

COMMITTEE ON LAND USE JOINTLY WITH

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY 1

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON LAND USE JOINTLY WITH
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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March 9, 2023
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HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Rafael Salamanca, Chairperson
Committee on Land Use

Jennifer Gutierrez, Chairperson
Committee on Technology

COUNCIL MEMBERS COMMITTEE ON LAND USE:

Shaun Abreu
Joseph C. Borelli
Erik D. Bottcher
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
Kamillah Hanks
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Darlene Mealy
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COMMITTEE ON LAND USE JOINTLY WITH

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY 2

COUNCIL MEMBERS COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY:

Robert F. Holden

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Sarah Carroll, Commissioner of Landmarks
Preservation Commission

Lisa Kersavage, Executive Director of Landmarks
Preservation Commission

Akeem Bisharu, Director of Financial Management

Dan Garodnick, Director of City Planning and
Chair of the City Planning Commission

Edith Hsu-Chen, Executive Director of City
Planning Commission

David Parish, Chief Financial Office of City
Planning Commission

Matthew Fraser, Commissioner and Chief Technical
Officer at Office of Technology and Innovation

Chantal Senatus, Deputy Commissioner for Legal
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Edwin Pemberton, Deputy Commissioner for
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Ryan Birchmeier, Deputy Commissioner for Public
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William Spisak, Senior Program Associate at New
Economy Project

Stuart Reid, co-Chairman of The Smart Community
Initiative

Paula Segal, Senior Staff Attorney in the
Equitable Neighborhoods Practice of TakeRoot
Justice

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning. This is a
sound check for the Committee on Land Use jointly
with Technology. Today's date is March 9, 2023.
Located in the Committee Room. Recording done by
Pedro Lugo.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and
welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for
the preliminary budget for the Committee on Land Use
joint with Technology.

At this time, we ask that you silence
cell phones and electronic devices to minimize
disruptions throughout the hearing. We thank you for
your cooperation.

Mr. Chair, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: [GAVEL] Good
morning and welcome to the preliminary budget
oversight hearing for the Landmarks Preservation
Commission, Department of City Planning, and
Department of Information Technology and
Telecommunications known as DoITT.

This hearing will begin with the
Landmarks Preservation Commission before moving on to
the Department of City Planning and finally DoITT
where the final portion will be held jointly with our

Committee on Technology under the leadership of Chair
Gutierrez.

Public testimony related to the three
agencies will be taken after testimony and Committee
questions for all of the agencies has concluded. If
you are here to testify today and have not already
done so, please see one of the Sergeants-at-Arms to
prepare a speaking card.

At this time, I want to welcome any
Colleagues joining us as Members of the Land Use
Committee including Council Members. We've been
joined by Council Members Moya, Hanks, Bottcher, Ung,
Borelli, Chair Louis, Abreu, and Chair Riley.

I want to especially thank Council
Members Riley and Louis for their leadership as
Chairs of the Zoning and Landmarks Subcommittee.

Before we begin, I would like to
recognize the Committee Counsel to review the meeting
procedures.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL HUH: Thank you, Chair
Salamanca. I am Arthur Huh, Counsel to this
Committee.

For the benefit of those here today or
viewing the livestream, please note again that the

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2 public testimony portion of this proceeding will be
3 after all three of the administration panels have
4 testified.

5 If you have written testimony that you
6 would like to submit, you may email it to
7 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

8 Council Members who are physically
9 present and would like to ask questions should
10 indicate so verbally. Council Members joining
11 remotely should use the Zoom raise hand function.
12 Chair Salamanca will recognize Members to speak.

13 We ask all participants for your
14 continued patience in the event of any technical
15 difficulties.

16 Chair Salamanca will now continue with
17 today's agenda.

18 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you,
19 Counsel. This is a critical time to invest in City
20 Planning. Our communities are being deeply impacted
21 by a lack of affordable housing. The historic lack of
22 investment in communities of color compounded by the
23 environmental justice issues that affect the health
24 of our youth must be addressed now. The City also
25 needs to adapt to remote work, and neighborhoods need

1
2 to become more resilient to climate change. As the
3 Administration likes to say, we need to get stuff
4 done, and we need to build more affordable housing
5 and provide the needed infrastructure now. Yet, today
6 we are presented with a preliminary budget that
7 proposes to reduce the City Planning's budget by 10
8 percent. The agency already has a staggering 20
9 percent vacancy rate. How can DCP get stuff done with
10 such a high vacancy rate and reduced budget? If the
11 City is actually going to plan and provide for the
12 needs of our community, City Planning must have
13 sufficient staff and resources to address those
14 needs. We have two objectives today. First, to
15 clearly understand the causes of the high vacancy
16 rate and City Planning, and the second, identify the
17 resources that DCP, LPC, and DoITT needs to make the
18 City more equitable and to actually get stuff done.

19 Chair Louis would like to make a
20 statement ahead of LPC's testimony.

21 CHAIR LOUIS: Thank you, Chair Salamanca.
22 Investments in Landmarks Preservation Commission are
23 investments in what makes our city the greatest in
24 the world. The people and places that make up its
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2 history and communities and that inspire us to move
3 into the future.

4 I would like to commend the Commission
5 work for its recent work in communities who history
6 has to be often marginalized, that of black,
7 Hispanic, LGBTQIA, women New Yorkers to name, and I
8 look forward to a discussion around continuing and
9 expanding this work and the LPC's preliminary budget
10 process to reduce rather than increase agency
11 resources. As we discussed the proposed budget, we
12 must work to ensure that the Commission has the
13 resources it needs to continue its vitally important
14 work.

15 I am especially interested to discuss the
16 disturbing citywide trend of the demolish of
17 designated buildings following unpermitted or poorly
18 executed repair work. The City must make sure that
19 the historic designations are not just symbolic and
20 that they actually fulfill their essential public
21 policy purpose of protecting our city's great
22 heritage.

23 I also look forward to discussing LPC's
24 staffing needs. Headcount and budget for salaries
25 have both been reduced. Given the increase in

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2 applications, the shifting of resources towards
3 enforcement actions and the rise in demolition by
4 construction, it is urgently important that the LPC
5 has the necessary resources to do its work at its
6 highest standard.

7 I am very interested in your testimony
8 today, and I look forward to a dialogue.

9 Thank you, Chair Salamanca.

10 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you, Chair
11 Louis.

12 I will now ask the Counsel to swear in
13 our panelists as we begin.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL HUH: Panelists, would
15 you please raise your right hand and state your name
16 for the record?

17 CHAIR CARROLL: Sarah Carroll.

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KERSAVAGE: Lisa
19 Kersavage.

20 DIRECTOR BISHARU: Akeem Bisharu.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL HUH: Do you affirm to
22 tell the truth, the whole truth, the whole truth and
23 nothing but the truth in your testimony before this
24 Committee and in your answer to all Council Member
25 questions?

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CHAIR CARROLL: I do.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KERSAVAGE: I do.

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DIRECTOR BISHARU: Yes, I do.

5

COMMITTEE COUNSEL HUH: Thank you. You may
6 begin.

7

CHAIR CARROLL: Thank you, Chair Salamanca
8 and Chair Louis. Good morning to you and the Members
9 of the Land Use Committee.

10

I am pleased to be here today to speak
11 about the Landmarks Preservation Commission's Fiscal
12 Year 2024 preliminary budget. I am joined today by
13 Lisa Kersavage, our Executive Director, and Akeem
14 Bisharu, our Director of Financial Management.

15

The Commission's mission is to protect
16 the significant architectural, historical, and
17 cultural resources of our city. The preservation of
18 historic resources revitalizes communities, supports
19 economic development and contributes to the vitality
20 of New York City. It is my honor to lead the agency
21 in its successful efforts to realize these important
22 public policy and quality of life goals.

23

To date, the Commission has designated
24 and regulates almost 38,000 buildings and sites
25 throughout the five boroughs. As Chair, one of my

1
2 primary goals is to incorporate equity and diversity
3 in all aspects of the agency's work, particularly to
4 ensure diversity and inclusion in our designations
5 and fairness, transparency, and efficiency in our
6 regulations so that all property owners have equal
7 access to resources, technical assistance, and
8 expertise.

9 Since I last testified on our agency's
10 budget, LPC has been focused on several key
11 initiatives:

12 Designating buildings and districts that
13 reflect the city's diversity and tell the stories of
14 all New Yorkers.

15 Transforming the permit process to make
16 it more accessible to all New Yorkers.

17 Developing programs to support small
18 businesses and educate property owners about
19 permitting processes and grant opportunities.

20 Importantly, we are also working with
21 other agencies to advance Mayor Adams' Get Stuff
22 Built Plan, and we have identified steps to improve
23 efficiency and transparency in our permitting
24 process.

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2 I will begin my testimony today by giving
3 a brief overview of LPC's budget and how resources
4 are allocated. LPC's preliminary budget for Fiscal
5 Year 2024 is 7 million dollars, which consists of 6.3
6 million in City funds and 622,000 in federal
7 community development block grant funds. LPC is
8 fundamentally an agency of professionals. 90 percent
9 of the preliminary budget, 6.1 million dollars, is
10 allocated to personal services and 10 percent,
11 862,000 dollars, is allocated to other-than-personal
12 services. Our budget supports the agency's five
13 departments including the Research Department,
14 responsible for evaluating and advancing properties
15 for designation, the Preservation Department that
16 reviews permit applications for work on designated
17 properties, the Enforcement Department that
18 investigates complaints of potential violations and
19 helps owners correct noncompliance, and the
20 Archeology and Environmental Review Departments that
21 assist city, state, and federal agencies in their
22 environmental review process. The agency's total
23 headcount in the Fiscal Year 2024 preliminary budget
24 is 74. Of the CDBG funding, about 80 percent of
25 allocated to personnel supporting critical community

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2 development related functions such as surveys,
3 environmental review, archeology, community outreach
4 and education while about 20 percent, or
5 approximately 115,000 dollars, is allocated for our
6 Historic Preservation Grant Program for low-income
7 homeowners and not-for-profit organizations.

8 I will now discuss the work of the
9 Commission that these resources support. LPC's equity
10 framework guides our priorities for designations, and
11 the agency has focused on places that represent New
12 York City's diversity and areas less represented by
13 landmarks. In the first half of Fiscal Year '23, LPC
14 designated the Lesbian Herstory Archives and Julius'
15 Bar Building, two sites of significant LGBTQ+
16 history, the architecturally significant Gompers
17 Industrial High School in the South Bronx, an area
18 where we have few landmark designations, and the
19 Melrose Parkside Historic District in the Flatbush
20 Neighborhood of Brooklyn, a distinctive district in a
21 diverse, predominantly African American and Afro-
22 Caribbean community. We have also recently calendared
23 for designation the Linden Street Historic District
24 in Bushwick, and two individual landmarks with
25 important cultural and historic significance, the

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2 former Colored School Number 4 in Manhattan and the
3 Bronx Opera House.

4 I will now turn to our Preservation and
5 Permitting Operations. Owners of designated
6 properties are tasked with the responsibility of
7 stewardship for the city's significant historic
8 buildings. I believe it is imperative to support
9 them. The key to success in preservation is effective
10 regulation, which requires an efficient, transparent,
11 and accessible process for applicants. Buildings are
12 living, thriving contributors to the dynamism of New
13 York City. Our job is not to prevent change but to
14 manage it so that we can ensure these significant
15 buildings and sites are protected and allowed to
16 remain a vital part of our city's continued growth.
17 Our Preservation Department is the regulatory arm of
18 the Commission, and it is the largest department
19 within the agency. Our staff are professionally
20 trained preservationists who work with property and
21 business owners to help them obtain approval for work
22 that meets their needs and is sensitive to the
23 historic building and context. Each year,
24 approximately 94 to 97 percent of permits are issued
25 by the staff pursuant to the Commission's rules. The

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2 remaining 3 to 6 percent of the applications are
3 reviewed by the full Commission. LPC staff works
4 closely with property owners including meetings and
5 other communications to ensure they understand the
6 criteria and review process and to help them put
7 together a complete application and presentation. In
8 Fiscal Year 2022, the Commission received 12,378
9 permit applications and took action on 11,423
10 applications ranging from restoration and repairs to
11 windows in storefronts to additions and new
12 buildings. Through February of this Fiscal Year, we
13 have received about 7,800 applications and are on
14 pace to match or surpass the Fiscal Year '22 total.
15 LPC is working with OTI to advance a major technology
16 upgrade, an e-filing portal that will streamline our
17 permitting process and improve customer experience.
18 Applicants and property owners will be able to upload
19 supporting documentation, view the status of the
20 applications at every step in the process, and
21 receive final permits. We anticipate that we will
22 launch the portal at the end of this Fiscal Year.
23 Once launched, our staff will conduct training
24 sessions on how to use the new system for our diverse
25 constituency which ranges from homeowners to seasoned

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2 professionals. Our Preservation Department continues
3 to develop and maintain resources to help applicants
4 and owners put together complete applications and
5 process permits quickly. We've continued our Open
6 Office Hours Initiative, launched as part of our
7 equity framework in which members of the public can
8 virtually drop in for technical assistance and to
9 discuss pending applications with our Preservation
10 staff.

11 In summer of 2022, LPC launched a new
12 program, the Business Express Service, which is a
13 one-stop shop for business owners in Landmark
14 buildings making it easier for them to get permits.
15 We coordinated with the Department of Small Business
16 Services and Building Improvement Districts citywide
17 to spread the word about this program, and we look
18 forward to continuing our efforts to support small
19 and local businesses in the new Fiscal Year.

20 While the risk of demolition or
21 deconstruction of designated buildings is very low,
22 LPC and DOB are working together to analyze threats
23 and assess our policies and practices. The two
24 agencies are in the process of finalizing an action
25 plan that will strengthen enforcement tools that

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2 preserve the City's most vulnerable historic
3 buildings. The plan is intended to protect designated
4 buildings that are at risk due to hidden pre-existing
5 conditions, owner neglect, and contractor negligence.
6 It will focus on earlier detection of risks to
7 designated buildings, more robust engineering
8 oversight, increased coordination between the
9 agencies, and more robust community outreach,
10 employing new digital tools and stakeholder outreach.

11 I will now share some further details
12 about the outreach and education work LPC conducts.
13 Outreach and education are also essential to our
14 success. My goal is to make information accessible to
15 everyone, and in a city as diverse as New York, we
16 need to make sure that we are effectively
17 communicating with property owners across the city.
18 Since my tenure began, we have increased community
19 outreach efforts and now place special emphasis on
20 reaching out to communities across all boroughs that
21 have not traditionally been well-represented by LPC.
22 We have also published new educational materials to
23 improve access to important information. This is
24 important for our regulatory work and generations
25 support for designations.

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2 Before I conclude, I want to return to
3 the Historic Preservation Grant Program, a modest
4 federally funded program targeted for low- and
5 moderate-income homeowners and not-for-profit
6 organizations to help restore and repair the facades
7 of their Landmark buildings.

8 In Fiscal Year '22, the program awarded
9 two grants to homeowners in the Bronx and Brooklyn
10 and one to a not-for-profit institution in Brooklyn
11 for amounts ranging from 30,000 to 36,000 dollars.
12 The homes are located in Bedford-Stuyvesant Brooklyn
13 in the Manida Street Historic District in the Bronx
14 respectively. The institution is the Brooklyn Sunday
15 School Union within the Brooklyn Academy of Music
16 Historic District. In Fiscal Year '23 thus far, LPC
17 voted to award four grants to homeowners and one not-
18 for-profit institution for amounts ranging from
19 25,000 to 35,000. The homes are in Addisleigh Park
20 Queens, Greenpoint Brooklyn, Manida Street in the
21 Bronx, and Central Harlem. The institution is the New
22 Amsterdam Music Association located in Harlem.

23 In summary, we're excited for the future
24 of preservation in New York City and thank the
25 Administration and the Council for your continued

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2 support and the resources provided in this budget. We
3 are a small agency, and nearly the entirety of our
4 budget is personnel-based. This is a hard-working,
5 dedicated, and professional staff with an outsized
6 impact on our city responsible for the protection and
7 preservation of its most significant buildings,
8 districts, and sites. Our commitment is that we will
9 continue to do so with the resources provided and
10 strive to do so equitably, efficiently, and
11 transparently.

12 Thank you, again, for allowing me to
13 testify, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

14 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you, Chair.
15 I will allow Chair Louis to start with the line of
16 questioning followed by Council Member Bottcher.

17 CHAIR LOUIS: Thank you, Chair. I just
18 want to thank the LPC for all your efforts in my time
19 as Chair of this Committee communicating and
20 educating BIPOC communities across the city on the
21 agency and what you all provide so I want to thank
22 you on that. If anyone beats you up, that's not my
23 fault.

24 My first question, the Fiscal 2024
25 Preliminary Budget includes a saving of 113,000 in

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2 Fiscal 2023 and 226,000 in Fiscal 2024 and the out-
3 years, eliminating the three vacant positions that I
4 mentioned earlier. Additionally, as of December 2022,
5 LPC has six vacancies within the agency for a vacancy
6 rate of 11.7 percent. Are there particular titles
7 associated with the three reduced positions as well
8 as the six vacancies within your budget?

9 CHAIR CARROLL: Yes, there are. The
10 headcount reduction of three is associated with two
11 Landmarks Preservationist titles and a Community
12 Coordinator. The vacancies include those three
13 positions as well as a Computer Associate which is
14 critically important for implementing new technology
15 tools for efficiency and transparency and a Director
16 of Communications. The sixth vacancy is a member of
17 our research team who is on parental leave and will
18 be returning by the end of this Fiscal Year.

19 CHAIR LOUIS: Are those particular
20 positions you mentioned part of the new program that
21 was implemented?

22 CHAIR CARROLL: Part of?

23 CHAIR LOUIS: There was a new program that
24 you all implemented, borough program.

25 CHAIR CARROLL: The Business Express?

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CHAIR LOUIS: Yes.

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CHAIR CARROLL: Not specifically connected
to the Business Express Service.

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CHAIR LOUIS: Got it. What do you project
your active headcount to be at the end of Fiscal Year
2024?

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CHAIR CARROLL: At the end of Fiscal Year
2024, the headcount would be 74 with six part-time
staff for a total staff of 80 people.

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CHAIR LOUIS: LPC has seen a steady
increase in the number of permit applications. The
number of work permit applications received during
the first four months of Fiscal 2023 was 4,234
compared to 4,091 during the same period in Fiscal
2022, a 3.5 percent increase. What factors do you
believe led to the increase in the number of work
permit applications during the first four months of
Fiscal 2023?

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CHAIR CARROLL: I think the increase in
the applications is good news. I think it's a sign of
the economy recovering, and we're actively working to
meet the demands of those increased applications.

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CHAIR LOUIS: I think I kind of asked this
before, but I want to make sure I add it now. With

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2 the reduction of the three positions, how will that
3 impact the increase in the process of applications
4 now that there's more applications?

5 CHAIR CARROLL: One of those positions is
6 an LP position from the Preservation Department.
7 However, I would say that over the last year, we had
8 a number of vacancies in that department, and we
9 worked very hard. Those positions are subject to the
10 Civil Service Exam and so we worked very hard to
11 navigate that system and have backfilled all of those
12 vacancies so at this point that department is where
13 it had previously been staffed so I am confident we
14 can meet the increased applications, which are still
15 not quite at pre-pandemic levels.

16 CHAIR LOUIS: With more communication, I
17 think we're going to have more this year.

18 My last question and I'll hand it over to
19 council Member Bottcher. Has LPC awarded any Historic
20 Preservation Grants to date of Fiscal 2023?

21 CHAIR CARROLL: We have awarded four
22 grants in Fiscal Year 2023 to homeowners, and we have
23 awarded a grant to a not-for-profit as well. The four
24 grants for homeowners are one in Addisleigh Park
25 question, one in Greenpoint Brooklyn, one in Manida

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2 Street in the Bronx, and one in Central Harlem, and
3 then the institution is the New Amsterdam Music
4 Association which is also located in Harlem.

5 CHAIR LOUIS: Right, which you mentioned
6 earlier. Thank you so much. Council Member Bottcher.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHER: Thank you so
8 much, and thank you for this courtesy, greatly
9 appreciate it.

10 Last year, a cut was proposed and
11 collectively we all fought the cut and ultimately
12 that was restored in the budget. This year, an
13 additional cut is proposed, somewhat smaller, but it
14 would result in a reduction of headcount of three
15 which in a small agency like the LPC that's
16 meaningful. Over the past year in my Council District
17 and across the City, we've seen the loss of historic
18 structures due to owner neglect and contractor
19 negligence. Should we not be increasing funding to
20 the LPC to stop this pattern from happening?
21 Additionally, in your testimony you stated that the
22 LPC and the DOB were in the process of finalizing an
23 action plan that will strengthen enforcement tools
24 that preserve the City's most vulnerable historic
25 buildings. Can you give us a preview of that action

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2 plan and how would these proposed cuts hobble these
3 efforts?

4 CHAIR CARROLL: Thank you very much. I do
5 want to start out by saying that we have seen an
6 unfortunate clustering of buildings that have been
7 put at risk due to owner neglect and illegal work and
8 also unknown pre-existing conditions. It is still
9 relatively rare when you consider the 38,000
10 buildings that are under our jurisdiction, but we
11 were also very concerned that it happened in a
12 relatively short period of time, and so we undertook
13 a study to analyze those threats and worked with our
14 Colleagues at the Department of Buildings. We also
15 met with the Preservation and Community Groups and we
16 met with preservation professionals in other
17 municipalities across the country to understand if
18 they were seeing similar impacts on aging buildings,
19 and we convened a round table of engineers to
20 understand what happened in each of the instances,
21 and ultimately our analysis led us to identify these
22 three primary risks. One is unknown pre-existing
23 conditions which are not caused by work or neglect.
24 They just are an aging building, and those conditions
25 can be revealed when work is happening, and actually

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2 that's an opportunity to make a difference and
3 protect those buildings or deal with public safety.
4 Illegal work, which is something that is a real
5 challenge because you can't control bad actors, but
6 you certainly can take enforcement actions, and we
7 have been doing that. I am pleased to say, though,
8 that the illegal work, we've gone back 20 years, and
9 there have only been really three instances of
10 illegal work resulting in the demolition or
11 deconstruction of facades so it doesn't appear yet to
12 be a significant pattern, but something we're deeply
13 concerned about and taking action on. The third is
14 sort of the broader category which is owner neglect
15 and how to pursue demolition by neglect, and that's
16 something that we have always taken very seriously,
17 and we work very hard to pursue it. In the case of
18 one of the buildings in those recent five incidents
19 that did have to be demolished, that was a building
20 where we had worked for years, sued the owner,
21 prevailed in court, and, despite prevailing in court,
22 the owner still didn't make repairs. The judge issued
23 three orders for the owner to make repairs. Those
24 were still ignored, and, despite being in contempt of
25 court, the owner didn't make those necessary repairs.

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2 This is a long process but something we actively work
3 on, but I would say each of these three distinct
4 causes are not staffing related per se. This why our
5 plan really focuses on early detection so that we
6 have the time to get through the legal processes and
7 the court system before we're at a place where the
8 building becomes a public safety issue. It also
9 focuses on more engineering oversight of our
10 applications to help us identify some of those pre-
11 existing conditions, and that is going to be dealt
12 with by changing the process of applications. It's
13 not a staffing issue. A large part of it is also
14 increased coordination with our Colleagues at
15 Department of Buildings, and that includes sharing
16 data and coordinating more site visits together and
17 joint inspections. Finally, we really do want to
18 partner with our Colleagues in the community who are
19 on the ground so local Council Members but also the
20 community groups and block associations who are the
21 eyes on the street and make sure that they know
22 what's happening and what buildings are at risk and
23 we're going to create some digital tools to create
24 that transparency but also increase communication

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2 with them so that we can benefit from their
3 experience on the street.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: I will recognize
6 Council Member Hanks for questions.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Good morning. Thank
8 you so much. I appreciate it.

9 My District is the North Shore of Staten
10 Island. We have many historic buildings. I'm not sure
11 whether they're landmarked as of yet, but do we have
12 any public/private partnerships that we do with
13 development because I know in my District some of the
14 buildings are being looked at as development as
15 preserving them so I just wanted to ask the question,
16 especially in lieu of the disparity with the budget,
17 is there any public/private partnerships with
18 development as of yet?

19 CHAIR CARROLL: I think when it comes to
20 designations really, we have expert researchers and
21 historians, and when we designate we have to ensure
22 the accuracy of our information so I think that
23 that's something that even if we do have sort of a
24 partnership with a private entity, we have to do that
25 work ourself to ensure that it's accurate. In terms

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2 of permitting, I think that also is sort of something
3 we have to do solely as the objective and expert eyes
4 looking at applications so I'm not sure that there
5 are opportunities.

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KERSAVAGE: I would
7 just add that we have designated a number of cultural
8 institutions, parts of Sailor' Snug Harbor are
9 designated, and I think we try and work very closely
10 with the institutions running those. We try to bring
11 awareness about the various grants, tax credits,
12 other kind of opportunities for funding so we try to
13 be very, very collaborative with those cultural
14 institutions and try and sort of develop those
15 partnerships.

16 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Council Member
17 Mealy for questions.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you. I just
19 have one question. You said, what would you start
20 doing about buildings that are in disrepair? You
21 would take it over and try to..

22 CHAIR CARROLL: We don't take over
23 buildings, but we work very closely with property
24 owners for all of our landmarks to ensure that they
25 can remain in good repair and that they meet the

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2 owner's needs. In cases where buildings are being
3 neglected, it takes a lot of work to work with those
4 property owners. Sometimes it's hard to even find the
5 owners, and we've had to take some creative steps to
6 find owners and then to work with them and sometimes
7 they don't have the resources so we do partner with
8 other institutions that can maybe provide some
9 funding assistance, but, ultimately, they are as
10 Landmark owners responsible to maintain the building
11 in good repair. We work really closely to help them
12 do that before we have to enter into a lawsuit, but,
13 if nothing is happening, we will pursue it legally.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: What is your budget
15 in regards to religious institutions that are in
16 disrepair and neglected and need help? Is there any
17 money set aside in this budget to really help them,
18 if you know who the owner is, and sometimes they just
19 don't know how to go about filling out the paperwork,
20 but it's a plight on the community because it's in
21 disrepair so how much of this city budget...

22 CHAIR CARROLL: The budget funds are
23 staff, and our staff works incredibly closely with
24 houses of worship.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: But no specific
3 budget for that?

4 CHAIR CARROLL: Our budget really is
5 personnel-based so it pays for our staff to
6 designate, review applications, and to assist
7 property owners, and we have a dedicated staff that
8 works specifically with religious institutions that
9 understand their needs.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: How many staff
11 designated for that?

12 CHAIR CARROLL: We have a main
13 Preservationist and then a second Preservationist who
14 assists. They understand the unique needs and
15 challenges that our religious institutions are
16 facing.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Do they have a
18 database in regards to how many churches or religious
19 institutions that do need dire help, that you have a
20 list now?

21 CHAIR CARROLL: We have a list, and we can
22 get you exact numbers, but it's about 270 religious
23 buildings are designated as individual landmarks, and
24 about 370 are designated within historic districts so
25 that 500-something number of buildings is a

1
2 relatively small percentage of our 38,000 buildings
3 and sites so we are very selective. We understand the
4 needs. We do outreach to them, but we also, as I
5 said, we meet them at the site, they have a personal
6 Preservationist that they can call if something
7 happens, if they need technical assistance. Some of
8 the technical assistance that our expert staff can
9 provide can actually save money in the long run so I
10 think we try to be a resource for those institutions.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay, but y'all
12 probably need more money in the budget to help to get
13 these institutions and historic buildings off your
14 list, right? Do you have enough funding for it?

15 CHAIR CARROLL: Well, no, they're
16 designated, and they'll remain designated. We don't
17 have a list of which ones are in disrepair, and I'm
18 not sure that there is such a list, but we do know
19 that many religious institutions have smaller
20 congregations and complex buildings and unique needs,
21 and we work very closely with them to help them meet
22 their needs.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Y'all are historic,
24 right? If it's an historic building, the City is
25 trying now to change over office buildings

1
2 retrofitted to housing. If a church wanted to do
3 that, would that be open or any...

4 CHAIR CARROLL: We do. We partner with
5 religious institutions to change the use in a portion
6 of their buildings or to develop a new building on
7 their lot if they have additional lot that is part of
8 the designated site and then even when religious
9 institutions no longer occupy the building, we do
10 approve new uses for those buildings.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you. You
12 answered my question. Thank you so much.

13 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you, Council
14 Member Mealy.

15 Just before I start my line of
16 questioning, I just want to follow up on some of the
17 questions from Council Member Mealy. Chair, do
18 religious institutions qualify for the federal
19 community development block grant?

20 CHAIR CARROLL: We do accept applications
21 from religious institutions. Because it's federally
22 funded, we cannot award a grant on a portion of the
23 building that is used for worship, but we can award
24 grants for other portions of the building. Last year
25 in Bushwick, we funded work to repair a leaning

1
2 steeple at the First Reform Church in Bushwick. We
3 paid first for an engineer to do an assessment, and
4 then after that we awarded 30,000 dollars for a grant
5 to do the repairs and partnered with the New York
6 Landmarks Conservancy, which is a not-for-profit that
7 has a program for religious properties, and they also
8 provided funding for the repair of the steeple, and
9 it's an incredible success and we're delighted that
10 we were able to participate in that.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Chair, could I ask
12 you something? Is this church and state?

13 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: That goes to my
14 next line of questioning. If there's a church, the
15 actual structure, if it's landmarked, just give us
16 some clarity, do they qualify for the grant to fix
17 any exterior capital needs, and the interior capital
18 needs they cannot, or can you just explain that to
19 us?

20 CHAIR CARROLL: Right. We couldn't fund
21 restoration of the sanctuary where they worship, but
22 we could fund the restoration of the steeple on the
23 outside, or if they have a related community space.
24 We gave a grant to the portion of the building of
25 another church that was used for a daycare.

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2

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Okay, all right.

3

With that, thank you, Chair Carroll.

4

5

First, I want to say thank you to you and
your team. Maybe about a year and a half ago, two

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years ago, we did a landmark in my District, the

7

Hunts Point Manida Street, and I know that there were

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some challenges there, but your team did some

9

research and we figured out to ensure that they are

10

preserved, that block, that neighborhood is

11

preserved, and my constituents are extremely happy

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with the decision, and it's great to see that they've

13

qualified for these grants.

14

CHAIR CARROLL: Yeah, we've now awarded

15

two grants in that historic district.

16

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Is that just one

17

homeowner or is it multiple homeowners?

18

CHAIR CARROLL: It's two separate

19

homeowners so last Fiscal Year we awarded a grant to

20

841 Manida Street, and this year we awarded a grant

21

for 856 Manida Street.

22

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Okay. Do you know

23

the amount of these grants? You don't have to give me

24

per home, but in total?

25

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2

CHAIR CARROLL: They were approximately
30,000 to 35,000 dollars.

3

4

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: A piece?

5

CHAIR CARROLL: Yeah.

6

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: A piece. All
right. Just to continue on with these grants, and I
ask this question every year. The federal government
allocates 622,000 dollars. Is that correct for the
federal community block grant?

7

8

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10

11

CHAIR CARROLL: The federal government
allocates money to the City, and then we are budgeted
622,000 dollars of that money.

12

13

14

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: How much does the
federal government allocate to the City?

15

16

CHAIR CARROLL: I don't know the answer to
that. We get 622,000. I don't know how much the City
gets.

17

18

19

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: All right. Is it
possible that you can follow up with this Committee,
because I would like to know what the breakdown is.
In terms of the 622,000 dollars, how much of it goes
to actual grants and how much of it goes to your
personal services?

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25

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2 CHAIR CARROLL: 80 percent of it goes to
3 personal services for community-related functions
4 like survey work and environmental...

5 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: I'm sorry. You
6 said 80 percent goes to personal services?

7 CHAIR CARROLL: Yeah. The other 20 percent
8 is the 115,000 dollars for the grant program, and
9 every year we have awarded as much as we could, we've
10 gone up to 115,000. We have not received applications
11 that we've had to reject because we don't have the
12 money, and if we did receive additional eligible
13 applications we would work with our Colleagues at OMB
14 to address those needs.

15 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: 80 percent is
16 almost 500,000 dollars out of the 622,000 dollars.
17 How many staffers do you have working there?

18 CHAIR CARROLL: We have three staff that
19 are dedicated to the grant program, and they work
20 with the property owners to help them through the
21 application process, then we do the bidding process,
22 we award the contracts to the contractors, and then
23 we do project management of the work. Again, I want
24 to be clear that we have not had to reject any
25 applications for lack of funds so if we did have more

1
2 applications than we could fund we would work with
3 our Colleagues at OMB.

4 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: If you were to
5 calculate personal services, research, and the grant,
6 what's the average amount that you spend per awardee?

7 CHAIR CARROLL: The average amount is
8 between 25,000 and 35,000 dollars.

9 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Yes, but if you
10 add, I'm just trying to understand if it's almost
11 500,000 dollars for personal services and you have
12 three employees, that averages out to about 165,000
13 dollars per employee.

14 CHAIR CARROLL: Okay, just to be clear,
15 the money that supports our PS portion of our budget
16 is not just for the grant program. That money
17 actually supports community-related functions like
18 our survey work that our research department does,
19 our environmental review work where we do survey and
20 assist the lead agencies through environmental
21 review, our archeology department, and our outreach
22 programs so the 400-something, nearly 500,000 dollars
23 supports all of those staff.

24 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: All right. Go
25 ahead. I'm sorry.

1
2 CHAIR CARROLL: It supports five full-time
3 and one part-time staff.

4 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: I'm sorry?

5 CHAIR CARROLL: It supports five full-time
6 staff and one part-time staff.

7 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Last year, how
8 many awardees did you have for this grant? Four?

9 CHAIR CARROLL: Last year we had four
10 altogether, and this year so far we've had five.

11 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Awardees?

12 CHAIR CARROLL: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: That's great news.
14 Okay. Thank you on that.

15 I want to move on to some other lines of
16 questioning. I want to recognize that we've been
17 joined by Council Member Brooks-Powers and Council
18 Member Sanchez.

19 I want to speak briefly regarding your
20 PMMR, regarding your enforcement. The LPC enforcement
21 actions increased tremendously year over year from 32
22 in the first four months of Fiscal Year 2022 to 136
23 in Fiscal Year 2023 as a result of a temporary
24 reallocation of staff services. Those were the
25 wordings that the LPC gave us at Land Use, temporary

1
2 reallocation of staff services. What is driving the
3 surge in enforcement actions?

4 CHAIR CARROLL: I would say that our
5 enforcement program is complaint-driven so we respond
6 to complaints by the public, and I would say first
7 that post-pandemic as people started to be out and
8 about more, people started to notice work and call in
9 complaints so I think is what has increased the
10 amount of complaints, and then we investigate every
11 single complaint and as those complaints increased we
12 shifted staff within the department to investigate
13 those complaints, to meet those demands.

14 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: What kind of
15 actions specifically have increased?

16 CHAIR CARROLL: I'm sorry?

17 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: What kind of
18 complaints have increased?

19 CHAIR CARROLL: If we get complaints and
20 we investigate it and we find that the work is work
21 that has happened without a permit or in
22 noncompliance with a permit, we issue a warning
23 letter, and, if the violation is not addressed after
24 that warning letter, we then issue a summons which
25 requires an appearance at OATH, and, if they don't

1
2 address it again, we issue a second summons that
3 requires also an appearance at OATH and penalties,
4 but the majority I would say of our enforcement
5 actions are resolved before we have to take those
6 second and third steps. One thing that I would note
7 is that the numbers of complaints and the numbers of
8 actions don't necessarily correlate because we may
9 get five complaints for one building and it's one
10 investigation to that building. Similarly, we might
11 do an investigation at one building and find multiple
12 conditions that are in violation and issue multiple
13 actions so in some ways the number of complaints,
14 number of investigations, and number of enforcement
15 actions varies, and they're sort of distinct.

16 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: What's the most
17 common complaint?

18 CHAIR CARROLL: Windows, I think the
19 installation of windows without permits or the
20 replacement of windows without permits.

21 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Okay.

22 CHAIR CARROLL: I think signage is
23 probably also another top one. We can find out the
24 exact work type.

25

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: All right. I want to talk briefly about your headcount. How many employees do you currently have on staff?

CHAIR CARROLL: We currently have 71 full-time staff and six part-time staff.

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: How many vacancies do you have?

CHAIR CARROLL: Six.

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: You have six vacancies?

CHAIR CARROLL: We have six vacancies. I would note that one of those vacancies is actually a person who's on parental leave and is due back before the end of the Fiscal Year.

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Okay. I believe that you provide an essential service to maintain New York City, and you have a small budget, and so the concern is that if you can continue to operate with these vacancies, OMB may want to eliminate those positions. What is your position on that?

CHAIR CARROLL: We have been working very hard to fill vacancies. The majority of our positions are subject to civil service exams and lists and so we've been working through that, and we've filled a

1
2 large number of vacancies that we had had prior to
3 this year, but, unfortunately, as is a national
4 trend, we also lost a couple of other positions. We
5 are working with OMB to actively fill the two
6 vacancies that are not subject to the PEG, which are
7 critical positions for us. It's a computer associate
8 that is going to help us with our technology
9 improvements for efficiency and our Director of
10 Communications.

11 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: So you have no
12 Director of Communications now?

13 CHAIR CARROLL: Not at this time. We're
14 working actively to fill it.

15 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Okay. All right.
16 Do you have any questions, Council Member Louis? All
17 right.

18 Finally, your permit applications. LPC
19 has seen a steady increase in the number of permit
20 applications. The number of work permit applications
21 received during the first four months for Fiscal Year
22 '23 was 4,234 compared to 4,091 during that same
23 period, which is an increase of 3.5. What factors do
24 you believe led to an increase in numbers of work
25 permit applications during the first four months?

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2 CHAIR CARROLL: Yeah, and I think this is
3 a sign of the economy recovering so I think it's a
4 good sign that people are doing work again, and I
5 would say that we're working hard to meet and balance
6 the needs of all of our applicants and meet the
7 demands. We have backfilled all of the vacancies that
8 we had last year in the department that reviews
9 applications and issues permits so that department is
10 now where it was before we started having vacancies,
11 and we are continuing to evaluate and monitor the
12 increase in applications and the agency's needs and
13 will continue to work with OMB on any needs
14 identified.

15 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Has your vacancy
16 rate made the increase in permit applications more
17 difficult than usual?

18 CHAIR CARROLL: I would say last year the
19 vacancy rate did have an impact on our staff's
20 ability to process permits as efficiently as they
21 would have in the past, but, as I said, we have
22 backfilled all of those vacancies, and we're
23 confident at this point that we'll meet the needs.

24 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: How big is your
25 backlog for the permit applications?

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CHAIR CARROLL: I'm sorry?

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Your backlog, do
you have a backlog?

CHAIR CARROLL: We don't have a backlog
per se. Applications come in on a rolling basis, and
some can be issued within two days, some can be
issued within 10 days, and those, again, 5 percent of
our applications cannot be approved at the staff
level, those require review by the full Commission at
a public hearing so obviously those take longer, but
they're moving on a sort of rolling basis, and the
staff issues 80 to 85 percent of all of the permits
within 10 days that are being handled at staff level,
and I would like to say, as I mentioned in my
testimony, last year we had a new need that was
funded to develop and build an e-filing portal which
we anticipate will increase the efficiency immensely
both for the staff and for the applicants who engage
with us and thereby improve customer experience.

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Okay, thank you.

Are there any other Members that would like to ask
questions? I want to recognize Council Member Pierina
Sanchez.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so
3 much, Chair. I just have a brief question. Over the
4 years, there have been several instances, some of
5 which we've worked on together, where buildings that
6 are not calendared, not designated as landmarks have
7 been proposed for demolition and communities have
8 been concerned about that, wanting to take action. Do
9 you have a number of the amount of times that that
10 has happened over the last three, four years for
11 instance, and can you remind us what is the process
12 to calendar a building? Do you think it's fast enough
13 to be responsive to community concerns like this?

14 CHAIR CARROLL: I don't think I have a
15 number specifically on that, but what I would say is
16 that our research staff surveys thousands of
17 properties every year and develops an inventory of
18 properties that may merit designation. We also get
19 requests to evaluate properties from the public,
20 which we do, and if those properties are determined
21 to may merit consideration they're also included in
22 that inventory, and we work very hard to make
23 decisions on which items the agency should calendar,
24 and those decisions are based on whether they're sort
25 of equitable across all five boroughs, whether they

1
2 fit within our goals of equity and equitable
3 representation in our designations, and what the
4 level of threat is can also be a factor and how they
5 compare to other similar building types that are
6 designated. We do an extensive amount of comparative
7 analysis, but all of our decisions are merit-based
8 decisions, and we do act on those as we first
9 determine merit and do the research to determine
10 merit. We also do an extensive amount of outreach as
11 well with the local Council Members and owners.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Just because I'm
13 on the clock, my question is really around the
14 timeline.

15 CHAIR CARROLL: I think that once we
16 advance properties to the calendar, we calendar and
17 we designate for individual landmarks within one year
18 and for historic districts we have within two years
19 to designate from the time that it's calendared, but
20 decisions on what to calendar and what to prioritize
21 are done with the research team and staff and
22 consider factors including goals of equity and
23 looking across all five boroughs.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: From the time
25 that a member of the public or community or some

1
2 entity like that proposes a site for consideration
3 for the calendar, how long does that take?

4 CHAIR CARROLL: We don't have applications
5 for designations so all so all designations are
6 Commission-led initiatives so if we get a request to
7 evaluate a property from a member of the public, we
8 do an analysis. In some cases, we find that it
9 doesn't merit consideration. In cases where we do
10 find that it merits designation, it's included in the
11 inventory with the other properties that we've
12 surveyed and among those we determine...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: What is the
14 timeline from the request to the...

15 CHAIR CARROLL: We generally respond
16 within a month. A request to look at a historic
17 district can take longer because we do a more in-
18 depth building-by-building analysis.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Just a
20 quick followup and then maybe, Lisa, you can answer
21 both of them. You said thousands are reviewed
22 annually. What are the criteria for properties
23 entering into the list for consideration by the
24 Commission?

