Gowanus Houses COMMUNITY VISIONING WORKSHOP SUMMARY REPORT









About this Report

This report presents the results and summary of the Gowanus Houses Community Visioning Session that took place on November 9, 2022, at the New Dawn Charter High School from 6 pm to 8 pm. It identifies critical needs, clear preferences, and a desirable action plan for the upcoming repair and renovation work at Gowanus Houses.

All recommendations presented were generated by a consensus-based methodology and agreed to by a majority and/or prioritized by residents. Although opinions differed on certain issues, the findings contained in this summary should be understood as the preferences for which either a clear majority of residents were in favor, or a general agreement was reached amongst residents.

Resident feedback will inform the development of a Request for Proposals (RFP) from architectural/engineering and construction teams resulting in the selection of the team that provides NYCHA the best value and that addresses the goals and priorities outlined in this report.



Acknowledgement

Planning a large-scale event is no easy feat. Significant effort and activity go into the planning and preparation. We would like to recognize the Gowanus Houses Tenant Association and Property Management whose support and collaboration were integral to the success of the Visioning Workshop. We thank the New Dawn Charter School for providing the space and time for NYCHA's Comprehensive Modernization Department team to engage and collect vital information on residents' priorities and concerns. We also wish to express our appreciation for the dedication of time and reflections from all the residents of Gowanus Houses who participated in these conversations and the NYCHA staff that ensured the meeting's success.

Community Partners

- New Dawn Charter School
- Brooklyn Community Board 6
- U.S Congress Member Nydia Velàzquez
- New York State Senator Jabari Brisport
- New York State Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon
- New York City Council Member Lincoln Restler

Agency Partners

- New York City Housing Authority
- New York Police Department 78th Precinct

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Background

In 2021, the City Council adopted the **Gowanus Neighborhood Plan**, a shared, long-term vision for a thriving neighborhood. The Gowanus rezoning will pave the way for mixed-use development within an 82-block stretch in the industrial neighborhood.

As part of the plan's commitment, approximately \$200 million is being invested at two nearby New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) campuses – Gowanus Houses and Wyckoff Gardens. This investment decision was a result of the near decade long advocacy effort between the City Council, Community Board 6, residents, and a large City agency team.

NYCHA's Comprehensive Modernization ("Comp Mod") program will oversee and utilize the \$200 million to deliver comprehensive interior apartment renovations for both Wyckoff Gardens and Gowanus Houses. The collaborative scoping process among NYCHA, Comp Mod's architects and engineers, and residents, will determine the work that will occur in each unit to improve the quality of life, eliminate hazardous conditions, and address other needs within the units within the budget available. **Scope of work will entail**:



Gowanus Houses at a Glance

Gowanus Houses is a public housing development located in the Gowanus neighborhood of Brooklyn. Built in 1949, Gowanus Houses is comprised of sixteen buildings with a mixture of sizes and heights. The buildings sit on a 12.57-acre tract covering two blocks bordered on the north and east by Hoyt and Wyckoff Street, and on the south and west by Bond and Douglass Streets.

