

# Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Announces "Housing Our Neighbors Plan: A Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness"

June 14, 2022

**Jessica Katz, Chief Housing Officer:** Good morning, everybody. Thank you so much all for coming. I'm Jessica Katz, I'm the chief housing officer for the City of New York. And I'm thrilled to finally deliver Housing Our Neighbors: A Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness.

**Katz:** Housing is fundamental to a successful life. In the hierarchy of needs, you must have stable housing to succeed in education, in a job, to support your family and more. Housing must be a priority and that's what this plan commits to.

**Katz:** One of the most important steps to starting this process is acknowledging our homeless crisis is a housing issue. For the first time ever, we hosted multiple sessions with homeless and formerly homeless New Yorkers to hear directly from those with lived experience on how we can do better. And everybody who was in those meetings, please raise your hand. Round of applause. Hey everybody, thank you so much for being here.

**Katz:** We have ample programs and services across our city, but if those in need are not able to access or receive them, we're all falling short. We're committed to fixing that today.

**Katz:** We co-hosted peer advocate meetings with Shams DaBaron and Rob Robinson with me at City Hall. Having around 25 homeless and formerly homeless New Yorkers come to City Hall, get to speak to the mayor himself, and speak directly to city leadership, is something I'm very proud of. And to Shams, to Rob, and Lyndon, and all our fellow New Yorkers with lived experience, this plan's for you.

**Katz:** Shams, you're working so hard to give homeless New Yorkers better futures, and I'm so grateful for your support and your partnership. I would like to welcome up the homeless hero, Shams DaBaron.

[...]

**Katz:** A key voice that we must elevate is that of our youth who have been homeless. That is a standard by which you judge a society on: how do we house and support our young people? Lyndon is making sure we hear him and his peers. He's one of the New York City Youth Action Board co-chairs, who is a leader in helping address youth homelessness. I'm honored that he is with us today and a partner with us going forward. To introduce the mayor, I want to bring up Lyndon Hernandez.

[...]

**Mayor Eric Adams:** Thank you. Thank you so much. And to all of you who are here in the room, joined with my administration, and those of you who have advocated for proper housing for so many years. And I don't know all of your names, but some of you I recall throughout my days as a state senator, as borough president, sitting in a room and a level of compassion.

**Mayor Adams:** It's good to see my sister Alicka is here as well. Ericka Keller, who builds affordable units, and this amazing team that I have assembled. My team is just made up of rock stars. And it's going to take a while before all of this noise that goes on before people start to see the quality of life improve in our city, because we're coming from a compassionate place.

**Mayor Adams:** Gary Jenkins formerly lived in a homeless shelter as a child. That's why he's compassionate. What all of us are bringing to the table is that we're bringing our life stories. I was just on Rikers Island talking to a group of young graduates who graduated with their high school diploma equivalency diplomas. And let them know the pathways, 72% of them are going to re-engage back into education because of what we're doing.

**Mayor Adams:** The amazing budget that we passed – 95% of what the City Council members wanted. We were able to pass it because we agreed on it, and we got it done. Historically during the budget season, there are protests everywhere. People couldn't

protest, because we answered the question. Dyslexia screening, vouchers for immigrant families for childcare. What we're doing around victims of crime, which many people ignore.

**Mayor Adams:** We just continuously carry out our agenda, in spite of all the noise that's going on around us. All the naysayers, what we can't do, can't we do. We getting it done. And all those get nothing done that have put us in this place, they must get out of the way of us because we are getting it done. And this is a signal of what we are getting done every day.

**Mayor Adams:** And deputy mayor, I notice under your portfolio, you're doing your thing. You're doing your thing. Adolfo Carrión, commissioner of HPD, and our amazing Jessica Katz, the years of being committed to what we are doing. You just look at my lineup. I have an all-star lineup that is changing the lives of New Yorkers.

**Mayor Adams:** We have an amazing administration. And people would critique one or two people, "Why didn't you pick him? Why did you pick him?" But if you are honest and you do a real analysis, you are going to walk away saying, "Eric built a team. A team."

