



City of New York

OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

Scott M. Stringer
COMPTROLLER



AUDITS AND SPECIAL REPORTS

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Deputy Comptroller for Audit

Audit Report on the New York City
Housing Authority's Maintenance and
Inspection of Its Playgrounds

SR17-127A

April 4, 2018

<http://comptroller.nyc.gov>



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
SCOTT M. STRINGER

April 4, 2018

To the Residents of the City of New York:

My office has audited the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to determine whether NYCHA is maintaining its playgrounds located within NYCHA developments in satisfactory condition and whether NYCHA is complying with its own policies and procedures for conducting inspections. We perform audits such as this to increase accountability and to improve the quality of life for New York City residents.

The audit found that NYCHA does not have adequate controls over playground inspections and does not ensure that its playgrounds are maintained in a clean and safe manner. Specifically, our inspections of all 788 NYCHA-maintained playgrounds—located in 238 NYCHA developments—found unsatisfactory conditions in 549 (70 percent) of the playgrounds. We found numerous playgrounds with substandard and visibly hazardous conditions, including missing and broken play equipment (some with exposed jagged edges), loose and deteriorated safety surfacing, tripping hazards, debris, erosion, and overgrown vegetation. We also conducted follow-up visits of developments with substandard and hazardous playground conditions and found that almost half had not prepared or retained mandated monthly inspection reports and that where inspection reports existed, many did not reflect the hazardous condition we had observed. Further, we found that NYCHA's development staff did not record the results of their monthly inspections of the grounds and playgrounds in Maximo, NYCHA's asset management system, as required by NYCHA's written procedures, a significant omission that deprives NYCHA of a reliable, current, and easily accessible record of the condition of all of its playgrounds.

The audit made nine recommendations, including that NYCHA should inspect all 788 playgrounds for which it is responsible and remedy any hazardous conditions noted; take immediate steps to implement an effective management oversight scheme to ensure that development grounds and playgrounds are all being inspected monthly; enforce agency policy that requires development staff to utilize the agency's Maximo system to automatically schedule monthly grounds and playground inspections and use handheld devices to document the inspection results in the system; ensure that development staff create work orders and track them in Maximo; and randomly and continuously inspect NYCHA playgrounds, inform the responsible development managers and supervisors of any unacceptable conditions that require immediate attention and follow up to ensure that all such conditions are remedied.

The results of the audit have been discussed with the NYCHA officials, and their comments have been considered in preparing this report. Their complete written response is attached to this report. If you have any questions concerning this report, please e-mail my Audit Bureau at audit@comptroller.nyc.gov.

Sincerely,



Scott M. Stringer

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER AUDITS AND SPECIAL REPORTS

Audit Report on the New York City Housing Authority's Maintenance and Inspection of Its Playgrounds

SR17-127A

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) is the largest public housing authority in North America, with more than 400,000 New Yorkers residing in its 326 developments across the City's five boroughs. Playgrounds exist at the majority of NYCHA developments and are important assets for NYCHA's residents, particularly the children. As NYCHA has stated, "[v]ibrant play-spaces are central to creating connected public housing communities—and all children deserve a space where they can explore, learn, and thrive with one another."

We inspected all 788 playgrounds that NYCHA maintains at 238 developments. NYCHA's Standard Procedure, *Administration of Development Grounds*, provides uniform, detailed instructions and procedures for each development's grounds-keeping staff to utilize when conducting monthly inspections of the grounds, including its playgrounds. These instructions include requirements for entering the results of their inspections into "Maximo," the asset and work management software system used by NYCHA to manage the maintenance and repair of its physical assets.

Within NYCHA, playground maintenance is primarily the responsibility of each development's grounds-keeping staff, under the overall direction of a development-based Superintendent. The Superintendent is responsible for supervising its grounds-keeping activities, which includes entering grounds inspection and playground results in Maximo. Supervising Housing Groundskeepers (SHGs) at each development are responsible for directly implementing grounds plans, and monitoring grounds operations. Specifically, the SHGs are supposed to (1) conduct daily inspections of the grounds, including playgrounds; and (2) complete a detailed monthly *Grounds and Playground Inspection Report*, also known as an *Inspection Work Order*, in the Maximo system. At the same time, each development's Housing Manager has overall responsibility for all development operations, which includes inspecting the grounds and related facilities on a regular basis.

In addition to this development-based staff, two NYCHA departments, NextGeneration Operations (NGO) and Property Management, are responsible for overseeing property-management

functions at the NYCHA properties under their respective jurisdictions.¹ Regional Asset Managers from each of those two departments are responsible for providing comprehensive management of NYCHA properties and focus on maintenance and upkeep of all buildings, environmental systems, grounds, and fiscal administration.

Audit Findings and Conclusion

Our audit found that NYCHA does not have adequate controls over playground inspections and does not ensure that its playgrounds are maintained in a clean and safe manner. Specifically, our inspections of all 788 NYCHA-maintained playgrounds—located in 238 NYCHA developments—found unsatisfactory conditions in 549 (70 percent) of the playgrounds. We found numerous playgrounds with substandard and visibly hazardous conditions, including missing and broken play equipment (some with exposed jagged edges), loose and deteriorated safety surfacing, tripping hazards, debris, erosion, and unkempt vegetation.

We also conducted follow-up visits of developments with substandard and hazardous playground conditions and found that almost half of those developments had not prepared or retained mandated monthly inspection reports. In those cases where inspection reports were available, we found that the reports did not consistently reflect the conditions we found during our inspections of the playgrounds. Additionally, each inspection report is required to be signed by both (1) the NYCHA staff member who performed the inspection; and (2) either the Superintendent or the Housing Manager. However, we found numerous reports that were missing the reviewers' signatures. Further, we found that NYCHA's development staff are not recording the results of their monthly inspections of the grounds and playgrounds in Maximo, as required by NYCHA's written procedures, a significant omission that deprives NYCHA of a reliable, current, and easily accessible record of the condition of all of its playgrounds.

While we found deficiencies in the majority of NYCHA's playgrounds, we also found that 30 percent of them—239 playgrounds—were in good or satisfactory condition at the times of our inspections, with no observed deficiencies. Those playgrounds reflect that a significant number of NYCHA developments provide their residents with safe, pleasant outdoor play areas for their children's enjoyment. However, that was not the prevailing condition we found in most of NYCHA's playgrounds.

Audit Recommendations

This audit made the following nine recommendations that:

1. NYCHA should immediately inspect all 788 playgrounds for which it is responsible and remedy any hazardous conditions noted.
2. NYCHA should make every playground it manages fully operational as quickly as possible, within a reasonable time frame. In so doing the agency should determine whether damaged and deteriorated playground equipment should be repaired or replaced, whether any of it is under warranty, and whether repairs should be performed by development staff or vendors.

¹ NGO is the property management component of NYCHA's NextGeneration Plan. NYCHA announced the implementation of its plan in 2015 and has increased the number of developments NGO is responsible for over time. Property Management is responsible for overseeing the property management of those developments that have not been made the responsibility of NGO.

3. NYCHA should take immediate steps to implement an effective management oversight scheme to ensure that development grounds and playgrounds are all being inspected monthly in accordance with NYCHA's written procedures.
4. NYCHA's senior management should evaluate and address the causes of the failures that allowed substandard and in some cases hazardous conditions in 549 NYCHA playgrounds to go unaddressed, including, where applicable, failures to conduct, review, sign-off, retain, and follow-up on required inspections and inspection reports.
5. NYCHA, through its senior management, should enforce agency policy that requires development staff to utilize the agency's Maximo system to automatically schedule monthly grounds and playground inspections and use handheld devices to document the inspection results in the system.
6. In instances where handheld devices are not available, NYCHA, through its senior management, should enforce agency policy that requires development staff to manually enter playground-inspection results in the Maximo system and maintain hard copies of the completed inspection reports, with required signatures of the preparer and reviewer, in the Superintendent's office.
7. Development staff should ensure that work orders are created and tracked in Maximo to enable all deficiencies in their playgrounds to be appropriately remedied.
8. NYCHA's NextGeneration Operations and Property Management departments should ensure that development-based Housing Managers and Superintendents:
 - a. require their staffs to perform thorough monthly inspections and report all deficiencies in accordance with NYCHA's standards;
 - b. conduct and document the results of subsequent inspections to confirm the accuracy of the staffs' findings on inspection reports; and
 - c. sign every monthly inspection report and enforce NYCHA policies requiring the retention of such inspection reports.
9. NYCHA's NextGeneration Operations and Property Management departments should:
 - a. randomly and continuously inspect NYCHA playgrounds, ensuring that such inspections cover all playgrounds throughout the agency's developments not less than annually;
 - b. inform the responsible development managers and supervisors of any unacceptable conditions that require immediate attention; and
 - c. follow up to ensure that all such conditions are remedied.

Agency Response

In its response, NYCHA generally agreed with all of the recommendations. However, it disagreed in part with one recommendation that it ensure that development-based Housing Managers and Superintendents conduct and document the results of inspections to confirm the accuracy of the findings contained in routinely filed inspection reports. NYCHA stated that it "is committed to providing safe, clean, and connected communities for everyone who lives in public housing.

NYCHA has taken steps since the initial audit findings to address the hazardous conditions found at its playgrounds.”

AUDIT REPORT

Background

NYCHA, created in 1935, is the largest public housing authority in North America; more than 400,000 New Yorkers reside in its 326 developments across the City's five boroughs. NYCHA's mission is to increase opportunities for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers by providing safe, affordable housing and facilitating access to social and community services. Playgrounds exist at most NYCHA developments, and as NYCHA has recognized, they are important assets for NYCHA's residents, particularly children. NYCHA has expressly stated that "[v]ibrant play-spaces are central to creating connected public housing communities—and all children deserve a space where they can explore, learn, and thrive with one another."²

We conducted this audit to determine whether NYCHA is (1) maintaining the playgrounds in its developments in satisfactory condition; and (2) inspecting them in accordance with its own policies and procedures. Although NYCHA could not provide us with a comprehensive list of its playgrounds, we were able to identify and inspect all 788 playgrounds we observed that NYCHA maintains³ by visiting 316 developments and ascertaining that 238 of those were equipped with playgrounds.⁴

Within NYCHA, playground maintenance is primarily the responsibility of each development's grounds-keeping staff, under the overall direction of a development-based Superintendent. In addition, each development's Housing Manager has overall responsibility for all development operations, which include monitoring the performance of the grounds-keeping staff, inspecting the grounds and related facilities on a regular basis, and meeting with the Superintendents and residents to discuss grounds issues.

Each development's grounds staff is supposed to maintain the exterior areas of the development, including lawns, trees, recreation areas, parking areas, paved area and fences. That overall responsibility encompasses the inspection, upkeep, and repair of playgrounds and playground equipment, which may involve contacting the manufacturer for equipment under warranty, or engaging vendors for repairs that cannot be completed by NYCHA's development-based staff. The development's Superintendent is responsible for supervising its grounds-keeping activities, which include reviewing records, logs and surveys, ensuring compliance with safety regulations, and entering grounds inspection results in Maximo, NYCHA's electronic system for managing the maintenance and repair of its physical assets, including playgrounds.⁵

NYCHA's SHGs (Supervising Housing Groundskeepers) who are assigned to every development, are responsible for directly implementing grounds plans, supervising grounds staff, monitoring grounds operations, and performing hands-on grounds-keeping work. Specifically, the SHGs are

² NYCHA Announces New Partnership With "Kaboom!" for Series of Resident-Led Playground Design Workshops and Community-Based Playground Building Days, January 10, 2017.

³ The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation currently leases and manages 34 additional playgrounds and parks located on NYCHA property; they are not among the 788 covered by this audit and will be discussed in a separate audit report.

⁴ For this audit a playground is defined as an outdoor area provided for children's play, often containing recreation equipment, and includes all areas identified by NYCHA signage as play areas. To identify all 788 playgrounds under NYCHA's jurisdiction, we reviewed NYCHA records that identify all 326 of its developments, eliminated 10 developments (primarily located in Queens) with 138 apartments that NYCHA administers under the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) Acquired Homes program, which do not have playgrounds. We conducted on-site visual inspections of the remaining 316 NYCHA developments.

⁵ Maximo is an asset and work management software product utilized by NYCHA to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of all work orders and inspections. Maximo is used to create, assign, and track work orders to perform maintenance and repair work requested by residents or initiated by NYCHA staff.

required to (1) conduct daily inspections of the grounds, including playgrounds; and (2) complete a detailed monthly *Grounds and Playground Inspection Report*, also known as an *Inspection Work Order*, in the Maximo system.

