

# NCSHA 2016 Annual Awards Entry Form

(Complete one form for each entry)

**Deadline: Wednesday, June 15, 2016**

Visit [ncsha.org/awards](http://ncsha.org/awards) to view the Annual Awards Call for Entries.

**Instructions:** Type entry information into the form and save it as a PDF. Do not write on or scan the form. If you have any questions contact [awards@ncsha.org](mailto:awards@ncsha.org) or 202-624-7710.

Fill out the entry name *exactly* as you want it listed in the program.

**Entry Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**HFA:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Submission Contact:** (Must be HFA Staff Member) \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a 15-word (maximum) description of your nomination to appear on the NCSHA website.

\_\_\_\_\_

Use this header on the upper right corner of each page:

**HFA:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Entry Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Select the appropriate subcategory of your entry and indicate if you are providing visual aids.**

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
Annual Report	Empowering New Buyers	Federal Advocacy	Financial
Creative Media	Encouraging New Production	State Advocacy	Human Resources
Promotional Materials and Newsletters	Home Improvement and Rehabilitation		Operations
			Technology
Rental Housing	Special Needs Housing	Special Achievement	Are you providing visual aids?
Encouraging New Production	Combating Homelessness	Special Achievement	Yes
Multifamily Management	Housing for Persons with Special Needs		No
Preservation and Rehabilitation			

The mission statement of the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC) is to seek to increase the supply of multi-family housing, stimulate economic growth and revitalize neighborhoods by financing the creation and preservation of affordable housing for low, moderate and middle income New Yorkers. HDC plays a major role in providing the initial financing for these affordable housing units, but the ongoing viability of each development depends on a stable base of tenants.

Even in New York City where the demand for affordable housing is large, a common concern among Developers and Managing Agents is that they will not be able to find enough of a viable pool of applicants from their initial advertising to fill their buildings. Without enough applicants the rent-up process can be delayed and cause financial harm to a new development. Common concerns among potential applicants include confusion about how to get an application, where to send their application once it is completed, and how they can find out about other new housing opportunities in general.

The Housing Connect website was originally launched in 2013. In December 2015, the website was updated and is now available in seven languages – English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Russian, Haitian Creole, and Arabic. The increased language accessibility better enables the diverse residents of New York City to find and apply for affordable housing.

NYC Housing Connect is an online housing portal ([www.nyc.gov/housingconnect](http://www.nyc.gov/housingconnect)) where new developments are advertised and where registered users are able to submit their housing application with just the click of a mouse. The Housing Connect system is able to produce a randomized log of all applicants to a particular development. The Housing Connect system alleviates the concerns of both Developers/Managing Agents and of applicants. The Housing Connect system utilizes the internet to advertise new life-changing opportunities to the widest possible audience and is able to reach more viable applicants that meet the requirements for these housing programs. It has revolutionized the application process and has had outstanding results.

## **BACKGROUND**

Prior to launch of the Housing Connect system, the application and lottery process was antiquated. When a new development was ready to advertise, advertisements would be placed in the media. To obtain an application, a potential applicant would have to contact the managing agent by mail. The agent would then send a blank application to the interested party. Some developers would also set up basic project-specific websites. If the development had a website, the applicant could download and print the application. All applications were completed by hand and mailed to a Post Office Box setup by the agent to receive all of the applications. After the application period expired, the agent and a representative of HDC would go to the post office and retrieve the applications. The applications were then brought back to the agent’s office. If they did not have the space in their office, a place where the lottery could be held had to be rented. The applications were then mixed together and opened at random (hence the term “lottery”) until all applications were entered by hand into a logsheet. This process often took multiple days. In between days, the unopened applications were stored in a locked box (to which HDC controlled the key) to prevent possible tampering. Extra temporary staff may have been used to handle large responses. After all applications were entered by hand, many agents would later re-enter this same information into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet so that they could better process the received applications. Once complete, the agent would then begin contacting applicants to schedule interviews for those who appeared to be eligible based on their applications.

## HOUSING CONNECT SYSTEM

The Housing Connect system has brought the application and lottery process into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is faster, more secure, and more efficient than the previous application and lottery process. It has streamlined a process that can be confusing and intimidating for applicants and time-consuming for developers and managing agents. HDC worked alongside the New York City Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) in the construction of the Housing Connect system, with technical support and ongoing server maintenance by The New York City Department of Internet Technology & Telecommunications (DOITT). By leveraging the internal expertise of these agencies' existing staff (with some budgeted consulting fees at start-up), costs were contained and managed within agency budget constraints. With continuing DOITT support, both HDC and HPD use the system to advertise new developments, to securely store the names and information of those who apply, and to efficiently monitor the rent-up of new housing developments.

When visiting the Housing Connect website, new users can register and fill out a household profile that will be used to complete an application. While completing their profile, users will be prompted if they do not fill out the required sections and are reminded that all household information should be listed. This information is stored in the Housing Connect database. If any of this information changes, the user can update their household information. Users can also search current affordable housing opportunities to look for developments that they may be interested in applying to. If a user wants to apply, they click the APPLY button next to the project they are interested in and their application is logged. Users can use the same household information to apply to multiple developments at the same time. They do not need to complete a different application for each development. A first-time user can go from registration to submitting an application in mere minutes. Returning registered users can apply even quicker, provided that their profile information has not changed.

