

NYC community land initiative



Fighting for vibrant, equitable and sustainable housing and neighborhoods through community ownership of land

2017-2018 Policy Recommendations

NYCCLI's housing and community development policy recommendations for New York City are:

1. Incorporate the following core principles into all new and existing programs:

- **Affordability for low- and extremely-low income households.** Current methods for developing affordable housing shut out those most in need.
- **Permanent affordability that can be enforced.** We must ensure that the resources we spend today on affordable housing keep working many decades from now.
- **Community-led planning, development, and preservation** to maximize the provision of stable housing for New Yorkers excluded from the housing market.
- **Fair Housing.** Equal opportunities to access affordable housing for all New Yorkers.

2. Use city-owned property as a resource to promote housing development and preservation for the lowest income New Yorkers.

City-owned property is the single most valuable resource to create housing for low- and extremely-low income people. The City has a critical responsibility and opportunity to prioritize the disposition of city-owned and regulated properties—including distressed and vacant properties—for truly affordable housing:

- Prioritize CLTs for disposition of city-owned properties, as well as distressed properties under city oversight.
- Ensure that housing created on formerly city-owned properties is and will remain affordable to the existing residents of the neighborhood.
- Issue a moratorium on the disposition of city-owned properties in East Harlem, the South Bronx, the Lower East Side, and other communities with existing or actively developing CLTs. These properties, both vacant and occupied, could form critical components of these CLTs.

3. Pass the Housing not Warehousing Act (Intros 1034, 1036 and 1039).

Vacant properties, which frequently remain empty and contribute to neighborhood blight while owners wait for development opportunities, could be used for affordable housing and other community uses. The City does not currently have a database for tracking vacant properties and is unable to develop an appropriate plan for addressing vacancy.

- Require property owners and mortgage-holders to register vacant property with the City and state a reason for the vacancy. The legislation should include adequate enforcement provisions, including fines for failure to register and an escalating fee for registration based on length of time a building is vacant.
- The City should create a community reporting mechanism to enable the public to report vacant properties in their communities.
- Prioritize census/property count in neighborhoods with high concentrations of vacancy.

- Develop programs to restore vacant properties to active uses that contribute to the supply of affordable housing for low income New Yorkers and to community resources.
4. **Use the Third Party Transfer program to create and preserve permanently affordable housing for very low income people and community resources.**
 - Prioritize CLTs and nonprofit developers for TPT and require permanent affordability for buildings.
 - Broaden the pool of properties eligible for entry into TPT and other preservation pathways.
 - Use TPT and related preservation and enforcement programs to more effectively transfer buildings in the Alternative Enforcement Program to responsible, preservation-minded ownership. Where possible, cluster troubled buildings in AEP by geographic area, to form mutual housing associations on CLTs.
 5. **Revise existing affordable housing programs to address the needs of extremely low-income and homeless New Yorkers.**
 - **Redefine “affordable.”** Move away from the use of the Area Median Income, which does not reflect local neighborhood incomes. Instead, affordable housing projects should reflect both neighborhood and citywide housing needs, particularly in neighborhoods with high rates of shelter entry and displacement.
 - **Shift public spending from shelters to deeply affordable housing.** Currently, the city dedicates between \$2,500-\$4,500 per month to support a growing and unsustainable shelter system—five to seven times the operating cost of a nonprofit rental apartment. Instead, the city should invest in housing for households most at-risk of homelessness, which represent nearly 1 in 5 NYC households, to prevent shelter entry and ease transition out of shelter.
 - **Reserve public subsidies—including public land—for projects that reach deep and *permanent* affordability.** Public funding—including disposition of public property, tax abatements and exemptions and other forms of subsidy—are critical tools that should be used to incentivize production and preservation of deeply affordable housing that can stem homelessness and displacement. Too often, these subsidies are granted to projects that do not meet the housing needs of local communities, at affordability levels that could be achieved without subsidy.
 6. **Limit the use of upzonings to neighborhoods where added density will increase rather than eliminate housing opportunities for residents of the lowest incomes.** All rezonings should prioritize deep and permanent affordability, and should increase housing opportunities and access for residents of very-low and extremely-low income. Additionally, rezonings should offer significant benefits to local community members (and residents citywide who are systematically excluded from the housing market), based on a substantive community planning and input process, and with mitigation commitments by city agencies monitored and enforced .
 7. **Create a housing trust fund with a dedicated revenue stream to support the creation and preservation of permanently affordable housing for the lowest income New Yorkers.** We must invest more in housing for New Yorkers who are most in need of housing and have the least political capital. To address this gap, the City should create a housing trust fund, supported by a dedicated revenue stream generated by increasing the property taxes on vacant and luxury properties.
 8. **Clarify tax assessment policy for land owned by a CLT and improvements on that land.** Ensure that people and entities leasing land from a CLT are taxed fairly based on an adjusted actual value of the land, not the market rate.