



# MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION

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WEBSITE: [www.mitchell-lama.org](http://www.mitchell-lama.org)

## Gov. Hochul's housing plan seeks to replicate Mitchell-Lama developments

If the housing section of Gov. Kathy Hochul's [State of the State message](#) is legislatively approved, New York may well see a renewal of affordable, limited equity cooperatives based specifically on the Mitchell-Lama program.

Further, the January message included a note to interested developers that any proposals submitted for such cooperatives — along with proposals to generate shared equity housing and community land trusts — must guarantee that whatever is built under the program would have to remain "permanently affordable."

This caveat reflects widespread disillusion among affordable housing advocates that the original M-L program contained provisions to allow developments to opt out after a certain period of time (generally twenty-five years), thereby causing tens of thousands of apartments to be lost to the private, largely unaffordable, market.

Developer proposals must also include methods to insure that residents will be involved in both the governing and long term operation. And they must be "designed to serve low-and-moderate income households in the community in which they are located."

If successful, the pilot program

"could lead to the creation of a large-scale program in the future, expanding affordable homeownership options for even more New Yorkers," the message noted.

Following are among the additional housing components of the message:

¶ Create and preserve 10,000 supportive housing units over the next five years to prevent homelessness of at-risk populations, including homeless veterans and their families, victims of domestic violence, elderly seniors and others.

¶ Ease restrictions on converting hotels and offices to affordable residential uses through legislation.

¶ Replace the 421-a tax abatement program, which has been widely abused by developers to create market rate housing, with a new program to achieve greater and longer-lasting affordability.

¶ Allow flexibility to enable construction of financially viable smaller buildings.

¶ Improve housing access for tenants who have had previous convictions or negative credit histories.

¶ Create a homeownership option for low- and moderate-income residents.

## Eric Adams' budget largely avoids affordable housing

The absence of any funding increases for affordable housing in Mayor Eric Adams' first [budget](#) has sparked anger among two leading groups of advocates.

The New York Housing Conference, a non-profit coalition comprising developers, managers, owners and funders of affordable housing, condemned the mayor for largely ignoring the issue in his budget or budgetary comments. And the Family Homelessness Coalition condemned the absence of any plans "to address the City's family homelessness crisis or affordable housing shortage."

Affordable housing in the city is largely a responsibility of the Housing Preservation and Development agency. For the current fiscal year, HPD received \$1.36 billion, which includes federal infusions. Next year, the budget calls for a drop to \$1.04 billion, a decline of more than twenty-one percent.

A similar situation applies to the Department of Homeless Services. In the current year, it received \$2.76 billion, again including federal funds; next year that figure will drop to

*(Continued on page 8)*

**50th Anniversary of Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition: 1972-2022  
Zoom meeting. More information on the way.**

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

**MLRC  
General Membership Meeting  
Saturday, March 19, 2022 at 10 a.m.**

**By Zoom**

**Call in at 1-646-558-8656**

**or by internet: Meeting ID: 850**

**1307 7536**

**Passcode: 1234**

**Members will be informed by regular mail**

**Contact: [Info@mitchell-lama.org](mailto:Info@mitchell-lama.org)**

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

## Hochul seeks \$1.6 billion in U.S. rent relief with support of tenants, owners, and developers

In the face of a monumental departure of tenants from New York City during the early days of Covid-19 — when the city was the pandemic's national epicenter — a coalition of property owners, developers, real estate associations and tenant advocates has been lobbying Gov. Kathy Hochul to request federal financing for rent relief.

The governor has responded by formally asking the US Treasury Department for \$1.6 billion to support the state's Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

Last year's curtailment of the program has hurt not only tenants, but small homeowners as well, who face the double whammy of tenants who cannot afford rent and a backlog of empty apartments caused by the departure of thousands of New Yorkers.

According to AMNY, an online news service, "Nearly 320,000 people left New York in 2020, a tremendous 237% increase from the prior year. Because of this, thousands of landlords have been unable to fill vacant properties, while simultaneously thousands of remaining New Yorkers have been without work or steady paychecks and are therefore unable to pay their rents."

Both federal and state legislators have supported Hochul's request.

