

# Vacant Property & Residential Unit Survey: Manhattan CB 11 Missed Opportunities in Times of Crisis



**CB11M**  
EAST HARLEM



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# Why We're Here?

- **We're in a housing crisis - rent burden is high in East Harlem**
  - **As of 2024, 31.1% of East Harlem residents are in severely rent burden households paying more than 60% of their income each month to rent<sup>1</sup>**
- **Yet many residential buildings sit empty and lots remain underdeveloped**
- **These represent homes taken off the market in a time of dire need**



<sup>1</sup>Data Sourced: <https://furmancenter.org/neighborhoods/view/east-harlem#renters-and-rental-conditions-city>

# Background - History Context

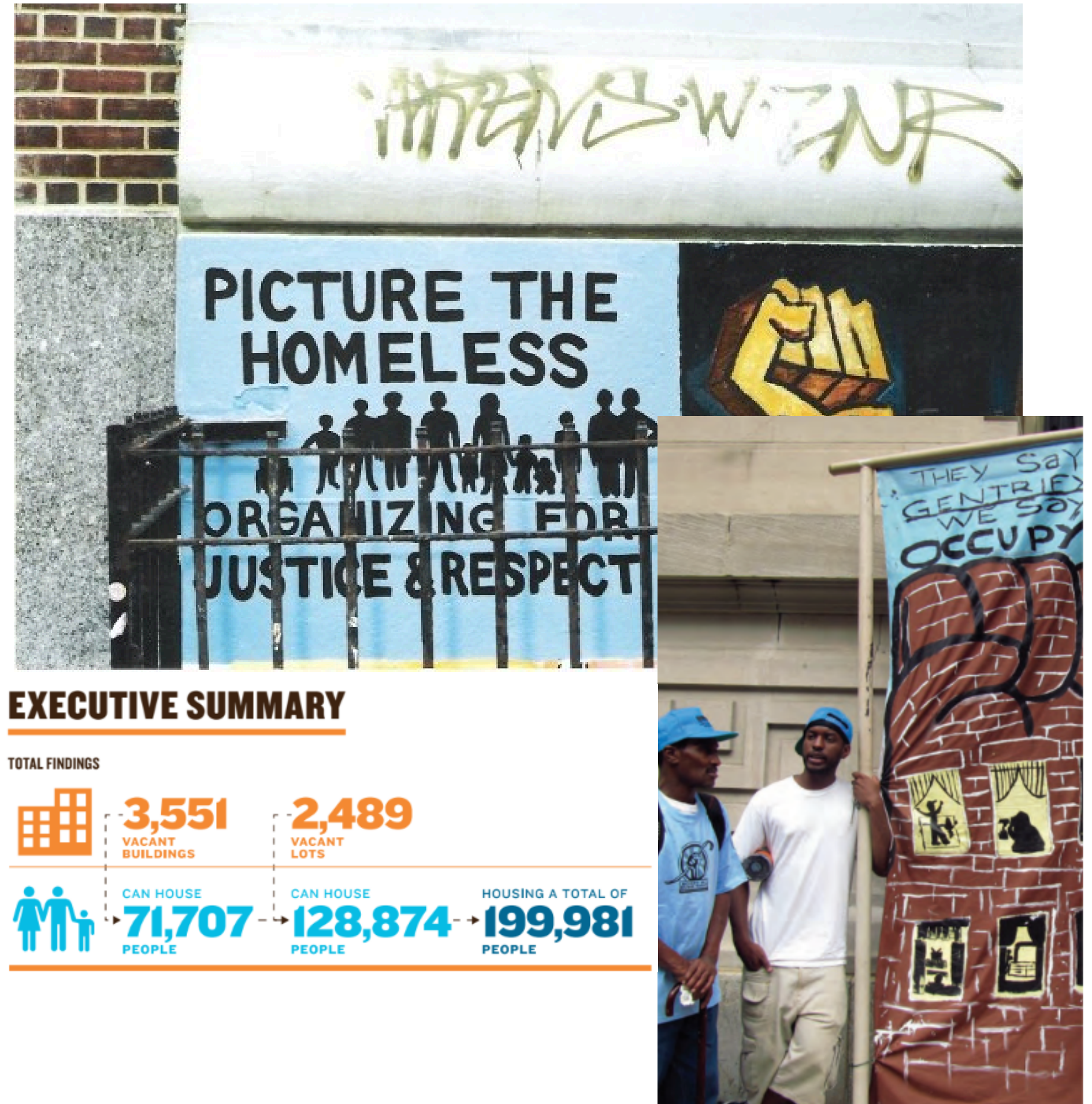
- **Picture the Homeless - Citywide Vacancy Count (2010, 2011)**

