

The New York City Housing Crisis: Reevaluating Mayor Eric Adams City of Yes for Housing Opportunity Plan

The [New York City Council](#) recently declared an ongoing state of emergency due to the continued severity of the city's housing crisis. In doing so, the City of New York reserves the right to continue enforcing rent stabilization laws with support from the State. It has long felt as though the City of Dreams has grown desperate as it loses its battle against homelessness. Between 2010 and 2020, New York City's population has grown by 7.7% [\[Office of the New York State Comptroller\]](#), and over 200,000 migrants have entered the City since 2022 [\[ABC7 New York\]](#). The cost of housing migrants, specifically, has grown extremely hefty with figures reaching billions of dollars, causing Mayor Eric Adams to refer to the migrant crisis as an "issue [that] will destroy New York City [\[NPR\]](#)." Efforts to remedy the crisis are many, but this op-ed will focus on Mayor Adams' City of Yes for Housing Opportunity. This article argues that the policies listed in the City of Yes have their merits and the potential to be extremely beneficial, however, they do not focus on finding affordable housing for migrants, an issue that is on the forefront of the crisis.

Before delving into the specifics of the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity, it is important to understand the history of the ongoing housing crisis in NYC. Unbelievably, in the 1970s, the city was dealing with completely different issues: loss of residents and home abandonment. A combination of rising apartment maintenance prices and stationary tenant and homeowner incomes [\[Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy\]](#) was making New York City more and more unlivable. As a result, the city's housing agency, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) was able to take ownership of many apartments after foreclosure, making it the landlord with the second largest amount of property in NYC, with the first being the New York City Housing Authority, another government organization. By the mid 1980s, rising costs of rent accompanied with Reagan administration cuts on subsidies for housing resources, allowed homelessness to become a true epidemic in New York City, causing lawsuits against city government on the quality of shelters and the need to provide housing the homeless. This led to the first major comprehensive housing plan, led by Mayor Koch, the Ten Year Plan for Housing. Its main goal was to "renovate 82,000 units in occupied in rem buildings (government owned buildings gained by foreclosure), rebuild 47,000 units in vacant in rem buildings, build 37,000 new units and upgrade 87,000 apartments in privately owned buildings [\[Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy\]](#)". This program was extended to 15 years and was an astounding success. "As of 2003, the city's programs had created over 34,000 affordable units through new

construction, had restored nearly 49,000 affordable units through the gut rehabilitation of formerly vacant buildings, and had provided renovation subsidies to another 125,000 units of distressed occupied buildings. [\[Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy\]](#) This is an example of an initiative that took decisive action against homelessness and widespread unaffordable housing, however, it is important to note that NYC today is not as it was. With a population increase of around one million from 1990 to today [\[Total Population - New York City & Boroughs, 1900 to 2010\]](#), and an enormous influx of migrants within such a short period of time, the city is finding it even more difficult to place its residents. The City of Yes for Housing Opportunity attempts to remedy this, although it has gaps in its policies.

The City of Yes for Housing Opportunity was published for public review in the spring of this year, now awaiting approval of the five borough presidents and community boards. It will then be subject to a vote by the City Council [\[NYC Planning\]](#). It is important to recognize that there are other housing policy plans in New York City, but the City of Yes has already been proven effective. Its two other components, the City of Yes for Economic Opportunity and Carbon Neutrality have both already been passed by the City Council, indicating real hope for the implementation for its Housing Opportunity aspect. If the already beneficial plan could be further improved upon, it could mean that the housing situation in NYC may end up well on its way to recovery.

In a summarized explanation of The City of Yes for Housing Opportunity, it is primarily focused on adding a new homes to each community through rezoning initiatives. It establishes The Universal Affordability Preference, through which developers can add “20% more housing to buildings, as long as the additional homes are affordable to households earning 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI) [\[NYC Planning\]](#).” Other rezoning initiatives included in the plan are residential conversions of office spaces, relegalizing housing being built above businesses, and utilizing underused campuses as housing.

