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Harlem Speaker Mark-Viverito And Others Vote On Legislation To Create An Office Of Crime Victim Services And More

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Today the New York City Council will vote on creating an Office of Crime Victim Services to provide important resources to relevant individuals in need. Next, the Council will vote on legislation to establish procedures for the reporting on results of employment and economic services offered to public housing residents. As winter approaches, the City Council will vote on a bill to clarify the bounds that homeowners must clear of snow around fire hydrants on their property. Finally, the Council will vote on several new affordable housing developments in East Harlem and the Bronx.



Establishing an Office of Crime Victim Services

Introduction 1147-A, sponsored by Council Member Laurie Cumbo and Harlem Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, would create an Office of Crime Victim Services (OCVS). The Office would be headed by a Coordinator charged with managing service providers, including non-governmental organizations and city agencies that provide social services to crime victims. OCVS would be required to publish a directory of all service providers in the city by type, location of services, hours of operation, services provided and contact information.

Additionally, the Office to Combat Domestic Violence would work in collaboration with OCVS on developing services and systems for victims of intimate partner violence.

“Legal proceedings can provide some measure of comfort and closure for crime victims, but coming to terms with their experience often takes a more personal action,” said Harlem Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. “Establishing an Office of Crime Victim Services will provide essential oversight and management of the process involved in coordinating city agencies and service providers, and getting those resources to those affected by criminal activity. Through offering crisis intervention services, addiction treatments, and shelter opportunities, we take a necessary step toward ensuring that victims of crime get the help that they need.”

“After surviving a traumatic experience, it can be challenging for crime victims to navigate through our City agencies and nonprofit partners in search of immediate assistance. Through my legislation, Introduction 1147-A, we will create a dedicated office that can connect New Yorkers directly to the vast network of service providers that will support their recovery,” said Council Member Laurie Cumbo, Chair of the Committee on Women’s Issues.

“Following an attack, a crime victim may need services ranging from trauma counseling to relocation. Victims often are unaware of the services available to them and, if they are, easily become discouraged by the red tape that prevents them from getting real help in real time. I am proud to say that ends today,” said Council Member Vanessa Gibson, Chair of the Committee on Public Safety. “Thanks to significant support from Harlem Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and the Chair of the Committee on Women’s Issues Council Member Laurie Cumbo, New Yorkers in need will soon be able to turn to a coordinated Office of Crime Victims Services in their time of need. As Public Safety Chair, I applaud this effort and am thankful that this long stand in gap in our overall efforts to promote criminal justice reform and create safer communities will now be filled.”

Reporting on Services Offered to Public Housing Residents

While there are a number of services and programs designed to increase and enhance educational, economic and employment opportunities for public housing residents, there is little information available regarding the outcomes of such resources once they have been accessed. To gauge the efficacy of these services, reporting procedures would be established through the following legislation.

Introduction 1213-A, *sponsored by Council Member Ritchie Torres*, would require an agency or office designated by the Mayor to publish an annual report on the outcomes of services provided to public housing residents, including employment-related services, financial counseling or banking services, income support services, adult education services and business-related services.

Introduction 1214-A, *sponsored by Council Member Ritchie Torres*, would require the Center for Economic Opportunity to submit to the City Council, the Mayor and the Comptroller a review of the Jobs-Plus program and recommendations for expanding the program to public housing residents throughout the City.

“Jobs-Plus is NYCHA’s hidden gem that has proven to raise income and employment opportunities for public housing residents. It has been implemented in various parts of the country and in several public housing developments in the City, and has shown to increase the earnings of public housing residents by as much as 17%. Jobs-Plus should be expanded to all NYCHA developments so that residents have the tools to land jobs and stable careers. These 2 bills are steps in that direction and I look forward to them being signed into law,” said Council Member Ritchie Torres, Chair of the Committee on Public Housing.

Clarifying Bounds of Fire Hydrant Snow and Ice Removal for Property Owners

Current law generally requires that property owners keep snow and other material from accumulating near fire hydrants fronting their properties. This bill would specify the area required to be cleared.

Introduction 300-A, *sponsored by Council Member Andy King*, clarifies the bounds of the area property owners are required to clear of snow around fire hydrants by making clear that the fire hydrant itself must also be cleared, narrowing the area to a size that is more closely in line with what the Fire Department needs for access to the hydrant, and specifying that property owners are not required to clear snow and other material from the street itself. The bill would also reduce criminal penalties associated with snow clearing.