**Mayor Adams:** That's why we had an early budget. That's why we have the largest amount in our reserves. That's why we are able to do and accomplish the things we are doing. We're building a team. We built an impressive team. Many people thought we couldn't do it, but we are doing it. And I'm proud of what we are accomplishing.

**Mayor Adams:** And hearing from you, Lyndon, your story is a story that we hear far too often, for those who are experiencing homelessness. And the plan is based on what I observed on the ground. Not only as a state senator, not only as a police officer, but also as the borough president and my first month in office. My first month in office as mayor, I went and sat in encampments, in tents, and talked to people on the ground. No cameras following me, just talking to everyday people and saying, "Why are you here? What are your needs?"

**Mayor Adams:** And really getting the real feel, as I went back to the administration to say, "This is the urgency of the moment, and I'm not succumbing to the theory that people are living in a dignified way in a tent on our street with no restroom, no food, no place to take care of themselves. I'm not accepting it. I'm not."

**Mayor Adams:** And those who want to advocate for that, you keep advocating for that. I'm not advocating for that. I'm advocating for this. This is what I'm advocating from. And housing cannot be a privilege, it's the key to living a healthy lifestyle. Safe, stable, and affordable housing is fundamental to our prosperity. And right now, a majority of New Yorkers that are living on the street don't have that, and don't believe in the system.

**Mayor Adams:** The average New York City household needs to double their income to have an average rentable unit in this city. And these are beautiful apartments. They're beautiful apartments. This rooftop is open to the tenants. This is the type of dignity that we want to give. And last night, [inaudible] – like it or not, thousands of children, 110,000 children are housing insecure. Thousands of children are living without permanent housing. And the science states that if children are in homeless shelters, they're less likely to graduate from high school. And if you don't graduate, you incarcerate far too many times. That's why we're going upstream to change the way we're doing things. The average homeless family now stays in the shelter for a better part of two years. And COVID-19 made it worse. For too long, we have taken one step forward and we have taken two steps back. Over and over again.

**Mayor Adams:** And Jessica talked with me about this throughout the entire campaign. And I was looking forward to getting her on our team. She has really proven to be the dedicated, committed expert in this area, as we do something that's revolutionary in the area of housing. Today, we release Housing Our Neighbors: A Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness. You can't really understand this if you just look at Twitter. You got to read this. I know we are in the Twitter generation and everything is a tweet. But, just take an opportunity to just read the thoroughness of this report. This is some good, hard work that Jessica, you and your team put together. The round tables were amazing. Sitting down in City Hall with those who lived a life and hearing from them. We sat down and we listened to them. And it was a very compassionate, very thorough conversation that came from them. This continuation of listening to people is the hallmark of this administration. The plan is the most comprehensive housing plan in New York City history. For the first time, it includes NYCHA.

**Mayor Adams:** We're going to cover the entire spectrum of New York's housing. And not play these games of trying to hide the number, because if you don't become honest in what the real problem is, you're not going to be honest in producing a real solution. And we spoke to New Yorkers who gave us real impact. Far too long, we did something that was extremely impressive. When I first sat down with Jessica, we celebrated the signing of the deal. We thought that was mission accomplished. We did not focus on,

did we place people in the housing? That is what we need to focus on. Having units stay empty is not solving a problem. And so the celebratory spirit of merely signing a deal is we are moving away from that. No, our success is going to be based on how many people we actually sign, not to deal the building, but signing the lease of putting you inside that apartment.

**Mayor Adams:** And that's what we want to focus on. Our measurement of success was wrong. We want to look at, number one, whether we are building for people at every income level, whether we're reducing the number of rent burden households, and our measurement will focus on people, not just money. It's often asked, "How many units you going to build? How many units you going to build? How many units are you going to build?" If that is one of the on-topic questions you're going to ask me, don't because I'm not answering that. How many people we going to put in housing? We need to put people in housing. That's the focus that we are on. Housing our neighbors, that's the point of this plan. It is about units to place people in. It's about New Yorkers, our neighbors, that we are focusing on. We're not going to go back to the way things were.

