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Implementing Mass Governance in New York City

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Editorial Note: This memo builds on and operationalizes the framework first outlined in “Towards Mass Governance in New York City: A Framework”¹. That document develops the conceptual architecture; this memo focuses on concrete institutional reforms and policy pilots.

The authors welcome feedback on this working paper. Please send all inquiries to: tyson.patros@nyu.edu

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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.

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¹ Baiocchi, Kumar, and Su, December 22, 2025

Executive Summary

The implementation memo translates the mass governance framework into concrete institutional reforms and policy pilots for the Mamdani administration. It starts from a clear diagnosis: New York already has extensive participatory infrastructure, but most of it is shallow, fragmented, and disconnected from real power or resources. The memo proposes upgrading community boards and other civic bodies from advisory to at least partially binding forums over capital budgets, transit priorities, housing preservation, and social infrastructure, backed by agency participation teams, response timelines, and public dashboards. It then details pilot projects in four areas: the transition period (borough town halls and forums tied to early decisions), transit (community-driven bus corridor priorities and “Map My Ride” data campaigns), housing (tenant-driven enforcement, RGB democratization, and “How’s My Building?”), and food access/childcare (community-governed groceries and participatory childcare design). Across all of this, mass volunteerism is organized as a permanent civic engine that gathers information, staff assemblies, and helps turn popular priorities into binding decisions.

Introduction

On November 21, 2025, in the Oval Office, then New York City mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani took a reporter's question on the cost of living. Asked if Democrats, long dominant in city government, shared blame for the problem in New York City, he replied: "Part of the message of our campaign was to take on a broken politics of the past...and what we found, time and again, is that working people were left behind in the politics of our city. And what we're looking to do is put those people right back at the heart of our politics." Not only words, this principle drove his electoral campaign. Tens of thousands of working New Yorkers knocked on doors, canvassed, rallied, and made phone calls, putting themselves and their concerns at the center of the political movement.

New Yorkers are increasingly dissatisfied. According to the Citizens Budget Commission's *2025 NYC Resident Survey*², only 27 percent rate government services as excellent or good, down from 44 percent in 2017. Only 11 percent believe the city spends tax dollars wisely. And a majority of residents rate most city government activities or services (23 out of 33) as fair or poor. Public distrust runs deep. Yet voter turnout in the 2025 primary and general elections showed something different. In the primary, voter turnout was the highest since 1989³ – in general, the highest in over half a century. Voters under 40 years of age⁴ surged in numbers, and expanded the left-progressive coalition⁵ in a way that has been described as “paradigm shifting.”⁶ The lesson is clear: New Yorkers participate when they believe their engagement matters.

How do we keep that campaign energy alive in governing and engaging New Yorkers to actually make the government better and more responsive? How do we bring everyday working people to the heart of politics?

² https://cbcny.org/sites/default/files/media/files/CBCREPORT_Resident-Survey-2025_06042025.pdf

³ <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/07/01/zohran-mamdani-ranked-choice-results-00435184>

⁴ <https://gothamist.com/news/youth-vote-surged-in-new-york-city-was-it-a-blip-or-a-paradigm-shift>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/11/us/mamdani-nyc-voters-election-demographics.html>

⁶ <https://gothamist.com/news/youth-vote-surged-in-new-york-city-was-it-a-blip-or-a-paradigm-shift>

The city today does not actually lack spaces for participation – its 59 Community Boards⁷ are a prime example. In recent years the city has advanced other initiatives to boost participation, like the Civic Engagement Commission⁸, Participatory Budgeting, electoral reforms⁹, and a dedicated Mayor’s Office of Civic Engagement¹⁰. But too often these efforts remain disconnected from real power or resources. There is a lot of process for very little outcome. Participatory structures are too consultative, fragmented, easily overridden, or linked to miniscule resources. Part of why we have “a broken politics” is that New Yorkers are tired of consultations that go nowhere. If putting working people “back at the heart of our politics” means genuinely transforming how politics is done *and* the policies that result, the administration must go much much further.

