



DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING  
 CITY OF NEW YORK  
 OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

**Statement from Marisa Lago, Chair of the NYC Planning Commission and Director of the  
 Department of City Planning, before the Land Use Committee of the City Council, on the  
 Mayor’s Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget**

**March 10, 2021**

<b>DCP Financial Summary</b>						
	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Preliminary Plan</b>		<b>*Difference</b>
<i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Adopted</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021 - 2022</b>
<b>Spending</b>						
Personal Services	\$ 28,150	\$ 28,207	\$ 30,642	\$ 29,006	\$ 29,689	\$ (953)
Other Than Personal Services	\$ 11,923	\$ 14,807	\$ 13,942	\$ 17,056	\$ 12,498	\$ (1,444)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$40,073</b>	<b>\$43,014</b>	<b>\$44,584</b>	<b>\$46,062</b>	<b>\$42,187</b>	<b>\$ (2,397)</b>
<b>Funding</b>						
City Funds	\$ 24,096	\$ 22,437	\$ 24,185	\$ 22,033	\$ 25,766	\$ 1,581
Federal - Community Development	\$ 14,513	\$ 19,145	\$ 19,056	\$ 21,629	\$ 15,078	\$ (3,978)
Federal - Other	\$ 1,273	\$ 1,237	\$ 1,343	\$ 1,832	\$ 1,343	\$ -
Intra City	\$ 4	\$ 95	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
State	\$ 187	\$ 99	\$ -	\$ 568	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$40,073</b>	<b>\$43,014</b>	<b>\$44,584</b>	<b>\$46,062</b>	<b>\$42,187</b>	<b>\$ (2,397)</b>
<b>Headcount</b>						
Full-Time Positions - Civilian	309	301	361	327	334	(27)
<b>Total</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>(27)</b>

*\*The difference of Fiscal 2021 Adopted compared to Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Budget.*

Good afternoon Chair Salamanca Jr., Subcommittee Chairs Moya and Riley and distinguished members of the Land Use Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Department of City Planning’s (DCP’s) Preliminary FY 2022 budget.

Marisa Lago, Director  
 NYC Department of City Planning  
 120 Broadway – 31<sup>st</sup> Floor, New York, N.Y. 10271  
 (212) 720-3200 FAX (212) 720-3303  
[www.nyc.gov/planning](http://www.nyc.gov/planning)

**Testimony on FY 2022 Preliminary Budget**

Before turning to the budget, I want to briefly touch upon the urgent and ambitious recovery-focused work that DCP plans to move through the City's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) before the end of this City Council's term. DCP's project pipeline for the remainder of this year is tailored to be responsive to Council Member priorities, and New York City's tremendous post-pandemic challenges. First and foremost, we seek to activate land use tools to help us dismantle some of the stark racial inequities that continue to plague our city, including by creating permanently affordable housing in some of Brooklyn's and Manhattan's wealthier, centrally located neighborhoods. Our work is simultaneously focused on access to jobs and job creation. And, underpinning all of our work is our commitment to advancing key resiliency goals of this City Council and this Administration. Each of the projects that we seek to advance builds on years of smart data analysis and planning, and benefits from community input.

DCP's planning work – which relies on your and the public's advocacy, input and support – includes advancing major public and private projects. Some of the largest private projects that you will be asked to review and adopt promise significant upgrades to some of New York City's largest and most impactful health care facilities, including a proposed expansion of The New York Blood Center in Manhattan. Just last fall, we prioritized and finalized approvals for important expansion and modernization plans to Borough Park's Maimonides Medical Center. With more than 700 beds, Maimonides is Brooklyn's largest hospital.

Proposals that you will see entering ULURP in the coming months include a handful of critically important citywide zoning text amendments, all of which are aimed at helping residents and

**Testimony on FY 2022 Preliminary Budget**

small businesses recover from the effects of climate change and the pandemic, both of which have so disproportionately harmed New York City's most vulnerable communities.

First among the citywide proposals that DCP is advancing is Zoning for Coastal Flood Resiliency (ZCFR), which updates and makes permanent emergency zoning rules that had been put in place in the aftermath of 2012's Hurricane Sandy. A soup-to-nuts overhaul of zoning, ZCFR is crafted to work in and for New York City's diverse floodplain communities and building typographies, protecting them from devastating but infrequent storms like Sandy, as well as rising sea levels and daily flooding. We can never lose sight of the fact that our city's expanding floodplain is already home to 800,000 New Yorkers, and tens of thousands of affordable homes, businesses and jobs.

The types of structures that this citywide text amendment can help protect are comprehensive. Let me give a few examples. A NYCHA or a Mitchell-Lama complex in Lower Manhattan or in Manhattan Beach will be able to construct an elevated mechanical building in a yard to address the needs of the entire campus. A single- or two-family homeowner in the Rockaways or Great Kills who is doing a substantial rehab, or building anew, will be entitled to additional overall building height for elevating their structure above the Base Flood Elevation, established by the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). An industrial business located in the South Bronx or along Newtown Creek will be allowed to build a mezzanine in buildings that are often otherwise difficult to floodproof. This means that important files and other sensitive equipment can be safely stored on the mezzanine, allowing these businesses to get back to work quickly after a storm.

**Testimony on FY 2022 Preliminary Budget**

ZCFR, which is based on four years of intense outreach to residents and businesses across the five boroughs, entered public review last Fall and is set to be voted on by the City Planning Commission (CPC) next week (3/17); and to come before the City Council soon after that.

Alongside ZCFR, DCP is set to release the next Comprehensive Waterfront Plan later this year.

The New York City Charter-mandated report will offer a plan for the role that the waterfront can take in addressing the challenges that we face as a city. The plan, which is refreshed and re-released every 10 years, is a community-driven vision for the city's 520-miles of waterfront for the next decade and beyond. The plan is guided by principles of health, equity and resiliency. It is prepared under the advisement of the 20-member Waterfront Management Advisory Board – including two City Council members, environmental justice advocates, a marine biologist and a leading maritime expert who is also a Port of New York and New Jersey tug boat captain.

Public outreach is a major component of preparing the plan. Beginning in 2019, DCP planners launched a community engagement effort that rooted the plan in the good ideas of thousands of New Yorkers. DCP has worked with local arts and education groups to gather public input from people of all ages and backgrounds. When in-person meetings were suspended last Spring, our planners and our partners, including the not-for-profit groups Culture Push, Works on Water and Brooklyn Boatworks, created remote engagement activities. From May through August, DCP and our partners released educational videos on social media to increase awareness of the vastness and variety of the city's waterfront. These videos were viewed over 6,000 times. We held 12 remote public workshops from September through November to

engage New Yorkers in shaping the content of the new plan. In total, more than 600 New Yorkers attended these workshops.

In addition to ZCFR, we are preparing four new citywide text amendments that we intend to advance into public review this year. Each is aimed at smoothing the way for a fairer and more equitable recovery for local communities and small businesses. This package of text amendments is being advanced in close collaboration with the City Council and a wide variety of agencies.

One of them, Elevate Transit: Zoning for Accessibility (ZFA), seeks to expand and improve zoning rules that allow the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to leverage private development to help create accessible subway and commuter rail stations. The need to develop and advance zoning tools for this purpose was definitively memorialized in the City Council Speaker's 2019 "Zoning for Transit Accessibility" report. With ZFA, we are working with the MTA and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) to expand a zoning tool that is currently limited to only a few areas of the city, mostly in Manhattan. ZFA would require property owners near stations, when developing their properties, to work with the MTA to provide station access easements. It would also expand zoning incentives to landowners in high-density districts who construct station accessibility improvements. The goal is to help expedite the delivery of a far more accessible and equitable transit system.

Our second zoning text amendment pertains to the Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH) Program. The proposal seeks to update and expand the 2009 FRESH program, which uses zoning and tax incentives to encourage the creation of convenient, accessible grocery

**Testimony on FY 2022 Preliminary Budget**

stores that provide fresh fruit, meats and vegetables, in addition to a full range of grocery products, to communities with food needs. The pandemic has only reinforced what we already knew, that many lower income communities do not have convenient access to healthy foods for their families. The current program applies in 19 community districts in four boroughs.

Working closely with the Council, the updated proposal seeks to bring the zoning program to another 11 lower-income districts, including, for the first time, to Staten Island.

