



This Week in New York

Covering New York State and 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

Governor and Mayor Differ on Migrant Solutions



New York Governor Kathy Hochul's office has issued a stern response to New York City Mayor Eric Adams' call for the State to assist in managing the migrant crisis and cover an estimated \$7 billion cost over two years. In a letter sent to the Adams administration on August 15, Hochul's outside counsel, Faith E. Gay, contends that the city has not effectively utilized available funding to aid migrants seeking asylum and has failed to provide suitable shelters, forcing migrants to sleep on Manhattan streets. The governor's attorney emphasized the need for proactive collaboration between the city and state to address the crisis.

The dispute arose after Adams proposed dispersing migrants to counties across the state according to their populations and having state taxpayers fund the response. However, Hochul's administration expressed concerns about involuntary relocations without adequate coordination with local officials. The State initiated a \$25 million pilot program offering rent coverage for migrant families relocating upstate, but frustration ensued as only 17 out of about 250 families accepted the offer.

Adams' administration asserted that the State should shoulder two-thirds of the costs of the migrant crisis, instead of the previously agreed-upon 29 percent, considering the absence of substantial federal support. This revised proposal could potentially lead to the state paying more than \$7 billion over the next two fiscal years, straining its finances.

Both parties emphasize the necessity of federal assistance to expedite migrants' work authorization. The State blames the City for not promptly utilizing \$10 million in state funds for legal services to aid migrants' asylum applications. The City, however, contends that the state failed to provide adequate funding to nonprofit organizations for legal assistance.

The conflict also involves the City's "right to shelter" obligation, in which Hochul's office and the Adams administration are engaging in a legal battle regarding whether the State shares this obligation. The governor enlisted external legal representation after the State Attorney General's office declined involvement.

Hochul and Adams maintain that their working relationship is strong despite the differences, emphasizing collaboration to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Both parties stress the importance

of federal aid and the need for effective coordination and communication to manage the crisis more efficiently.



In the News-New York City



Mayor Adams Announces Office-to-Housing Plan in City of Yes Proposal

On August 17, Mayor Eric Adams and NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) Director Dan Garodnick introduced a comprehensive plan to tackle New York City's housing shortage by converting vacant office spaces into housing units. This initiative is part of Mayor Adams' broader effort to expand affordable housing options and create new job opportunities.

The bombshell announcement, which the Mayor stated comes as a response to inaction from State legislators, laid out several initiatives that would boost the City's housing stock and align with the administration's goal to create 500,000 new homes across the five boroughs within the next decade. These initiatives include the launching of Office Conversion Accelerator – which would simplify the process of converting empty offices into housing units – and the Midtown South Neighborhood Plan - which aims to foster a live-work community with new housing and job opportunities in the area between 23rd Street and 40th Street from Fifth Avenue to Eighth Avenue.

The Office Conversion Accelerator represents a new collaboration between the City and its various departments that will assist building owners with complex conversion projects, including help in securing permits. The Midtown South Neighborhood Plan will enable new housing projects -including permanently affordable housing - in four areas that were previously designated for manufacturing.

These initiatives involve proposing changes to zoning regulations to enable up to 20,000 new homes for 40,000 New Yorkers over the next decade. The changes include extending flexible regulations to an additional 136 million square feet of office space and allowing conversions to a wider variety of housing types.

Mayor Adams highlighted the need for state-level action to facilitate a substantial number of new affordable homes through office-to-residential conversions. If the state does not act, the progress made in addressing the affordable housing crisis could be at risk.

Mayor Adams emphasized the urgency of finding housing solutions for New Yorkers. The plan aims to use various strategies to increase housing supply, stimulate economic growth, and provide affordable living spaces. By facilitating office-to-housing conversions, streamlining regulatory processes, and updating zoning rules, the administration intends to revitalize business districts, provide affordable housing, and enhance economic opportunities throughout the city.

The proposed initiatives will involve public engagement, with the "City of Yes for Housing Opportunity" proposal scheduled to begin public engagement in the fall and be formally referred in early 2024.



Department of Transportation Proceeds with Redesign of McGuinness Boulevard



The New York City Department of Transportation has unveiled a revised plan for McGuinness Boulevard in Brooklyn after a period of controversy and opposition from local businesses. The new plan aims to enhance street safety along the boulevard while accommodating various modes of transportation.

Under the revised proposal, McGuinness Boulevard will feature a bike lane in each direction, as well as a single lane of traffic from Meeker Avenue to Calyer Street. From Calyer Street to the Pulaski Bridge, the boulevard will have bike lanes in both directions and two lanes of traffic between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Outside of these hours, one traffic lane will transition into parking.

To ensure cyclists' safety, the bike lanes will be shielded by a combination of barriers and flexible delineators that allow drivers access to the curb.

The new plan comes after prior street safety improvement proposals encountered opposition, primarily led by a group named "Keep McGuinness Moving." This group, reportedly linked to the owners of the nearby Broadway Stages film production company, expressed concerns about potential job losses resulting from the changes. The controversy led to a reevaluation of the initial proposal.

Several fatalities have occurred on McGuinness Boulevard since 2012, contributing to the urgency of improving safety conditions. Transportation Alternatives, an advocacy group, welcomed the revised plan as a step toward prioritizing community well-being and road safety. Elizabeth Adams, a spokesperson for Transportation Alternatives, expressed gratitude for the decision, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding lives and ensuring equitable infrastructure for the entire community.

