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HABITAT WEEKLY MO TU WE TH FR

The Department of Buildings is Entering the 21st Century

Dealing with the Department of Buildings (DOB) has never been the favorite part of Anoush Hovhannessian's job. Whenever the expeditor for Merritt Engineering Consultants had to file for code- or safety-compliance certifications on behalf of one of her commercial or residential clients, she had to gather stacks of hard-copy reports, sketches and photographs, then travel to the DOB's offices on Church Street and stand in line in order to submit her application in person. And once the application was approved, the DOB put her through the ordeal again in order to collect the approval in person.

For Hovhannessian, as well as for many thousands of other engineers, architects, building owners and co-op boards, life is about to become a whole lot easier. Effective September 12, DOB is launching its DOB Now program, which will transfer a wide range of tasks online, from licensing and permits to reporting safety lapses.



The new program, the first phase of the rollout of DOB's new \$29.6 million computer system, promises to streamline inspections, safety compliance, and construction permits. "This will facilitate day-to-day tasks such as application filings, meetings, accessing documents electronically without having to physically stand in lines at the buildings department" says Hovhannessian. "By creating a user ID, the building owner will be able to sign documents, make payments, track the work of the architect, engineer, plumber, or other professionals they have retained and view the status of their work in real time."



The DOB Now program is part of a broader effort to reform the department that was launched in 2015 under Mayor Bill de Blasio. The effort, dubbed Building One City, will

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HABITAT BRICKS & BUCKS

The Façade That Could Have Come Tumbling Down

The sky wasn't falling - yet. Last summer, a resident at a 54-unit co-op in Hamilton Heights stuck his head out the window and noticed an alarming gap between the century-old building's structural wall and its brick façade. Alerted to the problem, the co-op board's president, Vincent Joseph, sent the super to take pictures. Then Joseph, property manager Frank Negron and a contractor went to investigate in person.

To avert such a calamity, the players swung into action. The manager called his boss, Josh Koppel, president of HSC Management, and the building's engineer. When Richard Koenigsberg, president of Koenigsberg Engineering, arrived on the scene, he notified the Department of Buildings (DOB), whose engineers ordered that the building had to be stabilized immediately.



The management company brought in IGH Restoration of White Plains. After police blocked off the street to traffic, the contractor's 10-man team worked all night and into the next evening, following Koenigsberg's instructions. "I've never seen anything like this," says Koppel. "They took a steel wire and wrapped it around the outside of the building, through the windows, cutting through people's floors and walls and around columns and securing the façade so that it wouldn't fall and kill somebody."



No one was evacuated. No one was injured. Disaster was averted - and the job of assessing the extent of the damage could begin. This required 10 probes of the façade, which revealed extensive separation - none of which was present when Local Law 11

Habitat publishes two e-newsletters a week, **Habitat Weekly** and **Bricks & Bucks**. Each is emailed to nearly 7,800 Habitat subscribers, property managers, attorneys and other vendors serving the co-op/condo community

HABITAT WEEKLY: (EACH THURSDAY) offers timely information to co-op/condo decision-makers on diverse topics ranging from technology to site safety to admissions issues. Each 600-word newsletter is focused on a single topic.

BRICKS & BUCKS: (EACH WEDNESDAY) focuses on two topics of vital interest to the co-op/condo community – building projects and interesting financial/funding opportunities. Each 600-word newsletter is focused on a single topic, and takes a deep look into the how, why and where of a project or money-related theme.

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