



MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION

Vol. 26, Issue
Winter 2020/2021

WEBSITE: www.mitchell-lama.org

Brewer, Hoylman, Kavanagh address MLRC members via Zoom

Thanks to such technological innovations as Zoom, the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition has been able to continue its general membership meetings in spite of the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

Addressing the sixty-two attending members at the January 23rd meeting were Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, New York State Senators Brad Hoylman and Brian Kavanagh, and MLRC executive board member Icemae Downes.

Brewer suggested the possibility of converting hotels for senior housing, and noted that her office has funds available for various capital (building and renovation) projects. Interested organizations should visit her application

site at <https://www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov/funding/capital-funding/>.

Concluding her remarks on a sad note, she reported that as of the date of the meeting, 3,500 Manhattanites were lost to Covid.

Hoylman opened with a discussion of the efforts of shareholders at East Midtown Plaza to remove the M-L cooperative from the program. Opposing this privatization, he argued that the financial pain caused by Covid-19 today

(Continued on page 8)

**Zoom
Meet & Greet**

**May 1, 2021
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

NY State eviction moratorium to remain in effect until spring

Landlords in New York State will be prohibited from evicting tenants for nonpayment of rent during the Covid-19 pandemic at least until May (a few weeks before the mayoral election), thanks to a law passed overwhelmingly by the Democratic controlled legislature towards the end of December.

While greeted with relief by tenants who are suffering severe financial

difficulties resulting from the pandemic, the law does not address a potential eviction surge in the spring, when the contagion may begin to decline.

According to the financial and management consulting firm Stout, more than a million households in the state are at risk of eviction. Nationally, the figure is around fourteen million.

New HUD chief to push fair housing, tenant relief, Black home ownership

Marcia Louise Fudge, a Democratic Representative from Ohio and former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, who was named to head the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development by President Joe Biden, said her top goals include restoring fair housing policies undermined by the former Trump administration, aiding tenants facing mass eviction during the Covid-19 crisis, and promoting more home ownership by Black families.

Soon after Fudge's Senatorial confirmation in February, HUD pledged as well to investigate complaints of discrimination against transgender and gay people.

Fudge succeeds Benjamin Carson, a pediatric neurosurgeon, who had had no prior experience in any elective or administrative office.

The Carson era, reflecting the former Trump administration's overall policies, was marked by efforts to roll back fair housing regulations. In July 2020, for example, he terminated the Obama regulation that required localities receiving federal housing funds to actively, or affirmatively, move to eliminate racial segregation.

(Continued on page 8)

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

**MLRC
General Membership Meeting
Saturday, March 20, 2021
10 a.m.**

Note: During the Covid-19 pandemic, the next meeting will be held online via Zoom. Members will be informed by regular mail and e-mail

CONTACT: Info@mitchell-lama.org

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

M-L cooperatives now eligible for US forgivable payroll loans

Mitchell Lama and other housing cooperatives are now eligible for the federal government's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), the first time since the program began during the former Trump administration.

Under the program, small businesses and small private practitioners were offered forgivable loans--loans that did not have to be repaid--to cover rent and staff during the economic stagnation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Although the program had closed before the start of the new year, it reopened in January as part of the

federal \$900 billion stimulus bill.

Funds will be distributed through participating banks. To be eligible, businesses and cooperatives must employ a staff of no more than three hundred.

To insure that they do not have to repay any part of the loans, cooperatives must demonstrate that sixty percent of the money was used for payrolls, with the remainder having funded a variety of costs, including mortgages, utilities, worker protection and property damage, among others.

Trump & relatives sued by tenants for years of rent overcharges

Ascheme involving inflated invoices charged by landlords of around thirty rent-regulated buildings, formerly owned by former President Donald Trump and his relatives (who inherited them from Trump's father Fred) is alleged in a lawsuit brought by tenants, who are seeking the return of excess rent, plus interest, plus treble damages.

