



*Cooper Square Committee*

*45<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary  
& Gala*

1959-2004

*45th Anniversary Gala*

*Wednesday, September 29th, 2004*

*Cooper Square Committee*

*61 East 4th Street*

*New York, NY 10003*

*(212) 228-8210*

# A History Of The Cooper Square Committee (1959-2004)

*As the Cooper Square Committee celebrates its 45th Anniversary, Cooper Square Committee's Board of Directors and staff thought it was important to document the struggle the organization has waged for affordable housing and inclusive community based planning during more than four decades, through changing political and economic conditions, and under different administrations. While much has changed during 45 years, with many victories as well as some losses, one thing has remained constant in Cooper Square's history. It's core values. Cooper Square has always put the needs of poor and working class residents in the forefront of its mission and its agenda. Cooper Square has worked to empower and expand opportunities for people who are often excluded by policy makers and by the private market. Cooper Square's members created their own vision for this community, and made this one of the few communities that not only survived the urban renewal process but thrived. Here's their story...*

## 1959

On March 17, 1959, the Cooper Square Committee was organized to protest Robert Moses' plan to tear down the 12 blocks from Delancey Street to 9th Street, from Second Avenue to the Bowery. It would have displaced 2,400 tenants, 450 furnished room occupants and 4,000 homeless men. The plan would have replaced this low-income neighborhood with 2,900 units of cooperative housing that only seven percent of the people in the neighborhood could afford.

The Committee on Slum Clearance commissioned Helmsley Spear to prepare a survey to justify the Robert Moses plan. In April and May of 1959, the Cooper Square Committee conducted its own survey of the 4th Street block to test the accuracy of the city's survey. On this one block of 300 families, almost 33% were Spanish speaking. This contrasted sharply with the city's report which found only 10% Spanish speaking on the entire site. Almost half the tenants were living on less than \$60 per week and almost half had been living in Cooper Square for 15 years or more.

## 1960

During the last half of 1959 and for the next year and a half, the Cooper Square Committee worked on its own Alternate Plan for Cooper Square. The Plan would ensure that the people affected by renewal would benefit from it rather than be hurt by it. Hortense Gabel, then assistant to Mayor Wagner, encouraged the Cooper Square Committee to develop its alternate plan, and to raise funds with which to hire a professional planner. Dr. Marion Barry of the City Mission Society helped the Committee get started by securing small grants from the Taconic Foundation and the Ascoli Fund. Later, grants from the J.M. Kaplan and Norman Funds made the preparation and publication of the plan as well as much of the Committee's future work possible.

Walter Thabit, the Committee's planner, agreed to undertake the work. Charles Abrams, an internationally known housing expert and tenant advocate, was invited to view the site and make suggestions. The result of this collaboration was a decision not to tear down the area north of 5th Street because of the importance of its local commercial center and its high residential density. The remainder of the 12-block area could be developed in stages for the people who lived there.

More than 100 meetings went into the preparation of the plan. Artists, single people, business people, and tenants all pointed up the needs of special groups. The principles of the plan and its physical expression took over a year to develop. The plan called for low-rent, moderate and middle-income housing, an artists housing building, shops, a small school for the lower grades, expanded day-care and nursery in the Church of All Nations building, and community rooms in all buildings. The blocks from 5th to 9th Streets were to be rehabilitated for the people who lived there. All this was to take place in stages, the preliminary phase to take place on vacant, or nearly vacant, land.

Chiefly responsible for the final product was the Cooper Square Steering Committee made up of the following persons:

Thelma J. Burdick, Chairwoman, Esther Rand, Chairwoman, House Captains Committee; Helen DeMott, Chairwoman, Artists Committee, Marvin Carpenter, Chairman, Single Persons Committee, Frances Goldin, Housing Consultant, Walter Thabit, Planning Consultant; Charles Kaswan, Member at Large, Margaret Richie, Secretary, Morris Moskovitz, Treasurer.

In July 1961, the Alternate Plan for Cooper Square was published and presented to city officials, the press, individuals and organizations. There was excellent response from the public, but for months city officials were silent as a tomb. The Cooper Square Committee organized a city-wide sponsors group adding to the pressure for a city response. Finally, in October, 1961, at a special press conference and reception called by Cooper Square, James Felt, Chairman of the City Planning Commission, praised the plan and said he would be greatly disappointed if it was not included in the 1962-1963 Community Renewal Program. The Alternate Plan gained national attention and is still studied throughout the country as a model of urban planning.

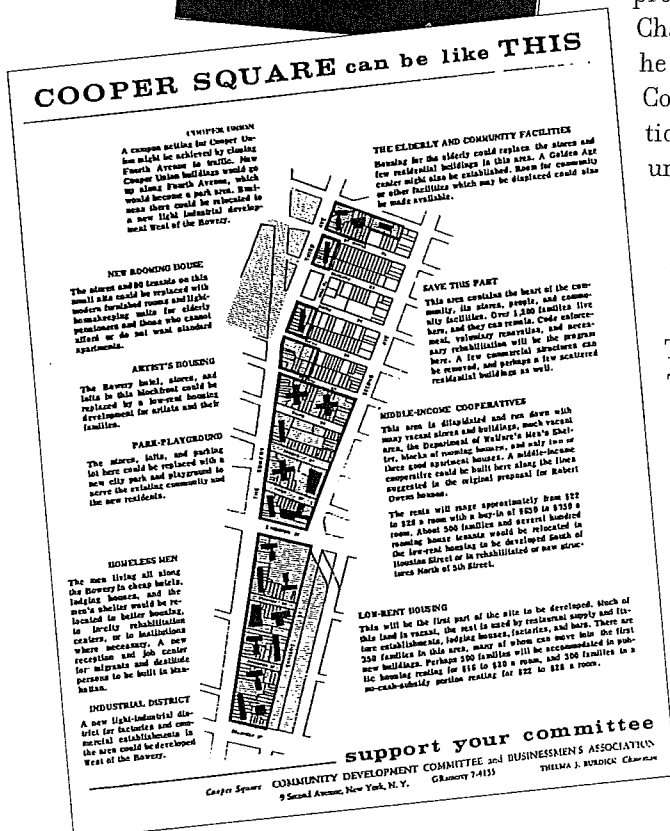
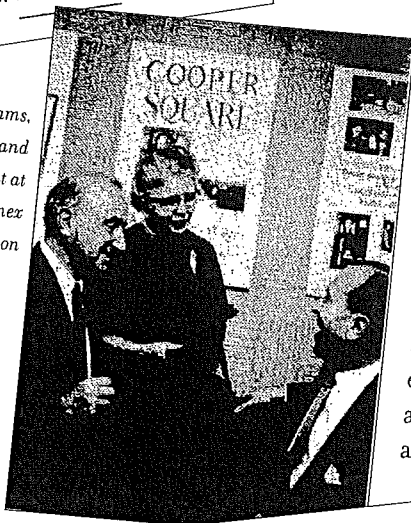
1962-1963

This was one of the most difficult periods in Cooper Square's history. Though Cooper Square was included in the City's Community Renewal Program, the Alternate Plan was ignored. The City Planning Commission designated a much larger renewal area (14th Street to Delancey Street, First to Third Avenues), despite strong community protests. The larger area contained 11,000 families, but no provisions were made for rehousing those who might be displaced by the city's rehabilitation and new construction plans. The City Planning Commission also approved opening a site office in the designated renewal area to assist with rehabilitation and "upgrading" efforts.

Though 200 site tenants appeared at City Planning Commission hearings to oppose the expanded renewal designation and the opening of the site office, the city went ahead anyway.



Charles Abrams, Thelma Burdick and Harris Present at Central Plaza Annex Reception



1964

Another disaster hit. The Committee was informed by the Chairman of the Housing and Redevelopment Board that a hearing was to be held to use the largely vacant block between Houston and Stanton Streets for middle income housing. Already slated for public housing, the change in designation would have destroyed the base of the Alternate Plan for Cooper Square. After a stormy hearing and numerous delays, the Board of Estimate referred the low-rent housing proposal back to the NYC Housing Authority, thus opening the way for the middle-income project proposed by Louis DeSalvio, CSC's Assemblyman at the time.

Despite these setbacks, the Cooper Square Committee grew stronger and matured during this period. It began to provide essential housing services to tenants, opened its first office at 69 Second Avenue and saw its membership increase, both at the local and citywide levels. A spirited demonstration at Gracie Mansion against then Mayor Robert F. Wagner was reported in the following New York Times article.

## HOUSING PROTEST ADDS LYRIC TOUCH

A Lower East Side 'Chorus'  
Serenades the Mayor

Housing demonstrators ended a 14-hour vigil outside Gracie Mansion at 8 A.M. yesterday not quite sure whether Mayor Wagner heard their version of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

The chilled pickets sang: Mine eyes have seen my landlord raising rents without repairs. My ceilings all are peeling and I've got some broken stairs. I've got some broken stairs and my faucets all are leaking and my window panes are cracked. We must have action now.

Seventy pickets were present at the height of the demonstration sponsored by the Cooper Square Community Development Committee. Nineteen-year-old Sally Goldin of 249 East Broadway played the guitar as the bundled pickets put into song their demands for low-rent housing on a site at Houston and Christie Streets, - on the Lower East Side:

We must fight to keep our land from being given to the rich. We've been promised low-rent housing and we'd rather fight than switch. The ball game's almost over, but it's now our turn to pitch. We must have action now.

A decision on the use to which the city-owned plot is to be put is now before the Board of Estimate. Another group wants it for the middle-income housing.

To some, the technique was reminiscent of the political and labor protests of the nineteen-thirties, or the civil rights drive of the nineteen-fifties.

1965

The Cooper Square Committee's luck began to change. In March an article in the Village Voice, written by Mary Perot Nichols, exposed an arrangement between Assemblywoman Louis DeSalvio and Robert Moses which promised DeSalvio the Houston Street site for middle-income housing if DeSalvio would soft-pedal his opposition to the Broome Street Expressway. This so embarrassed the City that the Board of Estimate reinstated low-rent public housing for the Houston Street site and approved the Housing Authority's plan. In October, the Cooper Square Committee filled a bus and brought pressure to bear on HUD in Washington to require more active participation by local communities in the urban renewal process.

## Wagner on Cooper Square: Low-Cost Housing Wins

By Edward J. Silberfarb  
Of The Herald Tribune Staff

A Cooper Square tract since 1956 a battleground for proponents of low and middle-income housing, will be the site of low-cost, public housing after all, Mayor Wagner announced yesterday.

Lyrical demonstration at Assemblyman DeSalvio's liquor store on the Bowery



Helen DeMott

Mike Ladin

Sally Goldin

Rosanna Judelson

Frances Goldin  
Bill Tatum

The City's site office on Stuyvesant Street remained open while the Cooper Square Committee continued to oppose it as it would result in displacement and higher rents. Mayor John Lindsay endorsed the Alternate Plan for Cooper Square, but the City site office remained a thorn in the community's side. To dramatize its demands, the site office was picketed and prevented from opening for two hours.

Then, the Cooper Square Committee conducted an over night "sit-in" at Eugenia Flatow's office (Lindsay's housing coordinator) in July to bring more pressure to close the site office. Finally, Mayor Lindsay announced withdrawal of the Survey and Planning application for the larger area and the closing of the site office.

