

NYC GENERAL ELECTION · NOVEMBER 3, 2026

Five questions on your 2026 ballot

A guide to the proposed amendments to the New York City Charter



THE BASICS

Key dates for the November 3 election

DATE	WHAT HAPPENS
Mon, Oct 19	Last day to update your address
Sat, Oct 24	Registration deadline; last day to request a mail ballot online or by mail
Oct 24 to Nov 1	Nine days of early voting
Mon, Nov 2	Last day to request a mail ballot in person
Tue, Nov 3	Election Day: polls open 6 am to 9 pm

Where these proposals came from

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Mayor Zohran Mamdani's **Commission on Government Efficiency** heard from 264 New Yorkers at ten hearings, then unanimously adopted five amendments to the **City Charter**, the city's governing document.

Each is a separate yes-or-no vote. If a majority votes yes, the Charter changes.

The shared goal is faster approvals from city government.

The shared question is what oversight is traded for that speed.

THE BASICS

All five at a glance

#	TOPIC	WHAT A YES VOTE WOULD DO
1	Public space	Faster approvals for sidewalk cafes, ramps and planters
2	City contracting	Simpler contractor paperwork; quarterly board meetings
3	Streets, property, leases	Fast-track street safety projects, property sales and office leases
4	Building permits	One central permit hub; waterfront permits move to Buildings
5	Rainy day fund	A savings target and a plan for making deposits

QUESTION 1 · PUBLIC SPACE · WHAT IT DOES

Faster permits for sidewalk cafes, ramps and planters

ON YOUR BALLOT

"Simplify process to use public space for uses such as ramps, planters, and cafes, by removing mandatory hearings and Council disapproval of sidewalk cafes, while maintaining community and Council input."

A YES vote means

Public hearings become optional and online notice replaces newspaper ads. The Council can no longer disapprove sidewalk cafes. Approvals drop from up to 8 months to about 2.

A NO vote means

The current process stays: mandatory public hearings and City Council review of sidewalk cafe applications.

QUESTION 1 · PUBLIC SPACE · THE DEBATE

Faster approvals vs. Council oversight

The case for

- About 75% faster approvals
- Saves businesses thousands per application
- Local boards and officials still notified

The case against

- Could mean more sidewalk obstructions
- Public notice shrinks from 15 days to 6
- Council loses its vote on cafe applications

KEY DEBATE

Is cutting months of wait for small businesses worth giving up a guaranteed public hearing on what goes on your block's sidewalk?

QUESTION 2 · CITY CONTRACTING · WHAT IT DOES

Less paperwork for city contractors

ON YOUR BALLOT

"Reduce paperwork for City's contractors by authorizing Procurement Policy Board to simplify contractor questionnaire. Require quarterly meetings of the Procurement Policy Board. Remove mandatory hearing for required client services report."

A YES vote means

The Procurement Policy Board can tailor the contractor questionnaire by contract size or vendor type, and must meet at least quarterly. The Mayor can delegate approval of larger contracts.

A NO vote means

The current detailed questionnaire and contract approval process, with Mayor and Comptroller oversight, stays in place.

QUESTION 2 · CITY CONTRACTING · THE DEBATE

Faster contracts vs. fewer safeguards

The case for

- Easier for small vendors and nonprofits
- Some nonprofits wait a year to be paid
- Comptroller review and audits stay

The case against

- Drops questions that help catch corruption
- Less public data on subcontractors
- Saves only about 30 of 387 days

KEY DEBATE

With \$42 billion a year going to contractors, is shaving about a month off worth a lighter screening questionnaire for some vendors?

QUESTION 3 · STREETS, PROPERTY, LEASES · WHAT IT DOES

Fast-tracking street safety projects, city property and office leases

ON YOUR BALLOT

"Simplify review of street safety projects to reduce construction timelines. Fast track disposition of unused City property with approval from City Planning Commission. Expedite leasing offices used for City workforce."

A YES vote means

DOT can start bus and bike lane projects before presenting to community boards. Small property deals go from about 7 months of review to 90 days. Office leases no longer need Council approval.

A NO vote means

Full consultation before street projects, and City Council approval of property deals and office leases, stay in place.

Safer streets sooner vs. less community input

The case for

- Bike and bus lanes built about 33% faster
- 13 of 37 major street projects missed 2026
- Council review did not catch recent lease scandals

The case against

- Work can start before community boards weigh in
- Skipped steps can no longer stop a project in court
- Three unrelated changes in one vote

KEY DEBATE

Should bike and bus lanes break ground before your community board weighs in, and be shielded from lawsuits over skipped steps, to get built a third faster?

QUESTION 4 · BUILDING PERMITS · WHAT IT DOES

One central hub for building permits

ON YOUR BALLOT

"Create centralized construction permits hub to simplify permitting. Move waterfront permitting from Department of Small Business Services to Department of Buildings. Allow construction approval by additional Department of Buildings officials."

A YES vote means

One portal for all permit applications, due by 2030 if funded. Waterfront permits move to Buildings, and more senior Buildings officials can give final approval.

A NO vote means

Today's system stays: about 40 approvals from 18 agencies, each with its own process, and waterfront permits stay with Small Business Services.

Simpler permits, few objections

The case for

- One front door for 40 approvals from 18 agencies
- New buildings average 4+ years to occupancy
- Safety and zoning standards don't change

The case against

- League and Citizens Union raised none
- Hub has no firm deadline: 2030 "or later"
- Hub depends on future funding

KEY DEBATE

Few oppose the goal. The real question is delivery: will writing a hub into the Charter make it happen, when it still awaits funding and a firm date?

QUESTION 5 · RAINY DAY FUND · WHAT IT DOES

A savings target for the city's rainy day fund

ON YOUR BALLOT

"Set target amount of money to hold in reserve funds, including rainy day fund, to address unexpected financial hardships in future years, and require development of methodology to calculate contributions."

A YES vote means

A target of 12% of last year's tax revenue (about \$11.5 billion). A formula guides deposits in good years, approved in each budget. Big withdrawals need a declared fiscal need.

A NO vote means

No target is set. The rainy day fund, created in 2019 and holding about \$2 billion, keeps relying on yearly budget deals.

QUESTION 5 · RAINY DAY FUND · THE DEBATE

Savings discipline vs. budget flexibility

The case for

- First target and deposit formula since 2019
- Saves only in good years, so services aren't squeezed
- Big withdrawals need a declared fiscal need

The case against

- Comptroller and budget watchdog urge 16 to 18%
- Retiree health money counts toward the 12%
- Deposits still are not required

KEY DEBATE

Budget watchdogs want a bigger, stricter fund. Economists and the Council's own staff warned rigid rules could force cuts in a crisis. Which risk worries you more?

LEARN MORE

Sources and voter resources

Commission on Government Efficiency: final report

nyc.gov/charter (adopted July 23, 2026)

League of Women Voters of NYC

lwvnyc.org/proposals-2026

THE CITY: what to know about the five questions

thecityreporter.nyc (Sept. 23, 2026)

NYC Votes: election calendar

nycvotes.org/how-to-vote/election-calendar

Vital City: the rainy day fund proposal

vitalcitynyc.org (Aug. 6, 2026)

NYC Votes: 2026 ballot proposals

nycvotes.org/whats-on-the-ballot

Citizens Union recommendations

citizensunion.org (Oct. 1, 2026)

NY1: commission unveils five proposals

ny1.com (July 21, 2026)