2026 Ballot Proposals Simplified

Proposal 1: Speed Up Permits for Public Space & Outdoor Cafes

This proposal makes it faster and easier to get approval for outdoor structures like sidewalk cafes, ramps, and benches on public property.

- **A "YES" vote** removes required public hearings and City Council vetoes for sidewalk cafes, while still notifying Community Boards.
- **A "NO" vote** keeps the current process, which requires public hearings, paid newspaper ads, and City Council review.

Why this matters:

- **Saves businesses time and money:** Businesses can add seating or ramps faster without paying for newspaper ads or waiting for public hearings.
- **Cuts City Council control:** Removes the City Council's power to block individual sidewalk cafe permits.
- **Moves notices online:** Replaces physical newspaper notices with postings in the digital City Record.

Proposal 2: Reduce Paperwork for City Contractors

This proposal cuts down on paperwork for businesses and nonprofits doing work for the city and speeds up contract approvals.

- **A "YES" vote** shortens application forms for smaller contracts, lets agency heads approve contracts over $5 million, and requires regular board meetings.
- **A "NO" vote** keeps current rules, requiring every contractor to fill out the same forms and keeping mayoral review steps.

Why this matters:

- **Cuts paperwork for smaller groups:** Allows small businesses and local nonprofits to apply for city contracts without filling out as much paperwork.
- **Speeds up big contracts:** Allows agency leaders to sign off on large deals directly instead of waiting on the mayor's office approval.
- **Replaces live hearings:** Swaps mandatory in-person hearings for annual service plans with online public comments.

Proposal 3: Fast-Track Street Safety & City Property Projects

This proposal speeds up street safety upgrades, cuts delays for selling small City properties, and lets the City lease office space without City Council review.

- **A "YES" vote** lets urgent road safety work start faster, shortens reviews for selling small city lots, and removes City Council approval for leased city offices.
- **A "NO" vote** keeps current rules, requiring extra agency checks for street projects and keeping City Council votes on property sales and office leases.

Why this matters:

- **Speeds up safety and street redesigns:** Lets the Department of Transportation start urgent safety work sooner when crash data shows it is necessary.

- **Cuts red tape on city land:** Speeds up the sale or lease of small city properties by skipping full City Council votes.
- **Gives one agency control over office leases:** Moves city office leasing decisions entirely to administrative staff, bypassing political reviews.

Proposal 4: Centralize Construction Permits
This proposal creates one online portal for all city building permits and moves all construction approvals under the Department of Buildings.

- **A "YES" vote** creates a single permit website by 2030, moves waterfront permits to the Department of Buildings, and lets more staff sign off on plans.
- **A "NO" vote** keeps the current system, forcing builders to apply through multiple separate agencies.

Why this matters:

- **One site for all permits:** Replaces complex applications across up to 18 different agencies with a single online system.
- **Faster permit approvals:** Allows more Department of Buildings staff to review and sign off on building plans.
- **Puts all building rules in one place:** Moves waterfront and maritime construction review under the Department of Buildings.

Proposal 5: Set Target Reserves for the Rainy-Day Fund
This proposal requires the city to save a specific amount of money in its emergency reserve fund to prepare for financial crises.

- **A "YES" vote** sets a target to keep at least 12% of annual tax revenue in savings, creates a plan to add funds, and limits emergency withdrawals.
- **A "NO" vote** keeps current rules with no set savings target or required plan for adding money to the fund.

Why this matters:

- **Sets clear savings goals:** Sets a specific 12% baseline target to help the city prepare for recessions or emergencies.
- **Requires a clear plan:** Forces city leaders to publish official rules for adding money whenever savings fall below target.
- **Limits emergency spending:** Locks in a rule that caps withdrawals at 50% unless the mayor declares a budget emergency.