

Summer 2019

WELCOME  
TO  
MORRIS  
HOUSES  
NYCHA

# A Community Vision for Morris Houses

## NYCHA Seniors First





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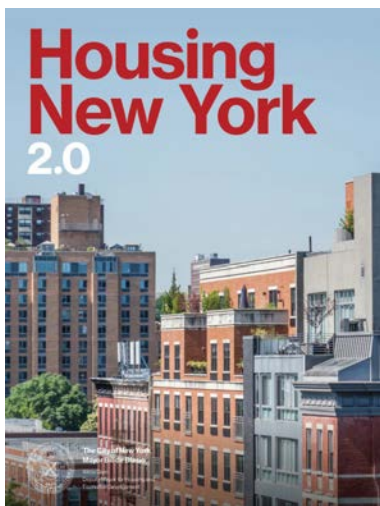
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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This visioning summary would not have been possible without the participation from residents of Morris I and Morris II (“Morris Houses”). We would like to thank all attendees for taking the time to share their ideas and concerns regarding the new senior housing development in Morrisania. We would also like to thank the Morris Resident Association, the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (“HPD”), and the New York City Housing Development Corporation (“HDC”) staff for their continued collaboration with the New York City Housing Authority.

# Introduction

The New York City Housing Authority (“NYCHA”) plays a key role in achieving the goals set forth in the Mayor’s Housing New York Plan. As part of the de Blasio Administration’s commitment to ensure safe and affordable housing for the City’s increasing senior population, HPD launched Seniors First, a three-pronged strategy including developing new senior housing on NYCHA land. NYCHA will continue to manage and operate its existing developments while selected development teams will build and operate the new affordable buildings.



*Building on the foundation laid through Housing New York: A Five-Borough, Ten-Year Plan, Mayor Bill de Blasio released Housing New York 2.0, an extended plan to accelerate the creation and preservation of affordable homes and serve more seniors.*

One of the sites selected for development is located at Morris Houses in Morrisania, Bronx. NYCHA staff met with residents and resident leaders of Morris Houses in the summer of 2019. The goals of the sessions were to inform residents of the planned development and create a summary document of residents’ preferences and concerns.

Some of the key preferences from the Community Visioning sessions include a new development that:

- ensures housing is affordable and accessible for neighborhood’s senior population;
- improves the safety, security, and pedestrian experience of the immediate surroundings;
- provides shaded outdoor amenity spaces for activities;
- provides personalized support and healthcare services designed to maximize the independence for seniors;
- increases the availability of nutrition services and affordable food access for seniors;
- includes amenities that serve seniors;



- partners with existing neighborhood service providers and/or community-based organizations to provide support services and senior programs.
- respects the area context and adjacent buildings by using similar materials, textures, colors, and proportions; Incorporate environmental design principles to promote water, energy, and material conservation.
- limits the environmental impacts experienced during construction;
- develops a resident hiring plan for the construction, maintenance, and management of the new building;
- procures services and supplies from local minority and women-owned business enterprises;
- continues community engagement with Morris residents to ensure the project's design and implementation meet the community's needs and priorities.

## DEVELOPMENT QUICK FACTS

The proposed development will include:

- a 99-year ground lease;
- approximately 150 -200 affordable senior units;
- on-site tenant services; and
- potential for ground floor community use.