Average Income

\$27,634

Average years in housing

29.2

2,604 1,139 Units



Seniors

20.78%

Under 18

23.73%

Residential **Buildings**

Elevators

Resident

Boilers

White **3.3%** Asian 7.95% Demographic

42.13%

26

Black 45.89%

Other 0.73%

Hispanic



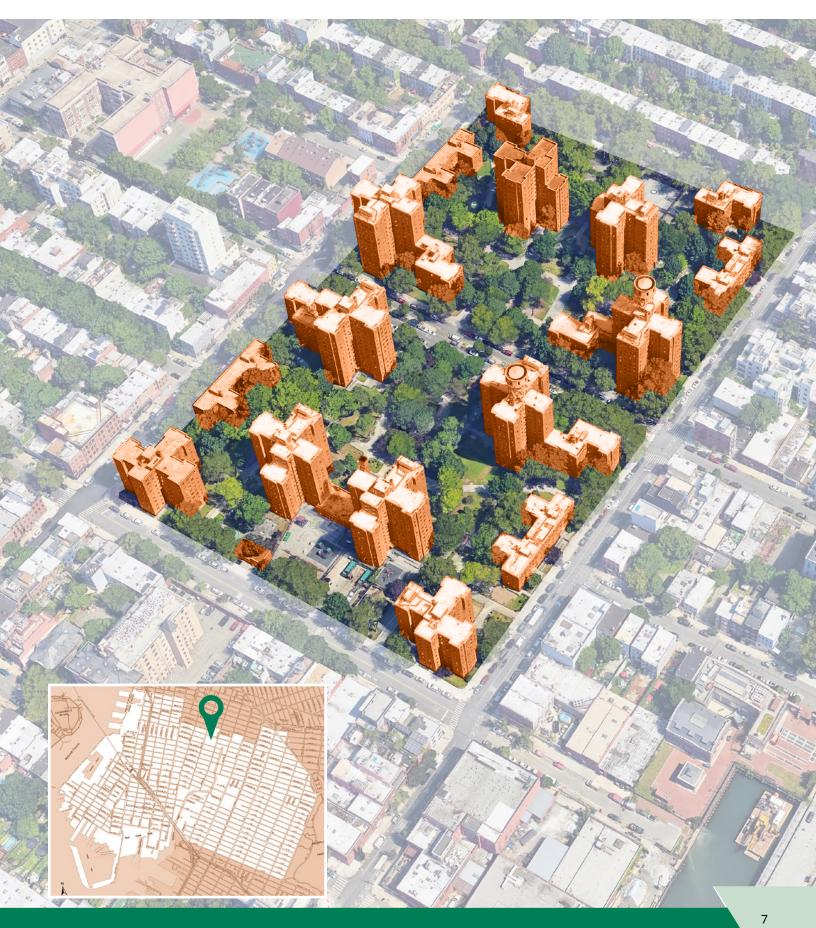
Studio

587 2 Bed

368 3 Bed

15 4 Bed

Map of Gowanus Houses

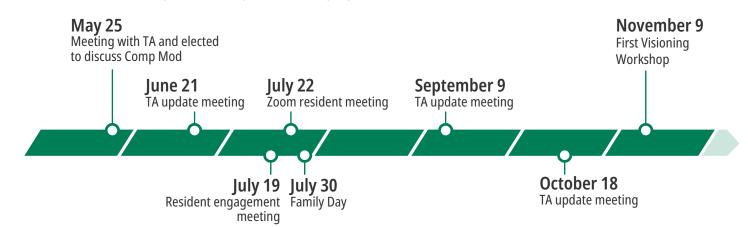


Engagement Process

NYCHA began the stakeholder engagement process to explain the Comp Mod Program at Gowanus Houses with a meeting with the Tenant Association leadership and local elected representatives on May 25, 2022.

The first in-person resident community meeting was held on July 19, 2022, where NYCHA informed more than 100 resident attendees of the upcoming repair work planned in their apartment; identified resident concerns; and conveyed the beneficial outcomes of the planned work for Gowanus Houses.

Since then, the Comp Mod team has led or participated in ongoing monthly collaborative planning process meetings with the Tenant Association (TA) and elected representatives to provide an update on the project and timeline.







Community Visioning Workshop

On November 9, 2022, NYCHA convened a visioning session workshop with the residents of Gowanus Houses. The workshop was designed to be interactive and encouraged broad participation focused on the three topics listed below:



The meeting was conducted in roundtable style with a total of **eleven tables – nine tables of English-speaking residents, one table of Spanish-speaking residents, and one table of Cantonese-speaking residents**. Each table hosted an average of eight to twelve participants with one facilitator and one note taker assigned. In addition, each table was provided with 3 24-inch x 36-inch poster/visual boards (provided in Appendix A) that facilitators used to lead the discussions. Residents could make comments/suggestions and notetakers would post the comments/suggestions on the boards.

Facilitators were equipped with a facilitation guide and run-of-show documentation that included a set of topic related prompts, a discussion guide, and potential interactive activities. They were asked to lead three 20-minute discussions on the three topics listed above to ascertain residents' concerns and needs; and to solicit detailed examples of where, when, and how issues in the areas of discussion occurred.

Note-takers were tasked with assisting residents in writing down specific feedback on post-it notes to paste onto the boards, as well as taking additional notes of important points made during the session. **In total, over 500 sticky notes were collected from the activity**.

Engagement Method

A range of communication and engagement activities were undertaken to inform and involve Gowanus Houses residents up to two weeks in advance of the event. This included:

Door-to-door flyer distribution in English, Spanish, Chinese and Russian

Robocalls to residents

Notifying local elected offices

Comprehensive Modernization



As part of the Gowanus Neighborhood Rezoning, the City of New York allocated \$200 million for the repairs and renovations at Wyckoff Gardens and Gowanus Houses.

