



## MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION

### *Dismay and glee greet news of Carson's move to head HUD*

**D**ismay and glee were the two overwhelming reactions to the news that President-elect Donald Trump named Ben Carson, an ultra-conservative neurosurgeon with no experience in either government, housing or urban affairs, as the new Secretary of the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Among those expressing dismay, if not disbelief, were tenant and affordable housing advocacy groups and fair housing organizations, among others. In contrast, industry groups representing large private real estate owners and developers, and mortgage bankers, were barely restrained in applauding the appointment.

Typical of the dismay and anger at the appointment were comments by New York State Tenants and Neighbors, a leading tenant advocacy group, in a statement.

"Dr. Carson has publicly objected to the premise of the fair housing law, a staple of federal housing policy aimed at preventing housing discrimination," the group said. "Dr. Carson wants to make deep cuts in social spending, in line with the budgets House Majority Leader Paul Ryan has long proposed. Such cuts could

pose massive threats to HUD's budget and impinge on the agency's ability to run crucial programs like public housing, project-based Section 8, and section 8 vouchers."

The statement also argued that "This appointment represents yet another travesty from President-elect Trump," the group said, "who has moved from running a racist, anti-immigrant, and sexist campaign to appointing a racist, anti-immigrant, and sexist cabinet. This cabinet includes Trump's choice for Treasury Secretary, Steve Mnuchin, known as the "foreclosure king," and other cabinet selections with deep ties to the biggest banks responsible for the country's housing crisis in the mid-2000s."

#### **Business groups cheer**

In direct contrast to such comments, Ed Brady, chairman of the National Association of Realtors, praised Carson as "a thoughtful leader who is sure to assemble a professional team of policy experts and be a great spokesperson for housing."

Dismissing Carson's lack of experience or knowledge of housing issues, David Stevens, head of the Mortgage Bank-

ers Association, said "I've been in this business for well over three decades and it's more typical than not that the HUD pick is not a person steeped in housing."

Critics of the appointment fear that Carson would undermine HUD's primary responsibilities, including--but not limited to--assuring that federally funded housing is non-discriminatory regarding ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.

#### **Danger to Fair Housing?**

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, who called Carson "a disconcerting and disturbingly unqualified choice to lead" HUD, said that "Our country deserves a HUD Secretary with the relevant experience to protect the rights of homeowners and renters, particularly in low income and minority communities, and to ensure that everyone in our country can have access to safe and affordable housing without facing discrimination or homelessness."

Pelosi's and housing advocates' fears may be based Carson's own expressed views on discrimination. In an op-ed essay for the Washington Post on

*Continued on page 8*

**Strengthen MLRC**  
**Join today (use form on page 2)**

### **GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**Saturday, January 21, 2017**  
**10:00 a.m - noon**

Workshops for ML co-op shareholders, and current & former residents of post '73 ML rentals. *Refreshments at 10:00 a.m.*

**NOTE:** If weather is inclement, prospective attendees should call the MLRC hotline at **212-465-2619** after 6 a.m., to learn if the meeting's been canceled due to the weather.

**CONTACT:** [Information@mitchell-lama.org](mailto:Information@mitchell-lama.org)  
**PLACE:** Musicians Union, Local 802, 322 W. 48th St., near 8th Ave. in the ground floor "Club Room." Subway trains: No. 1 to 50th St. & 7th Ave.; Q,W to 49th St. & Broadway; E to 50th St. & 8th Ave.

Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition  
PO Box 20414  
Park West Station  
New York, NY 10025

# Council seeks to amend law allowing 'nuisance' evictions

**W**hat constitutes a serious "nuisance" in New York City? To some police officers, the mere possession of a few ounces of marijuana -- or even those suspected of holding them-- is enough of a nuisance to cite a so-called nuisance law to bar them from their homes or small neighborhood businesses. Not surprisingly in New York City, most of those so barred or even evicted tend to be people of color or low-income immigrant families, according to research done by Pro Publica and the NY Daily News.

The law, known as the Nuisance Abatement Law (NAL), was passed in the 1970s as a way of dealing with a plague of drug dealers, illegal nightclubs, brothels and other serious lawbreakers.

