



The Impacts of Living in NYCHA

Needs for resident health in the Rockaways and beyond



This factsheet summarizes a 2020 Regional Plan Association report produced in partnership with Community Voices Heard. [Read the full report at rpa.org](http://rpa.org)



NYCHA residents need the same things as residents of all other housing: homes and buildings in good repair, and safe and healthy living conditions.

In 2018, Community Voices Heard (CVH) conducted one of the most comprehensive efforts to document how NYCHA's living conditions impact the physical and mental well-being of residents.

CVH members – all of whom were living in public housing – engaged in an extensive door-to-door survey, reaching more than 700 people across 35 buildings in five developments in the Rockaways. These insights directly informed CVH's advocacy efforts as well as RPA's recommendations for changes in property management, services, and engagement.

Conditions in public housing consistently lead to impacts which spiral far beyond just apartment conditions. Health impacts from lead and mold exposure can stay with people for years, if not lifetimes. Jobs can be lost because of the need to continually be home during working hours for repairs.

Pressing "pause" on fixing NYCHA is not only a bad policy – it is a deadly one. RPA's report with CVH demonstrates that the neglect of NYCHA has led to living conditions that exacerbate the effects of COVID-19. These health impacts are fully avoidable with proper maintenance and decent living conditions.

It is unconscionable that we are not prioritizing these improvements, which could greatly address the underlying health of NYCHA residents. A COVID-19 recovery program in NYC which does not prioritize NYCHA is unacceptable.

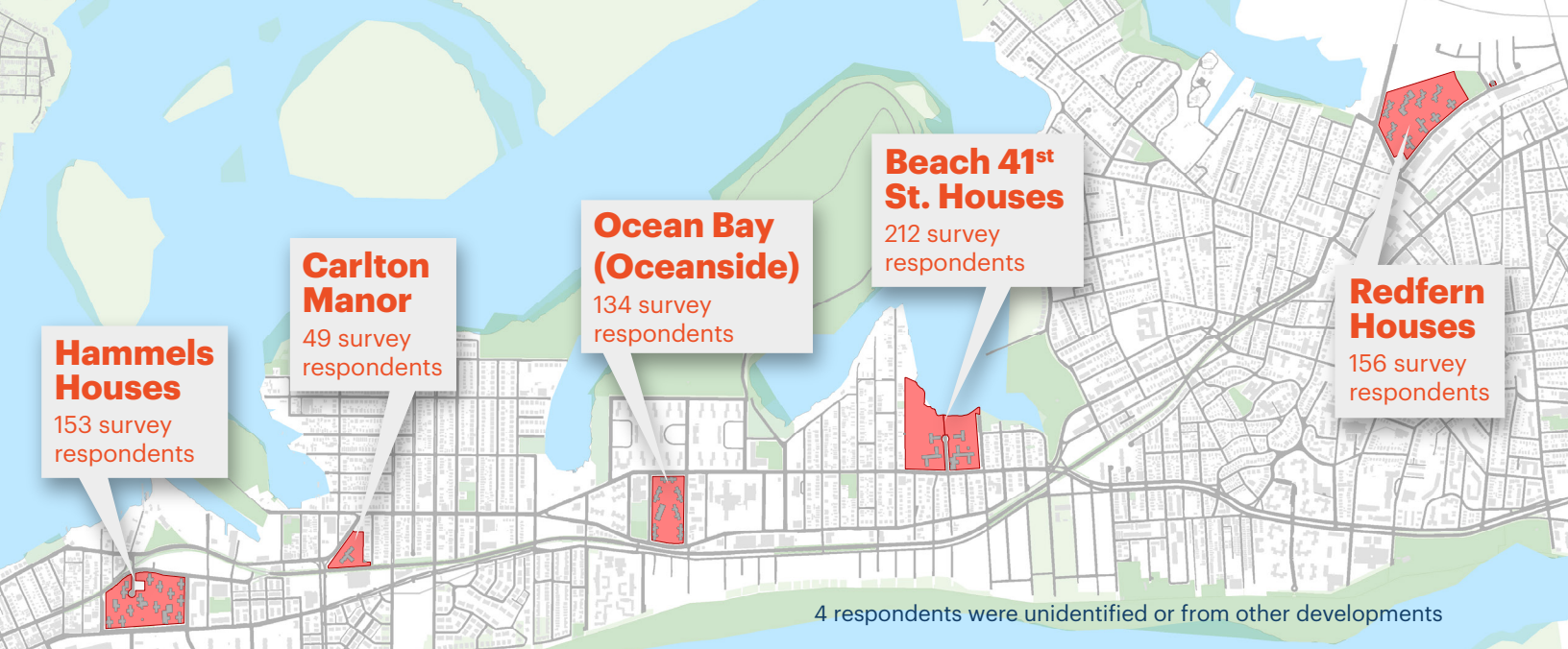
KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ **81 percent of residents** need immediate repairs to their apartments.
- ▶ **One-quarter of residents** say that living conditions directly affect their physical health, ranging from asthma to central nervous system problems.
- ▶ **One-third of residents** say that living conditions directly affect their mental health, adding greatly to stress and depression.