Filed in the State Supreme Court in Brooklyn, the suit alleges that between 1992 and 2004, when the Trumps sold the buildings, the Trump family overcharged tenants for capital improvements by inflating the cost of repairs. Even after the buildings were sold, the rent overcharges remained in place.

The scheme involved the creation of a phony company, All County Building

Supply & Maintenance, "which had no offices or employees," according to a report in the Times. The bogus company prepared false invoices to the Trumps, showing cost of items purchased for capital renovations. But that cost was actually twenty to fifty percent higher than what the items actually cost. As a consequence, the Trumps were able to charge higher rents under New York State law designed to "compensate" owners for the higher cost.

The scheme also enabled the Trumps to sharply curtail their tax liabilities.

A spokesperson for the Trumps called the allegations "frivolous" and politically motivated, because the suit was filed shortly before the 2020 election.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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CONTACT: Info@mitchell-lama.org

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Circulation: 5,000

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INDIVIDUAL: \$15 per year; DEVELOPMENT: 25 cents per apt
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Donations in addition to dues are welcome.

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



State of the Nation's Housing: Covid worsens affordability, racial disparities in markets

Worsening affordability for Renters." That is the opening item in the latest report from Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies--a report issued annually for the past thirty-two years.

Following is a summary of the 2020 [report](#) based on a Center press release:

Worsening Affordability for Renters

The economic fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic has amplified the rental affordability crisis. As of late September, renters earning less than twenty-five thousand dollars a year were much more likely to report lost employment income since the March shutdown.

Indeed, more than half of lowest-income renters lost wages during this period, compared with 41 percent of all households, and roughly one in five renters earning less than twenty-five thousand dollars also said they were behind on rent.

So far, state and federal moratoriums have slowed evictions. But without additional federal aid, many households that have missed payments may be unable to cover their back rents and will find themselves on the brink of eviction and at risk of homelessness.

Homeowners Also Affected by Covid

Homeowners have not been spared from the effects of the pandemic, and low income and households of color have taken a disproportionate hit. While thirty-six percent of all homeowners reported losing income between March and September, the shares are as high as forty-four percent among owners earning less than \$25,000, forty-one percent among Black owners, and forty-nine percent among Hispanic owners.

Additionally, while seven percent of white homeowners were behind on mortgage payments in late September, the share was nearly two-and-a-half times higher among Hispanic (eighteen percent) and Black (seventeen percent) owners, and twice as high among Asian owners (twelve percent).

Persistent Racial Disparities in Housing Markets

Widespread calls for racial justice have pointed out the high degree of residential segregation and economic inequality that still exists in the US. In fact, the sharp racial disparities in housing are both a cause and a consequence of other social inequalities.

People of color are heavily concentrated in high poverty neighborhoods and underrepresented in higher-income areas. Nearly two-thirds of the poor Black, Hispanic, and Native American populations live in communities with poverty rates above twenty percent, about twice the share of poor white Americans. They have far higher cost-burden rates and account for a disproportionately large share of the homeless population. Additionally, the Black-white homeownership gap is larger than it has been in decades at fully thirty-one percentage points.

The Devastating Effects of Climate Change

In 2020, the United States has experienced sixteen distinct billion-dollar natural disasters, making it one of the three worst on record. The cost of damages neared fifty billion dollars as of September, surpassing the total for all of 2019.

Climate change has also added to the number of low-income households facing energy insecurity. This was especially true during the record summer heat, when the need for air conditioning was extreme, which added to utility bills for households with access to air conditioning and threatened the health and lives of those without.

Could Housing Lead the Economic Recovery?

Despite these many housing challenges, single-family construction in the US started the year at its fastest pace since the Great Recession and, after a brief pause in April, was running back at a 1.1 million annual rate by September, a twenty-two percent increase from a year earlier.

While construction could be a key component of the country's economic recovery, the supply of homes for sale has not kept pace with demand: with historically low interest

rates contributing to demand, only 1.47 million existing homes were on the market in September, the lowest level in decades.

While many in the country continue to struggle with the fallout from the pandemic, those who have maintained their employment are likely to continue to fuel strong demand for housing.