Third, our Health and Fitness zoning text amendment seeks to change outdated regulation that prohibit the location of new exercise gyms, licensed massage therapy, martial arts studios, and spas (among other health-related businesses) in many neighborhood retail locations. Further, even in zoning districts where these salubrious uses are allowed, the current outdated zoning requires the owner of one of these health and wellness facilities to obtain special permission from the City's Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA) before they can open for business almost anywhere in New York City. This is a long-outdated restriction on a type of business that, today, we not only take for granted but also cherish as a neighborhood amenity. The current requirement to go through the BSA process typically adds six months and at least \$50,000 to the cost of opening even a small yoga studio. Meanwhile, COVID-19 has only made it more clear how important our physical and mental wellbeing is. The existing requirements create a very high bar for small and independent businesses. Unless reformed, this outdated zoning regime will slow the economic recovery of a sector that has been significantly harmed by the COVID-19 pandemic. DCP's proposed zoning text amendment would allow these health and wellness

**Testimony on FY 2022 Preliminary Budget**

facilities to open “as of right,” in other words without first having to seek special permission from City government.

Finally, DCP is pursuing an Open Restaurants text amendment. The New York City Department of Transportation (DOT’s) Open Restaurants program helped to re-energize our sidewalks and streets, and it saved 10,000 mostly small businesses and 100,000 jobs. The City will secure the future of outdoor dining by removing zoning limitations that might hinder efforts to make the program permanent.

Let me also touch on some of the most significant public and private land use projects that are expected to enter ULURP in the coming months. Each of these projects is being advanced to aid in our recovery and to help dismantle inequities faced by our communities of color. They do so by creating jobs, both permanent and temporary; producing desperately needed quality affordable housing, especially in centralized and transit-rich communities; and creating better public open spaces, including parks, playgrounds, and waterfront recreation areas.

You have no doubt heard about our ongoing work to advance both the Gowanus and SoHo/NoHo Neighborhood Plans into public review. Together, these two public plans, informed by intensive stakeholder engagement, would bring thousands of affordable homes to some of New York City’s most high-opportunity neighborhoods. They would also update 1960s- and 1970s-era zoning to work in neighborhoods that have changed significantly since then, better serving small businesses, neighborhood residents – and New York City’s recovery.

Currently in public review, the Governor’s Island proposal, also advanced by a City-controlled entity, seeks to ensure that this historic island is forever open to the public ,while also

**Testimony on FY 2022 Preliminary Budget**

leveraging the unique environment and waterfront location to create a New York climate center – thus providing a central convening spot for researchers, advocates, innovators and students from around New York City and the globe who are focused on climate change solutions. The center is projected to create 8,000 direct new jobs and \$1 billion in economic impact for New York City.

When it comes to private-sector land use proposals, we are prioritizing projects that significantly advance public health and economic recovery. Examples of private land use proposals that are job generating including the proposed Wildflower Studios in Queens, which promises 1,100 jobs, and the expansion of Acme Smoke Fish's facility in Brooklyn, which will maintain 140 local jobs and bring another 1,300 office jobs.

As important to the city's recovery are major upcoming affordable housing projects, such as Stevenson Commons in the Bronx, the East New York Christian Cultural Center in Brooklyn, and River North on Staten Island. At Stevenson Commons, where the existing complex's Mitchell-Lama status was recently renewed for another 40 years, the current proposal adds more than 700 new affordable homes, a portion of which will be permanently affordable.

The other two projects would, together, bring more than 700 permanently affordable homes, enough for at least 1,500 New Yorkers, under the City's Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) program. Among the nation's most demanding inclusionary housing programs, MIH ensures that neighborhoods where housing is created following a zoning change that increases residential density, between 20 and 30% of that housing must be permanently affordable. Since its inception in the Spring of 2016, more than 3,300 new permanently affordable homes have

**Testimony on FY 2022 Preliminary Budget**

been financed in 21 Community Districts. In addition, MIH has been approved for future construction projects in a total of 39 Community Districts across the city, ensuring that new development in a wide range of neighborhoods will include permanently affordable housing.

I would also like to describe two large public engagement and transparency initiatives that DCP has launched. The first initiative is NYC Engage, a remote portal developed in house by DCP planners. NYC Engage allows anyone, anywhere, to join CPC and DCP public meetings either online or by phone. This utilitarian portal allowed us to restart the CPC's planning work in August and the City's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) in September. Because of this accessible and intuitive remote-public engagement tool, we are able to move toward adopting the racial equity, recovery and resiliency projects that I have spoken to today.

Since ULURP restarted, 49 proposals have entered ULURP, about half of them housing projects seeking approval for nearly 5,800 new homes. Of that total, over 2,800 are affordable and more than 900 are permanently affordable under MIH.

While remote meetings offer a different experience than in-person meetings, remote engagement allows more New Yorkers to easily join public meetings and be heard from wherever they happen to be. Since NYC Engage debuted, the CPC and DCP have held 62 remote public meetings, with more than 3,200 people joining. Of these live events, 40 were Charter-mandated, for which live or written testimony is received. These including CPC public hearings and environmental review scoping meetings for land use proposals, in which public comment is solicited to help inform the environmental review process.

**Testimony on FY 2022 Preliminary Budget**

Some of our most important land use work is DCP's ongoing neighborhood-level work. Since October, DCP has hosted three SoHo/NoHo community information and question/answer sessions for the public, attracting close to 900 participants. Similarly, DCP and Brooklyn's Community Board 6 co-hosted three update meetings on the proposed Gowanus Neighborhood Plan, drawing over 800 participants.

Designed as a one-stop remote portal for the public to access all public hearings and meetings held by City agencies, NYC Engage is already being used for the City's public rule making process, the City Administrative Procedure Act (CAPA), and NYC Engage has been adopted by five other city agencies: the new Civic Engagement Commission; the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD); the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC); the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR); and the Public Design Commission (PDC).

The second large public engagement and transparency initiative we launched is an important update to DCP's sweeping Zoning Application Portal (ZAP), a multi-year project with a budget of \$7.5 million. Since December, ZAP allows New Yorkers to view and download land use applications and related environmental review filings as they enter public review. Before the pandemic forced many of our offices to close, New Yorkers who were interested in reviewing land use applications needed to trek to DCP's offices or to their local Community Board to review a paper application. Today's ZAP replaces yesterday's 20<sup>th</sup> Century, paper-based, land-use filing system. Having these documents digitally available means that elected officials, community boards and all members of the public can directly and instantly access the details of any land-use proposal. ZAP brings significantly added efficiency and transparency to the City's

**Testimony on FY 2022 Preliminary Budget**

planning work. Even more importantly, ZAP gives the public another tool to engage more fully in the City's public land use review process.

**FINANCIAL OVERVIEW**

DCP entered Fiscal Year 2021 with an Adopted Budget of \$44.6M and an authorized headcount of 361 full-time staff positions, of which \$24.2M (54%) and 160 positions are funded with City Tax-Levy dollars. DCP's remaining \$20.4M (46%) budget allocation and 201 positions are funded through New York State and federal grants, primarily through the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The \$44.6M Fiscal Year 2021 Adopted Budget allocated \$30.1M – over two-thirds of DCP's operating budget – to agency-wide personnel services (including part-timers and members of the CPC) and \$13.9M to Other-Than-Personal-Service (OTPS). DCP expends City, State and federal tax dollars to plan for the future of our City.

In comparison to the FY21 Adopted Budget, DCP's FY22 Preliminary Budget of \$42.2M and 334 full-time staff lines, represents a net \$2.4M reduction and 27-position decrease to the overall operating budget. This \$2.4M decrease is the combination of a net \$953K decrease in Personal Service funding and a net \$1.4M decrease in OTPS funding. The \$2.4M decrease between DCP's FY21 Adopted Budget and FY22 Preliminary Budget is largely driven by the expiration of temporary funding allocations from prior fiscal years, including the expiration of DCP's Hurricane Sandy CDBG-Disaster Recovery grant, and several budget adjustments associated with agency savings initiatives implemented across fiscal years 2021 and 2022 to meet citywide budget reductions.

**Testimony on FY 2022 Preliminary Budget**

The \$953K and 27-position Personal Service decrease to DCP's FY22 Preliminary Budget consists of a \$1.8M and 27 headcount reduction, which is offset by a \$800K restoration of current year reductions that return to the budget in FY22, and minor incremental collective bargaining adjustments.

