

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the City Council Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development, and the Homeless to hold public hearings examining Brooklyn's Nehemiah Program and its possible implementation in Philadelphia to increase the City's affordable housing availability.

WHEREAS, Homeownership provides families with security, stability, and support. Per the 2020 U.S. Census, sixty-seven percent of Philadelphia residents own a home; and

WHEREAS, Although seventy-four percent of white Philadelphia residents own a home, only forty-eight percent of Black Philadelphia residents and only forty-six percent of Hispanic Philadelphia residents own a home; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, white families posted the highest median family wealth at \$171,000, while Black families, in contrast, had a median family wealth of \$17,600; and

WHEREAS, Racial disparities in housing ownership continue to drive the racial wealth gap throughout the City and our Nation; and

WHEREAS, Similar to Philadelphia, Black and Hispanic families in East Brooklyn faced rampant discrimination in obtaining affordable housing; and

WHEREAS, In the early 1980s, community organizers from a consortium of thirty congregations in Brooklyn, New York formed the East Brooklyn Congregations (EBC); and

WHEREAS, In 1982, EBC initiated the "Nehemiah Plan," which consisted of buying 16 square blocks of New York City property at \$1 a lot in order to build affordable two and three-bedroom single-family houses that would be sold at working class prices; and

WHEREAS, Nehemiah houses accounted for 38% of the net increase in East New York's housing stock, and 77% of the increase in single-family houses; and

WHEREAS, A 2001 Fannie Mae Foundation study found that living in a zone in which Nehemiah houses stood raised the value of homes by 23.6% relative to the wider district; and

WHEREAS, Over the last forty years, the Nehemiah Program continues to expand nationwide, has built over 6,500 homes, and has created an estimated \$1.5 billion in wealth for first-time Black and Latino homeowners; and

WHEREAS, Replicating the Brooklyn's Nehemiah Program model could benefit Philadelphia residents immensely, especially those that have been historically excluded from the housing market because of rising costs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That is hereby authorizes the City Council Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development, and the Homeless to hold public hearings examining Brooklyn's Nehemiah Program and its possible implementation in Philadelphia to increase the City's affordable housing availability.