

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
AND BUILDINGS

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Chairperson

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COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to today's New York City Council hearing on the Committee on Housing and Buildings. At any point, no one may approach the dais during today's hearing. If you'd like to testify, please fill out one of the testimony slips in the back with the Sergeant at Arms. Please silence all electronic devices that you may have. Chair, you may begin.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: [gavel] Good morning. And first and foremost, my apologies for the tardy start. Everyone thank you so much for joining us. I'm Council Member Pierina Sanchez, Chair of the Committee on Housing and Buildings. Today, the City Council is holding a hearing, second hearing, on the topic of social housing, including a package of bills known as the Community Land Act. I would like to acknowledge my colleagues from the Council who are present, Council Members Hudson, Marte, Brewer, Nurse, Avilés, Restler, and Dinowitz on Zoom. New York City and municipalities across the United States are facing a dire housing crisis, not one that is felt equally by all New Yorkers or all those who call America home, but one with pain concentrated in low-income communities, communities

of color, and one that is felt by under-represented people like persons living with disabilities, sexual and gender minorities, religious minorities. That this pain is felt differentially is widely documented. It is a function of course of the history of this nation. Government and private sector policies like red-lining that devalue certain communities because they house people of color. Investments like the GI Bill and favorable mortgages that transfer no less than \$100 billion in 1950, \$1 trillion in 2025 dollars to white families in the post-war period at the exclusion of minority communities, and set the stage for white families to have an average net worth of \$188,000 across the country, while Black families have a median net worth of \$24,000 today, an eight-fold difference. To the lowest income New Yorker, being housing insecure means homelessness. This is 70 percent of the constituents who live in my district who are housing cost burdened. It means children forced to commute for hours from shelter in Queens perhaps to their school in a section of the Bronx, often time missing invaluable class time because of the long distances traveled, missing key moments with their school

1 friends. It means parents far from families and
2 social supports. It means community-level stress that
3 entire blocks and neighborhoods feel when their
4 apartments are falling apart, when heating isn't
5 sufficient, when there is mold and vermin everywhere,
6 when they look at their paychecks and their bills at
7 the end of the month and know full-well they will not
8 be able to make ends meet. And as we know, that
9 manifestation of community-level stress is
10 exacerbated by economic insecurity, food insecurity,
11 poor health outcomes, and even violence in some
12 communities. But it's not just the history of our
13 nation that causes this reality. Today, low-income
14 and working-class communities, communities of color
15 across the country are facing an unprecedented
16 federal assault. The Trump administration threatens
17 to put even more families on the street faster than
18 ever before, and while our city and state have made
19 strides and continue to work against the housing
20 crisis, increasing investments to build and preserve,
21 expanding traditional access to ownership and
22 increasing zoning capacity, we are falling short of
23 meeting this moment. Today's hearing is about
24 continuing the work toward a response to the housing
25

crisis that centers and solves for these stories and experiences. What exactly do we mean by social housing? As we explore this topic today, it is important to share an understanding. Simply put, social housing is housing built for the public good not as a product whose goal is simply to maximize profit. If we want to go deeper, we should. The Alliance for Housing Justice offers some basic principles: Housing that is socially owned by public entities, nonprofit organizations, community land trusts, or residents themselves-- in New York City, HDFC, Mitchell-Lama public housing. Housing that is permanently affordable at levels-- at deep levels of affordability, typically no more than 30 percent. Permanently de-commodified, meaning that the housing is removed from the speculative market and is managed without the goal of turning a profit. Under community control where residents in the broader neighborhood have some form of decision-making power through the democratic governing structures, anti-racists, and equitable with a goal of reversing a long history of harmful policy making, including red-lining, block-busting, urban renewal, and planned shrinkage. Sustainable so that social housing can be

resilient in the midst of not only a housing crisis, but a climate crisis as well. High-quality and affordable, built to meet the range of ages and abilities with robust maintenance to ensure a consistent state of good repair, and secure for tenants who are protected from landlord harassment and are able to live without fear of displacement. Promoting social housing in the U.S. is about shifting the housing paradigm. Bringing a discussion on housing solutions that does not leave out the vast majority of New Yorkers who are feeling the most pain, centering on ownership, protecting and growing the middle class, stabilizing our most vulnerable. Today, as we hear from our colleagues at HPD and agencies, I urge us not to only celebrate the work that we've done at the agency, but to ask ourselves what more can we do. What gap can this legislation fill, and how can it complement existing programs? I am excited to dive into each of these questions with you all today. Next, I'd like to turn to my colleagues who are having bills heard, bills that together contain-- create containers for truly deeply affordable housing in our city and community stability. Council Member Restler's Intro 78 would

require the City to prioritize not-for-profit developers and community land trusts when disposing of city land for affordable housing. Council Member Nurse's trio of bills, Intro 350 would require a study on the feasibility of establishing a social housing agency, and Intros 1006A and 1007A would define community land trusts for the provision of services in addition to housing that benefits the local community. Council Member Rivera is sponsoring Intro 902 which would bring to New York a system modeled on the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act, as launched in other jurisdictions, which allows qualified entities of first opportunity to purchase certain residential buildings. Council Member Brewer is sponsoring a pair of bills, Intro 570 which would establish the New York City Land Bank, and Intro 571 to establish a Wards Island affordable housing taskforce. We're also joined by Council Member Christopher Marte who is sponsoring Resolution 777, very lucky, calling upon the state legislation to pass legislation creating a public benefit corporation for the construction, acquisition, and rehabilitation of permanently affordable housing. Finally, the Public Advocate is sponsoring Reso 374

calling on the State Legislature to pass legislation requiring certain building owners to make an offer of sale to building tenants before any sale offers to third parties, also known as a Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act, or TOPA. In addition to our primary topic of social housing, the Committee is taking this opportunity today to hear additional legislation which agencies, don't worry, we're going to talk about first. Intro 1034 sponsored by Council Member Julie Menin would require notices in connection with eligibility for senior citizen and disability rent increase exemptions, otherwise known as SCRIE and DRIE. Intro 1281 sponsored by Council Member Dinowitz would delay the implementation of natural gas detector requirements to account for supply chain issues. And Intro 1296 by Council Member Rivera which would address an issue with capital funding eligibility by the City Canvas program which allows for the installation of approved artwork on temporary protective structures. We thank the Department of Cultural Affairs for highlighting this issue during the Preliminary Budget hearing and the staff from the Cultural Affairs, Libraries and Intergov Committee. We are our teams, and here I close, and so I'd like

to thank our-- my team. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank my teams at the district, Maria Ben [sp?], Kim Gerard, Carla Boula and Guenia [sp?], and I'd also like to thank the Housing and Buildings Committee staff, Senior Legislative Council, Austin Malone [sp?], Senior Policy Analyst, Jose Conde [sp?], and Andrew Bourne [sp?], Policy Analyst, Dirk Spencer [sp?], Finance Unit Head, Jack Storey [sp?], and Data Scientist, Reese Hirota [sp?]. We've also been joined by Public Advocate Jumaane Williams. I now will call on my colleagues to speak on their bills before turning it over to the Committee Counsel to administer the oath. So, first, Council Member Restler.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great. Thank you so much, Chair Sanchez. I think I say it every hearing, but only because it's so true, that we as the City Council and all New Yorkers are really fortunate to have you in this position, and I appreciate your exceptional leadership. Intro 78 is proudly co-sponsored by a healthy super-majority of Council Members, 31 Council Members-- maybe 34 is a super-majority, but a significant majority of Council Members, and we are fighting to ensure that public

space is always used for the public good. When I talk to my constituents about this bill, they're shocked that it doesn't already exist. They're shocked that it wouldn't be an incredibly high threshold that ensures that we are demonstrably achieving a public good every single time public property is redeveloped in our communities. I'm a big advocate for expanding housing supply, but we will never achieve the deeply affordable housing that we really need in-- from private developers, if we don't maximize those opportunities on public land. I can cite so many examples across my district, across all of our districts where public sites have been redeveloped in the last 15 years and gone to for-profit developers with far too much market-rate housing and far too much "affordable housing" that isn't actually affordable to working families, and I've been shocked to find that when we look back at the data from the Adams administration, from the de Blasio administration, the majority of the public sites that are redeveloped in New York City go to for-profit developers. That just doesn't make sense to me, especially when the record is clear that for-profit developers are building deeply affordable housing at

half the rate that not-for-profit developers are. I understand from your testimony that HPD has questions about nonprofit capacity. I think that we are really missing an opportunity that we will never ever get back. Every time we fail to properly redevelop publicly-owned sites into 100 percent deeply affordable housing that our communities deserve, and I am deeply committed to helping to push this legislation over the finish line, both the Public Land for Public bill, Public Good bill, Intro 78, and the whole CLA package, and I just want to commend Chair Sanchez, Council Member Rivera and all the people who are involved and the advocates who have been pushing so hard, especially the new economy project, and Comptroller Lander for helping to center smart, achievable bills that will advance social housing and build the deeply affordable housing that our communities are clamoring for. Thank you very much, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you, Council Member Restler. Council Member Rivera?

COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Thank you so much. Thank you to my colleagues. I want to thank Chair Sanchez for your leadership and for holding

1 this important hearing. I want to thank the admin
2 for your partnership over the years. It's really
3 meant a lot to me, and of course, to the advocates
4 here who show up every single time and who have
5 really been my guide over the last almost two decades
6 in fighting to bring affordable, truly affordable
7 housing to our city. I'm proud to be the sponsor of
8 Intro 902, the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act,
9 or COPA. COPA's designed to give certified
10 nonprofits and land trusts with a mission of creating
11 permanent affordable housing and a history of
12 community engagement the first opportunity at
13 purchasing certain residential properties before they
14 hit the open market. COPA would not only give these
15 groups the first opportunity to purchase, it would
16 also give them the ability to match any third-party
17 offers. Our goal with COPA is to help community
18 first organizations build the housing that this city
19 critically needs, and that's one major step towards
20 easing New York's housing crisis. As half of New
21 Yorkers do not earn enough to meet their basic needs,
22 nearly one-third of renters spend more than half
23 their income on rent. Too many apartments are
24 sitting vacant due to speculation and bad actors who
25

profit from scarcity, we must collaborate on ideas and leverage every tool we can to tackle housing instability and displacement. COPA is modeled on existing policies in cities such as San Francisco and Washington, D.C., and while I'm fully aware this is New York City-- born and raised proudly-- I look forward to hearing from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development on how legislation like COPA can be implemented and how we can help build affordable and community-owned housing for all New Yorkers. I truly look forward to your comments and your credible concerns. Additionally, I have legislation being heard today that will expand capital eligibility for the City Canvas program. That's helping more city-owned buildings qualify to place art on long-term scaffolding and sidewalk sheds. We can always make room to support artists and to create a more beautiful and livable city. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much, Council Member Rivera. I now-- I'd like to acknowledge that we're also joined on Zoom by Council Member Abreu, and I'd like to turn it over to Council Member Nurse.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you, Chair Sanchez. Thank you for putting together this hearing. As the Chair mentioned, we are hearing three bills today of mine. Intro 1006 will empower agencies to work with CLTs that don't meet the current definition of CLTs that is limited to those with HPD regulatory agreements. The first Community Land Trust, New Communities Inc. was created by Black sharecroppers and rooted in agricultural production, economic self-determination in housing, and in this tradition this bill really just expands the definition of CLTs beyond just housing to meet various community needs such as commercial and manufacturing, greenspace or housing. Intro 1007A amends the existing definition of CLTs as it relates to HPD regulatory agreements to strengthen their governance structures. As democratically governed entities, CLTs present a stark contract to the landlord/tenant relationship by codifying a more diverse and balanced board structure. This bill sets CLTs up for financial and operational success over the long term. And then lastly, Intro 350 requires the City to study the feasibility of creating municipal social housing agency. Pending state legislation would create a

1 statewide social housing authority, and city
2 officials should scrutinize how a municipal social
3 housing agency could supplement or branch off of a
4 statewide social housing authority to meet our unique
5 needs. We've heard this bill before in 2023. HPD,
6 RBNY [sic] and others testified that creating a land
7 bank, a municipal social housing agency, or creating
8 pathways for community ownership would just reduce
9 efficiency, create silos, divert attention away and
10 resources away from HPD. And the argument was that
11 HPD is best-equipped to handle the growing demands
12 for social housing. And I really empathize with this
13 argument. We're not here to create redundant
14 structures or departments. We don't want to clog up
15 government machinery for sure. However, in the last
16 two years since that hearing, we've just continued to
17 have a lot of delays and inefficiencies. We've seen
18 delayed contracts being signed, government
19 dysfunction, fundamental misunderstandings of social
20 housing models within government agencies that claim
21 to do this themselves. You know, for example, CLTs--
22 perhaps you all can speak to this, but we don't know
23 of a single community land trust that has gotten
24 their contract in a timely manner. We're still
25

1 fighting with MOCS and HPD for local CLT contracts
2 that are two, three years late. So, this is the
3 difference between having staff, having no staff,
4 between doing outreach and developing campaigns or
5 not, and this isn't efficient by any stretch of the
6 imagination. So, just wanted to remind the agencies
7 about the arguments they've made, and just say that
8 we reject them. So, when it comes to creating and
9 preserving social housing and ensuring groups recover
10 timely government contracts, we just can't have an
11 ad-hock approach. And we really need people who
12 understand the models and their different needs. And
13 we're here in good faith to have a conversation about
14 it, and we hope we can come to some agreements on how
15 to move forward. Thank you, Chair Sanchez.

17 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much,
18 Chair-- Council Member Nurse, Chair of another
19 committee. Council Member Brewer?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you, Chair
21 Sanchez. Intro 570, as you mentioned, has to do with
22 land bank, and a land bank is a nonprofit created by
23 the government, designed to convert tax delinquent
24 and vacant properties into affordable housing. A
25 land bank is a mechanism to ensure permanent

affordability. It maintains title to the land which nonprofit developers built instead of the city strategy of selling tax delinquent or vacant properties to a developer in exchange for a developer setting aside a certain number of affordable units, not which-- not all of which are usually affordable. And land banks retrain the title to the land so that developers can be accountable and negotiate for permanent affordability. Land banks exist in the state of New York in 31 different locations. The State under Eric Schneiderman put money toward it and passed state law, enabling us to create a land bank. I know also that they can raise funds by issuing tax-exempt bonds which offer lower interest rates than conventional bank loans. Many housing preservation developers have complained about the exorbitant cost of financing the rehab of neglected buildings. We have an aging building stock in need of rehab investments. Why would we want an entity like this? We have alien sale going on. We have no idea what is going to come of that lien sale. Perfect example. Use the land bank to create via the lien sale, opportunity for permanent affordable housing. I have a building in my district. It's vacant. It's all

ready to be sold. Perfect example. Why wouldn't the land bank help the City create with a nonprofit opportunity for hundreds of affordable units. In the past, in February 23, HPD testified against a land bank saying we have everything we need. We don't need any new tools to create affordable housing. I'd like to know what those tools are when we have questions for the administration. Land bank exists around the country. During the bad pandemic, San Francisco used it to create SROs and now has much more affordable housing in that housing stock than we do. Land bank would be very, very helpful to our city. Number two, Intro 571, Wards Island. This is my crazy idea. The idea is-- I was around when Welfare Island was converted to Roosevelt Island by Ed Logue, and the fact of the matter is Wards Island does have on it state facility for psychiatric patients. It has Fire Department. It was a wastewater processing tank, and it has two at least shelters. The question would be putting together state and city and a taskforce that would be sunsetted [sic]. What can the administration and us do to find space on Wards Island for affordable housing? It's the last place in the borough of Manhattan in particular where

you could build affordable housing, and it should be affordable. Mitchell-Lama 2.0, for instance. Why not make an effort towards something out of the box, exciting, and actually providing housing for people? Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much, Council Member Brewer. I'd now like to turn it over to Council Member Marte.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Thank you, Chair Sanchez. We're here today because we're facing an affordability crisis. Housing gets more expensive each month and whatever new housing does get build is often too expensive and displaces our communities. This is happening because our current approach to affordable housing does not work. We cannot continue to give tax breaks to private developers and rely on their good will to build true, affordable housing. The Social Housing Development Authority proposed by Assembly Member Emily Gallagher and Senator Cordell Clear will bring New York back to its roots of directly investing in public affordable housing. As a self-financing public authority, the Social Housing Development Authority would not be focused on profit like a private developer, allowing it to build

1 permanent deeply affordable housing throughout our
2 city and state, especially on public land. It would
3 create tens of thousands of good paying union jobs,
4 increase our stock of carbon-neutral, energy-
5 efficient buildings and give tenants true
6 representation in managing their homes. With the
7 bill stalled in Albany, passing Resolution 777 would
8 send a message that New York City wants and needs the
9 Social Housing Development Authority. As the City
10 Council, this is our opportunity to push back on
11 developer-driven housing plans and support true
12 public affordable housing like Mitchell-Lama and many
13 co-ops throughout New York are all proof that social
14 housing works. We just need to invest in it. I look
15 forward to passing Reso 777 to bring the social
16 Housing Development Authority one step closer to
17 reality. And something that my staff did not put,
18 which a joke I like to say-- in the 90s and early
19 2000s we used to dial seven to get us to where we
20 need to go. Let's vote for Reso 777 to put us on the
21 right track. Thank you.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you, Council
24 Member Marte. I'd now like to call on Public
25 Advocate, Jumaane Williams.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As mentioned, my name is Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate for the City of New York. Thanks again, Cahir Sanchez and the members of the committee on Housing and Buildings for holding this hearing today. There's been a lot of discussion in recent years about social housing, what it means, how it would look, how it could be funded, but despite the wealth of conversations, there's still no single defining vision for social housing. New York City proposals for social housing are centered around three main goals: insulating housing from market forces, promoting social equality, and enabling residents to exercise democratic control over their housing. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the housing crisis in both New York City and State, leaving many unable to pay their rent and at risk of eviction. Property owners and other landlords seeking to turn a profit during the pandemic, sold inhabited properties-- sorry-- sold inhabited properties leaving tenants in these buildings at higher risk of eviction and displacement, a risk further compounded by almost five years of uninterrupted rent hikes. Resolution 374 calls on

the New York State legislation to pass and the Governor to sign legislation mandating that any owner intending to sell a multi-unit residential dwelling must first make a fairly appraised offer of sale to the tenants within the residence before making any sale offers to third parties. Tenants would then have an opportunity to sell their interest in a community nonprofit or community land trust that would then own and maintain the building. This would place these properties in the hands of those who have a vested interest in maintaining a residence in their homes and would restore security and stability in their lives and tenants. By enacting this law, New York stands to boost home ownership, preserve affordable units, and further mitigate displacement amidst the housing and homelessness crisis. The resolution regarding the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act, also known as TOPA, however, is just one of the pieces of legislation being heard today, all aimed at building the underlying infrastructure for social housing programs. Council Member Nurse's bills Intro 1006 and Intro 1007 regarding community land trust would define provisions of services for CLTs under the Charter. This would further permit

city agencies to enter regulatory agreements with CLTs for use beyond housing such as manufacturing and commercial uses for open spaces and gardening.

Creation of public housing land banks-- creation of public land bank as proposed by Council Member Brewer, Intro 570, would further facilitate the acquiring, warehousing, and transferring of real estate, real property develop, rehabilitate and preserve affordable housing. I hope to see the state move forward with Assembly 9088 and it's accompanying Senate counterpart Senate 8494 which would create a public benefit corporation for the construction, acquisition, and rehabilitation of permanently affordable housing. With the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development understaffed and under-resourced, the coordination of the state and the city efforts is most important than ever. Finally, I would be remiss in failing to mention that public housing Mitchell-Lama buildings and NYCHA facilities is social housing. We cannot ever lose sight of that. We must reinvest in NYCHA and ensure that our Mitchell-Lama buildings remain affordable, accessible, and livable. It's not enough to build new affordable housing, we must also preserve our

existing affordable housing stock and ensure that New Yorkers can remain in their homes. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much, Public Advocate. I'd now like to call on Council Member Dinowitz to speak on his legislation.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you, Chair Sanchez, for holding this hearing, for ensuring we address affordability in this city. Before I begin my opening remarks, I do want to echo the sentiments of the Public Advocate regarding NYCHA and Mitchell-Lama. It's not enough to build this type of housing. We need to have continued investment in developments like Mitchell-Lama housing to ensure that in these developments that were designed and built for affordability, that the residents aren't being priced out or aren't living in squalor, both of which are happening in my district. But today, I'm here to talk about Intro 1281, a bill I introduced with Council Members Bottcher and Holden, to protect New Yorkers from being penalized for a mandate they cannot meet, and this is pretty urgent legislation, and I urge its swift passage. What this bill does, it amends Local Law 157 of 2016 which requires natural gas detectors in residential buildings and

hotels. This was a law passed in response to deadly gas explosions in 2015, including one at John F. Kennedy campus where I worked, a school in my district, which seriously injured three workers. Now, these detectors certainly are vital for public safety, but right now, the law's mandate is impossible to meet. As I noted in a letter to the Department of Buildings signed by 17 of my colleagues, a product recall, ongoing supply chain issues, and the fact that only one manufacturer currently makes these detectors have created a bottleneck. Even customers who ordered months ago still have not received their devices. Despite this, DOB rules require compliance by May 1st of 2025. That means New Yorkers now face fines for failing to do something that simply cannot be done. As we work to ensure New York City remains safe and affordable, we must hold ourselves to smart, realistic standards, not punish residents for circumstances beyond their control. So, Intro 1281 would postpone the installation deadline until one year after DOB confirms detectors are readily available and affordable, no earlier than January 1st, 2027. This is a straightforward, common-sense fix, and it

ensures we uphold critical safety standards without unfairly burdening New Yorkers. And unless the Council acts, residents, many of whom are doing everything right, will face fines for a mandate that is currently unachievable. This bill gives them a real chance to comply in good faith. So, thank you again, Chair Sanchez, for the opportunity to speak on my bill today, and I thank Council Members Bottcher and Holden for their partnership, and I urge all of my colleagues to join us and co-sponsor Intro 1281. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you, Council Member Dinowitz. I will now turn it over to our Committee Counsel to administer the oath.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth and to answer all Council Member questions honestly? Thank you. You may begin.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Good morning, Chair Sanchez and members of the New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings. My name is Lucy Joffe, and I am the Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Strategy at the New York City Department

of Housing Preservation and Development. I am joined by Stephen Erdman, the Assistant Commissioner of Homeownership Opportunities and Preservation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about social housing. Though there is no single, global definition of social housing, we think shared language is important. At its core, social housing is based on the foundation that everyone has a right to housing, including the most vulnerable. Social housing models typically focus on some combination of affordability, social equity or inclusivity, and resident representation. They reflect a broader focus beyond just building places to live, but also on creating homes in communities where people can thrive. Similarly, HPD's mission is to promote quality and affordability in the city's housing, and diversity and strength in the city's neighborhoods. We see the principles of social housing embedded in our mission and the work that we do every day. We are here today to discuss the ways that HPD enacts the principles of social housing through our work and our efforts to innovate overtime to make New York City more affordable, equitable, and accessible. We see today as an opportunity to discuss whether and

how certain additional tools or interventions would help improve our work in this area. As you all know, New York City is facing an unprecedented housing crisis. Our overall rental vacancy rate is shockingly low according to the 2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey, at just 1.41 percent, and is even more dire for the lowest-cost homes. The statistic that keeps me up at night is the almost \$1,500 gap between median rent and median asking rent. In practice this means that the typical New Yorker who needs to leave their current home would be faced with an almost inconceivable and destabilizing monthly increase. We know that the members of this committee share our sense of urgency. Therefore, we must balance our focus on new approaches with the need to build and preserve as much affordable housing as we can with the resources we have. While the principles of social housing guide much of HPD's work, from neighborhood planning to rental assistance programs, we are going to focus today specifically on HPD's work to build and preserve affordable housing. First, Affordability: HPD finances new construction and preservation requiring long-term or permanent affordability. To create new affordable housing, we

work with a range of partners, nonprofits, including community land trusts, and for-profits, to identify properties that may be feasible to acquire and develop. As we all know, property in New York City is expensive to purchase. Acquisition, carrying, and predevelopment costs can be prohibitively expensive. We have developed several pathways to minimize that burden when there is a viable path to affordable housing on a reasonable timeline. Nonprofits and MWBEs may receive assistance from the New York City Acquisition Loan Fund when acquiring property directly for affordable housing. Alternatively, Neighborhood Restore may acquire and hold certain property on an interim basis until it can be developed into affordable housing. In both cases, our partners typically form nonprofit housing development fund corporations, HDFCs, established under the Private Housing Finance Law to provide affordable housing, to serve as the legal ownership entities. The City, with the Council's support, can then provide the HDFCs with property tax exemptions to help offset some of the reasonable carrying costs. Most other cities do not have these tools, but they have been central to HPD's ability to build and