"I strongly urge the administration to promptly direct additional rental aid to New York, as Congress intended, from the unused funds we have already appropriated," said Senator Chuck Schumer in a statement. "New York

remains on the frontlines [of] this pandemic and our tenants suffer from a double whammy: being hit hardest by COVID and paying some of the highest rents."

Likewise, Brooklyn Congresswoman Yvette Clarke, said "Too many New Yorkers are facing housing uncertainties that have been compounded by the recent expiration of New York's Pandemic-Era Eviction Moratorium."

As of this writing, Hochul's request is awaiting approval. If it is approved, Hochul said, it would directly help around 174,000 tenants.

### Problems vs profits

Beyond the issue of insufficient funding, ERAP has suffered from a variety of administrative problems, such as lack of clarity in requirements, delays in distributing the funds, etc., resulting in further jeopardy for tenants in need.

Nevertheless, according to a video obtained by *The Washington Post*, the head of the consulting firm administering the program, Scott McIntyre, publicly boasted about how the firm, Guidehouse, made a financial coup through the program, earning \$115 million in fees over six months.

That amounted to "38 percent margins" [operating income divided by gross revenue]. Margins are a standard corporate metric of profitability.

New York State officials, probably taken by surprise, expressed alarm over the statement.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### MLRC General Membership Meeting

Saturday, March 19, 2022  
10 a.m.

By Zoom

Call in at 1-646-558-8656  
or by internet: Meeting ID: 850  
1307 7536

Passcode: 1234

Members will be informed  
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CONTACT: [Info@mitchell-lama.org](mailto:Info@mitchell-lama.org)

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## Good Cause Eviction: Two NYS bills set the stage for new landlord-tenant battles

Real estate and tenants rights organizations are, predictably, at loggerheads over potentially ground-breaking bills in the Senate and Assembly seeking to amend the state's real property law.

Those bills would prevent owners from evicting tenants at will, including tenants in non-regulated or market rate apartments, even if the lease has expired.

Known as Good Cause Eviction, the bills (S2892B and A10315A) would grant



tenants the right to remain in their apartments, under a new lease, regardless of whether or not the owner wants

them out, so long as the tenants do not do any harm, such as selling dope, causing property damage, behaving violently, refusing to allow the owner to make internal repairs, and the like. Eviction can occur if the owner plans to demolish the apartment — after notifying the tenants at least a year in advance.

Although the tenants must pay the new rent, they could remain in their apartments if they refuse to pay an "unconscionable" increase, which is defined in the Senate bill as either a hike of three percent, or of more than one-and-a-half times the rise in inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index, whichever is greater.

To place this in context, in January, the CPI for New York City rose over the year by slightly above five percent; nationally, it jumped seven and a half percent.

The good cause eviction conflict is a result of the soaring rise in rents in New York City (and several upstate areas), which guarantees that tenant activists, like Housing Justice for All, would strongly support the bills, while both large and small owners, like the Rent Stabilization Association, would strongly oppose them.

### A current example

A battle now ongoing in the city reflects the conflict.

In Manhattan and the Bronx, a private equity firm, Glacier Equities, purchased the unsold shares (shares in apartments whose tenants chose not to go co-op) in eight cooperatives two years ago. Last year those tenants, many of whom are low- and moderate-income, were informed that they must purchase their units, or leave. As one tenant, quoted

in *The City*, noted, "In this building there are people with children, retirees, and people like myself who work day after day to be able to live here. And this is how we're treated?"

Glacier Equities explained why it should be allowed to evict. Myles Horn, the firm's head, was quoted in a real estate publication as saying that "We are looking to create value, renovate and reposition these assets with significant additional investment to ultimately sell beautifully redesigned homes in existing buildings within the fabric of their neighborhoods for under \$500,000."

### Right to property vs Right to shelter

At its core, then, the conflict reflects two overarching societal values pitted against each other: the right to property versus the right to shelter.

Owners claim that they have an inherent right to do with their property as they wish, period. They also warn that good-cause eviction will increase rents on vacant apartments, and discourage new construction and upkeep (an argument they use for virtually every pro-tenant legislation).

