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THIS WEEK IN NEW YORK

COVERING NEW YORK & CITY GOVERNMENT
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Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. **- President George W. Bush, shortly after September 11, 2001**.

In The News-New York State

Comptroller DiNapoli: Lower Manhattan, 25 Years After 9/11

Lower Manhattan has undergone a profound transformation in the 25 years since the terror attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. A diversified business community, an expanding tourism sector, major public transportation investments, and the emergence of a 24-hour neighborhood that has seen the number of housing units and residents more than double since 2000, are testament to New York's and the nation's determination to recover and rebuild stronger than before. - Comptroller DiNapoli

In a report released this week, New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli examined the socioeconomic changes that have helped shape Lower Manhattan's evolution.

"Twenty-five years ago, it was impossible to imagine the neighborhoods around Ground Zero looking like they do today," Comptroller DiNapoli said. "Lower Manhattan rose from those ashes with an enormous amount of effort and investment. Today, the growing population, the mix of retail, business and government offices, as well as hotels, restaurants and cultural destinations, speak to New York's and America's tenacity in the wake of one of the darkest days in our history."

According to the Comptroller over more than two decades, Lower Manhattan has transformed from a location of mostly offices to one with amenities that facilitate work, residential life and recreation. Its population has more than doubled from 32,446 in 2000 to 70,761 in 2024, a growth rate far outpacing all of Manhattan. This increase, concentrated across the Financial District and Tribeca, was supported by a jump in housing from 21,337 units in 2002 to 46,194 at the start of 2026, driven by zoning changes and the conversions of office buildings for residential and ground floor retail use. That growth is expected to continue with 5,328 permitted units in the pipeline, nearly all of them in the Financial District.

"Having served as Chair of Community Board 1 in the years after 9/11, I saw firsthand the extraordinary resilience and determination that rebuilt Lower Manhattan," said Speaker of the New York City Council Julie Menin. "Twenty-five years later, it is a thriving community where New Yorkers live, work and raise families. I commend Comptroller DiNapoli for this important report documenting that remarkable transformation and the lessons it offers for the future of the city."

Area Jobs

Despite the disruptions of the Great Recession, the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges over the past 25 years, private sector employment in lower Manhattan reached 257,187 in 2024, up 3% from 2014, and 6.4% higher than in 2000. The increase was driven by an 11% growth in Tribeca. Jobs in finance, which made up 48.5% of all employment in 2000, accounted for 33.6% of the total in 2025. Meanwhile, business services — the second largest employment sector — saw jobs rise from a quarter of all jobs to 30.5%. Leisure and hospitality and educational services also saw notable gains.

Tourism

Tourism remains below pre-pandemic levels with 10.3 million visitors in 2025, and an annual average of 11.3 million visitors between 2022 and 2025, representing about 62.8% of the 2019 numbers. More than half of last year’s visitors (56%) were international tourists, still significantly below pre-pandemic levels. Prior DiNapoli reports found that federal immigration and trade policies continue to slow international tourism’s recovery to pre-pandemic numbers, affecting the hotel industry. At least 41 hotels in Lower Manhattan operate 7,928 rooms and there are 346 more in the pipeline. The occupancy rates of area hotels fluctuated between 72% to 85% from 2022 to 2025

Residents in the Workforce

More than half of Lower Manhattan residents (52.5%) work in business services and finance. Health care and social assistance combine to be the third most common sector, accounting for 7.9% of resident employment. Among residents 16 years and older, 75.8% were employed in 2024, higher than Manhattan (61.5%) and the city (58.1%). For youth aged 16-24, the employment rate reached 47.7%, exceeding both borough and citywide levels (44.2% and 38.8%, respectively).

Household Income and Housing Cost

The median household income in Lower Manhattan increased 55% since 2014 to at least $200,000 in 2024, nearly double the median for Manhattan and more than double that for the city overall. Median gross rents exceeded $3,500 compared with $2,709 in Manhattan and $1,881 citywide.