In August, Jason Nathan, newly appointed head of the HRB, toured the area and announced a new application would be prepared using the Alternate Plan as the basis for renewal of the area.

The Committee's happiness at this news was short-lived. In September, Mayor Lindsay announced that three Core Areas — Harlem, Central Brooklyn, and the South Bronx — would receive all available subsidized housing for the foreseeable future. Progress in Cooper Square was indefinitely postponed.

The Cooper Square Committee undertook one of its most memorable and dramatic campaigns: COOPERSQUARE ON THE WARPATH. It included community rallies, demonstrations and leafletting the office of the HDA, setting up tepees on Houston Street to dramatize the need for housing.

**THE VILLAGER, GREENWICH VILLAGE, NEW YORK, THURSDAY, AUGUST 10, 1967**

### *Tepees on Second Ave.*



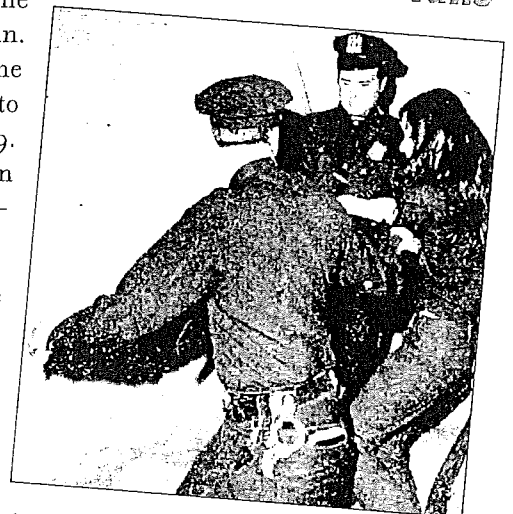
Thousands of feathered postcards were mailed to City Hall. Jason Nathan's home was picketed.

In December, 1967, the city finally gave in. Bob Hazen, the Assistant Commissioner of the HDA (successor to the HRB) informed the Cooper Square Committee he would soon start negotiations. The Committee met with Mr. Hazen who agreed to employ the Committee's city planner, Walter Thabit, to develop a plan for the initial phase of the Alternate Plan. The result of this planning, the Early Action Plan, was presented to the City Planning Commission in August, 1969.

Over 200 people came to the hearing to support the plan and dozens spoke, but the Planning Commission delayed its approval for months.

In September, 1969, Frances Goldin, acting for the Committee, took the podium at the City Planning Commission hearing and refused to yield until the Commission voted on the Cooper Square Plan. The Commission refused to vote the plan out that day and nine people, including Frances Goldin, were arrested.

### *9 Arrested in Row Over Renewal Plans*



Resident of Cooper Square is forcibly removed by police from Planning Commission hearing in City Hall. NEWS photo by John Pedin



1970

Finally, the plan was adopted on February 13, 1970!

## Project in Bowery Is Approved Following 10-Year Controversy

### Board of Estimate Supports Cooper Square Plans for New Apartments

1971-1974

Meetings between the Cooper Square Committee and the NYC Housing Authority and prospective developers of the moderate-income portion of the project began. After many interviews, the City Society of the Methodist Church, in conjunction with Shirley Boden of the Association for Middle Income Housing expressed interest in becoming the developer of the project. By the end of 1971, real progress had been made. All sites, with the exception of Site 3, (the artists housing site) had been acquired. Relocation, maintenance policies and a design concept was agreed to and a letter of agreement between the City Society and the Committee covering the moderate-income portion of the plan had been worked out.

After interviewing 10 of 23 interested architects, Shadrach Woods was selected. The Cooper Square Committee was designated as the Project Area Committee (PAC) by HDA and provided with funds to hire a small staff.

But in 1972 things began to go sour. An internal dispute within the Committee over the selection of the City Society as sponsor split the Committee into two camps, and ultimately caused the City Society to withdraw.

The Committee then turned to the UDC (Urban Development Corporation) as a potential sponsor. At this point Shadrach Woods suddenly died; his assistant, Roger Cumming, was selected to take his place. Roger prepared a concept plan at the UDC's request. After two years of negotiations, the Committee and the UDC were ready to sign a memorandum of agreement when the Nixon moratorium on housing subsidies (January, 1973), coupled with UDC's growing financial problems, forced UDC's withdrawal as developer.

The Committee then turned to the NYS Division of Housing as a possible developer. The State's guidelines called for a private developer and after a long and diligent search, Glick Affiliates was selected. Before the process was complete, the NYS Division of Housing, like the UDC, went bankrupt, and dropped out of the picture. Bloodied but not beaten, the Cooper Square Committee pursued alternative forms of financing the project, although prospects appeared dismal.

1975-1976

Cooper Square sites were hit with rent increases, tenant harassment, withdrawal of maintenance personnel and threatened with loss of funding of the Cooper Square office. HDA refused to approve renting of vacant apartments and tried to force out all tenants living on the Cooper Square site. Meeting these emergencies took all of the Committee's energy.

On Christmas eve in 1975, because the City had refused to allow the Committee to fill the vacant apartments, a derelict squatter set fire to one of the apartments in 71 East 4th Street, forcing all of the tenants to flee at 2 a.m. and destroying the building. On Christmas day, members of the Cooper Square Committee broke into vacant apartments on the site and relocated all of the homeless families. The neighborhood turned out and provided furniture, clothing and

NEW YORK POST, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1975

## When City Raised The Widow's Rent

Mrs. Spiegelberg paid the city \$64.40 a month for her small five-room walk-up. But now the city has raised her rent to \$112.50—almost half the \$227.10 Social Security widow's pension on which she lives.

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food to the burned-out families. Soon after, the Committee supported a homesteader occupying another apartment being held vacant by the City, which resulted in the arrest of the homesteader and eight members of the Committee. All of these actions forced the City to reverse its policy and again allow Cooper Square to rent vacant city-owned apartments to desperately needy families.

1975-1978

The Committee and Glick actively sought alternative forms of financing new low-rent housing, but since none were available, Glick Affiliates persuaded the Committee to agree to limited development of Site 1. A proposal along these lines was submitted to HUD, HDA and the Housing Authority in early 1977. It was decided to proceed with a preliminary plan for Site 1 in the belief that the funds obtained thus far could enable CSC to leverage additional funds which could be used to build additional housing units.

DAILY NEWS, MONDAY, APRIL 24, 1978

**Rally Urges Lower E. Side Housing**

Lower East Side residents demonstrated at Second Ave. and Houston St. yesterday, calling on the city to get on with the construction of 350 Section 8 housing units promised to them on a high priority basis last year.

Leaders of the Cooper Square Development Community said they had been fighting for the housing for 19 years and the number of planned units had been steadily reduced and is now in danger of being reduced to only 200.

Asserting "There can be no further cuts in our plans," some 50 neighborhood residents used cardboard containers to erect a facsimile of a building with a message urging Housing Preservation and Development Commissioner Nathan Leventhal to build the 350 units now.

—Martin King

Then followed a period of intense activity, meetings with every imaginable agency or official who could give us a Section 8 set-aside or who could influence such decisions. The efforts finally paid off, but in a disappointing way. In May, 1978, the HPD (Housing Preservation and Development), successor to the HDA, announced that Cooper Square would receive 200 units of Section 8 to be built by Glick Affiliates and 150 units to be built by the Housing Authority on the Houston Street site.

It soon became obvious that a unified plan could not be worked out and the Housing Authority gave back its 150-unit set-aside to HUD. HUD also announced stringent development cost maximums, which threatened the integrity of the conceptual plan CSC had so carefully nurtured.

1979-1981

Over the next several years, the plan for Site 1 was revised half a dozen times as HPD or the city imposed ever more restrictive limits on costs and put other impediments in the project's way.

Concessions were made to bring costs down to HUD-imposed levels for mortgage insurance and the Section 8 subsidy. Finally, in 1980, CSC seemed to be on the road to success. All CSC needed to get the project approved was HPD's letter stating they would complete the relocation. After months of promises, HPD finally admitted they would not send the required letter. This killed the project for construction on the full block. HUD was delighted to find an excuse to deny Cooper Square the 350 units, as they had overcommitted their funds for New York City.

In 1981, HUD told Cooper Square it could have the original set-aside for 200 units (now worth about 150 units, due to inflation) and that CSC should find a site that didn't require relocation. This bitter pill was swallowed and CSC opted for the Stanton Street site.

While new plans were being drawn, HPD cut off all of Cooper Square's funding without warning.

## Scaled-Down Plan for Housing Is Approved After 23 Years of Work by Cooper Square Committee



after ten years of modest contracts, but the organization persevered. Cooper Square called on its members to help keep the organization going. Hundreds of members who had previously paid \$1.00 per year in dues pledged \$1 to \$10 each month during this period, while the Committee looked for new sources of funding. Cooper Square also intensified its campaign against gentrification, a campaign that came to involve the whole Lower East Side.

## 1982-1983

As diminished as CSC's original grand plans were, the organization insisted on features, which would add grace and beauty to the development. CSC's developer agreed to extensive and creative landscaping, generous and well-equipped community space and a lower-than-average building height with better-than average design. Glick also contributed generously to the creation and incorporation of original art works in the building and on the grounds.

## 1984-1986

In 1984, the Thelma Burdick Apartments, Cooper Square's 146-unit Section 8 project on Stanton Street was rapidly approaching completion. It was ready for occupancy in the late Spring of 1985.

Dedication ceremonies for both the Cooper Square and the JASA projects occurred within a few weeks of each other. Cooper Square's dedication for the Thelma Burdick Apartments was held at the site on Friday, May 18th, 1984 with over 150 people attending a celebrating at a reception at the Church of the Nativity.

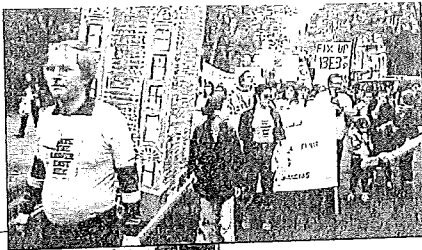
In addition to working with sites within the urban renewal area, Cooper Square worked to prevent HPD from selling 16-18 Second Avenue, AKA the Cube Building, to private developers for market rate housing. Cooper Square was successful in getting a site control letter from HPD in 1984, which enabled the organization to apply for and receive grants during 1984-85 totaling \$750,000 from the NYS Department of Social Services, \$550,000 from the Division of Housing and Community Renewal's Housing Trust Fund, and a \$675,000 federal Housing Development Action Grant (HODAG). CSC's proposal called for creating 22 units of low-income cooperatives to formerly homeless families, the first such project in the United States. In 1986, HPD transferred title of the Cube building to a non-profit Housing Development Fund Corporation (HDFC) formed by the Cooper Square Committee.

In late 1984, Manufacturers Hanover Bank announced they were closing a branch at 37 Avenue A, and Cooper Square worked in coalition with GOLES and other community groups to ensure that Loisaida didn't lose banking services. The idea of forming a credit union was proposed, and Cooper Square contributed to efforts during 1985 to gather pledges, and get the National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions to approve a charter for a community development credit union, under the leadership of Carol Watson. In February, 1986 the Lower East Side People's Federal Credit Union was established and opened its doors to hundreds of new members.

