



*THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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**NYCHA Tenant Leaders, Council Members Levin and Lander Demand
Increase in City Hall’s Capital Offer for NYCHA’s Gowanus Houses and
Wyckoff Gardens**

In negotiations over infrastructure investments connected to the Gowanus Neighborhood Rezoning, City Hall asks tenants to choose between essential repairs with three funding packages of up to \$52 Million.

NEW YORK, NY – New York City Council Members Stephen Levin and Brad Lander stood with Gowanus Houses Tenant Association President Ed Tyree, Wyckoff Gardens Resident Association Leader Valerie Bell, NYCHA residents and community advocates to demand that the City increase its funding offer for long-deferred maintenance at the two NYCHA developments. As part of negotiations connected to the Gowanus Neighborhood Rezoning, City Hall has proposed three separate repair packages ranging from \$40 to \$52 million for residents to choose between -- asking residents to “choose” between adequate bathrooms, heat, electrical systems, or working elevators.

The tenants leaders and City Councilmembers made clear that it is unacceptable for NYCHA to ask tenants to choose among these essential elements of NYCHA’s basic “warranty of habitability” to the tenants, especially when several of these items are mandated under the City’s federal consent decree.

Based on past history, tenant leaders also demanded new protocols for meaningful resident oversight of any committed work. The de Blasio Administration committed to repair and improvement work for the Gowanus Community Center in 2017, to be completed by the end of 2021, and funding was committed for renovations at Wyckoff Gardens Community Center in 2019, but work has not even started in either development, leading to severely diminished trust.

The City's proposed funding packages, as presented to CM Lander and CM Levin are as follows:

- Package A (\$52 million): Repair bathrooms in Gowanus Houses; no work at Wyckoff Gardens, OR
- Package B (\$40 million): Replace windows in Gowanus Houses; replace windows and repair heat at Wyckoff Gardens, OR
- Package C (\$40 million): Upgrade electrical and fix elevators at Gowanus Houses; upgrade electrical at Wyckoff Gardens.

Council Members Levin and Lander have repeatedly made clear that they will not support the Gowanus Neighborhood Rezoning unless it includes a sufficient commitment to these NYCHA developments, along with meaningful resident oversight. This is also a demand of Community Board 6, and of the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice, a coalition of community groups focused on the proposed rezoning. The Gowanus rezoning will be voted on by Community Board 6 on June 23, and is expected to reach the City Council in the fall.

“The City needs to step up and make a real commitment to funding desperately needed repairs at Gowanus Houses and Wyckoff Gardens,” said **Council Member Stephen Levin**. “Many of our public housing residents have lived in this community for decades as their homes have deteriorated due to neglect and lack of funding. If the City wants to move forward with the Gowanus Neighborhood Rezoning, then steps must be taken now to engage with the community to hear from them what they need. At a minimum, the City must commit funding adequate to cover all three of these “packages,” with a clear plan for implementation, and work must address critical needs in the resident's apartments as well as the development's infrastructure.”

“It is not appropriate to ask any tenant to choose between mold-free bathrooms, functioning elevators, and safe electrical outlets,” said **Council Member Brad Lander**, “and NYCHA is no different. In putting forward these three repair packages, the City acknowledges a minimum of \$132 million dollars in absolutely essential maintenance. City Hall must commit to meet that need. Today we call on City Hall to commit a minimum of \$132 million to address priority concerns as identified by residents of Gowanus Houses and Wyckoff Gardens, with a clear timeline for completion of these repairs. While some issues remain to be addressed, there is a lot of good reason to believe that the Gowanus Neighborhood Rezoning could lead to a more integrated, equitable, and resilient community that retains the creative character we love. But it cannot achieve this goal if it does not include these crucial improvements to the homes of our neighbors in public housing.”

NYCHA reports a total capital need in the two developments of over \$274 million, not including emergency repairs made after Hurricane Sandy.

Tenants are now organizing a ground-up process to identify their priorities for repairs. The items proposed by the City may not be first-in-line, and bathroom repairs may be legally mandated through the 2014 court order regarding mold abatement. Additional needs include kitchen renovations, lighting, waste disposal, and updated security technology.

“The City must fully fund the physical capital needs of both Gowanus and Wyckoff Gardens Housing developments, not only what is mandated under the City’s federal consent decree. NYCHA’s total capital need in these two developments is over \$274 million, not including the resiliency repairs already funded by FEMA after Hurricane Sandy.” **Said Congresswoman Velázquez** “And despite the City’s past funding commitments on renovating the Gowanus and Wyckoff community centers, the City has yet to deliver. Investments from any Gowanus rezoning must be up-front and full with community accountability. Tenants should not have to choose between token fixes here and there. Equity should be job-one.”

“Our homes need fixing,” **said Wyckoff Gardens Resident Association Leader Valerie Bell** “and they need it now! We’re tired of leaks, bad plumbing, and broken doors. If NYCHA does fix something it often takes weeks if not months and the condition just gets worse. If the City wants to go ahead with the Gowanus Rezoning, Wyckoff Gardens and Gowanus Houses must receive a substantial capital investment and a timeline to get the work done as soon as possible. We need real money, and real repairs.

The City needs to step up” **said Gowanus Houses Tenant Association President Ed Tyree**. “NYCHA needs to step up. Our developments have been neglected for too long. Those who are in office, and those who want to be in office need to pay attention and make sure that we get the Capital funding we need and that the money gets spent in the right way. This rezoning needs to benefit Gowanus Houses and Wyckoff Gardens or it shouldn’t happen.”

After decades of neglect, NYCHA leaders are calling for strong resident oversight to accompany any cash commitment. In addition to meeting commitments on construction timelines, the City and the Authority must ensure that contractors uphold Section 3 requirements, which ensure that residents are first in line for construction jobs.

At last week’s joint hearing of Community Board 6 and Community Board 2, many stakeholders conditioned their support for the rezoning on investment in NYCHA. The Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice, which includes public housing residents as well as affordable housing, environmental, arts, and industrial business advocates, lists it as a top dealbreaker. Both Councilmembers have promised to vote “no” on the rezoning plan without an adequate funding commitment for NYCHA.

“As a long time member of the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice, community member, and longtime resident of Wyckoff Garden, our three demands still stand-” **said Monica Underwood**, “upfront funding for capital needs at Wyckoff Gardens and Gowanus Houses, no CSOs, and the creation of an oversight task force. We care about our environment and our community.”

“Public housing residents from Gowanus Houses and Wyckoff Gardens and their Resident Councils have spent over 5 years coming together and advocating for humane repairs and remediations of indoor toxins and aging infrastructure” **said NYCHA resident and organizer Karen Blondel**. “Throughout this process they have gained the expertise to assess their own properties for physical and structural needs. They stand and demand upgrades to plumbing and infrastructure like elevators and gas risers. Today as members of the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice, we demand \$274 million dollars based on

the physical needs assessment conducted in 2017 with no less than \$132 million in upfront funding NOW before this city sponsored 80 block rezoning begins. For the City of New York to offer windows is typical of NYCHA to throw money out the window... when in fact we need plumbers!”

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