Adams Case Got Special Treatment, Review Finds

The Turkish Consulate was the only building of its size allowed to open without a required fire safety certification, an investigation by the city comptroller found.

Listen · 5:07 min

Share full article



Example of Comptroller Power: Exposing Corruption

In 2024, then-Comptroller Brad Lander's office conducted audits of Mayor Eric Adams' administration and found serious financial irregularities.

He found that there were hundreds of office buildings that were never certified as safe. The Mayor had pressured the Fire Department to approve a Turkish consulate building, despite safety violations, in exchange for illegal campaign contributions and luxury travel from Turkish officials worth \$100,000.



IG: [@nycpublicadvocate](https://www.instagram.com/nycpublicadvocate)

X(Twitter): [@JumaaneWilliams](https://twitter.com/JumaaneWilliams)

Website: <https://advocate.nyc.gov/>

Public Advocate

Current: Juumane Williams

- Citywide *ombudsman* (impartial referee) = helps residents navigate city bureaucracy (e.g., landlord abuse)
- Conducts investigations and releases reports highlighting problems and recommendations.
- Can introduce and co-sponsor legislation in the City Council, but cannot vote on it.
- Runs investigations.
- Has a platform to raise awareness.
- First in line of succession if Mayor can't serve (legacy of the City Council

Example of Public Advocate Power



Public Advocate publishes the annual “**Worst Landlord Watchlist**” a data-driven report used to publicly shame negligent building owners and equip tenant unions with the evidence needed to demand repairs and sue for safer living conditions.

After being named the 2022-2023 Worst Landlord, Daniel Ohebshalom was sent to jail twice for failing to make the proper repairs, serving time on Rikers Island.

Three of the most negligent landlords on this list were charged over \$33 million in penalties this year.

How can I Engage with my Public Advocate?

- File a complaint with the Public Advocate if a city agency isn't responding.
- Join campaigns highlighted by the Public Advocate's office (e.g., Worst Landlords).
- Organize neighbors or tenant groups around issues the office is spotlighting
 - Tenants and Neighbors: grassroots organization that provides organizing support and technical assistance to tenants who want to organize campaigns to keep their building affordable
 - Met Council on Housing: tenants' rights membership organization that offers tenants' rights telephone hotline and a free walk-in clinic



5 minute Break: Meet Your Neighbors



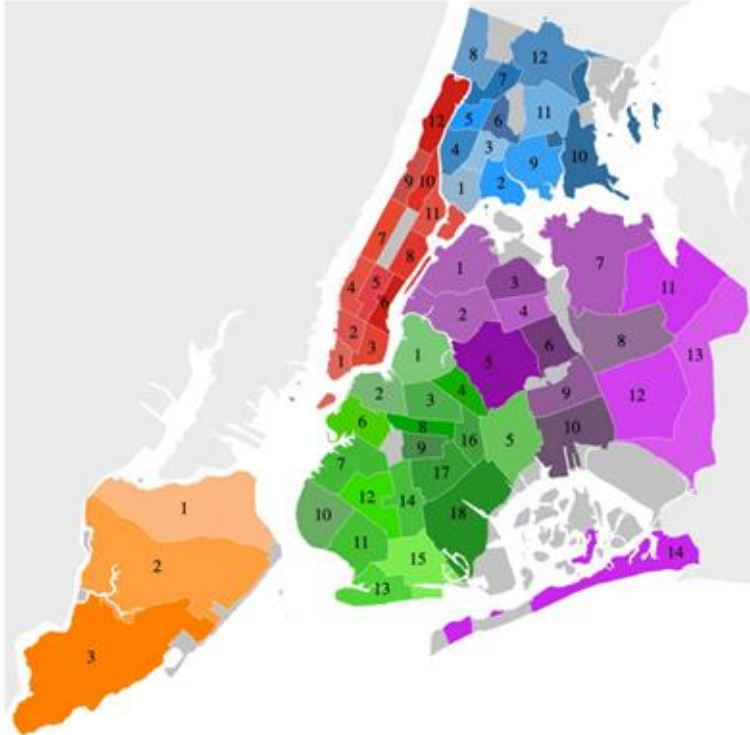
Ice Breaker: What do you look for in a comptroller

New York City Community Districts

by Fitnr

The following is a map of the community districts in the five boroughs of New York City. Each community district board advises on how land in their district is developed, provides input on the city budgeting process, and manages the delivery of services to their community.