Tenants counter that adequate affordable shelter is, or should be, viewed as a basic human right, thus superior to property rights, and that therefore eviction without good cause is intolerable. At a Manhattan rally last year, for example, Queens Assemblymember Zohran Mamdani said "Evictions are violence."

### Resisting the evictors

The tenants are not speaking theoretically. An upsurge in evictions lately in Brooklyn and the Bronx has been so alarming that tenant groups in both of those boroughs have been [organizing](#) to physically prevent marshals from carrying out the removal of families from their homes — a reprise of resistance during the 1930s Great Depression. Two of those groups today are Brooklyn Eviction Defense and Community Action for Safe Apartments.

In the 1930s, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt included shelter as part of a proposed "economic bill of rights." But such a right, let alone a bill, has never been formally established in the US.

If enacted, the Good Cause Eviction bills might be a step towards that eventuality.

## Carrión, new HPD chief, paid conflict of interest fine to City in 2007

Mayor Eric Adams' choice to head the city's Housing Preservation and Development agency had been involved in a conflict of interest case in 2007. As a penalty, he paid a \$10,000 fine.

**Adolfo Carrión**, whose previous posts included Bronx Borough President and City Councilmember, as well as a regional HUD director in the Obama administration, had accepted a "gift" of free home renovation work from an architect who was seeking approval for a large development project on which he worked, Boricua Village in Melrose, Bronx.

The architect, Hugo Subotovsky, explained why he offered the gift: "That's the way it is," he said, according to a report in *The City*, on online news source.

The project was approved.

"Carrión admitted that he'd hired Subotovsky at the recommendation of Peter Fine, the builder putting up Boricua Village," *The City* wrote.

Fine, who is also a member of Adams' transition team, had been a significant financial contributor to Carrión's political campaigns.

### Adam's EDC Pick also has questionable past

In a related situation, Adams' pick to head the city's Economic Development Corporation had been involved in 2018 in a questionable attempt help to Tim Ziss, a real estate developer, win management control of a Queens Mitchell-Lama development, Bridgeview III (an eight-story complex with 171 apartments).

According to *The City*, **Carlo Scisura**, whose former positions included CEO of both the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce and the New York Building Congress — a lobbying group for the construction industry — signed on for a \$6,000 deal to help Ziss in his efforts.

Although Scisura acknowledged that he did sign on to help Ziss, he chose eventually not to work on the project. Through a spokesperson, he said that he refused to do the work and never collected the money.

Ziss has a negative reputation with City officials. **Eric Enderlin**, who heads the Housing Development Corp., is quoted as saying that Ziss had obstructed a sale and refinancing designed to help Bridgeview make needed repairs. "Consequently, Bridgeview has continued to fall into an increasing state of disrepair and has been unable to pay its bills," he said.

## Horrific Bronx fire building was designed as an innovative Mitchell-Lama

The Bronx Mitchell Lama building that erupted into deadly flames in January — the result of a faulty space heater used by tenants for whom the radiators provided insufficient warmth — was intended as a breakaway from both traditional public housing and the more government-assisted structures such as M-L complexes.

Constructed in 1972, the architects — Prentice and Chan, Ohlhausen — had been tasked with creating public-funded housing that would signal a break from the traditional bland, boxy buildings of the New York City Housing Authority. As Mathew Haag of the New York Times noted, "The hope was that buildings of architectural quality, breaking away from the mold of uninspiring public-housing complexes throughout the city, would produce a happier, healthier and safer neighborhood of people with mixed backgrounds and ethnicities."

As part of that approach, the architects scattered the buildings in the Twin Parks development throughout the neighborhood, rather than clustering them all together, as in traditional public housing. The approach also embodied the principal of designing new buildings to harmonize, as much as possible, with the surrounding structures.

Although the social goal of us-

ing architecture and land placement as a way to mitigate the rampant crime of the era was never realized, the Northwest building was, and until the fire remained, a sought after home for many. Many of its current residents came from Gambia, as did all the people who were killed.

Much of the upkeep of the building, as in many other present and former Mitchell Lamas, derives from Section 8 vouchers.

