



Opening Doors: An Innovation Challenge for Accessibility in Housing & Small Businesses

No purchase or payment necessary. A purchase or payment of any kind will not increase your chances of winning. All contestants are subject to verification by the administrators whose decisions are final and binding in all matters related to the competition.

INTRODUCTION

The Accessible Buildings Innovation Challenge ('the Competition') is a joint initiative of the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) and the New York City Department of Housing Preservation (HPD), also known as the **Administrators**. The competition will open on **MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2025**, at 12:00 PM EST and close on **MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2025**, at 5:00 PM EST.

The purpose of the Competition is to recognize individuals or teams ('Contestants') who propose innovative, actionable solutions for improving accessibility in existing residential buildings and small businesses/storefronts across New York City. Selected winners will be invited to present their proposals at a DOB-hosted virtual conference (the 'Conference') to be held in **NOVEMBER 2025 through DECEMBER 2025**.

All Competition entries will be subject to an initial screening by DOB and HPD staff. Submissions that meet eligibility criteria will advance to review by a panel of experts from city agencies and the real estate, housing, and construction industries (the 'Innovation Committee').

The goals of the Competition are:

1. to promote development of new technologies, design strategies, and implementation models to increase accessibility in New York City's existing housing stock and small businesses
2. to engage the design, construction, housing, and small businesses communities – and the general public – in a collaborative effort to make the built environment more inclusive for all New Yorkers, regardless of age or ability.

By participating in the Competition, you agree that others may use or promote elements of your submitted proposal and/or prototype.

HOW TO ENTER & SELECTION PROCESS

To enter, visit [DOB's Innovation Challenge page](#) (the 'Competition Website') and apply by submitting your team's materials as required in Paragraph 3(B), including any links to your proposal (your 'Submission') to innovation@buildings.nyc.gov, and completing a participation form linked on the Competition website. All participants must enter as a Team, which may consist of a single individual or a group of people.

Submissions will be reviewed by the Innovation Committee. Up to ten (10) Semifinalists will be invited to participate in virtual pitch sessions ('Semifinalists Demonstrations') in **NOVEMBER 2025**. Based on the evaluations from these sessions, select Submissions will be named Competition Winners ('Winners').

Winners will have the opportunity to:

- present their ideas at the Conference before a professional audience from the design, housing, and construction sectors
- receive recognition through DOB and HPD events and/or communications highlighting innovations in accessibility retrofits for both residential housing and small business settings.

NOTE: Selection as a Winner does not obligate the City of New York, DOB, or HPD to review, adopt, or purchase any submitted idea, prototype, or technology.

1. Can I Participate?

The Competition is open only to legal residents, 18 or older, of the fifty (50) United States (including the District of Columbia) at the time of entry. Void in Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and other U.S. territories and possessions and where prohibited by law. Employees of the Administrators, the Innovation Committee, or any of their respective affiliates, subsidiaries, advertising agencies, or any other company or individual involved with the design, production execution or distribution of the Competition and their immediate family (spouse, parents and step-parents, sibling and step-siblings, and children and step-children) and household members (people who share the same residence at least three (3) months out of the year) of each such employee are not eligible to participate. The Competition is subject to all applicable United States federal, state and local laws and regulations. Participation constitutes Contestants full and unconditional agreement to these Official Terms and Innovation Committee and Administrators' decisions, which are final and binding in all matters related to the Competition. Participation in the Competition is contingent upon fulfilling all requirements set forth herein.

2. When Do I Enter?

Submissions will be accepted until MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2025, at 5:00PM Eastern Time (the 'Competition Submission Period'). Administrator's computer is the official timekeeping device for this Competition.

3. How Do I Enter?**A. Apply**

During the Competition Submission Period, visit [NYC DOB Innovation Challenge](#) to apply. It is free to apply. You must submit a valid email address via the Competition Website to complete your application. You must apply as a team, and single individuals are invited to apply as a team of one. No individual may be a part of more than one team or all teams including that individual will be disqualified.

