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### MID-NOVEMBER 2013 NEWS & UPDATE

#### MVUT's Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) and Tenant Action Project (TAP)

In our last mailing we reported on our last year's (Oct 1, 2012 - Sept. 30, 2013) efforts under our *HPP* - 147 eviction preventions, and 15 families/individuals rehoused! We feel that that is quite impressive. Under our *TAP* we also listed eighteen (18) separate buildings for which we provided organizing and/or technical assistance during that same time period. This does not include the literally hundreds (if not thousands) of tenants to whom we provide advice, counseling and moral support throughout the year. Our work on all of these fronts is continuing apace into November. There is no let up in the demand for our services. The phones literally ring off the hook day in, day out. That is a testament to the effectiveness of our services, but it also represents the ever worsening economic circumstances that so many low to moderate income tenants face.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) cuts and Hunger Action Network of New York State (HANNYS) efforts

You may have read about, or maybe you personally experienced the fact that the Federal Food Stamp Program (SNAP) just this month experienced cuts in benefits - \$ 11/month for a family of one (1) - \$ 36/month for a family of our (4). This cut will mean that the three (3) million New York State SNAP recipients will lose \$ 332 million a year. This \$ 332 million is more than ten (10) times the amount that New York State provides to Emergency Feeding Programs (EFP's) under the Hunger Prevention and Nutritional Assistance Program (HPNAP). HPNAP is currently funded at \$ 29 million. HANNYS is calling for a \$ 10 million increase in HPNAP funding. This is a stark example of "taking food out of the mouths of hungry children to balance the budget". These cuts are a result of Congress not reauthorizing the funds that were provided to SNAP from the stimulus. It's not that the need is not there. HANNYS recently reported that 81% of the state's EFPs reported an increase in the number of individuals served in 2012, roughly one third of who were children! Is this the kind of society we want to be living in ? Punishing hungry children ? At the HANNYS annual meeting in Albany in late September, Smita Narula an Associate Professor of Clinical Law, NYU School of Law, and legal advisor to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food spoke of the growing movement to frame food as a human right. Ms. Narula will be the featured speaker at a HANNYS fundraiser in New York City on December 4 - if you are interested in seeing her compelling presentation, call the MVUT office. We'll be going down to NYC for this fun and meaningful event.

New York and Connecticut Sustainable Communities

This bi-state collaboration of cities, counties and regional planning organizations has been meeting with representatives to plan to expand opportunities for jobs, housing and transportation. This initiative has been funded by a \$ 3.5 million grant from *HUD. MVUT* has been going to meetings in New Rochelle and Mt. Vernon regarding this and just participated in one (1) of the eight (8) public workshops to discuss findings and recommend actions for two (2) projects:

- A *Planning Enhancement* study of approaches to make communities throughout the New York/Connecticut region more sustainable through enhancements to regional transportation, housing, economic development and environmental planning.

- A Fair Housing and Equity Assessment to analyze evidence and develop regional strategies to further fair housing and expand equity and opportunity.

We're enclosing a copy of the Challenge that this initiative is addressing with the "Livable Principles" and "Partners" on the reverse side. We'll keep you posted on developments.

### Westchester Board of Legislators (W-BOL) County Budget Hearings

MVUT has received funding from Westchester County for years to support its extremely effective, and even more cost-effective Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP). You've seen the success we've reported to you in the last couple of mailings - well over one hundred and fifty (150+) successful eviction preventions and/or rehousing efforts. To be cost effective, according to current emergency shelter costs, MVUT would only have to prevent two (2) to four (4) evictions !! Think about that - we're doing 160 - 170!! Think of the savings !!! There'll be three (3) upcoming W-BOL Budget Hearings on next year's county budget. We'd like some of our members, friends, beneficiaries, etc. to come to one (1) or more of the Hearings. Call the MVUT office if you're interested. The dates and places are as follows:

- 1) Thursday November 21 at 7:00 pm Peekskill Middle School, 212 Ringgold Street
- 2) Tuesday November 26 at 7:00 pm Yonkers Riverfront Library, 1 Larkin Center
- 3) Wednesday December 4 at 7:00 pm Westchester County Center, 198 Central Avenue, White Plains

#### Heat Requirement

We're enclosing a copy of Section 602 of the 2010 Property Maintenance Code of New York State - "Heating Facilities". From Sept. 15 through May 31 landlords must provide heat at 68 degrees Fahrenheit in all rooms!

### **MVUT Holiday Gathering - Friday December 13**

MVUT will host its "Annual Gathering" at our office at 6:00 pm on Friday December 13. It's always a fun event when our members and friends can get together and share a joyful evening with great food, good holiday music and wonderful company. We'd ask that people bring a dish or two (2) with them. Invite your neighbors as well. Please give us a call and let us know how many will be coming. We're enclosing a flyer on the reverse side of the HEAT flyer.