**Mayor Adams:** We are going to do things differently. Number one. We're going to transform NYCHA, as I stated. Big victory for us in Albany, with the NYCHA land trust. People said we couldn't do it. Once again, we did it. Huge victory. You were up there camping out. I know your children were happy to see mommy come home. We pulled off something that other administrations attempted to do, and they didn't. We did it. That land trust is going to infuse billions of dollars from the federal government that historically abandoned NYCHA. And we found the way to get it done. And I'm proud of that.

**Mayor Adams:** We're already delivering much needed resources and we will overhaul NYCHA. Our chief technology officer, is going to move NYCHA into the 21st century by using technology, using dashboards to really monitor the success of NYCHA. And I want this to be a city where people, living in NYCHA, can get repairs just as quickly if you live in a condominium. Because NYCHA is a condominium to those who are living there and they deserve the services that others receive. Number two. We're going to make it possible for New Yorkers to own a home again. We invested in homeownership. The best way to stop displacement through gentrification is allow people to own their homes. We're going to refocus on that, particularly Black and brown communities and renters are priced out of the chance to build wealth for their children and grandchildren. That's what it's about.

**Mayor Adams:** My home on Lafayette Avenue, no, I don't live in Jersey.

[Laughter]

**Mayor Adams:** On Lafayette Avenue is wealth for my son and future generations. And that's what we want to do. I want to put the dream of home ownership back in the hands of working people and remind New Yorkers that leaving this city isn't an option. We have a hemorrhaging of Black and brown families leaving New York, because it's no longer affordable. We've decimated the middle class and we need to refocus our attention on stabilizing these families and stabilizing the city that they made prosperous. We're going to significantly expand affordable homeownership opportunities and help communities build and maintain wealth. Number three. We're going to make it easier to get our vulnerable New Yorkers off the street and into housing. We're going to accelerate the creation of supportive housing. The city promised to complete 15,000 supportive homes by 2030. We're going to get that done in two years ahead of schedule. We're focused on getting it done.

**Mayor Adams:** We're going to give safe, affordable housing. New York has always been a beacon of life and hope and we're going to continue to do so. I want to just thank all of our partners, all who have toiled in this field for so many years and thought it was not possible. The bugles you were hearing was taps and not the cavalry. We've changed that tune. Now you hear the cavalry, the cavalry is coming. We are going to place New Yorkers into housing. Difficult task. Huge task. Huge undertaking. We're clear on that. We're not going to always get it right.

**Mayor Adams:** That's why we're partnering with Norman Siegel to put in place a great deal of New Yorkers that are going to be part of our volunteer pool. That's why we're in the subway system talking to people to get them to understand that there's other housing. That's why we have to build more Safe Haven. We know we have so much to do. But one thing is for sure, one thing we are not going to fail at. We're not going to fail at trying. We will succeed. That is our goal. Thank you very much. Great job, Jessica.

**Katz:** Thank you, Mayor Adams. And thank you to Lyndon for sharing your story. This is a significant moment. Not just because we're releasing the much anticipated housing plan, but because this plan goes beyond anything the city has tried to do before. When I first started speaking with the mayor last year, he and I were clearly aligned on what needs to happen to make real change. We discussed how we couldn't just do business

as usual and expect different results. And I want to thank you, Mr. Mayor, for letting me flip the script. This plan is going to take some work because we are calling for bold structural change. The Adams administration strongly believes that homelessness is a housing issue and that NYCHA cannot remain a side project while we wait for some attention from D.C. We must align our different housing related agencies under one plan together if we're going to make the lives of New Yorkers better. But even more than that, we're incorporating health and resiliency into our housing strategies because they are critical to helping New Yorkers live in healthy and sustainable homes.

**Katz:** That's what this plan is about, housing New Yorkers. For the first time, we start with NYCHA. The public housing authority has already laid a lot of groundwork, but it has never been part of the citywide housing plan. By incorporating it here, we are doubling down on our commitment to finally give NYCHA residents the quality of life that they deserve. We are going to introduce programs across NYCHA that we hope to roll out citywide that will become national models. I want to thank Miguel Acevedo and Ms. Darlene Waters, the TA presidents at Fulton Houses and Elliott Chelsea, and all the members of the resident review committee there. Your hard work and expertise proved, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that NYCHA residents can and must have a seat at the table when deciding the future of their homes. And because of your dedication, today, we are proud to say that we are rolling out resident decision making for all NYCHA residents across the city.