Reduction to DCP's Personal Service funding include:

- \$838K and 16-position decrease in personnel funding received through a federal CDBG Disaster Recovery grant that was awarded to DCP post-Hurricane Sandy. Funding and positions, which heavily support the resiliency and coastal planning work of DCP's Waterfront and Open Space Division, is set to expire at the end of FY21. DCP is working closely with OMB to determine a transition plan for DCP's CDBG Disaster Recovery-funded staff to allow for coastal resiliency and planning of the City's 520 miles of waterfront to continue beyond the end of this federal grant.

- \$517K (of which \$237K is baselined) and a baselined seven-position Personnel Services funding reduction was implemented by OMB, cutting a percentage of DCP's overall tax-levy headcount and funding.

- Loss of \$150K and two temporary CDBG positions awarded in Fiscal Year 2018 to assist with the on-going maintenance and enhancement of DCP's GeoSupport system. The GeoSupport system is used by a wide array of agencies that rely on location data from the City's address validation system.

**Testimony on FY 2022 Preliminary Budget**

- Expiration of \$255K and two positions temporarily granted to support the build-out of DCP's ZAP paperless filing system and integration with CEQR View. The build-out of ZAP was successfully completed in 2020.

These \$1.8M reductions are offset by:

- \$800K replenishment of previously-claimed Personal Services savings are restored in Fiscal Year 2022.

- \$6K in contractual increases negotiated through collective bargaining.

The \$1.4M decrease to DCP's OTPS budget is driven by \$3.2M in expiring, temporary allocations received for short-term initiatives – many of which are federally funded through federal CDBG, and a \$1.7M FY22 replenishment of tax-levy environmental consulting funds that were claimed as savings in FY21. The FY21 allocations for Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) were partially replaced with CDBG funding in FY21 to allow DCP to give back tax-levy funds while ensuring that sufficient funding would still be available for City priority projects.

This \$3.2M reduction from one-time and temporary project funds consists of \$1.7M in CDBG-Disaster Recovery funding transferred into DCP's budget from HPD for environmental consulting work related to their Edgemere Rezoning. HPD is leveraging DCP's on-call environmental consulting contracts for the preparation of the EIS, \$1.15M in CDBG funding that had been temporarily added to FY21 to replace tax-levy EIS allocations, \$300K tied to the completion of ZAP, and \$43K tied to the expiration of DCP's CDBG Disaster Recovery grant.

**Testimony on FY 2022 Preliminary Budget**

Overall, these budget changes result in a net reduction of \$2.4M and a decrease of 27 positions to the DCP budget. DCP's FY22 Preliminary Plan budget stands at \$42.2M, or a 5% reduction from the FY21 Adopted budget. DCP will begin FY22 with an authorized full-time headcount of 334 positions, allocating \$29.7M to agency-wide personnel services and \$12.5M to non-personnel services. DCP will continue to use our resources as efficiently as possible to carry out DCP's work program and to meet the needs of this City's communities.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

**Testimony on FY 2022 Preliminary Budget****List of reports released in 2020-2021:**

2020 Travel Trends report (year-end report and bi-weekly reports published beginning in April 2020). Between April 2020 and Jan. 2021, DCP released a total of 27 [COVID-19 Weekly Transportation Reports](#)

[Info Brief on Net Change in Housing Units, 2010-2020](#)

[Covid-19 and NYC Metro Region Residential Sales Trends](#)

[NYC Housing Production Snapshot: First Half of 2020](#)

[Citywide Statement of Needs for FY 2022-2023](#)

[Retail Activity in NYC: COVID Recovery Across 24 Neighborhoods](#)

[NYCHA Connected Communities guidebook](#)

[Animals of NYC Physical Distancing Activity Book](#)

[NYC 2020 Census response reports](#)

**List of Digital Tools released in 2020-2021:**

[Zoning Application Portal update](#)

[NYC Metropolitan Region Telework Capability Portal](#)

[Comprehensive Waterfront Plan website](#)

[NYC Engage](#)

[DCP Housing Database update](#)



**DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS TESTIMONY BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL**

**COMMITTEES ON LAND USE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**FISCAL YEAR 2022 PRELIMINARY BUDGET**

**MARCH 10, 2021**

Good afternoon Chairs Salamanca and Holden, and members of the City Council Committees on Land Use and Technology. My name is Jessica Tisch and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications, also known as DoITT, and New York City's Chief Information Officer.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about DoITT's Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Budget. With me is Janine Gilbert, DoITT's First Deputy Commissioner, Joseph Antonelli, our Deputy Commissioner of Management and Budget and Tynia Richard, our Deputy Commissioner of Legal Matters.

The past year has been the most professionally challenging...and productive, year of my career. I became Citywide CIO in December of 2019, and three months later the pandemic hit, bringing tech to the forefront of so many services the City offers. Preparing this budget testimony has given me an opportunity to reflect on all the work of my agency over the past 12 months, and the scale, range, and breadth of what this team of professionals accomplished are quite emotional for me.

That's because the team at DoITT immediately kicked into high gear. They worked not just nights and weekends – but every night and every weekend, not for days, weeks, or months, but for the past year. And today, it is my great honor to share with you what DoITT has been doing since the pandemic hit.

- We transitioned much of the City's workforce to at-home, rather than in-office work. To make this possible, DoITT built out a brand new remote access environment and rolled out WebEx and Teams citywide. We also purchased and distributed tens of thousands of laptops and tablets for city agencies.
- We purchased and provisioned 500,000 iPads for New York City public school students, who lacked an internet connected device at home to support remote learning. These iPads included unlimited cellular data plans, doubled as hotspots, and came loaded with the apps required for schoolwork.
- We oversaw the development of the City's Contact Tracing System, which is the centerpiece of the Test & Trace Corps efforts to track and contain the spread of the virus in New York City.



**Information  
Technology &  
Telecommunications**

- We built the systems that support the GetFood program, which, at its peak, delivered 1 million meals a day to New Yorkers in need, and recently delivered its 200 millionth meal.
- We built the PPE Donations Portal, the ACTrack system, the COVID-19 Zone Finder, and the DOE Mobile Student Testing application as well as an entire enforcement system that supports the City's multi-agency COVID-19 inspection efforts.
- We built both the City Clerk's Online Marriage License Platform, allowing New Yorkers to obtain online marriage licenses, for the first time in our City's history; and a Funeral Director Portal, which connected funeral directors with the deceased when the City's morgues became overrun.
- We have enabled virtual arraignments and virtual family visits for the incarcerated, as well as online OATH and CCRB hearings; and we deployed new contact centers for dozens of agencies.
- We helped EMS implement telemedicine for low acuity EMS calls to take pressure off of the 911 system.
- We deployed the tenant resource portal, which connects New Yorkers facing eviction with resources to help keep them in their homes.
- We deployed dozens of new service requests and knowledge articles in the 311 system for COVID-related issues, including social distancing and face coverings.
- And we are managing a massive infrastructure build-out in all City homeless shelters that serve families with children to install Wi-Fi in each apartment.

**Vaccinations:** As we've discussed previously, in the middle of January, we were called in to overhaul the IT that supports the City's vaccination efforts. That has become my passion and obsession over the past eight weeks. A tremendous amount of progress has been made, but I am also very clear on what's left to be done. And I assure you, I'm impatient about getting it done.

I understand the old adage that you don't get a second chance to make a good first impression. But if you look at the current state objectively, it is clear that New York City is now leading the way and pushing forward in all the right directions on vaccination technology. Let me walk you through it.

The first thing we did was replace the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's vaccine scheduling system. The new one, which can be found at [www.nyc.gov/vax4nyc](http://www.nyc.gov/vax4nyc), is intuitive and easy to use. We have seen New Yorkers consistently schedule themselves for vaccination



**Information  
Technology &  
Telecommunications**

appointments in three minutes using this new site. It is also human translated into 10 languages for accessibility.

But the system is far more than an online scheduling system. It manages every aspect of a patient's vaccination from the time they create an initial appointment through to completion of their second dose. That is because the other piece of the system powers all the operations at the vaccination clinics, including patient check-in, screening, sending a record of the vaccination to the City's Immunization Registry, and scheduling of second dose appointments.

