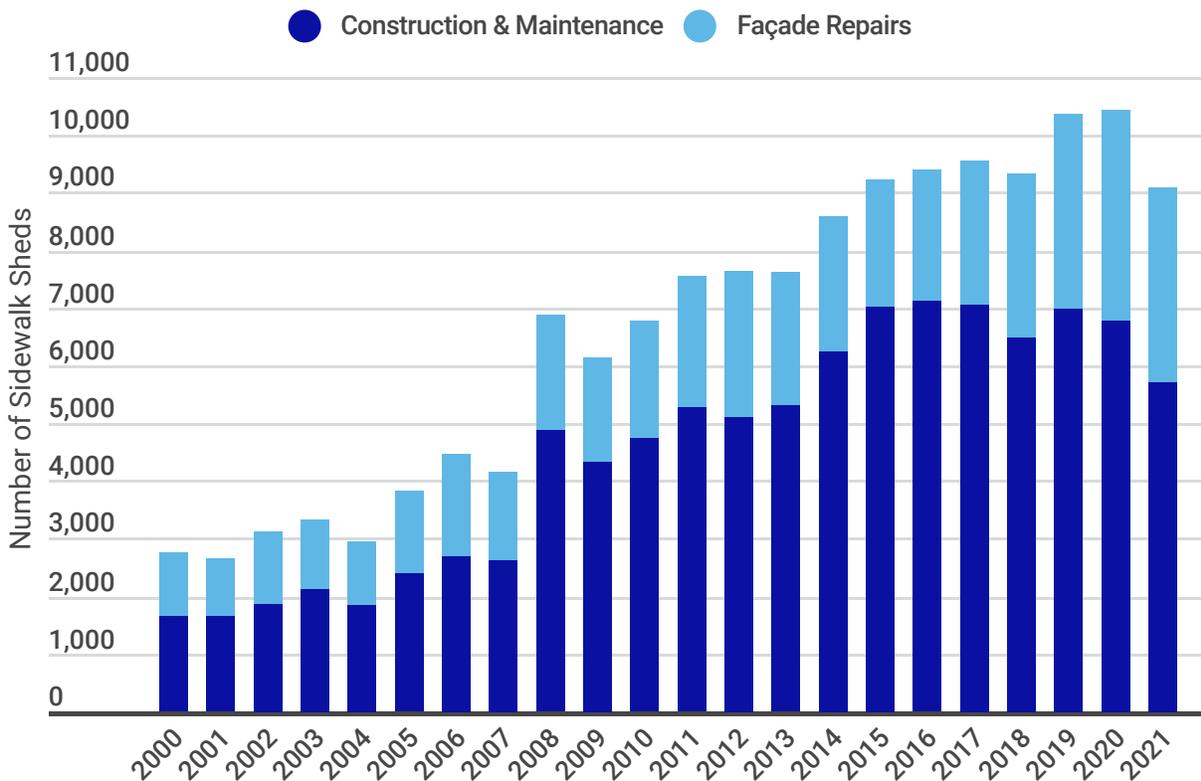


How Has the Number of Sidewalk Sheds On City Streets Changed Over Time?

Sidewalk sheds—temporary structures that cover New York City sidewalks to protect pedestrians and property against falling debris—serve an essential purpose in a city with many old buildings and lots of construction activity. Generally, sidewalk sheds are erected for two reasons: to protect passers-by during building construction and maintenance, or because a building’s façade has been deemed unsafe after failing an inspection required under the city’s Local Law 11. Sheds remain in place so long as construction is underway or until façade repairs are completed.

