

TESTIMONY FOR NYCHA BOARD MEMBER MARGARITA LÓPEZ

NYCHA'S GREEN AGENDA AND ENERGY POLICY

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 2010 – 10:00 AM

CITY COUNCIL HEARING ROOM, 250 BROADWAY, 14TH FLOOR

Chairwoman Rosie Mendez, distinguished members of the Public Housing Committee, and to all the members of the City Council — Good morning. I am Commissioner Margarita López, Member of the New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA) Board. And joining me this morning are Cristiana Fragola, Deputy Director of Strategic Initiatives and Felix Lam, NYCHA's Chief Financial Officer.

It is my pleasure to be with you today to illustrate the progressive environmental path that NYCHA is forging. As a result, NYCHA is challenging

communities within New York City and across the country to create a greener, more sustainable future for our communities.

Meeting the Mayor's Challenge

Three years ago, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg launched a bold, innovative strategy for creating a more livable metropolis for all New Yorkers called PlanNYC 2030. Focusing on the five key dimensions of the City's environment—land, air, water, energy, and transportation—the Mayor's plan has become a model for cities in the 21st century.

As home to nearly half a million New Yorkers, representing an estimated five percent of the City's population, NYCHA is a critical partner in fulfilling the Mayor's long-term vision of developing

sustainable environments, energy efficient homes and jobs for the emerging green economy.

In 2007—because of the Authority’s critical role in implementing an integrated strategy to meet the City’s environmental challenges—Mayor Bloomberg asked me to serve as NYCHA’s Environmental Coordinator.

As the Environmental Coordinator, I mobilized the Board in November 2007 to establish the Authority’s Energy Management and Environmental Sustainability Committee (“Green Committee”) in collaboration with NYCHA’s senior management team. Since that time, we have developed and implemented a Green Agenda to reduce the Authority’s carbon footprint, lower energy and utility consumption, conserve resources, engage residents in

adopting low-carbon lifestyles, and help to preserve public housing for the future.

Much like the Mayor's PlaNYC, NYCHA's Green Agenda is an integrated initiative that focuses on creating sustainable communities from the ground up, working hand in hand with residents, public service partners and key stakeholders in the private sector.

As Chairman John B. Rhea often says, at NYCHA we believe deeply in collaboration and the power of partnerships. To that end, we have an on-going strategic alliance with the Clinton Climate Initiative and with PlaNYC; we forge partnerships with key stakeholders in the environmental, development, and energy efficiency sectors on a project by project basis; and we stay in constant conversation with our chief stakeholder—NYCHA residents. We know that only

by empowering NYCHA families and bringing our partners across the City together in the “greening movement,” can we achieve the ambitious goals the Mayor has set for reducing New York City’s carbon footprint, fostering a long-term framework for energy efficient public housing, and creating needed jobs for New Yorkers, and particularly NYCHA residents, in the new Green Economy.

An Integrated Agenda

NYCHA’s Green Agenda is built on a six pillar foundation. Five of these pillars: 1) Energy; 2) Water; 3) Waste; 4) Green Space; and 5) Resilience/ Emergency Preparedness, link to the Green Agenda’s sixth and central pillar—Green Jobs and Empowerment.

At each step in the process, since we first established the Green Committee in 2007, we have remained focused on sustainable development, which means development that both conserves resources and generates revenue. Sustainable development is secure development—before we can improve our systems (for access to clean water, heat delivery, trash and waste removal, or lighting), we must first ensure those systems work properly. Before we can convince our residents to lead greener lives, we must make clear the personal and social benefits of “going green,” and we must understand that any efforts at environmental education are most able to take root and to succeed if the residents feel secure—if they have a job and are able to provide for their families; and if they know

that NYCHA is working with them each and every step of the way.

Green planning is integrated planning and must be implemented at every level—carefully, systematically and consistently. Already, NYCHA has implemented several substantive energy conservation and efficiency measures. Our mission is to improve service to our residents, increase Authority-wide productivity, and boost long-term financial savings, ultimately reducing NYCHA’s carbon footprint and its negative impact on the environment.

NYCHA Goes Green: 2007 to Present

NYCHA manages a utility budget of more than half a billion dollars—finding ways to increase our efficiency, while also improving our service to

residents is critical in achieving our Green Agenda goals. I would like to discuss several initiatives the Authority has implemented that, combined, make NYCHA a housing industry leader in environmentally-minded planning and development.

First, our heating system: few services that NYCHA provides are more discussed—by residents, by resident leaders, and by public servants than our heating system. NYCHA has 210 central heating plants that are managed using the Computerized Heating Automated System (CHAS), a powerful supervisory tool that enables housing managers and executives to monitor and control heating at the development from any internet-equipped computer, also known as “manage by exception.” Most importantly, CHAS allows NYCHA to optimize the

output of our heating facilities, contain energy costs and curtail carbon emissions.

We are also changing the way we heat the Authority's water. Water is one of nature's most precious resources. It is also one of the most expensive—to store, to transfer and to heat.

