

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Delivers Remarks at Opening of Affordable Homes on Former Site of Spofford Juvenile Detention Center, Where he was Once Held

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Andrew Kimball, President and CEO, New York City Economic Development Corporation: Okay, good morning. Good morning. Good morning everybody. My name is Andrew Kimball. I'm President and CEO of New York City's Economic Development Corporation. It is amazing to be here. You feel the energy in the room. Maria and I were just joking that she and I and the mayor have been in the South Bronx so much recently that we need to get maybe an office, maybe an adjunct office in the councilman's space. There's a lot going on up here and that's really due to tremendous elected leadership over a number of decades. And we've got a lot of the players here – have been a part of that and so much great on the ground leadership from not-for-profits and of course our partners in the private sector who made this project happen. This is another transformational project for the South Bronx. We're celebrating the completion of phase one of The Peninsula that not only has this spectacular 100% affordable housing complex, but, near and dear to my heart, also jobs right across the street in a new retail space on Tiffany Street.

Kimball: So EDC works with Mayor Adams to invest in communities to address pressing needs and drive an inclusive economic recovery. And in 2015, EDC began working with the community and elected officials on a plan to transform the site of the former Spofford Juvenile Detention Center, an infamous place that left many scars over many decades. And after it closed in 2011, it served as a painful reminder of an often painful past. Today, though, we chip away at that. This redevelopment is a symbol of hope for the community, a symbol of a better tomorrow addressing neighborhood needs for affordable housing, local jobs, community, and open space. It's a prime example of the type of investments the city and this administration will make to generate better outcomes for communities and residents. Mayor Adams is committed to addressing the

affordable housing crisis and he's particularly focused in Hunts Point, and he's working to make this city a place of opportunities for all New Yorkers.

Kimball: And for the EDC team, so many of whom are here, this is also a deeply personal project. It's not just another development. It's an opportunity to create transformational change, an opportunity to do better for the South Bronx and the Hunts Point community. And I'd like to thank so many of the community members who ensured we upheld your vision every step of the way. In particular, I'd like to thank our elected officials: Richie Torres, couldn't be with us today; Borough President Gibson, also couldn't make it; Council Member Salamanca, who I've stood with many times in recent months; Senator... Yeah. Round of applause for that. Senator Sepúlveda, also couldn't make it. And Assemblymember Septimo, who is here. Delighted to have her.

Kimball: I'd also like to thank our city partners at HPD. Commissioner Carrión, who I worked with many years ago on projects in the Bronx and has delivered over and over. And also former Bronx Borough President Rubén Díaz, Jr. And now I'd like to introduce the amazing team of developers on this project, working tirelessly for the city. MHANY Executive Director Ismene Speliotis, Chairman of Gilbane Development Company Robert Gilbane, and Aaron Kaufman with Hudson.

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Kimball: All right. What a great development team. Before I introduce our next speaker, I just want to acknowledge deputy borough president and newest EDC board member, Janet Peguero. And it's now my great pleasure to introduce my boss who played key roles in this project over a number of different assignments in government, Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer.

Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer, Economic and Workforce

Development: Thank you, Andrew. Good morning, everyone. I could not be happier or more inspired to be with all of you this morning. I want to thank our amazing elected officials, our partners in government at EDC, at HPD, at HDC. And of course, the wonderful development team: Ismene, Aaron, Bob, and all of the community leaders who are here because you fought for a very long time to do the right thing for this site and for this community. And so this is a tribute to all of those efforts and for that love and for that care that you showed over the years. Now, I know in government, you're not really supposed to have favorite projects, but I have to say this one means a lot to me.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: As Andrew mentioned, back in 2015, I was at the Economic Development Corporation when the initial RFP was released. And that was not just any old RFP. It was really for all of us an opportunity to make good and to deliver on the community's vision, to transform a site, a place that everyone who's here knows was for too long a symbol of pain and despair and struggle in this community. And to transform it into something better, transform it to something that benefits this community and its residents, and will benefit them for generations to come. I was fortunate enough before leaving EDC to designate the wonderful development team. So thank you for not screwing it up...