Ensuring that zoning is not an obstacle to affordable, comfortable housing for New Yorkers is extremely beneficial, and should it be passed, will no doubt do what it set out to do. Despite this, I believe that this plan does not account for one of the major reasons why NYC housing is currently in such a dire situation. Migrants are moving into New York City at unprecedented levels, while “the city is permitted to end adult migrants' shelter stays if they haven't found alternative housing and can't prove “extenuating circumstances” after a 30-day stay in city-provided shelter.” [\[Daily News\]](#) This means that migrants are consistently being denied long-term housing, and the City of Yes lacks measures to address this.

I propose that, through the Universal Affordability Preference, within the 20% of extra housing, there should be a percentage set aside for noncitizen migrants. This percentage does not need to exceed 5% of the total housing allotted for low-income individuals. In committing to setting aside long term housing for migrants, not only does the level of homeless New Yorkers decrease, but opportunities to truly set down roots in New York, to work and create a life, are given to migrants. In finding a safe, permanent home, it becomes easier for undocumented immigrants to find pathways to citizenship.

Local NYC legislation has, for too long, been afraid of integrating low-income and high income individuals and families (primarily due to the influx of NIMBYs in those of higher socioeconomic status), and Mayor Adams' rezoning plan aims to do just that, however, any plan can be improved upon. Permanent housing for migrants should be a priority in our Right to Shelter city, and by adding this aspect to City of Yes, we can work to meet the needs of all our residents, old and new.

1. Council of the City of New York. "Press Release: [Title of the Press Release]." Council of the City of New York, 19 Mar. 2024, council.nyc.gov/press/2024/03/19/2576/. Accessed 17 June 2024.
2. Office of the New York State Comptroller. "Changing Face of Post-Pandemic New York City." Office of the New York State Comptroller, Dec. 2023, www.osc.ny.gov/press/releases/2023/12/changing-face-post-pandemic-new-york-city. Accessed 17 June 2024.
3. ABC7 New York. "More Than 200,000 Asylum Seekers Entered NYC Since Spring 2022, City Officials Said." ABC7 New York, [www.abc7ny.com/post/more-than-200000-asylum-seekers-entered-nyc-since-spring-2022-city-officials-said/14910652/#:~:text=NEW%20YORK%20CITY%20\(WABC\)%20%2D%2D,are%20in%20the%20city's%20care](https://www.abc7ny.com/post/more-than-200000-asylum-seekers-entered-nyc-since-spring-2022-city-officials-said/14910652/#:~:text=NEW%20YORK%20CITY%20(WABC)%20%2D%2D,are%20in%20the%20city's%20care). Accessed 17 June 2024.
4. NPR. "How NYC Is Coping with 175,000 Migrants from the Southern Border." NPR, 15 Feb. 2024, www.npr.org/2024/02/15/1231712535/how-nyc-is-coping-with-175-000-migrants-from-the-southern-border#:~:text=The%20cost%20of%20providing%20shelter,will%20destroy%20New%20York%20City.%22. Accessed 17 June 2024.
5. Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy. *A History of Housing Policy in New York City*. www.furmancenter.org/files/publications/AHistoryofHousingPolicycombined0601_000.pdf. Accessed 17 June 2024.
6. New York City Department of City Planning. *Historical Population*. www.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/planning-level/nyc-population/historical-population/nyc_total_pop_1900-2010.pdf. Accessed 17 June 2024.
7. New York City Department of City Planning. "City of Yes: Housing Opportunity." City of New York, www.nyc.gov/site/planning/plans/city-of-yes/city-of-yes-housing-opportunity.page. Accessed 17 June 2024.
8. New York Daily News. "NYC to Start Evicting Migrants Who Hit 30-Day Shelter Limits Starting Next Week." New York Daily News, 17 May 2024, www.nydailynews.com/2024/05/17/nyc-to-start-evicting-migrants-who-hit-30-day-shelter-limits-starting-next-week/. Accessed 17 June 2024.
9. New York City Department of City Planning. "City of Yes: Carbon Neutrality." City of New York, www.nyc.gov/site/planning/plans/city-of-yes/city-of-yes-carbon-neutrality.page. Accessed 17 June 2024.
10. New York City Department of City Planning. "City of Yes: Economic Opportunity." City of New York, www.nyc.gov/site/planning/plans/city-of-yes/city-of-yes-economic-opportunity.page. Accessed 17 June 2024.