

Borough Monitoring – Quarterly Report

February 2024 (Period ending 2nd Quarter, 2023)

Executive Summary

It is well known that over the last several years NYCHA has re-branded, renamed, eliminated, added, and modified multiple departments, offices, and positions throughout the organization. The lack of any static state at NYCHA has impacted morale and often creates confusion with regard to whose responsibility it is to perform tasks. This has also contributed to waste, poor management, excessive overtime, and an overall lack of accountability. It was this predominant theme expressed by staff during interviews about the Operational Analysis and Contract Management (“OACM”) department. The inception and growth of OACM since 2020 are a direct result of NYCHA’s effort to address its limited resources, need for staff with specialized knowledge, and the then General Manager’s urgency to have a centrally managed unit that can immediately respond to emergent matters.¹ This stems in part, from a lack of faith in local property management staff to get things done at properties. Though well intentioned, the constantly changing departments and responsibilities leave most development staff unaware or “confused” about the different units within OACM and what the unit does.

OACM was created as one of NYCHA’s solutions to address issues identified in the HUD Agreement. First named OACM, the department consisted of four programmatic units: Management and Planning, Rapid Response, Technical Services and Paint Administration. OACM was renamed Technical Services mid-year in 2023, while the Monitor was conducting interviews to support the writing of this report. According to senior management, OACM was renamed with no substantive change in its function. Now known as Technical Services, the department is centrally managed, sits parallel to the property maintenance/management structure, and is vested with a broad array of responsibilities. Technical Services supports Chief Operating Officer (“COO”) objectives and special initiatives; and is also deployed to aid property management by assisting with certain categories of work orders. This report will refer to the unit as OACM, as that was how staff knew the unit to exist in the over seventy-five interviews conducted.

OACM is empowered by the COO to evaluate and operationalize new initiatives and process fixes when required, mostly in cases of emergencies or high priority initiatives. OACM will create and deploy “crash crews” to assist property managers and functions as a group of fixers in the organization. Reporting directly within the operations vertical, ultimately to the COO, OACM largely operates independently from the rest of the organization. Staff conceded in interviews that OACM does not fit within the neighborhood operating model.

NYCHA central office managers apparently have little faith in development staffs’ capability to execute certain types of work due in part to diminished training for NYCHA’s property management staff and institutional knowledge gaps. Work performed by skilled trades within OACM is, for the most part, no different than the work of the skilled trades assigned to the boroughs. Increased reliance on OACM as a tool to address issues, such as apartment turnovers, has empowered the department to execute these

¹ Since 2019 the role and title of General Manager has changed to the Chief Operating Officer.

initiatives, often without oversight into overtime or material costs, and with an urgent emphasis on time to completion. OACM managers who have oversight responsibilities have not been adequately trained and are often not held accountable. Accountability measures for managing staff performance are lacking and there are insufficient internal controls in place to ensure that fraud and waste are prevented. There is also inadequate communication with development staff.

Observations by the Monitor and interviews with OACM and development staff revealed nepotism, lack of supervision of skilled trades staff, and instances where resources are not managed properly (e.g., oversight of vendors and NYCHA staff). For example, instances of unrestricted overtime used as an incentive to influence staffs' compliance with management directives which often violate NYCHA policy. Waste, loss of materials, and suggestions of theft were other examples cited by OACM and development staff members that stem from the lack of appropriate oversight. This includes storage of materials in flood prone locations resulting in loss, misappropriation of supplies and equipment, and failure to comply with health and safety procedures.

The Department of Paint Administration ("DPA") performs the bulk of work performed by OACM at the developments and interacts more frequently with development staff compared to the other three OACM departments. The DPA portfolio is vast and touches apartments in almost every development across NYCHA. NYCHA staff at developments gave DPA mixed reviews. Extra resources are welcomed by developments because neighborhoods are understaffed, and DPA will help get work done. At the same time, development management also provide a contradictory view, reporting that DPA is sometimes disruptive and disassociated from developments.

In addition to oversight and controls issues described above, reports from front-line staff including Neighborhood Administrators ("NA") highlight several major issues previously brought to NYCHA's attention for remediation. Developments consistently reported communications breakdowns with OACM, describing situations where "OACM comes and goes as they please," and "we don't know what they're working on, no explanations are given." The quality of work by OACM and their contracted vendors is also inconsistent. The Monitor team inspected one recently completed apartment and saw paint applied to light switches, outlet covers, door casings, and over previously chipped paint. Finally, policy decisions by the COO's office around deploying OACM resources, encouraging work to occur in an isolated manner, and failing to question whether adequate oversight is in place, have hampered the improvement of NYCHA culture and the advancement of the neighborhood operating model. The most prominent example is the assignment of priority turnovers to OACM, removing responsibility to complete repair work in designated turnover apartments from individual developments across the NYCHA portfolio. This decision caused a significant backlog of work and alienated many development staff who wanted to get work done and fill vacant apartments.

Recently, there have been additional discussions and proposals by NYCHA for further re-organization, none of which had been set forth in writing or included in NYCHA's organizational plan documents. Most notable, is the proposed migration of skilled trades staff from TEMPO and Special Repair Projects (previously referred to as DPA) back to the boroughs. NYCHA also proposed a similar reassignment to boroughs skilled trades of approximately half of the Special Repair Project Painters and Paint Supervisors

who perform RRP work, among other things. NYCHA's proposals are currently under review by the Monitor.

NYCHA's organizational reformation has taken on various iterations in the course of the last several years at the direction of multiple managers and a changing leadership team. The Monitor has reported successes and repeated failures in NYCHA's ability to plan, execute, evaluate, and adjust to organizational changes. NYCHA must consider the Monitor's prior findings and recommendations as it attempts what seemingly will be a significant and wide-reaching organizational change by reassigning central office skilled-trades resources to the boroughs. Many at NYCHA would say moving skilled trades back to the boroughs is "the way it used to be." One cannot forget that at some point, someone decided that all of those skilled trades out in the boroughs were better managed and deployed centrally by OACM. Due consideration must be given to the functions that OACM staff currently perform and the rate at which they accomplish those tasks, so when their positions are no longer centrally managed, a fair and accurate assessment can be made about the efficacy of the change.

Background

The Operational Analysis and Contract Management (“OACM”) unit was created in 2020 “to consolidate existing functions within the Department of Management and Planning; Maintenance, and Skilled Trades; and Technical Services, and to oversee the creation of new units.”² OACM was one of NYCHA’s solutions to address issues identified in the HUD Agreement by consolidating repair functions into a centrally managed unit in Operations.³ OACM originally comprised three distinct departments: TEMPO Repair, Technical Services, and Management and Planning.⁴ Since its inception, the TEMPO Repair Department was renamed Rapid Response and a fourth Department named Paint Administration was created. This year, the department went through yet another renaming exercise which is discussed in more detail below.

