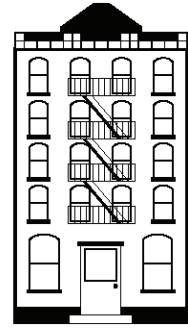


THE LATEST FROM Housing Conservation Coordinators



SPRING 2008

HCC NEWSLETTER

Rail Yards Fight is Back HCC Demands Housing on Old Stadium Site



HCC helped bring together more than 150 West Side residents to discuss the future of the rail yards. Above, Camilla illustrates her point during the public discussion.

Just three years ago, HCC joined the hordes of community members and organizations fighting the specter of a football stadium on the West Side.

Now that land is the subject of a renewed debate, HCC is dedicated to guaranteeing that development on the West Side Rail Yards serves the needs of the community.

Working with the leaders of our member-run organization, the West Side Neighborhood Alliance (see page 3), HCC is collaborating closely with community board leaders and local elected officials to guarantee that permanent affordable housing is the community's #1 priority for Rail Yards development.

Winning a guarantee of affordable housing will be an uphill battle—the original design guidelines for the site

included no affordable housing requirement at all.

The current proposals also share other common themes that serve our community poorly: they are burdened by excessive density and lack some necessary infrastructure, like police and fire facilities, that we need in our neighborhood.

But HCC is dogged and we're working with a unified coalition of community members—after that same group of hardy West Siders banded together to defeat the stadium, it's going to take a lot of chutzpah to try to approve a Rail Yards plan that doesn't meet the needs of our community.

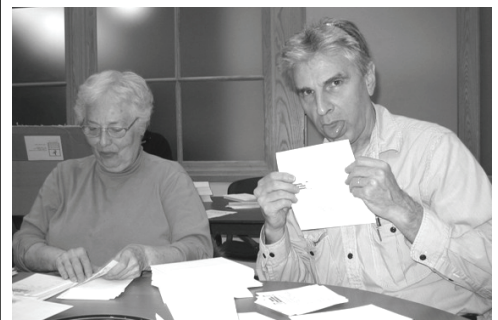
To join the fight for affordable housing and community-friendly development on the West Side Rail Yards, please contact our community organizer Lucas Shapiro at 212-716-1664.

HCC Launches Legal Clinic for Immigrants

In an immigrant-rich neighborhood, HCC has long provided legal support and organizing services to people from around the world. Immigrants are a particularly vulnerable population in our neighborhood because of language barriers and fears about legal status. Immigrants are often targeted by unscrupulous landlords for rent overcharge schemes, harassment and neglect.

Now, with funds arranged by City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, HCC is offering an immigration-specific legal clinic to dispel those fears and help low-income neighborhood residents receive top-notch legal advice about immigration and the citizenship process.

HCC's immigration clinic takes place on the second Thursday of every month. Do you have questions about your immigration status? Would the clinic be helpful to a neighbor? Please call 212-541-5996 for more information and to schedule a free, confidential appointment with an attorney who specializes in immigration issues.



Volunteer at HCC!

We always need help around the office! Call us at 212-541-5996.

HCC ATTORNEYS ALSO HELP NON-PROFITS & SMALL BUSINESSES

Working with the Clinton Seed Fund, HCC has launched a Community Economic Development program, aimed at keeping our neighborhood vital through assistance to small businesses, non-profit organizations and low-income co-ops.

Do you run a block association or community organization that could benefit from non-profit status? HCC is now able to help neighborhood organizations incorporate as 501c3 corporations, so that you can accept tax-deductible donations.



CED Attorney Rachel Jaffe

If you own a small business between 34th Street and 72nd Street on the West Side, HCC can help you negotiate commercial tenancy agreements and get your paperwork in order to make sure your business is legal and able to thrive.

And if you are looking to help preserve or set up a limited-equity co-op in your building, HCC can walk you through the legal issues involved.

Like all of HCC's housing and community services, these transactional legal services are provided free of charge to qualified neighborhood residents and organizations.

Please call 212-541-5996 to find out more about our Community Economic Development program. With ingenuity and support from HCC, you can help enhance the vitality of the West Side.

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Neighbor:

I'm writing to you at a time of great change, both in our neighborhood and at HCC. And though many of the changes in our neighborhood present us with new and unique challenges, the changes here at HCC are certainly for the best.



As new luxury buildings go up in the neighborhood and landlords charge rents that we never could have dreamed of when I started working at HCC, we work harder than ever to guarantee that long-term neighborhood residents can stay safely in their apartments and that there is a future for low-income New Yorkers here in Hell's Kitchen.

In order to better protect tenants and shape a more diverse, inclusive future for our neighborhood, HCC has grown a lot in recent years. We now have six staff attorneys, including our Director of Legal Services, and five organizers, including a Director of Organizing. More than ever, low-income tenants on the West Side depend on our services to defend their homes, organize their neighbors and shape a neighborhood where a diverse group of New Yorkers can afford to live.

As we strengthen our core services, HCC has also branched out into new areas to serve new needs in the community. We created an Intake Coordinator position to better respond to the concerns of the thousands of tenants who come through our doors every year. We created a legal clinic for immigration-specific questions and we just hired an attorney to focus exclusively on Community Economic Development, giving small grass-roots organizations and low-income co-ops the support they need to keep our neighborhood vital.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the generous donors, private foundations and public programs that support our work. If you have given recently to HCC, I would like to thank you for your support. If you think our work is valuable, I hope you'll fill out the donation portion of this newsletter and send it in with a contribution. With your support, we'll be able to strengthen and expand our services for the West Side residents who need them most.

