

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITINGS

AND DISPOSITIONS

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC
SITINGS AND DISPOSITIONS

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September 18, 2025
Start: 10:23 a.m.
Recess: 1:20 p.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Kamillah M. Hanks, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Justin L. Brannan
Amanda Farías
Oswald Feliz
Christopher Marte
Sandy Nurse
Yusef Salaam

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Kristy Marmorato

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Deborah Morris, Senior Director of Land Use and
Real Estate at New York City Health and Hospitals

Matthew Furlong, Senior Vice President of Real
Estate Transactions at New York City Economic
Development Corporation

Mychal Johnson, co-founder of South Bronx Unite,
and founding member of the Port Morris Community
Land Stewards

Jonathan Leit, Principal at Alembic Community
Development

Edwin Pagan, Mott Haven Port Morris Community
Land Stewards

Kaila Paulino, South Bronx Unite

Stanley Richards, President and Chief Executive
Officer of the Fortune Society

Lisa Villela, self

Bernadette Ferreira, President of the Van Ness
Neighborhood Alliance

Gina Colando, self

Patrick Stevens, Leadership Fellow at the Center
for Community Alternatives

Raffaella Elmi, Policy Associate at From
Punishment to Public Health at John Jay

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Diana Finch, self

Robert Cohen, physician

Patricia Cambria, self

Phyllis Bassalone, self

Patricia Marinello, self

Rochelle Mandina, self

Hayward Mouton, Senior Director of Programs at
Hour Children

Helen Taylor, self

Ryan Acquaotta, self

Michael Kass, self

Karen Catresi, self

Grace Marrero, community advocate

Charlene Jackson-Mendez, self

Mahmoud Zader, self

Zachary Katznelson, Executive Director of the
Independent Rikers Commission

Kirsten Bladh, Policy Manager at Open New York

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Hailey Nolasco, Senior Director of Government
Relations at the Center for Justice Innovation

Lori Peterson, self

Renata Sklavo, self

Max Zappone, self

Stephen DiTomaso, self

Tiffany Raspberry, Deputy Mayor for
Intergovernmental Affairs at the New York City
Mayor's Office

Diane Savino, Senior Advisor for the New York
City Office of the Mayor in the Office of
Intergovernmental Affairs

Roy Medina, self

Christopher Leon Johnson, self

Frenchie Muniz, self

Caroline Schwab, community organizer

Irene Estrada, President of Mothers Against 1900

Dan Miller, self

Gino Marmorato, self

Roxanne Delgado, self

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Austin Celestin, self

Anuva Goel, self

Kevin Deloia, self

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SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone
check for the Committee on Landmarks, Public Sitings
and Dispositions located in the Chambers, recorded on
September 18, 2025, by Pat Kurzyna. Check, check.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning, good
morning. Welcome to the New York City Council hearing
on the Committee on Landmarks, Public Sitings and
Dispositions.

At this time, please silence all
electronics and do not approach the dais at any time.
Please do not approach the dais.

If you are signed up and are testifying,
please make sure you fill out a slip at the back of
the room with the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Chair, you may begin.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: [GAVEL] Good morning
and welcome to the meeting of the Subcommittee on
Landmarks, Public Sitings, and Dispositions. I am
Council Member Kamillah Hanks, and I am the Chair of
the Subcommittee.

Today, I am joined by my Colleagues,
Council Member Brannan, Farías, Marte, Nurse, Salaam,
and Marmorato.

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Before we begin with today's agenda, I will remind everyone that this meeting is being held in a hybrid format and for members of the public who wish to testify remotely, we ask that you first register online and you may do so now by visiting www.council.nyc.gov/landuse to sign up and then sign into the Zoom and remain signed in until you have testified.

For anyone today in person wishing to testify, and if you have not already done so, please see one of our Sergeants to fill out a speaker's card. We will call your name at the appropriate time.

For anyone wishing to submit a written testimony on the items being heard today, we ask that you please send it via email to landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. Include the land use number and/or the project name in the subject line of your email. Video and audio testimony will not be accepted.

I will remind members of the public that this is a government proceeding and that decorum shall be observed at all times. And as such, members of the public shall remain silent unless called to testify.

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 for inclusion on the hearing record.

We will begin with a couple of votes today on the landmark designations and then we'll move on to our hearings.

I will first note that the following items on today's agenda are laid over. The Lincoln-Wortman Project under Land Use Numbers 345 and 346, which is a proposal by HPD for a UDAAP designation on Article XI tax exemption. This proposal will be heard at a later date.

We will now move to vote to approve the two landmark designations which are previously heard by the Subcommittee. Land Use 343, the former Whitney Museum of Art individual landmark and Land Use 344 of the former Whitney Museum interior landmark pursuant to applications submitted by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission for the delegation as both an individual and interior historic landmark

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in Council Member Powers' District in Manhattan.
Council Member Powers is in support of these
designations.

Members of the Subcommittee who have
questions or remarks about today's items, please let
me know.

Seeing none, I will now call for a vote.
Counsel, please call the roll.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Hanks.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: I vote aye.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
Brannan.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: I vote aye.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Majority Leader
Farías.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: I vote aye.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
Marte.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Aye.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
Nurse.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: I vote aye.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
Salaam.

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COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: I vote aye.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: With a vote of six
in the affirmative, zero negative, and zero
abstentions, the items are adopted and referred to
the full Land Use Committee.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you, Counsel.

We are now going to open the public
hearing for Land Use 363 for a project known as
Lincoln Recovery, an application submitted by the New
York City Health and Hospitals Corporation, HHC,
pursuant to Section 73856 of the HHC Enabling Act for
the authorization to lease a parcel of land
previously used by New York City Health and Hospitals
Lincoln in the Bronx, which has now been unused for
over 10 years, to the Mott Haven Port Morris
Community Land Stewards or an affiliate housing
development fund corporation formed for the lease
transaction for a 49-year ground lease with a two 25-
year renewal option for property located in Council
Member Ayala's District.

Appearing today for this proposal is
Laura Atlas from the New York City Health and
Hospitals, Deborah Morris from the New York City
Health and Hospitals, Matt Furlong from New York City

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EDC, and Mychal Johnson from South Bronx Unite, and
Jonathan Leit from Alembic Bendik Community
Development.

Again, those wishing to testify remotely
must register online by visiting the Council's
website at council.nyc.gov/landuse.

Panelists, please ensure that your
microphone is on, which is indicated by the red
light.

Counsel, will you please administer the
affirmation.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Panelists, would
you please raise your right hand and state your name
for the record.

MATTHEW FURLONG: Matthew Furlong.

DEBORAH MORRIS: Deborah Morris.

MYCHAL JOHNSON: Mychal Johnson.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Make sure the red
light is on.

MYCHAL JOHNSON: Sorry. Mychal Johnson.

JONATHAN LEIT: Jonathan Leit.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: And do you affirm
to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but

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the truth in your testimony before this Subcommittee
and in answer to all Council Member questions?

DEBORAH MORRIS: I do.

MATTHEW FURLONG: I do.

MYCHAL JOHNSON: I do.

JONATHAN LEIT: I do.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you, applicant
panelists.

For the viewing public, once again, if
you need an accessible version of this presentation,
please send an email request to
landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

The applicant panel team may now begin.

DEBORAH MORRIS: Good morning, Madam
Chairwoman Hanks, Members of the Subcommittee on
Landmarks, Public Sitings and Disposition. My name is
Deborah Helaine Morris, and I'm an urban planner and
serve as New York City Health and Hospital's Senior
Director of Land Use and Real Estate.

First, I'd like to thank you for your
time and consideration today for this really exciting
project. I'm joined by Matthew Furlong, Senior Vice
President of Real Estate Transactions at New York
City Economic Development Corporation, Mychal

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Johnson, co-founder of South Bronx Unite, and
founding member of the Port Morris Community Land
Stewards, and Jonathan Leit, Principal at Alembic
Community Development.

New York City Health and Hospitals is
before you today to request approval of a proposed
49-year ground lease with two 25-year renewal options
between the system and the Mont Haven Port Morris
Community Land Stewards for the development of the
Old Lincoln Recovery Center at 349 East 140th Street,
Block 2303, Lot 58, The Bronx, New York, 10454.

The Old Lincoln Recovery Center served as
New York City Lincoln Hospital's outpatient substance
abuse disorder clinic from the 1970s until 2013 when
it closed. The building has remained vacant for more
than a decade and requires significant
rehabilitation. If approved, the site would be
transformed into a vibrant hub for health, wellness,
fitness, education, and the arts.

I am proud to hand over this presentation
to the Mott Haven Port Morris Community Land Stewards
and Alembic, who will provide an overview of the
project. We will be happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you.

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MYCHAL JOHNSON: Good morning, Chairperson
Hanks and Subcommittee Members. My name is Mychal
Johnson again, and thank you for giving us the
opportunity to present our project. I am a co-founder
of the South Bronx Unite and the Mott Haven Port
Morris Community Land Stewards. I serve on the board
of both of these entities.

The Mott Haven Port Morris Community Land
Stewards was established in 2015 by the South Bronx
residents as a community land trust to maintain land
for public use and community self-determination, to
advance cultural, social, and economic initiatives,
including affordable housing and pathways to home
ownership. South Bronx Unite, a project of the Land
Stewards, leads community organizing, advocacy, and
planning initiatives, including the Mott Haven Port
Morris Waterfront Plan, as well as a clean air
program featuring local air quality monitoring
throughout the Mott Haven neighborhood. Well,
actually, throughout the South Bronx and beyond.

In 1931, the history of the Lincoln
Recovery Center was created. The building itself was
built in 31 and opened as a health center. Oh, they
haven't advanced the slide. That's okay. But in 1970,

which is a time period that was extremely special,
through '78, for active self-determination by the
Young Lords and the Black Panthers, they protested
health care inequities at the old Lincoln Hospital in
the South Bronx. Out of that activism and self-
determination, they created the first people's drug
program that was established. It was the first major
use of acupuncture, reiki, and holistic approach to
recovery, and an addiction treatment in the United
States. In the 1980s, this continued, in this
building, continued use of acupuncture.

Yes.

DEBORAH MORRIS: Wait until the slides can
advance.

MYCHAL JOHNSON: Okay. They want me to
wait until the slides catch up.

HOST: Please say next slide when you are
ready to proceed.

MYCHAL JOHNSON: Okay, I'm sorry. Next
slide. Next slide. Next slide.

Okay. The history of the Lincoln Recovery
Center. I've gone over when the building was built in
1931, and the history of the self-determination by
the Young Lords and Black Panthers, creating this

holistic approach to recovery. Now I'm talking about what continued on in the 1980s to 2010. Acupuncture treatment continued as an alternative treatment, nationally recognized and a symbol of grassroots health care activism. The building was closed in 2013 and set vacant. As it set vacant, the community realized it was an asset that we needed to reclaim or to figure out how it can benefit the community again, as it had been in multiple decades. Next slide.

Thank you, Subcommittee Members. Again, Jonathan Leit representing Alembic Community Development. We are the development partner to the Land Stewards who have deep experience in New York in redeveloping community facilities like this.

So this is about, the project is a 40-million-dollar rehabilitation of the Lincoln Recovery Center into the HEArts Center. HEArts is aptly named around the three pillars of the program, health, education, and arts. As everyone has said, it's been vacant for well over a decade, and the rehabilitation will provide extensive renovations to the property along historic guidelines. The new program will include a range of community organizations delivering programming. In addition to the Land Stewards, there

are several others who will focus on delivering services to community. The construction is anticipated to begin the first quarter of 2026 and to be completed in late 2027. Next slide, please.

MYCHAL JOHNSON: In 2013, when the building became vacant, the community came together and started envisioning what can this building provide again in terms of life-giving needs, structural stuff that had been taking place in our community for decades needed to be addressed. And we looked at how we could reuse this property in an appropriate way that would provide the kind of health, education, the arts attributes that the community envisioned it could. So in 2015, the Land Stewards, which is Mott Haven Port Morris County Land Stewards, was formed to acquire and repurpose this site. In 2018, the HEArts feasibility report was completed, strengthening advocacy to repurpose the building for community use. And in that envisioning for the feasibility project is when we brought community together and multiple opportunities to envision what would be the proper use for this property. In 2022 and on, we did multiple community envisioning sessions in front of the building and

annual HEArts festivals, as you see displayed on this image. This is a smaller model of the building I brought, and I also brought some flyers and brochures for you all. This building, you know, means a lot to this community, always has. It's been a place of hope and healing. And when it sat there vacant, you know, the community said, well, we need to make sure we continue to have that kind of a legacy that continues. So with the annual HEArts festival taking place actually in front of the building, bringing youth orchestra, Upbeat NYC is one of the tenants that will be in this structure, that would perform and bring community together to keep envisioning what's possible. In 2023, New York City EDC and New York City Health and Hospitals issued an RFP, and Mott Haven Port Morris Land Stewards and Alembic was designated the conditional developer. We won the RFP. Our feasibility study was thought of and bred by community envisioning, and it was fortunate that the vision of the community was seen in that RFP response. Right now to the present, presently, you know, the Stewards are looking to refine our redevelopment of this building and the programs that's been incorporating community feedback. We put

out surveys around what's the proper use of this facility, even going forward, as we look at different opportunities for different types of community-based organizations who've also been displaced in our community through land speculation and gentrification, they can't serve the local community. But this is a structure, even though it's 23,000 square feet, it cannot house and solve all of our problems. But we know there's something we can do towards health, education, and the arts is super important to meet and address some of the health care disparities, inequitable education outcomes, and this lack of access to arts and culture. Being a community helped to collaborate on the birthing of two music genres, hip-hop and salsa, and we don't really have a place to actually shine and show our cultural history and have our children able to really engulf their culture in that real deep history of arts and culture that really embolds our community. Next slide, please.

JONATHAN LEIT: So as Mychal described, more than 10 years of organizing, planning, and listening to community identified these three pillars around health and wellness, arts, and education. Some

examples of the type of programming that will be happening at the building focuses on free services around nutrition, health screenings, tai chi, a whole range of practitioners will be in the property, again, serving community. Around education, there'll be workforce training in STEM, green energy sectors, and then arts and culture. One of the centerpieces of the development is the creation of an auditorium space that is going to be available for performances, for meetings, for really an expression of culture, as Mychal identified, that is so prevalent and so important in South Bronx. Next slide, please.

Lastly, I want to highlight some of the impacts. So obviously, this is more than remediating a blighted building. This is showing the investment that is necessary and important in a community and in a property that has for kind of too long not been serving community. And as importantly, it's a permanent affordable space, and it's a permanent affordable space that will be run and operated by a community organization, the Land Stewards. We're anticipating approximately 80 full-time jobs that will either be relocated there or created, several thousand annual visitors and beneficiaries to the

various programming that will be offered by both organizations, as well as practitioners and free arts programs. I want to highlight just a couple of the organizations that will be here as lessees.

Obviously, the Land Stewards and South Bronx Unite, they will be operating on the third floor and overseeing the range of community programming. Green City Force, which is a wonderful organization that focuses on young adults who are either in public housing or other low-income housing and provide training in green sectors. And then Upbeat New York City, which provides free education in arts and music for kids. So again, this is really the manifestation of all this long organizing and planning, and these organizations will carry forward and really steward the long-term vision and implementation of the project. Thank you. Happy to answer questions.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much.

I do have a few questions. Firstly, it's an incredible presentation. So, you did answer the question on how long it was going to take for the construction to be built, so you're saying that it'll be 2027, but do you foresee any obstacles in meeting those goals on the timing?

JONATHAN LEIT: Nothing beyond typical construction obstacles. We're scheduled to close end of this year, first quarter 2026, and so we always hope to complete construction sooner, but we hope we'll stay on schedule.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Okay, great. So, you have a lot of great things that are all packed in with the arts, health, and community. How will you ensure the community partners, but more importantly the community, is going to know about this program, who's going to utilize this? How do you plan to get the word out?

