

# Housing Our Neighbors:

## A Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness



**The City of New York  
Mayor Eric Adams**

**Chief Housing Officer  
Jessica Katz**



# Table of Contents

LETTER FROM THE MAYOR .....	2
LETTER FROM THE CHIEF HOUSING OFFICER .....	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	8
METHODOLOGY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.....	11
THE STATE OF HOUSING IN NYC.....	16
CHAPTER 1: TRANSFORM NYCHA.....	25
CHAPTER 2: ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING INSTABILITY.....	42
CHAPTER 3: CREATE AND PRESERVE AFFORDABLE HOUSING.....	56
CHAPTER 4: IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF NEW YORKERS.....	74
CHAPTER 5: REDUCE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN.....	91

# Letter from the Mayor

## Letter from the Mayor

The ideas in the Blueprint you are about to read are not mine.

They reflect the hard-won wisdom and lived experience of hundreds of New York City's leading experts on housing – including homeless and formerly homeless New Yorkers, NYCHA residents, advocates and academics, and individuals who design, build, and operate housing of every kind.

In designing this Blueprint, my team and I have spent many hours speaking to these New Yorkers. Some of the individuals who contributed to this plan have been fighting for these ideas for generations – yet quite a few of these ideas have never been tried before.

This is the type of bold approach we will need if we are going to address one of the greatest challenges of our time. Safe, stable, and affordable housing is fundamental to a prosperous city.

We will never have a school system that offers opportunity to every child if thousands go to sleep in a shelter every night. We will never have a fully functioning health care system if we force our most vulnerable neighbors to fend for themselves. We will never be truly effective in reducing crime if a New Yorker leaving Rikers Island has nowhere safe to go.

For decades, New York City has set increasingly ambitious targets for the construction of new subsidized housing. Yet as of the release of Housing Our Neighbors, more than one-third of New Yorkers spend over half their income on rent, and last night thousands of children slept in a shelter bed.

This is not to say that the City will stop investing in the construction of new homes with below market rents. That remains a critical tool in our affordability toolkit, and we continue to fight to expand incentives for these types of projects. But if that approach alone was enough to address our housing crisis, we would have seen greater progress by now. Instead, we too often appear to be taking one step forward and two steps back.

We can do better. And if we are going to keep New York a city that is welcoming to all, a place where people can stay and grow a family or move to in pursuit of a dream – we must do better.

The commitments laid out in this Blueprint recognize, for the first time, the interconnectedness of all the different types of places New Yorkers call home.

They are backed up by the largest financial commitment to housing that any administration has ever made.

And they seek to answer a fundamental question - what kind of city do we want to be?

I want this to be a city where someone in need of mental healthcare, or even just down on their luck, can get the help they need and a safe roof over their head, rather than sleeping on the street or cycling in and out of shelter.

I want this to be a city where people living in NYCHA can get repairs made as quickly as someone living in a condo building on Park Avenue.

I want more New Yorkers to be able to find an apartment they can afford in a neighborhood they love – one that fits the needs and the size of their family – without having to literally win the lottery.

I want to put the dream of homeownership back into the grasp of working people, and prevent a generation of New Yorkers from believing that the only way they'll ever be able to buy a place to call their own is by moving out of the city we all love.

I want the immigrant family who poured their life savings into an apartment building to be able to invest in that property and offer safe and affordable homes to their neighbors.

I want to finally slice through the red tape and dysfunction that keeps too many apartments empty and too many potential homes for New Yorkers as vacant lots.

The stakes could not be higher. But we will not let petty politics stand in the way of progress. We will not let the opposition of the few shout down the needs of the many. And we will not be afraid to take bold action, to invest what is necessary, and to embrace new ideas along the way.

We cannot do this alone. It will take the help of the people whose ideas you see reflected in this plan, of elected leaders in every community, of the people of this city and those who dream of living here.

Most of all, it will take hard work. So, let us begin.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Adams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eric Adams  
Mayor of the City of New York

# **Letter from the Chief Housing Officer**

# Letter from the Chief Housing Officer

Dear Neighbors,

Housing is the foundation for everything else in our lives – without a stable place to live, no one can be expected to achieve and flourish. Stable, affordable housing is a literal homebase for everything New Yorkers hope to accomplish in our striving, thriving city. Housing is both the bricks and mortar that make up the fabric of New York City’s neighborhoods and the safety, stability, and wealth of New York City’s families.

We must treat our city’s housing and homelessness crisis with the urgency it deserves and ensure that all our neighbors have a safe, stable, affordable place to live in the greatest city in the world.

We must, and we will.

This Housing Blueprint re-writes the rules of what a housing plan is. We are asking New Yorkers experiencing homelessness to advise on how city programs could help better serve their needs. We are asking NYCHA residents to sit in the boardroom and make decisions that will affect the future of their homes. We surveyed New Yorkers across the five boroughs about their top housing priorities.

We’ll work together as a team by breaking down government silos, knowing that housing issues permeate dozens of city agencies that don’t have “housing” in their name, from Aging to Health to Sanitation.

We’ll be transparent about the state of homelessness in New York City and work with those that are directly impacted.

We’ll build more housing citywide and find new strategies for housing supply.

We’ll put people above paperwork and measure our success based on how quickly we can move New Yorkers into affordable housing, and not just how quickly we can close the deal.

While we have to build more housing overall, we cannot solely focus on building when the very systems set up to help New Yorkers gain access to a permanent home, whether that is supportive housing to help people adjust back from living in a shelter, winning a unit in the housing lottery, or receiving a Section 8 voucher to help a senior stay housed, are designed to keep them out.

For the first time, New York City is looking at the entire landscape. We are anchoring NYCHA residents and New Yorkers experiencing homelessness at the center of our city’s housing policy.

This is wide reaching and ambitious, but that is what we need in this moment. We are resetting what a housing plan is: serving New Yorkers; finally giving New Yorkers access to the services

that are meant to serve them; and ensuring our housing is supporting families, not hurting them.

It is time to house all of our neighbors. This Blueprint will help us get that done.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jessica Katz'. The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large initial 'J' and 'K'.

Jessica Katz  
New York City Chief Housing Officer

# Executive Summary



# Executive Summary

Housing has been a crisis in New York City for too long. Too many New Yorkers are experiencing homelessness, living in poor quality housing, or struggling to keep up with housing costs. Residents who need help securing and maintaining affordable, high-quality housing are burdened by long and stressful processes that make it more difficult to get the help they need.

The Adams administration is taking a new approach to the crisis. We will continue to invest in the creation and preservation of affordable housing to grow the supply of options for low-income New Yorkers. But these investments are just one part of a broader strategy to provide access to affordable, high-quality housing for all New Yorkers, including households experiencing homelessness, NYCHA residents, families, single New Yorkers, renters, and homeowners alike. We will harness all the benefits that housing can provide to bolster access to opportunity, promote economic stability and mobility, improve health and safety, and increase racial equity. We will make sure to deliver the housing and services that New Yorkers need. Through these efforts, we will work towards a New York City where all of our neighbors – not just a fortunate few – can thrive.

This Blueprint outlines policies and strategies for five key housing pillars:

## 1. Transform NYCHA

- Transform how NYCHA delivers services to residents
- Leverage new partners and resources to address capital needs
- Amplify resident voices in decision-making
- Invest in the health and safety of NYCHA residents

## 2. Address Homelessness and Housing Instability

- Break down government silos to better measure and address homelessness
- Combat housing instability to help New Yorkers stay housed
- Improve shelter and services for New Yorkers experiencing homelessness
- Help New Yorkers in shelter move into permanent housing faster
- Reduce the risk of returning to shelter

## 3. Create and Preserve Affordable Housing

- Accelerate and increase capacity for new housing supply citywide
- Increase access to transit and amenities for low-income New Yorkers
- Meet the housing needs of seniors and people with disabilities
- Expand tools to preserve existing low-cost and affordable housing
- Help communities build and maintain wealth through homeownership
- Promote housing stability for renters
- Provide inclusive development opportunities for equitable growth

## 4. Improve the Health and Safety of New Yorkers

- Improve housing quality to ensure healthy and safe living conditions
- Keep New Yorkers safe in their homes in a changing climate
- Create healthier and more sustainable homes

## 5. Reduce Administrative Burden

# Methodology & Community Engagement



# Methodology & Community Engagement

To ensure Housing Our Neighbors: A Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness reflects the full landscape of needs and priorities to serve our neighbors, the Chief Housing Officer engaged public, non-profit, private, advocacy and lived experience voices across a series of convenings and online forums from March to May 2022.

Starting from a New Yorker-driven analysis of leading priorities for our housing and neighborhoods captured through NYC Speaks, the Chief Housing Officer consulted with partners across City government to outline an integrated vision for housing and homelessness that addresses the needs of all New Yorkers, including NYCHA residents, for the first time.

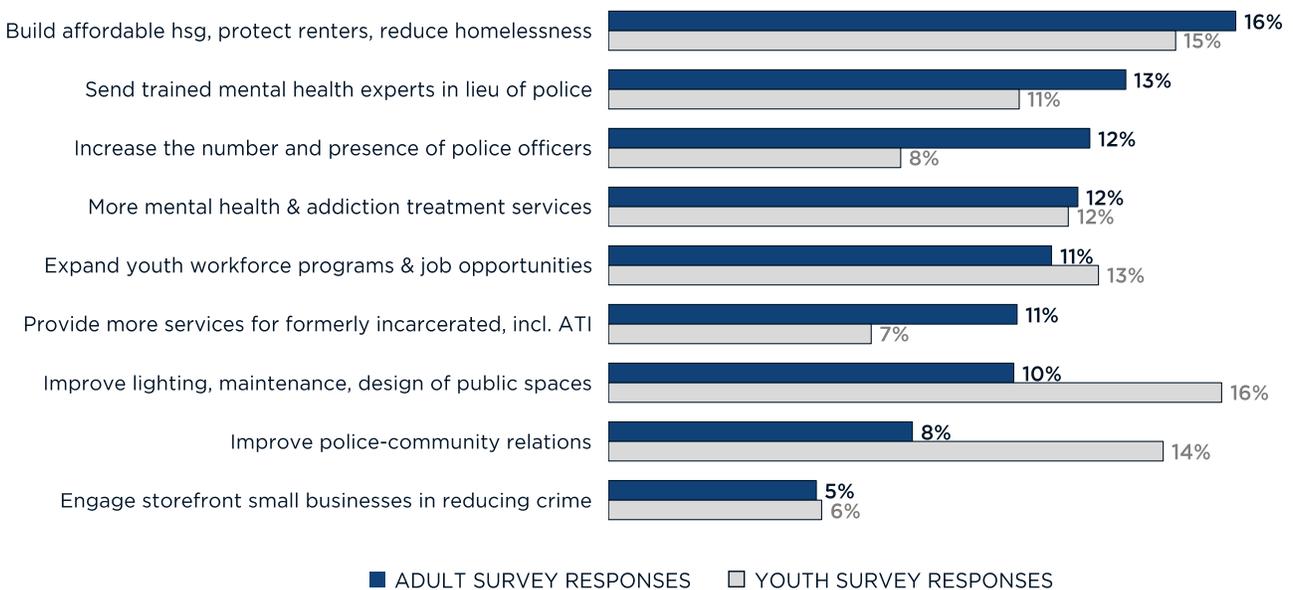


## Resident Priorities: NYC Speaks

Through the City’s ongoing public engagement initiative NYC Speaks, the Deputy Mayor for Strategic Initiatives and HR&A Advisors conducted a six-month citywide public engagement survey that engaged 62,000 New Yorkers on policy questions across 10 topic areas. Across all demographics, housing was listed as the number one priority for the vast majority of New Yorkers and as the second most pressing issue for others (see Figures I and II). Priority actions for New Yorkers related to housing are to: (1) Preserve affordable housing, (2) Enforce building code violations, and (3) Support affordable homeownership (see Figure III), which have been incorporated throughout the Blueprint. During the second phase of NYC Speaks, the Chief Housing Officer will lead Community Conversations on housing topics to build new partnerships in support of the Blueprint implementation.

**Figure I: Public Safety Priorities of New Yorkers, NYC Speaks**

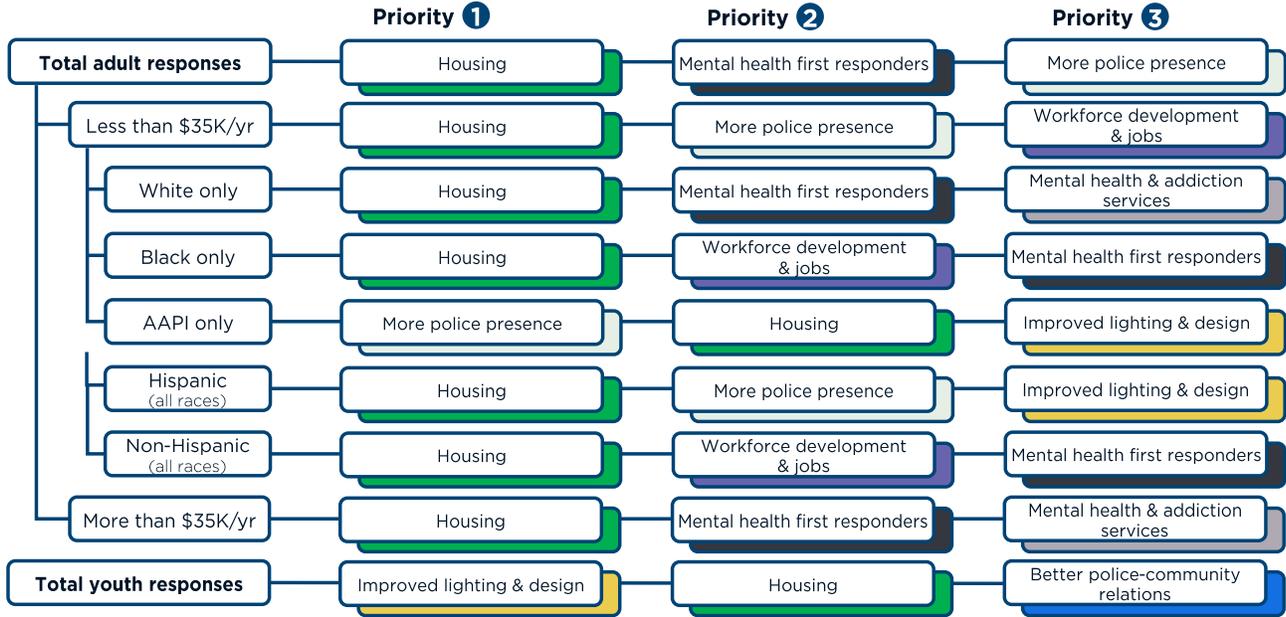
**How can City government make your neighborhood safer?** (select top 3)



Source: Civic Engagement Commission and HR&A Advisors, NYC Speaks survey, 2022.

**Figure II: Public Safety Priorities of New Yorkers by Demographics, NYC Speaks**

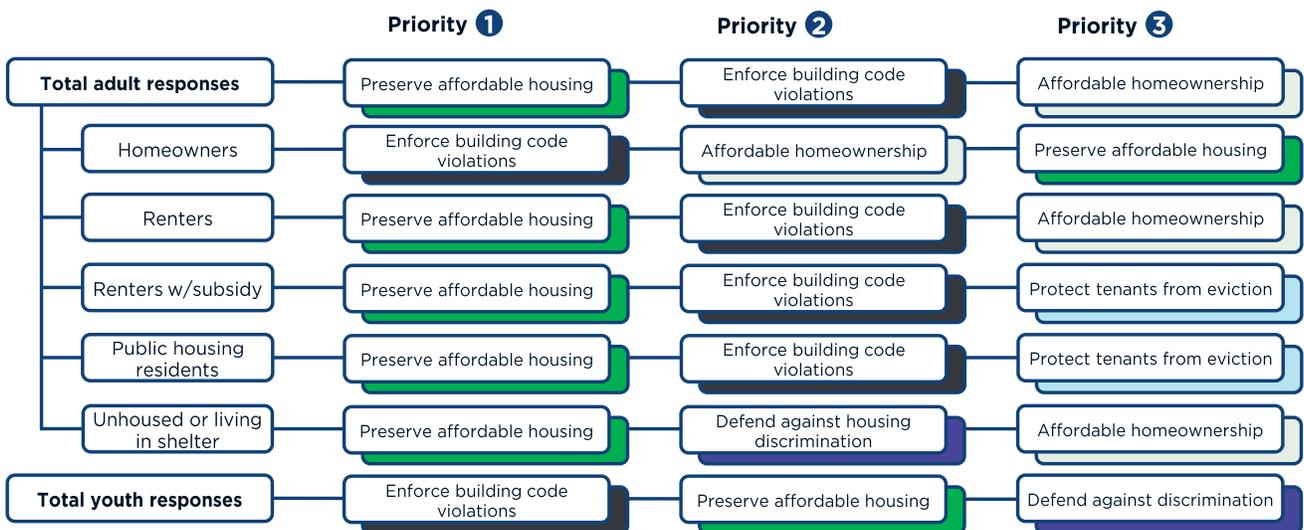
How can City government make your neighborhood safer? (select top 3)



Source: Civic Engagement Commission and HR&A Advisors, NYC Speaks survey data, 2022.

**Figure III: Housing & Neighborhood Priorities of New Yorkers by Housing Type, NYC Speaks**

Which of these actions would be most beneficial to ensuring a safe, quality, and affordable place to live for all New Yorkers? (select top 3)



Source: Civic Engagement Commission, HR&A Advisors: NYC Speaks Survey (2022)

## Expert Insights: Community and Lived Experience Engagement

In addition to capturing the priorities of everyday New Yorkers through NYC Speaks, the Chief Housing Officer led robust engagement with directly impacted communities.

For the first time in history, homeless and formerly homeless New Yorkers were invited to meet with the Mayor at City Hall and weigh in directly on policies and plans to combat homelessness. These meetings marked a major milestone and laid the groundwork for a new approach to housing and homelessness that incorporates the feedback and ideas of directly impacted New Yorkers. In the coming months, we will continue to partner with New Yorkers with lived experience of homelessness to implement the strategies in this plan.

Our team also met with NYCHA residents to hear expert insights into how the Adams administration should support public housing. As described further in Chapter 1, NYCHA residents will continue to play a key role in decision-making around the future of their homes.

## Housing Partners: Industry and Advocacy Leaders

Striving to make the blueprint comprehensive, the team held multiple roundtables with external partners including affordable housing developers, homeless shelter providers, and housing and homelessness advocates over a ten-week period. The team also offered an online portal for ongoing idea sharing, soliciting proposals from the staff, tenants, colleagues, and affiliates of stakeholders involved. The underlying objective was to engage the expertise of New York City's private and non-profit leaders to ensure the blueprint captures its full potential. Overall, these meetings and the portal were a successful collaboration, including over 200 attendees and responses.

## Interagency Collaboration: Working Across Government Silos

As an integrated vision for housing and homelessness, the Blueprint was crafted with input from leaders across City government. The Chief Housing Officer coordinated a group of agencies and offices to identify, prioritize, and develop housing initiatives that advance the core Blueprint goals. This group evaluated existing policies and programs and worked together to highlight issues that the Adams administration will address to advance a wide range of policy goals. These contributors were indispensable to the development of strategies and will play a crucial role in implementing the Blueprint moving forward. Along with every Deputy Mayor and Chief Officer in City Hall, these partners include but are not limited to:

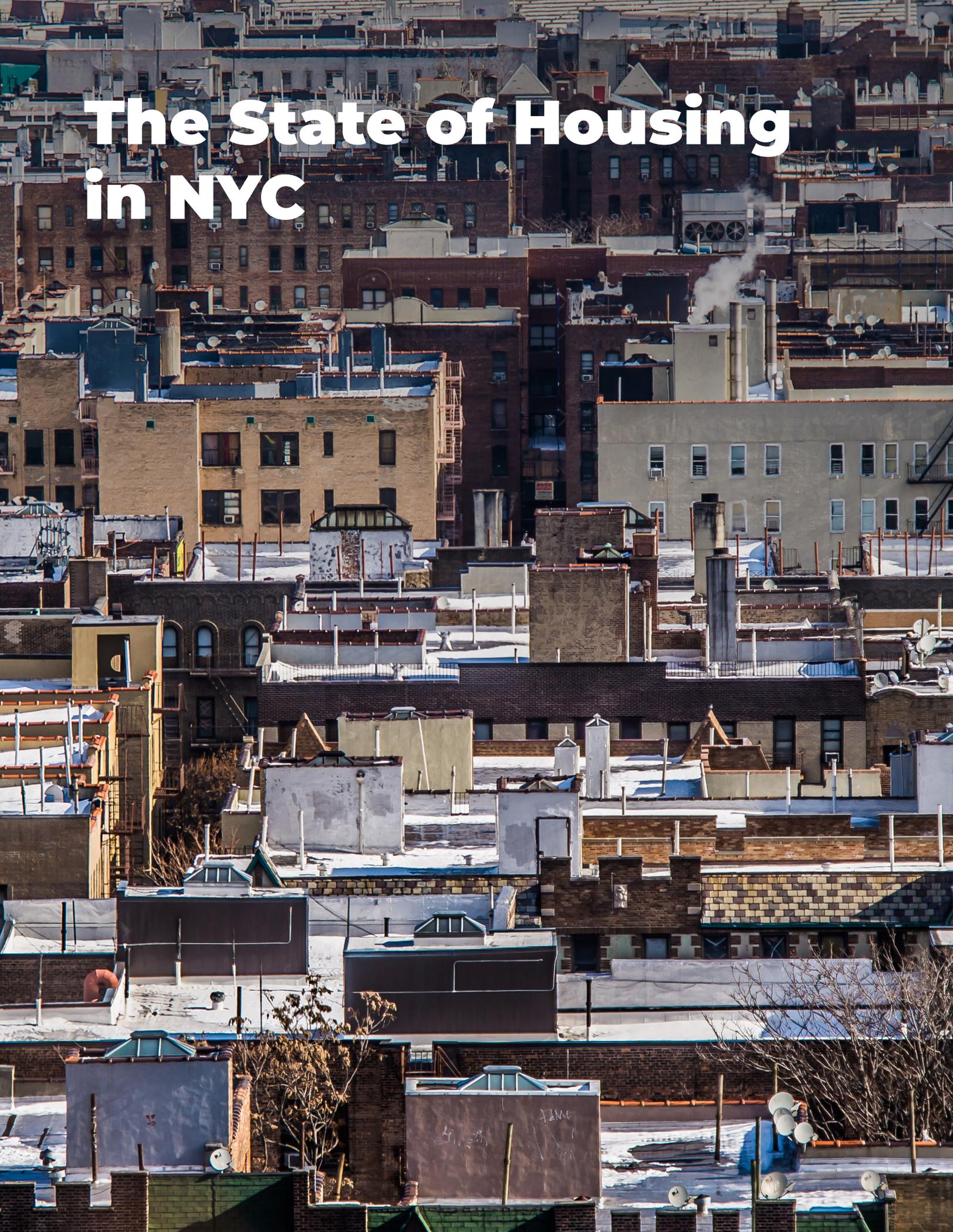
- Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)
- New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)
- New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC)
- Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)
- New York City Department of Social Services (DSS)
- Department of City Planning (DCP)
- Administration for Children's Services (ACS)

- Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)
- Department of Buildings (DOB)
- Mayor’s Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ)
- New York City Fire Department (FDNY)
- Department of Consumer and Workforce Protection (DCWP)
- Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
- Mayor’s Office of Operations
- Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA)
- Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DOITT)
- Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ)
- Department of Sanitation (DSNY)
- New York City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR)
- Department for the Aging (DFTA)
- Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)
- Department for Veterans’ Services (DVS)
- Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD)
- New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC)
- Mayor’s Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV)
- Mayor’s Office to Protect Tenants (MOPT)
- Mayor’s Office of Equity (MOE)
- Housing Recovery Operations (HRO)
- New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM)
- New York City Health + Hospitals (H+H)
- Mayor’s Public Engagement Unit (PEU)
- Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit (CAU)

## Crafting the Blueprint

Based on the data, insight and expertise, and feedback from directly impacted New Yorkers, industry leaders, and government partners, this Blueprint offers a vision that reflects a new set of priorities for housing in New York City.

