

QUEENS TODAY

APRIL 24, 2024

THE NYPD IS INVESTIGATING THE stabbing of two teenagers in Astoria Heights on Monday night, ABC reports. Police say the attack happened around 6:45 p.m. at 21st Avenue and 75th Street in the Western Queens neighborhood. The victims were an 18-year-old and a 16-year-old who were stabbed in the back and the right leg respectively. Both were taken to Elmhurst Hospital and are in stable condition. A group of male suspects fled on mopeds in an unknown direction, but no arrests have been made.

SOUTHEAST QUEENS STATE SENATOR James Sanders gave his third speech from the Atlantic Ocean over the weekend. Sanders, doing his third-ever "Tuvalu Challenge" gave a climate change-centered speech hip-deep in the water off the shores of the Rockaway peninsula on April 20. "Time is no longer a bystander in our fight against climate change; it's the rallying cry echoing through every community," Sanders said. "Our urgency is not just global; it's deeply local. Each action we take, every decision we make within our own neighborhoods, reverberates globally. Let's embrace this urgency as a beacon of hope, igniting grassroots movements and empowering communities to champion sustainable change, for the health of our planet and the prosperity of our localities."

POLICE NABBED A QUEENS MAN last week for allegedly tampering with subway security cameras along the F train line, the Daily News reports. Sebastian Mendez on Thursday night was arrested at the Parsons Boulevard station for allegedly covering at least 17 subway security cameras with black tape along the train line. Mendez reportedly told officers he didn't like hidden cameras or people watching him. His alleged actions blocked the department's view of a stabbing on that same platform last week.

THE METS CAN EXPECT SOME RE-inforcements soon via the bat of newly acquired J.D. Martinez, CNY Central reports. Martinez is a six-time All Star who signed to a one-year, \$12 million dollar deal in late March. He will be playing two games with the AAA Syracuse Mets this week, ramping up for a return to the Major Leagues, where he has a career 315 home runs and a .287 batting average over 13 seasons, according to Baseball Reference. He should be playing in Queens on Friday against the Cardinals. Heading into Tuesday night's game against the San Francisco Giants, the Mets were 12-8, a record good enough for third place in the highly competitive National League East. After dropping their first five games, the Mets have won seven of their last 10. They head home from their West Coast road trip on Friday.



Sammy's Law, a bill which will allow New York City to set its own speed limits, was included in the state budget last week. Eagle photo by Ryan Schwach

By Ryan Schwach
Queens Daily Eagle

Queens lawmakers, advocates and parents are breathing a sigh of relief after Sammy's Law, a street safety measure pushed heavily by Queens electeds and families, was passed as part of the state budget over the weekend, allowing the city to determine the speed limit on its own streets.

The bill, which has been in the pipelines for several years, was called for heavily in Queens, a borough which faced the brunt of traffic violence over the last year, including the deaths of three children younger than 10-years-old.

Promoted by the mother of Sammy Eckstein Cohen, a 12-year-old who was killed by a driv-

er in 2013, the bill will allow New York City – and other state municipalities – to set their own speed limits, rather than go by statewide regulations.

According to studies cited by elected officials, a pedestrian is four times more likely to be killed by a car going 30 miles per hour than one traveling 25 miles per hour. Additionally, slowing from 30 to 25 miles per hour reduces the chance of a fatal crash by 78 percent, and lowering speeds from 25 to 20 miles per hour has led to a 14 percent reduction in injurious crashes.

In recent months, passing Sammy's Law had become a major goal for Queens residents and officials, after 8-year-old Bayron Palomino

Arroyo, 3-year-old Quintus Chen and 7-year-old Dolma Naadhun were killed in Queens over the last year due to traffic violence.

"There are too many names," said Queens Borough President Donovan Richards at a march in Corona last month. "They were beautiful children with a bright future and families who loved them. They could have gone anywhere, they could have been anything. They had dreams shattered, all because of reckless drivers."

This week, those elected officials and advocates are applauding the bill, which many of them wanted to see made into law much earlier.

"It's long past time we take back our streets" *Continued on page 16*



'Slippery slope'
Mayor defends potential corp counsel pick as Council vows to reject nominee
Randy Mastro, the mayor's potential pick for the city's next corporation counsel. Mayor Eric Adams defended Mastro on Tuesday as a number of city councilmembers have vowed to fight his nomination, should he be picked by the Adams administration for the job. File photo by Caroline Willis/Mayoral Photo Office

By Jacob Kaye
Queens Daily Eagle

Mayor Eric Adams wouldn't confirm or deny Tuesday if he plans to nominate attorney Randy Mastro to serve as the city's next top attorney – but that didn't stop the mayor from defending the embattled potential nominee.

Though Adams has yet to say whether he will nominate Mastro to serve as the city's corporation counsel – he's also refused to say that he won't be nominating Mastro – he and his chief counsel spent at least 15 minutes defending the former deputy mayor's record during the mayor's weekly "off-topic" press conference on Tuesday.

Mastro, a former federal prosecutor, and deputy mayor and chief of staff under former Mayor Rudy Giuliani, is widely expected to be nominated by the Adams administration for the role soon to be vacated by current Corporation Counsel Syliva Hinds-Radix.

Not long before Tuesday's press conference, the City Council's Black, Latino and Asian Caucus said in a statement that they would strongly oppose Mastro's nomination, citing *See story on page 2*

Adams defends potential corp counsel nominee as Council criticizes possible pick

Continued from page 1

several of his past cases and clients. The opposition from the 34-member caucus would make Mastro's approval by the 51-member Council, who would have to confirm any nomination for corporation counsel, dubious at best. A number of progressive councilmembers have also in recent days vowed to block Mastro's nomination, should the Adams administration go in that direction.

But Adams and his chief counsel, Lisa Zornberg, were quick to defend Mastro on Tuesday.

"To go after an attorney based on the cases they represent is a slippery slope," the mayor said.

Zornberg, who serves as counsel to the mayor, City Hall and a number of mayoral agencies, ticked off a number of pro bono cases Mastro had taken on during his career, as well as his achievements in the nonprofit and civic worlds.

At one point, Zornberg drew parallels between Mastro and John Adams, the second president of the United States who, as an attorney, defended the British soldiers who killed five people during the Boston Massacre.

"[President Adams] didn't hesitate to take on that case, because he believed in upholding the rule of law," Zornberg said. "That is what makes the United States spectacular — our credible justice system."

After serving in the Giuliani administration, Mastro has taken on a number of controversial cases.

He served as an attorney to former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie and conducted an internal review of the "Bridgegate" scandal, during which Christie's administration was accused of colluding to create traffic troubles in Fort Lee by closing the toll area in front of the upper level of the George Washington Bridge in an attempt to wound a political foe.

Mastro also represented Chevron on behalf of law firm Gibson Dunn, where he formerly worked. The attorney helped get Chevron off the hook for a \$9 billion judgment by the Ecuadorian government in an historic pollution case. He later represented the company as they pursued a RICO case against Steven Donziger, the attorney who originally brought the suit against Chevron. After spending nearly three years under house arrest as a result of the case, Donziger was disbarred in New York State.

Mastro has also represented a number of clients that have brought cases against the city, including the state of New Jersey in its ongoing suit over the state's plan to implement congestion pricing in Manhattan.



Mayor Eric Adams defended potential corporation counsel nominee Randy Mastro on Tuesday.
File photo by Ed Reed/Mayoral Photography Office

He currently works for King & Spalding.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus, which includes 10 of Queens' 15 councilmembers, called Mastro's nomination as corporation counsel "an affront to the principles of public service we all hold dear."