MYCHAL JOHNSON: Very good question. Thank you for that. We are very intentional. We just had a HEAarts fall festival outside of the building, so we're doing HEArts before HEArts, where we bring arts and culture and health and wellness, bringing community together to continue to dream about what is possible there, but also to make sure they are incorporating their thoughts and their wishes in terms of what can be done, what should be done, and what do we really need as a community. I've been residing in this neighborhood for about 25 years. I've seen generations of our children going to school

across the playground from this school, PS49, and Mott Haven Houses another 500 feet away. This building, they've been watching, and what we're trying to show is not just by talk, but by doing, that we can make a difference if we work together. So this is a project that's built and bred by local residents and folks who, you know, thought that they didn't have a way to move forward on something like this, but we're in a place where we are, and we've done surveys to make sure that what we're providing will meet the needs, and we're constantly knocking, and we have a whole community organizing team that's knocking on doors and making sure we're tabling in multiple events throughout the neighborhood, but we continue to do our festivals. We have one in October, one in November, and we, you know, so we're really fortunate to be able to be in this place right now, but we know it's super important to be intentional about that outreach because this is what it's about. It's about furthering the outcomes, bettering outcomes for our community, and I didn't talk enough about health and how important that is. We live in a community that has some of the highest rates for asthma, obesity, and diabetes in the city. We are

desperate for healthier outcomes, and that's why that
this being a health center and provided so much
health and wellness, and it can be in the future, and
that's what we know. We can't have healthy outcomes
without being intentional, and our community
understands that, and so we're trying to make sure we
are there for them in this project.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much. Now
I'd like to recognize any of my Colleagues if anyone
has remarks or questions.

Seeing none, thank you. This applicant
panel is now excused.

Counsel, are there any members of the
public who wish to testify on this item?

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, there are.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: As a reminder, if I or
the Council Members have questions, witnesses are
asked to remain online or to stay seated at the
microphone after their testimony until they are
excused.

For those participating online, once you
or your group has been excused of the following
questions, participants may continue to view the live

stream broadcast of this hearing on the council's
website.

Members of the public, you'll be given
two minutes to speak. Please do not speak until the
Sergeant-at-Arms has started the clock.

We will now hear from the first panel.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: The first panel
will be online, Edwin Pagan and Kaila Paulino.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

EDWIN PAGAN: Yes. My name is Edwin Pagan,
and I'm here in support of the Mott Haven Port Morris
Community Land Stewards, and my job has been at this
point doing that outreach that Mychal spoke about in
the community. And we've been very intentional, as he
says, making sure that we reach out to the tenants in
the public housing and joining forces with the
community groups across the region. And one of the
things that we've noticed in all the studies we've
done for the last 10 years is that people are looking
for this kind of service. They require this kind of
service. And one of the things that I know from the
work I've done over the last 10 years in the region
is that people also only venture out in certain
concentric circles of comfort. And so what happens is

that people don't venture out beyond two or three miles because they have to work, they come from school, they have to do homework. But in the region that we're providing the service and building out for the future, as it happens, we are going to serve that need and people won't have to venture out three or four miles to get the service. There are other community cultural organizations not far away, but they're within five or 10 miles, and people are just not going to venture out that way. And so we are putting a seed in the ground for the arts, the culture, and health in a way that the people have asked for the last 10 years when we've done studies. We've done hands-on practicums where people actually put together these blocks that created the facility and knew exactly what they wanted in that place to serve their needs. So we've been very holistic. We've been doing this programming that Mychal said. We just did one this past Saturday. It was fantastic. We have another one coming up on October 11th and 10th. And then we have one in November where we're also paying homage to the people who have contributed for the last 30, 40 years in making sure that this community gets served. So, I think we're very hopeful and

certain that we're going to pull off this because
it's been a long time coming and we've rolled up our
sleeves and (TIMER CHIME) we have the know-how and
the capacity.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time
has expired.

EDWIN PAGAN: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you for your
testimony.

Kaila Paulino.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

KAILA PAULINO: Yes. My name is Kaila
Paulino. I also do work with South Bronx Unite and
other organizations here in the community. This
project would be so beneficial to all of our
community. Right now, as it stands, the area around
what was formerly Lincoln Detox is parks where the
community utilizes, the children play. But
unfortunately, there's a lot of drug addiction in our
community. So, we see oftentimes people dipping out,
heroin needles on the ground. It's something that the
community comes together to clean up so that we can
have safe clean spaces. I think it would be really,
really, really important for us to have a program

that is focused on healing, wellness, art, education,
and just a program that's open to the community where
they don't have to pay to come and utilize the
services. We still have a low-income community. So,
there are so many families that could benefit from
having all of these services. Also, just
educationally, arts-wise, we know that when people
are engaged in positive activity, it takes away from
a lot of the culture of just being on the street and
not really knowing what to do with your time. So, for
our youth, it would also be extremely beneficial to
be able to get education and develop different skills
that would be productive, loving, kind. The community
wants this. As has already been stated, we have been
doing a lot of work. And every time that we have a
healing event or a cultural event, people are so
excited and come together. And we see the way that
we're building connections and creating an active
community of love. So I think it's really important
for us to have this space in order to also have...

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you. Are there
any Council Members with questions for this panel?

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With there being no more questions from
this panel, the witness panel is now excused.

Counsel, please call up the next panel.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: We don't have
anyone else signed up, if there's anyone in person or
online.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Okay. So last call.
Are there any remote public participants who wish to
testify and have not already done so? Please press
the raise hand button now. And if you are here with
us today in person, please fill out one of the
Sergeant-at-Arms' cards. Anyone?

With there being no other members of the
public who wish to testify regarding hearings on Land
Use 363 for the H and H Lincoln Recovery Project, the
public hearing is now closed and this item is now
laid over.

Thank you for your patience.

We will now hear an application of Land
Use 364 for a project known as Jacobi Just Home, an
application by New York City Health and Hospitals for
authorization to lease a parcel of land on the campus
of the Fortune Society, Inc., or an affiliate of
Housing Development Fund Corporation, formed for the

lease transaction for the purpose of the redevelopment of the existing Jacobi Campus Building in Bronx Community District 11 to an affordable and supportive housing development with a total of 83 residential units. This proposal will include 24 permanently affordable studio units for the households, making less than 80 percent of the area median income and 58 supportive studio units for the formerly homeless, medically complex individuals who have been adjudicated or would otherwise be homeless. The proposal redevelopment would also include one superintendent unit, community rooms, an on-site social service suite, and 24-hour security. This proposal is located in Council Member Marmorato's District. City Council approval is necessary for this proposal because the City of New York is the fee owner of the property which leases the city to New York City Health and Hospitals under the terms of the operating agreement between the City and the New York City Health and Hospitals.

In accordance to Section 73856 of the New York City Health and Hospitals Enabling Act, a public hearing was conducted by Health and Hospitals on December 13, 2003. With the respect of the proposed

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lease in January 2004, New York City Health and
Hospitals Board of Directors authorized the leasing
of the property in question. The approval of the 99-
year sublease would include redevelopment of Building
2 staff house, which contains approximately 55,000
square feet, as well as land on which it is located,
including the surrounding grounds and 10 parking
lots, measuring a total of approximately 3,000 square
feet on the campus of the New York City Health and
Hospitals in Jacobi.

Counsel, is the applicant here?

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: No.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Why is the applicant
panel not here?

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: We don't have an
indication, but they did submit written testimony.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: I just want to express
for the record that this is completely unacceptable
and the public is here and this is a blatant
disrespect for the public that H and H is not here to
show up to answer questions for the record.

With that said, does any of my fellow
Council Members have any comments on this?

Council Member Brannan.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Yeah. I just want the record to reflect that this is the second time this week that City Hall is being represented by empty chairs in this Chamber, okay? All while the Mayor is pushing ballot proposals to build more housing because he says that we're the ones in the way of building more housing and here he is now playing games to block the building of more housing. I just want the record to reflect that. Second time this week we've gathered in this Chamber as a co-equal branch of government in the City Council and this is how your Mayor and City Hall is represented, by a row of empty chairs. They don't care about New York, they care about keeping their own power. They're telling us that we're in the way of building more housing and here they are playing games, giving us this fakakta bullshit thing to say that why they're not here. These are not serious people. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you, Chair Brannan.

I will now recognize Majority Leader Amanda Farías.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you, Chair and Council Member Brannan. I just want to state, I think the Mayor and Randy Mastro are once again preventing City agencies from testifying, except this time it's about their own land use application. They made a request to delay the hearing the day before which as you've already heard from my Colleague is unacceptable and especially so if the Mayor and Mastro are cooking up another scheme like Elizabeth Street Garden to block housing for people in need. Now they seem to be trying to block their own project to support supportive housing and medical care for people with serious health conditions. This hypocrisy of sabotaging housing while trying to take more power for the Mayor's Office to control housing in communities is another attempt to screw over New Yorkers, quite frankly. The Mayor himself stated he was in support of this project earlier this year in the very community he came to speak to yet here we are with empty chairs where no one is speaking to community again. And here communities are being used as political pawns. It's extremely shameful that the Mayor and Randy Mastro are operating this way and we cannot continue this way especially with as mentioned

by my Colleague the attempts that are being made on
our Charter this fall.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you, Madam
Majority Leader.

I will now recognize Council Member
Marmorato for a statement about this proposal after
which we will move on to the public testimony.

Again, those wishing to testify must
register online by visiting the Council's website at
council.nyc.gov/landuse.

Council Member Marmorato, you now have
the floor.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you
Chair. This proposal is not about blocking housing,
and the whole reason we're here and my community is
here. We would accept supportive housing. We would
accept affordable housing, but from day one there has
been a discrepancy of the type of individual that
would be in the housing project and there has been a
lot of lack of transparency and unfortunately there's
distrust. For three years, September is three years
that both the Fortune Society and Health and Hospital
has been to my community to continue community
outreach. We do not have a voice. We feel like we are

not being listened to, and I'm glad that my community is here to speak out and have their time to be listened to. And we are looking for an alternate location for Fortune Society that would actually better fit and probably be larger than the one at the Jacobi site. So, I just ask my Colleagues to open your hearts and listen to my community and hear what they have to say. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you very much.

Counsel, are there any members of the public who wish to testify on this item?

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes. We have quite a few.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Okay, thank you.

As a reminder, if I or the Council Members have questions, witnesses are asked to remain online or to stay seated at the microphone after their testimony until they are excused.

For those participating online, once you or your group has been excused following any questions, participants may continue to view the live stream broadcast of this hearing on the Council website.

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Members of the public will be given two minutes to speak. Please do not begin until the Sergeant-at-Arms has started the clock.

We will now hear from the first panel.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: First panel is Stanley Richards.

You can begin.

STANLEY RICHARDS: Thank you, Chair Hanks and Members of the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings and Dispositions. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today. My name is Stanley Richards, and I am the President and CEO of the Fortune Society, which has been my professional home for over 30 years. For 58 years, the Fortune Society has been committed to supporting people returning from incarceration and providing meaningful alternatives to incarceration. We make a lifetime commitment to the people that we serve, and our work is deeply rooted in the belief that people can undergo transformation when given the right support. We have seen firsthand how comprehensive community-based interventions, including supportive housing, can change lives, break cycles of incarceration, and create safer communities. In Fiscal Year 2025,

Fortune served over 18,000 people throughout 16 program areas, including alternatives to incarceration, re-entry program, employment and education, mental health and substance use treatment, and across our continuum of housing programs. We housed over 1,200 people across six different housing sites in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Manhattan, offering a continuum of emergency and transitional housing. At Fortune, we always say that we counter fear with facts. The fact is that providing formerly incarcerated people with supporting housing does not make our neighborhoods less safe. To the contrary, it makes all of us safer. As former HUD Secretary Marcia Fudd said, denying housing to people with convictions make our communities less safe because providing returning citizens with housing helps them integrate and makes them less likely to offend. We know this from research and we know this from our own decades of experience operating housing programs in New York City.

Over 25 years ago, we purchased a property on West 140th Street that would become the Fortune Academy. We got into the business of developing housing because far too many people who we

serve could not access it. Today, we are seeking approval for the Just Home to fill another (TIMER CHIME) gap, the lack of permanent supportive housing for people leaving incarceration with complex medical needs who would otherwise be homeless.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Sir, you have passed your two minutes. I'm sorry.

STANLEY RICHARDS: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Okay, thank you. So I do have some questions. Can you please detail the current condition of the building?

STANLEY RICHARDS: The building is in need of major repairs. It is of rehabilitation. I'm not sure how long the building has been vacant, but it requires major rehabilitation.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you. Would you kind of clarify the scope of what work is necessary for the new programming?

STANLEY RICHARDS: At this point, what we need to do is restructure the units so that we can have studios. We would need to do an environmental review to understand whether or not there is any remediation that needs to happen. We are repurposing where Health and Hospitals police used to be into a

community room that would be available to the
community board and local community members for use.
So, we would need to do some major rehab of the
building. We're building out a laundry room
downstairs. We're building out nurses' station on the
first floor, the supers unit. We're building out
community space for the residents. So, we would need
to do some major renovation. We estimate about the
project will cost about 40 million dollars.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you for that.

With the construction that you're about to do, what
measures are going to be put in place to ensure that
the hospital's operations and neighbors are not going
to be negatively impacted?

STANLEY RICHARDS: Well, we've put in our
proposal that we're going to provide on-site case
management, care management. The idea is that these
are folks with complex medical needs and are
homeless. So, we're going to make sure that people
are connected to healthcare, might be at Jacobi or it
might be with other medical providers. We are ready
to provide transportation for those who need that
transportation support to get to and from their
appointments. We have building out, as I said, a

nurse's station so they can have home health aides if they need to. We're building out the kinds of support that allows people to live with dignity and they don't have to cycle between emergency rooms, hospital beds, and shelters.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: So you have all of this worked out when there are major alterations that are going to be done that the current hospital and residents will understand that and be...

STANLEY RICHARDS: Absolutely. And I should remind you that this is on the campus of Jacobi Hospital. So, yes.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Would you clarify the timeline needed to complete the project?

STANLEY RICHARDS: A rehab of this sort and the fundraising that we would need to do, we anticipate two, two and a half years, perhaps three years. Once we obtain City Council approval, Health and Hospitals would need to prepare the 99-year ground lease, which would allow us then to begin to do fundraising for capital. We've already identified two funding streams. One, the Supportive Housing Loan Program from HPD, which will help with the capital cost. And the City Council has allocated a number of

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years ago 1 million dollars for just expansion that
DOHMH will be using for service dollars for this
particular project so thank you for that.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you. So, there's
been a lot of speculation about the population served
in the supportive housing here. Can you explain what
the selection process entails for the supporting
housing units in more detail? The Department of
Correctional Health Services is involved, yes?

STANLEY RICHARDS: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Okay. So given these
individuals will no longer be in the correctional
system...

STANLEY RICHARDS: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Let's talk about that
a little bit.

STANLEY RICHARDS: So, folks will be
identified through Correctional Health Services for
those people who are incarcerated and who are pending
release. The primary criteria is complex medical
needs. And I have said this to Council Member
Marmorato, I encourage her to go out to Rikers and go
to NIC, where primarily the folks are coming from.
She will see exactly who we're talking about. And so

these are people who are homeless, who cannot be managed in a City shelter, that end up in emergency rooms. Health and Hospitals have said the average age is probably going to be about 55, although there may be some younger. But these are going to be people with complex medical needs, stage 4 cancer, other kind of need for assistive devices as wheelchairs, oxygen, people who could not be managed in shelter.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Yeah. I think that kind of answers my last question is, you know, Health and Hospitals have been creating and using these properties for that purpose. So, I think we would just really want to understand, you know, the benefits and challenges, but I think that you went into that. I mean, as far as we're concerned, and, you know, even to Council Member Marmorato, it's the impact that the projects have on communities to make sure that everybody is doing what they're saying they're going to do when they testify, and that's the neighborhood concern.

