

**Testimony from NYCHA's Executive Vice President for Operations Support
Services Keith Grossman
Weather-proofing at NYCHA Buildings and Campuses
Committee on Public Housing
Monday, December 16, 2024 – 10 a.m.
New York City Hall Committee Room**

Chair Chris Banks, members of the Committee on Public Housing, other distinguished members of the City Council, NYCHA residents, community advocates, and members of the public: good morning. I am Keith Grossman, NYCHA's Executive Vice President for Operations Support Services. I am pleased to be joined by Dylan Baker-Rice, Deputy Chief Asset and Capital Management Officer; Siobhan Watson, Senior Director for Sustainability; Gillian Connell, Managing Director of Strategic Operations in the Real Estate Development Department; and other members of NYCHA's team.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss our progress in ensuring that NYCHA developments are adequately prepared for the challenges of the winter season. The health and safety of residents is our top priority, and we have been working hard over the past several years to provide NYCHA families with comfortable and consistent heat. We are also proud of our efforts to help prepare some of our developments for the future through the latest innovations in sustainability.

Heating Outages Are Down, and Restored Quickly

We continue to make progress in reducing the number of heat outages as well as the time it takes to resolve them. As of December 12, so far this heating season we are resolving heat outages in an average of 8.5 hours, well below the HUD Agreement's target of 12 hours. We have also decreased the number of outages by 40 percent, and no outages have lasted more than 24 hours.

This progress is a result of targeted operational investments and improvements to process and management. Our work is guided by our Federal Monitor-approved action plan, which outlines the procedures and protocols we follow to prevent and respond to outages. The action plan also details how we communicate with residents about outages and repairs, provide warming centers in certain scenarios, and investigate outages that cannot be restored within 12 hours.

We aim to restore heat within an average of 12 hours overall, within 24 hours for 85 percent of heating outages, and always within 48 hours. As I noted, so far this heating season we are exceeding these targets. Please keep in mind that an outage pertains to a total disruption of service on an entire apartment line, hallway, building, section of a development, or entire development; outages may be planned for scheduled maintenance or unplanned due to unforeseen emergencies. When there are planned outages, NYCHA notifies residents in advance via robocalls and notices posted throughout the development.

I would now like to discuss some of the ways we are enhancing heating services while investing in a sustainable future for our properties.

Preparing for the Winter Season

Our buildings and infrastructure are aging – the majority of our buildings are more than a half century old, and our boilers are 27 years old on average, past the 20-25-year expected lifespan for a boiler. For this reason, preventive maintenance is a vital part of our work to ensure consistent heat for residents. Every year, our Heating Management Services Department (HMSD) performs preventive maintenance and inspections to preserve and restore the reliability of nearly 5,000 pieces of heating equipment, including 897 boilers, 1,733 hot water systems, and 1,619 heat distribution systems. This involves inspecting, cleaning, lubricating, adjusting, repairing, and replacing worn components and ensuring that equipment and mechanical areas are in satisfactory operating condition.

Before this year's heating season began, HMSD and our vendors performed preventive maintenance – and made repairs, when necessary – on 100 percent of our heating equipment. Due to the large number of assets, NYCHA procured a vendor to conduct preventive maintenance on some our boilers, allowing NYCHA staff to focus on the hot water and heat distribution systems, which includes circulating pumps, vacuum tanks, and pipes that deliver heat to residents' homes.

Every year, we develop and maintain a list of critical heat and hot water equipment and systems that need replacement or extensive repairs, and we procure extra parts so we are prepared when key items fail. NYCHA invested over \$43 million in heating infrastructure upgrades at two

developments since last winter, and an additional \$224 million of investment at eight developments will be completed by the end of this heating season.

We also maintain a reserve of staged and non-staged boilers that can be activated in the event of a large-scale heating service disruption. Thirteen mobile boilers are currently connected to developments, and eight more can be deployed if needed.

And we increase after-hours staffing coverage ahead of the heating season, adding evening plumbing and electrical teams that can be deployed in response to outages. Additionally, an overnight (midnight to 8 a.m.) plumbing team is added when temperatures drop below freezing.

Transforming the Way We Operate

We hired 70 additional frontline heating staff to support the reorganization of HMSD into a neighborhood-based model as part of our Transformation Plan's organizational reforms. This involved reorganizing our coverage of developments from 13 clusters into 28 "neighborhoods." Smaller portfolios enable staff to better understand the unique needs and challenges of each heat and hot water system in their neighborhood; better distribute work orders and resources; foster greater collaboration among stakeholders; and bring the crucial decision-making which occurs during an outage closer to the root of the issue.

We also established a Data Analytics Unit that uses key performance indicators to identify and track areas where we need to improve. A Planning and Skilled Trades Unit addresses patterns of heat complaints and service disruptions before and during the heating season. HMSD's Special Teams, composed of highly experienced heating staff, address the more complex issues that arise and perform preventive maintenance and repairs.

