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# Mayor Again Choosing Wrong Road to a Cure

*GREGORY FLOYD*

Last year, when Mayor de Blasio issued his proposal for the city's budget, he expressed concern about a growing deficit that would adversely affect millions of New Yorkers and the city's ability to provide essential services.

In his budget presentation, he cited his greatest concerns. Public housing, home for nearly 500,000 residents, was listed among the top problems the city faced. The Mayor went on to unveil a plan his team devised to help reverse the downward economic spiral of NYCHA, entitled: "Next Generation NYCHA." Calling it "a 10-year roadmap...to stabilize the (Housing) Authority," NextGen included ideas to generate new funding as well as ways to improve management efficiency and save money.

Sounds good? Not really! It seems that NextGen was so focused on the future that it forgot about the current generation of NYCHA residents and workers. One of the "key strategies" that the plan calls for is the selling or leasing of supposedly unused or underused

playgrounds and parking lots, as well as the “better use” of developments in some of the city’s most desirable locations, that could ostensibly generate huge sums of money paid by developers to help fulfill the Mayor’s plan for creating more affordable housing.

This is simply the privatization of public housing for private profit. It would leave current residents with few guarantees and gentrification that raises the question: “For whom is this new housing and community affordable?” In addition, for our 8,000 members who work for NYCHA—one-third of whom are residents, too—privatization offers few employment guarantees. We have vehemently voiced our opposition to NYCHA’s land-grab plan and continue to use every opportunity to make our dissatisfaction known.

Another one of NextGen’s key strategies is even more troubling. As part of the NYCHA efficiency plan, FlexOps was created. Publicized to residents as a way to deliver improved services, FlexOps changes caretakers’ work hours. This is not only a violation of their contract, but also presents safety and security concerns. Fifty-six percent of that work force is women who would be forced to perform many of their duties alone and at off-hours.

With NYCHA’s history of broken locks, windows, elevators, security cameras, radios and lighting, we sought a remedy in legal action against NYCHA, which was resolved with the Authority committing to address the security issues we raised for both workers and

residents. Highlighting the severity of this problem is the recent arrest of more than 100 gang members—the largest gang takedown in New York’s history—by the NYPD and Federal agents in the northern Bronx, including crime activity in NYCHA developments.



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At the press conference announcing the arrests, U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said that NYCHA residents “are not getting the statutorily required level of housing that is decent, safe, sanitary and in good repair,” which helps “gang chaos to take root.” While we welcome this investigation, it is little comfort to the family of Sadie Mitchell, age 92, who was killed by a stray bullet at home in 2009 while watching “Wheel of Fortune,”—a death exemplary of the reasons for the gang arrests.

In the new budget to take effect July 1, 2016, the Mayor once again identified areas of major concern. This time, public hospitals received the “road-map” treatment. Although a plan for privatization and other questionable cost-cutting remedies are not as clearly

outlined as in NextGen NYCHA, once again we must be concerned that a new generation of problems will not be addressed by the prescribed road to a cure.

*Mr. Floyd is president of Teamsters Local 237 and a trustee on the board of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.*

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