



Tenants at 109 East Ninth Street rally outside their SRO building, where a judge found their landlord had harassed them. (Hell Gate)

MORNING SPEW

A Rare Victory for the Residents of This East Village SRO

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 Hell Gate

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In the [ongoing battle to save](#) one of the last remaining single-room occupancy buildings in the East Village, tenants have won a three-year reprieve thanks to an unusual move by the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

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Hell Gate first covered the story of 109 East Ninth Street [back in May 2025](#), when tenants claimed that the building's owner, Michael Geylik, was [harassing them](#) to force them out of their deeply affordable rooms—some of them pay \$155 per month.

The residents said Geylik insisted he needed to demolish their communal kitchen as well as one of their communal showers and two of their four toilets, in order to clear old housing violations with the City. He told them he would build the amenities back better, but he first needed what is called a "[certificate of no harassment](#)." The tenants agreed, and helped him obtain the certificate.

Years passed, but the kitchen, shower, and toilets were never rebuilt. Tenants felt betrayed, and have been forced to cook basic meals on hot plates in their rooms.

At the time of our first story, Geylik told Hell Gate he was not trying to push residents out, and said he was just following the orders of the City's Department of Buildings, [which issued a series of repair orders](#). He said the tenants' claims of harassment were "not true," and said he had no intention to "put profit over human life or of evicting the people for money."

But in the following months, HPD investigated the tenants' claims and found probable cause for harassment—defined as conduct intended to force tenants to leave their units—so they took Geylik to the City's administrative court.

After a protracted trial with testimony from tenants and Geylik, administrative law Judge Christine Stecura found that "the SRO tenants were harassed" by Geylik, including through his removal of their shared kitchen, and recommended that HPD rescind the certificate of no harassment. HPD did just that earlier this month.



Residents formed a tenant association to advocate for themselves. (Courtesy of 109 East Ninth Street Tenant Association)

The City's move prevents any demolition from happening at 109 East 9th Street for three years—effectively halting work by Geylik's builders and engineers that tenants feared was ultimately intended to turn the buildings into market-rate apartments, while making the building unlivable for those still living there.

On Tuesday, Geylik told Hell Gate he would appeal the administrative judge's decision, saying he did not believe it was based on substantial evidence, while questioning the credibility of two of the five tenants who testified against him.

"I am a first generation immigrant; I came to this country with my parents, grandparents and brother fleeing antisemitism—something that I fear is taking hold in our country today," Geylik wrote in an email. "I hope that you will see these allegations for what they are, and not just point the finger at me because I am a landlord or, worse, because I am Jewish," he said.

Geylik added that he hadn't "demolished" any of the units, he was simply conducting "structural probing" in vacant units as required by the DOB (the judge viewed photos of the work and deemed that images of ceilings and floors removed "strongly" indicated that "the construction work exceeded exploratory probing"). Geylik added that he now couldn't replace the kitchen or bathroom without the certificate of no harassment "which is currently suspended precisely because of these tenants' harassment allegations." (HPD confirmed to Hell Gate that Geylik can, in fact, still perform other work, including standard repairs, without the certificate.)

The building at 109 East Ninth Street is one of the last SROs in the East Village, once an affordable enclave for artists, students, veterans and others experiencing homelessness or joblessness who needed low-cost housing (including a young Alvin Ailey).

"Since Mike Geylik took over, conditions have deteriorated dramatically," Patterson Beckwith, a City College professor who has lived in the building since 1991, said at a rally to mark the tenants' victory on 9th Street Tuesday afternoon. Beckwith is one of four tenants Geylik has moved to evict, claiming either non-payment or that the units are not people's primary residences.

"For the first time in my life I was threatened with eviction, had to retain an attorney, and learned what 'constructive eviction means,'" he said. "We have experienced anxiety, fear and stress that we did nothing to deserve."



A room in 109 East Ninth Street. (Courtesy of 109 East Ninth Street Tenant Association)

An HPD spokesperson told Hell Gate it was uncommon for the agency to rescind a certificate of this kind, and housing attorney for the tenants, Michael Grinthal, said he had never seen it happen before.

Anna Baker-Heans, an organizer with [Cooper Square Committee](#) who helped the tenants craft their legal strategy, said her team noticed a pattern with other East Village SROs that had [slowly disappeared](#) from the neighborhood: they had certificates of no harassment granted before their transformation. She pointed to examples like [the Sunshine Hotel](#) and [the Whitehouse Hotel](#), which have become restaurants, office spaces, and, in one case, a [micro-boutique hotel](#).

"SROs are kind of like their last stop before street homelessness, so once the tenants left the Sunshine Hotel and the Whitehouse, unfortunately my supervisor wasn't able to find or contact them to get the full story of what happened," Baker-Heans said. "But what we do know is that they too were

longstanding SRO buildings that received [certificates of no harassment] from the City, and that shortly after were no longer SROs."

Baker-Heans said that with the help of the law firm Take Root Justice, they were able to find the right levers to pull, and spoke with the East Village's City Councilmember Carlina Rivera and her new replacement, Harvey Epstein, to make it happen. More recently, Cea Weaver, director of the Mayor's Office for Tenant Protection, had spoken with tenants and helped communicate their concerns to HPD and DOB, including taking their issues to DOB head Ahmed Tigani.

"Every tenant deserves a safe home," Weaver told Hell Gate. "We are committed to working with the tenants of 109 East 9th Street to ensure that they have repairs made and protecting them from landlord harassment."

Meanwhile, Epstein was at the rally Tuesday to show his support for the tenants.

"We see this all over our city where SRO tenants are being pushed out because the landlord doesn't believe in SRO housing," Epstein said. "We're going to fight as much as we can to protect this building as affordable housing."

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