# The State of Housing in NYC

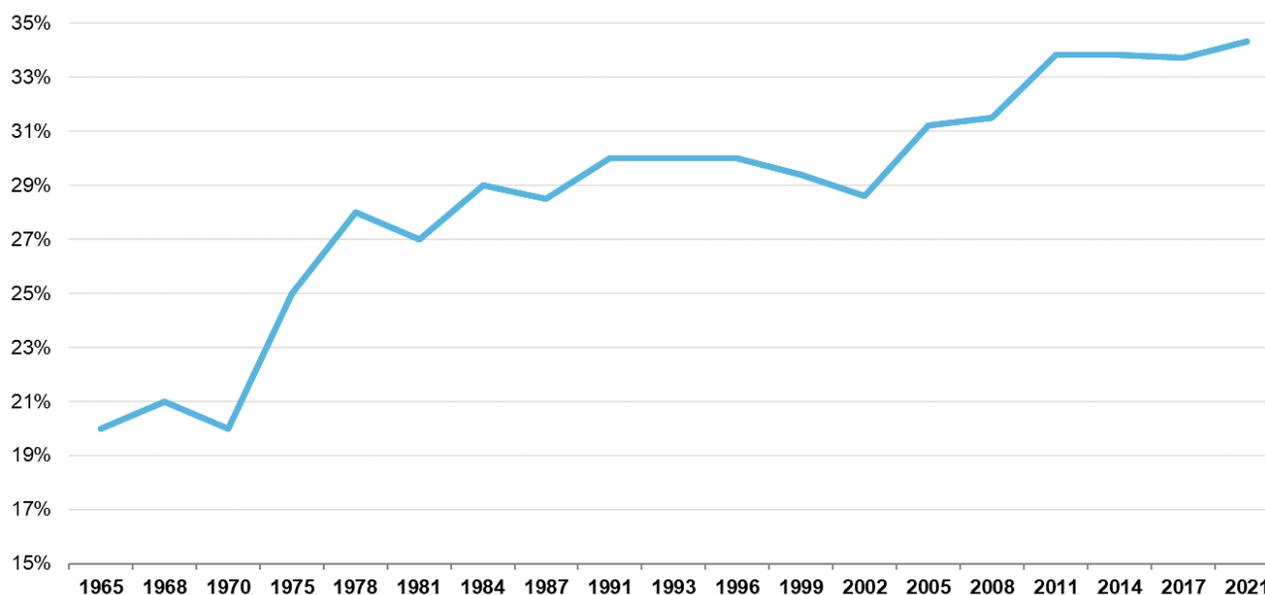


# The State of Housing in NYC

Despite the City's unparalleled investments in creating and preserving affordable housing over the past 40 years, the continued shortage of housing options contributes to our ongoing affordability and homelessness crisis. This crisis impacts millions of New Yorkers in detrimental ways, from struggling to keep up with high housing costs, to spending months or years in shelter, to dealing with pests, mold, lead paint, and heat outages in their homes, among others.

The share of New York renters who are rent-burdened, meaning they pay more than 30 percent of their income toward rent, remains the highest on record. Figure IV shows the median rent burden (rent-to-income ratio) for renter households in New York City from 1965 to 2021. Last year, the typical New York renter paid 34 percent of their income toward housing costs. Especially for households with lower incomes overall, this high level of rent burden means that residents have less money to spend on food, childcare, education, healthcare, and other necessary expenses. Today, 53 percent of renter households are rent-burdened, including 32 percent of renter households who are severely burdened and pay more than 50 percent of their income toward housing costs.

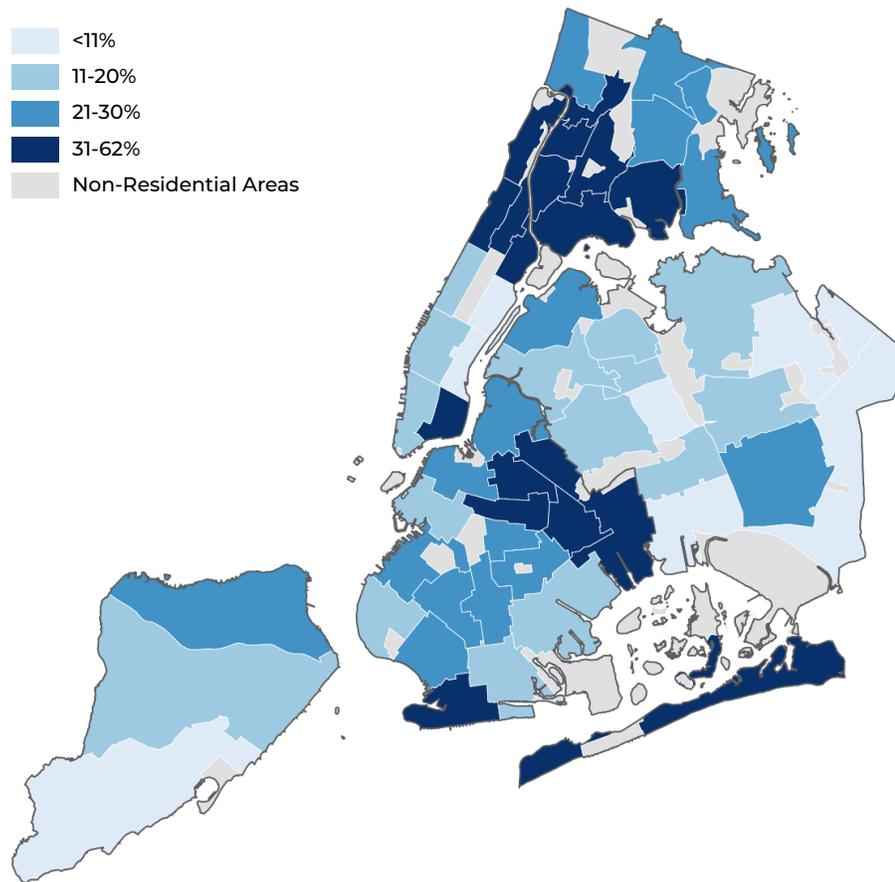
**Figure IV: Median Rent Burden of NYC Households, 1965 – 2021**



Source: NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey, 1965-2021. US Census Bureau/NYC HPD. The U.S. Census Bureau reviewed this data product for unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and approved the disclosure avoidance practices applied to this release. CBDRB-FY22-199 and CBDRB-FY22-POP001-010. Rent burden is defined as gross rent to income ratio

The lack of low-cost housing is especially pronounced in certain parts of the city, many of which have strong access to transit, parks, high-performing schools, and other fundamental resources that shape quality of life. According to federal housing guidelines, an apartment must cost 30 percent or less of a household's gross income in order to be considered affordable. For example, a household of three people earning 60 percent of Area Median Income (AMI) in 2019 would

**Figure V: Low-Cost Rental Units by Share of Total Units**

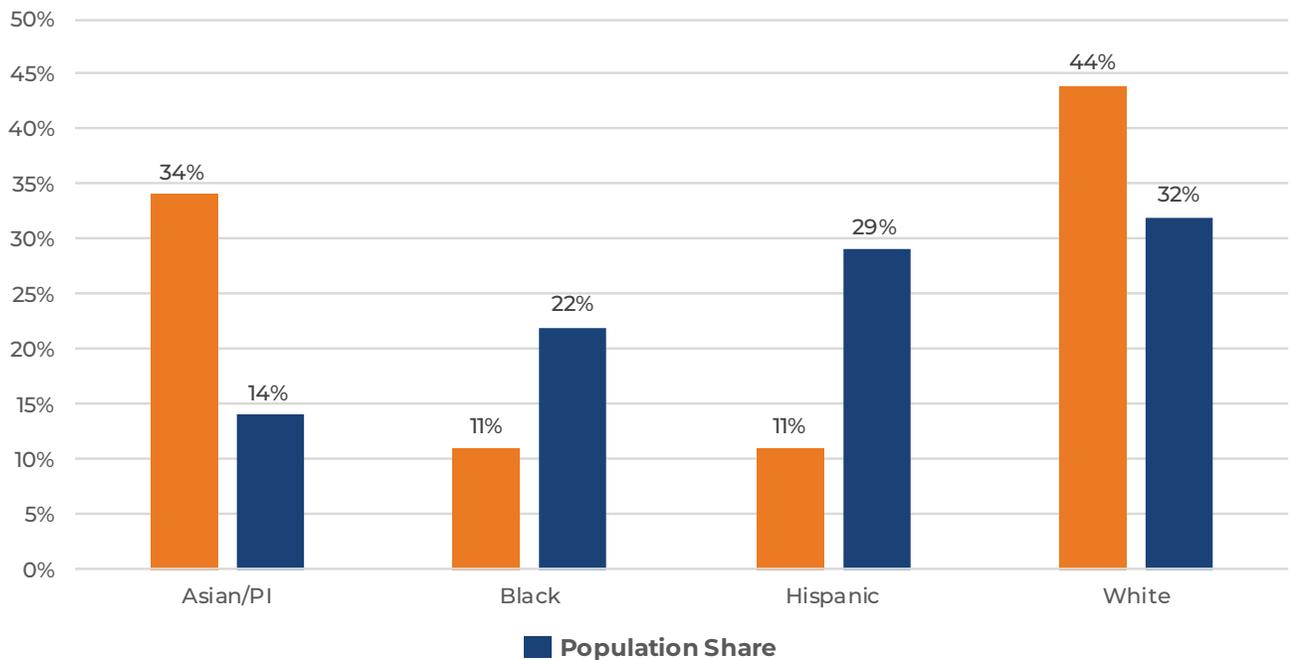


*Source: 2015-2019 American Community Surveys Public Use Micro Data. Note: Denominator includes both owner and rental units. Affordable units include both those that receive subsidies or are under regulatory agreements and units that are unregulated but still affordable to families below 60% AMI. Rent tiers are based on 2019 HUD Income Limits.*

have needed to find a 2-bedroom apartment renting for \$1,290 or less. As highlighted in Figure V, while 26 percent of rental units citywide were affordable to households earning 60 percent of AMI in 2019, they were not evenly dispersed across the city. In parts of Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island, fewer than one in ten rental units were affordable to households earning 60 percent of AMI.

The housing crisis also makes it more difficult for New Yorkers to buy a home – particularly first-time homebuyers who do not have generational wealth to support them. As the median price of homes across the city has skyrocketed over the past 20 years, access to new mortgage loans for Black and Hispanic New Yorkers is disproportionately low. Figure VI shows home mortgages by the race and ethnicity of the borrower. In 2020, White borrowers accounted for 44 percent of new loans for owner-occupied, one-to-four-unit properties in New York City, while Black and Hispanic borrowers each accounted for 11 percent, far less than their share of the total population in New York City.

**Figure VI: Home Purchase Loans by Race and Ethnicity, 2020**

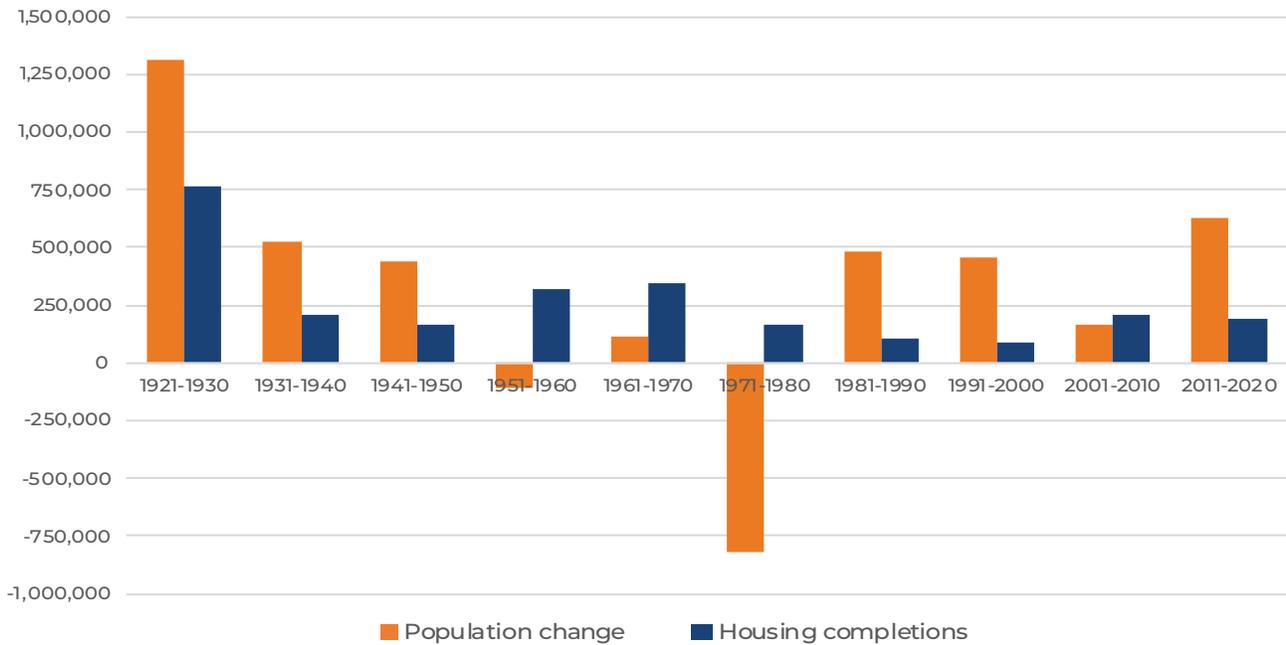


Sources: 2020 Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) data, available at: <https://ffiec.cfpb.gov/>, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019. More specifically, the data shows disparities in first lien home purchase loan originations for owner-occupied, one-to-four unit properties (including condos and co-ops).

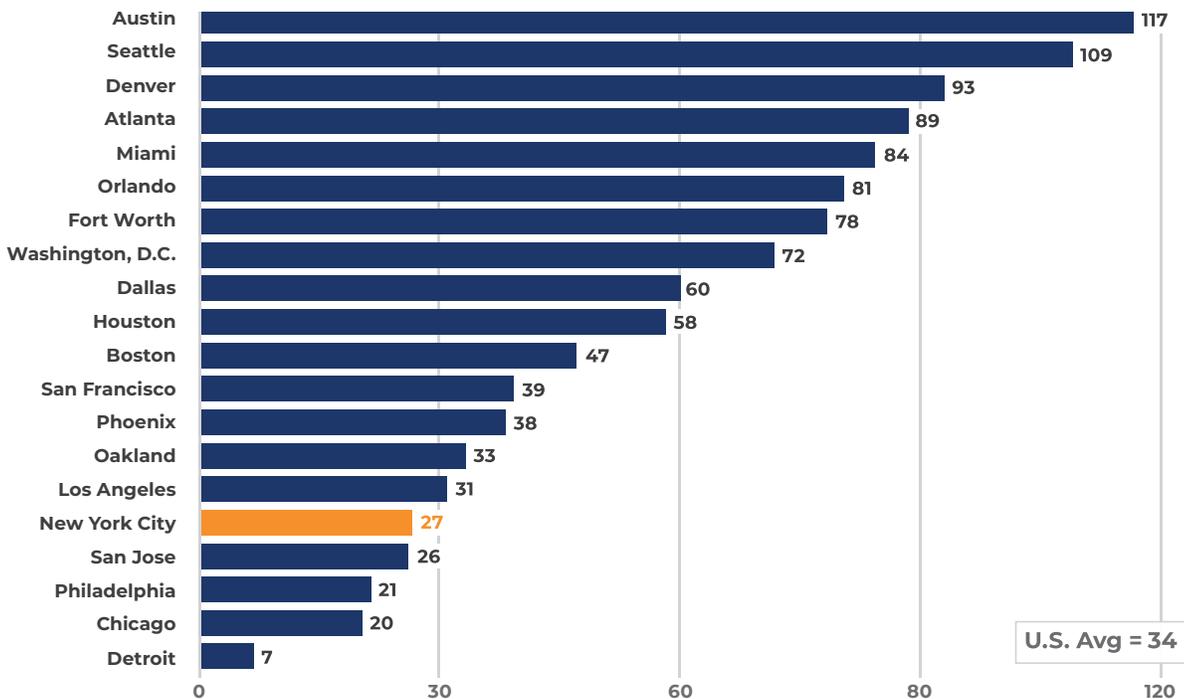
Across the country, the high cost of homeownership is even greater for households of color relative to White households. Black and Hispanic homeowners tend to pay higher interest rates when purchasing a home and do not have the same access to refinancing. Since 2005, the number of Black homeowner households in New York City has declined by more than 10 percent. This is likely due in part to the impacts of the financial crisis, where most foreclosure activity took place in communities disproportionately occupied by New Yorkers of color. Today, neighborhoods with a higher proportion of Black and Hispanic homeowners have lower home values, potentially compounding these challenges.

A primary reason for our affordability crisis is that New York City's housing stock has not kept up with the rapid population and job growth that our city has experienced in recent decades. Even as the population surged throughout the 1980s and 1990s, housing was built at a much slower pace than was necessary to meet the need (see Figure VII). These trends have created a cumulative housing shortage from which the city has yet to recover. Although housing construction picked up in the 2000s, a lot less housing is being built today than during the first three-quarters of the 20th century, adding too few units to keep up with job and population increases. New York City produces significantly fewer new units per capita than many other major cities across the country (see Figure VIII).

**Figure VII: Population Change vs. Housing Completions in NYC by Decade, 1921-2020**



**Figure VIII: New Housing Units per 1,000 Residents in Major U.S. Cities (2011-2020)**



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau Building Permit Survey (BPS) County Annual Files (imputed); U.S. Census Bureau Delineation Files March 2020; NYC DCP Housing Database Q4 2020; U.S. Census Bureau Redistricting Data Files 2021. New housing units measured as authorizations for new units by building permits.

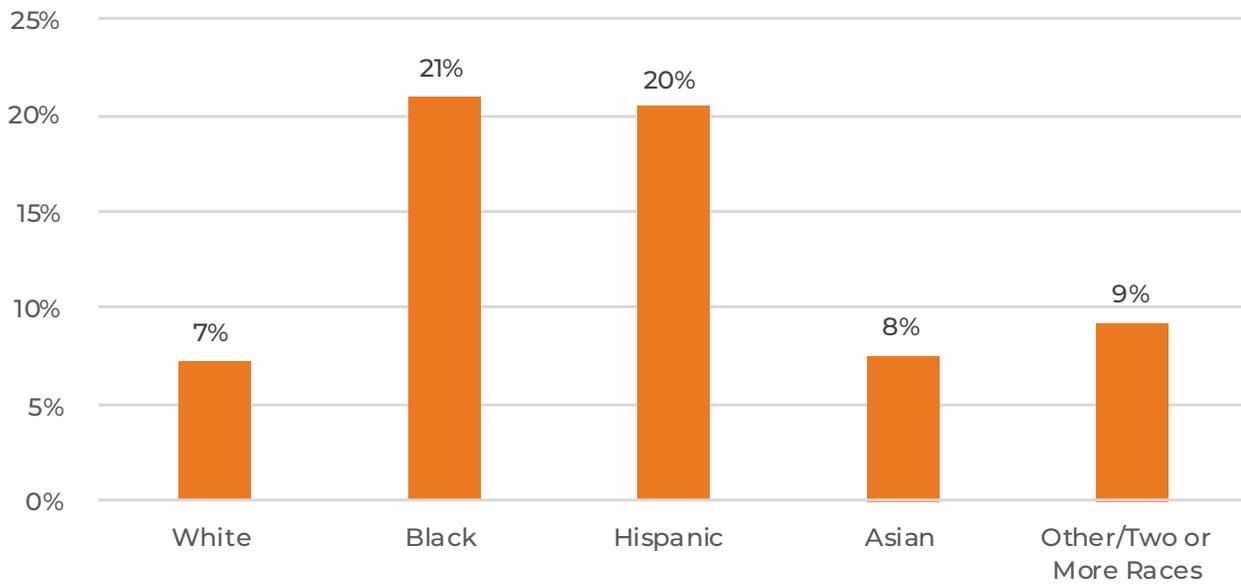
The lack of housing and affordable housing puts New Yorkers at greater risk of housing instability and makes it more difficult for residents experiencing homelessness to regain stable housing. Even though the City has expanded the availability and purchasing power of housing vouchers for tens of thousands of homeless New Yorkers, there are simply not enough available homes, making it difficult for households with vouchers to find an apartment to move into. Meanwhile, persistent source-of-income discrimination further limits the housing options of New Yorkers with vouchers. The impacts of COVID-19 exacerbated these challenges, contributing to longer stays in shelter for New Yorkers in need. While the average length of stay in shelter for families with children was already 446 days in Fiscal Year 2019, it grew to a shocking 520 days in Fiscal Year 2021. This means that the average homeless family now stays in shelter for the better part of two years.

High prices and prolonged shelter stays are not the only ways that the housing crisis manifests. The housing options of many New Yorkers are constrained not only by the lack of affordable housing overall but the dearth of affordable options that meet individual household needs. Growing numbers of seniors and young adults are forced into difficult rooming situations because of the lack of studio and one-bedroom apartments. Intergenerational families and other household types may be forced to compromise their privacy, space, and other housing preferences because they cannot find affordable units that meet their needs.

The harms of the housing crisis also exacerbate long-standing racial inequities in our housing stock and neighborhoods. New Yorkers of color and particularly Black and Hispanic residents are disproportionately impacted by the housing and homelessness crisis. Although Black and Hispanic New Yorkers make up approximately 49 percent of the city's population, 94 percent of families with children in shelter are Black or Hispanic. The stress, insecurity, and often crowded conditions that come with homelessness and unstable housing have a profound impact on the ability of students to learn and perform in school. In 2018, fewer than two in three students who had experienced temporary housing graduated on time.

Black and Hispanic/Latino New Yorkers are also significantly more likely to experience unsafe and unhealthy housing conditions, such as lack of heat, the presence of rodents, and peeling paint that may expose children to lead. In 2021, one in five Black and Hispanic New Yorkers reported experiencing three or more maintenance problems in their homes, compared to only 7 percent of White households (see Figure IX).