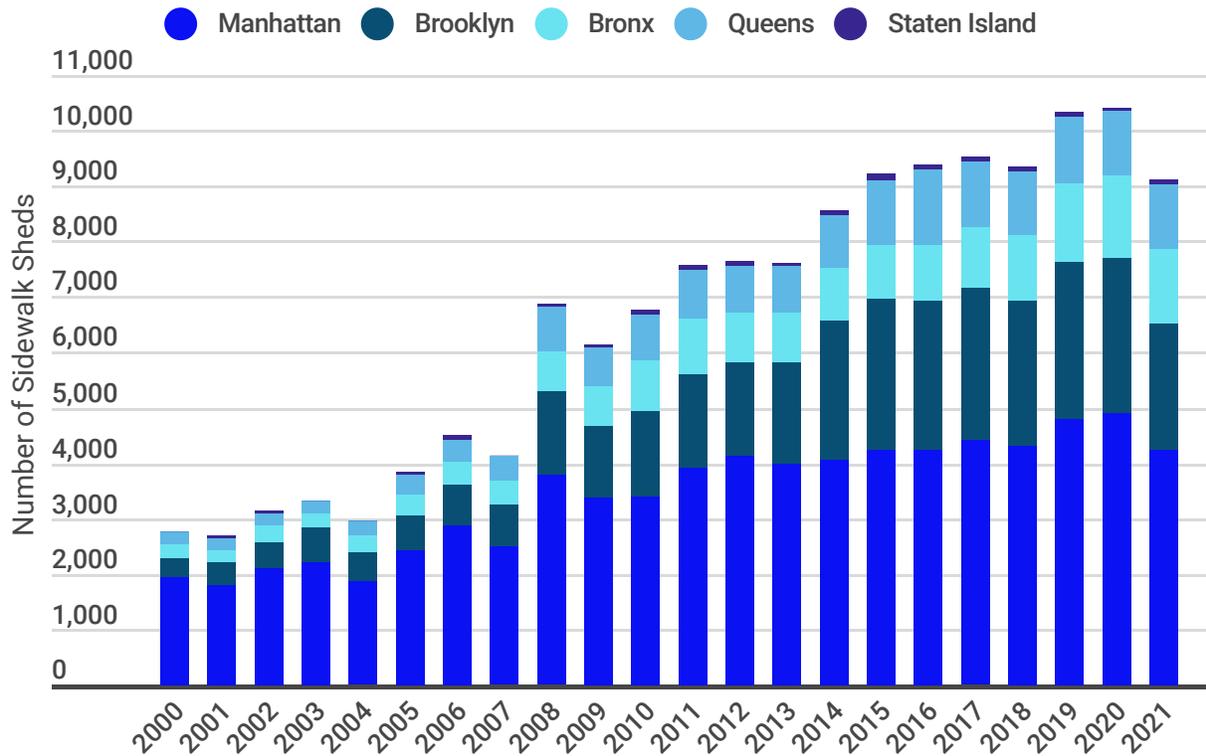
To many New Yorkers, however, sidewalk sheds can be a nuisance: they block light, narrow the sidewalk, obscure business signs, and collect garbage and grime. Furthermore, sidewalk sheds can often stay up for years as construction goes on or as façade repairs remain uncompleted. Using Department of Buildings (DOB) permit data for sidewalk sheds from 2000 through 2021, IBO examined how the number of sidewalk sheds on city streets—and how long they stay up—has changed over time.

Sidewalk Sheds on City Streets Tripled Over Past Two Decades

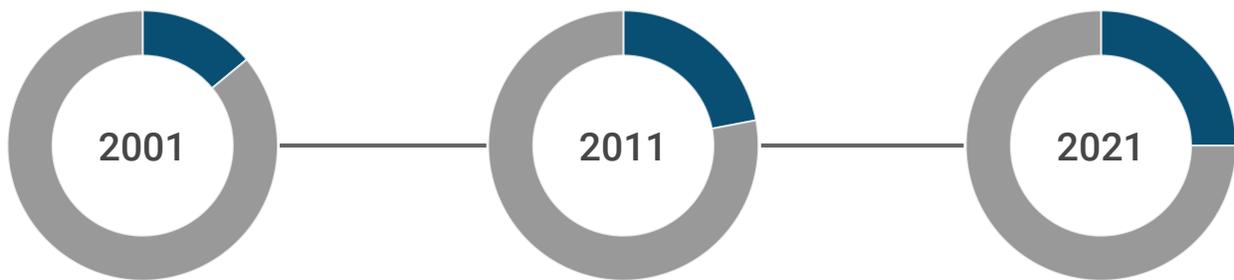


While the share of sidewalk sheds for construction and maintenance versus façade repairs has fluctuated in some years, on average two-thirds of sheds are related to construction or maintenance activity and one-third are for Local Law 11 façade repairs in any given year.