Most of us recognize that community organizing and engagement should be integrated into the administration's transformative governance strategy, not treated as standalone processes. The administration has already signaled the centrality of engagement. At the first transition team meeting in December 2025, for example, then Mayor-elect Mamdani proposed embedding a community organizing or democratic governance official in as many city agencies as possible, building on the PAIR program model. Still, for truly effective and durable change, the administration should adopt mass governance.

What is Mass Governance and Why Does it Matter?

As outlined in *Towards Mass Governance in New York City: A Framework* (December 22, 2025), mass governance treats New Yorkers not as “stakeholders” to be consulted but as co-governors. It means revamping existing institutions and creating new ones so that large numbers of working-class people can exercise binding influence over budgets, routes, sites, appointments, and enforcement priorities, rather than being confined to symbolic or purely consultative processes.

⁷ <https://www.nyc.gov/site/communityboards/index.page>

⁸ <https://www.nyc.gov/site/civicengagement/index.page>

⁹ <https://council.nyc.gov/pb/>

¹⁰ <https://www.nyc.gov/content/engagement/pages/>

In practice, mass governance strives for three things. First, participation that is empowered, open, inclusive, mass-based, and transparent, and tied to real levers of power. Second, participation that builds community power by helping ordinary people develop political skills and strengthen local organizations. Third, participation that enables the city to govern better, delivering visible improvements in services and cost of living.

Each of these three features is not just a democratic ideal but a strategic imperative:

First, mass governance tied to real decision-making expands and mobilizes the administration's base of support for transformative public policies. When residents participate in shaping the agenda rather than serving as passive recipients of services, they become advocates who defend the administration's work as their own. This type of coalition-building is essential to win battles in Albany over the state budget and against entrenched interests – like real estate and finance – that oppose the administration's priorities.

Second, mass governance bolsters civic education and associational life. It fosters citizens who are politically educated. Many New Yorkers know government only as punitive or extractive – fines, police, bureaucracy, sales tax – or simply inadequate. Mass governance demonstrates a city that redistributes resources and belongs to the people. In assemblies and volunteer corps, everyday people learn to deliberate, govern, and act collectively, building the sense that city institutions can work for them and the skills necessary to make that vision real through sustained progressive governance.

Third, mass governance improves the quality of governance by bringing in relevant knowledge that makes policies more responsive. Participation is not a substitute for competent delivery – buses must run on time, rents must be frozen, trash must be collected – but it strengthens policy implementation by drawing on the lived experience and expertise of those affected by government decisions. Demonstrating that a progressive administration can deliver competent governance *and* ambitious transformation is essential for legitimacy and for sustaining public trust.

Making Participation Matter: Towards a Common Framework for Mass Governance

Transforming Existing Structures

We outline here core structural changes that form a throughline for transforming participation. This is not an exhaustive agenda, but mainline reforms to anchor mass governance in the near to medium term. New York City's already extensive participatory infrastructure is shallow, symbolic, and fragmented. Many New Yorkers who have engaged in government-led community processes are tired and skeptical, feeling their time wasted in endless consultations that go nowhere. Processes today are uncoordinated, repetitive, and entirely disconnected from outcomes. The Mamdani administration can do things differently by adopting a coherent, activist posture, one that emphasizes clarity, respect for people's time, and delivers tangible outcomes. Every participatory initiative should fit in a coherent citywide framework, not be left siloed, while being flexible enough to adapt to specific issue areas. Engagement should be seen as "campaigning from government": ongoing mobilization, not passive consultation. To do so, we can draw on international examples where participation is transparent, binding, and massive.