**Figure IX: Reporting Three or More Maintenance Deficiencies in Home by Race and Ethnicity, 2021**

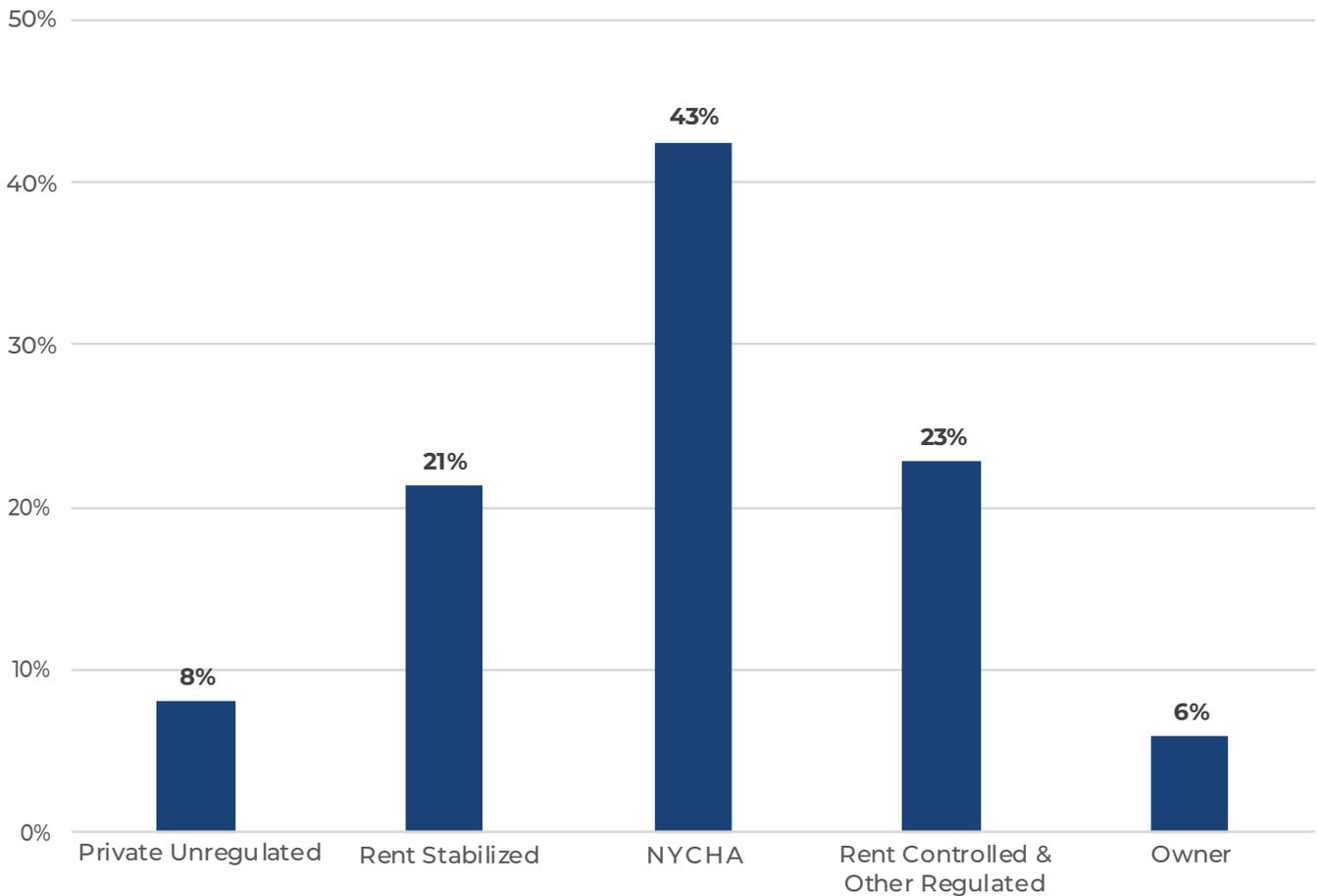


*Source: 2021 NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey. Data shows prevalence of three or more maintenance deficiencies in a home, which can include lack of heat, need for an additional heating source, presence of rodents, toilet breakdowns, leaks, peeling paint or plaster, and holes in the floor.*

Poor housing quality contributes to health issues like asthma and chronic absences from school and work. Asthma affects many aspects of child and family well-being, impacting children’s ability to learn and play, and increasing healthcare costs. It is also one of the leading causes of school absenteeism, putting the future earning potential of young New Yorkers at risk. Elevated blood lead levels in children, which result from exposure to lead through housing hazards such as peeling plaster and paint, can have irreversible effects on children’s physical and mental growth and cause learning and behavioral problems.

These experiences are closely connected to the type of housing in which New Yorkers live. For decades, the federal government has failed to invest in maintenance at the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), causing conditions to deteriorate for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers in public housing. Discrimination against New Yorkers with housing vouchers limits their housing options and may push them into lower quality homes. Figure X shows the prevalence of low-quality housing for different housing types. NYCHA residents and households with a federal Section 8 housing vouchers are most impacted by low-quality housing. In 2021, 43 percent of NYCHA residents and 27 percent of residents with Section 8 vouchers (who live in various types of rental housing), reported three or more maintenance deficiencies in their homes.

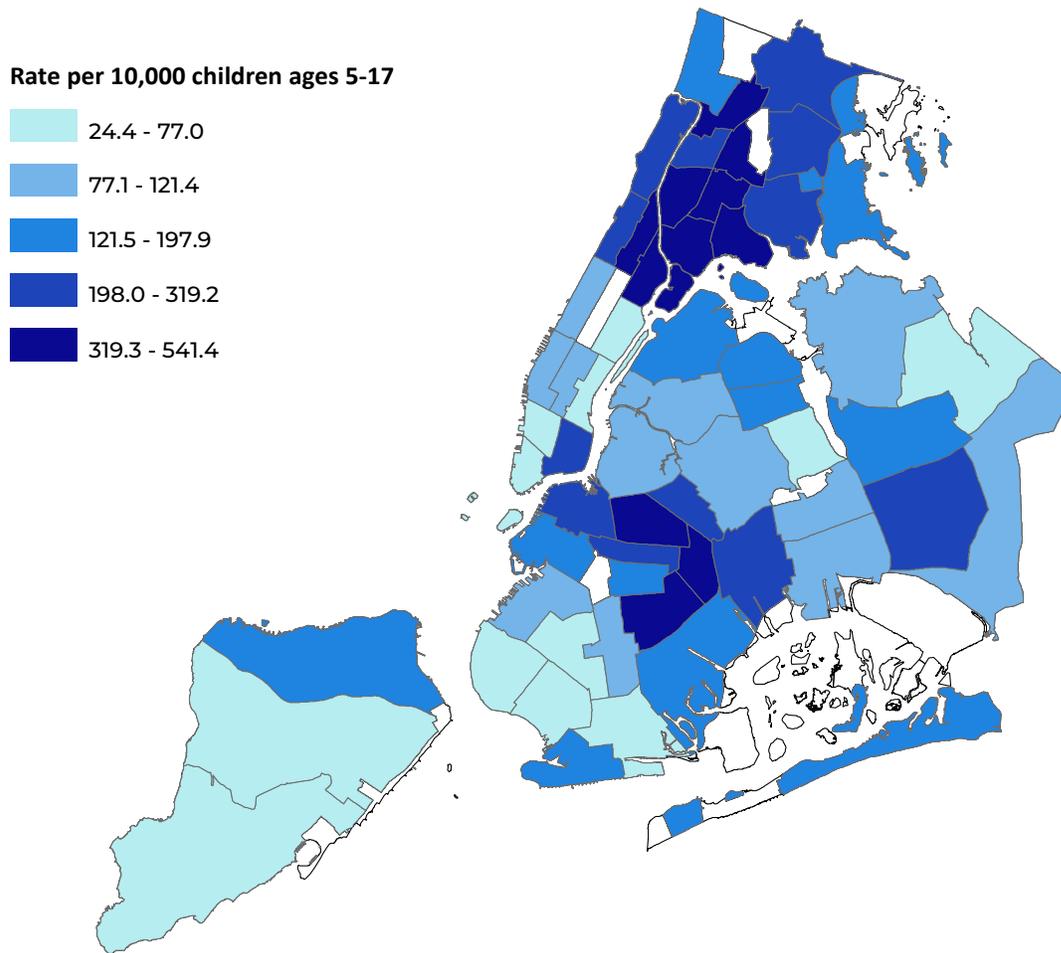
**Figure X: Prevalence of Three or More Maintenance Deficiencies by Housing Type**



*Source: 2021 NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey. Data shows prevalence of three or more maintenance deficiencies in a home, which can include lack of heat, need for an additional heating source, presence of rodents, toilet breakdowns, leaks, peeling paint or plaster, and holes in the floor. Residents with Section 8 vouchers occupy various types of rental housing, including rent-stabilized, rent-controlled and other regulated, and private unregulated housing.*

The clustering of low-quality housing in high-poverty communities and communities of color also impacts how New Yorkers experience health. The annual rate of children’s visits to emergency rooms for asthma is 647 per 10,000 children in Mott Haven and Melrose in the Bronx and 580 per 10,000 children in East Harlem, Manhattan. This is over 10 times the rate of children’s visits to emergency rooms in some parts of the city, including more affluent, predominately White areas such as the Upper East Side (49 per 10,000 children) and Greenwich Village/SoHo (38 per 10,000 children).

**Figure XI: Child Asthma Emergency Department Visits per 10,000 Children (ages 5-17), 2018**



Source: New York State Department of Health, Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System (SPARCS) data, 2018. Map created by New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of School Health. May 23, 2022.

# Chapter 1: Transform NYCHA



# Chapter 1: Transform NYCHA

NYCHA is the nation's largest public housing authority and home to over 400,000 New Yorkers. After decades of disinvestment, the Authority is facing a \$40 billion backlog in capital needs that has created untenable living conditions for residents. Households in NYCHA go without heat and hot water for weeks at a time, live with pest infestations and mold, and endure countless other hazards as the result of deferred maintenance and repair needs.

The Adams administration is committed to saving our public housing and providing NYCHA residents with the healthy, safe, and comfortable living conditions that every New Yorker deserves. We cannot fix a problem of this magnitude overnight. But, step by step, we will leverage the new resources, partners, and strategies that are needed to put NYCHA on a path to success in the long term. We will also invest in short-term improvements to NYCHA's housing stock and operations to prevent the situation from worsening. This includes addressing immediate issues around heat, lead, mold, pests, and elevators to ensure compliance with the 2019 agreement between NYCHA, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the City of New York. And, most importantly, we will position residents at the front and center of each and every effort to preserve our public housing stock and empower them to make decisions about the future of their homes.



## 1. Transform how NYCHA delivers services to residents

In 2021, NYCHA released the Transformation Plan, outlining a vision for the future of NYCHA and introducing a package of reforms to realize it. The Transformation Plan was designed to both improve day-to-day operations and help meet the requirements of the 2019 HUD Agreement.

The Transformation Plan is rooted in the values and ideas of NYCHA residents, staff, and advocates, who participated in hundreds of conversations to inform its development. The goal was to design and implement an organizational structure and business process that would better respond to the urgent needs of NYCHA residents, and the expressed commitments made in the HUD Agreement. Through robust community engagement emerged the core principles of development-level accountability and independence, paired with strong centralized oversight.

NYCHA began implementing key aspects of the Transformation Plan immediately upon its release in 2021. Early changes included the release of a new, streamlined resident portal that helped many tenants file rent hardships during COVID. The Adams administration is fully committed to supporting NYCHA as it implements major operational changes that are now underway. Through changes to its organizational structure, business model, and internal processes, NYCHA is transforming how it delivers services to residents, creating a better tenant experience and quality of life for nearly half a million New Yorkers.

## **Improve and streamline services to prioritize the resident experience**

The Transformation Plan empowers NYCHA developments by pushing resources and decision-making away from the central office and into the hands of those who know the most about each development: the on-site Property Management staff. Starting with resident needs, the new structure focuses on robust local teams with sufficient and appropriate oversight from central management. Implementing the Transformation plan will improve and streamline services at NYCHA to prioritize the needs and experience of residents.



### **SPOTLIGHT: Fully implement the Neighborhood Model**

The Neighborhood Model is a complete overhaul of NYCHA's approach to property management. It empowers local management teams to solve most resident concerns on-site without central office intervention, enabling a level of localized management that the Authority has not achieved in decades.

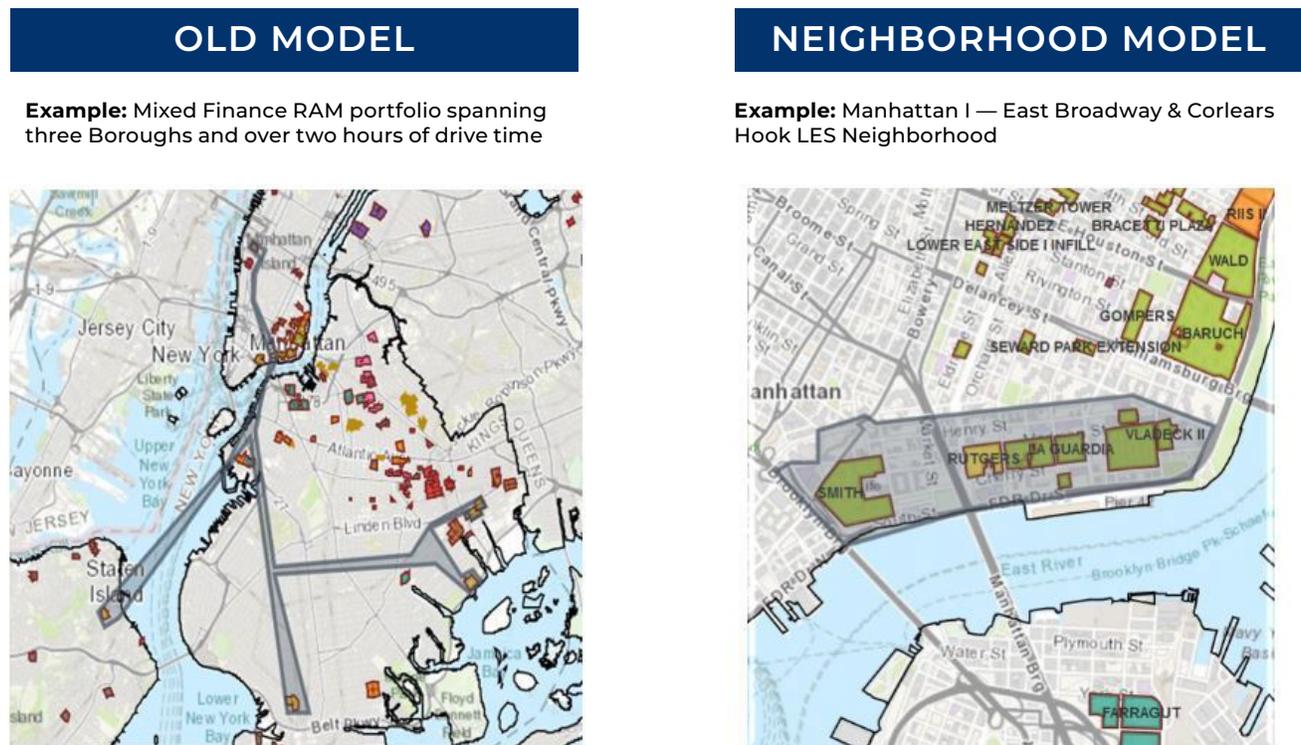
Under the current structure, NYCHA residents are forced to interact with many different departments to address a single issue. While most tenants in privately managed apartments report their maintenance and tenancy issues through a property manager, NYCHA residents are forced to navigate a complicated organizational structure that has not been clearly communicated to them. The Neighborhood Model makes structural improvements to reorient the Authority around its 290 developments. The model shifts decision-making authority and resources to each borough, neighborhood, and development office and sets new standards for local staff, while allowing enough discretion to meet the specific needs of each site's residents and physical environment.

The Neighborhood Model also makes more efficient use of resources and staff. In the old system, Regional Asset Managers (RAMs) at NYCHA were responsible for between 7,000 and 9,000 homes spread across multiple neighborhoods and boroughs, with up to two hours of driving time in between sites. In the Neighborhood Model, sites are clustered based on geographic proximity into 30 Neighborhoods with between 4,000 and 6,000 homes each. These changes promote efficiency and more hands-on management, improving response times for repairs and other needs, and reinvesting staff time previously spent traveling around the city into direct resident services.

NYCHA will fully implement the Neighborhood Model across every development by 2024. Each consolidation will have its own budget, Property Manager, and dedicated

management staff, who will serve as the node through which all resident concerns and problems are solved. Central office functions like human resources, information technology, and procurement will shift focus to operational needs and setting and enforcing standards to support overall function and performance. Throughout this transition, NYCHA will also evaluate and improve the Neighborhood Model using neighborhood performance metrics and input from residents.

**Figure XII: Old Regional Model vs. Neighborhood Model**



### SPOTLIGHT: Work Order Reform

Today, the state of NYCHA’s work order system includes wait times of over 300 days for key needs, such as a painter, plasterer, or carpenter, amid an overall backlog of 600,000 work orders. While NYCHA residents must fill out service requests for their repair needs, the longstanding system is not set up to work with residents. Appointments can be out of order, resulting in duplicative or unnecessary repairs. Work orders may be scheduled in conflict with a resident’s availability, requiring them to take time off work. Finally, the quality of the work may fall short of the standards that both residents and NYCHA should demand.

In conversations leading up to the Transformation Plan, these issues with the current work order system were often raised. NYCHA residents and staff specifically emphasized the need to move skilled trades workers—including painters, plumbers, electricians, and carpenters—closer to the property level. Stationing skilled trades staff at developments promotes good relationships and accountability between residents and staff, allows for workers to gain specialized knowledge of the unique issues facing the buildings they serve, and streamlines communication around complex work orders that require sequencing multiple trades.

To encourage these benefits and in response to community feedback, NYCHA launched Work Order Reform, an initiative that changes how NYCHA schedules skilled trade work orders and aligns the Authority's perspective of a repair with the resident perspective. Through Work Order Reform, NYCHA is moving skilled trades workers closer to the developments they serve. The highest-demand trades, including painters and carpenters, will be moved to individual developments. Other trades, such as plumbers and electricians, will be moved to the Neighborhood level and shared among two to four developments. To facilitate this more responsive structure, NYCHA is hiring over 450 new staff.

Work Order Reform also allows all necessary work orders for a resident's request to be made simultaneously during the first maintenance visit. This means that residents will be able to schedule all their appointments in a single phone call. In the current system, the next step in a repair process can only be scheduled once the previous step has been completed, and scheduling often occurs without resident input on availability. Work Order Reform aims to decrease total repair time, reorient the repair process to reflect the resident experience, and prioritize the completion of full repairs.

In recent months, Work Order Reform has launched in Queens, Staten Island, and The Bronx. NYCHA is preparing to bring the program to Brooklyn and Manhattan before the end of 2022.

**Figure XIII: Goals and Objectives of Work Order Reform**



**Reduce the amount of time it takes to complete an entire repair**

- Reduce Travel time for Skilled Trades Workers
- Increase Skilled Trades knowledge, familiarity, and relationship to the developments
- Reduce the number of tickets that are sequenced to Skilled Trades that can be completed by Maintenance Workers



**Create a resident focused scheduling system**

- Enable residents to schedule appointments on days that work with their schedule
- Provide residents with a single point of contact to schedule or reschedule their repairs
- Reduce instances of missed appointments due to resident not at home



**Increase scheduling efficiency**

- Enable all open work orders in an apartment to be scheduled together

**Figure XIV: New System for Scheduling Work Orders under Work Order Reform**



### **Increase accountability and transparency around performance**

Accountability is more than just regulatory compliance or an audit – it is the relationship between NYCHA and its residents. Accountability requires us to set clear goals, develop an organizational culture that embraces accountability, and report on our progress truthfully and consistently.

NYCHA is committed to increasing accountability and transparency. This goal is supported by the robust changes to management, organizational, governance, and leadership structures outlined in the Transformation Plan. To achieve the compliance goals and performance metrics required in the HUD Agreement, NYCHA established three new departments – Compliance, Environmental Health and Safety, and Quality Assurance – that now serve as a backbone for accountability, establishing clear procedures and strengthening oversight to drive operational improvements. NYCHA is also developing new key performance indicators (KPIs) to strengthen data-driven decision-making and the ability to track and share accurate information around performance. Through engagement with staff, leadership, and residents, NYCHA is creating a set of meaningful and consistent KPIs.

NYCHA is also implementing structural changes and new capabilities in its Asset and Capital Management Division that will allow the Authority to deliver on construction and development projects faster and with increased financial value, quality, safety, regulatory compliance, and sustainability. NYCHA will also strengthen oversight and asset management activities to improve the performance of partners that renovate and manage NYCHA properties through Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT). Together, these enhancements will allow NYCHA to better meet resident needs and preserve our public housing stock.

#### **SPOTLIGHT: Create a new NYCHA STAT unit**

NYCHA STAT brings together staff and leadership to conduct performance reviews around issues like maintenance and work orders, timelines for apartment preparation and turnaround for re-occupancy, rent collection and delinquency, and annual recertifications. NYCHA STAT emphasizes accountability while highlighting areas where staff need additional resources or training to improve performance.

NYCHA will create a dedicated new NYCHA Stat Unit (NSU). NSU will work closely with the Performance Tracking and Analytics Department to develop reports and KPIs and ensure consistent indicators and data governance. To provide a more holistic view of performance, the NYCHA STAT process will also be expanded to integrate compliance and monitoring around the five pillars of the HUD agreement: mold, pests, lead, elevators, and heat.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Launch a web-based capital projects tracker**

NYCHA residents and stakeholders frequently express the need for more accessible and transparent information around capital needs, projects, and investments. To meet this need, NYCHA recently implemented an end-to-end project management system for capital projects, which is now being leveraged to develop a user-friendly, automated, web-based solution that will provide regularly updated information on capital projects to residents and the public. The tool will include interactive mapping capabilities and details for each project including a description of the project scope and budget, milestones, and contact details for project management.

Capital needs information and a property-level capital investment plan for each NYCHA development will be incorporated into the tracker by summer 2023. User feedback collected throughout the next year will be assessed to identify and implement key enhancements to the functionality and content of the Tracker. With this new tool, residents and stakeholders will have easy access to current information on capital needs and projects at all NYCHA developments.

### **Improve systems for grounds and common area maintenance**

Ensuring a good quality of life for residents requires improvements to individual apartments as well as common areas and property grounds. Clean and well-maintained common areas (both indoors and outdoors) allow residents to feel a sense of pride in their homes. Poorly kept common areas have the opposite effect.

With nearly four square miles of land and 160 million square feet of space, NYCHA's common areas require constant upkeep from a dedicated staff of Caretakers who mop and sweep hallways and stairwells, mow lawns, maintain plants, and manage trash removal. These functions are particularly important to addressing pests and waste, which is a key pillar of the HUD Agreement and crucial to providing a good quality of life.

NYCHA is improving its systems to ensure that common areas and grounds are well-maintained and well-kept, while better meeting the needs of developments, residents, and Caretaker staff.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Site-Based Janitorial Schedules**

As part of the Transformation Plan engagement process, residents and staff identified shortcomings in the existing system for building janitorial services and Caretaker schedules. NYCHA's more than 2,000 buildings consist of vastly different heights, numbers of apartments, and proximity to neighboring buildings. The existing staff schedules were overburdening workers and failing to meet resident needs. Through conversations with residents, it became clear that decisions around where and how often maintenance tasks are performed should be shifted to the local level.

NYCHA launched a pilot program at three sites in Brooklyn, which tested changes to the janitorial building and shift schedules, along with new approaches to supervisory inspections. After seeing major improvements through the pilot, NYCHA moved quickly to a citywide rollout, which was completed in May 2022. In partnership with Teamsters Local 237, NYCHA established a new menu of shift schedule options that local property management can configure to meet the needs of each site, in partnership with resident leaders. These new options directly address key problems with the previous staffing model.

The Transformation team is closely monitoring the impacts of the new janitorial schedules. Initial findings demonstrate significant improvements in staff attendance, performance, and morale, as well as overall cleanliness, at several sites. In the months ahead, NYCHA will conduct formal evaluations of the new program to identify and implement points of further improvement. Resident input will remain paramount in this process moving forward.



### **SPOTLIGHT: Pilot mechanical waste collection**

In 2022 and 2023, NYCHA will be piloting a new kind of trash collection: mechanical waste collection.

Instead of residents putting trash and recycling into bins, and staff transferring the material into bags for storage and piling them on the sidewalk for pick-up, residents will place material directly into pest-proof containers that are picked up and emptied into a truck using an automatic hoist. Along with other strategies including the installation of door sweeps and rat slabs, new bulk crushers at some sites, improvements to waste yards, and Waste Department collections to supplement DSNY collections, this program will result in cleaner conditions on development grounds, sidewalks, and streets.

Mechanically-serviced containers are used widely in European countries, but this pilot will be the first of its kind in a major U.S. city. Moving away from loose bags on the curb will create cleaner conditions on NYCHA grounds and benefit New York City overall by piloting an entirely new model of waste collection. With over two thousand buildings under a single property manager and a critical need to address issues around pests and garbage, NYCHA provides a unique opportunity to test and learn about strategies that could improve waste management and sanitation for all New Yorkers.

This summer, in partnership with DSNY, NYCHA will release a Request for Proposals (RFP) to select a mechanical waste collection vendor. NYCHA is also working with DSNY to select appropriate sites for the pilot, with the goal of transitioning the first properties to mechanical trash and recycling collection to serve up to 4,000 residents in the first year. If the program expands to all NYCHA properties receiving curbside collection, 33.5 tons of material will be kept off the curb in neighborhoods citywide.

Together, NYCHA, the City, and DSNY will leverage this opportunity to reduce barriers to investment in mechanical waste collection and improve best practices for broader efforts moving forward.

