

Jacob Riis Houses

Community Planning Process

Resident Newsletter

Summer 2024

Letter from the Riis Tenant Association (TA) Board



Dear Riis Residents,

We are pleased to present the Jacob Riis Community Planning Process Summer Newsletter. Inside, you will find updates on our planning process so far, and information on upcoming events in the fall when we will decide together whether to enter NYCHA's Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) program. **Thank you all for your valuable input thus far, we hope that you will continue to attend meetings, share your support and concerns, and stay involved as we move toward the end of the year.**

PACT is New York City's implementation of the federal Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program, through which NYCHA can access much-needed funds to improve living conditions at its housing developments. As you will see from photos of completed projects in this newsletter, PACT can bring the investments our community needs, and you may have questions about what this change might mean. **Being a part of this process is helpful for everyone who lives here.**

Change is always challenging, even when necessary. Residents have tolerated deteriorating and unacceptable living conditions and poor quality of life for too long. This needs to, and must, change. The PACT program is an opportunity for NYCHA to give residents back the quality of housing that we all deserve, while keeping our homes permanently affordable (see the enclosed handout on Resident Rights and Protections). We can combine the old with the new. We can change successfully.

Thank you,

Jacob Riis Houses TA Board

*Daphne Williams, President
Mary Cannon, 1st Vice President
Sharon Stergis, 2nd Vice President
Nilsa Owens, Treasurer
Diane Gomez, Secretary*



Summary of Riis Resident Feedback



Below are some examples of the ideas and priorities that Riis residents have shared throughout the community planning process so far.

Apartment and Building Improvements

- Ensure the use of high-quality materials throughout the apartment, especially in the kitchen renovations (e.g., appliances, cabinets).
- Create fully accessible units for disabled and senior residents.
- Install new highly functional windows.
- Introduce secure, accessible laundry facilities with features such as sinks and electrical outlets.
- Resolve existing heating issues with a system that allows residents to control local temperatures.

Grounds and Environmental Improvements

- Increase navigability of grounds through improved and accessible pathways, enhanced lighting, and wayfinding.
- Maintain existing campus amenities including card tables and benches.
- Continue and complete soil remediation efforts.
- Maintain and improve tree canopy throughout the campus.
- Construct fully accessible, engaging, state-of-the-art playgrounds for young residents, including disabled and neurodiverse youth.

Operational, Safety, and Security Improvements

- Enforce house rules and penalize violators.
- Improve responsiveness to repair requests.
- Ensure the availability of social services for residents such as Meals on Wheels, support for victims of domestic abuse, and adult care and education.
- Upgrade to a key fob system to secure lobby doors and common areas.
- Hire on-site security personnel to increase levels of safety at Riis Houses.

To view the full **Summary of Riis Resident Feedback**, please visit www.JacobRiisCommPlan.com and check out the Documents and Resources section or scan the QR code.



PACT Site Visit (Williamsburg Houses)
March 2, 2024

“Riis needs a renovation of everything, i.e. grounds, building, security, & lighting.”
- Riis Resident

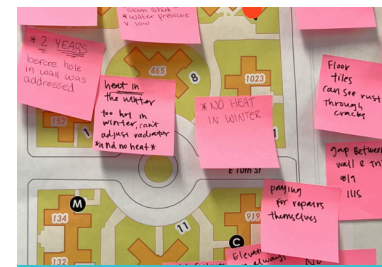


PACT Site Visit (Independence Towers)
February 28, 2024

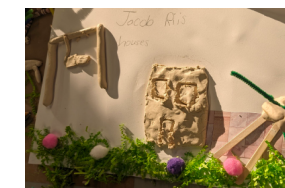


Resident Meeting 2
February 1, 2024

“Plumbing is terrible. New tiles needed. New windows needed. New cabinets needed.”
- Riis Resident



Resident Meeting 5
May 22, 2024



“Would be nice to have sprinklers and programming in amphitheatre.”
- Riis Resident



Resident Meeting 6
June 6, 2024



Monthly Riis Tenant Association Meeting
March 12, 2024



Resident Meeting 1
January 25, 2024

Did you miss the opportunity to attend Resident Meetings?