- \* We're enclosing two (2) newspaper items that we feel are instructive:
- 1) An October 27, 2013 Daily News "Be Our Guest" column by Jaron Benjamin the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Council On Housing - "The Real Reason Why The Rent Is Too High". Jaron's piece highlights the incredible damage being done to the provision of affordable housing by New York State's dysfunctional campaign finance system. Jaron is one (1) of the key coordinators of the Real Rent Reform (R3) Campaign that we've been reporting to you about.
- 2) A November 3, 2013 NY Times, Sunday Review "Poverty In America is Mainstream" by Mark R. Rank, Professor of Social Welfare at Washington University. Professor Rank convincingly debunks many of the myths surrounding poverty and our welfare system. Thank you Professor Rank!

Have a Great Thanksgiving! Support Tenants Rights! Support Economic Justice!! Support MVUT



An unprecedented bi-state collaboration of cities, counties and regional planning organizations has come together to launch New York-Connecticut Sustainable Communities. This initiative, funded with a \$3.5 million U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant, will integrate housing, economic development, transportation and environmental planning. This summary describes the collaboration and what it will achieve.

#### www.SustainableNYCT.org

#### Challenge

The New York-Connecticut metropolitan region includes New York City, Long Island, the lower Hudson Valley, and the coastal region of Connecticut stretching from Stamford to New Haven. The region's dense settlement pattern, extensive transit network and diverse, highly-skilled workforce have helped make it one of the most economically productive and energy efficient metropolitan areas in the United States. With more than 14 million people and nearly \$800 billion in economic output, the region includes a diverse set of living choices that spans the densest urban core in the nation and a network of smaller cities and suburban communities.

With these assets come a set of challenges that are as large and complex as the region itself. In the wake of the global financial crisis, the region needs to reposition itself in an increasingly competitive international economy, making use of its innovative and creative talent in a range of activities beyond the financial services that have been its primary engine for decades. It needs to maintain and upgrade the extraordinary but expensive infrastructure that allows this dense agglomeration to function, particularly its expansive transit network. In addition to being one of the densest regions in the nation, it is also one of the most congested, a condition that is projected to worsen substantially in the coming decades.

To become as equitable as it is efficient, the region needs to address the income disparities and high costs that make it a particularly difficult place for low-income households and small businesses. And like other regions, it is only beginning to grapple with the enormous challenge of building resilience to the effects of climate change, a particular concern for this coastal region.

#### **The Consortium**

- · City of New York
- City of New Haven
- City of Bridgeport
- City of Norwalk
- City of Stamford
- City of Yonkers
- Nassau CountySuffolk County

· City of White Plains

City of New Rochelle

• City of Mount Vernon

- i Salata
- New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC)
- South Western Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (SWRMPO)
- Greater Bridgeport/Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (GBVMPO)
- South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG)
- Long Island Regional Planning Council (LIRPC)
- Regional Plan Association (RPA)

#### **Advisory Board**

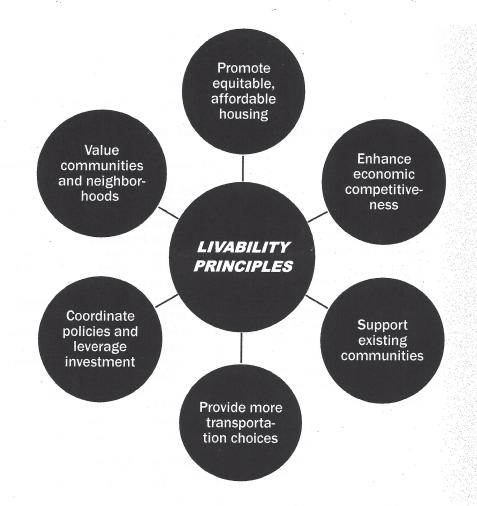
- CT Department of Economic and Community Development
- CT Housing Finance Agency
- CT Office of Policy and Management
- CT Department of Transportation
- Empire State Development Corporation
- New York State Department of State
- New York State Homes and Community Renewal
- North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
- ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation
- One Region Funders' Group
- WE ACT for Environmental Justice
- CT Coalition for Environmental Justice
- Urban Land Institute
- · City of Jersey City
- City of Newark