And we assigned additional managerial employees to the evening Heat Desk operations, streamlining decision-making for issues that arise after traditional business hours and during weekends and holidays. The Heat Desk is a 24/7 operation which monitors potential service disruptions from various data and dispatches staff accordingly.

Our repair teams also operate on a 24/7 basis, and to support these roving repair teams we established an after-hours field supervision schedule and skilled trades coverage. Enhanced staff

training is another way we are improving the way we operate. NYCHA revamped its Heating Plant Technician (HPT) curriculum to include new heating assets installed, with an enhanced focus on preventive maintenance. Additionally, we created a direct-to-training model with mentorship, where new HPTs go directly into training to learn in a low-stress environment prior to working on heating equipment at a development. Once assigned to a property, they are paired with veteran heating staff who provide real-life, hands-on training.

These changes are increasing accountability, oversight, and efficiency – and the NYCHA community is benefitting from faster resolution of issues thanks to the more hands-on management of our heating assets.

We also enhanced the way we communicate with residents. We make sure residents know about outages through flyers, robocalls, our website, social media, and MyNYCHA alerts; so that we can address any lingering issues, residents can automatically let us know if they're still experiencing a service disruption when they receive a service restoration robocall. When residents submit heat complaints via MyNYCHA or the Customer Contact Center (CCC), we ask additional triage questions that enable us to deploy repair staff most efficiently. I do want to note that we can most effectively identify and respond to issues when residents report concerns via MyNYCHA or the CCC.

Major Investments in Heating

NYCHA modernized heating controls at 51 developments, which involves installing a building management system and apartment temperature sensors. Apartments that were typically too hot are now at a more comfortable range of 72 to 74 degrees during the day and 69 to 71 degrees at night, with the heat coming on in cycles to prevent overheating and underheating and to reduce energy costs. We can also monitor building temperatures and heating and hot water systems in real time at these developments, enabling us to respond to issues faster.

Although our heating infrastructure is extensive and our capital needs are enormous – nearly \$13 billion for heating systems portfolio-wide – we are working hard to execute on the funding we have to address some of the major investment needs. Through 2026, we are replacing 500 boilers through capital work and PACT conversions. Two hundred and ninety-seven boilers will be replaced through capital projects across 76 developments thanks to \$3.4 billion in City, State,

and federal funding. Since 2019, we have replaced 134 boilers through capital projects and addressed 237 boilers through our PACT partnerships. Another 278 boilers have been converted through PACT and are under construction. Thanks to Hurricane Sandy recovery funding, 20 developments are receiving new heating and hot water systems housed in elevated and flood-proofed structures.

We're not just replacing in kind but are putting in place more effective systems. For example, to improve hot water service, we are incorporating modern designs in our new heating plants – decoupling hot water equipment from space heating equipment so that issues with one do not impact the other – and upgrading building-based equipment.

A Greener, More Sustainable Future

In accordance with our Sustainability Agenda, we are moving away from steam-generating heat and hot water systems when possible (by deploying geothermal energy and electric heat pumps) and improving building envelopes through window replacements – advancements that help reduce outages, enhance system performance, benefit the environment, and keep residents safe and comfortable.

Through the Clean Heat for All Challenge – a collaboration between NYCHA, the New York Power Authority, and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority – an initial \$70 million investment will lead to the development and production of 30,000 new heat pumps for NYCHA residents. The families who are already benefitting from them at Woodside Houses report that they are working well – and this environmentally friendly, easily installable technology will provide reliable heating and cooling for thousands of residents ultimately.

We invested about \$341 million in Energy Performance Contracts, replacing boilers and modernizing heating systems at 70 developments. And nearly \$26 million of weatherization upgrades are completed or in construction. We are also taking advantage of “direct install” programs, where local vendors (funded by local utilities) repair and replace apartment radiator valves and traps at no cost to NYCHA; this improves steam distribution and residents' comfort.

While we are pursuing all possible funding sources and investing that limited funding as wisely as possible, the reality is that there simply is not enough funding to address all the needs across

the entire portfolio. That is why we are implementing bold and innovative solutions – such as PACT and the Trust – that will provide residents with dramatically improved quality of life through comprehensive building renovations, including fully upgraded heating systems.

Improving Residents' Quality of Life

By improving the way we operate and investing strategically in the future with the limited funding available, we are strengthening the Authority while delivering better services for residents.

The challenges at NYCHA are significant, but they are not insurmountable – in fact, we are demonstrating that through partnership we can achieve great change. While there is still much work to be done, we appreciate the support of our stakeholders, including members of the Council, which is enabling us to be a better landlord for the NYCHA families we serve and improve their quality of life.

Thank you. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS AT RIIS HOUSES

Major construction on site and failing infrastructure is potentially exposing residents to toxic substances from the soil at Riis Houses.



Steam temperature recorded at nearly 180 degrees Fahrenheit in front of 1223 FDR Dr.