But we didn't stop there. As I previewed at last month's vaccination oversight hearing, we are now expanding this platform and offering it as a service to all vaccine providers citywide. We are doing this for the sole purpose of streamlining the process for New Yorkers to sign up for vaccinations. The goal is to consolidate the scheduling of as many vaccination locations as possible onto a single online platform, to take out the guess work for New Yorkers.

And I'm pleased to say we've made tremendous progress. Today, we are scheduling for more than 30 different locations on a single platform, including all of the city's mass vaccination sites, with the exception of Yankee Stadium, which comes online soon. This includes sites run by DOHMH, FDNY, H+H, Capsule, Northwell, Hospital for Special Surgery, and Affiliated Physicians, among others. And we have a pipeline of approximately 40 additional vaccination sites coming online in the coming weeks run by a number of different providers, including CityBlock, iCrowd, Maimonides, Daybreak, Somos, and all of the FQHCs.

We have also made the offer to New York State to put their New York City sites on our platform. Still no word on that, but a girl can dream!

Our new platform is also powering a number of temporary locations, with targeted outreach at houses of worship and NYCHA developments. And it also hosts dozens of Community Based Organizations, which schedule residents of the hardest hit communities through reserved appointments.

And with this new platform, we are also able to make thousands of appointments each week through our vaccine call center, 877 VAX-4NYC, so that lack of an internet connection does not disadvantage or prevent people from scheduling appointments. Last week alone, the call center made more than 11,000 appointments for New Yorkers.

But that's not enough. We know that there will always be providers who decide not to come onto our platform and continue to schedule through their own siloed scheduling systems. At a minimum, we are asking large providers who make this choice to give us real-time information about appointment availability at their locations, and we have updated [nyc.gov/vaccinefinder](https://nyc.gov/vaccinefinder) to include that information.

To date, we have real time information on the availability of appointments for 300 sites citywide, including all Walgreens pharmacies, CVS, all the New York State and FEMA sites, DOHMH



**Information  
Technology &  
Telecommunications**

PODS, H+H Hospitals, and Gotham Clinics. We are expecting Rite Aid to come online next week.

And yet... despite the pandemic and all the work and challenges that came with it, the general work of DoITT has not stopped for a second over the past year.

**TT911:** This past June, we met our commitment to the City Council and New Yorkers – including the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing community and survivors of domestic violence – when we launched Text-to-911, which has been running smoothly since it went live.

**NextGen 911:** As you know, this Text-to-911 system is an interim solution, designed to bridge the gap between where we are today – with an entirely legacy, analog 911 system – and where we will be in 2024, when we roll out NextGen 911.

The purpose of NextGen 911 is to allow voice, photos, videos, and text messages to flow seamlessly from the public to 911, on modern, digital infrastructure. Make no mistake about it: NextGen 911 has the potential to be hands down, the most impactful new public safety system in the City of New York over the next decade. As a woman who has public safety IT running through her veins, I can tell you it is absolutely imperative that we get it right.

So, what progress have we made? This year, we registered contracts for three key systems that are fundamental to the development of NextGen 911. These contracts are with Vesta Solutions to build out the core backend and geographical information systems, and NICE Systems Inc. to build out the new logging and recording system.

The City team, which includes members of DoITT, NYPD, FDNY, DCAS, and Cyber Command is hard at work with the vendors, and all is on track to be fully implemented in 2024. We are also building on the partnership we developed with advocates from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community during our work on Text-to-911, to ensure that they have a hand in dreaming up and designing some of the key aspects of the NextGen 911 system.

**NYCWiN:** Likewise, we made good on our commitment to decommission the NYCWiN network by June 2020. I am pleased to report that DOT, DSNY, DEP, NYPD, DCAS, DOHMH, Parks, FISA, and DOB were all completely migrated to commercial carriers and the NYCWIN network was powered down. We have already begun the work of closing out the Northrop Grumman contract by removing the NYCWiN infrastructure from rooftops and restoring facilities leased for this purpose.

Now let me transition into our franchise portfolio!

**5G:** We recently launched a major push in partnership with the telecom carriers to build out 5G equitably across New York City. 5G is the network of the future, and its buildout across all five boroughs will be key to the City's recovery efforts.



**Information  
Technology &  
Telecommunications**

Last week, the Mayor announced that the City will be making 7,500 street poles available to the telecom industry for the buildout of 5G. This represents the single largest number of poles ever made available for telecom purposes, and a doubling of the current number of poles on which 4G technology lives.

To get to this point, a bunch of things had to come together. First, we got all of the major carriers to agree on a single, unified design for the shrouds that will house the 5G radios and antennas. This design was reviewed by every community board in the City, as well as the Department of Transportation, and it was approved by the Public Design Commission.

As I announced last year, we also registered 12 Mobile Telecom Franchise agreements with companies who will be performing these installations. These franchise agreements contain worker protections, which will be a model for all new franchise agreements going forward. We are also working with our franchisees to ensure that MWBEs benefit from this buildout.

And we overhauled the system and processes that govern these installations to remove red tape and inefficiency, so that 2021 will be the Year of 5G in New York City.

**LinkNYC:** As you know, CityBridge, the franchisee who runs the LinkNYC program, owes the City tens of millions of dollars. We were poised to default them days before the pandemic hit, but in light of the public health emergency and the fact that we have been using Links for public service messaging throughout, we held off. We have been discussing options for repayment with CityBridge. If not, default remains a card we can and will play. I hope to have an update for the Council soon and I will brief you when I do.

**Broadband:** I believe that one of the keys to ending the digital divide in New York City is bringing down broadband prices by encouraging competition. Right now, the three cable companies hold a virtual monopoly on broadband in New York City. That is because the cable franchise agreements they hold with the City allow them to provide broadband, in addition to cable, because both run over the same wire.

The cable companies have taken unfair advantage of this position. And in particular, this year, they have not done nearly enough to make broadband accessible throughout New York City.

At best, their offers to New Yorkers have been insufficient to meet the moment, and at worst, veiled marketing attempts or promotions designed to build a customer base amidst a pandemic. But I'm not telling you anything I haven't told them myself.

Unfortunately, federal law preempts the City from regulating franchisees based on consumer pricing.

But, thanks to the City Council's recent passage of Authorizing Resolution 1445-A, constraints on our ability to promote, encourage, and frankly, pull in companies to compete in the broadband



**Information  
Technology &  
Telecommunications**

space against the big cable providers, have been lifted. And that's what we are doing – to bust this triopoly head on.

In accordance with the AR, we will soon be putting out a solicitation inviting companies that seek to provide low cost broadband in New York City to enter into franchise agreements that will allow them to use the City's rights of way to build out their networks.

In franchise agreements, it is typical for a franchisee to compensate the City based on the linear footage of the franchisees' plant installed.

But we're thinking outside the box. To increase competition in underserved areas of the City, we are considering counting only linear footage in Manhattan below 96th St. for a period of several years when determining compensation requirements.

Further, we are considering discounted compensation rates for franchisees with less than a specified number of linear feet of fiber in the City's rights-of-way, to give small providers a leg up. We expect to utilize franchise fees, in part, for digital literacy and community-based organization grants.

**Verizon Settlement:** This year, we settled long-standing litigation with Verizon arising from the company's failure to meet its commitments under its 2008 cable franchise agreement. Rather than allow the litigation to wind its way through the courts and drag on for years to come, we decided to seize the opportunity to make real progress for New Yorkers afflicted by the digital divide. Under the settlement, Verizon will build out its FIOS footprint to 500,000 additional households, making high-speed broadband available to more New Yorkers. Verizon is compelled to prioritize the least-connected Community Districts and ensure connectivity for every NYCHA residential building.

**311 Team:** One of the greatest joys of my job over the past year has been leading the 311 team. To my mind, they are, hands down, among the unsung heroes of this pandemic, who remained onsite to serve their fellow New Yorkers in need. Every single day. They showed up. And they connected New Yorkers to City services that in many cases saved or changed their lives – be it access to meals, healthcare, testing, or remote learning devices.

To put the enormity of what the 311 team has done in context for everyone, there are 8.2 million New Yorkers. And in 2020, 311 took over 24 million calls – that's the highest volume in 311's 18 years of operation. That means in 2020, 311 took 3 calls for every New Yorker. And the average wait time...under 33 seconds.

But that's not all they did. When I went to visit the 311 call center a few months ago, one of the Call Center Representatives told me something that moved me. She said that throughout the pandemic, some New Yorkers called 311 not because they were looking for information or a City service...but because they were lonely, isolated from the world, and wanted to hear a human's voice on the other end.

