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MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES REVISED AFFORDABLE HOUSING LOTTERY RULES

Restrictions on the use of credit scores, personal assets and recognizing special challenges residents of homeless shelters face ensure that affordable housing reaches those New Yorkers most in need

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) Commissioner and Housing Development Corporation (HDC) Chair Vicki Been announced today a series of new affordable housing lottery rules designed to ensure that City-assisted affordable housing reaches the New Yorkers who need it most.

Important changes to the policies include ending developers and leasing agents' ability to deny applications based solely on credit scores; new standards for homeless shelter referrals to account for special challenges faced by these households; strictly limiting the ability of landlords to deny an applicant based only on their exercising due process rights in housing court; and imposing limits on personal assets.

“Every New Yorker deserves equal access to an affordable home, including veterans, the elderly and homeless individuals and families,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Disqualifications based solely on credit history, or because a tenant fought for his or her rights in housing court, have no place in our affordable housing programs. These key improvements to the rules level the playing field and give every household the chance to find a home within their means.”

The new *Marketing Handbook* can be found [here](#).

The requirements – the first updates to these guidelines since Housing Connect was launched in 2013 – address feedback received by applicants, affordable housing advocates, marketing agents and for-profit and not-for-profit developers about the City's affordable housing eligibility criteria and the application process. In response, HPD and HDC reviewed and revised the policies to make them fairer, more transparent and more effective at targeting affordable housing to those most in need.

“Under Housing New York, we are working not only to build and preserve housing for rent-burdened New Yorkers, but also to ensure that our housing is allocated fairly and efficiently. Through our new marketing policies and procedures, we’ve standardized the criteria developers can use to evaluate applicants, restricted the use of credit scores and housing court history to determine eligibility and limited personal assets, all to ensure that the affordable homes we build and preserve serve the New Yorkers who need them most,” said **Vicki Been, Commissioner of HPD and Chair of the Board for HDC.**

“New York City is home to almost one million people with disabilities,” said **Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities Commissioner Victor Calise.** “The release of this handbook marks great progress in ensuring that accessible and affordable homes are available to the families who need them.”

“All New Yorkers, regardless of their source of income, deserve equal access to safe, affordable housing. At the Department of Veterans’ Services, we’re especially concerned with ensuring veterans are not discriminated against because their primary source of income is their post-9/11 GI Bill. Under the Mayor’s new *Housing New York* policies and procedures, it is clear that landlords must rent to veterans as they would to any other New Yorker. DVS thanks our partners at HPD and HDC for working with us and the larger veteran community to explicitly include this protection of veterans in its new policies,” said **Commissioner of the Department of Veterans’ Services Loree Sutton.**

The new marketing policies are yet another way the City is delivering on the promises of *Housing New York*, Mayor de Blasio’s ten-year plan to create and preserve 200,000 affordable homes. With nearly 53,000 affordable homes financed under the plan to date, the new policies and procedures help to ensure that those new homes reach the New Yorkers they were designed to serve.

By standardizing all selection criteria, the new guidelines ensure that households who have the ability to pay rent and, by all other indicators, can be expected to be responsible tenants are not rejected solely on the basis of a low credit score, or solely because a tenant appeared in housing court.

The policies also promote greater language accessibility at all stages of the application process, require consistency in how developers and marketing agents communicate with applicants and apply credit criteria and other standards, and increase the transparency of the appeal process.

The new policies and procedures make the affordable housing application process more inclusive to reach New Yorkers most in need by:

- Standardizing and limiting use of credit and housing court history in the selection process so that applicants are treated consistently and fairly across all projects.
- Accounting for the special challenges residents of homeless shelters face in meeting eligibility criteria, including victims of domestic violence, to improve the chances that households will be placed in permanent housing.

- Clarifying how developers calculate income of applicants receiving government benefits, for example those receiving GI Bill or Section 8 benefits, to ensure consistency and forestall discrimination.
- Tightening guidelines to ensure those who qualify for affordable housing will use their new home as their primary residence.
- Requiring that interview locations be accessible and clearly marked, and that interviewers provide interpretation services, including American Sign Language.
- Ensuring developers' outreach and advertising efforts include diverse communities citywide.
- Reforming the appeal process to make the process more transparent.
- Revising interview standards to ensure more privacy and security of personal information.
- Prohibiting home visits, which are too subjective to be fair.

