



Habitat for Humanity – New York City Advocacy E-Newsletter

October 2005 (Issue No. 12)

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1. Celebrating the success of the 2004-2005 Housing Covenant

Our sincere thanks and congratulations go to all of you who supported Habitat-NYC's 2004-2005 Housing Covenant. With your faith and support, this year saw major positive action on all three of the policy initiatives highlighted in the Covenant:

Ending chronic homelessness

Mayor Bloomberg has pledged his support for the New York/New York III agreement, committing the city's portion of funding for 9,000 more units of supportive housing for homeless individuals with mental illness and homeless families with special needs. The joint city-state plan cannot go forward, however, until Governor Pataki acts to provide the state's portion of the funding.

Fighting housing discrimination

Your efforts have helped strike a blow against housing discrimination with the passage of Intro 22, the Local Civil Rights Restoration Act. In September, Intro 22 was overwhelmingly approved by the City Council, passing 42-3 with one abstention. After initially opposing the measure, Mayor Bloomberg approved it on October 3. Thank you for making your voice heard in support of Intro 22!

You can read more about our success in passing Intro 22 here:

<http://www.antibiaslaw.com/legislation/nyc.html#local>

Increasing affordable housing production

The City adopted an inclusionary zoning approach in the rezonings of Greenpoint-Williamsburg, Hudson Yards, and West Chelsea, ensuring the production of thousands of new units of affordable housing. Developers building new housing units in these growing neighborhoods will be offered tax and density bonuses if they make a percentage of the units they build affordable.

You can read more about the Greenpoint-Williamsburg and Hudson Yards rezonings in an August policy update from Housing First! (PDF):
http://www.housingfirst.net/pdfs/HF_Policy_Update0805.pdf

Our 2005-2006 Housing Covenant, tentatively scheduled for release in January, will highlight three new issues where you have the power to make a difference at the city, state, and federal level. We look forward to building on the momentum from this year's successes and hope you'll continue to join us in fighting for housing justice in 2006!

2. The mayoral race: Ferrer vs. Bloomberg on housing policy

Election Day is Tuesday, November 8, and affordable housing has become one of the major issues of the mayoral race. Mayor Bloomberg this week announced a major expansion to his housing plan that brings his position closer to that of Ferrer, as well as to the proposal put forward by Housing First! in 2001.

Republican Michael Bloomberg

- Mayor Bloomberg's housing platform centers on his New Housing Marketplace plan. When introduced in 2003, the plan included \$3 billion to create or preserve 68,000 units of affordable housing over five years. The revised plan released this week proposes \$7.5 billion to create or preserve 165,000 units of affordable housing, 70% for households earning under 80% of area median income. It also includes a proposal to create a new city program to create below-market-rate housing for families earning \$50,000-100,000 a year, modeled on the state Mitchell-Lama program.
- The mayor's reelection campaign also highlights his plan to find solutions "beyond shelter" for the city's homelessness crisis. His plan includes the Home Base program, which provides social services and emergency financial support to families on the verge of becoming homeless, as well as the more controversial Housing Stability Plus program, which grants time-limited housing vouchers to homeless families.
- Mayor Bloomberg previously supported the repeal of the Urstadt Law, which gives the state, rather than the city, authority over rent control and rent stabilization laws. He no longer supports repealing the law, stating that the city does not have the budget to take over administration of rent regulations.

Democrat Fernando Ferrer

- Ferrer, the Bronx borough president, called the original New Housing Marketplace plan insufficient. He has pledged to devote \$8.5 billion to build or preserve 167,000 units of affordable housing over the next 10 years: 6.75 billion to create 86,400 new units, and \$1.75 billion to preserve nearly 56,000 existing units.
- He proposes a policy of mandatory inclusionary zoning in targeted areas, requiring developers to make at least 15 percent of units affordable to middle-income families and 15 percent affordable to low-income families. He would add financial incentives and density bonuses for developers who make between 30 and 50 percent of units affordable. Bloomberg's inclusionary zoning initiatives include incentives for developers to build affordable units, but he has not proposed mandatory inclusionary zoning.
- Ferrer supports repealing the Urstadt Law and giving the city control of rent regulations.

