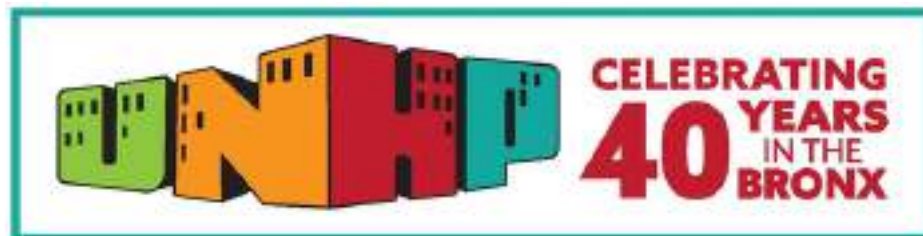# Housing Connect Roundtable

with Pierina Sanchez,
Bronx 14 Council Member

Agenda

Part 1: Introduction
- Interpretation Explanation
- Welcome
- Opening Remarks
- Group Introductions

Part 2: Discussion Topics
- Lack of Affordable Units
- Barriers to Applying for Housing Lotteries
- Process of Applying for Housing Seekers
- Process of Selecting Applicants
- Affordable Units Sitting Vacant
- Need for Flexibility

Part 3: Open Conversation

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Discussion Topics

Affordability

Resource Barriers

Application Timeline

Selection Process

Vacancies

Flexibility

Affordability

- The NWBRC has assisted over 2,000 Housing Connect applicants with an average annual household income of $24,000. As far as we know, only 21 applicants have received an apartment.

- Area Median Income (AMI) has increased significantly over the last few years: 30% AMI for a household of three is currently around $38,000.

- Apartments are not affordable to Bronx housing seekers - especially for those in the lower income bands, larger families, those on fixed incomes, and seniors.

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"AMAZING AFFORDABLE OPPORTUNITY AVAILABLE!"
1739 Grand Avenue, Morris Heights, Bronx, NY

"This luxury building, with its gorgeous, large apartments, will be a dream come true for every New Yorker out there! Only send one application per development. The tenant is responsible for electricity including hot water, heat, and stove."

Starting income is $99,000 for a studio for $2800 a month. This lottery closes on 12/8/23

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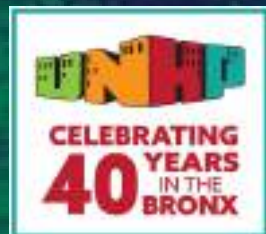
Resource Barriers

- Navigating the system of AMIs, household sizes, timelines, and preferences requires a level of expertise that most people in need of housing don't have time for.

- Lack of internet access and tech skills (and limited availability of low-tech options) is a major obstacle for potential applicants.

- There are simply not enough resources to assist New Yorkers in applying & preparing for interviews. Housing Ambassadors are overwhelmed and under-resourced.

Application Timeline

- Technology barriers persist even after creating accounts and applying for specific lotteries.

- After application, there is little transparency or communication regarding next steps and what is expected of the applicant.

- Application materials needed are onerous — materials need to be uploaded into a portal, applicants must take days off to gather and submit, etc.

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Selection Process

- The rent up process is slow and convoluted. This affects the viability of projects (pro formas, inability to convert to permanent financing, etc).

- The lottery process often leads to a mismatch between applicants and individual properties.

- Marketing timelines also suffer from the fact that many applicants don't have the necessary support.

- "Fairness" in the process is emphasized to the detriment of other goals.
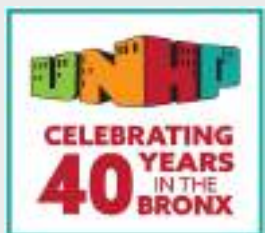
Vacancies

- Re-rentals — now mandated to be marketed via Housing Connect — are not well understood by applicants, making the lease-up process longer.

- This can even discourage good actors participating in preservation deals.

- New developments can sit vacant because of the high AMI tiers many of their 'affordable' units are set at.

- Many developers lease up high AMI units via voucher programs. This can be inefficient and serves as a double subsidy.

Flexibility

- Explicit permission is required to do anything outside of the centralized marketing process.

- Working with partners in emergency situations (like a fire) or for temporary relocations in extensive rehabs is near impossible.

- Non-profit CDCs and mission-aligned developers are not provided any more flexibility than 421A developers.

- Efforts to right-size families who no longer need large apartments are hindered.

Open Conversation & Brainstorm