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**TRANSCRIPT FROM WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2022: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS
APPEARS ON 'INSIDE CITY HALL' WITH ERROL LOUIS**

Errol Louis: Good evening. Welcome to Inside City Hall for Wednesday, October 5th, 2022. I'm Errol Louis. We begin tonight with the wave of migrants who were being bussed into the five boroughs from Texas and from Florida and our city's handling of the crisis. This week, the Adams' administration announced that it will move a planned emergency relief center from its original site, Orchard Beach, in the Bronx, to Randall's Island. But late this afternoon, City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams pushed back against that plan, urging the mayor to reconsider and find alternative locations. I spoke with Mayor Adams just after the speaker's announcement. He joined me from City Hall for a wide ranging interview and it's his first appearance on this program since taking office in January. We get into the controversial Bruckner Boulevard rezoning plan and much more. Here's the first part of the conversation.

Mr. Mayor, thank you so much for joining us tonight.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. Good to see you Errol.

Louis: Absolutely. I want to talk to you about affordable housing, but there was some breaking news just as we were sitting down and I wanted to get your reaction to this, that the speaker of the Council, Councilwoman Adams and several Council members are opposing your plan to put the Asylum Relief Center right on Randall's Island. They're proposing a different approach and I wanted to get your reaction.

Mayor Adams: I'm not sure of the announcement. If you could just give me an overview of what it was. I just came back from the funeral. If you could give me an overview, I could respond to it.

Louis: Oh, absolutely. They've said in a press release that they've expressed major concerns about the relief center. They said that there are similar environmental challenges on Randall's Island compared with the Orchard Beach location and the lengthy stays in homeless shelters, of the existing shelters, they fear are going to spread to these new locations. They believe that hotels, for example, large hotels, would be a more appropriate location.

Mayor Adams: And I agree with them that permanent housing is a more appropriate way to deal with this and this is what we're trying to address. And I'm glad they come in with the spirit of cooperation to come with a solution. If we are going to critique what we're doing during this humanitarian crisis that was created by human hands, then we should come with great ideas. If they have some specific hotels that they're talking about, I'm looking forward to sitting down with the Council and Councilwoman Adrienne Adams, our speaker, and come up with those solutions. But right now our team — we have been really focused on this crisis of thousands of people arriving to our city looking for assistance and we've responded to that and I look forward to talking to them and looking at the plan that they're presenting.

Louis: Okay. Overall, Mr. Mayor, are you considering migrants to be on a separate track, I guess, administratively and even legally from the average New Yorker who shows up looking for shelter?

Mayor Adams: Well, we have to be clear. I'm not going to pit everyday New Yorkers against migrants and I'm not going to take away resources that we have to really allocate for everyday New Yorkers. This is a national problem, it needs a national response. And that is why we call on Washington to respond to this on a national level. And this is different from the everyday shelter system. This is a migrant crisis and we must focus on that. Everyone that comes to this city — we are going to ensure that we fulfill our obligation of getting them housing. But this is a migrant humanitarian crisis that we are facing.

Louis: I guess it's interesting because ultimately, while it is, it's certainly a crisis and definitely a problem. If they're going to keep sending people here from the Texas border by the thousands week after week, at some point it becomes the norm, right?

Mayor Adams: Yes. So true. And that was the fear that we had in the beginning when it first started with Governor Abbott that we knew that unfortunately that some people were going to use it as a playbook to send buses to both New York, Washington, and to Chicago. Keep in mind, these are three cities where we have Black mayors. This is undermining our economy and is undermining our attempt to recover in our cities — that we're already dealing with crises from COVID to monkeypox to crime to housing. And I think it's something that we need to be very clear on. These three cities were targeted, and I have a conversation this afternoon with the mayors of the other two cities.

Louis: You think these cities are being targeted, including New York because they have Black mayors?

Mayor Adams: Well, I don't know if it's Black mayors or if it's just going to northern cities, but something is wrong. I mean, we have thousands of cities in this country. Why are we specifically targeting Washington, Chicago, and New York? There's something wrong with that and I believe there needs to be a national response to give the assistance to these three important cities in our country.

