

TESTIMONY FROM EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS CARLOS G. LABOY-DIAZ
THE NYPD'S OPERATION CREW CUT AND CRIME REDUCTION STRATEGIES FOR NYCHA
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING WITH THE COMMITTEES ON JUVENILE JUSTICE AND
PUBLIC SAFETY
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Chairman Ritchie Torres, Chairman Fernando Cabrera, Chairwoman Vanessa Gibson; members of the Committees on Public Housing, Juvenile Justice, and Public Safety; and other distinguished members of the City Council, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA) efforts to enhance the security of our public housing communities. I am Carlos G. Laboy-Diaz, Executive Vice President for Operations.

Making public housing more secure for our residents and communities is one of our highest priorities –nothing is more important to us than their safety. We know that the security of our developments is essential for the health, stability, and quality of life of NYCHA families. This afternoon, I will describe our work in collaboration with our partners to accomplish this very important objective.

Our Focus on Safety and Security

Realizing that security requires a multi-layered, holistic approach, the Authority's strategy for reducing crime focuses on "*People, Places, and Buildings.*" Because safety is everyone's responsibility, we work with all our stakeholders –especially NYCHA residents, the New York City Police Department (NYPD), the District Attorney's Office, community-based organizations, the City Council, and other City and State agencies – to address safety and security issues through a collaborative approach. Chair Olatoye and General Manager House met with Chief Gomez soon after his appointment to kick off what we know will be a close and productive partnership between NYCHA and the NYPD.

People

In 2009, we formed NYCHA's Safety and Security Task Force, which involved a core group of stakeholders such as residents, the Citywide Council of Presidents (CCOP), NYCHA management, and NYPD senior leadership. The Task Force worked to strengthen relationships among community stakeholders. It produced a detailed report which details our efforts to improve physical security infrastructure; deter crime; and discourage and remedy "evidence of disorder" such as broken doors and other vandalism which can lead to more serious crime. For instance, the Task Force's recommendations guide our layered access approach to building security. The Task Force also engaged residents to more proactively address violence in their communities and provided them with useful resources such as standardized signage on NYCHA rules. The Task Force has successfully obtained funding and support from the Office of the Mayor, the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor, the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, and the New York County District Attorney's Community Affairs Unit. The Task Force's findings informed the development of *Plan NYCHA*, our roadmap for the preservation of public housing, which features the improvement of safety and security as one of its key imperatives.

Part of our commitment to providing safe, secure housing for residents involves routinely following up on police actions using Termination of Tenancy procedures. If it appears that a tenant or a member of the household has engaged in certain non-desirable or criminal activities, development management will initiate a Termination of Tenancy Proceeding. In specific circumstances, NYCHA may exclude an offending member from the tenant's apartment, which allows the tenant to preserve his or her tenancy while protecting other residents. This also keeps a family from becoming homeless when the head of household is not involved in criminal activity. In 2013, NYCHA excluded offenders from 330 households, terminated 73 tenancies, and placed 40 tenancies on probation in connection with criminal offenses. In the first quarter of 2014, NYCHA excluded offenders from 93 households, terminated 22 tenancies, and placed 7 tenancies

on probation in connection with criminal offenses. Of course, recognizing that some families may need support and additional assistance to help them remain lease-compliant, stable, and productive, we also have procedures for referring residents to our Family Services Department, as needed.

Another way NYCHA helps residents in need of assistance is through a partnership with the NYPD to relocate families who are willing to cooperate with the NYPD or other law enforcement agencies in the prosecution of criminal cases against those who committed felony offenses that affected NYCHA, its employees, or residents. Since June 2011, 83 families have successfully transferred as part of this program. This cooperation with law enforcement is only possible because of the fact that the family is able to confidentially transfer within 24 hours to a different location.

NYCHA also works closely with the Crime Strategies Unit (CSU) of the New York County District Attorney's Office. By collecting and analyzing crime and quality of life data, together we have identified and developed crime reduction strategies. This includes partnering with CSU in their prosecution of gang cases and on their Saturday Night Lights violence reduction sports program at Polo, Johnson, and Corsi Houses. We conduct various recreational activities and mentorship programs with the District Attorney's Office and the NYPD, including the NYPD's Explorer and Cadet programs. The District Attorney's Office also works with us on relocating intimidated witnesses living in NYCHA developments.