1 preserve affordable housing for decades. We are
2 committed to continuing to innovate in this area, but
3 we want to ensure that any new tools improve upon our
4 existing resources, making our work more efficient
5 and effective. HPD then provides different types of
6 financial assistance or other incentives in exchange
7 for long-term and permanent affordability
8 restrictions. HPD has spent years refining and
9 developing a robust set of tools for ensuring these
10 restrictions remain in place for the foreseeable
11 future. Affordability restrictions are memorialized
12 through regulatory agreements that impose
13 restrictions, as well as through requirements that
14 the owner either maintain or enter rental units into
15 rent stabilization with New York State Homes and
16 Community Renewal. HPD has determined that these
17 legally binding protections are the best way to
18 ensure that these homes remain affordable. HPD also
19 structures our below-market financing with deferred
20 principal and interest payments due at the end of the
21 term to create an incentive for the borrower to
22 extend affordability. HPD's regulatory requirements
23 and financing terms are consistent for all borrowers,
24 whether for-profit or nonprofit. For example, a
25

project on a community land trust has a CLT incorporated as an HDFC, and the CLT and borrower enter into a regulatory agreement with HPD, binding them to our affordability requirements. In transactions without a CLT, the owner is also typically an HDFC, and the parties also enter into a binding regulatory agreement. These program tools and structures allow the agency to work with a wide range of partners to achieve the same public benefits through our housing projects. While we seek out mission-driven partners with strong track records of performance, we do not rely on the goodwill or mission of the organizations with which we work to achieve our housing goals; we dictate the terms through binding legal agreements. Two, Social Equity and Inclusivity: HPD leverages a variety of tools to promote mixed-income housing and further fair housing goals. HPD has been a leading voice on fair housing and are currently in the process of developing Where We Live 2025, our next comprehensive fair housing plan. Through Where We Live, we have been transparent about the challenges we continue to face in breaking down obstacles to housing choice and segregation. We aim to achieve greater social equity

through the income diversity within our buildings, where we build, and the types of housing we finance. Through our term sheets, we aim to serve New Yorkers at a wide range of incomes in the buildings we finance, a hallmark of many social housing models. Most of our programs serve households earning between 30 percent and 100 percent of Area Median Income. With additional support from our rental assistance programs, we are able to serve New Yorkers at even lower incomes than our programs otherwise require. Income diversity is both more inclusive and helps create long-term building-level financial stability. We also now prioritize building more affordable housing in limited affordability areas, or parts of the city that lack low-cost housing, so that New Yorkers have the ability to decide where to live, regardless of income. City of Yes will make it easier to build and preserve low-cost and affordable housing in neighborhoods that currently lack it. Mixed-income housing, in a wider range of neighborhoods across the City, furthers our equity goals and allows us to achieve greater integration beyond what is available in market-rate housing, and we have worked for years to bring down costs to make

this work more efficient and effective. Three, Resident Representation: HPD develops resilient communities through a combination of strong tenant protections and shared equity models that create capacity for community stewardship. Rent stabilization has long provided tenants with a critical set of legal rights such as the right to certain services and repairs and the right to a lease renewal. These protections have helped many New Yorkers remain stably housed despite changing conditions around them. HPD also promotes resident representation through a variety of shared equity approaches, including support for CLTs. Currently, HPD has 1,200 units on CLT-owned land that have been financed or are in the pipeline. Through projects like the ReAL Edgemere CLT, HPD has worked with partners to develop a model of community-led ownership of eight acres of city-owned land that will offer long-term affordability and support sustainable land stewardship. We are continuously collaborating through workshops and focus groups, which allows us to gather valuable input as partners. HPD devotes significant staff and financial resources to supporting limited equity co-ops, Mitchell Lamas, and

financial new affordable homeownership opportunities through programs like Open Door and the Affordable Neighborhood Cooperative Program, often in partnership with the Council. HPD provides financing and also secures that these co-ops-- ensures that these co-ops have the resources they need to hire co-op monitors, who provide oversight, technical assistance, and financial management to support the co-op's long-term stability and longevity. Through these programs, the City is providing New Yorkers with the opportunity for economic stability and resiliency through affordable homeownership. HPD has also focused on strengthening the ecosystem of partners that can support our mission. HPD prioritizes mission-driven ownership and has worked to remove many of the obstacles that smaller, nonprofit and minority- and women-owned businesses, MWBEs, face in the affordable housing industry. Nonprofits and MWBEs have exclusive access to the New York City Acquisition Fund, mentioned above, to help secure sites, obtain bridge loans and to help fund pre-development costs, and technical assistance to navigate the development process and identify public sites. And RFPs for public sites require that

nonprofits or MWBEs make up at least 25 percent of the development team. We are always looking for ways to improve our work including how to expand our social housing work. When we're evaluating new tools or approaches, we consider whether those new tools help us achieve our mission, impact our ability to advance our pipeline, and will result in more effective and efficient use of public dollars. Regarding Intro 78: As discussed, we are focused on ensuring that nonprofits can also participate in HPD's affordable housing development projects. We have dedicated resources to removing obstacles they may face and toward growing their capacity. However, given the urgency of our work to build and preserve as much affordable housing as we can, our commitment to other mission-driven entities including, but not limited to, small businesses and MWBEs, and that we have tools to ensure that the housing-- the social housing benefits of our work across all types of partners. We believe that the risks of limiting our bench of potential affordable housing development partners and slowing down the production of affordable housing in our pipeline outweigh the benefits. The Law Department has also

identified legal challenges with codifying this requirement into law that need to be further explored. Regarding Intro 350: We hope our testimony today sheds light on our commitment to shared housing and to working with the Council to identify the tools that can move our work forward. We do, however, believe that HPD is best positioned to continue this work. We also believe that a separate City agency engaged in the development and preservation of affordable housing risks duplicating and siloing work that is already central to HPD's mission and would be more costly and less efficient. Regarding Intro 570: HPD believes that we can certainly have existing tools and resources, largely unique to New York City, that allow us to acquire, hold, and dispose of land. While land banks can add an important new aspect to other cities' work, we believe that, compared to our current approach, it could result in increased costs, delays and a duplication of functions. We are happy to continue discussing gaps in our current tools that might be served by a land bank or other such tool so that we can focus on opportunities that make our current work more efficient and effective. Regarding Intro 902: We

believe that a narrowly tailored Community Opportunity to Purchase Act would help ensure that responsible and competent owners have an opportunity to intervene when distressed buildings are put up for sale, stabilizing these properties and protecting against bad actors. Any such approach would have to be narrowly targeted and well-tailored for our housing market, to minimize operational and administrative challenges for the agency and any prospective buyers and negative impacts on the housing market. Regarding Intros 1006A, 1007A: We appreciate the Council's intent to continue to support the growth of CLTs in our city by ensuring that our definition of CLTs enables non-housing uses. We support this goal, and in fact, some of our CLT housing projects include non-housing components such as our CLT initiative in Edgemere. We are discussing non-housing related aspects of this bill with other city agencies. Regarding Intro 1007A: We would like to further discuss with you the goal of defining in statute a specific version of this structure. The Law Department is reviewing 1006A and 1007A to ensure that they're aligned with our shared goals for setting up CLTs to thrive. And we look forward to

these continued discussions. Our work is strengthened through partnership with the Council, and we look forward to working together to refine our approaches to delivering social housing for New Yorkers in service of our shared goals. HPD is deeply committed to the vision of social housing and believes that through continued partnership with the Council and alignment on our shared goals, we can continue to expand and strengthen social housing that is equitable, integrated, community-controlled, and affordable for all New Yorkers. We look forward to our continued collaboration with the Council and all our partners in this critical work.

DIRECTOR CAPISTRAN: Good morning, Chair Sanchez and the members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings. My name is Jay Capistran and I'm the Deputy Chief of Staff and Director of Legislative Affairs for the New York City Department of Finance. I'm here today to discuss Introduction 1034, sponsored by Council Member Menin. Intro 1034 requires the Department of Finance to notify eligible households of our senior citizen rent increase exemption and disabled citizens rent increase exemption, better known as our Rent Freeze Programs.

1 Additionally, there are notification requirements for
2 renewal applications, removal applications, and
3 third-party notices. Overall, the Department of
4 Finance supports the intent of this proposed
5 legislation in furtherance of our goals to notify and
6 enroll as many eligible New Yorkers as possible. As
7 we understand that the most significant action
8 contemplating this legislation for our agency is the
9 requirement for us to mail all eligible heads of
10 households and landlords information on our Rent
11 Freeze programs. Unfortunately, we do not have
12 access to the necessary information to be able to
13 identify eligible heads of households, and therefore,
14 would not be able to meet this requirement. We can,
15 however, provide Rent Freeze notices to landlords
16 that have registered rent-stabilized units. This
17 would be a new notification for the Agency, and one
18 we'd welcome. Lastly, we have an existing
19 notification process for renewal, removal, and third-
20 party notice for program participants. We strongly
21 support efforts to increase participation and we look
22 forward to working through the legislative process
23 with the Council on this proposal. I'd like to thank
24
25

you all for the opportunity to testify, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HOLUB: Good morning, Chair Sanchez, members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings. I am Robert Holub, Executive Director for Code Development at the New York City Department of Buildings. I am pleased to testify before the committee regarding Intro 1281. Local Law 157 of 2016 required the Department to adopt standards for the installation of natural gas alarms within 180 days of the establishment of an industry standard. Owners of certain residential buildings were mandated to install natural gas alarms on or before May 1st of the first year that commences following the Department's adoption of the established industry standard. In 2024, the Department adopted the applicable industry standard, NFPA 715, by promulgating rules 1RCNY908-02 and 1RCNY3616-06. As such, the compliance date for installation of the required natural gas alarms was May 1st, 2025. Currently, there are various devices that meet the requirements established in code and rule. However, we've received feedback from the industry regarding potential compliance challenges. Limited

availability of the preferred device, costs associated with procuring and installing the devices, and supply chain issues are a few of the challenges raised by industry. Intro 1281 seeks to extend the compliance deadline until such time that there is sufficient supply of preferred devices available, but no earlier than January 1st, 2027. The Department does not object to extending the compliance deadline. Since the enactment of Local Law 157, other related laws have been implemented such as Local Law 152 of 2016 which requires periodic inspection of gas piping systems. The inspections required by Local Law 152 promote a safer environment by allowing for any issues with gas piping systems to be timely identified and addressed. While the Department does not object to extend the compliance deadline, it does have concerns regarding the inter-connection [sic] requirement and the required annual report related to market availability required by Intro 1281. Local Law 157 required the Department to adopt the industry standard. The applicable industry standard NFPA715 includes provisions for power source and interconnection among other things. Section 908.10.2 of the New York City Building Code as written

requires compliance with requirements that are not applicable to the devices at issue. The requirements of Section 908.10.2 are written for distinctly different devices than what is required by Local Law 157. Therefore, the Department suggests removing Section 908.10.2. The Department looks forward to collaborating with Council to ensure that the technical requirements align with the industry standard for the subject devices. With regard to the annual report, market research and affordability of devices are outside the Department's scope and expertise. Additionally, an owner's financial ability to purchase and install the required devices is dependent on multiple factors and may differ from owner to owner. As such, the Department is not in the position to make such a determination. The Department was tasked by Local Law 157 with a adopting standards and establishing requirements for installation given its role as the regulatory authority. However, understanding Council's goal of ensuring that compliance with the requirements of Local Law 157 is not unduly delayed, the Department welcomes the opportunity to further engage with Council regarding alternative mechanisms for

addressing the issue. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I welcome any questions you may have.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: DCLA's only submitting, not reading? Okay. Alright, thank you. That was the shortest introduction to any hearing that I've ever been to. So, colleagues, I do have a stack, but we're going to start with any questions on 1034, 1281, and 1296 so that Buildings and Finance can answer questions and then leave us to focus on social housing. Is that cool? So, let us-- let me know if you have specific questions on them, on those three bills. So, first I'm going to ask a question on 1281 to Buildings, and this is coming from Council Member Dinowitz who is online at this moment. So, first, thank you. I'm going to put this-- Council Member Dinowitz, I'm putting on my best you impression, okay? Thank you for your feedback on the legislation and your general support of amending the compliance deadline. The first question is have any fines gone out, and if so, how many? Second, without the implementation of this legislation, how much in fines would the Department of Buildings project would be imposed by the administration? And third, for

1 fines already imposed, will there be a process for a
2 refund?
3

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HOLUB: The
5 requirements are largely in the Housing Maintenance
6 Code which would be enforced by HPD. So, we have not
7 issued any violations or fines related to Local Law.

8 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Got it. And do you
9 have any projections on how many properties would be
10 subject to fines?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HOLUB: We've not done
12 those projections yet. One of the complications with
13 trying to put numbers to this is that it's not just
14 at the building level, but it's actually at the
15 dwelling and sleeping unit level. So, it'd be work
16 to calculate the number of units affected and then
17 how many buildings those are in.

18 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Got it. Thank you.
19 Okay, thank you so much. That was Council Member
20 Dinowitz's question. Okay. For Finance, on 1034,
21 does the City conduct outreach today to individuals
22 who may be eligible for SCRIE and DRIE and other tax
23 exemptions? You mentioned not having contact
24 information access or access to the list.
25

DIRECTOR CAPISTRAN: Yeah, so Council Member, we-- the Department of Finance does a considerable amount of outreach led by our Director of Outreach Kieran Mahoney. We do hundreds of events each year, anywhere between-- from town halls to office hours with our Council Members. Council Member Brewer does amazing SCRIE/DRIE office hours. So, we do hundreds of these events. We contact thousands of constituents. We also will assist with applications. We've done about a thousand this year alone on behalf of constituents. So, we try to get out in each and every community and try to meet, you know, eligible households where they're at. One of the most important things I think we do is Train the Trainer events. We'll meet with nonprofits. We'll meet with elected official offices, and we'll teach them about the eligibility criteria, about how to assist the constituents. So, we really try to with the best knowledge that we have to get out into the communities and have proactive outreach.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Great. Thank you. Any other colleagues have SCRIE and DRIE questions? Council Member Avilés?

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you. I was just curious. Is there any space for creating a rule that would require the landlords-- they're collecting rent on a monthly basis. They know where everyone is. I'd imagine they can reach out to every one of their tenants who could potentially qualify. Is there any way to require them to do that as well?

DIRECTOR CAPISTRAN: It's a great point, Council Member, and that's being contemplated in 1034. It is notifying the landlords which is not a practice we have right now, but we do have-- we do have the records of all the landlords that have rent stabilized units within their properties. So, that is something we're looking to explore through this legislation and with the Council, we're providing those proactive notifications about eligible households so they can go to the tenants. They know the units in their building that are rent-stabilized. We don't have access to information, but certainly the landlords do, and we're willing to adopt that practice.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Excellent. Thank you, Department of Buildings. Thank you, Department of Finance. Not thanks yet. Council Member Restler?

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I just wanted to congratulate you, Jake, on the promotion and thank you for all your hard work.

DIRECTOR CAPISTRAN: Thank you, Council Member Restler.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thanks all. Okay. So,-- oh, Council Member Nurse? Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Sorry, I did have a question in my mist [sic]. Council Member Brewer brought up the lien sale, and I just wanted to while we had you here, I wanted to ask what role or what opposition you would have to a land bank playing a role in acquiring tax foreclosed properties to preserve them for affordable housing?

DIRECTOR CAPISTRAN: Ultimately, we would defer to HPD who's offered testimony on that bill. I would say we ultimately defer to HPD.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: You don't think that liens themselves could be banked within a lien bank?

DIRECTOR CAPISTRAN: One thing we'd have to look at is the ownership of those-- the ownership of the property. As I understand what a land bank is and how it's being contemplated, the ownership would

have to be removed from the current owner, and as you know, Council Member, when a tax lien is sold, it doesn't remove the ownership. So it's something that needs to be contemplated through this process.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you for real this time, Finance and Buildings. Okay, the stack is going to be first up Council Member Nurse, then Restler, then Brewer, then Rivera, and then I will turn to my questions. So, Council Member Nurse, you're up.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Sorry, I had [inaudible]. Just related to your response with Intro 1006 and 1007-- does HPD engage with CLTs that-- I think you mentioned a little bit on this in your testimony, but does HPD engage with CLTs that do not have project plans for housing?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: Thank you, Council Member. So, we're really proud of the work that we're doing with our Community Land Trust partners. If a CLT is working on a project that's not housing, we're of course happy to advise our partner agencies on our experience working with CLTs

1 but we would not be involved in a project that
2 doesn't have a housing component. But many of our
3 housing projects do have nonresidential components,
4 and some of our projects with CLTs like we mentioned
5 in the testimony, our initiative Edgemere, has a
6 significant non-housing component. So, we do have
7 some experience with that as well.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay. And there
10 are, in your experience, been no limitations around
11 those non-housing components in your agreements with
12 them or in your workings with them?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: We are
14 bound, of course, by statutory limitations on the
15 type of assistance we can provide. We're a housing
16 agency, of course, but we're not currently familiar
17 with limitations on the ability of CLTs to work on
18 non-housing projects.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay. And just in
20 relationship to Intro 1007, as you know, Community
21 Land Trusts traditionally but not always have a
22 tripartite board structure. Does HPD require-- just
23 for the record. Does HPD require a certain kind of
24 governing structure in order for CLTs to be
25 recognized as CLTs?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: Yeah.

This is a really good question, especially as so many CLTs are really starting to get off the ground in New York City. So, we're very familiar with the tripartite structure that's used nationally for Community Land Trusts. We do not require a strict tripartite structure, but we are interested in the spirit of the structure, and we are interested in seeing CLTs have resident representation on their boards. The only requirement, though, regarding board structure that we've issued more formally is that 20 percent of the board of a Community Land Trust should have significant affordable housing experience. So, the members of the board should have experience with operating affordable housing, developing affordable housing. And we talk about this requirement extensively in the workshops that we facilitate for Community Land Trusts. Over the past year and a half we've done about a dozen individualized workshops with CLTs. Each one is about six hours long over the course of a few days, and we talk about issues like this. Like, how does the CLT envision setting up its board? What does HPD want to see? Because there's not-- we don't think

that there's like a one box that all CLTs need to fit into, but there's a spirit that we want to try to comply with.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, thank you, sir.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much, Council Member Nurse. Council Member Restler?