Background

The northern section of the Jacob Riis Houses Development is built on a site formerly used as a **Manufactured Gas Plant (MGP)** which led to soil and groundwater **contamination**. Due to its industrial past, the soil contains hazardous substances such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds (VOCs and SVOCs), and high concentrations of heavy metals like lead and arsenic. The north end of Riis Houses property is supposed to be managed under the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's **Superfund program**, which is tasked with ensuring that contaminated areas are addressed to ensure there are no risks to residents and the public.

Recently, however, construction and excavation activities at Riis Houses have thrown up **plumes of this toxic dust**, and major steam pipe leaks have caused **steam to erupt from the ground** across a large area. And this steam may be carrying toxins to the surface and into the air.

Neither NYCHA nor ConEd has taken the required proper precautions to ensure that residents and workers are not needlessly exposed to toxins. And neither City nor State officials have mandated compliance despite repeated pleas.

Construction Dust & Steam Leaks

When **toxic soil** is blown around as **dust (PM2.5)** it severely affects air quality and poses a danger to residents. Our lab-tested soil samples, as well as samples from a study commissioned by ConEd, show that the soil at Riis has levels of lead and arsenic that **exceed the Soil Cleanup Objective** levels (levels established under New York law), sometimes many times over. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) both mandate strict procedures for dealing with toxic dust. These procedures have not been properly followed. As a result, we have measured hazardous air quality during construction activity in a number of residents' apartments.

You may have noticed **steam erupting from the ground** on the north side of Riis Houses. Large leaks in the City's steam pipe system have gone unaddressed. As steam travels up through the soil it **brings along toxins from the soil** that are meant to stay in place. This is called **soil vapor intrusion**. There is an additional risk that the steam could expose residents to asbestos particles.

Soil Vapor Intrusion

At Riis Houses, this issue arises due to the site's history as a **former Manufactured Gas Plant (MGP)** site, where contaminants like benzene and toluene are present in the soil in addition to heavy metals like lead and arsenic. These harmful vapors can enter apartments, posing health risks to residents.

The **steam pipe leaks** at Riis are likely to make the situation much worse because steam is capable of carrying more toxins and forcing more vapors into the buildings.

Our Demands

NYCHA

- Must take the health of residents seriously and act decisively to prevent present and future toxic exposures.

ConEd

- Bears the legal responsibility to clean up the site and operates the steam pipe system which is being allowed to leak across a large area.
- The company must remove and replace toxic soil.

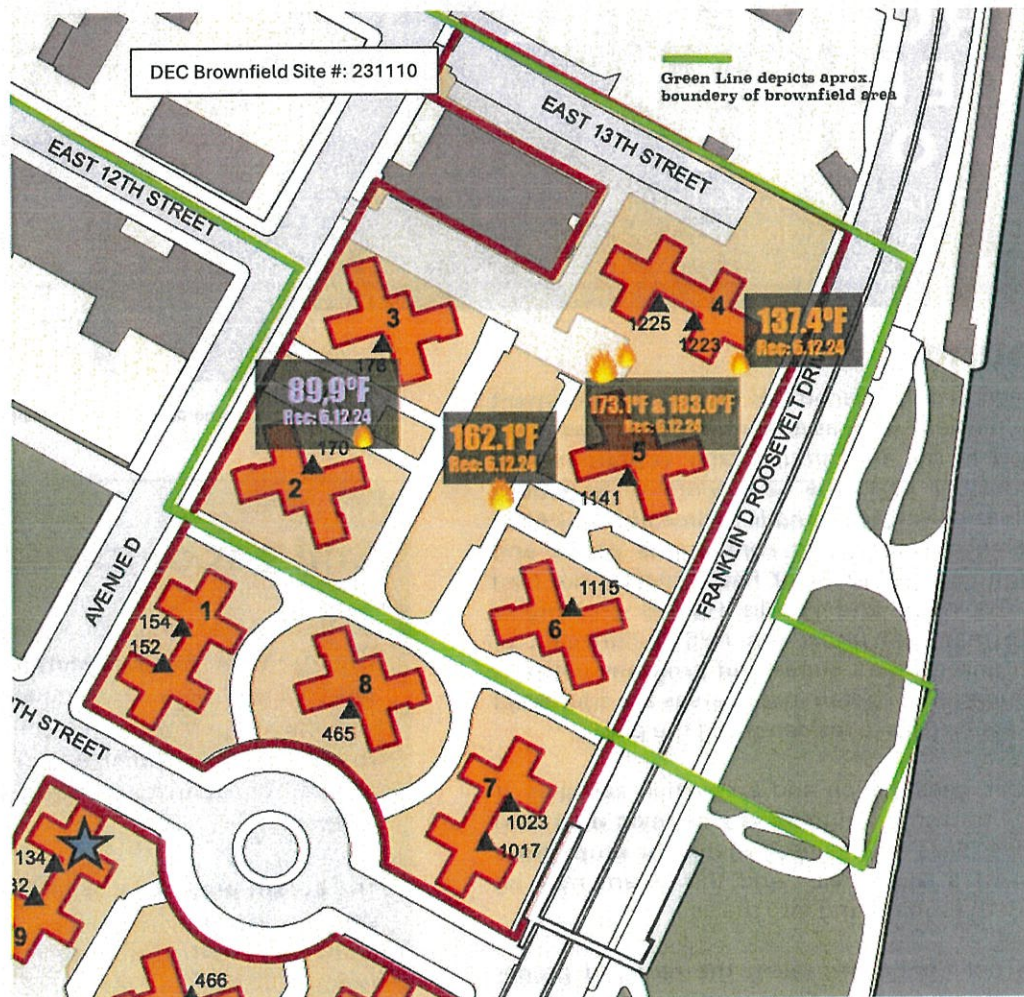
DEC & DEP

- Both agencies have unused enforcement power to oversee environmental hazards. They must act to protect the health of residents.
- Vapor intrusion testing and remedial controls such as thorough building cleaning are needed to protect health.