Today, however, with a significant decline in the high crime and addiction environment of those years, critics of the law argue that it is being misused.

"The nuisance abatement law is a powerful tool that can swiftly put an end to ongoing illegal activities in our communities," said the City Council's Public Safety Chair Vanessa Gibson. "However, it has become clear that the wide and disproportionate usage of this law has negatively impacted law abiding New Yorkers, and New Yorkers of color in particular."

In October, the Council submitted a series of bills collectively known as the Nuisance Abatement Fairness Act (NAFL). Among other things, the bills seek

to do the following:

- Eliminate an order under the NAL being issued without the defendant being put on notice or having an opportunity to plead his or her case in court.

- Repeal the Padlock Law, which permits the NYPD to close a residence or business without any judicial order.

- Restrict the application of the NAL to only the sale, not the possession, of drugs, and require four drug sales instead of three to constitute a "nuisance."

- Concerning alcohol sales to a minor, restrict NAL to "repeated, willful, and flagrant cases," and require four such incidents to establish a "nuisance."

- Require laboratory reports for all drug cases.

- Require any drug sale nuisance case to have at least one incident personally witnessed by a police officer, eliminating the ability to file NAL cases based solely on information from confidential informants.

- Establish a four-month statute of limitations for all NAL cases, and 90 days for drug cases.

Support for the NAFL, presented at City Council hearings on November 2nd, has come from the NYCLU, Brooklyn Defender Services, and the Legal Aid Society. Opposition came initially from the NYPD, but Assistant Commissioner Robert Messner said that the Department "is supportive of the concepts behind many of these proposals, and more broadly the goal of reforming" the law.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### MLRC General Membership Meeting Saturday, January 21, 2017

10:00 a.m. - noon

Workshops for ML co-op  
share-holders, and current  
& former residents of post '73  
ML rentals

Members are urged to voice concerns regarding their developments, especially long- and short-term standing issues

Musicians Union, Local 802,  
322 W. 48th St., near 8th Ave.  
in the ground floor "Club Room"

**NOTE:** If weather is inclement, prospective attendees should call the MLRC hotline at **212-465-2619** after 6 a.m., to learn if the meeting's been canceled due to the weather.

### Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition, Inc.

#### Officers

Co-chairs: Jackie Peters  
Ed Rosner  
Margo Tunstall

Treasurer: Carmen Ithier  
Financial Sec'y: Alexis Morton  
Recording Sec'y: Sonja Maxwell  
Corresponding Sec'y: KatyBordonaro

#### MLRC NEWSLETTER STAFF

Editor: Ed Rosner  
Assistant editors: Katy Bordonaro  
Sonja Maxwell  
Jackie Peters  
Margo Tunstall  
Editorial Coordinator: Nathan Weber

**Circulation: 5,000**

Articles, letters and photographs are welcome. Send to MLRC, PO Box 20414, Park West, New York, NY 10025. Fax: (212) 864-8165. Voice Mail: (212) 465-2619. E-mail: [information@mitchell-lama.org](mailto:information@mitchell-lama.org)

## JOIN THE MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION 2017

INDIVIDUAL: \$15 per year; DEVELOPMENT: 25 cents per apt  
(\$30 Minimum; \$125 Maximum)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Evening phone \_\_\_\_\_ Day phone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Current ML: Co-op \_\_\_\_\_ Rental \_\_\_\_\_

Former ML: Co-op \_\_\_\_\_ Rental \_\_\_\_\_

Development \_\_\_\_\_

President's name \_\_\_\_\_

Donations in addition to dues are welcome.

NOTE: Checks are deposited once a month.

Mail to: MLRC, PO Box 20414, Park West Finance Station, New York, NY 10025

# Affordable housing news from around the nation

## National: 'Extended families' pose new housing challenge

Households across the United States whose members relate to each other beyond the typical nuclear family--such as adult children living in their parents' homes, elderly parents living in their children's homes, various relatives of the "head" of family--are rapidly outpacing traditional households, but they are finding it increasingly difficult to secure adequate affordable housing.

