# MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION

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WEBSITE: www.mitchell-lama.org

## *‘Poor door’ loophole mars city’s inclusionary housing program*

In the not-too-distant past, African-Americans in much of the south were not allowed to enter a building by the same door as white Americans. If they were permitted to enter at all, they had to use a separate door in the back, by which they also had to leave.

In present-day New York City, poor, moderate and even middle-income people, of whatever color or ethnicity, may soon have to enter a different kind of back door, at least in some newly constructed buildings.

Known popularly as the “poor door,” one of the entrances to new developments built under the city’s inclusionary housing program will be consigned to those whose relatively low income qualify them for affordable units; the other entrance--usually facing more beautiful views--will be set aside solely for market rate residents.

Although it has not yet been legally challenged, constructing two separate entrances in a single building raises a serious question as to whether this practice amounts to “source of income” discrimination, which is illegal in New York City.

The inclusionary housing program grants developers the right to construct buildings considerably higher than allowable by code, so long as they provide a specified amount of apartments at affordable rates.

The program also allows them to build more than one structure, and even sell space to other developers on which to build, including on a different (although nearby) lot. If two buildings go up, each, of course, has to have its own door, by law.

Developers are assuming, however, that the law allowing two entrances for such “segmented buildings” provides them with an unintended loophole that allows them to create separate entrances even in the same structure.

At 40 Riverside, a 33-story condo on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, the 219 market rate condos will have an entrance facing the Hudson River and Riverside

*(Continued on page 7)*

## Affordable units to be required for all zoning changes

In an effort to spur the development of more affordable housing, Mayor Bill de Blasio’s administration has announced that any zoning change granted to a private developer will be contingent on the builder’s agreement to set aside a specified percentage of apartments at affordable rents. The percent required has not yet been made public.

This policy will apply not only to new buildings, but to any building revision--such as appending a block of new units to an existing structure (of at least six stories) that requires a zoning change granted by the City Planning Commission.

At a presentation to landlords and real estate investors in early September, Carl Weisbrod, the CPC’s chairman, told the gathering that the new policy, presumably specifying a minimum percentage of affordable units, should be fully revealed by year’s end. He added that the policy was needed because the program under former Mayor Michael Bloomberg, which offered tax benefits and other incentives to developers for voluntarily creating affordable units, was ineffective. The developers felt that they could make more money by charging only market rents.

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

**HPD policy shift, page 3**

**GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**SATURDAY, October 25, 2014**
**Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

*Members are urged to voice concerns regarding their developments*

*Refreshments at 10:00 a.m.*

**CONTACT: Information@mitchell-lama.org**
**PLACE: Musicians Union Local 802**
**322 West 48th Street (near 8th Avenue) Ground Floor, “Club Room”**
**TRAINS: No. 1, train to 50th St. and 7th Ave.; Q, W trains to 49th St. and Broadway; E train to 50th St. and 8th Ave.**

**Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition**
**P.O. Box 20414**
**Park West Station**
**New York, New York 10025**

# HDC bonds to generate some more affordable housing, renovations

Cadman Towers, a 422-unit Mitchell Lama development in the Brooklyn Heights neighborhood, is expected to benefit from proceeds of tax exempt bonds, newly issued by the City's Housing Development Corp. The proceeds will also fund construction of 1,259 units, and renovation of another 1,536 units, in three boroughs.

All told, eighteen developments will make use of the funds, designed to generate some additional affordable housing for people of disparate incomes--from low- to middle-income--including families that are homeless. Officials hope that the improvements will also serve as a catalyst for neighborhood economic improvement, such as encouraging new retail or community service facilities.

Some of the funds will be allotted to construction of part of Greenpoint Landing, a Bloomberg Administration project that has generated strong community opposition over the issue of gentrification.

# *Housing court rules co-op cannot evict shareholders over non-payment*

A Co-op on the Upper East Side failed in its effort to evict two shareholders over non-payment of maintenance and electricity charges, a Manhattan housing court ruled.

Judge Jack Stoller dismissed the charges against the married shareholders because the co-op, 300 East 85th Street Housing Corp., failed to provide evidence of how it calculated its maintenance charges in general, or how it applied them to the shareholders, Howard and Frieda Dropkin.

The co-op alleged that the Dropkins owed around $13,000 in mainenance, along with a sum for electricity, which their proprietary lease specifies.

Stoller ruled, however, that the co-op "bears the burden at proving, at trial, not only the existence of a contract but the terms of the contract . . . and the specific facts entitling it to relief."

