



RGB Recommends Vague but Large Rent Increases

By Jenny Laurie

I knew tenants were in trouble when I approached Cooper Union on May 8 and saw Jack Freund, one of the heads of the Rent Stabilization Association, the city's main landlord group, laughing and smoking a huge cigar. He knew what was coming.

The Rent Guidelines Board, in a vote heavily orchestrated by chair Marvin Markus, voted preliminary rent guidelines in a range of 3 to 6.5 percent for a one-year lease, and 5 to 8.5 percent for a two-year lease for apartments and lofts. For hotels and SROs, it set preliminary guidelines of 0 to 2 percent.

The final vote will be on June 27. Even if the RGB adopts guidelines at the low end of the proposed range, the increases allowed will still be larger than last year's, which were 2.75 percent for one year and 5.5 percent for two.

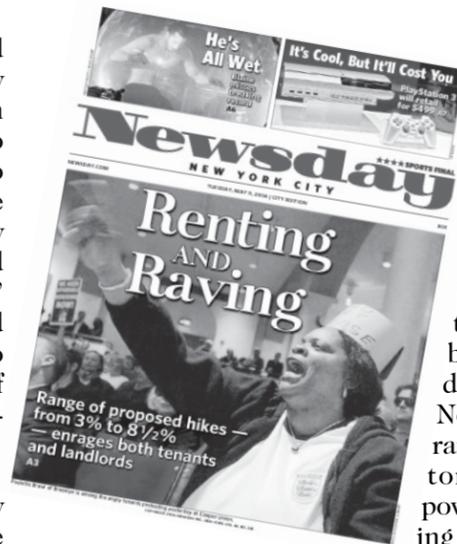
The hearing opened with Markus reading the boilerplate legal language into the record in a tone one tenant described as calculated to "put the audience to sleep." That didn't work. With hundreds of tenants and only a handful of landlords in attendance, the crowd was raucous, with boos and chants of "Rent Freeze Now."

The first motion, for a rent freeze, was made by tenant representative David Pagan, who appealed to the board to look at the many tenants who were deprived of services and repairs. It was voted down by 7-2. The next vote, also 7-2, was on the landlords' motion for a 7 percent increase for one year and no two-year leases.

After a short back-and-forth between the tenant and landlord members, Markus made the proposal for the 3-8.5 percent range. It passed by 5-4, with the public members all voting for it and both the tenant and landlord representatives opposed. (One landlord member passed on the first vote, not casting his vote until the proposal had the necessary five ayes.)

The only unscripted moment came when Mary Allen, a tenant from Brooklyn, yelled out, "Do you know what it is like to have no hot water? I have to boil water to bathe my sister who is disabled and uses a breathing tube." She walked up to the board members, continuing to shout out the details of misery caused by her landlord, Sadie Butler.

"Our hands are tied," public member Betty Phillips Adams said before the vote on Markus's proposal. "We board members are particularly frustrated with the continued problem of affordability and the limited parameters" of the powers of the board. Her comments, an apparent attempt to appease the tenants in the audience and deflect their criticisms, elicited groans of disbelief—as if the power to limit the rent increases of one million rent-stabilized tenants is meaningless in the New York City



market. Adams, apparently convinced by the landlord members' threat that owners would turn their buildings over to speculators if not given high increases, voted with the others for the Markus proposal.

A recent report by the Public Policy Institute of California measured national poverty levels while considering the high housing costs of major US cities, instead of just a one-size-

fits-all income standard—and found that New York City had the second-highest poverty rate in the nation, with 16.3 percent of its population poor. Without taking the high rent burdens of city residents into account, New York would have ranked 12th. (Washington had the highest poverty rate when housing costs were included, and San Francisco was third.) As long as the RGB has the power to adjust rents for just over one million rent stabilized apartments (who are now paying the highest rent burdens ever recorded), it has more power over housing affordability than any other agency, including the New York City Housing Authority, in the city.

See page 8 for hearing schedule.

New Orleans After the Flood: "Tremendous Rent-Gouging"

By Steven Wishnia

NEW ORLEANS—Eight months after Hurricane Katrina broke the levees and flooded most of the New Orleans, much of the city remains in ruins, from the shattered strip malls of New Orleans East to the flood-ravaged Lower Ninth

Ward, which looks like a cross between Ground Zero with trees and a bungalow version of the South Bronx circa 1978.

The hurricane and floods destroyed or caused major damage to 265,000 housing units along the

Gulf Coast, according to federal Department of Housing and Urban Development figures. Of those, 105,000 were in New Orleans, comprising 56 percent of the city's 188,000 homes and apartments. Of the city's 100,000 rental units, slightly more than half suffered major damage and more than one-third were destroyed.

Homeowners have had a hard time coming back because of the lack of infrastructure, from potable water to public schools; in the Lower Ninth Ward, they've had to face

government plans to raze the entire neighborhood. The city's renters have virtually no right of return.

New Orleans has no rent control. In 1977, local activists got a rent-control initiative on the city ballot, but a state court blocked the vote on the grounds that the proposed law would be an uncon-

stitutional intrusion on private landlord-tenant transactions. Most tenants go on month-to-month tenancies after their initial lease expires, so it is easy for landlords to get them out, explains Soleil Rodrigue, an antieviction

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A ruined house in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward.

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EDITORIAL

**An Open Letter to Eliot Spitzer:
End Your Silence on Home Rule!**

Dear Mr. Spitzer,

Given the national reputation you have earned as New York State attorney general fighting fraud and corruption, your continued silence about Albany's corrupt monopoly on New York City's rent and eviction regulations in the face of an unbearable housing-affordability crisis is no longer acceptable.

The leading candidate for governor of New York State has an obligation to all of the people, including the two and half million New York City residents living in rent-regulated apartments and the hundreds of thousands more facing loss of their Section 8, Mitchell-Lama, and other subsidies.

For well over a year, Met Council on Housing and other housing advocates have urged you to take a stand on home rule. Ordinary tenants, district leaders, and activists have questioned you repeatedly at Democratic clubs and other cam-

paigned appearances. Yet so far, you have ducked the issue. It is time to tell us where you stand.

The control of the city's rent and eviction laws by the gerrymandered state legislature in Albany is a scandal as great as anything you have tackled on Wall Street. With no accountability to anyone in New York City other than the real-estate lobbyists who contribute millions of dollars to their re-election coffers, the legislature has abused its public trust by repeatedly weakening rent and eviction protections, making the acute housing and homelessness crisis even worse. The evictions of some 25,000 tenants without lawyers in Housing Court each year, which are followed by steep vacancy increases and often complete decontrol, is causing the loss of tens of thousands of units of affordable housing each year as surely as if they were bulldozed, far faster than new affordable housing can be produced. This guarantees that

the housing crisis will continue to get worse even if a modest amount of new affordable housing is created at great expense.

Almost a third of New York City tenants—poor and middle-class alike—now pay at least half of their income in rent, and hundreds of thousands of very low-income families, many who are without health insurance, pay 70 percent or more. Hunger and homelessness are at record levels while real-estate profits skyrocket.