This finding comes from the Center for American Progress. In a report, the Center notes that extended families tend to be more ethnically (or "racially") diverse, and more economically disadvantaged. Because traditional housing tends to be geared towards nuclear families and singles, the extended families are "underhoused." The Center advocates more financial incentives to developers to create appropriate housing for extended families. For example, the Center recommends that local jurisdictions "broaden housing code and land use regulations to support the development and legalization of accessory dwelling units."

## Washington, DC: Strike Force seeks preservation unit

With nearly 14,000 affordable housing covenants set to expire by 2020, and 1,000 new residents moving to Washington, D.C., each month, the city's "Housing Preservation Strike Force" released recommendations in November for preserving the district's existing affordable housing. That includes maintaining as affordable 100 percent of units currently receiving federal or city subsidy.

The committee — consisting of 18 members from city agencies, law firms, community organizations and the D.C. council — also recommended creating a Preservation Unit within city government to focus on the issue and a public-private preservation fund to leverage outside investment. Other programs would focus on renovating small buildings, providing rental assistance to allow seniors to age in place, and allowing the district to transfer ownership of properties at risk of losing their affordable units to developers who agree to

maintain affordability. Regulations for the latter program will be proposed this fall.

## Pennsylvania: New legislation expands affordability law

Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf has signed legislation expanding the state's Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Act. The law, which is expected to benefit all 67 counties, increases revenues for the Housing Trust Fund; those revenues will be drawn from future growth in the Realty Transfer Tax. The legislation will direct up to \$25 million to the Fund, which will be used to help families locate and pay for safe, affordable shelter.

## Denver: First ever affordable housing fund

Denver's city council in the fall created the city's first-ever dedicated local funding sources for affordable housing. The action effectively ended a controversy which reflected housing advocates' views that it's "too little, too late," and developers and business interests' view that it's ill-advised government interference which will force up market rates and building prices.

Supporters of the fund describe it as a modest but important first step. New taxes and impact fees supporting the fund are expected to generate \$10 million. An additional \$5 million one-time infusion could come from city reserves, including marijuana taxes. For the first year, the fund would offer project subsidies and land purchases that might produce, in addition to the city's current programs, 653 new income-restricted apartments and other homes. Some 250 households might receive emergency assistance to help them to stay in their homes.

## Maine: Typical renter lacks income for modest shelter

In order to afford a modest, two-bedroom apartment at fair market rates in Maine, renters would need to earn just over \$17 an hour. A study by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, however, indicates that the typical renter in Maine earns almost \$7 less than that hourly wage.

## Housing Briefs

### NYC DOI probing M-L Dayton Beach Park

The Dayton Beach Park ML co-op on Rockaway Beach is being probed by the city's investigation department following residents' complaints of twenty-four vacant apartments and lack of HPD oversight.

As the probe continues, the co-ops shareholders are exploring exiting from the Mitchell Lama program. If the co-op decides to go private, the value of the empty units would soar. The development is reportedly one million dollars behind on its water bills.

### NLIHC: housing vouchers denied to 50% of new applicants

A recent National Low Income Housing Coalition survey of managers of public housing and voucher programs found that more than 50 percent of waiting lists for vouchers were closed to new applicants, compared with 11 percent of public housing waiting lists.

Other findings: The median wait time for vouchers (18 months) was double the median wait time for public housing (9 months).

The median wait time for assistance tended to be highest among large housing authorities. The maximum wait was 15 years.

Families with children accounted for 60 percent of the families on an average voucher waiting list. An average waiting list for public housing was more evenly distributed.

### New fund for NYCHA now up to \$900,000

The Fund for Public Housing, a public-private partnership geared towards helping cash-strapped NYCHA improve social service delivery and economic opportunity for its residents, has been receiving donations since January, totaling almost \$900,000. The Fund hopes to raise \$200 million in its first three years. Some of the largest donations have come from international banks. NYCHA consists of 328 developments and 178,000 units across the five boroughs.

### New public housing film

"Our Journey Home," a new film by Why Housing Matters, challenges perceptions about people in need of housing. It follows three characters striving to support their families, further their education and careers, give back to their communities and have a place to call home. Trailer for the one-hour film is available at <http://www.rethinkhousing.org/>

## MLRC workshops cover key issues in tenant, co-op developments



MLRC board members and guest at October general meeting. From left: Margot Tunstall Brown, Ingrid Lewis-Martin (Senior Advisor to BBP Eric Adams), Jackie Peters, Ed Rosner

By Kenya Numan

**R**ats, owners, and privatization were among the workshops presented at the last MLRC general board meeting held on October 19.

