



MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION

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WEBSITE: www.mitchell-lama.org

City issues new rules for affordable housing lotteries

A series of new affordable housing lottery rules, designed to aid lower income New Yorkers, has been issued by the department of Housing Preservation and Development. The rules are designed to ensure that New Yorkers most in need of affordable housing attain the units.

The changes include “ending developers and leasing agents’ ability to deny applications based solely on credit scores; new standards for homeless shelter referrals to account for special challenges faced by these households; strictly limiting the ability of landlords to deny an applicant based only on their exercising due process rights in housing court; and imposing limits on personal assets,” according to a City press statement.

“Every New Yorker deserves equal access to an affordable home, including veterans, the elderly and homeless individuals and families,” said Mayor Bill de Blasio. “Disqualifications based solely on credit history, or because a tenant fought for his or her rights in housing court, have no place in our affordable housing programs. These key improvements to the rules level the playing field and give every household the chance to find a home within their

means.”

The requirements – the first updates to these guidelines since Housing Connect was launched in 2013 – address feedback received by applicants, affordable housing advocates, marketing agents and for-profit and not-for-profit developers about the City’s affordable housing eligibility criteria and the application process, the statement said. In response, HPD and HDC said they reviewed and revised the policies to make them fairer, more transparent and more effective at targeting affordable housing to those most in need.

“New York City is home to almost one million people with disabilities,” said the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities Commissioner Victor Calise. “The release of this handbook marks great progress in ensuring that accessible and affordable homes are available to the families who need them.”

In the release, the Department of Veterans’ Services said they were “especially concerned with ensuring veterans are not discriminated against because their primary source of income is their post-9/11 GI Bill.” The new rules will require landlords to rent to veterans exactly as they would to anyone else.

Village View residents at odds over whether to go private

Some residents at Village View, a Mitchell-Lama coop in the East Village that opened in 1964, are pushing to have the 1,236-unit development leave M-L and go private. With rents and coop prices in the area soaring—even the ancient walk-up railroad tenements in the area (East Sixth and Seventh streets, between First Avenue and Avenue A) are now charging rents of \$3,000 per apartment—some of the Village View cooperators, who for years benefitted from public subsidies, are hoping to eventually sell and reap a fortune.

But as in other M-L developments that are, or have been, faced with the option of going private, many cooperators are counter-pushing to keep the buildings affordable to others.

As a first step towards resolving the issue, the board of directors must commission a feasibility study to explore the ramifications of going private. For that study to proceed, however, at least fifty-one percent of 617 apartments would have to approve. But even if the study is approved, at least two-thirds of residents in 822 apartments would still have to vote to go private. Further, if the development leaves M-L, residents could choose to remain in their apartments under some form of rent regulation.

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

**‘GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING’
Saturday, October 29, 2016
10:00 a.m - noon**

**Workshops for ML co-op shareholders, and current & former
residents of post ’73 ML rentals**

Refreshments at 10:00 a.m.

CONTACT: Information@mitchell-lama.org

**PLACE: Musicians Union, Local 802, 322 W. 48th St., near 8th Ave. in the
ground floor “Club Room.” Subway trains: No. 1 to 50th St. & 7th Ave.;
Q,W to 49th St. & Broadway; E to 50th St. & 8th Ave.**

**Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition
P.O. Box 20414
Park West Station
New York, New York 10025**

HUD proposes Sec 8 rule change to expand tenant opportunities

Tenants who receive Section 8 housing vouchers will theoretically have more choices on where to live if a rule change proposed by HUD is enacted.

The change would recalculate the way HUD determines the subsidies. At present, subsidies are geared to a "fair market rent" which is based on all rents charged within an entire metropolitan area. If enacted, the rule change would instead calculate subsidies based on *zip codes within* the area, rather than on the entire area itself.

This means that in a wealthier, more desirable section of a city--a "higher opportunity" area--subsidies would be higher, so that a landlord in such an area would be more willing to rent to a Sec. 8 tenant, because the higher subsidy he or she would receive from the government would be more in line with that zip code's market rate. According to a HUD press statement,

"This Small Area Fair Market Rent [SMFR] approach is intended to increase voucher holders' access to a greater number of units in low poverty ["higher opportunity"] areas while reducing excess subsidy from some high poverty neighborhoods."

In proposing this change, HUD cites numerous studies showing that the economic vitality of a community has a profound lifetime effect on the lives of those who live there, especially for children.