He said he found no evidence by the housing company demonstrating how maintenance charges were devised, and how such charges were allocated on a per-share basis.

Stoller also did not require the Dropkins to pay electricity costs, because the amount of those costs could not be reached until the rent liability was known.

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***MLRC fights for you and your right to affordable housing!***

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

**Saturday, October 25, 2014**

*Members are urged to voice concerns regarding their developments, especially long- and short-term standing issues*

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**Musicians Union, 322 West 48th Street, between 8th and 9th Avenues**

For more information, e-mail: info@mitchell-lama.org


### Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition, Inc.

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# HPD policy shift on city-sponsored units

**By Moses Gates**
*Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development*

Some important policy steps come in the form of a big announcement, and some come in the form of the well-planned implementation of policy details.

Last week, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) announced a small, but important, policy shift on the marketing of city-sponsored affordable housing units. Currently, HPD monitors only the initial rent-up of an affordable housing development – after this, the oversight ends.

But last week, the city announced that they would have the marketing process overseen by the Division of Asset & Property Management, which is responsible for the long-term stability of our affordable housing stock.

And they also announced they would start the process toward eventually monitoring the re-renting of these units after a tenant vacancy. In short, the city is shifting to a more long-term view when it comes to making sure our affordable housing is rented out effectively and fairly.

This could have a big impact. Affordable housing is supposed to remain that way, even after the first tenant moves out, and often the owner has to know that the city is watching to make sure that the rules are followed.

Instituting long-term and permanent affordability is something that requires real resources to accomplish – but is an integral part of making sure the vibrant, mixed-income neighborhoods we build continue to provide opportunities for affordable housing not just for this generation of New Yorkers, but also for those to come.

Already the city has implemented some big steps toward this – requiring 60 years of affordability for 9% tax credit deals, committing to permanent affordability for its new Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning program, and this recently announced monitoring change in the remarketing of our affordable housing.

There is, of course, more that still needs to be done, most notably ending the practice of giving away public land for private development and instead leasing it for affordable housing development, ending all of the short-term affordable housing deals of just 30 years, and reforming the 421a program to ensure long-term affordability.

But working toward long-term and permanent affordability is something that requires serious thinking every step of the way. This administration has started off by showing that they're committed to doing this work in pursuit of an important goal.

# *Affordable units in Brooklyn's hip areas remain vacant*

Imagine newly built quality apartments in Brooklyn's more chic neighborhoods, renting for $540 to $900 a month, going vacant because there aren't enough local people who qualify for them.

If stranger things happen, we haven't heard of them.

The units, located in luxury developments, are begging for area tenants primarily because the neighborhoods no longer have enough low- to moderate-income wage earners to meet the income requirements.

Ironically, the scourge of gentrification--in Brooklyn Heights, Dumbo, Fort Greene and parts of downtown Brooklyn--that has uprooted countless lower and moderate income residents over the past several decades, is the reason most if not all of the areas' current residents earn too much to qualify for the new cut-rate apartments. Residents who formerly would have qualified have been forced out; those now there earn above the income level.

To qualify, households, which must already reside in the neighborhood, must meet fairly tight creditworthy standards, and must earn between $20,000 and $40,000. Those few that do earn such limited amounts are likely to already reside in whatever rent-regulated buildings remain.

This situation apparently doesn't help the developers of the luxury buildings. As the director of Churches United for Housing noted, developers are adversely affected because "they can't rent all of their market apartments until they rent all of their affordable apartments."

## New Arlington Terrace owners promise repairs, low rents

Arlington Terrace Apartments, a severly ditressed M-L development built in 1975, will soon receive new owners who have agreed to undertake a comprehensive renovation plan, plus keep rents affordable.

The new owners are Development Preseration Partners (DPP), a group whose objective is "to provide long term, secure housing communities, and in partnership with affiliated nonprofit corporations, provide supportive social services focused on the most basic needs of very low income families and seniors," according to a statement.

Arlington Terrace Apartments have been suffering for years from "roach and mice infestations, peeling lead paint, broken and leaky pipes and missing smoke detectors," among other life-endangering malfunctions.

In a statement, DPP described itself as a "finance agency. So we provide funding to developers and non-profits for the creation and preservation of affordable housing. In return for our financing the developer has to enter into regulatory agreements that lock in the affordability of the complex."