Department of Health

- Must conduct a comprehensive human health assessment to ensure the safety of residents.

Map of Sidewalk Temperature Readings at Jacob Riis Houses on June 12th, 2024



- On June 12th, 2024, Environmental Justice Initiative surveyed the Jacob Riis Houses property after reports that steam leaks were making the area unbearably hot a challenging to traverse.
- The weather report at 2:30pm on June 12th showed that the current outdoor temperature in New York City was 79°F with a high of 80°F for the day.
- A long stretch of the sidewalk was radiating intense humid heat. It was difficult to stay there for very long. In the area directly in front of Building 4 (1225 FDR Dr.) the ground was visibly boiling with steam pushing through cracks in the asphalt.
- Temperature measurements with a laser thermomator revealed that intense heat ranging from approximately 130°F to 185°F was emanating up from the sidewalk.
- Our control temperature measurement of a stretch of sidewalk away from the steam leak on the northwestern part of the property (89.9°F) was consistent with the outdoor air temperature.
- The steam clearly killed 2 trees, a large area of groundcover and a large flower garden.
- To our knowledge, the situation remains unresolved as New York City experiences its hottest summer on record.



**Testimony of Alia Soomro, Deputy Director for New York City Policy
New York League of Conservation Voters
City Council Committee on Public Housing
Oversight Hearing on Weather-Proofing at NYCHA Buildings and Campuses
December 16, 2024**

My name is Alia Soomro and I am the Deputy Director for New York City Policy at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV is a statewide environmental advocacy organization representing over 30,000 members in New York City. Thank you, Chair Banks and members of the Committee on Public Housing, for the opportunity to comment.

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) has been long-neglected due to significant underinvestment and mismanagement. Chronic issues such as lack of heating and hot water, mold, lead paint, rats and other pests, and little to no recycling access have plagued NYCHA residents for years. Compounding this, NYCHA residents are disproportionately impacted by climate change. Many campuses are located in flood zones, exposing residents to sea level rise, coastal storm surge, and inland flooding. Many NYCHA campuses also lack access to air conditioning, leaving residents, especially seniors, more vulnerable to heat-related illnesses and death during extreme heat events. NYLCV stands with NYCHA tenants and advocates calling for prioritization and increased funding for long-needed building upgrades and public health improvements, as well as significant funding to address the impacts of climate change.

Quality of Life and Climate Improvements

When it comes to making quality of life and climate improvements to NYCHA buildings, NYCHA should explore opportunities to pair building capital repairs such as elevator improvements and mold and lead abatement with energy efficiency retrofits and zero-emission heating, cooling, and cooking systems installation. This includes replacing roofs and tightening building envelopes to eliminate mold and improve indoor air quality, make units waterproof and indoor air temperature more comfortable.

The City must ensure that NYCHA is sufficiently funded and staffed in order to meet Local Law 97 requirements and continue implementing its [Sustainability Agenda](#) and [Climate Adaptation Plan](#). NYLCV also urges NYCHA to explore the possibility of investing in thermal energy networks to decarbonize campuses to aid in reaching these emissions reduction goals. The City also must work with State and Federal agencies to identify sustainable funding streams to make NYCHA campuses resilient to climate hazards such as sea level rise, storm surges, and extreme rainfall. This includes protecting mechanical, electrical, and plumbing infrastructure, floodproofing buildings, and installing new, more efficient boilers and back-up generators.

We encourage NYCHA to continue working with the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to fund and improve NYCHA's stormwater management and implement green infrastructure projects such as permeable pavement, porous asphalt, porous concrete, rain gardens, and subsurface storage systems. These infrastructure improvements serve multiple purposes, such as mitigating extreme rainfall and flooding while cooling and improving local air quality.

Mitigating extreme heat for NYCHA residents should also be a top priority. This includes maintaining NYCHA's existing tree canopy and making improvements to increase its tree canopy by allocating funding for NYCHA tree maintenance and workforce development programs. [NYCHA's open spaces support about 1,000 acres of tree canopy](#), providing shade, comfort, and beauty in addition to carbon sequestration, air pollutant removal, reduced heat island impact, and stormwater mitigation benefits. This is particularly important in neighborhoods with less access to parks and open spaces since clusters of NYCHA developments can be the primary source of tree canopy cover and open space. Additionally, NYLCV urges the City to provide long-term funding for composting and recycling for all NYCHA campuses, especially as the City plans to roll-out the curbside organics program in the next few years. An organic waste collection program that leaves out NYCHA cannot be called a citywide or universal program.