OACM has a broad array of responsibilities to support COO objectives and property management by performing repairs, managing specific contracts for services, and analyzing data to develop new initiatives and deploy operational resources. For a period, OACM also handled all NYCHA turnover apartments.⁵ The group is centrally managed and sits parallel to the property maintenance/management structure.⁶ The Vice-President of OACM reports to the Deputy Chief Operating Officer, who in turn reports to the Chief Operating Officer.⁷

The Vice-President of OACM is supported by Directors assigned to each of the four departments: Paint Administration (“DPA”), Rapid Response, Technical Services, Management and Planning (“DMP”). OACM is staffed by over 550 employees, with the largest concentration of staff assigned to DPA.⁸ OACM operates across the five boroughs and most staff respond to different developments across the city to perform their duties.⁹

OACM is empowered by the COO to evaluate and execute specific projects and initiatives. The group provides analytical support covering short term process improvements at NYCHA with a goal of operationalizing new initiatives and process fixes when needed. One senior manager explained, when a specific goal is identified, OACM will be asked, “what can you do, how long will it take and how much will

² NYCHA’s Blueprint for Change: Transformation Plan, p. 52, March 2, 2021.

³ Prior to the creation of OACM, the Management and Planning Department was created, and painters were centralized to form lead paint “super-teams”, serving as crash crews to remove or paint over peeling paint. See Calcedonio Bruno Interview, April 30, 2019.

⁴ NYCHA’s Blueprint for Change: Transformation Plan, p. 52, March 2, 2021.

⁵ Turnover apartments are those units that are undergoing necessary preparation for new residents. The units could be undergoing rehabilitation due to a specified program unique to a property; involved in a disaster (e.g., fire or water damage); or simply be an apartment that has been vacated by a prior resident.

⁶ See appendix for organizational chart.

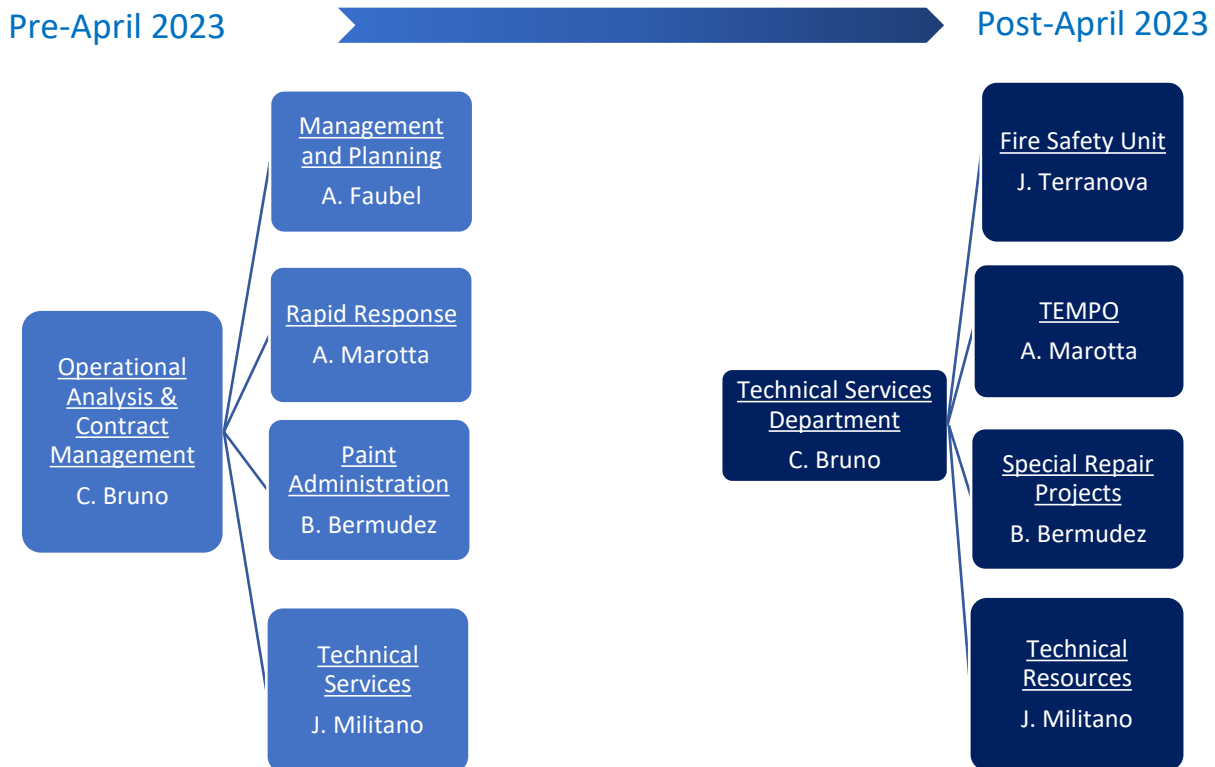
⁷ In early 2023 the Deputy Chief Operating Officer resigned from the position. NYCHA reorganized the Office of the Chief Operating Officer and eliminated the Deputy Chief Operating Officer position. The OCME currently reports to the Senior Vice President of Quality Assurance, Safety & Technical Programs, a new position, and department created in April 2023.

⁸ Headcount is based on NYCHA’s presentation entitled “2023 OACM Departments, Functions, & Initiatives.” Department of Paint Administration has 279 staff; Rapid Response has 70 staff; Technical Services has 160 staff; Department of Management and Planning has 12 staff.

⁹ This applies to most OACM staff, excluding the Department of Management & Planning and some management staff within the various departments.

it cost?” Senior leadership refers to these as “special projects,” and OACM will execute between 2-3 special projects per year, usually at the request of a senior level manager or member of the executive team. The time to execute special projects varies but most are estimated to take between 3-4 months to complete. In response to emergencies or high priority initiatives OACM will often create and deploy “crash crews.” When asked how OACM fits into the broader concept of the Neighborhood Model, the senior manager said, “we don’t really fit well into the Neighborhood Model,” explaining that “we have specific functions – we handle emergencies and do initiatives.”

During Q2 2023, during the Monitor’s review, NYCHA reorganized OACM. Several organizational changes occurred within Operations.¹⁰ First, OACM was renamed the Technical Services Department. Three of the four programmatic units previously overseen by OACM were renamed. The organizational charts below illustrate organizational changes relevant to this report. Management and Planning was removed from the prior reporting structure to another department within Operations, and a new office of Fire Safety was created. Although the Monitor team acquired information about the organizational restructuring through interviews with staff, formal notification of organizational changes came well after implementation. In a meeting with the COO, the restructuring was described as merely a renaming of departments with no discernible change or modification of responsibilities within each department. This continues NYCHA’s approach of renaming and rebranding departments, without adequate consideration for the confusion it creates for front-line staff and residents.



¹⁰ A detailed explanation of organizational changes may be found at <https://nychanow.nyc/significant-updates-in-operations/>.

