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Feds eye New York building sale at housing projects

BY ADAM LISBERG
DAILY NEWS CITY HALL BUREAU

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New York's top federal housing official said on Tuesday the city's cash-strapped Housing Authority should consider selling buildings in expensive neighborhoods to create more apartments elsewhere.

"It may displace some people, and that is a concern," Sean Moss, the regional administrator for the federal Housing and Urban Development Department, said at a forum on the Housing Authority's future.

"That is not necessarily a bad thing if you can create more housing with that," Moss said. "Instead of having 300 units [in a project], maybe there is a way to increase that if they are able to ... sell those assets so that you can create more housing."

Moss' frank comments prompted shocked murmurs among the dozens of housing advocates at the forum, organized by the New School's Center for New York City Affairs.

Gregory Floyd, president of Teamsters Local 237, which represents many Housing Authority workers, worried developers are already eyeing authority projects in valuable neighborhoods, which would curtail affordable housing options there.

"We have something that's working," Floyd said. "We would like this to be improved."

Other housing authorities have torn down dilapidated high-rises and replaced them with new low-rise buildings elsewhere, but New York's projects have been well managed in the past and provided solid middle-class housing for decades.

The Housing Authority and the city Housing Preservation and Development Department have sold parking lots at some Manhattan projects so developers can put up new apartments. Housing Authority General Manager Douglas Apple said the agency may also build new stores on its sites.

Federal cutbacks have left the authority with a \$200 million annual shortfall, which has hurt services and maintenance for its 400,000 residents.

City Councilwoman Rosie Mendez (D-Manhattan) said the city should consider putting millions into the Housing Authority - or at least stop billing the agency for police services, water, trash pickup and senior programs.

"We in city government need to pick up some of the slack and pay for that," Mendez said.

alisberg@nydailynews.com

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