

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STATEN ISLAND VACANT PROPERTIES COUNT KICKS OFF

Picture the Homeless and Hunter College launch unprecedented survey that will reveal the extent of vacant property in NYC

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St. George, Staten Island.— Picture the Homeless (PTH) and Hunter College’s Center for Community Planning and Development (HCCCPD) have begun the first-ever count of vacant buildings and lots throughout the five boroughs. The survey is the first of its kind and is unprecedented in scope. The count will cover Community Board District 1 in Staten Island, as well as 19 other Community Board Districts in the rest of the city. Volunteers and community members will start in the St. George and spread out block by block identifying vacant properties.

Pastor Michael Vincent Crea, native of Stapleton, Picture the Homeless member, and long time local human rights activist states, “The housing blight in our Borough impacts both individuals and families directly, while local merchants face dwindling clientele living in our neighborhoods. Borough businesses must partner with all people and demand housing as a human right.”

“I commend Picture the Homeless and the Hunter College’s Center for Community Planning and Development for taking on the arduous task of counting the vacant buildings and lots within the five boroughs for possible conversion into permanent affordable housing. The availability of permanent affordable housing would allow thousands of families who currently live in shelters to remain in the communities where they work and go to school without disruption to their daily routines,” said Staten Island City Council Member Debi Rose.

Picture the Homeless Ethics & Conduct Subcommittee member Duwon Bryant states, “The vacant building count is very important to members of the Staten Island community because there are so many people sleeping in the St. George ferry terminal as opposed to having a proper roof over their head. Clients of drop-in shelters, like Project Hospitality, could be living in these vacant buildings, as opposed to being on the streets for sometimes years. People can die homeless on the streets. This count is an important first step to stop that.”

Tom Angotti, Ph.D., the Director of HCCCPD, reiterates the significance of this historic survey: “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.”

The survey is the latest development in Picture the Homeless’s multi-year campaign to document the extent of vacant property in NYC. PTH argues that vacancy inflates the cost of housing in the city and is a root cause of homelessness. Preliminary findings, available on Vacant NYC (www.vacantnyc.crowdmap.com), maps over 11,000 vacant buildings and lots, city wide: most of which were provided by city agency data.

For interviews with PTH members and Hunter College faculty, call Adrian Paling or Kendall Jackman at 646-314-6423. In addition, PTH will be tweeting updates from the press conference. Follow <http://twitter.com/pthny> and hashtag #NYCvacancysurvey. For more information <http://picturethehomeless.org/blog/node/242>