**Katz:** The blueprint is a testament to our commitment to NYCHA residents. They are going to see the best of the best. And alongside the trust, which recently passed, we are going to finally overhaul our public housing system. I'm so proud to have NYCHA at the heart of this plan as I am that we have our homeless leaders with us today. I will say it again. Homelessness is a housing problem. To Deputy Williams-Isom and the DSS Commissioner Gary Jenkins, whenever I threw out a potentially crazy idea, you responded with, "Yes, let's get that done." So I'm so grateful to have such amazing partners in government. And to all the teams at DSS and HRA and DHS and HPD who have worked incredibly hard on this blueprint.

**Katz:** By bringing homelessness into this plan and putting it on equal footing with our housing strategies, we're better prepared to ensure that everyone has the services and support they need to stay housed, move out of the shelter system, gain access to supportive housing, or find safer, more affordable homes. A lot of the steps we are taking came to light through our conversations with New Yorkers with lived experience.

One new one that I'm excited to reveal here today is for Sarah, who's in the crowd. I got a surprise for you. We're getting rid of the four month rule.

[Crosstalk]

**Katz:** For those of you who don't know what that is, there is an industry standard that started out as a myth and became a rule, but was maybe never a rule to begin with, where New Yorkers must be in the shelter system for four months before they can start the housing application process. There's no reason for that. And I want to thank Commissioner Jenkins for jumping on this immediately. Sarah and everyone say goodbye to the four month rule.

**Katz:** And the truth is we would've never have known that if it weren't for you all bringing that to our attention. We didn't know. It was a myth that was embedded in the shelter system that we needed you all, the expertise, to let us know that. Probably another significant thing in this blueprint is that we are going to finally begin an accurate homeless census. Too often, government has tried to get cute with these numbers and not acknowledge the reality of our homeless problem. We've always just looked away and swept it under the rug, until now. We also have to keep producing housing. The housing crisis is as much a supply issue as an affordability issue.

**Katz:** The team at HDC and HPD, at HDC, led by their president, Eric Enderlin, is so critical to making the deals work and finding ways to let our city continue to produce housing. Eric, you've been a colleague and a friend and a mentor over the years, and I'm honored to continue working with you. We now have the largest capital commitment in history to work with thanks to the mayor's \$22 billion in funding for our housing stock over the next 10 years. We will ensure that we're able to maintain production levels, despite rising interest rates and global supply chains and every other global crisis that the world throws at us. But beyond that, we need to preserve our existing housing stock, expand opportunities for home ownership, and ensure that we are building a more equitable city. This is particularly important to giving MWBEs a fair bite at the apple.

**Katz:** Important to any and all of this work is ensuring that, when we are building or preserving housing, that families' homes are safe and stable for them to live. From fires to lead or asthma, we must protect New Yorkers in their homes. And if landlords are not providing quality housing conditions, we will proactively enforce the law and hold them accountable. Tenant protections are critical. Beyond the safe conditions in their housing,



the access to housing without source of income discrimination, or other legal violations that limit their ability to safely live and stay housed. We're putting people on notice. Everyone knows we have a housing shortage so it's important that we keep our current housing stock safe today and into the future as well. And we're also facing a change in climate. That's not up for debate. And New York City is out front building a more resilient and sustainable city. That means being clear that housing is a climate issue and climate change is a housing issue. We are going to work with our partners to put out housing on a pathway to meet our city's ambitious decarbonization goals.

**Katz:** Everything I've laid out cannot be successful unless we tackle the administrative burdens that are in our systems. Too often, government requires unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles, that means we are failing the very people our programs are meant to serve, or retraumatizing them again in the name of paperwork. That means reorienting our processes to serve New Yorkers so they can access housing. They're going to be some quick wins, like eliminating a form here and there, but there are going to be longer-term inter-agency cooperation efforts that will take time if we can make our government work for New Yorkers. It will truly be life-changing for so many of our neighbors. I'm excited about this blueprint. It's been an exhausting effort with countless partners, advocates, government, peers, homeless New Yorkers and NYCHA residents. I really want to thank the government leaders who joined us here today. There are many of you and even more staffers behind you who have dedicated their lives to this work. And on my team, I need a huge round of applause for Sheena Kang who corralled every person, idea, budget ask, for everybody.