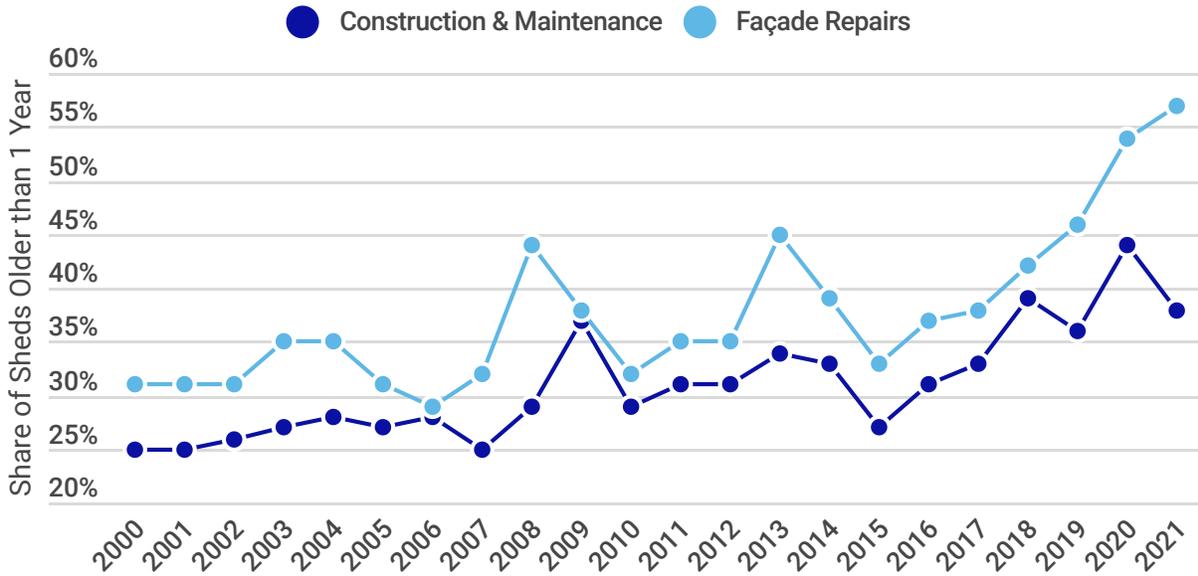
Manhattan Has Largest Share of City's Sheds, But Much Of Increase Over Time Has Been in Other Boroughs



Brooklyn's Share of City's Sidewalk Sheds Nearly Doubled Over Past Two Decades

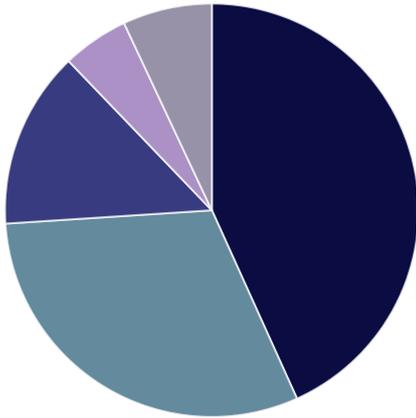


Sidewalk Sheds Staying Up Longer, Particularly Façade Sheds

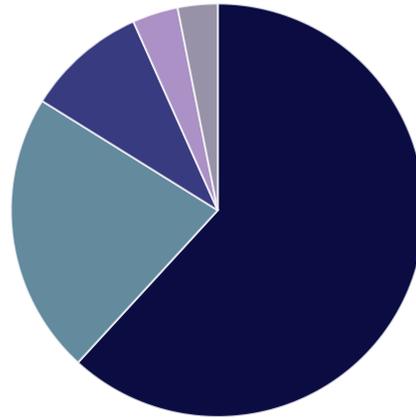


Although the number of sheds has been trending upwards since 2000, the pandemic may have made it more difficult to complete construction projects or façade repairs, leading to more sheds and older sheds.

Façade-Related Sheds: Majority Older Than One Year



Construction Sheds: Majority Less Than One Year Old



One reason why façade sheds tend to linger is likely because some property owners have chosen to pay the costs of renting the sidewalk shed and the penalties DOB imposes for delayed repairs, in lieu of completing the work quickly. Penalties start at \$1,000 per month in the first year. As part of broader façade inspection reform, penalties for delayed façade repairs were increased in early 2020 to scale up in additional years based on the size of the sidewalk shed.

SOURCES: IBO analysis of DOBNow and Building Information Systems data

NOTES: Annual data on sidewalk sheds reflect the number on December 31st of each year from 2000 through 2020. For 2021, shed age data is as of May 1st. IBO used the issue date and final expiration date for each sidewalk shed permit to produce counts of the total number of sidewalk sheds on a given date, in keeping with how DOB counts sidewalk sheds. This count, based on DOB permit data may differ from the actual number of sheds on sidewalks.



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