Should MTA Require Affordable Housing in Land Deals?

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority will decide on an affordable housing policy within 90 days, after being pressed by a Westchester County fair housing coalition over a planned development in Harrison.

By Mark Lungariello

The MTA has gone into the business of signing agreements to sell or turn over authority land to real estate developers, but the Westchester Workforce Housing Coalition said as a public benefit corporation the MTA should require as a condition of sale that any development contain 20 percent affordable housing.

Jim Killoran, coalition member and executive director of Habitat for Humanity Westchester, said a lack of affordable housing was the No. 1 issue in the state.

"How can anyone raise a flag on Memorial Day or fourth of July and say you're an American, then exclude people from living there?" he told the Journal News.

But MTA board member Jonathan Ballan, who was recommended to the seat by
Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino, is among those who believe the authority should not choose housing advocacy over the bottom line.

"We're a transportation agency, we have a fiduciary duty and responsibility as board members to maximize our revenue and to maximize the return on the sale of our assets," he said at a board meeting Wednesday.

The MTA board agreed at the meeting to sell for $56 million development rights to a lot in Long Island City where a builder plans to construct about 900 units in a 77-story tower that would be Queens' tallest. The lack of an affordable housing component was a point of contention in the deal, as it was in Harrison where 143 apartments are planned on a former train station parking lot.

Read More.

Get to Know Who Runs Our Services Programs

"Social Work Paves the Way"

Do you know the social workers around you? Do you know what they do? At Community Housing Innovations, social workers have a key role. They help us accomplish our mission of providing clients the support they need to overcome homelessness and they are in charge of our emergency, transitional and supportive housing programs.

Days start early and most are on call 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. There is always the possibility of a call, the cry of someone in need or the urgency of a life in danger. They will be there, sometimes with a smile, sometimes with a comforting voice, and sometimes with the tough love needed to break a vicious circle. We are talking about CHI social workers; those who have embraced a vocation of helping others.

Social workers deal with all kinds of people whose lives are marked by difficult situations such as poverty and homelessness, mental and physical disability, or violations of their human rights. It is a job of commitment and satisfaction, a job of high
March is a very important month for social workers since it is the time chosen to celebrate National Social Workers Day. This occasion was proposed by the National Association of Social Workers, an institution that in 2015 celebrates 60 years of service.

We praise their work and we want you to know more about it too! That is why we asked some of our social workers to share their experiences.

Read their inspiring thoughts in CHI's website.

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Save the Date: Give Local and Support CHI!

Get ready for Give Local Westchester & Putnam, an online giving event that provides nonprofits the opportunity to gain exposure to - and start relationships with - new donors, and for people in our region to come together to raise as much money as possible for local nonprofits.

Find Community Housing Innovations, Inc. in the list of nonprofits and you can support us with a minimum donation of $10. Your contribution is very valuable to support our Emergency and Transitional Housing programs. CHI is the largest provider of emergency on Long Island and the second-largest in Westchester, serving over a 1000 people each night.

*Give Local Westchester & Putnam* will take place from May 5, 2015 starting at 12 noon, to May 6, 2015, ending at noon.

Learn more and donate through [GiveLocalWP.org](http://GiveLocalWP.org).
Zoning to Discriminate in Westchester

By Alexander Roberts

"I recently attended a breakfast by the Westchester County Association featuring Michael Kaplowitz, chairman of the county Board of Legislators. He is rightly praised for restoring a sense of comity and bipartisanship to county government. But asked about the growing housing burden on county citizens and failure of the county to meet the need for affordable housing, he noted that New York is a home-rule state, granting zoning powers to the municipalities with which he had no desire to interfere.

A few months ago, I had a conversation with a county housing employee who used another line of reasoning to oppose the federal consent decree requiring the county to build 750 units of affordable housing. The federal court ordered the housing to be built in 31 of the county's municipalities that are less than 3 percent black and 7 percent Hispanic. The county employee used a car analogy to advance his argument.

"My car broke down last week and I have to get a new one," he said.

"But I can't afford a BMW so I have to buy a cheaper car. If I can't afford a house in Rye, then I have to buy in Port Chester or Yonkers. That's America."

On its face the argument seems reasonable and consistent with market economics. Why should the government - especially the federal government - force BMW, or Rye, to build a cheaper product, especially when New York is a home-rule state where municipalities have control over local zoning? But that's exactly where the argument breaks down"...

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- Brentwood, May 21st - At Suffolk County Community College.

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- Starting April 9, White Plains
- Starting April 16, White Plains (In Spanish)

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