By the mid-1980's, with parts of Cooper Square's Alternate Plan in various stages of implementation, CSC's leaders began the process of revising the Alternate Plan in light of changing political realities such as severe cuts in federal housing funds, as well as new trends in the planning and preservation movements. Cooper Square began holding meetings to discuss shifting its



*Thelma Burdick Apartments—  
ready for occupancy in late  
Spring 1985.*



Late 1980's Demonstrations

focus from new construction of low income housing on the urban renewal sites to the rehabilitation of the tenement buildings on East 3rd and 4th Street. Leaders proposed the creation of a non-profit housing company to take over ownership of poorly maintained city-owned buildings. A series of community based planning meetings were organized to revise the Cooper Square Plan for the sites.

1986 saw new threats to the 3rd Avenue/Bowery corridor. NYU proposed to build dormitories between 11th and 12th Streets on Third Avenue. Although the Third Avenue Tenants Association and Cooper Square Committee opposed the plan, it was ultimately approved. A plan by Street George's Church to get an R-10 zoning variance in order to build a 16 story residence between 6th and 7th Street was successfully opposed by the Cooper Square Committee.

During 1986, Cooper Square continued to meet and work with two Urban Planners from the Netherlands interning at Cooper Square on The Revised Cooper Square Plan which was completed in October, 1986. The document included an inventory of housing conditions in the urban renewal area, occupancy rates, income levels and other relevant housing data. The report detailed the idea of rehabilitating the tenements and the creation of a Mutual Housing Association. It called for renovating roughly 400 units of city-owned housing in the urban renewal area. Tenants would be temporarily relocated on a building by building basis to allow for substantial renovation, after which they would be returned to their original renovated apartment. It also called for an additional 600 units of new mixed income housing (including market rate housing).

1987-1988

In January, 1987, Cooper Square Committee's members voted to approve the Revised Cooper Square Plan. The next step was to win the City's support for the plan.

The same month, the Inspector General's office exonerated Cooper Square from charges leveled by Evan Blum, owner of Irreplaceable Artifacts, in his attempt to kill the Cube building project. Cooper Square was allowed to proceed with renovation of the building at 16-18 2nd Avenue on February 20th, 1987.



Demonstrators demand that the City sell the Cube Building for affordable housing.

By January 1988, renovation of the Cube building was 85% complete. Tenant selection procedures were prepared, and dozens of prospective tenants had been interviewed by May, 1988. Although occupancy was projected for June, 1988, delays by contractors in completing the punch list of remaining items pushed back occupancy until late 1988.

Meanwhile, in March 1988, Cooper Square's Preservation Committee prepared a draft of a Memorandum of Understanding between the HPD and the Cooper Square Committee. It spelled out the basic agreement to rehabilitate more than 20 tenement

buildings, primarily on East 3rd and East 4th Street, for the tenants who live there, and that a Mutual Housing Association be established to own those buildings. It also stated that in exchange for financing the renovation of the tenement buildings, the City would be able to develop low, moderate, middle income and market rate housing on the vacant urban renewal sites.

Another urban renewal site was on the planning boards as well. In May, 1988, Mayor Koch awarded the Lefrak Organization development rights in the Seward Park Extension Urban Renewal Area, drawing the immediate wrath of the Joint Planning Council, the Cooper Square Committee and other groups throughout the Lower East Side. With a downturn in the economy, the Lefrak plan died.

In November 14, 1988, a dedication ceremony was held to celebrate the renovation of the Cube

building. This once abandoned building was now home to 22 formerly homeless families. They moved in just days before Christmas.

## 1989-1990

The increasing gentrification of the Lower East Side was straining Cooper Square's capacity to address the growing displacement pressures facing many residential and commercial tenants. The wave of co-op conversions was also cause for concern, and Cooper Square had spearheaded a Co-op Watch in the late 1980's to document the number of buildings receiving "Red Herrings."

In March, 1989, one such co-op became the center of controversy. A disabled resident named Lincoln Swados of 99 East 4th Street died in his ground floor apartment after his landlord had built a shed around it, walling him in. The DA and AG were called in to investigate, and AG Robert Abrams filed suit to bar the owner, GLM, from selling apartments until the investigation was completed. The investigation lasted more than a year, and ultimately the owner was cleared of any wrongdoing, and no charges were brought.

In March, 1990, a Negotiation Committee was established to pursue the goal of getting the City to adopt the Revised Plan as the official plan for the Cooper Square Urban Renewal Area. The Negotiations Committee met with HPD and were able to arrive at a consensus by mid-1990. Before a Memorandum of Understanding could be signed, it had to be brought

before Cooper Square's members for a vote. On August 19, 1990, the members ratified the agreement. With everything in order, the MOU was signed by Maria Torres Bird for Cooper Square and by Felice Michetti for HPD on October 15, 1990. On December 18, there was an official signing of the MOU in the Blue Room of City Hall with Mayor David Dinkins. The MOU committed the City to spend some \$32.8 million for full implementation of the Cooper Square Plan as well as fund the rehabilitation of 350 occupied and 40 vacant tenement units, 25 SRO units, and 50 artist lofts. It also approved the establishment of the Cooper Square MHA as the owner and maintenance arm for the rehabilitated properties.

1990 also saw the resolution of community conflict over the 3rd Street Shelter. Cooper Square and other local groups had worked out an agreement with the 3rd Street Shelter. It would become an "in house" alcoholism treatment center for about 256 men. The program would be run by the Manhattan Bowery Project Corporation. It included 46 beds for detoxification, 144 specialty beds, 48 beds for rehabilitation and between 16-20 beds for Street Vincents Infirmary.



Cube Building



Front row, from left: Zandile Gumbi Sithole, Pedro Ortega, Ray Martel, Felice Michetti, Maria Torres Bird, Miriam Friedlander; 2nd row, from left: Brian Sullivan, Harriet Putterman, Ann Pollon, Val Orselli, Ruth Messinger, Kathleen Dunn, Herman Hewitt, Sharon Goldstein, Brian Rose, Frances Goldin, Rick Carmen.

## 1991-1992

In February, the Negotiating Committee approved an interim MHA Board that included Maria Torres Bird, Ann Pollon, Ernest Fernandez, Brian Sullivan, Pedro Ortega, Brian Rose and Frances Goldin.

In June, 1991, the Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association (CSMHA) was officially incorporated for the purpose of managing 20 city-owned buildings which were to be renovated by the NYC Dept. of Housing Preservation and Development pursuant to the 1990 Memorandum of Understanding



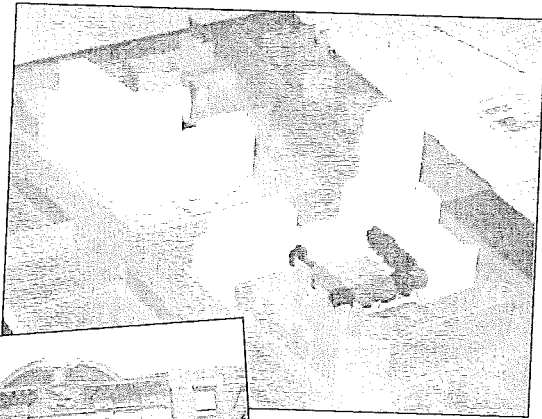
August 28, 1991. First MHA building  
71 East 4th Street officially  
ready for occupancy—  
affordable housing for 13 families.

(MOU). Soon after, Deanne D'Aloia was named as MHA Director. From April to June 1991 Cooper Square Committee's staff worked to gather petitions from tenants to join the MHA. At least 60% of the tenants in 7 buildings signed petitions to join the MHA program. With the creation of the CSMHA, CSC turned its focus more to the development of the vacant urban renewal sites.

On August 28, 1991, 71 East 4th Street was site of the first MHA building to hold a ribbon cutting ceremony. It was occupied by 13 families. During 1991, the Cooper Square Committee also worked to check-board nearly 30 households out of 58 and 60 East 4th Street so that they could be rehabbed.

In October, 1991, CSC retained architect Victor Caliandro to put together a Large Scale Development Plan for the largely vacant urban renewal sites (Sites 1A and 2) on the north and south sides of Houston Street, just east of the Bowery.

In November, 1991, HPD certified the petitions of seven MHA buildings, accepting them into the program. From May through October of 1992, Cooper Square's organizing staff worked to gather petitions from nine more city-owned buildings seeking inclusion in the MHA program. In December, 1992, HPD verified that nine more buildings were eligible, and accepted them into the MHA program.



In March, 1993, Victor Caliandro completed refinements to the Large Scale Development Plan.

In April, 1993, Cooper Square Committee held a retreat on the future directions of the organization. Since the MHA had taken over the maintenance of some 20 city-owned buildings, sharply reducing Cooper Square's involvement, the leaders of Cooper Square wanted to redefine the organization's mission and its future activities.

In July, 1993, 58 East 4th Street was completed, and occupied by 15 households. Renovation of 21 East 3rd Street and 25 East 3rd Street was in the planning stage.

Although the MHA project was underway and had strong support from the majority of urban renewal area tenants, Councilman Antonio Pagan, a resident of 5 East 3rd Street, was working to foment opposition to this ambitious project. In June, 1993, Councilman Pagan wrote a letter to Borough President Ruth Messinger accusing Frances Goldin, Joyce Ravitz, Margarita Lopez and several other Cooper Square supporters with inciting a riot at a Community Board meeting, a criminal offense. The six people named in Pagan's letter brought a suit against Pagan for Slander. The suit was settled out of court when Pagan apologized for his statements. Frances Goldin brought an individual defamation suit against Pagan, which was settled when Pagan signed a statement on October 5, 1993 conceding that his charges were untrue.

Pagan's efforts to undermine the MHA and the Cooper Square Committee took other forms. He was instrumental in getting HPD to not renew a Neighborhood Preservation Consultant contract that Cooper Square had with HPD. Despite receiving excellent program evaluations, the contract was ended in mid-1993, and another organization affiliated with Pagan was awarded the contract instead. The loss in funding hurt Cooper Square's housing preservation capacity over the next 18 months.



Top: Model of Large Scale  
Development Plan.  
Middle: 58 East 4th Street.  
Right: Opening ceremony  
of the newly renovated 58  
East 4th Street Building.  
Elected officials—Deborah  
Glick and Miriam  
Friedlander (center).



During 1994, the Cooper Square Committee's efforts to move the Large Scale Development Plan for the urban renewal area was at a standstill. Without the Councilman's support, HPD was reluctant to move ahead on a plan to develop the vacant urban renewal sites.

Cooper Square's staff assisted the MHA in relocating tenants back into their newly renovated apartments in 60 East 4th Street, 21 East 3rd Street and 25 East 3rd Street during 1994.

In September, 1994 NYS issued the Certificate of Incorporation for the Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association II Housing Development Fund Company, Inc. (the holding company created to take title to the city-owned buildings). In December, 1994, the MHA closed on 13 East 3rd Street.

## 1995

Fortunately, Cooper Square was able to obtain a 2 year grant from the Surdna Foundation in early 1995 to carry out community planning efforts on the Large Scale Development Plan. In February, 1995 Cooper Square created the Community Land Trust which would serve as the ownership entity for the land on which the MHA buildings sit. The land trust was designed to serve as an added layer of protection for the long-term affordability of the MHA buildings.

