

Public & Collaborative:

Designing Services for Housing

Liana Dragoman
Kristina Drury
Andrew Eickmann
Yasmin Fodil
Kaja Kühl
Benjamin Winter

Public & Collaborative
New York City

NYC
Department of
Housing Preservation
& Development

**PARSONS
DESIS
LAB**
THE NEW SCHOOL

**PUBLIC
POLICY
LAB**

**Public &
Collaborative:
Designing
Services
for Housing**

Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing

Liana Dragoman
Kristina Drury
Andrew Eickmann
Yasmin Fodil
Kaja Kühl
Benjamin Winter

November 2013
New York City



Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing is a project of the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Parsons DESIS Lab, and the Public Policy Lab.

Public & Collaborative New York City

<http://nyc.pubcollab.org>

New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development

<http://www.nyc.gov/hpd>

Parsons DESIS Lab

www.newschool.edu/desis

Public Policy Lab

<http://www.publicpolicylab.org>

Lead Authors & Public Policy Lab Fellows

Liana Dragoman

NTT DATA Experience Design Group

Kristina Drury

TYTHEdesign

Andrew Eickmann

NYC HPD

Yasmin Fodil

BYO Consulting

Kaja Kühl

youarethecity

Benjamin Winter

Parsons DESIS Lab

Project Leadership

Kathryn Matheny

NYC HPD

Chelsea Mauldin

Public Policy Lab

Eduardo Staszowski & Lara Penin

Parsons DESIS Lab

Book Design

Claudia Brandenburg

Language Arts

© Copyright 2013 by Parsons The New School for Design, the Public Policy Lab, and the City of New York acting by and through the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development. All Rights Reserved. Nothing contained in *Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing* shall be construed as obligating NYC HPD or the City to make any changes in their current policies or procedures or to adopt any of the recommendations made in *Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing*.

ISBN 978-0-9886455-2-3

6	New York City Department of Housing Preservation & Development Preface
7	DEGIS Prefaces
8	Public Policy Lab Preface
9	Executive Summary
10	Part 1: Context & Introduction
11	Project Overview
13	HPD & Affordable Housing
18	Co-Designing & Co-Producing Public Services
22	Part 2: Kit of Ideas
23	Introduction to the Kit of Ideas
24	Information as Service
26	Space as Service
28	Section 8 Voucher Services
30	Lottery & Lease-Up Services
32	Services That Promote Housing Quality
34	Community Engagement
36	Part 3: Pilot Proposals
37	Introduction to the Proposals
47	Proposal 1: Adopt New, Human-Centered Informational Materials
53	Proposal 2: Encourage Hyper-Local Marketing
57	Proposal 3: Support Housing Ambassadors
62	Proposal 4: Launch NYC Housing Connect Street Team
66	Proposal for Future Consideration
68	Part 4: Evaluating the Proposals
69	Evaluation of the Design Objectives
71	Evaluation of the Process: Pilot Implementation
74	Acknowledgments
76	Index

New York City Department of Housing Preservation & Development Preface

For over three decades, collaboration has been a defining characteristic of the New York City Department of Housing and Preservation Development's (HPD) delivery of public services to the neighborhoods and residents of New York City. Following dramatic, citywide depopulation and wholesale neighborhood abandonment of the 1960s and 70s, HPD established new partnerships with both community-based organizations and private investors to respond to these challenges and implement Mayor Koch's Ten Year Housing Plan. Working together to rehabilitate dilapidated homes and apartments, develop new affordable housing on vacant land, and build the capacity of individuals and tenant organizations for the ownership and management of housing, this unprecedented public-private-nonprofit collaboration gave rise to a strong and enduring network of professionals committed to improving the housing and neighborhoods of New York City. Today, HPD is proud to work with and through our public, private, and nonprofit partners to implement the nation's most ambitious plan for affordable housing, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's New Housing Marketplace Plan.

In an effort to explore new and improved ways to engage these partners and members of the public in the City's affordable housing programs, HPD recently joined a new partnership, Public & Collaborative:

Designing Services for Housing. This initiative brings together HPD, the Public Policy Lab, and Parsons the New School for Design and invites professional designers, agency staff, and New York City residents to analyze and help strengthen HPD's delivery of public services.

Since our first exploratory meetings with the Parsons DESIS (Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability) Lab and the Public Policy Lab, I have been excited by this opportunity to bring new perspectives and skills to bear on our mission of providing safe, secure, accessible, and affordable housing for New Yorkers. Our partners in this initiative have led design workshops that bring residents and public-facing staff to the same table, along with agency leadership, to examine the materials, physical spaces, and interpersonal interactions that define the agency's delivery of public services. The team of fellows convened by the Public Policy Lab has brought powerful design skills to this work, producing clear and compelling visual representations of complex agency operations, and outlining creative possibilities for service improvements. They then used those renderings to catalyze a collaborative and iterative design process. Perhaps most important, our partners in this initiative have brought a single-minded focus on the experiences and perspectives of the real experts on the matter of public service delivery — the residents of New York City and the agency staff members who, on a daily basis, work with the public to improve housing conditions.

Focusing on living conditions is not, in itself, an innovation for HPD employees — it is concern for residents and their quality of life that drives us, day in and day out, in our provision of services to New Yorkers. But viewing those services through

the eyes of designers, residents, and service providers offers a clarifying perspective nonetheless — one that highlights the challenges residents can face when attempting to access and navigate the broad array of public services offered by the city of New York. It is my hope that by the end of this unique collaboration we will have gained a better understanding of that experience and used it to improve the clarity, effectiveness, and efficiency of our interactions with residents and the building owners who develop and maintain housing. Achieving this will help HPD streamline agency operations while simultaneously helping residents and owners better understand when, where, and how to access and make use of HPD's housing-related services.

The findings contained in this guide mark a midpoint in our partnership with the Public Policy Lab and the Parsons DESIS Lab. Over the past year, I have been inspired and encouraged by the creativity and design skills on display in this unique team of designers and policy experts. I look forward to the next phase of this collaboration, when HPD will consider these proposals and work with our partners to plan and implement pilot versions of those that we believe will offer real benefits to the residents of New York.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Matheny
Chief of Staff/Deputy Commissioner
for Strategic Planning, Technology &
Administration

DESIS

Prefaces

Parsons DESIS Lab Preface

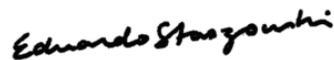
Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing, an initiative supported by the Rockefeller Foundation's 2012 Cultural Innovation Fund, provides an extraordinary opportunity for our university to collaborate with the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and the Public Policy Lab in researching new ways to better inform and assist the public about affordable housing.

At Parsons DESIS (Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability) Lab, a research laboratory at the New School, we conduct research into the ways in which design can enhance the development of socially and environmentally sustainable ways of living. We believe that solving complex social problems, such as housing scarcity, requires solutions to be designed and implemented in collaboration with a variety of civil society actors. Our research has shown that all over the world the ability to design solutions to urban problems is not restricted to design experts — individuals and communities also invent creative ways to solve their problems. A growing number of these social innovations are happening today in New York City. They represent an inspiring tradition of grassroots innovation: from community gardens and

food cooperatives to informal sharing networks and collaborative housing.

Public & Collaborative was launched in spring 2012 with a series of lectures by design experts and policymakers and two courses that included co-design sessions with HPD staff, students, and Public Policy Lab fellows. For the Parsons DESIS Lab, Public & Collaborative is the beginning of a journey to learn how public services can be designed to trigger, orient, support, and scale up promising cases of social innovation, and how those social innovations can then become powerful and positive drivers of public innovation. This publication fulfills our vision of producing concrete design proposals. With HPD's support, we look forward to testing and evaluating the most promising of these ideas in the following months.

Sincerely,



Eduardo Staszowski
Director, Parsons DESIS Lab

International DESIS Network Preface

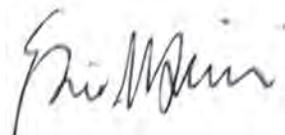
Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing is part of an international initiative promoted by the DESIS Network, a consortium of design-driven research labs, that actively promotes social innovation and sustainability. This initiative brings together government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and DESIS Labs in the United States and Europe to explore the intersection of design and public policy innovation.

The starting point for the international Public & Collaborative initiative was

the concept of people-as-assets, i.e., the consideration of people as partners in the design and delivery of public services. During the last year, multiple DESIS Labs and local design teams have experimented with the people-as-assets approach in their ongoing activities (research programs, design classes, and open lectures) and have applied it to several fields of inquiry (such as housing, cultural diversity, neighborhood improvement, healthcare, and, more generally, public-sector innovation policies).

Today, these activities and the Public & Collaborative international initiative are still in progress, but some initial results can be shared and discussed now. This guide presents the proposals developed by the Parsons DESIS Lab and its local partners, the Public Policy Lab and the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development. These results represent a meaningful contribution to the international effort organized by the DESIS Network.

Sincerely,



Ezio Manzini
Founder DESIS Network
Professor at the Politecnico di Milano, Italy and Distinguished Visiting Professor at Parsons The New School for Design

Public Policy Lab Preface

The Public Policy Lab is a nonprofit organization, launched in 2011, dedicated to improving the design and delivery of public services. We are delighted to have partnered with the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development and Parsons DESIS Lab for our inaugural project, Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing.

Our mission is grounded in two beliefs: We believe that services provided by government agencies are crucial tools for ensuring the well-being and success of individual Americans and our society as a whole. And we believe that methods and approaches from the design professions have the potential to greatly improve the delivery of these public services.

Designers specialize in making things work well, while also making them feel good. By collaborating with design professionals, we're convinced that government agencies can better understand how a public service is used and experienced by the public and by agency staff — then apply that knowledge to create, test, and refine service delivery, making improvements at low cost and with low risk.

We're fortunate that some of the world's most talented researchers, designers, and policy strategists are based in New York City, and many of them share a desire to put

their skills to work for the public good. The Public Policy Lab is delighted to connect these experts with HPD and Parsons to investigate ways to enhance how New Yorkers engage with the agency and access housing services.

For this initiative, the Public Policy Lab's fellows included Liana Dragoman, an experience designer who focuses on participatory design and systems thinking; Kristina Drury, a service designer specializing in social sector clients; Yasmin Fodil, an expert in public-engagement strategy and public-sector digital innovation; Kaja Kühl, an urban planner with a focus on community-based design; and Benjamin Winter, a service designer and researcher. HPD's Director of Strategic Planning, Andrew Eickmann, served as the linchpin of our fellow team.

Beginning in 2012, the team of fellows worked to develop proposals for expanding HPD's profile in the community and enhancing the mechanisms the agency employs to engage with potential and current residents. Part 3 of this guide, Pilot Proposals, outlines the results of the fellows' work: four interrelated proposals for service enhancements that the agency began implementing in 2013.

Assistance from HPD staff and Parsons faculty — and the many students, professionals, and stakeholders listed in the Acknowledgements section — was absolutely crucial to this work. We look forward to continuing our partnership throughout the implementation stage, with a special eye toward measuring and documenting the outcomes of the pilot proposals that are put into operation.

Finally, this project would not have been possible without the encouragement, counsel, and support of our founding board of directors —

David Gibson, Deborah Marton, and especially Sylvia Harris, our first board chair, who passed away shortly after Public & Collaborative was conceived. The example of her life and work, as a designer in the public interest, guides this project and will inspire all our future efforts.

Sincerely,



Chelsea Mauldin
Executive Director, Public Policy Lab

Executive Summary

Public & Collaborative represents an opportunity to explore the needs and perspectives of affordable housing stakeholders by talking to city residents and housing professionals about issues, developing possible solutions, then testing service concepts to see how, and if, they work.

The project's primary research methods were qualitative and participatory in nature. Interview sessions and co-design workshops were organized to identify information gaps, areas of confusion, and "pain points" in the current process, and to gather insights to inform and inspire design solutions.

During and subsequent to these engagements, the project team developed a suite of pilot proposals and supplemental resources. Multiple rounds of design research, creation, presentation, and revision ensured that the informational materials, implementation plans, and related strategies were vetted in full by HPD and received input from other stakeholders.

The final pilot proposals put forward by the Public & Collaborative team in this guide are intended to help New Yorkers more successfully navigate the affordable housing application process. These proposals are designed for collaborative implementation by housing developers, community-based organizations, and HPD and its sister agency, the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC). The proposals seek to generate efficiencies for service providers and, above all, to extend the reach of the City's affordable housing program to a greater number of eligible New Yorkers.

The pilot proposals recommend that HPD enhance the application process for affordable housing by:

1. creating new, human-centered informational materials,
2. encouraging hyper-local marketing by developers,
3. supporting community-based "housing ambassadors,"
4. and forming a street team for in-person HPD outreach.

In combination, the proposals create a knowledge-sharing infrastructure that enables the dynamic and reciprocal exchange of information between residents, community-based partners, housing developers, and HPD leadership and front-line staff.

Part 1: Context & Introduction

This introductory section provides a project overview and context related to the mission of the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, as well as discussion of the co-design and co-production principles that are central to the approach of the Public Policy Lab and the Parsons DESIS Lab.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), the DESIS Lab at Parsons The New School for Design, and the Public Policy Lab launched *Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing* in early 2012.

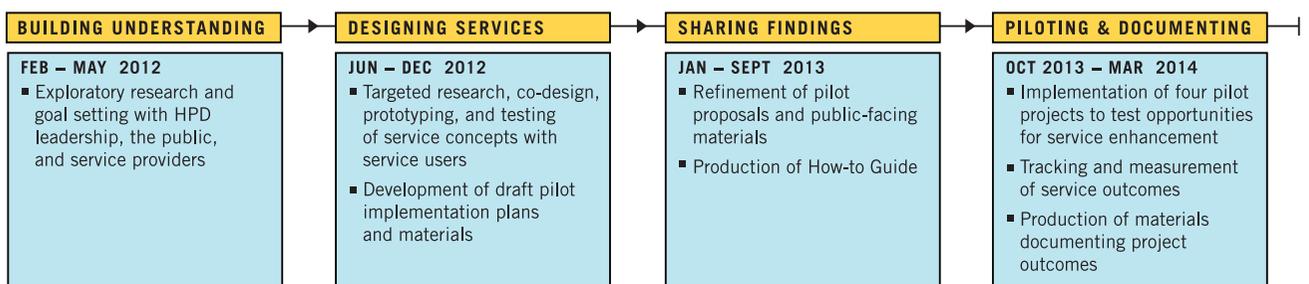
The project's goals were twofold:

- to assist HPD in delivering more effective, efficient, and satisfying services,
- and to explore ways to facilitate the involvement of community residents in the development of housing-related services in neighborhoods with significant public- and private-sector investment leveraged by HPD.

This New York City-based project is affiliated with a global *Public & Collaborative* research effort of the DESIS Network, an international network of design schools and organizations focused on design for sustainability and social innovation, in which research labs based in cities around the world are developing parallel projects at the intersection of public services, social innovation, and design.

PHASE 1: EXPLORATION

Phase 1 work involved inquiry into the full scope of services HPD provides for New York City residents. From February through May of 2012, the project developed along two interrelated tracks. The first track revolved around a hands-on collaboration among fellows and staff of the Public Policy Lab, Parsons faculty, and HPD. The second track was a more independent research initiative by Parsons faculty and students, with opportunities for the fellow team to observe and respond. Notable components of the Exploration phase included two courses at Parsons and a public lecture series, described below. Concepts developed during the Exploration phase are described in more detail in Part 2, the *Kit of Ideas*. Work during Phase 1 revealed an agency desire to focus on enhancements to the application process for New Housing Marketplace Plan units coming to market.



Academic Courses

Two courses at Parsons during the Spring 2012 term provided students with the opportunity to collaborate with the project team. Concepts developed by the students are highlighted in Part 2, the *Kit of Ideas*.

Services and the City

Working with HPD staff and Public Policy Lab fellows, Parsons students explored mechanisms for engagement with the agency, assessed current service offerings, and generated ideas for improving points of service. Proposals included the enhancement of neighborhood walk-in centers, a “People’s Housing Week” event to highlight



COURSE COLLABORATION

Parsons students present service-design concepts to HPD staff and Public Policy Lab fellows.



DESIGNERS & POLICYMAKERS IN CONVERSATION

Ezio Manzini, Ronald Shiffman (Pratt Institute), Kathryn Matheny (HPD), and Miodrag Mitrasinovic (Parsons The New School for Design) in discussion after Manzini's March 2012 talk.

a new online application portal for affordable housing, and ways for HPD field staff to share information with tenants.

Public and Collaborative Services

A second class of Parsons students explored ways to promote more connected and successful communities, particularly by enabling residents' involvement in the design and delivery of local services and amenities. Students analyzed existing conditions in the South Bronx neighborhood of Melrose, an area with significant HPD investment. A series of videos produced by the students highlighted community assets in Melrose, including social entrepreneurship, cultural diversity, and channels for community-based learning.

Public Lectures

A lecture series organized by Parsons brought together leading European design experts with New York City policymakers and academics to explore the intersection of social innovation and public services. Videos of all four lectures are available on the project website, nyc.pubcollab.org. Each lecturer also met with students and the fellow team, and several experts held small group presentations with HPD leadership.

The four visiting lecturers were Ezio Manzini, professor at the Politecnico di Milano, Italy, on "Active and Collaborative People"; Christian Bason, director of Mindlab, an inter-ministerial design consultancy chartered by the Danish government, on "Design for Public-Sector Innovation"; David Boyle, a fellow at London think tank the New Economics Foundation, on "Co-Production: A Preventive Welfare System"; and François Jégou, scientific director of the public innovation lab 27e Région in France, on "From the Design of Public Services to the Design of Public Policies."

PHASE 2: DESIGN

Over the latter half of 2012, the Public Policy Lab fellows led a sequence of interviews and workshops involving HPD leadership, front-line agency staff, staff at community-based organizations (CBOs) that offer housing assistance, developers of affordable housing, and current or potential users of the agency's services. These co-design exercises were intended to identify challenges in the affordable housing application process, generate ideas for enhancing service provision, and rapidly prototype and test proposed solutions.

A HISTORY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEW YORK CITY

1977 The New York City Housing and Development Administration is separated into two departments: The Department of Buildings, ensuring the safe and lawful use of buildings and properties, and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), tasked with improving the availability, affordability, and quality of housing in New York City.

1979 In response to abandonment and other challenges, HPD and its partners take into their portfolio through tax foreclosure (in rem) a large number of housing units from irresponsible or absentee owners.

1985 Mayor Koch pledges city capital to build or rehabilitate housing units "for middle-class, working poor, and low-income families and individuals." This became a \$5.1 billion, 10-year plan to subsidize over 250,000 units.



CO-DESIGN WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Public Policy Lab fellow Kristina Drury captures insights from staff of affordable housing developers and NYC HDC at a September 2012 workshop.

The story begins in the 1970s, a decade in which the city lost over 800,000 residents. As a result of these large population losses, together with rising maintenance costs and stagnant tenant incomes, entire neighborhoods in the city were devastated by waves of abandonment and arson.

Michael Schill, *Housing Policy in New York City: A Brief History*

The fellow team synthesized and documented findings from this work, selected the most promising ideas, further refined those concepts, and developed preliminary implementation proposals for pilot projects by HPD and community partners, as described in Part 3 of this guide.

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION

In 2013, materials were further refined, then HPD launched pilot programs to test the efficacy of the enhancements proposed by the project team to the agency's materials and services. The Public Policy Lab fellows are providing design support during implementation. Support includes monitoring process and impact, and drafting interim and final evaluation reports. Parsons is organizing events to bring together community members, academics, designers, and policymakers to report on the pilot outcomes and discuss public-sector innovation.

HPD & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

As the nation's largest municipal housing-development agency, HPD's primary mission is to expand and improve the affordability, availability, and quality of housing in New York City. Through its initiatives and programs, HPD delivers a broad range of housing services to the residents and neighborhoods of New York, including enforcement of the City's Housing Maintenance Code. By providing significant capital and leveraging substantial investment, HPD also undertakes the preservation and development of hundreds of thousands of affordable housing units.

HISTORY OF THE AGENCY

Since the 1980s, HPD has been at the forefront of preserving neighborhoods that suffered from arson and abandonment. In the face of a fierce debate over planned shrinkage, sparked in response to wholesale urban decay and other challenges that threatened to further destabilize communities, HPD and its partners responded by taking more than 100,000 units into its portfolio in rem from irresponsible or absentee owners (for nonpayment or failure to pay taxes) and crafting programs to rehabilitate these properties. This was the focus of Mayor Edward I. Koch's visionary ten-year, \$5.1 billion housing plan, launched in 1986.

While investing public capital into the rehabilitation of the city's housing stock at an unprecedented scale, Mayor Koch and HPD Commissioners Paul Crotty and

2003 Mayor Bloomberg launches the New Housing Marketplace Plan (NHMP), pledging to create or preserve 65,000 units of affordable housing by 2008.

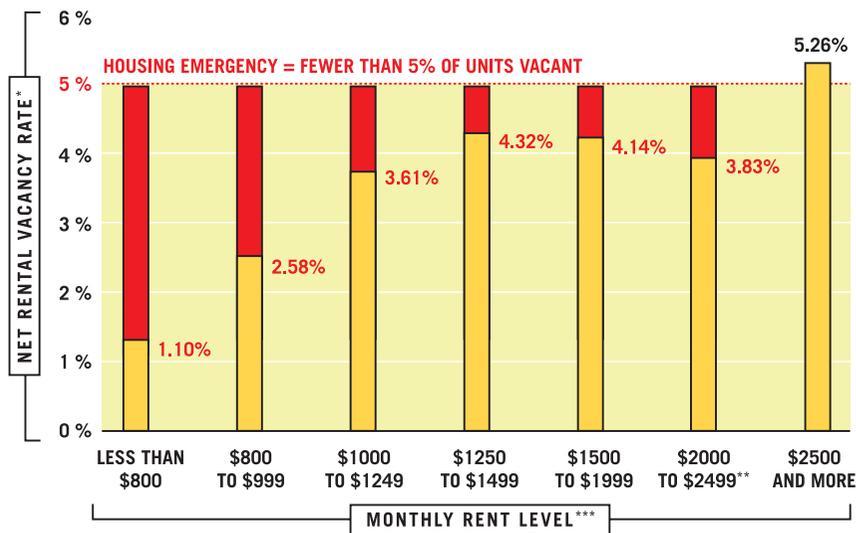
2006 The NHMP original five-year plan is increased to 10 in order to create and preserve 165,000 units of affordable housing. This becomes the largest municipal affordable-housing effort in the nation's history, scheduled to provide affordable homes for 500,000 New York City residents.

2008 Mayor Bloomberg announces that 82,509 units have been started, reaching the plan's halfway point exactly on schedule.

2010 The NHMP is updated to meet the challenges of the post-recession economy. Focus is placed on (1) strengthening neighborhoods, (2) expanding the supply of affordable and sustainable housing, and (3) stabilizing families by keeping them in their homes. (100,000 units of affordable housing have been created by this point.)

2013 The City has financed 156,397 units of affordable housing under NHMP, on track to meet its 165,000-unit goal by the close of fiscal year 2014.

NEW YORK CITY RENTAL VACANCY RATES



Vacancy rates are much lower among more affordable units; only in the category of units costing more than \$2,500 is New York City not in a “housing emergency,” defined as a vacancy rate below 5%.

In the decades since, the city’s crime rate has seen unparalleled reductions and the population has continued to increase with each decade, with hundreds of thousands of new residents. The affordable housing community has played a pivotal role in this transformation and can tout these accomplishments with pride. HPD recognizes, however, that the agency cannot rely solely on programs that fueled past successes to address the affordable housing challenges of the future.

HOUSING CHALLENGES IN NEW YORK CITY TODAY

The rebirth of New York City’s neighborhoods marked the end of the crisis of abandonment, and signaled the beginning of a focus on housing availability and affordability. This focus is driven by a stark reality: despite the recent housing boom, there is still a critical shortage of housing affordable to lower- and middle-income people in New York City.

Low Vacancy Rates¹

The 2011 NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey (HVS), a legislatively mandated triennial sample survey of the city’s housing stock, revealed what many New Yorkers in search of affordable housing have felt over the last decade: Even with the largest housing inventory on record – over 3.3 million units – and improved housing conditions in all five boroughs, affordable housing in New York City remains scarce.

The 2011 HVS showed the citywide rental vacancy rate to be 3.12%, which is well below the 5% vacancy threshold that indicates the market is in a state of “housing emergency.” Importantly, the vacancy rate is even lower among the lowest-rent units, suggesting that lower-income households face the greatest challenges when seeking a high-quality, affordable home.

