



**New York City Council  
Committee on Housing and Buildings  
Chair, Council Member Pierina Sanchez**

**July 1, 2022**

**Oversight - “Housing Our Neighbors”: A First Look at the Mayor’s Housing Plan.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LiveOn NY’s members include more than 100 community-based nonprofits that provide core services which allow all New Yorkers to thrive in our communities as we age, including older adult centers, home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention, caregiver support, NORCs, and case management. LiveOn NY is proud to host our Affordable Senior Housing Coalition, which works with our non-profit members and partners to address the significant need for affordable senior housing. With our members, we work to make New York a better place to age.

**First and foremost, LiveOn NY is deeply appreciative of the release of the Mayor’s new housing plan**, created under the leadership of Chief Housing Officer Jessica Katz, Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) Commissioner Adolfo Carrión, Department of Social Services (DSS) Commissioner Gary Jenkins, and New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Chair and Chief Executive Officer Gregory Russ, among others. The release of the plan signals to New Yorkers an understanding of the dire nature of today’s housing crisis and a commitment to taking meaningful action to address such a plan. LiveOn NY is appreciative of the collaborative spirit that went into the creation of the plan, and was pleased to have the opportunity to give feedback early in the process around the ways in which a housing plan could better support all New Yorkers as we age. Evidence of this collaboration, we are particularly pleased to see the plan is inclusive of all types of housing in New York, namely both housing under the purview of NYCHA, as well as that developed through HPD.

In advance of further articulating the aspects of the plan in which LiveOn NY is most supportive of, the following offers further background on why such a plan is so critical to address the affordable housing crisis as acutely experienced by older New Yorkers.

**Background**

Today, more than half of older renters are rent-burdened, as are a third of older homeowners. Further, roughly 2,000 older New Yorkers are living in homeless shelters, a number that is expected to triple by 2030 without significant intervention. LiveOn NY’s own research has found that there are more than 200,000 older adults languishing on waiting lists for affordable housing through the HUD 202 program, each waiting for 7-10 years on average for a unit to become

available. This challenge is mirrored by the thousands of applications that come flooding in each and every time a new affordable senior housing lottery opens on Housing Connect.

This crisis is particularly acute for older adults as many rely on fixed incomes, making it difficult to afford the rent while other costs rise. Further, much of the City’s housing infrastructure is inadequate to accommodate an older adult’s health and mobility needs, with 70% of the City’s housing stock only navigable by at least one set of stairs. In addition, NYCHA is a well-known provider of affordable housing for low-income older adults, and yet in many situations for many older tenants living in NYCHA, their living experience is plagued by poor ventilation systems, broken elevators, leaking roofs, and recurring mold.

It is critical we address this crisis, as New York is aging rapidly and research shows that the majority of older adults would prefer the opportunity age in their community, surrounded by the networks of support built over a lifetime. Moreover, we’re *all* aging, and we all have a stake in ensuring there are affordable options to call home throughout the lifecycle.

## Response to the Housing Plan

### Chapter 1: Transform NYCHA

1. In addition to supporting the overarching goals of transparency, resident decision-making, and partnership, LiveOn NY is also appreciative of the effort to reform work orders within NYCHA to create a more efficient and effective system for repairs. Recognizing that this system extends beyond the residential units, **LiveOn NY encourages that attention also be paid to improving work order processes initiated by community-based organizations offering services within NYCHA facilities.** Community-based organizations operating within NYCHA buildings, such as older adult centers, are critical resources for NYCHA residents and the community at-large. These spaces must also be considered when updating work order processes or should be funded directly to address maintenance concerns considered outside the purview of the authority.

### Chapter 2: Addressing Homelessness and Housing Insecurity

1. In addition to supporting the overarching goals to better measure homelessness, and serve those experiencing homelessness, **LiveOn NY also supports the goal to streamline and expand access to supportive housing and combat source-of-income discrimination.**

### Chapter 3: Create and Preserve Affordable Housing

1. First and foremost, **LiveOn NY deeply supports the primary goal to “accelerate and increase capacity for new housing supply citywide.”** We look forward to partnering

with the Administration to determine ways to lower costs and accelerate the pace of production, as outlined in this section.

2. **LiveOn NY deeply supports the intent to utilize zoning to encourage a wide range of housing types.** Within our membership, we have seen the power of diverse housing types, for example, the Project FIND Woodstock Hotel represents one of the first examples of how an SRO can come to provide stable housing, and offer services such as Older Adult Center, to aging New Yorkers over the course of decades. Within this section, we specifically support: the intention to legalize Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), which offer incredible opportunities for caregivers to live close by to care recipients; the conversion of vacant hotels into affordable housing; and leveraging zoning to “allow greater square footage for affordable housing for everyone who needs it.”
3. Given our research, [\*Paving the Way for New Senior Housing\*](#), which first identified the opportunity to develop affordable senior housing on underutilized HUD 202 parking lots, **LiveOn NY wholeheartedly supports the intent to “prioritize people over parking,”** particularly in transit-rich neighborhoods.
4. **LiveOn NY supports the continued prioritization of creating new community spaces within affordable housing,** and is appreciative of the new older adult center facilities built to date, such as that included in the newly developed WSFSSH Tres Puentes and the SAGE Stonewall House. Beyond this, we recommend a deeper partnership with agencies such as the Department for the Aging (DFTA) to analyze where community facilities would be best incorporated into future housing developments in order to serve an emerging population of older adults or to offer an updated older adult center where the current space may no longer prove sufficient.
5. **LiveOn NY supports the plan to “partner with H+H to create a nexus between housing and health,” as well as to expand broadband access through affordable housing.** By prioritizing institutional land such as hospitals in particular, the City will reflect an understanding of the connections between health and housing and a commitment to treating housing as the social-determinant of health that it is.
6. **LiveOn NY deeply supports the clear focus on meeting the housing needs of older adults and people with disabilities.**
  - a. **Within this, we support the work to facilitate automatic enrollment in SCRIE and streamline application and recertification processes for eligible households.** Currently, LiveOn NY offers a Benefits Outreach Program, which supports hundreds of older New Yorkers in applying for benefits each year. Through this work we recognize the opportunity to address under-utilization of benefits such as SCRIE by removing barriers in the application processes.
  - b. **LiveOn NY also supports accelerated production of supportive housing, including that for older adults. We encourage the Administration to also**



