TESTIMONY FOR NYCHA CHAIR SHOLA OLATOYE
NYCHA'S FIVE-YEAR OPERATING AND CAPITAL PLANS
CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING
FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 2014 – 10:00 AM
COMMITTEE ROOM, CITY HALL

Chairman Ritchie Torres, Members of the Public Housing Committee, and distinguished Members of the City Council: good morning. I am Shola Olatoye, Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). Joining me today are General Manager Cecil House and Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Richard Couch. I was honored to accept the Mayor's appointment. I have spent my career as an advocate and unabashed houser. As a New Yorker, Harlem resident and mother, I assume this responsibility to provide safe and quality homes for New York families with a deep sense of commitment and humility. I appreciate the opportunity to present NYCHA's Adopted Budget for the years 2014 through 2018, which was passed on time in December 2013. I am eager to share with the Committee, an update on 2013 and the Authority's future outlook.

NYCHA at a Glance

NYCHA is the largest public housing authority in North America, committed to serving 630,000 low- and moderate-income New Yorkers with safe, affordable housing, and access to critical social services. NYCHA administers two distinct programs, the first of which is public housing, where NYCHA acts as the property manager. The second is the Housing Choice Voucher program, more commonly known as Section 8, where in most cases NYCHA provides a cash subsidy to private landlords on behalf of voucher holders. While NYCHA operates the two major platforms, we receive funding from four distinct streams: first, public housing operating funds for maintenance work, second, public housing capital funds for modernization, third, Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) for Section 8 vouchers, and finally, an administrative fee for managing the Section 8 program.

Unlike the City of New York, NYCHA's financial fiscal year follows the calendar year beginning on January 1st and ending on December 31st. For this fiscal year, NYCHA's federal subsidies account for over 60 percent of the Authority's total revenues. These subsidies make up about 50 percent of revenues supporting the NYCHA owned public housing portfolio, and 100 percent of the Section 8 program. We receive federal operating funding for public housing based on an eligibility formula that is intended to reflect the costs of operating public housing. Congress determines the level of funding eligibility annually. If Congress appropriates less than 100 percent of eligibility, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will prorate each Public Housing Authority (PHA) accordingly. While the average proration for the past five years has been 90 percent, 2013 saw the lowest proration rate PHAs have experienced in over a decade – just 82 percent.

In conjunction with the existing strain on the operating funding stream, NYCHA is further challenged by a rapidly aging housing stock. This challenge is not dissimilar to many other City agencies. In fact, the Center for an Urban Future recently released a report highlighting the City's dire infrastructure needs demonstrating that public systems remain a relic of the early 20th century. Specifically, more than 75 percent of NYCHA's residential buildings are over 40 years old, and are therefore in need of significant capital investment. Unfortunately, NYCHA has seen a consistent decrease in capital subsidies, from $420 million dollars in 2001 to $258 million dollars in 2013.

In spite of the decreased level of funding, NYCHA has employed new strategies to expedite repair work and invest in our aging housing infrastructure. We look forward to working with the Administration on its new housing plan. We are confident that it will offer a meaningful commitment to improving the quality of life for public housing residents. The noticeable cultural shift in New York City government ensures that NYCHA's residents will continue to have access to safe and quality housing in the years to come. Moreover, NYCHA appreciates all the contributions that the Council and Mayor have made this year so far. The Mayor's forgiveness of $52.5 million dollars in New York City Police Department payments will allow the Authority to create a new assessment unit and address critical maintenance and repair work orders. We also greatly appreciate the Council's investment in our capital and maintenance program, as well as community centers. These partnerships are down payments on our future and signal a unified commitment to public housing.

2014-2018 Operating Plan Assumptions

Now, let me take you through some of our 2014 operating budget assumptions.

Section 8

For the Plan that was adopted in December, we projected a Section 8 program deficit of $90 million dollars. The Authority assumed that this program would only receive $927 million dollars from HUD for Housing Assistance Payments, which is 94 percent of total eligibility. In addition, we expected to receive $62 million dollars of the $90 million dollars required to administer the program.

We were just advised that funding for the Section 8 program will increase to 99 percent of eligibility for Housing Assistance Payments and 75 percent of eligibility for the Section 8 administrative fee. This welcomed revenue increase reduces the deficit by approximately $68 million dollars, leaving a $13 million dollar deficit. NYCHA is hopeful that HUD will provide shortfall funding to completely eliminate the deficit. The availability of shortfall funding was part of the federal government's response to sequester cuts, where HUD held funds for PHAs in dire need of additional subsidy. If NYCHA cannot obtain this funding, the Authority will need to reduce our expenditures or look for other sources of income.

In order to fully fund NYCHA's Section 8 program in 2013, the Authority exhausted all reserves, as well as received $21 million dollars in shortfall funding from HUD. It is because of this additional subsidy, that the Authority did not have to cut the number of voucher holders or reduce payments to property owners.

Public Housing

The Adopted 2014 Operating budget assumed a deficit of $191 million dollars for public housing due to continued reductions in federal funding. On the expense side, approximately 55 percent is attributable to personal services and 45 percent to other expenditures. The main components of personal services are full-time salary and fringe, which includes benefits for both current employees and retirees. These costs make up a total of $1.1 billion dollars. Specifically, the budget assumes that fringe has risen 3 percentage points, from 70 percent to 73 percent of total compensation costs. Another major expense component is utilities, projected to be $576 million dollars in 2014, an increase of $32 million dollars from the prior budget. Insurance premiums are an important factor of budgeted expenses and have increased 28 percent from the previous budget. Like many property owners in New York City, NYCHA is seeing a rise in insurance costs due to the impact of Superstorm Sandy and higher payments for buildings that are in the expanded Zone A flood area.

Through attrition the 2014 Plan assumes the elimination of 426 positions, saving the Authority $37 million dollars in full time salaries and $185 million dollars cumulatively through 2018. These eliminations will primarily effect central office positions, while frontline headcount will benefit from an increase.

Furthermore, NYCHA has requested funding and support from our partner agencies for the 57 NYCHA operated community and senior centers. Our Adopted Plan assumes funding for these centers through June 30th 2014, leaving a $17 million dollar shortfall for the rest of the year. These centers provide critical services for approximately 5,000 people annually. I am confident that an agreement can be reached so that we can continue to operate quality programs and keep these centers functioning at full capacity.

The majority of public housing revenues consist of tenant rent and HUD operating subsidy. Specifically, $973 million dollars is revenue from our residents, of which $955 million dollars is rent and $18 million dollars is revenue from other fees. It is important to note that NYCHA bears the costs of utilities provided to each unit. Federal operating subsidy in the Adopted Plan total $784 million dollars, which assumed a 77 percent proration from HUD. Fortunately, the budget outlook in Washington, D.C., has become more favorable since NYCHA adopted the budget in December of 2013. As of March 1, 2014, NYCHA is currently being disbursed at 89 percent of its eligibility. If this level remains constant, the Authority will receive an additional $120 million dollars in revenue. Although the appropriation for public housing is at higher levels, these increases are still expected to be insufficient and will not allow us to fully fund our commitments. It is important to note that the Authority also operates 5,100 units that receive no dedicated federal, state, or local government funding.

2014-2018 Capital Plan

Now I would like to share details on the 2014-2018 Capital Plan.

