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HCC's Housing Corner

Housing Conservation Coordinators is a non-profit neighborhood organization that helps Hell's Kitchen tenants maintain decent and affordable housing. In the Housing Corner, HCC's intake coordinator Nora Kelleher addresses frequently asked questions about affordable housing.

HOW CAN I FIND AN AFFORDABLE APARTMENT?

Finding affordable housing has become increasingly more challenging. However, there are resources available to help low- and middle-income tenants find an apartment they can afford. The local community board often maintains a list of buildings accepting applications; in Hell's Kitchen, Community Board 4 keeps a list at www.manhattancb4.org.

Some newspapers will also list available apartments, such as the Daily News, El Diario, and AMNY. You can also try city, state and federal housing agencies: New York City's Department of Housing, Preservation and Development has information at www.nyc.gov/hpd; the New York State Housing Finance Authority can be found at www.nyhomes.org and the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development is at www.hud.gov.

WHAT CAN SENIOR CITIZENS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES DO TO KEEP THEIR RENT AFFORDABLE?

The Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) programs preserve affordable housing by protecting seniors and those with disabilities from continuous rent increases. To qualify for SCRIE, an applicant must be at least 62 years of age, have a maximum annual income of \$25,000, live in a rent-controlled, rent-stabilized, or Mitchell-Lama apartment, and

must be paying at least one third of their income towards rent. The rent is frozen at the amount a senior is paying when the SCRIE application is approved. They do not provide any rent rollback, but the exemption from any future increases could be all that is needed to keep the apartment affordable. Building owners receive a dollar-for-dollar tax abatement credit from the City of New York for all future rent increases.

Applications for SCRIE are processed through the Department for the Aging. To learn more go online to: <http://home2.nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/scrie/scrie.shtml> or call 311 to request an application.

The Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) program is similar to SCRIE. This program provides exemption from future rent increases to people with disabilities. Qualifications are similar to those for SCRIE, but instead of being a senior citizen the applicant must currently receive any one of the following forms of financial assistance to be eligible for DRIE: Federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Federal Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI); US Department of Veterans Affairs disability pension or compensation; or Disability-related Medicaid.

The income requirements for DRIE are: for households of one, the applicant's total household income for the last calendar year must have been less than or equal to \$17,580 per year. For households with two or more members, the total household income must be less than or equal to \$25,212. For more information about DRIE go online to: http://www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/property/property_tax_reduc_dric.shtml or call the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities at

212-788-2830 (TTY: 212-788-2838).

MY LANDLORD IS RENTING SOME APARTMENTS TO TOURISTS FOR THE WEEKEND. IS THAT LEGAL?

No, it's not legal, but unfortunately it's happening all over the West Side. Some landlords are harassing tenants and forcing them out of the building in order to rent rooms illegally as short-term hotel rooms.

If this is happening in your building, the first thing you should do is call 311 (you can even do this anonymously). Write down the confirmation number they give you, so you can follow your complaint and see if the City is taking action.

Unfortunately, calling 311 won't solve the problem. The City hasn't yet put enough resources into enforcing the law, so many landlords are getting away with breaking the laws that require residential buildings to be used for long-term residents. HCC is working with local elected officials to compile a list of buildings where landlords are illegally renting to tourists, and you should be sure that your building is represented on the list. Call 212-716-1665 or e-mail community organizer John Raskin at jraskin@hcc-nyc.org to request a Building Registration form, so we know the full story in your building.

Do you have concerns about your own housing situation? HCC has walk-in intake hours every Monday from 4:00 to 6:30 and every Thursday from 10:00 to 12:30 at its storefront office: 777 Tenth Avenue, between 52nd and 53rd Streets. Bring any papers related to your apartment situation and proof of your income. Please call intake coordinator Nora Kelleher with questions: 212-541-5996 or nkelleher@hcc-nyc.org.