



Citizens Housing and Planning Council
WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON NYCHA'S DRAFT FY2020 ANNUAL PHA PLAN
July 19, 2019

Citizens Housing & Planning Council (CHPC) is submitting the following comments in response to NYCHA's Draft Agency Plan for 2020. Thank you for the opportunity to submit our feedback alongside tenants.

We commend NYCHA and the city for the capital development plan set forth in NYCHA 2.0 and the draft Agency Plan. The RAD program is not perfect, but it does come with the two things NYCHA needs most: Resources and oversight. We hope RAD skeptics come to see the value in the additional oversight that is injected into the process when multiple levels of government and private funders are all jointly responsible for ensuring that a project goes smoothly.

In 2018, CHPC conducted an evaluation of the Triborough Pilot Project. We heard from hundreds of residents about their impressions of the renovations. The results were unsurprising: when \$80 million is spent to modernize a development, tenants are happier! It doesn't get simpler than that.

NYCHA 2.0 uses RAD and infill development to create as many new resources for NYCHA as is possible. However, the plan will take 10 years and afterwards, NYCHA will still be the largest landlord in the country, and the plan says little about how it will address its operations and management.

CHPC recently hosted an event about the transformation of the public housing system in London, and I'll repeat our main lessons here:

1. Every action taken by NYCHA should be in the pursuit of getting existing units to a habitable, high quality standard by a certain date.
2. NYCHA must engage residents at the beginning of any redevelopment process and give tenants formal decision making power. NYCHA should focus on **meaningful** resident engagement, not just more of it.
3. Both NYCHA and the City should create a broader toolbox of options for residents and affordable housing providers to work from.

Last night, you heard from a lot of residents who are frustrated, who feel they are not included in determining the fate of their own housing. Residents have the most knowledge about their housing needs and this knowledge should be considered a resource to the city. Residents should be given information about the physical and financial needs of their developments and an active role in the decision-making process before a plan or application is sent to HUD. In the UK, residents worked alongside the housing authority and the affordable housing industry to decide what would happen to their homes.

Recent controversies at Holmes Tower and Fulton Houses highlight the need to change the current process. Inspired by what happens in the UK, members of the Alliance to Save Public Housing also submitted written remarks proposing that 'Joint Planning Councils' are created so that city government, developers and NYCHA residents can work together on equal footing. This is



precisely the type of recommendation that could help change the conversation about the future of NYCHA housing.

However, some are also suggesting that all NYCHA redevelopment plans should go through ULURP, which would give Community Board members, who may have different interests and considerations, a stronger voice than NYCHA residents in what happens at their developments.

We need to pair the resources and expertise of the affordable housing industry with the lived experience and knowledge of NYCHA residents. We need to build out a toolbox of options. We need to pay attention to lessons from the places that have successfully tackled their public housing problems.