

NEW YORK Amsterdam News

Vol. 102 No. 21 May 26-June 1, 2011
© 2011 The Amsterdam News

The new Black view
www.amsterdamnews.com

\$1.00 New York City

Picture the Homeless, Hunter College count vacant Manhattan properties

By **STEPHON JOHNSON**
Amsterdam News Staff

It made sense to hold the announcement in a neighborhood with one of the highest densities of vacant property in New York City.

Last week, members of the non-profit organization Picture the Homeless and Hunter College's Center for Community Planning and Development (HCCCPD) gathered in East Harlem to announce their first-ever count of vacant buildings and lots throughout all five boroughs.

New York City Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito explained why this vacant lot count is so important.

"The task of tallying unoccupied lots and buildings is extremely important to the communities in my

district as we fight to create new income-targeted housing and simultaneously mitigate displacement," said Mark-Viverito. "This citywide count will give us the data we need to continue advocating as communities for policies that encourage the transformation of vacant properties into housing."

According to members of Picture the Homeless, the venture is part of a multiyear campaign to document the amount of empty space in New York City. The organization believes that vacancy "inflates the cost of housing in the city and is a root cause of homelessness."

"The housing situation in the village of Harlem has caused people from the community to struggle,"

said Picture the Homeless member Arvernetta Henry. "Families and small business owners have been forced to leave their homes and forfeit their businesses to realtors. This count will help give us the information we need to help people who have been displaced fill these vacant buildings and come back to Harlem!"

The sentiment is not lost on East Harlem district leader and the vice chair of the Community Board 11 Housing Committee, Peggy Morales.

"Our city is in a crisis," said Morales. "As a district leader and housing advocate, I am very pleased to learn of the partnership between PTH and Hunter College. I am eager to read the results of this count

(Continued on Page 32)

PTH

(Continued from Page 3)

and expect that we will use this information to craft legislation and policy to help our homeless population as well as those who currently live in overcrowded conditions."

With the city facing budget issues and the middle class becoming the poor working class, while the poor working class falls into abject poverty, everyone involved in the survey hopes that City Hall will take notice and act accordingly.

"Our partnership with PTH will help combine grassroots intelligence and university-based knowledge to create the conditions for improving and changing city housing policy so that it can serve those in greatest need," said HCCCPD Director Tom Angotti, Ph.D.

The citywide survey will begin in June of this year.