The Case for a New National Housing Agenda

The economic dislocation caused by the pandemic has underscored, perhaps as never before, the fundamental importance of secure, adequate, and affordable housing for all. It has also revealed just how many millions of cost-burdened households are facing housing insecurity.

Indeed, those with good-quality, appropriate housing have been more likely to maintain their health and financial security this year, while those without adequate resources have faced not just the risk of eviction or foreclosure, but greater exposure to life-threatening illness from COVID-19.

Among other things, a new national housing policy would establish funding sources and distribution channels for subsidies, create incentives for efficient private production of housing through regulatory and tax structures, and ensure the availability and affordability of mortgage financing as well as the stability of the housing finance system.

National Recommitment to a Decent Home for All

Between the effects of the pandemic, the nation's reckoning with its painful history of racial discrimination, and the series of devastating natural disasters, 2020 has been among the most difficult years in American history. All of these sources of distress have important ties to longstanding housing policy issues. The hope is, now that these challenges are so clearly in the spotlight, we can finally re-envision a national housing policy and recommit to the goal of a decent home in a suitable living environment for all.

Mayor joins opposition to Crown Heights towers plan

A controversial plan for two 400-foot towers in Crown Heights that would have resulted in around 750 below-market-rate apartments was rejected by Mayor Bill de Blasio in December, after a year long battle between the developer, Continuum Development Company, and community activists.

Fearful of gentrification, the activists were joined by residents near the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, on whose perimeter the shadow-casting towers were to be situated.

Opposition to the proposed 1.4 million square foot development, known as 960 Franklin, was led by a group called the Movement to Protect the People, which had argued that the 39-story towers were completely alien to the neighborhood, which is characterized by brownstones and other "human sized" houses. The group, which has reportedly obtained tens of thousands of signatures from residents opposing

the development, also argued that "below market rate" is often misleading, since such rentals are themselves beyond the reach of many low- and moderate-income tenants.

Joining the opposition was the Garden, whose directors feared that the enormous shadows cast by the structures would harm the myriad plants for which the Garden has become renowned.

According to Adrian Benepe, the Garden's president and a former commissioner of the city's parks, the towers would pose an "existential threat" to the vast collection of flora. That threat, in turn, would undermine the Garden's programming to the public.

Condemning the mayor's opposition, William Wallace, an official of Continuum Development, said he was "baffled" by the mayor's stance, given de Blasio's support for affordable housing in general.

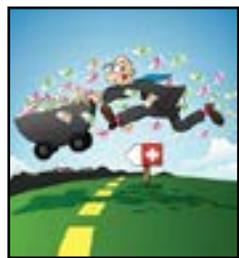
Brooklyn, Queens owners sued in 421a rent and tax scheme

Landlords participating in New York City's 421a rent assistance program have been overcharging tenants in rent stabilized apartments, at the same time that they are depriving the city and state of millions of dollars in tax revenues, according to three lawsuits filed in

the State Supreme Court in January.

The scheme, according to plaintiffs, entailed providing tenants with free rent for the first month, but then filing the full

year's amount with the state, which enables them to illegally raise the rent from a higher base. According to the Rent Stabilization Code, the first legal rent a landlord registers with the state must be what the tenants actually pay, including concessions, not the higher, full years' rent they would pay without the concession.



The same process enables the owners to take advantage of the tax benefits of 421a, while avoiding the quid pro quo legal requirement of keeping rents lower.

Owners named in the lawsuits filed by tenants' attorneys affiliated with the Housing Rights Initiative include Joseph Brunner, David Lubinitsky, and Heatherwood Luxury Rentals, whose buildings are in Brooklyn and Queens.

The owners have denied the allegations. An attorney for Brunner said "The great majority of tenants are paying less than the occupants who first entered possession."

Supporters of the suit, include Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris, Assemblyman Zohran Mamdani and Councilman Costa Constantinides.

Assemblywoman Linda Rosenthal and Senator Zellnor Myrie have introduced bills to abolish the 421a program.

