



NYCHA Commits to Eliminate Maintenance and Repairs Backlog

One of the most common complaints by NYCHA residents is waiting a long time for repairs in their homes. They sometimes have to wait months or even more than a year for work to be completed. As NYCHA faces continued underfunding from the federal government and buildings that keep getting older, the result is a backlog of unfinished work order requests.

NYCHA is taking on the issue with a new and aggressive Action Plan. The goal is to eliminate the backlog of 420,000 open repair work orders by the end of 2013. "NYCHA understands and respects our residents' frustration over the current backlog of repair and maintenance work," said NYCHA Chairman John B. Rhea. "In spite of our budgetary constraints, we have a responsibility to work smarter and better with what resources we do have, which is why expediting maintenance and repairs has been a top priority in our strategic roadmap, Plan NYCHA." (Ed. Note: to read more of Chairman Rhea's thoughts on the Action Plan, please see "Message



A NYCHA maintenance worker repairs a kitchen at Patterson Houses.

from the Chairman" on page 3).

NYCHA not only plans to eliminate the backlog of repair requests, but also permanently reduce the average wait time for repair work to seven days for basic maintenance and repairs and 15 days for repairs needing skilled trades workers, such as carpenters, plasterers

and plumbers. It also will continue to respond to all emergency repair requests within 24 hours.

"No one has felt the impact of federal underfunding more than NYCHA residents, who have had to face long waits for repairs to apartments and public

continued on page 4 ▶

NYCHA ALERTS

Get Informed About YOUR Building

NYCHA residents now can get up-to-the-minute information about service outages in their buildings. NYCHA Alerts provides updates on the status of heat, electricity, elevator, gas, hot water, compactor and water service disruptions. Information is updated whenever these services are interrupted and when they get restored. To see any information about their building, residents can go to www.nyc.gov/nychaalerts. As a security measure, residents will need to log-in to see information specific to their development. After a resident logs in, they have the option to sign up to receive NYCHA Alerts automatically by e-mail. This is NYCHA's latest effort to communicate more effectively with its residents.

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Ground Broken On Mixed-Use Development at Washington Houses

On February 7, the groundbreaking ceremony was held for the East Harlem Center for Living and Learning, located at Washington Houses in Manhattan. The multi-family, mixed-use development will have 88 new affordable apartments, a kindergarten-eighth grade DREAM

Charter School run by Harlem RBI and office space for non-profit organizations.

The facility, located on 104th Street between Second and Third Avenues on land the developer bought from NYCHA, will bring benefits to Washington Houses residents, including half of the spots in the lottery to enroll in

the charter school; new playground equipment and trash compactors at Washington Houses; and the renovation of nearby Blake Hobbs Playground. In addition, NYCHA residents will get preference for 25 percent of the affordable apartments, and for construction and permanent job opportunities.

"The development features broad public-private partnerships, an innovative financial structure, and unprecedented socio-economic benefits for NYCHA residents," said NYCHA Chairman John B. Rhea.

Chairman Rhea was joined at the groundbreaking by representatives from numerous City agency partners, including the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, as well as from Harlem RBI, including New York Yankee Mark Teixeira, who is a member of their Board. "This groundbreaking represents a wonderful new beginning for thousands of kids in East Harlem," Mr. Teixeira said.

"These children and families deserve continued on page 2 ▶



NYCHA Chairman John B. Rhea (right) and New York Yankee Mark Teixeira prepare to break ground at the East Harlem Center for Living and Learning, located at Washington Houses, on February 7, 2013.

NYCHA Board Meetings



Notice hereby is given that the New York City Housing Authority's Board Meetings take place every other Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. in the Board Room on the 12th floor of 250 Broadway, New York, New York (unless otherwise noted). The remaining meetings for Calendar Year 2013 are as follows:

March 13	May 22	August 14	October 23
March 28	June 5	August 28	November 6
(Thursday)	June 19	September 11	November 20
April 10	July 3	September 25	December 4
April 24	July 17	October 9	December 18
May 8	July 31		

Any changes to the schedule above will be posted here and on NYCHA's website at nyc.gov/nycha to the extent practicable at a reasonable time before the meeting.

These meetings are open to the public. Pre-registration at least 45 minutes before the scheduled Board Meeting is required by all speakers. Comments are limited to the items on the Calendar. Speaking time will be limited to three minutes. The public comment period will conclude upon all speakers being heard or at the expiration of 30 minutes allotted by law for public comment, whichever occurs first.

Copies of the Calendar are available on NYCHA's website or can be picked up at the Office of the Corporate Secretary at 250 Broadway, 12th floor, New York, New York, no earlier than 3:00 p.m. on the Friday before the upcoming Wednesday Board Meeting. Copies of the Disposition are available on NYCHA's website or can be picked up at the Office of the Corporate Secretary no earlier than 3:00 p.m. on the Thursday after the Board Meeting.

Any person requiring a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in the Board Meeting should contact the Office of the Corporate Secretary at **212-306-6088** no later than five business days before the Board Meeting. For additional information, please visit NYCHA's website or call **212-306-6088**.



Residents' Voices

January 31, 2013

Following is an excerpt of the comments made by Reginald Bowman, President of the Citywide Council of Presidents, during the news conference to announce NYCHA's maintenance and repairs Action Plan.

I'd like to applaud Mayor Bloomberg, the team at NYCHA, resident leadership and certainly all those who support this endeavor. I look forward to seeing this plan get off the ground. It shows the priorities of New York City have included one of the largest interest groups that exists here – the people of public housing.

The work order backlog has been a sore thumb in this city for many years. The underfunding of housing by the federal government has been the primary reason why there has been such a shortage of work repairs and other resources that were necessary to maintain the 334 developments in this city at a very high level. This ambitious plan, which we have been waiting quite some time for, has the support of the resident leadership. We certainly must look forward and understand that it has taken more than four years to get this far and I'd like to ask everyone that we need your support to get this plan done.

October 19, 2012

(via mail)

"A Grave in Newfoundland"

This tiny mound, I'm told holds a tiny body. A child who died 5,000 years ago. No name, no tribe is known. Just a small body. In this wide expanse of wilderness, lived and played a child.