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much. Appreciate y'all being with us today. I know, I feel like we keep having the same conversation, but we don't seem to be making progress. So, has HPD conducted analysis that compares the affordability of developments led by nonprofits versus for-profits versus joint ventures? We looked at analysis of public land dispositions from 2019 to 2023 that found nonprofit-led ventures developed more extremely low-income units than for-profits or joint ventures. Nearly 50 percent of nonprofit-developed units were affordable at the extremely low income levels compared to 28 percent-- so half as much-- for for-profit developers, and about 40 percent for joint ventures. Do you have a similar analysis? Have you looked at this data?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: We are optimistic that today will feel like the day where we do make progress on these topics.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: So, we would love to see the analysis that you're talking about. We have looked at this. We feel really confident that there is not sort of a difference in how we relate to our nonprofit versus any other partners. We provide for and require certain affordability levels in our term sheets. So, by program participation, there may be differences, of course, and that may be something of what you're seeing, but we have seen very consistent responses between for-profit and nonprofit and any other type of partner within any program term, and don't see variation on the affordability levels.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: I'm so sorry, Council Member-- I just want to acknowledge that-- oh, they're walking away. We were joined by the Student Government from Lucero [sic] Elementary School. Hi, kids. Bye, kids. Back to you.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Nice waves from the back, oh and hearts, too. Okay, sorry about

1 that. I wasn't paying attention. The-- we found that
2 40 percent of newly constructed affordable housing
3 units completed last year were for middle-income, I'd
4 even say upper middle-income households. A two-
5 bedroom apartment that goes from between \$4,000 and
6 \$5,800 a month. We're counting as affordable
7 housing, 165 percent AMIs that rent for \$5,766. I
8 don't know who thinks that a \$5,766 apartment is
9 affordable, but that person needs to have their head
10 examined. But that is, of course, the policy of the
11 City of New York as egregious as it is. Only 18
12 percent of the units generated, half as much of these
13 units that are-- that you're claiming are affordable
14 housing and are totally unaffordable, and it's
15 deeply, deeply offensive, only 18 percent of those
16 units-- of the total units, half as few, just over
17 2,000 were for extremely low-income families. So,
18 twice as much of the affordable housing is totally
19 unaffordable and for very wealthy people, and half as
20 many units are going to people that deeply-- that
21 desperately need it and are unable to get by in New
22 York City. Public land is the place where we should
23 be creating the deeply affordable housing, right?
24 There's no land cost to purchase it. We already own
25

1 it. This is where we can achieve our deeply-
2 affordable housing goals in a meaningful way, and
3 yet, we're continuing to give this property over to
4 for-profit developers that are delivering less good
5 outcomes for our communities. And so I'm just
6 confused that you're saying that-- you're looking at
7 data that's showing similar outcomes for for-profit
8 and nonprofits. We've looked at this data over the
9 last five years. We've looked at the data over the
10 previous five years, fully under the de Blasio
11 administration, and found the same exact thing, that
12 for-profit developers are not generating the deeply-
13 affordable housing that our communities need. So, do
14 you have any data to share with us other than what
15 you're seeing is similar across the board? Is there
16 anything specific and substantive that you can share
17 that can give me and anyone else in this room any
18 confidence that we're actually maximizing
19 opportunities on publicly-owned land?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: Thank
22 you. That's a really great question, and I think
23 there's a lot points that we want to touch on. So, we
24 might share a response to that question. So, the
25 first point I think might be helpful to share is just

some information about our work on public land since 2023. And so for the RFPs that we've issued since 2023, 100 percent of the selected teams included nonprofit as part of the team, and this is in accordance with our equitable ownership policy that was rolled out a few years ago, and there have been teams that are 100 percent nonprofit and then there's other teams that are joint ventures between nonprofits and for-profits, but the minimum of the requirements is that there's a 25 percent ownership stake by a nonprofit or an MWBE.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So, nonprofit or MWBE.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: That's correct, yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But you said that 100 percent of the properties that have been selected, redeveloped-- that partnerships have been identified for redevelopment over the last two years have included a nonprofit partner with at least 25 percent stake, or is it a nonprofit or a MWBE?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: So, 100 percent included in nonprofit and all of the projects complied with the 25 percent requirement. We'd have

to verify for the-- for specific projects what the breakdown might be between nonprofit, MWBE and other for-profits.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Go ahead.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: Yeah, so I just want to then talk a little bit about the term sheets regarding your question. So, you know, we've done a lot of work of revising our term sheets. We're in the process of publishing new term sheets, and so we've looked at project data for many of these term sheets to understand what drives cost and what kind of subsidy the city needs to provide to make our different programs function. And we know that the drivers of cost are acquisition price, or hard [sic] cost, which may be somewhat constant across certain types of projects, and then what really drives differences is the population that we're serving, the affordability of the project, and any other site-specific conditions, public approvals, non-residential space. So, our term sheets don't differentiate between ownership type, and I think that's really important, because that's the expectations that we have put out publicly regarding the subsidy that we provide projects. And then just

the last point I'll make now, and I'm not sure if I've covered everything that you brought up, but even where we may have subsidized a unit at a higher AMI than ELI or very low-- extremely low income, very low income, we do provide rental assistance subsidies to households so they can afford those units. So there's many more units that are being lived in by extremely low-income households who are able to afford that rent because of the rental assistance that we've provided them.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Which we're big supporters of the expansion of CityFHEPS on the City Council. It's been one of the primary priorities that we've had over these four years, and one in which we have fought tooth and nail against your administration, against the Mayor every step of the way to expand access to that for more families, and our Chair has done an amazing job in leading on that with our Speaker. But in publicly-owned land that's redeveloped that should be truly affordable, we shouldn't need to be using our precious voucher resources which are too few and far between to make the housing affordable in those developments. That's totally bonkers, right? No, we're not supposed to

1 clap. So, I have more questions, but there are
2 people waiting and I will see if there's an
3 opportunity for second round if that's okay, Chair.
4

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Thank you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Unless you want
7 me to keep talking.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: I think we
9 would-- we do want to engage on this. We think this
10 is a really important point. We talked extensively
11 about the ways in which we use HUD guidelines which
12 at times can feel very remote when we're sitting up
13 here and talking about different data points. We
14 have talked about the ways in which we attempt to
15 maximize deeply-affordable housing. We do that most
16 and best on our publicly-owned land and on our
17 subsidized projects. We also-- this is a social
18 housing hearing. we are talking about here as well
19 one of the hallmarks of social housing is serving a
20 wide range of incomes and projects, and we've
21 experimented with ways that we serve sometimes higher
22 income households to subsidize to get to also lower
23 income households, and we also have a wide range of
24 as-of-right tool, right? When that is loaded or--
25 sorry-- included into the same data, you are going to

1 see some difference in how some of our work plays
2 out. We do stand by the fact that we are working day-
3 in and day-out to try to as efficiently and
4 effectively as possible serve lower and lower income
5 households. Sometimes that does require rental
6 assistance, not just because New York City is
7 incredibly expensive to build, and we're trying to
8 utilize the best resources that we always have, but
9 as the Chair is frequently asking us, yes, we are
10 committed to serving households of every single
11 income, and to be able to do that, we couple our
12 resources together to try to maximize our impact. We
13 are here in the spirit of wanting to talk about the
14 ways that we can continuously do this better, but we
15 have been working tirelessly to try to figure out how
16 do we couple our resources to both-- to reach all of
17 those goals.

19 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Do you have-- do
20 you have figures that incorporate HPD's use of rental
21 assistance to sort of report to us how many-- how
22 much HPD-subsidized projects that use rental
23 assistance are reaching which households, which
24 income levels?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Yeah, there's a couple different categories in which that can happen. So, we've come back with some more detailed figures on that. A-- sometimes we use rental assistance in the financing of the affordable housing so some units therefore from the beginning are set aside for using project-based rental assistance. Many people apply through our lottery and have already been-- have been assigned at rental assistance so they'd be using a wide range of programs often administered by another agency, and they're coming into our housing using rental assistance. So, there's a couple different source. Someone could be living in our housing and then have rentals, either Section 8 or local. So, it's happening through a wide range of different channels, and we can follow up with data to sort of better understand each of those.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Yeah, I mean, there's a reason why so many for-profit companies are a part of developing-- a part of development in New York City. It's because they're making a pretty penny, and when we-- when we're layering, as Council Member Restler is highlighting-- when we're laying in

this rental assistance, it's like how much money are we putting in to make this unit affordable. Like, yes, finally we have reached a household that's earning \$15,000 a year, but is the City of New York paying-- how much are we paying for that affordability.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Yeah, and we're very-- we try to be very mindful of it. We want to stretch these dollars as far as we can. We are really committed to building as much affordable housing as we can in as many neighborhoods as we can, and reaching the New Yorkers who need it most and a wide range, because here in New York City there are a lot of New Yorkers who need it. So, we're constantly looking at that and trying to use our resources as effectively as we can. It is, you know, ongoing work that we're doing, and you know, we want to keep talking about ways that we can be more efficient and effective as we go.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: And just to state out loud, I think we tried calculating this a couple of years ago, and we calculated that on average the City, when you layer on all the different projects just in terms of capital funding, we're subsidizing

\$300-\$400,000 per unit that then becomes affordable or maybe not so affordable for New Yorkers when you layer on rental assistance on top of that. That's that figure that we want to understand so we understand what taxpayers are paying, you know, and how much we're getting in return.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: I think-- just want to make it clear, though, that we-- we do have projections for the rental assistance income and that factors into how we finance the project. So, it's a really precious resource that is important. It helps us leverage other sources of funding when we look out over 15 years, over 30 years how much rental income is coming in from those vouchers. So, this is something that we're looking at very actively in any project that uses a project-based rental assistance source.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Okay, thank you. I'd now like to turn it over to Council Member Brewer. And sorry, I'd like-- I need to acknowledge that we've been joined by Council Member Feliz.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. I appreciate that at last you said, you know, we might work together on 571. In February 23, it

1 was no. That's a big step in the right direction. I
2 want to know, you know, based on the lien sale, I
3 think there was a passage of the lien sale. We know
4 about the reauthorization, and it's supposed to
5 identify alternatives to the current lien sale trust
6 system which is pretty opaque. So how could a land
7 bank be used as a replacement for the lien trust?
8 Would you consider this bank with appointments on the
9 board to be a more transparent process to the current
10 system? And then what is the current system that you
11 say is working so well?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: Thanks.

13 So, I think we're very interested in talking about
14 land banks with you, and you know, we have a lot of
15 tools that we believe are accomplishing the goals of
16 land banks, but we're not opposed to talking about
17 how to improve those tools, but we want to be mindful
18 of what the value add is of any additional tool and
19 what the cost of those tools might be. So, just
20 speaking about some of the existing tools that we
21 have, that we've of course spoken with you about
22 before, including the New York Acquisition Loan Fund
23 which provide some really valuable acquisition and
24 predevelopment financing to our nonprofits and MWBEs.
25

The loan fund has help finance the acquisition of over 16,000 units of affordable housing so far. And so, in addition to the loan fund, we also have a nonprofit partner who really serves as a sort of landbank which is Neighborhood Restore. We also have other nonprofit partners who can serve in a similar fashion as well. So, Neighborhood Restore forms HDFC, nonprofit HDFCs, that can hold title to property on an interim basis until that property can be redeveloped for affordable housing. And as an HDFC we are of course able in partnership with the Council to provide Article 11 tax exemptions which will reduce the carrying costs for those properties. And then we also do have bond issuing availabilities to us. OMB is able to issue bonds. We have the Housing Development Corporation which issue private activity bonds to support affordable housing development. So, we have a lot of these existing tools. Our tax exemptions, our nonprofit partners, the Acquisition Loan Fund, or bond issuing abilities to accomplish a lot of the goals of the land bank. So, we just want to be really careful about thinking about setting up another tool that would take an enormous amount of staff resources, operating

capacity, in terms of what we would be getting with that investment.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: We could offer lower interest rates, perhaps, than some of the tools that you have suggested, some of which needs banks, I assume.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: Just-- yes. Specifically on the interest rates, we have a lot of partners who offer favorable interest rates for our projects, CDFIs that we work with, you know, the Housing Development Corporation that we work with. So, there are a lot of, you know, very advantageous lending products that we use every day in our projects. You know, if there's specific information that you'd like us to look at regarding the type of lending products land banks offer, we'd be happy to do so.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Have you looked at the 31 that already exist in the state of New York in terms of what they are or not doing? I know you said testimony-wise that, you know, we have more tools than the other, I don't know, Kingston or elsewhere. But have you looked at any of the work that they're doing, because it might be helpful?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Yes, we appreciate that and we're constantly trying to talk with other jurisdictions, see what they have. We have not talked to all 31, but that is something that we, you know, we're continuing to-- we're interested in continuing to explore. I would say that we're not totally clear. We would like for the tax lien sale and any programs that the City is involved in to be increasingly transparent and we are working on that. The tax lien sale results in the sale of the liens, but not necessarily the sale of the project.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No, I understand that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: So, I think we're not totally sure in thinking about the role that the land bank would play, how that would necessarily change the process compared to what might happen now. But again, if there's some gap that we're not understanding, happy to keep talking about that.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. But I mean, on the lien sales, like I said, well, I have a couple of brownstones. I don't know what happened to the owners that you would leave a \$6 million

1 brownstone and not pay the taxes, etcetera. But that
2 would be a perfect example. I'd love to have a
3 nonprofit take it over, land bank, to-- no taxes been
4 paid on after years and years. Have a nonprofit land
5 bank pay for it. Why wouldn't that make sense, for
6 instance? Abandoned, could be affordable. Nonprofit
7 could do it, etcetera.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: So, I
10 want to just make two points, because it's a good
11 question. So, the first is that we want to make-- we
12 always need to make sure that when we're working
13 without our partners to acquire projects, that
14 there's a viable path forward for an affordable
15 housing long-term contract--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] No,
17 I understand that. I've been-- I've done that. So,
18 I understand that.

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: Okay.
20 So, then the other, you know, something I want to
21 highlight is that we worked very hard with the
22 Council last year to pass new lien sale legislation.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm aware, yeah.

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: And it
25 created a new option for some low-income, one to

three family owner occupants where they can opt to have the City foreclose on their homes and transfer the homes to a qualified preservation purchaser. So, you know, we're excited to continue working with the Department of Finance and our community partners on rolling out this new option. But you know, we see this and other tools that we have as certain ways that we can bring properties into the fold, and we just need to keep in mind about the, you know, the additional cost of carrying property and staffing different options to augment those abilities.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I hear. But I look forward-- go ahead, sorry.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Yeah. So those two-- I'm not specifically familiar with those properties, but to the extent that there was an interested buyer and a preservation buyer, they could with either sort of resources through the New York City Acquisition Fund depending on who that buyer is, or using Neighborhood Restore, that purchase-- those properties could in fact be acquired. The whole goal from our perspective when properties are acquired and ultimately going to moved towards affordable housing is not keeping them in that state longer than they

need to be, because that can be very expensive.

Stephen mentioned carrying costs. So, that movement is something that we would-- we try to encourage through Neighborhood Restore, etcetera, and something that we'd want to make sure that a land bank isn't adding to that cost, because you don't want that property sitting there within the land bank.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I see, alright.

Let's keep talking. The other thing is I don't think you have a position on this Wards Island idea. Do you have an idea, a position on creating more affordable housing on vacant land in the borough of Manhattan?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: So, thank you for that questions. Department of Parks is not here, and so we ultimately defer to them. We are working to activate as many city-owned sites as we can for affordable housing. We've been doing that on more of a citywide basis. So, I think we want to make sure that's sort of a site-specific study. Makes sense in this context, but we would ultimately defer-- that's their position, but we would defer to them for more details on that.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, thank you. I just, you know, just going back quickly to the land-- there's so-- Manhattan is a different place. I-- Borough President now-- very frustrated in the past as Borough President and now, because you were constantly saying let the market provide the affordable housing. MIH, LITE [sic], TIPE [sic], etcetera. One, two, three, whatever the hell the option is. But the issue is we are constantly not providing-- and you say in your testimony, want to be places where there isn't affordable housing. Guess what? Manhattan, transportation, all the opportunity for families, schools, and so on. Yet, we're constantly not deepening it and not making it available. So, that's-- I don't think-- with all due respect, not you specifically and not [inaudible] specifically, but a little bit talking out of both sides of your mouth. I got ABC site. I got the Windermere. I could go on and on. I got all the extra units that were provided during H&H for the asylum-seekers all sitting vacant, vacant, vacant, vacant. And we're not-- you know, they're all too expensive. Well, you know what, you got to find a way to do it. And you know, the land bank is one

possibility. They're all vacant. They're all just sitting there, and yet, we're not moving toward affordability in Manhattan. Do you have any answer to that?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: I'm not totally sure the specific question, but I appreciate the sentiment.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It's a deep-- finding more tools to make affordable--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: [interposing]
Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: to make affordable units in the borough of Manhattan. That's the question.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: That is a top priority. We talk about this. We have not just Manhattan, but there are large parts of the city that sometimes it's because of cost. Sometimes it's not-- where we have not been able to build or preserve affordable housing.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Manhattan is cost. Not-- it's not-- there's a will. It's nothing to do with will. It's cost, and we're always told go

to the Bronx, because the dollar stretches further.
We want in Manhattan.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: You're not
going to hear that from us. This is a top priority.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: Right.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: You will also
hear-- right, and I hope it doesn't sound like
outside of-- out of two sides of our mouths, and I
don't want to rely on the fact that these things are
tricky, and we're trying to figure them out. We want
to keep working with you. Think you described your
idea as outside the box and we're here for that. We
just want to see what we can make work, because
ultimately it does then come down to how are we using
limited resources and stretching them, but that
doesn't mean that there aren't certain policy
priorities that we are really committed to advancing
and we're doing that.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: And we
have-- we always want to do more, but we have done a
lot of preservation projects and other projects in
Manhattan, and there are unique challenges in
Manhattan, other very expensive areas of the City.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know, though.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: So, those challenges would remain for a land bank as well and other tools. It's-- there's a cost challenge that we have to grapple with and that we are grappling with as we try to increase our production in high-cost areas of the City.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. ABC site needs help. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you, Council Member Brewer. Council Member Rivera?

COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Thank you. I think, you know, I feel like Gale is getting to this idea that we so desperately want these tools, and social housing may be the definition is relative. I understand that. But what is it that we have to do? I mean, is it that city officials like HPD and other nonprofit partners, like we have to maybe convene a series of meetings with trusted nonprofit developers to better understand their challenges, and so we can actually create these interventions, these tools, these solutions to increase their capacity. They don't have the same capacity as for-profit developers, clearly. They don't have the same access to capital, among other things. And so, we're trying

1 to be fair. We're trying to think of ideas or
2 concepts that are going to assist in the creation of
3 affordable housing. I've passed bills on tenant
4 protections, on lead remediation, on trying to
5 protect the tenant in their home itself. I've funded
6 construction with AFI [sic] and barrier-free living,
7 and then on the other side with someone like BFC. So
8 we're really trying here to figure out how do we
9 address the ongoing challenges that we're facing in
10 creating affordable housing, and how do we further
11 lift up the nonprofit developers as well as those
12 Community Land Trusts that exist and have really
13 created models for the rest of the nation. So, my
14 questions are-- given your concerns about the nexus of
15 intervention timing and the risk of maybe harming
16 smaller property owners with something like COPA,
17 what kinds of exemption thresholds or supports do you
18 think would strike the right balance?

19
20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Thank you for
21 that question. But also, for your points about
22 engaging with nonprofits and partners in terms of
23 understanding what it is they need, including in this
24 moment, we at HPD have been trying to do a lot of
25 that to better understand the challenges that folks

are facing, particularly in-- particularly currently.

And it is a really important thing to do when we're

exploring new resources, new approaches, even ones

that we are studying in other cities because they can

play out differently in different markets. As we

alluded to, we think that when thinking about an

intervention like COPA that we could-- there's a

couple different administrative and sort of policy

challenges that we're thinking through. We hear from

other cities that when it is too broad in scope, that

it can both be overwhelming for the city agency that

is receiving all of these notices, but that also the

perspective preservation buyers really can't do the

due diligence and vetting that they need to do, such

as they don't actually-- they can't ever move forward

and actually make a purchase. We heard one report

of, you know, a small preservation buyer getting

notices of 50 different potential sales in one week,

and there's no way that they can do that kind of

vetting, and that kind of vetting is very important

for this type of purchase. You really want to

understand what you're getting involved in, what

you're purchasing, and the acquisition price does

need to be supportable, right? It needs to be the

market price and supportable, ultimately. And so from that sort of administrative or operational type perspective, but also from a policy perspective, we think that when we look at the types of buildings where we most need to influence, right, who is ultimately going to be buying and owning. When the building is experiencing significant physical and financial distress, it would benefit from a responsible, competent owner with experience in doing this kind of work. And so that could really be the area, right, where you might see a benefit from slowing the market long enough that, you know, qualified preservation purchasers can do the due diligence necessary to actually make that decision that this is a building to intervene in. we think that's to the benefit of the tenants. We think that's to the benefit of sort of all of the stakeholders that are involved, and because it's on sort of a smaller scale, not only can it be implemented, but you also sort of mitigate some of the potential unintended consequences that could come to the rest of the market where no one is really going to be engaging in some of those purchases

1
2 anyway, but slowing them down could have some
3 negative side effects.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: So, we have-- you
5 mentioned other cities. We were briefed by San
6 Francisco advocates about COPA last year. They
7 highlighted how COPA had helped create an ecosystem
8 of real estate professionals, nonprofits and
9 preservation developers. So how does HPD see COPA
10 creating an ecosystem of preservation in New York
11 City? And then you mentioned capacity. So, what
12 guidance would HPD offer around refining the scope of
13 eligible buildings like size, ownership, structure,
14 or level of existing regulatory oversight to avoid
15 unintended consequences while preserving meaningful
16 reach? And if I could just speak as I'm out of time,
17 just add regarding-- you mentioned agency delays,
18 right? We know about your own capacity at HPD and
19 regarding HPD pipeline delays. What additional tools
20 such as acquisition funds, bridge financing or
21 technical assistance would be needed to help
22 community-based groups successfully move through the
23 acquisition and preservation process? Thank you,
24 Madam Chair.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: We have a number of questions there. I'll start, and you'll see Stephen and I go back and forth. We also have been in touch with our colleagues in San Francisco over the years-- D.C., Chicago, it has a pilot-- in trying to understand what they're seeing and expecting. We think it would be reasonable from what we're hearing that they're doing, but also from their sort of reports on what's manageable, that typically you would see a couple transactions per year, and that this would-- you know, that is different in scale in different place, right, and impact. But in terms of HPD-- in terms of New York City's market, you know, we think that that's probably what would happen here. We-- as we talked about, COPA is a legal mechanism. It slows the market long enough for folks to make that decision for an interested preservation buyer to come in, make the decision to get involved. We think that-- you mentioned our extensive pipeline. We try to dedicate our preservation resources most urgently to those buildings that are most in need. We would continue to do that, and you know, think that that-- you know, that may open up more opportunities, but that we

would need to continue to target the buildings that are most in need of preservation intervention.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: So, I would just add a few things. You spoke about the ecosystem of partners that COPA helped facilitate in places like San Francisco. We're very fortunate that we have a strong affordable housing ecosystem in New York with many different groups that we work with on an enormous number of transactions every year. We of course want to continue to foster that ecosystem, especially our nonprofit partners and MWBEs. And so we have a number of initiatives that are underway to do that, and we're always seeking to do more, but our Building and Land-use Approval Streamlining taskforce, or BLAST, was designed to try to make process improvements and code improvements that facilitate the development of affordable housing to make it easier for our partners to move through the approvals process. I mentioned the Acquisition Loan Fund before. A few years ago, the policies were changed for the fund, that it only provides loans to nonprofits and MWBEs. So, we're really targeting those resources more directly to those types of groups. Last year, we also set up an MWBE guarantee

1 facility in partnership with HDC, and this is
2 intended to help address the financial capacity
3 constraints of the MWBEs and provide pre-development
4 loans, and we closed last year on our first pre-
5 development loan with an MWBE via that guaranteed
6 facility. So, we're looking forward to seeing how
7 that work continues to expand. And I also mentioned
8 our CLT workshops, which I'm personally very proud of
9 and hope to continue to expand the work we do with
10 our CLT partners. And then just in terms of where
11 this work intersects with our pipeline and backlogs
12 that have occurred over the last few years, we're
13 also very proud of advancements we've made in
14 increasing HPD staff capacity. We are really
15 grateful for partnering with the Council during City
16 of Yes which helped achieve a number of new staff
17 lines in the Office of Development specifically, but
18 also in other parts of the agency that support our
19 housing development like the Office of Legal Affairs.
20 And we more immediately set up a capacity accelerator
21 to hire temporary employees to support our work
22 immediately, as it takes time to hire permanent
23 employees. And we've also launched a new program
24 called Community Partnerships for Affordable
25

Renovation Program, which is a way for us to partner with our lending institutions to offload partner lenders outside of the agency to offload a lot of the due diligence for certain types of projects that are good fits so that they can move much more quickly through the process, and we can start to clear out that backlog. So, we're looking forward to seeing how all those new initiatives get off the ground, and then we'll, of course, evaluate where we are and see what else is needed moving forward.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: We also didn't address timeline which you raised. We think this is incredibly important for us to think through, talk to partners, talk to that ecosystem of stakeholders about, because there is going to be sort of a difficult balance, right? Making sure that we don't slow down the market so much that we have unintended consequences, including raising costs, right? Ultimately, at its core our work is about trying to lower the cost of housing. So, if we are distorting the market and resulting in higher prices, that's not quite advancing our goals here, and there also would need to be enough time that these organizations actually could meaningfully vet and put

together a package. So, that's something that we do feel like we need to continue to talk to partners about. We certainly started, but would welcome further conversations there.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you, Council Member Rivera. We do have quite a number of folks signed up for public testimony, so I do want to get to you all. So, I'm going to limit my questions to a couple of buckets and then we'll do a final round if any of my colleagues want to close out. So, starting off, I'm going to pick up where Council Member Rivera left off and just to, you know, drive finer points on a few areas that you've already discussed. So, Deputy Commissioner Joffe, first of all, congratulations on the promotion. I'm a little late.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Congratulations. So, on Intro 902, you have said that 902 should be narrowly tailored to specific scenarios. So, I'm going to jump into some specific questions on what universal buildings you have in mind that would be best served by COPA. So, can you just talk a lite bit about what size of building that you think should be here? Distressed buildings, are those any good?

