

Testimony of Brendan Cheney, New York Housing Conference

Queens Borough President
City of Yes for Housing Opportunity Public Hearing

August 8, 2024

Good afternoon. My name is Brendan Cheney. I am Director of Policy and Operations at the New York Housing Conference. We are a nonprofit affordable housing policy and advocacy organization. **We support the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity as one important solution for our affordable housing crisis and history of housing discrimination.**

New York City's affordable housing crisis is obvious. The housing vacancy rate is 1.4% - the lowest rate in 50 years – and nearly 500,000 households are paying more than half their income in rent.

The city needs more affordable housing and more housing supply overall. The City of Yes will allow for more housing in all neighborhoods and more affordable housing **without changing the character of the neighborhoods.**

The Universal Affordability Preference will add affordable housing, while conversions from offices to residential, eliminating parking requirements, adding accessory dwelling units, transit oriented development and town center zoning will add housing supply citywide. These policies will also promote fair housing.

Our [New York City Housing Tracker](#), which shows affordable housing production by City Council district, shows that most of our housing is produced in a few Council districts while many districts are essentially opting out of adding new housing.

The top 10 Council districts that produced the most affordable housing financed more than 3,500 units each over ten years while the bottom 10 districts financed just 200 units or fewer each. **This disparity is particularly stark in Queens: five of the ten Council districts that produced the least new affordable housing were in Queens.**

The City of Yes proposal will allow for more housing in all types of neighborhoods – from high density to low density neighborhoods. But we must support all provisions in the City of Yes. If we allow for provisions to be eliminated or watered down – particularly policies for low-density neighborhoods like ADUs, eliminating parking mandates, Transit Oriented Development and Town Center Zoning – **if we let some neighborhoods say no to housing, we will perpetuate housing discrimination.**

We must say yes to housing in all neighborhoods.