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Nonpartisan Policy Explainer: NYC's 5 Ballot Proposals

Background

In the upcoming November 3, 2026, elections, New York City residents will vote on five proposals that could change how the city government works. The five proposals were developed by the Commission on Government Efficiency (COGE), a city agency established by Mayor Zohran Mamdani to focus on delivering services quickly and respecting citizens' time by reducing bureaucracy. Organized below in order of appearance on the NYC ballot, these proposals present changes to the City Charter, i.e., NYC's constitution.

These proposals cover:

- Public Space
- Contracts with Businesses and Nonprofits
- Street Projects
- City Property Building Permits
- Emergency Savings.

Residents can vote “Yes” or “No” on each question separately. A “Yes” vote approves the changes to the City Charter. A “No” vote means no change in the city. Residents should consider whether each proposal would improve services and how it would affect their community's ability to participate in these changes. More information can be found at [NYC Votes](#).

Nonprofit New York Analysis

Nonprofit New York has prepared this nonpartisan analysis for New Yorkers to understand the impact a “Yes” or “No” vote would have on these particular issues.

Proposal 1: Speed Up Process for Granting a Revocable Consent to Use Public Space

Context: Local restaurants, small businesses, and property owners currently face multi-month backlogs, high legal costs, and mandatory public hearings simply to install outdoor dining tables, ramps, or seating on public sidewalks. This measure aims to clear those administrative bottlenecks to help local businesses open seating faster and make buildings accessible without long bureaucratic delays. If approved by voters, these changes will take effect on **March 1, 2027**.

A YES vote means:

- **Public Meetings:** The City is no longer required to hold public meetings for every application, reducing opportunities for direct resident input on issues like noise or sidewalk space.
- **Business Costs and Speed:** Businesses can avoid paying for mandatory newspaper advertisements, allowing restaurants to open outdoor dining sooner and property owners to install ramps and benches faster.
- **City Council Authority:** The Department of Transportation gains final approval over sidewalk cafe permits, removing the City Council's power to vote down or reject approved applications.
- **Public Input:** Residents can still submit written feedback, but guaranteed live public meetings with officials are eliminated.

A NO vote means: Maintenance of the current context

Proposal 2: Reduce City Contractor Paperwork, Require Regular Meetings of the Procurement Policy Board

Context: Nonprofits and small vendors doing business with the City are often pushed to the brink of financial distress by months-long contracting delays and overwhelming paper-based reporting requirements. Although this proposal accelerates initial contract registration for a faster start, it only streamlines administrative workflows and does not legally guarantee quicker invoice payments to contractors. The policy takes effect immediately upon election certification, with new Procurement Policy Board meeting schedules beginning January 1, 2027.

A YES vote means:

- **Contracting Simplification and Speed:** The Procurement Policy Board can simplify paperwork for smaller organizations and lower-value contracts, streamlining the hiring process for businesses and nonprofits and shortening overall contracting timelines by up to 30 days.
- **Board Governance:** The Procurement Policy Board is required to meet at least once every three months, and mayoral authority to delegate contract approvals to agency officials is expanded.
- **Public Meetings and Transparency:** Agencies are no longer required to hold public meetings on their annual service contract plans, reducing direct public discussion. Final contract plans must still be published.
- **Contract Approval Timelines:** Faster contract approval processes take effect immediately upon election certification, though this streamlines administrative

registration only and does not guarantee faster city payments or invoice disbursements to non-profit contractors.

A NO vote means: Maintenance of the current context

Proposal 3: Speed Up Street Safety Projects, Disposition of Unused City Property, Office Leasing

Context: Street safety infrastructure, like protected bike lanes and pedestrian islands, as well as municipal office moves often sit bogged down for years in extended land-use review processes and public hearings. This measure targets these delays by bundling three municipal functions into a fast-tracked approval pathway to accelerate traffic safety upgrades and city property transfers. Most procedural changes take effect **immediately upon election certification**, while specific fast-track provisions for small lot sales take effect on **December 31, 2030**.

A YES vote means:

- **Streamlined Approvals:** The City can use faster, simplified approval processes for three specific activities: making streets safer, selling or renting out certain unused City-owned properties, and buying or renting offices for City agencies.
- **City Council Authority:** Authority over eligible property sales and leases shifts from the elected City Council to the appointed City Planning Commission, eliminating the final City Council vote for those deals.
- **Public Overview and Input:** Requirements for public meetings on City office space decisions are reduced, providing residents and Council members fewer opportunities to speak up or vote on these land and building decisions.
- **Package Deal:** All three administrative changes are bundled together as a single measure and take effect **immediately upon certification of election results** (with the exception of the permanent authorization for selling small undevelopable land lots, which takes effect on December 31, 2030)

A NO vote means: Maintenance of the current context

Proposal 4: Simplify Building Permitting and Move Waterfront Permitting to the Department of Buildings

Context: Property owners and developers must currently navigate a fragmented, multi-agency permitting web, including a separate, slower process through the Department of Small Business Services for waterfront sites. By consolidating all building review procedures into a single centralized Department of Buildings hub, this proposal aims to address the citywide housing and

construction lag. If passed, the structural re-organization and permitting transfer will take effect **immediately upon election certification**.

A YES vote means:

- **Centralized Permitting Hub:** A unified, faster system is established for submitting construction and building documents through a single pathway.
- **Waterfront Permit Transfer:** Authority over waterfront building permits moves from the Department of Small Business Services (SBS) to the Department of Buildings (DOB).
- **Expanded Staffing and Faster Processing:** A larger team of DOB officials can review and approve construction documents, speeding up permit issuance and timeline start dates on construction sites, effective immediately upon certification.

A NO vote means: Maintenance of the current context

Proposal 5: Set Contributions Targets for Rainy Day Fund to Promote Sufficient Budgetary Reserves

Context: Following years of volatile tax revenues, rising municipal costs, and fiscal uncertainty, New York City currently lacks a binding legal benchmark for how much money it must keep in emergency reserves. This proposal establishes a clear 12% reserve target to force long-term fiscal discipline and prevent sudden, severe budget cuts to core city services during future economic downturns. These target methodology requirements will take effect **immediately upon election certification** to apply to upcoming municipal budget cycles.

A YES vote means:

- **Reserve Goal and Plan:** The City establishes a formal goal to maintain total reserves (including the existing Rainy Day Fund) equal to at least 12% of the previous year's tax revenue, and must publish a multi-year plan to achieve this target.
- **Flexible Savings:** The City can build savings over several years or pause deposits during financial hardship, with final annual deposit amounts continuing to be set through the Mayor and City Council budget process.
- **Rainy Day Withdrawal Cap:** The rule capping Rainy Day Fund withdrawals at 50% without an official mayoral certification of financial urgency is formally codified into City law.
- **Budgeting Trade-Off:** Emergency reserves are strengthened to cushion future service cuts during downturns, though funds saved are unavailable for immediate spending on current City services.

A NO vote means: Maintenance of the current context