Testimony of New York University’s Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy before The New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings

March 22, 2019

Chairman Cornegy and fellow Council Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Mark A. Willis, Interim Executive Director and Senior Policy Fellow at the NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about the Furman Center’s data resources on affordable housing and neighborhood conditions in New York City.

The NYU Furman Center’s mission is to advance research and debate on housing, neighborhoods, and urban policy. We provide essential data and research that helps policymakers and the public to understand and analyze pressing policy issues including changes in the city’s housing stock, concentration of poverty, economic inequality, and gentrification.

Since 2011, the City Council has supported the data work that allows us to share valuable information and analysis with the public. With Council funding we have developed and maintained CoreData.nyc, an online data and mapping tool that presents comprehensive information about housing and neighborhoods in New York City. The platform includes the following:

- **CoreData.nyc**, an online, interactive data and mapping tool that standardizes over 20 datasets from a variety of city, state, and federal sources, gives users easy access to over 100 metrics about New York City’s housing and neighborhoods;
- **The Subsidized Housing Database on CoreData.nyc**, a unique property-level database that links housing subsidy data from the city, state, and federal governments so that users can assess the location, financing arrangements, and physical condition of subsidized housing, and evaluate threats to the affordability of that housing;
- **Neighborhood Data Profiles**, specialized reports with data and analysis on changing housing and economic conditions for each of New York City’s 59 neighborhoods;
- **The Directory of Affordable Housing Programs**, a unique guide to over 250 current and historical city, state, and federal housing subsidy programs in New York City.

You may be familiar with the Furman Center’s annual publication on the *State of New York City’s Housing & Neighborhoods*, a rich compendium of data and analysis about New York City’s housing, land use, and demographics. CoreData.nyc provides the backbone for this widely-used report, and includes even more data and analysis.

In order to maintain, upgrade, and further disseminate these tools, we’ve submitted a discretionary budget request for FY20. The request seeks to renew City Council funding from past fiscal years, which will allow us to expand the resources’ content and features. The upgrades and improvements that we propose for FY20 are based on feedback that we received from community organizations, organizers, advocates, city agency staff, and other data providers over the past year.

Based on their feedback, and with your support, we will update and improve our tools so that they are more robust, timely, as well as easier for diverse organizations and individuals to use in their work.

1. We will add new content and features to the Subsidized Housing Database, so users can more easily identify a subsidized property’s risk of expiration and analyze more properties at a time.
2. We will expand training and outreach to community organizations about how to use housing and neighborhood data in their work.

3. We will update and improve the features on CoreData.nyc, to make the data even more accessible for customized analysis and create capacity for users to compare more indicators across more geographies over time.

These upgrades were prioritized by many of the users we spoke with over the last year. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our plans in further detail with members of the Committee.

As New York City continues to grapple with the challenges of housing demand, affordability, the preservation of affordable housing, as well as social and economic inequality, we believe that the Furman Center’s data tools make a significant contribution to the understanding of these complex issues, and can help inform evidence-based community work, policy-making, and service provision. All of our data is available to the public and we are dedicated to making these resources as valuable and accessible as possible.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today, and for your continued support of the Furman Center. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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