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COVERING NEW YORK & CITY GOVERNMENT
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In The News-New York State

Aqueduct: NYC's Horse Racing Era Ends; Redevelopment Begins

Aqueduct Racetrack hosted its final meet on Sunday, June 28th, bringing a close to 132 years of live racing in New York City and opening the way for “once-in-a-generation” redevelopment in Queens.



**Aqueduct's 60ft-by-80ft mural
depicting Secretariat on Hall of Fame
Jockey Ron Turcotte**

The “Big A” was the site of American racing history, providing a showcase for Hall of Fame champions, Triple Crown prep races, and Breeders' Cup championships. A mass celebrated by Pope John Paul II in 1995 drew 75,000 attendees.

Secretariat made his career debut on July 4, 1972, in a \$6,000 maiden race at Aqueduct Racetrack, and his official retirement farewell took place on November 6, 1973 at the “Big A.” Nearly 33,000 fans gathered to say goodbye to the Triple Crown champion.

Man o' War won at Aqueduct three times during his 20 out of 21 race career. Cigar began his record 16-race winning streak there. The Wood Memorial Stakes, Aqueduct's most famous annual race, was a key stop on the road to the Kentucky Derby. Seabiscuit, Kelso, Ruffian, Seattle Slew, Easy Goer, Smarty Jones and many other champions all raced at the "Big A."

As one era has ended, a new era begins as the State looks to redevelop the approximately 100-acre property into a mixed-use of housing, retail, community facilities, and open space.



Under the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget legislation that funded Belmont Park's \$455 million redevelopment, the New York Racing Association agreed to relinquish its lease on the property. The site is owned by the New York State Franchise Oversight Board, which represents the state's ownership interests at three NYS racetracks: Aqueduct, Belmont Park and the Saratoga Race Course.

"The Aqueduct Racetrack site represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine 100 acres of state-owned land in Queens," Empire State Development (ESD) President, CEO and Commissioner Hope Knight said.

ESD has taken the lead in reimagining this site for alternative uses. The redevelopment is guided by the goals set out in Executive Order 30, which directs New York State agencies to identify and activate underutilized state-owned sites for housing.

The Commission has been conducting community workshops and outreach initiatives since May to gather input from the public on priorities including housing, public open space, retail and community spaces — "directly informing" the [Aqueduct Community Master Plan](#), expected to be complete in early 2027.

"As we work to address New York's housing crisis and create more vibrant, inclusive communities, it is critical that we fully utilize state-owned land to meet local needs," Governor Kathy Hochul said in a statement. "The Aqueduct site represents a significant opportunity, and through this community-driven process, we will ensure its future reflects the priorities of Queens residents while expanding housing, economic opportunity, and public amenities."

The Fiscal Year 2024 Budget legislation also provided for a 15-member local advisory board for the Aqueduct racetrack facility redevelopment-- nine designated by the New York City Queens Community Board 10, three designated by Franchise Board and three designated by Resorts World. This Advisory Board's work will end soon, per the legislation upon "substantial completion of the Belmont project, as determined by the gaming commission." Racing is scheduled to begin at Belmont in September.

After the creation of the Master Plan, ESD will take the Master Plan through the public approval process, including environmental review, before issuing one or more competitive Requests for Proposals (RFP) for a development team to begin construction on the site.

An Aqueduct Redevelopment Community Advisory Board was also established by the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget legislation to assess all bids made in response to the RFP. The Advisory Board will consist of six members: one each appointed by the Governor, Mayor of the City of New York, Queens Borough President, and the State Senator, State Assemblymember and the New York City Council Member representing the area where the Aqueduct property is located.



Chapters of the Laws of 2026

Chapter 137 – Sponsored by AM Lavine/Senator Myrie – Extends the authorization of New York City Marshals to enforce money judgments rendered by the Supreme and Family Courts in New York City to 2028.

Chapter 138 – Sponsored by AM Raga/Senator Ramos – Extends provisions to allow employers, with their employees' consent, to deduct wages from employees' paycheck to cover specified goods and services to 2028.

Chapter 141– Sponsored by AM Fall/Senator Scarcella-Spanton – Updates the statutory base pilotage tariff schedule used to calculate pilotage fees for vessels navigating through the Port of New York and New Jersey.

Chapter 145 – Sponsored by AM Cunningham/Senator Stavisky – Extends the authorization that provides firefighters and fire officers enrolled at CUNY with a tuition waiver for one course.

Chapter 146– Sponsored by AM Williams/Senator Stavisky – Extends the authorization of a tuition waiver for one course for police officer students at CUNY.

Chapter 151 – Sponsored by Rules (Cook)/Senator Stavisky – Extends certain provisions allowing physical therapy assistants to provide services without the physical presence of supervising physical therapist in home care settings.

Chapter 154 – Sponsored by Rules (Lavine)/Senator Bynoe – Extends provisions related to the assessment and review of assessments in the county of Nassau.

Chapter 155 – Sponsored by Rules (Alvarez)/Senator Liu – Relates to extending the deadline for reduction in class size under contracts for excellence in a city school district in a city having a population of one million or more.