- In the middle of homelessness crisis, picture the homeless conducted a citywide building and lot survey to assess the potential for housing New York City growing street homeless population
- The issue then was that many landlords were deliberately shelving units and underutilizing lots that could've gone to the development and provision of affordable housing for the homeless!
- When they covered CD11 East Harlem, they found ‘

- 96 Vacant Buildings > 7,055 People
- 47 Vacant Lots > 2,197

- **East Harlem CD11 Vacancy Count (2025)**

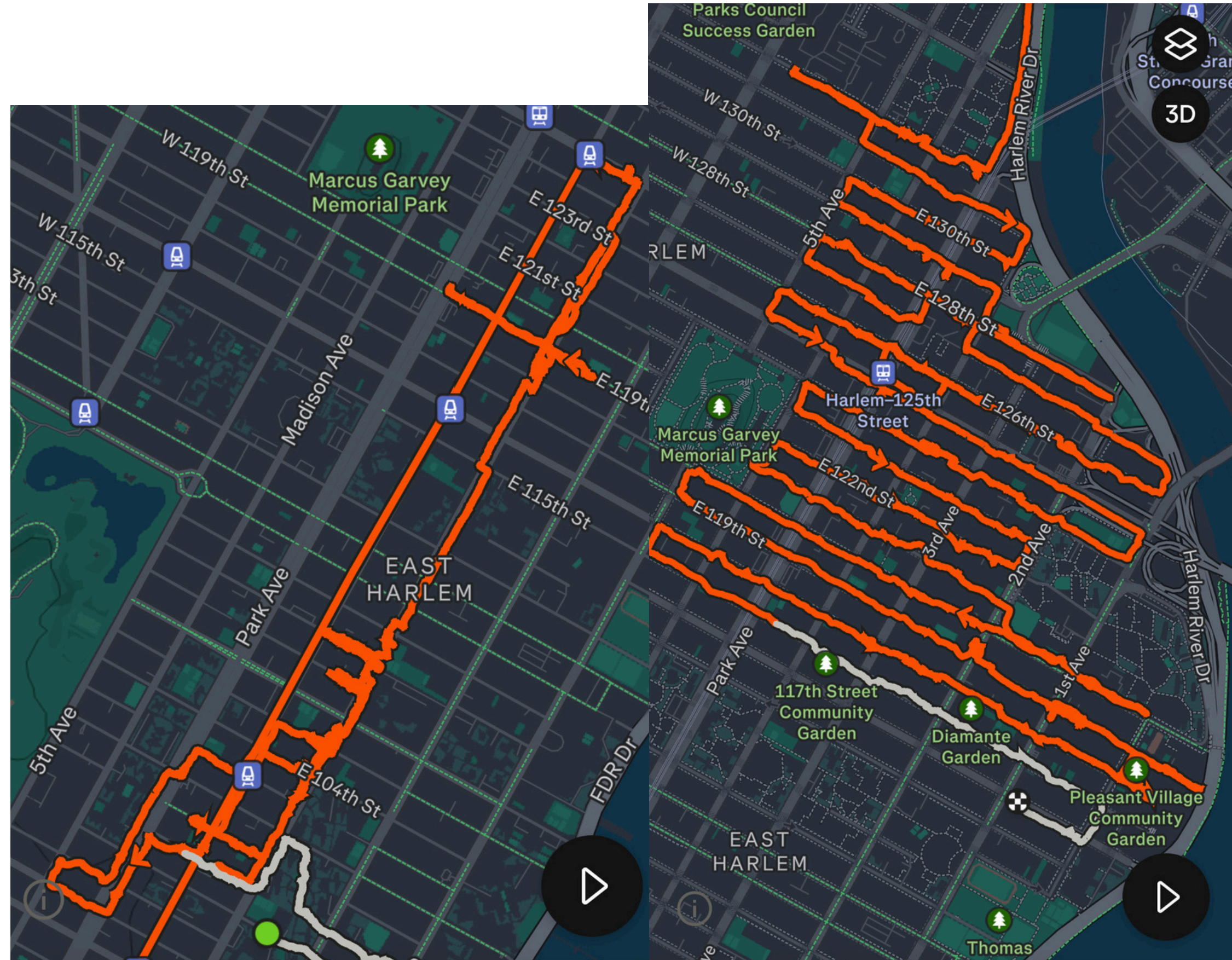
- Homelessness is still on the RISE
- Gentrification and Displacement is still on the rise
- Affordable housing production so far has not met the demand created by the continual increase





