

# PLUMBERS AND GASFITTERS LOCAL UNION NO. 1

OF THE

UNITED ASSOCIATION OF JOURNEYMEN AND APPRENTICES OF THE PLUMBING  
AND PIPE FITTING INDUSTRY OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA  
NEW YORK CITY

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KENNY VAZQUEZ JR.

May 28, 2026

Mayor Zohran Mamdani

City Hall

New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Mamdani:

I write to you today after reviewing your “Block By Block” housing plan, meant to address the City’s affordable housing crisis, with serious concern with the plan’s intention to study the use of plastic piping materials as a cost-effective measure.

UA Plumbers Local Union No. 1 strongly urges the administration not to pursue this measure and dispel the myth linking the creation of affordable housing to the use of cheaper materials like plastic piping. Throughout the “Block By Block” plan your administration states its intention is to create and protect union jobs, but adopting plastic piping standards completely contradicts that aim.

There are serious and well-documented safety and health issues surrounding the use of plastic piping and the administration’s consideration of its use as a way of building affordable housing risks creating two distinct sets of plumbing codes – a cheaper, dangerous code for affordable housing, and a code for those that can afford safer materials, installed by qualified and experienced union workers.

This is not just a labor issue - it is part of labor’s mission to lift working families up – it is the most gratifying part of our work. So, it is particularly frustrating to us when the City would create an unequitable system under the pretense of creating affordable housing. It is simply a false choice that cheaper materials are needed to build affordable housing.

There is a lot at stake with even the consideration of this measure – indeed, plastic plumbing is often recognized as the leading contributor to microplastic contamination in drinking water. Plastic pipes commonly leach chemicals used in their manufacture into the water passing through them. And since they are more permeable than copper, environmental chemicals have been shown to leach into the plastic piping, meaning the plastic is susceptible to both internal and external chemical contamination.

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Polyvinyl Chloride or PVC is highly toxic and flammable and can sustain a flame. When you install PVC, you are essentially placing a toxic, solid fuel behind the walls of a house. Both the FDNY and NYCHA have confirmed the safety and health concerns of plastic piping and have repeatedly stated their opposition to its use.

It is also critical to mention that these plastic lines cannot be sanitized in case of biological contamination, such as if Legionella or if other pathogenic bacteria is detected. There are only two ways to sanitize potable water piping – by pushing either chlorine or high temperature water through the system – plastic piping would not survive either. Along with health and safety concerns, many multi-million-dollar lawsuits have accompanied the installation and subsequent failure of plastic piping.

Local 1 strongly urges the administration to abandon consideration of adopting plastic piping standards as it seeks to create more affordable housing opportunities. The City should have a single building code that ensures the health and safety of all residents, regardless of their status and background.

We greatly appreciate calls throughout “Block By Block” for construction workers to be paid proper wages and receive benefits. But the use of plastic piping and other cheap materials hurts union jobs and creates a two-tiered housing system.

No one is more supportive of the creation of affordable housing than Local 1 and other labor unions. We would encourage the administration to engage with labor, and working together, find a safe and affordable way to expand on the construction of affordable housing. If the administration is planning on forming a committee to study building code reforms, Local 1 respectfully requests that we be included.

Thank you, in advance, for your attention to this critically important issue. Should you have any questions or concerns, I would be more than happy to address them. I can be reached on my cell phone at 917-709-9244 or via e-mail [pocconnor@ualocal1.org](mailto:pocconnor@ualocal1.org).

Sincerely,



Paul O'Connor  
Business Manager

PO:kp

**cc: Deputy Mayor Julie Su; Deputy Mayor Leila Bozorg; DOB Commissioner Ahmed Tigani; City Council Speaker Julie Menin; City Council Committee on Housing & Buildings Members – Council Members: Pierina Ana Sanchez, Dr. Nantasha Williams, Carl Wilson, Virginia Maloney, Shaun Abreu, Yusef Salaam, Kevin Riley, Oswald Feliz, Crystal Hudson, Rita Joseph, and Susan Zhuang**