

Summer 2026 NYC Report

## **The Sixth Borough Dispatch**

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### *The Mamdani Scare*

I do not believe it is even an exaggeration at this point to claim that the new NYC mayor has profound impacts on both local and national US politics, even as he previously stated his involvement will only be in NYC and state and national politics related to NYC.

Still, as NYC's first socialist mayor, people all around the country have become invested in this new experiment: can socialist policies not only work in America's biggest city, but can they also actually improve governance and its constituents' lives? I think many Americans are pleasantly surprised at the outcomes so far—after all, Mamdani has taken on the title of “America's Mayor.” A recent Siena poll also shows Mamdani with a 69% approval rating, up from 58% in July, and 48% earlier this year. This increase is unprecedented in the current political environment.

And so, this experiment, I think, has surprised many of us, especially this summer where campaign promises, which required cautious optimism for fear that they were probably just populist empty campaign promises, started to come into fruition.

This summer, Mamdani's government has managed to:

- Freeze the rent
- Continue the progress on city-owned grocery stores
- Implement numerous policies related to more efficient buses
- Begin implementing the pied-a-tier tax on wealthy New Yorkers
- And more

In the first half of his first year, Mamdani has touched on many of his campaign promises that are leading more Americans across the country to embrace America's new mayor as a mayor for the people, which in turn is bringing about a new trend in politics: the rise of Democratic Socialism with Mamdani as its poster boy.

Make no mistake, regardless of if Mamdani ever endorses a candidate in another state or not, his actions, successes, and failures are impacting elections throughout the US. This summer, we already saw Mamdani's endorsement power at work with the defeat of several establishment Democrats to his endorsed leftist Democrats. Young Americans look to Mamdani, and it seems unlikely that the fascination with the mayor is disconnected from the popularity of leftist politicians elsewhere in the country.

As is likely obvious, the “Mamdani Scare” alludes to the “red scare” era of fearmongering about possible socialist revolution in the US with many groups today trying to instill similar sentiments regarding Mamdani. While an unserious title, I do still believe that American politics is at a precipice, and Mamdani may be a spark for an evolution of sorts for American politics or at least for what the American left could look like.

Or maybe this will all be forgotten come the next NYC mayor, as American politics has a very short memory. Only time can tell.

## **Mamdani’s Political Impact on National Elections**

This summer, Mamdani has had effects on various elections. While the impact of mayors on these elections is not typically studied, there are a few commentaries addressing specifically Mamdani’s impact. [The first article](#) is from the London School of Economics.

This commentary argues that mayors affect elections through their position to create narratives. Mostly, mayors create narratives that focus on certain issues which they and their preferred candidates are positively known for. In Mamdani's case, this would be affordability. In Donald Trump's case, he would and does focus on issues like immigration.

At the same time, mayors also create a narrative that current or opposing officials are not good for the issue the mayor chooses to highlight. This is obviously standard. Donald Trump said that Biden and Harris were poor on immigration. Mamdani stated that Cuomo's previous policies were poor for affordability. If voters believe that a given issue is important and that certain candidates are not well-suited for that issue, then they will likely look for other candidates, which is where the third part of this strategy comes into play:

Mayors also create narratives that they and their candidates are well-suited for the issue they highlight. In Mamdani's case, he emphasized his endorsed candidates' strengths for dealing with affordability. Mamdani also created a narrative that he himself will effectively tackle affordability.

Mayors (at least mayors of large cities) are well suited for this task of narrative creation, because they already have a large audience, and some are well known on the national stage too, like Mamdani. National news outlets often have Mamdani speak, and voters around the country actively look to Mamdani.

Overall, Mamdani has certainly continued to highlight affordability in his narrative, and he continues to make the issue more salient while endorsing candidates he argues will address this issue. Because Mamdani has a national spotlight, Americans across the

country will continue to hear about affordability from him, keep it in the front of their minds (if it wasn't already), and look for candidates to address this issue. Even if Mamdani does not endorse candidates outside of New York, because of his focus on affordability and the narrative he has created that he and other progressives are the best option for this issue, he is likely contributing to the victories of other Democratic Socialists across the country.

Additionally, a primary election in NYS adds additional evidence for Mamdani's impact on elections. Mainly, this election focuses on the gap between progressive Democrats and establishment Democrats. In this primary, establishment Democrats lost to Mamdani-backed candidates. Three of three Mamdani-endorsed candidates won their primaries (which means that they will also win the midterm election because Democrats heavily outnumber Republicans in these districts).

[The CNN article](#) claims these candidates would not have been elected to Congress without Mamdani's endorsement, which shows that Mamdani's endorsement power is massive, even on the federal level.

Because these Democrats will almost certainly win their general elections, we can already see Mamdani's impact on the midterm. While this did not lead to any Democrats winning Republican seats (that's impossible in the primary election alone anyways), we can see a shift Mamdani may be causing in Democratic voters—moving away from establishment Democrats to progressive Democrats. Additionally, even though they are members of the same party, more leftist Democrats have the potential to shape the future of the party, which is not a small matter either.

So, will this impact other elections that are not just Democrats vs Democrats? I think it might. From some election studies, we can see that younger voters (Millennials and Generation Z) vote significantly more democratically than any other American generation, often leaning blue rather than red. This includes basically all demographics other than no college education, young white men. Other studies also report that younger Americans vote a lot less than older generations. Which is where Mamdani becomes important.

I think the really important demographic to watch is younger voters. Even though younger voters tend to be much more progressive than other generations, they also have a low voting participation rate. In my opinion, this can be explained by: young voters are cynical; they believe voting doesn't make a difference, because politicians on both the left and right do not actually care about the American people. Even if politicians did care, they are not effectively improving conditions that are truly making life challenging for young Americans including:

1. Inflation rising faster than wages

2. Unaffordable housing (both rent and actually buying a home are either unobtainable or put massive stress on young Americans)
3. The job market is weak. It is hard to even get hired let alone find a job that is meaningful or pays well.
4. Work-life balance is poor due to increasingly poor labor conditions. Generation Z experiences much higher burnout than even Millennials, partly caused by the fact that no matter how hard they work, they are still financially unstable.

Mamdani is basically a populist for these issues, and younger voters relate. Mamdani directly addresses these issues and has them as his main policy priorities. Even young Americans that do not live in NYC are inspired by Mamdani and are very interested in his politics. 75% of young Americans supported his victory.

So, when the main issue plaguing Democrats are that younger voters don't vote, a politician that is popular and relatable to them could be the encouragement they need to vote. So, I think in this way that wasn't discussed in other articles, Mamdani can continue to have impacts on the upcoming election.

## Rent Freeze

In late June, [the Rent Guidelines Board approved Mamdani's rent freeze](#) in a 7-to-1 vote. This applies to both one and two-year leases, making it historical as the first rent freeze on both one- and two-year leases. It will pause increases on 40%+ of all apartments in NYC.

**Mamdani's Campaign Promise:** Freeze the rent for all stabilized tenants.

### Previous Changes:

In April, the NYC Rent Guidelines Board met to discuss a possible price hike for New Yorkers without confirming anything.

In May, the Rent Guidelines Board approved a preliminary proposal for setting rent increases for one- and two-year leases at 0–2% and 0–4%, respectively. Because 0% is included in the approved increase ranges, the possibility of a rent freeze has emerged.

**Current Status:** Completed.

## Public Reactions and Reception to the Rent Freeze: Tenants vs. Landlords

## **Tenants**

Many tenants expressed joy after the announcement. These tenants believe that New York City has long been a place for only the wealthy, but now it's becoming a city for the working class, and the government is listening.

Tenants also believe these changes will make it easier for them to afford basic needs. For middle- and low-income tenants, this policy is incredibly popular.

