



January 1, 2026

Mayor Zohran Mamdani
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Mamdani,

Congratulations on your inauguration as New York City's 112th Mayor. The voters of New York City have entrusted you with the awesome responsibility of leading this city and its 8.5 million residents, and charting a safe, healthy, and productive future for us all. I look forward to working with you and the team you are assembling to do so in the weeks and months ahead.

As you begin that endeavor, I want to share with you some of this organization's primary concerns, and highlight ways in which we hope you will diverge from your predecessors in terms of policies, projects, and practices.

This includes:

- **Troubling and Dramatic Aversion to New Landmark Designations Under Mayor Adams:** As per our [report issued in December of 2025](#), analyzing all landmark designations during the sixty years of the landmarks law, from 1965 to 2025, we found the following troubling and very apparent trends under Mayor Adams which we urge your administration to reverse:
 - Landmark designations under Mayor Adams reached all-time lows, including in comparison to Mayors such as de Blasio and Bloomberg who immediately preceded him. His rate of landmark designations was as much as ten times lower than that of his predecessors.
 - The dramatic reduction in landmark designations cut across all geographies and all categories of designations, with the number of buildings landmarked down by 99% in Upper Manhattan, 65% in the Outer Boroughs, and 99% in the "Manhattan Core."
 - The very few designations made typically bypassed immediately endangered or vulnerable sites and instead focused on sites already landmarked, already subject to city regulation which could ensure their preservation, sites facing no foreseeable danger or vulnerability, and designations such as interior designations that have limited utility due to the ability of owners to nullify them by closing the space to the public.

Along these lines, under your predecessor, the Landmarks Preservation Commission refused to act upon several proposed landmark designations with broad support from the local community, local elected officials, scholars, academics, preservationists, and a broad range of interest groups and New Yorkers connected to the histories they embody. I strongly urge you to reconsider this inaction before it's too late to do so:

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- **South of Union Square Historic District:** Determined [eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places](#) and named one of the Preservation League of New York State's "[Seven to Save](#)" in 2022-2023, the area is distinguished by a broad range of [19th and early 20th architecture](#) by some of New York's most distinguished architects, as well as an incredible array of sites connected to [Black](#) and [LGBTQ+ civil rights history](#), the [women's movement and women's suffrage](#), [artistic](#), [musical](#), [literary](#), and [publishing history](#). An increasingly large number of buildings in the proposed approx. 190 building district are threatened or have been demolished.
- **Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, 229 West 14th Street** (1902, 1921): The very [first Spanish-language church in New York](#), this Spanish Baroque style structure is threatened with demolition.
- **New York Eye and Ear Infirmary, 216-222 Second Avenue** (1856, 1893, 1903): The [oldest specialized hospital in the Western Hemisphere and the second oldest hospital in New York](#), NYEEI has been the location of incredible innovations and care for people with hearing and vision disabilities (Helen Keller cut the ribbon at the opening of the building's newest section in 1903). Currently there are no New York City landmarks designated primarily for their significance to the history of people with disabilities. The building and institution are currently threatened.
- **Most Holy Redeemer Church, 173 East 3rd Street** (1852, 1913): Once one of the tallest and largest churches in the city, this monumental structure has served waves of immigrants over the years, from the Germans it was originally founded to serve to southern and Eastern Europeans and more recently Latin Americans. The church and its connected school have been [the site of profound innovations in church liturgy and fire safety](#). The church is currently threatened.
- **Completely Inappropriate Plan for "[Gansevoort Square](#):"** Over overwhelming community objection and feedback, Mayor Adams selected a development plan for this narrow sliver of public land on Little West 12th and West Streets that would include super-luxury housing and a scale and density that is unheard of and unprecedented in this area — a 60 story tower rising straight up with 600 apartments, making for a floor area ratio of 60, which is double that of the Empire State Building. Given that this is public land, we demand that:
 - All market rate housing be eliminated from the project.
 - The height of the tower be reduced by 50-75% (which would eliminate all luxury housing from the plan)
 - Clear measures be provided to ensure that the affordable housing remains 100% affordable in perpetuity.
- **Plans for Demolition of the [Tony Dapolito Recreation Center](#) and Development of City-Owned Land at [388 Hudson Street](#):** Here as well, Mayor Adams in his final hours in office put forward plans that completely ignore the overwhelming public sentiment expressed for the use of these sites. [We call upon you to:](#)
 - Repair and reopen the long neglected landmarked Tony Dapolito Recreation Center, which was promised to this community years ago, and which you promised to do during the campaign. The building can and should be brought up to code and made disabled accessible, with new recreational facilities at 388 Hudson Street allowing

uses that would work best to be located in the new building and those that can function well within the parameters of the historic building going there. More than \$120 million was allocated for these repairs over the years and remains largely untouched and available for this use.

