



# CONNECTED COMMUNITIES GUIDEBOOK

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A practical guide for community engagement, open space design, and building preservation and construction on NYCHA campuses.

CONNECTED  
COMMUNITIES  
GUIDEBOOK

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The New York City Department of City Planning (the Department) is so pleased to be partnering with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) as part of NYCHA’s Connected Communities initiative and more broadly on ensuring that NYCHA residents have the homes that they deserve. Specifically, we are excited about the opportunity to rethink how NYCHA’s 2,400 acres—an invaluable resource in a space-constrained city—can better serve NYCHA residents and all New Yorkers.

Using the urban design principles that inform all the Department’s work, the *Connected Communities Guidebook* demonstrates how open spaces—including pathways and playgrounds—can be designed to improve quality of life for NYCHA residents and better knit NYCHA campuses into the broader fabric of our city. A vibrant, inviting, safe public realm helps all New Yorkers enjoy and take pride in their community. Sadly, years of federal underfunding have diminished the quality of open spaces at many NYCHA campuses, isolating them from their surrounding neighborhoods.

As with any urban planning effort, the creation of the *Connected Communities Guidebook* started with engaging the community. NYCHA residents are the most vital source of knowledge about the spaces in and around their homes. Informed, strategic and transformative design decisions on each NYCHA campus depend on local residents’ inputs. The Guidebook provides strategies and principles to ensure that NYCHA, its residents, community members, planners and designers remain effectively engaged in imagining the future of NYCHA’s physical features, particularly its abundant open spaces. It is designed to spark and help shape conversations about improving the open spaces. This includes everything from public art installations to pathways designed to welcome pedestrians get from home to the park, to school, and to work. The Guidebook also offers important guidance on how new construction can be leveraged to improve NYCHA campuses.

The *Connected Communities Guidebook* is just the beginning of a strong interagency and community partnership to enhance the open spaces at NYCHA campuses, which are an integral part of the city’s neighborhoods.

Special thanks to NYCHA—both the administration and the residents—for their collaboration on this important initiative. I look forward to a better designed, connected and sustainable future for all NYCHA communities.

In partnership,

Marisa Lago  
Director of NYC Department of City Planning  
Chair of the City Planning Commission



For more than 85 years, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), the nation’s largest public housing authority, has provided countless New Yorkers with a decent, affordable home and a pathway for opportunity. Yet, NYCHA is facing historic challenges: decades of federal underfunding have resulted in capital needs exceeding \$32 billion. To address these challenges, the Authority launched NYCHA 2.0 in 2018. This long-term plan outlines strategies to stabilize NYCHA’s finances and buildings, and improve the quality of life for the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who call the Authority home.

As part of this vision, NYCHA has been rolling out Connected Communities, the Authority’s comprehensive urban design initiative. As a steward of over 2,400 acres across every borough of the city, NYCHA is leveraging design to better physically connect its residents to each other, and to surrounding neighborhoods and resources.

In 2018, NYCHA partnered with the Department of City Planning to create a tool to help implement this design approach. The *Connected Communities Guidebook* is the product of extensive discussions with internal and external stakeholders, and it builds on prior NYCHA design initiatives. It also supports the City’s goals to improve inter-agency collaboration, increase green space equity, and integrate resilience within vulnerable communities. Through this collaboration with City Planning, the Authority will continue to improve the quality of life for residents through better design and activation of streets, pathways, and open spaces in their communities.

We must also ensure that public housing residents can connect to and enjoy increasing transit opportunities, green spaces, and pedestrian experiences across New York City. Through strategic partnerships, capital investments, and improvements in policies and procedures, the *Connected Communities Guidebook* will help change the way the Authority approaches urban design issues. From rezonings to streets to fencing, NYCHA is looking to design in an inclusive way for generations of New Yorkers to come.

This guidebook to creating stronger communities will be a valuable resource for residents, employees, community organizations, and sister agencies who are working together to create a more connected NYCHA. Thank you for joining us in this vital work.

In partnership,

Gregory Russ  
Chair & Chief Executive Officer

J. Steven Lovci  
Executive Vice President of Capital Projects



# INTRODUCTION



South Jamaica Houses residents at design workshop

## Preface

All New York City Housing Authority residents deserve a well-designed environment that is integrated with the city. The *Connected Communities Guidebook* was produced to address urban design issues at NYCHA campuses in a holistic manner and with the guidance and support of the City’s urban design goals<sup>1</sup> at large. In early 2018, the Authority started engaging leadership, staff, and residents on strategies for increased connectivity throughout its campuses to better integrate them into the city. With the help of the Department of City Planning (DCP), and through a process of research, analysis, and workshops with residents, designers, and decision-makers, the collaboration has culminated in a publication that consolidates the Authority’s priorities for urban design and community engagement.

1. In 2017, DCP released its principles for urban design. They are applied across all of DCP’s work: they help shape neighborhood planning initiatives and zoning regulations; they inform the design of public spaces and the buildings around them; they reinforce planning goals related to equity, accessibility and resiliency; and they guide future development to improve peoples’ experiences of the city. For more details, visit [www.nyc.gov/planning](http://www.nyc.gov/planning).

## How to Better Connect Communities?

Quality design can better connect NYCHA residents to one another and to the surrounding community by carefully considering and exploring the following elements:



### Community Engagement

Engaging residents to have a participatory role in shaping the spaces around them is a powerful strategy for forming connections in a community. It fosters trust, stewardship of space, and an understanding of place that results from the lived experience of the residents. Whenever community engagement is conducted, it should be transparent and done with the intent to listen and integrate what is being said by the residents. An iterative design process that provides different opportunities for feedback is essential to meaningful resident engagement.



### Safety and Security

Developing design solutions to make common open spaces feel safe and comfortable for NYCHA residents and the surrounding community. The perception of safety is important to the use and stewardship of open spaces.



### Health and Resilience

Designing safe, clean, and accessible open spaces will encourage physical activity. Open spaces must be designed in ways to promote residents' health, wellbeing, and social resilience.



### Maintenance and Operations

Designing open spaces while considering maintenance requirements will ensure that they improve residents' quality of life in the long-term. Designs that foster strong community ownership and sense of pride are more likely to be successful.

## The *Connected Communities Guidebook*

The Authority launched the Connected Communities Initiative to institutionalize design excellence. Multiple city and community partnerships were formed, and design interventions were piloted. This process allowed us to evaluate what could be done to improve design outcomes in campus rehabilitation. The *Connected Communities Guidebook* contains many of the lessons learned from various special initiatives, capital programs, and pilot projects underway across NYCHA campuses.

The guidebook will serve as the Authority's comprehensive approach to urban design across its portfolio. It will be an important part of every Request for Proposal (RFP) for new construction and the revitalization of Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) conversion campuses, as well as for smaller-scale non-profit or resident-led projects or City agency improvements. The guidebook's goals include:

1. Empowering residents in guiding and contributing to design projects at their campuses
2. Clarifying the process for implementation of a design project
3. Developing best practices for urban design that activate and improve connections between the NYCHA communities and surrounding neighborhoods
4. Expanding the audience of partnership for the Authority
5. Promoting community-centered design at NYCHA campuses

## Who Should Read This?

The *Connected Communities Guidebook* is a valuable resource for all NYCHA's stakeholders.



### NYCHA residents

The guidebook will empower residents to take on small-scale interventions, or engage partners in larger design decisions at their campuses. It provides residents with ideas for projects, processes for implementation, and valuable resources for how to design for a positive effect.



### Community-Based Organizations

Community-based organizations often know the needs and assets of a community best and can implement design projects accordingly. The guidebook provides clarity about partnering with the Authority on advocating for, designing, and implementing projects.



### Public Agencies

The guidebook provides agencies with access to the Authority's priorities on design for any collaborative project.



### NYCHA staff

The guidebook provides a comprehensive baseline for any design project on NYCHA land. The Authority's Capital Projects Division will continue to pursue the best design practices in the field of architecture and engineering. The Real Estate Development Department will continue to preserve and produce high-quality affordable housing for New Yorkers. The Community Engagement and Partnerships Department will continue to help facilitate relationships with residents and partners to collaborate on future projects. All other teams related to the maintenance and operations of buildings and grounds will continue to be an invaluable source of know-how to facilitate implementation.



### Private Development teams

As a part of the Authority's development initiatives, development teams will execute large design projects at NYCHA campuses across the city. The guidebook provides strategies for effective and transparent resident engagement as well as design priorities for architectural projects (both retrofitted and new) or open spaces initiatives.

## Contents

The *Connected Communities Guidebook* is divided into four main chapters that broadly reflect the role that NYCHA communities play in the city, the past and current conditions of its form and financing, and how these come together to preserve public housing in New York City.



### The New York City Housing Authority in Context

The first chapter of the guidebook looks at NYCHA's evolution from a bold experiment in public housing for the working class to today. This includes an examination of broader housing policies that have shaped NYCHA's architecture, urban design, and operation.



### Community Engagement

The second chapter explores engagement of residents and community members around design and how the Authority can partner with others to implement participatory design across the campuses. It provides strategies to facilitate meaningful and transparent resident engagement, and clarifies the role of those involved in the design process for projects ranging from open space pilots to new building construction.



### Design Guidelines for NYCHA Open Spaces

The third chapter establishes design principles that guide efforts to improve the open spaces within NYCHA campuses. With the clear goal of connecting NYCHA residents to their surrounding communities, this chapter also contains a range of strategies and case studies to guide collaboration on design projects.



### Design Guidelines for Preservation and New Construction

The fourth chapter provides basic parameters that guide the architecture and design of new construction on underused NYCHA land as well as rehabilitation projects. It provides guidance for designers and planners on analyzing NYCHA campuses to best connect residents and leverage available assets, as well as guidance on how new buildings can be thoughtfully integrated into an existing campus.





# THE NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY IN CONTEXT

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NYCHA HOUSES  
**1 IN 15**  
NEW YORKERS



## NYCHA IS THE LARGEST LANDLORD IN NEW YORK CITY



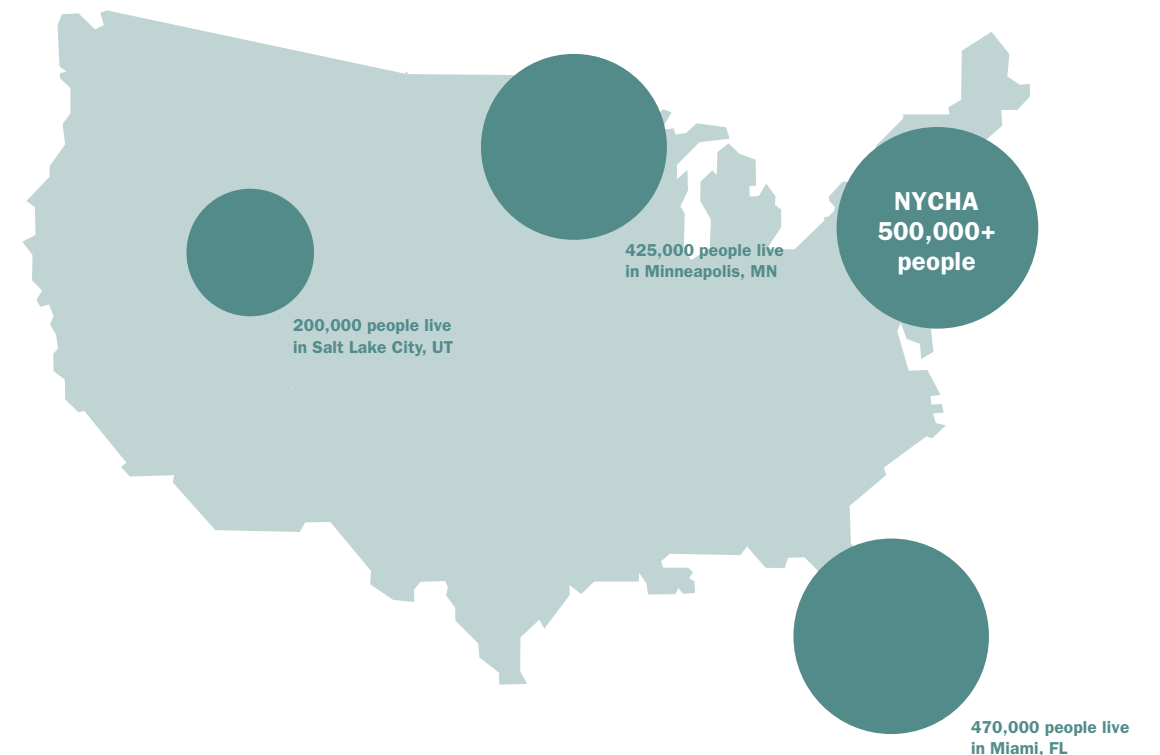
NYCHA HOUSES  
**ALMOST 100,000**  
CHILDREN



### NYCHA in Context

The New York City Housing Authority was established in 1934 by Mayor Fiorella LaGuardia as an affordable housing solution to the deplorable living conditions of tenement housing residents. Through broad political and financial support, the Authority was able to expand to become the largest housing authority in the country. Today, it is larger than the next eleven housing authorities combined, and it includes more than 170,000 public housing units in over 300 campuses. The Authority's public housing apartments comprise 8 percent of New York City's rental housing stock and are in such high demand that they have an average vacancy rate of less than 1 percent.

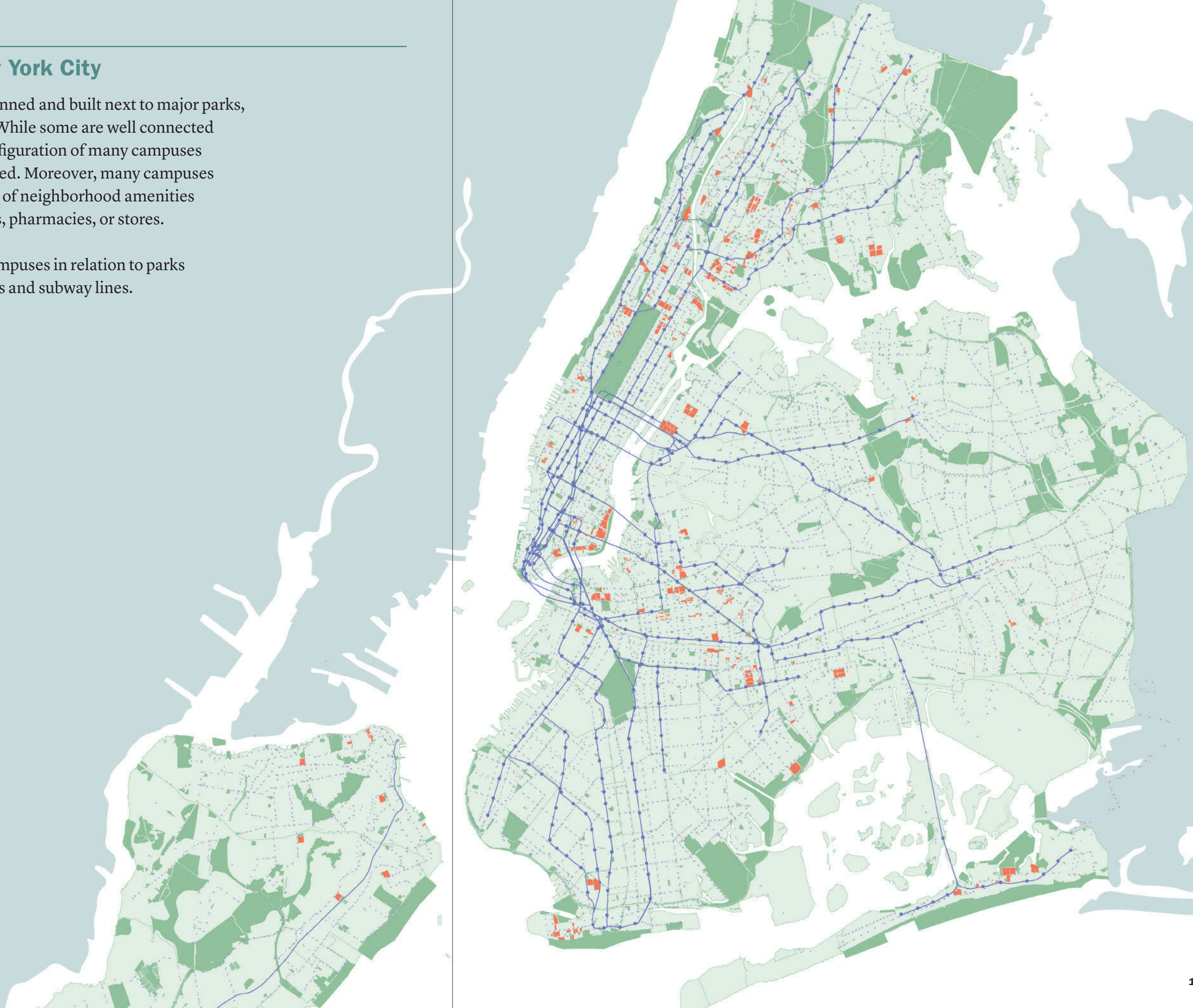
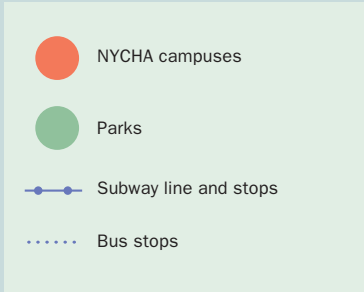
With more than 500,000 people, NYCHA's population is larger than the populations of Miami, Minneapolis, and Salt Lake City.



# NYCHA Campuses in New York City

NYCHA campuses were generally planned and built next to major parks, public institutions, and mass transit. While some are well connected to the rest of the city, the size and configuration of many campuses can make them feel remote and isolated. Moreover, many campuses suffer a lack of access to a diverse mix of neighborhood amenities and services, such as fresh food stores, pharmacies, or stores.

The following map shows NYCHA campuses in relation to parks and mass transit locations, such as bus and subway lines.



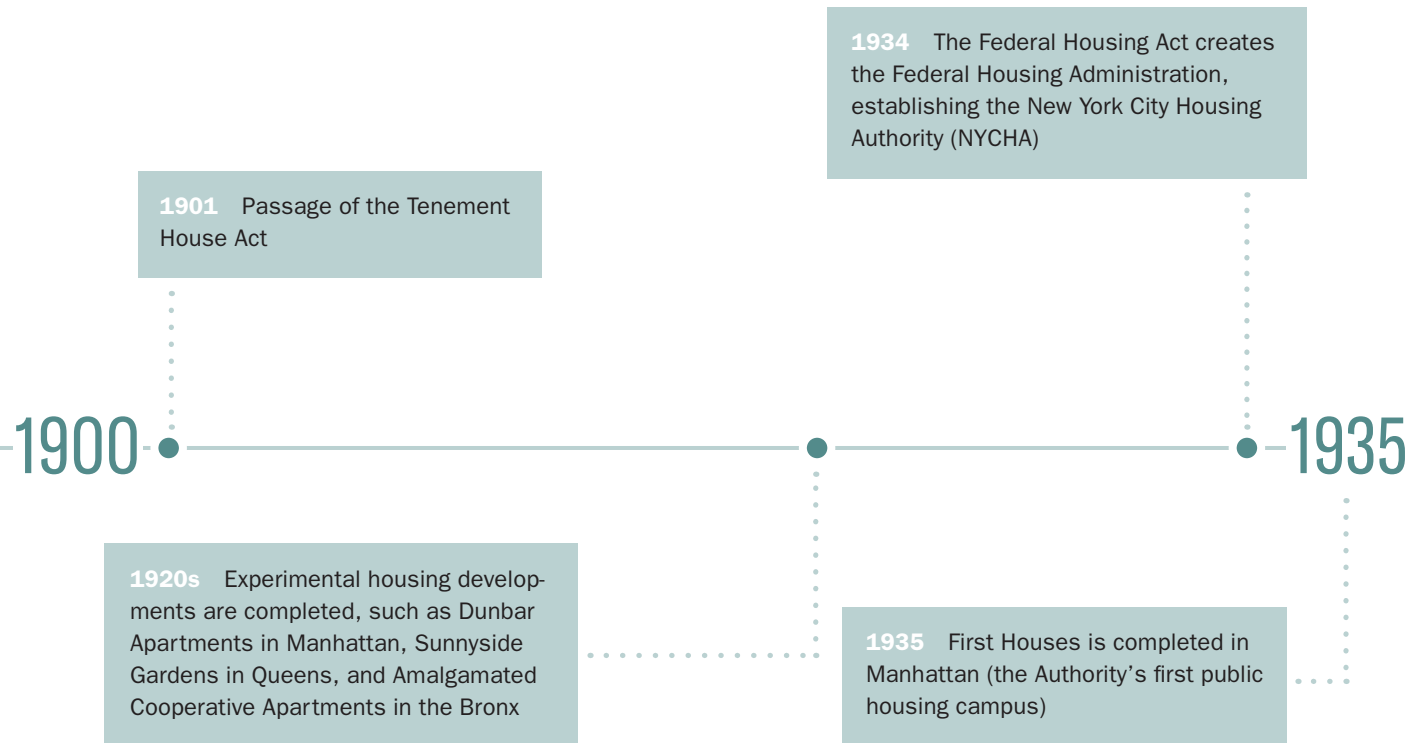
# NYCHA Campuses Through Time

## The Origin of Public Housing in New York City

Following the passage of the Tenement House Act of 1901 that banned the construction of dark and poorly ventilated tenement buildings in New York state, a growing awareness of the need to build decent housing for all led housing reformers (among them architects, planners, and politicians) to experiment with new housing forms in New York City.

The new law had stricter requirements for light and air access to rooms in the interior of buildings, which prompted the creation of new building forms. Moreover, with the city expanding along new train lines into sparsely urbanized part of Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, social housing architects pioneered experimental housing configurations based on abundant open space. Those new housing experimentations broadly inspired the Authority's architects, administrators, and planners when the Authority was created in the early 1930s.

NYCHA's portfolio contains buildings built before the Authority was even created, having been constructed both before and after the Tenement House Act was passed. These "pre-war" campuses were acquired over time by the Authority. Anyone walking by these buildings today would barely notice that they are NYCHA campuses.



## PRE-WAR TYPOLOGY

### Characteristics

#### Campus Size

Originally constructed as individual buildings, they became a campus under NYCHA. Multiple adjacent pre-war buildings can form a larger campus with combined rear yards that create a broader enclosed common space, accommodating active programs such as playgrounds or sports courts.

#### Building Configuration

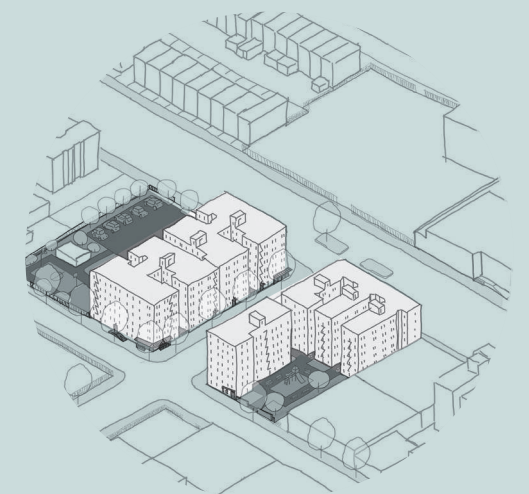
Building façades are parallel to the street, and placed along the property line or minimally set back. Buildings are generally six floors or less, and usually match the height of the surrounding neighborhood.

#### Access

Entries and lobbies face the street and are either located at the sidewalk level or raised a few feet and reachable through a stairway (stoops) and a ramp. Community facilities are sometimes found at the ground floor level.

