

Public &  
Collaborative:

Designing  
Services  
for Housing

# EVALUATING NEW HOUSING SERVICES

ASSESSING IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES OF  
PUBLIC & COLLABORATIVE: DESIGNING SERVICES FOR HOUSING

LIANA DRAGOMAN & KAJA KÜHL



Public &  
Collaborative  
New York City

**NYC**  
Department of  
Housing Preservation  
& Development

**PARSONS  
DESIS  
LAB**  
THE NEW SCHOOL

**PUBLIC  
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WWW.G



NYC  
Housing  
Connect

Find and Apply for  
Affordable Housing

Ask Us About Affordable Housing



WWW.G  
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Department of  
Housing Preservation  
& Development  
[www.nyc.gov/hpd](http://www.nyc.gov/hpd)

HPD staff share new informational materials at a pilot of the street team proposal.

# Executive Summary

## Background

In 2013, the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, the Parsons DESIS Lab, and the Public Policy Lab released a set of proposals intended to help New Yorkers more successfully navigate the affordable housing application process. (*Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing*, the sister publication to this report, details the proposals and the collaborative design process used to develop them.) The pilot proposals recommended that HPD enhance the application process by:

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

These new services and materials were designed to create a knowledge-sharing infrastructure that enables the dynamic and reciprocal exchange of information among HPD leadership and front-line staff, residents, community-based partners, and housing developers.

## Evaluation Activities

This document is a candid evaluation of pilot implementations of the Public & Collaborative services and materials. Using a range of qualitative and quantitative assessments—including results from a survey of nearly 2,500 New Yorkers—the evaluation team looked both at the process by which each of four pilot proposals was implemented and also the outcomes and impacts of those activities. Piloting and evaluation activities took place over a 12-month period, ending in July 2014.

## Evaluation of Objectives & Outcomes

The evaluation team found that the pilots clearly met the proposals’ stated design objectives: to encourage information accessibility and exchange, account for applicants’ lived reality, and enable more informed decision-making (although findings were somewhat mixed regarding the first of those objectives). The pilots also achieved their intended short-term outcomes, to create stronger support for community groups that provide applicants with assistance and to generate greater access to information about the process. Long-term outcomes and impacts, described below, also pointed toward success, though findings in those areas are necessarily preliminary.

## Evaluation of Implementation

Test implementation of all four pilots was largely carried out as designed. Piloting revealed that the informational materials and the housing ambassadors programs are effective and are suitable for scaling. Implementation of the street team and hyper-local marketing proposals was successfully achieved, but the pilots also suggest a need for additional resources or different approaches before the programs are scaled up.

## Next Steps

The findings and recommendations contained in this assessment are intended to provide guidance to the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development as the agency contemplates scaling the pilot programs. It’s also hoped that this evaluation will inspire and support similar efforts by other design practitioners to carry out and publish assessments of programs to innovate public services.

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# 1 EVALUATION OF DESIGN OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES

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A primary goal of our evaluation process was to determine if the four proposals, when piloted, actually met the three original design objectives and created a new infrastructure for knowledge sharing between affordable housing applicants and providers.



## WHAT WERE THE DESIGN OBJECTIVES?

The goal of the Public & Collaborative pilots was to test whether a new knowledge-sharing infrastructure—a coordinated approach to providing information through multiple channels—could create a better service experience for New Yorkers during the affordable housing application process overseen by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). To meet that goal, the pilots were designed to meet three objectives:

- Encourage information accessibility and exchange.
- Account for applicants' lived reality.
- Enable more informed decision-making.

A fourth objective of the pilots was to carry out an assessment of the pilot activities—the purpose of this document.

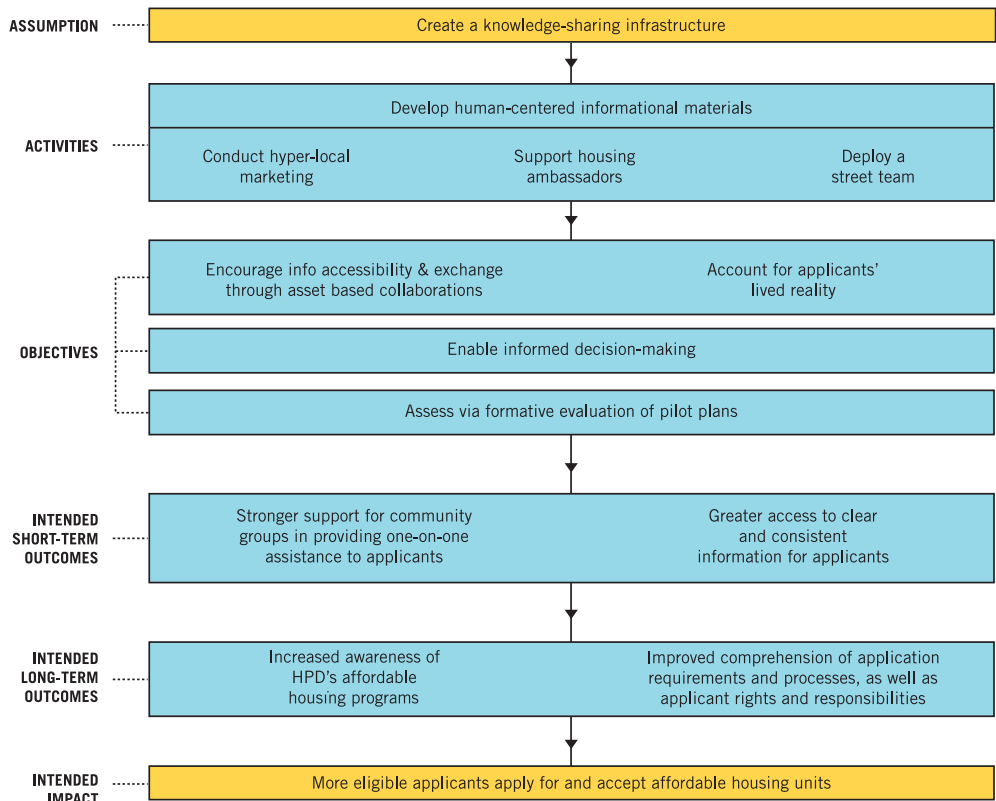
## WHAT OUTCOMES WERE EXPECTED?

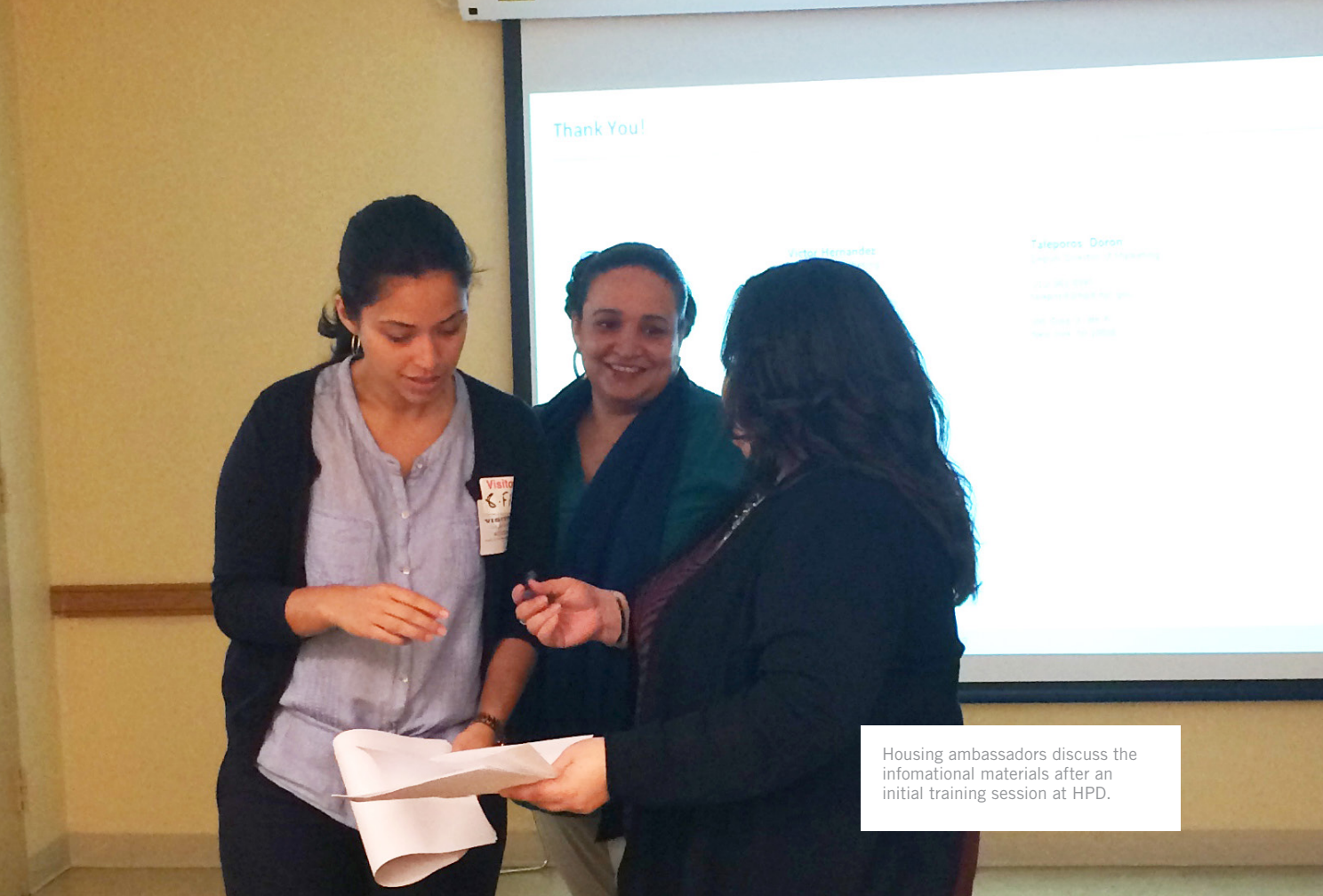
The project's theory of change (see Figure 1) was that by meeting these design objectives, the pilots would contribute to short- and long-term outcomes: In the short term, the project team hoped that meeting the design objectives would lead to stronger support for community groups providing one-on-one assistance to applicants and to greater applicant access to clear and consistent information about the process.

In the longer term, the design objectives were intended to increase awareness of HPD's affordable housing program and improve comprehension of application requirements and processes, as well as applicant rights and responsibilities. Ultimately, the intended impact is for more eligible applicants to apply for and accept affordable housing units.

**FIGURE 1**  
**THEORY OF CHANGE**

By carrying out the pilot activities, the project team hoped to meet specific short- and long-term design objectives.





Housing ambassadors discuss the informational materials after an initial training session at HPD.

## HOW DID WE ASSESS THE OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES?

Although the ultimate impact cannot yet be evaluated, given the relatively short timeframe since the pilots' launch, we can now assess whether the pilots met their design objectives and offer some preliminary findings about the outcomes of the pilot activities.

Evaluation of the design objectives and outcomes is based on results from a range of quantitative and qualitative assessments, including:

- responses from nearly 2,500 housing applicants to an online survey (posted over four weeks from June to July 2014, a period during which nearly 250,000 applications were submitted to eight developments);
- tracking of materials downloads over eight months, between November 2013 and July 2014;
- an in-person survey of 60 members of the public who interacted with the HPD street team pilot on May 6, 2014;

- in-person user-testing sessions with ambassadors and applicants;
- observation of ambassador information sessions and monitoring of feedback calls;
- shadowing of marketing agents during hyper-local activities;
- observation of the street team pilot in action;
- assessment interviews with HPD staff, marketing agents, and ambassadors; and
- bi-weekly status calls with the project team to review implementation activities.

The preliminary evaluation plan—as well as survey questions, testing scripts, and interview questions—are presented as appendices to this document. Note also that findings below aggregate stakeholders' experiences in order to evaluate the design objectives and outcomes. For detailed information on the implementation of each pilot, see specific sections of Part 2.

## OBJECTIVE 1

# Did the Pilots Encourage Information Accessibility & Exchange?

### OVERALL ASSESSMENT

**YES**

The informational materials and the three community-based systems for collaboration were designed to build shared knowledge among the affordable housing community, from HPD to developers, community based organizations (CBOs), and potential applicants. The first design objective was for stakeholders to have ready access to good information—and then to not only personally become more informed, but also begin to share knowledge with their networks.

To evaluate whether the pilots encouraged information accessibility and exchange, we've assessed how well the collective pilot activities met our evaluation criteria:

<b>DID THE PILOT ACTIVITIES...</b>	<b>ASSESSMENT</b>
enhance the work of each stakeholder in the system?	<b>mixed</b>
meet stakeholder needs and expectations for information exchange and support?	<b>mixed</b>
provide adequate access to informational materials?	<b>mixed</b>
encourage collaboration among implementation partners?	<b>yes</b>
support CBOs in providing one-to-one assistance to applicants?	<b>yes</b>
encourage information exchange between potential applicants and their peer networks?	<b>yes</b>
empower potential applicants to use and share the informational materials?	<b>yes</b>
encourage collective empowerment through collaboration and information exchange?	<b>yes</b>
clarify incomplete or inaccurate assumptions held by stakeholders?	<b>yes</b>
help stakeholders keep up with marketing information?	<b>yes</b>

## FINDINGS

### Did the pilots enhance the work of each stakeholder in the system?

Findings were mixed. Applicants benefited from all three community-based outreach systems and from the informational materials, in whatever way they were accessed. Ambassadors appreciated the materials and the new support their pilot provided. HPD derived significant benefit from the materials and from the strengthened relationship with ambassadors; the street team and hyper-local pilots provided some value, but with operational caveats. Developers benefited perhaps the least, as the hyper-local pilot had a limited observed return on time invested.

### Did the pilots meet stakeholder needs and expectations for information exchange and support?

Findings were mixed. HPD and ambassadors' expectations were largely met, and applicants were strongly positive about the provision of easy-to-understand materials. However, in some cases, applicants' increased understanding of the process led to disappointment at their lack of eligibility or the limited numbers of appropriate units available, and some developers struggled with the requirements of their hyper-local pilot and/or experienced challenges adapting the new advertisement template.

### Did the pilots provide adequate access to informational materials?

Findings were mixed. Over the eight-month tracking period, materials were downloaded from multiple online locations a total of more than 350,000 times (see Figure 2). In addition, HPD printed and distributed approximately 2,000 physical copies of these assets to ambassadors and members of the public.

While this scale of distribution exceeded expectations for the pilot phase, it should be noted that survey responses from nearly 2,500 online applicants showed that fewer than half of all respondents had accessed any one of the informational materials (see Figure 3), suggesting that a significant number of applicants went through the process without additional informational support.

### Did the pilots encourage collaboration among implementation partners?

Yes. In particular, HPD's marketing team and the ambassador organizations developed strong new working relationships. We also observed a successful level of collaboration among different divisions within HPD (e.g. marketing, strategic planning, and public outreach and education staff).

### Did the pilots support CBOs in providing one-to-one assistance to applicants?

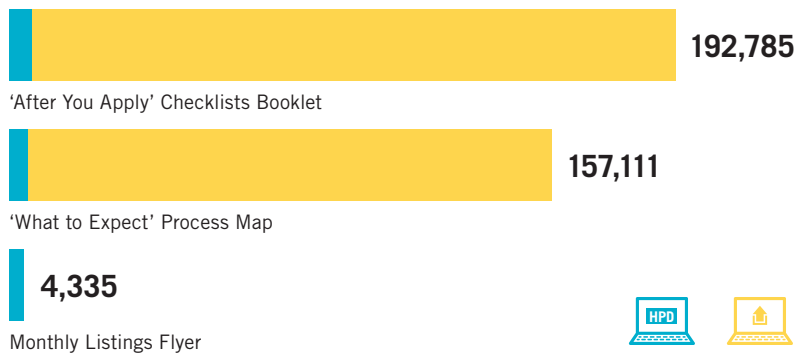
Yes. Ambassadors reported successfully using the materials to communicate the concepts of the application process with their constituents. The informational materials were frequently used as the basis for more in-depth questions, explanations, or discussion.

FIGURE 2

#### MATERIAL DOWNLOADS

Information materials were downloaded more than 350,000 times during the eight-month pilot period.

