

Habitat for Humanity - New York City Advocacy Newsletter

July/August 2005, Issue No. 11

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Welcome to new members of the Covenant Action Network! If you are receiving this e-newsletter for the first time, you signed one of our Hammer and Pen postcards supporting the Habitat-NYC Housing Covenant and we have added your name to our advocacy mailing list. YOU WILL NOT RECEIVE SOLICITATIONS. However, if you would like to be taken off this list, please respond to this e-mail and write “unsubscribe” in the subject line. Otherwise, welcome to the Covenant Action Network! You can expect monthly updates on Habitat-NYC and other housing advocacy events.

Housing First! Policy Update

WILL AFFORDABLE HOUSING BE THE ‘SLEEPER’ DEDICING ISSUE IN THE
MAYORAL ELECTION THIS SEASON?
NEW POLICY PAPER ASKS HOW NEXT YEAR’S MAYOR WILL ADDRESS
CRISIS

Housing First! Report Underscores Voters’ Concerns About Affordable Housing, Issues Recommendations to Address and Solve Long-Term Crisis

New York, NY—With 82% of active Democratic voters saying in a recent poll that New York City’s real estate boom is bad for them, Housing First! releases a policy paper detailing New York City’s affordable housing crisis and providing a blueprint for solving this issue that has plagued low- and moderate-income New Yorkers for decades. Housing First! also calls on every mayoral candidate to respond to five concrete requests that would begin to address the crisis.

“Nearly one-quarter of renters and 15 percent of homeowners spend more than half their household income on housing,” said Mark Willis, Housing First! Co-Chair and Executive Vice President at JP Morgan Chase. “These statistics show why a sustained commitment from our elected officials is critical.”

Since its formation in 2001, Housing First!, a coalition of almost 300 citywide and neighborhood-based organizations and private enterprises involved in the financing, production, management and maintenance of affordable housing, has become a widely respected voice for affordable housing policy and information. Housing First!’s new policy paper, “A Home for All New Yorkers,” highlights uncomfortable details on how the sky-high cost of housing hits home for most New Yorkers:

- 23 percent of all renters (more than 725,000) live in overcrowded apartments;
- The vacancy rate for all rental apartments is only 2.9 percent, the lowest vacancy rate in 15 years; and
- 149,789 households are currently waiting for public housing and 128,763 households are currently waiting for Section 8 rental vouchers.

The tremendous housing boom that benefited many of the city's neighborhoods and homeowners has literally left behind millions of people, who confront daunting home prices and escalating rents. The Housing First! coalition is committed to ensuring that our city remains a home for all New Yorkers. The mayor for the next four years must map out a clear plan for sustaining NYC as a mixed-income community, preserving existing affordable housing stock, and ensuring that our most vulnerable citizens have an appropriate place to call home.

Housing First! calls on New York City's mayor for the next four years to:

1. **Extend the existing New Housing Marketplace plan** through 2010, to encompass the full upcoming mayoral term, *and expand the plan* to a \$10 billion investment that will create 100,000 new units of affordable housing for New Yorkers and will preserve at least 85,000 more.
2. **Rigorously target housing units** created and preserved through this public investment to meet the needs of all New Yorkers. The Housing First! plan targets 56% of new units to low-income households, 33% to moderate-income households, and 11% to middle-income households. Permanent affordability for all New Yorkers, as well as mixed-income communities across the city, must be critical elements of the City's housing strategies.
 - A *citywide inclusionary zoning* policy is an important vehicle for achieving the goal of diverse, mixed-income communities. HF! calls on the mayor for the next four years to use this powerful and proven tool to ensure that all new development in the city incorporates permanently affordable housing for New Yorkers at all income levels.
3. **House NYC's most vulnerable citizens** by expanding planned production of supportive housing for homeless, disabled and HIV-ill New Yorkers from the current goal of 12,000 units to at least 16,000 new units, and by securing the resources needed to meet this goal.
 - Current funding commitments will support only 5,000 units of new supportive housing. HF! calls for immediate *implementation of a third New York/New York agreement* with the State, which would provide the funding to create 9,000 new units of supportive housing.
4. **Ensure the preservation of affordable housing** with a comprehensive strategy that addresses expiring use restrictions on publicly assisted stock, as well as distressed private housing stock. Preservation is just as critical as new development to meeting current and future need for decent, permanently affordable housing in all New York City neighborhoods.
5. **Proactively address threatened cuts to critical federal housing programs.** Actual and threatened cuts and changes to federal housing programs have the potential to undermine City and State housing investments, rendering any plan to address the affordable housing crisis meaningless. HF! calls on the mayor for the next four years to develop a proactive

strategy to work with New York's Congressional delegation to *expand federal support* of local investment and to ensure that New York City remains the diverse, vibrant engine of the United States economy and culture.

“The Pace University poll that studied this year's mayoral election made headlines for a number of reasons,” said Roland Lewis, Co-Chair of Housing First! and Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity – New York City. “One of the biggest ‘surprises’ was how concerned everyday New Yorkers are with housing issues: 18% said housing was the most important issue for the next mayor to work on, surpassed only by education. But this comes as no surprise to housing advocates or ordinary New Yorkers. We're only surprised that affordable housing issues have not dominated the electoral discussions—yet.”

