



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, INTERIM CHAIR BREZENOFF ANNOUNCE
MAJOR RENOVATIONS FOR 2,400 NYCHA APARTMENTS**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Dereese, thank you so much. I want to thank you for telling your story but also for your leadership as the Tenant Association President for Campos 1, and I want to also acknowledge and thank the President for Campos 2, Patricia Troche, thank you very much for your leadership. What you're hearing about today from Dereese is striking and we were up in her apartment –

Dereese Huff: Yes.

Mayor: And Dereese can tell you literally the whole history of this place because she was here when it opened, 1979?

Huff: Yes.

Mayor: She saw it through some good years, she saw it through some really tough years, and then she saw this rejuvenation, this renaissance that was achieved with a public-private partnership. So Dereese it is really amazing to hear how much your life has changed for the better.

Huff: Yes.

Mayor: And how much this new approach is working for you and for your fellow residents. And I want to thank you because I know you said a really important thing there, you said now you get to hold the management accountable –

Huff: Yes.

Mayor: In a way that really shows results.

Huff: Yes.

Mayor: And that's what we want for all NYCHA residents. That they – when they need repairs, they get repairs. When there is a problem it gets addressed, that their voices get heard, this is what we want to do more and more all over NYCHA. So I know you're a strong voice –

Huff: Oh yeah.

Mayor: I know you helped make sure the voices of residents were heard and that's made all the difference. Let's thank Dereese for all she has done.

[Applause]

Mayor: And this model we're talking about today, what's happened here at Campos is the shape of things to come in so much of NYCHA. This public-private partnership is an idea whose time has come, a way to bring new resources in that really make a difference, I want to commend all of the partners, all of the organizations and entities that have been a part of this because you've done great work. It's obvious when – I had never been in Campos to the best of memory, when I came in to that court yard area at the front, I was blown away. It looks absolutely beautiful. And then going into the apartment and seeing a beautiful updated apartment.

Another thing Dereese said that really was striking to me, she said the renovation of her apartment was done in a really sensitive, helpful way. The bathroom was renovated, one day. Kitchen renovated, one day. People were able to continue living in their apartments while renovations happened and they were high quality renovations. So this is something really wonderful for the residents.

I want to thank also everyone at NYCHA, who – and you will hear from some of my colleagues in a moment, but I want to thank everyone at NYCHA who worked hard to make this model work for these residents and a lot of people deserve appreciation. I want to particularly single out the Executive Vice President for Real Estate at NYCHA, Takisia Whites. Thank you, Takisia, for your leadership.

[Applause]

So at Campos 1, things were really turned around due to this public-private financing model and I didn't know Dereese before today, but I didn't expect to meet someone who could tell me the whole history, but what is really clear is how much of a difference this model makes and how quickly it can make a difference. And I want you to know when we came in to office, all of my colleagues and I, four-and-a-half years ago, this approach didn't exist. It was not part of the plan. It was something that had to be created and innovated.

We are now seeing what it means in real terms. It means as I said, renovated kitchens, renovated bathrooms, it means that the grounds of the buildings, the lobbies, the elevators, everything looks different. Everything is updated. It's a place people can be very proud of. It's a place that now has a strong foundation and whenever there is a need for repair, those repairs are being made quickly to keep it strong. That is the beauty of this model.

Today we are announcing that we're going to be expanding this approach rapidly. We have already 700 apartments in the Bronx that have this funding in place. We have now identified a team that will take over and make this happen in those 700 apartments, the full renovation of the buildings, total improvement of the quality of life. That work is going to start right away. We also are announcing 2,400 more apartments in Brooklyn and in Manhattan will now be getting this funding.

And some as some of you were with us, I think a few weeks back when we went to Ocean Bay in the Rockaways, another example of this type of approach. What you saw there, very similar to what you see here at Campos 1, full renovation, a lot of care, a lot of deep, professional, work being done to rehab the whole development, so we've proved it could work in the Rockaways. We've proved it can work here in the Lower East side, we're going to make sure it works all over the city and soon to see a big expansion in the Bronx, and then in Brooklyn and other parts of Manhattan.

The goal per our current plan, NextGen NYCHA, Next Generation NYCHA, the goal is to do 20,000 apartments that they will go through this full rehab with this public-private partnership. That's going to affect the lives of 50,000 or more New Yorkers and you can see and you can talk to Dereese about how much of a difference it makes, that's going to happen for 50,000 more NYCHA residents.

This is a plan that works not only because of how the place gets better physically but because of the ground rules, I want to really emphasize this upfront, a public-private partnership where public control and public ownership are maintained, which means we, NYCHA and the City, make sure we guarantee the long term affordability of these apartments. The apartment rent levels remain the same, the same standard as has been true always in NYCHA, 30 percent of income, and these apartments remain affordable permanently. That is the beauty of this model but with it comes very professional management, working with the NYCHA team to help improve the quality of life for all of the residents.

Now I want to say something to the residents of Campos 2, right next door, that we have more work to do and we intend to extend this effort to Campos 2 as well. Clearly everyone understands – and Dereese's story makes it so clear – that these problems that we're confronting didn't happen overnight. She told me in 1979 it was a beautiful new building and by the end of the '80s the problems were beginning to really deepen. That means in the '90s and the 2000s, she and her colleagues here had to go through a lot before the change finally happened over the last couple of years. This has been the pattern throughout the Housing Authority, decades of decline that literally coincide with decades of disinvestment, first by the federal government, then by the State government. And as I've said to all of you, City didn't do enough either, so we're trying to turn that all around because it's been 30, 40 years of decline. We won't fix it overnight, but we can fix it resolutely, we can make constant progress and what you're seeing here today is proof that progress can be made in any building.