The Northwest building, consisting of 120 units, was last purchased, along with other M-Ls, by LIHC Investment Group, Belveron Partners and Camber Property Group for \$166 million.

Camber's portfolio includes affordable developments throughout the city, including stakes in Housing Authority buildings.

Among the firm's principals is Rick Gropper, who has been named to Mayor Eric Adams' transition committee. Press reports indicate that Gropper has contributed heavily to local lawmakers.

Another Camber officer is Karen Hu, whose career includes service as a planner at HPD, and experience in both luxury and affordable housing development.

The firm, along with previous owners, is now facing a class action lawsuit by some tenants and relatives of the victims.

## Inwood Towers M-L receives funding for repairs and 30-year affordability

Inwood Towers, a state-supervised Mitchell-Lama cooperative in Manhattan's Washington Heights neighborhood, will receive a \$7.6 million subsidy to make much needed capital improvements and to keep the development affordable through 2052.

Constructed in 1963, the cooperative houses 190 apartments.

A release from the State's department of Homes and Community Renewal, capital improvements will include "elevator repairs, roof replacement, gas line repairs, replacement of boilers and associated piping, radiator replacement, and facade and brick repointing."

The release went on to note that the repairs "also include several energy-efficiency measures that will reduce energy costs for the cooperative."



Inwood Towers

## Schumer urges HUD to approve \$120 M for Co-op City refinancing

New York State Senator Chuck Schumer has asked HUD administrator Maria Fudge to approve a \$120 million mortgage refinancing effort by Co-op City, before interest rates rise.

The funds are needed by the sprawling Bronx M-L for repairs, including electrical and HVAC systems and facade upgrading.

The refinancing would also lower the complex's mortgage payments.

A year ago, Schumer and Rep Jamaal Bowman said refinancing Co-op City's mortgage could amount to \$100 million in savings, facilitating repairs without raising residents' fees.

Co-op City houses around 45,000 people. It opened in 1968.



## MLRC Developments

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

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

*Donations above membership dues are welcome*

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

## Rights group notes evictions increased in NYCHA projects leased to private firms

Two of the six NYC public housing projects that participated in a federal program to privatize management by leasing the buildings to developers—who then get federal compensation via a rental subsidy—have rendered tenants more subject to evictions and less protected by monitors. The two projects house 6,500 residents.

That is the conclusion of a year-long [research study](#) undertaken by Human Rights Watch, a leading international rights organization.

While the rights group noted that the four other PACT [Permanent Affordability Commitment Together] conversions were not associated with higher evictions, they too were subject to other problems.

### Negative impact on tenants

"Based on research conducted between October 2020 and October 2021, this report finds that PACT has negatively impacted the right to housing of low-income residents by leading to a reduction in oversight and crucial protections for tenants' rights, including the loss of a federal monitor overseeing a previous settlement with NYCHA. Inadequate government oversight and avenues for redress may render tenants more vulnerable to other violations of their rights, such as increased evictions leading to a loss of housing or ongoing habitability [e.g., repairs, infestations, etc.] issues."

The report went on to note that, while it is difficult to predict the long term effects of the program, negative impacts on tenants are reasonable to expect.

These include "feeling pressured into signing leases without fully understanding them, ongoing habitability issues and potentially dangerous construction practices, a lack of access to services, and difficulties in obtaining redress. . . ."

Human Rights Watch's report would appear to reinforce an investigation last October by [The City](#), an online news source, where it found that "in recent months, tenants at several Brooklyn and Manhattan developments have alleged that private contractors and building managers have botched renovations, clogged hallways with debris and left upgrades half-finished for weeks or more.

"City building inspectors have repeatedly cited one contractor for multiple

violations at a Brooklyn [PACT] development, while outside investigators uncovered toxic mold lurking in dozens of apartments of a development about to go into private management. The EPA lead paint abatement certification of a contractor hired for work at yet another development had expired in 2011."

And NYCHA, tenants contend, has done little to respond to their complaints, a finding reinforcing fears of privatization critics.

### NYCHA defends its oversight

Acknowledging some of the problems, NYCHA officials took issue with the report.

"Overall, our systematic approach to oversight and monitoring have led to the overwhelming resident satisfaction of our PACT program," the authority said in a statement. "While we take every complaint seriously and work with our PACT partners to address all construction and maintenance issues, the number of issues represent a small proportion of the work that is taking place across the PACT portfolio."

According to *The City*, NYCHA officials "described an ongoing effort to track work and adherence by private developers to health and safety regulations at PACT."

Officials also said "they're now performing both scheduled and unannounced inspections, undertaking a monthly review of repair request responses and holding regular meetings with tenant leaders."

### Fourth shelter operator found to ignore city orders

Another operator of homeless shelters who has been found to violate New York City rules regarding nepotism and other practices continues to stay on the job without meeting any of the city's demands.

A [New York Times](#) expose found that Matthew Okebiyi, head of the African American Planning Commission since 2017, took in a salary of \$500,00 a year, and paid his brother \$245,000, while his sister remained a board member. Additional payments were made to "consulting" firms connected to Okebiyi.

Other shelter operators recently exposed for unethical or criminal situations were Victor Rivera of Bronx Parent Housing Network, Jack Brown of CORE Services Group, and Ethel Denise Perry of Millennium Care.

## Community board 10 nixes two-tower Harlem proposal on 145th St.

Millicent Redick, a resident of a Mitchell-Lama in Manhattan, is among the victors so far in a community effort to protest the redevelopment of a vacant lot on a Harlem block to include two massive high rise buildings and a museum on civil rights.

Ms. Redick has been instrumental in opposing the project. As a result of her and her neighbors' visible protests, the community board in January unanimously voted down the proposal, which would have encompassed almost the entire block at 145th Street and Lenox Avenue.

In an unsuccessful effort to sway the board, the developer had offered to increase the sizes of the proposed 220 affordable units, which would share space with more than 600 market-rate apartments.

The gambit failed.

Protesters argued that the below-market rate apartments would still be unavailable to current residents earning \$49,000 annually.

Councilmember Kristin Richardson Jordan called the inclusion of such apartments a "bread crumb or a carrot dangled in front of us."

She said the towers would amount to "a whole bunch of market rate housing masquerading as somehow being for the community and it's not."

### Fears of traffic congestion

Aside from gentrification and the inevitable displacement, opponents' concern is that of enormous traffic congestion — Yankee Stadium is close by — and the curtailment of pedestrian space.

"If we have a game at the Yankee Stadium, it becomes even more challenging trying to get through the community. The congestion is my biggest concern," Redick was quoted as saying on CBS-TV.

### Boro Pres, Council still undecided

Notwithstanding the failure of the developers to sway the Board, the project is not yet dead. That is because the board is an advisory body only; the borough president and the city council can, if they choose, override the community board's decision.

If they do, the towers will replace a block currently home to low-rise retailers and gas stations.

## Covid's impact on rental housing: Lower-income tenants suffered most

The following is excerpted from [The State of the Nation's Housing 2021](#), by Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies. It is reprinted with permission.

**M**assive job losses early in the pandemic compounded the housing challenges for millions of renter households.

In the third quarter of 2021, almost a quarter—twenty-three percent—of renters reported they had lost employment income in the previous four weeks—losses that in many cases resulted in missed rent payments.

Indeed, the Household Pulse-Survey indicates that fifteen percent of renter households were behind on rent in that quarter, down from the peak of nearly seventeen percent in the fourth quarter of 2020.

### Lower-income especially hard hit

Lower-income renters were especially hard hit by the job cuts, and many of these households were already struggling to cover their rents.

Lower-income renters typically work in the service sector, where job and wage cuts early in the pandemic left them with even less income to pay for housing. As a result, nearly a quarter of renter households with incomes under \$25,000 were behind on their housing payments in the third quarter of 2021, along with fifteen percent of renter households with incomes between \$25,000 and \$49,999.

These lower-income renters were more than twice as likely to be in arrears on rent as renters earning between \$50,000 and \$74,999 and four times more likely than renters earning at least \$75,000.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the affordability crisis, especially for households that were already cost burdened. Even before 2020, the number of households paying more than thirty percent of income for rent remained stubbornly high, and the job losses over the past two years are likely to have left even more renters struggling to pay for rent.