This is not good government or good policy by any definition.

In 1971, when New York City's home rule over rent regulations was taken away by the Urstadt Law, the average monthly rent for an apartment here was only \$215. After 35 years of misgovernment by the state legislature, the median rent has more than tripled. The city's elected government is powerless to protect its residents because its hands are tied, and the state government, having arrogated that power to itself, refuses to exercise it.

Not only the major tenant

groups have called for restoration of home rule over rent and eviction laws. They have been joined by organizations such as the New York Immigrant Coalition, Citizen

Action, and the Working Families Party.

The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, which does not take a position on what rent regulations, if any, are appropriate, has stated that the decision must be made by the city's local government based on fundamental principles of American democracy and self-government.

Mr. Spitzer, perhaps by your silence on this issue of fundamental human rights and basic survival to so many New Yorkers, you are hoping to appeal to both the millions of tenant voters who look forward to the end of the Pataki administration and to the real-estate interests who contribute millions of dollars to political campaigns. We urge you to take a stand on this issue of life and death for New York City: restoring our home rule over rent and eviction laws.



Eliot Spitzer

Hotline Volunteers Needed!

Our phones are ringing off the hook! Met Council is looking for people to counsel tenants on our hotline. We will train you! The hotline runs on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 1:30-5 p.m. If you can give one afternoon a week for this crucial service to the tenant community, call Jenny at (212) 979-6238 x3.

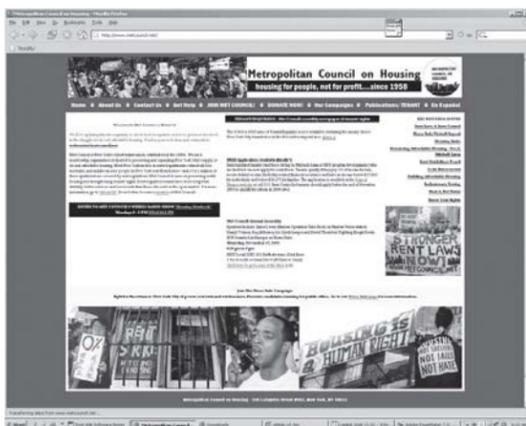
Visit Met Council's Website www.metcouncil.net

for information about:

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- ✓ how to get repairs
- ✓ the fight to preserve Section 8 and Mitchell-Lama housing
- ✓ the fight for home rule
- ✓ How to Join Met Council
- ✓ Links to other resources
- ✓ Back issues of Tenant/Inquilino

and much more!

Get active in the tenant movement! Write to us at active@metcouncil.net



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EL INQUILINO HISPANO

La RGB recomienda aumentos de renta imprecisos pero grandes

Por Jenny Laurie

Traducido por Lightning Translations

Sabía que los inquilinos estaban en aprietos cuando me acerqué a Cooper Union el 8 de mayo y vi a Jack Freund, uno de los directores de la Rent Stabilization Association (Asociación de Renta Estabilizada), el grupo principal de caseros en la ciudad, riéndose y fumando un gran puro. Él sabía lo que estaba por venir.

La Rent Guidelines Board (Junta de Regulación de Renta, RGB), en un voto muy tramado por el presidente Marvin Markus, aprobó pautas preliminares en un rango de 3 a 6.5 por ciento por un contrato de un año y 5 a 8.5 por ciento por un contrato de dos años

para apartamentos y desvanes. Para hoteles y SROs, fijó pautas preliminares de 0 a 2 por ciento.

El voto final será el 27 de junio. Aun si la RGB aprueba las pautas más bajas del rango propuesto, los aumentos permitidos todavía serán mayores que los del año pasado, que fueron un 2.75 por ciento por un año y 5.5 por ciento por dos.

La audiencia comenzó con Markus leyendo el lenguaje legal estereotipo para las actas, en un tono descrito por un inquilino como intencionado a "hacer dormir al público". No funcionó. Con cientos de inquilinos y sólo

unos cuantos caseros presentes, la multitud fue estridente, con abucheos y coros de "Congelación de rentas ahora".

La primera moción, para una congelación de renta, fue hecha por el representante de inquilinos David Pagan, quien pidió que la junta prestara atención a los muchos inquilinos privados de servicios y arreglos. Perdió por una votación de 7 a 2. La siguiente votación, también de 7 a 2, fue sobre la moción de los caseros para un incremento de 7 por ciento por un año y ningún contrato de dos años.

Después de una breve discusión

entre los miembros inquilinos y caseros, Markus hizo la propuesta para el rango de 3 a 8.5 por ciento. Fue aprobado por 5 a 4, con todos los miembros públicos votando a favor y tanto los representantes de los inquilinos como los de los caseros en contra. (Un miembro casero pasó en el primer votación y no emitió su voto en contra hasta que la propuesta alcanzó los necesarios cinco a favor).

El único acontecimiento fuera del guión sucedió cuando Mary Allen, una inquilina de Brooklyn, gritó, "¿Sabén lo que es no tener

pasa a la página 4

Los Ajustes de la "Junta de Regulación de Renta" de la Ciudad de Nueva York (Orden No. 37)

Para los contratos de apartamentos de Renta Estabilizada que comienzan el 1ro. de octubre de 2005 hasta el 30 de septiembre de 2006.

Los topes de renta que aparecen en el cuadro son los incrementos máximos que los dueños de edificios pueden cobrar legalmente por los apartamentos de renta estabilizada en la ciudad de Nueva York. Son válidos para todos los contratos que comienzan dentro del período de doce meses a partir del 1ro. de octubre de 2005. Los incrementos de alquiler basados en las pautas para la renovación del contrato de 1 o 2 años pueden cobrarse solamente una vez durante el período cubierto por dichas pautas, y deben ser aplicados a la renta legal estabilizada para el 30 de septiembre de 2005. Las cantidades que aparecen en el cuadro y los incrementos para los apartamentos vacíos no se aplican a los apartamentos que estaban sujetos a renta controlada en aquella fecha. No se permite el recargo también conocido como el «impuesto de pobres.»

Los Contratos para Apartamentos Vacíos o Nuevos En junio de 1997, el gobernador George Pataki, al intentar destruir la regulación de rentas, forzó cambios que les dieron a los caseros un recargo muy grande por los apartamentos vacíos. Una cláusula de la "Reforma al Acta de Regulación de Renta" de 1997 permite que los nuevos alquileres sean incrementados en un porcentaje obligatorio: 20% para un contrato de dos años, y por un contrato de 1 año, 20% de incremento menos la diferencia en el tope de renovación para los contratos de 1 y 2 años. La ley permite también incrementos adicionales para los apartamentos vacíos donde no se habían cobrado incrementos por desocupación por ocho años o más.

