



NEWS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Joseph A. Zayas
Chief Administrative Judge**

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Chief Judge Wilson Appoints Working Group to Implement Full Re-Opening of Harlem Community Justice Center

NEW YORK—As part of his vision to expand problem-solving justice approaches in courts statewide and to create a space that will serve residents of the surrounding communities, Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson has announced the formation of a working group charged with creating and implementing plans to fully restore and re-open a community court to effectively respond to the justice needs of Harlem residents.

Problem-solving courts address the underlying issues that bring people into the justice system. The Harlem Community Justice Center, located in a storied courthouse listed on the National Register of Historic Places, operated as a partnership of the Court System and the Center for Justice Innovation. It heard family, housing, and small claims matters, offering programs centered on stable housing, community safety, re-entry, youth, and other essential services from 2001 until the Court closed at the outset of the COVID crisis. Although the Center for Justice Innovation once again began providing limited services to the community in 2022, because of significant building structural issues, only a small corner of the building is presently useable. The East Harlem building is currently undergoing extensive repairs and upgrades.

The Chief Judge's Working Group on the Future of the Harlem Community Justice Center, a prominent contingent of judges, court administrators, government officials, and community and legal leaders, will focus on reimagining the HCJC's mission and future goals and repurposing the space to manifest the Chief Judge's commitment to community-based and problem-solving methods for the Court System and providing recommendations for using the renovated courthouse as a resource for all members of the Harlem community regardless of court involvement.

The advisory group—led by Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman partner Rolando Acosta, a retired Appellate Division, First Department Presiding Justice and former Presiding Judge of the Harlem Community Court, and New York County Supreme Court and Appellate Term Justice Ta-Tanisha James, also a former Presiding Judge of the Court—will also aim to expand the scope of the HCJC to provide resources to strengthen the community in ways that avoid involvement with the judicial system.

“As Chief Judge, one of my top-most priorities remains building on the success of our problem-solving court models which, time and again, have proven integral in

transforming individual lives and enhancing the stability of our communities,” said Chief Judge Wilson, who since his 2023 appointment has worked to secure more funding and shift greater resources to expand and support New York’s problem-solving courts.

“I am wholly confident that, through the collaboration of this diverse and highly accomplished group of leaders and experts, we will find the best path forward in realizing the Harlem Community Justice Center’s full potential as a neighborhood fixture whose positive impact will be felt throughout East, Central, and Western Harlem, and a model for a wholesale reimagining of what community-based justice can look like.”

The Chief Judge’s Working Group on the Future of the Harlem Community Justice Center has already set its wheels in motion, last week gathering at the historic East Harlem building and site of the HCJC. There, they were welcomed by Chief Judge Wilson, took a tour of the facility led by the Center for Justice Innovation staff and uniformed Court Officers from the New York City Civil Court, and, most importantly, discussed plans for their next steps.



New York Attorney General and Working Group Member Hon. Letitia James points to an architectural feature of the landmark courthouse during the group’s initial meeting. Seated are (L-R) Working Group member Hon. Sylvia Hinds-Radix, Working Group Co-Chair Hon. Ta-Tanisha James, Chief Judge Rowan Wilson, Working Group Co-Chair Hon. Rolando Acosta, and Mindy Jeng of OCA’s Executive Office



Working Group members descend the Romanesque Revival style building’s marble and iron spiral staircase, which leads from the building’s lobby to the top of its tower, during a recent tour of the landmark site led by Center for Justice Innovation staff and uniformed Court Officers from the New York City Civil Court



Working Group Co-Chair Hon. Rolando Acosta (left) and member Hon. Shahabuddeen Ally, Administrative Judge of the New York City Civil Court, tour a part of the building under renovation

Following is a roster of the new Working Group on the Future of the Harlem Community Justice Center.

Working Group on the Future of the Harlem Community Justice Center

Co-Chairs

Hon. Rolando Acosta, Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman, former Presiding Justice of the Appellate Division, First Department

Hon. Ta-Tanisha James, New York County Supreme Court and Appellate Term Justice

Members

Hon. Suzanne Adams, Administrative Judge, New York County Supreme Court–Civil Term

Hon. Shahabuddeen Ally, Administrative Judge, New York City Civil Court

Hon. Diana Ayala, Deputy Speaker, New York City Council

Justin Barry, Executive Director, New York State Unified Court System

Piyali Basak, Managing Director, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem

Hon. Alvin Bragg, New York County District Attorney

Courtney Bryan, CEO, Center for Justice Innovation

Twyla Carter, CEO, The Legal Aid Society

Hon. Cordell Cleare, New York State Senator (30th Senate District)

Robert Cohen, Cohen Clair Lans Greifer & Simpson

Hon. Adriano Espaillat, U.S. Congressperson (13th Congressional District)

Carl Forbes Jr., CFJ Law, Past President of the Metropolitan Black Bar Association

Darrell Gay, ArentFox Schiff

Hon. Edward Gibbs, New York State Assemblymember (68th Assembly District)

Hon. Sylvia Hinds-Radix, JAMS, former Corporation Counsel and Associate Justice, Appellate Division, Second Department

Hon. Letitia James, New York State Attorney General

Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President

Deanna Logan, Director, Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

Noah Mamis, Counsel to Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson

Shameka Overton, Executive Deputy Commissioner, DCAS

Hon. David Paterson, former Governor of New York State

Jennifer Raab, President and CEO, New York Stem Cell Foundation

Xavier Santiago, Chair, Manhattan Community Board 11

Hon. Adam Silvera, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City Courts

Jane Silverman, Executive Director, Chase Community Development Banking

Shannon Simpson, Cohen Clair Lans Greifer & Simpson

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