



MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION

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WEBSITE: www.mitchell-lama.org

Privatization of M-L cooperatives may slow to a crawl under new law

Mitchell-Lama cooperators who have long fought to keep their developments affordable well into the future won a significant victory in June with the [passage of a law](#) requiring at least eighty percent of all apartments--whether occupied or not--to approve a plan to privatize.

Long promoted by the MLRC, Cooperators United for Mitchell Lama, and the Brooklyn Mitchell Lama Task Force, the new law applies not only to a final plan to dissolve, that is, go private, but also simply to authorize either a privatization feasibility study, a preliminary offering (commonly known as a red herring), a final offering, any proxy statements, or even a notice to the city or state of an intent to dissolve.

Until now, any part of the privatization process required merely a simple majority of occupied units.

Passage of the law was a major development in a years-long battle between two groups of cooperators in many M-L developments.

On one side were those who, in spite of having benefitted from the M-L program of relatively low purchase prices for decades, saw in privatization an opportunity to "make a killing," that is, reap huge financial rewards by ultimately selling their apartments on the private market. Such privatizations effectively prevent future residents

from the benefits of M-L's lower housing costs.

On the other side of the conflict were cooperators who wanted to stop the hemorrhage of affordable apartments and retain the original purpose of M-L: keeping housing costs affordable for all, including future residents.

Additional changes

Another important change mandated by the law is that no funds from the housing company's operating budget can be used to finance any of the above privatization steps, including legal fees.

In addition, if the attempt to go private doesn't succeed, another vote on the process cannot be held for at least five years.

Other provisions of the law require that the housing company's board of directors hold six meetings annually, open to all shareholders and residents. Only executive sessions may be closed.

Further, the board has to file with the supervising agency a record of all resolutions it considers, and how each board member voted. The record must be open to the public.

And shareholders who form

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Upzoning, office buildings, NYCHA: Eric Adams' approach to housing

Wealthy neighborhoods like Manhattan's SoHo district should be upzoned to allow high rise buildings containing a portion of affordable units. Office buildings and hotels now experiencing a glut of empty space as workers and tourists vacated should be repurposed for affordable apartments. Government should embrace an "all-in" approach for NYCHA repairs.

These are three of the recommendations offered by Eric Adams, the Mayor-elect of New York City, on resolving the city's dearth of affordable housing.

It is of course too early to say which, if any, of these or his other proposals will become actual policy. But his over plan, promoted during the campaign, was laid out in some detail.

To date, the upzoning proposal has been the most contentious. Traditionally, upzoning has taken place in poorer areas, resulting in super high-rise towers with unregulated rents that, inevitably, fostered surrounding rent increases and the ensuing displacement of long-time, lower and moderate-income residents.

But the SoHo proposal--which was rejected by Community Planning Board #1 at the end of July--would attempt to modify the process. Under it, newly constructed towers would contain around 3,200 new apart-

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MLRC General Membership Meeting

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

CONTACT: Info@mitchell-lama.org

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

Free online housing court tool discontinued for tenants

Tenants who had been able to utilize a free online method to legally complain in housing court about their landlords' lack of service and other problems, and to forego both a \$45 court fee and a notarizing requirement, were informed in that those benefits have been discontinued.

The online tool, JustFix's HP Action Tool, was presented for tenants at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. But as the pandemic waned in the city, the housing court began to resume its previous operations.

Filing fees and notarizations were reinstated in May. Further, tenants must once again appear in person during court proceedings.

An effort to restore the free service was begun in June by housing advocates, the JustFix company, and some public officials, who wrote a letter to Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence K. Marks requesting that the courts reinstate the tool.

George Clement, the executive director of JustFix, wrote that "Discontinuing this important avenue for tenants to advocate for their right to a safe and habitable apartment represents an unnecessary, harmful and reckless setback for NYC's tenants."

The firm noted that Since March 2020, over three thousand HP Actions have been filed using the site.

Joining the effort to reinstall the free tool were the Right to Counsel Coalition NYC and Chhaya CDC, a housing support organization servicing primarily low-income South Asian and Indo-Caribbean tenants.

Queens Assembly member Zohran Mamdani also joined the effort.

A spokesperson for the Office of Court Administration said the office "will give due consideration to any concerns that are addressed."