## 2. Leverage new partners and resources to address capital needs

Restoring the health and quality of our public housing stock has never been more urgent. Far too many New Yorkers are living in conditions that are unacceptable, unhealthy, and unsafe due to the massive backlog of capital needs at NYCHA. The longer repair and maintenance needs are left unaddressed, the worse their impacts on living conditions and quality of life for residents become. Deferred needs also grow more difficult and expensive to cure over time. When left unaddressed for years, a routine issue (e.g., aging pipes) can grow into a much larger problem (e.g., major leaks, metal fatigue, and plumbing deterioration) that requires significantly more time and money to fix.

NYCHA needs over \$40 billion to fully restore and renovate all its buildings. The federal government can and must be held accountable for helping solve this crisis, but the need is too great to be met by any single source. The Adams administration will work with partners across all levels of government to direct much-needed assistance towards our public housing. We must leverage new partners and resources from outside of government to help meet capital needs. Together, we will create more independent and reliable funding streams for NYCHA that can support the preservation of our public housing stock and safe, healthy living conditions for New Yorkers today and in the decades ahead.

### Create the Public Housing Preservation Trust

Alongside our State partners, the Adams administration recently celebrated the passage of legislation enabling the creation of the New York City Public Housing Preservation Trust. The Trust will allow NYCHA to access far more funding from the federal government and improve procurement rules to complete higher-quality renovations faster.



The Trust will be a new public benefit corporation. NYCHA will continue to own, control, and manage the developments. Resident voices will play a critical role and residents will vote on whether their development participates. The Trust will keep homes permanently affordable and preserve all resident rights and protections. Specifically, rights and protections will be the same as those currently enjoyed by public housing residents. NYCHA residents will continue to pay no more than 30 percent of their household income towards rent. Residents will continue to benefit from existing succession rights and Part 964 resident participation rights, including the right to organize. NYCHA developments in the Preservation Trust will still be reserved for low-income households, and vacant units will continue to be filled from existing NYCHA waitlists. All resident rights, affordability and use restrictions will continue, such that protections cannot be changed, and units can never be converted to market-rate.

Our administration looks forward to supporting NYCHA residents in creating the Public Housing Preservation Trust and leveraging its benefits.

### **Recapitalize 62,000 units of public housing for rehabilitation by 2028**

Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) is New York City's implementation of the federal Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program. PACT leverages the federally funded Project-Based Section 8 program and public-private partnerships to unlock funding to complete comprehensive repairs at public housing developments. Residents in PACT developments benefit from much-needed renovations, enhanced property management, and



social services, while maintaining the same legal rights as in the traditional public housing program. PACT provides opportunities to advance Minority- and Women-owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) and non-profit contracting and subcontracting goals. PACT also improves the urban design of NYCHA campuses and the sustainability and resiliency of our public housing stock.

As of May 2022, construction is completed or underway at 58 developments comprised of 15,435 units, representing \$3.4 billion in comprehensive capital upgrades. An additional 75 developments, or nearly 20,000 additional units, are in various stages of the predevelopment process. Once converted, these projects will address another \$3.6 billion of capital upgrades. To facilitate this, the City is committing an additional \$1.5 billion in the capital budget for NYCHA between Fiscal Years 2023 and 2026. By 2028, NYCHA will convert and recapitalize roughly 62,000 units.

### **Explore opportunities to leverage unused land and air rights**

NYCHA will continue to explore opportunities to leverage infill development and the sale of air rights to enhance redevelopment project budgets. Each of these programs creates a unique opportunity to generate additional revenue for capital needs at NYCHA.

In the infill program, new housing is built on NYCHA-owned land, and the revenue from that transaction is put back into the community at adjacent NYCHA developments. Some NYCHA campuses have unused transferable development rights (also known as “air rights”) that can be sold to eligible owners of privately-owned sites. Similar to the infill program, these sales generate revenue to pay for capital repairs at the developments. The sale of air rights has already generated \$28M in revenue for NYCHA developments. NYCHA will continue to analyze sites selected for PACT to identify existing opportunities for the sale of air rights.

### **Support the SAVE Federally Assisted Housing Act**

One of the most valuable tools the City has to finance affordable housing is the 4% Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), which is generated by loans made from tax-exempt Private Activity Bonds (PABs). Through 4% LIHTC, the City has financed the creation and preservation of tens of thousands of affordable apartments, but there are limits on its use. The federal government imposes a cap on the amount of PABs that states can issue each year, limiting how much financing the City can provide while still generating tax credits.

The City has long advocated to ease the constraints around these crucial tools to finance more affordable housing. To that end, the SAVE Federally Assisted Housing Act would unlock the power of PABs and housing credits to help preserve NYCHA by allowing the preservation and improvement of our public housing to generate housing credits without using volume cap. This bill would allow NYCHA to access additional capital funding for urgently needed renovations at its properties. The City will work closely with the New York State Congressional delegation to support the passage of this bill.

### 3. Amplify resident voices in decision-making

Residents must be positioned at the front and center of any plan to transform NYCHA. Listening to New Yorkers who are directly impacted by the housing crisis is a top priority for the Adams administration and crucial to creating effective solutions. When it comes to our public housing, residents have an especially vital role to play. Residents have first-hand knowledge of the problems facing their homes and the solutions needed to fix them. After years of government disinvestment from NYCHA, rebuilding trust with residents is paramount to the success of public housing in New York City.

#### **Empower residents to make decisions around the future of their homes**

NYCHA and the Chief Housing Officer will amplify resident voices in decision-making around capital projects. Residents will be given more control and oversight over decisions about repairs, investment, and opportunities affecting their communities and homes, shaping how we leverage new partners and resources to address urgent capital needs. As we carve out new pathways to achieving the safe and healthy living conditions that all New Yorkers deserve, residents will be empowered to lead decision-making every step of the way.

#### **SPOTLIGHT: Resident opt-in for the Preservation Trust**

The creation of the Public Housing Preservation Trust will provide a pathway for NYCHA to access new sources of federal funding and streamline capital repairs. As part of the state legislation that enables the Trust, the City supported the inclusion of an opt-in provision for individual developments to vote on entry into the Trust. This provision was recommended by public housing residents from across the city and will ensure that residents have direct control over receiving renovations through the Trust. Residents at each development will have the ability to choose the future of their homes, setting a national example for resident decision-making in public housing.

#### **SPOTLIGHT: Resident decision-making in PACT**

Public-private partnerships are a crucial tool to improve the conditions of our public housing, but residents must have a seat at the table. Resident expertise must be centered and respected. The engagement process must be transparent and allow enough time for each project to have robust resident participation and dialogue before key decision points. Residents must be supported with technical assistance and provided ready access to information. NYCHA is committed to these guiding principles and is advancing several new initiatives at PACT project sites to achieve them, including:

**Resident Review Committees:** Resident review committees will be formed early in the PACT planning process. The resident review committee will select the PACT partners for their development through a series of site visits and interviews and a final proposal review. This approach allows residents and potential PACT partners to co-design a project proposal with resident priorities and goals front and center.

**Technical Support and Resources for Residents:** The PACT Resource Team is a new, independent group of organizations and professional consultants that can provide direct

technical assistance to developments in the PACT program to ensure that residents are informed, organized, and empowered. The PACT Resource Team provides third-party technical assistance on issues including design, construction scopes, legal guidance, and more.

**Empowering Residents to Make Key Project Decisions:** Residents are both partners and clients in the redevelopment process. Once PACT partners are selected, residents will have a seat at the table in all key decisions around the investment being made at their development. These include but are not limited to rehabilitation, property management, and social services.



### Explore new strategies for resident participation in property management

NYCHA is committed to ensuring that residents remain a key partner, and their experience remains the primary focus, after redevelopment projects are complete. Residents have valuable insight into not just the physical needs of their homes, but ways that operations and management at their development could be improved. PACT brings

new property management entities into the fold, creating an important opportunity to lay the groundwork for strong partnerships between property management partners and the residents they serve.

In collaboration with residents, the City, private PACT partners, and public housing advocates, NYCHA will explore and pursue new strategies to enhance resident participation in property management at PACT developments.

### Engage residents in partnerships between NYCHA and CCOP

The Citywide Council of Presidents (CCOP) is the resident association government of the duly-elected associations of NYCHA's public housing developments. CCOP represents the entire body of NYCHA residents and serves as the official recognized voice of residents to NYCHA, government, and the city at large.

In Fall 2021, NYCHA and CCOP agreed to the first Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in 25 years. This agreement officially recognizes CCOP in an advisory role across all areas of

polymaking and operations at NYCHA. It establishes a framework for how NYCHA and CCOP will work together to enhance the operations and management of the Authority, amplify resident voices in decision-making, and address issues that residents see as the highest priority. The agreement also outlines how NYCHA and CCOP will share information and communicate, formalizing the relationship between these two parties and laying the foundation for collaboration moving forward.

Now that the new agreement is in place, NYCHA and CCOP must work together to train local resident leaders and NYCHA employees on the details of the agreement to ensure it is implemented properly at developments across the city. With support and funding from HUD, NYCHA will contract a technical assistance provider to ensure the successful coordination and implementation of this work. Through the development and administration of trainings, NYCHA and CCOP will bring staff and resident leaders together to translate the values and goals of the new agreement into action.

#### 4. Invest in the health and safety of NYCHA residents

Investment in our public housing infrastructure will be strengthened by strategic investment in the health and safety of NYCHA residents. As comprehensive systems to address critical needs in NYCHA’s buildings are advanced, we will simultaneously activate new strategies to improve community safety and build health.



#### **Incubate healthy and sustainable food systems**

NYCHA leads a variety of programs to expand access to healthy food, encourage sustainable food systems, and promote opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship related to food, health, and wellness. The past two years have only underscored the vital importance of healthy food access. Working closely with pandemic response programs including GetFoodNYC, NYCHA has been a key partner in ensuring that food access and activation efforts are reaching the most vulnerable New Yorkers during COVID-19.

NYCHA will continue to support these initiatives and build new programs and partnerships to invest in healthy and sustainable food systems. Public housing is a critically important venue for the incubation of innovative, cross-sector work to test, refine, and scale new food activation solutions that support healthy, sustainable, equitable communities. In addition to the direct benefits for NYCHA residents, this work benefits New Yorkers overall by piloting new models that the City can learn and build from.

## **SPOTLIGHT: Strengthen access to organics recycling**

The DSNY SmartBin Pilot offers New Yorkers a convenient new way to participate in organics recycling, diverting food scraps from landfills to support sustainability goals. Residents who sign up can use a key card or an app to access the pest-proof bins, which are available for drop-off around the clock. In Spring 2022, DSNY and NYCHA partnered to add an organics recycling bin at Ravenswood Houses.

Continuing on the success of the pilot program, NYCHA and DSNY are now working together to expand SmartBin organics recycling to 13,000 NYCHA residents living in Western Queens. Data collected from SmartBin users will provide crucial feedback on how residents participate in this new method of organics collection. NYCHA will leverage this information to further expand the SmartBin program at its developments, with the goal of providing access to organics recycling to all NYCHA residents by 2026.

## **SPOTLIGHT: Expand Farms at NYCHA**

Farms at NYCHA is an urban agriculture initiative grounded in public housing resident leadership and community partnership. The program is a collaboration between NYCHA, Green City Force, the Office of Neighborhood Safety, the Mayor's Fund, and other partners to expand healthy food access at NYCHA. Farms at NYCHA also provides youth workforce and leadership development opportunities to residents and creates more sustainable and connected public housing communities. The program has resulted in a network of farms on NYCHA land that are built and operated by NYCHA residents. In addition to their food production and access benefits, the NYCHA farms serve as hubs for health and wellness programming, sustainability, and workforce training.

By 2025, NYCHA will establish eight new Farms at NYCHA urban agriculture and food production hubs to achieve the goal of 15 farms. Each farm will produce and distribute an average of 5,000 pounds of fresh produce a year and host a wide range of community events. To support these efforts, the City is investing \$7M over three fiscal years.



## **Promote resident-led initiatives to improve health outcomes**

NYCHA Health Works is an umbrella of programs that support the health and well-being of public housing residents by creating pathways into health careers and attracting health-centered investments to NYCHA developments.

In 2022, DOHMH launched the Vaccine Equity and Partnership Engagement (VEPE) COVID-19 recovery program. The program recruits and trains NYCHA residents as community health workers (CHWs) who provide connections to health resources, organize wellness activities, and advocate for residents' health and wellbeing. The program will build the capacity of 60 CHWs to support resident health in 44 NYCHA developments in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island. NYCHA and DOHMH will explore new ways to engage CBOs, CHWs, resident leaders, and other stakeholders to build community capacity to address health inequities. NYCHA will also seek out collaborations with partners in healthcare and government to address chronic inequities in public health outcomes, reduce gaps in community-based health services, and create new opportunities for resident health careers.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Build health equity and career opportunities through NYCHA Health Corps**

Starting in fall 2022, NYCHA and partners will expand NYCHA Health Works through an innovative new Public Health AmeriCorps program. Led by NYC Service in close partnership with NYCHA, the NYCHA Health Corps will provide an opportunity for NYCHA residents to receive training and work experience in areas that promote health and wellness. Leveraging the national AmeriCorps model centered on leadership development and public service, approximately 80 Corps Members per year will serve at NYCHA, other city agencies, and non-profits that support NYCHA residents.



### **Improve safety and security for NYCHA residents**

Safety and security of NYCHA campuses is routinely raised as the top concern from NYCHA's resident leaders. To address these issues, NYCHA has worked with partners across the City, including NYPD, MOCJ and others, to support innovative, targeted and comprehensive approaches to reduce violent crime in and around public housing developments. The Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety (MAP) includes many such initiatives including the NeighborhoodStat (NSTAT) program, a community-based, problem-solving process grounded in the belief that public safety cannot exist without the public.

NSTAT engages NYCHA residents and MAP partners in sharing and analyzing data to identify public safety priorities and implement solutions. The initiative provides local residents and stakeholders with resources to enhance accountability. NSTAT and the MAP program acknowledge that safe and thriving neighborhoods require resident leadership, community and government support, and resources to produce sustainable change.

By summer 2022, the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety (housed within the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice) will expand NSTAT from 15 NYCHA developments to over 30 developments.

# Chapter 2: Address Homelessness and Housing Instability



## Chapter 2: Address Homelessness and Housing Instability

Homelessness is a housing problem. Any successful plan to house New Yorkers must prioritize the needs of those lacking or at risk of losing stable housing. In the long term, this means growing the supply of deeply affordable and supportive housing. In the near term, we must also strengthen and improve our shelter system to better serve New Yorkers experiencing homelessness and help them transition back into permanent housing.

The City will advance a range of strategies to break the cycle of housing instability and homelessness. We will proactively address housing instability to prevent homelessness, increase support for New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, accelerate the return to permanent housing, and ensure that households who previously experienced homelessness remain stably housed.

### 1. Break down government silos to better measure and address homelessness

Too often, bureaucratic barriers make it difficult to achieve the interagency solutions that New Yorkers need. Although the City's multiple housing and homelessness agencies each handle different aspects of this crisis, they share the common goal of providing access to affordable, permanent, stable housing for all New Yorkers. Our administration is committed to breaking down government silos so that these agencies can better measure, track, and address homelessness through solutions that include key housing and social service components.



#### **Enhance accountability for the crisis across government agencies**

To help our housing and homelessness agencies work together, the City will enhance shared accountability for the crisis through improved data and metrics for success. We will develop new metrics that prioritize the impact of our affordable housing investments on New Yorkers and moving households out of shelter faster. Every agency that interacts with individuals and families experiencing homelessness will be held accountable for the crisis.

#### **SPOTLIGHT: Track and count all shelter systems**

Currently, New York City measures homelessness based on the number of individuals and families residing in DHS shelter. While DHS represents the City's largest shelter system, the

universe of homeless New Yorkers is larger than the DHS shelter population. There are three additional agencies that assist individuals experiencing homelessness – HPD, DYCD, and HRA (HASA and Domestic Violence) – each of which report on their clients separately and employ different tools to serve them. The current focus on the DHS census obscures the true picture of homelessness in New York City and diminishes our accountability to address the full scope of the problem, reducing transparency for the public and making progress more difficult to track.

Our administration will implement a new system for tracking and measuring homelessness in New York City – one that includes all five shelter systems and provides a comprehensive view of the crisis. The City will publish a new dashboard that includes the total number of individuals and households residing across all shelter systems on any given day. This will allow government agencies and the public to have a comprehensive understanding of the overall need and provide a more consistent, reliable means of measuring progress.



### Listen to peer lived experience to inform policymaking

New Yorkers who have experienced homelessness have unique and direct insight into the areas where our systems and policies are helping – and where they need to be improved. Our administration is leveraging that insight to inform our priorities, policies, and programs to address the housing and homelessness crisis. New

Yorkers with lived experience of homelessness were engaged as key partners in the production of this blueprint, marking the first time that homeless and formerly homeless individuals were invited to contribute to the plan. As we implement the Blueprint, the City will continue building on this framework to listen to and learn from those with lived experience.

## 2. Combat housing instability to help New Yorkers stay housed

New Yorkers may experience housing instability for a variety of reasons, including financial crises, unsafe housing conditions, and tenant harassment. These experiences put households at greater risk of homelessness, potentially leading to eviction, stays in emergency shelters, or other temporary housing arrangements, such as living doubled-up with family or friends. The sooner we can intervene and restore stability for these New Yorkers, the greater their chances of avoiding homelessness. Our administration will proactively address housing instability so that more New Yorkers can stay housed.

## **Strengthen access to emergency financial assistance and housing stabilization services**

The housing and affordability crisis puts millions of New Yorkers at risk for housing instability. Many low-income households struggle to balance monthly rental payments with the costs of childcare, healthcare, groceries, and other essential needs. With intense pressure to make ends meet and limited or no ability to save, these households could be one crisis away from losing their apartment. An unexpected increase in expenses or decrease in income can immediately trigger housing instability and put residents at risk of homelessness.

Emergency financial assistance and other services that address financial instability are crucial homelessness prevention tools to help keep people housed. The Adams administration will increase outreach and case management to ensure that tenants are able to access these critical resources. We will also increase city-funded emergency financial assistance and services.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Provide emergency financial grants to survivors of domestic violence**

Domestic and gender-based violence are leading causes of homelessness. Survivors of domestic violence often face many forms of abuse, such as isolation from family and friends, disruption of work or school, and not having access to financial resources. As a result, survivors who leave their abusers often do so with nowhere to go and limited or no means of securing new housing, putting them at greatly increased risk of homelessness. To address this risk and to ensure that survivors have affordable and sustainable options, the City is expanding a pilot program operated by ENDGBV to provide low-barrier emergency grants to survivors of domestic and gender-based violence. By offering quick access to financial assistance, this program will help survivors avoid shelter entry and offer them a chance to get back on their feet.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Advocate for an increase in the public assistance shelter allowance**

New York State's public assistance program provides a shelter allowance that is intended to supplement housing costs. The current shelter allowance amounts are vastly inadequate compared to current housing costs. The shelter allowance for a single adult in New York City is \$215—an amount that has not increased since 1988. The shelter allowance for families, last increased in 2003, stands at \$283 for a family of two and \$400 for a family of three. New Yorkers simply do not have access to housing options that rent at such low amounts.

The Adams administration will seek an increase to the shelter allowance for all households, and for the State to cover their fair share of the costs of any increase. Over 200,000 households in New York City benefit from public assistance. Increasing the amount of help they receive for housing costs will provide greater stability and reduce the risk of homelessness. We look forward to working with our partners at the State to meet this critical need.

## **Enhance local capacity to identify and address tenant harassment**

Tenant harassment can cause housing instability and put the health and safety of tenants at risk. Our administration will dedicate new resources to strengthen and expand the City's ongoing anti-harassment activities, invest in staff and technology to enable more proactive inspections of buildings where harassment may be occurring, and increase capacity to bring harassment cases against bad landlords in Housing Court. We will also strengthen outreach and partnerships with tenants, advocates, and community organizations to bolster networks on the ground that can help keep tenants informed and elevate instances of harassment to the City.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Expand the Partners in Preservation program to combat tenant harassment in more neighborhoods**

With support from HDC and Enterprise Community Partners, HPD piloted Partners in Preservation (PiP) to bring together tenant organizers, legal service providers, and government agencies to proactively address tenant harassment in rent-regulated buildings. The pilot produced a new data model to assess tenants' risk of harassment by building and leveraged partners on the ground in three neighborhoods to conduct outreach to tenants in buildings identified as being high-risk. The pilot facilitated outreach and individual counseling to tenants in hundreds of buildings and resulted in the creation of 72 new tenant associations, among other positive outcomes.

Building on this success, HPD will expand Partners in Preservation to a wider range of neighborhoods where tenants face a greater risk of being harassed by their landlords. HPD will customize the program to the building stock in each area and partner with the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit (PEU) to increase capacity for outreach and targeted interventions, while ensuring that tenants are aware of resources such as Right to Counsel and rental assistance programs.

## **Increase shelter and services for displaced households**

Each year, hundreds of households are displaced from their homes due to fires, illegal occupancy, and other hazardous conditions. Displaced households in HPD shelter benefit from rehousing support. HPD successfully assists more than 400 households a year move into new housing or return home once repairs have been completed.

But more must be done to alleviate the trauma that New Yorkers face after losing their homes to fires or other emergency conditions, especially when these conditions force them out of their neighborhoods and away from day-to-day activities and support networks. The City will explore strategies to provide temporary housing that allows displaced households to stay closer to their schools, religious institutions, healthcare facilities, and other daily needs. We will also develop interagency policies and procedures to ensure that residents in HPD shelter have access to homeless set-aside units, rental assistance, and other services and benefits that help New Yorkers in the DHS shelter system secure permanent affordable housing. Finally, by including HPD shelter residents in the homeless census, we will elevate the needs of these households and enable the planning, resources, and coordination necessary to meet them. Together, these strategies will provide greater stability for displaced households and help return them to stable housing as quickly as possible.



### **Prevent housing instability and homelessness among new migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers**

Refugees and new migrants often seek resettlement in New York City due to family ties, the presence of well-established immigrant communities, and the city's vast linguistic and cultural diversity. Yet our immigrant communities face complex housing challenges that are even more difficult for newly arrived New Yorkers. Many new migrants are undocumented and are ineligible for affordable housing and housing assistance as a result. Residents with limited English proficiency (LEP) may have trouble navigating government programs, preventing them from accessing available

support. Refugees and asylum-seekers are frequently told not to settle in New York City due to the high cost of housing and may lack the financial resources to secure a new home. Many are recovering from traumatic and stressful circumstances while simultaneously navigating cultural and linguistic differences.

Supporting our immigrant communities is vital to the future of our city and all New Yorkers. We can and must do a better job of providing the support that newly arrived migrants need to thrive. Beginning in summer 2022, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) and the Chief Housing Officer will formally convene a working group composed of city agencies, community-based organizations, and community members to lead a year-long engagement process focused on meeting the housing needs of undocumented New Yorkers lacking access to stable housing, as well as newly arrived migrants and asylum-seekers. The working group will identify and develop strategies to increase access to information, resources, public assistance and services, and safe, affordable, permanent housing.

### **3. Improve shelter and services for New Yorkers experiencing homelessness**

While the City's ultimate goal is to ensure that every New Yorker is housed, the magnitude of the homelessness crisis means that it cannot be solved overnight. The City of New York has a moral and legal obligation to provide shelter for all those who need it, including the tens of thousands of families and individuals already living in shelter, and thousands of residents living on the street. Ensuring that these New Yorkers have access to high-quality shelter and services that meet their needs is paramount to increasing stability during times of crisis.

As we work towards meeting the affordable housing needs of all New Yorkers, the City will also prioritize improving shelter and services for residents currently experiencing homelessness. We will provide a wider range of shelter and service options, improve shelter quality, and connect shelter residents with resources that support their overall health and well-being, with special attention to children's mental health.

## **Increase low-barrier shelter beds and outreach to unsheltered New Yorkers**

As of May 2022, there were approximately 3,500 individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness in New York City. These New Yorkers are more likely to experience violence and illness. Many have fallen through every social safety net and may be reluctant to use the shelter system as a result. Safe havens are a service-rich, low-barrier shelter option that are more responsive to these needs and concerns. Safe havens have fewer restrictions and are typically lower-density than traditional shelters, providing residents with more privacy and freedom.

