

**New York City Housing Authority
Proposed Amendment to the Agency Annual Plan for FY 2006 and
Draft Agency Annual Plan for FY 2007**

**Testimony of Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz
June 8, 2006**

I WANT TO THANK NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY CHAIRMAN TINO HERNANDEZ FOR HOLDING TODAY'S HEARING. I APPRECIATE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON ISSUES THAT IMPACT THOUSANDS OF BROOKLYN AND NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS.

NO PROGRAM TODAY IS MORE VITAL TO THE FUTURE OF OUR CITY OR WORTHY OF PUBLIC FUNDING AND SUPPORT THAN NEW YORK CITY'S PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY — NYCHA.

BROOKLYN HAS THE LARGEST NUMBER OF CONVENTIONAL HOUSING UNITS OF ANY BOROUGH, WITH 30 PERCENT OF THE CITY'S PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS, INCLUDING 100 DEVELOPMENTS AND NEARLY 59,000 APARTMENTS. BROOKLYN'S RED HOOK HOUSES IS THE SECOND LARGEST PUBLIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN THE CITY WITH NEARLY 3,000 UNITS.

IT IS INDEED AN OUTRAGE THAT SINCE 2002, NYCHA HAS NOT RECEIVED THE FULL FEDERAL FUNDING IT DESPERATELY NEEDS TO EFFECTIVELY OPERATE AND MAINTAIN NEW YORK'S PUBLIC HOUSING. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT UNDER PRESIDENT BUSH'S 2007 BUDGET PROPOSAL, NYCHA WILL RECEIVE ONLY 87 PERCENT OF THE FUNDING REQUIRED FOR NEW CAPITAL PROJECTS, AND ONLY 78 PERCENT OF THE NECESSARY FUNDING FOR OPERATION.

BUT DESPITE THE FACT THAT NYCHA, LIKE PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, IS STRUGGLING TO MEET INCREASING DEMANDS WITH SLASHED RESOURCES, I WANT TO STATE UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT NYCHA SHOULD NOT AND CAN NOT BALANCE ITS BUDGET ON THE BACKS OF PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS---NOT TODAY, NOT TOMORROW, NOT IN NEW YORK CITY AND DEFINITELY NOT IN BROOKLYN. NYCHA HAS A FUNDAMENTAL MANDATE TO PROVIDE SAFE, AFFORDABLE AND DECENT HOUSING TO THOSE WHO CANNOT AFFORD TO PAY MARKET RATE RENTS. IT IS THEREFORE UNCONSCIONABLE TO FORCE PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS, WHO ARE LEAST ABLE TO ABSORB THE ADDITIONAL COSTS, TO HELP FILL THAT BUDGET GAP. THERE MUST BE OTHER SOLUTIONS AND TOGETHER WE MUST FIND THEM.

COMMENTS ON PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE AGENCY PLAN FOR FY 2006

CONCERNING NYCHA'S LIMITED RENT REFORM INITIATIVE AND ADJUSTMENT OF TENANTS' CEILING RENTS, I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT NYCHA SHOULD SEEK TO FIND SOLUTIONS THAT DO NOT INVOLVE RAISING RENT FOR PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS. IF RENT INCREASES ARE IN FACT IMPLEMENTED, NYCHA MUST PROVIDE ADEQUATE NOTICE TO TENANTS AND INSTITUTE AN APPEALS PROCESS FOR TENANTS WISHING TO APPEAL RENT INCREASES.

REGARDING ADMISSIONS PREFERENCES, IT IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL THAT COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS BE ALLOWED TO MAKE REFERRALS FOR HOMELESS CLIENTS DIRECTLY TO NYCHA JUST AS CITY AND STATE AGENCIES DO. THIS WILL EXPAND THE SCOPE OF NYCHA'S EVALUATIVE OUTREACH, INCREASING ITS ABILITY TO IDENTIFY, ACCESS, AND ASSIST THE NEEDIEST NEW YORKERS, THEREBY, ULTIMATELY REDUCING THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IN OUR CITY.

WITH RESPECT TO NYCHA'S PLAN TO PRESERVE MORE THAN 20,000 UNSUBSIDIZED NON-FEDERAL APARTMENTS UTILIZING NEW SECTION 8 VOUCHERS, NYCHA SHOULD PROVIDE TENANTS WITH A LIST OF TARGETED DEVELOPMENTS IN EACH BOROUGH, SPECIFIC STEPS AND TIMELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS PLAN INCLUDING THE TENANT SELECTION PROCESS AND CATEGORIES FOR WAITING LIST PRIORITIES.

