

Promoting the Next Generation of Leaders
through the NYC Housing &
Planning Fellowship

New York City Housing Development Corporation
Special Achievement

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Summary

The new NYC Housing and Planning Fellowship is two-year rotational program designed to expose a diverse cohort of eight rising young professionals to city government specifically in the fields of affordable housing, city and neighborhood planning and economic development. The Fellowship is designed to provide direct, professional work experience at HPD, HDC, DCP and EDC with the shared mission to plan for the future of New York City through the creation and preservation of affordable housing and the promotion of land use and economic development policies that will help the city thrive.

Submission

In September of 2021, New York City welcomed the very first cohort of the NYC Housing & Planning Fellowship, an interagency collaboration focused on increasing diversity and cultivating new leaders in affordable housing and community planning. Under the two-year program, the Fellows will work to advance affordable housing and community development across the five boroughs, rotating through four (4) unique six-month assignments that will provide opportunities to learn and experience first-hand the City's efforts to revitalize New York City's neighborhoods.

Each of the eight Fellows will rotate through one assignment at each of the participating agencies: the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC), NYC Department of Housing & Preservation (HPD), Department of City Planning (DCP), and NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), with individual work assignments varying dependent on the current needs and policy focus of the agency. The Fellowship provides unique exposure and valuable insight into the inner workings of various areas of city government, as well as interagency collaboration of four agencies that share in a mission to shape a more equitable city through affordable housing, land use, and economic development.

Building upon the success of the long-standing HPD-HDC Housing Fellowship, the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC) spearheaded the implementation of a new iteration of this established Fellowship program to cultivate a more robust experience for a diverse cohort of rising young leaders interested in exploring careers in public service. The move effectively doubled the program's reach from four fellows to eight, and two agencies to four, providing greater access and opportunities to explore differing career paths within affordable housing and community development.

The original HPD-HDC Housing Fellowship offered four recent graduates, the opportunity to create meaningful career pathways in affordable housing. The program cycled every two years and afforded each fellow the chance to rotate through four six-month rotations, two at HPD and two at HDC, in various divisions at the agencies. As the program progressed, each fellow was able to shape their experience towards their interests based on what they learned in each assignment. The majority of Fellows have gone on to pursue longstanding careers in affordable housing, many continuing on within the field of public service demonstrating the longstanding impact of a Fellowship experience in city government. Fellows Alumni also form a network of support and mentorship for future classes of Fellows, including ongoing demonstrated commitment to the new *Housing & Planning Fellows*.

The expanded *New York City Housing & Planning Fellowship* was a direct response to a call for greater diversity, equity, and inclusion within the workplace and our communities. The year 2020 was marked

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by an historic moment of reckoning to confront systemic racial inequities, and HDC, HPD, DCP, and EDC, started taking steps to ensure greater diversity and inclusion starting from within. Leadership from HDC, HPD, DCP and EDC came together to form an Interagency Diversity Talent Taskforce to explore ways to create meaningful and proactive change within city government.

The Taskforce, made up of representatives from the a cross-section of divisions and Human Resources teams from the four agencies, set forth a framework of goals in the spring of 2021 that included identifying and establishing collaboration opportunities to develop and expand the talent pipeline of the City's Planning and Development organizations with intentional concentration on BIPOC groups, including a focus on outreach to local SUNY (State University of New York), CUNY (City University of New York), and HBCU campuses and populations; attracting, retaining, and training a workforce that reflects the diversity of New York City; and to creating and supporting career pathways and roles that help to define New York City's present and future.

Out of this framework, the new *NYC Housing & Planning* Fellowship program was born. Each agency brought their own breadth of knowledge and established recruitment practices to the table to parse out how their combined resources could help to actualize these goals. Considerations had to be given to each agency's mission and priorities, as well as a breakdown of shared and individual efforts in the process. HDC took on a pivotal role in the implementation of the new fellowship and functioned as the lead hiring organization that would retain the Fellows as employees. HDC would take the lead on everything from application intake to the development of a specialized and structured recruitment process to address the complexities of hiring 8 positions that would be assigned at various divisions across 4 unique agencies. Ultimately, the recruitment process involved five rounds of interviews, including a case study, and narrowing a pool of over a hundred applicants to the final selection of eight individuals who would become the inaugural class of NYC Housing & Planning Fellows.