- Maintaining the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center for recreational purposes would reduce the required size of the new recreational facilities at 388 Hudson Street, reducing the overwhelming and utterly out-of-scale dimensions of that proposed new building. The number one point of feedback offered by the public during the so-called “engagement process” designing this project was not to go too tall and keep the scale and design in context with its surroundings. The plan put forth by the Mayor in his final days in office utterly fails to do so.
 - Public feedback called for a lower, squatter building that stepped back from the adjacent J.J. Walker Park and the Greenwich Village Historic District which the site directly faces, using the larger loft buildings to its south and west as a benchmark for height. Instead, the design utilizes a grossly-out-of-scale tower that appears to exceed 350 feet in height, making it the tallest ever built in Greenwich Village, placed on top of a huge podium containing the new recreation center, the size of which is unnecessarily inflated by demolishing the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center and removing all recreation facilities from there.
 - The monotonous, pockmarked design of the facade of the tower bears no relationship whatsoever to its surroundings and should be rethought. Public feedback made clear that a design which related harmoniously to its surroundings was a priority for this community, and especially for this visually prominent site.
 - This plan must provide clear and ironclad guarantees that all its housing will remain 100% permanently affordable — without contingencies or loopholes.
- **Plans for a 538 ft. tall tower at [5 West 13th Street](#).** A developer claims that new “City of Yes” regulations allow the construction of an obscenely tall and out of context tower here containing just roughly 30 oversized super luxury condos; no affordable housing or any other public benefits are required or included. This is exactly the type of development we warned “City of Yes” would allow and encourage — larger, taller luxury housing unaffordable to all but the absolute richest potential residents, when housing at that price point is actually relatively abundant in our city and not what is needed. We and others have filed a [zoning challenge](#) citing some very specific requirements of the zoning regarding street walls and other technical issues which we believe these plans fail to satisfy. While no construction permits have yet been issued, the Department of Buildings has also not responded to the challenge, and given no indication of when it will. We urge you to ensure that there is a clear and thorough response to the challenge, and that your administration consider if this type of development is in fact what it believes is appropriate or desirable at this location.
 - **[Failure to protect landmarked and older structures from illegal work](#), or penalize owners for responsibility for doing so, resulting in housing loss, displacement, and destruction of landmarked sites.** Under recent administrations, landmarked buildings have been damaged or destroyed due to illegal work by their owners or neighboring property owners at an alarming rate. Relatedly, we’ve seen several disturbing examples of work done at or next to

older buildings that have resulted in serious damage or destruction. The result in all cases is that people's homes — often relatively affordable and/or rent regulated units, typically with older and/or longer term residents — are made temporarily or permanently uninhabitable, their occupants are made homeless, and a source of what is frequently cheaper housing is lost. In the case of landmarked or otherwise historic buildings, there is additionally a loss of sites of significance that merit preservation. Previous administrations have done little or nothing to address this problem, and disturbingly allowed those responsible to avoid any serious penalty or consequence. Just a few examples in our neighborhoods include [14-18 Gay Street and 16-20 Christopher Street](#), [10-16 Fifth Avenue](#), [44-54 Ninth Avenue/351-355 West 14th Street](#), [105-107 Bank Street](#), and [642 East 14th Street](#). We have [made recommendations to prior administrations](#) about how best to address this growing problem, which were largely ignored for window dressing solutions that failed to move the needle at all, and likely were not designed to. I urge your administration to take meaningful action to address this dangerous and damaging trend.