# Background

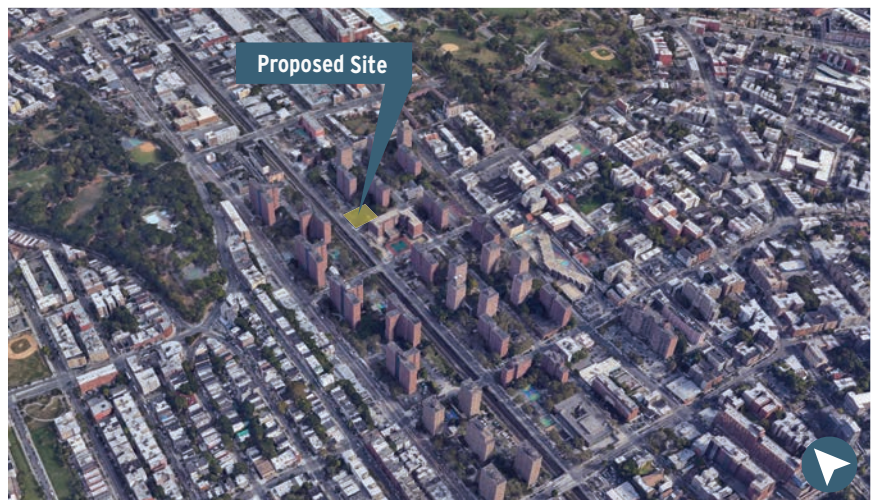
## MORRIS II AT A GLANCE\*

buildings: 7  
heights: 16 and 20  
apartments: 802  
residents: 1989  
density: 241 people/acre

avg gross income: \$24,435  
avg gross rent: \$507

5-yr capital needs: \$127 million  
community district: Bronx 3  
NYC council district: 16

*\*The neighboring development, Morris I, is comprised of ten buildings with 2,889 residents living in 1,085 apartments. The average gross rent is \$499 per month.*



## MORRIS HOUSES

Morris I and II are home to approximately 4,900 residents – about a quarter of the public housing population in the Morrisania neighborhood in the Bronx. The Morris developments were among several tower-in-the-park complexes constructed in the early 1960s in the neighborhood and remain some of the tallest buildings in Morrisania.<sup>1</sup>

Located between the Claremont and Crotona Parks, Morris Houses is surrounded by recreational and open space amenities on a somewhat hilly terrain. There are commercial corridors running along Third and Webster Avenues to the east and west sides of the developments. The Houses are located south of the Cross Bronx Expressway in a subway desert more than a 20-minute walk to the nearest station.

# Engagement Process

The Seniors First engagement process at the Morris Houses took place in the summer of 2019. Outreach efforts included door-knocking and flyer distribution to encourage the participation of residents in the Community Visioning sessions. During the meetings, staff led a range of activities to help NYCHA residents and other community members identify solutions that would both strengthen existing assets and address current challenges of the neighborhood. Participants raised concerns, asked important questions, and suggested solutions to be included in this visioning document for the Seniors First development at Morris II.

## ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Over the course of three meetings, NYCHA used various activities to provide program information, document common concerns, and determine participants' preferences for the forthcoming development at Morris II. The activities were developed using social, economic, and health data about Bronx Community District 3 ("BX3").

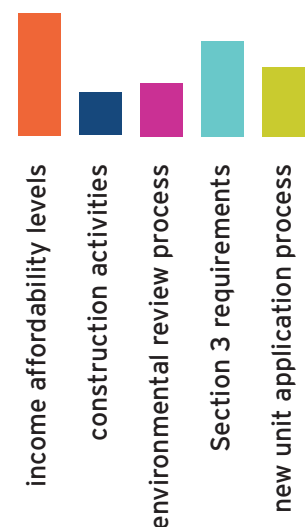
### Meeting 1 - Introduction

The first meeting included a presentation to the Resident Association of Morris Houses, informing attendees about the Seniors First initiative and the planned development of the open space at Morris II. A discussion followed the presentation to help clarify the goals and timeline, and address any concerns about the new development.

*The charts in the report show preferences expressed by meeting participants.*

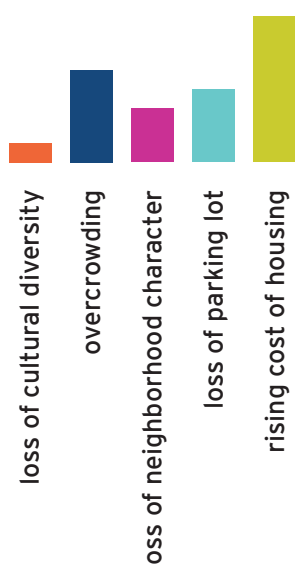


What topics would you like more information on?