For a discussion on the **pros and cons** of the proposed rule change, see http://rooflines.org/4544/give_housing_vouchers_their_full_power/?utm_source=Section+8+Gets+More+Power&utm_campaign=Section+8+Gets+More+Power&utm_medium=email

For HUD's own statement, see http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press_releases_media_advisories/2016/HUDNo_16-092

Income spike no longer curtails rent exemptions

Residents who qualify for the city's Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) or Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) programs will no longer be penalized for a temporary increase in income, as a result of legislation introduced by Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz (D-Brooklyn) that was recently signed into law by Governor Cuomo.

"This new law will assist those who have a non-recurring spike in income to reapply for SCRIE or DRIE and receive their

previous benefit, rather than requiring them to reapply as a new applicant at their higher rent," said Assemblyman Cymbrowitz.

Senator Marty Golden (R-Brooklyn) was the bill's Senate sponsor. A recent report issued by Enterprise Community Services and LiveOn NY found that while 32 percent of New York City's single seniors are severely rent burdened, or paying over half of their income on rent, only 43 percent of those eligible for SCRIE (approximately 52,000 households out of 121,729) actually enroll.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MLRC General Membership Meeting

Saturday, October 29, 2016
10:00 a.m - noon

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

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

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

For more information, e-mail:
info@mitchell-lama.org

Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition, Inc.

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INDIVIDUAL \$15.00 per year and DEVELOPMENT 25 cents per apartment (\$30 Minimum; \$125 Maximum)

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Development _____ Renewal _____ New Member _____

President's Name: _____

Donations in addition to dues are welcome.

NOTE: Checks are deposited once a month.

Mail to: MLRC, PO Box 20414, Park West Finance Station, New York, N.Y. 10025

Officials here push Council bill to counter tenant 'blacklists'

A bill to counter the notorious "tenant blacklists," or lists of tenants who have appeared in the city's housing court, was introduced in the City Council in August by Council Member Ben Kallos.

Prepared by tenant "screening" companies and sold to landlords, the lists merely contain the names of any tenants who have ever appeared in housing court. This enables building owners to reject an application from any tenant on the lists, regardless of the outcome or circumstances of the case before the court. For example, even if a tenant won a case against a negligent landlord, the mere fact of his or her name on the lists is sufficient to bar the tenant from renting.

Companies compiling and selling such lists include CoreLogic, SafeRent, TransUnion Rental Screening Solution, On-Site, and ALM.

A statement from Kallos' office said the legislation "requires anyone who assembles or evaluates screening reports which contain court histories to register and obtain a license from the Department

of Consumer Affairs (DCA) and requires:

"Each housing court case mentioned must contain the names of all parties involved, the claims alleged, the current status or outcome of the case, and which party initiated the case;

"Tenant screening companies will have to state the defenses asserted by the tenant and the specific outcome of the case, including any rent abatement awarded.

"The Department of Consumers Affairs is tasked with enforcement with civil penalties of \$500 per report [for inaccuracies] and fines for non-compliance up to \$5,000.

"Anyone who believes they have been harmed by an inaccurate screening report could bring their own case in court."

Support for the legislation came from NYS Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell, NYS State Senator Liz Krueger, Public Advocate Leticia James, and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer.

NYC's 'right to counsel': Where will the \$\$ come from?

Low income tenants in New York City facing eviction or other legal actions will most likely gain a new right to obtain legal services even if they cannot afford it. As of this writing, a landmark bill introduced by Councilman Mark Levine and Councilwoman Vanessa L. Gibson, with near unanimous support from the other council members, is expected to be passed by the end of the year. The bill, 214-A, is also supported by the NYC Bar Association, labor unions, and tenant advocacy groups.

Some progress on legal representation has already been made. According to the newly created Office of Civil Justice (a unit of the NYC Human Resources Administration), about one in four tenants in housing court now have attorney representation. By comparison, in fiscal 2013, only one percent of tenants in housing court were represented by a lawyer. Almost all landlords have attorneys in housing court.

Legal representation for tenants, of course, is expensive. According to the OJC, for the first time, New York City's overall investment in civil legal services for low-income City residents will exceed

\$100 million in Fiscal Year 2017.

Is it enough? A neighbor of Susanna Blankley of New Settlement's Community Action for Safe Apartments, asked where the money to fund counsel will come from. Ms. Blankley responded with these points:

To prevent evictions, we currently spend over \$60 million--up from \$5 million a few years ago.