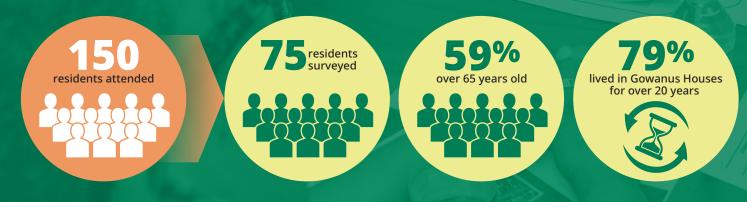
Now we need you help! Come share your thoughts and inputs about the needs of Gowanus Houses. Your participation will shape a Community Vision, which will help guide the work completed at your development.

Wednesday | November 9, 2022 6 pm to 8 pm Community Update Meeting New Dawn Charter High School 242 Hoyt Street Brooklyn, NY 11217 Space is limited | Please reserve at 212-306-6768

NYCHA's Comprehensive Modernization Department Questions/Problems, 疑问/家里的问题, Вопросы /Проблемы, Preguntas/Problemas 饺 (212) 306-6768 | 💼 compmod@nycha.nyc.gov | 🛄 https://on.nyc.gov/comp-mod

Attendance Summary

Prior to the start of the discussions, residents were asked to fill out a survey (provided in Appendix B), which was used to further guide discussions and obtain specific details on renovation priorities. Results of the survey are shown in each respective topic below.



Construction Timeline and Temporary Move



Objective

The first twenty minutes of the Community Visioning Meeting were used to discuss the construction timeline and phasing process. Effective December 1, 2021, New York City has a new and more stringent standard for defining the presence of lead in paint, in accordance with Local Law 66 of 2019. This new standard defines leadbased paint as having 0.5 milligrams of lead per square centimeter or more. As such, each unit at Gowanus Houses will be tested in accordance with the stricter standard of 0.5 mg/cm2. Residents were informed that a temporary move from their apartments will be necessary to protect their health and safety when environmental hazards are remediated.

Residents were provided with three scenarios to accomplish this move: 1) Floor-By-Floor, 2) Line-By-Line (e.g., turning off kitchen water line), and 3) Full Building. A discussion was held to obtain residents' preferences for one of the three scenarios and for the facilitators to provide the pros and cons of each, with an emphasis on the safety and the well-being of residents during construction.

Ultimately, all scenarios will require residents to be temporarily moved from their residences with each scenario having different issues of time and inconvenience.

Key Takeaways

Despite concerns, residents understand the need for the full-scale temporary move as the best option

After discussing the pros and cons of each of the possible temporary move scenarios, most residents agree that a full building move would be the best option if it means expediting construction.

Residents believe a full-scale move poses significant challenges for a development as large as Gowanus Houses

Facilitators noted that most residents are willing to endure the inconvenience of service interruptions and other disruptions if it means a home free from hazardous materials and upgrades to kitchens and bathrooms. While residents agree the "full building move" scenario would be the fastest and safest option, many expressed doubts that NYCHA has the qualifications, budget, accommodations and logistical capacity to move over 2,000 residents.

We like what you are saying, we like the facilitators here tonight,we really believe [NYCHA] have good intentions, but based on [NYCHA's] track record, we just don't think it's gonna happen as you say it will...



Residents are excited about renovations, but doubtful on timeline and budget citing previous Gowanus construction project

Residents anticipate severe delays and high costs associated with the temporary move, which they believe can severely prolong construction start and finish dates. The consensus is that the \$200 million allocated between the two developments is insufficient believing that a huge chunk of it will go towards relocation costs. Many cited the Superstorm Sandy work at Gowanus Houses which took several years to complete despite the fact that neither temporary moves nor work inside residents' apartments was necessary. Given the much greater scope of work and the need for temporary moves, residents fear extensive delays and disruption.

Contractor accountability is a huge concern

Residents worry that the temporary move will place many, especially seniors and the disabled, in a vulnerable position. As such, concerns were raised that this would put contractors in a position to stronghold NYCHA for more money or abruptly stop working in the event of a shortfall in the budget—leading to a "hostage" situation. Not only would work be stalled but residents return to their home would be uncertain. Residents want to know what steps NYCHA will take to prevent such scenarios and to ensure work will be completed on time in the event contractors back out.