Both Bloomberg and Ferrer have pledged to fight for New Yorkers at the state and federal level to extend rent stabilization for tenants of buildings enrolled in the Mitchell-Lama program and preserve federal Section 8 housing vouchers.

Don't take our word for it! Read the candidates' housing platforms in their own words.

Ferrer:

<http://www.ferrer2005.com/main.cfm?actionId=globalShowStaticContent&screenKey=engNews&htmlId=3404>

Bloomberg:

http://www.mikebloomberg.com/pressroom/detail.cfm?content_id=357

The Housing First! platform calls for a ten-year, \$10 billion investment to create or preserve 185,000 units of affordable housing. Read the proposal here:

<http://www.housingfirst.net/policypaper1.html>

Read the Oct. 20 *New York Times* article on Bloomberg's revised housing plan:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/20/nyregion/metrocampaigns/20mayor.html>

3. Federal budget cuts threaten housing assistance programs

Hurricane Katrina exposed the devastating effects of poverty and added thousands of families to the ranks of the homeless. We are alarmed that the budget reconciliation measures put forth by Congressional leaders could slash vital programs for low-income and middle-income families -- including Section 8 housing assistance and public housing, as well as Medicaid and student loans -- by \$35 billion or more. In the coming months and years, these programs will be needed more than ever; they will be essential for families who have suffered displacement and loss as a result of the hurricanes, as well as families across the country who currently rely on them.

The proposed cuts will pay for only a small portion of the short-term hurricane response. Furthermore, they will be more than offset by a new round of tax cuts that will go primarily to the wealthy.

Encouraging developments this week indicate that these harsh budget cuts may not become a reality. On Wednesday, the Senate Agriculture Committee dropped a proposal for large cuts in the food stamp program, and on Thursday, House leadership postponed a vote on a proposal to increase the cuts to \$50 billion, when it became evident that the proposal lacked majority support.

Read more about the budget reconciliation efforts in a report by the Coalition on Human Needs:

<http://www.chn.org/humanneeds/051014a.html>

4. Take Action! Keep “Gag Rule” out of Affordable Housing Fund

Next week, Congress is scheduled to consider a bill that, among other provisions, would establish a national Affordable Housing Fund to support the creation and preservation of affordable housing. This week, the bill's sponsors added a provision that would bar nonprofit or public organizations from applying for or receiving grants from the fund if they or any of their allies have engaged in voter registration activities in the last year. This regulation would not apply to for-profit entities, only nonprofits and public entities.

Nonprofit and public organizations that use their own funds to engage in nonpartisan voter registration activities should not be barred from receiving grants to support affordable housing. Tell your representative to act to prevent this gag rule from becoming law!

The public interest group OMB Watch and the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) have prepared resources to help you take action with a click of the mouse or a phone call.

Visit OMB Watch's resource center:

<http://www.ombwatch.org/article/articleview/3133/1/265?>

Read the NLIHC and National Housing Trust Fund Campaign's action alert:

<http://www.nlihc.org/news/101305.html>

5. Recent housing and homelessness research

HUD survey finds 1 in 400 Americans is homeless

Before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck, approximately 727,304 people in America —one in every 400 — were homeless, according to the preliminary results of a national count released this week. The count was conducted by state and local governments at the request of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. It was the first nationwide count of the homeless since a 2000 survey by the Urban Institute, which yielded an estimate of 444,000-842,000 homeless people.

Read a *USA Today* article on the nationwide count:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-10-11-homeless-cover_x.htm

Focus on family homelessness

Although many people think of the typical homeless person as a single adult, families make up more than 75 percent of the city's shelter population. The Vera Institute of Justice has released a detailed study of family homelessness that illuminates some of the major reasons families become homeless — and how those who successfully leave the shelter system for permanent housing are able to do so.