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2 CHAIR CARROLL: We work with the research
3 department to determine priorities for surveys, and
4 they're looking across, again as we are now focused
5 on equity across all communities, we've been focusing
6 our survey work on neighborhoods that have been less
7 well-represented by landmarks. We actually last
8 summer did an extensive district-by-district survey
9 in the Bronx because that's a borough in general that
10 is less well-represented by landmarks and so we
11 determine, as we do with which items to move ahead
12 with designation, we prioritize which areas we want
13 to allocate resources for survey work.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KERSAVAGE: I just
15 wanted to note when something is calendared, our
16 timeframe for actually moving through the designation
17 process in the last few years has averaged around
18 three months or four months for individuals,
19 sometimes a little bit longer, but as Sarah, we had
20 the one year, and then districts we've been doing
21 generally in about six months, although we have the
22 full two years, but it depends on the owner outreach
23 and we've been trying to do a lot more owner outreach
24 in communities where there aren't as many
25 designations.

1
2 CHAIR CARROLL: And in those communities
3 as we look at representing areas that haven't been as
4 well-represented, there's also less familiarity with
5 Landmarks Commission and what it means to be
6 designated so that outreach is important.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Got it. Thank
8 you. Thank you, Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you. I want
10 thank you, Chair Carroll, and your team for
11 testifying today at the Preliminary Budget hearing
12 and we look forward to continuing to work with your
13 agency.

14 We're going to take a two-minute recess,
15 and we're going to bring up the Department of City
16 Planning up next.

17 All right, good afternoon. Now, we will
18 continue the Land Use Preliminary Budget hearing and
19 hear from the Director of City Planning and Chair of
20 the City Planning Commission, Dan Garodnick, with the
21 Executive Director Edith Hsu-Chen and the Chief
22 Financial Officer David Parish.

23 Before City Planning testifying, Chair
24 Riley would like to make a statement.

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CHAIR RILEY: Thank you, Chair Salamanca.

3

Thank you to all the Administration panelists and my

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Colleagues on the Committee and Subcommittee in

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attendance here today.

6

The Council's work in land use touches

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the lives of all New Yorkers. Today, the Council

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exercises its mandate for fiscal oversight over

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public funds as prescribed by the City's Charter. To

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that end, part of our task today is to assess the

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work conducted by the Department of City Planning and

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to ensure the Department is equipped to undertake its

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own important work. DCP is uniquely positioned to

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address a vast array of challenges confronting New

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Yorkers, including the need for housing and

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affordable housing, addressing food insecurities,

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providing reasonable access to public transportation,

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and protecting against the consequences of climate

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change. The Department has the potential to foster

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comprehensive long-lasting positive impacts on our

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physical, social, and natural environments, and it's

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our goal to realize its potential. However, this can

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only be achieved through a critical review of its

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operations.

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1
2 Thank you, Chair Salamanca, for the
3 opportunity to speak, and I look forward to a
4 productive conversation today with the
5 Administration. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you, Chair
7 Riley. I will now ask the Counsel to swear in the
8 panelists and we may begin.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL HUH: Panelists, would
10 you please raise your right hands and state your
11 names for the record?

12 CHAIR GARODNICK: Dan Garodnick.

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HSU-CHEN: Edith Hsu-
14 Chen.

15 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH: David
16 Parish.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL HUH: Do you affirm to
18 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
19 truth in your testimony before this Committee and in
20 answer to all Council Member questions?

21 CHAIR GARODNICK: I do.

22 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HSU-CHEN: Yes.

23 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH: Yes.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL HUH: Thank you. You may
25 begin.

1
2 CHAIR GARODNICK: Great. Good afternoon,
3 Chair Salamanca, Subcommittee Chairs Riley and Louis,
4 nice to see you, and distinguished Members of the
5 Land Use Committee. My name is Dan Garodnick. I am
6 joined by City Planning's Executive Director Edith
7 Hsu-Chen and our Chief Operating Officer, David
8 Parish. We thank you very much for the opportunity to
9 be here today to discuss the Department of City
10 Planning's Preliminary Fiscal Year 2024 budget.

11 Before we get to our budget items, I
12 wanted to highlight some of the critical work that
13 City Planning has led since the start of this
14 administration and the initiatives that we are
15 preparing to advance into public review.

16 First, I will point to the fact that in
17 2022, the City Planning Commission advanced and the
18 City Council approved over 12,000 new homes, 7,500 of
19 them income restricted, through New York City's
20 public review process. This is a big deal and is
21 enough homes for approximately 30,000 New Yorkers. As
22 we work to take on our severe housing crisis, and
23 from many angles, it is important to say that every
24 home we can approve and then see built across our
25 city plays a role in our collective efforts to bring

1 rents down, reduce gentrification pressures, protect
2 tenants, and address homelessness so I wanted to take
3 a moment to thank you for your critical partnership.
4 We really do appreciate it and enjoy it.
5

6 One way we're looking to create housing
7 and create more affordability is our collective work
8 to make it easier for underutilized office buildings
9 to convert to homes. This is part of the larger
10 agenda set by Governor Kathy Hochul and Mayor Adams
11 through the Making New York Work for Everyone Action
12 Plan to reimagine our central business districts.
13 Advocating for rational changes to the dates of
14 eligibility for office buildings to convert as well
15 as the applicable geography along with a tax
16 incentive that would bring permanently income-
17 restricted units to office conversions is a key part
18 of this proposal and is something that would help us
19 to advance our fair housing goals.

20 We also are very excited about three in-
21 development City of Yes zoning initiatives, which
22 seek to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, support
23 economic growth, and create a lot of new housing. The
24 first of these initiatives, which we call City of Yes
25 for Carbon Neutrality, is expected to enter public

1 review the Monday after Earth Day so only a few short
2 weeks away.

3
4 We also have several neighborhood plans
5 that are already underway. In connection with the
6 four new Metro North Stations that are expected to
7 open in the East Bronx in 2027, our Bronx Metro North
8 Plan is projected to create 10,000 jobs and 6,000
9 homes in Morris Park and Parkchester/Van Nest.

10 Council Member Marjorie Velazquez, Council Member
11 Amanda Farias, Chair Riley, Chair Salamanca, and
12 Council Member Oswald Feliz have been extremely
13 engaged, and I thank all of you for your ongoing
14 work.

15 Additionally, with significant guidance
16 and leadership from Council Member Crystal Hudson,
17 public engagement around our Atlantic Avenue Mixed-
18 Use Plan is well underway. This plan seeks to bring
19 jobs and housing to an already transit-rich stretch
20 of the Brooklyn thoroughfare.

21 And launched on the heels of the Mayor's
22 State of the City announcement, we're also in the
23 preliminary stages of studying potential changes to
24 areas of Midtown South to ensure the long-term
25 success of the area's legacy manufacturing zones as

1
2 vibrant, 24/7 mixed-use communities. We are working
3 closely with Council Members Erik Bottcher and Keith
4 Powers and also Borough President Mark Levine.

5 As this Body knows, we recently announced
6 a new division at City Planning, the Community
7 Planning and Engagement Division. Led by Lara Merida,
8 this group of seven is leading public engagement and
9 community outreach on all our initiatives to make
10 sure that community voices and needs are front and
11 center as we shape these plans. I will add here in
12 that I used to sit in the seats where you all are
13 sitting, it is extremely important to me to make sure
14 that we do that and we do that right.

15 With support from across the agency, and
16 as the division was being shaped last year and
17 working closely with tenant advocate groups, the
18 division built in-house what we call the Equitable
19 Development Data Explorer. The award-winning tool is
20 used by City Planning, the City Planning Commission,
21 and New Yorkers to directly access data about how New
22 York City communities are changing. This tool is the
23 result of a local law passed by the City Council in
24 2021. I will add that because it was built in-house

1
2 City Planning was able to return 500,000 dollars to
3 the City in savings.

4 With a 2-million-dollar federal grant,
5 our new engagement division and our Bronx Office are
6 presently working with the City's Department of
7 Transportation as we seek with community to reimagine
8 the Cross Bronx Expressway, a roadway that has
9 divided and polluted local communities for more than
10 half a century. We are eager to move this process
11 along with our federal partners.

12 Now, looking internally, City Planning
13 continues to be laser-focused on hiring staff to meet
14 the ambitious goals we've set under your and the
15 Mayor's leadership, for housing, job creation, and
16 climate resiliency. In the last year, City Planning
17 has hired 74 new staff members. That translates to us
18 hiring a planner or IT professional, for example,
19 roughly every three working days in 2022. It has
20 reshaped and renewed our ranks at all levels and has
21 brought our head count to 282.

22 Before I turn to City Planning's budget
23 needs, I want to speak about our efforts around the
24 Mayor's Building and Land Use Approval Streamlining
25 Task Force, otherwise known as BLAST, which includes

1
2 111 concrete actions. DCP is leading approximately 20
3 of these initiatives and serving as a partner agency
4 on 20 more, and our explicit goal is to provide
5 better, faster, and improved service in our review of
6 applications. For example, we are currently advancing
7 proposals to establish a Land use Express Application
8 Process, LEAP, to skip process steps and expedite
9 review for simple projects, reducing the pre-cert
10 period for these projects by more than 50 percent,
11 improve our application commenting process to reduce
12 the revision loops between our staff and applicants,
13 enhance the quality of our environmental review data
14 products to facilitate faster and more consistent
15 analyses, and bolster our menu of digital tools to
16 automate more of the application preparation process,
17 facilitate improved communication through our
18 applicant portal, and provide greater transparency on
19 public applications.

20 Now, for a financial overview: DCP
21 entered Fiscal Year 2023 with an Adopted Budget of
22 49.1 million dollars and an authorized headcount of
23 347 full-time staff positions, of which 34.8 million
24 dollars, 71 percent, and 178 positions are funded
25 with City Tax-Levy dollars. DCP's remaining 14.3-

1 million-dollar budget allocation and 169 positions
2 are funded by State and Federal grants, primarily
3 through HUD's Community Development Block Grant
4 Program. The 49.1 million dollars Fiscal Year 2023
5 Adopted Budget allocated 31 million dollars, almost
6 two-thirds of DCP's operating budget, to agency-wide
7 personal services, which include part-time staff,
8 interns, and members of the City Planning Commission,
9 and the remaining 18.1 million dollars to other-than-
10 personal-services.
11

12 In comparison to the Fiscal Year 2023
13 Adopted Budget, City Planning's Fiscal Year 2024
14 Preliminary Budget of 44.3 million dollars and 348
15 full-time staff lines, represents a net 4.8 million-
16 dollar decrease, the combined effect of a 5.1-
17 million-dollar reduction in OTPS and a slight 318,000
18 dollar and one-headcount increase in Personal
19 Services. This 4.8-million-dollar decrease in the
20 Fiscal Year '24 Preliminary Plan is largely
21 attributed to the completion of work that was funded
22 by one-time Federal grants to measure building
23 elevations and subgrade spaces throughout the City
24 and to examine adaptive reuses of outdated office
25 buildings with the goal of converting underutilized

1 commercial space into new and affordable housing, a
2 subject we had the pleasure of speaking with this
3 Committee on just about a week ago.

4
5 Focusing on DCP's OTPS, the Department's
6 Fiscal Year '24 Preliminary Budget allocates 13
7 million dollars to pay for agency operating expenses
8 aside from staffing, such as supplies, community
9 outreach, and various contractual services. The OTPS
10 budget contains 5.1 million dollars less than its
11 18.1-million-dollar Adopted Budget from '23. This
12 relatively large outflow of funding reflects 1.1
13 million dollars in efficiency savings identified to
14 achieve DCP's share of Citywide PEG targets combined
15 with 4.9 million dollars in temporary funds that
16 expire at the end of this year and are offset by
17 900,000 dollars in new needs to implement the BLAST
18 initiative, which as I noted a moment ago is a series
19 of land use and environmental application process
20 reforms.

21 Shifting to staffing, the Department's
22 '24 Preliminary Budget allocates 31.3 million dollars
23 to PS compared to 31 million dollars in the '23
24 Adopted Budget. The 31.3-million-dollar figure
25 represents a 318,000-dollar increase for funding for

1
2 agency personnel and net gain of one new position.
3 Headcount and associated funding changes include a
4 reduction of seven positions and a reduction of
5 402,000 in personnel funding, elimination of six tax-
6 levy funded vacancies and 284,000 dollars to achieve
7 agency savings in line with the Mayor's Program to
8 Eliminate the Gap, expiration of one short-term
9 staffing tax-levy funded resource and 75,000 dollars
10 funded in previous plans that are slated to exit the
11 budget at the end of Fiscal Year 2023, 44,000 dollars
12 in savings to the City as a result of lower-than
13 expected spending in DCP's paid 2022 summer
14 internship program, these seven positions and the
15 associated 402 dollars in reduction is offset by the
16 addition of eight new positions and 720,000 for the
17 Mayor's BLAST initiative.

18 Overall, these combined PS and OTPS
19 budget changes result in a decrease of 4.8 million
20 dollars accompanied by a one-position increase to
21 City Planning's budget, establishing a Fiscal Year
22 '24 Preliminary Plan of 348 full-time authorized
23 positions and 44.3 million dollars, of which 31.3
24 million dollars is allocated to agency-wide personnel
25

1
2 services and 13 million dollars is allocated to
3 other-than-personal-services.

4 DCP will continue to distribute its
5 resources in the most effective way possible to
6 advance the Department's work program and to meet the
7 needs of New Yorkers, all while striving for bigger,
8 better, and brighter future for our beloved city.

9 Thank you very much, Chair Salamanca and
10 Subcommittee Chairs Riley and Louis and Members of
11 the Committee for the opportunity to share that
12 information with you, and, of course, we are here to
13 answer any of your questions.

14 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you, Chair
15 Garodnick.

16 I'm going to start with a line of
17 questioning regarding the vacancy rate. The average
18 city planner at DCP earns 85,000 dollars per year
19 with a range that begins as low as 63,000 dollars a
20 year. This is below the average salary for comparable
21 private sector jobs and even public sector jobs in
22 other agencies. Other agencies such as DOT, HPD, and
23 DCAS employ city planners at salaries over 100,000
24 dollars per year, which incentivizes qualified
25 candidates that are interested in public service to

1
2 go after other agencies and subsequently keep the
3 vacancy rate for DCP high. Do you believe that
4 raising the starting salary for city planners for DCP
5 would lower the vacancy rate and improve agency
6 performance and speed?

7 CHAIR GARODNICK: First of all, thank you
8 for the question, and it certainly is something we
9 hear from employees, former employees, prospective
10 employees when considering their options. Certainly,
11 the starting salaries for certain titles are, as you
12 mentioned, in some cases even lower than what you
13 mentioned so we recognize that this is a point of
14 concern for applicants and the impact is that
15 potentially we lose people to some of the other
16 agencies just like you cited in your question. One of
17 the real challenges that we have seen over the past
18 year is we have been not-exempt from the challenges
19 that have been national in scope, tight labor market,
20 and we, as a result, saw the departure of 73 planners
21 or other professionals in our agency, and we hired 74
22 people in the year 2022 so for an agency of our size
23 we hired at a very rapid clip, one employee every
24 three and a half working days so we were working very
25 hard to try to keep up and to make sure that we were

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able to provide the highest possible level of service, but that was a significant swing of about 140 people in an agency of our size was a big shift so we were not exempt from the challenges that we're seeing nationally, but we do believe that with our current headcount and where we are headed with training our new people, bringing them up to speed, able to invest in them that we believe we are now in a much better position than we were in the start of last year.

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: How many city planners do you currently have on staff?

CHAIR GARODNICK: I'm going to turn to David Parish to answer the specific question because it's about a specific subset of our team.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH: It's about 172.

CHAIR GARODNICK: I will note, if the question is about current active staff, it is 269 is what we are. Now, our staff is made up of city planners which is how I interpreted your question specifically to city planners but we have professionals who do all sorts of different things.

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: How many city
planners specifically?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH: It's
roughly 170.

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: 170 city planners
on staff currently right now.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH:
Currently.

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: When you hire a
city planner, what is the starting salary?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH: The
starting salary for a city planner 1 which requires a
bachelor's degree and two years of experience or a
master's degree is 55,208.

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: 55,000...

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH: 208
dollars.

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: For a city planner
with a master's degree?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: What's your
retention rate with your city planners? How long do
they stay in DCP?

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2 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH: In the
3 last year, we had significant attrition as Dan noted.
4 I believe it was, overall 26 percent, for city
5 planners specifically it was 24 percent so a very
6 significant shift.

7 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: So 26 percent
8 stayed for how long?

9 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH: This is
10 just attrition in the last year.

11 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Do you know in
12 terms of your city planners their average lifespan
13 working for DCP?

14 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH: I'd have
15 to get you exact figures and I'm happy to do that
16 after the hearing. Anecdotaly, it's generally two to
17 six years.

18 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Two to six years?

19 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH: Yeah.

20 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Chair Garodnick,
21 have you spoken to OMB about increasing the starting
22 salary for city planners? I mean 55,000 dollars is
23 extremely low. That's actually the starting salary in
24 my office for an employee, and city planners play
25 such an important role in planning for the city. In

1
2 my opinion, someone who is qualified with the
3 education and has to pay back student loans, how can
4 they survive off of that salary?

5 CHAIR GARODNICK: First, let me just thank
6 you again for your identifying that and for your
7 advocacy for this professional context because you
8 are right to say that this is a concern that has been
9 presented by the folks who have left and certainly by
10 prospective hires. We are in constant conversation
11 with OMB about how to make sure that we get to the
12 optimal place for us as an agency and enable us to
13 continue to do this important work, but, as you
14 correctly observed, the folks who are coming into
15 City Planning, like a city planner 1 at 55,208, they
16 certainly can earn more elsewhere, and we have seen a
17 decline in the number of candidates applying for
18 these roles, and I will also note that the people who
19 can take those lower paying jobs frequently are
20 disproportionately more privileged because they're
21 doing something as a mission-driven effort and they
22 tend to be more white on the whole so it is not an
23 area in which it helps our ability to create a more
24 diverse workforce at City Planning.

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2

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: The Vacancy

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Reduction Memo issued in November described a change

4

in the City's hiring process, ending the policy that

5

allowed agencies to fill one of every two vacant

6

positions. Since November, has your agency been

7

enabled by OMB to hire to fill all vacant positions

8

or are you still required to provide two vacant

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positions for every one to be hired?

10

CHAIR GARODNICK: We're able to hire, and

11

we have been hiring actively with the support of OMB.

12

The numbers are really, I will repeat them only

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because I'm proud of them, that we have brought on 74

14

new people to our agency within calendar year 2022

15

and if you consider that number relative to the

16

overall size of this agency it is a big percentage.

17

Now, the good news is we were able to hire people.

18

The challenge for us, of course, is we need to train

19

these new people, we need to support them, and our

20

hope is that we would be able to keep them over time

21

because once we have invested time and energy into

22

our own team we want them to build a career at the

23

Department of City Planning, stick around for a

24

while, and help us to be able to move applications

25

1
2 and the City's own public initiatives even faster
3 than we are doing today.

4 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: A city planner
5 gets hired, let's say effective March 1, what is the
6 timeframe when they receive or they are up for an
7 increase in salary?

8 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH:
9 Generally, it's annually so we have a process where
10 we look at salaries quarterly. I think also it's
11 important to note that many titles also have
12 preplanned increases within them so we are constantly
13 taking a look every quarter, but we do a review cycle
14 twice a year with the aim of getting folks in
15 annually.

16 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: How many levels of
17 city planners do you have because when you first
18 mentioned, you mentioned a city planner I believe was
19 level 1 at 55,000?

20 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH: The civil
21 service title has four levels.

22 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Okay, so these
23 city planners are civil service?

24 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH: Correct
25

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2 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: It is a civil
3 service title. Okay. What is your new vacancy rate
4 now that you've hired these 70-plus?

5 CHAIR GARODNICK: Our new vacancy rate is
6 16 percent. Now, you won't see that in the math
7 before you because I can share with you that we have
8 17 people who have also been hired who are currently
9 in the process of being onboarded so to the extent
10 that there's a difference in the number that you may
11 have and the number that I'm presenting to you, it's
12 because there are 17 new people who have already been
13 hired who are not reflected in that statistic so our
14 vacancy rate now is 16 percent, and we were at 19
15 percent last year when I came before you.

16 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: What is allowable
17 headcount at the moment?

18 CHAIR GARODNICK: Under the Fiscal Year
19 '24 preliminary budget, allows us up to 348.

20 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: 348, and you
21 currently have how much?

22 CHAIR GARODNICK: We currently have 286 if
23 you include the people that we just hired but have
24 not yet been onboarded. If you don't include them, we
25 would be at 269.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Do you not agree
3 that even if you were at full capacity of 348,
4 because of the complexity of work that City Planning
5 does, that you actually need more employees, more
6 than 348 employees?

7 CHAIR GARODNICK: I think with the
8 budgeted number here, we can do the work that we need
9 to do to be able to advance not just our ambitious
10 text amendments that are coming to the Council but
11 the neighborhood plans and also to find ways to
12 address private applicants that are coming to us
13 regularly, and we still have some hiring to do as you
14 might observe here so we have some work to do. We
15 hired a lot in 2022. We have more hiring to do. We
16 are hopeful that we continue to hire at the same pace
17 and that we continue give people a chance to grow
18 professionally at the Department of City Planning,
19 but we're not even at our budgeted headcount so, to
20 me, I think we should aspire to get there, and that
21 is what we are trying to do.