So, I think that is my questions. Council Member Marmorato, would you like to? Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you, Chair.

So, I just want to ask, since September of '22, have you done any community outreach and engaged the community any further?

STANLEY RICHARDS: We have. We have been engaging with that community, and including you, since we've been designated as the developer and service provider. We went to a number of community meetings that we were not well received, but we still showed up. We had conversations with district leadership. We've been having ongoing conversations about the project, our vision for the project, our track record. We invited you up to Castle Gardens, which we are replicating Just Homes after, so you could see firsthand what our building looks like, how we provide services, and we've been open since 2010 in that particular building, and you've seen it. The building still looks brand new, and we provide service to the broader community. So, we try to and are willing to always engage in community, because for us, being a good neighbor is as good as being a good service provider. Being a community partner is as important to us as it is to providing services for people who are impacted by the criminal legal system. So, we don't shun or stay away from community

engagement. And I'm here saying we would continue to have conversations and whatever we need to do to build trust and to support community.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. I guess I was looking more along the lines of the people that actually live in Indian Village and Morris Park, like the people that are a couple of hundred feet away. Have you done any engagement there?

STANLEY RICHARDS: Yeah. As I said, we did, I think, two community meetings.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: I think the last one was '22.

STANLEY RICHARDS: Was it Jacobi?

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Yes. That was the last one. So have you been back to the community since then?

STANLEY RICHARDS: We have not been invited back. No, we have not.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay.

STANLEY RICHARDS: But as you know, in that meeting, we were not very well received. We didn't get an opportunity to share our vision. We didn't get an opportunity to talk about who we are.

And so even in the face of that, we are still willing to come out and have conversations.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: And I'm sorry about that, but I think it has a lot to do with the rollout, and maybe it wasn't the rollout on your end. Maybe it was the way that Jacobi did not roll the information out to the community, that it was leaked out through an internet posting, and I felt like (INAUDIBLE) doesn't excuse anybody's behavior, but I feel like the way that it was rolled out had a lot to do with some people's behaviors. Not everyone's, but not everybody was as terrible.

STANLEY RICHARDS: And I just hope that the community, at Fortune, we have a saying that none of us want to be judged by the worst thing that we've ever done.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Right.

STANLEY RICHARDS: And if Health and Hospitals or Correctional Health or HPD didn't roll this out as the community expected, I hope the community offers Health and Hospitals, HPD, and Fortune some grace to say that none of us will be judged by the worst thing that we've ever done. And we've made some mistakes, but we're standing before

you right now saying that we want a partnership with that community to provide stable, affordable housing that encompasses dignity for people who are most vulnerable in New York City.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Can you kind of walk me through the selection process? Like how will the selection process for the Just Home Initiative units work? What will the outreach be? Because I know you mentioned that there were a lot of individuals at Rikers NIC. How many people are currently there?

STANLEY RICHARDS: I don't know what the census is for that particular facility. I think it's a little over 7,000 people who are incarcerated in New York City jails. NIC is a medical wing. I don't know what the census is. I know that the capacity for that kind of medical wing is probably about 100. I doubt if it's that many people.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Now, if individuals don't meet the criteria, like I know that you had said medically complex individuals. I know Health and Hospitals isn't here. Can you touch on medically complex for us? Like what the criteria would be?

STANLEY RICHARDS: I can't go into detail. I'm not a medical professional, but from the conversations we've had with Health and Hospitals, it is the primary eligibility of people who would have a hard time living independently and would need significant supportive housing to be able to live with dignity and manage their lives. And so they gave examples of the kind of medical conditions that people would need. And I think the most clearest one of people who require oxygen to get around, people who have complex medical needs that require perhaps in-home care. And so one of the things we're doing for Just Home is we're building out a nurse's station. So people who need (TIMER CHIME) health home, aides can have it. If people need medical attention, they can get it. And we're going to have care managers who are ensuring that people are connected to healthcare so they don't use the city's most expensive resource, which is our emergency rooms, hospitalizations, and shelters.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Now, if people do not meet the criteria, will these apartments sit empty?

STANLEY RICHARDS: I don't think they'll be sitting empty. There has been this need. It's been identified, I think, since 2017 when the concept first was developed because they saw that this need is present, and I don't think the need has been going down. And in fact, the City and the City Council has been doing what is necessary to try to create more pathways for people with justice histories to get housing.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay.

STANLEY RICHARDS: They just recently passed Intro. 1100. They baselined and increased funding for justice-involved supportive housing, and we are thankful for that leadership. We are thankful for that partnership because for far too long, New Yorkers with criminal convictions have been invisible and have been ostracized and have been demonized. And it's time for this city to stop and to look at people as they are valuable, even if they made a mistake. And that's what we hope to do with Just Homes, provide dignity and stability.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. So, I just want to go back to the eligibility. In July of 2022, Health and Hospitals' FAQ stated the project

would target medically complex homeless New Yorkers after they leave jail. The next month in August of 2022, an email between one of my constituents and the Fortune Society's former CEO Joanne Page says over 80 percent of the people incarcerated at Rikers Island are pretrial detainees so we expect that a significant percentage of the people who would be housed at Just Home will be pretrial detainees. Can you kind of, and then even like last month with our meeting, you're saying that the individuals would be adjudicated. And we had Correctional Health still saying they would be pretrial detainees. And it's still up until a month ago, there was no concrete criteria of what these individuals are. Can you please kind of just go over that with me? Will these be pretrial detainees? Will they be adjudicated? Will they have some type of, excuse me one second...

STANLEY RICHARDS: Open case?

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Any kind of open cases or an alternative to incarceration type of release?

STANLEY RICHARDS: So, I think what you're pointing out, and thank you for pointing that out, because I think that is an example of how we listened

to what we've heard from the community. I think when the project first started, the reality of it is 80 percent of the people who are incarcerated on Rikers Island are pretrial. They have not been convicted of anything. They are pending adjudication of their case. That is a fact that has nothing to do with Just Homes. What we have heard from the community is that that is a concern for the community, to have people with pending cases, because the community then tied that to somehow closing Rikers, which this is not about. And what we've done is listened. And so we've narrowed the eligibility in saying, you know what, this will be for people who have their cases adjudicated. They will not be with open court cases. They will not be as an alternative to incarceration, because this is permanent housing. They will have a lease like every other New Yorker who has a lease. They will have an obligation to pay rent, 30 percent of their income, 60 percent AMI, and we're looking to make sure that we have affordable housing. So the funding that we're going to be pursuing will hopefully allow us to reduce the 60 percent AMI to some units for 30 percent AMI, so that way people who are on Social Security can have affordability. But

we've listened, and I think that's an example of us with the ongoing conversation saying, we're hearing that the concern from the community is people are going to have open court cases. So, I can tell you right now that eligibility, complex medical needs, primary eligibility. Second eligibility, that they have to have their case adjudicated before they are screened by Fortune, enrolled, and given a lease for Just Homes.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Will you look to acquire any HUD funding for this project?

STANLEY RICHARDS: It all depends on what we need to do, the capital and the services. HUD funding traditionally is around capital. There are some rental subsidies. Given the climate that we're in, we doubt very seriously that we'll probably get some of the rental subsidies.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Will there be any smoking allowed in the apartment units?

STANLEY RICHARDS: I think it's important to clarify that Just Homes is just like any other leased unit. They have the same rights and protections as any tenant. If there was a tenant in one of the Pelham Bay apartment buildings, that they

have a right to have visitors, they have a right to smoke in their house, they have a right to cook their own meals. They have the same rights as any tenant in New York City.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Just don't understand how that's possible, being that all of New York Health and Hospital campuses are smoke-free campuses, and we just have concerns about that. It's on the property of Health and Hospital so I think that we got to kind of talk about that or work on that. I understand that you should be able to smoke in your own property, but if the entire campus is smoke-free, I think that's something we should kind of talk about.

I just have one or two more questions.

Now, security. What will 24-hour security look like to protect not only the individuals living at the property, but the people living around the property?

STANLEY RICHARDS: Yeah. As you've seen when you came to Castle Gardens, we have residential aides, and we purposely call them residential aides and not security because they are there as an aid to the tenants, both for the tenant's protection and for

the community's protection. At Castle Gardens, we have over 90 cameras throughout the building, where every part of the building is secured and monitored by the front desk residential aides. They welcome guests in, they assist tenants with any help that they may need, and they keep eyes and ears on what's happening in the building. We will have that same model at Just Homes on the campus. One of the things we heard when we first engaged with the community is that along Seminole Avenue in the summertime, young people often gather there. They race their cars there. We are willing to put cameras on that wall that separates Jacobi campus from Seminole Avenue to ensure that we have eyes on the back of the property. That is not part of Just Homes, but that was a concern for the community. Hopefully, that would reduce laundering from young people and racing.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Do you have any intentions of knocking down the wall to make an entrance on Seminole Avenue?

STANLEY RICHARDS: No, not at all.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay.

STANLEY RICHARDS: The entrance will be the Jacobi Hospital entrance.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Will partners
or children be allowed to live in these studio
apartments with these individuals?

STANLEY RICHARDS: No. These are all
studios, so they're for singles. They're not for
families. In Castle Gardens, we have one-, two-, and
three-bedrooms that allow for families to move in. In
Just Homes, it's all studios.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: I mean, things
happen. We get a boyfriend and/or a girlfriend, and
then we end up having babies. That's kind of like the
way of the world. What happens when that happens?
Now, there's three individuals living in a studio
apartment.

STANLEY RICHARDS: Part of that is with
our residential aids. You can have as many visitors.
We don't allow people to just stay over to claim
housing access. Those are all studios, so they are
going to be small units. I think we presented the
presentation to you. You've seen the units. It's one
bed. It's a bathroom. It's like a kitchenette, so we
don't anticipate people coming in trying to create
families. I can tell you what we did in Castle
Gardens because we have 63 studios. In partnership

with HPD, we enrolled in a program that allows the Section 8 vouchers to be project-based vouchers, but if somebody wanted to start a family and get a bigger unit, they can apply for a portable voucher and move out and move into a two-bedroom or one-bedroom if they wanted to start a family. As you know, our building is really, really nice, and we've had a handful of people who moved out.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Now, what happens if there is any kind of violent incidents within the property? Will people be at risk of getting their leases up, or will they be removed? Who handles that?

STANLEY RICHARDS: We will respond because safety is a critical issue for us. You can check in with the 30th Precinct in Harlem. We have been, as I said, we've been there since 2002. We have been in partnership with the 30th Precinct. If an incident happens or we are in need of calling the police, we will call the police. We are not afraid of holding people accountable. If people need to be held accountable, they will be held accountable, but then we also give people second chances, and so if someone gets in trouble and we have to call the police, the

police will come and do what they need to do. They have a lease, and if we need to evict, we will pursue eviction proceedings, but that's not our first choice, and we've had the history of we didn't have to do that in Castle Gardens. We've had history because we build relationships with tenants. You've seen, you know, I'm the President and CEO, and I know 90 percent of the people in that building by first name, and they know me, and so we have an ability that if people are struggling, they come to us. We work with them. We have on-site case managers that work with people. We have care managers, and so we're going to bring that same model to Just Homes.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. All right. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much. We have Majority Leader Farías has questions.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Richards, thank you for showing up as, you know, we haven't had an opportunity to have a full hearing today. Can you explain a little bit more and tell the Subcommittee about your existing housing projects? I know you've given us in brevity what they

look like, who's within them, the type of services,
but any way that you can expand upon that to give us
a more contextual view other than those of us that
have had the privilege to go view them ourselves.

STANLEY RICHARDS: Yes. So, in 1998, we
have seen, as we were serving people, so many people
that were coming home wanting to obtain employment
but couldn't do so because they were homeless, and so
we took it upon ourselves as an organization to say,
what can we do to help people build stability so that
they can truly integrate back into community, and so
we purchased a lot on 140th Street, and we opened in
2002 the Academy, which is our emergency and
transitional housing. We had a lot that was next
door, and it was at a time where real estate was
really growing, and we had a choice at that point to
either sell that land and lose total control over it
or do some community good. We went to Community Board
9, and we said, what is it that you need? And at that
time, Columbia was buying up a lot of the property
coming up by 125th Street. They said we need
affordable housing. Our kids will not be able to live
in this community with the gentrification that was
going on. We took that seriously and embarked on a

partnership to build Castle Gardens. In 2010, we opened up Castle Gardens, 114 units of both supportive, 63, and 50 affordable, and one for the super, 20,000 square feet of program space, where we have services, and since that time, we have been a real partner with Community Board 9. Community Board 9 meets in that space. We have become a polling place. Each week, we do a food distribution, mainly to seniors, where we serve over 300 seniors, where we give out eggs and produce that is produced here in New York, and we have become a real partnership. We do a back-to-school event. We do health fairs for that community. We have become a real community partner, and so now we have two other projects that are in development, one on 123rd Street between Park Avenue and Lexington Avenue, same model, mixed-use supportive housing for people with criminal convictions and affordable housing, and we're doing one on 97th Street between Broadway and West End. Both projects, we engaged with the community, and the community is fully in support of that, and we look forward to opening up both of those projects sometime next year, middle to end of next year, and so we have decades of history of providing housing stability to

some of New York's most vulnerable New Yorkers,
people with criminal convictions, and we look forward
to taking that expertise and that experience and
building out Just Homes. And I would add that
Community Board 9 wrote us a letter when we first got
this designation in 2022, and it's in my testimony.
The letter says that Fortune has been a really good
neighbor, and in fact, they recommend that Fortune
should be in every community, in every borough,
throughout the city, and throughout the country, and
I think that is a testament to the relationship we
have built over the years with Community Board 9 in
that particular community.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you for
that response.

How do you ensure that there's a balance
between public safety in the neighborhood and making
sure that people living there in your buildings have
the services that they need? I know you've mentioned
the nursing location, any other services, the
security cameras you've mentioned, and again, I know
there's just a reiteration, this is on an already
hospital campus that's closed, but if you can expand
further on any other public safety measures.

STANLEY RICHARDS: Yes. We think about our work as public safety. It is not re-entry in itself. It is not alternatives to incarceration. It's public safety. What we know is every life that we get an opportunity to touch, to give hope, and to envision a future where incarceration is not a reality for them, that means our communities are safer. I'm a formerly incarcerated man who, in my younger days, devastated my community, and I hope the work I've done over the last 30 years, 30-odd years, has paid back some of what I caused for my community, but the opportunity Fortune gave me when I came home from prison stopped my cycle of incarceration. My cycle of incarceration was (TIMER CHIME) stopped, and I was able to stop my children's because I was in prison. My brother was in prison. My sister was in prison. We lived that life, and thank God that my children and my grandchildren would not have to know the life that I lived because somebody gave me a chance.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Chair, can I have expanded time?

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Yes.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you.

Thank you for that response.

Just on my own, just because I've been doing a lot of my own research trying to make sure I have full context of this process and timeline, do these public engagement events sound accurate to you based off of your engagement, Fortune's participation, and both with H and H? So, in 2022, we have HPD designating Fortune the pre-development stage, and at that point, we also have Morris Park Community Association briefing and public comment. In August of 2022, we have CB11 hosting a virtual briefing that was attended by H and H, HPD, and Fortune Society. Is that accurate?

STANLEY RICHARDS: Yes.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: And also the Administration issued their Just Homes press release. And I also have in September 2022, former Council Member Velasquez hosted virtual community briefing on housing for health with H and H's participation. And I believe additionally to that, that same year or month, you folks had CB11 meeting at Jacobi with presentations from both yourself and H and H engaging the public.