Capital funds, provided by the federal government, can only be used on major modernization efforts to our existing infrastructure. In recent years, this funding has decreased dramatically. This gap has, not only, jeopardized the preservation of our public housing stock and the safety of our residents but also increased NYCHA's operating costs due to the rising level of repairs. As of 2014, NYCHA needs approximately $18 billion dollars to bring all of our developments to a state of good repair. In contrast, the estimated revenue from HUD for major modernization and infrastructure is only estimated at $2.3 billion dollars. Clearly, NYCHA's need far outweighs the available funds. On top of our existing need, NYCHA is estimating an additional $1.8 billion dollars to address any damage incurred by Superstorm Sandy. Of the $3.9 billion dollars assumed in the five-year Capital Plan, 37 percent is an annual appropriation from the federal government, 45 percent is from funds related to disaster recovery, 13 percent is from our Bond B program, and 5 percent comes from the City of New York. Lack of funding severely constrains NYCHA's ability to make needed repairs. As I mentioned earlier, the outlook in Washington, DC, has improved. We have just learned that the Capital subsidy will be around $300 million dollars, a 15 percent increase from the plan.

Superstorm Sandy

Superstorm Sandy inflicted extensive damage to NYCHA developments and severely affected NYCHA's finances. Over eighty thousand New Yorkers and NYCHA residents in

423 buildings were significantly affected, many of whom are still dealing with the aftermath today. NYCHA's immediate response included installing 23 mobile boilers, restoring service to 397 elevators, installing more than 100 generators, and pooling resources from non-impacted developments to provide much needed cleaning crews. "The Capital Plan projects a one-time infusion of $1.8 billion dollars for repair and resiliency work at the developments impacted by Sandy, as well as those developments located in the expanded Flood Zone A. To date, NYCHA has only recovered $206 million dollars from our private insurance coverage and from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). NYCHA shares the concern of residents and advocates that delays in disaster-related capital investments and repairs place our developments at risk. In recent week, we have appreciated the intervention of Senator Schumer to help move us past some of the programmatic sticking points with FEMA, in order to quicken the federal pipeline of recovery dollars. When we do receive funds we intend to use the disaster recovery money to fund an implementation plan that will repair and replace damaged infrastructure and safeguard NYCHA against future extreme weather events. Funding for this needed work includes a combination of insurance reimbursements, FEMA dollars, and Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery funding.

Notable Accomplishments

Now that we have discussed the budget, I would like to update you on a few notable initiatives.

Work Order Backlog

Last year, NYCHA embarked on a maintenance and repair backlog initiative to reduce the number of open work orders and the average time to respond to a work order. As of today, NYCHA successfully reduced open work orders by 79 percent, from a peak of a shocking 423,000 to approximately 88,000.

We also reduced the average time it takes to respond and close a work order request. When comparing February 2013 to 2014, the average time it takes to complete a maintenance task has declined from 147 days to an average of 7 to 15 days. It still takes us longer to complete a skilled trade work request. Although much progress has been made, our work is not done. With your help, I am confident we can improve our response time even more.

Completed Capital Projects

In 2013, NYCHA expended $420 million dollars on major modernization at our developments. About 70 percent of those funds were spent on building facades, roofs and the administration of the capital program. Moreover, NYCHA has fully completed work at 53 developments and improved the quality of life for more than 59,000 residents. In addition, NYCHA has completed every one of its HUD mandated deadlines ahead of schedule, successfully spending the 2009 capital grant and obligating 90% of the 2011 award.

Bond B

Additionally, NYCHA closed on a $732 million dollar bond issuance called Bond B, which provides funding for critical repairs and quality of life improvements for residents. Of the $732 million dollar bond, NYCHA used $232 million dollars to pay back the 2005 Bond issuance, about $50 million dollars for closing costs and a debt service reserve, and $450 million dollars to rehabilitate building envelopes, , and to install new roofs at up to 38 developments across all five boroughs. In total, this bond will impact up to 30,000 NYCHA residents. To date, NYCHA has executed six contracts under the Bond B program. We are confident that we will complete this work by 2016.

Security Enhancements

In 2013, NYCHA also completed the installation of 3,879 new security cameras at 84 developments. This met our goal to install all pre-2012 City Council-funded closed-circuit television (CCTV) security cameras by the end of 2013.

Section 8

Despite funding challenges, significant upgrades to the Section 8 program were initiated in 2013. NYCHA implemented two significant customer service online portals, received additional funding for Veteran's housing, and increased our HUD Section 8 management assessment performance scores by 30 percent.

The first initiative is the successful launch of the Tenant Self Service Portal, which allows a Section 8 applicant or existing participant to register their voucher or case electronically and obtain status information on their request. Additionally, existing Section 8 tenants now have the ability to create service requests for special inspections and reschedule their annual inspection appointments online. The second initiative is Owner Portal, where property owners can renew their tenant leases online and have the option to self-certify outstanding Housing Quality Standard inspection violations. These portals improve customer service and drive efficiency in the Section 8 program. Additionally, the collaboration between NYCHA and The Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that veterans receive Section 8 vouchers was so successful that we received new funding under the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program (VASH) for 250 new vouchers and an additional $2.6 million dollars in annual Housing Assistance Payment funds. This funding enables the Authority to serve almost 2,500 homeless veterans.

NYCHA submitted the annual HUD Section 8 Management Assessment Program certification, which indicated a score of 125 points, or a rating of 86 percent, which is a 30 percent improvement over 2012. Productivity was very high, with the completion of annual re-certifications and inspections at 96 percent.

Resident Employment

NYCHA's office of Resident Economic Empowerment Services (REES) is responsible for overseeing NYCHA's compliance with the employment-related provisions of Section 3 and the resident employment program. Section 3 encourages PHAs to connect residents to employment opportunities through housing authority contractors. These policies facilitate access to economic opportunity for our residents by creating lasting partnerships with some of the City's best employers.

REES also provides technical assistance and oversight of contractors to ensure they are well informed of their obligations to hire Section 3 eligible residents for NYCHA approved projects. For the current HUD Section 3 reporting period, from October 2012 to September 2013, REES has facilitated over 1,000 direct job placements, a 5% increase from 2010 placements. I look forward to accomplishing even more for our residents.

Partnering with the City

Collaboration with stakeholders and government partners is essential to NYCHA's success and a cornerstone of my leadership approach. In that spirit, the City Council has been a critical partner to the Authority, helping to bolster our fiscal outlook. In response to the federal sequestration in 2013, the Council provided NYCHA an additional $58 million dollars for fiscal years 2013 and 2014, which prevented the closure of 70 community centers and 87 senior centers and approximately 300 layoffs. More importantly, community services at these centers were able to continue at full capacity with the help of partner agencies DYCD and DFTA.

We would also like to thank the Council for its commitment to improving maintenance and repair conditions at NYCHA developments – $10 million dollars in Council funds enabled us to hire 175 temporary workers to address repair and maintenance needs. Our Plan assumes this funding for maintenance and repairs will be continued through 2018, and we respectfully request that the Council make a commitment through 2018 and beyond.

Over the past decade, the Council has also invested $175 million dollars in capital funds to renovate community centers, and install CCTV and Layered Access Controls. In this calendar year, the Authority is on track to install CCTV and/or Layered Access projects at about 49 developments. In order to stay on track, NYCHA is also committed to spend the 2013 and 2014 City Council capital funds by the end of the year. To reach this goal, we are currently hosting meetings at developments citywide, engaging residents and elected officials.

As part of our commitment to the City Council, we will continue to submit quarterly reports on Council funded capital projects. We are also working to extend transparency to the public by revamping our website and posting more pertinent and real time information. It is my intention to continue to drive transparency initiatives throughout the organization. In fact, I have posted my public schedule on our website for all of the residents, partners, and stakeholders to follow along.