Right to counsel will cost about \$200 million/year. Since tenants with lawyers have a much better chance of winning, the cost will likely decrease as landlords find it less cost-effective to bring cases.

Once it's up and running, it will not only pay for itself but save the city \$320 million a year. That figure comes from a study done by an independent financial firm, SRR, that the city bar commissioned. See also the Right to Counsel NYC coalition's website.

In sum, the money would come from the base line budget (the budget cannot be earmarked) and will over time save far more than it spends, according to the study.

Yuh-Line Niou wins Dem primary for 65th Assembly seat

Yuh-Line Niou, former chief of staff to Queens Assemblyman Ron Kim, won the Democratic primary race for the 65 Assembly District in Manhattan, effectively ousting Alice Cancel who had held the seat since April, several months after the former decades-long speaker, Sheldon Silver, was convicted on various federal corruption charges. Niou's victory virtually guarantees her victory in November against any Republican.

Cancel was widely considered Silver's favored candidate. Her defeat, as reported by the Gotham Gazette, represents a "blow to Silver's old downtown machine. It is a boost to the district's large Chinese population and provides an opportunity for the district to in some ways step out of Silver's long shadow."

Niou, who lost to Cancel in the April special election, had previously worked as a legislative assistant in Washington State and as a lobbyist for the Statewide Poverty Action Network. She was supported by the Working Families Party.

At her victory celebration, she said "We need to provide the services that the gorgeously diverse residents of this district are expecting — reaching out to every neighborhood, every ethnicity, in every language that we can."

She ran against five Democrats for the seat. They included, in addition to Cancel, Paul Newell, Jenifer Rajkumar, Gigi Li, and Don Lee.

Newell, a district leader, was an advocate of expanding rent regulations, and had sought specifically to extend protection for thousands of "421-g" tax-abated apartments in Manhattan's financial district.

Rajkumar, a human rights lawyer and district leader, had developed a reputation advocating for tenants, labor, and women seeking office.

Li, who chairs Manhattan's community Board 3, is the first Asian-American to be elected to chair a city community board.

Lee, a technology executive and former city official in the Edward I. Koch Administration, is the chief information officer for the Coalition of Asian American IPA and the Asian American Accountable Care Association.

In November, Niou will face Lester Chang, a Republican, who had also run in the April special election. His website notes that he has worked for two decades "in international shipping and logistics; moving goods by sea and air to meet the needs of an ever expanding global economy."

Former Axton M-L building now on sale for \$105 million

A former Mitchell-Lama building on the Upper West Side, which still has 145 rent-regulated units, is currently on the market for \$105 million.

The building, at 175 West 95th Street, formerly known as the Axton, is owned by the Starret Corporation, a unit of Pembroke Cos. owned by Larry Cohen. Three years ago, Cohen secured a non-eviction condominium conversion plan for the property.

Press reports indicate

that Cohen began to remove the property from the ML program in 2013, after owning it for several decades. At the time of the conversion, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer noted that, notwithstanding the non-eviction clause, residents were “scared. They think they will get kicked out.”

Eighty apartments have so far been converted to condos.

A recent sale of a three-bedroom unit at the building commanded a price of \$2.2 million.

Kips Bay owner urges re-branding to appeal to market rate tenants

Phipps Houses, the owner of the former M-L complex Kips Bay Court in Manhattan, is appealing to real estate investors to purchase the buildings and re-brand them to appeal to upper income tenants.

In place of the buildings' current names of North, Central and South, the developer urges investors to consider such names as The Garden, The Sciences and The Nautical, according to a real estate trade publication. Other potential names Phipps is suggesting include The Rosa, The Gallica, The Veritas, The Agnitio, The Spinnaker and The Mizzen—all names that reflect historic flowers, sciences and the nautical environment at the time a Dutch colonial magis-

trate by the name of Hendrick Hendricksen Kip founded the New Amsterdam estate.

Although around forty percent of the apartments house Section 8 tenants, the actual rent received for those units is very close to market rate. Further, the number of Section 8 tenants is dropping steadily, as is the smaller number of LAP [Landlord Assistance Program] tenants, who are protected from arbitrary raises through a contract.

Phipps Houses is also recommending that investors consider renovating some units to double the number of bedrooms to increase market rents. Adding bedrooms requires significantly tightening kitchens and living rooms.

