



## NEXT GENERATION NYCHA COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES FOR HOLMES TOWERS



*This Summary presents the results of the Holmes Towers' Community Visioning Sessions and meetings with Community stakeholders. It identifies critical needs, clear preferences, and desirable solutions for the new building, existing development, and overall community. As a community-driven process, it is built upon the ideas, desires, and expectations expressed by participants in these sessions.*

NextGeneration NYCHA is a long-term strategic plan that will create safe, clean, and connected communities for its residents and preserve New York City's public housing assets for the next generation. One strategy from the plan is the NextGen Neighborhoods program, which is NYCHA's program to build 50 percent affordable and 50 percent market-rate housing on underutilized land at NYCHA developments. The program will generate revenue to help repair existing public housing while creating affordable apartments for households below 60% Area Median Income (AMI).

In the fall of 2015, NYCHA started the conversation about NextGen Neighborhoods with the residents of Holmes Towers and members of the community through a series of resident engagement sessions. The sessions explained the development process, identified resident questions and concerns, and began to shape the possible benefits and outcomes of the NextGen Program at Holmes Towers. In February of 2016, NYCHA offered two days of visioning sessions with the residents of Holmes Towers. At these sessions, NYCHA described the possible locations for new buildings, discussed the pros and cons of each option, prioritized resident preferences for added amenities, and explained how the feedback from these sessions could help shape the Request for Proposals (RFP).

### VISIONING SESSIONS

The format was a series of roundtable meetings which included various group activities designed to understand the strengths and opportunities of the existing development, and pinpoint potential benefits from the NextGen Neighborhoods program at Holmes Towers. Holmes Towers Residents participated in various activities designed to solicit input and feedback, including:

- A community mapping exercise to help residents identify issues and potential improvements;
- Identifying and prioritizing residents' ideas for improvements to outdoor space and the addition of new outdoor amenities;
- Identifying and prioritizing residents' ideas for possible programs in the proposed community facilities;
- Exploring the possible locations, and corresponding heights, of the new building at Holmes Towers and developing group consensus around which site is preferred.

Although opinions differed on certain issues, the findings contained in this summary should be understood as the preferences for which either a clear majority of residents were in favor, or a general agreement was reached amongst residents. As will be stated in the RFP, preference will be given to proposals that align with these findings, which add to the full range of criteria to be clearly stated in the RFP. The preferences expressed in these findings fall into two general categories by which proposals submitted in response to the RFP will be evaluated: 1) Quality of Building & Urban Design; and 2) Program.

### QUALITY OF BUILDING & URBAN DESIGN

Holmes Towers is located in a vibrant and growing community, and many residents expressed that one of the best parts of living there is the neighborly atmosphere and sense of safety and security. The development enjoys two main communal areas, the park and the playground, as well as a number of seating areas in front of the two buildings which are used regularly by the growing senior population at Holmes Towers.

After reviewing all of the potential building locations, a majority of residents agreed that they preferred the site, along 92<sup>nd</sup> Street between the two existing buildings, because it would impair the fewest number of views, it would require the building of a brand new playground, and would foster a sense of community between the residents of the new building and the current residents. Many residents also made note that the larger area at this site would allow for a shorter building than would be required at either of the alternate locations, and would feel less overwhelming in relation to the surrounding buildings.

## **BUILDING DESIGN & MASSING PREFERENCES**

A clear preference was stated by the residents in favor of any new buildings that kept the context of the immediate surrounding neighborhood and complimented the character of the existing buildings. Residents also commented that any new building should be designed in such a way so as to enhance the existing site and not detract from it, specifically by minimizing the amount of shadows cast on the existing buildings, maximizing the amount of natural light to the existing buildings, and preserving as much of the natural breezes enjoyed by the current residents as possible. Views of the East River are highly valued and enjoyed by residents at Holmes and they stressed the importance of maintaining those views.

## **URBAN & SITE DESIGN PREFERENCES**

Residents were in favor of Site design that strengthens the sense of community through enhanced common spaces. Residents also wanted to ensure that the new playground would be built before the old playground is removed to make way for the new building.

## **OUTDOOR AMENITY PREFERENCES**

During the table-based group activities, residents identified and prioritized the following outdoor amenity preferences as part of any site improvements, which would be accessible to both new and existing members of the Holmes Towers community:

- Improved seating areas
- Improved gardening areas
- Enhanced security and improved lighting
- Parking
- Improved playground

## **PROGRAM**

Residents felt like their neighborhood was fairly well equipped with existing amenities, but they wanted the community facility space to exist as something that could benefit residents from Holmes Towers as well as the residents of the new building. Facilitators walked through the list of building programming ideas that were generated in fall visioning sessions. Resident preferences for programs to be featured in any Community Facilities are as follows:

## **COMMUNITY FACILITY PREFERENCES**

- Affordable gym or fitness center
- Healthcare facility
- Small Business Incubator & Vocational Training Program
- Community Legal Services
- Cultural Center

## **ADDITIONAL CONCERNS & CONSIDERATIONS**

In addition to preferences and concerns specifically related to Quality of Building & Urban Design and to Program, residents expressed some general concerns and preferences for the overall development process.

## **SAFETY & SECURITY**

Holmes Towers residents expressed concerns regarding safety in their buildings, on their development, and around their neighborhood; to address these concerns, residents suggested that proposals include improved security and better lighting. Residents were also sensitive to quality of life issues for children during, and after construction; to address these concerns, residents suggested construction staging strategies that would minimize disruption to playground access and safe routes to school, as well as identifying any extra precautions.

## **AFFORDABILITY**

Residents were also in favor of proposals that include both deep-affordability, and long-term affordability, for the non-market-rate units.

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