



# Navigating City Government

Neighborhood Leadership Institute Workshop


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**CITIZENS  
COMMITTEE  
FOR NEW  
YORK CITY**



## ***About***

*Navigating City Government involves understanding the ways that New York City's government functions and who holds power on particular issues. This will help you better navigate the basics of law-making, public policy, legislative organizing, as well as launch issue-based campaigns.*

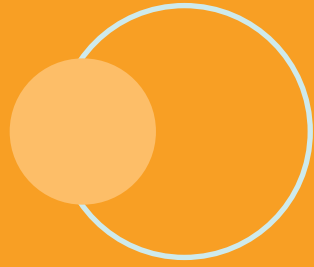




# OVERVIEW

**New York City's government is more centralized than that of most other U.S. cities, with the city government being responsible for public education, correctional institutions, libraries, public safety, recreational facilities, sanitation, water supply and welfare services.**

**New York City has a strong mayor-council type government; the Mayor is the executive and administrative head of the city, and the council is the policy making body. This model gives more power to the mayor than some other forms of city government.**



**The City Charter puts forth the rules for NYC, and it is subject to periodic review and change. The Charter establishes the authority and responsibilities of elected officials. The Charter is subject to periodic changes that all New Yorkers can vote on.**

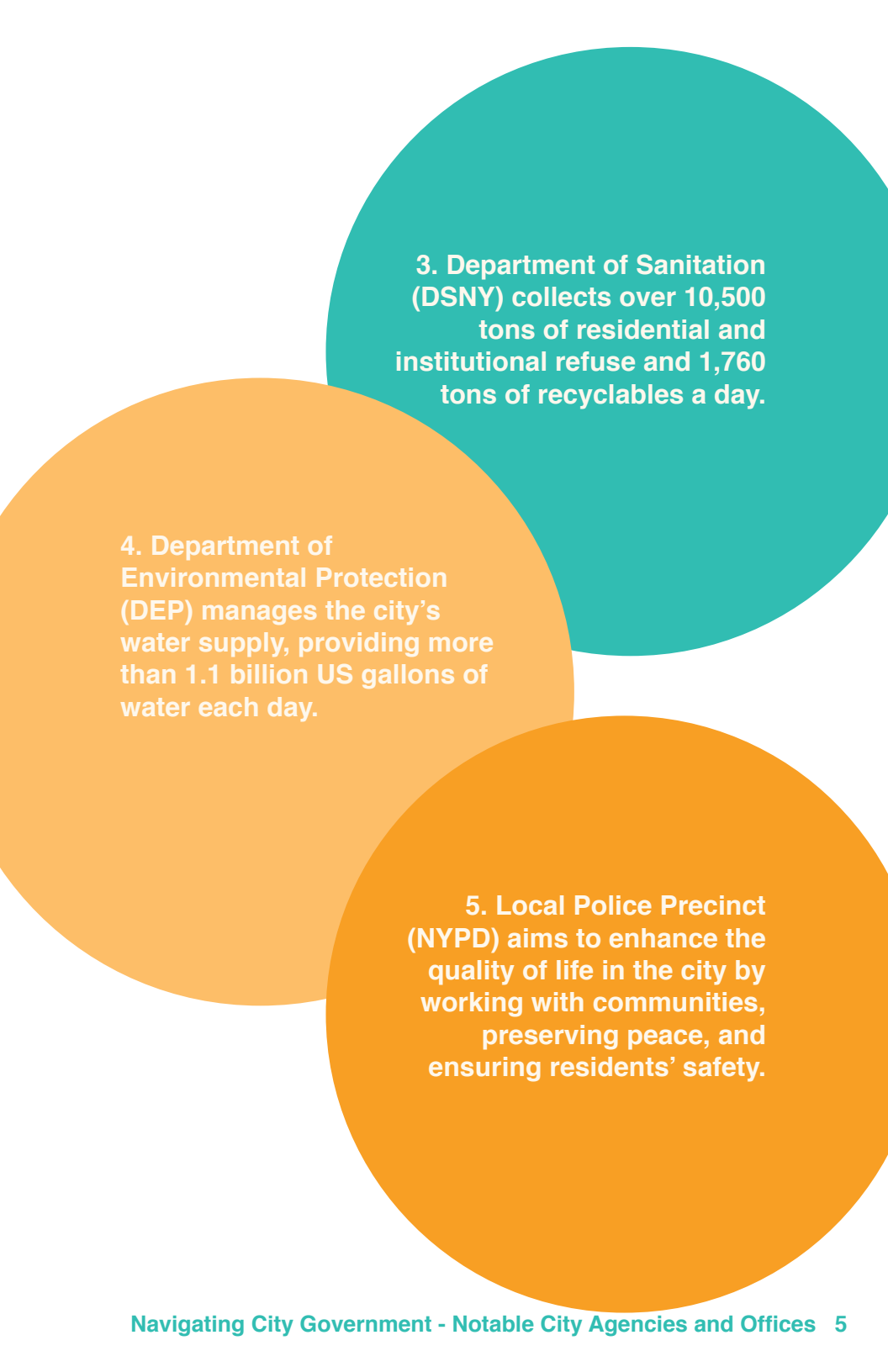


# NOTABLE CITY AGENCIES AND OFFICES

**The heads of about 50 city departments and agencies are appointed by the mayor. The mayor also appoints several Deputy Mayors to head major offices within the executive branch. Deputy Mayors report directly to the Mayor.**

**1. Department of Transportation (DOT) provides for the safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible movement of people and goods in NYC and to maintain and enhance the transportation infrastructure. DOT also rehabilitates and maintains the City's infrastructure, including bridges, tunnels, streets, sidewalks, and highways.**

**2. Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks & Rec) stewards the approximately 29,000 acres of land (14 percent of New York City). NYC Parks is also responsible for maintaining the ecological diversity of the city's natural areas and providing recreational opportunities for the city's residents and visitors.**



**3. Department of Sanitation (DSNY) collects over 10,500 tons of residential and institutional refuse and 1,760 tons of recyclables a day.**

**4. Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) manages the city's water supply, providing more than 1.1 billion US gallons of water each day.**

**5. Local Police Precinct (NYPD) aims to enhance the quality of life in the city by working with communities, preserving peace, and ensuring residents' safety.**

**6. Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) receives, investigates, mediates, and recommends action on complaints towards New York City police officers.**

**7. Local Community Boards (CB) serve as advocates for New York City residents and communities. New York City is divided into 59 Community Board and each Board has up to 50 voting members.**

**8. The Mayor's Street Activity Permit Office (SAPO) issues permits for street fairs, festivals, block parties, green markets, commercial/promotional and other events on NYC streets and sidewalks.**





# Notes



# CITY-WIDE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

- **Mayor**

The Mayor is responsible for working with borough presidents to prepare and submit a budget, signing or vetoing all legislation passed by the City Council, and appointing heads of city agencies and departments. The mayor has the ability to appoint people to powerful decision-making boards such as the City Planning Commission and the Landmarks Preservation Commission – both boards that make decisions affecting the character of our neighborhoods.

## • **Public Advocate**

The Public Advocate functions as a go-between for people having trouble with city services, reviews and investigates complaints, monitors compliance of city agencies with the City Charter, votes in council in event of a tie, and pursues investigations of city agencies. The Public Advocate is the voice for the community, but only if community groups participate, communicate, and make the advocate aware of their work.

## • **Comptroller**

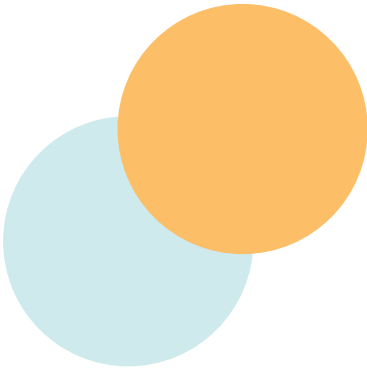
The Comptroller makes sure that city agencies are performing efficiently, advises the mayor, council, and public advocate on the city's finances, issues financial reports, and maintains the city's bank accounts. The Comptroller's Community Action Center is another resource for people who are looking to solve problems in their communities.



# LOCALLY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

- **City Council**

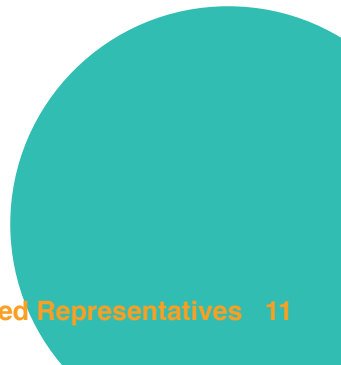
The City Council operates as a check on the Mayor's power. It is composed of 51 members from 51 council districts, and these members also serve on 35 committees, such as consumer affairs, land use, aging, etc. The City Council also approves the city budget. Council Members are elected every four years and are limited to three consecutive terms in office.



## • Borough Presidents

Borough presidents work with the Mayor to prepare the executive budget and to propose budget priorities to the City Council. They are also part of the land use review process and preside over “borough boards,” which consist of city council members from that borough along with community board chairs.

They have a small amount of discretionary funds to use for special projects within their boroughs.





# HOW DOES A BILL BECOME A LAW?

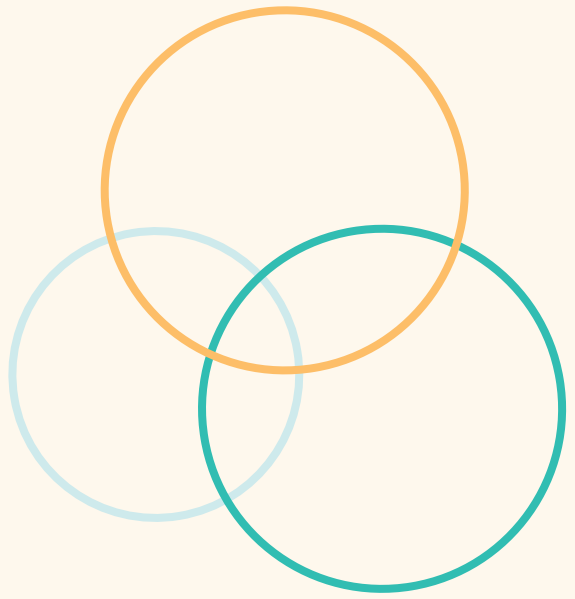
**The bill is filed by a council member with the council speaker's office.**

**The bill is introduced into the council and referred to the appropriate committee. One or more public hearings may be held on the issue.**

**After public testimony and committee debate, the bill may be amended.**

**The committee votes on the final version of the bill.**

**If passed in the committee, the bill is sent to the full council for a vote and debate.**



**If passed by a majority vote (at least 26 members), the bill is sent to the Mayor, who also holds a public hearing, which leads to two outcomes:**

**1. If the mayor signs the bill, it immediately becomes law, and it is entered into the city's charter. The time that it takes to become effective varies from law to law.**

**2. If the mayor does not sign the bill, it is returned to the City Clerk with the mayor's objections. The council has 30 days to override the veto. If the council re-passes the bill by a vote of at least 34 members, it is adopted and becomes a "local law".**