#### Open Space

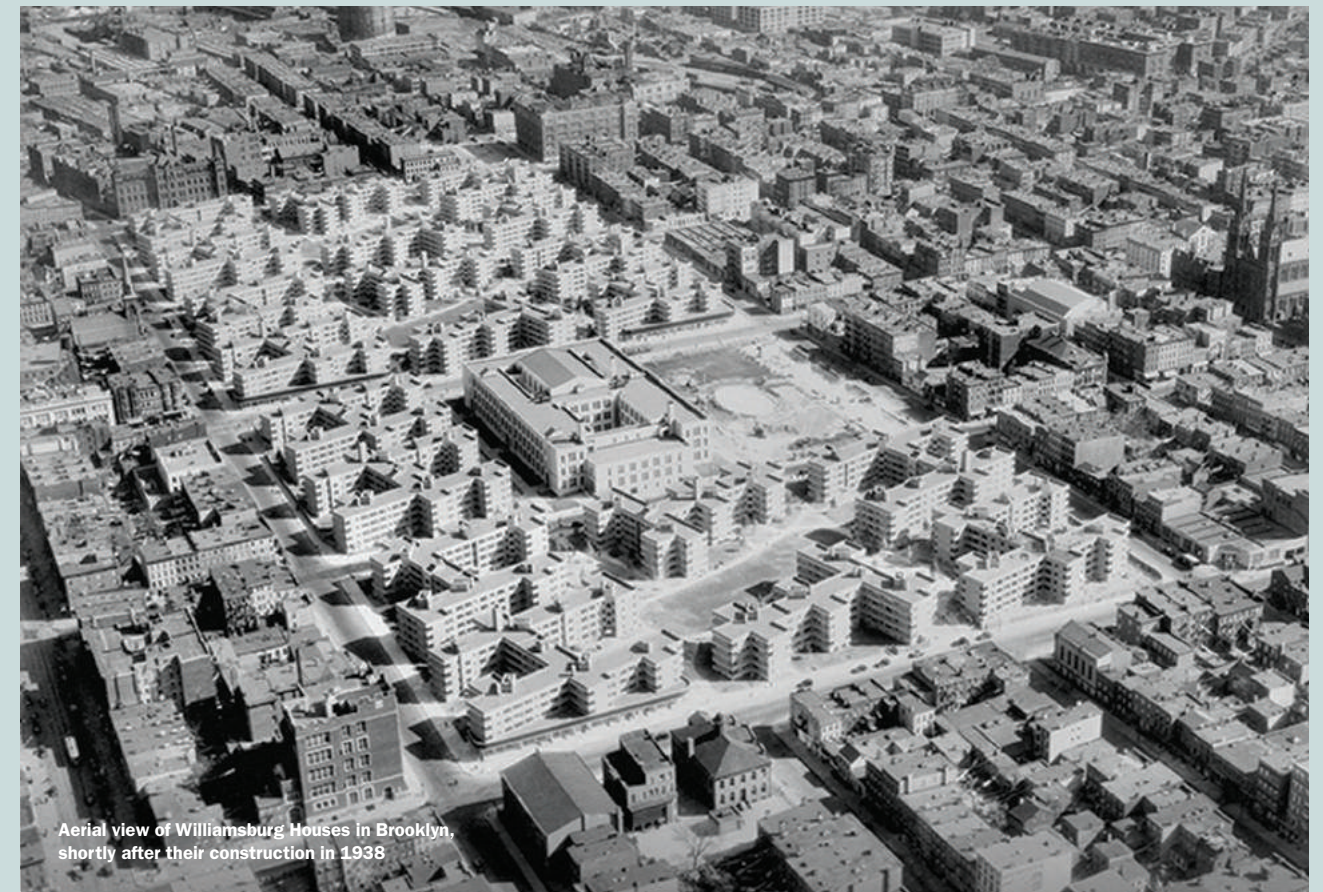
Lot coverage (the portion of a property covered with a building) is high, often taking up to 80 percent. Open spaces are limited to the rear yard, which can be used as either service areas (often waste management) or common space for residents.



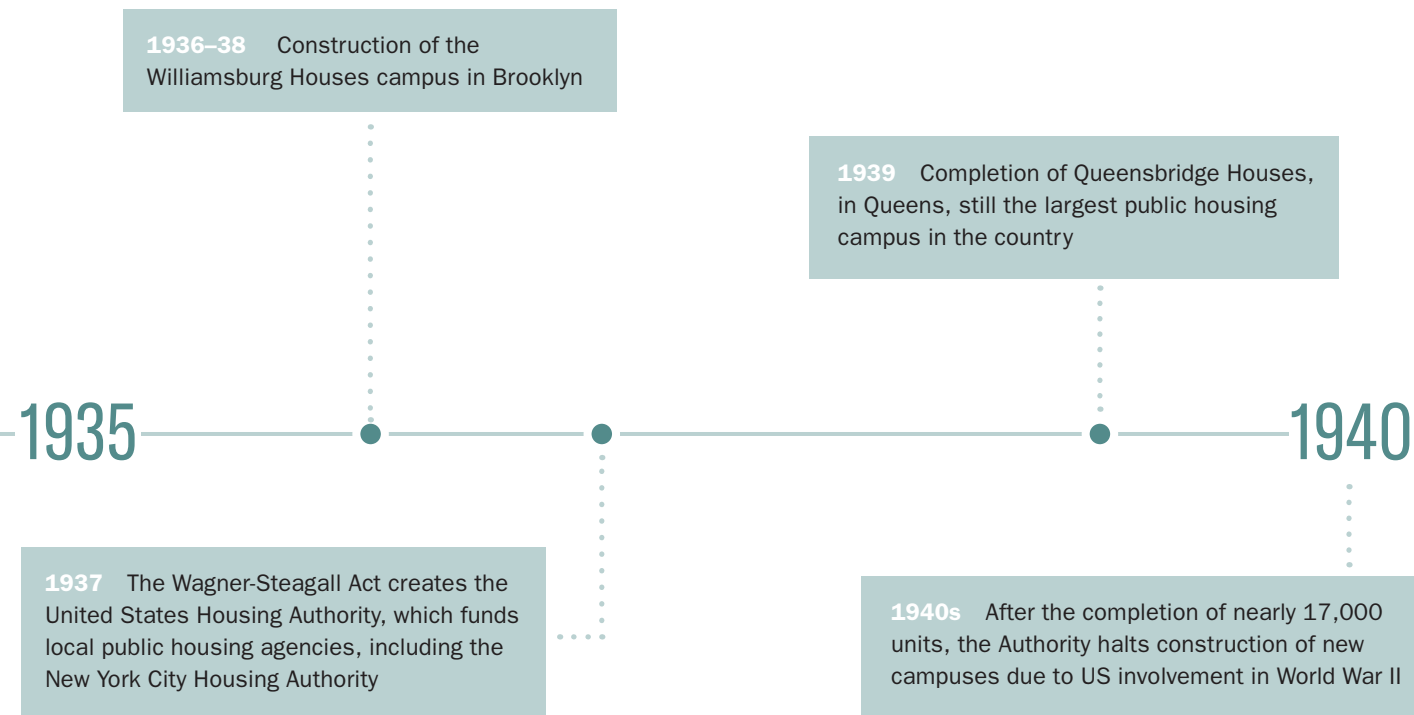
## Early NYCHA Campuses

During the 1930s, with financial support from the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration (PWA) and inspired by European housing precedents, the Authority completed its first “towers-in-the-park” campuses, including Harlem River Houses in Manhattan (completed 1937), Williamsburg Houses in Brooklyn (completed 1938), and Queensbridge Houses in Queens (completed in 1939). These first NYCHA campuses were at the vanguard of modern public housing architecture in the United States.

Accompanying the Authority’s expanding housing portfolio were a robust series of community programs for residents. Early housing projects included nurseries, kindergarten classrooms, actively programmed community centers, and playgrounds. In addition to these programs, NYCHA staff had rigorous procedures in place for the management of buildings and grounds, as well as strict code of conduct for residents to follow on public grounds. With a few notable exceptions, most NYCHA campuses did not include retail amenities, such as grocery stores.



Aerial view of Williamsburg Houses in Brooklyn, shortly after their construction in 1938



## EARLY TOWERS-IN-THE-PARK TYPOLOGY

### Characteristics

#### Campus Size

Campuses typically extend over multiple blocks to form superblocks and interrupt the original street grid.

#### Building Configuration

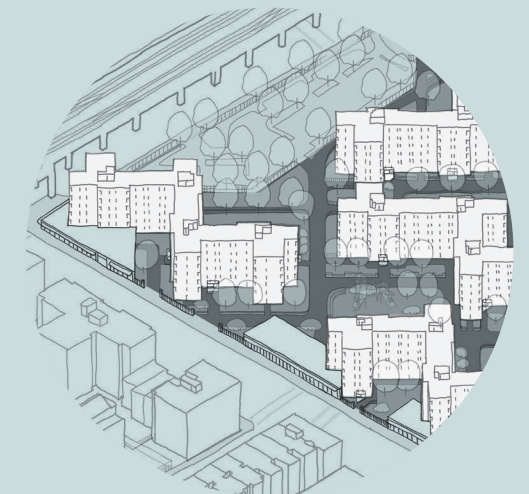
Building façades are usually set back from the street and can be either parallel or at an angle. Buildings are generally six floors or less and usually match the height of the surrounding neighborhood.

#### Access

Lobbies often face away from the street towards the interior of the campus and are accessed through pathways extending from the sidewalk. Some campuses have ground-floor retail or community facilities facing the street.

#### Open Space

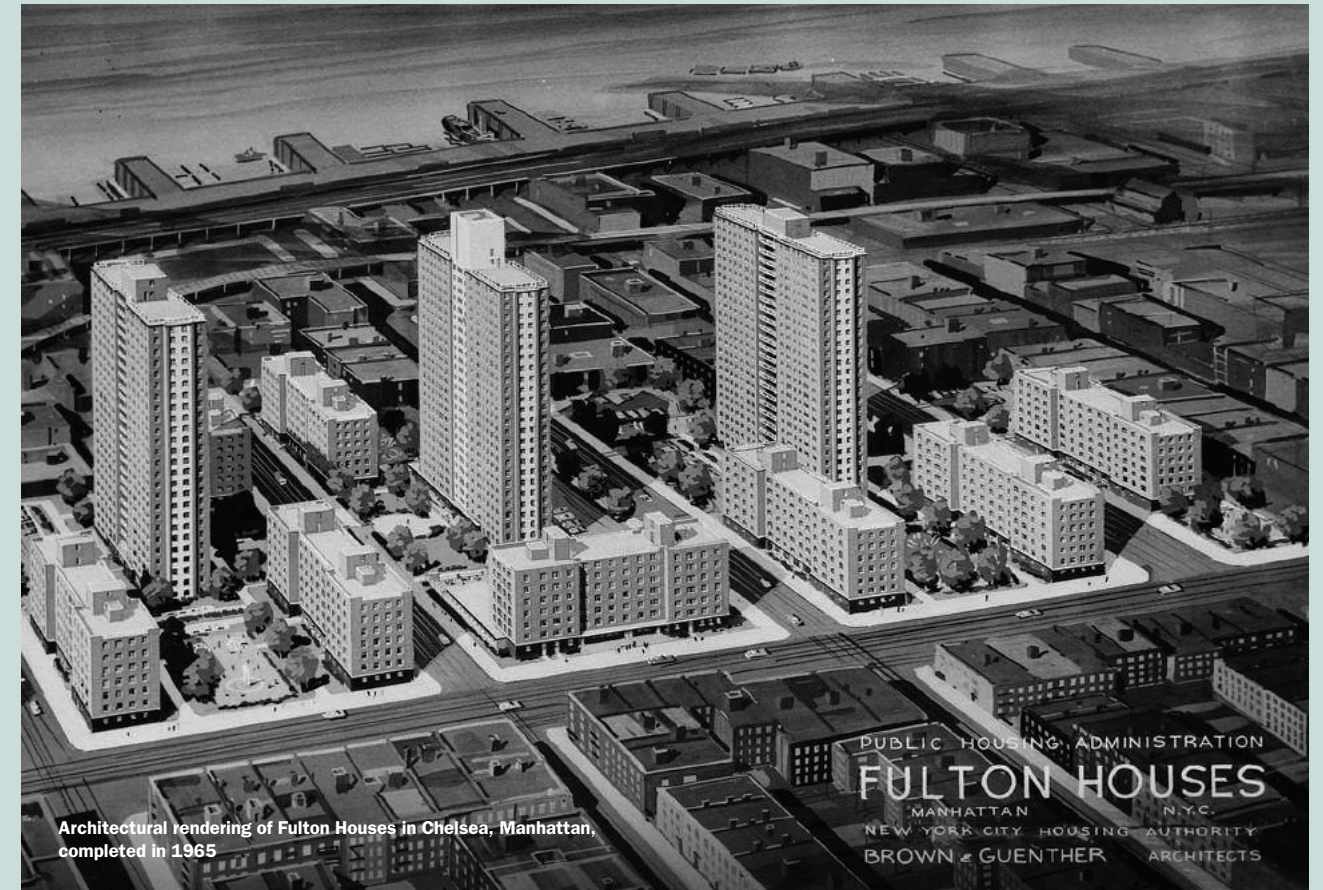
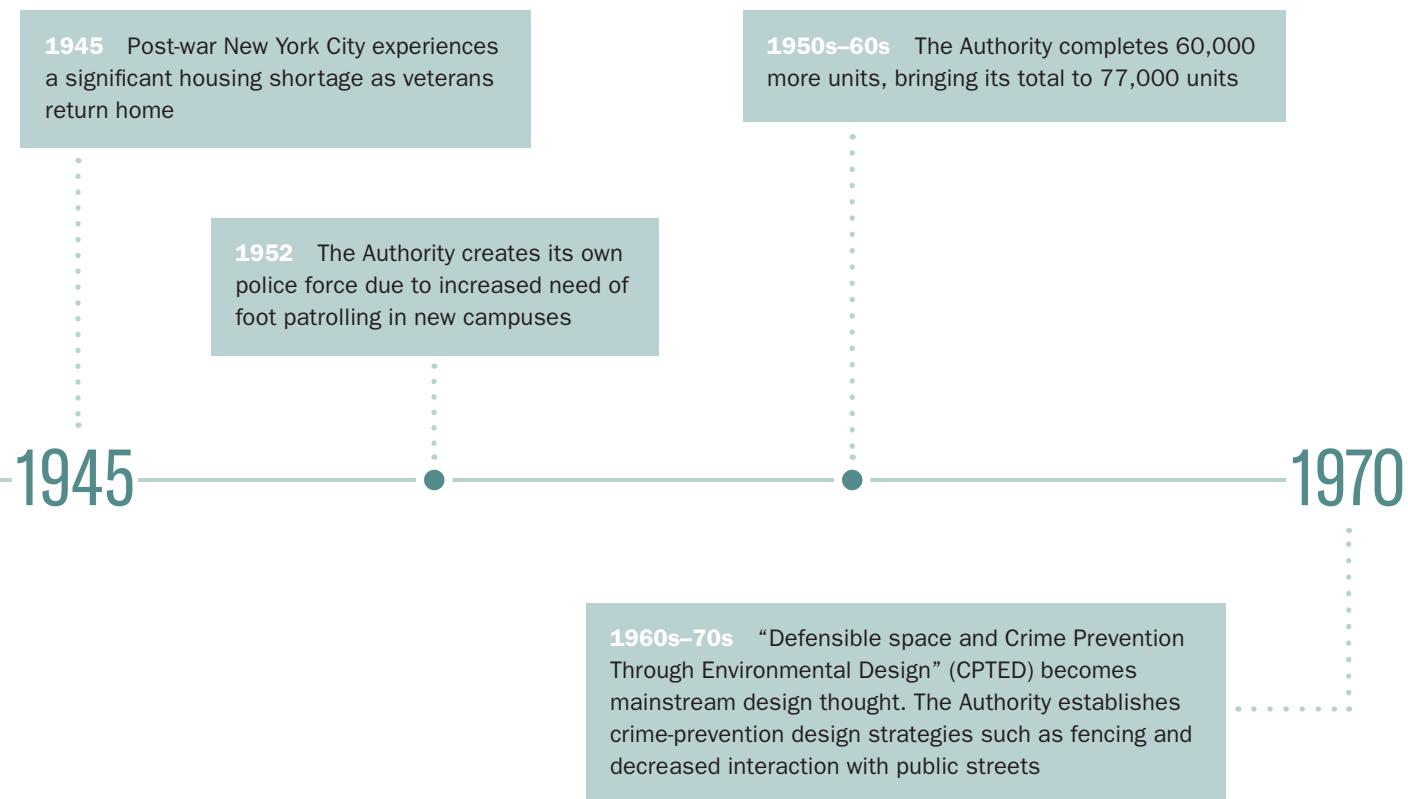
Given the size of the overall campus, building lot coverage is low (20–30 percent) providing vast and leafy open spaces. Buildings are set back from the street creating residual open spaces that are typically fenced off and landscaped. Larger landscaped open spaces are located at the center of the campus where active uses (such as playgrounds and sports courts) take place.



## Expansion through the Five Boroughs

To align with standard costs for housing construction for the federal government, buildings within NYCHA campuses in the 1940s and 1950s increased in height to maximize efficiency. The Authority also started eliminating some of the amenities featured in campuses built in the 1930s. Projects such as Farragut Houses in Brooklyn (1952) and Lilian Wald Houses in Manhattan (1958) reflect this second period of NYCHA construction which emphasized taller buildings, larger open spaces, and more efficient vertical circulation within buildings.

Many of NYCHA's buildings are recognizable by a "towers-in-the-park" design, which originated from certain basic tenets: better access to natural light and fresh air, durability, replicability on a large scale, and provision of vast open spaces for playgrounds and sports courts. NYCHA's high-rise campuses were situated on superblocks (blocks larger than typical city blocks), and were usually built near transit, schools, hospitals, and other municipal services. The towers-in-the-park concept became the model for high-rise public housing in the United States.



## TOWERS-IN-THE-PARK TYPOLOGY

### Characteristics

#### Campus Size

Campuses typically extend multiple blocks to form superblocks and interrupt the original street grid. Often, multiple campuses form larger clusters covering large swaths of a neighborhood and can read as one campus.

#### Building Configuration

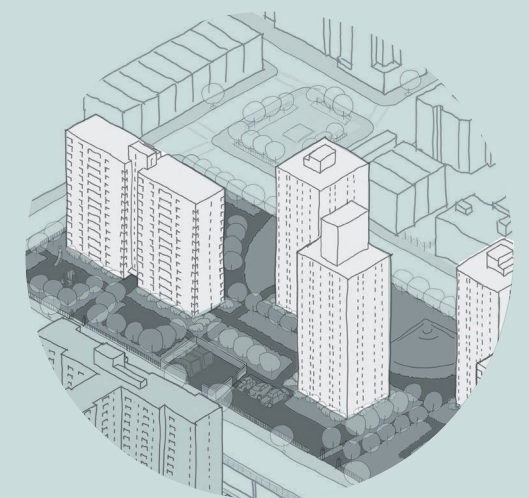
Buildings are set back from the street and can be either parallel or at an angle to it. Building height varies within a campus or from one campus to another, ranging from 6 to 30 stories.

#### Access

Lobbies face either the street or the center of the campus. They are reachable through a network of pathways that also lead to other buildings on the campus, shared service areas, and amenities (such as playgrounds, sports courts, and community centers).

#### Open Space

Given the size of the overall campus, building lot coverage is low (20-30 percent) providing vast and verdant open spaces. Open areas between the sidewalks and the buildings are fenced off and landscaped or used for parking and service areas. Larger landscaped open spaces located at the interior of a campus host active uses (playgrounds, sports courts) or large landscaped open spaces.



## Responding to the City Fabric

In the late 1960s, growing opposition to slum clearance and urban renewal led to a new development strategy that focused on scattered-site housing campuses. These are located throughout the five boroughs and tend to be further from the traditional NYCHA campuses that had already been built. Scattered-site campuses are usually smaller in size, rarely cover more than one block, and these are often built on scattered lots within the existing city fabric.

During the 1970s and 1980s, despite the management challenges faced by NYCHA staff, administrators, and residents, the Authority persisted in providing hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers with decent housing. While other housing authorities in cities like St. Louis and Chicago faltered, the New York City Housing Authority remained intact despite falling subsidies and rising demand. In the 1990s, while many other public housing agencies pursued HOPE VI (an initiative to revitalize distressed public housing projects) funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to demolish public housing towers and replace them with low-rise, mixed-income campuses, the Authority applied that same formula to only one campus, Prospect Plaza in Brooklyn, where the buildings had suffered structural damage that imperiled their future state of good repair.

**1970** The bulk of NYCHA campuses is completed by this point with over 120,000 units

**1980s** Defensible space and CPTED prescriptions of the 1970s are determined to have mixed effectiveness

1970

1980



Architectural drawing of Betances Houses in the Bronx, built in the early 1970s

## SCATTERED-SITE TYPOLOGY

### Characteristics

#### Campus Size

Campuses rarely extend over more than one block and do not interrupt the street grid.

#### Building Configuration

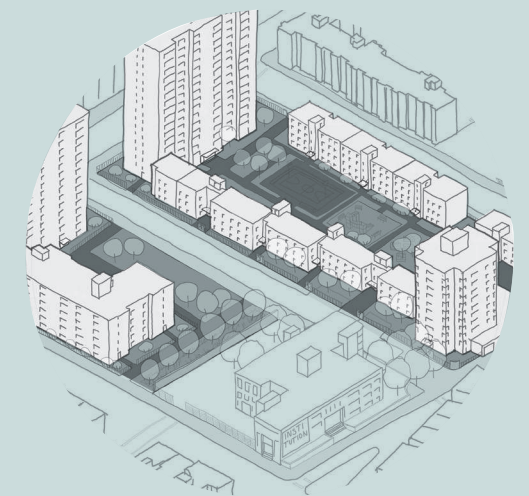
Building façades are parallel or aligned to the street. Building heights vary within a campus, or from one campus to another. Taller buildings (around 20 stories high) usually front on wider streets while lower height buildings (three to four stories high) front the side streets or interior of the blocks.

#### Access

Entries and lobbies generally face the street and are either located at the sidewalk level or raised a few feet, accessible through stairs and a ramp. When building entrances are inward-facing, they can be reached through pathways that cross the campus.

#### Open Space

Building lot coverages vary. When buildings are set back, the residual spaces between the buildings and the sidewalk are fenced off and landscaped to preserve privacy for ground floor apartments. The open spaces in the center of the campus are often activated with programs. Sometimes open spaces with direct access to streets are used for parking or service areas.



## NYCHA Today

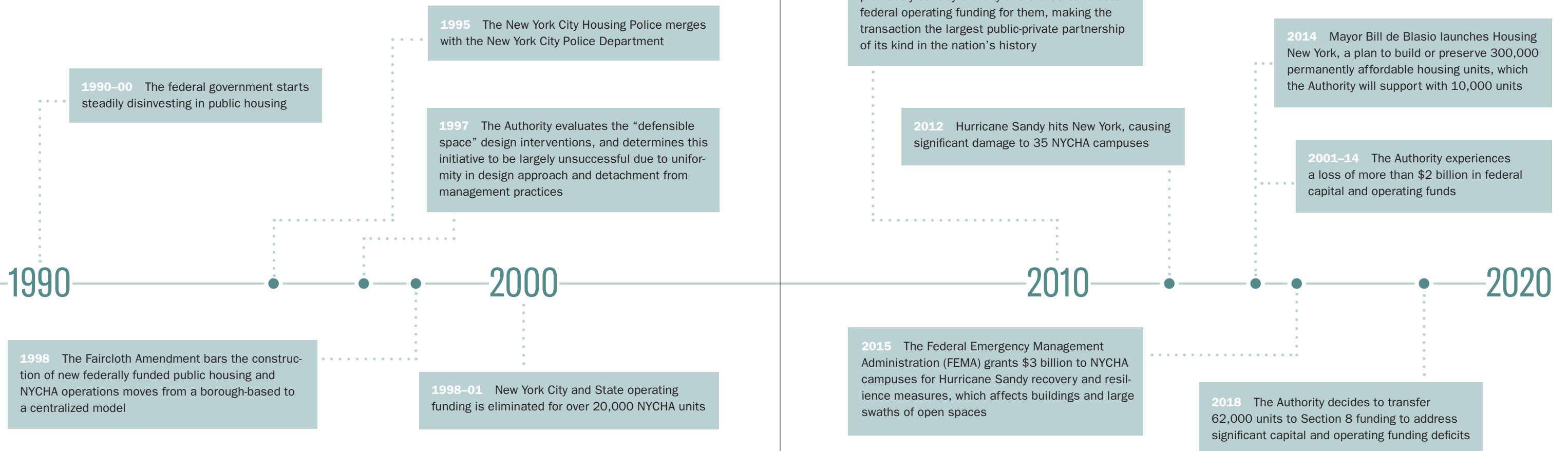
The Faircloth Amendment, a federal legislation enacted in 1998, barred the construction of any new federally funded public housing that would result in a bigger portfolio. The effect of this policy has made it impossible for the Authority to build any new public housing buildings.