As always, HCC remains a community effort. Thank you for being a member of the growing HCC community.

Best,

Sarah Desmond

Executive Director

Yes! I want to help HCC protect West Side tenants!

I am enclosing a contribution of: \$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 \$200 \$500

Other: _____

Contributions to HCC are fully tax-deductible. Checks should be made out to Housing Conservation Coordinators and sent to HCC at 777 Tenth Avenue, New York, NY 10019. Thank you for your help!

Name _____

Address _____ Apt. # _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Your contribution will help us fight for decent, affordable housing in our community.

Fighting Illegal Rent Increases, HCC Keeps Tenants In Their Homes

After years of neglect, conditions at 703 Ninth Avenue and the adjoined 401 West 48th Street had become so dangerous that the landlord had to pay attention—a tenant was almost hit by bricks as a section of the facade crumbled off the building. The owner was forced to make up for decades of deferred maintenance and repair the building's exterior.

But after that repair work, the tenants faced a new threat. The landlord applied for a Major Capital Improvement (MCI) rent increase, hoping to make the tenants pay for \$700,000 worth of repairs that would never have been necessary if the building had been properly maintained. The proposed increase would have raised the rent in most apartments by hundreds of dollars each month.

For many in this group of low- and moderate-income Hell's Kitchen residents, this sort of increase would have been a de facto eviction notice. Like many tenants who have lived here for years, they don't have extra cash lying around the apartment, and many worried they couldn't afford the new rent.



HCC's Ivette Nunez with tenant leader Seth Sklar-Heyn at 703 Ninth Avenue

The tenants came to HCC looking for help. HCC tenant organizer Ivette Nunez and staff attorney Stuart Lawrence arranged building-wide meetings, in English and Spanish, to help the tenants understand the legal process behind fighting an MCI rent increase.

The tenants and HCC chipped in to hire an architect, who inspected the repairs and concluded that the landlord's work

did not meet the legal definition of a Major Capital Improvement. Research into HPD records also revealed outstanding housing code violations on the building, barring the collection of an MCI increase.

Lawrence submitted a formal response to DHCR on the tenants' behalf, and the landlord dropped its effort to win a rent increase for the maintenance work.

Today, thanks to their solidarity and HCC's help, these tenants can keep their homes for years to come. Building by building, HCC fights to protect West Side tenants and keep our neighborhood affordable.

Spanish Outreach Effort Kicks Off with a Fiesta

HCC and the West Side Neighborhood Alliance have begun a new outreach effort to guarantee that the thousands of Spanish-speaking neighborhood residents know about the services we offer and have the opportunity to join our affordable housing campaigns.

The effort launched, as ours often do, with a party: more than 300 West Siders got together at P.S. 111 one Saturday afternoon in November to hear live music, eat donated (and homemade!) food and schmooze with Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer.

HCC's intake coordinator,



Tenants Mercedes and Belia with Borough President Stringer

Monica Morante, explained the legal and organizing services we offer, while community leader Martha Hauze exhorted everyone to join the West Side

Neighborhood Alliance.

Buoyed by the success of the *fiesta*, the Spanish outreach team is planning more events this spring.

What's WSNA?

Working with a pioneering group of neighborhood residents, HCC community organizers helped form the West Side Neighborhood Alliance, a member-run organization dedicated to preserving our diverse, affordable community and making the neighborhood more livable for residents of all income levels. WSNA has more than 500 members today and continues to grow!

Are you a member of the West Side Neighborhood Alliance? Find out more at www.westsidenyc.org and call HCC's Lucas Shapiro to join: 212-716-1664.



Speaker Quinn Announces New Harassment Legislation at HCC's 3rd Tenants' Conference



Speaker Christine Quinn with tenants

City Council Speaker Christine Quinn appeared at the Third Annual West Side Tenants' Conference, hosted in October by HCC and its neighborhood allies, to announce new legislation intended to curb the growing harassment of tenants.

In addition to Speaker Quinn's address, the highlights of the conference

were the workshops for tenants. Assembly Member Dick Gottfried led a workshop about illegal hotels, Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal held a seminar on services available to seniors, various social service providers discussed tenants' rights,

and Borough President Scott Stringer addressed the audience.

Four months after the West Side Tenants' Conference, Speaker Quinn's historic anti-harassment legislation was passed and signed into law!

Visit HCC's updated web site for photos, video and detailed information about our services!
www.hcc-nyc.org

PRSRST STD
 US POSTAGE
 PAID
 NEW YORK, NY
 PERMIT #2128



HCC'S Weatherization Program Helps 8th Avenue Senior Building Go Green

Environmental advocates point out that one primary source of energy consumption and global warming is right under our noses: buildings!

Apartment buildings are responsible for much of New York's energy use, but HCC's Weatherization Assistance Program is working with building owners to make their buildings more energy-efficient and pass the savings on to low-income tenants.

This year, HCC's Weatherization pro-

gram targeted Capitol Apartments, a Section 8 building on 8th Avenue with 250 apartments for low-income seniors.

After an audit of the building's energy use, HCC arranged for the owner to install thicker, double-paned windows, replace inefficient incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs, replace malfunctioning refrigerators and purchase new boiler parts to upgrade the building's heating system.

Taking advantage of the federally

funded Weatherization program, administered by the state Division of Housing and Community Renewal, the owner received government funding for a portion of the upgrades—and is expected to make back the initial investment in just a few years due to of increased energy savings.

As HCC puts the finishing touches on its renovations in the building, Capitol Apartments will become the latest demonstration that affordable housing can and should be environmentally friendly. Now, on to the rest of the neighborhood!