"Given his professional track record representing dubious clients, which has included bringing numerous lawsuits against the City of New York, Mastro is unfit to serve as the City's chief lawyer," the caucus said, adding that they felt his nomination was "questionable at best" and "deeply concerning."

Noting that as corporation counsel Mastro would also be representing the City Council in court, the caucus said it "deserve[d] better than someone who has fought for the interests of top-earners, abusive corporations, and vindictive politicians."

"The BLAC is firm in its opposition to this potential nomination," the lawmakers added. "We ask the administration to reconsider its position."

In response to the caucus' statement on Tuesday, the mayor said that he'd hope the Council would hear out any potential nominee, and judge them based on their responses to

questioning, rather than just their resume.

"I'm hoping that anyone we put up for any nomination, they have an opportunity to sell their story, let them know their real story, not



New York City Corporation Counsel Sylvia Hinds-Radix, who is expected to depart the administration soon.
File photo by Ed Reed/Mayoral Photography Office

what was printed about them," the mayor said. "I think it is very healthy for people to be able to sit down and be able to say, 'We're willing to answer questions.'"

Though the administration has confirmed that Hinds-Radix is on her way out of the top attorney role, they've been hushed about the reasons behind her departure, when it will be official and when a new nominee will be put forward.

Multiple outlets have reported that Hinds-Radix's opinions on a number of the high-profile cases brought against the city and the mayor over the past two years have differed from those held by administration, leading to clashes over the right defense.

On Tuesday, the New York Post reported that the former judge had raised objections over the Law Department's representation of Adams in a sexual assault lawsuit brought against him and was later asked by City Hall to resign.

When asked on Tuesday about why the mayor may prefer Mastro to Hinds-Radix, the mayor said he would "let everyone know... when we roll out and make our announcement official."

But the mayor also called Hinds-Radix a "longtime friend."

"There is no disagreement," Adams said. "All of us are dealing with these issues that we're facing, and we're all doing the best we can to make them happen."

Koshy named to lead Richmond County Criminal Court in historic appointment

By Robert Abruzzese
Queens Daily Eagle

Hon. Biju Koshy has been appointed as the supervising judge of Richmond County Criminal Court, becoming the first Asian American to occupy the judicial role in the history of the New York City Criminal Court.

The appointment was announced by Chief Judge Joseph Zayas and First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Norman St. George on Friday, following consultations with Presiding Justice Hector LaSalle of the Appellate Division, Second Department.

Koshy will take over from Acting Supervising Judge Alexander Jeong.

Zayas emphasized Koshy's understanding of the justice needs of the Staten Island community, which he has gained through his long-term residence and participation in local civic activities.

"I am proud to announce this historic and well-earned appointment," Zayas, a former Queens judge, said. "Biju Koshy is a fair-minded and talented judge, garnering a reputation for his innovative and collaborative leadership, legal acumen and outstanding work ethic."

"Judge Koshy has ably served the New York City Criminal Court in a variety of capacities for well over a decade," Zayas added. "Additionally, as a longtime Richmond County resident and participant in many local civic organizations and activities, he has a deep understanding of the justice needs of the Staten Island community."

St. George also commented on Judge

Koshy's familiarity with criminal law and court operations, emphasizing his readiness to excel in his new role. Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City Courts Deborah Kaplan mentioned Koshy's capabilities in problem-solving and adaptability as important for leading the Richmond County Criminal Court.

The Asian American Judges Association has expressed support for Koshy's appointment. Hon. Shahabuddeen Ally, president of the association and supervising judge of the New York County Civil Court, explained the significance of this appointment.

"The Asian American Judges Association is thrilled to celebrate the appointment of Judge Biju Koshy as supervising judge of Richmond County Criminal Court," said Ally. "Judge Koshy is an eminently qualified jurist who brings much-needed diversity to the bench. Diversity and inclusion matters at all levels. This is a good day for New York State."

Expressing gratitude for his appointment, Koshy reflected on his 14 years of service at the Richmond County Criminal Court.

"I am humbled and honored to receive this appointment and thankful to the New York State Courts' leadership team for this opportunity," Koshy said. "I have been privileged to work in the Richmond County Criminal Court for the past 14 years in various roles. I look forward to collaborating with our judges, court personnel and our partners in justice to serve the needs of all those who come before the Criminal Court."

Koshy's legal career spans various significant positions, including roles as a prosecutor



Judge Biju Koshy is the newly appointed supervising judge of Richmond County Criminal Court, making him the first Asian American to hold this position in the history of the New York City Criminal Court.
Eagle file photo by Caroline Ourso

and senior court attorney before his judicial appointment in 2021. He is also an active member of several legal and community organizations.

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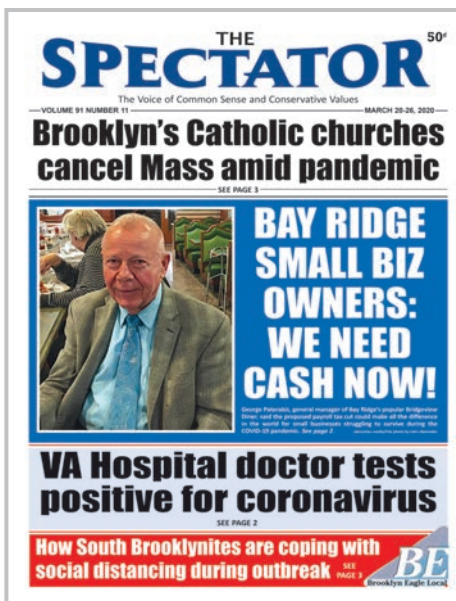
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Jen Hopewell,
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Migrant men allege ‘Grabba’ sweatshop stole their earnings in new complaint

By **Claudia Irizarry Aponte**
THE CITY

Two Ecuadorian migrants working in a Queens factory packaging loose “grabba” tobacco sold by a popular New York-based street brand have filed wage theft complaints to the state labor department, alleging thousands of dollars of unpaid labor and overtime.

The complaint against HotHead Grabba LLC comes weeks after women in a Brooklyn factory filed papers against the company with the New York State Department of Labor and the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration alleging wage theft and dangerous working conditions, as previously reported by THE CITY.

In the new complaints to the state DOL, submitted April 11, the two male workers assert they typically worked between 10 and 13 hours a day, seven days a week at an Ozone Park assembly line packing tobacco into five-gram plastic tubes for sale in retail outlets for several weeks in November and December.

A man they knew only as El Niño told them they would be paid \$10 an hour, the men said in their complaints and in a joint interview with THE CITY. The New York minimum wage at the time was \$15 an hour, now up to \$16.

They were never paid even the \$10 an hour, according to the complaint — either getting short-changed or not paid at all.

The older brother, who’s 34, got paid \$1,600 for 410 hours of work according to their calculations filed with the state — equivalent to \$3.90 per hour. His 25-year-old sibling received \$1,540 for 400 hours of work.

With overtime, they are owed \$6,545 and \$6,365 respectively, asserts the complaint, filed with the state by the immigrant advocacy organization Make the Road New York.

“We just want them to compensate us for our work,” the older brother said of HotHead Grabba. THE CITY is withholding the complainants’ names at their request. “We don’t want this to happen to anyone else ever again.”

In their complaint, the men said that even getting paid what they were able to get was a protracted process. “I asked El Niño repeatedly for



A Harlem market advertises selling HotHead Grabba, Feb. 23, 2024.