Physical, financial, good physical and financial conditions? Are there specific geographic areas of the City? Do you think that there should be a focus on stronger or weaker markets in the City, higher or lower displacement risk areas?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Thank you for that question. We, as we talked about, recommend a focus on distress. That can happen in various parts of the city and on this point, I think we would be particularly cautious about codifying in the statute geographic determinations which can then very quickly become stale, and we see that in New York City maybe more than some other places. So, you know, we think that there is some flexibility beyond that, but really focusing in on those buildings where we think it's important to influence the ultimate ownership is the biggest defining factor, and you know, the other pieces of that we could talk in more detail, but that's mainly where we've focused.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: What do you mean by that, where we think it's important to influence the ultimate ownership?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Well, we think that there are a category of buildings where--

1 that have experienced significant financial and
2 physical distress, and clearly that has been a
3 difficult situation for the tenants. You know, there
4 can be obviously owners in that situation who are
5 seeking supports, but when they go to put it on the
6 market, that's a moment where we're interested in
7 ensuring that there's responsible ownership involved,
8 and it can be a lot of work, as you all know and
9 appreciate, to stabilize a building that has gotten
10 to that level of distress, and that's not something
11 that we have seen actually in our experience, that
12 not all even developers are in a position to do well.
13 So, we would want to make sure that someone who's
14 taking that on can be trusted to not only start the
15 job, but really finish it. And so, when we're
16 talking about that level of distress, that's sort of
17 how we think about it.

19 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: So, just flagging,
20 right-- if we focus on financial and physical, on
21 buildings that are in the greatest financial and
22 physical distress, then we're talking about the most
23 difficult buildings, you think that community
24 organizations should-- that COPA should focus on
25

transferring ownership to community organizations for these universe of buildings?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Ultimately, yes. We think that it's important to target the right set of buildings, and you know, we want to make sure that we have qualified partners from our perspective, that those partners could come from a wide range of backgrounds. But the most important defining feature would be that they are qualified and have experienced doing this work, and that that would best achieve the policy goals or outcomes, at least that we see where this would bring some benefits.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: And how would HPD support those groups?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Well, we do have a wide range of programs to support MWBEs, nonprofits and building their capacity as do many of our partners. So, to the extent that we're talking about those groups and support, absolutely. That's work that we're already doing and we remain committed to.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Does HPD have data on sales of multifamily buildings that do not involve the City with this?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: We do have data. We believe, for example, that the current scope of COPA as drafted would cover 90,000 buildings, about 2,500 sales per year. We are not involved on the front end in most private market transactions, but we do look and try to understand what's going on the housing market, of course.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Are there ways, are there interventions in which HPD could have better access to this kind of information? Are there requirements that you all have considered imposing, reporting requirements?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: I don't think we see the obstacle currently to the lack of knowledge. Typically, when there is-- we're looking both for sort of a building that someone is interested in buying, and that's more often when we get involved. We have a very, as we've discussed here, a long pipeline of projects that people are interested in financing the development of affordable housing for. So we have not-- we don't see necessarily a gap there, but certainly if any kind of legislation along the lines of COPA were to be enacted, one of the things we would have to figure

1 out is how it could be operationalized without
2 overwhelming HPD in notice requirements and sort of
3 bogging down any of our systems making us less
4 efficient or able to react.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: So, if the agency
7 was able to track multi-family sales, you're saying
8 that it wouldn't influence your preservation strategy
9 as it exists today?

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: I think
11 just stepping back, we're not necessarily seeing that
12 as the real barrier to this work. The barrier--
13 there's a resource question and then there's a
14 viability question. You know, we want to make sure
15 that the resources HPD has are being really
16 effectively targeted to creating viable affordable
17 housing projects, and we know that acquisitions are
18 very expensive, and so I think that's part of, you
19 know, where we're focusing on what, you know, what is
20 the barrier to these types of transactions happening.

21 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. How
22 many HPD projects per year are supported by the New
23 York City Acquisition Fund and how does HPD determine
24 which projects receive assistance?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: So, I do have some information on the acquisition fund. I don't-- we can follow up on an annual amount, but I do know that since the fund was created in 2006 it supported over 100 projects, and it's loaned out over \$780 million, and there's currently about \$170 million that's outstanding. So, that's out there right now supporting projects that are in pre-development or intended to be in pre-development. And so in total, that's 17,000 affordable housing units that have been supported by the Acquisition Fund. What's really crucial here is that the fund looks to HPD in many cases to get affirmation that the acquisition of a certain property can turn into a viable affordable housing project. So, there is a lot of vetting that happens so that we don't have these precious acquisition resources going to purchase property that then languishes for many years and struggles to turn into affordable housing and has carrying costs that rack up that then divert resources away from, you know, buying the affordability that we all want as the outcome. So, we're involved with the fund, even though we don't directly manage it.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: And the Acquisition Fund, these are grant funds or these are low-interest loans?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: they are - the loan term are very favorable and typically the loans are repaid when the project achieves construction loan closing. And so that's the way the fund is able to recycle those resources to support more acquisitions. And we do evaluate from time to time, you know, the future needs of the fund and assess, you know, what moving forward does the fund need to do to continue to execute its mission.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Can you give a few examples of recent projects that have benefitted from the fund? And what kind of developers?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: I don't have handy some stats on specific projects, but the range of projects is pretty wide. It's really everything. We see, you know, low-income rental projects. There's supportive housing projects for formerly homeless households. There's even hotel conversions that have been supported by the loan fund, and we definitely would be happy to provide the Council with specific examples of projects. But it

may be projects that many of you are familiar with as well.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: How might the Acquisition Fund make a COPA acquisition and redevelopment more financially feasible?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Well, the starting point is-- we talked t this a little bit. COPA is a legal mechanism, right? It would fit into a larger ecosystem of various tools. Certainly, those purchases could happen without any HPD or public support. If they applied to the Acquisition Loan Fund they could receive assistance for some of that sort of range of cost that the New York City Acquisition Fund supports which includes predevelopment resources and other, you know, below-interest or below-market loans to be able to make that work more feasible. So, depending on who the purchaser is, they would be eligible for those resources.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Following up on the earlier exchanges on the-- in relation to the tax lien sale, how many buildings currently qualify as distressed citywide?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: In terms of the tax lien sale definition specifically? So, as I believe you're aware, we're moving through the process for the tax lien sale. So, there is obviously a-- obviously there is a starting point of a wide number of buildings that are eligible and receive notices, and there's a renewing [sic] process as we try to make sure that folks are very aware of what's going on, and that there's sort of a funneling there. You know, in terms of that eligibility, I'm not sure it maps on exactly here. But are you asking sort of the number of buildings that-- because that's the statutory distress definition, that's what you're looking at?

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Yeah.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Okay. Give us one second.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: As we all know, the lien sale is also just happening now, and so we are definitely happy to follow up with our colleagues at DOF to provide a number of buildings that qualified for statutory distress, and we should be able to get that over to you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Yeah, I think we brought numbers, but it might just be easier for us to follow up as this is-- as Stephen noted, happening in real-time.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: What about-- so, the statutory definition in the lien sale apart, what about physically distressed?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: We have varying definitions of physical distress in various programs that we have. So, there is not sort of a one definition there. What we would want-- if we were thinking about this in the context of an intervention like COPA, we would want to be thinking both how we set standards for physical and financial distress that borrow from some of these programs, but also serve to shrink that universe so that we're really looking at both manageable and feasible number of transactions per year, and so that we're really getting at those high levels of distress. So that is going to be some intersection of those things, and you know, are-- in current thinking about it, and we would welcome the opportunity to talk more with you all about the way to define that.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Got it. Do you have handy a number like how many properties, residential properties in the City of New York, have more than two-- and I'm making up a reference point-- but more than two B and C class violations per unit, or anything like that? Anything you can sort of just use as a benchmark?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: We did not come with that level of enforcement data, but we'd be more than happy to follow up. I know that my colleague, Deputy Commissioner Ann Marie Santiago [sp?] is always a religious testimony-watcher, so she is watching us right now and asking someone to get us that data. We'll follow up.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. In conversations around Intro 1063 that we've had with the agency, I've heard that the agency would like to limit the number of properties that are rooted through the third-party transfer program, and the agency's positions has been that the rest of the program should go through the lien sale so that there's a clean-- a clear path for every building. So, question for you today is if a rent-stabilized building with significant physical and financial

problems is sent to the lien sale, is that a good policy outcome from your perspective?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: Well, we of course, do not want rent stabilized buildings to be experiencing physical and financial distress, and that's part of why so many of our preservation programs are well-funded and available for existing affordable housing, and so we work with many owners of rent stabilized buildings to provide capital loans to ensure that they've been stabilized. So, I'm not sure if that answers your question, but we would seek to-- there's many interventions that we would seek to deploy to prevent a situation where buildings are in those circumstances.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: To put a finer point on it, it is never the ideal policy outcome for a building to end up in a situation where they cannot pay their bills, their operating costs. You're always going to then have concerns. We have-- it is always preferable to us that that building seek to participate in one of our programs to get support before something ends up in that situation.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. And so I guess the ultimate question is relating back to

1 COPA-- is how do you understand that COPA could work
2 in parallel to different programs that the agency
3 has, the proposed Intro 1063 that we're talking about
4 a lot behind the scenes, to preserve distressed
5 buildings without sending them to the tax lien sale?
6

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Thank you for
8 that question. It is as we're talking about sort of
9 an ecosystem, right, of a number of ways that we may
10 engage with a building that is experiencing some
11 level of challenge in the ideal sense where we're
12 providing support, in the less ideal sense where
13 they're experiencing enforcement. What's unique
14 about COPA is that it is-- I used this term already,
15 forgive me, but a legal mechanism which slows the
16 market, but only when an owner moves to put that
17 building up for sale voluntarily. So, that action
18 can dovetail-- can happen among folks who are looking
19 for support and looking to work with us, or those who
20 are not and might experiencing enforcement. So,
21 while there's a lot of potential sort of
22 intersections in that universe of buildings, COPA
23 sort of is a little bit unique in that it is only an
24 intervention that is available when that owner goes
25 to sell.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you. Okay, so next set of questions. In August 2024, the Mayor issued Executive Order 43 which created the City Housing Activation Taskforce. HPD sits on this taskforce which is tasked with reviewing all land under the ownership and control of the city for housing development. Can you provide us an update on this taskforce, who else serves on it, what types of sites are being considered for new housing, and is HPD advocating that these sites be designated for 100 percent affordable housing, or does the agency have no position on whether future public sites will be 100 percent affordable? And, sorry, is there a timeline for a public report?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Thank you for that question. The City Housing Activation Taskforce, otherwise known as CHAT, is being led by the Deputy Mayor's Office for Housing, Economic Development, and Workforce. There are many city agencies represented there that does include HPD. They are charged with looking at the-- I'm told-- over 13,000 properties that the City has control over. Many serve essential functions. It includes park areas, schools, police stations, fire departments, shops, lots of things

1 that keep the cities up and running. CHAT has
2 identified several dozen "easy sites" for further
3 evaluation, and by the end of the year, they're
4 anticipating that we'll be able to advance housing on
5 sites that could generate thousands of homes. Some--
6 there have been some announcements of those sites,
7 so, Flushing Airport in Queens, Whitney Gansevoort in
8 Manhattan, Coney West in Brooklyn-- for all of my
9 colleagues' benefit, 100 Gold in Manhattan, 395
10 Flatbush Avenue, and Hunter's Point South. So, these
11 are all in varying stages of RFP lead-up or
12 announcement, or even I think it looks like a couple
13 of them have already had their responses come due.

15 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: And what is the
16 status of 100 Gold? You know this is my favorite
17 line-- one of my favorite lines of question. What's
18 the status of consideration there?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: We also like
20 talking about the prospect of 100 Gold being
21 renovated into more usable space or high-quality
22 space that includes residential. So, specifically
23 they're-- EDC, as you may know, is leading the RFP
24 process and HPD is participating with them in that.

RFP responses are due June 5th, so two days from now actually.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Why EDC? Why not HPD?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: It's coordination based on both combination of resources and tools to try to move this as efficiently and effectively as possible, but it is a coordination and collaboration.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: 100 percent affordable-- specific term sheets being considered?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: I have to say I actually am not specifically involved, so I don't know the terms of that. It is, I believe, publicly available but we will get back to you on the details.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Council Member Brewer grumbles "no" for the record.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Okay, thank you. Just a couple more on this line. So, in 2023, HPD reported 810 vacant tax lots under HPD's jurisdictions with two-thirds already RFP'd. how many of these lots have successfully been developed since then. How long have these properties been RFP'd. How many vacant lots are currently under HPD's

jurisdiction? Where are they located, and what is the average length of time that these properties have remained vacant?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: Okay.

So, yes, since 2023, we have approximately 40 lots are under construction as individual projects or as scatter site cluster projects. And so since November 2024, there were 742 vacant lots citywide under HPD jurisdiction. So, more than 75 percent are part of the existing RFP or RFQ pipeline where we're planning future development for affordable. This will happen over, you know, a period of time. The-- so they're, you know, different projects that are in different stages of approval process, and just something that's important to note is that it's 742 lots, but that doesn't mean there will be 742 projects. Many lots may be combined into one project, and so there's some, you know, lots that are held up as, you know, an entire project is being advanced through the RFP or RFQ process. The lots are citywide, but there's a lot in Brooklyn and Queens, and there's some that are part of larger planning processes. And there's both, you know, residential and there's some non-

residential uses that we're planning as always through RFP process for these lots to be developed.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Okay.

Well, that concludes my priority questions, because I do want to get to the folks that are patiently waiting. Colleagues, do you have any final questions?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Just very quickly-- so the Ward's Island, in order to get on the CHAT, CHAT taskforce, how do you get on it?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: I'm not sure the process of getting on the taskforce, but I assure you--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing]
Well, not on the taskforce. How do you get Wards Island--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: [interposing]
Right, to get on the list for the CHAT list. I'm not sure the mechanics of it, but we absolutely will talk to our colleagues about this and continue to talk to our colleagues at Parks.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Alright. Thank you. Thank you so much, HPD, for your testimony today, and I look forward to hopefully making even mor progress on these bills.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOFFE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Okay. I will now open-- what I can do when the baby's not here, right? I will now open the hearing for public testimony. I remind members of the public that this is a formal government proceeding and that decorum shall be observed at all times. As such, members of the public shall remain silent at all times. The witness table is reserved for people who wish to testify. No video recording or photography is allowed from the witness table. Further, members of the public may not present audio or video recordings as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant at Arms for inclusion in the hearing record. If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will have two minutes to speak on today's hearing topic of social housing and the associated legislation, numbers 78, 350, 570, 902, 1006A, 1007A, 1034, 1281,

1296, Resos number 374 and 777. If you have a written statement or additional written testimony you wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy of that testimony to the Sergeant at Arms. You may also email written testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours of this hearing. Audio and video recordings will not be accepted. I will now call the first panel: Hayoung Jeong out of East New York CLT, Deborah Ack [sp?], Jakob Schneider, Shantanu Dew, and Hannah Anousheh. You may begin when ready.

HAYOUNG JEONG: Thank you, Council Members. My name is Ha Jeong and I'm a member of East New York CLT. I'm here to urge your support for Intro 78, a bill that is not simply about the city's preference for real estate developers, but about the future of our public land. In the 1980s, the city used to have over 100,000 units of city-owned properties. Imagine if those properties had gone to Community Land Trust for permanently affordable housing, we would have never seen the housing crisis that we see today. Instead, HPD has given away public land to for-profit developers who constantly fail to serve our community needs. This approach has

1 COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 108
2 come at the expense of communities of color who
3 can't afford housing built on our bare public land.
4 in the past decade, one-third of all affordable
5 housing on public land has been concentrated in just
6 three community districts: East New York, East
7 Harlem, and Mott Haven. Why? Because these were
8 properties abandoned by slumlords in Black and Brown
9 neighborhoods back in the 70s. The City took this
10 land, let them sit vacant for decades, and now handed
11 them to for-profit developers. I urge you to pass the
12 Community Land Act now, and thank you for allowing me
13 to speak.

14 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

15 JAKOB SCHNEIDER: Hello. Thank you, Chair
16 Sanchez and committee members, for the opportunity to
17 testify in support of proposed legislation to advance
18 Community Land Trust. I am Jakob Kendall Schneider
19 of the East New York Community Land Trust which works
20 to prevent real estate speculation and displacement
21 in East New York and Brownsville for community
22 organizing providing permanently affordable housing
23 on community-controlled land. we are also members of
24 NYCCLI and lead the Abolish the New York City Tax
25 Lien Sale Coalition. We know that when land and

housing are permanently affordable and under community control, communities thrive. This is why we're urging the City Council to pass the three proposals under consideration today that are part of the Community Land Act. The Community Land Act also calls to permanently abolish the tax lien sale and replace it with an equitable system which could be accomplished through a land bank. The lien sale is an especially pernicious example of state-sponsored real estate speculation. Through the lien sale, the City encourages predatory dispossession of homeowner and tenant wealth that rewards Wall Street investors while abdicating its duty to perform a core function of city administration, the collection of city debt. The lien sale has been especially devastating for East New York. From 2017 through 2019, East New York had the second highest share and number of liens sold and was fourth in 2021. This year, East New York has held the dubious position of having the second greatest number of residential properties representing thousands of units eligible for the lien sale at each of the four notice periods. In addition, East New York has held the top spot of all community districts in the rate of hazardous HPD

violations, ODNK [sic], per residential unit with-- I mean, it's astonishing. 7.7 hazardous violations per unit at the 10-day notice period. While homeowners risk losing their homes and the wealth tied up in it, tenants pay rent to live in substandard conditions while their landlords don't pay their taxes or take care of their properties. The City must permanently end the tax lien sale and its sponsorship of private profit on the backs of Black and Brown communities. In our forthcoming written testimony we'll also provide additional information about our support for the Land Act, and our support for the land bank and social housing development authority proposals. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

HANNAH ANOUSHEH : Good afternoon, Council Members. My name is Hannah Anousheh and I'm the Campaigns Director for the East New York Community Land Trust. Myself along with many community leaders founded the East New York Community Land Trust in 2020 at the height of the COVID pandemic to combat displacement. In just five years we've built out a powerful, member-led organization with a disciplined democratic structure. Not only

that, but we founded the citywide Abolish the Lien Sale Coalition to replace the lien sale with a more just municipal debt collection system that Jakob spoke about. I just want to thank Council Member Brewer for sponsoring the land bank bill. We really great that it's a critical piece of the solution to replace the lien sale. Also, I want to mention that we've organized residents in the jewel streets, also known as the Hull, and extremely flood-prone area of East New York without connection to city sewer, and launched a neighborhood resilient planning effort with Council Member Banks, HPD, DEP, and DOT. Now we need to make sure that the 17-acre city-controlled site in the jewel streets is brought under community control. And so, we thank Council Member Restler and this whole committee for pushing forward the Public Land for Public Good bill and we urge the Council to pass the bill. We really need that swath of land that's actually on higher ground. It's the only area on higher ground to become a resilience hub with emergency resources, deeply affordable housing and much-needed commercial space. And finally, my colleague Shantanu is going to talk more about this, but we made history as the first CLT in New York City

history to acquire a multi-family building from a private landlord who had, you know, never even been to the building so that the tenants who had been organizing for years could become co-op shareholders. So, we urge you to pass COPA to make it so much easier for organized tenants and CLTs to take control of their buildings. And so, I just want to say, you know, we also did all this with \$98,000 a year from the City Council, and for a long time with only one fulltime staff. And now, thankfully, we have two more staff members. But, you know, we really need this legislation and funding to advance our movement. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you, Hannah.

SHANTANU DEW: Okay. Good afternoon, Chair Sanchez and committee members. Thanks for the opportunity to testify in support of proposed legislation to advance Community Land Trust. My name is Shantanu Dew, and I'm a Project Manager at East New York Community Land Trust. I'm currently, as Hannah mentioned, working on stewarding and managing the CLTs first property, 248 Arlington Avenue, through a rehab under HPD's preservation loan program. The project will bring long overdue major

repairs and major systemic upgrades to the building and eventually convert it to limited equity HDFC co-op, ensuring that the tenants can remain in their homes and community and preserving permanent affordability through a future 99-year ground lease with East New York CLT. 240-- as Hannah mentioned, 248 Arlington is historic and that is the first time in New York City that a CLT has privately purchased a building and it was all possible-- only possible due to the incredible work of the tenants. You know, many of these folks have lived in the building for decades, raised multiple generations of their family there. They organized for years with previous landlords to fight for basic repairs, and ultimately to take over their building. Tenants spent a lot of hard time and energy organizing for the takeover, meeting for months with the CLT even before I was here, with-- again, as Hannah mentioned, you know, where it was only just Hannah basically. You know, with the CLT helping just steward the efforts. You know, they believed in the power of collective action and the fact housing right is a-- that housing is a human right, not a commodity. It was this persistence that make the takeover possible, and now

1 they'll get to own their homes. You know, no matter
2 the result, there's no denying that the work for 248
3 Arlington was and is difficult and taxing, but also
4 deeply necessary because it's what the tenants wanted
5 and deserved. We hope that this is the hardest a
6 tenant takeover ever needs to be. The only way to
7 make that a reality is by passing the Community Land
8 Act which, as everyone has mentioned, includes three
9 proposals: Public Land for Public Good, COPA, and
10 Resolution for supporting TOPA [sic] in Albany,
11 especially when it comes to replicating tenant
12 takeovers like 248 Arlington, passing COPA and
13 supporting TOPA is absolutely essential. So, you
14 know, passing this is a critical step in fighting
15 back against the predatory real estate on, you know,
16 all the tenants and city land. So, thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much.