Our goal, and we felt it from the very beginning, was to fix NYCHA building by building, brick by brick. That's the kind of commitment it's going to take and that's what we're dedicated to.

Now a lot of you remember, before the recent settlement with the federal government, we already had, as an administration, invested \$2.1 billion of new investments in NYCHA and \$1.6 billion of expense money – \$2.1 billion of capital, \$1.6 billion of expense – grand total \$3.7 billion. We were not obligated, the City of New York was not forced to do it, was not mandated to do it, no law made us do it, we believed it was the right thing to do, just like we believe entering into the settlement with the federal government was the right thing to do. And that guarantees another billion dollars in capital funding to NYCHA over the next four years and crucially obligates the next administration to keep investing in NYCHA, something I think is absolutely fair.

So we're are going to keep this work going and I really want us to appreciate the folks who work at NYCHA who even under adverse circumstances make so much happen. Some of you were also with us at Queensbridge Houses when we showed you the new roofs there, a lot of hard working people at NYCHA got that done, beautiful new roofs at the biggest housing development in North America. That took hard work from the NYCHA team and outside partners.

Everyday there are NYCHA employees who even against adverse circumstances keep the heat on, keep the grounds looking right, make sure the repairs are done. Repair times have improved markedly. Safety has improved markedly. The team at NYCHA should get credit for that. There is certainly a lot of fair criticisms that we all need to address but I also want to acknowledge and express my appreciation for the folks who have worked hard and have made things happen for those people who live in NYCHA buildings and got new lighting and got repairs done more quickly and had a safer environment – ask them and they will tell you a lot of credit goes to the people who work at NYCHA and to our colleagues at the NYPD for making peoples' lives better.

This is all about fairness. I've said many times this is the single biggest source of affordable housing in this city, over 400,000 people live in NYCHA apartments. To protect what New York City is all about, we have to protect NYCHA. To make sure it's a city for everyone we have to protect NYCHA. To make sure we will be the fairest big city in America, we have to protect NYCHA and we intend to do it. Just say a quick few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that I want to turn to the Chair and CEO of NYCHA, thanking him for all he is doing that's making an impact already and more to come, Stan Brezenoff.

[Applause]

Interim Chair & CEO Stanley Brezenoff, NYCHA: Thank you Mr. Mayor. It's exciting to be here today, to highlight the preservation efforts of – that NYCHA has undertaken to bring needed repairs to residents. Consistent with the Mayor's vision that he has just articulated, our efforts to preserve housing for future generations under our PACT Program, it's a mouthful – Permanent Affordability Commitment Together Initiative, brings units on to a more solid, financial footing. And that's a clear path towards enhancing housing for residents, all while maintaining affordable

rents and keeping residents in their homes. Under PACT we have two programs, RAD, Rental Assistance Demonstration Program and the conversion of our unfunded units. And today, as the Mayor has noted, we have some exciting news on both of those fronts.

We begin a journey today to advance the agenda of converting 15,000 such units under NextGen, an articulation of the Mayor's vision and agenda. We've completed 1,400 units in Ocean Bay, 3,100 are underway in the Bronx and Brooklyn, and today's announcement of 2,400 more brings us almost half way to that 15,000 unit goal in only three years.

The RAD sites we are announcing today have a need of about \$400 million in repairs. Decades of federal disinvestment has resulted in significant shortfalls for NYCHA but with RAD as a tool, these repairs become possible. Additionally we are progressing and converting our unfunded units through a similar preservation program to RAD. 700 of those unfunded units with 1,500 residents at Baychester and Murphy Houses have spent 20 years without dedicated funds.

Today we can finally say those funds are coming and in the public-private partnership we have a new team working with us – MBD Community Housing Corporation, Camber Property Group, and L&M Development Partners to start repairs as soon as 2019.

Look, across the country, cities like Chicago and Atlanta have retreated from public housing. Mayor de Blasio has committed to supporting NYCHA's future and these two initiatives are the key to preserving housing for future generations today. As has been noted where we are today, Campos Plaza demonstrates that through public, private partnerships, we can provide residents the homes they deserve.

What Ms. Huff said – this housing is a remarkable change for residents and something we want to expand to thousands more. I'm proud to be here today to support the future of public housing and I look forward to our continued work with Mayor de Blasio, residents, and all of our partners as we work to modernize and protect NYCHA housing.

Mayor: Thank you very much Stan.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you, Council member. Okay, we are going to take questions about today's announcement and NYCHA in general then I have another update I want to offer on another topic, and we'll take questions on that. And then we will go to a broad q-and-a off topic. On today's announcement, Dave?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: I'm sorry, Josh, my apology. I had a moment, Josh. Dave's behind you, I was looking at you, I was looking at him. I got all –

Question: [Inaudible] by some sort of public or private relationships that [inaudible]?