Today, the Authority is at a pivotal moment in its history. Due to decades of dwindling federal subsidies and its aging buildings, the majority of which are over 50 years old, the total needed for comprehensive repairs, upgrades, and investment to improve resident quality of life is more than \$32 billion. While the city as a whole has prospered economically, many NYCHA campuses and their residents have been excluded from the prosperity of their immediate neighborhoods.

## NYCHA 2.0

NYCHA 2.0 is a comprehensive plan to preserve and strengthen public housing while improving the quality of life of its residents. NYCHA 2.0 goals are further detailed in Chapter 4 of this guidebook. The main goals of the plan are:

1. **Construction of 10,000 new affordable housing units by 2030 as part of the *Housing New York* plan**
2. **Improvement of neighborhood safety**
3. **Activation of underutilized ground floor spaces**
4. **Conversion of 62,000 public housing units to project-based Section 8 through Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) conversions**
5. **Adoption of design excellence practices that improve the quality of NYCHA campuses**







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# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Residents of Pomonok Houses, Queens, painting during Volunteer Day

## Community Engagement at NYCHA

NYCHA residents and the surrounding community must have an active role in shaping the environment in which they live. **Community engagement is a trust-building exercise, and projects that promote an inclusive participatory design are more likely to succeed.**

A transparent and inclusive community engagement is invaluable to the stewardship, sustainability, and legacy of any project.

As with any public space in the city, understanding open spaces at NYCHA campuses begins with careful observation and analysis. The culture, history, and operation of one campus may be entirely different from another, even though their buildings and grounds appear the same. Interventions in the built environment have a more sustained effect if the needs of the users of that space are understood. The *Connected Communities Guidebook* aims to establish a foundation of community engagement in which NYCHA residents are able to use their lived experience as an asset for projects that seek to activate and enhance open spaces in and around NYCHA campuses. If clear parameters are set from the beginning and resident feedback is recognized and valued, projects can improve the community as a whole. The community should be involved in the process of designing, establishing metrics for success, and evaluating effect on quality of life.

Resident interviews and observation should be the preliminary basis of understanding how open spaces are used on a NYCHA campus. Analyzing how open spaces work, and how they can be improved, should always begin with talking to residents about their perception of their campuses. What role does the community center, or other institutions, play on the campus? Where do people meet and gather? What is the relationship between the campus and the surrounding neighborhood?

Most NYCHA campuses have resident associations that are dedicated to improving the quality of life in their campuses. They are usually the first point of contact for any potential project, and they work with NYCHA management at every level. Apart from the elected positions on a resident association board, NYCHA residents have other ways of organizing to pursue various issues of interest, such as Youth Leadership Councils, the Senior Champions program, and Resident Green Committees.

The Authority's Department of Community Engagement and Partnerships is dedicated to the engagement of residents and facilitation of community partnerships. Each campus has a dedicated coordinator who can serve as a liaison between residents and the agency or other partners. This chapter clarifies the organization of some resident structures within the NYCHA community and highlights key principles to a successful engagement process.



NYCHA maintenance staff at Eastchester Gardens in the Bronx

### On-the-Ground Staff Engagement

To design successful open spaces, engaging with staff is as crucial as engaging with residents. NYCHA on-the-ground staff ensure adequate maintenance of buildings and open spaces, and they serve as direct line of communication between residents and the Authority. As such, their perspective must be considered in the design and future operation of any new project and program, since they offer thorough knowledge of how buildings, campuses, and immediate neighborhoods interact daily.



NYCHA caretakers managing waste

### Maintenance and Operations

NYCHA's Operations staff are responsible for the daily upkeep of all campuses. Today, there are a total of about 5,000 Operations staff, which make it one of the largest groups of NYCHA employees. Their work ranges from running boiler plants to maintaining open spaces, and the majority of their focus is on waste management. Currently, there are on average one to two caretakers on each campus dedicated to open space maintenance, meaning that each caretaker is responsible for the upkeep of over two acres of land each day. By comparison, 30 years ago, each caretaker was on average responsible for less than half an acre. This information highlights why thoughtful considerations related to ongoing maintenance and operation are key to creating successful open spaces.



Residents participating in gardening day at Patterson Houses in the Bronx

## Community Stewardship

The Authority engages many organizations in the stewardship and maintenance of the campuses open spaces, such as Partnerships for Parks, GrowNYC, and GreenThumbs. The Authority also partners with youth-oriented organizations to provide workforce training in sustainable practices, and to prepare them for the job market. Among those youth-oriented organizations are the New York Restoration Project and Green City Force (through its AmeriCorps program). All these partners are vital for supplementing the capacity to maintain NYCHA's extensive open spaces.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST

- Research the neighborhood and its history
- Conduct asset mapping and in-depth analysis
- Provide consistent and trained facilitation
- Engage community leaders
- Host multiple-format listening and workshop sessions
- Establish a consistent feedback loop with residents
- Document residents' needs, ideas, and proposals
- Develop a shared vision and establish goals
- Finalize and communicate project vision
- Evaluate projected goals

This is a reference checklist to help ensure community engagement is thorough, inclusive, and transparent. This checklist is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive. It's meant to outline a methodology that can be adapted to any NYCHA campus.

# Community Engagement Process

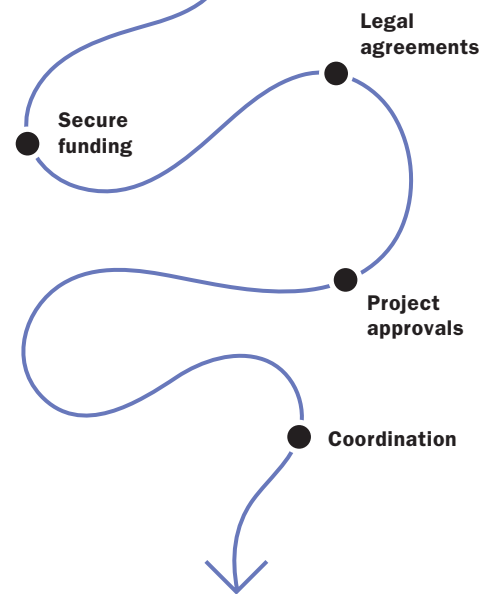
## INFORM

A partner reaches out to the Authority, who informs NYCHA representatives

**PARTNERS**

There is a wide range of groups that collaborate with NYCHA, including City Agencies, civic organizations and institutions.

Development Teams      Community-Based Organizations



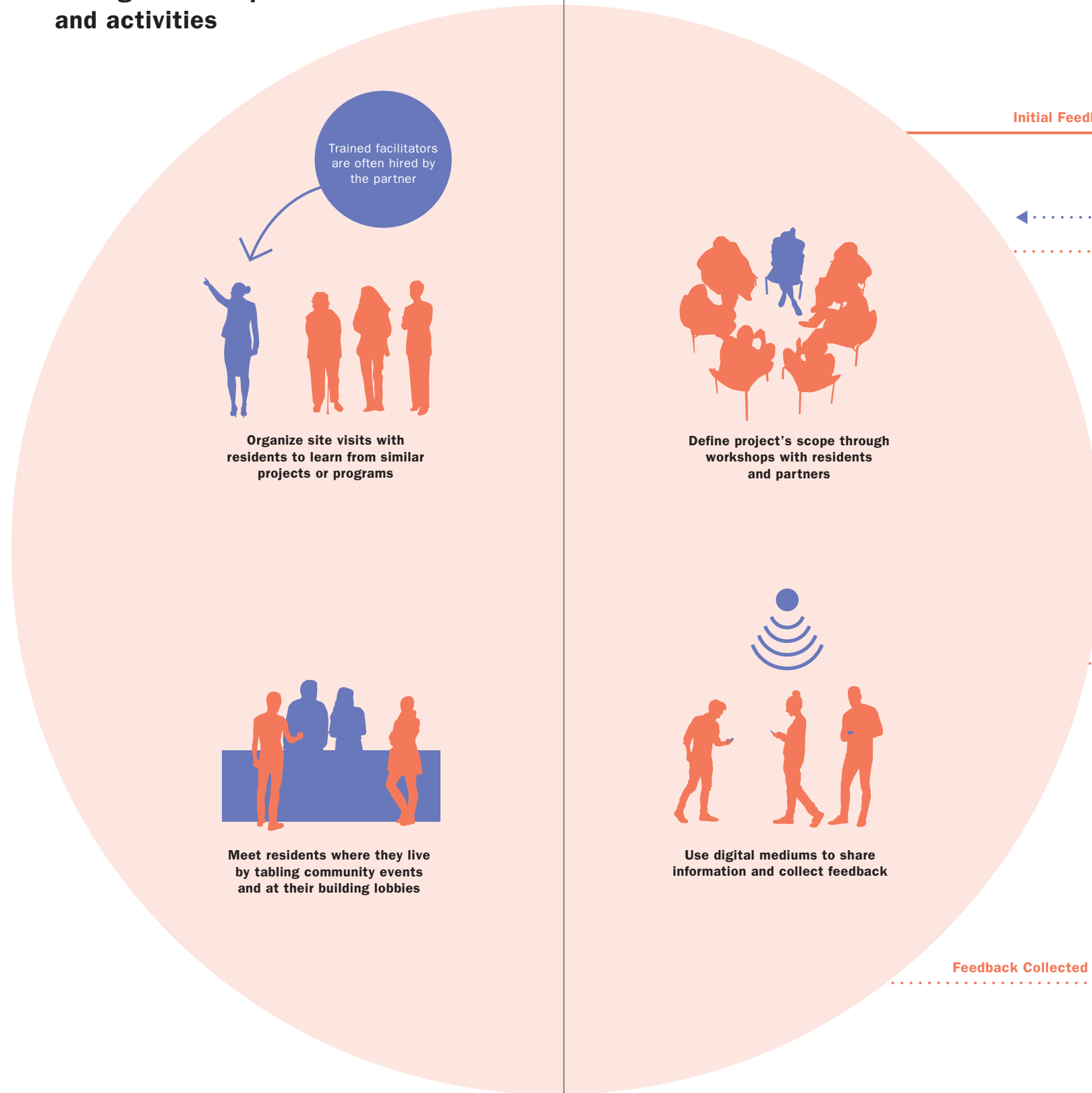
**NYCHA**

NYCHA representatives' primary role is communicator. The representatives should also continue to stay informed throughout the process.

NYCHA Zone Coordinators      Resident Associations

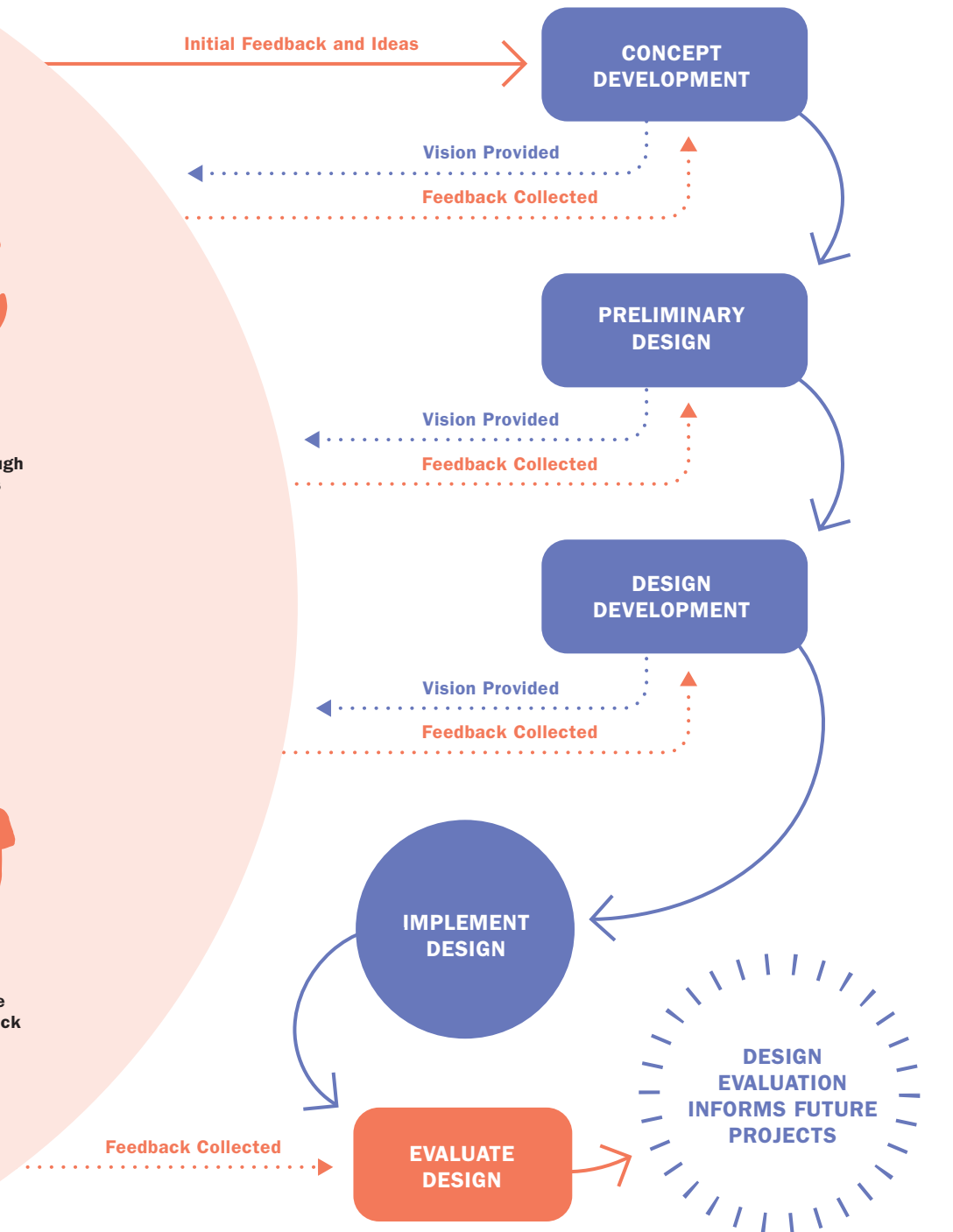
## ENGAGE

Facilitators engage residents through several platforms and activities



## ITERATE

NYCHA and partners develop trust by regularly informing and engaging with residents



# Principles of Community Engagement

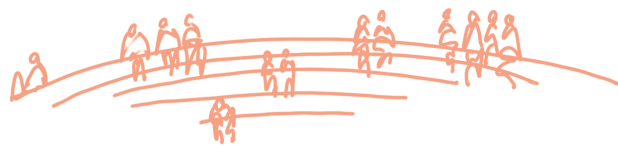
## 1. Learn from local voices and stories

Engage with key stakeholders who may offer insight into community history and unmet needs. A collaborative design process helps bring local understanding and resident ownership. There are local leaders already established at NYCHA campuses, and they can serve as great assets during the engagement process.



## 2. Strengthen community

Design spaces that inspire civic engagement, social cohesion, education, active programming, and neighborhood interaction. Plazas, streets, and community facilities at the ground floor of buildings are spaces where NYCHA residents can congregate and collaborate.



## 3. Inspire community stewardship

Design to instill a sense of ownership and leadership that encourages community members to participate in the maintenance and upkeep of shared open spaces over time.



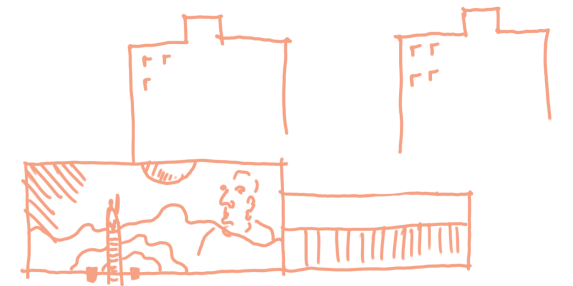
## 4. Engage across generations

Understand and address the needs of residents at every age group. Even if unique spaces for each population cannot be included in the design, explore ways that programming can fill gaps in activities across age groups.



## 5. Engage local artists and community-based organizations

Encourage the creation of art that is reflective of the culture and spirit of the community. Engage local organizations that can provide insight into community needs, as well as strategies that have proved effective in their neighborhood.



## 6. Build programs to activate spaces

Work with residents to creatively program shared interior and exterior spaces. Consistent, active programming can help engender a sense of ownership and participation while encouraging eyes on the street (such as food trucks and barbecues, public workshops and fitness classes).



## STRATEGY ONE

## Broaden the spectrum of resident input through events and organizations that already exist within the NYCHA community.



Design workshop at Pomonok Houses in Queens

### Why is it important?

Fitting community engagement activities and discussions into structures and programs that already exist helps avoid “engagement fatigue.” Engagement fatigue happens when residents are continually asked to give feedback on a similar issue. Involving existing groups also helps ensure feedback is being contributed from already engaged and recognized members of the community.

### How does it happen?

There are several groups already in place within NYCHA communities that can support engagement efforts, such as:

- **Youth Leadership Councils (YLCs)**  
YLCs are found across the city. They are engaged high school students, and the majority of them are NYCHA residents. YLC members work with NYCHA staff to pursue community enhancement projects or inform policy decisions that affect resident quality of life, particularly from a young person’s perspective. This age range is usually the most difficult to engage with within NYCHA campuses, and the YLCs provide an opportunity to plug into a set group of engaged youth.
- **Resident Green Committees and NYCHA Environmental Ambassadors**  
Those groups are made up of NYCHA residents with a defined interest to further different methods of sustainability-focused activities such as gardening, recycling, and waste management. They are often engaged on the appearance of exterior spaces and serve as a resource for open space projects.
- **Community centers on NYCHA campuses**  
Community Centers often have programming for several age groups and host evening meetings. They can serve as an access point to a variety of residents. Community centers are operated by non-NYCHA sponsor organizations.

STRATEGY TWO

**Engage around positive events that the community cares about to increase residents' participation and a diversity of opinions.**



**Why is it important?**

NYCHA campuses can be very large, and reaching a representative portion of residents can be challenging. Taking advantage of events that are celebrated on the campuses increases the likelihood of involving a diversity of perspectives.

**How does it happen?**

There are numerous events taking place on NYCHA campuses that can support engagement efforts, such as:

→ **Family Day festivals**

These events are held at most NYCHA campuses during the summer months and have been a neighborhood tradition for over 20 years. Family Day events provide a unique opportunity for residents to “show off” their campus to visitors, and they offer activities for a multigenerational audience. They often provide opportunities for residents to learn about an array of available services and products.

→ **Seasonal celebrations such as back-to-school events and Thanksgiving celebrations.**

During these events, resources of the season can be shared with NYCHA residents. For example, some NYCHA campuses have large-scale urban farms that participate in “harvest days” (when the food that has been harvested from the farm is distributed to the community). These successful programs provide an opportunity for the community to come together, and to promote issues of sustainability, stewardship, and health.

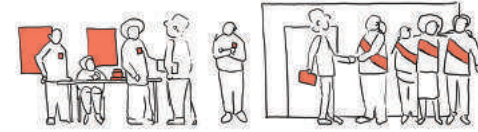


A Pomonok Houses resident sharing ideas at Family Day



STRATEGY THREE

**Partner with local organizations with an established relationship to residents to facilitate engagement.**



**Why is it important?**

Organizations with active initiatives have an increased knowledge of the community’s needs and have established a trusted relationship with residents through their work in the neighborhood.

**How does it happen?**

The Authority has long-standing partners familiar with how NYCHA functions. These partners, including community-based organizations, are often present at resident meetings and events (such as Family Days) to stay informed, share information, and build relationships.

Police Service Areas (a program of the New York City Police Department) and local civic institutions from nearby schools, to libraries, and places of worship can also have established relationships with residents and offer an opportunity to engage a different audience.

Community engagement Case Study

**Neighborhood Activation**

In 2017, the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) published a *Neighborhood Activation Study* supporting public safety through community engagement and design of the built environment. Studio Gang, an architecture and urban design firm, led studies at NYCHA campuses in Brooklyn (Brownsville Houses) and the Bronx (Morrisania Houses). Through a six-month process that brought together residents and government, they identified design intervention and programming solutions that could contribute to community safety and stability.

STRATEGY FOUR

**Show residents the outcome and the effect of their feedback on a project.**



**Why is it important?**

Resident time and input is a uniquely valuable asset that can improve the design outcome and long-term social effect of a project. Residents are experts on their environment, how it affects them and how it can be improved.

**How does it happen?**

Thoughtful and meaningful engagement with NYCHA residents can be achieved by:

- Being efficient when engaging with and requesting feedback from residents. Be deliberate when planning engagement and be considerate of residents’ time and energy.
- Following-up with residents on the progress of a proposal is an important step to demonstrate that their inputs have influenced the project.
- Establishing a point person between community leaders or representatives and the Authority to enhance resident trust.
- Evaluating the effect of a project through surveys, observational studies, or other methods is a valuable experience that enables residents to measure the intended outcomes of a project.

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# DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NYCHA OPEN SPACES



Open spaces at the center of Bushwick Houses in Brooklyn

## The Public Realm and the Open Spaces at NYCHA

The public realm is essential to the quality of life of New Yorkers. When thoughtfully designed, the public realm fosters a sense of belonging and enjoyment, as well as feelings of comfort, safety, and pride. The public realm includes all publicly accessible spaces of a city—the streets and sidewalks, the exteriors of buildings, parks and sports fields, plazas and squares, beaches and waterfronts—and their relationship to one another.

NYCHA campuses were planned and designed to create affordable housing in an ideal setting, one with expansive open spaces that serve as places to relax and recreate. This defining characteristic is why they are referred to as “towers-in-the-park” campuses and are emblematic of campus developments built between the 1930s and 1960s. Buildings on these campuses are often at an angle to and set back from the street, creating open spaces adjacent to the city’s public realm which often look and feel like an extension of it. However, NYCHA campuses are built on private land owned by the Authority. This sometimes blurry relationship can lead to confusion between what is traditionally referred to as the public realm, which is open to everyone, and the open spaces of NYCHA campuses.

Throughout the years, NYCHA campuses and their surrounding neighborhoods have faced disinvestment on many fronts, contributing to poor upkeep and often leading to increased crime and safety concerns. During the 1970s and 1980s, NYCHA and other public housing authorities embraced Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), which explored how residents’ feeling of ownership over the open spaces on NYCHA campuses relate to their sense of safety and security.

The Authority’s implementation of CPTED resulted in the fencing off of most of its green areas, limiting access to designated communal spaces such as basketball courts, playgrounds, and fixed seating areas. These interventions created less appealing spaces, making them feel desolate, and further separated NYCHA campuses from the surrounding community.

Today, we have the opportunity to open up and activate NYCHA open spaces while also providing clearer and stronger connections between NYCHA campuses and the city’s public sidewalks and streets, parks, institutions, retail and transit, and to do so through careful planning and design. This chapter describes the unique features of NYCHA campuses and sets forth principles to improve them. It also offers best practices and strategies to support such efforts.

## Features of a NYCHA Campus

NYCHA campuses are made up of unique features that generate a specific urban form. Understanding the relationships of these features is essential when planning and designing a new project within a NYCHA campus. This understanding ensures that the project relates to and enhances other campus features.

## Accesses

Accesses are the entry points to a NYCHA campus, including connections between NYCHA campuses. Their locations and design represent a crucial first step in developing a sense of direction and marking destinations for NYCHA residents and visitors.

## Gateways

Gateways are the threshold or "front door" between NYCHA campuses and the surrounding community. They are often located on the corners of campuses at major street intersections. These spaces serve as a great opportunity to welcome NYCHA residents and visitors alike.

## Pathways

Walkways or pathways are the routes to move through a NYCHA campus or to get to a destination (such as a playground, sports courts, building lobby, community center, or service area). Their size, scale and the materials used to build them can help define their intended use, making them easy to navigate and understand.

## Commons

Commons are large open spaces, typically in a central location on a NYCHA campus, that are designed for people to come together, and make a commons a gathering space. Commons play a meaningful role in forging NYCHA campus identity and sense of community, and benefit from good design and programming.

## Edges

Edges form the outermost boundaries of NYCHA campuses. They establish a separation from the surrounding public realm, such as public sidewalks and streets. Since they are often the first physical element perceived from outside a NYCHA campus, their size, material, and transparency (for example, a see-through fence versus a brick wall) affect how people perceive the campus.