About 3 years old, local people tell me. I try to imagine his daily life. Did he live in a hut made of soil? Did he have siblings? What did he have for food? Probably fish, berries, caribou meat.

His toys, neatly arranged around him are shells, stones and little carvings made of drift wood. What did he die of? Nobody knows, and we'll probably never know.

The wind howls, and a cold rain beats down. I stand there, with nobody around for miles, just me and the little grave, I feel strangely moved by the solitude.

Finally I leave, looking back once more as if saying goodbye.

Rest in peace little boy.

Wilhelmina C. Schouten,
Cassidy-Lafayette Houses

February 8, 2013

(via Twitter)

And so it begins...

Dominick-Daniel Borde,
Glenwood Houses



Check out NYCHA's Facebook page!

Got a web-enabled smartphone? Now you can access NYCHA's Facebook page and bonus content in this issue by scanning or taking a snapshot of the QR codes. The QR code for NYCHA's Facebook page is on the right.

Step 1: Download a QR code scanner application from your phone's marketplace (many of these "apps" are free to download). **Step 2:** Point your phone's camera at the QR image.



Tell us what is on your mind!

Residents' Voices accepts letters, photographs, poems, drawings – anything that allows you to express yourself!

Please include your full name, development name, address and phone number. We will print only your name and development on our pages; we need your address and phone number for verification purposes only.

Please limit written submissions to 250 words.

The *Journal* reserves the right to edit all content for length, clarity, good taste, accuracy, etc. Because of space limitations, we must limit all contributors to one letter per person per issue.

There are many ways to share your thoughts with us at the *Journal*:

Send an e-mail to **Journal@nycha.nyc.gov**

Send a snail mail to:
NYCHA Journal
Letters to the Editor
250 Broadway, 12th floor
New York, NY 10007

Send a Tweet on Twitter at **twitter.com/NYCHA_Housing**

Post a message on Facebook at **www.facebook.com/NYCHA**

Send a fax to **212-577-1358**

If you have any questions, please send them to **Journal@nycha.nyc.gov**.



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Ground Broken On Mixed-Use Development at Washington Houses

a beautiful, state of the art educational facility where they can learn, a park where they are safe to play, and Harlem RBI and DREAM by their side to help them grow."

The completed housing complex will include an exercise room, computer room, social services office and laundry room. The affordable apartments are scheduled to open in July 2014, with the school and office facilities opening the following August for the 2014-

2015 school year. The total development cost for the facility is approximately \$80 million.

The Harlem RBI Interagency Development is part of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's New Housing Marketplace Plan, a multibillion dollar initiative to finance 165,000 units of affordable housing for half a million New Yorkers by the close of the 2014 fiscal year. "The Department of Housing Preservation and Development's partnership with NYCHA, which launched in

2005, has resulted in the development of more than 4,000 new or renovated units of affordable housing, and has played an integral role in the realization of our overall goals for expanding and preserving affordable housing opportunities in the City of New York," said HPD Commissioner Mathew Wambua.

For information on another New Housing Marketplace Plan project, please see "New Affordable Housing Features Rooftop Farm" on page 3.



Message from the Chairman

In the four years I have been at NYCHA, the problem residents most consistently have told me about is our backlog of maintenance and repair work. NYCHA faces tough challenges, especially continued underfunding from the federal government. But we know that we have a responsibility to work more efficiently with the resources we do have. That is why expediting maintenance and repairs is one of the 10 imperatives of Plan NYCHA. And it also is why we created

the Work Order Task Force, which groups teams of skilled workers to target the developments with the highest number of outstanding repair work orders per apartment. This was a step in the right direction, but not the complete approach needed.

Our new Action Plan to eliminate NYCHA's backlog of maintenance and repair work is a result of collaboration with resident leaders, as well as NYCHA employees and unions. It is an example of the kind of actions we are taking to ensure that public housing remains available for current and future generations of New Yorkers.

Only a bold and comprehensive approach will enhance the quality of life for the more than 400,000 of you living in public housing. It is important to be aware that although we dramatically will accelerate the completion of outstanding work orders, it will be toward the end of this year before newly scheduled repairs begin to meet our targeted standards. This includes permanently reducing the average wait time for repair work to seven days for basic maintenance and repairs, and 15

days for repairs needing skilled trades workers, such as carpenters, plasterers and plumbers.

Our Action Plan is ambitious. We are committed to implementing the solutions we need, and to making the investments necessary to get the job done. You can read more about the plan on page 1.

I often have written about ongoing funding cuts from the federal government, and putting the Action Plan in place and ensuring it remains successful will require significant resources. However, we will not allow severe budget constraints to get in the way of our efforts. Make no mistake, we will pay for this transformative plan with more than \$40 million in recent administrative savings resulting from our work with the Boston Consulting Group and various Plan NYCHA initiatives, and \$10 million from the City Council to add more staff at developments.

Many NYCHA employees contributed their experience and insights to the development of the Action Plan. NYCHA's resident leaders provided input and feedback that was invaluable and I cannot thank them enough. And of course, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who consistently champions our efforts to transform the way NYCHA does business, both to increase efficiency and enhance resident quality of life.

Our Action Plan marks the beginning of the end of the maintenance and repairs backlog problem. We will keep you updated on our progress on this plan that will affect residents positively and help us preserve public housing in New York City for generations to come.

John B. Rhea
John B. Rhea

New Affordable Housing Features Rooftop Farm

NYCHA Residents to Get Preference for Units at Bronx Facility

A new building on NYCHA property at Forest Houses is very green, but not because of its color. Arbor House, located on land in the Bronx development sold by NYCHA to a private developer, is an innovative apartment building that will promote environmentally friendly living. The affordable housing building has 124 apartments, a rooftop hydroponic farm that will provide fresh produce for building residents and the local community and a living green wall installation in the lobby.

Twenty-five percent of the apartments will be set aside with preference for NYCHA residents and people on NYCHA's waiting list. In addition, there are more than 40 sub-level parking spots available on site that residents will have first priority to rent on a monthly basis. "The development of innovated projects such as Arbor House is critical to our strategic roadmap, Plan NYCHA," said NYCHA Chair-



The rooftop farm at Arbor House will include herbs, fruits and vegetables for residents and members of the community.

man John B. Rhea. "Completing this effort on NYCHA property is truly on the vanguard of urban development, and we're definitely doing our part to improve the lives of not only NYCHA families, but the entire Morrisania community."

