



cooper square committee
“housewarming” party,
2005

“here today, here to stay”



housewarming party
wednesday, november 16th, 2005

Cooper Square Committee
61 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10003
(212) 228-8210

Design by Alison Roberto

the cooper square committee's highlights of 2005

2005 has been a year of important achievements as well as daunting challenges for the Cooper Square Committee. This year, 46 years after our formation, we joined with more than a dozen non-profit cultural and community organizations on East 4th Street to have an ownership stake in our homes on the block. Along with our affiliate, the Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association, and several other partners, we formed a non-profit company (ARC on 4th St., Inc.) that bought our building at 59-61 East 4th Street on October 6th, 2005.

Cultural organizations purchased five other buildings on the block as part of a precedent setting Cultural District project. More than \$6 million in renovations will take place on East 4th Street, not to mention over \$200 million in new construction in new mixed use construction on the vacant urban renewal sites, over the next few years. With the last remaining city-owned properties in the Cooper Square Urban Renewal Area now in private hands, our organization and our community enter a new era. As our community grows, the Cooper Square Committee must recommit itself to our mission of "working to preserve and develop affordable housing and community/cultural spaces on the Lower East Side".



preserving the fabric of our community as we grow

Many challenges stand in our way. Over-development is threatening to transform the low rise character of the community as new dorms, hotels and luxury rentals and condos crop up on side streets and avenues; hundreds of area apartments have been deregulated, some illegally, in the past year as the rent regulation system appears to be broken beyond repair. A Cooper Square Committee survey found that 1 out of 8 apartments in rent regulated buildings is now deregulated, virtually all within the past 3-4 years.

The prospect of deregulation has given many landlords more incentive to evict long term and low-income tenants, resulting in a steady rise in eviction proceedings against area tenants. Cooper Square has seen a 30% rise in tenants coming into our office seeking help since 2001, while facing budget constraints that limit our capacity to meet the demand for our services. In addition to all of these challenges, the Cooper Square Committee has been engaged in a capital campaign to raise \$150,000 towards our share of the costs of acquiring and renovating our office space as part of a large scale cultural district plan for the block.

We're happy to report that we've made progress in all these areas during the past year. To date, the Cooper Square Committee has raised most of the funds we need to contribute to the estimated \$2.5 million renovation cost for the building. We've led the building's efforts to obtain capital funds from Councilwoman Margarita Lopez, the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development and the NYS Main Street Program. We've also been very gratified to receive many contributions from our members and supporters over the past couple of years.

With the help of our attorneys Mallin & Goldstein, we formed ARC on 4th Street, Inc., a non-profit real estate holding corporation that purchased 59-61 East 4th Street from the City of New York on October 6th. We've put together a two-phase renovation plan with our architect James Strawder, and expect to select a general contractor in the coming months. We expect to begin renovation in early 2006. Phase one is intended to bring the building up to code, including the replacement of the manual elevator with an automatic elevator. This should take about a year to complete. Phase two is likely to begin in the 2nd half of 2007.

The Cooper Square Committee will also be meeting regularly with the cultural groups on East 4th Street to share information and encourage best practices as they sponsor the renovation of their own buildings. 62, 64, 66-68-70 and 72 East 4th Street are scheduled to be renovated over the next several years. Given that some of the buildings are interconnected by temporary relocations, many coordination issues will have to be addressed throughout the renovation process. Fortunately, we've enjoyed a good working relationship with the cultural organizations in Fourth Arts Block (FAB), and we expect that the cultural groups will be able to resolve obstacles as they arise.

holding government agencies accountable

The Cooper Square Committee has also been working to deal with the thornier challenges of over-development and deregulation. We have organized tenants and worked in coalition with other housing groups to fight back. In April, 2005 the Cooper Square Committee led a demonstration against a 14 story "dorm" at 81 East 3rd Street that had been built in disregard for the City's Zoning Resolution and NYC Building Department codes.

The demonstration garnered media attention and led to a meeting between community leaders and the New York Law School which was in negotiations with the owner to lease the building. New York Law School ultimately chose to sign the lease, thereby allegedly bringing the building into compliance with the zoning code. The NYC Department of Buildings has since closed a loophole in the Code to prevent developer from getting building permits to build dorms without first having a signed long term lease by an educational institution.