Mayor: I will get my colleagues to say the total number of apartments. I think the goal right now, the 20,000 apartments – so think about it this way. There’s about 400,000 people who lives in NYCHA. Those 20,000 apartments will certainly reach more than 50,000 people. That’s about one in eight folks who live NYCHA. So it’s a big piece of the puzzle. And that’s separate from the other major investments. When I talk about the billions that have been committed, that’s an entirely separate stream. So, we think this piece, this 20,000 apartments, is a big piece of the equation. As it succeeds and we are seeing visible success, we’re going to look for opportunities to build on it and go farther. So I think the public-private partnerships are going to be a big piece of the equation, but there’s also a lot of buildings where the direct public investment is going to be the difference maker. Total number of apartments –

Interim Chair Brezenoff: 175,000

Question: There’s 20,000 units that are [inaudible] or another program. It’s some sort of public-private partnership [inaudible].

Mayor: Correct, one of the 20,000 units. Yes, Sally.

Question: [Inaudible] what’s the financing mechanism that city [inaudible]?

Mayor: What’s the financing – ?

Question: Does the City take any steps for the [inaudible]?

Mayor: NYCHA colleagues can you explain the technical?

Interim Chair Brezenoff: So – help me out here, because some of these are rather technical and arcane. Essentially this is built on Section 8, the rental –

Mayor: Project-based Section 8, just to clarify.

Stan: Project-based Section 8 –

Executive Vice President for Real Estate Real Estate Takisia Whites, NYCHA: We’re converting the Section 9 to Section 8 –

Mayor: Is that on? Hold on.

EVP Whites: We’re converting the Section 9 to Section 8 funding, and we’re looking at a number of different financing streams. So, depending upon the particular nature of the development, we’re looking at some conventional options. But as of right now, we’re not looking for City subsidies.

Mayor: And to just clarify, let me, let me add and see – you can help clarify. This approach qualifies the buildings for project-based Section 8.

EVP Whites: That's correct.

Mayor: That's the crux of it, right? So that allows a different kind of federal funding stream to come with it which also allows for the private sector folks to then have something to finance with, basically it?

EVP Whites: That's absolutely right.

Mayor: Yes, Greg?

Question: Just a sense of timeline on this one. There about like 1,400 [inaudible] that's been going on for a while. That's [inaudible] 2,400 to get this towards 15,000, correct?

Mayor: 700 – what I said and you guys can add to it – 700 in the Bronx that have been funded and now have the team of organizations that have been put together to actually do the work. 2,400 in Brooklyn, Manhattan we're announcing the funding for today.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: We will get to the specifics in the case of the Bronx. The work is starting in the coming months. It will certainly start by the beginning of 2019. And then the case of the 2,400 we'll get you the exact payout. Okay, yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, [inaudible] is public engagement [inaudible]. A lot of people don't understand why [inaudible] means for them. And they're concerned [inaudible] public lands –

Mayor: Nope.

Question: On the roofs there are [inaudible]. There is some major concern can impact one group.

Mayor: Let me, let me do that first part and then I'll come right back to the second part. This is not privatization in the sense of selling off land or losing public ownership or losing public control in any way shape or form. I want to be very, very clear about that. What I just said a moment ago, this model allows federal financing to come in, and that allows these private sector colleagues to then be able to work with that. Public control is maintained. The rents will be kept at the same level as with all other NYCHA developments, 30 percent of income. The units will be affordable permanently. So I share by the way the fear of residents, of the concepts of privatization you've seen in other cities. You have seen public housing destroyed, very real and people pushed out –

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Absolutely. There are horror stories all around the country of literal privatization, buildings knocked down, never brought back. There's all sorts of things that people should be worried about. But I want New Yorkers to look very carefully at what's happening here. We in

this administration are absolutely committed to NYCHA long term, as a public entity protecting affordability, protecting rental levels, protecting public control.

Question: Why [inaudible] federal issue?

Mayor: It's – they're providing the financing, but again it's an automatic, it's not – let's be clear it's, you apply for the program, and if you qualify you get the financing so –

Question: Why [inaudible]?

Mayor: We just didn't think about it that way. Juliet?

Question: How did you determine which developments are getting the renovations?

Mayor: How to determine? Which developments?

EVP Whites: So with the RAD developments we use a scatter site methodology to make sure that those that are – the scatter site unfortunately benefit from the least centralized approach. So this way they will have privatized management, it will help alleviate the needs that they're having us from a capital needs basis, and make sure that they can get the management that they're looking for.

Question: How did you select the developments that are getting the help, how did you select that? Like who – did you decide which developments were getting the work done?

EVP Whites: Again, those are the nature of where they are. A number of NYCHA developments are in traditional campuses. These that we're announcing today are primarily scattered site.

Mayor: Yes?

Question: The 15,000 unit number was announced with the NextGen NYCHA plan in the May of 2015. Why is that number still the same three years later but things like your housing plan have grown, why [inaudible]?

Mayor: So as I said, 15,000 now augmented by 5,000 other units that are very similar mechanism but weren't included in that first group. So 20,000 is what we're working now. We are looking to expand on that number. And as soon as we secure a way to do that we will have updates. But I think this is a typical situation where ramp-up time in the beginning does take time too. It's a newer approach for New York City, making sure it works, making sure we can do it on a bigger scale. Now, I think, and it mirrors some of what we went through with our affordable housing plan in general. You remember originally we were projecting I think it was 15,000 units a year. We've been able to get it that up to 25,000 units a year now between new and preserved. First few years do take some ramp-up time. But we're really confident in the model now, and we're going to make it go very fast from this point.

Question: Just two things, one in my understanding Section 8 is always [inaudible]. By converting these, you're not taking Section 8 away from other developments, are you?