NYCHA's monthly *Grounds and Playground Inspection Report* is a two-page form that delineates 100 specific types of items in 11 categories for inspection, such as trees, shrubs, lawns, paved areas, and sitting areas. The section captioned "Play Area Equipment and Safety" is the largest and most detailed section of the report form and lists 38 types of items for monthly inspection. For each of the 38 items, the inspector must record its condition as good, fair, or unsatisfactory, and add additional information in a space for remarks. Among the items to be inspected and assessed are the metal, wood, safety surfacing, swings, climbers, decks, platforms, bridges, ramps, steps, and various types of slides, and other items in each playground.

NYCHA's Standard Procedure, *Administration of Development Grounds*, provides uniform, detailed instructions for each development's grounds-keeping staff and describes the purposes and procedures for conducting the required monthly inspections of the grounds and entering the results of those inspections into NYCHA's Maximo system.

Apart from the development-based grounds-keeping staff, two NYCHA departments, NGO (the NextGeneration Office) and Property Management, are responsible for overseeing property-management functions at all NYCHA properties. Each of those two departments has Regional Asset Managers to provide comprehensive management of all NYCHA properties under their jurisdiction and to concentrate on the maintenance and upkeep of all buildings, the grounds around the developments, and fiscal administration.

Objectives

The objective of this audit was to determine whether NYCHA is maintaining its playgrounds located within NYCHA developments in satisfactory condition and whether NYCHA is complying with its own policies and procedures for conducting inspections.

Scope and Methodology Statement

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. This audit was conducted in accordance with the audit responsibilities of the City Comptroller as set forth in Chapter 5, §93, of the New York City Charter.

This audit covered the period June 1, 2016, through October 31, 2017. Please refer to the Detailed Scope and Methodology at the end of this report for the specific procedures and tests that were conducted.

Discussion of Audit Results

The findings in this report were discussed with NYCHA during and at the conclusion of this audit. In addition, during the course of the audit we observed potentially hazardous conditions during field work that appeared to need immediate attention, and we informed NYCHA in writing of those

conditions. A preliminary draft report was sent to NYCHA and was discussed at an exit conference held on February 12, 2018. At the exit conference, NYCHA officials requested a list of developments with playgrounds that we observed and asked that we note all the unsatisfactory conditions that were found at each playground, including those that we had deemed potentially hazardous and had previously brought to their attention. In accordance with NYCHA's request at the exit conference, we provided that list the same day. In response, NYCHA officials subsequently informed us that our list of development-playgrounds with unsatisfactory conditions was forwarded to the developments for appropriate action. That information and our discussions with NYCHA officials were considered in preparation of the draft report.

On March 8, 2018, we submitted a draft report to NYCHA with a request for comments. We received a written response from NYCHA officials on March 22, 2018. In its response, NYCHA generally agreed with all of the recommendations. However, it disagreed with one part of one recommendation—that it ensure that development-based Housing Managers and Superintendents conduct and document the results of subsequent inspections to confirm the accuracy of their staffs' findings on monthly inspection reports. NYCHA stated that it "is committed to providing safe, clean, and connected communities for everyone who lives in public housing. NYCHA has taken steps since the initial audit findings to address the hazardous conditions found at its playgrounds."

The full text of NYCHA's response is included as an addendum to this report.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NYCHA does not ensure that its playgrounds are maintained in a clean and safe manner and that required inspections of its playgrounds are being performed. Our inspections of all 788 NYCHA-maintained playgrounds—located in 238 NYCHA developments—found unsatisfactory conditions in 549 (70 percent) of the playgrounds, some of which were hazardous to children. We found numerous playgrounds with substandard conditions, such as missing and broken play equipment, some with exposed jagged edges, loose and deteriorated safety surfacing, tripping hazards, debris, erosion, and unkempt vegetation.

During the audit, as we proceeded with our playground-inspections, we informed NYCHA management of the potentially hazardous conditions we found to enable the Authority to take immediate corrective action to address safety concerns. NYCHA responded within reasonable time frames with reports that identified corrective actions it had taken to address each condition, which included, repairs, closures, and the engagement of vendors to upgrade damaged areas and equipment. This report cites several examples, with photographs, of conditions we reported to NYCHA during the audit, along with NYCHA's reported corrective actions in response to our notifications. Copies of the letters to and from NYCHA regarding such potentially hazardous conditions are attached as appendices to this report.

In addition to our visual inspections of each of the 788 NYCHA-maintained playgrounds, we made an additional visit to a sample of 25 developments where we had identified deficient and hazardous playground conditions to review the records maintained by the developments related to playground conditions and repairs. We found that almost half of the 25 sampled developments had not prepared or retained mandated monthly inspection reports. In addition, we found that the inspection reports that were available did not always accurately document the conditions we found during our inspections of the playgrounds, as is described in this report. Further, each inspection report is supposed to be signed by both (1) the NYCHA staff member who performed the inspection; and (2) the Superintendent, or the Housing Manager. However, we found numerous reports that were missing the reviewers' signatures. Further, we found that NYCHA's development staff are not recording the results of their monthly inspections of the grounds and playgrounds in Maximo as required by NYCHA's written procedures, a significant omission that deprives NYCHA of a reliable, current, and readily-available record of the conditions of all of its playgrounds.

While we found deficiencies in the majority of NYCHA's playgrounds, we also found that 30 percent of them—239 playgrounds—were in good or satisfactory condition at the times of our inspections, with no observed deficiencies. We included photographs of two such playgrounds in this report. Those examples show that a significant number of NYCHA developments provide their residents with safe, pleasant outdoor play areas for their children's enjoyment. Unfortunately, those were not the prevailing conditions we found in most of NYCHA's playgrounds.

The above-described issues are discussed in detail in the following sections of this report.

Hazardous and Unsatisfactory Conditions Found in NYCHA Playgrounds

NYCHA's *Administration of Development Grounds*, which prescribes the agency's standard procedures for grounds-keeping, states, "Proper grounds design and maintenance result in a

clean, safe, and attractive environment and improve the quality of life for residents.” However, based on our inspections we found that 549 out of 788 (70 percent) NYCHA playgrounds were not properly maintained in accordance with NYCHA’s policies and procedures. We found conditions that were not only unsatisfactory but in some cases hazardous to children. During the audit, we notified NYCHA of all potentially-hazardous conditions so that action could be taken to correct them. The types of unsatisfactory conditions we observed in the 549 playgrounds at 187 developments fall into the following categories:

- 151 developments had a total of 352 playgrounds with damaged safety surfacing, such as mats and tiles that were loose, missing, warped or otherwise damaged;
- 129 developments had a total of 319 playgrounds with overgrown/penetrating weeds and grass;
- 97 developments had a total of 164 playgrounds with missing, warped, bent, or broken play equipment;
- 59 developments had a total of 149 playgrounds with broken or deteriorated benches;
- 55 developments had a total of 79 playgrounds with clogged or inadequate water drainage; and
- 52 developments had a total of 72 playgrounds with conditions that may have posed imminent danger, as described below.⁶

Among the unsatisfactory conditions that we observed, the following are five examples of conditions that posed a potential danger for children:

- At Riis Houses in Manhattan (1115-1141 FDR Drive), a play structure’s spiral climber was broken with exposed sharp metal edges;
- At Armstrong Houses in Brooklyn (380 Clifton Avenue), a deteriorated chain log ladder was not properly secured to its play structure;
- At Jackson Houses in the Bronx two playgrounds (285 East 156th Street and 300 East 158th Street) had deteriorating metal slides with cracks and exposed jagged edges on the sliding surfaces; and
- At South Jamaica Houses in Queens (106-56 160th Street), we found a play structure with a broken crossing bridge and a broken chain ladder.

⁶ A development may have more than one playground and a playground may have more than one unsatisfactory condition. Accordingly, the total number of unsatisfactory categories identified in the audit exceeds the total number of playgrounds observed.

Riis Houses playground located at 1115-1141 FDR Drive, Manhattan
Broken Spiral Climber with Sharp Edges

We notified senior NYCHA officials of the broken spiral climber at Riis Houses on June 23, 2017. On July 12, 2017, NYCHA informed us that the damaged portion of the equipment had been secured with plywood and caution tape. Subsequently, NYCHA repaired and refurbished the equipment as shown in the third (bottom) photograph below.



Refurbished Spiral Climber



Armstrong Houses playground, 380 Clifton Avenue, Brooklyn
Deteriorated Chain Log Ladder Improperly Secured

We notified senior NYCHA officials of the deteriorated chain log ladder at Armstrong Houses on July 14, 2017. On August 2, 2017, NYCHA officials informed us that they had locked the gates that had allowed access to the playground area to prevent public access, and that a work order for a vendor to repair the equipment had been created.

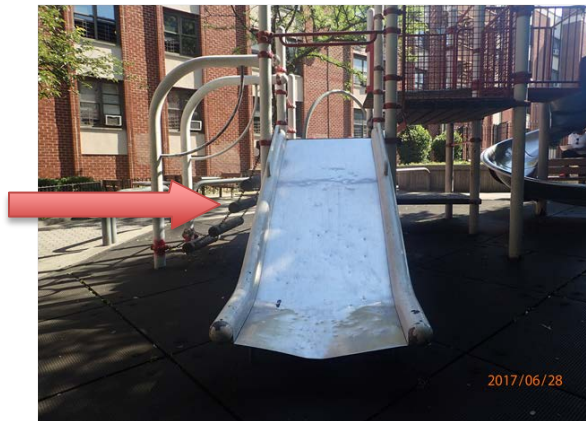


When we revisited the site on October 31, 2017, we found that the entire play structure and its safety surfacing had been removed. The following two photographs of the playground, taken on June 28, 2017 and October 31, 2017 show, respectively, the play structure before removal, and the empty space where it had been removed. The development Superintendent informed our auditors that the development did not have sufficient funds to have the play equipment repaired and that it had instead been removed.

Armstrong Houses playground, 380 Clifton Avenue, Brooklyn

June 28, 2017

(Arrow shows deteriorated chain log ladder)



Removed Armstrong Houses playground, 380 Clifton Avenue, Brooklyn

October 31, 2017



Jackson Houses playground, 285 East 156th Street, Bronx
Broken Metal Slides with Sharp Edges

By letter dated July 24, 2017, we notified NYCHA officials of the broken metal slides reflected in the photographs below at the Jackson Houses playgrounds. On August 17, 2017, NYCHA informed us that the damaged equipment was repaired.



Jackson Houses playground, 300 East 158th Street, Bronx



South Jamaica Houses playground located at 106-56 160th Street, Queens
Broken Crossing Bridge and Chain Ladder

By letter dated August 2, 2017, we notified NYCHA officials of the hazardous conditions reflected in the photographs below that we found in the South Jamaica Houses playground. On August 17, 2017, NYCHA officials informed us that the bridge and chain equipment were removed and the affected area was closed off.



Inadequate Playground Inspections

NYCHA does not ensure that inspections are scheduled or that the inspection reports are properly completed and maintained. When we compared the conditions we observed at the playgrounds with inspection reports provided by the developments we found that what was documented in the inspection reports did not match the actual conditions of the playgrounds. Our review found that the inspection reports at 9 of the 13 developments that had both playgrounds with hazardous conditions and at least some inspection reports on file did not reflect any such conditions or any other playground-conditions needing repairs. Of the remaining four developments in that group, one reported a hazardous condition that needed repair and three had no inspection reports for June and July 2017, the period we used for comparison purposes.

Upon review, we found that NYCHA has inadequate controls over its inspection process and does not follow its own policies and procedures for inspecting its playgrounds. As a result, NYCHA has no assurance that every NYCHA playground is inspected monthly or that necessary maintenance and repairs are being performed on playground equipment and grounds. Although NYCHA's standard procedure instructs its development staff to use NYCHA's Maximo system to automatically schedule playground inspections every month, the evidence found in this audit shows that NYCHA does not utilize Maximo to schedule such inspections or to record and follow up on the results.

According to NYCHA's Standard Procedure, *Administration of Development Grounds*:

- Inspection reports document conditions, identify problems, serve as a written record of all findings, and ensure that development staff follows up to correct problems and make improvements.
- The Maximo system should schedule inspections of the playgrounds every thirty days.
- Development grounds staff should use handheld devices to record grounds inspection results, which would automatically upload into Maximo, and if a handheld device is not available, then inspection results should be manually entered into Maximo.
- Work orders are automatically created by Maximo for any deficiencies noted in the inspection. Corrective follow-up work is performed by NYCHA staff or an outside vendor to correct any deficiency noted during an inspection.

However, based on our interviews with senior NYCHA officials and development personnel, we found that, in fact, NYCHA does not use its Maximo system to schedule playground inspections, and inspection results are not uploaded to Maximo as required by NYCHA procedures. Instead, NYCHA officials stated that the staff at each development are required to schedule and conduct monthly inspections and maintain hard copies of inspection reports in the Superintendent's office at the development. Development staff create a work order in Maximo only if a repair is needed.

