

View from the Window

A Homesteading Update

UHAB
URBAN HOMESTEADING
ASSISTANCE BOARD

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Milestone Step in Fight Against Predatory Equity

For the residents of ten over-leveraged buildings in the Bronx, a recent court decision could mean a return to livable conditions for their families.



Over a year ago, owner Milbank Real Estate defaulted on its \$35 million mortgage, leaving ten Bronx buildings, making up 554 units, in foreclosure. Since then, the buildings have reached unlivable standards, and residents have been forced to take court action.

"We stand together today to send a clear message to owners of distressed and over-leveraged buildings: you will be held accountable for providing tenants with safe and habitable conditions."

-Council Member Annabel Palma

This fall, UHAB's Organizing and Policy team worked with the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition and Baer Architecture Group to do an infrastructural study on Milbank's 10 distressed properties in the Bronx.

The report found over 3,200 housing violations, with an average of \$26,500 repairs needed *per unit*. All told, Baer estimated that fixing all ten buildings will cost between \$19.7 million and \$24.7 million.

The program which created the report was announced at a press conference at City Hall on September 23 with New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, Council Member Annabel Palma, Legal Services of New York City in the Bronx, the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, and UHAB.

At the event, UHAB's Executive Director Andy Reicher stated, "Arming tenants with concrete information that allows them to better advocate on their own behalf is exactly in line with the self-help philosophy that is at the core of UHAB's mission. We... believe that residents are

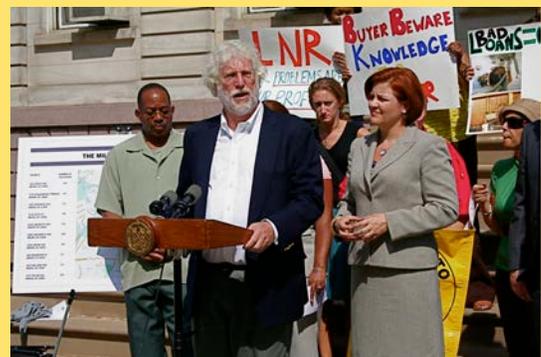
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necessary partners in the redevelopment of any distressed property, so this is a very important tool for the Milbank tenants."

Just six days after the press conference announcing the findings, on September 29, a Bronx judge ordered LNR Property LLC,

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Andrew Reicher and Speaker Christine Quinn at City Hall, announcing a plan to fight predatory equity.

A Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Affordable housing, whether we are preserving or creating it, is a truly collaborative process. Recently, UHAB partnered with the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition and Baer Architecture Group to do an infrastructural study on ten distressed properties in the Bronx. The impact of the report was a milestone in the fight against Predatory Equity. For the first time, a

court is holding a bank accountable for paying for repairs on overleveraged buildings.

In Brooklyn, UHAB is near the finish line in developing five buildings that will house 28 families and provide four commercial units. The tenants, soon to be shareholders, have been actively involved in the construction phase of this development.

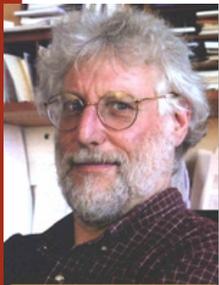
Finally, I hope that you will be able to join us as we celebrate UHAB's 35th Anniver-

sary on Monday, November 22nd. We look forward to honoring Senator Charles Schumer, Bank of America/Merrill Lynch, James Fenniman, and our HDFC Building of the Year. Their contributions to UHAB's work are invaluable.

Peace,



Andrew Reicher
Executive Director



Andrew Reicher
Executive Director

Five Brooklyn Buildings Near End of Construction

Families in five buildings across Brooklyn all have one thing in common this fall: they're coming back home, and finding it anything but ordinary. The buildings, enrolled in New York City's Third Party Transfer (TPT) program, have been undergoing rehab and construction for just over a year.

As part of the TPT program, the city transfers foreclosed-upon, distressed properties to a responsible temporary owner like UHAB. The buildings are then renovated, and the residents undergo trainings which will teach them how to convert to, and run, a low-equity housing co-op.

Though these buildings (making up 28 units) aren't co-ops yet, cooperative living among the building residents has started al-

ready. Throughout the construction process, volunteer construction committees made up of building residents did walkthroughs of the units and common areas, reporting back to their fellow residents and UHAB employees to ensure that needs were being met. The system worked well, and there were plenty of smiles as residents did a final walk through of their "new" units last week.

New kitchen appliances, cabinets, hardwood floors, and bathrooms went into each unit. Fresh paint jobs in common areas, new roof work, and boiler maintenance were also completed.

At 529 Marcy Ave., UHAB and its contractors changed the composition of the units in the building, in order to better fit the needs of three families. Large families that used to live in 1-bedroom units will now be able to have 3-bedroom duplexes. The residents, who plan to call their building "The Garden HDFC," are looking forward to starting a communal vegetable garden in their new backyard next Spring.



Residents of 856 Nostrand Ave. gather for their final construction walk-through.

"I'm grateful to have worked on these projects from beginning to end," said Jaz Lancaster, UHAB's Program Manager of Training and Technical Assistance. "Right when I came on I started working with these residents, and it's really exciting to see construction almost finished. Overall the tenants seemed really pleased with the work that's been done." Jaz is hopeful that all five of the buildings will convert to HDFCs, some as soon as eight months from now. All residents are now fully trained, and prepared to start the process of co-op conversion once they've moved back into their units in January.