Residents worry temporary moves will lead to delays and unwanted consequences for NYCHA

Residents understand the purpose of the temporary move, however, they worry the risks will significantly outweigh the intended benefits. Residents indicated there are too many problems to anticipate such as the mental anguish it will cause to vulnerable residents; the severe disruption in the quality of life; extensive delays; logistical issues; damage and/or loss of property—or even worst, the loss of life. All of this will be blamed on NYCHA and may lead to severe backlash, distrust and a potential lawsuit.

A temporary move is a waste of resource and money

Residents believe that the time, effort, and costs associated with moving more than 2,000 residents, which includes packing, hiring moving companies, storage costs, and returning residents back to their homes, would be better utilized (and be more cost effective) if applied to other resident priorities.

If NYCHA does exactly what you are telling us and can reassure us that it goes without a hitch, we have no problem cooperating. But we know better!

What was said

How much is it going to cost? This sounds very expensive and risky cuz I don't know of any other place they've relocated residents at this level. Seems to me the money could've gone to other needed repairs.

I am really excited about the outcome of the work and grateful that our development will be getting this funding.

> We need to know how contractors are going to be held accountable if things go south? Cuz you know it will. You need to understand we are not Wyckoff Gardens. We are a massive development. Lot of people are going to be displaced. [NYCHA] doesn't fully understand how complicated this is going to be.

If the move will be for a few months, than that seems fine. But only for a few months and not for years. Please reassure us this.

Kitchen



Objective

This next 20-minute discussion focused on identifying and prioritizing residents' ideas for improvements in their kitchens. A series of questions was asked regarding their cabinets, appliances, fixtures, mold issues, and color and material preferences. Below are the results of the discussion and some key takeaways.

Survey Results





51% reported problems with refrigerators





reported issues with rodents



Roaches

33% extreme 58% low 10% no infestation



Key Takeaways

Preference for modern-style kitchen with bright lighting, hardwood floors, and backsplash

By far the biggest takeaway from the kitchen discussion is that an overwhelming number of residents (69 percent are unhappy with the current kitchen wall color and floors. Almost every table of residents stated that the walls, floors, and cabinets stain easily, are difficult to clean, and are an eyesore due to stains and discolorations. As one possible solution, a stone slab backsplash would be preferred to prevent water, grease, and other mess from damaging the walls, particularly behind the stove and sink.

When asked about color preference, residents were in favor of dark "modernistic" colors with more lighting in the kitchen.

Desire for more storage space and better-quality wooden cabinets with sealants to prevents pests

Residents indicated the need for additional storage space in their kitchens and suggested increasing the size of the cabinets and countertops as part of the renovations citing a lack of space for kitchen appliances (i.e. toaster, air fryer). Wood cabinets was the top suggested material preference with doors that can be tightly closed to prevent roaches.

Preference for easy to clean countertop material and double bowl sink

When asked for kitchen material preferences, residents opted for marble or granite countertops for the ease of cleaning. Residents also indicated they would like bigger kitchen sinks, ideally with dual basins for washing on one side and drying on the other.

Reported issues with leaks and cracks

More than half the residents experienced leaks in their kitchens particularly underneath the sink or near the faucet. Most leaks were attributed to either: 1) Faulty plumbing, 2) Loose faucet knob, and/or 3) Leaks from upstairs neighbors. These leaks led to cracking of the walls which allowed roaches and pests to enter. Residents would like water and rodent-proof sealant around the edges of heaters, windows, stove, refrigerators and cabinets.

Refrigerator temperature and noise

Fifty-one percent of residents brought up refrigerators, with the primary complaints being that their refrigerators are too small, make loud noises and do not provide uniform cooling. There were many instances where food in the non-freezer section of the refrigerator was frozen, despite adjusting the temperature control.

Problems with pest infestation and rodents vary

Extreme cases of roach infestation were reported by 33 percent of residents, while 58 percent reported few roaches encountered, and 10 percent reported no roaches at all. 37 percent of residents reported problems with rodents.

We definitely need more storage and cabinet space. Make everything bigger!

A modernistic kitchen with hardwood floors would be nice. And more lighting. It's too dim in the kitchen.



Bathroom



Objective

This final 20-minute discussion of the Community Visioning Meeting focused on identifying and prioritizing residents' ideas for improvements to their bathroom. A series of questions was asked ranging from quality and type of ventilation, color and material preference, tile preferences, shower/bathtub, plumbing fixtures, sink, toilet and storage space information. Below are the results and some key takeaways.

