



PROVIDE RESOURCES FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS TO ACCESS AND AFFORD HOUSING

THE CHALLENGE

The City of New York is experiencing a profound shortage of available housing at every rental level. This is particularly the case with affordable housing. In fact, recent surveys conducted by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development report that the vacancy rate for very affordable apartments is under 3%, meaning there is a “housing emergency” for the lowest income New Yorkers.

Many at-risk and low income New Yorkers turn to rental assistance programs to maintain and secure housing. But demand continues to outpace supply; various agencies and their clients are in competition for these scarce resources; and the eligibility requirements and application processes can be confusing and contradictory. In addition, some people have a need for services beyond rental or financial support. The need for housing with support services also outpaces supply.

In addition, entering the shelter system has become the quickest and most certain way for families to receive rental subsidies. A family applying for assistance from existing housing will likely wait years to receive assistance, if they receive it at all. A family entering shelter may wait just months.

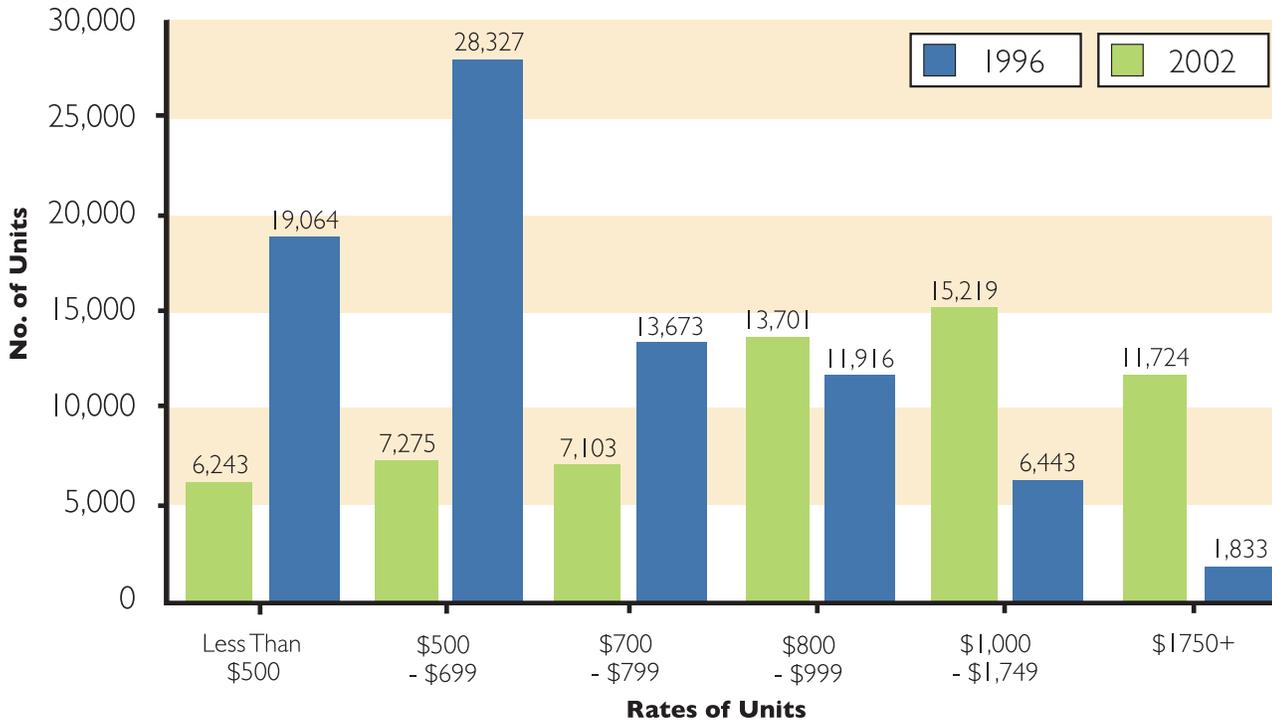
SOLUTIONS

The initiatives in this chapter embrace and build upon Mayor Bloomberg’s housing plan, *The New Housing Marketplace*, which is the most significant housing development and preservation strategy introduced in the city in over a decade. That plan pledges \$3 billion over five years to create and preserve 65,000 new units of housing.