Conclusion

Despite NYCHA's very difficult fiscal picture, and a turbulent financial climate we are moving in the direction of becoming a leaner and more efficient organization. However, we cannot turn a blind eye to the reality of NYCHA's fiscal situation: The fact remains that NYCHA will continue to be underfunded in its Operations and Capital budgets for the foreseeable future. While working with renewed energy to become more sustainable, we are confronted with unsustainable employee health care and pension costs. We are challenged by our capital needs that continue to outpace available funds.

We strongly believe this invaluable asset is worth preserving, and we will do everything we can to meet the challenges ahead. Public housing is a lifeline to families and communities throughout New York City. With a new Administration and City Council leadership equally committed to preserving public housing, now is the time to secure its future for the generations to come. We will maintain a strong partnership with the Council that will benefit the residents and community. I also look forward to coming back in June to update you on HUD's funding levels and the Authority's overall financial outlook.

I am eager to work with you and answer any questions you may have.

FOR THE RECORD

UNH United **Neighborhood** Houses

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Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses Before the New York City Council Committee on Public Housing And Committee on Finance At the FY 2015 Budget Hearing

Honorable Ritchie Torres, Chair, Committee on Public Housing
Honorable Julissa Ferreras, Chair, Committee on Finance

Presented by Gregory Brender, Policy Analyst
March 21, 2014

Good afternoon Chair Torres and Chair Ferreras. My name is Gregory Brender and I am here on behalf of United Neighborhood Houses, New York City's federation of settlement houses and community centers. I am here to draw attention to the work of settlement houses and human service providers working in NYCHA communities and the issues they face as a result of NYCHA's fiscal challenges. UNH member agencies are among the City's leading providers of core human services including early childhood education, after-school, services for older adults and adult literacy education. UNH member agencies have a deep commitment to providing services to public housing residents and to the mission of public housing. 25 UNH member agencies provide services on site in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments and several have their entire operation based in NYCHA developments.

The history of settlement houses and the history of NYCHA are deeply intertwined. Settlement houses advocated for the construction for affordable public housing and Mary Simkovich, the founder of UNH member agency Greenwich House was a member of NYCHA's first board of directors. In more recent times, UNH and its member agencies have worked with the city to create the Cornerstone Initiative which brings the successful multi-service, multi-generational type of community services used in Beacons to community sites in public housing that were either vacant or underutilized. We are proud that after a successful pilot effort with just 25 sites, there are now 60 Cornerstone programs throughout New York City.

Due to federal cutbacks, NYCHA, like all public housing authorities, faces significant challenges from the ever growing costs of maintaining an aging infrastructure. However, the model of public housing the New York City has is more successful than any other public housing authority. This is due in large part to the inclusion of community based services in NYCHA developments. Through NYCHA's partnership with Community based organizations, NYCHA is able to offer its residents safer, more vibrant communities and work to its stated mission of providing more than bricks and mortar.

This partnership is possible because human service providers operate in public housing developments in space that is either free or sharply discounted. They provide services that are city funded and city contracted in an excellent model of interagency cooperation between NYCHA and ACS, DFTA, DYCD and other city agencies. City human service contracts do not include, in most cases, funding for rent and human service providers cannot raise the funds to pay NYCHA for the space they use in order to serve NYCHA residents.

Recently, NYCHA has begun surveying the space utilized by human service providers to determine rent increases that may be imposed on city contracted service providers operating in NYCHA facilities. The contracts for many of these services such as senior centers do not contain lines for rent.

The City and NYCHA must work together to ensure that human services providers can continue to offer services in NYCHA developments without an additional rent burden.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to working with you to strengthen public housing.

FOR THE RECORD

New York City Council
Committee on Public Housing

Testimony of Erin Markman
Research and Policy Coordinator, Community Development Project at the Urban Justice Center
646-459-3008; emarkman@urbanjustice.org

Friday, March 21, 2014

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Erin Markman and I am the Research and Policy Coordinator at the Community Development Project of the Urban Justice Center. The Community Development Project strengthens the impact of grassroots organizations in New York City's low-income and other excluded communities. We partner with community organizations to win legal cases, publish community-driven reports, assist with the formation of new organizations and cooperatives and provide technical and transactional assistance. Our Research and Policy initiative partners with and provides strategic support to grassroots community organizations to build the power of their organizing and advocacy work.

I'm here today to share some findings and recommendations from a newly released report, entitled "Weathering the Storm: Rebuilding a More Resilient New York City Housing Authority Post-Sandy," by The Alliance for a Just Rebuilding, ALIGN, Community Voices Heard, Faith in New York, Families United for Racial and Economic Equality, Good Old Lower East Side, Red Hook Initiative, and New York Communities for Change, with research support from the Community Development Project.[1]

When hurricane Sandy hit New York, it hit NYCHA. Approximately 80,000 New Yorkers living in NYCHA buildings lost crucial services like electricity, functioning elevators, heat and hot water. Mold proliferated and the lists of repair needs grew. Issues long pre-dating the storm were exposed and exacerbated.

Surveys conducted with nearly 600 NYCHA residents in neighborhoods impacted by Sandy (Coney Island, Lower East Side, Far Rockaway, Red Hook and Gowanus)[2], underscored by interviews, demonstrate this trend: NYCHA tenants were grappling with serious problems before Sandy, and these problems were made worse by the storm and persist in its wake. While the report details issues ranging from NYCHA's communication with community groups and tenants, to the need for new and better job opportunities for residents, I will, in the interest of time, focus on the issues of repairs and mold.

NYCHA apartments, buildings and grounds are desperately in need of repairs, and Sandy exacerbated this need. 55% of survey respondents had repair needs in their apartment before Sandy, and 40% had new repair needs as a result of the storm. Repairs are far too long in coming. 62% of respondents were told they would have to wait 6 months or more for repairs.

Mold was a serious issue with implications for health and safety before the storm, and the problem has gotten worse. 34% of respondents had visible mold in their apartment before Sandy, and

[1] The report can be found online at: http://cdp-ny.org/report/Weathering_The_Storm.pdf

[2] 597 surveys were collected; see the report for a breakdown of surveys collected by neighborhood.

45% had mold after the storm. Of those who reported the problem, 38% said NYCHA has done nothing, and 34% said the mold was cleaned poorly. 56% of respondents said the mold had affected their health.

Recommendations for improvement, developed by those on the ground who witness NYCHA's problems on a daily basis, and significantly elaborated in the report, include: increasing transparency and accountability of the repairs process and expediting repair efforts to alleviate the wait time and backlog; creating a watch list for NYCHA properties, which would allow this Committee and/or the Public Advocate to monitor the developments with the most unmet repair needs; focusing on the underlying infrastructure issues that cause mold, rather than on temporary, surface-level fixes; establishing and adhering to strict timelines for inspecting and addressing reports of mold; and training residents and providing employment in safe and healthy mold remediation as well as ensuring that more jobs in general go to residents. These solutions—as well as the others in the report, such as improving NYCHA's communication with community based organizations and residents, creating a resilient infrastructure, and funding vibrant community centers—are crucial components of a functional, thriving housing authority.