- [**The failure of upzonings, market-based “supply increase” strategies, and Mandatory Inclusionary Housing policies to improve affordability, and the harm they do instead.**](#) We fundamentally disagree with the premise of many of the prior administration's policies that deregulating development to encourage a greater level of market-rate housing production will make housing more affordable in our city, and that a failure to do so is a cause of its expense. New York City builds more housing than any city in the country, even as our population is hundreds of thousands less than its pre-pandemic peak. [We have more housing now and more housing per person than we've ever had in the city's history](#), and yet [our housing is also more expensive than it's ever been, and our housing prices are rising more quickly than they are in other cities](#). That is because the housing we are building is unaffordable to by far the majority of New Yorkers, and we are losing our older and more affordable housing stock, often to make way for the new more expensive housing and as a result of policies that encourage its destruction. [Analysis shows that when neighborhoods are upzoned](#), they tend to become more white and less Black and Hispanic, and frequently actually lose Black and Hispanic residents even as population and housing increases. In neighborhoods with lower levels of development, including those with landmarks and zoning protections, the opposite dynamic tends to be more common — the neighborhoods generally see the proportion of Black and Hispanic residents rise, and its share of Asian residents rises more rapidly than in other parts of the city. Current Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) policies exacerbate this problem, largely because they are only applied in tandem with very large upzonings, vastly increasing the amount of market rate housing that can be built and incentivizing the destruction of existing older and often affordable housing. It should be noted that previous administrations have refused to impose affordability requirements of new multi-family housing development without also including the large and destructive increases in the allowable size of market rate housing which incentivizes the loss of existing affordable housing, and adds more of the unaffordable housing the city does not lack.

An illustration of this dynamic are the false promises and premises of MIH upzonings like [SoHo/NoHo](#) (which actually includes parts of Chinatown), approved in 2021. More than four years after this highly controversial and hotly debated rezoning, which promised to make

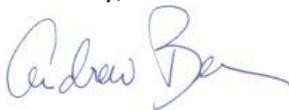
housing production easier, create affordable housing, protect existing affordable housing, ensure that all new housing it enables includes on-site affordable housing, and to increase the diversity and accessibility of the affected area, [it has been a spectacular failure on all accounts](#). Not a single unit of housing has been created since its passage, while hundreds of units in over a dozen projects were created in the rezoning area before the rezoning was passed (corporate offices and luxury retail spaces have however been built under the new zoning). Multiple units of existing affordable rent regulated housing have been destroyed in preparation for planned projects under the rezoning. [Multiple projects allowed by the new zoning have been planned and are moving towards development](#) which will contain exclusively super-luxury housing, [including a single-family mansion and a condominium development with in-unit swimming pools for the huge and very expensive units](#) — none of which would have been allowed under the old zoning. One development being planned will include affordable units, but segregated into an off-site “poor building” with exclusively super-luxury units on the main development site. Currently, more affordable housing has been destroyed by the rezoning than created. And recent analysis shows that the [Asian population of Chinatown](#), which includes the rezoning area and blocks directly adjacent to it, has [dropped substantially](#) since the rezoning — [much as we predicted it would](#).

While new projects will no doubt emerge as the years continue to pass, it’s clear that the promises about existing affordable housing not being destroyed to make way for new housing, and all new housing including on-site integrated affordable housing, were false. It’s also clear that even if new residential development does eventually include the promised fraction of “affordable housing,” [even those developments will make this neighborhood less socio-economically diverse than it is now](#), as the 20-25% “affordable” units typically require incomes higher than the poorest 20-25% of these areas have, and the 75-80% market rate units typically sell or rent at prices unaffordable to all but the wealthiest 10% or less of these neighborhoods.

For all these reasons, we urge you to rethink the approach of your predecessors towards stripping away zoning regulations to encourage larger market rate development, and to instead focus on creating truly affordable housing where possible, maintaining a reasonable flow of new market rate housing construction that respects neighborhood context, and shaping development and other policies which discourage rather than encourage the destruction and loss of existing older affordable housing, and to take proactive steps to protect it.

I hope your administration will thoughtfully consider all of these matters. I look forward to working with you and your commissioners and staff on making New York a greater city for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Berman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: Public Advocate Jumaane Williams
Manhattan Borough President Brad Hoylman-Sigal
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