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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS DELIVERS ADDRESS ON NEW YORK CITY'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS AND HOLDS Q-AND-A

Mayor Eric Adams: A city made up of millions of stories over hundreds of years. Generations have come and put down roots, formed communities, raised their families here. More New Yorkers arrive every day, each one of them bringing their dreams, energy, and ambition. It is the people who make this city what it is. And if New York is to remain the city we love, we must have places for the people we love. We need more housing, and we need it as fast as we can build it. That means affordable housing for working families. It means apartments for young people, and places for people to grow older. It means supportive housing for those in need and those in crisis. And today, we are announcing our next steps to get there. Because if we do not deal with this housing crisis, New York will no longer be a city for working people, for families, for immigrants, or for elders. We cannot let this happen. We must take action now.

This crisis has been decades in the making, but the reality is here now. There's nowhere for people to go. The stories are everywhere. For some it means racing to sign a lease, only to find the apartment snapped up by someone else. Others are forced to squeeze a family of five into a one-bedroom apartment for years on end. Many fear a rent increase that would force them to leave the neighborhood they grew up in and the relatives they rely on. And for 60,000 New Yorkers, the housing crisis means more than difficulty and drawbacks, it means spending a night in a homeless shelter. This is for real and important to me.

I lived on the edge of homelessness growing up. As a young man in South Jamaica, Queens, I carried a trash bag to school filled with my clothes because my mother was worried that we would be forced onto the streets without warning and wouldn't have a change of clothing. Every day, I wondered if I would come home to a roof over my head. That was nearly 50 years ago, and the problem has only gotten worse. Now, the average household would need to double their income to afford the average apartment in this city.

In the last decade, New York City grew by nearly 800,000 people, but we added just 200,000 homes to our city. It's not complicated: We have more people than homes. This shortage gives landlords the power to charge any price they want and leaves too many New Yorkers with no place to go. That needs to change. And history is on our side. We used to build things; we can do it again. We built the Empire State Building in just over one year at the lowest point of the Great

Depression. 100 years ago, we built 750,000 new homes, more than three times the number of homes built over the past 10 years. Think about that for a minute.

But as the decades have passed, the dysfunction has increased. We imposed rules that blocked new housing or made it more expensive to build, and rents went up. In addition, exclusionary zoning and redlining prevented Black and Hispanic communities from finding affordable housing and accumulating wealth. We're still living with the remnants of those failed policies today. 94 percent of families in our shelters are Black or Hispanic; that cannot continue. Equity must be a part of the New York story just as it is part of the American dream. And building more housing is one of the best ways of creating wealth and economic opportunity.

One national study estimates that the shortage of affordable housing costs the American economy about \$2 trillion a year in lower wages and productivity. Our city declared a housing emergency five decades ago, yet we have failed to address it with the same urgency we would any other crisis. If our city is to have a true post-pandemic economic recovery, we need to build more. This crisis doesn't have to be our reality. We can do better and we must do better. Today, we are saying yes to more housing, yes to getting stuff built.

We are going to build faster, we are going to build everywhere, and we are going to build together.

This morning, we released a roadmap to a new way of getting stuff built in this city. The Get Stuff Built report contains more than 100 actions that will help us build faster, smarter, and cheaper. It begins with changing outdated processes that prevent us from creating the housing we need. Let me give you a few examples.

Most new residential builders that require zoning approvals or receive public financing are required to conduct a formal environmental review. These reviews take at least eight months to complete and can cost tens of thousands of dollars, money that gets absorbed into the rent for every apartment in the building. We found that most smaller builders have no significant impacts on the environment, yet every new project is required to go through the same formal analysis. We're going to exempt small housing projects from that review so we can deliver new homes with lower costs.

We're also going to shorten the time it takes the city agencies to review new housing and other development proposals. The process to make zoning changes is called the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure, or ULURP. It takes up to seven months and includes input from community boards, borough presidents, the City Council, and members of the public. Before that process even begins, there's an entire pre-certification process. That's right. The city has a process before you can start the process. The pre-certification has no mandated timeline; it takes two years or more to complete. We're going to make the process faster by eliminating certain requirements. In other words, cutting red tape and bureaucracy.