Without housing they can afford, households must make spending tradeoffs that jeopardize basic health and well-being. While the federal government has stepped in with emergency assistance, much of the country lacks a sufficient supply of affordable rentals, particularly for extremely low-income households.

### Households of color fell behind on rent

Households of color were especially likely to fall behind on rent, in part due to widespread income losses. In the third quarter of 2021, nearly a quarter of Black renter households and nearly a fifth of Hispanic households were behind on their housing payments.

The share of Asian households in arrears was nearly as high, although these renters were less likely to have lost employment income.

Meanwhile, only nine percent of white renter households owed back rent, thanks to an even lower rate of income losses.

Eight of the ten states with the highest shares of households in arrears were in the South. Although states in this region generally have lower housing costs, they also have large numbers of both lower income renter households and pandemic-related job losses.

In the third quarter of 2021, Mississippi and Louisiana had the largest shares of renter households in arrears, at twenty-two percent. However, New York had the third-largest share and Maryland the tenth-largest share of households in arrears, largely because of high housing costs and high numbers of lower-income renters.

The onset of the pandemic took a particularly heavy financial toll on lower-income renters, compounding the challenges for households already struggling to pay for housing.

### Increasing debt

To meet expenses, many of these households have had to tap several financial resources, including drawing down savings, increasing their credit card debt, and borrowing from friends and family.

Even so, many lower-income renters have been unable to meet basic needs. In the third quarter of 2021, 40 percent of households that were in arrears on rent reported that they sometimes or often did not have enough food.

*Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, "The State of the Nation's Housing 2021," [www.jchs.harvard.edu](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu). All rights reserved.*

## Homelessness emerges as leading cause of death

**P**eople who are homeless are astronomically more likely to die sooner than those who are housed.

A new study of twenty major urban areas by [The Guardian](#) in conjunction with Homeless Death Count, a nonprofit formed specifically to monitor deaths among people who have no homes, found that from 2016 through 2020, the number of homeless deaths surged by seventy-seven percent.

By contrast, according to data from the nonprofit [Population Reference Bureau](#), US deaths from all causes during the same years was around 5.7 percent (2.74 million in 2016 and 2.9 million five years later).

### Philly, NYC top list of homeless death rates

New York City's homeless death rate during the five years was the second highest among the twenty jurisdictions surveyed: 136 percent. It followed only Philadelphia's death rate of 150 percent.

People without homes are also much more likely to die at a significantly younger age than Americans in general. In Sacramento county, for example, the average of death was fifty-one for men and forty-nine for women, according to Bob Erlensbusch, executive director of the Sacramento regional coalition to end homelessness.

By contrast, for US men as a whole, the average death rate is around seventy-six; for women it is around eighty-one.

"Basically, on average, homelessness takes off 25 percent of a person's life," Erlensbusch said.

### Homeless students more apt to be expelled or suspended

**C**ollege students who are homeless are much more likely to face suspension or be expelled than students in general.

That, at least, was the findings of a study at the University of Michigan. The study has prompted state legislators to prepare bills seeking to reform the state's system of discipline.

Expulsions and suspensions are often justified by Michigan administrators as a form of discipline for school infractions. But some of those infractions are as minor as maintaining a hair or clothing style that officials find objectionable. Further, a [study](#) by the American Institutes for Research found that both expulsions and suspensions are largely ineffective in changing behavior. Instead, primarily, they have a negative impact on a student's future academic performance and therefore life advancement.

## Affordable housing news from around the nation

### National: Rents leapt 14 percent over year

On average, tenants throughout the U.S. were presented with a whopping fourteen percent hike in monthly rents during 2021, according to [Redfin](#), an online real estate news source. And most Americans expect the hikes to continue, as eviction moratoriums have ended, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

Further, owning your home was no safety haven for housing expenditures: homeowners found their monthly mortgage bills leap even higher than rents: up 21.6 percent.

The top three Metro areas with the fastest-rising rents over the year were Austin, TX (40%); Nassau County, NY (35%); and New York City (35%).

