

WE ARE

PUBLIC

FOODS

**OPEN
HERE**

**MAKING
POLICY
PUBLIC**

INTRODUCING THE PLAYERS

RESIDENTS



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

NYCHA



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

CITY/STATE



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

HUD



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

THE WAYS TO PARTICIPATE!

NYCHA RESIDENT PARTICIPATION

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

GRASSROOTS Organizing

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



Your Development

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



The Budget

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

The Annual Plan

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

NYCHA Policy

HUD, the City, and the State write the policies that NYCHA has to follow. If NYCHA breaks the rules, it's up to them to do something, and up to you to make sure they know about it. It might not be the best way to get your toilet fixed today, but working to change the rules that NYCHA follows can be an important way to improve public housing.

WHERE TO FOCUS MAKE AN IMPACT

WE ARE PUBLIC HOUSING

When it comes to public housing, **YOU ARE THE EXPERT.**

You know what works and what doesn't work. So, when it's time to make the decisions that affect your development and public housing across the city, you can let "experts" who've never lived in public housing make decisions, or you can get in on the action.

MAKING POLICY PUBLIC is a program of the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP). CUP collaborates with policy advocates and graphic designers to produce fold-out posters like this one. Find out more at makingpolicypublic.net

COLLABORATORS
CUP: Christine Gospar, Mark Torrey, John Mangin; CVH: Vincent Villano, Henry Serrano, Mo George, Sondra Youdelman, Agnes Martinez, Ann Valdez, Anne Washington, Gloria Wilson, Kfir Kluz; Office of Jeff: Jeff Lai

THE CENTER FOR URBAN PEDAGOGY (CUP) is a nonprofit that uses design and art to improve public participation in shaping the places where we all live. welcometocup.org

OFFICE OF JEFF is a design company started by Jeff Lai in 2004. Jeff and crew use collaboration and hands-on work to simplify the complicated, and are drawn to approachable solutions using a bold practicality. They make animations, identities, websites, books, and illustrations, (among other things) for clients ranging from small nonprofits to international conglomerates. officeofjeff.com

COMMUNITY VOICES HEARD (CVH) is a membership-based community group that works to engage low-income families in organizing campaigns to influence policy that affects their families and their communities. CVH places priority on leadership development, policy education, direct action, participatory research, and community outreach to build the tools necessary to engage community members and win on policy issues. The current issue campaigns are Welfare/Workforce, Sustainable Communities; Public Housing; and The Voter Power Project. cvhaction.org



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GET INVOLVED!
HERE'S HOW

This poster will connect you to other residents who know how to get the attention of the people at NYCHA, plus elected officials, the media, and officials at HUD. Together, public housing residents are Building Power!



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WHERE TO FOCUS MAKE AN IMPACT

BASE BUILDING

ADD MORE PEOPLE, GET A LOUDER VOICE!
When you take a friend to a meeting, go doorknocking, or tell neighbors in the courtyard about your group, you're base building. A group of people working together can do more than one person. Bigger groups can usually do more than smaller groups. Get more people on board!

"What we do at CVH is a great thing, because we go in and recruit people." —NYCHA resident

"My RA tries to get involved and bring information back to people. I think that makes a good RA." —NYCHA resident

NYCHA LEVEL 1 RESIDENT ASSOCIATION

About 2/3 of public housing developments in NYC have a Resident Association, or RA. The first step to participating in the NYCHA system is to go to an RA meeting in your development. Look for a poster in the elevator or ask your neighbors. Every RA is different.

RAs help individual tenants get what they need from NYCHA staff. They mostly deal with problems in individual apartments and developments—things like leaky toilets, broken elevators, or bad security. Every RA elects a President, who also becomes part of the District Council.

RAs can get money, office space, and other support from NYCHA to help do their work. They also get funds to organize Family Day.

400,000+ RESIDENTS ARE REPRESENTED BY 239 RAs

NYCHA LEVEL 2 DISTRICT COUNCIL

District Councils, or DCs, are made up of all the Presidents from the different RAs. There are 9 District Councils representing different areas of the city.

Their job is to bring information about residents' concerns up to the Citywide Council of Presidents (CCOP) and get information to bring back to residents. Each District Council elects a Board of 5 to 7 Officers, including a Chair, who becomes part of the CCOP.

239 RA PRESIDENTS ARE REPRESENTED BY 55 DC OFFICERS

NYCHA LEVEL 3 CITYWIDE COUNCIL

The 9 DC Chairs make up the Citywide Council of Presidents, or CCOP, representing the concerns of all public housing residents at the city level. CCOP members are also DC Officers, RA Presidents, and RAB Members. That's a lot of power in the hands of only 9 people!

They deal with big-picture things, like NYCHA's budget, policy issues, maintenance cuts, and the community service requirement. The CCOP meets with NYCHA officials and brings information back to the District Councils.

55 DC OFFICERS ARE REPRESENTED BY 9 CCOP MEMBERS

"I was voted to sit on the Resident Advisory Board in 2009 when the stimulus package came in, and I really saw what was happening in public housing." —NYCHA resident

NYCHA RESIDENT ADVISORY BOARD

The Resident Advisory Board, or RAB, meets with NYCHA to represent residents during the creation of the Annual Plan. It is made up of the 9 CCOP members plus 81 other members of the District Councils and five Section 8 voucher holders. (Section 8 is another housing program that NYCHA runs.)

"I met my district leader and we put together a plan where we can go in and sit with NYCHA." —NYCHA resident

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

LEARNING HOW TO ORGANIZE FOR CHANGE!
Groups work best when everybody's a member and everybody's a leader. Leadership development means getting new members up to speed on the issues and training everybody on how to organize and how to talk to people in power.

"CVH empowered me. I felt like the mess in public housing was a waste of time. CVH was organized and structured, and took me down a path." —NYCHA resident

MOBILIZING

MOVING TO ACTION!
We all need to work together to build power. A group of people won't accomplish much unless they work together to do something. Mobilize people to learn about the issues, educate others, and build the power to make change happen.

"We went up to Albany and saw the governor. It was really exciting! He ran away from us. I realized that CVH is an organization that really does something." —NYCHA resident

WE ARE 400,000+

NYC PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS.

WE MOBILIZE!

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

WE ARE BUILDING OUR BASE!

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

WE ARE VOTING!

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

WE ARE EDUCATING!

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

WE ARE SHAKING IT UP!

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

WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

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

WE ARE WORKING TOGETHER!

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

WE ARE MISSING YOU!

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

START BUILDING POWER TODAY!

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

WE ARE BUILDING POWER!