Some of these changes can be accomplished through procedural changes alone, but many will take resources. Funding the solutions to these problems will require serious attention to the way that current NYCHA funds, including those coming in related to Sandy, are allocated. But NYCHA also needs more money. NYCHA, this Committee, and the Council as a whole, must prioritize, allocate and pursue additional resources. A permanent end to the MOU between NYCHA and the NYPD could free up resources. The City could baseline additional support funds for public housing. Various greening processes could be instituted to save funds and reinvest them back into repairs. The City Council could consider a special fund for local NYCHA needs not covered by the strained NYCHA budget (such as on-site parks, basketball courts, benches, etc.) and that money could be allocated through a Participatory Budgeting process involving NYCHA residents. In thinking through these ideas and more, NYCHA tenants and community based organizations should be included as partners.

We are encouraged by productive conversations with NYCHA leadership, and hopeful about the prospects of working with NYCHA, the members of this Committee, the Council Speaker, and the new Mayoral administration, to rectify long standing problems and pave the way for a new NYCHA.

Thank you.

Community Service Society | Fighting Poverty Strengthening New York

Testimony of
Victor Bach, Senior Housing Policy Analyst
Community Service Society (CSS)
at
Preliminary Budget Oversight Hearing: New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)
City Council Committee on Public Housing
.March 21, 2014

The Community Service Society (CSS) is a nonprofit organization that for over 160 years has developed innovative approaches to improving conditions and opportunities for low-income New Yorkers. For some time we have been closely involved in public housing issues, working with resident and community leaders, allied housing advocates, community and labor organizations, and concerned elected officials, at times with NYCHA itself, to promote policies to help preserve New York's public housing and strengthen its resident communities.

Over the past decade, we have all witnessed the decline of NYCHA from the nation's largest, high-performing housing authority into critical condition, marked by chronic operating deficits and accelerating physical deterioration in the public housing infrastructure. At present we are preparing a report identifying and assessing factors that marked and contributed to NYCHA's decline during that period, in order to understand how it happened, how it might be turned around, how it might be prevented in the future.

<u>Adequate Information on NYCHA Finances?</u>

One of the consistent themes that come through is whether the financial information available to City Council and other decision leaders was sufficient to comprehend the growing crisis in time to respond effectively. For example, between 2001 and 2005, the public housing general fund had an average operating deficit of $83 million annually and was gradually depleting its operating reserve, according to a retrospective 2006 report issued by the NYC Independent Budget Office (IBO).[1] The deficit and the sapping of the Authority's operating reserves was, in a sense, "soft-pedaled" until 2006 when NYCHA went public, announcing an operating deficit of $168 million and a plan to address it. Had the facts been fully known, the data made available earlier, it would have put into perspective Mayor Bloomberg's decision in 2003 to terminate the city's long-standing operating subsidies to six city-financed NYCHA developments, which were not eligible for federal operating subsidies to cover the gap between rents and operating costs. The Mayor's decision added another $26 million annually to NYCHA's operating shortfall. Better information might also have affected the standing, silent arrangement under which NYCHA was required to pay the city about $100 million annually—$75 million for NYPD police services, $30 million currently for PILOT payments in lieu of property taxes—draining NYCHA's limited and inadequate federal operating subsidies. Thanks to Mayor Bill de Blasio's initiative in his preliminary budget, NYCHA will be relieved of this year's NYPD payment burden, which should lessen the operating deficit estimate reported today.

Call for Annual, Independent Audit of NYCHA Operating and Capital Budgets

Transparent data on NYCHA's financial and physical condition, open to public scrutiny, are needed if City Council and other decision leaders are to consider the actions necessary to address them. NYCHA no doubt does its best to present and package its planned budgets from year to year, but the experience of the past decade suggests that an independent assessment is needed to point to critical trends and needs, free of political or institutional constraints, such as the $100 million annual NYCHA payments to the city, at least while the Authority faces a chronic structural operating deficit.

For that reason, we urge Chair Ritchie Torres and the Council Committee on Public Housing to call for an annual independent audit analysis of NYCHA finances prior to each year's Council budget hearings. To the extent possible, current data on physical conditions, the status of outstanding repairs should be included. Such an audit would include, for example: 1) analysis of the prior-year NYCHA budget—projections versus actuals—as a check on performance, 2) updates on key indicator trends, such as changing operating costs (and the major factors driving changes), depletion of the operating reserve, the source of major shortfalls due, such as units in former state/city developments receiving no operating subsidies at all. (About 5,500 units at present generating an operating shortfall of over $20 million annually.), 3) Workforce headcount trends and shifts in allocations (such as between administrative and front-line management) and their implications for NYCHA's capacity to provide decent housing, as it has for so long in the past, to low-income New Yorkers.

Thank you.

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[1] City of New York Independent Budget Office, *Examining NYCHA's Plan to Preserve Public Housing,* June 8, 2006.

TESTIMONY

ON

ISSUES WITH REPAIRS IN NYCHA BUILDINGS AND THE PROPOSED INFILL PROGRAM

PRESENTED BEFORE:

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC HOUSING COMMITTEE

PRESENTED BY:

Nova Strachan
HOUSING ORGANIZER
MOTHERS ON THE MOVE
On behalf of
MOTHERS ON THE MOVE AND THE URBAN JUSTICE CENTER

MARCH 21, 2014

Good afternoon. My name is Nova Strachan and I am the Lead Housing Organizer at Mothers on the Move, a community-led organization in the South Bronx. I am also a lifelong public housing resident. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this afternoon.

Mothers on the Move is a member-led community organization which was founded in 1992 as a vehicle for low-income people of color to take strategic leadership in campaigns to transform ourselves and our communities. MOM envisions a society where resources and benefits are equally shared, and where people play a role in community decision-making in proportion to the degree they are affected. We are fighting for a South Bronx where future generations have clean air, well-resourced & community-controlled schools, safe streets, green space, good jobs and more control over the wealth that their labor creates.

I am also presenting this testimony on behalf of the Community Development Project at the Urban Justice Center, which formed in September 2001 to strengthen the impact of grassroots organizations in New York City's low-income and other excluded communities by winning legal cases, publishing community-driven research reports, assisting with the formation of new organizations, and providing technical and transactional assistance in support of their work towards social justice. CDP's work is informed by the belief that real and lasting change in low-income, urban neighborhoods is often rooted in the empowerment of grassroots, community institutions.

I am here today to speak about two issues of great importance to NYCHA residents – inadequate repairs and the infill or land lease program first proposed by the Bloomberg administration. We are on the ground meeting with NYCHA residents every day across the borough(s) and are thus uniquely situated to comprehensively survey issues across developments, and these two issues have been repeatedly brought up by NYCHA tenants.

Regarding inadequate repairs, it comes as no surprise that the failure of NYCHA to address systemic building conditions is a common thread across almost all public housing developments. We have repeatedly seen NYCHA waste countless resources, time and labor doing an ineffective "quick fix" for reoccurring conditions instead of addressing them at the root. Cascading leaks from the top floor down to the bottom, mold, sewage back-ups, rat infestations, elevator malfunctions are all conditions that are never addressed such that the problem does not come back.

Instead, NYCHA residents are confronted with circuitous system of wasteful spending of taxpayer money. This is the typical situation: a tenant with black mold in her bathroom calls the CCC number, an office that uses considerable taxpayer resources to do a job that local Housing Assistants could do, and gets a ticket for 18 months out. When NYCHA finally arrives after the tenant has spent 18 months living with black mold, they spend five minutes inspecting the condition, and then leave. It then takes weeks, if not months, for someone to return to cover up the problem by wiping off the mold, and then a few weeks later someone else will come and plaster over the ceiling. A few weeks later, the mold reappears because NYCHA did nothing to investigate the cause of the mold and try to stop it at the source. So taxpayer money is wasted again and again applying this same ineffective fix multiple times.