Contestants will be able to enter links to or files of their work, and all of the materials linked or submitted must represent their original work. In the event of a dispute as to any application, the authorized account holder of the email address used to register will be deemed to be the Contestant. The 'authorized account holder' is the natural person assigned an email address by an Internet access provider, online service provider or other organization responsible for assigning email addresses for the domain associated with the submitted address. Potential winners may be required to show proof of being the authorized account holder. If a team is selected as a Semifinalist, the Administrators may require individual documentation from each team member. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the 'authorized account holder' represents and warrants that they have the authority to bind the other members of their team to these Official Terms and such other terms as may be stated on the Submission Form.

B. The Submission

On or before **MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2025**, you and the members of your team must collectively submit ONE Submission outlining your innovative idea to increase the accessibility of existing buildings and small businesses/storefronts in New York City. The Submission must include the name(s) and email addresses of the members of your team. In addition, it is recommended that you provide a link or file to a virtual demonstration of your Submission. Any supporting documentation or information you may want to provide, including photos or specifications of a prototype (the 'Prototype'), can also be submitted at this time. Please complete the [Submission Form](#) and/or send your supporting materials through the Competition Email (innovation@buildings.nyc.gov).

After Submissions are entered, Submissions cannot be modified by Contestants. However, Contestants who are selected as Semifinalists may further develop their Submissions after the Competition Submission Period up until the Semifinalist Demonstrations, but the Submission must remain consistent with initial core concept and not deviate materially from the original Submission.

C. Submission Requirements

A Submission must be the original work of the Contestant submitting it and the Contestant must own all right, title, and interest to the Submission. Submissions must be made in a format compatible with Microsoft Windows operating systems, such as PowerPoint or PDF, or in a link to a dedicated website for the submission.

Submissions will be disqualified if they are indecent, defamatory, in obvious bad taste, demonstrate a lack of respect for public morals or conduct or adversely affect the reputation of the Administrators, are illegal under applicable laws, depict hatred, threaten a specific community in society or incite violence, contain vulgar language or violence, or contain pornography, obscenity or sexual activity. Disqualification under this Section is in the sole discretion of the Administrators.

D. Submission Rights for Contestants

Contestants will retain all rights to their Submission and Prototype (as defined in these Official Terms), except for the non-exclusive rights granted to New York City and the Administrators in the Grant of Rights and Release agreed to in Section 5 of the Official Terms. Submissions will not be returned to Contestants.

4. Judging of Submissions

Submissions will be judged by the Innovation Committee on a rolling basis after being submitted. Submissions that violate a Submission requirement will not be considered.

All Contestants will have equal access to submit their Submissions through the Competition website. Contestants may not offer to pay, or pay the Innovation Committee, or provide any other type of consideration in exchange for votes. Any Contestant who violates the ban on offering to pay, or paying, or providing consideration in exchange for votes will be disqualified. The Winners will be the Contestants that receive the most votes. Administrators reserve the right to modify the voting period at any time for any reason.

Submissions will be judged on creativity, functionality, scalability, cost-effectiveness and potential impact on accessibility, safety, and inclusive design in New York City's existing residential buildings and small businesses/storefronts. Strong consideration will be given to ideas that demonstrate the potential for broader implementation across the city, especially in aging housing stock and diverse building types. Proposals should aim to improve access for all New Yorkers – regardless of age or ability – by promoting innovative strategies, technologies, or models that can be feasibly and effectively scaled citywide. Submissions that foster collaboration across the design, construction, and housing sectors, and that advance inclusive practices in the built environment, are strongly encouraged.

Categories for submissions include, but are not limited to:

A. Construction Practices

1. Creating innovative design and construction techniques.
2. Improving construction process efficiency and safely reducing cost.
3. Retrofitting existing residential buildings and small businesses/storefronts to improve accessibility for residents and visitors with disabilities or mobility challenges.

B. Improving Conditions for Tenants, Occupants, Small Business Owners & the Public

1. Best practices for complying with tenant protection regulations.
2. Innovative technology that coordinates and minimizes disruption of services in occupied buildings, including heat, hot water, elevators, and accessible routes.
3. Minimizing the impact of construction and building maintenance on tenants in residential buildings and on operations in small businesses - including preserving safe and accessible paths of egress during construction.
4. Minimizing the effects of construction on other building occupants, the public, and neighboring properties, with particular attention to maintaining access for individuals with disabilities.