Every day, my team hears stories of how the existing system is failing New Yorkers. For instance, a small minority-owned business wanted to buy a parcel of land and build 100 percent affordable housing. They wanted to apply for city approval to build 230 quality, affordable homes for their community. But they had to downsize to 155 apartments because the city's land

use and environmental processes were taking too long and costing too much. The results, 75 families lost out on the opportunity for good homes. It's time to make sure that old rules are not getting in the way of new housing, and the Get Stuff Built plan is how we get there.

But we know that building faster only works if we can build everywhere, so we need to start saying, "Yes in my backyard, yes on my block, yes in my neighborhood." No more locking communities out of prosperity because neighbors are afraid of change. We're all New Yorkers. There is space here for all of us. That is why we will push forward with our Zoning for Housing Opportunity Amendment. This amendment will ease conversion of underutilized buildings, so we can create new housing without building from the ground up. It will make it easier for owners to alter and update their property, whether it is adding a family room or an extra apartment, unlocking the potential of tens of thousands of new units in every neighborhood.

When we say build everywhere, we mean everywhere. We will invest in housing in all five boroughs, starting with two major neighborhood planning efforts in the Bronx and Brooklyn. Today, I'm proud to announce we are going to bring 6,000 new homes to the Bronx with the Bronx Metro-North Plan. Four brand new Metro-North train stations are set to open in East Bronx in 2027, and we are going to build affordable homes and create well-paying jobs around them. We're able to do this by making zoning changes in Parkchester, Van Nest, and Morris Park. At least 1,500 of these new homes will be rent-regulated through the city's Mandatory Inclusionary Housing Program. The plan will create 10,000 new jobs, bringing more opportunities for people in the neighborhood.

We have already begun working with the Central Brooklyn community to bring in affordable housing through the Atlantic Avenue Mixed Use Plan. This plan will also deliver commercial and industrial jobs and infrastructure improvements to Crown Heights and Bedford-Stuyvesant. We'll also be working with additional communities to develop even more neighborhood plans in the months ahead, but we can't do this alone. We need everyone to step up and do their part, and that means local, state, and federal governments coming together in common cause.

Major projects like Innovation QNS, Halletts North, and Bruckner Boulevard have already been approved by our partners at the City Council. We need to keep that momentum going and bring housing to the communities who need it most. And we need the council to join with us in advancing the reforms in the Get Stuff Built report. It's not just about what we can do in partnership with the city and state, we also need to work with our federal partners to increase fiscal resources and change regulations. This means making it simpler for New Yorkers to access Section 8 vouchers to pay for housing, increasing our tax-exempt bonds, and lowering the 50 percent test. Those terms might not mean much to the average New Yorker, but these actions will make their tax dollars go further in creating affordable housing. We look forward to continuing to work with the federal government in advancing these priorities.

We also need to engage the entire city to resolve this crisis. That means including helping the faith-based community play a more active role in building the housing their communities need. For too long, these leaders have been left on the sidelines. That stops today. Faith leaders are our partners in this mission. They see people in need of help every day, people in crisis, people in danger, people who are at risk of falling into the rivers of dysfunction. So much of this is because they need a place to call home.

We have been meeting with faith groups to share ideas that will help address the housing crisis and serve the needs of their communities. They bring so much to the table. Many have served their communities for decades or even centuries. They have a strong community presence and deep ties through generations of New Yorkers. But the most important resource our faith groups bring is their resolve, their partnership, and their desire to get stuff done for the community. That partnership is key to solving this crisis going forward.

In addition to working with faith groups and other advocates, we will work with Governor Hochul and our partners in Albany on a legislative housing agenda that puts New Yorkers first, and equity front and center.

We need to restore critical incentives for residential builders to include more affordable housing in their projects. And we also need incentives for existing building owners to make investments in their units that preserve affordable apartments, or make unused units safe and available again. We need to make it easier to convert underused commercial buildings into affordable homes, and eliminate arbitrary caps on density in Midtown Manhattan. We will also work to eliminate exclusionary zoning practices throughout the entire New York metro region.