22 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: All right. My last
23 round of questioning, I'm just going to move around
24 from vacancy to you mentioned in your opening
25 statement that the Council and the City Planning

1
2 Commission in 2022 approved over 12,000 new homes,
3 which of 12,000, 7,500 of them are income-restricted,
4 which will create homes for approximately 30,000 New
5 Yorkers, correct?

6 CHAIR GARODNICK: Correct.

7 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Of those 12,000
8 new homes, how many have actually been built?

9 CHAIR GARODNICK: Since we approved them?

10 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Yeah.

11 CHAIR GARODNICK: Very few of them
12 actually would be built at this stage of the game.

13 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: How many of them
14 do you know are in the closing stages with HPD? Does
15 DCP, after these projects are approved and rezoned,
16 does DCP communicate with HPD to follow up as to when
17 these projects are actually going to close? It's one
18 thing to say we created 30,000 homes for New Yorkers.
19 That's nice on paper, but it's another thing for them
20 to actually break ground on these projects and move
21 forward.

22 CHAIR GARODNICK: You are totally correct
23 in that, and I will note that this is an important
24 point that I make frequently, which is when the
25 Council and we together change the rules to enable

1
2 things to happen, that does not allow us to snap our
3 fingers and have those units suddenly appear on-site
4 where we have approved them. There still needs to be
5 the financial structure at place, putting aside HPD
6 for a moment, but all of the component parts of
7 actually getting these developments built which
8 include the interest rate environment, the presence
9 of any tax opportunities that are presented, the risk
10 tolerance of the individual who is investing this
11 money in the city, if only it were just we could snap
12 our fingers and make it all happen. We are enabling
13 the thing. We're not actually building it ourselves.
14 As to the HPD question, we are in regular contact
15 with HPD about their projects and, to the extent that
16 you want to know where we are exactly today on the
17 ones that were approved, we will come back to you and
18 would gladly give you that report.

19 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: There in the
20 Commission right before the application comes to the
21 City Council, your Commission reviews the
22 application, you question the applicant, is HPD
23 present in those hearings?

24 CHAIR GARODNICK: If HPD were the sponsor
25 of a project, they would be present at the public

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2 hearing of that project, which, for us, comes just
3 before we vote and just before we send it on to you
4 at the City Council. At certification and before
5 certification, we are in direct contact with HPD or
6 whoever the applicant is, even if it is a private
7 applicant that is being supported with HPD LIHTC
8 funds or any other program, we are in touch with them
9 making sure that they're complying with the
10 environmental rules and regulations, getting them to
11 a place of certification so that they can begin their
12 process officially, but, yes, HPD would show up
13 ordinarily to the hearing at the City Planning
14 Commission to discuss their project.

15 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: In your public
16 hearings, HPD, they present, correct, and they're
17 questioned by the Commissioners..

18 CHAIR GARODNICK: Correct.

19 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: And I'm pretty
20 sure that Commissioners have, at least my Bronx
21 Commissioner, he's very specific in terms of the
22 AMIs. I'm pretty sure that there's questions in terms
23 of the AMI structure and how that particular project
24 that's being reviewed at the moment, how did they get
25 there. Am I correct?

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2 CHAIR GARODNICK: Yeah, it frequently is a
3 conversation that comes up at the City Planning
4 Commission.

5 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: What worries me,
6 and I know that this is HPD and I know that Council
7 Member Sanchez will have a hearing, so I'm just
8 throwing you an alley-oop so when you meet with HPD,
9 what worries me at least in my district when I
10 approve projects it averages anywhere between three
11 to five years to close on a project, and, therefore,
12 what we agree to here in the Council and what you
13 agree to when you have your public hearings, it's not
14 really what's happening once this project closes.
15 Every year, the AMI changes per the federal
16 government. We have no control over that, and,
17 unfortunately for communities such as mine which are
18 low-income communities, I am going back saying we
19 won, this is the rents that we were able to secure,
20 but yet, if they don't close within a reasonable
21 timeframe, those rents are going to increase
22 drastically so I just want you to please keep that in
23 mind and grill them just like we are going to grill
24 them here during this budget process to be realistic

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2 as to what is preventing them from closing on
3 projects.

4 With that, I'm going to hand it over to
5 Chair Riley.

6 CHAIR RILEY: Thank you, Chair Salamanca,
7 and thank you to the Administration for your
8 testimony today. I think Chair Salamanca really
9 discussed the vacancies, something that's really
10 concerned the Council, the Speaker, made a note in
11 the State of the City that we really want to address
12 the vacancies across our city agencies. Do you know
13 specifically where in the Department these vacancies
14 are?

15 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PARISH: Yeah.
16 We're closely monitoring that, and we work with all
17 of our divisions so we are ensuring that we're
18 focused on every team's needs and, in fact, we've
19 invested in an Assistant Director of Recruitment and
20 Retention to help us push recruitment. This year,
21 we're holding hiring panels through the civil service
22 process roughly every six weeks. We have done salary
23 exercises to look for promotional opportunities and
24 increase wages so we're doing everything we can to
25 recruit and retain as quickly as possible.

1
2 CHAIR RILEY: Thank you. Chair Garodnick,
3 you mentioned a new Community Planning Engagement
4 Division that you announced. How many staff are
5 proposed to be within this new division?

6 CHAIR GARODNICK: Seven.

7 CHAIR RILEY: Seven. How does DCP intend
8 to decide which communities the new division focuses
9 on?

10 CHAIR GARODNICK: Entirely on your
11 district, Council Member. That's a joke. We have
12 initiatives that are undertaken throughout the whole
13 city. We have three citywide text amendments, we have
14 neighborhood plans, we have private applications, we
15 have our own responsibility to be support to
16 Community Boards, all 59 of them. We want to do all
17 of that better. We want to find ways to speak the
18 language of the various communities of New York City,
19 and I mean like literally actually speak the
20 language, and I also mean talk in ways that
21 demystifies some of these complicated concepts that
22 we're frequently engaging communities on. The real
23 answer to your question is that we intend to deploy
24 this team throughout the whole city, focusing on the
25 moments when we really need them to show up, think

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2 about ways for us to talk to a specific community
3 about a specific issue or to plan talking to a
4 specific community about a specific issue, and that
5 is already underway as we're doing our Bronx Metro
6 North efforts, our Atlantic Avenue efforts, and
7 certainly when we are working with you all on our
8 three citywide text amendment proposals, the way that
9 we do public forums, engagement, and information
10 sessions with New Yorkers, that is really being led
11 by this team so it's going to be a focus them as we
12 need them, but we really do need them. It's an
13 important part of our work, and we recognize that.

14 CHAIR RILEY: Yeah, definitely. You've
15 been in this seat before, and you realize how
16 important it is to have a division like this to
17 communicate with communities, especially over tough
18 projects that we've seen even within the last year so
19 I really am pleased to know that you guys are taking
20 this seriously in creating this division and look
21 forward to partnering with that division as well.

22 How does DCP intend to budget for
23 neighborhood capital investments along neighborhood
24 rezonings? A lot of rezonings we're seeing now where
25 we're adding density to a specific neighborhood, but

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2 there's transportation needs, there's resiliency
3 needs, there's a ton of different needs, so how do we
4 plan on addressing this when we're at a rezoning?

5 CHAIR GARODNICK: Yes, I think it's a
6 really important point that you're making, and it
7 also is an important point separate and apart from
8 any specific rezoning that is happening in one
9 specific neighborhood. We need to be thinking about
10 our capital budgeting process and the way that we
11 correct historic disinvestments in various
12 communities, use capital planning to do its own
13 efforts to spur growth and job creation, economic
14 opportunity. That is what the Mayor was after when he
15 announced our SEED Fund, our Strategy for Equity and
16 Economic Development, which will be part of all of
17 these conversations, both in and out of the formal
18 land use process so we look forward to working with
19 you and your Colleagues and our sister agencies to
20 best define those sorts of projects that will
21 accomplish those goals, both in the process of a
22 rezoning but also separate.

23 CHAIR RILEY: Thank you. Chair, if I may?

24 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Yes, you may
25 continue.

1
2 CHAIR RILEY: Thank you. Speaking on
3 equity, now that the Racial Equity Report is a
4 requirement, is DCP actively asking applicants to
5 discuss their applications in relation to the
6 neighborhoods where the project will be located such
7 as whether the housing they are proposed to build is
8 affordable to black and brown populations in the
9 neighborhood? I ask this because the Racial Equity
10 Report released today has a heavy focus on citywide
11 benefits and now the impact on the neighborhoods.

12 CHAIR GARODNICK: Yeah. We do ask these
13 questions. Certainly, the applicants have started to
14 provide these reports only as of last June, and they
15 were created pursuant to Local Law 78 of 2021 here at
16 the Council, and they were developed as part of the
17 Racial Impact Study Coalition. There are 12 projects
18 so far that have seen them, and advocates and the
19 coalition called the presence of this tool a
20 significant victory, and, as a way for us to allow
21 for a risk map for displacement and between this and
22 the community engagement team that you were
23 highlighting a moment ago, we are trying to find ways
24 to advance our work to promote fair housing and
25 equitable development, and we think these are all

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2 important tools, and we refer them to the City
3 Planning Commission and to the Council for their
4 consideration of this additional information.

5 CHAIR RILEY: Thank you, Chair. As the
6 threat from climate change such as sea level rise,
7 intense cloudburst rainfall, and other hazards grow,
8 has DCP considered the city long-term development
9 patterns for communities such as Rockaway, Coney
10 Island, I know in the Northeast Bronx we do have some
11 resiliency issues as well, do you guys hold this and
12 think about this when you all are developing?

13 CHAIR GARODNICK: We do, and, in fact, we
14 recognize that there are neighborhoods for which we
15 want to be very cautious about enabling new
16 development, and that is why we have already created
17 six coastal special risk districts in New York City,
18 most recently in partnership with you all at the
19 Council in Edgemere and the Rockaways but it also
20 includes places like Broad Channel and Gerritsen
21 Beach and others, places which are very susceptible
22 to coastal risks here and where we believe that we
23 should be extra cautious and take steps to reduce
24 population as opposed to enhancing it so the short
25 answer to your is yes, it is certainly front of mind

1
2 as we consider neighborhood plan and certainly
3 individual projects as well.

4 CHAIR RILEY: Just two more questions,
5 Chair. As was discussed last week, you talked about
6 the office conversion which I believe is an amazing
7 idea, but Chair Salamanca and Council Member Sanchez
8 brought up a very good point. Right now the proposal
9 only has 5 percent of units of affordability at 40
10 percent AMI and the rest only have to average 70
11 percent AMI which is 84,000 for a family of three,
12 but the median income of black and Hispanic
13 households is approximately 50,000. That means these
14 units will not be available for the people who
15 actually need them. What does DCP propose to do to
16 make affordable housing actually available to the
17 people who really need it?

18 CHAIR GARODNICK: I think most
19 fundamentally we recognize the challenges here and
20 that we need to find ways to incentivize the creation
21 of affordable housing in connection with office
22 conversions today. There is no incentive to do that.
23 Office conversion gives you a market-rate unit, full
24 stop. There is no opportunity for us to be able to
25 deliver affordable housing in connection with office

1
2 conversions so we are supportive of the proposal to
3 create an incentive to do that exactly that because
4 right now there is none and with a 19-year tax
5 abatement in exchange for a permanent affordability
6 program at the rates that you described we think is
7 an important and significant improvement on where we
8 are today which is zero. The precise contours of the
9 tax abatement, the AMI levels, etc. would certainly
10 continue that conversation with you and our partners
11 up in Albany, but most importantly to us, we wanted
12 to make sure that there was an incentive to create
13 affordable housing here as part of office conversions
14 because we see that that does not exist today, it
15 should exist today, and that's why, as part of our
16 taskforce, we proposed creating one so that is a live
17 conversation up in Albany and certainly would
18 encourage you to share your views there.

19 CHAIR RILEY: Thank you, Chair, and one
20 last question, Chair Salamanca. The Metro North
21 coming to the Bronx is an amazing opportunity for the
22 people within our community. Has DCP identified a
23 list of priority community projects to complete as
24 part of this rezoning and, more importantly, how is
25 DCP making sure funding will be available to complete

1
2 these projects because our communities cannot take
3 empty promises anymore, and the reason I'm bringing
4 this up is there's an empty lot in my District that
5 fell through from prior administrations, Baychester
6 Square, it's not too far away from the Co-op City
7 Metro North, a huge lot that's owned by MTA but it's
8 not being utilized right now. I had a tour there with
9 the Land Use team last week and the Community Board,
10 and we're just thinking of comprehensive ways that we
11 can improve the area, maybe some homeownership
12 opportunities and things of that nature, but are we
13 thinking about this along with the Metro North
14 project being that it's going to add mass
15 transportation to communities that haven't received
16 transportation for such a long period of time, how
17 can we improve those areas with this rezoning?

18 CHAIR GARODNICK: The short answer to this
19 is yes, yes, yes, we definitely see the urgency of
20 making direct city capital investments to go along
21 with significant changes that we anticipate. That is
22 an ongoing conversation. We are having this
23 conversation now with sister agencies about what
24 should be included, what we need. We want to have
25 this conversation with you, with the community, this

1
2 is a really important part of the equation, and the
3 City should not make empty promises either. This is a
4 real opportunity for us, and there are a lot of
5 infrastructure needs in and around these stations
6 even today, before you have Metro North coming. We
7 see that, we are eager to do thoughtful engagement
8 with the communities and also thoughtful engagement
9 with the agencies that have the projects and have
10 themselves identified significant needs to be able to
11 deliver real opportunity for the people of the Bronx
12 here, not just through new stations, which itself is
13 extraordinary, but also through city investment to
14 deliver a real chance of success for housing, job
15 creation, and for the people of the Bronx and beyond.

16 CHAIR RILEY: Thank you, Chair. You have
17 been amazing in this position. Our communication and
18 the way that you communicate with other members of
19 the Bronx, we truly appreciate it, and we're looking
20 forward to partnering with you on many more
21 collaborations to come.

22 Thank you, Chair Salamanca.

23 CHAIR GARODNICK: Thank you. I appreciate
24 that.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you, Chair
3 Riley. Now, we will recognize Council Member Hanks
4 followed by Chair Farah Louis followed by Council
5 Member Sanchez.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you, Chair
7 Salamanca. I want to associate my comments with
8 Council Member Riley. Being from Staten Island, we
9 are the bookends of some really challenging districts
10 that often have been overlooked when it comes to
11 investment so I just wanted to drill down a little
12 bit on coordinating the capital planning and city
13 planning. How did the Department of City Planning
14 select neighborhoods to focus on when it comes to
15 looking at neighborhoods capital investments
16 alongside neighborhood rezonings?

17 CHAIR GARODNICK: The process of
18 identifying an area that would be suitable for a
19 neighborhood rezoning is a complicated one, and it is
20 a number of factors including the existing land use
21 pallets, the opportunities that the city sees if we
22 were to change it in any way, the partnership that we
23 have with elected officials who are engaged and want
24 to drive change in their communities and are willing
25 to do what is really hard work to make this stuff

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2 happen, and I certainly, having sat right where
3 you're sitting, understand the complexity of doing
4 that so it's a number of factors that would animate
5 where we would think about doing a neighborhood
6 rezoning, but when we do do one, and this is to the
7 point that Chair Riley was asking a moment ago and I
8 certainly think this is an important one, we need to
9 look at it not just as a zoning opportunity. This is
10 a city opportunity for thoughtful planning, and that
11 includes capital investment in neighborhoods and
12 thoughtful capital investment to correct historic
13 problems and also to spur the change that you
14 actually want to see so it's real important to us at
15 this table to make sure that we get those component
16 parts right and that we're not operating in a silo.
17 The Mayor has made this very clear. He does not want
18 his agencies working in a silo from one another. We
19 think he's absolutely right on that point, and that
20 has certainly been a leading factor in bringing us
21 all together to think about solving some new problems
22 and also some existing ones, which I believe you may
23 even have on your mind.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: 100 percent, so my
25 District, one of the things that I'm quarterbacking

1
2 is a master plan, do you think that all Council
3 Members or all Districts should have some sort of a
4 master plan of some sort that would help City
5 Planning do the best kind of planning possible?

6 CHAIR GARODNICK: I think it's incredibly
7 useful when Council Members step up and show a path
8 for change or evolution of their own communities
9 because it is so difficult as a political matter so
10 we really appreciate the leadership that you have
11 taken on the North Shore to advance change, economic
12 development, waterfront access, housing, all the
13 things that you have made very clear that you want to
14 see and that you need in that part of your district
15 and we agree. The short answer is it's very useful
16 when it happens, and we're really excited to work
17 with you on this one in particular.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you so much,
19 and the feeling is mutual. Like I said, I associate
20 my comments with Council Member Riley when it means
21 to have City Planning and you as a Commissioner and
22 having been in this role I think it's extremely
23 helpful to help guide us through this extremely
24 important process and difficult challenging process.

1
2 I just want to kind of drill down on
3 another piece. I know everything is all about filling
4 vacancies. Being part of the Finance Committee, OMB
5 had testified that 25,000 vacancies and they
6 associated a number, but you testify that you're
7 bringing on 74 new people, and I just wanted to ask
8 what are your recruitment strategies, and I know you
9 mentioned that you're having those open houses, but I
10 think it may be something else so I'm just curious as
11 to why is City Planning not having an issue
12 attracting people, retaining is always going to be an
13 issue with the salaries, but what are some of your
14 recruiting strategies that we can kind of maybe adopt
15 for some of our other city agencies?

16 CHAIR GARODNICK: Thank you. I appreciate
17 that, and we brought on the 74 and we're bringing on
18 the additional 17 so we were very proud of our
19 efforts to go out and do that. That included
20 participating in hiring pools every six to eight
21 weeks. We hired an Assistant Director of Strategic
22 Planning and Human Capital to help us think about how
23 to find people, attract people, bring them in. We
24 have continued a popular paid internship program
25 where people come into our agency, they see what

1
2 we're all about, they get to see the incredible,
3 talented, brilliant people that I now get to work
4 with at this agency, and it is a great sales tool
5 because people see what we're actually doing and they
6 want to be part of it, and we're looking to expand
7 that with a paid fellowship for post-graduates and
8 graduates, although I can't credit that with our
9 hiring in 2022, it is something that we are embarking
10 on, and we think will continue to help us going
11 forward.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you so much.
13 Thank you, Chair Salamanca, for allowing me to ask
14 those questions.

15 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you, Council
16 Member Hanks. We will now recognize Chair Farah Louis
17 followed by Council Member Sanchez.

18 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you, Chair
19 Salamanca. Thank you, Chair Garodnick and your team,
20 for being here today. Some of my questions were asked
21 already so I'll ask them in another way because
22 they're very important.

23 I'll start with this quick question on
24 the BLAST program, and I think it's a great way to
25 improve the services that DCP provides. It's an

1
2 ambitious initiative. Regarding the advanced
3 proposals and the four prongs mentioned in your
4 statement, I wanted to know would that require new
5 hires or do you already have existing staff?

6 CHAIR GARODNICK: We actually got some new
7 hires for the purpose of implementing the BLAST
8 initiative which is important because we think that
9 not only will those people allow us to fill gaps that
10 we've had but also will help us to move these
11 applications and these processes better and faster.
12 Yes, we agree with you that the BLAST initiative that
13 the Mayor has introduced is really important and will
14 be meaningful in speeding up our land use processes,
15 and we believe that we have the people necessary to
16 be able to implement it.

17 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you for that.
18 Within the new Community Planning Engagement
19 Division, I know Chair Riley asked about it already,
20 I noticed that you could either have staff or
21 consultants, right, so I wanted to know are
22 consultants on staff or is there like an RFP process
23 for your consultants?

24 CHAIR GARODNICK: For our Community
25 Engagement, those are members of our staff.

1
2 Periodically, there is a consultant which is done
3 through the Economic Development Corporation to
4 engage in more depth with a specific neighborhood
5 which is something that is presently happening on
6 Atlantic Avenue, for example, with Council Member
7 Hudson. That is not done through the Department of
8 City Planning. The only consultants that we engage at
9 the Department of City Planning relate to the highly
10 technical environmental review, which is best done by
11 a consultant rather than keeping all that expertise
12 in-house where you use it only periodically, but
13 those are the consultants that we use.

14 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Got it. My second
15 followup question is does DCP intend for the new
16 Division to replace engagement and facilitation work
17 previously done by consultants?

18 CHAIR GARODNICK: No, we do not, we do
19 not. We expect them to be really productive in our
20 ability to reach more communities and more people,
21 but I don't think that they will have the capacity to
22 replace that.

23 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Okay. Thank you. Quick
24 question on the rezoning process and the impact on
25 FY24 Chair Riley mentioned earlier. What projects

1
2 will DCP undertake in the FY24 funding for
3 neighborhood capital investments?

4 CHAIR GARODNICK: That is still an open
5 question for us. We are looking at this with our
6 partner agencies as well as with OMB to think about
7 how to identify those projects that will be really
8 meaningful for communities in their own right and
9 certainly to support some of the neighborhood
10 planning work that we are already embarking upon so
11 that is an ongoing conversation, but we look forward
12 to reporting to you what those are and how we think
13 they will actually impact the lives of New Yorkers.

14 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Would Community Board
15 17 happen to be one of those projects you're
16 considering?

17 CHAIR GARODNICK: We appreciate Community
18 Board 17's efforts in talking about a community-based
19 plan, and we look forward to continuing that
20 conversation with them. The conversations with
21 Community Board 17 have gone well longer than my
22 tenure by about four or five years, but we look
23 forward to continuing that conversation with them.