The struggle involving 81 East 3rd Street has made the community more proactive in addressing the threat of new dorms. A case in point was the community's strong showing at the Board of Standards and Appeals hearing in August, 2005 to oppose Greg Singer's proposed demolition of Charas to make way for another dorm without an institutional tenant in place. The dorm was stopped and the building is now up for sale. The Community Board has also stepped up efforts to address inappropriate development by forming a 197 Task Force to push for contextual zoning in the community.

The fight to preserve affordable housing is being fought on several fronts, and deals with several housing types, from rent regulated to project based Section 8 housing. The Cooper Square Committee worked with GOLES and AAFE to assist the tenants at 10 Stanton Street (The Thelma Burdick Building) in their efforts to get their landlord to renew the Section 8 contract, which was scheduled to expire on June 23rd, 2005. The tenants turned out in large numbers for building meetings and met with allies such as Congresswoman Nydia Velasquez, Assemblyman Sheldon Silver and Councilman Alan Gerson, as well as representatives from HUD to ultimately win a five-year contract renewal, until 2010. The owner worked with HUD to put together a "Mark Up to Market" plan and obtained a waiver from HUD that enabled them to obtain higher rent subsidies from HUD beyond what the program would normally allow. The challenge remains to develop a plan to preserve these units permanently as affordable housing.

The Cooper Square Committee is providing organizing assistance to several multi-building tenant coalitions that are fighting back against systemic abuses by their respective landlords: The Croman Coalition, the Shalom Tenants Alliance, the Granite Tenants Coalition have all been active in the past year, seeking redress of their grievances.

In June, Granite tenants at 47 E. 3rd St. held a rally and press conference outside their home to denounce their landlord's personal use eviction of the entire 15 unit building in order to turn it into a mansion for his family of three and their nanny. A Supreme Court Judge has ordered a stay on all eviction proceedings until he determines a final decision. The stay is on-going until such time. The rent stabilized tenants have mobilized and obtained the support of elected officials and the entire community. Their case was featured in the New York Post and the New York Times this Summer.

The Shalom Tenants Alliance has actively worked, with assistance from Cooper Square, to publicize the abuses by the Ohebshalom (a/k/a Shalom) family of landlords. Their new website www.shalomtenants.org highlights the range of displacement practices tenants are facing. The website has proven to be a vital outreach and organizing tool, bringing many new buildings into the coalition. Their list of Shalom buildings expanded from 30 to over 90 within one year.

In June, 2005 the New York Post published an article about their plight. Their group's member buildings have had some victories in Housing Court and in dealing with City agencies. Most recently HPD and DOB have stepped up investigations and enforcement in Shalom buildings. Tenants garnered support from 15-20 City and State elected officials who have attended tenant meetings and helped them strategize.



Dorm at 81 East 3rd Street violates the low rise character of the block



10 Stanton Street gets a 5 year extension of Section 8 contract

NYS Senator Tom Duane sponsored a very successful town hall meeting on June 2nd, 2005 which was attended by over 80 tenants from Ohebshalom owned and managed buildings city-wide. With Cooper Square's help, Shalom tenants were successful in obtaining funds from Council members Margarita Lopez and Christine Quinn to hire attorneys and increase publicity and organizing efforts through printed communication. Cooper Square continues to work in coalition with city-wide housing organizations such as ANHD and Housing Here and Now, Metropolitan Council on Housing and NYS Tenants & Neighbors. In February, 2005 Cooper Square members joined a massive rally sponsored by Housing Here and Now to demand that Battery Park City surplus funds be used to build low income housing, more funds for code enforcement and housing for People with AIDS. In early July, 2005 Cooper Square joined in an Independence from Albany rally to demand "Home Rule" for NYC to administer its own Rent Laws.

more affordable housing

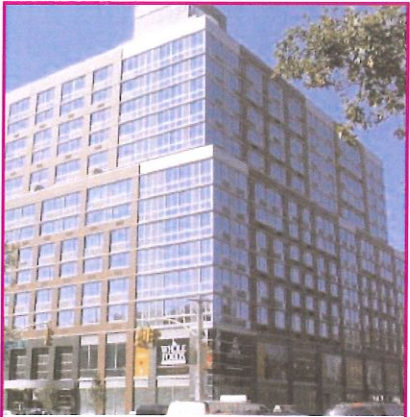
The challenge of creating new affordable housing opportunities remains. The new supportive housing at 29 East 2nd Street that we are co-sponsoring with Community Access has unfortunately fallen well behind the completion schedule that we originally anticipated. At our request, HPD sent the contractor an acceleration letter in October. If significant progress is not made, HPD will work with us to replace the contractor so that we can complete a quality building by the end of 2006.