I have seen numerous cases where a tenant is trapped in this vicious cycle *for years*, until litigation is commenced and finally a judge compels NYCHA to address the problem at its root. The defense of such litigation is also a strain on NYCHA's resources. Surely, in 2012 when the city council committed $10 million to NYCHA to hire workers to address the backlog of repairs, this is not the result council expected.

Similarly, in Smith Houses here in Lower Manhattan, NYCHA knows there is a problem with the gas system. They have allocated funds to fix the gas, but instead of repairing the entire system, they turn off one line and patch it up every month, and then the next month another line breaks. This repeats month after month, with the NYCHA solution costing more money and causing tenants to needlessly suffer repeated gas outages.

We strongly recommend that NYCHA create a proactive repair and replacement program that addresses system wide problems at their root. If tenants in a building complain about mold, NYCHA should not focus on just painting over the problem, but looking for the systemic problem and proposing a solution. NYCHA says that they have $18 billion a year in capital needs, and only $3 billion a year in income; however, NYCHA spends billions of dollars focusing on short term fixes. Dealing with the underlying conditions that cause these repair problems will save the agency money in the short *and* long term.

Regarding the infill or land lease program, in the prior administration, NYCHA proposed leasing what they describe as "underutilized land" such as playgrounds, parks, community gardens and athletic grounds, to developers to build luxury housing on NYCHA campuses and using the revenue to address the backlog and close the budget gaps. They called this the Land Lease Program and went as far as soliciting bids from developers before the new administration took over. While we commend this current administration for abandoning this flawed Land Lease project, we understand that the idea may be renewed by the current administration. We strongly oppose renewed consideration of the land lease program, as these community and outdoor spaces are essential for the health and well-being of inner-city public housing residents, and these residents should have a say in deciding whether or not they should be deprived of their open space. Furthermore, any housing built on NYCHA land should be affordable housing, not market-rate or luxury housing, and the city should conduct proper environmental assessments before surrendering public land to private developers.

We understand that this position may not but fill address the budget crisis, but abandoning or changing the land lease program brings substantial benefit to the city, including 1) preservation of much needed open, green space 2) more affordable housing, which is one of the key priorities of the de Blasio administration and 3) a process where NYCHA residents are consulted, have the opportunity to give feedback and are able to share their ideas to close the budget gap rather than being told they must give up their gardens and basketball courts.

Addressing these two issues – the inadequacy of repairs and the adverse impact of the infill program on NYCHA residents' quality of life – will significantly improve the health and well-being of NYCHA residents, and we urge the Public Housing Committee to make these things a priority.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

FOR THE RECORD

Testimony by The Legal Aid Society

Preliminary Budget Oversight Hearing Before the New York City Council Committee on Public Housing

March 21, 2014

Introduction

The Legal Aid Society, the nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, is an integral part of our City's emergency response efforts. It is more than a law firm for clients who cannot afford to pay for counsel. The Legal Aid Society is an indispensable component of the legal, social and economic fabric of New York City – passionately advocating for low-income individuals and families across a variety of civil, criminal and juvenile rights matters, while also fighting for legal reform. The Legal Aid Society has performed this role in City, State and federal courts since 1876. It does so by capitalizing on the diverse expertise, experience, and capabilities of 1,000 of the brightest legal minds. These 1,000 Legal Aid Society lawyers work with nearly 700 social workers, investigators, paralegals and support and administrative staff. Through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices in 25 locations in New York City, the Society provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel. The Society's legal program operates three major practices — Civil, Criminal and Juvenile Rights — and receives volunteer help from law firms, corporate law departments and expert consultants that is coordinated by the Society's Pro Bono program. With its annual caseload of more than

300,000 legal matters, The Legal Aid Society takes on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States. And it brings a depth and breadth of perspective that is unmatched in the legal profession.

Our Civil Practice has offices in every borough of the City, and worked on more than 43,000 individual legal matters last year winning over 90 percent of the cases that go to court or an administrative hearing. An additional two million low-income children and adults benefit from the Civil Practice's pending class action litigation. The Civil Practice works to improve the lives of needy New Yorkers by helping vulnerable families and individuals on issues ranging from health care, housing, homelessness prevention, employment law, education, foreclosure prevention, consumer law, community economic development, public assistance, immigration, family law and domestic violence and disability-related issues.

The Society is counsel on numerous class-action cases concerning the rights of public housing residents and Section 8 tenants and is a member of the New York City Alliance to Preserve Public Housing, a local collaboration of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) resident leaders, advocates and concerned elected officials.

We appreciate the leadership of the new Chair of the Public Housing Committee, Ritchie Torres and his commitment to public housing residents. We are grateful for the opportunity to testify at this hearing before the City Council's Public Housing Committee about the fiscal challenges NYCHA faces and to offer the unique viewpoint we have as advocates for public housing residents and Section 8 Housing Choice voucher program participants.

Hurricane Sandy's Impact on NYCHA Public Housing Residents

NYCHA's fiscal challenges were only exacerbated by Hurricane Sandy. Including costs associated with elevating infrastructure and building new utility buildings and including over $620 million of costs for resiliency measures, NYCHA estimates its Sandy-related expenses at $1.8 billion.[1] 26 NYCHA developments – home to more than 45,000 residents – are in Hurricane Evacuation Zone A (Zone A). Within these developments, 26 buildings that contained ground boilers were flooded and submerged. According to NYCHA, 24 temporary boilers and approximately 100 generators were used to restore heat and electricity to its facilities.[2] On November 20, 2013, a full year after Hurricane Sandy hit, NYCHA confirmed that thousands of residents throughout 15 developments remain dependent on 24 temporary mobile boilers to provide heat and hot water and predicted that it may take another two heating seasons to complete the permanent repair or replacement of temporary boilers.[3]

There appears to be available pools of funding that NYCHA can pursue towards this end. NYCHA should pursue additional funds under the Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery Program (CDBG-DR), administered by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This is the main source of federal funds for post-Sandy redevelopment activities. Pursuant to this grant, New York City has been allocated $3.219 billion from the CDBG-DR funds, to be paid in two tranches. The first tranche, approved by HUD in May, 2013, includes $1.77 billion. On November 18, 2013, the City received a second allocation of $1.447 billion. The City will allocate $108 million to design and construct improvements to public housing directly impacted by Hurricane Sandy. NYCHA is expected to receive a total of $308 million from the CDBG-DR funds. This is not nearly enough to address the infrastructure needs as significant challenges existed prior to Sandy.

NYCHA should also take further action, including litigation, to pursue much needed funds from its insurers. As of November 20, 2013, NYCHA received only $126.3 million from

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[1] [1] Testimony of Cecil House, General Manager, NYCHA at an Oversight Hearing before the City Council Committee on Public Housing — "NYCHA's efforts to Repair, Rebuild and Recover in the Wake of Sandy" at Page 8.

[2] "NYCHA Numbers" at Page 20, *NYC Hurricane Sandy After Action* – Report and Recommendations to Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, May 2013 by Deputy Mayor Linda L. Gibbs, Co-Chair and Deputy Mayor Caswell F. Holloway, Co-Chair.

[3] Id at 2.

its commercial and flood insurance and $3.5 million from FEMA[4]. NYCHA confirms that the payments are just a fraction of the funds necessary in order for NYCHA to start addressing its recovery and resiliency efforts.