STANLEY RICHARDS: Yes.

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MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: And then in 2023,
we had the Jacobi Community Advisory Board briefing
where there was also an additional public meeting at
Jacobi.

STANLEY RICHARDS: Yes.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Okay. Just want
to make sure that I have an accurate timeline here.

STANLEY RICHARDS: And then there was a
public meeting with Health and Hospitals Board where
they voted unanimously for the ground lease. We've
also have done a tour of Just Homes with former
Council Member Velasquez.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Okay. Thank you
for those additional points.

And just mentioning on the 83 apartments
that will be here, we know there's 58 supportive
housing units, 24 affordable studio units through
Housing Connect, and the superintendent apartments,
all 100 percent affordable housing development. Can
you talk a little bit more about the wraparound
services on the campus again? And then can you tell
us anything additional to the security on the campus
itself in addition to what you folks are already
providing?

STANLEY RICHARDS: Yes. So, everybody, once they come in, they'll go through the lease process where they'll sign a lease. They'll get a move in date. They'll be able to move in. Everybody will be assigned a case manager and a care manager. Care managers are the folks who help them get and stay connected to healthcare to make sure that they're taking care of what they need to do. The case manager is someone who helps them navigate all of the systems that they have to go through to make sure they have additional services. We usually start off with three visits a week. So, it'll be two face-to-face visits and a visit in the unit. So, we are really assessing what are the needs that they have, what are the resources available to them, and how do we make sure that they're connected to those resources. That is also about building a relationship so they know if they're struggling with something, they have somebody that they can talk to, someone who they could have confidence that will be available for them. And so those services are going to be available as long as they live in that particular building.

On the security side, our residential aides, the way we normally work it is we have two

people on each shift. We have three shifts per day,
24-hour coverage. They make hourly rounds. So, they
go around, they check to make sure, one, the tenants
are all right, particularly in that building because
they're going to have complex medical needs, and so
we want to make sure tenants are all right so they do
hourly rounds. Those rounds are all documented in
what we call our shift reports. Every shift report,
anything that seems out of place, anything that
raises a concern, confirming that rounds were made
and everything was clear, it's all documented in our
shift reports. Those shift reports at the end of
every shift are then emailed to the supervisor so the
supervisor and the director of that building
understands what's going on at the end of every
shift. And that is in support of all of the cameras
we will have, which record on motion. The cameras
that we have in Castle Garden, it records on motion.
No motion, it will not record.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you so
much.

And then just based off of your
experience already working with different
developments, I want to get a better understanding of

either the selection and screening process. I know you've already gone through some of that. And I just want to clarify some of the things we will have folks that likely have nowhere else to live, leaving a jail facility, and we're looking at who would be, quote unquote, the best candidate for this housing. So, we have CHS clinicians that are going to consider all of the patient's health profile, including the severity of their illnesses and their level of functional need, and then we're looking at primary health conditions that are potentially including cancer, congestive heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cirrhosis, and end stage renal disease. And I'm sorry that I'm asking you for this, but since no one from the Administration is here to answer this or clarify, I'm asking just because you are having these engaged conversations as you're going to be the provider on this campus. And again, the majority of the folks here are going to be complex patients who will likely, based off of the average that they've been able to see, is 55-plus. Does that sound accurate to the conversations you've had?

1
2 STANLEY RICHARDS: Yes, that is accurate.
3 And in addition to that screening, Fortune, once they
4 hit the eligibility threshold, Fortune will be doing
5 our own screening, and our screening will be about
6 appropriateness for the level of care we provide. So,
7 for example, if somebody needs hospice care, we
8 cannot provide that care in Just Homes. So, we will
9 do our own assessment in terms of appropriateness
10 based on the level of care that we can provide as a
11 service provider.

12 MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: And what's the
13 likeliness of folks needing, I know you mentioned
14 transport will be available. Do we have an idea of
15 how many folks will be commuting within the Jacobi
16 campus versus maybe some of their primary care or
17 their specialty care off campus?

18 STANLEY RICHARDS: Yeah. I don't have a
19 sense of how many, but we think because this is a
20 population that's going to be about 55 years old and
21 have multiple medical conditions, that mobility may
22 be a challenge. So, we have built into the program
23 vans that will be able to take people to and from
24 their appointments. And you should also know that
25 Jacobi Hospital, there is transportation on Pelham

Parkway, the 12 bus, and there's a couple of train lines, but it's not easy to get to. And so we are building in transportation to help people with mobility issues get to and from.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: I frequent Jacobi and I can never find buildings, so I get that.

STANLEY RICHARDS: Yes.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Okay. The only last question I have is just based off of, and I know you may not have this number in front of you in any way, but if there's a guesstimation to the percentage of maybe veterans you've served, do we have that percentage? I mean, I haven't looked more recently at the numbers that we have of veterans in Rikers right now or veterans that might be impacted in this case, but do you have an idea in Fortune's history, like what's the likeliness of those folks coming through for your services and for your housing? Just wanted to know if you have that number.

STANLEY RICHARDS: Yeah. I couldn't give you a percentage, but I would assume that some will be veterans. What we've seen, particularly on Rikers, a number of veterans have been going up. In fact, when I was the First Deputy Commissioner of Programs

and Operations at the Department of Corrections,
there was a veterans' dorm because we had that many
veterans, and a dorm holds 50 people. I think that
program has expanded, so I don't know how many dorms
they have, but I would say right now it's probably 50
to 100 people who are incarcerated on Rikers who
might be veterans, and those are veterans who are
identifying as veterans. You have some veterans who
don't identify and therefore wouldn't be in that
particular category, so I couldn't give you a sense
of the percentage, but I would assume that some will
be veterans, yes.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Okay. Thank you.
Those are all my questions, Chair.

STANLEY RICHARDS: And Chair, if I may,
this has been really put on my heart early this
morning, and I'd just like to share it with this
Committee because this Committee and this Council
have been really bold, and I think the work over the
years has been reflected in what I'm about to read,
and this is based on my faith, and it's Matthew 25:34
to 40, and it says, Then the king will say to those
on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my father,
inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the

creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me. Then these righteous ones will reply, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink, or a stranger and show you hospitality, or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the king will say, I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these, my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me, and I think this is a moment where we need to stand in the gap for some of New York's most vulnerable New Yorkers, and Just Homes is one tool to allow us to move a critical inch towards showing humanity and giving grace to those who might have made a mistake but deserve a second chance so thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much.

We're just going to pause, and I would like to recognize Council Member Feliz has joined us online, and we are going to be reopening the vote for Land Use Item 343 and Land Use Item 344 for the Whitney

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Museum of Art Interior and Exterior Landmark. Council
Member Feliz, how do you vote?

COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Aye on all. Thank
you.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: By a vote of seven
in the affirmative, zero in the negative, and zero
abstentions, the items are adopted and referred to
the full Land Use Committee.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much,
Council Member.

We now have questions from Council Member
Nurse.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you, Chair.
Thank you for sharing that and reminding us that
compassion is exactly what is needed in this time
right now. You know, we just saw or heard on Fox News
one of their anchors talk about lethally injecting
homeless people, and I think all of us that heard
that just felt how low we are right now.

STANLEY RICHARDS: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: And so I really
think that the dignified and very elegant way that
you are managing this project is exactly the
leadership we need. I want to thank Fortune for all

of your partnership and just how well you all work with the Council, and as the Chair of Criminal Justice, you all always show up and speak to the needs. You provide transparency. Anytime we need information or we have questions about your projects, your budget, programs, funding that the Council has given, you are always responsive and ready. So thank you for that. And I'm sorry that some of the questions today have been absurd. I mean, the idea that people who are 55 plus with terminal or chronic diseases might be having babies is kind of, it just shows the absurdity in which people are looking at homelessness and people in need, and I'm really sorry for that question. Chairing the Committee of Criminal Justice, the thing that we've just hammered on over and over again and advocated for to City Hall is that we need support for people with chronic health. And as someone who has gone to Rikers since the first week I became a Council member, and I've been many, many times, someone with a heart condition, people who have serious mental illnesses, someone with schizophrenia, someone who has got liver failure, being in Rikers or being in a jail system or prison system is absolutely the worst place for them to be.

They're getting absolutely no care and certainly not up to par care that they need. This type of project is exactly the type of project that we need to support our homeless population, because just because you are homeless or just because you did something a long time ago doesn't mean you should deserve to die in the streets, right? And it doesn't mean you should deserve to die without care and someone who stands by you. So, I will just say that I'm going to be working as hard as possible with my Colleagues to support this project and champion this project. This is based on a real need. This isn't made up. And I think sometimes the opposition to things like this is because people just don't realize how close they are to being in the exact same situation. People don't realize how a late stage in life mental illness or chronic disease can put you on a very fast track to homelessness.

STANLEY RICHARDS: That's right.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: And sometimes it's easy to deny that by just kind of keeping it out of sight and out of mind. But the fact is these are our people. These are New Yorkers and we're not throwing them out and we're not leaving them out to dry. So, I

want to make sure this works. I think you all have provided so much information and you have been very transparent and upfront about your operations, your protocols, your security plans. I mean, there couldn't be a project that I have seen in this Committee talked about at length like this, and I really wish that Correctional Health was here standing with you. They have been in our hearings many, many times specifically identifying this need, and it's really disappointing and shameful that they're not here to be with you because, I believe and I know that people at Correctional Health are with you and believe in this project. And hopefully, and I believe this will be the case, next year we will have an Administration that actually is going to support real solutions and isn't going to cower in moments like this. So, thank you for doing what you're doing and thank you for your partnership with the Council. And that's all I have to say, Chair.

STANLEY RICHARDS: Thank you, Chair Nurse.

CHAIRPERSON HANKS: Thank you so much,
Council Member.

Are there any other Council Members with questions for this panel?

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Seeing none, this panel is now excused.

Counsel, please call up the next panel.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: The next panel, and
excuse any mispronunciations, Ronnie Calangelo
(phonetic), Lisa Villela (phonetic), Bernadette
Ferreira (phonetic), and Gina Colando (phonetic).

Ronnie, you don't want to go first?

RONNIE CALANGELO: (INAUDIBLE)

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: You don't want to
go first?

RONNIE CALANGELO: (INAUDIBLE)

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lisa.

Sorry, as soon as we set the clock. You
may begin.

LISA VILLELA: (INAUDIBLE)

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Oh, sorry, make
sure the button is on. The light would be red.

LISA VILLELA: I've lived in Morris Park
my whole life. I am raising my children here, and my
80-year-old mom lives on Seminole, directly across
the street from this proposed site. From the windows
of this building, you can see directly into my
mother's home, as well as her neighbors who are
elderly or have young children. Mr. Richards from

Fortune Society told us not to worry because, quote, these people have one foot in the grave. Stage four cancer and end-stage renal failure were two diagnoses that were told to us. Then the story changed to medically complex, which could be two diagnoses. Then the story changed to pretrial detainees with possible mental health and substance abuse issues, and that the only security will be cameras and a front desk person. If your mother lived 100 feet from this building, wouldn't you be concerned? Fortune Society restricts who can live at their 97th Street facility. They cannot have a history of methamphetamine production, arson, sex offenders, those who pose a risk of violence, or anyone Fortune deems inappropriate. So, since they get to pick and choose who lives there, that leaves us with the people that they don't want. There are numerous daycares and schools within walking distance, as well as the Kennedy Center, which is a facility for developmentally disabled individuals, located approximately 20 yards from this building. One population that is in desperate need of affordable housing are our seniors. Many have spent their life working hard and trying to make ends meet. Now, as

they live on fixed, limited incomes, many need to
downsize for financial, medical, or mobility
concerns. With the high cost of food, prescriptions,
and housing, many of our seniors are struggling. This
building would be a perfect location where seniors
can live in small, manageable, and affordable
apartments with easy access to Jacobi's medical
facilities.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

Bernadette Ferreira, please restate your
name for the record.

You may begin.

BERNADETTE FERREIRA: Okay. Good morning,
Chair and Committee Members. My name is Bernadette
Ferreira. I'm the President of the Van Ness
Neighborhood Alliance and a lifelong northeast Bronx
resident. Today, I speak on behalf of my many years
as a Bronx resident. There are many reasons why I
strongly oppose the Just Homes Project, which will
permanently house Rikers homeless and detainees at
1900 Seminole Avenue. And to note, Just Homes is a
first-time experimental project for the Fortune
Society and for New York City Health and Hospitals.
The community asks the New York City Health and

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Hospitals, the Mayor, and the City Council to work towards a win-win solution. The communities respect New York City's Health and Hospitals' need for revenue. We ask that you respect our love and the needs for our communities we call home. The Just Homes Project is not our community's need. Our list has veterans housing, senior housing, a community center, a birthing center, a wellness and culture center, and these are the top priority needs before Just Homes in our communities. Our major concerns are its close location to many of the schools and the safety of our residents. The Fortune Society will choose who permanently lives there and who was referred by the Correctional Health Services. CHS has disclosed that most of the medical conditions suffered by Rikers inmates are not complex medical needs, but mental health and substance abuse problems. The permanent housing will have minimal security, and the Fortune Society will not be discriminating on any of the reasons why these inmates have been incarcerated. This means that the Rikers tenants will be roaming freely in our community. Who will be accountable when situations happen? (TIMER CHIME) This Just Homes Project in 1997

is too risky at this location for our communities.

Thank you.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Ronnie.

RONNIE CALANGELO: Hello, I'm Ronnie Colangelo. I've been here a few times. The Correctional Health Service says there aren't enough sick and dying people on Rikers Island to afford this project. So, what's going to happen when they don't have enough people? Who are they going to get? Where are they going to get them from? So, the gentleman from the Fortune Society didn't bring up the problems of Mr. Kompas, who did business with them, rented an apartment to them. First tenant, fine. Second tenant, gang-bang drunk dealers, who he had a fight with and he got arrested. Not them because, you know, they're from the Fortune Society. So, you sit there and you listen to what he says and you go, oh they're not going to be pretrial detainees. Who were they going to be if they're not sick and dying? And this is a big cash cow for the Health and Hospitals Corporation because where are these people that are sick and ill going to go? To the hospital right there. And they're going to bang them over the head. They're going to be making a fortune from this. It's almost a cash cow

because everybody sick and dying is going to need medical help and we're going to be sitting there with them coming and going. Christy mentioned about people coming and going, staying, this and that. Yeah, what are you going to tell them? You can't have guests. So, you know, I don't want to say birds of a feather flock together, but as he confessed, many members of his family were incarcerated. Maybe members of the people staying there have families that are incarcerated or involved in criminal activity, roaming around the neighborhood, having a good time, seeing what's here, what's there. I don't want to say all my friends were a little shady, but when they were having problems, they would find an empty house, walk in, take something, and walk out. So, you're going to have little or no security. He's worried about people doing donuts, keeping his people awake at night. So, what are we going to have? People roaming around with no security or limited security and if anything pops off, oh well, we can't guarantee (TIMER CHIME) the future, and you still haven't fixed the clock.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Gina.