Support from the non-profit and public sectors enables us to work toward reducing crime. We partner with "Cure Violence" organizations that assist high-risk individuals at NYCHA developments; through a grant from the New York Community Trust, we collaborate with them on education campaigns, community mobilization events, and youth empowerment workshops.

As the saying goes, "Nothing stops a bullet like a job." To that end, we are proud to host eight Jobs-Plus sites at 20 developments which have placed a total of 968

residents in jobs. In addition to getting connected to employment opportunities, Jobs-Plus participants experience an average earnings gain of 16 percent. However, Jobs-Plus is just one way NYCHA helps our residents obtain good jobs. Since 2011, we have hired 1,534 caretakers, including 970 residents. We hired 99 painter apprentices – most of whom are residents – with City Council funds. Through a variety of initiatives, we facilitated a total of more than 2,000 job placements for our residents in just the past year.

Places

The NYPD created “Impact Zones” at selected NYCHA developments, where increased police patrols help reduce and prevent serious crime. And we are currently drafting a proposal to implement place-based, community-oriented strategies that address crime in the Mott Haven neighborhood of the South Bronx. The Center for Court Innovation is conducting education campaigns and greening efforts which promote safety in specific areas of our developments.

In 2010, we revamped NYCHA’s Resident Watch, which evolved from a proud tradition of residents volunteering their time to enhance the safety and security of their communities. Volunteers trained by the NYPD and NYCHA help deter loitering, vandalism, and other criminal activity. There are currently more than 1,700 volunteers at a total of 113 developments in all five boroughs.

Buildings

As a landlord, NYCHA knows that good maintenance of our buildings and other infrastructure correlates to crime deterrence. That is why we expect that our successful efforts to increase the schedule of maintenance and repairs at developments will lead to a reduction in criminal activity. Well-maintained environments prevent vandalism from escalating into more serious crime. To that end, the Authority is committed to the faster removal of sidewalk sheds as part of a new, streamlined process for completing repairs. In 2013 alone, we

removed sheds at 188 buildings in 52 developments, a total of more than 15 miles of sheds. NYCHA continues to remove sheds as soon as construction at the developments is complete and is deconstructing sidewalk sheds that have remained in place long after completed work has finished. By the end of this year, we expect to remove another 15 miles of sheds. By the end of 2015, only sheds associated with active construction projects will be in place. Also, we are using the balance of NYCHA's 2014 payment to the NYPD to reduce the number of open work orders and improve service levels.

To improve the physical security of our developments, we have installed 10,810 security surveillance cameras of varying scale at 1,061 buildings in 196 developments citywide since 1997. 3,879 of those cameras were installed at 500 buildings since 2012 with City Council funding. Cameras enhance security for many families – more than 272,000 residents live in developments where cameras are installed. We expect to invest about \$27 million this year for cameras at about 50 developments. We also installed layered access controls – which means new intercoms and front door key fobs and hardware – at 63 buildings across 26 developments, enhancing security for more than 23,000 residents.

Since 2009, we completed six security-enhancing lighting improvement projects at our developments totaling about \$14 million. Another 10 projects are in progress or in the planning stage, including at Ravenswood Houses, where Majority Leader Jimmy Van Bramer helped secure \$1.5 million for state-of-the-art lighting upgrades that will better illuminate various areas of the development. I'd like to highlight the fact that assistance from the City Council – from project design to funding – has enabled these various security enhancements to come to fruition.

Conclusion

Although we commit all available resources and work with our partners to ensure the safety of NYCHA communities, we know that there is more that can and must

be done. For that reason, we continue to seek additional funding and support from our collaborators to realize our safety objectives. For instance, resources could fund Youth Peer Leadership Committees at our developments and curricula on life skills and positive behavior models at our community centers, expand the presence of “Cure Violence” organizations at our community centers, and augment our Resident Watch program. Thank you your continued assistance in promoting the safety and security of NYCHA families, employees, and visitors. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.