The failure of neighbors on Long Island and Westchester to accept new housing has made the New York metropolitan area one of the most racially segregated in the country, more segregated than Birmingham, Alabama and St. Louis, Missouri. That's not right, but it is reversible. It's time for neighbors to do their part to ease the housing crisis. Our agenda calls for the state to make it easier for homeowners to create smaller accessory apartments, like basement apartments. And we want to change outdated rules, like parking requirements that prevent housing near transit hubs.

We want to thank Governor Hochul for her leadership and support on this critical housing agenda. As the governor said last week, there's no kicking this can down the road. We've tinkered around the edges enough. We have failed too many people for too long. It's time to build the next generation of affordable housing in New York City. Experts have proposed different numbers, but everyone agrees, to address the affordability crisis, we must double the rate at which housing is built in the city. It's a major task, a major ask. But I did not become mayor to climb a hill, I became mayor to climb a mountain, and I want every one of you to climb it with me.

Today, I am issuing a call to our partners in the City Council, and our colleagues in Albany and in D.C., to the development community, nonprofits, faith leaders, and neighborhood advocates. Let us work together to meet the need for 500,000 new homes over the next decade. This is our mission, our moonshot, a bold effort that must fire ambition and inspire teamwork, because teamwork is the only way we get this done. We need everyone doing their part to reform outdated laws, expand incentives, increase coordinations, and build, build, build. And we must start now.

We have already made significant progress this year on several fronts. We have committed \$22 billion for housing, the largest investment in our city's history. And we release *Housing Our Neighbors*, our comprehensive blueprint for housing and homelessness. We are building more

deeply-affordable housing for the entire city. Since the beginning of the year, we've worked with the council to approve more than 12,000 additional homes. And we recently announced that the largest 100 percent affordable housing new development in four decades will be coming to Willets Point in Queens. Most importantly, we have been taking care of the housing stock we already have.

For decades, we have underinvested in NYCHA, leaving crumbling infrastructure and aging utilities. In partnership with the state, we fought for the NYCHA Trust so that residents could have the safe, high-quality, affordable homes they deserve. But we need to do more. How we respond to the crisis will determine what kind of city we become, a city where people struggle to make ends meet, or a city where everyone has a chance to reach their potential.

At moments like this, I think about my mom. She was a single mom who worked two jobs in order to look after six children. She created opportunities for us so that we could live our American dream, but she had to do it on her own because the city was not there for her. No New Yorker should struggle to keep a roof over their head like my mother did. Safe, stable, affordable housing cannot be a privilege. It is the foundation of a prosperous society.

This city was built on the bedrock of opportunity, not just the opportunity to work here or pass through, but to live here. That is what makes New York City possible. New people, new ideas, new cultures converging here in search of a dream. The best people in the world, in the brightest city on earth. If we want to remain that city, the economic engine of America and the most diverse community on the globe, we must get stuff built, not for the few, but for the many. Brick by brick, block by block, this new city will rise again together.

(...)

Mayor Adams: So why don't we open up to some questions. Because you all hear the speech we just put in place. I'm hoping this time, unlike our mental health speech, that you actually heard me, and not just interpreted. So we're open. Our team is here, and you could ask any questions you want from me or the team about our Get Stuff Built report.

Question: How much of the plan you rolling out today is contingent on Council approval, approval from other governmental entities? And what have you done so far to kind of secure those approvals wherever they are?

Mayor Adams: There's a combination. There are things that — as in any holistic full government approach to dealing with a major crisis, there's a combination of reflection on what we could do better and what we want to do in change. And there's a combination of what our partners can do on the federal as we deal with vouchers, on the state as we look at incentives to build. So there's a combination. This is a full government approach and we're going to look at our house first. We're going to look at our house first on what we must improve and do, but at the same time there needs to be a partnership in doing that.

And thanks for handing me this. This stack of papers here, think about this for a moment, this is what it takes to get it done. People are reading through 50,000 pieces of paper to actually get housing built in our city. It's antiquated, is counterproductive and we have to face it head on, and

that is why we are putting this report together and calling on a full government response. So it's a combination that we all have to be a part of this.

Question: Good afternoon, mayor. Oftentimes New Yorkers, when they hear about new development, they immediately begin thinking about gentrification and concerns that other housing around this new building is going to get more expensive, the grocery stores are going to come in and be more expensive. So what do you say to New Yorkers who are concerned about gentrification, want to make sure that things don't overall get more expensive in their communities thanks to new buildings and new development?