[Laughter]

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: ... and while at HPD was part of a team that helped finance. And before I left government was able to do one of the... I think there are a few different demolition events, but that was so important because the act of taking down the structure was not just one that was physical. I know for so many in this community, it was one that was visceral and emotional and meant more than just a site coming down.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: And so it's just so meaningful to me to be with all of you today, because so much of the work that we do in government is of course not a sprint or a marathon. It's a relay. And so various people have passed the baton and will continue to pass the baton to make sure that it's not just phase one of this project, but it's phase two and phase three, to fully deliver on the vision that this community truly deserves. We'll talk about December. I know there's a lot of conversation. That's the man you need to talk to, but I just want to mention as Andrew said, of course, it all starts with safe and affordable housing. And this mayor's commitment to safe and affordable housing is unmatched.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: And it has to include a wide range of opportunities. And that's why this project, I think, is so special because the residents of this community will have an opportunity to participate in the neighborhood's economic revitalization. Bronx-based small businesses can thrive in the industrial space on the site, and artists can utilize affordable space to rehearse. And so residents won't just have safe, affordable housing, but really access to the types of jobs that are so critical at all times, but especially given what's at stake today in our city.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: And so we know as we look forward, we expect a head start for early childhood education, a healthcare center, a supermarket, all of that is part of phase two and phase three. So these will be game changers for the health and the wellness of this community. And I really do look forward to coming back to celebrate future milestones. And so at some point, people said that it wasn't possible to grow anything here in this site or in this community, but we all know that's not true because through this project and many others driven by the amazing champions and leaders of this community, so much opportunity is growing right here in the Bronx and we intend to continue that. Thank you.

Kimball: Thank you, Maria. Our next two speakers are really the key players on delivering on housing in New York City, and are really going to be driving it the next few years under Mayor Adams. And it's really a pleasure to first introduce HPD Commissioner Adolfo Carrión.

Commissioner Adolfo Carrión Jr., Department of Housing Preservation and Development: Thank you, Andrew. And good morning, everyone.

Audience: Good morning.

Commissioner Carrión, Jr.: Come on, church. Good morning, everyone.

Audience: Good morning.

Commissioner Carrión, Jr.: Amen. Buenos días. I'm number 12 and that's number 13, and number 14 is represented by 14 and a half. This moment is incredibly special to me, very personal. I'm almost not here as the commissioner, but just as Adolfo from the Bronx. Revival, renewal, and restoration doesn't happen by accident. The South Bronx's return from the burning South Bronx of the 1970s, and you all have heard, we all say that that October chilly evening when Howard Cosell turns to the world and says, "Ladies and gentlemen, the Bronx is burning." And you had the blimp overlooking the South Bronx, and you could see fires everywhere. It was not government that saved the South Bronx. It was not businesses or investors from the outside that saved the South Bronx. It was the people, the people living and what was left there, living and walking among the rubble, unfortunately. You remember those pictures. Attending little storefront churches where around the church there was rubble, and then there was this

little building and people went into worship believing that they should not be defined by the limits of their circumstances.

Commissioner Carrión Jr.: And the people insisted, including the kids. And Rubén tells the story best when he talks about the birth of hip hop and the voice of the young people creating an international cultural and music movement that is unmatched in human history because they just couldn't take it anymore, and they were not going to be defined by the limits of their circumstances. And so then we come along, government officials, we come along. The people from the hood who rise up like a Rafael Salamanca, a young kid who is in the neighborhood and sees that "I got to do something." And he gets appointed to a community board and he runs for City Council and he becomes the chair of land use, and Rubén Díaz, and so many others who just decided to roll up their sleeves and... Like the deputy mayor suggested, it's a relay. The relay is long because they just kept passing the baton forward and forward and paying it forward.

Commissioner Carrión Jr.: And here we are today at the site of what was really an ugly place in the history of the Bronx, New York City, and even the country. How we were treating kids, how we didn't believe in their dignity as human beings. And now look at this. This is just the beginning. We're going to continue to invest. We look forward to working with our community partners. Paul, The Point, Urban Health Plan. This neighborhood, this area did it. And we are the supporting actors. Eric and I, the mayor, Andrew, Maria, we are all the supporting actors now for this community. We will support you, we will continue to build, and we look forward to the next record-breaking phase of this project working with Gilbane, the Hudson, and the Mutual Housing Association of New York. Congratulations to the general contractor, congratulations to every hand that has something to do with the success of today. God bless you.

Kimball: Thank you, Adolfo. And it's now my great pleasure to introduce HDC president, Eric Enderlin.