Exceso de Cobro Los inquilinos deben estar al tanto de que muchos caseros van a aprovecharse de la complejidad de estas regulaciones y subvenciones, así como del poco conocimiento de los inquilinos del historial de renta de sus apartamentos, para cobrar un alquiler ilegal. Una vez que el inquilino haya tomado posesión

del apartamento, puede escoger entre llenar un formulario de queja de exceso de cobro de renta con la oficina de la División de Vivienda y Renovación Comunal (DHCR), o disputar la cantidad de la renta en la corte de vivienda de la ciudad para que se determine cuál es el alquiler legal.

Si un posible inquilino da muestras de conocer sus derechos, lo más probable es que el casero no firmará ningún contrato con tal inquilino. Los caseros evitan contratar con inquilinos que les pueden dar problemas. El exceso de cobro de alquiler es muy común. Todos los inquilinos deben luchar contra posibles excesos de cobro. Obtenga y llene un formulario *Form RA-89* con la oficina de DHCR para determinar el alquiler correcto en los archivos oficiales. Llame a la DHCR a (718) 739-6400 para obtener un formulario, o búsquelo en el sitio www.dhcr.state.ny.us.

La Apelación de la Renta de Mercado Justa Otro tipo de exceso de cobro sucede frecuentemente cuando se vacía un apartamento que previamente estaba sujeto a renta controlada y se alquila con renta estabilizada.

La Junta de Regulación de Renta (RGB) establece anualmente lo que ellos llaman el "Tope Especial de la Renta de Mercado Justa," el cual es empleado por la DHCR para bajar las rentas de mercado injustas de los inquilinos que llenan el formulario llamado "Apelación a la Renta Justa de Mercado" (FMRA). Según la Orden 37, es la Renta de Mercado Justa de HUD o un 50% sobre la renta base máxima. Ningún inquilino de un apartamento de renta estabilizada que fue descontrolado el 1ro de abril de 1984 o después debe dejar de poner a prueba la llamada "Renta Legal Inicial Regulada" (renta de mercado) que los caseros cobran cuando hay descontrol del apartamento. Use el formulario de DHCR *Form RA-89*. Indique claramente que su queja es tanto una queja de "Apelación a la Renta Justa de Mercado" como de "exceso de cobro." La corte de vivienda no puede tomar decisión sobre una Apelación de Renta de Mercado. Apartamentos vacíos que antes estaban controlados en edificios que se han convertido en cooperativas o condominios no se vuelven estabilizados y no satisfacen los requisitos para la Apela-

ción de la Renta Justa de Mercado.

Exención de Incrementos para las Personas de Mayor Edad:

Las personas de 62 años o más que viven en apartamentos estabilizados y cuyos ingresos familiares anuales son de \$26,000 o menos, y que pagan (o enfrentan un incremento de alquiler que los forzaría a pagar) una renta de un tercio o más de sus ingresos, pueden tener derecho al programa de Exención de Incrementos para las Personas de Mayor Edad (SCRIE, por sus siglas en inglés), si aplican al Departamento de la Ciudad de Nueva York Sobre las Personas de Mayor Edad, cuya dirección es: SCRIE Unit, 2 Lafayette Street, NY, NY 10007. Si el alquiler actual de un inquilino que tiene derecho a este programa sobrepasa un tercio del ingreso, no se lo puede reducir, pero es posible evitar incrementos de alquiler en el futuro. Para más información sobre SCRIE o el programa equivalente para los minusválidos (DRIE), llame al 311 (vea la página 4).

Unidades de Desván (Lofts)

Los incrementos legales sobre la renta base para las unidades de

desván son de un 2.25 por ciento por un contrato de un año y un 4.5 por ciento por un contrato de dos años. No se permite incrementos para las unidades de desván vacías.

Hoteles y Apartamentos de una Sola Habitación

No habrá ningún aumento de la renta este año para los apartamentos de hotel de Clase A, casas de habitaciones, hoteles de clase B (de 30 habitaciones o más), hoteles de una sola habitación, y las casas de habitaciones (Clase B, 6-29 cuartos). No se permite incrementos para apartamentos vacíos.

La Desregulación de Rentas Altas y Altos Ingresos

(1) Los apartamentos que legalmente se alquilan por \$2,000 o más por mes y que se desocuparon entre el 7 de julio de 1993 y el 1ro. de octubre de 1993, o en o desde del 1ro de abril de 1994 son sujetos a la desregulación. (2) La misma desregulación se les aplica, para el mismo período establecido en (1), a los apartamentos que legalmente pagan \$2,000 o más mensualmente aunque no se desocupen, si el ingreso total de la familia es más de \$175,000 en los dos años consecutivos previos. Para cumplir los requisitos de esta segunda forma de desregulación, el casero tiene que enviarle un formulario de certificación de ingreso al inquilino entre el 1ro de enero y el 1ro de mayo, así como someter dicho formulario al DHCR y conseguir su aprobación.

Para pautas previas, llame a la RGB al 212-385-2934 o busque el sitio www.housingnyc.com.

| Tipo de Contrato | Renta Legal Actual | Contrato de 1 Año | Contrato de 2 Años | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Renovación del Contrato | Si el dueño paga la calefacción | 2.75% | 5.5% | |
| | Si el inquilino paga la calefacción | 2.5% | 4.5% | |
| Contratos para Apartamentos Vacíos | Más de \$500 | Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años | 17.25% | |
| | | Incrementos por desocupación no cobrados en los últimos 8 años | 0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, más el 17.25% | |
| | Menos de \$300 | Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años | 17.25% + \$100 | 20% + \$100 |
| | | Incrementos por desocupación no cobrados en los últimos 8 años | 0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, + 17.25% + \$100 | 0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, + 20% + \$100 |
| | Renta de \$300 a \$500 | Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años | 17.25% o \$100, lo que sea mayor | 20% o \$100, lo que sea mayor |
| | | Incrementos por desocupación no cobrados en los últimos 8 años | 0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, mas 17.25%, o \$100, lo que sea mayor | 0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, mas 20%, o \$100, lo que sea mayor |



Todos somos Jacobsianos

Por Jeff Gold

Traducido por Lightning Translations

Jane Jacobs, quien murió a los 89 años el mes pasado, escribió uno de los libros de literatura realista más influyentes de la década de los 60, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (*Muerte y resurrección de las grandes ciudades americanas*). Publicado en 1961, fue un llamado para el vecindario contra la esterilidad, la diversidad contra el control, los pequeños edificios particulares en vez de torres, las personas en vez de carreteras, vigilancia de la calle por los vecinos y el valor de topar inesperadamente con lo bueno en la urbe.

De hecho, era una celebración de la ciudad en tiempos cuando se les instó a muchos norteamericanos—tras deducciones impositivas hipotecarias, subvenciones para los automóviles, tasas de interés selectivamente favorables sobre préstamos y leyes de zonificación excluyentes—a hacerlos abandonar los centros de las ciudades por las afueras. Se ha clasificado *Death and Life* entre los libros más influyentes del período, junto con *Silent Spring* (*Primavera silenciosa*) por Rachel Carson, *The Other America* (*Los otros Estados Unidos*) por Michael Harrington y *The Feminine Mystique* (*La mística femenina*) por Betty Freidan.