Thirty-two members from fifteen developments participated in two sets of workshops, one for cooperatives, the other for tenant developments. Each workshop consisted of participants and an executive board member serving as a facilitator.

For the tenant developments, workshops explored the following issues: rodent infestation, formation of tenant unions, sales of developments and lease issues, management/owner concerns, budgets, and Article 11 (preservation of affordable housing by “converting from a Mitchell-Lama cooperative to an HDFC cooperative and providing financial incentives to existing shareholders,” according to HPD). Although this workshop pertains to cooperatives, shareholders in ML coops have proprietary leases issued by the coop corporation, which effectively makes them tenants.

### National conference set on ending family & youth homelessness

**T**he 2017 National Conference on Ending Family and Youth Homelessness will be held February 23 - 24, 2017 at the Marriott Marquis Houston, TX. Check-In opens from 2 pm

Workshops for cooperative developments addressed such issues as management and authoritarianism, transparency (or the lack thereof), privatization, shortfall budgeting, by-laws education, HPD/HCR oversight, and board training.

Participants in the tenant workshops represented Atlantic Towers, 1849 Sedgwick, C Park East, Haywood Towers, Promenade Apartments, Tivoli Towers and 3333 Broadway.

Attendees from the cooperatives included Tilden Towers, River Terrace, Co-Op City, St. James Towers, Clayton Apartments, and River View Towers.

The borough of Brooklyn was officially represented at the meeting. Borough President **Eric Adams** was unable to attend, but he sent his senior advisor, **Ingrid Lewis-Martin**, in his stead. MLRC Co-chair **Margot Tunstall Brown** had been instrumental in forming the Brooklyn Borough President’s affordable housing task force.

to 5 pm on February 22, 2017. The rate is \$525 per person. Registration is available at <http://help.endhomelessness.org/events/40>

## Council seeks to make owners increase apartment heat

**A** bill to raise the outside temperature in winter that requires landlords to provide heat has been introduced to the City Council. Intro 0722 would require owners to increase the apartment temperature, between October 1 and May 31, to 72 degree--up from 68 today, between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. And between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., the inside temperature would have to be kept at 65 degrees or above; today it is 55.

The bill was sponsored by Council member Jumaane D. Williams. A rally in support of the bill was held on Dec. 12, at City Hall. Williams was accompanied by Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Senator Bill Perkins, the Flatbush Tenant Coalition, Housing and Family Services of Greater New York, and impacted New Yorkers from Midwood Senior Center. Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Senator Bill Perkins, the Flatbush Tenant Coalition, Housing and Family Services of Greater New York, and impacted New Yorkers from Midwood Senior Center.

## MLRC Developments

### These developments are members of the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition

**Individual Membership: \$15 per year**  
**Development Membership: 25 cents per apt**  
**(\$30 minimum; \$125 maximum)**

*Donations above membership dues are welcome*

Adee Towers	Assn
Amalgamated Warbasse	Meadow Manor
Arverne Apartments	Michelangelo Apartments
Bethune Towers	109th St. Senior Citizens Plaza
Castleton Park	158th St & Riverside Dr. Housing
Central Park Gardens	Parkside Development
Clayton Apartments	Pratt Towers
Coalition to save Affordable Housing of Co-op City	Promenade Apartments
Concerned Tenants of Sea Park East, Inc.	RNA House
Concourse Village	Riverbend Housing
Dennis Lane Apartments	River Terrace
1199 Housing	River View Towers
Esplanade Gardens	Rosedale Gardens Co-op
Franklin Plaza	Ryerson Towers
Independence House Tenants Assn	Starrett City Tenants Assn
	St. James Towers
	Strykers Bay Co-op
	Tivoli Towers
	Tower West
	Village East Towers
	Washington Park SE Apts
	Washington Square SE Apts
	Westgate Tenants Assn
	Westgate
	Westview Apartments
	West View Neighbors Assn
	West Village Houses

## ‘Cluster sites’ program for homeless families under attack by groups, reps

Two organizations advocating for the homeless in New York City, along with three political representatives, are calling on the City to discontinue its cluster housing program to temporarily place homeless families.