No problem! In case you may have missed these meetings, below please find a brief recap and information on how to access the presentations. There will be additional meetings taking place this year where you will have more opportunities to stay involved and share your feedback. Please stay tuned.

Recap of Resident Meetings 1 to 4

At these meetings, our Resident Advisor, BFJ Planning, shared a presentation introducing Riis residents to this community planning process. All meetings covered the same content. Key topics included:

- **Overview of this community planning process**
- **Process schedule** (see page 9)
- **Explanation about the Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) program** (see attached handout for this information)
- **Summary of PACT Resident Rights and Protections** (see attached handout for this information)



“ I love old Riis, this present Riis is neglected and ugly.”
- Riis Resident



To view previous **meeting presentations**, please visit www.JacobRiisCommPlan.com and check out the Meetings and Workshop Information section or scan the QR code.



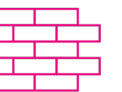
AN UPDATE FROM THE ARCHITECT: BUILDING CONDITIONS AT RIIS HOUSES

Since the winter, Nelligan White, a third-party architectural consultant, has been examining building conditions at Riis Houses. This research is meant to help inform Riis residents about the needs, constraints, and opportunities related to the conditions at Riis, and to help residents think about the possibilities of PACT renovations. Nelligan White's findings will be discussed in-depth at this Fall's public workshops:



The buildings at Riis Houses are structurally sound despite age-related deterioration to the superstructures. **Necessary structural repairs can be easily completed using modern and effective strategies. In other words, the buildings at Riis are structurally salvageable.**

We heard about persistent leaks through discussions with residents and comments we received, before seeing these conditions during site visits. These leaks are caused by a combination of issues related to the roofs, windows, and façades of each building. **NYCHA has previously addressed leakage and façade issues with “band-aid” repairs, but a full façade replacement or cladding along with window replacement is necessary.**



There are no units at Riis which meet HUD standards for accessibility. Due to the age and construction of the buildings (i.e. small elevator shafts) **only four (4) units at Riis can be converted for residents with mobility accessibility needs** via a renovation-only approach to PACT.

Due to their age, electrical and water systems will need to be replaced.

Similarly, apartment finishes, appliances, and fixtures, particularly in the kitchens and bathrooms are outdated or damaged and are recommended to be replaced.



The steam heating system at Riis Houses has never been replaced and is showing age-related deterioration. At the same time, there is no cooling system at Riis besides individual air conditioning units. **The heating system will likely require replacement, an opportunity to implement a modern heating and cooling system.**

Based on sampling performed by NYCHA, Nelligan White estimates that approximately **25% of apartments at Riis contain lead-based paint exceeding current limits**, which will require abatement by removal as a part of any repairs.



The Department of Environmental Protection and Con Edison have announced plans to remediate the site at Riis, removing contaminated soil and underground coal tar. This work will begin upon completion of Hurricane Sandy Recovery and Resilience work.

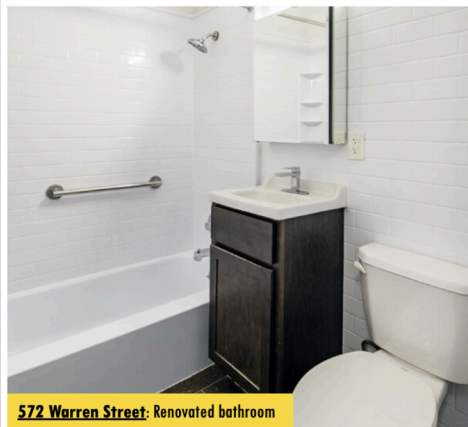
NYCHA Developments Renovated through the PACT Program