## How People Move Onto and Through NYCHA Campuses



Grabbing groceries or doing laundry...



Coming home or visiting family...



Playing and exercising...



Walking along the sidewalk...



Having a seat and chatting with friends...

## Principles for Open Spaces at NYCHA Campuses

The purpose of the Design Guidelines for NYCHA Open Spaces chapter is to establish guiding principles and illustrate practical design strategies for future improvements to NYCHA campuses. This chapter also offers case studies in support of these principles.

To shape a positive experience of open spaces at NYCHA, the design guidelines focused on how people move onto and through space, from a public sidewalk or park to paths leading into the many destinations of a NYCHA campus. Recognizing that NYCHA campuses have a wide variety of configurations and building types, which makes each one unique, three main principles have been established:

1. **Strengthen open spaces within NYCHA campuses.**
2. **Connect and integrate NYCHA campuses into the surrounding neighborhoods.**
3. **Enhance residents' quality of life through attention to design and details.**

## 1. Strengthen open spaces within NYCHA campuses.

Open spaces that are welcoming, accessible, and attractive for NYCHA residents reinforce a strong sense of place and support positive community interactions.

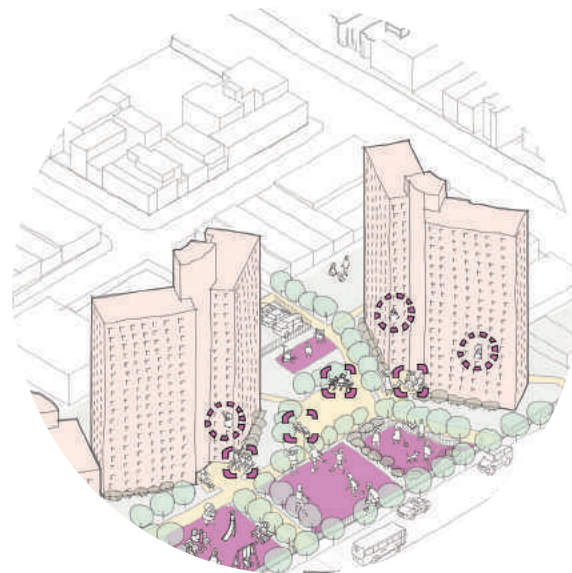
### 1A. Design for community cohesion

Open spaces that are comfortable and attractive for multi-generational and multi-cultural recreation promotes social cohesion. Adjacent spaces for children and adults with open sightlines makes them safer and more usable.



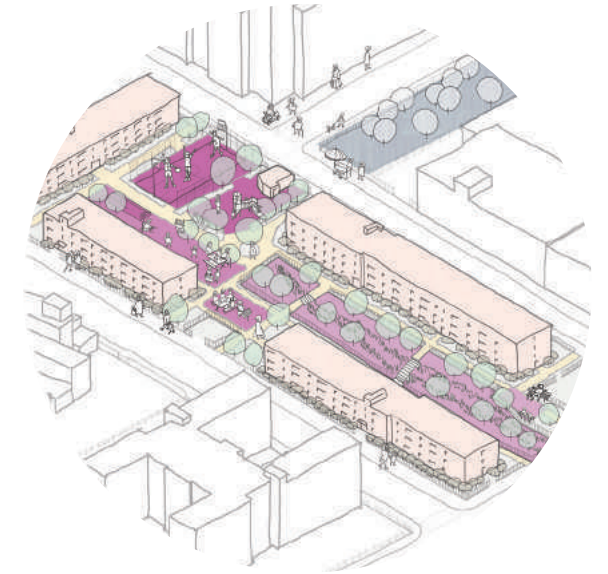
### 1B. Provide safe areas of respite and activity

Well-connected communities grow to be stronger, healthier and more resilient. Embedded crime prevention techniques, such as strong visual corridors, easy circulation, and good maintenance, help strengthen communities and decrease physical and mental stress.



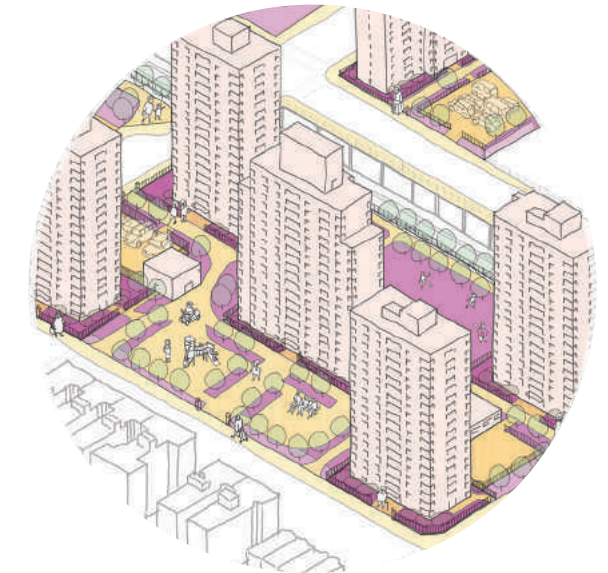
### 1C. Balance passive and active open spaces

Open spaces for active and passive recreation increases the likelihood that a variety of people use them throughout the day. Flexible design can enhance the potential for everyday, casual interactions, and formal programming for all ages.



### 1D. Delineate public from private spaces

Clearly defined public and private spaces rely on a combination of visual cues and design elements that increase the use of communal spaces. They can also be used to limit activity in areas where residents live, such as near apartment windows and building entrances.



### 1E. Establish intuitive pathways

Pathways connect a variety of users to different spaces and destinations and their visibility is fundamental to making them safe and pleasant. Lighting, signage, furniture and plantings make it easier for NYCHA residents and visitors to navigate NYCHA campuses.

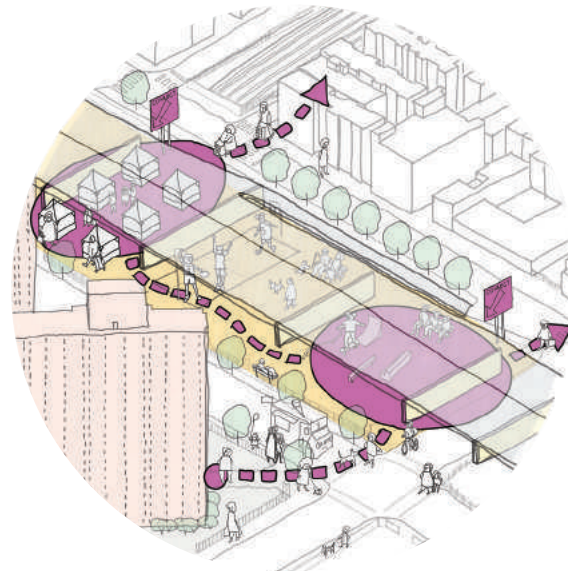


## 2. Connect and integrate NYCHA campuses into the surrounding neighborhoods.

Access to neighborhood amenities and institutions, welcoming and visible open spaces, and safe pedestrian connections are fundamental components of a well-connected community.

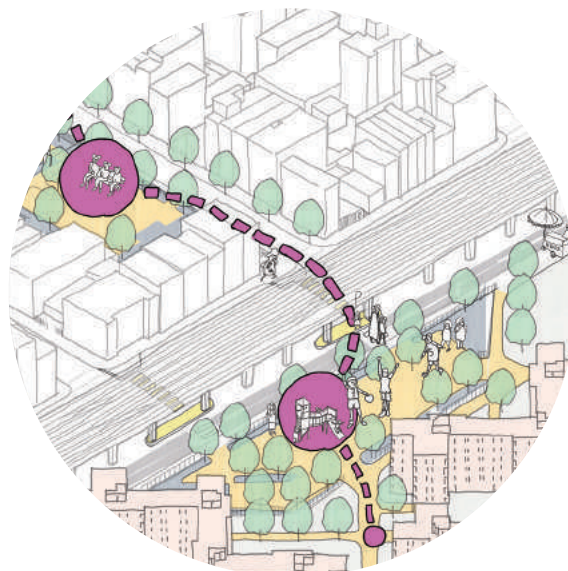
### 2A. Make connections out of barriers

Design strategies that soften how highways, railways, rivers, waterways, and other nearby barriers relate to NYCHA campuses can help overcome physical isolation.



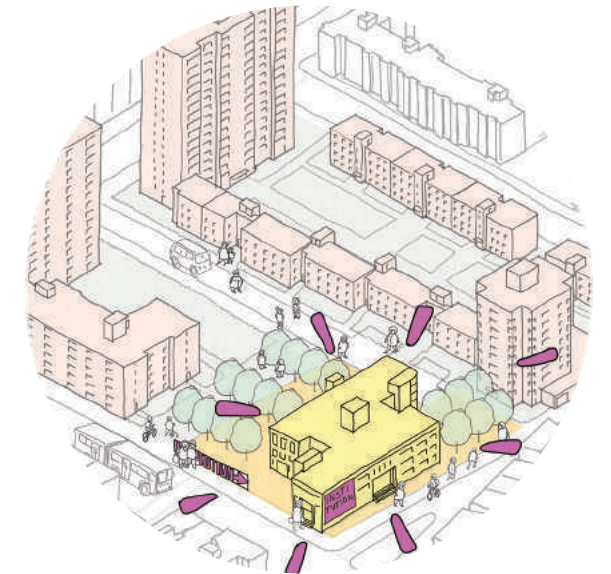
### 2B. Connect NYCHA campuses to the neighborhood public realm

Well-designed wayfinding and easy-to-recognize pathways can improve connectivity of NYCHA campuses with city streets, neighborhoods, regional parks, and greenways.



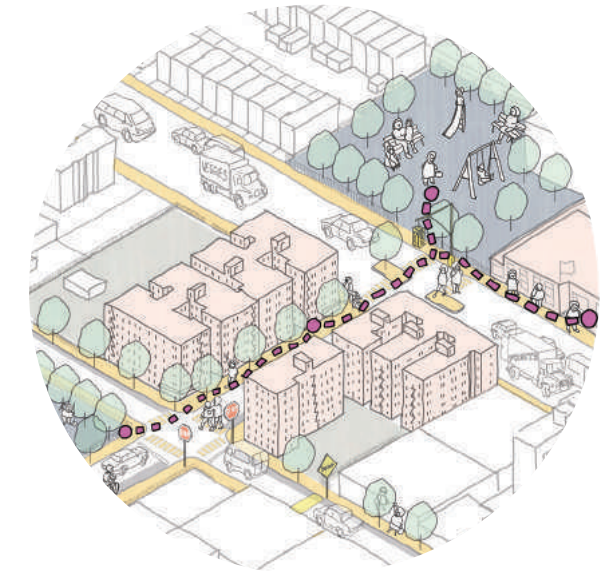
### 2C. Connect to surrounding institutions

Partnerships, programs or physical connections with surrounding institutions and organizations can increase access, interaction and support for NYCHA residents and the broader community.



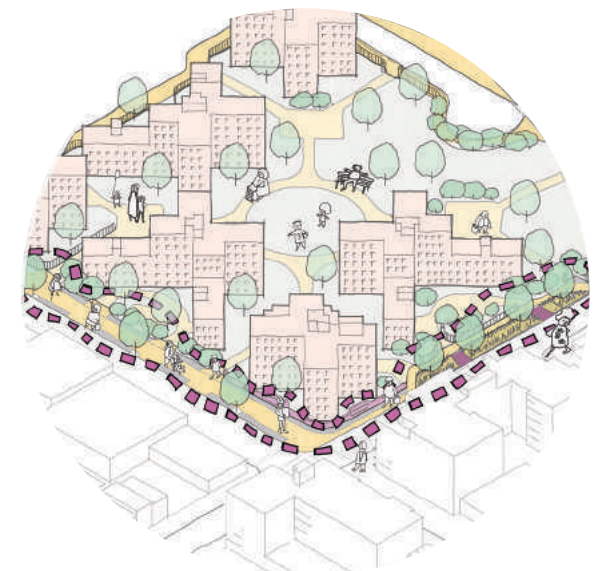
### 2D. Improve pedestrian safety

Safe and convenient crossings are essential for all New Yorkers. Comfortable sidewalks for people with disabilities, seniors and children, and clear visual cues for drivers support everyone's safety.



### 2E. Soften and activate the campus edges

Using a variety of materials and techniques can help campus edges feel more welcoming and open. Carefully considering the relationship of a campus to its surrounding community can inform how best to balance privacy and openness.



### 3. Enhance residents' quality of life with attention to design and details.

Careful attention to the location and design of campuses' details, such as lighting, street furniture and plantings, can positively affect how a campus is perceived by NYCHA residents and neighbors. Consistency and good maintenance of those elements are key for a successful open space design.

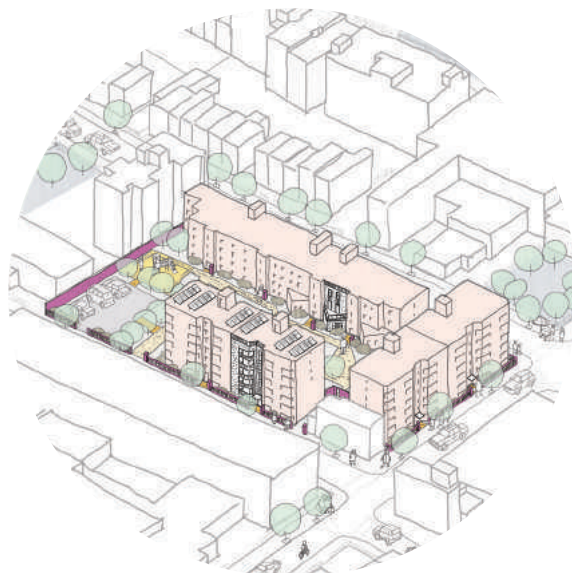
#### 3A. Foster identity through design

Creative use of art, signs, color, playful and artistic elements, and other details help celebrate the identity and history of a campus and its residents.



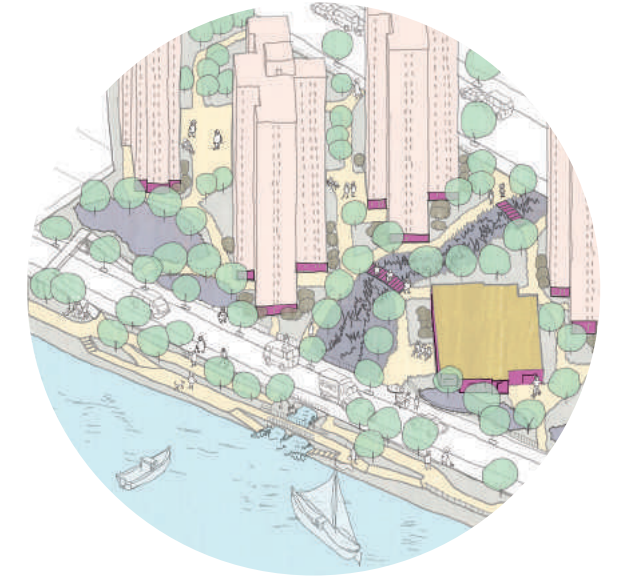
#### 3B. Balance aesthetics and durability

Creating spaces that are aesthetically diverse can increase their appeal to a variety of users, and celebrate the identity of a campus. Consistent use of materials in pavement, benches, and other outdoor furniture can reduce the burden of long-term maintenance.



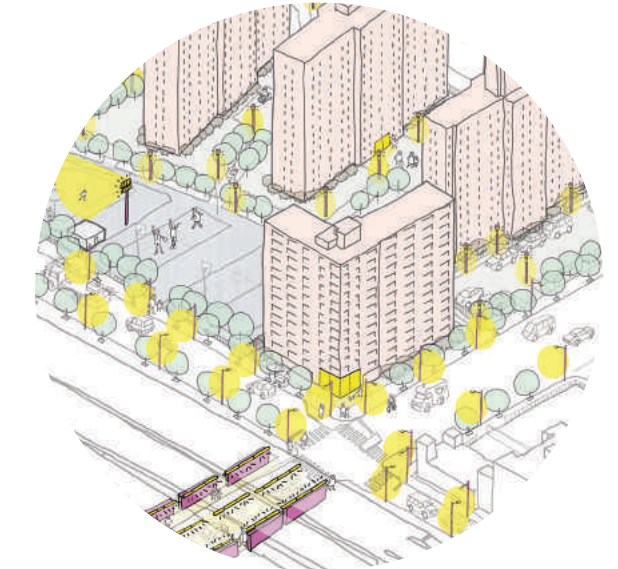
#### 3C. Design for a resilient landscape

Native plantings can provide a low-maintenance landscaping option, and along with pervious surfaces, can help manage stormwater runoff and reduce the load on storm sewers and pollution in the city's waterways. Light-colored surfaces and shade can help regulate temperatures within a NYCHA campus and throughout the city.



#### 3D. Install lighting that activates and enhances open spaces

Well-designed lighting can help people feel safer and enhance the quality of open spaces. Pedestrian-oriented lighting enhances night-time visibility and encourages people to be outside. Creative uses of lighting, such as artwork installations, can be effective at activating open spaces.



#### 3E. Redesign waste management

Clean and litter-free open spaces feel more inviting, and enhance the sense of stewardship of residents. Locating trash receptacles at visible locations can prompt people to use them more often. Screening waste facilities with plants minimizes waste exposure, enhancing the perception of cleanliness and wellness in a NYCHA campus.





## Create spaces for people to come together

Gathering spaces are areas within NYCHA campuses where residents naturally come together for many types of social events. They serve as the commons or “living rooms” of a campus, hosting main social events such as Family Days. Many of the strategies outlined in the following pages can create beautiful, well-used, and cared-for gathering spaces for both the campus residents and the people living in the neighborhood.



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## Strategies

The Authority has implemented many successful initiatives that are deeply rooted in the principles of this chapter. These resident-led initiatives have been organized as strategies to improve NYCHA open spaces. Community gardens, community centers, and playgrounds play an important role in forming sense of identity, pride, and collaboration. The following pages describe each strategy in detail, accompanied by case studies that illustrate potential future enhancements to NYCHA campuses.

### 1. Strategies that strengthen open spaces within NYCHA campuses

These strategies identify how to use typical elements of most NYCHA campuses to better structure open spaces, clarify orientation and create privacy where appropriate.

#### Campus Edges

Vertical elements such as fences, low walls, curbs, plantings, and building walls help establish the perimeter of NYCHA campuses. How these elements are arranged help communicate access points from the street.

#### Hard and Soft Barriers

Separating open spaces designated for active or passive uses with fences, low walls and plantings is an effective way of helping people navigate naturally through a NYCHA campus.

#### Pathways

Used for pedestrian and maintenance vehicles, circulation paths are the interior connections between buildings and open spaces, such as playgrounds, sports courts, and community amenities.

#### Wayfinding

A wayfinding system is a tool for helping people navigate a large complex with multiple buildings and open spaces, such as NYCHA campuses. These visual aids allow finding a desired destination quickly and facilitate discovery of existing resources.

#### Streets at NYCHA

Most NYCHA campuses are composed of two or more typical city blocks that sometimes interrupt the flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Allowing for more points of access and improving existing streets or portions of streets can make the campus easier to navigate for pedestrians and drivers alike.

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## 2. Strategies that connect and integrate NYCHA campuses into the surrounding neighborhood

The following strategies explore opportunities to activate open spaces in NYCHA campuses to enhance connections to their surrounding neighborhoods.

#### Active Recreation

Playgrounds and sports courts are ideal places for people of all ages to come together while encouraging well-being through exercise.

#### Programming and Activation

Open spaces designed with a purpose create desirable, lively and safe places where people can come together.

#### Urban Farms

Large open spaces prevalent in NYCHA campuses are a great opportunity to provide access to healthy food, education about growing and cooking food, and the recycling of food waste.

#### Resident Gardens

Similar to urban farms, gardens are an opportunity for collaboration amongst residents to beautify an otherwise unused part of their campus.

#### Public Parks

Some NYCHA campuses have public parks. These can serve to incorporate the campus into the larger community and park network by reconnecting with green corridors.

## 3. Strategies that enhance residents' quality of life with attention to design details

These strategies identify how to use furniture and finishing materials to support a sustainable environment within NYCHA campuses that incorporates cultural identity and a sense of pride.

#### Campus Identity and Details

An effective way to complement a community living in a NYCHA campus is to use details such as plantings, fence design, building façades, and art installations in a way that creates a unique character.

#### Community Art

The cultural identity of a campus is often expressed through artworks of varied forms. Art has the power to bring people together while fostering a sense of pride and showcasing local talent.

#### Diversity of Materials

The palette of materials used on NYCHA campuses is deliberately limited to ease maintenance and replacement costs. Minor changes in colors, textures, and patterns can help create distinctions that support a more intuitive understanding of a campus.

#### Lighting

Good illumination levels adapted for pedestrians' comfort can make open spaces feel safe after dark. Lighting posts located along pathways can also be used to support a sense of orientation and identity of a NYCHA campus.

#### Seating

Comfortable seating, arranged in ways that support multiple users and people of all ages, such as an individual reading a book, a group playing a table game, or caregivers watching children on a playground, are key for creating successful spaces for people.

#### Landscaping

Broad expanses of landscaped areas on NYCHA campuses are an opportunity to design visually enjoyable and diverse open spaces with a variety of trees, shrubs and groundcover grasses.

#### Heat Mitigation

Most open spaces on NYCHA campuses have mature canopy trees that help maintain temperatures down during the summer months. This benefits the residents, who can cool down in the heat, as well as the neighborhood and the city.

#### Stormwater Management

Planted areas are best at absorbing rain water. The open spaces at NYCHA campuses represent an outstanding opportunity to manage stormwater and prevent flooding within and around campuses.

#### Waste Areas

The proper management of daily solid and organic waste, as well as furniture and appliances, has a great effect on the quality of life of NYCHA residents. Easy access to, as well as location and design of, disposal areas are central to the community's well-being.

## Campus Edges

**Use the edges of a campus as opportunities to demarcate the relationship between a campus and its immediate surroundings.**

Edges mark the boundaries between a NYCHA campus and the surrounding neighborhood and serve as the first impression of a campus. Typically consisting of fences, walls, and shrubs, edges delineate spaces and signify adjacent uses or access points of a campus.

Campus edges should be designed to draw connections or set boundaries where appropriate given the surrounding context. Open or see-through edges are best at access points to ground-floor community uses, main entry pathways or to integrate active open spaces with the street. Opaque edges can be used to buffer ground-floor residential units or screen service areas or other spaces where privacy is desired.



### How does it happen?

- By facilitating access to street amenities such as bus stops, bike share stations, and crosswalks.
- By encouraging connections from the campus to the surrounding neighborhood through high-traffic paths or areas of congregation.
- By considering the design of edges to accommodate service areas while allowing for safe pedestrian circulation and an attractive streetscape. For example, using screening gates to decrease visibility of waste collection areas.
- By using walkways, paving treatments, plantings, and architectural design features to direct visitors to public areas or building entrances and away from private areas.
- By looking for opportunities for seating and lighting to provide areas of respite.

### Who can help?

- Identifying edges with potential for improvements:
  - NYCHA residents with Property Manager or Resident Engagement Coordinator
- Planning and design
  - NYCHA residents
  - NYCHA Operations staff
  - Design staff
  - contractors (landscape architects, engineering teams)
- Implementing programs
  - New York City Housing Authority
  - Department of Sanitation
  - Department of Parks and Recreation
  - Department of Transportation
  - Department of Environmental Protection
- Maintaining spaces in good condition
  - NYCHA residents
  - visitors
  - NYCHA Operations staff
  - Nearby businesses or organizations



Design Trust for Public Space hosts a resident engagement session at Lillian Wald Houses in Manhattan

**TIP** → The edges of NYCHA campuses are spaces where many City agencies' responsibilities meet. Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Transportation and the New York City Housing Authority can all facilitate better design on the edges of campuses. Residents can call 311 to request a street tree from the Department of Parks and Recreation, or to request that the Department of Transportation address sidewalk and street issues.