24 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you. I'm happy
25 that's on the record. They're probably watching. I

1
2 heard about the other Districts that you're working
3 with in the Bronx and in Central Brooklyn, particular
4 in Council Member Hudson's District, but I didn't
5 hear much about the IBX program that Kathy Hochul had
6 proposed and DCP's involvement so I wanted to know if
7 you could share a little bit about that.

8 CHAIR GARODNICK: We think that that's a
9 really exciting initiative, the idea that we would be
10 adding new rail opportunities connecting parts of New
11 York City that today are underserved. We will want to
12 engage as that project gets closer to formality and
13 detail to think about what sorts of land use changes
14 would be appropriate. Transit-oriented development is
15 central in our minds and in our efforts. We want to
16 make sure that we're being thoughtful about adding
17 density, homes closest to where you can move around
18 the city. That's certainly animating our work with
19 the Bronx Metro North stations. It's also really
20 important with Atlantic Avenue and also with
21 Manhattan's M Districts so, yes, taking advantage of
22 that moment and that opportunity and thinking about
23 our land use changes is something that we definitely
24 would want to do.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: We look forward to
3 that. Thank you.

4 CHAIR GARODNICK: Us too.

5 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you, Chair
6 Louis. Now, we will hear from Council Member Sanchez.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Great. Thank you.
8 Thank you so much, Chair. I think I'm just following
9 up on a bunch of comments and notes by Council Member
10 Louis, but the first one is it used to be the Tri-
11 Borough Express so if we can bring back the Bronx
12 into that conversation, that would be phenomenally.
13 We also have underutilized rights-of-way, and that
14 would be a boon for the Bronx as well.

15 My question is around the Office of
16 Community Planning and Engagement, or the Division.
17 Super exciting to hear about this office. I think we
18 have all who work in this space have heard so many
19 criticisms lodged at the Department of City Planning
20 for being the Department of City Zoning, right, and
21 not doing as much of the thinking about the big
22 picture, New York City planning framework, and so
23 this is a longstanding recommendation that many
24 advocates have had and I'm very excited to see it and
25 see you move in this direction. I would like to ask,

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2 and I'm just going to lump my questions together.
3 First, around the staffing for the new Division. Are
4 there new proposed staff for the Division, one, and
5 then, two, similar to Council Member Louis, thinking
6 about District 14, we have the largest plot of real
7 estate that is underdeveloped in the City of New
8 York, one of the largest, if not the largest, which
9 is the Fordham Landing Development, and Fordham
10 Landing is an assemblage of sites that have 2,280
11 proposed units on it, 50,000 square feet of retail,
12 800,000 square feet for life sciences, and all in all
13 a 3.5-billion-dollar development, and so thinking
14 about a huge asset like the Fordham Landing proposed
15 development, how is the office going to be tackling
16 and helping to tackle projects like this? It is a
17 fully private site, fully recognizing that, but with
18 so much potential to meet so many of the City's goals
19 for affordable housing, for job creation, everything
20 else, would just love to hear how the Department is
21 thinking about it.

22 CHAIR GARODNICK: Great. First, on the
23 Community Engagement, it's a team of seven, and we
24 look forward to your seeing them around plenty and
25 doing more and trying to find ways to not just rebut

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2 but actually correct that impression that this
3 Department is just one thing or another. We really
4 recognize that we are in partnership with the
5 Council, with Community Boards, and our communities
6 around the city, and we want to project that. We know
7 it's not going to be 100 percent agreement all the
8 time, but we want to make sure that we're on the same
9 playing field and talking about the same facts and
10 being thoughtful and honest about that.

11 To the question about Fordham Landing, we
12 are already deeply engaged in the subject of Fordham
13 Landing South and North. We know there's an applicant
14 that's interested in developing the sites, there's
15 complexity as it relates to access from the bridge,
16 there's proposals that could create park land and
17 other opportunities and access. It's a really
18 exciting opportunity for the Bronx and for the City.
19 We are already engaged, and we are talking to the
20 applicant and thinking about how we can best move
21 this application. You are correct to observe it is a
22 biggie and one that is worthy of our time and
23 attention, and we have been focused on it for sure
24 and certainly would be happy to run through with you
25 where we are, where we think it's headed, how quickly

1
2 we can get there, all of those things if it would be
3 of any value.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Yeah, absolutely,
5 and thank you, Chair. Just to follow up on that, I
6 want to make sure that the community is also
7 intentionally brought into the process, why I'm so
8 excited about the Division for Community Planning,
9 and this is something that I don't need to repeat in
10 this space but will anyway just about how much need
11 there is in my community. We are one of the lowest
12 income communities in the city. The way that you
13 tackle inequality if you ask me is you pump money in,
14 right, so pumping jobs, pumping opportunities, and I
15 just want to make sure that we are using this
16 opportunity in concert with DCP to train the
17 community on land use, talk about land use, and
18 really drive something that will benefit the
19 community and the rest of the Bronx.

20 CHAIR GARODNICK: We'll do you even
21 better. We'd love to chat with you about how we can
22 best do that, particularly as it relates to Fordham
23 Landing South and North and to, with you, develop a
24 plan that actually makes sense and that you believe
25 would accomplish those goals.

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Did you want to add something?

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HSUEN-CHEN: Yeah. I'd

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love to amplify. It's hard to amplify the

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Commissioner because his answers are so fulsome and

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yet succinct. Thank you for your question about our

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Community Planning and Engagement Team. I wanted to

8

underscore a point about that team. It is a seven-

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person team, but they work in conjunction and really

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closely with the divisions throughout our Department.

11

They're working closely with our Borough Offices in

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particular, our Planner Liaisons which we have

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incredible relationships with the Community Boards

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across the City so while there may be seven people

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there, we really have a hundred people in our agency

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who are actively working to improve and do our best

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work on Community Planning and Engagement.

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COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: That's great to

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hear. Thank you, Executive Director, and I have great

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respect for all of you. I'm very excited that Lara is

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leading this team, and I look forward to

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conversations. Thank you, Chair.

23

CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you, Council

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Member Sanchez.

25

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2 Chair Garodnick, I want to go very
3 quickly to my last question in terms of citywide
4 zoning text amendments. The Speaker and the Council
5 have repeatedly raised concerns about the zoning for
6 economic development text amendment, which must
7 include holistic reforms of M zones to support
8 industrial businesses and preserve central core
9 industrial districts. In short, City of Yes should
10 include yes to growing good industrial jobs and
11 ensuring we have enough space for infrastructure in
12 our transition to green energy including offshore
13 wind facilities. Can DCP commit to supporting full
14 reforms of M zones including creations of a core
15 industrial district?

16 CHAIR GARODNICK: Thank you for the
17 question. We certainly understand the concern here
18 and the competition for space in M zones. As the
19 Speaker noted in her speech yesterday, the current
20 zoning tools are clearly outdated, and we're hearing
21 that from lots of players, certainly from Council but
22 also from manufacturing businesses that are looking
23 to grow and evolve in New York City and are finding
24 that our zoning designations are out of date and
25 prohibiting their ability to evolve over time. That's

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2 through high parking requirements or limits to single
3 story buildings, etc., and so we do need new tools
4 here and want to have that conversation with you all
5 about more opportunities to allow growth in M
6 districts and, as it relates to heavy industry and
7 protection of heavy industry at M districts, that is
8 also a conversation that we are open to exploring and
9 considering whether there are ways to create new
10 zoning districts to that as well, and we look forward
11 to having that conversation with you all.

12 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: All right, thank
13 you. I, too, look forward to having these
14 conversations as I have one of the biggest industrial
15 zones in the city which is the Hunts Point and Port
16 Morris. Many areas are underutilized and we need to
17 be creative on how to keep them industrial but create
18 jobs.

19 With that, I want to thank you and your
20 team for testifying today, and I'm going to hand it
21 over to the Counsel.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL HUH: Thank you, Chair.
23 Just as an announcement, reminder to anyone wishing
24 to testify, if you are here with us in the room,
25 please see one of the Sergeants to fill out a speaker

1
2 card, and, if you are viewing the livestream of this
3 proceeding, you need to register at the Council's
4 website, and you may do that by clicking on the
5 Register For One Of Our Hearings link at the website
6 and select the hearing for 12:30 p.m. on March 9th,
7 that's today's date, Technology joint with Land Use,
8 and then submit your information. That's for those
9 who wish to testify remotely.

10 For everyone else, there is also the
11 option to submit written testimony by email. You can
12 send that to landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

13 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you,
14 Counsel. Now, we will take a two-minute recess, and
15 next up will be the Department of Technology.

16 All right. Good afternoon. Welcome to the
17 Committee on Land Use. Lastly, we will hear from
18 DoITT, and I will now turn it over to Chair Gutierrez
19 who is our Chair for the Committee on Technology for
20 the Council.

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you, Chair.
22 Good afternoon and welcome to FY24 preliminary budget
23 hearing for the Department of Information,
24 Technology, and Innovation, more recently known as
25 the Office of Technology and Innovation.

1
2 I'm Jennifer Gutierrez. I'm the Chair for
3 the Committee on Technology. Today's hearing is joint
4 with the Committee on Land Use, and I would like to
5 thank my Colleague, Council Member Salamanca, Chair
6 of the Committee, for co-Chairing today's hearing.

7 The FY 2024 preliminary budget for DoITT
8 totals 697.4 million dollars, which includes nearly
9 155.7 million in personal services funding to support
10 1,637 full-time positions. The budget also includes
11 nearly 541.7 million in OTPS, half of which, 275
12 million, is allocated to contractual services. In the
13 preliminary plan, DoITT's Fiscal 2024 preliminary
14 budget is 23.3 million dollars less than its Fiscal
15 2023 adopted budget. This slight decrease of 2
16 percent is mainly driven by a reduction in technology
17 services. Additionally, in the preliminary plan,
18 DoITT's budget introduces significant funding in
19 Fiscal Year 2023 for the onboarding of consultant
20 resources to build the MyCity project, an app, which
21 we have learned from both previous hearings and the
22 press will be a one-stop shop for New Yorkers to
23 access services as well as significant funding for
24 the buildup of a technology platform to support the
25 Administration's effort on the asylum-seekers crisis.

1
2 At today's hearing, this Committee will
3 focus on a range of components of the agency's budget
4 and new projects to ensure that New Yorkers and city
5 agencies receive the services they deserve and are
6 entitled to. We will spend significant time on the
7 status of the universal broadband capital projects
8 that were announced in 2020. We'll also discuss
9 funding models of more recent programs such as Big
10 Apple Connect which is intended to provide free
11 broadband and cable for NYCHA residents. The
12 Committee is concerned about vacant positions across
13 program areas and potential impacts on the Agency's
14 operations, and we will inquire about OTI's efforts
15 to address these vacancies. We'll request a status
16 update on critical services for our communities such
17 as NextGen 9-1-1 and 3-1-1 customer services. We'll
18 explore OTI's ambitious 2022 strategic plan. Finally,
19 in line with all of the other without of the Tech
20 Committee, we will approach many of the questions
21 from the lens of equity to ensure that everyone from
22 New Yorkers we serve to those that we contract with
23 are provided equal opportunities. I'm looking forward
24 to an open conversation with Commissioner Fraser,
25 OTI's strategy and budget plan, and hope that we can

1 focus this hearing on concrete updates and progress.

2 We look forward to working with you to ensure that

3 City investments in technology provide long-term

4 benefits to all New York City residents regardless of

5 the borough they live in, their age, their race, or

6 immigration status.

7
8 After the testimony, Members will have

9 the opportunity to follow up with questions.

10 In closing, I also want to make sure that

11 we thank our Committee Staff for their hard, hard

12 work including Principal Financial Analyst Florentine

13 Kabore, Unit Head Aliya Ali, Committee Counsel Irene

14 Byhovsky, Policy Analyst Charles Kim, and my team,

15 Senior Advisor Anya Lehr, and Chief-of-Staff Anna

16 Bessendorf.

17 Now, I will ask the Committee Counsel to

18 please swear in the Commissioner.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BYHOVSKY: Thank you

20 very much, Chair Gutierrez. My name is Irene

21 Byhovsky. I'm Committee Counsel to the Committee on

22 Technology, and I will be moderating the hearing

23 today.

24 We are pleased to welcome representatives

25 from the Administration, Commissioner and CTO Matt

1
2 Fraser, who will be testifying today, as well as
3 Deputy Commissioner for Management and Budget, Deputy
4 Commissioner for Legal Affairs, and Deputy
5 Commissioner for Public Information. I ask you all to
6 raise your right hands.

7 Thank you. Do you affirm to tell the
8 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth and
9 answer honestly to Council Member questions today?

10 COMMISSIONER FRASER: I do.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SENATUS: I do.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: I do.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BIRCHMEIER: I do.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BYHOVSKY: Thank you.

15 You may begin your testimony.

16 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Good
17 afternoon, Chairs Salamanca and Gutierrez and Members
18 of the City Council Committees on Land Use and
19 Technology. My name is Matthew Fraser, and I am the
20 Chief Technology Officer of the City of New York and
21 head of the Office of Tech and Innovation. With me is
22 Edwin Pemberton, OTI's Deputy Commissioner for
23 Management and Budget, Chantal Senatus, OTI's Deputy
24 Commissioner for Legal Matters, and Ryan Birchmeier,
25 OTI's Deputy Commissioner for Public Information.

1
2 Thank you for the opportunity today to speak about
3 OTI's Fiscal Year '24 Preliminary Budget, our recent
4 accomplishments, and our priorities for the coming
5 year.

6 When I assumed my position as CTO and
7 head of OTI a little more than a year ago, I hit the
8 ground running. As you know, my first major task was
9 to consolidate six different technology offices, the
10 Department of Information Tech and
11 Telecommunications, New York City Cyber Command, the
12 Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer, the
13 Mayor's Office of Data Analytics, the Mayor's Office
14 of Information Privacy, and 3-1-1, under a single
15 entity, OTI. Bringing these disparate offices
16 together streamlined overall operations and inspired
17 a much higher level of collaboration among staff to
18 support common goals. Once these workstreams
19 synergized, OTI created a Strategic Plan to outline
20 the path forward for technology across the entire
21 City. We have proposed several strategic priorities
22 that will underpin all of our future efforts:
23 building a connected City to make access available to
24 all; modernizing how City agencies deliver services;
25 making data-driven decisions and operations

1
2 ubiquitous in City government; powering up our tech
3 sector for innovation and diversifying participation
4 in the tech economy; creating the strongest, most
5 secure, and best value technology service and team
6 necessary to deliver on our priorities; and
7 supporting our technology professionals and creating
8 opportunities for them to grow.

9 Fulfilling these goals requires
10 optimizing resources to the greatest extent possible.
11 That is why one of our strategic priorities aims to
12 further develop procurement processes and
13 partnerships to create IT procurement efficiencies
14 and leverage citywide buying power. Last year, we
15 undertook a review of historical citywide IT spend
16 and surveyed City agencies on critical needs and near
17 future spending to identify high impact areas for
18 standardization. This effort will help expedite
19 future funding requests and will assist in
20 identifying the areas where we can use our total
21 buying power to lower costs and to include the
22 participation of City-certified M/WBE in technology
23 contracting.

24 Another innovative way we have invested
25 in our existing pool of resources is implementing a

1
2 comprehensive workforce strategy through agency Cyber
3 Command Liaisons. We launched the inaugural New York
4 City Cyber Academy this past fall to provide
5 specialized training for these positions, and we plan
6 to expand this training program in the coming year.
7 Further, we are continuing to undertake cybersecurity
8 road mapping assessments for governmental entities
9 that interact with the City's systems, including
10 elected officials. We welcome support and input as we
11 take on this exercise.

12 As we continue to execute our overall
13 technology strategy, I want to emphasize we are
14 focused on achieving real, tangible results for New
15 Yorkers. I'm proud to say that Big Apple Connect, the
16 program that provides free internet and cable
17 services to NYCHA residents, currently has an
18 adoption rate of 76 percent, and is being offered to
19 more than 96,000 households. OTI conceived of this
20 program, finalized contracts with Charter and Altice,
21 and rolled this out to over 130 developments in less
22 than one year. Thousands of New Yorkers, who
23 previously either did not have a home broadband
24 connection or had to prioritize the expense of
25 internet over other essential services, have

1
2 benefitted from this program. We will expand Big
3 Apple Connect to more developments in the coming
4 weeks and would be thrilled to partner with the
5 Council to get the word out.

6 Another top priority we will be rolling
7 out in a few weeks is the MyCity application. As we
8 previously announced, the Administration's first
9 priority is a childcare subsidy portal, which will
10 streamline this process for parents and caregivers.
11 User experience testing has been very successful, and
12 we are looking forward to unveiling this tool for the
13 Council and the general public. As we work towards
14 launching MyCity, we have coordinated with partners
15 across all levels of government. Our final hurdle is
16 getting a seal of approval from our colleagues in
17 State government, whose subsidies are included in the
18 portal.

19 Before I speak to the numbers in the
20 Fiscal Year '24 Preliminary Budget, I also want to
21 take the opportunity to mention how rewarding it is
22 to support and celebrate milestones for some of our
23 most essential public-facing initiatives. Today, we
24 celebrated 3-1-1's 20th anniversary, and starting
25 this weekend, we will be co-hosting Open Data Week,

1
2 which has continued to expand over the past several
3 years. It is the continued dedication of our staff
4 and the cooperation of our sister agencies and
5 offices that makes these programs successful.

6 Finally, I'd like to briefly summarize
7 OTI's budget. OTI's Fiscal Year '24 Preliminary
8 Budget includes operating expenses of approximately
9 697.4 million, allocating 155.7 million in Personnel
10 Services to support the 1,637 full-time positions,
11 and 541.7 million for Other-Than-Personal Services,
12 or OTPS. Intra-City funds transferred from other
13 agencies account for 137.6 million, or about 20
14 percent of our total budget allocation.

15 Telecommunications costs are the largest portion of
16 the Intra-City expense, projected at 100.3 million
17 for Fiscal Year 2023.

18 For Fiscal Year 2023, the Preliminary
19 Budget decreased by 3.1 million, which is largely
20 attributed to the vacancy reduction savings
21 initiative.

22 For Fiscal Year 2024, the Preliminary
23 Budget decreased by 9.7 million, which is also
24 largely attributed to the vacancy reduction savings
25 initiatives.

1
2 Thank you for the opportunity to testify
3 today. I will now take Council Members' questions.

4 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you,
5 Committee. Before handing it off to Chair Salamanca,
6 I just want to recognize our newest Committee Member,
7 Council Member Ari Kagan, as well as recognizing
8 Council Members Abreu, Council Member Holden who is
9 via Zoom. Chair Salamanca.

10 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you, Chair
11 Gutierrez. Thank you, Commissioner.

12 Commissioner, I just have a few questions
13 and then I'm going to hand it off to my Colleagues. I
14 want to speak to you about some of my NYCHA
15 developments, the Melrose Houses, was receiving free
16 internet access from the prior administration, and it
17 seems that when this administration came on, they put
18 a pause on that contract for the Big Apple Connect.
19 Are you familiar with that?

20 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I would
21 need more specific details on that.

22 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Basically, Big
23 Apple Connect is bringing free high-speed internet
24 services to NYCHA.

1
2 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That is
3 correct. Yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Prior to the
5 administration, they were using what was called
6 People's Choice Communications, a small New York City
7 cooperative cobbled together by striking Charter
8 Communications workers as one of several ISPs left in
9 the lurch by a sudden reversal by the Adams'
10 administration. Basically what's happening is that
11 there is free internet access that's being provided
12 to NYCHA residents, at least in my District, Melrose,
13 and it seems that this Administration has put a pause
14 on that, and they're going to go into a different
15 direction. In that direction, with the Big Apple
16 Connect, they're going to be using Charter and Altice
17 to provide these services, which you know they have a
18 monopoly when we're talking about internet services
19 in the City of New York. Can you just speak a little
20 bit about why there was a new route going replacing
21 the route that was working?

22 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Sure
23 thing. When we look at that specific issue, the issue
24 that we had at those developments with People's
25 Choice, essentially what had happened was People's

1
2 Choice had subbed the work out, meaning like they
3 brought in another provider to provide the service to
4 developments, and, due to a dispute that occurred,
5 there was some impact to services, and what I mean by
6 that, some equipment was removed from the site and
7 then all the residents that live within those
8 facilities that were dependent on those services had
9 lost access. Instead of the residents feeling the
10 blunt of the dispute between the primary who was
11 awarded the contract and the person that they subbed
12 it to, we stepped in and we said it's not that
13 residents are impacted or feel that loss of services
14 so what we did was we offered Big Apple Connect to
15 the development, we brought in the providers that
16 service that specific development, and we gave them
17 the ability to deploy forthwith, minimizing impact to
18 the people that lived in the community. Before we
19 stepped in, between the dispute between the primary
20 and subcontractor, services were interrupted for over
21 48 hours.

22 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Their services
23 have not been interrupted?

24 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: No.

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Okay. All right. I
3 have not met with my constituents. I know that we've
4 gotten calls, and I will be following up. Who is your
5 contact person so that my office can connect with
6 directly?

7 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Brett
8 Sikoff, which is our Senior Director for Broadband,
9 or Franchise Administration, and he will connect with
10 your team accordingly. I think for us we take
11 connectivity very seriously and we want to make sure
12 that those that need it get it as quickly as they
13 can.