C. New Design Standards & Practices

1. Identifying outdated regulations that hinder accessibility improvements and recommending modern alternatives.
2. Innovative approaches to inspections, maintenance, and retrofits that enhance accessibility in both residential and commercial buildings.
3. Incorporating new technology and data to support inclusive building design and operations.
4. Improving overall building safety with inclusive strategies that address the needs of people with physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities.
5. Advancing fire safety through accessible alarm systems and evacuation protocols for individuals with disabilities.

Winner Selection & Judging Criteria

At the conclusion of the Competition Submission Period, up to ten (10) Semifinalists will be chosen by the Innovation Committee based upon the foregoing criteria. Semifinalists will be invited to virtually present their ideas to the Innovation Committee, who will then choose the Winners. Administrators reserve the right to substitute or modify the participants on the Innovation Committee at any time for any reason. Participants on the Innovation Committee have the right to withdraw without advance notice to the Contestants. The Innovation Committee will be fair and impartial. A participant on the Innovation Committee may be removed from judging a Submission, if in the Administrator's sole discretion, it is not appropriate for him or her to judge that particular Submission because of a past or current relationship with that particular Contestant. A Submission will not be at a disadvantage if one or more participants on the Innovation Committee are required to recuse themselves.

Contestants whose Submissions earn the highest overall scores will be chosen as Winners. The selection of the Winners is at the sole and exclusive discretion of the Innovation Committee and is final, conclusive and not subject to appeal. If a Winner notification is returned as undeliverable, Contestant forfeits their participation in the Competition. In the event that a Contestant is disqualified for any reason, Administrators may select the next Contestant who has the highest overall score amongst the remaining eligible Submissions. Either at the Semifinal or Final stages, the Administrators reserve the right not to choose any Semifinalists or Winners, respectively.

Participation in the virtual Semifinalist Demonstrations by at least one member of the Contestant team is required. A Contestant who fails to participate in the required presentation to the Innovation Committee or fails to present at the virtual DOB Conference forfeits their status as a Semifinalist or Winner, as applicable.

No travel, per diem or other expenses will be paid for attendance at the virtual Semifinalist Demonstrations or virtual DOB Conference or any events. Selected participants will be responsible for all costs associated with attending.

What Can I Win?

The Competition Winners will be featured at the DOB Conference and other events as DOB deems appropriate. The Winners will be announced on DOB's website and on other City websites as DOB deems appropriate. To the extent technical approvals are needed, DOB will provide assistance in facilitating review in accordance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations. No cash will be offered in lieu of a prize. No substitution of award is permitted except by the Administrator. All of the award elements are subject to change and will be determined by Administrator in their sole discretion. The Approximate Retail Value (ARV) of the prize will be \$0. Any difference between stated value and actual value will not be awarded.

5. Grant of Rights & Release

A. Entry Conditions and General Release

By entering, each Contestant agrees to: (a) comply with and be bound by these Official Terms and the decisions of the Administrator and/or the Innovation Committee which are binding and final in all matters relating to this Competition; (b) release and hold harmless the Administrators, the Innovation Committee, and their respective parent, subsidiary, and affiliated companies, and any other organizations responsible for sponsoring, fulfilling, administering, advertising or promoting the Competition, and all of their respective past and present officials, officers, directors, employees, agents and representatives (collectively, the 'Released Parties') from and against any and all claims, expenses, and liability, including but not limited to negligence and damages of any kind to persons and property, including but not limited to invasion of privacy (under appropriation, intrusion, public disclosure of private facts, false light in the public eye or other legal theory), defamation, slander, libel, violation of right of publicity, infringement of trademark, copyright or other intellectual property rights, property damage, or death or personal injury arising out of or relating to a Contestant's entry, creation of an entry or submission of an entry, participation in the Competition (including any travel or activity related thereto), and/or the broadcast, transmission, performance, exploitation or use of entry; and (c) indemnify, defend and hold harmless the Administrators and the Innovation Committee from and against any and all claims, expenses, and liabilities (including reasonable attorney fees) arising out of or relating to a Contestant's participation in the Competition.