Developers are notified of the marketing policies and procedures before their affordable housing projects are financed, and are required to follow them to allocate units that become ready for occupancy. About 7 months before the construction project will be completed, developers must submit a marketing plan to the HPD or HDC marketing teams for approval. These plans must adhere to the policies described in the *Marketing Handbook*. Once HPD or HDC approves the marketing plan, the developer must advertise the availability of new affordable housing. Those advertisements and other outreach described in the marketing plans typically begin twenty-one to sixty days prior to the lottery application deadline.

Learn more about the affordable housing lottery process and about available housing lotteries by visiting the links below:

- For a summary of affordable housing resources visit: [How to Find Housing](#)
- Learn [What to Expect](#) when you apply
- Find out what happens [After you Apply](#)

All of the above webpages can be accessed through [HPD's website](#).

Since its 2013 launch, *NYC Housing Connect* has simplified the City's housing lottery process. The website allows New Yorkers to fill out a single online profile, which can be used to apply to multiple new housing lotteries. That profile can be saved and edited, eliminating the need to fill out individual paper applications for upcoming lotteries. HPD and HDC encourage people in need of affordable housing opportunities to take advantage of the convenient online application,

as application periods for new affordable housing lotteries open regularly. Because the City has shaped its programs to ensure that housing is available for people at a range of income levels, not all buildings provide housing at all income levels. However, applicants who are not income-eligible for one given development may be eligible for another.

Income eligibility standards are generally set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and contain strict rules about how income is calculated. For more information that will help with this portion of the application process please visit: [Applicant Income Guidelines](#)

The NYC Housing Connect website now serves Arabic, Simplified Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, and Spanish speakers. Each existing housing lottery advertisement and all upcoming lotteries are also available in each of the above listed languages. Translations were funded by Citi Community Development.

All registered applicants are notified via email when new lotteries are posted to the *NYC Housing Connect* site. Instructions on how to submit a paper application are also available, and listed in each housing lottery advertisement. Applicants may not submit both a paper application and a web application for the same project. Duplicate applications may be disqualified, as an applicant can only apply once to any given development.

Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez said, “Discrimination in housing based on credit score is unacceptable and this new policy will make the public housing lottery fairer and more equitable. I appreciate the steps the City is taking in this regard.”

State Senator Brad Hoylman said, "Affordable housing is the bedrock of our city. To blacklist families and deny them a decent home on the basis of credit history runs contrary to the purpose of housing lotteries and our most basic precepts of fairness. I applaud Mayor de Blasio and Housing Preservation and Development Commissioner Vicki Been for removing this unnecessary barrier to entry, which will go a long way toward making New York a more open and just city for countless individuals and families."

"Expanding access to affordable housing for those in greatest need is one of the most pressing issues in our city. No one should be excluded from housing opportunities because of they have bad credit, limited English or have fought for their rights in housing court. Today's announcement from Mayor de Blasio and his Administration is an important step in the right direction," said **State Senator Liz Krueger**.

State Senator James Sanders Jr. said, “These new guidelines open doors to affordable housing that were otherwise closed, and will have a positive impact on everyday working class people who are looking to put a roof over their heads. It will also assist the homeless, disabled and veterans. It is not uncommon for people to have to utilize shelter alternatives because a low credit score, housing court judgment or limited personal assets disqualified them from affordable housing lotteries. Now those who were previously shut out can have the same chance as those with greater financial means. I look forward to building on this foundation and working with the Mayor and my colleagues in government to continue to fight to increase the number of

affordable housing units that are available and to make sure they are filled by the people who need them most.”

“While the pool of those who currently qualify is overwhelming, this is the right thing to do and a good step in creating even more eligible applicants. I look forward to working on solutions to expand the available number of truly affordable units which are so desperately needed in New York City,” said **Assembly Member Keith L.T. Wright, Chair of the Committee on Housing.**

“I applaud Mayor de Blasio’s efforts to make affordable housing more accessible to some of our most vulnerable New Yorkers by eliminating unnecessary and discriminatory barriers,” said **Assembly Member Andrew D. Hevesi, Chair of the Committee on Social Services.**

“With so many New Yorkers struggling to find decent, affordable housing for themselves and their families, and with too many sliding into the abyss of homelessness for the lack of it, I call this a good step forward. All too often, I have experienced the city's long term housing problems and issues in meeting with beleaguered constituents seeking my help. At the same time, I also hope the City will work closely and supportively with developers and landlords, whose investments in this program are key to making affordable housing a reality,” said **Assembly Member Luis Sepulveda.**