The report, "Understanding Family Homelessness in New York City: An In-Depth Study of Families' Experiences Before and After Shelter," is available on the Vera Institute's Web site (PDF):

http://www.vera.org/publication_pdf/308_575.pdf

City placing vulnerable homeless in buildings it deems unsafe

The city grants landlords generous subsidies to provide temporary housing to homeless families leaving the shelter system and homeless people living with AIDS. Yet fully one-quarter of the buildings in which the city places these vulnerable populations have been deemed

“unsatisfactory” by the city’s own Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), according to a new report by Housing Here and Now. 45 percent of the buildings had at least one hazardous (Class B) or immediately hazardous (Class C) violation per unit. The list of landlords receiving these subsidies includes eight on HPD’s 2003 Major Problem Owner list four of Housing Here and Now’s “Ten Worst Landlords.”

Read the report on Housing Here and Now’s Web site (PDF):
www.housinghereandnow.org/pdfs/YourTaxDollarsFINAL.pdf

Section 8 housing assistance

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities assesses the recent instability in funding for Section 8 housing vouchers and lays out a proposal for shoring up future funding in a recent report, “High Stakes for the Housing Voucher Program in the 2006 Appropriations Bill.”

Read the entire report on CBPP’s Web site:
<http://www.cbpp.org/8-24-05hous-pr.htm>

6. Upcoming events

Tuesday, October 25

The Community Service Society presents:

“The Unheard Third, 2005: Bringing the Voices of Low-income New Yorkers to the Policy Debate”

9:30-11:30 a.m.

The Community Service Society: 105 East 22nd Street, Room 4A

Read about the event and register:

<http://www.cssny.org/news/events/2005-10-signup.html?tr=y&auid=1152562>

Admission is free, but a reservation is required.

Thursday, October 27

The Center for an Urban Future presents an evening of panel discussions:

“The Race For Mayor 2005: Of Politics and Policy”

5:45-8:00 p.m.

Theresa Lang Community and Student Center, The New School: 55 West 13th Street between 5th and 6th Avenues, Second Floor

See the invitation here:

http://www.nycfuture.org/content/reports/report_view.cfm?repkey=169&search=1

Admission is free, but space is limited. RSVP recommended!

Thursday, October 27

Demonstration for repeal of the Urstadt Law

The demonstration will target Charles Urstadt, former state housing commissioner under Governor Nelson Rockefeller, who is receiving a real estate award at the University Club. Members of Housing Here and Now will demand that the state repeal the Urstadt Law and give control of rent regulation back to the city. Organized by the Coalition for the Homeless, the Metropolitan Council on Housing, and Tenants & Neighbors, all members of Housing Here and Now.

6:00-7:30 p.m.

The University Club: 1 West 54th Street at 5th Avenue

Read more at Met Council’s Web site:

<http://www.metcouncil.net/campaigns/urstadt.htm>

Tuesday, November 1

Housing Here and Now General Meeting

Hear the latest on the “Fix It Now!” campaign calling for enforcement of building code violations and discuss Housing Here & Now’s agenda in the city and state.

6:30 p.m.

United Federation of Teachers building: 52 Broadway at Exchange Place, 2nd Floor, Auditorium C

Thursday, December 1

Housing Here and Now: New York City Council Speakers Forum

This event will be the first-ever forum on housing justice issues for candidates for City Council Speaker.

6:30 p.m.

Washington Irving High School: 40 Irving Place, off 17th Street near Union Square

And last but not least:

Wednesday, November 9

Habitat for Humanity-New York City Builder Awards Gala

Habitat-NYC's annual gala will celebrate our family partners and our community, faith, and corporate allies, including Bloomberg, Habitat-NYC’s corporate partner of the year. The evening will feature an auction of services donated by painters, electricians, plumbers, celebrities, and other home professionals, with auctioneer Al Roker of NBC’s Today Show. Join Honorary Chair Susan Sarandon and Habitat-NYC as we celebrate the hard work of Habitat-NYC families!

The gala will take place at the majestic Cathedral of St. John the Divine and will begin at 6:30 p.m.

**Habitat for Humanity – New York City
transforms lives and our city by uniting all New Yorkers
around the cause of decent, affordable housing for everyone.**

To join the Covenant Action Network, sign up at our Web site:

<http://www.habitatnyc.org/advocate.html>