When it comes to public health, NYCHA must prioritize safeguarding the health and safety of NYCHA residents by (though not limited to) eliminating lead-based paint, mold, and pests from NYCHA residences, all of which contribute to adverse health impacts such as asthma and lead poisoning. We echo calls by the New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning (NYCCELP) advocating for sufficient funding for NYCHA's [Lead-Safe Housing Policy](#) (Lead-Based Paint Abatement and Dust Wipe Sampling), [XRF Testing Initiative](#), and the [Team for Enhanced Management Planning and Outreach \(TEMPO\)](#).

Funding

NYLCV calls on the City to work with New York State and Federal agencies to identify more funding for operating and long-term capital repairs, including heating and cooling systems, and lead and mold removal. The City should also identify long-term capital funding to make permanent [a pilot program that switched out gas stoves for electric induction ones](#) at 20 NYCHA apartments in the Bronx. The program, run by WE ACT, in partnership with NYCHA, the Association for Energy Efficiency, Columbia University, and Berkeley Air Monitoring, saw a significant improvement in air quality compared to households with gas stoves. NYLCV applauds the Governor's and Mayor's commitment to electrify NYCHA housing through the [Induction Stove Challenge](#), which promises to deploy 10,000 induction stoves in NYCHA apartments, and encourages the implementation and expansion of projects like this, as a step in the right direction.

We also urge the City and NYCHA to reprioritize and fund the [Get Cool NYC Program](#), which provided air conditioners, free of charge, to senior residents who are 65 or over or have a qualifying underlying condition. This program was [found](#) to help seniors who participated less likely to report feeling sick from the heat compared to those who didn't participate in the Get

Cool NYC Program. To complement this program, the City should also identify funding sources to help qualifying residents in this program with their summer utility bills.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.



Testimony to the City Council on the Underfunding of Preventative Services
December 2024

To Honorable City Council Members, and esteemed colleagues:

The Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services writes today on behalf of ourselves, the families and children we serve, and the nonprofit organizations that are providing vital preventative services to families at risk of having their children placed into foster care. Our organization, which has one of the largest preventative services programs in New York City, is on the front lines of child welfare who are committed to strengthening families, keeping children safe, and ultimately saving the community significant long-term costs. These programs are effective, but they are underfunded—and the sustainability of our work is at risk.

The services we provide, including parenting support, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence intervention, and family therapy, are proven to prevent foster care placements. Research consistently shows that investing in prevention creates better outcomes for children and families, and saves the community money by reducing the need for foster care, court involvement, and long-term social services. In fact, for every dollar spent on prevention, we save multiple dollars that would otherwise be spent on crisis interventions and foster care. These programs work—they keep children safe, they reduce trauma, and they create long-term positive outcomes for kids.

However, despite their proven effectiveness, our programs are facing a critical financial shortfall. One of the most pressing issues we face is the way government contracts are structured. While these contracts fund direct program costs, they severely cap what can be allocated to "indirect costs"—the administrative costs necessary to run any program, including rent, utilities, insurance, and other operational expenses. Specifically, the contracts set the indirect cost rate at a flat 17.9%. This rate however does not reflect the true costs of running a program, nor does it align with industry standards.

In fact, the federal indirect cost rate for comparable programs is 21% while our actual "indirect costs" run closer to 22% in most programs. For example, our total unreimbursed indirect costs for prevention programs amount to approximately **\$500,000**. These are costs we must cover through other means or, more often, by absorbing them into the program itself by serving fewer children, and/or the high rate of staff vacancies in this area. Furthermore, these contract rates do not account for the cost to rent the space needed to administer our programs. The rent for office

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space, where our staff meet with families and provide essential services, is a significant and increasing cost, yet it is not covered by the current government contracts. The lack of adequate funding to cover these basic operational costs forces us to stretch our resources even thinner, further compromising the quality of services we can provide. Worse, the combination of an underfunded reimbursement structure, an arbitrary cap on indirect costs, and the rising costs of rent and basic operations is a recipe for program instability.

The government contracts also do not allow us to hire front line staff at a competitive pay rate, leading to high staff turnover. Our frontline workers, who are essential to delivering these programs, are some of the lowest-paid professionals in the sector relative to the demands of their job. The emotional toll of working with at-risk families, the complexity of the issues they address, and the often-overwhelming caseloads would be challenging for any professional. When you add financial insecurity and limited resources to the equation, it is no wonder we are seeing such high turnover. And high turnover, as we know, severely diminishes the effectiveness of our programs, as families lose the continuity of care they need and the trust that is so crucial for successful interventions. Staff vacancies and staff turnover, both of which are very high for prevention programs, also exacerbate indirect costs because the cost of onboarding new staff is not compensated as part of the base program rate.