## 3 realty cos agree to end income discrimination

Three New York State real estate brokerage firms and a few landlords have agreed to pay several thousand dollars each, and to adopt policies to counter their previous policies of discriminating aginst prospective tenants on the grounds of the the applicants' sources of income, including food stamps and rent vouchers.

The firms are in New York City; some landlords are in Buffalo. Both cities have regulations prohibiting discrimination in housing based on legal source of income.

The agreement requires the firms to insure that all applicants for rental apartments are "provided equal access," according to a statement from the AG's office.

They also have to conduct "training" for employees about the new anti-discrimination policies; preserve records of complaints; and report to the AG that they are cooperating.

The three firms involved are Destination Real Estate ($6,000); Brownstone Real Estate ($18,000); and Absolute Properties ($15,000), all in NYC. The individual landlords, some of whom are in Buffalo, will pay $5,000 each.

# Elected officials relate to MLRC members at May's Meet & Greet

**Top left: City Councilmember Helen Rosenthal confers with MLRC members. Other photos on page show members at their tables.**

## MLRC Developments

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

**Individual Membership: $15 per year**
**Development: 25 cents per apt. ($30 minimum; $125 maximum)**

*Donations above the membership dues are welcome.*

Bethune Towers
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Central Park Gardens
Clayton Apartments.
Coalition to Save Affordable Housing of Co-op City
Concourse Village
Dennis Lane Apartments
1199 Housing
Esplanade Gardens
Independence Plaza North
Jefferson Towers
Lindville Housing
Lincoln Amsterdam House
Manhattan Plaza
Marcus Garvey Village
Masaryk Towers Tenant Association
Meadow Manor
Michangelo Apartments
109th St. Senior Citizen Plaza
158th St. & Riverside Dr. Housing
Parkside Development
Pratt Towers
Promenade Apartments
RNA House
Riverbend Housing
River Terrace
River View Towers
Ryerson Towers
Concerned Tenants of Sea Park East
Starrett City Tenants Association
St. James Towers
Strykers Bay Co-op
Tivoli Towers
Tower West
Village East Towers
Washington Park SE Apartments
Washington Square SE Apartments
West View Neighbors Association
West Village Houses

If your development has not received an invoice, please call the MLRC Voice Mail: (212) 465-2619. Leave the name and address of the president of your Tenants Association, board of directors, or treasurer and an invoice will be mailed.

**Top left: MLRC Co-Chair Ed Rosner applauds as Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer (right) hears accolades for her support of affordable housing. Others in photo from left are Congressman Charles Rangel, MLRC Co-Chair Jackie Peters, and MLRC Co-Chair Margo Tunstall Brown.**
**Below left: MLRC members at table, Charles Rangel moving among members.**
**Right, from top: Jackie Peters and State Senator Brad Hoylman; members; Diane Lapson, president of IPN tenants association, confers with City Councilmember Margaret Chin.**

# 'Affordable' housing in Hell's Kitchen; new Gotham complex seeks renters

More evidence emerged recently that "affordable" housing units, offered by landlords as a result of benefitting from a government program, are less and less affordable even to the city's middle income residents. The latest example: Gotham West, a giant development on Manhattan's mid-west side, familiarly known as Hell's Kitchen or Clinton.

The four-building complex at West 44th Street and Eleventh Avenue, developed at a cost of at least $530 million, announced that because of state financing through tax-exempt bonds, 682 of the apartments--slightly more than half--are affordable, with most set aside by people earning between $88,102 and $109,000 annually. (Workers earning less than $48,150 will have access, theoretically, to 250 of those units.)

But the rents are well beyond what most people, including economists, consider affordable. For example, a one-bedroom unit rents for $2,509 a month, and a two-bedroom for $3,020. This is well above the 30 percent of income required--the widely accepted official "affordability" criterion. (Many housing activists dispute that criterion, arguing that it is itself too high.)

Not surprisingly, the owners are having difficulty locating area residents who can come up with the rent. The situation is similar in some respects to that in gentrifying areas of Brooklyn, where developers have set aside affordable units for lower and moderate-income area residents. These units are priced at far lower levels than those in Gotham West, but years of gentrification have forced out precisely those residents whose minimal income would have entitled them to tenancy. The set-aside units have been going vacant, although at the Barclay Center, the developer applied for and got permission to expand the pool of eligible renters to individuals from outside the immediate area. (See page 3.)

# *New small building downtown will have all ten units affordable*

Ten lucky residents of Community Board 1 in Manhattan's downtown area will some day be able to live in a newly constructed building on Fulton Street, and will not face the threat of soaring rent increases.

Currently a vacant lot, the planned seventeen-story building will accommodate those who can afford a monthly rent between $833 and $1,460, depending on size.

The units will include one three-bedroom, six two-bedrooms, one one-bedroom and two studios. A laundry will also be included. Rents will be permanently affordable.

Tenancy will be decided by a lottery.

The developer, The Fisher Organization, will be granted a zoning variance that will allow him to construct a larger building elsewhere and apply for tax breaks.

Of the current 933 affordable apartments in the district, which includes Battery Park City and adjacent areas, more than a fifth are in buildings now on the market. When sold, the units will likely revert to market rates.

## Riverton tenants allege new owners seek to force them out for higher rents

Tenants at Riverton, a complex of middle income housing in Harlem, built after World War II, have filed a $10 million lawsuit in State Supreme Court against the managers, alleging massive rent overcharging. The tenants say the real goal of the owners, CWCapital Asset Management and an affiliate, Compass Rock Real Estate, is to force them out and turn the units into luxury rentals.

Tenants cite the fact that many of them, especially older residents, recieve eviction notices for non-payment, even though they have mailed in their checks, which the managers have not cashed.

The owners deny the allegations.

Nine years ago, Riverton was sold to investors who also attempted to force out current tenants. But when they defaulted on their debt, the lenders foreclosed.That provided some relief to the tenants, but as the economy re-heats, investor speculation is being renewed.

# *__Housing briefs__: Section 8 cuts; cease & desist order; disability discrimination*

Federal cuts to the budget of Section 8 housing vouchers may result in ending the rent subsidies for some 3,000 households in NYCHA projects, according to the City's department of Housing Preservation and Development.

Residents dependent on the vouchers may have to "downsize," that is, move to smaller units where the rent is lower, regardless of how many years they--including the elderly--have spent in their current homes. Tenants in a one-bedroom unit, for example, may have to move to a studio. NYCHA residents will have one year to make the move.

Voucher tenants who are not in NYCHA can stay in their apartments unless a smaller one becomes available in their building.

Gale A. Brewer, the Manhattan borough president, has called for a moratorium on downsizing, until alternatives can be developed.

* * *

A former NYPD officer has been slapped with a cease and desist order by Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, who issued the order after receiving numerous complaints that the ex-cop was relentlessly harrassing tenants in rent-regulated apartments.

The former policeman, Anthony Falconite, has been accused by numerous tenants of physically intimidating them, as an employee of multi-millionaire Steven Croman, an owner of numerous rent-regulated buildings in Manhattan. Croman himself has been accused of harrassing tenants to move.

Tenants have alleged that Falconite visits their homes under false pretenses (for example, as a repairman or private investigator), and once inside tries to intimidate them into accepting a small buyout sum to vacate the apartment.

Allegations include Falconite following them to work, questioning their children, rifling through drawers, photographing their mail, and demanding Social Security numbers.

A spokesman for the owner said that Falconite "has acted professionally and consistent with legal requirements."

Schneiderman said that Falconite "coordinated with landlords to offer buyouts under circumstances meant to coerce tenants into vacating the property."

* * *

Public Advocate Letitia James has joined several physically disabled tenants in Pelham Parkway houses in the Bronx in filing a lawsuit against the owner, Goldfarb Properties. The suit alleges that the landlord is attempting to force them out of their rent-stabilized apartments.

Tenants claim that Goldfarb, who bought the property in January for $52.5 million, neglected to accomodate them during elevator repairs, thus violating the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Fair Housing Act, as well as with similar state and city laws.

# Affordable housing is associated with greater family spending on children

*The following article is excerpted from a new research study by Sandra J. Newman and C. Scott Holupka. The research was funded by the MacArthur Foundation.*

On average, the modest-income families in the study spent about four thousand dollars a year on their children between 2004 and 2009, including necessities and enrichment activities. Approximately one thousand of that amount is for enrichment items alone. Only a small fraction of these families, approximately one in ten, spent nothing on child enrichment.

The study finds that spending roughly thirty percent of household income on housing is associated with the greatest spending on child enrichment.

Spending on child enrichment items increases until housing costs reach thirty to thirty-five percent of income and then declines as housing cost burdens grow.

Thus, both those spending the least and the most on housing (those at the extreme ends of the distribution) spend less on their children's enrichment than those spending approximately thirty percent of income to housing. As found in an earlier study, children in families spending roughly thirty percent of income on housing performed best on tests of cognitive skills.

A family spending approximately that amount on housing also spent about $125 more on their children's enrichment activities per year than those who spent ten percent of income on housing, and fifty dollars more than those who spent half their income on housing. (A family that devoted ten percent of its income to housing spent approximately eight hundred dollars annually on child enrichment, while a family devoting fifty percent to housing spent approximately $875).

Interestingly, at sixty percent, spending declines dramatically and at a much faster rate. These findings help to explain earlier findings that lower housing costs burdens were not necessarily better for children's cognitive development. In this current analysis, families with the lowest housing cost burden (spending only ten percent) on housing are not devoting their additional disposable income to child enrichment. This is also the group with the highest incomes in the sample, and they are worth exploring further in future research. On the other hand, the lower spending could also signal that this group is paying so little for their housing because the housing is substandard, which is known to have greater health risks and negative impacts on cognitive and social-emotional development.

### Policy Implications

Evidence reveals that investing in children's cognitive and social-emotional development pays off not only in greater success in school, but in less incarceration, higher employment, and less reliance on public programs later in life. The current findings show that affordable housing can play a role in those investments.

The results argue for policies that help low-income families with children attain a housing cost burden of roughly thirty percent so that they can invest more in their children's development. Recent analysis by the Joint Center for Housing Studies shows that more than one-third of all U.S. households spend more than thirty percent of their income on housing costs, and that half of all renters do. These rates of housing cost burden demonstrate that if their housing is made affordable to this standard, for example through direct subsidy, there is significant potential for households to redirect dollars spent on housing to their children's enrichment.

The results also are the first to confirm empirically the validity of the rule of thumb that housing costs that exceed more than approximately thirty percent of income have a negative effect on investments in children. Although spending declines substantially beyond a fifty percent ratio—HUD's definition of "severely burdensome"— spending on children drops off at twice the rate after reaching the sixty percent threshold than beyond the fifty percent mark.

# 'Poor door' looophole mars inclusionary housing program

*(Continued from page 1)*

Blvd; the shorter tower, with 55 affordable units, faces West 63rd Street.

The developer is Extell Development Company, whose president, Gary Barnett, donated $100,000 to Gov. Andrew Cuomo just prior to receiving tax breaks to construct the luxury ONE57 at Park Avenue.

The poor door loophole, developed under the real estate-friendly administration of Michael Bloomberg, presents a quandry for de Blasio, whose campaign relentlessly condemned the growing chasm between the city's very rich and everybody else. (A recent report by the US Census Bureau found that Manhattan had the largest dollar income gap of any county in the country.)

City Council Member Helen Rosenthal, who represents the area where 40 Riverside is being built (construction began during the Bloomberg years), Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, and City Councilmember Jumaane Williams, who chairs the council's housing and buildings committee, are three of the officials seeking ways to counter the alleged loophole.

So far they have been stymied. Nevertheless, the de Blasio administration is negotiating with other developers to insure that even if two entrances are constructed in segmented developments, both face the same views. This will in fact happen at 10 Freedom Place, a block away from 40 Riverside, whose developer is Silverstein Properties. The doorway in the structure containing 116 affordable units will face the same beautiful location as the one with the 250 market rate condos: a new park in between the two towers. All residents will be given access to a gym, a children's room and other amenities.

# Housing quote of the year

"Affordable housing policy shouldn't be just about building new affordable housing. It should be about making sure that the affordable housing resources we have don't become so unaffordable that tenants get displaced. Currently, over 30 percent of rent-regulated tenants are paying half or more of their income toward rent.

"If there isn't a rent freeze next year, or the year after, approximately 750,000 tenants will likely be under threat of displacement in the next few years."

*Katie Goldstein, Exec. Dir., Tenants & Neighbors, in Rooflines, July 28, 2014*

# CSS details NYCHA deterioration; Seeks 'Marshall Plan' for repairs

*The following article is excerpted from the Community Service Society's press release announcing the publication of its new report on NYCHA. The report was prepared by Victor Bach and Tom Waters.*

For nearly eight decades, NYCHA served as a model for large-scale public housing management. With 179,000 apartments spread across 334 developments, it is the city's largest landlord. It also has the distinction of being one of the few large-city authorities that retained its public housing inventory, while others have embarked on massive conversion or demolition.

However, in the period following 2001, the erosion of government support at every level resulted in large NYCHA deficits and rapid deterioration of living conditions.

Evidence of this decline was found in Unheard Third Survey data polling the concerns and opinions of the city's low-income residents. For example, in the summer of 2012, respondents were asked what they worry about the most. Low-income renters outside of public housing identified a range of concerns, including schools, healthcare, jobs, retirement and crime. But for NYCHA residents, the pre-occupying concern was their housing.

CSS analysis of HVS data from low-income households reporting apartment deficiencies (e.g., leaks, rodents, cracked walls, severe plaster and heating break-downs) confirmed anecdotal resident and media reports of accelerating deterioration in NYCHA units.

From 2002 to 2008, the percentage of low-income households in both public and private rentals reporting four or more deficiencies varied between 11 and 12 percent. But from 2008 to 2011, the number of reports of multiple deficiencies in NYCHA units nearly doubled, from 11 to 19 percent.

The steep rise among NYCHA households is unmatched among low-income tenants in assisted and private rentals.

### Meeting the Challenges Ahead

Over the post-2001 decade, government defunding has caused NYCHA to cover its large operating deficits by depleting its operating reserves, transferring capital funds to support operations (thereby delaying major improvements), and reduce its work-force headcount.

In effect, the savings achieved by government through disinvestment were passed on as costs to vulnerable residents, who were more and more dealing with substandard conditions, what one outraged resident leader described as "third world conditions."

To its credit, the de Blasio administration has taken positive steps to address NYCHA chronic operating deficits. Earlier this year the mayor ended an agreement under which NYCHA paid the city $70 million annually for special police services. NYCHA can now apply these funds to its backlog of repairs and other urgent maintenance needs.

### Directions for Change

This is a critical, defining period for NYCHA. The report envisions a positive future for NYCHA and maps out several directions for stemming its crisis and restoring its well-deserved reputation. Chief among them are:

**A call for a "Marshall Plan for NYCHA**: A long-term plan for city and state capital investment in addressing the $7 to $15 billion estimated backlog in needed major improvements to the Authority's aging housing stock.

**Letting NYCHA retain all its operating resources:** The termination of $100 million in NYCHA annual payments to the city for police services (more than $70 million), PILOT payments in lieu of property taxes ($29 million), and special sanitation services ($2 million.)

**Planning for redevelopment on available land in NYCHA tower-in-the-park campuses,** by engaging resident and community leaders in a meaningful dialogue and building a consensus on the future of the community.

**City take-over of the costs of operating NYCHA senior and community centers.** Greater financial transparency: An independent, annual audit and analysis of NYCHA finances to provide a realistic basis for local decision-making to assure NYCHA solvency.

**Integrating NYCHA into the local code enforcement system:** Providing NYCHA residents parity in access to the city's "311" Citizens Service Center for registering condition complaints and receiving follow-up services and inspections.

**Eliminating the exclusion of NYCHA buildings** from public records of code violations maintained by HPD and the Department of Buildings.

**Changing the governance of NYCHA** so that its Board is more independent of City Hall.

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# Mayor's goal of winning senate for Dems faces strong opposition

Mayor Bill de Blasio's newly announced goal of winning Democratic control of the New York State Senate--and in the process revoking the notorious Urstadt Law--appears likely to face opposition not only from Republicans, but from some moderate Democrats as well.

The Urstadt law, passed in 1971, deprives New York City the authority to enact local rent regulations that are more stringent than the state's.

At present, the Senate is controlled by Republicans with several break-away Democrats. Whether the latter will re-unite with their own party after the elections remains to be seen, but even so they may well resist enabling the City, especially under an outspokenly liberal mayor, to go against Albany on the issue of rent.

For example, Andrea Stewart-Cousins (Dem-Westchester), currently the Senate Democratic Leader, refused to commit herself on the issue. Instead, her office was quoted as saying that she looks forward to getting the views of "stakeholders," which clearly means real estate interests, including the Rent Stabilization Association and the Real Estate Board of New York. Such groups provide enormous funding to both parties, including upstate Dems who have no particular tenant constituency.

Governor Cuomo's office declined to comment on the issue, and an associate of Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver said that while he was in favor of strong rent regulations, he was not committed to ceding control of the issue to the City.

The Real Deal, a trade publication, recently reported that "In a 24-hour period, [real estate giants] and other business leaders opened their checkbooks to the tune of $329,950 for his campaign — among the largest single-day hauls in this entire election cycle."