NYCHA Infill

While we recognize NYCHA must take steps to address its serious financial condition, we are pleased that Mayor de Blasio's administration will not pursue the previous administration's plan to create luxury housing on the grounds of several public housing developments. The plan, as devised under the previous administration, was a short term solution that would not have gone far in addressing NYCHA's long-term, structural deficit. Although Infill may be a valid strategy for revenue generation, other sources of capital must be conscientiously pursued. The current administration appears to be taking a step in this direction. We are encouraged by the new Mayor's commitment to redirect resources into NYCHA repairs and maintenance, demonstrated by the announcement made on February 12, 2014, that the preliminary budget for FY 2015 relieves NYCHA of the remaining $52.5 million that would otherwise be owed to the NYPD in FY 2014 for the provision of police services under the MOU between NYCHA and NYPD that dates back to 1994. Private landlords receive this service free of charge. Further, the administration should consider discontinuing the $23 million *Payment* in Lieu of Taxes (*PILOT*) payments NYCHA makes to New York City. Many nonprofit housing developers are exempt from this tax. NYCHA should also consider capturing the excess revenues generated by the Battery Park City Authority that were originally intended to be allocated to the preservation and development of affordable low-income housing in other neighborhoods. While these options are not within NYCHA's control, it is unclear that they have been brought to the attention of the officials and agencies with the necessary decision-making powers. Addressing NYCHA's financial difficulties will require long term planning. It is our hope that any development plan will feature meaningful community input and will be devised with an eye towards fostering the long term prosperity of both NYCHA and its communities.

[4] Id at 8.

Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program

Under the FY 2014 Omnibus Appropriations Act, Tenant Based Rental Assistance is funded at $19 billion. This represents a $1.2 billion increase over the FY 13/sequester number currently in effect. It falls short of what the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities had estimated would be needed to fully restore voucher funding to previous levels, adjusted for inflation (reportedly $1.6 billion), but may be sufficient to avert voucher terminations and other cutbacks at most PHAs. However, as a result, NYCHA's waiting list remains closed and new vouchers will only be issued except under very limited circumstances such as emergencies and where prior commitments are in place. Also, NYCHA recently implemented new HUD Fair Market Rents(FMR)(set at 110% of the FMR), resulting in a lowered payment standard amount that will apply to new admissions and families who transfer to a new unit.

NYCHA and the City should appeal to the State to immediately increase the shelter allowance received by Section 8 tenants that receive public assistance. At least 13,482 or 15% of the households that participate in the Section 8 housing Choice Voucher program receive Public Assistance. However, NYCHA does not receive the shelter allowance at levels that private landlords do. For example, the shelter allowance for a typical family of three receiving public assistance is $400. A family of the same size that receives a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher would only receive $236.70 as a shelter allowance.[5] This is $163.30 forgone every month. Even looking at a household of one, which comprises the largest percentage of NYCHA Section 8 voucher holders, the monthly rent forgone is $138.97. NYCHA is, at a minimum, losing $22,283,122.48 each year. Thus, increasing she shelter allowance paid to Section 8 households could significantly relieve budgetary strain and allow NYCHA to fund new vouchers.

[5] $236.70 is arrived at by adding the shelter allowance for a family of 3($400) with the food and other grant($389) and multiplying by 30%.

Conclusion

We are optimistic that the City's new Administration, under the leadership of Mayor de Blasio, will address and resolve the pressing issues faced by NYCHA's residents, many of which result from years of under-funding at the City, State and Federal level. As we informed NYCHA, The Legal Aid Society remains available to help with advocacy with OTDA on the shelter allowance issue, with the Council, and with HUD on shortfall funding.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before the Committee on Public Housing.

Respectfully Submitted:

Adriene Holder, Attorney in Charge, Civil Practice
Judith Goldiner, Attorney in Charge, Law Reform Unit
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City Council 2014-2018 Adopted Operating and Capital Budget Briefing

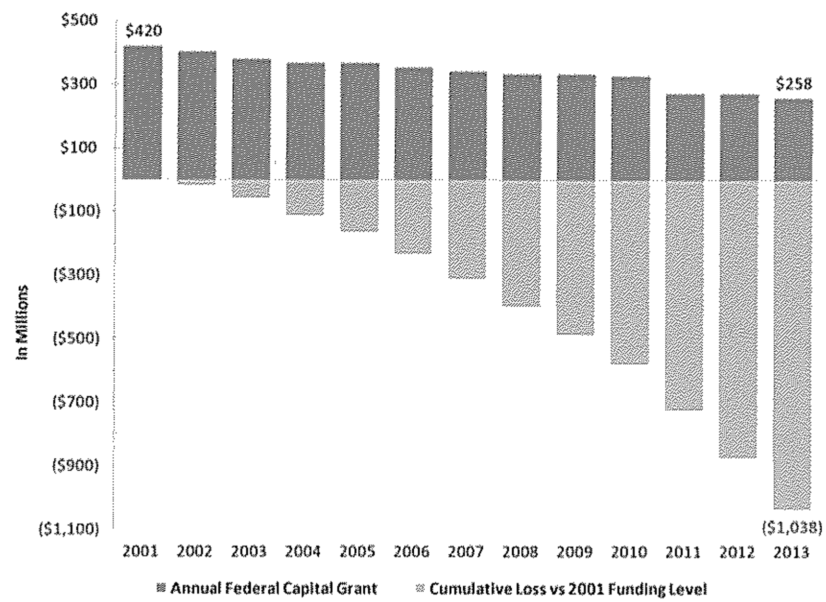
NEW YORK CITY
HOUSING
AUTHORITY

March 21, 2014

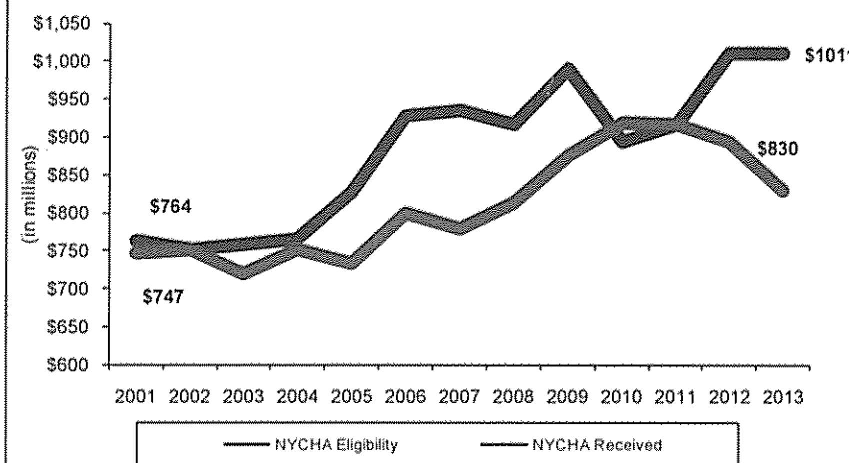
NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY

Historic Federal Funding

Capital Funding Decline Since 2001



Operating Subsidy - Shortfall Since 2001

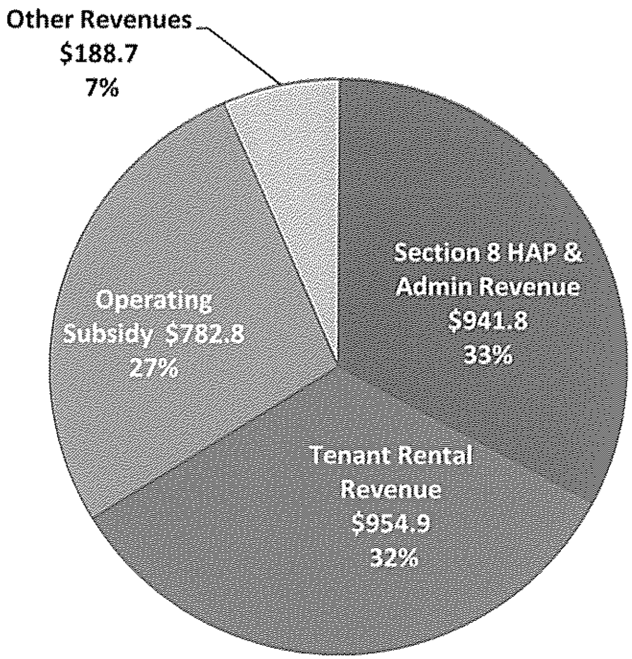


NYCHA faces a $280.8 million deficit for the Adopted 2014 budget, primarily due to a loss in operating subsidy