#### Case Study

### Opening the Edge

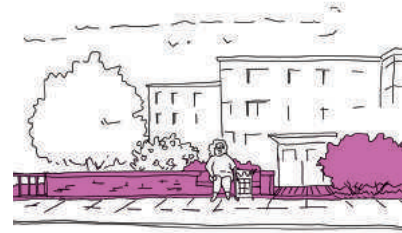
Opening the Edge project at the Lillian Wald Houses in the Lower East Side is an example of a partnership between the New York City Housing Authority and the Design Trust for Public Space. In the first phase of this project in 2014, the Design Trust met with NYCHA residents and community members to discuss how they would like to use an inaccessible green space on Avenue D. The community design team envisioned a hardscaped area with benches to relax and meet with neighbors, a stage for performances, a stepped mound for recreational activities, new lighting, and landscaping. The Design Trust then hired a NYCHA resident to participate as the Artist Fellow who would incorporate community-designed art into the space. The residents included signage that welcomed residents in multiple languages to acknowledge the diversity of residents at Lillian Wald Houses.

## Hard and Soft Barriers

**Delineate spaces within a campus with barriers that are scaled and sized to increase physical and visual connections.**

Curbs, low walls and fences are used as boundaries of a campus or the pathways within it. When combined with hedges, trees, or shrubs, they can define spaces and delineate private areas from public areas.

Strategic use of barriers to maximize readability of circulation and minimize defensive design can make residents and visitors feel welcome when entering a NYCHA campus. Barriers are crucial determinants of privacy and should be placed to encourage activity within primary areas of circulation and limit use of more intimate spaces within a campus.



### How does it happen?

- By using designs that create a multi-functional barrier, such as hedges that serve both as a soft barrier and landscape amenity, or a low wall that separates but can also serve as a seating area.
- By designing barriers with appropriate height, material, and transparency for the degree of privacy warranted in the space, and by limiting use of high fences that inhibit visibility and can be perceived as unwelcoming.
- By exploring opportunities to incorporate seating, lighting and signage to barriers to make campuses more inviting.
- By ensuring ease of upkeep of open spaces, especially if those spaces have limited uses for residents. Appropriate fencing placement is useful to decreasing the amount of time spent on maintenance of a space.

### Who can help?

- Identifying barriers with potential for improvements
  - NYCHA residents with Property Manager or Resident Engagement Coordinator
- Planning and design
  - NYCHA residents
  - NYCHA Operations staff
  - Design staff
  - contractors (landscape architects, engineering teams)
- Implementing programs
  - the New York City Housing Authority
- Maintaining spaces in good condition
  - NYCHA residents
  - visitors
  - NYCHA Operations staff



Low fences limit access to lawn areas around buildings with apartments at the ground floor.

At the center of the Ravenswood Houses campus, pathways are delineated with low concrete curbs that provide easy access to lawn areas.

Open space at Ravenswood Houses in Queens

## Pathways

### Design pathways that are convenient, intuitive, and enjoyable.

Circulation on and through NYCHA campuses should be clearly defined, appropriately sized, and safe for pedestrians and cyclists while balancing vehicular access needs. When combined with other design strategies, such as materials, wayfinding, fencing and lighting, pathways can be convenient and enjoyable means to connect people with their destination.

Internal pathways should be designed with consideration of who is using them and for what purpose, to prevent conflicts and create a system that works for all the activities throughout a campus.



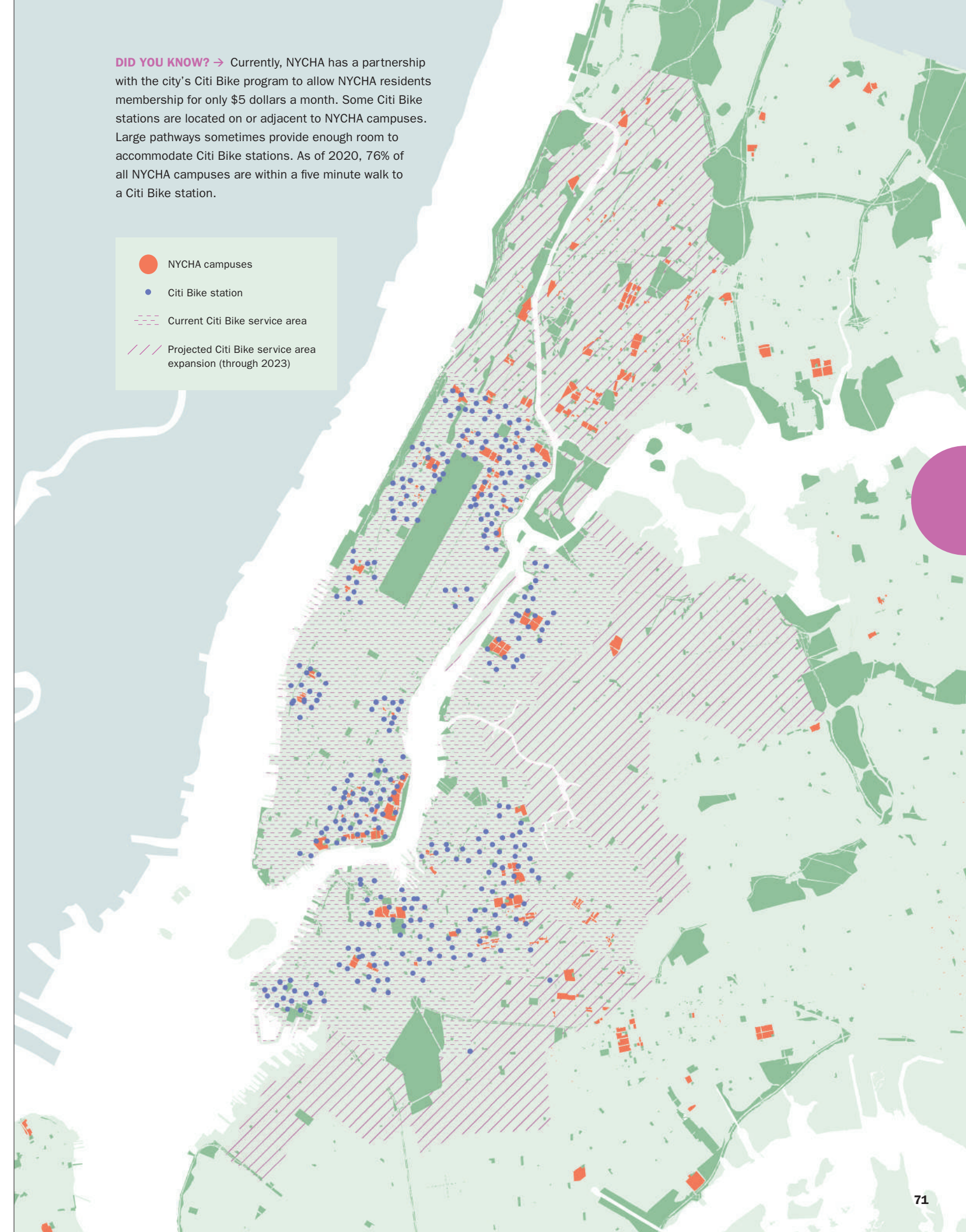
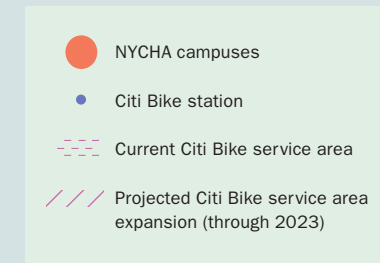
### How does it happen?

- By maintaining a clear distinction among pathways and internal streets within a campus depending upon their use. Pathways should be for pedestrian use only unless vehicular access is needed by Operations staff or emergency vehicles. Pathways can also be used for children under the age of 12 who are biking.
- By clearly delineating bike paths on the internal streets and ensuring they are respected by vehicles and pedestrians.
- By clearly marking pathways where vehicular use is allowed within the campus with appropriate signage and crosswalks for pedestrians.
- By placing street furniture (such as bollards, curbs, and planters) to slow down or prevent vehicular circulation in a pedestrian zone.
- By using materials to differentiate pathways and roads.

### Who can help?

- Identifying pathways with potential for improvements
  - NYCHA residents with Property Manager
- Planning and design
  - NYCHA residents
  - NYCHA Operations staff
  - Design staff
  - contractors (landscape architect, engineering team)
  - in some instances, the NYC Fire Department
- Implementing programs
  - New York City Housing Authority
  - Department of Transportation
- Maintaining spaces in good condition
  - NYCHA residents
  - visitors
  - NYCHA Operations staff

**DID YOU KNOW?** → Currently, NYCHA has a partnership with the city's Citi Bike program to allow NYCHA residents membership for only \$5 dollars a month. Some Citi Bike stations are located on or adjacent to NYCHA campuses. Large pathways sometimes provide enough room to accommodate Citi Bike stations. As of 2020, 76% of all NYCHA campuses are within a five minute walk to a Citi Bike station.

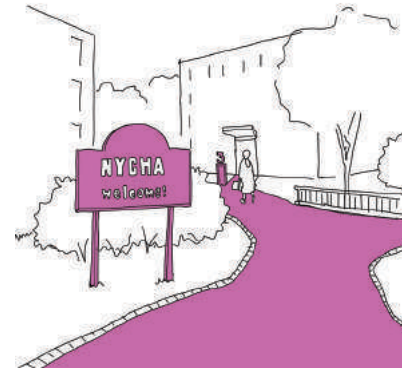


## Wayfinding

### Create a unified wayfinding system to help people navigate NYCHA campuses.

Wayfinding panels are used on large campuses to help people understand where they are and how to access any location within the campus. These can be broadly helpful in NYCHA campuses where entrances to buildings and resident amenities are not accessed from the street. Wayfinding systems typically include a map of the area with labels identifying building addresses and important open spaces, amenities or services, in addition to other visual markers with universally known symbols.

Wayfinding systems are most effective when placed in highly visible locations, such as near entry points of a NYCHA campus, or near a community space with pedestrian traffic. Providing good illumination on a wayfinding panel eases its readability and use after dark.



### How does it happen?

- By clearly marking access points to building lobbies, community centers, laundry facilities, management offices, and highly used open spaces, such as gardens, playgrounds and sports courts.
- By considering different wayfinding strategies (such as pavement stenciling, sculptures, and colors or unique features) to decrease confusion on larger sites.
- By highlighting building addresses so they are visible from a distance. Creative signage can also add to the sense of ownership for residents who primarily identify with their own building.

### Who can help?

Identifying locations for wayfinding improvements and important spaces within a campus

- NYCHA residents with Property Manager or Resident Engagement Coordinator
- community-based organizations

#### Planning and design

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA Operations staff
- NYCHA Design staff

#### Implementing programs:

- New York City Housing Authority
- Department of Transportation
- Department of Cultural Affairs

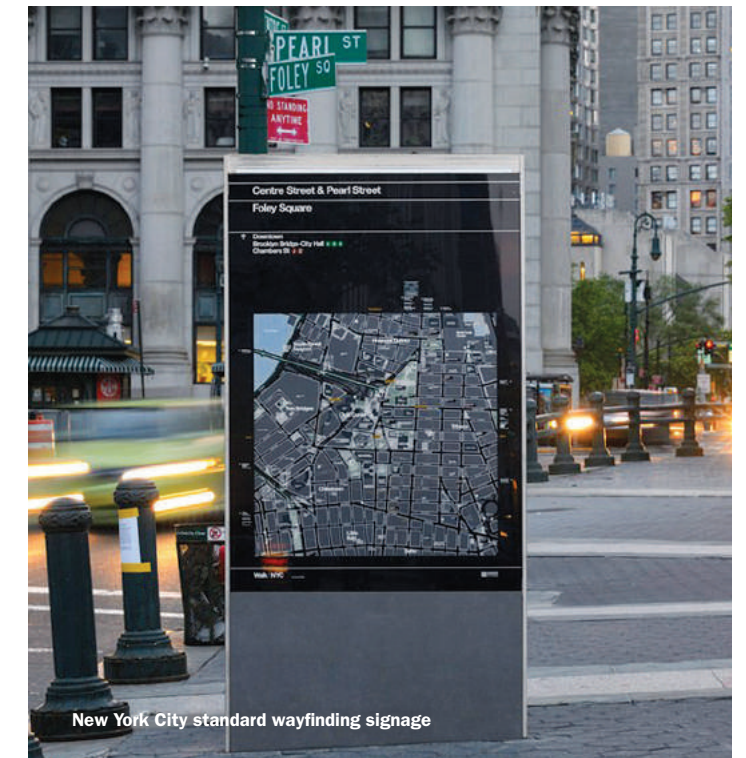
#### Maintaining spaces in good condition

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA Operations staff
- visitors



Campus signage at Ravenswood Houses

**TIP** → WalkNYC is New York City's standard for pedestrian wayfinding. WalkNYC is an example of a clear visual language and graphic standards that can be universally understood. Many of WalkNYC signs are located near NYCHA campuses. By providing reliable information about the location of subway stations and bus stops, WalkNYC encourages people to walk and use modes of public transportation. It also provides information regarding local community facilities and major institutions that are within walking distance.



New York City standard wayfinding signage

## Streets at NYCHA

### Ensure that streets at NYCHA meet the operational needs of their users.

Streets in and around NYCHA campuses serve a wide range of users and modes of transportation. People can walk, bike, or drive on NYCHA streets. The streets are also used for deliveries and waste collection, as well as for emergencies and public transportation. Since streets and adjacent sidewalks are also used by seniors and children, providing safe pedestrian access to community hubs, such as schools, libraries, grocery stores, and transit stops, must be prioritized.



There are multiple benefits to rethinking the design of NYCHA streets. It can help the community to reclaim and activate dead-end streets, and it can reconnect with the broader city's streets network by extending existing dead-end streets or upgrading internal NYCHA streets to the Department of Transportation (DOT) standards, so they function like regular streets.

### How does it happen?

- By clearly designating spaces for car, bike, and pedestrian activity on streets within and adjacent to NYCHA campuses.
- By appropriately placing crosswalks at mid-block locations of long streets and aligning them with the internal path network.
- By allowing safe biking on pathways that connect to the existing bike lane network around the city.
- By establishing areas for children to bike safely away from vehicular traffic, and by locating bike parking near entryways and transit hubs where residents can conveniently leave or pick up their bikes.
- By considering reducing roadway widths on streets bounding campuses that are wider than the adjacent blocks to allow for shorter pedestrian crossing distances and decrease driving speeds.
- By exploring opportunities to reconnect larger campuses to the adjoining street network through re-streetsing (action of re-creating pre-existing streets) or extending neighborhood streets through campuses.

### Who can help?

Identifying locations for street improvements in and around NYCHA campuses

- NYCHA residents with Property Manager and Resident Engagement Coordinator
- community-based organizations

Planning and design:

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA Operations staff
- Design staff
- Department of Transportation Design staff

Implementing programs

- New York City Housing Authority
- Department of Transportation
- Department of City Planning
- Mayor's Office of Sustainability
- CitiBike
- community-based organizations

Maintaining spaces in good condition

- NYCHA residents
- visitors
- NYCHA Operations Staff
- Department of Transportation



Osborn Plaza in Brownsville, Brooklyn

**TIP** → For a public street, a new crosswalk at an intersection or a midblock can be requested from the Department of Transportation by calling 311.

**DID YOU KNOW?** → *Public streets* connect NYCHA campuses with the city's street network and are maintained by the Department of Transportation (DOT). *Private streets* serving NYCHA campuses do not connect to adjacent streets and can be used as through routes. *Private streets* are typically accessed by a curb cut, do not properly align with intersections, lack proper crosswalks and traffic signals, and as such do not meet DOT standards for roadway and sidewalk design, which can lead to confusion and safety concerns.

#### Case Study

### Osborn Street Plaza

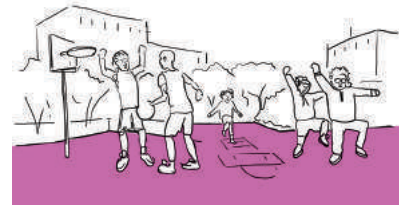
The Osborn Street Plaza was completed by the Department of Transportation (DOT) in 2015. DOT partnered with the Brownsville Community Justice Center to help connect Hughes Apartments residents to their broader neighborhood by converting what once was an unsafe dead-end street into a well-lit plaza with seating, plants, and a mural produced by the local youth creative agency Made In Brownsville.

## Active Recreation

### Ensure every campus has access to active recreation space.

Easy access to active recreation spaces, including playgrounds, fitness equipment, and other areas designated for sport activities, promotes a healthy lifestyle for everyone.

These spaces should be easy to maintain and designed to be used by people of all ages.



Redesigned basketball court at Woodside Houses in Queens

### How does it happen?

- By partnering with organizations focused around play and fitness, including sports programming leagues, to create or upgrade playgrounds and adult fitness equipment areas.
- By placing active recreation spaces in highly visible locations and providing lighting opportunities to extend hours of usability.
- By engaging residents in the design of the spaces, as they may have recommendations related to their look and feel, or equipment choices.
- By designing durable, low-maintenance play areas.
- By partnering with athletic organizations that provide programming for teenagers and young adults, such as Fathers Alive In The Hood (FAITH) or the Police Athletic League, to ensure all age groups are served.

### Who can help?

Identifying places and generating ideas to create active recreation

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA design staff
- community-based organizations

Planning and design

- NYCHA Design staff
- contractors (design team, architects, landscape architects)

Implementing programs

- New York City Police Department
- Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice
- Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- Department of Youth and Community Development

Maintaining spaces in good condition

- NYCHA residents
- visitors
- NYCHA Operations staff



Children at the Butler Houses Playstreets programming

#### Case Study

### Playstreets

The Police Athletic League's Playstreets program was established more than a century ago, in 1914. Each summer, over seven weeks, approximately 15 public streets in different New York City neighborhoods are opened to children ages 6 to 16 to play safely. Each Playstreets location has recreational equipment as well as arts and crafts. All Playstreets are staffed with a site director, an arts specialist and a sports specialist, all of whom provide supervision and mentorship. The Authority is an active partner in Playstreets, providing an opportunity for the local police precinct, elected officials, and visitors to build a sense of community and relationships with one another.



## Programming and Activation

### Enliven NYCHA open spaces with diverse programming.

There are multiple ways to activate and program a space, either for a short-term event (such as Family Days) or ongoing programs (such as sports courts or community centers).

Activated and programmed spaces are safer than underutilized spaces. They bring people together to discuss ideas for community organizing, stewardship, and collaboration. Spaces that are active increase trust, sociability, and social cohesion amongst residents and visitors.



### How does it happen?

- By partnering with resident groups, day cares, senior centers and community centers, City agencies or other organizations that may already provide activities for NYCHA residents.
- By engaging campus residents in the process of creating the activities to ensure they are responsive to their needs.
- By developing programs and activities that can be repeated throughout the year, regardless of season.
- By using the spaces on the ground floor of buildings to activate adjacent outdoor spaces when possible. For example, if there is a community center next to a large seating area, events from the community center can maximize use of that space year-round.

### Who can help?

Identifying places and generating ideas to program and activate a space

- NYCHA residents
- community-based organizations

Planning and design

- NYCHA Design staff
- contractors (design teams, architects, landscape architects)
- community-based organizations

Implementing programs

- New York City Police Department
- Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice
- Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- Department of Youth and Community Development
- Department for the Aging
- community-based organizations

Maintaining spaces in good condition

- NYCHA residents
- visitors
- NYCHA Operations staff

Case Study

### Mayor's Action Plan: Neighborhood Activation

The Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) led 15 Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) projects with the aim of increasing sense of safety at NYCHA campuses. The sites were activated through placemaking projects that included a combination of design and programming. Resident groups were trained in CPTED techniques and then created a design and action plan for unsafe spots that they identified through surveying their campuses. These projects ranged from basketball courts and pop-up gyms, to game nights and art exhibitions. MOCJ is now evaluating the impact that the projects had on the activation of the spaces and the community's perceptions of safety.



Brownsville residents in Brooklyn benefiting from the activation of an open space designed with MOCJ

## Urban Farms

### Implement urban farms to promote access to fresh food while also providing skill-building and community-organizing opportunities.

Urban farms expand access to healthy foods, provide workforce and leadership skills, and activate and maintain open spaces within NYCHA campuses. Urban farms offer an opportunity for residents to participate in a communal activity that improves well-being by diminishing stress and providing moderate physical activity.

Partnerships are especially crucial for the success of urban farms. The Authority has worked with City partners such as Building Healthy Communities, as well as many local organizations, to provide resources, education, and support for urban farms on their campuses.



#### How does it happen?

- By gathering input at community meetings from residents on each farm's plan and design before the farms are developed. Residents can help determine location and size of the farm and the crops they would like to grow.
- By adequately locating farms at large areas with good exposure to sun light and access to water.
- By inviting residents to take part in the care and harvest of the farms once designed and constructed.
- By strategically locating farms so they can support other sustainable activities such as catching rainwater for irrigation, composting, and solar site lighting.
- By inspiring other campuses to start a new one.

**DID YOU KNOW?** → Green City Force, Harlem Grown, East New York Farms!, Red Hook Farms, Isabahlia Ladies of Elegance Foundations, New York Restoration Project and La Finca del Sur are some of the local organizations that partnered with the New York City Housing Authority to develop urban farms.

#### Who can help?

Identifying places to locate an urban farm

- NYCHA residents
- community-based organizations
- Green City Force

Planning and design

- NYCHA Design staff
- contractors (design and engineering teams, landscape architects)

Implementing programs

- Mayor's Office of Resiliency
- Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- Department of Education

Maintaining spaces in good condition

- NYCHA residents
- visitors
- NYCHA Operations staff
- community-based organizations
- Green City Force

## FARMS AT NYCHA OUTCOMES

(BETWEEN 2012 AND 2019)

1. Distributed over **25,500 lbs** of organic local produce to NYCHA residents
2. Collected and diverted over **4,700 lbs** of compostable materials from the municipal waste system
3. Processed over **200 tons** of compost
4. Educated over **800** local students in Farm Based Learning activities

#### What is Farms at NYCHA?

The Farms at NYCHA initiative, a project of the mayoral Building Healthy Communities initiative executed by Green City Force in partnership with the New York City Housing Authority, the Fund for Public Health in New York and local partners, expand healthy food access, provide youth workforce and leadership development, and promote sustainable and connected public housing communities.



Urban farm at Red Hook Houses in Brooklyn

#### Case Study

### Red Hook Farms

The farm at Red Hook Houses West in Brooklyn is a 1.1-acre educational farm built in 2012 through a collaboration between Green City Force and the New York City Housing Authority. It was the first farm ever on a NYCHA campus. Many NYCHA urban farms are supported by Green City Force's corps members. In 2019, CUNY Urban Food Policy released a study analyzing NYCHA farms and the work-training program provided to residents by Green City Force. It showed that over 80% of NYCHA young adults who participated were successful in either job or college placement afterwards. The Red Hook Farm has recruited over 200 NYCHA residents to serve on the farm, 31 of them Red Hook residents. At NYCHA farms, residents can bring their compost to the farm in exchange for free produce, thereby diverting organic waste from the waste stream.

## Resident Gardens

### Enhance the quality of open spaces with resident gardens while bringing people of all ages together.

Across the city, there are over 600 resident gardens tended to by more than 1,000 NYCHA residents. Gardening provides NYCHA residents an increased sense of ownership over the open spaces around their buildings.

Resident Gardens have been a successful program to shape and improve areas that would otherwise be underutilized. Residents become stewards of these spaces while increasing their physical activity, strengthening relationships with their neighbors, and beautifying their campus.



NYCHA youth volunteer to plant flowers

### How does it happen?

- By having residents or resident groups applying to become responsible for the upkeep of a garden. This is done through the campus Property Manager or Resident Engagement Coordinator.
- By having residents or resident groups request support, education, or programming from stewardship organizations such as New York Restoration Project or GreenThumb. The Department of Sanitation also offers a program for delivering compost to resident gardens around the city.

### Who can help?

- Identifying places to locate a resident garden
  - NYCHA residents with Property Manager or Resident Engagement Coordinator
- Planning and design
  - NYCHA residents
  - NYCHA Operations staff
  - New York City Restoration Project
- Implementing programs
  - Department of Sanitation
  - Department of Parks and Recreation through the GreenThumb program
  - stewardship organizations
- Maintaining spaces in good condition
  - NYCHA residents
  - visitors
  - NYCHA Operations staff
  - stewardship organizations



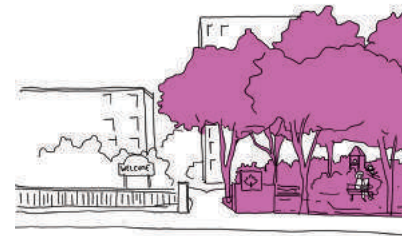
A resident garden at a NYCHA campus

## Public Parks

### Enhance connections to public parks within NYCHA campuses to promote social interactions between NYCHA residents and their neighbors.

