

A Turning Page for New York City



June is an exciting month for older New Yorkers. Centers like KCS Flushing Neighborhood Senior Center in Queens have begun resuming activities like grab-and-go meals and can fully reopen this week. The City is also holding primary elections this month, in which the new ranked-choice voting system will be used.

This summer will be a special one for New Yorkers. The City is having one of the most important elections in recent history that will use a new voting system, and next month the City is scheduled to fully reopen. After more than a year of being separated from family and friends, and not being able to do the things we love such as going to restaurants, craft fairs, and movies, the City's reopening – and most importantly for us older adults, the reopening of senior centers – feels like a revival.

On June 1st, we received exciting news when the Mayor announced that senior centers could resume

outdoor activities immediately and be able to fully reopen on June 14th. Of course, safety precautions like social distancing and face coverings will be in place to protect participants and staff. We know older adults have been waiting for this news and they cannot wait to see their friends, participate in workshops, and enjoy the food that the centers provide. Getting vaccinated is an important part in this reopening process.

Some senior centers have been able to reopen this week, while others continue the preparations needed to welcome back older New Yorkers. Senior centers have always served as community hubs

and as a lifeline for older New Yorkers who need services and information on resources available in the City. These services have been provided over the phone and virtually in the last year, but nothing beats seeing someone in person. We are so happy to welcome you all back!

Equally important news for older New Yorkers is this year's election, which will use ranked-choice voting to elect our local officials. It is a new and different form of voting, in which you can vote for your favorite candidate and rank four other candidates in order of preference.

Older adults are historically the most reliable voters and make up about 20.6% of New York City's population. We older adults take voting seriously because we know that elected officials shape the future of our communities, where we worked, and raised our families, and we want to continue to make a difference. Most importantly, voting is not only a privilege, but it is also a right and our civic duty.

With the adoption of the new voting system, it is crucial that older adults are equipped with the education and knowledge they need to cast a well-informed ballot. Last month, the Mayor partnered with [DemocracyNYC](#) and committed funds to launch a large-scale voter education campaign. The campaign includes advertising and PSAs, investments in language access and accessibility, and more.

[The Department for the Aging](#) has been working to help older adults become familiarized with the new system. Last month, we partnered with the NALEO Education Fund in a virtual training for older adults to learn about the voting process. We also joined NALEO and several non-profit Latino organizations to kick-off Ranked-Choice Voting Latino Week of Action and encourage the Latino community to vote.

Again, the ranked-choice voting system allows voters to rank up to five candidates. You select your number one candidate and four others in order of preference, giving you more choices and say in who gets elected. Even if a voter's first-choice candidate does not win, their ranked-choice ballot is still able to affect the outcome as their vote will go to the next highest ranked candidate on the ballot. Interesting, isn't it!

For those who want to get a taste of the new voting experience, they can practice with an interactive ballot on [DemocracyNYC's website](#), which mimics the NYC ballot and offers a fun experience for users to practice voting. Best of all, the interactive practice ballot is available in 15 languages. One of my preferred voting topics is choosing my favorite NYC Landmarks and I'm not surprised to see Central Park leading.

With the elections approaching in less than a week, my last tip to voters is to visit the [ElectNYC](#) website, which provides an overview on the races and candidates in your district or you can simply watch a short video to refresh yourself on ranked-choice voting. Remember, every vote and every voter matters. You have the power to decide for the future of New York City.

Lastly, I also want to continue encouraging New

Yorkers to get vaccinated. The more people who get vaccinated, the sooner we can get back to a true sense of normalcy. Have a wonderful, fun-filled, safe summer.



**NYC Department for the Aging
Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez**