
MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION

Vol. 13, Issue 3
September 2007

WEBSITE: www.mitchell-lama.org

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GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING SATURDAY, October 13, 2007

Time: 10:00 a.m. - Noon (Refreshments at 9:30 a.m.)

PLACE: Goddard Riverside Community Room
593 Columbus Ave. (Eastside of Columbus Ave. 88-89th St.)

TRAINS: No. 1 train to 86 St. and Broadway; B or C trains to 86th and Central Park West

BUS: Crosstown M86 to Columbus Avenue

INVITED GUEST: State Senator Andrea Stewart - Cousins

Mitchell-LamaResidents Coalition
P.O. Box 20414
Park West Finance Station
New York, New York 10025

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

First elected to the New York State Senate in 2006, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins brings many years of community involvement and public service to her post as State Senator representing the 35th district serving several communities in Westchester County, including Yonkers, Greenburgh, and Mount Pleasant.

Prior to joining the Senate, Ms. Stewart-Cousins served as a member of the Westchester County Board of Legislators from 1996-2006. During her tenure, she was elected Majority Whip and later elected as the legislature's Vice Chair. As a legislator, she Chaired the Committees on Health, Families, and the powerful Committee on Legislation. In her six-year role as Chair of Legislation she authored and passed the landmark legislation that included the county's first human rights laws; smoke-free workplace laws; tougher gun laws; Living Wage legislation; and laws that prosecute "predatory lenders," tax cuts for seniors and veterans, as well as legislation prohibiting racial profiling.

Senator Stewart-Cousins began her service as a lawmaker after twenty years in the public sector. After 13 years with New York Telephone/AT&T she left sales and marketing for journalism, teaching and personnel management. She earned her Bachelor of Science Degree from Pace University and her teaching credentials in Business Education from Lehman College. Her career in government began with her appointment from 1992-96 as Director of Community Affairs for the City of Yonkers. The former 1st Vice Chair of the Westchester County Democratic Committee, Senator Stewart-Cousins currently sits on the Boards of the Riverside Health Care System and Yonkers Community Action Program. For her extensive legislative and community service, she is the recipient of many citations and awards, including the Thurgood Marshall Award, leadership awards from the Westchester Arts Council, the NAACP, the American Cancer Society, the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Association of Social Workers. The Senator was also named "Woman of the Year" by the Business and Professional Women's Club, "Legislator of the Year" by the Community Health Centers of New York State and "Leader in Social Justice" by Pace Law School.

During her campaign for the State Senate, Senator Stewart-Cousins pledged to fight for fair funding for schools, accessible health care, affordable housing, increased services for senior citizens, greater environmental protections, and legislative reform to make our state government more open and accountable to citizens. The Senator's Committee assignments are Local Government (Ranking); Commerce, Economic Development and Small Business; Finance; Judiciary; and Tourism, Recreation and Sports Development.

Senator Stewart-Cousins resides in Yonkers with her husband, Thomas Cousins. They have three children and two grandchildren.

Biography from the New York State Legislator 's website.

UPCOMING EVENTS

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP

Saturday, October 13, 2007
10:00 a.m. - Noon
**Goddard Riverside Community
Room**
**593 Columbus Avenue
Manhattan**

Saturday, January 26, 2008
Place: (TBA)

*EXECUTIVE BOARD Meetings (Saturdays)

October 27, 2007
November 10, 2007
December 1, 2007
January 12, 2008

*Executive Board Meetings are held at RNA House, 150-160 West 96th Street (between Columbus and Amsterdam).
All dates are subject to revision. Please call the voice mail to confirm (212) 465-2619.

JOIN THE MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION

INDIVIDUAL \$10.00 per year DEVELOPMENT 15 cents per apt.
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Fax _____ E-mail _____
Development _____ Check: Renewal ___ New Member ___

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MLRC fights for you and your right to affordable housing!

Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition, Inc.

