

**Testimony of Brendan Cheney, New York Housing Conference  
New York City Council Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises  
October 19, 2022**

Good afternoon. My name is Brendan Cheney. I am Director of Policy and Communications at the New York Housing Conference (NYHC). I would like to thank Subcommittee Chair Kevin Riley as well as the other members of the subcommittee for the opportunity to testify.

NYHC is a nonprofit affordable housing policy and advocacy organization. As a broad-based coalition, our mission is to advance City, State and Federal policies and funding to support the development and preservation of decent and affordable housing for *all* New Yorkers.

In order to meet citywide housing needs, every neighborhood must say “yes” to more housing – including more affordable housing – if we are going to make progress fighting the affordable housing crisis. Today the subcommittee is considering a proposal for mixed-use housing in Astoria, Queens, called Innovation Queens, including 1,100 affordable apartments – with more than 500 at extremely low income – roughly for households earning \$36,000 per year.

New York City has an affordable housing crisis that affects every neighborhood. The metro area has a shortage of 772,000 apartments affordable to very low-income households, while nearly 1 million households are rent burdened – paying more than 30 percent of their income on rent – and more than 68,350 people were homeless in New York City according to the most recent comprehensive estimate.

And every neighborhood is feeling this crisis and every City Council district needs more affordable housing, including Council District 26, where the project is located. In this district, 12.6% of households live below the poverty level and 44.2% of renters are rent burdened while 815 New Yorkers who were in a city shelter at the end of 2021 last lived in one of the two overlapping community boards.

Mixed with residents with real housing needs is a high-cost, high income district, where the median income is \$71,509. This district needs affordable housing as much as anywhere else in the city.

While this district was among the top producers of new affordable housing over the past eight years, producing 2,733 units, they developed less deeply affordable housing than the citywide average – just 170 units of extremely low-income housing. Instead, more than half of the new housing was for incomes of \$144,000 or more, including 48 percent for households making almost \$200,000.

Today’s proposal acknowledges the need for more deeply affordable housing with 1,100 affordable apartments, including senior housing and more than 500 units of extremely low-income housing. This one project could add almost three times as much deeply affordable housing to the district than was added in to total during the last 8 years.

Communities and their elected officials should push for as much affordable housing, and deeply affordable housing, as they can get in these projects, within reasonable limitations of housing finance. But negotiations should always be with the goal of getting to “yes”. The need is too great to let opportunities with affordable housing pass by.