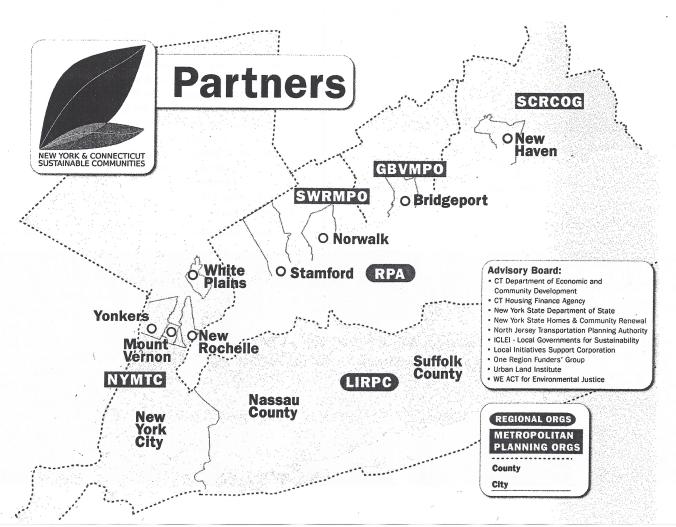
# What is the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program?

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program is a centerpiece of the Interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities, an initiative jointly implemented by HUD, the US Department of Transportation (DOT), and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The Partnership is committed to advancing six overarching Livability Principles as a framework to help American families gain better access to affordable housing, more transportation options and lower transportation costs, while protecting the environment and reducing our energy dependence.

The Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program supports metropolitan and multijurisdictional planning efforts that promote coordinated housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation and infrastructure investments in a manner that empowers jurisdictions to consider the interdependent challenges of these issues specific to their region. The regional plans being created or updated in this and 74 other regions will address these policy issues and illustrate how federal resources will be aligned to mirror local and regional strategies for achieving inclusive, sustainable communities. Grant recipients and other high-scoring regions have also achieved access to federal funding for implementation in the future.





#### **CHAPTER 6**

### MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL REQUIREMENTS

#### SECTION 601 GENERAL

**601.1 Scope.** The provisions of this chapter shall govern the minimum mechanical and electrical facilities and equipment to be provided.

601.2 Responsibility. The owner of the structure shall provide and maintain mechanical and electrical facilities and equipment in compliance with these requirements. A person shall not occupy as owner-occupant or permit another person to occupy any premises which does not comply with the requirements of this chapter.

### SECTION 602 HEATING FACILITIES

**602.1 Facilities required.** Heating facilities shall be provided in structures as required by this section.

602.2 Residential occupancies. Dwellings shall be provided with heating facilities capable of maintaining a room temperature of 68°F (20°C) in all habitable rooms, bathrooms and toilet rooms based on the winter design dry-bulb temperature for the locality indicated in the Energy Conservation Construction Code of New York State. Cooking appliances shall not be used to provide space heating to meet the requirements of this section.

**Exception:** Owner-occupied one-family dwellings subject to the approval of the code enforcement official.

602.3 Heat supply. Every owner and operator of any building who rents, leases or lets one or more dwelling unit, rooming unit, dormitory or guestroom on terms, either expressed or implied, to furnish heat to the occupants thereof shall supply heat during the period from September 15th to May 31st to maintain a temperature of not less than 68°F (20°C) in all habitable rooms, bathrooms and toilet rooms.

**Exception:** When the outdoor temperature is below the winter outdoor design temperature for the locality, maintenance of the minimum room temperature shall not be required, provided that the heating system is operating at its full design capacity. The winter design dry-bulb temperature for the locality shall be as indicated in the *Energy Conservation Construction Code of New York State*.

602.4 Occupiable work spaces. Indoor occupiable work spaces shall be supplied with heat during the period from September 15th to May 31st to maintain a temperature of not less than 65°F (18°C) during the period the spaces are occupied.

#### **Exceptions:**

- Processing, storage and operation areas that require cooling or special temperature conditions.
- 2. Areas in which persons are primarily engaged in vigorous physical activities.

602.5 Occupiable public spaces. Indoor public spaces shall be supplied with heat during the period from September 15th to May 31st to maintain a temperature of not less than 68°F (20°C) in accordance with the *Building Code of New York State* during the period the spaces are occupied.

602.6 Room temperature measurement. The required room temperatures shall be measured 3 feet (914 mm) above the floor near the center of the room and 2 feet (610 mm) inward from the center of each exterior wall.

#### SECTION 603 MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT

603.1 Mechanical appliances. All mechanical appliances, fireplaces, solid fuel-burning appliances, cooking appliances and water heating appliances shall be properly installed and maintained in a safe working condition, and shall be capable of performing the intended function.

**603.2 Removal of combustion products.** All fuel-burning equipment and appliances shall be connected to an approved chimney or vent.