High Rent Burdens²

Examination of the HVS data further shows that half of all New York City renter households are “rent burdened,” which is defined as households paying 30% or more of

Abraham Biderman were determined to enlist private and nonprofit partners in the rebuilding effort and, more important, in the long-term work of owning and operating the housing stock. As private and nonprofit real estate developers took on the rehab of one crumbling building at a time, neighborhood activists and community groups worked to build capacity for ownership and management of multifamily housing. The result was a new model of public-private-nonprofit collaboration, the birth of an industry of committed affordable housing professionals, and the transformation of struggling and abandoned neighborhoods into more stable communities now home to thousands of families from across the income spectrum.

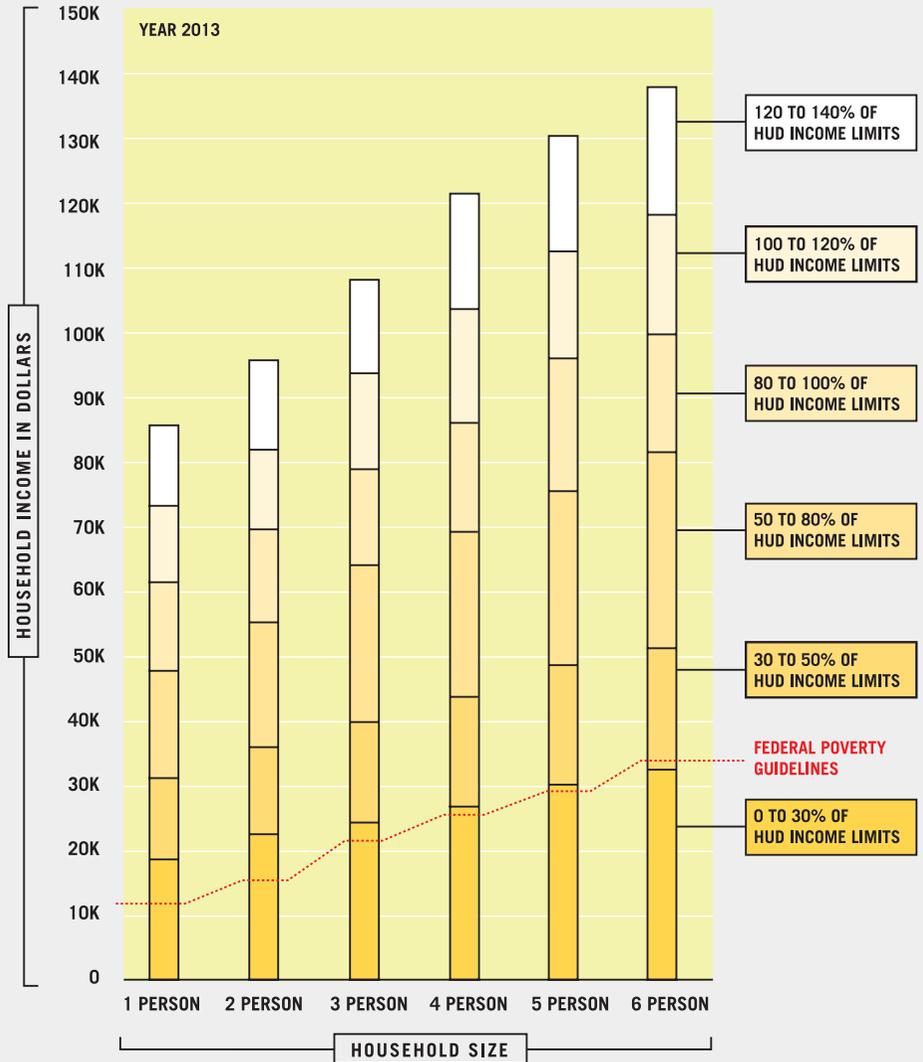
* The vacancy rate is calculated by dividing vacant available for rent units that are not dilapidated by the sum of vacant available for rent units that are not dilapidated plus renter-occupied units (dilapidated and not dilapidated).

** Since this is a small number of units, interpret with caution.

*** Asking rents for vacant units and contract rents for occupied units.

2013 HUD INCOME LIMITS BY FAMILY SIZE

Units in HPD's affordable housing programs are keyed to specific income bands.



UNDERSTANDING HUD INCOME LIMITS (HUDIL)

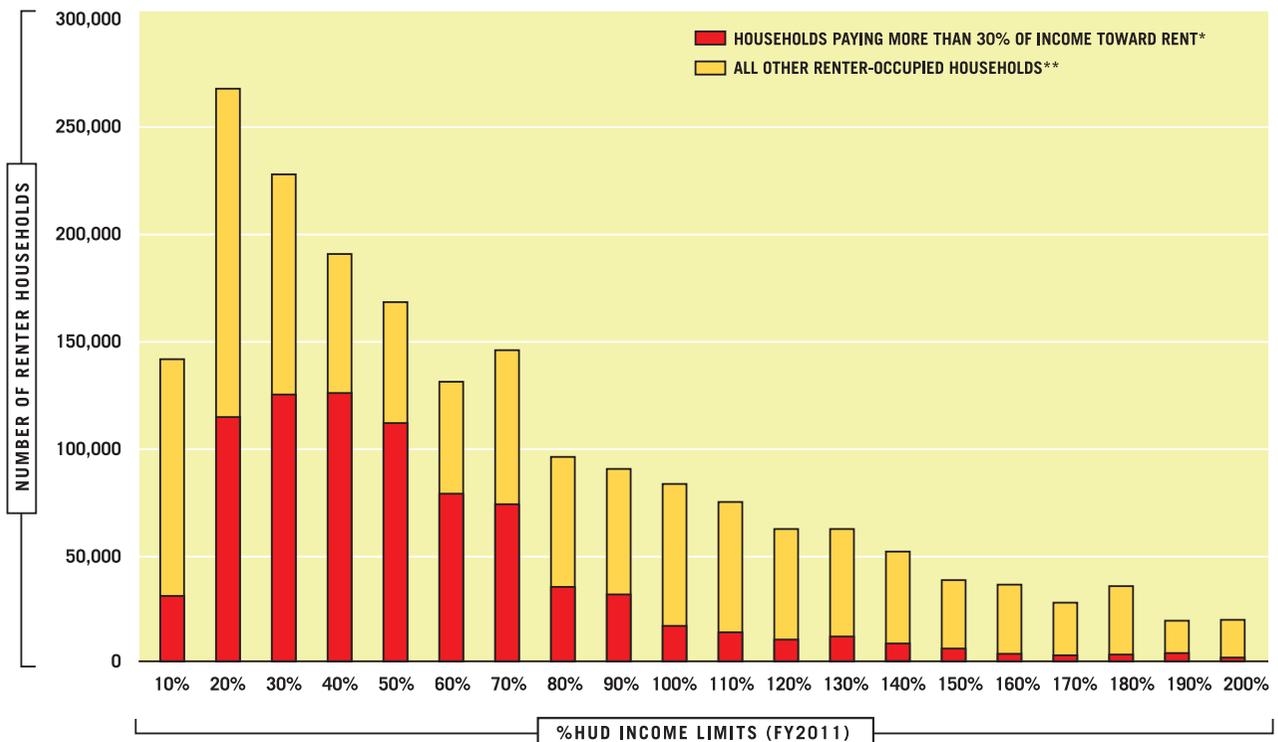
The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sets annual regional income limits for eligibility to live in subsidized affordable housing. HUD calculates the limits beginning with a measure of median family income, then makes adjustments based on household size, local housing costs, and other geographically specific factors. The result is a set of limits for households of different sizes and different income levels. Public agencies like HPD use HUDIL to qualify applicants of different income levels to live in affordable housing developments and to regulate maximum rents for subsidized units.

For example, when collaborating with Phipps Houses and Jonathan Rose Companies to advertise the new Via Verde affordable housing development in the Bronx in 2011, HPD used the HUDIL published at the time to make apartments affordable to households of specific income ranges. Thirteen units were intended for households earning up to 40% HUDIL, which is equivalent to \$32,720 for a household of four, and 120 units were intended for households earning up to 60% HUDIL, which is equivalent to \$49,080 for a household of four.

It is important to note that income limits are often further adjusted for various purposes — for example, to meet the requirements of specific subsidy programs. Because of these adjustments, income limits may differ depending on context.

Note: 30%, 50%, and 80% HUD income limit data available at huduser.org. The 100%, 120%, and 140% limits are calculated where 100% is double the 50% HUDIL for a family of 4, 120% is 120% of the 100% value, and 140% is 140% of the 100% value. Adjustments are made according to HUD instructions for household size calculations. Numbers may not match HUD. Info on poverty guidelines is available at aspe.hhs.gov. Federal poverty guidelines are a version of the federal poverty measure. They are a simplification of the federal poverty thresholds issued each year by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and do not account for household composition. For more information, please refer to aspe.hhs.gov/poverty.

RENT BURDEN IN NEW YORK CITY



Of the 2.1 million renter-occupied units in New York City (~63% of all units), most are occupied by households below 100% of HUD’s Income Limit — equivalent to \$81,800 for a family of four in 2011. Lower-income families are much more likely to spend more than 30% of their gross income on rent, making them “rent burdened.”

their gross household income towards rent. One-third of renter households in the city are severely burdened, meaning they pay more than 50% of their income in rent.

Rent burden is particularly prevalent among the city’s low-income working population: that is, New Yorkers making less than 80% of the income limits defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).³

While all New York City renters face strategic trade-offs between housing cost, housing quality, and location, families who are rent burdened are most likely to face severe challenges in meeting critical expenses beyond rent, such as urgent medical care.⁴

THE NEW HOUSING MARKETPLACE PLAN

In recent years, the city of New York has renewed and expanded its commitment to address the housing needs of low- and middle-income households. In 2003, at the end of the first year of the Bloomberg Administration, the Mayor announced the New Housing Marketplace Plan – at that time the City’s largest affordable housing program since the Koch Administration in the 1980s. The original plan pledged to create or preserve 65,000 units of low- to middle-income affordable housing by 2008. In April 2005, that commitment was increased to 68,000 units and, in 2006, it was expanded once again to create and preserve 165,000 units of affordable housing, the largest municipal housing effort in the nation’s history.

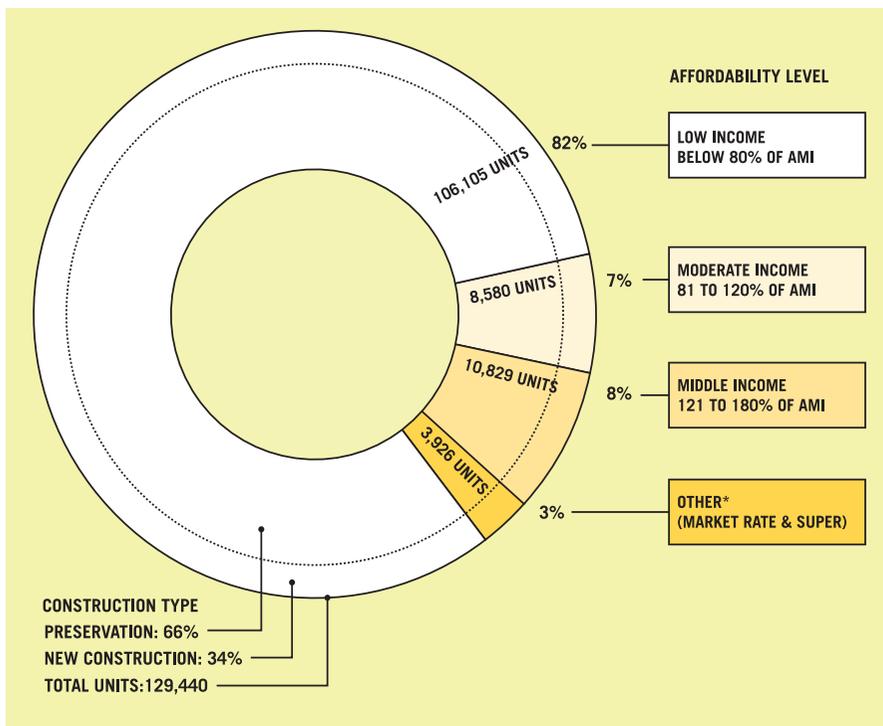
Due to the collapse of the economy in 2008, the contraction of credit markets, and the attendant mortgage foreclosure crisis, many New Yorkers were left in vulnerable housing situations. Homeowners and landlords often cut back on maintenance and

* Rent burden defined as household paying 30% or more of gross household income toward gross rent (includes utilities); excludes households living in Public Housing and/or receiving rental subsidy (including Section 8 Voucher, SCRIE, Jiggets, Employee Housing Incentive Program, Work Advantage, or other City, State, or Federal housing assistance as reported by respondent), anyone not paying cash rent, and cases where rent burden could not be computed because of missing or top-coded income or rent data.

** All other households include the total enumerated count of renter-occupied households minus those identified as paying more than 30% of income toward rent.

UNIT DISTRIBUTION BY AFFORDABILITY

From FY 2004 through FY 2012, nearly 130,000 housing units were created or preserved under the City's New Housing Marketplace Plan.



upkeep, financial strain forced many residents to leave their homes or double up with family members, and communities experienced significant upheaval as a result.

In response, the New Housing Marketplace Plan was retooled to update and adapt existing programs to meet three critical goals: (1) strengthening neighborhoods by proactively identifying and supporting communities at risk of reduced housing maintenance; (2) expanding the supply of affordable and sustainable housing; and (3) stabilizing families facing eviction or foreclosure by helping to keep them in their homes.

Between July 2003 and March 2012, there were 130,606 starts towards the New Housing Marketplace Plan's goal of 165,000 units – 79% of the plan's goal. Of that total, the vast majority of units (82%) are targeted to low-income households earning less than 80% of HUD Income Limits. Of the 130,000-plus units, more than 99,000 (76.0%) are rentals, while over 31,000 (24%) units were made available for purchase.

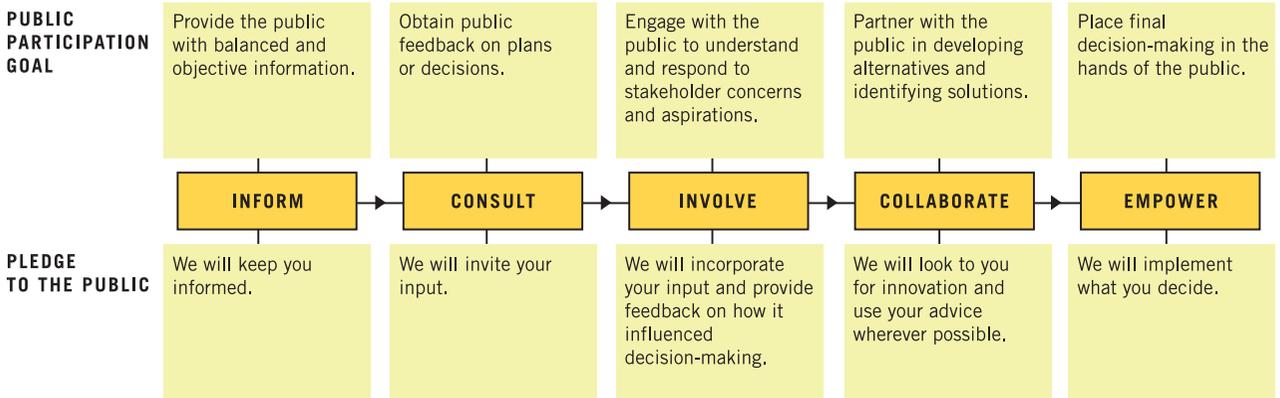
AGENCY GOALS FOR SERVICE PROVISION

The unparalleled scale of HPD's investment in the development and preservation of affordable housing is matched by an extensive array of housing-related services provided to the residents of New York City.

Residents of all multifamily buildings are entitled to safe and healthy living environments through the enforcement of the City's Housing Maintenance Code, which sets standards for heat, hot water, safety, and habitability. Families and individuals can apply for affordable apartments and homes that HPD has worked with developers to finance. The agency is also responsible for administration of the nation's fifth-largest Section 8 voucher program, which provides low-income families with a subsidy that covers much of their rent. In addition, when crises such as fire, flood, or structural damage force residents to evacuate their homes, HPD provides emergency shelter.

* Note: The "other" category is subject to ongoing adjustment as HPD reviews units where income-limit information is unclear.

OPTIONS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



Most public agencies do not explicitly identify goals and intended outcomes for public participation. One starting point for consideration of this issue is the IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation, a rubric for considering levels of engagement between government and members of the public.

To borrow a term from the field of design, the “end users” of HPD’s programs and services are the people of New York City. However, HPD’s direct engagement with New Yorkers includes interactions not only with individual residents, but with a wide array of intermediates and representatives: tenant associations, community organizations, policy experts and elected officials, and housing professionals such as developers, bankers, and property managers. Residents and their representatives engage with HPD through a host of channels, ranging from in-person conversations to email and the distribution of print materials.

Public & Collaborative represents an opportunity to explore the needs and perspectives of members of the public by talking to city residents about issues, possible solutions, and what form those might take, then testing service concepts to see how, and if, they work. By the end of this process, HPD hopes that residents who participate in this project’s pilot programs will have a clearer understanding of the application process for affordable housing, and will better understand how and when to access HPD’s services. HPD’s goal is to make New Yorkers feel as if they have been well and fairly served, while simultaneously improving the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the work the agency does, day in and day out.

We are at a kind of tipping point... a moment in which these ideas... could become very, very popular, become something that really challenges the mainstream ideas on how to live and how to organize our society.
 Ezio Manzini, *Active and Collaborative People*, March 2012 Lecture

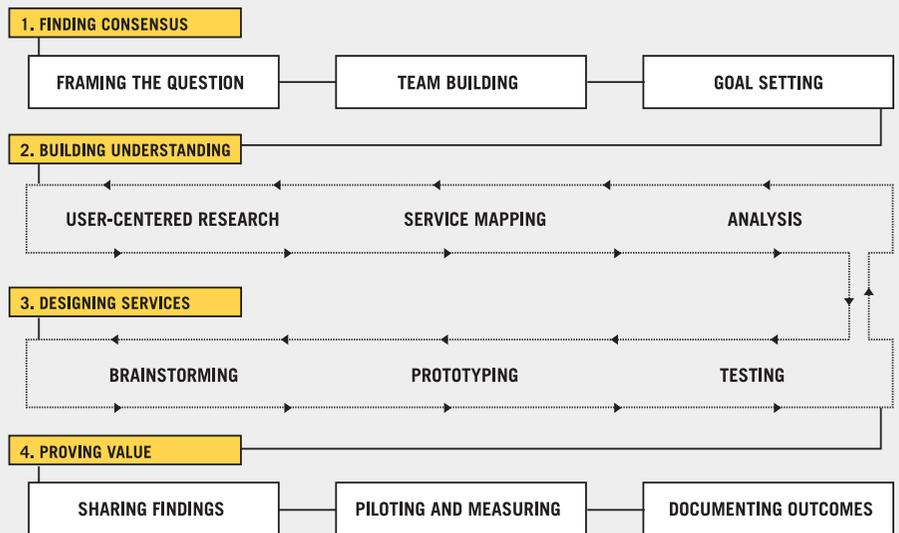
CO-DESIGNING & CO-PRODUCING PUBLIC SERVICES

Public & Collaborative builds on a number of societal and policy trends, including growing public interest in large-scale collaboration and social engagement and increasing public-sector interest in harnessing digital and design technologies to better deliver public services, as suggested by the launch of innovation and digital offices within multiple local and federal agencies. Meanwhile, current economic challenges are creating pressure for the public sector to increase effectiveness, while also reducing costs.

This guide is premised on the idea that design-based collaboration offers two promising paths for improvements to public services. The first could be called a co-design approach – more intensively involving members of the public and front-line service providers in research, prototyping (the making of preliminary models for the purpose of subsequent refinement), testing, and implementation of services to be administered by public agencies. The second strategy is to engage agencies and the public in a

SERVICE-DESIGN PROJECT PHASES

This publication represents the “Sharing Findings” step in a multipart service-design process.



WHAT IS SERVICE DESIGN?

The pilot proposals described in this guide were identified using principles from the field of service design, an emerging design discipline. Service design is the activity of collaboratively planning and organizing the people, back-end systems, communications, and material components involved in delivering a service, in order to improve the quality of interactions between service providers and service users.

While the design of services draws from different fields and practices, such as service engineering, service marketing, and management, a design approach to services is unique in that, as theorist Lucy Kimbell notes, it frames the design process as an enquiry, rather than a straightforward problem-solving activity.

A service-design enquiry, as suggested by *This Is Service Design Thinking*, the influential 2011 primer edited by Mark Stickdorn et al., has five hallmarks:

- It's user-centered, meaning the lived experience of the users of the service is of the greatest interest in the design process.
- It's co-creative, meaning that all the service's providers and users, from upper management to front-line staff to end-users, should be engaged in the design process.
- It's time-based, meaning that the experience of users is tracked over the duration of their service journey.
- It's holistic, meaning the service is understood to involve not just tangible products or even interactions, but all the systems and processes required to make the service interaction occur.
- And crucially, it's iterative and visual — meaning that multiple rounds of conceptualizations are visualized (or even acted out), then subjected to review and testing in an effort to identify, at low cost and low risk, promising avenues for innovation; this process occurs throughout the design and implementation process.

A service-design approach may not, in itself, generate the tangible resources that agencies or the public desire most — in HPD's case, for example, more land for development or more funds to provide subsidy vouchers for low-income families. But it can provide valuable insights into user needs, the “touchpoints” at which an agency interacts with the public, and the impact of those interactions on service experience and flow — all of which can point to improvements in the time or cost required to deliver a service, generating gains in resources, effectiveness, and user satisfaction.

In addition to suggesting near-term changes in service delivery, a service-design project may offer longer-term organizational benefits: Designers spend a lot of time learning about service providers and their institutional culture, as well as the end users of the organization's services. The processes employed by service designers, including visual documentation techniques, emphasize the iterative cycle of the design process (in contrast to a linear sequence of one-off tasks) and follow a cycle of problem-framing, data gathering and analysis, idea-generation, prototyping, testing, and back to problem-framing. As a result, service providers working with service designers may find they derive value not only from a project's final deliverables, but also from a learning process that may inform the organization's mission over time.

When I say design for public-sector innovation, [it] is really about using design methods to better understand how government systems and non-governmental systems interact in peoples' lives and whether they create better outcomes or not.

Christian Bason, *Design for Public-Sector Innovation*, March 2012 Lecture

Co-production means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families, and their neighbors. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighborhoods become far more effective agents of change.

David Boyle, *Co-Production: A Preventive Welfare System*, April 2012 Lecture

co-production process, where end users design and implement their own service programs, enabled and supported by public agencies. In both cases, the goal is for members of the public to receive more effective and satisfying services, while reducing public resource requirements.

CO-DESIGNING PUBLIC SERVICES

Implementing more collaborative public services can be challenging, but there is a growing awareness that methodologies (design thinking, human-centered design, participatory design, user interface design, etc.) pioneered in the design professions can be used to support collaboration in the public sector and at the policy level.

Government-chartered design innovation offices have been established in Great Britain, Australia, Denmark, and elsewhere. Recent establishment of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's federal innovation lab and Boston's Office of New Urban Mechanics suggests the approach is making inroads in the U.S., as well. A number of private-sector design firms are also working with federal agencies, such as the Social Security Administration and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. A goal of these initiatives is to use design methods to involve the public more fully in the development of policies and to improve service delivery.

Specifically, these strategies usually include some combination of design methods – facilitated brainstorming, iterative design and quick prototyping, hands-on user testing – and pilot implementation with ongoing measurement, assessment, and documentation. These strategies engage disparate stakeholders (members of the public, front-line service providers, agency leadership, etc.), help in clarifying these users' needs and motivations, and promote their alignment towards a shared goal.

CO-PRODUCING PUBLIC SERVICES

The design strategies described above are also being used to take collaborative service production a step further – to help agencies develop programs that facilitate effective citizen-led service efforts.

Even when they succeed, these social innovations are often fragile and highly localized. In order to flourish, co-produced services often require a level of public support. To endure and spread, citizen-led initiatives benefit from technical assistance, material support, rules, and directions from government agencies. Instead of acting only as providers of public services, agencies can also act as enablers of collaborative efforts that respond to the emerging needs of citizens.