Credit: Alex Krales/THE CITY

my unpaid wages, eventually he told me to stop calling and he would let me know when my payment was ready but I never heard from him,” both of them assert on their complaint forms.

The brothers also described sweatshop-like conditions at the factory, where they listened to salsa, Colombian vallenato and English-language music on a speaker while sorting and packing the tobacco.

HotHead provided workers with surgical face masks, barely a buffer against the acrid tobacco smell, so strong that they stuffed their masks with napkins as an additional filter. At the end of his shifts, the younger brother said, his hands were sometimes swollen and cramped.

The ground tobacco, they said, was “everywhere” — inside their masks, stuck to their clothes and hanging in the air, making them nauseous and dizzy, they told THE CITY.

The factory, which the brothers said is windowless and unventilated, doesn’t have a bathroom, forcing workers to use the bathroom at a garage next door. On days where the garage was closed, workers had no choice but to wait until they got home to wash their faces and hands. They have not submitted complaints to OSHA.

The state labor department declined to discuss the new complaint, citing its ongoing investigation of HotHead Grabba.

OSHA is probing the Brooklyn women’s claims of enduring dizziness, fainting and nausea on the job, THE CITY previously reported.

A message sent to HotHead Grabba’s Instagram account Monday did not receive a response. Last month, a message from the account called “false” the initial wage theft allegations from women who had worked at the Brooklyn factory.

“How can we ever owe someone thousands of dollars we don’t offer that kind of help here, it’s impossible so,” the message read.

HotHead Grabba registered as a limited liability company with the state of New York on March 7, three days after OSHA inspected the Brooklyn factory and a week after THE CITY first exposed the allegations of sweatshop conditions at that facility.

Weekly Pay Promised

The brothers started working at the Ozone Park factory just three days after arriving in New York from their native Ecuador in November. A mutual friend told them about the job, saying they could earn between \$2,100 and \$2,200 a week packing ground tobacco.

Once at the factory, the younger brother said, the two went straight to work after “El Niño” explained how and when they would be compensat-

ed: \$8 hourly for the first week, and then \$10 hourly every week after, from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day, in cash payments at the end of each week.

The men worked seven days a week to meet their production quota: a daily minimum of 500 plastic bags filled with 30 five-gram branded tubes of packed “grabba” tobacco each, the equivalent of 15,000 individual tubes daily, they told THE CITY.

The men told THE CITY they were in charge of packing the tobacco while two other men were responsible for grinding the stripped tobacco leaves that arrived in piles of black garbage bags throughout the day.

At the time, the two brothers were unaware of New York’s minimum wage laws but they were happy with the pay they were promised, said the older sibling, compared to the \$20 a day he earned harvesting bananas back home.

The brothers didn’t receive their first payment until their third week at the job, \$520 and \$480, according to the complaint, after reporting 190 hours of work.

“El Niño told us that business was bad and that’s why they couldn’t pay us the full amount then, but they would in the future,” the younger sibling said.

But if business is so bad, he recalled asking El Niño, why hadn’t their hours and daily quota decreased? “He said that they would give the tobacco to the stores on credit, and that’s why they didn’t have any money,” the former worker said.

They each received two more payments before quitting on Dec. 18, 2023, according to their complaints to the DOL.

“It got to the point where we couldn’t afford the bus to work,” said the older brother. “That’s why we told them we were quitting.”

Another relative loaned the brothers money to cover their rent, a debt they are still repaying. Both said they continued texting and calling El Niño to ask for their money — and claim El Niño eventually told them to stop calling him, an assertion they included in their DOL complaints.

Now both work as construction day laborers, finding odd jobs in residential renovation projects and construction cleanup. The pay is better — \$16 an hour, they said — but between recent bad weather and a market saturated with other migrants like them, work is hard to find.

They only realized the extent of how much money they were owed when in February they attended a know-your-rights workshop at the Jackson Heights office of Make The Road and learned about New York’s minimum wage laws for the first time.

The younger brother said he hopes that HotHead will stop denying other workers their due wages.

“We’re angry, and we feel like we were cheated,” he said. “We want [HotHead] to really think about what they’ve done with our pay, and to stop cheating workers out of their pay and taking advantage of illegals.”

THE CITY is an independent, nonprofit news outlet dedicated to hard-hitting reporting that serves the people of New York.



Video shows conditions inside a HotHead Grabba packaging warehouse.

Credit: Screenshot from Video Obtained by THE CITY



A worker shows how swollen his hands would get after long shifts packing thousands of tubes of loose HotHead Grabba tobacco, April 17, 2024. Credit: Claudia Irizarry Aponte/THE CITY

Shaming Can Sometimes Be Helpful for Online Groups: A Political Scientist Tells When and How

By Jennifer Forestal
The Conversation

“Cancel culture” has a bad reputation. There is growing anxiety over this practice of publicly shaming people online for violating social norms ranging from inappropriate jokes to controversial business practices.

Online shaming can be a wildly disproportionate response that violates the privacy of the shamed while offering them no good way to defend themselves. These consequences lead some critics to claim that online shaming creates a “hate storm” that destroys lives and reputations, leaves targets with “permanent digital baggage” and threatens the fundamental right to publicly express yourself in a democracy. As a result, some scholars have declared that online shaming is a “moral wrong and social ill.”

But is online public shaming necessarily negative? I’m a political scientist who studies the relationship between digital technologies and democracy. In my research, I show how public shaming can be a valuable tool for democratic accountability. However, it is more likely to provide these positive effects within a clearly defined community whose members have many overlapping connections.

When shaming helps

Public shaming is a “horizontal” form of social sanctioning, in which people hold one another responsible for violating social norms, rather than appealing to higher authorities to do so. This makes it especially useful in democratic societies, as well as in cases where the shamers face power imbalances or lack access to formal authorities that could hold the shamed accountable.

For example, public shaming can be an effective strategy for challenging corporate power and behavior or maintaining journalistic norms in the face of plagiarism. By harnessing social pressure, public shaming can both motivate people to change their behavior and deter future violations by others.

But public shaming generally needs to occur in a specific social context to have these positive effects. First, everyone involved must recognize shared social norms and the shamer’s authority to sanction violations of them. Second, the shamed must care about their reputation. And third, the shaming must be accompanied by the possibility of reintegration, allowing the shamed to atone and be welcomed back into the fold.

This means that public shaming is more likely to deliver accountability in clearly defined communities where members have many overlapping connections, such as schools where all the parents know one another.

In communal spaces where people frequently run into each other, like workplaces, it is more likely that they understand shared social norms and the obligations to follow them. In these environments, it is more likely that people care about what others think of them, and that they know how to apologize when needed so that they can be reintegrated in the community.

Communities that connect

Most online shamings, however, do not take place in this kind of positive so-

cial context. On the social platform X, previously known as Twitter, which hosts many high-profile public shamings, users generally lack many shared connections with one another. There is no singular “X community” with universally shared norms, so it is difficult for users to collectively sanction norm violations on the platform.

Moreover, reintegration for targets of shamings on X is nearly impossible, since it is not clear to what community they should apologize, or how they should do so. It should not be surprising, then, that most highly publicized X shamings — like those of PR executive Justine Sacco, who was shamed for a racist tweet in 2013, and Amy Cooper, the “Central Park Karen” — tend to degenerate into campaigns of harassment and stigmatization.