Survey Results





59% would like more storage space







cracked and/or dirty tiles easily prone to grout loss



reported rodents and/or roaches





sink area

42%

had complaints with

36% experienced leaks in ceiling or pipes



Key Takeaway

Preference for new bathroom color, new tiles, grab bars and mounted soap holder

Just like the kitchen discussion, residents were most passionate about the color and materials used in bathrooms. Sixty-three percent would like colors and materials that are not prone to grout and mildew. The current color in the bathrooms is peach, residents' opinions vary on the paint color. Some prefer white; however, others indicated it is more prone to dirty and would like a darker hue. Bigger tiles are also the top preference as small tiles are difficult to clean. Grab bars and mounted soap holders were among the top bathroom amenities requested.

Storage Space/Cabinet is a priority

Residents indicated that their bathrooms currently lack storage space or cabinetry under the sink. Adding under-sink vanity cabinets would be beneficial for storing items like cleaning supplies, toiletries, detergent, etc.

Shower/Bathtub area needs work, but opinions vary

Resident attendee consensus was that the bathtub/shower area needs work; several ideas were presented. A majority of elderly residents would prefer walk-in showers with guard rails. Others would prefer stand-in showers with sliding doors, and some would like to keep the tubs but add handheld shower heads.

Issues with leaks, cracks, and chipping paint

Fifty-two percent of the resident attendees experienced leaks in their bathroom particularly around the bathtub, sink, or toilet areas due to issues with the plumbing and pipes. In some cases, leaks experienced by upstairs neighbors trickle down to the floors below. These leaks and humidity cause cracks and peeling paint.

Mold and rust a common issue

More than half the residents reported mold in their bathroom ceilings, bathtubs, behind sinks, and tiles. Residents also indicated instances of asbestos and rusting around their pipes and faucet.

Rodents and pests are a problem

Instances of rodents and pests in bathrooms were reported by 77 percent of the resident attendees. Residents believe this is attributed to the humidity resulting from the absence of windows and poor ventilation. Residents also believe the humidity from the shower and warm weather soften ceilings and walls resulting in cracks that serve as entryways for rodents and roaches.

Current bathroom not accommodating to the needs of the elderly

Based on the survey results, 59 percent of the resident attendees were over the age of 65. Many of the senior residents indicated their bathrooms are incompatible with their needs, such as toilets being too low, preference for walk-in showers, and the desire for handrails.

Everything in the bathroom needs work. We have mold in the ceilings, walls, and bathtub. Lots of rust in the pipes. There is leaks and drips even when you shut off the faucet in the bathtub and sink. Grime and mildew everywhere. Fix plumbing too because water pressure is inconsistent.



Conclusion and Next Steps...

The community visioning sessions allowed residents to share their renovation priorities and preferences for kitchen and bathroom materials, colors, finishes, and fixtures; and their thoughts on how construction and temporary moves due to the renovations should be planned. It was apparent that residents have deep knowledge of issues regarding their development and strong passion for their community.

Overall, residents are excited about the prospect of having their kitchens and bathrooms renovated, as evident from their enthusiastic responses and engaging feedback. Not surprisingly, the biggest concerns remain about the temporary move. More details and outreach will be needed over the next few months to dispel rumors and alleviate resident anxiety. As noted, residents lack the confidence in NYCHA's ability to pull off such a huge endeavor. Many believe the risks will severely outweigh the intended benefits.

NYCHA and the contractor eventually selected to perform the renovations will be tasked with presenting much greater details about the temporary move such as safety plans, logistics and realistic timeframe.

NYCHA will continue to host additional public engagements and convene with residents to keep them informed of the latest milestones and progress. The goal is to ensure that residents are part of this process every step of the way—as partners. Over the next few months, NYCHA will meet with every resident to assess their situation and needs to appropriately match families with move-out accommodations.

Gowanus Houses residents provided tangible and meaningful input to ensure the Comp Mod repair and renovation work will be durable, usable and informed by resident needs. NYCHA greatly appreciates residents for their input, involvement, and commitment. Residents dedicated their time to give thoughtful input to questions, provided their vision for improvements, and offered their thoughts on how NYCHA could improve their homes in a manner that is beneficial now for current residents and for future residents in the years to come.

