Building construction of Arbor House mostly used local and recycled products and 95 percent of construction waste was recycled and diverted from landfills. The building meets NYC Active Design Guidelines to promote physical fitness and reduce obesity through indoor and outdoor fitness areas. And even the air in Arbor House

will be cleaner – it has a 100% smoke-free policy, the living green wall in the lobby provides fresh oxygen, there is air ventilation and filtration throughout the building and it was built with paints and sealants that have no or low volatile chemical make-up. With all of these sustainable features, Mount Sinai Hospital chose Arbor House for a study on the effect of healthy living on asthma and obesity.

The rooftop farm will be operated by Sky Vegetables, an urban agriculture company, which will make 40 percent of the produce available to the community through local

outreach to schools, hospitals and markets. "Our commercial hydroponic greenhouse will provide this community with fresh, local, chemical-free, nutritious

herbs, fruits and vegetables twelve months a year, and create a national model for sustainable food production," said Robert Fireman, President of Sky Vegetables.

Arbor House is part of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's New Housing Marketplace Plan, a multibillion dollar initiative to finance 165,000 units of affordable housing for half a million New Yorkers by the close of the 2014 fiscal year. For information on another New Housing Marketplace Plan project, please see "Ground Broken on Mixed-Use Development at Washington Houses" on page 1.



The lobby at Arbor House includes a living green wall.

Next NYCHA Grows with Its Gardeners Conference on March 15

NYCHA's Garden and Greening Program will host the 11th NYCHA Grows with Its Gardeners Conference on Friday, March 15, from 9:30 to 2:00 at the Johnson Community Center at 1833 Lexington Avenue in Manhattan. The event features entertainment; a key note speaker; horticultural, community building and environmentally related workshops; a free raffle of garden related materials; and free information and resources from more than 30 community and NYCHA partners. For registration and questions, please call **212-306-3511**.

THE NYCHA NOT WANTED LIST

Below is a partial list of names of individuals who have been excluded permanently from NYCHA's public housing developments. This list keeps residents informed of the Authority's ongoing efforts to improve the quality of life for New Yorkers in public housing and to allow for the peaceful and safe use of its facilities. The full list can be viewed at on.nyc.gov/nychanotwanted. The following are the people, with their former addresses, excluded as of August 15-September 19, 2012.

Prohibited as of August 15, 2012

Jessie Gillispie Mill Brook Houses, 530 East 137th Street, Apt. 13H, Bronx

David Gilmore Williamsburg Houses, 219 Scholes Street, Apt. 4A, Brooklyn

Kent Higgins Breukelen Houses, 330 Stanley Avenue, Apt. 2A, Brooklyn

Anthony Phelps Woodside Houses, 50-05 Broadway, Apt. 5C, Queens

Jesus Rodriguez 344 East 28th Street Houses, 344 East 28th Street, Apt. 18D, Manhattan

Maliek Smith Armstrong II Houses, 375 Lexington Avenue, Apt. 4E, Brooklyn

Lawrence Stokes Langston Hughes Houses, 315 Sutter Avenue, Apt. 15B, Brooklyn

Prohibited as of September 5, 2012

David Gill Todt Hill Houses, 176 Schmidts Lane, Apt. 3E, Staten Island

Steven Nivar Astoria Houses, 4-21 Astoria Boulevard, Apt. 4E, Queens

Angel Olivio Gowanus Houses, 198 Bond Street, Apt. 3D, Brooklyn

Carmelo Ortiz Elliott Houses, 446 West 26th Street, Apt. 9E, Manhattan

Jesus Pimental Marlboro Houses, 2220 West 11th Street, Apt. 5F, Brooklyn

Prohibited as of September 12, 2012

Darryl Andrews Morris Houses, 1460 Washington Avenue, Apt. 2B, Bronx

Jean Paul Rodriguez Woodside Houses, 50-34 Broadway, Apt. 6H, Queens

Zenquell Rodriguez Riis Houses, 90 Avenue D, Apt. 8A, Manhattan

Billy Shuff Morris Houses, 1460 Washington Avenue, Apt. 2B, Bronx

Prohibited as of September 19, 2012

James Butler Morrisania Houses, 1285 Washington Avenue, Apt. 9B, Bronx

Greg Freeman a/k/a Craig Freeman Wyckoff Gardens Houses, 130 3rd Avenue, Apt. 19H, Brooklyn

Phillip Hanna a/k/a Phillip Hannah a/k/a Phillip Burroughs Gowanus Houses, 427 Baltic Street, Apt. 5C, Brooklyn

Kevin King Seth Low Houses, 131 Belmont Avenue, Apt. 6G, Brooklyn

Felix Tejada Mill Brook Houses, 620 East 137th Street, Apt. 10H, Bronx

Reinaldo Torres Monroe Houses, 877 Taylor Avenue, Apt. 5A, Bronx

Bayona Washington Lower East Side II Houses, 628 East 5th Street, Apt. 1A, Manhattan

NYC's New TXT-2-Work Can Help Connect You to a Job

Do you get public assistance, food stamps or housing assistance? Sign up for TXT-2-Work today to start getting NYC job openings texted directly to your phone!

1. Sign up by texting the word "JOBS" to **877877** for available positions in the transportation, education, retail, healthcare and security fields, and more.
2. Get texts about job openings and how to apply. As jobs become available, you will get texts.
3. Once you get a job, the City Human Resources Administration (HRA) can continue to help you with work support programs, like food stamps and public health insurance, to help you reach financial independence.

Many jobs pay \$10+ per hour! For more information, visit www.nyc.gov and search for "NYC Business Link" or call **311**.

Txt-2-Work is a voluntary, opt-in service. Standard text messaging rates may apply. Check with your service provider. You can opt-out at any time by replying STOP to any text received.