Battle over management firm in Van Cortland housing complex

Intense disagreement over the quality of management at Park Reservoir Housing, a complex in Van Cortland Village in the Bronx, has led some board members to announce a new management firm to replace long time Amalgamated Housing. The new firm is Midas Management, which has ties to Daniel Padernacht, chair of

Bronx Community Board 8.

But a memo from the NYS Dept of Homes and Community Renewal told the board it must adhere to established rules before appointing or even vetting another firm. The memo may well delay a vote over a new firm, and require the board to restart a vetting or selection process from scratch.

Tenants at Tivoli Towers hold first awards ceremony

On Saturday September 17, 2016, Tivoli Towers Tenants Association hosted their First Annual Tivoli Towers Appreciation Awards Ceremony.

The ceremony acknowledged attorney Seth Miller and MLRC treasurer Carmen Ithier, along with several influential

elected officials in the community for their contribution in helping Tivoli Towers thrive.

The ceremony also honored committed members of the Tenants Association for their hard work in gradually reforming Tivoli into the “Upper West Side” of Brooklyn.

MLRC Developments

These developments are members of the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition

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

Donations above the membership dues are welcome.

Adee Towers	Masaryk Towers Tenant Assn
Amalgamated Warbasse	Meadow Manor
Arverne Apartments	Michelangelo Apartments
Bethune Towers	109th St. Senior Citizen 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 Association
Independence Plaza North	St. James Towers
Inwood Towers	Strykers Bay Co-op
Jefferson Towers	Skyview Towers
Knickerbocker Plaza	Tivoli Towers
Linden Plaza	Tower West
Lindsay Park	Village East Towers
Lindville Housing	Washington Park SE Apartments
Lincoln Amsterdam House	Washington Square SE Apartments
Manhattan Plaza	Westgate Tenants Association
Marcus Garvey Village	Westgate
	Westview Apartments
	West View Neighbors Association
	West Village Houses

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.

Major party platforms: how they differ on housing

By Leslie Strauss

Senior Policy Analyst, Housing Assistance Council

The major political party platforms take different approaches to federal housing assistance and related topics. The Republican and Democratic platforms adopted at the parties' conventions in July are couched in strikingly different ways, consistent with the conventions' tones. For example, while the Republican paper states, "We must scale back the federal role in the housing market, promote responsibility on the part of borrowers and lenders, and avoid future taxpayer bailouts," the Democratic one asserts, "We will substantially increase funding for the National Housing Trust Fund to construct, preserve, and rehabilitate millions of affordable housing rental units . . . [to] help address the affordable housing crisis . . . [and] create millions of good-paying jobs in the process."

There are some similarities. Both platforms support home ownership and an end to homelessness among veterans. Both favor expansion of broadband service in rural areas and both recognize tribal sovereignty. Most of their policy proposals, however, are dramatically different.

The Republican platform emphasizes the need to avoid another housing crisis. "Reforms should provide clear and prudent underwriting standards and guidelines on predatory lending and acceptable lending practices. . . . We call for a comprehensive

Dems support Consumer Financial protection Bureau, National Housing Trust Fund, and Community Development Block Grant program

review of federal regulations, especially those dealing with the environment, that make it harder and more costly for Americans to rent, buy, or sell homes." It criticizes Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, the Dodd-Frank Act, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), as well as "lending quotas to specific groups" and the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing regulation.

In contrast, the Democratic platform cites the CFPB, as well as fair housing law and regulations, as factors contributing to the strong housing market it hopes to foster. It also supports existing federal housing programs that address both homeownership and affordable rental housing, committing to expand them and increase their

funding. It specifically mentions additional monies for the National Housing Trust Fund and the Community Development Block Grant, and supports HUD's Neighborhood Stabilization Program.

The Republican platform addresses veteran homelessness, but does not mention other people who experience homelessness. To resolve the issue for veterans, it

The GOP criticizes Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, Dodd-Frank, & the Consumer Financial Protection Act

pledges better health care, including mental health care, and discusses the importance of employment. The Democratic platform calls for "robust [federal] funding" to end homelessness generally, then mentions families and veterans specifically.

Rural housing is not mentioned separately in either platform. The rural economy is in both, with different emphases. "Agricultural production and exports are central to the Republican agenda for jobs, growth, expanded trade, and prosperity."

The Democratic platform backs "a stronger rural and agricultural economy," including non-agricultural businesses. It also explicitly acknowledges farm workers, calling for "stronger agricultural worker protections including regulation of work hours, elimination of child labor, ensuring adequate housing for migrant workers, and sanitary facilities in the field."

Native Americans are addressed in both platforms, with the same kind of differences as with other subjects. The Republican document promises to reduce federal regulations relating to Indian Country, while the Democratic platform commits to "strengthen the operation of tribal housing programs and reauthorize the Indian Housing Block Grant Program. We will increase affordable and safe housing and fight to significantly reduce homelessness on and off Indian reservations, especially among Native youth and veterans."

Both documents also address poverty. The Republican platform describes current safety net programs as "the false compassion of the status quo" and proposes to replace them with "the dynamic compassion of work requirements in a growing economy." It calls for the "removal of structural impediments which progressives

throw in the path of poor people: Over regulation of start-up enterprises, excessive licensing requirements, [and] needless restrictions on formation of schools and day care centers serving neighborhood families." It urges "greater state and local responsibility for, and control over, public assistance programs."

The Democratic platform "reaffirm[s] our commitment to eliminate poverty." It pledges to focus on persistent poverty communities by, for example, using "the 10-20-30 model, which directs 10 percent of program funds to communities where at least 20 percent of the population has been living below the poverty line for 30 years or more." It supports existing programs such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the New Markets Tax Credit. It also acknowledges the "racial wealth gap" and says federal policy must help eliminate it.

Both platforms are more aspirational than practical, at least with respect to rural housing and poverty. Even when one party controls the presidency and both houses of Congress, it cannot change the status quo quickly. In any case, this election is not expected to give either party that degree of control. So it is equally unlikely that federal regulations will be swept away or that current federal housing programs will receive dramatically more funding.

This post was originally published on Rooflines, the Shelterforce blog, and can be found at: <http://bit.ly/2aiRomg>.

Evictions here decline but court cases remain high

Evictions in NYC dropped significantly in 2015, according to Housing Court Answers. Evictions by a marshal dropped by 18 percent – and the number of evictions was the lowest its been in ten years. In the past, a drop in evictions has mirrored a drop in Housing Court case filings – but not in 2015. Case filings were almost the same as in 2014 showing that the city's new efforts have slowed evictions (and hopefully will slow the rate of families entering shelter).

Housing Court Answers provides information on the city's Housing Court and staffs a hotline for callers with questions on housing law, rent arrears assistance, and homeless prevention guidance. The group can be reached at <http://cwtfhc.org/contact-us/>

Issues reviewed at BP's forum: financing, succession, certificates

Over a hundred residents from more than thirty current and former Mitchell-Lama developments and several political representatives attended a forum on the program in May, hosted by Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer. The MLRC helped to plan the forum.

The program provided information on three key areas of Mitchell-Lama preservation: financing, apartment succession, and adding names to stock certificates.

On financing, the forum noted that the City's Housing Development Corporation's Mitchell-Lama Preservation Program has issued over \$900 million bonds and over \$454 million in subordinate financing to preserve more than 60 Mitchell-Lama developments, or over 36,000 units, throughout the city. Further, by partnering with the NYC Energy Efficiency Corporation, HDC offers energy audits, building retrofits, and training on new energy systems via PERL (Program for Energy Retrofit Loans). The goal of PERL is to reduce buildings' operating expenses by at least 15 percent and to improve their long-term sustainability.

Finally, for Mitchell-Lama developments adversely affected by Hurricane

Sandy, \$96 million in NYC Build it Back funds are available. However, all those funds must be deployed by HDC in 2016.

In terms of apartment succession, all requests must be approved through an application process. (Online applications for succession are accessible at <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdf/renters-mitchell-lama/Succession-Rights-Application.pdf>.) HPD has recently hired a staff dedicated to processing succession applications so that tenants and shareholders can follow up with a designated contact person.

To set up additional safeguards for succession, such as establishing a special needs trust for a family member/successor who has a disability, both HPD and the state's HCR advised consulting an attorney. The desired successor must still meet all succession criteria listed in the Mitchell-Lama Rules.

Regarding adding names to stock certificates, under rules amended in 2014, no name can be added to stock certificates except at the time of succession, when an approved family member formally succeeds to the apartment. This rule is intended to prevent confusion around having multiple family members willed or designated as "successors" outside of proper succession procedure.

Bronx tenants, workers and others protest City's re-zoning plans

Several hundred angry Bronx residents in September packed a City Planning Department "scoping" hearing--a public session to explore the scope, or dimensions, of a proposal--to protest the City's proposed zoning plans for Jerome Avenue. The plans essentially offer developers incentives, such as increases in building height beyond what current zoning allows, to create more affordable housing.