Primary Source:



Borough Presidents of NYC:

Manhattan- Brad Hoylman-Sigal (D)

The Bronx- Vanessa L Gibson (D)

Brooklyn- Antonio Reynoso (D)

Queens- Donovan Richards (D)

Staten Island- Vito Fossella (R)



IG & X (Twitter): @reynoso.brooklyn
Website: brooklynbp.nyc.gov

Borough President

Example: Antonio Reynoso

The Borough President serves primarily as an advocate, with these duties:

- Appoints Community Board members and one member of the City Planning Commission.
- Holds public hearings and advocates for borough residents.
- Advocates for borough priorities during the city budget process.
- Reviews land use applications with advisory power
- Reviews major land-use and affordable housing proposals, with an expanded advisory role under the 2025 Charter reforms

Example of Borough President Influence



Borough presidents can affect the land-use and zoning review process and control a portion of the city budget.

In 2023, Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso launched “The Comprehensive Plan for Brooklyn” to address the housing and public health crises. This was the first borough-specific large-scale planning effort ever in NYC and a model for planning citywide.

This means that when developers try to pass rezonings that lack affordable housing or don’t match the plan’s equity goals, Reynoso uses his official land-use power to recommend denial



Brooklyn Community Board 6

Includes Park Slope, Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill, Gowanus, Red Hook and Columbia St Waterfront

IG: @bkcb6

Website: brooklyncb6.cityofnewyork.us/

Community Boards

59 local boards across NYC

Members are volunteer residents appointed by the Borough President and City Council.

Primary Forum for Concerns

The first place residents raise issues about housing, traffic, sanitation, parks, and nightlife.

Development Review

Review housing proposals and make recommendations on zoning and construction.

Neighborhood Feedback

Provide critical feedback on schools, public safety, and local services.

How can I Engage with Community Boards?

- Apply to become a Community Board member!
- Attend Borough Board meetings (representatives from all Community Boards in each borough)
 - Monthly board meetings (you can also join via Zoom)
 - Remaining 2026 Dates: July 16th; August 20th; September 17th; October 15th; November 19th; December 17th
- Attend monthly Community Board meetings
- Speak during public comment
- Join a committee (housing, transportation, parks, etc.)
 - Apply through Borough President's office

Examples of Citizens Making Change Through Community Boards



Community boards can influence bike lanes and street redesigns. Residents can testify to community boards to push for increased street safety, more bike lanes, or changing street designs.



In 2024, residents and restaurant owners testified before Community Boards about outdoor dining setups. They influenced decisions about roadway dining locations, when structures should be removed, and the city's new dining program.



X(Twitter) and IG: @brooklyndaoffice
Website: <https://brooklynda.org/>

Brooklyn District Attorney

Current: Eric Gonzalez

- Elected to 4-year terms
(Independent from NYPD)
- Prosecutes criminal cases in
Brooklyn
- Sets prosecution priorities.
- Decides which cases to charge
- Investigates public corruption
- Established the Post-Conviction
Justice Unit to overturn wrongful
convictions.

Example of District Attorney Power



Policy & Prosecution Priorities

Manhattan DA Alvin Bragg's policy on subway fare evasion is to no longer prosecute it as a standalone criminal charge. He also no longer prosecutes misdemeanor marijuana possession and sales.



Major Convictions & Authority

In 2022, Manhattan DA Alvin Bragg secured the conviction of former Trump Organization CFO Allen Weisselberg on tax fraud charges, demonstrating the DA's authority to investigate and prosecute financial crimes committed in Manhattan.

How can I Engage with the District Attorney?

- Vote in elections for DA
- Organize community to push DA on prosecution priorities
- Attend a Community Advisory Council meeting to share information and observations (particularly about crimes that are underreported to the police because of language barriers or immigration concerns)
- Submit complaints or information about fraud, misconduct, or bias in NYC or NYC government to the DA's office.



5 minute Break: Talk to Your Neighbors



Ice Breaker: Would you join a community board? Why or Why not?

Who Runs NYC Government Departments?