For the purposes of this report, interview subject matter and departmental references are made according to the names and the operating structure as it previously existed within NYCHA's organization unless otherwise specified or indicated in parentheses. Below is a brief description of what each department is tasked to accomplish.

Department of Management and Planning¹¹

The Department of Management and Planning ("DMP") provides analytical support to evaluate and model work order data, resource needs (staffing and funding), and process improvement recommendations on individual initiatives or requests from within operations. The group also provides project management support to roll out new programs and initiatives, including developing training materials. They generate reports and provide actionable operational data on those initiatives and programs, including lead-based paint remediation and vacant apartment turnover initiatives. They manage blanket releases for Operations-managed contracts and administer annual notice contracts. Finally, the group oversees an annual chargeback project to reconcile contract encumbrances, and in 2023 began managing leases for laundry rooms across NYCHA.

Technical Services Department (Technical Resources)

Technical Services Department ("TSD") personnel are the subject matter experts who were previously responsible for fire safety and managing related contracts. Towards the end of 2023 the Fire Safety Unit was created. It now runs independently from Technical Resources and is overseen by a newly created position, the Director of Fire Safety. TSD is responsible to oversee central shops which includes fabrication, repair, and specialized skills support to various trades. The group will provide oversight to PMs on horticultural repairs and related issues and serves as a technical advisor and a resource for carpentry, electrical, masonry, plumbing and roofing issues. In one example, TSD has special equipment to perform complicated plumbing stoppage work. TSD will make recommendations on specifications and provide technical expertise to development staff when required. The group will also administer gas line inspections, manage vendor work for cooling towers, perform bi-monthly roof warranty inspections, maintain building generators, and conduct preventative sewer maintenance.

Rapid Response (TEMPO)

Rapid Response Department personnel are subject matter experts who repair lead-contaminated apartments where children younger than 6 years old reside ("CU6 units"). Once CU6 units are abated, the team will support complete apartment renovations. In addition, the team provides expedited skilled trade and maintenance repairs to support NYCHA's Healthy Start Program. Lastly, until Q2 of 2023, this unit was responsible for the administration of NYCHA's privately managed developments.¹²

Department of Paint Administration (Special Repair Projects)

The Department of Paint Administration ("DPA") performs lead-based paint interim controls in apartments using vendors and in-house staff. The group's responsibilities also include public space painting; oversight of vendor work; preparation of vacant apartments for the Department of Homeless

¹¹ Removed to Planning and Project Management under Quality Assurance, Safety & Technical Programs.

¹² This function was transferred to local neighborhood administrators.

Services (“DHS”) and emergency transfer programs;¹³ playground inspection and repair; public space and apartment renovations damaged by fire; painting and plastering at NYCHA community centers; and advising on technical painting and plastering specifications on contracts.

Observations

Below are observations from the perspective of OACM staff and front-line staff who perform work in the borough office, in the neighborhood, or at developments. First, we recount general observations about the relationship between development staff and OACM (Technical Services Department). Then, we discuss the departments within OACM, with a special focus on the DPA, now referred to as Special Repair Projects, which interacts most frequently with development staff.

OACM departments operate as a centrally managed operations team that executes work to support individual developments citywide. Approximately seventy-five interviews were conducted with front-line NYCHA employees, including management and executive staff. The report is a snapshot in time and includes examples provided by NYCHA staff along with observations by the Monitor’s Field Examiner team.

Over the last several years NYCHA has re-branded, renamed, eliminated, added, and modified multiple departments, offices, and positions throughout the organization. The lack of any static state at NYCHA has impacted morale and often creates confusion with regard to whose responsibility it is to perform tasks. This has also contributed to waste, poor management, excessive overtime, and an overall lack of accountability. It was this predominant theme expressed by staff during interviews about OACM. For NYCHA to succeed, the leadership team must create a sense of clarity and stability for the workforce and residents, as well as establish clear lines of communication, oversight, management, and internal controls to ensure accountability.

General Observations

Interviews with NYCHA staff indicate that central office managers apparently have little faith in development staffs’ capability to execute on certain politicized, high-profile, or priority matters. As training has diminished for NYCHA’s property management staff, and institutional knowledge gaps grow, a focused team of experts has become NYCHA’s remedy and OACM was conceived. OACM operates independently from the local developments, but its departments provide support to development staff when circumstances require certain subject matter or technical expertise. They are also frequently deployed to address special initiatives or specific projects designated by the COO’s office. One OACM manager explained, “we do work that should be pushed out to the developments to execute – turnover apartments for example ... they are a basic function that developments should be able to execute and manage.” He went on to explain that “development staff don’t have enough staff or expertise to deal with [certain] operating functions.” However, when reviewing the composition of staff comprising OACM, many are the same skilled trades titles managed by borough staff as part of NYCHA’s work order reform initiative.¹⁴

¹³ DHS or PEG (“Program to Eliminate the Gap”) designations set aside apartments to place individuals identified by the New York City Department of Homeless Services into public housing.

¹⁴ For example, Paint Supervisors, Painters, Plaster Supervisors and Plasterers.

The growth of OACM since 2019 supports the notion that senior management believes a central team is required to execute particular aspects of local property management maintenance work. OACM was described by that same manager as a group who “takes over emergencies and does initiatives,” and also referred to the team as a “crash crew” who gets the job done. This perception is shared by development staff. One development manager explained that OACM is “the team that does whatever the COO wants.” The organization of OACM, and how initiatives are identified and resources deployed, has reinforced a long-standing culture of central office micro-management of the developments and magnifies the resource needs and vast training gaps that the enterprise as a whole has failed to adequately address for development and borough staff.¹⁵ Removing responsibility to perform basic property management functions from developments exacerbates the “hands-off” mentality by front-line development staff highlighted in previous monitoring reports.¹⁶

During interviews with NYCHA staff, they were often either unaware of OACM or had a perception that OACM was a wholly independent entity from the rest of NYCHA borough and development operations. While one OACM manager reported that OACM “special initiatives are reported in advance, [and] meetings are scheduled with development leaders and management”, development staff reports were not consistent with that account. Some reported knowledge of OACM work but most said they were wholly unaware of OACM work on their properties. One Superintendent said she was “not familiar with DPA.” She explained that she “finds all of these groups in central to be confusing.” During an interview with a Brooklyn Superintendent, we realized that he had been describing work that is regularly performed by DPA, as work that DMP does for NYCHA. Once we clarified, the Super realized his mistake and explained that it was confusing to keep up with all these groups from the central office. He said, “when you have to send an email to someone, we have to research who is who and who does what. Some of these groups are only a couple years old and NYCHA should have meetings to introduce them to the operations staff. We don’t know what they do and who is responsible for what.” One Bronx PM recommended that, “NYCHA or OACM should create a short training session to educate Property Managers and Superintendents on the functions of the OACM departments.” A short training session would be even more beneficial now considering that, according to recent organizational changes, OACM has been replaced with the newly named Technical Services Department.