B. Grant of Rights and License

Contestant represents that any Submission and/or Prototype submitted for the Competition are original work and agree that Submissions and/or Prototypes may be licensed to the City of New York (the 'City') for future use free and clear of claims of third parties. By entering the Competition, Contestant agrees to be bound by these Official Terms and the terms of the Submission Form available at <https://buildingcodeinnovation.splashthat.com/>. Contestant grants the City and its agents and assigns an irrevocable, non-exclusive, royalty-free, perpetual license to reproduce, prepare derivative works from, distribute, perform or display publicly, transmit, make, or use the Submission or Prototype for the purposes of posting and promoting the Competition, and, in the case of Submissions designed to improve a City governmental process, procedure, law, rule, regulation, for governmental purposes. Contestant understands and agrees that the Submission may be used in whole or in part, at any time, in composite, modified or distorted form, in color or otherwise, and may be published through any medium including, but not limited to, printed medium (including, without limitation, signage), video and/or on the internet and in all other media now known or hereafter devised. This consent authorizes both any initial and any subsequent disclosure and publication of the Submission at any time.

Contestant hereby represents that Submission and/or Prototype are original work that do not violate the rights of any third party. In addition, Contestant hereby represents that no additional permission is needed, nor are any payments required to anyone else in order to grant the City the right to use

the Submission and/or Prototype submitted to the Competition. If such permissions or payments are required, the Contestant agrees to be responsible for such payment or obtaining such permission and release, indemnify and hold harmless the Administrators, the City and its agents and assigns from any liabilities arising therefrom.

Contestants agree that the City has access to and/or may create or have created materials and ideas which may be similar or identical to the Submission and/or Prototype in theme, idea, or other respects and agree that they will not be entitled to any compensation or other consideration because of the use by the City of any similar or identical Submission and /or Prototype which may have been independently created or come to the City from any other independent source or may be in the public domain.

Contestants also agree that they will be acting as volunteers and that they are doing so without expectation or promise of future paid employment by the City of themselves or any entity with which they are affiliated.

C. Publicity

Except where prohibited, participation in the Competition constitutes Contestant's consent to Administrators' and their agents' use of Contestant's name, likeness, photograph, voice, opinions and/or hometown and state for promotional purpose in any media now known or hereafter devised, worldwide, without further payment or consideration.

D. General Conditions

Administrators reserve the right to cancel, suspend and/or modify the Competition, or any part of it, if any fraud, technical failures or any other factor beyond Administrators' reasonable control impairs the integrity or proper functioning of the Competition, as determined by the Administrators in their sole discretion. Administrators reserve the right in their sole discretion to disqualify any individual or Contestant found to be tampering with the entry process or the operation of the Competition or to be acting in violation of these Official Terms or any other promotion or in an unsportsmanlike or disruptive manner. Any attempt by any person to deliberately undermine the legitimate operation of the Competition may be a violation of criminal and civil law, and should such an attempt be made, Administrators reserve the right to seek damages from any such person to the fullest extent permitted by law. Administrators' failure to enforce any term of these Official Terms shall not constitute a waiver of that term. Administrators are not responsible for, nor are they required to count, incomplete, late, misdirected, damaged, unlawful or illicit votes, including those secured through payment, votes achieved through automated means or by registering more than one email account and name, using another Contestant's e-mail account and name, as well as those lost for technical reasons or otherwise.

E. Limitations of Liability

The Released Parties are not responsible for: (1) any incorrect or inaccurate information, whether caused by Contestants, printing errors or by any of the equipment or programming associated with or utilized in the Competition, (2) technical failures of any kind, including, but not limited to malfunctions, interruptions, or disconnections in phone lines or network hardware or software; (3) unauthorized human intervention in any part of the entry process or the Competition; (4) technical or human error which may occur in the administration of the Competition. If for any reason a Contestant's Submission is confirmed to have been erroneously deleted, lost, or otherwise destroyed or corrupted, Contestant's sole remedy is to provide another Submission prior to **MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2025**, at 5:00PM EST. No more than the stated number of prizes will be awarded.