PART 3





**Department of
Education**



**Department of
Housing Preservation
& Development**



**Department of
Social Services**

Human Resources
Administration

Department of
Homeless Services



IG & X (Twitter): @NYCHousing
Website: nyc.gov/site/hpd/index.page

Housing Commissioner

Current: Dina Levy

- Appointed by mayor
- Enforces housing quality standards (heat, hot water, repairs)
- Inspects apartments for code violations
- Takes legal action against bad landlords and can take over buildings in extreme cases.
- Develops and preserves affordable housing

Note: NYC public housing and section 8 is run by a separate agency (NYCHA) overseen by a mayor-appointed board.

Example of Housing Commissioner Power



Mayor Zohran Mamdani directed HPD and other city agencies to hold "Rental Ripoff" hearings in all five boroughs during the administration's first 100 days.

HPD used this testimony to identify common patterns of abuse and develop new enforcement priorities and policy recommendations. The administration committed to publishing a report based on what residents shared.

How can I Engage with the Housing Preservation and Development Department?

- Attend HPD [housing workshops](#) (free, teaches about tenant rights and how to file complaints)
- Call 311 with a complaint to trigger an HPD inspection on your building/landlord.
- Organise building-wide with multiple tenants
- Request Emergency Repair Program for ignored repair requests.
 - 1) Report the emergency with 311
 - 2) HPD will inspect the violation and give the landlord a timeframe
 - 3) If the landlord does not fix it, ERP allows the HPD to fix it and bill it to the landlord
 - hpderp@hpd.nyc.gov

Example of Tenants Organizing to Change Housing Policy

Brooklyn - Flatbush Gardens



- In 2026, Residents reported mold, leaks, pests, and unsafe conditions.
- Over 2,000 tenants formed the United Tenants of Flatbush Gardens.
- Organized rallies, media campaigns, and partnered with legal aid.
- Won a pause on 300+ eviction cases while disputes were reviewed.
- Demonstrated how collective action can pressure landlords and government.



DSS Commissioner

Current: Erin Dalton

- Appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council
- Oversees HRA (Human Resources Administration) and DHS (Department of Homeless Services)
- Administers SNAP, cash assistance, rental assistance, and Medicaid enrollment
- Operates NYC's homeless shelter system (50,000 housed nightly)
- Connects New Yorkers to benefits and social services
- Investigates benefit fraud while ensuring eligible residents receive assistance

IG & Twitter: @nycdsscommr

How can I Engage with the Department of Social Services?

- Apply for benefits (SNAP benefits, disability access, healthcare, temporary emergency shelter) through [ACCESS HRA](#) (Human Resources Administration)
- If HRA not responding, call your Council Member or Public Advocate
- File complaint with Public Advocate if DSS not providing service
- Get help from free advocates:
 - Legal Aid Society - nonprofit that gives free legal representation to low-income New Yorkers on issues including disability/health, homelessness, domestic violence, etc
 - Urban Justice Center - nonprofit legal services serving New York's poverty stricken and minority populations that protects New Yorkers' access to public services

Example of Organizing to Make Change: Right to Shelter



In 2023, hundreds of protesters called for the protection of the Right to Shelter laws in NYC.

This mandate guarantees emergency housing to anyone who asks, but Mayor Eric Adams and Governor Kathy Hochul proposed suspending this policy.

Protesters demanded that the city provide shelter to any New Yorker in need. These laws are still in place today.



IG & X (Twitter): @nypdpc
Website: [nyc.gov/site/nypd/index.page](https://www.nyc.gov/site/nypd/index.page)

Police Commissioner

Current: Jessica S. Tisch

- Appointed by mayor (Commissioner Tisch was appointed by Eric Adams)
- Police Commissioner runs the entire NYPD (36,000+ officers & 78 Precincts)
- Sets policing policies and priorities (e.g., stop and frisk vs community policing).
- Manages NYPD's ~\$6 billion budget
- Appoints the Chief of Police and precinct commanding officers.
- Disciplines officers (or doesn't)

Example of Police Commissioner Power



Commissioner Tisch wanted to increase collaboration between NYPD units by giving cops more flexibility to operate outside of their normal precinct boundaries.

This method of specific policing sends in 650 additional officers to target neighborhoods.

How can I Engage with the NYPD?

- Attend precinct community council meetings to raise neighborhood safety concerns directly with precinct leadership
 - Bring neighbors so that your issue is too big to ignore!
- Meet with the precinct commanding officer to flag a specific, ongoing issue in your block or building.
- File a complaint with the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) if you experience or witness police misconduct.
- Learn more through the Citizens Police Academy: a 6-week program where community members get a behind-the-scenes look at NYPD policies and operations to understand how decisions get made.



