

## Affordable Housing Construction and Preservation at Record Pace: de Blasio

By [Amy Zimmer](#) | July 14, 2017 11:06am | Updated on July 17, 2017 7:59am



Bronx Commons is one of the projects the city financed last fiscal year. It should be completed in 2019. **View Full Caption**  
WXY and Local Projects

MANHATTAN — The city helped finance a record 24,293 affordable housing units — a mix of new construction and preserved units — in fiscal year 2017, representing the [highest overall number since 1989](#), Mayor Bill de Blasio said Thursday.

With these units, the administration is ahead of schedule to reach its \$41 billion housing plan's goal to create 80,000 new units of affordable housing and preserve an additional 120,000 units by 2024, the mayor touted. Many housing advocates, however, were critical of the mayor taking a "victory lap," saying that too many New Yorkers in need are still being left out of the equation.

“By making smart investments we are stretching public funds and creating more and better homes for New Yorkers, from formerly homeless families to seniors, firefighters, police officers and teachers. We have more work to do, but this city is for New Yorkers – and we will keep it that way,” de Blasio said, unveiling the numbers while visiting Central Harlem’s Strivers Plaza, a new eight-story 54-unit development reaching families earning as little as \$27,000 a year.

Despite criticism that much of the housing isn't affordable to many New Yorkers — where the median household income is about \$50,000 a year — the mayor noted that more than 40 percent of these units target families earning less than \$43,000 a year, paying no more than \$950 a month in rent.

This also included a record number of units for formerly homeless New Yorkers: 2,571, city officials noted.

“We are reaching more of the city's lowest-income families, making good on our commitment to reach far deeper levels of affordability,” Housing Preservation and Development Commissioner Maria Torres-Springer said.

Some notable projects financed this past year include Fort Greene's Ingersoll Senior Residences, a 17-story building for low-income seniors built on public housing land with a senior center run by Services and Advocacy for LGBT Elders (SAGE); Melrose's Bronx Commons, where a 300-seat music- and arts-centered community hub, the Bronx Music Hall is part of the 305-unit development; and One Flushing, where the city-owned parking lot will be replaced with 208 affordable units, for those earning as little as \$25,770 for a family of three, in a building with a rooftop farm.

Since de Blasio announced his housing plan in 2014, the city has financed more than 77,650 affordable units, with direct city investment totaling \$2.8 billion and bond financing reaching \$5.5 billion.

Earlier this year, the mayor committed an additional \$1.9 billion in city subsidy to ensure that 50,000 affordable homes — one quarter of the plan's total — will be for the lowest income New Yorkers, with particular goals to help seniors and veterans.

The number of units built and preserved is no small feat. It's not only the largest amount of affordable housing produced in any three years of city history, it's also enough housing for the entire population of Salt Lake City, officials pointed out.

De Blasio, in a column he penned for the *Daily News*, said the city was leveraging \$5 from other sources for every city dollar spent on the housing plan, and that he hopes New York City can serve as a national model amid the federal attack on affordable housing from the Trump administration and Republicans in congress.

The need for affordable housing is great, he knows, citing that half of renters were spending more on housing than they could afford. Economists generally consider someone “rent burdened” if they spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent.

De Blasio blamed the problem on the city’s success in attracting people.

“As more parents stay here to raise their kids, more seniors retire in their neighborhoods instead of the Sun Belt, and more young people and immigrants come here because this is where the good jobs can be found,” he wrote, “the pressure on our city’s housing stock has led to a full-blown affordability crisis.”

Many advocates, however, still felt the housing plan did not go far enough in helping those in need.

“It’s irresponsible and wrong for Mayor de Blasio to take a victory lap on affordable housing. Here’s the reality we see every day in our neighborhoods: this administration has failed to deliver real affordable housing for countless low-income and homeless New Yorkers,” said Daisy Gonzalez, a spokesperson for Real Affordability for All and an organizer at Community Voices Heard, a nonprofit fighting for more deeply affordable housing.

She also slammed de Blasio’s decision to make his announcement in Harlem, “a neighborhood that has been harmed by his misguided housing and rezoning plan, and his massive giveaways of public land to developers.”

In East Harlem, where Pilar DeJesus has lived for 36 years, a [rezoning proposal](#) underway, along with a plan to build a massive development, called Sendero Verde, on [East 111th Street](#), with [655](#)

[below market-rate units](#), has led to speculation and resulted in long-time residents being forced out of the neighborhood, the advocate believes.

“They’re not factoring in a lot of the indirect displacement. They are accelerating it,” DeJesus said. “Instead of doing all of this building, we should be preserving what we have and going after landlords like [Steve] Croman,” [who pleaded guilty](#) to fraud charges, including lying to banks about his buildings’ rental income.

DeJesus, who works as a paralegal in the Tenant Rights unit with the Urban Justice Center, also criticized the city for focusing more help on public housing in East Harlem — which has the highest concentration in the nation.

"The mayor is just pleasing his [development friends](#): his campaign funders," she charged.

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