Attending the session at Bronx Community College were tenants, small enterprise owners, employees of various businesses, and others, many of whom were members of the Bronx Coalition for a Community Vision.

Most of the speakers, while supporting the need for more affordable housing, voiced concerns about how the two zoning proposals--known as Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) and Extremely Low- and Low-Income Affordability (ELLA) development program--would specifically help them, and

affect the quality of life in their community.

Some workers at the meeting asked about the likely dislocation of the area's auto repair services. "Where are the autos shops going to go?" asked one person. "You have no plan for them!"

According to a report on the hearing by the Association for Neighborhood Housing Development, "MIH does not reach the nearly one third of New Yorkers whose incomes are at or below 30 percent of AMI, and the city's existing programs for creating affordable housing have only a limited ability to target those at the low end of the income spectrum, who are in fact those most in need of affordable housing in the Jerome Avenue area and throughout the City." ANHD also noted that "without new, significant, proactive anti-displacement protections, new development would benefit people making higher incomes than most local residents and would simply make these stories of harassment more common."

Gov. Cuomo moves to release \$2 billion for supportive housing

Families and individuals in need of supportive and affordable housing won a victory in September, as Gov. Andrew Cuomo instructed his budget director to take steps to release two billion dollars for 6,000 units. Technically, the director was ordered to prepare a memo of understanding to be signed by the state assembly and senate.

The announcement was met with satisfaction by the Campaign 4 NY/NY Housing, and its partner the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing.

A statement released by the religious group noted that they and the campaign "have been engaged in a nearly 2 year effort to gain commitments from the Mayor and Governor to produce 35,000 units of supportive housing over the next 15 years.

"After letters signed by 120 members of the New York State Assembly, 350 organizations and nearly 300 faith leaders, the Mayor pledged 15,000 units last November and the Governor pledged an additional 20,000 units in his January address -- and in April, he and the State legislature included funding for the first 6,000 of these in this year's budget."

The campaign had staged weekly demonstrations in front of the governor's New York City office.

HUD lauds partnership for public housing repairs

More than 19,000 public housing units have been repaired between 2012 and 2015 through a public-private partnership, according to a statement released by HUD.

The partnership, known as the Rental Assistance Demonstration Program, allows the private firms involved to own the units, so long as they agree to keep the rents below market.

The owners, however, do not fully forego market rents, because the program shifts units from public housing authorities to the project-based Section 8 voucher program. Thus, although residents "continue to pay 30% of their income towards the rent and they maintain the same basic rights as they possess in the public housing program," according to HUD, the remainder of the rents, which are at or near market rates, are paid for by HUD, i.e., from public revenues.

HUD said that the program utilized \$2.5 billion in private capital, which "equates to \$9 in private investment for every \$1 in public funds."

Responding to critics who are concerned about private ownership, HUD Secretary Julián Castro said that "approximately 10,000 units per year would become uninhabitable because of disrepair."

Affordable housing news from around the nation

National: “With federal programs struggling to maintain the current level of service. . . state and local governments are increasingly working to find ways to expand the supply of affordable housing in any way they can.

“At the state level, the Technical Assistance Collaborative data show 30 states offering state-funded rental assistance, ranging from \$5 million in Delaware to \$83 million in Massachusetts. While not insignificant, resources for state funded assistance programs are not nearly enough to supplant federal assistance and are also commonly designed to be temporary supports for renters until they can secure more permanent federal rental assistance programs. State programs are also highly targeted to help low-income individuals with mental illness or disabilities or who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness, rather than low-income households in general. Still, more and more states are looking to such programs to further meet their affordable housing needs.”

Rooflines, August 19: For full story, see <http://bit.ly/2bfkHq5>

Boston: “Putnam Square, an affordable rental property in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with 94 units for senior citizens and residents with disabilities, utilized both Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and Project-Based Rental Assistance (PRBA) funding from the federal government. But the project also received acquisition and predevelopment funding from the state’s Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation and financing through the city of Cambridge and the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust. . . . Funding these sorts of projects is a complex endeavor, often involving a host of stakeholders. Funding Putnam Square alone involved 13 agencies and organizations.”

Next City, August 26.