**Katz:** Jasmine Blake, my indomitable chief of staff who kept all the wheels turning, taking names. And this is just the start. We have a lot of work ahead but we have a real path to changing how the housing works in the city. I want to acknowledge where we are today. 90 Sands is a hotel that after a long and expensive land use process will soon provide supportive services and housing for hundreds of New Yorkers. So thank you to Breaking Ground for hosting us here today. And I hope we see a few more vacant hotels become housing soon. And I look forward to implementing it all alongside my partner and my friend at City Hall. Our next speaker, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Anne Williams-Isom. Thank you.

**Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom, Health and Human Services:** I thought that was the end. It's hot out here. You got your sunglasses. I don't want to wrinkle. So I got to hurry up. Oh, it's hot out here. I was thinking about why I'm so happy to be here today. And it usually does go back to a personal story. When my mother came here from

Trinidad and Tobago, she came by herself, and my father was there. And when he came here, she very quickly became a victim of domestic violence. And we know that a majority of folks who end up in homeless shelters, families, it's because of domestic violence. And I say to myself, "How did that not happen to my brothers and myself?" And it was because of two reasons: my mom had a job, she had a livable wage, and she was able to get a house in Springfield Gardens, Queens, a small, modest house where we lived and where we were able to stay together and get a great education.

**Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom:** So this day is so important because that's what we want for all

New Yorkers, to be able to have an affordable place and where they can live and be able to raise their family. I want to thank the mayor. He called us all stars, but you know why we're all stars? Because he's a great manager, and because he is our leader. It is so important to have a leader that is clear about their north star so that you just know what you need to do. From day one, he said that was not okay to have people living on the streets and that was not dignified. We didn't have to worry then, about, is this right? What are we going to hear in the newspapers? What's going to be the drama? He told us to don't forget about all of the chatter and to focus on what we need to do.

**Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom:** So thank you, Mayor Adams, for your clarity and for your commitment to this issue. Jessica Katz is both brilliant and compassionate. Do you know how important that is? She is my sister in this work. And I just want to thank you, Jessica, for all that you do and for your fabulous team that put us here. Gary Jenkins, we said enough about you already, you and your crew, but without Gary, without Ashwin, without all of the people in the human services portfolio, we wouldn't be able to do this work.

**Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom:** So you're saying why is the deputy mayor for health and human services at a housing plan announcement? And it's very simple. And we've said it over and over again. Homelessness is a housing problem. So homelessness has to be cured with housing, that's why I'm here today. Whether you're experiencing homelessness, struggling to afford or keep your home, this plan puts concrete steps forward towards that. It's what the mayor promised and the mayor is delivering every day on the promises he has made. Every New Yorker deserves a permanent home, and today's announcement is another step in that direction. Thank you all so much.

**Katz:** Next up, I have to applaud the HPD team for all of your work. Many of you have been through this housing plan routine before as have I. So I'm really grateful for your dedication, even when we throw a few curve balls your way. And it wouldn't be a citywide housing plan without HPD, and, of course, the amazing Commissioner Adolfo Carrión.

**Commissioner Adolfo Carrión, Housing Preservation and Development:** Thank you, Jessica, Mr. Mayor, friends and colleagues. Everything that can be said has been said but not by everyone. So I'm going to go line by line in the plan. So put on your sun hats and your sunblock. I remember when the mayor announced our appointments, Jessica, and I shared that this is very personal to me just like Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom. My family was the beneficiary of important investments in the poor and working families of New York City. And I was born on South Second Street in Williamsburg in a sub basement of a tenement. And my parents had just come to New York City from Puerto Rico. You've heard me tell this story. And they were born in your borough, Mr. Mayor. And we got a chance to move to Jacob Riis Houses. We won the lottery, chairman, and we were going to waterfront housing by the FDR drive, but it was public housing that gave us an opportunity. And a few years later to move on up to a HUD-assisted limited equity co-op on 12th Street and Avenue C in Loisaida.