Chapter 157– Sponsored by Rules (Pheffer Amato)/Senator Gounardes – Provides a cost-of-living increase for certain special accidental death benefits paid to widows and orphaned children of members.

Chapter 158 – Sponsored by Rules (Kim)/Senator Gianaris – Extends the effectiveness of certain provisions relating to tickets to places of entertainment for one year.

Chapter 159– Sponsored by Senator Rivera/AM Paulin – Makes conforming changes reflecting the previously authorized scope of practice of nurse practitioners; allows nurse practitioners to sign return to school reports, job fitness reports, and bus driver health certificates.

Chapter 160 – Sponsored by Senator Mayer/AM Benedetto – Extends provisions related to certified school psychologists and special education services and programs for preschool children with handicapping conditions.

In The News-New York City



Mayor Mamdani's First Budget is in the Books

The Mamdani Administration and the New York City Council agreed on a \$125.8 billion FY2027 budget on June 30th, meeting the City's statutory deadline. The agreed upon spending plan expands access to affordable housing, and "protects the beloved public places that make New York the greatest city in the world."

The Council adopted the \$125.8 billion budget 45-6 Tuesday night, with Democrat Althea Stevens of the Bronx joining Republicans Joann Ariola, David Carr, Frank Morano, Vickie Paladino, and Inna Vernikov in voting no.

The agreement restores funding for parks, libraries and cultural institutions, including library support, cultural community support, parks enforcement patrol, and GreenThumb. In addition, it allocated \$175 million in Fiscal Year 2027 and \$125 million baselined starting in Fiscal Year 2028 for a new voucher program administered by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

The budget also includes \$34.2 million to create an online portal for city records related to post-9/11 air quality and health risks. According to published reports, the first batch of documents is expected to be released before the 25th anniversary of the September 11th attacks, with additional records added on a rolling basis.

According to Council Speaker Julie Menin, the Council also secured \$350 million in additional reserves, strengthening New York City's long-term financial stability.

The final budget does not include an increase in NYPD headcount.

According to published reports, Speaker Menin disagreed with the omission. "We need to be adding police officers," Speaker Menin said.

According to an NYPD spokesperson, Commissioner Jessica Tisch is experienced in dealing with tight budgets and resources.

"Commissioner Tisch has led three city agencies over the course of her career, and few public servants have a stronger record of finding efficiencies, modernizing operations, and delivering results for New Yorkers even under the most difficult budget conditions," the spokesperson said, in published reports. "For now, the department is able to police effectively with the budgeted headcount we have, driving crime down month after month. That headcount and our hiring plan gives us the flexibility we need to maintain that balance over the next fiscal year."

City Comptroller Mark Levine noted that this budget shows the challenges faced by the City going forward.

“This budget also reveals the City’s ongoing structural imbalance between recurring spending and recurring revenue, and the enormous extent to which we rely on the strength of the financial sector to support growing spending,” Comptroller Levine said. “Even with billions of dollars in unexpected additional revenue, the City still needed State support and \$6.1 billion in short-term and one-time measures to close the gap...This agreement gets the City through an exceptionally difficult year, but it does not resolve the structural challenges ahead.”



Work Zone Speed Camera Program Now in Effect on MTA Bridges and Tunnels

Governor Kathy Hochul and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) yesterday announced the activation of speed cameras at active construction zones on MTA vehicular bridges and tunnels.

According to the Governor, to reduce traffic crashes and road worker fatalities, vehicle owners whose vehicles are recorded driving more than 10 miles per hour above the posted speed in the work zones will be subject to warnings and fines.

The cameras are part of the Automated Work Zone Speed Enforcement Program, which was signed into law in 2021 by Governor Kathy Hochul and initially covered work zones on state highways. It was expanded in 2025 to include MTA Bridges and Tunnels, which operates and maintains nine facilities in the five boroughs:

- Bronx-Whitestone Bridge
- Cross Bay Veterans Memorial Bridge
- Henry Hudson Bridge
- Hugh L. Carey Tunnel
- Marine Parkway-Gil Hodges Memorial Bridge
- Queens Midtown Tunnel
- Robert F. Kennedy Bridge
- Throgs Neck Bridge
- Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge

Per the MTA, in the first phase, warning notices will be issued. In the second phase, which will start later this year, fines will be issued. Violations start at \$50 for the first offense and \$75 for the second offense, if within 18 months of the first violation. Drivers with three or more violations will be fined \$100 for each subsequent offense, if within 18 months of the first violation. These fines are subject to additional late fees.

All violations will be validated by a certified technician before they are issued. Because these are considered non-moving infractions, they will not appear on driving records nor be reported to insurance providers. Fines can be paid online, via mobile app, by mail, or in person at the NYC Department of Finance Business Centers.

An unmarked vehicle equipped with radar and camera equipment will be stationed in active work zones and operate during work hours. There will be signs alerting drivers to the presence of cameras posted ahead of these active construction sites.

ICE Mask Ban Takes Effect in New York As Federal Government & New York File Opposing Lawsuits

New York's new law restricting mask use by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents carrying out their duties went into effect Friday as New York State and the federal government are in a legal battle involving the constitutionality of New York's law to ban masks and 287(g) agreements.