DESIGNING SERVICES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

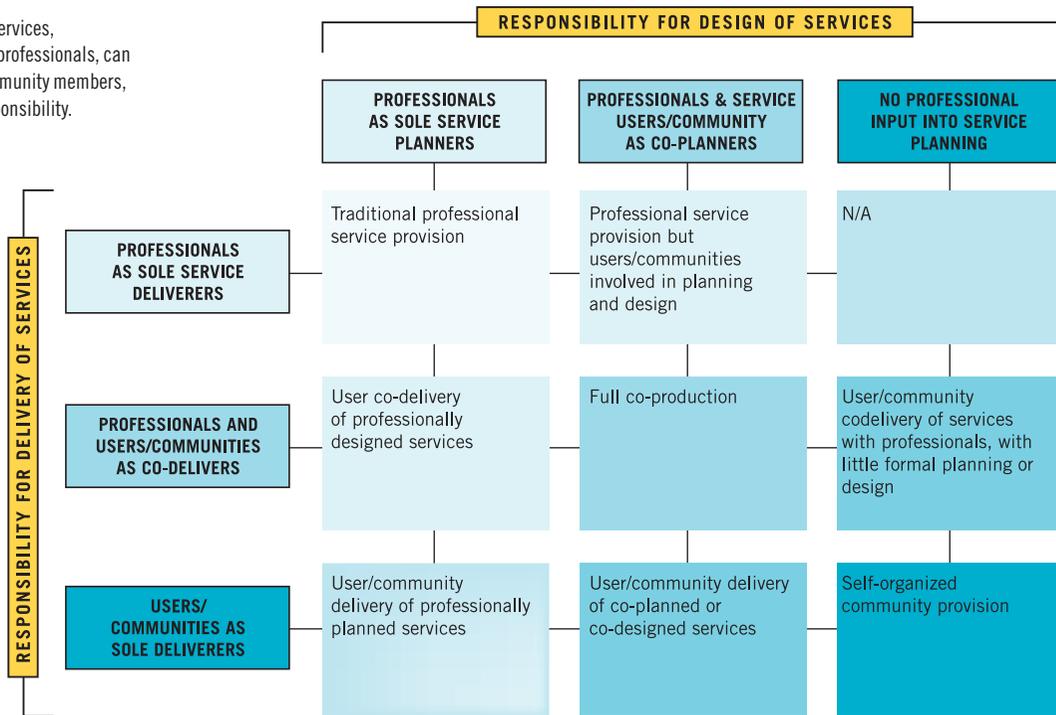
For many New Yorkers, affordable housing is not about a new place to live: it is about a new way to live. During the design-research phase of this project, residents of HPD-financed affordable housing developments described moving into their homes as an opportunity to improve their lives or better provide for their families.

Over the years, HPD has provided these opportunities to New Yorkers in large part by relying on a rich network of partners. Aside from a small stock of properties retained from prior legacy programs, the agency itself does not build, market, or manage housing, nor does it directly process applications or lease properties.

Instead, it has found that, with financial and regulatory support, entrepreneurial private developers, devoted community groups, and pro-active citizens are excellent

ROLES IN SERVICE CO-PRODUCTION

The design and delivery of services, traditionally the purview of professionals, can also be co-produced by community members, with varying degrees of responsibility.



drivers of affordable housing development. Working with and through these third-party partners, HPD strives to involve members of the public and organizations representing them in agency policymaking, housing development processes, and other forms of public-service provision.

However, affordable housing development is a technical field defined by complex legal, political, and business processes that can be difficult for members of the public to access and fully understand. The ideas and proposals described in this guide consist of a series of design and policy enhancements that more fully engage members of the public – as well as the front-line staff of HPD, housing developers, and community organizations – as co-designers and co-producers of the agency’s services for affordable housing.

¹ All data in this section from *Selected Initial Findings of the 2011 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey*, prepared by Dr. Moon Wha Lee. Available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/hpd/downloads/pdf/HPD-2011-HVS-Selected-Findings-Tables.pdf>

Please note: The Housing and Vacancy Survey (HVS) is a sample survey, thus, findings are subject to sampling and non-sampling errors. For this reason, HVS findings are estimates of the true value of the variables, which are unknown.

² All data in this section from *Selected Initial Findings of the 2011 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey*, prepared by Dr. Moon Wha Lee. Available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/hpd/downloads/pdf/HPD-2011-HVS-Selected-Findings-Tables.pdf>

³ For 2013, this figure is \$48,100 for a single person, \$55,000 for a household of two, \$61,850 for three, \$68,700 for four, \$74,200 for five, and \$79,700 for six. See www.huduser.org for documentation.

⁴ Gaumer E, Brooks-Gunn J. The Effect of Place-Based Subsidized Housing on Family Well-Being: Findings from the NYC Housing and Neighborhood Demonstration Project. Presented at the How Housing Matters Panel on Child Well-Being. APPAM Annual Fall Research Conference, November 2011, Washington DC.

Part 2: Kit of Ideas

This “Kit of Ideas” captures important work created during the Exploration phase of this project. It consists of ideas developed by Parsons students in two courses held during the spring of 2012, as well as a set of preliminary concepts explored by the Public Policy Lab fellows during the same period. A number of the ideas identified during this early phase of work were further developed into the pilot proposals outlined in Part 3 of this guide; however, many potentially promising concepts remain for future exploration.

INTRODUCTION TO THE KIT OF IDEAS

The goal of this section is twofold:

- to collect inspiring ideas for future reference and development by HPD and other public agencies,
- and to serve as the starting point for a broader conversation about the continuing evolution of public services in New York City.

In this sense, these ideas can be seen as speculative proposals intended to engage with current realities and explore future possibilities.

WHAT THE KIT COVERS

Ideas in this section span the arc of HPD's current services, and extend into areas of housing-service provision not currently under the agency's purview. The concepts are grouped into six broad categories, represented on the illustrated spreads that follow.

This wide scope resulted from an open-ended enquiry carried out by Parsons students and Public Policy Lab fellows during the first phase of the project. During this phase, students and fellows explored concepts for deepening New Yorkers' understanding of, and participation in, HPD programs. In addition, one class of Parsons students was asked to investigate community engagement in housing-related issues and explore ways to amplify such engagement.

MELROSE, THE BRONX

To develop this kit of ideas, students and fellows began by exploring housing and community services — provided both by neighborhood groups and city agencies — in an area that has seen major investment by HPD in recent years. This area is called the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area in the Melrose neighborhood of the South Bronx.

Under the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area plan, HPD has worked with for-profit and community-based partners to develop over 2,800 new units of affordable housing since 2000. In the coming years, HPD anticipates the completion of an additional 900 new units of affordable housing, bringing the total to approximately 3,700 units in the Urban Renewal Area alone. The area also includes new construction for the Boricua College campus, and more than 30,000 square feet of commercial and community space.

The conversations of students and fellows with Melrose residents and neighborhood organizations are reflected in the ideas that follow, particularly in ideas that relate to community engagement. Those conversations served as a touchstone for the design team throughout the refinement of the pilot proposals in Part 3.

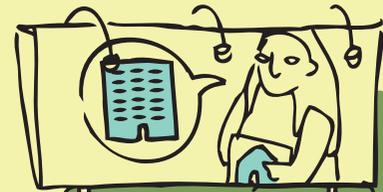
TRANSFORMING IDEAS INTO PILOT PROGRAMS

At the end of the first phase, in June 2012, the project team presented concepts from the first five kit categories that follow to HPD for consideration as potential pilot projects. (Community Engagement ideas were reviewed with Parsons students and faculty, but not evaluated as pilots.) Members of HPD's leadership team assessed the concepts and evaluated each on degree of innovation, usefulness, and feasibility. While many ideas were perceived as innovative and potentially useful, concepts in the Information as Service category and the Lottery & Lease-Up category were identified as most feasible for piloting in 2013, given current agency needs and resources. See Part 3: Pilot Proposals for more details on the development and resulting recommendations related to those concepts.

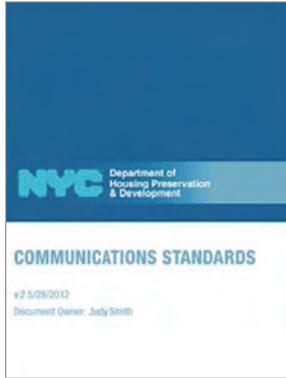
Assuming that the first set of recommended pilots is successful, other categories of ideas presented in this kit might be considered as pilot programs in the future. These are presented in Part 4: Concepts for Future Consideration.

Information As Service

Easy-to-understand communications materials, paired with simpler ways for staff and the public to provide feedback, could improve information exchange between service providers and service users.



Liana Dragoman and Kaja Köhl



HOLISTIC COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

Increase public awareness and understanding of HPD services by further developing style guides, media templates, and graphic assets for all of the agency's external communications. Work with HPD staff to expand practical governance and implementation models that ensure these holistic communication standards are appreciated, adopted, and maintained. *Concepts developed by Liana Dragoman and Kaja Köhl.*

NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development
COMMUNICATIONS STANDARDS
v2 5/28/2012
Document Owner: Judy Smith

VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS ASSETS

Develop infographics and icon sets to help illustrate and explain HPD programs. These visual communication assets are intended to assist non-English-speaking and low-literacy populations in identifying programs that can address their needs, while providing visual clarity and consistency for all of the agency's constituents. *Concepts developed by Liana Dragoman and Kaja Köhl.*



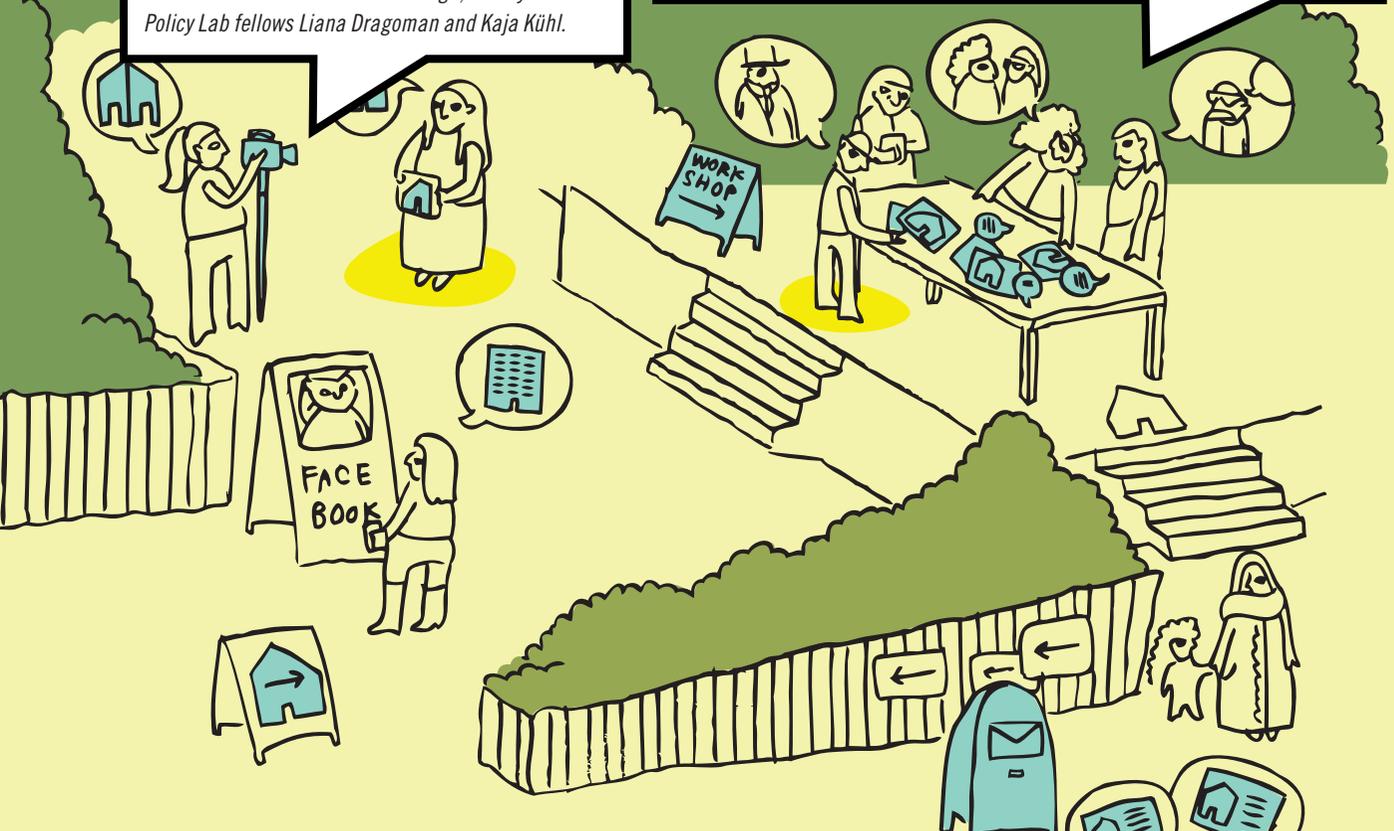
VIDEO COMMUNICATIONS

Put a human face on the benefits of HPD programs and services by soliciting video testimonials and tutorials from New York City residents who have benefited from the agency's work. Increase awareness, comprehension, and engagement by embedding these videos on multiple websites and providing access via multiple devices. Consider setting up a video booth to collect stories. *Concepts designed by John Goddu, Marissa Hatch, and Eli Rosenbloom at Parsons The New School for Design, and by Public Policy Lab fellows Liana Dragoman and Kaja Kühn.*



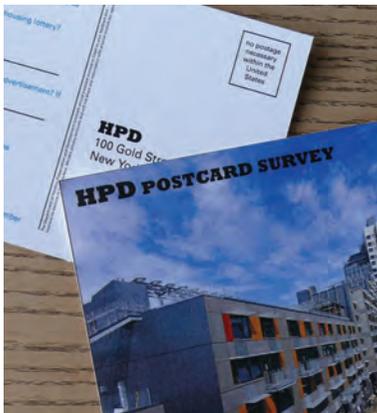
PROVIDER FEEDBACK PROCESS

Implement structured processes, such as semi-annual workshops, for HPD leadership to learn from front-line staff. Use this feedback to incorporate front-line knowledge into policy, motivate and empower staff to seek positive change, and improve overall service provision. *Concepts developed by Liana Dragoman and Kaja Kühn.*



USER FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

Use brief, targeted questionnaires to gain insight into the needs and preferences of members of the public who interact with HPD. Employ different survey media (including postcards, email blasts, etc.) to access different user groups. Invite users to submit additional comments and concerns, as well, through digital and real-world comment tools. *Concepts designed by Judit Boros, Matteo D'Amanzo, Harriette Kim, and Molly Oberholtzer at Parsons The New School for Design, and by Public Policy Lab fellows Liana Dragoman and Kaja Kühn.*

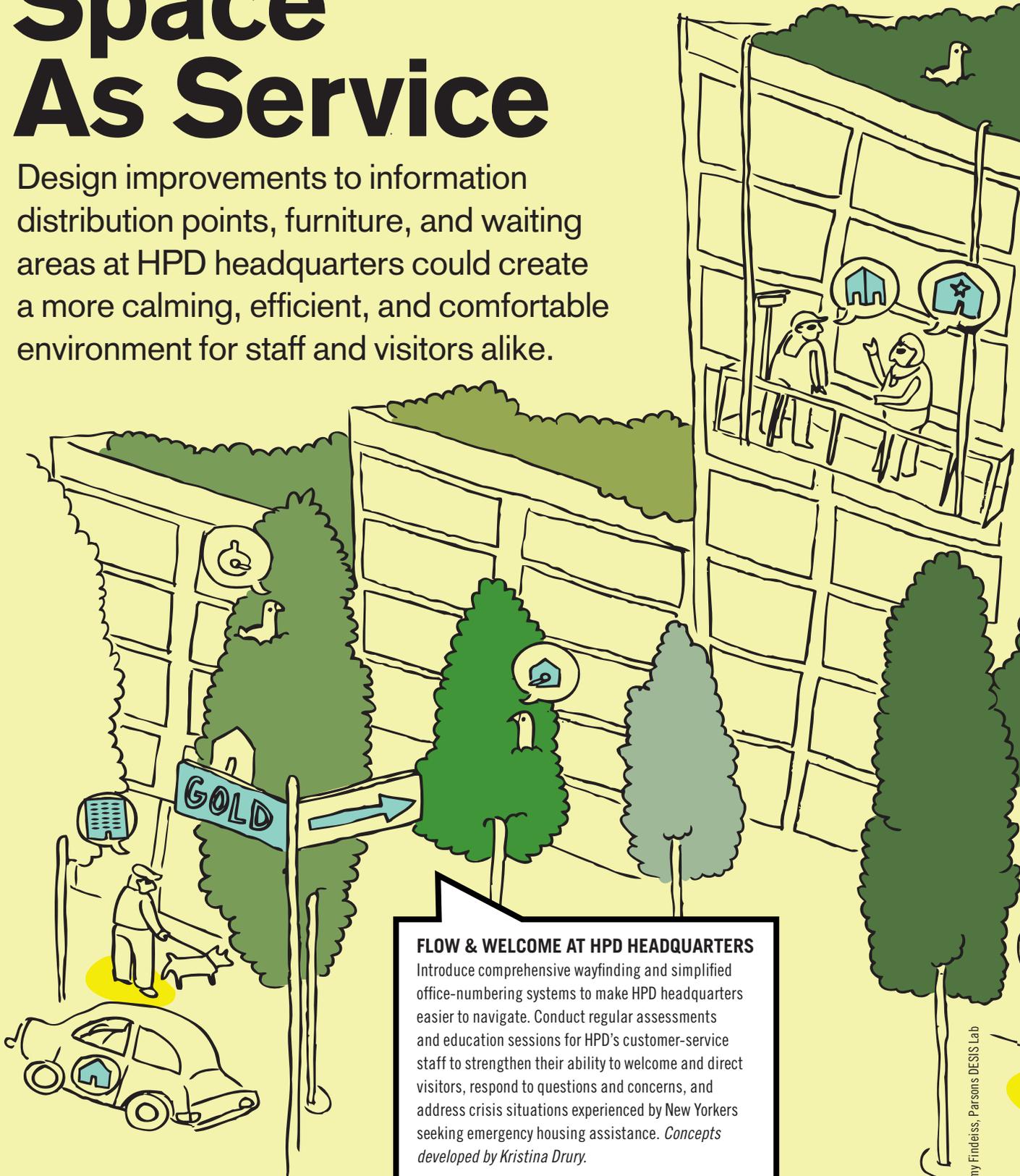


Liana Dragoman and Kaja Kühn



Space As Service

Design improvements to information distribution points, furniture, and waiting areas at HPD headquarters could create a more calming, efficient, and comfortable environment for staff and visitors alike.

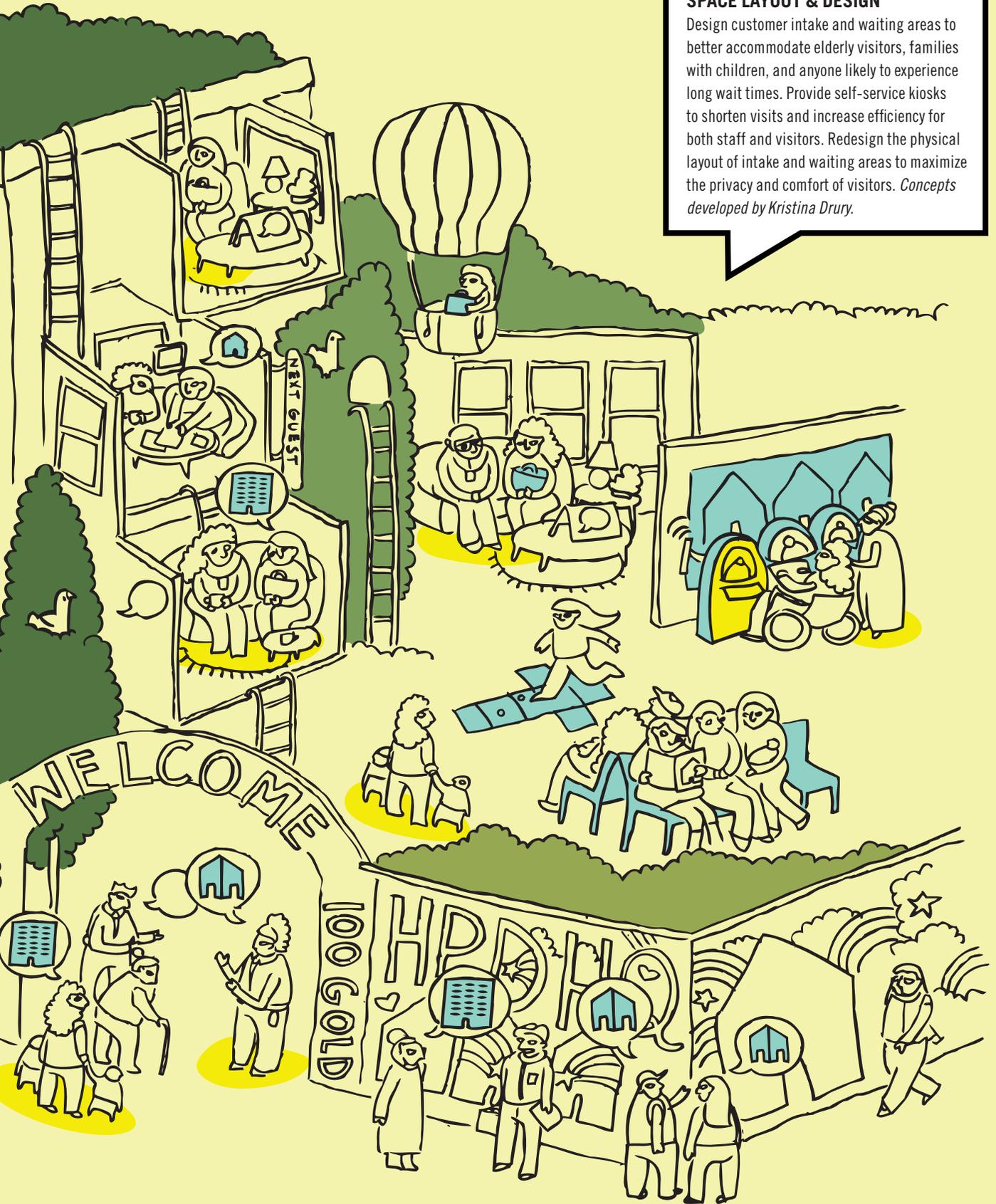


FLOW & WELCOME AT HPD HEADQUARTERS

Introduce comprehensive wayfinding and simplified office-numbering systems to make HPD headquarters easier to navigate. Conduct regular assessments and education sessions for HPD's customer-service staff to strengthen their ability to welcome and direct visitors, respond to questions and concerns, and address crisis situations experienced by New Yorkers seeking emergency housing assistance. *Concepts developed by Kristina Drury.*

SPACE LAYOUT & DESIGN

Design customer intake and waiting areas to better accommodate elderly visitors, families with children, and anyone likely to experience long wait times. Provide self-service kiosks to shorten visits and increase efficiency for both staff and visitors. Redesign the physical layout of intake and waiting areas to maximize the privacy and comfort of visitors. *Concepts developed by Kristina Drury.*



Section 8 Voucher Services

Improve informational materials to make the Section 8 voucher program easier to navigate for current and potential tenants and for landlords.