Economic Development

Since 9/11, extensive public and private infrastructure projects have reshaped Lower Manhattan. Major transportation projects, including the Fulton Transit Center ($1.4 billion), the World Trade Center Hub and Oculus ($4 billion) and ferry terminal upgrades, have increased connectivity and activity, and supported population growth.

Private investments include the Perelman Performing Arts Center ($560 million) and the public-private redevelopment of the South Street Seaport and Pier 17 (2018) in the wake of Superstorm Sandy. Coastal resiliency initiatives are ongoing throughout the district, guided by the Lower Manhattan Coastal Resilience Strategy, which targets the challenges of climate change and rising sea levels.

A related report by the Comptroller highlights the work of the 9/11 Memorial & Museum to educate the public and support 9/11 families.

9/11 Memorial & Museum

The National September 11 Memorial & Museum remains central to honoring the nearly 3,000 people who were killed, supporting those affected by 9/11-related illnesses, and educating visitors from around the world. In 2025, visitations to the 9/11 Memorial and the Museum totaled 11.3 million and 2.4 million, respectively. Ticket sales are the Museum's primary revenue source, helping to support over $70 million in annual operating costs and to provide free access to the memorial.

More than half the visitors come from outside the United States, with the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, and Spain making up the largest numbers. U.S. visitors predominantly come from New York, California, Texas, Florida and New Jersey. Last year, more than 94,000 9/11 families, survivors, first responders, active and retired military, Lower Manhattan residents and students received free admission. The museum houses more than 82,000 artifacts from both the 1993 and 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center.

Between 2018 to 2025, the memorial welcomed more than 57 million visitors, and the museum hosted more than 16 million. While visitors to the museum remain below 2019's pre-pandemic peak of 3.1 million, the memorial visits exceed pre-pandemic numbers. Besides ticket sales and donations, the 9/11 Memorial & Museum hosts various fundraisers and receives income from the Never Forget Fund, which was created in 2021 to fund education programs aimed at those born after 9/11.

Governor Hochul Signs Legislation to Support 9/11 Victims, Responders, New York's National Guard and Their Loved Ones

Governor Kathy Hochul this week signed three pieces of legislation to provide support to 9/11 victims, responders and surviving family members. This support will help ensure eligible New Yorkers can receive the benefits they are entitled to under the law.

"None of us will ever forget the horrific attacks on our state and nation on that day in 2001 — nor will we ever forget the unflinching bravery and sacrifice of civilians and first responders whose lives were devastated," Governor Hochul said. "As we mark the 25th anniversary of the events at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania, we sign these three laws to support and honor those whose lives were transformed on that terrible day."

Chapter 296 of the Laws of 2026, sponsored by AM Charles Fall and Senator Robert Jackson, extends the deadline to submit documentation with the retirement system detailing an individual's participation in World Trade Center rescue, recovery and clean-up operations following September 11, 2001 to September 11, 2030. The deadline to submit Form WTC-12 to the New York State Workers' Compensation Board is now September 11, 2030.

According to the Governor, submitting the proper documentation preserves an individual's right to file a claim for workers' compensation benefits in the future for any injury or illness caused by participation in rescue, recovery and clean-up operations between September 11, 2001, and September 11, 2002. All individuals who participated at Ground Zero, Fresh Kills Landfill, the barges, the piers and/or the morgues during that time should file Form WTC-12 whether they were injured or not.

The legislation also requires the Board to reconsider any claims in which the worker became disabled between September 11, 2021, and September 11, 2025, which were previously disallowed due to the deadline, and extends the time limit for filing new claims for injuries or illnesses occurring within that timeframe until on or before September 11, 2030.

"As World Trade Center health consequences continue to manifest 25 years later, the New York State Workers' Compensation Board remains dedicated to ensuring World Trade Center victims, responders, and surviving family members get every benefit they are entitled to receive," New York State Workers' Compensation Board Chair Freida D. Foster said. "We continue to urge all those who participated in the rescue, recovery, and clean-up efforts to file a WTC-12 form to preserve their rights to file a claim for workers' compensation benefits should they ever need them."