2014 Adopted Operating Plan Revenue & Expenses

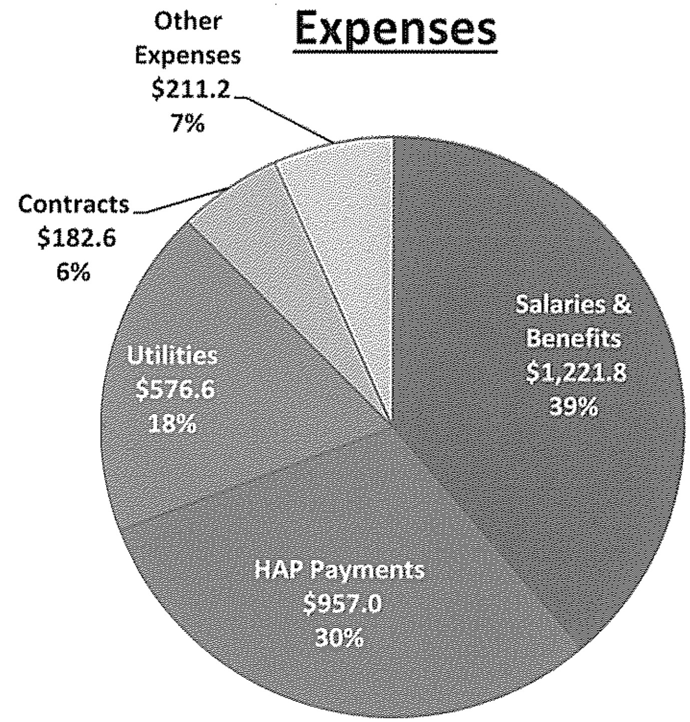
($ Millions)

Revenue



TOTAL= $2.868 Billion

Expenses



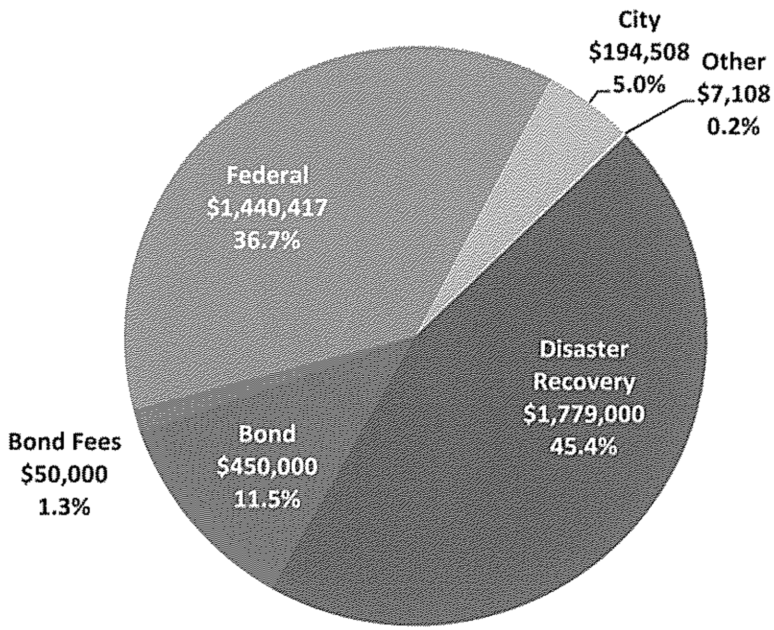
TOTAL= $3.149 Billion

2014 Deficit= ($280.8 Million)

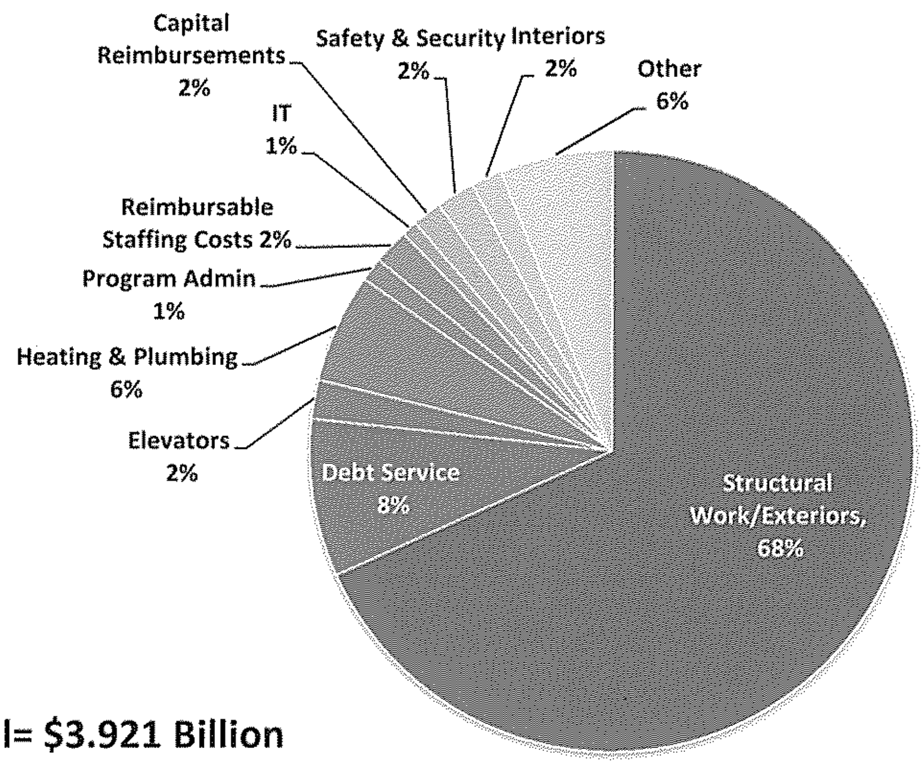
FY 2014 – 2018 Adopted Capital Plan – Revenue & Expenses

Capital Plan Revenue

($ Millions)