The competitive recruitment process yielded an impressive and diverse cohort of individuals from a wide range of demographic, professional and academic backgrounds, with the majority hailing from local colleges and universities, with graduate degrees ranging from public administration, urban policy and planning to architecture, business, and law.

HDC worked closely with HPD, DCP, and EDC to establish a mutable structure for the trajectory of the Fellows rotational experience. The fellowship would manifest through the various divisions within each agency, subject to the programmatic and policy priorities of each respective agency. Alongside this came figuring out the nuts-and-bolts logistics of how to run and manage the fellowship and setting protocols to streamline interagency communication. To manage all the cross-agency coordination, each agency was tasked with establishing program leads who would act as point of contact for the fellows' needs and concerns during their tenure. Each agency assigned a minimum of 3 program leads, one being from HR, one from a programmatic perspective and an Executive lead, who would be dedicated to ensuring the program's success as it progressed.

HDC took the lead role in managing the Fellowship, bringing years of experience co-managing the previous iteration of the HDC-HPD Housing Fellowship program. HDC's lead program director helps to curate the unique rotational assignments for each Fellow every six-months, working with the Fellows and all four agencies to balance varying workplace needs to ensure a robust experience for the program

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participants, while making sure to structure rotations based on the individual goals of the Fellows as they explore their potential interests and career pathways.

Rotating assignments include direct exposure to projects within a range of program areas from new construction; preservation; finance (including tax-exempt and taxable bonds); code enforcement; housing litigation (for legal rotation); neighborhood planning; property management and real estate transactions at HPD and HDC; technical planning, neighborhood/community planning and strategic Citywide planning at DCP; and neighborhood and transportation planning; affordable housing; climate change resiliency; real estate and/or economic development transactions at NYCEDC.

Beyond the incredible breadth of experience gained through the rotations in the agency's themselves, the Fellowship program also provides an assortment of enrichment activities providing educational and volunteer opportunities, in addition to mentorship and networking within the industry. Examples include meet and greets with city and agency leadership, affordable housing site tours, policy and program focused educational brown bags, industry conferences and events, as well as access to an expansive and supportive network of past Fellowship program alumni and public and private industry partners who understand the value of the Fellowship experience in developing our next generation of leaders.

The New York City Housing & Planning Fellowship is innovative both in structure and execution. From the program's actualization from concept to fully functional program working simultaneously across four different agencies, to the diverse make-up of participants who would learn from one another's varied strengths and experiences, to the impact of the program on the strengthening the talent pool within public service and on fostering a successful career trajectory for each of the program participants. The time and resources that go towards the execution of Fellowship program represent an invaluable investment in the future of our city and respond to important need to cultivate the next generation of leaders who will bring with them the unique perspective gained through the Fellowship throughout their careers.

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Appendix

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Medium Story Announcing Launch of the NYC Housing & Planning Fellowship

Link: <https://nyhousing.medium.com/nyc-housing-planning-fellowship-1d5a101d93ee>

NYC Housing & Planning Fellowship

On September 7th, the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC), New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), New York City Department of City Planning (DCP), and New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) welcomed the first cohort of fellows for the NYC Housing & Planning Fellowship, a new interagency collaboration to increase diversity and cultivate new leaders in affordable housing and community planning.



Under the two-year program, the Fellows will be introduced to the City's government work to advance affordable housing and community development throughout the five boroughs. Fellows will rotate between 6-month assignments at the four partner City agencies, HDC, HPD, DCP and EDC with the shared mission to shape the future of New York City through affordable housing, land use and economic development policies.