Public parks are operated and maintained by the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). They can accommodate a wide variety of activities with spaces such as playgrounds, tot-lots, and ball fields.

Access to recreational green space is a high priority for the City and its residents because it increases well-being, social cohesion and sustainable and ecological goals in the city. In particular, parks with large, mature canopy trees provide habitat for wildlife as well as shade and comfort for people. These benefits can be increased by strategically connecting public parks in the neighborhood to one another and integrating them into the city's broader network of parks.



### How does it happen?

→ By partnering with the DPR. In 2018, the Authority formalized a partnership with DPR to permit public parks to be constructed on NYCHA campuses in areas that had limited access to parks. This was done as part of the NYC Walk to a Park initiative, which aims to have all New Yorkers within a 10-minute walk of a public park. The Authority retains ownership of the land and DPR maintains the public park for the agreed-upon duration. Currently, there are three parks being piloted at Woodside, Redfern, and Pomonok Houses in Queens. DPR engaged NYCHA residents from the beginning of the planning process to vet their interest in a public park within their campus. The residents were involved in locating the park, deciding equipments, and visioning potential programming.

### Who can help?

#### Identifying places to locate a public park

- NYCHA residents with Property Manager or Resident Engagement Coordinator
- the Department of Parks and Recreation

#### Planning and design:

- the Department of Parks and Recreation Design staff
- contractors (landscape architects, engineering teams)

#### Implementing programs

- Department of Parks and Recreation through the Walk to a Park initiative
- Partnerships for Parks

#### Maintaining spaces in good condition

- NYCHA residents
- visitors
- the Department of Parks and Recreation Maintenance and Operations staff



Johnson Playground in East Harlem, Manhattan

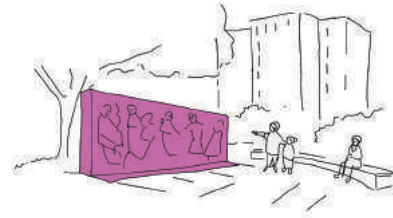


Little Flower Playground at Laguardia Houses, Manhattan

## Campus Identity and Details

### Explore ways to enhance the cultural uniqueness of NYCHA campuses.

Each NYCHA campus has a unique history and culture, which is often reflected in the built environment through art, building details, memorials, and other physical components. Campus design that prioritizes the community's culture and history will foster a stronger sense of pride and belonging among residents. It demonstrates that residents' stories are intrinsic to the spaces they live in, making the campuses more than just buildings, they are homes and communities.



#### How does it happen?

- By maintaining and celebrating unique architectural elements such as brick detailing or artwork that are representative of the time they were built. NYCHA's WPA-era artwork is already recognized as historically significant on the National Register of Historic Places.
- By maintaining and celebrating murals, memorials, or tributes to former or current community leaders that had a positive effect on the neighborhood. NYCHA campuses are often named after significant figures in history, some of whom had a connection to the campus. For instance, some gardens and parks have been named after residents and community leaders. NYCHA residents have invested time and energy in their communities, and they serve as a good representation of their values and social fabric.
- By maintaining and celebrating other physical components that reflect the campus culture, such as signage commemorating special personalities, window décor that reflects personal heritage, and community spaces that display local accomplishments or host local events.

#### Who can help?

##### Identifying locations for celebrating a campus identity

- NYCHA residents with Property Manager and Resident Engagement Coordinator
- community-based organizations

##### Planning and design

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA Operations staff
- Design staff, local artists

##### Implementing programs

- New York City Housing Authority
- Department of Cultural Affairs
- Landmarks Preservation Commission

##### Maintaining spaces in good condition

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA Operations staff



Bas-relief panels decorate the façade of the Jacob A. Riis Settlement House at the Queensbridge Houses in Queens



Walls of Jericho at Kingsborough Houses

#### Case Study

### The Walls of Jericho

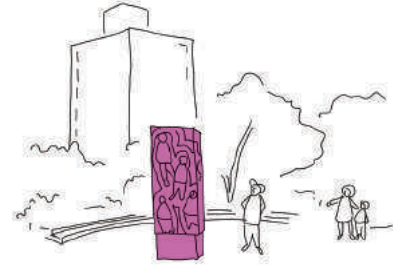
The Walls of Jericho is an 80-foot long wall with bas-relief panels at Kingsborough Houses in Brooklyn. It was made by the renowned Harlem Renaissance African-American artist Richmond Barthé and is one of the first sculptural art pieces to highlight the figures of an African-American family in history. The City Council provided funding for the wall to be restored. Weeksville Heritage Center, the Fulton Art Fair, Kingsborough Houses residents, and the New York City Housing Authority are working together to incorporate story-telling and arts programming during and after the restoration of the sculptural wall.

## Community Art

### Enliven NYCHA campuses with artwork to foster pride and showcase local talents.

Art provides residents with an outlet for expression of their identity. This is often seen in the artistic designs of murals around community hubs such as day cares and community centers. Art also has the power to activate open spaces, especially when combined with appropriate programming.

NYCHA campuses have many forms of art created by various partners throughout its history. Examples range from newer community-designed murals to several Public Works Administration (PWA)-era art pieces that have been recognized by the National Register of Historic Places.



NYCHA youth participate in mural painting

### How does it happen?

- By following NYCHA art installation application procedures, residents and organizations can request approval of any proposed art pieces. Typically, arts organizations partner with residents to create murals on blank walls and paved areas, or install art in open spaces to help activate them and strengthen the identity of the community.
- By partnering with renowned art institutions. For example, the Brooklyn Museum has partnered with neighboring NYCHA campuses to conduct “artwalks” led by teaching artists from the community that also included art activities.

### Who can help?

- Identifying locations for artwork
  - NYCHA residents with Property Manager and Resident Engagement Coordinator
  - community-based organizations
- Planning and design
  - NYCHA residents
  - NYCHA Operations staff
  - Design staff, local artists
- Implementing programs
  - New York City Housing Authority
  - Department of Cultural Affairs
  - local art institutions
- Maintaining spaces in good condition
  - NYCHA residents
  - NYCHA Operations staff

**DID YOU KNOW?** → There have been temporary art installations at NYCHA campuses, such as the Artspot workshops at Mitchel Houses in the Bronx, which has engaged children ages 4-9 in outdoor art activities during the weekend.



Sculpture at Jacob Riis Houses, Manhattan



Case Study

## Public Art / Public Housing

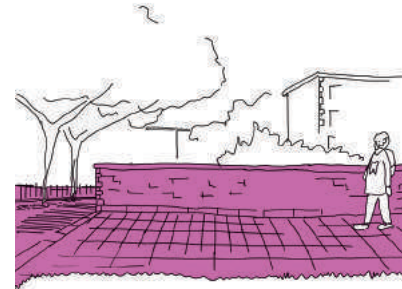
This mural initiative brought together youth, teaching artists, and community leaders to co-create 15 murals at five NYCHA campuses, one in each borough. The selected campuses were Tompkins Houses in Brooklyn, Queensbridge Houses in Queens, Saint Nicholas Houses in Manhattan, Castle Hill Houses in the Bronx, and Stapleton Houses in Staten Island. This collaboration celebrated the stories, hidden treasures, and imaginations of NYCHA residents by activating their communities as sites of dialogue through public art. The initiative was funded by the New York City Council and created in partnership with Groundswell. Groundswell employed NYCHA resident youth to use art as a tool for social change by cultivating stewardship of public space, community asset mapping, and the collaborative mural-making process. The artist teams illustrated a shared vision of revitalized communities by tackling a diverse array of pressing issues, including promoting holistic wellness, bridging the intergenerational divide, and ending gun violence.



## Diversity of Materials

### Utilize a diversity of materials to reinforce a sense of place.

The palette of materials used throughout a campus should be visually engaging, durable and easy to maintain. Materials should support accessibility for people with disabilities, children, and seniors. Material selection affects the way spaces may be used. For instance, a paved space can better serve as an area for a children's game of double-dutch, while a grassy space is more conducive to picnics. Adding colors, textures, or similar materials in different patterns help to achieve visual variety and to differentiate adjacent areas.



### How does it happen?

- By adapting commonly used materials in a creative way. Asphalt and concrete are some of the most widely used materials on NYCHA campuses, which can be enhanced in a variety of ways without compromising durability or maintenance.
- By considering the use of stamped concrete within large expanses of concrete to help make the space feel more distinctive and inviting.
- By adding colored aggregates to different types of concrete to add visual variety to specific areas.
- By considering cost-efficient and durable special materials along campus edges, on main pathways, and at gathering spaces to add emphasis to these significant spaces.
- By introducing materials that can be used to enhance resilience onsite, such as pervious paving or highly reflective materials.
- By considering safety surfacing and sports-coating. Already widely used on NYCHA campuses, they are available in a variety of colors.

### Who can help?

Identifying locations for materials replacement or improvement

- NYCHA residents with Property Manager and Resident Engagement Coordinator

Planning and design

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA Operations staff
- Design staff and contractors (architects, landscape designer)

Implementing programs

- New York City Housing Authority
- Department of Environmental Protection

Maintaining spaces in good condition

- NYCHA residents
- visitors
- NYCHA Operations staff

Pathway at Johnson House, made of concrete and Belgian blocks, which are easy to replace.



Pavement at Taft Houses, where material and pattern changes facilitates people's sense of orientation.



Paving at Baruch Houses, where subtle changes in the scoring of concrete provides visual differentiation and highlights building entrances.



Red brick pavings at Vladeck Houses, where color differentiation of pathways highlights important areas of the campus.



Playground at Lilian Wald Houses, where soft materials help identify the space while making it safer for children.



Pathway at Taft Houses, where asphalt is used in high-traffic and high-use areas such as main pathway, bike paths and streets.

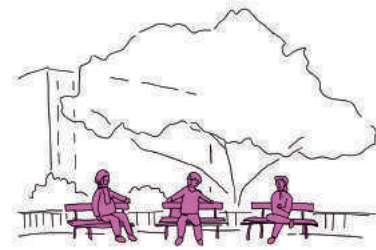


## Seating

### Improve comfort for NYCHA residents and their neighbors with appropriately located and designed seating areas.

Seating varies across NYCHA campuses. It encompasses everything from benches along pathways or around active open spaces to single fixed chairs for chess players. Most NYCHA campuses provide many different options for seating.

Seating provides an opportunity for all residents to rest and gather, and is particularly important for seniors and children. How seating is arranged on a campus impacts social interactions, circulation along pathways, and activity at nearby open spaces. Therefore, seating areas may offer a variety of designs to accommodate different age groups and physical abilities. Their locations should also be thoughtfully considered to provide comfort and enjoyable views.



#### How does it happen?

- By considering the use of low walls, steps, and changes in grade for seating.
- By incorporating seating for children, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- By locating seating where there are natural points of rest around the campus, such as near bus stops, community centers, and gathering spaces.
- By locating seating areas to enhance comfort and by considering placing seating areas with shade during the summer, or protected from the wind during the winter, or far from nuisances (noise, traffic pollution).

**TIP** → Residents can call 311 to request the Department of Transportation for benches on a public street surrounding a NYCHA campus. Small businesses and non-profit organizations can apply to the Department of Transportation's Street Seats program in front of a non-residential ground-floor space.

#### Who can help?

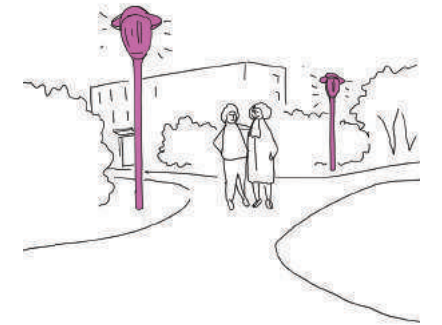
- Identifying locations for seating areas
  - NYCHA residents with Property Manager and Resident Engagement Coordinator
  - local businesses and non-profit organizations
- Planning and design
  - NYCHA residents
  - NYCHA Operations staff
  - Design staff and contractors (architects, landscape designers)
- Implementing programs
  - New York City Housing Authority
  - Department of Parks and Recreation
  - Metropolitan Transportation Authority
  - Department of Transportation
- Maintaining spaces in good condition
  - NYCHA residents
  - visitors
  - NYCHA Operations staff

## Pedestrian Lighting

### Design for adequate illumination to increase nighttime use of open spaces.

Lighting helps people feel more comfortable as they navigate a campus at night, thereby extending active hours in playgrounds and sports courts. The lighting should be scaled for pedestrians to minimize light pollution.

Having energy-efficient lights with good color differentiation is best practice for exterior and site lighting. For instance, the Authority is currently implementing new LED 12-foot tall pedestrian lighting specification that is suited for a residential setting.



#### How does it happen?

- By using pedestrian-scale street lighting in areas with pedestrian traffic.
- By using lighting to add character and spatial definition to areas around the site. As column-like features, lighting can be used to emphasize pathways or gathering spaces in the interior of the campus.
- By using different scales of lighting to help differentiate activities. For example, bright lights at a basketball court let people know that it can be used after dusk, whereas low lighting in a resident garden lets people know that it should not be used after dark.

#### Who can help?

- Identifying locations for pedestrian lighting
  - NYCHA residents with Property Manager
  - NYCHA design staff
- Planning and design
  - NYCHA residents
  - NYCHA Operations staff
  - Design staff and Contractors (architects, landscape designers)

#### Implementing programs

- the New York City Housing Authority
- the New York Police Department
- the Department of Transportation
- the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

#### Maintaining space in good condition

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA Operations staff

#### Case Study

### Light the Night

The Mayor's Action Plan lighting initiative was spearheaded by the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) in 2015. MOCJ installed new pedestrian lighting in 15 NYCHA campuses. Lighting was placed in what used to be dark open spaces perceived as unsafe by residents. Approximately \$120 million was invested in the complete lighting upgrade of these campuses. The new light posts are now the new NYCHA standard, and they are similar to the pedestrian lighting seen in City parks.

## Landscaping

### Consider balancing soft and hardscape materials to enhance the appearance of NYCHA campuses.

Landscaping gives open spaces character. It ties together hard and soft materials to create pleasant and attractive open spaces. The appearance and upkeep of green open spaces affect the perception of the community, resident pride in their home, and employee morale.

Landscaped areas cover over half of NYCHA grounds and provide access to green open spaces in areas of the city in need of greater access to open space. The social value of landscaped areas for residents is highlighted when residents become attached to them. Some campuses have named them, such as “Shadyside” in Brownsville or “Cherry Park” in Woodside, adding cultural identity to these areas.



### How does it happen?

- By celebrating the unique vegetation found in NYCHA campuses, many of which have an abundance of mature trees that provide shade and add to the urban tree canopy across the city. Efforts must be made to preserve these trees.
- By favoring diverse, hearty, and low-maintenance plants that also contribute to stormwater management whenever possible.
- By using landscaping to establish boundaries between open spaces. Landscaping should be designed to preserve clear sightlines and minimize the potential to host pests.
- By requesting horticultural expertise to properly maintain the trees, shrubs, and plantings on NYCHA campuses.

**DID YOU KNOW?** → 75% of the land on NYCHA campuses are open spaces.

### Who can help?

Identifying locations to improve or create landscaping

- NYCHA residents and stewardship organizations

Planning and design

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA Design staff and contractors (design and engineering teams, landscape architects)

Implementing programs

- New York City Housing Authority
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- stewardship organizations

Maintaining space in good condition

- NYCHA residents
- visitors
- NYCHA Operations staff
- stewardship organizations



Case Study

### NYCHA's Urban Canopy

Trees are some of the most impressive assets found on NYCHA campuses. The Authority is continuously looking to diversify its collection of trees to be more resilient to issues like natural disasters and disease. The Authority currently specifies and recommends the following list of trees divided into three groups according to tree quality.

**Priority 1** Honey Locust, Sycamore, Oak, Maple (except Norway Maple), Elm, Horsechestnut, Magnolia, White Pine, Flowering Cherry, Sour Wood, Purpleleaf Plum, London Plane

**Priority 2** Norway Maple, Ash, Ginkgo, Sophora, Linden, Kentucky Coffee Tree, Dogwood, Rowan, Silk Tree, Red Bud, Birch, Goldenrain Tree, Thuja, Zelkova, Japanese Lilac

**Priority 3** Hawthorn, Sweet Gum, Crabapple, Black Pine, Poplar, Austrian Pine, Hackberry, Serviceberry, Willow, Callery Pear, Mulberry, Empress Tree, Spruce, Fir, Juniper

Tree canopy along pathway at Queensbridge Houses, Queens

## Heat Mitigation

### Apply best practices to reduce outdoor temperature on NYCHA campuses and their surroundings during summer months.

Extreme heat is harmful, especially to children and seniors, and other vulnerable populations. The city experiences higher temperatures than it otherwise would because of its dense urban environment and expansive paved areas. NYCHA campuses help decrease outdoor temperatures thanks to their generous open spaces covered with mature tree canopy.

Ensuring the health of the tree canopies through additional planting and maintenance can help reduce heat island effect (a phenomenon that makes areas of the city hotter than their surroundings due to use of dark material that absorbs and retains heat). Using lighter-color materials for ground cover and roofs can help keep NYCHA campuses cool and offset extreme heat.



### How does it happen?

- By installing lighter-color aggregate for paving surfaces to help mitigate the heat absorption of these materials.
- By ensuring that the existing tree canopy does not deteriorate and that trees which need to be removed are adequately replaced. This will help keep the campus's overall temperature cooler. For spaces where a tree canopy is not feasible, shade structures that could provide relief from the sun should be considered.
- By ensuring appropriate overall maintenance of the landscaped areas on NYCHA campuses to help mitigate the urban heat island effects of the city.

### Who can help?

#### Identifying places to mitigate the heat island effect

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA Operations staff
- community-based organizations

#### Planning and design

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA Design staff
- contractors (design and engineering teams, landscape architects)

#### Implementing programs

- New York City Housing Authority
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- Department of Environmental Protection
- Mayor's Office of Resiliency

#### Maintaining space in good condition

- NYCHA residents
- visitors
- NYCHA Operations staff
- stewardship organizations



Large landscaped area at Sumner Houses in Brooklyn

**DID YOU KNOW?** → NYCHA campuses' canopy tree population represents about 3% of the city's total tree canopy.

**GOOD PRACTICE** → Roof painting is an effective tool to reduce outdoor temperatures during the summer months. The Authority is planning to expand roof replacements that include lighter colors to reflect radiant heat and keep buildings and overall campuses cooler. Some roof replacements have included planting components that increase stormwater retention which have proven to maintain more moderate temperatures and minimize heat gain in buildings.

#### Case Study

### NYCHA Climate Adaptation Plan

The Capital Projects Division at NYCHA is developing a Climate Adaptation Plan to ensure that its capital work is helping make NYCHA campuses more resilient to climate change. The Climate Adaptation Plan is planned to be released. It will identify major climate vulnerabilities and changes needed in NYCHA's capital investments in order to adapt. It will also include strategies that The Authority will use to make those changes.

## Stormwater Management

### Apply best practices in green infrastructure to capture stormwater runoff in NYCHA campuses.

According to the Department of Environmental Protection, stormwater is the rain and melting snow that falls on rooftops, streets, and sidewalks. As stormwater flows, it picks up pollutants, such as oils, chemicals, sediments, pathogens and trash. Rather than being absorbed naturally into the ground, much of New York City's stormwater flows into storm drains and catch basins, and from there into the sewer system.

The Authority, like the rest of the city, is facing increased risk of flooding because of climate change. Designing stormwater management for NYCHA campuses provides opportunities to enhance the resilience of its residents.



### How does it happen?

- By fostering education and training of the community and staff. Training staff and residents on green infrastructure will increase resilience awareness and provide skills to communities that will be affected by flooding.
- By utilizing green infrastructure as a resident amenity and a tool to control stormwater to create more successful projects that are supported and stewarded by the community.
- By using permeable materials for hardscaped areas, rain gardens, and bioswales to dramatically increase the retention of stormwater within campuses.

### Who can help?

Identifying locations for stormwater management infrastructure

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA Operations staff
- the Department of Environmental Protection

Planning and design

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA Design staff
- the Department of Environmental Protection
- contractors (design and engineering teams, landscape architects)

Implementing programs

- New York City Housing Authority
- Department of Environmental Protection
- Mayor's Office of Resiliency

Maintaining space in good condition

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA Operations staff
- stewardship organizations
- the Department of Environmental Protection



Green infrastructure at Edenwald Houses in the Bronx

**DID YOU KNOW?** → The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has partnered with the New York City Housing Authority to create \$32 million of green infrastructure around the city to help prevent coastal and inland flooding and alleviate the burden on New York City's combined sewer overflow system, which releases polluted water into waterways during large rain events.

Case Study

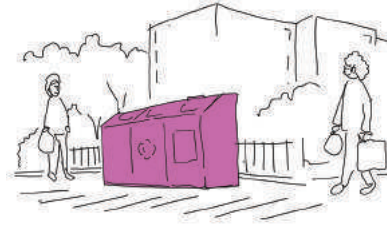
### Cloudburst Resiliency

The Cloudburst Resiliency pilot at South Jamaica Houses was initiated by the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Cloudburst Resiliency Planning Study (2017). This study proposed to test how green infrastructure could mitigate flooding in the Southeast Queens catchment area, which includes South Jamaica Houses. DEP will lead its first "placemaking" green infrastructure project at this campus. Following six months of resident engagement, South Jamaica Houses residents and DEP agreed upon a design to improve open spaces to include green infrastructure. Construction is expected to start in 2021. It will include the first publicly funded submerged water plaza in New York City, as well as retention tanks underneath a basketball court. As a result, the project is expected to divert approximately 25,000 gallons of stormwater from New York City's combined sewer overflow system.

## Waste Management

### Consider the location and physical needs of waste management areas to minimize their effect on open spaces.

Waste areas are often located at the edges of NYCHA campuses to ease access for Department of Sanitation (DSNY) vehicles. Most NYCHA campuses also provide litter receptacles that are strategically located (such as in close proximity to building lobbies and playgrounds). However, waste management facilities differ from one campus to another. Waste and litter buildup remains one of the Authority's largest operational hurdles, and the most visible aspect of understaffing. Thoughtfully designed waste areas can improve health and hygiene on a NYCHA campus, as well as increase perceptions of safety and community trust.



### How does it happen?

- By placing litter bins at every campus to make it easier for residents and visitors to dispose of their trash properly.
- By making sure waste management areas provide adequate access for the DSNY vehicles. Equipment can include exterior compactors, bulk crushers, cardboard balers, and containers for mattresses, textiles, and e-cycling. Efficient layout of these spaces helps to minimize the size of curb cuts and reduce potential conflicts with pedestrians.
- By considering placement and design of waste and recycling infrastructure within the waste disposal process, placing them in convenient locations for residents and maintenance staff.
- By screening all waste areas and bulk waste sites from view, and by considering art installations for screening.
- By avoiding placement of waste areas where they can create blind spots or decrease pedestrian safety.

### Who can help?

#### Identifying locations for waste management amenities

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA Operations staff
- the Department of Sanitation

#### Planning and design

- NYCHA residents
- NYCHA Design staff
- the Department of Sanitation
- local artists

#### Implementing programs

- New York City Housing Authority
- Department of Sanitation
- community-based organizations
- companies specializing in waste removal
- Mayor's Office of Sustainability

#### Maintaining space in good condition

- NYCHA residents
- visitors
- NYCHA Operations staff
- the Department of Sanitation



NYCHA resident recycling at development receptacles

**DID YOU KNOW?** → NYCHA's Waste Management Plan seeks to make NYCHA campuses free of visible waste and litter, make waste disposal convenient, and reduce landfill-bound trash. NYCHA caretakers spend half their working days managing the 200,000 tons of waste produced on NYCHA campuses each year.