SOME OF MY CONCERNS REGARDING PROJECTS SPECIFIC TO BROOKLYN ARE AS FOLLOWS: CONCERNING THE DEMOLITION AND DISPOSITION OF PROSPECT PLAZA IN BROOKLYN, TENANTS TEMPORARILY DISPLACED DURING THE RELOCATION PHASE SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO HAVE DIRECT INPUT INTO THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR THE PROPOSED COMMUNITY CENTER. NYCHA SHOULD ALSO SEEK TO IMPLEMENT THIS SUGGESTION AS PART OF ITS DRAFT AGENCY PLAN FOR FY 2007, FOR OTHER COMMUNITY CENTERS PLANNED. REGARDING THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF TOWN HOUSES AND/OR CONDOMINIUMS AND AN 80-100 UNIT SENIOR RESIDENCE TO BE LOCATED AT THE SITE OF THE LINDEN AND BOULEVARD HOUSES IN BROOKLYN, CURRENT LINDEN AND BOULEVARD HOUSES TENANTS SHOULD BE GIVEN FIRST PRIORITY TO PURCHASE THE PROPOSED TOWNHOUSES OR CONDOMINIUMS.

COMMENTS ON DRAFT AGENCY ANNUAL PLAN FOR FY 2007

AS WE LOOK AHEAD TO 2007, I HAVE SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS. FOR EXAMPLE, CONSIDERING THAT NYCHA HOUSING HAS A NINETY-NINE PERCENT OCCUPANCY RATE, WHAT IS NYCHA'S PLAN FOR HANDLING ITS CURRENT PUBLIC HOUSING WAITING LISTS, WHICH INCLUDE 136,000 FAMILIES ON THE PUBLIC HOUSING WAITING LIST, 123,000 FAMILIES ON THE SECTION 8 WAITING LIST, AND 25,000 APPLICANTS ON BOTH LISTS? WHY HAS NYCHA DECIDED TO LIMIT NEW SECTION 8 VOUCHERS TO CURRENT NYCHA RESIDENTS RATHER THAN EXTENDING THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THOSE NOT RESIDING IN NYCHA HOUSING, BUT STILL ON WAITING LISTS FOR SECTION 8 OR PUBLIC HOUSING?

HOW DOES NYCHA PLAN TO UTILIZE THE \$100 MILLION FUNDING COMMITMENT FROM THE CITY? CAN NYCHA DIRECT A PORTION OF THIS FUNDING TO REHABILITATE AND OPERATE THE 20,000 UNITS IDENTIFIED IN ITS PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE AGENCY PLAN FOR FY 2006, CONSIDERING THAT THESE UNITS WERE INITIALLY FUNDED BY THE CITY AND STATE?

REGARDING NYCHA'S CENTRALIZED CALL CENTERS FOR RESIDENTS—WHY WERE STATEN ISLAND, QUEENS AND MANHATTAN CHOSEN AHEAD OF BROOKLYN FOR CENTRALIZED CALL CENTERS WHEN BROOKLYN MAINTAINS THE MOST PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS IN THE CITY? MY COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER IN BROOKLYN RECEIVES CALLS ON A REGULAR BASIS FROM TENANTS HAVING PROBLEMS OBTAINING TICKETS AND RECEIVING TIMELY REPAIRS. WHY MUST BROOKLYN WAIT UNTIL 2008 FOR A CENTRALIZED CALL CENTER?

FINALLY, NYCHA MUST SEEK TO INCREASE THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING LANDLORDS BEYOND ITS CURRENT 30,000 FOR ITS SECTION 8 LEASED HOUSING PROGRAM, WHILE IMPROVING PARTICIPATORY GUIDELINES AND RESTRICTIONS. MY OFFICE ALSO REQUESTS UPDATED LISTS OF PARTICIPATING AND NON-PARTICIPATING LANDLORDS IN BROOKLYN, SO WE CAN PROVIDE INFORMATION TO TENANTS SEARCHING FOR SECTION 8 APARTMENTS AND IDENTIFY WAYS TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION FROM LANDLORDS.

I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT BEYOND PROVIDING SAFE, AFFORDABLE AND DECENT PUBLIC HOUSING FOR THE NEEDIEST AND MOST VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IN NEW YORK CITY AND BROOKLYN, NYCHA'S MANDATE SHOULD INCLUDE ACHIEVING A SUFFICIENT DIVERSITY OF TENANTS, INCREASING INCLUSIONARY RESIDENT PARTICIPATION IN THE PLANNING PROCESS, AND PROVIDING SUFFICIENT OPERATIONAL AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES.

AS PRESIDENT OF THE BOROUGH WITH THE MOST PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT THE WELL-BEING OF PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS IS ESSENTIAL TO THE WELFARE OF NOT ONLY BROOKLYN, BUT OF THE ENTIRE CITY. THESE ARE OUR MOTHERS, OUR FATHERS, OUR SISTERS, OUR BROTHERS, OUR FRIENDS AND OUR NEIGHBORS. THEY ARE YOU, AND THEY ARE ME. AND AS NEW YORKERS, WE ALL DESERVE BETTER.

I WOULD AGAIN LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME THIS OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE PROPOSED PLANS.