GINA COLANDO: My name is Gina Colando, and I've lived near Jacobi for my entire life. I have a vested interest in this project, and I'm speaking not just as a local resident, but I'm also speaking as someone who recently completed 12 months of chemotherapy and I truly hope that none of you ever have to experience that. There's a lot of hard parts of having cancer, but you know what's the hardest? It's not the fear, the treatments, or the side effects. It's all the waiting. Waiting for your doctor, your labs, your infusion. Due to a lack of planning and foresight, many H and H hospitals are unable to safely prepare chemotherapy for their patients. This adds significant time and cost for every patient. Why does H and H care so little about cancer patients? Jacobi has a one-star Medicare rating and a D from Leapfrog. Is it their leadership? I don't think so because a further investigation shows that Jacobi is not alone. Most H and H sites have a one or two-star rating and Cs from Leapfrog. The failure is at a corporate level. If this were a private system, all of them would have been replaced. Patients use H and H when they have no other choice. Why are we okay with our poorest and most vulnerable

receiving poor quality care? But I do want to highlight the safety concerns around this project. Think of the staff, the young nurse leaving that facility alone at midnight, the housekeeper coming in alone at 5 a.m. Who will help them when one of the residents assaults them? For those who say there is no risk, let's talk about Joyce Grayson, a home care nurse who was murdered by a medically complex patient she went to care for. Or the Alton's who were tortured and killed in their home by a recently released individual. H and H demonstrates a lack of care for their patients. This project shows that they don't care about their staff or surrounding community. Regardless of what they claim, this is about trying to increase their revenue without investing in improving the quality of care they provide. Jacobi campus is the wrong location for this project. If they had asked the community like they did for the previously discussed Lincoln project, they would have heard that Building 2 would be much better used to support our aging population. Thank you.

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. This panel is excused.

The next panel will be Patrick Stevens,
Raffaella Elmi, Diana Finch, Robert Cohen.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: I just want to
reiterate for the panelists and those that are coming
up for panelists, when you refer to a Member that is
on this dais, please refer to them by their Council
Member and last name, not first names.

And Patrick, you can begin.

Touch the button on your microphone. If
it's red, you can speak.

PATRICK STEVENS: Thank you. Good morning,
Chair and distinguished Members of the Committee. I
appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony.
My name is Patrick Stevens, and I serve as a
Leadership Fellow at the Center for Community
Alternatives. As a systems-impacted individual, I can
attest to the critical nature of this issue. I was
incarcerated for nearly 25 years before my release in
2022, during which time I had the opportunity to earn
a bachelor's degree through the Bard Prison
Initiative and a master's degree from New York
Theological Seminary. My professional endeavors are
now dedicated to youth development, anti-violence,
and restorative justice work, as well as advocating

for criminal legal system reform with a particular focus on re-entry support. I appear before you today to advocate for the Just Home Initiative in the Bronx, where I currently reside. I have a profound understanding of the positive implications of providing adequate housing for justice-involved individuals. Conversely, I hold grave concerns about the consequences when their fundamental housing needs are not met. Now, the Just Home Initiative is an evidence-based housing solution that will demonstrably enhance public safety. Furthermore, by housing individuals with complex medical needs, such as those with stage four cancer, end-stage renal disease, and congestive heart failure, Just Homes will help to disrupt the cycle of emergency room visits, police interactions, and reincarceration. This initiative is built upon proven and successful models. This success informed the creation of the Freedom Commons Development in Syracuse, New York, which is operated by the Center for Community Alternatives. Our organization provided technical assistance based on Fortune Society's model, which resulted in 54 units, including 11 permanent supportive housing units for justice-involved

individuals. The Denver Supportive Housing Evaluation (TIMER CHIME) documented a 52 percent reduction in arrests. In fact, there has been no evidence that since Freedom Commons has been established or Fortune's Castle, that there has been any increase in crime as a result of that. In fact, public safety has been increased, and they've been getting the support that they need. So the data is unequivocal, supporting housing.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Your time has expired, so please make this your last line.

PATRICK STEVENS: Thank you. It generates an estimated 15,000 in public funding, savings per person, and also 67 percent of program costs. So, I implore you to support the Just Homes initiative. Thank you for the opportunity.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you.

Raffaella, you can begin.

RAFFAELLA ELMI: Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Raffaella Elmi, and I am the Policy Associate at From Punishment to Public Health at John Jay. P2PH works to transform the infrastructure of public health and public safety. As a native New Yorker, I've observed

the real-life implications of housing policies on the city's most vulnerable populations. Housing and re-entry services are a critical part of promoting community health. Gaps in housing services have had detrimental effects on formerly incarcerated individuals with complex medical needs, leading to worse housing and health outcomes long-term. Chronic homelessness, incarceration, and health care access have long been treated as distinct issues, but research and personal narratives suggest that these issues are interlinked, directly impacting community public health. According to an NIH study, 80 percent of formerly incarcerated individuals leave prison with a chronic health condition that requires consistent medical care. Furthermore, the 2023 report on health care in New York City revealed that 79 percent of individuals with high medical needs experience greater housing insecurity in comparison to those without such needs. Through our cross-sector advocacy group, which brings together stakeholders from separate sectors to explore how public health can drive equity, the Fortune Society has been an essential partner in advocating for supportive housing initiatives and re-entry services. This

initiative emphasizes the critical need for formerly incarcerated, chronically ill individuals to have access to immediate medical care. In consideration of the information provided, the Just Home Initiative presents a solution to chronic homelessness and can disrupt the revolving door cycle of incarceration. Individuals with chronic health conditions are less likely to commit crimes and just need to be close to direct medical care. This initiative will also help to cut costs for crisis services such as hospitalizations. A healthier New York City begins with community-based, person-centered approaches that meet the intersectional needs of vulnerable populations. Thank you again for letting me testify, and I'm going to submit a written testimony later.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you. You have 72 hours to submit a written testimony.

RAFFAELLA ELMI: Yes.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Diana, you can begin.

DIANA FINCH: My name is Diana Finch. I speak in support. I live in the same community board district and police precinct as Just Home. I first heard of it in a meeting of local community leaders

shown a draft from Jacobi's Community Advisory Board.

It seemed a good idea. Affordable, supportive,
permanent housing in studio apartments. Correctional

Health explained their mandate. Arrange safe, free
entry for people with serious health needs and no

homes to return to. Next thing I knew, there was
strident opposition let from one pocket of the

district. Well-to-do homeowners in the leafy Indian

Village neighborhood by Jacobi. Two public meetings,

one held by Morris Park Community Association, one by

Community Board 11 at Jacobi in hopes of a more

orderly setting, descended into shouting, boos,

curses, threats. Video of the chaos went viral. I

should not have been shocked. Morris Park has a

regrettable history of opposing people not like us.

In 1984, a local broker and the Morris Park

Association, which then ran a housing referral

service, reached agreement with the state attorney to

stop keeping blacks and Hispanics from moving in,

settled lawsuits they'd violated city, state, federal

housing law through racial steering and

discrimination. The vitriol spread to local Facebook

groups. Just Home residents were called Rikers

inmates. Their permanent housing, a shelter.

Medically complex became mentally ill pedophiles.
Screened as responsible was violent recidivists who
terrorized hospital staff and roamed nearby streets.
Council Member Marmorato ran and still runs on this
platform, focusing fear on 58 future Just Home
constituents out of the 168,000 she represents.
Health and housing are human rights. Health and
Hospitals approved the ground lease. I urge the
Council and the Mayor to approve as well. Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Robert, you can
begin.

ROBERT COHEN: Great. Good afternoon.
Thank you, Chair Hanks and other Members of the City
Council for the opportunity to testify. My name is
Robert Cohen. I'm a physician. I was the Director of
the Montefiore Rikers Island Health Services from
1981 to 1986. I served as the Vice President of
Medical Operations at the New York City Health and
Hospitals Corporation from 1986 through 1988. I
served as the City Council's representative on the
Board of Correction for 16 years, ending in July of
this year. I was also a member of the Fortune Society
Board of Directors for 17 years. These were
consecutive. So, for 44 years, I've worked with the

city and the Fortune Society. Today's hearing concerns matters close to my heart, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak in strong support of the Just Home Initiative. The New York City Criminal Justice Administration has analyzed data over the past eight years on the relationship between homelessness and release from New York City jails. CJA found that pre-trial detention is associated with a 420 percent increased likelihood of becoming homeless. This relationship is significant at the 0.5 level. It would be significant at any level. Tossing men and women with serious medical problems out of jail and onto the streets without a place to live is cruel and heartless. The City's shelter system is enormous, but it is not equipped to care for seriously ill homeless people leaving jail. The City's opportunity to provide supportive housing for these patients with complex medical needs is not optional. It is essential. These men and women have serious medical needs requiring supportive care that they will not receive if they do not have a place to live. This program should be celebrated and not subject to cost-benefit analysis and scoring. Thank you very much.

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MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you.

Any questions for this panel?

Council Member Marmorato.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Mrs. Finch, I
find it really disheartening that you're going to
bring an incident that happened over 40 years ago up
today and try to paint our community as racist
because that's far from the truth. I'd like to know
when was the last time you rode your scooter through
Indian Village to see the diversity within the
community that is currently living there right now?

DIANA FINCH: Probably about a month ago.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Have you
seen the change in diversity in our neighborhood over
there?

DIANA FINCH: I know Black people and
Hispanic people who live in that area, yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Thank
you.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Any other
questions related?

Seeing none, this panel is now excused.
Thank you so much.

I'd now like to call Patricia Cambria
(phonetic), Phyllis Bassalone (phonetic), Patricia
Marinello (phonetic), and Rochelle Mandina (phonetic)
to the dais.

Okay. Just a reminder, two minutes, and
Patricia can begin.

PATRICIA CAMBRIA: Okay. Good morning,
Council Members. My name is Patricia Cambria, and I
am here to strongly oppose the Just Home Project at
Jacobi Hospital. What troubles me the most is how
this proposal came to light. It was not openly
discussed with the community. It was not presented in
a transparent way. It was leaked out. That alone
tells us something. If this project were truly in the
best interest of the Bronx, it would have been shared
proudly and discussed openly to people who live here.
Instead, the community was left in the dark. We
deserve honesty. We deserve input. Instead, we are
being told after the fact that our neighborhood will
host housing for people leaving jail, including pre-
trial detainees. These are individuals who are still
in the court process, not yet convicted but deeply
involved in the criminal justice system, and now
they're being prioritized over seniors, veterans, and

working families who have been waiting years for affordable housing. This is wrong. It is wrong in how it was handled, and it is wrong in its priorities. The Jacobi site should serve the people of this community, seniors, veterans, and local residents need a safe, affordable housing near health care, not a project that was hidden from us and forced upon us without our consent. I urge the Council reject Just Home, demand real transparency, real community engagement, and a project that meets the real needs of the people of the Bronx. Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Phyllis, you can begin.

PHYLLIS BASSALONE: Good afternoon, Council Members. As a resident of this extremely diverse community and a senior, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges that many older adults face, particularly when it comes to housing and social isolation. Our seniors, who have contributed so much to the fabric of our society, deserve not only safe and affordable housing, but also a space where they can engage with one another, access necessary services, and remain active participants in their community. Many seniors are living on fixed incomes,

which often makes finding affordable, accessible housing a significant challenge. Without sufficient housing options tailored to their needs, whether it's mobility, assistance, proximity to health care, or affordable rent, the risk of homelessness, overcrowding, and health complications increases for them. Senior housing options are not just a matter of comfort, but of dignity and security for those who have given so much to our community, and the waiting lists for these options are years long. Beyond housing, a community center dedicated to seniors offers a vital space for connection, well-being, engagement in a world where isolation is a growing concern. A community center provides opportunities for seniors to form lasting relationships, participate in activities that stimulate their minds and bodies, and seek support when needed. It becomes a place where they can continue to thrive, engage in lifelong learning, and contribute to the community. I urge you to vote no against Just Homes.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Patricia, you can begin.

PATRICIA MARINELLO: I am a lifelong resident of Mars Park. The Just Home presentation to

the advisory board stated, how will Just Home benefit Jacobi? Direct quote, will increase patient volume and revenue for Jacobi as Just Home tenants will utilize Jacobi services. 90 percent of all CHS patients who are potentially eligible for an apartment are Medicaid eligible. Yet on two different FAQs, Jacobi doubles down, painting themselves as Good Samaritans. September FAQ asked if Just Home is a money-making scheme. No, Just Home is intended to provide dignified care for vulnerable individuals. Just Home FAQ 3, is Just Home a revenue-generating project for the City or H and H? No, Just Home is not designated to generate revenue for the City or H and H. This flip-flop calls into question the true intention of the project and raises questions about the financial arrangements. I have all the documents here with me if you wish to review. Let me be clear, we are not opposed to housing for this building, but it should not be a way for Jacobi to line their pockets with patients that are required to use their services. We have a need for senior affordable housing. Jacobi has not partnered with the community or made any provisions to provide jobs for these individuals. They are worried about one thing, money.

They cannot raise their revenue due to their one-star rating. These individuals will use their medical facilities and be scared to complain for fear of losing housing. There are multiple irregularities with the way this contract was awarded. First, the change population. Second, the fast-track approval of developer. Multiple FOIA requests have been submitted to different City agencies, have been denied or delayed for over three years. For 2023, the Fortune Society received over 55 million dollars, a 20-million-dollar increase from the previous year in government grants and fees. A published independent audit for June 2023 identified significant deficiencies in internal controls. We really hope that if Member deference is requested, it will be honored for both this project and others going forward. And I just want to say that it's disappointing that people took off work today to come testify, and many of the Members of this panel left before hearing from the public. Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Rochelle, you can begin.

ROCHELLE MANDINA: Good morning. I also would like to point out that the Council Members that

1 were complaining about the Mayor and the Health and
2 Hospitals not showing up to the hearing that we
3 actually took the day off of work to come here, and
4 they didn't have the respect to stay here and listen
5 to us. I'm not sure that they're really concerned
6 about what we have to say. And I also would like to
7 point out that people speaking in favor of this
8 project, I don't see any of them that live in our
9 community. So, I want to tell you quickly a story
10 about who I am, because people decide who people are
11 before they get a chance to really know them. I was
12 adopted at six months. I lived in the Parkside
13 housing project. My parents divorced when I was four.
14 We moved, and I lived with my two siblings and my mom
15 in a one-bedroom apartment to be in a safer
16 neighborhood. I became a hairdresser, met my husband,
17 and we worked hard, and we were able to save and buy
18 a house in Indian Village 21 years ago, which ranks
19 third safest in the Bronx. And now I may have to
20 leave and go somewhere safe again and lose what we
21 worked so hard for. Our home will lose value, and
22 this will affect our ability to retire. And why not
23 use Rikers Island to train them for a career? Why not
24 build apartments for them there and treat them there?
25

There are 59,000 empty apartments with NYCHA. Why can't they be placed in those apartments? Putting them in one building would be much more dangerous than releasing them separately. Releasing people into a quiet, safe neighborhood and saying, here's a counselor for you to go to, or Jacobi for treatment if you feel like it, doesn't sound like a good plan. 68 percent of offenders are rearrested within three years, and only 10 to 13 percent of those people are homeless. Our community has a tremendous amount of seniors who need housing. When we had to find senior housing for my mom, they (TIMER CHIME) said the list was 10 years. How many seniors lived that long? We were lucky and found a place. We are hardworking, taxpaying community members, and we do not deserve this. Please, please look into your hearts and ask if you would want this for your mom or your family or yourself. Thank you for listening.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Any questions for this panel?

Thank you. This panel is now excused.

I'd like to call up Hayward Mouton, Helen Taylor, Ryan Acquotta, and Michael Kass (phonetic).

If you have any additional testimony that you'd like for the Members on the dais, you can hand it to the Sergeant-at-Arms.

When ready, Hayward, you can begin.

HAYWARD MOUTON: Good morning, Madam Chair Hanks and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Hayward Mouton. I serve as the Senior Director of Programs at Hour Children, and speaking on the organization's behalf in support of Just Homes. I'm also a licensed clinical social worker here in New York, and for more than 10 years, I have worked alongside women and families impacted by incarceration. As a social worker, I couldn't go without saying even Abraham Maslow, a well-renowned American psychologist in 1943, noted in the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs that a person cannot be the best if their basic psychological needs are met, which includes stable housing. As human beings, we shouldn't even be choosing who has housing or not and where they belong. It's people's right to have a roof over their head. We all are one step away from homelessness or making a mistake, and if I or you became homeless or made a mistake, I pray the Fortune Society, they it will give me or you a second chance.