Al desafiar a Robert Moses y su propuesta autopista en bajo Manhattan (que hubiera destruido lo que se volvió en SoHo, entre otras áreas) y a toda la clase dirigente del “desarrollo de nuevo” de roza y quema del siglo 20 después de la segunda guerra mundial, Jane Jacobs ofreció un modelo alternativo de organización basada en la comunidad. Ella y sus aliados no sólo desafiaron al gobierno municipal sino ganaron por una vez. Jacobs vio el valor de la unidad en contra de los que tenían grandes planes ajenos a la realidad de inquilinos en pequeños apartamentos, padres que querían calles seguras en las que sus hijos pudieran andar y bodegueros en la esquina que puedan realmente conocer a sus clientes. Ella conocía el valor de la vivienda de arriendo y de la seguridad que viene de los vecinos vigilando la calle—y no el Departamento de Seguridad Nacional.

Jacobs también gozó de la reputación de ser una madre de familia responsable, quien miró la carnicería de la guerra en Vietnam y decidió que sus dos hijos en edad de ser reclutados no morirían en arrozales luchando por dueños de tierra decadentes en un país de campesinos. Mudó toda la familia a Toronto, donde siguió siendo una defensora de los panoramas callejeros densos y complicados y del activismo local.

Sus libros posteriores se dirigieron a la economía, el desarrollo, Québec y temas relacionados; sin embargo, fue *Death and Life* el que realmente proporcionó la columna vertebral intelectual a los desafíos posteriores a los planes maestros estériles de los poderosos que se

muestran indiferentes a los que están tratando de sobrevivir y mejorar calles mezquinas para vivir decentemente. Generaciones de activistas de vivienda, planificadores progresivos, arquitectos, diseñadores paisajistas y organizadores comunitarios están endeudados con Jane Jacobs y continúan su trabajo en tres dimensiones, como pueden, contra fuerzas abrumadoras. Es una guerra de guerrillas, desde apartamento a apartamento y desde edificio a edificio, pero el movimiento para la planificación basada en la comunidad es el aliado orgánico de la defensa de inquilinos.

La influencia de Jacobs se hizo patente en un charette de diseño de estudiantes de planificación que se celebró recientemente en una escuela local de arquitectura. En los diseños dedicados a salvar unidades de vivienda pública en Markham Gardens en Staten Island, a alojar a residentes en aprietos en Bridgeport, Connecticut, y vincularlos a un centro de la ciudad más económicamente vibrante y al crear alternativas populares contra las promesas fantasiosas de los grandes especuladores de Atlantic Yards en Brooklyn, Jane Jacobs parecía vivir en los espíritus de todos los estudiantes y muchos de sus profesores. Cada vez que tratamos de salvar una unidad de renta regulada, detenemos la destrucción caprichosa de intactos pequeños

edificios continuos por el falo para ricos de un especulador de bienes raíces o abogamos por la acción pública para construir vivienda asequible *contextual* de ingresos

mixtos, Jane Jacobs está suavemente dando un masaje a nuestros hombros, alentándonos. ¡Gracias, Jane!

aumentos de renta

viene de la página 3

agua caliente? Tengo que hervir agua para bañar a mi hermana quien es minusválida y usa un tubo para respirar”. Se acercó a los miembros de la junta, continuando a gritos los detalles del sufrimiento causado por su casera, Sadie Butler.

“Estamos maniatados”, dijo el miembro público Betty Phillips Adams antes de la votación sobre la propuesta de Markus. “Los miembros de la junta estamos particularmente frustrados por el prolongado problema de accesibilidad financiera y los ámbitos limitados” de los poderes de la junta. Sus comentarios, aparentemente un intento para apaciguar a los inquilinos en el público y desviar sus críticas, fueron recibidos con gruñidos de incredulidad—como si el poder para limitar los aumentos de renta de más de un millón de apartamentos de renta estabilizada no significara nada en el mercado de la Ciudad de Nueva York. Adams, aparentemente convencida por la amenaza de los miembros caseros que los dueños entregarían sus edificios a especuladores si no se les daban altos aumentos, votó con los demás a favor del propuesto de Markus.

Un informe reciente emitido por el Public Policy Institute (Instituto de Políticas Públicas) de California midió los niveles nacionales de pobreza tomando en cuenta los altos costos de vivienda en las principales ciudades estadounidenses, en vez del mismo estándar de ingresos para todos—y descubrió que la Ciudad de Nueva York tenía la segunda tasa más alta de pobreza en el país, con un 16.3 por ciento de su población en la pobreza. Sin tomar en cuenta el peso de las altas rentas en los residentes de la ciudad, Nueva York ocuparía el 12º lugar. (Washington tuvo la tasa de pobreza más alta cuando los costos de vivienda se incluyeron y San Francisco ocupó el tercer lugar.) Mientras la RGB tenga el poder de ajustar las rentas para los inquilinos de un poco más de un millón de apartamentos de renta estabilizada (quienes ahora pagan las rentas más altas que jamás se hayan registrado), tendrá más poder sobre la accesibilidad financiera de vivienda que cualquier otra agencia en la ciudad, incluida la New York City Housing Authority (Autoridad de Vivienda de la Ciudad de Nueva York).

We Are All Jacobsians

By Jeff Gold

Jane Jacobs, who died at 89 last month, wrote one of the most influential nonfiction books of the 1960s, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Published in 1961, it was a call for neighborhood against sterility, diversity against control, brownstones over towers, people over highways, eyes on the street and the value of serendipity in *urbis*.

In fact, it was a celebration of the city at a time when many Americans were being urged—through mortgage tax deductions, automobile subsidies, selectively favorable lending rates and exclusionary zoning laws—to abandon central cities for suburbia. *Death and Life* has been ranked among the most influential books of the period, along with Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, Michael Harrington’s *The Other America* and Betty Freidan’s *The Feminine Mystique*.

Jane Jacobs, in taking on Robert Moses and his Lower Manhattan Expressway proposal (which would have wiped out what become SoHo, among other areas), and the entire slash-and-burn “urban redevelopment” establishment of the postwar 20th century, offered an alternative model of community-based organizing. She and her allies not only took on City Hall, they beat it for once. Jacobs

saw the value of unity against those who had grand plans that were divorced from the reality of tenants in small apartments, parents wanting walkable streets for kids, and corner grocers who might really know their customers. She knew the value of rental housing and of the safety that comes from eyes on the streets—and not those of the Department of Homeland Security.

Jacobs also had a reputation as a concerned parent, who looked at the carnage of the Vietnam war and decided that her two draft-age sons would not die in rice paddies fighting for decadent landlords in a peasant country. She moved her entire family to Toronto, where she carried on as an advocate of dense and complicated urban streetscapes and local activism.

Her later books were concerned with economics, development, Quebec, and related topics, but it was *Death and Life* that really provided the intellectual backbone for later challenges to the sterile master plans of powerful people who have no regard for people trying to survive and improve mean streets and live decently. Generations of housing advocates, progressive planners, architects, landscape designers, and community organizers owe Jacobs a debt and carry on her work in three di-

mensions, against heavy odds, as they can. It’s guerrilla warfare, apartment by apartment and building by building, but the movement for community-based planning is the organic ally of tenant advocacy.