Homeless youths to receive housing vouchers from city, feds

A city pilot program, reinforced by a federal program, will improve the ability of homeless youths to secure housing services without having to enter the often chaotic and dangerous adult shelter system run by the Department of Homeless Services.

In July, A combination of the NYC pilot program offering fifty housing vouchers to youths receiving services at a youth drop-in center, plus six hundred federal emergency housing vouchers, will improve the prospect of the youths, some of whom have aged out of the foster care system, to secure apartments.

Many of the youths are gay or transgender, which places them at even greater risk in the standard shelters.

The federal vouchers are worth \$1,945 for a one-bedroom unit, or \$2,217 for a two-bedroom unit. The City pays \$1,265 for a single adult, although that may rise if a bill passed by the Council secures the Mayor's signature.

The service for youths is provided by the city's Family Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement program, or CityFHEPS.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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CONTACT: Info@mitchell-lama.org

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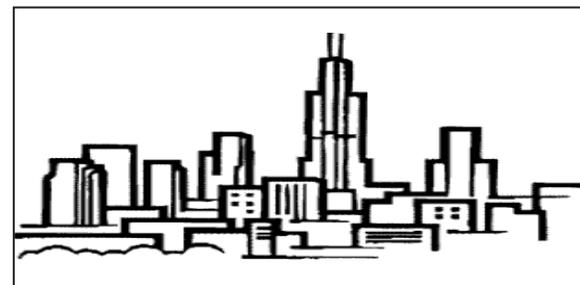
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Corresponding Sec'y: Katy Bordonaro

MLRC NEWSLETTER STAFF

Editor: Ed Rosner
Assistant editors: Katy Bordonaro
Sonja Maxwell
Jackie Peters
Managing editor: Nathan Weber

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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



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Starrett City to get major upgrade and retain affordability through 2069

Residents of Starrett City, a 46-building, 5,881-unit Mitchell Lama rental in Brooklyn's East New York neighborhood, will retain both rent-regulated status and Section-8 subsidies for the next forty-seven years, thanks to an agreement brokered by the state's Department of Homes



Starrett City

and Community Renewal between the complex and two real estate management and investment firms. The arrangement

was announced in July.

In addition to retaining affordability, the plan requires the owners to undertake considerable capital improvements over the next nine years, including new kitchen appliances for all apartments, renovation of all lobbies and corridors, replacement or improvement of roadways and streets, and upgrading playgrounds and outdoor sports areas. The cost for the improvements is esti-

mated at \$140 million.

The real estate firms involved are Brooksville Company, which invests in and manages large, complex multi-family properties throughout the city, and Rockpoint Group, L.L.C., a real estate private equity firm headquartered in Boston.

According to a statement released by Gov. Cuomo's office, the arrangement "Requires owners to apply for an additional 15 years on Starrett City's Section 8 contract with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, keeping the complex's 3,569 apartments for low-income residents affordable through 2069."

The plan also keeps the non-subsidy apartments affordable for an additional fifteen years, assuming the City's tax exemption for the development is extended.

Finally, residents who for various reasons face financial hardships will have access to a ten million dollar rent relief fund, and to an additional ten million dollar social services fund which may offer education, health and job training services.

City buys 14 Bronx 'cluster homes' for permanent affordable housing

Fourteen Bronx buildings known as cluster homes--small private houses built near each other--which have been used as homeless shelters will be transformed into permanent affordable housing for hundreds of lower income families.

In June, the City paid \$122 million for the houses, which includes 777 apartments, many of which will be let to homeless families.

Almost four hundred of the units will be reserved for homeless families, not including additional units for those earning up to sixty percent of Area Median Income (\$71,580 for a family of four).

While any additional units of affordable housing are widely supported, some critics have argued that the cluster home buying program rewards landlords who have been notorious in allowing their properties to disintegrate while families were living there. An article in City Limits noted that the "most damning failure occurred in 2016, when a burst steam pipe scalded and killed two young girls living in a Hunts Point cluster apartment and fueled the urgency to end the policy. The owner, Moshe Piller, was previously named on the Public Advocate's Worst Landlord List."

Under the current deal, the fourteen buildings will be managed by several nonprofit groups, including the Settlement Housing Fund, the Bowery Residents Committee, the MBD Community Housing Corp, Fordham Bedford Housing-Corporation, and Neighborhood Renewal HDFC.