SECTION 8 VOUCHER PROGRAM LANDLORD TOOLKIT
Enhance the design and encourage the effective use of HPD's current Partner Portal — an online service that helps landlords administer their tenants' Section 8 voucher benefits — by providing HPD with interface redesign strategies and a companion toolkit of supporting materials. Assist landlords and tenants in better coordinating, communicating, and sharing information regarding Section 8 voucher applications and renewals. *Concepts developed by Liana Dragoman.*



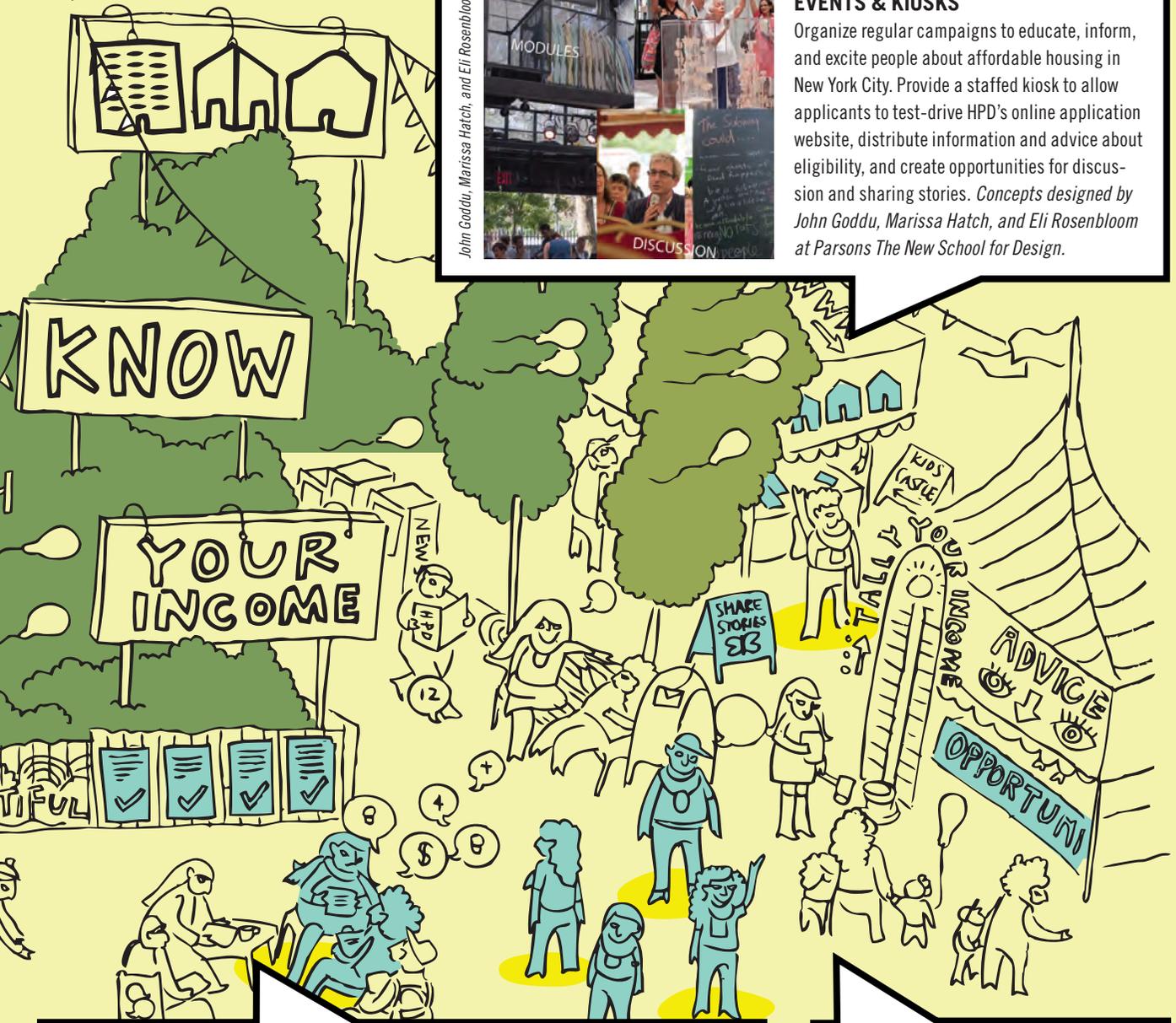
SECTION 8 VOUCHER APPLICANT TOOLKIT

Provide a toolkit that consolidates all the instructions, documents, and contact information necessary for someone to apply for the Section 8 program (also known as the Housing Choice Voucher Program). Make it visual, easy to read, and widely available to the vulnerable populations who may be most in need of support when applying for a Section 8 voucher.

Concepts developed by Liana Dragoman.

"A lot of stuff is word of mouth. A lot of information is not given to the client until they are asking for it." - HPD Staff





PEOPLE'S HOUSING WEEK EVENTS & KIOSKS

Organize regular campaigns to educate, inform, and excite people about affordable housing in New York City. Provide a staffed kiosk to allow applicants to test-drive HPD's online application website, distribute information and advice about eligibility, and create opportunities for discussion and sharing stories. *Concepts designed by John Goddu, Marissa Hatch, and Eli Rosenbloom at Parsons The New School for Design.*

John Goddu, Marissa Hatch, and Eli Rosenbloom

INCOME CRITERIA ASSISTANCE

Partner with a community-based organization to assist housing applicants with questions and concerns about income requirements. Alternatively, supply user-friendly written advice, rules of thumb, and checklists to help applicants accurately understand income requirements. *Concepts designed by John Goddu, Marissa Hatch, and Eli Rosenbloom at Parsons The New School for Design, and by Public Policy Lab fellows Kristina Drury and Liana Dragoman.*

Benjamin Winter

APPLICATION AMBASSADORS

Support third-party organizations and individuals who assist people applying for affordable housing. Train these community members to follow consistent procedures and supply correct information to applicants. *Concepts designed by John Goddu, Marissa Hatch, and Eli Rosenbloom at Parsons The New School for Design, and by Public Policy Lab fellows Kristina Drury and Liana Dragoman.*

Chin-Fu Chen, Ivett Cser, Michael Mangan, and Caitlin Webb



“TENANT DIRECT” & “BOOK.ME” WEBSITES

Enlist residents as partners in housing-quality enforcement by providing them with a simple, online interface for reporting housing violations and registering for code inspections. Provide tools to help residents identify which issues constitute violations, tips for resolving violations with their landlord, and instructions about how and when to report violations to HPD. *Concepts designed by Chin-Fu Chen, Ivett Cser, Michael Mangan, and Caitlin Webb at Parsons The New School for Design.*

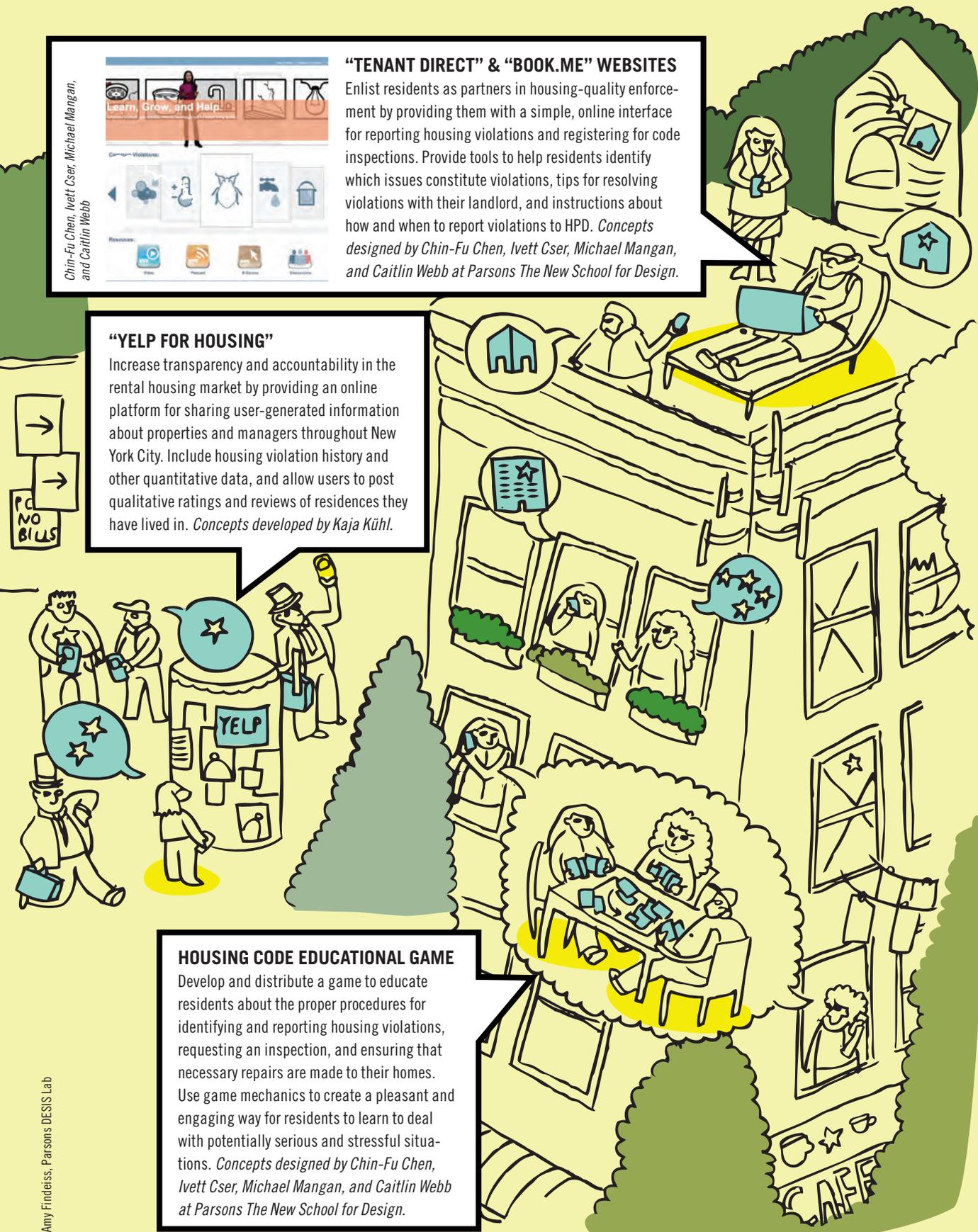
“YELP FOR HOUSING”

Increase transparency and accountability in the rental housing market by providing an online platform for sharing user-generated information about properties and managers throughout New York City. Include housing violation history and other quantitative data, and allow users to post qualitative ratings and reviews of residences they have lived in. *Concepts developed by Kaja Köhl.*

HOUSING CODE EDUCATIONAL GAME

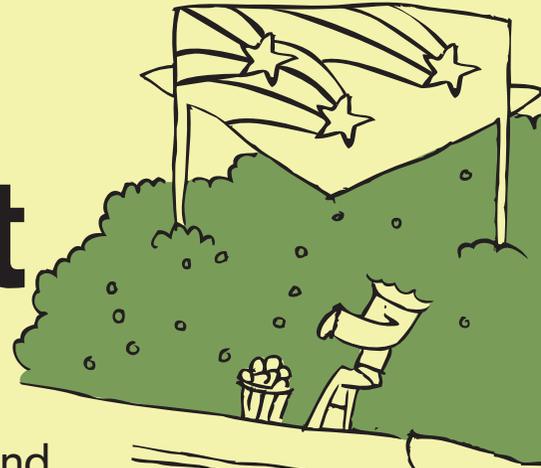
Develop and distribute a game to educate residents about the proper procedures for identifying and reporting housing violations, requesting an inspection, and ensuring that necessary repairs are made to their homes. Use game mechanics to create a pleasant and engaging way for residents to learn to deal with potentially serious and stressful situations. *Concepts designed by Chin-Fu Chen, Ivett Cser, Michael Mangan, and Caitlin Webb at Parsons The New School for Design.*

Amy Frideiss, Parsons DESIS Lab



Community Engagement

Future community engagement concepts could encourage HPD's services to reflect and reinforce the feeling of independence and sense of belonging that comes with moving into a new home in a welcoming community. These ideas could help local organizations act as agents of positive change in their community.



COMMONS IN COMMON
Encourage building owners and property managers to adopt this low-tech, user-friendly, collaborative service that promotes democratic relationships between residents and landlords who are interested in working together to improve their building. Allow residents to publicly propose and vote on projects they are interested in developing, so that their peers and landlord can gauge interest and provide support. *Concepts designed by Aly Blenkin, Andrea Curtoni, Giulia Mazzorin, and Namkyu Chun at Parsons The New School for Design.*



MELROSE MADE
Support the creation of an incubator platform that would help young community members develop business ideas through apprenticeships with local entrepreneurs. Help identify vacant storefronts in which to host workshops, showcase new business ventures, and ultimately stimulate the local economy. *Concepts designed by Michelle Girelli, Kara Kane, Rosalind Louvet, and Christopher Patten at Parsons The New School for Design.*

Janet Lobberecht, Nelson Lo, and Jennifer Meyer

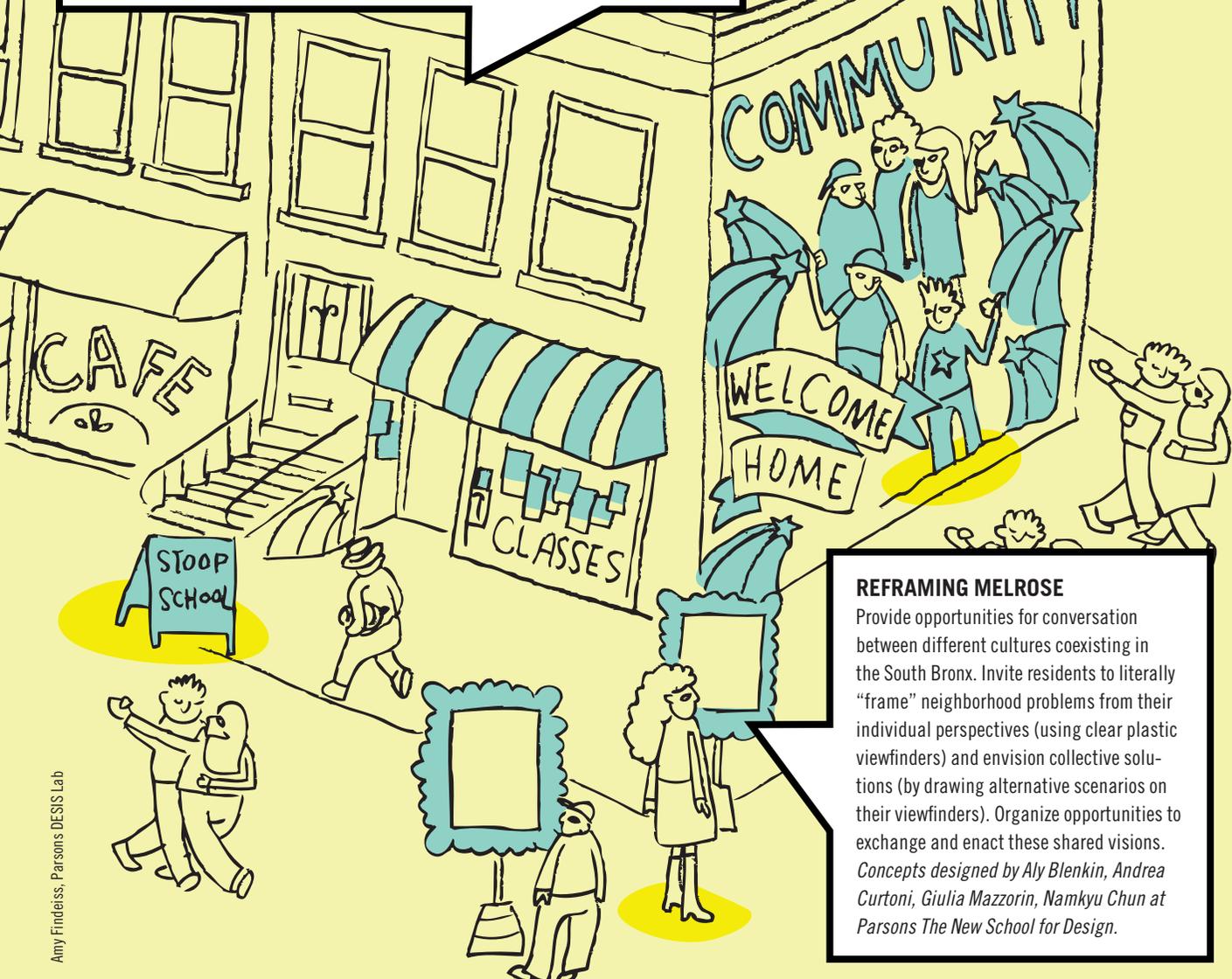


STREET SCHOOL

Help facilitate a system of informal education in which the neighborhood becomes a classroom. Inspire South Bronx residents of Melrose Commons to become both teachers and students, sharing and learning from each other on the stoops, streets, and sidewalks of their community. *Concepts designed by Janet Lobberecht, Nelson Lo, and Jennifer Meyer at Parsons The New School for Design.*

FIELD-OFFICE MURAL

Highlight HPD's community relationships and enhance the vibrancy and aesthetics of neighborhoods by partnering with local schools and youth organizations to create street-art paintings on the façades of the agency's field offices. *Concepts designed by Judit Boros, Matteo D'Amanzo, Harriette Kim, and Molly Oberholtzer at Parsons The New School for Design.*



REFRAMING MELROSE

Provide opportunities for conversation between different cultures coexisting in the South Bronx. Invite residents to literally "frame" neighborhood problems from their individual perspectives (using clear plastic viewfinders) and envision collective solutions (by drawing alternative scenarios on their viewfinders). Organize opportunities to exchange and enact these shared visions. *Concepts designed by Aly Blenkin, Andrea Curtoni, Giulia Mazzorin, Namkyu Chun at Parsons The New School for Design.*

Part 3: Pilot Proposals

This chapter proposes a series of pilot projects intended to help New Yorkers more successfully navigate the affordable housing application process. These proposals are intended to be collaborative efforts between the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), developers, and community partners. Beyond improving the experience of applicants, the proposals seek to generate efficiencies for service providers and extend the reach of the City's affordable housing program to a greater number of eligible New Yorkers.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPOSALS

The four proposals described in this chapter recommend that HPD and its sister agency, the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC), enhance the application process for affordable housing by creating new, human-centered informational materials, encouraging hyper-local marketing by developers, supporting community-based “housing ambassadors,” and forming a street team for in-person HPD outreach. (HDC regulates approximately 40% of the city’s affordable housing developments. Wherever applicable, processes and recommendations in this chapter can be understood to refer also to HDC-managed projects.)

In combination, the proposals create knowledge-sharing infrastructure that enables the dynamic and reciprocal exchange of information between New York City residents, community-based partners, housing developers, and HPD leadership and front-line staff. In time, the proposals intend to:

- Increase awareness of HPD’s affordable housing programs.
- Ensure that New York City residents who apply to HPD’s affordable housing have easy access to clear and consistent information.
- Improve comprehension of application requirements and processes and applicant rights and responsibilities.
- Support community groups in providing one-on-one assistance to applicants.

The following sections outline the proposals, including implementation plans and evaluation strategies, and also speak to the thinking behind each proposal and recommendations for future actions.

WHAT IS THE HPD HOUSING LOTTERY?

The New Housing Marketplace Plan is New York City’s plan for developing affordable housing. Roughly two-thirds of the 165,000 units financed by the plan are rehabilitations that preserve the affordability of existing units; approximately one-third of the total (or more than 57,000 units) will be newly constructed. All vacant rehabilitated and new units are offered by application to eligible New Yorkers. “Housing lottery” is the term used for the method through which HPD allocates available affordable housing units to members of the public.

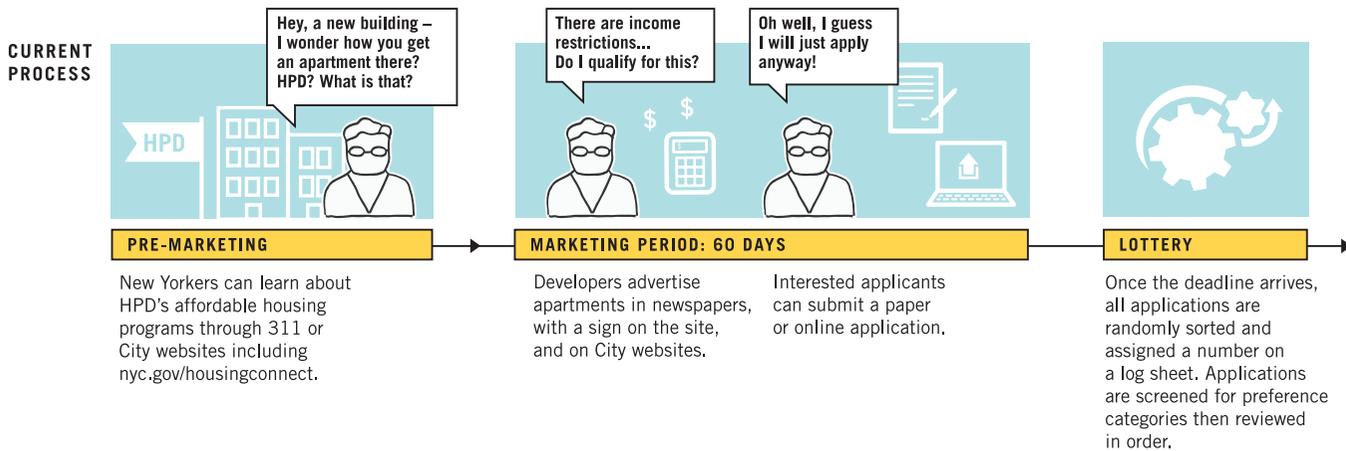
Marketing Process

HPD requires developers to begin marketing available units to the public when construction on a building is approximately 70% complete. Developers must publicly solicit applications through advertisements in newspapers, post information about the units on multiple City websites, and provide information to an automated toll-free affordable housing hotline.

Application Process

For each development, a 60-day window is established during which interested households can submit an application. HPD’s online application portal — NYC Housing Connect — covers all new rental developments and allows applicants to create a profile and apply for affordable units as new projects become available. Paper applications continue to be available for applicants who prefer the paper to the electronic process.

CHALLENGES IN THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING APPLICATION PROCESS



An applicant must take various steps to obtain an affordable unit. This service journey maps out various actions that are required of the applicant to complete the process and highlights some possible challenges or points of confusion they may currently experience.

Initial Application Processing

HPD assigns a randomly generated log number to each successfully submitted application, and assesses all logged applications for “apparent eligibility.” Apparent eligibility means that an applicant seems to be eligible for at least one available unit in the development based on reported income and household composition.

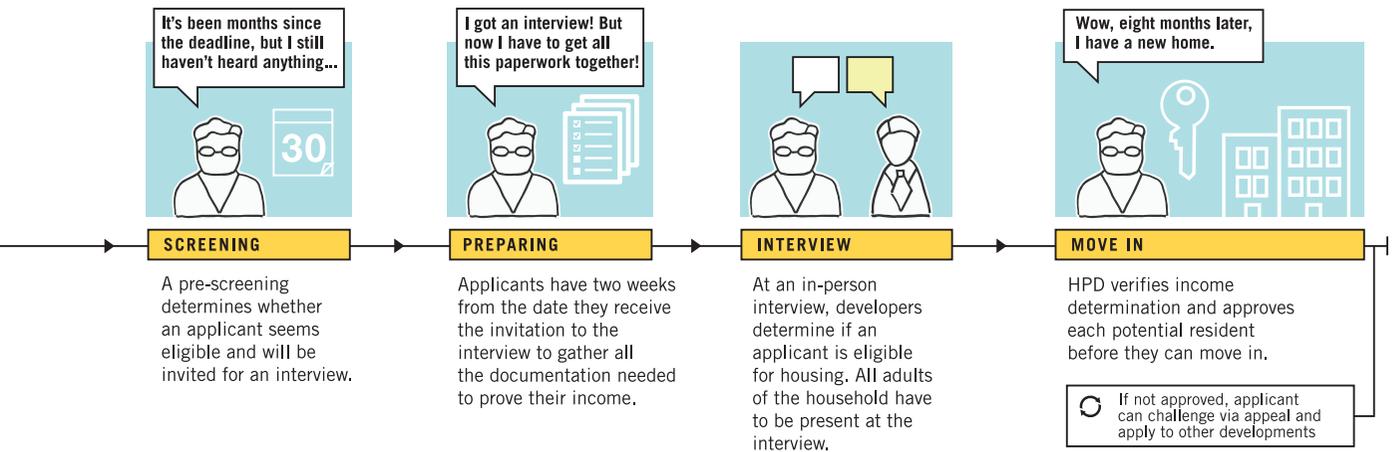
Agency rules require that, of a given development's affordable units, 5% are intended for persons with a mobility impairment, and an additional 2% of units are intended for persons with a visual or hearing impairment; a further 50% of the units are intended for current residents of the community-board district where the development is located, and 5% of units are intended for municipal employees. These preference categories were established to provide greater housing opportunities for residents with specific needs or challenges.

Screening Interview

Applicants who have passed the “apparent eligibility” phase of the process are invited by the building's developer to participate in a face-to-face screening interview. All adult members of the household who will be living in the affordable unit are required to attend this interview. Interviewees are asked to bring documentation that verifies the information reported on their application, such as tax returns, pay stubs, school enrollment forms, and other documents that prove compliance with income, household size, and other eligibility requirements.

Unit Allocation

Households deemed eligible after completing the interview and approval process are matched by the developer to appropriate available units, based on unit size and affordability targets. The developer makes a list of eligible households for each available unit, and in some cases, documentation for households that receive confirmation of eligibility is sent back to HPD for final approval; approved applicants are then offered an apartment. If the household offered housing does not accept, then the next household on the waiting list will be offered the unit.



PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

Key findings about the public's experience of the application process for affordable housing — and the agency's needs and constraints — were identified through a series of research and co-design activities, led by a team of Public Policy Lab fellows. These findings, described below, informed the pilot proposals' design and development.

Participatory & Iterative Approach

The project team's primary research methods were qualitative and participatory. The research and design process was split into two phases; see Part 1 for a description of the project phases. In both phases, the team created and facilitated a series of exercises with stakeholders to ensure that the proposed pilot plans were realistic and useful.