Learn more about the NYC Housing & Planning Fellows below:

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Vanessa Almanzar



Vanessa Almanzar is a Public Service Worker with experience in homelessness prevention and supportive housing. She was born and raised in the Bronx, but her family is originally from the Dominican Republic, and she spent part of her childhood living there. Vanessa has a degree in Social Work from Lehman College and a Master's in Public Administration from Baruch College. She has extensive experience working the nonprofit sector servicing clients that were often high-needs or in crisis. In her most recent role, Vanessa worked as Program Developer for HomeBase, an HRA-funded program and one of the City's vital efforts to address housing instability.

“Having worked as a housing provider and experienced housing insecurity in New York City

firsthand, I have a frontline view of the many issues I hope to tackle. Being a part of this fellowship means I get to do work that is purposeful and groundbreaking, but it also means I get the opportunity to fulfill my passion.”

Anthony Hascheff



Anthony Hascheff is originally from Reno, Nevada. He recently graduated with an MPA from Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs, where he focused his studies on economic development and land use. Prior to his graduate studies, he spent 2.5 years in rural Paraguay as a Peace Corps Volunteer working on community and economic development. Anthony is fluent in both Spanish and Portuguese.

“I am looking forward to working on one of the largest social issues confronting New York City (and the US as a whole) at this very unique moment in history and beginning my career in this industry, learning and hopefully making a contribution to positive social change. I took on this fellowship because I believe in public

service, and this fellowship is the perfect synthesis of my interests and experience.”

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Ananya Kashyap



Ananya Kashyap is a recent graduate of the Edward J Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University where she pursued the Master of City and Regional Planning program with a dual concentration in Community Development and Housing and Urban Design and Redevelopment. She is deeply interested in the field of housing affordability and insecurity, and its intersection with issues of climate change, gentrification, and displacement. Prior to joining the Bloustein School, Ananya finished her undergraduate degree in Architecture from the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi. Through her work on housing research and design projects at the school, Ananya developed an interest in housing, particularly around the issues of housing informality,

insecurity, and affordability. When not working on all things housing, she enjoys exploring new places — be it hiking through nature or walking around small towns and big cities.

Binh Ly



“The NYC Housing and Planning Fellowship is an excellent opportunity to experience varying facets of the problem firsthand and take a multi-angled approach to the issue by participating in the valuable work undertaken at the HDC, HPD, DCP, and EDC. I am grateful for this incredible opportunity at the beginning of my career as a housing and planning professional, and I look forward to delving deeper into the dynamics of a city that impacts the world!”

Binh Ly most recently worked as a project manager at WinnCompanies, preserving and developing low-income and workforce housing. Prior to that, he interned at the nonprofit Alexandria Housing Development Corporation. Binh has also worked for the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as for

various local, statewide and national political campaigns. Binh holds a Master’s in Urban and Regional Planning from Virginia Tech and a Bachelor’s in Political Science from George Mason University. He is an avid runner and a native of Springfield, Virginia.

“As a Housing & Planning Fellow, I am looking forward to working across disciplines and city agencies, applying what I’ve learned in housing development, and being a part of making New York City a more inclusive, accessible, and sustainable place to live.”

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Whitley Plummer



Whitley Plummer is a recent graduate of UMass Amherst’s dual MBA and Master of Public Policy and Administration program. Prior to graduate school, Whitley received a B.A. in Political Science from SUNY Stony Brook. She then began working in the nonprofit world, first as an AmeriCorps fellow through NYC’s Civic Corps program, helping nonprofits with volunteer capacity building, and then at a non-profit risk management firm, administering the property insurance portfolio of a large women’s health organization. As a fellow, Whitley hopes to contribute to the development of inclusive and thriving communities in New York City.

“I applied to this fellowship because the role seemed to perfectly align with my interest in affordable housing and economic development,

my research in graduate school, and my love for New York City. While the four agencies have different missions, they all advance policies and programs that enrich our communities, and they all play a role in addressing one of the most pressing needs of New Yorkers — housing.”