Comptroller Scott Stringer and Public Advocate Letitia James have joined the Coalition for the Homeless and Picture the Homeless in seeking to end the program, citing the death of two sisters, aged one and two, who burned to death after their room was filled with steam from a broken radiator, at 720 Hunts Point Avenue in the Bronx in December. In addition, Councilman Rafael Salamanca, who represents the community where the two girls were killed, announced a series of proposed bills to deal with the issue.

One of the bills would ban the Department of Human Services from contracting with landlords who have outstanding stop-work orders or “C” violations. The City’s Department of Housing Preservation and Development defines such violations as “immediately hazardous.”

For years now the City, lacking sufficient safe shelters for families, has been providing funds to owners of hotels to house the families. Formerly known as “scatter sites” but today referred to as “cluster sites,” the rooms were rented initially as a stop-gap

### **Nearly three million tenants faced eviction last year**

A new study by real estate website Redfin, estimates that 2.7 million renters faced eviction in the U.S. last year, and that those numbers will continue to rise as long as housing prices do.

By analyzing more than six million eviction records across 19 states where data was available, Redfin found that the 15 metros with the biggest increases in portion of income spent on rent also experienced an increase in the number of evicted families. Those metros — which were topped by Allentown, Pennsylvania; Jacksonville, Florida; Los Angeles; and Newark, New Jersey — experienced an average increase in the rent-to-income ratio of 5.8 percent between 2011 and 2014, and an increase in the number of evicted families of 3.8 percent in 2014.

measure, but the program has outlasted Mayor Bill de Blasio’s commitment to ending it.

Begun in the Giuliani administration and continued during the Bloomberg years, the program “not only takes affordable apartments off the market, but costs the taxpayers millions in inflated payments to the landlords,” according to the Coalition.

According to Stringer, some sites have “more than 13,000 open violations — including nearly 1,000 that are “high priority” and especially dangerous.”

Stringer is asking the City to release a “roadmap to tackle our homeless crisis. Cluster sites are known to be dangerous. Hotels are extraordinarily

expensive and provide limited services. These options make no sense.”

The owner of the building in which the sisters burned to death is Moshe Piller, who has been sued on several occasions for failure to provide adequate services in his buildings. After the death of the two girls, Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark announced an investigation into Piller.

According to DNAinfo, Piller’s buildings have 36 violations listed with the Dept of Buildings, and 26 violations with HPD. In addition, HPD filed a suit against Piller on Feb. 6, 2014, over his failure to make repairs at 720 Hunts Point Ave., notwithstanding Piller’s claim that he had done so.

### **Jamie Towers residents seek DHCR and politicians’ help on management issues**

Cooperators at Jamie Towers, a M-L complex in the Bronx, are appealing to government and political officials to deal with such maintenance problems as insufficient heat in cold weather and too much heating in warm weather, insufficient security resulting from personnel cutbacks, and inadequate lighting.

In letters to the NYS Homes and Community Renewal, elected officials, and the media, residents have complained that because of “predatory practices of the management company(s), the unscrupulous practices of the board and the lack of oversight of the state (DHCR), we are in jeopardy of losing our homes,” according to one letter.

Inadequate conditions, however, have not prevented the management

agency, First Service Residential, from raising fees for security and carrying charges, although he allegedly did so without official approval from the state.

“DHCR is reviewing the proposed rent increases and will make a determination, as required by law, to ensure that Jamie Towers can continue to meet its financial obligations and proceed with much needed capital improvements. As always, DHCR will work with the housing company to ensure that it takes all reasonable steps to minimize its expenses.”

According to a representative of the coop’s senior citizens group, sixty percent of the residents are seniors, with some in their eighties and nineties.

### **Anti-gentrification groups illuminate their message**

Affordable housing and anti-gentrification activists promised to light up various neighborhoods throughout the city during the holiday season, as a way of illuminating their concern about a process that relentlessly encourages real estate owners to lure higher income residents at the expense of people of low and moderate incomes.