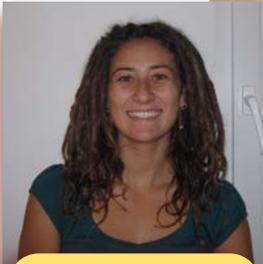


The newly-renovated kitchen of a 529 Marcy Ave. duplex unit.

Four New Staff Join UHAB

UHAB is fortunate to have four new additions to its team this fall. Meet the new staff:

Avital Aboody joins UHAB as a tenant organizer in the Organizing and Policy Department. A member of the Ameri-corps program called “AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps,” Avital received an undergraduate degree in Peace and Conflict Studies from UC Berkeley in 2009. Throughout her time in school, she was a very active member of the Berkeley Student Coops. Avital spent the past year working for a non-profit human rights organization in Jerusalem called Breaking the Silence, and has previous experience as a group facilitator, community organizer, and activist with various social-justice themed organizations in the Bay Area and abroad.



Avital Aboody

Celia Weaver comes to UHAB’s Organizing and Policy Department through Public Allies, a nationwide organization that seeks to develop leadership and build capacity in non-profits. Celia graduated from Bryn Mawr College in May 2010 with a BA in Growth and Structure of Cities and Economics. Before joining UHAB, Celia worked in various CDCs and arts outreach non-profits in Rochester and Philadelphia.



Celia Weaver

Elise Selinger joins UHAB as a Project Associate for the Brooklyn and Lower East Side TIL HDFC contract. Originally from Burlington, Connecticut, Elise graduated in May 2010 from Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine where she studied sociology. Elise furthered her study by spending a semester abroad in Quito, Ecuador. Elise recently moved to Brooklyn, and in her free time she enjoys exploring her new neighborhood and working with college students and campuses across the country to promote democratic dialogue and decision making.



Elise Selinger

Sheila Somashekhar joins UHAB’s Weatherization team after managing energy efficiency, urban forestry and greenway development projects for two years at Sustainable South Bronx. While at SSBx, Sheila developed the curriculum and oversaw program implementation for the pilot session of a weatherization job training program, BEST for Buildings. She also worked on a number of planning and policy initiatives to promote environmental equity and health in the South Bronx.



Sheila Somashekhar

In the past, Sheila has worked on participatory planning and environmental justice initiatives in southeast Michigan, as well as health and immigrants’ rights programs in the Washington, DC area. Sheila holds a Master’s of Urban Planning and a Master’s of Public Health from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Milestone Step in Fight Against Predatory Equity

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the servicer to the loan that oversees the Milbank buildings property, to pay \$2.5 million for repairs within 30 days. This decision is a milestone step for the fight against predatory equity, as it is the first to hold bank accountable for paying for repairs on over-leveraged buildings.

“It has huge implications for the more than 5,000 overleveraged apartments that are in fore-



Charlene Barton, a resident of 1576 Taylor Ave., shows her support on the steps of City Hall.

closure and in poor physical condition across New York City,” said Dina Levy, Director of Organizing and Policy.

UHAB is now working with Legal Services and Speaker Quinn’s office to bring both the architectural services and the novel litigation strategy to other tenants associations struggling with the effects of predatory investment in affordable housing. For more information, contact Dina Levy at 212-479-3302.

Co-ops: From New York to Japan

UHAB has years of experience building co-ops in New York City, but now our strategies may have international reach. Noriko Yamamoto, President of Global Link, a Los Angeles firm that consults for the Japanese government, has been meeting with UHAB staff to learn more about turning public housing into co-ops.

In August, Noriko visited UHAB's Wall Street office, and held meetings with Marina Metalios,

Christopher Illum, Ann Henderson, and Adam Cloud about New York's Multi Family Homeworship Program (MHOP). Staff reviewed various case studies with her, and took her on two site visits to meet residents, including Mott Haven Victory HDFC and Plaza Off the Park HDFC.

Noriko's research will be compiled this winter, culminating in a report for the Japanese government and the non-profit known as the Association of Promoting Co-operatives.



Special Projects director Marina Metalios and Norika Yamamoto discuss the intricacies of New York City's affordable housing policies.

UHAB's Turning 35: Get Your Tickets Today

This year, UHAB celebrates its 35th year of creating, supporting, and sustaining affordable housing cooperatives in New York City.

To celebrate this occasion, and to honor those who have assisted UHAB in its mission to provide affordable housing opportunities to New Yorkers, we will be hosting a Gala fundraiser on November 22 at the Angel Orensanz Center in the Lower East Side.

We are proud to announce that our honorees will include Senator Chuck Schumer, James

Fenniman of Bollinger Insurance, Bank of America/Merrill Lynch, and a soon-to-be-announced HDFC building of the year.

The event will take place from 6pm to 9pm, and will include food, drink, and entertainment. Special thanks to Committee Chair Michael Rooney for all of his support.



Interested in coming out to help support UHAB? We'd love to see you! For information on tickets, packages, and advertisement options, please visit www.uhab.org. You can buy tickets directly through our website, or contact Chris Heeg at heeg@uhab.org or (212) 479-3324.

As always, thank you for helping to support UHAB's work across New York City. Your support will help our co-ops thrive for the next 35 years and beyond.

Help create and preserve affordable housing cooperatives...

Donate Today!



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