Chapter 294 of the Laws of 2026, sponsored by AM Grace Lee and Senator Brian Kavanagh**,** extends by four years, through September 11, 2030, the deadline for submitting a claim for World Trade Center death and disability benefits for members of New York's National Guard members and their beneficiaries. This relates to members of the National Guard who were activated on state active duty on or after September 11, 2001, to participate in World Trade Center site rescue, recovery or cleanup operations as part of their duty and determined to have incurred a qualifying World Trade Center condition.

"Twenty-five years ago, thousands of our National Guard members answered the call to duty, descending on Ground Zero to assist in rescue and recovery efforts," AM Lee explained. "Five members of the National Guard died on that tragic day, and many more have battled health complications as a result of their service. Thank you to Governor Hochul for signing this bill, as part of a package supporting 9/11 victims, responders and their families. We will never forget the sacrifices made by all who answered the call on 9/11, and we will keep fighting to honor and support them."

Chapter 295 of the Laws of 2026, sponsored by Senator Robert Jackson and AM Stacy Pheffer-Amato, extends the presumptive eligibility period, from 25 to 35 years, for certain retirement benefits for injuries or illnesses related to World Trade Center rescue, recovery and clean-up operations. It allows for the reclassification of retiree deaths as World Trade Center qualifying accidental deaths for retirees who die after having been retired for more than 25 years up to a maximum of 35 years.

The legislation also requires the Board to reconsider any claims in which the worker became disabled between September 11, 2021, and September 11, 2025, which were previously disallowed due to the deadline, and extends the time limit for filing new claims for injuries or illnesses occurring within that timeframe until on or before September 11, 2030.

"The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 had, and still has, a profound lasting impact on our State's history and is felt by many residents in our community, and across our great State," AM Stacey Pheffer Amato said, 'Never Forget' is not a motto, it is a real statement that New York is fully committed to honoring."

Chapters of the Laws of 2026

Chapter 291, Sponsored by AM Catalina Cruz and Senator Jessica Ramos -- Establishes the Construction Reporting Pay Act which ensures construction workers are fairly compensated for their time in the event of a last-minute scheduling change by their employer. Current law requires four hours of pay at minimum wage upon reporting to work. With this law, workers must be paid for two hours at their regular rate if their shift is cancelled with less than 12 hours' notice, and paid for four hours at their regular rate when a worker reports to a job site and is sent home without cause.

Chapter 292, Sponsored by AM Judy Griffin and Senator Jessica Ramos -- Allows the Attorney General to seek damages of $1,000 per violation from individuals fraudulently presenting themselves as a union representative. This will protect union members' rights and prevent outside groups from deceptively collecting personal and protected information.

Chapter 293, Sponsored by Senator Andrew Gounardes and AM Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas -- Ensures that all employees have access to their personnel files and are notified when a negative report is filed against them.

In The News-New York City

NYC Office of the Mayor

Mayor Mamdani Launches Office of Worker Power to Support Labor Organizing

Mayor Zohran Mamdani this week signed an executive order establishing the Mayor's Office of Worker Power (MOWP).

MOWP will work across City Hall and City agencies on outreach, education, policy, research and strategic partnerships focused on workers who lack "meaningful benefits, adequate wages and a voice on the job." The office will be led by its inaugural Executive Director, Tony Perlstein – a former longshoreman and UAW organizing director. The office will help workers to shape City policy and strengthen the City's ability to identify and address violations of workers' rights.

Born in the Bronx and raised in Brooklyn, Perlstein most recently served as a director in the organizing department of the United Auto Workers (UAW), having previously served as the union's national co-director of education.

As a former longshore worker in the port of New York and New Jersey, Perlstein was elected Secretary-Treasurer of his local union and helped lead a successful national effort to raise wages and ensure new technology did not undermine workers' standard of living. Before becoming a longshoreman, he organized New York City restaurant, warehouse, lumberyard and other industrial workers to advocate for better working conditions.