Included, here, are new commitments to increase supportive and service-enriched housing. These are proven, cost-effective interventions that provide permanent homes, as well as services, to formerly homeless people – people who might not be successful in permanent housing without support services. Expanding New York City’s leadership in the area of supportive housing is essential to overcoming chronic homelessness. This includes increasing access to new and established at-risk populations, as well as using these interventions in homelessness prevention efforts.

These initiatives also streamline and expand rental assistance options for individuals and families at risk of homelessness. They level the rental assistance playing field, in order to reduce competition for subsidies and counter the perverse message that becoming homeless is the best way to receive assistance.

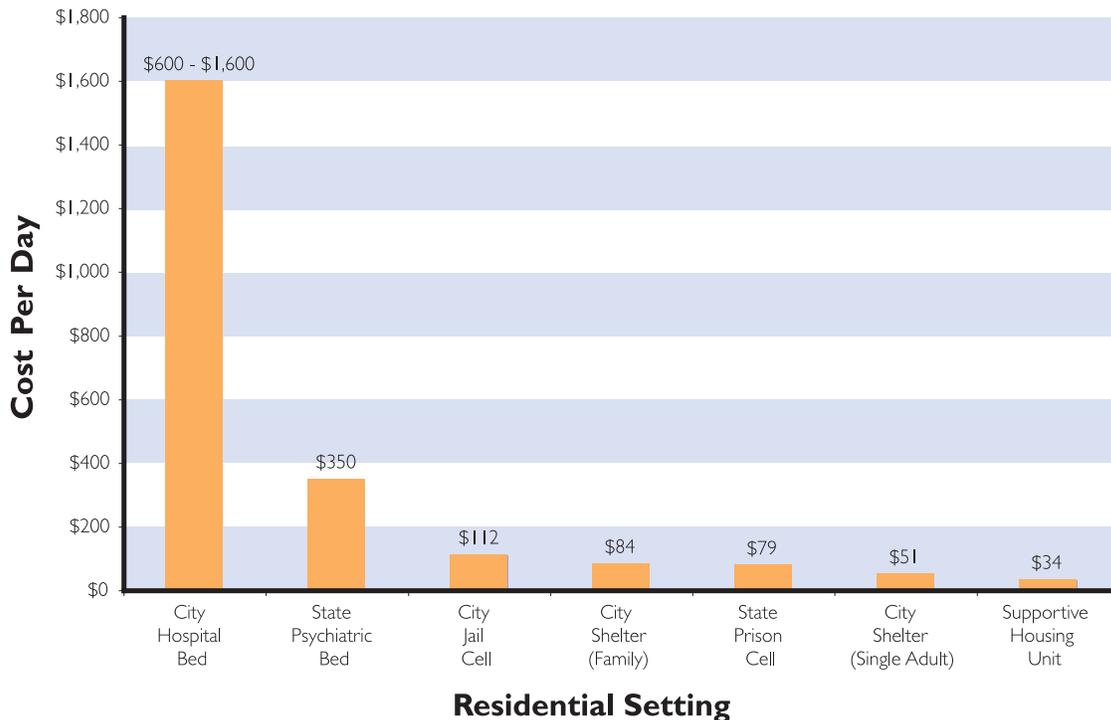
Housing Vacancies (1996 and 2002)



In 1996, most rental unit vacancies were at the low end of the market. Though 2002 data are not directly comparable, the largest number of vacancies now exist at the high end of the market.

Source: HPD

Cost Effectiveness of Supportive Housing



Supportive housing provides a cost effective permanent living environment for individuals who are challenged in living independently.

