

July 12, 2024

MAS Comments on the Preliminary Report of the 2024 City Charter Revision Commission

Dear Commission,

The Municipal Art Society of New York (MAS) was founded four years before New York City adopted its first Charter in 1897. Since then, MAS advocacy efforts have created municipal policies and agencies, including the New York City Planning Commission, Public Design Commission, and Landmarks Preservation Commission. In recent years, MAS has provided input on the various City Charter revisions, focusing on issues such as the land use review process, community board structures, and civic engagement.

MAS supports the staff recommendations below from the preliminary Charter Revision Commission report and has added additional related recommendations. MAS is happy to help provide additional research and expert input on any of these ideas so that they are well-informed, clear, and can be put forth in a viable way.

- Improve assessment of the financial impact of legislation on the budget, including by requiring an evaluation of the fiscal effects earlier in the legislative process and by involving additional parties in the assessment process.
- Harmonize the Charter-mandated budget process with the Council's power to pass legislation with budget impacts outside the annual appropriations process.
- Update provisions concerning capital plan inventory and maintenance estimates, including by adding an explicit statement of purpose linking the infrastructure assessment to the Ten-Year Capital Strategy, modifying the inventory to reflect additional pertinent details, and including additional criteria for identification of capital needs to be included in the Ten-Year Capital Strategy.
 - MAS further recommends that formal leadership of the capital planning and budgeting process revert to the Department of City Planning (DCP). DCP is better positioned to take a long view and identify opportunities across agencies for co-benefits, cogeneration, and colocations.
 - Additionally, MAS recommends that the ten-year capital strategy time frame be extended, possibly to 20 years, to allow for more long-term planning required to meet

our climate resiliency goals. DCP could help plan capital projects to ensure our city is resilient to the effects of future storms, flooding, and extreme temperatures.

- Modernize deadlines and related technical requirements to promote efficiency in the budget process.
- Improve services provided to and use of MWBEs.
 - However, MAS believes this improvement is best done through policy revisions and programs within capital agencies, such as the MWBE support systems in the most recent DDC blueprint. A new agency would not be the most expeditious way to achieve our MWBE goals, and the creation of a new agency may undermine them by adding another level of coordination with agencies and for procurement.
 - Further input from the Department of Design and Construction (DDC) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) would be beneficial.
- Remove all waterfront permitting for construction/alteration from the Department of Small Business Services (SBS)
 - MAS also recommends further exploring opportunities to streamline permitting processes across capital agencies.
- Collect a resident feedback survey on local quality of life and service delivery to inform municipal operations and the budget.

City Agency Proposals

In addition, MAS supports and recommends that the City Charter Revision Commission further study several of the City agency recommendations, including the following:

- The Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) suggestion to exempt acquisitions from ULURP and competitive processes if the acquisition is for flood protection or has already undergone an environmental review and with the understanding that any land that is intended to be used as parkland will be mapped as such, even if that occurs at a later date.
- The Department of Transportation (DOT) proposal to align language with federal standards to streamline processes, provide consistency for consultants, and enable incredible innovation and flexibility to meet our goals of a more resilient and multimodal city.
- The NYC Service recommendation of an accountability portal to increase the transparency of public input in the feedback loop of a public project if staff capacity is added to accommodate the workflow.

- The Department of Buildings (DOB) recommendation to streamline its code revision process, especially if this could facilitate more housing construction in New York City.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. We look forward to following and participating in the City Charter Revision Commission process as it moves forward.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Goldstein
President, The Municipal Art Society of New York