Louis: Okay. And I guess finally on this topic, have you conferred with your corporation counsel? Is there going to be a legal response to try and maybe stop the transference of these migrants from the other states?

Mayor Adams: Yes. Sylvia Hinds-Radix, who's the corporation counsel, she has been looking at every legal ground that we have to make sure we protect New Yorkers from this assault on our city of really not allowing us to continue to move this city in the direction that we believe it should go in to.

Louis: Okay. Well, let me talk about affordable housing with you. There's a City Council — a subcommittee for rezoning. They're expected to vote tomorrow on a development plan for Bruckner Boulevard up in the Throggs Neck section; you've expressed support for it. This is the one where I think it's about 349 units of which 168 would be affordable. The local Council member says it doesn't go far enough. She also is complaining that it doesn't adequately involve local hiring, including by the carpenters' union. How do you expect this all to play out?

Mayor Adams: Well, we are optimistic. As you know, the councilwoman, Velázquez, also went to Puerto Rico with us to look at some of the issues they were facing around the hurricane. We had an opportunity to talk, continue to speak with the councilwoman. I believe she's a very conscientious councilperson as she's dealing with the need of addressing affordable housing. In that area, Throggs Neck's area, they only had about 58 units of affordable housing placed there. This is a citywide issue of affordable housing. And I'm looking forward, and I'm optimistic that we should be able to come to a conclusion with this project.

Louis: Does the Council need to move away from what is normally called, I guess, member deference where the local member essentially makes the decision and the rest of the Council goes along with them on zoning changes?

Mayor Adams: I respect that the Council, really, each councilperson is elected on a local level and they're concerned about their districts. And I respect that. And I believe that even if you say officially that there's no more member deference, the reality is that cannot be codified in law because members are going to respect each other. But what we should do is to look at this issue of affordable housing and see what districts we have not built the housing in. And that's why we need to look at how we change zoning. This should be a citywide concern. If we want to integrate our schools, it comes with housing. We want to integrate access to good healthcare, it comes with housing. And even access to healthy food, it comes with housing. So to integrate our city must be integrating the housing and that is our focus.

Louis: Well, yeah, I mean, and look, there's a whole issue of supply and demand. I mean, there's an estimate that New York needs 560,000 new units of housing by the year 2030 just to make up for the deficit in new construction over the last decade. There's expected population growth. We've had a number of different studies that have all shown that we're getting more and more New Yorkers and there's just not a lot of housing, and that's housing overall, never mind affordable housing. How do we ever get on top of that? How do we get a half million units built if every good proposal for 350 units turns into a gigantic political battle?

Mayor Adams: So true. And there are things that are within our span of control and there are things that are out and those things that are within my span of control as the mayor and this administration, we must address. You saw we inherited over 2000 units of affordable housing that was just bottlenecked. We have to streamline the process. We need to utilize our vouchers better. We need to make sure we fill whatever vacancies that normally comes with the new administration. And when you have a new mayor or new administration coming in, we must make sure we fill those places so we can clear up the pipeline and that's what we are aggressively doing.

But we also need to include what we've done, include nature into the conversation of affordable housing. And that's why we are investing the dollars that we need to do so. \$22 billion, Errrol, that's the largest amount that has been allocated for affordable housing. We're focused on this issue and we know there's several things that are outside and inside our control that needs to be done. We need 421-a. There's no way of getting around it. Let's adjust it if it's needed, but we witness that without it, we see a decrease in affordable units and even housing altogether, and we need to be zero focus on housing in this city and affordable as well as market rate housing.

Louis: We're going to take a short break here. Coming up, I'll bring you the second part of my conversation with Mayor Adams. We talk about public safety and much more. Also tonight, I'll be joined by an EMS union president to talk about the fatal stabbing of EMS Captain Alison Russo, who is laid to rest today. Stay with us.

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Louis: Welcome back to Inside City Hall and more of my interview with Mayor Eric Adams. Earlier today, the mayor delivered remarks at the funeral service for EMS Captain Alison Russo. That horrific and unprovoked killing has spotlighted concerns about public safety and that's where we begin part two of our conversation.