What is your biggest concern about the new building at Morris?



### Goals

- Provide an overview of the Seniors First program.
- Inform Resident Association about the planned development and resident engagement process.
- Gather feedback about the needs and challenges of the neighborhood.

### Event Details

- Date: May 2, 2019
- Venue: Claremont Community Center

### Activities

- Q&A: This activity let the resident leaders ask questions about the program, engagement process, and project schedule.

### **Meetings 2 & 3 - Visioning Workshops**

The second and third meetings included an overview of the Seniors First program and the planned development at Morris II. The activities of the workshops were developed in response to the priorities and concerns raised with the Resident Association. NYCHA's Community Development staff led small group activities and residents gave feedback on their preferred ground floor use and site improvements.

### Goals

- Identify assets and challenges in the immediate area to better understand how the development can strengthen the conditions of the neighborhood.
- Determine clear preferences for ground floor space.
- Gather feedback about site improvements.

### Event Details

- Date: July 25 & 26, 2019
- Venue: Intermediate School 219 - New Venture School
- Participants: 37 NYCHA residents and 4 other
- Languages: English and Spanish



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ***What is affordable housing?***

It is housing where the occupant(s) pay no more than 30% of their income for housing expenses.

### ***Who will own the land?***

NYCHA will maintain ownership of the land and continue to manage and operate Morris Houses. The selected development team will build and operate the new building.

### ***What type of housing will be developed?***

The project will develop low-income apartments for seniors and provide residents with assisted living services.

### ***Who can apply for the new units?***

During construction, the selected development team will begin the marketing of the units and publicize the application requirements. The building will include a 25% NYCHA preference for the new affordable units.

### Activities

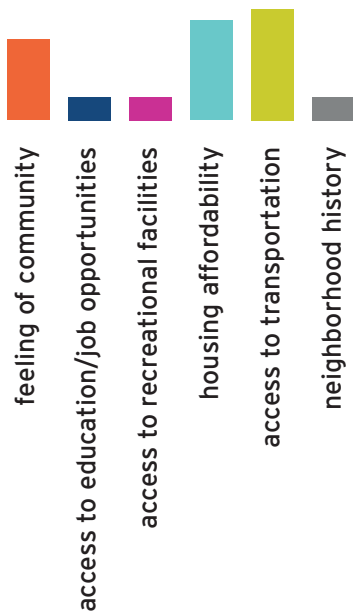
- **Questionnaire:** Participants answered questions about their concerns and needs related to the new development.
- **Neighborhood Asset Mapping:** Participants reviewed an asset map to discuss the challenges and opportunities of existing neighborhood assets.
- **Ground Floor Space Preference:** Participants selected their preference for how the ground floor space could be used at the new development.
- **Site Improvements:** Residents evaluated the existing sites based upon three criteria – accessibility, safety, and outdoor amenities. Participants reflected upon personal experience with the site, studied provided materials to better understand the site conditions, and provided recommendations of site improvements.

# Findings

Throughout the engagement process, NYCHA discussed a range of issues with Morris Houses residents. The resident feedback collected from the sessions has been organized into four categories: Housing, Urban Design, Community Resources, and Human Capital. Data from Bronx Community District 3 (“BX3”) is included in each category to contextualize the resident feedback.



What makes Morris Houses special?



## HOUSING

*According to Bronx Community Board 3, the district is facing significant housing challenges. The shortage of deeply affordable, accessible, and adequately maintained rental units continues to impact the community.<sup>3</sup>*

### Resident Preferences

- Ensure the rents for affordable units align with the income levels of the Morrisania senior population.
- Develop opportunity for seniors living in underoccupied public housing units to move to new development.
- Ensure housing is accessible for people with mobility and visual impairments.