“New Yorkers shouldn’t be blacklisted by landlords for fighting for their rights in housing court, and New Yorkers seeking affordable housing shouldn’t be summarily rejected solely on the basis of their credit history. By establishing fair, uniform standards, the de Blasio Administration is helping to the affordable housing application process more inclusive and equitable,” said **Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried.**

“The sad reality is that many in our society have no choice but to borrow above their means in emergencies to take care of their families,” said **Assembly Member Robert J. Rodriguez.** “This unfortunate predicament cannot preclude New Yorker’s from affordable housing. Today, Mayor de Blasio has taken a major step in ending the cycle of poverty that all too easily snares our most vulnerable. This revision brings us closer to creating a New York City with fair and equitable housing.”

“It is vital that we reassess the affordable housing process and increase access to those who are in dire need of it,” said **Assembly Member Diana C. Richardson.** “The new policies presented by Mayor de Blasio and Housing Preservation and Development’s Marketing Handbook help to increase transparency, protect applicant rights and consider the challenges many face in the eligibility process.”

“As so many New Yorker’s struggle with the burden of high rents, we must act decisively to preserve and protect existing affordable apartments and to develop new ones. We must also ensure that as we invest in affordable housing, these resources are distributed equitably. The policies announced today serve as a reminder that this effort is not merely about lowering rents for the lucky few, but also about a fundamental commitment to expanding opportunity for all. I thank Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Been for taking these important steps,” said **Assembly Member Brian Kavanagh.**

“I would like to commend the Mayor and his Administration for recognizing the need to revise the affordable housing lottery rules and criteria. This revision will allow a substantial number of working class New Yorker’s, who are most in need to now qualify for decent affordable housing, the necessary and real time opportunity to overcome the burdensome restrictions that are currently allowing landlords to deny applicants because of their credit score,” said **Assembly Member Walter T. Mosley**.

“If I’ve learned one thing in my years of public service, it’s that details matter, and nowhere is that more true than in the fight for affordable housing,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “It’s not enough to just build more affordable housing, we also need to make sure that when we do, we’ve dotted every ‘I’ and crossed every ‘t’ in these programs’ rules so they work in the real world for the New Yorkers who need them most.”

“This is a positive move in the right direction and will make way for many additional New Yorkers to permanent affordable housing. For some time, these are the changes advocates have worked to address to ensure greater affordable housing opportunities for families across this city,” said **Queens Borough President Melinda Katz**.

“We cannot fully address the City's housing crisis if there are barriers such as a person's credit score, and housing court history that prevents them from taking advantage of the affordable housing programs the City puts in place. These factors should not be sole determinants in when considering who is eligible for affordable housing programs; doing so would unnecessarily prevent the most vulnerable New Yorkers in moving forward,” said **Council Member Jumaane D. Williams, Chair of the Committee on Housing and Buildings**.

“Ensuring that every New Yorker has equal access to affordable housing is critical,” said **Council Member Mark Levine**. “Too often, circumstances such as unforeseen illnesses or layoffs due to a changing economy wreak havoc on a reliable tenant's credit history. People who have had tough times financially should not be blocked out of the housing market based solely on their credit scores. By ending this harmful practice, the HPD is creating a significantly fairer housing market by leveling the playing field between tenants and their landlords. I applaud the Mayor for his leadership on this issue, and look forward to seeing the positive effects this measure has in the near future.”

“Just as one's credit score shouldn't be a barrier to employment, neither should a negative credit or housing court history prevent anyone from applying for affordable housing. With the release of this handbook, our City is ensuring fairness in our lottery system, as well as expanding access to the affordable housing that New Yorker’s and their families need,” said **Council Member Margaret Chin**.

“All New Yorker’s deserve access to affordable housing,” said **Council Member Brad Lander**. “Poor credit scores are often outside of one’s control and disproportionately impact low-income communities of color in NYC. On top of that, about a quarter of them contains serious mistakes, and can’t even be considered a reliable source of information. I am pleased to hear that the City has restricted its use of credit scores in reviewing housing applications.”

“A major challenge our clients have faced during the affordable housing process is inconsistency in eligibility requirements, which can create confusion and frustration. HPD's Marketing Handbook is an excellent step in ensuring standardization in the rent-up process and the reforms made to the appeal process provides for much greater transparency," said **Chief Operating Officer of The Actors Fund, a national human service organization for everyone in performing arts and entertainment Barbara Davis**. “The Actors Fund is a member of HPD's Housing Ambassadors program which consists of community-based organizations and service providers who partner with HPD to ensure that people have access to up-to-date information and assistance with affordable housing applications.”