To build on the existing city infrastructure, we can start with New York City's 59 Community Boards. The administration should grant greater decision-making authority to the Boards in specific domains. These include: allocating a guaranteed percentage of district capital budgets, setting priorities for transportation improvements and local service delivery, co-designing housing preservation and development projects, and determining sites and priorities for social infrastructure like childcare centers and community facilities. This would upgrade the Community Boards from advisory bodies to (at least) partially binding forums tied to real resources, implementation timelines, and transparent accountability mechanisms. They should be democratized as well, with attention to renewal of Board positions, representation of wide sectors of the community, and generally improved processes. Community Boards can host

neighborhood forums on specific cross-cutting issues like transit or housing to deepen engagement and feed priorities into their broader deliberations. At their regular monthly meetings and committee sessions, residents should deliberate local priorities, evaluate trade-offs, and rank proposals. Outside groups – labor unions, neighborhood associations, political organizations, and so on – should prioritize turnout at these gatherings. City agencies must respond to board recommendations within 60 days with either an implementation timeline or a detailed public explanation of constraints. This means board decisions directly shape government action through guaranteed response commitments and dedicated implementation funds. The administration should encourage people activated by the Mamdani campaign to participate, transforming Community Board meetings into vibrant forums where residents exert real control over their city.

Beyond the Community Boards, the city has hundreds of other civic engagement spaces that have atrophied. An activist effort within the administration should identify and apply similar principles to these civic spaces – clarify their authority, dedicate resources, and revitalize them through popular participation. These range from Community Education Councils and School Leadership Teams to tenant associations across NYCHA and other housing. The goal is to maximize the power of participants to make binding decisions that materially matter to them. The Mayor's Office of Civic Engagement should coordinate these efforts citywide, while dedicated participation teams within key agencies – like a Transit Participation Team at DOT and a Housing Participation Team at HPD, each with 10-12 full-time staff – provide the institutional backbone for area-specific engagement. The teams ensure community input connects to binding decisions through published workflows, dedicated budget lines, and direct coordination with both city agencies and community organizations. The Mayor's Office of Data Analytics should maintain public dashboards tracking which priorities were identified, what's being implemented, timelines, and funding allocated, with updates tied to community board meetings and agency response deadlines. The Office of Civic Engagement should work across these teams and with the transformed Community

Boards through standardized agency response protocols, shared digital infrastructure for tracking decisions, and regular convenings that connect participants to citywide priorities.

Supporting Mass Volunteerism

The administration can vastly expand volunteer engagement and organize it to strengthen governance. New York already has a strong volunteer culture – NYC Service¹¹ estimates half of city residents volunteered in 2024-2025. And people volunteer in hundreds of different ways. We know elderly tenants who volunteer at their local public libraries to teach literacy and friends who volunteer with the Parks Department to plant trees and wildflowers across the city (an estimated 200,000 volunteers a year¹²). Outside city government, mutual aid networks sustained communities during the pandemic and ICE defense networks protected neighbors from deportation. The Mayor should build on this foundation. He should use his social media reach to send out calls for volunteers on specific city projects, like a park clean up or restoration project, directing a volunteer corps tens of thousands strong. NYC Service should coordinate these efforts, ensuring volunteers have training, resources, and structured ways to shape city priorities – from choosing restoration sites to influencing Parks Department timelines, for example.

This type of mass volunteering makes more people feel connected to their city and fosters the sense that the city is theirs to fix and build, which mitigates the tendency to blame the government or the mayor for every problem. Mass volunteering helps sustain the energy and solidarity of the campaign, embedding in people a sense of belonging and ownership over the city.

Mass governance depends on volunteer labor not just for service delivery but to gather information, conduct outreach, and support implementation. Volunteer-powered data campaigns can strengthen policy by documenting lived experience at scale. In transit,

¹¹ <https://www.nycservice.org/power-of-volunteering>

¹² <https://www.nycgovparks.org/opportunities/volunteer/letsgreennyc>

volunteers could staff "Map My Ride" campaigns – tabling at major bus stops to document rider experiences like delays, missed connections, and transfer bottlenecks, feeding this data into an accessible online portal where any resident can submit information. DOT should commit to synthesizing this data into quarterly reports that inform community board deliberations, given that Boards will exercise binding authority over transit corridor priorities. In housing, "How's My Building?" campaigns could combine an online reporting system with volunteer canvassing in buildings to help tenants document conditions like heat failures, pest infestations, or harassment. HPD should integrate the volunteer-collected data into enforcement workflows and share building condition reports with Community Boards and tenant associations. These campaigns create multiple channels for input - volunteer outreach, online portals open to any resident, in addition to the community board convenings. City agencies synthesize this input into reports for community board review, feeding into the binding decisions Boards will exercise over local priorities.