Mayor: No, I am going to start – let me just stay on that and you guys will correct me if I get anything wrong. You're right if – you're right technically, but in practice it's open ended. So as I understand it's a 20-year term initially but very typically is renewed in 20-year increments long term. So that's what the history has shown us and we feel confident of that. On terms of – no, we are taking away from other developments, this is additive.

EVP Whites: That's right.

Mayor: These are additional resources coming in because it qualifies for project-based Section 8.

Question: I'm just wondering if someone could just briefly talk us through how the RAD program works [inaudible].

EVP Whites: Sure, so there's an LOI that's entered into that we –

Mayor: What does that mean for us civilians?

EVP Whites: Sure, so we send to HUD a letter of interest on the buildings that we're looking to apply to. We get authority under HUD to convert these units from Section 9 financing, to Section 8 financing. Once that process is done, we go through a competitive RFP process to choose our developer, partners, team members to convert the units and provide the repairs at the same time we're putting together a financing plan to get them all financed and converted and get the repairs to the residents. So that's it in a nutshell.

Question: And what does the developer get? Just the right to do work, I guess.

Mayor: I am going to start and you'll add. Because I was asking all the same questions yesterday. Two ways it works for the private entities. One, because of the level of Section 8 funding they are able to have enough money to run the development, and you see how well run it is. So there is ample enough resources to do that and have some additional money for a management fee. And then two, they can finance against the revenue stream. So, in effect imagine if you or anyone has a 20-year guaranteed revenue stream, you can borrow against that, because you have a guaranteed asset. And that's what makes it appealing to them. But it's to me, this is truly a win-win, because it brings in this kind of expertise that you can see applied here. But it does it in a way that's realistic for private and non-profit developers to utilize and we win in the end. It's a new element of federal funding. As you asked before, it does not take away from other things, and so it's a model we found to be very effective.

EVP Whites: And just to add to that, the conversion is a legal instrument that allows us to go out and get the private financing.

Mayor: Okay, yes?

Question: So does the rent money run [inaudible] –

EVP Whites: The rent goes to the operations of the developments.

Question: [Inaudible] his would be done previous leadership?

Mayor: Stan, good question.

Unknown: Say it again.

Mayor: Say it again.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: I asked myself the same question. I think we can say that the physical decline of the NYCHA dates to 1980, and this is not a partisan statement, this is an analytical statement. When Ronald Reagan was elected is when the federal government started pulling back from support for public housing, and then it intensified in the 90s when Newt Gingrich was Speaker of the House. So we, physically, have been living with declining funding for NYCHA buildings and physical degradation of NYCHA buildings literally since the 1980s. I don't know why this wasn't tried earlier, because it's a great idea. I don't know the history of RAD, but it's an idea that time has come.

Interim Chair Brezenoff: So RAD itself, though there were a few pre-cursors, was legislated in 2012.

Mayor: Well, there you go.

Interim Chair Brezenoff: So, it's also an evolution and change in federal policy which sort of parallels their withdrawal from traditional public housing.

Mayor: Okay, anymore questions on this, yes?

Question: Following up on Sally's question. Before it got financing, will you anticipate using capital bond financing for these developments? Or like the other sources, I know bond capital has a limited resource, and you also have them used for the Mayor's housing plan?

EVP Whites: We don't want to rule out any financing stream. Certainly bond cap has been used in a number of our developments to date. And it's one that's being considered but we are looking at conventional financing options as well just to open up the pool.

Mayor: Okay, last call on this, please.

Question: What do you say about selling all of the [inaudible]?

Mayor: So you mean – I want to make sure we’re speaking the same language. Under the Next Generation plan there were specific sites identified for development on NYCHA sites, that’s continuing. We need in fact to speed that up is the honest truth because the plan we put together which maximizes both affordable housing creation and revenue for the surrounding development and for NYCHA in general, I think absolutely makes sense. Of course there is going to be intense local discussions and of course there’s going to be some of the same concerns about, you know, is this a good long term decision? I’m convinced it is. I’ve had, a few years back, a meeting with residents at Wyckoff in Brooklyn and I intend to have other meetings. But that’s something I want us to now double down on too. I think it’s part of the solution.

Question: [Inaudible] question –

Mayor: Sure.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: There have been very, I think, productive conversations with the Southern District. Again they are the ultimate decision-maker there so I want to yield to them in terms of – they will decide how and when to update on the process but we’ve been engaged with them on a regular basis.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: I don’t have a specific date for you but I do think, you know, the conversations are productive. I think everyone would like to get it done reasonably soon and then of course it has to go to court for ratification and then there’s other steps thereafter. But again, I think the conversations are going well. Okay last call on – yes, Rich.

Question: [Inaudible] air conditioning [inaudible] –

Mayor: Is it central air? Since the rehab? What do they have? Do we know?

Huff: Central air. Central air.

Mayor: Central air. It’s a damn good thing, central air.

Unknown: [Inaudible]

Mayor: That’s cool. A play on words, impressive. Dereese, obviously made the point that since that was put in, they have not had the heat problems they used to have.

Huff: That’s right.

Mayor: So, it’s another example of getting at the root of the problem.

Unknown: [Inaudible]

Question: [Inaudible] WNYC, you said the City [inaudible] –

Mayor: Wait, I lost you for a moment.