Eric Enderlin, President, New York City Housing Development Corporation: Good morning, everyone. It is such an honor to be here. And you think about, "What can I add to this conversation?" I think the commissioner said it beautifully. And, by the way, it is so great to work with Maria Torres-Springer again. Congratulations to Maria. This is an incredible site. And let me start by saying, one of the foundations of environmentalism is the idea that every place has the potential to be loved. And if this building shows

anything, it's absolutely that. So I'm proud to represent the Housing Finance Agency. The commissioner just said very rightly that this starts with the people, but investment also matters. Investment is absolutely key. HDC is proud to have contributed \$56 million to the financing of this development, we have the mayor here, \$56 million to the financing of this development. We're very proud of the work.

Enderlin: And as a houser, I should be most focused on this building, but I have to say, in many ways, one of the most important buildings on this site is going to be this building. When we think about adding jobs and mixing uses – and the mayor who's just arrived has said many, many times, talked about fixing problems upstream and eliminating problems downstream, and that's exactly what this does. When you create jobs, when you mix uses, you start to solve problems upstream. And mayor, we've heard that, the people of New York have heard that. The housing agencies have heard your message and that's a very, very important message. Let me just congratulate the development team here today. Let me also congratulate my HDC folks who are here today, and my colleagues at HPD as well. It is great to be part of this, and it's a really fantastic day for the Bronx. Thank you very much.

Kimball: All of us in city government are blessed to have a tremendous partner in the City Council in Council Member Salamanca, you just can't get big projects like this done without that kind of leadership. It's a great honor to introduce the Council member.

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Kimball: Thank you very much, Council member. It's now a great pleasure to introduce a key partner for us in the legislature, Assemblymember Amanda Septimo.

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Kimball: Thank you very much. Our cleanup hitter is ready to step up to the plate, committed to bringing home dynamic projects around housing and jobs and economic development, not just here but across the entire city. It's a great pleasure to introduce the mayor of New York City, Eric Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. Thank you so much. Just in my brevity, there's just a level of subtext to what is happening here. It's good to see my brother, brother, brother,

Rubén Díaz, Jr. that's here with us. But it is a continuation. It's a continuation. When you think about the fact that Adolfo Carrión is now in charge of HPD, former Bronx borough president. When you hear Councilman Salamanca talks about how he did this in the community board, then went on to the City Council. Now we see that this first phase is done. And we have another phase to do.

Mayor Adams: When you come in as a mayor and a team, and your mindset is you must be the starter of something instead of the finisher of something, that is what destroys the real progress in our city. I'm not here to reinvent the wheel. I'm here to make sure that the wheel that has already been put in place, it continues to roll to the completion of the project. We will get this done. We will get this done. It doesn't matter whose name is on the placard that's put up on who has accomplished it. It's about getting these great projects done.

Mayor Adams: Nothing could be more significant than that I was housed here as a juvenile in Spofford, and now we are building housing to prevent people from being housed in a juvenile correctional facility. That is amazing. That is great about this city. My administration is going to take the juvenile facility that I was a juvenile offender in and now I'm returning as the mayor to build a place to house people in. That's what we're talking about. That's what we're talking about.

Mayor Adams: We know that this community has been denied for so long, so long. You have been the backdrop of a photo-op. You have not received the support you deserve. Rubén was fighting so hard. He was moving us to the pathway and COVID hit and decimated this community. All the work you did, brother, of moving us in the right direction year after year, really changing the symbol of the Bronx. And he was hit hard with COVID. Now you have a new borough president, Vanessa Gibson, who's solid, who's going to continue that. I know your work. I know what you were doing. I know the electeds that are here that are so focused. Your stories are clear. You don't come from a textbook. You come from the block. You know what this represented and what it was.

Mayor Adams: That's the beauty of this group of electeds from the Bronx. They all came here. When I hear you talk about your dad in Hunts Point and how he used to come to work every day, these are real stories and real lives. These are not people who made it and then fled it. These are people who made it and stayed to say, "We're going to make a better future for those who are coming up after us." I'm really proud to be able to complete this project. This is not only your favorite project, this is going to be my

favorite project, because it's all about the possibilities and opportunities. Thank you.
Thank you all. I look forward. We got our team here. We're going to get it done. Thank
you.

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