# Vacant Buildings - What I Found

- I canvassed a good portion of the district:
  - Covered every street between 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and FDR from 131<sup>st</sup> Street to 116<sup>th</sup> Street
  - Covered every street between Lexington Avenue and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue from 96<sup>th</sup> Street to 125<sup>th</sup>
- At least 103 empty sites:
  - 21 empty residential buildings
  - 11 empty mixed use buildings
  - 5 empty commercial buildings
  - 18 empty mixed use buildings with active commercial fronts
  - 47 empty lots
- These units were once lived in - and could be again especially under the current housing crisis faced by this city.
- As you may already know, this city has a 1.4% rental vacancy which is the lowest it's been since 1968. That has led to quickly developed large scale initiatives such as the City of Yes and the Manhattan Plan to help address this. <sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Data Sourced: <https://edc.nyc/housing-crisis-and-new-york-city>



# Vacant Buildings - What I Found (Examples)

## 51 - 55 129 STREET

- Zoning: R7B
- Lot Area: 7494 sq ft
- Total # of Floors: 6
- Total # of Units: 30
- Multi-Family Elevator Buildings
  - Elevator Apartments - Miscellaneous ( D9 )





# Vacant Buildings - What I Found (Examples)

## 52 EAST 126 STREET

- Zoning: R6A 125TH
- Lot Area: 3,997 sq ft
- Total # of Floors: 5
- Total # of Units: 21
- Multi-Family Elevator Buildings
  - Elevator Apartments - Miscellaneous ( D9 )





# Vacant Buildings - What I Found (Examples)

## 70 EAST 129 STREET

- Zoning: M1-6/R9 EHC
- Lot Area: 1576 sq ft
- Total # of Floors: 3
- Total # of Units: 1
- Public Facilities & Institutions
  - Educational Structures -  
Training School ( W4 )





# Vacant Buildings - What I Found (Examples)

## 1868 3 AVENUE

- Zoning: R8A C1-5
- Lot Area: 1685 sq ft
- Total # of Floors: 2
- Total # of Units: 2
- Mixed Residential & Commercial Buildings
  - Store Buildings - Predominant Retail with Other Uses ( K4 )





# Vacant Buildings - What I Found (Examples)

## 1924 3 AVENUE

- Zoning: R9 EHC C2-5
- Lot Area: 1,660 sq ft
- Total # of Floors: 5
- Total # of Units: 2
- Mixed Residential & Commercial Buildings
  - Store Buildings - Predominant Retail with Other Uses ( K4 )