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Lee Chong
Jackie Peters

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Park West Finance Station, New York, NY 10025
Voice Mail: (212) 465-2619

TESTIMONY
DHCR PUBLIC HEARING:
Proposed Amendment for "Unique
or Peculiar"
22 Reade Street
September 24, 2007

Good afternoon, my name is Lee Chong and I am a co-chair of the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition.

Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition (MLRC) is an all-volunteer organization, more than twenty years old, of residents and community activists advocating for the preservation of affordable, secure and decent housing for low, moderate and middle income New Yorkers. We are the only Mitchell-Lama group representing cooperative and rental developments in Albany, Buffalo, New York City (all five boroughs), Rochester, Syracuse and Westchester County. The MLRC is recognized by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR); and the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) as one of the premier volunteer organizations knowledgeable in the regulations, procedures and laws governing the Mitchell-Lama program.

We commend the Administration and the DHCR staff for understanding the "unique or peculiar" position of former Mitchell-Lama residents through the proposed amendment to the Rent Stabilization Code – Section 2522.3(f). Our understanding of the "unique or peculiar" provision of the Emergency Tenant Protection Act is that landlords used it only for situations affecting individual apartments, such as a unit occupied by a super or family member of the landlord, where no rent had been collected and the landlord is now putting that unit back on the rental market. Allowing this provision to be used by landlords of former Mitchell-Lama developments as a financial hardship is a total perversion of the intent of the law. Leaving the program is not a "unique or peculiar" circumstance as landlords would like you to believe. During the period these landlords were in the program, they received tax abatements and subsidized mortgages, as well as a profit of 6% return on their equity. All of them, real estate professionals and many of them real estate lawyers would not have entered into an agreement to participate in the Mitchell-Lama program if it were not a financial benefit to them and their equity partners. Mitchell-Lama was a good real estate deal – bottom line it was good business! It was NEVER a hardship.

Now we ask that you recognize the "unique or peculiar" position of two former Mitchell-Lama developments located in Manhattan's Upper West Side. One of these former Mitchell-Lama developments was pressured by the Pataki Administration to sign a Rent Adjustment Agreement with their owner or face having their rents immediately increased to rents of \$500 or more a room. By virtue of their dubious agreement, this development is now not allowed to benefit from the new DHCR Regulation and is also precluded by the DHCR agreement from seeking any form of redress. Therefore, the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition ask Governor Spitzer and Commissioner VanAmerongen, on their own volition, to look into rescinding the Rent Adjustment Agreement that may have been signed under duress or make the pending RSC Amendment retroactive, to include the residents of all former Mitchell-Lama buildings who signed agreements under the Pataki Administration under the same protections that you are seeking to impose.

We also ask that the Administration support the passage of the Stewart-Cousins/Pretlow Bill (S5284/A7811) which allows New York City and the other municipalities with rent regulation to declare a housing emergency for Mitchell-Lama and project-based Section 8 developments, regardless of when it was built or initially occupied, including those developments that have left the program – bringing them all under the full protections of the Rent Stabilization Code. This bill also eliminates the "unique or peculiar" circumstances for these subsidized developments regardless of when they were built or first occupied.

Again, the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition wants to thank the Administration, Governor Spitzer and DHCR Commissioner Deborah VanAmerongen for recognizing the need for change to the Emergency Tenant Protection Act's "unique or peculiar" provision. However, we also strongly recommend that Governor Spitzer and Commissioner Van Amerongen look at supporting passage of the Stewart-Cousins/Pretlow Bill.

Thank you.

"Unique or Peculiar" At a Glance

* Over the past 10 years, landlords have been manipulating the Emergency Tenant Protection Act of 1974 by claiming that leaving the Mitchell-Lama program is a "unique or peculiar" circumstance and therefore such pre-1974 buildings should have their rents raised.

* Landlords have tried to raise these rent stabilized rents by doubling to as much as quintupling what they would be without this increase. Working class people cannot afford to pay these rents.

* Requiring across-the-board "unique or peculiar" rent increases essentially negates the protections of rent regulation by making rents unaffordable as well as pushing rents to the \$2,000 per month decontrol threshold.

* Historically, the "unique or peculiar circumstances" provision of the ETPA has been used only for situations affecting individual apartments: for example, a unit occupied by a superintendent, or family member or friend of the landlord, where the landlord was not collecting rent, or imposing rent increases, and the landlord is now putting the unit back on the market and wants to bring the rent up to where it would have been had he been collecting rent guidelines increases. Allowing this provision to be used for an entire building would be a perverse interpretation of the law.

* Currently, there are 24 buildings totaling nearly 6000 units in New York City, Nassau County and Westchester County that have pending "unique or peculiar" rent increase applications.

* Additionally, another 60 developments totaling over 17,800 units would face this increase if they came out of the Mitchell-Lama program and into rent stabilization, as is true for all pre-1974 developments.

* We support Governor Spitzer and Commissioner Van Amerongen's decision to end the "unique or peculiar" loophole. Landlords are already making more than enough money by exiting the Mitchell-Lama program. They do not deserve to pocket even more out of the tenants' expense.

* Furthermore, the Governor should encourage the legislature to pass laws extending rent stabilization to all exiting Mitchell-Lama, Section 8 and other subsidized housing developments, regardless of initial date of construction or occupancy. Buildings that have already left their programs should also be included.

* Specifically, we support legislation introduced by Senator Andrea Stewart Cousins and Assembly Member Gary Pretlow (S5284/A7811) which would place all current and former subsidized housing exiting their programs into rent stabilization without "unique or peculiar" increases. While there are other similar bills pending in the legislature, this is the only one that covers New York City as well as the suburban counties, and Section 8 and other subsidy programs as well as Mitchell-Lama.

* Lastly, the State should also recognize that subsidized housing is rapidly disappearing and that while extending stabilization will protect tenants in former Mitchell-Lama and Section 8 housing, it will not preserve those programs. The Governor should immediately place a MORATORIUM on all buyouts until the State creates a comprehensive preservation program to save subsidized housing.

Thanks to Amy Chan of Tenants & Neighbors for drafting this piece based on the input of many Mitchell-Lama supporters and advocates.

Castleton Park (Staten Island) Tenants and Politicians Fight to Save Affordable Housing

The offices of Senator Charles E. Schumer and Councilman Michael E. McMahon are fighting to save affordable Mitchell-Lama housing. Kristen Simpson-Zak, chief of staff for Staten Island Councilman McMahon, worked very diligently with Castleton Park Tenants' Association co-chairs Sharon Valentin and Judy Montanez for the past year, keeping the Councilman informed of Castleton's issues. Councilman McMahon was persistent in writing letters to HUD in an attempt to get HUD to respond to our need for information and clarification on the Castleton buy-out process and time-frame. He and Senator Schumer assisted CPTA in organizing a press event in April of 2007, which was successful in making the front news of the Staten Island Advance. Both Councilman McMahon and Senator Schumer have both been great supporters advocating for Mitchell-Lama residents and the MLRC PIE Campaign.

On June 2, 2007, Councilman McMahon received a response from HUD to his letter of March 19, 2007 regarding the prepayment of the mortgage on Castleton Park, a 454-unit ML development in Staten Island. Councilman McMahon specifically asked HUD in his letter what type of affordability requirements would be imposed on this development. He had a concern that, if the Area Median Income (AMI) is used to determine rental ceilings, our tenants will suffer severe rent increases. We also wanted to know if Mr. Lawrence Gluck had officially applied to HUD for the purchase of the property. or if he had applied to HUD for a physical transfer of assets. There were many questions left unanswered. CPTA Co-Chairs, with the assistance of Senator Schumer, Councilman McMahon, Attorney E. Davidson, UHAB organizers Dina Levy and Dan DeSlover, and Tenants & Neighbors' Mitchell-Lama organizer, Amy Chan called for a meeting with HUD to answer those questions.

Castleton Park's co-chairs and organizers went to Washington July 18, 2007 to meet with HUD officials. Congressman Fossella, who facilitated the meeting, his Chief Administrator, Jon Taets (also in attendance) were instrumental in assisting us in getting this HUD meeting to take place. Chief Assistant to Senator Schumer, David Stoopler, was also present. Senator Schumer has been advocating on behalf of tenants to preserve our existing affordable housing and stop the citywide Mitchell-Lama buyouts.

We wanted to get a clearer understanding of what HUD's interpretation of affordable housing is, what and where the transfer of physical assets (TPA) is, etc. The outcome of the meeting was not a victory of any kind — HUD was not in a position to offer any decision at that time regarding plans for approval or rejection of Mr. Gluck's application or a timeline for making a decision. We did leave, however, with clarification of the facts and a better understanding of each party's different views on the issues. We did find out that HUD, to date, had not received an official application from Mr. Lawrence Gluck to purchase the building and opt out of Mitchell-Lama.

We believe that Mr. Gluck has not submitted the official application to HUD yet, since he failed the first REAC inspection in December. However, CPTA expects things to change now that Mr. Gluck has passed the August (second) REAC inspection. We now expect Gluck to move on his application to purchase the property. What does the future hold for Castleton Park?. At this time, we are not certain. What we do know is that the majority of tenants at Castleton Park will fight to the end to save their affordable homes. The CPTA will continue to lobby for political support to change the laws, preserve and create affordable housing, protect tenant rights, give incentives to landlords to stay in ML, and see that government agencies enforce regulations.

We would like to thank all of the politicians— Senator Schumer, Councilman McMahon, Senator Lanza, NYC Comptroller William C. Thompson, Jr. and staff member Gail Benzman who are actively participating in the fight to save Castleton Park and all of affordable housing in New York City. The Staten Island Councilman's office has been particularly helpful to us on many issues— obtaining information from HUD; getting crime statistics for our area and assisting us with our challenge to Stellar Management's physical condition survey, to name a few.

Judy Montanez, CPTA Co-Chair

Bill Passes: Standard Procedure for Proxies and Absentee Ballots

Assemblymember Alec Brook-Krasny (D-Coney Island, Dyker Heights) reports that Governor Spitzer has signed Bill A.7892 which would mandate a standard form and procedure for the casting of proxies or absentee ballots in any matter requiring a shareholder vote at a Mitchell-Lama building.

"Annual elections for the boards of directors at mutual companies are often contentious, and charges of fraudulent solicitation and use of proxies or absentee ballots are not uncommon," said Krasny. Such charges are exacerbated by the fact that mutual companies do not have the financial resources to perform signature verification of each proxy or absentee ballot. All of this controversy ultimately leads to lawsuits that further drain the financial resources of such housing companies through the imposition of substantial legal bills.

"By requiring a standard form and procedure for the casting of proxies or absentee ballots, these housing companies may better regulate the voting procedure and, consequently, make it more equitable and less prone to disputes," Krasny added. "We are able to institute a uniform code of proxy and absentee voting to ensure that corruption plays no role in shareholder elections."

The law became effective on August 15.

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http://www.brooklyneagle.com/categories/category.php?category_id=5&id=15216

Space TALK:

by Brooklyn Eagle (edit@brooklyneagle.net), published online 09-05-2007

Dues-Paid Developments 2007

MLRC strength comes from you, the membership. Support the Coalition's educational, advocacy and outreach programs with your membership dollars.

Individual Membership: \$10

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MANHATTAN PLAZA
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MEADOW MANOR
MICHELANGELO

PRATT TOWERS
PROMENADE APTS.
RNA HOUSE
RIVER TERRACE
RIVERBEND HOUSING
SAM BURT HOUSES
SKYVIEW TOWERS
STRYCKERS BAY
TIVOLI TOWERS
TRINITY HOUSE
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WESTVIEW APTS.
WEST VILLAGE HOUSES
WOODSTOCK TERRACE

If your development has not received an invoice, please call the MLRC voice mail (212) 465-2619. Leave the name and address of the President of your Tenants Association, Board of Directors, or Treasurer and an invoice will be mailed.

STRYCKERS BAY CO-OP 40 Years

By Hannah S. Hess

It was a snowy March in 1967 when the first families moved into the almost completed "A" building of Stryckers Bay Apartments. The lobby floor was still bare concrete. Workmen still scurried around putting finishing touches on walls. Still, those first families - who had signed on for apartments several years earlier, and who had waited out a plumbers' strike that held up construction for several months - were eager to begin their new lives as cooperators of one of the first three Mitchell-Lama buildings on the upper westside (the other two were Columbus Park and Goddard Towers).

Sponsored by Father Henry Browne of St. Gregory's Church, Marianne Jacobs, and Madeleine Polayes, Stryckers Bay was, from the beginning, a microcosm of the area. Its residents were ethnically and economically (within the parameters of the Mitchell-Lama regulations) diverse, with a large population of young parents. There were, when the buildings opened, more than sixty pre-school children, most of whom subsequently attended - and changed the culture of - the local public schools. There were among the original cooperators teachers, social workers, musicians, secretaries, nurses, police and probation officers, hairdressers, clerks, artists, guidance counselors, postal workers, and construction workers. They came from all over the city, many of them relocatees from the urban renewal area, but also (like my family) exiles from Queens. What we all had in common was a commitment to the idea of affordable housing in a multiethnic community, and a commitment to the hard work that would preserve both the affordable housing and the diverse community.

The building had more than its share of activists. When, in the early 70s, it seemed as though the Mitchell-Lama program would be terminated, the cooperators organized a funeral procession (with a coffin built for the occasion by one of the cooperators and with signs mourning the death of affordable housing in the city). The resultant publicity saved Mitchell-Lama on that occasion. Many of the Stryckers Bay residents were an integral part of the community's life, serving as district leaders of The FDR-Woodrow Wilson Democratic Club (Olga Cassiz), as chair of Planning Board 7 and general gadfly (Doris Rosenblum), as PA presidents of several of the local elementary schools, and as school board members. Over the years our residents worked together with cooperators from other of the Mitchell-Lama buildings, such as Rena and Jim Garst and Bob Woolis, to preserve moderate housing for the generations to come.

The co-op, at forty, is still faithful to its beginnings. Unlike some of the other Mitchell-Lama coops we have chosen to remain in the program, to give to the future teachers, firemen, police officers, clerks, and nurses the same opportunity to live in decent affordable housing that was given to us in 1967. We have an active board of directors who carefully monitor costs to keep our maintenance as low as possible. This sometimes leads to dicey situations of cash flow problems, especially with the rising cost of steam, water, payroll, and insurance. HPD and HDC are trying to help, and those of our cooperators, who are able, have come to the rescue by advancing several months' carrying charges to tide us over until the problem is resolved.

This is only one example of the cooperative spirit of the building. Another is the active NORC program, which was brought into the area through the efforts of our board and with the hard work of Nancy Stein, one of the board members. Because of NORC, many seniors have been able to remain in their homes where they might otherwise have had to move to assisted living facilities. The luncheons that Nancy and her husband, Ed (Mac) McDermott, have hosted each month also serve to bring cooperators together and have helped to continue the spirit of community that we all enjoy.

Another sign of the success of this venture is that many of the present cooperators are the children and grandchildren of original cooperators. These children so valued the quality of life offered at Stryckers Bay that they spent long years on the waiting list for the chance to continue the Stryckers Bay tradition.

Although our carrying charges are now far from the original \$21 per room, we are still one of the biggest bargains in the city. People who, in the early years, asked cooperators whether they were crazy to move into such a marginal neighborhood now say enviously "That was the smartest thing you ever did." We know it.

