

Statement of Liz Glazer
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Committee on Public Housing
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Good morning, Speaker Mark-Viverito, Chairperson Torres, Chairperson Gibson, Councilmember Barron and members of the Committee on Public Housing. My name is Liz Glazer and I am the Director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. I am happy to come before you today to discuss security and safety at NYCHA, and in particular the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, targeted at improving public safety at the fifteen housing developments with some of the highest rates of violent crime in our city. This initiative is a coordinated effort of ten different city agencies, representatives of whom are here with us today and will be available for questions. Before I begin, I'd like to thank you for your focus on improving public safety in NYCHA, and for holding this hearing at the Breukelen Houses. At the core, this initiative is about strengthening neighborhoods, and so it is very fitting that we are discussing it here in one of the City's most storied neighborhoods, Canarsie.

As many of you know, on July 8th of this year, the Mayor announced the launch of a coordinated plan to make NYC's neighborhoods and housing developments safer. It was based on the premise that while law enforcement and police are a critical first response in reducing violent crime, improving safety is also about improving infrastructure, matching effective programs to individuals and families most in need, and strengthening our neighborhoods. In addition, it is about holding ourselves as the city accountable for results, making decisions based on data and evidence, and ensuring that neighborhoods have a voice and a means to be heard. This initiative includes the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), the New York Police Department (NYPD), Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), Office to Combat Domestic Violence (OCDV), Department For The Aging (DFTA), Department Of Probation (DOP), Center for Economic Opportunity, (CEO), Human Resources Administration (HRA), Parks Department, Mayor's Office of Operations (MOO), as well as the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ). We are also working with a team of researchers who are evaluating our results and outcomes, so that we can ensure that our programs and interventions are effective.

I believe that it is this level of coordination and rigor that has allowed us to deliver results and success in the first two months of the initiative, and will ultimately be a model of how to improve neighborhood safety that we can replicate citywide.

I want to provide several updates about what we have accomplished since the initiative launch. Since July 7th, the city has:

- Dramatically increased police protection at the target developments, deploying 150 additional police officers on the ground each week in the target developments, as well as officers at all 105 community centers across the city that had extended hours during the summer.
- Improved the physical infrastructure of NYCHA developments, starting with 184 light towers at every target development that started going up the day the initiative was launched. We have received substantial positive feedback about these light towers, both from resident leaders who say that they have improved quality of life, and from NYPD which has reported anecdotally that the lighting has disrupted criminal activity in some target locations.
- Started installing more than 1840 security cameras, with construction begun on camera installation at 43 developments and completed at 19. Almost 20,000 feet of shedding have been removed since May; that is 3.7 miles of shedding, longer than the borough of Manhattan at its widest. NYCHA is on track to eliminate all shedding that is not serving a safety or construction related purpose by the spring of 2015, which we know from resident feedback is a critical issue for quality of life. Importantly, these improvements are not limited to the target fifteen developments; they are occurring citywide.
- Conducted more than 6,000 observations of physical conditions as part of a quality of life survey in the target developments. And we did this with the assistance of residents themselves. This survey was conducted by 30 young people from 10 developments, who did this work as part of a summer youth employment program supported by the Mayor's Office of Operations and the Street Conditions Observation Unit (SCOUT). Results will soon be shared with both NYCHA and the Parks Department for incorporation into their maintenance plans.

In addition to deploying more officers on the ground and focusing on improving neighborhood infrastructure, we have also launched a number of programs to strengthen neighborhood and community cohesion. These programs include:

- Over 27,000 youth have participated in Parks Kids in Motion programming near each target development, with some of the largest sites, such as Maria Hernandez Park in Bushwick, serving between 300 and 500 young people weekly.
- Almost 1,000 additional youth from 15 sites working in summer youth employment programs throughout the city, including the 30 mentioned above.
- 105 community centers across the city operated at extended hours over the summer, until 11 pm every single night of the week, with many staying open until 12:30 am on the weekends. Participation at the centers was impressive and it increased every single week since extended hours began. Over this past summer, NYCHA's 24 centers served 5,300 young people and DYCD centers served 18,000. According to a survey of participating youth, 41% of them had not used the community centers before the extended hours began. It was great to see Councilmember Cumbo at Ingersoll on rollerskates when we visited with the Mayor, so I know that she can attest to the impact of these extended hours.