Without adequate funding, we face two very real and unacceptable options: we can either continue to deliver services at a diminished level—cutting the number of children and families we can support below the number specified in the contract—or we can reduce the quality of our services, which would harm the very families we aim to protect. Both outcomes are disastrous for the community and for the families in need of our help.

To prevent this from happening, I strongly urge the City Council to reassess the funding structure for these critical programs. Specifically, we need the indirect cost rate to be raised to reflect the true costs of administering these programs, including the costs of rent, utilities, insurance, and other operational expenses. Additionally, we need the program costs to increase based on job market fluctuations and inflation. If we are to continue to provide effective services and retain the talented professionals who are the backbone of this work, we need a funding model that reflects the full cost of service delivery. Investing in adequate compensation for our workforce, raising the indirect cost rate, and allowing for reimbursement of rent and operational expenses will ensure that these programs remain sustainable, effective, and capable of meeting the growing demand for services. Without these changes, we will be forced to reduce services and risk further instability in the child welfare system.

In conclusion, the programs we provide are not only effective in keeping children out of foster care—they are essential to maintaining the well-being of families and children across this city. However, the current funding structure is insufficient and



unsustainable. I urge you to take immediate action to address the funding shortfall, raise the indirect cost cap, and ensure that the costs of operating these programs are fully reimbursed. By doing so, we will help ensure that we can continue to support families, prevent unnecessary foster care placements, and create a healthier, stronger community.

Thank you for your time and attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to working with you to find solutions that will ensure the long-term success of these programs and the well-being of our most vulnerable families.

Sincerely,

/S

Julia Pinover Kupiec
Chief Public Policy Officer
The Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services

NYC Council Public Housing Committee Oversight Hearing

Council Member Banks, Chair of the New York City Council's Committee on Public Housing

Weather-Proofing at NYCHA Buildings and Campuses.

Monday, DECEMBER 16th, at 10:00 A.M.

Committee Room at City Hall

Good afternoon, Councilmember Banks and members of the Public Housing Committee.

My name is Diana Blackwell, and I am the President of the Fred Samuel RA, representing the RAD/PACT conversion known as Sam City Collaborative. Thank you for hosting this hearing.

I am here today to discuss the "Preparation and Weatherization" of buildings undergoing conversion. While communication has significantly improved over the years, there is still room for enhancement.

As a stakeholder in a newly converted development, I am concerned that the developer and their management team did not have sufficient time to properly test, assess, and prioritize the boiler systems before presenting their findings to stakeholders at mandatory meetings. Despite our buildings being 100 years old, the boilers are at least 30 years old. The turnover (closing) occurred on September 27, 2024, and unexpectedly, we faced an early winter in the second week of October. This left no time to repair, replace, or retrofit the boilers, which have a known history of heat issues.

Preparation for weatherizing buildings is crucial for any conversion. In our development, where residents pay for their electricity, the new management is discussing a plan to compensate each unit affected by the increased electricity bills, especially if they have been provided with a heater. However, if NYCHA had proactively created a plan for early inclement weather, residents would not be experiencing the same issues they faced as NYCHA residents.

Thank you for allowing me to share my concerns on behalf of the residents of Sam City.

Diana Blackwell, President
Fred Samuel RA (NYCHA)
Fred Samuel RA, Inc.
RAD Round Table--(Member 2015-)
SWAB (Co-Chair, NYCHA Recycling Committee 2022-2024)
NLIHC (Board Member 2024-2027)

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City Council Committee on Public Housing- Oversight - Weather-Proofing at NYCHA Buildings and Campuses

Climate Adaption Program

NYCHA is also the second-largest owner of open space, over 2,400 acres in New York City, behind only the New York City Parks Department. Beyond its critical role as the nation's largest public housing provider, NYCHA is also a significant steward of open space, owning over 2,400 acres—second only to the New York City Parks Department. Many NYCHA developments follow the “towers in the park” urban design model, which was envisioned to balance density with access to light, air, and open space. These campuses are not just housing complexes but community assets, offering green spaces that serve as vital recreational and social resources. NYCHA's unique configuration underscores its importance in creating livable, sustainable neighborhoods and highlights the opportunity to enhance these spaces for greater environmental, social, and health benefits for residents and the surrounding community. (https://www.nyc.gov/assets/nycha/downloads/pdf/NYCHA_Urban_Forest.pdf). the substantial tree loss that NYCHA suffered as a result of Hurricane Sandy. The 2017 LiDAR data showed that Sandyaffected NYCHA developments had lost an average of 8% of their tree canopy cover since 2010, with 12 developments losing more than 25% of their tree canopy cover. Redhook has lost 450 trees (12 check)