For full story, see <http://bit.ly/2bVyzT6>

Colorado: “In a joint venture, the [Colorado] housing authority inked a deal involving national affordable housing developer Volunteers of America (VOA) and Community Development Trust (CDT), a private REIT and federally certified CDFI (community development financial institution). . . . The deal, CDT’s first in Colorado, preserves and deepens affordability for all 256 units at Summit Apartments, a 30-year-old complex. In exchange for part ownership of the build-

ing, CDT provided \$2 million in long-term financing to VOA, which includes \$1.5 million for improvements at the property, including kitchen updates, new windows, other energy upgrades and new retaining walls. VOA will stay on as part owner and property manager. Constructed in 1986, the property was acquired by VOA in 1993, salvaged from that era’s Savings and Loan crisis. . . . Thanks to a 100 percent property tax abatement granted by CSHA, 85 percent of the units will now be reserved for families at or below 50 percent area median income (AMI), and the rest of the units will serve those at or below 80 percent AMI.”

Next City, August 24. For full story, see <http://bit.ly/2bOzbKr>

St. Paul: “The St. Paul Promise Neighborhood is seeking federal funds to expand the services it provides, which are currently funded by private businesses, nonprofits, and the state government. People living in the community benefit from the initiative because it provides “all the assistance [residents] had been struggling to pull together. . . in one place,” such as stable housing and early educational services. While standardized test scores do not reflect improvements in educational outcomes, local stakeholders point to services like the neighborhood’s summer programs, which kept 96 percent of participants at the same reading level or better during the summer. After showing some signs of success, many want to see the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood expand to other parts of the city and provide educational services to middle school students and beyond.”

How Housing Matters, August 11. For full story, see <http://bit.ly/2cIHI6m>

Nashville: “Nashville’s Metro Council approved two proposals aimed at creating more affordable housing in Davidson County. The first. . . outlines a new three-year pilot program that lets residential developers who agree to build affordably priced units compete for \$2 million in grants. The trial program is optional for developers. . . . The second. . . requires developers. . . who are building five or more units to include a percentage of new affordable or workforce housing units in their projects when they request a zoning variance for the likes of density or height.”

Next City, September 8, For full story, see <http://bit.ly/2cJm2XX>

Housing Briefs

Veterans’ homelessness declines

Homelessness among veterans has declined sharply over the past six years, according to a joint statement by HUD, Veterans Affairs, and the US Interagency Council on Homelessness. Since 2010, homelessness has decreased 47 percent. Over the past year, the drop has measured 17 percent--four times the previous year’s annual decline. In January, however, more than 13,000 unsheltered veterans were still living on the streets.

Cisneros, Martinez seek expansion of LIHTC

Two former HUD secretaries, who co-chair the Bipartisan Policy Center Senior Health and Housing Task Force, have publicly called for an expansion of the low income housing tax credit. At a July presentation, Henry Cisneros and Mel Martinez noted that reversing the dearth of affordable housing in the nation should be “a critical national priority. It becomes doubly important when the health and well-being of so many older adults are at stake.”

The 30-year old LIHTC credit has encouraged \$100 billion in private investment in affordable rental housing, according to the Task Force. “It has proven to be a great success, helping to support the construction and preservation of more than 2.8 million affordable rental homes in communities across America.”

Harvard study shows rise in people living in poverty areas

In 2014, 13.7 million Americans lived in neighborhoods with a poverty rate of at least 40 percent. In 2000, just 6.5 million Americans lived in such highly concentrated poverty.

Data from Harvard’s annual state of the nation’s housing report shows that fewer families have been living in middle-income neighborhoods over the past forty years. Between 1970 and 2012, the share of families living in middle-income neighborhoods is down 24 percentage points. “The share living in low-income neighborhoods is up 11 percentage points, and the share living in high-income neighborhoods is up 13 percentage points.”

Additional data show that “Only one in four income-eligible renters receives assistance of any kind, leaving millions to try to find housing they can afford in the private market. But units affordable to lowest-income households are often already occupied by higher-income households. Indeed, the National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that only 57 units were affordable and available for every 100 very low-income renters in 2014.”

Battle heats up over Nolita housing plan

Battle lines between community groups in lower Manhattan fighting to preserve a huge neighborhood garden, and the City and real estate developers, heated up in October, as the City's department of Housing Preservation and Development issued a request for proposals (RFP) from developers to build affordable housing on the site.

The site of the conflict is in a section of Manhattan known as Nolita (for North of Little Italy, specifically on Elizabeth and Mott Streets. Any such plan would of necessity destroy the garden, which was created over the years by volunteers.