19 I'd like to thank you so much for your tireless
20 advocacy on the Land Act. I'd now like to call the
21 next panel: Rauna Zamal from Chhaya, Jessica
22 Balgobin, Will Spisak, Roberta Gratz-- and I'm so
23 sorry for any mispronunciation-- Simeon Bancroft and
24 Paula Segal. And you may begin when ready. Turn on
25 your mic, yep.

RAUNAQ ZAMAL: Thank you, Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee. My name is Raunaq Zamal and I'm the Communications and Neighborhood Development Associate at Chhaya CDC where we support in building the power, housing stability, and economic wellbeing of South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities in New York City. I was born and raised in Jackson Heights Queens and my neighborhood is getting the change rapidly. Two-family homes are being replaced with luxury apartment buildings. Small businesses that served our communities for generations are shutting down and being replaced by big box stores. What's being built isn't for us. It's not affordable. It's not community-driven and it's pushing working-class families, cultural spaces and long-standing local business to the edge. One example I wanted to mention is Hot Bazar [sp?], a restaurant and grocery store at 3711 73rd Street in Jackson Heights that was a staple for the Bangladeshi community. My family went there my whole life and after more than 20 years, as a cornerstone for our community, had recently closed due to rising rents. It was a cultural anchor, a communal space, and a taste of home for countless members of my community.

Its closure is part of a larger pattern. The few community spaces we do have are only here if they can survive the next rent spike. Intro 78, Public Land for Public Good, would help shift that reality by ensuring city-owned land is used to create permanently affordable spaces for local businesses and cultural institutions that serve, reflect, and stay in our communities. That's why we need the Community Land Act. Intro 78 and Intro 902 would give our communities a fair shot at keeping our homes, our neighborhoods and our businesses affordable permanently. They would give residents the power to create something lasting rooted in community needs. Our communities deserve more than survival. We deserve a say in what our neighborhoods become. Please pass Intro 78, Intro 902, and Resolution 374. Thank you.

ROBERTA GRATZ: I am Roberta Brandes Gratz and it's a pleasure to be here today. I'm here on behalf of the Campaign for a Livable City. We are a new initiative advocating for a balanced approach to planning and development that promotes responsible new development and ensures neighborhood continuity and access to essential resources like schools, parks

and small businesses. I've written six books about cities across America, covering what works and what doesn't. We want to enthusiastically support the Land Bank, the Land Trust, and the Affordable Housing Taskforce proposals. Unknown to most people, we are actually losing more affordable housing than we are building new. In this climate, land banks could be particularly useful in stabilizing neighborhoods, preventing land from being developed that disrupts a balanced community, and more. Land Trusts are particularly useful when there is property to be disposed of that would be disruptive if sold on the open market. And an Affordable Housing Taskforce on Wards Island would help avoid squandering, a fresh opportunity for needed affordable housing when more excessive high-priced housing would result instead. Furthermore, mandating the large apartment complexes first be offered to the tenants would avoid the further loss of affordable housing opportunity as was with the sale of Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village to Blackrock. It is little recognized today how much public equity is buying up housing in New York City and across the country and helping create the affordable housing crisis. Finally, creating a

public benefit corporation to build, acquire or rehabilitate permanently affordable housing is yet a commendable tool for a toolbox address our affordable housing crisis. Please address the loss of stable existing affordable housing being torn down to build new, expensive housing out of reach to middle income families. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

JESSICA BALGOBIN: Dear Council Member Sanchez and members of the Housing and Buildings Committee. My name is Jessica Balgobin and I am the Community Initiatives Manager at Chhaya Community Development Corporation where we work to build the power, housing stability, and economic wellbeing of Indo-Caribbean and South Asian communities across New York City. As a [inaudible] American born and raised in South Ozone Park and a constituent of Council Member and Speaker Adrienne Adams, I'm asking you to pass the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act, Public Land for Public Good, and the Resolution supporting the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act, three urgently needed bills that provide pathways to combat displacement of Black and Brown New Yorkers and take property of the speculative market. My

neighbors and I do not have a say in what is built in our neighborhood. South Ozone Park and the neighboring Richmond Hill are deeply anchored communities built by working-class immigrants, but we see a deep lack in access to things like affordable housing, public gathering spaces, community gardens and locally supported businesses that adequately address the needs of our community. Storefronts become vacant and turn into smoke shops, and I count over five that have popped up while traveling just five minutes on my local bus. The communities in South Ozone Park and Richmond Hill struggle with issues of domestic violence and alcoholism and other mental health conditions, and our people are left with no choice to commute out of the neighborhood and frequently out of the borough to access support and safety, relying on transit that's also deeply inaccessible. Public Land for Public Good and COPA would absolutely make a positive difference, allowing my neighbors to create safe, local, healing spaces, bolstering the deeply impactful work that already happens in my frequently-forgotten section of South Queens. Please pass Intro 78, Intro 902, and

Resolution 374 to give New Yorkers a real chance to build a meaning power in our communities. Thank you.

WILL SPISAK: Hi, good afternoon, Council Members. Thank you so much for holding this milestone hearing on social housing. My name us Will Spisak. I'm a Senior Policy Strategist with New Economy Project. We are also co-founders and facilitators of the New York City Community Land Initiative, the citywide coalition of CLTs that have been working to decomodify [sic] housing and land for a benefit of communities across the City. We're here to urge this committee and the Council to pass the Community Land Act, namely Public Land for Public Good, COPA, and the TOPA resolution as well as to express our support for the Land Bank bill. These bills will address root causes of New York's affordability crisis, combat displacement, and build lasing community wealth in low-income Black and Brown neighborhoods. This is not our first time here. We did have a hearing back in 2023, and we're excited to say that since then we're seeing progress and we've been extremely busy. We've built a mass movement. We have over 150 organizations endorsing the Community Land Act today. A Data for Progress poll found that

two-thirds of New York voters support the Community Land Act. We have dozens of CLT projects in the pipeline and we have hundreds of tenants that have reached out to our coalition expressing their desire to see a community takeover of their building or direct tenant takeover of their building and to bring it under community control. So, these are very popular ideas that were excited to see move forward. Just a few notes on some of the bills. Public Land for Public Good, we're extremely, you know, excited to see it move forward. We wanted to emphasize that one way to improve the bill would be make explicit the joint venture options available to nonprofits, and we wanted to just mention that Public Land for Public Good would not slow down the process of developing land. HPD already goes through a rigorous RFP process. All they would have to do is identify nonprofits and put them at the top of list, and if they don't qualify, they don't qualify. You move onto the next one. And just to mention about COPA, we're really excited to hear HPD's openness and excitement about COPA policy. We just want to stress that limiting it only to distressed properties would be very difficult for nonprofits and CLTs that want

1
2 to make sure that we're preventing rent stabilized
3 buildings and other properties from becoming
4 distressed. We need to not just address the crisis
5 in front of us but prevent the next one. So, we're
6 happy to continue having these conversations about
7 how to make COPA viable and strong enough for New
8 York City.

9 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank
10 you for all your work on this.

11 SIMEON BANCROFT: Good afternoon, Council
12 Members. I'm Simeon Bancroft with the Campaign for a
13 Livable City which Roberta Gratz has mentioned
14 earlier. We're a new initiative and we're incredibly
15 pleased to support the important initiatives being
16 discussed today. These bills are a remarkable effort
17 to bring much-needed aid to the communities
18 throughout the city suffering from the current
19 affordable housing crisis. We especially support
20 those bills which empower community members to have a
21 stronger voice in determining their future within
22 their existing neighborhoods through the creation and
23 strengthening of Community Land Trust and banks as
24 well as encouraging appropriate community-oriented
25 development for all. All too often in the past, the

City has looked to private real estate industry to solve the social ill of housing scarcity. While private industry is a powerful player in our city and must be engaged with when envisioning our city's future, the primary focus of industry is profit, not meeting social needs. This omnibus of proposed bills goes some distance to addressing these very real needs by creating and empowering new tools dedicated to creating and preserving affordable housing. Currently, city housing policy seems to be based on getting whatever is left over from market-rate development. New Yorkers need more than leftovers and scraps. This initiative is a worthy attempt to flip the script and actually menu plan for the actual affordable housing New Yorkers require and deserve. We need more of this.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

PAULA SEGAL: Thank you so much. Council Members, thank you so much for holding this hearing. My name is Paula Segal. I am speaking today as Senior Staff Attorney in the Equitable Neighborhoods practice of TakeRoot Justice. As you know, TakeRoot works with the grassroots groups, neighborhood organizations and community coalition to help make

sure that people of color, immigrants, and other low-income residents who've built our city are not pushed out in the name of progress. We're a member of the New York City Community Land Initiative and counsel to many of the grassroots Community Land Trust groups that make up that initiative. We're also a member of the Abolish the Tax Lien Sale Coalition. As you heard earlier, the coalition advocates for the full abolition of the New York City lien sale which is being held as we speak, and its replacement with systems that preserve homeowners and tenants' ability to stay in their homes, promote racial equity and support Community Land Trusts. I want to respond to a couple of things I heard in the exchange this morning. I'm really heartened that we are having this holistic hearing where we're talking about COPA. We're talking about a universal TOPA that I think we're all ready to go to Albany and fight for. We're talking about a land bank for New York City that will fill gaps that we're seeing with the existing agencies. I'm really excited that we're having a single conversation about that. I was a little bit distressed to hear that HPD seems to consider the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act a tool for

1 them, right? When they say, oh, we want this limited
2 to distressed properties, what they're really saying
3 is we want this limited to properties where we're
4 going to be really involved in bringing these
5 buildings back online. Well, it's really nice of
6 them to be really involved, but projects where HPD is
7 really involved move extremely slowly. I just
8 recently received a signed certificate for the
9 approval of the creation of a housing development
10 fund corporation, a year and a half after we
11 submitted the initial application, but also two weeks
12 after it was signed and dated by the Commissioner.
13 So, I don't know why, but I'm very fearful of a COPA
14 program that is one that is entirely in HPD purview,
15 and instead I want to encourage this to be a legal
16 requirement. The community opportunity to purchase
17 any property that is occupied that meets the criteria
18 the same way that if a charity sells its property it
19 needs to show that it got approval from the Attorney
20 General's Office. If a landlord wants to sell their
21 building, they need to show that they've provided a
22 community opportunity to purchase.
23 community opportunity to purchase.

24 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank
25 you so much. I want to thank all of you for your

1 advocacy on this issue. We're going to take just a
2 two-minute recess. Five minutes is more realistic.
3 Yes, after Council Member Brewer asks her question,
4 so don't leave. But let me just give a heads up to
5 the next panel. It's going to be Renelle Bradley
6 [sic], Will Depoo, Sheena Benjamin, Cameron Clarke,
7 and Rachel Coyle. Council Member Brewer?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
10 much. For Will Spisak, the land bank has many
11 functions. Can you discuss just a few of them and
12 how they can support affordable housing as well as
13 the other aspects, and how they would benefit with--
14 work with CLT, and do you think there are ways that
15 they should be changed even from what we've proposed.

16 WILL SPISAK: Yeah, thank you for the
17 question. You know, we've been working with as
18 NYCCLI, the coalition on this land bank issue, since
19 it was Brad Lander's bill. So, we've had many
20 iterations of the bill to work on. And you know,
21 land banks are really useful tools and HPD is correct
22 to say that New York City has a number of tools at
23 its disposal, but we've been really honed in on this
24 issue of the lien sale, because right now we have
25 this really opaque system where this completely

unaccountable lien sale trust buys liens from the City and then, you know, it goes to these private debt collectors, these investors that then can add on more interest and fees, and the City loses its leverage over these properties. A land bank could be a publicly accountable intermediary that can hold those liens and actually, you know, use its leverage to hold landlords accountable to help homeowners get out of financial distress which DOF for some reason doesn't do. They do have payment plans where they don't have case managers, for instance, which a land bank can do. So, there's a lot of ways that land bank can fit into that ecosystem in a way that doesn't replicate things that the city already does and then provides new options. And then of course, the changes that we had proposed to your office to strengthen the bill makes the board much more publicly accountable and transparent which is really important, opens up the land bank to doing more than just housing. There's so many needs. You know, there's neighborhoods that don't have, you know, access to affordable produce. You know, a community group could work with a land bank to develop a grocery store, for instance, in a neighborhood or a

community center, a commercial space. So, there's so many ways that we can leverage the power of that entity into benefiting New Yorkers far and wide, and by prioritizing CLTs as a key partner we think we would be able to do that in a way that preserves permanent affordability in the long-term.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. I think you're dismissed.

[break]

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Sergeants, I'm ready to resume.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Keep it down, please. Quiet, please. Have your seat. We are going to resume. Please have your seat. Guys, please, excuse me. Excuse me. May I have your attention? May I have your attention, please? Please, keep it down in the chambers. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: So, again, that's Renelle Bradley [sic], Will Depoo [sp?], Sheena Benjamin, Cameron Clarke, and Rachel Coyle. And you may begin when ready. Please turn on your microphone. Afternoon.

RENETTE BRADLEY: Excuse me. Sorry about that. Good afternoon, Councilwoman Sanchez and all

the rest of the members of the Council board. My name is Renette Bradley. I'm a resident of Cypress Hills, Brooklyn. I'm a tenant, a Section 8 tenant at that. I'm a member of the Hope Tenant Union, as well as part of Housing Justice for All Coalition, and I also one of the 19 authors of the Green [sic] Social Housing bill, and I am part of the House the Future Campaign for Social Housing. I'm here to speak on social housing. Public housing has not built housing in-- has not built affordable housing since 1970, and we need affordable housing to be built. There has been programs. There have been programs that have not lasted, and there have been housing said that they are affordable, but they are not deeply-affordable. With social housing, our vision of social housing will be deeply-affordable, de-commodified, and will be very green, and will be places for children to play. We need-- it's not only are we looking to build housing, we are looking to preserve the housing that we already have, and in order to preserve that housing, we have to build new housing for real affordable in our neighborhoods. We're seeing housing built up in our neighborhoods that we can't live in. We hear HPD say they building

housing, but we don't see HPD building anything for us. They're building for-- they're building for the rich and the one percent, but what about us? We're being pushed out our neighborhoods.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much for your testimony.

CAMERON CLARKE: Good afternoon Committee Chair, Committee on Housing and Buildings. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'm Cameron Clarke. I'm an organizer representing WE ACT for Environmental Justice speaking in favor of Community Opportunity to Purchase, Tenant Opportunity to Purchase, and Public Land for Public Good. If you're familiar, WE ACT is a membership organization headquartered in Harlem and for the past 30 years has served all of northern Manhattan. The communities that we serve are majority Black, Brown or low-income and lack the parks, gardens, grocery stores, community centers, etcetera, that we need and deserve in order to thrive, even as we are being pushed out by speculation and gentrification. But every time we would call for more affordable housing and community center development, we would hear the same things. There's no room to build in Harlem. It's too dense.

1 The land is already built-up. Harlem is full. Well,
2 that actually didn't sound right to our members. So,
3 last year we actually spent every day walking past
4 abandoned buildings and empty lots that seemed like
5 they were begin to be redeveloped by one of our three
6 uptown Community Land Trusts. So, we actually
7 decided to test that claim. So, with our members,
8 last year we walked every single block of northern
9 Manhattan tracking vacant lots, abandoned buildings,
10 parking lots, community gardens, all viable
11 properties for transfer to a CLT. In total we found
12 392 vacant lots, 20 percent of which were city-owned,
13 238 abandoned and deteriorating buildings, 284
14 parking lots-- that's nearly 10 million square feet
15 of under-developed land. that's enough space for
16 more than 150 football fields, or if you think in
17 terms of northern Manhattan, that's 3,000
18 brownstones. That's a long way from no room to
19 build. This isn't an issue of space to develop.
20 This is truly a policy choice where we've created a
21 landscape where developers can get land from the city
22 for pennies on the dollar and sit on it, or trade it
23 back and forth amongst themselves until the
24 neighborhood is gentrified so much that they can
25

1 build a luxury tower that no one from the actual
2 community is able to afford to live in. So, that's
3 why we need to actually change the system and put
4 communities first, which is why we need the City
5 Council to pass the Community Land Act, including
6 Public Land for Public Good, Community Opportunity to
7 Purchase, and Tenant Opportunity to Purchase. Thank
8 you so much.

10 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

11 RACHEL COYLE: Hi. Thank you, Council
12 Member Sanchez and members of the Housing and
13 Building Committee. My name is Rachel Coyle. I am a
14 member and organizer with WE ACT for Environmental
15 Justice and also a coalition organizer at the Climate
16 Justice Coalition, New York Renews. I am submitting
17 testimony in favor of COPA, Intro 902, Public Land
18 for Public Good, Intro 78, and the resolution
19 supporting the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act,
20 Resolution 374, three bills urgently needed that
21 provide pathways to take property off of the
22 speculative market, combat displacement of Black and
23 Brown New Yorkers, and ensure community-led
24 development. I live in central Harlem, as well, and
25 my neighborhood is fewer and fewer local businesses.

1 While I see constantly new corporations coming in,
2 developing the neighborhood, that displace local
3 Black and Brown people, and build unaffordable
4 housing to make a profit. I work at a restaurant
5 down the street from me, and we're fighting hard to
6 stay open. It's Black-led and immigrant-led, and
7 even though we provide one of the few community
8 spaces in the neighborhood, not just to eat but to
9 host writing groups, book clubs, virtual workers,
10 local musicians, and local art exhibitions, rising
11 costs are struggling to kick us out of the
12 neighborhood. It's also happened to the community
13 garden next to me as well where a luxury apartment
14 building took over half of their plot. My neighbors,
15 co-workers, friends and I do not have a say on what
16 is built in our neighborhood, and in the summer of
17 2024, I was also a part of the community-led land
18 survey where we identified 881 total lots in uptown
19 Manhattan that are buildings fallen in disrepair,
20 parking lots, and many other types of land that
21 Cameron mentioned that can be utilized for affordable
22 housing, for these community centers, and to support
23 local businesses so we don't have to close and we
24 don't have to struggle like the restaurant that I
25

work at. We, the community, demand the opportunity to decide how land in our community is used. I know my neighborhood would like more affordable housing and more greenspaces to deal with rising temperatures and the increased impacts of asthma due to pollution. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

WILL DEPOO: Thank you, Chair Sanchez and members of the Housing and Buildings Committee, for holding this hearing on the bills and resolutions related to social housing. My name is Will Depoo and I'm a Senior Campaign Organizer at ANHD. As you may know, ANHD is one of the city's leading policy advocacy, technical assistance and capacity building orgs with a membership of over 80 neighborhood-based and citywide nonprofits that have affordable housing and/or equitable economic development as a central component of their mission. As we continue to face an affordable housing and homelessness crisis, we must commit to building and preserving affordable housing for those who most need it. ANHD members, which are-- which some are mission-driven nonprofit developers and Community Development Corporations, CDCs, have always provided housing services and

organizing support in low and moderate income, primarily BIPOC communities and are rooted in addressing community needs, not economic gain, and ensuring that housing remains permanently affordable and community-controlled. Many of the bills being heard today would provide these critical tools to fight speculation, develop more equitably, and transfer distress buildings to trusted stewards. And in those ANHD strongly supports Intro 78. City-owned land should be transferred to trusted community stewards such as mission-driven nonprofit developers and CLTs to ensure that public land serves a public good. Intro 350, ANHD supports-- and Intro 350 which would require the HPD in collaboration with other city agencies to conduct a feasibility study on developing a social housing agency. ANHD supports 570, Intro 570, which would establish the land bank that would be tasked with acquiring warehousing and transferring property for affordable housing. And ANHD supports Intro 902, the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act, COPA, and the mission of ensuring that community-focused, mission-driven nonprofit developers and CLTs have the first opportunity to purchase apartment buildings. And lastly, we support

passing Resolution 374 which supports the state-led Tenant Opportunity to Purchase legislation. Thank you again for having this important hearing, and we must ensure that we keep New York equitable, affordable for those that most deserve it.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you so much to this panel. Next panel is Matthew Shore of Mott Haven-Port Morris Community Land Stewards, South Bronx Unite, Elizabeth Thompson, Adam Blazej, Jorge Paula [sp?], Jack Hsia, and Melanie Reyes [sp?]. You may begin when ready. There we go.

JACK HSIA: Good afternoon, Chair Sanchez and Committee Members. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify in support of the proposed legislation to advance Community Land Trusts. My name is Jack Hsia. I'm a Housing Attorney and community organizer and I'm speaking on behalf of the Chinatown CLT which is also a member of NYCCLI. We urge the committee and the City Council to pass the Community Land Act, a package of urgently needed policies to bring land and housing into permanently affordable community control. The housing crisis is dire. Chinatown is shrinking. We have one of the lowest rates of homeownership in the entire city at only 15

percent and our tenants are constantly living in--
often living in dangerous and overcrowded conditions.
Much of the housing in Chinatown is made up of old
tenement buildings that haven't been updated in
decades. Many members of our community are
immigrants, seniors, families, small business owners,
and we're at constant risk of displacement. Many
struggle with English and fear interacting with
complicated court and social services systems. And
on a personal note, like I said, I'm a lawyer and I
cannot afford to live in the neighborhood that my
family is from when market rents are now \$3,000 to
\$5,000. CLTs owned and operated by the people are an
important tool for creating sustainable communities
and inter-generational wealth by making the land and
housing permanently affordable. Our CLT is actively
trying to acquire land to combat some of the housing
and neighborhood problems, and the Community Land Act
can help. For example, despite multiple homeless
shelters being proposed and built in our communities,
when our own neighbors lose their homes to fires,
they might get uprooted to any shelter in this whole
city. The Chinatown CLT is now in discussions with
local organizations on finding property to use as

1 emergency housing and affordable housing so that
2 displaced community members can stay near their jobs
3 and loved ones when they try to rebuild their lives
4 after fires, which is more and more common in our
5 aging housing stock. We know our issues best and
6 demand the opportunity to decide how land in our
7 community is used. And if all these more serious
8 matters don't convince you-- don't worry, almost
9 done-- I also want to remind you that Chinatown is
10 City Hall's neighbor and probably responsible for
11 feeding generations of underpaid public servants. My
12 dad was once a food delivery worker for family's
13 restaurant which delivered cheap and delicious foods
14 to workers in and around City Hall. And when I got
15 my first job out of college as a public servant, my
16 office was nearby, and I think many of you and your
17 staffers can relate, I relied heavily on Chinatown
18 for affordable and healthy meals. Please support our
19 communities as we have long supported you. I
20 strongly urge the New York City Council to enact
21 Intro 902, Intro 78, and Resolution 374. Thank you
22 for your time.

