



Testimony of Habitat for Humanity – New York City
September 2nd, 2008

New York City Council Sub-Committee on Land Use

Testimony respectfully submitted by:
Joshua Lockwood
Executive Director
Habitat for Humanity – New York City

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Josh Lockwood, and I am the Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity - New York City.

Habitat-NYC was founded in 1984 as an independent affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International. Habitat-NYC has built more than 180 homes throughout the five boroughs of New York City. Habitat-NYC builds homes for ownership by families and individuals in need, and every year, an average of 10,000 volunteers build with Habitat-NYC. Habitat-NYC is a "hand up, not a handout." Families must be willing to work – at least 300 "sweat equity" hours per adult member as a down payment (maximum of 600 hours per family). The families that are selected must be living in substandard or overcrowded housing and meet income criteria of 45 to 80 percent of Area Median Income (AMI). Habitat-NYC housing is not free: Habitat-NYC families pay a monthly affordable mortgage. Payments provide for the construction of additional homes. For more than 20 years we have built affordable homes in all five boroughs for hard-working New York City families. Our homes are built with the "sweat equity" of our family partner homeowners, who work side-by-side with volunteers. The use of thousands of New York City volunteers is unique to the Habitat for Humanity model. These volunteers not only involve everyday New Yorkers in the issue of affordable housing and economic development, but also inject energy and resources into communities where we build. On our current project in Brooklyn, thousands of volunteers spending money on coffees, lunch, and supplies, are helping to inject over \$2 million into local businesses during the construction period.

As an affordable housing developer, Habitat for Humanity – New York City has had a long history of building in Brooklyn and especially in Bedford-Stuyvesant. To date Habitat-NYC has built more than 40 units of affordable housing in

Bedford-Stuyvesant. Our organization is proud to continue the development and enrichment of such a vibrant community. We have been lucky to have had a good relationship with the Councilman Vann and are extremely grateful for his continued support.

Our current homeowners in Bedford-Stuyvesant have proven to be assets to their neighborhoods: they are hardworking, community-minded families, committed to improving schools and resources. They support local businesses and help Bedford-Stuyvesant flourish.

Our projects have transformed empty lots into thriving homes. They are simple but attractive and designed to complement existing homes. We use green building methods that protect the environment of our communities. We work closely with the local neighborhood to ensure our homes meet and exceed their wishes.

The homeownership rate in NYC is only 34.4 percent—far below the national average of almost 70 percent. We are confident this project will provide desperately needed affordable home ownership in Brooklyn for 16 families. In Bedford-Stuyvesant, one of New York City's oldest neighborhoods, 26% of residents own their own homes. This project will help strengthen the community as it transforms the lives of the families who will build and live there. Bedford-Stuyvesant is also home to some of the city's oldest housing stock, and although the rate of serious housing code violations has decreased by more than 17% since 2000, the neighborhood still suffers from a comparatively high number of violations citywide.

The Hart Lafayette project will be located on separate sites. Two are adjacent at 512 and 514 Lafayette Ave, while the single buildings will be located at 544 Lafayette Ave. and 118 Hart St. The Hart Street/Lafayette Avenue development will consist of four buildings, each four stories and housing four families. Each building will have one 2-bedroom and three 3-bedroom homes. The construction process will incorporate energy efficient design and appliances to meet NYSERDA's EnergyStar standards and help owners save up to 40% on their utility bills. Environmentally friendly building materials – such as formaldehyde-free insulation, low VOC paint and caulk and Forest Stewardship Council approved hardwood flooring – will be used in construction. We are hopeful that construction will start in the winter of 2008, and be completed in the winter of 2010.

We look forward to working with the many hundreds of volunteers and community partners that will come from across the city to make affordable homeownership a reality for hard-working New York City families. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

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in favor in opposition

Date: 9/2/08

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Name: HARVEY HICKS

Address: 430 Lenox Ave

I represent: 430 Lenox Ave Tenet #155

Address: 430 Lenox Ave

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Name: REATH SMITH

Address: 430 LENOX AVE

I represent: 430 Lenox Ave Tenet #155

Address: 430 Lenox Ave

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Name: JOHN ELIZON

Address: 204 W. 120th St

I represent: 152 Tenant Association

Address: 152 W. 144th St NYC 10030

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Name: Josh Lockwood

Address: 315 West 86th St, 10A

I represent: Habitat for Humanity - New York City

Address: 111 John St, 23rd Fl, NY, NY 10038

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 152 Res. No. _____

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Name: Veronica Harris

Address: 204 West 150th St

I represent: 152 Tenant Association

Address: 152 West 144th St NY 10030

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