#### Download Totals (November 2013–July 2014)



HPD  
Website



Housing  
Connect

### Did the pilots encourage information exchange between potential applicants and their peer networks?

Yes. Members of the public who interacted with the street team reported that the one-on-one engagement with team members prepared them to share affordable housing with their friends and family. Hyper-local marketing activities also prompted feedback from members of the public about their interest in sharing affordable housing knowledge with their networks.

### Did the pilots empower potential applicants to utilize and share the informational materials?

Yes. Ambassadors reported that applicants asked for additional copies of materials to share with family and friends.

### Did the pilots encourage collective empowerment through collaboration and information exchange?

Yes. Overall, most stakeholders reported an increased level of knowledge and confidence after using the materials and interacting with other participants.

### Did the pilots clarify incomplete or inaccurate assumptions held by stakeholders?

Yes. Applicants who met with ambassadors reported a greater understanding of application requirements and their ability to meet those requirements—although, as noted above, the realization by some applicants that they were likely not eligible was often disappointing.

### Did the pilots help stakeholders keep up with marketing information?

Yes. Ambassadors appreciated the monthly listing flyer, in particular, as a tool to stay on top of current developments. Applicants also found the flyer helpful, but it should be noted that the visualization of only those units currently being marketed made it very apparent (especially during the street team event) how limited the choices and options can be at various times, confirming the belief of many New Yorkers that affordable housing is not available for them.

#### PILOT FEEDBACK

**“Can I take the left-over printouts? I do community corners at our church on Saturdays and would like to use them to explain how to apply to people in my community.”**

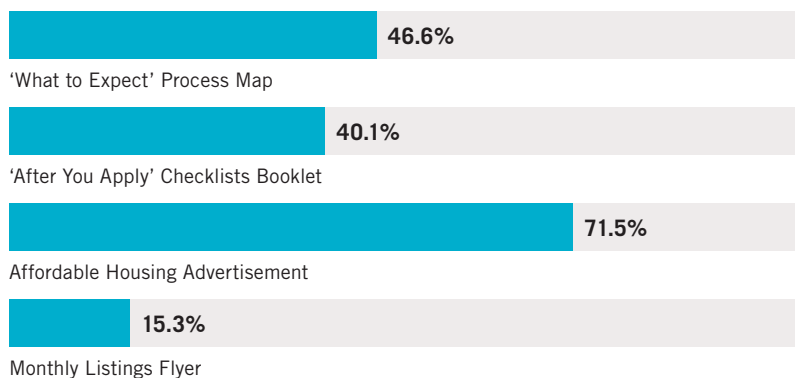
Participant at Workshop  
Organized by a Housing  
Ambassador

FIGURE 3

### ONLINE SURVEY: MATERIALS RECOGNITION

Survey respondents' familiarity with the survey materials ranged from a high of 72% (for the housing advertisement) to a low of 15% (for the monthly listings flyer).

When trying to learn more about affordable housing in New York City, did you find or see...



## OBJECTIVE 2

# Did the Pilots Account for Applicants' Lived Realities?

### OVERALL ASSESSMENT

**YES**

The second design objective was for New Yorkers to have access to affordable housing information in their everyday environs, on the premise that potential applicants would be more receptive to receiving information presented in the context of their daily lives.

To evaluate whether the pilots accounted for applicants' lived reality, we've assessed how well the collective pilot activities met our evaluation criteria:

DID POTENTIAL APPLICANTS...	ASSESSMENT
appreciate interacting with affordable housing informational materials in casual and "everyday" settings?	yes
report that discussion of affordable housing in informal settings affected their receptivity to and comprehension of informational materials?	yes
indicate that person-to-person interactions facilitated by informational materials informed their decision to apply for housing?	yes

## FINDINGS

### Did potential applicants appreciate interacting with affordable housing informational materials in casual and "everyday" settings?

Yes. Members of the public who interacted with the street team indicated that they valued the team's appearance in a community location, and many requested more such appearances. Members of the public who interacted with hyper-local marketing activities similarly expressed appreciation for finding affordable housing information in such convenient locations as bodegas, laundromats, etc.

### Did potential applicants report that discussion of affordable housing in informal settings affected their comprehension of informational materials?

Yes. Residents who interacted with street team members and ambassadors expressed appreciation for the materials and reported that they were helpful, and more than two-thirds of online survey respondents reported that the materials increased their comprehension (see Figure 5). Note that our evaluation process unfortunately did not allow for surveying potential applicants to determine their comprehension of the process *before* using the materials, then assessing their understanding *after* exposure to the materials.



A hyper-local marketing pilot agent posts a housing advertisement in an everyday setting—a laundromat.

**Did potential applicants indicate that person-to-person interactions facilitated by informational materials informed their decision to apply for housing?**

Yes. Ambassadors reported that when they reviewed the materials with potential applicants, those applicants were then clearer on available opportunities and requirements. In some cases, a greater comprehension of program requirements also led people who were not eligible for a given development to recognize that and to refrain from applying.

### OBJECTIVE 3

# Did the Pilots Enable Informed Decision-Making?

#### OVERALL ASSESSMENT

**YES**

The third design objective was to increase applicants' comprehension of the affordable housing application process, enabling more informed decision-making during their application experience.

To evaluate how well the pilots enabled more informed decision-making, we've assessed how well potential applicants:

DID POTENTIAL APPLICANTS...	ASSESSMENT
understand the informational materials and find them to be clear and trustworthy?	<b>yes</b>
better understand application time frames and processes, as described by the informational materials?	<b>yes</b>
better understand and interpret income guidelines, per the description in the informational materials?	<b>yes</b>
use the informational materials as a self-guiding tool, or use them to pass on information to members of their networks?	<b>yes</b>

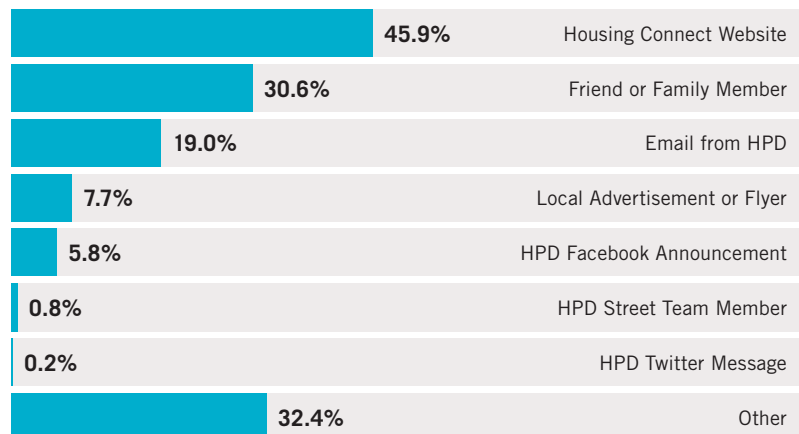
Feedback on this objective was primarily gathered during the street team event and in interviews with housing ambassadors. Most members of the public appreciated the clarity of the informational material as well as the opportunity to ask questions in a variety of settings (street team appearance, ambassador-held info sessions).

FIGURE 4

### ONLINE SURVEY: SOURCES OF HOUSING INFORMATION

Many survey respondents reported receiving information about affordable housing from their friends and family members.

#### How did you find out about the affordable housing opportunity you applied to recently?





## FINDINGS

### **Did potential applicants understand the informational materials and find them to be clear and trustworthy?**

Yes. Respondents to the online survey overwhelmingly indicated that the materials were helpful, as did members of the public who interacted with the street team and ambassadors.

### **Did potential applicants better understand application time frames and processes, as described by the informational materials?**

Yes. The 'What to Expect' process map and the 'After You Apply' checklists booklet allowed applicants to familiarize themselves with the application process.

### **Did potential applicants better understand and interpret income guidelines, per the description in the informational materials?**

Yes. The 'After You Apply' checklists booklet and the clear income requirements on the advertisement also helped applicants to familiarize themselves with income and eligibility requirements. According to feedback from ambassadors and from survey respondents, this caused some frustration as applicants realized that their financial circumstances did not match requirements and that therefore their chances of getting a unit were limited.

#### PILOT FEEDBACK

**“It depressed me to see nothing available for a 2-person, 2-bedroom for a yearly salary of \$50,000.”**

Online Survey Respondent

### **Did potential applicants use the informational materials as a self-guiding tool or use them to pass on information to members of their networks?**

Yes. Ambassadors reported that applicants asked for additional copies of materials to share with family and friends. Members of the public who met the street team and hyper-local market staff also indicated an interest in sharing information about affordable housing with their friends and family. Multiple survey respondents also noted that they had received informational materials “from a friend” or relative, and survey responses suggest that nearly a third of applicants learned of housing opportunities from their social network (see Figure 4).

#### PILOT FEEDBACK

**“The link [to the ‘What to Expect’ process map] was sent to me by a family member.”**

Online Survey Respondent

INTENDED OUTCOME

# Did the Pilots Meet Intended Short-Term Outcomes?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

YES

Meeting the three design objectives was intended to lead to two short-term outcomes. We've assessed how well the collective pilot activities led to these short-term outcomes:

DID THE PILOT ACTIVITIES LEAD TO...	ASSESSMENT
stronger support for community groups providing one-on-one assistance to applicants?	yes
greater applicant access to clear and consistent information about the process?	yes

## FINDINGS

### Did the pilot activities lead to stronger support for community groups providing one-on-one assistance to applicants?

Yes. The informational materials and housing ambassadors' pilots were very successful in providing direct support to CBOs.

### Did the pilot activities lead to greater applicant access to clear and consistent information about the process?

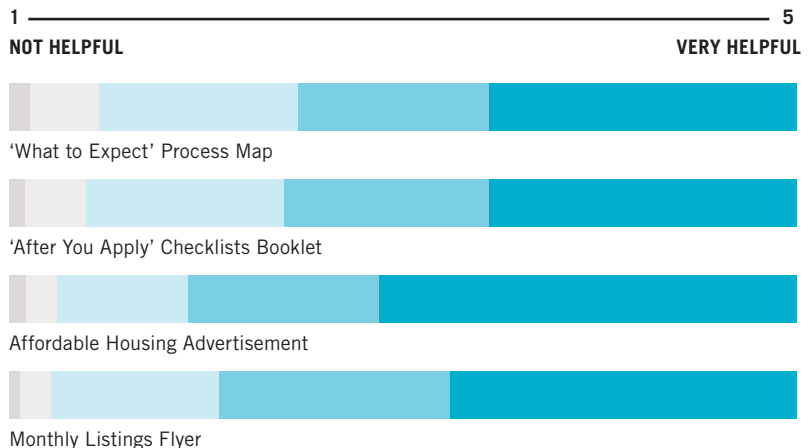
Yes. Respondents to the online survey and members of the public who interacted with housing ambassadors, street team, and hyper-local marketing staff largely suggested that the pilot activities helped make the process easier to understand.

FIGURE 5

## ONLINE SURVEY: AWARENESS & COMPREHENSION

A significant majority of survey respondents gave the informational materials strongly positive ratings—at least a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how helpful was the document for helping you understand the affordable housing application process [process map and checklists booklet] or increasing your awareness of affordable housing opportunities in New York City [advertisement and flyer]?



## INTENDED OUTCOME

# Did the Pilots Meet Intended Long-Term Outcomes?

### OVERALL ASSESSMENT

**PRELIMINARILY, YES**

Meeting the short-term outcomes is intended to lead to two long-term outcomes. Our findings here are preliminary, but we have some indications of how the short-term outcomes are pointing to longer-term outcomes.

<b>DID THE SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES LEAD TO...</b>	<b>ASSESSMENT</b>
increased awareness of HPD's affordable housing program?	<b>yes</b>
improved comprehension of application requirements and processes, as well as applicant rights and responsibilities?	<b>yes</b>

## FINDINGS

### **Did the short-term outcomes lead to increased awareness of HPD's affordable housing programs?**

Yes. Interactions with the public and survey responses indicated that the pilot activities and materials were successful in increasing awareness of HPD's programs.

### **Did the short-term outcomes lead to improved comprehension of application requirements and processes, as well as applicant rights and responsibilities?**

Yes. Interactions with the public and survey responses indicated that the pilot activities and materials were successful in increasing the public's comprehension of HPD's programs. It is worth noting, however, that materials designed to increase awareness (the redesigned housing advertisement and monthly listings flyer) ranked slightly higher in our online survey than comprehension-building materials (the 'What to Expect' process map and 'After You Apply' checklists booklet), with the former judged positively around three-quarters of the time, compared to about two-thirds of respondents giving the comprehension materials strongly positive marks (see Figure 5).

### PILOT FEEDBACK

**"This is indeed very helpful. I am preparing to be prepared."**

Online Survey Respondent



# HPD Housing Ambassadors Pilot



Training

4/23/14

Community organizations taking part in the housing ambassadors pilot attended a training at HPD.

# Have the Pilots Had the Intended Impact?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

**TOO SOON TO TELL**

Ultimately, the intended impact is for more eligible applicants to apply for and accept affordable housing units. As we noted in the original pilot recommendations document, *Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing*, further implementation and evaluation will be required to assess any ultimate impact:

*...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, and*
- *decreasing the number of affordable units going to open market.*

Based on the largely positive outcomes of the pilots, it's our hope that HPD will improve each program and scale it up. Recommendations for scaling are contained in each of the implementation assessment sections that follow.

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# 2 EVALUATION OF PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

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In addition to assessing whether the pilots met the design objectives, we've also attempted to capture the processes involved in implementing the pilots, lessons learned from the implementations, and potential items for consideration should HPD decide to take any pilot to a larger scale.

## PILOT 1

# Assessing the Informational Materials Pilot

The informational materials pilot required HPD to deploy a new set of public-facing communications designed to improve understanding of the application process for affordable housing. Five new materials were developed, each suitable for distribution as print documents or as downloadable PDFs.

Implementation of this pilot required testing content with users, performing iterative design revisions, participating in training sessions, developing content governance plans, and distributing materials strategically through a variety of different channels. The evaluation goal for the informational materials pilot was to understand the effort needed by HPD to engage in this level of content development and management.



A redesigned housing advertisement and three other new informational materials were distributed to the public during pilot activities.

## INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

Prior to releasing the informational materials to the public, HPD and the Public Policy Lab organized two feedback workshops at local community based organizations (CBOs) to evaluate the content and design of the materials. The goals of these workshops were to hear from CBO staff and members of the public to what extent the informational materials were helpful, intuitive, and easy to use. Feedback distilled from these users informed a new round of design refinements before the materials were deployed.

Four documents—the ‘What to Expect’ process map, the monthly listings flyer, the redesigned affordable housing advertisement, and the ‘After You Apply’ checklists booklet—were made available to the public as part of the pilot implementation. A fifth document (the income guide) was not distributed publicly, but was provided to housing ambassadors for their feedback and review.

All four of the publicly released materials were made available in hard copy and were variously used in the three pilots of community-based engagement strategies. Additionally, digital versions of the materials were made available online.

## INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS LESSONS LEARNED

### Did HPD successfully test the informational materials with users and refine appropriately?

Materials were tested with users at two sites, at the offices of the Mutual Housing Association of New York (MHANY) in Brooklyn and on the premises of a housing project developed by the Women’s Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco) in the Bronx.

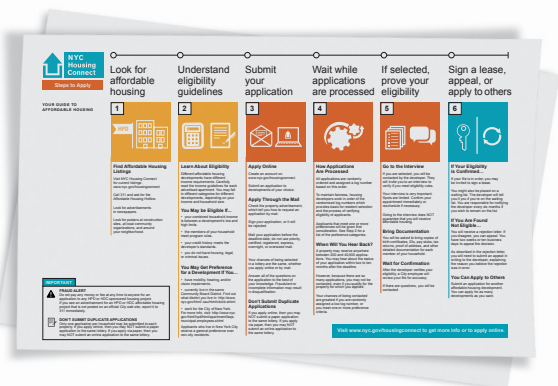
MHANY is a nonprofit organization committed to increasing affordable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income families and working with residents to improve community conditions and increase neighborhood participation, among other goals. The other user-testing site was WHEDco, a community development organization in the Bronx that builds sustainable, affordable homes and also offers residents a wide range of educational, arts, economic development, and family support services.