F. Disputes

Contestant agrees that: (1) any and all disputes, claims and causes of action arising out of or connected with this Competition, or any prizes awarded, other than those concerning the administration of the Competition or the determination of winners, shall be resolved individually, without resort to any form of class action; (2) any and all disputes, claims and causes of action arising out of or connected with this Competition, or any prizes awarded, shall be resolved exclusively by the United States District Court or New York State Court in New York County; (3) any and all claims, judgments and awards shall be limited to actual out-of-pocket costs incurred, including costs associated with entering this Competition, but in no event attorneys' fees; and (4) under no circumstances will Contestant be permitted to obtain awards for, and Contestant hereby waives all rights to claim punitive, incidental and consequential damages and any other damages, other than for actual out-of-pocket expenses, and any and all rights to have damages multiplied or otherwise increased. SOME JURISDICTIONS DO NOT ALLOW THE LIMITATIONS OR EXCLUSION OF LIABILITY FOR INCIDENTAL OR CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES, SO THE ABOVE MAY NOT APPLY TO YOU. All issues and questions concerning the construction, validity, interpretation and enforceability of these Official Terms, or the rights and obligations of the Contestant and Administrators in connection with the Competition, shall be governed by, and construed in accordance with, the laws of the State of New York, without giving effect to any choice of law or conflict of law rules (whether of the State of New York or any other jurisdiction), which would cause the application of the laws of any jurisdiction other than the State of New York.

G. Privacy

Sponsors collect personal information from you when you enter the Competition. The information collected is subject to nyc.gov's Privacy Policy, which can be found at www.nyc.gov/privacy.

H. Competition Results

Competition results will be announced on DOB's website following the DOB Conference.

I. Administrators

Administrators: (1) New York City Department of Buildings, 280 Broadway, New York, NY, 10007 (2) and the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, 100 Gold Street, New York, New York, NY 10038.

J. Waiver & Release

Contestant hereby releases and discharges the Administrators from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of her/his/its Submission, including without limitations any and all claims for libel or invasion of privacy. The Administrators maintain the exclusive right to declare no Semifinalists or Winner. The Administrators will not return any material that was part of a Submission and assume no responsibility for any lost or damaged material.

By entering the Competition and providing a Submission and/or Prototype, Contestant agrees that these Official Terms shall be binding upon Contestant and Contestant's heirs, legal representatives, and assigns. Contestant further releases the Administrators from any responsibility for injury incurred during the research or production of the Submission. If the Submission is or contains a photograph(s), Contestant warrants that Contestant photographed it from public property and has the legal right to use such photograph, having obtained all necessary permissions.

Contestant waives any right to inspect or approve any finished product, advertising or other copy that may be used in connection therewith or the use to which it may be applied.

Contestant represents, warrants, declares and avows that the Submission is Contestant's own original work in all respects; that Contestant is the sole and exclusive owner of the Submission; that the Submission is free, clear, and unencumbered; that no part of the Submission is taken from or based on any other work; that no part of the Submission infringes the copyright, trademark, patent rights or any other right of any person or entity; and that no part of the Submission triggers any reporting or royalty obligation to any third party. Contestant further represents, warrants, declares and avows that the Submission does not contain malicious code, such as viruses, timebombs, cancelbots, worms, Trojan horses or other potentially harmful programs or other material or information. Contestant represents, warrants, declares and avows that the rights Contestant grants under these Official Terms do not conflict in any other way with any other agreement to which Contestant is a party.

Contestant agrees to indemnify the Administrators, including their respective officials, officers, and employees, from and against any and all loss, damage, costs, charges, legal fees, recoveries, judgments, amounts paid in settlement, penalties, and expenses that may be obtained against, imposed on, or suffered by the Administrators by reason of (1) any violation or infringement of any proprietary right, trademark, patent or copyright; or (2) any libelous or unlawful matter contained in the Submission. Contestant also agrees to indemnify the Administrators for any such amounts arising from Contestant's breach of any covenant, representation, or warranty contained in these Official Terms. Contestant understands that the entry or winning of the Competition does not in any way imply that the City will conduct patent, trademark, or copyright clearances for the Submission and/or Prototype.

Contestant understands that the terms herein are contractual and not a mere recital, that the terms are legally binding, and that Contestant has voluntarily agreed to be bound by these terms.