The Chief's Corner

OPERATION ID – AN EFFECTIVE CRIME PREVENTION TOOL

Since 2011, Americans have lost approximately \$30 billion dollars worth of cell phones and electronic equipment. Furthermore, the theft of cell phones and other electronics has become more prevalent, especially in New York City, due to their high resale value. That's why electronic devices are more likely to be the target of theft, even more so than money.

What can you do? Remain alert and be aware of your surroundings when using your device. Don't leave your device unattended. Use the security features of your phone, including pin lock, Find my iPhone, as well as other applicable Android Applications, etc.

What can the NYPD do for you? Operation Identification is a crime prevention program offered free of charge by the New York City Police Department, which involves registering the serial numbers of your

electronic device(s). It takes just a few minutes to complete the registration, as we only ask you to provide your name, address, e-mail (if you have one), phone number, device type and serial number. We then outfit your devices with a uniquely identifiable serial number FREE of charge, using either a highly adhesive sticker or the engraving process.

Benefits from this program include:

- The marked property is more difficult for a thief to sell.
- Stolen property in the possession of a thief is easily traceable to its rightful owner.
- If you are a victim of theft or loss, registering your property with the NYPD could improve



Housing Bureau Police Chief Joanne Jaffe

the odds of recovering your property.

How to get started? You can contact your local Police Service Area / Precinct Crime Prevention Officer, telephone the Community Affairs Bureau at **(646) 610-5323**, or e-mail the Community Affairs Bureau at communityaffairs@nypd.org.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, DIAL 911 (NON-EMERGENCY, DIAL 311)

Help us fight terrorism, report suspicious activity to the

**COUNTER TERRORISM HOTLINE:
1-888-NYC-SAFE (1-888-692-7233)**

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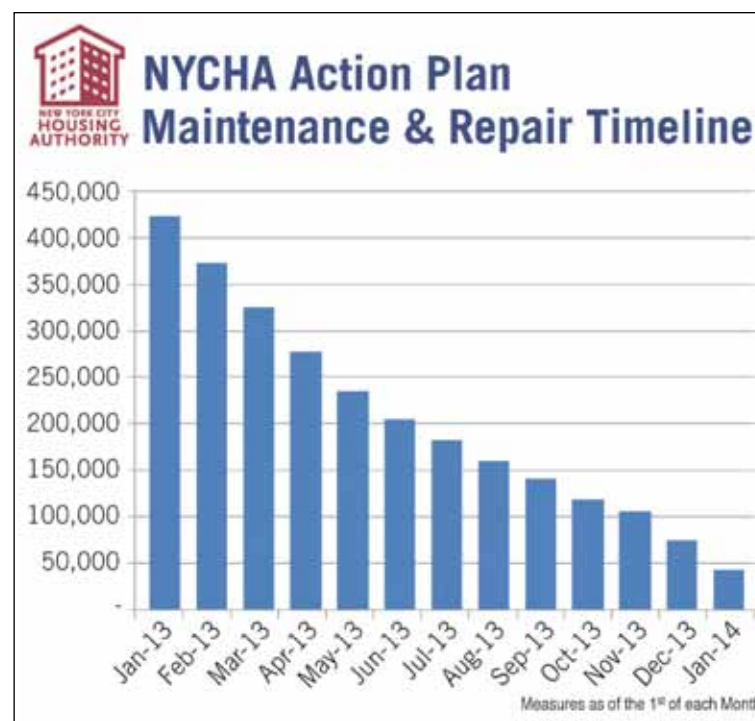
NYCHA Commits to Eliminate Maintenance and Repairs Backlog

spaces," said Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who joined with Chairman Rhea to announce the plan at Drew Hamilton Houses in Manhattan on January 31. "Despite these severe funding challenges, we refuse to turn our backs on public housing – something we have seen other cities throughout the country do."

NYCHA is able to put the Action Plan in place now by reinvesting \$40 million into repair efforts picked up from savings in administrative costs, and from the City Council. NYCHA has hired more than 500 additional workers over the past year for maintenance and skilled trades.

"This plan looks good on paper and could well work," said Local 237 President Gregory Floyd, which represents 7,000 NYCHA workers. "Our members always have done this best and will continue to do so."

NYCHA also is ensuring the availability of important equipment and materials; more effectively scheduling repair crews; and enhancing performance management. While residents will not see any immediate



changes on scheduling repairs, a noticeable turnaround is expected to be seen over the next six months.

"I commend John Rhea and the Executive team for coming up with a strategy and plan to address the backlog work orders that are necessary," said Reginald Bowman, President of the Citywide Council of Presidents. "And I applaud the Mayor for assisting NYCHA with the re-

sources necessary to get the job done for the residents."

"This Plan is the culmination of input from a broad group of NYCHA stakeholders, including employees, unions, advocacy groups and residents," said NYCHA General Manager Cecil House. "With this Action Plan we are empowering NYCHA workers with tools and resources that they need to eliminate the backlog of repair work orders."

Flat Rent Ensures All Residents Will Pay Equal Share

As NYCHA continues to face underfunding from the federal government, its buildings get older and the waiting list for public housing sits at more than 160,000, the Authority keeps looking for new ways to secure and maximize funding sources and improve delivery of services in order to preserve public housing in New York City. One critical way NYCHA will do that is by restoring rent equity to ensure that all residents pay 30 percent of their income toward rent.

More than 47,000 NYCHA households currently pay less than 30 percent of their income toward rent. To make sure all residents are subject to the same standards, NYCHA will increase rent maximums and gradually raise rents for these households, by up to 30 percent of their income based on the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) affordable fair market rent. This is consistent with what housing authorities in other cities do. NYCHA estimates it will retain

an additional \$135 million, which will be used to better maintain building services and property upgrades for all developments.

Households that pay less than 30 percent of their annual income toward rent have an average income of more than \$48,000, but they pay an average of only 21 percent of that income for their monthly rent. Eighty-six percent of these households earn their income from having a job. The average household income NYCHA-wide is less than \$24,000. Under the new policy, the more money a resident earns, the higher his/her monthly rent will be, bringing them closer to their fair share of rent.

The vast majority of residents – more than 70 percent – already pays 30 percent of income in rent and will not be affected. The change to NYCHA's rental policy was discussed with residents at its Draft Annual Plan roundtable discussions in 2012. At those meetings, most resident leaders and residents

supported the change and many spoke out in support of it.