While Cooper Square worked to move the planning process forward for the urban renewal area, more roadblocks were put in the way. In May, 1995, the City Council held hearings on removing Site 1A from the Cooper Square plan. The hearing was called after the City Council leadership met with the leadership of Community Board 3 and Councilman Pagan who insisted that the community no longer supports the Cooper Square plan. In addition, HPD cut \$10.3 million for Sites 1A and 2 from the City's 1996 capital budget, a devastating blow to Cooper Square's efforts to create middle income housing on the urban renewal sites.

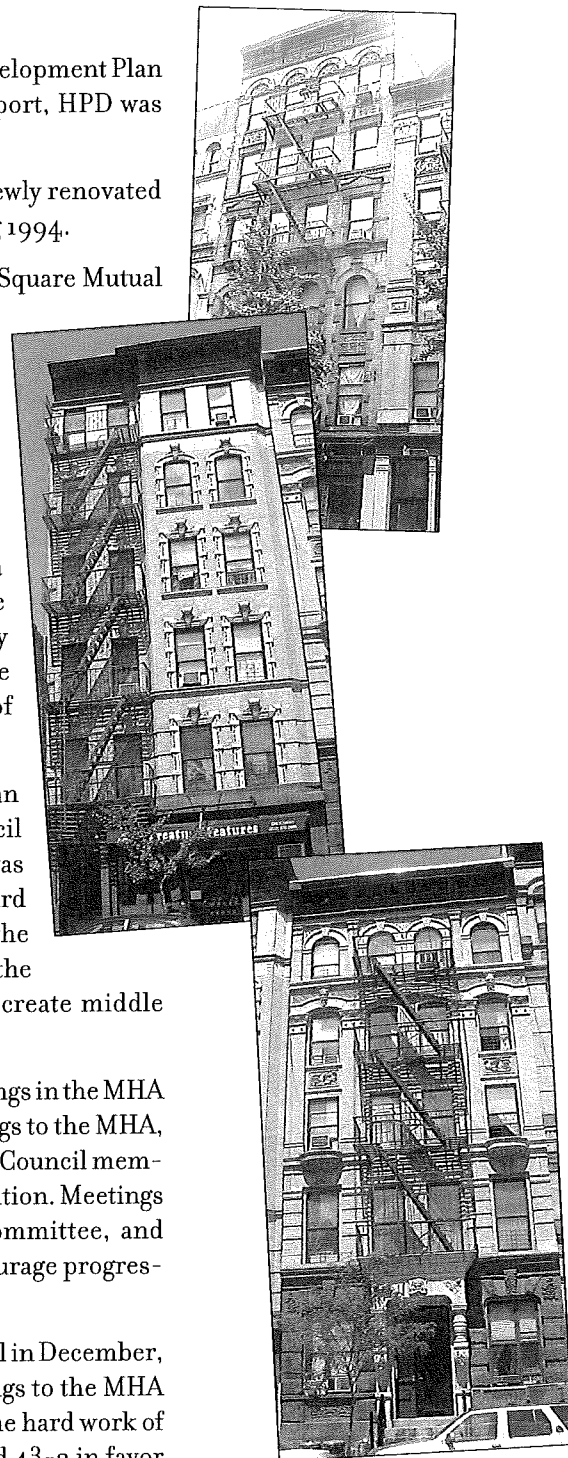
In mid-1995 HPD submitted the ULURP application for the 18 city-owned buildings in the MHA program. Knowing that Councilman Pagan was opposed to the sale of the buildings to the MHA, Cooper Square's staff and leaders worked hard to set up meetings with other City Council members to educate them about the program, and win their support over Pagan's opposition. Meetings were set up with the Council Speaker, the Chairperson of the Land Use Committee, and meetings were held with allies, including Rev. Al Sharpton to ask that they encourage progressive members of the Council to vote in support of the ULURP application.

More than a dozen MHA residents attended the ULURP hearing at the City Council in December, 1995 and testified in support. A few tenants testified against selling the buildings to the MHA because they preferred the TIL program, with much fewer resale restrictions. The hard work of mobilizing supporters paid off when, in December, 1995, the City Council voted 43-2 in favor of the ULURP application to sell the 18 city-owned buildings to the MHA. Councilman Pagan and a member from Staten Island were the only dissenting votes.

## 1996-1997

In 1996, CSC received a 3 year grant from the New York Foundation, increasing its staffing capacity. In June, 1996 the City of New York transferred ownership of the 10 buildings already renovated to Cooper Square MH2 and the Cooper Square Community Land Trust. 13 East 3rd Street is owned in entirety by the Land Trust. The remaining 9 buildings would be purchased from the City by the MHA after they completed renovation.

In July, 1996, Deputy Mayor Fran Reiter met with members of Cooper Square's Negotiating Team to discuss the vacant urban renewal sites. It was agreed that a consultant should be brought in to help



From top:  
60 East 4th Street,  
21 East 3rd Street and  
23 East 3rd Street.

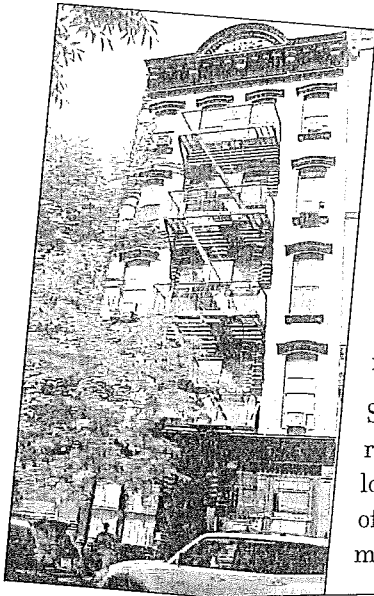


Tabling at 1997 Street Fair



create a new plan that reflected the new real estate market realities on the Lower East Side.

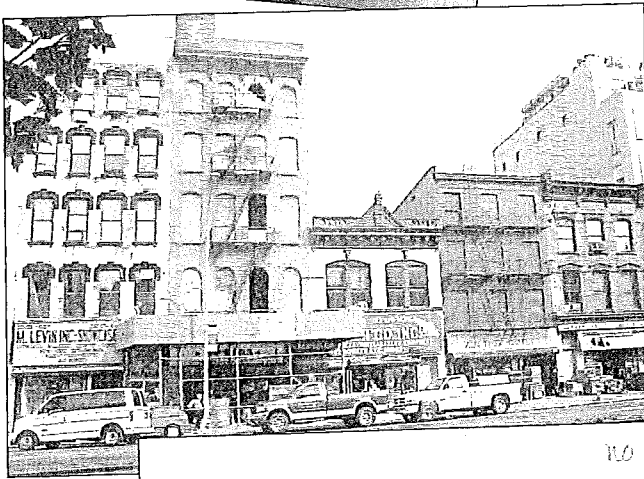
On October 10, 1996 renovation of 13 East 3rd Street was celebrated. Renovation of 57 East 4th Street was underway.



In the Spring of 1997, longtime Cooper Square Executive Director, Val Orselli, left to become Executive Director of the Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association, and longtime Assistant Director Sharon Goldstein stepped into the position.

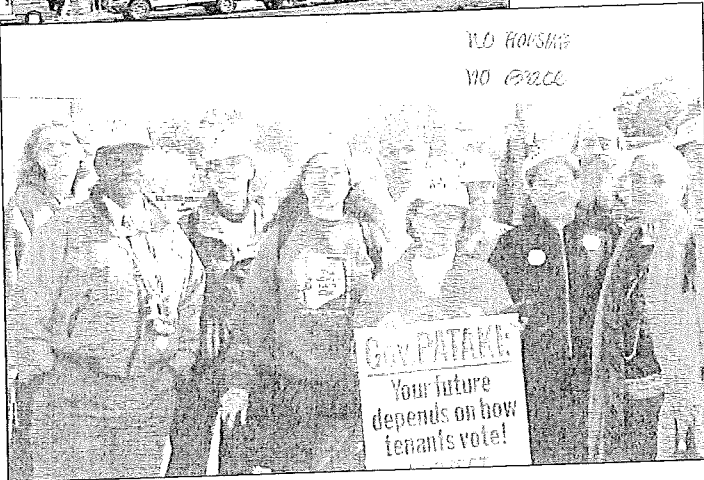
In early 1997, HPD issued an RFP for a planning consultant for the Cooper Square Urban Renewal Area. Deputy Mayor Reiter created a Cooper Square Task Force which was charged with arriving at a consensus for development of the largely vacant sites. HPD retained the planning firm, Abeles Phillips Preiss & Shapiro to facilitate the planning process, conduct zoning and land use analyses, and interviews of all relevant stakeholders in the community. CSC had to fight to be included on the Task Force over the objections of Councilman Pagan. Only 1 Task Force meeting was held in 1997.

Some activity took place on the urban renewal sites however. In March, the NYTimes reported that the Bowery loft artists had negotiated a deal with the City to purchase 5 loft buildings for \$2.97 million. This deal was a departure from HPD's previous policy of maintaining the long term affordability of artists' housing. It allowed the artists to make windfall profits from reselling vacant loft spaces for up to a \$1 million per floor.



On July 17, 1997, 26 East 1st Street, a city-owned SRO was declared unfit for human habitation and was torn down by the City before Cooper Square could take any action to stop it. Some 27 tenants were relocated to other city-owned buildings.

During 1997, the Cooper Square Committee led local efforts to preserve rent regulations and public housing. Cooper Square co-sponsored a rally on East 14th Street attended by more than 600 Lower East Side residents. City, State and Federal elected officials were invited and pledged to work in support of preserving affordable housing. Cooper Square members went to Albany in May, 1997 to participate in a large rally to preserve rent regulations.



While efforts to deregulate public housing were defeated, the State legislature weakened rent protections by allowing 20% vacancy increases when extending the Rent Laws in June, 1997 for another more years.

In mid 1997, Cooper Square was awarded an AmeriCorps intern from the Local Initiatives Support Corp. (LISC) to run an after school arts program for local youths. It started up in the fall of 1997, based at the Thelma Burdick building at 10 Stanton Street.

Top: 13 East 3rd Street.

Middle: Bowery loft buildings.

Bottom: 1997 Albany  
Rent Regulation Demonstration  
with City Council Member  
Margarita Lopez (2nd from right)

In January, 1998, Margarita Lopez was sworn in as the City Councilperson for the 2nd Election District, creating a vastly improved political climate for affordable housing advocates in the community.

On February 11, 1998, the consultants hired by HPD to facilitate the planning efforts for the Cooper Square Urban Renewal Area presented a number of alternative plans for the sites. On

April 30, 1998, based on feedback from Task Force members, the consultants developed yet more alternative development scenarios. Further meetings and revisions took place in July and November of 1998. During this time, CSC staff and several of CSC's community leaders — such as Saylor Creswell, Maria Torres Bird and Joyce Ravitz — and CSC's consultant from Pratt Institute, Brian Sullivan, were actively involved in the Cooper Square Task Force, attending the meetings and advocating for more low income housing than the City was originally willing to concede.

The initial plan envisioned by HPD was 80/20 development, with renovation of the Church of All Nations building for community use, and minimal demolition. A preliminary plan prepared by APPS resulted in up to 575 new mixed income units of 80/20 housing. The City felt that the 115 low income units met CSC's bottom line for low income housing. However, with no middle income housing in the new plan (CSC's plan called for 115 low income and 115 middle income units), CSC's leaders argued that this was not acceptable. Cooper Square began to advocate more forcefully for increasing the percentage of low income housing, and rethinking the development potential of Site 2. Using planning principles rooted in the Caliendo plan of the early 1990's, CSC argued that preservation of the Bowery loft buildings (with 3 units of housing) and the Church of All Nations building (a dilapidated and obsolete building) would cost the community an opportunity to create significantly more housing. CSC's members asked APPS to generate an alternative plan showing the development potential of Site 2 after demolishing the Bowery loft buildings and the Church of All Nations building, and constructing a new community facility elsewhere on Site 1A or 2.

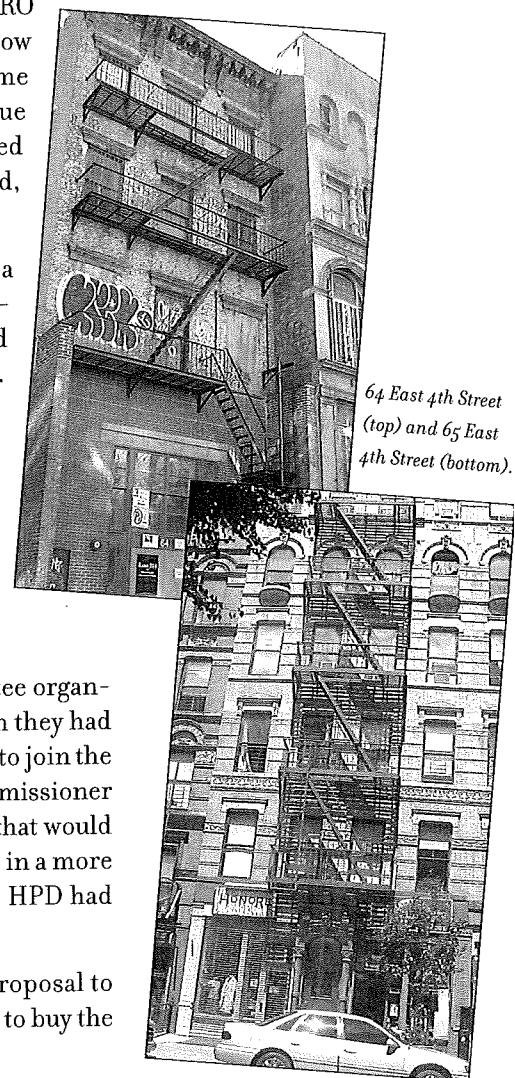
When the planners came back with several alternative land use plans showing an additional 110 units of housing, the Task Force members endorsed the demolition of the Bowery loft buildings and the Church of All Nations. CSC also pushed for supportive housing to replace an SRO at 26 East 1st Street that had been demolished in 1997, and for increasing the overall low income percentage to 30%. HPD met this condition by increasing the mixed income housing to 25%, and setting aside a parcel on the corner of 2nd Street and 2nd Avenue for supportive housing. The site could hold over 50 units. All together, the plan resulted in at least 675 units, of which at least 205 units would be low income housing. By year end, 1998, the plan was shaping up as one that CSC's members could endorse.

Cooper Square's prospects improved financially as well. In mid-1998, CSC obtained a 3 1/2 renewable grant from the Neighborhood 2000 Fund which enabled the organization to hire an additional staff person, expanding CSC's housing counseling and organizing capacity. Steve Herrick became the Executive Director in the Fall of 1998. Cooper Square's staff began doing more outreach to tenants in privately-owned rent-regulated housing to address growing displacement pressures.

By October, 1998, two more MHA buildings had completed renovation—63 and 65 East 4th Street, providing low income housing for 31 households. 15 of the MHA buildings had now been fully renovated, and two more (27 East 3rd Street and 56 East 4th Street) were undergoing renovation. Cooper Square Committee provided assistance to the MHA with temporarily relocating tenants before renovation started.

Tenants in other City-owned buildings were under the gun. Cooper Square Committee organized tenants at 89 East 3rd Street who did not want to go into the TIL program which they had failed to work for them when they were in the program in the late 1980s. They wanted to join the MHA program over HPD's opposition. After a building meeting with HPD Deputy Commissioner John Warren, HPD relented and allowed the tenants to go into a pilot-TIL program that would lead to their eventually joining the MHA program. Tenants of 346 East 21 Street were in a more precarious position, as HPD planned to sell their building at auction. By year end, HPD had issued an RFP to developers to purchase their building.

The Cooper Square Committee and the MHA worked with LISC to put together a proposal to purchase the building. Although HPD ultimately selected a proposal by BFC Partners to buy the



64 East 4th Street (top) and 65 East 4th Street (bottom).



building, BFC planned to preserve the 30 units as low-income housing using the Inclusionary Zoning Program, which entitled them to air rights they could use or sell in exchange for the low-income units they were preserving.

Cooper Square also joined with other Lower East Side groups to fight against the City's policy of selling off vacant lots, community gardens and other city-owned properties at auction. With real estate values rising, the City was collecting several hundred thousand dollars per parcel for vacant lots in Loisaida. To the dismay of local residents, Charas/El Bohio, a major Lower East Side community and cultural center on East 9th Street east of Avenue B was sold at public auction on July 20, 1998. This led to a long term struggle to prevent the eviction of Charas and the developer's efforts to lease space as pseudo-community use. The community was dealt another blow on April 3, 1999 when Armando Perez, co-Director of Charas was found beaten to death in Long Island City, Queens. Ten days after his death, a memorial drew more than 250 people to Our Lady of Sorrow Church.

During the first half of 1999, the Task Force met two more times, wrapping up its work. The Task Force meeting on Jan. 20th recapped points of agreement from the previous meetings, and dealt with the size of the community center, and how the footprint size might affect the height of the residential buildings on the block. The Task Force concluded that there would be less of an impact on building heights if the community center faced Christie Street instead of the Houston/Bowery corner.

A public meeting of the Task Force was held on February 11th to give the community an overview of the Task Force plan for the urban renewal sites. There was some opposition but the community board voted its support for it in principle. During the second half of 1999, HPD worked on writing the RFP for developers which was sent to Task Force members to review at the end of December, 1999.

On March 6, 2000, HPD issued the RFP for the Cooper Square Urban Renewal sites. Seven developers submitted proposals by the May deadline. On July 20, 2000 HPD announced the selection of Chrystie Venture Partners (CVP), which bid \$40.5 million, to develop over 700 apartments on the north and south sides of Houston Street, between the Bowery and 2nd Avenue. CVP's development team is led by Avalon Bay Communities, Inc., a real estate investment trust (REIT) that has done over 130 developments nationwide, totaling nearly 40,000 units. As per the RFP, their proposal included 25% of units for low-income tenants, in addition to 160,000 sq. ft. of retail space and a 30,000+ sq. ft. community center. With these new mixed income units, 1,422 mixed income units will be either built or renovated on the urban renewal sites, of which 888 (63%) will be low income. This is the highest rate of low income housing on any urban renewal site anywhere in the United States.

With a plan finalized for the Cooper Square Urban Renewal Area, the Cooper Square Committee turned its attention to rethinking its mission, goals and objectives over the next 5 years. In the Spring of 2000, Cooper Square hired Assets Consulting Inc. to facilitate its efforts to do a 5 Year Strategic Plan for the organization. Frequent meetings were held by the Planning Committee with the consultants to revise Cooper Square's mission, goals and objectives in light of much of the urban renewal area planning work nearing completion. A couple of planning retreats were held in July and September, involving CSC's membership as well as numerous interviews of area stakeholders regarding Cooper Square's work. Members proposed issues to discuss, and people formed working groups to brainstorm about a variety of neighborhood issues, and report back on their recommendations.

During 2000, Cooper Square had to respond to a number of crisis and emerging issues. On July 13, 2000, a 4-story building at 14 2nd Avenue, occupied by "Irreplaceable Artifacts", collapsed during illegal renovation work causing injury to eleven workers and forcing the evacuation of

more than 100 people from nearby buildings, including the Cube building next door. 22 families in the low-income cooperative were placed in hotels by the Red Cross. The NYC Dept. of Buildings hired a contractor to install metal straps on the building's south facade, and engineers reinspected it two weeks later and determined it was safe for the residents to return. A lawsuit against Evan Blum, the owner of 14 2nd Ave, was initiated, and criminal charges were later brought in July, 2001.

In the first half of 2000, a group called the Coalition to Save the East Village (CSEV) was formed to oppose a general large scale development plan (GLSDP) by Cooper Union to demolish two of their buildings near their Foundation building and to build three new buildings, ranging from 10 to 27 stories. The Cooper Union plan aimed to replenish their endowment which was eroding, and to generate ongoing cash flow. The community objected to the environmental impacts of the GLSDP and to the fact that most of the new development would be for non-educational purposes (ie., commercial office space, luxury residential or hotel space). Cooper Square joined the CSEV and attended Task Force meetings held by Community Board 2 and 3 to meet with Cooper Union regarding their plan.

In mid-2000, Cooper Square outreached to the cultural organizations housed in city-owned buildings on East 4th Street to start a dialogue about the needs of the cultural groups. A meeting was held with HPD Deputy Commissioner John Warren in September 2000 about HPD's disposition plans for the buildings, in particular the two vacant city-owned buildings on the block at 70 and 72 East 4th Street Mr. Warren asked the groups to submit proposals for the buildings by early 2001. The cultural groups began holding regular meetings to arrive at a plan for the block, and formally named their coalition Fourth Arts Block (FAB).

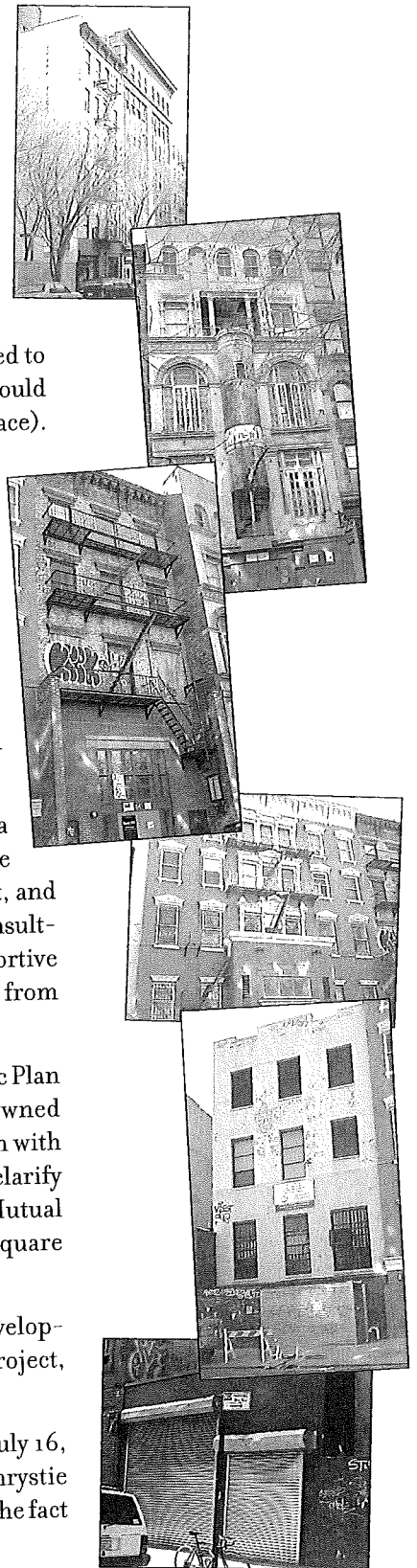
On October 13, Community Board 3 held a ULURP hearing on 29 East 2nd Street, a proposed 53 unit building with supportive services to be developed by Cooper Square Committee in conjunction with Community Access, Inc. It received unanimous support, and sailed through the ULURP process. With the invaluable assistance of Cooper Square's consultant, Brian Sullivan, the \$8 million development had received financing from HPD's Supportive Housing Loan Program, low-income tax credits from the National Equity Fund and a grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank's Affordable Housing Program.

As the year 2000 ended, Cooper Square finalized its efforts, resulting in a 47 page Strategic Plan in December. It emphasized the need to do more organizing of tenants in privately-owned buildings to address the growing problem of displacement, the need to work in coalition with other organizations regarding neighborhood-wide and citywide issues, and the need to clarify and formalize Cooper Square Committee's relationship with the Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association which had matured into a larger organization than the Cooper Square Committee.

In 2001, Cooper Square's leaders were busy attending public hearings on a variety of development projects. They testified at ULURP hearings in support of the supportive housing project, and in March 2001, it received unanimous approval by the City Council.

Months later, the Cooper Square development plan began its own ULURP process. On July 16, 2001, a special meeting of Community Board 3 was held regarding the ULURP for the Chrystie Venture Partner's development. Although it was approved, critics raised questions about the fact that it did not go before the full Community Board, so it was reviewed again in August.

Testimony was evenly split among those in favor and those against it. Cooper Square Committee's members all spoke in support of the plan, and pointed out that nearly 63% of the housing units within the urban renewal area (including JASA, 10 Stanton Street and the MHA apartments) were designated for low income housing. Opponents mainly represented a narrow slice of the community representing CUANDO and the Bowery loft tenants. Fortunately, concerns about the impact the developer's designs might have on the Liz Christy garden had been resolved to permanently protect the garden shortly before the ULURP process got underway. The plan was



Fourth Arts Block (FAB) cultural buildings (from top): 59-61 East 4th Street, 62 East 4th Street, 64 East 4th Street, 66-68 East 4th Street, 70 East 4th Street and 72 East 4th Street

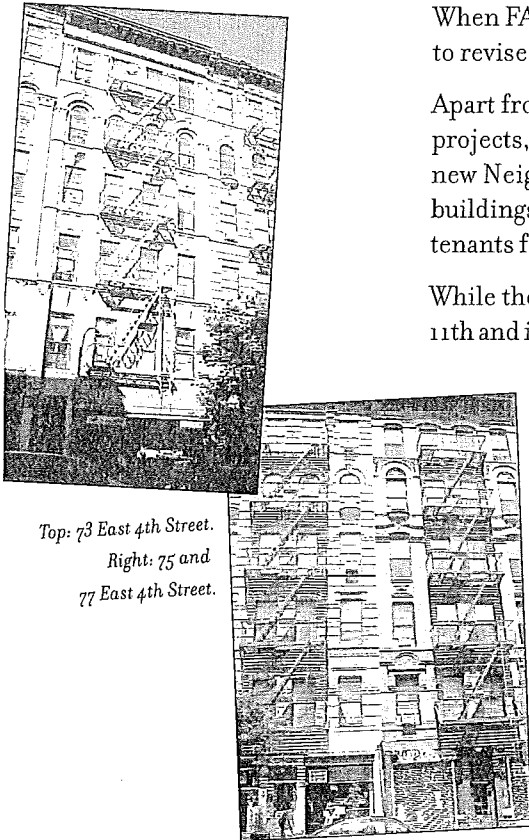
overwhelmingly approved by the Community Board at the August meeting. It went on to obtain unanimous approval by the City Planning Commission and the City Council at the end of 2001.

Fourth Arts Block (FAB) continued to meet regularly in 2001 but did not submit a proposal as requested by HPD in part because the groups realized the task of assessing every group's needs for space was too complicated to address in a matter of weeks or even months. A needs assessment of each group was done during 2001, and architects and engineers were retained to determine the work scopes needed for each building. The cost of renovating all 6 buildings was estimated to be several million dollars.

However, HPD's position that the buildings would not be sold for \$1 made negotiations impossible, and Councilwoman Margarita Lopez made it clear she would not support any plan that involved purchasing the buildings for more than \$1. FAB submitted a proposal in the fall of 2001. When FAB met with John Warren of HPD and Susan Chin of DCA on Dec. 20th, they asked FAB to revise its proposal and assume that there will be no City money to finance the renovations.

Apart from Cooper Square's efforts regarding the urban renewal sites and other development projects, the organization increased its organizing efforts in privately owned buildings. Under a new Neighborhood Preservation Consultant contract with HPD, CSC inspected more than 55 buildings in 2001 and was organizing tenant associations and advising an increasing number of tenants facing repair problems, rent overcharges and other housing issues.

While these successful ULURP outcomes were cause for celebration, the tragedy of September 11th and its long term impact created an uncertain outlook. The number of tenants seeking CSC's help began to climb more than 25% over the next year, straining CSC's organization's limited resources to assist them. More than 400 tenants obtained counseling assistance from Cooper Square in 2001, and more than a dozen tenant associations were organized. The severity of the housing crisis was further highlighted in the Fall of 2001 when the Cooper Square Committee assisted the MHA with the marketing of 36 vacant apartments in recently renovated buildings at 56, 73, 75 and 77 East 4th Street. The MHA received more than 6,000 applications for 36 apartments. Staff and volunteers of Cooper Square and the MHA opened and logged the applications under the supervision of HPD.



Top: 73 East 4th Street.  
Right: 75 and  
77 East 4th Street.

During the first half of 2002, FAB's member organizations met several times with HPD, and Luiz Aragon became the point person regarding the cultural buildings. In 2002, HPD informed the cultural groups that their proposals were accepted, and that HPD would sell the six buildings for \$1 each, a major victory for the East 4th Street cultural district given that the buildings are valued at over \$20 million. The buildings will be owned by non-profits with permanent resale and use restrictions. Cooper Square played a leadership role in FAB's efforts, providing technical assistance during the planning process and helping to set up site meetings with elected officials to win their support for FAB's efforts.

By mid-2002, the revised plan for 59-61 East 4th Street was to form a non-profit entity to purchase the building, and then convert it into a condominium. The law firm of Mallin and Goldstein was retained. Cooper Square Committee was able to obtain \$525,000 in capital funds from Councilwoman Margarita Lopez for the renovation of this building. The Pratt Planning and Architectural Collaborative put together floor plans, building elevation drawings, and a scope of work with cost estimates as part of the proposal. By late 2002, they completed their work, and Cooper Square learned that the building renovation would cost \$2.35 million, to be raised by the occupants of the spaces.

In June, 2002, the limited partnership formed by Cooper Square Committee and Community Access took title to 29 East 2nd Street and issued the contractor, JCH Delta Inc., the order to

proceed with construction of the 54 unit supportive housing project. After delays in commencing, they began in August, and by November, they had encountered problems during the excavation process as cracks formed in both adjacent buildings (21 East 2nd Street and 33 2nd Avenue).

During the Summer and Fall of 2002, ULURP hearings were held regarding the Cooper Union GLSDP which called for building a 16 story office complex on the north side of Astor Place and 3rd Avenue, and a new 10 story engineering building on Third Avenue and 6th Street. The proposed 27 story residential building on Astor Place and Lafayette Street was not included in the GLSDP despite community protests over it being treated as a separate entity. The ULURP was approved despite overwhelming testimony against the nature of the development. Cooper Union had made a few concessions to the community, preserving Schevchenko Place and the design and massing of the commercial building. Cooper Union had also agreed in a Memo of Understanding with Councilwoman Lopez to give consideration to local businesses in the new building, to hire local residents and other concessions.

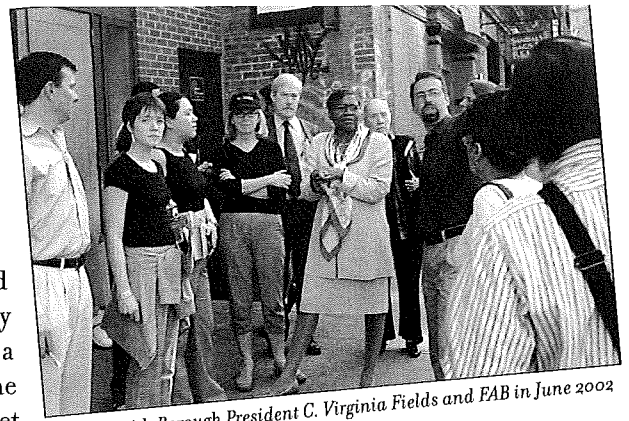
On February 7, 2003, the NYC Dept. of Buildings placed a Stop Work Order on the supportive housing project and issued a partial vacate order on 21 East 2nd Street which put the project on hold for months. CSC, Community Access, the project architects from the Pratt Planning and Architectural Collaborative (PPAC) and attorneys, Mallin and Goldstein, met with HPD to arrive at a plan to repair the buildings since the contractor refused to accept responsibility for repairing the damaged buildings. An engineering firm was retained to shore up 21 East 2nd Street and inject grout below its foundation wall. JCH Delta poured the foundation and built the foundation wall up to the first floor. The Stop Work Order was lifted in October, 2003 after the DOB was satisfied that no further movement of 21 East 2nd Street's wall would occur.

In June, 2003, HPD sold title to Site 1A to Chrystie Venture Partners. In the fall of 2003, Chrystie Venture Partners broke ground on Phase I of the Cooper Square development plan, 360 units of mixed income housing and over 60,000 sq. ft. of retail space, and a 40,000 sq. ft. community center. Due to the MTA subway bed below the site, excavation was a complicated and cautious process. By August of 2004, the foundation had been poured and the building was coming out of the ground.

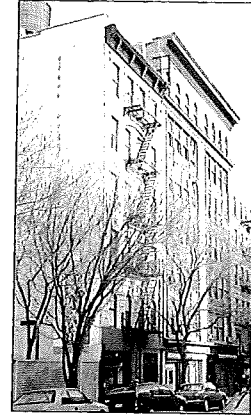
The 13 cultural and community groups that comprised FAB's membership worked individually and collectively with FAB to raise their share of the funds needed to carry out the renovation. The projected rehab costs of the six cultural buildings increased as revised cost estimates were completed during 2003, pushing the rehab budget up to \$5.8 million. FAB set up numerous site visits during 2003 with elected officials, foundation representatives, banks, and cultural consultants.