Hour Children is a non-profit organization serving women and children within the prison and jail system.

We work to ensure that mothers stay connected with their children while detained or serving their sentence, and upon release, we provide a 360-degree holistic model of support. This model centers both mother and child, putting them on a path towards successful re-entry and long-term self-sufficiency. I can tell you stable housing paired with comprehensive support is the foundation of successful re-entry.

This is why Hour Children strongly supports the Fortune Society's Just Home initiative. At Hour Children, we also know firsthand the quality of Fortune Society's work. They provide outstanding supportive service, and over the years, we have referred clients to Fortune when their programs could best meet a client's need. We have seen the positive impact their care and expertise has had on the people we serve, which gives us even greater confidence in the success of Just Home. By creating 83 affordable and supportive apartments on the Jacobi Hospital campus, Just Home will meet the needs of medically complex individuals leaving jail, people who are often overlooked and underserved. As a fellow

provider in the re-entry housing space, Hour Children know that Just Home will not only save lives, but will reduce avoidable hospitalization and offer the (TIMER CHIME) dignity of homes to people rebuilding after incarceration. Thank you for your time.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Helen, when you're ready, you can begin.

HELEN TAYLOR: Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Sorry, Helen, is your microphone on? Yes?

HELEN TAYLOR: Yes.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Okay, perfect.

HELEN TAYLOR: Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony today. I'm grateful to be here to share why supportive housing is so very important to me. I want to share why other people who have been incarcerated, like myself, need to have access to supportive housing. This is especially important for people who have health issues and will not be able to survive in shelters and let alone the street. I know this only because I once was in a shelter. Unfortunately, I have gotten sick due to asthma and COPD and had to be taken to a

hospital where I laid up 45 days in a coma and then
got released from the hospital and had the
opportunity of getting into the Fortune Society,
which I asked then for them to give me a chance to
save my life and they granted me that and today I'm
able to sit here and tell you why it's so important
for everyone to have the opportunity to have their
own apartment and live around such a caring, loving
community. Getting my apartment and working with such
wonderful people at the Fortune Society allowed me to
go from hanging out and sleeping in the park to
performing Shakespeare in the park. Yes, right? The
creative arts department at the Fortune Society
connected me with the wonderful people of public
theaters. The next thing I know, I was acting on
stage at the Delcor (TIMER CHIME) Theater, performing
on stage.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Just to inform
you, Helen, your time has expired. If you can give us
your last line.

HELEN TAYLOR: Okay, by advocating for the
people to have access to supportive housing, I'm
hoping that the Land Use Committee and the City
Council would approve the Just Home Projects so that

they may have the opportunity that I have at the
Fortune Society.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you so much
for your testimony.

Ryan, you can begin when ready.

RYAN ACQUAOTTA: Thank you, Chair and
Subcommittee Members. My name is Ryan Acquaootta. I'm
a Bronx resident. I spent several years working in
the Bronx Criminal Court collaborating with the
District Attorney's Office on various alternative to
incarceration programs and over those years in the
court, I interviewed hundreds of people, some
detained, some in the community. I worked with anyone
the District Attorney and the court would allow me to
and it was my job, if they were homeless, to find
them housing, if they needed treatment, if they
needed jobs, GEDs, find them whatever they needed.
And it was at this time that I spent working in the
courts that really showed me why a facility like Just
Home is so urgently necessary. And I remember being
thrilled when I first heard it announced years ago. I
thought of people that I interviewed on Rikers who
were in wheelchairs with numerous co-occurring
medical conditions whose families had no capacity to

house or care for them when they came home. And the concept of Just Home seemed tailor-designed to me to need that as a court advocate on the outside, I so often had such difficulty identifying resources to meet because many of the already existing housing programs for people coming home from jail could not provide the level of medical care that these particular people required and many of the medical facilities or programs that could provide that appropriate level of care would not take referrals from the jail. And I'm sure everyone here has heard horror stories of people dying on Rikers. I'm sure if people actually read those stories, they see many of those deaths are the result of neglect. People are frequently not getting the medical care that they need on Rikers. Sometimes it's intentionally denied to them. Sometimes it's just extremely difficult to obtain even if it's not intentionally denied. A colleague of mine spoke to someone on Rikers recently who'd basically given up on his life because traveling between Bellevue and Rikers for chemo treatments was destroying his body. Chemo treatments are incredibly hard to endure just in and of themselves, let alone while shackled, malnourished,

1 sleep deprived, and more. Rikers is just not an
2 environment in which people can get well. And what
3 the City has proposed and is discussing here today in
4 Just Home will save lives. It will make all of us
5 safer because we are all safer when our neighbors are
6 housed and healthy. And so I urge the Subcommittee
7 and the Council to approve this proposal. I hope to
8 see Just Home open in the very near future so
9 everyone who'll be (TIMER CHIME) a neighbor to the
10 people living there can learn to appreciate their
11 humanity. Thank you.

12
13 MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Michael, you can
14 begin when ready.

15 MICHAEL KASS: Good afternoon. My name is
16 Michael Kass, and I'm a resident of Morris Park.
17 Three years ago, I testified at a contentious Bronx
18 Community Board 11 hearing on Just Home. Some of my
19 neighbors here tried to drown out my voice, but they
20 couldn't. Three years later, I'm here to tell the
21 City Council that Just Home is welcome in our
22 community. There's no question that this project is
23 essential. It's for New Yorkers who are otherwise
24 eligible to be released from Rikers but cannot be
25 discharged to a shelter because shelters are unable

to meet their medical needs. Right now, they're completely unserved by existing housing options and they are still waiting. Just Home is already behind schedule and we cannot afford to restart from scratch at a less suitable site. Building 2 at Jacobi could not be a more ideal location. Its future tenants are already patients at Jacobi. They are already in our community. Housing them at Building 2 affirms the dignity that all human beings deserve. Now, some of my neighbors will demand other uses for Building 2. They may even invoke the housing crisis. Yet, I've witnessed the same voices oppose every effort to add housing in our district, from the City of Yes, where many of them joined the lawsuit, to the Bronx Metro North rezoning, where Council Member Kristy Marmorato cut an estimated 582 homes. If Building 2 didn't already exist, they would no doubt object to the building itself. If we are to build housing for everyone, we cannot let projects like Just Home be derailed by cynical attempts to pit vulnerable New Yorkers against each other. I urge the City Council to approve this project. Just Home belongs in Morris Park at Building 2. Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you.

Any questions for this panel?

Thank you. This panel is now excused.

I'd like to call up Karen Catresi
(phonetic), Grace Marrero (phonetic), Charlene
Jackson-Mendez (phonetic), and Mahmoud Zader
(phonetic).

GRACE MARRERO: Do we go in the order we
were called?

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: I will call you.

GRACE MARRERO: Okay.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Please make sure
your microphone is on, and if any of you have
testimony for the panelists, you can hand it over to
the Sergeant.

Karen, you may begin.

KAREN CATRESI: Is it on? Okay. Good
morning, Council Members. I just want to start out by
saying I did not grow up in Morris Park. I grew up in
the Soundview section of the Bronx, but when I got
married and had a child, I wanted to own a home in a
family-friendly, safe environment. And so I come here
today not just as a homeowner on Seminole Avenue, but
as a mother of a small child. My home is supposed to
be our safe place, where my child should be free to

1 play in the backyard or ride her bike in front of her
2 house without fear. It's where we build our memories
3 and our future. The idea of people recently released
4 from Rikers Island and pretrial detainees housed
5 directly behind my home fills me with worry. These
6 are individuals who may be struggling with serious
7 issues, and placing them so close to families feels
8 like too great of a risk to take. I believe in second
9 chances. I believe people can change and turn their
10 lives around, but I don't believe my child's safety
11 or the peace of mind of every person here should be
12 the price for that. I understand that these programs
13 are important, but they need to be placed
14 thoughtfully in locations where proper support
15 services and security measures are already in place.
16 Please, I'm asking you, don't let this happen here.
17 Don't make us live in fear in our own backyards.
18 Protect the families who've worked hard to build
19 their homes and their lives in this community. Thank
20 you.

22 MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Grace, you may
23 begin when ready.

24 GRACE MARRERO: Is this on? Okay. Good
25 afternoon. My name is Grace Marrero, and I'm a

community advocate. Like Mrs. Finch, I do not live in the Seminole area. However, I support all my community neighborhoods, Indian Village being one of them. So let me be clear. While we believe in helping people rebuild their lives, placing formerly incarcerated individuals with serious medical or mental health issues on hospital grounds next to residential neighborhoods, schools, and parks raises serious safety and accountability concerns. Jacobi is a public health facility, not a housing development. Its purpose is to serve patients, not to become a de facto supportive housing complex. This sets a dangerous precedent. Once one facility is converted, what's stopping similar projects from taking root in other hospitals without proper community input or insight? There's been a lack of transparency and meaningful engagement with the community. The concerns of local residents who will be directly impacted have been dismissed and minimized. We urge the City Council and project leaders to consider alternative sites better suited for this kind of housing, ones that do not place the burden on communities that are already stretched thin. This is not about being anti-reform or anti-housing. This is

about responsible planning, public safety, and respect for the community. And we all know that the majority of people in Rikers are gang members. I don't believe that they're elderly. There may be some elderly. However, the majority are going to be young people without health complex, health issues. That has been a lie. They keep repeating the lie over and over to people to believe. So that's another thing that needs to be discussed. Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Charlene, you may begin.

CHARLENE JACKSON-MENDEZ: Good afternoon. As we approach the 250th anniversary of our beloved America, it is difficult to fathom how the country's most iconic city is being destroyed by radical, progressive politicians who sadly make up the majority of the New York City Council. The current City Council has revealed its lack of respect for representative government by failing to adhere to the norm of Member deference. Councilwoman Marmorato is a champion for the residents of her District, yet her expertise regarding her own District is constantly disrespected. And as a result, the residents of her District are disempowered. The Just Home Project is a

horrific example of government malfeasance. The City seeks to house 50 medically complex pretrial detainees presently living on Rikers Island on the campus of Jacobi Hospital in a community that is filled with vulnerable senior citizens. The definition of the term medically complex is not known. Post-bail reform, those accused of crime are routinely let back into the community. Only those that are accused of the most heinous crimes are even detained. As such, the population of individuals from which the Just Home Project will draw will represent extremely high-risk individuals. These individuals who are highly likely to re-offend will be given two-year leases with no supervision or requirement that they participate in treatment. This is absolutely irresponsible and represents a clear and present danger to the community. The problems that exist at Rikers Island cannot be resolved by placing residents, medical staff, students, and interns of our community in harm's way. Housing for pretrial detainees should be found near a public hospital in their community of origin.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Mahmoud, you can begin.

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MAHMOUD ZADER: Thank you. My name is
Mahmoud Zader. I'm a resident from the Browns
community. I'm a member of the (INAUDIBLE) and a
volunteer with the (INAUDIBLE). As I come here to
show support to our community, I'm against the
project and I'm with Housing for Seniors. Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Any questions for
this panel?

Thank you so much. This panel is now
excused.

I'd like to call up the next panelists,
Zachary Katznelson, Hailey Nolasco, and Kirsten
Bladh. Apologies for the mispronunciation.

Zachary, you can begin when ready.

ZACHARY KATZNELSON: Thank you, Majority
Leader, Council Member. Pleasure to be with you. I'm
Zachary Katznelson. I'm the Executive Director of the
Independent Rikers Commission, and we are strongly in
favor of Just Home. We did polling of New Yorkers,
including crime victims, last year about what they
want to see, and they want to see exactly investments
like this in supportive housing, ways to break the
cycle, the churn of homelessness, incarceration,
hospitalization. Crime victims especially want to see

investments like this. There's no question of efficacy. There's no question that we know that supportive housing like this breaks the cycle and increases safety. It also saves a ton of money. I mean, average cost of housing somebody at Rikers is 33,000 dollars a month. Average cost of supportive housing is about 4,500 dollars a month. Wouldn't we rather be proactive, invest in things like this, prevent crime victimization in the first place, and have much better outcomes for people that are very ill? Right now, there are over 400 people at Rikers who have already been approved for supportive housing. Is the plan really to just send them to shelters and hope for the best? We have the chance to do something better, to build a system that New Yorkers can be proud of, that actually works and is safer for everyone. This is a great example, and I would just add that the Fortune Society has an excellent proven track record of not only operating supportive housing in a way that brings much better outcomes, but also being an excellent neighbor. This is really an opportunity. They've been working to engage, we know, with mixed success, but the opportunity is there for us to try and partner as a

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City and as communities to try and all do our part to
get to a better place. Hopefully, this will be a plan
that is approved, and we support it. Thank you very
much.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Hailey, you can
begin when ready.

KIRSTEN BLADH: Thank you, Chair Hanks,
Council Member Marmorato, and Members of the
Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings, and
Dispositions for the opportunity to testify in favor
of the Just Home Project. My name is Kirsten Bladh,
and I'm the Policy Manager at Open New York, an
independent grassroots pro-housing non-profit working
toward the goal of making New York a city where
everyone who wants to live here can do so, including
the members of our community who have been
incarcerated. When formerly incarcerated people
return to the city, they face widespread
discrimination from landlords and restrictive
eligibility requirements for public housing. These
barriers are compounded by our city's extraordinarily
high rent and severe shortage of units to make it
nearly impossible to find housing. Homelessness is in
many cases the only option, and for formerly

incarcerated individuals who also have serious medical conditions, homelessness can be a death sentence. The Just Home Project will provide stable, supportive housing that meets the unique needs of this vulnerable population for the first time. It is only by meeting people's basic needs for shelter and health that they will have the stability and dignity required to heal and to stay out of the justice system long-term. So, this project is an act of compassion, but it's also a smart investment in the health and safety of our city, because every unit of supportive housing that we build equates to fewer emergency room visits, fewer police calls and jail readmissions, and the recovery of human potential. Thank you.

HAILEY NOLASCO: Good afternoon, Majority Leader Farías, Council Member Marmorato. My name is Hailey Nolasco, Senior Director of Government Relations at the Center for Justice Innovation. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify in strong support of the Just Home Project. Safe, stable, and supportive housing is public safety. When people return from jail without a stable home, they face overwhelming barriers, lost jobs and shelter

placements, landlords who turn them away, and restrictions tied to a criminal record. These obstacles harm not only individuals, but also weaken the vibrancy of entire communities by fueling cycles of homelessness, rearrest, and incarceration. Supportive housing breaks this cycle. Research consistently shows that when people have a safe home and the services they need, they are far less likely to return to jail and far more likely to rebuild their lives. Just Home delivers this solution. This thoughtful partnership will create over 80 affordable units, including permanent supportive housing for people with complex medical needs returning from incarceration, while also housing other community members to foster a stable and inclusive environment. By intentionally serving neighbors who would otherwise face homelessness, Just Home strengthens the entire community as a whole. The building will provide on-site supportive services, as mentioned, with 24-hour security, ensuring residents receive comprehensive care while maintaining safety for everyone. The Center supports Fortune Society, whose proven expertise ensures all residents will receive compassionate, high-quality services. Approving this

project is both really the right thing to do and a smart investment in the safety, health, and stability of our city. We know that when people are given a real chance, they really rise to it. Every person who finds safety in housing is one less person in crisis and one more neighbor contributing to a stronger, safer city. I respectfully urge the Council to approve Just Home. Thank you so much for your time.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Seeing no questions, this panel is now excused.

I'd like to call up Lori Peterson, Renata Sklavo (phonetic), Max Zappone (phonetic), and Stephen DiTomaso (phonetic).

Lori, you can begin when ready.