Begun in 2008 by area residents and friends, the garden is now the only significant green space in the midst of a neighborhood trying to hold off what many see as the over-development of communities, in Manhattan as well as Brooklyn and other boroughs.

In a public statement following the RFP, Jeannine Kiely, president of Friends of Elizabeth Street Garden, said "The City has repeatedly threatened to move forward with plans to build on the Garden, and we knew this day would come. We will not back down and allow real estate developers and elected officials to ignore us any longer."

The community groups and their supporting public officials fear that any plan will not only demolish the garden, but

will ultimately serve as a wedge to displace long time residents and lay the foundation for more luxury housing. Further, many argue that the term "affordable" is misleading, since most of the housing to be created through zoning modifications will be too expensive for the truly needy to afford. Similar conflicts are occurring in The Bronx (see article page 6) and elsewhere. On October 1, the garden's supporters held a rally at Gold Street to publicize their position.

Defenders of the housing plan are fighting back. Responding to the critics, for example, City Council member Margaret Chin on October 6 acknowledged in the Gotham Gazette that "Communities must be consulted about changes coming to their neighborhoods."

She added, however, that "this crisis [of insufficient affordable housing] demands that we make tough decisions to accommodate the pressing needs of all New Yorkers. That is why I am proud of the public process that led to the inclusion of at least 5,000 square feet of publicly-accessible space at a new affordable senior housing project on Elizabeth and Mott streets in Little Italy in my Council District." Further, that while many residents "have already received a letter from the landlord informing them of a double-digit rent increase... Others, including too many of our seniors,

are desperately searching for any space available in a city that seemingly has none."

Chin insisted that "the question before us must not be if, but how affordable housing is to be created."

But her call will not likely impress the garden's supporters. In a rejoinder, Aziz Dehkan, executive director of the NYC Community Garden Coalition, said that the "threat to Elizabeth Street Garden violates Mayor de Blasio's mandate to promote livability for New Yorkers." He added that HPD's RFP "requires [only] 30 years of affordable housing, perhaps a single generation, in a city where the senior population is outpacing all other demographic groups. In three decades, the senior apartments could exit affordability, but a new building would remain atop a community garden sacrificed for fleeting gain."

HPD's request for proposals includes this provision: "The Project must include affordable housing for seniors that both meets the economic needs of the community and furthers fair housing by promoting economically diverse neighborhoods. The Development must also include quality commercial and/or community facility uses, as well publicly-accessible open space."

Manhattan Community Board 2 has recommended an alternative site with the potential, the Board says, for "five times more affordable housing."

City launches amnesty program for many fines

The Department of Finance (DOF) has launched a time-limited program called "Forgiving Fines: The New York City Amnesty Program." The program, which began on September 16, runs through December 12, 2016.

The program forgives penalties and interest on violations received by individuals and business owners from the Department of Sanitation, Department of Buildings and other City agencies.

It covers violations left unpaid that are now in judgment. To have a violation in judgment means the City of New York has a public record of liability due on a violation for the entire amount, plus additional interest. Criminal violations and violations over \$25,000 are excluded. Other limitations, exclusions and eligibility requirements apply.

For more information, visit <http://on.nyc.gov/2bwPYFI>

USA Pediatricians' warning: lead poisoning in housing still an issue

Pediatricians in the United States are calling for a far stronger effort by government to eliminate sources of lead in homes. In a report on the pediatricians' proposal, Medical News Today, an online medical information service, acknowledged that the mandated removal of lead from gasoline and various consumer products resulted in "a dramatic fall in American children's blood levels of lead." Neverthe-

less, they noted that "mounting evidence shows even less than half [the official] standard of a blood lead level of 10 µg/dL "causes mental and behavioral problems, such as lower IQ, worse academic performance, aggression, hyperactivity, poor impulse control, and inattention."

An estimated 37 million homes in the United States still have lead-based paint.

NYC museum hosts signing for new housing book

The My City Book Club will host a book signing ceremony for Richard Plunz's landmark study, "A History of Housing in New York City" on Wednesday October 19, at the Museum of the City of New York.

The book, tracing the development of housing in New York from 1850 to the present, investigates the housing of all classes, from the single-family house to ten-

ements and high-rise apartment buildings, and places the story of housing within the context of the New York's broader political and cultural development. A revised edition extends the scope into the city's recent history, adding three decades to the study, covering the recent housing bubble crisis, and the rebound and gentrification of the five boroughs.