The effort, according to DNAinfo, would be a repeat of last year’s effort

in Brooklyn’s Bushwick neighborhood, during which the activists carried signs saying “No Me Mudo” [I’m Not Moving], “No Eviction Zone” and “Not 4 Sale”.

On Christmas eve, illuminated signs were to be placed in various gentrifying neighborhoods in the South Bronx, Chinatown, Inwood, Ridgewood, Jackson Heights and Flatbush.

# New songs for tenants & residents

(with thanks to veterans of labor battles)

## Tenant Band

(To the tune of Union Maid)  
© Sue Susman 2016

**T**here once was a tenant band  
United in our stand  
We stopped all cries of doom and  
gloom  
And saved this same Community room  
Garage rents staying low,  
We know just how to go.  
We'll fight those hikes  
And stick to our rights  
And let the landlord know:

*Chorus:*

Oh you can't scare us,  
We'll stick together  
To save our homes now  
Despite the weather.  
Oh you can't scare us,  
We'll stick together  
We'll stick together,  
Till the fight is won.

Strong regulations now  
Make tenants all go wow!  
No U or P for you or me  
No that we can't allow.  
We need a law that's passed  
So benefits will last  
Gluck's day in court  
It was real short  
The die it has been cast.

*Chorus:*

With real rent reform  
"Affordable's" the norm  
Landlords will quake & Cuomo shake  
We'll take the place by storm  
A million tenants strong  
We really can't go wrong  
They'll change their tune  
And not too soon,  
Rent laws will last, and long!

## Which Side Are You On? (tenant version)

(To the tune of Which Side Are You On?:  
labor union version)

Original lyrics by Florence Reece, adapted  
by E. Shneyer/A. Kaufman (c) 2011

*Chorus (sing twice)*

**W**hich side are you on?  
Which side are you on?  
Which side are you on?  
Which side are you on?

Rent laws protect our city,  
The rent laws quell our fear  
The rent laws help to save our homes,  
rent laws keep workers here

*Chorus*

Come all you New Yorkers,  
good news to you we'll tell  
Of how the tenant movement  
has come in here to dwell

*Chorus*

They say in New York City,  
there are no neutrals there  
You're either for fair housing  
or you're a billionaire

*Chorus*

These special interest landlords,  
paid off the GOP  
Now they want to gut the laws,  
destroy our communities

*Chorus*

Don't stand by without speaking,  
While New York gentrifies  
The only way to keep our homes  
Is if we organize.

## Amazing Rents

(To the tune of Amazing Grace)  
© Sue Susman 2016

**A**mazing rents, how high they go  
Without rent regulation  
To save our homes, we'll stand as  
one  
We'll get that legislation.

The owner wants five times the rent  
His greed, it knows no bounds  
A note to him we all have sent:  
We're gonna stand our ground.

Big real estate gives millions now  
So Cuomo does their bidding.  
With no true change to ethics law  
Who does he think he's kidding.

The election's done, we're stuck right now  
We're gonna lose Obama.  
But we'll fight on, we'll save our homes  
And save our Mitchell-Lama.

The Pres.-elect's a landlord now  
And so's his son-in-law  
If they think we'll lie down and bow  
We'll just show them the door.

### The Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition

wishes all its members  
and readers

a very healthy,  
happy  
and prosperous  
New Year

## Clash among architects erupts over Trump's electoral victory

A clash pitting some of the nation's leading architects against their own primary organization erupted in November almost immediately after the electoral victory of Donald Trump. The issue is of concern to housing advocates because architects are charged with creating the so-called built environment, including infrastructure and housing.

The day after the election, Robert Ivy, chief executive officer of the American Institute of Architects, issued a public statement in which he stated that the group's 89,000 members are "committed to working with President-elect Trump to address the issues our country faces," specifically mentioning infrastructure, which Trump had promised in his campaign to fund.

The next day, individual architects and architectural organizations issued a torrent of statements condemning the AIA's offer of cooperation.