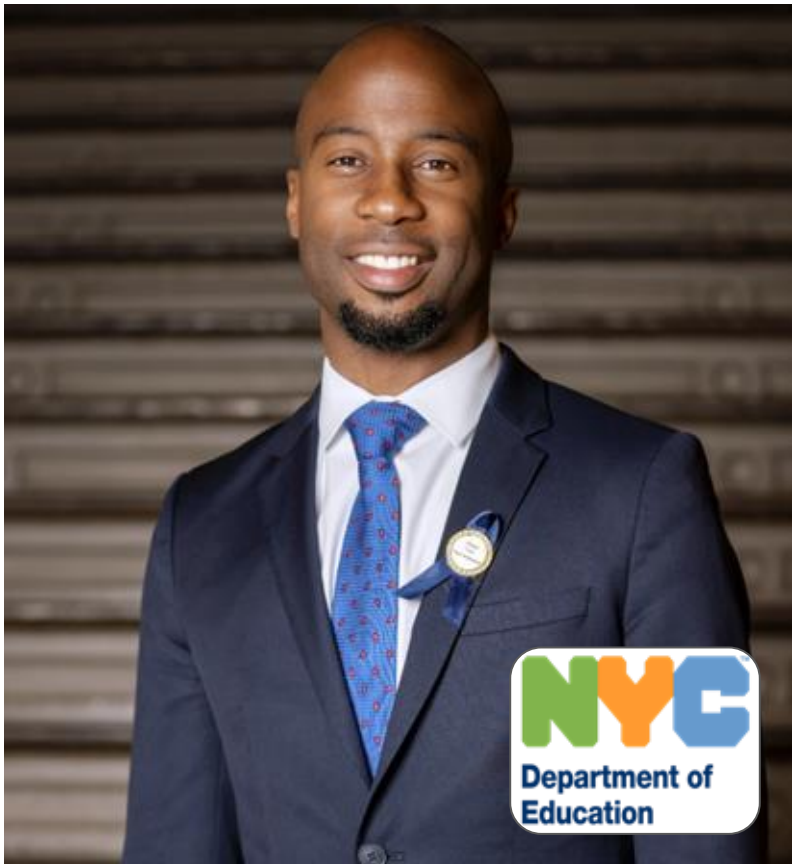
Example of Citizens Making Change to Policing



Following the 2020 Black Lives Matter Protests, the practice of **kettling** became heavily criticized.

Kettling is when police officers form a tight border around a group of protesters, trapping them to then pepper spray or arrest them.

People organized and protested against this tactic, calling to reform policing rules surrounding protests. In a 2023 legal settlement, kettling was banned and policy reforms were made to reduce police presence at protests and require de-escalation methods.



Schools Chancellor

Current: Kamar Samuels

- Appointed by the Mayor (Commissioner Samuels was appointed by Mamdani)
- Runs entire NYC public school system (1,800+ schools, 1 million students)
- Hires and fires principals
- Sets education policy and curriculum
- Decides school admissions policies, calendar, health protocols
- Answers only to the Mayor (no elected school board in NYC)

IG & X (Twitter): @nycschools

Website: schools.nyc.gov

Examples: Schools Chancellor Impact

2025: Cell Phone Prohibition



Chancellor **Melissa Aviles-Ramos** prohibited student cell phone use during school hours.

This unilateral policy affected over one million students without requiring a City Council vote.

2023: Citywide Literacy Reform



Chancellor **David Banks** mandated a citywide elementary reading curriculum based on the "science of reading."

Resulted in new training for thousands of teachers and updated materials for hundreds of thousands of students.

How can I Engage with the Education Department?

- Attend PEP (Panel for Educational Policy) meetings and testify during public comment.
 - PEP votes on major policies like school closures and budget allocations. Testifying puts pressure on members before a vote and creates a public record of community opposition or support.
- Organize Through Your PTA or School Leadership Team to influence school spending and programming.
- Contact your City Council Member to pressure the DOE if a serious problem isn't being addressed at the school level.
- Join advocacy groups that can amplify your cause:
 - [Advocates for Children of New York](#) – helps families fight for students being denied services or rights.
 - [EdTrust-New York](#) – connects local school issues to statewide policy fights on funding and opportunity gaps.