“As a housing ambassador who worked with HPD to develop a more just housing acceptance policy, MHANY applauds the City for expanding its criteria when screening potential tenants,” said **Executive Director of the Mutual Housing Association of New York Ismene Speliotis**. “It just makes sense to require all marketing and lease up agents to look beyond a credit score number, one blemish on a credit report or even one housing court situation. We must realize that, as stewards of the lease up process for publicly financed apartments, we have an obligation to house real people.”

“For too long, credit checks and the highly immoral 'landlord blacklist' have been obstacles that deny low-income New Yorker's access to decent housing,” said **Board Member of New York Communities for Change Norman Frazier**. “We support HPD's decision to amend its criteria and not solely rely on these often-discriminatory factors, making the lottery process more inclusive for those who are most in need of affordable housing.”

“In a city where the elderly, homeless, and new immigrant populations are struggling to find an affordable place to live, we welcome reforms that will open up the housing lottery and make the language more accessible to those who need it the most,” said **Executive Director of Woodside on the Move Amy T. Paul**.

“I think this is an excellent shift! The Mayor is looking at the challenges that renters face and is responding by making it easier for people to get affordable housing,” said **President of the 303 Vernon Ave. Tenant Association Vanessa Gumbs**.

“This is tremendous and timely. It comes at a time when New Yorker's need affordable housing more than ever. These changes will only improve New York City's homeless crisis,” said **President of the 654 - 716 Willoughby Ave. Block Association Yoland Harrell**.

“The world's great religious traditions share a concern for how societies treat their most vulnerable members. With these reforms addressing the needs of New Yorker's who require shelter and affordable housing, the de Blasio Administration makes itself a friend to people of good faith as well as good conscience across the economic spectrum,” said **Executive Director of Interfaith Center of New York Reverend Chloe Breyer**.

“The Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing is pleased to endorse the Administration's strengthening of the rules for the NYC Housing Connect Lotteries to ensure

that the thousands of below market rental housing units being made available over the coming years through the City's Housing Lottery will even more effectively and equitably address the special circumstances faced by the most housing challenged of our neighbors," said **Executive Director of Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing Marc Greenberg**.

"Credit scores should not determine the ability for a person to get affordable housing. HPD's changes in the criteria to the lottery system will expand the access to affordable housing and make the process of selection more equitable. ALIGN applauds this new criteria allowing for more New Yorker's the opportunity to enter into affordable housing," said **Deputy Director of ALIGN Maritza Silva-Farrell**.

"Enterprise commends the de Blasio Administration, HPD and HDC for their commitment to helping New York families find a place to call home. Our work with homeless families has taught us that overly stringent tenant selection criteria can be major obstacles to obtaining housing for vulnerable populations and people of color," said **Judi Kende, Vice President and New York Market Leader at Enterprise Community Partners**. "The consistent criteria in this new handbook will go a long way toward streamlining tenant selection for affordable housing, benefiting both applicants and housing providers through a more just and equitable process."

About the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD): HPD is the nation's largest municipal housing preservation and development agency. Its mission is to promote quality housing and diverse, thriving neighborhoods for New Yorkers through loan and development programs for new affordable housing, preservation of the affordability of the existing housing stock, enforcement of housing quality standards, and educational programs for tenants and building owners. HPD is tasked with fulfilling Mayor de Blasio's Housing New York: A Five-Borough Ten-Year Plan to create and preserve 200,000 affordable units for New Yorkers at the very lowest incomes to those in the middle class. For more information visit www.nyc.gov/hpd and for regular updates on HPD news and services, connect with us via www.facebook.com/nychousing and [@nychousing](https://twitter.com/nychousing).

About the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC): HDC is the nation's largest municipal Housing Finance Agency and is charged with helping to finance the creation or preservation of affordable housing under Mayor Bill de Blasio's Housing New York plan. Since 2003, HDC has financed more than 120,000 housing units using over \$13.7 billion in bonds, and provided in excess of \$1.6 billion in subsidy from corporate reserves. HDC ranks among the nation's top issuers of mortgage revenue bonds for affordable multi-family housing on Thomson Reuter's annual list of multi-family bond issuers. In each of the last four consecutive years, HDC's annual bond issuance has surpassed \$1 billion. For additional information, visit: <http://www.nychdc.com>.

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