Since OACM often operates independently, there are ample opportunities for staff to outright violate or operate in grey areas of NYCHA standard operating procedures. This impacts staff accountability and compliance – it also creates challenges for NYCHA to mature the Neighborhood Operating Model. OACM Managers who have oversight responsibilities have not been adequately trained and are often not held accountable. Accountability for managing staff performance is lacking and there are insufficient internal controls in place to ensure that fraud and waste are prevented. Observations by the Monitor and interviews with OACM staff also revealed nepotism, a lack of supervision of skilled trades staff, and instances where resources are not managed properly (e.g., oversight of vendors and NYCHA staff). One OACM employee described OACM as a “group of staff who were told they didn’t have to sign-in or out,” and explained that sign-in sheets were fabricated as a paper trail to support hours worked. Specific NYCHA

¹⁵ The OACM manager also indicated that “it would be better to push more of OACM work out to developments, but they don’t have the necessary support to handle the work,” highlighting the ongoing concern for scarce resources.

¹⁶ See Borough Monitoring Quarterly Report, Neighborhood Model pp. 1-2, 6.

staff were threatened by senior management and told that timekeeping policy would start to be enforced (and overtime limited/capped) if workers didn't fall in line with management's directives, which often violated NYCHA policy.

Waste, loss of materials, and suggestions of theft were other examples cited by OACM staff members that stem from the lack of appropriate oversight. One individual reported that cabinets and other materials required to renovate NYCHA units are frequently stored in flood prone locations which has resulted in crucial materials becoming damaged or destroyed and thrown away. The problem was described as ongoing and known to OACM managers with no plan to address future waste. In another example a Superintendent in Brooklyn said that DPA retrieves all supplies from the development storerooms and the developments are not reimbursed. He explained that he "would be ok with it if all the supplies were used at the development but he felt that DPA was taking those supplies to use at other locations." A borough painter in the Bronx had a similar account, "DPA takes supplies from the borough paint shops without prior warning or reimbursement." More troubling was an account from a storeroom employee who reported that OACM staff would "take equipment out into the field" on jobs and then equipment would "go missing or [be] unaccounted for."

In another example a Bronx borough painter recalled one Monday morning when he arrived at work, to find that "DPA painters had gained access to his paint shop over the weekend and turned the place upside down." Material and paint were missing, including paint used for mold work. The same Bronx borough painter remembered hearing that "DPA is a free-for-all for overtime work." He said he "never sees DPA at the development during work hours, only at night and on weekends and there is never any supervision." Multiple operations personnel at developments had a similar account. One assistant super in Queens told us that DPA uses their own skilled trades employees to take over an apartment, but all required materials to perform work are taken from the development's storeroom. In contrast, OACM senior management reported that DPA accesses development storerooms only when needed and only for tape, plastic, or PPE equipment.

Insufficient oversight can lead to health and safety concerns. Monitor team field examiners observed OACM storing flammable materials at an unapproved storage facility in Southern Queens in violation of NYCHA's health and safety procedures. Despite flagging the matter, and intervention by NYCHA's Environmental, Health and Safety group, subsequent follow-up reporting by the Monitor's field examiner team confirmed that the materials were not relocated by OACM. Eventually, NYCHA eliminated the use of the storage location and moved the remaining materials, goods and supplies to NYCHA's Long Island City warehouse where, according to central office management, they are under "lock and key."

There is a significant difference between NYCHA management's perception of what occurs in the field, and what front-line development staff experience and report. The need for supplies to be "under lock and key" calls into question those issues of accountability, internal controls and oversight raised throughout this report. Overall, development staff described varied experiences with OACM. An OACM supervisor acknowledged that "what we do can be disruptive" when talking specifically about TEMPO. He said, "we took over a portion of the portfolio to knock out the backlog on a condensed schedule. Within a week or two we complete the work." Staff also reported the benefits of have having a team that executes work, and the extra support OACM provides because there are limited skilled trades in the boroughs. The

concept of a centrally managed squad of fixers, who are deployed to address emergency matters may be a necessity at NYCHA, due in part to insufficient staffing levels, an ever-failing infrastructure, and inadequate training; however, internal controls, management oversight and close supervision cannot be compromised.

Technical Services Department

Development staff distinguish TSD from other OACM departments due to the highly technical work the group performs. A Manhattan PM and Super both reported familiarity with TSD, saying that “they provide useful assistance – assisting with roof warranty inspections, work on the water station and TSD plumber’s work on steam and high-pressure systems.” They explained that TSD also did work on fencing repairs, but more recently the development used vendors for fencing work because they are faster.

Another Superintendent said, “there are borough plumbers and there are plumbers under TSD. When it involves heating or anything to do with risers, expansion joints on the risers, or anything else related to heating, it goes to TSD.”¹⁷ There was general understanding and appreciation by front-line staff that TSD are subject matter experts. A Brooklyn property manager said she often relies on TSD for “big plumbing repairs, waste management compactor repairs, and welders for welding.” She described having a direct line with TSD to address matters as they arose.

One Superintendent said “TSD staff aren’t much more skilled as compared to in-house trades staff.” He compared the Emergency Service Department (“ESD”) with TSD, although he explained that “TSD won’t respond after-hours, noting the specialized equipment that they use when they respond.” Generally, there was little feedback from development staff in connection with TSD, and the information provided by development staff was generally positive.

Rapid Response (TEMPO)

Development staff also reported limited interaction with the TEMPO group. One Property Manager noted “I’m not in contact with Rapid Response, I deal primarily with Lead Hazard Control.” Another Property Manager in Manhattan said his little interaction with TEMPO included “receiving and delivering notices under residents’ doors related to scheduling work,” explaining that it was property management’s job to make sure residents knew when TEMPO would be showing up to do work.

Development staff did raise some concern about being unable to adequately respond to resident inquiries when TEMPO work was scheduled to occur. A Property Manager said that “occasionally residents will contact the management office after a TEMPO notice was left at their door and the resident wants to know what’s going on.” The Property Manager explained the development is unaware of exactly what work is being done or why they are knocking on a resident’s door, except to provide a date that TEMPO will be doing work.

¹⁷ What the superintendent reported is in fact not accurate. Generally, the Heat Maintenance Service and Repair (“HMSD”) department will respond to heat related issues, unless HMSD is overloaded with work and additional support is required from either borough or TSD plumbers. TSD plumbers will usually assist with gas risers and waste line plumbing issues among other things.

A Bronx Superintendent complained that there is typically no notification ahead of time for TEMPO work. It was unclear in this circumstance whether the Superintendent's account is attributed to a breakdown in communication between the Property Manager and the Superintendent locally at the development, or whether the Property Management office was not providing notices (under the doors) to residents. In any event, inconsistent communication regarding upcoming TEMPO work should be addressed.

