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THIS WEEK IN NEW YORK

COVERING NEW YORK & CITY GOVERNMENT

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"Obstacles don't define us. Rather, it is the unparalleled courage and character of us that defines us as a people. So my confidence in the future is steeped in our glorious past - in the face of adversity, we always persist. We persevere, we prevail." Governor Kathy Hochul

In The News-New York State



Traffic Down, Business Up: Governor Hochul Highlights Progress Under NY's Congestion Pricing Program

Governor Kathy Hochul today joined business leaders, transit advocates, and elected officials to "highlight ongoing progress" under New York's congestion pricing program. In the months since congestion pricing took effect, traffic is down and business is up, providing benefits for commuters across the New York metro area and for businesses and offices in Manhattan's Central Business District (CBD).

"Since congestion pricing took effect over two months ago, traffic is down and business is up – and that's the kind of progress we're going to keep delivering for New Yorkers," Governor Hochul said. "Every day, more New Yorkers are seeing and hearing the benefits for our commutes, quality of life, and economy – and we're not going back."

According to MTA CEO and Chair Janno Lieber, since the congestion pricing program took effect on January 5th, it has delivered a wide array of benefits according to data from the MTA and other reports and studies from business groups and other data sources:

Traffic

- Traffic is down 11 percent in the CBD in February compared to the same time last year.
- Three million fewer vehicles entered the CBD in January and February compared to the same time last year.
- Traffic is moving up to 30 percent faster on bridge and tunnel crossings in February compared to the same time last year.
- Commuters saving up to 21 minutes per trip into the CBD.
- Bus service is faster throughout the CBD, with up to 23 percent customer trips on express buses delayed 10 minutes or more.
- Complaints about excessive car horn honking within the CBD were down by more than 70 percent in January and February compared to the same time last year.

Business

- Broadway show attendance was up 19 percent in January and February compared to the same time last year.
- Restaurant reservations in the CBD rose 5 percent from January to mid-March compared to the same time last year.
- Retail sales in the CBD are on track to be \$900 million higher in 2025 compared to last year.
- Workers coming to the office in the CBD on an average weekday increased 6.6 percent in February compared to the same time last year.

Transit Ridership

- Transit ridership in January and February 2025 has grown significantly compared to the same time last year.
- Bus ridership is up 9 percent.
- Subway ridership is up 6 percent.
- Long Island Rail Road ridership is up 8 percent.
- Metro-North Railroad ridership is up 4 percent.



New York Court of Appeals Strikes Down Noncitizen Voting Law for Municipal Elections

The New York Court of Appeals on Thursday struck down New York City's law that granted certain noncitizens the right to vote in municipal elections.

"It is plain from the language and restrictions contained in [the state constitution] that 'citizen' is not meant as a floor, but as a condition of voter eligibility: the franchise extends only to citizens whose right to vote is established by proper proofs," Chief Judge Rowan Wilson wrote for the majority in a 6-1 decision.

The law aimed to grant approximately 800,000 legal non-citizen residents the right to vote in municipal elections (including mayoral races) provided they met one of three criteria: (1) they had lived in New York City for at least 30 consecutive days, (2) are a "lawful permanent resident or authorized to work in the United States," or (3) "meets all qualifications for registering or preregistering to vote under the election law, except for possessing United States citizenship, and who has registered or preregistered to vote with the board of elections in the city of New York under this chapter."

The local law, passed by the New York City Council in December 2021, took effect on January 8, 2022.

Legal challenges that followed have focused on language in the State Constitution that provides "every citizen shall be entitled to vote at every election for all officers elected by the people."

A state Supreme Court judge in Staten Island ruled against the City Council in 2022, as did an appellate court last year. The City Council then appealed to the state's highest court.

“In a major victory for common sense, the New York State Conservative Party and other clear-eyed plaintiffs just succeeded in their legal effort to prohibit non-citizen voting in New York City,” according to New York State Conservative Party Chairman Gerard Kassar. “This historic 6-1 Court of Appeals decision is a win for every citizen of New York State. The fact that the case was overwhelmingly decided by a left-of-center court reflects on just how fundamental this suit was to U.S. democracy.”