Council bill would bar housing discrimination against formerly convicted

A bill sponsored by Councilmember Stephen Levin, with twenty-three co-sponsors, would bar housing discrimination against people who have been convicted of various crimes.

According to the [Fair Chance Housing Campaign](#) the bill, Intro #2047-2020, "would prohibit housing discrimination in rentals, leases, subleases, or occupancy agreements in New York City, on the basis of arrest or criminal record. Landlords and real estate brokers would be prohibited from inquiring about criminal record information at any stage in the process."

Supporters of the bill argue that such discrimination, justified by owners as

(Continued on page 8)

Staff resignations at HUD under Trump imperil fair housing, tenant aid, grants

Federal homeless assistance, help for low-income tenants, fair housing, and distribution of block grants to states suffering from hurricanes and other disasters are in danger of languishing under the leadership of Marcia Fudge, the new secretary of Housing and Urban Development--not because of anything she did, but because of a severe personnel shortage at the agency.

The shortage is due almost entirely to mass resignations of long-time HUD officials under the previous Trump administration. The former president appointed Ben Carson, a neurosurgeon who had had no experience in either housing or government, and who reportedly took little interest in the actual running of the agency.

An expose in the [New York Times](#) revealed how the mass departures, motivated by the Trump/Carson efforts to sabotage progressive housing goals, has deprived the agency of expertise needed to carry out current programs, as well as depriving states of the information and assistance they had come to expect from HUD.

"I'm not going to sugarcoat it," Ms. Fudge, quoted in the Times expose, said. "Until we can start to build up our staff, and build up our capacity, we are at risk of not doing the things we should do."

Families sue Hudson Yards for demanding they enter via separate 'poor door'

Three low-income families who won a lottery granting them apartments in the super-luxury Hudson Yards on Manhattan's far West Side are suing the owners, the Related Companies and Ery South Residential, for violating the city's "poor door" law and the federal Fair Housing Act.

The families claim they were told that they could not enter the building through the main address, 15 Hudson Yards, but around the corner through a separate address in the same building, 553 West 30th Street.

Further, they were told that they would not have access to the building's pool, rooftop deck, gym, or playroom.

Buildings receiving a tax break for accepting low-income residents are prohibited from demanding access through separate entrances by a 2015 New York State law. The owners deny the charges.

Large landlords continued to issue eviction notices, ignoring moratorium

In spite of a nationwide ban on evictions that was slated to have lasted until the end of June 2021 (later extended through July), large landlords across the nation had been filing eviction notices to tenants who have been unable to pay their rents because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A Private Equity Stakeholder Project [study](#) has found that corporate landlords filed around 70,000 eviction notices since the start of the CDC moratorium (September 2020) in at least six states. They include Arizona, Texas, Florida, Nevada, Georgia and Tennessee.

The study noted that Pretium Partners (Progress Residential, Front Yard Residential) "has been the most prolific filer of evictions we have seen, filing 215 eviction actions in May and more than 1,500 eviction actions" since the moratorium began.

Other corporate landlords filing the notices include Canadian real estate investment firm Western Wealth Capital, Mid-America Apartment Communities, S2 Capital, Ventron Management, Western Wealth Capital, Invitation Homes, and Bridge Investment Group.

Although the notices do not always lead to evictions, they can have an intimidating effect on tenants, especially those earning low to moderate salaries.

The Federal Trade Commission and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau have both announced forthcoming investigations; since those announcements, some corporate landlords have pulled back on is-

suing notices, but others have ignored the warnings.

For its part, the CDC moratorium, designed to limit the spread of Covid in courthouses and other legal arenas, has gone through a number of legal twists and turns.

Eviction rulings

In the latest legal development, the US Supreme Court ruled in June that the ban on evictions could stay in place, thereby dealing a final blow to a coalition of landlords who had been fighting it for over a year. The ruling reinforced a decision by a federal appeals court in Washington refusing to lift a stay on yet a previous judge's order striking down the moratorium.

That previous judge, Dabney Friedrich, a Trump appointee, had ruled that the CDC overstepped its authority, but then agreed to block her own ruling from taking effect immediately, to allow time for the Biden administration to appeal.

The landlords immediately sued to lift the stay. It was that request that the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals denied in an unsigned ruling.

"HHS has demonstrated," the ruling noted, "that lifting the national moratorium will exacerbate the significant public health risks identified by the CDC because, even with increased vaccinations, COVID-19 continues to spread and infect persons, and new variants are emerging."

The US Supreme Court, in its own five to four ruling that the ban could stay, did not offer an explanation for its decision.

CUNY students at homeless risk may be aided by nonprofit proposal

A proposal to provide supportive housing accommodations to students at various colleges of the City University of New York was presented this summer by the Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter, which normally provides such services to young people transitioning out of foster care.

In making their proposal, the organization cited a 2019 [survey](#) by the Hope Center that showed fourteen percent of CUNY students were homeless at least part of the year. The survey covered 22,000 students.

The survey also found that more

than half, or fifty-five percent, had experienced "housing insecurity," a term encompassing such issues as affordability, safety, quality, insecurity, and loss of housing, according to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

A related issue--food insecurity--afflicted nearly one in two students in the month preceding the survey's administration.

The dual problem has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

To date some funding has been received for a pilot project for students in the Bronx, which may open as early as 2022.

Co-op developments exempt from law protecting tenants

The state's 2019 law protecting tenants does not apply to cooperators, including those in M-L developments, as a result of NYS legislation passed in June.

Until its passage, for example, co-op boards were restricted from requiring more than a month's maintenance fee in escrow, just as landlords are prohibited from asking more than one month's rent as a security deposit up front.

For tenants, the requirement eased a burden, thereby freeing up apartments they can afford. But for potential shareholders, paying an additional month's fee would increase the value of their application. That gives them a leg up in competition with wealthier applicants.



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
Independence Plaza North	St. James Towers
Inwood Towers	Strykers Bay Co-op
Jefferson Towers	Tivoli Towers
Knickerbocker Plaza	Tower West
Linden Plaza	Village East Towers
Lindsay Park	Washington Park SE Apts
Lindville Housing	Washington Square SE Apts
Lincoln Amsterdam House	Westgate Tenants Assn
Manhattan Plaza	Westgate
Marcus Garvey Village	Westview Apartments
Masaryk Towers Tenants	West View Neighbors Assn
	West Village Houses

Housing affordability drops nationwide as Covid-related costs of shelter soar

The following is based on a release from Harvard University's Joint Center on Housing, summarizing its [latest annual report](#)

As the US economy continues to recover from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, households that weathered the crisis without financial distress are snapping up the limited supply of homes for sale, pushing up prices and further excluding less affluent buyers from homeownership.

At the same time, millions who lost income are behind on housing payments and on the brink of eviction or foreclosure. A disproportionately large share of at-risk households are those with low incomes and people of color.

Racial disparities in homeownership

Although the national homeownership rate remains on an upward trajectory, disparities between households of color and white households remain substantial.

In the first quarter of 2021, the Black-white homeownership gap stood at 28.1 percentage points, an improvement from the record high of 30.8 percentage points in 2019 but still large by historical standards.

Income inequality contributes to the disparities in homeownership, with the median income of white households (\$71,000) some sixty-five percent higher than Black households (\$43,000) and nearly thirty percent higher than Hispanic (\$55,000) households.

Accumulating the savings needed for down payment and closing costs is difficult for most first-time buyers, but especially for renter households of color.

Renters face an acute challenge

Housing affordability remains an acute challenge for lowest-income renters: more than eighty percent of renters earning less than \$25,000 were cost burdened in 2019 (spending over thirty percent of their income for housing) and the majority spent more than half their income on housing. And while housing subsidies offer much-needed support, only a quarter of eligible households receive assistance.

"Housing cost burdens have also moved up the income ladder," says Alexander Hermann, a Senior Research Analyst at the Center. "Seventy percent of renter households earning between \$25,000 and \$34,999 and nearly fifty percent of renters earning from \$35,000 to \$49,999 were cost burdened in 2019."

Millions face risk of eviction or foreclosure

As a result of widespread income losses during the pandemic, fourteen percent of all renter households were behind on their housing payments in early 2021, and in ten states, more than one-fifth of renters were in arrears.

Racial disparities are evident here as well, with twenty-nine percent of Black, twenty-one percent of Hispanic, and eighteen percent of Asian renters in arrears, compared with just eleven percent of white renters.

With so many renters in financial distress, concerns abound about an impending wave of evictions. So far, substantial federal relief, along with federal and state eviction moratoriums, have prevented large-scale displacement.

However, if the federal moratorium ends in [August], staving off a substantial increase in evictions and homelessness will depend on whether the latest round of assistance reaches at-risk households in time. [See adjoining article.]

Homeowners facing hardship have also received support in the form of loan forbearance and a ban on foreclosures.

This protection, allowing borrowers to defer or reduce their payments for up to eighteen months, was extended to the seventy percent of homeowners with federally backed loans. As of March 2021, a majority of the 7.1 million loans that had entered forbearance had left that status, but the outcomes are uncertain for the 2.3 million borrowers who have yet to resume their mortgage payments.

Burdens will linger

And for many households that had to tap savings or go into debt to cover lost income last year, the impacts of the pandemic will linger well into the future. Recovering from the devastating effects of the pandemic will be harder yet for those who have lost loved ones to COVID-19 or are themselves suffering from the long-term debilitating effects of the virus.

The unprecedented events of 2020 both exposed and amplified the impacts of unequal access to decent, affordable housing.

"For those households with secure employment and good-quality housing, their homes provided a safe haven from the pandemic," says Chris Herbert,

Managing Director of the Center. "But for millions struggling to cover the rent or mortgage, their housing situations have become increasingly insecure and these disparities are likely to persist even as the economy recovers, with many lower-income households slow to regain their financial footing."

Policymakers must be attuned to the needs of those who have fallen even further behind, ensuring that they also benefit from the expanding economy.

10 million+ U.S. families at risk of eviction as moratorium ends

As the federal Covid-19 moratorium on evictions due to nonpayment of rent nears an end, more than ten million households--counting adults and children--may be facing forcible removal from their homes, according to the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#).

The Center has compiled the following data, based on the US Census:

¶ One in five families with children reported their household was behind on rent, twice the rate of households without children.

¶ Twenty-eight percent of Black renters living with children, twenty-five percent of Asian renters living with children, and twenty-one percent of Latino renters living with children said they were not caught up on rent, compared to thirteen percent of white renters living with children.

¶ The rate was twenty-three percent for American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and multiracial adults living with children.

¶ Nearly one in four renters who have "a lot of difficulty" or "cannot" see, hear, or walk or climb stairs reported that their household was behind on rent.

¶ One in four renters who are out of work reported that their household was behind on rent. Job losses have been heavily concentrated in low-wage industries and among workers of color, immigrants, and people with less education.

¶ "The single most important step policymakers can take to stabilize families and reduce eviction, overcrowding, and homelessness is to fund more Housing Choice Vouchers, which [are] highly effective at addressing these [and other problems faced by] families and children."

Aquino appointed head of Tenants and Neighbors

Genesis Aquino has been appointed the new executive director of Tenants and Neighbors, a premier tenant advocacy and lobbying organization in New York State. She succeeds Acting Executive Director Yolande Cadore, who had served for a year and a half during the pandemic.

Aquino had worked for five years as a tenant advocate on Housing Court Answers, an online service providing information on housing court issues to tenants, landlords, advocates and others.

In a comment accepting the appointment, Aquino said that "What inspires me

the most about our mission is our commitment to empowering tenants to build strong, stable, dynamic communities. As a long time tenant I know firsthand the strength and resiliency that exists in our communities, and it's an honor to serve in this role as we continue building tenant power."

Prior to her time on Housing Court Answers, where she helped unrepresented tenants and advocated to expand legal access for low-income residents, Aquino worked with the City Council directing social services and community organizing. She had previously worked as a community organizer for nonprofit organizations.

Weisselberg's niece: He hid his taxable income with a little help from his friend, Laurence Gluck

Allen Weisselberg, the former chief financial officer of the Trump Organization now under investigation by the Manhattan District Attorney for alleged tax evasion, did not always act alone. In at least one incident described by his former niece, Jennifer Weisselberg, he had assistance, in hiding evidence of his income, from a realtor notorious for his role in purchasing Mitchell Lama developments and turning them private.

As Ms. Weisselberger described it to Business Insider, recounted by CNN, Mr. Weisselberg in 2018 provided an apartment to her--she had recently divorced his son--in a way that enabled him to hide any evidence of his own income from tax officials.

The apartment did not belong either to Weisselberger or to the Trump organization. Rather, Alex contacted Trump's real estate pal Laurence Gluck of Stellar Management, and got Gluck's agreement to let his niece live there without having to show proof of income, either for herself or for himself. Alex would act as "guarantor" of the apartment, to satisfy standard requirements.