### Supporting Data (All Furman)

- More than 35% of residents aged 65 or older residing in BX3 are living below the federal poverty level.<sup>2</sup>
- Nearly 36% of the residents in BX3 are severely rent-burdened, spending more than 50% of their income for housing-related expenses.<sup>2</sup>
- About 27% of renters in BX3 live in a NYCHA development.<sup>1,2</sup>

- The rental vacancy rate in BX3 is 1.8% compared to the citywide rate of 3.5%.<sup>2</sup>
- The median rent for studios and 1-bedroom units in BX3 is \$883 compared to the average rent of \$507 for residents living in Morris II.<sup>2</sup>
- In BX3, approximately 20% of the adult population have disabilities compared to the citywide rate of 7.9%.<sup>2</sup>
- About 8% of rental units in BX3 have serious housing code violations.<sup>2</sup>

## BUILDING & URBAN DESIGN

*According to residents, the new development should strengthen neighborhood character and increase health and safety for its residents.*

### Resident Preferences

- Improve the safety and security of the immediate surroundings through lighting improvements; video intercom and security cameras; natural surveillance measures; and ground floor activation.
- Improve the pedestrian experience by revisiting circulation paths and providing clear wayfinding features and signage.
- Improve accessibility by providing exterior rest areas, mobility aids, tactile walking surface indicators, and a passenger drop-off for the building.
- Provide shaded outdoor amenity spaces for activities such as walking, chess, gardening, etc.
- Respect the area context and the adjacent buildings by using similar materials, textures, colors, and proportions from the immediate surroundings.
- Incorporate environmental design principles to promote water, energy, and material conservation.
- Limit the environmental impacts experienced during construction, including noise, vibration, dust, and other pollution effects.

### Supporting Data

- BX3 is a densely-populated district of the Bronx with approximately 43,000 residents per square mile.<sup>2</sup>
- BX3 residents have a higher pedestrian injury



What is your preference for the number of units?





hospitalization rate than NYC overall.<sup>3</sup>

- Nearly 100% of BX3 residents live within a quarter mile of a park;<sup>2</sup> however, about a third of adults in BX3 report getting no physical activity in the past 30 days.<sup>4</sup>

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

*According to residents, the community resources and amenities in the Morrisania neighborhood do not adequately serve seniors' mobility and safety needs.*

### Resident Preferences

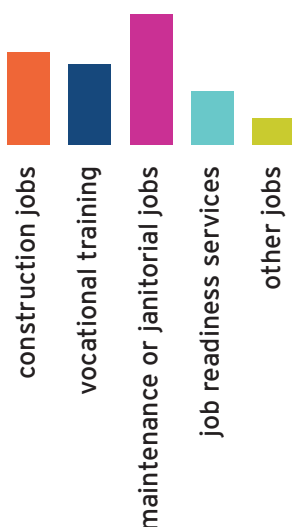
- Provide personalized support and healthcare services designed to maximize the independence for each senior resident at the new building. Services and facilities may include memory care services, medication management, emergency call systems, and laundry services, all with a focus on creating and bolstering the sense of community at Morris Houses.
- Increase the availability of nutrition services and affordable food access for seniors.
- Include amenities that serve the diverse interests of seniors. Residents suggested game tables, reading room, performance space, dining area, exercise equipment, and guest rooms.
- Partner with existing neighborhood service providers and/or community-based organizations to provide support services and senior programs.

### Supporting Data

- The percentage of adults in BX3 who report eating at least one serving of fruits or vegetables in the past day is lower than the citywide average.<sup>4</sup>
- The rate of avoidable hospitalizations among adults in BX3 is nearly triple the citywide rate<sup>3</sup> and approximately 15% of adults within the district report going without needed medical care in the past year.<sup>4</sup>
- In BX3, the adult rate of obesity and diabetes is significantly higher than the citywide average<sup>4</sup> and the psychiatric hospitalization rate is nearly double the citywide rate.<sup>3</sup>
- BX3 has nearly three times the citywide rate of assault-related hospitalizations.<sup>3</sup>



What types of economic opportunities do you think are the most important?