24 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

MELANIE REYES: Hello. Good afternoon, Chair Sanchez and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today to talk about the Community Land Act and the way it can advance Community Land Trust. My name is Melanie Reyes. I work at We Stay Nos Quedamos in the Melrose community in the Bronx which operates a Community Land Trust that centers resident leadership and long-term affordability. We are working collaboratively with tenants to improve their living conditions, address issues, and ensure they have a voice in decisions affecting their homes. Through structures like our advisory committee, residents are directly involved in shaping how their building is owned and operated, and we are also members of NYCCLI, a coalition that you're hearing from today. To truly combat the affordability crisis, displacement and homelessness, the City permanently-- the City must bring land and housing into permanently affordable community control, and so we urge the City Council to pass the Community Land Act which includes the Public Land for Public Good, COPA, and a resolution supporting TOPA in Albany. The Community Land Act also calls to permanently abolish the NYC tax lien sale and replace

it with an equitable system which could be accomplished through the creation of a land bank. Together, these policies will protect and maximize city land and subsidies for public benefit, level the playing field for nonprofits and CLTs to meet community needs. One priority bill in the CLA is the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act which would give tenants a meaningful seat at the table when their building is up for sale, but allowing them to sign their purchasing rights to a nonprofit or a Community Land Act. At Nos Quedamos we're strengthening tenant voice and collective governance through our advisory committee so residents have real input. TOPA would expand this model citywide, ensuring that tenants have power in positions about their housing, and that buildings remain permanently affordable and community-controlled. So, we ask for your support. Thank you for your time.

ELIZABETH THOMPSON: Good afternoon. My name is Elizabeth Thompson. I'm from the Bronx. I believe before I got sick we was fighting for this, and now I'm well, and I'm ready to fight for this again. I don't think the people should be waiting for so long before all this Act-- Intro 902, 78, 374,

it should be passed today. This is too long. People need housing, and when we go and say we need housing and we tell them our income, they say oh, you're making too much. \$40-\$50,000 is not enough. The Bronx is terrible when it comes to housing. Y'all have to help us do something around-- do something for us, and to pass these Intro would help us out a lot. I don't get any subsidize. Nobody helps me, but my pension. I work for the City, and I think it's time for all of these to be passed now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you, Ms. Liz.

MATTHEW SHORE: Bronx in the house. Good afternoon, Chair Sanchez and committee members. Thanks for the opportunity to testify--

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: [interposing] I think your mic is off.

MATTHEW SHORE: Good afternoon, Chair Sanchez and committee members. Thanks for the opportunity to testify in support of legislation to advance Community Land Trust. I'm Matthew Shore from the Bronx and an organizer with the Mott Haven-Port Morris Community Land Stewards, a CLT founded in 2015 by south Bronx residents to permanently steward land for public use, ensuring community control and self-

determination. In 2023, we reclaimed a long vacant Lincoln Recovery Center in Mott Haven which will reopen in two years as the Heart Center, a hub for holistic health, education and arts in a neighborhood lacking community spaces. We're also working to activate our peninsula's inaccessible waterfront by creating greenspaces to mitigate asthma, pollution, and flooding. We're proud members of NYCCLI and co-organized its Greenspace Equity Committee, a group of CLTs and nonprofits that briefed the Council in January about the holistic benefits of Intro 78 and how it could scale up affordable housing CLTs and greenspace CLTs, community space CLTs, etcetera. We urge passage of the Community Land Act which includes Public Land for Public Good, COPA, a resolution supporting TOPA up in Albany, and the permanent abolition of the New York City tax lien sale, replacing it with an equitable system, potentially through a land bank as mentioned today. These anti-displacement and equity-centered policies would help CLTs and nonprofits deliver more deeply affordable housing, commercial and community spaces. Nearly half of New Yorkers live in environmental justice areas; 67 percent live in historically red-lined

neighborhoods. To undo environmental racism and top-down planning, we must be empowered to shape and steward public land. With Intro 78, CLTs like ours are better positioned to create the healthy greenspaces our neighborhoods need, critical in areas like the south Bronx where one in five children have asthma. Please see my written testimony for more information about why this legislation package is critical for the south Bronx. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

JORGE PAULA: Hi. My name is Jorge Paula. My background is architecture. It's my first time here, first time speaking in public like this, but I want to bring to attention something very important. You mentioned asthma. I'm suffering asthma now because of mold in my unit for over 28 years, and leaks that continue today despite the times that I've been in court, and I'm in court right now, on trial. I work from the [inaudible] center to airports, train stations, schools, all kinds of infrastructures for every New Yorker, and I cannot understand how as we serve our country, our city, our people, we can't have at least a decent home. I now have a child and a family. These are the cracks-- these are the cracks

1 in the ceiling of my unit. Total-- measuring the
2 cracks there, there's 214 feet of cracks.

3 [inaudible] those are just simply hairline cracks.

4 They're not hairline cracks. They're cracks here in
5 my bedroom that go along this wall and this wall that
6 are going to cause a collapse like this one if
7 nothing happens. We have all kinds of inspections

8 happening our city, and there are things that are
9 visible and obvious and there are things that are not

10 so obvious. We take care of doing all the cosmetics
11 all the time. We are concealing what's happening in

12 the structure inside, and so there are things that
13 are visible and simple like this, all the cracks in

14 the back of the building that the DOB and HPD can do,
15 but there's so many other things that happen inside

16 of our buildings that only tenants know. I know how
17 the building moves. I know how our floors goes up and

18 down in certain areas, how we have to nail back the
19 nails when the building moves and shifts, how our

20 doors get jammed and we get entrapped and all those
21 kinds of things. When HPD goes to our homes and the

22 inspectors come, they can't see anything. They can't
23 report all those things. doesn't matter how many

24 times we say. I don't sleep well. I'm here on three
25

1 hours of sleep and I've been like this for over two
2 years thinking that if the building falls, how do I
3 grab my six-year-old daughter, my wife and our dog to
4 run out of the building to stay alive? Is this what
5 I pay rent for? I still pay rent two years ago. I'm
6 on trial right now. If I don't pay whatever the
7 judge says that I need to pay at the end, and I don't
8 have the money, I end up homeless. This is what we
9 are working. I was born on this earth like everybody
10 else, and by birth alone, we are all shareholders of
11 this earth. We are all dust, and we're all returning
12 to the earth someday. No one takes anything. Money
13 is ink on paper, and everything I hear most of the
14 time is a talk about the monopoly game. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank
17 you for your testimony, and I'd love to follow up
18 with you about your property where you live if that's
19 okay?

20 ADAM BLAZEJ: Hi. I'm Adam Blazej. I'm
21 a tenant and a member with Jorge, the Upper Manhattan
22 Tenants Union. We are a tenant-led group committed
23 to organizing tenant associations in our buildings
24 from Harlem to Inwood in order to counter the
25 violence of our landlords. In 2020, my wife and I

1 with our then two-year-old son moved into a rent
2 stabilized apartment in a building that happened to
3 be owned by a notorious private equity landlord.
4 From the beginning we experienced infestations, days
5 of no heat and hot water, lead paint, you know,
6 elevator not working, you know, all the things that
7 people-- tenants are familiar with. And we reached
8 out to our neighbors in our building. Learned we all
9 shared similar experiences, many tenants for several
10 years fighting the landlord. So, we formed a tenant
11 association taking what collective responsibility we
12 could to improve our living conditions. We had some
13 success as a tenant association, but we knew that our
14 landlord was more powerful than us, owning over 100
15 buildings across the City, and we also knew that
16 they, the landlord, Sugar Hill Capital Partners, had
17 been named the number one worst landlord in the City
18 for violations and evictions. So, we reached out
19 tenants, a couple of dozen of other buildings from
20 Harlem to Inwood, and we talked about our
21 experiences. We shared strategies, and we formed a
22 union of sorts to put pressure on the owner. In part
23 because of that, because of the public pressure and
24 financial pressure and also help of some city
25

officials, we were able to begin to bring Sugar Hill Capital Partners to the negotiating table and begin negotiating with them, because they were, we were told, in the process of looking to sell their buildings. A long story short, that ultimately went nowhere, in part because we didn't have the legislative tools necessary to really effectively exert the leverage we needed to influence the sale of our buildings, and so what ended up happening was they sold a bunch of our buildings to who-- to another owner who by all tenant accounts is surprisingly even worse. And so, yeah, we're trying-- we want to stop that. We want to have some influence over the sale of our buildings, because part of what we've seen since the passage of 2019 tenant protection laws, owners are just going on like a capital strike. You know, we can without our rent, but they can withhold a bunch of their resources from our buildings and make us suffer because they're crying about these laws that, you know, they claim are putting them in the red. But you know, so we need to some, like, action. So, we come in support of TOPA and COPA, in particular. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you so much. Thanks to all for your testimony. Ms. Liz, I will see you tonight at the Kingsbridge Armory hearing where we are talking about community ownership and I'm very excited about that, and I also just wanted to highlight for you Jorge-- and I'm sorry, I forget your name.

ADAM BLAZEJ: Adam.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Adam. I wanted to highlight for you that in addition to the Community Land Act, Intro 1063 is trying to bring back a version of the third-party transfer program that would go after just your kind of landlord, right? The worst of the worst with buildings in deteriorating conditions, wrestle that control from them through a municipal foreclosure, and then turn it over to responsible ownership whether it's the tenants or mission-driven organizations. So, I look forward to talking more with you about that, just so that we can continue on the momentum to move all of these pieces of legislation forward and stabilize more properties in the City. Thank you.

JORGE PAULA: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: The next panel is going to consist of John Krinsky, Arielle Hersh, Pia Palomino, Sylvia Morse, Oksana Mironova, and Valerio Orselli.

JOHN KRINSKY: Good afternoon, Council Member Sanchez, and thanks very much for holding this hearing. My name's John Krinsky. I'm a professor at City College of New York where I lead the Community Change Studies Program which introduces students to community organizing around the city and also hosts fellowships for housing organizers and leaders. This has been a long road. I first became aware of Community Land Trust in 1992 when Cooper Square was organizing in the Lower East Side the first Community Land Trust in the City, and it still provides deeply-affordable housing to residents in an otherwise very gentrified area. In 2010, I started working with Picture the Homeless, a homeless activist group, that among other things-- and I was reminded of this by Cameron's testimony. Surveyed a third of the city and found enough vacant property at the time to house almost 200,000 people, and it was out of that work that interest in Community Land Trust, especially in neighborhoods where there's a large production of

homelessness that were also facing gentrification threats and also had a lot of vacant property, and so we got together, we did some studies together, and found other people around the city interested and founder together the New York City Community Land Initiative and I'm a founding board member of that. So, the Community Land Trust-- Community Land Act came out of NYCCLI and came out of our thinking what could we possibly do? What are the legislative things that we need to see in order for deeply-affordable, community-controlled housing to become a reality. We're in a historic moment right now. The City Council is interested in this in ways that it hadn't been. HPD is showing more openness to it than ever before, and with the changes that are going to come to City Council, with the changes that are going to come to the administration, now is the time that we really, really need to pass this. So, thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

ARIELLE HERSH: Sorry, one second.

Honorable Chair Sanchez, members of the Committee, thank you for holding today's hearing and for the opportunity to testify. My name is Arielle Hersh and

I'm the Director of Policy and New Project at UHAB.

For 50 years UHAB has empowered low and moderate-income residents to take control of their housing and become homeowners in the buildings where they already live. We really appreciate the Council's initiative in holding this hearing today and proposing this package of bills to advance social housing. We're supportive of the Community Land Act. We're also a member of NYCCLI, and we'd really like to use some of our testimony to talk about COPA, but before we do that, we also want to make sure that we're using this prescient conversation around social housing to uplift and focus on the preservation of New York City's existing social housing stock, including limited equity cooperatives like HDFCs and Mitchell-Lama's, the stable block of affordable homeownership for 25,000 households across 1,200 buildings in New York City, and for the last 30 years, folks who stewarded their buildings through deferred maintenance, fiscal uncertainty and maintained their buildings and their homes despite too little investment from this city. HDFC co-ops need a renewed property tax abatement, easier access to low-cost loans for energy upgrades and capital needs, and

assistance complying with Local Laws including Local Law 97. Now, to the COPA part. We're really excited to hear about HPD's openness to a COPA program. We think that COPA needs some of those edits that I know are pending and have been proposed around making that right of first refusal and the right of first offer really strong to make this a complete piece of legislation, and we agree that COPA is best as a broad citywide right not specific to specific neighborhoods. Things change too quickly. And for the same reason it's also most powerful when it covers as many buildings and as many tenants as possible, not just the most distressed buildings. We've been talking for a long time about this larger universe of preservation strategies that build pathways to tenant and community control. COPA can't do this all. TPT, Intro 1063 can't do this all. We need sort of an all-and-above approach. I do want to respond to a couple points of testimony if I have a second. We expect that the vast majority of buildings that go through COPA will perhaps not actually exercise their right, and then a smaller bundle will use that point of sale as additional leverage to win repairs and other tenant organizing

1 wins, and a smaller portion of that will actually
2 pair with a nonprofit preservation purchaser or CLT
3 and work to take over their homes, and an even
4 smaller proportion than that will succeed in doing
5 so. And an even smaller proportion of the ones that
6 succeed will work with alternative ownership models
7 like CLTs and HDFC co-ops. As much as I wish that
8 was the whole piece of the pie, we heard about this
9 90,000 universe of sales that are eligible earlier
10 today, and it's highly unlikely that that whole
11 90,000 will move forward in exercising a COPA
12 purchase. And so, this question around disrupting and
13 extending the market I think is not entirely as
14 represented and really want to find both a program
15 that's workable and feasible that the agency can
16 execute, and also matches where their tenant
17 organizing and interest and movement from this whole
18 community of advocates here. I also want to say as a
19 preservation purchaser, a nonprofit developer and
20 sponsor who's worked on these type of purchases, also
21 with a lot of HPD programs, that we need time in
22 COPA. Those edits are so important because we need
23 time to do due diligence. There's like a 10-week
24 minimum timeline to do things like an PNA, physical
25

needs assessment, engineering assessments, appraisal, compiling a rent role, etcetera. These are the things that we're talking about in addition to tenants getting organized and being able to exercise their right when we're talking about the nitty gritty of what goes into that timeline of the bill, and so just want emphasize how important that is for all pieces of the folks who are working on this. Again, we're really excited to hear about that support for a COPA framework and want to continue to engage on specific details of the program. We'll submit longer written testimony. Thanks. Sorry, I went over.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. No, no problem. We just-- we have a lot of folks on que, but thank you for your testimony. Appreciate it.

PIA PALOMINO: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you, Chair Sanchez and the Committee on Housing and Buildings for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Pia Isabella Palomino. I am a community organizer with the East New York Coalition for Community Advancement, an organization dedicated to fighting against gentrification and the erosion of affordable housing in East New York. Our neighborhood has historically been a working class

community, but in recent years, rapid gentrification has rapidly risen up rents, pushed out long-term residents and threatened the very fabric of the community. As a community organizer, I see firsthand how market force is driven by investors and speculators exploit our community's vulnerabilities. Long-term residents constantly express their fears of being pushed out, unable to afford the rising rents, or losing their home due to predatory practices. Homeowners are harassed daily to sell their property for cash in order to quickly resell these homes for corporate profit. These toxic home-flipping practices are what we must fight against in order to preserve affordable housing and homeownership opportunities for our community. I strongly urge City Council to pass the Community Land Act which includes three proposals being discussed today, Public Land for Public Good, COPA, and a resolution supporting TOPA in Albany, an important package of policies needed to reclaim land and housing for the people who have built and sustained East New York and similar communities over generations. These proposals are essential to curb speculation, stabilize our neighborhoods, and protect affordability and

accessibility for all residents. The Community Land Act will allow communities like East New York to take land off the speculative market and ensure it is used for public good. In our neighborhood, we see the devastating effects of market-driven gentrification, and this includes long-time residents being priced out, small businesses forced to close, and vital community spaces disappearing. Finally, though not on the agenda for today, we also urge City Council to pass Resolution 683 introduced by Council Member Sandy Nurse in December 2024 in order to support state legislation to tax home-flipping that is driving up prices for New York City's scarce affordable homes and neighborhoods. We thank the Committee for prioritizing these policies and recognizing that community-led solutions are essential to addressing New York's housing crisis. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

SYLVIA MORSE: Good afternoon, Chair Sanchez, members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of several important proposals to advance community land stewardship and affordability. I'm Sylvia Morse from

Pratt Center for Community Development which conducts research and technical assistance in collaboration with community-based organizations on land use and housing policy in New York City including to Community Land Trust as members of NYCCLI. we urge City Council to pass the Community Land Act, including Public Land for Public Good, COPA and the resolution in support of TOPA, and we echo the testimony of other NYCCLI members on how to make sure those bills are as strong as possible. Together these policies would protect and maximize city land and subsidies for public benefit, level the playing field for nonprofits and CLTs to meet community housing and economic needs and help vulnerable New Yorkers stay in their homes and neighborhoods. We also support others bills and resolutions being discussed today that will advance community stewardship of land for long-term affordability, including the Land Bank bill Intro 570, as well as Intros 1006 and 1007 to expand legal definition and regulatory agreements for CLTs to include uses beyond housing. And we support the resolution related to the social housing development authority. Pratt Center has a long history of researching and advocating for strategies to combat

displacement, preserve affordable housing, and give tenants a say in the future of their homes and neighborhoods. Our 2023 report on Community Land Trust, Gaining Ground, identified the land acquisition and disposition, funding and regulatory reforms proposed in these bills included in the Community Land Act as key strategies to address the root cause of our affordability crisis with precedent in other cities like D.C. and San Francisco. Our recent report on home-flipping which found that speculators are driving up prices and displacement in New York City's last affordable neighborhoods of color just like Pia was talking about only underscores the need to expand non-speculative models. We also urge the enhancement of funding for CLTs which will support new CLTs as well as groups like ours to provide technical assistance to CLTs throughout the City. Thanks so much for your time.

OKSANA MIRONOVA: Thank you so much for this opportunity to testify. My name is Oksana Mironova and I'm here from the Community Service Society of New York to support the Community Land Act which includes Intro 902, the COPA, Intro 78, Public Land for Public Good, and the Resolution 374 in

support of TOPA on the state level. We also call on the City Council to pass the land bank bill, specifically as a pathway towards reforming and abolishing the tax lien system, Intros 1006 and 1007 which would expand the legal definition of CLTs, Intro 350 to support a study of a feasibility of a social housing agency on the city level, and Resolutions 777 in support of the state SHDA built. We know that COPA works. San Francisco passed a similar law in 2019, and in the years since, the law has provided-- has proven to be very effective, especially in preserving affordability in rent-controlled buildings. For example, the Mission Economic Development Agency founded in 1973 to promote equitable economic development for working class Latino households, and San Francisco's Mission District has successfully closed eight COPA-facilitated purchases, each one in close partnership with the building's tenants. I also really wanted to lift up Arielle from UHAB's point about the fact that our COPA bill is really powerful as it is, but it would be great to see an expansion of it to include right of first purchase as well our right to first refusal, and to make sure that it is not just limited

1 to distressed properties. We have seen similar
2 policies in the past in the city going back to the
3 1970s and the 1980s not succeed when the pool of
4 buildings that is targeted by a program is limited to
5 just severely distressed buildings. But some amount
6 of limiting could be okay as long as it includes
7 additional factors as well. Thank you so much.

8 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

9 VALERIO ORCELLI: [inaudible] Okay.

10 Thank you, Chairman Sanchez, members of Committee,
11 for this opportunity to allow me to speak in support
12 of the Community Land Act and all of its aspects. My
13 name is Valerio Orcelli. I'm currently the Project
14 Director of This Land is Ours, Community Land Trust.
15 I'm a founding member of Cooper Square Housing
16 Association, and Cooper Square Community Land Trust.
17 I just want to mention just some things that we've
18 been able to accomplish through City Council's
19 discretionary funds. In particular, using the funds
20 from the City Council, we were able to identify MWBE
21 partners to work with us after the Archdiocese of New
22 York issued an RFP for one of their properties, Saint
23 Emmerick [sic] on East 12th Street, and we applied
24 successfully, and now we're in the process of
25

1 implementing after our position plans for the site
2 which would result in 570 apartments, 60 percent of
3 them deeply affordable, 40 percent affordable to
4 families of 80 percent of AMI or below. The land
5 will ultimately be owned by the Land Trust, but we
6 cannot predict exactly when that's going to happen,
7 because of the financing for the project being so
8 wide, requiring tax credits [sic] and so on. And we
9 don't wish to jeopardize the funding, so that might
10 take a while before it happens, but we're very
11 grateful for the help we got from then Borough
12 President Gale Brewer and our Councilwoman Carlina
13 Rivera. We're also here to support the Public Land
14 for the Public Good. Most city-owned property in the
15 neighborhoods that we're working in which is lower
16 east side and also Chelsea Clinton has been given
17 away to for-profit developers. There's a couple of
18 properties we're interested in in our neighborhood, a
19 NYCHA parking lot on East Sixth Street and an NYPD
20 parking lot on East Fifth Street, but we are being
21 asked to compete with all sorts of for-profit
22 developers, so we'll have to see what happens. But
23 we're hoping to be able to successfully complete
24 that. We're also working with a couple of buildings
25

on West 45th Street and also 331 East 14th Street for acquisition. The main problem is the acquisition. And finally, we're working to empower agencies to partners with CLTs to steward all kinds of properties besides housing. We're engaged in a community-wide visioning process for the PS 64 building that used to be the [inaudible] Community Cultural Center. The land is now owned by philanthropic entity, but-- the buildings is owned by the philanthropic entity, but the land is still owned by the City of New York and we're hoping that the City will agree to share ownership with us of the land to make sure that public land remains public in perpetuity. And last but not least, we've done this with a skeleton staff. We need much more funding than we have received to date from City Council. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you all so much. I will now call the next panel which is consisting of Mark Natanawan, Pamela Herrera, Clint Okayama, Rachel Brown, and David Lander. You may begin when ready. Also, I want a shirt. Just kidding. I mean, I do, but just kidding.