But just because X shamings often turn pathological does not mean all online shamings do. On Threadless, an online community and e-commerce site for artists and designers, users effectively use public shaming to police norms around intellectual property. Wikipedians’ use of public “reverts” — reversals of edits to entries — has helped enforce the encyclopedia’s standards even with anonymous contributors. Likewise, Black Twitter has long used the practice of public shaming as an effective mechanism of accountability.

What sets these cases apart is their community structure. Shamings in these contexts are more productive because they occur within clearly defined groups in which members have more shared connections.

Acknowledging these differences in social context helps clarify why, for example, when a Reddit user was shamed by his subcommunity for posting an inappropriate photo, he accepted the rebuke, apologized and was welcomed back into the community. In contrast, those shamed on X often issue vague apologies before disengaging entirely.

Crossing online borders

There are still very real consequences of moving public shaming online. Unlike in most offline contexts, online shamings often play out on a massive scale that makes it more difficult for users to understand their connections with one another. Moreover, by creating opportunities to expand and overlap networks, the internet can blur community boundaries in ways that complicate the practice of public shaming and make it more likely to turn pathological.

For example, although the Reddit user was reintegrated into his community, the shaming soon spread to other subreddits, as well as national news outlets, which ultimately led him to delete his Reddit account altogether.

This example suggests that online public shaming is not straightforward. While shaming on X is rarely productive, the practice on other platforms, and in offline spaces characterized by clearly defined communities such as college campuses, can provide important public benefits.

Shaming, like other practices of a healthy democracy, is a tool whose value depends on how it’s used.

Jennifer Forestal is an assistant professor of political science at Loyola University Chicago



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Fernández Officially Named Nets Coach

Former Sacramento assistant to take reins in Brooklyn

By John Torenli, Sports Editor
Brooklyn Daily Eagle

The Brooklyn Nets had to wait a while to get their man.

But once the Sacramento Kings were ousted from the NBA play-in tournament last week, Nets general manager Sean Marks was officially able to name Jordi Fernández as Brooklyn's new head coach.

"We're thrilled to announce Jordi Fernández as Brooklyn's new head coach," Marks finally confirmed through a team-issued statement Monday, nearly a week after ESPN and other sources revealed the hire.

Terms of the deal were not released, as per team policy.

The 41-year-old Fernández spent the past two seasons on the Sacramento bench, helping the Kings reach the playoffs for the first time since 2006 in 2022-23 as Mike Brown's top associate.

This season, Sacramento finished 10 games above .500, but failed to grab one of the six coveted spots in the Western Conference that would have guaranteed it a first-round series.

Instead, the Kings were relegated to ninth-place in the West, where they knocked off Golden State in the 9-10 matchup of the play-in before last Thursday night's ousting in New Orleans with the No. 8 seed on the line.

If Sacramento had slipped past the Pelicans, Brooklyn would still be waiting for Fernández to show up here.

The native of Badalona, Spain will be in Industry City at the team's HSS Training Center Wednesday at 11 a.m. to begin his duties as the 24th coach in Nets history.

Marks reportedly interviewed a dozen candidates, including interim coach Kevin Ollie, during the regular season's final month before settling on Fernández, who has worked at the amateur, international and professional levels.

"As we progressed through an extensive search over the past six weeks, it became increasingly clear that Jordi is the

best coach to lead our team forward," Marks intimated.

"Jordi brings a diverse set of experiences and basketball knowledge gained over the course of a coaching career that has taken him around the world.

An assistant for six seasons in Denver and part of the player-development team in Cleveland for several years, Fernández guided Team Canada to its highest finish ever in international competition, winning a bronze medal at the 2023 FIBA Basketball World Cup.

He also coached Canton of the NBA's G-League to a pair of Eastern Conference finals as head coach.

Now, he inherits a team that missed the postseason for the first time in six campaigns and finished with 50 losses.

Ollie took over for former coach Jacque Vaughn after the Nets tumbled from 13-10 to 21-33 at the All-Star break. Brooklyn went 11-17 under Ollie, but was eliminated from playoff contention on April 3 while the Kings played on.

Fernández did get a recent look at his new team, visiting Barclays Center with Sacramento on April 7.

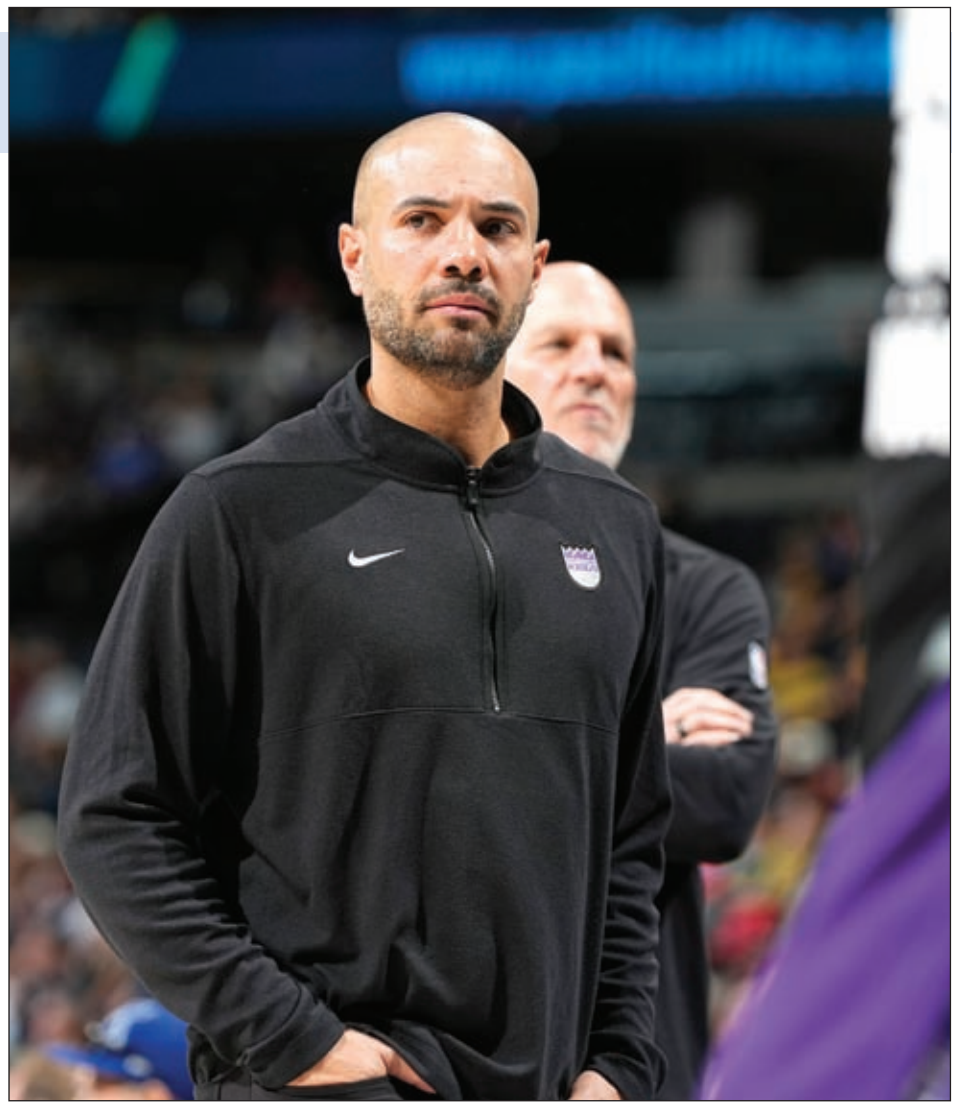
The Kings rolled to a 30-point win in Brooklyn, but that didn't deter Fernández from welcoming the opportunity to hold one of the league's 30 head-coaching positions.