In February 2022, with the release of the Subway Safety Plan, the Adams administration announced cross-agency outreach initiatives to better connect with unsheltered residents and help them access shelter options that work for them. To support these goals, the City is also expanding its portfolio of low-barrier safe haven and stabilization beds.



### **SPOTLIGHT: Provide 4,000 Safe Haven and Stabilization beds by 2024**

On April 24, 2022, Mayor Adams announced an unprecedented \$171 million investment in shelter and services for New Yorkers experiencing unsheltered homelessness. This commitment will allow DHS to grow its portfolio of safe haven and stabilization beds to more than 4,000 beds by 2024, and to continue investing the resources necessary to

ensure the demand for these beds is met. With this increase in low-barrier shelter options, more unsheltered New Yorkers will have a pathway to benefit from dedicated services that will help them get back on their feet and transition to permanent housing.

## **Expand shelter and services to meet a wider range of needs**

New York City thrives on the diversity of its residents, and we must ensure that the unique needs of all individuals and families experiencing homelessness are met. Households who are struggling financially, have suffered a job loss, or do not earn enough to pay for the high cost of housing often need a rental subsidy to regain permanent housing. Some residents have medical and accessibility needs that make it more difficult to find and maintain an affordable home. Seniors, who represent an increasingly large share of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, have shelter and permanent housing needs that are often very different from those of younger residents. Youth and young adults, LGBTQI+ residents, immigrant New Yorkers, and countless other communities may require specialized services and supports that are not well-met by the traditional shelter system.

The City has several agencies and programs in place dedicated to meeting the diverse shelter and service needs of homeless New Yorkers, including DYCD programs for runaway and homeless youth, dedicated HRA shelters and services for survivors of domestic violence, LGBTQI+ and TGNC friendly shelters, and shelters with a focus on mental health, to name a few. But more can and must be done to meet the needs of every community. The Adams administration is committed to expanding shelter and services to meet a wider range of needs and fill in gaps where New Yorkers are falling through the cracks.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Better meet the needs of homeless youth and young adults**

Youth and young adults (YYA) experiencing homelessness, who are disproportionately Black, Hispanic/Latino, and members of the LGBTQI+ community, have diverse needs that may not be well-served by traditional homeless shelters and services. Many are balancing the challenges of homelessness with the demands of work and school, and nearly half of homeless YYA in New York City are parents. A disproportionate share of homeless YYA have a history in foster care or the criminal justice system, and YYA experiencing homelessness are at significantly greater risk for sexual exploitation and labor trafficking. YYA experiencing homelessness often couch-surf or live doubled-up, preventing them from being seen or captured through annual counts.

The Adams administration is committed to better meeting the unique needs of homeless youth and young adults. The City will expand services at its eight YYA drop-in centers, which fill a critical need by providing food, clothing, showers, laundry, case management, and a host of other services. New services at the drop-in centers will include peer navigation programs that will provide employment to YYA with lived experience of homelessness, and a new financial literacy program operated in partnership with DCWP. Finally, *Opportunity Starts with a Home: New York City's Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness* will be released later this summer, with a number of commitments to help YYA experiencing homelessness find and move into permanent housing.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Increase the supply of medical respite beds**

Medical Respite is a service-enriched transitional model for patients experiencing homelessness after a major health episode. Respite offers a place to rest, recover, de-escalate, and heal in a safe environment while accessing medical care. The use of medical respite shortens inpatient stays, reduces emergency department utilization, and connects patients to stable housing.

A limited number of respite beds exist in the city already, some of which are operated by NYC Health + Hospitals (H+H). H+H will increase the supply of medical respite beds and expand the services available to users. Medical respite sites will have clinical providers who can offer services such as wound care, wellness checks, and physical therapy, as well as holistic care coordination. New Yorkers in respite will also receive intensive housing case management to help identify their future housing options. Increasing the number of medical respite beds in the city will fill a critical care need for medically frail New Yorkers experiencing homelessness.

## **Replace aging and substandard shelters with high-quality facilities**

The City operates an extensive shelter system in more than 400 buildings, but not all shelters provide the same level of comfort or quality of life. Some existing sites, especially those in older buildings, face unaddressed maintenance and repair needs that result in poorer living conditions, and do not provide adequate space for social services and programming.

The Adams administration is committed to closing aging and lower-quality shelter buildings and replacing them with new, high-quality facilities that provide better conditions for residents. These new shelters will be located across the city, moving towards a more even distribution of facilities that allows New Yorkers to access emergency shelter closer to their neighborhoods.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Launch a shelter predevelopment and acquisition fund**

Not-for-profit shelter operators are increasingly developing their own shelter sites. These shelters are often beneficial in that they are designed and maintained with service needs in mind, and owned and operated by experienced, mission-driven service providers that are well-equipped to provide residents with a strong platform for stabilization and return to permanent housing. Despite these benefits, shelter development can be difficult for not-for-profit operators to achieve, as they have fewer resources to invest in the significant acquisition and predevelopment costs that must be met well before the city contract is in effect. The upfront financial burden is a barrier for many organizations.

To encourage the development of high-quality shelters by not-for-profits, the City is partnering with SeaChange Capital Partners to create a new predevelopment and acquisition fund that blends public dollars with program-related investment (PRI) funds from our philanthropic partners. Not-for-profits will be able to borrow from the fund to cover upfront costs, and then pay the fund back later through the shelter contract. Because the funds recycle, the City's upfront investment will allow not-for-profits to continue acquiring sites for many years into the future, adding a significant number of high-quality shelters and replacing capacity so that lower-quality shelters can be shut down.

## **Support the health and well-being of shelter residents**

Health and housing are inextricably linked. Stable housing makes it easier to become and remain healthy, just as being healthy makes it easier to become and remain housed.

Homelessness and housing instability impact health for people of all ages, from children and young adults who experience higher rates of asthma and mental health conditions, to parents and older people who experience more chronic and behavioral health conditions. Approximately 40 percent of single adults in DHS shelter report a mental or behavioral health condition and 40 percent report a medical condition. Housing instability and homelessness make it harder to access the health care system because of increased logistical burdens and competing priorities. As a result, many people experiencing homelessness lack a primary care provider, leading homeless clients to utilize the emergency department at a far higher rate than the general population.

The City commits to supporting the health of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness by providing better access to health care, services, and support.

## **SPOTLIGHT: Connect children and families in shelter to mental health support**

Adverse childhood experiences (or ACEs) affect cognitive development and other long-term health outcomes for children. High ACE scores are associated with a range of both physical and behavioral health problems. Homelessness is itself a form of trauma, and many children in shelter have also experienced other ACEs such as household domestic violence or having a family member incarcerated. Investing in child, family, and preventative mental health can mitigate against the intergenerational effects of trauma.

The City will facilitate mental health services for children via telehealth by leveraging existing equipment, deployed during the pandemic to facilitate remote learning, within the DHS family shelter system. These upgrades include enhanced resident access to an iPad or computer, improved Wi-Fi, and private space reserved for health appointments. Shelters will scale existing telehealth services including NYC H+H/ExpressCare Urgent Behavioral Telehealth and Nurse Triage Line to prevent mental health crises and emergency room visits, particularly among teenagers.

## **SPOTLIGHT: Expand healthcare services for New Yorkers experiencing homelessness**

As the largest provider of healthcare to New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, H+H is well-positioned to address the complex physical and behavioral health needs that some of these individuals face. H+H operates borough-based clinics that provide primary care and holistic support services for patients experiencing homelessness and transitioning out of jail or prison. In addition, H+H has mobile street outreach vans that bring medical, behavioral, and social services to unsheltered individuals living on the street. H+H will expand both of these programs and increase extensive behavioral health and substance use services to improve the transition from hospitalization to stable housing. This is possible because of a new Medicaid Managed Care program under consideration by federal and state governments.

These efforts will bring the City, H+H, and a broad network of healthcare providers and community-based organizations together and provide new resources to care for homeless patients who have unmet physical and behavioral health needs.



## **4. Help New Yorkers in shelter move into permanent housing faster**

Moving from shelter to permanent housing can be extremely challenging. Housing vouchers and other types of assistance are in limited supply, and often involve lengthy, cumbersome processes to obtain. Navigating the city's extremely competitive housing market can be difficult for anyone but is even more so for

New Yorkers lacking the stability that permanent housing provides. As a result, households are subjected to longer stays in shelter, adding to the high cost of homelessness. The Adams administration will allocate new resources and pursue policy changes to streamline and accelerate pathways out of shelter to permanent housing.

### **Break down government silos to strengthen housing access across shelter systems**

The City's commitment to ending homelessness for households in DHS shelter has led to a range of housing options for DHS clients. However, not all of these options are available to residents in the City's other shelter systems. This means that some New Yorkers in shelter are treated differently depending on the specific set of circumstances that led them to one shelter system versus another.

Our administration will make it a top priority to even the playing field for all New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, regardless of which shelter system they are in. We will ensure that every household has access to the full range of resources for housing and support, such as city-funded rental vouchers and set-aside units in new affordable housing developments.

### **Streamline and expand access to supportive housing**

Supportive housing is a critical tool for providing permanent, affordable homes to New Yorkers who may also need social service supports to remain stably housed. Although supportive housing is in high demand, the range of specialized categories and accompanying eligibility requirements are challenging to navigate.

The Adams administration will pursue a range of strategies to accelerate and expand access to supportive housing so that New Yorkers can get matched with and move into units faster, ensuring that these crucial housing resources do not sit vacant. In addition to streamlining process requirements and reducing the administrative burdens involved, we will explore changes to categories and eligibility requirements so that more households who would benefit from supportive housing can access it.

#### **SPOTLIGHT: Expand family supportive housing eligibility**

Currently, a household can only qualify for supportive housing based on the diagnosis and evaluation of the head of household. However, some families with high-needs children may benefit from the on-site services that supportive housing provides. The City will explore options to expand supportive housing eligibility so that families can become eligible based on the service needs of other household members.



### Improve the housing search process for households with vouchers

Housing vouchers provide significant benefits to New Yorkers by helping them exit shelter and move into permanent housing, lowering their rent burdens, and allowing families to spend more money on groceries, childcare, and other basic needs. Rental assistance makes a crucial difference when it comes to ensuring that homeless New Yorkers can not only return to

permanent housing but remain stably housed. While 15.7 percent of families exiting DHS shelter without a housing voucher returned to shelter within the next year, the rate of return for families exiting with a voucher is only 0.3 percent.

Despite these crucial benefits, the lack of housing options and persistent source-of-income discrimination in the housing market can prevent households from using their vouchers quickly. Many households face additional barriers such as limited time and capacity to search for housing, accessibility challenges, and unmet language access needs. These obstacles force New Yorkers to stay in shelter for longer and may prevent voucher-holders from accessing housing in the neighborhoods they prefer.

To ensure that rental assistance is an effective tool for helping New Yorkers regain housing, we will explore options for additional supplemental services and supports, such as expanded use of the DSS enhanced broker fee. The City will also ramp up efforts to combat source-of-income discrimination so households with vouchers can access the full range of housing options.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Launch a coordinated enforcement and outreach effort to combat source-of-income discrimination**

Empowering New Yorkers with housing vouchers to access housing options in a range of neighborhoods is crucial to reducing homelessness and advancing fair housing. Source-of-income discrimination is a key area of concern for homeless and formerly homeless stakeholders who contributed to the development of this Blueprint. Stakeholders and community members in the *Where We Live NYC* planning process also described countless experiences with discrimination – and reported that voucher holders are often steered to landlords in high-poverty neighborhoods where vouchers are more likely to be accepted. More than half of households who use federally funded vouchers in New York City are concentrated within approximately 10 percent of the city’s census tracts.

The City's current enforcement practices regarding source-of-income discrimination are underfunded and split across too many agencies without enough organized collaboration. Our administration recently restored funding for the Source of Income unit at the City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), adding crucial capacity for activities such as reviewing complaints from the public and pursuing litigation against bad actors. However, there is still an enormous amount of outstanding need that require significantly more robust solutions.

The City will launch a coordinated enforcement and outreach effort to root out and combat source-of-income discrimination, leveraging agencies across all levels of government as well as industry and community partners. We will ramp up legal and testing resources to root out discrimination, make an example of bad actors, and elevate the issue for brokers and landlords.

### **Strengthen housing navigation services and supports**

High housing costs are only one of many obstacles that New Yorkers face when navigating the city's highly competitive housing market. Housing navigation services are crucial resources that can help New Yorkers find a home that they can afford and meets their preferences and needs. The City will strengthen housing navigation services and supports so that those most in need can find a home.



### **SPOTLIGHT: Create new housing navigators at H+H**

Even with high-quality medical services, a lack of stable housing can prevent New Yorkers from staying healthy. H+H is committed to strengthening resources to move vulnerable patients experiencing homelessness into housing. Recognizing that housing is a social determinant of health, H+H will create dedicated housing navigators to help H+H patients access housing. These services will leverage trusted relationships with health care providers, and supplement those provided in shelter. While the H+H care team focuses on a patient's health care needs, a housing navigator will bring the necessary expertise to focus on the patient's housing needs.

## **5. Reduce the risk of returning to shelter**

Some New Yorkers need additional services and support to remain stably housed. Without the right resources, these residents face a higher risk of returning to homelessness. Some individuals struggle to leave shelter because there are no housing options that provide the services and supports they need. Others may exit shelter and return after experiencing untreated health issues, domestic violence, and other challenges. Our administration will advance a range of strategies to ensure that New Yorkers who exit shelter remain stably housed moving forward.

## **Expand housing stabilization services for formerly homeless households**

While supportive housing is an incredibly effective tool to address the housing and service needs of many, it is typically targeted to people who are diagnosed with a mental health and/or substance use disorder. There are many households who are not eligible for supportive housing or need a different level of support in order to leave shelter and remain stably housed.

To meet the needs of these New Yorkers, the City will increase resources for stabilization services and provide additional supports to help formerly homeless residents remain stably housed. Strategies may include expanding the continuum of on-site social services for people without mental health or substance use disorder diagnoses and increasing supportive services and flexible case management for a wider range of households in affordable housing.

## **Work with the State to address the prison-to-shelter pipeline**

Approximately 11 percent of single adults in DHS shelter have a criminal justice history, and thousands of individuals exiting state correctional facilities each year are discharged to New York City shelters. Homelessness puts individuals at greater risk of contact with the criminal justice system and increases the likelihood of being formally punished for minor infractions and crimes of survival. Meanwhile, people with criminal justice histories have a harder time accessing permanent housing and the employment opportunities needed to sustain housing payments. These dual challenges cause some individuals to end up in a constant cycle between shelter and jail/prison, making it harder to access services in either system and creating enormous public costs.

In partnership with the State, our administration will strengthen housing services and interventions to help New Yorkers with criminal justice histories access permanent stable housing. We will explore options for case management to serve individuals with history in both shelter and jail/prison, as well as housing strategies for New Yorkers exiting correctional facilities to prevent them from being discharged to shelter.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Support stronger anti-discrimination protections for New Yorkers with criminal justice histories**

In 2015, the City successfully rolled out “ban-the-box” protections, restricting employers from taking arrest and conviction records into account during hiring. Similar protections should be extended in the housing market. In addition to vastly increasing overall housing options for New Yorkers with criminal justice histories, this would unlock access for those individuals to a wider range of neighborhoods, advancing racial equity and fair housing goals.

HUD issued guidance in 2016 regarding the intersection between the federal Fair Housing Act and how housing providers evaluate the criminal records of applicants, which HPD and NYCHA each follow within their respective portfolios. However, there is less oversight of homes in the private market regarding these protections, and there are frequent reports of housing providers denying housing to New Yorkers with criminal records. Limited housing opportunities for people with criminal records is a major driver of homelessness and impedes a successful return to the community. Our administration will work with partners in the City Council to pass local legislation creating new anti-discrimination protections for New Yorkers with criminal justice histories.

# Chapter 3: Create and Preserve Affordable Housing



## Chapter 3: Create and Preserve Affordable Housing

The continued housing shortage is a key reason for the acute affordability and homelessness crisis facing New York City. An undersupply of housing drives up prices for everyone. Today, the share of renters in the city who are rent-burdened remains the highest on record, with over half of renter households paying more than 30 percent of their income towards rent every month. The lowest-income households are the most severely affected. Housing with rents that are affordable to the average New Yorker is even harder to find: homes renting for less than \$1,500 per month have a net rental vacancy rate of less than one percent.

The housing shortage exacerbates disparities in access to transit, amenities, and economic opportunity, forcing many households to make trade-offs between the location, quality, and affordability of housing. High home prices put homeownership and its wealth-generating benefits out of reach for the vast majority of New Yorkers, especially communities of color.

Our administration is committed to working across all levels of government to invest in high-quality, safe, and affordable housing that allows New York City residents and neighborhoods to thrive, while removing barriers to development that prevent equitable growth and increase the cost of housing across the five boroughs.

### 1. Accelerate and increase capacity for new housing supply citywide

We cannot solve our affordability and homelessness crisis without changing the trajectory of housing growth in New York City. In recent decades, New York City has experienced rapid population growth and an all-time high of 8.8 million residents, but housing production has not kept pace (see Figure VII on pg. 19). This accumulated housing shortage has led to significant increases in housing costs and placed enormous pressure on low-income New Yorkers. To reverse this crisis and meet the housing needs of all residents, we must sustain housing production today and into the future.

Our administration will advance an inclusive, citywide approach to encouraging new housing supply that holds every neighborhood accountable for meeting housing needs and increases equitable access to opportunity. In recent years, the City of New York has made unprecedented investments in the creation and preservation of more affordable homes. The Adams administration will continue making critical investments in the affordable housing stock, while simultaneously pursuing policy reforms, state legislation, tax incentives, and a suite of other tools to help new housing get built faster and increase overall capacity for new supply.

#### **Pursue regulatory reforms and advances in construction technology to lower the cost of housing and accelerate production**

The cost to construct and maintain buildings in New York City is among the highest in the world. Construction and maintenance costs are affected by a wide range of factors such as inflation rates, supply chains, rising insurance premiums, and building material and labor costs. In New York City, development and operating costs are also exacerbated by zoning, building, construction, and maintenance codes that have not been updated to reflect best practices

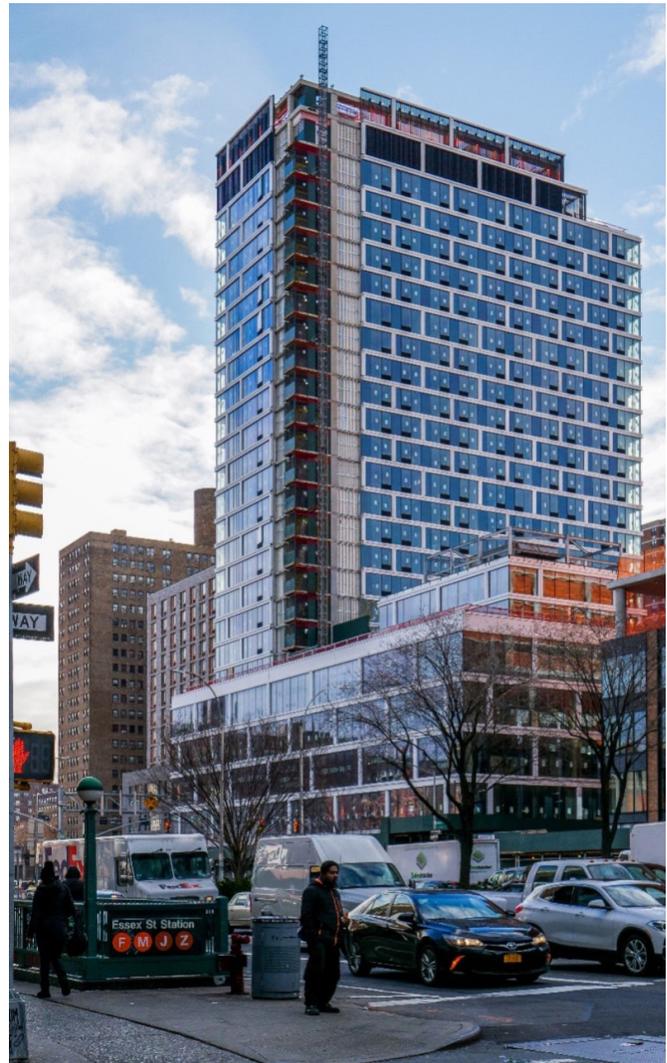
around the world. Complex, often outdated regulations levy additional costs that are reflected in higher rents, higher home prices, and deferred housing maintenance. At the same time, there are major innovations in construction manufacturing, digital fabrication, automated framing, building information modeling, and related technologies that New York City should be supporting. These tools will help lower the cost and speed up the production of housing, while also creating new businesses and jobs for New Yorkers.

Our administration will work with a wide range of industry experts and practitioners, including our minority and women-owned business partners, to gather information on and develop action plans to address these challenges, which may require legislative, regulatory, and process reforms. We will remove unnecessary barriers to development, embrace innovation in new building techniques, and streamline agency processes to seize upon technological advancements that can boost speed and efficiency. This includes the Building and Land Use Approval Streamlining Taskforce (BLAST), led by the Deputy Mayor for Economic and Workforce Development and the Chief Efficiency Officer, as well as other ongoing efforts across city government.

### **Encourage a wider range of unit sizes and housing types**

In the half-century since many of our zoning and housing regulations were established, New York City's population has diversified tremendously, yet the range of housing types we allow has gotten increasingly narrow. Historically, there were more housing options available to meet diverse needs—prewar apartment buildings full of studios or efficiencies, single-room occupancy units (SROs), garden apartments in low-density neighborhoods, and two-family homes, to name a few. But the supply of these options is diminishing in the face of restrictive zoning and other regulations that often tip the scales against them or prohibit them outright. As a result, there is a clear mismatch between the housing stock and the diverse living and household arrangements of New Yorkers.

Seniors, single adults, and non-family households, as well as families and intergenerational households, all have different housing needs that may be met by more economical smaller units, accessory units, shared housing models, and other typologies that are difficult or



impossible to create under current regulations. Many of the regulatory limitations behind this dynamic are rooted in a history of discrimination and exclusion. Updating zoning and housing regulations will not only meet a wider range of household needs but also combat the legacy of redlining and segregation in our city.

The City will pursue a package of zoning and regulatory changes to encourage a wider range of unit sizes and housing types. We will seek to increase flexibility for small homes and residential conversions, enable accessory units and other options in existing low-density districts, and remove obstacles to supportive and affordable housing development, among other strategies.



### **SPOTLIGHT: Increase flexibility for the creation of small homes**

One-third of New York City households are single adults. More and more New Yorkers are living alone or would like to live alone. However, most of the city's housing stock still has two bedrooms or more. We must expand the supply of studio and one-bedroom units and create more flexibility for other housing typologies that can meet the needs of single-person households.

The City will pursue changes to regulations around density and minimum unit size and widen the pathway for micro-units and shared housing models. These changes will provide more housing options for young adults and seniors alike. In addition, they will free up larger apartments for families who cannot compete financially with households comprising of multiple young professionals.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Support the creation of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**

Across the country, cities and states have altered laws to encourage the development of lower-cost housing options on existing residential properties. Whether they are called granny flats, tiny homes, or accessory dwelling units (ADUs), the regulatory changes all have the same purpose: to allow homeowners to create safe, less expensive housing options for their families and communities. Our administration will explore all options to encourage the development of new ADUs in New York City and support efforts to create them in our surrounding suburbs, as well as to bring existing spaces into safe and legal use.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Convert vacant hotels to affordable and supportive housing**

Converting vacant hotels to new supportive and affordable housing is one way to increase housing options for homeless and low-income New Yorkers. The Adams administration

recently celebrated the passage of state legislation which unlocks new opportunities for underutilized hotels to be repurposed to help meet housing needs. The regulatory reforms and resources enabled by this legislation pave the way to seize this unique opportunity to create desperately needed housing quickly.

