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Make NYC Efficient by Empowering Regional Governance

by Corey Bearak

Chair, Queens Community Board 13 Special Committee on Charter Revision

On behalf of Queens Community Board 13 ("QCB13"), I share the board's recommendations to the Commission on Government Efficiency, COGE, a Charter Revision Commission tasked by the Mayor on May 28, 2026 "with changing the NYC Charter to make City government work better for New Yorkers." I am Corey Bearak and I chair Queens Community Board 13's Special Committee on Charter Revision. Some of you also know of my prior service and work with a city council member and with two borough presidents.

QCB13 takes this opportunity to present changes it previously advanced to recommend improvements in NYC governance with respect to land use, budget, oversight, government structure and delivery of city services – all items within QCB13's purview under the City Charter.

The QCB13 recommendations emphasize these seven main points:

- 1) NYC should be recognized as a region;
- 2) The boroughs and local communities should be meaningfully involved in decisions on the delivery and effective allocation of municipal services and City resources;
- 3) The City budget never reflects the need to allocate resources and services to reflect different neighborhood priorities as represented and identified by Community Boards;
- 4) NYC should explore regional models for funding agencies;
- 5) There should be a greater role for the borough presidents in land use planning for their boroughs, allocation of agency resources within the boroughs, overseeing local implementation of the capital budget and oversight of delivery of local services;
- 6) Strengthening the role of Community Boards and the Offices of the Borough Presidents and empower these institutions with the resources to carry out their responsibilities under the City Charter; and
- 7) Correcting the 1989 mistakes that removed legislative review of decisions of the Board of Standards and Appeals and failing to include rules for major concessions.

Find the full QCB13 report and resolution at [http://coreybearak.com/blogs/2026-06-22 QCB13 Charter Report & Proposed Resolution.pdf](http://coreybearak.com/blogs/2026-06-22-QCB13-Charter-Report-&Proposed-Resolution.pdf).

As QCB13's Chair of its Special Committee on Charter Revision, I presented this set of recommendations to share with the Commission and stressed the need for QCB13 to act early this summer as opposed to when our board next regularly meets, likely September 28, 2026. The mayor announced this commission on May 28 – 10 days after QCB13 last met on May 18. That leaves little time to consider recommendations when QCB13 meets next on June 22. Secondly, to get its recommendations placed on the November 2026 ballot, the commission would need to finalize its recommendations before the community board meets after the summer.

At our June meeting, I recommended that Community Board 13 members meet this summer early enough to propose meaningful changes to the City Charter that the mayor's commission could review and consider. Nonetheless, community board members expressed support for the Resolution shared in June and it was left that I would discuss the plan further with members upon their request.

The Queens Community Board 13 resolution "welcomes this opportunity to recommend improvements in New York City governance with respect to land use, budget and delivery of city services – all items within its purview under the City Charter."

It recommends that "New York City should be recognized as a region;" and that the [five] boroughs and local communities should be meaningfully involved in decisions on the delivery and effective allocation of municipal services and City resources."

In emphasizing how the "City budget never reflects the need to allocate resources and services to reflect different neighborhood priorities as represented and identified by Community Boards," it recommends that New York City should explore regional models for funding agencies."

It also calls for "a greater role for the borough presidents in land use planning for their boroughs, allocation of agency resources within the boroughs, overseeing local implementation of the capital budget and oversight of delivery of local services;" and identifies that "a need exists to strengthen the role of Community Boards and the Offices of the Borough Presidents and empower these institutions with the resources to carry out their responsibilities under the City Charter."

It also seeks “to correct the 1989 mistakes that removed legislative review of decisions of the Board of Standards and Appeals, and the failure to include rules for major concessions;” and address “New York City’s policies wrongly subsidize extra illegal occupancies that crowd schools and overburden services.”

The resolution also states that “community boards remain important partners in smart growth policies to provide needed housing, especially housing that remains affordable for our seniors, our children as they leave their family nests and new families starting out – as exemplified by Queens Community Board 13’s role in the development planned on the Creedmoor campus; and “the timing of this charter commission’s appointment and the placement of any recommendations it makes for consideration at the November 2026 election limits this community board’s ability to timely offer any proposals and thus requires the community hold special meetings to consider and approve recommendations to this commission.”

Therefore, Queens Community Board 13 makes the following specific recommendations that address how to make the city of New York work better for its residents and urges the Charter Revision Commission (“Commission on Government Efficiency”) to include each in its proposal it makes to the voters:

Land Use Items

- Provide the Community Boards, Borough Presidents and the Public Advocate with the resources to empower each to carry out their charter functions and help New York City weather the current fiscal crisis; use the IBO/OMB analogy to assure each of the offices adequate funding by base-lining funding for those offices and setting funding for each office against a set percentage of the overall expense budget.
- Subject all residential, commercial, industrial and public (agency) developments that occupy a city block or more, and all public agencies’ projects to ULURP public review (which includes Community Board, Borough President and City Council review and oversight and approvals), whether or not a zoning or permit change is required.

- Create distinct borough-based planning and zoning offices under supervision of each borough president.
- Maximize community participation in City approval of major concessions for private use of public spaces, including parkland, by involving the Borough Presidents, Council Members and Community Boards in formulating rules defining and governing major concessions.
- Empower the City Council to review all Board of Standards and Appeals dispositions.
- Provide for Council oversight of all decisions by the City Planning Commission.

Government Structure

- Expand the role of borough presidents in local land use planning for their boroughs, allocation of agency resources within the boroughs, overseeing local implementation of the capital budget and greater oversight of the delivery of city services in their boroughs.

Budget

- Budget for the delivery of city services where appropriate by borough and community district.
- Set up a mechanism that devolves resources and service delivery to the appropriate borough or local level that directs City resources to address community needs such as precinct staffing, code enforcement, tree pruning/removal, traffic studies and signal installation, and programs for youth and seniors.

- Make elected officials accountable by barring mayoral rate-setting boards and authorities from imposing budget allocations unless the Council grants such authority, as in the example of the Water Board setting rates after, rather than, as it does now, before the budget's adoption.

Oversight

- Shift responsibility for preparation of the Mayor's Management Report (MMR) to the Independent Budget Office and renaming the document the Independent Management Report.
- Create an independent Civilian Complaint Review Board ("CCRB") by baselining its funding as a percent of the NYPD budget and establishing a mechanism to make the appointed CCRB members more reflective of the City and controlled less by the administration.
- Make City Charter Revision recommendations for approval by the electorate on a subject matter basis that empowers voters to vote separately and distinctly on each item for their consideration and approval.

In conclusion, recognize community boards as important partners in good governance and smart growth policies that provide needed housing, especially housing that remains affordable for our seniors, our children as they leave their family nests and new families starting out – as exemplified by Queens Community Board 13's role in the development planned on the Creedmoor campus.

Thank you.