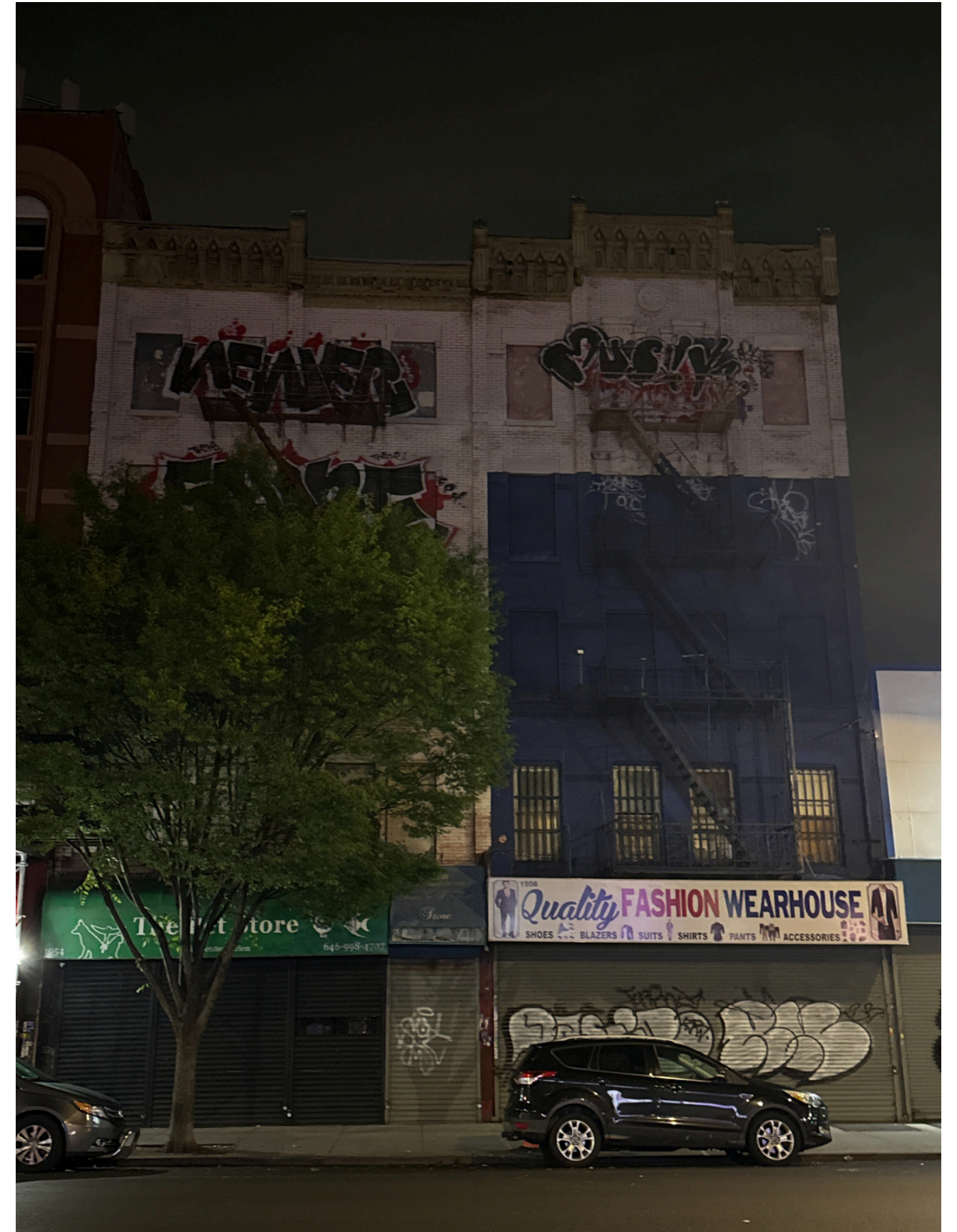




# Vacant Buildings - What I Found (Examples)

## 1954 3 AVENUE

- Zoning: R9 EHC C2-6
- Lot Area: 1825 sq ft
- Total # of Floors: 4
- Total # of Units: 2
- Mixed Residential & Commercial Buildings
  - Store Buildings - Predominant Retail with Other Uses ( K4 )





# Vacant Buildings - What I Found (Examples)

## 2096 MADISON AVENUE

- Zoning: R9 EHC C2-6
- Lot Area: 1825 sq ft
- Total # of Floors: 4
- Total # of Units: 2
- Mixed Residential & Commercial Buildings
  - Store Buildings - Predominant Retail with Other Uses ( K4 )





# Vacant Lots - What's Possible (Examples)

## 2321 3 AVENUE

- Zoning: C6-3
- Lot Area: 6,983 sq ft
- Potential Total # of Floors: 12
- Potential Total # of Units: 82 Units





# Vacant Lots - What's Possible (Examples)

## 8 EAST 132 STREET

- Zoning: C6-3
- Lot Area: 6,983 sq ft
- Total # of Floors: 12 - 14
- Total # of Units: 82





# Vacant Lots - What's Possible (Examples)

## 13 EAST 128 STREET

- Zoning: R7B
- Lot Area: 1,932 sq ft
- Total # of Floors: ~ 6-7
- Total # of Units: 4





# Vacant Lots - What's Possible (Examples)

## 1815 Park Avenue

- Zoning: C6-4 125TH TA
- Lot Area: 6,810 sq ft
- Total # of Floors: 13 - 15
- Total # of Units: ~ 96