Both the City Law Department and Council Speaker Adrienne Adams indicated that they respect the court’s decision.

“The highest court in New York State has spoken. We respect the court’s ruling,” said Nicholas Paolucci, a spokesperson for the city Law Department in published reports.

In a statement, City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams said that while the Council also respected the ruling, “we disagree that the State Constitution bars municipalities from expanding the local franchise to noncitizens as noted by Justice Rivera in her dissent.”

In The News-New York City



NYC Office of the Mayor

Mayor Adams Appoints Randy Mastro As First Deputy Mayor

New York City Mayor Eric Adams yesterday announced the appointment of Randy Mastro as first deputy mayor. The announcement follows the recent appointment of senior leadership positions, rounding out Mayor Adams' City Hall senior leadership team.

“Randy Mastro joins the team as we work to double down on all we have delivered for New Yorkers,” said Mayor Adams. “Randy is a storied and impressive New Yorker with a track record of success in the face of some of the city and nation's most challenging times. I, and the whole team, welcome Randy to our administration and look forward to working side-by-side with him as we continue to lead the city forward and make New York City a safer, more affordable city that is the best place to raise a family.”

Mastro’s professional career includes public service as deputy mayor for operations and chief of staff to former Mayor Rudy Giuliani (1994 to 1998). In addition, from 1985 to 1989, Mastro served as assistant U.S. attorney and deputy chief of the Civil Division in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, where he specialized in organized crime cases.

From 2016 until earlier this year, Mastro served as chair of the Citizens Union. He previously served as former vice chair of The Legal Aid Society and as a former board member of The City University of New York, the YMCA, Sanctuary for Families, the Children's Museum of Manhattan, Hale House, and the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School.

Mastro has also taught as an adjunct professor at the University of Pennsylvania Law School and at Fordham Law School. He has authored and co-authored articles in the Fordham Law Review, the Federal Communications Law Journal, the University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform, and the Seton Hall Law Review, among others. He has a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Yale University and received his Juris Doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania.



Comptroller DiNapoli: NYC's Solid Housing Growth at Risk As Permits Fall

New York City's efforts to address its housing shortage have led to a growth in supply that outpaced that of the state, but a drop in permits suggests slower growth, according to [a report released](#) by State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli. The report examines where new housing has been concentrated since 2010 and implications for growth in other areas under the "City of Yes" initiative and the creation of the 485-x affordable housing program.

The city gained 307,000 housing units from 2010 through 2023, an increase of 9%, bringing the total to over 3.7 million. Brooklyn gained the most over that time, with 11.4% growth to reach 1.1 million units or 30% of housing citywide. Housing increases were often concentrated in specific areas like northeastern Brooklyn (Williamsburg, Greenpoint), Manhattan's Midtown West, and along the East River in Queens. The neighborhoods with the greatest increase in housing over those 14 years were in Queens (Long Island City, Sunnyside and Woodside) with nearly 42% more housing units and Brooklyn (Downtown, Fort Greene) with over 38% more units.

While growth in the city was faster than statewide growth (6.5%) and metropolitan area growth (7.4%), it lagged the nation's overall 10.3% rate of housing growth.

Growth spiked in 2023, with 30,170 units added citywide. Nearly 93% of 2023's growth was from new construction, with the largest share in new buildings with 100 or more units. The Bronx had the greatest share of 2023's net new housing (35%), driven by new construction that was likely a combination of rezoning, available land on the Harlem River and special districts, just above Brooklyn's 34%.

Based on recent data from the Department of City Planning, housing continued to grow at a fast pace in 2024, with a new record of 37,690 net new units to reach 3.76 million total housing units, a 1% increase over 2023. Comptroller DiNapoli indicated that the recent acceleration in new housing reflects, in part, a surge in permits before the 2022 expiration of the 421-a tax abatement program for affordable housing construction.