Capital Plan Expenses



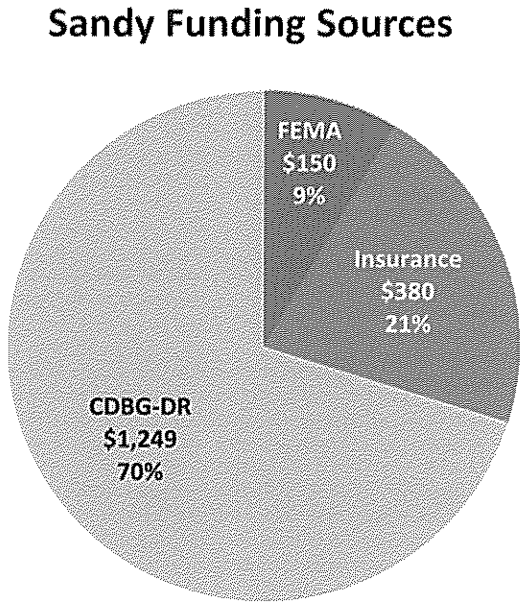
Total= $3.921 Billion

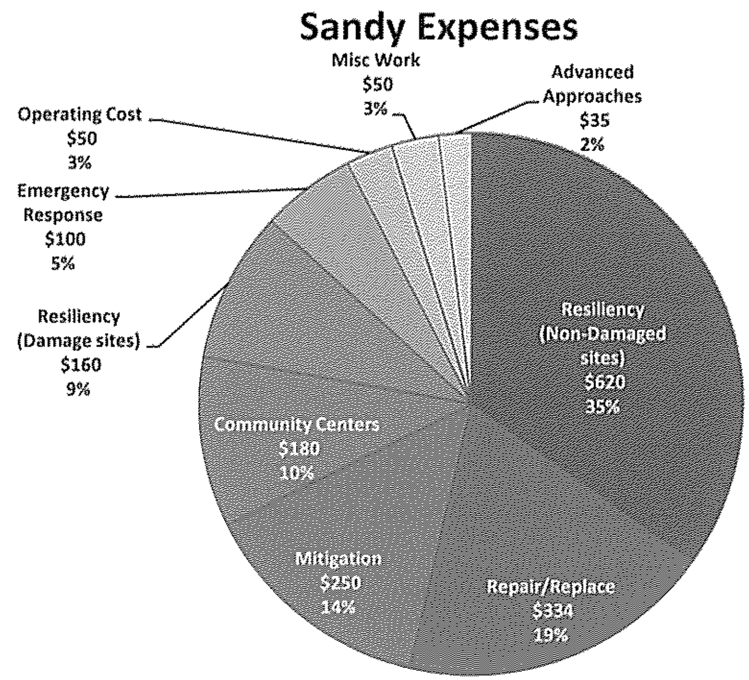
Highlights

- Revenue includes 1.8 Billion requested for disaster recovery (45% of Capital Budget)
- $40 Million was for Randolph Mixed finance renovation with HPD for 36 5-story tenement buildings in Harlem. (316 units)
- $178 Million is allocated for Critical repairs: $18M for gas riser replacements, $6M for steam mains, $120M for boiler replacements

5-year Superstorm Sandy Funding & Expenses

($ Millions)





Total= $1,779 Billion

Comments

- Superstorm Sandy funds are a one time additional revenue source that will add 68% more capital dollars to our 5 year plan. 2014 Budget based on Current NYC Action Plan. Assumes 100% Insurance payout and FEMA Reimbursement level at 90%
- NYCHA will use these funds to repair the damage caused by Super storm Sandy to infrastructure and critical systems at 32 developments and fortify 26 additional developments in the expanded Flood Zone A.

NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY

Notable Achievements

Notable Achievements		Impact
	• Maintenance & Repair Initiative	• NYCHA reduced outstanding work orders by 95%, from 423,000 to 90,000 by December 2013 • Work Order response and closure times have also been reduced from 147 to 9 days for maintenance orders and 288 to 155 days for skilled trade work
	• Completed Capital Projects	• NYCHA capital projects improved the housing of 59,000 tenants • NYCHA completed $31.6 Million in structural repairs and $17.8 million in heating & plumbing improvements
	• Bond B	• NYCHA has begun work at four developments with the $450 million bond funding
	• Security Enhancements	• Completed the installation of 3,879 new security systems at 84 developments
	• Section 8 Program Changes	• NYCHA received 250 more Veteran Housing Vouchers and achieved 96% completion rate for annual re-certifications and inspections • Implementation of Tenant Self-Service Portal and Owner Portal, allowing residents and applicants more services online
	• Jobs	• For the HUD Section 3 reporting period, REES facilitated over 1,000 direct job placements

NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY

Partnership With the City

		Impact
Accomplishments	• Community Centers	• The City Council allocated $58 million to keep open NYCHA Community & Senior Centers set to close by yearend 2013, maintaining jobs and services for NYCHA residents.
	• Painters Apprentice Program (PAP)	• City Council Provided $10 Million for NYCHA's Painter Apprentice Program. Providing skills training and temporary jobs for 175 individuals.
	• NYCHA security improvements	• NYCHA completed the installation of 3,879 security cameras in 87 developments with $30 Million in City council funds. Providing a safer environment for NYCHA residents.

		Impact
Asks	• 57 Community/ Senior Centers set to close in 2014	• 57 of NYCHA's community and senior centers remain unsponsored. With additional Council funds NYCHA can continue providing community space and programs to NYC residents until full sponsorship is attained. NYCHA has budgeted for these centers through June 31, 2014. This centers provide ~164 jobs and programs, such as the Summer Day Camp, which serves ~2,000 children annually.
	• Painter Apprentice Program	• Although PAP funds will expire yearend 2014, NYCHA's budget assumes City council will continue to fund the Painters Apprentice Program throughout the next 5 years.
	• Sandy Aid	• NYCHA is still recovering from Sandy related damages. No permanent repair and resiliency work has begun due to uncertain funding. We hope to work with the City Council to advocate on behalf of NYC's most vulnerable for additional funding.

NEW YORK CITY
HOUSING
AUTHORITY

Appendix

Changes in 2014 Budget Assumptions

($ in Millions)

	Public Housing	Section 8	Authority Total
Adopted Plan	($191)	($90)	($281)
Congress Op. Subsidy Proration Increase, 12%	122		122
Congress HAP Subsidy, 5%		61	61
Congress Admin, 6%		7	7
NYPD Forgiveness	52		52
New Initiatives (Repair & Inspection Unit)	(52)		(52)
Reduction of Section 8 Admin Fee		6	6
Other Section 8 Expense Realignment		3	3
Shortfall Funding		13	13
2014 Reforecasted (Surplus/Deficit)	($69)	$0	($69)

Comments

- 2014 Congressional Appropriations were announced, that were much higher than previously expected. Based on the larger HUD allocations, NYCHA's federal funding will be $190 Million.
- NYCHA was also granted reprieve from paying $52.5 Million of the annual NYPD Subsidy, all of which will be used to lower our HQS inspection backlogs, along with the creation of a new monitoring unit for the program.
- **With these new Funding assurances, NYCHA 's deficit has been reduced from approximately $280 Million to $70 Million.**

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. ______ Res. No. ______

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/21/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nova Strachan

Address: 928 Intervale Avenue Bronx, NY 10459

I represent: Mothers on the Move

Address:

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. ______ Res. No. ______

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date:

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cecil House

Address:

I represent: NYCHA

Address:

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. ______ Res. No. ______

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date:

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Richard [illegible]

Address:

I represent: NYCHA

Address:

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. ______ Res. No. ______

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/21/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shola Olatoye

Address: ______

I represent: NYCHA

Address: ______

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. ______ Res. No. ______

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: ______

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DAVID MC CREDO

Address: 225 BROADWAY 43 FL NY. NY

I represent: LOCAL 211 ALLIED BUILDING INSPECTORS

Address: 225 BROADWAY NYNY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. ______ Res. No. ______

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 03/21/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Crystal Glover

Address: 1225 E. 99th St.

I represent: Washington Houses

Address: 1773 3rd Ave.

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. ______ Res. No. ______

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/21/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: VICTOR BACH

Address: ~~105 E 22~~

I represent: COMMUNITY SERVICE SOCIETY (CSS)

Address: 105 E. 22 St NY NY 10010

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms