

Urban

Democracy

Lab

 NYU | GALLATIN

Working Paper

February 2026

The Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants

Sara Duvisac

Gianpaolo Baiocchi

Marnie Brady

H. Jacob Carlson

Yuly Chan

Tyson Patros

urbandemos.nyu.edu

The Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants

January 2026

Sara Duvisac

Independent Researcher

Gianpaolo Baiocchi

New York University

Marnie Brady

Marymount Manhattan College

H. Jacob Carlson

Kean University

Yuly Chan

New York University

Tyson Patros

New York University

The authors welcome feedback on this working paper. Please send all inquiries to: sduvisac@gmail.com.

We wish to acknowledge the support of the Public Humanities program and the Initiative for Community Power at NYU. We wish to also individually name the support of Andrew Friedman, Daniela Tagtachian, and Racquel Forrester in making this effort possible, and Mahin Rahman Tawrat for data assistance for the whole series. In addition, we wish to acknowledge students in the Public Humanities seminar and in the Law and Organizing Lab course who volunteered time, effort, and opinions on these topics in the Fall of 2025. While not everyone contributed an individual working paper, all contributed to the debate and we are appreciative. Finally, we need to acknowledge the important contributions of a number of individuals whose professional commitments prevent them from being named.

Urban Democracy Lab Working Papers are circulated for discussion and comment. They reflect ongoing research and analysis and may be revised. These papers emerge from discussion with community partners but have not gone through a process of community review as is our practice. This paper is part of a series that responds to a rare political opening: the chance to rebuild city governance around affordability, dignity, and democratic control. The papers are designed as practical tools for transition and early governing, with companion briefs for rapid circulation and working-paper versions that provide full rationale, evidence, and implementation detail. They reflect our Real Utopian orientation: feasible design of transformative institutions and policies that are egalitarian, durable, and sustainable.

Suggested citation: Duvisac, Sara, Gianpaolo Baiocchi, Marnie Brady, H.Jacob Carlson, Yuly Chan and Tyson Patros with Claire McMahon Fishman and Kendra Neumann. 2026. "The Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants: A Proposal," NYU Urban Democracy Lab Working Paper. URL

Executive Summary

One of the first actions of the new mayoral administration of Zohran Mamdani was to re-establish the Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants, signaling the administration's deep commitment to strengthening tenants' rights and tenants' voices in city governance. Executive Order 3, "Revitalizing the Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants," identifies six core functions and duties of this new office. This working paper outlines specific areas of action that MOPT can take to fulfill these core functions, as well as to deliver on four core rights for tenants: (1) affordability, (2) habitability, (3) collective power, and (4) security of housing (including freedom from harassment). MOPT will integrate tenant organizing support, enforcement coordination, anti-speculation strategies, and transfer of distressed assets to social housing. To effectively achieve these aims and meet the needs of tenants will require investment to create a robust office. We propose establishing the office with a minimum \$8 million dollar budget and a minimum staff of 35.

Introduction

New York City, despite having relatively strong tenant protections, is plagued by issues of housing affordability, habitability, and security. Too often, the city's existing protections are out of reach for tenants. And the collective demands, concerns, and voices of tenants are often sidelined or only incorporated in an ad hoc way within city governance. Confronting the crisis of housing affordability, habitability, and security requires the city to institutionally center and incorporate tenants' demands and needs.

The new mayoral administration of Zohran Mamdani has already signaled its commitment to strengthening the voice of tenants in city governance with Executive Order 3¹, "Revitalizing the Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants." Executive Order 3 identifies the core functions and duties of the Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants (MOPT) as:

- a) Ensuring access to housing-related city resources for tenants and other related actors;
- b) Strengthening the voice of tenants and other actors to "promote policies within City and State government that promote safe and habitable housing conditions for tenants";
- c) Improving housing stability through facilitating dialogue between tenant organizations and landlords or management companies;
- d) Coordinating tenants' "know your rights" campaigns and advocacy on housing quality and affordability;
- e) Reflecting tenants' voices in the development and implementation of the city's housing policies;
- f) Strengthening city enforcement on housing quality through new policies and strengthening coordination with tenants; and

¹ City of New York, Office of the Mayor, Exec. Order No. 3 (January 1 2026)
<https://www.nyc.gov/mayors-office/news/2026/01/executive-order-03>

g) other duties as identified by the mayor.