## HUMAN CAPITAL

*According to residents, the lack of job opportunities in the neighborhood remains a significant challenge.*

### Resident Preferences

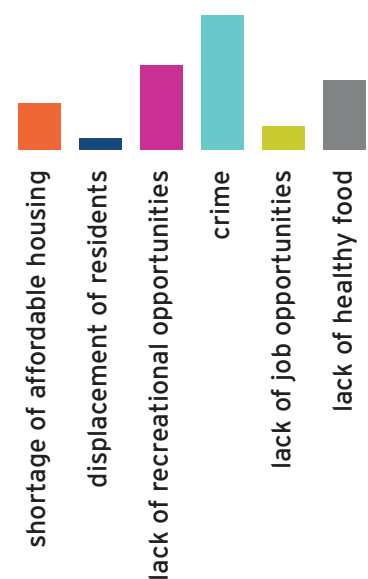
- Develop a resident hiring plan for the construction, maintenance, and management of the new building in coordination with the Resident Association.
- Procure services and supplies from local minority and women-owned business enterprises.
- Continue community engagement with Morris residents to ensure the project's design and implementation meet the community's needs and priorities.

### Supporting Data

- The unemployment rate for BX3 is significantly higher than the citywide rate.<sup>2</sup>
- About 8% of residents aged 16 to 19 in BX3 are neither enrolled in school nor participating in the labor force.<sup>2</sup>
- More than one third of the BX3 population aged 25 or older do not have a high school diploma.<sup>2</sup>



What are the most pressing issues in your neighborhood?

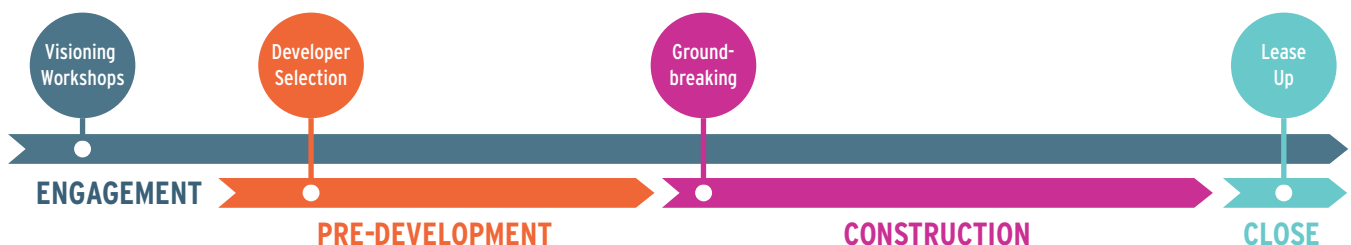


# Conclusion

The Community Visioning sessions are part of a multi-year engagement process at NYCHA to inform residents of planned developments and to incorporate resident preferences and concerns. This report includes ideas for implementation that require a cooperative effort among residents, community partners, and development teams.

NYCHA has included this visioning document as part of its Request For Proposals to solicit development plans that align with resident preferences and address their concerns. The selected development team will continue the public engagement process and present their proposed plans to Morris residents. The development team will also work with NYCHA's Office of Resident Economic Empowerment and Sustainability to connect NYCHA residents to job opportunities. NYCHA, alongside HPD and HDC, will monitor project progress from pre-development to construction finish.

We would like to thank all who have participated and encourage others to join as the process moves forward. NYCHA will continue to update residents throughout the development process at Morris Houses.





# Works Cited

1. New York City Housing Authority. (2019). *NYCHA Development Data Book 2019*.
2. NYU Furman Center. (2017). *CoreData.nyc*.
3. New York State Department of Health. (2014). *Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System*.
4. New York City Department of Health and Mental Health. (2016). *Community Health Survey, 2015-2016*.

# Appendix

Questionnaire

Asset Map

Ground Floor Space Preference

Site Improvements

Site Views

# Questionnaire



## SENIOR'S FIRST: MORRIS HOUSES Community Visioning Series: Questionnaire

NYCHA is conducting a community assessment of Morris Houses to understand your priorities and concerns about the new building. We greatly appreciate your input!