Source: Corporation for Supportive Housing, DHS Budget, Culhane Study

TAKING ACTION

The Next Step	Current Status	Taking Action
<p>Coordinate Rental Assistance Across All Agencies</p>	<p>Currently, rental assistance is granted to members of prioritized populations (such as homeless families and victims of domestic violence), and consists of programs developed in isolation from each other. This leads to incoherence and confusion by service providers and clients over what benefits are available. It also leads to competition between agencies for limited housing resources.</p>	<p>A citywide strategy will be implemented that grants uniform access to rental assistance based on a citywide determination of priority need. This strategy will reduce competition between agencies, minimize inconsistent practices between agencies, and ensure resources are allocated based on need.</p>
<p>Develop a Rental Assistance Primer</p>	<p>Today, multiple rental assistance programs exist, each of which have different requirements, rules, and application procedures. As a result, there is confusion and competition between service providers and those who receive the aid.</p>	<p>Once the citywide rental assistance program is revamped, a plain language guide to rental assistance will be created and broadly distributed to agencies, providers, and residents. The guide will include essential information about eligibility requirements, regulations, and levels of aid available.</p>
<p>Streamline the Rental Assistance Application</p>	<p>Applying for rental assistance today is a time consuming process that requires extensive paperwork and processing for applicants and public agencies.</p>	<p>The city will introduce a new web-based application process. The use of technology such as signature pads, online client files, and digital scanners will reduce paperwork, minimize information and documentation loss, and increase efficiency for clients and staff.</p>
<p>Redesign Rental Assistance to Disincentivize Shelter</p>	<p>At present, the most effective way for a family to receive rental assistance is to enter the shelter system. The current system places those in shelter at a higher priority for housing assistance than those at risk of homelessness. Inadvertently, this system provides an incentive for people to leave unstable housing rather than find solutions to stabilize and keep it when appropriate.</p>	<p>Rental assistance will be shifted from shelter to the community so that entry into shelter is not necessary to obtain assistance. At the same time, rental assistance resources must continue to be available in shelter to re-house chronically homeless individuals and families.</p>

The Next Step	Current Status	Taking Action
<p>Increase the Supply of Supportive Housing for Adults and Families</p>	<p>New York City is the leader in developing innovations in supportive housing. Mayor Bloomberg's <i>The New Housing Marketplace</i> builds on this commitment. Nonetheless, demand for supportive housing continues to outpace supply.</p>	<p>The commitments made in <i>The New Housing Marketplace</i> will be reinforced and expanded. City and state agencies will collaborate to identify appropriate funding to support additional development and to identify additional at-risk subpopulations to serve. "Moving On," a successful program that provides access to rental assistance for those "graduating" from supportive housing will be expanded to open existing units to new clients.</p>
<p>Increase the Supply of Service-Enriched Housing for Adults and Families</p>	<p>Service-enriched housing includes single apartments rented on a permanent basis to formerly homeless individuals and families. Transitional or longer-term services that aim to link these people with community-based services are "tied" to the apartment.</p>	<p>The availability of service-enriched housing, as part of the city's continuum of services, will be expanded. Different models for different subpopulations, including chronically street homeless, will be explored. These will include "housing first" models.</p>
<p>Advance <i>The New Housing Marketplace</i></p>	<p>The Mayor's 5-year plan to develop and preserve 65,000 units of affordable housing for individuals and families is ambitious and will require collective creativity and support to accomplish.</p>	<p>City agencies and private interests collectively will leverage funding, provide financial incentives, and simplify the regulatory and development processes to increase the supply of affordable housing. This plan will encourage the development of lower-cost housing, for singles in particular, by reducing barriers to the development of more modern models of SRO-type housing.</p>
<p>Improve Community Relationships to Support New Community Housing Initiatives</p>	<p>While there is support for affordable housing generally, communities sometimes feel less certain about supportive housing and rental assistance programs. Not enough public dialogue has occurred around the success of these interventions and the ways in which they benefit communities.</p>	<p>A coordinated effort to educate the public about the benefits and success of supportive housing and other interventions will be undertaken. Improved efforts to engage with communities will increase confidence around these interventions.</p>