"I am truly grateful to lead the Nets as head coach and cannot thank (Nets owners) Joe and Clara (Tsai), and Sean enough for this exciting and humbling opportunity," Fernández noted in the release.

"My family and I are thrilled to join such an incredible organization and become part of the vibrant Brooklyn community. I am eager to get to work with this talented group of players and collectively drive our team forward.

There is talent on the Nets roster.

Mikal Bridges is coming off an up-and-down campaign after shining here following his arrival in the Kevin Durant trade-deadline deal in February 2023.



Jordi Fernández will be in Industry City Wednesday morning, when he will officially be introduced as the 24th head coach of the Brooklyn Nets. AP Photo by David Zalubowski



Nets general manager Sean Marks interviewed a dozen candidates before picking former Sacramento assistant Jordi Fernández to lead Brooklyn. AP Photo by Mary Altaffer



Both Kevin Ollie (left) and Jacque Vaughn tried to turn the Nets around last season, but Brooklyn will welcome new head coach Jordi Fernández on Wednesday. AP Photo by David Zalubowski

Cam Thomas emerged as the Nets' top scorer for the season and led them in points in each of their final 10 contests.

Nic Claxton, an unrestricted free agent this summer, finished tied for sixth in the NBA in blocked shots and just missed averaging a double-double with 11.8 points and 9.9 rebounds per game this year.

Point guard Dennis Schroder, forward Cam Johnson and veteran power forward Dorian Finney-Smith give Brooklyn added depth, as will the return of blossoming young players like Noah Clowney, Jalen Wilson and Tandon Watford.

Marks believes Fernández will make the most of his current roster, regardless of offseason changes via trade or free agency. Also, Brooklyn's new coach will have a say in whom the Nets select during the NBA Draft in June.

"Each step of the way, Jordi has consistently demonstrated the ability to implement strong processes and creative systems designed to optimize each team's specific roster," Marks gushed.

"He's proven the ability to build genuine relationships and garner the respect of players of all levels, and we're confident

that our players will benefit greatly from his expertise. We look forward to Jordi, Kelsey and their children joining the Nets family and calling Brooklyn home."

Ownership was just as pleased with the hire.

"We are excited to welcome Jordi Fernández and his family to the Nets big family," said Tsai.

"Jordi's character as a leader and his emphasis on structure, process and habits will instill a Nets identity that our fans will want to root for. We look forward to working with Jordi to build a sustainable winning culture in Brooklyn."

Unlike his predecessors here in Brooklyn -- Avery Johnson, P.J. Carlesimo, Jason Kidd, Lionel Hollins, Kenny Atkinson, Nash and Vaughn -- Fernández is looking forward to a long tenure on the corner of Atlantic and Flatbush.

One that will ultimately result in this borough's first major pro sports championship since the 1955 Brooklyn Dodgers.

"Together, we will be fully committed to building something special for Nets fans and the borough to be proud of for years to come," he said.



Our World In Pictures

BRAZIL — In recognition of those who came first: An Indigenous woman attends the 20th annual Free Land Indigenous Camp in Brasilia, Brazil, Monday, April 22, 2024. The 7-day event aims to show the unity of Brazil's Indigenous peoples in their fight for the demarcation of their lands and their rights.

Photo: Luis Nova/AP



DENVER — Celebrity action right under the net: Denver Nuggets guard Reggie Jackson (7) and Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (23) eye the ball during the second half in Game 2 of an NBA basketball first-round playoff series, Monday, April 22, 2024, in Denver.

Photo: Jack Dempsey/AP



JAKARTA — More problems accepting election results: A protester shouts slogans as smoke billows from burning tires during a rally alleging widespread fraud in the Feb. 14 presidential election near Constitutional Court in Jakarta, Indonesia, Monday, April 22, 2024. The country's top court on Monday rejected appeals lodged by two losing presidential candidates who are demanding a revote, alleging widespread irregularities and fraud at the February polls.

Photo: Achmad Ibrahim/AP



MILAN — At this global fashion center, 'WE LIKE SHORT SHORTS...': Inter Milan's Marcus Thuram, left, and Inter Milan's Federico Dimarco celebrate at the end of the Serie A soccer match between AC Milan and Inter Milan at the San Siro stadium in Milan, Italy, Monday, April 22, 2024.

Photo: Luca Bruno/AP



Our World In Pictures



KYIV — The face of hope for survival of prisoners: A woman holds a “Free Azov” sign during a rally in Kyiv, Ukraine, aiming to raise awareness on the fate of Ukrainian prisoners of war, Sunday, April 21, 2024. The U.S. House of Representatives swiftly approved \$95 billion in foreign aid for Ukraine, Israel and other U.S. allies in a rare Saturday session as Democrats and Republicans banded together after months of hard-right resistance over renewed American support for repelling Russia’s invasion. Photo: Francisco Seco/AP



VIETNAM — It’s a big deal, and it’s bagged for shipping: A worker carries a bag of rice at a warehouse in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2024. Vietnam is the world’s third-largest rice exporter, and the staple importance to Vietnamese culture is palpable in the Mekong Delta. Photo: Jae C. Hong/AP



LA PAZ — Earth Day celebrated with earthy instruments: Aymara Indigenous musicians play during a ceremony in honor of the “Pachamama,” or Mother Earth, on Earth Day in La Paz, Bolivia, Monday, April 22, 2024. Photo: Juan Karita/AP



ATLANTA — ‘I dub thee safe, Sir Goodslide...’: Atlanta Braves’ Orlando Arcia is playfully tagged on the head by Miami Marlins second base Luis Arraez (3) after sliding into second base with a double in the seventh inning of a baseball game Monday, April 22, 2024, in Atlanta. Photo: John Bazemore/AP

Poor communication, out-of-service equipment hindered response to tropical storm, comptroller finds

By **Katie Honan**
THE CITY

New York City officials were unprepared for torrential rainfall last September that flooded roads, homes and schools, according to a new report from the city comptroller's office, which found that poor communication, staff shortages and out-of-service equipment hampered the city's response.

The report, released Monday by Comptroller Brad Lander, focused on how city agencies handled Tropical Storm Ophelia, which dumped 8.65 inches of rain in some parts of the city on September 29, 2023. At the storm's peak, some parts of Brooklyn saw up to 3 inches of rain in an hour.

It was the wettest day in New York City since the remnants of Hurricane Ida hit in September 2021. It was also the wettest September day on record at John F. Kennedy Airport, surpassing the previous mark set by Hurricane Donna in 1960, according to the National Weather Service.

But despite promising to change the way it notifies and prepares for extreme weather, city officials still seemed surprised by the storm, Lander said.

"One thing that's critical in making sure that you're actually ready for storms when they hit and in strengthening public confidence is to do an investigation into how things went when it happened," he said at a press conference Monday.

The biggest issue, Lander said, was that his team found that the majority of the trucks the city uses to clean catch basins of debris were out of service on the day of the storm, with just 19 of 51 operating.

The Department of Sanitation maintains the trucks on behalf of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

That made it harder for DEP to inspect the 964 catch basins (out of 153,000 total) identified for priority inspection — clearing fewer than half of them before the storm.