Mayor Adams: We hear them and as I said, the great philosopher of our time, the rent is too damn high. And it's not only high for low-income New Yorkers, it's high for middle-income New Yorkers, it's high for the full-time employee at McDonald's, where he and his wife are working full-time and now they are not eligible for low-income, it's high for them. And so it is imperative with our call of a full government approach to have this moonshot moment of 500,000 homes. It is low, middle and market rate.

And the goal is not to displace, and I think reports are starting to show that development does not have to be displacement. It's not about removing long term residents from their communities, but allowing them to be part of the development of their communities. Not only in housing, building the housing, making sure that they're part of as communities evolve. And so we must put safeguards in place to make sure that people are not displaced. And there's roles that the district attorneys can even play for those who try to illegally evict or damage property, get tenants out. And that is what a full government approach is. And so I say to them, we're going to keep the safeguards to make sure they could stay safely in their communities.

Question: Hi mayor. How are you?

Mayor Adams: Good. How you doing?

Question: I'm good. It seems like a cornerstone of this plan is to streamline the input process, the community input process. Do you see it as a barrier that there is too much input on a lot of projects now?

Mayor Adams: No, there's nothing in this plan that streamlines the community input process. That's very important. What it is saying that pre-process, it can take up to two years. We have a pre-process before the process and throughout the years we continue to add on new bureaucracy and new layers until we started out with probably with one ream of paper. You're going to be into photos. We started out with one ream of paper. Now we have this. I mean this has to be unacceptable to everyone. So we have to get rid of this using technology, using innovative ways to cut this down so we could go from the ideal to the actual ideal environment of someone finding housing, but we are not taking away the community input process.

Question: Real quick. I see a few of the objectives essentially fill vacancies that already exist. And a lot of these agencies, we've talked about the financial issues the city's facing, we've talked about the staffing issues. How do you reconcile those with this very personnel heavy approach here?

Mayor Adams: And that is something that has been consuming a lot of my time for the last two months. One, I believe that we have to have outside eyes look at how we function as a city. And all of these processes, you can't have money, ideas, but the ideas are getting caught in the bottleneck of the system. And it's no excuse to me that we don't have enough manpower. That is not an excuse. The new norm is that they're going to be challenges on staffing up.

Even Brad did his report that we have an 8 percent vacancy rate in the city. He missed that he has a 14 percent vacancy rate in the comptroller's office. That was not included in his analysis. But that was with all of his work for homes, all of his remote work, all of his modifications, he still has a 14 percent vacancy rate. There's a challenge.

And so what I'm saying to my leaders that are behind me, we cannot have a reason for not reaching these goals because of the existing circumstances that not only post-Covid created, but just a new norm. We have a national workers shortage problem. Every company I speak with, no matter where I go across the country that's saying the same thing. So now it's up to us to adapt to this norm and come up with innovative ways of getting these projects through. And I've been meeting with companies, corporations, and other individuals who are saying we are using antiquated methods on producing a better product. And I truly believe that the mere fact that we don't have competition as a corporation has, that there's no real incentive to modify government to produce a better product and to create a better government customer experience, and we are focusing on doing that.

Question: Hi Mayor Adams.

Mayor Adams: How're you Kate?

Question: Thanks. Two questions. Have you guys heard of the PDF? You can probably save a lot of paper. (Laughter.) I know that's a better visual. My second question is, the report lists a number of 50,000 apartment or housing units. I was just curious as to how that number came to be, because I don't know the background of how that was estimated that when this is sort of moved away, when these regulations are lifted or changed that that's the number we'll get to.

Mayor Adams: I'm sorry, you said 50,000 or 500?

Question: It's 50,000.

Mayor Adams: I'm sorry, which one are you talking...

Question: That's what the report says...

(...)

Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer, Economic and Workforce Development: Sure. So as the mayor said, we're trying to go from a system that is based on paperwork to... and one that's based on process, to one that's based on progress. And so if we enact all of 111 reforms, we cut the time in half for a project to get from environmental review to actually permitted with people

in them, and we're saving about \$2 billion. What that unlocks, if we can build as fast as we want to through this plan, are 50,000 additional new homes over the course of the next decade. So those are 50,000 homes that we otherwise would create after a decade because our process is so slow and costly, and frankly a little Kafkaesque. And that's what we're trying to change.