**(1) What makes Morris Houses special?** [Choose top 2 with "X"]

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling of community                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing affordability           | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood history      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood character                | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to transportation        | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to social services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access to education/job opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to recreation facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____              |

**(2) What are the most pressing issues in your neighborhood?** [Choose top 2 with "X"]

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shortage of affordable housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Displacement of residents        | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of job opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of education facilities   | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of recreation opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of healthy food      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of social/health services | <input type="checkbox"/> Crime                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____              |

**(3) What is your biggest concern about the new building at Morris?** [Choose top 2 with "X"]

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of cultural diversity | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of neighborhood character | <input type="checkbox"/> Rising cost of housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overcrowding               | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of parking lot            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____           |

**(4) There is a trade off between the height of the new building and the number of affordable units. What is your preference for the number of units in the new building?** [Choose 1 with "X"]

- |  |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer to maximize the number of units even if that would make the new building taller. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to maximize the number of units to make the building shorter.                |

**(5) The new building will create economic opportunities for residents. What types of opportunities do you think are the most important?** [Choose top 2 with "X"]

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Construction jobs   | <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance or janitorial jobs | <input type="checkbox"/> Other jobs: _____      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational training | <input type="checkbox"/> Job readiness services         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other trainings: _____ |

**(6) We are at the beginning of a multi-year engagement process. What topics would you like more information on?** [Choose top 2 with "X"]

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Income affordability levels | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental review process | <input type="checkbox"/> New unit application process |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Construction activities     | <input type="checkbox"/> Section 3 requirements       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                 |

**(7) Do you have additional ideas or comments you would like to share about the new building?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

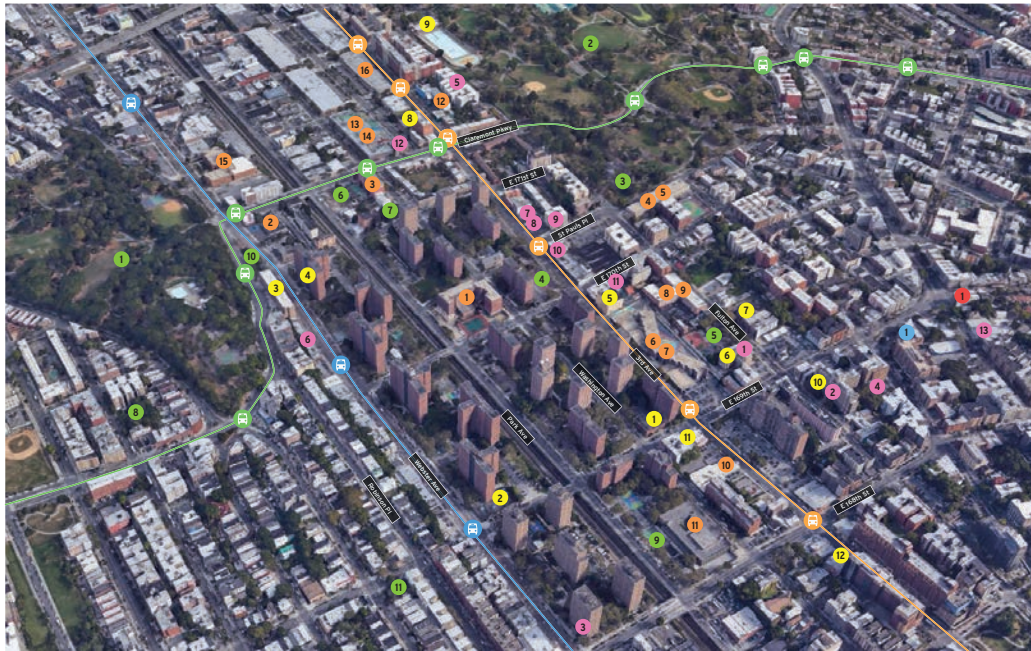


## Asset Map

PLEASE HELP US IDENTIFY THE **COMMUNITY ASSETS** NEAR MORRIS HOUSES.  
POR FAVOR AYUDENOS A IDENTIFICAR LOS ACTIVOS COMUNITARIOS CERCA DE MORRIS HOUSES.