Bills Approved by the City Council

***Introduction 196-C, Sponsored by Council Member Oswald Feliz* --** Requires DOHMH to develop rules requiring food service establishments to display a warning symbol with the words “HIGH SODIUM” next to listed food items that contain 2,300 milligrams of sodium or more per serving. This bill would also require food service establishments to display a warning symbol with the words “VERY HIGH SODIUM” next to listed food items that contain 6,000 milligrams of sodium or more per item.

Introduction 547-B, Sponsored by Council Member Oswald Feliz -- Requires the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to designate icons and factual warning statements to be displayed next to listed food items that meet or exceed 100 percent of the daily value for added sugars determined by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. This bill would also require that DOHMH issue warnings for non-compliance, followed by a $100 fine for a second violation, and $200 for third and subsequent violations.

***Introduction 804-A, Sponsored by Council Member Phil Wong* --** Establishes a maximum allowable illuminance for certain residential outdoor lighting fixtures. The illuminance limit would apply only to one- and two-family homes in low-density residential districts. Outdoor lighting fixtures that are government-operated, used to illuminate a parking lot or sidewalk shed, used for construction safety, part of lawful signs, or part of temporary ornamental displays would be exempt.

***Introduction 813-A*, S*ponsored by* Council Member Harvey Epstein** -- Allows the Commissioner of Consumer and Worker Protection to refuse to renew, suspend, or revoke a tobacco retailer dealer license or an electronic cigarette retail dealer license upon a finding that the holder of such license violated the Cannabis Law through the sale of cannabis without the appropriate license, or through the indirect retail sale of cannabis irrespective of whether a license had been obtained.

Introduction 866-A, Sponsored by Council Member Harvey Epstein -- Requires the Department of Transportation (DOT) to post at least 1 sign at the end of each block where disruptive work will occur, at least 48 hours in advance of the anticipated start of said work. The posted signs would contain the contact information of the entity performing the work; the anticipated start and end dates of the work; and the location, nature, and extent of the work to be performed.

Introduction 906-A, Sponsored by Council Member Justin Sanchez -- Requires the Department of Sanitation (DSNY), upon receiving 7 or more complaints of dog waste on the same block within a 7-day period, to dispatch employees within 14 days to evaluate the block and enforce state and local health codes against animal waste in public spaces.

Briefs

NYSLRS Releases Employer Contribution Rates for SFY 2027-28

Comptroller DiNapoli this week announced employer contribution rates for the New York State and Local Retirement System (NYSLRS) for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2027-28. Employers' average contribution rates will decrease from 17.6% to 17.3% of payroll for the Employees' Retirement System (ERS) and increase from 36.5% to 37.4% of payroll for the Police and Fire Retirement System (PFRS).

In the SFY that ended March 31, 2026, NYSLRS paid more than $17.5 billion in benefits. ERS has about 1.2 million members with 493,000 retirees and beneficiaries receiving benefits and PFRS has 79,000 members with 42,000 retirees and beneficiaries currently receiving benefits.

Employer rates for NYSLRS are determined based on investment performance and actuarial assumptions recommended by NYSLRS' actuary, who is required to review the actuarial assumptions and experience and to issue an annual report. The recommendations are reviewed by the independent Actuarial Advisory Committee and approved by the Comptroller. In addition to investment performance, other factors that impact rates include higher salaries, plan options selected by employers, recent legislative reforms to Tiers 5 and 6 and member retirement rates.

Payments based on the new rates are due by February 1, 2028, but employers receive a discount if payment is made by December 15, 2027.

Comptroller DiNapoli also announced that NYSLRS had a funded ratio of 96.8% as of March 31, 2026. The fund's estimated value was $309.7 billion as of June 30, 2026.

US Appeals Court Halts Natural Gas Pipeline Through NJ, NY

A federal appeals court on Tuesday put a halt on the proposed natural gas pipeline running from Pennsylvania through New Jersey and New York, ruling the Northeast Supply Enhancement (NESE) pipeline violates the Garden State's water-quality standards.

The ruling by the Third Circuit Court of Appeals negated the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's earlier certification of a key section of the Northeast Supply Enhancement (NESE) pipeline. Both New Jersey and New York approved the pipeline last November.