At MHANY’s Brooklyn office, Public Policy Lab and HPD staff tested the monthly listings flyer, the ‘What to Expect’ process map, and the ‘After You Apply’ checklists booklet with four participants, all of whom had previously sought housing counseling from the organization. WHEDCo’s staff recruited six residents from one of their housing developments. Being residents of affordable housing, these participants had previous experience applying for affordable housing, including documenting their income. As such, the testing team focused on capturing feedback to the income guide.



## 'WHAT TO EXPECT' PROCESS MAP

The process map was developed to help all service participants better understand what to expect from the affordable housing application process. The front of the document shows a simplified service journey—a series of steps an applicant moves through over the duration of the application process, from pre-marketing to lease-up. The reverse of the document details processing requirements and eligibility criteria related to each step.



The 'What to Expect' process map was distributed during the housing ambassadors and street team pilots; it was also posted to the HPD, HDC, and NYC Housing Connect websites as part of the informational materials pilot.

This building is being constructed through the Low-Income Affordable Market Rate Program (LAMP) of the New York City Housing Development Corporation and the Low-Income Rental Program (LIRP) of the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

### Affordable Housing For Rent

**45 NEWLY CONSTRUCTED UNITS**  
**500 West 30th Street, Chelsea, Manhattan**  
 Amenities: 24-hour attended lobby, on-site resident manager, sun terrace, fitness center\*, computer lounge\*, bike terrace\*, party rooms\*\* (additional fees apply)

**Who Should Apply?** Individuals or households who meet the income and household size requirements listed in the table below may apply. Only qualified applicants will be eligible for apartments. Applicants who live in New York City receive a general preference for apartments.

**Preference for a percentage of units goes to:**

- applicants with mobility impairments (5%)
- applicants with visual or hearing impairments (2%)
- residents of Manhattan community districts 7 (50%)
- municipal workers (5%)

Unit Size	Monthly Rent*	Units Available	Household Size**	Annual Household Earning***
Studio	\$525	4	1 person	\$19,920 - \$24,080
Studio	\$670	22	1 person	\$24,892 - \$30,100
1 bedroom	\$564	55	1 person	\$21,328 - \$24,080
			2 people	\$21,328 - \$27,600
1 bedroom	\$720	28	1 person	\$26,675 - \$30,100
			2 people	\$26,675 - \$34,400
2 bedroom	\$687	3	2 people	\$25,612 - \$27,600
			3 people	\$25,612 - \$30,360
2 bedroom	\$873	2	2 people	\$31,989 - \$34,400
			3 people	\$31,989 - \$38,700
2 bedroom, 2 bath	\$873	14	2 people	\$31,989 - \$34,400
			3 people	\$31,989 - \$38,700

\* Rent includes gas for cooking  
 \*\* Persons include all persons who will live with you, including pets and children. Subject to occupancy criteria.  
 \*\*\* Household earning includes every person who will live with you, including pets and children. Income guidelines are based on household members. Income guidelines are subject to change.

**How Do You Apply?** Apply online or through mail. To apply online, please go to: [www.nyc.gov/housingconnect](http://www.nyc.gov/housingconnect). To request an application by mail, send a postcard to: Manhattan Pilot, P.O. Box 1160, New York, NY 10201 and send one application per development. Don't submit duplicate applications. Do not apply online and also send in a paper application. Applicants who submit more than one application will be disqualified.

**When is the Deadline?** Applications must be postmarked or submitted online no later than May 25, 2014. Late applications will not be considered.

**What Happens After You Submit an Application?** After the deadline, applications are selected for review through a lottery process. If you are selected and you appear to qualify, you will be invited to an interview to continue the process of determining your eligibility. Interviews are usually scheduled from 2 to 10 months after the application deadline. You will be asked to bring documents that verify your household size, identify members of your household, and your household income.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg  
 NYC Commissioner Barbara Vucich  
 NYC President Marc Janz

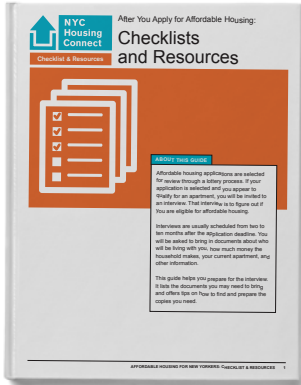
[www.nyc.gov/housingconnect](http://www.nyc.gov/housingconnect)

## HOUSING ADVERTISING TEMPLATE

HPD has long provided developers with a customizable template for each development's official advertisement. Building on findings from design research, the template was redesigned to address housing seekers' difficulties understanding some content; the layout was also altered to accentuate important process details, including how and where to apply for affordable units.

The redesigned housing advertisement was used by 16 developments during the pilot period. Redesigned advertisements were distributed during the housing ambassadors and street team pilots; they were also posted to the HPD and NYC Housing Connect websites and shared via HPD's social media outlets as part of the informational materials pilot. The evaluation team also tracked new distribution methods for the advertisement in the hyper-local marketing pilot.



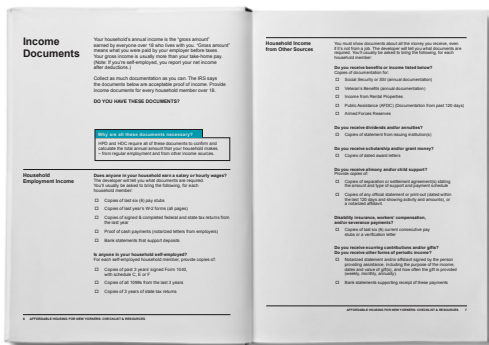


## 'AFTER YOU APPLY' CHECKLISTS BOOKLET

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 'After You Apply' document provides checklists for required documents (e.g., current lease, recent electricity bill, birth certificates for each household member, pay stubs, tax returns, etc.). It also provides tips on how to order missing documents and lists resources for further assistance with housing issues, such as credit disputes. In hard copy, the checklists form a booklet with a central spread for tucking documents as they are collected.

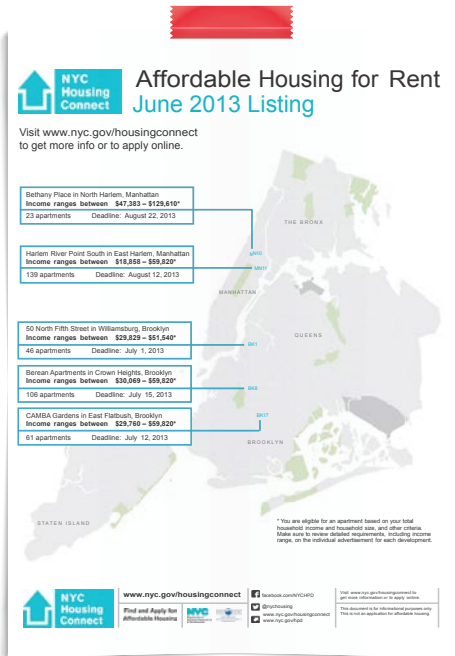
The 'After You Apply' checklists booklet was distributed during the housing ambassadors and street team pilots. It was also posted to the HPD, HDC, and NYC Housing Connect websites for the informational materials pilot.



## MONTHLY LISTING FLYER

Lists of all current developments are available online, but design participants specifically mentioned the need for a hard-copy flyer—to display on bulletin boards, hand out at workshops, or share with non-digital friends or family. A new monthly-listings template was developed for this purpose, highlighting developments' locations, income-eligibility requirements, and number of available units.

The monthly listings flyer was distributed during the housing ambassadors and street team pilots. For the informational materials pilot, the flyer was posted to the HPD website and publicized via HPD's social media outlets, but it was not posted to NYC Housing Connect.



Both sessions consisted of 45-minute sessions with multiple individual applicants, preceded by a one-hour session with multiple staff members from the housing service provider. Please see the Appendix section for the specific questions and scenarios that were posed during the sessions. Findings from the sessions informed a subsequent round of design and content changes.

### **Did the web- and email-based distribution methods work?**

The 'What to Expect' process map and 'After You Apply' checklists booklet were posted by HPD for public viewing and download in several locations on the HPD, HDC, and NYC Housing Connect websites on November 1, 2013. They appeared as links to PDF files. The NYC Housing Connect site was a very effective distribution location, generating tens of thousands of downloads (see Figure 3). The HPD site generated a much smaller number of downloads; statistics for downloads from the HDC site were not available.

The redesigned housing advertisement template was adapted for use by 16 developments during the pilot period (from July 2013 to July 2014). Download numbers for these ads are not available, but successful distribution can be inferred from survey responses suggesting that more than 70% of applicants had seen an advertisement (see Figure 3), with the HPD website as the top source of information (see Figure 4).

The monthly listings flyer was released in monthly iterations for public download beginning in April 2014. Digital distribution was limited, however, to the HPD website and reflected the comparatively low download numbers of that site versus the NYC Housing Connect site.

Email distribution of the informational materials did not occur in trackable numbers. Regular e-mail blasts about new developments that are distributed to all subscribers to HPD's mailing list are generated through a template that did not allow the customization to add attachments or specific links to the information materials.

### **What were the biggest challenges in developing and distributing the informational materials?**

One development challenge related to the relationship between the materials and HPD's online application system: The income guide document, which was conceived originally as a tool for assisting applicants with accurately filling out a paper application, was altered during proposal development to focus on guiding applicants through the new NYC Housing Connect online application system. Testing with users suggested that the tool required further revision, either to focus even more specifically on issues related to the online process, or to function more generically as a resource for applicants using either the online system or a paper application. The team decided to suspend piloting of the guide with the public pending planned content and layout changes to the online application system; it was distributed to ambassador organizations for review and feedback.

Production and distribution of the materials posed some challenges. It proved difficult for HPD's in-house print shop to produce hard-copy materials to the specifications provided by the design team, particularly relating to the use of less common paper sizes and double-sided printing. Several ambassadors were interested in additional hard copies and appreciated HPD's generosity to print them, but responsibility for delivery or pick-up was not always clearly identified. During the street team event, demand for hard copy materials outstripped supply.

The visual appearance of the redesigned housing advertisement template received positive feedback all around, but HPD marketing staff and developers found it cumbersome to work with the complicated formatting in the Word template file, a legacy of converting the template from the InDesign layout program.

#### **PILOT FEEDBACK**

**“Applicants will come to me and ask me what are dividends, annuities, and life insurance policy. Key terms in the [income] guide would be helpful.”**

Participating Housing Ambassador

## What aspects of the pilot were notably successful?

As the team had hypothesized, printed informational materials were very helpful for non-digital applicants, and the ‘What to Expect’ process map and ‘After You Apply’ checklists booklet were very useful for helping applicants understand the process. The income guide, even despite the challenges described above, was a helpful training tool for ambassadors, and the monthly listings flyer helped applicants see available units in one location, some of which they may not have heard about otherwise.

## INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS SCALING UP

### Translate the Materials into Spanish, Mandarin, and Other Common Languages

As expected, demand for materials in languages other than English was high. A priority should be placed on translating future version of the materials into Spanish, Mandarin, and other languages specific to the communities in which HPD most often markets affordable units.

### Develop Design Capacity

For efficient development of top-quality informational materials—whether revisions to the pilot materials or new items—it may benefit HPD to develop further in-house or freelance design capacity, whether through hiring, training and equipping current staff, or identifying budget for design services.

### Expand Web- and Email-based Distribution

For greater exposure, the monthly listings flyer could also be distributed via NYC Housing Connect, where applicants can download it for their own reference or to share with members of their network. Survey responses suggesting that more than 5% of applicants learned of opportunities from HPD’s Facebook page highlight the value of social media in reaching New Yorkers; more distribution of comprehension-building materials via social channels may be valuable. It may also be helpful to adapt HPD’s email template to allow for greater customization and links to the informational materials.

### Find Ways to Direct Ineligible Applicants to Other Resources

As intended, the informational materials helped applicants understand their own eligibility for housing opportunities—with the result that some applicants reported disappointment at their limited ability to apply for affordable housing (typically because of low income). Future iterations of the materials might look to more specifically direct New Yorkers to alternate sources of affordable housing.

#### PILOT FEEDBACK

**“I wanted to know if there is an update on language. People want to use these sheets but they should be in different languages.”**

Participating Housing Ambassador

#### PILOT FEEDBACK

**“People are really excited about [the materials] because it avoids all of the paperwork... they are understanding [eligibility] better now, but they are getting really discouraged... People are not coming back because they are not eligible.”**

Participating Housing Ambassador

## PILOT 2

# Assessing the Hyper-Local Marketing Pilot

The hyper-local marketing pilot asked developers and their marketing agents to share information about new developments in the places of daily life surrounding new-to-market housing developments. The intention was to help developers reach more eligible applicants within the development's community-board district. The hyper-local marketing pilot was also used to test the revised design of the advertisement template itself.



A customer in a Lower East Side restaurant assists a marketing agent in posting a flyer.

## HYPER-LOCAL MARKETING PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

HPD selected two marketing agents whose projects fell within the timeline of the pilot phase to serve as partners for the hyper-local marketing implementation: Wavcrest, a residential management company with over 30 years of experience in managing affordable housing units, was responsible for marketing Morris Court, a 201-unit development in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx; of the 201 units, 158 were affordable housing units marketed to a mix of income ranges. Housing Partnership, a non-profit organization, was responsible for marketing 30 units of an otherwise market-rate development in the Lower East Side; this project was constructed under the inclusionary housing program and contained a total of 135 units.

HPD met individually with the agents to plan pilot implementation. In addition, a Public Policy Lab fellow shadowed the marketing agents as they carried out hyper-local marketing activities in each of the two locations, following along for several hours and observing agents' interactions with store owners and reactions from members of the public.

## HYPER-LOCAL MARKETING LESSONS LEARNED

### Were the planning activities related to hyper-local marketing effective?

Preliminary discussion about the hyper-local marketing pilot was folded into the required meeting that is held with every marketing agent prior to signing off on the marketing plan. To explain the goals and requirements of the pilot to both marketing agents, HPD developed a new attachment to the existing marketing plan. (The plans that marketing agents have to submit include a series of "attachments"—supporting materials such as the housing advertisement itself and a list of institutions that the advertisement will be sent to, among other documents.) This attachment included the request for a detailed hyper-local marketing plan (see Appendices) that lists all establishments where the advertisement would be distributed and a rationale for these choices.

Questions arose during the meeting about the number of sites or the radius from the development that should be targeted for distribution. This was left to the marketing agent to decide. Another issue raised was what would happen to the posted advertisements after the deadline. HPD emphasized that it was the marketing agent's responsibility to take them down.

After the meeting, both piloting marketing agents submitted a plan identifying locations. Housing Partnership identified two different neighborhoods using Google maps, one near the development and one in Chinatown—Chinese being the population identified as least likely to apply. (As part of every marketing plan, marketing agents are required to identify population groups least likely to apply and propose marketing strategies to reach this population.) The submitted plan also included proposed schedules for the advertisement's initial distribution, replenishing, and removal.

Overall, planning activities were comprehensive and well-intentioned. Ultimately, however, some aspects of the plans were not entirely effective. See discussion below of challenges the marketing agents faced in distributing the advertisement and potential improvements to distribution networks.

### **What were the biggest challenges to customizing the advertising template, if any?**

Both marketing agents used the redesigned housing advertisement template, which they successfully adjusted to fit the needs of the development in collaboration with HPD staff. The visual appearance of the redesigned advertisement template received positive feedback from all users, but HPD marketing staff and developers found it tricky to customize the elaborately formatted Word template file—an adaptation of a template created in the graphic layout application InDesign.

### **How did the developers identify hyper-local marketing locations?**

Agents identified potential locations in the marketing plan, but picking the optimal locations for posting the advertisements turned out to be best done during distribution. While the prepared plan served as a rough guide, several businesses that were on the list appeared closed, and others that weren't on the list turned out to be very suitable.

Both distribution agents used their knowledge of the development neighborhood to navigate businesses and decide on appropriate venues. On-the-ground knowledge was particularly helpful in one case, where the original agent who'd developed the plan didn't know the neighborhood well and had struggled to identify appropriate locations. In both neighborhoods, the distributor made notes of the new locations that were chosen in order to be able to monitor and remove the advertisements, as required by the marketing plan.