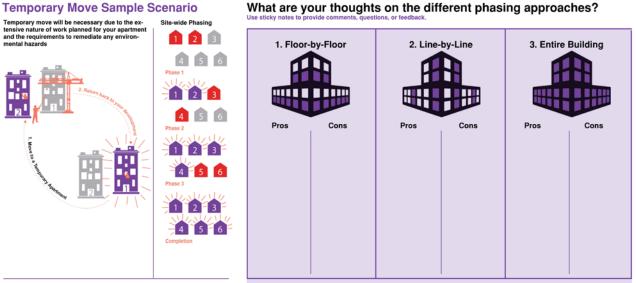


Appendix A

Visioning Boards



Construction Phasing + Temporary Moves



4. Other Ideas or Concerns?

Lead Laws

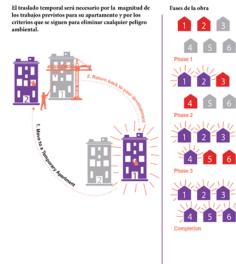
Effective December 1, 2021, New York City has a new standard for defining the presence of lead in paint, in accordance with Local Law 66 of 2019. This new standard defines lead-based paint as having 0.5 milligrams of lead per reverse combined or more

square centimeter or more. Each unit at Gowanus Houses and Wyckoff Gardens will be tested in accordance with the new, stricter standard of 0.5 mg/cm2.

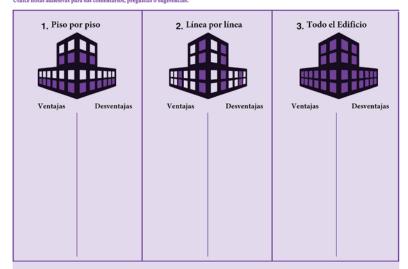
Fases de la construcción + traslados temporales



Ejemplo de un traslado temporal



¿Qué opina sobre las distintas maneras para dar inicio a las fases? Utilice notas adhesivas para sus comentarios, preguntas o sugerencias



Regulaciones sobre el plomo

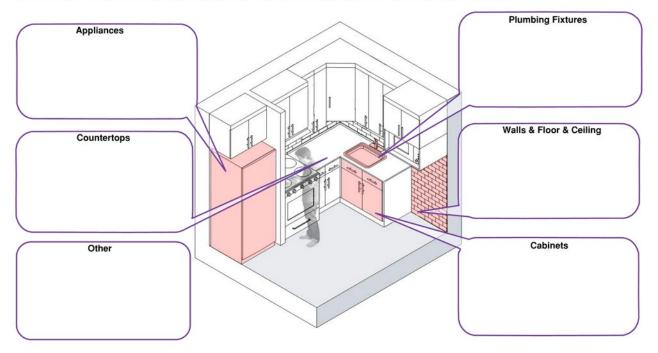
Desde el 1 de diciembre de 2021, la ciudad de Nueva York tiene una nueva medida para Desde el 1 de diciembre de 2021, la ciudad de Nueva York tiene una nueva medida para determinar la presencia de plosmo en la pintura, de acuerdo con la Ley Local 66 de 2019. Esta nueva medida define una pintura con plomo cuando ésta contiene 0,5 miligramos de plomo por centimetro cuadrado o más. Cada unidad de vivienda en Govanus Houses y en Wyckoff Gardens se someterá a prueba con base en la nueva y más estricta medida de 0,5 mg/cm2.

4. ¿Alguna otra idea o inquietud?

Visioning Boards

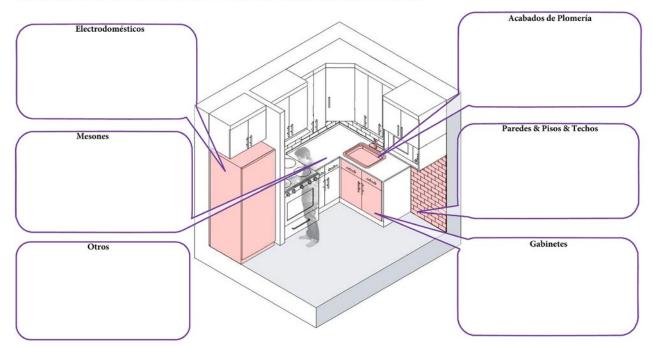
Kitchen

What issues do you have in your kitchen? What would you like to see changed or improved?