# Vacant Lots - What's Possible (Examples)

## 2015 5 AVENUE

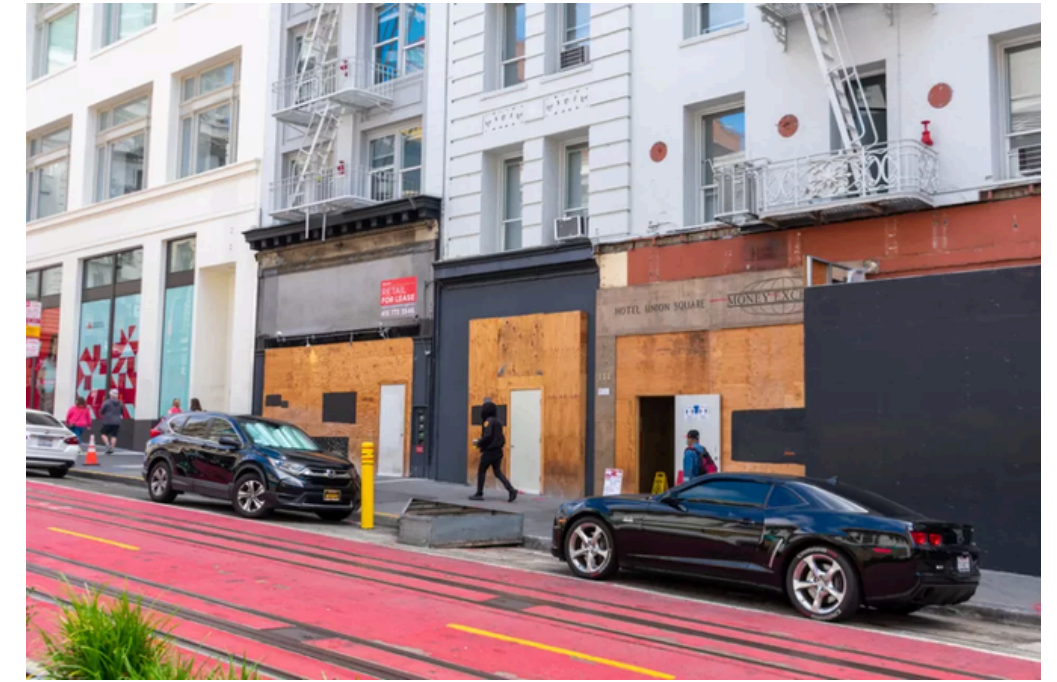
- Zoning: R7B
- Lot Area: 3,497 sq ft
- Total # of Floors: 4 - 5
- Total # of Units: 11 - 13





# The Harm of Vacancy

- When homes go empty, the community pays
  - Total Wasted Opportunity in a High Need Area:
    - 369,816 sq ft
    - At least ~ 2,610 potential units
  - Blight and safety issues; Quality of life issues
    - Vacant buildings often become sites for decay, illegal dumping, or squatting
  - Community disillusionment
    - “Why are these homes empty while my neighbors are forced to move?”
  - Negative Economic Impact
    - Vacant buildings and lots reduce local tax revenue further straining needed city services
- Restoring homes for residential use is a public good





# Recommendations & Committee Action Steps

- Advocate for Activation
  - Urge HPD to issue RFPs for affordable housing development on public or tax-delinquent land.
  - Push for partnerships with nonprofit developers for deeply affordable housing (up to 80% AMI).
- Support Zoning & Land Use Alignment
  - Recommend rezoning or special permits where needed to unlock higher-density affordable housing.
  - Collaborate with the Land Use Committee to assess zoning mismatches on vacant sites.
- Quantify the Potential
  - Support a deeper analysis of how many units could be created if all vacant buildings/lots were used for affordable housing.
  - Use this data to inform future ULURP, community needs statements, or budget priorities.



# Recommendations & Committee Action Steps

- Engage Private Property Owners
  - Encourage or pressure landlords of vacant residential buildings to bring units back online — especially in buildings with existing Certificates of Occupancy.
  - Request HPD or DOB to conduct inspections and identify code violations in persistently vacant buildings.
  - Explore legislation or local organizing to require minimum use standards or public explanation for long-term vacancies.