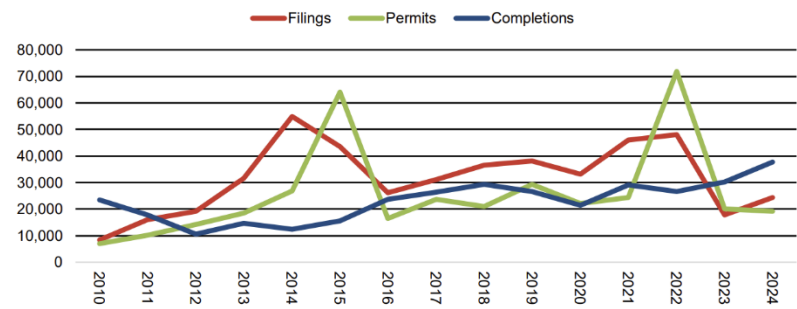
In addition, he noted that applications for abatements and construction permits fell steeply in 2023. Brooklyn continued to lead the boroughs in number of permitted housing units as of 2024, partially due to rezoning initiatives that may have also influenced activity in the Bronx.

As of last year, there were 51,714 units of housing approved and awaiting permits with 98,502 more permitted for construction. This is equivalent to nearly 3% of the current housing stock and could signal a few more years of strong annual growth. Growth in housing remains uncertain beyond the next few years, however, due to the decline in filings, and the risk of federal funding cuts.

Much of the upcoming development is expected to take place in Brooklyn, given its high number of permits compared to other boroughs. However, rezoning initiatives and broader development choices allowed by the “City of Yes” may shift development toward newly upzoned areas of the city and encourage a greater variety of development in a larger number of neighborhoods, as contextualized development is encouraged.

Comptroller DiNapoli’s report encourages city and state leaders to examine the city’s housing database closely to assess whether housing units are being added to the neighborhoods that most need them and to review changes in neighborhoods after rezoning.

FIGURE 9
Number of Housing Units From Filings, Permits and Completions in New York City



Sources: New York City Department of City Planning, Housing Database, Project Files; OSC analysis

Briefs

Governor Hochul Announces Loan Repayment Program Expansion to Mental Health Practitioners Serving Children and Youth

Governor Kathy Hochul this week announced an expansion of the Community Mental Health Loan Repayment Program to include licensed professionals serving children and adolescents at programs licensed or funded by the state.

Administered by the state Office of Mental Health (OMH), in partnership with the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the funding will provide at least 400 awards of up to \$30,000 to help mental health professionals serving youth repay education loans and student debt, provided they work a minimum of three years at eligible mental health programs.

The Community Mental Health Loan Repayment Program provides up to \$120,000 for psychiatrists and \$30,000 for other mental health professionals to repay qualified education loans and student debt, provided they remain employed by licensed community mental health programs for three years. Program eligibility includes many licensed mental health professionals, including master and clinical social workers; mental health counselors; marriage and family therapists; creative arts therapists, psychoanalysts, and psychologists.

Federal Court Grants NYC's Motion to Dismiss Gas Ban Lawsuit

Federal judge dismissed a challenge to New York City's local ban on fossil fuel appliances in new buildings.

Judge Ronnie Abrams of the Southern District of New York this week issued an order dismissing a challenge to New York City's gas ban from unions, builders, and fossil fuel trade groups. In a [16-page decision](#), Judge Abrams ruled that federal law does not override New York City's local law banning gas and other fossil fuels in new buildings.

"Regulations prohibiting the use of certain types of fuels and appliances in residential, commercial, and industrial settings are integral to municipal construction and fire codes. See, e.g., N.Y.C. Admin. Code, Fuel Gas Code § 623.1.1 (prohibiting cooking appliances from using liquefied petroleum gas); id., Mechanical Code § 922.1 (prohibiting the installation of kerosene and oil-fired stoves); id. § 918.1 (prohibiting unvented fuel-fired furnaces); id., Fire Code § 313.3 (prohibiting the indoor use of kerosene space heaters); id., Mechanical Code § 917.2 (prohibiting the installation of commercial cooking appliances in domestic dwelling units). Were Plaintiffs correct about the scope of EPCA, these vital safety regulations would likewise be preempted—an absurd result that the Court must avoid," Judge Adams wrote.

New York City's local ban on fossil fuels in new construction went into effect in 2024 for buildings under seven stories. A ban in larger buildings begins in 2027. A similar ban on the state level is scheduled for buildings under seven stories in 2026 and for larger buildings in 2029.