Question: Two weeks ago on WNYC you said you got [inaudible] elevated blood levels since 2010 yet at the same time [inaudible]. So, I guess why was there a suggestion that there is an [inaudible] between their blood levels and elevated levels of lead?

Mayor: Not sure I heard all of the question but let me try and answer and tell me if I'm on the right path here. We know there are kids all over New York City with elevated blood levels. It's our job to help all of them. Anyone, through our Health + Hospitals facilities, our Department of Health – very clearly, I want everyone to hear this. Thank God New York City has done real work over the last couple of decades to greatly reduce the amount of lead exposure. And we've done a lot more than many cities but any child with elevated lead levels needs care and we want to make sure they get that care, and if the family can't afford it we'll provide it for free.

On the question of how children get that exposure, the scientific truth is we don't know in many cases because it's not just paint. There are other sources. Unless we have an exact set of evidence of where exactly it came from, we can't say. We do know that any apartment where there's presence of lead or has been presence of lead and there's a child six or younger, has to get those regular inspections and that regular remediation. And we're going to keep doing that, and let's be clear, that lapsed years ago. It's now being done. But just – I'm trying to be honest about the scientific element of it. We don't know because unfortunately there are multiple sources.

Huff: Sir, I have a correction. Could I just say –

Mayor: Yes you may.

Huff: Hi, I have a correction. It's not central air. It's actually called a pitack unit that where, they installed the air conditioner and the heating system comes through it. To me, it's central air but it's really a pitack unit. So, that's the correction.

Mayor: Is it better than what was there before?

Huff: Yes, it is. Yes, 100 percent better.

Mayor: You get heat?

Huff: Yes, all day long. All day and all night.

Mayor: We like the pitack unit then. Last call on this before I go to another – yes, way back.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Well, the good news is that I think RAD is an – I'll start and my colleagues who are more expert will jump in. I think RAD is actually getting good reviews around the country and hopefully is the kind of thing that could get expanded upon. You know, I've been reminding people that even though we've had a very long stretch in which the federal government was not involved in affordable housing the way it used to, we've seen a couple of glimmers of progress including in the last federal budget where there actually was some new money put into public housing.

I think a lot of that had to do with Senator Schumer and it was for the whole country. But I also think some new approaches like RAD which obviously started in the Obama administration, but I think is gaining favor even with this Congress, might be expanded upon.

So there are some interesting pieces. We're certainly going to work for that because we'd like to take full advantage of it. Yes?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: No, and I appreciate the question. So, I've often talked about this and because I am a proud Democrat and a proud progressive, I think people have maybe assumed some things that if they look at a little more carefully they would see some evidence.

I think we have been living now for a decade or two in a time of greatly reduced government funding compared to what it used to be in the past, obviously, especially from the federal level. And look, I come from a philosophy very much informed by the New Deal of Franklin Roosevelt and I always say my family members used to talk about Roosevelt and the New Deal like, you know, he was another family member. It had a huge positive impact on their lives and I would love nothing more than to have government be able to fund things the way it used to. But we've been seeing for decades that's just not real anymore.

So, there's times when public-private partnerships make sense. The crucial question is – is there public control and are there clear public benefits? So you can look at a lot of situations in this administration where we determined those kind of balances make sense even going back to my time as a Council member.

You can look at what's happening with Brooklyn Bridge Park, which I was deeply involved in. There's a case where some people in the community did not like a public-private partnership but I thought it was essential for the maintenance of that incredible park for everyone and it also was part of how we got affordable housing into the mix.

I absolutely think there's a place for them but with really strict ground rules. Okay, last call on this topic and then we're going to go over to another topic and then we're going to off-topic. Okay, so let me go to another topic which is on folk's minds here and all over the country.

A number of you were with me on Wednesday when I went to the Cayuga Center in East Harlem – and thank you to my colleagues, appreciate it – and that was a very painful experience on one

level because seeing kids who have been taken away from their parents was horrible and the fact it was done with our tax dollars in our name.

But if there was something positive about it, it was the folks who worked there trying their best to help these kids and I thought they were very earnest. One of the employees at the Cayuga Center said to me – I asked how do you know that these kids can reach their parents or their grandparents, how can they reach a family member? And she said to me some kids are old enough that they know the names of their relatives and they know their phone numbers. She said some kids have a scrap of paper in their pocket with a phone number for their mother or grandmother where they can reach them.

But she said younger kids, a lot of times, don't have that or they had the scrap of paper and they lost it. So, literally the idea that a child might have been taken from their parent, taken 2,000 miles away and have no way to reach their mother or father.

And the folks, who work at the Cayuga Center even if they wanted to make that connection, are not always in the position to do it and they're not being given clear information from the federal government of how to do it.

What they described to me was a kind of barely controlled chaos where there was no game plan for reuniting these kids with their families and there was no plan for getting legal representation for the parents and there was no guarantee that the kids could even talk to their parents or family members.

And it was all done in a very fast and haphazard way. So, that's what we learned on Wednesday. Senior members of my administration who were with me at the Cayuga Center proceeded over the next 48 hours after that to visit the other two locations that are housing kids as part of the family separation policy here in New York City.

Catholic Charities runs one of them and Lutheran Social Services runs the other. They are much smaller numbers of kids. At this moment we estimate the grand total of kids in New York City is about 300. We have no indication of a reunification plan. We have no timeline from the federal government.

