



**TakeRoot Justice's Written Comments:
NYCHA FY2022 Annual Plan**

July 27, 2021

My name is Dr. Sophonie Milande Joseph. I am speaking today as Community Planner & Advocacy Coordinator in the Equitable Neighborhoods practice of TakeRoot Justice.

TakeRoot Justice works with grassroots groups, neighborhood organizations and community coalitions to help make sure that people of color, immigrants, and other low-income residents who have built our city are not pushed out in the name of “progress.” We represent our community-based partner organizations to ensure that residents in historically under-resourced areas have stable housing they can afford, places where they can connect and organize, jobs to make a good living, and other opportunities that allow people to thrive.

This hearing does not comply with HUD public hearing requirements:

Our presence at today’s public hearing is illegal. NYCHA failed to provide the 45 days’ notice prior to today’s public hearing. While NYCHA’s website states the Annual Plan was published June 11, 2021, our organization—which is a known stakeholder, having testified at prior NYCHA hearings, and which is signed up on various NYCHA stakeholder listservs— only received notice of the Authority’s 2022 Draft Annual Plan and hearing on July 11, a mere 16 days before this hearing. We’ve heard the same from numerous community partners— including TA presidents, NYCHA residents and tenant organizers.

As such, NYCHA has failed to actually provide 45 days notice¹, and is in direct **violation of federal notice requirements**. NYCHA’s failure to circulate its draft annual plan and notices of this hearing with sufficient notice highlights its ongoing blatant **disregard of its obligation to solicit resident and community input**.

The Authority is skirting federal notice requirements to ram through a plan that does not reflect NYCHA residents’ vision for the future of their respective communities. Over the past year NYCHA residents have protested repeatedly about their right to be included in all planning processes from inception, and not merely be informed after decisions have been made. These protests urgently addressed NYCHA as it has attempted to make deals with private entities to have them take over management of public housing, to secure private investments with public housing (giving the investors the right to foreclose if the public entity cannot pay interest and principal), or to build privately-owned housing on the public authority’s playgrounds and open spaces.

¹ See 24 CFR § 903.17. Available at: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/24/903.17>

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The fact that the draft plan for FY2022 includes all of the above strategies, despite resident opposition through the grueling months of the pandemic, demonstrates that **NYCHA doesn't care what residents and community stakeholders have to say** about the future of NYC public housing. In doing so, NYCHA confirms that they are ignoring repeated resident protests against privatization.

The proposed Annual Plan is substantively unacceptable:

In the Annual Plan for FY 2022, NYCHA continues to “plan” in **reliance on the Blueprint-- key components of which have been rejected by the New York State (NYS) legislature, NYCHA residents and allies.**

The preservation component of the Blueprint, as described in the Executive Summary of the FY2022 Draft Plan, on of a “Public Housing Preservation Trust,” which can only be created through a legislative act. However, both NYS legislative bodies, the State Senate and the Assembly, have shelved the proposal to create it²— since it does not have the support it needs to take this crucial step towards the “Preservation” portion of its Blueprint plan, NYCHA should look elsewhere for preservation strategies. NYCHA’s decision to proceed with the Blueprint for preservation, despite the decision of elected officials who are accountable to NYCHA residents and community stakeholders, is simply another example of its commitment to an undemocratic process for managing public housing. NYCHA has wasted another year on its Blueprint pipe dreams and failed to present any viable preservation strategy to protect the public housing it is obligated to steward.

On June 2, 2021, the chairs of both legislative chambers’ Housing Committees, State Senator Brian Kavanagh and Assemblymember Steven Cymbrowitz, announced in a joint statement,

After consultation with public housing residents, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and other stakeholders on proposed legislation [...] that would create the New York City Public Housing Preservation Trust [...] we have decided that further conversation, outreach, and negotiation are necessary before advancing legislation on this topic.³

Having failed to convince the legislature to create the “Public Housing Preservation Trust,” NYCHA’s insistence on “planning” a NYCHA future based on the Blueprint— without even bothering to propose an alternative in the event that the Trust is not approved— is tone-deaf, at best.

As recognized in the joint statement, in public testimony in last year’s Annual Plan hearings, and in every community space where NYCHA’s future is the topic of conversation, the Blueprint is widely opposed by

² “NYCHA’s Latest Rescue Plan Needs State Approval But That Won’t Be Coming Anytime Soon.” June 4, 2021. Available at: <https://www.gothamgazette.com/state/10539-nycha-blueprint-rescue-plan-needs-state-approval>.

³ “Statement by Sen Kavanagh, AM Cymbrowitz Regarding Not Advancing the Proposed NYCHA ‘Trust’ Bill This Legislative Session.” June 2, 2021. Available at: <https://www.nysenate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/brian-kavanagh-statement-sen-kavanagh-am-cymbrowitz-regarding-not-advancing>.

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residents and community stakeholders as NYCHA's plan to privatize New York City's public housing. NYCHA's ongoing denial of the fact that the Blueprint, RAD/PACT, and private infill development on NYCHA's campuses, are privatization is disrespectfully gaslighting NYCHA's residents.

Rather than planning for how to sell— or long-term, low-rent lease— our City's essential public housing resources, NYCHA should return to the drawing board, and develop a new Annual Plan that plans for the future of public housing in collaboration with residents. With a massive influx of federal infrastructure funding around the corner, and with legislative majorities on the city, state, and federal levels all supporting preservation of public housing, NYCHA must re-imagine what preservation looks like—and must plan for essentials of dignified living for its residents, not simply the minimum repairs, but also community resources like playgrounds, schools, grocery stores and libraries.

We will not preserve public housing and build a dignified future for public housing residents by leasing away public land and green space in NYCHA developments, and/or by transferring management to for-profit management companies who are not driven by NYCHA's public service mission.

NYCHA must look back to its mission and create a new Annual Plan in collaboration with tenants. Otherwise, the ongoing injustice towards NYCHA tenants will unfortunately continue.