A community asset is anything that can be used to improve the quality of community life. Place a sticker on the map to locate important assets in the neighborhood.

Un activo de la comunidad es todo lo que se puede utilizar para mejorar la calidad de vida de la comunidad. Coloque una etiqueta en el mapa para localizar activos importantes en el vecindario.



Social Services / Centros de Servicios Sociales	
1. Community Neighborhood Centers	4. Oakdale Park Community Center
2. William Bowers Neighborhood Center	5. Peking Neighborhood Services
3. Washington Avenue	6. Yolo Homeside
7. Alameda Square Public-School Center	8. Richmond Youth Center
9. Yolo Agency for Services	
10. Bureau of Child Care	
11. Children's Center	
12. Yolo Transit Services Bus	
<b>Educational Institutions / Instituciones Educativas</b>	
1. Public School No. 1 Benjamin Franklin	6. Keston College Preparatory Academy
2. Public School No. 2	7. Keston Science Center School
3. Yolo Charter School	8. Keston / Alameda Public School 128
4. Public School No. 3 Theodore Schenckel	9. Bessie Browder School
5. West Hill	10. Yolo Preschool Academy
6. Frederick Douglass Academy (Y)	11. West Hill Bessie High School
12. Yolo Community School 22	12. Yolo Community School 128 and 142
13. Bessie Center for the Sciences and Math	13. Yolo Area Educational Opportunity Center
<b>Health Facilities / Instalaciones de Salud Pública</b>	
1. Yolo County Adult Health Center	6. King Pharmacy
2. Bessie Center for the Sciences and Math	7. Yolo Pharmacy
3. Yolo Health Center / Medical Community Health	8. Yolo Pharmacy
4. Medical Community Health Center	9. Yolo Pharmacy
5. Bessie Center Public Family Practice	10. Bessie Red Medical Center
6. BSA Ranches	
7. West Medical Center	
8. St. Paul's Neighborhood Pharmacy	
<b>Leisure-Sports / Espacios de Ocio</b>	
1. Community Park	4. Noriega Playground
2. Community Park	5. Michel Tennis
3. Victoria Center	6. Community Neighborhood Center
7. Community Playground	
8. Bessie Playground	
9. Yolo Community Center	
10. Yolo de La Parilla	
11. College Area Greenfield	
<b>Arts &amp; Cultural Centers / Artes y Centros Culturales</b>	
1. WPA's Washington Branch Library	
2. Yolo Community Center	
3. Yolo Community Center	
4. Yolo Community Center	
5. Yolo Community Center	
6. Yolo Community Center	
7. Yolo Community Center	
8. Yolo Community Center	
9. Yolo Community Center	
10. Yolo Community Center	
<b>Healthy Food Access / Comida Sana</b>	
1. Yolo de La Parilla	
2. Yolo Community Center	
3. Yolo Community Center	
4. Yolo Community Center	
5. Yolo Community Center	
6. Yolo Community Center	
7. Yolo Community Center	
8. Yolo Community Center	
9. Yolo Community Center	
10. Yolo Community Center	



## SENIORS FIRST MORRIS HOUSES

Community Visioning Workshop \* Community Asset Map \* Summer 2019  
Taller de Visión de la Comunidad \* Mapa de Activos Comunitarios \* Verano 2019

# Ground Floor Space Preference

PLEASE TELL US HOW THE **GROUND FLOOR SPACE** SHOULD BE USED IN THE NEW BUILDING AT MORRIS HOUSES.