The overall average rent increase for affected households in 2013 will be \$58. The increase will be phased in gradually over the next five years, beginning in May. The exact amount of the increase will be calculated as a part of residents' annual review process, and notices started going out with the March rent bill. Residents can get an estimate of their new rent by using the "Flat Rent Calculator" on NYCHA's website at www.nyc.gov/nycharenttool. Anyone with questions should contact their management office.

Rent maximums for 2013

Studio	\$946
1 bedroom	\$1,024
2 bedrooms	\$1,139
3 bedrooms	\$1,402
4 bedrooms	\$1,576
5 bedrooms	\$1,813
6 bedrooms	\$2,049



Protect Your Social Security Benefits

Scammers are using personal information to re-direct the direct deposit of Social Security benefits. To help protect yourself you can tell the Social Security Administration that no changes may be made to your account unless you appear in person. To exercise this option you may go to www.socialsecurity.gov/blockaccess or call the Social Security Administration at **800-772-1213**. Say "agent" to speak with a live person.

Tips to avoid scams and identity theft:

- Never give out personal information when receiving an unexpected phone call
- Don't respond to mail, e-mails or text messages that ask for personal information
- Never agree to send or wire money to an unknown person
- Shred papers with personal information before you throw them out
- Read your credit reports and financial account statements on a regular basis
- Get FREE credit reports by calling **877-322-8228** or going to www.annualcreditreport.com

If you think you have been the victim of an identity theft, you should contact the Federal Trade Commission at www.consumer.ftc.gov, or call **877-438-4338**; TTY: **866-653-4261**.

Comments? Questions? E-mail Journal@nycha.nyc.gov.

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Q & A with Director of Resident Engagement Melba Butler

By Eric Deutsch

Last fall, NYCHA created a new Office of Resident Engagement, which interacts with Resident Associations and finds ways to get residents involved and informed in NYCHA programs. The *Journal* recently spoke with Dr. Melba Butler, Director of Resident Engagement, about the role the Office will play at NYCHA and how she and her staff can help residents.

Why is the Office of Resident Engagement important for NYCHA to have?

Our overall focus is to enhance the resident voice within NYCHA, and to support and strengthen residents so they exercise that voice in a way that can impact the way NYCHA does business. This is important because in any community, to the extent that residents are involved and invested in their community, it enhances the likelihood of the success and viability of that community.

What are some ways the office can help residents?

Anyone serving on the Resident Engagement staff will have to relate well to the diversity of NYCHA residents – young and old, multiethnic, multiple languages, new residents and long timers. They have to be able to connect across the board. We recognize that some people are involved in the Resident Associations, but there is a whole universe of residents who are not. If we're going to include

them, we have to find ways to engage them. For example, the Resident Green Committees and the Gardening and Greening program support the developments, beautify the community and improve the quality of life of our residents. We also will work with residents living in Zone A flood zones to become better prepared for disasters, and build on NYCHA's existing emergency preparedness efforts to help residents become more self-sufficient. We want to make this into a consistent effort that regularly goes through drills.

What do you expect the office will focus on in the next few months?

After Hurricane Sandy, which happened one week after I started working at NYCHA, we held many meetings with affected residents across the city. We are going to take that model and expand it into other areas so we can figure out how we can best support residents. These meetings include NYCHA employees from many departments, so residents get responses to their concerns and have the opportunity to learn about different parts of the Authority. The department also is focusing on Tenant Participation Activity, or TPA, funds that Resident Associations use for their activities which are vital to supporting resident engagement. One of our tasks is to look at how those funds can best be used to support our efforts to enhance resident participation.

What interested you in taking this job, why do you enjoy going out and working with residents?

I care very deeply about people being able to maximize their potential. Much of my work experience before coming to NYCHA focused on the interactions of children with their families and communities, kind of like in a concentric circle. This position is an opportunity to work more with the adults and the community in that circle, while still being able to impact the lives of children. I care very much about finding ways to support people in taking charge of their lives and their communities. And I also want to make sure that residents have an informed voice



NYCHA's Director of Resident Engagement Melba Butler (left) speaks with residents at one of the meetings her office has facilitated since Hurricane Sandy hit New York City.

and the skills to use that voice to contribute to the sustainability of public housing.

To contact Melba Butler, please e-mail her at Melba.Butler@nycha.nyc.gov.

Why Do So Many Tenant & Resident Associations at NYCHA Use BOB MANN TOURS?



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at Sight & Sound Theatre



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Memorial In
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NYCHA Youth Spread the Word to Keep Developments Cleaner and Greener

A group of NYCHA youth put their talents as poets to use to get the word out about keeping developments clean. They wrote "trash haikus" as part of an after-school program at the Lehman Village and Clinton Community Centers run by NYCHA and the Museum of the City of New York. Artwork then was added to the poems; a few examples are shown.



Brianna Hicks,
Clinton Community Center



Jariah Carrenard and Sajdah Nieves,
Clinton Community Center



Jah-Nya Howell,
Lehman Community Center

NYCHA Beats Blizzard, Provides Resident Support Throughout Snowstorm

After the snowstorm that hit New York City from February 8 to February 9, NYCHA completed snow removal at all 334 developments citywide during the weekend. Staff worked throughout the weekend to provide normal service to residents, and the Family Services Department conducted outreach to thousands of households, including seniors living alone, those on life-sustaining equipment and those with mobility impairments. In addition, NYCHA teamed with resident outreach workers hired through the U.S. Department of Labor post-Hurricane Sandy National

Emergency Grant to follow up with residents in Sandy-affected areas in Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens.

NYCHA's Customer Contact Center was staffed over the weekend to receive calls regarding snow removal and any other concerns, and it used the new NYCHA Alerts system to inform residents of potential service disruptions (see page 1). In addition, NYCHA was helped by Resident Association Presidents – particularly those in Flood Zone A – to outline snow preparation plans, so they could inform their neighbors about NYCHA's efforts.



A NYCHA truck in action during the snow storm that hit New York City from February 8-February 9, 2013. Photo credit: Andre Christopher Rivera.