Brokerages unite to oppose potential real estate taxes

Three of the city's largest realtor companies, representing thousands of brokers, have joined forces to combat the possibility of new real estate taxes, which would be more likely to pass this year by the state's Democratic-controlled assembly, senate and governor's office.

Under the rubric Coalition for Livable Neighborhoods, the realtors will lobby legislators against such potential levies as the pied-à-terre tax, a tax on apartments or homes that are used infrequently. A proposal to levy such a tax was made by Sen. Brad Hoylman.

According to the realtors, such taxes would have a negative "trickle down" effect, adversely affecting construction, home prices, and the income of individual brokers.

The group is also opposed to a proposed city bill to cap brokers' income, and a state ban on prohibiting brokers from charging tenants. News reports show that the ban, however, is often ignored by brokers. Meanwhile, a group of fifty economists signed a letter to Gov. Cuomo in December urging a hike on taxes of billionaires.

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

Lander calls for 'social housing' policy to address affordability

City Councilmember Brad Lander, a Brooklyn candidate for mayor in New York City, has put forth a plan he refers to as "social housing," essentially a way of minimizing and sometimes eliminating housing for profit.

His plan, which he refers to as "Housing as a Social Good," entails creating and preserving 542,000 units--"democratically owned, permanently affordable rental and cooperative units removed from for-profit speculation."

Citing the Mitchell-Lama program as "the gold standard in terms of fairness, demmodification, and preservation of affordability," Lander calls for preservation of all 65,000 M-L co-ops as permanently affordable.

In addition to strengthened prohibitions on privatization, his plan promotes financing for preservation and upgrading, especially with regard to implementing "green"--ecologically beneficial--regulations.

Beyond Mitchell-Lama, Lander's plan calls for:

- ¶ Creation of a city land bank to purchase real estate assets, including hotels) that fall into default;

- ¶ Requiring all housing built on city-owned land to be social housing;

- ¶ Expanding the city's Neighborhood Pillars Program (which provides low-interest loans and tax exemptions to nonprofits and other groups to acquire and rehabilitate unregulated or rent stabilized housing for low- to moderate-income households);

- ¶ Transfer future affordable units created through inclusionary zoning to social housing. (Inclusionary zoning is a city policy offering extra building space to developers in exchange for the creation or preservation of affordable housing, on-site or off-site, principally for low-income households);

- ¶ Ending the speculative lien sale;

- ¶ Preserving every unit of social housing already in existence (e.g., Mitchell-Lama, NYCHA units, etc.);

- ¶ Launching a citywide shared equity homeownership program for working class families.

Lander noted that his concept of social housing is based on the report "[Social Housing in the US](#)" by Oksana Mironov and Thomas Waters, published by the Community Service Society.

ANHD joins regional planners and employee trainers to promote equitable growth policies

The Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD) has joined a regional planning association and a worker training group to promote "an Inclusive Growth Initiative" for New York to steer equitable economic growth across the city.

Preparing for the coming Mayoral election, the coalition will recommend "inclusive and equitable systems of economic growth," as a bottom-up alternative to traditional top-down policies.

"Over the next few months, the committee will create recommendations for inclusive and equitable systems of economic growth -- focusing on adding good jobs, expanding affordable housing, and reducing structural inequities -- and advocate for their implementation to government and civic stakeholders," the new group said in a press release.

The two other organizational members of the Initiative include the Regional Plan Association and the NYC Employment and Training Coalition.

"To chart a new course for our

city, we need a new cohort of leaders and advocates that actually represent the diversity of New York," said Jose Ortiz, Jr., CEO of the New York City Employment and Training Coalition.

"For too long, policies have failed because they aren't being made by the people who need to benefit from them. That's about to change. This new coalition will draw on their ideas and lived experiences to craft an agenda for recovery, prioritizing NYC's under-served communities and hardest hit areas. There is no one better to put New York back on track than the people who know it inside and out."