Question: To be clear, the regulations unlocks the money that will then fund 50,000 additional...

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: The regulations — a lot of these projects are built, of course, by private developers, not-for-profit developers, MWBEs. It would otherwise take them — if it takes them six years to get a project from start to finish, our goal here is to cut that in half. And so that means those units come online for New Yorkers 50 percent faster. And that's an additional 50,000 within the 10-year period of new homes that we've added to our housing supply.

Question: There was a 500,000 number.

(Crosstalk.)

Question: There was a 500,000 number. I'm curious where that came from as well.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: Which one was that?

(Inaudible.)

Oh, okay. Yeah, I'm happy to do that.

Mayor Adams: You got it.

Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer: So 500,000, it is a moonshot. I believe we can get there. As the mayor said, we added 800,000 people to the city in the last decade, only 200,000 new homes. So how can we not just recover from this pandemic but prosper into the future and meet both population economic growth if we don't at least double that. So the doubling of that, the 500,000, is the moonshot that we are putting out there. And it is truly a call to action. And to get there, we need to build faster, which is the blast report. We need to build everywhere, all of the work on land use and zoning, and we need to build together, which is why we're calling on our federal and state partners to join us and City Council, of course, to join us in this effort.

Mayor Adams: And Kate, and I say to the team all the time, I don't know if he said it or if it's attributed to him — Henry Ford. He said, "If I would've asked people, they would've told me how to build faster horses". And he was thinking about a car. We have too many fast horse thinkers. We would not have known that we would've had this thing called Zoom if it wasn't for the pandemic. We would've not have known, you don't know your full potential until you're faced with real challenges. And we cannot say that because of the large amount that of, well, it's too hard to do, so... That's just not how this administration operates.

We have to push ourselves. Here's the challenge, now let's become creative in reaching the challenge. That is just how we operate. We operate with... give us a challenge and we are going

to push ourselves to get to the challenge. We need 500,000 units, we need housing. We have all these New Yorkers that have come to this city and then want to enjoy this city. These are the numbers, so we have to reach the numbers. We can't just ignore it. The problem's not going to go away just because it's hard. That's just not how this administration operates. We want the hard task.

Question: I wanted to ask about that 500,000 number. It's very ambitious. Very aggressive.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: How are you going to reach it without 421-a, which was a tool that your predecessor had for most of his years, and we might be entering a recession or a period of slower growth. So those are two very big challenges to 500,000. Do you see if there's a way that the state legislature can revive for 421-a, do you need it?

Mayor Adams: And part of the report that we have here points out that we need the legislative body to look at incentives to repair existing properties in housing and to incentivize building more houses. That is part of the component, it goes back to Michael's comment that this has to be a full government approach. So we need to find ways, whatever the hurdles were with 421-a, 421-w, whatever those hurdles were, let's find ways to get over them so we can incentivize private industries building, and even our faith-based leaders that we are partnering with to build as well.

Question: Hi Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Adams: How are you?

Question: Are you concerned at all that speeding up the process (inaudible) to miss or ignore legitimate environmental issues?

Mayor Adams: No, not at all. Particularly with the smaller units. We have to constantly ask ourselves why are we doing something. We know the smaller development units are not impacting the environment. Are we just doing it because it feels good and it's a good soundbite? No, we got to stop just doing things because it sounds good or feel good. It doesn't have a major impact, and that is what we are focusing on when it comes down to those environmental issues.

Question: Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: You laid out the number of 500,000. The city did 200,000 in the previous decade and provided all your changes go through and you get that number to 250,000, you're still short by half. How do you close that gap, to sort of follow up on Liz's question, what do you need from the Council to close the gap? What do you need from Albany towards the gap? What's on your wishlist?

Mayor Adams: And we laid out very specifically, when you read the report, you're going to see the specific items that we laid out on what we need both from the Council, from Albany, and what we have to do here. It's not only what the federal government, Albany and the City Council, but we have to do a reflection on ourselves. We have to say what can we do better in getting this done? And that's why we putting the challenge here. So it's a combination and it's all laid out here in the report, to say specifically what we need from each one of them.