To fulfill the six core functions of MOPT that Executive Order 3 identifies, we propose that MOPT work with city agencies, tenants, and tenant groups to:

- Strengthen and support the collective organizing and power of tenants;
- Ensure landlords are effectively penalized for non-compliance;
- Ensure appropriate enforcement of existing tenant protections;
- Support the transfer of distressed rental properties to social housing models to protect affordability;
- Protect tenants from unfair evictions; and
- Fight speculation in rental properties and the destabilization of rent-stabilized rental stock.

The city is at an urgent inflection point on affordability, with some indicators pointing to a looming increase in foreclosures. Between 2023 and 2024, NYC’s commercial mortgage-backed securities (“CMBS”) distress rate for multifamily buildings rose from 7% to 14.4%.² Distress is heavily concentrated in older multifamily buildings. Pre-1974 multifamily buildings—home to a disproportionate share of rent-stabilized units—have a distress rate of 25.1% versus 2.9% for post-2000 properties.³ This means that one in four older buildings is in danger of being delinquent on loan payments, increasing the likelihood of defaults that would disproportionately impact rent-stabilized housing. In the face of these pressures, it is imperative that MOPT organize, advocate, and coordinate city agencies to implement solutions that ensure that multifamily buildings facing physical and financial distress continue to be a source of stability and affordability.

²Kroll Bond Rating Agency. 2025. “KBRA Releases Research – New York City Leads CMBS Multifamily Issuance as Distress Jumps.”
<https://www.kbra.com/publications/VPVVBmBV/kbra-releases-research-nyc-leads-cmbs-multifamily-issuance-as-distress-jumps>

³ Ibid.

Building collective power: Protect, strengthen, and support the collective organizing power of tenants

Executive Order 3 signals that a core function of MOPT is to strengthen the voices of tenants and tenant organizations in the development and implementation of city and state housing policies; coordinate tenants, tenant organizations, and other relevant housing actors and increase their access to relevant housing-related city resources; and coordinate relevant advocacy, outreach, and “know your rights” trainings.

To achieve these goals, MOPT must protect, strengthen, and support the collective organizing power of tenants. New York City has a long history of diverse and vibrant tenant organizing, encompassing efforts going back decades, more recent tenant associations, autonomous tenant unions, and non-profit tenant groups organizing across all five boroughs. The work of MOPT must be grounded in the collective work of these groups and be a conduit for their demands, recognizing and respecting the diversity of these groups.

1. Creating institutional channels for tenant voices and demands in city and state housing policies

To better coordinate tenants, tenant organizations, and other relevant actors and to improve their access to housing-related city resources, as outlined in sections 2(a) and 2(b) of Executive Order 3, MOPT should create a central repository of autonomous and non-profit tenant groups and map the concerns they raise across the city. This will aid in coordinating tenant groups and also in identifying geographic locations that need more tenant organizing support. It will also aid in systematically identifying areas where city resources are not reaching tenants and areas where tenants’ voices are being excluded from city governance. This first step would help position MOPT as a central hub where tenant groups can access support and resources for struggles ranging from building-level issues to neighborhood and citywide campaigns.

To ensure that the coordination of tenants and tenant organizations and other actors leads to city and state policies that promote safe and habitable housing, combat landlord abuse, and advance tenant interests (sections 2(b) and (e)) MOPT should create formal institutional channels where tenants can express their concerns and demands and identify specific areas of support. This could entail both MOPT staff meeting with or attending meetings of various tenant groups and nonprofit groups on an annual or biannual basis.

In addition, MOPT should convene an annual Tenant Congress and regular borough Tenant Assemblies to set priorities, select focus buildings/portfolios, and co-design enforcement pilots. We discuss our vision for an integrated participatory infrastructure in our, “ Implementing Mass Governance in New York City,” working paper.

2. Outreach, Advocacy, and Education Campaigns

In working to coordinate outreach, advocacy, and education campaigns on tenants’ rights, housing quality, and affordability as outlined section 2(d), MOPT should coordinate with tenant groups to offer training for tenants on habitability protections, rights to organize, tenant protections and rights, and pathways to collective tenant ownership. To support more tenant-led pathways for social housing, MOPT should, in partnership with other groups, offer training on social housing models.

3. Strengthening access to city resources

To strengthen access to city resources for tenants, tenant organizations, and other relevant actors, MOPT should streamline current city efforts to organize and protect tenants. The current Tenant Support Unit, which includes the Tenant Support Hotline and Tenant Resource Portal, and is currently housed within the Mayor’s Public Engagement Unit, should be moved under MOPT. MOPT should also work closely with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development’s (HPD) Partners in Preservation program. The city’s eviction protection funding and programming should be housed within MOPT and streamlined with MOPT tenant organizing work.

Strengthening enforcement to improve housing quality

Section 2(f) of Executive Order 3 tasks MOPT to develop policy changes that “improve housing quality through City enforcement actions.” This will require MOPT to identify and tackle core barriers to effective city enforcement with respect to housing quality. There is consensus that code enforcement is failing New York tenants. Between fiscal years 2023 and 2024, violations increased by 24% totaling nearly 900,000 violations⁴, and there were over \$107 million in unpaid charges issued by HPD between 2017 and 2022.^{5 6} There are two core issues for MOPT to consider: capacity for code enforcement and current penalty mechanisms.

First, MOPT should advocate for policy changes that strengthen the capacity for code enforcement. HPD inspectors are the frontline for tackling concerns over housing quality, but there has been significant turnover amongst code enforcement inspectors and a loss of staff with institutional memory and experience within HPD. In 2022, nearly 15% of staff members with over five years of experience left the agency.⁷ Although hiring has increased, greater capacity for code enforcement is needed. MOPT should advocate for strengthening staffing capacity within HPD to cover both enforcement and the building agenda of the city. In addition, MOPT should, in partnership with HPD, establish a committee to interview HPD inspectors to better identify blockages in

⁴ This increase was due in part to an increase in complaints, but underscores that poor conditions remain an important concern. See Spauster, Patrick. 2024. “Housing Violations in NYC Jumped 24% This Year. We Mapped Them By Neighborhood.” *CityLimits*. October 16.

<https://citylimits.org/housing-violations-in-nyc-jumped-24-this-year-we-mapped-them-by-neighborhood/>

⁵ These are unpaid lienable property charges, and are primarily charges stemming from emergency repairs that HPD oversaw under the Emergency Repair Program and the Alternative Enforcement Program. See Independent Budget Office. 2023. “Total Cost of Three Selected Categories of Unpaid Fines and Charges in New York City.”

<https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/unpaid-fees-fines-letter-april-2023.pdf>

⁶ The Department of Buildings leads amongst city agencies in unpaid fines with \$778 million outstanding. These fines are not lienable charges, and include fines for safety, facade violations, and issues with elevators and boilers (see *Ibid*).

⁷ Office of the City Comptroller. 2024. “Building blocks of change: A blueprint for Progress at NYC’s Housing Preservation and Development.” Bureau of Policy and Organizing.

<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/building-blocks-of-change/>

enforcement, proactive-enforcement programs, the collection of fines and costs of repairs, and the city's building agenda.

Second, the current system of penalties for maintenance code violations has failed to provide sufficient deterrence to maintain habitability. Many landlords view maintenance code fines as a cost of doing business, and tenants continue to struggle to have basic repairs made.

The city's existing proactive enforcement mechanisms, administered by HPD, are also insufficient. These include the Alternative Enforcement Program (AEP), Certificate of No Harassment (CONH), Proactive Preservation Initiative (PPI), and the Emergency Repair Program (ERP). The Alternative Enforcement Program is one of the city's strongest proactive enforcement programs, and has been relatively successful: 83% of buildings in the program between 2007 and 2024 were successfully discharged from the program.⁸ At the same time, a large number of buildings remain in the program year to year, and the program only covers 250 buildings per year. For example, in January 2024, there were 622 buildings still active from previous years.⁹ Moreover, 477 buildings (95.4% of the buildings in AEP between 2022 and 2024)¹⁰ still have open violations despite AEP participation, indicating significant gaps in the program's ability to incentivise sufficient repairs. AEP, as well as the other proactive enforcement programs, need to be expanded, and the ability to hold landlords in the program accountable must be strengthened.