The appeals court ruled that the project violated water-quality standards. According to the lawsuit filed by Natural Resources Defense Council, the section of proposed pipeline in Raritan Bay requires dredging the ocean floor potentially stirring-up toxic contaminants.

The NRDC also filed a lawsuit challenging the 17-mile portion of the pipeline proposed offshore near Staten Island and the Rockaways in New York. The court ruled in favor of the pipeline.

DFS Releases New Regulation to Increase Transparency for Policyholders in the Auto Insurance Market

The New York State Department of Financial Services (DFS) has proposed a regulation amending the process for filing private passenger auto insurance rates, implementing reforms enacted in the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget. The regulation requires insurers to receive prior approval for any private passenger automobile rate increase requests.

Currently, insurers may implement no more than two overall average private passenger auto rate increases without the Department's prior approval if the cumulative effect of the rate increases are within 5%. The proposed regulation requires insurers to seek express prior approval from DFS before any upward rate changes. Additionally, the regulation ensures insurers notify policyholders about rate decreases taken without prior approval resulting from Fiscal Year 2027 budget reforms and explain why the changes are happening.

A 60-day public comment period began Wednesday upon the proposed regulation's publication in the *State Register.* The law and regulation will take effect on November 27, 2026.

MTA Releases CNG Bus RFP

Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) released a request for proposals (RFPs) from bus manufacturing companies to build 650 new buses, the largest single upgrade to the fleet since 2013. When the full order has been completed, these new buses will represent more than 10 percent of the MTA's bus fleet.

These buses will be purchased with funding from the MTA's historic 2025-29 Capital Plan and will use compressed natural gas (CNG), a cheaper, greener alternative to diesel fuel. The new buses which will replace aging CNG buses already in service.

"The Governor and Mayor have been clear: better bus service can't wait," MTA Chair and CEO Janno Lieber said. "So, while the electric bus industry continues to mature, MTA is moving forward with CNGs to further improve service for the millions of New Yorkers who ride MTA buses every day."

9/11 Documents Released

Mayor Zohran Kwame Mamdani announced the release of more than 170,000 pages of City records documenting the government's response to the attacks and their aftermath, as well as the settlement of two lawsuits brought by 9/11 Health Watch.

The portal, available now at nyc.gov/sept11docs, features an initial release of approximately 170,000 pages of records concerning health concerns, air quality and the City's response to September 11th. The records include the frequently referenced Harding Memo, the "68 boxes" of records that were not located until 2025 despite multiple Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests, and a collection of records concerning World Trade Center 7.

The portal will be updated regularly as the Law Department reviews additional City records over the next 12 months. The City expects more documents will be released in the coming year as they are reviewed, and personally identifiable information is removed.

The Mamdani Administration will also appoint dedicated personnel at the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) and New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) to coordinate the retrieval of records for New Yorkers seeking to establish their presence in the New York City Exposure Zone and access assistance through the two Federal Programs established under the Zadroga Act, the World Trade Center Health Program and the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund.

Coming Up

New York State

Monday, September 14th

Meeting of the Board of Regents, 89 Washington Ave – Room 217 – Albany, 9 a.m.

Tuesday, September 15th

Public Hearing: Concession Pricing Fairness, Roosevelt Hearing Room C – Legislative Office Building – Albany, 10 a.m.

Meeting of the Board of Regents, 89 Washington Ave – Room 217 – Albany, 11 a.m.

New York City

Tuesday, September 15th

Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor - Room 2, 10 a.m.

Committee on Education, Council Chambers – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Committee on Oversight and Investigations, Council Chambers – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Wednesday, September 16th

Committee on Small Business, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 3, 1 p.m.

Committee on Children and Youth, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 2, 1 p.m.

Committee on Public Safety, Council Chambers – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Friday, September 18th

Committee on Finance, Council Chambers – City Hall, 11 a.m.

Committee on Aging, Council Chambers – City Hall, 11 a.m.

Committee on Disabilities, Council Chambers – City Hall, 11 a.m.

Committee on Veterans, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 1, 1 p.m.

Committee on Mental Health and Substance Use, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 1, 1 p.m.

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