14 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: All right. For my
15 line of questioning, I want to talk about LinkNYC. In
16 my past years as Land Use Chair, going through this
17 budget dance, we brought up the issue with LinkNYC so
18 Fiscal Year 2021 and 2022 actual budget indicates
19 that DoITT collected a revenue of nearly 27 million
20 dollars on LinkNYC in each of these Fiscal Years.
21 Since Fiscal Year 2023 adopted budget, DoITT
22 recognized revenue of 5.4 million at adoption, of 5.6
23 million in Fiscal 2024 preliminary budget, which
24 represents a significant decrease in revenue. How
25 much is the renegotiating franchise agreement with

1
2 CityBridge and how much money did the City receive
3 since the new franchise agreement with CityBridge? Is
4 it a yearly or monthly payment?

5 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: To
6 answer that question, I will defer to the Deputy
7 Commissioner of Management and Budget, Edwin
8 Pemberton.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: For
10 CityBridge?

11 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Yes.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: CityBridge
13 is making their payments from the 60 million. They
14 are up-to-date. They have a payment schedule that is
15 going until 2030, and we monitor their retro payments
16 from their debt and also their continued payment into
17 the program.

18 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: So they're paying
19 their debt and actuals, correct?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: So what is their
22 debt? How much are they required to pay yearly on
23 their debt?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: On the
25 debt, it actually has a staggered amount. It started

1
2 at 1.6 and it is moving into 2.2, 2.6, it keeps
3 growing every year. They've paid 28.5 million to
4 date, and the remaining is 31.5.

5 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: They're on
6 schedule for debt?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Okay. They have
9 not defaulted?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: Have not
11 defaulted.

12 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: All right. In
13 terms of the actuals, what they have to pay every, do
14 they pay monthly or do they pay yearly for their
15 services?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: I believe
17 they pay quarterly, but they pay the City 2.7 or 3
18 million dollars per year on their regular scale.

19 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Okay, and they
20 have not defaulted?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: They have
22 not defaulted.

23 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: All right. My next
24 question was to see if they pay on time, which they
25 do.

1
2 All right, my last line of questioning, I
3 promise, mobile telecommunications. DoITT anticipates
4 the decline of 29 million dollars in revenue from
5 mobile telecommunication franchises compared to
6 Fiscal 2023 adoption. Mobile telecommunication
7 franchises bring the second most revenue collected
8 after cable television franchises. Can you help us
9 understand the decrease?

10 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: For that
11 question, again, the Deputy Commissioner of
12 Management and Budget will defer to.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: OTI, we
14 look at revenue trends on a quarterly basis, every
15 fiscal plan, we talk to our revenue taskforce at OMB.
16 What we actually do is adjust the plan accordingly as
17 we can until we see a consistent trend. Mobile is
18 actually going up as you stated, but it's updated
19 every financial plan, around the (INAUDIBLE) plan is
20 when we actually change the budgets, and we will go
21 back to OMB and figure out what's the best baseline
22 for that revenue source.

23 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: All right, so we
24 don't know why?

1
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: Well, it's
3 definitely increasing steadily because, again, we see
4 more revenue coming from the mobile side than the
5 cable side.

6 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: All right. I will
7 follow up with other line of questioning. I will hand
8 it over to Chair Gutierrez. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you, Chair.
10 Thank you all so much, once again, for your
11 testimony.

12 I'd like to just spend a little bit of
13 time on OTI's priorities for FY24. I know you touched
14 on them a little bit in your testimony, Commissioner,
15 but if you can just expand a little bit more on just
16 OTI's budget priorities are for FY24 and how you plan
17 to implement the Mayor's Blueprint vision, especially
18 a year into this new office.

19 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Our
20 budget priorities are focused as we started the last
21 year moving into this year, many of those priorities
22 have remained the same, and that's, one, ensuring
23 that we democratize access to city services. A lot of
24 challenges that we face and what our constituents
25 face is we have a bureaucracy that's overly complex

1
2 to interact with and figuring out ways where we can
3 streamline and simplify that process is one of the
4 things that we're focused on. Within the next couple
5 of weeks, we're looking to launch MyCity, which
6 signifies a change to how we've done business
7 historically where we take the emphasis from the
8 agency-specific service and we shift it to the
9 customer, the person, the resident that requires that
10 service. In addition to that, what's coming from the
11 childcare perspective, the other portions of MyCity
12 that we're focusing on now which includes looking at
13 workforce development and how we bring people into
14 public service, looking at small businesses and how
15 they grow and interact with the City and get access
16 to the services that they need, and, in addition to
17 that, looking at other things that live within the
18 Health and Human Services umbrella to see how we can
19 bring those into a common platform. The key here is
20 as we move over time, moving away from individual
21 systems and bringing them into a single place, it's
22 like a snowball that builds mass as it goes downhill.
23 It took a lot of effort to get the underpinning
24 platform done. Now that we've got the platform done
25 and we've got the first service, the things that come

1
2 thereafter will come at a much more expedient pace.
3 In addition to that, continuing to invest in the
4 areas where we've seen great success, areas like Big
5 Apple Connect where we offer to date to about 96,000
6 households and, of the 96,000 households, we have a
7 76 percent adoption rate so we're seeing a
8 significant utilization of the service. Currently,
9 we're in 130 developments, and within the coming
10 weeks we plan to have an expansion that takes it
11 beyond that. In addition to services like MyCity and
12 Big Apple Connect, part of our fiscal priorities is
13 also to ensure that we're not wasting city resources
14 so part of the thing that we've done is we started up
15 an office, Deputy Commissioner of Strategic
16 Initiatives, to focus on coordinating technology
17 efforts across the city. We've conducted a survey all
18 citywide significant tech programs that have an
19 aggregated or projected spend of 2 million or more,
20 we've looked at the vendors that we're looking to
21 invest with, and we've looked at ways where we could
22 leverage the City's total buying power into driving
23 down those costs. In addition to doing that, we've
24 looked at our regular recurring telecom expenses and
25 looked at how we're spending money. There is massive

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2 variance between what our big agencies and small
3 agencies pay, and recently we've coordinated between
4 the heads of these agencies and we're bringing
5 streamlined wireless plans and wireless services
6 across the city, which will equate to reductions that
7 are well north of 50 million. Again, we're focused on
8 democratizing access to city services, making sure
9 that in New York City those that need access to
10 broadband and other services that are essential that
11 they can get, we're focused on being fiscally
12 responsible, and the final piece that we're focused
13 on is making sure that we are working smart, and when
14 I say working smart, it's leveraging the data that we
15 have to ensure that we have KPIs, key performance
16 indicators, that we can measure that ensures that
17 we're moving the needles forward from a progress
18 perspective. As the Mayor has spoken about, New York
19 City STAT, building a portal where we can track the
20 performance metrics from the different verticals that
21 we have across the city and also building a portal
22 where we can see the quality of our response, the
23 quality of service jobs at 3-1-1, we're in the
24 process of delivering those and we expect by the end

1
2 of the year to have significant both internal and
3 public releases around both of those toolsets.

4 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you,
5 Commissioner. I think you expanded on this a little
6 bit towards the end, but I'm curious on the
7 streamlining process, it sounded like it's obviously
8 a top priority for the agency in this Fiscal Year,
9 how do you plan on achieving streamlining with the
10 reduction in headcount, what are some examples of
11 where you feel confident that the streamlining is
12 going to be successful even with less people to
13 potentially do that work?

14 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: When you
15 look at how bloat occurs in an organization over time
16 or how unnecessarily complex processes leads itself
17 to needing more people, I think that's a lot of what
18 we suffer from today so by bringing in more
19 automation, by bringing in capabilities where we can
20 do things like pre-eligibility determinations so that
21 those that are reviewing files can get the topline
22 information that they need so they can get to
23 decisions quicker. That helps reduce the burden on
24 the staff that today is dependent on reading or
25 pulling out information and going through that in a

1
2 very manual process. A good example of this is
3 childcare. From a childcare perspective, in order to
4 submit or get access to childcare services today or
5 childcare subsidies, it's a 15-page form that gets
6 delivered to one of three different agencies, and
7 every agency that gets that form, intakes the form
8 then has to call for an interview then has to call
9 for supporting documents, and then at some point a
10 determination is made whether that person is eligible
11 for the service or not. By digitizing the process,
12 making sure that all those required documents are
13 submitted ahead of time, it reduces the
14 administrative burden on the people that are
15 responsible for that task so by continuously pushing
16 more innovative, more automated toolsets that helps
17 the workforce work smarter, it reduces our dependency
18 or our need for more people, and we can shift those
19 resources, where we have them, towards the areas
20 where we have greater needs around people.

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay. Thank you.
22 I'm going to have a followup question about that in a
23 little bit. I want to just wrap up on the FY24
24 priorities. We noticed in the preliminary budget that
25 it does not include any new needs for the agency's

1
2 budget. Have you asked for any needs from OMB that
3 you did not receive funding for in this budget?

4 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: At this
5 point, everything that we have needed we have
6 received funding for from OMB. In any area where we
7 have an additional need, we're looking for
8 opportunities beyond what we've been provided funding
9 for, we're looking for opportunities to realign and
10 self-fund internally.

11 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay, so you are
12 satisfied with OMB's response on the Agency's needs?

13 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah.
14 OMB is a true partner, and what we've tried to do is,
15 given the fact that we are the tech authority for the
16 city and that within every agency there is a tech
17 function and there is a subsequent tech budget, we've
18 tried to reassess or realign our thinking. Instead of
19 looking at it as an individual agency's problem, look
20 at the City's tech need as a cooperative task so the
21 things that we're focusing on, making sure across the
22 agencies is aligned with our top priorities. In areas
23 where we need to increase funding because things are
24 underfunded, realigning things that are less of a

1
2 priority from other places and bringing that money
3 into the appropriate places.

4 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay. I hope to
5 learn a little bit about what those shifts look like.
6 I do also want to acknowledge Council Member Erik
7 Bottcher who has joined us.

8 I want to get into headcount and
9 vacancies. That's a big theme with this
10 Administration in this year's budget, you, in your
11 testimony, you also alluded to some of the vacant
12 positions. I believe it's the elimination of about
13 101 vacant positions through this year's PEGs. Can
14 you share with us a breakdown of these vacant
15 positions by program?

16 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Sure
17 thing. To go through our vacancies and our existing
18 vacancy rate, our Deputy Commissioner for Management
19 and Budget will run through the details, and I'll
20 fill in any additional context as necessary.

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: Currently,
23 the agency has 200 vacancies based on the (INAUDIBLE)
24 numbers. We have a 12 percent vacancy rate, and what
25 we're actually doing with OMB is negotiating areas of

1
2 risk to make sure that any PEG targets that we have
3 to meet are not coming from areas of concern for
4 service levels such as 3-1-1, risks such as cyber,
5 and services such as infrastructure management. We're
6 trying to make sure that whatever reductions that we
7 have to meet are in the areas that we have seen some
8 form of savings from consolidation, admin, clerical
9 lines, technology has made reductions, so we're
10 planning to make sure that we don't have any major
11 impacts when we do those cuts.

12 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: So can you just
13 share as of when are the vacancies at 200, and can
14 you just list the programs where those vacant
15 positions exist?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: For 3-1-1
17 we have 25 vacancies, applications we have 12, 41 is
18 in strategic initiatives, data analytics is 14,
19 general counsel office, I could group them and send
20 it back to you, but these are the main areas of
21 vacancies.

22 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Yeah. That's fine.
23 What was the one before general counsel?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: There was
25 data analytics, 14.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: And general
3 counsel?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: General
5 counsel office we have 12.

6 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: 12. Okay, and so
7 these are 200 vacancies for which 101 have been
8 eliminated?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: Right.
10 After the 101 has been eliminated, we currently have
11 200 vacancies.

12 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Oh.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: After the
14 cut, we have 200 vacancies left, and we're working
15 with OMB to move on filling those 200 vacancy lines.

16 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay, goodness,
17 okay. Do you have a sense of what the agency's
18 attrition rate is?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: Attrition
20 rate I believe is like 17.5 percent.

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: I also want to
22 acknowledge Committee Member, Council Member Vickie
23 Paladino has just joined us.

24 My next question is given the crucial
25 role, and you kind of alluded to this, Deputy

1
2 Commissioner, but given the crucial role of the
3 agency in supporting city agencies, do these
4 vacancies pose any risk to your ability to run its
5 operations?

6 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: As it
7 stands right now, we have no risk around essential
8 city services or operations, and the way that we
9 manage headcount is to ensure that we staff up in the
10 areas where we have our most critical needs.

11 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: What is the
12 minimum amount of staff required to operate Cyber
13 Command, for example?

14 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Cyber
15 Command is an interesting example. Remember, Cyber
16 Command was launched in 2017 and, since it's
17 inception, it's been carrying over 100 vacancies so a
18 lot of...

19 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: I'm so sorry. How
20 many vacancies?

21 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Over 100
22 vacancies.

23 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: 100? Okay.

24 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So it
25 was an entity that was created from the ground up so

1
2 a lot of Cyber Command's initial operations came out
3 of the DoITT Information Security Arm, and then, from
4 there, there was some staff up that was performed,
5 but they've never been at a level that was necessary
6 to take its vacant headcount under that 100-person
7 threshold. What we're doing on that front is we
8 mentioned that we've launched our Cyber Academy.
9 Across the market, whether you're in public sector or
10 private sector, cybersecurity is one of the most
11 sought-after skillsets so there is a market rush in
12 sort of pulling those resources in so, to abate that,
13 what we've done is we've created a program also as
14 part of the executive order that established OTI and
15 New York City Cyber Command where we've created Cyber
16 Liaisons so within every agency, they identified a
17 resource that wasn't the Chief Information Officer or
18 the Chief Information Security Officer that would
19 have a mandate that would focus specifically on
20 cyber, and, from those agencies, we built a Cyber
21 Academy where we could take those resources and build
22 them at a level where they can run as a senior level
23 cybersecurity analyst. Now, it's a process very
24 similar to how the federal government, you take a
25 special agent who has never done anything in cyber

1
2 and build the capability to do that, we've modelled
3 our program very much like that so we've had our
4 first class go through, and we have about 25 people
5 that's completed the first class and then we have a
6 second class that's going through this year, and we
7 plan to continue to expand the program. As it stands
8 right now, in addition to the resources that we have
9 at Cyber Command, we also have external partners that
10 help us complete and ensure that New York City and
11 all of its surrounding assets are safe.

12 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay. Thank you.
13 There's no amount that you can share with us of like
14 an ideal number of staff to ensure the City's
15 cybersecurity?

16 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: There
17 isn't a specific number, and I think there's a number
18 of factors that go into how many people you at any
19 given moment, and in areas where we have more needs
20 than others or areas where we have capabilities that
21 we need filled we also, in addition to our staff
22 resources, we also use partners to do that just like
23 any major organization running a similar (INAUDIBLE)

24 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay. What
25 restructuring or shifting in your words has the

1
2 Agency done that may have led to both vacancies and
3 new roles?

4 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I
5 apologize. Can you repeat, please?

6 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: What restructuring
7 within the agency, you said in a previous response
8 that you're looking at priorities and where you can
9 shift budget in areas that make sense and move them
10 into areas where you need them so can you give us
11 some examples of where that shift or where that
12 restructuring happened?

13 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Sure.
14 When you look in the budget, one of the areas that
15 we've done the significant restructuring and, as many
16 of you may be familiar, New York City Wireless
17 Network, so NYCWiN was, for those of you who aren't
18 familiar, just a quick run-through, NYCWiN was a
19 carrier-grade wireless network that was commissioned
20 in the early 2000s to support mobile telecom needs
21 for agencies. DoITT had a baseline in its budget of
22 around 41 million to support NYCWiN. When we came in,
23 we looked at the work that was left to decommission
24 the NYCWiN network, and we're at a state where that
25 network has been fully decommissioned. Now, in order

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2 to support programs like Big Apple Connect it was
3 important that we found funding sources that could be
4 baselined to ensure that once we provided this
5 service we didn't our constituents in the place where
6 we had funding that would dry up very similar to the
7 Affordable Connectivity Program, because that funding
8 from the federal end is provided year-to-year so we
9 took the baseline NYCWiN funding, and we used it to
10 cover the funding to support Big Apple Connect so
11 that's one way where you can see how that
12 materializes.

13 One of the other things that I mentioned
14 is we looked at wireless telecom across the city. We
15 looked at rate plan variances, and what I mean by
16 variances, a good example is for our largest agencies
17 they may have been paying 27 dollars per month for a
18 cellphone. For our smallest agencies, they may have
19 been paying maybe 30 dollars per month, 32 dollars,
20 33 dollars per month per cellphone. In some cases,
21 more, in some extreme cases maybe a little less. What
22 we were able to do was we were able to renegotiate
23 with all of our telecom carriers and, after the
24 renegotiation, we were able to drive down the average
25 cost for a rate plan significantly by over 20

1
2 percent, and that projected savings will carry us,
3 once standardized across the city, over 12 million
4 per year, and then when we eliminate excess devices,
5 we should go up significantly beyond that. Our plan
6 is to use those excess funds to cover other programs
7 like MyCity and other areas where we have needs.

8 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you. I just
9 have two more followup questions regarding attrition.
10 You said earlier that the rate is about 17.5 percent.
11 Can you speak to what efforts OTI is making to reduce
12 attrition and attract new hires?

13 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER:
14 Currently, we've expanded recruitment efforts
15 significantly. We've partnered with entities like the
16 U.S. Army to get veterans that are coming back into
17 areas like Cyber Command. They've built dexterity
18 responding to global cyber conditions so what better
19 place to come than New York City Cyber Command? In
20 addition to working with entities like the Army,
21 we're partnering with higher ed institutions to
22 create a more robust pipeline so that instead of
23 people that are coming out of college trying to jump
24 out into the private sector, we can attract them
25 directly into government. In addition to that, we're

1
2 working very closely as we focus our digital equity
3 efforts now that we've brought things like broadband
4 into public housing and we standardize it like a
5 utility. In addition to that, we are looking to bring
6 in digital workforce upskilling and career pathways.
7 Imagine, one of the things that we're working on
8 within the next year is we want to ensure that when
9 we look for talent in areas where we have the highest
10 need, and now that we've brought connectivity into
11 areas where people have historically been
12 underserved, we want to bring digital skills programs
13 into those neighborhoods. In addition to that,
14 provide them a pathway where they can come into the
15 city's workforce. We look at our entry-level
16 positions, our entry-level cyber analyst positions,
17 our entry-level network engineering positions. After
18 completing a 12- to 16-week program, you can train
19 someone and certify someone and get them an entry-
20 level job to cover one of the needs that we have on
21 one of those fronts. In addition to our efforts
22 partnering with external entities, partnering with
23 higher ed, and looking at our community-based efforts
24 to build stronger workforce out of our public housing
25 community, in addition to that, we are working on, of

1
2 course, other things like recruitment fairs and
3 partnering with other entities that do workforce
4 development in New York City.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Fantastic. Thank
6 you. I'm excited to learn more about the veteran
7 program and obviously expanding more on the higher ed
8 program. I think that's really good. Thank you.

9 I just also want to recognize Council
10 Member Julie Won who has joined us. I think I'm going
11 to, out of respect for my dear Colleagues, I'm going
12 to hand off some questions to them. First up we have
13 Council Member Ari Kagan with a question. Look at
14 that.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Thank you very
16 much. I'm a little bit jumping ahead of the schedule,
17 sorry, and we have questions here about program, Link
18 NYC, and I know it's like a little bit further down.
19 Thank you very much, again, for this opportunity.

20 I represent Coney Island in Southern
21 Brooklyn and when people read about this program, of
22 course, everybody likes it, but do you have any plans
23 to open some of these kiosks in the Coney Island
24 area?

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CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Of course. What we're trying to do right now is accelerate our deployment of Links, especially in the areas that need them. Coney Island is a great example of an area where we have high traffic. It doesn't matter where you live in New York City, everyone knows where Coney Island is, and the moment that it gets warm out, that's where everyone gravitates to, and we want to make sure no matter where you come from, when you get to areas that have that high traffic, that high demand, making sure that broadband is open and available like here. We're working very aggressively to get that connectivity into those neighborhoods, and you can rest assured that it will be there. For specific timelines, we can have the office follow up, and, if you have a specific area of need, we can look to prioritize those accordingly.

COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Thank you. I would love to have it in Coney Island, of course. It's not just me. It's community.

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I love a fan of Link. It's great.

COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Thank you.

1

2

CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay, great.

3

Fantastic. I just want to come back to a couple of

4

the FY24 questions in the preliminary budget. Can you

5

share what positions the agency currently has open

6

and is actively hiring for?

7

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: A list

8

of vacant specific titles?

9

CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: I know in the last

10

hearing we talked a little bit about the positions

11

that you all are hiring for with regard to blockchain

12

planning so if there's any of those examples that you

13

can share with us. I guess in the spirit of the

14

agency kind of looking at priority areas versus non,

15

can you share what some of those positions are that

16

you're hiring for?