Apartments

Independence
Fully upgraded kitchen



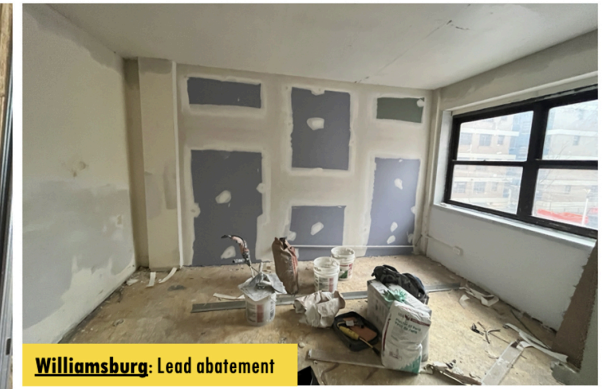
Williamsburg: Renovated living room



572 Warren Street: Renovated bathroom

Health and Safety

Williamsburg
New plumbing and electrical wiring



Williamsburg: Lead abatement



Harlem River: Lead abatement

Sites and Grounds

Baychester
New playground with water fountain



Williamsburg: New basketball court



Williamsburg: Community gardens

Buildings and Common Areas

Independence
Upgraded building entrance



Independence: New mailbox



Weeksville: Upgraded vestibule



Twin Parks West: Renovated laundry room

Previous Resident Engagement Events

It has been wonderful to see so many Riis residents attend the resident engagement events throughout the year as part of the Jacob Riis Houses community planning process. To the right, you can see a list of events that have taken place thus far. Thank you again to all Riis residents who have attended events, asked important questions, and shared your stories.



Resident Meeting 6
June 6, 2024



PACT Site Visit (Williamsburg Houses)
March 2, 2024



Seniors Workshop
March 22, 2024

January to August 2024

Resident Events

- Resident Meeting 1
January 25, 2024
- Resident Meeting 2
February 1, 2024
- Resident Meeting 3
February 7, 2024
- Resident Meeting 4
February 15, 2024
- PACT Site Visit (Independence Towers) - February 28, 2024
- PACT Site Visit (Williamsburg Houses) - March 2, 2024
- Monthly Riis Tenant Association Meeting - March 12, 2024
- Youth Workshop
March 14, 2024
- On-Site Riis Office Hours
March 21, 2024
- Seniors Workshop
March 22, 2024
- On-Site Riis Office Hours
April 18, 2024
- Resident Meeting 5
May 22, 2024
- Resident Meeting 6
June 6, 2024
- On-Site Riis Office Hours
June 13, 2024
- Legal Aid Society - PACT Info Session - July 16, 2024
- PACT Site Visit (Baychester Houses)
July 23, 2024
- PACT Site Visit (Baychester Houses)
August 2, 2024

Community Planning Process Schedule

1 Sharing Information (Door-drop materials, posters in common areas)
Mid-December (2023)

WINTER / SPRING

2 Listen & Learn:
January - March (2024)

Goals:

- Launch planning process
- Clarify purpose & goals of the process
- Affirm resident rights and protections
- Surface key resident concerns and priorities
- Begin conducting building conditions assessments

SUMMER / FALL

3 Design Options:
April - October (2024)

Goals:

- Reflect back & confirm resident concerns
- Share preliminary findings from building conditions assessments
- Define resident goals & objectives
- Develop design and program options

FALL / WINTER

4 Consensus Building:
October (2024) - January (2025)

Goals:

- Create a shortlist of design & program options
- Affirm key principles & desired outcomes
- Build consensus around a desired direction
- Publish a Jacob Riis Houses Community Plan

Engagement Activities:

- Town Hall style meetings
- Workshop style meetings
- Open House style meetings
- Small group meetings
- Resident Subcommittees
- On-Site Riis Office Hours
- Site visits
- Interactive website

Community Planning Process Schedule



This process began in January 2024 and is expected to conclude in January 2025. As seen on **page 9**, we are now in the **Design Options** phase. This phase is focused on learning about the building and ground conditions at Riis Houses from Nelligan White Architects and Riis residents to better understand key issues that need addressing. At the upcoming Resident Meetings in the fall, we will work together to craft a vision for the future of Riis Houses and shape potential future design options for Riis Houses under the PACT program. Hope to see you at upcoming events.