**Exception:** Fuel-burning equipment and appliances which are labeled for unvented operation.

603.3 Clearances. All required clearances to combustible materials shall be maintained.

**603.4 Safety controls.** All safety controls for fuel-burning equipment shall be maintained in effective operation.

**603.5 Combustion air.** A supply of air for complete combustion of the fuel and for ventilation of the space containing the fuel-burning equipment shall be provided for the fuel-burning equipment.

603.6 Energy conservation devices. Devices intended to reduce fuel consumption by attachment to a fuel-burning appliance, to the fuel supply line thereto, or to the vent outlet or vent piping therefrom, shall not be installed unless labeled for such purpose and the installation is specifically approved.

#### SECTION 604 ELECTRICAL FACILITIES

**604.1 Facilities required.** Every occupied building shall be provided with an electrical system in compliance with the requirements of this section and Section 605.

**Exception:** Owner-occupied one-family dwellings dwellings not supplied with electrical power, subject to the approval of the code enforcement official.

604.2 Service. The size and usage of appliances and equipment shall serve as a basis for determining the need for additional facilities in accordance with Chapter 27 of the Building Code of New York State or Part VIII of the Residential Code of New York State, as applicable.

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## MVUT HOLIDAY GATHERING



### COME CELEBRATE WITH US!

DATE:

FRIDAY DECEMBER 13

TIME:

6:00 PM

PLACE:

MVUT OFFICE - 2 GRAMATAN AVENUE - ROOM 312

MVUT WANTS TO CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAY SEASON WITH ALL OF OUR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS.

IF YOU CAN, WE'D ASK THAT YOU BRING A SMALL DISH OF FOOD OR SNACKS TO SHARE WITH OTHERS THAT EVENING.

LIKEWISE IF YOU CANNOT COME, YOU COULD DROP OFF SOMETHING EARLIER IN THE DAY BEFORE. YOU CAN ALSO MAKE A FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO DEFRAY THE COSTS.

CALL AND LET US KNOW IF YOU'RE COMING SO WE CAN ADEQUATELY PREPARE.

CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS WITH US ON DECEMBER 13!
WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU ALL!!

## The real reason why the rent is too high

hat has the lack of affordable housing got to do with campaign finance reform? Lots.

Both major candidates for mayor, Bill de Blasio and Joe Lhota, agree that an inadequate supply of affordable housing is a serious problem, and both have plans to create more. But what has not been discussed nearly enough is one of the major causes of the shortage: the way the real estate industry uses its massive campaign contributions to limit our affordable housing stock.

This year, after receiving tons of money from well-placed donors, the governor and members of the state Legislature quietly gave away millions of your tax dollars to developers of luxury towers. The deal was so bad that it is being looked at by the Moreland Commission to Investigate Public

Affordable housing may be the biggest issue in the city. As a remedy, state government offers tax incentives to encourage developers

to build projects with less expensive units that they might not otherwise build.

But developers of five Manhattan luxury towers wanted the subsidies without includ-

ing affordable housing, and they got it - courtesy of language quietly inserted into a bill that coasted through the Legislature.

Thanks to Daily News reporting and the Met Council on Housing's report, "Tax Breaks for Billionaires," the public is now aware of this multi-million dollar giveaway.

The report found that four of the five developers used high contribution limits and loopholes to give more than \$1.5 million to state elected officials, political parties and real estate PACs between 2008 and 2012, including at least \$440,962 in 2012 alone. And Cuomo, who had to sign the legislation, was the biggest single recipient, pulling in \$150,000 from the four developers in 2012.

The millions of dollars that the city has lost could have been used for real housing needs - like rent subsidies for the more than 50,000 people sleeping in homeless shelters or for the repair of dilapidated apartment buildings.

The 421-a real estate tax break program cost the city \$755 million in lost real property tax reve**BEOUR GUEST** 

**BYJARON BENJAMIN** 

nue in 2010, according to the Pratt Center for Community Development. We won't know how much in tax breaks those five luxury towers will get until they are finished, but just the two penthouses in one tower that have already sold for \$90 million each will share \$2.4 million in tax breaks.

A handful of real-estate developers winning such a huge giveaway at a time where there are more homeless people in New York City than ever before, and too many families paying too much of their income on housing, is a reflection of just how broken the current campaign finance system is.

The fix is not complicated. New York City has had a working public financing program for years that forces candidates to reach out to many voters and limits the influence of big donors.

It's time for the state to implement the same kind of system.