#### **PILOT FEEDBACK**

**“You need to highlight the deadline. That’s important information! Do you have a marker, let me mark it up right now.”**

Customer in Business on the Lower East Side

### **To what extent did passersby notice and interact with the flyers?**

Members of the public appreciated face-to-face encounters with marketing agents. In almost all instances, business owners, clerks, and customers made positive remarks about affordable housing being built in their neighborhood and the opportunity to learn about it. When posting materials quite near the development (within a five-minute walking distance), members of the public made the connection to the development instantly.

However, it is not clear how visible or noticeable the advertisements were without the face-to-face encounter, since the materials were not designed to function as posters. The advertisements contain a lot of detailed information that is difficult to absorb at a glance, and this complexity was reflected in how people responded. In some cases, customers and store clerks who interacted with the posted materials made recommendations on how to highlight the most relevant information. However, more often members of the public expressed interest in being able to take the flyer with them or take a picture in order to study it in detail or pass on to someone else.

### **What aspects of the pilot were notably successful?**

Interacting with businesses was time consuming but had unexpected additional benefits. In both pilot observations, the agent distributed approximately 12 advertisements in two hours. Asking for permission and explaining the purpose of the housing advertisement took a considerable amount of time. However, those conversations led to valuable interpersonal contact: Almost every store clerk seemed interested in applying or had a relative or friend with whom he or she wanted to share the flyer.

#### PILOT FEEDBACK

**“This seems like overkill. We get too many applications for not enough apartments already. We do not have enough staff resources to do this. Also, there is the cost for printing... I was reluctant to print more than 30 flyers.”**

Participating Marketing Agent

## **What were the biggest challenges that marketing agents had in distributing the advertisement?**

In both pilots the submitted hyper-local marketing plan proved to be unrealistic in terms of its extent and ambition. Neither marketing agent was able to cover the entire area proposed in the plan. Both agents also scaled back on the proposed schedule and reduced the number of times that an agent went out to post advertisements after realizing the enormous time commitment required. In both cases, the plan with previously identified locations was used as a general guidance, but was not followed exactly. Overall, the level of effort required to plan, distribute, track, and remove the materials seemed unequal to the benefit created.

## **HYPER-LOCAL MARKETING SCALING UP**

### **Create a Network of Hyper-Local Distributors**

Under current marketing guidelines, marketing agents are required to send a copy of the housing advertisement to local community organizations and political offices. Revisiting the guidelines for who is included in this list—and potentially expanding it to schools, libraries, businesses, and other places of everyday life—might increase the capacity for hyper-local marketing.

HPD and the marketing agent should consider all local contacts as potential “hyper-local marketers” and provide them with copies of the advertisements to distribute to their constituents. Shop owners contacted during the pilot, for example, were very interested to learn about affordable housing opportunities in their community. Local business operators might potentially be recruited to serve as informal community ambassadors—spreaders of information to many dozens of community residents every day.

This approach would have the added benefit of targeting community members likely to speak languages common in a given neighborhood. (In both pilot cases, agents encountered business owners or clerks who had a limited knowledge of English and needed explanation of the pilot from the agent in another language.)

### **Provide Copies of Advertisements to Take Home**

Since the housing advertisement contains a lot of detailed information that cannot be easily grasped on the fly, many people were interested in taking a copy home for themselves or a friend. Marketing agents should provide local organizations and places of everyday life with greater quantities of flyers to hand out, in addition to posting one in the store or on a bulletin board.

### **Design a ‘Postable’ Version of the Advertisement**

It would be helpful to create specific poster version of the advertisement, designed for display, or a postcard version. This idea was considered and shelved during proposal development due to workflow concerns, but it should be revisited prior to scaling hyper-local marketing efforts.

## PILOT 3

# Assessing the Housing Ambassadors Pilot

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 residents—and give them the tools they need to be most effective.



HPD's marketing division presented an overview of the pilot and the informational material to a group of representatives from several organizations participating in the ambassadors pilot.

## HOUSING AMBASSADORS PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

The goals of the ambassador program were to establish channels for communication and feedback between ambassadors and HPD, ensure a consistent message about the marketing and application process, distribute the knowledge of those acting as ambassadors, and increase meaningful face-to-face interaction between ambassadors and applicants prior to applying and throughout the process. In order to implement these goals, HPD developed a training program and bi-weekly feedback sessions for the ambassadors, which spanned a several month period. Over that time, HPD:

- Recruited ambassadors for participation in the program.
- Developed training materials for use during the ambassador kick off and subsequent training meetings.
- Laid out all responsibilities to the ambassadors so that they had a clear understanding of their role and that they were not liable to for applicants' application errors or rejections.
- Prepped and printed all information materials to be distributed to all ambassadors for use.
- Conducted bi-weekly calls with ambassadors to check in on the progress of their work and to capture additional insight.
- Facilitated additional in-person training and evaluation sessions to discuss the value of the program and encourage cross-organizational collaboration.

In order to evaluate the pilots, Public Policy Lab fellows attended all or most of the bi-weekly check-ins and in person meetings in order to capture questions and successes that were emerging from conversations. Those key findings are outlined below.

## HOUSING AMBASSADORS LESSONS LEARNED

### Did HPD find that existing housing partners were excited or reluctant to serve as housing ambassadors?

HPD chose participants based on their location, the types of housing that were going to be marketed during the pilot implementation cycle, and the work that the organizations were doing within multiple types of neighborhoods across New York City. The four initial participating organizations were Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES), Community League of the Heights (CLOTH), Churches United for Fair Housing (CUFFH), and Mutual Housing Association of New York (MHANY). All four were enthusiastic about participating and continued to report satisfaction about their involvement in the pilot.

#### PILOT FEEDBACK

**“This is a really helpful exchange as an agency... How can we continue with this after [the conclusion of the pilot]? How can we continue to answer your questions?”**

HPD Staff Member,  
Speaking to Ambassadors

### **Were the training sessions for housing ambassadors useful?**

The training sessions were helpful to all who participated—including HPD staff and the housing ambassadors. The in-person meetings allowed HPD to hear from ambassadors and coordinate their participation in the pilot program with minimal confusion. The ambassadors were able to actively contribute to the pilot’s development and voice their constituents’ concerns—receiving direct feedback from the “experts” (e.g., HPD) on how to handle those concerns. Clarity was achieved, and when there was confusion, it could be addressed immediately.

### **Did HPD establish and maintain a platform for feedback and exchange? Was it effective?**

The bi-weekly check-in calls and in-person sessions were effective mechanisms for feedback and information exchange. HPD heard first-hand about small successes—and areas for improvement—that ambassadors were experiencing ‘on-the-ground’ with applicants, and ambassadors had access to feedback to help them in their roles. HPD was also able to capture valuable knowledge about how, when, and why applicants struggle with the affordable housing process, how they could best support ambassadors in their work, and how the application process could be improved to minimize confusion.

Cross-organizational collaboration between ambassadors was more difficult to ignite, however. Ambassadors conversed during the bi-weekly calls, but they did not reach out to each other beyond those calls, and most comments were directed to HPD. When asked, ambassadors explained that demanding schedules made it difficult to pursue further conversations beyond the scheduled call times. It’s also possible that the pilot ambassador groups, being knowledgeable and established organizations, had a more need for specific data from HPD than for operational tips from each other. HPD staff surmised that less-experienced organizations might get more benefit from cross-organizational relationships.

### **Did the ambassador program make a difference in the lives of the applicants it touched and the ambassadors themselves?**

It was very clear from all meetings that the ambassadors have deep knowledge of the needs of applicants who are navigating the affordable housing application process. They are important resources within the affordable housing space, and they reported that the pilot allowed them to better serve their constituents.

The ambassador organizations also seemed to derive value from the new opportunity the pilot offered, to serve as the applicant voice in conversations with HPD. During bi-weekly calls and in-person meetings, ambassadors were honest and upfront about their experiences working with applicants. HPD was equally open and receptive to the ambassadors’ input.

#### PILOT FEEDBACK

**“Since we got these materials, it’s been helpful to divert the walk-in traffic from our wait list. Now we can give people the materials and it’s nice to have the people leave the office with optimism.”**

Participating Housing  
Ambassador

## **HOUSING AMBASSADORS SCALING UP**

### **Provide Ambassadors with Larger Quantities of Printed Materials**

Informational materials proved extremely important to ambassadors for their work with affordable housing applicants. Some ambassadors were in need of additional printed resources from HPD for scheduled public events. Others made additional copies themselves to hand out during regular walk-ins. In



addition to being committed to the provision of hard copies to ambassadors, when needed, HPD and ambassadors should establish a more standard system for requesting, printing, and distributing materials. More regular in-person sessions, as suggested below, may solve the problem of delivery.

### Hold More In-Person Ambassador Sessions

The two in-person events HPD held during pilot assessment were notable for their depth of content and quality of information exchange. While bi-weekly phone check-ins were helpful for HPD to share information, the in-person sessions were more effective venues for ambassadors to become familiar each other and to provide HPD with direct feedback. In recognition, HPD added more in-person sessions (after the assessment period). Future efforts should also include frequent in-person gatherings.

#### PILOT FEEDBACK

**“It would be nice to be able to say ‘We are your housing ambassador.’ It helps people know they are getting real, factual information... Just being able to recognize the relationship in some way would be helpful.”**

Participating Housing Ambassador

### Develop a Public Acknowledgment of Ambassadors’ Role

Ambassadors were interested in some form of public acknowledgment regarding their ambassadorial role, both as a way to publicize their work around affordable housing and as an endorsement of their services. After discussion between the agency and ambassadors, a letter or certificate of participation in the ambassador program seems to be the most appropriate format. It will be necessary to develop this acknowledgment in a way that minimizes any potential confusion with other recognitions that already exist, such as being a HUD-certified housing counseling agency.

### Encourage Collaboration among Ambassadors

The potential of ambassadors to serve as peer educators and supporters remains largely untapped. HPD should find additional ways to encourage, but not manage, collaboration among ambassadors. A digital forum managed by and developed for ambassadors (e.g., a list-serve or Facebook closed group) could supplement regular phone calls or meetings with HPD.

### Include More Organizations in the Ambassador Program

Due to the number of affordable housing applicants and the success of the pilot program, HPD should include more organizations in the ambassador program so that their reach can multiply. HPD should consider scaling the program through incremental phasing to ensure that HPD’s capacity for support is not compromised.



HPD staff and members of ambassador organizations met in person to review the pilot plan and informational materials.

## PILOT 4

# Assessing the Street Team Pilot

The goal of the pilot was to increase awareness about HPD's affordable housing programs—and the online application system—by sending a street team of HPD staff to targeted high-traffic areas across the city.

## STREET TEAM PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

For the first street team appearance, HPD set up a tent at the Brooklyn Borough Hall Greenmarket on May 6, 2014, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The market is centrally located in Downtown Brooklyn and is frequented by a diverse daytime population due to a variety of courthouses, government offices, universities, and businesses in the area.

To staff the team, HPD's Marketing division teamed up with the agency's Public Outreach and Education (POE) division, whose members participate in similar events frequently. HPD's marketing staff prepared approximately 200 color copies of each of the information materials, and POE brought additional materials on tenant rights and housing maintenance.

During the day, a Public Policy Lab fellow joined the street team as an observer, engaging members of the public in conversation about the presence of the street team and asking them to participate in a survey to rate their experience of encountering the street team. Responses were overwhelmingly positive and many expressed their appreciation for the presence of HPD at the market (see Figure 6).

## STREET TEAM LESSONS LEARNED

### Did potential applicants feel more comfortable with the application process as a result of coming into contact with the street team?

Interaction with the street team was much appreciated: Members of the public were interested in learning about affordable housing and appreciated that HPD was there to answer questions. People who engaged with the street team described the staffers as friendly, polite, knowledgeable and informative. Conversations were as long as it took for people to feel informed.

Some key elements of the information conveyed to many during the day:

- Where to apply online and find out what's available
- Walk-through the online application process
- The relationship between income, unit size, and rent
- The length of the process
- What a community preference is

In addition, HPD staff answered many individual questions that were specific to each person's circumstances.



The pilot event for the street team was held in downtown Brooklyn on May 6, 2014. The team set up during a semi-weekly farmers' market that attracts significant foot traffic.



Street team members wore branded shirts encouraging passers-by to ask them about affordable housing. More than 250 New Yorkers took them up on the request.

### Did residents take advantage of the ability to start an application on the spot? Why or why not?

The team had four tablet devices to demonstrate the NYC Housing Connect online portal. It was the design team's original assumption that members of the public would register with NYC Housing Connect at the event, but concerns that HPD's involvement might create the misperception of an advantage in the process led to use of the tablets solely for demonstration purposes. Most members of the public appreciated seeing how the online portal functions and what developments were available, although some people with less digital familiarity found the online environment too foreign for comfort.

### What were the biggest challenges in staffing and running the street-team operations?

The event is taxing for staff. Four to five HPD staff members (from the strategic planning, marketing, and POE divisions) were engaged in conversation with members of the public non-stop. With a constant flow of interested people asking for information, the team rarely got a break; they would have benefited from additional staff members. However, HPD's marketing division is small and a day on the street means that other work does not get done. In addition, it is HPD's policy to follow up with members of the public regarding questions that cannot be answered right away. This potentially consumes additional time after the event. The support by and collaboration with POE was critical in making the pilot event possible.

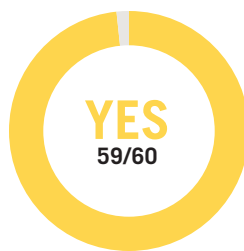
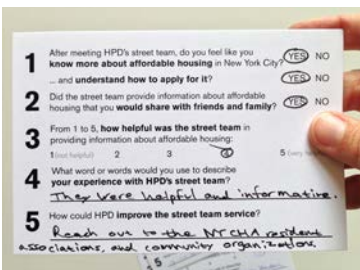
### How many residents engaged with the street team?

Over the course of the day, the team spoke to more than 250 members of the public about a variety of topics. Interactions ranged from a quick provision of informational materials to in-depth conversations about a person's particular situation and options.

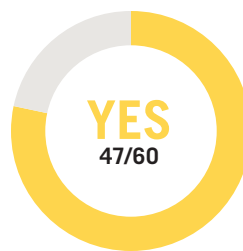
FIGURE 6

### POSTCARD SURVEY: STREET TEAM VALUE

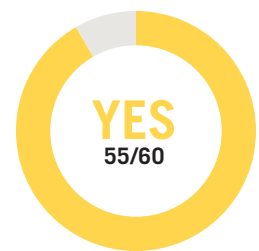
Survey respondents were overwhelmingly positive about their interactions with the street team and the value of the service.



After meeting with HPD's street team, do you feel like you know more about affordable housing in New York City...



...and understand how to apply for it?



Did the street team provide you with information about affordable housing that you would share with your friends and family?

## STREET TEAM SCALING UP

The street team appearance was very much appreciated by the public and encouraged throughout the day with positive feedback in person and in the survey. To continue, HPD can learn from the experience and incorporate some improvements to it, which will benefit both the team and the public.

### Hold More Frequent Events in Different Locations

The most frequent comment expressed in terms of ideas for improving the street team was to “come to the community” and “come more often”. To hold more frequent and far-flung events, however, the team’s staffing capacity will have to be increased. Ongoing collaboration between marketing and HPD’s skilled Public Outreach and Education Unit will allow POE staff to become increasingly familiar with specific issues related to the marketing and lottery process, perhaps boosting capacity for future street team events. To increase the range of event venues, HPD marketing could also collaborate with ambassador or community development partners to identify future locations and events.

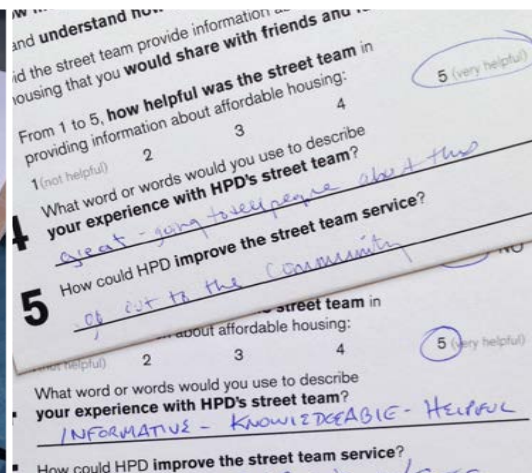
### Select Strategic Times and Locations

During this first street team event, only two developments were accepting applications, neither of which were near the street team location. While this made most inquiries hypothetical, it did not make the topic of affordable housing any less interesting to New Yorkers.