After learning that the inspection reports are not maintained in Maximo, we conducted a second visit of a sample of 25 developments with hazardous playground conditions to obtain and review copies of the relevant inspection reports. We found that 12 of the 25 developments did not maintain any inspection reports for their grounds and playgrounds. Based on our interviews with development personnel, 10 developments did not keep inspection reports because, their staff members stated, they were unaware that doing so was required, and they only noted issues that they found needed to be repaired in the SHG's logbook. At two developments, according to the

staff, the inspection reports reportedly were destroyed when the grounds shops where they were stored experienced flooding.

The remaining 13 developments in our sample maintained 124 (56 percent) of the 221 required inspection reports for the 17-month period of June 2016 through October 2017. However, our review of the inspection reports available found that more than half were not signed, as NYCHA procedures require, by a reviewing official—the development Superintendent or the Housing Manager. Under NYCHA procedures, the review signature should evidence that the inspection report was reviewed and that the inspection was conducted properly. NYCHA's Standard Procedure, *Administration of Development Grounds*, states, "The Superintendent, Housing Manager, and SHG review and sign the Inspection Work Order that is kept on file in the Superintendent's Office."

Throggs Neck – Inaccurate Playground Inspection Reports

Below is an illustration of a playground where we documented hazardous conditions that were not reflected in the NYCHA development's monthly inspection reports dated July 31, 2017 and August 4, 2017.

- July 17, 2017: We visited Throggs Neck Houses and found three different hazardous conditions in two playgrounds:
 - a damaged spiral metal slide with a jagged edge;
 - a broken mesh bench; and
 - a deteriorating platform with a sharp metal edge (photos on following page).

A resident told us that her child had been injured while playing in one of the playgrounds because of the hazardous conditions.⁷

- July 24, 2017: We informed senior NYCHA officials of the potentially hazardous conditions we observed in all playgrounds in all Bronx developments, including the above three conditions at Throggs Neck.
- July 31, 2017: Development staff at the Throggs Neck Houses conducted a monthly inspection and reported that the playground, including the spiral slide, the benches and platforms, was in "good" condition; the only exception noted was a curved slide rated "fair." The inspection report did not have a reviewing Manager's or a Superintendent's signature as required by NYCHA's procedures.
- August 4, 2017: Development staff at Throggs Neck performed another inspection, this time rating the spiral slide unsatisfactory, and stating that it had been removed. No other unsatisfactory conditions were noted. Benches and platforms were rated "good."
- August 17, 2017: NYCHA officials informed us that the spiral slide was removed and blocked off, the area with the broken mesh bench was blocked off, and a work order was created for repair of the deteriorating platform.

⁷ After the exit conference, NYCHA informed us that its Law Department did not have any records of claims of injury pertaining to Throggs Neck playgrounds.

Throggs Neck Houses playground, 2800 Schley Avenue
Broken Spiral Slide with Sharp Metal Edge



Broken Mesh Bench



Throggs Neck Houses playground, 2821 Dewey Avenue
Rusting and Uplifting Platform with Sharp Metal Edge



Throggs Neck Houses July 31, 2017 Playground Inspection Report

Below is a copy of the “play area equipment and safety” section of the July 31, 2017 monthly *Grounds and Playground Inspection Report* for the Throggs Neck development, which was prepared after our inspection and after we informed NYCHA of the hazardous conditions. The play equipment, including the spiral slide, benches and platforms, is rated “good” except for a curved slide, which is rated “fair.” No actions are noted. The inspection report is not signed by a reviewer, which should be either the Superintendent or the Housing Manager.

GROUNDS AND PLAYGROUND INSPECTION REPORT (MONTHLY)		NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY			
		Development: <u>Throggs Neck Houses</u>			
Inspection Areas	Good	Fair	Unsat.	Remarks	

E. PLAY AREA EQUIPMENT AND SAFETY					
Mats	✓				
Wood	✓				
Safety surfacing	✓				
Free of hazardous objects	✓				
Free of obstructions	✓				
Lighting	✓				
Benches	✓				
Tables	✓				
Basketball (pole, backboard)	✓				
Paved area (game)	✓				
Risk notes				N/A	
Handball court				N/A	
Spiral slides	✓				
Straight slides	✓				
Curved slides		✓			
Tunnel slides				N/A	
Roller slides				N/A	
Swings				N/A	
Tire swings				N/A	
Seesaw				N/A	
Spring rockers				N/A	
Merry-go-round				N/A	
Sliding rockers				N/A	
Log ride				N/A	
Rigid climbers	✓				
Flexible climbers				N/A	
Crawl tunnels				N/A	
Balance beams				N/A	
Step ladders	✓				
Rung ladders	✓				

NYCHA 040.752 (2/09)

Good Benches

Good Spiral Slide

Fair Curved Slide

Inspection Areas	Good	Fair	Unsat.	Remarks
Rings			N/A	
Hand over hand bars			N/A	
Signs	✓			
Stairways	✓			
Decks/Platforms	✓			
Bridges	✓			
Ramps	✓			
Steps	✓			
F. PAVED AREAS				

Good Deck/Platform

Lighting	✓			
Date Inspected:	Inspected by:	Title:		
<u>Jul 31, 2017</u>	<u>Jorge H. Almo</u>	<u>S.P.H.C.</u>		
Date Reviewed:	Reviewed by:	Title:		

cc: Development Manager
Development Superintendent
Borough Deputy Director

NYCHA 040.752 (2/09)

Throggs Neck Houses August 4, 2017 Playground Inspection Report

Below is copy of the section from the August 4, 2017 Throggs Neck play area equipment and safety inspection report, which is the second report completed after we informed NYCHA of the hazardous conditions. On this report the spiral slide is rated unsatisfactory, and the report indicates that it was removed. No unsatisfactory condition or action was recorded for the damaged bench or deteriorated platform with the sharp edge. This inspection report was also not signed by a reviewer, which should be either the Superintendent or the Housing Manager.

Grounds and Playground Inspection Report (Monthly)	NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY		
	Development: <u>Throggs Neck Houses</u>		
Inspection Areas	Good	Fair	Unsat.

Inspection Areas	Good	Fair	Unsat.	Remarks
Locks	✓			
E. PLAY AREA EQUIPMENT AND SAFETY	✓			
Metals	✓			
Wood	✓			
Safety surfacing	✓			
Free of hazardous objects	✓			
Free of obstructions	✓			
Lighting	✓			
Benches	✓			
Tables	✓			
Basketball (pole, backboard)	✓			
Painted lines (game)	✓			
Bike racks			N/A	
Handball court			N/A	
Spiral slides			✓	Removed From BSO's Away Play ground
Straight slides	✓			
Curved slides		✓		
Tunnel slides			N/A	
Roller slides			N/A	
Swings			N/A	
Tire swings			N/A	
Seesaws			N/A	
Spring rockers			N/A	
Merry-go-rounds			N/A	
Standing rocking			N/A	
Log rolls			N/A	
Rigid climbers	✓			
Flexible climbers			N/A	
Crawl tunnels			N/A	
Balance beams			N/A	
Step ladders	✓			
Pump ladders	✓			


Good Benches

Unsatisfactory Spiral Slide

Fair Curved Slide

Inspection Areas	Good	Fair	Unsat.	Remarks
Rings			N/A	
Hand over hand bars			N/A	
Signs	✓			
Stairways	✓			
Decks/Platforms	✓			
Shades	✓			
Plumps	✓			
Steps	✓			

Good Deck/Platform

Lighting Date Inspected: <u>08/04/2017</u> Date Reviewed: _____	Inspected by: <u>Sergio H. Plano - Sergio H. Plano</u> Reviewed by: _____	Title: <u>S.O.H.C.</u> Title: _____
cc: Development Manager Development Superintendent Borough Deputy Director		
		

Stuyvesant Gardens – No Playground Inspection Reports

In another example of undocumented and/or inadequately documented hazards, we found a playground at Stuyvesant Gardens in Brooklyn to have damaged safety surfacing, such as loose, separated, and missing tiles:

- June 28, 2017: We visited this playground and observed loose tiles and severe separation in the safety surfacing.
- July 14, 2017: We informed senior NYCHA officials of the potentially hazardous conditions we observed in all playgrounds in all Brooklyn developments, including the damaged safety surfacing at Stuyvesant Gardens.
- August 2, 2017: NYCHA officials stated that they were awaiting a vendor's proposal for the repair of the safety surfacing.
- November 1, 2017: We met with the SHG for Stuyvesant Gardens and requested copies of the inspection reports. The SHG informed us that no inspection reports were available for the 17-month period of July 2016 through November 1, 2017.

Stuyvesant Gardens playground located at 680 Quincy Street, Brooklyn **Damaged Safety Surfacing**



30 Percent of NYCHA's Playgrounds Were Found in Good Condition

We found that 239 (30 percent) of NYCHA's 788 playgrounds were in good or satisfactory condition at the times of our inspections, with no observed deficiencies. One such site is shown in the following two photographs depicting two different play structures.

Astoria Houses playground located at 1-10 Astoria Boulevard, Queens



The fact that 239 NYCHA playgrounds were found in good or satisfactory condition demonstrates that the staff and management at a significant number of NYCHA developments can and do successfully provide their residents with safe and pleasant outdoor play areas for their children's enjoyment. Unfortunately, that was not the prevailing condition we found in most of NYCHA's playgrounds.

NYCHA's Oversight of Its Playgrounds Is Insufficient to Provide Reasonable Assurance That Its Policies Are Consistently Followed

As evidenced by the conditions we found during our inspections of all 788 NYCHA-managed playgrounds, overall, NYCHA does not ensure that its playgrounds are being properly maintained and inspected. Moreover, although NYCHA has established a detailed, uniform process, with appropriate management tools to provide for the proper scheduling, performance, review, documentation, and follow-up of playground inspections by its development-based staff, the audit revealed that in practice NYCHA does not follow or enforce its written policy. Further, senior NYCHA officials informed us that NYCHA does not use its Maximo system to schedule playground inspections, and inspection results are not uploaded to Maximo as required. Thus, it appears that NYCHA's senior management was aware that the agency's Maximo asset-management system is not being used in accordance with written NYCHA policy for the ongoing inspection and maintenance of development grounds, including playgrounds. Notwithstanding that awareness, NYCHA has not taken sufficient action to enforce agency policy regarding the role of the Maximo system in playground maintenance or to develop alternative measures to ensure that maintenance issues are otherwise proactively identified and addressed. Further, although in theory centrally- and regionally-based Regional Asset Managers oversee the development-based maintenance activities, their oversight has not been adequate to ensure that NYCHA's playgrounds consistently meet agency standards for appearance and safety. Without sustained, effective management oversight, inspections may or may not be performed and documentation, such as inspection reports, may or may not be created, and those that are created may or may not be accurate. Under such circumstances, in the absence of a practical, consistently-enforced agency policy, there is little evidence to suggest that overall conditions in NYCHA's playgrounds will improve.

Recommendations

To address these issues, we make the following nine recommendations for improvement:

1. NYCHA should immediately inspect all 788 playgrounds for which it is responsible and remedy any hazardous conditions noted.

NYCHA Response: "NYCHA will inspect playgrounds and remedy hazardous conditions within 90 days. As noted in the Comptroller's draft audit report, NYCHA management was notified of the potentially hazardous conditions during the audit and took corrective action to address safety concerns."

2. NYCHA should make every playground it manages fully operational as quickly as possible, within a reasonable time frame. In so doing the agency should determine whether damaged and deteriorated playground equipment should be repaired or

replaced, whether any of it is under warranty, and whether repairs should be performed by development staff or vendors.

NYCHA Response: “NYCHA will make this part of its automated inspection for playgrounds. This will be a semi-automated (partially paper) process until full automation is completed. However, given NYCHA's limited funding, damaged or hazardous equipment may be removed and not replaced.”

3. NYCHA should take immediate steps to implement an effective management oversight scheme to ensure that development grounds and playgrounds are all being inspected monthly in accordance with NYCHA's written procedures.

NYCHA Response: “Playground inspections will be automated through NYCHA's Maximo system and monitoring reports will be available for NYCHA to track completion of inspections.”

4. NYCHA's senior management should evaluate and address the causes of the failures that allowed substandard and in some cases hazardous conditions in 549 NYCHA playgrounds to go unaddressed, including, where applicable, failures to conduct, review, sign-off, retain, and follow-up on required inspections and inspection reports.

NYCHA Response: “NYCHA's senior management is aware of the causes that allowed playground conditions to go unaddressed. Enhanced monitoring will be conducted once inspection reports are automated. Lack of funding to address poor conditions is another major cause - as such, damaged or hazardous equipment may be removed and not replaced.”