Jacobs’ influence was obvious at a design charette of planning students held earlier this month at a local school of architecture. In designs intended to save public-housing units at Markham Gardens on Staten Island; to house struggling Bridgeport, Connecticut residents and link them to a more economically vibrant city center; and to create people’s alternatives to the fanciful promises of big developers at Atlantic Yards in Brooklyn, Jane Jacobs seemed to inhabit the spirits of all the students and many of their teachers. Every time we try to save a rent-regulated unit, try to stop the wanton destruction of intact row houses for a real-estate operator’s phallus for the rich, or advocate public action to build *contextual* mixed-income affordable housing, Jane Jacobs is gently massaging our shoulders, urging us on. Thank you, Jane!



New Orleans

continued from page 1

organizer with the Common Ground Collective activist group. “You have five days’ notice,” she says.

If apartments were damaged by the hurricane, landlords can get tenants out on those grounds. In some cases, Rodrigue says, they demanded that tenants continue paying rent if they wanted to keep their home. If the apartment was undamaged, it can command a premium in the city’s post-hurricane housing market, where contractors and people waiting for their houses to be restored compete for the limited supply of habitable units.

“There’s been tremendous rent-gouging,” says expatriate New York organizer Shakoor Aljuwani, formerly with the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board and now with Common Ground. “You practically can’t find a landlord who hasn’t doubled the rent.”

In the Marigny neighborhood, the gentrifying bohemian area between the French Quarter and the Upper Ninth Ward, a sign advertises a small two-bedroom house for \$2,000 a month—or \$2,750 with furniture. In the Mid-City area, a basement apartment that was \$275 five years ago is now \$900. In The Woodlands, a mostly vacant apartment complex in Algiers—on the west bank of the Mississippi River, one of the few African-American neighborhoods that didn’t get flooded—the price of a three-bedroom apartment has

gone from around \$800 to \$1,100 or more, although the elevators are broken and there’s no garbage collection, says housing activist Malik Rahim, the former Black Panther who founded Common Ground.

That spotlights what Rodrigue calls the main problem for tenants now: landlords renting apartments “as is.” “You can complain, but if they’re on month-to-month, they have a five-day notice, and the landlord knows that they can rent the apartment again in a day.”

The post-Katrina rent-gouging has provoked several calls for rent control from liberals and the left, and Mayor Ray Nagin briefly floated the idea last November, but New Orleans does not have much of a tenant movement. Most landlords, says Rodrigue, are small owners—who have had their own problems collecting insurance and are often not eligible for federal assistance—and there are few large buildings or complexes to provide a “focus point” for organizing; a typical rental unit is “half a shotgun house.” Of the 175,000 rental units in the New Orleans metropolitan area before Katrina, according to HUD, two-thirds were in buildings of four units or less, and less than a quarter were in buildings of 10 or more apartments. In the Lower Ninth Ward, 88 percent of the rental units were single-family homes.

Among the exceptions are The Woodlands in Algiers and the



Activists have planted sunflowers to detoxify the soil outside houses being rebuilt.

Louisburg Square apartments in the West Bank suburb of Terrytown. In Louisburg Square, the owner, Massachusetts slumlord Leonard Samia, moved to oust all the tenants immediately when the eviction moratorium ended last Oct. 25, after gutting apartments and throwing tenants’ possessions out. As only two tenants had more than month-to-month leases, says Rodrigue, the courts would not stop the evictions.

At The Woodlands, only 90 of the 360 units are occupied, though other than the elevators, the repairs it needs are mainly cosmetic. The owner has not been able to get help from either HUD or the Federal Emergency Management Administration, says Aljuwani, although he asked FEMA why they were paying \$60,000 for trailers “when my places could be up and running for \$5,000?”

Among the city’s public-housing tenants, less than 900 families have reoccupied their apartments. The Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO), which was taken over by HUD in 2001 for mismanagement, has been trying to shrink its stock for several years. It managed 7,400 units before the hurricane, down from 14,000 in the mid-1990s, and almost one-third of those units

were vacant, with many slated for demolition. One of the authority’s ten main projects, St. Thomas, was converted to mixed-income housing in 2001, and HANO now says that the Florida and Desire projects will probably have to be demolished. (Desire, in the Upper Ninth Ward, is near the former streetcar route of dramatic fame; it was also the scene of a 1970 standoff between city police and the Black Panthers and tenants who supported them.)

At the Christopher Park Homes, next to The Woodlands in Algiers, HANO required all tenants to buy their apartments, though many can’t afford it and the process is mired in litigation, says Malik Rahim, the project’s former manager. Less than half the 120 units are occupied, and the buildings had significant damage before the hurricane. HANO sold another 62 apartments to a developer for \$1; Rahim says he was fired for objecting to that deal, in which less than ten of those units would remain low-income. As HANO had no funds to renovate them, those apartments are now vacant and slated to be torn down, he adds.

“Why would you tear down perfectly good units at a time when we’re in a housing crunch?” Rahim asks.



Three blocks from where the levee broke in the Lower Ninth Ward.

SCRIE & DRIE

Seniors: Rent-regulated seniors, 62 or older, whose disposable annual household income is \$25,000 or less (for 2005) and who pay (or face a rent increase that would cause them to pay) one-third or more of that income in rent may be eligible for a Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE). Apply to:

The NYC Dept of the Aging
SCRIE Unit
2 Lafayette Street, NY, NY 10007.

Disabled tenants: Rent-regulated tenants receiving eligible state or federal disability-related financial assistance with incomes of \$17,580 or less for individuals and \$25,212 or less for a couple facing rents equal to more than one-third of their income may be eligible for the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE). Apply to:

NYC Dept. of Finance
DRIE Exemptions
59 Maiden Lane - 20th floor
New York, NY 10038

DRIE and SCRIE info is available on the city’s website, www.nyc.gov, or call 311.

Nearly one third of NYC tenants pay **half or more** of their incomes for rent. We need affordable housing more than ever before ... yet **each day** we lose hundreds of affordable apartments. 300,000 rent-stabilized units will become unaffordable **FOREVER**, if we wait for Albany to change the rent laws.

WE CAN'T WAIT!

Put home rule and fair rent laws on the next governor's agenda!

Town Hall Meeting on Home Rule and Fair Rent Laws

Wednesday, June 14, 2006

7 to 8:30 p.m. at St. Bartholomew's Church

Park Avenue @ 51st Street

6 train to 51st St. or E, V trains to 53rd St./Lexington Ave.

For more info: Met Council on Housing
212-979-6238 or www.metcouncil.net or active@metcouncil.net

or call Jillian at Housing Here & Now at 718-246-7900 ext. 243 or email jillian@housinghereandnow.org or www.housinghereandnow.org

Chelsea Takes It to the Streets

By Gloria Sukenick

There was a time when it was possible to rally massive community outrage when landlords behaved in an abusive fashion and/or took illegal actions against the tenants who lived in their buildings. Well, on Saturday, March 26, that is exactly what happened in Chelsea.

