



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** January 14, 2016

**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT GROUNDBREAKING  
CEREMONY FOR NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING AT HALLETS POINT**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Well, there is a lot to be inspired by today, but I'm inspired by Claudia. Let's give her another round of applause.

[Applause]

When you think about vision, it takes vision to recognize that a community can be down, but not out – that a community could have been set back, but still have a great future. You know the phrase, this far by faith – a lot of faith helped us get to this day and a lot of people hung on in the tough times by believing they could create something better. So, for Claudia – and Claudia, as a leader representative of all the people of this community – a round of applause for perseverance to this great day.

[Applause]

Well, I just want to be thankful that so many people came together and got something done. Carolyn mentioned that she'd rather be here than in Washington D. C. I agree Carolyn. I – You definitely would rather be here, and that is for one reason – immediately, here, everyone has found a way to work together and get something done. If I were to take a poll of everyone here, we don't – we might not agree on every single issue. You know what? We don't have to agree on every single issue because we want to get things done for people and that's what comes first.

So, this is an example of the spirit of New York City and the willingness of people to roll up their sleeves. I want to thank everyone here and I do want to take a moment to name some names.

Everyone in my administration who played a role, including one who is here – my senior advisor, Gabriel Fialkoff.

I want to thank all the elected officials – Carolyn Maloney, Melinda Katz, Michael Gianaris, Cathy Nolan, Costas Constantinides – all supported the strengthening of this community in so many ways.

Peter Vallone Sr. – well, he's my former boss, so, I've got to start with that. I learned a lot from him. I think anyone who spent time with him learned a lot from him – and it's a day you have a lot to be proud of as well.

I want to thank Doug Durst and Jody Durst from the Durst Organization; Joel Bernstein from Lincoln Equities; Bishop Taylor, and everyone at Urban Upbound for your great work.

[Applause]

The chairs and community boards play a crucial role in this as well – the Chair of Community Board 1, Joseph Risi Jr. – thank you and thank you to everyone at that community board.

Eric Matthews, Founder of Mind of Miracles, thank you.

Reverend Dwayne Jackson, of the First Reform Church of Astoria, thank you.

I knew a woman once who said it takes a village. It does take a village to create something as great as this. And you heard that this was a lost opportunity here for years, and it's finally changing. A whole neighborhood will rise. Hallett's Point is going to be good for every surrounding neighborhood. It's going to be good for all of Queens. It's going to be another phoenix rising in this city, and it will definitely be good for the people of Astoria, and particularly for the people of Astoria Houses who deserve a better opportunity.

[Applause]

This was done right because the people of the community were a part of it. This was done right because it was seen as an opportunity to right some wrongs, to address some mistakes of history. Families deserve good food to eat. They deserve a supermarket that will give them fresh produce. It's finally happening. [Inaudible] it's finally happening because of this project. There'll be a great new school for our children. There'll be jobs for people who long have not had as much opportunity as they deserved – and yes, I am a little obsessed with affordable housing. Guilty as charged. I tend to say the words affordable housing 50 to 100 times each day. So, I'm going to say affordable housing now. And I am particularly moved by the fact that in the very first building there will be 100 affordable apartments for low-income families –

[Applause]

– And hundreds more affordable apartments in the years to come. You know I set us out on a goal of building and preserving 200,000 affordable apartments in this city. Some said it could not be done, many naysayers emerged when you offer a brand new vision and a different vision. Well, after two full years, I can tell you we're very proud to have announced 2015, we financed 21,041 affordable apartments, the most in the history of this city in any single year.

[Applause]

Grand total over two years is 40, 204 apartments. Brothers and sisters, 40,204 apartments on the way right now – enough for over 100,000 New Yorkers who need affordable housing. That is what we are here to do.

[Applause]

I'll finish with this. This city – this city has worked when it's a city for everyone. Everyone in this room has a story – a family story, and it typically goes back to some people who struggled and strived and their energy, their entrepreneurship, their creativity added up with everyone else's to make this city great – and that's why we're admired all over the world, in fact. So, it has to remain the place for everyone. If it isn't affordable, it's not a place for everyone. Today, we take another step forward toward that city for everyone again, and I will see you again in 2017. We will be back here as we welcome a new [inaudible] right just a few hundred feet away from here.

[Applause]

And as we see this beautiful community rise, congratulations to everyone today.

###