#### PILOT FEEDBACK

**“Our street team at the farmers’ market was great, but not sustainable for the staff to continue doing [with current staff capacity].”**

Participating HPD Staff Member



Street team pilot activities were warmly received by the public, if taxing on staff members.



That said, it would be good to test how the dynamic changes if the street team appears in a neighborhood with an active marketing campaign. In that case, the street team could support marketing agents in reaching out to the local community, educate members of the public about income requirements, and create a general awareness of the relationship between income, unit size and rent.

### Bring More and Different Materials

The take-away informational materials were hugely popular and crucial to the street team pilot’s success. However, different people needed different levels of information: some only needed a short reminder of the NYC Housing Connect website address, while others wanted a complete set of materials to study later. In many cases, people wanted to take material to give it to somebody else.

During the pilot event, the team ran out of informational materials before the day was over; 200 copies of each piece was not enough for five hours of engagement. In the future, it will be helpful not just to bring more copies of each material but also to diversify the material available and hand it out during the event strategically to conserve resources (including copies of the advertisements). A card that only has the website information could be useful. For some members of the public, that URL is all they want or need.

### Upgrade hardware and materials production

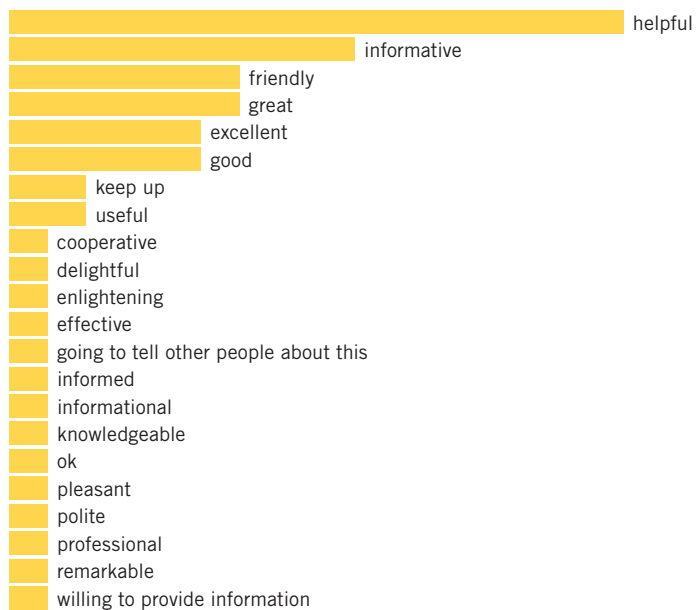
HPD was able to use equipment provided by the greenmarket (tent and table), which made setup much easier. However, signage to identify the agency was small, not printed on weatherproof material, and had no mechanism to be secured to the tent or table; production specifications outlined by design team were not used, so communication about these specs may need to be revisited. Informational material was not printed in the correct size or color; communication with HPD’s in-house print service should be reviewed, and staff may also need more planning time prior to an event to resolve issues.

FIGURE 7

### POSTCARD SURVEY: STREET TEAM EXPERIENCE

Survey respondents were asked to describe their experience with the street team in one or two words.

What word or words would you use to describe your experience with HPD's street team?



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# 3 APPENDICES: RESEARCH MATERIALS

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For reference, this section houses research materials used by the Public Policy Lab fellows to plan and conduct the pilot evaluation activities.

# About the Research Materials

- 
- 38** **APPENDIX A:**  
**PRELIMINARY EVALUATION PLAN**
- The purpose of the preliminary plan was to outline an overall process for evaluating the pilot implementation efforts performed by HPD. Evaluation planning was structured around the three design objectives and the four pilot proposals. Each section lays out the research materials, team-member roles, strategy, and timeframe for evaluation efforts. This plan, developed in late 2013, guided the evaluation team’s work until completion of the assessment process, in mid 2014.
- 
- 51** **APPENDIX B:**  
**USER TESTING SCRIPTS**
- Prior to piloting the informational materials, HPD and the Public Policy Lab organized two testing sessions to evaluate the materials’ content and design. The scripts and testing scenarios developed for these sessions were designed to elicit feedback on to what extent the informational materials were helpful, intuitive, and easy to use. Each session, which took place at housing organizations in the Bronx and Brooklyn, consisted of multiple 45-minute interviews with individual applicants, preceded by a one-hour session with a group of staff members from the housing service provider. Separate scripts were developed for providers and applicants.
- 
- 65** **APPENDIX C:**  
**APPLICANT ENGAGEMENT & SURVEY PLAN**
- This plan proposes different activities to capture applicants’ experiences with the pilots; it was developed by the Public Policy Lab fellows both to guide their work and for HPD staff to review and grant approval prior to the fellows beginning public outreach and engagement. Given available time and resources, the team chose to proceed with two of the five proposed applicant engagements—the online survey posted on NYC Housing Connect and a postcard survey distributed at the street team pilot.
- 
- 80** **APPENDIX D:**  
**POSTCARD SURVEY**
- An evaluator observed the street team pilot on May 6, 2014, and carried out intercept interviews with members of the public who had interacted with street team representatives. Each respondent was asked to fill out a brief survey in postcard form, reproduced here. Sixty members of the public participated, nearly 25% of the approximately 250 who interacted with the team during the course of the event.
- 
- 81** **APPENDIX E:**  
**ONLINE SURVEY**
- An online survey was posted on NYC Housing Connect over four weeks from June to July 2014. See this appendix for representative screen shots of posted questions (survey questions are presented in full in Appendix C). This survey generated responses from nearly 2,500 housing applicants, approximately 1% of the nearly 250,000 applicants during that period.



# PRELIMINARY EVALUATION PLAN

## **PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

OVERVIEW  
REPORT STRUCTURE  
IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION ROLES  
TIMELINE

## **PART 2: EVALUATION OF THE DESIGN OBJECTIVES**

ASSESSING DESIGN OBJECTIVES 1-3

## **PART 3: EVALUATION OF THE PILOT PROPOSALS**

ASSESSING PROPOSAL 1: INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS  
ASSESSING PROPOSAL 2: HYPER LOCAL MARKETING  
ASSESSING PROPOSAL 3: HOUSING AMBASSADORS  
ASSESSING PROPOSAL 4: STREET TEAM



## PART 1

# Introduction

## OVERVIEW

Four pilot proposals were developed as part of *Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing*, a collaboration between the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), the Parsons DESIS Lab, and the Public Policy Lab. The proposals recommend that HPD and its sister agency, the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC), enhance the application process for affordable housing through the following efforts:

### **Create new, human-centered informational materials**

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.

### **Encourage hyper-local marketing by developers**

Supplement existing outreach by asking developers to share redesigned advertisements in public venues frequented by neighborhood residents.

### **Support community-based housing ambassadors**

Recognize the work of community-based groups and individuals who assist residents in applying for affordable housing by providing them with reliable information and resources.

### **Form a street team for in-person HPD outreach**

To address the lack of visibility and awareness of HPD and its affordable housing programs, employ a street team in strategic locations and at specific events in order to highlight HPD's work, publicize resources, and broaden the pool of applicants.

The objective of these proposals is to create a 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.

## REPORT STRUCTURE

In late 2013, HPD began planning for implementation of the proposals described above. The purpose of this preliminary report is to outline a process for evaluating the pilot implementation efforts performed by HPD. Two subsequent evaluation reports will describe whether and how the proposals met the design objectives of creating a knowledge-sharing infrastructure: encouraging information accessibility and exchange, accounting for applicants' lived realities, and enabling informed decision-making. Evaluation of the pilots' implementation process will be included in the second and final reports, as well.

The evaluation plans presented in this document have been divided up by three design objectives and by four pilot proposals. Each section lays out the research materials, roles, and strategy needed to support evaluation efforts among all Public & Collaborative constituents.

INTRODUCTION

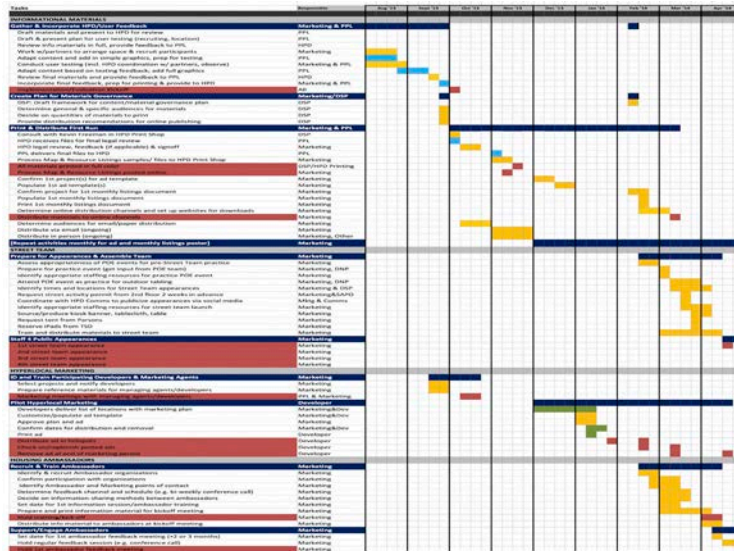
In addition, each evaluation plan has been divided into three phases: prior, during, and post. 'Prior' refers to activities and planning that are required of evaluation/implementation participants before implementation begins. 'During' maps out activities occurring during the implementation effort, and 'post' describes the work that should occur after implementation has concluded.

**Implementation & Evaluation Roles**

HPD staff, a team of fellows from the Pubic Policy Lab, and a variety of other organizations are participating in the implementation of the pilot proposals. HPD is leading all piloting efforts, including organizing street team outings and printing all informational materials, among other responsibilities. The Pubic Policy Lab team will provide frameworks and materials to guide pilot implementation and evaluation activities; these will include shadowing HPD staff, interviewing pilot participants, and consulting as needed. Parsons faculty will play an ongoing leadership role. Other participants may include developers and marketing agents from partnering organizations who will assist in the implementation of the pilots based on their role within the affordable housing application process.

**Timeline**

It's expected that implementation and evaluation will carry through mid 2014. Please see the below chart, which visualizes the implementation process over time.



PART 2

# Evaluation of the Design Objectives

## ASSESSING DESIGN OBJECTIVES 1–3

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. Therefore, the pilot proposals are meant to work together to improve applicants' experience. The intended result is to meet the following design objectives:

- Encourage information accessibility and exchange.
- Account for applicants' lived reality.
- Enable more informed decision-making.

Through evaluation, it is hoped that HPD and the project team can determine the extent to which each pilot plan combined to create the knowledge-sharing infrastructure and therefore embodied the design objectives.

Due to the holistic nature of the design objectives, the Public Policy Lab team will conduct the majority of this portion of the evaluation post-implementation of all of the pilot proposals, as described below.

### PRIOR TO IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL PILOTS

ROLES	ACTIVITIES	FORMATS
PPL	Create a survey that addresses the evaluation of the design objectives across pilot proposals; make available across channels, including NYC Housing Connect.	Variety of Formats (Survey could be online.)
	Work with HPD and other Public & Collaborative partners to distribute the survey.	Variety of Formats
HPD	Approve content of survey.	Internal HPD Process
	Assist in the distribution of the survey to Public & Collaborative partners.	Variety of Formats

**EVALUATION OF THE DESIGN OBJECTIVES**

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**POST IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL PILOTS**

<b>ROLES</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>FORMATS</b>
<b>PPL</b>	Work with HPD to acquire completed surveys.	Variety of Formats (Please note that if the survey is online, then the data can be easily collected without coordination.)
	Analyze results from surveys to evaluate success of design objectives.	Variety of Formats
<b>HPD</b>	Collect survey from Public & Collaborative partners.	Variety of Formats
	Distribute completed surveys to the Public Policy Lab team for analysis.	Variety of Formats

## PART 3

# Evaluation of the Pilot Proposals

## ASSESSING PROPOSAL 1: INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

The informational materials proposal asks HPD to deploy a new set of public-facing communications, designed to improve understanding of the application process for affordable housing. Five new materials were developed, each suitable for distribution as print documents or as downloadable PDFs. (See Appendix A)

Implementation of this pilot requires testing the materials' content with users, performing iterative design revisions, participating in training sessions, developing content governance plans, and distributing materials strategically through a variety of different channels. The evaluation goal for Proposal 1 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 prior, during, and post implementation:

- 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?

**EVALUATION OF THE PILOT PROPOSALS**

**PRIOR TO IMPLEMENTATION OF PILOT**

<b>ROLES</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>FORMATS</b>
<b>PPL</b>	Work with HPD staff to evaluate the user testing process and refinement of informational materials.	In-Person Meeting
	Provide testing framework and language to help with recruiting and organization. (See Appendix B)	Digital Document and General Consulting
	Facilitate user-testing sessions; prepare research materials for testing.	In-Person Meeting
	Create documentation of user feedback from testing.	Digital Document
	Revise informational materials for final pass off based on HPD and use feedback.	Digital Documents
<b>HPD</b>	Recruit and assist in the organization of user testing sessions.	Variety of Formats
	Provide feedback on research materials and documents during iterative design process.	Variety of Formats
	Set up tracking system to track downloads of informational materials from identified websites.	Determined by HPD
	Set up tracking system to assess printed materials that are being distributed by HPD staff.	Determined by HPD
	Set up tracking system to track email based distribution.	Determined by HPD

**DURING IMPLEMENTATION OF PILOT**

<b>ROLES</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>FORMATS</b>
<b>PPL</b>	Support HPD as needed.	Variety of Formats and Biweekly Check-in Calls between HPD and PPL Fellows
<b>HPD</b>	Track the various distribution channels.	Variety of Formats
	Maintain documents and tracking systems as needed.	Determined by HPD

EVALUATION OF THE PILOT PROPOSALS

POST IMPLEMENTATION OF PILOT

ROLES	ACTIVITIES	FORMATS
PPL	Analyze data collected across distribution channels.	Variety of Formats
	Interview HPD Strategic Planning staff.	In-Person Meeting
	Interview implementation staff.	In-Person or Phone Meetings
	Provide tracking data for all information materials distributed during pilot implementation.	Variety of Formats
HPD	Help organize various interviews with HPD staff.	Variety of Formats
	Participate in post-implementation interviews.	In-Person or Phone Meetings

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 new-to-market housing developments. The intention is to 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?

EVALUATION OF THE PILOT PROPOSALS

PRIOR TO IMPLEMENTATION OF PILOT

ROLES	ACTIVITIES	FORMATS
PPL	Provide HPD and marketing agent with participation requirements.	Variety of Formats
	Make arrangements with HPD to ensure attendance of representatives at a marketing meeting.	In-Person Meeting
	Select a marketing agent who is willing and able to participate in the pilot implementation.	Internal HPD Process
HPD	Invite Public Policy Lab to the marketing meeting (or represent Public Policy Lab at marketing meeting) to introduce pilot to participants.	In-Person Meeting
MARKETING AGENT	Work with HPD and Public Policy Lab to develop a hyper-local marketing plan. This proposal could include: number of flyers to be printed, general distribution locations and their types, a tracking system for locations, and a plan for flyer removal.	Variety of Formats
	Distribute the Public Policy Lab survey to participants at the interview and collect answers.	Variety of Formats
	Assist in the scheduling of and allow for a Public Policy Lab team member to shadow flyer distribution.	Variety of Formats
	Commit to participate in an interview with Public Policy Lab post implementation.	In-Person or Phone Meetings

DURING IMPLEMENTATION OF PILOT

ROLES	ACTIVITIES	FORMATS
PPL	Shadow a marketing agent while s/he distributes flyers; observe challenges and interactions; document all pertinent activity.	In-Person Meeting
HPD	Consult as needed.	Variety of Formats
MARKETING AGENT	Track the number and locations of flyers distributed.	Variety of Formats
	Track the number and locations of flyers collected at end of marketing period.	Variety of Formats
	Track qualitative aspects of the pilot (e.g., the benefits and challenges of implementation).	Variety of Formats



EVALUATION OF THE PILOT PROPOSALS

POST IMPLEMENTATION OF PILOT

ROLES	ACTIVITIES	FORMATS
PPL	Interview marketing agents to understand the usefulness of planning activities related to hyper-local marketing; the challenges faced when customizing the template and other resources; the process for identifying hyper-local marketing locations and distributing flyers; and the effectiveness of the flyers at their locations.	In-Person or Phone Meetings
	Analyze survey results from applicants.	Variety of Formats
HPD	Consult as needed.	Variety of Formats
	Provide survey results to Public Policy Lab team from NYC Housing Connect and screening interviews (e.g., was flyer named as a source of information?).	Data
MARKETING AGENT	Assist in the organization of and participate in an interview with the Public Policy Lab team.	In-Person or Phone Meetings
	Provide Public Policy Lab team with all survey results for their analysis.	Variety of Formats

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?
- 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?