5. NYCHA, through its senior management, should enforce agency policy that requires development staff to utilize the agency's Maximo system to automatically schedule monthly grounds and playground inspections and use handheld devices to document the inspection results in the system.

NYCHA Response: “NYCHA agrees with this recommendation to require the use of Maximo for playground inspections and will implement it as part of the inspection automation.”

6. In instances where handheld devices are not available, NYCHA, through its senior management, should enforce agency policy that requires development staff to manually enter playground-inspection results in the Maximo system and maintain hard copies of the completed inspection reports, with required signatures of the preparer and reviewer, in the Superintendent's office.

NYCHA Response: “NYCHA will conduct playground inspections using handheld devices as part of the automation of the playground inspection. Staff that conducts the inspections will be equipped with hand held devices. The reports will be retained in Maximo. Until automation is complete, electronic versions of the paper inspection reports will be retained.”

7. Development staff should ensure that work orders are created and tracked in Maximo to enable all deficiencies in their playgrounds to be appropriately remedied.

NYCHA Response: “NYCHA agrees and will implement this as part of the automation of the playground inspection.”

8. NYCHA's NextGeneration Operations and Property Management departments should ensure that development-based Housing Managers and Superintendents:

- a. require their staffs to perform thorough monthly inspections and report all deficiencies in accordance with NYCHA's standards;

NYCHA Response: "Through the automation of the playground inspection, NYCHA will have access to monitoring reports to ensure that staffs are completing the monthly inspections and addressing deficiencies."

- b. conduct and document the results of subsequent inspections to confirm the accuracy of the staffs' findings on inspection reports; and

NYCHA Response: "NYCHA disagrees with conducting routine subsequent inspections, but will have oversight of the inspections once they are automated."

Auditor's Comment: Since NYCHA's standard procedure requires Housing Managers and Superintendents to inspect the grounds (including playgrounds) on a regular basis, we continue to recommend that follow-up inspections are conducted and documented.

- c. sign every monthly inspection report and enforce NYCHA policies requiring the retention of such inspection reports.

NYCHA Response: "Inspection reports will be retained in NYCHA's Maximo system. Inspection reports in Maximo are required to be signed by the employee that completed the inspection."

Auditor's Comment: Since NYCHA's standard procedure requires Housing Managers and Superintendents to sign the inspection reports as reviewers, we continue to recommend that the inspection reports be signed by those reviewers.

9. NYCHA's NextGeneration Operations and Property Management departments should:

- a. randomly and continuously inspect NYCHA playgrounds, ensuring that such inspections cover all playgrounds throughout the agency's developments not less than annually;

NYCHA Response: "Through the automation of the playground inspection, NYCHA will have access to monitoring reports to ensure that staffs are completing the monthly inspections and addressing deficiencies."

- b. inform the responsible development managers and supervisors of any unacceptable conditions that require immediate attention; and

NYCHA Response: "NYCHA agrees with this recommendation. Supervisors and other staff will report unacceptable playground conditions to the development's property manager."

- c. follow up to ensure that all such conditions are remedied.

NYCHA Response: "The automation of NYCHA's playground inspection will allow for oversight to ensure that conditions are remedied in a timely manner."

DETAILED SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. This audit was conducted in accordance with the audit responsibilities of the City Comptroller as set forth in Chapter 5, §93, of the New York City Charter.

The audit covered the period of June 1, 2016 through October 31, 2017.

We met with NYCHA officials to obtain an understanding of the controls and processes involved in maintaining, inspecting and repairing playgrounds. We reviewed the *Public Playground Safety Handbook* to obtain an understanding of the safety and maintenance guidelines as it pertains to what is required to provide a nonhazardous environment for children to play in.⁸ To further our understanding of NYCHA's policies and procedures on playgrounds, we reviewed its *Administration of Development Grounds* manual.

Upon our request, NYCHA submitted a list of playgrounds within NYCHA developments that it manages. The submitted list only included seven playgrounds within four developments that NYCHA is responsible for managing, which includes the maintenance, inspection and repair of all play equipment. NYCHA officials stated that some playgrounds are under the jurisdiction of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and NYCHA is not responsible for the maintenance of those areas. To determine the reliability of the list of playgrounds and parks managed by NYCHA, we visited 316 NYCHA developments not including the 10 FHA Acquired Homes and spoke with the NYCHA personnel. Based on our visits we identified 822 playgrounds that were within the NYCHA developments we visited. We noted that 34 playgrounds had signs indicating that they were under the jurisdiction of Department of Parks and Recreation. The remaining 788 playgrounds had signs indicating that they were under NYCHA jurisdiction. During our observations, which were conducted from June 8, 2017 through July 25, 2017, we inspected all 822 playgrounds for imminent danger, missing or broken equipment, safety surface irregularities, overgrown vegetation, chipping paint or broken benches, litter, graffiti, and clogged or inadequate drainage. This audit report reports on the conditions found at the 788 playgrounds under NYCHA's jurisdiction.

We developed an inspection package, using the inspection checklist used by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to inspect its playgrounds, to assist us when visiting each of the 316 development locations. This enabled our auditors to identify any conditions that are satisfactory or unsatisfactory in accordance with NYCHA requirements. The package included an inspection checklist to document the development name, location, and conditions seen at each development. The package also included a copy of a map to be used by auditors to establish the location and layout of each development. We took photos to document any unsatisfactory or satisfactory conditions in each development location.

We reported to NYCHA officials our results pertaining to imminent danger at playgrounds for 54 development locations. Our auditors' issued "Conditions Observed in Playgrounds in NYCHA Development" letters to NYCHA officials to alert them of hazardous conditions that posed a danger

⁸ The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) Public Playground Safety Handbook. The handbook, first published in 1981, provides safety information for public playground equipment in the form of guidelines. Because many factors may affect playground safety, the U.S. CPSC staff believes that guidelines, rather than a mandatory rule, are appropriate.

in several playgrounds throughout the five boroughs. NYCHA officials confirmed the auditor's observations and took actions they deemed appropriate for each issue.

We judgmentally selected 25 developments (5 from each borough), which had poorly maintained playgrounds during our inspections, to conduct interviews with development personnel to get an overview of their inspection process. We conducted these interviews from October 2, 2017 through November 1, 2017. We requested copies of the *Grounds and Playground Inspection Report (Monthly)* from June 2016 through October 2017. That report documents the conditions of the development grounds, including playgrounds, with a "good," "fair," or "unsatisfactory" rating. We were able to obtain 124 of the 221 inspection reports from 13 of the 25 sampled developments. The 97 inspection reports were not available because the SHG or the superintendent was new to the development and did not know their location. The remaining 12 developments did not have any inspection reports available. We compared the information on these reports to our own inspection checklists and photos taken of the playgrounds.

Although the results of our sampling tests were not statistically projected to their populations, the results of our testing provide a reasonable assurance regarding the inadequate controls over the inspection process.



CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
SCOTT M. STRINGER

MARJORIE LANDA
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER FOR
AUDIT

BUREAU OF AUDIT

June 14, 2017

By Hand

Shola Olatoye
Chair & Chief Executive Officer
NYC Housing Authority
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Re: Conditions Observed in a Playground in Vladeck Houses

Dear Chairwoman Olatoye:

As we informed the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) by letter dated May 1, 2017 and in an entrance conference held on May 16, 2017, the Office of the Comptroller is conducting an audit of parks and playgrounds located in NYCHA developments. In the course of our audit field work, we observed certain conditions that appear to pose immediate health and safety risks and so are bringing those to your attention for whatever action is appropriate.

Specifically, on June 8, 2017, the audit team observed a slide in a playground at Vladeck Houses located between 630 Water Street and 640 Water Street with cracks and jagged metal edges in the upper left side of the slide. Further, the slide did not appear to be securely attached to the structure. (See enclosed photos marked A, B and C.) At the same location, we also observed jagged surfaces on the part of a climbing ladder that a child might grab a hold of. (See enclosed photos marked E and F.)

Please let me know if there is any additional information you need related to any of these conditions. Thank you for your immediate attention to these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Marjorie Landa".

Marjorie Landa

c: Tricia Roberts, Audit Director



MARJORIE LANDA
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER FOR
AUDIT

CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
SCOTT M. STRINGER

BUREAU OF AUDIT

June 23, 2017

By Hand

Ms. Shola Olatoye
Chair & Chief Executive Officer
NYC Housing Authority
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Re: Conditions Observed in Playgrounds in NYCHA Developments

Dear Chairwomen Olatoye:

I am writing to provide additional information on conditions that staff of Comptroller's Office Audit Bureau recently observed that could pose a danger in several playgrounds on the premises of NYCHA developments. These conditions were observed by auditors after June 14, 2017, the date of my earlier letter related to playground conditions at Vladeck Houses, a copy of which is enclosed. We are bringing these conditions to your attention for whatever action is appropriate.

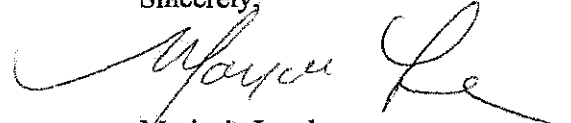
Specifically, auditors from the Comptroller's Office observed the following:

- At Riis Houses, on June 15, 2017, auditors observed a large metal play structure at RIIS Houses that had corroded and separated in several places, leaving sharp metal edges exposed. (See enclosed photos marked A1-A4.)
- At Polo Ground Towers, on June 20, 2017, auditors observed a slide with jagged metal exposed on the left side of the equipment. (See enclosed photos marked B1-B3.)
- At Jefferson Houses, on June 20, 2017, auditors observed a slide that was partly detached from the structure, leaving an exposed gap where children could get hurt. (See enclosed photos marked C1-C2.)
- At Wagner Houses, on June 20, 2017, auditors observed a sharp metal piece protruding at the top of the slide. (See enclosed photos marked D1-D5.)
- Also at Wagner Houses, on June 20, 2017, auditors observed a gap between the slide surface and the side rail on another play structure. (See enclosed photos marked E1-E3.) A resident told our auditors that a child had been injured playing on that slide.
- At Rangel Houses, on June 20, 2017, auditors observed breaks and gaps in a mesh climbing/seating surface. (See enclosed photos marked F1-F4.)
- At Wilson Houses, on June 20, 2017, auditors observed breaks and gaps in a mesh climbing/seating surface. (See enclosed photos marked H1-H3.)
- Near Metro North Early Childhood Center, on June 20, 2017, auditors observed a gated fence that was not securely attached to the building. (See enclosed photos marked G1-G7.)
- At Jefferson Houses, on June 20, 2017, auditors observed a climbing structure/bridge with a missing guardrail. (See enclosed photos marked I1-I3.)

- At Lincoln Houses, on June 22, 2017, auditors observed a rusty metal plate sticking out from the ground. (See enclosed photos marked J1-J3.)

Please let me know if you need any additional information related to any of these conditions. Thank you for your immediate attention to these matters. If you have any questions, please call our Assistant Director, Lawrence Welgrin, at (212) 669-8326.

Sincerely,



Marjorie Landa

Enc.

c: Tricia Roberts, Audit Director

c: Kelly MacNeal, First Deputy General Counsel



NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY
250 BROADWAY • NEW YORK, NY 10007
TEL: (212) 306-3000 • <http://nyc.gov/nycha>

SHOLA OLATOYE
CHAIR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

July 12, 2017

Marjorie Landa, Deputy Comptroller for Audit
New York City Office of the Comptroller
1 Centre Street, Room 1100
New York, NY 10007

Re: NYCHA Response – Playgrounds Conditions Observed

Dear Ms. Landa:

This is in response to your letters, dated June 14, 2017 and June 23, 2017, regarding conditions observed in Playgrounds at NYCHA Developments. Please be advised that public safety is our primary concern and we appreciate you bringing this matter to our attention.