As we continue to talk about the effects that trees had I would like to speak of the past in which “NYCHA once had a much stronger horticultural focus than it does today. During the 1980s and 1990s, NYCHA had a landscape unit that included a forester, an arborist, and 22 landscape architects. During this time, NYCHA had a robust maintenance program that included an extensive plant list, a pruning policy, an integrated pest management policy, and a planting policy. Funding cuts in the early 2000s eliminated the landscape unit, and NYCHA now relies on 4 landscape architects within the Capital Projects Division, up from 2 landscape architects that were relied on for many years. Certain staff within the Grounds unit in Operations are now informally relied on by many developments for input into tree care, but there is currently no central operational staff person responsible for developing a tree maintenance plan and overseeing ongoing tree care.” (37)The value of mature trees can not be underestimated they absorb more carbon than newly planted trees while providing greater air quality, shade, and erosion control. Investing in the land of NYCHA must be done but not at the expense of inside the apartments. Sustain

The tree canopy in New York City plays a critical role in mitigating urban heat, improving air quality, and enhancing residents' quality of life. Manhattan has one of the lowest canopy covers in the city at just 7%, yet certain areas, such as NYCHA properties, stand out as vital green oases. NYCHA developments, comprising 2% of the city's urban forest, boast a 34% canopy cover—well above the citywide average of 22%. This is particularly significant in neighborhoods like Chelsea, where 370 mature trees contribute to the local canopy, forming a critical part of the community's

natural infrastructure. However, this area's overall canopy cover is only 10%, falling short of the citywide goal outlined in the Urban Forest Master Plan to expand coverage from 22% to 30%.

The [TreeMap](#) doesn't include private property so NYCHA is siloed. The trees of NYCHA can be wiped out without the general populace being aware. Red Hook had 450 trees decimated by the clean up of Super Storm Sandy, Baruch at least 100 due to the East coast resiliency project, the Wald house residents gardens were destroyed that beautify and enhance the community. NYCHA should be working with Brooklyn USDA Center with the district conservationist and

The Urban Forest Master Plan, introduced by Councilmember Erik Bottcher, offers a roadmap to achieve this ambitious goal by evaluating the health and distribution of the city's trees, preventing further canopy loss, and using tools like LiDAR data to monitor progress. NYCHA properties are central to this effort, as they represent one of the largest concentrations of tree canopy outside NYC Parks jurisdiction, with 44% of the Chelsea area's canopy cover located on non-NYC Parks land. Investing in preserving and expanding NYCHA's tree canopy will not only advance environmental justice but also improve health and resilience in underserved communities. A comprehensive, equity-focused approach to the Urban Forest Master Plan is essential to protect and enhance these invaluable resources for all New Yorkers.

Councilmember Bottcher at the same time that he speaks about the increase of tree canopy is quite willing to commit arboricide on the campuses of Fulton and Elliott Chelsea houses where we have 370 mature trees.


We speak about solar as sustainable. The question needs to be asked who this solar is for. Jonathan Gouveia, Executive Vice President of Real Estate continues to say that NYCHA leverages its real estate. The real estate he is speaking of is the residents. His team follows his lead. Solar for NYCHA is financially unfeasible to use for the residents instead they lease it to low and middle-income households. When you ask about solar ask who is it being used for, how many outages have been on the development. The land that NYCHA rests on is public land whose purpose is for the public good. The tenants don't exist to be sacrificed for the solvency of NYCHA's bottom line is solvent.

It's unacceptable to claim that "residents are our priority" while committing actions that contradict this statement. The focus should be on ensuring safe, stable, and equitable living conditions for all tenants—not exploiting the very communities NYCHA is supposed to serve.

An urgent question we must demand answers to: **How many outages and infrastructure failures are tenants in these developments experiencing while energy and resources are being**

redirected to serve other purposes? Accountability starts with transparency and prioritizing residents over profit. When NYCHA speaks of "leveraging their real estate," let's be clear—they are talking about the lives of the residents who call these buildings home. This isn't just about property; it's about people. We are not a transaction to be used for deals or developments. The bad actors driving these policies must be held accountable.


These are some examples I discovered from the past year reviewing NYCHA's Board Meetings.

July 31  New York City Housing Authority Board Meeting - July 31, 2024 at 10:00am time stamp 1:00:47

11 Authorization to Enter into a Rooftop Lease Agreement with RP New York Solar, LLC ("RP New York")

Location:	Various (Bronx & Brooklyn)
Administering Department:	Asset & Capital Management – Sustainability Programs
Funding Source:	N/A
Amount:	N/A
Projected Section 3 Hires/Labor Hours:	Not Required

Authorization is requested to enter into a lease agreement between the Authority, as landlord, and RP New York as tenant, to lease rooftop space of buildings at Cooper Park, Cypress Hills, Sumner Houses, Monroe Houses, Butler Houses and Bronx River Houses, which will be utilized for solar photovoltaic systems, commencing on August 1, 2024 and continuing through July 31, 2044, or commencing on such other date as may be determined by the Chief Procurement Officer or the Chief Asset & Capital Management Officer and continuing for twenty (20) years thereafter, at an annual rent of \$122,744.04. Tenant shall have the option to extend the term for an additional five (5) one-year renewal options. Total revenue for the initial twenty-year term: \$2,454,880.80.