The New York decision contrasts an earlier California decision in

In April of 2023, a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit held that the plain text and structure of the Energy Policy and Conservation Act (EPCA) preempts state and local building codes concerning the energy use of natural gas appliances. In 2024, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit denied a request for review by the full Ninth Circuit and the panel's decision was reaffirmed.

Advocates for the gas ban assert that while the New York decision is not binding on other courts, it could give other models to judges deliberating on similar lawsuits across the country, according to published reports.

Snug Harbor Welcomes New Chair to Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden has named Anita Laremont as chair of the 83-acre historic site.

Laremont, former executive director of the Department of City Planning and general counsel of Empire State Development Corporation, initially joined the board in 2010. She replaces Mark Lauria, who served as board chair for more than 20 years.

"In the many years that I have served as a board member, I've been struck by Snug Harbor's importance as a community anchor and regional destination," Laremont said. "I am dedicated to working with our talented staff, committed board members, funders and community stakeholders to fulfill Snug Harbor's promise to be a bridge to the past by celebrating our history, and an emissary to the future, through

upgrading and enhancing our grounds while providing programming, experiences and educational offerings that meet the public's needs and interests."

Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden is the result of more than four decades of restoration and development to convert a 19th century charitable rest home for sailors to a regional arts center, botanical gardens, and public park. It is home to the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art, Staten Island Museum, Staten Island Children's Museum, Noble Maritime Collection, Art Lab, Children's Harbor Montessori School, and Staten Island Conservatory of Music.

Coming Up

New York State

Monday, March 24th

Senate Insurance Committee Meeting, 124 Capitol, 11:30 a.m.

New York State Senate Session, Senate Chamber, Albany, 3 p.m.

New York State Assembly Session, Assembly Chamber, Albany

Tuesday, March 25th

Assembly Cities Committee Meeting, 843 Legislative Office Building, 9:30 a.m.

Senate Judiciary Committee Meeting, 124 Capitol, 10 a.m.

Assembly Children and Families Committee Meeting, 624 Legislative Office Building, 10 a.m.

Assembly Racing and Wagering Committee Meeting, 846 Legislative Office Building, 10 a.m.

Senate Corporations, Authorities and Commissions Committee Meeting,
912 Legislative Office Building, 10:30 a.m.

Assembly People with Disabilities Committee Meeting, 715 Legislative Office Building, 10:30 a.m.

Assembly Social Services Committee Meeting, 843 Legislative Office Building, 10:30 a.m.

Senate Crime Victims, Crime and Correction Committee Meeting, 124 Capitol, 11 a.m.

Assembly Election Law Committee Meeting, 715 Legislative Office Building, 11 a.m.

Senate Codes Committee Meeting, 124 Capitol, 11:30 a.m.

Assembly Corporations, Authorities and Commissions Committee Meeting, 423 Legislative Office Building,
11:30 a.m.

Assembly Tourism, Parks, Arts and Sports Development Committee, 714 Legislative Office Building, Noon.

Assembly Correction Committee Meeting, 524 Legislative Office Building, 1:30 a.m.

New York State Senate Session, Senate Chamber, Albany, 3 p.m.

New York State Assembly Session, Assembly Chamber, Albany

Wednesday, March 26th

New York State Senate Session, Senate Chamber, Albany, 3 p.m.

New York State Assembly Session, Assembly Chamber, Albany

Thursday, March 27th

New York State Senate Session, Senate Chamber, Albany, 11 a.m.

New York State Assembly Session, Assembly Chamber, Albany

New York City

Monday, March 24th

Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction, Council Chamber – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on Health, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on Contracts, Committee Room – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Tuesday, March 25th

Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, Committee Room – City Hall, 9:30 a.m.

Committee on Housing and Buildings, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings, and Dispositions,
250 Broadway – Committee Room, 16th Floor, 11 a.m.

Committee on Land Use, 250 Broadway – Committee Room, 16th Floor, 11:30 a.m.

Committee on Veterans, Committee Room – City Hall, 12 p.m.

Wednesday, March 26th

Committee on Finance, Committee Room – City Hall, 10:30 a.m.

City Council Stated Meeting, Council Chambers – City Hall, 1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 27th

Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises, Council Chambers – City Hall, 11 a.m.

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