Upcoming Events



September 2024

Jacob Riis Houses Family Day

DATE: Saturday, September 14, 2024

TIME: 11 am - 6 pm

LOCATION: Jacob Riis Houses Amphitheatre

DETAILS: Please swing by the Jacob Riis Houses community planning process table to chat and ask any questions you may have.

PACT Resident Experience Panel

DATE: Thursday, September 19, 2024

TIME: 6:30 pm - 8 pm

LOCATION: P.S. 34 Franklin D. Roosevelt
730 E 12th Street, New York, NY 10009

DETAILS: Come join us to learn more about the PACT program from residents living at completed PACT developments in NYC. PACT residents will share their experiences and answer questions asked by Riis residents. Please bring some questions you would like to see discussed.

Save the dates!
Please bring your family and neighbors.

Key Updates



Riis Resident Subcommittee

As part of this community planning process, all residents were invited to apply to join a Resident Subcommittee. The Resident Subcommittee will assist the TA Board in exploring, discussing and documenting important needs and considerations if the Riis community decides to move forward with the PACT program. Thank you to all who applied to be considered, and especially to those who were selected to be on the Subcommittee for your willingness to serve, for sharing your time, and for your

commitment to improving our community. The Resident Subcommittee began meeting this summer to carefully think about specific topics and capture their thoughts to best reflect the Riis community as representatives of our fellow residents. Key areas of interest include resident rights and protections, design and construction, and future social service needs for Riis residents. A summary highlighting the collective ideas of the Resident Subcommittee will be shared at the Resident Meetings this fall.

“ I think there should be more services to support the community.”
- Riis Resident

“ I appreciate the proximity to the East River. The availability of recreational resources in the neighborhood.”
- Riis Resident

“ Damaged ceiling due to leaking. In inclement weather, flooding through the walls, facing perpendicularly towards the East River.”
- Riis Resident

Ways to Stay Involved



1 Stay Updated on the Website

Check out the community planning process website at www.JacobRiisCommPlan.com or by scanning the QR code:

- Learn more about the PACT program
- Stay updated on future meeting dates
- Review past meeting presentations



2 Look Out for Future Resident Event Flyers

3 Sign Up for Meeting Reminders

Subscribe for meeting reminders by texting **RIIS** to **(646) 347-9880**

4 Learn more about the PACT program

Want to learn more about the PACT program?

Please visit the website at <http://on.nyc.gov/nycha-pact>

Have questions about the PACT program?

Please contact NYCHA representatives by phone or email.

PACT Hotline: 212-306-4036 | Email: PACT@nycha.nyc.gov



BFJ Planning

NELLIGAN WHITE ARCHITECTS



Joint Statement from our Elected Officials



We would like to extend a special thank you and gratitude to our elected officials for their support all of these years and throughout this Jacob Riis Houses community planning process. Since the beginning of this process in January 2024, our elected officials and their teams have been involved,

supported us, participated in Resident Meetings, and attended check-in meetings with the Riis TA Board, our Resident Advisor (BFJ Planning), and our Architectural Consultant (Nelligan White Architects). On the following page, please find a joint statement from our honorable elected officials.





August 16, 2024

Dear Residents,

We would like to take a moment to acknowledge and support the critical process you have all undertaken in determining whether you want to remain under Section 9 or transition into RAD/PACT. We applaud the ongoing efforts of the Tenant Association Board in its endeavor to continuously provide comprehensive information, as well as create opportunities for residents to ask questions, share concerns and offer feedback to the community planning process at large. The work of the TA Board represents their dedication to finding a solution to address issues that Riis residents have been facing for far too long. We encourage everyone to get involved and participate constructively and actively in this process, ultimately leading to a vote by the residents on the future of your development.

We would like to extend our wholehearted support of the Tenant Association Board's commitment in initiating this conversation and allowing the Riis community to ultimately decide your future. As always you can reach out to any of our offices for ongoing support.

Sincerely,

Dan Goldman
Representative

Brian Kavanagh
Senator

Harvey Epstein
Assemblymember

Carlina Rivera
Council Member