(Crosstalk)

Mayor Adams: Thank you, thank you, thank you all for coming in. Hey, what's up?

Question: Mayor, any plan to stop the ghost apartments?

Mayor Adams: The ghost apartments? When you say the ghost apartments, help me understand.

Question: When the landlords hide apartments. We know (inaudible)

Mayor Adams: Well, I would need to drill in to find out exactly what they are and if they are illegal, everything — a combination from the Department of Buildings to our Human Rights, we will focus on any illegal conversions and any illegal housing, and any way people are preventing people from getting houses.

(...)

Question: Hi, Mayor. (Inaudible.)

Mayor Adams: How's it going?

Question: Good. I want to ask you about jobs. You promised to create 70,000 jobs in your first year. You've exceeded that. But the last jobs report had the city losing jobs month over month for the first time since early in the pandemic. So are you concerned that New York City, given the sectors of the economy that relies on, might feel recession earlier and deeper than the rest of the country and what do you (inaudible).

Mayor Adams: Well, there is an interesting dynamic that is happening around employment and jobs. As you stated, we focus on jobs creation, we are moving and we were moving in the right direction and we got to continue to do so. And every day new industries are opening, our startups are growing here in the city. The more we increase our tourism potential is going to open up a major job employee market. We are in a very unique place around employees being, number one, in workforce, and number two, of doing remote working. We're going to continue to do the things that have worked for us and continue to grow our employment pool in the city.

Question: Mr. Mayor, how are you doing?

Mayor Adams: What's happening.

Question: There's a Council bill that prevents landlords from doing background checks on prospective tenants. Is that a bill that you support?

Mayor Adams: In concept. But I'm always concerned about public safety. I want to be clear that the bill reach the exact desired results. No one should be denied housing based on their records, but I want to make sure residents in apartments and buildings and rentals in the small units, that they get the protection that they deserve. I'm a big supporter of having a look back period to allow a person to clean their record, there's some bills in Albany that's doing that now. But I am just not a blanket support of it. I want to make sure that particularly those who participated in violent crimes, we need to respect the safety of people who live in buildings and sometimes we ignore that, and I don't believe that.

Question: Mr. Mayor, there seems to be a growing effort in Albany this next session to talk about reparations. It's something California's worked on. They came up with a number, some lawmakers in Albany think this could gain some traction. I wanted to see what you think of that idea of reparations, of looking back at the echoes of slavery and some kind of payment or compensation for people of color.

Mayor Adams: I support it. I think it's long overdue. I think we need to zero in on some of those corporations and companies that the foundation of their wealth came from slavery. And I commend those lawmakers in Albany that are looking at this because I believe it's long overdue. It's something that I supported for many years, I would say around about 30 years I supported, that we need to look at, this country was built on free labor and we are who we are because of that free labor, and that free labor destroyed the foundation of African Americans that worked on plantations, made cotton king, the tobacco industry, many of the banking industries, a lot of these industries are where they are because of it, and government has an obligation to deal with that. And I'm 100 percent supportive of what they're doing.

Question: Mr. Mayor, I wanted to go back to the housing announcement. With the 500,000 number, I know in the summer when you unveiled your housing plan, you got a lot of criticism for not having a number, but you kind of stood by that. Why the decision now to come out with such an ambitious number, and also are you rethinking appointing a deputy mayor of housing since this is becoming so central to your agenda?

Mayor Adams: So let's peel that back. The latter part of your question, no, not rethinking the second part. The first comment, I'm criticized all the time, it's part of the game. But I turned out to be right many times, and we were pointing out the affordable units. Many of the advocates, professionals and people who analyzed affordable housing stated one of the big problems that we were making is counting units, not ensuring the affordability of it and actually people inside the units, we say we're not doing that. Our success is not going to be based on the number of units we have, but how many people we place inside and how affordable it is. The call today of that 500,000 moonshot is saying not only affordable, not only middle income, but even market, we need more housing. We don't have enough housing to fit the population that we have.

Question: Mr. Mayor, may I ask about your mindset and approach when it comes to community outreach? Because a lot, the slowing of the process of building housing does come from

resistance in the communities. Are you thinking about listening towards or is it a messaging from the topic that's going to happen and needs to happen?