#### Case Study

### Mattress Recycling

Household furniture makes up to 65% of bulk waste at NYCHA. How discarded furniture is handled has a large impact on the amount of waste that ends up in a landfill. The City does not yet have programs available for recycling this type of waste; however, in 2018, the Authority partnered with Renewable Recycling Inc. (RRI), a mattress recycling company, for a four-month mattress recycling pilot. RRI deployed 20-yard enclosed shipping containers to eight campuses. Over the course of the four-month trial, RRI collected almost 70 tons of material. This diverted 7.5% of the bulk waste that would otherwise have been sent to landfills. Staff at participating campuses reported that waste yards were cleaner and that removing the mattresses eliminated shelter for vermin. Up to 85% of the mattress materials collected were able to be recycled or repurposed, creating carpet padding and soundproofing material. In 2019, the Authority solicited proposals for longer term mattress recycling services at up to 100 additional locations.



# DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR PRESERVATION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

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**Sumner Houses Senior Building** 130



Rendering of Stonewall House at Ingersoll Houses in Brooklyn

## NYCHA Moving Forward

The New York City Housing Authority's most pressing challenge is to achieve the successful preservation of the nation's largest resource of affordable housing. In partnership with residents and development partners, the Authority aims to adapt campuses to address its large capital need and improve residents' quality of life while improving accessibility as well as social and physical adaptation in relation to climate change.

Moreover, the large expanse of land the Authority owns across the five boroughs is an immense resource. Underutilized land, such as parking lots and waste management areas, can be used to generate funds to reinvest in existing NYCHA campuses and bring these properties back to a state of good repair.

As the Authority pursues the development of infill sites questions of community context and design sensitivity become fundamental considerations. To attain the original promise of delivering the highest quality of life for its residents, the Authority must ensure that updated campuses are thoroughly integrated into their broader physical and social context.

This chapter examines a few recent proposals for preservation of existing buildings and infill development. These case studies illustrate what a well-designed outcome could look like, and can serve to guide conversations between NYCHA residents and staff, developers, city agencies and the community at large. This chapter also provides a guide to analyze, design, and effectively implement projects that are sensitive to both the existing NYCHA communities and the surrounding neighborhood.

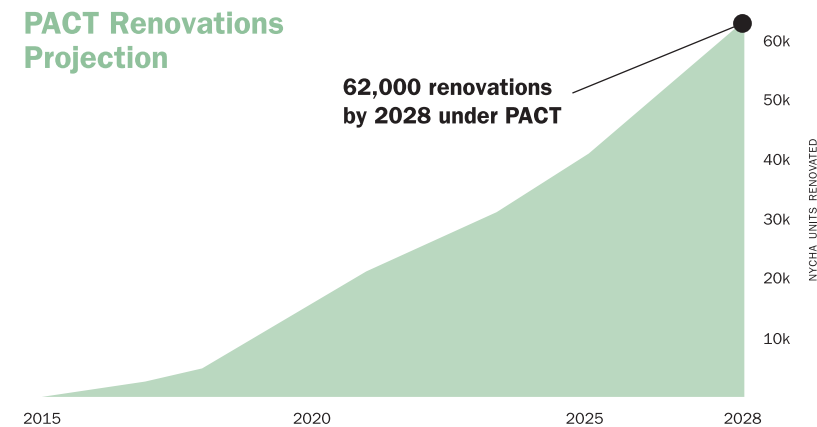


## Current NYCHA Construction and Preservation Programs

Under *NYCHA 2.0*, three new programs promote the construction of new development to preserve existing NYCHA housing: **PACT to Preserve**, **Build to Preserve**, and **Transfer to Preserve**. The main objective of these programs is to provide the Authority with financial proceeds to address existing capital needs without displacing residents.

### PACT to Preserve

The PACT to Preserve (Permanent Affordability Commitment Together) program harnesses public-private partnerships to make major improvements to campuses while preserving permanent affordability, public ownership, and residents' rights. Using the federal funding from the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD), Section 18, and Part 200 Disposition, PACT converts public housing subsidy to more stable, project-based Section 8 funding to renovate NYCHA campuses with significant capital needs. The Authority owns the land, controls affordability requirements, and upholds resident protections through a ground lease. For example, residents maintain the current rights of paying no more than 30 percent of income on rent, automatic renewal of lease if residents are in good standing, maintenance of established resident organizations, succession rights, and the right to hearings to resolve grievances.



### Build to Preserve

The Build to Preserve program will develop new mixed-income buildings within NYCHA campuses to generate significant revenue for NYCHA capital repairs. Funds are generated through partnerships with development teams. All proceeds generated by new construction are used to renovate the NYCHA campus where development occurs, and any remaining proceeds will go to repairs at other campuses in the same neighborhood. NYCHA retains ownership of the land and provides a long-term land lease for all new buildings. All proposed development designs are created with community input to comprehensively address improvements to the campus comprehensively. Renovations to existing NYCHA apartments occur at the same time as new construction.

### Transfer to Preserve

The Transfer to Preserve program works to transfer portions of NYCHA campuses' estimated 80 million square feet of unused development rights to adjacent sites to generate funds for capital repairs.

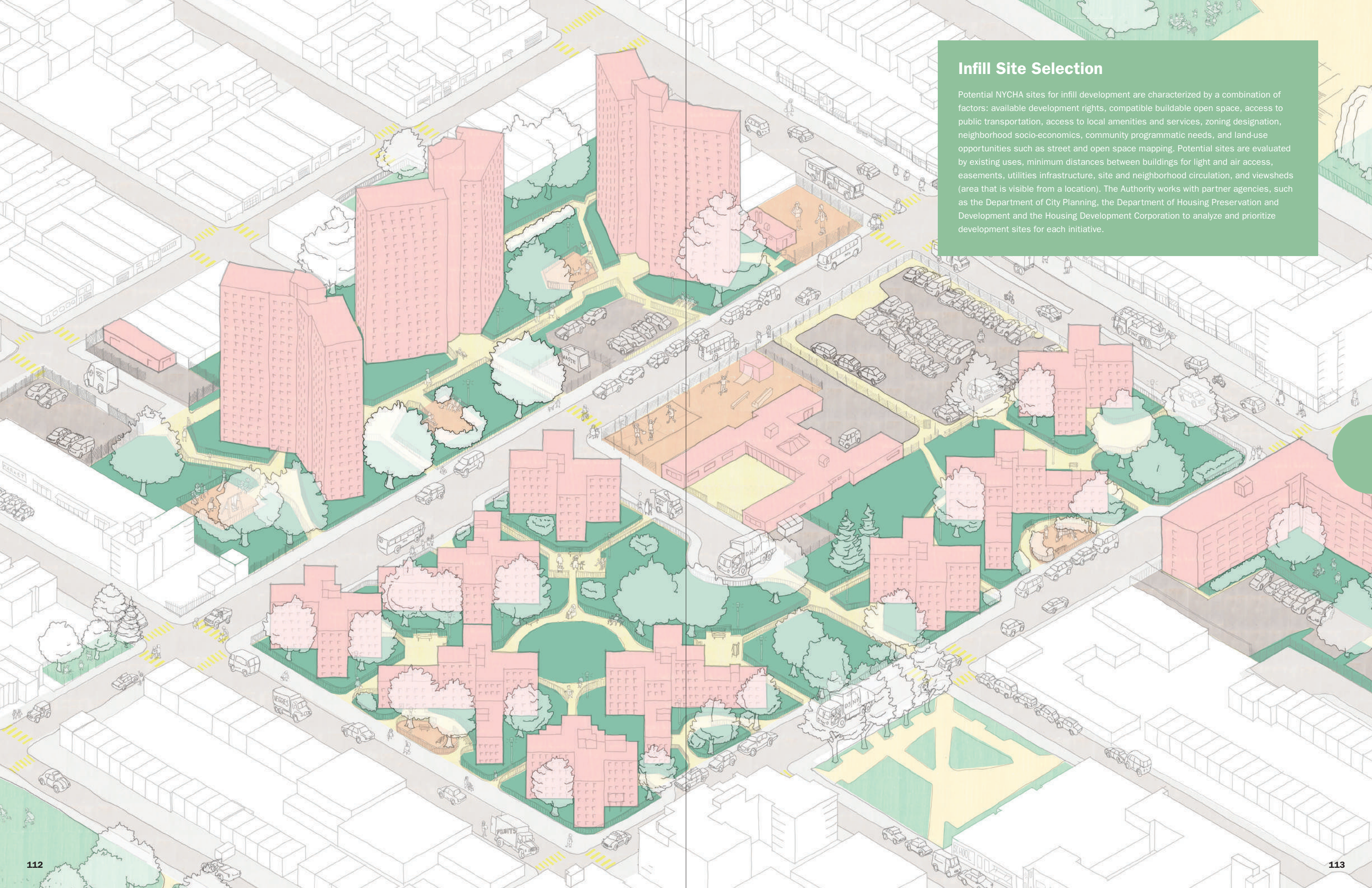


### Other Programs

All new developments on NYCHA campuses aim to create crucial resources and amenities for residents, such as community centers, schools, parks, grocery stores, and flood resilience infrastructure. New developments also bring workforce training, jobs and business opportunities for NYCHA residents as well as minority and women-owned small businesses.

In addition to the NYCHA 2.0 programs, the 100% Affordable Housing Program is playing a key role in achieving the goals set forth in Mayor Bill de Blasio's 2014 Housing New York: A Five-Borough, Ten-Year Plan. The Authority has committed to the creation of 10,000 units of affordable housing throughout different neighborhoods of the city. The Authority partners with the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and the Housing Development Corporation (HDC) on the planning, development, and ground leasing of its sites. Typically, new development sites are on street-facing areas currently used as parking lots, storage sites, or underutilized open spaces. Sites are also selected based on the neighborhood-specific need for affordable housing and the opportunity to leverage other public investments.

As part of Housing New York 2.0, released in 2019, the City created the Seniors First program to address the drastic shortage of affordable housing for low-income seniors in New York City. By 2040, the number of residents at least 65 years old is projected to increase by 40 percent. Seniors are more likely to be living on fixed, low incomes, making them a vulnerable rent-burdened population. NYCHA has committed to creating a dedicated pipeline of underutilized land to build new senior housing, in addition to the 10,000 affordable apartments already planned.



## Infill Site Selection

Potential NYCHA sites for infill development are characterized by a combination of factors: available development rights, compatible buildable open space, access to public transportation, access to local amenities and services, zoning designation, neighborhood socio-economics, community programmatic needs, and land-use opportunities such as street and open space mapping. Potential sites are evaluated by existing uses, minimum distances between buildings for light and air access, easements, utilities infrastructure, site and neighborhood circulation, and viewsheds (area that is visible from a location). The Authority works with partner agencies, such as the Department of City Planning, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and the Housing Development Corporation to analyze and prioritize development sites for each initiative.

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## Preservation and New Construction Principles

A thorough and transparent community engagement process is an important first step for all preservation and new construction projects. Through a series of activities and discussions, residents, community leaders, and stakeholders from the neighborhood provide vital knowledge and help to inform which amenities are brought to their communities.

The principles outlined in the following pages represent actionable steps to work with residents and community leaders towards responsive and innovative design solutions that serve as the baseline for proposal evaluation across NYCHA preservation and new construction programs.

- 1. Understand the Context** 116
- 2. Connect from the Ground Up** 118
- 3. Build Up with Responsive Design** 120

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## Preservation and New Construction Case Studies

### **Randolph Houses** 124

a preservation project designed for community cohesion and woven into the surrounding community while taking into consideration the historical and cultural significance of existing conditions.

### **DREAM Charter and Yomo Toro Apartments** 126

a new mixed-use development that provides transparent facades and invites eyes on the street.

### **Red Hook NYCHA Resilience Plan** 128

a project that provides amenities to support community resiliency.

### **Sumner Houses Seniors Building** 130

a new development that welcomes the community in with a carefully designed building.

## 1. Understand the Context

Documenting and analyzing the unique physical and cultural context of a NYCHA campus can help in establishment of complementary programmatic and design goals.

### 1A. Design for community cohesion

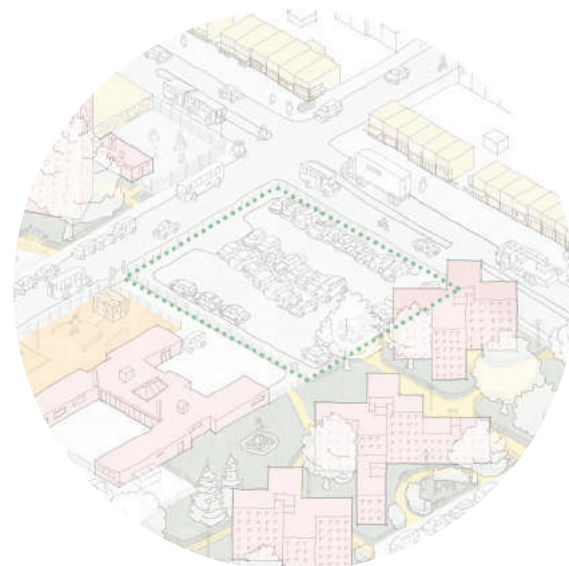
Create spaces that supports the community as people move through their everyday lives. Any new development should serve as an opportunity both inside and outside to provide spaces for multigenerational and multicultural recreation to foster social activity.



### 1B. Study the physical surroundings

Analyze the context to inform and reinforce design decisions at all scales. Consider the following areas of inquiry:

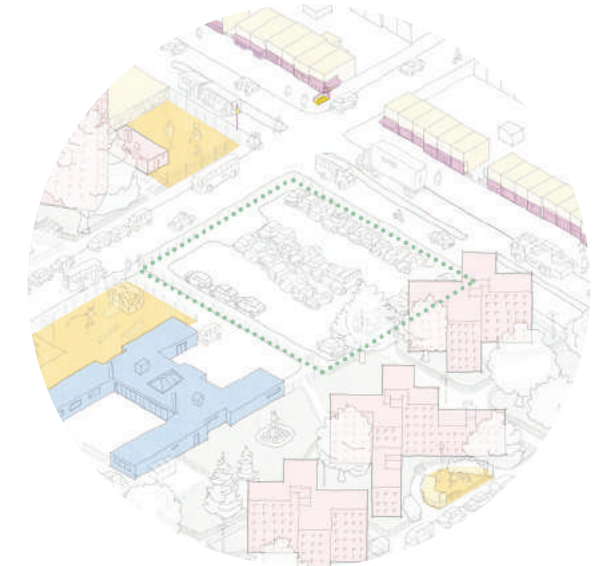
- Neighborhood massing (the overall size and shape of a building), including heights, setbacks, and uses
- Site lines and viewsheds
- Circulation and gathering patterns, including routes and access, wayfinding measures, security hazards, and transportation and transit links
- Environmental conditions, including sun path, wind direction, topography, and drainage across the site
- Restrictions, including easements, utility lines, hazardous materials, and zoning requirements



### 1C. Identify and map community assets and needs

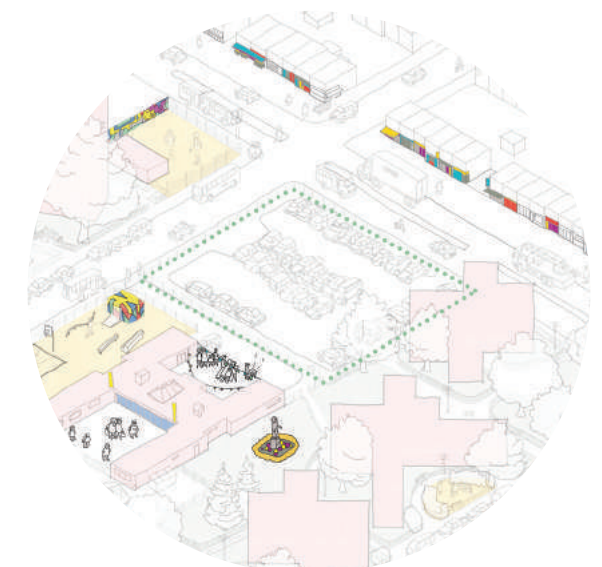
Consult NYCHA residents and community members to document existing resources and determine needs through community visioning and asset-mapping activities. This engagement process ensures community members are decision-makers and confirms a viable demand for proposed programming.

- Supplement analysis with the mapping of key socioeconomic and health indicators.
- Consider existing site uses that may be incorporated into a new building (i.e., waste facilities, bike storage, etc.) and where commercial uses may be beneficial.



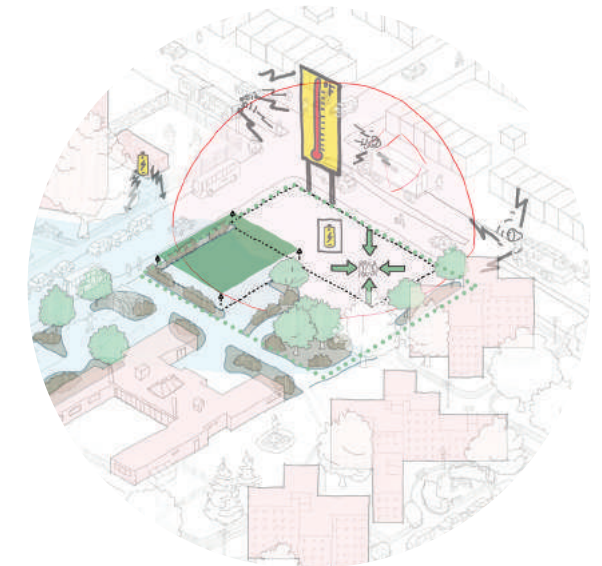
### 1D. Consider the historical and cultural significance of existing conditions

Acknowledge the history and evolution of a campus to inform materiality, programming, and other design features. An understanding of the existing cultural context of a campus must be part of every design process.



### 1E. Support community resiliency

Consider opportunities to help mitigate flood risk, reduce heat island effect, and provide spaces that will foster social cohesion and strengthen the community's social resilience to climate change. In situations of extreme heat events, flooding, or other climate-related stressors, NYCHA's campuses must be prepared for and adaptable to these conditions, especially given that NYCHA residents include some of the city's most vulnerable population.

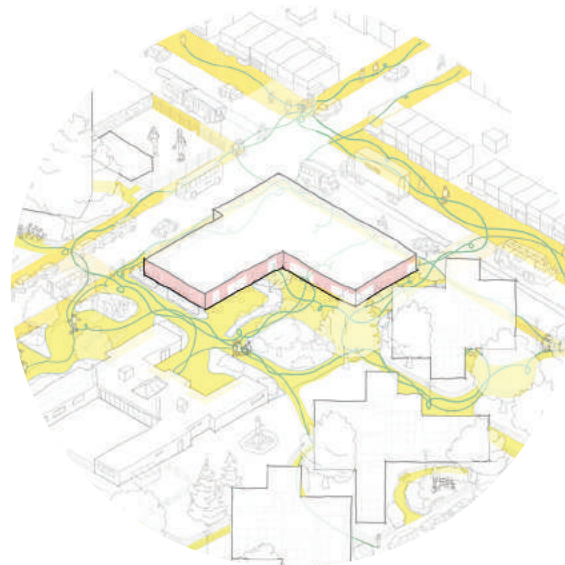


## 2. Connect from the Ground Up

A successful ground floor and adjacent exterior spaces of a new development can be an asset to the community when seamlessly integrated with the existing campus.

### 2A. Weave NYCHA developments into the surrounding community

Facilitate the physical connection of NYCHA residents to their neighbors, surrounding assets, and resources. NYCHA campuses have been a part of their larger communities, in some cases, for over eighty years. They are a vital housing resource for neighborhoods and many residents are leaders in their communities.



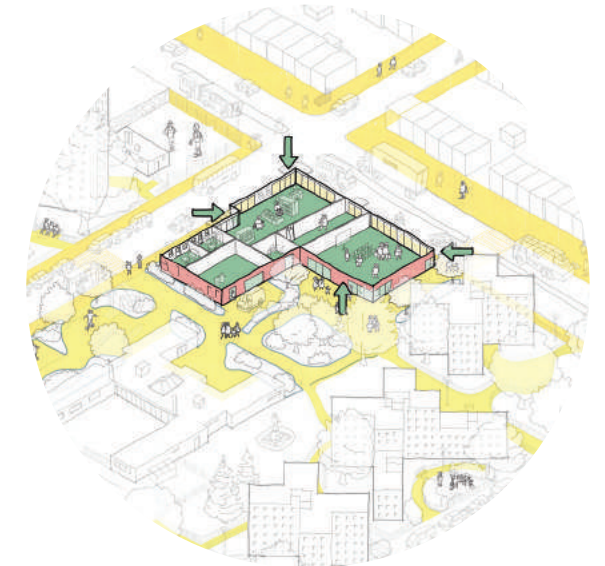
### 2B. Promote a mix of uses

Combine residences with commercial, cultural, institutional, or entertainment uses in a mixed-use building. The first floors of a mixed-use building should be designed to attract pedestrian activity through amenities that serve the needs of NYCHA residents and the surrounding community.



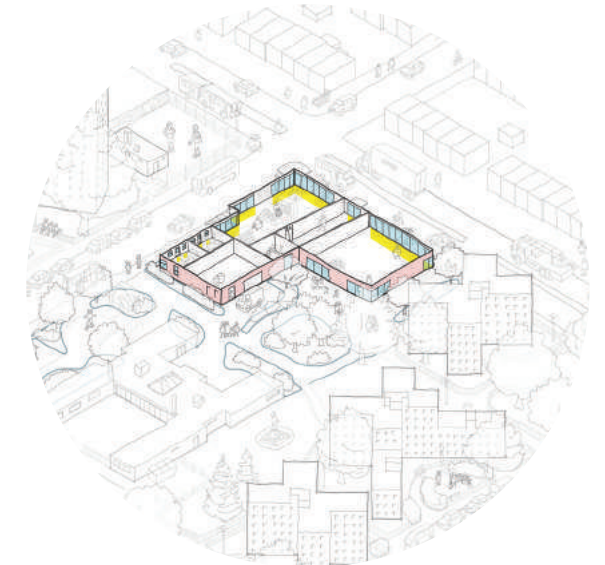
### 2C. Welcome the community at the ground floor

Consider programs and design strategies that help integrate inviting publicly accessible uses into the ground floor. Community facilities within new developments invite broader neighborhood inclusion, while a variety of activities can ensure that different age groups and communities feel welcomed in a new campus development.



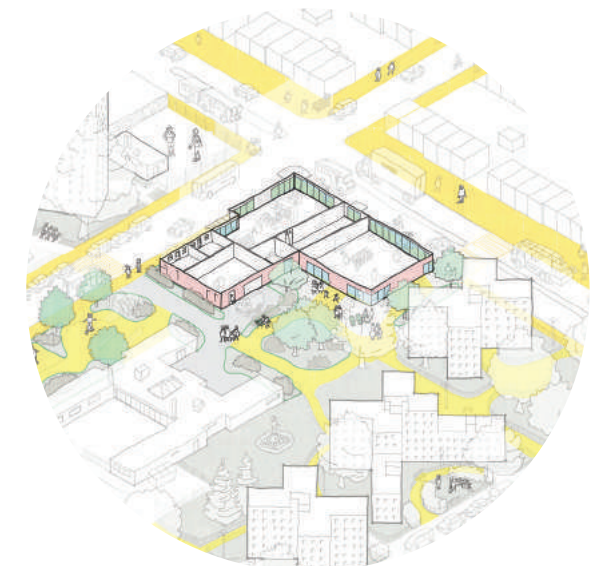
### 2D. Provide transparent façades

Use glass and transparent materials on every building façade to create a generous sense of visual and physical connectivity between interior and exterior spaces. Large expanses of blank walls should be avoided.



### 2E. Consider open spaces in NYCHA campuses as an extension of the city's public realm

Carefully consider how NYCHA residents' amenities can create places of activity. Lounges, roof gardens, and resident facilities can all support active programming and increased visual connectivity between a new development and shared open spaces. Visual connectivity between open spaces and building entrances increases the perception of safety within the campus and adjacent streets.

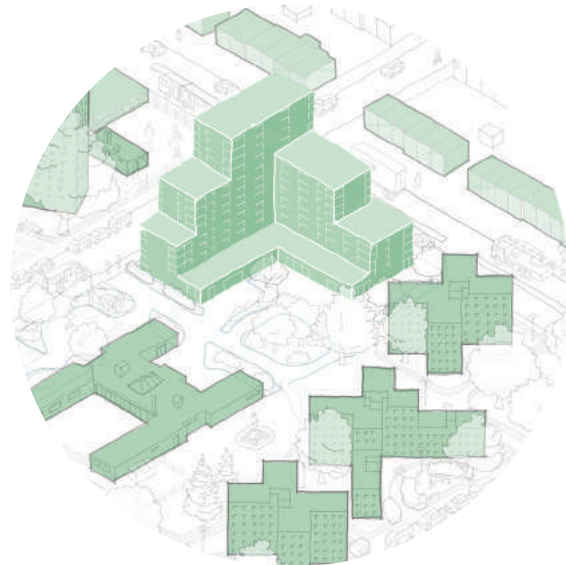


### 3. Build up with Responsive Design

Acknowledging the existing built environment and character of a NYCHA campus and surrounding neighborhood is a valuable approach to a creative building design response.