"The living conditions in NYCHA buildings are simply inhumane. The toxic environment is destroying the health of our communities, which are largely Black and Brown residents."

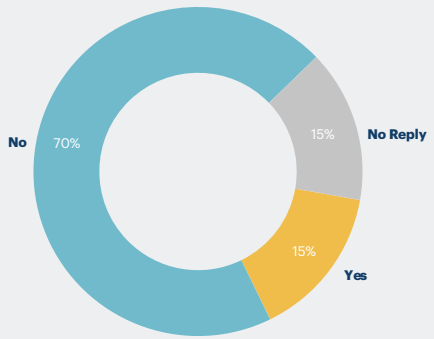
— **Vernell Robinson**

Community Voices Heard Rockaway Hub project coordinator

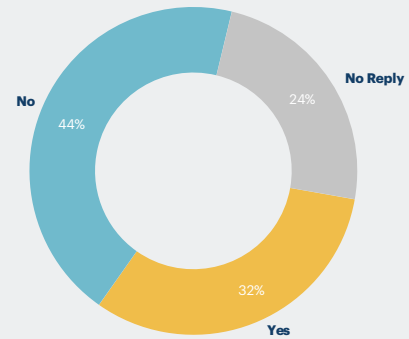


CVH members engaged in an extensive door-to-door survey, reaching more than 700 residents in the Rockaways. The findings are stark:

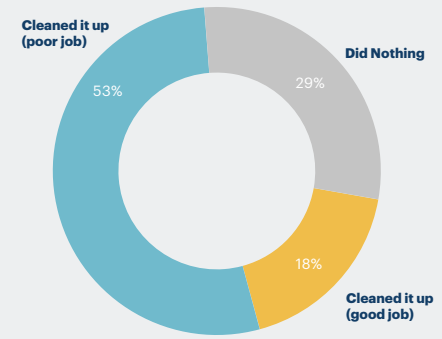
Are you aware of lead in your apartment?



In the last year, have you had visible mold in your apartment?



What has NYCHA done to help address the mold problem?



For additional survey findings and analysis, view the full report *The Impacts of Living in NYCHA* on rpa.org.

IMMEDIATE REFORMS ARE NEEDED

RPA, CVH and several other organizations have suggested paths toward improving conditions at NYCHA, including calling for each level of government to work together to fully fund NYCHA repairs. While a long-term plan for NYCHA is desperately needed, we cannot lose sight of the everyday reality for residents. More immediate reforms should be undertaken without delay.

- ▶ NYCHA should extend hours for maintenance calls and provide better language access for non-English speakers.
- ▶ Lists of planned and needed repairs should be more transparent, and regular meetings to address them should be organized for tenants.

- ▶ NYCHA needs to invest in a management training and evaluation system that prioritizes respect for residents' time and schedules.
- ▶ NYCHA's centralized call system is clearly not working from a resident perspective. More autonomy and responsiveness at the local level is greatly needed.
- ▶ Direct access to specialized technical help, such as construction managers and engineers with development experience, would help residents gain a sense of the actual capital needs and potential costs of repairs in their development.