These activities — referred to subsequently in this document as the design research — were formative in nature: the intention was to gather ideas and insights to inform and inspire design solutions, not to generate quantitative data. Interview and workshop participants were asked to propose solutions that emerged from their own lived experience and expertise. The project team was able to observe and respond to information gaps, areas of confusion, and "pain points" in the current process. Participants included developers of affordable housing, staff at community organizations, New York City residents, applicants to HPD's affordable housing services, HPD leadership, and front-line agency staff.

Specific design-research activities over the course of the project included:

- observations of HPD service spaces,
- assessment of HPD online interfaces and application materials,
- examination of HPD communication channels' content, accessibility, and communications strategy,
- brand and content audit of HPD information materials,
- professional practice research into service design for the public sector and design precedence for future recommendations,



HPD, CBO & DEVELOPER WORKSHOP

Participants from CBOs, developers, and HPD were brought together to respond to the validity of the pilot proposals. Participant insight shaped the next iteration of the project team's work.



APPLICANT WORKSHOP

During Phase 2, applicants participated in a workshop where they responded to and redesigned pilot proposal material.

- assessment of affordable housing policy, analysis of data collected by HPD, and other desk research with housing-related resources,
- site visits to the HPD field office in Brooklyn and to HPD developments in the Bronx,
- observations and interviews with developer and HPD staff at a lease-up interview site, also in the Bronx,
- a group workshop with more than two dozen HPD policymakers,
- more than a dozen one-on-one and small-team interviews with HPD and HDC leaders, division heads, and staff,
- on-the-street interviews, in Manhattan and the South Bronx, with several dozen past and potential affordable housing applicants,
- multiple in-class working sessions and critiques with Parsons students and faculty, Public Policy Lab fellows, and HPD staff,
- one-on-one and small-group interviews with several community-based housing organizations, located in the South Bronx and in Chinatown,
- design workshops in the South Bronx with more than a dozen past or potential applicants identified by Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and
- a design workshop with more than a dozen front-line staffers from multiple housing-development organizations.

During and subsequent to these stakeholder engagements, the project team created multiple, sequential versions of most aspects of the proposals and the supplemental resources. These multiple rounds of design research, creation, presentation, and revision — known to designers as “iterations” — ensured that the informational materials, implementation plans, and related strategies were vetted in full by HPD and received input from other stakeholders.

Identifying a Design Lens

Begin with the People: Affordable Housing Partners & Constituents

To better understand the application process for affordable housing and identify avenues of design research, the project team first looked to understand the people involved in the process: Who facilitates and utilizes HPD affordable housing services currently? What are their needs and constraints, and what frames their decision-making?

Deconstruct the Current Experience & Uncover Challenges

A second focus was the range of current processes and channels: How do people — including front-line staff, service providers, and potential applicants — currently access or participate in the application process for affordable housing? What communications and service-delivery channels are employed? What are the challenges all stakeholders face when interacting with the application process?

Imagine a More Satisfying Future

Finally, the project team imagined possible future versions of the application process: What would individuals like their experiences to be? What does a successful application process look like, regardless of role or organization? How can we solve key challenges, and balance organizational capacity with applicant needs? These questions resulted in key findings that were used to inform the design process.

KEY FINDINGS

Engagements with stakeholders during design research revealed a number of challenges faced by participants in the affordable housing application process. These findings are outlined below.

Information & Its Exchange Can Seem Fragmented & Impersonal

HPD and its development partners make significant efforts to inform applicants and community members about opportunities for affordable housing; however, from the perspective of potential applicants, this information—its distribution channels and methods for interaction—can seem fragmented and impersonal. Therefore, there's an opportunity to create more targeted and human-centered services to further assist New Yorkers applying for affordable housing.

New Yorkers Do Not Know About HPD or Affordable Housing

On-the-street interviews by the fellow team in the South Bronx and Manhattan suggested that many residents are not familiar with the full extent of HPD services. Additionally, the majority of these interviews, as well as one-on-one interviews at Bronx community organizations, suggested that participants did not understand the concept of affordable housing. Many interviewees wrongly assumed that all affordable units are targeted for extremely low-income households, or conversely, that affordable units were available to any applicant, regardless of income. These misperceptions suggest significant opportunities may exist to better explain to New Yorkers the target audience for affordable housing.

Residents Lack Clarity About the Application Process & Eligibility Requirements

Design research with both CBOs and potential applicants suggested that applicants for affordable housing also have an incomplete understanding of the application process. Interview subjects asked, "Why does it take so long?" and "Why did someone else with the same income get the unit?" Several applicants expressed concern and misunderstanding about the relationship between household size and eligible unit size — "Why can't we put more kids in a room?" or "Why don't I qualify, I still need housing, too!" Multiple applicants referred to the concept of "winning the lottery," suggesting that they understood the selection of their application to mean they would definitely receive a new home, rather than signifying an opportunity to be screened for eligibility. Many applicants didn't understand why eligibility screening was necessary, how that affected their chances, how the process worked, or that they could apply to other developments. This lack of understanding suggests the need for clearer communication about application requirements and processes.

Applicants Misunderstand, Ignore, or Misinterpret Income Guidelines

During design interviews on the street in the South Bronx, several respondents said that they "just took a stab at the lottery," unaware of how strictly income requirements are adhered to, assuming that it couldn't hurt to try, and thinking there was a good chance that they would get an apartment. These assumptions may poorly prepare applicants for the multipart, time- and information-intensive requirements of the application screening process. Additionally, housing developers' staff mentioned to the design team that many applicants seem unclear on why and how to calculate their income; fundamental concepts, such as gross vs. net earnings, are not well understood. Income calculation is particularly challenging for applicants with overtime, part-time, or other variable income.

Applicant Screening Is Time-Intensive & Challenging

Given the findings above, it was not surprising to the design team that one of the greatest challenges in the affordable housing leasing process is screening the

REASONS APPLICANTS DON'T QUALIFY

OVER INCOME CREDIT DENIALS MISSED INTERVIEWS HOUSEHOLD SIZE NO RESPONSE OTHER DUPLICATE APPLICATION UNDER INCOME INCOME GAPS APPLICANT CANCELLED

Applicants may be rejected during screening for a number of reasons, although mismatches between an applicant's income and the building's income requirements are among the most common causes. Some applicants fall below the income requirements, while others are above the limit or fall in between advertised income brackets. Other applicants may be eliminated during the process because they fail to respond to interview requests or miss their scheduled interview. There are other reasons, such as applicants' credit history, which have a variable impact, depending on individual developers' requirements.

impressive number of applicants, many of whom may not eventually qualify for the unit they applied for. According to design research with staff from housing developers, marketing agents often spend a significant amount of time processing and interviewing applicants with a low success rate. Thousands of applicants may be interviewed in order to fill several hundred units — although it should be noted that variations in developers' screening processes may cause some applicants to experience swift resolutions, whereas others have significant processing delays.

Developers who are not able to lease up all their affordable units using the pool of applicants who applied via the lottery system may apply for permission to re-market the units on a first-come, first-served basis to any eligible applicant. Given the high level of demand for affordable housing throughout the city, it seems possible that improvements in the application process could ensure higher turnout and more efficient results through the lottery system, in lieu of a two-step process of lottery first, with a subsequent round of first-come/first-served placements.

Anecdotal evidence from design research also suggests that many apparently eligible applicants fail to appear for screening interviews. Interviews with developer staff point to multiple possible causes for these no-shows: The volume of applicants means that the entire screening and lease-up process may take many months, during which time applicants may not receive information on their application status. Developers speculate that applicants may drop out of the process because they have to accept other living arrangements in the meantime. Still others may not show up to an interview because of the challenge of producing the documentation that is requested. And, some applicants may have already accepted an affordable unit in a different development. In addition, the short time period between notification letters and appointment dates—sometimes as little as five days — may not provide sufficient time for some applicants to change their work schedules, get child care, find a translator to read the letter and/or accompany them to the appointment, or otherwise make themselves ready and available to attend.

Some Community-Preference Slots Go Unused

Typically, 50% of the units in a development are intended for residents of the building's local community-board district. In some developments, however, not all of the community-preference slots are used. It's surmised that low community demand may result when a neighborhood already has a significant number of HPD buildings

PROVISIONAL PERSONAS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING SERVICES

As part of the service-design process, designers often test concepts by conceiving service scenarios with imaginary users (whose traits emerged from design research). These user profiles — usually representing various social, functional, or demographic aspects of the actual user community — are called “personas.” Personas can be detailed character sketches, or more abstract and provisional, capturing just a few key qualities of typical service users. The following visual narratives use provisional personas to identify design challenges related to the experiences and requirements of various potential users of affordable housing services.

DESIGN CHALLENGE: DOCUMENTING INCOME

How can residents better understand how to accurately report their income, so they'll be more likely to apply for units for which they're actually eligible?

I applied so many times already, but I don't think I am doing it right. Most of the time I never hear back.



Yolanda, 43, lives with her mother and her two children in central Brooklyn. She works as a cashier at Best Buy. She receives child support from the father of her daughter; the father of her son only pays support sporadically. Her mother receives Social Security. The family could qualify for a three-bedroom unit, but providing documentation for their different sources of income, especially the sporadic and often cash-only support for the children, is a challenge.

DESIGN CHALLENGE: CLARIFYING THE PROCESS

What's the best way to support eligible residents who may be intimidated by the process of filling out a housing application?

We are expecting our first child and would love our own apartment.



We saw this flyer for a new building in our neighborhood, but we don't know how the application works.

Luis and Martha, both 26, moved to New York from Guatemala six years ago. Martha works as a nanny. Luis works as an auto mechanic for his uncle, whose house they also share. The couple thinks they can afford a one-bedroom unit, but they don't feel very secure filling out official paperwork in English.

DESIGN CHALLENGE: REACHING THE “UN-NETWORKED”

How can housing providers better reach residents who don't have robust social ties or affiliations with community institutions that alert members to housing opportunities?

I would love to live closer to my job, but can't seem to find anything affordable there.

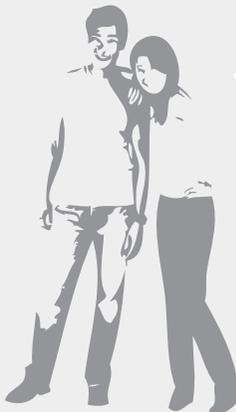


Carl, 55, works as a security guard at JFK making \$30,000 a year. He is single and has no close friends or family in New York City. He has never heard of HPD, and he gets news from the radio and TV, so he hasn't seen affordable housing newspaper ads.

DESIGN CHALLENGE: ATTRACTING A RANGE OF APPLICANTS

How can more New Yorkers be made aware that they could be eligible for affordable housing?

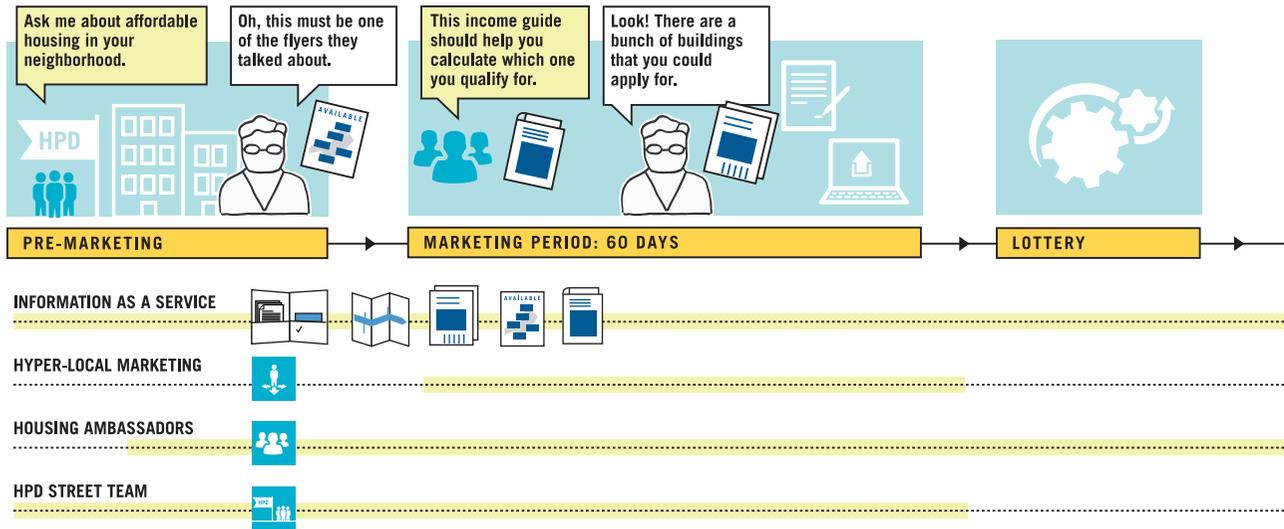
We've heard about subsidized apartments, but aren't they for really low-income people? Would we qualify?



John and Justine, both 32, are the children of immigrants, the first in their family to go to college. They both work in the nonprofit sector, and their combined income is just over \$70,000. They are looking for a one-bedroom apartment in their neighborhood.

PROPOSAL ECOSYSTEM

INTENDED PROPOSAL OUTCOMES



"Information as service" is the common thread across each proposal. Hyper-local marketing attempts to connect with applicants in their individual communities. Housing ambassadors and HPD street team members act as the human channels for HPD and partnering service providers.

(meaning many eligible local residents already have affordable housing) or when relatively few income-eligible households reside in the community-board district. Lack of sufficient developer outreach may be another contributing factor.

ABOUT THE PROPOSALS

A Knowledge-Sharing Infrastructure

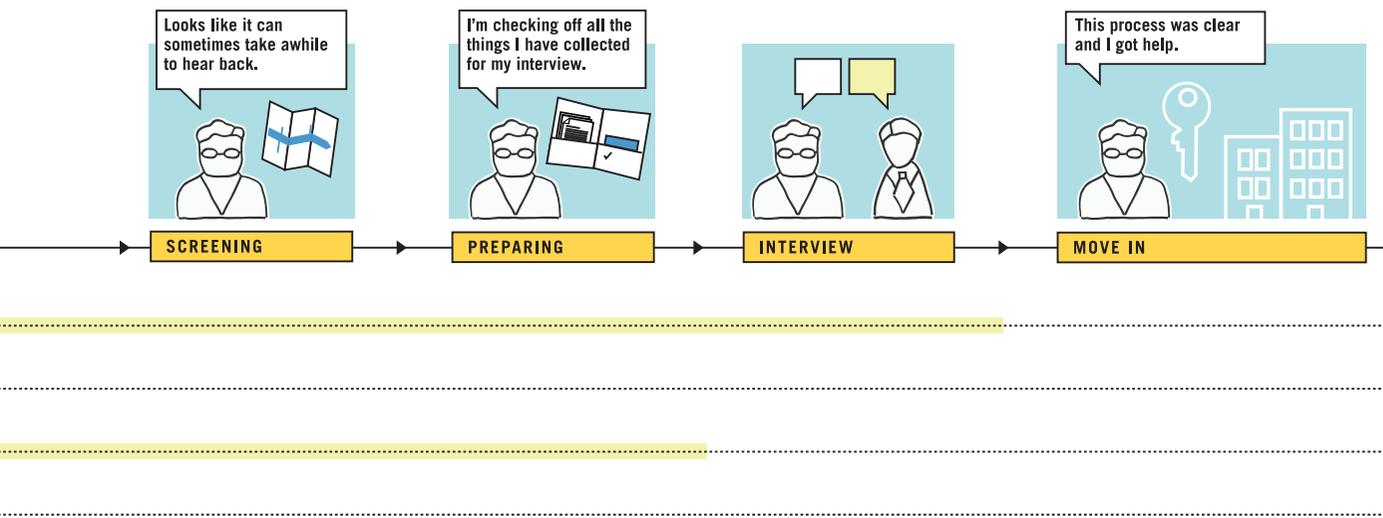
Based on the findings described above, the following questions emerged as drivers for design efforts:

- How might HPD offer stronger support for community groups that provide one-on-one assistance to applicants?
- How could HPD offer greater access to clear and consistent information, engaging residents through the right channels, with the proper information, and at strategic moments over time?
- How might the public develop increased awareness of HPD's affordable housing program?
- How might the public have improved comprehension of application requirements and processes, as well as applicant rights and responsibilities?

The four pilot proposals described in the upcoming pages respond directly to these questions. Each pilot proposal seeks to support a robust infrastructure for New Yorkers to share knowledge about the affordable housing application process.

The proposals recommend that HPD enable the dynamic and reciprocal exchange of information between key service-related constituents — essentially treating the provision of information as a service. Specifically, it's recommended that HPD:

- Proposal 1: Adopt new, human-centered informational materials.
- Proposal 2: Encourage hyper-local marketing by developers.
- Proposal 3: Support community-based "housing ambassadors."
- Proposal 4: Form a street team for in-person HPD outreach.



Guiding Design Objectives

Certain guiding objectives, based on design research findings, inform each of the proposals. These design objectives are the glue that holds the knowledge-sharing infrastructure together. The project's theory of change (see graphic, p.69) is that by carrying out the four proposals, the agency will see positive short- and long-term outcomes. If proven effective during piloting, HPD can use these basic principles as a foundation to shape the design of future community outreach and interactions.

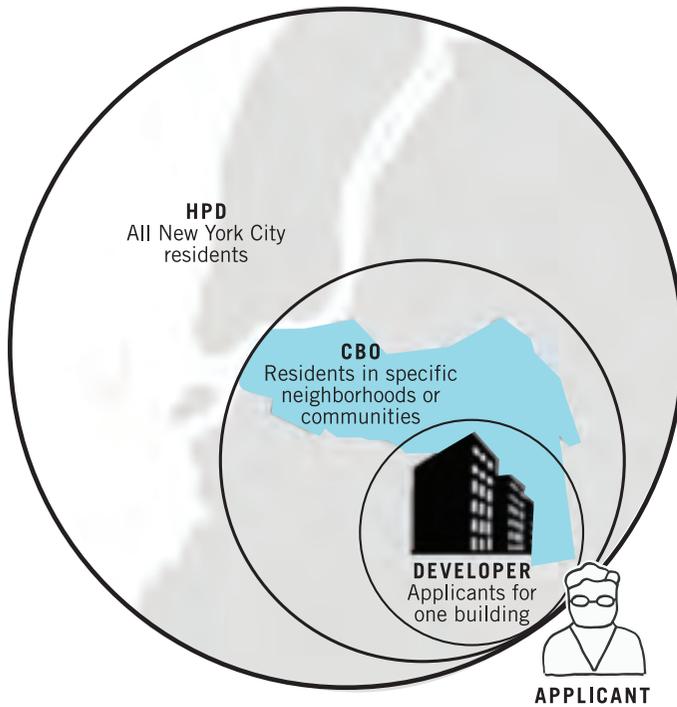
Objective 1: Encourage Information Accessibility & Exchange through Asset-Based Collaborations

HPD does not need to be the sole distributor of reliable program information. Indeed, systems of co-production can be supported among service partners (CBOs and developers) and members of the public. As one constituent learns new information, she or he becomes an ambassador or teacher, passing that knowledge to others — enabling residents to be active participants in the process by honoring their expertise and role in the exchange of information.

The person-to-person, everyday approach used by the pilot proposals relies on the varying scales at which HPD and its partners — including CBOs, elected officials, developers, and marketers — reach or interact with potential applicants. The proposals leverage the power of public and private partnership for a range of potential impacts, at varying geographic scales. The proposal for housing developers targets the immediate vicinity of a development; community groups are encouraged to reach out to all members of their neighborhood network; and the city agency is asked to focus on outreach that spans neighborhoods and income groups.

Objective 2: Account for Applicants' Lived Realities

New Yorkers apply for affordable housing from the context of their daily experiences, not from within a vacuum. An applicant's view of the application process for affordable housing is intimately tied to the realities of his or her life, and how he or she perceives government and its services in general. Further, the affordable housing

**PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COLLABORATION:
RANGE OF POTENTIAL IMPACT**


The proposals work at varying scales: Housing developers target the immediate vicinity of a development; community groups reach out to their neighborhood network; and the city agency does outreach that spans communities and income groups.

application process requires applicants to interact with multiple private and public organizations to complete an application.

In response, the pilot proposals have been designed to connect with individuals in their everyday environs, rather than asking applicants to step into more official surroundings. Person-to-person interactions, ideally with trusted CBOs, peers, or neighbors — as opposed to solely digital distribution or formal presentations from professionals — are recommended as a primary mode of active information exchange (in addition to the official channels HPD currently provides).

These forms of interaction put a human face on a seemingly complicated process. In addition, the newly proposed informational materials attempt to guide and equalize person-to-person conversations with accurate and usable information. Applicants are provided with tools to manage their application process holistically and within the context of their “everyday” interactions.

Objective 3: Enable Informed Decision-Making through Human-Centered Information Design

Many applicants understandably have difficulty following the complex details of affordable housing application processes. The objectives above attempt to address this complexity through improved sites and scales of information exchange.

To further mitigate this complexity and enable informed decision-making, all of the pilot proposals also address informational needs across various communication and distribution channels and formats. The goal here should not just be more information, but better information.

Clear, simple, and engaging design — of materials and services — is crucial for supporting informed decision-making. The following tenets guided the visual and content design of the proposals’ informational materials:

- Provide consistent, up-to-date, and straightforward information in human terms.
- Create highly visual material for diverse readers.
- Communicate processes clearly and in a timely manner through reasonable expectation setting with applicants.

PERSONA SCENARIO

All of this material is so helpful. I have a much better understanding of how the application works and how to document our income.



YOLANDA: INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS PROVIDE CLEAR GUIDANCE

Yolanda found a copy of the process map at her local library. She then went to HPD's website to download all the other informational materials. She is now collecting documentation for her income and will apply again.

When you have motivated people who want to get placed into an affordable unit, they will read through all materials.

A South Bronx CBO participant at a co-creation workshop in the South Bronx

PROPOSAL 1: ADOPT NEW, HUMAN-CENTERED INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

During the design-research process, many housing applicants, HPD front-line staff, and CBOs expressed a need for easy-to-understand, centralized, and consistent information on the application process. As a result, the proposal below recommends that HPD implement, distribute, and sustain a series of new or redesigned informational materials to be used throughout the application process — from marketing to interview and lease-up.

The materials are designed to be helpful to potential applicants, ambassadors, HPD staff, and developers. These materials include a redesigned advertisement template to list information about a specific development, as well as a monthly-listings template that offers information about all available developments citywide. An income guide, application-process map, and a checklists document complete the suite of new HPD-branded informational materials.

These materials are intended to ensure that the application process is understandable and transparent, both for housing applicants and for those who help applicants through the process. Please note that Proposals 2 through 4 explore specific distribution channels for the informational materials presented in this section.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS: INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

Participant insight, captured during design workshops, includes the following:

- Application-related information and marketing details can be hard to locate and understand. Access to information feels scattered across multiple, misaligned distribution channels.
- Current information design and content about the affordable housing application process tends to lack straightforwardness and a human tone.
- Specific content areas deemed “confusing” relate to income requirements, eligibility, required documentation, applicant rights, and clarity of process.
- Participants are interested in understanding application-processing time frames, like: how long a step might take and when or if they will receive a response after turning in materials. Sometimes applicants feel like they are “left in the dark.”
- Applicants request a varied amount of informational support from HPD and other third-party organizations. Some individuals are interested in comprehensive details while others prefer high-level points. Additionally, some participants ask for the translation of materials into multiple languages beyond English.
- Some applicants cannot identify and/or are not fully aware of the work HPD performs in affordable housing.
- Applicants, community groups, developers, etc. believe that equal access to the same informational materials can provide each group with the same “language” from which to communicate and collaborate with one another.



CO-CREATING THE PROCESS MAP

Several participants in a co-creation workshop with a South Bronx CBO discuss pain points in the application process and design solutions that resolve their frustrations.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS: PROPOSAL GOALS

The proposed communications tools are meant to supplement the marketing process, from initial advertisement to the applicant interview, giving people the right information at the right time. In addition, the materials are designed to facilitate collaboration and conversation between key service partners and applicants. Specific goals for these materials are as follows:

Provide Consistent, Up-to-Date, and Straightforward Information in Human Terms

The content, voice, tone, aesthetics, and information hierarchy — the structure, order, and relative weighting of content components, also known as “information architecture”— of the informational materials should be user-friendly, trustworthy, relatable in tone, and meaningful. All resources should align with the HPD brand and reflect up-to-date versions of the application process so that applicants connect the materials to a trusted source and are reassured by the accuracy of the information.

Communicate Processes Clearly and Set Reasonable Expectations with Applicants

The informational materials should be explicit about the key steps, time frames, and other process-related points in order to help applicants successfully navigate the process with the correct expectations throughout their service journey, the series of interactions, with people and materials, that comprise the application experience.