In connection with the Audit of the Oversight of New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA) Playgrounds / Parks and response to your staff's inspections on June 8, 15, 20 and 22, 2017 of NYCHA playgrounds, we took the following actions:

Comptroller Letter Date	Development Name	Location	Observed Condition	Corrective Actions
6/14/2017	Vladeck Houses	630-640 Water Street	Slides with cracks and jagged metal edges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cracked metal on top of slide was spot welded and sanded. •Uneven beam between platform and slide was sealed and smoothed out. •The deteriorated coated finish on climbing chain and bar was temporarily corrected with duct tape to prevent injury. •Repairs were completed by NYC Department of Parks.
6/23/2017	Riis Houses	1115-1141 FDR Drive	Large metal play structure corroded and separated. Sharp metal edges exposed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Secured the damaged portion of the equipment with plywood and caution tape. •Staff is in the process of contacting a vendor to make repairs. •*FYI – Riis Houses was affected by Hurricane Sandy and will be receiving renovations. Playground maybe selected for future renovations.
6/23/2017	Polo Ground Towers	2921 8 th Avenue	Slide with jagged metal exposed on left side of equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The area was cordoned off. •The work orders have been assigned to vendor for repair. Vendor is

Comptroller Letter Date	Development Name	Location	Observed Condition	Corrective Actions
				scheduled to assess and repair play equipment by 7/14/2017.
6/23/2017	Jefferson Houses	Behind 2211 First Avenue	Slide partly detached from structure, leaving exposed gap where children could get hurt.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Area has been currently closed. •Being checked by contractor to verify the necessary repairs. •The work orders have been assigned to vendor for repair.
6/23/2017	Wagner Houses	505 East 120 th Street 2370 First Avenue	Sharp metal piece protruding at top of slide. Gap between the slide surface and side rail on play structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Temporary repair has been made to the damaged area while upgrades are being made in the play areas.
6/23/2017	Rangel Houses	159-26 Harlem River Drive	Breaks and gaps in a mesh climbing/seating surface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Playground area of Rangel Houses that needs repair has been tapered off with caution tape to prevent any injuries. •Property Management staff called vendor to get wire mesh repaired, and is waiting for a proposal to get work started.
6/23/2017	Wilson Houses	425 East 105 th Street	Breaks and gaps in a mesh climbing / seating surface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Playground cannot be closed. The metal mesh has been removed.
6/23/2017	Metro North Early Childhood Center	304 East 102 nd Street	Gated fence that was not securely attached to building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The work order has been assigned to vendor for repair.
6/23/2017	Jefferson Houses	310 East 113 th Street	Climbing structure /bridge with missing guardrail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Area has been currently closed. •Being checked by contractor to verify the necessary repairs. •The work order has been assigned to vendor for repair.
6/23/2017	Lincoln Houses	2101 Madison Avenue	Rusty metal plate sticking out from the ground.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Metal plate has been removed and area is cleared out.

As indicated in the preceding table, NYCHA has initiated immediate corrective actions. In the interim, we are working diligently internally as well as in conjunction with the NYC Department of Parks to address the conditions cited.

We hope this satisfies your inquiry. If you have any questions, please contact Tricia L. Roberts, Audit Director, at 212-306-3441.

Sincerely,


Michael Kelly
General Manager & Chief Operating Officer

Cc: Shola Olatoye, Chair and Chief Executive Officer, NYCHA
Jackie Primeau, Chief of Staff, Office of the Chair
Brian Clarke, Senior Vice President for Operations, NYCHA
Cathy Pennington, Interim Senior Vice-President for NextGen Operations, NYCHA
David Farber, General Counsel, NYCHA
Kelly MacNeal, First Deputy General Counsel
Karina Totah, Vice-President for Strategic Initiatives, NYCHA
Tricia L. Roberts, Director Internal Audit & Assessment, NYCHA



CITY OF NEW YORK
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MARJORIE LANDA
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER FOR
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BUREAU OF AUDIT

July 14, 2017

By Hand

Ms. Shola Olatoye
Chair & Chief Executive Officer
NYC Housing Authority
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Re: Conditions Observed in Playgrounds in NYCHA Developments

Dear Chairwoman Olatoye:

I want to thank you for the prompt responsive action reflected in your agency's letter of July 12, 2017 by General Manager/COO Michael Kelly in reply to my previous letters of June 14 and June 23, 2017, which concerned similar playground conditions in different NYCHA developments.

Based on further observations, I am writing to provide additional information regarding damaged play equipment and fixtures in several play areas on the premises of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments. The conditions reported in this letter and the accompanying photos were observed in Brooklyn between June 20, 2017 and July 6, 2017 by staff of the Comptroller's Office Audit Bureau who are conducting an audit of the NYCHA play areas. We are bringing them to your attention now, while the audit proceeds, as we did with my previous letters, to allow NYCHA's management to continue to take action as needed to address any immediate potential safety concerns that may affect the children and other residents using the play areas.

Specifically, auditors from the Comptroller's Office observed the following:

- At the Cypress Hills Houses Day Care Center, on June 28, 2017, auditors observed a slide with a broken chain ladder with missing and unsecured rungs (See enclosed photos marked A1-A3.)
- At Armstrong Houses I, on June 28, 2017, auditors observed a play structure with a steel chain-and-wood climbing ladder improperly secured at the base and at the top where the metal flanges have partly separated from the wooden platform/support structure. (See enclosed photos marked B1-B9.)
- At Gravesend Houses, on June 30, 2017, auditors observed a cracked plastic slide with an exposed jagged edge on the sliding surface. (See enclosed photos marked C1-C3).
- At Carey Gardens, on June 30, 2017, auditors observed a cracked plastic slide with an exposed jagged edge on the sliding surface. (See enclosed photos marked D1-D3).
- At Lafayette Houses, on June 28, 2017, auditors observed a gap in a climbing structure with screw protruding from the steel support tube where the top wooden step is missing. (See enclosed photos marked E1-E4.)

- At Long Island Baptist Houses, on June 28, 2017, auditors observed a deteriorated steel chain ladder/climbing apparatus with broken, bent, and missing rungs and a climbing ladder with a broken/missing support/handrail. (See enclosed photos marked F1-F4.)
- At Pink Houses, on June 28, 2017, auditors observed a rusted metal slide with a gap between the slide surface and the side-rail (1167 Stanley Avenue—See photos marked G1-G2). Additional conditions observed at Pink Houses: a play structure that is missing several components, including a stepping platform, bridge, and side rails (2724 Linden Boulevard—photos G3-G6); a play structure with nails protruding from deteriorated wood (2678 Linden Boulevard—photos G7-G8); and a play structure that is missing a climbing chain (2700 Linden Boulevard—photo G9).
- At Clinton Houses, on June 20, 2017, auditors observed a climbing chain that was broken with hanging/partially detached/missing metal rungs. (See enclosed photos marked H1-H2.)
- At Stuyvesant Gardens I, on June 28, 2017, auditors observed loose, damaged safety surfacing tiles in the play area with exposed gaps and missing bevel edge tiles. (See enclosed photos marked I1-I3.)
- At Kingsborough Houses, on June 30, 2017, auditors observed a deteriorated wood/steel play structure and slide with protruding screws and bolts (241-253 Kingsborough 2nd walk—photos J1-J3) and partly detached bracing. (529 Kingsborough 5th walk—photos J4-J9).
- At Roosevelt Houses (997 DeKalb Avenue), on June 28, 2017, auditors observed structural deterioration of a metal slide including exposed jagged edges and a partly detached metal brace; and a second play structure (93 Lewis Avenue) on which the top of the slide was not flush to the structure/platform and on which wooden slats protecting a platform edge were deteriorated with nails protruding above the surface. (See enclosed photos marked K1-K5.)
- At Roosevelt Houses I & II, on June 28, 2017, auditors observed that a bolt was missing where the top of the slide should be secured to the play structure/flange. (See enclosed photos marked L1-L3.)
- At East New York City Line Houses, on June 28, 2017, auditors observed a play structure with a gap of several inches where the top of the slide attaches to the platform (470 Fountain Avenue—photos M1-M2); and a play structure with an unprotected platform edge where the slide is missing (between 765 Logan Street and 1080 Hegeman Avenue—photos M3-M5).
- At Howard Avenue-Park Place, on July 6, 2017, auditors observed a play structure with a deteriorated metal slide, including cracks with exposed jagged edges. (See enclosed photos marked N1-N4).
- At Surfside Gardens, on June 30, 2017, auditors observed a play structure that is missing a slide, leaving an unprotected opening to what would have been the entrance to the slide at the elevated platform level. (See enclosed photos marked O1-O3).
- At Red Hook East, on June 28, 2017, missing litter containers left four rusted/deteriorated metal base-assemblies anchored and exposed, protruding several inches above the ground. (See enclosed photos marked P1-P4.)
- At Low Houses, on July 6, 2017, auditors observed a broken bench where a missing slat left the steel support brackets with protruding bolts exposed. (See enclosed photos marked Q1-Q3).
- At Brevoort Houses, on June 30, 2017, auditors observed that play structure was missing a bolt at one of the assemblies where the slide should be secured to the play structure (300-

Ms. Shola Olatoye
July 14, 2017
Page 3 of 3

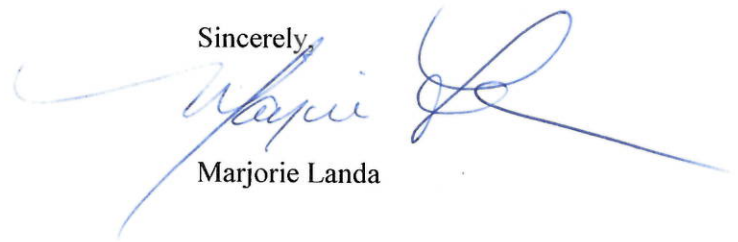
02 Bainbridge Street) and that bolts that anchor the safety surfacing to the ground were protruding from the top the safety surface bevel edge (1853 Fulton Street). (See enclosed photos marked R1-R6).

- At Sheepshead Houses, on July 6, 2017, auditors observed a play structure with a stepping bridge that was missing a handhold/guardrail on one side. (See enclosed photos marked S1-S4).
- At Douglass II Houses, on June 20, 2017, auditors observed a climbing chain that was loose and detached from the safety surface. (See enclosed photo marked T.)
- At Unity Plaza Sites, on June 28, 2017, auditors observed a broken fence that could allow children to stray from the play area into an overgrown vacant lot. (See enclosed photos marked U1-U2.)

Additionally, while entering the premises of Bushwick II (Group A & C) located at 75 Covert Street, the auditors observed a fragmented and uplifted portion of the concrete sidewalk, where loose cement pieces have become detached. (See enclosed photo marked V.)

Please let me know if you need any additional information related to any of these conditions. In addition, Assistant Director Lawrence Welgrin (212) 669-8326 is available to respond to any questions. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marjorie Landa', is written over the word 'Sincerely,'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Marjorie Landa

Enc.

c: Tricia Roberts, Audit Director
c: Kelly MacNeal, First Deputy General Counsel



NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY
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SHOLA OLATOYE
CHAIR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

August 2, 2017

Marjorie Landa, Deputy Comptroller for Audit
New York City Office of the Comptroller
1 Centre Street, Room 1100
New York, NY 10007

Re: NYCHA Response – Playground Conditions Observed

Dear Ms. Landa:

This is in response to your letter, dated July 14, 2017, regarding conditions observed in Playgrounds at NYCHA Developments in Brooklyn and Manhattan. Please be advised that public safety is our primary concern and we appreciate you bringing this matter to our attention.

In connection with the Audit of the Oversight of New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA) Playgrounds / Parks and response to your staff's inspections performed during the period June 20, 2017 to July 6, 2017 of NYCHA playgrounds, we took the following actions:

No.	Comptroller Visit Date	Development Name	Location	Observed Condition	Corrective Actions
A	6/28/2017	Cypress Hills Houses <i>(Also, see "M" on page 3)</i>	Day Care Center 720 Euclid Avenue	A slide with a broken chain ladder with missing and unsecured rungs (See enclosed photos marked A1-A3.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vendor will be secured to install new chain that will be welded on. • The area has been roped off for child safety until repairs are complete. • A Work Order has been created for a vendor.
B	6/28/2017	Armstrong Houses I	380 Clifton Avenue	A play structure with a steel chain-and-wood climbing ladder improperly secured at the base and at the top where the metal flanges have partly separated from the wooden platform/support structure. (See enclosed photos marked B1-B9.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vendor is needed to replace the entire piece of play equipment. • The area has been cautioned off and the gates that allow access to this area have been locked. • Work Order was created.
C	6/30/2017	Gravesend Houses	In front of 2749 West 33 rd Street)	A cracked plastic slide with an exposed jagged edge on the sliding surface. (See enclosed photos marked C1-C3).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area has been temporarily sealed off. • Survey has been submitted to Kaboom Construction. • Waiting on Sandy renovation.

No.	Comptroller Visit Date	Development Name	Location	Observed Condition	Corrective Actions
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *FYI – This development was affected by Hurricane Sandy and will be receiving renovations. Playground maybe selected for future renovations.
D	6/30/2017	Carey Gardens	2832 West 23rd Street	A cracked plastic slide with an exposed jagged edge on the sliding surface. (See enclosed photos marked D1-D3).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area has been temporarily sealed off. Survey has been submitted to Kaboom Construction. *FYI – This development was affected by Hurricane Sandy and will be receiving renovations. Playground maybe selected for future renovations.
E	6/28/2017	Lafayette Houses	456 DeKalb Avenue	A gap in a climbing structure with screw protruding from the steel support tube where the top wooden step is missing. (See enclosed photos marked E1-E4.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screws were removed. An e-mail has been sent to the Supervisor of Carpenters to replace wooden slats. A Work Order has been created for Skilled Trade.
F	6/28/2017	Long Island Baptist Houses (Unity Plaza) (Also, see “U” on page 5)	398 Sheffield Avenue	A deteriorated steel chain ladder/climbing apparatus with broken, bent, and missing rungs and a climbing ladder with a broken/missing support/handrail. (See enclosed photos marked F1-F4.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The playground equipment was entirely fenced in; so that it temporarily cannot be used until the vendor does the repairs.
G	6/28/2017	Pink Houses	1167 Stanley Avenue	A rusted metal slide with a gap between the slide surface and the side-rail (See photos marked G1-G2).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brooklyn Property Management has created work orders for the skilled trades: Carpenter, Welder and Painter. A vendor was also called in to inspect the damaged parts of the play areas. Awaiting Proposal and schedule dates. The Work Order was created for Welder.
			2724 Linden Boulevard	A play structure that is missing several components, including a stepping platform, bridge, and side rails (See photos G3-G6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brooklyn Property Management has created work orders for the skilled trades: Carpenter, Welder and Painter. A vendor was also called in to inspect the damaged parts of the play areas.

No.	Comptroller Visit Date	Development Name	Location	Observed Condition	Corrective Actions
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awaiting Proposal and schedule dates.
			2678 Linden Boulevard	A play structure with nails protruding from deteriorated wood (See photos G7-G8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Order was created for "Carpenter" skilled trade. • A vendor was also called in to inspect the damaged parts of the play areas. • Awaiting Proposal and schedule dates.
			2700 Linden Boulevard	A play structure that is missing a climbing chain (See photo G9).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Order was created for "Vendor". • Awaiting Proposal and schedule dates.
H	6/20/2017	Clinton Houses	1505-1507 Park Avenue	A climbing chain that was broken with hanging/ partially detached/missing metal rungs. (See enclosed photos marked H1- H2.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The equipment was cordoned off with a caution tape. • Waiting for a proposal from a vendor to correct missing ladder.
I	6/28/2017	Stuyvesant Gardens I	680 Quincy Street	Loose, damaged safety surfacing tiles in the play area with exposed gaps and missing bevel edge tiles. (See enclosed photos marked I1-I3.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awaiting Proposal and schedule dates from vendors.
J	6/30/2017	Kingsborough Houses	241-253 Kingsborough 2nd walk (529 Kingsborough 5th walk)	A deteriorated wood/steel play structure and slide with protruding screws and bolts (241-253 Kingsborough 2nd walk-photos J1-J3) <u>and</u> partly detached bracing. (529 Kingsborough 5th walk- photos J4-J9).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance removed protruding bolts and covered the hole with caulking. The Work Order was created. • and Work Order was created for Welder to repair detached bracing.
K	6/28/2017	Roosevelt Houses	997 DeKalb Avenue	Structural deterioration of a metal slide including exposed jagged edges and a partly detached metal brace (See enclosed photos marked K1-K2.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vendor visited the play area on July 21, 2017 to resolve the problem. The slide was welded and smoothed out. Work Order was created.
			93 Lewis Avenue	A second play structure (93 Lewis Avenue) on which the top of the slide was not flush to the structure/platform and on which wooden slats protecting a platform edge were deteriorated with nails protruding above the surface. (See enclosed photos marked K3-K5.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vendor was hired to resolve the problem. Work Order created . • The vendor replaced the wooden slats.

No.	Comptroller Visit Date	Development Name	Location	Observed Condition	Corrective Actions
L	6/28/2017	Roosevelt Houses I & II	927 DeKalb Avenue	A bolt was missing where the top of the slide should be secured to the play structure/flange. (See enclosed photos marked L1-L3.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vendor was onsite to resolve the problem. Work Order created. • The vendor replaced the missing bolt.
M	6/28/2017	East New York City Line Houses (Cypress Hills)	470 Fountain Avenue	A play structure with a gap of several inches where the top of the slide attaches to the platform (470 Fountain Avenue- see photos M 1-M2); and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The slide will be adjusted by vendor Virgo. • Play area roped off until work is completed and is currently not in use.
			Between 765 Logan Street and 1080 Hegeman Avenue	A play structure with an unprotected platform edge where the slide is missing (between 765 Logan Street and 1080 Hegeman Avenue-see photos M3-M5).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vendor to install a protective barrier. • Play areas are roped off until work is completed and are currently not in use.
N	7/6/2017	Howard Avenue-Park Place (Park Rock Consolidated)	1774A Sterling Place	A play structure with a deteriorated metal slide, including cracks with exposed jagged edges. (See enclosed photos marked N1-N4).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The repair work is completed. The staff utilized Bondo to remove sharp edge from the play structure.
O	6/30/2017	Surfside Gardens	2820-22 West 23 rd Street	A play structure that is missing a slide, leaving an unprotected opening to what would have been the entrance to the slide at the elevated platform level. (See enclosed photos marked O1-O3).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carpenter work needed to repair will be scheduled. • The play area was roped off. • *FYI – This development was affected by Hurricane Sandy and will be receiving renovations. Playground maybe selected for future renovations.
P	6/28/2017	Red Hook East	754 Henry Street	Missing litter containers left four rusted/deteriorated metal base-assemblies anchored and exposed, protruding several inches above the ground. (See enclosed photo marked P1-P4.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trash cans cannot be re-attached because they are rusted/damaged/missing. Will hire vendor to remove the assemblies.
			161 Bush Street	Missing litter containers left four rusted/deteriorated metal base-assemblies anchored and exposed, protruding several inches above the ground. (See enclosed photo marked P2.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trash cans cannot be re-attached because they are rusted/damaged/missing. Will hire vendor to remove the assemblies.

No.	Comptroller Visit Date	Development Name	Location	Observed Condition	Corrective Actions
			131 Lorraine Street	Missing litter containers left four rusted/deteriorated metal base-assemblies anchored and exposed, protruding several inches above the ground. (See enclosed photo marked P3.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The trash cans cannot be re-attached because they are rusted/damaged/missing. Will hire vendor to remove the assemblies.
			21 Mill Street	Missing litter containers left four rusted/deteriorated metal base-assemblies anchored and exposed, protruding several inches above the ground. (See enclosed photo marked P4.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The trash cans cannot be re-attached because they are rusted/damaged/missing. Will hire vendor to remove the assemblies.
Q	7/6/2017	Low Houses	232 Powell Street	A broken bench where a missing slat left the steel support brackets with protruding bolts exposed. (See enclosed photos marked Q1-Q3).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carpenter temporarily repaired bench until permanent repair can be made. A Work Order was created for this broken bench and request had been made for repair. The repair is scheduled for completion pending receipt of material.
R	6/30/2017	Brevoort Houses	300-02 Bainbridge Street	Play structure was missing a bolt at one of the assemblies where the slide should be secured to the play structure (300-02 Bainbridge Street); (See enclosed photos marked R1 –R4). <u>and</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Work Order was created to have maintenance reinstall the bolt. The missing bolt was replaced.
			1853 Fulton Street	Bolts that anchor the safety surfacing to the ground were protruding from the top of the safety surface bevel edge (1853 Fulton Street). (See enclosed photos marked R5 - R6).	The protruding bolts were removed and replaced.
S	7/6/2017	Sheepshead Houses	In front of 2953 Avenue W	A play structure with a stepping bridge that was missing a handhold/guardrail on one side. (See enclosed photos marked S1-S4).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have obtained a proposal for the fabrication and installation of the missing handhold/ guardrail. A requisition will be created for the work. The playground has caution tape and is currently closed.

No.	Comptroller Visit Date	Development Name	Location	Observed Condition	Corrective Actions
T	6/20/2017	Douglass II Houses	840 West 102 nd Street (s/b 840 Columbus Avenue)	A climbing chain was loose and detached from the safety surface. (See enclosed photo marked T.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The maintenance worker replaced and attached one "S" hook latch hook to playground equipment on In addition, two hooks were replaced and attached to ground under matting with hammer drill. A work order created.
U	6/28/2017	Unity Plaza	360-380 Williams Avenue	A broken fence that could allow children to stray from the play area into an overgrown vacant lot. (See enclosed photos marked U1-U2.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The janitorial staff removed the damaged chain link from fence behind 360 Williams Ave, and they connected new chain link fence to the existing pole, so that the path from our playground to the empty lot is blocked off by the chain link fence temporarily. A vendor has been contacted to complete the work.
V	7/3/2017	Bushwick II (Group A & C) [Hope Gardens]	75 Covert Street	Additionally, while entering the premises of Bushwick II (Group A & C) located at 75 Covert Street, the auditors observed a fragmented and uplifted portion of the concrete sidewalk, where loose cement pieces have become detached. (See enclosed photo marked V.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sidewalk in front of 75 Covert has been repaired. Inspection was completed.

As indicated in the preceding table, NYCHA has initiated immediate corrective actions.

We hope this satisfies your inquiry. If you have any questions, please contact Tricia L. Roberts, Audit Director, at 212-306-3441.

Sincerely,


Michael Kelly
General Manager

Cc: Shola Olatoye, Chair and Chief Executive Officer, NYCHA
Jackie Primeau, Chief of Staff, Office of the Chair, NYCHA
Brian Clarke, Senior Vice President for Operations, NYCHA
Cathy Pennington, Interim Senior Vice-President for NextGen Operations, NYCHA
David Farber, General Counsel, NYCHA
Kelly MacNeal, First Deputy General Counsel, NYCHA
Karina Totah, Vice-President for Strategic Initiatives, NYCHA
Tricia L. Roberts, Director Internal Audit & Assessment, NYCHA



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MARJORIE LANDA
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER FOR
AUDIT

BUREAU OF AUDIT

July 24, 2017

By Hand

Ms. Shola Olatoye
Chair & Chief Executive Officer
NYC Housing Authority
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Re: Conditions Observed in Playgrounds in NYCHA Developments - Bronx

Dear Chairwoman Olatoye:

I am writing to provide additional information regarding damaged play equipment and fixtures in several play areas on the premises of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments. I thank you again to your prompt attention to these matters.

The conditions reported in this letter and the accompanying photos were observed in the Bronx between July 6, 2017 and July 19, 2017 by staff of the Comptroller's Office Audit Bureau who are conducting an audit of the NYCHA play areas. We are bringing these conditions to your attention now, while the audit proceeds, as we've done with our previous letters, to allow NYCHA's management to continue to take corrective action as needed to address any immediate potential safety concerns that may affect the children and other residents using the play areas.

Specifically, auditors from the Comptroller's Office observed the following:

- At Jackson Houses, on July 17, 2017, auditors observed three deteriorating metal slides with some cracks and exposed jagged edges on the sliding surfaces. (See enclosed photos marked A1-A8)
- At Paterson Houses, on July 6, 2017, auditors observed a play structure that is missing a metal guardrail/pipe wall, which apparently had broken off, leaving a jagged edge at one end where the rail had been secured to the structure (281 East 143rd street – See enclosed photos marked B1-B2), and a slide hood that had become detached from one of its four collar-brackets. (301 East 143rd Street – See enclosed photos marked B3-B4).

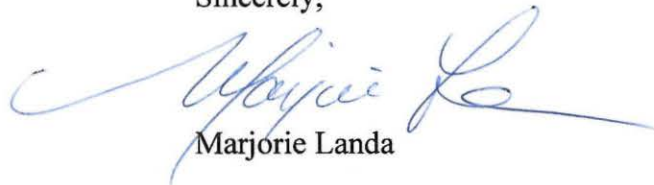
Ms. Shola Olatoye
July 24, 2017
Page 2 of 3

- At Davidson Houses, on July 17, 2017, auditors observed a play structure that is missing a bridge and guardrails, leaving an unprotected opening on an elevated platform. (See enclosed photos marked C1-C4).
- At Throggs Neck, on July 17, 2017, auditors observed a metal sliding surface with some cracking and exposed edges on the lower left side. A resident from the development informed our auditors that her child was injured while playing on the slide. Auditors also observed a play structure with a mesh climbing/seating surface with breaks and gaps (2800 Schley Avenue – See enclosed photos marked D1-D6.); and some surface deterioration/flaking of bridge /platform. (2821 Dewey Avenue – See enclosed photos marked D7-D9.)
- At Union Ave-East 166th Street Houses, on July 17, 2017, auditors observed a deteriorating steel chain ladder/climbing apparatus with broken rungs and partly detaching from the play structure (See enclosed photos marked E1-E5.); and a play structure with an elevated platform that was missing a guardrail/pipe wall, leaving an unprotected opening. (822 East 167th Street – See enclosed photos marked E6-E8.)
- At Highbridge Gardens, on July 17, 2017, auditors observed a play structure with a gap of several inches where the top of the slide attaches to the platform as well as a crack on the top right corner. (See enclosed photos F1-F2.)
- At Forest House, on July 17, 2017, auditors observed a slide surface that is detaching from the side-rail at the bottom. (See enclosed photos marked G1-G3.)
- At Eastchester Gardens, on July 11, 2017, auditors observed a worn platform surface that was bent in one location where it was partly detached from the frame. (See enclosed photos marked H1-H2.)
- At Clason Point Gardens, on July 11, 2017, auditors observed a bolt protruding from a post of a play structure and some surface wear and flaking of wooden platforms. (See enclosed photos marked I1-I3.)
- At Bronx River Houses, on July 11, 2017, auditors observed a play structure that was missing its spiral ladder, leaving an opening at the platform. (See enclosed photos marked J1-J2.)
- At Butler Houses, on July 17, 2017, auditors observed a play structure that was missing a climbing rail. (See enclosed photos marked K1-K3.)
- At Boston Secor, on July 11, 2017, auditors observed a deteriorating platform surface-edge at the entrance to the slide. (See enclosed photos marked L1-L2.)
- At Baychester Houses, on July 11, 2017, auditors observed a screw head protruding from the safety surfacing. (See enclosed photo marked M.)
- At Saint Mary's Park, on July 12, 2017, auditors observed a broken bench where a missing slat left protruding bolts exposed. (See enclosed photos marked N1-N2).
- At McKinley Houses, on July 17, 2017, auditors observed a play structure with a stepping bridge that is missing a guardrail on one side (730 East 163rd Street-731 East 161st Street – See enclosed photos marked O1-O3.) and a broken chain ladder that was missing one of its four hangers and had become detached from three of its four base anchors. (731-751 East 161st Street – See enclosed photos marked O4-O5.)

Ms. Shola Olatoye
July 24, 2017
Page 3 of 3

Please let me know if you need any additional information related to any of these conditions. In addition, Assistant Director Lawrence Welgrin, (212) 669-8326, is available to respond to questions. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Marjorie Landa

Enc.

c: Michael Kelly, General Manager & Chief Operating Officer
c: Kelly MacNeal, First Deputy General Counsel
c: Tricia Roberts, Director Internal Audit & Assessment, NYCHA



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SHOLA OLATOYE
CHAIR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

August 17, 2017

Marjorie Landa, Deputy Comptroller for Audit
New York City Office of the Comptroller
1 Centre Street, Room 1100
New York, NY 10007

Re: NYCHA Response – Playground Conditions Observed – Bronx

Dear Ms. Landa:

This is in response to your letter, dated July 24, 2017, regarding conditions observed in Playgrounds at NYCHA Developments in the Bronx. Please be advised that public safety is our primary concern and we appreciate you bringing this matter to our attention.

In connection with the Audit of the Oversight of New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA) Playgrounds / Parks and response to your staff's inspections performed during the period July 6, 2017 to July 17, 2017 of NYCHA playgrounds, we took the following actions:

No.	Comptroller Visit Date	Development Name	Location	Observed Condition	Corrective Actions
A	7/17/2017	Jackson Houses (Morrisania Air Rights)	285 E 156 th Street	Deteriorating metal slides with some cracks and exposed jagged edges on the sliding surfaces. (See enclosed photos marked A1-A5)	• The damaged playground equipment has been repaired.
			300 E 158 th Street & 3080 Park Ave	Deteriorating metal slides with some cracks and exposed jagged edges on the sliding surfaces. (See enclosed photos marked A6-A7)	• The damaged playground equipment has been repaired.
			765 Courtlandt Ave	Deteriorating metal slides with some cracks and exposed jagged edges on the sliding surfaces. (See enclosed photos marked A8)	• The damaged playground equipment has been repaired.

No.	Comptroller Visit Date	Development Name	Location	Observed Condition	Corrective Actions
B	7/6/2017	Patterson Houses	281 East 143 rd Street	A play structure that is missing a metal guardrail/ pipe wall, which apparently had broken off, leaving a jagged edge at one end where the rail had been secured to the structure (281 East 143 rd Street - See enclosed photos marked B1-B2), <u>and</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vendor made the needed repairs to the missing/ damaged rail. • A Work Order was created.
			301 East 143 rd Street	A slide hood that had become detached from one of its four collar-brackets. (301 East 143 rd Street – See enclosed photos marked B3-B4).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hood was re-attached. • Work Order was created.
C	7/17/2017	Davidson Houses (Union Avenue Consolidated)	818 Home Street	A play structure that is missing a bridge and guardrails, leaving an unprotected opening on an elevated platform. (See enclosed photos marked C1-C4).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Play Area has been cordoned off with a caution tape. • A Work Order has been created.
D	7/17/2017	Throggs Neck	2800 Schley Avenue	A metal sliding surface with some cracking and exposed edges on the lower left side. A resident from the development informed our auditors that her child was injured while playing on the slide. (See enclosed photos marked D1-D4.);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slide has been removed and blocked off.
			2800 Schley Avenue	Auditors also observed a play structure with a mesh climbing/seating surface with breaks and gaps (2800 Schley Avenue - See enclosed photos marked D5-D6.); <u>and</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area has been blocked off from using.
			2821 Dewey Avenue	Some surface deterioration/flaking of bridge /platform. (2821 Dewey Avenue - See enclosed photos marked D7-D9.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painter is scheduled. • A Work Order was created.

No.	Comptroller Visit Date	Development Name	Location	Observed Condition	Corrective Actions
E	7/17/2017	Union Ave-East 166 th St Houses	819 East 167 th Street	A deteriorating steel chain ladder/climbing apparatus with broken rungs and partly detaching from the play structure (See enclosed photos marked E1-E5.); and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vendor will be hired to perform the needed repairs.
			822 East 167 th Street	A play structure with an elevated platform that was missing a guardrail/pipe wall, leaving an unprotected opening. (822 East 167 th Street - See enclosed photos marked E6-E8.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vendor will be hired to perform the needed repairs.
F	7/17/2017	Highbridge Gardens	1075 University Avenue	A play structure with a gap of several inches where the top of the slide attaches to the platform as well as a crack on the top right corner. (See enclosed photos F1-F2.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractor will be on site to weld the top of the slide. • A temporary abatement was done. • Caution tape was put around the slide to prohibit the children from using the slide.
G	7/17/2017	Forest Houses	750 East 166 th Street	A slide surface that is detaching from the side-rail at the bottom. (See enclosed photos marked G1-G3.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caution tape was put around the slide to prohibit the children from using the slide. • Slide portion has to be replaced. • Obtained proposal from vendor. • Awaiting funds to complete work.
H	7/11/2017	Eastchester Gardens	1166 Burke Avenue	A worn platform surface that was bent in one location where it was partly detached from the frame. (See enclosed photos marked H1-H2.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The playground was surveyed by the Property Maintenance Supervisor and his staff. • Caution tape was placed around the play area that needs to be repaired. • The contractor also inspected the area and he is going to provide a proposal for work.
I	7/11/2017	Clason Point Gardens (Sack Wern)	54-60 Clason Point Lane South	A bolt protruding from a post of a play structure; and some surface wear and flaking of wooden platforms. (See enclosed photos marked I1-I3.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Carpenter replaced all old plywood. • The Maintenance Worker removed the bolt from the playground equipment. • The work orders were created.
J	7/11/2017	Bronx River Houses	1435 Harrod Avenue	A play structure that was missing its spiral ladder, leaving an opening at the platform. (See enclosed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vendor was on-site, and removed the upper archway on the observed platform and sealed off the opening of the platform by means of

No.	Comptroller Visit Date	Development Name	Location	Observed Condition	Corrective Actions
				photos marked J1-J2.)	vertical and horizontal welded safety pole. This corrective action will abate the observed safety hazard. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the two egresses on the playground equipment, there will be no need for a spiral ladder to be installed. • Painting of equipment will be performed accordingly.
K	7/17/2017	Butler Houses	1430 Webster Avenue	A play structure that was missing a climbing rail. (See enclosed photos marked K1-K3.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vendor has installed the missing handle. • Painting will be done. • The necessary Work Order was created.
L	7/11/2017	Boston Secor	3555 Bivona Street	A deteriorating platform surface-edge at the entrance to the slide. (See enclosed photos marked L1-L2.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rubber mat was ordered and delivered. • The necessary Work Order was created.
M	7/11/2017	Baychester Houses (Boston Secor)	1851 Schiefflin Place	A screw head protruding from the safety surfacing. (See enclosed photo marked M.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protruding screw was removed by Supervisor of Grounds. • The mat is secured -- there are other screws holding it in place. The mat does not need replacement at this time. • A Work Order was created.
N	7/12/2017	Saint Mary's Park	700 East 156 th Street	A broken bench where a missing slat left protruding bolts exposed. (See enclosed photos marked N1-N2).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carpenter made the necessary repairs to the bench. • A Work Order was created.
O	7/17/2017	McKinley Houses (Forest Houses)	730 East 163 rd Street- 731 East 161 st Street	A play structure with a stepping bridge that is missing a guardrail on one side (730 East 163 rd Street- 731 East 161 st Street - See enclosed photos marked O1-O3.) and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guardrail to be fabricated and installed. • Obtained a proposal from vendor. • Awaiting funds to complete work.
			731-751 East 161 st Street	A broken chain ladder that was missing one of its four hangers and had become detached from three of its four base anchors. (731-751 East 161 st Street - See enclosed photos marked O4-O5.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chain ladders to be secured. • Obtained proposal from vendor. • Awaiting funds to complete work.

As indicated in the preceding table, NYCHA has initiated immediate corrective actions.

We hope this satisfies your inquiry. If you have any questions, please contact Tricia L. Roberts, Audit Director, at 212-306-3441.

Sincerely,



Michael Kelly
General Manager

Cc: Shola Olatoye, Chair and Chief Executive Officer, NYCHA
Jackie Primeau, Chief of Staff, Office of the Chair, NYCHA
Brian Clarke, Senior Vice President for Operations, NYCHA
Cathy Pennington, Interim Senior Vice-President for NextGen Operations, NYCHA
David Farber, General Counsel, NYCHA
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Karina Totah, Vice-President for Strategic Initiatives, NYCHA
Tricia L. Roberts, Director Internal Audit & Assessment, NYCHA



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MARJORIE LANDA
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER FOR
AUDIT

BUREAU OF AUDIT

August 2, 2017

By Hand

Ms. Shola Olatoye
Chair & Chief Executive Officer
NYC Housing Authority
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Re: Conditions Observed in Playgrounds in NYCHA Developments – Queens and Staten Island

Dear Chairwoman Olatoye:

I am writing to provide additional information regarding damaged play equipment and fixtures in several play areas on the premises of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments. I thank you again to your prompt attention to these matters.

The conditions reported in this letter and the accompanying photos were observed in Queens and Staten Island between July 20, 2017 and July 27, 2017 by staff of the Comptroller's Office Audit Bureau who are conducting an audit of the NYCHA play areas. We are bringing these conditions to your attention now, while the audit proceeds, as we've done with our previous letters, to allow NYCHA's management to continue to take corrective action as needed to address any immediate potential safety concerns that may affect the children and other residents using the play areas.

Specifically, auditors from the Comptroller's Office observed the following:

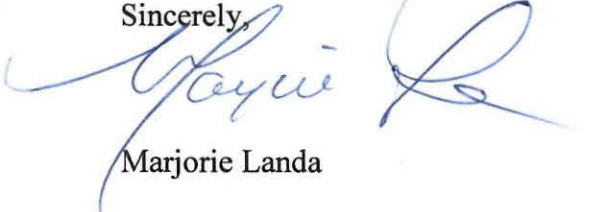
- At Mariner's Harbor, on July 25, 2017, auditors observed a play structure in which a bent stepping surface had become partly detached from the frame. (124 Brabant Street – See enclosed photos marked A1-A3.) and a base for a missing litter receptacle protruding from the ground. (168 Brabant Street – See enclosed photos marked A4-A5.)
- At South Jamaica II Houses, on July 21, 2017, auditors observed a play structure with a broken crossing bridge and a broken chain ladder, leaving unprotected openings on an elevated platform. (See enclosed photos marked B1-B4.)
- At Richmond Terrace, on July 25, 2017, auditors observed a play structure with a missing play-wheel, leaving the metal column/hub exposed and protruding from its mounting bracket on the pipewall. (See photos enclosed marked C1-C2.)