Department of Management and Planning

There is little direct interaction between DMP and development staff. This is to be expected considering the function that DMP performs in connection with developing operational analytics. However, many of the staff who were interviewed acknowledged receiving a monthly DHS/PEG email from DMP, identifying apartments designated for DHS. A Bronx PM acknowledged the report but did not always review it in detail considering the overwhelming flood of emails PMs receive daily. Another PM couldn't recall whether she receives a monthly list from DMP while another PM said he receives the list but wasn't entirely sure on the frequency. Ultimately, according to development staff the extent of DMP interaction with development staff is limited to emails identifying DHS apartments.

In one interview a Superintendent in Brooklyn said, "I know that they have a unit where they do playground work. We reach out to them in regard to budgeting, a little bit of everything. I've never spoken with someone, just emails. I don't know any specific person, just an email address." When the Superintendent provided the email address for DMP, it was clear that this individual was confusing DMP with DPA who has a playground repair team. This type of confusion regarding the different departments and who does what was something we encountered frequently.

During interviews, an OACM senior manager recognized that DMP performed a crucial function not directly available to Borough and Neighborhood managers. He explained that DMP is "focused on operational change and not reporting", drawing a distinction from the type of data analysis performed by the Performance Tracking and Analytics Department ("PTAD"). DMP will look at work order data, conduct cost analysis, review overtime and project costs to evaluate the benefits of executing an initiative, while PTAD is primarily focused on reporting data. He concluded by saying, "all borough VPs should have analytics staff to provide support to help make decisions." This suggests the need for resources and a broader shift towards localized data driven decision-making for operations.¹⁸

Department of Paint Administration (Special Repair Projects)

The Department of Paint Administration ("DPA") is the most front-facing OACM department. During interviews with NYCHA staff, it became evident that DPA performs the bulk of work at developments and interacts more frequently with development staff compared to the other three OACM departments. The DPA portfolio includes public space painting; handling lead based paint remediation in apartments also known as CU6 apartments; fire remediation; playground inspections and repair; and apartment

¹⁸ See Borough Monitor Report Q4 2021, recommending, "Hire data analysts (at least 1-2 per borough) who report to the Borough VP to support NAs to perform their functions. Alternatively, these positions could report to PTAD and be matrixed to the Boroughs to provide necessary analytical support."

turnovers.¹⁹ The breadth of the portfolio touches apartments in almost every development across NYCHA with work performed in vacant apartments.

DPA often uses exclusive contracts and resources that are not limited by budgetary ceilings imposed on individual developments. For example, the department will engage and manage vendors to complete work orders or aid in executing necessary tasks. DPA is given wide latitude to get the job done and is viewed by staff as an extension of the COO's office. The exclusivity of the contracts and the perception of the unit as capable of executing unique tasks has created a silo effect within operations. This became apparent in an interview with a DPA supervisor who explained the limitations from property management "using my vendors" and explaining why "they", referring to property management staff, weren't permitted to do so. As a result, DPA has processes and workflows independent from the rest of NYCHA property management and is not held to the same standard.

The independent and centrally managed structure of DPA has produced varied results. DPA has a total of 279 total staff, including 138 painters and 38 paint supervisors.²⁰ Opinions from development staff cut both ways. On one hand management staff appreciate the extra resources because neighborhoods are understaffed, and DPA will help get work done once they get to the development and begin. But management have a contradictory view, reporting that DPA is sometimes disruptive and disassociated from developments, and that they operate wholly independently.

For example, while one Superintendent praised DPA's performance, saying there is "no need to do more work after DPA is there – they fix all," the Super raised concerns about work orders. He said sometimes DPA will "ask the development to close work orders and DPA will create their own," hampering the development from its ultimate responsibility of closing out their work orders.²¹ The Super explained that the "development will have to track down work orders and then request that DPA close them out, which impacts development SLAs."²² Another Super said, "there have been instances in which units were left sitting vacant because DPA failed to close their child work orders and the development's SLA suffered." The development PM joined in the Super's sentiment, and they jointly expressed frustration for unfairly being held responsible for DPA's mistakes. Ultimately, the NA assisted in pushing DPA to close the remaining open work orders.

Development staff also raised concern about limitations and lack of collaboration with DPA with respect to using vendors. Local developments cannot use DPA vendors, nor do they have any control or say on scheduling, procurement, or any other variable that may impact the work being completed. In one example, a development arranged for a vendor to perform public space painting in anticipation of a PHAS inspection. Prior to work commencing, DPA instructed the property manager not to commence the work.

¹⁹ CU6 work orders are apartments identified as those where children under six years old reside. Apartment turnovers include emergency transfers and DHS/PEG apartments. A policy change occurred towards the end of 2022 eliminating DPA exclusive jurisdiction over handling DHS/PEG apartments.

²⁰ Data was provided by NYCHA during Q2 2023.

²¹ Work orders in the Maximo system can only be closed out by the designated Owner Group. For example, a work order created by DPA may not be closed by development staff and vice versa.

²² Service Line Agreement ("SLA") are standards developed by NYCHA that mandate the maximum duration of time allotted to complete specified tasks.

Work did not begin, the responsibility was assumed by DPA, and more than a year later the public spaces remained untouched. A week after the vendor was instructed to stand down, HUD conducted a PHAS inspection, and the development failed.

Another Super expressed a general frustration about being “responsible for repairs that are out of the development’s control.” He asserted, “there are many SLA’s we have no control over, they [central office] need to take a look and fix who takes the blame for delays, we work with so many different departments and yet we’re held responsible for them, it’s not a fair system ... we have to come up with ways to not get blamed.”²³ He said he manages this type of issue by closing move-out work orders assigned to maintenance when DPA arrives, and then reopening work orders for remaining work after DPA is finished. The Super explained, “if it starts out as a DPA workorder then there is no one else to blame.”

Turnover Apartments Including DHS / PEG Moveouts

The disconnect between DPA and the developments is illustrated by the problems that arise from turnover apartments. This subset of apartments are vacant apartments which have been returned to NYCHA’s portfolio and require some renovation and/or remediation before they are fit for use. Many apartments require the removal of lead paint, asbestos, or other repairs. Once repaired, apartments are designated as either a DHS apartment to aid the city in housing the homeless, an emergency transfer apartment, or an apartment designated for a qualified new public housing resident.

There has been a series of operational policy shifts occurring over the last two years in connection with turnover apartments. Individual development Managers and Superintendents were customarily responsible for advancing necessary measures to schedule and complete turnovers using skilled trades resources assigned to each borough. As the need for housing and the rise in homelessness in New York City has increased, so has NYCHA’s need to turnover vacant apartments as quickly and efficiently as possible. For several years, NYCHA’s ability to turnover apartments lagged due to an insufficient number of skilled trades staff and multiple operational challenges. Although NYCHA’s work order reform initiative has helped NYCHA improve deployment of borough-based skilled trades resources, recently planners are scheduling some borough skilled trades work as far as eight months out. Meanwhile, NYCHA made commitments to the Mayor’s Office for DHS/PEG apartments and incoming NYCHA residents, in some cases taking deposits for apartments that would not be ready for occupancy until well over twelve-months.²⁴

During 2022, NYCHA identified a fixed number of apartments allocated to emergency transfers and DHS as priority turnovers.²⁵ In a memo to NYCHA staff, the COO centralized responsibility and assigned these

²³ Field staff are indiscriminate when referring to the “central office.” During interviews with staff the term central office was used interchangeably referring to both centrally managed operational units (e.g., elevator department, heat department) and core central office departments (e.g., finance, human resources).