Support Diverse Readers with Highly Visual Materials

Some applicants for affordable housing have low-literacy levels in English or even in their native language. Information graphics (including icons and process maps) can enhance most forms of communication, particularly complex material. By developing highly visual and simplified forms of communication, HPD can ensure that all constituents (regardless of language preference and/or literacy level) have a better chance of understanding application-related information.

Enhance Collaboration through Accessible and Well-Designed Informational Materials

Well-designed collateral is particularly useful when it facilitates information exchange between experts and novices. For example, a street-team member (Proposal 4) can point out available units when engaging with potential applicants at an event, or a housing ambassador (Proposal 3) can employ the supplemental materials for applicant support throughout the application process.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS: REQUIRED RESOURCES

This proposal calls for HPD to distribute, print, and maintain five new or revised communication pieces. Each designed piece is compatible with standard office printer formats and is designed to be effective whether printed in black and white or in color. Each piece can also be saved as a full-color PDF for digital download and distribution.

Advertisement Template

HPD provides developers with a template that can be customized and used as the official advertisement for a given development. This advertisement is placed in newspapers and sent to community contacts and elected officials. Enlarged versions of this flyer can also be mounted to construction fencing.

Design research with interested apartment seekers suggested that residents had difficulties understanding the content of the advertisement and were not familiar with



ADVERTISEMENT TEMPLATE

A customizable template allows developers to create easy-to-read listings flyers, ads, and signage.

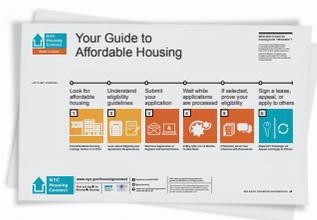


MONTHLY LISTING OF AVAILABLE DEVELOPMENTS

Community groups can display these monthly-listings posters on their bulletin boards, allowing potential applicants to quickly see available units in their neighborhood and beyond.

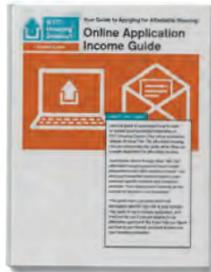
I get about 50 calls a day from people who have questions about the lottery and lease-up application process and eligibility requirements.

HPD staff member during interview



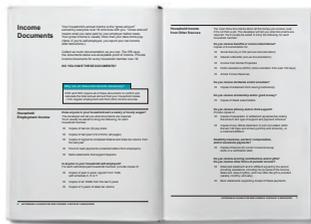
PROCESS MAP DOCUMENT

The process map is designed to give applicants a high-level view of the steps in the affordable housing application process.



INCOME GUIDE DOCUMENT

The income guide seeks to help potential applicants understand income requirements when applying for affordable housing.



CHECKLISTS DOCUMENT

The checklists document provides applicants with a framework to help manage all the information they need for the interview.

terms like “community board” or “community preference.” Further, the layout and design did not accentuate important process details, including how and where to apply for affordable units.

A revised template developed for this proposal works across multiple scales (newspaper ad, standard-sized flyer, and construction-site sign) and draws attention to the key information.

Staff members of community organizations and potential applicants expressed the need for a comprehensive, hard-copy overview of all currently available and upcoming developments. Lists of developments are presently available on NYC Housing Connect and the HPD, HDC, and New York City websites. However, CBO staff members specifically mentioned the need to display such information on their bulletin boards and/or to hand out flyers at workshops. Some groups have proactively created hard-copy lists, but resource constraints preclude most CBOs from taking this step.

A new monthly-listings template has been developed for this proposal. The template will be updated monthly by HPD and distributed to partner CBOs for use. CBOs can customize the template by adding their contact details and other relevant information.

A development’s location, income-eligibility requirements, and number of available units were identified during design research as essential pieces of content that should be highlighted in the monthly-listings template. As such, the monthly-listings template visualizes these details in order to grab the attention of potential applicants.

Process Map Document

During participatory design-research activities, many CBOs, developers, and residents explained that they did not understand how the overall application process for affordable housing works. A highly visual process map has been developed to clearly map out the steps applicants must take to apply.

Included content describes an applicant’s service journey — the series of interactions she or he experiences over the time frame of the application process, from pre-marketing to the lease-up phase. Other content areas set clear expectations regarding processing time frames and eligibility criteria.

Income Guide Document

HPD staff, CBOs, developers, and residents frequently mentioned applicants’ difficulties in responding to application requirements regarding household income. An income guide has been developed for this proposal to support potential applicants in reporting their income on housing applications. Note that the income guide does not determine eligibility; it describes income requirements and helps applicants supply complete and accurate earnings data for each member of their household.

Checklists Document

Some respondents mentioned during design research that applicants are often unprepared for the significant amount of documentation they must provide to verify their application, if and when they are called in for a screening interview.

The checklists document provides applicants with a set of lists for required documents (e.g., copy of current lease, most recent electricity bill, birth certificates for

each household member, picture ID, school letters for children, pay stubs, tax returns, etc.). It also provides useful tips on how to order missing documents, suggests places to make copies of materials, and lists organizations that can provide further assistance with housing issues, such as landlord or credit disputes.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Agency Role

The primary role of the agency during the pilot phase is to test the informational materials with key constituents in consultation with the project team, print and distribute collateral both online and in-person through a variety of old and new channels (see upcoming proposals), and maintain the documents as needed.

Test & Iterate

For the pilot, the informational materials will go through an additional round of user testing to evaluate the usability of all documents. The design team will work with HPD to design and facilitate the user testing. Tone, information hierarchy, document functionality (i.e., How does the document feel in its digital and print forms to users?), visual preference, and value (i.e., Are the documents adding value to the application process?) will be examined.

The team will follow up with another design iteration cycle with HPD to ensure that the documents reflect insight captured during user testing. By working closely with HPD on this final round of testing and document iteration, it's hoped that HPD will have the design framework and experiential toolset to continue to iterate on the most valuable documents beyond the pilot phase of the project.

Define Content Governance Plan

Before the pilot launches, HPD will be provided with the advertisement and monthly-listings templates. In addition, supplementary applicant documents will be handed over in both PDF form for digital distribution and print-ready formats for easy printing.

For the pilot phase, one or more HPD staff members should be identified to “own” the master copy of the five communications. Content owners are responsible for verifying that the materials:

- comply with all city, state, and federal legal standards and regulations,
- can be printed in HPD's on-site print shop in necessary quantities,
- can be distributed via online and in-person channels to members of the public and partner organizations.

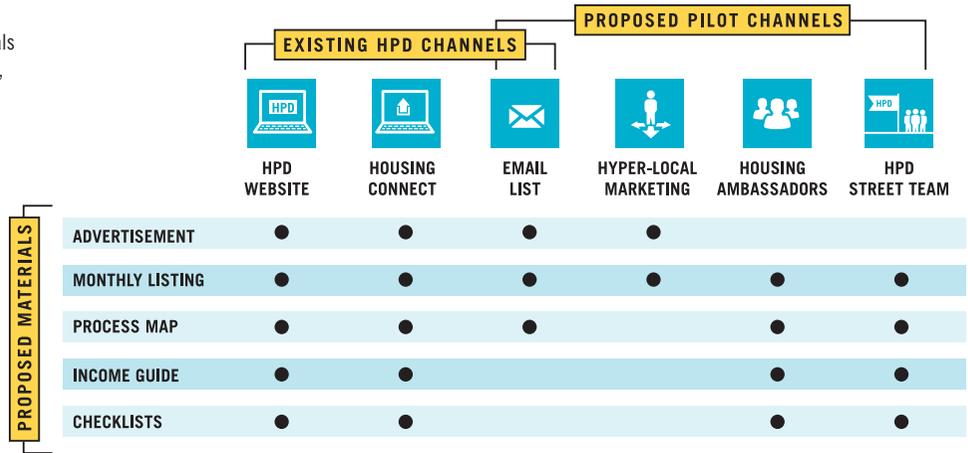
Content owners are responsible for updating and distributing the material. The monthly-listings flyer will require regular monthly updates to reflect the most current and upcoming developments. Other communications may not require updates during the pilot phase, but the capacity to update visual communication should be considered for longer-term adaptation of these pilots.

Print Full-Color Copies of Informational Materials

All informational materials are available across color modes and have been designed for scalability; however, for the pilot, HPD will need to fund the in-house, full-color printing of proposed materials in the HPD print shop.

DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

Participants in design exercises recommended that informational materials be distributed through multiple channels, including online and print.



All components can be printed to the following specifications:

- advertisement: 8.5"x11" paper, single-sided, no bleed
- monthly listing: 8.5"x11" paper, single-sided, no bleed
- process map: 11"x17" paper, double-sided, no bleed
- income guide: 8.5"x11" paper, double-sided, folded, no bleed with a saddle stitch
- checklists document (in folder form): 11"x17" cardstock, double-sided, folded, no bleed

For the pilot phase, the number of printed copies for each document should be determined by:

- purpose and use of document (advertisements, which are highly customizable, might be needed less than a "universal" document like the process map);
- size of the pilot development(s) (smaller developments require fewer materials);
- type of distribution channel and/or context of interaction (a street-team member interacting with potential applicants on the street during a large-scale community event may need more printed materials than an HPD representative facilitating an affordable housing workshop with community partners).

The pilot phase will help determine the proper amount of informational materials needed for the various distribution channels. Insight captured through observation during the pilot program will be communicated to HPD to help minimize future printing waste and ensure approximate distribution counts.

Distribute Materials through HPD and NYC Housing Connect Websites

For the pilot phase, the project team will continue to work with HPD to identify the appropriate online locations for digital versions of the process map, income guide, and checklists document. A few linking strategies are as follows:

- Make sure that the linked material maps to the discussed content on the page. The linked content — in this context — acts as additional and/or related information.
- Phrase the link appropriately and avoid using the term "click here." Instead, utilize nouns and phrases that communicate to users the kind of information they may be accessing when they click on the link.

- Place the link at the end of a sentence or in a prominent place on the screen. Placement will depend on the linked content; the point is to ensure that the link is accessible to users and logically placed based on the context of the interaction.
- Use icons to warn users that they are accessing a downloadable digital file, like a PDF, so that they are not surprised when a download is initiated.
- Name the PDF file in a way that is relevant to the content of the document (i.e., the PDF should not be named Version3.pdf) so that when users download the file to their desktop, its descriptive title will help them find it at a later date. Once HPD chooses a naming convention, they should use it consistently.
- Document titles are searchable; create “google-friendly” documents. If the title of a document is logical, and reflects how users might understand the content of that document, then it has a better chance of being found via an online search.

Distribute Materials by Email

During the pilot phase, PDFs of informational materials can be attached to individual email messages, group email blasts, and electronic newsletters between HPD and service partners or applicants.

Utilizing one consistent email address that clearly names the sender can help with uptake of HPD email communications. Timing of communication and amount are also keys to effective email engagement. Too many email messages can be cumbersome and counterproductive.

Distribute Materials in Person

In addition to digital distribution, HPD should also ensure that hard-copy versions of the materials are provided to street team members (Proposal 4) for distribution when interacting with potential applicants. HPD can also provide printed informational materials to housing ambassadors (Proposal 3) at quarterly informational sessions.

Developer, CBO, & Community Member Roles

Community members can access the informational materials through the HPD and NYC Housing Connect websites, as well as via various third-party organizations. Developers and CBOs will have the opportunity to receive and/or download the informational materials and use them in their own marketing and educational efforts. These organizations should be encouraged to distribute informational materials along with other standard marketing and application materials. As above, it’s recommended that the HPD content owner maintain a digital mailing list of individuals and organizations to receive alerts that new or updated materials have been posted.

CBOs and community boards can reprint the process map and use it when or if people ask about the application process. Developers can include informational materials with all of the applications they send to interested parties. By including the monthly-listings flyer, in addition to application-support materials, they are educating their interested parties regarding other developments that might be more suited to their unique needs or income. Further descriptions of how third-party organizations may use the materials are contained in the three proposals that follow.

PERSONA SCENARIO

If it wasn't for that flyer at the corner store, I would have never found out about the City's program.



CARL: REACHING PEOPLE IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR 'EVERYDAY'

Carl saw a flyer for a development in his neighborhood at the local corner store. He wrote down the phone number and called the next day. He was sent an application and applied. He also asked a co-worker to check HPD's website for him and print out applications for other buildings in his area.

I saw the building, so I asked the security guard next door, [if] there are apartments available. He didn't know, but he told me where to go and ask. So then I went to the management's office and filled out an application.

Interview with resident in the Bronx

PROPOSAL 2: ENCOURAGE HYPER-LOCAL MARKETING

To ensure that units are marketed fairly to all New Yorkers, HPD has established marketing guidelines for developers of HPD-financed affordable housing units. The guidelines require developers to:

- Participate in a lottery to assign units to households.
- Create an advertisement and place it in a minimum of three newspapers: one citywide daily newspaper with a circulation of at least 200,000; one ethnic newspaper with a circulation of at least 10,000; and one local newspaper.
- Erect a project site sign and marketing sign, informing people how to obtain an application for units in the development.
- Maintain a list of individuals who have inquired about the project and mail these individuals an application once marketing begins.
- Draft and mail letters to a list of community contacts and elected officials who can spread the word about the development.

Aside from the site-signage requirement, these strategies require that potential applicants actively seek out information, by contacting a developer, maintaining a relationship with a CBO, or by perusing the appropriate newspaper. HPD may be able to attract more eligible applicants by engaging in a hyper-local marketing strategy — going into communities and sharing information with potential applicants in the places where they spend time — instead of asking or expecting that eligible applicants find HDP and its services.

This pilot proposal suggests that HPD supplement existing outreach by asking developers to share redesigned advertisements (described in Proposal 1, above) in public venues frequented by neighborhood residents, including laundromats, bodegas, and supermarkets, schools, churches, hospitals, gyms, libraries, and transit stations. By targeting locations frequented by most community members at some point during the average week, more eligible residents could become aware of available units and will apply.

HYPER-LOCAL MARKETING: INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

The following recommendations resulted from one-on-one interviews, group conversations, and workshops with community members, community-based organizations that work with potential applicants, and housing professionals (including developers and HPD staff). Insights regarding developers' marketing processes included:

- To increase their chances of meeting preference requirements, some developers elect to go further than the required marketing guidelines, engaging in person-to-person marketing and holding informational seminars and application training sessions at local events, such as community-board meetings, and/or local organizations.
- Even so, if application announcements were available in places where community members spend time, developers might better target income-eligible individuals from within the community-board district.
- The physical presence of a construction site can be a powerful advertising tool — neighbors become curious and want to find out how to apply for an apartment long before completion.



DEVELOPERS REVIEW MARKETING MATERIALS

Collaborative exercises with community groups, housing developers' staff members, and agency staff revealed needs and requirements for marketing materials.



TYPICAL CONSTRUCTION-SITE SIGN

Banners currently hung on the fencing around HPD-financed developments provide hyper-local marketing.

HYPER-LOCAL MARKETING: PROPOSAL GOALS

One reason that some developments may have difficulty filling community-board preferences is that eligible individuals in those communities do not know about the developments. This proposal outlines a series of actions that could help a developer create more targeted marketing channels in the community districts where affordable units are constructed.

Reach Residents in Community Districts Where New Developments Are Planned

Current marketing guidelines implicitly focus on potential applicants who already have good access to information, whether via the proactive consumption of media or connection to a local group or individual who distributes news. However, there may be significant numbers of residents who lack strong community bonds (and thus access to local information) or literacy skills (print or digital), but who nevertheless would be interested in, and qualified for, an affordable housing unit. To that end, this proposal is designed to target New Yorkers across a given community-board district — one in which a new development is located.

Attract New Audiences to the New Housing Marketplace Plan

There is another group of people who are perhaps digitally literate and networked, but not connected to the affordable housing community. This group of people might not be aware that they're eligible for affordable housing or may not currently be in the market for a new apartment, but they might come across a flyer and learn about HPD, keeping the program in mind the next time they are in need of housing.

Reach People in the Places They Frequent

In addition to putting materials online and distributing them through traditional media sources and community organizations, local residents may best be reached through direct marketing in their neighborhood's publicly accessible locales. Potential sites for this hyper-local marketing include local businesses and community institutions, as well as construction sites. The selected sites should be the largest and most trafficked in the community, increasing the likelihood of engaging the widest possible range of potential applicants.

HYPER-LOCAL MARKETING: REQUIRED RESOURCES

This proposal calls for human resources, access to templates, and organizational facilitation from HPD. Required proposal components are as follows:

HPD Management

HPD will act as a facilitator for this proposal — working with developers and their marketing agents during the marketing plan development process to include hyper-local marketing as an activity.

Developers and Their Marketing Agents

Developers and their marketing agents are already doing a lot of work to notify New Yorkers about their developments. This proposal suggests that they augment these efforts by blanketing locations in the community with the informational materials described below. They may consider using paid staff or recruiting volunteers from the community to distribute the materials.

Informational Materials: Advertisement + Monthly-Listings Poster

The hyper-local marketing proposal depends on materials described in Proposal 1, namely the redesigned advertisement and monthly-listings template. The

monthly-listings flyer should be distributed alongside the redesigned advertisement so that New Yorkers get a full picture of the advertised unit's context and can make a choice about the most suitable development for their needs. Please see Proposal 1: Informational Materials for more information about these specific materials.

Hyper-Local Marketing Best Practices

Hyper-local marketing requires that developers and their marketing agents interact with local merchants and community sites in a way that they may never have before. Accordingly, HPD should create and maintain a brief list of best-practice recommendations for most effectively distributing hyper-local marketing materials; a preliminary list is provided below. Developers should be encouraged to modify these tips to include guidance related to their specific context and needs, and share effective practices with HPD.

HYPER-LOCAL MARKETING: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Agency Role

For the purposes of this proposal's pilot implementation, the agency's main responsibilities are to enlist one or more developers to commit to testing hyper-local marketing, ensure that these developers and their marketing agents have all of the ingredients of this pilot plan, and confirm that they understand the distribution plans. Accordingly, HPD would be expected to:

Select Development(s) for Pilot Implementation

HPD should select at least one development to pilot the hyper-local marketing proposal. The selected development(s) should be committed to fully implementing the hyper-local marketing proposal and evaluating its impact on the process and outcome of marketing efforts.

Hold Hyper-Local Marketing Kickoff Meeting

A meeting to kick off the hyper-local marketing effort should be held during, or very close to, the development's overall marketing meeting. During the kickoff meeting, HPD should describe the hyper-local marketing requirements and preview the associated materials. Hyper-local marketing distribution requirements and laws should be included alongside the existing marketing guidelines.

HPD should request that the developer submit a hyper-local marketing plan as part of the standard marketing plan to HPD.

Developer, CBO, & Community-Member Roles

Developers will be responsible for distributing the advertisement and monthly-listings poster to the places of daily life. As part of this task, they should:

Submit Hyper-Local Marketing Plan

After the kickoff meeting, selected developers should create a hyper-local marketing plan as a supplement to the required marketing plan. The hyper-local marketing plan should be submitted at the same time the developer submits the standard marketing plan to HPD. The plan should include:

- neighborhoods covered,
- target number of advertisements to be distributed in each neighborhood,
- number and location of distribution sites to be visited in each neighborhood,

- name(s) of the staff members who will distribute the materials,
- timeline for distribution implementation and subsequent removal of materials by the application deadline.

Customize the Advertising Template and Produce Copies

Developers must be responsible for downloading the advertising template, modifying the template based on their specific data and information, and producing the resulting advertisement for distribution to locations around the community.

Distribute Advertisements in Community Districts

Developers should place at least 50 flyers in high-trafficked areas in the community-board district. Potential sites to seek permission for posting include laundromats, bodegas, and supermarkets, barbers and beauty salons, schools, churches, hospitals, and doctors' offices, gyms, libraries, and transit stops.

A potential sequence of events for distributing informational materials includes the following:

- Reach out to entities in each community-board district who can provide hyper-local guidance about where to post flyers, for example:
 - council member's office,
 - community boards,
 - borough president's community liaison,
 - churches and religious leaders,
 - social-services providers.
- Create a script for volunteers to follow when asking for permission to post advertisements. The script should include:
 - who you are, whom you work for, and why you are asking to post the materials in their shop;
 - prompts to give the merchants the opportunity to say "no": these are private businesses and merchants have the right to refuse to post the informational materials.
- Print at least 50 copies of the advertisement and the monthly-listings flyer for distribution.
- As marketing agents are canvassing, they should ensure that the selected hyper-local marketing sites:
 - are publicly accessible (even if privately owned) and located in a relatively high-traffic area;
 - have a place to post the flyer (taped to the wall or storefront window or pinned to a bulletin board);
 - are high-trafficked areas that neighborhood residents are likely to frequent.
- Create a supply pack for distributors including thumbtacks, tape, more information about the initiative, printed instructions for location managers on when and how to remove the advertisement, and business cards of someone at the developer's office should the merchant have additional questions about hyper-local marketing efforts.
- Maintain a list of distribution locations. Developers should also create a "do-not-disturb" list of sites that reject requests to leave materials.

Monitor & Remove Materials

Hyper-local marketing managers should canvas the community-board district each week to replace any worn, torn, or vandalized advertisements and monthly-listings posters. At the end of the marketing period hyper-local marketing agents should remove all advertisements and monthly-listings posters.

PERSONA SCENARIO

We feel much better after someone showed us how the process works.

She says people who already live in the neighborhood get preference. That makes me hopeful.



LUIS AND MARTHA: IN-PERSON APPLICATION SUPPORT

Luis and Marta spoke to a housing ambassador in their neighborhood. She helped them fill out an application and showed them other available options on a monthly listing poster. She gave them tips on how to collect documentation of their income. They will meet with her again to prepare for an interview if they get one.

People see a construction site and they come in and ask, when or where they can apply. I don't know. We don't have any information when the marketing for that particular site starts. The only way to find out is to keep checking the HPD website and that's really cumbersome.

Interview with CBO staff

PROPOSAL 3: SUPPORT HOUSING AMBASSADORS

Throughout New York City, many individuals and institutions support residents in applying for affordable housing. They include neighborhood groups, who assist in filling out applications; nonprofit developers, who maintain hotlines for applicants; employees of city agencies, who answer questions on the phone; community-based organizations, who translate documents or host housing-related workshops; and many individuals with housing experience who blog about affordable housing, or help neighbors, friends, and family members through the application process. This proposal calls for HPD to implement a pilot program, “NYC Housing Ambassadors,” to recognize the work of these groups and individuals and to support their work by providing reliable information and resources.

HOUSING AMBASSADORS: INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

Staff members of community-based organizations provided valuable insights into their work with housing applicants and the challenges faced by applicants. The following insights resulted from these interviews, conversations, and participatory workshops:

- Community members, especially in immigrant neighborhoods, often rely on CBOs in addition to elected officials, community boards, and official channels for information about affordable housing.
- Limited access to reliable and consistent informational materials, particularly those that can be used in a hard-copy format and/or adapted for community needs, hinders CBO's work with community members.
- Knowledge about the application and lease-up process is often acquired informally by CBO staff and may be incomplete or inaccurate.
- Community groups may have limited access to HPD staff — often by design, to conserve HPD staff resources — and they often struggle to keep up with marketing information posted online.

HOUSING AMBASSADORS: PROPOSAL GOALS

Establish Channels for Communication & Feedback between Ambassadors & HPD

It is recommended that HPD set up a pilot of formal communication channels between the agency, CBOs, and others interested in participating. Communication channels should include both in-person meeting opportunities and phone or digital communications. These channels should allow for “horizontal” peer-to-peer communication as well as “vertical” ambassador-agency communication.

Ensure a Consistent Message about the Marketing & Application Process

For ambassadors to function effectively, they need to be well informed about all HPD regulations. Knowing that members of the public rely on their trusted community-based organizations, it is important that the organizations' knowledge is consistent with HPD's message about the marketing and application process. Ideally, CBO staff assisting in the application process should receive regular training and updates directly from HPD, through information sessions or email blasts.

Distribute the Knowledge of Those Acting as Ambassadors

Current “unofficial” ambassadors often have robust social networks. To be most effective, ambassadors' knowledge base should be developed, as above, then, amplified through their peer network. By efficiently disseminating information to multiple



CO-CREATION MEETING WITH STAFF AT A SOUTH BRONX CBO

Staff members at a community organization in the South Bronx discuss their challenges when helping applicants.

members of their community, who then inform and teach one another, ambassadors may create a “multiplier effect” for housing information. Utilizing ambassadors as effective “middlemen” reduces the amount of HPD staff time required currently to respond to inquiries from individuals through 311 or directly to HPD.

Increase Meaningful Face-to-Face Interaction between Ambassadors & Applicants Prior to Applying and Throughout the Process

Ambassadors should be equipped to offer timely, specific, and differentiated support to residents as they proceed through various stages of the application process. CBOs should not only provide informational materials, but also help applicants build their own capacity for correctly responding to application requirements.