If you've walked down West 16th Street lately, you will have noticed that there is still a sprinkling of buildings occupied by longtime Chelseaites who are protected by rent regulations. The rest have all given way to gentrification and, of course, the skyrocketing rents that accompany gentrification.

On Feb. 19, there was a fire in one of the rent-regulated buildings, 347 West 16th St. The tenants there and at 345 West 16th St.

next door were forced to vacate their apartments. Tenants at 345 were able to return to their building shortly after the fire, but nothing has been done to begin repairs at 347. That building's tenants have been doubling up with relatives or friends, and several have been forced to stay at shelters. One, a U.S. Army reservist, shipped out after the fire to begin his second tour of duty in Iraq.

Soon afterwards, tenants discovered a posting on the Craigslist Internet classified-ad site that announced the sale of two buildings in Chelsea. A call was made inquiring about the sale... and, lo and behold, owner Dan Benedict's real-estate broker faxed info describing 347 West 16th as "DESTABI-

LIZED AND VACANT." The fax priced the two buildings at \$6,150,000.

The tenants, the Chelsea Coalition on Housing, and the Chelsea Housing Group swung into action. The community was notified, e-mails went out, press releases went out, elected officials were called and there was a demonstration—the kind of demonstration we used to see years ago in the neighborhood. Close to 100 neighbors marched around the buildings in support of the currently homeless tenants. The press turned out in impressive numbers. State Senator Tom Duane addressed the rally, and Borough President Scott Stringer's office sent a representative.

Tenants and advocates

contacted the Department of Housing Preservation and Development to demand that repairs be made. They also filed a complaint calling for an investigation into the misrepresentation of the real-estate broker, Hecht Group Corporation, for attempting to market the building under false pretenses.

Almost three months have now gone by, and the tenants are still scattered, living in shelters or crowding in with relatives. They are currently in court trying to force the landlord to make repairs so the vacate order can be removed and they can move back into their homes.

There was a rumor that the owner, seeing that his last ploy to vacate the building was at best unsuccessful and at worst possibly criminal, has attempted to buy the tenants out of their apartments. But in order to replace their housing in Chelsea, or anywhere in Manhattan, he would need

to offer astronomically high amounts.

Many of the tenants, however, are not blessed with big bank accounts, and getting a few thousand dollars could look very tempting. The news is that the tenants are organized, working together, and getting help from Chelsea Coalition on Housing and legal assistance from Legal Services of New York.

Many of the tenants in the building had been helped by Chelsea Coalition 20 years ago and are currently organized and united. That's half the battle!

It would be a sad day indeed to lose even more of the diminishing stock of affordable housing in Chelsea. We need to see these tenants' struggle as our struggle as well.



Missed an issue of TENANT?

Check us out on the Web:

www.metcouncil.net

NYC Rent Guidelines Board Adjustments (Order No. 37)

for Rent Stabilized Leases commencing Oct. 1, 2005 through Sept. 30, 2006

This rent guidelines table shows the maximum increases landlords in New York City can legally charge for rent-stabilized apartments on all leases commencing in the 12-month period beginning October 1, 2005. Increases in rent based on the one- or two-year renewal guidelines can be charged only once during the period covered by the guidelines, and must be applied to the legal stabilized rent as of September 30, 2005. The above guidelines and vacancy bonuses do not apply to an apartment which was rent controlled on that date. There is no low-rent supplement, a.k.a. poor tax, allowed.

Sublease Allowance

Landlords can charge a 10 percent increase during the term of a sublease that commences during this guideline period.

Vacancy Leases

The pro-landlord Rent Regulation Reform Act of 1997 allows the rents of apartments to rise by a statutory percentage: 20 percent for a two-year lease, and 20 percent minus the difference between the one- and two-year renewal guidelines for one-year leases. See chart for other increases.

Rent Overcharges

Tenants should be aware that many landlords will exploit the complexities of these guidelines and bonuses, and the tenant's unfamiliarity with the apartment's rent history, to charge an illegal rent. The tenant can choose between filing an overcharge complaint with the Division of Housing and Community Renewal or challenging the rent in Housing Court to get a determination of the legal rent. A prospective tenant who expresses knowledge of their rights will probably not be given

| Lease Type | Current Legal Rent | | One-year Lease | Two-year Lease |
|----------------|---------------------|--|--|---|
| Renewal Leases | Landlord pays heat | | 2.75% | 5.5% |
| | Tenant pays heat | | 2.25% | 4.5% |
| Vacancy leases | More than \$500 | Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years | 17.25% | 20% |
| | | No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years | 0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 17.25% | 0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20% |
| | Less than \$300 | Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years | 17.25% plus \$100 | 20% plus \$100 |
| | | No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years | 0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 17.25% plus \$100 | 0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20% plus \$100 |
| | Rent \$300 to \$500 | Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years | 17.25% or \$100, whichever is greater | 20% or \$100, whichever is greater |
| | | No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years | 0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 17.25%, or \$100, whichever is greater | 0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20%, or \$100, whichever is greater |

a lease to sign. Landlords avoid renting to tenants who may be troublesome. Overcharging is very common. Every tenant should challenge a possible overcharge. With DHCR, obtain and fill out Form RA-89 to determine the correct rent from official records. Call DHCR at (718) 739-6400 to obtain the form or go to: www.dhcr.state.ny.us.

Fair Market Rent Appeal

Another type of overcharge frequently occurs at the time that a previously rent controlled apartment becomes vacant and is rereanted as a stabilized unit. The Rent Guidelines Board annually sets what they call the "Special Fair Market Rent Guideline" that is used by DHCR to lower unfair market rents for tenants who file the Fair Market Rent Appeal (FMRA). Under Order 37, it is the HUD Fair Market Rent or 50%

above the maximum base rent, whichever is higher. No stabilized tenant of an apartment that was decontrolled on or after April 1, 1984 should fail to challenge the so-called Initial Legal Regulated Rent (market rent) that landlords charge upon decontrol. Use DHCR Form RA-89. Indicate clearly that your complaint is both a complaint of "overcharge" and "Fair Market Rent Appeal." The Housing Court cannot determine a Fair Market Rent Appeal. Formerly controlled vacant apartments in buildings converted to co-ops or condos do not become stabilized and are not eligible for a Fair Market Rent Appeal.

Senior Citizen and Disabled Tenants

Seniors: Rent-stabilized (the program also covers rent-controlled, Mitchell-Lama, and limited

equity coops like Penn South) seniors, 62 or older, whose disposable annual household income is \$25,000 or less (for the year 2005) and who pay (or face a rent increase that would cause them to pay) one-third or more of that income in rent may be eligible for a Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE). Apply to: The NYC Dept of the Aging SCRIE Unit, 2 Lafayette St., NY, NY 10007.