Labor unions, tenant organizations, neighborhood associations, and others should mobilize members for these campaigns, bringing organizational capacity to data collection. Volunteers can also staff community board meetings and neighborhood forums, helping with logistics, outreach, and documentation – making these transformed participatory structures function at scale. And more generally, during the transition period and beyond, volunteers should conduct neighborhood canvassing and help translate community knowledge into policy proposals, ensuring governance draws on resident expertise from the start. NYC Service should expand to coordinate these governance-focused volunteer efforts, working with agencies to ensure data flows into decision-making processes. These campaigns engage both organized volunteers and individual residents through accessible digital tools and widespread face-to-face conversations, creating feedback loops that make governance more responsive.

Design Principles

Making participation both popular and effective also requires attention to how other aspects are designed and run. Every community board meeting, neighborhood forum, and volunteer campaign should follow basic accessibility principles: providing childcare, food, and language interpretation so working families can participate. Co-locating services - like free flu shots or legal clinics - with participatory meetings builds a sense of belonging and community, encouraging people to show up and stay engaged. Political education should be built into deliberative processes: maps, infographics, basic statistics on what's been tried elsewhere, and one or two experts in the room to answer questions. This helps participants develop shared vocabulary and analysis, building connections across social differences and cultures of solidarity, not division. Participation should aim to deliver both immediate pilots or quick wins that demonstrate tangible impact and build momentum toward larger structural policy demands. And crucially, when a process cannot address a participant's concern, staff and volunteers should direct people to relevant channels - tenant unions, community organizations, City Council hearings, legal services, or advocacy groups - so engagement builds power rather than frustration.

Applying Mass Governance

We can apply the framework above immediately to priority policy areas, demonstrating from day one that mass governance delivers tangible improvements to city governance and New Yorkers' daily lives as part of a longer-term project of structural transformation. This means improving and aligning participatory infrastructures that already exist while selectively creating new ones. Below we focus on three pilot projects to set the tone for mass governance – the transition period (November 2025 to April 2026), and priority areas of the affordability campaign. Each demonstrates what is possible in a short time frame while also building momentum for longer-term initiatives. Together, they show how mass governance can mobilize residents, deliver material wins, and create binding participatory structures.

Project I: The Transition Period (November 2025 - April 2026)

The transition from November 2025 to April 2026 is the first test of mass governance and the bridge between campaigning and governing. During the first 90 days after inauguration, the administration should organize borough-wide town halls – one per borough, with 2,000+ in-person attendees, live-streaming capacity, and at a cost of approximately \$200,000 per event. They should cover campaign priorities like housing, transit, and childcare, alongside critical political education on city and state budget cycles, agency structures, and how organizing has won historically. The Community Boards help mobilize residents, facilitate logistics, and are featured in the political education component, teaching attendees how Community Boards work and their envisioned new role in binding decision-making. Each town hall includes breakout sessions on specific policy areas, co-facilitated with organizations like Tenant Bloc, Riders Alliance, and AQE, where residents deliberate and vote on immediate priorities. City agencies provide 60-day responses with implementation timelines or detailed constraint explanations.

