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Comments re: DOB Sidewalk Shed Rule Change

Sidewalk sheds are essential to protect New Yorkers from unsafe building facades and falling debris or equipment. However, far too often, these sidewalk sheds are left up for prolonged periods of time while no active construction work occurs. Indeed, there are currently over 7,000 active, permitted construction sheds with an average age of over 500 days. These sheds collectively span nearly 2 million linear feet, or 400 miles, constituting about 3 percent of the city's sidewalk space.

These sheds clog sidewalks, undermine public safety, and negatively impact accessibility and quality of life for pedestrians. They make our streets dark and uninviting, detracting from the aesthetic of our neighborhoods. Small businesses underneath scaffolding experience decreased visibility and foot traffic, putting them at risk for revenue losses and even closures. Hundreds of these sheds have been up for over five years, sometimes even decades. In District 33, the scaffolding at the Kings County Courthouse (360 Adams St) in Downtown Brooklyn has been up on a public building for almost 20 years.

The City Council took a major step forward in passing the "Get Sheds Down" package to remove outdated and unnecessary sidewalk sheds from city sidewalks and buildings. These proposed rules will enable DOB to carry out the law, put more pressure on developers who fail to remove scaffolding in a timely manner, and ensure penalties on buildings that fail to make acceptable progress on repairs.

This change is a key step towards improving public safety and quality of life for New Yorkers and reducing the impact of scaffolding on our public realm. I am grateful to DOB for helping address the issue of sidewalk sheds, and I hope this proposed rule is enacted as swiftly as possible.

Lincoln Restler
Council Member, District 33