Fortunately, new technology is allowing NYCHA to cut our water management costs and improve our service to residents. We have installed 644 instantaneous hot water heaters that have brought the Authority a nine percent reduction in our water heating expenses. At Castle Hill Houses, we have installed six 500 horsepower-four pass energy efficient boilers—the first such boilers installed in the New York City region. At Rutgers Houses, we converted an inefficient high pressure steam heating

system with five individual boiler rooms at the five buildings, thereby reducing energy waste by having condensate returned and reused rather than being shunted to the City's sewer system. And NYCHA has installed one four pass energy efficient boiler at Brooklyn's Sheepshead Houses, and we plan to install four such boiler systems at Elliott Houses in Manhattan.

And we are changing the way we light the developments. Since 2007 NYCHA, in collaboration with Con Edison, has replaced 178,000 standard light bulbs with compact fluorescent energy saving lamps (CFLs) in 30,000 apartments saving the Authority 10 million watts of energy per year, or \$3.9 million. For our efforts, NYCHA was honored by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the

Department of Energy (DOE) with the ENERGY STAR Award for Excellence in Affordable Housing. The EPA and DOE cited NYCHA's "invaluable commitment and dedication to the ENERGY STAR program and providing energy efficient, affordable housing to an underserved population of the American public."

To date, NYCHA has installed Energy Star refrigerators in all of its developments and 900 Energy Star computers in its offices. And the Authority's procurement standard for apartments dictates that all new electric appliances are Energy Star rated and new plumbing materials have an EPA WaterSense rating.

Finally, we remain committed to creating and fostering Green Spaces. Since 2007, NYCHA has created 124 new gardens and planted 11,195 trees, in

partnership with the Mayor's MillionTreesNYC initiative.

The Green Agenda: 2010 and Beyond

One of the next key phases of our Green Agenda focuses on energy, efficiency and conservation.

NYCHA has recently submitted to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) an Energy Performance Contract (EPC) for final approval; and we will submit additional EPCs moving forward. By implementing in larger scale the energy conservation and efficiency measures we piloted since 2007, we estimate that this EPC will generate \$29 million annually and create at least 200 green collar jobs for NYCHA residents.

Just last year as part of our Green Agenda, NYCHA launched a Green Lecture series, where

environmental experts—from scientists to advocates—came to discuss key topics with NYCHA’s residents and staff.

Furthermore, as part of our resident engagement strategy, NYCHA is emphasizing environmental awareness in the developments by creating and mobilizing volunteer-based resident Green Committees. In less than seven months, with the help of eight *Volunteers in Service to America* (VISTAs), provided by NYC Service, we have created 32 Green Committees currently serving in approximately 10 percent of our developments. Each committee member signs a pledge committing to embrace a responsible, low-carbon lifestyle by switching to CFLs in their home, recycling, conserving water and taking

care of newly planted trees. To date, more than 800 residents have signed a Green Pledge.

And later this year, on April 22—as part of our Earth Day Celebration and round two of the Green Lecture Series—NYCHA will distribute to all Resident Green Committee members a user-friendly Green Guide with 40 “green tips” and a tool to help calculate their personal “green score.” The Green Guide was developed in response to the Green Committee’s interest in learning more about eco-friendly lifestyles.

The Big Picture

As I will demonstrate in my presentation, NYCHA’s Green Agenda is a comprehensive, systemic program designed to not only reduce the Authority’s greenhouse gas emissions and lower operating costs,

but also and more importantly, to preserve public housing and the planet for future generations.

It is about leading the way, not only in New York City but also nationwide, on the path to creating sustainable, environmentally friendly homes and communities for low and moderate income families.

It is about modern high efficiency boilers and instantaneous hot water heaters that improve our service to residents and save the Authority \$7.5 million annually. It is about new, energy efficient lighting and appliances that save an additional \$5.7 million a year. It is about reducing NYCHA's current carbon footprint of 1.4 million metric tons of greenhouse gases (GHGs) by taking measures to assist with the City's goal of achieving a 30 percent

reduction in New York City's annual greenhouse gas emissions below 2005 levels by 2030.

It is about educating and empowering our residents to lead greener lives in their homes and preparing them to fill the jobs of the green economy.

Conclusion

This is an exciting time. We have enthusiastic leadership from Mayor Bloomberg and from Chairman Rhea. We have experienced partners willing and ready to collaborate with us in the City Council and at our sister Agencies. From our partners in the private sector, we have their dedication to help us empower NYCHA families so that they can seize the opportunities of the new Green Economy. And we have renewed environmental leadership at the

Department of Housing and Urban Development and in the Obama White House to make these ambitious goals a reality.

I will walk you through the initiatives of the Green Agenda and the energy policies of NYCHA's plan— what it is; what it means to the families we serve; the steps we have taken and the accomplishments we have made to date in this large scale plan; and NYCHA's vision for a greener, more sustainable future for public housing and for all of New York City.

Thank you.