

Annika Lescott-Martinez, 34

Chief financial officer and executive vice president, New York City Housing Authority

BY NATALIE SACHMECHI

Annika-Lescott Martinez says her passion for housing policy started during an internship at the Local Initiatives Support Corp., which champions affordable housing.

“I didn’t know anything about it before,” said Lescott-Martinez, who grew up in Flatbush. “I’ve seen people deal with housing problems. You always knew someone who was dealing with a difficult landlord or rising rents.”

In 2015 she went to work for the U.S. Office of Management and Budget under President Barack Obama. There she oversaw the Department of Housing and Urban Development budget.

“My legacy,” she said, “was probably being really tenacious and creative in terms of some of the solutions I was pushing.”

Around that time, the New York City Housing Authority was in search of fresh blood, and she got a role there in 2018 as a senior advisor to the chief financial officer.

Today Lescott-Martinez is the gatekeeper of the agency’s \$4 billion budget and \$1 billion investment portfolio.

At NYCHA, the largest provider of public housing in the country, she oversees payroll; risk management and insurance; financial analyses; planning; and accounting—the real guts of finance.

The biggest challenge she faces, she said, surrounds the agency’s capital needs. Its aging housing stock desperately requires repairs, she said, after decades of disinvestment in public housing.

“I’d like to say I’ve never really worked for a private company,” she said. “I may be dealing with big dollars, but these dollars are connected to people.”