Gluck is known among housing activists for acquiring M-L developments and transforming them to market-rate entities. A prime example was Independence Plaza North, in Manhattan's Tribeca community.

Normally, tenants or guarantors have to show pay stubs or other documents, such as tax forms, to let the owner know that they have income of at least forty percent of the monthly rents.

But in this case, Gluck allegedly did not ask for the documents. Of course, the niece would still have to pay rent, but without formally demonstrating that she had the capacity to do so.

She did pay the rent--until she lost

her job because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Eventually, most likely without checking with Gluck himself, the Gluck-owned company that managed the building sued her for \$54,550 in unpaid rent.

Before you could say "Oops!" the lawsuit was withdrawn. Somehow, the back rent was paid by some law firm directly through Stellar Management.

After that, as lawmakers began to let it be known that the Trump Organization could face serious tax scrutiny, a second law suit was filed by the Gluck company. It demanded Ms. Weisselberg's eviction.

Cooperating with investigators, talking to media

Officially, this eviction notice was based on the argument that her lease had expired, and that the owner, Gluck's company, was under no obligation to renew.

The real reason for the suit, she thinks, and for her uncle's decision to withdraw as official guarantor, is that she had been cooperating with investigators.

And was *very* open about it to the media.

For its part, Stellar insists that the eviction was to be expected, since Alex Weisselberg, after paying any renewed back rent, asked to be removed as guarantor. Ms. Weisselberg, they said, was then offered to continue in the apartment, but she "not only refused to respond to the offer, she further failed to respond to a courtesy reminder and continues to not pay rent."

Emergency rent checks sent to at-risk tenants

Emergency rent checks for tenants facing eviction because of economic hardship caused by the Covid-19 pandemic were finally mailed in July, after months of inexplicable delays and anger expressed by both tenants and landlords.

The checks were sent three months after the governor and legislators approved the bill authorizing the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). Funds were made available to the state through a federal disbursement.

Although the need for the funds is considered vast, only \$117,000 were actually distributed at first, according to Newsday, which broke the story. Additional distributions were expected to follow shortly, according to the state Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.

A number of legislators have expressed a fear that, while offering relief to some, the checks may not be sufficient to thwart a potential onslaught of evictions, after the national eviction moratorium ends on August 31st.

More than 160,000 tenants have applied for the funds to date.

To apply, according to [OTDA](#), a household's gross income must be at or below 80 percent of the Area Median Income. And the household "must be at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability, which can be demonstrated by having rental arrears owed on or after March 13, 2020."

Fifteen-story affordable housing planned for Lower East Side

Grand Street Guild, a nonprofit that manages three 26-story affordable housing complexes on Manhattan's Lower East Side, is planning a fifteen-story mixed use building at 161 Broome Street.

The site is near Essex Crossing, a massive luxury development. It will rise fifteen stories

high, and will contain 232 affordable apartments, plus community and commercial space, and a parking garage.

According to The Real Deal, the project is one of two currently in the planning stage.



Rendering of 161 Broome Street

Affordable housing news from around the nation

Oakland: Homeless, activists create mini-village with services

Frustrated with the city's ineffective plans to deal with the burgeoning homeless population, a group of community activists and homeless residents developed their own "village" under a highway, complete with structures that are small but large enough to enter, showers, a kitchen (well stocked), a health clinic, and a free "store" offering donated items including clothes and books. Also a composting toilet, a pizza oven, and stone and gravel paths. Known as the "Cobb on Wood" Center," it was developed to "provide amenities for those living in a nearby homeless encampment, one of the largest in the city," according to [media reports](#). The village now hosts events and skills workshops, and provides food and hygiene services to some 300 people who live in nearby encampments.

Evanston, Ill: City to offer \$25,000 in reparation housing grants to Black residents

In an effort to address its history of racist housing policies, the city will provide sixteen housing grants worth \$25,000 each to eligible Black residents for repairs and down payments on mortgages. While small, the grants are widely viewed as a form of reparations for Evanston's generations of slavery, Jim Crow laws, and discrimination in general.

Three cities offer owners grants to provide affordable units

In *Washington, D.C.*, a bill in the city's Council would pay landlords to set aside a portion of their units to tenants earning up to fifty percent of the Median Family Income (up to \$63,000 for a family of four). According to Councilmember Robert White, based on current rent levels, a payment of around \$210,000 could provide housing for a family earning half of the median income for forty years. The bill would also require the landlord, rather than the City, to foot repair bills.