17

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: One of

18

our higher priority areas and a significant portion

19

of our vacancies come from the cyber space so looking

20

to bring in cyber security analysts, threat hunters,

21

data engineers to mine that information. That's one

22

area where we're doing a significant amount of

23

recruitment and we have a lot of postings out. In

24

addition to that, application development and data

25

visualization. Making sure that we have a strong and

1
2 robust city workforce that is capable of building the
3 applications, and not just building them but
4 sustaining them after they've been developed. From a
5 data and analytics perspective, as you heard, we're
6 trying to work very smart, right, and we want to make
7 sure that for the things that we build in the areas
8 where we have performance demands and needs and
9 expectations from the public, that we can create the
10 visualizations and tools that are necessary so that
11 we can work effectively. In addition to our cyber
12 needs and our application development needs, business
13 analysts and data analysts to help us do that sort of
14 work is high. In addition to those few areas, 3-1-1
15 is an area where we're always recruiting. As we said
16 today, we celebrated 3-1-1's 20th year, and currently
17 we only have about 20 vacant positions within 3-1-1,
18 but we're looking to ensure that we continuously
19 staff that model because the public expects a certain
20 quality of service and we want to make sure that we
21 maintain that.

22 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you. The
23 vacant positions under 3-1-1, the 25 or 28 that I
24 think I heard both of you say, those have not been
25 reduced, correct?

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2 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Those
3 have not been reduced.

4 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay, they just
5 haven't been filled. Okay, fantastic.

6 I'm going to pass it off to Council
7 Member Bottcher who's going to ask a question.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Hi, how are you?

9 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Good.
10 How about yourself?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Good, thank you.
12 There's 101 vacant positions being proposed in this
13 budget. How many of those vacant positions are out of
14 the 3-1-1 program?

15 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: About
16 25?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: 25
18 currently.

19 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: 25
20 current.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: There's 25 that
22 are proposed to be eliminated from the 3-1-1 program.
23 What are those...

24 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER:
25 Apologies. Sorry. There are 25 current vacancies in

1
2 3-1-1. There are no planned eliminations from the 3-
3 1-1 program.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Great. That's
5 what I wanted to know.

6 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Okay.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Very important
8 that 3-1-1 be kept whole if not increased. It's so,
9 so important. I don't need to tell you how important
10 it is. It's the link of constituents to the
11 government to get problems solved, and we should be
12 building it up, not cutting positions.

13 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I
14 wholeheartedly agree. One of the things that we've
15 seen, a fun fact is that we survey the performance of
16 the 3-1-1 operators. In addition to that, we survey
17 the performance of agencies as they respond to 3-1-1
18 conditions. For 3-1-1 operators or satisfactions with
19 3-1-1 service itself, 9 out of 10 people that we
20 survey rate the performance of 3-1-1 operations at
21 least a 9 out of 10, which means that 9 out of 10 New
22 Yorkers are very satisfied with 3-1-1's performance,
23 at least the performance that they get from a call
24 center operator. With that expectation, there's a mix
25 of having the right number of resources, making sure

1
2 that response time is quick enough when we answer a
3 phone call, and we want to make sure that we maintain
4 that so I completely agree.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: The 9 out of 10
6 favorability that you get for the operators
7 themselves?

8 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That's
9 correct.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: When is that
11 recorded? Is that immediately after the phone call
12 with the operator?

13 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That is
14 correct.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Can you report
16 on the favorability rating that you get after the
17 case is closed out?

18 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yes, we
19 can.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: What is that?

21 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: It
22 depends on the specific service line, but one of the
23 things that we're working on now is creating a
24 dashboard to make a lot of that information public,
25 and I think one of the things that the Mayor believes

1
2 is in order, as he says often, if you don't inspect
3 what you expect, everything is suspect, so we want to
4 be...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: That's a great
6 Eric Adams-ism.

7 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah. I
8 love it. I think for us, in that there's a key
9 lesson, and if we don't inspect what the public
10 expects, right, so when we respond they expect the
11 high quality of service, they expect us to respond in
12 complete and close the condition that they've called
13 about, and if we don't inspect that expectation to
14 make sure that we're doing that, then how can we
15 surely and truly measure how successful we are in
16 fulfilling that. One of the things that we've worked
17 on of late is building a dashboard to track the
18 public satisfaction for response to 3-1-1 conditions
19 post-call, and in that, there's a lot of revelation
20 in terms of areas where we could be doing better. In
21 terms of providing an overview of what that looks
22 like per service line, we can certainly follow up
23 after this and look providing a preview of what that
24 looks like.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: I would love to
3 get those numbers. I think the call from the operator
4 in my experience is almost always a good interaction.

5 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I love
6 that.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: In my personal
8 experience, I always get a good interaction when I
9 call, although I normally do it digitally. It's the
10 followup from the complaint that to me is arguably
11 the most important, and that is a conversation I'd
12 love to follow up on and the portal, very important.
13 Thank you.

14 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Thank
15 you.

16 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you, Council
17 Member.

18 Next, I also just want to shout out
19 Council Member Bottcher. This is isn't his Committee
20 but he actively participates, and I love that you
21 join us. Thank you so much.

22 Council Member Won.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Thank you so much,
24 Chair Gutierrez. Hello. Good to see you all. I had a
25 question about the telecommunications costs since

1 it's the largest portion of expense at 100.3 million.
2 For the next Fiscal Year, do you have an earmark for
3 homeless shelters, for emergency shelters, since we
4 are getting a high number of requests for these
5 family shelters who have children who are looking for
6 internet connectivity in their hotels?
7

8 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Family
9 homeless shelters across the city, last year we
10 embarked on a campaign to provide wireless across all
11 the family homeless shelters and, as of early last
12 year or mid last year, we completely provided
13 connectivity to all those family (INAUDIBLE)

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay, so for the new
15 shelters, I can trust that they will be brought
16 online because I have many shelters in my District
17 that are newer that are waiting to be connected.

18 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: You can
19 rest assured if they're a family shelter, that's the
20 expectation.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: What about for the
22 men's shelters or the women's only shelters?

23 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: We are
24 currently looking at a program to expand the existing
25 program that we did to carry it to all of those, but

1
2 we wanted to make sure that we prioritized the family
3 homeless shelters because they have school-aged kids
4 that need that resource so that they can compete in
5 school. In addition to that, we're looking to expand
6 into those other areas as well within this year.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay. For Big Apple
8 Connect, congratulations on having 76 percent
9 adoptions, that is extremely high...

10 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Thank
11 you for the partnership.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: For a government
13 program so is there going to be an increase in that
14 amount for this next Fiscal Year so that you can
15 increase the contracts since there is such a high
16 demand for NYCHAs that weren't part of the initial
17 release that want to be?

18 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Within
19 the coming weeks, we have an announcement where we'll
20 focus on an expansion of Big Apple Connect that will
21 carry to more developments. The Mayor made a
22 commitment both in the first 100 days in the State of
23 the City of what that would look like, and we expect
24 that we will meet all of the commitments along that
25 line to public housing. Short answer is yes we plan

1
2 an expansion, and we plan to get to more NYCHA
3 residents very soon.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay, because we are
5 still waiting for Ravenswood Houses in my District.
6 They're clutching on, waiting for their cable TV and
7 internet and so I hope to hear good news soon.

8 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Very
9 soon.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay. Thank you so
11 much.

12 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you, Council
15 Member. I wanted to just ask about the hiring
16 process. Is the hiring process for these vacant
17 positions any different than some of the other city
18 agencies and, if it is, can you just walk us through
19 what that process looks like?

20 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I think
21 for these positions, many of them like our 3-1-1
22 positions, it's very similar to what civil service
23 appointments look like across the city. There's an
24 exam that you take, there's a list that gets called,
25 and then we conduct interviews. Those that respond,

1
2 they go through an eligibility review, and then we
3 bring them on accordingly. For our noncompetitive
4 hires, it's a process very similar to what you have
5 in your traditional employment search. It's
6 collecting candidates, interviewing candidates,
7 bringing them on board, and partnering with the
8 Office of Management and Budget and broader team to
9 ensure that as candidates are identified that we can
10 streamline the hire.

11 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Got it. What is
12 the ideal number of positions necessary for your
13 agency to deliver key services? Do you have that?

14 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I don't
15 know if there's a specific number, and I think that
16 that number is a moving target depending on what we
17 are focused on and what we are working on at any
18 given day or any given moment. The one thing that I
19 can say with certainty is that we have not nor do we
20 expect to be near our threshold where we expect any
21 disruption of any critical service that the agency
22 provides and nothing that has inhibited our ability
23 to deliver any of the commitments that we've made. I
24 think one of the things that we, as a City, and as
25 all other verticals across the nation are facing, is

1
2 that the job market is a high-demand market, and
3 there's a resource shortage and in order to get
4 around those challenges, we're trying to build those
5 talents and build capabilities locally.

6 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you. My last
7 question around this and, as you know, we're trying
8 to do a job fair in our District, is the Agency
9 working with DC37, for example, to do these job fairs
10 or how are you thinking the best way to help recruit
11 and just raise awareness about the urgency to fill
12 these vacant positions?

13 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: A lot of
14 the challenges that we have in terms of awareness,
15 we're trying to partner with both unions, higher ed,
16 faith leadership, and also other recruitment firms
17 across the city to bring resources in. In addition to
18 that, we're looking to rebrand like the nyc.gov jobs
19 portal. If your first experience with any entity is
20 solely judged based on their web presence, you want
21 to make sure that that sends a strong message around
22 who you are and what they can expect as part of that
23 experience so the Mayor has been a big believer and a
24 big supporter of updating and streamlining that
25 process and making sure that it looks like what the

1
2 modern workforce expects from a recruitment site. In
3 addition to working with external and internal
4 entities to create a talent pipeline, we're working
5 on redefining our digital presence so that we can
6 attract more talent as well.

7 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you. I look
8 forward to that.

9 Next, I'm going to pass it to my
10 Colleague, Council Member Vickie Paladino, for her
11 questions.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: No, I'm good.

13 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: You're good? Okay.
14 Thank you.

15 I want to follow up, and this can be very
16 brief, Commissioner, on NYCWiN because I think we're
17 all really excited to close that chapter in the
18 City's history. Can you just give us a breakdown of
19 any of the NYCWiN cost for this Fiscal Year, if there
20 are any?

21 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: This
22 Fiscal Year, NYCWiN has been decommissioned, and what
23 you see in the budget that's represented as a new
24 need for Big Apple Connect, what we've basically done
25 is we've said let's close the budget line NYCWiN so

1
2 going forward we don't have to look at NYCWiN again
3 in the budget so let's close the budget line and
4 let's reappropriate it under Big Apple Connect so
5 we're fully transparent in where the money is
6 actually going.

7 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: That's right.

8 Okay, great. The last time there was a budget item
9 was FY23?

10 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That is
11 correct.

12 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay. Great. The
13 breakdown and transition off the system, has that
14 already been completed, all of the infrastructure
15 breakdown, all of that stuff?

16 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: All the
17 infrastructure breakdown for the network that
18 supported NYCWiN is completed.

19 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: It's completed.
20 Great. So there's no more equipment on rooftops?

21 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Not that
22 I'm aware of and, if it is, it's squatting.

23 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: It's what?

24 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: It's
25 squatting.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay. They have
3 rights too. Great.

4 My next question is around M/WBEs. We've
5 talked about this at length at so many of our
6 hearings. I think this is something that obviously
7 the Administration and the Council as a whole we're
8 super committed to. I understand that in FY24, the
9 contract budget total was 274.6 million, 40 percent
10 of which represents OTPS, and the agency budget
11 covers 222 contracts in the same Fiscal Year. My
12 question is how much of the contract budget was
13 allocated in FY23 and how much do you anticipate to
14 be allocated for M/WBEs in FY24?

15 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: To
16 respond to that question, I will defer to the Deputy
17 Commissioner for Management and Budget.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: For
19 M/WBEs, the Department has seen an increase in usage.
20 Currently, we have awarded, looking at a period from
21 Fiscal Year '20 last quarter to Fiscal Year '23, we
22 have increased close to 400 percent M/WBE vendors.
23 The dollar value went from 522,000 to 2.6 million.
24 Black women vendors, we went close to 900 percent; it
25 went from 90,000 to 879,000, and Hispanic women we've

1
2 increased 400 percent from 93,000 to 483,000 so what
3 we've been trying to do is using the new threshold of
4 1 million dollars, we've been pushing agencies to
5 make sure that they actually target M/WBEs first,
6 especially the other underutilized categories. We've
7 seen a lot of increase from us because of our
8 spending, but we also try to make sure that other
9 agencies follow the lead on using M/WBEs.

10 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: So more spending
11 in this area has allowed for more applicants and more
12 allocations of M/WBE contracts?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: Right. The
14 threshold actually helps agencies now to utilize it
15 more. We do a lot of master contract agreements so
16 that people actually can use so we're targeting
17 M/WBEs in our master agreements for citywide usage.

18 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: That's great. So
19 more investment in this area..

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: Right.

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Garners more
22 representation. Amazing.

23 Do you have a sense of which program at
24 OTI holds the most M/WBE contracts?

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CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I would say that's highly dependent on how we classify so in terms of direct M/WBE contracts, we can get you a summary of what that looks, but in addition to direct M/WBE contracts, we have larger city requirements contracts with entities like SHI, and through those larger requirements contracts, I believe this year that accounted for, through partner spend with them, over 400 million in M/WBE spend that went through one of the major contracts so I think depending on how we look at it, either one of our larger requirements contracts through partner spend with M/WBEs or direct from City, we can get you a breakdown catalogue of what that looks like.

CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay, that would be great.

Are there any issues related to contracting M/WBEs? I don't know if you touched on that, but are there any...

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: There are no issues, but we're trying to do more outreach. At the end of next month, we're doing a big outreach for M/WBE vendors just to show them exactly how the City system works. A lot of them need some education on

1
2 how to apply for these bids so we're trying to do
3 something at the end of the month for them.

4 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay, thank you.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: Sorry. End
6 of April.

7 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: End of April?

8 Okay.

9 My next questions are related to the
10 preliminary capital commitment plan. For FY24, the
11 agency's capital commitment plan includes 631.3
12 million between FY23 and FY27. Can you share how many
13 active capital projects the agency currently has?

14 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Our
15 Deputy Commissioner of Management and Budget will go
16 through that as well.

17 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: If you have in
18 front of you the breakdown of those projects by
19 borough? Do you track it that way?

20 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: By
21 borough?

22 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Yeah.

23 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: No. It's
24 usually tracked at a program level.

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CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay, but I guess

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not for today, but I think it would be good if we

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could just get a sense borough-by-borough because

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we're always talking about equity and if we could

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just have a sense of that, but I understand maybe not

7

for today.

8

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER:

9

Understood.

10

CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you.

11

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: Currently,

12

we have 150.4 million in our current plan. Of that,

13

107 million is committed. These projects mainly

14

relate to application, modernization projects.

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CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Is that the MyCity

16

app?

17

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: No,

18

modernization of existing systems.

19

CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Oh, okay. So

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that's the only capital project?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: There's a

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few, but I was just categorizing them. There's over

23

20 on this list, but I can give you a grouping..

24

CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: 20?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: Yeah.

3

There's over 20 open CPs right now for projects

4

related to modernization.

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CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay. I know you

6

don't have the borough-by-borough breakdown, but how

7

does OTI work to ensure that the capital spending is

8

as equitable as it can be, obviously related to where

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the demand is and where the need is?

10

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: From a

11

capital perspective, in terms of resources where we

12

get them, I mean ensuring that it's equitable we

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depend largely on the threshold for M/WBE contracts,

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which now brings that with the new million dollar

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threshold, it brings us a higher capability to

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leverage that. In addition to that, in terms of where

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resources are spent, it's largely driven by demand.

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When you look at programs that we have like Link New

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York City, the significant majority of new Link

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kiosks that will go out will go out in the areas

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outside of the business districts in Manhattan, which

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will bring it into areas that have historically been

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excluded, and those same sort of approaches are what

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we use to streamline and rationalize where we place

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investments for other types of services.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay. Does the
3 expense budget capture all of the cost for staff,
4 maintenance, leases, costs associated with capital
5 projects?

6 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That is
7 correct.

8 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay. Great. I
9 would like to move on to your favorite topic and
10 mine, Big Apple Connect.

11 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Oh, all
12 right.

13 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: I know. The
14 November plan added 15.7 million in FY23 and 27.2
15 million in out-years for Big Apple Connect, which is
16 a program like we all mentioned intended to provide
17 free in-home broadband and basic cable television to
18 NYCHA residents. Can you clarify the source of
19 funding for Big Apple Connect?

20 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: The
21 source of funding for Big Apple Connect if what was
22 once classified as NYCWiN funding. We have closed the
23 NYCWiN budget line, and we have reappropriated it
24 under Big Apple Connect.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Fantastic. Given
3 that the goal for Big Apple Connect to connect
4 approximately 300,000 New Yorkers with internet by
5 the end of this year, can you tell us once again how
6 many New Yorkers are currently connected?

7 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER:
8 Currently, we have 74,000 households connected, and
9 that is 74,000 of over 96,000 households that are
10 eligible for access.

11 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: All right. Great.
12 Do you have a sense of what that breakdown is by
13 borough? I know that there's the designated NYCHA
14 developments?

15 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: We can
16 certainly provide a detail by borough of the total
17 subscription rate. We've actually built a dashboard,
18 which again, some of the things that we're also
19 looking to do is create more transparency around what
20 we're doing, so we built a dashboard to summarize the
21 deployment of Big Apple Connect which we hope to
22 launch soon, and it will give the public both
23 transparency into where the services are offered and
24 how many people are consuming the services in each
25 development.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Where does this
3 dashboard live?

4 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: See, the
5 dashboard lives currently in our development
6 environment, but it's expected to go live soon.

7 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Soon? Okay. I'm
8 excited.

9 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, we
10 will gladly give you a preview as well so you can see
11 it.

12 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: I just love to be
13 involved in color scheme selection. Let me be in the
14 room.

15 Commissioner, can you walk us through the
16 sign-up process for residents that are in the
17 developments that are eligible for Big Apple Connect?

18 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: It's a
19 pretty seamless process. In many cases, we have sign-
20 up days that are local at the developments
21 themselves. We work with both the tenant association
22 and our community affairs team within the NYPD to
23 make sure that we have resources available on-site to
24 hand out fliers and let people know that service is
25 available. The process is simple as calling the

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2 provider that offers the service in your building,
3 confirming details and the unit number, and
4 scheduling an installation date. No other information
5 is necessary. That's all that is required. If you're
6 an existing customer, it's just calling the
7 (INAUDIBLE) have to call so we created it in such a
8 way that if you are an existing customer and those
9 services you were consuming that they would
10 automatically get flipped to the Big Apple Connect
11 program so that you didn't have to go through any
12 manual effort to do it.

13 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Great. Have there
14 been any instances where residents are being charged?

15 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Not for
16 any of the services that are covered under Big Apple
17 Connect, but Big Apple Connect, you can consider that
18 like a baseline service. You have basic TV and free
19 high-speed broadband. If in the household, someone
20 wants to make a determination to carry something
21 other than what we cover with Big Apple Connect,
22 anything that's different or the difference, the
23 household would have to cover. As an example, if the
24 household instead of basic TV they want any one of
25 the premium channels, like they want HBO, Starz,

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2 Showtime, whatever the cost associated with that
3 additional service is passed on to the household. We
4 do not cover that.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay, so you don't
6 have any instances where folks were being charged for
7 the basic service, especially those that were making
8 that switch because they maybe already had Altice or
9 Charter?

10 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That is
11 correct.

12 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: You said something
13 earlier, and I don't know if maybe I had missed this
14 before, you all have a community affairs team?

15 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: No.
16 Working in conjunction with the NYPD's community
17 affairs team.

18 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Oh. Maybe it's not
19 intuitive for me. Why community affairs team to help
20 do this outreach?

21 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Because
22 across all of the City's housing developments, there
23 are police service areas, PSAs, that cover the
24 housing developments.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Except Cooper Park
3 in my District so not all of them.

4 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: We can
5 work on that. The police service areas or the housing
6 areas work directly with the tenant associations and
7 they have a very robust relationship so instead of,
8 for any service hitting a tenant association from
9 multiple directions, we try to have a coordinated
10 approach so if we have community affairs teams that
11 are working with the public and the community to
12 build strong relationships, one of the things that
13 they can use in their toolbelts is also saying, hey,
14 by the way do you know if you live in a household,
15 you don't have access to broadband, these services
16 are available free. It's also one of those tools that
17 you use because, again, our Police Department is more
18 than just a Police Department. It's also the bridge
19 between the community and the City because they have
20 a lot of touchpoints with the community so we want to
21 make sure that during those touchpoints, especially
22 the ones that aren't related to enforcement, they
23 have the capability to talk about things that can
24 help a household. With things like broadband, it may
25 not be the thing that may be the silver bullet to

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2 bring crime completely down, but it's certainly a
3 tool that can be used to help provide alternative
4 services, alternative access to tools that can bring
5 violence conditions down in neighborhoods.

6 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: This is the first
7 time I'm hearing about it so, again, maybe I just
8 hadn't caught that before, but what has been the
9 feedback from the various PSAs because I often think
10 that the City is asking the PD to do things that
11 they're not typically trained for, while I understand
12 that in the scenario they're potentially just asking,
13 I'm just curious if there are other avenues to do
14 that or outside of the PD, perhaps just because again
15 that connection doesn't seem seamless to me. Are
16 there other instances or other non-profits that are
17 aiding in this? I represent a community that I think
18 my NYCHA residents have a decent with PSA3, for
19 example, but it just strikes me that they would, in
20 any interaction whether it's positive or not, would
21 kind of drop Big Apple Connect on them.