MOPT should work with relevant agencies, primarily HPD, and the city council to strengthen penalties for non-compliant landlords. These should include:

⁸ New York City Department of Housing, Preservation, and Development. 2024. "Alternative Enforcement Program—Year 17. Report to the City Council."

<https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/AEP-year17-report.pdf>

⁹ New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development. 2025. Buildings selected for the Alternative Enforcement program (AEP) [Data set]. *NYC Open Data*.

https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Housing-Development/Buildings-Selected-for-the-Alternative-Enforcement/hcir-3275/about_data

¹⁰ Based on calculations by Mahin Rahman Tawrat cross referencing the "[Buildings Selected for the Alternative Enforcement Program AEP 20250922.csv](#)" and the "[Housing Maintenance Code Violations 20250922.csv](#)" datasets.

- **Increase fines** for maintenance code violations, including for buildings in proactive enforcement programs such as the AEP.
 - In 2023, the city increased penalties for maintenance code violations, while the number of violations increased—implying that the increase did not provide a sufficient deterrent. MOPT should convene a committee in partnership with HPD and the City Comptroller’s office to establish recommendations for increases in fines for non-compliance. The committee should explore the impact of the increase in penalties in 2023 and also develop a penalty system that differentiates between small landlords and medium and large landlords.
- MOPT should advocate for HPD to explore deploying its statutory power to collect **rent directly** from non-complaint landlords to cover the cost of repairs and fines, in place of only placing tax liens.¹¹
 - Under §27-2147, HPD can either place a tax lien or collect rents under a receivership for unpaid fines and repairs. Currently, placing a tax lien is the default option, and liens are only collected when the building is sold. Between 2017 and 2022, there were over \$107 million uncollected lienable property charges from HPD.¹²
 - Under §27-2147, HPD can collect rent directly from tenants under a receivership.¹³ MOPT should work with relevant city agencies to identify pathways for rent to be collected from non-compliant landlords. However,

¹¹ Between 2017 and early 2024 AEP billed \$109 million in costs and fees (81 million for maintenance related expenditures and 27.3 million in fees). AEP has recouped \$73 million of the \$109 million (54.3 million in maintenance related costs and 18.8 for the fees). See: New York City Department of Housing, Preservation, and Development. 2024. “Alternative Enforcement Program—Year 17. Report to the City Council.” <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/AEP-year17-report.pdf>

¹² Independent Budget Office. 2023. “Total Cost of Three Selected Categories of Unpaid Fines and Charges in New York City.” <https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/unpaid-fees-fines-letter-april-2023.pdf>

¹³ §27-2147 specifies the steps that HPD would need to take, which include: 1) demonstrating proof of the lien, civil penalty, or other judgment against the owner; 2) letter that specifies that rent should be paid to HPD rather than landlord; and 3) give notice to the owner or agent that HPD will be collecting rent from renters.

care should be taken to ensure that HPD does not engender housing insecurity for tenants for nonpayment.

- MOPT should work with HPD to **strategically pursue more civil cases and, where appropriate, criminal cases** against large corporate landlords who are chronic bad actors.
 - Civil penalties and criminal cases are another avenue that HPD can deploy to collect unpaid fines. However, a 2019 report from the Comptroller's office found that there is a severe backlog of cases in housing court, and HPD has limited capacity to pursue a substantial number of cases¹⁴ and to collect on judgments.¹⁵ MOPT should work with HPD to identify the most efficient strategy for determining which landlords should be targeted for civil cases and where criminal charges would be an appropriate lever.
- MOPT should advocate to strengthen the capacity of HPD to collect unpaid liens. HPD does not have sufficient staff to track and enforce the collection of unpaid liens. MOPT should work with HPD and the Department of Finance to strengthen the collection of unpaid liens.

Strengthen Housing Affordability

1. Transfer of distressed properties to social housing

Sections 2(c) and 2(e) of Executive Order 3 make the development of housing policies that improve housing stability a core remit of MOPT.