The compassion, warmth, professionalism, and dedication the 311 team has shown over the past year is awe inspiring.

And their work was supported by massive improvements in the 311 system over the past year, many of them responsive to feedback from the City Council, including:

1. Enabling photo and video attachments for more types of service requests;
2. Adding additional service request types available via the mobile app; and
3. Emailing alerts for all service requests, regardless of whether the customer has signed up for an account.

Coming soon are:

1. Improved location selection and accuracy, which is planned to start in April; and
2. Customer satisfaction surveys in ten languages, in accordance with recently passed Introduction 1525, which will be rolled out in April.

In the interest of time, I will now take the Committees through our FY22 budget as it stands today.

DoITT's Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Budget provides for operating expenses of approximately \$699.2 million, allocating \$171.2 million in Personnel Services to support 1,824 full-time positions; and \$528 million for Other than Personnel Services, or OTPS. Intra-City funds transferred from other agencies account for \$139.5 million, or about 20% of our total budget allocation. Telecommunications costs represent the largest portion of the Intra-City expense, projected at \$100.5 million for Fiscal 2021.

For Fiscal Year 2021, the expense budget appropriation increased by \$74.4 million from the Fiscal Year 2020 November Financial Plan to the Preliminary Financial Plan. The increase to the Fiscal Year 2021 Preliminary Budget is largely attributed to the funding that DoITT has received for COVID related costs, funding for expense costs associated with approved capital projects, and Intra-City funding transfers from agencies that have been reflected in the January financial plan.

For Fiscal Year 2022, the expense budget appropriation increased by \$10.9 million from the Fiscal Year 2021 November Financial Plan to the Preliminary Financial Plan. The increase to the Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget is largely attributed to the funding that DOITT has received for expense costs associated with approved capital projects.

With that, I want to thank the Committees for this opportunity to update you on DoITT's important work and I am now happy to take your questions.

To: NYC Council - Committee on Land Use with the Committee on Technology  
From: Noel Hidalgo, Executive Director of BetaNYC



Re: **Preliminary Budget Hearing**

10 March 2021

---

[BetaNYC](#)<sup>1</sup> is a civic organization dedicated to improving all lives in New York through civic design, technology, and data. We envision an informed and empowered public that can leverage civic design, technology, and data to hold government accountable and improve its economic opportunity. BetaNYC is oriented around [four digital freedoms](#)<sup>2</sup> -- the freedoms to Connect, Learn, Innovate, and Collaborate.

## [Connect]

The [freedom to connect](#)<sup>3</sup> to a “*high-speed bi-directional internet*” is a prerequisite for full participation in our digital era.

After seven years of experimentation and [three “broadband for all”](#) announcements/reports, we’re excited to see the City publish its first “[master plan](#)<sup>4</sup>”.

TODAY, *high-speed bi-directional internet* is as important to New York City as the subway or electricity was in the 20th century and as fresh water was in the 18th century. For too long, we’ve seen arguments for broadband framed under the “economic development” banner. The pandemic has pulled back back the curtains on this charade.

For the last year, we have lived, learned, and loved online. We are completely dependent on high-speed bi-directional internet at home and in our pockets.

Just as the yellow fever epidemic of the late 1700s drove the city to [found a public health department](#)<sup>5</sup> and invest in a municipally funded water supply, the COVID-19 pandemic is making us rethink our infrastructure and [address centuries of inequity](#)<sup>6</sup>.

**The past year is a testament for *high-speed bi-directional internet*. Our city requires a robust digital backbone that is ready for the 21st century. BetaNYC agrees that we MUST invest in this opportunity and build a public network for the 21st century and beyond.**

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://beta.nyc/about/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://nycroadmap.us/#connect>

<sup>3</sup> <http://nycroadmap.us/#7>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cto/#/project/internet-master-plan>

<sup>5</sup> <https://ny.curbed.com/2020/3/19/21186665/coronavirus-new-york-public-housing-outbreak-history>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/blog/viral-justice-interconnected-pandemics-portal-racial-justice>

**As part of funding the City’s technology budget, we need the City to fund a public option for the internet master plan.**

---

## **[Learn]**

Since Saturday, March 6th, 2021, we have co-hosted [NYC’s Open Data Week](#)<sup>7</sup> with the Mayor’s Office of Data Analytics. On Monday, we launched our new Intro to Open Data course and as of today, we have trained over 200 people in the last 72 hours. On Thursday, we will launch our first Spanish language course with Manhattan Community Board 12.

In the last three years, we have received Council funding that supports our digital inclusion and literacy programming. We have engaged 2055 New Yorkers at events; 1498 of them attended open data classes.

New Yorkers want to know about the data collected about them and data collected by them. In 2019-2020, we launched a certificate program to enable New Yorkers to teach open data in their communities. We trained 14 [Open Data Ambassadors](#)<sup>8</sup> who have since hosted over 30 sessions at Queens Public Library branches. These intimate, hands-on trainings, exposed over 200 New Yorkers to the City’s Open Data portal and other open data resources.

When the pandemic started, we retooled [all of our classes](#)<sup>9</sup> so New Yorkers could join virtually. Soon, we will launch a virtual Open Data Ambassadors program with the Queens Public Library and the Mayor’s Office of Data Analytics.

As part of our partnership with the Department of Education, we facilitated the 2019-2020 [hack league academic competition](#)<sup>10</sup> that engaged 254 students from 42 middle and high schools in open data and civics. At six events, they built 61 data driven solutions to their community issues. In total, our open data curriculum reached 2,270 students and 181 teachers at New York City schools.

When we went on PAUSE, BetaNYC was in the middle of our [6th Civic Innovation Fellowship \(CIF\)](#)<sup>11</sup>. This program bridges digital and data literacy gaps with CUNY Service Corps students. Without high-speed internet, it would have been impossible to provide emotional and moral support for our Fellows. We helped them navigate the trauma the pandemic created in their academic, personal, and professional pursuits. Additionally, we dedicated all of our technological resources for our Fellows to continue their virtual learnings. Our 6th cohort successfully completed their assigned projects and graduated in [May 2020](#)<sup>12</sup>.

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://2021.open-data.nyc>

<sup>8</sup> <https://civic-switchboard.gitbook.io/guide/case-studies/queens-borough-public-library-queens-ny>

<sup>9</sup> <https://beta.nyc/nyc-opendata-journeys/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://cs4all.nyc/student-events/hackathons/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://beta.nyc/2019/10/23/introducing-year-6-civic-innovation-fellows-2019-2020/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTcbHQ4i9X4>

Over the summer, we ran our organization and programming virtually. This included a virtual summer Fellowship program. We formalized our [Apprenticeship program](#)<sup>13</sup>, and hired two recent CIF graduates to replace two outgoing apprentices.

Our Staff, [Apprentices](#), and Fellows help Borough Presidents, Community Boards and NGOs address their data and analytical needs. We have built a digital and data literacy service to specifically meet difficult & complex data needs. We call it Research and Data Assistance Requests ([RADARs](#)<sup>14</sup>).

From March 15, 2020, to March 10, 2021, our staff, fellows, and apprentices addressed 88 RADARs across the City.

A majority of our RADARs serve community boards or elected officials desperate to understand how open data can help inform their decision making process.

**We ask that the City Council continue to fund its digital literacy and inclusion initiative grants so we can continue to provide for the needs of your colleagues and constituents.**

**Second, we ask that the Council develop a funding framework to help non-profit organizations, like BetaNYC, provide literacy and career development for all New Yorkers. Also, we ask that CUNY Service Corps is funded to ensure career opportunities exist for the next generation of Public Interest Technologists, Designers, and Analytics.**

---

## **[Innovate and Collaborate]**

**No technology tool can replace poor or missing leadership.**

In March 2020, we ensured there was a continuity of government operations by researching and coaching 16 community boards and one Borough President to [adopt virtual meeting practices and Zoom](#)<sup>15</sup>. In the course of seven days, we developed [context specific training materials](#)<sup>16</sup> and hosted trainings with community board staff and members.

Six weeks later, DoITT rolled out WebEx and Microsoft Teams to all agencies and our training material became the foundation for the City's training material for Community Boards. Every month, for the past year, I've received emails asking how an agency or community board could switch to Zoom. As a community member of Brooklyn Community Board 1, I've seen how inconsistent training and lack of resources has led to meetings that normally take 1 hour to span three to four hours.

