

Description of NYC Government Positions

This document is a brief synopsis of the power and responsibilities of each position up for election in NYC 2021. It has been created by the Columbia Postdoctoral Workers, Local 4100 Community Action Program working group as an informational tool for members. If you have any questions or suggestions please write us at columbiapostdoctunion@gmail.com

Mayor

Limited to two consecutive four-year terms, but can run again after four-year break

- Chief Executive
 - Power to appoint and remove the heads of over 40 different city agencies, including Department of Education, NYPD, NYFD, sanitation, majority of City Planning Commission (see zoning and land use), etc.
 - Full control over NYC public schools
- Budget
 - Oversees the preliminary city budget--the largest municipal budget in the US (~\$92 billion)--which sets the terms of negotiations
 - Oversees office that contracts with municipal labor unions
- Legislation
 - Oversees all city-level legislation passed by the City Council and can sign it into law or veto it
- State & Federal Relationships
 - Manages relationships with State and Federal lawmakers and advocates for NYC priorities
 - These relationships are important for many reasons, particularly housing and healthcare
- Zoning and Land Use
 - Can propose changes to city-wide zoning laws
 - Limited veto power on Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) rulings
 - ULURP is basically the complicated process a developer must go through if they want to use land in a way that doesn't match its zoning designation
- [Housing and Homelessness](#)
 - Most of what the mayor can do with respect to housing relates to the budget and zoning regulations
 - Mayor's office can also design tax incentives for affordable housing construction and create more meaningful opportunities for residents to engage in the creation of housing policy
 - NYCHA: change management structure; integrate NYCHA into local code enforcement system, providing residents the same rights as tenants in private homes; create Preservation Trust
- Transportation
 - MTA is NOT really controlled by the City

- But, the Mayor can affect transportation by changing parking rules; creating bikeways, bike lanes, and bus-only streets and lanes; and funding new forms of transportation like extended ferry service and bike shares.
- Legal System
 - Mayor appoints judges to NYC criminal, family, and civil courts
- Healthcare
 - Protect and expand NYC Care and NYC Public Option, Metroplus
 - Advocate at state level for NY Health Act

City Council Members

Limited to two consecutive four-year terms, but can run again after a four year break

51 City Council Districts in NYC

- Legislation
 - Introduce and vote on legislation
- Land Use
 - Approves or rejects land use proposals approved by the City Planning Commission
 - Has final say on land use decisions--can override Mayor's veto with 2/3 majority vote
- Oversight
 - 35 committees overseeing various functions of city government
 - Committees hold hearings
- Budget
 - Negotiate budget with the Mayor
- Discretionary budget
 - Each Councilmember has a discretionary budget to fund local projects and programs run by non-profit organizations.

Borough Presidents

Limited to two consecutive four-year terms

Since 1990, these are mainly advisory/ceremonial positions

- Appointments
 - Each Borough Pres gets to appoint
 - 1 member to the City Planning Commission
 - 2 members to the NYC Panel for Education Policy (aka the Board of Ed)
 - Community Boards (council members often follow their recommendations on land use)
- Discretionary budget
 - Together, they control about 5% of the capital budget, which they distribute through capital grants to schools, cultural agencies, etc.
- Land use

- Arguably their biggest power. Borough presidents and community boards (with a number of members appointed by the Borough president) are tasked with reviewing proposed changes to the city's land use.
- Bully Pulpit
 - Essentially cheerleaders for their respective boroughs. They can use their position to create a participatory process for communities affected by the budget.

District Attorney

Four-year terms, no term limits

- Top prosecutor
 - Oversees all criminal prosecutions in the Borough
 - Decides what to prosecute (e.g., can decide not to prosecute drug possession charges) and how
 - Decides whether to request bail
 - Can seize property as part of prosecution
 - Decides whether and how plea bargains are made
 - Oversees hundreds of assistant DAs and other staff