

Citizens for Buildings (Department) Reform

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Queens Civic Congress



Community Groups, Electeds Demand DOB Reform

Something is very wrong with how buildings are going up in New York City.

- The New York Times (June 11, 2008)

Queens Civic Congress, Four Borough Neighborhood Preservation Alliance (4BNPA), Historic Districts Council (HDC) and other concerned community organizations throughout the City of New York convened today as Citizens for Buildings (Department) Reform, (Thursday, June 12, 2008) on the steps of City Hall with elected officials, including Council Members Tony Avella, David Weprin, John Liu and James Vacca, and other concerned citizens who seek to reform the NYC Department of Buildings by including community input and consultation in construction safety and apply the same vigor to the building issues that plague neighborhoods throughout the city.

These grassroots advocacy groups find the Bloomberg reforms a watered-down version of previous proposals.

Corey Bearak (President, Queens Civic Congress) convened the news conference which also included Raul Rothblat (Executive Director (4BNPA Foundation) and Simeon Bankoff (Executive Director, HDC) as prime speakers.

The threat of accident and death has turned citizens into construction experts. It is time for the City to use this expertise.

The most pressing reforms include:

- *Re-inspect hazardous Stop Work Order sites.* The Department of Buildings fails to re-inspect construction sites after every hazardous violation, and fails to verify compliance. Some offenders simply pay a fine.
- *End Self-Certification (a.k.a. "Professional Certification").* The crane disasters represent a more serious lack of oversight of the construction industry. City Hall needs to stand for safety all around New York, not just at high-rise crane sites.
- *Work with the community.* City Hall needs to harness the expertise of community groups.

"We are facing a crisis of construction safety. In the first six months of 2008 alone, we've suffered more deaths than in all of 2007. This is a record of failure," Council Member Jessica Lappin said in a submitted statement. "In the Council I will continue to fight for meaningful reforms, including the four that I have proposed. In addition, I expect the Department of Buildings to take dramatic steps to end the culture of corruption that plagues the agency." Council Members Letitia James and Bill diBlasio and Assembly Member Richard

Gottfried also extended their support.

Citizens for Buildings (Department) Reform also released a “[platform](#)” of state and city measures that its coalition members urge City Hall to embrace and help enact.

Other speakers included Beverly Corbin (co-founder, United Neighbors of Brooklyn), Steve Barrison (Small Business Congress), Josh Skaller (Democracy for New York City), Phil DiPaolo (New York Community Council), Nellie Bailey (Harlem Tenants Council), Robert Friedrich (Glen Oaks Cooperative) and Norman Siegel (4BNA counsel).

For more information, please contact Corey Bearak (Queens Civic Congress) at (718) 343-6779 or [Bearak@aol.com](mailto: Bearak@aol.com), Raul Rothblatt (Four Borough Neighborhood Preservation Alliance) at rrothblatt@gmail.com or (718) 857-3150, or Simeon Bankoff (Historic Districts Council) at sbankoff@hdc.org or (212) 614-9107.

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Queens Civic Congress President Corey Bearak opens the news conference.



Raul Rothblatt, Executive Director, Four Borough Neighborhood Preservation Alliance Foundation speaks.



Historic District Council Executive Director Simeon Bankoff speaks.



Councilman Tony Avella speaks



Councilman John Liu (left). Below, Councilman James Vacca



Small Business Congress of NYC spokesman Steve Barrison discusses economic impacts.



Councilman David Weprin



Left, Democracy for New York City's John Schaller. Right, HDC's Simeon Bankoff thanks the Council Members who could not attend but support our effort.



Note the diverse grassroots participation and support for Citizens for Building Department Reform.



Below, Our simple message:



Fix DOB now!

***Editors, please credit Photos by Historic Districts Council.
Thank you to HDC for these photographs.***