¹⁴ Office of the City Comptroller. 2016. Audit Report on the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's Efforts to Collect Outstanding Money Judgments. New York City. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/audit-report-on-the-department-of-housing-preservation-and-developments-efforts-to-collect-outstanding-money-judgments/>

¹⁵ Office of the City Comptroller (2024). "Building blocks of change: A blueprint for Progress at NYC's Housing Preservation and Development." Bureau of Policy and Organizing. New York City. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/building-blocks-of-change/>

Increasing the number of affordable housing units and preserving the existing stock of affordable housing units are both critical to ensuring housing stability. Our working paper, “The Building Blocks of a Progressive Building Agenda for New York City,” discusses the pathways of public ownership and the ways in which the administration can reach its goal of creating new affordable units.

This working paper examines how city housing policies can be strengthened to elevate tenants' voices in efforts to improve stability, as outlined in sections 2(c) and 2(e) of Executive Order 3. To do so, we argue that a key function of MOPT should be to ensure that the city and other actors can convert distressed properties¹⁶ into social housing to promote long-term housing stability. MOPT should articulate the city's overall approach and identify the different pathways that the city can take to ensure that distressed properties can be transformed into social housing with long-term affordability and tenant control.

A number of city programs exist to transfer physically and/or financially distressed properties to nonprofits, mission driven development actors, and women-and-minority owned businesses, including the Neighborhood Pillars program, the Third Party Transfer program (which is currently paused), the Tenant Interim Lease program, and the pending Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (COPA) and Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) legislation. This working paper focuses on the Neighborhood Pillars program, as one that can be scaled up easily to address a potential increase in financial distress.

Neighborhood Pillars

The Neighborhood Pillars program, administered by HPD, targets multifamily buildings experiencing physical and/or financial distress for acquisition and renovations to improve housing stability and quality for tenants. In its current form, the program is

¹⁶ The Neighborhood Pillars program defines distress as, “a significant number of open HPD violations, substantial amounts of outstanding DOF and/or DEP arrears, considerable municipal debt relative to the property's market value and at-risk of loan default or foreclosure.”
See: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/hpd/services-and-information/neighborhood-pillars.page>

limited in its ability to integrate large portfolios at once and to ensure that a greater proportion of units are permanently affordable. MOPT should push reforms to the Neighborhood Pillars program to increase ***tenant input and control, expand permanent affordability, increase financing, and provide more proactive technical training.***

- **Implement a right of refusal for tenant associations.** The current program has no stipulation regarding the role of tenant associations in the transfer of property and selection of landlords. Including this provision would create a clearer pathway to tenant power and control within housing, even when privately owned. It can also give a clear role for consultation and partnership that non-profit developers should develop with tenant associations.
- **Increase proportion of units of permanent affordability to 50%.** Currently, the program requires owners in the program to commit 30% of units to permanent affordability. MOPT should advocate for reforms such that 50% of units are permanently affordable. This will also entail changes in the loan term sheet, and the financial implications will need to be explored, including the potential need to reconsider the requirement that all permanently affordable units be contained in the lowest regulated tiers.
- **Expand the funding pool.** Currently, the city subsidizes eligible purchasers through low-interest loans from HPD; the Down Payment Assistance Fund operated by Restored Homes Development LLC, an entity affiliated with Neighborhood Restore HDFC; full or partial property tax exemption through J-51 or Article XI tax benefit programs; and additional potential funding for acquisition via loans from the New York City Acquisition Fund (a public-private enterprise). If the pace and support for acquisition are to expand, the funding pool must also increase. A potential pathway is for MOPT to explore and establish partnerships with union-led banks and green banks to expand the funding pool for potential owners.

- **Support mission driven and non-profit owners including Community Land Trusts with repairs.** Buildings with significant physical distress require a high level of capital to conduct repairs that some non-profit and mission driven developers may not have. In addition to providing subsidized loans for purchase, the city should support these owners with the resources necessary to carry out critical repairs.
- **Ensure ongoing technical assistance.** City reports have already found that smaller nonprofits that do not have dedicated real estate teams require significant technical assistance for rehabilitating buildings. There is already a significant backlog in HPD-provided technical assistance, which impacts the financial viability of these nonprofits. Dedicated funding to strengthen technical capacity must be meaningfully increased to meet these gaps.