 NYCHA Board Meeting - Live Video on September 25, 2024 time stamp 21:38

IV. Authority Calendar

Calendar of Regular Meeting, Wednesday, September 25, 2024

1 Authorization to Enter into a Rooftop Lease Agreement with API Capital LLC ("API")

Location:	Various (Brooklyn & Queens)
Administering Department:	Asset & Capital Management – Sustainability Programs
Funding Source:	N/A
Amount:	N/A
Projected Section 3 Hires/Labor Hours:	Not Required

Authorization is requested to enter into a lease agreement between the Authority, as landlord, and API as tenant, to lease rooftop space of buildings at Breukelen Houses, Brownsville Houses, Astoria Houses, Ravenswood Houses, South Jamaica I and South Jamaica II, which will be utilized for solar photovoltaic systems, commencing on October 1, 2024 and continuing through September 30, 2044, or commencing on such other date as may be determined by the Chief Procurement Officer or the Chief Asset & Capital Management Officer and continuing for twenty (20) years thereafter, at an annual rent of \$138,019.68. Tenant shall have the option to extend the term for an additional five (5) one-year renewal options. Total revenue for the initial twenty-year term: \$2,760,393.60.

Thursday NYCHA Board Meeting November 21, 2024

The current approach of converting Section 9 protections to Project-Based Section 8 is deeply troubling and unsustainable. NYCHA has repeatedly claimed financial hardship, yet it is depleting its most valuable resources—traditional public housing protections under Section 9—to shift to a model that enriches developers. Project-Based Section 8 is not a viable solution; “Trust President Vlada Kenniff said. Over the first year-and-a-half to two years, she explained, the New York City Housing Authority will work on transferring Nostrand Houses apartments out of Section 9 status, or traditional public housing. This process will make apartments eligible for federal Tenant Protection Vouchers (TPVs), worth double NYCHA’s current federal subsidy. The Trust can then leverage these more valuable subsidies to fund repairs. Apartment inspections could begin in year two, Kenniff said. Construction may begin in the third year and could require some tenants to temporarily relocate. As for the repair plan, Kenniff was careful not to commit to anything

specific.

[\(https://citylimits.org/2024/01/25/no-false-promises-nycha-tenants-get-preview-of-trust-transition/\)](https://citylimits.org/2024/01/25/no-false-promises-nycha-tenants-get-preview-of-trust-transition/)

- 27 Authorization to (i) Ratify the Expenditure of Funding by NYCHA in Support of the Trust's Operations; (ii) Approve Additional Financial Support by NYCHA in Connection with the Trust's Ongoing Operations; (iii) Enter into a Repayment Agreement with the Trust; and (iv) Take Further Necessary Action

Location:	Non-Development
Administering Department:	Financial Accounting & Reporting Services
Funding Source:	Operating – Non-Federal Funds
Amount:	\$15,024,993.00
Projected Section 3 Hires/Labor Hours:	Not Required

Authorization is requested to (i) ratify the expenditure of \$2,225,040.00 by the New York City Housing Authority (the "Authority" or "NYCHA") in support of the operations of the New York City Public Housing Preservation Trust (the "Trust") from 2023 and 2024; (ii) approve additional financial support in the amount of \$12,799,953.00 by the Authority in connection with the Trust's (a) ongoing operations and (b) undertaking various pre-development activities in furtherance of the conversion from the Section 9 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 program to the project-based federal subsidy under Section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 program of the Authority's developments which have or may elect through a vote of Authority residents to choose the Trust model, for fiscal year 2025; (iii) enter into a repayment agreement with the Trust; and (iv) take such further necessary action in connection herewith.

Sustainability is about more than just energy efficiency or infrastructure upgrades—it's about people. For residents, sustainability must be rooted in what makes our lives healthier, longer, and more equitable. The conversation cannot exclude us; it must center on our voices and lived experiences.

True sustainability considers the determinants of health: safe housing, clean air and water, access to nutritious food, mental and physical health resources, economic stability, and a sense of community. NYCHA's sustainability objectives should address these critical factors, ensuring that efforts to "modernize" housing don't overlook the real, everyday needs of residents.

We, the residents must not only be included in these conversations but also be empowered to shape them. Sustainability that fails to account for the well-being of the people it's meant to serve is not sustainability at all.

**Renee Keitt
FEC Tenants Against Demolition**

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 12/16/94

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Renee Keitt

Address: EGH

I represent: PEC Tenants

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joel Kupperman

Address: _____

I represent: SMITH HOUSES RESIDENT ASSOC.

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gillian Connell

Address: _____

I represent: NYCHA Managing Director of

Address: Strategic Operations for Real Estate
Development

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Siobhan Watson

Address: _____

I represent: NYCHA Senior Director for

Address: Sustainability

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: AMELIA WALDEN

Address: _____ BRlyn 11207

I represent: TENANT - PUBLIC HOUSING

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Keith Grossman

Address: _____

I represent: NYCHA EVP for Operations

Address: Support Services



Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dylan Baker - Rice

Address: _____

I represent: NYCHA Deputy Chief Asset and

Address: Capital Management Officer

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tony Timmons

Address: [Redacted] Brooklyn NY

I represent: _____

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms