



## Columbia vs. West Harlem

### Struggle Heats Up as Council Nears Vote on Expansion Plan

By Mario Mazzoni

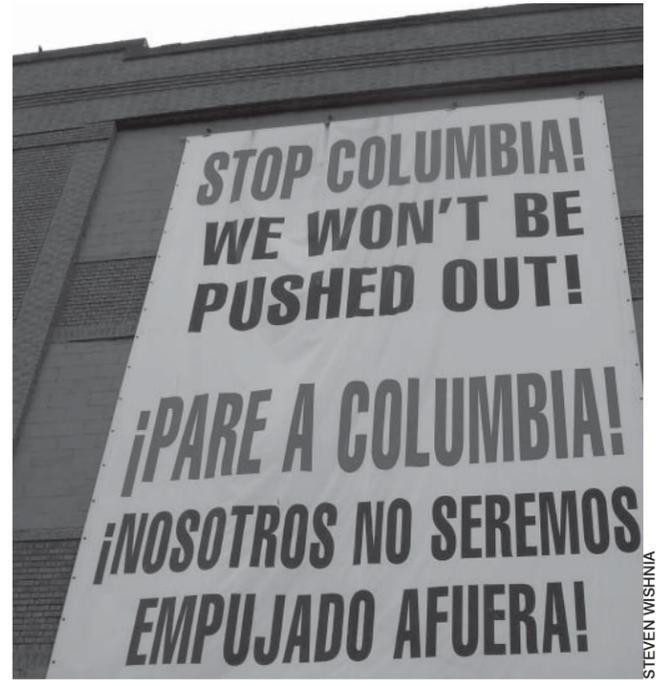
**A** movement has been growing in West Harlem of tenants, homeowners, workers, and business-people who have united to stop a Columbia University expansion plan that would destroy their Upper Manhattan community.

Four years ago, Columbia announced its intentions to expand its facilities to approximately twice the size of the university's current Morningside Heights campus. The battle lines are familiar—a vibrant working-class community fighting for its survival against a wealthy and well-connected developer—but in this case, the developer's hostile real-estate takeover is being masqueraded as an altruistic academic expansion.

The proposed project is immense. It would occupy 17 acres—larger than the entire World Trade Center complex—and take 25 years to finish, with a cost projected at \$7 billion. It would encompass the entire area from 125th Street to 133rd Street, between Broadway and 12th Avenue, as well as some properties between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue from 131st to 134th streets. Its glass and steel towers would rise up to 25 stories high and extend seven stories below ground into an enormous basement that would cover the entire project area.

It is clear that this expansion would result in the end of the West Harlem community as we know it. Columbia has repeatedly characterized the area it wants to expand into as a blighted no-man's land, playing on racial and class stereotypes held by some outsiders. But the reality is that it is a place that over 400 residents proudly call home, where scores of small businesses operate, and where over 1,000 people are employed, mostly from the surrounding neighborhoods.

From the outset, the university's stance has been that it wants all or nothing. Columbia President Lee Bollinger announced early on that he did not want to expand in this location unless the university could control the entire contiguous site. Under Columbia's plan, every resident, commercial renter, and property owner would be removed, and all but three buildings would be demolished. Since some of the property owners have refused to sell, the university has asked the State of New York to invoke its powers of eminent domain to seize that property. The implications of an elite institution using eminent domain for its private interests go far beyond one Upper Manhattan community. As for the residents of the area, Columbia has attempted to broker a deal to have them relocated—without getting their consent or even consulting with them.



STEVEN WISHNIA

What cause is so great to demand such an uprooting of a community? Columbia's early attempts to characterize their plan as a "revitalization" got little traction, as it was clear the university's desires directly contradicted the interests of the West

Harlem community. The rhetoric surrounding the expansion has changed, and university officials have now resorted to saying that their grand ambitions simply outweigh the damage that the expansion

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## DHCR Tries to Close Mitchell-Lama Rent Loophole

By Steven Wishnia

**I**n an attempt to curtail rent-gouging by landlords leaving the Mitchell-Lama program, the state's housing agency has proposed eliminating a loophole in the law—the "unique or peculiar circumstances" provision—that owners have used to escape rent regulations.

The state Division of Housing and Community Renewal wants to change its rules so that landlords cannot claim "unique or peculiar" increases simply because they have taken apartments out of Mitchell-Lama or a similar program. Tenants in Mitchell-Lama buildings built before 1974 are supposed to be protected by rent stabilization if their landlord buys out of the program. But several owners, most notoriously Laurence Gluck of Stellar Management,

have argued that they were entitled to unlimited rent increases because leaving the program constituted "unique or peculiar circumstances." In 2005, the state's highest court ruled that the DHCR could grant such increases in most of the affected buildings.

There are now 24 "unique or peculiar" applications pending before the DHCR, comprising buildings with almost 5,000 apartments. Eleven of them come from Stellar, perhaps the landlord most aggressive at removing buildings from Mitchell-Lama. Another 17,800 apartments still in the program would also be protected if the DHCR adopts the proposed change.

In the DHCR's hearings on the proposal Sept. 24 in Manhattan, tenants and activists sounded several

common themes. Protecting Mitchell-Lama tenants is a crucial part of ameliorating the city's housing crisis. These working- and middle-class tenants are the people who keep the city running and sustain community. There is nothing "unique or peculiar" about landlords leaving the program, and they made plenty of money while they were in it. And this proposed change is only a first step: It does not protect tenants in buildings from 1974 on, who are not covered by rent stabilization except in rare circumstances.

"We have stayed in our communities. We have built these communities," said Darryl Allen, president of the tenants association at Bruckner Towers in the Bronx. "We were not put here to be babysitters

for this property so in 20 years our rent could be increased and we can be put out." His rent, \$694 a month, would go up to \$741 under rent stabilization. Stellar is trying to raise it to \$1,250.

The one witness who opposed the proposed change was Mitchell Posilkin, general counsel for real-

estate lobbyists the Rent Stabilization Association. Dismissing the proposed change as a "political response to tenant activism," he argued that landlords leaving Mitchell-Lama need large rent increases because the ones allowed

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**Loophole**

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under rent stabilization are “inadequate”—they’re not enough to cover the extra taxes landlords incur by leaving the program.

“If they thought it was going to be a hardship, they wouldn’t have left Mitchell-Lama,” responded Sue Susman, a tenant leader at Central Park Gardens on the Upper West Side. The Mitchell-Lama program guaranteed participating landlords a 6 percent annual profit, she noted. But Stellar, under the “unique or peculiar” claim, is trying to raise the rent for a low-income tenant’s one-bedroom apartment from \$496 to \$3,015, she said, and it wants to raise her rent from \$1,000 to \$5,275.

Sandra Rivera, a tenant at Independence Plaza North in Tribeca—a former Mitchell-Lama not covered by rent stabilization, but where the Bloomberg administration arranged for some tenants to receive federal “enhanced Section 8” subsidies—broke down crying when talking about how Stellar had raised her rent from \$900 to \$5,600, and the city had terminated her Section 8 payments because of an alleged “change of household composition.” A customer-service worker for the city’s child-support agency, she said she makes \$906 every two weeks and takes care of her disabled nephew.

Though the Mitchell-Lama program is usually considered middle-income housing, many tenants, especially the elderly, are closer to near-poor, said Tom Waters, a housing-policy analyst with the

Community Service Society. The median household income in Mitchell-Lamas in 2005 was only \$22,500 a year.

Several bills to deal with the situation passed the state Assembly this year but went nowhere in the Republican-majority state Senate.

The current measure endorsed by many tenants at the hearing is S.5284/A.7811, sponsored by Sen. Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assemblymember Gary Pretlow, both Westchester Democrats. It would let the city and suburban counties or towns bar “unique

or peculiar” rent increases and extend rent stabilization to all buildings leaving Mitchell-Lama, Section 8, or similar programs, regardless of when they were built. The law would be retroactive for buildings that already left those programs.

**The Mitchell-Lama Program: What’s at Stake**

**T**he Mitchell-Lama program, begun in 1955, is sometimes called New York State’s most successful affordable-housing program. In it, landlords got tax breaks for constructing housing and keeping it affordable. In the 1960s and 1970s, approximately 140,000 units, roughly half rental and half co-op, were built in the city under the program. These included Co-op City in the Bronx, Starrett City in Brooklyn, and General Sedgwick House in the Bronx—known as the “birthplace of hip-hop” because pioneering DJ Kool Herc spun records at his sister’s birthday party there in 1973. Donald Trump’s father gained much of the family fortune by erecting Mitchell-Lama high-rises on the land between Coney Island and Brighton Beach.

The law that established the program lets landlords buy out of it, usually after 20 years. With the real-estate market growing like a particularly aggressive cancer, many owners have opted to do that so they can raise rents.

- In 1990, there were more than 65,000 Mitchell-Lama rental apartments in the city.

- As of last Dec. 31, according to Tom Waters of the Community Service Society, there were fewer than 40,000 left, with about 3,700 lost last year.

- Buyouts are now pending for another 11,000 apartments, including the 5,900-unit Starrett City complex.

- In April, seven former Mitchell-Lama buildings in Harlem, East Harlem, and Roosevelt Island were sold for \$940 million.

- If landlords buy out of the program, the vast majority of tenants in buildings built in 1974 or afterward have no rights: They can be evicted without cause at the end of their leases and can have their rent doubled, tripled, or even septupled.

- Tenants in buildings from before 1974 are supposed to be protected by rent stabilization—but landlords have been attempting to win similarly astronomical rent increases by claiming “unique or peculiar circumstances.” —SW

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# EL INQUILINO HISPANO

## Columbia contra West Harlem La lucha se acalora al acercarse la votación en el Concejo Municipal sobre el plan de desarrollo

Por Mario Mazzoni, Traducido por Lightning Translations

Un movimiento está creciendo en West Harlem, compuesto por inquilinos, propietarios de casas particulares, trabajadores y gente de negocios quienes se han unido para detener un plan de desarrollo propuesto por la Universidad Columbia, el cual destruiría su comunidad en el Alto Manhattan.

Hace cuatro años, Columbia anunció sus intenciones de aumentar sus instalaciones hasta aproximadamente el doble del tamaño del actual recinto de la universidad en Morningside Heights. Las líneas de batalla son las de siempre: una comunidad vibrante de la clase obrera luchando por su supervivencia contra un rico especulador con buenos contactos—excepto de que en este caso, la adquisición hostil de bienes raíces por parte del especulador viene enmascarada como un desarrollo académico altruista.

El proyecto propuesto es inmenso. Ocuparía 17 acres, un área más

grande que todo el complejo del World Trade Center, y necesitaría 25 años para completarse, con un costo proyectado en \$7 mil millones. Abarcaría toda el área desde la calle 125 hasta la calle 133 entre Broadway y la avenida 12, además de algunas propiedades entre Broadway y la avenida Amsterdam desde la calle 131 hasta la calle 134. Sus torres de acero y vidrio se levantarían hasta una altura de 25 pisos y se extenderían hasta siete pisos bajo la tierra en un sótano enorme que cubriría el área entera del proyecto.

Está claro que este desarrollo tendría por resultado la desaparición de la comunidad de West Harlem como la conocemos. Columbia ha calificado repetidamente al área que quiere desarrollar como una arruinada tierra de nadie, explotando los estereotipos raciales y de clase que tienen algunos que no viven en la comunidad. La realidad es que el área es un lugar donde más de 400 residentes orgullosa-

mente mantienen sus hogares, veintenas de pequeños negocios operan y más de 1,000 personas son empleadas, la mayoría de ellas de las vecindarios cercanos.

Desde el principio, la postura de la universidad ha sido de querer todo o nada. El presidente de Columbia Lee Bollinger declaró temprano en el proceso que no quería desarrollar este lugar a menos que la universidad controlara todo el sitio contiguo. Bajo el plan de Columbia, todos los residentes, centros comerciales y propietarios serían removidos y todos los edificios menos tres serían derribados. Puesto que algunos de los propietarios han rehusado vender sus inmuebles, la universidad ha pedido que el Estado de Nueva York recurra a sus poderes de dominio eminente para apoderarse de estas propiedades. Las implicaciones del uso del dominio eminente por una institución de élite para sus intereses particulares van mucho más allá de una sola comunidad

en el Alto Manhattan. En lo que a los residentes del área se refiere, Columbia ha intentado hacer un arreglo para reubicarlos, sin su permiso y sin siquiera consultar con ellos.

¿Qué causa puede ser tan importante para necesitar tal desplazamiento de una comunidad? Los primeros intentos de Columbia de calificar su plan como una “revitalización” ganaron poco terreno, ya que era claro que los deseos de la universidad eran directamente opuestos a los intereses de la comunidad de West Harlem. La retórica en torno al desarrollo ha cambiado y los funcionarios de la universidad han recurrido ahora a decir que sus grandes ambiciones pesan más que el daño que el desarrollo causaría a los vecindarios cercanos.

Al principio, Columbia sostuvo que sus estudiantes carecían de espacio, comparando las condiciones en su recinto en Morningside Heights con

*pasa a la página 4*

### Los Ajustes de la “Junta de Regulación de Renta” de la Ciudad de Nueva York (Orden No. 39)

Para los contratos de apartamentos de Renta Estabilizada que comienzan el 1ro. de octubre de 2007 hasta el 30 de septiembre de 2008.

#### Renovación de Contrato

Los caseros tienen que ofrecer a los inquilinos de renta estabilizada una renovación de contrato dentro de 90 a 120 días antes de que venza su contrato actual. La renovación de contrato tiene que mantener los mismos términos y condiciones que el contrato que vencerá, excepto cuando refleje un cambio en la ley. Una vez que se haya recibido el ofrecimiento de renovación, los inquilinos tienen 60 días para aceptarlo y escoger si van a renovar el contrato por uno o dos años. El propietario tiene que devolver la copia firmada y fechada al inquilino dentro de 30 días. La nueva renta no entrará en vigencia hasta que empiece el nuevo contrato, o cuando el propietario devuelva la copia firmada (lo que suceda después). Ofrecimientos retrasados: si el casero ofrece la renovación tarde (menos de 90 días antes de que venza el contrato actual), el contrato puede empezar, a la opción del inquilino, o en la fecha que hubiera empezado si se hubiera hecho un ofrecimiento a tiempo, o en el primer pago de renta fechada 90 días después de la fecha del ofrecimiento del contrato. Las pautas de renta usadas para la renovación no pueden ser mayores que los incrementos de la RGB vigentes en la fecha en que el contrato debía empezar (si se lo hubiera ofrecido a tiempo). El inquilino no tiene que pagar el nuevo aumento de renta hasta 90 días después de que se haya hecho el ofrecimiento.

#### Asignación de Subarriendo

Los caseros podrán cobrar un aumento de 10 por ciento durante el término de subarriendo que comience durante este período de las pautas. Programa de Exención de Incrementos

de Renta para las Personas de Mayor Edad Las personas de mayor edad con renta estabilizada (y los que viven en apartamentos de renta controlada, Mitchell-Lama y cooperativas de dividendos limitados), con 62 años o más, y cuyos ingresos familiares disponibles al año sean de \$27,000 o menos (para 2006) y que paguen (o enfrenten un aumento de renta que les haría pagar) un tercio o más de aquel ingreso en renta pueden ser elegibles para una congelación de renta. Solicite a: NYC Dept of the Aging, SCRIE Unit, 2 Lafayette St., NY, NY 10007 o llame al 311 o visite su sitio Web, [nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/scrie\\_sp/scrie\\_sp.shtml](http://nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/scrie_sp/scrie_sp.shtml).

Programa de Exención de Incrementos de Renta para Minusválidos Inquilinos con renta regulada que re-

ciben ayuda económica elegible relacionada con discapacidad, que tengan ingresos de \$17,580 o menos para individuales y \$25,212 o menos para una pareja y enfrenten rentas iguales o más de un tercio de sus ingresos pueden ser elegibles para un congelamiento de renta. Solicite a: NYC Dept. of Finance, DRIE Exemptions, 59 Maiden Lane - 20th floor, New York, NY 10038. Llame al 311 para una solicitud o vaya al sitio Web en [www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/property/property\\_tax\\_reduc\\_drie.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/property/property_tax_reduc_drie.shtml)

#### Las unidades desvanes

Los aumentos legalizados para unidades de desván son un 2.5 por ciento por un contrato de un año y 5.25 por ciento por dos años. No se permiten incrementos para las unidades de desván vacías.

#### Hoteles y SROs

El aumento es un 0 por ciento de la renta cobrada el 30 de septiembre de 2007 para los apartamentos de hotel de clase A, casas de alojamiento, hoteles de clase B (30 o más habitaciones), hoteles de una sola habitación y pensiones (clase B, 6-29 habitaciones).

#### Exceso de cobro

Los inquilinos deben estar al tanto de que muchos caseros se aprovecharán de las complejidades de estas pautas y concesiones adicionales, además del poco conocimiento de los inquilinos del historial de renta de sus apartamentos, para cobrar una renta ilegal. Los inquilinos pueden impugnar los aumentos de renta sin autorización en las cortes o al presentar una impugnación con la agencia estatal de vivienda, la División de Vivienda

y Renovación Comunitaria (Division of Housing and Community Renewal, DHCR). El primer paso en el proceso es ponerse en contacto con la DHCR para ver el registro oficial del historial de renta. Vaya a [www.dhcr.state.ny.us](http://www.dhcr.state.ny.us) o llame al 718-739-6400 y pida un historial de renta detallado. Luego, hable con un abogado o defensor experto antes de seguir.

Para las pautas previas, llame a la RGB al 212-385-2934 o vaya al [www.housingnyc.com](http://www.housingnyc.com)

Tipo de Contrato	Renta Legal Actual	Contrato de 1 Año	Contrato de 2 Años	
<b>Renovación del Contrato</b>	Todos	3%	5.75%	
<b>Contratos para Apartamentos Vacíos</b>	Más de \$500	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	17.25%	20%
		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%	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, más el 20%
	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, + 175% + \$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



## La asamblea anual de Met Council

La asamblea anual del Consejo Metropolitano de Vivienda (Met Council on Housing) el 27 de septiembre, si bien no atrajo tanta gente como la reunión de campaña del senador Barack Obama en Washington Square Park esa misma noche, sin embargo llenó la sala en la iglesia Judson Memorial Church, al otro lado de la calle.

El programa no carecía de controversias. El presidente del condado de Manhattan Scott Stringer habló menos de 48 horas después de aprobar el plan de desarrollo en West Harlem de la universidad Columbia. “Columbia va a conseguir este desarrollo. Usamos nuestro conocimiento de zonificación para hacer el mejor arreglo”, dijo al público, aseverando que la universidad había acordado contribuir con \$20 millones para vivienda asequible. Si él se hubiera opuesto al plan, añadió, “no habría sido nada”.

Esta aseveración recibió una respuesta tajante por Mario Mazzoni de la Coalición para Conservar la Comunidad (Coalition to Preserve Community), un profesor que vive en West Harlem. Según él, Columbia “no quiere ser parte de esta comunidad a menos que todas y cada una de las personas en ella desaparezcan”. Stringer, añadió, “recibió un mensaje muy claro por parte de la comunidad y no hizo caso”. Según Mazzoni, el presidente del condado debía apoyar el plan 197a de la Junta 9 de la Comunidad (Community Board 9) para el desarrollo de la universidad, el cual evitaría el desalojo de residentes o negocios.

Mazzoni apareció en un foro sobre caseros sin fines de lucro, junto con la lideresa de las inquilinas del Ejército de Salvación (Salvation Army) Princess Usanga. “Ni soñando pensé jamás en toda la vida que iba a estar involucrada en una demanda en contra del Ejército de Salvación”, dijo. Mas el uso que la organización hizo de la exención de las normas de renta para los caseros sin fines de lucro

para desalojar a sus inquilinas les dejó sin otra opción, explicó.

El senador estatal Bill Perkins fue el último en tomar la palabra y fulminó contra la mayoría republicana en el senado estatal, comparándolos a “adictos al crack en una casa de crack a punto de sentir el síndrome de abstinencia”. Si los demócratas se apoderan del senado en 2008, dijo, las prioridades en cuestiones de vivienda deben incluir dar a la ciudad autonomía en torno a las normas de renta, aprobar una ley estatal más fuerte sobre pintura a base de plomo, la cual, dijo, el gobernador Eliot Spitzer está “dispuesto a respaldar de mala gana”,

y cambiar los patrones numéricos usados para la creación de viviendas supuestamente asequibles. En vez de que los especuladores construyan 80 por ciento de unidades de lujo y 20 por ciento de unidades asequibles, dijo, los porcentajes deben ser al revés y las rentas deben ser fijadas en un 20 ó 25 por ciento de los ingresos del inquilino, en vez del actual patrón de un 30 por ciento, al que llamó una herencia de las “políticas públicas atrasadas” de Ronald Reagan.

La definición de vivienda “asequible”, añadió, se ha vuelto un “truco publicitario de la industria de bienes raíces”, y el culpable es

el alcalde Bloomberg, quien “ha proclamado que Manhattan es una mercancía de lujo. Si no tienes con qué pagar en Bloomingdale’s, sal de la tienda”.

El desarrollo de Columbia, añadió, “no es solamente un asunto de Harlem. Es una prueba para sentar precedente, para averiguar hasta qué punto toleraremos que las instituciones acaparen nuestras vecindades sin ningún respeto”.

Tanto Mazzoni como Usanga fueron elegidos a la junta directiva de Met Council y los 12 titulares fueron reelegidos.

—Por Steven Wishnia, traducido por Lightning Translations

### Columbia contra West Harlem

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las de las otras instituciones de la Ivy League (conjunto de universidades de élite), ubicadas en ciudades más pequeñas o en pueblos pequeños. Al ser presionados para decir qué haría la universidad con los 6.8 millones de pies cuadrados en su totalidad que está buscando, los funcionarios de Columbia admitieron que no tenían planes específicos. En esta etapa, la universidad ha hecho propuestas concretas para solamente la mitad del sitio, en una llamada Primera Etapa del desarrollo, que tomaría 15 años para construir. Ni una sola de estas instalaciones está destinada para el uso de estudiantes en los cuatro primeros años de la educación superior.

La única ambición clara que la universidad ha tenido desde el principio es la construcción de facilidades de biotecnología con permiso de estudiar enfermedades mortales como ántrax, el síndrome respiratorio agudo severo (SARS), el virus del Nilo Occidental y el peste. Tales investigaciones pueden ser muy lucrativas para la universidad, pero pueden poner en peligro los residentes de las áreas cercanas. Eso aparte, la propuesta también incluye viviendas para la facultad

y estudiantes de Columbia, tiendas, restaurantes, facilidades deportivas, espacios para actuaciones, galerías de arte, un central eléctrica y espacio para estacionamiento, todos los cuales son usos que desmienten la afirmación de la universidad que un desarrollo de esta envergadura es imprescindible para sus necesidades académicas.

Los propios analistas de Columbia pronostican que 5,000 personas en un radio de media milla serán desalojadas. Esta calculación, considerada muy moderada por los residentes, no incluye la pérdida de apartamentos que se convertirían en viviendas de lujo al salir los residentes de bajos ingresos. Durante los dos últimos generaciones, la universidad desalojó o desplazó decenas de miles de inquilinos en Morningside Heights al adquirir, derribar o convertir inmuebles residenciales en el área. Ahora guarda miles de apartamentos, antiguamente disponibles a los residentes locales, para su propio uso.

Hace doce años, mucho antes de que se hablara del desarrollo de Columbia, la Junta 9 de la Comunidad (Community Board 9) en West Harlem empezó a diseñar un marco para el desarrollo en el vecindario, creando lo que se llama un plan 197-a. Por primera vez en la historia de la Ciudad de Nueva York, un plan 197-a de la comunidad está siendo considerado simultáneamente con una solicitud de rezonificación proveniente de un especulador (conocido como un plan 197-c). Este plan 197-a ofrece a los políticos una oportunidad única para apoyar el crecimiento basado en las opiniones bien informadas de la comunidad de West Harlem. Permitiría a Columbia desarrollarse, pero no por medio de desalojar a los actuales residentes y causar la desaparición de negocios locales.

West Harlem tiene un mensaje unificado, lo que es una rareza en la política municipal. El plan 197-a ha recibido la aprobación unánime de la Junta 9 de la Comunidad, mientras la propuesta de Columbia fue rotundamente rechazada. Desesperados por crear la apariencia de apoyo local, los cabilderos

de Columbia recurrieron a sobornar a algunas personas para que acudieran a las audiencias públicas el agosto pasado y hablaran de parte de ellos.

Pues ¿cuál es la posición de los funcionarios elegidos? Después de pasar años prometiendo apoyar la voluntad de la comunidad, el presidente del Condado Manhattan Scott Stringer faltó a su palabra y a sus votantes al apoyar el plan de Columbia totalmente a cambio de ofertas simbólicas por parte de la universidad. En cambio, el senador estatal Bill Perkins ha sido un aliado de la comunidad. A fin de cuentas, el Concejo Municipal determinará si se va a permitir que Columbia devaste West Harlem o si la universidad tiene que compartir la comunidad a la que quiere juntarse. La votación del Concejo vendrá en las próximas diez semanas. Residentes de toda la ciudad deben presionar a sus funcionarios elegidos para que apoyen el plan 197-a de la comunidad y rechacen la propuesta de desarrollo de Columbia.

Esta lucha se ha librado en reuniones, audiencias públicas y manifestaciones. Al ser necesario, los residentes del área están dispuestos a hacerla una batalla entre sus propios cuerpos y las excavadoras.

Por favor, únase a West Harlem para decir “no” al desalojo y el desarrollo desbordado y “sí” al crecimiento proveniente de la comunidad. Para más información y para participar, vaya a [www.stopcolumbia.org](http://www.stopcolumbia.org).



STEVEN WISHNIA

### Inquilinos de mayor edad y minusválidos

Las personas mayores de 62 años o más, en vivienda de renta regulada, Mitchell-Lama y algunos otros programas, con ingresos disponibles anuales de familia de \$27,000 o menos (el año pasado) y quienes pagan (o enfrentan un aumento de renta que les obligaría a pagar) un tercio o más de estos ingresos en renta pueden llenar los requisitos para una Exención de Incrementos de Renta para las Personas de Mayor Edad (Senior Citizen Rent Exemption, SCRIE). Solicítela a:

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

Los inquilinos minusválidos que reciben ayuda financiera relacionada con invalidez y tienen ingresos de \$17,580 o menos para individuos y \$25,323 o menos para una pareja y quienes enfrentan rentas iguales a o más de un tercio de sus ingresos pueden llenar los requisitos para la Exención de Incrementos de Renta para Minusválidos (Disability Rent Increase Exemption, DRIE). Solicítela a:

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

La información sobre DRIE y SCRIE está disponible en el sitio Web de la ciudad, [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov), o llame a 311.

# Met Council's Annual Assembly

By Steven Wishnia

**M**et Council's annual assembly Sept. 27 may not have attracted as many people as Sen. Barack Obama's campaign rally in Washington Square Park that evening, but it still drew a packed house to the Judson Memorial Church across the street.

The program was not without controversy. Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer spoke less than 48 hours after his endorsement of Columbia University's West Harlem expansion plan. "Columbia is going to get that expansion. We used our zoning knowledge to get the best deal," he told the crowd, saying the university had agreed to contribute \$20 million for affordable housing. If he had opposed the plan, he continued, "there would have been nothing."

That drew a sharp response from

Mario Mazzone of the Coalition to Preserve Community, a teacher living in West Harlem. Columbia, he said, doesn't "want to be a part of this community unless every single person is gone." Stringer, he added, "got a very clear message from the community, and he ignored it." The borough president, Mazzone opined, should have endorsed Community Board 9's 197a plan for the university's expansion, which would avoid displacing residents or businesses.

Mazzone was appearing on a panel on nonprofit landlords along with Salvation Army tenant leader Princess Usanga. "I never once in my life dreamed I'd be in a lawsuit against the Salvation Army," she said. But the organization's use of nonprofit landlords' exemption from rent regulations to evict tenants left them with no choice, she explained.

State Senator Bill Perkins was the final speaker, and he lashed out at the state Senate's Republican majority, comparing them

with "crackheads in a crackhouse about to go cold turkey." If Democrats take over the Senate in 2008, he said, priorities on housing issues should include giving the city home rule over rent regulations, enacting a stronger state lead-paint law, which he said Gov. Eliot Spitzer is "reluctantly open" to, and changing the numerical standards used in the creation of supposedly affordable housing. Instead of developers building 80 percent luxury and 20 percent affordable units, he said, the percentages should be the other way around, and the rents should be set at 20 or 25 percent of income instead of the current 30 percent standard—which he called a leg-

acy of Ronald Reagan's "retarded public policies."

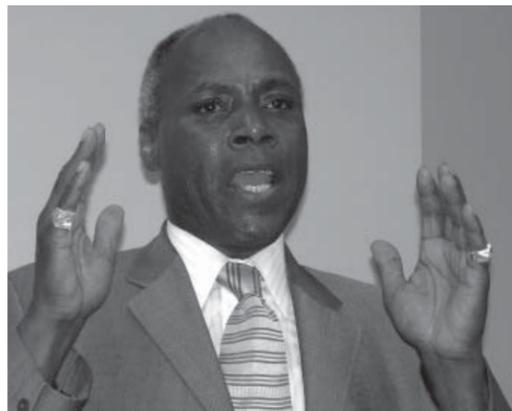
The definition of "affordable" housing, he added, has become a "real-estate gimmick," and the culprit is Mayor Bloomberg, who "has declared Manhattan a luxury product. If you can't afford Bloomingdale's, get out of the store."

The Columbia expansion, he added, is "not just a Harlem issue. This is a test case to see how much we will tolerate of institutions taking over our neighborhoods without any respect."

Both Usanga and Mazzone were elected to the Met Council board of directors, and the 12 incumbent members were re-elected.



Princess Usanga (left), a Salvation Army tenant leader and new Met Council Board member. Mario Mazzone (right), a West Harlem resident active in the struggle against the Columbia expansion plan, is the other new Met Council Board member. Photos by Steve Wishnia.



State Senator Bill Perkins, above. Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, right.

## EDITORIAL

### Nonprofit Abuse Must End

**D**ue to New York's chronic and acute housing crisis, our laws protect tenants in by limiting owners' ability to raise rents or evict tenants. But nonprofit institutions were given an exemption from these laws, on the assumption that their charitable or educational missions would lead them to treat their tenants humanely.

Tempted by enormous real-estate values, however, more and more nonprofits, large and small, have been taking advantage of this exemption to raise huge amounts of money or simply to expand their real-estate holdings. This is not a small issue; tens of thousands of people are affected.

For example, Columbia University has for decades bought up property between 110th Street and 125th Street and gained control of tens of thousands of apartments, which it has taken off the market. The huge religious nonprofit the Salvation Army has

used its exemption to evict long-term tenants simply to sell empty buildings to the highest bidder. So far, the courts have allowed this.

Big nonprofits have immense moral sway, as there is a presumption in the public arena that nonprofits are working for the greater good. But the real-estate market is fiercely competitive in New York, and without rent regulations, tenants would be taken advantage of unfairly. The nonprofits are in that fierce market competing for land and buildings. They are essentially competing with for-profit landlords to suit their own organizational purposes, which may not match those of the public—and they can be very arrogant about that. Why should they have an advantage in that competition? The advantage, if there is any, should go to efforts to provide affordable housing.

Nonprofit institutions are given tremendous public benefits in the form of tax exemptions, and

many have enjoyed a freer hand in their development projects than for-profit developers do. With Columbia and New York University leading the way, universities, hospitals, and churches have entered the real-estate market on a large scale. That means they are threatening to destroy the character of the communities surrounding them or profoundly change it. Columbia is now attempting to gain complete control over an entire portion of West Harlem to build a new satellite campus, against the nearly unanimous wishes of

Community Board 9 and strong community opposition.

As the discussion at Met Council's annual assembly on September 27 made clear, it is time for this abuse to end. We welcome the legislation being proposed by Assemblymember Dick Gottfried and State Senator Liz Krueger, which will close one of the loopholes (see related article), as a necessary first step. When nonprofit institutions go into the housing market, they should be held to higher, not lower, standards.

#### GET ACTIVE!

Sign up for Met Council's e-mail alerts and get notices of rallies, hearings, and other important actions for tenants' rights and affordable housing.

[www.metcouncil.net](http://www.metcouncil.net)

# Salvation Army's Tenant Evictions Spur Legislation to Protect Tenants

By Assemblymember Richard N. Gottfried

The Salvation Army is in court to evict dozens of low-income women who have lived for years in two residences on the East Side of Manhattan (as reported in last month's *Tenant/Inquilino*). The Salvation Army has operated the buildings, the Parkside Evangeline on Gramercy Park and the Ten Eyck on East 39th Street, as low-cost housing for women of moderate means. A little over a year ago, it announced it would empty the buildings and sell them to a for-profit landlord. Many of the 600 tenants were elderly and had lived in the buildings for many years. There are now 30 tenants who have stayed to fight eviction.

This fight is about protecting the individual tenants and trying to preserve 600 units of affordable housing—and protecting other people in similar situations.

The Salvation Army is taking advantage of an exemption in the rent laws for housing run for “charitable purposes.” The Emergency Tenant Protection Act of 1974 (ETPA), the rent stabilization law, says that “housing accommodations run by institutions operated exclusively for charitable or educational purposes” are exempt from rent regulation as long as a tenant is directly related to the charitable or educational institution.

In a rent-regulated building, one of the most important rights tenants have is the right to stay in their apartments even when the building changes hands. But because of this exemption, the Salvation Army tenants did not have this right, according to a recent court decision.

The tenants organized to fight the evictions with the help of Met Council, State Senator Liz Krueger, Assemblymember Brian Kavanaugh, City Councilmembers Dan Garodnick and Rosie Mendez, and me. They are being represented in court pro bono by Marc

Landis of Phillips Nizer and Legal Services for New York City. One argument is that the Salvation Army is no longer operating the buildings exclusively for charitable purposes.

Unfortunately, Supreme Court Judge Milton Tingling ruled against the tenants. He stated that the Salvation Army still qualifies for the exemption because all of the proceeds from the building sales will go towards a charitable cause. The tenants have appealed the decision. Meanwhile, the Salvation Army is in Housing Court to evict the tenants.

## The Salvation Army Is Wrong

What is so shocking is not just that low-income tenants are being evicted and affordable housing destroyed, but that it is the Salvation Army doing it. The Salvation Army is one of the world's largest charitable organizations. Millions of people give them money at Christmas. Their motto is “Doing the Most Good.” Yet they will evict tenants to take advantage of the lucrative real-estate market.

We teach children that you don't waste food. The same should be true for affordable housing.

## What to Do

The exemption in the ETPA is based on the assumption that charities or educational institutions will always act benevolently and for the community good. There are situations where this exemption enables a charitable or educational institution to do its job, such as a school that provides students with lower-cost housing and requires them to leave after completing their education, or a charity that provides its staff with housing for the length of their employment. But the Salvation Army case shows that too often a charitable or educational institution can abuse the common good, especially when it comes to housing.

I am working on state

legislation to change this. First, it will strengthen the “exclusive use” requirement and make it clear that once this use ceases, the building becomes rent-stabilized. It will also make it illegal for these institutions to empty a building before selling it. The tenants would get to stay and be rent-stabilized. I will introduce the legislation in the upcoming legislative session in Albany. State Senator Liz Krueger will be

the Senate sponsor.

For more information, please contact Shannon Flaherty in my community

office, at (212) 807-7900 or [flahers@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:flahers@assembly.state.ny.us). I welcome your support!

**Don't Freeze**

**The law requires landlords to provide heat and hot water at specified levels from Oct. 1 through May 31.**

**see next issue or webpage below for more info:**

[www.metcouncil.net/factsheets/heathotwater.htm](http://www.metcouncil.net/factsheets/heathotwater.htm)

## NYC Rent Guidelines Board Adjustments (Order No. 39)

for Rent Stabilized Leases commencing Oct. 1, 2007 through Sept. 30, 2008

Lease Type	Current Legal Rent	One-year Lease	Two-year Lease	
<b>Renewal Leases</b>	All	3%	5.75%	
<b>Vacancy leases</b>	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	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20%, or \$100, whichever is greater

### Renewal Leases

Landlords must offer rent-stabilized tenants a renewal lease 90 to 120 days before the expiration of their current lease. The renewal lease must keep the same terms and conditions as the expiring lease, except when reflecting a change in the law. Once the renewal offer is received, tenants have 60 days to accept it and choose whether to renew the lease for one or two years. The owner must return the signed and dated copy to the tenant in 30 days. The new rent does not go into effect until the start of the new lease term, or when the owner returns the signed copy (whichever is later). Late offers: If the owner offers the renewal late (fewer than 90 days before the expiration of the current lease), the lease term can begin, at the tenant's option, either on the date it would have begun had a timely offer been made, or on the first rent payment date 90 days after the date of the lease offer. The rent guidelines used for the renewal can be no greater than the RGB increases in effect on the date the lease should have begun (if timely offered). The tenant does not have to pay the new rent increase until 90 days after the offer was made.

### Sublease Allowance

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

### Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption Program

Rent-stabilized seniors (and those living in rent-controlled, Mitchell-Lama, and limited equity coop apartments), 62 or older, whose disposable annual household income is \$27,000 or less (for 2006) 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 rent freeze. Apply to: NYC Dept. for the Aging, SCRIE Unit, 2 Lafayette St., NY, NY 10007 or call 311 or visit their Web site, [www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/scrie/scrie.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/scrie/scrie.shtml).

### Disability Rent Increase Exemption Program

Rent-regulated tenants receiving eligible disability-related financial assistance who have incomes of \$17,580 or less for individuals and \$25,212 or less for a couple and are facing rents equal to more than one-third of their income may be eligible for a rent freeze. Apply to: NYC Dept. of Finance, DRIE Exemptions, 59 Maiden Lane, 20th floor, New York, NY 10038. Call 311 for an application or go to the Web site at [www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/property/property\\_tax\\_reduc\\_drie.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/property/property_tax_reduc_drie.shtml).

### Loft Units

Legalized loft-unit increases are 2.5 percent for a one-year lease and 5.25 percent for two years. No vacancy allowance is permitted on vacant lofts.

### Hotels and SROs

There is no increase on rent charged September 30, 2007 for Class A apartment hotels, lodging houses, Class B hotels (30 rooms or more), single room occupancy (SRO) hotels, and rooming houses (Class B, 6-29 rooms).

### 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. Tenants can challenge unauthorized rent increases through the courts or by filing a challenge with the state housing agency, the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR). The first step in the process is to contact the DHCR to see the official record of the rent history. Go to [www.dhcr.state.ny.us](http://www.dhcr.state.ny.us) or call (718) 739-6400 and ask for a detailed rent history. Then speak to a knowledgeable advocate or a lawyer before proceeding.

For previous guidelines, call the RGB at (212) 385-2934 or go to [www.housingnyc.com](http://www.housingnyc.com).



## Complaint Numbers

To reach the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development's Central Complaints hotline, call 311.

Also call 311 to reach the Dept. of Buildings and other city agencies.

# HUD Approves Demolition of New Orleans Public Housing

By Bill Quigley

Odessa Lewis is 62 years old. When I saw her in late September, she was crying because she is being evicted. A longtime resident of the Lafitte public-housing apartments, since Hurricane Katrina she has been locked out of her apartment and forced to live in a 240-square-foot Federal Emergency Management Administration trailer.

Ms. Lewis has asked repeatedly to be allowed to return to her apartment to clean and fix it up so she can move back in. She even offered to do all the work herself and with friends at no cost. The government continually refused to allow her to return. Now she is being evicted from her trailer and fears she will become homeless because there is no place for working people, especially African-American working and poor people, to live in New Orleans. Ms. Lewis is a strong woman who has worked her whole life. But the stress of being locked out of her apartment, living in a FEMA trailer, and the possibility of being homeless brought out the tears. Thousands of other mothers and grandmothers are in the same situation.

Renting is so hard in part because there is a noose closing around the housing opportunities of New Orleans African-American renters displaced by Katrina. They have been openly and directly targeted by public and private actions designed to keep them away. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development added its weight to the attack on Sept. 21, by approving the demolition of 2,966 public-housing apartments in New Orleans.

Despite telling a federal judge for the last year and a half that public-housing demolition applications take about 100 working days to evaluate, HUD approved the plan one day after the complete application was filed. It says the nearly 3,000 apartments are scheduled to be replaced in a few years with up to 744 public-housing-eligible apartments and a few hundred subsidized apartments.

Unfortunately, HUD's actions are consistent with other governmental attacks on African-American renters.

After Katrina, St. Bernard Parish, an adjoining suburb that's 93 percent white, enacted a law prohibiting home owners from renting their property to anyone who is not a blood relative. Jefferson Parish, another majority-white adjoining suburb, unanimously passed an ordinance prohibiting the construction of any subsidized housing. The sponsoring legislator condemned poor people as "lazy," "ignorant," and "leeches on society"—specifically hoping to guard against former residents of New Orleans public housing. Across Lake Ponchartrain, Sheriff Jack Strain, the chief law enforcement officer of St. Tammany Parish, complained openly about the post-Katrina presence of "thugs and trash from New Orleans" and

announced that people with dreadlocks or "chee-wee hairstyles" could "expect to be getting a visit from a sheriff's deputy."

HUD's actions are also bolstered by pervasive racial discrimination in the private market as well. The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center has documented widespread discrimination in the metro New Orleans rental market and in the states surrounding the Gulf Coast.

HUD told a federal judge that "the average time [for the process of reviewing applications for demolition] is 100 days." It did suggest that the process could be expedited in the case of New Orleans. So it was. Instead of reviewing the details of demolishing 3,000 apartments and considering the law and facts and the administrative record for 100 days, HUD expedited the process to one day.

HUD and the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO, which HUD has been running for years) argued passionately that residents displaced from public housing are financially "better off" than they were before. This echoes the Barbara Bush comment of September 5, 2005 when she said, viewing the overwhelmingly African American crowd of thousands of people living on cots in the Houston Astrodome, "And so many of the people in the arena here, you know, were underprivileged anyway, so this [she chuckled slightly]—this is working very well for them."

The 2,966 units to be demolished comprise the four largest public-housing projects in New Orleans: 896 apartments at Lafitte, 521 at C.J. Peete, 1,158 at B.W. Cooper, and 1,391 at St. Bernard. A few buildings on each site will be retained for historical preservation purposes.

New Orleans had a severe affordable-housing crisis before Katrina, when HANO housed over 5,000 families. There was a waiting list of 8,000 families trying to get in. HUD and HANO together did

such a poor job of administration that there were about 2000 more empty apartments that had been scheduled for major repairs for years.

The continuing deceptions by HUD and HANO have been shameless. Since Katrina, HUD has continued to act out both sides of a charade that the local housing authority is making decisions and HUD is waiting on local actions.



STEVE WISHNIA

Though much of New Orleans remains in ruins, the federal government has approved the city's plans to demolish its four largest public-housing projects—buildings that were not seriously damaged by the hurricane and flood of 2005.

Yet, the decision to demolish was announced by HUD Secretary Alphonso Johnson in Washington over a year ago. But in the year since then, HUD has continued to tell a federal judge that any legal challenge to demolitions was premature because HANO had not even submitted an application to HUD for its careful 100-day evaluation. This is while a HUD employee runs the agency, commuting back and forth to DC each week. HANO even announced it would have 2,000 apartments ready for people in August 2006—a deadline not met even in September 2007. HANO later announced to the public that it had a list of 250 apartments ready for people to return, only to admit in writing weeks later that no such list existed—nor were the phantom apartments ready.

The list of untruths goes on. HUD would not agree to delay

the demolition of the 3,000 apartments until Congress finished reviewing legislation that would give residents the right to return and participate in the process of determining what kind of affordable housing should be in place in New Orleans.

And so HUD's actions help further restrict the opportunities for African-American renters in New Orleans. Adjoining white suburbs do not want African-American renters. HUD does not want them back. The local federal judge has refused to stop the demolitions.

The mothers and grandmothers and their families and friends are still determined to return and resist demolition. One sign at a recent public-housing rally summed it up. "We will not allow the community we built to be rebuilt without us."

Odessa Lewis, despite her tears, said she is not giving up. She and other public-housing residents promise "we did not come this far to be turned back now. We will do whatever is necessary to protect our homes." Thousands of African-American mothers and grandmothers are the ones directly targeted by HUD's actions.

Forty years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said "We as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a 'thing-oriented' society to a 'person-oriented' society... When profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered." We can add sexism to the list, particularly in the fight for the right of public-housing residents to return.

The fight of Ms. Lewis and others on the Gulf Coast shows how much we need a radical revolution of values.

*Bill Quigley, a law professor at Loyola University New Orleans, is one of the attorneys representing the city's public-housing tenants in their efforts to stop the demolition.*

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**Columbia**

*continued from page 1*

would cause to the surrounding communities.

At first, Columbia claimed that its students were constrained for space, comparing conditions on its Morningside Heights campus with those at the other Ivy League institutions, which are in smaller cities or small towns. When pressed on what the university would do with all the 6.8 million square feet of development space it is calling for, Columbia officials admitted that they had no specific plans. At this stage, the university has made concrete proposals for only half of the site, in what it calls Phase One of the development, which would take 15 years to construct. Not a single one of those facilities is intended for use by undergraduates.

The only clear ambition the university has had from the start has been to construct biotech facilities permitted to study deadly diseases such as anthrax, SARS, West Nile virus, and the plague. Such research could be lucrative for the university, but might endanger residents in the surrounding areas. Otherwise, the proposal also includes housing for Columbia faculty and students, retail spaces, restaurants, athletic facilities, performance spaces, art galleries, a power plant, and park-

ing space—uses which belie the university’s claim that an expansion of this scope is required for its academic needs.

Columbia’s own analysts predict that 5,000 people within a half-mile radius will be pushed out of their homes. This figure, which community residents consider very conservative, does not include the loss of housing that would be converted to luxury dwellings as lower-income residents move out. The university over the past two generations removed or displaced tens of thousands of tenants in Morningside Heights, as it acquired, demolished, or converted residential properties in the area. It now holds thousands of apartments, once available to local residents, for its own use.

Twelve years ago, well before talk of a Columbia expansion, West Harlem’s Community Board 9 began designing a framework for development in the neighborhood, creating what is known as a 197-a plan. For the first time in New York City’s history, a community 197-a plan is being considered simultaneously with a developer-driven rezoning application (known as a 197-c). This 197-a plan affords politicians a unique opportunity to support growth based on the informed judgments of the West Harlem community. It would let Columbia expand, but not in a way

that would oust the current residents and cause the demise of local businesses.

West Harlem has a unified message—a rarity in city politics. The 197-a plan has received unanimous approval from Community Board 9, and the Columbia proposal was resoundingly rejected. Desperate to create the appearance of local support, Columbia lobbyists resorted to bribing people to show up to public hearings this past August to speak on their behalf.

So where do the elected officials stand? After years of promising to support the will of the community, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer betrayed his word and his constituents in stunning fashion, by supporting Columbia’s plan in full in exchange for token givebacks. On the other hand, State Senator Bill Perkins has been an ally of the community. Ultimately, the City Council will determine whether Columbia is allowed to devastate West Harlem or must share the community that it



West 127th St and Broadway. Is this an empty, blighted neighborhood.

STEVE WISHNIA

wishes to join. The Council’s vote will come in the next ten weeks. Residents from across the city need to pressure their elected officials to support the community’s 197-a plan and reject the Columbia expansion proposal.

This struggle has been fought locally in meetings, public hearings, and in protests. If need be, local residents are willing to make it a battle between body and bulldozer.

*Please stand with West Harlem in saying no to displacement and overdevelopment, and yes to community-driven growth. For more information, and to get involved, visit [www.stopcolumbia.org](http://www.stopcolumbia.org).*

**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**

**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

**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

**GOLES (Good Old Lower East Side)**  
171 Avenue B (between 10 and 11 St.);  
and by appointments only except for emergencies. 212-533-2541.

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

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

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

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

**HOUSING CONSERVATION COORDINATORS**  
777 10 Ave.; 212-541-5996  
Mondays ..... 7-9 pm

**Senior and Disabled Tenants**

Seniors, 62 or older, in rent-regulated, Mitchell-Lama and some other housing programs whose disposable annual household income is \$27,000 or less (for the previous year) 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 receiving eligible 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 or 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](http://www.nyc.gov), or call 311.

**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