We have no accounting for how many kids are here or where they are. We have sent informal and formal communications to federal officials asking for these answers. I've sent a letter to the Secretary of Health and Human Services just asking for an accounting of these kids and what the plan is – no response yet. I'm going to try and reach the HHS Secretary and the Homeland Security Secretary this week to try and get some clarification.

But right now it's about 300 kids. These are all kids who came here under the family separation policy – so just in the last two months. They are overwhelmingly Guatemalan, Salvadoran, and Honduran children, almost none from any place else.

Some, very young – the youngest at the Cayuga Center, nine months old. Most of them in the age range of four years old to ten or 12. Certainly the kids I saw in the classroom where generally in that four that ten range.

The other thing – two other things I want to say to you. One – the health impact. So, what's really clear to us is there was not a plan to care of the health of these kids. I will at least be clear about the fact the federal government did have a plan for them to get into foster care which means staying with families, did have a plan for them to get daytime programming – you know school of some sort – but there was not a health care plan and when we talked to the Cayuga Center, they were very straightforward that they would have to try and figure out a way to get the health care for these kids.

Obviously, these kids didn't have insurance so that became a challenge. We are stepping in with the Health + Hospitals Corporation, our public hospitals, our public clinics to provide whatever health care they need. There's been a group of kids who have seen so far. Number one problem we're seeing is mental health challenges.

Obviously kids have been through a very traumatic experience and they need support and they need counseling to get through this. So we are providing that for free to these organizations.

Lastly, a lot of New Yorkers have asked how they can help. Anyone who wants to help can call 3-1-1. Right now the best way to help, for those who can, is financial donations either for the legal support for these families or for the social service organizations that are providing the direct help to the kids.

Some people have said they want to become foster parents. There certainly is a need. We're going to have that available hopefully later today on 3-1-1 as well of the way you can apply to the various organizations to become a foster parent. Anyone who wants to do that right away, they can literally reach out the Cayuga Center or Catholic Charities or Lutheran Social Services and ask them directly how to go about that application. But there definitely is a need for additional foster parents here in the city.

Very quickly in Spanish just a few sentences –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that I want to take questions on this topic of this family separation policy.

Question: [Inaudible] shouldn't these kids all be reunited with their parents [inaudible] said not necessarily. He said sometimes they're better served [inaudible] and he said a lot of these kids [inaudible] they come alone.

Mayor: That's not what we're seeing here. So, I don't know him or his views but I'm going to disagree respectfully. I asked this very specific question at the Cayuga Center – were some of these kids independently coming here, were they the unescorted kids that we saw a while back coming in large numbers? The answer was no. All of these kids came here with their parents and then were separated from their parents. If they came here with their parents, to me it's self-evident they should be reunited.

I'm not going to judge someone else but I don't know many situations where you'd rather have kids away from their own parents particularly if their parents are trying to save them from violence and oppressive situations in their home countries.

If there is a specific reason why a parent can't take care of a child, let that be determined by a court. But as a general rule, people coming here fleeing violence, trying to get their kids to a better life – those sound like good parents to me.

Question: Mayor, how do you know that there are [inaudible] federal government is [inaudible]

–

Mayor: Yes.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: It's totally unacceptable and I've asked a lot of people, can they remember anything like this and the answer is no. And I doesn't [inaudible] the government and the City and the State all sing, Kumbaya, but there's always been a level of professional respect and a sense that information must be shared in a democracy.

This is unprecedented and I want to say the media has a very good job of uncovering what's happening here and people should see this as a very dangerous precedent where even senators and Congress members can't go into the centers in Texas. The federal government is refusing to give anyone a straight answer about how many kids are involved.

If they can do that to immigrant kids, what's next? People should be really, really worried about that. But we're only, Josh, working from what we know. These are the organizations that have acknowledged to us that they're doing this work and they've told us the numbers they're dealing with. They've been forthcoming.

There may be others we don't know about. It's impossible to know and clearly the federal government is trying not to share the information and I think for some in leadership in the federal government, this policy has proven to be a real negative situation for them in terms of public opinion, so they're trying to stonewall. I'm sure some other people in the federal government are embarrassed to be a part of this. But no, we do not have definitive answer. That's what we're trying to get.

Question: [Inaudible] brought to New York that they may have extended family here or [inaudible]?

Mayor: I asked that question too because I was trying – I couldn't believe it at first, Jillian, that kids would be sent 2,000 miles including by bus in some cases. No, the answer is no. I asked – at that moment, Wednesday at the Cayuga Center had 239 kids all there because of family separation. I said, how many had relatives even somewhere on the East Coast, they said maybe a third.

The clear majority, if they had relatives, they were in the west and southwest. It was not that. What seemed to be the reason in their view – one opinion – was that in a lot of other states the capacity isn't there. They don't have a substantial number of social service organizations that are big enough to handle a large influx of kids. They don't have as developed foster care programs.

So, look, we're a compassionate city and a compassionate state so it makes sense that we would have more of that but you'd think if someone was cooking up a policy, which makes no sense to begin with to separate parents from their children, but you'd think they would have said well if we're going to do it we should at least keep them nearby. There was no such forethought –

Question: [Inaudible] detained by ICE [inaudible]. Is that [inaudible] –

Mayor: Obviously, it's part of the same problem. If an unaccompanied minor comes here fleeing violence and oppression, they should get an opportunity to be heard and to be protected if in fact they have a legitimate claim. I'm not clear at all that that's happening. And if kids have been here for a few years, we should be very careful to make sure we're not sending them back to a dangerous situation.