#### 3A. Straddle multiple contexts

Consider how a new building can best support a positive outcome by creating envelopes that complement or link different spatial arrangements and physical contexts. Relate the massing to adjacent buildings, while also being mindful of the pedestrian scale.



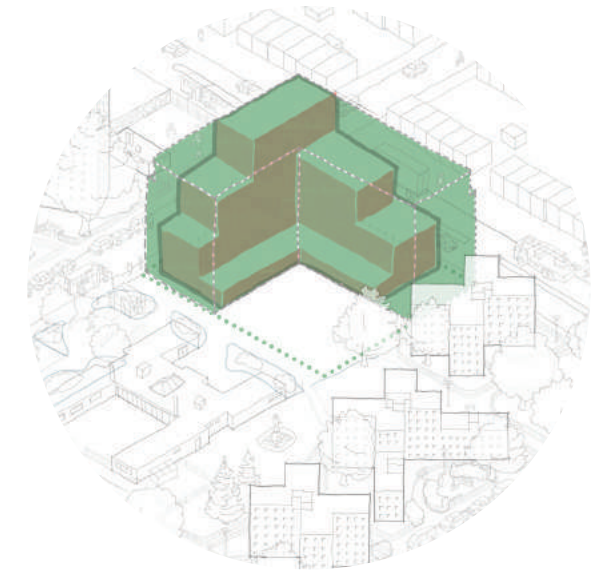
#### 3B. Design a “360-degree” building

Consider how each side of a new building relates to adjacent conditions. Most NYCHA buildings are seen from the street as well as from the open spaces of the campus interior. It is important to create a harmonious relation between existing buildings and entrances, pathways, gathering spaces, and views from within the campus and adjacent public streets, parks or other significant public places.



#### 3C. Enliven with massing

Articulate facades of buildings with recesses and setbacks to support a positive relationship to the adjacent context. Building articulations can help preserve or complement NYCHA residents’ views from nearby buildings, and serve as indicators of campus entrances. It is important to consider how the shape and size of a new building affects existing features of a NYCHA campus, such as pathways, playgrounds, and sports courts.



#### 3D. Invite eyes on the street

Having many “eyes on the street” can help residents feel safer on the internal pathways, perimeter sidewalks, or gathering spaces of a NYCHA campus. This can serve as a less institutional way of ensuring safety, in comparison to security cameras or police patrolling. Maximizing transparent building materials, appropriately locating building entrances, and having windows on every building façade are effective design details to enhance the residents’ perception of safety.



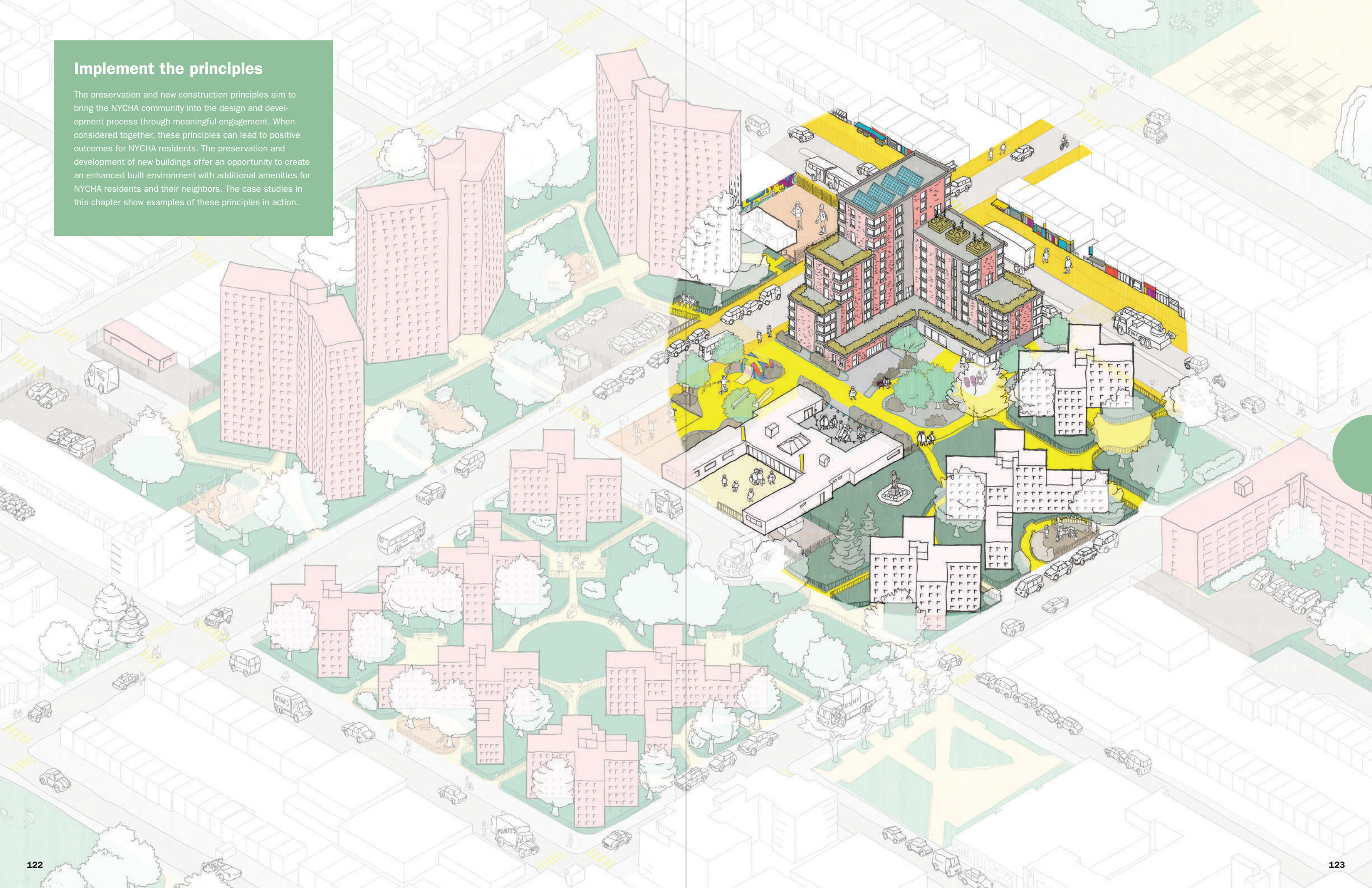
#### 3E. Enhance with building materials and details

Incorporate materials with different textures, colors and levels of transparency to make a building feel inviting to the community. For example, a different material can be used to signify a building entrance, or the location of a community facility. New buildings can also serve as an attractive marker that supports an enhanced sense of orientation throughout the NYCHA campus.



## Implement the principles

The preservation and new construction principles aim to bring the NYCHA community into the design and development process through meaningful engagement. When considered together, these principles can lead to positive outcomes for NYCHA residents. The preservation and development of new buildings offer an opportunity to create an enhanced built environment with additional amenities for NYCHA residents and their neighbors. The case studies in this chapter show examples of these principles in action.



## Randolph Houses

Developer: Trinity Financial Architect: SLCE Architects

The preservation of Randolph Houses in Harlem is a unique design intervention that responds to future needs while acknowledging the values of the past. Two rows of historic existing buildings were retrofitted to facilitate access to people with disabilities by providing one central circulation core with elevator access. The newly interconnected buildings façades were restored and the building interiors retrofitted with apartments, community space, and storage. Site improvements include active and passive outdoor spaces for residents. The development recognized the value of the architectural heritage of these buildings, for the residents and the larger community of the city.

### PRINCIPLES EMPLOYED

#### 1A. Design for community cohesion

##### How does it happen?

- By incorporating programs that bring residents together. Randolph Houses provides a community space, a teaching kitchen, a computer lab, a fitness room and storage area for residents. The site improvements also include two children's play areas for different age groups and active and passive outdoor spaces for residents.

#### 1D. Consider historical and cultural significance of existing conditions

##### How does it happen?

- By recognizing unique features of a building or a group of buildings. For instance, Randolph Houses is a rare ensemble with remarkable architectural details built in the 1890s.
- By conducting a comprehensive asset-mapping analysis, and a survey visualizing the rich stories within NYCHA campuses. Longtime residents have a wealth of knowledge about the history of their community, which can add depth to the understanding of a site.
- By connecting to residents who can share information about existing networks, challenges, and longstanding traditions which can add value to design proposals.



Randolph Houses in Harlem, Manhattan

#### 2A. Weave NYCHA developments into the surrounding community

##### How does it happen?

- By carefully renovating existing structures, like the buildings that make up Randolph Houses. The preservation of the historic façades retained the existing character of the block and neighborhood, while the interiors were completely reconfigured adding updated entrances, vertical circulation, and elevators.



## DREAM Charter and Yomo Toro Apartments

Developer: Jonathan Rose Companies LLC Architect: Perkins Eastman

The DREAM Charter and Yomo Toro Apartments development was built on what used to be underutilized land on NYCHA’s Washington Houses campus. Multiple City agencies, as well as private and nonprofit partners came together to forge a vision with the East Harlem community. East Harlem Center for Living and Learning includes the DREAM charter school, affordable housing units at the Yomo Toro Apartments and office space for the youth-oriented non-profit organization. This is an exemplary case of community driven mixed-use development on a NYCHA campus. It transformed what used to be a parking lot and trash compactor area into what has become a model of cohesive development.



Dream Charter School in East Harlem, Manhattan

### PRINCIPLES EMPLOYED

#### 2B. Promote a mix of uses

##### How does it happen:

- By considering which uses can be part of the new building program. DREAM Charter and Yomo Toro Apartments combines a school with office space and residences.
- By using community visioning and asset-mapping to determine best uses to be incorporated in proposal. This ensures NYCHA residents and community members are decision-makers in the process and that there is a viable demand for the programming proposed.
- By studying existing land use in the neighborhood, and incorporating potential missing amenities or services.
- By identifying nearby infrastructure that the proposal should be buffered from (such as elevated train lines or highways), or connected to (such as waterfronts and parks).

- By acknowledging current pathways and open spaces the proposal should connect to within the campus.
- By coordinating programming with the demographics of the area, infrastructure needs of the proposal, and technological trends.
- By analyzing best location of service areas of the proposal, and how it will interact with the existing activities of the NYCHA campus.
- By ensuring that community-based designs consider the existing community strengths to effectively respond to the unique challenges of the community.

#### 2D. Provide transparent façades

##### How does it happen?

- By creating visual and physical connections between interior and exterior spaces. On the ground floor of the DREAM Charter and Yomo Toro Apartments, the building has large glass walls that create transparency and visual connectivity, breaking the boundaries between the building and the streetscape. The school itself is filled with light and opens up directly on a public street, which activates a nearby local park, connecting the amenities in the new building with the existing amenities of the neighborhood.

#### 3D. Invite eyes on the street

##### How does it happen?

- By creating façades with generous fenestration. The façades of the DREAM Charter School and Yomo Toro Apartments are enlivened with windows facing the street and the interior of the campus.
- By considering maintenance and upkeep of common spaces for residents.
- By locating community-oriented spaces in highly visible areas to promote resident ownership and stewardship.

## Red Hook NYCHA Resilience Plan

NYCHA Office of Resilience and Recovery Designers: Kohn Peterson Fox associates and OLIN

Red Hook, an industrial neighborhood in Brooklyn, is prone to flooding due to its topographical characteristics and peninsular landmass. When Superstorm Sandy hit the community of Red Hook Houses, Brooklyn’s largest NYCHA campus (28 buildings), thousands of residents were left without power. The property’s infrastructure suffered substantial damage. The award winning master plan for the campus renovation will serve as a part of the community resilience plan. The proposal includes installing “utility pods” that deliver heat and electricity to each building, as well as creating raised earth mounds that function as a flood barrier and as a gathering space for public programming.

### PRINCIPLES EMPLOYED

#### 1E. Support community resiliency

##### How does it happen

- By developing design proposals for climate change adaptation. The Red Hook NYCHA Resilience Plan includes major infrastructural investments to mitigate flood risk.
  - By studying opportunities to strengthen the physical and social resilience of the larger community through cooling centers, sustainable energy sources and alternate sources to the power grid.
  - By evaluating opportunities to update and consolidate infrastructural needs of a NYCHA campus in one location, such as centralizing a heating plant in a single facility.
  - By implementing efficiencies throughout a campus with technologically-driven solutions.
- By elevating vital infrastructure above projected flood levels to mitigate potential flooding impact during a storm.
  - By maximizing stormwater management techniques, such as green roofs, to decrease offsite runoff.
  - By fostering social cohesion with neighborhood networks and organizations that can be instrumental in supporting residents during stressful times as well as in stewardship and long-term maintenance programs.



Rendering of the proposed main heating plant for Redhook Houses, Brooklyn



Rendering of the utility pods that will provide heat and electricity at Redhook Houses, Brooklyn

## Sumner Houses Seniors Building

Developers: Selfhelp Community Services, Urban Builders Group, RiseBoro Community Partnership  
 Architect: Studio Libeskind

The proposal for senior housing development at Sumner Houses in Brooklyn challenges the notion that a building must completely match its context. The proposed 10-story building, designed with very few right angles, stands out due to its architectural features and selection of materials, while its scale and proportion complements existing NYCHA buildings. The building form was designed to allow natural light to reach street level, where open spaces flank building entrances. The ground floor community facility consists of flexible public and resident-only spaces that will include neighborhood health resources and meeting areas. The interior of the building features a courtyard with natural light, which hosts a communal space to foster resident interaction.



### PRINCIPLES EMPLOYED

#### 2C. Welcome the community in at the ground floor

##### How does it happen?

- By designing an inviting ground floor with community facilities, as proposed at the Sumner Houses Senior Center.
- By establishing prominent entrances with transparent materials that visually connect interior spaces with public streets, plazas and parks.
- By locating community facilities on the ground floor, and inviting NYCHA residents and the surrounding community in with appropriate wayfinding and signage.

#### 3B. Design a “360-degree” building

##### How does it happen?

- By treating each façade of a proposed new building with equal attention to design details. The façades of the proposed Sumner Houses Seniors Building are designed with the same materials and fenestration.
- By complementing the existing context of the NYCHA campus. The scale and proportion of new buildings must consider its relationship to other buildings nearby.

#### 3C. Enliven with massing

##### How does it happen?

- By paying attention to building form and articulation of façades, from the ground floor to the top of the building, to create a pedestrian-friendly experience. The Sumner Houses Seniors Building proposal includes tilted façades designed to maximize natural light at the ground floor.
- By using architectural details to support the overall massing and articulation of the building, including building setbacks and recesses, as well as balconies, terraces, and screening features.

#### 3E. Enhance through materiality

##### How does it happen?

- By enhancing the proportions and visual interest of a building’s elevation with a deliberate selection of exterior materials. The proposed Sumner Seniors Building utilizes a unique building shape that is accentuated by the use of color and texture.
- By carefully designing architectural details to create a pedestrian-friendly experience, with particular emphasis on the ground floor.
- By selecting durable building materials that age well and don’t require intense ongoing maintenance.
- By adequately sizing and spacing windows to provide comfortable interior spaces, complementing the neighborhood character, enhancing the pedestrian experience, and maximizing access of natural light.
- By minimizing the creation of blank walls, particularly on the ground floor. Consider their relationship of blank walls to the campus’ pathways, and by minimizing their visual perception with design details and landscape features.



**“As a steward of over 2,400 acres across every borough of the city, NYCHA is leveraging design to better physically connect its residents to each other, and to surrounding neighborhoods and resources.”**

Gregory Russ  
*NYCHA Chair and Chief Executive Officer*

## **Conclusion**

New York City Housing Authority’s Connected Communities initiative is a revolutionary step by the Authority towards leveraging the power of design. The initiative creates opportunities to educate, empower, and engage residents and community members. A cornerstone of the initiative, the *Connected Communities Guidebook* sets a blueprint for partners to collaborate when working to improve NYCHA campuses and their connections to their surrounding communities as investments occur.

This Guidebook highlights that the built environment at NYCHA campuses can be best improved with adaptable, concrete, and diverse design solutions when they rely on the participation of residents and the community at large.

The Connected Communities initiative is also a model for a more democratic process for designing the built environment. It speaks to the value of well-designed buildings and open spaces within public housing campuses and the effect they have on residents’ quality of life, today and well into the future.

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## Glossary

**Activation** Animating open spaces by creating opportunities for social activity. For example, playgrounds and sports fields can allow for activation of a park or lawn area. Activation can also be created through community events and other temporary programming.

**Building Façade** Exterior face of a building that usually fronts the street or open space.

**Built Environment** The human-made structures or surroundings that we live, work, and play in, ranging from buildings and infrastructure, parks and green spaces to neighborhoods and cities.

**Capital Projects** Construction projects on NYCHA buildings or grounds that are publicly funded to help improve or maintain them.

**Community Engagement** Process that facilitates communication, interaction, involvement, and exchange between an organization and a community for a range of social and organizational outcomes.

**Durability** Quality of a material that is long-lasting.

**Green Infrastructure** An approach to water management that protects, restores, or mimics the natural water cycle.

**Heat island effect** Phenomenon that makes areas of the city hotter than their surroundings due to the lack of vegetation, retention of heat in buildings, or expanse of paved surfaces, especially those that use dark materials that absorb and retain heat.

**Landscaping** Designing, creating or modifying the visible features of an open space. (see Softscape and Hardscape)

**Lot Coverage** The portion of a zoning lot that is covered by a building.

**Massing** Refers to the form of a building in three dimensions. It defines both the interior space and the exterior shape of the building.

**Natural Surveillance** A design strategy to make it easy for people to observe the spaces around them. Low landscaping, street lights, and design that encourages activity can help promote natural surveillance. For instance, a low sightline can help caregivers watch their children at the playground.

**Open Space** Areas that are public and accessible (i.e., streets, sidewalks, or public parks) or private with limited access (i.e., private streets, parks, or parking lots).

**Participatory Design** Approach to design that attempts to actively involve all stakeholders in the design process to help ensure the result meets their needs and is usable. (see Community Engagement)

**Passive Open Space and Active Open Space** A *passive open space* has limited programs and amenities. At NYCHA, passive open spaces are made of lawns, paths, and seating areas. An *active open space* has programs and amenities. At NYCHA, active open spaces are made of playgrounds and sports fields.

**Permeability** Quality of a material that is porous and facilitates runoff or rainwater to travel directly to the ground.

**Public Space and Private Space** A *public space* is publicly owned. Public spaces can both be outside (i.e., streets and public parks) or inside (i.e., public library or public community facility). A *private space* is privately owned. Private spaces can be open spaces (i.e., buildings yards, private parking lot, Privately Owned Public Space) or enclosed spaces in buildings (i.e., offices, retail, or apartments).

**Resiliency** The capacity to recover quickly from natural disaster.

**Semi-Public Space and Semi-Private Space** A *semi-public space* is a privately owned space that is publicly accessible. Most of NYCHAs' open spaces are semi-public. Playgrounds, sports fields, and community centers at NYCHA are on privately owned land, but most of them are accessible to the public. A *semi-private space* is a privately owned space that is publicly accessible but with limited access. An open space adjacent to the lobby of a residential building or the mechanical rooms within a building are semi-private spaces.

**Section 8** Created by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1978, the Housing Choice Voucher program, also known as Section 8, provides assistance to eligible low- and moderate-income families to rent housing in the private market. Eligibility for this program is based on a family's gross annual income and family size.

**Social Cohesion** A sense of belonging, trust and willingness to work together in a group.

**Softscape and Hardscape** *Softscape* are made up of soft-wearing materials such as sand, earth, and any kind of plants (grass, shrubs, and trees). *Hardscape* are part of the landscape made up of hard-wearing materials such as wood, stone, and concrete.

**Stakeholder** Person or organization with an interest in a project. At NYCHA, stakeholders include campus residents, community based organizations, neighborhood community, elected officials, City agencies, and contractors.

**Stormwater Management** Technique that lessens water runoff and rainwater into public sewers (see Green Infrastructure)

**Superblock** Block with dimensions that are larger than a typically sized city block. NYCHA campuses, especially towers-in-the-park types, often stretch out on superblocks.

**Territoriality** How people use spaces (territories) to communicate ownership or occupancy of areas. (see Natural Surveillance)

**Urban Design** Practice that bridges architecture, urban planning and landscape architecture. It shapes the cities and neighborhoods we live in.

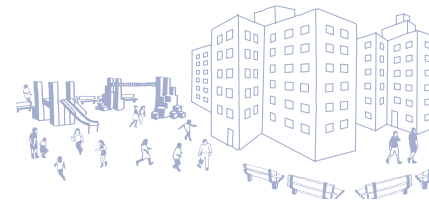
**Wayfinding** Signs to help orientation in a city, a neighborhood, or a campus, and navigate from place to place.



# Prioritizing the Community

## A Connected Communities Initiative

Community engagement questionnaire to know the thoughts, ideas and concerns of the people about their built environment. **We want to hear from you!**



1. How often do you use the outdoor spaces at this property? (Select one)

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- A few times a year
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. When do you or others typically use the outdoor spaces at this property? (Select all that apply)

- Weekday  Morning  Afternoon  Evening
- Weekend  Morning  Afternoon  Evening

3. Who do you often see using the outdoor spaces? (Select all that apply)

- Children
- Teens
- Families
- Adults
- Seniors
- People in groups
- Individuals
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

3B. Who do you see excluded from these spaces?

7. What are your top 3 priorities to make more inclusive outdoor spaces at this property? (Select 3)

- Program + Events
- Gathering + Socializing
- Sports + Recreation
- Gardens vegetables + plantings
- Walkability + Accessibility
- Maintenance + Upkeep
- Safety + Security
- Health + Wellness
- Sense of Belonging
- Connection to outside community
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

8. What programs, uses, activity, or quality would make you use this property's outdoor spaces more often?

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9. If you could change or improve ONE outdoor space on the property campus, what would it be? Why?

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10. Any other thoughts or observations you'd like to share? Write them below:

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# Measuring Connectivity

## In Your Built Environment

This worksheet is intended to evaluate the 'Connectivity' of a space based on the community's observations and thoughts.

Name or Address of Location Observed \_\_\_\_\_

Date & Time of Observation \_\_\_\_\_

Description of the Day \_\_\_\_\_  
(sunny, cloudy, cold, during an event, etc.)

### USERS & ACTIVITIES

1. Is this a space that people young and old can use at the same time?



2. Does the space have areas for teens and adults to be active?



3. Does the space have areas for children to play safely?



4. Does the space have areas to spend time, sit and/or rest?



5. Are there areas where people can have conversations with each other comfortably?



6. Could someone who has trouble walking, such as an older person or someone in a wheelchair, be able to easily enter and use this space?



7. How much greenery is in the space, like trees, flowers, plantings and shrubbery?



As you observe, **count (or estimate) the number of people** you see using the space:

- ✓ 1. Going back to the map, place a ✓ in the spot(s) where you have conducted your observation.
- X 2. On your map, place an X in the area(s) where safety might be an issue for a person who is walking or has trouble walking.
- S 3. Mark an S on your map where safety might be a concern. What are the reasons why someone might not feel safe in the space? Write them down below:

### COMFORT & LOOK

1. Is the space welcoming?



2. Is it easy to see if someone is approaching from most spots throughout the space?



3. Does the space appear to be well lit at night?



4. Overall, would someone of any age feel safe in this space?



5. Is there trash on the ground in this space?



6. Is there dog waste on the ground?



7. Are there places in the space for community members to throw their garbage away?



8. Are there signs or other markers posted to tell community members which areas are not free to use, and other useful information?



9. Are there sidewalks or clearly marked walking paths that connect this space to the rest of the campus?



10. Does the space have areas that provide shade from the sun or shelter from rain?



11. Can you use the space year round?



13. Overall, how would you rate the visual environment?



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