### **Leverage zoning to encourage more affordable and supportive housing citywide**

For decades, New York City has encouraged affordable housing development through innovative zoning incentives. For instance, most medium- and high-density zoning districts allow more floor area for affordable senior housing than for other uses. The City will continue to leverage these tools in creative new ways to address the urgent need for housing supply and affordability. Our administration will propose a package of zoning changes that remove obstacles to developing supportive and affordable housing and allow greater square footage for affordable housing for everyone who needs it—including senior, supportive, and other affordable housing.

### **Advocate for federal resources for affordable housing**

With rising construction and maintenance costs, supply chain issues, and volatile interest rates, federal programs and resources are more important than ever to the growth and preservation of New York City's affordable housing stock. HDC, HPD, and NYCHA will continue partnering with our federal delegation to ensure that we have the resources necessary to meet New Yorkers' housing needs.

## **2. Increase access to transit and amenities for low-income New Yorkers**

The Adams administration is committed to making housing equity a reality. All New Yorkers should be empowered with realistic choices to live in thriving, diverse neighborhoods that benefit from equitable access to resources, amenities, and quality of life. This requires more housing opportunities across neighborhoods citywide, and especially those with strong access to jobs, transit, schools, parks, and day-to-day amenities, where residents of all income levels have access to economic opportunity.

The City has made important strides towards more equitable and inclusive development. But in large parts of the city, including some neighborhoods with access to crucial transit and quality-of-life amenities, there has been limited or no new affordable housing. Many other neighborhoods have not seen equitable investments in parks, schools, healthcare resources, cultural amenities, and other assets that make New York City vibrant and livable.

Our administration will plan and execute catalytic investments to encourage equitable development, using the creation of new housing developments as key neighborhood resources and anchors. We will make substantial housing, infrastructure, and service investments in neighborhoods with high needs, while also facilitating the construction and preservation of affordable housing in neighborhoods that already offer a wide array of services and amenities. To guide and support these investments, the City will partner with communities in every borough to advance neighborhood planning efforts that increase housing options for all New Yorkers, especially in neighborhoods with significant opportunities for new affordable housing under Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) and other programs. The City will also continue to

prioritize quality development projects that meet citywide goals and support their success in areas with particularly acute housing needs.

### **Prioritize people over parking in transit-rich neighborhoods**

With the passage of Zoning for Quality and Affordability (ZQA) in 2016, the City eliminated many onerous parking requirements that previously raised the cost of building affordable housing. DCP and HPD will expand on these efforts through plans to further reduce the amount of space that is required for vehicle storage, particularly in transit-rich neighborhoods.

In many zoning districts, parking requirements are the primary obstacle to achieving the full development potential on sites where owners want to add new housing. Prioritizing people over parking will reduce development costs, make streets safer, and enable the creation of more housing, services, and amenities that help neighborhoods thrive.



### **SPOTLIGHT: Advocate for housing development in the region**

For the last four decades, the New York suburbs surrounding the five boroughs have built less and less new housing, placing increasing pressure on the city to accommodate the housing needs of the broader region. Our city has historically relied on the suburbs to accommodate a share of regional housing needs, and in exchange the suburbs benefit from the region's excellent transit networks and access to job opportunities and cultural amenities in New York City. The current housing crisis is directly connected to diminishing opportunities for homebuyers and renters in the surrounding suburbs.

States across the country are enacting a wide range of reforms to address restrictive zoning, increase housing supply, and create a more equitable housing environment. These changes include relief for transit-accessible areas that have eased development on sites well-served by public transit, ADU programs, fast-track approval processes for affordable housing, and other reforms. All these tools can support more housing equity in the region, create more walkable, activated places, and leverage our public transit assets. The City will work with our partners across the region, in Albany, and at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to contextualize the housing crisis in our metropolitan area and encourage innovation in New York State.

## Leverage non-residential spaces in affordable housing to meet community needs

Over the last 20 years, through investments in affordable housing, the City has financed the development of over two million square feet of new retail and community facility space. Although these spaces were designed to provide communities with the amenities and services they need, many are currently vacant. While the retail environment has been difficult in many neighborhoods for years, the City can do more to ensure that our commercial and community facility spaces are improving quality of life for the New Yorkers they serve.

In collaboration with City Hall and agency partners, HPD will pursue strategies to decrease commercial vacancy and leverage non-residential spaces in affordable housing to better meet community needs. This may include providing development partners with more insight into neighborhood priorities and working across agencies to incorporate city services, such as affordable healthcare and childcare, arts and cultural facilities, and more.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Create new childcare centers in the ground floors of affordable housing**

The lack of accessible, affordable, high-quality childcare is an issue that has long impacted families, businesses, and the economy. Lack of childcare creates yet another barrier for parents, and especially mothers, to advance their careers and earning potential. COVID both increased childcare needs and made care even more inaccessible.

The Adams administration recognizes how critical it is to make more affordable childcare available to lower- and middle-income parents.

Our administration spearheaded two new tax incentives included in the most recent state budget that will spur private sector action to create new childcare seats, especially in childcare deserts. Property owners who pay for construction associated with the creation of new seats in a childcare center will be eligible for a property tax abatement. Businesses that provide free or subsidized childcare to their employees in new childcare seats will be eligible for a business income tax credit. We will maximize the utilization of these new tools alongside our investments in affordable housing. HPD will partner with DOE, DOHMH, and non-profit partners to permit and place new childcare centers into affordable housing developments in neighborhoods with unmet childcare needs.



## Make catalytic capital investments to support equitable development

In March 2022, the Deputy Mayor for Economic and Workforce Development announced the creation of the NYC SEED (Strategy for Equity and Economic Development) Fund to deliver quality-of-life improvements and economic recovery projects in areas of the city that have not experienced equitable investment in key amenities and services. The Chief Housing Officer and HPD will collaborate with these efforts to support the creation and preservation of affordable

housing alongside transformational capital investments. This process will ensure that good jobs, infrastructure, and services are delivered alongside affordable housing construction to support more equitable development in the long term.

### **Redevelop underutilized government-owned land**

For the past 40 years, HPD has redeveloped thousands of vacant lots that were transferred to city ownership during the 1970s and 1980s. This supply of free public land is largely already developed, and we must now utilize other government-owned land to maximize housing opportunities for extremely and very low-income households. Sites owned by other city agencies can be leveraged to provide new affordable housing paired with upgraded public amenities. Recent partnerships of this kind will bring 50 new affordable apartments above an expanded, state-of-the-art library to Sunset Park, and 330 affordable homes and a performing arts center to a former NYPD parking lot in East Harlem. The City will identify government-owned properties that may be suitable for similar strategic developments.

#### **SPOTLIGHT: Partner with H+H to create a nexus between housing and health**

NYC Health + Hospitals (H+H) manages underutilized city-owned land assets that could provide valuable housing opportunities for its patients and other New Yorkers in need. Expediting the development of high-quality, affordable, and supportive housing on H+H land will create stable housing that saves lives, improves health outcomes, and reduces expensive emergency health care and in-patient resources. In partnership with HPD, HDC, and the State, H+H will build new affordable homes on its land, leveraging proximity to healthcare resources for continuity of care for vulnerable New Yorkers.

### **Expand broadband access in affordable housing**

The City is pursuing a multi-pronged approach to broadband investments in our affordable housing, with the goal of serving tenants in affordable buildings and their surrounding communities as a whole. To the maximum extent feasible, all HPD-subsidized new construction projects must be designed and constructed to provide high-quality internet service at minimal cost to the tenant. HPD is also exploring new initiatives that will support broadband in existing multi-family buildings. Finally, the City is supporting Congressional efforts to consider broadband access a utility in federal housing programs, which would direct additional support to the city's 150,000 federal voucher holders to pay for broadband service.

## **3. Meet the housing needs of seniors and people with disabilities**

Seniors are the fastest-growing population in New York City and are projected to account for nearly one in six residents by 2040. Older New Yorkers and people with disabilities alike face fewer options for housing that they can afford and meets their needs. As well as investing in the creation of new affordable senior and supportive housing, the Adams administration will pursue new strategies to better meet the needs of these New Yorkers.

### **Increase enrollment in SCRIE and DRIE**

The Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) are crucial programs that freeze the rents of seniors and people with disabilities living in

rent-regulated apartments. Over the past decade, the City and the State have worked to expand income eligibility for both programs and conducted extensive outreach and assistance to help qualifying households enroll in and stay qualified for the programs. However, there are many eligible households who could benefit from SCRIE and DRIE but are not yet enrolled.

The Chief Housing Officer will partner with HPD, DOF, the Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit (CAU), and the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD), and affordable housing providers to ensure more eligible individuals benefit from SCRIE and DRIE and to help current recipients with annual recertification. We will explore pathways to facilitate automatic enrollment for New Yorkers living in affordable housing and pursue changes to streamline and reduce administrative burden in the enrollment and recertification process.

### **Accelerate the creation of supportive housing**

Supportive housing is one of the most cost-efficient and effective tools we have to end homelessness for New Yorkers who are chronically homeless, have mental disabilities and/or substance use disorders. In 2015, the City committed to creating 15,000 supportive homes by 2030, including a projected 7,500 new congregate (single-site) apartments and 7,500 scattered-site apartments.

Our administration will strengthen the commitment to supportive housing development. We will target city funds to accelerate supportive housing development and achieve our 15,000-unit production target by 2028—two years faster than previously expected. We will also advance policy and process changes to allow more households that would benefit from supportive housing qualify for it, speed up housing placements to fill new units faster, and reduce administrative burden for residents.

### **Fill in the housing service continuum to serve a wider range of at-risk populations**

Although supportive housing has ended homelessness for thousands of New Yorkers, many individuals who need ongoing services to remain stably housed do not qualify for existing models of supportive housing, putting them at greater risk of chronic homelessness and institutional cycling. Often, this includes homeless seniors and youth, individuals living with physical disabilities or ongoing medical service needs, and people with criminal justice backgrounds. The Chief Housing Officer and the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services will leverage partnerships across housing and social service agencies to explore new models of housing with on-site services that can better serve the needs of these communities.

#### **SPOTLIGHT: Leverage social service dollars to provide permanent housing opportunities**

Healthcare and social service providers across the country are increasingly recognizing the intersection between lack of access to stable housing and poor health outcomes. There are many additional opportunities to maximize health and social service dollars to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to safe, affordable housing, which is foundational to health and well-being.

The City will work with the New York State Department of Health (DOH) and the Centers

for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to maximize our ability to use Medicaid funding to develop and operate permanent supportive housing and provide new housing options for homeless New Yorkers with medical needs. The City has already engaged DOH around including such language in the State’s most recent 1115 Medicaid waiver amendment, which will be submitted in summer 2022.

The City will also work to expand HRA’s project-based rental assistance contracts, which can provide savings and create more permanent housing options for New Yorkers experiencing homelessness.

### **Support federally assisted properties serving seniors and very low-income New Yorkers**

HPD will do targeted outreach and offer financial support to HUD-assisted properties, a critical source of housing for very-low and extremely-low income New Yorkers. Most of the project-based Section 8 properties have expiring benefits in the next few years, and there is an opportunity to do targeted outreach, and stabilize HUD-assisted housing for extremely and very low-income households, including formerly homeless households. Recent changes at the federal level enable HUD 202 properties with Project Rental Assistance Contracts to participate in the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program. Paired with support from the City, this can help owners address renovations and ensure high quality housing for seniors.

## **4. Expand tools to preserve existing low-cost and affordable housing**

Preserving low-cost and affordable housing is crucial to ensuring healthy and safe living conditions, promoting stability for households and neighborhoods, and protecting our investments in affordable housing. The City will build out a proactive and comprehensive approach to preservation, leveraging data and community partnerships to identify properties in distress and to help owners stabilize the physical and financial conditions of their buildings.

### **Help small landlords and HDFC cooperatives maintain housing quality and affordability**

Individual building owners or those with smaller portfolios, as well as Housing Development Fund Company (HDFC) cooperatives, often have difficulty accessing private capital to support the maintenance of their buildings, putting the long-term quality of their housing at risk. Government programs can also be difficult to navigate for these property owners, with paperwork and legal requirements that can hinder access to assistance. If owners are unable to get the help they need, they may not be able to hold onto their properties, resulting in the loss of low-cost or affordable units and threatening the housing stability of tenants.

To ensure the long-term quality and affordability of our housing stock, and to protect the health, safety, and housing stability of low-income New Yorkers, the City will strengthen outreach and assistance to struggling landlords and HDFC cooperatives, with a particular focus on properties facing the greatest financial and physical challenges. We will also leverage these efforts to explore “early warning” detection methods to identify and reach at-risk buildings before they are in crisis.



## **Facilitate the acquisition and stabilization of distressed homes**

One in seven New York City households—including a disproportionate share of Black and Hispanic residents—endure multiple deficiencies in their homes, such as the regular presence of pests and mold, inadequate heat in winter, and problems with lead paint. The City is committed to addressing these persistent issues. HPD will increase its capacity to preserve and rehabilitate low-cost housing that desperately needs repairs.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Revamp the Neighborhood Pillars program**

Non-profit and mission-based housing developers have played a crucial role in stabilizing and improving New York City neighborhoods for decades. These partners can help preserve the affordability and quality of buildings experiencing financial and physical distress, yet often lack sufficient resources to compete with other buyers. To address this challenge, HPD launched the Neighborhood Pillars program in 2018, allowing the agency to collaborate with neighborhood-based organizations well-positioned to identify buildings most at risk of speculation and rapid turnover. Since its launch, the City has leveraged Neighborhood Pillars to facilitate the acquisition of 429 units in multi-family buildings by qualified buyers who were evaluated to ensure responsible ownership and long-term affordability for tenants.

HPD will revamp Neighborhood Pillars to target multi-family buildings experiencing physical or financial distress for acquisition and stabilization in order to improve housing quality and stability for existing residents. The program will be paired with a down payment assistance fund to support acquisition by non-profits and M/WBEs.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Turn zombie homes into opportunities for affordable homeownership**

Zombie homes—vacant, deteriorated small homes whose owners are significantly behind on their mortgage—present major challenges to the neighborhoods where they are clustered. Zombie homes lead to reduced property values, pose public health and safety risks, place a financial burden on the City, and contribute to the city’s housing shortage. Many zombie homes are concentrated in the same neighborhoods hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis of 2008-2009, largely communities of color across Central Brooklyn, Southeast Queens, the North Bronx, and the North Shore of Staten Island. Following the end of the foreclosure moratorium put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, there may be an increase in foreclosures and abandonment in the coming years.

To address the potential rise in zombie homes following the pandemic, the City is funding the creation of a permanent Zombie Homes unit at HPD, which has relied on grant funding from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to conduct field surveys, tracking, and enforcement. The Zombie Homes unit will develop strategies to drive the acquisition and transformation of zombie homes into opportunities for affordable homeownership.

## **Strengthen oversight and protection of city investments in affordable housing**

Proper asset management and oversight are crucial to preserving the affordability benefits and the financial and physical stability of our affordable housing stock over the long term. The City is committing additional resources to the oversight and protection of these assets and will build out new capabilities to provide deeper, more targeted supervision and assistance moving forward. These efforts will strengthen our ability to help owners remain in compliance and take enforcement actions against those who fail to comply.

## **Encourage more landlords to participate in preservation programs**

HPD has a wide variety of preservation programs in place to keep buildings in sound financial and physical shape. Encouraging more building owners to reap the benefits of these programs is key to supporting the preservation of our housing stock. To reach this goal, HPD will expand targeted outreach to property owners who are struggling to keep up with financial obligations, unable to consistently maintain housing quality, or whose properties are nearing the end of their regulatory terms. The agency will also make it easier for building owners to participate in preservation programs by simplifying and consolidating existing loan programs, investing in technology to reduce communications and data entry for building owners, and creating new partnerships with private lending partners.

## **5. Help communities build and maintain wealth through homeownership**

Homeownership is a critical tool for families to create generational wealth and economic opportunity. Owning a home can help households build the assets they need to send their children to college, save for retirement, and put down roots in a community. Yet with median home prices reaching over \$750,000, the opportunities available to New Yorkers seeking to purchase a home are extremely limited. Moreover, if existing homeowners lose access to their homes, either because they fall behind on their mortgage payments or are unable to keep up with maintenance costs, they also lose a vital financial asset, and another chance at homeownership may be out of reach.

Due to the legacy of discriminatory policies and lending practices that explicitly excluded communities of color from homeownership opportunities for decades, helping communities build and maintain wealth through homeownership is a crucial racial equity goal. Exclusion from homeownership opportunities is a key reason for the racial wealth gap, which continues to make it harder for New Yorkers of color to become homeowners today. We cannot achieve racial equity in our city if homeownership and its wealth generation benefits remain out of reach.

Our administration will advance a wide range of programs to strengthen access to affordable homeownership opportunities for low-income households and households of color, and to help existing homeowners stay in and maintain the quality of their homes.



## **Increase opportunities for affordable homeownership**

The homeownership rate in New York City is 31 percent—half the national average. While the city’s high rate of rental opportunities has many benefits for a fast-moving city, the lack of homeownership, particularly for New Yorkers of color, has perpetuated significant wealth disparities, pushed many residents out of the city, and prevented low- and moderate-income New Yorkers from accessing the stability and savings that homeownership can provide. The City will prioritize new funding and resources for programs that strengthen access to affordable homeownership.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Expand down payment assistance**

HPD’s HomeFirst program provides down payment assistance to low-income New Yorkers purchasing their first home. Down payment assistance is a tested and proven means of empowering low- and moderate-income households who would not otherwise be able to achieve homeownership. HomeFirst has leveraged more than \$50 million to help over 3,000 low-income families achieve their dream of homeownership in New York City.

The City will strengthen and expand this critical program, which provides up to \$100,000 in down payment assistance, to help more New Yorkers at a wider range of incomes become homeowners. The City will double the annual budget for HomeFirst and expand program eligibility to include moderate-income households. With these changes, the program will help an estimated 300 households per year purchase a home – three times as many as it currently serves.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Build more affordable homeownership options**

Through its Open Door program, HPD finances the construction of co-ops and condos affordable to low- and middle-income first-time homebuyers. HPD will create more of these opportunities by allocating additional capital resources to Open Door projects and modifying the program to make it more flexible. With a majority of projects that are sponsored by M/WBE and non-profit partners, prioritizing this crucial program will achieve the dual goals of delivering affordable homeownership opportunities to New Yorkers and supporting M/WBE and non-profit developers.

## **Help low- and moderate-income homeowners stay in and maintain their homes**

Many low- and moderate-income homeowners need assistance to keep up with rising maintenance costs and property taxes. This need has only grown during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused instability for many low-income homeowners. Rising inflation and

supply chain constraints have made home maintenance more expensive than ever. The City will expand and launch an array of programs to help existing homeowners address physical and financial conditions in small buildings, prevent foreclosure and displacement, and ensure the long-term stability of one- to four-family homes that are one of New York City's most important wealth creation vehicles and housing assets.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Launch HomeFix 2.0**

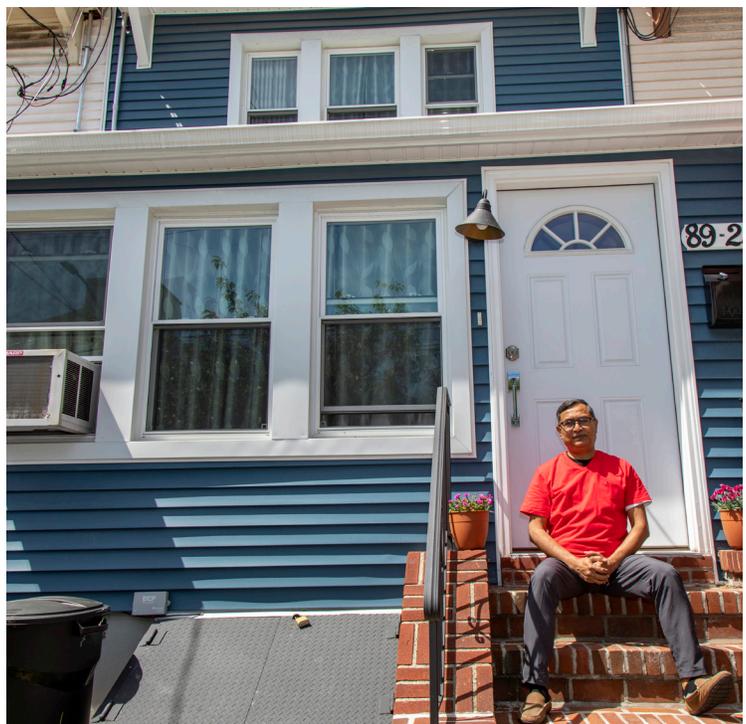
With funding from Enterprise Community Partners, HPD launched the HomeFix program to help low- and moderate-income homeowners in small, one- to four-unit properties fund home repairs. The program addresses home renovations including window replacement and heating, hot water, and roofing repairs, as well as accessibility improvements to help seniors age in place. Participating homeowners also receive technical assistance, such as financial counseling, construction management, and other individualized services. In the three years since the program launched, more than 4,000 homeowners have expressed interest.

To meet this overwhelming demand, the City will expand this critical program to help homeowners without access to traditional home repair financing address urgent repair and maintenance needs. The expanded program will also fund sustainability and resiliency upgrades to reduce energy costs, advance emissions reduction goals, and help protect homeowners from extreme weather and flooding events. Seventy-five percent of buildings in the city's coastal floodplain are one- to four-family homes, highlighting the urgent need to address increased flood risks and other climate threats. By providing a one-stop shop for low- and moderate-income homeowners to address housing quality, sustainability, and resiliency needs, HomeFix 2.0 will support the long-term preservation of the housing stock, promote the health and safety of residents, and provide critical stability to over 150 homeowners each year.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Create a citywide Homeowner Help Desk**

The Homeowner Help Desk is a pilot operated in partnership with the Center for New York City Neighborhoods (CNYCN) in parts of Central Brooklyn, Southeast Queens, and the North Bronx. Since 2017, the program has provided more than 1,400 homeowners with services ranging from repair loans to legal counseling to prevent foreclosure.

Building on the pilot's success, HPD and CNYCN will establish a permanent, citywide Homeowner Help Desk to support all New York City homeowners who are



at risk of displacement due to foreclosure, scams, municipal tax liens, rising operating and maintenance costs, or a lack of estate planning. The Homeowner Help Desk will conduct intensive outreach through on-the-ground flyering, door-knocking, and events, as well as a targeted marketing campaign to reach more homeowners. Homeowners served by the Help Desk will benefit from one-on-one housing, financial, and legal counseling on a variety of topics, including scam prevention, mortgage and municipal payment assistance, repair financing, and estate planning. Counselors will help homeowners navigate and access available resources and services, such as applying for municipal relief plans. The Help Desk will provide support to an estimated 1,000 homeowners annually, with the opportunity to scale up in the future.

### **Explore new models for shared equity and community ownership**

Shared equity models aim to provide households broader access to ownership and enable communities to build wealth while promoting long-term affordability. Through discussions with industry partners and advocates and a Shared Equity RFEI, the City is learning about shared equity models that could be embedded into our housing policy. These include programs that would allow homeowners in financial distress to stabilize their properties and remain in their homes with the help of a non-profit or community land trust (CLT). HPD will continue to explore new strategies to advance the goals of neighborhood stability and inclusive growth.

#### **SPOTLIGHT: Support Community Land Trusts**

Community land trusts (CLTs) are not-for-profit organizations formed to own land and maintain control and oversight of housing, businesses, and other uses on the land. CLTs may support affordable rental housing or sell homes to qualified buyers, enabling wealth building opportunities, while retaining ownership of the land to preserve long-term affordability. CLTs are often governed by representatives living on the CLT, in the surrounding community, and by members of the public, ensuring that different community perspectives inform the stewardship of land. CLTs may also offer financial support and counseling for homeowners struggling with mortgage payments or ongoing maintenance, which can reduce rates of delinquency and foreclosure.

To date, HPD has financed or plans to finance over 1,000 units of housing on CLTs, including the Cooper Square CLT, East Harlem/El Barrio CLT, Interboro CLT, and the soon-to-be-formed Edgemere CLT. HPD will continue to provide technical assistance and operational support for CLTs that are establishing themselves across the city, identify additional public sites that are suitable for transfer to CLTs, launch new programs and tools to help CLTs acquire private sites, and explore pathways to leverage CLTs to stabilize private owners in financial distress so that they can stay in their homes and avoid foreclosure or displacement. To support these efforts, the City is also working with partners in Albany to pass state legislation that would expand our ability to finance affordable housing projects involving CLTs.