Disabled tenants: Rent-regulated tenants receiving eligible state or federal disability-related financial assistance with incomes of \$17,580 or less for individuals and \$25,212 or less for a couple facing rents equal to more than one-third of their income may be eligible for the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE). Apply to: NYC Dept. of Finance, DRIE Exemptions, 59 Maiden Lane - 20th floor, New York, NY 10038. DRIE and

SCRIE info is available on the city's Web site, or by calling 311.

Loft Units

Legalized loft unit increases above the base rent are 2.25 percent for a one-year lease and 4.5 percent for two years. No vacancy allowance is permitted on vacant lofts.

Hotels and SROs

The board voted to freeze rents for Class A apartment hotels, lodging houses, Class B hotels (30 rooms or more), single room occupancy (SROs) hotels, and rooming houses (Class B, 6-29 rooms). No vacancy allowance is permitted. Landlords cannot collect an increase over the rent charged on September 30, 2005 between October 1, 2005 and September 30, 2006.

High-rent, High-income Deregulation

(1) Apartments legally renting for \$2,000 or more a month that became vacant from July 7, 1993 through October 1, 1993, or on April 1, 1994 and thereafter are subject to deregulation. (2) The same deregulation applies in the time periods set forth in (1) above to apartments legally renting for \$2,000 or more a month without their becoming vacant if the total household income exceeds \$175,000 in each of the prior two consecutive years. To be eligible for this second form of deregulation, the landlord must send an income certification form to the tenant between January 1 and May 1 and file it with and get the approval of DHCR.

For previous guidelines, call the RGB at 212-385-2934 or go to www.housingnyc.com.

Giuliani Time: Documentary Attacks Mayor's Legend

By Steven Wishnia

Rudolph Giuliani's eight years as mayor of New York bridged two political eras: the racially coded politics of the late 20th century, which targeted the "pathological" African-American poor as Public Enemy No. 1, and the post-9/11 police state, which transformed dissenters into "terrorist" suspects.

Of course, the conventional wisdom lauds Giuliani as "the man who cleaned up New York" and "the hero of 9/11." Kevin Keating's new documentary, *Giuliani Time*, deconstructs that legend with a mix of interviews, period news footage, and the occasional bit of Michael Moore-style humor.

The film follows Giuliani's rise from the son of a small-time mobster to a federal prosecutor in the Reagan administration, where he gained prominence for his vindictive pursuit of mobsters and Haitian refugees. It tracks his mayoralty from the unofficial opening of his 1993 campaign, leading a mob of white cops in shouting "Bullshit" at City Hall (then occupied by David Dinkins, New York's first black mayor), to his political collapse in 2000, when cancer and much-publicized marital problems forced him to drop out of a Senate race against Hillary Clinton.

Crime-fighting is the cornerstone of the Giuliani legend. In 1990 and 1991, with the rampant crack trade spawning hundreds of lethal business disputes, the city averaged six murders a day. Giuliani supporters such as Myron Magnet of the Manhattan Institute, his main advocate in this film, point to the numbers: By the time Giuliani left office, crime had dropped to the levels of the mid-'60s, with murders below three a day. Did his policies—in particular, "quality of life" policing, prosecuting small offenses like public drinking and pot-smoking (and even reviving a Prohibition-era ban on dancing in bars!)—really bring it down in New York? William Bratton, Giuliani's first police commissioner (who admits he never got along with the mayor) cites the use of computers to pinpoint high-crime locations—and

the 6,000 new police officers hired by Dinkins.

"Quality of life" policing was actually most successful in reducing the *perception* of crime. Giuliani's campaign against the menace of "squeegee men" epitomized this; it played to the fears of white car owners who were so terrified of being accosted by a ragged-looking black man that they wanted them all locked up.

But the racial subtext of Giuliani's policies eventually caused his political downfall. Though the Abner Louima case of 1997 didn't stop the mayor's re-

posed a punitive mandatory-work policy, using welfare recipients to do laid-off city workers' old jobs for less than minimum wage while couching it in rhetoric about "ending dependency." The film juxtaposes black welfare recipients complaining that they need "real jobs" with footage of Giuliani welfare commissioner Jason Turner, who responds to a union leader's complaint about "slave labor" by declaring, "Work is what sets you free." (That's "Arbeit macht frei" in German, but Keating opts to cut to an old movie-comedy version of a 19th-century workhouse instead of to the more sinister inscription over the gates of Auschwitz.)

Was Giuliani a racist? Former city education commissioner Rudy Crew, one of the few black officials in his administration, says his support of school vouchers was racist, and calls the mayor's attitudes "deeply pathological" and "emotionally barren." And all three of Giuliani's mayoral races were racially polarized: He won more than two-thirds of the white vote and less than 20 percent of the black vote.

The film largely skips over two significant areas: Giuliani's policies on housing and protest suppression. The mayor expended a lot of venom on homeless people begging for quarters, but the landlords raising rents past \$1,000 a month were among his biggest supporters. He cut the city's housing-construction programs dramatically, and he discreetly supported the gutting of its rent controls. (In 1995, Giuliani appointees on the Rent Guidelines Board approved a scheme for partial vacancy decontrol, withdrawing it the day of the final vote after it provoked a storm of protest.) The city's housing crisis accelerated; today, homelessness is the highest it's been since

the Depression, and nearly 29 percent of New York tenants spend more than half their income on rent.

Giuliani also pioneered many of the tactics against political pro-

Giuliani expended a lot of venom on homeless people begging for quarters, but the landlords raising rents past \$1,000 a month were among his biggest supporters.

tests that since 9/11 have gone national: an overwhelming and overbearing police presence, preemptive arrests, and corralling demonstrators into cattle pens. His successor, the less puritanical but more plutocratic Michael Bloomberg, has amplified those policies, denying permits for large antiwar rallies and jailing almost 2,000 people during the 2004 Republican Convention.

While the film begins and ends with images of Giuliani talking about the 9/11 attacks, it doesn't do much to dissect his image as a "hero" of 9/11—the moment of his political resurrection, and perhaps the most overrated part of the Giuliani legacy. Maybe he looked courageous next to the scared rabbit staring at *My Pet Goat*, but his most concrete response to the attacks was trying to get the 2001 mayoral election postponed, on the grounds that only he could handle the crisis.

Giuliani Time posits itself as a warning in case the former mayor runs for president. He may be too "liberal" for the Republicans' Taliban wing—he's spent more time schmoozing rich gay campaign donors than crusading against sodomite abominations—but if he does gain traction, be afraid.

A version of this article originally appeared in In These Times, www.inthesetimes.com.



election that year (in the film, a staffer for Democratic candidate Ruth Messinger cites a *New York Post* editorial which stated that crime was down so much that a little police brutality was an acceptable price), the 1999 police killing of Amadou Diallo, an African immigrant shot 19 times because he pulled a wallet during a police stop, cracked Giuliani's invincibility. He dismissed the ensuing protests as "silly," which translated to many as callous and racist.

The other key racial-code issue of the era was welfare. Giuliani im-

Will Northern Manhattan Tenants' Be Displaced?