A mechanic shortage at DSNY caused the repair backlog, which only got worse as the year went on, the report found. The number of out-of-



Streets were flooded in South Williamsburg as Tropical Storm Ophelia hit the city, Sept. 29, 2023.

Credit: Gwynne Hogan/THE CITY

service trucks rose to 77% by the end of 2023, up from 63% at the time of the storm.

A spokesperson for the mayor, Liz Garcia, defended their administration's response and noted that the comptroller's report contained a "slew of inaccuracies."

"Since the start of the administration, we have invested billions of dollars in climate infrastructure that has already started to save lives and prevent damage to properties — just take the Jewel Streets project, where the first phase of our \$75 million flood management investment got this neighborhood dry in a few hours, as opposed to the weeks it took during Hurricane Ida," she said in a statement.

"And in the face of Tropical Storm Ophelia

— which brought more total rainfall than Ida in some parts of the city — our city agencies inspected over 900 catch basins, distributed thousands of flood barriers, rain barrels, and other protective tools, and got the word out to millions of New Yorkers two days ahead of the event."

Catch basin cleaning is a multi-agency effort, she noted, adding that more than 900 catch basins prone to clogging were cleaned by other agencies like the Department of Transportation. And DEP as well as the Department of Citywide Administrative Services are prioritizing buying new trucks, she added.

The comptroller's office also found deficiencies in the city's notification system through the New York City Emergency Management department, or NYCEM.

The office activated an emergency flood plan at 8:30 a.m. the day before the storm, which let them coordinate with other agencies. But "this proactive approach was not as effectively extended to public communications," the report said.

Lander's team noted that the mayor's first press conference on the storm was held at 11:40 a.m. on Sept. 29 — three hours after the storm began. The Department of Education first posted on social media at 12:35 p.m. the day of the storm, and updated its website on school dismissal at 2:30 p.m.

The New York City Housing Authority sent out robocalls at 4:45 p.m., nine hours after flooding began.

Most New Yorkers are not enrolled in the NotifyNYC alert systems for specific events; the report found, for example, that just 2.7% of New Yorkers over the age of 16 signed up for flash-flooding warnings.

The basement apartment notification list has just 2,378 subscribers, which is less than 1% of the estimated number of people living in these

dwelling in the city, the report found. The report noted that these "residents are an especially hard-to-reach population because many basement apartments are not formally permitted, and many speak languages other than English."

Garcia said the NotifyNYC alert system reaches more than a million New Yorkers, and the emergency management office worked with DEP to distribute 4,000 flood barriers, 7,500 rain barrels, 500 sump pumps, and 500 flood sensors to people in flood-prone neighborhoods last year.

Extreme Weather Coordinator MIA

Another issue identified in the report was over the "extreme weather coordinator," a role originated by former Mayor Bill de Blasio in response to Hurricane Ida. On the day of the storm, that coordinator position was not filled, according to the report.

In the days following the storm, a spokesperson for the mayor said City Hall had appointed someone internally to take on the role — but refused to say who it was.

Lander said the Adams administration told their team last month that Camille Joseph Varlack, the mayor's chief of staff, has been assigned the role, which includes coordinating with other agencies during a weather emergency and arranging run-throughs of various scenarios.

"Under this administration, our extreme weather coordinator has always reported to the chief of staff, and as we have continued to think about best practices around weather preparedness, that position has now shifted to Chief of Staff Joseph Varlack," Garcia said in a statement, although she would not name who the previous "extreme weather coordinator" was.

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A New York City catch basin collects storm water.

Credit: Screengrab/NYC Water/YouTube

What's EMTALA, the patient protection law at the center of Supreme Court abortion arguments?

By Amanda Seitz
Associated Press

The Supreme Court will hear arguments Wednesday in a case that could determine whether doctors can provide abortions to pregnant women with medical emergencies in states that enact abortion bans.

The Justice Department has sued Idaho over its abortion law, which only allows a woman to get an abortion when her life — not her health — is at risk. The state law has raised questions about when a doctor is able to provide the stabilizing treatment that federal law requires.

The federal law, called the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act, or EMTALA, requires doctors to stabilize or treat any patient who shows up at an emergency room.

Here's a look at the history of EMTALA, what rights it provides patients and how a Supreme Court ruling might change that.

What protections does EMTALA provide me at an ER?

Simply put, EMTALA requires emergency rooms to offer a medical exam if you present at their facility. The law applies to nearly all emergency rooms — any that accept Medicare funding.

Those emergency rooms are required to stabilize patients if they do have a medical emergency before discharging or transferring them. And if the emergency room doesn't have the resources or staff to properly treat that patient, staff are required to arrange a medical transfer to another hospital, after they've confirmed the facility can accept the patient.

So, for example, if a pregnant woman shows up at an emergency room concerned that she is in labor but there is no OB/GYN on staff, hospital staff cannot simply direct the woman to go elsewhere.

Why was this law created?

Look to Chicago in the early 1980s.

Doctors at the city's public hospital were confronting a huge problem: thousands of patients, many of them Black or Latino, were arriving in very bad condition — and they were sent there by private hospitals in the city who refused to treat them. Most of them did not have health insurance.

Chicago wasn't alone. Doctors working in public hospitals around the country reported similar issues. Media reports, including one of a pregnant woman who delivered a stillborn baby after being turned away by two hospitals because she didn't have insurance, intensified public pressure on politicians to act.

Congress drafted legislation with Republican Sen. David Durenberger of Minnesota saying at the time, "Americans, rich or poor, deserve access to quality health care. This question of access should be the government's responsibility at the federal, state, and local levels."

Then President Ronald Reagan signed the bill into law in 1986.

What happens if a hospital turns away a patient?

The hospital is investigated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. If they find the hospital violated a patient's right to care, they can lose their Medicare funding, a vital source of revenue for most hospitals to keep their doors open.

Usually, however, the federal government issues fines when a hospital violates EMTALA. They can add up to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

WHY IS THE SUPREME COURT LOOKING AT THE LAW?

Since the Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to an abortion, President Joe Biden, a Democrat, has repeatedly reminded hospitals that his administration considers an abortion part of the stabilizing care that EMTALA requires facilities to provide.

The administration argues that Idaho's law prevents ER doctors from offering an abortion if a



The Supreme Court is seen on Friday, April 21, 2023, in Washington. The U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments Wednesday in a case that could determine whether doctors can provide abortions to pregnant women with medical emergencies in states that enact abortion bans.

AP Photo/Alex Brandon, File

woman needs one in a medical emergency.

But Idaho's attorney general has pointed out that EMTALA also requires hospitals to consider the health of the "unborn child" in its treatment, too.

What are advocates saying?

Anti-abortion advocates argue that state laws banning abortion can co-exist with the federal law that requires hospitals to stabilize pregnant patients in an emergency.

The prominent anti-abortion group Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America said in a statement to The Associated Press on Friday that all 50 states offer life-saving care to women. The group responded to an AP article that found pregnancy-related EMTALA complaints spiked in some states with strict abortion bans in 2022.

"This is not a red state-blue state issue, this is a nationwide need for better emergency care for women and their unborn children," said Kelsey Pritchard, the group's state public affairs director. "EMTALA clearly requires care for both patients."

But many doctors say it's not as clear cut as anti-abortion advocates claim. Idaho's state law banning abortion, except for the life of the mother, has left some doctors weighing if a patient is close enough to death to treat.

Most other states allow doctors to perform abortions to save the health of a mother. But, if the Supreme Court rules in Idaho's favor, it could invite other states to pass restrictions without that exemption.

In a statement released Monday, Jack Resneck, the former president of the American Medical Association, said Idaho's law forces doctors to withhold proper treatment for patients.

The state's "dangerous standard cannot be applied to the real-life situations faced in emergency departments every day," Resneck said. "There is no bright line when each patient's condition suddenly reaches 'life-threatening,' and deteriorating patients don't want their physicians delaying care."

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How much housing will Hochul's new deal build?

By Greg David
THE CITY

Gov. Kathy Hochul called the package of housing proposals approved by the Legislature Saturday as part of the state budget “a once in a lifetime housing deal.”

Mayor Eric Adams said triumphantly that his administration had gotten everything it wanted as it tries to create an average of 50,000 new homes a year in hopes of achieving his moonshot goal of 500,000 units over the next decade.

Key provisions offer a tax break for new developments that guarantee some affordable apartments, speed the conversion of obsolete office buildings to residential use, increase the number of apartments that can be built in a single building and let landlords invest in renovating vacant apartments.

But each one of those elements contains restrictions and requirements that make their impact highly uncertain.

“The new tax break is better than nothing,” said Daniel Bernstein, a lawyer at Rosenberg & Estis who specializes in incentive programs for development, “but whether it is going to be enough to produce robust housing development is unclear.”

Saturday's vote to approve a budget containing the housing reforms comes after a 16-month struggle between the governor and mayor, who jointly proposed sweeping changes in current laws in January 2023, and the Legislature, which failed to enact a single one of those measures last year.

This year, the governor set aside highly controversial measures she had earlier proposed to force construction in the suburbs and set out to concentrate on help for the city. She also backed a severely weakened “good cause” anti-eviction law, allowing legislators who had made tenant protections a condition of their support for any other housing measures to get behind the package.

Caveats aside, there is no doubt more housing will be built thanks to the new laws.

“These are significant policy measures that will spur supply,” said Rachel Fee, executive director of the New York Housing Conference, an affordable housing policy group.

Replacement for 421-a

The most complicated calculations for developers will be the financial implications of the new tax credit, called 485-x. Offsetting high taxes on multifamily apartment buildings, it replaces a break called 421-a, which provided property tax exemptions up to three decades and still costs the city about \$1 billion a year in forgone revenue.

New construction has plummeted since 421-a expired in June 2022.

Under 485-x, builders will have to agree to set aside either 20% of units in smaller buildings or 25% in larger ones at below market rents for people making no more than 100% of the area median income of \$140,000 for a family of three. The average AMI must be no more than 80%.

In addition all projects with more than 100 units have minimum construction wage requirements of \$35 an hour, with two sets of higher wages for large projects in Manhattan south of 96th Street and waterfront and adjacent areas of Queens and Brooklyn. Most of the tax breaks last 35 years.

But buildings with more than 150 units in Manhattan south of 96th Street and the Brooklyn



Gov. Kathy Hochul speaks in Albany about reaching a deal on housing with legislative leaders during their budget negotiations, April 15, 2024.

Credit: Mike Groll/Office of Governor Kathy Hochul

waterfront will have even stricter rules. They must adhere to the highest wage scale and set aside 25% of the units as affordable at an AMI averaging only 60%. In return, they will get a 40-year tax break or five years longer than elsewhere.

Because of the rules for these large projects, “the new tax exemption program for housing production, 485-x, will produce less rental housing than its predecessor 421-a,” said James Whelan, president of the Real Estate Board of New York.

One bellwether of the impact of the tax break may be Innovation QNS, a \$2 billion development in Astoria approved by the City Council in 2022 that has been moribund since 421-a expired. The project envisions 3,200 new apartments with an exceptionally high 45% of them set aside as affordable.

“The math was tight enough under the old tax break,” said Hal Rosenbluth, head of nearby Kaufman-Astoria Studios and a partner in Innovation QNS. “I am hoping the deal allows the math to come out right because this area needs economic drivers.”

The legislature also agreed to extend the deadline to 2031 from 2026 for competition of projects that had qualified for 421-a by getting their foundations in the ground before its expiration as long as they don't use an option allowing rents for some affordable units to be 130% of AMI.

Bernstein notes that his clients have thousands of units in limbo with foundations poured but uncertain they could meet the 2026 deadline. If they can obtain financing they will be able to restart work quickly.

A provision that is designed to both produce housing and stabilize the hard-hit office market offers landlords who convert their office buildings to residential a 90% tax break on residential property taxes as long as they set aside a quarter of the apartments at an average of 80% AMI.

The Adams administration has estimated conversions could add 20,000 more units.

The key is that the sooner conversion starts, the longer the tax break lasts, an incentive to

jumpstart office-to-residential projects. Buildings with permits issued by June 2026 qualify for 35 years but buildings that get a permit after June 2028 get only 25 years.

“That means you've gotta get going right now,” SL Green Chief Executive Marc Holliday said last week while discussing his company's first quarter profits. “This isn't wait-and-see.”

SL Green seems likely to file permits soon to renovate 750 Third Avenue, built in 1957 and today only 15% occupied by tenants in one of the hardest-hit office corridors in Manhattan. It could produce about 500 units of housing.

“It will be great for the city, great for struggling office corridors where foot traffic has declined with the consequences for retailers and restaurants,” said Rob Schiffer, SL Green executive vice president for development. “Conversion takes that specific building out of the availability and any tenants remaining become tenants for other buildings.”

Yes to City of Yes

The legislature also allowed the city to use its land use review process to increase what is known as the floor area ratio or FAR cap, which for decades has limited any new residential building's square footage to 12 times the area of the land. To comply with the new law, any new residential project bigger than 12 FAR must include affordable housing.

The Adams administration is already pursuing the creation of zoning that would designate areas with FARs of 15 or 18 through its City of Yes zoning proposal to build more housing in every neighborhood of the city, which is expected to reach the Council for a vote at the end of the year.

The link between the new housing package and The City of Yes plan is crucial.

“Proposals in The City of Yes to add more residential zoning capacity, especially in medium- and high-density neighborhoods, would not be enough to spur development without tax incen-

tives passed in the state budget,” said Fee of the Housing Conference.

The most controversial change in the package — an increase in how much a property owner can spend to improve vacant rent regulated apartments — could have the least impact.

The 2019 tenant-friendly rent reforms imposed a strict \$15,000 cap on the amount that landlords can recoup for renovations and limited resulting rent increases to no more than \$83 a month. Landlords have said the amount is inadequate to make the vast majority of units rentable when a long-term tenant leaves, so they just leave the unit vacant.

About 26,000 rent-stabilized units were vacant and not available for rent in early 2023, the most recent census survey of New York City's housing found.

Over the loud objections from tenant groups and progressive Democrats angry at the first change to 2019 law reforms, the package increases the amount a landlord can recover on renovations to vacant apartments from \$15,000 to \$30,000 in most cases and \$50,000 in some instances. It also imposes new paperwork requirements.

“The increases to the cap will provide minor relief to a small number of buildings, but the changes in the process are fraught with legal traps that will deter most property owners from using it,” said Jay Martin, head of the Community Housing Improvement Program, which represents owners of small and mid-sized rent regulated buildings.

For example, the cost of renovating a 750-square-foot, one bedroom apartment in Queens that had been vacated by a long-term tenant would be \$111,000, according to an estimate by an owner with an extensive portfolio of rent regulated buildings that asked not to be named.

The amounts include lead paint abatement at more than \$13,000 and work to upgrade, plumbing and electrical systems and install a new kitchen and bathroom.

This owner said he was unlikely to renovate and lease any of his vacant units.

While the legislature gave the city flexibility on FAR rules, it continued to insist on dictating the details of other actions the Adams administration requested.

The city had asked for flexibility to legalize basement apartments and other so-called accessory housing units. The legislature only agreed to a pilot program on basement units in 15 of the city's 59 community districts with one in Queens, where the need is greatest, to six in Manhattan and four each in the Bronx and Brooklyn. None are in Staten Island.

So far there are no new estimates of how many new units each one of the changes will produce. And factors the state controls won't ultimately be the only ones determining what landlords and developers will do.

“High interest rates remain the largest hurdle to future development,” said Brett Gottlieb, a real estate partner at the law firm Herrick Feinstein. “And construction costs are an enormous part of the cost picture.”

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A rendering shows part of the Innovation QNS development in Astoria.

Credit: Rendering Courtesy of Innovation QNS, ODA Architecture



Mayor Eric Adams speaks at City Hall about the need to build more affordable housing, March 4, 2024.

Credit: Ben Fractenberg/THE CITY

NYC can now set its own speed limits via budget measure pushed by Queens pols

Continued from page 1

from speeding drivers and deliver justice to grieving families like Sammy Cohen Eckstein's and Bayron Palomino Arroyo's," the BP said in a statement on Tuesday. "That's exactly what the long overdue passage of Sammy's Law, allowing New York City to finally set its own speed limits, will help us do."

State elected officials who championed the bill in Albany, had told the Eagle that they were ready to do it last year, but applaud the bill's inclusion in the budget.

"I'm elated that we were able to include Sammy's Law in the state budget," said Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas, herself a victim of traffic violence earlier this year. "As someone who has been hit by a car I know the trauma that this can cause for those of us that may be lucky to walk away from a crash."

"But this victory is for all of the loved ones who we have lost and were not able to make it back home," she added. "It is for Sammy and his mother, Amy Cohen, who has fought relentlessly for this moment. It is for Bayron Palomino Arroyo, a child from East Elmhurst we recently lost to traffic violence. It is for Dolma Naadhun, a child from Astoria who was killed in a crash while crossing the street with her family in Astoria."

State Senator Jessica Ramos led a rally and march last month calling for the passage of Sammy's Law and other safety measures in Corona following the death of Palomino Arroyo.

"Being able to come back from Albany and tell the parents in my district that we were able to get Sammy's Law done is so meaningful," Ramos said in a statement. "As a mother myself, I'm so relieved that this is now law. This was made possible by families who took the pain that came from incredible loss and channeled it into creating change. Now, I'm passing the baton to the city to lower the speed limits in the areas that are at high risk for children and pedestrians."

For Queens parents who have lost children to traffic violence, Sammy's Law's inclusion in the budget is a dose of justice in and of itself.

"I'm extremely happy, very happy on behalf of my son," said Raul Ampuero, who's 9-year-old son, Giovanni, was killed by a driver in Jackson Heights in 2018.

"Things could be done differently, people don't need to die, kids don't need to die," Ampuero said in a Monday phone call with the Eagle. "Our goal, our mission, especially myself on behalf of my son – I want people



Queens elected officials pushed Sammy's Law at two separate rallies in March, calling for street safety measures after recent traffic deaths.
Eagle photo by Ryan Schwach



Raul Ampuero, who's 9-year-old son Giovanni was killed by a driver in Jackson Heights in 2018, said he is very happy that Sammy's Law has finally made it over the finish line.
Eagle photo by Ryan Schwach

to live longer."

Ampuero got involved with the advocacy group Families for Safe Streets following Giovanni's death, a cause he says he probably

wouldn't have gotten into had he not had to deal with it himself.

"A lot of people think speed cameras, stop signs, so many traffic lights, or even reducing

the speed limit is very traumatic for them," he said. "And unfortunately, they don't understand because it didn't happen to them."

Ampuero believes that Sammy's Law is a big step in making streets safer for New Yorkers and Queens residents, calling it "common sense," while also saying there is more that needs to be done both legislatively – like increasing the number of school crossing guards – and through education.

"[We need to] educate people how important it is to reduce the speed limit so they will be able to understand and educate people to lower your speed and also understand that this is a lethal weapon – a car will kill somebody," he said. "We're going to be doing many, many more things with the mayor, the governor, and this is something that needs to be done in the City of New York for the sake of our kids and our families."

"We're going to continue, this is not the end of it," he added. "We're going to try to do many more things to minimize traffic violence."

Outside of Albany and in Queens Criminal Court last week, similar progress was being made in holding drivers accountable.

There, a man was indicted in the March 13 crash that killed Palomino Arroyo.

Last week, 52-year-old Flushing resident, Jose Barcia was indicted on criminal charges for allegedly speeding through a crosswalk while making a left turn, killing Palomino Arroyo and injuring his 10-year-old brother.

Barcia had previously been charged in a criminal complaint on March 14 with criminally negligent homicide, failing to yield to oncoming traffic while making a left turn, disobeying speed restrictions, two counts of failing to provide the right of way to pedestrians, and two counts of failing to exercise due care.

The grand jury indictment was filed on April 18, and he will be arraigned on the indictment April 30.

"Both victims in this case, the boy who died and his brother, were with their mother crossing the street with the light in their favor in broad daylight," Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz said following the indictment.

"This tragedy was completely preventable, if not for the alleged recklessness of the defendant," she added. "Obeying road safety regulations is not a choice. It is the law. And more than that, it is a personal obligation to safeguard everyone we encounter on our shared roadways. The grand jury handed up an indictment on serious charges against this defendant. I continue to send my deepest condolences to the young victims' loved ones."

Queens man indicted for killing girlfriend at Maspeth bar

By Ryan Schwach
Queens Daily Eagle

A Queens man from Glendale was indicted Friday for the murder of his girlfriend at a Maspeth tavern at the end of March, Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz said.

Marcin Pieciak, a 36-year-old man from Glendale, was indicted on murder charges in Queens Criminal Court for the murder of his girlfriend, Sarah McNally, at the bar she was working at.

According to the charges, on March 30, at approximately 6:30 p.m., Pieciak arrived at the Ceili House Bar at 69-56 Grand Ave. in Maspeth where 41-year-old McNally was working as a bartender.

Pieciak was seen on video footage walking behind the bar in the bartender area toward McNally.

The defendant then is alleged to have stabbed McNally 19 times in the neck, back and chest causing significant wounds and bleeding.

Pieciak then cut his own throat several times and tried to leave the bar. A bar patron tried to detain Pieciak until police arrived.

Pieciak allegedly came out of the bar brandishing two knives, waving them at police, who were able to safely disarm him and recover the knives.

McNally was taken to the hospital for treatment of her extensive wounds, which included damage to her carotid artery and a severed spine.

She was pronounced dead due to her injuries.

There are reports that there were issues in the relationship prior to the killing.

Pieciak was arraigned Friday on an indictment charging him with murder in the second degree and two counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the fourth degree.

Supreme Court Justice Ushir Pandit-Durant remanded the defendant and ordered him to return to court on June 18.

"The defendant is accused of cruelly and brazenly taking the life of someone he purported to care for and doing so in front of her colleagues and bar patrons," Katz said. "We are grateful to the grand jury for returning these serious charges and we will work to seek justice for Sarah McNally."



A Queens man was indicted last week for the stabbing and murder of his girlfriend in Maspeth in March.
File photo by Walter Karling