## **6. Promote housing stability for renters**

While homeownership provides many benefits for New Yorkers to generate wealth, the vast majority of households in the city are currently renters. Ensuring housing and financial stability for New York City renters is absolutely crucial. The Adams administration will

execute a range of strategies to achieve this goal, with a particular focus on the low-income renters who need our help the most.

### **Reduce rent burden**

Housing is the largest monthly cost for most low-income New Yorkers. Too many New Yorkers are rent-burdened or severely rent-burdened, paying more than one-third or even more than one-half of their monthly income towards rent. Experiencing a high level of rent burden is associated with many negative outcomes and leaves households with limited income to spend on other necessities or withstand an emergency.

Many of the initiatives in this Blueprint are intended to lower the typical cost of housing in New York City for lower-income residents. As described in *Rebuild, Renew, Reinvent: A Blueprint for New York City's Economic Recovery*, the Adams administration is similarly focused on increasing New Yorkers' incomes to provide them with a stronger foundation to absorb their housing costs. In addition, we can better leverage existing, powerful tools to assist New Yorkers in need.

### **Allow on-time rental payments to improve tenant credit scores**

"Rent reporting" is the reporting of on-time rental payments to consumer credit bureaus including Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. This tool creates a new pathway for tenants to improve their credit, providing a platform to address persistent racial disparities in the credit scores of low-income households, and helping renter households build the necessary credit to purchase a home.

Building on the success of a recent rent reporting pilot at NYCHA, HPD, and HDC will pilot rent reporting services to renters in city-financed affordable housing. This program will provide a pathway for renters to have their on-time rental payments positively reflected in their credit scores. The pilot will encourage the development of partnerships and best practices that could eventually inform rent reporting requirements for private landlords citywide.

## **7. Provide inclusive development opportunities for equitable growth**

Housing provides enormous economic opportunities that can be leveraged to advance racial equity and inclusive growth. Affordable housing supports not only the residents who live in affordable buildings, but the local businesses and firms that build, maintain, and fortify those developments and their surrounding communities. Last fiscal year, our investments in affordable housing employed nearly 30,000 construction workers in temporary jobs and created over 500 permanent jobs.

To advance our goals of inclusive economic opportunity and equitable growth, the City will promote the participation of Minority- and Women-owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) and non-profit community development organizations that have played an important role in our neighborhoods for decades, with a particular focus on non-profits led by Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). In addition, we will advance partnerships and support for faith-based institutions and other mission-driven organizations that want to help meet the housing needs of the communities they serve.

## **Support M/WBEs and BIPOC-led non-profits**

M/WBEs and non-profits face many barriers in the affordable housing industry. By increasing access to capital and providing more business opportunities for these entities, we can ensure that communities of color are reaping the economic development benefits of housing. The City will prioritize M/WBEs and BIPOC-led non-profits to help them expand and grow.



### **SPOTLIGHT: Work with private partners to grow development opportunities for MBEs**

Minority-owned Business Enterprises (MBE) have historically had difficulty securing construction loans at competitive interest rates. Many MBEs partner with larger firms as a result, which dilutes their ownership and cedes part of any developer fees they would have earned, limiting their ability to grow and take on more projects independently in the future. To facilitate more direct and meaningful opportunities for MBE developers to build affordable housing, HPD and HDC are working with financial institutions to create a guaranty facility that will replace the financial security that a larger partner often provides. This will allow more MBE developers to secure construction guaranties and lead city-financed projects.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Prioritize existing M/WBE and non-profit projects in the HPD pipeline**

Many affordable housing projects in HPD's pipeline struggle to secure the complete package of financing needed to move them from proposal to construction. This delay poses particularly acute challenges for M/WBE and non-profit developers, who have less access to capital and less capacity to wait for projects to move forward. The City will commit additional subsidy to Neighborhood Construction Program (NCP) projects in the pipeline, all of which are M/WBE- and non-profit-led, to accelerate their completion by reducing reliance on 9% tax credits that are in extremely limited supply. HPD and HDC will also analyze and implement strategies to prioritize projects led by M/WBEs and non-profits over the long term.

## **Provide technical assistance and support for faith-based and mission-driven organizations developing affordable housing on their land**

As HPD seeks new sites for affordable housing development, non-profit and faith-based organizations that have developable land have provided an important source of new housing opportunities across the city and will continue to be key partners. Many of these organizations have a mission-driven interest in supporting affordable housing but no previous real estate development experience. HPD will help connect interested organizations with resources and experts that can educate and guide them through the development process.

HPD will establish a dedicated point-of-contact within the agency to engage in proactive work with faith-based and other mission-driven organizations. This liaison will provide a bridge to external technical assistance providers, such as Enterprise Community Partners' Faith-Based Development Initiative (FBDI) and entities on HPD's Pre-Qualified Owner's Representative List. HPD will also build out a suite of outreach and educational materials specifically targeted to faith-based and mission-driven organizations to provide a broad understanding of the affordable housing development process, as well as the specific issues and challenges that these types of organizations may face.

# Chapter 4: Improve the Health and Safety of New Yorkers



## Chapter 4: Improve the Health and Safety of New Yorkers

Every New Yorker should live in a safe and healthy home. Poor housing conditions diminish health outcomes and exacerbate longstanding health disparities in our city. Climate change hazards including flooding and high heat put residents and communities at risk – especially those in lower-quality housing. Low-income households and communities of color have fewer options for high-quality, affordable housing and are most severely impacted by these health and safety risks.

The Adams administration will take a fresh look at how to create and preserve healthy, sustainable, and resilient homes. Through housing design, neighborhood investment, community planning, and proactive code enforcement, we will address health disparities and keep New Yorkers healthy and safe in the face of climate change.

### 1. Improve housing quality to ensure healthy and safe living conditions

Life expectancy at birth in New York City was 81.3 years in 2019 – more than two years higher than the national average. Yet improvements in health outcomes have not been enjoyed equally by all New Yorkers. Decades-old health inequities in our city persist, putting low-income households and New Yorkers of color at disproportionate risk.

Housing quality plays a key role in determining health outcomes, and inequities in housing conditions contribute to health disparities. Lack of heat in the winter and air conditioning in the summer create risk of cold- or heat-related mortality, especially for older New Yorkers. Infestations of rodents and other pests, leaks, and mold can exacerbate and trigger asthma and other preexisting health conditions. Peeling paint or plaster may expose children to lead, while electrical issues and other hazards can increase the risk of fire. Today, residents of public, subsidized, and regulated housing report the highest prevalence of maintenance deficiencies and low-quality housing in the city (see Figure X on pg. 22). The COVID-19 pandemic forced New Yorkers to spend significantly more time inside their homes and hit low-income communities and communities of color the hardest, exacerbating and highlighting these disparities in our health and housing.

The City has a wide range of tools in place to protect New Yorkers from hazardous housing that puts their health and safety at risk, and to help property owners keep their buildings in habitable, healthy condition. Still, more can and must be done to reduce long-standing health inequities in our homes and communities. The Adams administration will prioritize the creation and expansion of programs to improve housing quality and ensure healthy and safe living conditions for all New Yorkers.



## **Invest in training and technology to improve code enforcement**

Through housing code enforcement, HPD plays a key role in ensuring the health and safety of New York City renters. HPD inspects over 100,000 apartments per year, either proactively or in response to 311 complaints. The standard inspection protocol requires that HPD inspectors always look for nine conditions on every inspection, of which five are health-related and four are related to fire

safety. HPD has programs targeted to buildings that are consistently not up to code, as well as programs to intervene in and address immediately hazardous conditions. The agency brings cases in Housing Court against owners who do not remedy outstanding violations and, when necessary, seeks findings of contempt against recalcitrant landlords. HPD inspectors have been out in the field throughout the COVID crisis, never standing down even at the height of the pandemic.

Given the many important responsibilities that HPD inspectors undertake each and every day, this administration is committed to growing the expertise and capacity of the inspection workforce. The agency will increase the number of expert trainers, widen the range of training topics, and provide more frequent and consistent training for enforcement staff, including through the design and implementation of an annual training curriculum for all inspectors and construction project managers. This will ensure the ongoing expertise of inspection staff, increase the capacity for and quality of inspections and enforcement, and provide opportunities for employment in skilled careers that will benefit the city workforce.

HPD will invest in technology to provide a better experience for the public when interfacing with the City's enforcement processes, streamlining annual property registration by property owners and improving electronic certifications of correction. These efforts will increase valid property registration, which plays a critical role in providing reliable contact information in case of building emergencies, as well as documenting when violations are corrected. Better technology will also enhance the efficiency and impact of enforcement operations, reducing response time to tenant and owner inquiries and speeding up enforcement activities.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Proactive inspections based on DOHMH and FDNY data**

New Yorkers can report housing maintenance issues to the City by calling 311 to file a complaint. While this process empowers HPD to conduct thousands of inspections each year, the system does not benefit all communities and residents equally. Not all New Yorkers

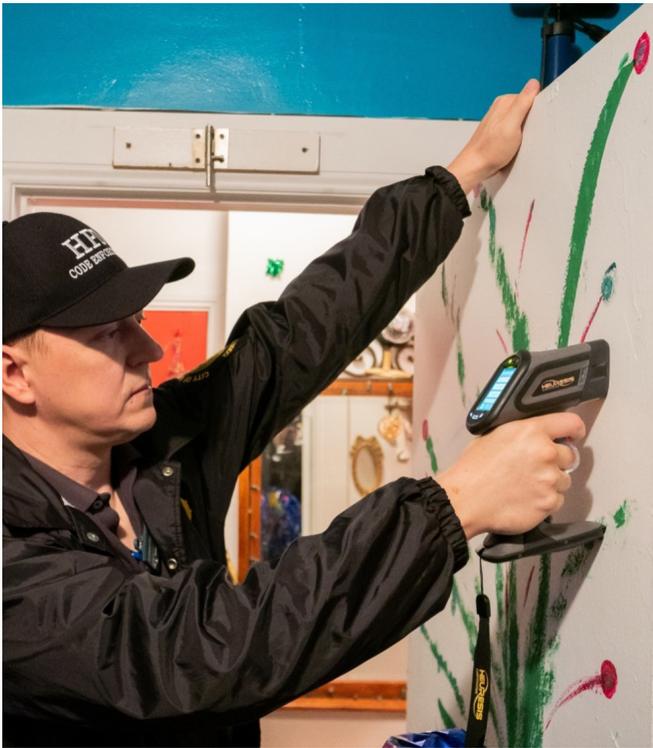
are aware of the complaint process, while some residents may choose not to use it due to fear of government and/or landlord reprisal. For example, undocumented New Yorkers may feel uncomfortable calling 311 to report housing quality problems to the City.

Understanding these nuances around the complaint system and how it gets used, the City is committed to expanding proactive enforcement as a crucial supplement to complaint-driven activity. HPD will expand and refine specialized programs to proactively survey and recommend enforcement actions in buildings that may not come to the attention of enforcement agencies through the 311 complaint process. To this end, HPD will deepen its existing work with DOHMH and FDNY to target buildings for proactive inspection where cross-agency data indicate that housing quality issues could be putting the health and safety of residents at risk, even where complaints have not been directly filed with the City. Through proactive inspections and targeted outreach, we will root out harmful conditions and work with property owners to determine whether education and assistance or enforcement is the proper mechanism to achieve compliance.

### **Combat lead paint in homes**

Protecting children from the dangers of lead and reducing health inequities caused by lead exposure in our homes is a key priority of the City of New York. Elevated blood lead levels (EBLLs) can cause irreversible developmental effects in children, including adversely affecting physical and mental growth and causing learning and behavioral problems. While childhood lead exposure has plummeted 93 percent since the City's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Act (Local Law 1 of 2004), the burden of lead exposure remains high for children of color and children living in high-poverty neighborhoods. In 2020, 65 percent of children under age six with blood lead levels (BLLs) of five micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ ) or greater were from high-poverty neighborhoods, while children of color represented 78 percent of New Yorkers under age six newly identified with BLLs of five  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$  or greater.

The Adams administration is devoting more staff and funding to enforcement and intervention work to combat the presence of lead hazards in homes. Peeling lead paint is the most commonly identified source of lead poisoning in young children. Investing in training and technology to improve enforcement at HPD will strengthen our ability to identify and enforce against housing quality issues where lead hazards may be involved. We are also strengthening programs to address lead hazards in the homes of children with EBLLs. The City will leverage interagency data and collaboration to advance its goal of eliminating childhood lead exposure altogether.



## **SPOTLIGHT: Increase lead-related inspections to reach more homes**

In October 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated the blood lead reference value from 5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$  to 3.5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ , and DOHMH lowered its action level to conduct investigations and provide care coordination for children accordingly. This change means that more children will be identified as having EBLLs, which triggers city enforcement and intervention work to address health effects and sources of lead exposure. Through the Healthy Homes Program, DOHMH coordinates follow-up care for children with EBLLs. A care coordination nurse is assigned to monitor the child's BLLs and coordinate care until it declines. DOHMH simultaneously performs an environmental investigation that aims to identify the potential sources of lead

exposure, conducting inspections of homes where the child lives or regularly spends time. When lead hazards are identified in a residential building, DOHMH issues a Commissioner's Order to Abate (COTA) to the owner and monitors for compliance. If the owner fails to do the work, DOHMH refers it to HPD, which demands records from the property owner and attempts to access apartments in the building where a child under six resides to correct the conditions. HPD issues violations for lead-based paint hazards observed during inspection, as well as failure to maintain records of complying with lead-based paint requirements or to perform abatement upon apartment turnover.

DOHMH expects that approximately 1,500 additional children will receive services from the Healthy Homes Program this year, bringing the total number of children served to 3,500. This will increase the number of lead-related housing inspections triggered by EBLLs, in addition to the roughly 40,000 lead inspections that are conducted annually in response to complaints of peeling paint, and in homes inspected for any other complaint where a child under the age of six resides.

With an additional 1,500 children served through Healthy Homes, the number of COTA referrals that HPD receives from DOHMH will substantially increase. To allow for the additional inspections and enforcement work that will arise as a result, the Mayor's Executive Budget commits an additional \$7.5 million to HPD for lead enforcement. We are also reallocating federal funding to enhance lead compliance efforts within 144 city-owned buildings, with more than 1,000 homes. These additional resources will reduce health risk for thousands of New Yorkers, support the long-term health and quality of the housing stock, and create new jobs and professional opportunities that directly contribute to healthy housing.

## **Reduce asthma triggers and risk**

Asthma is a leading cause of emergency room visits and hospitalizations for children and has a significant impact on emotional and economic well-being. Inequalities in housing conditions based on household income, race, and ethnicity contribute to the disparities in how asthma affects different communities. In New York City, asthma disproportionately affects Black and Hispanic/Latino children as well as those residing in high-poverty neighborhoods. For children in our poorest neighborhoods, asthma is a leading cause of missed school days, leading to academic setbacks and delays.

Certain allergens in the environment can cause an asthma attack or make asthma symptoms worse. Common indoor asthma triggers include cockroaches and mice, mold and mildew, and airborne toxins, including those found in many cleaning products. Environmental and structural conditions, like leaks and cracks often found in the walls and ceilings of poorly maintained housing, lead to higher levels of allergens and can increase asthma risk. Property owners are legally required to keep their buildings free of pests and mold, including by safely fixing the conditions that cause these problems.

The City is committed to addressing these persistent issues through a variety of strategies. As described in Chapter 3, HPD will expand and streamline preservation programs to ensure that struggling landlords can access the resources and assistance they need to make repairs and preserve housing quality and affordability. In addition, the City will embed criteria to address allergens into affordable housing design guidelines, deepen interagency partnerships, and pilot new strategies to work with landlords and residents to create pest-free homes.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Proactively enforce against owners who fail to address pest violations**

HPD and DOHMH have often partnered to track and address bedbug infestations. Now, the Agencies will join forces to take enhanced enforcement measures against properties with a pattern of roach and mouse violations. HPD will share data and help DOHMH target properties for enforcement, requiring property owners to implement Integrated Pest Management (IPM). For property owners who fail to comply, DOHMH will issue summonses subject to monetary penalties. This initiative will both educate owners on how to properly address pest violations and create a mechanism for seeking penalties, with the goal of lowering the incidence of this common source of indoor allergens that exacerbate asthma.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Expand the Medicaid Together Pilot to improve housing conditions for more children**

Asthma disproportionately affects Black and Hispanic/Latino children as well as those residing in high-poverty neighborhoods. In 2016, the rate of asthma-related emergency department visits among children ages 5-17 was more than six times higher in very high-poverty neighborhoods. To help get to the source of the problem, DOHMH introduced Medicaid Together Improving Asthma, a pilot project to provide Integrated Pest Management with allergen reduction (IPM-AR) services in the homes of children between 5-17 years old receiving Medicaid or Child Health Plus who are admitted to the hospital with a primary diagnosis of asthma, are allergic to pests, and are exposed to pests in the home. The goal of this pilot is to serve 1,200 families over three years and to make the case that IPM-AR leads to reduced

hospitalizations, providing savings that should be considered in the cost of healthcare. This administration aims to expand the program to cover children under five years old who have been hospitalized with asthma, to receive similar IPM services in their homes to reduce asthma triggers from home environments.

## **SPOTLIGHT: Launch a healthy living initiative to help owners and managers of affordable housing understand and combat asthma-related conditions**

DOHMH will launch an Asthma Friendly Living Conditions initiative to reduce the individual stigma and burdens associated with poor building conditions, which falls disproportionately on low-income New Yorkers, and to raise expectations of landlords and building managers to improve conditions. The top New York City neighborhoods with the highest prevalence of homes with maintenance problems are also among those with the highest rates of pediatric asthma-related emergency room visits. By partnering with communities in historically underserved neighborhoods, this new initiative educates both residents and building managers on practices to create healthy spaces that are free of pests, mold, and other hazards.

DOHMH will issue a Request for Proposals for partners to pilot the new program in East Harlem and Central Harlem. DOHMH will solicit enrollment from interested property managers and owners whose buildings have struggled from high pest infestation. Enrolled building managers, owners, and their residents will benefit from workshops on housing rights and ways to create healthy living conditions. The program will be leveraged to develop a best practices toolkit that can be used to replicate efforts in other buildings and neighborhoods.

## **Increase fire safety**

On Sunday, January 9, 2022, a fire at the Twin Parks North West affordable housing development in the Bronx resulted in the loss of 17 New Yorkers, including eight children, from smoke inhalation. This devastating loss brought renewed urgency to the need for heightened fire safety enforcement, education, and outreach to prevent future tragedy. In the aftermath of the Twin Parks fire, Mayor Adams signed Executive Order 12 and a suite of fire safety measures into law.

### Keeping Homes Fire Safe

*Whether you're a tenant or property owner, make sure you're aware of these six safety rules:*



**Close the Door**  
When escaping a fire in your home, always close the door. All residential buildings with 3 or more apartments must have self-closing doors.



**Clear Exits**  
Help your family escape from fire, and help first responders quickly access your home, by keeping exits free and clear of clutter or storage on fire escapes, hallways, and entrance doors including roof doors.



**Smoke & CO Alarms**  
Property owners must provide & install smoke detectors. Detectors should be maintained by the tenant, including testing and replacing batteries.



**Kitchen Safety**  
Keep the area around your stove clear of towels, papers, and potholders. Stand by your pan and never leave cooking food unattended, and enforce a kid-free zone around your stove.



**Fire Escape Plan**  
Property owners must post plans on the inside of every apartment door, common area, and distribute them to each unit, to new tenants & annually.



**Heating Safety**  
When using an electric space heater, never use an extension cord. Give space heaters at least 3 feet of space from combustible material such as bedding and furniture.

*Contact the property owner of your building if your front door doesn't self-close, you don't have a functional smoke alarm, obstacles block your exits that aren't your own, or you don't have the stove knob covers you need. If the issue is not corrected, you can register a complaint with 311.*



## SPOTLIGHT: Integrate HPD violations into FDNY’s risk model

HPD issues tens of thousands of violations related to fire safety each year. This information will now be used by FDNY to inform its model for identifying buildings that are at higher risk for more dangerous fires. FDNY’s Risk-Based Inspection System uses data from multiple sources to track, score, prioritize, and then automatically schedule approximately 50,000 buildings for annual inspection. Currently, the risk model contains characteristics including the building’s construction material, whether or not the building has a sprinkler system, the height and age of the building, last date of inspection and occupancy. The system also captures and tracks violation history and building information from several other city agency databases including DCP, DOB, DEP, and DOF. Adding in HPD fire safety violations will further strengthen the way that FDNY conducts inspections.

## SPOTLIGHT: Work with FDNY to increase fire safety awareness

Outreach and education are crucial to public safety. New Yorkers must know how to keep themselves safe through fire prevention and in the case of a fire. A fire safety notice should be posted on the inside of every apartment door. In accordance with Executive Order 12, HPD will now be checking for these life-saving notices during every routine inspection and notifying the tenant, owner, and FDNY if there are fire safety violations.



### FDNY’s Fire Safety

Education (FSE) unit has a robust program to increase public awareness regarding fire safety. HPD’s Division of Neighborhood Preservation has an outreach van that brings information to neighborhoods on issues such as how to file a complaint, how to apply for affordable housing, and how to properly register a building with HPD. Building on this platform, FDNY and HPD will enhance outreach through joint efforts, including the launch of a broad public awareness campaign to educate New Yorkers on how to prevent fires and respond to fire emergencies. The public awareness campaign will include in-person events across the city, social media campaigns, and the production of joint materials targeting both tenants and property owners in multiple languages. HPD will leverage existing infrastructure to reach out to approximately 35,000 property owners registered with the agency to ensure that messaging is targeted and audience appropriate.

## 2. Keep New Yorkers safe in their homes in a changing climate

Climate change creates an urgent need to keep New Yorkers safe in their homes. Climate-related events such as heat waves and extreme weather are dangerous for many New Yorkers and can negatively impact health outcomes. Homes with poor housing conditions in high heat areas can become dangerously hot in the summer, exacerbating preexisting conditions like cardiovascular disease, and putting the lives of vulnerable residents at risk. The tragedies wrought by Hurricane Ida last year, and nearly a decade ago during Hurricane Sandy, further underscore the need for improved safety during instances of extreme weather.

The City will work with communities to advance a range of strategies to keep New Yorkers safe in their homes during floods, heat emergencies, and in the face of a changing climate. The Chief Housing Officer and the Chief Climate Officer will leverage resources and partnerships across agencies include MOCEJ, HPD, NYCHA, DOHMH, DEP, HRO, and NYCEM to combat the health and safety risks posed by climate change. We will help New Yorkers better understand and prepare for these risks, with a focus on those most impacted, bolster capacity and networks to strengthen community-based resiliency, and leverage our knowledge of resiliency needs to inform housing design and development.

### **Protect New Yorkers in basement apartments from the impacts of flooding**

Basement apartments are an important supplement to the housing stock that disproportionately serve very low-income households, immigrant New Yorkers, and other communities that lack access to affordable options in the general housing market. However, complex and often outdated codes and regulations make it difficult to bring these units into safe and legal use, creating the potential for unsafe living conditions and depriving occupants of leasehold rights. Flooding exacerbates safety risks for all basement occupants because their homes are below street level. Some apartments face greater flood risk based on their location, means of egress, and other physical factors. Improving safety for basement occupants, especially during flooding events, is a top priority for the Adams administration.