NYCHA Post-Sandy Work Continues

Additional reporting by
Eric Deutsch and Howard Silver

It has been close to half a year since Hurricane Sandy hit New York City, and recovery efforts still continue. Over the past two months, NYCHA's Capital Projects Department has worked to make sure residents living in Coney Island, Red Hook and the Rockaways could get their lives back to normal. This included replacing the generators that operate mobile boilers with electric transformers, which improved the reliability of heat and hot water service. In addition, Capital Projects managed ongoing restoration and mold remediation work, such as cleaning and sanitizing apartments and building areas, and site-specific tasks, such as removing sand from Coney Island developments.

"We continue to run a seven-day-a-week operation, with more than 50 percent of our staff involved in continuing recovery work," said Executive Vice-President for Capital Projects Raymond Ribeiro.

NYCHA's efforts also include planning for the future. As part of the \$1.77 billion in Community Development Block Grants New York City received from the federal government for Sandy recovery, NYCHA will get \$120 million to install back-up generators at key buildings to power critical building systems during and after storms.

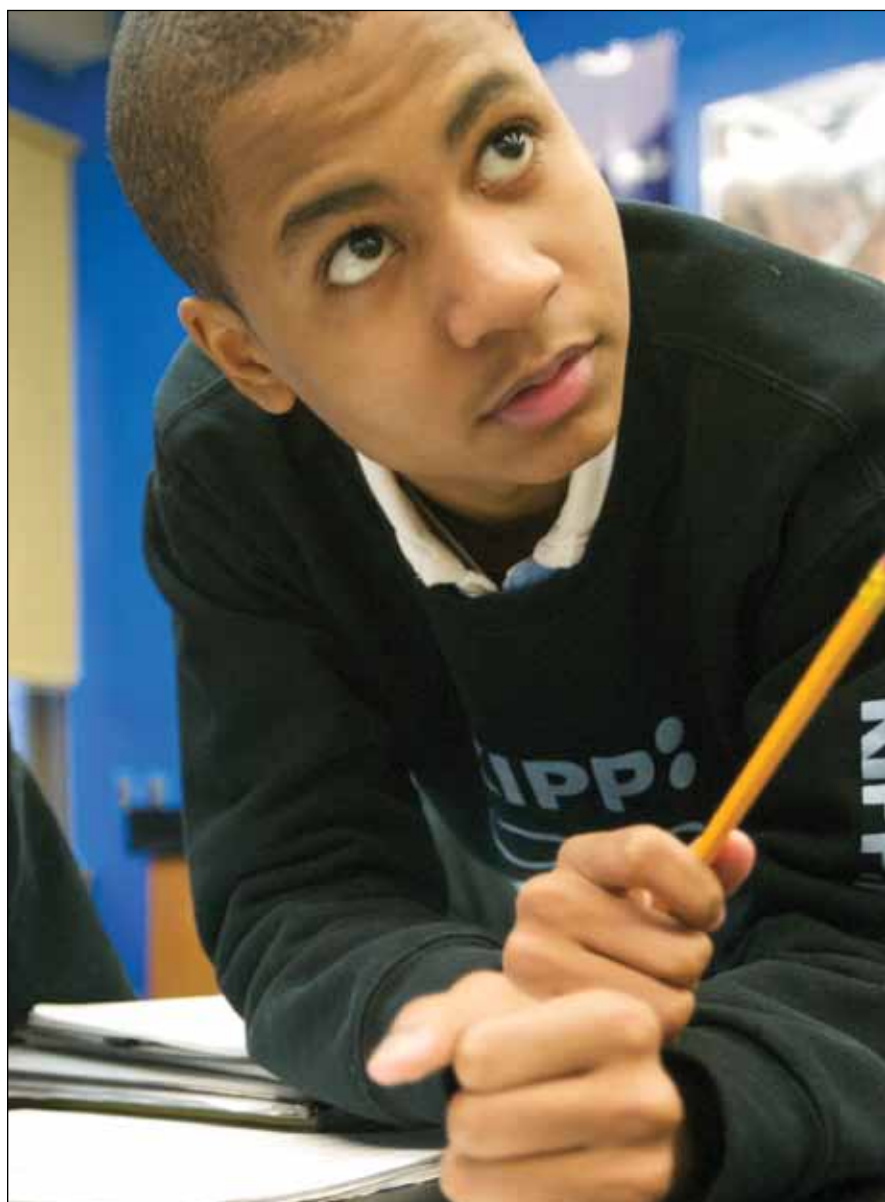
"NYCHA will use these funds to install back-up generators and other critical equipment above flood levels in more than 100 of our buildings in low-lying areas, focusing on buildings with high concentrations of seniors and vulnerable residents," said NYCHA Chairman John B. Rhea. "These upgrades will ensure that essential ser-



NYCHA contractors conduct mold remediation at LaGuardia Houses after Hurricane Sandy.

vices such as elevators and emergency lighting are maintained during and after a storm."

NYCHA's Office of Resident Engagement is looking for ways to apply lessons learned from the storm in the future, particularly from the experience of residents who did not evacuate and how they managed. "We want to see how that can help NYCHA and residents plan for future disasters," said Director of Resident Engagement Melba Butler. "We will look at what NYCHA did and what resources residents' found in their communities and from their neighbors that helped them to be able to stay in place during the storm."



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NYCHA Youth Nominated for Scholarships for Public Housing Residents

The New York City Housing Authority is committed to helping public housing and Section 8 residents achieve their goals of higher learning and actively seeks and promotes opportunities for NYCHA residents to afford a college education. The Scholarship Committee at NYCHA has nominated three outstanding high school seniors for consideration of college scholarships offered by the Public Housing Authorities Directors Association (PHADA) and the New York State chapter of the organization (NYSPHADA). The awards range in value from \$750 up to \$7,000 and honor academic excellence, as well as community responsibility among high school students.

Justin Mejia, who lives in Red Hook East Houses in Brooklyn and attends the Brooklyn



Justin Mejia, a senior living at Red Hook East Houses, is nominated for a college scholarship offered by the Public Housing Authorities Directors Association. Photo credit: Justin Mejia

School for Global Studies, and Dorothy Bailey, who lives in Queensbridge North Houses in Queens and attends Queens Vocational and Technical High School, both are nominated for the PHADA scholarship. Esther Wen, who lives in Brooklyn in Section 8 housing and attends Brooklyn Technical High School, received nominations for both the PHADA and NYSPHADA programs.