2. Maintain existing affordable housing stock

To ensure that current housing stock remains affordable and accessible to low- and middle-income tenants, MOPT will work to 1) map and identify properties that are in foreclosure or at risk of foreclosure; 2) properties and units that have undergone illegal destabilization; and 3) regulate illegal conversions while maintaining housing stability for impacted tenants.

Foreclosures

To protect existing housing stock, it is imperative that buildings at risk of foreclosure be transferred to permanently affordable housing models, like the social housing models we discuss in the “The Building Blocks of a Progressive Building Agenda for New York City,” working paper. Current municipal programs that transfer distressed properties to social housing models do not include foreclosed buildings. It is imperative for MOPT to identify legal strategies and changes to municipal code that would meaningfully include tenant voices and demands in the foreclosure process. In the meantime, MOPT should proactively identify buildings at risk of foreclosure and coordinate tenant and landlord

engagement to ensure that any property transfer preserves affordability and improves habitability. MOPT should partner with data scientists to develop an algorithm to identify properties that are undergoing or at risk of foreclosure. Once they have been identified, MOPT should support tenant groups, nonprofits or CLTs who would be interested in transforming the properties into models of social housing.

Re-Stabilization

Despite the passage of the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019, which closed previously existing loopholes for landlords to deregulate rent-stabilized apartments, some units continue to be illegally deregulated, and many previously deregulated apartments remain illegally destabilized. Currently, the work of identifying illegally destabilized units is placed on individual tenants: the resident of a unit must request a rental history and identify whether an illegal destabilization has occurred, and then pursue a legal case as an individual. First, MOPT should work with data scientists to develop a tool that reads rent histories to identify potential cases of destabilization and leads on legal action to re-stabilize the unit. Second, MOPT should work with the New York State Division of Housing and Community (DHCR) and the State Attorney General to pursue additional group cases to re-stabilize units as was successfully done in 2024 and 2025.¹⁷ Third, MOPT should pursue group cases to re-stabilize units that were illegally deregulated post -2019. Investigative reporting has uncovered a number of landlords illegally de-registering stabilized units; these are units that MOPT should target and ensure are re-stabilized.¹⁸

¹⁷ New York State Attorney General. 2024. "Attorney General James and HCR Return Over 300 Affordable Housing Units to New York City." Press Release. September 17. <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/2024/attorney-general-james-and-hcr-return-over-300-affordable-housing-units-new-york>

¹⁸ Rabiyah, Sam. 2022. "Apartments Vanish From New York's Rent Regulation System and Questions Linger About How." *The City*. December 23. <https://www.thecity.nyc/2022/12/23/rent-regulated-apartments-registration-missing/>

Illegal Conversions

For tens of thousands of marginalized New Yorkers, illegal conversions¹⁹ are a source of affordable housing despite being unsafe and/or overcrowded. They have remained an intractable issue despite some attempts at the city and state level to regulate these units.²⁰ The increasing frequency of climate disasters has increased the risks associated with these units, particularly for basement apartments. Regulating illegal conversions requires striking a delicate balance between ensuring safety while ensuring that impacted tenants are not displaced and have access to safe, affordable housing. MOPT, with its remit, is well situated to ensure tenants' needs are protected and centered while coordinating responsible city agencies, namely, the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) and HPD, as well as landlords, in efforts to regulate these units. In addition, MOPT, in coordination with the DOB, can also pursue group cases targeting landlords that systematically use illegal conversions for rental units.²¹

MOPT's role, size, and relationship with existing city and state agencies

MOPT is not a regulatory office, but rather sets housing policy priorities to ensure that tenants have affordability, collective power, and security by coordinating and organizing with other city agencies. Currently, a number of tenant-facing offices are spread across

¹⁹ Illegal conversions are units that are a result of "an alteration or modification of an existing building to create additional apartment units without first obtaining the proper permits or approval from DOB, as defined by New York City. This can include basements, garages, attics as well housing units in areas zoned for or buildings designated for manufacturing or industrial use. See New York City, Department of Buildings (2026). "Illegal Conversion." <https://www.nyc.gov/site/buildings/tenant/illegal-conversion.page>

²⁰ In 2024, the NY state legislature passed a pilot program covering 15 community districts in New York City, that supported homeowners to bring their basement apartments to code. In addition, in 2024, the city launched a similar program to regularize basement apartments. However, neither pilot program has thus far started.