22 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I think
23 there's a couple of ways that you look at it. I
24 wouldn't look at it as it's a primary function on any
25 given day for them to do that. You have to remember

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2 that we have resources like the community affairs
3 team may be local in the developments themselves.
4 They may be there doing any other activity that
5 they'd be doing any other given day, but also in a
6 conversation just being aware that that broadband is
7 available and those services are available. It's
8 something that they can use to continue to build that
9 relationship with community. When we went live with
10 the first development, which was Hughes Houses in
11 Brooklyn within the confines of PSA2, one of the
12 things that we did was in addition to working the
13 tenant association, we worked with the PSA Commander,
14 we work with the NYCHA tenant association. In
15 addition to that, we had teams from both Charter and
16 Altice, their community affairs teams, and we had
17 other organizations partner to get out to get the
18 word out that these services were available. As I
19 mentioned, this isn't one of those things where it
20 deters them or distracts them from their day job...

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: I'm so sorry to
22 interrupt you, but they're not doing the application
23 for folks?

24 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: No.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: That's what I'm
3 asking.

4 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: No.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: I personally want
6 to reduce those interactions so I just needed that
7 clarity. Okay.

8 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: No, no.
9 Nobody's doing applications for folks. It's just
10 awareness that the programs exist.

11 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay, they're just
12 dropping it? I understand. After year three, if you
13 want to just clarify where we are in the three-year
14 plan because I the Big Apple Connect piloted maybe at
15 the beginning of FY23?

16 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That is
17 correct.

18 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: That's correct?

19 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Or mid-
20 through Fiscal Year '23 because that's when...

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: It was around
22 September. I remember the announcement. Great. Is
23 your timeline still set for those three years, and do
24 you anticipate any additional funding for this
25 project beyond the three years?

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2 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: As I
3 mentioned, the funding for Big Apple Connect was
4 already baselined in OTI's budget so it isn't like
5 we're looking for new funding, and part of the magic
6 of using baseline funding is that it's there.

7 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Right.

8 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: The Big
9 Apple Connect contract was established primarily for
10 three years with a two-year option to renew, and then
11 from there we can renegotiate to see if we can bring
12 rates down lower than where it is, but, as it stands
13 right now by leveraging baseline expense costs, the
14 need is already carried in the baseline operating
15 budget.

16 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay. That's
17 expense?

18 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That is
19 expense.

20 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay. Does the
21 Administration plan on renewing those contracts with
22 still Altice and Charter or, I have to bring up again
23 the conversation around Verizon, kind of what is the
24 plan to extend the project after that three-year term
25 and who are you all thinking about working with?

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2 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: At this
3 point, we're evaluating our options, again, to see
4 what's the best path forward. We try not to be in a
5 position where we make a decision and we don't look
6 back. We want to make sure that periodically we
7 sanity-check to make sure that it's the right thing
8 to move forward with.

9 In terms of partnering with anyone beyond
10 Charter Communications and Altice, certainly the
11 opportunity is open, and it's possible that that may
12 occur. The key for us is minimizing impact to
13 residents and making sure that we get them access as
14 quickly as possible. A lot of the prior efforts were
15 focused on these big monolithic programs that did not
16 really deliver any material success, and I think, for
17 us, who we partner with and how the Administration
18 moves forward is largely dependent on who can deliver
19 those services as quickly as possible and the most
20 reliable service as well.

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Right, but it does
22 sound, like someone on the outside like Verizon is a
23 candidate, are those conversations happening?

24 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: We had
25 conversations with Verizon. They were a part of the

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2 initial rounds of conversation, but we were unable,
3 at least at this moment, we were unable to come to an
4 agreement in terms of the service cost. Just long
5 story very short, there's a big disparity in the
6 rates that Verizon provided versus the ones that
7 Charter and Altice provided, and, for us, it was
8 disproportionate so spending excess expense for the
9 same service is something that wasn't fiscally
10 responsible.

11 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay, I would love
12 to get a better sense of what those rates are at a
13 later time.

14 Do you have any examples of coordinating
15 with any local internet service providers?

16 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: The
17 local internet service providers outside of the RFEI
18 that exists within NYCHA right now where we have 18
19 buildings across six developments where those
20 services are partnering with local providers to
21 provide broadband into those areas, that's the
22 largest opportunity that we have running at the
23 moment. Beyond that, we're continuously assessing the
24 availability of resources and opportunities to bring
25 those providers into the ecosystem.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay. My next
3 question is related to the cost of the buildout in
4 these NYCHA developments. I know Chair Salamanca had
5 asked about Melrose in your District. In that
6 example, for Big Apple Connect to move in, there was
7 a provider there before, who incurred the cost of
8 that infrastructure?

9 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: It
10 depends. I'd have to look at the direct contract and
11 tell you. It may be the provider or the City may have
12 subsidized a portion of it, but, sitting here at this
13 moment, we can get back to you.

14 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay. It's
15 important because my next question is in these Big
16 Apple designated developments, is the development
17 allowed to receive infrastructure buildout from other
18 internet service providers other than Spectrum and
19 Optimum or are they the ones exclusively doing that
20 buildout?

21 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: No. In
22 those developments, we do not place a prohibition on
23 any other service provider that wants to offer
24 service to any development. However, we will only
25 cover the services that are offered through Big Apple

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2 Connect so a household can choose to use a different
3 provider or move in any direction that they want, the
4 power is in the household's hand, but if they
5 leverage Big Apple Connect, it has to be through one
6 of our authorized providers.

7 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay. My last
8 question on this topic, under Big Apple Connect. When
9 the Big Apple Connect was launched, although I
10 understand it was piloted months before back in
11 September, we at the Council were still trying to
12 grapple with what was going on. We had Council Member
13 Menin's NYCHA broadband program which seems to be
14 very successful. I know Council Member Won signed up
15 folks. She did as well under the Affordable
16 Connectivity program to essentially do the same
17 thing, to deliver broadband to NYCHA residents at no
18 cost. What was the rationale behind launching Big
19 Apple Connect and using taxpayer dollars to fund a
20 program instead of federal money?

21 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: The
22 emphasis on federal money is an interesting one. The
23 ACP program, which is 29.99 per month, is a program,
24 yes, subsidized by the federal government, but then a
25 household has to make a determination on whether they

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2 cover their home internet or they cover one mobile
3 device, and in that case you're making a household
4 determine whether they have access in their home
5 versus having access outside. What we saw as a need,
6 especially when we looked at the fact that in many
7 housing developments, over 40 percent of those
8 developments didn't have access to broadband, and
9 then we looked at historic events that were, as you
10 said, were successful, it really depends on how you
11 define success. For the developments that we provided
12 services to and the ones that had access to the
13 programs the longest, we've seen adoption rates go
14 from 60 percent or 50 percent to over 80 percent so
15 what we've seen is a significant uptick in both use
16 and subscription over time. For us, the fact that we
17 had that significant portion of the developments that
18 weren't covered, we had school-aged children that
19 didn't have access to resources that they needed,
20 it's a problem. The way that we look at is that
21 instead of having our constituents, our residents,
22 dependent on services that may disappear, because
23 remember the federal ACP program isn't baselined,
24 it's year-to-year approved, we built a program that
25 was functioning off of baseline operating expense

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2 that was going into a vacuum that provided little
3 utility to the city. In addition to that, we've
4 partnered with both community and the organizations
5 to increase adoption rates so when I look a
6 representation across the City, let's say in your
7 District as an example, we have nearly 1,000 people,
8 actually it's about 900 people that have subscribed
9 to Big Apple Connect, and across the city we're at,
10 again, 74,000 of the 96,000 that are eligible. As we
11 continue the deployment, we expect to get north of
12 200,000. With that, I guess the short of it is in
13 situations like this where we can undoubtedly that
14 we've provided more free access to broadband in one
15 year than any administration has done over an eight-
16 year term. One may argue with the method, but no one
17 can argue with the effectiveness of what we've done.

18 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you,
19 Commissioner. Sorry. I'm just being rushed over here.

20 Can you share how much of the budget is
21 allocated for the MyCity portal?

22 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: As it
23 stands right now, the specific allocations for
24 MyCity, our Deputy Commissioner of Management and
25 Budget can give you an overview.

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PEMBERTON: Currently,
3 MyCity, for this Fiscal Year is 4 million dollars,
4 and that's to take care of the initial buildout of
5 MyCity.

6 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Okay. I know that
7 the app is going to continue to evolve. Do you have a
8 sense of what that cost will look like?

9 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: The
10 costs are heavily dependent on the services that we
11 consume. One of the things that I mentioned earlier
12 is that we did a survey of all the city tech programs
13 north of 2 million so what we're looking at now is
14 instead of spending any of that money in an
15 independent system that lives outside of MyCity, how
16 can we take those investments and point them towards
17 a consolidated platform. The specific budget around
18 MyCity, depending on the services that we consume,
19 will shift, but the significant majority of the funds
20 for MyCity is already allocated to tech programs and
21 agencies that would've been standalone. We're just
22 bringing them into a single ecosystem.

23 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you. Are we
24 still looking at an end-of-this-month launch?

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2 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: We are
3 very aggressively looking at an end-of-this-month
4 launch, but what we...

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: There are 31 days
6 in this month, Commissioner.

7 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I am
8 very aware. We're working very closely with the
9 State. As I mentioned in the testimony, that's the
10 last hurdle. The MyCity program for childcare is
11 build and it's available, and we'd be happy to
12 provide Council with a preview so that you see it.
13 We've tested it with families that have applied for
14 services through the traditional means, meaning the
15 paper-based process, and we've gotten a tremendous
16 amount of feedback that it's significantly better and
17 easier than not just what they used to do but any
18 other system that they felt from the City. We are
19 very hopeful that we will get it launched by the end
20 of the month, and the long pole in the tent at this
21 moment is just getting through the State approval.

22 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Great. My last
23 questions are related to technology service too. I
24 think one of the most important agencies is DSS and,
25 obviously, we've gotten a lot of feedback from where

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2 the falloff has been with the agency's inability to
3 process these applications quickly enough, a lot of
4 it has to do with staffing. What is the agency's
5 role, if any, in technology service on SNAP
6 specifically?

7 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: We have
8 started a process through review, not just SNAP but
9 SCRIE, DRIE, cash assistance, and looking at how we
10 can streamline those processes. As you can imagine,
11 for entities that have existed for almost over a
12 century, there's lots of ways that we can create
13 efficiencies in how we both review and approve those
14 sorts of applications. The one thing that I would
15 remind Council is that a lot of our processes and
16 some of the inefficiencies aren't regulated at a City
17 level because a lot of that funding is provided from
18 the State so what we're trying to do now is
19 streamline the process by which people both apply and
20 how interviews take place so looking at ways where we
21 can increase the amount of interviews on demand that
22 occur so instead of waiting for someone to come into
23 a center, being able to do an interview virtually.
24 Looking at the process that they use to apply and the
25 information that's collected to make sure that we're

1
2 collecting as much information upfront as possible
3 and we're reducing the amount of times that people
4 have to supply the same information. Imagine being a
5 family that's getting cash assistance in some way but
6 then every quarter you have to update and provide a
7 copy of your passport, how often does your passport
8 expire and why do I need that every month? Those are
9 areas where it seems like an undue burden on the
10 families that are dependent on these services that we
11 could eliminate by being more smart about how we
12 collect and keep that information. For us, those are
13 some of the areas that we're working on with DSS, and
14 I'd remind Council that OTI's role in the city, we're
15 not a managed hosting provider or a managed service
16 provider; we are a business partner to the City to
17 ensure that we're using technology in the most
18 efficient and effective ways.

19 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you. I think
20 that, out of respect for everybody here, I think that
21 that is it for my questions regarding you, lucky you,
22 play the lotto today, Commissioner. You know we love
23 (INAUDIBLE) I appreciate this.

24

25

1
2 We do have a couple of other questions if
3 it's okay to get to you separately after today's
4 hearing?

5 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yes,
6 certainly.

7 CHAIRPERSON GUTIERREZ: Thank you so much.
8 I'll pass it over to the Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you, Chair
10 Gutierrez. Thank you for attending today's hearing.

11 We're concluding this portion of this
12 hearing on Technology.

13 Counsel, do we have individuals for
14 public statement?

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL HUH: I understand we
16 have two remote public witnesses signed up to testify
17 and who are both currently logged in to this
18 proceeding.

19 We will first take public testimony from
20 William Spisak who will be followed by Paula Segal.
21 William Spisak.

22 WILLIAM SPISAK: Hi Good afternoon. Can
23 you hear me?

24 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Yes. You have two
25 minutes.

1
2 WILLIAM SPISAK: Great. Two minutes, thank
3 you. Good afternoon, Council Members. My name is Will
4 Spisak. I'm the Senior Program Associate at New
5 Economy Project, a citywide organization that works
6 with community groups to build a just economy for all
7 New Yorkers. We are the cofounders and coordinators
8 of the New York City Community Land Initiative, a
9 coalition working to expand Community Land Trust, or
10 CLTs, to ensure permanently affordable housing and
11 equitable neighborhood-led development. Since Fiscal
12 Year '20, the City Council has supported CLT
13 organizing education, technical assistance through
14 the citywide Community Land Trust Initiative. We
15 serve as the technical assistance provider for the
16 Initiative, which has helped to catalyze the growth
17 of CLTs in low-income, particular black and brown
18 neighborhoods across the five boroughs. CLTs are
19 gaining recognition as one of the most effective ways
20 to address our City's affordability crisis, combat
21 displacement, and advance racial equity in housing
22 and land use. We currently have 1,200 homes in CLT
23 portfolios or pipelines according to HPD, and CLTs
24 are stewarding dozens of affordable storefronts or
25 small businesses, working to develop community and

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2 cultural space in historically red-lined
3 neighborhoods. We thank the City Council for its
4 vital support and urge you to continue funding the
5 citywide CLT initiative this year, for Fiscal Year
6 '24, at 3 million dollars. With this enhancement, the
7 Initiative will support 20 organizations including
8 new CLTs in Edgemere Queens and Flatbush Brooklyn and
9 expand urgently needed CLT organizing, legal and
10 technical assistance. We urge the City Council also
11 to ensure robust capital funding for the acquisition,
12 development, and preservation of affordable housing
13 and community space in order to support CLTs and
14 their mission. We urge you to fight any proposed
15 budget cuts, especially to agencies like HPD, DSS,
16 DHS, and other agencies that would threaten the
17 housing security of thousands of New Yorkers. By
18 giving communities shared ownership and control of
19 land, CLTs serve as a bulwark against predatory
20 development and displacement, and by maintaining
21 affordability..

22 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time is expired.

23 WILLIAM SPISAK: Over generations, CLTs
24 protect public investment in housing and other
25 community development so please to continue to

1 support and invest in CLTs this Fiscal Year. Thank
2 you.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you very
5 much.

6 Counsel, do we have another speaker?

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL HUH: Yes. If Stuart
8 Reid is here in the room with us today, we have one
9 individual signed up to testify in-person. We will
10 hear from Stuart Reid who will then be followed by
11 Paula Segal.

12 STUART REID: Good afternoon, Members of
13 the New York City Technology Committee, Chairman
14 Gutierrez, Elected Officials, and guests gathered
15 here today. Thank you for giving me the opportunity
16 to speak about technology and digital equity in New
17 York City.

18 My name is Stuart Reid. I'm the co-
19 Chairman of The Smart Community Initiative, TSCI, a
20 501(c)3 not-for-profit partnership of public housing
21 resident leaders and veteran New York City community
22 technologists who have come together to help improve
23 the quality of life for our residents utilizing
24 innovative technology applications and services.
25

1
2 TSCI testified before this Committee on
3 September 19, 2022, regarding equal access to the
4 internet in New York City. In that testimony, TSCI
5 talked about the decades-long history of its
6 principles in providing fiber and wireless free
7 access, applications, and services to public and
8 affordable housing residents in Harlem, the Bronx,
9 and Brooklyn. We talked about how there will only be
10 technological equity when residents themselves, when
11 we take control of the technology solutions deployed
12 in our neighborhoods. Finally, we spoke about how our
13 group, TSCI, brings resident training, skill
14 development, and economic opportunity to our
15 communities as it creates a resident-based
16 technological ecosystem that is both self-sustaining
17 and innovative in its approach.

18 While we at TSCI are extremely
19 disappointed that after almost two years of vetting
20 by the previous administration where we were selected
21 and designated for a contract which would have
22 literally been a first in order of magnitude for a
23 NYCHA resident group, despite being the only resident
24 group in the country to be certified as a provider in
25 the federally funded ACP program to provide internet,

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2 despite being recently granted an OVS license by the
3 FCC, the largest ever granted to an African American
4 resident group, somehow, once again, the forgotten
5 among us were forgotten again. We would be remiss in
6 our testimony if we didn't recognize these facts.

7 Today, I'd like to applaud Mayor Adams
8 and CTO Matt Fraser for the Big Apple Connect
9 program, which is bringing free internet connectivity
10 and broadcast TV service to thousands of underserved
11 in NYCHA. With one bold initiative, the City has
12 probably done more than any previous administration
13 in helping to close the access divide in our low-
14 income communities. However, we feel this is not
15 enough given some of the major issues affecting many
16 of our communities. We need meaningful economic
17 opportunity, training, and skill development for our
18 residents who are going to be in the same dire need
19 of income. Even if we all have free Big Apple Connect
20 internet in our homes, we will still be poor
21 tomorrow.

22 TSCI believes that we should always help
23 folks to be smarter, that training and engaging our
24 residents in learning and providing the technology
25 solutions, applications, and services themselves is

1
2 what we need to improve the public safety and quality
3 of life in our communities. It is this kind of
4 solution that helps everyone. This is TSCI's mission.

5 We look forward to further collaboration
6 with the City in this regard. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you. Thank
8 you for your statement.

9 Do we have another public testimony?

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL HUH: We have one
11 additional witness registered to testify.

12 We will now hear remotely from Paula
13 Segal.

14 PAULA SEGAL: Thank you so much. Good
15 afternoon. My name is Paula Segal. I'm speaking to
16 you today as Senior Staff Attorney in the Equitable
17 Neighborhoods Practice of TakeRoot Justice.

18 TakeRoot works grassroots groups,
19 neighborhood organizations, and community coalitions
20 to help make sure that people of color, immigrants,
21 and other low-income residents who have built our
22 city are not pushed out in the name of progress.

23 My remarks today are really addressed to
24 the Land Use Committee, and I'm not sure if they're
25 still here, but like New Economy, where my Colleague,

1
2 William, works, we are a member of the New York City
3 Community Land Initiative, which is an alliance of
4 over 20 groups that are creating and supporting
5 Community Land Trust organizations in neighborhoods
6 in all five boroughs of the city. We at TakeRoot
7 support this borough movement for affordable
8 community-controlled housing, commercial and
9 community spaces through legal services to CLT
10 members of the initiative and to other groups
11 exploring the CLT model. We provide everything from
12 education, orientation and preparation to transaction
13 and representation in negotiating ground leases and
14 joint venture agreements.

15 Our work and the work of our clients
16 would not be possible without our contract with HPD
17 that is the result of this Council's Community Land
18 Trust Initiative. Since Fiscal Year '20 when the
19 Council established this initiative, we've seen the
20 demand for our services and the services of our
21 partners grow exponentially and CLT organizing
22 flourish in every borough of the city.

23 The amount that's allocated in the
24 preliminary budget for this initiative is exactly the
25 same as it's been in the last two years despite this

1
2 growth so I'd just like to echo my Colleague's
3 remarks and request an enhancement this year. With an
4 enhancement to 3 million dollars, the initiative can
5 support (INAUDIBLE) Community Land Trust in Edgemere
6 Queens and in Flatbush Brooklyn and expand citywide
7 education, organizing, and technical assistance to
8 meet the growing and urgent need for Community Land
9 Trust.

10 Equally importantly, the budget must
11 include capital funding commitments to support CLT-
12 drive revitalization of buildings that fell into
13 disrepair while under City ownership..

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

15 PAULA SEGAL: Leased buildings recently
16 acquired by our clients in the East Harlem El Barrio
17 Community Land Trust in Manhattan and Kingsbridge
18 Armory in the Bronx through which community vision
19 and (INAUDIBLE) is now underway.

20 If you don't mind, may I finish?

21 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Please, you have
22 five seconds.

23 PAULA SEGAL: Thank you so much. This
24 Council has made great strides ensuring that such
25 public properties are disposed of to Community Land

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2 Trusts and other not-for-profits that can be used for
3 the public good, but without capital commitments to
4 support those new owners as they work to reverse
5 decades of disinvestment, such dispositions are, at
6 best, a gesture and, at worst, the offloading of the
7 City's problems onto community-based organizations.

8 I've submitted written testimony with a
9 few more details. Thank you so much for the extra
10 time.

11 CHAIRPERSON SALAMANCA: Thank you for your
12 statement.

13 Counsel, do we have anyone else?

14 No? All right.

15 Seeing none, I want to thank my
16 Colleagues, Chair Gutierrez, Chairs Louis and Riley,
17 for helping hold today's hearing and thank you to the
18 public for your testimony as well as all of our
19 Administration's panelists for joining us today.
20 Counsel Staff will be following up with any
21 additional questions for the agencies in the coming
22 days. Thank you to the Council Staff and to the
23 Sergeants.

24 Today's meeting is hereby adjourned.

25 [GAVEL]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date March 24, 2023