EVALUATION OF THE PILOT PROPOSALS

PRIOR TO IMPLEMENTATION OF PILOT

ROLES	ACTIVITIES	FORMATS
PPL	Develop interview questions for HPD and ambassador staff post implementation meetings.	Digital and Hard-Copy Documents
	Prep ambassador staff on evaluation needs and activities.	In-Person or Phone Meetings
	Provide ambassador staff with a brief survey which they can distribute to applicants after their interactions with them.	In-Person Meetings & Hard-Copy Documents
	Schedule observation of ambassador/applicant interactions.	Variety of Formats
HPD	Select one or two organizations to work with as ambassadors during the pilot phase.	Internal HPD Process
	Work with Public Policy Lab team to prep ambassador staff on evaluation needs and activities.	In-Person or Phone Meetings
AMBASSADOR STAFF	Agree to participate in pilot implementation and evaluation activities.	Variety of Formats
	Work with HPD and Public Policy Lab team to organize evaluation activities.	Variety of Formats

POST IMPLEMENTATION OF PILOT

ROLES	ACTIVITIES	FORMATS
PPL	Facilitate interview with HPD staff to discuss interaction with ambassador staff (i.e., their commitment, passion, and/or reluctance) and effectiveness (or lack thereof) of feedback/exchange platform with ambassador staff.	In-Person or Phone Meeting
	Facilitate interview with ambassador staff to discuss the effectiveness of the training sessions and applicant interactions (e.g., Did the ambassador program make a difference in the lives of the applicants?).	In-Person or Phone Meeting
	Analyze results from applicant survey.	Variety of Formats
HPD	Assist in the organization of and participate in an interview.	In-Person or Phone Meeting
AMBASSADOR STAFF	Assist in the organization of and participate in an interview.	In-Person or Phone Meeting

EVALUATION OF THE PILOT PROPOSALS

**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 targeted 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?

**PRIOR TO IMPLEMENTATION OF PILOT**

ROLES	ACTIVITIES	FORMATS
PPL	Prepare brief postcard survey for members of the public.	Hard-Copy Document
	Develop interview questions to ask members of the public.	Variety of Formats
HPD	Set up tracking system for daily or hourly web traffic on NYC Housing Connect website.	Web Analytics
	Coordinate schedule of street team appearance with Public Policy Lab.	Phone or Email Communication

**DURING IMPLEMENTATION OF PILOT**

ROLES	ACTIVITIES	FORMATS
PPL	Shadow street team and document event.	In-Person Meeting
	Distribute survey to public during event.	In-Person Meeting
	Interview members of the public during event.	In-Person Meeting
HPD	Track number of NYC Housing Connect accounts created before, during, and after street team event.	Google Analytics
	Track web traffic of NYC Housing Connect pre, during and post street team event.	Google Analytics

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**DURING IMPLEMENTATION OF PILOT**

<b>ROLES</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>FORMATS</b>
<b>PPL</b>	Facilitate interview with HPD staff (e.g. What were the biggest challenges with implementing the street team?)	In-Person Meeting
	Analyze data collected at street team event; examine the comfort of applicants with the process as a result of interacting with a street team member, their follow-through on completing a profile during an interaction, and the general level of engagement of residents with the event and the process.	Variety of Formats
<b>HPD</b>	Assist in the organization of and participate in an interview with Public Policy Lab team.	In-Person Meeting

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**INTRODUCTION & INFORMED CONSENT [5 minutes]**

*Hello and thank you for taking the time to meet with us. We greatly appreciate it.*

[Describe who is speaking and who is in the room.] *My name is \_\_\_\_\_.*

*To give you a sense of why we are speaking with you today: the Public Policy Lab has partnered with HPD to enhance aspects of the affordable housing application process, including the design of informational materials. During this session, we would like to capture your feedback on these materials so that we can ensure their usefulness and usability. Your feedback will help shape their future design.*

*Before we continue, I'd like to discuss some of the logistics of our conversation.*

*We would like to record this session through audio and photography. [Pass out the consent forms. Explain consent forms. Have participants sign forms. Collect forms.]*

*During our discussion, please let me know at any time if you have questions or are unsure of what I am asking. It's important to keep in mind that we are NOT testing you; the only way we'll be able to make real improvements is if we get your honest feedback. There are no wrong answers.*

*There may be times when I have to cut part of our discussion short and move onto another topic for the sake of time; this doesn't mean you shouldn't share what you think or that I'm not interested, but I do have to make sure we cover all of the topics within our allotted time.*

*Please note that your participation in this workshop will not impact your affordable housing application, status, or relationship with HPD and HDC in any way.*

*Do you have any questions before we get started?*

[Break participants up into groups. Numbers depend on how many participants and facilitators are attending the session.]

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### CONTEXT [5 minutes]

[Participants have been broken up into groups. Facilitators engage in small group conversation.]

*Before we begin, I'd like to get a sense of what your experience is or has been with HPD or the affordable housing application process as well as a few general demographic questions.]*

#### Questions for Applicants:

- What borough do you live in? Or what is your Zip Code?
- How long have you lived in NYC?
- Are you a renter in NYC currently? If so, how many years have you rented in NYC?
- Generally speaking, how do you find out about affordable housing opportunities? *For example, newspaper, friend, organization, etc.*
- Have you ever applied for affordable housing in NYC?
  - If so, with whom?
  - Did you apply online or by print?
- On a scale from 1 - 5, where 1 is not confident and 5 is very confident, how confident did you feel applying for affordable housing with HPD? *(The steps, communication, process, approval, etc.)*

[For the next question, feel free to have the participants look at the attributes sheet for prompting. Explain that they can use their own words if they'd like.]

- If you had to choose three words or adjectives to describe your experience of the process, what would they be? *(For example: confusing, easy, simple)*
  - Why was the process [insert adjectives]?
- Did anyone help you through the application process? *(For example, a community organization, friend, family member, HPD staff, etc.)*
  - If so, what were the aspects of the process that were the most difficult?
  - What were the simplest aspects of the process?
  - Please describe how you were helped by a [Insert their answer here.]
  - Why kind of assistance would have been most beneficial to you?

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**Questions for Ambassadors:**

- Please provide me a general sense of your organization’s work. We are primarily interested in your relationship to affordable housing and supporting the local community.
  - What is your primary mission?
  - What programs and services do you offer?
  - What constituents, partners, and communities do you work with the most?
  - What do you do to promote quality affordable housing in X neighborhood?
- Please describe your current role and/or responsibilities at X organization.
- How long have you been working at X organization?
- Can you tell me about the programs and services you provide to individuals and families looking for affordable housing in this community?
  - a. How do people hear about you and why do they generally contact you?
  - b. Who generally reaches out to you and what qualifies them for your services?
  - c. How do you currently interface with the affordable housing application process and HPD in particular?
- How long have you been working with affordable housing applicants?
- Generally speaking, how do you find out about affordable housing opportunities for your constituents? *For example, newspaper, HPD, organization, etc.*
  - How could this process be improved for you and your constituents?
- What resources do you currently use to help others understand the affordable housing application process?
  - What is your assessment of these resources?
  - What suggestions might you have for additional resources based on your past experiences?

[For the last two questions, feel free to have the participants look at the attributes sheet for prompting. Explain that they can use their own words if they'd like.]

- Please choose three words or adjectives that describe your experience of the affordable housing application process. (*For example: confusing, easy, simple, etc.*)
  - Why is the process [insert adjectives]?
- Please choose three words or adjectives that describe how you would like your experience with the affordable housing application process to be.
  - Please explain.





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**DEEP DIVE: USABILITY OF DOCUMENT [35 minutes]**

[The facilitator should have their document/s in front of the participant or hanging on a wall — printed with enough copies for all at the table. Go through these questions with each document that has been assigned to the facilitators track — one at a time.]

**PART A.**

*Now I'd like to review the document with you. We will begin with some general questions.*

[Let the participant review the document for 2 minutes.

- At first glance, is there anything about this document that is confusing?
- In your opinion and without knowing much about this document, what do you think you can do with it? [DO NOT PROVIDE PROMPTS AND DO NOT EXPLAIN DOCUMENT. LET THEM BE CONFUSED IF NEED BE.]
  - How do you think it can be used?
  - What do you think its purpose is?
  - Who do you think the audience is for this document? Please explain.
- Would you know what to do with this document (how to read it or use it) if you found it at a library? Please explain.

**PART B.**

*For the next part of our conversation, I'd like to get a sense from you as to how usable and useful you feel the document is. So that I can understand your thinking, it's important for you to be vocal and honest about what you are experiencing with the document. **Please remember that there are no wrong answers!***

[Depending on what document the facilitator is testing and/or whom the facilitator is speaking with, they can provide a quick scenario to the participant — providing a description of what it is and how it can be used. For instance: "Let's imagine that you are in the process of applying for an affordable housing unit and you have questions regarding how your income is calculated (income guide)." Or: "Let's imagine you are helping an applicant find out more information on the affordable housing application process (process map)."]

*Within that context, let's discuss the following.*

- Now that you have a better sense of what the document is, does my description match your initial expectations? Please explain.
- At a high-level, how could this document be improved to quickly catch your attention and clearly communicate its purpose to you?

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- Please talk to me about how you might use or interact with this document in your everyday.

[It's important to get a sense from the participant about context of use. For example: "I would probably sit at my computer and have it next to me with my notes and use it to help me fill out my online application, etc.")

- Where might you use it?
- How might you use it?
- What other information, documents, and/or resources might you use in coordination with this document?
- Where would you want to find or get access to a document like this?
- I am going to walk you through each page of this document. For each page of content...
  - Quickly — please point to the first item, word, or object on the page that draws your attention.
  - Point to the second.
  - Now the third.
- [Walk the participants through the name (title/main header) of the document and all subsequent headers or labels. Ask them the following for each or the most important.]
  - When you see the word/phrase XXX, what content do you expect to see within that section?
  - Now, let's look at the content in that section. Is that what you had expected to see? Please explain.
  - How might the name, headers, and/or labels be improved to better match your understanding of the content?
- Let's talk a bit more about how you might interact with this document. [Repeat what they explained to you earlier on in this section.] Do you think the size — both size of document and type size — and feel of you physically interact with the document best suits your needs, or how you might use it in the future? Please explain.
- Now that you know a bit more about the document, who do you think the audience is/should be? In your opinion, who would benefit the most from this type of document?
- How useful is this document to you? (Range from 1 – 5 where 1 in not very useful and 5 is very useful) Please explain.
- How would you rate your overall confidence level in using this document? (Range from 1 – 5 where 1 in not very confident and 5 is very confident) Please explain.
- How likely are you to use a document like this in the future? (Range from 1 – 5 where 1 in not very likely and 5 is very likely) Please explain.

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**PART C.**

*I have a couple more questions before we finish.*

- How could this document be improved to better suit your needs?
- Can you name one thing that we should absolutely not change about this document?
- Do you have any final comments or questions before we finish?

**WRAP UP & CONCLUSION [5 minutes]**

[At this point, the leader should address the group. Express gratitude. Pass out metro cards. Answer final questions]

*Thank you so much for your time and for your feedback today. We'll be incorporating the information we gathered into our final design recommendations. Please accept these metro cards as a token of our appreciation for your participation in this workshop.*

*Does anyone have any final questions before we end this session? Thanks again!*

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**INTRODUCTION & INFORMED CONSENT [5 minutes]**

*Hello and thank you for taking the time to meet with us. We greatly appreciate it.*

[Describe who is speaking and who is in the room.] *My name is \_\_\_\_\_.*

*To give you a sense of why we are speaking with you today: the Public Policy Lab has partnered with HPD to enhance aspects of the affordable housing application process, including the design of informational materials. During this session, we would like to capture your feedback on these materials so that we can ensure their usefulness and usability. Your feedback will help shape their future design.*

*Before we continue, I'd like to discuss some of the logistics of our conversation.*

*We would like to record this session through audio and photography. [Pass out the consent forms. Explain consent forms. Have participants sign forms. Collect forms.]*

*During our discussion, please let me know at any time if you have questions or are unsure of what I am asking. It's important to keep in mind that we are NOT testing you; the only way we'll be able to make real improvements is if we get your honest feedback. There are no wrong answers.*

*There may be times when I have to cut part of our discussion short and move onto another topic for the sake of time; this doesn't mean you shouldn't share what you think or that I'm not interested, but I do have to make sure we cover all of the topics within our allotted time.*

*Please note that your participation in this workshop will not impact your affordable housing application, status, or relationship with HPD and HDC in any way.*

*Do you have any questions before we get started?*

[Break participants up into groups. Numbers depend on how many participants and facilitators are attending the session.]

**CONTEXT [7 minutes]**

[Participants have been broken up into groups. Facilitators engage in small group conversation.]

*Before we begin, I'd like to get a sense of what your experience is or has been with HPD or the affordable housing application process.]*

**Questions for Applicants:**

- What borough do you live in? Or what is your Zip Code?

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- How long have you lived in NYC?
- Are you a renter in NYC currently? If so, how many years have you rented in NYC?
- Generally speaking, how do you find out about affordable housing opportunities? *(For example, newspaper, friend, organization, etc.)*
- Have you ever applied for affordable housing in NYC?
  - If so, with whom?
  - Did you apply online or by print?
- On a scale from 1 - 5, where 1 is not confident and 5 is very confident, how confident did you feel applying for affordable housing with HPD? Please explain. *(For example, the steps, communication, process, approval, etc.)*
- Did anyone help you through the application process? *(For example, a community organization, friend, family member, HPD staff, etc.)*
  - If so, what were the aspects of the process that were the most difficult?
  - What were the simplest aspects of the process?
  - Please describe how you were helped by a [Insert their answer here.]
  - Why kind of assistance would have been most beneficial to you?

**Questions for Ambassadors:**

- Please provide me a general sense of your organization's work. We are primarily interested in your relationship to affordable housing and supporting the local community.
  - What is your primary mission?
  - What programs and services do you offer?
  - What constituents, partners, and communities do you work with the most?
  - What do you do to promote quality affordable housing in the neighborhoods you service?
- Please describe your current role and/or responsibilities at WHEDco.
- How long have you been working at WHEDco?
- Can you tell me about the programs and services you provide to individuals and families looking for affordable housing in the communities you service?
  - d. How do people hear about WHEDco?
  - e. Why do they contact you?
  - f. Who generally reaches out to you and what qualifies them for your services?
  - g. How do you currently interface with the affordable housing application process and HPD in particular?
- How long have you been working with affordable housing applicants?

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- Generally speaking, how do you find out about affordable housing opportunities for your constituents? (*For example, newspaper, HPD, organization, etc.*)
  - How could this process be improved for you and your constituents?
- What resources do you currently use to help others understand the affordable housing application process?
  - What is your assessment of these resources?
  - What suggestions might you have for additional resources based on your past experiences?
- Please choose three words or adjectives that describe your experience of the affordable housing application process. (*For example: confusing, easy, simple, etc.*)
  - Why is the process [insert adjectives]?
- Please choose three words or adjectives that describe how you would like your experience with the affordable housing application process to be.
  - Please explain.

**VISUAL IMPRESSION / PREFERENCE TEST [6 minutes]**

[For this section, facilitators should capture quick first impressions of the visual design. Print the attributes document out and have a copy on the table.]

