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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 31, 2020
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NEW YORK CITY LAUNCHES NO-PENALTY SIGN INSPECTIONS

City restarts annual no-penalty deck, porch and retaining wall inspections

NEW YORK—The de Blasio Administration today announced the start of a new No-Penalty Business Accessory Sign Inspection Program and the return of the annual No-Penalty Deck and Porch and Retaining Wall Inspection Programs. These initiatives allow small business owners and homeowners to obtain free inspections of the relevant structures, without risk of penalty, to determine if they comply with City safety regulations. Rather than penalize small businesses and homeowners, these initiatives will help New Yorkers comply with the regulations and proactively maintain their properties, saving them time and money by fixing potential problems before they occur.

“Our small businesses are the core of our city,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “That is why we want to work with them to help them keep their businesses safe, and instead of just giving them a fine or violation.”

“We want to ensure all New Yorkers' homes and businesses are safe, and that is why we are re-launching these no-penalty inspections,” said **Deputy Mayor Laura Anglin**. “With everything our City has gone through these last several months, we want to make sure we are helping as much as possible rather than penalizing. I encourage all New Yorkers to take advantage of this great program.”

“Making sure your home and property are in good shape is essential to keeping your loved ones and neighbors safe,” said **Buildings Commissioner Melanie E. La Rocca**. “Putting off needed home repairs or keeping up a sign that is out of compliance might seem harmless in the short run, but it could end up costing a lot more than you bargained for. We're pleased to offer these programs to help small businesses and property owners comply with the regulations that keep us all safe.”

No-Penalty Business Accessory Sign Inspection Program

Beginning July 31st until September 15th, 2020, the Department of Buildings will start accepting business accessory sign inspection requests from small business owners. For the first time, DOB is offering to inspect business signage at no cost and without penalty. During the inspection, DOB's team will come out and verify that business accessory signs comply with City regulations and are safely installed. Small business owners can take advantage of these no penalty inspections and avoid issues later by bringing their signs up to code if any deficiencies are found. Those interested in the No-Penalty Business Accessory Sign Inspection Program can contact 311 to set up an appointment.

As part of a moratorium from February 9, 2019 until February 9, 2021, the Department will not issue violations for business signs that existed on or before February 9, 2019, unless the sign is not eligible for the moratorium for reasons such as being an imminent threat to public health or safety. Businesses are encouraged to contact 311 to have their signs inspected to determine whether they comply with applicable regulations before the end of this moratorium to potentially avoid receiving future violations for signs that are not in compliance. DOB will continue to respond to 311 complaints about signs to determine whether a business' sign is compliant or eligible for this moratorium. Visit our site for more on the [Business Accessory Sign Moratorium](#)

No-Penalty Deck and Porch and Retaining Wall Inspection Programs

Beginning July 31st, and also ending September 15th, homeowners and property owners can also contact 311 to request a free DOB inspection of their decks, porches, or retaining walls as part of the annual No-Penalty Deck and Porch and Retaining Wall inspection initiatives. By law, homeowners must properly maintain any deck, porch, or retaining wall on their property, and ensure that these structures comply with City regulations. Over time, weather and shifting soil can cause these household structures to deteriorate, and periodic maintenance of these structures is critical to preventing accidents. During the scheduled inspection, a Buildings inspector will look for potential dangers, such as cracking, rotting, bulging, leaning, and conditions that could lead to structural failure.

The Department first launched the No-Penalty Retaining Wall Inspection Program in 2005 and later added the No-Penalty Deck and Porch Inspection Program in 2010. Since the start of these initiatives, the City has dealt with over 1100 properties across the five boroughs, helping to prevent structural failures and saving money for homeowners. New Yorkers concerned about the safety and stability of any of these structures in their neighborhood are also urged to contact 311 to report any unsafe conditions.

“SBS is committed to helping our small businesses get back on their feet. The Business Accessory Sign Inspection Program not only saves business owners time by providing them with the education to remain in compliance with City rules leading up to the moratorium, but it also saves them money by helping them avoid costly fines which may have resulted from non-compliance. We look forward to working with our colleagues at the Department of Buildings on launching an initiative that puts small businesses first,” said **Jonnel Doris, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services**.

“I am hopeful that the Department of Building's Accessory Sign Inspection Program will be a massive help for local business owners who are currently suffering from the Coronavirus and may not be aware that their signs do not meet DOB regulations,” said **State Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.** “By alerting small business owners of any deficiencies with their signs, this free inspection has the potential to save thousands in fines and fees. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be wrong to levy fines when businesses are struggling to stay open, or are forced to be closed. I encourage any business owners who have concerns or questions about their accessory signs to register for this free program before scheduled city penalties will be allowed to be issued next February.”

"At a time when so many small businesses have already suffered devastating losses due to COVID, the last thing they need is a financial penalty incurred because of a sign violation," said **Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz (D-Brooklyn)**. "I commend this new inspection program for its business-friendly approach, one that offers business owners the chance to correct any deficiencies without having to pay a penalty that many of them can't afford."

Council Member Robert E. Cornegy, Jr., Chair of Committee on Housing & Buildings said, "Affording small businesses the opportunity to access free, compliance-focused inspections through this Business Accessory Sign Inspection Program is particularly important in this moment. By working with small businesses, this Program uplifts a thoughtful approach that recognizes the many challenges these businesses face as they pursue recovery from the pandemic and reopening to safely serve our shared communities."

Council Member Peter Koo stated, "Our small businesses were hit hard by sign fees last year and the pandemic has only made life harder for small business owners. This free, no-penalty inspection program is a rare and great example of the kind of small business assistance our communities need from the city during these tough times, and I encourage all our businesses who are still facing issues with signage compliance to take full advantage of this program."

"Many of our small businesses and property owners are struggling to stay afloat as a result of COVID-19," said **Council Member Vanessa L. Gibson, Chair of the Subcommittee on Capital Budget**. "The No-Penalty Business Accessory Sign Inspection Program and No-Penalty Deck and Porch and Retaining Wall Inspection Programs will provide critical relief by ensuring small business owners and property owners will not have to worry about additional costs for their property to comply with City regulations. I want to thank the Department of Buildings Commissioner Melanie E. La Rocca and her team for their work in bringing these initiatives forward and for supporting some of our struggling New Yorkers most affected by the pandemic."

"The Yemeni American Association wants to express its sincerest gratitude to the DOB for establishing a Business Accessory Sign Inspection Program. For a very long period of time many of our Yemeni-owned Bodegas were fined because their business's signs/awnings were deemed not compliant with the NYC regulations. The Business Accessory Sign Inspection Program will be a huge relief for our merchants as it would grant them a free service to get their signs inspected and consulted on making corrections if needed. The Program will most importantly save our merchants from being fined excessively. We thank you for your support and look forward to continued work together to better our NYC community," said **Youssef Mubarez, Director of Public Relations of the Yemeni American Merchants Association**.

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