



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

May 28, 2021

Greg Russ  
Chair and CEO  
New York City Housing Authority  
250 Broadway  
New York, NY 10007

Re: Proposal to Pilot “Shared Grocery Delivery Centers” in NYCHA

Dear Chair Russ:

The COVID-19 pandemic brought multiple crises to our city. Alongside the public health crisis, we suffered through unemployment and food insecurity crises which disproportionately impacted lower income communities of color, including NYCHA residents. As more and more new Yorkers become vaccinated and our city continues to open up, we must continue to invest in our food systems to ensure New Yorkers have increased access to healthy, affordable food, particularly in our hardest hit communities.

That’s why we are recommending NYCHA consider a pilot program for ***Shared Grocery Delivery Centers*** that allows residents to accept food deliveries from online retailers at a central location within a NYCHA development without the onerous fees.

Many NYCHA developments are in neighborhoods with limited healthy and affordable food options. Ordering groceries from online retailers could help fill in the gap; however, most online grocers have minimum purchase requirements and delivery fees that are prohibitive for lower income customers. NYCHA could use its scale to negotiate a no-minimum, no-fee arrangement for deliveries within a single development, opening up more affordable and reliable grocery options for residents in food swamps or food deserts. If such an agreement could be reached with online retailers that accept SNAP, even greater benefit could be achieved, as NYCHA residents could use their SNAP benefits to purchase food from the comfort of their own homes.

We recommend NYCHA consider the following basic components that will be necessary to establish a “Shared Grocery Delivery Center” pilot:

- 1) Identify a NYCHA development with appropriate community space that already has cold storage or has the capacity to accommodate a large fridge and freezer. This space will serve as the “Shared Grocery Delivery Center” and supports NYCHA’s aim of

maximizing uses in ground floor community space which may have vacancy rates in excess of 20 percent<sup>1</sup>.

- 2) Establish a partnership with a retailer or retailers that will waive delivery fees and minimum order requirements for residents of the development in exchange for use of a single grocery drop-off location and the possibility of an expanded customer base. Online retailers that accept SNAP should be prioritized when selecting a partner.
- 3) Allocate staff or volunteer resources to accept groceries in the community space on behalf of residents and ensure their security until they are picked up.
- 4) Promote the program within the development so residents are aware of the opportunity.

The benefits of such a pilot program would include:

- 1) Increased access to healthy and affordable grocery options for NYCHA residents in a community where options may be limited.
- 2) Increased convenience for NYCHA residents who will be able to receive groceries even if they are away from their apartments at the time of delivery.
- 3) Increased opportunity to use SNAP benefits, which is currently limited amongst online retailers.
- 4) Reduction of delivery truck idling and traffic congestion near NYCHA developments as multiple deliveries would be reduced to a single, or at least fewer, deliveries from the chosen retailer.

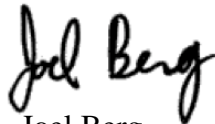
If the pilot proves successful, shared delivery center programs would create an opportunity for NYCHA residents across the city to access the food of their choosing in a cost effective and convenient manner. If you determine that funding is required to implement this program due to equipment or staffing needs, we would be happy to partner with you to explore funding options.

We truly appreciate your consideration of this proposal and would welcome the opportunity to speak with you further about it.

Sincerely,



Scott Stringer  
New York City Comptroller



Joel Berg  
CEO, Hunger Free America

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nycha/downloads/pdf/nextgen-nycha-web.pdf>