



IMPACT FOR HOUSING AWARD

MOLLY PARK

ACTING COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

As New York City grapples with complex and sensitive issues like homelessness and asylum, Molly Wasow Park has emerged as a compassionate leader and tireless advocate for the city's vulnerable. She doesn't shy away from the challenges presented by crises; she embraces them as part of her deep commitment to equity. Molly's leadership combines a macro policy vision with sensitivity and a human-to-human approach.

Though she initially envisioned a career fighting for justice as an outside advocate, it was an early moment as an analyst in the Independent Budget Office (IBO) that convinced her that government was precisely where she needed to be. Molly was sitting in on a meeting unveiling Mayor Bloomberg's inaugural housing plan when she realized that if she wanted to effect major policy change, she needed to be in the room where decisions were made. Her work analyzing the budgets of HPD, DHS, and DOB set her on a trajectory that would put her in the room for many of New York City's toughest housing policy decisions.

As the Acting Commissioner for the Department of Social Services (DSS), Molly is responsible for the country's largest social services agency administering not only homeless shelters but also Cash Assistance and SNAP benefits, Medicaid, domestic violence services, and many other programs protecting the wellbeing and dignity of New Yorkers. Before assuming her current role, Molly was the First Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) overseeing rehousing, capacity development, and agency planning and operations. While at DHS, she was instrumental in shaping the agency's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the emerging influx of asylum seekers coming from the nation's southern border.

Molly is quick to praise her team and proudly shares a story about how DHS employees were able to turn a City-owned building into a COVID isolation facility equipped with beds, computers, staff, and necessities in the brief amount of time it took her to drive from the George Washington Bridge to her in-laws' upstate home. Similarly, she credits the partnership among government, non-profit, and for-profit organizations with the creation of New York City's unparalleled housing and social service infrastructure. Since her time at the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), she has considered building bridges between public and private sector partners as one of her core responsibilities.

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Before joining DHS in 2019, Molly spent three years as HPD's Deputy Commissioner for Development, where she was responsible for the housing production goals of the *Housing New York Plan* and related pre-development work. Her portfolio included the divisions of New Construction, Preservation Finance, Housing Incentives, Preservation Disposition Finance, Supportive Housing, Building and Land Development Services (BLDS), Storm Recovery, and Credit and Underwriting. This was her second stint at HPD, having left the agency in 2014 to become the Chief Operating Officer of Settlement Housing Fund. From 2010 to 2014, Molly served as HPD's Deputy Commissioner of Budget,

Fiscal, and Performance Management, which involved oversight of one of the nation's largest Section 8 programs. During this period, Molly navigated the Section 8 program through severe budget cuts brought on by federal sequestration.

Molly's career has been shaped by many of the challenges that have tested New York City—Hurricane Sandy, sequestration, COVID-19, national immigration policy—and with each of these challenges Molly has shown how committed and principled leadership in government can make a difference. Molly's dedication to the city, its people, and her staff make her not only a gifted problem solver and thoughtful policymaker, but also a respected and compassionate leader. She understands that high-impact work is never easy, but she is undeterred by the challenges ahead.

Molly is a graduate of Amherst College and holds a Master's in Public Policy from the University of California - Berkeley Goldman School of Public Policy.