Members of the steering committee of the coalition include people "from all five boroughs and represent and reflect our immigrant communities, single parents, small business owners, educators, queer communities, veterans, labor unions, individuals with disabilities, NYCHA residents, and the SUNY and CUNY systems," the press release noted.

New online tool helps tenants facing eviction

A coalition of tenants rights associations in New York State have prepared a website that enables tenants facing eviction to take advantage of state legislation protecting tenants from eviction, during the Covid-19 pandemic. To receive such protection, tenants in trouble must complete a hardship declaration form and send it to their landlords and/or the courts.

The [tool](#) enables tenants to fill out the form online, automatically fill in their landlords information based on the tenant's address (in New York City), send the form by email to their landlords and the courts, and, if tenants prefer, send the form by US Postal Service Certified Mail free to the landlord.

The tool is also available at eviction-freeny.org/en/declaration/welcome. Groups providing the free service include the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition, Housing Justice for All, and JustFix.nyc.

On a related matter, tenants with questions on Housing Court can receive free information from (212) 962-4795.

Suit against Stellar nets tenant rent reduction to \$470, plus \$800,000

Stellar Management, one of the city's largest real estate owners--including former Mitchell-Lama buildings--was ordered by a judge to plunge a tenant's rent and fork over more than three-quarters of a million dollars.

Brought by a tenant--who was also an attorney--residing at The Windermere on West 57th Street, the suit alleged overcharging fraud resulting from repairs on his apartment.

As a result of the February lawsuit, tenant Marc Bogatin's stabilized rent will be rolled back to \$470.72 a month, and the overcharge damages will rise to \$818,165.64 plus interest, all to be paid by Stellar.

In its ruling, the court noted that it found "defendants engaged in a fraudulent scheme to deregulate the subject apartment, as evinced" by previous litigation brought by plaintiff's co-tenants alleging substantially similar claims of illegal deregulation."



Stay safe: Distance

The City's guide to upcoming primary elections in New York

With primary elections for New York City's Mayor, Comptroller, Council and other offices only a few months away, and with the advent of an unfamiliar "ranked choice" voting, *The City*, an online journal of political and related developments, has prepared a list of informational websites to help readers navigate the terrain. Here are some resources:

- What you need to know about the 2021 elections in NYC: [Click here](#)

- The race for Mayor: Who's running? [Click here](#)

- What is ranked choice, and how does it work? [Click here](#)

- City Council races: [Click here](#)

- City Comptroller's race: [Click here](#)

- Public Advocate race: [Click here](#)

- Borough President races: [Click here](#)

- The District Attorney races: [Click here](#)

- Special elections in The Bronx and Queens: [Click here](#)

New York State senate offers new fair housing bills

The New York State Democratic-dominated Senate submitted a series of bills to combat a still-rampan atmosphere of racial discrimination in the sale of homes.

The bills were motivated largely by an investigation by Newsday, which was followed by a series of hearings, attended by both civil rights groups and real estate agents.

The package includes a bill, Annual Covert Fair Housing Testing, which requires the attorney general to conduct annual covert fair housing testing to see whether realtors are complying with existing fair housing laws.

Other bills would require brokers and salespeople to receive implicit bias training as part of their license renewal process; award compensatory and punitive damages to victims of discrimination; and increase fines for discrimina-

tion, and create an anti-discrimination housing fund which would be used for testing, a practice designed to catch discriminatory brokers in the process.

Additional bills would, among other things, double the maximum fine from \$1,000 to \$2,000 against realtors who violate discrimination laws. A quarter of those proceeds would go to a new housing fund.

Another bill would direct the commissioner and heads of all housing agencies to establish and administer programs in a manner that affirmatively further fair housing; and require brokers to compile client demographic data to be submitted to the secretary of state.

The bills await approval by the Assembly, which is also majority Democratic.

Owning is more affordable than renting in suburban and rural counties

Notwithstanding a significant rise in private home prices over the year, it's still more affordable to buy a house than to rent an average three-bedroom apartment in about two-thirds of US representative suburban and rural counties.

