

## Security is key at Flushing complexes

by Jason Pafundi, Chronicle Contributor | Posted: Thursday, November 17, 2011 12:00 pm

Councilman Peter Koo (R-Flushing), along with other elected officials, held a town hall meeting at the Flushing Library on Tuesday night to hear the concerns of residents of the Bland and Latimer Gardens public housing complexes.

Representatives from the New York City Housing Authority were also in attendance to discuss changes to the security of the Flushing sites after recent violence there.

“Public safety is always a top priority,” Koo said. “I have expressed my concern over the senseless acts of violence and blatant disregard for our laws.”

Over the past few months, there have been five reported shootings within the Bland Houses, and on Oct. 31, according to Koo, an individual was shot at point-blank range in an elevator. He said that there is allegedly a gang war that has resulted in numerous fights, in addition to rampant drug use and sales as well as prostitution.

“We are afraid to leave our homes,” said a resident, who chose not to give her name. “I shouldn’t have to be scared just to walk down to get the mail, but I am. We need to protect our children and senior citizens and families.”

Brian Clarke, a deputy general manager of operations for NYCHA, outlined a plan to improve security at both housing complexes, due in part to funding allocated by Koo.

Clarke said that new surveillance cameras that Koo secured funding for will be installed during the first quarter of 2012. He also recommended a fiber optic network be installed to provide connectivity between all the buildings.

“This is really the foundation for closed-circuit TV,” Clarke said. “And once we put that in, it’s not only good for the cameras, but also other smart building technology.”

One of the problems with the current security system, he said, is that there is one digital recording device for each building, and in order to retrieve the video, a NYCHA staffer has to go to the site and burn the video to a disk, which is

neither cost effective nor fast.

“The fiber optic network means we can bring the video to a central location,” Clarke said. “For up to 300 cameras, we’d only need three servers, unlike now, where each building has its own separate DVR.”

The plan was met with applause by most in attendance, though some weren’t satisfied.

Craig Kinsey, the president of the tenant association at Bland, questioned whether the cameras could actually stop crime from happening. He suggested real-time cameras for prevention rather than those that just record activity and are used after the fact.

Clarke said that type of system is expensive because it would require a full-time staff to monitor the video 24/7.

Another security measure being recommended by NYCHA is the installation of layered access entrances, including a keyless entry system.

Clarke said the system is used for the four D’s — defend, delay, detect and deter. Each resident of the proper age that is on the lease would be given a plastic keyfob that would be used to gain access to the building. If a keyfob is lost or stolen, NYCHA would simply deactivate it and reissue a new one.

Most of the audience questions were directed to the 109th Precinct, which had a spot on the dais but was not represented.

Warren Jenkins, who lives in a first-floor apartment in Latimer Gardens, said the police need to do their part. “I hear the moans and the groans [ of prostitutes] as if I’m in a triple-X theater,” he said. “Why aren’t [the police] here? I’ve been told by some officers that they don’t even want to be at Bland or Latimer. They need to have a presence and it has to be a positive presence.”