**[Our research shows](#) that community boards need continuous investment.<sup>17</sup> Two years later, they continue to face significant challenges in getting across the digital divide. Not only do they need**

---

<sup>13</sup> <https://beta.nyc/2020/08/14/intro-to-the-apprenticeship-program/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://beta.nyc/products/research-and-data-assistance-requests/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://beta.nyc/2020/03/26/virtual-meeting-support-for-community-boards/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://beta.nyc/products/virtual-meeting-support-for-community-boards/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://beta.nyc/publications/data-design-challenges-and-opportunities-for-nyc-community-boards/>

**continuing technology literacy training, they need more than one DOITT tech support person to address their hardware, software, and training needs.**

During the PAUSE, reliable retail information on Google Maps and Yelp became unreliable and inaccurate. In response, [mutual aid and community groups started crowdsourcing information](#)<sup>18</sup> and providing up-to-date information about essential services. BetaNYC built multiple “[open maps](#)”<sup>19</sup> in partnership with nine community organizations across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens.

[These maps](#)<sup>20</sup> immediately met the needs of elderly and immunocompromised neighbors’ — we provided information about special store hours, accessibility, and delivery options. At their height, maps were receiving thousands of unique visits per day. Each map/partnership continues to evolve into a platform of hyper-local geographic information that local partners are maintaining. These maps have continued to support the City’s recovery efforts through the [Data Recovery Partnership](#)<sup>21</sup>.

Since March 2020, we have known that this virus was disproportionately affecting communities of color. Yet, equity issues were marginalized until we had the data to see the impact of the tragedy.

Throughout the pandemic we found it difficult to navigate the City’s myriad of covid websites. For every question asked, unsettling conversations unfolded. For nearly a year there has been a service design and technology leadership vacuum. Dating back to April 2020, we have seen digital information tools and service design processes sit on the sidelines. Yet again, this Administration refuses to address known inequities and deploy service design and collaborative technology leadership.

**It is insulting for this administration to willfully sideline government technologists and designers who sit in the Mayor’s Office. Refusing to employ them in this crisis has furthered the digital divide, while perpetuating racism, ageism, and ablest mentalities.**

**For the last eight years, we have said the same thing, digital technology is a critical tool in how government services are delivered in the 21st Century. [In real time, the pandemic and vaccine distribution has demonstrated what a massive government technical and design failure looks like.](#)**<sup>22</sup>

**NYC’s technology leadership needs to be reorganized and properly resourced for the 21st century. While we commend DoITT’s work in this time of crisis, there are several fundamental improvements that MUST be made. [Service design](#)<sup>23</sup> must be at the core of ALL policies and**

---

<sup>18</sup> <https://beta.nyc/2020/04/09/community-crowdsourcing-of-essential-food-and-services/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://beta.nyc/products/open-maps/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://beta.nyc/2020/05/13/announcing-essentially-open-north-brooklyn/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/analytics/initiatives/recovery-data-partnership.page>

<sup>22</sup>

<https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-how-to-vaccinate-everybody-20210131-ees7uylrqneytk7axe7rljtzhi-story.html>

<sup>23</sup> *“a practice that refers to creating a better understanding, and improving upon programs at any stage. For a program, product, policy or service to be effective, many factors come into play: the context in which it operates; the value that potential clients perceive to their lives; daily processes and workflows; staff skills and perspectives; clarity of communications; and, physical environments, among them. It considers people, processes, communications and technology as part of the solution.”*  
<https://civicservicedesign.com/what-is-civic-service-design-9fd9deebef99>

**technology. New Yorkers who are on the other side of the digital divide, in or near poverty, or are not a member of a privileged caste need the City's services and technology to work for them. Their lives depend on services and technology meeting them where they are, in a language they speak, and on tools that they have.**

**This reorganization must start with a reorganization of DoITT and the CTO, and include a complete inventory of the City's computing systems. For government services to work in the digital era, they must share development practices and code bases. Services and tools need to be co-developed with the people they are serving. We need policy leaders to be digitally literate. We need technology staff to be literate in service design strategies AND have the resources to implement with agility. The current tug of war between technology resources needs to end.**

**Second, NYC.gov needs a content management system built for this century, not the last.**

**Third, the City needs to embrace open sources practices. All software has vulnerability but only close sourced software license fleece our tax dollars while preventing us to [audit the code](#) <sup>24</sup>.**

**Lastly, this reorganization requires a realignment of procurement and hiring practices. If the Mayor is not going to realign these practices, we need the City Council to use whatever resources it has to move us forward. We cannot squander eight more years.**

---

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.govtech.com/security/Is-Open-Source-Software-More-Secure.html>



# Community Land Trust Initiative

## FY2022 Discretionary Funding Request

The **citywide Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative** requests **\$1.51 million** in FY2022 City Council discretionary funding to support 14 community-based organizations and four citywide organizations working to develop CLTs and permanently-affordable housing, commercial and community spaces. Launched in FY2020, the initiative combats displacement and promotes community control of land and housing in Black and brown NYC neighborhoods, by incubating CLTs and providing comprehensive community outreach, education, organizing, and legal and technical support.

Throughout the pandemic, groups have sustained and deepened their work on CLTs and social housing, as a matter of public health, racial equity, and just recovery. CLT initiative funding has helped groups launch and expand CLTs in all five boroughs, develop strong grassroots leadership, engage thousands of community members, and organize for land and housing justice. Two CLTs have acquired properties, and others have completed site acquisition and feasibility plans. (The initiative received \$855,000 in FY2020 and \$637,250 in FY2021.)

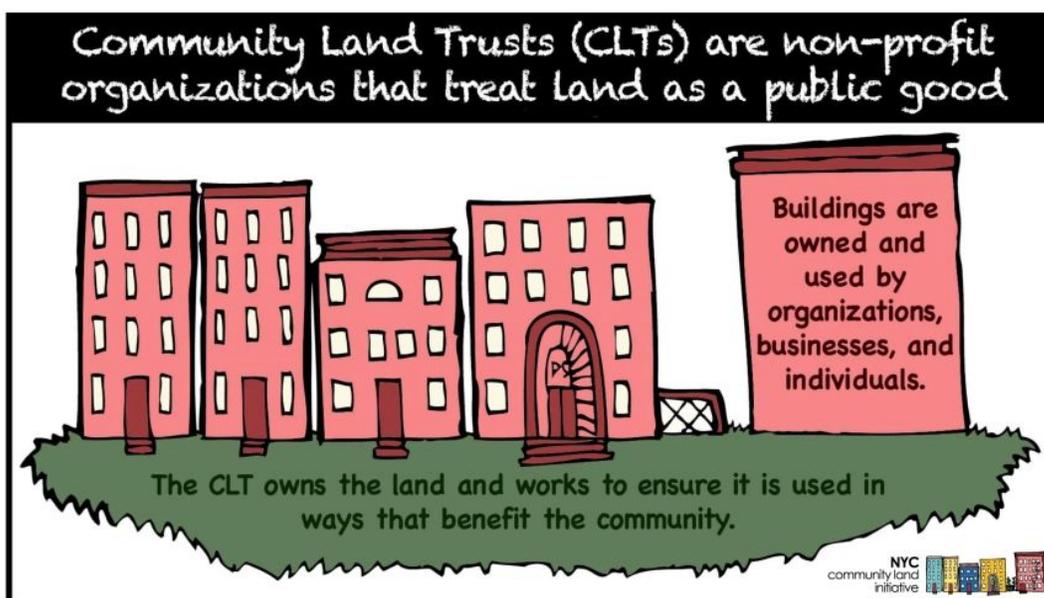
In FY2022, we will continue to build CLT capacity and expand the initiative to include two new CLTs and a fourth technical assistance provider. (See map of participating organizations.)



**In FY2022, the CLT initiative will engage 18 organizations to:**

- Provide 100 CLT education and organizing sessions--including virtual Town Halls and workshops--for tenants, homeowners, small business owners, and other stakeholders.
- Provide capacity-building training for 50 CLT board and steering committee members.
- Provide 35 legal and technical assistance engagements related to CLT incorporation, bylaws, developer partnerships, property research and acquisition, and more.
- Publish a CLT start-up guide and popular education material.
- Complete feasibility studies and acquire first (or additional) properties.