Ms. Shola Olatoye
August 2, 2017
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- At Redfern Houses, on July 25, 2017, auditors observed a play structure with a hole in the steel mesh platform leaving jagged edges exposed near the entrance to the slide. (See enclosed photos marked D1-D2.)
- At Beach 41st Street-Beach Channel Drive Houses, on July 25, 2017, auditors observed two rusted metal bases for missing litter receptacles protruding from the ground. (See enclosed photos marked E1-E3.)
- Similarly, at Ravenswood Houses, on July 20, 2017, auditors observed a rusted metal base for a missing litter receptacle protruding from the ground. (See enclosed photos marked F1-F2.)
- At Queensbridge North, on July 20, 2017, auditors observed damaged safety surfacing with gaps between the tiles. (See enclosed photos marked G1-G2.)

Please let me know if you need any additional information related to any of these conditions. In addition, Assistant Director Lawrence Welgrin, (212) 669-8326, is available to respond to questions. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Marjorie Landa

Enc.

c: Michael Kelly, General Manager & Chief Operating Officer
c: Kelly MacNeal, First Deputy General Counsel
c: Tricia Roberts, Director Internal Audit & Assessment, NYCHA



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SHOLA OLATOYE
CHAIR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

August 17, 2017

Marjorie Landa, Deputy Comptroller for Audit
New York City Office of the Comptroller
1 Centre Street, Room 1100
New York, NY 10007

Re: NYCHA Response – Playground Conditions Observed – Queens and Staten Island

Dear Ms. Landa:

This is in response to your letter, dated August 2, 2017, regarding conditions observed in Playgrounds at NYCHA Developments in Queens and Staten Island. Please be advised that public safety is our primary concern and we appreciate you bringing this matter to our attention.

In connection with the Audit of the Oversight of New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA) Playgrounds / Parks and response to your staff's inspections performed during the period July 20, 2017 to July 25, 2017 of NYCHA playgrounds, we took the following actions:

No.	Comptroller Visit Date	Development Name	Location	Observed Condition	Corrective Actions
A	7/25/2017	Mariner's Harbor	124 Brabant Street	A play structure in which a bent stepping surface had become partly detached from the frame. (124 Brabant Street - See enclosed photos marked A1-A3.) <u>and</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development staff repaired the broken /bent frame. • A Work Order was created.
			168 Brabant Street	A base for a missing litter receptacle was protruding from the ground. (168 Brabant Street - See enclosed photos marked A4-A5.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development staff removed base receptacle and filled in the hole. • A Work Order was created.

No.	Comptroller Visit Date	Development Name	Location	Observed Condition	Corrective Actions
B	7/21/2017	South Jamaica II Houses	106-56 160 th Street	A play structure with a broken crossing bridge and a broken chain ladder, leaving unprotected openings on an elevated platform. (See enclosed photos marked B1-B4.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase Order was put into Oracle. We are currently awaiting funds to have the repair corrected. • The Carpenter removed bridge and chain. • He currently closed off the affected section of the play area. • He is also preparing material to repair both the bridge and chain. This is temporary until we get the funds for the vendor. • A Work Order was created.
C	7/25/2017	Richmond Terrace	???	A play structure with a missing play-wheel, leaving the metal column/hub exposed and protruding from its mounting bracket on the pipewall. (See photos enclosed marked C1-C2.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area is secured. • Removed broken play wheel. • A Work Order was created.
D	7/25/2017	Redfern Houses	Play Area between Bldg. 8 and 9	A play structure with a hole in the steel mesh platform leaving jagged edges exposed near the entrance to the slide. (See enclosed photos marked D1-D2.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance has closed off the area. • A vendor will be assigned for work to be completed. • A Work Order was created.
E	7/25/2017	Beach 41 st Street-Beach Channel Drive Houses	40-20 Beach Channel Drive	A rusted metal base for missing litter receptacle, protruding from the ground. (See enclosed photo marked E1.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vendor will be secured to remove the base. • Area has been taped off until work is conducted. • A Work Order was created.
			438 Beach 40 th Street	Another rusted metal base for missing litter receptacles, protruding from the ground. (See enclosed photos marked E2-E3.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vendor will be secured to remove the base. • Area has been taped off until work is conducted. • A Work Order was created.

No.	Comptroller Visit Date	Development Name	Location	Observed Condition	Corrective Actions
F	7/20/2017	Ravenswood Houses	12-15 36 th Avenue	A rusted metal base for a missing litter receptacle protruding from the ground. (See enclosed photos marked F1-F2.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Work Order was created. • Maintenance has corrected deficiency.
G	7/20/2017	Queensbridge North Houses	40-11 12 th Street	Damaged safety surfacing with gaps between the tiles. (See enclosed photos marked G1-G2.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All loose matting was removed and mats were placed closer to fill the gaps. • A Work Order was created. • *FYI – This playground is scheduled for renovation by Councilman Van Bremer initiative, in October 2017.

As indicated in the preceding table, NYCHA has initiated immediate corrective actions.

We hope this satisfies your inquiry. If you have any questions, please contact Tricia L. Roberts, Audit Director, at 212-306-3441.

Sincerely,



Michael Kelly
General Manager

Cc: Shola Olatoye, Chair and Chief Executive Officer, NYCHA
 Jackie Primeau, Chief of Staff, Office of the Chair, NYCHA
 Brian Clarke, Senior Vice President for Operations, NYCHA
 Cathy Pennington, Interim Senior Vice-President for NextGen Operations, NYCHA
 David Farber, General Counsel, NYCHA
 Kelly MacNeal, First Deputy General Counsel, NYCHA
 Karina Totah, Vice-President for Strategic Initiatives, NYCHA
 Tricia L. Roberts, Director Internal Audit & Assessment, NYCHA



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SHOLA OLATOYE
CHAIR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

March 22, 2018

Ms. Marjorie Landa
Deputy Comptroller for Audit
NYC Office of the Comptroller
One Centre Street, Room 1100N
New York, NY 10007

Dear Ms. Landa:

This letter is in response to your March 8th letter which provided the draft Audit Report on the New York City Housing Authority's Maintenance and Inspection of its Playgrounds -- # SR17-127A.

NYCHA is committed to providing safe, clean, and connected communities for everyone who lives in public housing. NYCHA has taken steps since the initial audit findings to address the hazardous conditions found at its playgrounds. In response to the audit report recommendations, NYCHA is committed to improving its oversight of playgrounds. NYCHA's limited resources and demands on staff make replacing playground equipment challenging, but unsafe equipment will be removed.

NYCHA is also pursuing new funding strategies to improve quality of life at its developments. One such strategy is NextGen NYCHA Plays, an innovative public-private partnership¹, that will transform communities by building safe, engaging play-spaces for children in NYCHA housing. The first "NextGen NYCHA Plays" playground was built in November 2017 at Pomonok Houses in collaboration with Pomonok Residents Association. Through this partnership, NYCHA hopes to build over 200 playgrounds over the next several years for New York City Public Housing residents.

In addition, NYCHA's Capital Projects Department currently has about 70 grounds improvement projects, with a total budget of \$30 million (mostly City funded by Council members), in various phases from design to construction, to improve play areas, grounds and recreational facilities.

We have included the NYCHA response on the following pages, which provides our responses to each recommendation.

¹ NextGen NYCHA Plays is a partnership between the Fund for Public Housing and KaBOOM!, a national non-profit dedicated to giving all kids – particularly those growing up in poverty in America – the childhood they deserve filled with balanced and active play, so they can thrive. The Fund for Public Housing is an independent not-for-profit organization that invests in the well-being of NYCHA residents and their communities. The Fund collaborates with public and private partners to reimagine and improve the way public housing works.

Audit Recommendation No. 1

NYCHA should immediately inspect all 788 playgrounds for which it is responsible and remedy any hazardous conditions noted.

NYCHA Response:

NYCHA will inspect playgrounds and remedy hazardous conditions within 90 days. As noted in the Comptroller's draft audit report, NYCHA management was notified of the potentially hazardous conditions during the audit and took corrective action to address safety concerns.

Audit Recommendation No. 2

NYCHA should make every playground it manages fully operational as quickly as possible, within a reasonable timeframe. In so doing the agency should determine whether damaged and deteriorated playground equipment should be repaired or replaced, whether any of it is under warranty, and whether repairs should be performed by development staff or vendors.

NYCHA Response:

NYCHA will make this part of its automated inspection for playgrounds. This will be a semi-automated (partially paper) process until full automation is completed. However, given NYCHA's limited funding, damaged or hazardous equipment may be removed and not replaced.

Audit Recommendation No. 3

NYCHA should take immediate steps to implement an effective management oversight scheme to ensure that all development grounds and playgrounds are being inspected monthly in accordance with NYCHA's written procedures.

NYCHA Response:

Playground inspections will be automated through NYCHA's Maximo system and monitoring reports will be available for NYCHA to track completion of inspections.

Audit Recommendation No. 4

NYCHA's senior management should evaluate and address the causes of the failures that allowed substandard and in some cases hazardous conditions in 549 NYCHA playgrounds to go unaddressed, including, where applicable, failures to conduct, review, sign-off, retain, and follow-up on required inspections and inspection reports.

NYCHA Response:

NYCHA's senior management is aware of the causes that allowed playground conditions to go unaddressed. Enhanced monitoring will be conducted once inspection reports are automated. Lack of funding to address poor conditions is another major cause – as such, damaged or hazardous equipment may be removed and not replaced.

Audit Recommendation No. 5

NYCHA, through its senior management, should enforce agency policy that requires development staff to utilize the agency's Maximo system to automatically schedule monthly grounds and playground inspections and use handheld devices to document the inspection results in the system.

NYCHA Response:

NYCHA agrees with this recommendation to require the use of Maximo for playground inspections and will implement it as part of the inspection automation.

Audit Recommendation No. 6

In instances where handheld devices are not available, NYCHA, through its senior management, should enforce agency policy that requires development staff to manually enter playground-inspection results in the Maximo system and maintain hard copies of the completed inspection reports, with required signatures of the preparer and reviewer, in the Superintendent's office.

NYCHA Response:

NYCHA will conduct playground inspections using handheld devices as part of the automation of the playground inspection. Staff that conducts the inspections will be equipped with handheld devices. The reports will be retained in Maximo. Until automation is complete, electronic versions of the paper inspection reports will be retained.

Audit Recommendation No. 7

Development staff should ensure that work orders are created and tracked in Maximo to enable all deficiencies in their playgrounds to be appropriately remedied.

NYCHA Response:

NYCHA agrees and will implement this as part of the automation of the playground inspection.

Audit Recommendation No. 8a

NYCHA's NextGeneration Operations and Property Management departments should ensure that development-based Housing Managers and Superintendents require their staffs to perform thorough monthly inspections and report all deficiencies in accordance with NYCHA's standards.

NYCHA Response:

Through the automation of the playground inspection, NYCHA will have access to monitoring reports to ensure that staffs are completing the monthly inspections and addressing deficiencies.

Audit Recommendation No. 8b

Conduct and document the results of subsequent inspections to confirm the accuracy of the staffs' findings on inspection reports.

NYCHA Response:

NYCHA disagrees with conducting routine subsequent inspections, but will have oversight of the inspections once they are automated.

Audit Recommendation No. 8c

Sign every monthly inspection report and enforce NYCHA policies requiring the retention of such inspection reports.

NYCHA Response:

Inspection reports will be retained in NYCHA's Maximo system. Inspection reports in Maximo are required to be signed by the employee that completed the inspection.

Audit Recommendation No. 9a

NYCHA's NextGeneration Operations and Property Management departments should randomly and continuously inspect NYCHA playgrounds, ensuring that such inspections cover all playgrounds throughout the agency's developments not less than annually.

NYCHA Response:

Through the automation of the playground inspection, NYCHA will have access to monitoring reports to ensure that staffs are completing the monthly inspections and addressing deficiencies.

Audit Recommendation No. 9b

NYCHA's NextGeneration Operations and Property Management departments should inform the responsible development managers and supervisors of any unacceptable conditions that require immediate attention.

NYCHA Response:

NYCHA agrees with this recommendation. Supervisors and other staff will report unacceptable playground conditions to the development's property manager.

Audit Recommendation No. 9c

NYCHA's NextGeneration Operations and Property Management departments should follow up to ensure that all such conditions are remedied.

NYCHA Response:

The automation of NYCHA's playground inspection will allow for oversight to ensure that conditions are remedied in a timely manner.

We look forward to our continued collaboration with all our stakeholders to improve customer service and obtain the funding required.

If you have any questions, please contact Hyacinth Jeffers, Acting Audit Director, at 212-306-8055.

Sincerely,



Vito Mustaciulo
Acting General Manager

cc: Shola Olatoye, Chair & Chief Executive Officer
Kelly D. MacNeal, First Deputy General Counsel, Law Department
Cathy Pennington, Acting Executive Vice President of Operations
David Pristin, EVP for External Affairs
Edna Wells Handy, Acting Chief Compliance Officer
Karina Totah, VP for Strategic Initiatives
Hyacinth Jeffers, Acting Director, Internal Audit & Assessment