### National: Soaring rents attributed to equity firms scooping up homes

Private equity firms are emerging as the nation's leading acquirer of homes, a key factor generating enormous rent increases and inadequate maintenance. According to [ProPublica](#), "Large loans to private equity firms . . . are helping drive industry concentration and pushing up the cost of renting. The loans typically do not include provisions that increase tenant protections or that keep affordable housing rents low over the long term."

### National: Mayors feel helpless in dealing with homelessness

Almost three-quarters of mayors in thirty-nine cities openly acknowledge that while they are held responsible for dealing with the issue of homelessness, the crisis is beyond their control, according to a new survey. The two key factors they cite that tie their hands are lack of funding, and opposition by local residents to shelters and affordable housing. The [survey](#) was published by a nonprofit — Community Solutions — in collaboration with Boston University.

### Cincinnati: Agency buys homes for affordable rentals

A Cincinnati government agency will purchase 195 houses in the city and Hamilton County, will upgrade them, and will then rent them at below market rates for low- and moderate-income tenants. The Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority outbid more

than a dozen private investment firms which, had they been successful, would undoubtedly have charged market rents, thereby exacerbating the area's dearth of affordable homes. Other cities that have pursued similar policies include San Francisco and Oakland.

### Sacramento: City buys 102 acres for homeless parking area

The Sacramento government spent \$12.3 million to purchase a 102-acre land parcel, formerly owned by the federal government, which will be used initially as a safe parking area for people who sleep in their cars. Press reports indicate that community opposition has already emerged.

### Nevada: State to borrow \$300 million for affordable housing projects

The state recently secured the authority to borrow over \$300 million for affordable housing projects. The new homes will be in addition to fourteen such projects now under construction in Reno, Las Vegas, and North Las Vegas, which will provide close to three thousand affordable homes. An additional group of more than twenty-one hundred homes are expected to be completed later this year.

### Durham, NC: Plans to build below-market housing on old HA site

A joint venture between a group of developers and the Durham Housing Authority is in the works to develop more than a thousand units of affordable housing on a site that was formerly a public housing center but has become vacant. The plan calls for the creation of 774 affordable, mixed-income units spread over four building types, as well as a parking garage, an office building and retail space.

### Garland, TX: \$7.1 million renovation for affordable complex

An affordable housing complex in the city, constructed in 2006, will undergo a \$7.1 million renovation by its new owner, Dominion. The 204-unit age-restricted development, known as Cesara, will gain new cabinets, flooring, and energy-efficient appliances. Exterior renovations will include building repairs and updated landscaping. The complex was constructed using low-income housing tax credits.

## Local Housing Briefs

### Adams announces three to head housing policy

Mayor Eric Adams has released the names of the three people who will be in charge of the city's housing policies and development. They are Jessica Katz as Chief Housing Officer, Eric Enderlin continuing as head of the Housing Development Corporation, and Adolfo Carrión as head of HPD. See page 3 for story on Carrión.

### After eviction moratorium ended, most tenants not facing eviction

Most NYC tenants behind in rent have not yet faced the threat of eviction (as of January 31), according to a report in *City and State*, an online news source. In part, this was due to the fact that thousands of tenants who found themselves at risk after January 15, when the NYS eviction protection program ended, applied for state emergency relief aid, which bars eviction while applications are pending. Further, landlord spokespeople say they were not rushing to evict. "Nobody is trying to evict anyone," said Valentina Gojcaj, a manager of more than 200 apartments.

### Evergreen Gardens M-L acquired by real estate fund

Evergreen Gardens, a 357-unit Mitchell-Lama development in the Bronx, was acquired by Global One Real Estate Fund, an affiliate of Nelson Management Group. Aided by \$23.6 million provided by the NYC Housing Development Corp., the acquisition will finance a rehabilitation.

### Heat complaints in quarter rose 26 percent over year

Almost 84,000 heat complaints were lodged between October 21, 2021 and January 19, 2022, an increase of 25.6 percent over the same period last year.

According to RentHop, an online apartment locator, the Bronx "continues to be the coldest borough," that is, registered the most complaints. And within the Bronx, Fordham South "ranks the coldest among over 180 NYC neighborhoods."