In neighborhoods where campaign support was weaker, Community Boards should organize smaller forums (500-1,000 people) that surface local immediate priorities – a housing acquisition site, childcare location, or bus corridor. This demonstrates that participation yields tangible results beyond mobilized bases. For the town halls and the forums, the 100,000+ campaign volunteers move through a structured pathway: canvassing to gather input, staffing the assemblies, and helping draft implementation plans. MODA integrates transition priorities into public dashboards tracking what came out of each event, implementation status, agency responses, and timelines. Drawing from Barcelona's model, residents also help set criteria for key appointments (like Rent Guidelines Board members): conflict-free, equity-driven, rooted in working-class communities. The people set the standards, the mayor names the people. This transition demonstrates mass governance in action: accessible participation (with childcare, interpretation, wheelchair access), a clear level of binding input, agency responsiveness, and visible outcomes tracked publicly.

Project II: Transit

Bus lane expansion should be guided by participatory mapping of commuter routes, with transparent service planning and community votes on corridor priorities. These processes should demonstrate competence in planning and delivering better transit quickly and reliably, while broader engagement can include volunteer mapping drives, rider campaigns, and city-backed outreach programs to keep people engaged in monitoring and improving service. International precedents show this is possible: in Porto Alegre and Montevideo, assemblies directly shaped bus routes and schedules; in Barcelona, the Decidim platform allowed residents to propose new lines and debate priorities; and in Mexico City, neighborhood assemblies influenced Metrobus stop locations and corridor alignments. Even in New York and Los Angeles, bus redesign processes have shown that rider mobilization can win concrete changes to proposed routes. These examples demonstrate that participatory transit planning can be both feasible and impactful.

Community Boards should exercise their new binding authority over transportation priorities at district and borough scales. At their regular monthly meetings and committee sessions, Community Boards deliberate and vote, for example, on four priority areas: (1) ranked corridor priorities for bus lanes and improvements, (2) stop changes including location, spacing, and amenities, (3) service frequency and span, and (4) specific streets for dedicated bus lanes. DOT's Transit Participation Team – a 10-12 person cross-agency structure coordinating DOT, MTA, and MODA – implements immediate district-level improvements, provides 60-day responses with implementation timelines or constraint explanations for district-level requests requiring study, and identifies priorities that require borough-wide coordination for binding decision at quarterly transit forums.

For major corridor improvements, Community Boards within each borough convene joint quarterly transit forums that aggregate district priorities while remaining open to new ideas and system-level thinking that emerge through the broader deliberations.

Working with the Transit Participation Team (\$6 million budget covering governance, forum costs, data infrastructure, and communications), these forums bring together district priorities, identify patterns across neighborhoods that reveal borough-wide transit needs, deliberate conflicts between districts, and allow residents to advance priorities that may not have been clearly articulated at the district level. The forums produce borough-wide ranked corridor lists that Community Boards collectively endorse, exercising binding authority at the borough scale. Organizations like Riders Alliance and Transportation Alternatives should mobilize members to these forums. The administration committed to 10 corridor improvements citywide in Year 1 (\$15 million total, ~\$1.5 million per corridor) – tactical interventions like painted bus lanes with flexible bollards, turn restrictions, transit signal priority, and stop amenities. Building on NYC's 14th Street Busway and Select Bus Service quick-builds, 5 corridors should be completed by May 2026 and 10 by December 2026.

The "Map My Ride" volunteer campaign feeds this process by combining an online portal accessible to all New Yorkers with volunteer tabling at major bus stops. Volunteers document rider experiences – delays, missed connections, transfer bottlenecks – while any resident can submit reports online. DOT synthesizes this data into quarterly reports presented to Community Boards at their monthly meetings and at borough-wide forums, complementing MTA data. MODA maintains public dashboards showing which corridors were identified, implementation status, timelines, funding, and before/after metrics (bus speeds, on-time performance, rider satisfaction). A high-visibility "Buses for All" campaign frames these improvements as collective wins: "Your buses, your routes." This demonstrates mass governance delivering material improvements for bus riders, 75 percent of whom have household incomes under \$50,000, the majority being transit-dependent New Yorkers of color. International precedents show this approach works: Porto Alegre and Montevideo used assemblies to shape routes and schedules; Barcelona's Decidim platform enabled resident proposals; Mexico City's neighborhood assemblies influenced Metrobus alignments.