First Sale Capital Assessment: An Overview

By Leanora Nelson

The concept of First Sale Capital Assessment (FSCA) evolved from a need to find means for limited-income Mitchell-Lama housing developments to raise money for capital improvements. Inherent in its initial design was a promissory note made out to the housing company that guarantees additional revenues paid only by the incoming tenant "equal to one-half (1/2) of the shareholders equity value at the time of the first sale of a unit" (Sloman, HPD, 6/19/07). Outgoing tenants would retain revenues based on the totality of their current equity, amortization and capital assessment. Financially speaking, where you are now (outgoing tenant) is where you remain.

The overall intent of FSCA was to curtail levying increases to current tenants already burdened by recurring assessments. Housing Companies have adopted FSCA to offset spiraling costs not fully met through collection of tenant charges and budgeting.

For example, in my housing company we have used the following measures to pay for needed repairs as well as specific bills:

1. A one - time utilities pass-along was initiated to pay for bills occasioned by extraordinarily high energy costs.
2. An equity increase was assigned to all shareholders to help offset major building repairs.
3. A five-year capital assessment (which we are still paying) for building façade repairs required by Local Law 11.
4. The final stage of a three-year carrying-charge-increase to cover operating and other costs will be concluded in 2008.

FSCA has been advantageously used by housing developments having high vacancies. In lieu of borrowing, incoming tenants would help to defray costs for needed capital improvements. In addition, money would be immediately available without going through the process of applying for loans and imposing repayments on tenant populations having fixed and limited incomes.

At the same time, in buildings where there have been low apartment turnovers, prospects of attaining revenues through FSCA remain doubtful. The companies failed to ask current tenants if they wanted to participate and pay the additional equity into the FSCA. A building-wide survey might have indicated other possibilities for producing the best results. Of course, not everyone would be interested, but for those who might be, the immediate capital advantage cannot be denied. Last, but not least, a question remains as to how FSCA money would be replenished once used as the housing company intended?

In closing, finding options for paying for capital improvements will continue to challenge housing companies. FSCA is but another attempt at managing the budget.

Lobby
Your Elected Officials
For
Affordable Housing



Knickerbocker Plaza residents are fighting higher rents. But, fretted Rita Popper, fourth from left in front, “landlords have very deep pockets for legal advice

Michelle V. Agins/The New York Times

By EMILY BRADY

Published: August 26, 2007

On July 12, someone slipped a letter under Ann Shannon’s front door and under the front door of every other apartment in Knickerbocker Plaza, a hulking government-subsidized complex on Second Avenue at East 91st Street.

When Ms. Shannon, 82, picked up her copy from the rose-colored carpeting in her entryway that Thursday, she did not understand the legal language. But she nevertheless got the message: Change was coming to the place where she had lived for 32 years.

The letter announced that the owner of the 578-apartment complex was withdrawing from the state’s Mitchell-Lama program, which subsidizes lower- and middle-income housing, and would be raising rents to market levels by next summer.

“I told myself, I have a year to think about it,” Ms. Shannon said with a sheepish smile.

Transformation of housing for middle-income families into luxury apartments has become an ever more persistent refrain in the city, accompanied by ever more anger and unhappiness on the part of residents.

When Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village along the East River were sold in a record-setting deal late last year, howls of dismay were heard, not only from tenants but from champions of affordable housing. The intensity of their reaction was due in part to the immense complexes’ symbolic role as havens for generations of working- and middle-class New Yorkers.

When the 5,881-unit Starrett City, on Jamaica Bay in Brooklyn, the nation’s largest federally subsidized housing complex, was put on the auction block last year, similar protests erupted; there, no sale has yet been completed.

The same drama is playing out on a smaller scale at Knickerbocker Plaza, where residents are scrambling to pool their money to hire a lawyer in hopes of working out an arrangement under which their rents would not rise beyond a certain point.

Longtime tenants of the two rust-colored high-rises that make up the development watched uneasily as other Mitchell-Lama buildings around the city left the program in recent years. In the late 1990s, two neighboring complexes, Ruppert Towers and Yorkville Towers, exited the Mitchell-Lama program and went co-op. The three complexes make up the three-block-long development, which is bounded by East 90th and 93rd Streets and Second and Third Avenues, and is owned by the DeMatteis Organization.