This was the finding of a report issued in February by Attom Data Solutions, a real estate property database.

The higher affordability of homes over apartments in suburbia and rural America is evident in spite of the fact that median home prices have increased

more than average rents in almost two-thirds of the nation.

"Home-prices are rising faster than rents and wages in a majority of the country," said a spokesperson for the group. "Yet home ownership is still more affordable, as amazingly low mortgage rates that dropped below three percent are helping to keep the cost of rising home prices in check," said a spokesperson for Attom.

In large urban areas, however, renting remains more affordable.

In Memoriam

Hector Valentin

It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of our tenant leader, Hector Valentin, here at Park Lane, 1965 Lafayette Ave, Bronx, NY.

Hector was very active with tenant issues and assisted many tenants with various problems, including rent. Because of the pandemic, he was not able to be as visible in recent days. However, he surely kept in touch with our landlord and had an excellent relationship with them. He will be sorely missed.

Mayor, governor in jurisdiction dispute over hotels-to-housing

Mayor Bill de Blasio, who last December proposed converting various hotels to permanent housing, has condemned that very proposal when it was presented in January by Gov. Mario Cuomo.

De Blasio's opposition, however, was not based on a rejection of his former position. Rather, it reflects his anger over the state's attempt to ignore the city's zoning rules, thereby, in effect, undermining municipal prerogatives--a long-standing source of conflict between the city and the state, especially when it comes to real estate.

Referring to the Covid-19 pandemic, de Blasio said "This crisis is not an excuse to overturn the will of struggling communities and give away local control to wealthy real estate interests."

The state's proposal, if enacted, would enable hotel and some office owners to convert twenty percent of their apartments at affordable rents, or if the buildings had become a source of supportive housing through earlier agreements with either the city or the state.

Under the governor's proposal, office buildings would also be allowed to offer a portion of their space for affordable housing. Such buildings, however, would have to be located within a confined area, between Park and Ninth Avenues, and between 14th and 60th Streets.

Mask up, stay safe!



Affordable housing news from around the nation

Three cities: Amazon to offer \$2b for affordable housing

Amazon, the online retail and tech giant, said it will spend two billion to preserve or create more than twenty thousand affordable units in Arlington, Va., Nashville, Tenn., and Puget Sound, Wash. The firm said it expects to have five thousand employees in those areas over the next few years. Funds will be used for below-market loans and grants to "non-traditional" housing and minority organizations.

Philadelphia: Two 'tiny home' villages planned for homeless

Philadelphia officials are planning to create two villages of tiny homes, following months of protests by people who occupied vacant land owned by the city and housing authority. One of the villages is expected to consist of twelve to fourteen "pods," or single-room units of about 120 square feet each. Although the rooms will have heat, they will share a central kitchen, bathroom and laundry, and are expected to be used only for transitional housing. The other village should have twenty-four permanent homes of around 400 square feet each, complete with utilities. A nonprofit organization is expected to eventually own and manage the housing.

Washington, DC: Tenants now can check landlords' histories

Tenants in the nation's capital will now be able to conduct a background check of landlords before agreeing to rent an apartment, in a reversal of the usual situation whereby owners check the backgrounds of tenants. The DC government has prepared the Landlord Violations Tool, a data base of almost 40,000 violations discovered through investigations over the past three years. These include failure to secure locks, maintain the interior, repair peeling paint, repair doors and the like. The base is available from the district's department of consumer and regulatory affairs.

Tampa, Fla.: Small landlords to receive forgivable loans

The City of Tampa began a program to lend federal CARES Act funds to landlords of affordable housing whose rental income has severely declined because of the pandemic. If the owners can demonstrate that they have fore-

gone at least twenty-five percent of their rental income between February and July (compared with the same period the year before), they can receive funds to help cover repairs and maintenance. The non-interest loans, ranging from \$200,000 to \$500,000, carry no interest, and can be forgivable after ten years, so long as the owners keep their apartments affordable.