²¹ The DOB, in collaboration with researchers at Columbia, explored this idea during the De Blasio administration. They conducted initial analyses to identify buildings at high risk of particularly exploitative and dangerous illegal conversions that could be targeted for inspection. See the Illegal Conversion Risk Tool: Building Census Risk Analysis developed by Zheng Fu, Josh Whitford, and Darius Mehri. https://github.com/jaydeedubyu/IllegalConRiskTool_FuMehriWhitford/blob/main/Illegal%20Conversion%20Risk%20Tool.pdf. Contact Josh Whitford, jw2212@columbia.edu for more information.

different city and state agencies (e.g., DOB, DHCR, and HPD). MOPT would set the priorities for the ways of working for these different tenant-facing arms across different agencies, signaling the priorities of the Mayor when it comes to housing. MOPT will develop good working relationships and trust with other departments to ensure streamlining of priorities and efficient coordination.

MOPT will need to establish strong working relationships with city and state regulatory agencies. MOPT should focus significant attention on HPD, as it is the primary agency responsible for resolving housing conditions complaints and violations. HPD accounts for 79% of all housing-related 311 requests,²² while DOB handles approximately 13%,²³ and other agencies handle significantly smaller volumes. In addition to ensuring that data on conditions and violations for buildings are streamlined across various agencies, a primary focus of the MOPT should be to advocate and organize for strengthening the capacity and resources of HPD.

To meet the different functions of MOPT, we propose that the office be staffed with a minimum **35 staff members** in addition to its Executive Director. Without adequate funding and staffing, there is a significant danger that MOPT would fail to meet its goals as set out in Executive Order 3. Functions and proposed staff are detailed below:

- Fighting Speculation and Maintaining Housing Stability
 - 3 Senior Policy Advisors who focus on policy coordination with city agencies and departments related to housing and planning, including City Council, Department of Finance, and the Economic Development Corporation with the aim of transferring distressed properties to social housing. These advisors would also identify the need for data and programs to limit speculation in the housing market.

²² Based on analysis by Mahin Rahman Tawrat of 311 Service Requests from 2010 to 2024 (September). Data from: New York City Office of Technology and Innovation at NYC Open Data. <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Social-Services/311-Service-Requests-from-2020-to-Present/erm2-nwe9>. Accessed September 2024.

²³ Ibid.

- 2 Senior Legal Policy Advisors who develop legal strategies for housing acquisition for social housing, maintaining housing stability, and strengthening code enforcement.
- 2 community organizers specialized in social housing who coordinate with developers and tenants in buildings that are transitioning to social housing.
- Housing Conditions, Tenant Harassment, & Eviction Protections
 - Tenant Support Unit with 20 staff for organizing outreach and working with tenant associations, tenant unions, and housing non-profits.
 - 4 Policy Advisors focusing on coordinating housing policies on housing quality, code enforcement, and tenant harassment with DOB, DHCR, and HPD.
- Coordinating with specialized housing
 - 2 Policy Advisors that conduct outreach and develop relationships with the various city agencies responsible for senior housing, NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA), subsidized housing, and the NYC Department of Homeless Services.
- Office Coordination
 - 2 staff members

We propose a budget of \$8 million to cover salaries and functions. This is based on the budgets of previous programs run by the city: HPD’s anti-harassment unit had \$1.2 million in FY24, and the Anti–Eviction Unit had \$7 million in FY24. With an estimated HPD FY25 budget of \$1.84 billion,²⁴ MOPT's proposed \$8 million represents less than

²⁴Kroop, Daniel and Jack Storey. 2024. “Note on the Fiscal 2025 Executive Plan and the Fiscal 2025 Executive Capital Commitment Plan for the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD).” Department of Housing Preservation and Development. <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2024/05/HPD.pdf>.

half of a percent of the City's housing expenditure—a modest investment to align, enforce, and deliver on tenant protections across agencies. Funding and staffing MOPT appropriately will be critical to ensure that MOPT can build trust amongst tenants and tenant organizations, which will be critical to its success.