MARK NATANAWAN: Hello, and thank you for having us speak here today. My name is Mark

1 Natanawan. I'm a supporter of the New York City
2 Community Land Initiative, and over the past several
3 years I've worked as a tenant organizer in the west
4 side of Manhattan. Prior to that, I worked in
5 providing technical assistance to community
6 organizations seeking to build affordable housing
7 NYC. I have had a lot of experience up and close
8 with developers and landlords of all different shapes
9 and sizes. I support Public Land for Public Good,
10 COPA, TOPA, and the third-party transfer program, any
11 legislation that advances social housing in our city,
12 because I know that the type of entity that we
13 entrust with our land and our homes matters. The
14 fundamental ethos, goals, and mission of the
15 organization matters. Building housing is long, hard
16 work, and each developer makes countless tiny
17 decisions within each project that can be oriented in
18 one of two directions, either maximizing
19 affordability in every single unit, or maximizing
20 profit within every single unit. I believe it was
21 Council Member Restler that mentioned earlier today
22 the studies that showed that when we entrust
23 nonprofits with our public land, we see significantly
24 more affordable housing produced as a result, and
25

1 that is not surprising to me at all, given my
2 experience. What happens with housing not just at
3 the outset of projects, but also in the long-term
4 matters as well, I have seen too many instances of
5 for-profit landlords buying buildings in the west
6 side of Manhattan and proceeding to push out tenants,
7 jack up rent, and neglect housing to the point of
8 letting it deteriorate and fall apart. I would love
9 to see more of the opposite in New York City,
10 nonprofits purchasing buildings, preserving
11 affordable housing, creating new affordable housing,
12 and making homes safe, and once again secure for
13 everybody to live in. The choice is obvious. Let's
14 support nonprofits and Community Land Trusts whose
15 mission is firmly aligned with ours, creating
16 affordable homes and addressing the housing crisis.
17 Please, let's be bold. Let's be ambitious. Let's
18 not let hesitation water down this legislation or
19 stop it completely. Let's keep pushing, and let's
20 not stop until this housing crisis is behind us.
21 Thank you.

23 PAMELA HERRERA: Hello. Good afternoon,
24 Chair Sanchez and members of the Housing and
25 Buildings Committee. My name is Pamela Herrera. I

work in Queens as a Land Justice Coordinator for the Western Queens Community Land Trust. We are in favor of the Community Land Act package which includes Intro 902, 78, and Reso 374. Here in Long Island City we have four public sites that could be used for deep affordable housing, affordable commercial space, and accessible open greenspace. We currently are at risk of losing those sites to a proposed rezoning that would gift away public land to developers. The community worked tirelessly to protect the public sites from both Amazon and previous rezonings, but we're back again faced with a 54-block rezoning which threatens us with mass displacement. We continue to repeat history by pushing aside marginalized communities, but we now have a measure that can create opportunities for our low-income New Yorkers. The Land Trusts in New York are leading the way to preserve the culture and vibrant fabric of this city by collaborating and creating community-led projects. Community Land Trusts create housing stability which can lead to a better quality of health, education and public safety. With Public Land for Public Good, we not only have a say as a community to see what we'd like on the site, but we have the opportunity to

1 stabilizing our neighborhoods with the ongoing
2 housing crisis we have. Affordability is the real
3 issues and CLTs can guarantee something truly
4 affordable for generations to come. I want to uplift
5 the community our CLT works closely with, Queens
6 Bridge Houses, the largest public housing in North
7 America, with over 7,000 residents. They currently
8 have the Jacob Riis Center, the Queensbridge Park,
9 and scattered community centers that have limited
10 space and services. If Public Land for Public Good
11 were to become a reality, it would forge a clear path
12 towards an accessible and thriving community hub on
13 the public land filled with creativities, services,
14 and support called the Queensboro People's Space.
15 Our CLT's working to address the immense need for QB
16 [sic] residents in Queens through this project, but
17 we can't do it without passing this bill. And so, I
18 strongly urge the New York City Council to enact
19 Intro 902, 78, and Reso 374. Thank you so much for
20 your time.

22 CLINT OKAYAMA: Council Member Sanchez and
23 members of the Housing and Buildings Committee. My
24 name is Clint Okayama and I'm a resident of Astoria,
25 Queens. As a member of the Western Queens Community

Land Trust and a LGBTQ affordable housing provider, I am here to testify in favor of Public Land for Public Good, Intro 78. This legislation will protect affordability and preserve the cultural fabric of our city. I am an LGBTQIA activist who is witnessing rocketing land prices across New York. This city is one of the few places that the queer community not only created, but also feels safe in, as the birthplace of modern, global LGBTQIA movements. But what do we see in the neighborhoods of New York that were once the heartbeat of LGBTQIA culture like the West Village? Blocks of homes, only affordable to the world's richest. Meanwhile, over 60 percent of chronically homeless youth are LGBTQIA. I have had so many friends forced out of this city due to the lack of affordability, including queer elders who forged the laws that allow people around the world to love each other free from discrimination. As part of the Community Land Act, Public Land for Public Good would empower local organizations to preserve affordability and cultural identity. These organizations know their neighborhoods better than anybody else, and nobody is as fiercely devoted to fighting for their people. Without them, New York

loses the people and identity that has made this city the power of the world. Please, pass the Community Land Act and Public Land for Public Good. Thank you for your time. And I just like to mention that HPD, you know, mentions that they are committed to affordability, but they are hamstrung by their administration and the pipeline that is created by for-profit landlords. We would create developments that are much more aligned with affordability and mission. Thank you so much.

RACHEL BROWN : Good afternoon members of City Council. My name's Rachel Brown, and I'm a resident of Astoria and member of Western Queens Community Land Trust, submitting testimony here in favor of the Community Land Act, and in particular, Public Land for Public Good, Intro 78. We need these bills to combat the speculative market, displacement of low-income residents and small businesses, and ensure community-led development. In terms of Public Land for Public Good, I wanted to share examples from Queens, although Pam and Clint already mentioned some of these, but just to remind you that we've been organizing for five years to turn an under-used public building on public land into this commercial--

1 this community hub with affordable commercial rents
2 for small businesses, light manufacturers,
3 entrepreneurs, co-ops, nonprofits, and working
4 artists. Because of the rapid gentrification of Long
5 Island City and Western Queens in general, these
6 types of businesses, artists, and organizations are
7 being priced out. And so we need to support local
8 economic development for the people who live and work
9 in Queens rather than billion-dollar companies like
10 Amazon who was, you know, the former administration's
11 were going to give this public building to. And as
12 Pam mentioned, we are facing a massive upzoning as we
13 speak, and there are four public parcels in the area.
14 An allied organization, the Long Island City
15 Coalition, has developed a resiliency plan for the
16 waterfront, and as I mentioned, you know, our plan
17 for the Department of Ed building, these are-- these
18 are plans that can actually address the community
19 needs, and we have other needs like schools and
20 greenspaces and these public lands are in great
21 danger of going to for-profit developers that want to
22 build more luxury high-rises on the waterfront. So,
23 we really need Public Land for Public Good to make
24 sure this doesn't happen and to ensure that the
25

precious public lands don't go to for-profit developers that will only exploit and displace local residents. So, I strongly urge New York City Council to enact Intro 78 and the full Community Land Act package. Thank you so much for your time.

DAVID LANDER: Good afternoon, Council Member Sanchez and members of the Housing and Building Committee. My name is David Lander. I'm a resident of Hell's Kitchen. I've lived in the same apartment for 29 years. My apartment is one of two 15-unit buildings that sits side by side on West 45th Street. In the time that I've lived there, our building has had four owners. The current owner, a private investment firm, took possession after the previous landlord lost the building to foreclosure. That landlord Daniel Ohebshalom has the distinction of topping the City's list of worst landlords two years in a row. Four years ago, following weeks without heat and hot water in the middle of a brutal winter, we formed a tenants association and with the help of the not-for-profit organization, Housing Conservation Coordinators, we organized a rent strike and filed a lawsuit against Ohebshalom. Our HP action is still before the court and we are still on

a rent strike. We are now at a crucial juncture. Our building is up for sale yet again. We, the tenants, are searching for a partner to help us purchase the building. We have had several conversations with the current landlord, and they tell us they are under no obligation to share any details of the sale or information on a prospective buyer. If COPA was the law, the landlord would be required to negotiate with us. Time is of the essence. We hope we can persuade the landlord to sell the building to us or at least allow the tenants to approve the next entity that buys the building. Thus, allowing us to approve our next landlord. What a concept. If TOPA was the law, the landlord would be required to negotiate with us. Thank you. Please support both.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you to this panel. I need to take another few minutes recess, but I will call the next panel so that you can prepare. William Latimer, Rebecca Pool, Anna DiTucci, Escalante, Alexis Foot, and Sheena Benjamin.

[break]

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Alright. So, again, that was William Latimer, Rebecca Pool, Anna

DiTucci, Escalante, Alexis Foot, and Sheena Benjamin.

You may begin when ready.

SHEENA BENJAMIN: Good afternoon. my name is Sheena Benjamin. I am in support of everything that was said here today, pretty honestly. I'm a daughter of Harlem, a first-generation northerner and a daughter of the second migration. The wave of Black Americans and African-Americans who came north seeking freedom, safety and opportunity. Some of our people settled in Harlem and we built the Harlem Renaissance, a cultural, political, and spiritual epicenter of global Black excellence, and we just reached our peak. Harlem was injected with drugs, violence, and surveillance. From where? We don't know. But we do know this, it still plagues the still illness. We still suffer the same consequences, and you can see that Harlem doesn't need luxury towers. It needs healing and it needs treatment. What we do need or what we will accept is luxury facilities for our elders, safe housing for recovery citizens, homes for family and people who are considered invisible. We need a chance to pass down land through our community and not just generational trauma. Today, HPD spends over \$1.4

1 billion annually, but only 10 percent of the housing
2 reaches 30 percent AMI or below. That's not
3 affordability. That's political. That's policy
4 coated with gentrification and red-lining and is
5 completely unacceptable that it has continued to
6 happen and continued to be allowed. At the same
7 time, only private developers get access to lead
8 these projects because they're considered reliable.
9 They're considered trustworthy because they have a
10 record or a jacket of these things that they've done,
11 but I do construction. They have no idea what
12 they're doing, and it's offensive that only these
13 people-- it's offensive that only these people who
14 have the funds to say something are deemed and
15 considered trustworthy. We live in these
16 communities. We know everything about these
17 communities, and I cannot say that my church, the
18 Guiding Star Covenant of the Southern Cross, leading
19 circa 25 resurrection, I can build a community of
20 people that would give their life to volunteer to
21 help build the community.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

24 SHEENA BENJAMIN: And I'm sorry I went
25 over.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: It's okay. Thank you so much.

SHEENA BENJAMIN: Thank you.

NICHOLAS LATIMER : Good afternoon, Council Member Sanchez. Thank you for staying and listening to us. My name is Nicholas Latimer, and I've lived in the same apartment in Hell's Kitchen for more than 40 years. When I first moved to New York as a young graduate from the University of Alabama, a splashy advertising campaign was attempting to boost tourism in a then beleaguered city. It's catchy phrase, "I Love New York," could be heard on every radio station and television station across the City, and it's related pop-art graphic, I heart New York, was being plastered on t-shirts, post cards and souvenirs from Times Square and beyond. I came to this city to work in book publishing, because New York is the book publishing capital of the world. And when I landed a lowly job as a publicist at one of the most prestigious publishers, I knew I had arrived. A few months later, I was manning our company's booth at New York is Book Country, the popular street fair that ran up down Fifth Avenue each fall. But working in a

1 glamorous world of books is a notoriously low wage
2 job. For the first few years to make ends meet I
3 also had to work weekends as a sales clerk at
4 Bloomingdale's selling designer handbags to tourists
5 and wealthy upper east siders. So it's no
6 exaggeration to say that the only reason I was able
7 to achieve my dream of living and working in New York
8 city was because I was lucky enough to find a tiny
9 apartment with relatively low rent in walking
10 distance of my office. But today, luck is not
11 enough. We need to pass COPA, Public Land for Public
12 Good, the resolution supporting TOPA so that young
13 people coming to this city can realize their own
14 dreams and find an affordable place to live. We all
15 love New York, but New York needs to give a little
16 love back.

18 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Oh, I'm
19 sorry. Thank you. I just want to call up John Leyva
20 and Gilda Gillim to come up to the dais, and you may
21 continue.

22 ESCALANTE: Good afternoon, Council
23 Members. Appreciate the opportunity to communicate.
24 My name is Escalante, Mr. Escalante. I represent the
25 Northwest Bronx. I'm the founder of the Community

1 Cosmic Orchestra Coalition, and I have connection
2 with the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy
3 Coalition, and different partners from the
4 Brownsville Coalition, and I'm here to communicate
5 about the importance of the Community Land Act today.
6 Just have to address very serious matters that
7 predatory equity cannot go any longer. Corporate
8 housing happens to be making millions of dollars
9 behind decaying buildings with families and with
10 entire communities that are kept in deplorable
11 infested conditions and exposed to unhealthy and
12 dehumanizing environments in today's times. The
13 Community Land Act which consists of the Community
14 Opportunity to Purchase Act, Intro 902, Public Land
15 for Public Good, Intro 78, and Tenant Opportunity to
16 Purchase Resolution, Reso 374 would permanently
17 abolish and replacing it, the New York City lien
18 sale, needs to be passed as soon as possible. So
19 this way, the land and the administration of the land
20 may go in the hands of the community so we can build
21 affordable homes, ecosystems of sustainable
22 businesses, and cultural and wellness healing centers
23 citywide. This way, I really want to make it very,
24 very-- you know, an emphasis that the main purpose of
25

1 doing this is the next generation. You know, I have
2 to think about the youth. It's when we can gather
3 the youth of this city and transform their lives for
4 the better, you know. The rate-- when we look at the
5 realities that we're dealing with, the rate of drug
6 addiction, gun violence is the highest in history.
7 We have teenagers shooting other teenagers in the
8 south Bronx. As a father myself and someone who is
9 deeply rooted in my indigenous [inaudible] cultural
10 of the Andes, I know that this is not acceptable, and
11 I also know that us adults, we are responsible for
12 all the children in our community. We're responsible
13 for all the children in our city and our
14 neighborhoods. To achieve resolution, we must
15 acknowledge that this is an emergency. Predatory
16 equity has been going on for way too long. There has
17 to be a shift of paradigm to create sustainable
18 ecosystems. We need more integration programs, and
19 this work, there needs to be also an acknowledgement
20 that there's strength in numbers. So, we need to
21 create a lot of programs that center the youth to
22 stay focused in creating their own destiny and
23 creating healthier futures. So, in all the reality,
24 we have to acknowledge, the old ways of doing things
25

have come to an expiration date. We need a wave. A new wave of unstoppable empowerment has come to rise, and frankly, the Community Land Act is long overdue. We need to secure a healthier future for all of us, and especially our youth. So--

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: [interposing] Thank you.

ESCALANTE: in reality, this needs to be passed yesterday. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much.

ANNA DITUCCI: Hello, members of the City Council. My name is Anna DiTucci and I am a student of the City College of New York. I'm here today to advocate for the passing of COPA and TOPA. Time and time again, we seen working-class New Yorkers being forced to move out against their will because they have no other choice. They can't afford the rent anymore. How is it fair that the very thing that makes us New York, our community, is being driven out due to inflation and the gentrification of our neighborhoods. Slumlords are neglecting our buildings while charging us more and more rent each and every year. Many homes are under threat of being foreclosed by a tax lien sale because their landlords

1 have not paid their city taxes, and many tenants
2 don't even know about it. You say your resources are
3 stretched thin and you're using every dollar you can
4 to create affordable housing, yet there's thousands
5 of vacant luxury apartments across the City. Those
6 in power to make a difference need to hear the cries
7 of the people. Many New Yorkers are struggling on
8 the brink of homelessness each and every day, barely
9 managing to stay afloat. As someone who is also a
10 tenant, I've struggled first-hand with the housing
11 crisis in this city. I am a part of a class called
12 Community-based Research, a class dedicated to help
13 solve the housing crisis in the City. We have
14 reached out to several tenants who have organized
15 together under a Community Land Trust to own their
16 building. They already have won massive victories in
17 the fight against for-profit landlords that run the
18 housing market with an iron fist. 248 Arlington
19 Avenue in East New York has been the first building
20 to be taken over by their tenants through a CLT.
21 Since East New York CLT has purchased their building,
22 tenants now enjoy the fundamental rights of owning
23 their own homes. It should be like this for every
24 New Yorker. That is why we need to TOPA and COPA to
25

pass, so that people don't have to choose whether to feed their kids or afford rent. The City of New York wants to find solutions to the homelessness crisis, and the solution is very clear: make housing affordable again. We have the resources. We have the space. We have the apartments waiting to be lived in. We, as students, workers, and tenants implore you to pass these bills, because Section 8 and Section 9 are not enough. People are put on the backlog and are made to wait years before an opening shows up. We need TOPA and COPA now so that every New Yorker can live with peace of mind knowing that they have somewhere secure to lay their head at night. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

JOHN LEYVA: Good afternoon, Chair Sanchez. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of proposed legislation to advance Community Land Trust. My name is John Leyva from Save63Tiffany. I'm fighting to stay in my home of 31 years from a speculative, greedy landlord trying to kick us out due to an expiring lower-income housing tax agreement, or LiTax [sic] for short. As you probably know, LiTax are a part of the Reaganomics

and are still one of the main drivers of affordable housing development to this day. They were made permanent in 94. This is important because LiTax have an expiration date of 30 years. Interestingly enough, other states have extended that date, but New York has not. For example, California has made it 55 years. Many people don't know that when a LiTax agreement expires, the rents automatically go to market-rate. Currently, there's no remedy for that. According to a recent article in Shelter Force [sic] we're looking at losing upwards of 500,000 deeply affordable units in the next few years. This is a crisis looming created by bad policy. For me and the 70 families at 63 Tiffany placed in Brooklyn, this is not hypothetical. This is our current situation. Most, if not all of us, will now be priced out of not only our homes, but our city. As our tenant leader I've been desperately looking for a solution not just for my building but for thousands in our same predicament, and this is why I'm here testifying. We are members of NYCCLI and Coalition of CTLs and advocates, many you're hearing from today, but to truly combat the affordability crisis, displacement, homelessness, the City must bring land and housing

1 into permanently affordable community control. We
2 urge City Council to pass the Community Land Act
3 which includes three proposals being discussed here
4 today, the Public Land for Public Good, COPA, and a
5 resolution supporting TOPA in Albany. The community
6 Land Act also calls to permanently abolish the New
7 York City tax lien sale and replace it with an
8 equitable system which could be accomplished through
9 the creation of a land bank. Together these policies
10 would protect and maximize city land and subsidies
11 for public benefit. Level the playing field for
12 nonprofits and CLTs to meet community housing and
13 economic needs and help vulnerable New Yorkers stay
14 in their homes. In our case, TOPA and COPA would give
15 us the tools to acquire our buildings and take them
16 off the speculative market and into community--
17 tenant or community control. We also support the
18 bills expanding the City's legal definition of CLTs
19 beyond housing which will advance permanently
20 affordable commercial, community and open space.
21 Thank you.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. I'm
24 just consistently impressed by everybody's ability to
25 get in the time frame. So, thank you.

GILDA GILLIM: Hello. In the 1970s Harlem and the Bronx was burning. They were burning because unscrupulous landlords abandoned their properties and did not want to pay taxes. In 1976 my family was a part of that fateful day of being burned out of our apartment and having to be transplanted back into the neighborhood in which I was born in. the tenants in the building that I live in now for nearly 50 years has-- was facing that same fate with abandonment by their landlord. However, our tenants fought back. Good afternoon, Chair Sanchez. My name is Gilda Gillim, and I'm a lifelong housing advocate, environmental justice organizer, and founder of the Social Impact Organization to Lindy [sic]. I've stood with residents facing eviction and I've helped train communities to fight back against displacement. My neighbors had to face over a decade of being in a program called 7A Administrative. We rebuilt our building. We took care of our property, only for the City to sell it to a landlord and other entities that we couldn't even investigate who owned the buildings. We thought we were going to be owners. However, I was robbed in 1990 of that dream. This legislation, the Community Land Act, is a legislation is just not

1 policy. It's protection. It's about giving our
2 communities the legal right to stay rooted in place.
3 This act is comprised of COPA, Intro 902, Public Land
4 for Public Good, Intro 78, and TOPA, Tenant
5 Opportunity to Purchase, Resolution 374, and abolish
6 and replace the New York City lien sale which we can
7 preserve deeply affordable housing and stop
8 speculative buyouts and ensure that land serves the
9 public good, not developer profit. I want to give
10 this next generation an opportunity to own their own
11 property, not to be sold to a landlord--

12
13 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: [interposing] I'm
14 sorry, I do-- we--

15 GILDA GILLIM: Yes, thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank
17 you all so much for your testimony. Thank you. The
18 next panel is going to be Marnie Brady, Abou Farman
19 [sp?], Anabel Ruggerio, and Albert Scott. And you
20 may begin when ready.

21 MARNIE BRADY: Hello, Council Member
22 Sanchez. My name is Marnie Brady. I'm an Associate
23 Professor of Sociology at Mary Mount Manhattan
24 College, and I'm a member of the House the Future
25 Campaign. As a concerned scholar, a New Yorker, and

a proud mom of a CUNY Hunter College student and a New York City public high schooler, I'm here to call on you to support the New York State Social Housing bill, New York State TOPA, and the pillars of the New York City Community Land Act, measures that are mutually reinforcing. We need both a statewide public authority and well-supported nonprofit affordable housing developers so all of our kids who the City invests in every day in their schools can have secure housing as children and envision a future here as young adults. I've lived in Brooklyn for the last 20 years, but previously lived in D.C. where I learned firsthand TOPA works. I organized with my neighbors there and instead of the prospect of another new overleveraged landlord squeezing or getting rid of tenants, tenants were informed at the announcement of sale of the right to TOPA, and ultimately formed their own co-op, and in the process got rid of the mold and rats. Here in Brooklyn I've been part of many different tenant rights workshops through my PTA and with the CEC15, and over and over again where community-minded, involved, empowered parents have shown up to learn more about their rights, including when their buildings went up for

1 sale. TOPA and COPA have been sorely missing in the
2 preservation toolbox. So whether we're reinforcing
3 the potential of HPD, or we're prioritizing the
4 Community Land Trust nonprofit developer, or when we
5 enact the New York State Social Housing Development
6 Authority, we need both COPA and TOPA. And I thank
7 you.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Hi, Al.