In another development, Florida landlords filed almost 47,500 evictions last year between March 1 and December 31. While federal law prevented those evictions from taking place, the filings are generating fears of massive evictions once the moratorium law expires.

Detroit, Mich: \$250 m bond measure for affordable homes

The city approved a bond measure worth \$250 million in a blight elimination effort. The funds will be used to demolish eight thousand vacant dilapidated houses, and preserve six thousand others for affordable housing.

San Antonio, Tx: Oldest public housing slated for demolition

Residents of the Alazán-Apache Courts, the oldest public housing complex in San Antonio, built between 1939 and 1942, are fighting a proposed demolition to make way for a new mixed-income development. Support for demolishing the 685-unit cement-block facility come from some members of the local housing authority, which recently voted five to two to seek HUD's approval. Although the complex is sorely in need of renovation, residents, primarily Hispanic-Americans who earn an average of roughly \$10,000 a year, fear that they will not be able to afford any new apartments built on the site, even with Section 8 vouchers. Texas law does not prohibit landlords from discriminating on the basis of income.

Atlanta, Ga: Council approves city's \$50 million bond plan

Atlanta will borrow \$50 million in municipal bonds to pay for affordable housing development and preservation projects. The plan, approved by the city council in January, reflects approval of the mayor's efforts to spend \$1 billion for twenty thousands new and preserved homes at affordable levels, without causing displacement.

Local Housing Briefs

Ruling: Inwood rezoning plan may proceed

A ruling by the New York Court of Appeals in November paves the way for the bitterly fought upzoning of Manhattan's Inwood neighborhood to proceed, dealing a blow to residents and others who fear an impending gentrification and consequent removal of long time Black and Latinx residents. Unlike most of Manhattan, Inwood remains largely a "human sized" neighborhood with reasonably affordable, low-level apartment buildings. City officials and developers, who can now construct skyscraper high buildings, praised the decision (which reaffirmed an appellate court's ruling that overturned a Supreme Court's stay of the zoning), arguing that it would allow for the creation or preservation of around 4,100 units of affordable housing in about twelve years.

Covid-19 stalls city's effort to aid basement dwellers

A program launched by the city in 2019 to provide low-interest or forgivable loans to small homeowners to bring their often illegal and unsafe basement apartments up to code has stalled, another victim of the economic impact of Covid-19. A report by the online news source The City notes that as a consequence, a growing number residents--often among the most vulnerable--are being evicted from such units, which house more than 114,000 tenants. Inspectors from the City's HPD have "issued 95 vacate orders for illegal occupancy between March and October of this year."

Homeless population grows during pandemic

The number of single adults forced to live in city shelters has grown by ten percent as of October, according to a report issued by Coalition for the Homeless. That amounts to 20,210 people, or twice the amount compared with a decade ago. On a more positive note, the number of homeless families in shelters has declined.

Private & nonprofit developers to renovate NYCHA properties

PACT Renaissance Collaborative, a coalition of private and nonprofit developers, will repair and maintain sixteen NYCHA properties, currently housing around 3,000 tenants. Among their management duties will be administering Section 8 rent subsidies. Renovations were expected to begin in January. PACT was selected by NYCHA during a competitive bidding process.

Federal homeless grants will fund more than 6500 programs throughout USA

Thousands of local homeless assistance programs throughout the country will be able to continue operating during the Covid-19 pandemic, thanks to \$2.5 billion in HUD grants authorized by the new Biden Administration.

Known as Continuum of Care grants, the program will fund 6,597 local efforts to assist homeless individuals and families, efforts that have been under extreme duress because of the pandemic.

In a press statement, HUD said it "wants to ensure that thousands of local homeless assistance providers continue to receive federal funds needed to provide stable housing for people experi-

encing homelessness during these trying times. Renewing these grants not only offers relief to our local partners but it allows Continuums of Care to continue their work to end homelessness and help keep our most vulnerable neighbors off the streets."

The federal program funds a variety of efforts to help individuals and families who are now homeless, or who are at imminent risk of becoming so.