**Commissioner Carrión:** And then we got an FHA mortgage to buy a \$28,000 row house up in the country in the North Bronx. And that set our family on a trajectory that we owe the next generation. So it is very personal. The team at HPD is amazing, Jessica's right. These folks have been through this drill several times at HDC with Eric and the team there. They've seen this, but this time, it's different. Think about the fact that we are wrapping our arms around the entire housing ecosystem because the mayor understands and this team understands one thing that housing, that a home is a fundamental building block for a family, and the prospects for the future for that family, whether or not they enter into the economy or enter into the criminal justice system, whether or not they get a career or they get stuck somewhere, just barely surviving.

**Commissioner Carrión:** So the work that we're doing is phenomenally important. And I'm so glad to be able to work with such great partners in government. And I'll leave you with this thought. Do you remember Fred Baker, popularly known as Sam Breakstone? The older folks do, right? It's time to make the donuts. Let's go! We're going to get to work. I want everybody who's here from HPD to just raise your hand and wave. Hello HPDers, we're going to rock this. Love you. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Thank you, Jessica.

**Katz:** I want to give a shout out to our HUD Regional Administrator, my friend and the amazing Alicka Ampry-Samuel is here. Thank you so much for coming and being so supportive of this plan. And finally, to the NYCHA team who's working so tirelessly to turn around that agency and restore a quality of life that the residents deserve. I want to acknowledge the work that you've already done and amazing work getting the public housing trust passed through the state legislature. And I look forward to accomplishing much more together alongside the NYCHA Chair and CEO Greg Russ.

**Gregory Russ, Chair and CEO, NYCHA:** It is a great privilege to be here. I want to thank Jessica. I want to thank the mayor for wrapping their arms around the housing plan because if you look around in this view, you can see at least 10 different NYCHA properties. So we are in this city and with the trust bill, which was supported wholeheartedly by the mayor and Jessica and their team. Think about this. You invest in an entire community. You invest in the unit, that's an investment in that family. And that gives them an opportunity that does not exist when that housing is compromised. And that's a polite word for it. So we have to rebuild these buildings. We have to preserve every unit and that's the goal. And we have to restructure NYCHA and that's our goal. And I'm very thankful to have the opportunity to work with the city team and to have the support that we had both in putting the plan together and also getting the job done in Albany. So thank you very much.

**Question:** Some of the homeless advocates are saying they like the promise for more supporting housing and they like the size of your plan, but they wish that the available housing was available before you shut down the homeless encampments. What is your answer to the criticism that what you essentially did was criminalized homelessness before you provided them an alternative.

**Mayor Adams:** Okay. 8.8 million people in the city, 30 million opinions. Of those families and individuals that were living on the street, they were living on the street before I became mayor. If that compassion was real that they were talking about, they had 50 years to solve it. I had five months to say there's nothing dignified about living on the streets. We're going to continue to send that message, clarity, as was stated of my north star. And there are a lot of opinions. Norman Siegel called me and said, "We believe there's a better way to do it." I say, "Well, okay, Norman, you think it's a better way to do it? Put the team together and join us in doing it." He says, "Yes, I will." So all those advocates that are saying that to you, tell them come join us on the street,s because we are on the streets. We're not sitting back in the classroom with a

philosophical theory while people are living on our streets, our neighbors. Come join us on the street because that's how we roll. We roll on the streets to get the job done.

[Crosstalk]

**Question:** When you sat down at the round table with the participants who were homeless, what did you learn? What did you hear from them? And what did you learn, and what was your takeaway?

**Mayor Adams:** So two things. Number one, they had some real ideas, real ideas like the four month rule, those are real ideas, and they kept producing real ideas. That was amazing. Number two, they're no different than me. These are everyday New Yorkers that have fallen on hard times. And sometimes people think that these are— Well, they don't want to work, well, they're this they're that— No. All just about everyone in my administration telling these stories, we were all one step away from homelessness. And so as I walked away from the room going in and hearing the constant complaints of what we're trying to do, they fortified me and said, "Listen, you're on the right track, brother, ignore all those people." The advocates are not the people living in penthouses, they're people who are living in tents. And those are the advocates who we're going to listen to.