LORI PETERSON: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Lori Peterson, and I have been living in Morris Park for 50 years. I moved into Indian Village in 1999. My house is located on Seminole Avenue. My backyard is facing Jacobi's property, so when I say not in my backyard, I literally mean it. It will be located 200 feet from my home. When we purchased this house, never in my wildest dreams did I think I would have to beg someone like City Council or a Mayor not to

pass a project like this through. My parents, who also live on Seminole Avenue, are 80 and 81 years old. My neighbor is wheelchair bound. My question is, how are you going to protect them? It's time to start listening to the people who are going to be directly affected by this project and not to the people that are being paid to be here in support of it and don't even live in the neighborhood. It's time to start listening to your taxpayers and worry about their concerns and safety. It's time to say no to this project when our most vulnerable population are our seniors. They need affordable housing and health care, and they should come first. It's time to build up the Bronx and stop dumping on it. It's time for you all to listen to us and stop listening to the people that are to be lining their pockets. You must say no.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Renata, you can begin when ready.

RENATA SKLAVO: Good afternoon, Council Members. My name is Renata Sklavo. I want to begin with something personal. My mother is elderly, and she desperately needs an affordable apartment. Like so many Bronx seniors, she has been waiting for

years. Every day, families like mine worry about whether their parents will be able to age with dignity and stability in a community they have helped build. That is why I'm here to oppose the Just Homes Project at Jacobi Hospital Campus. This is not about rejecting housing. It is about ensuring housing, reflecting the most urgent need of our community, which is senior housing. Right now, seniors face year-long waiting lists. Many live in apartments they cannot afford or safely navigate. Too many are forced into nursing homes, not because they need that level of care, but because there are no alternatives. These are men and women who work, raise families, and pay taxes here. They are the ones that deserve better. The Jacobi Campus presents a unique opportunity. It is directly connected to health care and senior services already offered at Jacobi – geriatrics, rehabilitation, primary care, and wellness programs. No site could be better suited to meet the needs of older adults. Imagine how transformative it would be for seniors to live steps away from doctors and programs they rely on daily. Instead, this proposal aims to house pretrial detainees that does not address the real immediate needs of the surrounding

areas. I respectfully urge the Council to reject the Just Homes Project and commit this site to affordable senior housing. Our elderlies, including my mother, have earned the right to live and with dignity, supported by the services Jacobi already provides.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Max, you can begin when ready.

MAX ZAPPONE: Thank you, Council Members, for staying. I'm a bit offended that the rest of the Council Members left, and I feel that my testimony has been diminished because they're not here to hear it. I was touched by Just Homes and how they want to help people, but I'm also, at the same time, touched by my own community. I'm going to tell you a little story. There's an 83-year-old woman. Her name is Mary. I was speaking to her, and she said that she has to move out and she can't afford another apartment. She's been living in the area since she was 18 years old. At this point, she has to move to New Jersey with her granddaughter. That's one story. Another story that no one's talked about today, but almost a year ago, on January 10, 2025, there was a fire on Allerton Avenue. Sixty percent out of 250 people are still living in shelters. They don't have

a place to live. I was talking to one of the advocates this morning on the way here, and she said it's great that they want to bring these projects to the Bronx, but what about us? What about us? What about the people of the community that actually need the help? They're not getting it. They're not getting it. So why don't we concentrate on the people that actually live in the community first and help them find apartments, the elderly, keep them there? Why are we forcing them out and bringing new people in? Again, I'm touched by what they're trying to do with people who are in jail and getting out, and I believe in second chances, but at the same time, I'm an advocate for my own community. I've been living there all my life, and I want to help the people. I don't want to see them forced out. Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Stephen, you can begin when ready.

STEPHEN DITOMASO: Thank you. My name is Stephen DiTomaso. I am a lifelong Bronx resident, and I have seen lots of growth, expansion, and change within my community over the years. Some has been for the better, and some not so much. One thing we could always count on was our elected officials acting in

the best interest of their community. The Just Home Project definitely falls into the not good change category. Rarely is there a project that garners such across-the-board agreement. Elected officials from both parties agree that this project is wrong for this location, including multiple Bronx Council Members, our Senator, Assemblyman, and even the Bronx Borough President. We also have over 3,000 signatures from local residents from all walks of life opposing this project. Our City Council has long recognized that while we are one city, we are not all the same. What works in Upper Manhattan may not work in Lower Manhattan. What works in Brooklyn may not work in the Bronx. Local representation and local voices are what keep this city unique and strong. There is a long history of Members calling on their Colleagues to support their District needs. We know there is a Charter revision proposal that aims to limit the role of City Council in land use. We hope that since Adrienne Adams supports Member deference as a key part of ensuring Members can vote and advocate for their communities, you will all honor Member deference in this project and others going forward. We need to keep land use decisions in the hands of

elected officials, not unelected bureaucrats and
developers. Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you.

Any questions for this panel?

The only statement I want to say is to
Max, thank you for your testimony. I think a lot of
us here in the Council, particularly when looking at
our communities, I'm a Member that borders this
community, and I represent Westchester Square, which
also is a part of Community Board 10. We're
constantly trying to find ways to house every single
person that needs housing in this community. I think
the goals that we have are directly reflective in the
more nuanced conversation that you're hoping
continues to happen with this project. Again, I
particularly hope to see a lot of the other community
boards around the Bronx, outside of what I can
control in CB9 and CB10, support building more
housing in our communities because our seniors need
it, our mothers with kids need it, even single
individuals need it. I look forward to that
continued, more nuanced conversation throughout the
years.

Thank you all. This panel is now excused.

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I'd like to call up Tiffany Raspberry
from the Mayor's Office and Diane Savino from the
Mayor's Office.

You can begin when you're ready.

DIANE SAVINO: Thank you. Good afternoon,
Council Member Farías, Council Member Marmorato, and
the former Council Members who were here, but I'm
sure they're listening somewhere. I think I saw
Council Member Feliz was on the Zoom. I am Diane
Savino. I am the Senior Advisor for the New York City
Office of the Mayor in the Office of
Intergovernmental Affairs. I'm joined by Tiffany
Raspberry, our Deputy Mayor. We submit a testimony
that was originally drafted on behalf of Mitchell
Katz, who is the head of the Health and Hospitals
Corporation, who had requested that this hearing be
postponed because we have further and further
discussions about the potential use of this property.
That request was denied. We submitted testimony, so
I'm just going to briefly read into it on behalf of
Mitchell Katz, who is writing in regards to Land Use
0363-2025 Application Number G230033HHX, a land use
application that was submitted by the New York City
Health and Hospitals Corporation requesting

1 authorization to lease a parcel of land located on
2 the Jacobi Hospital campus to the Fortune Society. At
3 this time, the Adams Administration is actively
4 reviewing the Just Home Project. The City is
5 developing a new proposal that would identify a
6 different location for Just Home, and I think it's
7 important to note we are committed to finding that
8 location, and also on this site to deliver supportive
9 and affordable housing at the Jacobi Hospital site.
10 This approach would ultimately allow more people in
11 need to receive the care and services that they
12 deserve. We hope to come back to the Council in the
13 near future with a plan that would continue to
14 deliver the Just Home Project affordable and
15 supportive housing on the campus. We look forward to
16 working with the Council on this process.

18 And I think it's important to note I
19 heard a lot of the testimony from the Fortune
20 Society. We are committed to that project, not at
21 this location, though, and in my previous career as a
22 member of the Senate, I had the opportunity to visit
23 the Fortune Society's castle in Washington Heights
24 more than once. It is an amazing program. They do
25 God's work there. There's no doubt about that, but

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(TIMER CHIME) we are here to talk about this location
and what we would like to do with this location and
also find another location so we can be committed to
Just Home.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Is there any
other additional testimony?

TIFFANY RASPBERRY: That's it.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: When was the
postponement request filed for the hearing?

DIANE SAVINO: I believe yesterday.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Do you folks
think that's a suitable amount of time for all the
people that gave up their day for work on their jobs
to their family picking up their children to come out
here for us to then say it's allowable to postpone
this hearing date while they're all already committed
to coming despite whatever its opposition or support
of this?

DIANE SAVINO: Well, with all due respect,
Council Member...

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Majority Leader.

DIANE SAVINO: Majority Leader.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you.

DIANE SAVINO: The request came from the Chair of the H and H, and he asked for it, so I can't answer on his behalf. Obviously, we wanted to hear what the people had to say, which is why I sat here for the past several hours to listen to the community.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: We appreciate you being here for the entire hearing.

DIANE SAVINO: Right. We are interested in what the people of this community have to say. We're interested in what the local Council Member has to say, and that's why we're here.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: I hear that response. All I'm saying, at least for us on the Council side, and I can't speak on behalf of the Chair's decision, I'm here in interim as she's managing a lot of things for the Committee right now, and in respect of the local Council Member having her hearing date and her constituency and some of my constituency as well, we could not postpone or accept that request for postponement on behalf of the people that are coming into this Chamber to express their opinion, and so whether it was H and H or came directly from the Administration, that was an

inappropriate request to come in within 24 hours of
when we're supposed to notify the public.

DIANE SAVINO: We don't necessarily
disagree, which is why we're here and which is why we
felt it was important enough to sit through the
entire hearing process, listen to what the people who
are going to be affected by this have to say, and
wait to be able to present why we thought it was
important to postpone it, but obviously that request
was not approved, and we're here.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: And how long have
you folks in the Administration been deliberating a
new location for this site that has not been recently
communicated to the Chair? I'm unsure... you can speak
on your behalf how recently that was communicated to
the Member themselves.

TIFFANY RASPBERRY: We've been negotiating
or deliberating this site for several years, and now
with two different Members of the Council that
represent the community.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: But when was it
decided that you folks are going to find a new
location?

DIANE SAVINO: I couldn't give you an exact date, but this conversation has been ongoing, months in the works, and I would point out that this hearing that we're holding today could have been held at any point in the last two years, and it was not. The Council itself chose not to move forward on this land authorization, and so we're here today for the first time.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Okay.

Any other questions?

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: No. I'd just like to say we actually offered the site that we're currently looking into years ago when this first came about as an alternate location. Like I said, we're painted out to be these terrible individuals that live in this community. We're not. We said we'd always like to see it as supportive housing or some type of affordable housing. We proposed the site that we're currently looking at to see if that makes sense, and at the end of the day, what it's really going to do is just create more housing in the District so thank you. Thank you for showing up, and thank you for listening to my community and letting them have a voice. Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you, folks.

We're now going to move to our final in-person panel.

If anyone that would like to speak and has not signed up to speak, please go to the Sergeant-at-Arms to fill out a request at the desk. I see some raised eyebrows.

Sergeants. Can you raise your hand if you'd like to speak and have not signed up? Those people need to fill out cards.

I'd like to call up Roy Medina, Christopher Leon Johnson, Frenchie Muniz (phonetic), Caroline Schwab (phonetic), and Irene Estrada (phonetic).

If you can find your chairs quietly so we can continue the proceeding.

Roy, you can begin when ready. Are you Roy?

ROY MEDINA: Yes.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: You can begin when ready. Just make sure your microphone is on.

ROY MEDINA: All right. Just give me one second, please. Okay. Gentleman here from the Fortune Society wrote a verse from the Bible. I believe it

was from Matthew. I'm going to read something from Matthew also. Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. Do not cross their path. Do not wait in the way of evil. Avoid it. Don't go to it. Turn away from it and pass on. The gentleman from the Fortune Society spoke of success stories, but he left out the recidivism rate. Now, he knows. He's got experience all the years that he's said, and I'm proud of him that he was formerly incarcerated and made a success story. That's beautiful, but we've got to face the truth. Three out of 10 of these people are going to be reincarcerated in the first 12 months, and six out of 10 are going to be reincarcerated in the first 36 months. We can't avoid that. You can't ignore that. You have to sometimes think with your brain and sometimes you have to think with your heart, okay? And they already dispelled the notion, the medical staff, when we had the meeting at the Rotunda at Jacobi Hospital, that it's only going to be people that are disabled that are going to be housed there. That's not true. That lie needs to end, and I want to say this to the Council. The other day, four days ago, a young girl, a friend of my daughter's, was

walking in our neighborhood when two guys started following her. They were wearing ski masks. They were on bicycles, and she was terrified. Then they started to chase her, but she was too far from her house, so she had to run into a (TIMER CHIME) stranger's house. Do you understand what she felt? Have you ever experienced that? Have you ever tasted that kind of fear? Because this girl's never going to forget this, and this is what's going to happen.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Your time is up.
If you can give us your last line.

ROY MEDINA: Sorry?

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: You have one last line. This is my rule. You have one last line.

ROY MEDINA: I've lost my hearing.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: It's okay. If you wanted to just conclude your statement with a line.

ROY MEDINA: Okay. My house is 96 years old. You know how many families have lived there in 96 years? Two, because it's that kind of neighborhood, but now they've got this fear of what's going to be happening to our neighborhood. People are pointing up for sales signs. They're running out of there. Don't vote for this. It's just not right. If

that girl would have ran into your house, you would
have opened your door. Don't close the door on us.
It's not right.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you so much
for your testimony.

I'd like to next call up Christopher. You
can begin when you're ready.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah. Hello. My
name is Christopher Leon Johnson. I want to be on the
record that I know there's a lot of controversy
within here about the situation between me and Kristy
about the Bronx casino, but I am a man of my word
from 2023 to be on the record that me and Kristy
actually drove into the Just Home area in 2023 to
campus and talked to some people, and I'm going to be
a man of my word and say I'm still opposed to the
project. I'm opposed both to Just Home and I'm
opposed to Jacobi. Now, I want to make clear that,
like this guy back here, Stanley Richards, won't he
admit that he actually enabled a pedophile to sit
here two years ago in 2022, like three years ago in
2022, to speak on behalf of a bill that will allow
pedophiles to live next to your kids without being
vetted. Won't he be on the record to admit that to

the people right here or people here that he was the main one that engineered this stuff called Local Law 17 to allow pedophiles to live next to your kids while being vetted, Stanley Richards himself. Now, I'm opposed to this project because it's going to create a lot of crime. This is going to bring the wrong type of demographic into the area, which is going to destroy the District. It's going to destroy the whole community. All these non-profits are getting paid to push this. They're getting paid by the Speaker through discretionary funding to push this project in. The Mayor's Office, the reason they didn't come out, and that's why he's out the door in about the next six months, Eric Adams, is because he's down with the Fortune Society. He is down with that non-profit, a corrupt non-profit that does nothing for the people. All he do is send the worst of society into areas that people don't want them to be in, and they let them live in those districts with no opposition because the Mayor is down with that non-profit. He's down with Stanley Richards, and they're both Freemasons. Both of them are Freemasons. Now, let's make that clear that people need to oppose this project, and I'm calling on the City Council to

oppose this project, and I know that Kevin Riley won't oppose this project because he's another Freemason, and this is the biggest problem here. We got to start calling out these Freemasons in the City Council. Like, why they made a Freemason like Kevin Riley, the chair of the Land Use Committee, and (TIMER CHIME) they need to remove this guy, the Chair, and he's nothing but a clown to the developer. And one more line. People need to start going outside Kevin Riley's house. These people here need to start going outside this guy's house and oppose this project.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: I'm going to stop you right there. You're not going to call on anyone to go into a Member's home. Your time is over.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: (CROSS-TALK)

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Your time is up. Shut his mic, Sergeants. Thank you so much. You can see yourself out of the Chambers.

Frenchie, whenever you're ready.