²⁴ NYCHA has since altered its process of filling vacant apartments. Instead of committing apartments to prospective residents prior to initiating necessary renovations, apartments are now held in abeyance until all necessary renovations have been completed, at which point a resident will be identified to occupy the apartment.

²⁵ NYCHA will annually negotiate an agreement with City Hall to set aside apartments to house families selected by the Department of Homeless Services. In 2022, NYCHA prioritized emergency transfers and then expanded the

priority turnovers to OACM, removing the responsibility to initiate and complete repair work in designated turnover apartments from individual developments across the NYCHA portfolio. The COO deployed OACM as a specialized group to improve turnover speed, but ultimately it was not successful. The shift resulted in confusion and frustration from development staff. In some cases, development management would initiate work orders to advance the turnover of these apartments only to have OACM come in to take control of an apartment and then have it sit vacant with no work occurring for months. During our interviews, development managers felt that these cases unfairly negatively impacted their developments' performance metrics.

NYCHA essentially charged OACM with responsibility for apartment turnovers for all DHS/PEG and emergency apartments citywide, a task that local development staff were previously responsible to execute. During this period of time, local development staff were restricted from initiating work orders to advance repairs in any DHS/PEG designated apartments. This caused a backlog of empty units in need of repairs to grow because development staff could not initiate the turnover process and schedule initial repair work orders. Once repair work was eventually completed by the OACM team, apartments would be returned to each individual development portfolio and local property management would resume their oversight responsibility.

NYCHA's executive managers believed that property managers and superintendents lacked the expertise and resources to address many types of work that OACM could handle. One NA reported, "the problem with moveouts was created by [the COO]." Developments stopped doing moveouts for a long time, resulting in the current backlog. He went on to say, "it is clear this program did not work, [so] the developments are being relied upon to fix the problem." In August 2022, NYCHA reversed its policy by lifting the restriction imposed on local developments and allowing developments to initiate work orders. Over a year later, in September 2023, a NYCHA Executive estimated it would take an additional 12-18 months to work through the backlog of turnover apartments. Interestingly the competency gap was described as bilateral according to a senior level manager who candidly explained, "there used to be less intrusion from the central office. Nowadays, we have a whole different level of people who supervise operations and don't have the knowledge and experience required. Back then, everyone knew policy and procedure and the people in charge came up through operations." Over time the backlog of NYCHA turnover apartments has grown significantly to now close to 5,000 vacant apartments, an issue widely publicized in recent news reports.²⁶

There has been confusion about the division of responsibility. One Superintendent explained that she wasn't sure what she was supposed to be doing with respect to turnover apartments. She explained, "development staff didn't know if they were supposed to be turning them over or if someone else was going to do the work ... my staff reached out to DPA, then DMP and never got a response." She went on to say "I have a list of PEG apartments, but they can't be because we already had tenants selected for those units. We don't really know what PEG is or who is taking those units." The Superintendent concluded

program to include 1000 apartments for the DHS program after receiving additional funding from DHS. The total number of apartments requiring turnover was 2283.

²⁶ It's Taking NYC Over a Year to Fix Up Vacant Public Housing Units, <https://gothamist.com/news/its-taking-nyc-over-a-year-to-fix-up-vacant-public-housing-units-report-shows>; Thousands of NYCHA Apartments Sit Empty as Wait Continues for Potential Tenants, <https://abc7ny.com/nycha-housing-apartments-empty-apartment-nyc/14053684/>

by recounting how “a central unit came in to do a few turnovers, but then the work stopped for months.” She said, “there were three units that were designated as PEG/DHS apartments that sat empty for several months before someone showed up to do an inspection.”

As far as notifications to development staff, the Monitor heard various accounts of how and when NYCHA staff find out about whether an apartment is designated as DHS/PEG. A Brooklyn Superintendent explained that “occasionally, I will email DPA with a spreadsheet of open work orders, asking for updates, but DPA usually does not respond.” Another Superintendent in the Bronx explained that he periodically receives the full updated list of DHS/PEG units (all boroughs and developments) from the Neighborhood Administrator, usually via email.²⁷ He acknowledged that, “it’s easy for them to miss notifications such as the updated DHS/PEG list.”

The Monitor heard criticisms of the process related to DHS/PEG apartments. One Property Manager said, “when we create the moveout work order, we create the moveout strip. If DMP selects a unit, they should remove that ticket or transfer the owner group in Maximo to DPA. If they don’t, we automatically start scheduling turnover related work orders. If we aren’t in communication, we don’t know that the unit is for DHS. DMP notifies the borough office that a unit is selected for DHS, and then the Borough notifies the development, but as far as I know, no one is notifying the planning unit.”

A PM in Manhattan said, “before receiving the [DHS/PEG] list I already assigned some of the units on the list to a vendor for work to be completed, unaware that those apartments were designated for DPA as DHS/PEG units.” A Brooklyn Superintendent said, “we did most of the turnover work and then DPA came in and told us to cancel the remaining work orders, which involved some tile work and paint. The borough carpenters were already done with all their work. DPA told us to cancel the remaining work orders and they will finish it.” Interviews confirm that even in instances when apartments are clearly designated as DHS/PEG units, stagnant vacant apartments warrant borough and development intervention. A Brooklyn Superintendent said, “if you have a DHS moveout, an apartment might be sitting there for so long, and the development may have already started to turn it over. A supervisor from DPA will then show up, stop us from doing work, make us cancel our work orders, and then they will take over. They notify us in person when the supervisor shows up.”

Another Brooklyn Superintendent said “sometimes I’ll have a finished unit, freshly painted, but there will still be open DPA work orders that we can’t close because of the owner group. They are usually duplicates for work that my maintenance or skilled trades have already done.”²⁸ This has delayed renovated apartments from clearing a final inspection for occupancy and impacted SLAs for developments.

Communications and Operational Logistics

The confusion surrounding turnover apartments is just one example of the disconnect between DPA and the developments. Most accounts by development staff highlighted a lack of communication and logistical

²⁷ During the interview the Superintendent stated he was unsure which units are designated for DHS/PEG, but with prompting from the Monitor team, he found an email from the Neighborhood Administrator and remembered the list.