All three will compete against other public housing and Section 8 graduating seniors throughout New York State for the NYSPHADA scholarship. In the case of the PHADA scholarship, they face nation-

wide competition. NYCHA wishes Justin, Dorothy and Esther the best of luck, and considers them all to be fine representatives of the hard-working spirit of public housing and Section 8 families.

Here is Justin Mejia's nominated essay:

While living in public housing I have seen and heard things that a child should not witness. I have seen drugs being sold, violent fights and arguments, gang violence and much more. As a child I always wondered what was going on around me and now I know what it is, chaos. I see the environment I live in as a dangerous one. When I walk around in my neighborhood I must be very careful of who I look at and what I look at. In today's society I have learnt that it is very easy to throw your life away especially when you live in a place where most people frown upon. I would never frown on public housing because it is the place I call home and where I feel comfortable. I appreciate where I live and I am not ashamed to admit that I live in public housing. Living in public housing has taught me to appreciate everything I have and to allow myself to reach for the stars. Public housing has also taught me that I cannot just grow up and be a man, I must grow up and be a successful man who has made a name for himself. This is why I attend school and will attend college. I attend school to learn important life skills and knowledge that will help me achieve my educational and life goals.

In high school I have seen what it is like to follow a path of destruction and I have experienced the opposite. Although the influence to ruin my life is all around me, I keep myself on the right path. I am living the life of a high school student that has a clean record and great grades. I made it my first priority to graduate high school in the top ten of my class. I am currently ranked number two in my school. It is an accomplishment I am very proud of. In high school, students take the time to get their feet wet in different experiences. They try new things even things that they know are dangerous to their health. As a responsible student I have chosen not to endanger my health and by making this decision I have made friends that follow the same path as me. My high school experience was one well lived. I was able to be social and keep myself on track with my goals. I was never alone at lunch and I was happy. Living in public housing and my high school experience has taught me that life is short and you only have one chance at it but that does not mean that you cannot be responsible and make the right decisions.

A Message from the Department of Education

This school year, public school students across the City are reading more difficult books and spending more time writing. When students share their opinions, teachers are asking them to use evidence to back up their points. In math class, students are solving more real-world math problems than in the past.

These changes are due to the introduction of the Common Core standards. Education experts, teachers and parents developed the standards to describe what students from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade need to know and be able to do to graduate from high school ready for college and a career. To qualify for high-quality jobs in the 21st century, our students need to develop stronger writing, critical-thinking, problem-solving and creative skills. The Common Core standards, combined with excellent classroom instruction and help from parents and families, will help us get there.

This spring, students in grades 3-8 will take State reading and math tests that are based on these higher standards. In the 2013-14 school year, high school students will take Regents exams in English and some math courses that also are based on these standards. We expect these tests to be more difficult, and for an important reason: we want all of our students to graduate from our schools prepared for college and a good job. Still, when students in other states have taken similar tests, scores have gone down. At first, it's likely that our results will be lower, too.

The new standards represent a big change for students and teachers, and the Department of Education has been working hard to support schools during this transition. Fully adjusting to these new standards will take time, but students will get there. Resources to help parents learn more about these changes are available online. Please visit www.nyc.gov and search for "Common Core Library." Public schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott also is asking teachers and principals to talk with their school communities about these changes in February and March.

NYCHA Invests Another \$18 Million in Capital Improvements and Repairs

NYCHA continues to invest in capital improvements to keep its buildings structurally sound and in a state of good repair. Another \$18 million in repairs to roofs, elevators, brickwork, kitchens, bathrooms, and other upgrades are underway, to the benefit of approximately 22,000 NYCHA residents at 11 developments. The work is part of NYCHA's 2013 Capital Plan and is funded by capital grants from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

"NYCHA continues to make improvements to its building structures and systems by spending its money wisely, and in the best interests of residents," said NYCHA Chairman John B. Rhea. "These major upgrades are needed regularly to ensure the preservation of our aging building stock, with 70 percent of our buildings more than 40 years old."

NYCHA also is implementing a Capital Plan to obligate its annual federal funding for capital projects in 18 months, as opposed to HUD's current man-

date of 24 months, and meet its expenditure targets for those projects in 36 months, as opposed to HUD's current mandate of 48 months. Enhancements to NYCHA's current planning and process management practices are underway to facilitate these new targeted timelines.

The capital projects scheduled to begin in the first quarter of 2013 include:

- East New York City Line - Roof replacement
- Glenwood - Installation of security cameras
- Ingersoll - Kitchen upgrades
- Isaacs - Installation of security cameras and new intercom system; lighting fixture and spray shower upgrades
- Jackson - Installation of security cameras
- Murphy - Installation of security cameras and new intercom system
- Red Hook West - Brickwork and re-pointing
- South Jamaica - Basketball court renovation
- Taft Rehab - Bathroom renovations
- Whitman - Kitchen upgrades

