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Dear Neighbors,

Two significant events took place at City Hall yesterday: the budget handshake and the passage of [Int. 775-A](#), which sets time limits for designating individual landmarks and historic districts. I supported the budget deal, and I voted "NO" on Int. 775-A.



The budget handshake at City Hall (June 8, 2016). Credit: @NYCCouncil

One of the most important ways the City comes together is to agree on budget priorities and how to best spend our resources. The Mayor and Speaker of the City Council shook hands on that agreement for Fiscal Year 2017, which runs from July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017. This is the earliest budget agreement in over a decade. It is a fiscally responsible budget that includes funding to support all New Yorkers.

We agreed to permanently fund an additional **\$100 million for youth programs** that will keep our teens engaged in summer jobs and constructive activities over the

summer and after school. We increased opportunities for young people across the board: the number of summer youth jobs to 60,000 (10,000 more than last year); year-round youth jobs to 6,000 (from 5,000); slots in after school programs for elementary school children to 6,600; and after school slots for middle school children to 26,000. We committed to **permanent six-day library service citywide**. The City also **added \$250 million into the Retiree Healthcare Benefits Trust Fund** for a total of \$8.76 billion in reserves, a fiscally responsible decision. You can learn more about the citywide budget [here](#).

I voted "no" on [Int. 775-A](#) because it opens a window of opportunity for building owners to destroy buildings and historic ornamentation prior to getting a "landmark" designation. The bill to **establish a time limit for designating landmarks and historic districts**, passed the City Council 40-10. Currently, if the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) decides to officially consider a building or area as a landmark or historic district (a process called "calendarizing"), there is no time limit for deciding its outcome. Once the bill is signed into law, the LPC will need to resolve the status of individual buildings within **one** year of being calendared and all historic districts within **two** years of being calendared. All items currently on the calendar (both individual buildings and potential historic districts) must be resolved within 18 months of the bill being signed into law. If LPC disapproves or fails to designate any item, the property or district in question would be automatically removed from the calendar. This bill will not impact the status of existing landmarks or historic districts.

Some landmarks were on the LPC calendar for decades before being designated, and I support deadlines to ensure a more efficient landmarks process. In addition, I appreciate that the bill's sponsors removed the 5-year moratorium from the bill.

However, I voted "no" on 775-A because it opens a window of opportunity for landlords to destroy buildings that do not receive designation in time. 775-A offers a one-year extension for individual buildings, but *only if the landlord sends written approval and the LPC agrees*. Our historic buildings and districts are part of New York City's identity, and their preservation is a matter of public good. Many building owners in Manhattan want to capitalize on their properties rather than preserve their historic value, so it troubles me that an extension is dependent on the landlord's approval. Furthermore, with this legislation, historic districts on the calendar have no opportunity for an extension at all. The LPC testified they would prefer three years, not two, to research historic districts, which are often comprised of large swaths of buildings. I'm concerned that the LPC does not have the staff and resources necessary to designate individual landmarks in one year and historic districts in two years.

At this juncture, it is critical that we monitor the impact of 775-A. In addition, I am working with the Land Use Chair to identify ways in which we can increase penalties on building owners who move forward with demolition prior to LPC designations. There is much more work to be done, and I am committed to preserving our historic buildings and districts and stopping the development of luxury high rise buildings in our already overbuilt neighborhood.

After the "handshake" on the budget, there are still many more details to be ironed out. It is likely that we will vote on the final amended budget next week. My office is working on a summary of that information, and we will post it on our website and send it to you

as soon as possible.

Looking forward to enjoying the summer weather with you this weekend. Hope to see you biking on the Greenway or at the street fair on Sunday.

Warmly,

Helen.



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