Elected officials, including Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso, Assemblymember Emily Gallagher, state Sen. Kristen Gonzalez, City Councilmember Lincoln Restler, and Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez, recognized the revised plan as a significant step in enhancing safety along McGuinness Boulevard. Although the new proposal may not include all desired elements, these officials commended the Adams administration for engaging in the collaborative process and addressing community concerns. The construction for the project is scheduled to commence in early September, before the start of the school year.



Briefs

NYC Local 983 Drivers Overworked, Underpaid

City-employed motor vehicle operators, tasked with critical responsibilities like delivering meals and supplies to schools and shuttling Department of Correction personnel, are grappling with a significant staffing crisis, as highlighted by District Council 37's Local 983 union. The current roster of operators, numbering only 303, pales in comparison to the 600-strong workforce in 2014. The resultant shortage has compelled these drivers to endure grueling 16-hour shifts to maintain operations. According to Joe Puelo, President of Local 983, the surge in online retail activity has also spiked demand for commercial vehicle operators, creating lucrative opportunities in the private sector – with salaries rising for vehicle operators that are employed by companies such as Amazon and FedEx. In contrast, the starting annual salary for city-employed operators stands at around \$39,000, which reaches \$49,927 after three years, according to the union. The wage discrepancy has prompted potential employees to veer towards private firms offering substantially higher pay.

A recent pact negotiated between Teamsters and UPS could grant UPS drivers \$49 per hour, nearly doubling the initial wage of city motor vehicle operators if ratified. The union is advocating for improved wages to tackle the recruitment shortfall, asserting that the city's inability to attract talent has precipitated a reliance on excessive overtime, potentially compromising safety measures. As city agencies grapple with about 23,000 vacancies as of April, the motor vehicle operators, spread across approximately 20 city departments, are confronted with double shifts five days a week. This situation is particularly prevalent at the Department of Correction, where operators have been mandated to work these prolonged shifts. Consequently, operators allegedly barely manage two hours of sleep between shifts, with refusals to comply with forced overtime leading to penalties. The union has pointed out that such back-to-back shifts potentially violate federal standards set by the U.S. Department of Transportation, which stipulate driving limits for the sake of safety. The union's call for fair compensation reflects the desire to provide market-appropriate remuneration and curb the reliance on excessive overtime.

New York State Enters Driver's License Reciprocity Agreements

New York is set to become the 39th state to establish driver's license reciprocity agreements with foreign countries, making it easier for international visitors to obtain licenses. Typically, foreign visitors can use their home country's license temporarily while driving in the state. However, if they decide to establish residency, they are required to undergo the entire process of applying for a driver's license, which includes driver's education and a road test.

Reciprocity agreements enable extended international visitors to bypass the standard examination process for obtaining a license. For instance, Texas has such agreements with countries like Canada, France, South Korea, and Taiwan. These agreements allow visitors from these countries to skip the examination process in Texas, and Texans can also obtain licenses more easily when staying in these countries for an extended period.

Governor Kathy Hochul signed a bill that empowers the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to establish similar reciprocity agreements. This move is especially significant in New York, which has a substantial immigrant population. The bill aims to alleviate the challenges faced by individuals who have extended visas but need to navigate the full licensing process.

New York State Assembly member Phil Ramos, who is the chambers sponsor of the bill, highlighted that the measure benefits individuals such as businessmen with extended visas, as well as Dominican-Americans and others who frequently travel between New York and their home countries. The agreements will be limited to countries with comparable licensing processes, and they may also involve additional education requirements to ensure familiarity with specific driving rules in the new country. The initiative is geared toward simplifying the licensing process and fostering closer ties between New York and its immigrant population's home countries.

United States Department of Labor Announces Apprentice Trailblazer Initiative

On August 16, the United States Department of Labor launched their new Apprentice Trailblazer Initiative. This new initiative aims to create a national network of apprentices and graduates across industries, in which they will be able to communicate their experiences with Registered Apprenticeship and share opportunities with each other. Serving as an Apprentice Trailblazer will allow for additional professional development – with Trailblazer’s being able to practice leadership skills, networking, and mentorship. The announcement comes as the Department celebrates the 86th anniversary of the National Apprenticeship Act which established the nation’s current Registered Apprenticeship system.

The Department is calling on all interested youth apprentices and recent graduates to collaborate with their Registered Apprenticeship sponsors to apply to become an Apprentice Trailblazer. The application deadline for the first cohort, which will focus on youth between the ages of 16-24, is September 30. This first cohort will be announced during National Apprenticeship Week (November 13-19). More information on the initiative and application process can be found [here](#).

NYC Health + Hospitals Closes School-Based Health Centers

NYC Health + Hospitals is set to close its network of eight school-based health centers by August 31, pending state approval. These centers, located in public schools in Brooklyn, Queens, and Manhattan, offer primary care and mental health services to enrolled students at no cost, complementing the care provided by school nurses. The closures come after NYC Health + Hospitals shifted focus from school-based clinics to bolstering its Gotham Health standalone primary and preventive care centers, citing low usage due to overlapping services with school nurses.

Staff from the closed clinics will be transferred to nearby Gotham Health locations. The move is unrelated to Mayor Eric Adams' budget cuts and highlights a need for increased state funding and

Medicaid rates for such services. This trend extends beyond NYC Health + Hospitals, with 24 requests to close school-based health centers submitted to the state Department of Health since last year.

Coming Up

New York State
No Scheduled Hearings
New York City
No Scheduled Hearings

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