

NYCHA REPORT CARD: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS



Introduction

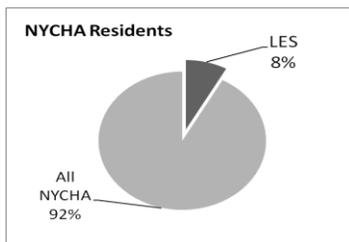
Every year, the New York City Housing Authority puts out an annual plan discussing its current state and its goals for the future. However, NYCHA does not allow residents, the people directly impacted by policies, to have true decision-making power in this process. Members of the Resident Advisor Board (RAB) are allowed to officially comment on the annual plan and all residents are allowed to attend hearings to comment on the draft annual plan. But they are not given true decision-making power to decide specifics, including an assessment of current practices and prioritizing future goals. This policy excludes residents from essential and significant housing authority decisions. So we thought: What if everyone could help decide NYCHA's goals? What if residents had a voice in this process? What if residents graded NYCHA on their current policies and practices?

Background

Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES) is a neighborhood housing and preservation organization that has served the Lower East Side (LES) of Manhattan since 1977 and is dedicated to tenants' rights, homelessness prevention, economic development and community revitalization. As a part of this work, GOLES formed Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side (PHROLES) specifically to fight for public housing resident's rights. PHROLES partnered with the Community Development of the Urban Justice Center to survey over 280 residents of the Lower East Side, asking residents to grade the management staff, the repair process, and the overall state of buildings and developments. Surveys are still being collected, but the preliminary results are below.¹

Public Housing in the Lower East Side

27 Developments
32,379 Residents
14,440 Apartments



Survey Respondent Demographics

DEMOGRAPHIC	PERCENT
GENDER	
Female	75%
Male	25%
RACE	
African American	22%
Asian American	6%
Caucasian	10%
Hispanic	61%
Other	2%
YEARS IN PUBLIC HOUSING	
0 to 2	3%
3 to 5	8%
6 to 10	12%
11 to 15	12%
16+	66%
VOTERS	
YES	82%

Findings

1. NYCHA management staff is not properly running and maintaining buildings and developments.

NYCHA is the largest landlord in the city, with over 400,000 people in 178,000 apartments. Developments are organized by borough and then by managing developments; though each development still retains at least a few management staff on site. According to the NYCHA handbook, management staff, including housing assistants, clerical staff, managers and assistant managers, are "proud to serve" residents to "successfully manage and maintain buildings and developments." However, residents report that management staff are often rude and are unable to properly manage the buildings. **Nearly 40% of our survey respondents reported that NYCHA had lost their paperwork at least once in the past four years.**

"They lose my paperwork every year. Then they threaten to terminate your lease for their mistake. They never take responsibility. You make an appointment with them and they don't show up. The management is very rude and unprofessional."

-NYCHA Resident, Baruch Houses

¹ Preliminary findings based on analysis of 281 surveys. Percentages only reflect answered questions in the survey.

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Management Staff	Grade
Availability	C
Accountability	C
Overall	C

Residents report significant problems in the cleanliness of buildings and the extermination of rodents and pests.

“Our elevators are broken every day!”

-NYCHA Resident, LaGuardia Houses

2. Residents have difficulty reporting necessary repairs and then often have to wait too long for repairs to be completed.

In the past, repairs were reported and fixed in a timely manner. The procedure was simple enough; go to the development’s management staff and ask the development’s repairman to fix the problem, which they usually did within a few days. However, NYCHA decided to consolidate this process and created the Centralized Calling Center (CCC). Now residents report needed repairs by calling this number, where language services are limited and repairs come slowly. Even something as simple as unclogging a sink can take upwards of six months!

Centralized Calling Number	Grade
Timeliness	F
Overall	C

“Half of these maintenance workers did not receive the proper training. They only half fix stuff.”

- NYCHA Resident, Jacob Riis Houses

Repairs	Grade
Quality	C
Competence	C
Timeliness	F
Overall	C

3. As a direct result of poor management and repair practices, NYCHA buildings and developments are falling into more and more disrepair and disarray.

Most of the NYCHA buildings, and particularly those in the LES, were built in the 1940s and 1950s, but the First Houses go back to 1935. Those historic landmarks, like other old buildings in the LES, require extensive upkeep and maintenance. These properties represent an initial substantial federal investment in the LES neighborhood and its people. But current NYCHA policies and practices are sending these developments into disorder.

Building/Development	Grade
Cleanliness	D
Development Safety	F
Elevator Maintenance	F
Pest Management	D
Overall	C

NYCHA Annual Plan Stated Goals

1. Improve Customer Service and Quality of Life: Management
 - NYCHA aims to foster “the best customer service possible;” but has only provided customer service training for 10% of its employees.²
 - **We recommend NYCHA provide customer service and sensitivity trainings to all employees, and improve accountability by increasing transparency of management practices and policies.**

2. Improving Customer Service and Quality of Life: CCC and Repairs
 - Despite the fact that repairs take even longer to complete with the new Centralized Calling Number, NYCHA plans expand it to cover additional customer service needs.
 - **We recommend NYCHA provide better training for CCC operators and repairmen, implement a formal follow-up process to track the completion of repairs, and provide fully inclusive language access.**

3. Preservation and Expansion of Public Housing Stock: Elevators
 - NYCHA only plans to upgrade some of the elevators in 19 of the 334 developments.
 - **We recommend NYCHA drastically increase maintenance staff training and oversight to ensure safety and convenience at all NYCHA developments, but with a priority on buildings with seniors and people with disabilities.**

² Calculation based on NYCHA estimate of total employees.