In the Fall of 2003, Cooper Square received a renewable grant from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development to launch an Illegal Deregulation Organizing Campaign. Cooper Square's housing staff formed a committee to plan the organizing campaign. 20 buildings were targeted for surveys of landlord practices.

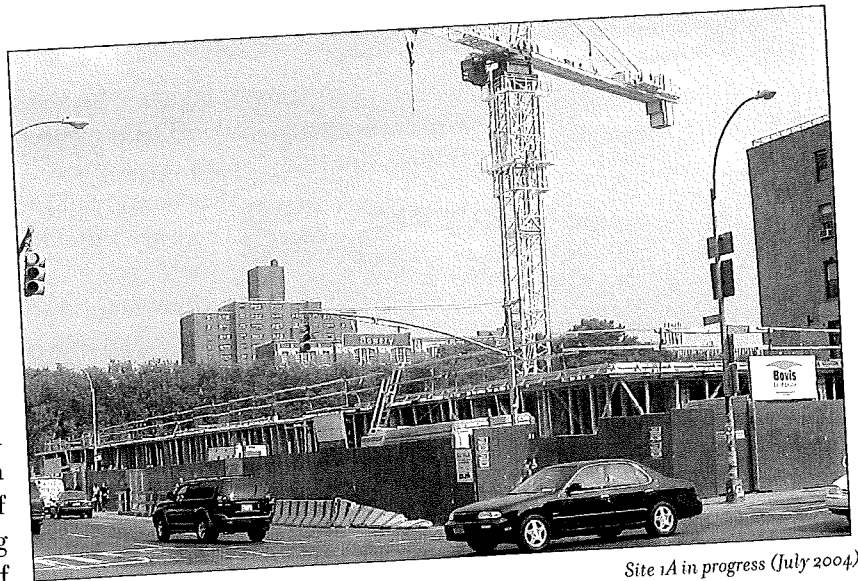
By May, Cooper Square had completed a survey of 70 rent regulated tenants in 20 buildings, and



Site visit with Borough President C. Virginia Fields and FAB in June 2002



59-61 East 4th Street



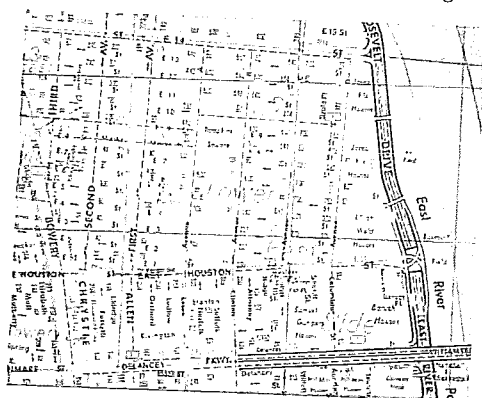
Site 1A in progress (July 2004)

# **IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL TENANTS**

Is your landlord registering a different rent than what you actually pay?

Do you have a preferential rent?

Is your legal regulated rent different than your actual rent?



*As of Spring 2004 the new Cooper Square Committee catchment area spans east from 3rd Avenue/Bowery to the east River and south from 14th Street to Delancey Street.*



*29 East 2nd Street (August 2004).*



*Cooper Square Committee demonstrates outside of NY Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver's office (August 12, 2004).*

found that the median rent is \$950 per month. For tenants who moved in after 1997, the median rent is \$1,850 while tenants who moved in before that date are paying a median rent of \$725 per month. For many long-term tenants, the threat of displacement is growing. Half of pre-'97 tenants have been in court with their landlord, and Cooper Square has intensified its efforts to safeguard their rights, much like CSC has done for tenants in the Urban Renewal Area.

With much of CSC's work in the Urban Renewal Area completed, CSC's membership voted in the Spring of 2004 to expand the organization's catchment area so that CSC can assist more rent regulated tenants at risk of displacement, as well as tenants in public housing and struggling TIL buildings. CSC's western, northern and southern boundaries remain the same (the Bowery, 14th Street and Delancey Street respectively) but CSC now serves residents east of 1st Avenue, all the way to Avenue D.

As Cooper Square celebrates its 45th Anniversary, CSC's work with sites in the Urban Renewal Area is moving closer to completion. The construction of 29 East 2nd Street is underway, and by the end of September, 2004, the contractor is expected to finish laying the concrete plank, topping off the 6-story building. The completion of the 54 units building is projected to be in the Spring of 2005.

In April, 2004 the ULURP process began for the six cultural buildings on East 4th Street. Community Board 3 unanimously approved it on May 25th, and the City Planning Commission voted its approval on August 11th. After the City Council and Mayor sign off their approval for the sale, HPD is likely to transfer title of the buildings to the cultural groups in the first half of 2005. Renovation of the buildings will begin soon after, and the dream of a formal cultural district on East 4th Street will move closer to becoming a reality.

The Cooper Square Committee is in the midst of a \$120,000 capital campaign, and expects to reach its target by mid-2005, enabling the organization to have a permanent secure home on East 4th Street, one of the many blocks in the Cooper Square Urban Renewal Area where it has preserved affordable housing and cultural spaces for future generations of low income tenants and artists.

Cooper Square continues to organize and work in coalition with other housing organizations. Cooper Square has been working with the Seward Park Area Redevelopment Coalition (SPARC) to push for development of the largest parcel of city owned land in Lower Manhattan. On August 12, 2004, CSC participated in a demonstration outside Assemblyman Sheldon Silver's office, urging that he speak out in support of low, moderate and middle income housing on the long-vacant site.

Cooper Square's history has been 45 long years of struggle. As the first anti-displacement organization in the country, CSC can point to many significant achievements: The Thelma Burdick Houses stand proudly on the Bowery and Stanton Street (146 units), the integration of JASA's 150 senior housing units on East 5th Street, the country's first homeless housing co-op, 22 units, at 14-16 1st Avenue; nearly 400 low income apartments managed by the Cooper Square MHA — tenements that were mainly studios with bathrooms in the hallway are now renovated and reconfigured to provide larger apartments for families living in quality housing with hard wood floors, full 3-piece bathrooms and modern appliances at jaw dropping low rents of \$115 per room; and over 230 low income apartments, as well a new community center, coming on the market over the next 12-36 months in the urban renewal area. Hard grueling work, but well worth the struggle.

# Honorees:

## David Dinkins

David Norman Dinkins was born on July 10, 1927 in Trenton, New Jersey. He was raised in Trenton until the Depression, when his family moved to Harlem. He served as the first African American Mayor of New York City.

Dinkins served as a Marine during World War II. After receiving a B.S. in mathematics from Howard University in 1950, Dinkins married Joyce Burrows in 1953. They have two children, David, Jr. and Donna. He went on to graduate from Brooklyn Law School in 1956 and then started a private law practice that he maintained until 1975.

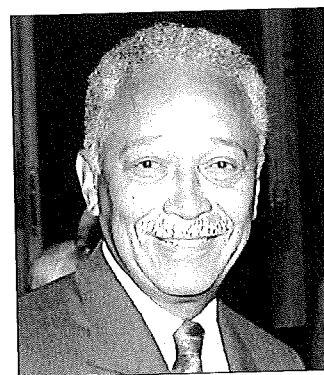
Over the years, Dinkins established a legacy of working to empower poor people and minorities. Elected to the New York State Assembly in 1966, he helped create the Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK) program, which provides grants and educational assistance to low-income students. He established guidelines that encouraged wider voter registration as president of the New York City Board of Elections, a post he held from 1975 until he became the president of the borough of Manhattan in 1985.

Dinkins was elected mayor in 1989, inheriting a city budget deficit of \$500 million during a massive recession. At that time, one in four New Yorkers was classified as poor — a figure unequaled since the Depression. Dinkins focused on crime and problems of racial inequality and initiated a program called "Safe Streets, Safe City: Cops and Kids," reducing crime and expanding opportunities for New York's children. He championed issues such as drug abuse prevention, AIDS, housing and education.

In 1990, the Dinkins Administration negotiated and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Cooper Square Committee, agreeing to transfer title of 18 city-owned buildings to a non-profit management company to be created by the Cooper Square Committee in order to preserve more than 350 tenement apartments as permanent affordable housing.

Dinkins has continued to be critical of problems within the criminal justice system, including abusive police and institutionalized racism in the courts. In 1999, his beliefs led to his arrest along with approximately 1,200 others while protesting the shooting of Amadou Diallo, an unarmed immigrant from West Africa who was shot forty-one times by police.

Dinkins currently serves as professor of public affairs at the Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs. He hosts Dialogue with Dinkins, a public affairs radio program, and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the board of the American Stock Exchange, among many other organizations, especially ones which benefit children and young people. When he is not working, Dinkins can often be found on a tennis court.



## Miriam Friedlander

Miriam Friedlander has for generations been a fighter for justice, an indomitable defender of the people. She is a former NYC Council Member from the 2nd Council District. Prior to her election to the NYC Council in 1974, Miriam was the Director of the Citizen's Committee for Constitutional Liberties. For the 18 years she was in Council, where she was the voice of all progressives. She not only championed labor and the unions but also was a prime leader for tenants and their rights, including the right of pet ownership. As one of the first advocates for loft tenants, she promoted the Loft Law and helped shepherd it through the Legislature.

Miriam's proudest achievement was her creation and chairing of the Committee on Women. In that venue, she held hearings and fostered progress on such things as pay equity and women's health issues. For ten years she has coordinated the highly successful annual conference Women Fighting Poverty.





Miriam is still an active member of Coalition for a District Alternative (CoDA) and continues to be involved in community issues.

Miriam is the very proud mother of a musicologist, Dr. Paul Friedlander and the grandmother of David, a delightful middle-schooler.

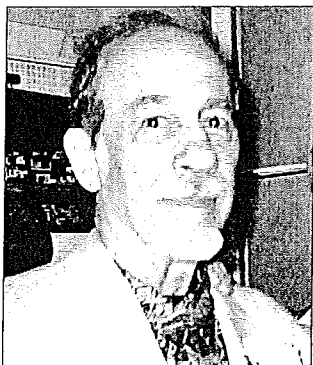


Frances Goldin was born in 1924, and celebrated her 80th birthday this year. Mother of two daughters, literary agent and progressive political activist, Frances has been involved in political struggles for decades. Frances was one of the principal founders of the Cooper Square Committee in 1959 when Lower East Side residents learned that Robert Moses planned to demolish 12 city blocks to build middle income housing that would have displaced thousands of area residents.

Frances served on the Cooper Square Committee's Board for more than 30 years, and led the organization's organizing, planning and negotiating efforts on many issues. She testified at hearings, marched in demonstrations, and got arrested on several occasions to protest city plans and policies concerning the Cooper Square Urban Renewal Area. Ultimately, Frances led Cooper Square to successfully save hundreds of buildings from demolition in the 1960s and 1970s, and to preserve and develop hundreds of low income apartments during the 1980s and 1990s.

Frances Goldin founded the Frances Goldin Literary Agency in 1977. She envisioned an agency representing only literary fiction and serious, controversial, progressive non-fiction. She worked with the Jeanne Hale Literary Agency for 20 years and for the next six for Ernest, Cane, Berner and Gitlin, before striking out on her own. Her agency was 25 years old in 2002. Frances worked out of her home for 22 years with two other people in her second bedroom, forcing her to work from 10 pm to 3 in the morning when she finally had some quiet time to think. The move enabled her to expand her staff and have the privacy to work normal hours.