The mask ban was part of Fiscal Year 2027 Budget legislation which also banned formal cooperation agreements between ICE and state and local governments. Counties with 287(g) agreements are in a 90-day grace period. The ban fully takes effect August 25th.

The Department of Justice filed a [lawsuit](#) against the State of New York, Governor of New York Kathy Hochul, New York Attorney General Letitia James, and Assistant Attorney General in Charge, Buffalo Regional Office, challenging their unconstitutional attempt to regulate federal law enforcement officers by criminally prohibiting federal officers from wearing masks, requiring individual identifiers, and banning cooperative 287(g) agreements with numerous local law enforcement agencies dedicated to helping enforce this nation's laws.

Meanwhile Governor Hochul and Attorney General James [sued](#) DOJ and the Department of Homeland Security in Northern New York arguing the state has the sovereign right to protect its residents and manage local police resources.

Governor Hochul Issues New Guidance to Implement Reforms Aimed at Lowering Auto Insurance Premiums for New Yorkers

New York State Department of Financial Services (DFS) has issued new [guidance](#) to insurers, implementing reforms enacted in the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget to help bring down the cost of auto insurance rates and combat fraudulent claims across New York State.

According to DFS, the Circular Letter is to "advise all insurers authorized to write motor vehicle insurance in New York State, the New York Automobile Insurance Plan, and rate service organizations (collectively, "Addressees") of changes to the Insurance Law, Penal Law, and Civil Practice Law and Rules ("CPLR") affecting motor vehicle insurance, and to ensure that Addressees reflect the impact of these reforms in all pending motor vehicle insurance rate filings by August 31, 2026 and in all future motor vehicle insurance rate filings (including pending and future filings subject to flex rating under Insurance Law § 2350) submitted to the Department of Financial Services (the "Department")."

The Department expects the insurers, State Automobile Insurance Plan, and the rate service organizations to review and update their pricing models to align with the reforms described in the Circular Letter. Additionally, these organizations must reflect expected savings in all pending and future motor vehicle insurance rate filings submissions, including the completion of new Exhibit TR-1 Automobile Tort Reform Calculation.

NYC Readies to Implement Pied-A-Terre Tax

The Mamdani administration this week released rules to implement the City's new pied-à-terre tax. The city Department of Finance will notify owners of luxury secondary residences that they have been determined to be eligible for the tax by August 30, [according to the proposed guidelines](#).

Owners will have 30 days to appeal or challenge the new tax bill imposed on non-primary residences. Appeals would be made to the city's Tax Commission, or in some cases to the DOF.

City officials estimate the pied-à-terre tax will generate between \$340 million and \$500 million in annual revenue from approximately 10,000 luxury second homes. One-to-three family homes will be taxed at a rate of between 0.8% to 1.3% depending on their value, while the rate for co-ops and condos starts at 4% and goes up to 6.5% for those worth over \$5 million.

Court Rules New York's All-Electric Buildings Mandate Does Not Violate Federal Law

A federal appeals court upheld New York's All-Electric Building Act on Tuesday, confirming state jurisdiction over fossil fuel appliances in new buildings. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit [ruled](#) that federal energy laws do not preempt state or local electrification mandates.

Enacted as part of the Fiscal Year 2023 Budget, the All-Electric Buildings Act bans new gas hookups in new buildings under seven stories. The mandate would apply to all other buildings constructed after January 1, 2029. There is an exemption for previous construction.

Gas and construction trade groups sued to block the law two years ago, arguing it violates the federal government's rules around how gas appliances are regulated under the 1975 Energy Policy and Conservation Act (EPCA).

The Second Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled on Tuesday that "the challenged laws are not preempted under EPCA."

"Interpreting preemption provisions in federal statutes requires ascertaining Congress's intent. EPCA, a statute that at its heart promotes national energy conservation goals, does not preclude these particular state and local efforts to regulate the use of fossil fuels," the court wrote in its ruling.

The All-Electric Buildings Act had been scheduled to go into effect on January 1st, but the state agreed to delay its implementation until after the court ruled.

Mayor Mamdani Appoints Bharti Sharma Executive Director of the Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence

Mayor Zohran Kwame Mamdani announced the appointment of Bharti Sharma as Executive Director of the Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence (CIDI).

Founded in 2011, CIDI conducts interagency research to identify gaps in City services and improve outcomes for New Yorkers. The center works across Health and Human Service (HHS) agencies and other City partners to use data, research and collaboration to inform policy and strengthen service delivery.

Sharma most recently served as Senior Director of Data and AI Strategic Enablement and Operations at NYC Health + Hospitals and holds a Bachelor of Dental Surgery, a Master of Health Administration from Hofstra University, and a Master of Science in Information Systems Engineering and Management from Harrisburg University.

Coming Up

New York State

*There are currently no meetings at the state level at the time of this publication**

New York City

Tuesday, July 7th

Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 2, 10 a.m.

Thursday, July 9th

Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings, Resiliency and Dispositions, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing room 1, 11 a.m.

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