Basement Apartment Conversions

Affordable Housing
New York City Needs Now
Introduction

AGENDA
- Background
- Coronavirus & Basements
- Why Basements Matter
- Join the Campaign

SPEAKERS TODAY:
- Chhaya CDC
- Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation
- Queens Legal Services
- Pratt Center for Community Development
Background

The Basement Apartments Safe for Everyone (BASE) Campaign has been working for over 10 years to mobilize New York communities for the creation of a citywide program to streamline basement and cellar conversions into code-compliant, safe living spaces.

2006

2009

Pratt Center and Chhaya CDC publish “New York’s Housing Underground”
Won the East New York Basement Conversion Pilot which established a three-year pilot in Brooklyn Community District 5 to test the feasibility of converting basements and cellars into safe, habitable, legally recognized apartments with goal of converting 40 basements/cellars to apartments.
East New York Basement Pilot Legislation

WHAT WAS LEGISLATED?

2019

HOUSING

BUILDING CODE

ADMINISTRATIVE

TYPES OF HOMES THAT CAN PARTICIPATE:

▪ One-, two- and three-family homes

▪ Basements and cellars eligible for conversion
East New York Basement Pilot Legislation

2019
WHAT WAS LEGISLATED?

HOUSING

BUILDING CODE

ADMINISTRATIVE

RULES FOR HOW UNITS* ARE CONSTRUCTED:

▪ Minimum ceiling height
▪ Automated sprinkler systems
▪ Emergency escape openings
▪ Smoke/CO alarms
▪ Fire separation of stairs, boilers, upstairs apartment
▪ Egress requirements
▪ Windows in habitable rooms

*only applicable for one- and two-family homes
2019
WHAT WAS LEGISLATED?

HOUSING
BUILDING CODE
ADMINISTRATIVE

PILOT STRUCTURE & CONSTRUCTION
FILING PROCESSES:

▪ City financing option w/ rental regulatory requirements
▪ Violations deferment/waiver for permit issuance
▪ Waiver of DOB/DEP* application, permit, and inspection fees

* And other agencies if deemed appropriate
Background

Mayor’s January 2020 “Blueprint to Save Our City” includes plan to bring basements citywide and legalize 10,000 basement apartments and accessory dwelling units over the next decade.

2019

Won the East New York Basement Conversion Pilot

2020

BASE kicks-off campaign in February to ensure the Mayor keeps his promise and citywide program becomes a reality

BASE Steering committee includes:
- Center for NYC Neighborhoods
- Chhaya CDC
- Cypress Hills LDC
- Pratt Center for Community Development
- Queens Legal Services
- Take Root Justice
COVID-19 and Basements

Neighborhoods hit hardest by COVID-19 stand to benefit most from basement apartment legalization

COVID-19 Cases as of May 28, 2020

- 0-1000
- 1001-2000
- 2001-3000
- 3001-4,373

Homes with a basement or cellar*

* This is based on the eligibility parameters used for the East New York Basements Pilot, as set forth by NYC HPC, and extrapolated out to the city as a whole, and includes one-, two-, and three-family homes with basements or cellars. View the full set of parameters and interact with our basements map online at prattcenter.net/basementsportal

Data Sources: NYC Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene, PLUTO 2019 v2
COVID-19 Impact on Tenants and Basements

NYC HPD slashes funds to the East New York Pilot, a critical program in a community that finds itself on the frontline of the pandemic’s health and economic impacts.

Housing protections changed due to COVID crisis – but basement tenants are not protected

- NYC housing courts are accepting new cases for eviction proceedings although the eviction moratorium has been extended through September 4, 2020.
- Department of Buildings continues to conduct home inspections and issue vacate orders for illegal basement apartments despite the risk of CoVid-19.
COVID 19’s Impact on Basement Pilot

- BASE advocacy campaign to save the Pilot throughout spring
- NYC Council fails to restore program funding for FY21
- Pilot’s future uncertain as budget cut cripples program capacity
- Despite this setback, fight for the pilot and citywide expansion continues at city and state
Why basement apartments matter now more than ever

Housing is Health Care
- A safe home to shelter in place.
- Sick or at-risk tenants can ask for help from neighbors without fear of DOB violations
- Existing basement apartments can become safer, healthier homes

Housing is Economic Justice
- Increase the amount of affordable housing
- Increased revenue for homeowners
- Increased economic activity for local businesses
- More equitable access to city housing subsidies for underrepresented communities

Housing is Social Justice
- Basement tenants get same protections as other tenants
- Need for city services (i.e. schools, hospitals) can be more accurately measured
- If applied universally, could bring new housing to neighborhoods that don’t typically see affordable housing
Homes eligible for basement/cellar conversions under the CURRENT pilot model

- Properties with basements or cellars with at least 0.5 FAR available

Total 209,700

Sources: NYC DCP PLUTO 2018 v1, NTA 2016 NYC DCP.
Map prepared by Pratt Center for Community Development, 2020
Homes eligible for basement/cellar conversions under an **EXPANDED** program model

- Properties with basements or cellars
  - Total 424,500

Sources: NYC DCP PLUTO 2018 v1, NTA 2016 NYC DCP.
Map prepared by Pratt Center for Community Development, 2020
Potential New Apartments in NYC

Current Model  209,700

Improved Model  424,500  ↑ 102%
Potential new apartments in YOUR neighborhood
The BASE Campaign Platform

1. Establish funding for a citywide program
2. Update zoning and building codes
3. Simplify the participant experience
4. Make it affordable

The upcoming year:

1. Education campaign for NYC electeds & political candidates
2. State ADU campaign
3. Ongoing support of limited ENY Pilot
4. Growing BASE’s “Base”
Join the fight to bring affordable, safe basement apartments to New York City

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Supporting</th>
<th>Collaborating</th>
<th>Core</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Share and promote BASE events, campaign updates and asks of electeds/city/state</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>Be a community-based organization or collective with a community-based membership or clientele</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>Join at least one committee</td>
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<td>Co-lead at least one committee</td>
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<td>Attend all committee meetings</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>Be involved and committed to participating in decision-making processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assist in decision-making within committee and larger meetings</td>
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<td>Attend monthly check-ins</td>
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<td>Attend weekly check-ins</td>
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<td>Identify basement tenants and homeowners to be part of the campaign</td>
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<td>Send members/staff to press conferences, actions and other events</td>
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<td>Collaborate with coalition partners on press and research opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Send members/staff to meet with elected officials and city/state agencies</td>
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</table>

✓ Required  ✓ Suggested  ✓ When possible
Join the fight

HOUSING IS HEALTH CARE

HOUSING IS ECONOMIC JUSTICE

HOUSING IS SOCIAL JUSTICE
For further information, contact:

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