²⁸ The owner group in Maximo is the assigned title/department responsible for an individual work order. When the owner group changes, the work order becomes the obligation of the new owner group.

consideration by DPA towards local developments. One Superintendent reported, “we don’t know what they’re working on, no explanations are given.” A Property Manager explained, referring to DPA, “they have even showed up during after hours without notifying any staff,” and another Superintendent explained, “OACM comes and goes as they please. They do not notify development staff when they are present, what they are doing, when they will return, or when they will have the unit completed. No communication.”

The process for designating apartments starts when the COO together with the head of the OACM identifies the aggregate number of apartments to be assigned exclusively for DPA to address. When a designated unit list is provided to DPA, an email is sent to the developments identifying units and eventually a DPA worker reports to a development, changes the locks, and changes the owner group in Maximo for pending work orders.

Advance notice notifying property staff when DPA will be performing work was reported as either nonexistent or inconsistent. The Monitor heard multiple reports from Property Managers and Superintendents that, as one Superintendent explained, “[OACM] groups typically do not send advance notice when they will be onsite, but they do sign in when they arrive and check out keys.”²⁹ However, in another borough, a Superintendent reported “Paint Supervisors typically email the development a week before arrival – that varies.” Another super said that “the Paint Supervisor [] provides advanced notice and sends a list of units designated for DHS/PEG.”³⁰

A PM in the Bronx explained that ideally, she would “appreciate at least 48 hours advanced notice.” Another Super explained that “the paint supervisor will occasionally send a list of DHS/PEG units DPA will be working on, but we don’t know when they’ll be here.” Although staff confirmed receiving advance notice, in varied forms, of designated DHS/PEG apartments identified for turnover, they were not provided notice when DPA staff would report to a location to perform work. The Monitor observed that communication between DPA and local development staff is driven exclusively by the individual personalities of each employee and the relationships they have with DPA staff, not by adherence to any broader OACM or DPA policy.

A Manhattan Superintendent described that he has “little interaction with DHS set-asides which are handled by DPA.” He explained that he “doesn’t get involved until he is asked to do a final walk through after DPA has completed their work.” Once a final walk through is complete, the unit is returned to the development’s portfolio for occupancy. With some frustration, the Superintendent explained that he often has to “email DPA to have [them] ... close a ticket but doesn’t know who to email in DPA to do this.” A Queens Property Manager said, “when the development needs to contact [OACM] we have to use a general inbox ... no one ever answers so they stopped using the email.” Another Property Manager said,

²⁹ Procedurally, when DPA arrives at a development to perform work at an apartment, they will request the keys to the vacant apartment and then change the cylinder/lock so only DPA then has access to the unit. After locks are initially changed, DPA keys are stored in the Management Office at each development and must be provided to DPA when onsite performing repairs.

³⁰ The Monitor was unable to verify whether advanced notice is in fact provided. While OACM reported sending out notification emails, varied accounts were described by development staff. This may be attributed to development staffs’ local capacity to review email which is an issue raised in prior Borough Monitoring reports.

“if there is a response, it is not always the same individual who replies, which is confusing for development staff.” In most instances when development staff have a direct DPA contact, it is a Paint Supervisor assigned to DPA. A Bronx Superintendent said, “DPA crews are overseen by Paint Supervisors, who would typically email or stop by in person after repairs are completed.”

In many instances, once work is completed, DPA will notify development staff of completed work. This is done to formally transition the responsibility of the apartment back to the development. A Bronx Superintendent reported that he will “meet with Paint Supervisors during post repair walkthroughs for both DPA Crews and vendors” that have completed work at his development. He said that they would “take pictures, create a punch list and walkthrough again once all issues are addressed by DPA.” As in several other areas discussed in this report, responses from staff were inconsistent. Another Property Manager in the Bronx said, “the Paint Supervisor typically emails the development staff after finishing their work and they have left the development, and I am not given the opportunity to conduct a post-repair walkthrough or create a punch list with the Paint Supervisor.” He explained that “OACM vendors have not returned to finish unaddressed issues and the development has had to complete the outstanding repairs.” The lack of consistency aligns with observations of mismanagement and lack of accountability and oversight by managers.

One Bronx Property Manger reported instances where “DPA finished repairs and left without notifying any of the development staff” and he realized that work had not been completed only because the Assistant Superintendent happened to check on the unit. He went on to explain, “walkthroughs were not done and DPA had to return to complete repairs.” He went on to criticize DPA recalling several occasions when “DPA transferred work orders back to the development ... and not informed the development” negatively impacting development reporting statistics. Similar reports were made in Manhattan, where a Superintendent reported “having to open work orders in units with new residents after DPA completed substandard work.”

A Superintendent in Queens said, “it’s common that the Paint Administration team claims to have completed a unit, but the development staff really did the work.” In another borough, one Super criticized the existence of DPA explaining that “DPA created an excess of work order tickets, creating a lot of work for the development to review and remove duplicate tickets.” She recounted when Regional Asset Managers (“RAM”) “used to have their own small crews of workers who were responsible for all the painting” saying it “used to be a much better system.”³¹

There was one stand-out exception during interviews with NYCHA staff. One Superintendent gave a glowing account of DPA, saying, “they come to the development, get things done, and it’s a win for both the development and the OACM team.” He pointed out that, “the development is lucky in the sense that the DPA team stores materials on-site.” He mentioned that “Staten Island, in general, loves working with the DPA team.” The Superintendent didn’t seem to mind that they “have no knowledge of which units are chosen or a schedule of the work performed by DPA,” which was consistently reported across NYCHA.

³¹ Regional Asset Managers were assigned oversight of developments prior to the creation of NYCHA’s new geographic neighborhoods. The RAM position was most akin to the current role of Neighborhood Administrators.

Quality of Work

Whether work is completed to industry standard remains a hurdle for NYCHA staff and the contactors they engage.³² In one example, a Superintendent invited the Monitor team to inspect work in two apartments that were identified as completed by DPA. In the first apartment the unit was mostly painted, but the bathroom vanity, tub surround, and cabinets were still in the middle of the bathroom. The second unit was damaged from a fire, it was cleaner than the first and had a new floor. The Monitor team observed a sloppy paint job – paint applied to light switches and outlet covers, door casings, and over previously chipped paint. The sides of kitchen cabinets were painted, and the newly installed floor tile already had begun coming up from the floor curling up at the edges.

Quality of work issues are attributable to a lack of supervision and oversight of vendors and NYCHA staff.³³ A Manhattan Superintendent said that “some of the vendors really needed watching – they are not using primer, not painting inside.” He said he does “a lot of checking himself” and complained that he never sees Paint Supervisors. One Superintendent in the Bronx attributed the lack of supervision to limited staff. She said the “Paint Supervisor is spread too thin. He must travel to all areas of the Bronx, sometimes in the same day,” which makes it difficult to properly oversee all vendors doing work. The Superintendent did acknowledge that “he [the Paint Supervisor] does typically check in at the work site each day at least once.”