“The Mayor and the City Council have taken important steps to address the affordable housing crisis,” added Housing First! coordinator Hilary Botein. “But New Yorkers need resources, sustained political will, coordination and accountability to end this crisis. Housing First! will continue its push to make this happen.”

Housing First!, formed in 2001, is a broad-based coalition of 300 nonprofit and for-profit developers, community-based organizations, religious institutions, civic groups, businesses, banks and labor unions, united around New York City's housing crisis and the need for concrete solutions.

To read the full comprehensive policy update please visit the following link:

http://www.housingfirst.net/pdfs/HF_Policy_Update0805.pdf

Mayoral Candidate Fernando Ferrer announces his new housing plan

Fernando Ferrer also announced a new housing plan he proposes if elected Mayor. Fernando Ferrer plans to target four main goals:

- **Require that 30%** of newly created units be set aside for moderate and low-income individuals in targeted "growth zones" -- and provide substantial financial incentives for developers to set aside an additional 20% of the units for affordable housing.
- **Dedicate \$8.5 billion** over ten years for the development and preservation of 167,000 affordable housing units throughout the City.
- **End tax giveaways** to developers who refuse to include affordable housing in their new developments.
- **Provide real Mayoral leadership** in Albany and Washington, D.C. and fight for housing resources for New York City.

To read his full solution report for creating affordable housing in New York City, please visit: <http://www.ferrer2005.com/main.cfm?actionId=globalShowStaticContent&screenKey=engNews&htmlId=3404>

Housing Here and Now! Action

Housing Here and Now has just released a new survey documenting New York City's 10 Worst Landlords. To find out more and to get involved, please visit.

<http://www.housinghereandnow.org/>

From our friends at Congregation B'nai Jeshurun: The NYC Health Care Security Act (Intro 468a) vote in City Council on August 17, 2005

BJ Friends and Supporters,

THIS IS SO EXCITING!

As many of you know, the Health Care/Economic Hardship Hevra of B'nai Jeshurun's Social Action/Social Justice committee has been hard at work the past year in joining with other coalition members to pass the NYC Health Care Security Act into legislation. We are so thrilled to announce that our hard work and perseverance has led us to success.

The NYC Health Care Security Act (Intro 468a) will be coming to the floor of the NY City Council for a floor vote August 17, 2005. Jobs With Justice is bringing together all of the diverse coalition members (health care professionals, workers, clergy, labor unions, community organizations and business leaders) to celebrate this momentous occasion with a press conference.

You are invited to attend the **press conference at 12:00 noon on August 17, 2005 on the steps of City Hall.** We want to show the diversity and depth of the coalition and to call on Mayor Bloomberg to sign the NYC Health Care Security Act (Intro 468a) into law!

You are also invited to stay and attend the vote at 1:30PM in Council Chambers. **We want to pack to gallery to show our support and thank co-sponsoring Council members for passing the NYC Health Care Security Act (Intro 468a).**

Please consider joining us for either or both events next Wednesday. We need your help to demonstrate BJ's community's dedication to social justice by having a sizeable presence.

If you have any questions, or to RSVP, please contact alicefisher@earthlink.net or 917-439-6083.

Build it Green! Is Habitat for Humanity – New York City's Restore

Log in to www.bignyc.org to get details about part of our advocacy platform, Habitat-NYC's exciting new "green" initiative. BUILD IT GREEN!

Habitat for Humanity – New York City is now partnering with Build it Green-NYC, a program of Community Environmental Center, in a non-profit retail outlet for reusable, environmentally friendly and low-cost building materials. Proceeds from the Restore will help build simple, decent homes for ownership by New Yorkers in need.

Salvage and Surplus: Habitat for Humanity – New York City’s Restore sells salvaged and surplus building materials at half or below their new price. Shopping at the Restore helps keep perfectly useful material out of the landfill, while providing great items for your projects.

Green Products: Habitat for Humanity – New York City’s green building program brings the benefits of environmentally friendly construction to disadvantaged neighborhoods. The Build it Green! Restore is expanding its stock of building materials to include environmentally friendly and non-toxic materials.

Why Reuse? Reuse is an environmentally friendly alternative to discarding durable materials into our city’s landfills. Recycling building materials is an important part of green building. Don’t put it on the curb—donate it to us!

Where do Restore materials come from?

Salvaged materials are taken from a variety of buildings about to be demolished in New York City. These may include antique architectural elements.

Surplus materials are donated by building suppliers, contractors, and residents interested in protecting the environment and reducing their waste.

Drop-in materials accepted during store hours. Pick-up service available for higher value resale items. Donations to the Restore are tax-deductible.

Please check out our Website!

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We are the “Site of the Week” on the Design Interact website:

<http://www.designinteract.com/sow/>. Visit us at www.habitatnyc.org and find out more about who we are, where we build, and how you can donate and advocate with Habitat for Humanity – New York City.