Here are some quotes:

"This is no longer just a city that's a playground for the rich. This is a city for the working people making it run, and we are making it run for us, and I am so overjoyed, and we are finally here after so much fighting, after years of struggling to figure out how we're going to make ends meet."

"For years, landlords have run this city, and this is a new era of tenant power. We have a rent freeze mayor. Hundreds of people came out and testified, thousands online. Landlords' days are over; tenants are in power now and it feels amazing."

"The working class makes this city run, and we deserve to live in dignity. A freeze on rents for two years means relief and peace of mind for 24 months."

"I don't even know how to express it in words. Like, this is what we had been hoping for years and years, but it was never happening."

"I feel like we really were heard, and our needs are being addressed. And it feels fantastic to know that we all came together and we really pushed for this and we were listened to."

## **Landlords**

Landlords are generally upset and worried about this decision. They say that with the rising costs of fuel, oil, taxes, and insurance a rent freeze will hurt their ability to maintain buildings. Landlords and independent housing experts have been raising alarms about these issues for years.

Even so, under the Adam's administration, landlords received 12% rent increases while their net operating incomes rose by 30%. The discrepancy between fear about the cost of managing units and the statistics about net incomes rising faster than net increases is likely due to the two types of rent stabilized apartments.

The first type is mixed buildings which have both market price units and rent stabilized units. The market units often subsidize regulated units by bringing in more income. Mixed buildings have done well in terms of revenue. Mixed buildings can benefit from the rent stabilized units through tax credits.

The other type is entirely rent stabilized buildings with no market value units. These are the landlords that are really going to struggle. There is a fear that this will increase the number of vacant units (units that will not be leased to anyone). This is because rent stabilized units are not profitable and landlords won't bother maintaining and renovating these units to allow someone to occupy it. It is more profitable to not have the unit occupied.

Notably, one of the two board members representing landlords voted in favor of the rent freezes. This is because he said the problems facing landlords need broader solutions from the city and the state over rent increases, as rent increases might decrease income collected by landlords if tenants can't afford to pay it.

Many landlords state that because of inflation and the increasing age of buildings, a large portion of their portfolio just breaks even or operates at a deficit.

Here are some quotes:

“We’re going to have to cut back. We’re gonna have to lay off some of the people. We’re gonna have to lay off supers. Only choice, it’s a business.”

“Tonight’s vote may be politically popular, but it will make New York’s housing crisis worse.”

“The freeze will “destroy the living conditions for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers.”

“It’s outrageous. It’s completely against every piece of data that was brought before the board. The fix was in. There was pressure from City Hall for the members to vote this way.”

“They did all of this really hard work, to come to really specific numbers and then put it all in the shredder and did something else”

“Despite all the noise, this vote will do nothing to help tenants, will run small landlords out of their life savings, further destabilize the market and drive more distressed property owners into default and bankruptcy”

## Six Months In: Mamdani Affordable Housing Update

In August, Mayor Mamdani and the Deputy Mayor for Housing and Planning [announced that the city financed the creation and preservation of nearly 12,500 affordable homes](#) during the first half of 2026. At the same time, the administration helped nearly 10,000 New Yorkers access this housing, 4,000+ of which were formerly homeless people.

Mamdani also introduced a housing plan called *Block by Block* which will invest \$1 billion over the next two fiscal years to create and preserve housing. This is a 60% increase over the previous two fiscal years.

At the beginning of August, [Mamdani broke ground on the Casanova Residence](#), which will become a new affordable housing development with 96 units in Hunts Point, the Bronx. This facility will also provide on-site services for mental illness, substance use, and disabling medical conditions.

## What is Needed to Fix NYC's Housing Shortage?

A [New York Times article](#) looks to discuss this issue. It mentions that only 1.5% of the city's rental apartments are available, demonstrating a detrimental lack of supply.

NYC would need about 700,000 homes built over the next 10 years to solve the problem, meaning 70,000 homes per year, where only 18,000 homes were permitted in each of the last three years. Still, it is an achievable goal, though not easy, according to Moses Gates.

While the Mamdani administration has taken important steps to promote building, more efforts are needed such as expanding tax incentives for large-scale residential buildings and returning vacant rent-regulated apartments to the market.

## Insurance Rates and Why Everything is Getting More Expensive

So, landlords keep arguing that rapidly increasing insurance rates are a key cause behind high property and following rent costs. [The City Reporter published an article](#) in 2024 that takes a look at why this is occurring.

1. Climate Change—More frequent and intense disasters lead to more spending on repairs and rebuilding.

2. Inflation—General inflation and pandemic related supply chain interruptions have made it more expensive to rebuild.
3. Expensive Housing Market—Expensive housing means housing becomes more valuable and more valuable housing means it's more expensive to rebuild.
4. Technological advances—Ai, drones, and data-mining give insurance companies more information about the risk of each property that they might not have otherwise been aware of.
5. Higher Reinsurance Rates—The same things increasing the cost of insurance are increasing the costs for the insurer to be insured.
6. City Risks—Close proximity increases fire hazards, lithium-ion battery fires, and flooding washing machines.
7. Personal Injury Lawsuits—These lawsuits have a prevalent culture in NYC where they are often filed against property owners.

## **Bad Landlords**

This summer, Mamdani's office [released the Rental Ripoff Report](#), which is a package of 23 policy actions shaped by testimony from New Yorkers at the Rental Ripoff Hearings held earlier this year.

The report's recommendations include:

1. Recognizing tenant unions
2. Expanding tenants' ability to organize and collectively bargain
3. Requiring landlords to disclose when listings have been altered by AI or other digital tools
4. Modernizing building owner registration and communication systems
5. Using the city's enforcement authority to crack down on landlords through inspections, enforcement programs, and litigation

The report also identifies the most common tenant concerns as pests, mold, and leaks.

It also listed possible future executive actions and agency rulemaking:

1. Investigating each heat complaint individually over consolidating complaints from the same building
2. Allowing tenants to schedule building inspections
3. Improving response time for elevator outages
4. Addressing root causes of fires
5. Streamlining public information about tenants' rights

Lastly, this report discussed ways it could improve enforcement regarding violations:

1. Adding financial penalties for landlords who fail to remediate mold
2. Strengthening the Alternative Enforcement Program to better address chronic building violations
3. Modernizing the property registration process which is still paper-based and doesn't require property owners to provide an email address
4. Allow HPD to give building owners violations through digital notice

In line with expanding tenants' ability to organize and unionize, [the "Talk to Tenants" campaign was launched](#). This campaign is a door-to-door campaign to support renters living in buildings with chronic violations.

### **Original Campaign Promise:**

- Overhaul the Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants and coordinate code enforcement under one agency to make sure agencies work together to hold landlords responsible for the conditions of their buildings.
- Tenants will be able to schedule and track inspections with a revamped 311.
- If a landlord refuses to make a repair, the City will do it and send them the bill.
- If a landlord demonstrates consistent neglect for their tenants, the City will step in and take control of their properties.

### **Previous Changes:**

In February, Mamdani held the city's first "Rental Fraud Hearing," providing a forum where tenants can voice their criticisms regarding unsafe building conditions and hidden fees. Following the meeting, the city is required to announce a plan to protect tenants within 90 days.

Additionally, a list of 250 buildings with frequent code violations has been released. Buildings on this list will be subject to stricter oversight; if landlords fail to carry out necessary repairs, the city will step in to perform the work on their behalf.

### **Current Status:**

Early progress: Overhaul the Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants and coordinate code enforcement under one agency to make sure agencies work together to hold landlords responsible for the conditions of their buildings.

## **Mamdani's Grocery Stores**

Near the end of July, [Mamdani announced the exact discount for essentials](#) including produce, meat, seafood, pasta, bread, yogurt, butter, nuts, rice, and beans: 30%. Other products will be sold at regular market prices.

This is estimated to save shoppers \$90 per month and \$1,000 per year, according to NYC's Economic Development Corporation.

The city is also working on selecting private operators to run the city-owned stores. The City is looking to make up for these discounts by waiving rent and property taxes and providing an operating subsidy to help pay for the discounts likely with the \$70 million Mamdani's budget deal secured for building the stores.

Additionally, the regular market priced goods will also help to cover some of the costs of the discounted goods by being the primary profit drivers.

### **Original Campaign Promises:**

- Create a network of city-owned grocery stores focused on keeping prices low over making a profit
- Stores will not need to pay rent or property taxes and will pass those savings to shoppers
- Stores will buy and sell at wholesale prices
- Stores will centralize warehousing and distribution
- Stores will partner with local neighborhoods on products and sourcing

### **Previous Progress**

In April, Mamdani announced the first of five city-run grocery stores to be built in La Marqueta, East Harlem.

In May, Mamdani announced an outline for a second city-run grocery store. This grocery store is planned to be established in the Bronx, and it is expected to be the first one to open.

### **Current Status:**

In progress: Create a network of city-owned grocery stores focused on keeping prices low over making a profit

In progress: Store will not need to pay rent or property taxes and will pass those savings to shoppers

## **Opponents Look to Challenge Mamdani's Stores**

[A business group filed a lawsuit](#) in August arguing that the city-owned grocery stores would hurt smaller businesses and city officials did not properly study how the new stores could negatively impact neighborhood/local supermarkets, which would

discriminate against Latino and Asian business owners. Basically, the lawsuit argues that the current grocery store plan violates state civil rights laws and the equal protection clause.

## Grocery Store Challenges

I'm sure many are concerned about the challenges this project faces and if there is any chance, it can actually be successful.

The City Reporter released an [article](#) conversing with an industry expert, Errol Schweizer, to summarize the main challenges.

Firstly, Schweizer discusses why NYC has such high grocery store prices to begin with compared to the national average (although, both are seeing food price increases). Major stores like Walmart have the ability to bargain for very low prices from suppliers, which allows them to both lower their prices and lower the overall market price by existing as competition to other stores. These corporations largely do not operate in NYC, where the city mainly sees independent stores that don't have this same ability to bargain with suppliers.

Schweizer also goes on to say that most grocery stores are unionized, which pushes up labor costs.

Schweizer then compares the NYC city-owned grocery store plan to other cases with publicly owned stores. One major example is the Defense Department's commissary stores in military bases, where the DOD spends \$2 billion a year subsidizing 235 stores. However, because there are 235 stores, this collective is able to have massive bargaining power with suppliers. With the NYC plan, there are only five stores, and Schweizer estimates about 25 stores are needed to obtain meaningful bargaining power and discounts.

There are other cities in the US that have tried municipal grocery stores. For example, Atlanta opened a store last summer and Madison, WI is currently constructing one. However, there is a difference in environment for these stores which are attempting to reduce food deserts (when there are no grocery stores within a neighborhood). On the other hand, the NYC's grocery stores will be within close distance to other stores. This means that competition will be higher for the City's stores, which could be both a good thing and a bad thing. A bad thing could be it might be harder to get enough customers to maintain the store if customers end up just shopping at other stores, but it can also be

a good thing as competition will require efficient operation compared to a store that is basically a monopoly.

## **Highlight: Public-Owned Grocery Stores in America**

Even though the shock has made it appear as though city-owned grocery stores have no place in the US, this is not a new concept. Let's look at some examples and what led to their successes or failures.

In Kansas, [the St. Paul Supermarket serves as one of the icons of publicly owned grocery stores](#) in the US. After the retirement of the store's ownership, the city government decided to purchase it. The grocery store is in its 12<sup>th</sup> year of operation as a city-owned grocery store. Its success is attributed to broad community support, effective leadership, and commitment from the city to continue to provide financial support.

In Atlanta, the Azalea Fresh Market, [a city-backed grocery store opened in 2025](#). It has seen over 150,000 customers, which officials stated exceeded expectations. The store was so successful that the city is now planning to open a second location. By opening this location, the hope is to increase buying power, customer service, and economies of scale. The store is now running through a public-private collaboration. Average daily revenue at the store has increased 20% since its opening.

On the other hand, [the publicly owned store in Baldwin, Florida closed](#). In 2019, the town opened its own grocery store after the only grocery store in town closed. It operated until 2024 after it had struggled to reach a breakeven point for years. The challenges for this store include its rural location which limited the market size/potential customers, and limited buying power which forced the store to increase prices as they could not bargain for lower prices from suppliers.

It seems, then, that for these projects to work, it will likely be essential for community support to stay high, so communities continue to support spending tax dollars on subsidizing the locations, and so that communities shop at these locations. Additionally, it will be critical for these locations to expand buying power as much as possible. Still, compared to grocery stores outside of the city that need to compete with the buying power of stores like Walmart, these city shops will not need to be quite as competitive in that area as there aren't giants in NYC that will have substantially more buying power.

## **Healthcare Cuts and New Yorkers**

[400,000 people in New York state lost their “Essential Plan” health coverage](#) after federal funding cuts from President Trump. The Essential Plan is a New York state program that is nearly completely federally subsidized, and it provided insurance for those who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but cannot afford private insurance. This program reduced the number of uninsured people in the state to below 5%. This did cost billions of federal health care dollars, and the flow of funds were reduced under President Trump. About 50% of the people who lost coverage have joined new plans.

## Buses

There have been many updates to buses in the summer. Let’s look at some of the projects announced.

1. Offset bus lanes on Fordham Road – [Ground was broken](#) for the redesign of Fordham Road which added offset lanes. Buses currently travel slowly due to blocked bus lanes. The city will convert these lanes into offset lanes to separate buses from general traffic and create parking and loading spaces for local businesses.
2. Tremont Ave—[This will be the first busway in the Bronx](#). It will include Eastbound and Westbound busways and an offset shared bus and bike lane Eastbound.
3. Central Brooklyn—[This project is currently in the community engagement process](#) to develop a more reliable bus service. This phase will include online feedback portals, engagement events, surveys of riders, pedestrians, local institutions and other stakeholders, and outreach events. After this process, DOT expects to release an updated plan.
4. Madison Avenue—[This project will resume a stalled project](#) to extend double bus lanes. The redesign also includes one general travel lane, a parking lane, and a parking lane that converts into a travel lane during rush hour. This project will also update curb regulations to improve parking availability.
5. Lexington Ave—[This project converts eight blocks of Lexington ave](#) from curbside to offset bus lanes.

Lastly, [the city is working with the state government](#) to implement the “Next Stop” plan. This plan identifies 50 priority corridors where NYCDOT and MTA will target investments to address the slowest and least reliable routes. Five corridors were selected to be in the first phase of rapid bus routes especially because of their usage as connections to jobs, schools, and subways:

1. Tremont
2. Northern Boulevard

3. Flatbush Avenue
4. Utica Avenue
5. Kensington/JFK

MTA will also work to improve reliability by ensuring trips are completed, modernizing depot operations, and improving bus maintenance. They will also purchase 2500 new buses with funds granted from the state. Lastly, they currently plan to phase in all-door boarding.

MTA and NYCDOT are also looking to improve the rider experience by:

1. Expanding the bus stop accessibility program to reach 65 bus stops by 2030
2. Install 300 new bus shelters
3. Add seating at 875 bus stops annually
4. Plant 30 trees at bus stops
5. Install real-time passenger info displays with 2,900 completed by 2030.

Lastly, NYC is looking to keep bus lanes clear by:

1. Expanding bus mounted automated Camera enforcement to 25 new routes each year from 2026-2027
2. Install 200 additional stationary bus lane cameras
3. NYPD will expand targeted bus lane enforcement from 14 to 20 corridors

Much like Mamdani's other campaign priorities, the city will also hold community events, conduct surveys, conduct public education campaigns, so the public knows about the improvements, and work with advocacy groups and community groups.

### **Campaign Promises:**

- Eliminate city bus fares
- Make city buses faster by building priority lanes
- Expand bus queue jump signals
- Build dedicated loading zones to keep parkers out of the way

### **Current Status:**

In progress: Make city buses faster by building priority lanes

## **NYC Congestion Pricing and Air Quality in NYC**

According to a [study](#) from NYC's health department, pollution within the congestion pricing zone has only slightly improved. Additionally, the tolling program did not lead to increased pollution in neighborhoods where drivers may drive through to avoid the tolling zone.

It turns out that traffic only produces 10% of fine particulate matter. Because of NYC's density, buildings and restaurants, which use a lot of fuel, are the main producers of pollution.

Still, the congestion pricing has led to more New Yorkers using public transit, which is still an environmental win.

## **The Commute**

One of the core reasons for Mamdani's interest in bettering the bus system is to reduce overall commute times for New York workers. He believes this is essential in giving more time back to the worker and improving work-life balance.

The New York Times published a [brief report](#) on the current state of the commute in the US. They mentioned that even though the pandemic ended the daily commute, the commute is back and it's taking more time. Some of the reasons for this is due to constant increases in delivery truck traffic, hybrid work that creates new travel patterns outside of standard rush hours, and really long commutes are becoming more common, with housing costs pushing people farther away from their workplace. A Stanford report mentioned in this article stated that commutes of 75 miles or longer each way had increased by 32% between 2019 and 2024.

The commute is impacting people's mental health too. A study found that every extra 10 minutes spent in a traffic jam increased a commuter's depression risk by 0.8%, which can become a larger risk in places where roads are congested. Another study stated that longer commutes not only make workers less happy but also deteriorated the commuter's abilities as a parent. A Chinese study bluntly states, "The longer the commute, the lower the satisfaction with work and life."

From this, it's plausible to assume that Mamdani's proposed and implemented changes, if they lead to reduced commute times, could improve hundreds of thousands of people's mental health (and health outcomes for that matter) in NYC. These bus projects are about so much more than public transit alone.

## Free Childcare

In August, [Mamdani announced that childcare will be free](#) for all families receiving childcare assistance through vouchers and contracts. This policy will impact around 22,000 low-income families. Out-of-pocket costs for childcare for these families reach \$5.2 million, which will be covered by the city. This funding is already included in the budget beginning in FY28.

Additionally, [Mamdani and Hochul extended offers](#) for NYC's inaugural 2-K class to more than 2,000 children. 5,700+ families applied for these 2,000 seats. Each seat saves families around \$26,000 annually. Later this year, the city will discuss the details of the 2027 expansion of 2-K with the goal of serving 12,000 children.

### Insufficient Budget...

A [report](#) published by the Center for New York City Affairs estimated that the annual cost of the proposed free childcare for all program would cost about \$9 billion annually. This is \$5 billion more than the city spent on childcare in 2025. Mamdani estimated that the system would cost about \$6 billion annually. The gap is attributed mostly to teacher pay. The Center's report used higher rates that researchers recommend the city pay.

The Center argues this problem could be mitigated through the incorporation of childcare vouchers for low-income families which are mostly funded by the state and federal government.

## Small Businesses

At the end of July, [Mamdani announced the "OPEN for Small Business"](#) package with over 50 regulatory reforms to reduce the bureaucratic and paperwork burden for small businesses. This package will save time, effort, and money for small businesses. A breakdown of the reforms includes:

1. 25 reforms for food service and food retail
2. 7 for transportation businesses
3. 5 for other retailers
4. 4 for childcare providers
5. 3 for industrial and commercial businesses
6. 2 for personal care businesses
7. 3 for nonprofits running bingo and games of chance licenses
8. 6 that apply to every business in the city.

### Campaign Promises:

- Make it easier, faster, and cheaper to start and run a business in NYC
- Cut business fines in half
- Speed up permitting
- Make online applications easier
- Increase funding for 1:1 small business support by 500%
- Appoint a “Mom-and-Pop Czar”

### **Current Status:**

In progress: make it easier, faster, and cheaper to start and run a business in NYC

In progress: speed up permitting

### **Scaffolding Coming Down**

In August, [Commissioner Tigani announced progress in taking down sidewalk sheds](#). Final rules were issued to improve oversight and enforcement of sidewalk sheds and requiring building owners to begin necessary repairs and remove the sheds faster. There are about 1,000 fewer sheds than at this time last year.

Every sidewalk shed permit renewal must now include a report explaining what repair requires it and detailing the progress made on those repairs since the last renewal. Under the new rules, permits must be renewed every 90 days. The rules also create stronger penalties when no active work is occurring. After 180 days, monthly penalties will be given based on the size of the sidewalk shed and how long it has been in place. Penalties can be paused if property owners show they are making meaningful progress.

### **Taxing the Rich**

At the end of July, the [Department of Finance began notifying property owners](#) that they may be subject to the new “pied-a-terre” tax. This tax was originally approved by the state government earlier this year, but implementation was unclear.

The New York Times editorial board said this tax is a win for New York.

### **Campaign promises:**

- Raise the corporate tax rate to match New Jersey’s 11.5%
- Tax New Yorkers making more than \$1 million annually a flat 2% tax
- Implement procurement reform

- End no-bid contracts
- Hire more tax auditors
- Crack down on fine collection from landlords

### **Current Status:**

Indirect progress: Tax New Yorkers making more than \$1 million annually

## **Botched Second-Home Tax Rollout**

In early August, a group of [NYC homeowners filed a lawsuit](#) arguing that the city mishandled the rollout of this tax by not sufficiently narrowing the pool of properties that might be taxed before publishing a data set on the Department of Finance's website. Some owners who are full-time city residents were erroneously listed. This lawsuit does not seek to invalidate the tax but instead looks to have the city remove the data set.

## **Business Leaders Remain Skeptical of Mamdani**

[A New York Times article](#) discusses Mamdani's frayed relationship with many business leaders. This has been caused by some of Mamdani's tax-the-rich rhetoric, publicly ridiculing one wealthy hedge fund manager, and the poor rollout of his tax on expensive second homes.

Although Mamdani announced his intentions to create a business advisory council made up of corporate leaders, many leaders are hesitant to join as they do not want to act as a cover for policies which they may disagree with or create the reputation that they support Mamdani. Still, some leaders suggest that executives can and should use their experience to help NYC thrive economically.

## **Fighting Corporate Exploitation**

In early July, [Mamdani announced a "click-to-cancel" rule](#) to ensure people can end online subscriptions as easily as they start them. In January, he signed executive orders to begin this process, and now the New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection has proposed this rule to "require transparent, all-in pricing that bans hidden junk fees, alongside a final "click to cancel" rule that guarantees consumers can cancel

subscriptions as easily as they sign up for them.” Supporters of this policy state this will save constituents up to \$162.5 million annually.

In August, the [Mamdani Administration announced](#) that the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection had conducted 62 inspections and issued 56 summonses for violations of the City’s Consumer Protection Law for rental car companies. This was the first comprehensive review in nearly a decade. Inspectors found that many businesses failed to post required price signs and disclose prices and lacked a posted refund policy.

### **Campaign Promises:**

- Fight misleading advertising
- Fight predatory contracts
- Ban all hidden fees
- Ban non-compete clauses
- End secret corporate handouts
- Fund challenges to utility companies

### **Current Status:**

In progress: Ban all hidden fees