The anxiety that filled the apartments and hallways of Knickerbocker Plaza after the letter arrived was especially noticeable at the complex’s senior center, a popular meeting place for the elderly men and women who make up about a third of the buildings’ 1,500 residents.

“Everyone is very stressed,” said Carol McCabe, a tenant of 32 years who helps run the center. “You’re afraid. You don’t know what’s going to happen to your life in a year.”

Residents are already eyeing the future uneasily.

“Where am I going to go?” asked Shirley Deonarine, a retired nurse who has also lived at Knickerbocker since it opened. “Everywhere you turn, it’s luxury rentals.”

Near Ms. Deonarine sat a retired Teamster who used to work for Pepsi-Cola, a former hospital administrator, a man who used to sell produce, two former employees of the city’s Parks Department and a retired teacher. The group was typical of the people the Mitchell-Lama program was designed to benefit.

In 1975, when the first tenants moved into Knickerbocker Plaza, which was built on the site of the former Jacob Ruppert Brewery, Yorkville was a much sketchier area, and far from the respectable address it would become.

“This was the wild West,” recalled Rita Popper, president of the buildings’ tenants association. “There were tenements and bars, lots and lots of bars.”

Paradoxically, it was residents of Mitchell-Lama buildings like Knickerbocker Plaza that helped make the neighborhood more affluent.

“The residents moved into that neighborhood when it was dicey and made it into a community,” said City Councilwoman Jessica Lappin, whose district includes the complex. “It doesn’t seem right that they don’t get to stay.”

The owners, in turn, “are determined to do everything in their power to soften the blow,” said Gerald McKelvey, a company spokesman. He said tenants on public assistance would be eligible for vouchers, under which their rent would be no more than 30 percent of their income. As apartments are vacated, they would be converted to market rate.

Even so, residents are fearful. “Landlords have very deep pockets for legal advice and the tenants don’t,” Ms. Popper said. “That’s what it comes down to.”

Meanwhile, tenants are left to contemplate the future or, in the case of Ann Shannon, the past.

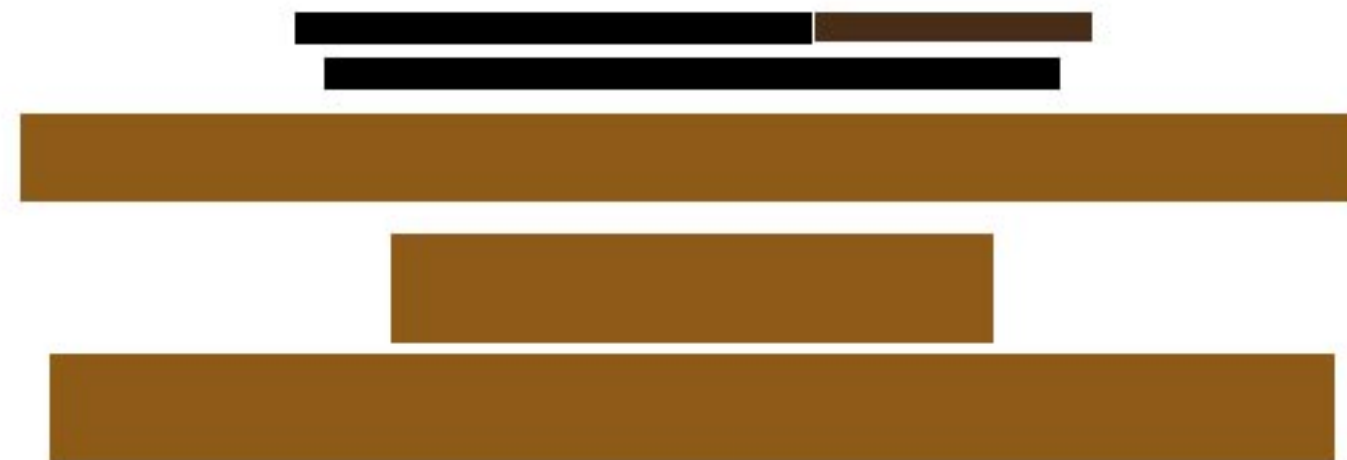
Peering out the front window of her one-bedroom apartment, over the red-brick pedestrian walkway that passes through the complex on East 91st Street, Ms. Shannon can see the stone turrets of Our Lady of Good Counsel Church on East 90th Street over the tops of the maple and honey locust trees. Ms. Shannon was married in the church, her five children were christened there, and it is in that church that funeral services were held for her husband and both her parents.

