



Establish a city-wide program

Guarantee sufficient funding to continue and complete the East New York Basements Pilot

In early 2020, the City gutted FY21 funding for the East New York basements pilot program, which the de Blasio administration had guaranteed to the East New York community during the ENY 2016 rezoning. The program promised to convert 40 basements into affordable rental units for low- and moderate-income homeowners in this community of color already facing mounting pressures of speculation and displacement.

The program has secured alternate funds to sustain a much scaled back pilot through FY21. However, it is vital that the City allot the \$250,000 that the pilot program requires to continue operations in FY22 and keep the City's promise to ENY, evaluate the pilot's lessons after completion, and expand the program citywide.

Fund the legalization and conversion of basement and cellar apartments

The risk of foreclosure and evictions is most acute in low-income and working-class communities of color. For homeowners with informal basements units, the lack of any citywide conversion program puts them at risk of exorbitant fines, sudden vacate orders, and the loss of much-needed monthly income. For tenants of these units, this means a constant state of housing precarity and a lack of tenant protections.

The City must include a line item in the FY22 budget to establish a citywide basements legalization and conversion program. This needs to include sufficient funding for: affordable and forgivable loans for homeowners; technical assistance provision; and resources for partnering CBOs to help their communities through the complex legalization process.

Ensure program permanence

Programs are too often initiated with insufficient commitment or follow-through by politicians, only to see them scaled back or shelved in subsequent administrations. This ensures that these programs never develop the administrative infrastructure and public support needed to see them succeed in perpetuity.

Both current and prospective administrations and City Councils should issue a high-level commitment to a bold and permanent basement conversion program. The goal of identifying 200,000 potentially eligible participants citywide should be at the center of any housing policy.