In *Charleston, SC*, the city is offering grants of up to \$200,000 to twenty homeowners to create small, affordable new or accessory dwelling units on their properties. Rents will be regulated by the city council. The goal is to counter the city's zoning codes which, by mandating only single-family homes, effectively bars multifamily housing

which is used primarily by lower-income residents.

In *Philadelphia, PA*, the city is offering landlords cash grants to provide housing for young LGBTQ people who are homeless. The Way Home Project, operating with community groups, will offer a full year's rent to landlords to provide apartments to the youths. Studies have found that around forty percent of homeless youths in the area between the ages of 18 and 26 are LGBTQ, who experience the typical abuses of family rejection, discrimination, and violence.

Iowa: Landlords now allowed to discriminate by income source

Section 8 tenants in the state have lost their protection against source-of-income discrimination, as the Republican controlled legislature and governor, lobbied by landlord groups, passed a bill banning any city or county from enacting laws preventing such discrimination. The state law, which overrides laws in Des Moines, Iowa City, and Marion, runs counter to a growing national trend of anti-income source discrimination statutes.

Sacramento: Mayor suggests housing as a legal right

To address the ever growing scourge of homelessness on the city's streets--roughly 6,000 prior to Covid--, Mayor Darrell Steinberg suggested that localities should be legally required to provide affordable housing. Such a law would go far, he said, not only to offer housing, but to counter



the strife among community groups and irrelevant "blue-ribbon" commissions" that comprise the only current efforts to deal with the exploding issue. Local groups greeted the recommendation with caution, because it would accompany a requirement that the homeless accept whatever shelter is offered. They fear that refusal to accept an offer could result in violent police crackdowns and sweeping clearance of homeless encampments.

Local Housing Briefs

Council raises value of NYC vouchers

Tenants holding NYC rent vouchers now have a much larger stock of apartments to rent, after the City Council approved legislation in May to increase the vouchers' value. Instead of covering only \$1,580 for a family of three, the vouchers will now cover \$2,217. The increase effectively expands the number of apartments available from about 564 to about 72,000.

Bill allows state to buy, renovate vacant buildings for housing

A bill to allow the state government to purchase and renovate vacant hotels and other unused commercial properties for permanent affordable housing was passed in June in the NYS senate. The Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act thus reflects an effort to transform two negative economic developments--the dearth of affordable units, and the skyrocketing rise in vacant commercial properties resulting from Covid-19--into a positive. At least half of any new units will be slated for the homeless; the remainder, to be rent-regulated, will accommodate low- and moderate-income New Yorkers. As of this writing, the bill awaits the governor's signature.

'Racial impact' study required for all land use proposals

All new land use proposals, especially for zoning variances, may now have to include a study showing how and to what extent the proposal would affect racial demographics and fair housing. Sponsored by Public Advocate Jumaane Williams and Council Member Rafael Salamanca, the bill, which is not yet law, is intended to ease the gentrification and ensuing displacement that often accompanies new developments. The studies must encompass at least four blocks, or 50,000 square feet, surrounding the proposal.

Brokers can demand a fee even if they provide no help in finding an apartment

Tenants who find an apartment on their own rather than through a broker are still required to pay a broker's fee, if a broker, who works for the landlord, demands it. New guidance from the NYS Department of State reinforces a long-standing situation, thereby dismissing tenants' increasing complaints that because they now tend to find their own apartments online, that is, without the assistance of a broker, they should not have to pay a fee.

On a related issue, the Department clarified that tenants need only pay one month's rent as a security deposit, even if they plan to bring a pet.

Upzoning, office buildings, NYCHA: Eric Adams' approach to housing

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ments, of which about eight hundred, or roughly twenty-five percent, would be affordable over the next decade.

The remaining units would command market rents, which most likely would be among the highest in the city.

Opposition to the proposal has come largely from long time residents, many of whom are middle-to-upper-middle income, and from designers who decry the replacement of "human sized neighborhoods" with primarily luxury towers.

Further, they argue that the promised "affordable" rents are often well beyond the ability of the truly poor to pay.