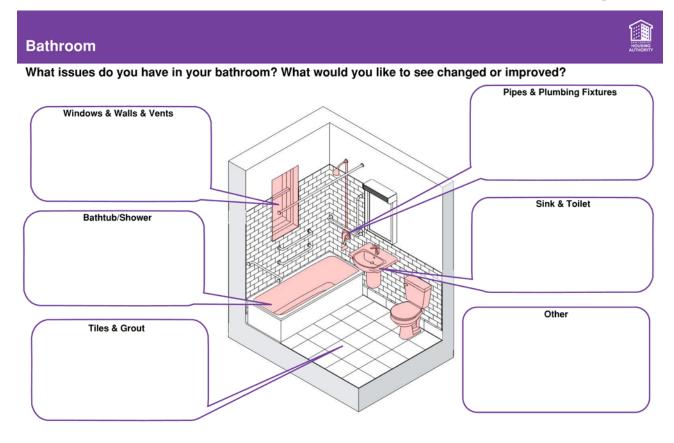


Cocina

¿Qué problemas tiene usted en su cocina? ¿Qué cambios o mejoras le gustaría ver?

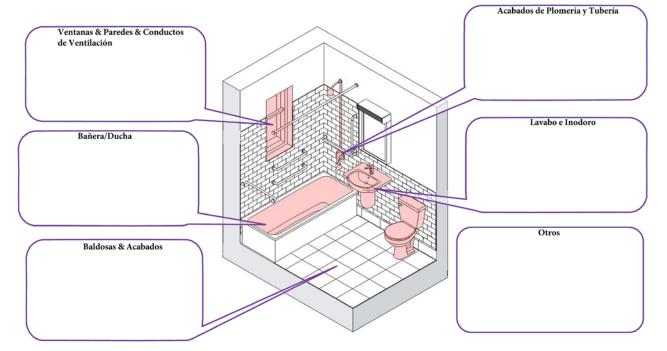


Visioning Boards



Baño

¿Qué problemas tiene usted en su baño? ¿Qué cambios o mejoras le gustaría ver?



Appendix B

Gowanus Houses Resident Survey
We would like to invite you to complete this brief survey. This is your opportunity to provide feedback that will guide renovations and enhancements in your apartment. Responses from this survey will be used to compile a Community Visioning Report for contractors to review.
Are you a resident of Gowanus Houses? Yes No
How many years have you lived at Gowanus Houses?
 6-10 years 11-15 years
 16-20 years Over 20+ years
Are you currently a senior (65+)?
□ No
NYCHA's Comprehensive Modernization Department Questions/Problems, 疑问/家里的问题, Вопросы /Проблемы, Preguntas/Problemas 囗 (212) 306-6768 @ compmod@nycha.nyc.gov 国 https://on.nyc.gov/comp-mod

	CHEN
	you currently have or in the past had mold in your kitchen?] Yes
] No
Do	you currently or have experienced leaks in your kitchen?
	Yes
] No
На	ve you ever had any problems with your refrigerator?
	Yes
	No
На	ve you ever had any problems with your stove?
	No
Do	you have any issues with roaches in the kitchen?
	Yes, it's very bad
	Yes, but few
	No
Do	you have rodents in the kitchen?
	Yes, it's very bad
	Yes, but few
	No
Wo	ould you prefer another color preference for your kitchen?
	Yes
	No
••••	

Do you cu	irrently or have had mold in your bathroom?
□ Yes	
🗆 No	
Do you cu	irrently or have experienced leaks?
☐ Yes	
🗆 No	
Have you Noise?)	ever had any problems with your toilet? (i.e Leaks?
Yes	
🗆 No	
How is the	e height of your toilet?
🗌 It's ok	
🗌 Too sh	ort
🗌 Too hi	gh
Have you	ever had any problems with your sink?
Yes	
🗆 No	
Have you	ever had any problems with your bathtub?
Yes	
🗆 No	
Have you	ever had any problems with your tiles?
Yes	
🗌 No	

H	ave you ever had any problems with your shower?
[Yes
[No
D	o you have any issues with roaches in the bathroom?
[Yes, it's very bad
[Yes, but few
[No
D	o you have rodents in the bathroom?
[Yes, it's very bad
[Yes, but few
[No
D	o you have storage space in your bathroom?
[Yes
[Yes, but not much
[No
M	/ould you prefer another color preference for your bathroom?
[Yes
[No
•••	