**Question:** I want to go back to people staying on the streets. Some people are getting cleaned up or swept day after day after day, they don't want to go into the safe havens, stabilization beds. What would it take to say "Here's a new apartment, here's a set of keys, you can move in, work on your paperwork and everything else from permanent housing?"

**Mayor Adams:** In life, I learned that idealism collides with realism. And there are people who are living on the street right now that are dealing with mental health illnesses based on some that I have communicated with that can't make those decisions. And so we are not going to tell people they can't live on the streets because they have a constitutional right. There's nothing we could do about that. But you can't build tents. You can't build encampments. You can't. And we are going to give them options.

**Mayor Adams:** We're going to speak with them. And people said nay when we did the transit encampment enforcement. First week, 22 people. Everyone said we were a

failure, but we were consistent. We went from 23 people to, I believe around 1,300 people that we put into safe havens.

**Mayor Adams:** And so we know we have to build trust. We know we have to keep talking to people. It may start with bringing them a pair of socks, some under clothes, something to eat, hot cup of coffee. We're going to be consistent and rebuild that trust. But one thing I'm not going to do, I'm not allowing New Yorkers to live on the streets in camps. I'm not going to do that.

**Question:** But they still are. So if they're asking for housing, could you give them housing?

**Mayor Adams:** Yeah. That's exactly what we're doing. We're going to keep doing it until we run out of space and then we are going to build. Now, let me tell you what building equates that many of you are not asking over and over again. To some of the loudest voices to put people in housing. "Eric, you are wrong. We'll protest you. Put people in housing." Okay, we will. We're going to put it on your block." Oh, wait, we didn't say that." You know what I'm saying? We want housing, but don't put it on my block.

**Mayor Adams:** So I want you to go to all the advocates, go to all those who are making the elected decisions and say, "Who's going to raise their hands first to allow Eric to build the housing that he wants to do on their block?" So you can't talk the talk if you're not going to walk the walk. I will have housing on my block. On the corner of Lafayette and Lewis, we have a location ready, willing, and able. And when people attempted to boycott them, I say, "No, you won't." We are going to talk and live what we say. So go pull all the people who are saying nay, they tell them to give me the address of their block and we'll find a location for them. Until then, I ignore them.

[Crosstalk]

**Question:** [Inaudible] said something about this event. Okay, but you did say that you don't want to be asked about metrics and numbers, about a commitment for a particular type of unit. But if you don't have metrics and numbers, how do you measure success? So are you going to be measuring success by the amount of people that you can get housing? Or what kind of numbers should we be looking for in terms of this plan?

**Mayor Adams:** One of the most important things I learned from Jessica is that we were focusing on these high numbers and not how many people we place in apartments. That is our metrics. How many people we place in the apartments. How many people we place in housing. How well we do and partner with housing and NYCHA to turn around the amount of time it takes to complete a ticket. The amount of time to repair. We want to focus on the finished product, not the pathway to that finished product.

**Question:** Thanks. Mr. Mayor, follow up on Courtney's question. So how many people do you want to place in housing? What is your metric for achieving?

**Mayor Adams:** As many as possible.

**Question:** The last administration was criticized for not doing enough very low income housing, will you spend more city resources [inaudible].

**Mayor Adams:** We're going to do as much as we can for low and middle income housing. We often abandon middle income housing, and we need to stop doing that. And we're going to do as much as we can for low and middle income housing.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor, I have two questions. One is a follow up on David.

**Mayor Adams:** I'm going to give you the same answer.

**Question:** Okay. I'm going to ask it anyway.

**Mayor Adams:** Okay.

**Question:** I'm going to dig into, there was a New York Times article today about what Houston has done and they've made really impressive strides in reducing homelessness and it's predicated on a housing first model. So similar to what David was saying, they're able to convince people to stop living in encampments, because they're saying, you don't have to go to a shelter. You don't have to accept AA treatment, drug treatments. We're going to give you an apartment or a house. I'm wondering, does the city have enough money, enough political will to move to a model like that?