They point out, as reported in the New York Times, that in so many other neighborhoods, "In exchange for incorporating a certain number of low-cost rentals, builders were allowed to erect tall towers filled mostly with luxury apartments, and with stores at street level. The imposing new buildings have irked [non-wealthy] people living in the older, low-rise streets around them."

Office buildings and hotels

Regarding the repurposing of office buildings and hotels, Adams is calling for the conversion of "a number" of them into structures containing only affordable units. He argues that the conversion process is often welcomed by owners of the near empty buildings, but that "City regulations make that either too expensive or too challenging."

He would deal with that problem by enacting "zoning tweaks and other rule changes."

In June, the New York State legislature approved a program to offer nonprofit groups financing worth \$100 million to purchase selected hotels and convert them into permanent affordable housing. Under the program, half the converted units would go for the homeless, and the rest to low-income households. The bill has not yet been signed into law by Governor Cuomo.

Financing NYCHA

The severe maintenance problems besetting New York City Housing Authority buildings, the largest such public housing development in the country, have been an exploding issue well before the recent campaign.

Adams' approach, which he calls "all-in," consists in part of meeting developers' requests to purchase air rights from NYCHA,

which would allow them to construct buildings in a project's open spaces, such as playgrounds, park areas, and parking lots. The amount of such space overall has been estimated as high as 80 million square feet.

These sales, some say, would generate around a billion dollars in revenue--Adams' estimate is eight billion dollars--which could be used for upgrading. Most observers, however have placed the full cost of repairs at \$40 billion; others, including Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-N.Y.), have said the cost might be twice that amount.

Adams' positions on upzoning and selling air rights has led to charges that he is far too cozy with real estate developers, who have in fact contributed heavily to his campaign.

Additional suggestions

Beyond the foregoing, Adams has suggested providing more rent subsidies for those at risk; creating live/work communities (areas where people work where they reside); empowering community development corporations and non-profit land trusts; and giving houses of worship and other faith-based institutions the "tools" to provide affordable housing.

In addition he has recommend moving City offices from Manhattan to the outer-boroughs, which will somehow "free up density for housing."

Bill would bar housing discrimination against formerly convicted

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protecting public safety, " actually makes people less safe; there is no world in which making people homeless makes any of us safer."

Responding to concerns that people convicted of violent crimes pose a danger to tenants, the Campaign argues that "categorically denying a group of people a basic need like housing drives violence."

The Act would cover owners, mortgagees, lessors and others who have the right to sell or lease housing accommodations.

The act would also protect people convicted of sex offenses. The Campaign notes that such ex-cons "are already under intense scrutiny and supervision by law enforcement — most are required to get approval for any residence and allow a parole officer to visit their residence."

Exempt from the law would be owners required by federal law to deny housing to ex-felons, or to roommates.

Downtown residents seeking 100 % affordable units in proposed WTC tower

How many units of affordable housing should be included in the final tower to be built on the World Trade Center site?

That is the issue at the core of a growing dispute in lower Manhattan, as the current proposal, promoted by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and involving the Port Authority and several other government agencies, calls for a nine hundred foot tower containing 1,325 apartments, of which around a quarter--perhaps 330--would be below market rate.

Those units would be set aside for households from anywhere in the city making up to fifty percent of the Area Median Income, or around \$53,000 for a three-member family.

But to many of the current lower Manhattan residents who have had their homes destroyed and/or their health severely impacted by the destruction of the old World Trade Center in 2001, that number is woefully insufficient.

Many of them have been raising their voices against the current proposal, asking instead for a building that would contain *only* affordable apartments, with preference going to the current victims, some of whom are low-income and others middle-income.

To promote their concerns, they have formed a new organization--the Coalition for an Affordable World Trade Center Tower Five--to pressure the agencies and the two private developers involved, Brookfield Properties and Silverstein Properties, to scrap their current plan.

In a report in The City, an online news and opinion source, one member, Taylor Banning, "watched as longtime neighbors have struggled to stay in the area, or been priced out. Seniors on fixed incomes are especially vulnerable...."

To garner support, the coalition has been contacting elected officials, local tenant groups and housing groups.

Privatization of M-L co-ops may slide to a crawl under new law

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a committee or association are now allowed to meet on premises without having to pay any fees. This no-fee provision had already applied to tenants, but not to shareholders.

The bill had been sponsored in the Assembly by Linda Rosenthal and in the Senate by Brian Kavanagh.