One Bronx Property Manager said of Paint Supervisors, they “don’t have the experience to perform oversight for issues for other trades and they should not be conducting pre- or post-repair inspections/surveys for the DPA crews.” OACM leadership was aware that there is a lack of training for staff to perform certain tasks and developed a training program focused on improving the skills of Paint Supervisors to remedy the issue.

OACM spearheaded a training initiative for Paint Supervisors to conduct inspections of contracted paint vendors. Ultimately, explained a NYCHA senior manager, the “paint supervisors will have the responsibility to inspect vendor work.” OACM created a training facility, developed materials, and organized the training. According to NYCHA training for all Paint Supervisors and Maintenance workers was to be completed by summer 2023. He said, “the idea is that spot audits will be performed in the future.” Unfortunately, this training has occurred independently from the NYCHA Learning and Development Department. Due to attrition, new hires, and transfers, the NYCHA manager said, “we cannot track who will be trained in real-time – we have to rely on developments to keep track and to ask for new training when new staff are transferred or hired in.” The lack of administrative support and a methodology to record training for all NYCHA employees is a burden that cannot continue to reside with any individual department. Efforts to train staff are positive and should lead to an improved quality of work. Ultimately, management must hold the Paint Supervisors accountable for oversight responsibilities.

³² See Borough Monitoring Quarterly Report, Procurement, pp. 6-8.

³³ NYCHA has fallen short of taking responsibility to manage contractors, as was previously reported in borough monitoring reports. In this circumstance, the function of contract management is a broader issue in connection with vendor oversight and reaches beyond OACM.

Further Reorganization and NYCHA's Organizational Plan

Since conducting interviews in support of this report there have been significant changes in management and organizationally within operations both within OACM and in other areas. Many of those changes were discussed herein; however, there has been recent discussion and proposals by NYCHA for further reorganization, none of which had been set forth in writing or included in NYCHA organizational plan documents.

Most notable, is the proposed migration of skilled trades staff from TEMPO and Special Repair Projects (previously referred to as DPA) back to the boroughs. The Monitor was informed earlier this month that NYCHA has proposed to reassign TEMPO Repair skilled trades from the central office unit to boroughs skilled trades. This will have an impact on NYCHA's ability to respond to CU6 units. Additionally, NYCHA proposed a similar reassignment to boroughs skilled trades of approximately half of the Special Repair Projects Painters and Paint Supervisors who perform RRP work, among other things. With respect to the latter, NYCHA proposed that Painters and Paint Supervisors will "be assigned to individual neighborhoods and the remediation work will be planned and scheduled in accordance with the Neighborhood Model."

Although the Monitor has not received a comprehensive plan, supported by data, delineating the expected impact of proposed changes, NYCHA's proposals are currently under review.

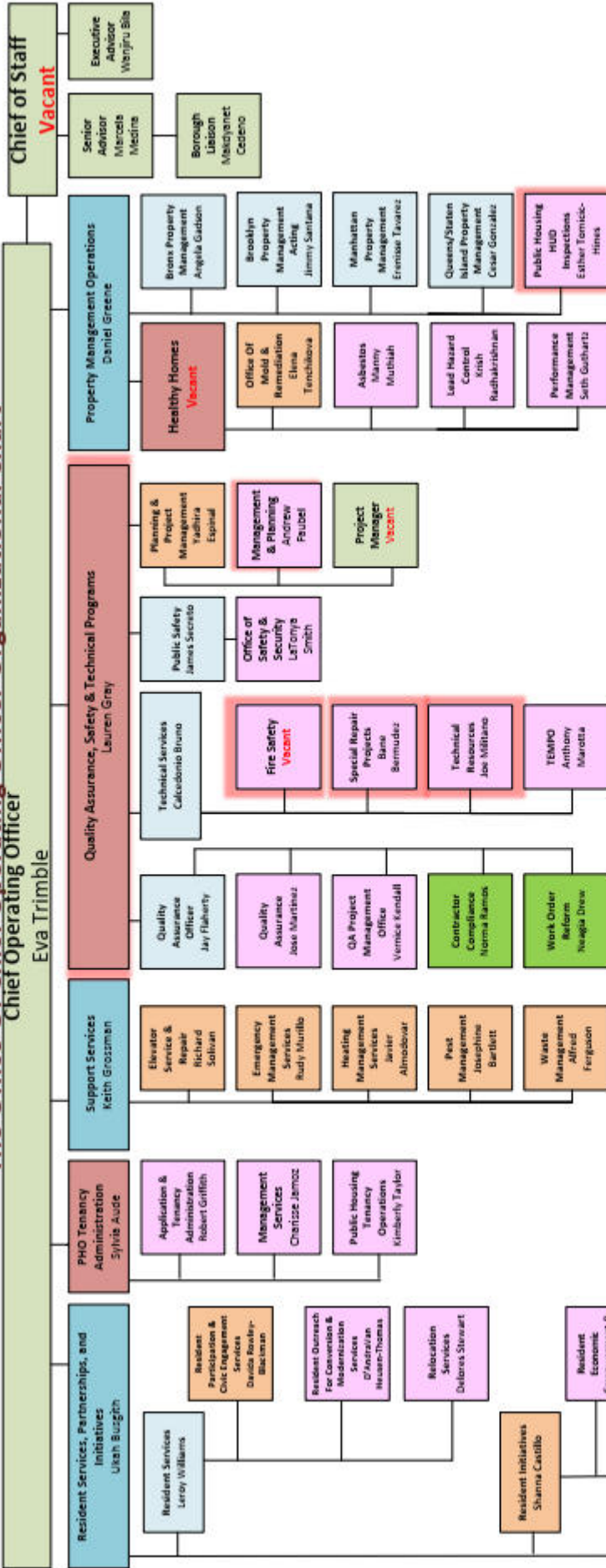
Conclusion

NYCHA's organizational reformation had various iterations in the last several years at the direction of multiple managers and a changing leadership team. The Monitor has reported successes and repeated failures in NYCHA's ability to plan, execute, evaluate, and adjust to organizational changes. NYCHA must consider the Monitor's prior findings and recommendations as it attempts what seemingly will be a significant and wide-reaching organizational change by reassigning central office skilled-trades resources to the boroughs. Many at NYCHA would say moving skilled trades back to the boroughs was "the way it used to be." One can't forget that at some point, someone decided that all of those skilled trades out in the boroughs were better managed and deployed centrally by OACM. Due consideration must be given to the functions that OACM staff currently perform and the rate at which they accomplish those tasks, so when their positions are no longer centrally managed, a fair and accurate assessment can be made about the efficacy of the change.

Updated April 2023

The Office of Chief Operating Officer Organizational Chart

Eva Trimble
Chief Operating Officer



Current Head Count = 53
(Vacant/New Position = 5)

- Executive Level Management = 6
- Executive Vice President = 3
- Senior Vice President = 3
- Senior Director = 10
- Vice President = 8
- Director = 21
- Deputy Director = 2