New York State will receive \$245,971,792, the second largest sum after that afforded California, which will get \$491,195,402.

Former Bed-Stuy nursing home slated for mixed rental building

A former nursing home in Brooklyn's Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood may be transformed into a fourteen-story rental, with about a quarter of the apartments affordable.

The home, formerly known as Cabs, had shut down several years ago, and was awaiting demolition. But BRP Companies, a major developer in the city, has recently filed a rezoning application for the site, 270 Nostrand Avenue.

As often happens with zoning and construction proposals, the planned project has generated opposition. Some members of Community Board 3 have

questioned the planned height, calling for a building no higher than ten stories.

The board members are also questioning just how affordable the 144 apartments will be. The plan calls for a total of 487 units.

The site is owned by a subsidiary of the Allure Group, which had purchased the property in 2015 for \$15.6 million. But unbeknownst to Cabs, Allure had planned to convert the home to housing. Cabs soon brought a lawsuit, claiming that not only did the real estate company lie about its intentions, but also started to force residents to leave.

Brewer, Hoylman, Kavanagh address MLRC members via Zoom

(Continued from page 1)

demands a pause on all such efforts. He said he would ask the Attorney General to explore the issue; if the AG proves unable to stop the conversion, he promised to start working on state legislation to halt conversions.

On other issues, Hoylman outlined the importance of improving health care access, supporting struggling small businesses, enabling a Pied a Terre tax, protecting rent stabilization, strengthening speed limits, and cracking down on robocalls.

Kavanagh, who also focused his comments on housing issues, noted that the situation of tenants unable to pay rent has reached crisis proportions. He added that he is committed to getting former M-L renters covered by the rent exemption programs SCRIE and DRIE in this year's legislative ses-

sion.

Icema Downes reported that her development in Brooklyn was featured in a new documentary, CODED BIAS, about the failures of technological facial recognition systems. The film demonstrates how machine-learning algorithms — now ubiquitous in advertising, hiring, financial services, policing and many other fields — can perpetuate society's existing race-, class- and gender-based inequities.

Downes has been fighting the installation of this system in her building on the basis of its built-in racial bias.

Future Zoom meetings will be held in March, June and October. Residents wishing to attend, or simply to receive notices of meetings and newsletters by mail, should forward their email address to information@mitchell-lama.org.

New HUD chief to push tenant relief, Black homeownership

(Continued from page 1)

Ms. Fudge said she will pursue an active fair housing agenda, as well as promoting more housing affordability.

A key element in the fair housing effort may entail transforming the housing choice voucher program (Section 8) into an entitlement, much like Social Security and Medicare. This would enable every household that meets eligibility criteria to receive the subsidy. Households slightly over the income limit would receive a tax credit.

Preventing eviction

Dealing with the threat of mass eviction of tenants who fell behind in their rent because of the coronavirus pandemic, is also top on her list. Fudge told a Senatorial committee that her "first priority as secretary would be to alleviate that crisis and get people the support they need to come back from the edge."

She noted at that hearing that millions of American tenants have fallen behind in their rent, and many more have been able to pay only a part of their monthly obligations.

Another priority will be boosting Black home ownership, which entails eliminating various discriminatory policies in the housing market. She noted that the rate of home ownership by Black families was 46 percent, compared with 75 percent by white families.

Concern by activists

Notwithstanding her progressive position on the issues, Fudge's appointment has not met with wide approval from housing activists, given her scant experience either as an administrator or with housing-related committees in Congress. Nor, they say, had she made it an explicit top priority when she was in Congress, according to a report in Shelterforce, a housing publication.

An example of the discontent was a comment from James DeFilippis, a professor of planning and public policy at Rutgers University, who said that Biden's choice of Fudge is "breathtaking in its complete dismissal of urban issues and housing issues—given what we're about to face" regarding evictions and foreclosures during the current pandemic.

"I don't care how smart you are," he said, "you don't just walk in" to the sprawling HUD bureaucracy without housing experience."