HOUSING AMBASSADORS: REQUIRED RESOURCES

Individuals to Serve as Housing Ambassadors

The primary resource required for implementing this proposal is human. As described above, individuals and organizations already providing assistance with affordable housing applications should be trained and recruited to serve as ambassadors. Their role should be formalized as participants in this pilot, and communicated to members of the public.

Housing Ambassador Information Sessions

Similar to already existing educational events aimed at tenants, building owners, and members of the development community, HPD should host information sessions for housing ambassadors. At such sessions, HPD staff can introduce the informational materials described in the proposal above, give an overview of the entire marketing and lease-up process, and answer related questions. For community groups that act as ambassadors, the information session is an opportunity to ensure that their staff members are well-versed in these matters, have an opportunity to ask questions, provide feedback to the agency, and exchange experience among themselves.

Informational Materials

A critical component of the ambassador’s work is the availability of the informational materials described in the proposal above. The process map, along with the income guide and checklists document, forms the basis for timely, consistent, and accurate knowledge about applying for affordable housing. In addition, ambassadors should be able to display and distribute monthly-listings flyers and advertisements to advertise all available and upcoming lotteries. Please see Proposal 1 for complete details.

Platform for Feedback and Exchange

During design-research sessions, staff from community-based organizations described difficulties in approaching the agency with simple questions related to the application process. HPD staff, on the other hand, remarked that they do not have the capacity to engage in individual relationships with applicants or CBOs. To meet both needs the agency should establish and maintain a communication platform (either digital or via regular phone calls) that offers timely, meaningful information to ambassadors while not overburdening agency staff with individual requests.

Seen as a mechanism to follow up and build on the information session, this platform should meet the following goals:

- Enable “horizontal” communication: Enabling ambassadors to communicate with each other allows them to share experience and best practices, develop collaborations, and answer each other’s questions to the extent possible.
- Enable “vertical” communication: HPD staff should use the platform to ensure a consistent message, disseminate information to ambassadors, and intervene, when inappropriate or false information is being shared. In addition, ambassadors are HPDs “ears on the ground” and can serve as an effective feedback mechanism for HPD staff to identify issues related to marketing and lease-up.
- Be transparent: By allowing all communication between ambassadors and agency to be transparent and visible to all participants in the pilot, ambassadors can benefit from each other’s questions and answers. A transparent platform makes more efficient use of HPD’s limited staff time, as it strives to avoid having to repeatedly answer similar questions. HPD staff can benefit from such transparent communication, being able to monitor and, if needed, correct or delete any misinformation.
- Be archived: Creating a searchable archive of all communication exchanged on this platform allows participants in the pilot to access information at any point in time. Over the course of the pilot phase, questions and answers in this archive develop into a robust resource. Participants can search for keywords and use this resource during their daily work with applicants.

Communication channels that could serve as such a platform include monthly conference calls, a private online message group (such as a listserv or Google group), or regular newsletters summarizing incoming queries. HPD should assess the risks and benefits of such channels prior to piloting this proposal, and possibly test one or more channels for feasibility with participating ambassadors during the pilot phase.

HOUSING AMBASSADORS: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Agency Role

The primary role of the agency is to create relationships with, and support, the housing ambassadors. Accordingly, HPD will need to:

Recruit Ambassadors

To initiate the pilot and recruit existing groups into the program, HPD should reach out to organizations that are already providing housing-related services with an invitation to the first information session. During the pilot phase, the group of recognized ambassadors may be small and specific to neighborhoods in which developments are marketed. In order to participate in the pilot for this program, groups or individuals should meet the criteria below:

- be affiliated with a HUD-approved community-based organization or other group, such as a church or neighborhood association, that currently assists others in the housing application process;
- participate in an ambassador information session as described above and maintain a list of all names of staff members who have attended such meetings;
- sign a document that acknowledges the rights and responsibilities of an ambassador organization;
- agree to participate in the platform for feedback and exchange.

Prospective ambassadors should be responsible for demonstrating that they meet these criteria.

Host Ambassador Information Sessions

Information sessions for ambassadors should be intended as in-person exchanges between all participants. In planning such sessions, HPD staff should develop an agenda that includes:

- a presentation of the pilot for this program, its goals, components, and duration as well as the context in which it was conceived;
- a presentation and handout of the informational material described in Proposal 1;
- an overview of the marketing and lease-up process followed by Q & A;
- an opportunity for participants to meet each other and exchange their prior experience and best practices;
- an introduction to the platform for feedback and exchange.

It is recommended that the agency hosts at least two such sessions during the pilot phase. The first session would be an opportunity to present the ambassador initiative and other pilots discussed in this document in addition to more general information about marketing and application. A second session would provide an opportunity for HPD to collect feedback from participating ambassadors on their work as ambassadors and the effectiveness of the interaction with HPD.

Distribute Informational Material to Ambassadors

Ambassadors and their networks serve as a great multiplier of information. In order to maximize their impact, it is important that they themselves have easy access to informational material to use and distribute.

During the design research, staff of CBOs welcomed the idea of information sessions as an opportunity to receive print material for their own education as well as for distribution to their constituents. Prior to each session, HPD staff should ensure that a sufficient number of copies of all print material are available during the sessions. In addition, HPD staff should email PDF versions of all informational material to

SCENARIO: AMBASSADORS INTERACT ONLINE

One possible communication platform is a private website, where ambassadors and agency staff can engage in a dialogue.



participating ambassadors. Updates of the monthly-listings flyer should be emailed to participants, when they become available, with a reminder to print, display, and distribute the flyer.

Establish and Maintain a Platform for Feedback and Exchange

Prior to the pilot phase, a member of the HPD marketing team should evaluate the risks and benefits of different tools for this platform and propose one or more to be tested during the pilot phase.

The HPD staff person should be the administrator of the platform for the duration of the pilot, should maintain a contact list of all participants, have the ability to invite and disinvite participants, and moderate the dialogue. Prior to beginning the dialogue on this platform, HPD should set clear expectations and boundaries, and advise participants of general rules for the group.

Housing Ambassadors' Role

Housing ambassadors will be primarily responsible for engaging with potential housing applicants, with the support of HPD. Accordingly, they will be expected to:

Build Public Awareness About Affordable Housing

As participants in this pilot, ambassadors should be expected to educate their constituents about the process of applying for affordable housing through workshops, information sessions, and one-on-one consultations. Ambassadors can be one of the human faces in this process; provide support throughout the marketing, application, and lease-up process; and serve as a point of contact for applicants who are seeking assistance in understanding the process.

Distribute Materials

Ambassadors should actively engage in distributing material about the application process to their constituents. Printed material available at ambassador information sessions and online should be passed on to applicants at workshops or in meetings, and be displayed at their facilities. Ambassadors play an important role in distributing marketing information within their communities and should lead volunteer efforts to distribute marketing flyers, such as the monthly listings or individual advertisements, throughout their communities.

Share Information with HPD and Other Stakeholders

In order to maximize the impact of this pilot, it is important for ambassadors to actively participate in opportunities to provide feedback to HPD and exchange experience with each other. The ambassador information session and the digital platform for exchange are two different mechanisms through which ambassadors can share feedback about issues that are discussed at the community level and questions that arise.

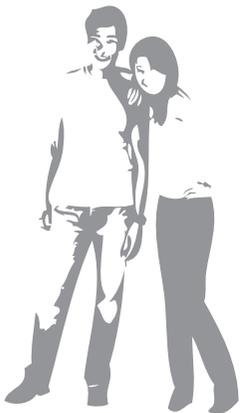
Note that the pilot is also an opportunity to demonstrate the value of public and private partnership. To date, the extent and impact of ambassador-like activities on New York City's affordable housing application process have not been assessed. This pilot proposal presents an opportunity to develop metrics to monitor efforts such as this.

We host weekly tenant workshops in Cantonese and Mandarin. Among other things, we explain how to apply for affordable housing and where to find the advertisement for it. People usually sign up for a follow-up appointment, where they come to our storefront and we can assist them individually with their applications.

Staff member of Asian Americans for Equality

PERSONA SCENARIO

Wow, I am so glad we met that street team! We had no idea that you can apply online.



JOHN AND JUSTINE: TARGETED AWARENESS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

John and Justine met the street team at their local farmer's market. They learned about the different income ranges for affordable housing and even the option to buy. Afterwards they went to HPD's website, and downloaded the process map, income guide, and resource checklist. They found a number of developments that looked right for their income and applied for three units that same day.

PROPOSAL 4: LAUNCH NYC HOUSING CONNECT STREET TEAM

New Yorkers are acutely aware of the most common housing challenge in New York City, namely finding affordable housing. Yet, in street interviews many respondents indicated they had never heard the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and its efforts to provide affordable housing to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers.

To address this lack of visibility and awareness, this proposal calls for HPD to employ a street team in strategic locations and at specific events to:

- highlight HPD's sponsorship of affordable housing,
- publicize the rollout of the NYC Housing Connect online application portal,
- and broaden the pool of eligible housing applicants.

STREET TEAM: INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

In preparing for the rollout of the automated housing-application system, agency leadership expressed a desire to get the word out that the public can apply online, and to enable better access to a computer for those without access. Design-research sessions with members of the public and community-based organizations suggested that these concerns were valid, but that availability of the online application (and computer access) may not be, in itself, enough to make all applicants comfortable with the application process. Some residents have significant uncertainty about how to take the first step and navigate the application or read a housing advertisement correctly. The following recommendations resulted from conversations with stakeholders:

- In order to increase awareness of HPD and its programs, the agency needs to be publicly visible in places where people are.
- The ability to speak with a staff member of HPD creates greater comfort and trust in the application process. One-on-one HPD assistance, preferably at a location individuals visit during the activities of their daily life, would be advantageous.
- Being able to initiate an application process immediately and on the spot — as opposed to receiving a static flyer that requires subsequent steps to start an application — is more likely to encourage residents to act on the information received.

STREET TEAM: PROPOSAL GOALS

The proposal for a street team speaks to two goals that agency staff and leadership expressed in several working sessions:

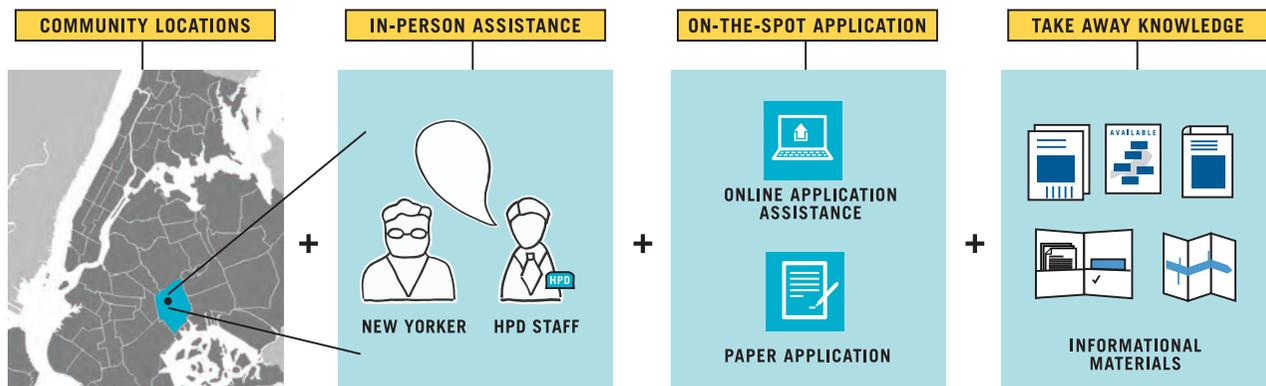
Increase Awareness of HPD and the Online Application System

A temporary station or table in places with a lot of foot traffic provides visibility and access to the agency, allowing New Yorkers to directly interact with HPD staff on questions related to affordable housing generally and the online application system specifically.

Support New Yorkers in Applying for Affordable Housing

In addition to increasing awareness, an on-the-street presence allows agency staff (and, if desired, other appropriate partners) to assist members of the public by providing informational materials and hands-on help setting up a NYC Housing Connect account.

STREET TEAM INGREDIENTS



The NYC Housing Connect street team can be identified through branded signage and material. Print material, such as the process map or advertisements of current developments, should be available at the street team's kiosk.

STREET TEAM: REQUIRED RESOURCES

This proposal calls for human resources, print and/or PDF materials, other branded materials, a folding table and/or tent, and computer hardware. Required proposal components are as follows:

HPD Street Team Member

The most important ingredient of the street team is a knowledgeable staff person, well versed in the process of applying for affordable housing. This person should be easily identifiable through HPD-branded clothing, buttons, signs, or banners.

Informational Materials

The street team should have hard copies of the materials described in Proposal 1 to hand out to interested passersby. Please see Proposal 1 for complete details.

HPD-Branded Material

A tee-shirt and/or button with the NYC Housing Connect logo and HPD branding will enable passersby to identify staff as members of the NYC Housing Connect street team. Large weatherproof signage or banners to be attached to a foldable tent or table allow the street team to create a physical presence at events such as street fairs or markets.

Laptop or Tablet Device with Internet Connection

In order for the street team to introduce HPD's online application system to interested applicants, the street team should be equipped with a tablet or laptop computer with Internet capabilities. Staff must have the ability to demonstrate the registration process on the spot, reducing barriers to entry for those who would not otherwise find or use the NYC Housing Connect website on their own.

STREET TEAM: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Agency Role

The NYC Housing Connect street team should be led and implemented by HPD. The team's goal is to provide a public face for the agency at strategic times

RENDERING OF A NYC HOUSING CONNECT STREET TEAM AT A FARMERS MARKET

The NYC Housing Connect street team comes to community events such as farmers' markets, street fairs, block parties, and concerts in parks. It can also set up shop on the sidewalk in front of public buildings or in areas with a lot of foot traffic.



and locations, and to represent the City's effort to implement the New Housing Marketplace Plan, by providing information on how to apply for affordable housing. Accordingly, HPD should:

Identify Appropriate Staffing Resources

The street team should consist, at a minimum, of two staff members, preferably from the agency's marketing and/or public-outreach units, to engage passersby in conversations about the mission of the agency and about the application process for affordable housing in particular.

Produce Street Team Materials

HPD should print or order a limited number of tee-shirts and buttons with the HPD street team logo that will serve to identify street-team members on the street. Two weatherproof signs that can be attached to a table or tent should be printed, and a foldable tent or table should either be identified within the agency's inventory or leased for use at street-team appearances.

In addition, the street team should coordinate with HPD's print shop to have a sufficient number of hard copies of the informational material available for distribution during street-team appearances.

Identify Times & Locations Where a Street-Team Appearance Will Be Most Valuable

The goal of the street team is to reach New Yorkers who might be eligible for, but unaware of, affordable housing. Ideal locations to capture a cross section of potential applicants are major transit hubs close to neighborhoods with HPD developments, such as Union Square, Queens Plaza, or Atlantic Terminal, or similarly situated destinations, such as the Hub, 125th Street, Fordham Road, or Fulton Mall. These locations have the advantage of being busy during weekday business hours, when HPD staff may be most available. In addition, public events such as street fairs, block parties, farmers' markets, housing fairs, or parades are places to meet people where they are. Most of these events happen on weekends.

During the pilot phase for this proposal, HPD should identify a development that might benefit from the agency's presence on the ground, and plan at least three such events during the marketing phase of this development. These events may be held in the community-board district of the development, in an effort to assist in meeting community preference. However, the agency might also choose to target a greater cross-section of New Yorkers outside of the community-board district in order to reach New Yorkers who were previously unaware of HPD's programs.

Publicize Locations Where the Kiosk Will Be Appearing

The presence of a street team in a particular location should be advertised through the HPD website and HPD social media. It should also be announced to housing ambassadors, who can advertise it to their constituents. In addition, HPD should reach out to relevant community organizations, who blog about HPD developments and can help advertise the presence of the street team at particular events.

Spend Time on the Street

The most important component of this proposal is the presence on the street itself. During the time spent on the street, it is critical to engage as many New Yorkers as possible in a meaningful way and distribute print material to an even larger group. Conversations will likely range from general overview of the New Housing Marketplace Plan to detailed assistance in understanding income requirements.

Proposal for Future Consideration: Further Enable Resident Social Networks & Collaborative Services

New Yorkers seeking affordable housing are typically introduced to HPD through marketing, lottery, and lease-up processes facilitated by the agency and its development partners. However, for those applicants who are ultimately selected to move into city-subsidized affordable housing, the impact of the services HPD provides extends far beyond the lease-up process. For these transitioning residents, move-in marks a pivotal moment when the possibility of a new apartment, new neighbors, and a new community becomes a reality.

Moving to a new home presents inherent challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, residents may be moving to a less familiar part of their neighborhood or to an entirely new community, where they do not know how to find services that they need on a daily basis. They may be moving away from friends, family, and neighbors with whom they are used to sharing resources and supportive activities, such as child care, cooking, or carpooling. On the other hand, a new living situation may constitute a new beginning for some residents — a chance to meet new people, access new resources, and join or form a new community of neighbors.

There is considerable evidence that people depend on informal support from their social networks before, during, and after moving into a new home. In a survey of affordable housing applicants conducted by HPD, more than three-quarters of applicants had people upon whom they could rely for support in their current living situations at the time of applying for affordable housing.¹ Many prospective residents also rely on social support to negotiate the application process. Social networks and community groups may supply them with information about new housing opportunities, clarify eligibility

requirements, or help them assemble their applications.

Current research also suggests that informational, practical, and emotional support acquired through social relationships is just as beneficial to residents after moving into affordable housing.² Although their previous relationships may have been altered or disrupted somewhat, moving into a new home provides residents with an opportunity to expand or diversify their social network, and supplement the informal supports that it allows them to give and receive. New friends, neighbors, and local acquaintances may provide anything from a cup of sugar, to advice about the neighborhood, to entirely new professional, recreational, or collaborative opportunities.

By creating new affordable housing opportunities, HPD is creating the conditions for new interactions, collaborations, and peer-to-peer (as opposed to provider-to-user) services to emerge between residents. Certain HPD and City policies and programs are also explicitly intended to improve the well-being of residents (and by extension, their households, buildings, and communities) long after move-in. These policies reflect institutional investment in the long-term strength and stability of residents and the communities into which they move, and they suggest that affordable housing developments can provide space for new residents and neighbors to engage in new activities and collaborations.

For example, HPD has instituted comprehensive green-building standards for all of its developments, encouraging physical and environmental health as well as resource efficiency. While not necessarily intended to promote social networks and collaborative services (such as community gardening, shared meals,

or resident-led environmental education classes) among residents, these sorts of policies demonstrate how new HPD policies can have a beneficial impact, not only on the preservation and development of housing in the city, but also on the health, well-being — and potentially on the social engagement — of city residents.

Additionally, with HPD's support, some developers invest in architectural features and infrastructure designed to promote healthy living and social interaction among residents. For example, Arbor House is a new 124-unit low-income development in the Bronx that features a living green-wall installation in the lobby and a privately operated rooftop hydroponic farm that will provide fresh produce for building residents and the local community. It also includes active design elements — fitness areas and readily accessible stairways — to encourage physical activity.

HPD also remains strongly committed to building, preserving, and managing supportive housing, where services for elderly, disabled, chronically homeless, or other vulnerable populations are incorporated into the development's physical and operational structure. HPD's supportive housing developments have a holistic, resident-focused approach to affordable housing where the developer's involvement in the social welfare of its tenants and their communities continues beyond lease-up. For example, at The Hegeman in Brooklyn, supportive services are available to residents and additional amenities extend beyond the building itself. Approximately half of the building's staff are residents of the neighborhood, and in 2013 the building will open an adjacent garden that will be available to the wider Brownsville community. It will also provide financial literacy and employment

services to tenants as well as residents of Brownsville not living in The Hegeman. In the near future, New York City will see more of this kind of development; in partnership with the State of New York, HPD has recently committed to doubling the rate at which supportive housing is created in New York City.

Beyond affordable housing, and in cities around the world, more and more collaborative services and cooperative initiatives are emerging organically from creative communities experimenting with more satisfying and sustainable ways of living together. Although often fragile and highly localized at first, these informal community collaborations occasionally attract formalized support from local government, which allows them to scale and sustain their supportive impact.

In New York City, for instance, the tradition of community gardening in vacant lots grew so strong that the City created the GreenThumb program to provide assistance and coordination to local gardens. Meanwhile, in Helsinki, the municipality now recognizes and helps facilitate a cooperative childcare program in which parents and caregivers take turns providing dependable, affordable, and personalized daycare for each other's children in their own homes.

It seems clear that both institutional and informal efforts to create beneficial environments — both physical and social — for residents in affordable housing support HPD's mission to stabilize families and strengthen neighborhoods. These efforts are also emblematic of a general trend in public policies — such as Councilman Brad Lander's use of participatory budgeting in New York City's 39th District and the

Apps for Democracy competition in Washington D.C. — that leverage public participation and community engagement to promote responsive governance and social welfare.

Supplementing conventional services provided by building owners and property managers with collaborative services co-produced by residents and neighbors could help to maximize scarce resources and improve the quality of life in HPD-financed developments. With a little help, impromptu walking groups, informal childcare arrangements, gardening and cooking cooperatives, car and bike sharing, and other forms of reciprocal household assistance could become more regular and meaningful parts of the resident experience for those who wish to participate.

As more is learned about the characteristics and potential benefits of social networks in affordable housing complexes, there may be opportunities for the City to actively encourage efforts to further connect residents, amplify their social assets, and foster more engaged communities.

The project team recommends that HPD continue to explore these opportunities, and consider partnering with residents, landlords, and neighborhood groups to actively promote this form of peer-to-peer service provision.

¹ Brooks-Gunn, J. & Gaumer, E. (2011). *Social Networks and Mixed-Income Housing*, Appendix: Site 25 Baseline Report. 2011 Natural Experiments Grant H-21613CA, submitted to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

² Brooks-Gunn, J. & Gaumer, E. (2011). *Natural Experiments Grant H-21613CA Narrative*. Submitted to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Part 4: Evaluating the Proposals

The four proposals will be evaluated during a pilot phase in late 2013 and early 2014. The pilots are trials on the part of HPD to understand whether creating a knowledge-sharing infrastructure results in better service delivery during the affordable housing application process.

Within the context of a formative evaluation, the project team will attempt to evaluate the extent to which the proposals lived up to the project's theory of change. The planned project evaluation is intended to enable HPD to understand what works and what doesn't work from a process and usability perspective, in order to modify the proposals prior to full-scale implementation.

Evaluation will be comprised of two parts: an assessment of the design objectives embodied in the knowledge-sharing infrastructure model, and an assessment of the pilot-plan implementation process. The project team will use surveys, interviews, and observations to conduct the evaluation before, during, and after pilot implementation.

Note that this evaluation will not allow HPD to understand the comprehensive impact that these proposals have on the system; only an experimental research model, with a control group and an experimental group, can accurately measure impact. Should HPD decide to scale up the proposals, it's recommended that HPD set up an experimental research model to assess the specific impact that the pilot proposals and resultant knowledge-sharing infrastructure have on:

- increasing the number of eligible applicants applying for and accepting affordable housing units,
- enabling developers to meet community preference categories,
- decreasing the number of affordable units going to open market.