She considers herself lucky to have an agency which is an extension of her politics. She has served as the literary agent for people such as Ramsey Clark, Mumia Abu Jamal, Martin Duberman, Dorothy Alison, Barbara Kingsolver and others.



For the past 50 years, in various positions and as an advocate planning consultant, Walter Thabit has served clients in over a dozen communities throughout New York State, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut. He received degrees in design, sociology and planning from Brooklyn College, the New School and MIT.

Mr. Thabit joined the Cooper Square Committee at its inception in early 1959, was a member of the Steering Committee from 1959 til mid-1985, and he still helps out when needed. Working with the Cooper Square Committee, he prepared 'An Alternate Plan for Cooper Square,' a community approach to urban renewal which changed the renewal program across the country, and around the world. He was a founder of Planners for Equal Opportunity, a national planning organization with 600 members, formed in 1964. He served as PEO's President for eight years.

He has written, taught and lectured widely on housing and planning subjects at the New School for Social Research, the Graduate School of Urban Planning in Hunter College and at Long Island University, and to various local community and national advocacy groups.

Most recently, Walter Thabit has written a book, *How East New York Became a Ghetto*, an unsparing look at the racism which creates minority ghettos and destroys communities in the process.

Mr. Thabit lives on East 11th Street, not far from the Cooper Square community he has served so well.



## Maria Torres Bird

Maria Torres Bird was born in Puerto Rico and moved into our community 23 years ago. As a single parent she raised her son, Guillermo, while fighting for our community as an on site tenant and housing advocate. Ms. Torres Bird has a Masters Degree in Special Education from Hunter College. She was an Early Child Development teacher at the New Interdisciplinary School for Developmentally Disabled Children on Long Island for many years. Today she is teaching at a New York City Department of Education School for Children with Special needs in Harlem.

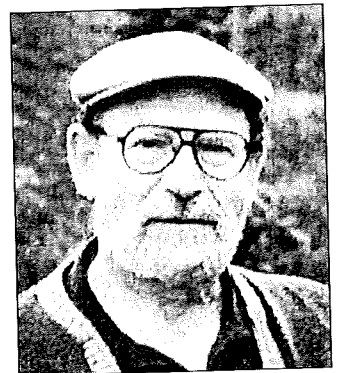


Maria has been a member of the Cooper Square Steering Committee for 15 years. During her 8 years as the Cooper Square Committee Chairperson Mayor Dinkins signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding with the Cooper Square Committee endorsing the Cooper Square Plan. She was a strong advocate for the creation of the Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association and became a founding board member of the Cooper Square MHA. Ms. Torres Bird served as a Cooper Square Committee representative on the Cooper Square Task Force. She has always been a strong advocate for low income housing and worked hard to get the new community center included in the urban renewal plan. Today she serves on the board of the Cooper Square Committee and the board of the Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association.

## Martin M. Berger

(March 4, 1927 to January, 27, 2003)

Martin Berger, or Marty as we at Cooper Square knew him, served as the organization's lawyer for decades. He filed the organization's non-profit incorporation papers in 1968, incorporated the Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association in 1991, and the Community Land Trust the same year. He defended both the Cooper Square Committee and its affiliate when they faced legal threats by opponents of affordable housing. He handled more than 20 closings for the MHA buildings. He was in the process of revising the MHA's co-op offering plan at the time of his death.



He represented residents of Westbeth during a rent dispute in 1972 and helped establish the low-rise West Village Houses, which took a decade of legal and political action. He also represented Villagers who tried to stop New York University from building the Bobst Library on Washington Square South.

Marty was a dedicated organizer and campaigner in the Reform Democratic political movement of the 1960s as well as a skillful and tenacious civil-rights lawyer. A founder in 1961 of Downtown Independent Democrats, he was an organizing member of Village Independent Democrats, serving as president of V.I.D. in 1964 and 1965, and leading the club to endorse John V. Lindsay, a Republican, for Mayor. From 1994-2003, he was mayor of Saltaire, on Fire Island, where his family had a summer home.

He achieved national recognition in 1966 as a volunteer attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union defending the right of George Lincoln Rockwell, leader of the American Nazi Party, to speak in Union Sq. The defense, by the son of Jewish immigrants who lost 30 relatives in the Holocaust, prompted a flood of hate mail along with many messages of support from people all over the country. One lawyer wrote thanking him for "upholding the honor of the profession."

Marty was an ACLU lawyer in more than 100 court cases, representing people who had no resources, gay applicants for social-worker positions, Stuyvesant High School students who challenged censorship of their school newspaper, co-op residents who were victims of fraud and pushcart vendors denied the right to use the streets. During the civil-rights actions in the South in the 1960s, he represented sit-in demonstrators.

Marty Berger was born in 1924 in Staten Island, the oldest son of Leo and Rita Berger,

immigrants from Ukraine, who ran a candy store. He lied about his age to join the Army just as World War II was ending.

In addition to his wife, a professor at Bronx Community College, he is also survived by a brother, Howard, a teacher and consultant in the New York City public school system; and four daughters, Rachel Stassen-Berger, a reporter for the St. Paul (Minn.) Pioneer Press; Bethany Berger, a law professor at University of Conn.; Elissa Berger, director of operations for the Working Families Party; and Sarah, an economics major at Skidmore College.



## Rod Rodgers

*(December 4th, 1938 – March 24th, 2002)*

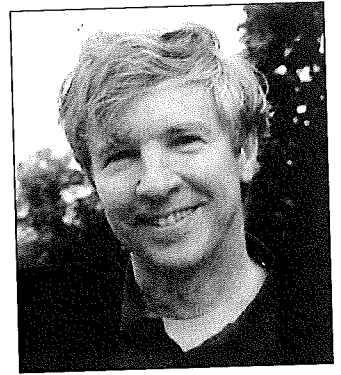
Rod A. Rodgers—dancer, choreographer, master teacher, cultural and political activist passed away on March 24th, 2002. His loss was deeply felt by the many people who knew him in the various cultural, social and political circles in which he moved. As a Board member of the Cooper Square Committee, he provided valuable insights, a broad perspective and a sense of humor that enriched the lives of everyone who had the pleasure of knowing him. Rod Rodgers was one of the founding members of Fourth Arts Block (FAB) an association of a dozen cultural groups based on East 4th Street.

Born in Cleveland, to professional dancer parents, Rod Rodgers grew up in Detroit. In 1962 he moved to New York to further his studies, and his training included techniques of Katherine Dunham and José Limon. His experiences with Hanya Holm, Mary Anthony, Charles Weidman, the Dancers' Theater Company, the Erick Hawkins Modern Dance Company, and the National Dance Teachers Guild all inspired him to create his own works. Collaborations with musicians, designers, and extraordinary dancers influenced his creative exploration.

He formed the Rod Rodgers Dance Company in 1967, which evolved into a new vision and was incorporated in 1974. This internationally acclaimed New York based ensemble went beyond traditional African, ethnic, and historically African-American styles. His multi-ethnic company is known for dance theatre, which explores and celebrates the black experience; and for unique contemporary rhythm dances in which the dancers create the score with handheld instruments as they move. He received many fellowships, commissions, and awards for his creative work and for innovative community outreach and audience development. He published articles on dance and worked with young people. Rod was an educator, a choreographer, a percussionist, a photographer, and a graphic artist.

His company toured West Africa, Europe and Mexico. Rod brought programs to communities that get few chances to see professional dance concerts. The company and studio space is a landmark of the East Fourth Street cultural community. Rod Rodgers is survived by longtime companion Kim Grier; four sons, Jason, Kalan, Kaldar, and Jamal; a grandson, two brothers, two sisters, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, and cousins. He is deeply missed by the board and staff at the Cooper Square Committee, as well as by many friends and "adopted children" at his beloved dance company.

# Saylor Creswell



Saylor Creswell was born in 1939 in Spring City, Pennsylvania. He loved jazz and James Dean and cultivated a desire to study acting. He attended the Central School of Drama in London, England for three years and returned to the States in 1965, or rather he moved to the Lower East Side to be an actor. It was on the Lower East Side that he learned to turn his power of intense focus, his attention to detail, his sense of justice, his appreciation of the theatrical, his organizational skills and the pleasure he derived from positive confrontation - to advocacy and activism. His community was here.

It started with a random evening's visit to an open house meeting at the Second Avenue Cooper Square office in 1970. It wasn't initially the plan, the idea that grabbed him. It was the people... the energy in the room, the sense of purpose, the humor. He had studied philosophy at Brown University and the argument behind the Cooper Square plan intrigued him... that people would argue about it, yell at each other and move ahead. He found the meetings high drama. He found the ferocity bracing. And he came to believe in the cause whole-heartedly. Soon he was Chair of the Membership Committee, updating a messy collection of names into legible order, enabling voting and dues collection and creating a record of names, dates and addresses that formed the base of a coherent membership. It wasn't a glamorous job. It was the kind of thing he relished making succeed.

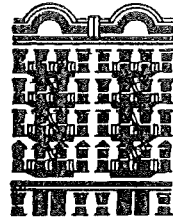
Saylor served on the Board of Directors of the Cooper Square Committee for over twenty years. From his position at Cooper Square, he advocated not only for affordable housing but also for community gardens, neighborhood services, better schools, community preservation - for a more livable Lower East Side.

He was a founding member of The 4th Street Tree People and Group 751, who saw to the planting and maintenance of dozens of trees, especially on East 4th and 5th Streets. Also with these groups and in co-operation with planners from Pratt Institute, he instigated an overhaul of the PS 751 playground and foyers - benches, planters and curb-seating

Saylor was a founding member of CODA, helped organize the New York Green Party and, year after year, worked tirelessly on School Board #1 elections. He pamphleted and cajoled and collected signatures to elect Miriam Friedlander and Margarita Lopez and worked to elect a School Board that would be responsible to the parents of this community. Then, when he was too ill to walk around the neighborhood so much, he volunteered with Book Pals to be a classroom reader in the Neighborhood School. It was a wonderful amalgamation of his love for the community and his acting skills.

In the late 1990's, Saylor joined the East Timor Action Network as the result of a talk given by Noam Chomsky. Until he died in 2000, he worked to raise public awareness of the role played by the United States in aiding the oppression and genocide of the East Timorese people by the Indonesian government. He went to Washington to lobby Congress, made hundreds of phone calls, organized a major benefit, held information sessions and, true to his Cooper Square roots, helped to establish a membership mailing list. It was an enormous pleasure for him to be able to witness the UN monitored elections in 1999.

Saylor was a big supporter of Cooper Square but it was a two way street. He forged ties that were deeply meaningful to him, with his community, with like-minded people. He learned he could make a difference.



# Cooper Square Committee

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*If there is no struggle, there is no progress  
Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation  
Are those who want crops without plowing up the ground  
Want rain without thunder and lightning  
They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.  
The struggle may be a moral one or it may be a physical one.  
BUT IT MUST BE A STRUGGLE.  
Power concedes nothing without a demand.  
It never did and it never will.*

*Frederick Douglass said it,  
and we,  
The Cooper Square Committee,  
believe it.*

*We thank our honorees for helping us come this far.*