## EXAMPLES

### SOCIAL SERVICES

benefits enrollment center  
immigrant assistance services  
small business support center  
environmental justice advocacy  
domestic violence support

violence prevention/mediation  
senior center  
legal assistance center  
crisis intervention services  
anti-displacement programs

### EDUCATION

nursery/daycare center  
after-school programs  
tutoring/test prep center  
STEM education hub  
parenting center

adult literacy programs  
financial empowerment center  
vocational training programs  
job readiness services  
mentoring programs

### PUBLIC HEALTH

preventative care initiatives  
disease management services  
substance abuse counseling  
outpatient counseling  
lab testing services

mental health services  
healthcare enrollment services  
prenatal/newborn care services  
doulas services  
exercise programs

### LEISURE

play space  
fitness center  
athletic fields/courts  
sauna/steam facility  
community garden

computer/reading room  
communal dining room  
lounge  
event space  
theater

### ARTS + CULTURE

visual arts center  
performance arts center  
community gallery  
beautification programs  
storytelling programs

cultural fluency programs  
cultural preservation initiatives  
institutional access initiatives  
mentorship programs  
local arts advocacy

### HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS

food assistance services  
food pantry  
farmers market/youth market  
farm-to-institution program  
CSA program

nutrition awareness programs  
meal delivery program  
community farm  
community kitchen  
food justice advocacy

List your preferences.

Place a green sticker next to your 1st choice  
and a yellow sticker next to your 2nd choice.

01 02

**COMMENTS** Please explain your choices.



**SENIORS FIRST  
MORRIS HOUSES**

Community Visioning Workshop \* Ground Floor Space Use \* Summer 2019

# Site Improvements

PLEASE TELL US WHAT **SITE IMPROVEMENTS** YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE AT MORRIS HOUSES.




**ACCESS**  
ability to move  
around comfortably

## CONCERNS

01) the new building will disrupt how residents connect to Park Ave

## SOLUTIONS


01) create comfortable walking paths around building



**SAFETY**  
ability to feel secure at  
all hours of day

01) certain areas of the site are very dark


01) install sufficient lighting across site



**AMENITIES**  
features that create a  
more vibrant community

01) there is no covered place to sit outdoors

01) provide deep awning or other covered seating areas



**CONTEXT**  
relationship to immediate  
surroundings

01) the new building will block all the sunlight of the existing building

01) design new building to ensure adequate light, air, and privacy of existing building



**SENIORS FIRST**  
**MORRIS HOUSES**

Community Visioning Workshop \* Site Improvements \* Summer 2019

# Site Views



Views from St Paul's Pl / Vistas de St Paul's Pl



Views from St Paul's Pl / Vistas de St Paul's Pl



Views from St Paul's Pl / Vistas de St Paul's Pl



Views from Park Ave / Vistas de Park Ave



Views from Park Ave / Vistas de Park Ave



Views from Park Ave / Vistas de Park Ave



**SENIOR'S FIRST: MORRIS HOUSES**  
Proposed Site Views / Vistas del Sitio Propuesto



# Credits

We would like to thank the NYCHA staff that helped to make this community engagement process possible.

## **Real Estate Development**

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## **ABOUT NYCHA**

The New York City Housing Authority's mission is to increase opportunities for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers by providing safe, affordable housing and facilitating access to social and community services. Nearly 400,000 New Yorkers reside in NYCHA's 316 public housing developments across the City's five boroughs. Another 195,000 residents receive subsidized rental assistance in private homes through the NYCHA-administered Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

To fulfill this mission and better serve residents while facing dramatic reductions in traditional government funding, NYCHA is developing new financing options and building innovative partnerships across the public, private, and non-profit sectors. These strategies help NYCHA address many key challenges, from preserving aging housing stock through timely maintenance and modernization of buildings to increasing resident access to a multitude of community, educational and recreational programs, and job readiness and training initiatives.

## **SENIORS FIRST**

The population of city residents who are senior citizens is projected to increase by 40 percent between now and 2040. New York City seniors are more likely to be low income, to be rent-burdened, and to live on a fixed income than other city residents. To reach more of the growing senior population, the de Blasio administration has committed to create or preserve senior homes and apartments through Senior's First. The three-pronged strategy includes an initiative to make more homes accessible to seniors and people with disabilities; developing new senior housing on NYCHA and other land; and preserving more of the senior housing originally developed through federal housing plans.