### An 'embarrassment'

Michael Sorkin, a leading architect and critic, condemned the AIA statement as "an embarrassment to those of us who feel that the Trump presidency represents a clear and present danger to many values that are fundamental to both our nation and our profession.... We do not welcome Donald Trump to the White House and will revile and oppose him until he can conclusively demonstrate that the hideous pronouncements and proposals of his campaign have demonstrably been set aside and in favor of positions and actions that genuinely seek to serve our national cause and purpose—to build a better America rooted in the principles of justice, equity, and human dignity."

In an equally direct challenge to the AIA's statement, the board of directors of the organization's Chicago affiliate wrote that "we do not support the recent statement made by national AIA on November 10, which prematurely expressed the support of AIA's 89,000 members for an unarticulated infrastructure agenda made by the incoming presidential administration."

Sentiments from other leading architects were similar in content. Edward Mazria, founder and chief execu-

tive of Architecture 2030, responding to Trump's threat to gut the Paris Agreement on climate change, wrote that "The International Union of Architects with member organizations representing over 1.3 million architects in 124 countries worldwide has unanimously adopted the 2050 Imperative, a declaration to eliminate CO2 emissions in the built environment by 2050.

"Individual architecture, engineering, and planning firms continue to make a commitment to design to carbon neutral standards by 2030, including top international and Chinese architecture and planning firms that have signed the China Accord and are now working to implement it. Over 350 firms have joined the AIA 2030 Commitment."

Aaron Betsky, the dean of the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, wrote that "I despair about the future of my country for many reasons after these elections. In the end, the threat of social divisiveness and the victory of climate change deniers are more serious issues that fixing bridges and railroads. At least most of us will survive the physical decline of this country. We will just live in a diminished, less connected and therefore ever poorer country. Whether we – and the rest of the world – can survive its environmental and social decline is another matter."

### 'Endangering our cities'

The Architecture Lobby wrote that Trump's environmental policies are "endanger[ing] the very cities that we not only live in but are sworn to protect."

The AL's statement ended by noting that "Trump's agenda—and that of his allies—will only accelerate the privatization and erosion of our public realm in both its social and physical forms and practices. . . . Let us not be complicit in building Trump's wall but band together to take it down!"

In the face of such stinging refutation, AIA chief Robert Ivy and national president Russ Davidson prepared a video admitting that their memo was "tone deaf" and "resulted in hurt and anger by too many people."

"The message that went out was a mistake, and it shouldn't have happened," they said.

## Brooklyn landlords admit using terror to force out regulated tenants

Two Brooklyn landlords pleaded guilty to using terror tactics to remove rent-regulated tenants from their buildings, to make way for free-market tenants willing to pay far higher rents.

Joel and Aaron Israel entered the plea in State Supreme Court near the end of November. Although their crimes could result in prison sentences for up to four years each, the brothers may stay out of prison, and may continue to own their buildings, under an agreement to compensate the tenants for the damages, hire an independent manager to operate their buildings, and hire an independent monitor, subject to government approval, to oversee all rent-regulated apartments.

The owners pleaded guilty to using such tactics as demolishing kitchens and bathrooms, forcing tenants to live without water. They also hired people to walk through hallways with pit bulls, baseball bats, and sledge hammers, and hired others to so damage utilities that the City was forced to order the tenants to vacate. In one case, the owners actually constructed a wall in a tenant's apartment that prevented the tenant from entering his own home.

The brothers' guilty plea comes two years after the states Homes and Community Renewal agency's tenant protection unit began an investigation.

### Pub. Advocate cites success in pressuring owners to repair

New York City's Public Advocate Letitia James reported in December that six landlords have repaired their buildings after being warned that the City would withhold rental assistance payments.

"Our pledge to protect tenants is working," James said in a public statement. "Since May, six of the eight landlords have repaired their buildings, improving the lives of over 1,000 tenants."

James cited the Spiegel Law as authority for denying payments to owners who neglect basic repairs. The law had not been utilized in over twenty years. "We are now withholding payments to the remaining two landlords."

"We are not a city that subsidizes dangerous and unsanitary living conditions, such as mold, mice, roaches, blocked fire escapes, or missing smoke detectors," she said. All the affected owners had appeared on James' "worst landlords" list.