Closing her eyes, as if feigning eternal sleep, she said, “I thought they’d take me out of here with my arms crossed.”

**Concerned
about rents?**

**Unsure of what
to do about it?**

**Worried about your
building becoming
unaffordable?**



SPONSORED BY THE BRONX MITCHELL-LAMA TASK FORCE

Time:

Saturday, September 29th, 10:00 AM-1:00 PM

Place:

Fordham University, McGinley Center

Directions:

Bus:

BX9, 12, 15, 17, 22, 55 or W60/61 to Fordham Plaza (Third Avenue)

BX1 or 2 to Fordham Road & Grand Concourse

BX19 to Fordham Road & Southern Boulevard

BX26 to Botanical Garden stop

BX28 to Valentine Avenue

BX34 to Fordham Road & Valentine Avenue

BX41 to Fordham Road & Webster Avenue

Subway:

D train to Fordham Road then walk 5 blocks east

4 train to Fordham Road then walk 7 blocks east or take BX12 to Fordham Plaza

Metro-North:

Fordham Station

Topics include:

- Mitchell-Lama Basics
- How to Form a Tenant Association and Organize Your Building
- Legislative Issues
- Strategies to Fight a Buyout

Workshops will be facilitated by Mitchell-Lama residents, members of the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition, and Tenants & Neighbors.

Free continental breakfast will be served.

For questions or to RSVP, please call (718) 590-8088.

CHARLES B. RANGEL
15TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
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HONORABLE CHARLES B. RANGEL
OF NEW YORK

TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2007

MR. RANGEL. Madame Speaker, I rise today to recognize the passing of a dear friend and prominent citizen-activist of New York City, Mr. Robert Woolis.

Bob was born in 1924 and he quickly became a well-known community figure, starting with a position on his apartment building's tenant association. He quickly climbed the ranks to become one of the most well-known housing activists in New York State. As he gained knowledge and notoriety in the field, he briefed elected officials on the issues and guided tenants on how to fight to preserve their housing. He would boldly go after greedy landlords and fight them at every step of the way, doing everything in his power to stop any potential unjust rent increase.

Bob and I have been friends for decades. In 1972, Mr. Woolis and I co-founded the Mitchell Lama Residents Coalition (MLRC), an organization that consists of residents and community advocates who are passionate about preserving Mitchell Lama buildings throughout New York State.

Today, the organization is at the forefront of tenant advocacy fighting on behalf of 400,000 residents. These residents represent America. They are teachers, postal workers, construction workers, police officers, municipal workers, secretaries, students and homemakers from many ethnic and cultural backgrounds. They are racially diverse but morally united. Like myself, they believe that affordable housing is a human right.

To get a glimpse into how charming he was, consider this: When he turned 75, instead of celebrating his 75th birthday, he invited his friends to the third anniversary of his 25th birthday. This was the kind of person he was – good humored and witty, always looking on the bright side of things.

Bob will be missed, not just for his massive bank of knowledge about New York's complex housing laws, but for his personality, his values and his vision. He was passionate about an issue that touches each and every one of us. Thanks to him thousands of New Yorkers are better off today.

I look forward to working with New York State's legislature, the New York City Council and our new Governor to continue toward Mr. Woolis's vision and in the name of his legacy – to ensure that affordable housing exists for all who are in need.