Colin Ryan



Colin Ryan is a recent graduate from Hunter College where he earned his Master’s in Urban Planning with a focus on housing and community development. Prior to that, he earned a Bachelor’s degree in geography with a focus in GIS from Binghamton University. He is a huge fan of cities, maps and anything related to these fields. He became interested in this fellowship based on his courses related to affordable housing as well as his experience with the New York City Housing Authority. Colin also has experience with various other public agencies, and he is excited to continue that legacy through this fellowship. Aside from work in the public sector, his interests include biking around his neighborhood, reading fantasy novels and leaving the city to go for a hike.

“I’m most looking forward to all the learning opportunities at this fellowship. I love any opportunity to learn more about the city and this opportunity allows me to do it all while jumping right into the field of

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affordable housing. I chose to apply because I thought this opportunity was the best way for me to enter the field and understand what areas of housing I wanted to pursue for my career.”

Sacha-Aviva Sellam



Sacha-Aviva Sellam is a born and raised New Yorker with a strong love for her city and the centuries worth of history in its streets. She received her B.A. from SUNY Stony Brook in Art History & Criticism and French Language & Literature. Upon seeing the changes in her neighborhood since going away to college, she grew more passionate about the rapid disappearance of rent stabilized units across the city. She attended Brooklyn Law School and focused on real estate law, diversifying her work experience between the public and private sector to gain a holistic approach to understanding real estate, finance, and affordability. In her free time, Sacha enjoys taking photos of old buildings and store fronts before they are demolished, exploring the revitalized waterfronts around

the city, visiting new exhibits at museums, and discussing new restaurants to try around the city.

“It’s such a rare and unique opportunity to be able to continue learning about affordable housing while doing hands on work in different city agencies. I love my city, this is my hometown, and I want to be a part of the continued movement to increase affordability in housing- it’s personal!”

Keri Springett



Prior to becoming a Housing & Planning Fellow, Keri Springett served as Deputy Director of Marketing & Compliance at the Housing Partnership. In this role, she oversaw a team of project managers who facilitated the lease-up of affordable housing units throughout NYC. Keri is a recent graduate of the Milano School of Policy, Management, & Environment at The New School, where she completed her M.S. in Urban Policy Analysis & Management with a concentration in Housing and Community Development. In her spare time, she is an **aspiring** book reader and plant mom, but finds more success in catching up on the latest shows and spending quality time with her family.

“In order to truly grasp the innerworkings of this industry, I think it is important to understand the environment in which it is built. From planning, to financing, to developing and beyond, I am looking forward to gathering a more holistic understanding of affordable housing.”

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Supportive Quotes Demonstrating Success of the Program

As of spring 2022, a year after the program's inception, the eight fellows are currently nearing the end of their second rotation. Their experience within the program has been documented through an ongoing interview series in HDC's Employee Newsletter. The below are just a few excerpted quotes from those interviews:

Reflecting on the Fellows Program and her fellow program participants thus far, Whitley, who is currently on assignment at the Department of City Planning Capital Planning Division, notes that she is "grateful to be going through this experience with such a great group of committed and lovely humans" and has "truly enjoyed meeting so many dedicated city employees willing to share their experience and expertise."

When asked about his takeaway from the program thus far, Binh, who is on assignment at NYCEDC Planning Division, stated that "it is one of a broadening of my understanding and appreciation for the different fields of work involved in the planning, development and future growth of the city. This is a priceless experience, and I am excited to build lasting relationships through the process."

Sacha-Aviva is currently on assignment at NYCEDC Real Estate Transaction Services team noted that that the Fellowship program represents a moment in time that will impact her for the rest of her life. She cites the fact that "this is a truly a rare experience to be learning one-on-one from top professionals in four distinct City agencies. It's a fascinating time to be participating in the Fellowship during a transition of Mayoral administration."