# Dismay and glee greet news of Carson's move to head HUD

*Continued from page 1*

July 23, 2015, Carson wrote that “These attempts to legislate racial equality create consequences that often make matters worse. There are reasonable ways to use housing policy to enhance the opportunities available to lower-income citizens, but based on the history of failed socialist experiments in this country, entrusting the government to get it right can prove downright dangerous.”

Carson may have had in mind the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule, passed in 2015, which required local areas to set targets to reduce dense pockets of low-income and minority families.

As noted by a report in the Washington Post, Carson, as housing secretary, could “direct his staff not to enforce the rules, by moving resources out of the fair-housing division and into other areas of the department.”

## Condemning Sec. 8 subsidies

In an interview with an Iowa radio talk show host on June 10, 2015, Carson said, regarding the Section 8 housing subsidy program for low-income residents, “This is what you see in communist countries, where they have so many regulations encircling every aspect of your life that if you don’t agree with them, all they have to do is pull the noose.”

Previous and current government housing officials also expressed opposing negative and positive views of Carson’s appointment.

Brandon Friedman, a former public relations official at HUD, tweeted: “It hurts” Like asking “an affordable housing expert to perform brain surgery” “Makes zero sense” “Troubling.” As of this writing, his tweet was retweeted 17 times.

By contrast, House Speaker Paul Ryan tweeted that “@RealBenCarson is a great choice for @HUDgov. A shining example of overcoming poverty, he will put focus on dignity rather than dependence.”

As of this writing, Ryan received 571 Retweets.

Not all opponents of the appointment were so fierce in their reactions. Diane Yentel, president and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, took a conciliatory approach, saying that the NLIHC is “committed to working with

the next[HUD]secretary to ensure the country’s poorest families have decent, safe and affordable homes.”

Nevertheless, she added that “With so many qualified candidates to choose from with deep knowledge of, and commitment to, affordable housing solutions for the poorest families, and with the housing crisis reaching new heights across the country, Dr. Ben Carson’s nomination to serve as HUD secretary is surprising and concerning, given his lack of experience with or knowledge of the programs he would oversee.”

## Veterans weigh in

In a related issue, a group of veterans known as VoteVets.Org in Seattle, responded to Carson’s argument that the United States did not need a department of veteran affairs. Rather, Carson said, the functions of the department should be transferred to the Department of Defense. Carson’s prescription for the DVA

is not dissimilar from his view that HUD should end or sharply decrease its programs.

Regarding veterans, Retired Major General Paul D. Eaton, said that “Dr. Carson’s writing a bad prescription, here. Austerity should not fall on the backs of those who have given all they have for this country, in uniform. When men and women enlist, we, as a nation, make a pact with them that they will be guaranteed care when they come home.

“Eliminating the Department of Veterans Affairs, and telling our troops to save up money in a Health Savings Account, to take care of themselves when they return, is an insulting idea. Rather than think of ways to nickel and dime our veterans, Dr. Carson should be thinking of other areas of fat in government – particularly in defense contracts – that can be cut, so we can hire more doctors and caregivers, to provide returning veterans with the kind of care they earned.”

## Study: LIHTC Housing developments associated with slight poverty decline

With a growing body of evidence demonstrating that neighborhoods can significantly affect people’s future outcomes (e.g., lifetime earnings), three researchers explored the impact of the the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit’s (LIHTC) on neighborhoods. They found little evidence that the tax credit is associated with increases in concentrated poverty.

On the contrary, using data from HUD, the Census bureau, and two additional databases related to tenants in LIHTC developments, the researchers found a link between the tax program and a slight reduction in poverty.

Although LIHTC developments are concentrated in higher-poverty neighborhoods, tenants moving into the developments tend to be comparatively more impoverished than the other resi-

dents in their neighborhood. This could be because of higher rental assistance rates in higher-poverty neighborhoods and nonprofit developers tending to aid unassisted residents in poor neighborhoods

Additional units in higher-poverty neighborhoods (where over 30 percent of the residents are poor) are associated with a two percentage point decline in the neighborhood poverty rate, largely because of spillovers.

Within metropolitan statistical areas, poverty concentration is lower in years when more units have been placed in service, which suggests that building LIHTC units does not increase concentrated poverty.

*--How Housing Matters  
December 6, 2016*