10 ALBERT SCOTT: How you doing, Chair,
11 Chair Sanchez. Wow, what a day. I'm just so excited
12 to be here today to see the progression five plus
13 years later in this particular fight. But for the
14 record, Albert Scott, Co-founder of the East New York
15 Community Land Trust, also a steering committee
16 member of the East New York Coalition for Community
17 Advancement and the other grassroots organization
18 where I witness a lot of things on the ground. This
19 Community Land Act is much more-- much more than just
20 simply words on a paper. This is an economic justice
21 and housing justice tools to fight back the predator
22 speculators, the hedge funds giving us the fighting
23 chance. These are our tools. We heard that word a
24 lot today, what the Community Land Act, and knowing
25 what's going on in East New York, we know \$145,800 is

1 the AMI for New York City, and East New York is
2 \$46,695. We recognize as a result we're being
3 targeted by toxic house flipping. We're targeted by
4 speculators, deed fraud, all of these entities, and
5 the only thing we definitely want to disrupt is
6 displacement that's taking place in communities like
7 East New York. I don't know what HPD had in mind
8 when they talk about the market, but the displacement
9 market needs to be slowed down. And with these
10 particular tools as the Community Land Act, you're
11 giving us a fighting chance to push back against
12 these economic predators that target our communities,
13 working families throughout New York City. Pass the
14 Community Land Act. Demonstrate-- the Council needs
15 to demonstrate to communities of color, working
16 families, that they are A, with us. They're willing
17 to give us the opportunity to remain in our
18 communities, and in closing, our power, our movement.
19 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Okay, thank you.

22 Thank you so much, Al. Thank you for your leadership
23 on this and thank you for your testimony. We will
24 now turn to remote testimony. Once your name is
25 called a member of our staff will unmute you and the

Sergeant at Arms will give you the go-ahead to begin.
Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that you may
begin before delivering your testimony.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Ann Korchak. Ann
Korchak?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

ANN KORCHAK : Hi, good afternoon. My
name is Ann Korchak and I serve as the Board
President of the Small Property Owners of New York,
and our members operate small rent-stabilized
buildings and naturally occurring portable housing
that you'll find in one- to four-family homes. I'm
speaking today in opposition to 902. We view this
bill as an unfair burden on small property owners,
and it risks putting us at even greater financial
risk. Typically, when a family is selling a
building, it's often due to the death of a family
member and real-- and state taxes must be settled.
While this bill does include an exemption in case of
death, that exemption only applies if the individual
owns the property, and most rental properties are
held in corporations or LLCs because of the liability
protections that they provide. This bill would

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CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. The next person is Annie Wilson, followed by Bruno Daniel.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

ANNIE WILSON: [inaudible] I'm online. I think I'm online. Hold on. Hello?

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: You are online, yes.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You're online.

ANNIE WILSON: Hello, this is Annie Wilson. Thanks for letting me speak up. I'm Annie Wilson. I was a co-founder of a low-income cooperative, now known as an HDFC, and the tenants association at 544 East 13th Street where I had resided since 1984. And I have testified at six, seven hearings since 2017, and I've disclosed some of the issues that limited the potential of our affordable housing in the long-term. We ended up being in a partnership which is my concern that I want to raise right now in the context of the COPA bill. I will be providing written comments. By the due time on Friday. And I wanted to inform a fact that the pre-qualified lists which are now still published and will be published for the purpose of

1 COPA do not require the full disclosure to all
2 stakeholders, including residents, of all information
3 that is relevant to the public interest such as
4 partnerships and contracts. And in my lived
5 experience, unfortunately, our nonprofit developer
6 you had partnered with a for-profit developer that
7 got all the income from the low-income housing tax
8 credits, and the profits from the construction while
9 controlling the building, and a contract that was not
10 shared with the residents which allowed the developer
11 to decide on who lives where--

12
13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your
14 time's expired. Thank you for your testimony.

15 ANNIE WILSON: I'm sorry.

16 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Bruno Daniel?

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

18 BRUNO DANIEL: Good afternoon, Chair
19 Sanchez and members of the Committee, and thank you
20 for holding this hearing today. I'm here
21 representing Brooklyn Borough President Antonio
22 Reynoso, a strong supporter of the Community Land
23 Act. It is important to note the new city housing
24 crisis as evidence by our dangerously low vacancy
25 rates, demands new housing development of all types

serving a broad range of incomes and family sizes.

The longer we wait to build more housing, the more market pressure is increased. According to New York Times, families leaving New York City at the fastest rate are people of color who live between \$32,000 and \$65,000 a year. Low and moderate income homeowners and tenants who want to stay are increasingly looking for strategies that remove real estate speculation from the equation and provide long-term housing affordability. That's why social housing models based in community ownership and democratic control of land provide important tools in the toolbox for meeting our city's housing needs. On today's agenda, our tools for new development including Intro 78. Public land is our best opportunity to create much-needed deeply affordable housing. For years HPD has had an informal policy requiring use of one of its affordable housing term sheets for public land submission. This bill simply codifies that policy and goes a step beyond to require a preference for local mission-driven developers to build that housing. It means developers will have interest in keeping the housing affordable in the long-term and the development's profits will stay in the community

to be used for other services. Resolution 777, this resolution supports state legislation that'll create a Social Housing Development Authority. This new state entity would issue bonds for purpose of creating preserved affordable housing throughout the state. Some of our most enduring affordable housing such as Mitchell-Lama and homes developed by the Urban Development Corporation or state project, and this proposal has the potential to revive this power with the social housing mission. Intro 902, Reso 374, preserving existing affordable housing, both regulated and unregulated is critical to save lives in communities and fighting the housing crisis. Intro 902, aka, the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act, creates a process for qualified mission-driven development to make competitive offer when a landlord sells a multi-family building.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.
Thank you for your testimony.

BRUNO DANIEL: [inaudible]

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. I'd now like to call Joyce Bialik.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

JOYCE BIALIK: Okay, hi. Hello and thank you. I'm Joyce Bialik, a member of WE ACT for Environmental Justice. I live in District Seven and I surveyed most of my district for WE ACT's land survey. We identified vacant lots and buildings for development. I'm also a social work and social policy educator who's advocated for housing that affordable for all, because when we are adequately housed, our mental and physical health benefits as well as our ability to earn a decent living. I support all the parts of the Community Land Act, but we'll be talking now about Public Land for Public Good, Intro 78. It's a bill that requires the city government when awarding its properties with a purpose of developing affordable housing to give priority to nonprofit developers and Community Land Trust over those organizations that are for-profit. Studies have found that not-for-profit organizations do allocate more units for the most low-income residents than do for-profits. We're talking about 38 percent by not-for-profits versus 21 percent by for-profits. As you know, we define the most low income as zero to 30 percent of the area median income which in New York City is between zero to \$38,000 for a family of

three. If not-for-profits are more likely to develop for the most needy, then we want more such organizations developing properties. I'd like to suggest you introducing another bill, mainly that any development that is obtained from city property or that receives tax credits be required to allocate at least 40 percent of its units for residents at the most low-income level. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. Bye.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much, Joyce. I'd now like to call Juan Rivero.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

JUAN RIVERO: Good afternoon. My name is Juan Rivero, Special Projects Director at Village Preservation, an organization that serves the neighborhoods of Greenwich Village, NoHo, and the East Village. I'm submitting testimony in favor of the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act, Public Land for Public Good, and the Resolution supporting the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act. We regard these acts as significant steps in ensuring that land in our neighborhoods serve the needs of people who live there rather than that of those looking for an investment vehicle. Like all neighborhoods in the

1 City, ours struggle with a lack of residential and
2 commercial affordability that leads to displacement
3 of often longstanding members of our community, and
4 folks in the neighborhood have little say on the
5 matter. Community plans are formulated, neighborhood
6 needs listed, and resolutions issued, but then these
7 are brushed aside and the community has to make do
8 with crumbs off the table of zoning allowances and
9 marked down public lands sales that is served by the
10 City to developers in the name of affordability and
11 social justice. The upzoning of NoHo, SoHo and
12 Chinatown is illustrative. The City promised that it
13 would produce hundreds of housing units and
14 "affordable housing unit" within 10 years and ignored
15 community's demands for deeper affordability and
16 zoning protections and concerns about speculation and
17 displacement. A third of the way through those 10
18 years, not a single new housing unit has been
19 produced and the neighborhood has seen a loss in
20 rent-regulated housing. Communities deserve a
21 greater opportunity to determine how neighborhood
22 land can serve their needs. At a public site on 324
23 East Fifth Street, the community is clamoring for
24 permanent affordability that a CLT would make
25

possible. At a public site north of the Gasberg [sp?] Meat Market, the community is demanding 100 percent affordability, but the city is insisting on a for-profit luxury development with a marginal affordability requirement. Why? This is public land and should be devoted in perpetuity to the public good. For that reason, I urge you to enact Intro 902, Intro 78 and Resolution 374. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much. I'd now like to call Vijay Dandapani followed by Mbacke Thiam.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

VIJAY DANDAPANI: Good afternoon, Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee. Thank you for holding this hearing today. I'm Vijay Dandapani, President of CEO of Hotel Association of New York City, also known as HANYC. I'm here to testify in support of 1281 introduced by Council Member Dinowitz and [inaudible] by 13 other CMs. This bill would delay the implementation of the natural gas detector requirement of Local Law 157 2016. This requires the DOB to establish or adopt a standard governing installation location of natural gas alarms. This

standard is the MFB Standard 715 [sic] which requires interconnected alarm systems, and these alarm systems are to be the industry standard. However, there is only a single company that can meet these requirements and otherwise the hotel and other buildings would need to install blind [sic] operated gas detecting systems. These wired systems require that major work be performed throughout the hotels, and in order to install these wired systems for gas we need to remove or drill through walls, floors, and ceilings of occupied hotels. This would severely disrupt both guests and workers in order to satisfy the-- safely perform extensive work, and hotels would need to empty their room for guests as well as workers for weeks. This requirement comes at a particularly inopportune time for the hotel industry which is still to recover from the COVID pandemic and is now under a double-whammy from some of the policies of the federal administration. Most hotels lack the financial wherewithal to suddenly pay for such major work and let alone close for weeks. Intro 1281 would address this problem by delaying implementation as the DOB determines that non-wired alarms are available, and give us one year from DOB's

determination that these devices are available. And this would allow hotels enough time to prepare for installing them. By being wireless, these alarms will also be safer to install. For these reasons, we strongly urge the Council to pass this bill immediately. I thank you very much for your time.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much, Vijay. I'd now like to call Mbacke Thiam and followed by Memo Salazar.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

MBACKE THIAM: Hello everyone. Good afternoon, Chair Sanchez, Chair Brannan and Chair Brewer. My name is Mbacke Thiam of the Housing and Health Committee Organizer at Center for Independence of the Disabled New York. We advocate for people with disabilities in the five boroughs of New York City. And thank you for having this hearing. I wanted to voice the needs for accessible, affordable, and affordable housing. We cannot advocate for affordable housing without advocating for accessible housing. We need more inclusion of people with disabilities and seniors in the housing program that the City and the State are implementing. We also need to advocate for a fair and just proceeding of

housing application to combat the discrimination that people with disabilities may encounter when their disabilities are disclosed in the housing applications. We strongly support Intro 78 in relation to disposition of property of the city. We also support Intro 350, Intro 750 in relation to creating a land bank, Intro 902 in relation to giving qualified entities of first opportunity to purchase, and importantly to supplement [inaudible] the purchase of the residential building when offered for sale. We also support Intro 06-- proposed Intro 1006 and 1007 in relation to defining Community Land Trust. We also support Intro 374 for Resolution calling on New York State legislators to pass and the Governor to sign legislation mandating that any owner intending to sell a multi-unit residential dwelling must first [inaudible] of the sale to tenant [inaudible]

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time expired.

Thank you for your testimony.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much.

Memo Salazar?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: We can't hear you, Memo. You're not muted. Is there something you could do about your microphone?

MEMO SALAZAR: Hello? Can you hear me now?

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Yes.

MEMO SALAZAR: You can hear me now?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Hear you.

MEMO SALAZAR: Okay, thanks. Sorry about that. I don't know what happened. My name is Memo Salazar. I'm the Co-Chair of the Western Queens Community Land Trust. I've heard a lot of discussion today about how to solve this affordability crisis, and I'm telling you that CLTs are your most immediate and direct solution, because we're on the ground. We know our neighborhoods better than any city agency. We can move faster than the city processes allow, but with the land prices being as high as they are, it's like a David and Goliath situation. We need more money. We need stronger policy. This tips the scales away from the market-driven private developers. In the last couple of years, our CLT specifically has explored purchasing multiple potential buildings, developing relationships with tenants who want to own

1 their buildings, and it's been exciting to connect
2 with them. We're real people in the community who
3 are willing to work together, but every single time
4 we've tried this, the owner has sold the building off
5 before we had a chance to react. COPA would give us
6 that fighting chance, the ability to buy the building
7 and keep the people in their homes, which is a
8 crucial law in a market like New York City's. It also
9 needs to come with an acquisition or bridge fund,
10 because landlords want to sell their buildings as
11 fast as possible which is often why they end up
12 selling to a private buyer. We offer a better, long-
13 term system, one that has ownership with deep
14 community roots that CLT will work with to make sure
15 that the buildings remain permanently affordable.
16 And I can't underscore how essential COPA is as a
17 piece of that very complicated puzzle. I'd also like
18 to underscore what some other folks have said today,
19 that this needs to be a citywide legally binding law,
20 and not just for distressed properties. That's
21 really important. The Public Land for Public Good
22 Act is also important as you've heard from other
23 folks who are currently proposing a huge 750,000
24 square foot building project in LIC. That would go a
25

long way in keeping Queens artists, workers and community orgs alive, and without this law in place, the land can be given away to any private developer that the EDC deems worthy. So, with the law in place, the building will be saved from potential demolition and be kept in the hands of the community. If you can please support both of those plans and the TOPA Resolution and the abolish the tax lien sale, we can't do our work without any of it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Next, Olivia Gonzalez Killingsworth.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

OLIVIA GONZALEZ KILLINGSWORTH: Hi, my name is Olivia Gonzalez Killingsworth. I'm a resident of Kensington in Brooklyn, and I'm a member of the House the Future Campaign. I'm also a shareholder in the cooperative where I live, one of many co-ops across the city that initially began life as a rental building, but was then converted into a co-op in the 1980s, giving a whole generation of tenants access to the stability of homeownership. When I was lucky enough to acquire this apartment and go from being a tenant to being a homeowner, I discovered that now that I don't have to worry about working three jobs

1 to pay for my housing, I have time to attend City
2 Council hearings like this one. But all too often I
3 hear my fellow property owners testifying at
4 community hearings against measures to create stable,
5 affordable housing in their neighborhoods, basically
6 pulling the ladder up after themselves. So, I'm here
7 to use my platform as a local homeowner to do the
8 opposite, and urge you to pass the Community
9 Opportunity to Purchase Act, Public Land for Public
10 Good, and the resolutions in support of the New York
11 State Social Housing Development Authority and the
12 Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act. Council Member
13 Sanchez and her excellent questioning of the
14 representatives from HPD revealed how inadequate our
15 current programs for creating and preserving
16 affordable housing really are compared to the scale
17 of the need that we have. Each of these bills
18 provides an additional pathway to creating and
19 preserving affordable, dignified, and stable housing
20 like mine for my neighbors who don't have access to
21 the same privileges that I do, especially my Black
22 and Brown neighbors. So, for that reason, I strongly
23 urge the New York City Council to enact Intro 902,
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Intro 78, and Resolution 777, and 374. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. I just want to note that we have been joined and will-- we've been joined by Council Member Rita Joseph who will close out our hearing. Thank you so much, Council Member. I will be listening to the last few folks on Zoom. Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Calling Raine Reilly.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

RAINE REILLY: Hi, good afternoon. my name Raine Reilly, and I'm a member of the MET Council on Housing, the New York State Tenant Block, and Caring Majority Rising. And I'm here today to demand that you pass the Community Land Act proposed by the NYC Community Land Initiative. Like many Americans, I've never had housing security, and in my entire life I've never lived in one place longer than four years. Where I live now in Flushing, the gentrification is disgusting, and there's so much land sitting vacant while our neighbors struggle on the street. We already can't afford the current rent, and tenants are constantly in eviction court

1 despite working multiple jobs, and the stress of
2 always being homeless is so bad for people's health,
3 including my own. So why do we allow these
4 developers and these thieves to hoard this housing
5 that's direly needed right now in the community.
6 I've yet to meet any of these competent and
7 experienced owners. I don't trust any of them to
8 dictate what is best for tenants. So, could you
9 introduce me? Because I'm technically homeless right
10 now. My trans friends are homeless right now. My
11 sex worker friends are homeless right now. My fellow
12 disabled friends are homeless right now, and
13 wheelchair users like myself are priced out of
14 accessible buildings. We're being discriminated
15 against, I believe, and my immigrants neighbors are
16 literally being terrorized and silenced. Seventy
17 percent of the people in this city are tenants. My
18 landlords don't need more money. They own 20
19 buildings and a mall. They live in Logn Island. I've
20 never met them and my building has a disgustingly
21 high turnover rate with constant empty units. They
22 don't provide basic repairs. They lie about the
23 stabilization status. They harass people. They
24 steal people's HRA payments and still sue them, and
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take down any union organizing signage and retaliate very, very fiercely. And they've raised our rent \$400 each year since 2022. It makes no sense. Each one of you holds our lives in your hands. You might not remember me in a year, but if I'm still alive, I will remember you. So, you need to stand up to these leeches in our community strongly and permanently, and if the Community Land Act is too anti [inaudible] for you, I'm warning you with no ill intention, that people are going to start seizing these buildings, because we don't have any other choice. It's either going to jail for being homeless or going to jail for squatting. So please don't trick hardworking people into [inaudible]. Thank you very much for your time.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. I'd like to call on Yvette Chen.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

YVETTE CHEN: Hi, my name is Yvette Chen and I'm the Program Manager for Neighborhood Development at the Center for New York City Neighborhoods. I would like to thank Chair Sanchez and members of the City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings for holding today's hearing. The Center is committed to identifying and securing

affordable housing opportunities for New Yorkers. We are currently focused on creating pathways to homeownership with the goal of helping BIPOC households maintain or become homeowners through our Worth Initiative which is in partnership with LISC [sic] and NHS NYC. We submit this testimony in favor of the three bills, COPA, Intro 902, the Resolution in support of TOPA, Res 374, and Public Land for Public Good, Intro 78. COPA implemented along with TOPA at the state level helps tenants stay in their neighborhood instead of being subject to displacement. It provides a much-needed pathway to permanently affordable homeownership and wealth building. COPA levels the playing field for qualified CLTs and nonprofits so they're more easily able to acquire and preserve buildings and expand permanently affordable housing in gentrifying neighborhoods. We also support Intro 78 or Public Land for Public Good which reforms the City's process for disposing of real property by prioritizing nonprofit developers and Community Land Trusts. From our research, the extremely limited supply of land is one of the major challenges to developing affordable housing. CLTs and nonprofits consistently build at

higher levels of affordability and can help alleviate the shortage of affordable housing. In summary, we need a level playing field. These bills can help curb housing speculation and assist nonprofits and CLTs with expanding our supply of permanently affordable housing. We also urge the City Council to support the \$9 million Schedule C funding request to support the foreclosure prevention, estate planning home repair initiatives to assist homeowners across New York City. We also ask the City Council to support and fund the citywide CLT initiative [inaudible]

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time expired.

YVETTE CHEN: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. Next, Christopher Leon Johnson.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, hello. Hello. Hello. [inaudible] My name is Christopher Leon Johnson and I'm [inaudible] on against every bill that Rivera and Lincoln Restler has introduced on behalf of Community Land Trust. Now, the reason I'm against these bills, because Community Land Trust

1 is nothing but a scam. It's really called a
2 Community Scam Trust, and what happens is that all
3 this does is benefit these corrupt nonprofits that
4 all they want to do is steal land from the landlords
5 and private developers because they just want the
6 land. What's-- if a developer or a landlord doesn't
7 pay their bills, okay, take away their property. But
8 if they just-- you can't just take away property
9 because these guys and gals-- because these corrupt
10 nonprofits want the property. Let's keep that 100
11 percent. Now, one more thing I want to say is that,
12 look, 248 Arlington Avenue which is ran by East New
13 York Community Land Trust is a prime example of the
14 reason why that Community Land Trust does not work
15 [inaudible] New York. That nonprofit is corrupt.
16 East New York Community Land Trust is corrupt, ran by
17 Deborah Ack and Mr. Albert Scott-- the conditions of
18 that apartment, of that area is horrible. The
19 tenants get treated like dirt. Prostitution, drugs,
20 vagrancy is at all-time high. The quality-- the
21 quality is disgusting, and the fact that that
22 director tried to throw shock [sic] at me, discussed
23 it, because she know it's true. I heard her, she
24 tried to throw shit at me, and I been there before. I
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actually been to [inaudible] 248 Arlington. So I know what's going on here. So, like I said, keep it real. I'm totally against it, because East New York Community Land Trust behind that-- is behind that. And they behind that situation, and just because that I'm totally against the bill. 248 Arlington Avenue is a prime example. It's a life lesson of why Community Land Trust doesn't work. It does not work at all. Community Land Trust is nothing but a scam, and I hope the City Council rejects it, or hopefully that the Speaker doesn't get this passed-- get to the full body in the session so the bill dies. So, hope all those bills die at the end of session, and it's really corrupt. Real corrupt process. Real, real corrupt process.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time expired.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you for your testimony. We will call on the following people if you're here, Liza McMillan [sp?], Todd Baker, Gordon Lee, Melanie Reyes, Rachel Coyle, Janeka Speller [sp?], Hailey Kim, Gilda Dawn [sp?], Raymond Mendez [sp?], Valerie Crossland [sp?], Amando Rodriguez [sp?], Chael Pandeia [sp?], Rafiat Hassan

[sp?], Herman Huett [sp?], Alex Stein, Deborah Ack,
Alexis Foot [sp?], Rebecca Poole, Abou Farman, Anabel
Reggiero [sp?], and Aaron Bond [sp?]. If we have
inadvertently missed anyone that has registered to
testify today and has yet to be called on, please use
the Zoom raise hand function if you're testifying
remotely. You'll be called in order that your hands
have been raised. If you're testifying in person,
please come to the dais. Seeing no one, I will now
close the hearing. Thank you to the members of the
administration and members of the public who have
joined us today. The hearing is now adjourned.

[gavel]

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COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date July 15, 2025