TENANTS' MARCH FOR AFFORDABLE AND DECENT HOUSING

Saturday, June 10, 2006

Start at: 11:00am at 135 St & Broadway

**Rally at: 3:00pm at Post Ave (204 St)
(between Dyckman & Academy)**

**Buses available for people who cannot walk
#1 Train to 137 St and Broadway
Buses M4 & M5 to 135 St and Broadway**

**For more information, 212-544-2278
Gpuello@yahoo.com; www.projectremain.com**

Beware Phony Demolitions

An increasing number of NYC tenants are receiving notices in the mail that their landlords are doing "interior demolitions." If you have received a notice, call the Met Council on Housing at (212) 979-6238 Ext. 2. Elected officials, tenant organizations, and renters are coming together to fight back.

Met Council is a membership driven city-wide tenant union. Join Met Council at <http://metcouncil.net/join.htm> to support tenant rights.

Below is a resolution on Home Rule Over Rent and Eviction for New York City. Please ask your tenant association, neighborhood organization, union, or religious group to sign on. For more information, or to sign on, contact active@metcouncil.net or call Met Council at 212-979-6238 ext 3.

Why New York City Needs Home Rule Over Rent and Eviction Protections

New York City is experiencing its worst housing-affordability crisis in modern memory. In 1970 the average tenant household devoted 20 percent of their income to rent. Today the average household pays almost 32 percent of their income in rent. These are the highest average rent burdens ever recorded. Nearly 29 percent of city tenants devote over half their incomes to rent—also the highest figure ever. Overcrowding rates nearly doubled between 1981 and 2002.

Vacancy rates remain extremely low at 3 percent, compared with a nationwide vacancy rate of 9.7 percent. It is now virtually impossible for working families to find an affordable apartment. Over the past three years, the number of homeless tenants forced to live in city shelters reached record levels, with some 38,000 tenants housed in 2005, including nearly 9,000 families with over 15,000 children.

All of these developments occurred while owners of rent-regulated buildings have witnessed steady and generous rent increases. Owners have largely been immunized against the effects of inflation and continue to see growing returns, despite the aging of the city's housing stock.

Why have apartments become so unaffordable? In 1993 state legislators began to dismantle the city's rent and eviction protection laws. The number of affordable units lost under various deregulation measures has been estimated to be as high as 200,000.

Moreover, new rules regarding rent overcharges, vacancy allowances, preferential rents and a whole host of other administrative changes have all resulted in higher rents. Despite growing hardships, New York City's tenants have not received a single significant new protection from the state for over two decades.

Why are rent and eviction protections being dismantled? First, in 1971 the state cut off the city's ability to enact rent and eviction regulations that are more protective than those in effect. This law was further tightened in 2003. The city now lacks any meaningful ability to protect tenants.

Second, prior to each round of rent-law renewals state legislators and the governor have been showered with millions of dollars in contributions from New York City's real-estate interests. Before the last round of renewals Common Cause documented that upstate legislators and the governor accepted nearly three million dollars in contributions from various New York City landlords and city-based landlord groups.

Third, none of these upstate legislators have a single rent-regulated constituent to answer to at election time. They thus have accepted landlords' money and exercised power on their behalf without any real accountability to the people who are hurt by their policies.

When legislative power is exercised remotely and without accountability to local populations, destructive public policies are inevitable. Democracy only works when those who exercise power must answer to those over whom power is exercised. That is not the case with New York City's rent and eviction protections. This situation has bred a public-policy disaster reflected in the city's current housing crisis.

For all of the foregoing reasons, each of the undersigned individuals and organizations call on Governor Pataki and every state legislator to restore forthwith home rule powers to the City of New York over rent and eviction policies. The future of affordable housing in New York City depends on local control over its most critical housing - affordability programs: rent control and rent stabilization. There is no principled reason to oppose home rule, and every principled reason to support it. We cannot claim to be champions of democratic values throughout the world while ignoring those same values at home.

Rent Guidelines Board (RGB) 2006 Schedule

The NYC Rent Guidelines Board Chair Marvin Markus wants to raise your rent again! The RGB, under Markus' direction, voted preliminary guidelines of 3 to 6.5% for one year, and 5 to 8.5% for two year leases. *Think those are fair guidelines?*

Landlords gain from MCI's, deregulated apartments and huge vacancy allowances while they leave tenants with violations and neglect.

Want to stop the board? Come to the public hearings and final vote. Show the RGB that tenants can't afford to pay higher rents.

Monday, June 19
4:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
Public Hearing
(Public Testimony)

Main Theatre of Hostos
Community College / CUNY
450 Grand Concourse
Bronx, NY 10451

Thursday, June 22
10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Public Hearing
(Public Testimony)

The Great Hall at Cooper Union
7 East 7th Street
at corner of 3rd Ave. (Basement)
New York, NY 10003

Tuesday, June 27
5:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.
Public Meeting
(Final Vote)

The Great Hall
at Cooper Union

Call the Rent Guidelines Board to register to testify at one of the public hearings: (212)385-2934.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

LOWER EAST SIDE BRANCH at
Cooper Square Committee
61 E. 4th St. (btwn. 2nd Ave. & Bowery)
Tuesdays 6:30 pm

LOWER MANHATTAN LOFT TENANTS
St. Margaret's House, Pearl & Fulton
Sts., 212-539-3538
Wednesdays 6 pm-7 pm

CHELSEA COALITION ON HOUSING
Covers 14th St. to 30th St., 5th Ave. to the Hudson River.
322 W. 17th St. (basement), CH3-0544
Thursdays 7:30 pm

VILLAGE INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS
26 Perry St. (basement), 212-741-2994
Wednesdays 6 pm

GOLES (Good Old Lower East Side)
17 Ave. B. Lower
East Side tenants only, 212-533-2541.

WEST SIDE TENANTS UNION
4 W. 76 St.; 212-595-1274
Tuesday & Wednesday 6-7 pm

HOUSING COMMITTEE OF RENA
Covers 135th St. to 165th St. from Riverside Dr. to St. Nicholas Ave.,
537 W. 156th St.
Thursdays 8 pm



Join Met Council

Membership: Individual, \$25 per year; Low-income, \$15 per year; family (voluntary: 2 sharing an apartment), \$30 per year. Supporting, \$40 per year. Sustaining, min. of \$100 per year (indicate amount of pledge). For affiliation of community or tenant organizations, large buildings, trade unions, etc. call 212-979-6238.

My apartment controlled stabilized unregulated other _____
 I am interested in volunteering my time to Met Council. Please call me to schedule times and duties. I can counsel tenants, do office work, lobby public officials, attend rallies/protests.

Name _____

Address _____ Apt. No. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone Number _____ Email _____

Send your check or money order with this form to:
Metropolitan Council on Housing, 339 Lafayette St., NY, NY 10012

Have a question about your rights?

Our phones are open to the public
Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays from 1:30 to 5 p.m.

We can briefly answer your questions, help you with organizing or refer you to other help.

212-979-0611