

ANN VALDEZ

Community Voices Heard Leader
Resident of Gravesend/ O'Dwyer Houses in Brooklyn

*Public Housing Tour with NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn
July 22nd, 2009*

Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman. My name is Ann Valdez. I am a member and leader of Community Voices Heard as well as a resident of Gravesend/ O'Dwyer Houses in Brooklyn, New York. I am here to talk about my experiences as a resident during this fiscal crisis.

Due to an annual lack of funding, residents are still dealing with the loss of maintenance workers and caretakers, as well as the ineffective Centralized Call Center. Not only are our workers still being laid off, but the workers who remain complain constantly about not having the proper materials needed in order to do their jobs efficiently. We are also dealing with fewer open community centers, as well as the loss of programs within the centers that are still open. Many centers and management offices are being shared by two or more developments which stretches thin an already overworked NYCHA staff in all areas, from management to maintenance.

In Gravesend/ O'Dwyer Houses specifically, the management as well as the maintenance staff has been combined - leaving them to cover approximately 20 buildings in two separate locations. I have not had doors on my closet since I moved in 4 ½ years ago! To my knowledge there are only 3 maintenance workers who are on call to do various repairs. That is not enough and is probably the reason that things are falling apart now.

Our elevators are still out of whack to this day. About 2 weeks ago there was a disabled senior who was stuck outside of her building for over 8 hours! This is a travesty. A year ago, there was a child named Jacob Neumann who died because of an elevator malfunction. At the time there was a big fuss over fixing the elevators and it was stated by the then chairman, Tino Hernandez, that \$100 million would be put into our elevators to improve their efficiency. Where is it? Did Mr. Hernandez forget to tell our new chairman, John Rhea, what that \$100 million was for?

Residents across the city depend on public housing as the only place we can afford to live. We demand the city stop ignoring its responsibility and take care of the public housing it built. By fully funding public housing with \$30 million this year and every year hereafter, the city would be investing in its future. We demand that the city increase its funding in the future to allow for increases in the cost of living as well as the materials that are needed to maintain our buildings.

We also demand that the city re-evaluate the payments that NYCHA makes to the city that no other non-profit is forced to make - such as \$23 million to the Dept. of Aging, \$73 million to the NYPD, and \$2 million to the Sanitation Dept. The city has no problem putting money into building new homes for both of our baseball teams at a cost of over \$2 billion; however, they cannot find the crumbs that would house over 500,000 people, not including those of us who are still living in shelters. That is why the Mayor and City Council should be ashamed and try to practice that age old adage, put your money where your mouth is. Don't talk about how much you care about us; show us by fully funding public housing! Thank you.