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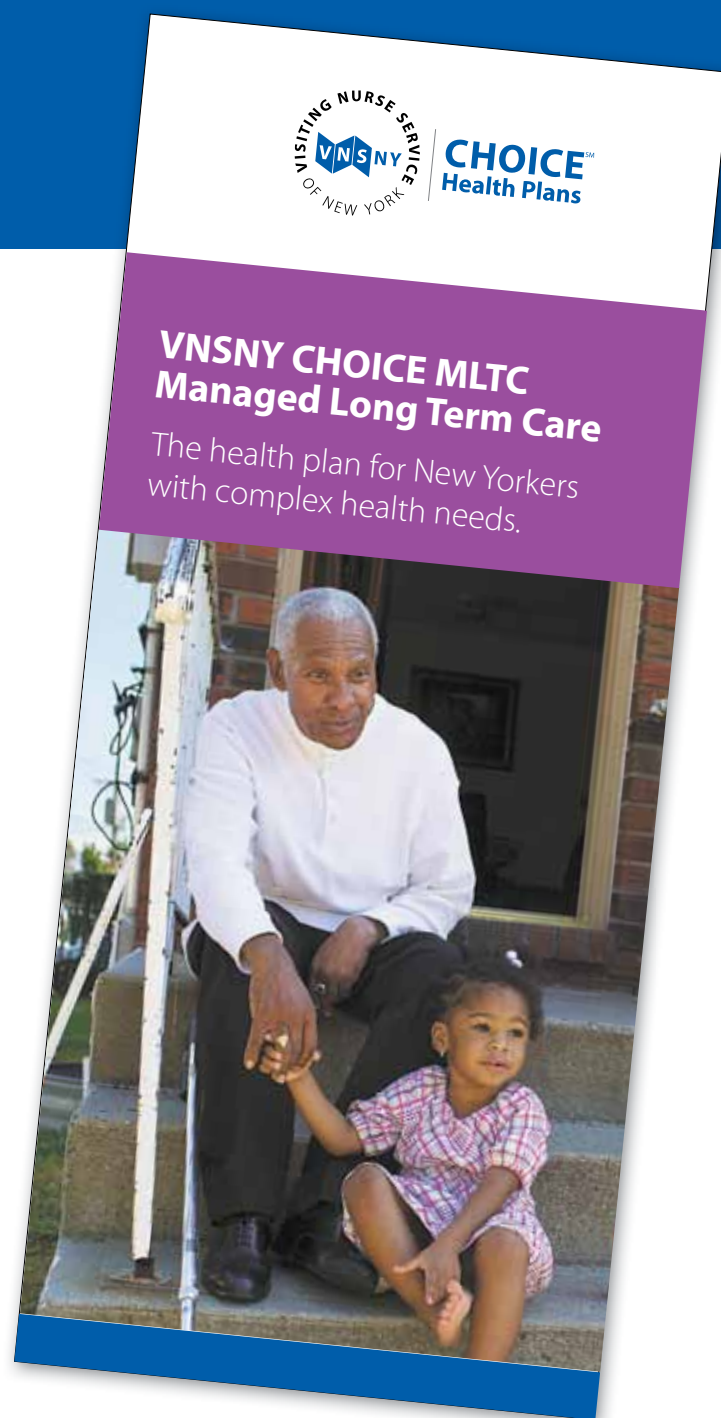


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*January 2012 VNSNY CHOICE membership data

NYC Taxi Smart Card Program Helps Disabled in Brooklyn & Queens

Residents with disabilities who live in Canarsie and Flatlands in Brooklyn, and Astoria in Queens, now can get assistance in paying for taxis and livery cabs. The Mayor's Office for Disabilities (MOPD) and the Department for the Aging (DFTA) are running a pilot program in those neighborhoods called Taxi Smart Card that provides pre-loaded debit cards that can be used for cab fare as an alternative to Access-A-Ride.

Participants can use the Taxi Smart Card to go to doctor's appointments, visit relatives and/or friends, for transport to supermarkets or shopping centers, etc. The Taxi Smart Card Program can be a good resource for transportation during off-peak periods, nights and weekends and for trips that don't fit into regular Access-A-Ride routes or public transportation.

The Taxi Smart Card only can be used in taxi cabs and livery cars. Enrollees contribute \$12.50 and the program contributes \$87.50 for a total of \$100. Participants can reload the card four more times. They also receive a telephone directory with livery service providers in their area.

For more information, go to DFTA's website at www.nyc.gov/aging, or call DFTA at (212) 442-3026 or MOPD at (212) 788-2830.

The NYC Taxi Smart Card Program is available in Brooklyn Community District 18 and Queens Community District 1. Residents in the following NYCHA developments are eligible to apply:

Brooklyn CD 18

Bayview
Breukelen
Glenwood

Queens CD 1

Astoria
Queensbridge North
Queensbridge South
Ravenswood
Woodside

NYCHA Initiatives Highlighted in State of the City Address

Additional reporting by
Howard Silver

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg mentioned NYCHA during his State of the City speech on February 14, 2013. Below are excerpts as prepared.

"Of the 2,000 people employed (at the Barclays Center), our Workforce One Centers helped 1,100 of them find their jobs. Nearly 75 percent of them are Brooklyn residents and because of the outreach we did, about one-third are NYCHA residents. That's only right – because after all, one of the owners here grew up in Marcy Houses. His name is Shawn Carter, and if you don't recognize that name, you may know him by what he's been called since the Super Bowl: Beyoncé's husband. . .

"We'll continue to stand with all the residents affected by the storm, and that goes for public housing residents, as well. Hurricane Sandy made painfully clear just how much NYCHA's aging housing stock is suffering from



NYCHA Construction Project Manager Oscar Esposito stood at the dais during Mayor Michael Bloomberg's State of the City address.

decades of federal disinvestment. Two weeks ago, NYCHA announced a new action plan to virtually eliminate their backlog of work orders. But the fact is: there's just not enough federal money to maintain the buildings. We can either allow them to crumble, or knock them down, or find new revenue for repairs and capital investments. I know which is right for New York: our Administration will not walk away from public housing.

"To raise the revenue NYCHA residents deserve, we'll begin the process of developing new housing at underdeveloped NYCHA sites. You know, some people in elected office and in the press have taken cheap shots at NYCHA in recent months. But none of them have offered a plan to fix the revenue problem. Well, we have a plan – and we will move forward on it this year."

In addition, Construction Project Manager Oscar Esposito in the Capital Projects Department, stood at the dais during the speech. The Mayor's Office bestowed the honor on Mr. Esposito in recognition of his outstanding work to restore vital services at developments in the Rockaways following Hurricane Sandy. "This honor came as a complete surprise," said Mr. Esposito, who only learned the day before that he would attend the State of the City Address. "The recognition should include the rest of our team, as well."

NYCHA BOARD MEMBER VICTOR A. GONZALEZ HELPS CELEBRATE MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES



Harlem River Houses Celebrates 75th Anniversary

Patricia McCrea, Harlem River Houses Resident Association President (center), was on hand to celebrate.



West Brighton Houses Celebrates 50th Anniversary

Beatrice Everett, West Brighton Houses Resident Association President, and Rosetta Newcombe, prior Resident Association President, joined development and borough staff.



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