FRENCHIE MUNIZ: Good evening. I mean, good morning. My name is Frenchie Muniz, and I had a statement ready, but I'm going to break this down. I don't need it, because just like Mrs. Diana Finch, I

1 don't live in the area, but I do support them, and I
2 know what they're going through. This morning, I saw
3 a video of an immigrant person with two children, two
4 daughters, that said he had just recently, about
5 three years ago, bought a home there, and he's afraid
6 for his daughter, and that if this project goes
7 forward, okay, he might end up selling his home. An
8 immigrant father. An immigrant father. And another
9 thing, too, that I want to raise here, something that
10 I did not like, Mrs. Diana Finch saying that the
11 community is racist. Look at me. Hispanic guy. I'm a
12 Hispanic guy, and I felt no racism in the area, and I
13 visit the area. I have friends in the area, and
14 everything. So, for her to say those things, keep
15 bringing racism to all these hearings and everything,
16 it's just breaking apart the community, and we cannot
17 have that anymore. Everybody here that's in favor of
18 just home, they're all getting paid. They get paid.
19 So yes, they're going to support this bill. I'm not
20 getting paid. I sympathize with that community. We
21 are losing the communities, and we cannot allow that.
22 We have a lot of people that have children or want to
23 create a home and live in New York, in the Bronx, and
24 that is disappearing. We're having a lot of one-

bedroom apartments coming up, studios apartment.

Where's the family going to go? We have to think
about this. Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Caroline, you can
begin when ready.

CAROLINE SCHWAB: Hi. My name is Caroline.
Thanks for allowing me to testify today. I'm a
community organizer. I work extensively with
communities in the Bronx. We work to mobilize house
neighbors in support of neighbors experiencing
homelessness. The crux of our work lies in that when
we welcome, embrace, and support neighbors with
complex needs, the community as a whole does, in
fact, become a safer and better place. I've actually
personally been touched by the number of Bronx
community members that I've worked with who strive to
make their neighborhoods better by working with
homeless individuals. Their work has proved that when
you're not scared and you work in collaboration, it's
beneficial for everyone. I've spent a considerable
amount of time in a supportive housing site with
volunteers, actually doing things like crocheting and
computer literacy, and these connections that we've
formed with folks who have been formerly

1 incarcerated, who are in supportive housing, really
2 have been beneficial for everyone, which is why I
3 come today in support of Just Homes. When individuals
4 are treated with respect and provided with the
5 support that they need to recover, they are less
6 likely to re-offend. When people's basic needs are
7 met, everyone is safer. Formerly incarcerated
8 individuals with complex needs are more likely to re-
9 enter homelessness, and they especially deserve the
10 dignity to recover peacefully. As we hear calls for
11 more affordable and supportive housing, I urge the
12 Council to approve this project to help those who are
13 among the most vulnerable in achieving stability to
14 work towards a safer and better place. It's the ideal
15 first step in creating more of this supportive and
16 affordable housing, and I urge the Council and the
17 community members to support this project to work
18 towards a more welcoming, kinder, and safer New York.
19 Thank you.

20
21 MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Irene, you can
22 begin when ready.

23 IRENE ESTRADA: Good afternoon. My name is
24 Irene Estrada, and I am the President of Mothers
25 Against 1900, and I am also a mayor candidate. When I

found out about Just Homes coming to our community, I went to Community Board 11, and I told them that Indian Village had to be notified. Their response was, not now. I told them I would go door-knocking and notify the whole community. Many times, these projects are swept under the rug, and communities have no information. We are a very well-informed community, and we stand against this project. I am also a minister, a clergy, and I have been the bridge between Just Homes and the community, from the meetings, the rallies, the protests, and everything to get the message out. Now, after three years, we are here, and the final request considered another area. This is a wrong location. We recognize the scripture that he spoke about in the book of Matthew, and I would like to add that, yes, we do take care of the sick, we take care of the homeless, and we do help those that have needs in our communities, because in our district, we are one. We are one big family. We're the body of Christ. This project needs a different location to protect the little ones. We have five schools in the area. We need to use wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, and hear the people's needs and what the people need in their community. We

need senior affordable housing with a wraparound service for their medical needs, while waiting for 10 years on a waiting list. We need responsible planning and accountability. Just Homes housing re-entry is important, but not in this location. In our district, we had a fire in the building where I was a tenant association president for over 35 years. I moved in 2014, and I've been helping those families since. That fire was 2910 Wallace (TIMER CHIME) Avenue. That fire left 300 people homeless. We need to take care of our people in our own communities. These are families in shelters.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Irene, your time has expired, so just give us your last line, please.

IRENE ESTRADA: My last statement will be that I am not surprised at the show of our elected officials not attending this hearing, and it shows the disrespect for District 13. Government is supposed to be the work for the people, and we the people have been disrespected. Everyone that has testified in this project do not live in this area who are for it. We who are opposed, we came out of our homes to come here to request that City Council Members will listen to our community, because our

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community is not only well-informed, we are
important. Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Your time has
expired.

IRENE ESTRADA: Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Any questions for
this panel?

Okay. No questions for this panel. You
folks are excused.

Just a friendly reminder to those in the
room, you have 72 hours to submit a written testimony
to this Committee. Those testimony packages will then
go to Members of the Committee, and anyone else, any
other Member that wants access to review testimonies,
those will not be inaccessible to anyone a part of
the Committee.

I'm now going to move to virtual
testimony, and I'd like to first recognize Dan Miller
to unmute himself, following Kevin Deloia (phonetic)
and Gino Marmorato.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Dan Miller.

DAN MILLER: Hello, yes. My name is Dan
Miller. I'm here to support Just Home. I just want to

say that I think we, I've heard from many commenters that we should listen to the people most affected by this project, and I agree, which is why I'm surprised that I haven't heard a single medically complex older patient being released from Rikers on this panel. Somehow the most affected seem to be people who live nearby rather than those who would actually live here. This kind of project is exactly the kind of thing that our city needs. Rikers Island is a hellhole. I wouldn't want one of my family, especially a family member with medical conditions, to be trapped there when unable to receive the care they need because the City hasn't built enough housing for people in that situation. This is a chance to make that right. We can do better than what we're doing. We can make the world a better place. We can provide the housing that people need who are in a really tough situation, and to throw that away because of concerns about the location or the, you know, like the crocodile tears of, oh, this should be for some other type of affordable housing. This project is right on the cusp. We can do it. We can get it done, and I think we should because we need this type of housing. We need it here. It's a perfect

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location for it, and this is what the city needs. If
you (TIMER CHIME) wouldn't want one of your family
members to be trapped in Rikers...

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time
has expired.

DAN MILLER: Thanks.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you. Kevin
Deloia, you're welcome to unmute yourself and give us
your testimony.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Kevin, I'm
calling you for a second time.

If not, I'll move on to the next panelist
and try again.

Okay. I'm going to move on to Gino
Marmorato. You can unmute yourself when ready.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

GINO MARMORATO: Thank you, Council. Well,
thank you to those of you that showed the courtesy,
dignity, and respect of staying throughout this
hearing and listening to all speakers, both for and
against. 30 to 4, 30 to 4. That was the Community
Board's vote opposing this project. While merely
advisory, the vote carries weight. The Community

Board is not one-sided. It is comprised of socialists, liberals, moderates, Republicans, conservatives, and everything in between. Our community is broad. Our community is compassionate. Our community is understanding. But above all, our community is responsible. No one disputes that affordable housing is needed. And yes, this project has elements that sound appealing on paper. But when all the facts are laid out, the overwhelming vote against it makes sense. The project was rejected because it was reckless, rushed, and lacking in thoughtful planning. The proposed site sits in the heart of a residential neighborhood surrounded by families, schools, playgrounds, and community spaces. Children walk these streets every day. Parents drop their kids off at schools just blocks away. Seniors rely on the stability and safety of this area. Safety is not a scare tactic. It is a responsibility. Placing formerly incarcerated individuals in this dense residential community raises real serious questions that to this day remain unanswered. Yes, when this proposal was introduced, community members were angry, and some may have been hostile. But context matters. When people feel deceived and

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dismissed, of course frustration rises. Members of my
community felt there was no transparency,
collaboration, or partnership. There are two sides to
every story, actually three. So if you want the
truth, look to your own Colleague, the Council Member
for this District. Through her efforts and that of
our community, I'm happy to hear that New York City
Health and Hospitals, the Mayor's Office, and Fortune
Society are now working on a sensible, well-planned,
and well-thought-out solution for everyone.

Thankfully, our community has a Council Member who
listens first, asks questions, does her due
diligence, (TIMER CHIME) and advocates with passion
and...

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time
expired.

GINO MARMORATO: Trust, I remind this
Council that you've always stood up for the rights of
Members on your land use matter. But remember,
fairness means not cherry-picking when those rights
are protected. I urge you to stand with your
Colleague and honor your own principle of Member
defense.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you for
your testimony.

I'm going to call Kevin Deloia one more
time to see.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Okay, if you
folks are leaving the Chambers, please leave the
Chambers quietly.

I'm going to move on to the next
panelists as we're still having some tech
difficulties.

I'd now like to call up Roxanne Delgado,
followed by Austin Celestin, and Anuva Goel.

Roxanne Delgado, you can unmute yourself
when ready.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

ROXANNE DELGADO: Hello. Can you hear me?

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Yes, we can hear
you.

ROXANNE DELGADO: Hello. My name is
Roxanne Delgado, and I would like to say I live at
Pelham Parkway, which is District 13 that includes
Jacobi Hospital. My main concern is why did it take
so many years to have this hearing, and why is this

hearing being held now, right before elections? Is this payback because the Bronx Democratic Machine is upset with our Council Member who listen to our community and voted no to a (INAUDIBLE) that will bring poverty, pollution, addictions, and take away our precious park land? The District is majority Latino, I know that, including Morris Park. Most of them are homeowners, which is great for the Latino community. And many of them hold moderate or conservative views, unlike myself, but that doesn't make them racist. And the fact that someone comes out of the District constantly trying to divide us by calling people racist, even myself, and I'm obviously Latino, I'm a person of color, is disgraceful. We do have lots of disagreements, we are a very passionate community, but believe me, we are very diverse, and we do work together. I'd also like to say we have our own Bronx Democratic Machine selling us out to real estate developers, corporations, special interests, and why the Bronx and most of the marginalized community is suffering the consequences, including myself. I'd like to say our Councilwoman was elected, and I myself also voted for her. She represents us, and you must please defer to her because she speaks

for our community. Don't disempower a community, a very diverse community, because of people who are stating that the community does not reflect the Council or because of special interests. She represents our community, and in my own opinion, she's doing good work, and she's speaking for our behalf. So, please listen to the community. Also, regarding Fortune Society, they are doing a lot of good work, and they represent a demographic that suffers a lifelong punishment despite the fact that they serve their time. So, there's no shade against Fortune Society. I do support them, but I don't think that we should disengage a community or disregard a Councilwoman because of politics. So, I thank you for your time, and thank you. Bye.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you. I'd now like to call on Austin Celestin to unmute yourself.

AUSTIN CELESTIN: Can you hear me?

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Yes.

AUSTIN CELESTIN: Cool. Hi. Good afternoon. My name is Austin Celestin. I prepared this (INAUDIBLE) so if it's so incoherent, I apologize. I'd like to start off by mentioning two

quotes from former popular civil servants in regards to similar projects from Manhattan. In 2019, former Councilwoman Margaret Chin uttered the words, there's no such thing as alternative sites, only additional ones. And while this line has been uttered many times, former First Deputy Mayor Maria Torres Springer said the line that housing delayed is housing denied. And I want to start with that first quote. People have brought up the need for housing for seniors, for families, for health staff, and for veterans, all laudable, necessary, critical needs. But also, for the formerly incarcerated, that housing is just as critical. Housing for them is more than just a housing issue. It is a public safety issue. It is a health issue. They are at their best, and they are at their safest, and the community is at their safest when they have a roof over their heads and services available to them. If they are unhoused, they are the most vulnerable to recidivism. They are most vulnerable, and everybody else is most vulnerable. I'm hearing rumors that there's a second site that's possible. If there's a second site, go for it. But build both. Don't do one or the other. Don't put these vulnerable communities against each

other. And every time we talk about alternatives,
very often the goalpost shifts. Look at (INAUDIBLE).
People pointed to 3D Hudson as an alternative when
they started building that (INAUDIBLE) and now, Randy
Mastro interviewed with that project, proposed
rezonings, haven't heard anything about it in months.
And then to that second line about housing delayed is
housing denied. It was three years ago when the first
community meetings started. Those viral videos of
some of the nastiest public comments I have ever
seen, that was October 2022. The New York Giants were
a good football team back then. You know how long ago
that was? It's 2025, and we're still in public
hearings. Let's say that it is good faith (TIMER
CHIME) and we do shift gears. Are you saying that we
have to do another three years?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time
expired.

AUSTIN CELESTIN: So please vote yes for
this project, and if we're serious about those
alternatives, go for both. It's not one or the other.
Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you.

And just a reminder for our virtual public testimony, you have 72 hours to send in your written testimony, and you can send that to testimony@council.nyc.gov.

I'll now call on Anuva Goel.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

ANUVA GOEL: Hi. Can you hear me?

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Yes, we can.

ANUVA GOEL: Okay. Hi, everyone. My name is Anuva, and I'm a Morris Park resident speaking in support of Just Home, which will be about just a block away from where I live. I'm currently a medical student living in the Albert Einstein College of Medicine apartments, and I'm reminded of a patient at Wyler Hospital, who my team and I recently cared for, who had struggled to access stable housing following incarceration, in part due to restrictions given his history of incarceration. This contributed to him being unhoused, unable to prioritize his health above other needs, when even access to food was a daily struggle, impacting his mental health and putting him at risk of substance use and unhealthy exposures. Ultimately, these risk factors led to a hospital admission for infective endocarditis, an infection of

the heart, but with a prolonged hospital stay, since he was not eligible for continuing his long IV antibiotic course outside of the hospital, due to his unstable housing situation. Clearly, his lack of housing put him at greater risk of worse uncontrolled health outcomes, and also strained the hospital system's resources for an otherwise preventable and shorter hospital stay. The Just Home project would address many of these barriers by providing previously incarcerated individuals with stable permanent housing, allowing them to address other urgent social and economic needs with the assistance of support staff, including case managers, social workers, and Fortune services. And with the close proximity to Jacobi, this will also allow for a renewed focus and attention on management of complex health needs and continuous access to necessary meds, scans, and labs, while also affording quick and easy access to specialists and treatments in the setting of acute health exacerbations. So ultimately, I think the Just Home project will improve the health of a vulnerable population, while also not causing unnecessary over-utilization of in-demand, limited,

and expensive health services, ensuring that all
community members have appropriate health access.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you so much
for your testimony.

I'd like to recognize a virtual
participant that is currently listed under iPhone. If
you can unmute yourself and state your name prior to
giving your testimony.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

KEVIN DELOIA: Do you hear me?

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: We can hear you.
Please state your name for the record and then give
your testimony.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you very
much. This is Kevin Deloia. I had a microphone issue
earlier. I don't have any pre-written things to say
here. I want to say that I am for the Just Home
project and I have been since day one. I've gone to
many meetings and I've heard both sides of the
positive and a negative about the project. And, you
know, the more housing we have for any individual
will help the New York City housing problem that we
have. I'm not going to say much more. You have my
point that I'm for the project and I would like to

continue to stay positive towards the project. Thank
you for the opportunity and thank you for waiting and
calling me back.

MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Thank you so much
for your testimony.

If there are any other remote public
participants who wish to testify and have not already
done so, please press the raise hand button now.

And if you are here with us in person,
please see one of the Sergeant-at-Arms to fill out a
speaker card.

Seeing none and no other members of the
public who wish to testify both in person or
virtually regarding LU364 for a project known as
Jacobi Just Home, the public hearing is now closed
and the item is laid over.

That concludes today's business. I would
like to thank the members of the public, my
Colleagues, Subcommittee Counsel, Land Use Staff, and
the Sergeant-at-Arms for your participation today.

This meeting is hereby adjourned. [GAVEL]

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 September 29, 2025