

NYC DCAS

Citywide Administrative Services

Good morning, Chair Brewer and Members of the Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation.

My name is Laura Ringelheim, and I'm the Executive Deputy Commissioner for Asset and Property Management at the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, commonly known as DCAS. I am joined by Matthew Berk, Assistant Commissioner for Planning, Dispositions and Property Management in Real Estate Services. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to come before you and discuss surplus city-owned real estate, in particular, the DCAS surplus portfolio.

As you know, DCAS is responsible for providing agencies with the real estate they need to support their operations. DCAS also has its own portfolio of property, which totals approximately 1,800 lots, including over 55 court and multi-agency office buildings, 400 long- and short-term lease agreements, 500 lots with unique characteristics, and 900 lots with limited marketability. While this number may sound like a large and significant amount of property, I'd like to provide some details about the portfolio, its challenges and opportunities.

In 1996, when the tax foreclosure process in New York City came to an end, DCAS had approximately 11,000 individual tax lots in its portfolio. There were rigorous efforts to reallocate these properties to better benefit the city – as a result, many were allocated towards new parks, affordable housing, economic development and other city priorities. Others were sold through public auctions. The vast majority of the surplus properties that we're now left with have limited marketability, and largely do not meet the operational needs of city agencies.

The lots in our surplus portfolio include wetlands, lands under water, and mapped streets, totaling over 500 tax lots. In addition, the portfolio contains Sliver Lots, Accessways and Interior Lots (SAIL), which have limited marketability. For these limited market properties, which total over 900 tax lots, we have our SAIL Away program, allowing DCAS to directly dispose of these undevelopable properties to abutting property owners. Picture a 1 foot wide by 100-foot-deep strip between two brownstones. That is the prototypical image of our sliver lots. However, interest from an adjacent owner is needed for a sale. Since the inception of SAIL Away in 2010, DCAS has offered for sale around 100 lots through this program, and sold 39 lots totaling \$6 million in revenue.

In addition, DCAS administers over 400 revenue generating long- and short-term agreements for the private use of city property. We also have properties that are on hold for future use by other agencies, including for HPD and EDC, for affordable housing and economic development projects. Tenants vary from small and medium-sized businesses to community benefit organizations and homeowners. Uses range from retail stores and restaurants to community

facilities, to industrial ground leases, and accessory residential uses. This portfolio generates over \$35 million in annual revenue for the city.

In addition to these, mostly vacant lots, DCAS has a portfolio of approximately 10 small surplus buildings that are currently unused. These buildings average 12,000 SF, but many are smaller than 3,000 SF, and all have capital needs to be brought into a state of good repair for use. We have been working with partners, including some at the City Council, to activate these buildings through ULURP and subsequent public auctions. Before any public auctions, however, DCAS makes an offering of the properties one last time to city agencies for possible reuse. Specifically, DCAS has worked with HPD to review many of these sites for housing opportunities. We look forward to continuing those conversations with our council partners that will lead to opportunities for the public and activation of sites.

Throughout the years, DCAS has consistently worked with agencies to identify properties suitable for their operational needs, as well as for strategic dispositions for housing, and economic development by way of example. Each agency has access to the DCAS database of properties, and vetting of sites for future uses is an ongoing collaborative effort. When new properties are surrendered to DCAS as surplus, a review is conducted, and in many cases, DCAS offers the property to agencies for potential reuse. When a property is found that meets an agency need, DCAS works with them to transfer the property to that agency.

Despite these challenges, DCAS has been and is making tremendous efforts to activate these properties. It is a priority of the administration to ensure we are using properties for housing, while also providing essential city services. DCAS is part of the Land Inventory Fast Track (LIFT) Task Force with the mayor's office and other agency partners. Separately, DCAS has been reviewing its portfolio for suitable sites for mayoral priorities. And, recently, we successfully partnered with the New York City Small Business Services and New York City Department of Cultural Affairs to locate temporary artists' studios in vacant retail spaces, such as at 2 Lafayette St. Aside from this location, DCAS is currently evaluating future opportunities for the two retail spaces located at 5th Avenue and 86th Street, in the Bay Ridge Municipal Garage in Brooklyn.

With regard to intro 542 - DCAS shares the desire to make data available for public consumption in the most usable and intelligible format. We would like to point out that much of data is already published by the city and is updated on Open Data. DCAS and City Planning put forth the COLP (City Owned and Leased Property) dataset on Open Data, which contains information on City-ownership or leased status, and agency use. In addition, City Planning puts out the PLUTO (Primary Land Use Tax Lot Output) dataset that contains detailed information about each tax lot. Even though some of this data may be published in different formats, and some data points may present challenges to generate, we look forward to engaging in conversation to ensure that properties are put to the most productive use in the most efficient manner.

In addition, regarding intro 541- DCAS supports the intent of the bill, and we share the desire to ensure vacant city properties are used in the most productive way possible. However, given the unique characteristics of and inherent limitations in the DCAS surplus portfolio as outlined in my

testimony, there are many properties that are inappropriate or impractical for leasing for traditional uses. Moreover, there is a lack of interest from the private sector to lease certain properties. Therefore, we look forward to working with you on creative strategies for portfolio activation and leasing.

We are always looking critically at our portfolio to come up with creative solutions for activation of these unique properties. With that, we welcome any questions or comments you may have.



NYC Department of Records & Information Services (DORIS)
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31 Chambers Street, Suite 305
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**Testimony of the Department of Records and Information Services
Before the New York City Council Committee on Governmental Operations,
State and Federal Legislation
February 25, 2026**

Good morning, Councilmember Brewer and members of the Committee on Government Operations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this hearing on Intro No. 87, which would amend the New York City Charter to merge two existing advisory boards at the Department of Records & Information Services (DORIS).

As you know, DORIS is responsible for three key government functions: (i) establishing and enforcing records practices and policies; (ii) providing access to New York City government information; and (iii) preserving the historical records of City government. We do this through our three divisions: Municipal Records Management, the Municipal Library, Municipal Archives, with essential support from the Information Technology, External Affairs and Administration Units.

One advisory board, the Archival Reference and Research Advisory Board was established in 1977 when the agency was created. At that time, the Board played an active role in shaping the new agency and met almost monthly. Now, 49 years later, the Board largely serves as a sounding board around the agency's outreach initiatives. The second board, the Archival Review Board was established in 2003 after former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani removed the mayoral records of his administration from the City to have them processed by outside consultants. The same local law that established the board also created charter procedures that must be followed if an outside entity is contracted to process historical city records. This outsourcing can only occur if the commissioner certifies its necessity "under extraordinary circumstances."

Beginning in 2014, the boards have been holding joint meetings. The most recent annual report for Fiscal Year 2025 was issued jointly. The proposed local law codifies current practices. It preserves the appointment structure, giving both the Mayor and Council Speaker responsibilities. Creating a combined nine-person board with the mandate to advise the commissioner and evaluate the management of both the archival and library collections will provide oversight.

I would like to publicly acknowledge that the members of both boards have volunteered their time to suggest improvements, review the agency's collection processing plans, and report on

activities from the Municipal Archives and our External Affairs divisions. They are creative, thoughtful people and the agency has benefited from their insight.

DORIS strongly supports the proposed local law, as do the members of the two advisory boards. Combining the two existing advisory boards into a smaller board will be efficient and still serve the guidance and oversight purposes.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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