### **SPOTLIGHT: Support pathways to bring basement apartments into safe and legal use**

New Yorkers living in basement apartments often face unsafe and unstable living conditions. As we tragically learned in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida, this can be a matter of life and death. The process of bringing a basement apartment into safe and legal use is too difficult and expensive for many homeowners who could benefit from renting out a secondary unit in their

home. To widen the pathway for basement conversions and encourage healthier, safer living conditions for basement occupants, the City has partnered with the City Council and community-based organizations to provide funding and regulatory relief for a limited number of basement conversions in East New York, Brooklyn. The pilot provided a testing ground for potential strategies to facilitate policies and programs for basement conversions citywide. Through this effort, it has become clear that we cannot meet our goals for basement conversions without statutory changes at the state level. We will continue to work with our partners at the State to advocate for legislation that would enable a pathway to the creation of safe, legal basement apartments in New York City.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Increase strategic outreach about flooding to basement occupants**

The City will improve community outreach to ensure that basement occupants are alerted ahead of time about potential flooding events and can take the necessary steps to keep themselves safe. As many basement occupants are new migrants who may have limited English proficiency (LEP) or face documentation challenges, outreach must be strategic and shaped to meet specific community needs. To this end, the City has engaged Los Deliveristas Unidos/Workers Justice Project, Uber Eats, Grubhub, and DoorDash in a working group to create new strategies for ensuring penetration of messaging to occupants of basement apartments. The group will also work to align on protocols to ensure that delivery workers are kept safe during extreme weather, such as restricting deliveries during dangerous weather conditions.



### **Help homeowners and renters understand and address flood risk**

Flooding can compromise housing stability, threatening the ability of households to maintain uninterrupted access to a decent, safe, and healthy home. Hurricane Sandy and Hurricane Ida underscored a new reality in New York City. Storm surge and flash flooding have killed 57 New Yorkers in the past decade, mainly in one- and two-family homes.

Flooding events can also create financial liabilities for owners and occupants when properties are damaged. If left unaddressed, flood-related damages can lead to decaying conditions that may cause mold and reduce the quality of the housing stock. These conditions are particularly difficult for low-income communities that have limited access to savings.

The City will prioritize initiatives to increase awareness of flood risks and to connect homeowners and renters with available resources to reduce this risk. These efforts will promote health and safety, reduce the risk of housing instability, and help more owners understand how to maintain the quality of their buildings and homes.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Expand FloodHelpNY**

The City will expand outreach to New Yorkers about flood risk through FloodHelpNY, an online platform administered by the Center for New York City Neighborhoods (CNYCN) that provides homeowners and renters with information and resources about flood risks, flood insurance, and flood resiliency retrofits. Since its launch in 2016, FloodHelpNY has educated and equipped over 700,000 New Yorkers with resources to increase their resiliency. The platform's proven track record also makes it an important resource to help achieve the City's goal of increasing flood insurance enrollment on an annual basis. After participating in the programs offered through FloodHelpNY, 58 percent of uninsured individuals took out a flood insurance policy. The City is committing additional funding to support FloodHelpNY and its impacts on building flood risk and flood insurance awareness.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Advocate for more affordable flood insurance**

Flood insurance is an important financial tool to support households' repair needs after a flood. Traditional homeowner and renter insurance policies do not cover flood damage and federal disaster assistance is never guaranteed. Following Hurricane Sandy, homeowners with flood insurance received an average payment of \$68,000. By contrast, federal disaster assistance through FEMA Individual Assistance only provided an average of \$3,685 per household. Over the past decade, federal changes to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) have caused flood insurance premiums to rise for many New Yorkers. The City will continue to advocate for federal legislative reforms to the NFIP, including a means-tested affordability program, to ensure flood insurance remains accessible for the households that need it the most.

## **Leverage working knowledge of climate resiliency needs to inform housing design and development**

With 520 miles of coastline and a broad range of housing types, New York City faces a continuous need to adapt to sea level rise and the other impacts of climate change. The Adams administration will help communities prepare for these changes through climate-informed land use planning, resilient housing construction and design, and support for voluntary housing mobility.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Apply the Coastal Land Use Framework to guide investments in housing on the waterfront**

New York City will advance a resilient land use strategy to guide growth and investments taking into account the risks communities face in a changing climate. As outlined in the 2021 Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, the Coastal Land Use Framework includes three major strategies for managing residential densities along the 520-mile waterfront. In waterfront areas where buildings and public infrastructure can be adapted to withstand flooding,

the City will support investments at currently permitted residential densities, along with resilient design improvements, flood retrofits, and sound waterfront asset management. We will increase residential densities and prioritize housing investment in areas where new development will help address housing needs, while also achieving a higher standard of resiliency. Finally, the City will limit future residential densities in highly vulnerable or isolated waterfront areas.

Affordable housing investments citywide will be evaluated alongside climate risk and energy cost burden information. Investments will be strategically targeted to encourage housing production in areas that can support additional density. These include neighborhoods that are receiving resiliency and sustainability improvements to support a growing population, such as drainage, heat mitigation, flood protection infrastructure, and distributed energy resources like solar, storage, and microgrids.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Embed design principles for climate resiliency and health into all affordable housing projects**

Current building codes do not require buildings to be designed to withstand future climate conditions such as increased heat and flooding – risks that have outsized impacts on already under resourced communities. Climate resilient design helps minimize structural damage during extreme weather events and enables buildings to recover from them more quickly.

The City is advancing strategies to incorporate climate risk information into building codes and design guidelines, alongside sustainability and efficiency standards. Resilient design principles account for both current and future climate risks and will enable most of our housing stock to remain safe and healthy even as flood and heat risk increase. Building from MOCEJ's Climate Resiliency Design Pilot, HPD will embed risk-specific resilient design criteria into its Design Guidelines for New Construction and build resiliency screenings and recommendations into needs assessments for retrofits. These strategies will facilitate the long-term safety of residents and buildings while providing other benefits like energy efficiency, improved occupant health, and access to critical amenities like broadband and cooling.

### **Expand capacity for equitable post-disaster housing recovery**

New Yorkers across the five boroughs are still recovering from two climate-related disasters—Hurricane Sandy in 2012 and Hurricane Ida in August 2021. These disasters have underscored the important role that post-disaster housing recovery plays, particularly for underserved communities, as they repair and rebuild their homes or seek housing mobility options. Through a partnership across multiple city agencies—including HPD, HRO, NYCEM, DEP, and MOCEJ—the City will explore ways to build this capacity and improve the stability, sustainability, and resiliency of our housing in the face of extreme weather.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Explore pathways to voluntary housing mobility for homeowners and renters in areas that experience chronic flooding**

The City is actively pursuing federal resources to develop programs and services that support equitable, voluntary housing mobility for New Yorkers living in areas with high flood risk and

whose homes experience chronic flooding. Our goals are to limit and prevent involuntary long-term displacement caused by flooding, and to equip homeowners and renters in flood-prone areas with the resources to plan and budget for a future move. Housing mobility services, as described in the 10-Year Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, will prioritize the needs of low- and moderate-income households. They will also reflect engagement with housing advocates and populations that disproportionately experience life-safety hazards caused by flooding, displacement risk, and housing discrimination.

The City will explore and evaluate a spectrum of housing mobility services that may include housing counseling, down payment assistance, rental assistance, real estate brokerage services, estate planning, and moving assistance. Housing mobility services will be complemented by resilient and sustainable planning and policies to meet housing needs.

### **Bolster community-based resiliency against extreme temperatures and other emergencies**

Community resiliency plays a critical role in reducing risk from extreme weather events. Nationwide and globally, communities with strong social networks are better able to withstand and recover from heat waves, hurricanes, and other disasters. Community networks with trusted messengers can also help reach vulnerable and socially isolated residents ahead of



extreme weather events through hyper-local emergency preparedness and amplification of City messaging. By checking in on New Yorkers before and during extreme weather events, we can prevent them from harming seniors, those with cardiovascular, respiratory, and mental health conditions, and people living in flood-vulnerable homes.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Expand Be a Buddy to create a Climate Resiliency Alumni Network**

The City will strengthen community networks by expanding Be a Buddy (BAB), a proven community-led social resiliency program that connects residents most vulnerable to the impacts of extreme weather with volunteers who provide wellness checks and connections to city services. The networks and social resiliency that BAB fosters also help keep residents safe during other types of crises. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, BAB networks checked in on enrolled residents and provided critical information on food, technology, mental health services and other free resources provided by the City. The City will expand BAB into new communities by partnering with community-based organizations (CBOs) and

houses of worship, while also supporting existing CBOs in the BAB network through the development of a Climate Resiliency Alumni Network.

### 3. Create healthier and more sustainable homes

New York City is committed to reducing carbon emissions to help mitigate the impacts of climate change. Buildings are the city's largest source of emissions, and a key sector that must be addressed to reach our goal of carbon neutrality by 2050. More efficient buildings can also reduce energy costs for residents, improve indoor air quality, and increase thermal comfort.

In 2019, New York City passed a first-of-its kind law that requires large building owners to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from building operations (Local Law 97). This is backed by the State's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), which will put New York State on a path to reach economy-wide carbon neutrality by 2050, including a zero-emission electrical grid by 2040. The Adams administration will prioritize the development and rollout of new technologies and financing options to help property owners meet these ambitious goals in a timely, equitable manner.

#### **Fast-track equitable decarbonization and beneficial electrification to serve low-income households**

We must ensure that the transition from a fossil-fueled economy is fair and equitable. Reaching New York City's ambitious climate targets while meeting our environmental justice goals will require significant investments in our housing stock, including scaling up beneficial electrification. Beneficial electrification reduces building emissions without creating additional costs for residents, and without stretching the energy grid in ways that may increase pollution and other environmental burdens in communities already disproportionately impacted by climate change.

Our administration will fast-track beneficial electrification in both existing and new residential buildings by replacing fossil-fueled heating systems and appliances with highly efficient, low-carbon technologies like heat pumps. In addition to improving building sustainability, such changes can provide healthier living conditions for residents. For example, the replacement of gas cooking with electrical appliances can reduce asthma triggers and improve indoor air quality. Electrification of heating and hot water contributes to improved outdoor air quality.

HPD will release new Sustainable Design Guidelines that leverage these practices and tools to create a clear and equitable pathway to decarbonization in both new and existing affordable housing. The guidelines will establish mandatory baseline criteria for efficiency, resiliency, and health, as well as higher, optional thresholds for owners who want to make their buildings even healthier and more sustainable in the long term. Electrification will be mandated where it is the most beneficial and the most feasible – including in new construction projects subject to green performance standards, as well as certain preservation projects and retrofits. Together, these requirements will shape our affordable housing to meet decarbonization goals while benefiting residents through lower energy costs, healthier living conditions, greater thermal comfort, and more sustainable homes.

## **SPOTLIGHT: Incubate new ideas to scale beneficial electrification**

Working with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), the NYC Accelerator, and other partners, the City will execute pilots and programs to scale up capacity for beneficial electrification in multifamily housing. Through its \$24 million Retrofit Electrification Pilot, HPD is funding and overseeing the electrification of more than 1,200 units of affordable housing by 2025 while building agency and stakeholder capacity around electrification. ElectrifyNYC is a partnership between the Mayor's Office, NYSERDA, and local community partners to promote air-source heat pump retrofits across Staten Island and Queens, while supporting heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) workforce efforts. This summer, NYCHA will award the winning proposal of Clean Heat for All, a design challenge hosted by NYCHA, the New York Power Authority (NYPA), and NYSERDA through which manufacturers are competing to design an air-source heat pump that can be easily and affordably installed in a window frame. Clean Heat for All will facilitate the replacement of obsolete combustion heating systems in roughly 8,000 NYCHA units and bring a new, cost-effective window heat pump to market. This product will be a game-changing electrification solution for multifamily buildings citywide.

The City will use existing and forthcoming pilots to incubate new ideas, test strategies, identify funding, and develop best practices for beneficial electrification in multifamily housing. These efforts will inform HPD's forthcoming Sustainable Design Guidelines and other initiatives to drive electrification on a citywide scale.

## **SPOTLIGHT: Leverage the NYC Accelerator to jumpstart compliance with LL97**

The NYC Accelerator program provides resources, training, and one-on-one expert guidance to help New York City building owners and industry professionals improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions from buildings over 5,000 square feet. The program is free to building stakeholders and seeks to build momentum for lasting transformational effects and climate action across the five boroughs.

NYC Accelerator also serves a valuable advisory role in helping building owners and developers understand climate-related local laws and identify actionable upgrades that will help them comply with Local Law 97 (LL97), reduce carbon emissions, save money, improve energy efficiency, create economic opportunity, and improve the health and well-being of New Yorkers. Ensuring that building stakeholders have access to clear guidance on local law requirements, and confidence in the available pathways to meet them, is critical to the long-term success of LL97.

## **SPOTLIGHT: Scale up geothermal heating systems in affordable housing**

Similar to other heat pumps, geothermal heat pumps can help replace fuel oil and natural gas to transform how the city heats and cools its one million buildings. Geothermal heat pumps use the constant temperature of the ground to provide highly efficient, emissions-free heating and cooling. While often more expensive to install than other types of heat pumps, they require less electricity to run, reducing long-term operational costs and strengthening grid resiliency by reducing peak electricity demand.



As required by Local Law 6 of 2016, the City developed and published the NYC Geothermal Pre-Feasibility Tool, an online tool that allows users to identify areas where ground source heat pump systems may be an option for retrofitting buildings' heating and cooling systems. HPD has already funded several projects using this technology, with very promising results. Starting with the information compiled for the pre-feasibility tool, the City is evaluating locations for a demonstration project that would connect multiple

buildings to a single geothermal heat pump system, creating a “district” that relies on shared heat pump infrastructure to maximize environmental benefits. MOCEJ, NYCHA, and DCAS are working together to examine sites across the city where this may be technically and economically feasible, and where the most benefits to environmental justice communities would be achieved. NYCHA has identified at least nine housing developments with potential. Once the appropriate sites have been identified, the agencies will conduct feasibility studies at individual sites to guide the design and execution of the pilot.

### **Cultivate financing and public support to ensure that all multifamily buildings can meet near-term sustainability targets**

Multifamily buildings make up the largest sector of buildings subject to Local Law 97, and their compliance is critical to achieving New York City's climate goals. We must ensure that these buildings are able to meet near-term deadlines imposed by the law. Many buildings with affordable units will be subject to compliance as soon as 2024 or 2026, and market-rate buildings face deep greenhouse gas emissions limits in 2030. While large commercial properties may benefit from the NYC Accelerator Property Assessed Clean Energy Program (PACE), this innovative financing tool is often unable to work for multifamily residential buildings. The City will explore new ways to ensure that multifamily properties can receive the retrofits needed to meet near- and long-term sustainability goals. These may include working with lenders and other partners to create new financial products, partnering with the State to develop tax incentives, and more.

### **Implement zero carbon zoning**

Our zoning and building codes are not designed to accommodate the extensive retrofitting of existing buildings, or development of high-performing new buildings, needed to meet climate goals. DCP and partner agencies will clear a path to achieving these goals through the advancement of citywide zoning changes to eliminate impediments to decarbonization. For instance, Zero Carbon Zoning would increase the ability to cover rooftops with solar panels, provide distributed energy storage for a resilient grid, retrofit exterior walls, and provide public charging facilities for electric vehicles. These changes will support innovation in new buildings and the adoption of sustainable practices at scale.



### **Make better use of state and federal funds**

The federal government is making significant investments in the ability of states and localities to become more sustainable and resilient in the face of climate change. To make better use of these resources, the City needs to continue building capacity to help agencies and the private sector access and layer federal and state grants. To achieve this, the City is facilitating coordination between agencies to identify all funding opportunities in the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to support city goals.

In addition, we will continue to partner with the State to meet our common goals. New York State recently committed to achieving two million climate-friendly, electrified or electric-ready homes by 2030. Successful electrification in New York City will be essential to meeting these goals. We will work closely with New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) and NYSERDA to expand access to the State's Weatherization Assistance Program and drive other funding sources and incentives to our housing stock.

# Chapter 5: Reduce Administrative Burden



## Chapter 5: Reduce Administrative Burden

The city's decades-long housing crisis requires policies that respond with urgency and help New Yorkers secure safe, quality housing as quickly as possible. Yet access to public assistance, rental subsidy vouchers, and affordable units often requires long and onerous processes involving extensive paperwork, in-person appointments, and valuable time that people facing housing instability or homelessness simply do not have. Applicants are often asked to repeatedly verify basic facts about their identity and eligibility for benefits to multiple government agencies. Households may be required to provide information that they do not have access to or is difficult and stressful to obtain. While many of these barriers are designed to weed out ineligible people and prevent fraud, others reflect a lack of interagency coordination, investment in technology, and user-centric program design. These burdens have a very real cost for New Yorkers in need, causing families experiencing homelessness to live in shelter for longer and allowing scarce affordable housing resources to sit vacant for months.

The Adams administration has made it a top priority to change this dynamic by designing systems and services to fit the needs and experience of residents, rather than the internal bureaucracy of government. We must make it easier for New Yorkers to access the help they need, especially during times of crisis. This is not only beneficial to residents, but it maximizes and accelerates the impact of the housing, services, and assistance the City provides. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, city agencies automated or suspended various process steps to make accessing resources less onerous. Those changes can now guide additional reforms to streamline access to the social safety net by shedding aspects of current procedures that are duplicative, unnecessary, or do not serve our goals.

Previous housing plans for New York City have centered primarily around production targets for affordable units. However, our residents, communities, and industry partners alike have made it clear that this approach is lacking. Housing production is critical, and the Adams administration will continue to invest in the creation and preservation of affordable housing to grow the supply of options available to low-income New Yorkers. But we will also recalibrate how we manage and measure the success of those investments to prioritize impacts on residents over

operational benchmarks. This new approach will hold us accountable for delivering – not just creating – housing and services, and at a lower cost to residents' time and effort.

This chapter describes near-term fixes that our administration is making as first steps in the process to overhaul our approach to housing policy and reduce administrative burden. It also lays out the long-term processes and milestones



needed to embed these changes at the systematic and structural level. Through this two-pronged approach, the City will create more efficient, effective, and equitable processes to deliver the housing and assistance that New Yorkers need and deserve.

### **Eliminate the Absent Parent Form**

Households applying for a Section 8 voucher through HPD are currently required to fill out the Absent Parent Form as part of the application process. This form requires applicants to list detailed personal, contact, and income information for the parents of any children in the household who will not be residing with them in the apartment. While this form is designed to enhance fraud prevention, it comes at a heavy price, placing undue stigma and burden onto single parents and their children and potentially putting their safety at risk. In instances where an “absent parent” committed abuse, obtaining and providing the required information may alert the abuser to the household’s location or bring up painful and traumatic memories. This summer, HPD is eliminating the Absent Parent Form as a first step towards improving the Section 8 process to reduce administrative burden, stress, and trauma for households.

### **Overhaul Section 8 technology at HPD**

During the height of COVID-19, HPD introduced a number of improvements to the Section 8 application and recertification process to reduce the amount of paperwork wherever possible and limit the use of in-person meetings. While these changes were made in response to pandemic-related constraints, they remain beneficial in other circumstances. Paperwork that must be printed and filled out requires access to a printer and scanner, which many New Yorkers do not have at home. In-person meetings can force residents to commute long distances, pay for childcare, and take time off work.

HPD is now seeking permanent changes to the Section 8 application and recertification process to improve transparency and efficiency to benefit clients. HPD will overhaul its Section 8 technology systems and digitize many core aspects of the process to facilitate increased convenience, access, and ease. With new client-facing portals, the use of digital case files, and workflow management to keep cases moving, HPD will make it easier and less stressful for households in need to apply for Section 8 rental assistance.

### **Move the NYCHA Section 8 briefing online**

In May 2022, NYCHA stopped requiring a phone briefing for recipients of Section 8 vouchers, significantly reducing the time it takes to get these New Yorkers the help they need. HUD requires that households receiving Section 8 vouchers be given a briefing on their rights and responsibilities. Previously, households had to meet this requirement through an inefficient phone system that left residents on hold for long periods of time and forced them to schedule appointments several weeks in advance. One missed call meant that residents had to reschedule their appointment, further delaying the process by several weeks.

In the new system, residents can meet HUD’s briefing requirements by watching a pre-recorded video online and attending optional weekly office hours. This change is expected to reduce the time it takes for households to receive a Section 8 voucher from NYCHA by weeks. It also creates more flexibility for residents to be briefed on a timeline that fits their schedule – and gives them a resource to refer back to later.

This modernization was made to accelerate the issuance of Section 8 Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) allocated as part of federal COVID response. NYCHA is using the EHV program to test new ways to reduce the high administrative burdens of the Section 8 program overall and will continue making improvements wherever possible.

### **Eliminate the use of clinical evaluations as a barrier to supportive housing**

New Yorkers seeking supportive housing must complete a series of eligibility assessments, including a clinical evaluation designed to ensure that their needs are severe enough to qualify for a unit. The prospective tenant must meet with a licensed mental health professional – often one who they have never met before – and spend several hours on this assessment, at a time when mental health professionals are not always readily available. While eligibility for most supportive housing requires a client to have received one or more specific diagnoses, there are often other administrative data sources that can confirm the psychiatric history of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, as well as psychosocial assessments that focus on how their mental health condition affects function and social interaction, including the range and intensity of supports to remain stably housed. While an ongoing therapeutic relationship with a psychologist, psychiatrist, or other mental health professional is key to mental health, extra assessments and appointments are not – and certainly not as a precondition for housing. The Adams administration will eliminate the requirement for clinical evaluations in cases where other information is available to assess supportive housing eligibility, while ensuring that supportive housing tenants have the psychosocial support team they need.

### **Implement a back-end audit for income verification in the affordable housing lottery**

More than half of affordable housing units take longer than six months to rent up. This means that households in need are staying in shelter, doubled-up living arrangements, low-quality housing, and other untenable conditions for months longer than is necessary. Creating and preserving affordable housing is not enough. We must also ensure that New Yorkers can access these critical resources in their time of need.

The Chief Housing Officer, HPD, and HDC will work together to streamline the application and lease-up processes for affordable housing. HPD and HDC have already eliminated agency review of income eligibility in some projects and units. The agencies no longer review income eligibility in cases where a third party also conducts file review (as is the case for some projects receiving federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits), or where households apply with a tenant-based subsidy to a non-federally funded unit. Building on this progress, HPD and HDC will implement an audit-based system for the remainder of the affordable housing portfolio. The agencies will randomly select a share of households for whom income eligibility information will be reviewed. Households will be able to move in sooner, without waiting for their income eligibility to be confirmed first. The City will invest in technological enhancements to Housing Connect to facilitate this new approach.

### **Revamp the MMR to include more people-focused metrics**

The Mayor's Management Report (MMR) is the centralized system the City of New York uses to publicly measure agency performance and track progress over time. The MMR, like the City's housing plan, has historically focused on the number of affordable units created or preserved to



capture the impacts of housing policy. This is an important metric, but it only tells part of the story.

The Adams administration is prioritizing the impacts of our housing investments on residents over internal operational benchmarks. The Chief Housing Officer will implement new metrics in the forthcoming MMR that reflect this approach and drive the agencies to execute it. Among other key indicators, we will measure the amount of time that it takes for New Yorkers to move into new affordable housing. In collaboration with the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, we will also institute new metrics that help the housing and homelessness agencies work together towards common goals.

### **Evaluate the administrative burden of social safety net programs related to housing**

To reduce the administrative burden associated with affordable housing and social safety net programs, we must first understand and evaluate the level of burden that currently exists. City agencies will work together to map the various processes associated with each program, evaluate the design and content of application materials and forms, and check program requirements against legal requirements. Through these evaluations, we will identify areas where administrative burdens could be reduced and the necessary steps to do so. Solutions may range from technological improvements to greater interagency coordination to clarifying or advocating for changes to state and federal rules.

### **Advocate for changes to state and federal rules to reform housing placements**

In some cases, City agencies can reduce administrative burdens through internal process and policy changes. In others, state and federal regulations and laws limit the amount of change that we can make and require collaboration with partners across all levels of government. Most of the city's affordable housing stock and social safety net is funded in part through state and/or federal resources that come with their own standards and requirements. The City will work closely with its state and federal partners to clarify interpretations of rules and amend regulations and laws where appropriate. Last year, President Biden issued an Executive Order calling on federal agencies to improve service delivery. Our administration will take full advantage of this opportunity to work collaboratively with our federal partners to align and streamline regulations, eliminate redundancies, and reduce administrative burden on housing applicants and residents.

*Photos courtesy of the Mayor's Office of the City of New York, HPD, NYCHA, DSS, DEP, and MOCEJ*



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