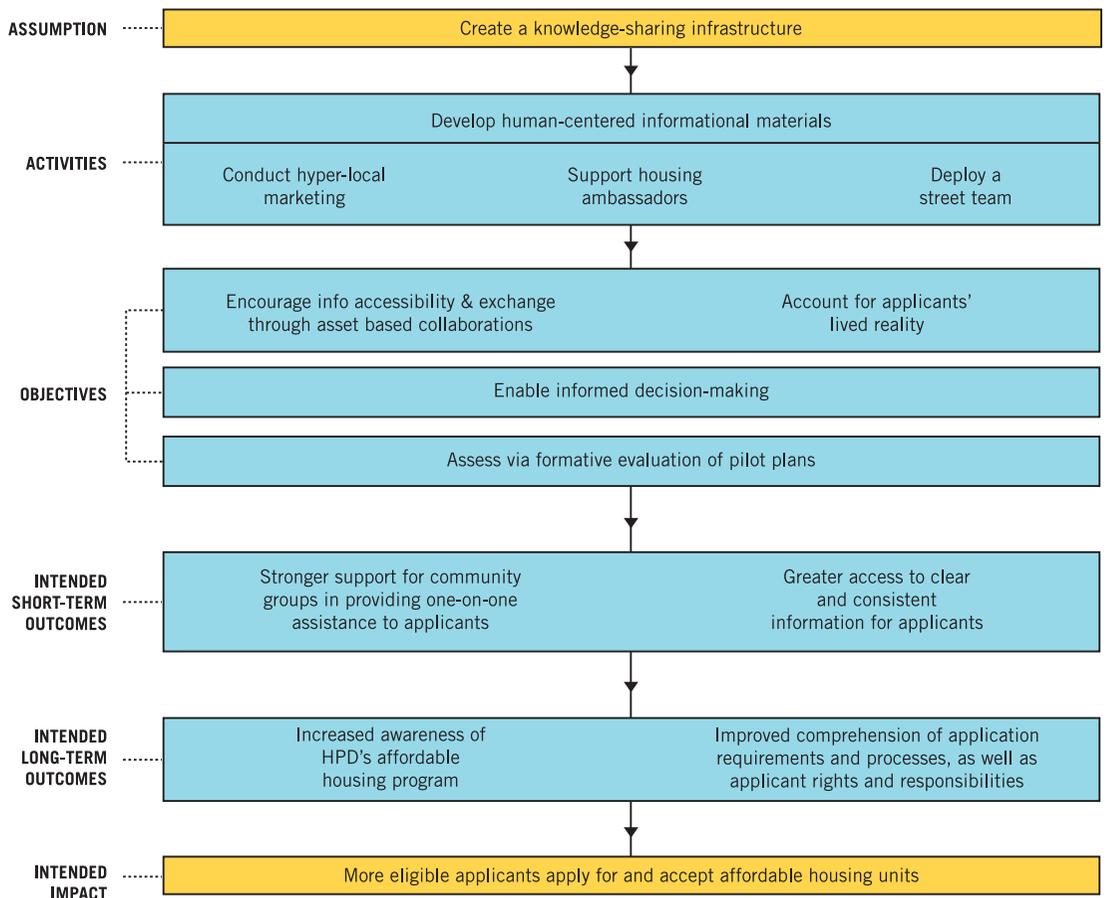
EVALUATION OF THE DESIGN OBJECTIVES

The premise of the knowledge-sharing infrastructure is that a coordinated approach to information provision results in a better service experience during the affordable housing application process. The pilot proposals are meant to work together to improve applicants' experience by encouraging information accessibility and exchange, accounting for applicants' lived reality, and enabling more informed decision-making.

The hyper-local marketing pilot plan addresses these objectives by sharing well-designed advertisements in places where community members spend time; the ambassador program by training CBOs to use the informational materials in deep interactions with constituents; the street team by arming HPD staff members with materials to spread the word about affordable housing in highly trafficked areas. The informational materials are the glue that binds the proposals together; their primary value is not as stand-alone resources, but as tools to facilitate local, collaborative interactions.

Specific areas of evaluation related to the three design objectives are detailed below. Through evaluation, it's hoped that HPD and the project team can understand the extent to which distribution of the informational materials through each pilot plan embodied the design objectives of the knowledge-sharing infrastructure.

THEORY OF CHANGE



ASSESSING OBJECTIVE 1: ENCOURAGE INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY & EXCHANGE

The informational materials have been designed as teaching tools that build shared awareness among the affordable housing community – from HPD and HDC to developers, CBOs, and potential applicants. It's hoped that when stakeholders in the system really understand the materials, they will not only personally benefit, but also begin to share knowledge with their networks.

To evaluate how well the proposals encouraged information accessibility and exchange through asset-based collaboration and co-production, the project team will evaluate the extent to which each proposal:

- enhanced the work of each stakeholder in the system,
- met stakeholder needs and expectations for information exchange and support,
- provided adequate access to informational materials,
- encouraged collaboration among implementation partners,
- encouraged information exchange between potential applicants and their peer networks,
- supported CBOs in providing one-to-one assistance to applicants,
- empowered potential applicants to utilize and share the informational materials,
- encouraged collective empowerment through collaboration and information exchange,
- clarified incomplete or inaccurate assumptions held by stakeholders,
- helped stakeholders keep up with marketing information.

ASSESSING OBJECTIVE 2: ACCOUNT FOR APPLICANTS' LIVED REALITIES

The pilot plans were designed to connect with applicants in their everyday environs. The hypothesis is that applicants will be more receptive to information that takes into account the context within which they operate. By understanding the impact of sharing the materials in everyday contexts, the project team hopes to be able to make recommendations about which pilot plan had the greatest positive impact on potential applicants' service experience.

To evaluate how well the proposals accounted for applicants' lived reality, the project team will evaluate the extent to which:

- potential applicants appreciated interacting with affordable housing informational materials in casual and "everyday" settings;
- discussion of affordable housing in informal settings affected applicants' receptivity to and comprehension of informational materials;
- person-to-person interactions, facilitated by informational materials, informed potential applicants' decision to apply for housing.

ASSESSING OBJECTIVE 3: ENABLE INFORMED DECISION-MAKING

The hypothesis for the knowledge-sharing infrastructure is that applicants' comprehension of the affordable housing application process will increase after coming into contact with the informational materials, enabling more informed decision-making during their application experience.

To evaluate how well the proposals enabled more informed decision-making through human-centered information design, the project team will assess the extent to which potential applicants:

- understood the informational materials, and found them to be clear and trustworthy;
- understood the application process and eligibility requirements, as described by the informational materials;
- better understood and interpreted income guidelines, per the description in the informational materials;
- better understood application time frames and processes, as described by the informational materials;
- used the informational materials as a self-guiding tool, or used them to pass on information to members of their networks.

EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS: PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

In addition to assessing the guiding design objectives, HPD also needs to understand the costs and skill sets associated with carrying out each proposal, as well as the resources needed to sustain each proposal over time. Process evaluation will track the implementation of proposal activities and stakeholders' experiences during the pilot phase.

ASSESSING PROPOSAL 1: INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

The informational-materials pilot requires testing content with users, doing iterative design revisions, participating in training sessions, developing content governance

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS: BEYOND THE PILOT PHASE

Successful informational materials are not just created, but also maintained, updated, and governed. The following suggestions offer guidance beyond the pilot phase.

Define a Holistic Content Governance Plan

If the materials are adopted for ongoing use, HPD should develop a holistic governance plan and content strategy that integrates the documents and all other public-facing HPD-branded material. Materials that are properly “owned” and integrated within a larger system of maintenance are more likely to remain up-to-date and comply with brand standards. A robust governance plan should also account for ongoing changes in document content and ownership. As materials evolve over time, additional training sessions should be organized by and for content owners.

Expand Distribution Channels for Materials

Post-pilot implementation, HPD should consider additional uses for the content and graphics developed for the informational materials. Materials could be:

- integrated into NYC Housing Connect, first as downloadable PDFs, and later as web pages, digital graphics, and/or interactive “wizards,”
- distributed via regular email mailings (particularly applicable to the advertisement and monthly-listings flyer),
- integrated into digital slide presentations.

Test & Iterate

HPD may be interested in using the testing/iteration cycle as an internal design approach when creating and maintaining long-term informational materials.

plans, and distributing materials strategically in a variety of different channels. The core goal of the Proposal 1 process evaluation is to understand the costs and requirements of engaging in this level of content development and management.

To assess the effectiveness of the informational-materials pilot implementation, the project team will explore a number of questions:

- Did HPD successfully test the informational materials with users, and refine appropriately?
- Did the web- and email-based distribution methods work? How did they work around standard Key Performance Indicators?
- What were the biggest challenges in developing and distributing the informational materials?

ASSESSING PROPOSAL 2: HYPER-LOCAL MARKETING

The hyper-local marketing strategy asks developers to share information about new developments in the places of daily life surrounding the development. The assumption is that sharing information in this way will help developers reach more eligible applicants within the development's community-board district.

To assess the effectiveness of the hyper-local marketing pilot implementation, the project team will explore the following questions:

- Were the activities related to planning hyper-local marketing effective?
- What were the biggest challenges to customizing the advertising template, if any?
- How did the developers identify hyper-local marketing locations?
- What were the biggest challenges in distributing the advertisement?
- To what extent did passersby notice and interact with the flyers?

HYPER-LOCAL MARKETING: BEYOND THE PILOT PHASE

For any ongoing post-pilot implementation, HPD should consider integrating hyper-local marketing into future developments' official marketing plans. The marketing guidelines could be amended to include a requirement to use the redesigned advertisement in newspaper ads, on construction sites, and in places of daily life. As part of the plan, the agency and developer could also agree on a scope of ambassador-related services to be performed by a community-based organization chosen by the developer to assist with local marketing and outreach.

ASSESSING PROPOSAL 3: HOUSING AMBASSADORS

The housing-ambassador pilot aims to support those people and organizations who already work with potential applicants during the marketing process – neighborhood groups, nonprofit developers, employees of city agencies, community-based organizations, and concerned citizens – and give them the tools they need to be most effective.

To assess the effectiveness of the housing-ambassador pilot, the project team will explore the following questions:

- Did HPD find that existing housing partners were excited or reluctant to serve as housing ambassadors?
- Were the training sessions for housing ambassadors useful?

HOUSING AMBASSADORS: BEYOND THE PILOT PHASE

Creating lasting working relationships with established organizations can ensure that these groups can convey a consistent message about HPD's program to members of the public. The following elements should be considered as part of a formal program should the agency decide to continue this proposal beyond the pilot phase:

- Develop a scope for ambassadors that clearly defines their role in the marketing and lease-up process for affordable housing, and formalize their legal role in the process.
- Identify an HPD staff person as a manager of this program.
- Host quarterly meetings with ambassadors.
- Establish and maintain a web-based and easily searchable database of housing ambassadors.
- Support the training of "Citizen Ambassadors" to disseminate knowledge about affordable housing deeper into communities.

- Did HPD establish and maintain a platform for feedback and exchange? Was it effective?
- Did the ambassador program make a difference in the lives of the applicants it touched and the ambassadors themselves?

ASSESSING PROPOSAL 4: STREET TEAM

The goal of the street-team pilot is to increase awareness about HPD's affordable housing programs – and the online application system – by sending HPD staff to high-traffic areas throughout the city. To assess the effectiveness of the street-team pilot, the project team will explore the following questions:

- Did potential applicants feel more comfortable with the application process as a result of coming into contact with the street team?
- Did residents take advantage of the ability to start an application on the spot? Why or why not?
- What were the biggest challenges in staffing and running the street-team operations?
- How many residents engaged with the street team?

STREET TEAM: BEYOND THE PILOT PHASE

Building on experience of the street team during the pilot phase, the agency should consider developing a schedule for regular street team appearances. To build greater capacity, staff of the marketing and lease-up division should work closely with staff of the public outreach unit. The street team may also wish to expand on the type of information available to include other divisions at HPD.

The agency may also choose to collaborate with a community housing-service provider. This may be particularly helpful in communities where the organization has language skills not held by HPD staff. Community-based organizations also typically have the trust of local residents and may have the ability to reach out to those who are not connected to and are intimidated by government. In such cases, staff needs to ensure that only HPD staff (identifiable as such) can speak on behalf of HPD, while staff of the CBO can translate, answer general questions, or distribute material.

Editorial Contributors

This publication benefited from the contributions of many dedicated academics, professionals, and students.

HPD & HDC

Beatriz de la Torre
Deputy Commissioner, Administration,
Communications, Strategic Planning,
and Technology

Andrew Eickmann
Director of Strategic Planning

Clare Farnen
HDC, Vice President, Asset Management
and HPD, Director of Marketing

Catie Marshall
Assistant Commissioner, Public Affairs

Kathryn Matheny
(formerly) Chief of Staff/Deputy
Commissioner for Strategic Planning,
Technology & Administration

Emily Osgood
Analyst, Strategic Planning

Parsons The New School for Design

Faculty & Researchers

Scott Brown
Doctoral Researcher

Ezio Manzini
Distinguished Visiting Professor

Eduardo Staszowski
Assistant Professor

Lara Penin
Assistant Professor

Benjamin Winter
Teaching Assistant

Services & the City Students Spring 2012

Judit Boros
Chin-Fu Chen
Ivett Cser
Matteo D'Amanzo
John Goddu
Marissa Hatch
Harriette Kim
Michael Mangan
Molly Oberholtzer
Eli Rosenbloom
Caitlin Webb

Public & Collaborative Services Students Spring 2012

Aly Blenkin
Namkyu Chun
Andrea Curtoni
Michele Girelli
Nelson Lo
Janet Lobberecht
Rosalind Louvet
Kara Kane
Mai Kobori
Jennifer Meyer
Christopher Patten
Bridget Sheerin

Public Policy Lab

Fellows & Lead Authors

Liana Dragoman
NTT DATA Experience Design Group

Kristina Drury
TYTHEdesign

Andrew Eickmann
NYC HPD

Yasmin Fodil
BYO Consulting

Kaja Kühl
youarethecity

Benjamin Winter
Parsons DESIS Lab

Staff

Chelsea Mauldin, Executive Director
Jennifer Rose, Design Director
Erin Routson, Senior Researcher

Interns

Amanda Elder
Charlotte Fliegner
Molly Oberholtzer

Project Contributors

The insights contained in this guide would not have been identified without the involvement of dozens of agency staff; members of the community, particularly in the South Bronx; and many colleagues and professionals who contributed their time and expertise. All errors and omissions are the authors' own.

HPD Staff

Eric Bederman
Meryl Block Weissman
Margaret Brown
William Carbine
Aisha Crumpton
Josh Cucchiaro
Andrea Foley-Murphy
Elyzabeth Gaumer
Pamela Glaser
Elizabeth Greenstein
Jennifer Jacobs-Guzman
Patricia Jordan
Roeland Kim
Laurie LoPrimo
Vivian Louie
Hector Padilla
Jim Padilla
Molly Park
AnnMarie Santiago
Elise Shin
Meghan Smith
Eunice Suh
Anthony Thomas
Michael Vito
Alexandra Warren
Ted Weinstein

Staff at Other City Agencies

Josephine Logozzo
NYC Housing Development Corporation
Matthew Murphy
NYC Housing Development Corporation

Staff at Housing & Community-Based Organizations

Carrie Bloss, Common Ground
Susan Camerata, TWMT
Patrice Clayton, C&C Apartment Management
Jessica Clemente, We Stay / Nos Quedamos
Rebecca Eigenbauer, WHEDco
Lelah Fontanez, PWB Management
Melanie Garcia, PWB Management
Peter Gee, Asian Americans For Equality
William Goodman, Jonathan Rose Companies
Effie Guevara, PWB Management
Douglas Nam Le, Asian Americans For Equality
Valerie Neug, WHEDco
Josephine Santana, We Stay / Nos Quedamos
Andrea Shaw, WHEDco
Nicole Sherwood, Jonathan Rose Companies
Julie Woinsky, Bronx Pro Group

Visiting Lecturers

Christian Bason
MindLab
David Boyle
New Economics Foundation
François Jégou
La 27e Région
Ezio Manzini
Politecnico di Milano

Production Credits

Book Design

Claudia Brandenburg, Language Arts

Copyediting

Rachel Vigier

Graphic Design

Public Policy Lab

Illustration

Amy Findeiss, Parsons DESIS Lab

Indexing

DoMi Stauber

Further Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the support and guidance of the following colleagues.

David Gibson, PPL Board Member
Laura Keller, NTT DATA Experience Design Group
Deborah Marton, PPL Board Member
Sean Moriarty, The New School
Will Murray, The New School (formerly)
Edwin Torres, Rockefeller Foundation
Lisa Woodley, NTT DATA Experience Design Group

Index

- abandonment, 13
- advertisement template, **48–49**, 54–55
- affordable housing
 - current challenges, 14–16
 - HPD initiatives, 13–14
 - income limits, 16
 - and social networks, 66–67
 - timeline, **12–13**
- agency roles. *See* HPD roles
- application process
 - current process visualizations, **38–39**
 - initial application processing, 38
 - intended proposal outcomes, 44–45
 - Kit of Ideas, 30–31
 - marketing stage, 37, 48–49, 53–56
 - overview, 37–39
 - process map document, 49
 - screening process, 38, 39, 41–42, 49–50
 - reasons applicants don't qualify, **42**
 - time frames, 39, 41, 42, 47
 - unit allocation, 38
 - See also* pilot proposals
- arson, 13
- asset-based collaborations, 45

- Bason, Christian, 12, 20
- Biderman, Abraham, 14
- Blenkin, Aly, 34, 35
- Bloomberg, Michael, 13, 16
- Book.me website, 33
- Boros, Judit, 25, 32, 35
- Boyle, David, 12, 20

- CBOs. *See* community-based organization (CBO) roles
- checklists document, **49–50**
- Chen, Chin-Fu, 33
- Chun, Namkyu, 34, 35
- co-design approach, 18, 20
 - workshops using, **40, 47, 54, 58**
- co-production, 18, 20–21, 66–67
 - varying roles in, **21**
- Commons in Common, 34
- communication
 - and design objectives, 45, 70
 - feedback, 25, 58–59, 61
 - human-centered design, 46
 - human-centered informational materials, 46, 47–52, 54–55, 58
 - key findings, 41
 - Kit of Ideas on, 24–25
 - visual materials, 46, 48

- community-based organization (CBO) roles
 - and co-production approach, 45
 - and design phase, 12
 - housing ambassadors, 57, 59
 - human-centered informational materials, 49, 52
 - and lived realities, 46
 - proposal development, 40
- community engagement, 34–35
- community member roles
 - and co-production approach, 45
 - human-centered informational materials, 52
 - and lived realities, 46
 - proposal development, 40
- community-preference slots, 42, 44
- construction sites, 53, 54
- co-production approach, 20, 21, 45
- Crotty, Paul, 13–14
- Cser, Ivett, 33
- Curtoni, Andrea, 34, 35
- customer service, 26

- D’Amanzo, Matteo, 25, 32, 35
- design objectives, 45–46,
 - evaluation of, 69–71
- design phase, 12–13, 39–40
- DESYS Network, 11
- developer roles
 - and co-production approach, 45
 - design phase, 12
 - human-centered informational materials, 52
 - hyper-local marketing, 53, 54, 55–56
 - proposal development, 40
- distribution channels, 51
- diverse readers, 46, 47, 48
- Dragoman, Liana, 24, 25, 28, 31
- Drury, Kristina, 30, 31

- educational posters, 32
- emergency shelter, 18, 26
- evaluation, 68–73
- exploration phase, 11–12 *See also* Kit of Ideas

- feedback
 - and housing ambassadors, 58–59, 61
 - and information as service, 25
- field office murals, 35
- Fodil, Yasmin, 30

- Girelli, Michelle, 34
- Goddu, John, 25, 31

- Hatch, Marissa, 25, 31
- holistic communication standards, 24
- housing ambassadors, 31, 57–61, 72–73
- housing code educational game, 33
- housing emergency, 14
- housing lottery, 37–38 *See also* application process
- Housing Maintenance Code, 18, 32
- housing quality services, 32–33
- HPD. *See* HPD roles; NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development
- HPD roles
 - housing ambassadors, 57, 58–61
 - human-centered informational materials, 50–52
 - hyper-local marketing, 54, 55
 - street team, 63–65
- HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development), 15–16
 - income limits set by, 15
- human-centered informational materials. *See* communication; informational materials
- hyper-local marketing, 53–56, 72

- income criteria and documentation, 16, 31, 41, 43, 49
- income guide document, 49
- informational materials, 46, 47–52
 - and design objectives, 46, 70–71
 - evaluation, 71–72
 - and housing ambassadors, 58, 60–61
 - and hyper-local marketing, 54–55
 - and street team, 63
 - See also* communication
- information as service, 24–25, 44
- informed decision-making, 46, 70–71
- insights from participatory design, 47, 53, 57, 62

- Jégou, François, 12

- Kane, Kara, 34
- Kim, Harriette, 25, 32, 35
- Kimbell, Lucy, 19
- Kit of Ideas, 22–34
 - application process, 30–31
 - community engagement, 34–35
 - housing quality services, 32–33
 - information as service, 24–25, 44
 - Section 8 voucher program, 28–29
 - space as service, 26–27
- Koch, Edward I., 12, 13–14
- Kühl, Kaja, 24, 25, 32, 33

- Lander, Brad, 67
- landlord information
 - housing quality services, 32
 - Section 8 voucher program, 28
- lived realities, 45–46, 70
- Lo, Nelson, 35
- Lobberecht, Janet, 35
- Lottery & Lease-up process. *See* application process
- Louvet, Rosalind, 34

- maintenance calendars, 32
- Mangan, Michael, 33
- Manzini, Ezio, 12, 18
- marketing stage, 37, 48–49
 - advertisement template, 48–49, 54–55
 - hyper-local marketing, 53–56
- monthly listing template, 48, 49, 54–55
- Mazzorin, Giulia, 34, 35
- Melrose Made program, 34
- Melrose neighborhood, 12, 23
- Meyer, Jennifer, 35
- monthly listing template, 48, 49, 54–55

- New Housing Marketplace Plan (NHMP), 13, 16–17, 37–38.
 - number of units created, by affordability, 17
 - See also* application process; application process pilot proposals
- NHMP. *See* New Housing Marketplace Plan
- NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), 11
 - field office murals, 35
 - headquarters design, 26–27
 - history of, 12, 13–14
 - Lottery & Lease-up process, 30–31
 - Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area plan, 23
 - Partner Portal, 28
 - public lack of knowledge of, 41, 47
 - and public participation, 19, 20–21
 - service provision goals, 17–18
 - See also* application process; HPD roles
- NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey (HVS), 14
- NYC Housing Connect, 30

- Oberholtzer, Molly, 25, 32, 35
- online connections
 - and housing ambassadors, 60
 - housing quality services, 33
 - NYC Housing Connect, 30
 - and street team, 62, 63

- Parsons The New School for Design, 11, 12. *See also* Kit of Ideas
- Partner Portal (HPD), 28
- Patten, Christopher, 34
- People's Housing Week, 31
- personas, provisional, 43, 47, 53, 57, 62
- pilot proposals, 36–67
 - agency roles. *See* HPD roles
 - design objectives, 45–46, 69–71
 - development of, 39–40
 - distribution channels, 51
 - evaluation, 68–73
 - goals of, 48, 54, 57, 62
 - housing ambassadors, 31, 57–61, 72–73
 - hyper-local marketing, 53–56, 72
 - implementation guidelines, 50, 55, 59, 63
 - informational materials, 47–52, 54–55, 58
 - insights from participatory design, 47, 53, 57, 62
 - intended proposal outcomes visualization, 44–45
 - key research findings that inspired proposals, 40–44 and lived realities, 45–46, 70
 - provisional personas, 43
 - range of impact, 46
 - required resources, 48, 54, 58, 63
 - social networks, 66–67
 - street team, 62–65, 73
- process map document, 49
- project overview, 11–13
- project phases
 - of Public & Collaborative, 11
 - of typical service-design project, 19
- provider feedback, 25
- public lectures, 12
- public participation
 - and HPD service provision goals, 18
 - and service design, 19
 - spectrum of options for, 18
- Public Policy Lab, 11
 - design phase, 12, 13

- Reframing Melrose program, 35
- rent burden, 14–16
- Rosedahl, Sarah, 35
- Rosenbloom, Eli, 25, 31

- Schill, Michael, 13
- screening process, 38, 39, 41–42, 49–50
- Section 8 voucher program, 18, 28–29
- self-service kiosks, 27
- service design, 19
- signage, 26, 54, 56

- social networks, 66–67. *See also* community member roles
- space as service, 26–27
- Stickdorn, Mark, 19
- street art, 35
- Street School, 35
- street team, 62–65, 73
 - ingredients for, **63**
 - rendering of, **64**

- Tenant Direct website, 33
- theory of change, 45, **69**
- Traina, Elizabeth, 35

- unit allocation, 38
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), 16
- user feedback mechanisms, 25
- user research
 - findings from, 41–44
 - methods and activities, 39–40
 - co-creation workshops, **40, 47, 54, 58**

- vacancy rates, **14**
- video communications, 25
- visual communications assets, 24
- visual materials, 46, 48

- Webb, Caitlin, 33
- workshops, **40, 47, 54, 58**

- Yelp for Housing, 33

Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing is an innovative collaboration between a New York City public agency, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development; an academic research lab, the DESIS Lab at Parsons The New School for Design; and a nonprofit dedicated to improving the design and delivery of public services, the Public Policy Lab.

The project's goals are twofold — to assist the Department of Housing Preservation and Development in delivering more effective, efficient, and satisfying services, and to explore ways to facilitate the involvement of community residents in the development of housing-related services in neighborhoods with significant public- and private-sector investment leveraged by HPD.

This publication illustrates the project's development and details four proposals intended for pilot testing by the agency.



Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing was made possible through the generous support of a 2012 New York City Cultural Innovation Fund grant awarded by the Rockefeller Foundation.

nyc.gov/hpd
newschool.edu/desis
publicpolicylab.org

NYC
Department of
Housing Preservation
& Development

**PARSONS
DESIS
LAB**
THE NEW SCHOOL

**PUBLIC
POLICY
LAB**

ISBN 978-0-9886455-2-3



9 780988 645523 >