**Mayor Adams:** I'm going to let Jessica move in. I'm going to call the mayor, a good friend of mine, Turner in Houston. I would like to go visit him. But whenever I lead the city to see great projects, you all write stories. Why is Eric away for a day? You know, but you know, that's part of the noise. But I'm going to call my mayor, my friend in Houston, because mayors are going to make these tough decisions. And I'm going to look at that. And if I could possibly sneak out without you knowing it, I would like to go down and actually see the project to see what he's doing. But I read the article this morning. I was extremely impressed and there's going to be a combination of things we're going to have to do. And we're going to learn from others. Jessica, you want to answer?

**Katz:** Sure. I'll just add, that article was very inspiring and it was predicated on a housing first approach, which New York City has always laid claim to. We always say we have a housing first approach. It's something that we believe, but in actual practice, we end up with a paperwork first approach. And so that's why we have this real focus in the plan on administrative burdens. So we can achieve something closer to that, where we're housing people more quickly, rather than screening people over and over again and asking them for forms before we can move them into the housing.

**Mayor Adams:** And you know what else is important? Getting people in housing and keeping them in housing. If you don't – to get a house and then find yourself back in the shelter system is, we failed. So you want to get people in housing and keep them in housing by giving them the wraparound services. The information. How to actually live in a house. Financial literacy. There's a lot of things we need to do to make sure we get you in the house and you can stay in the house because we fail them if we don't.

**Question:** So, is there an educational component to all of this, to help people understand how do you get a mortgage or how you take advantage of government programs?

**Mayor Adams:** Part of the build out, you're dead right. The number of people who get into housing and lose their housing, we need to really lean into that number. But yes, we want to make sure our providers, we want them to step up and doing more than providing them as a place. People need to know how to balance their checkbook. How to pay the rent. All these things are important to stay in housing.



**Question:** So Mr. Mayor, your deputy mayor, your housing chief, have said that there is a housing shortage in the city, which is contributing of all these underlying ailments. The city created like 700,000 jobs over the last decade and built just 200,000 new units of housing. You said you don't want to give a number, but what is a successful number for actually putting a dent in the overall housing shortage?

**Mayor Adams:** As many people as possible to get in housing.

**Question:** Is it 30,000?

**Mayor Adams:** I'm not, no, no, no, no. As many people as possible to get into housing. If you say 30,000 and you have 50,000 that are homeless, then what success is that? I got 20,000 people that are not. So I'm not at this magic number. I'm going to get as many people, in my four years, to get into housing as possible. And I'm not playing these numbers of what is this number? No, everyone needs to find housing. Those are my goals.

**Question: Sure.** But if the overall housing production level is what the overall housing production level is, and if you say the way to fix it is to improve that, what is improving that look like? What is the number we can judge you against?

**Mayor Adams:** As many people as possible to get into housing.

**Question:** And the denominator is?

**Mayor Adams:** As many as people as possible to get into housing.

**Moderator:** Can I quickly ask, the folks that are sitting on steps, move to the side for a moment?

**Mayor Adams:** They want to do off-topic. And I don't want you all to go through this. That's how compassionate I am.

**Question:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. We reported in the past two days about the Deputy DOC Commissioner on Security Operations Ronald Brereton. It came to light in

our reporting that he was under investigation for sexual harassment, misuse of funds, other type of misconduct at his previous post at the state DOC. Were you and Commissioner Molina aware of his history before his appointment last month and do you think it's appropriate for him to serve in this role, given that?

**Mayor Adams:** He was promoted twice in this state, after those allegations. Twice. We have a vetting process that's underway and I have full confidence in Commissioner Molina. I was on Rikers today. I'm really impressed. And you're going to see some good stuff that we are doing there, but he's going through our vetting process and I trust Commissioner Molina to get the job done.

**Question:** So you were aware of that history before he was appointed?

**Mayor Adams:** I don't recall saying that.

**Question:** But I'm just trying to clarify, because that's my question.

**Mayor Adams:** Okay. Well, I could understand your clarification, but I answered the question. He is in our vetting process and I trust Commissioner Molina.

###