PUBLIC HOUSING

WE ARE OPEN HERE
The Annual Plan

Every year, NYCHA has to give HUD an annual plan showing the budget and proposed activities for the next year. If NYCHA wants to change any policies affecting public housing, they have to put them in the plan. NYCHA holds public meetings to share the plan and to get residents’ comments, which have to be included in the plan. Unless HUD says no, the plan is automatically approved.

Your Development

Your toilet is leaking. Your elevator is broken. If you want to get something fixed in your building, talk to the maintenance staff. But some solutions are bigger than that, like NYCHA policy, their budget, and their annual plan.

The Budget

NYCHA gets money from you when you pay rent and from HUD in Washington. NYCHA has been running a budget deficit of millions of dollars per year. That means cutbacks on building security and less maintenance for things like broken elevators and leaky toilets.

Introducing the Players

Resident Participation

Every housing authority like NYCHA has to set up a way for residents to take part in decisions about their development and about public housing in the city. It’s the law! Read the sections to the right to find out how it works in New York City.

The Ways To Participate!

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NYCHA Policy

HUD, the City, and the State write the policies that NYCHA has to follow. If NYCHA breaks the rules, it’s up to them to do something, and up to you to make sure they know about it. It might not be the best way to get your toilet fixed today, but it is about organizing for public housing residents to protect and improve their housing.

Grassroots Organizing

People can come together and build power through numbers—400,000 is a lot of people! Members work together to learn the issues, and every member becomes a leader in advocating for public housing residents. It’s about organizing for yourself and people like you.

New York City has over 400,000 people living in 180,000 units of public housing. (More like 500,000 if you count people not on the lease!) Other cities, like Atlanta and Chicago, have torn down their public housing. Public housing in New York City is strong, but residents have to get involved in policy to protect it and make it better.

The City and State have a lot of say in NYCHA policies. They write some of the laws that regulate public housing, and NYC’s mayor hands the NYCHA Chairman and the Resident Commissioner, who represents residents.

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development is part of the federal government in Washington, DC. HUD writes housing policy for the whole country, and gives money to the local housing authorities that manage public housing all over the US.

The New York City Housing Authority runs public housing in New York City. Your building manager and the maintenance people you see (or maybe don’t see) work for NYCHA. It’s their largest housing authority in America.

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WE MOBILIZE!
We mobilize (in groups of 3 to 30,000)—around NYCHA meetings, Wall Street, City Hall, Albany, Washington, DC—wherever and whenever people in power need to be held accountable. When we have to, we step it up. If we can't set up a meeting with people in power, we might just go to their houses instead.

WE ARE BUILDING OUR BASE!
We build power by building our base. In the last six years, Community Voices Heard has talked to over 40,000 public housing residents in doorways and at events and meetings. We've had close to 20,000 sign up to join us in our campaign to improve public housing. Every member is a leader who helps make decisions about the future of the campaign.

WE ARE VOTING!
We knock on doors, make phone calls, and send out mailings to get people to the polls. We help people identify the issues, explain how elected officials affect public housing, and tell people where and when to go on Election Day. We hold “accountability sessions,” where officials take questions from residents. We remind elected officials that there are a lot of us and we vote.

WE ARE EDUCATING!
We educate each other so we can educate others. In our Leadership School, members train members about policy, politics, organizing basics, and team building. Learn how to knock on doors, write a policy report, speak on a university panel, hold a press conference on the steps of City Hall, or give your elected officials a tour of your development.

WE ARE SHAKING IT UP!
We've delivered repair tickets directly to the NYCHA board at public meetings, camped out on the steps of City Hall, taken over the lobby at JPMorgan Chase, blocked the entrance to NYCHA, delivered “baloney” sandwiches to elected officials, and much more to get attention for our issues and our community. We have fun and get things done.

WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE!
We're in this to change policies and improve our lives. No one is going to do it for us. When the gas got shut off at a Harlem site, we knocked on 300 doors, started a campaign, and got the gas turned back on. On a higher level, we've helped to organize campaigns that have steadily increased resident participation in agency public housing programs.

WE ARE WORKING TOGETHER!
We build alliances with groups around the country on the issues that matter to us. We work as resident leaders with the RAs, DCs, RAB, and CCOP to make public housing stronger. We partner with unions, educators, housing advocates, unions, and organizations like Good Old Lower East Side, Mothers on the Move, FUREE, and more to increase our power and make our voices heard.

WE ARE MISSING YOU!
You don't have to wait for us to knock on your door. Come to the next meeting and learn about what we do.

START BUILDING POWER TODAY!
To find out how, contact Community Voices Heard at (212) 860-6001 or visit www.cvhaction.org.