



Fund for Public Housing Receives \$3.2 Million from Helmsley Charitable Trust to Launch Green Space Connections for 14,000 NYCHA Residents in Brooklyn and the Bronx

Groundbreaking initiative to activate open spaces utilizes urban design principles introduced in NYCHA's Connected Communities Program as well as a successful pilot completed this year at Pomonok Houses in Queens



Authority (NYCHA) public housing developments. Led by the Fund for Public Housing in collaboration with NYCHA's Asset & Capital Management Division, the program, called *Green Space Connections*, utilizes the award winning **Connected Communities** methodology as a framework, which engages NYCHA residents in the planning process. The four developments – Marlboro Houses and Roosevelt Houses in Brooklyn and Castle Hill Houses and Patterson Houses in the Bronx – were selected due to their documented high need in health indicators as well as climate vulnerability.

Through a resident-led process, the *Green Space Connections* program will focus on creating and activating these four NYCHA green spaces in collaboration with NYCHA residents and expert green space providers to help advance health, climate resilience, and community. This effort will feature three program elements – Participatory Design Process, Physical Transformation, and Programming for Sustainability – to ensure that the spaces have a direct, positive impact on the health, well being, resiliency, safety, and overall quality of life of NYCHA residents.

“Through a powerful public-private partnership, the *Green Space Connections* program will empower public housing residents to develop ideas on how to activate and transform green spaces in their community, leading to improved health and quality of life for residents. Investments in this program will pay dividends for years to come, from improving the physical environment to building resident capacity to further activate these spaces,” said Alex Zablocki, Executive Director of the Fund for Public Housing. “We are excited to hear from residents about how green spaces in their community can be transformed through this program!”

“There is a clear link between proximity to green spaces and overall mental and physical health,” said Tracy Perrizo, Program Officer at the Helmsley Charitable Trust. “At Helmsley, we know that to truly improve health outcomes for New Yorkers, we need to scale up the creation of green space through collaborative initiatives like this one that include residents’ voices in the process.”

scalability and a communications roadmap for execution.

“Pathways, playgrounds, and open spaces keep public housing residents invested in the future of their communities,” said Interim NYCHA CEO Lisa Bova-Hiatt. “The launch of the *Green Space Connections* program through the support of the Helmsley Charitable Trust and the Fund for Public Housing represents an important step in the vision we had for integrating the power of urban design and public engagement when we first established Connected Communities.”

Public housing residents’ access to and relationship with their ecological environment has proven to be of critical importance during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Green Space Connections* will utilize the Connected Communities participatory process to activate green space in public housing communities, empowering residents to develop their own ideas and strategies on how green space should be used. With grant funding, projects will be refined and designed with green space nonprofit partners. The overall program will be supported by Design Trust for Public Space, who will also support program communications.

“Access to safe, well-maintained green public spaces is a crucial health equity issue,” said Matthew Clarke, Executive Director of the Design Trust for Public Space. “The Design Trust is proud to empower NYCHA residents through the *Green Space Connections* program to design community spaces — by them and for them — that improve quality of life and create more opportunities to make our NYC neighborhoods healthier and happier.”

“NYCHA is committed to securing the public-private partnerships capable of reimagining our communal spaces as vibrant and appealing amenities that are firmly embedded in their surrounding communities,” said NYCHA Chief Asset & Capital Management Officer Shaan Mavani. “The *Green Space Connections* program will be a vital tool in our ambitious goal of modernizing the 2,400 public acres we oversee and enlisting NYCHA residents in that process.”

“I would like to thank the partners that we are working with on this project to improve green spaces at Castle Hill,” said Castle Hill Houses Resident Association



NYCHA is the nation's largest residential landlord and contributes to eight percent of the city's rental housing. NYCHA's 335 public housing developments contain more than 177,000 apartments that are core to New York City's affordable housing stock. Through the Fund for Public Housing, NYCHA and its advocates and partners are hoping to leverage other funding opportunities to be able to address the need for modernized communal spaces across the Authority, from basketball courts and playgrounds to pathways and park benches.

Through physical and programmatic improvements to its green space, the Fund for Public Housing and NYCHA, along with green space nonprofit partners, aim to improve the physical environment for its residents – many of whom are children and seniors. An array of design issues, such as lack of access to safe and usable open space or insufficient lighting, directly influence safety, physical activity, and overall resident quality of life. *Green Space Connections* will be informed by an in depth participatory design process, followed by a resident capacity-building program for continued activation of the revitalized spaces.

“The Fund for Public Housing is committed to improving community health for public housing residents. We'll continue to deliver on that promise thanks to the support of the Helmsley Charitable Trust, which will allow us to expand our successful Connected Communities partnership to four NYCHA developments. Over the next months and years, the Fund will work with residents, funding partners, and NYCHA to maximize the positive impact of the program and have a transformative effect on the lives of public housing communities,” said Diallo Powell, Board President for the Fund for Public Housing Board President.

Green Space Connections will begin with resident engagement in early 2023. Projects are expected to be developed by spring 2023, followed by design through summer 2023. Construction and activation will begin in fall 2023 and the program is expected to be completed in 2024, followed by a year of continued resident engagement and open space activation.

About the Helmsley Charitable Trust

The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust aspires to improve lives by

purposes.

About the Fund for Public Housing

The Fund for Public Housing (The Fund) is an independent not-for-profit organization that creates and leverages resources and relationships to enhance the opportunities and quality of life for New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residents. Through public-private partnership with NYCHA, the Fund is investing in leadership development, workforce skills, economic mobility, community health and resident asset building, with a focus on NYCHA's 100,000 youth and young adults (14-24 years of age), as a centerpiece of the organization's commitment to creating economic opportunity and equity for all NYCHA residents. For more information, visit www.fundforpublichousing.org.

About NYCHA

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), the largest public housing authority in North America, was created in 1935 to provide decent, affordable housing for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers. NYCHA is home to roughly 1 in 16 New Yorkers across over 177,000 apartments within 335 housing developments. NYCHA serves over 339,000 residents through the conventional public housing program (Section 9), over 29,000 residents at developments that have been converted to PACT/RAD, and over 92,000 families through federal rent subsidies (the Section 8 Leased Housing Program). In addition, NYCHA connects residents to opportunities in financial empowerment, business development, career advancement, and educational programs. With a housing stock that spans all five boroughs, NYCHA is a city within a city.

About Design Trust for Public Space

The Design Trust for Public Space is a nationally recognized incubator that catalyzes change and transforms New York City's shared civic spaces—streets, plazas, parks, public buildings, transportation, and housing developments—to create a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable city. Its innovative model brings together government agencies, community groups, and private-sector experts, utilizing cross-sector partnerships to deliver creative solutions that shape the city's landscape.



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