Project III: Housing

The administration should democratize the Rent Guidelines Board through new criteria and public campaigns, expand acquisitions into the Preservation Trust and Community Land Trust pathways with tenant first-look and anti-speculation tools, and pilot social housing on city-owned lots with deep co-design to ensure projects are timely, well-managed, and high-quality. Broader engagement can include volunteer campaigns for tenant first-look, neighborhood canvassing to build support for acquisitions, building tenant corps to support code enforcement; and partnerships with mutual-aid housing groups to sustain participation beyond formal hearings.

Community Boards within each borough should coordinate to convene joint quarterly housing forums tied to the January-March state budget and April-June city budget cycles. Working with HPD's Housing Participation Team – a 10-12 person team coordinating HPD, the Office of Tenant Protection, MODA, and Community Affairs (\$6 million budget covering governance, forum costs, data infrastructure, and communications) – these borough forums become spaces for budget education, volunteer mobilization, and binding decision-making on housing priorities. Forums deliberate trade-offs between acquisition budgets, preservation funds, eviction defense, and code enforcement. A defined share of allocations (e.g., \$200 million for acquisitions and preservation) is earmarked for participatory decision-making on priority projects in each borough, with forum votes feeding directly into the Mayor's Preliminary and Executive Budget. This makes housing money visibly connected to tenant choices. Community Boards collectively endorse these priorities. Organizations like Tenant Bloc and tenant unions should mobilize members to these forums. In Year 2 and beyond, Community Boards' housing authority should deepen: exercising binding say on preservation investments, co-designing Housing Preservation Trust projects (deciding unit mix, affordability levels, design priorities, and governance models for city-owned lots and acquisitions), and gaining authority over displacement-heavy rezonings.

The "How's My Building?" volunteer campaign feeds this process. It combines an online portal where any tenant can report heat failures, pest infestations, needed repairs, and

landlord harassment with volunteer canvassing in buildings to help tenants document conditions and form tenant associations. HPD integrates this data with existing HPD violation data to create public dashboards giving letter grades to landlords. Borough forums can vote to escalate "worst actors" for priority enforcement. A citywide RGB appointment campaign transforms the Rent Guidelines Board in the first 90 days by having residents set criteria through borough forums – must be rent-stabilized tenant, must disclose conflicts, must commit to transparency – with the Mayor naming appointees with written rationales against the criteria, transforming a technocratic body into a mass-governance fight. The people set the standards, the Mayor names the people. The Office of Tenant Protection is restructured around these forums: a Tenant Protection Council with tenants nominated through borough forums meets quarterly to set enforcement priorities – illegal evictions, repairs, harassment – with inspectors assigned to flagged cases and timelines publicized. MODA maintains enforcement dashboards showing complaints received, actions taken, and outcomes. This demonstrates mass governance building tenant power: 960,600 rent-stabilized households benefit from democratized RGB appointments, while volunteer data and Community Board coordination make enforcement responsive to tenant needs. And a rent freeze would save tenants an estimated \$2.44-6.84 billion over four years. International precedents show this works: Vienna's tenant councils in social housing, Uruguay's FUCVAM cooperatives with resident participation, and participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte allocated housing resources through community assemblies.

Project IV: Food Access and Childcare

Food Access. Community grocery boards can guide siting, product mix, and outreach, while neighborhood-scale public markets with elected community liaisons show how community input leads to well-run, affordable, and accessible food infrastructure. Broader engagement can include volunteer corps helping with food distribution, campaigns around healthy eating and affordability, and support for mutual aid food networks that complement formal boards. There are strong precedents for this

approach: in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, the city created popular grocery stores and food distribution centers overseen by participatory councils, a model praised by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization for reducing hunger and malnutrition. Porto Alegre's participatory budgeting similarly prioritized popular markets that linked farmers to urban residents. Globally, the UN's New Urban Agenda and the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (signed by NYC) have emphasized participatory food governance, with cities like Milan and Toronto establishing *food policy councils* that shape access to groceries and markets. Even in New York, co-ops and solidarity groceries such as La Canasta and Brooklyn Packers demonstrate the appetite for community-run food access projects. These examples show that participatory food initiatives can be institutionalized, effective, and globally recognized as advancing the right to food.