“When fire alarms sound in an Engine Company, firefighters rush at top speed to get to the location of the blaze. When firefighters arrive at the scene and don’t have clear access to the nearby hydrant that Engine Company is forced to waste precious time clearing the obstruction before it’s operational,” said Council Member Andy King. “This law, once enacted, will make it so that there is a clear and explicit duty on building owners, homeowners, lessees, and tenants to keep fire hydrants clear of obstructions such as snow, ice, (and dirt) within four hours after the snow stops falling. Additionally, this law will prohibit newsstands from being located within 10 feet on either side of a fire hydrant, with some exceptions. The bottom line is two minutes or less for an Engine Company to be operational as opposed to several minutes. A home or business could be saved. A life could be saved without delay.”

The City Council will vote on the following land use items...

Lexington Gardens II

The Lexington Gardens II project is a fully-affordable proposed mixed-use development located on the block bound by Park Avenue and Lexington Avenue and 107th Street and 108th Street in East Harlem.

The total size of the development will be 411,725 square feet, with 370,470 square feet allocated for residential space, and 3,201 square feet allocated for commercial space. An additional 38,053 square feet will be used to house community non-profits, including the Union Settlement Association and the new headquarters of the Northside Center for Child Development. The development will rise 15 stories and contain 390 dwelling units.

Affordability:

- 20 % of units at 165% AMI
- 30% of units at 100% AMI
- 50% of units at 50% AMI or less

Lexington Gardens II will be a joint development project between Tahl-Propp Equities and L&M Development.

“The Lexington Gardens development will advance the goals of the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan by making sure that hundreds of existing local community members can benefit from affordable units. After extensive negotiations between my office and the developing corporation, I am proud to say that we lowered the AMI band to help more families qualify for affordable housing—which has been and will continue to be one of the top priorities of the New York City Council,” said Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. “I am proud to work with L+M and Tahl Propp Equities to open up 390 units and more than 38,000 square feet of community space for families in El Barrio/East Harlem.”

Lambert Houses

The Lambert Houses currently exist as an affordable housing complex in the West Farms neighborhood of the Bronx. Constructed in the early 1970s, multiple design flaws have rendered the facilities unsafe and difficult to operate. The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, and affordable housing developer Phipps Houses, seek a vote allowing the demolition and redevelopment of the Lambert Houses.

The proposed reconstruction would nearly double the number of affordable residential units to 1,665. It would also increase the amount of available retail space to 61,000 square feet.

An additional 86,608 square feet would be utilized as a new public elementary school. “The redevelopment of Lambert Houses will be the largest affordable housing project under the Mayor’s Housing Plan. It will offer deeper affordability, significant infrastructure improvements and community upgrades that will benefit all of the residents of the West Farms neighborhood in the Bronx. I’m proud to have worked collaboratively with Phipps Houses, the Administration and several City agencies to come to an agreement that will transform this section of the Bronx and improve the lives of thousands of families,” said Council Member Ritchie Torres, Chair of the Committee on Public Housing.

Second Farms

The Second Farms project is a fully-affordable proposed mixed-use development to be located in the West Farms neighborhood of the Bronx.

The total size of the development will be 320,280 square feet, with 295,780 square feet allocated for residential space, and 14,500 square feet allocated for commercial space. An additional 10,000 square feet will be used as community facility space, and is anticipated to house Pre-K classrooms. The development will rise 12 stories and contain 290 dwelling units.

Affordability:

- All units will be at 60% AMI and below

“The new Second Farms development will be an exciting addition to the West Farms area of the Bronx,” said Council Member Rafael Salamanca. “We worked diligently to ensure that this new building will have units that are affordable for a mix of incomes, and will feature quality amenities for families in our community to enjoy.”

Melrose Commons North RFP Site B

The Melrose Commons North project is a fully-affordable proposed mixed-use development to be located in the Morrisania neighborhood of the Bronx.

The total size of the development will be 426,000 square feet, with 390,000 square feet allocated for residential space, and 22,000 square feet allocated for commercial space. An additional 14,000 square feet will be used as cultural and educational space to house the new permanent home of the Bronx Music Heritage Center. The development will contain 305 dwelling units.

Affordability:

- Units are available on a graduated scale from 30% to 110% AMI. Melrose Commons North will be a joint development project between WHEDco and BFC partners.

“Melrose Commons North will provide Bronx residents at a variety of income levels with new housing opportunities,” said Council Member Rafael Salamanca. “I am pleased that the development team was able to work with local citizens to ensure that concerns were addressed and that our needs as a community were met. As a result, this will be a tremendous addition to the Melrose neighborhood.”

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