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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**STATE OF THE CITY: MAYOR DE BLASIO PUTS AFFORDABLE HOUSING AT CENTER OF 2015 AGENDA TO FIGHT INEQUALITY**

**NEW YORK**—In his second State of the City address, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced affordable housing would be the next front in his administration’s fight to lift up families and confront economic inequality. With housing the most significant cost facing New York City families, the Mayor laid out a sweeping set of programs to build a new generation of affordable housing, protect New Yorkers facing displacement from rising rents and harassment, and put in place the groundwork for denser, economically diverse communities with affordable homes for New Yorkers of all means.

“While the state of our city is strong, we face a profound challenge. If we fail to be a city for everyone, we risk losing what makes New York, New York. And nothing more clearly expresses the inequality gap—the opportunity gap—than the soaring cost of housing,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio** in his remarks.

From targeted new programs for populations like veterans and seniors, to specific neighborhoods being studied for growth and rezoning, to new resources to protect tenants, the State of the City put into practice key elements of the Housing New York plan to build and preserve 200,000 affordable homes in the coming decade.

Highlights of those initiatives include:

*Building the Next Generation of Affordable Housing*

**Six Neighborhoods Now Slated for Mandatory Affordable Housing Requirements**

In the first six neighborhoods now being studied for more residential capacity—East New York (Brooklyn), Long Island City (Queens), Jerome Avenue Corridor (Bronx), Flushing West (Queens), and newly announced Bay Street Corridor (Staten Island) and East Harlem (Manhattan)—a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing policy will require all new housing built under rezoning to include affordable units. The first rezoning will enter the formal land use process this spring.

**Bring More Affordable Housing and Better Infrastructure to the Southwest Bronx**

The City will invest \$200 million in affordable housing, new infrastructure and job creation initiatives to the Lower Concourse area of the Southwest Bronx, which will include the construction of a new public open space, roads, local infrastructure upgrades, and remediation to spur development of up to 4,000 units of affordable housing. The design phase of the program will launch in the coming fiscal year.

**Seize the Opportunity for Affordable Housing and Stronger Communities at the Sunnyside Yards**

The City will work with communities in Queens to develop a new vision for the Sunnyside Yards in-keeping with the area’s working- and middle-class DNA. Development of the yards’ 200 acres represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build thousands of new affordable homes, knit together neighborhoods and meet vital needs facing western Queens for new open space, transportation and schools. The City will engage local stakeholders, the MTA, Amtrak and private owners to launch a feasibility study this month to determine the costs and infrastructure needs required to redevelop the rail yards.

## Protecting New Yorkers from Displacement and Homelessness

### **Free Legal Defense for Tenants in All Areas Undergoing Rezoning**

A new \$36 million commitment will provide free legal representation in housing court to all tenants in rezoned neighborhoods facing harassment, building neglect or eviction proceedings. Approximately 90 percent of tenants enter housing court without a lawyer. The new funding will triple the City's investment in these free legal services for tenants. Coupled with City efforts to protect and strengthen rent regulation in Albany, the City will aggressively protect the existing affordable housing in changing neighborhoods.

### **End Homelessness Among Veterans**

Through new programs, new outreach, and a new priority for veterans in specific housing programs, the City will end homelessness by the end of 2015 for the approximately 1,000 veterans living in shelters and on New York City streets.

### **Help Seniors Live Independently**

With half of seniors "housing-burdened," the City will create and preserve 10,000 units of senior housing, supported by a \$400 million capital investment as well as Section 8 vouchers. The first projects, many under a new Senior Affordable Rental Apartments (SARA) program, will begin in 2015.

### **Keep New York City Affordable for Artists and Makers**

To help low-income artists thrive in New York City, the Department of Cultural Affairs will invest \$30 million in 1,500 affordable live/work spaces for artists in the coming decade, working with cultural partners, housing agencies and the philanthropic community. The City will also convert underutilized City-owned assets into 500 below-market artist workspaces, creating new cultural hubs for communities to share in performances and arts education.

## Supporting Growth with Better Infrastructure

### **Launch a Five-Borough Ferry System**

To make sure there is new transportation to accommodate growth, the City will launch a new Citywide Ferry Service that will knit together existing East River routes with new landings and services to Astoria, the Rockaways, South Brooklyn, Soundview and the Lower East Side. Pegged to the cost of a Metrocard, service will launch in 2017 and will be supported by City operating support and a \$55 million capital commitment. Further expansion to Stapleton and Coney Island will constitute a second phase of expansion, pending additional funding.

### **Implement 13 New Bus Rapid Transit Routes**

To connect growing neighborhoods and improve commutes for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, the City will develop and implement 13 new Bus Rapid Transit routes through 2017. Improved service, off-board fare collection, dedicated bus lanes and reduced travel times will speed commutes on Woodhaven Boulevard, Utica Avenue, Flushing-to-Jamaica, and 86th Street during the next immediate wave of expansion. The City will partner with the MTA, New York State, and US Department of Transportation to secure multi-level support for the Select Bus Service program, starting with a \$295 million commitment from the City.

In his remarks, Mayor de Blasio called New Yorkers to come together to build and preserve the next generation of affordable housing as part of a broader agenda to confront income inequality. Below are excerpts of his address, as prepared for delivery:

"If we do not act—and act boldly—New York risks taking on the qualities of a gated community. A place defined by exclusivity, rather than opportunity. And we cannot let that happen."

“This administration is taking a fundamentally different approach—one that not only recognizes the need for more affordable housing, but demands it. How will we do this? First, we’re writing new rules, ones that mandate affordable housing as a condition of development in areas rezoned for residential use. Second, we’ll do everything in our power to keep those who already have affordable housing in their homes. And third—since we only have so much land—we’ll create more affordable housing by literally building up: adding density to appropriate parts of our city.”

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“For the first time in New York City history, we are creating a Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning requirement that will apply to all major residential re-zonings. In every major rezoning development, we will require developers to include affordable housing—not as an option—as a precondition.”

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“We need stronger rent regulations that reflect today’s New York. To preserve our city as a place for everyone, we need to do more than ever to protect the one million rent-regulated apartments in New York. For so many, it’s the only way they make ends meet and the only path to the middle class.”

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“For years, the conventional wisdom has been that certain neighborhoods are doomed to isolation because of their geography. We are going to change that. Today, we announce that we’re launching a new citywide ferry service to be open for business in 2017. New ferry rides will be priced the same as a MetroCard fare, so ferries will be as affordable to everyday New Yorkers as our subways and buses, so residents of the Rockaways and Red Hook and Soundview will now be closer to the opportunities they need.”

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“Today, we’ve focused on the number one expense in the lives of most New Yorkers. Reducing that expense is absolutely critical to addressing the Tale of Two Cities. But we’ll also fight on the other end of the equation. Because nothing does more to address income equality than actually raising people’s incomes... That’s why we will fight to raise New York City’s minimum wage to more than \$13 in 2016, while indexing the minimum wage, which will bring us to \$15 per hour by 2019.”

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“Creating more affordable housing; raising wages and benefits; strengthening our neighborhoods by better connecting them to jobs and opportunity—that is how we’ll take on the Tale of Two Cities.”

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