



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

1 Centre Street, 19th floor, New York, NY 10007
(212) 669-8300 p (212) 669-4306 f
431 West 125th Street, New York, NY 10027
(212) 531-1609 p (212) 531-4615 f
www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov

Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

August 9, 2021

Gregory Russ
Chair
New York City Housing Authority
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair Russ:

I write regarding complaints reported by Wise Towers residents who are concerned that PACT Renaissance Collaborative (PRC) and its transition and construction plan are not meeting their needs.

On May 20, 2021, PRC held a meeting outside at the Wise Playground where many residents showed up to share their displeasure with PRC's workplan. The topic was how residents who need to move temporarily so that construction can take place in their apartment would do so. Apparently, such a phase of the construction would involve packing with the assistance of a moving company. All moving and scheduling concerns had to be communicated to either of two assigned PRC staff and, unfortunately, both do not speak Spanish.

Wise has a large senior population and PRC's workplan lacked coordination, organization and created a traumatic experience for residents. Many reported that their health was impacted due to added stress/anxiety when they called PRC continuously to complain about the movers, construction problems, maintenance of common areas, rude staff, no returned calls, not enough staff, unsupervised construction workers, no follow up, last minute workplan changes, and miscommunication (no Spanish speaking staff). Residents are exhausted with constantly calling PRC with the same complaints.

My staff coordinated with Ernesto Carrera, TA President, to be at Wise Towers on Wednesdays from May 26, 2021 through June 30, 2021, 12pm-4pm, to hear resident concerns and help resolve problems onsite. This action was welcomed by the residents and to PRC's credit, they welcomed the additional support and input to help improve community communication and build trust. Residents reported that work was done in a professional manner once they were able to communicate their needs to PRC.

I understand that work in place is a challenge, and many of these issues that continue to stress and frustrate residents are slowly being addressed (see enclosed list of Outstanding Construction Complaints at Wise Towers). I also understand that, if done right, with clear expectations among all parties and constant communication and updates, the transition would be less traumatic and welcomed. At Wise Towers, Mr. Ernesto Carrera wants to see all of his fellow residents happy. With facilitation from my staff, communication between residents and PRC has improved. My staff will continue to monitor the progress at Wise Towers and work with PRC to ensure all issues are resolved.

I believe that the mistakes that are impacting the first bundle of RAD conversion properties can demonstrate to all parties how to better proceed with future PACT projects. In addition, CLOTH's resident survey was completed and provides information to help future projects keep resident needs in mind (survey attached).

The underlying issue is a lack of trust between NYCHA residents and PRC. When the Manhattan mega bundle was announced as a PACT project in 2019, residents' roles were limited to receiving information after decisions had already been made and reacting to issues when they arose. Residents did not choose RAD or PRC, and their non-involvement during the process meant that a relationship of trust could not be built prior to the start of PRC's tight construction timeline.

Going forward, NYCHA must ensure 1) residents want PACT/RAD 2) residents are involved in setting expectations for the level of construction that's needed, and 3) residents are engaged with vetting and approving the development team. NYCHA must convene all leaders, stakeholders, and partners involved so residents can opt for PACT/RAD (or decide on a different path) and help craft the RFP, thus ensuring that each project builds from a foundation of open communication and trust.

The newly announced PACT developments in Manhattan North are Jackie Robinson Consolidation, Jefferson Consolidation, Taft Rehabs-Kraus, Taft Consolidation, Manhattanville, UPACA (Site 5), UPACA (Site 6), Morris Park Senior Citizens Home, Corsi Houses, Rehab Program, and 131 Saint Nicholas Avenue. I am requesting a meeting to discuss your outreach plans to proceed as we did with the Fulton and Elliott-Chelsea Houses. If you have any questions, contact Rosalba Rodriguez, Deputy Director of Northern Manhattan Office at 917-880-3089.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gale A. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

Enclosure

cc:/rr: Amy Stokes, Pierre Downing, Monadnock Development, 155 - 3rd Street,
Brooklyn, NY 11231

Outstanding Construction Complaints at Wise Towers

Compiled by Office of the Manhattan Borough President June-July 2021

Resident complaints reported to PRC that are being worked on:

- Hospitality suites were not ready for use when construction began.
- Materials are not showing up, punchline is not done, closet metrics are not correct, appliances are not showing up on time and residents are left without appliances for days/week.
- Construction was taking place after 5pm and on weekends, and PRC acknowledged that they did not have permits for afterhours work nor weekends.
- Construction workers are supposed to use the left elevator cab only. Residents continue to report that workers are still using the right elevator cab and residents must wait a long time. Construction workers are not following their own rules. Early morning residents must wait because both cabs are being utilized by construction workers.
- Water is not restored after work is completed. Lack of follow up when construction is done at the end of the day.
- Some construction workers are rude, some are seen not wearing masks, some are loud, wearing earpieces, and many do not speak English. Residents cannot communicate and cannot explain that they are doing something wrong.
- A workstation was created for construction workers in the plaza. Residents were able to see from their windows that the workstation area was never being cleaned nor power washed. Brand-new appliances/materials/cabinets/tiles were propped onto dirty grounds and then taken to residents' apartment.
- Workers were using other spaces that were not designated as "workstations" and cutting tiles on dirty grounds and then placing them into the apartments.
- Residents are still waiting for "No parking" signs to be changed to "No parking, Mon-Fri, 8am to 5pm" so residents can park after 5pm and on weekends. Without proper notices, those who park will be ticketed.
- Window replacements began and 117 W 90 Street # 17E reported that during the work, plastic was not placed to mitigate the dust and breathing was difficult, air quality was horrific and clean up did not occur. Dust and debris were left everywhere.
- Residents with new bathrooms have reported that the vanity standard is too big for bathrooms, but their claims are ignored.
- Some residents want to opt out of construction work and are willing to sign a waiver. PRC has not provided any written details regarding HUD holding them accountable for renovations.
- Handicapped unit at 117 West 90 Street # 17E, prefers to keep the current sliding closet doors because the accordion doors are not a good fit. Are other residents refusing new closet doors? If so, why?
- Recently installed vanity mirror was not secured properly to the wall with anchors at 133 West 90 Street # 17A. What is protocol for incidents/injury claims, property damage claims?
- Windows are expected to be installed and a few residents have reported that A/C was not reinstalled. Some reported that A/C was installed incorrectly and required reinstallation.
- No communication with resident when there is a change in schedule; for example, 117 West 90 Street # 10A/9E, no one showed up to remove A/C's, and help move furniture.
- Window replacement date for 117 W 90 Street was changed. Residents did not know and according to PRC liaison, doors were knocked on, but residents were not home. If

resident is not home, is it not PRC liaison's job to ensure that new information is delivered due to last minute changes? Blaming the residents is not an option. What is the protocol for PRC staff to communicate with residents? Do they have resident phone numbers? Could they leave a note on the door for a call back?

- Cleanliness of buildings is a challenge.
- Cleaning of common areas after construction is not happening.
- Entrances of buildings are filthy and have not been power washed nor cleaned.
- Slop sink rooms and vacant units have been left unsecured.
- Damaged new material is installed despite resident reporting damaged items.
- The entire "E" line at 133 West 90 Street is handicapped accessible units. Tenants do not know what is happening, no call, follow up but are asked to have their items packed in boxes.
- Many residents have expressed concerns that when they return to their jobs, and children return to school in September. PRC's plans usually change without proper notification and coordination; how will accessing apartment for repairs occur?
- Residents are not able to make complaints about construction workers due to the lack of visibility of name tags/IDs.
- Wise plaza was closed off with less than a 24-hour notice and residents have nowhere to gather during the summer hours.
- Seating area near the laundromat was closed off to residents with a metal bar which does not allow residents to use the laundromat after 5pm nor on weekends when construction work is not in progress. Seating area should just be closed off with a net when in use by construction workers.
- PRC has plans to renovate entire Wise Plaza and not all residents have received a plan. Dates to meet have not been scheduled nor have dates of projected work in the plaza been shared.
- Residents report that they are calling the PRC emergency number, 914-380-8220, multiple times and are being hung up or no one picks up the call. Complaint numbers are not provided via the secure café website where residents can retrieve a reference number for their complaint.
- Bedbugs have been identified and create a slowdown in PRC's workplan.
- Multiple units utilizing one apartment to store their personal belongings; how are these items inspected for bedbugs?