**The CLT initiative's long-term goals** include creating and preserving thousands of deeply- and permanently-affordable housing units; providing affordable commercial space for hundreds of small and cooperatively-owned businesses; and ensuring that public land and subsidy are preserved for permanent public benefit.



**CLTs are a proven model to protect public subsidy and facilitate community-led development.**

CLTs are flexible and can support rental, limited-equity and mutual housing, as well as commercial and mixed-use development and other community needs. For example, Cooper Square CLT on the Lower East Side stewards more than 320 permanently-affordable homes for families earning as low as 30% AMI, as well as storefronts for 20 local small businesses. CLTs ensure permanent affordability of housing through ground leases that establish income, resale, and other restrictions.

**In the wake of COVID-19, CLTs are needed to combat displacement and ensure a just recovery.**

CLTs are needed to strengthen and stabilize housing in Black and brown neighborhoods hardest-hit by the pandemic. With evictions and speculation looming, NYC must invest in CLTs and progressive housing and land ownership models that promote community safety and self-determination.

For more information, please contact Deyanira Del Rio at New Economy Project ([dey@neweconomynyc.org](mailto:dey@neweconomynyc.org)).



**Testimony of  
Kevin Jones  
AARP New York**

**New York City Council  
Committees on Technology and Land Use**

**Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**March 10, 2021**

**Remote Hearing  
New York, New York**

**Contact: Kevin Jones (646) 668-7550 | [kjones@aarp.org](mailto:kjones@aarp.org)**

Good morning Chair Holden and members of the City Council Committee on Technology. My name is Kevin Jones and I am the Associate State Director of Advocacy for AARP New York, representing the 750,000 members of the 50+ community in New York City. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify at today's preliminary budget hearing in order to outline our priorities and concerns related to broadband and technology in the City's budget for Fiscal Year 2022.

As some of you may know, New York City's population of older adults is one of the fastest growing demographics in all five boroughs and will continue to make up a greater portion of the City's population in the coming years, which will require greater attention from the City in addressing the needs of this population.

Prior to the pandemic, at-home broadband access had already been a growing issue for older New Yorkers as a significant portion of the City's aging population lacked access to high-speed internet in their households. In a 2015 report conducted by the Office of the NYC Comptroller, they found that 42 percent of New Yorkers age 65+ lacked access to the internet at home. In addition, they found that 44 percent of low-income New Yorkers lacked internet access in their homes, while Black and Hispanic households disproportionately lack access to broadband when compared to White households in New York City.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the stark disparities in internet access and created new challenges for the livelihoods of New York City's aging residents. As so much of our work, services, and programming has transitioned to the internet and online platforms, older adults who lack access to the internet in their homes have faced serious gaps in accessing vital services and critical information during the pandemic.

Without reliable internet, older adults are struggling to access home delivered meals, routine healthcare, telemedicine, and/or services to refill their medications, and grocery deliveries. Older adults are also struggling to sign up for their vaccine appointments without internet access at home, and have a more difficult time accessing critical information about the progress of the COVID-19 pandemic and related protocols to protect oneself from contracting the virus.

Without sufficient access to the internet, older adults are also missing out on opportunities to participate in online social programs and to connect with family and friends remotely throughout the pandemic. These issues have caused a significant increase in incidents of social isolation among older adults, which have real and tangible impacts on the physical and mental health of individuals.

In addition, many of these issues related to broadband access have been compounded by the fact that a large portion of the City's older adults do not have sufficient technological literacy or training to remain connected to vital City services or their friends and loved ones, thereby further worsening the situation.

As the City Council and the Mayor begin to formulate the FY22 Budget, AARP New York calls on the City to make critical investments into broadband infrastructure and related technological services in order to bridge the digital divide and keep the City's 50+ connected to the internet and to the surrounding world.

AARP commends the Mayor's recent actions to begin delivering on his "Internet Master Plan" to deliver affordable and universal high-speed internet to New Yorkers across all five boroughs. We believe that this plan will aid in closing the digital divide and connecting underserved areas with affordable access to the internet, which is especially critical amid the current pandemic

AARP calls on the Mayor and the City Council to fully fund this initiative and all broadband infrastructure projects included in the Internet Master Plan in order to ensure that all 50+ New Yorkers, especially individuals in historically underserved areas, have the opportunity to attain affordable and quality internet access in their homes.

In addition to the buildout of affordable and reliable broadband in New York City, AARP urges the City Council and the Mayor to devote more funding to organizations that provide technological trainings and educational courses to older adults in order to help this population remain connected to critical services and loved ones, especially amid this pandemic.

We call on the City to expand discretionary funds and other pools of funding to nonprofits and service providers, such as Older Adult Technology Services, Inc. (OATS) in order to reach more clients and improve the technological literacy of older adults across all five boroughs.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today. I am more than happy to take questions.

Testimony  
New York City Council Hearing  
Committee on Technology  
Wednesday, March 10, 2021  
From Clerical Administrative Local 1549  
By Jim Hamlin-McLeod

## **Need for Increased Staffing of CCR Title in DOITT 311 Need for Interpreters**

311-DOITT plays a critical role in the life of the city by providing information needed by the public. The usage of the system increased during the COVID Pandemic and remains high. Usage has increased over the past four years overall.

The current staffing levels have remained the same the last two years for Call Center Representatives (CCR). However, the number of calls has jumped by 15% since 2016 and 10% in 2020 from 2019 alone. Texting increased by 68% from 2019 to 2020. Yet staffing remains the same.

There are desks empty now at the main call center in Manhattan due to spacing for COVID. A satellite was set up in Brooklyn. However, without the COVID Pandemic there would be some empty cubicles.

The staff is burned out due to the volume of calls received. They have worked tirelessly throughout this crisis.

We are requesting increased staffing by 25 CCRs. This is a proportionate number to the increase in calls received.

### **Need for Interpreters**

The city has a Civil Service Interpreter title that it does not use. Instead, they use a private, low wage phone line for interpretation servicing. Private contractor interpreter phonenumber servicing at times leads to delays in ending calls and confusion in proper information dissemination to the public. It would be better to have Interpreters in place at the centers that would be city employees trained in city government and servicing information dissemination, verbiage, and terminology.

The number of Spanish speaking calls rose by 25% and 36% for calls from non-English and Spanish speaking people. We would expect that these numbers would either stay the same or increase. But the time used for these calls are greater than English language ones.

We would like the City Council's support for increasing the 311 CCR titles staffing. THANK YOU.



**Testimony of Deyanira Del Rio to the New York City Council  
Committee on Land Use  
Preliminary Budget Hearing for FY 2022**

**March 10, 2021**

Good afternoon, Committee Chair Salamanca, and members of the Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Deyanira Del Rio and I am the co-director at New Economy Project, a citywide organization that works with community groups to build a just economy that works for all. Among our activities, New Economy Project is a founding member and co-coordinator of the NYC Community Land Initiative, a citywide coalition working to promote community land trusts (CLTs) as a strategy to address the city's affordability crisis and ensure equitable, community-led decision-making over land use in New York City.

Since FY2020, New Economy Project has coordinated the citywide Community Land Trust Initiative, through which the City Council has provided discretionary funding support for the development of CLTs and permanently-affordable housing, commercial and community spaces across the five boroughs. In less than two years, the Initiative has made major progress--helping to launch and expand CLTs in the South and Northwest Bronx, East Harlem and the Lower East Side, Jackson Heights, Brownsville, East New York, and beyond. Through this groundbreaking and cost-effective initiative, the City is helping to seed a new generation of neighborhood-based institutions equipped to create and preserve affordable housing, facilitate equitable development and build community wealth. We thank the City Council for its vital support of CLTs, worker cooperatives, and other models that advance shared ownership and democratic control of our economy.

**New Economy Project and 17 partner organizations in the CLT Initiative seek \$1.51 million in City Council discretionary funding in FY2022.** We urge the Committee to support this funding request, and ensure that CLTs continue to play a key role in stabilizing housing, combating speculation, and promoting a just recovery in Black, brown and immigrant neighborhoods. (See attached one-pager detailing activities and participating organizations.)