Huff: [Inaudible]

Mayor: You can say it.

Huff: I'm very touched by this. I am – I used to be a foster parent for Catholic Charities. When I go back to my office today, I'm going to put notices in the building to let other tenants know that they can call Catholic Charities and these other two organizations to try to let's get these kids adopted because it's not fair of what they're going through. And sometimes all they need is love, a touch of love, a feel of love. And we have so many people in this development right here in Campos Plaza that already has – I know there are quite a few that are foster parents, and a lot of them don't know that these kids can possibly be adopted by them. So, I will take this back for sure.

Mayor: Thank you. That's a good compassionate New Yorker there.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Not yet but to Josh's point before, we don't know. We are not getting an accounting of the situation of children who have been brought here in general. But I have no indication of that at this point. Yes?

Question: [Inaudible] mental health but as far as education I guess I just a little surprised to hear that they will have classes with the kids at the social service provider rather than the foster parents taking the kids to local school. Is there any kind of policy around what they should be doing?

Mayor: I think – I'm only going to say this. We have not spoken to that before to the best of my knowledge but I think there is a common sense element to this that does make sense to me. From

the point of view of the providers, their goal is to get these kids reunited with their parents and they're not planning for these kids to be here for a long stay. And I think it is probably easier in the scheme of things to keep kids together who have come from the same country and who can be really focused on in this setting.

It's imperfect, obviously, but that probably – and they're being taught in Spanish which is basically the only language for most of these kids. I think that's probably smoother than trying to bring them into the public school system if they're not going to be here long term.

Also, obviously, our schools are about to shut down for the year. This center is going to continue going.

Question: Are these providers getting federal funding?

Mayor: Yes, there's a – to the best of my understanding, they are part of this. They have a contract for refugee resettlement in general and they were doing this work in other ways before and then out of nowhere it was put on steroids and suddenly they're dealing with hundreds of kids instead of the occasional kid. Okay, last call on this – please?

Question: I'm just curious what you thought about President Trump's press conference on Friday where he did that press conference with families who [inaudible] was killed by immigrants [inaudible] –

Mayor: Look, it's a very clear pattern. First of all, my heart goes out to any family who has lost a loved one to crime of any kind and anyone who has committed such a crime needs to feel the consequences. Here in this city, we have 170 offenses that if you commit one of those offenses and you're found guilty and you came here undocumented, you are leaving and we are fully cooperative with ICE in those deportations and I'm very, very comfortable with that. That's the law of this city and I believe in it.

But what I think the President is doing is not addressing the public safety in a sober way, the President is trying to create division, and he's trying to paint a picture of people of color and particularly Latinos being agents of violence in this country.

Nothing could be further from the truth. This is a country that will be a Latino majority in a few decades and these folks are the backbone of America, and hardworking people who make America work.

And there's a very small number of people who do the wrong thing as with every community. But the President, every chance he gets, tries to portray Latinos as criminal and I find it disgusting and I find it un-presidential and unfair. Yes?

Question: [Inaudible] sense of how it works. You have your top aides like call in [inaudible] –

Mayor: Yeah, particularly our Commissioner for Immigrant Affairs, Bitta Mostofi, who has been working with DHS all along. We don't agree with some of the policies but we still try to

work with Homeland Security on a variety of fronts. She's had a regular dialogue with them, been asking them for answers, we've been reaching out to HHS. Again I formally sent a letter Friday to the secretary with very specific questions, I am going to try and speak to the secretary directly. But you know, under any normal situation and I certainly can say this was true of the Obama administration; it was true of the Bush administration, if a city was asking these kinds of questions they would get some answers. It would be normal to share this kind of information. We've never seen anything like this. Last call on this before we go onto other questions. Okay, any other questions? Yes?

Question: Earlier today, Governor Cuomo [inaudible] to LaGuardia Airport [inaudible]. I just want to know your thoughts about the AirTrain [inaudible].

Mayor: So, I want to separate my thoughts on people getting to LaGuardia from my thoughts about the specific legislation because I do not know the details of that legislation so I will come back to you today with a comment on that. We need more ways for people to get to LaGuardia, that's obvious. And I'm supportive of more and better alternatives. But again, how we do it is a different question, so we'll get you a more full answer today. Yes?

Question: Do you plan to visit with the family of [inaudible]?

Mayor: I spoke to his mom yesterday evening. It was heartbreaking. Really admirable woman who talked about all she did to bring him up the right way. And look he was part of our Police Explorers program and I really admire young people who become a part of that. So I said to her that we want to find a way to honor him in a lasting way related to our Explorers program. We want other young people to become a part of that to remember him as a young man who was on his way to our police force. And I'll figure out with her the right time to visit as well.

Question: How do you feel about the police have been cracking down gangs, and focusing on gang violence [inaudible] –

Mayor: Wait, couldn't hear the last part.

Question: That it appears at this time that this is related to a gang.

Mayor: Yeah, look gang violence, we've been talking about this for years, is one of the central challenges we face. The city has gotten safer, year after year. Shootings are way down, homicides are way down. But to the extent we have focal points of violence, a lot of it is related to gangs. That said, you'll notice the NYPD has done a series of gang take downs, typically with a large number of arrests, dozens in some cases more than a hundred. A lot of weapons seized, a lot of drugs seized. Those are intensifying, and the reason they're intensifying is as other crime is going down, more time and energy is being put onto gangs. So the precision policing model puts a whole lot of focus on gangs. This was a disgusting, horrible incident. I think you're going to find that everyone responsible will be brought to justice. But yeah, we want to get under the skin of the gang problem more every year, and cut it off at the root. Yes?