Example of Citizens Making Change in Local Education

This past year, Schools Chancellor Kamar Samuels announced a proposal to open an AI-themed high school, which would have closed and relocated several middle schools to make room.

Parents, students, and educators protested and testified to the Panel for Education Policy with a petition of over 2,200 signatures.

On April 29, parents, students, and educators testified to the Panel for Education Policy for seven hours against the role of AI and big tech in schools.

Impact: this proposal was voted down.



Review: Who Makes Decisions for NYC?



Mayor

Chief Executive Officer of NYC, responsible for city services and police.

City Council

The legislative body; passes laws and approves the city budget.

Commissioners & Department Heads

Heads of specific city departments like NYPD, FDNY, and Sanitation.

Comptroller

The chief financial officer; monitors city spending and audits agencies.

State Government

Governor and State Legislature have authority over many NYC matters.

What Can You Do In These Scenarios?

Scenario 1: Heat in your building has not been working for 6 weeks during the winter. Your landlord has ignored your calls for a month. What would you do first? Who else could help?

Scenario 2: Your landlord threatens to report an immigrant tenant to ICE unless they move out in two weeks. Who would you contact? What can you do?

Scenario 3: There has been open-air drug dealing and repeated assaults on your block for six months. You and your neighbors feel unsafe. What can residents do? What can NYC do?



What's Next



NYC Civics Modules in July

**July
23**

HOUSING

Understand why housing costs are rising and how tenants and residents can shape local housing policy.



**July
28**

HOW TO BE AN INFORMED NYC RESIDENT

This session provides an overview of local news in NYC; equips participants with tools to know misinformation when they see it; and provides some understanding of local information in the AI age.



Action Items Before We Meet Again !

- Follow your reps and agency chiefs on social media (See SM handles below) and/or follow their weekly/monthly newsletters (Available on their websites)
- Subscribe to a new local news source or follow it on social media (see above!)
- Please complete the survey I will send to you shortly if you have not already.
- Make a plan to attend a civic event.
- RSVP for the remaining sessions
 - Through the Old Stone House Evite:
 - Or directly through the organizer through the civics page:
- Get coffee with your neighbors and discuss local issues.
- Tell your friends about what you learned today. Bring them with you for the housing session on July 21 at 7pm!
- Share our next IG post on Housing and comment on the one for the session you attended if you like.

Contact Info (Brooklyn)

- **Mayor:** IG & X (Twitter): @NYCMayor - YouTube: @NYCMayorsOffice - Website: nyc.gov/mayor (send message via website)
- **City council:** IG & X (Twitter): @NYCCouncil - Website: council.nyc.gov - correspondence@council.nyc.gov
 - Shahana Hanif (City Council Member) - IG & X (Twitter): @shahanafrombk - (718) 499-1090 - District39@council.nyc.gov
- **Governor:** IG & X (Twitter): @govkathyhochul - Website: governor.ny.gov/ (send message via website) - (518) 474-8390
- **Comptroller:** IG & X (Twitter): @MarkLevineNYC - Website: comptroller.nyc.gov
- **Public Advocate:** IG: @nycpublicadvocate - X (Twitter): @JumaaneWilliams - Website: advocate.nyc.gov/
- **Brooklyn Borough President:** IG & X (Twitter): @reynoso.brooklyn - Website: brooklynbp.nyc.gov/ - (718) 802 – 3700 - AskReynoso@brooklynbp.nyc.gov
- **BK Community Board 6:** IG: @bkcb6 - Website: brooklyncb6.cityofnewyork.us/ - info@bkcb6.org - (718) 643-3027
- **Brooklyn District Attorney:** IG & X(Twitter): @brooklyndaooffice - Website: brooklynda.org/ - 718-250-2340 - DAAction@Brooklynda.org
- **Police Commissioner:** IG & X (Twitter): @nypdpcc - Website: nyc.gov/site/nypd/index.page
- **Schools Chancellor:** IG & X (Twitter): @nycschools - Website: schools.nyc.gov
- **Housing Commissioner:** IG & X (Twitter): @NYCHousing - Website: nyc.gov/site/hpd/index.page
- **Social Services Commissioner:** IG & X(Twitter): @nycdsscommr - nyc.gov/site/dss/index.page - Email via this [link](#)

Q&A



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