

2023 *Legislative Agenda*

Building a more equitable, stable, and affordable New York City and Westchester County requires every neighborhood, no matter the racial and wealth demographics, to commit to building their fair share of housing. New Yorkers deserve the opportunity to live in any community and should be welcomed with open arms – not picket signs. Historically marginalized communities can no longer carry the burden of our housing crisis. At Habitat for Humanity New York City and Westchester County, we believe our crisis must be addressed as a collective, beloved community and not as individual, exclusive enclaves.

Inclusion and equity must be our guiding principles in order to meet our neighbors' needs.

Our region is heavily impacted by our country's housing crisis. We are challenged with an unprecedented number of neighbors struggling with housing insecurity.

It is time for all municipalities to share the burden of addressing our housing crisis. From the Hudson River towns in Westchester to the expensive neighborhoods in Lower Manhattan, we have a vision for an equitable New York in which all people have access to healthy, affordable homes. Federal, State, and Local government policies are essential to striving towards this vision and we implore government officials to implement policies that serve all New Yorkers.

Habitat for Humanity New York City and Westchester County presents the following policy actions that will invest in communities while building inclusive neighborhoods for today, tomorrow, and generations to come.

Municipal Priorities

■ Fully fund and staff housing and planning agencies to fulfill their missions on-time and on-budget.

Staffing shortages and cuts to agency budgets have challenged and slowed municipal housing and planning departments in approving and financing crucial affordable housing projects. Affordable housing must be prioritized in municipal budgets and staffing plans to ensure non-profits and affordable homebuilders are supported to meet our region's growing housing needs.

■ Reform municipal zoning regulations that impede new affordable housing development.

Equitable zoning changes can enable and expedite homebuilding opportunities, ensuring more families are served faster. Possible approaches include:

- Reforming zoning ordinances and design manuals to allow a greater variety of housing types
- Streamlining discretionary land use approvals to reduce the time, risk and cost of building affordable homes
- Removing or eliminating zoning barriers to creating cost-effective affordable homes, such as parking requirements and prohibitions against Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

■ Pass the New York Housing Compact.

With the New York State Housing Compact, the Governor has proposed ambitious policy changes that would unlock new opportunities for affordable housing in high opportunity communities across the state. These include but are not limited to:

- Requiring all municipalities provide housing at an increased rate relative to their location in the state
- Creating Transit Oriented Development around MTA stations
- Instituting a fast-track approval (builder's remedy) process for developments in communities that do not achieve their housing targets
- Updating property tax exemptions offered by local governments to support homeowners building ADUs

■ Permanently preserve inclusionary affordable homes while increasing tax revenue.

Ensure expiring inclusionary rental units remain permanently affordable by allowing subsidized luxury rental units (built using programs such as 421-a) to convert to free-market condo ownership. **S8334/A9340** reduces the 51% building buy-in threshold required to convert a rental unit to condo for a small class of buildings that have expiring inclusionary affordable units. Without extending public benefits to private, predominantly luxury property owners, the bill could save thousands of affordable units from going market rate, while increasing tax revenues to the budget-strapped city and state.

■ Support Community Land Trusts (CLTs) through fair taxation and modernized financing authority.

Existing tax exemptions, abatements, and assessment practices are insufficient to ensure the long-term and permanent affordability of affordable homeownership. Housing on CLTs throughout the state are vulnerable to unfair tax assessments. In order to preserve this critical housing stock, the State must act to maintain affordability of resale-restricted homes by passing the CLT tax exemption.

Additionally, the CLT movement is hindered by the outdated lending authority of NYC's housing agency and limitations to acquiring land. The Affordability Plus legislation proposed by NYC Housing Preservation and Development would modernize and unlock the city's ability to finance creative opportunities to build and preserve permanently affordable housing on CLTs. Combined with the NYS CLT Acquisition Fund proposed by Senator Brian Kavanagh, CLTs across the state would be supported in acquiring vacant land and preserving housing in desperate need of repair.

■ Expand Federal support for affordable Housing nationally and internationally.

For information on federal housing priorities supported by the national network of Habitat for Humanity affiliates, please visit, www.habitat.org/about/advocacy.