Childcare. Universal childcare should be designed through participatory processes, with parent councils and educator assemblies helping decide priorities, siting, and standards. Competence must be demonstrated through reliable rollout, fair wages for childcare workers, and transparent allocation of new revenue. Broader engagement can include volunteer campaigns to expand awareness, peer-to-peer parent organizing, and support for childcare co-ops and mutual aid childcare networks. International precedents: Quebec's universal childcare system integrates parent advisory committees into governance; Bologna has long relied on councils of parents, educators, and city officials to guide pedagogy and operations; and Barcelona has experimented with *neighborhood childcare assemblies* to steer expansion of nurseries. In Belo Horizonte, participatory budgeting was used to site new childcare centers in underserved neighborhoods. Even in New York City, Parent Advisory Councils already exist in early education and could be strengthened to have real decision-making power. These examples show that universal childcare can be both affordable and democratically governed.

Conclusion

Mayor Mamdani's call to put working people "right back at the heart of our politics" echoed through his inaugural address: "But in our city, where every corner of these five boroughs holds power, there is no nowhere and there is no one. There is only New York, and there are only New Yorkers." Mass governance is central to realizing this vision. At a moment when cities worldwide are seeking alternatives to broken politics and extractive governance, New York has the chance to demonstrate that genuine popular sovereignty at scale is possible – that democratic participation can deliver material improvements while transforming who holds power.

The three pilots demonstrate what this looks like in practice, applying a common framework for mass governance. The transition period transforms how 100,000+ campaign volunteers engage with governance through borough town halls and neighborhood forums, helping make participation popular and effective. Transit shows Community Boards exercising binding authority over corridor priorities, supported by volunteer-powered Map My Ride campaigns gathering data and DOT's Transit Participation Team, delivering 10 visible corridor improvements in Year 1. Housing shows democratizing the RGB and restructuring enforcement around tenant priorities set through borough forums, with How's My Building volunteer campaigns feeding Community Board decisions that deliver material relief to nearly a million rent-stabilized households. Each pilot transforms existing participatory structures by upgrading Community Boards from advisory to binding forums and invigorating other civic engagement spaces. The pilots support mass volunteerism through data campaigns, forum staffing, and mobilizing tens of thousands for city projects, while following design principles that ensure participation is accessible, educational, and delivers both immediate wins and structural change.

But these pilots are just the beginning. To sustain and scale mass governance, the administration must further build the common citywide framework: strengthening coordination across agencies through participation teams with dedicated budgets and published workflows, establishing clear design principles that apply to all civic spaces, creating modes of engagement beyond decision-making forums that allow volunteers

to shape priorities and get projects done, developing evaluation metrics focused on building durable power and political capacity, and maintaining unwavering commitment to competent delivery alongside transformation. Each participatory initiative must be evaluated not just for inclusiveness or numbers of participants, but for how it builds durable power and political capacity. When people co-design projects, vote on priorities, and set enforcement agendas, they become advocates defending the administration's work – essential for Albany battles and sustaining transformative policies. When participation delivers faster buses, frozen rents, and responsive enforcement, popular sovereignty feels like shorter commutes and lower bills.

New Yorkers showed record turnout because they believed their engagement could matter. The administration can prove them right. The transition, transit, and housing pilots will show that every corner of the five boroughs can hold power, that there is no nowhere and no no one, and that the city's institutions can be rebuilt to serve the many over the few. The people are ready. The question is whether the city government is ready to become theirs.