The feedback from all of these efforts has been incredibly positive, and we are pleased with the number of additional young people and families that our efforts have been able to serve.

Of course, we know that the most important indicator of success is what the impacts of these efforts have been on public safety. We can report that we are making good progress in reducing violent crime and making these communities safer for residents. In the ten weeks since the initiative was launched, violent crime has decreased 2% in the fifteen target developments compared to the same time period last year.

We focused on the fifteen developments that comprised 20% of all violent crime within NYCHA and we are encouraged that we are seeing a reduction in violent crime so early in the effort. However, this work is still in its beginning phases, and we intend to continue to target and evaluate in order ensure that we are delivering public safety results to the residents of this city.

In the coming weeks, there are additional programs that will launch, focused on serving the residents of these target developments. These programs include:

- HRA will conduct outreach in the developments to close the benefits gap for individuals who are eligible for cash assistance, SNAP, or public health insurance who are not currently accessing those programs, including holding office hours at community centers to help walk people through the application process.
- DFTA will host trainings for 2,000 grandparents who are acting as primary guardians to young children, providing them with a network of support as well as training on identifying signs of gang involvement and other high risk child behavior, teaching personal safety practices for them and their children, and engaging children in productive activities.
- CEO Works Progress Program will target non-profit providers in the target neighborhoods to provide job opportunities and training to individuals in the 15 developments. One provider, the Red Hook Initiative, has already been identified, and other applications are currently pending.
- The Department of Probation will replicate its highly successful Arches program, targeting 200 young people in the 15 developments to receive intensive mentorship services.
- The Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence has established a NYCHA Domestic Violence Response Team, an 8 member team that will conduct extensive outreach throughout the 15 developments and surrounding communities, launch public education campaigns, link victims directly to services provided through the City's Family Justice Centers, and coordinate multi-agency services for high risk cases. This effort is particularly critical because although we see have seen a decrease in violent crime, felony assault in particular has increased 14% in comparison to this same time period last year, a portion of which is domestic and family violence. Moving forward, we will be specifically focusing efforts on the problem of domestic violence.

Agencies that began programming this past summer will continue to provide services this fall.

- Parks will provide Shape Up New York programs at all 15 developments, targeting all ages in fitness activities, as well as continue Kids in Motion through the end of October and from 3-6 pm around school schedules, weather permitting.

This next phase of the initiative will begin to pull together this disparate collection of programs into a concerted effort targeted at the greatest needs and risks in each neighborhood. To do that, we will be working with each neighborhood to understand better key issues faced by residents, and those insights combined with agency information will enable us to build an accountability mechanism -- a "Neighborhood-stat" -- that will bring agencies and neighborhood residents together, to align our goals, to permit us to work together on key issues and to ensure there we continue to make progress.

Finally, and equally critically, we continue to expand our evaluation and analysis of our outcomes, as well as seek out further neighborhood input on our indicators of success. Researchers have begun analyzing both how community centers and lighting deter crime and whether they are a factor in creating social cohesion, and will continue this research, as well as target evaluation of other programs as they come on board.

The Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety is an ambitious undertaking, which we believe is on the right track, by reaching and serving an increasing number of people and by improving public safety. We are just two months into a long term commitment to improving safety at New York's housing developments and neighborhoods, starting with those that have historically been the most plagued by violent crime. As we move ahead, we look forward to continuing to work with the Council to ensure that all residents of our City's developments can enjoy a neighborhood that is secure and safe.

I'll be happy to take your questions.