*I'm going to show you a visual design. For this exercise, we'd like to understand your reaction to the visual design.*

*Please review the list of attributes that you have next to you. You'll see that there is a range of attributes and sentiments from which you can choose. I will follow up with additional questions. **Please feel free to repeat attributes and/or use your own to describe what you see. This sheet is just a prompt.***

ATTRIBUTES AND DESCRIPTORS					
Accessible	Connected	Engaging	Impressive	Motivating	Straight forward
Advanced	Consistent	Entertaining	Incomprehensible	Not Secure	Successful
Annoying	Convincible	Enthusiastic	Inconsistent	Not Valuable	Time-consuming
Appealing	Convenient	Essential	Ineffective	Novel	Time-saving
Approachable	Creative	Exceptional	Innovative	Old	Too technical
Attractive	Customizable	Exciting	Inspiring	Optimistic	Trustworthy
Boring	Cutting Edge	Expected	Professional	Ordinary	Unapproachable
Business like	Dated	Familiar	Relevant	Organized	Unattractive
Busy	Desirable	Fast	Responsive	Overbearing	Unconceivable
Calm	Difficult	Flexible	Rigid	Overwhelming	Unconventional
Clean	Disconnected	Fragile	Satisfying	Piercing	Understandable
Clear	Disruptive	Fresh	Secure	Personal	Undesirable
Collaborative	Distracting	Friendly	Simplest	Poor quality	Unpredictable
Comfortable	Out	Frustrating	Integrated	Powerful	Unrefined
Compatible	Easy to use	Fun	Intimidating	Predictable	Usable
Competing	Effective	Gets in the way	Intuitive	Slow	Useful
Complex	Efficient	Hard to use	Inviting	Sophisticated	Valuable
Comprehensive	Effortless	Helpful	Irrelevant	Stable	
Confident	Empowering	High quality	Low Maintenance	Sterile	
Confusing	Energetic	Impersonal	Meaningful	Stimulating	

- Facilitator shows income guide to participant.

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- Participant reviews and provides at least 3 attributes for the design.
- [Facilitator asks the following questions to clarify stated attributes.]
  - When you chose the words X, Y, and Z, what is it about the design that makes you feel that way?
- What do you like **least** about the visuals?
- What suggestions do you have to improve the VISUAL design?
- What do you like the **most** about the visuals?

**DEEP DIVE: USABILITY OF DOCUMENT [38 minutes]**

[The facilitator should have their document/s in front of the participant in coordination with the online application.]

**PART A.**

*Now I'd like to review the document with you. We will begin with some general questions.*

[Let the participant review the document for 1 minute.]

- Would you know what to do with this document — how to read it and/or use it — if you found it at a library or someone gave it to you? Please explain.
  - What is it about this document that provides you with this information?
- Who do you think the audience is for this document?
  - What is it about this document that provides you with this information?
- At first glance, is there anything about this document that is confusing?

**PART B.**

*To provide you with a little bit of background, you can use the income guide to assist you when you are applying online or in print for an affordable housing unit with HPD/HDC.*

*For the next part of our conversation, I am going to ask you to complete a series of tasks using the online Housing Connect site and the income guide. I'd like for you to pretend that you are applying for an affordable housing unit, that your name is [Fake Name], and that your email address is [corresponding fake email address]. As you use the site, please provide us with made up information, and note that you are not officially applying for a unit at this moment. **This is a testing environment; meaning, anything that you submit will not be sent to a developer for application processing. It will be deleted immediately upon submission.** Again, this session does not impact any past or current application you may have submitted for an affordable housing unit.*

*Finally, it's important for you to be as vocal and honest as possible when walking me through what you are experiencing with the document and the site. **Please***

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*remember that there are no wrong answers!*

[Pass participant their slip of paper with their name and email address. Ask the participant to complete tasks. Do not prompt them unless they cannot figure something out.]

- Please access the Housing Connect website to begin your application. [Participant should use the site with the fake name and email address you have provided.]
- After accessing the site, what do you think you need to do next? Please explain.
- [Allow the participants to walk through all sections of the income guide and application process – moving between the document and the site. **Please avoid having them submit an application with e-signature.** Ask the following questions...]

#### GUIDE SECTION: SCREEN 1

- When you see the title 'Screen 1', what does that mean to you? What is it referring to?
- When you see the sub-title 'Instructions', what content do you expect to have access to in this section?
- Now, let's look at the content in that section. Is that content what you expected to have access to?
- Please follow the instructions – moving between the guide and the Housing Connect site for this first section.
  - Do you find the process you just completed to be easy or confusing? Please explain.
- How useful is this information to you as you are trying to apply online? (Range from 1 – 5 where 1 is not very useful and 5 is very useful) Please explain.

#### GUIDE SECTION: ALL OTHERS

[Ask the below questions for all of the other sections in the guide. Observe the participants as they move between the guide and the site. If you see them hesitating, ask them to verbalize their confusion. Pay attention to body language and length of pauses as they try to navigate the guide and site. These will be your key indicators of what could be confusing and where to probe. Remind participants to talk through their thoughts.]

- When you see the sub-title XX, what content do you expect to have access to in this section?
- Now, let's look at the content in that section. Is that what you expected to have access to?
- Please follow the instructions in this XX section – moving between the guide and the Housing Connect site.
  - Do you find the process you just completed to be easy or confusing? Please explain.
    - What was the easiest part?
    - What was the most difficult part?



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- How useful is this information to you as you are trying to apply online and navigate the Housing Connect site? (Range from 1 – 5 where 1 is not very useful and 5 is very useful) Please explain.
- How could this section information be improved to better support your needs?

[Repeat above question for all sections of the income guide. If you are running out of time, choose the most significant sections to test.]

**PART C.**

*I have a couple more questions before we finish.*

- How would you rate your overall confidence level in using this income guide? (Range from 1 – 5 where 1 is not very confident and 5 is very confident) Please explain.
- How could this document be improved OVERALL to better support your needs?
- Can you name one thing that we should absolutely not change about this document?
- How likely are you to use an income guide in the future? (Range from 1 – 5 where 1 is not very likely and 5 is very likely) Please explain.
- How you might use or interact with this document in your everyday?

[It's important to get a sense from the participant about context of use. For example: "I would probably sit at my computer and have it next to me with my notes, etc."]

- Where might you use it?
- How might you use it?
- What other information, documents, and/or resources might you use in coordination with this document?
- Where would you want to find or get access to a document like this?
- Do you have any final comments or questions before we finish?

**WRAP UP & CONCLUSION [4 minutes]**

[At this point, the leader should address the group. Express gratitude. Pass out metro cards. Answer final questions]

*Thank you so much for your time and for your feedback today. We'll be incorporating the information we gathered into our final design recommendations. Please accept these metro cards as a token of our appreciation for your participation in this workshop.*

*Does anyone have any final questions or comments before we end this session? Thanks again!*

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*Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the workshop.*

**Notes and recordings:** With your permission, we would like to take notes and make an audio recording of this workshop. These recordings will be used for review and analysis purposes only. We will not share notes or recordings made during this workshop with anyone outside of our research team. Any excerpted information or quotations that are generated from the workshop, could be used in future publications. You will remain anonymous. Only your first name will be used.

Please initial here \_\_\_\_\_ if you **approve** of having your audio recorded. Again, you will remain anonymous.

**Photography:** With your permission, we would like to take pictures of the workshop and the output from the workshop. While your identity will remain anonymous, your image could be used in a future publication of our work.

Please initial here \_\_\_\_\_ if you **approve** of having your photographed image used in future publications.

**Risks and benefits:** You will not be asked to disclose any private details other than standard demographic information. Any transcriptions that are made of the audio recording of this interview will have all identifying information removed. Access to the original audio data will be restricted to personnel on our research team. We will take all necessary and appropriate precautions to limit any risk of your participation.

**Taking part is voluntary:** Taking part in this interview is completely voluntary. You may instruct the fellow to stop the workshop at any time, in which case no subsequent actions performed by you will be included in our project or publications. You may also instruct the fellow(s) to destroy all record of your participation at any time.

**Confidentiality:** Any reports that we make public about our research will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Your name, address, and other personal information will not appear in any transcriptions, and they will not be released to anyone without your written permission. Research records will be kept in a secure location, and only the fellows working on this project will have access to them.

**Statement of Consent:** I have read the above information and received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in this workshop and to have any information I provide or audio recordings that are made be used in the manner described above.

Consent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name (Please print) \_\_\_\_\_

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## Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing EVALUATION OF APPLICANT EXPERIENCE

- **Part 1: Introduction**  
*This section discusses the purpose of soliciting feedback from applicants regarding their experience with the four pilots.*
- **Part 2: Research Logistics**  
*This section discusses in detail the format and logistics of the various ways in which the project fellows intend to engage applicants to solicit feedback.*
- **Part 3: Research Descriptions & Questions**  
*This section includes all questions to be asked of participants. Different subsets of this complete list of questions will be used in the various engagements described in Part 2.*



## PART 1. INTRODUCTION

Four pilot proposals to enhance the application process for affordable housing were developed as part of *Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing*, a collaboration between the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), the Parsons DESIS Lab, and the Public Policy Lab (PPL). HPD and its sister agency, the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC), will test the following approaches:

1. **Create new, human-centered informational materials**  
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.
2. **Encourage hyper-local marketing by developers**  
Supplement existing outreach by asking developers to share redesigned advertisements in public venues frequented by neighborhood residents.
3. **Support community-based housing ambassadors**  
Recognize the work of community-based groups and individuals who assist residents in applying for affordable housing by providing them with reliable information and resources.
4. **Form a street team for in-person HPD outreach**  
To address the lack of visibility and awareness of HPD and its affordable housing programs, employ a street team in strategic locations and at specific events in order to highlight HPD's work, publicize resources, and broaden the pool of applicants.

Combined, the objective of these pilots is to create a 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.

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. Therefore, the pilots are meant to work together to improve applicants' experience. The intended result is to meet the following design objectives:

- Encourage information accessibility and exchange.
- Account for applicants' lived reality.
- Enable more informed decision-making.

Through evaluation, it is hoped that HPD and the project team can determine the extent to which each pilot plan combined to create the knowledge-sharing infrastructure, and therefore, embodied the design objectives. In addition, the evaluation will help HPD understand what aspects of the pilots did and did not work both from a process and an outcomes perspective. All *Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing* participant groups will be interviewed. This document focuses on applicant interviews for pilot evaluation purposes.

In order to evaluate applicants' experiences with the pilots, the Public Policy Lab fellows will measure how these objectives were met, if at all. The fellows plan to solicit feedback from applicants by directly engaging them in a series of in-person

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interviews, online survey, paper survey, and postcard survey. All interactions with applicants will occur after the applicants have interacted with one or more of the four pilots. These applicant-specific evaluation engagements will take place between March and May of 2014.

**Applicant Engagement Overview**

The following engagements are planned:

- **Engagement 1: In-person interviews** with applicants after their interview for an apartment with marketing agent staff.
  - 30-minute commitment.
  - Approximately 6 applicants will be recruited at the interview site.
  - 2 Public Policy Lab interviewers will be present.
  - 1 interview date at each of the pilot projects.
  - Date is TBD as it is dependent on pilot test sites.
- **Engagement 2: Online survey** prompted after an applicant's e-signature on NYC Housing Connect website.
  - 10-minute commitment.
  - Approximately 500-800 participants are expected to participate.
  - A prompt will link applicants to an external survey site set up by the Public Policy Lab (e.g., Survey Gizmo or Survey Monkey).
  - Applicants will be clearly advised that the survey is not conducted by HPD and that their participation has no impact on their application status.
  - Dates are March to May of 2014.
- **Engagement 3: Paper survey** to be distributed and collected during the marketing agent staff interview process with applicants.
  - 10-minute commitment for paper survey.
  - Approximately 100 applicants recruited by marketing agent staff at survey site.
  - Public Policy Lab team will provide the paper survey to marketing agent staff members.
  - Marketing agent staff will assist in the distribution and collection of the paper surveys – passing them back to the Public Policy Lab upon completion.
  - Date is TBD as it is dependent on pilot test sites.
- **Engagement 4: Postcard survey** to be distributed during a street team appearance.
  - 3-minute commitment.
  - Postcard includes around 5 short answer questions.
  - Approximately 100 applicants will be encouraged to participate by Public Policy Lab team at a street team appearance.
  - Date is TBD as it is dependent on pilot test sites.
- **Engagement 5: In-person interview** with applicants after interacting with a housing ambassador.
  - 30-minute commitment.
  - Approximately 6 participants recruited by ambassadors.
  - 2 Public Policy Lab interviewers will be present.

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- Date is TBD as it is dependent on pilot test sites.

### **Focus of Approval from HPD**

The Public Policy Lab team seeks approval from HPD for each engagement's 1) format, 2) logistics, and 3) research descriptions and questions.

Each of the aforementioned engagements will be conducted *after* the pilots are implemented and *after* the applicants have interacted with the pilots.

Please note that applicants will be informed of the following before participating in any form of evaluation:

- The purpose of the interviews and surveys (e.g., Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing project overview).
- A summary, which explains the source of the surveys and/or interviews (e.g., Public Policy Lab created the surveys for pilot evaluation only).
- A description of how the outcomes will be used by the Public Policy Lab.
- A clear explanation that participation in the evaluation process will have no impact on an applicant's application status.



**PART 2. RESEARCH LOGISTICS**  
**(APPROVAL FOR THIS SECTION IS NEEDED BY HPD.)**

This section contains a detailed description of all of the logistics for each of the planned engagements. All logistics are dependent on the specific timing of the pilot implementation by HPD and its partners. Please see the following points, which map out the engagements' logistics in full.

**Engagement 1 Logistics: In-Person Interview**

Two marketing agent groups, Wavecrest for Morris Court and Housing Partnership for Alphabet Plaza, have agreed to participate in the hyper-local marketing pilot as well as its related evaluation activities. To solicit feedback from applicants directly on this proposal, the Public Policy Lab team would like to recruit and facilitate in-person interviews with applicants after their interview with marketing agent staff. The Public Policy Lab team will work with the marketing agents accordingly to secure the interviews.

<b>Participant Sample</b>	Applicants
<b>Interview Content</b>	Proposal 1: Informational Materials Proposal 2: Hyper-Local Marketing All Design Objectives
<b># of Participants</b>	6-8
<b>Logistics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants will be recruited at the interview site and asked if they are willing to participate either before or after their interview.</li> <li>• Approximately 30-minute commitment.</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPL fellow works with marketing agents' staff to coordinate interview date.</li> <li>• HPD approves research questions and logistics.</li> </ul>
<b>Survey Dates</b>	March–April of 2014 (Please note that the exact dates are TBD, dependent on the marketing agent groups' applicant interview timeline.)

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**Engagement 2 Logistics: Online Survey**

A prompt to participate in a 10-minute online survey will appear after an applicants' e-signature on NYC Housing Connect. It will be clear for the applicants that the Public Policy Lab is conducting the online survey for the Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing project. The survey will be created and maintained by the Public Policy Lab via an external site (e.g., Survey Gizmo or Survey Monkey). In addition, applicants will be alerted of the survey's existence via a NYC Housing Connect link and/or an email blast by HPD's marketing staff.

Please note that the online survey format is the best opportunity for the Public Policy Lab team to engage with a broad and large sample of applicants about their experience with the four pilots. Due to the timing of all pilot implementation efforts, there will be a partial survey that explores the first two proposals (e.g., Proposal 1: Informational Materials and Proposal 2: Hyper-Local Marketing), and a full survey, which explores all proposals plus the design objectives.

<b>Participant Sample</b>	Applicants
<b>Interview Content</b>	All Four Pilot Proposals All Design Objectives
<b># of Participants</b>	500 – 800
<b>Logistics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online survey is prompted after the e-signature on the NYC Housing Connect site and/or clickable from an HPD email blast.</li> <li>• Approximately 10-minute commitment.</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPL fellow will create the online survey via an external site.</li> <li>• HPD facilitates connection with NYC Housing Connect staff.</li> <li>• HPD staff set up link to online survey.</li> <li>• HPD approves research questions and logistics.</li> </ul>
<b>Survey Dates</b>	Partial Survey: March 10–April 15, 2014 Full Survey: April 15–May, 31 2014





**Engagement 3 Logistics: Paper Survey**

The Public Policy Lab team hopes to gain feedback on the effectiveness of the hyper-local marketing proposal. To do this, a paper survey will be sent to and collected from marketing agents who are engaging applicants in interviews. The marketing agent staff will distribute the paper surveys to applicants only; nothing else is expected of the marketing agent staff.