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**prioritize the acceleration of lighter touch housing built for older adults, as developed through the Senior Affordable Rental Assistance (SARA) program.** The SARA program offers a unique opportunity for non-profits and partners to meet the needs of older adults who may not require the level of services provided in supportive housing, but would greatly benefit from some level of support in order to foster aging in place while preventing isolation.

- c. **We support the intent to aid federally assisted properties serving older adults, particularly those with expiring benefits, as well as to explore innovative ways to leverage social services dollars to better serve the continuum of needs that exists across aging New Yorkers.** Given the outsized impact that housing can have on reducing healthcare spending, we are particularly supportive of the intent to work with the State, and through the 1115 waiver, to improve services.
7. **LiveOn NY supports the effort to prioritize M/WBE and non-profit projects in the HPD pipeline.**

#### **Chapter 4: Improve the Health and Safety of New Yorkers**

1. **Recognizing housing as a social determinant of health, LiveOn NY greatly appreciates the blueprint's clear emphasis on improving the health and safety of New Yorkers through our housing stock.** From fire safety, to lead, to asthma, to climate change, we appreciate the holistic approach to utilizing housing as a springboard for creating healthier communities.

#### **Chapter 5: Reduce Administrative Burden**

1. **LiveOn NY deeply supports the intent to reduce administrative burden experienced both by developers of affordable housing and tenants seeking to secure affordable housing.** Specifically, we are supportive of the work to streamline Section 8 processes at both HPD and NYCHA, and in other forms and evaluations related to affordable housing. LiveOn NY and our Affordable Senior Housing Coalition seeks to be a resource in this endeavor, with the shared goal of reducing administrative burden to more expeditiously renting up projects developed through the City's housing programs.

#### **Additional Recommendations**

To build on the foundation laid in the housing plan, LiveOn NY recommends the following core principles be adopted, funded, and prioritized by this Administration. Much of the following amplifies recommendations collectively advocated for by the United for Housing Coalition,

which includes more than 80 organizations that have come together around a set of bold but attainable recommendations to address the housing crisis in our City.

1. **While appreciative of the initial affordable housing capital investments outlined in the FY23 budget, LiveOn NY continues to believe it is time to double down in our investment in affordable housing.** Given this, we support the United for Housing led call for a \$4 billion annual investment to fund a comprehensive affordable housing plan.
2. **While recognizing that a diversity of metrics will be critical to implementing a housing plan, with units but one component, we continue to call for a minimum target of 1,000 new units of affordable senior housing with services per year.** This must be part of a total target to construct no fewer than 8,000 new units of housing dedicated to serving extremely low income and homeless households annually. As waitlists and limited housing stock pose an acute challenge for older New Yorkers, a considerable investment and consistent unit targets per year will be critical to paving a pathway out of this crisis.
3. It is currently unclear the extent to which the agencies that intersect with this plan are fully staffed as a result of the FY23 budget. Given the historical concerns around staffing, particularly as a result of previous hiring freezes and PEGS, **LiveOn NY continues to recommend that the City put forth the full resources necessary to quickly and robustly staff HPD and its sister agencies to ensure all affordable housing goals can be met.**
4. **LiveOn NY also recommends the City increase the per unit reimbursement rate for SARA services from \$5,000 per unit, to \$7,500 per unit, allowing for increased staff to more adequately address social isolation and significant case assistance needs.** This increased reimbursement rate would make services better available to support an aging and formerly homeless tenant population, in turn enabling more older New Yorkers to age in place and avoid institutionalization.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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*Testimony provided by Katelyn Andrews, Director of Public Policy and External Affairs at LiveOn NY  
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*LiveOn NY's members provide the core, community-based services that allow older adults to thrive in their communities. With a base of more than 100 community-based organizations serving at least 300,000 older New Yorkers annually. Our members provide services ranging from senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, case management, transportation, and NORCs. LiveOn NY advocates for increased funding for these vital services to improve both the solvency of the system and the overall capacity of*



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*community-based service providers.*

*LiveOn NY is also home to the Reframing Aging NYC Initiative, part of the national Reframing Aging Initiative aimed to counteract ageism and improve the way policymakers, stakeholders, and the public think about aging and older people. LiveOn NY also administers a citywide outreach program and staffs a hotline that educates, screens and helps with benefit enrollment including SNAP, SCRIE and others, and also administers the Rights and Information for Senior Empowerment (RISE) program to bring critical information directly to seniors on important topics to help them age well in their communities.*