When a new development is ready to advertise, the advertisement is uploaded to the Housing Connect website. An email blast is sent to all registered users notifying them of this new housing opportunity. If interested, registered users only need to log in and click apply. Developments are still advertised in the media and paper applications are still available. These paper applications are mailed to a Post Office box and are combined with the online applications under HDC supervision prior to the generation of the randomized log. Once the log is generated, it is sent to the managing agent in Excel format so they can begin to process the applicants. Paper applications are still accepted because some applicants may not have access to a computer or they might not be comfortable submitting an application online. As detailed later in this report, the overwhelming majority of applications received since the inception of Housing Connect have been submitted online. Due to the low number of paper applications, agents can complete the paper entry in much less time than for previous paper lotteries.

In their profile, users are asked to specify how they would like to be contacted (via mail or via e-mail) by the agent in the future. By choosing their preferred method, communication between the applicant and managing agent has greatly improved.

The Housing Connect system is replicable and can be adapted to fit the needs of other agencies. Profiles and application data are stored on secure servers. Knowledge of website editing, Excel and internet code language is essentially all that is needed.

## RESULTS

The goals for the Housing Connect system were to provide a centralized location where interested applicants could find a list of HDC and HPD developments; to increase the pool of potential tenants for Developers and Managing Agents; and to simplify and modernize the application process for applicants while still ensuring (and in fact increasing) the continued integrity and security of the process. The Housing Connect system has succeeded in achieving these goals beyond our wildest expectations. The impact this system has had on the number of applications received is unprecedented. More applicants are aware of the affordable housing opportunities across New York City and are applying in record numbers. This compliments the goals of affirmatively furthering fair housing by ensuring that the internet's vast outreach (including to those who may have been less likely to know about and apply for any given project) is utilized to promote all our affordable housing programs to all who are in need.

The Housing Connect system provides benefits that outweigh the costs and demonstrates an effective use of resources. The computer randomization of applications has contributed to increased confidence on the part of applicants that their place on the log is truly impartial. The ability of applicants to view their log numbers for each project that they have applied to allows them to more accurately assess whether they will be called in for an interview. The built-in security features of the website ensure that personal information is not jeopardized. There is less opportunity for possible application tampering.

Lastly, the ability of the public to apply for affordable housing online has greatly increased the pool of applicants to these developments, as detailed below. Based on those who register and apply, the population of New York City can be better served. From this information, we can extract household data (size, income) which will better inform us of the type of affordable housing needed and what models of new construction to finance in the future.


### **Housing Connect Statistics:**

- 843,867 – The number of people who have registered to use the Housing Connect system to date.
- 15,004,028 - The number of times the Housing Connect website has been visited since January 2014.
- 156,534 – Average number of site visits per week for 2016.

### **Impact on HDC Housing Lotteries:**

- Prior to Housing Connect (2008 – 2013): The average response was 4,031 applications per project.
- Housing Connect (2013 – 2016): The average response has been 56,788 applications per project. With Housing Connect, the average response has increased by more than 14 times.
- Since inception, the 31 completed HDC lotteries that used the Housing Connect system have received 1,760,435 total applications. Of the 1,760,435 applications, 1,723,519 (97.9%) were received online. Only 39,916 paper applications (2.1%) were received by mail.
- The highest number of applications received using the Housing Connect system for a completed HDC lottery is 92,924. For comparison, the highest number of applications received for an HDC development prior to Housing Connect was 16,263 applications.
- The lowest number of applications received for an HDC development that used the Housing Connect system was 26,753. This demonstrates that even the lowest response to a project using Housing Connect far exceeds the greatest response to any project that predated the system.


[www.nyc.gov/housingconnect.com](http://www.nyc.gov/housingconnect.com)



Find and Apply for  
Affordable Housing

Choose language: English Welcome Guest [Sign In](#)

[MITCHELL-LAMA](#) [SEARCH](#) [ABOUT](#) [FAQ](#)



461 DEAN STREET AT PACIFIC PARK BROOKLYN

**WELCOME TO NYC HOUSING CONNECT!**

**On this site you can:**

- Search and Select Affordable Housing
- Enter and Update your Household Information
- Apply for Housing




**It's easy to apply for affordable housing!**

To get started, [click here](#) to create an account


**For additional housing opportunities, visit:**


[HPD Apartment Seekers](#) and [HDC Now Renting](#)

**More information about the application process and what to do after you apply**

-  [What To Expect \(PDF\)](#)  
Text-Only
-  [New! Income Guide \(PDF\)](#)  
Text-Only
-  [After You Apply \(PDF\)](#)  
Text-Only

Translations funded by Citi Community Development.





**NYC  
Housing  
Connect**

**Find and Apply for  
Affordable Housing**

Choose language: English Welcome Guest [Sign In](#)

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To apply for housing, you must sign in to your NYC Housing Connect account. If you do not have an account, click on Create Account button found below to get started.

### Sign In

Email Address: \*

Password: \*  [Forgot Password](#)

☐ Remember me

[Sign In](#)

### Create New Account

If you already have an account, please sign in to NYC Housing Connect above; otherwise you can create a new account by clicking on the Create Account below.

[Create Account](#)

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