Since FY2020, the CLT Initiative has engaged thousands of low-income tenants and homeowners in education and organizing; developed grassroots leadership through CLT steering committees and founding boards; provided comprehensive legal and training support; completed planning and property research; and formalized strategic partnerships with nonprofit developers and other stakeholders. Two CLTs have acquired first or new properties; and others have completed feasibility studies or are negotiating for acquisitions. Expanded FY2022 discretionary funding will enable the CLT Initiative to sustain and deepen this essential work, and engage two new CLTs and an additional citywide technical assistance provider.

This committee has deliberated over dozens of ULURP requests and rezoning plans that have put the City Council between a rock and a hard place: either approve a development project that will provide a small number of nominally affordable apartments but likely lead to displacement and gentrification, or reject the project and allow for as-of-right development without any of the community benefits that would come with the rezoning. Community land trusts offer a new way forward for land use in the city, allowing for community-led development without displacement.

CLTs are a flexible, proven model to protect public investment in affordable housing and other development. As community-governed nonprofits, CLTs own land and control terms on which the land is developed to ensure, for example, that housing remains permanently affordable and that development meets community needs. New York City CLTs are organizing for deeply-affordable multifamily rental housing, limited-equity cooperatives, and 1-4 family homes at risk of foreclosure, as well as commercial and cultural spaces, community gardens, community-owned solar, microgrids and other infrastructure.

NYC faces unprecedented threats of speculation and displacement in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Holding reportedly massive amounts of cash, global private equity firms are expected to pounce on vulnerabilities in the real estate market brought on by the COVID crisis. This potential feeding frenzy could lead to unparalleled levels of commercial and residential displacement at a time when small businesses, tenants, and homeowners are at greatest risk. All the intentional work of city planning and community engagement could be upended by waves of speculation in the years to come.

City Council is rightly considering policy interventions to address these threats, from the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act and ending the City's lien sale to prioritizing nonprofits like CLTs for public land disposition, and more. Strong public investment in CLTs will be key to ensuring that these policies meet with success and that land and housing is removed from the speculative market, for good.

We urge the City Council to renew and expand discretionary funding support for CLTs at this critical time. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.



## Community Land Trust Initiative

### FY2022 Discretionary Funding Request

The **citywide Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative** requests **\$1.51 million** in FY2022 City Council discretionary funding to support 14 community-based organizations and four citywide organizations working to develop CLTs and permanently-affordable housing, commercial and community spaces. Launched in FY2020, the initiative combats displacement and promotes community control of land and housing in Black and brown NYC neighborhoods, by incubating CLTs and providing comprehensive community outreach, education, organizing, and legal and technical support.

Throughout the pandemic, groups have sustained and deepened their work on CLTs and social housing, as a matter of public health, racial equity, and just recovery. CLT initiative funding has helped groups launch and expand CLTs in all five boroughs, develop strong grassroots leadership, engage thousands of community members, and organize for land and housing justice. Two CLTs have acquired properties, and others have completed site acquisition and feasibility plans. (The initiative received \$855,000 in FY2020 and \$637,250 in FY2021.)

In FY2022, we will continue to build CLT capacity and expand the initiative to include two new CLTs and a fourth technical assistance provider. (See map of participating organizations.)



In FY2022, the CLT initiative will engage 18 organizations to:

- Provide 100 CLT education and organizing sessions--including virtual Town Halls and workshops--for tenants, homeowners, small business owners, and other stakeholders.
- Provide capacity-building training for 50 CLT board and steering committee members.
- Provide 35 legal and technical assistance engagements related to CLT incorporation, bylaws, developer partnerships, property research and acquisition, and more.
- Publish a CLT start-up guide and popular education material.
- Complete feasibility studies and acquire first (or additional) properties.

**The CLT initiative's long-term goals** include creating and preserving thousands of deeply- and permanently-affordable housing units; providing affordable commercial space for hundreds of small and cooperatively-owned businesses; and ensuring that public land and subsidy are preserved for permanent public benefit.

**CLTs are a proven model to protect public subsidy and facilitate community-led development.** CLTs are flexible and can support rental, limited-equity and mutual housing, as well as commercial and mixed-use development and other community needs. For example, Cooper Square CLT on the Lower East Side stewards more than 320 permanently-affordable homes for families earning as low as 30% AMI, as well as storefronts for 20 local small businesses. CLTs ensure permanent affordability of housing through ground leases that establish income, resale, and other restrictions.



**In the wake of COVID-19, CLTs are needed to combat displacement and ensure a just recovery.** CLTs are needed to strengthen and stabilize housing in Black and brown neighborhoods hardest-hit by the pandemic. With evictions and speculation looming, NYC must invest in CLTs and progressive housing and land ownership models that promote community safety and self-determination.

For more information, please contact Deyanira Del Rio at New Economy Project ([dey@neweconomy.org](mailto:dey@neweconomy.org)).

# TAKEROOT JUSTICE

**Testimony to the NYC City Council**  
**Committee on Land Use**  
**Preliminary Budget Hearing for FY 2022**

March 10, 2021

Good afternoon. My name is Paula Segal. I am speaking today as Senior Attorney in the Equitable Neighborhoods practice of TakeRoot Justice. Thank you for the opportunity to testify as the Council prepares its response to the Mayor's preliminary FY2022 budget. TakeRoot works with grassroots groups, neighborhood organizations and community coalitions to help make sure that people of color, immigrants, and other low-income residents who have built our city are not pushed out in the name of "progress." TakeRoot and 17 partner organizations are part of a citywide Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative that seeks \$1.51 million in City Council discretionary funding in FY2022, to develop CLTs and permanently-affordable housing, commercial and community spaces, in all five boroughs of NYC. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, CLTs have an especially critical role to play to stabilize housing, combat speculation, and ensure a just recovery in Black, brown and immigrant neighborhoods. **We ask the Committee to recommend renewed funding for the Citywide CLT Initiative, in the FY2022 budget.** (Please see attached one-pager and supporting material).

Launched in FY2020, the Citywide CLT Initiative has provided crucial support to groups organizing CLTs in the South and Northwest Bronx, East Harlem, Jackson Heights, Brownsville, East New York and beyond. CLTs are community-controlled nonprofits that own land and ensure that it is used to provide permanently-affordable housing and other community needs. Locally, CLTs are working to develop and preserve deeply-affordable multifamily rental housing, limited-equity cooperatives, and 1-4 family homes at risk of foreclosure, as well as commercial and cultural spaces, community gardens, community-owned solar, microgrids and other infrastructure--reflecting the flexibility of the CLT model.

TakeRoot serves as a legal services provider to CLTs and groups incubating CLTs, advising on corporate form, developing regulatory and governance documents, supporting negotiations with tenants and potential sellers of property and assisting CLTs in complex closings with multiple parties, including the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development.



The CLT Initiative has made major strides in less than two years--engaging thousands of community members in education and organizing; developing CLT steering committees and founding boards; incorporating new CLTs and expanding existing ones. Groups have completed comprehensive property research and planning in their CLT catchment areas, and formalized developer and other strategic partnerships. Two CLTs in the initiative have acquired first or new properties, while others are completing feasibility studies and negotiating for acquisitions. TakeRoot was counsel to East Harlem-El Barrio CLT in its closing on four buildings acquired from the City last November, and continues to represent them in necessary transactions as renovations begin. We represent the Bronx CLT and were please to aid in its formation last year. In addition to providing transactional counsel TakeRoot supports grassroots groups in the Initiative on their policy campaigns and counsels groups evaluating community land trusts as a strategy on the process and considerations.

Renewed FY2022 discretionary funding will build on this tremendous progress, as more groups secure legal and technical assistance, launch CLT operations, sustain comprehensive organizing and community planning, and acquire properties for long-term community stewardship. It will ensure a continuity of services for the groups already relying on TakeRoot, and allow us to potentially expand counseling.

In the context of the pandemic and real estate market flux, NYC has an opportunity to address root causes of housing insecurity by investing in CLTs and community ownership of land and housing. CLTs have stabilized housing in the wake of past crises--for example, preventing foreclosures on CLT land after the 2008 financial crash, and rebuilding in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. Strong CLTs, combined with policymaking that removes land and housing from the speculative market, will be key to a just recovery in Black and brown neighborhoods hardest-hit by the pandemic.

We urge the City Council to redouble its commitment to CLTs at this critical time, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

**Contact:** Paula Z. Segal, Senior Staff Attorney  
[psegal@takerootjustice.org](mailto:psegal@takerootjustice.org) (646) 459-3067