Question: [Inaudible] terrible situation [inaudible].

Mayor: Look, it would be a tragedy in any situation. It, for all us, is even more painful if it was mistaken identity, and I am not going to confirm details. I'll let the NYPD do that. But, what hurts me the most is the notion that this was young man who wanted to serve this city, and be a part of our police force and had such a bright future and now is taken from us. And I think it, for all us, feels very personal to have lost sort of an exemplary young man. Yes, way back.

Question: A four-year-old girl on her scooter was run over and killed yesterday on a sidewalk by Hart Street in Bushwick. The sidewalk was next to a laundromat where there is a parking lot and cars have to back out of this parking lot right onto the sidewalk in order to get onto the street. You know, people in the neighborhood say this was an accident waiting to happen. I am wondering what are your thoughts on this, what is the City going to do to make sure this doesn't happen again?

Mayor: Yeah, my heart goes out to the family. At four years old that's particularly painful to lose someone so young. And I don't know the location, but you know what we're doing with Vision Zero everywhere we can, we're changing the physical layout to make it safer. And we're adding a lot more enforcement and obviously right now we're fighting to get more speed cameras. So the Vision Zero idea applies to a lot of different ways of keeping people safe, and particularly kids safe. I'll have my team look at the site, and whatever we can do to make it safer we certainly will. Let me see if there is any others.

Question: Yes, one more.

Mayor: Wait, wait, wait let me see – let's get them and then I'll get you at the closeout. Go ahead.

Question: Mayor, we have a council [inaudible] tomorrow that's going to be [inaudible] Airbnb. I was wondering if you can tell me [inaudible] Airbnb and [inaudible] there should be some kind of me [inaudible].

Mayor: I have really mixed feelings. And the mixed feelings begin with the corporate responsibly question which is a challenging question with the sharing economy. We've seen it in transportation, we've seen it in lodging where unfortunately a lot of the companies have not been forth coming with information and have not been particularly interested in following the law. Now I am speaking very broadly here. So, that gives me pause right off the bat. Airbnb has in some places come to some kind of better approach with local governments. But you know I have not seen the kind of sharing of information and data that would make me more comfortable. There's a lot of problems we've identified to Airbnb about safety and security for people in buildings for example – avoiding criminal activity. I am not satisfied with what's been done to address those, and that's part of why we have a very aggressive enforcement now through our Office of Special Enforcement. We obviously see de facto hotels, whole buildings in effect that are Airbnb without going through the proper regulation. So, I have a lot questions and concerns. I am glad the Council is looking at this. On the positive side, I think you know a beginning with some of what the Supreme Court acted on the other day, another step towards ensuring that governments will get appropriate revenue. That would be necessary for any different outcome.

When I think of these – if the sharing economy companies want to have a different relationship with this city and other cities, they should be a lot more forthcoming with the information they have. Last call, yeah, Rich.

Question: Mr. Mayor, this isn't exactly a local question but my office asked me to ask you about Sarah Huckabee Sanders being refused service, and whether or not [inaudible] there are people who are saying we've got to protest anytime you see a cabinet member out somewhere follow them around and go after them. Do you think that that's a good project [inaudible]?

Mayor: No, I don't, I don't. I appreciate that I think the folks at that restaurant were acting from the heart and I think a lot of them are troubled by what they see in the country, and were expressing it, but I don't think it's the right approach. I think when it comes to all public accommodations everyone needs to be respected. By the way I don't think anyone should be refused service of any kind. Even if someone says they have religious or moral beliefs. I think if you're involved in a public enterprise, it should be a fair and equal treatment for everyone. And I think for those folks who disagree with the administration, they should express that politically. They should vote, they should go to protests, they should do it in a way that's actually going to have an impact. Maybe getting upset who is at the table next to you may feel good, but it doesn't change anything. And look, folks come up to me and express their opinions all the time and I'm never shocked by that. But I think it's a different matter than refusing someone service. I actually don't think that's healthy. I think we have to sit at the same table, if you will, right. And I've seen that – by the way I was in Texas on Thursday with a whole group of Republican mayors who were there with me in common cause and my fellow Democrats to oppose the family separation policy. I thought it was a very healthy thing. So I'd like to encourage people to try and have a dialogue even when we disagree. But I do not like the notion of people being turned away from public accommodations. Okay, thanks everyone. Oh wait, wait last call, last word, Dereese.

Huff: I just want to say I'm thinking about what the young lady said about the young baby getting hit. When you walk out this court yard right here, you see the street where the channel news 2 parked at, where it says do not enter? Where L&M put the sign up, do not enter? I am sorry but it does say channel news.

Mayor: Channel two is being shamed.

Huff: And NYCHA's vehicles always driving up there, and that's going to be an accident waiting to happen.

Mayor: So you want us to make sure that the vehicles are more careful.

Huff: Not come up on the road, not come up –

Mayor: Don't come up on this.

Huff: It's a street.

Mayor: You guys on it.

Interim Chair Brezenoff: Yeah, we're going to enforce it.

Huff: Thank you so much.

Mayor: Thank you everyone.

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