Mayor Adams: Well, there's a predetermined amount of time for community boards, for community input, for borough president. That's a solid amount of time that it must go through the process. That preconditioning, which is an open window, is really problematic. And so we want to put out a very loud and clear full government approach to this by telling communities, as we indicated in this speech today, that we can no longer have the thought process, not on my block, not in my neighborhood, not in my community. We have to say we must house all our neighbors. And that must be the full approach in those communities who have historically stated they don't want any building in their community. We have used different methods to keep people out. We can't do that anymore.

Question: You're looking at candidates for rat czar.

Mayor Adams: Yes, you want the job?

Question: It pays pretty well. And a lot of people I know sound like they're interested, but are you guys going to be asking them how to better mitigate the situation at your bedside pad. I mean, what's going on there?

Mayor Adams: All over the city. All over the city. I'm not sure where you live at, but trust me, you got rats. Don't think for one moment that you are excluded. Upper East Side, Upper West Side, rats are everywhere. I hate rats. I'm scared of them. And when I see one, I think about it all day. And so I am fixated on killing rats. And so on my block, whenever I go over to visit the brownstone, I see one scurrying down the block. It's a problem. I don't know who in here, if you are not scared of rats, you are really my heroes. Then you can be the rat czar.

So yes on Lafayette Avenue, on Franklin Avenue, wherever they're rats, we want, the rat czar to go. And what's lost is that, let me tell you how scared I am of rats. I spent \$7,000 to get rid of rats. That's a serious piece of paper. But the guy blackmailed me, he said, "I know you're scared of rats." So seriously, it's a problem. I don't want rodents running around the city.

Question: What did that actually (inaudible)?

Mayor Adams: Because I went up and down the block, I helped other places. Some tenants were not cooperating, and he came in, did a real analysis and he did a good job. But not every New Yorker can pay that dollar amount because they maybe may not be as frightened as I am of... I'm terrified of rats.

Question: We saw you were at former Governor Cuomo's birthday party. What made you go and how was it?

Mayor Adams: Well, I like birthday parties. I like birthday parties, you get a chance to socialize. There was some good group of people in there. I was invited, so I popped in. I think we did six or seven events that night and that was one of the events. And I stopped in, wished him a happy birthday, and then I bounced, kept it moving.

Question: Mr. Mayor, two more Brooklyn related questions, one on-topic, and one off-topic.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

(Crosstalk)

Question: On-topic and off-topic. Off-topic, should Tish James be trusted to investigate Tish James?

Mayor Adams: I've been reading some of the stories of... I don't think I know a better advocate fighting on behalf of women than Tish James. Tish James is a real voice for women in leadership and I think she's extremely capable of investigating. And of my understanding, she had an outside entity that investigated and once the report was released, she turned it over. But I think Tish is a real advocate on behalf of women.

Question: And then on-topic, Mr. Mayor.

Question: (Inaudible.)

Mayor Adams: I'm sorry.

Question: (Inaudible.) Right now, the (inaudible) ready to receive all the people that are trying to (inaudible).

Mayor Adams: Is there a place for the people?

Question: (Inaudible.)

Mayor Adams: Yes. Yes. No one that has a mental health illness is being turned away from our hospitals or being turned away when we bring them, if they're in a place that they are in danger to themselves or others because they can reach their basic needs. And we're going to continue to expand. And again, this is one of the moments, we know the challenge. We know how big this challenge is. So people who criticize what we're doing, then they're saying they want to support the status quo. The status quo is leaving people on the street that cannot take care of their basic needs and they're in danger to themselves. I don't support that. And we have to meet the challenge that's in front of us and I'm ready to do it. I want these tough challenges.

Question: Mr. Mayor, really quickly, the city is appointing a rat czar. Just as the Sanitation Department deals with the city's waste, could we see the formation of an individual entity or department that under the city's supervision gets rid of these pests?

Mayor Adams: Okay, you got...

Question: The formation of a new department. The Sanitation Department deals with waste. Could we have a new department that deals with getting rid of these rats?

Mayor Adams: No, we don't. We don't need a new department. We just need someone that hates rats as much as I do to take this job and go out and kill these rats.

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