Meanwhile, the new construction of additional mixed income and low income housing developments in the Cooper Square Urban Renewal Area are proceeding rapidly. Phase one of the 712 unit large scale development on the north and south sides

of East Houston Street, being built by Avalon Bay Communities, Inc. and their development partners, is largely completed. In February, 2005 Avalon Chrystie began marketing 72 low-income apartments in the 360 unit building on the south side of Houston Street. According to Phipps Houses, their development partner, over 30,000 people applied. The low-income tenants for Phase One have been selected, and are now housed. The new 42,000 square foot community center included in the development is nearing completion, with a projected occupancy in the first quarter of 2006.



Avalon Chrystie Place (Phase 1): 360 units of 80/20 housing with a 42,000 sq. ft. community center and a Whole Foods supermarket.



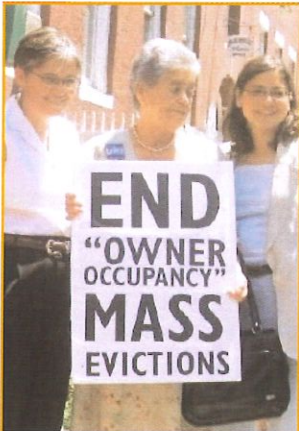
89 E. 3rd St: Nearly completed renovation of 15 units of low income housing. The building joined the MHA Program with the organizing assistance of Cooper Square Committee.



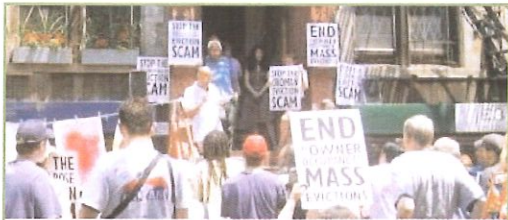
Cooper Square Committee Board: (Top row, L to R) Joyce Ravitz, Patricia Hoag Adams, Brenda Hill, Maria Torres Bird, Lois Slessinger, Susi Schropp; (Bottom row, L to R) Patricia Melvin, Lucille Carrasquero, Marva Clark, Ray Martel. Not shown: Maxine Fee, Jason Rodgers, Anna Sawaryn, Laura Triana.



Rent stabilized tenants of 47 E. 3rd Street at a rally/press conference on June 25, 2005 speaking out against their landlord's Personal Use eviction brought against the entire building to make way for a mansion for his wife, child and nanny.



From left: Councilwoman Margarita Lopez, her mom, and District Leader Rosie Mendez at the 47 E. 3rd St. rally.



Local residents supporting their neighbors at the 47 E. 3rd St. rally against "Owner Occupancy" evictions.



Cooper Square members preparing to go to the Housing Here and Now rally in February, 2005.



29 E. 2nd Street: A 54 unit apartment building with supportive services for the mentally disabled, being co-developed by Cooper Square Committee and Community Access.

Avalon Chrystie has broken ground on Phase Two on the north side of Houston Street, taking extra precautions to shore up the adjacent Liz Chrystie Garden as they pour the foundation. An agreement was reached with the garden to replace any trees that may be damaged during the excavation, shoring and construction process. Phipps Houses has also broken ground on 42 units of low income housing on the corner of the Bowery and East 1st Street, pursuant to the Cooper Square Task Force Plan.

The Cooper Square Committee continues to work closely with our affiliate, the Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association, to provide housing and entitlement assistance to the tenants residing in nearly 400 units of housing, primarily on East 3rd and East 4th Streets. They recently completed the renovation of 89 East 3rd Street, the final building to be renovated in their portfolio. We look forward to providing assistance to their tenants when the low-income cooperative offering plan is issued, hopefully sometime in 2006.

Cooper Square's Board continues to direct policy for the organization, and continues to be democratically elected by our members. Our most recent election was held in June, 2005 and 14 members serve, many of whom are also involved in other housing and neighborhood preservation coalitions or cultural organizations.

As we enter a new era of ownership on East 4th Street for ourselves, and for the residential and cultural tenants, the Cooper Square Committee will continue the struggle to create opportunities for the preservation and development of more affordable housing and community/cultural spaces in our community. We're thankful to all of the people and organizations that have supported our efforts of the past 46 years and remained our loyal allies in this very necessary endeavor.

cooper square – here today, here to stay!