<b>Participant Sample</b>	Applicants
<b>Interview Content</b>	Proposal 1: Informational Materials Proposal 2: Hyper-Local Marketing All Design Objectives
<b># of Participants</b>	100
<b>Logistics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper survey will be distributed to applicants by marketing agent staff.</li> <li>• Approximately 10-minute commitment.</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPL fellow will create the paper survey.</li> <li>• PPL fellow will coordinate with marketing agent staff to distribute and collect the surveys.</li> <li>• HPD approves research questions and logistics.</li> </ul>
<b>Survey Dates</b>	March – April of 2014 (Please note that the exact dates are TBD, and are dependent on the marketing agent groups' applicant interview timeline.)

**Engagement 4 Logistics: Postcard Survey**

The Public Policy Lab team hopes to gain feedback on the effectiveness of the HPD street team. To do this, a post card survey will be created by the Public Policy Lab team. The postcard survey, which will consist of approximately 5 short answer questions, will be distributed during an HPD street team appearance. The Public Policy Lab team will be present during an HPD street team appearance to observe their interactions with the public and to recruit the public to fill out the postcard survey.

<b>Participant Sample</b>	Members of the Public
<b>Interview Content</b>	Proposal 4: Street Team All Design Objectives
<b># of Participants</b>	100
<b>Logistics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Postcard survey will be distributed to members of the public by PPL team.</li> <li>• The participants will fill out the survey immediately and return it to the PPL team.</li> <li>• Approximately 5-minute commitment.</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPL fellow will create postcard survey.</li> <li>• PPL fellow will coordinate with HPD on the date and logistics of the street team.</li> <li>• 1-2 PPL team members will be present.</li> <li>• HPD approves research questions and logistics.</li> </ul>
<b>Survey Dates</b>	April of 2014 (Please note that the exact dates are TBD, and are dependent on HPD's street team schedule.)

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**Engagement 5 Logistics: In-Person Interview**

The Public Policy Lab team hopes to gain feedback on the effectiveness of the housing ambassadors. To do this, the Public Policy Lab team would like to conduct in-person interviews with applicants after they have interacted with a housing ambassador. Similar to the user testing that was conducted by the Public & Collaborative team during the summer of 2013, participants will be recruited by the community-based organization. The interviews will be conducted by Public Policy Lab.

<b>Participant Sample</b>	Applicants
<b>Interview Content</b>	Proposal 1: Informational Materials Proposal 3: Housing Ambassadors All Design Objectives
<b># of Participants</b>	6-8
<b>Logistics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HPD will select one or more community-based organizations to act as the housing ambassadors.</li> <li>• Housing ambassadors will recruit applicants.</li> <li>• PPL will facilitate interviews.</li> <li>• Approximately 30-minute commitment.</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPL team will work with HPD and housing ambassadors to coordinate interview dates.</li> <li>• 2 PPL interviewers will be present.</li> <li>• HPD approves research questions and logistics.</li> </ul>
<b>Survey Dates</b>	May of 2014 (Please note that the exact dates are TBD, and are dependent on the pilot implementation roll out.)



**PART 3: RESEARCH DESCRIPTIONS & QUESTIONS**

**(APPROVAL FOR THIS SECTION IS NEEDED BY HPD LEGAL.)**

This section contains the descriptions and questions that the Public Policy Lab team intends to ask of applicants throughout all of the previously mentioned engagements. In each engagement, the team will use a subset of the following questions that are appropriate to the engagement’s timing and format (e.g., if the housing ambassador pilot has not been implemented yet, then applicants will not be asked of their experience with the ambassadors.)

The descriptions and questions are organized in the following sections:

- Descriptions
  - In-Person Interview
  - Online Survey
  - Paper & Postcard Surveys
- Questions
  - General
  - Informational Materials
  - Hyper-Local Marketing
  - Housing Ambassador
  - Street Team

**In-Person Interview Description: Used for Engagements 1 & 5**

*Hello! My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a fellow at the Public Policy Lab, a non-profit that improves the design and delivery of public services. For the past two years we have been working with HPD to improve their affordable housing application process through a project called Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing. As follows, we designed several proposals that HPD is piloting right now. We would like to talk to you about your experience with the pilots, which is why we are conducting interviews today. If you can spare 30 minutes, I would like to talk to you about your experience. Your feedback will be used to improve the pilots for their future implementation.*

*Please know that your participation in this interview and your answers will not impact your application status in any way. HPD will not have access to your answers and they will not know if you participated or not.*

*If you are interested in finding out more about Public Policy Lab’s collaboration with HPD, you can go to [www.publicpolicylab.org](http://www.publicpolicylab.org).*

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### **Online Survey Description: Used for Engagement 2**

*Do you have approximately ten minutes to fill out an online survey?*

*The Public Policy Lab is a non-profit that improves the design and delivery of public services. We are conducting an online survey to better understand your experience with applying for affordable housing. For the past two years the Public Policy Lab has been working with HPD to improve their affordable housing application process through a project called Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing.*

*The feedback you provide through this survey will help us improve your future experiences with the affordable housing application process. If you are interested, then please **click here** to be directed to the online survey. Once you click on the link, a new window will open up in your browser.*

*Please know that your participation in this survey and your answers will not impact your application status in any way. HPD will not have access to your answers and they will not know if you participated or not.*

*If you are interested in finding out more about Public Policy Lab's collaboration with HPD, you can go to [www.publicpolicylab.org](http://www.publicpolicylab.org).*

### **Paper Survey Descriptions: Used for Engagements 3 & 4**

*The Public Policy Lab, a non-profit that improves the design and delivery of public services, is conducting a survey to better understand your experience with applying for affordable housing. For the past two years the Public Policy Lab has been working with HPD to improve their affordable housing application process through a project called Public & Collaborative: Designing Services for Housing.*

*If you can spare 10 minutes, then please answer the questions below and place the completed survey in the box entitled "Public & Collaborative Completed Surveys". The feedback you provide through this survey will help us improve your future experiences with the affordable housing application process.*

*Please know that your participation in this survey and your answers will not impact your application status in any way. HPD will not have access to your answers and they will not know if you participated or not. **It is important that you do not write your name or any personal information on the survey.***

*If you are interested in finding out more about Public Policy Lab's collaboration with HPD, you can go to [www.publicpolicylab.org](http://www.publicpolicylab.org).*

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**General Questions**

- Do you currently rent an apartment in New York City?
- What zip code do you live in currently?
- Have you ever applied for affordable housing before this application?
- Before applying for this apartment, how much did you know about affordable housing in New York City?
  - 1 (I did *not* know a lot.)
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5 (I knew a lot about affordable housing in New York City.)
- Before applying for this apartment, how much did you know about the application process for affordable housing?
  - 1 (I did *not* know a lot.)
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5 (I knew a lot about the affordable housing application process.)
- Before applying for this apartment, had you heard of NYC Housing Preservation & Development (HPD)?
- What do you think HPD does for New York City residents?
- What two things would you recommend to help improve the NYC Housing Preservation & Development's affordable housing application process?

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New York City



**Informational Material Questions**

- **In general, did you look at any resources either online or in print to learn more about affordable housing in New York City?**

[IF NO — SKIP BELOW QUESTIONS.]

[IF YES]

- What materials did you use?
- Where did you find the materials?

- **Did you find and look at the below document when trying to learn more about affordable housing in New York City?**

[TO QUESTION REVIEWERS: Please note that this question and the subsequent questions will be asked of *all* of the informational materials developed for the pilot proposals. The material's thumbnail will be visible to the applicant with a series of questions following, depending on their yes/no upfront answer.]

[IF NO — SKIP BELOW QUESTIONS.]

[IF YES]

- Where did you find it?
- On a scale from 1 to 5 – where 1 is not useful and 5 is very useful – how useful was it in increasing your understanding of affordable housing in New York City?

1 (It was *not* useful.)

2

3

4

5 (It was very useful in helping me to understand.)

- On a scale from 1 to 5 – where 1 is not useful and 5 is very useful – how useful was it in increasing your understanding of *applying for* affordable housing in New York City?

1 (It was *not* useful.)

2

3

4

5 (It was very useful in helping me to understand.)

- **After using [NAME OF MATERIAL], do you feel like you could help a friend apply for affordable housing in New York City?**
- **How could [NAME OF MATERIAL] be improved?**

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**Hyper-Local Marketing Questions**

- **How did you find out about the affordable housing opportunity you applied to recently?**

*Choose All That Apply:*

- Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) Facebook Announcement
- HPD Twitter Message
- HPD Street Team Member
- HPD's NYC Housing Connect Web Site
- An Email from HPD
- A Friend or Family Member
- An Advertisement or Flyer Posted in a Local Place
- A Construction Site Poster
- A Community Organization
- An Affordable Housing Ambassador
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

- **Where do you find out about affordable housing opportunities normally?**
- **In the future, how would you like to find out about affordable housing opportunities?**

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**Housing Ambassador Questions**

- **Did anyone provide you with information on affordable housing in New York City? Please explain.**

[IF NO — SKIP BELOW QUESTIONS.]

[IF YES]

- On a scale from 1 to 5 – where 1 is not helpful and 5 is very helpful – how helpful were they in teaching you about affordable housing in New York City?

1 (They were *not* helpful.)

2

3

4

5 (They very helpful.)

- **Did anyone help you fill out your affordable housing application? Please note that it is okay if someone helped you fill out your affordable housing application.**

*Choose All That Apply:*

- No One Helped Me
- A Friend or Family Member
- A Community Organization
- An Affordable Housing Ambassador
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

[IF NO ONE — SKIP BELOW QUESTIONS.]

[IF YES]

- On a scale from 1 to 5 – where 1 is not helpful and 5 is very helpful – how helpful were they in assisting with your affordable housing application?

1 (They were *not* helpful.)

2

3

4

5 (They very helpful.)

- **What was the most difficult part of the affordable housing application process with NYC Housing Preservation & Development (HPD)?**
  - What type of assistance would have been most helpful to you during this difficult part?
- **After working with the housing ambassadors, do you feel like you know more about affordable housing in New York City?**



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- What word or words would you use to describe your experience with interacting with the housing ambassadors?
- Do you think HPD should continue to offer the housing ambassador service?
- How could HPD improve the housing ambassador service?

**Street Team Questions**

- After interacting with HPD’s street team, do you feel like you know more about affordable housing in New York City?
- After interacting with the HPD’s street team, do you feel like you know more about *how to apply* for affordable housing with HPD?
- On a scale from 1 to 5 – where 1 is not helpful and 5 is very helpful – how helpful were they in providing you with valuable information about affordable housing in New York City?
  - 1 (They were *not* helpful.)
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5 (They very helpful.)
- On a scale from 1 to 5 – where 1 is not helpful and 5 is very helpful – how helpful were they in providing you with valuable information about *applying for* affordable housing in New York City?
  - 1 (They were *not* helpful.)
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5 (They very helpful.)
- What word or words would you use to describe your experience with HPD’s street team?
- Do you think HPD should continue to offer the street team service?
- How could HPD improve the street team service?


**1** After meeting HPD's street team, do you feel like you **know more about affordable housing** in New York City? YES NO  
... and **understand how to apply for it?** YES NO

**2** Did the street team provide information about affordable housing that you **would share with friends and family?** YES NO

**3** From 1 to 5, **how helpful was the street team** in providing information about affordable housing:  
1 (not helpful)    2    3    4    5 (very helpful)

**4** What word or words would you use to describe **your experience with HPD's street team?**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5** How could HPD **improve the street team service?**  
\_\_\_\_\_

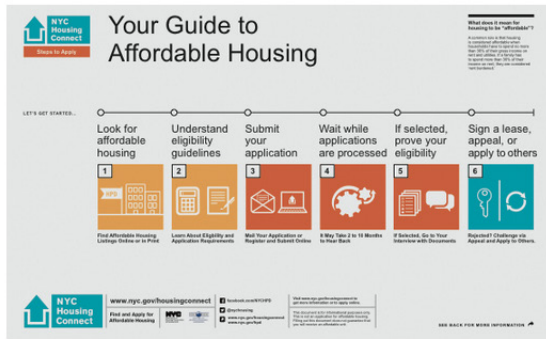
<p>Please use this space for additional comments</p>	<p><b>Public &amp; Collaborative</b> New York City</p> <p></p> <p><b>Please take our short survey about talking to HPD today!</b> The Public Policy Lab is a non-profit organization. We are working with HPD to improve New Yorkers' experience applying for affordable housing. Your participation in this survey and your answers will not impact your application for affordable housing in any way.</p> <p>To find out more about Public Policy Lab's collaboration with HPD, go to <a href="http://www.publicpolicylab.org">www.publicpolicylab.org</a>.</p>
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Public Policy Lab: Designing Services for Affordable Housing Survey  
 Informational Material



This survey is being conducted by the Public Policy Lab. If you are interested in finding out more about Public Policy Lab's collaboration with HPD, please access [publicpolicylab.org](http://publicpolicylab.org).

7. Did you find and look at the below [guide to affordable housing](#) document when trying to learn more about affordable housing in New York City?



- Yes
- No

Public Policy Lab: Designing Services for Affordable Housing Survey

Marketing & Advertising



This survey is being conducted by the Public Policy Lab. If you are interested in finding out more about Public Policy Lab's collaboration with HPD, please access [publicpolicylab.org](http://publicpolicylab.org).

9. How did you find out about the affordable housing opportunity you applied to recently?

Choose all that apply.

- Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) Facebook Announcement
- HPD Twitter Message
- HPD Street Team Member
- HPD's NYC Housing Connect Web Site
- An Email from HPD
- A Friend or Family Member
- An Advertisement or Flyer Posted in a Local Place
- A Construction Site Poster
- A Community Organization
- An Affordable Housing Ambassador
- A Newspaper Advertisement
- Other

10. Did you see an advertisement that looked something like this?



Public Policy Lab: Designing Services for Affordable Housing Survey

Introduction



This survey is being conducted by the Public Policy Lab. If you are interested in finding out more about Public Policy Lab's collaboration with HPD, please access [publicpolicylab.org](http://publicpolicylab.org).

Thank you for agreeing to take our Public Policy Lab survey! Your feedback will help improve how New Yorkers apply for affordable housing. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

**Please note: Your participation in this Public Policy Lab survey will not affect your housing application in any way. Neither the NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) nor your prospective landlord will have access to your individual answers. They will not know whether you participated or which questions you answered.**

Next

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Survey Software powered by SurveyGizmo



# Acknowledgments

## EVALUATION TEAM

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Public Policy Lab fellow Kristina Drury and researchers Isabel Cuervo and Jen Tang provided invaluable assistance during user testing of the informational materials. PPL fellow Yasmin Fodil created the original evaluation framework used in this document. Publication design was provided by Rebecca Hume.

## PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

Our evaluation was only possible because of the thoughtful participation of many HPD staff members, service providers at community organizations, housing developers, marketing agents, and members of the public.

Special thanks to HPD's Marketing, Public Education & Outreach, and Strategic Planning teams, and to staff at Community League of the Heights (CLOTH), Churches United for Fair Housing (CUFFH), Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES), Housing Partnership, Mutual Housing Association of New York (MHANY), Wavecrest, and Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco) for taking part in pilot activities.

Finally, more than 2,700 New Yorkers participated anonymously in our pilot testing and survey activities. We offer them our sincere thanks for their participation and candor.



## CAN COLLABORATIVE DESIGN IMPROVE HOUSING SERVICES?

The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Parsons DESIS Lab, and the Public Policy Lab partnered to find out.

Our project team designed and pilot-tested four new services to help New Yorkers applying for affordable housing. We created the designs collaboratively, with city residents and housing service providers.

Then, to tell if our designs worked as intended, we surveyed more than 2,500 housing applicants. We also interviewed and observed dozens of members of the public and service providers as they used our new services.

**The results? New Yorkers said that our services helped them better understand affordable housing, share that knowledge with family and friends, and make more informed decisions about applying for housing.**

This report captures our findings in detail, as well as recommendations for scaling the four services.

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*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.*

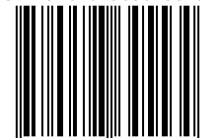
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[publicpolicylab.org](http://publicpolicylab.org)

**NYC**  
Department of  
Housing Preservation  
& Development

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