### January median rents soar

Median rents in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens increased annually "at its highest rate to the second-highest January ever recorded," according to the real estate monitoring firm DouglasElliman. At the same time, the inventory of apartments fell "at a record rate for the sixth straight month, and the vacancy rate fell below pre-pandemic levels for the second consecutive month."

## Think your M-L development has problems? Try these on for size

**F**looding balconies.

- Ill-fitting balcony doors that allow rain and wind to seep into apartments.
- Therefore, cold, damp apartments.
- Overflowing toilets.
- Leaky and broken pipes. Which means, sometimes, no water for days.
- And which results in damaged floors.
- Mold, which can lead to upper respiratory tract problems, including lung inflammation.

Want to hear more afflicting this Mitchell Lama cooperative in the Kingsbridge Heights section of the Bronx?

Try these:

- Broken smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Cracks on the building facade, leading to falling debris.
- Sidewalk sheds, which can be dangerous because of broken pieces flying off, but which can be more dangerous if removed.
- An unreliable super.

These are among the issues afflicting residents at 3400 Fort Independence Street in the Bronx, a Mitchell Lama cooperative construct-

ed in 1965, as reported in a recent expose by Joseph de la Cruz of [The Riverdale Express](#), a community newspaper.

The expose goes on to quote individual residents about their experiences, and responses by the city's Housing Preservation and Development agency.

Not surprisingly, Jeremy House, a spokesman for HPD, tells de la Cruz that it "responds to all complaints filed as quickly as possible."

That is not a false statement. As the article notes, "It's not that no one is paying attention. In fact, officials from the city's housing and preservation department have become regular visitors, and pointed out a problem with not just Cullen's [one of the tenants quoted in the story] balcony door, but doors on three floors."

"We attempt to notify the landlord of the complaint," he said, "and we attempt to confirm with tenants if the condition has been corrected before sending an inspector."

Nevertheless, the appalling problems persist. Hopefully, exposes like those in *The Riverdale Express* will spur more effective responses.

## Eric Adams' budget largely avoids affordable housing

(Continued from page 1)

\$2.15 billion, a drop of more than twenty-two percent.

Rachel Fee, who heads the Housing Conference, criticized Adams for "choosing to maintain the status quo and abandon his campaign promise," as reported in *City and State*.

She noted that Adam's budget undermined the promises he made while running for office, namely to allocate four billion dollars a year on affordable housing.

Fee also noted that the budget does not call for increases to the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development, in spite of his campaign promise to increase allocations to \$2.5 billion.

In a statement, the Family Homelessness Coalition criticized Adams for not mentioning how he plans to deal with the "homelessness crisis or the affordable housing shortage."

The statement went on to note that families with children continue to make up the largest share of New York's City's homeless population. "This is especially troubling given the expiration of the eviction moratorium, thousands of additional families are at the brink of homelessness and the life-altering trauma that comes with it."

Finally, notwithstanding ongoing news about dilapidated conditions in much of NYCHA's buildings, the budget does not earmark any increases for construction upgrades.

## Upper West Side SRO hotel to house affordable units

**A** plan to generate eighty-two affordable homes by transforming illegal Single Room Occupancy hotels on Manhattan's Upper West Side was announced by Mayor Eric Adams in February.

Funding for the project will derive from a \$1.1 million settlement between the City's Office of Special Enforcement and the hotels' operator, Hank Fried. The City and Fried had been involved in lawsuits dating back a decade over the operation of the hotels.

The Fortune Society, a nonprofit aiming to assist people formerly incarcerated into mainstream society, will take possession of one of the buildings, and will work with both the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and the Department of Social Services.

## Lotteries open for apts in Brooklyn and LIC

**L**otteries for new below-market-rate apartments in Brooklyn and Long Island City are available for people earning between \$56,092 and \$167,570 (Brooklyn) and between \$68,229 and \$192,400 (LIC). Units range from studios to two- and three-bedrooms.

The Brooklyn apartments are at 266 Kent Street, on Domino Park, at the waterfront.

The Long Island City units are at 2959 Northern Boulevard.

Applicants need to create an account with [Housing Connect](#). More information may be available at 212-863-5610.

## Vaccines work. Let's fight Covid!