So I know you went to the funeral today for that slain EMS Captain Alison Russo. You said among other things that it's your responsibility to keep the city safe and that you feel the weight of it every day. I think we all share that sentiment and we know that this is something that's important to you. I wonder though, sometimes we hear you as the mayor saying that the city's not as safe as it needs to be and we therefore need to change things like bail reform. And then I hear you also trying to convince New Yorkers to not be afraid to take the subway, that it's not only actually safe, relatively speaking — five felonies per day when there are millions of people taking the trains — but also you need people in the streets that in itself creates a certain element of safety. Which is it? I mean, it seems like there are mixed signals that come from City Hall.

Mayor Adams: No. It's consistent. I'm extremely consistent. We're not as safe as we should be. I'm clear on that and I like to be honest with New Yorkers when it comes down to public safety. But we're not going to surrender to crime and surrender to violence. The numbers of homicides decreased. The numbers of shootings decreased. We're still zeroing on those major crimes such as robbery, burglary, and grand larceny. But the city must become safer every day. But also know we have real wins. And sometimes when you read every day about those average of

roughly six crimes a day on our subway system, when you read specifically about them, you lose the fact that the system has 3.5 million riders a day.

And I know that this city is winning. This city is back. We're seeing increasing ridership, tourism. Almost 56 million tourists are going to come here this year. We're seeing from... in April we had only 30 percent in our office occupancy. We're now up to 40 percent to 50 percent — moving towards that. 94 percent of our hotels have returned to pre-pandemic levels. The city is back and we must do what's right to make sure it's safe as complete as possible and that's what the police commissioner and I are going to do with the men and women who are serving us.

Louis: When I hear the CompStat numbers that are being reported — what I normally focus on and it always jumps out at me that homicides appear to be down by 10 percent to 12 percent and likewise with shootings, and to me that's almost the whole ball game. Of course, there are other categories of crime and some of those are not improving. How do you read the numbers?

Mayor Adams: Well, no, the same way that you do, Errol. And you're right, we're seeing what we did with what some criticized about was putting in place our anti-gun unit. This administration, we have removed over 5,000 guns off our streets. And here's the problem, Errol, too many of them, the shooters and the carriers of guns, they're back out in the street days later. You saw what happened with the rapper who was bailed out just to be now charged with an additional shooting, or the one that shot the police officer and then got caught with another gun in his car. And that's the same thing that's happening with our grand larcenies, our robberies, and our burglaries.

Too many repeated offenders of small number of people. This is not just talking about bail reform. It's about also un-bottlenecking our criminal justice system. Too many people are out waiting to be sentenced that should be serving their time inside. Too many people are out on trial that they should be held accountable for their actions. And I believe we need to look at those ways of going after those small number of people who have made up their minds that they're going to create havoc in our streets and they are repeated offenders over and over again.

Louis: Okay. In our last minute before I let you go, I know that it's been important to you personally and a major initiative of your administration to see to it that the city's school children start to eat healthier, and that includes vegetarian options, that includes vegan options. Have you tried any of the meals? Because kids will always complain about eating their vegetables, but I'm wondering if the mayor himself has tried what they're putting up with.

Mayor Adams: Yes, without a doubt. And I like that term you use, putting up with. It's not putting up with — part of what we must do, as we did with the hospital, we did the plant-based option in the hospital and over 50 percent of the people use it as a default. They saw that as part of their healthcare regiment. Same with our schools. This is the first two years they did plant-based Mondays, vegan Mondays, and then they did plant-based Friday, plant-powered Fridays. So this is new to the palettes and we want our children to come in and help us really put together a menu that they could enjoy. Because it's about feeding people, not only caloric consumption, nutritional consumption.

Too many children are malnourished, not getting the meals that they deserve. And if they don't get it in school, many can't afford to get it at home. We have an obligation to give our babies healthy food as they nourish their healthy minds to be productive citizens. And yes, we're going to get pushback. This is new. Anything new is frightening to people. But things that are right I believe are right for people.

Louis: Okay. And you're vouching for the meals. You say it tastes good or at least good enough?

Mayors Adams: I'm like Mikey, man, it's difficult to please me. It tastes good to me.
(Laughter.)

Louis: Okay. (Laughter.) If it's good enough for Eric... Thanks very much for spending some time with us, Mr. Mayor.

Mayors Adams: Thank you. Take care.

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