That means placing reasonable limits on the amount one donor can give, and giving a public match for small donations. The combination of those two would force candidates to seek lots of

small donations from actual voters, while still leaving them able to raise enough to run a successful

Blame

campaign

finance

Combine that with an effective watchdog to make sure the rules are followed, and you have a campaign finance system that encourages elected officials to do what's best for all of us, not be beholden to a few big money donors.

How do we get that system? That Moreland Commission is charged with not just investigating corruption and the role of money in politics, but also coming up with recommendations for change by Dec. 1. So we need the commission to issue a strong report, showing why we need systemic change.

Then we need Cuomo to use his power to get those reforms passed now. We have an historic opportunity to restore trust in government. We can't afford to delay campaign finance reform any longer. The time to get it done is

Benjamin is executive director of the Metropolitan Council on Housing.

(See Over)

## **SundayReview**

The New York Times

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2013

THE GREAT DIVIDE MARK R. RANK

## Poverty in America Is Mainstream



Mark R. Rank is a

pro fessor of social

University and a

co-author of the

for the coming book

Amierican Dream:

Understanding

What Shapes our

welfare at

Washington

"Chasing the

Fortunes."

ST. LOUIS
Few topics in American
society have more myths
and stereotypes surrounding them than poverty, misconceptions that

distort both our politics and our domes-

tic policy making.

They include the notion that poverty affects a relatively small number of Americans, that the poor are impoverished for years at a time, that most of those in poverty live in inner cities, that too much welfare assistance is provided and that poverty is ultimately a result of not working hard enough. Although pervasive, each assumption is flat-out wrong.

Contrary to popular belief, the percentage of the population that directly encounters poverty is exceedingly high. My research indicates that nearly 40 percent of Americans between the ages of 25 and 60 will experience at least one year below the official poverty line during that period (\$23,492 for a family of four), and 54 percent will spend a year in poverty or near poverty (below 150 percent of the poverty line).

Even more astounding, if we add in related conditions like welfare use, near-poverty and unemployment, four out of five Americans will encounter one

or more of these events.

In addition, half of all American children will at some point during their childhood reside in a household that uses food stamps for a period of time.

Put simply, poverty is a mainstream event experienced by a majority of Americans. For most of us, the question is not whether we will experience poverty, but when.

But while poverty strikes a majority of the population, the average time most people spend in poverty is relatively short. The standard image of the poor has been that of an entrenched underclass, impoverished for years at a time. While this captures a small and important slice of poverty, it is also a highly misleading picture of its more widespread and dynamic nature.

The typical pattern is for an individual to experience poverty for a year or two, get above the poverty line for an extended period of time, and then perhaps encounter another spell at some later point. Events like losing a job, having work hours cut back, experiencing a family split or developing a serious medical problem all have the potential to throw households into poverty.

Just as poverty is widely dispersed with respect to time, it is also widely dispersed with respect to place. Only approximately 10 percent of those in poverty live in extremely poor urban neighborhoods. Households in poverty can be found throughout a variety of urban and suburban landscapes, as well as in small towns and communities

## Most of us have been poor, at least for awhile.

across rural America. This dispersion of poverty has been increasing over the past 20 years, particularly within suburban areas.

Along with the image of inner-city poverty, there is also a widespread perception that most individuals in poverty are nonwhite. This is another myth: According to the latest Census Bureau numbers, two-thirds of those below the poverty line identified themselves as white — a number that has held rather steady over the past several decades.

What about the generous assistance we provide to the poor? Contrary to political rhetoric, the American social safety net is extremely weak and filled with gaping holes. Furthermore, it has become even weaker over the past 40 years because of various welfare reform

and budget cutting measures.

We currently expend among the fewest resources within the industrialized countries in terms of pulling families out of poverty and protecting them from falling into it. And the United States is one of the few developed nations that does not provide universal health care, affordable child care, or reasonably priced low-income housing. As a result, our poverty rate is approximately twice the European average.

Whether we examine childhood poverty, poverty among working-age adults, poverty within single-parent families or overall rates of poverty, the story is much the same — the United States has exceedingly high levels of impoverishment. The many who find themselves in poverty are often shocked at how little assistance the government actually provides to help them through tough times.

Finally, the common explanation for poverty has emphasized a lack of motivation, the failure to work hard enough and poor decision making in life.

Yet my research and that of others has consistently found that the behaviors and attitudes of those in poverty basically mirror those of mainstream America. Likewise, a vast majority of the poor have worked extensively and will do so again. Poverty is ultimately a result of failings at economic and political levels rather than individual shortcomings.

The solutions to poverty are to be found in what is important for the health of any family — having a job that pays a decent wage, having the support of good health and child care and having access to a first-rate education. Yet these policies will become a reality only when we begin to truly understand that poverty is an issue of us, rather than an issue of them.

(See Over)