

**QUOTE: 'WE'RE BLEEDING EXISTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING EVERY DAY.'**

— Thomas Yu  
of Asian Americans for Equality

# Immigrants take on landlords

Groups help save affordable homes

By Marlene Naanes  
mnaanes@am-ny.com

Decrepit apartments and cramping are a common trend among the city's immigrant families struggling to afford housing, particularly in gentrifying neighborhoods.

"In some immigrant communities, tenants are more vulnerable to being pushed out illegally because they may fear being reported to the authorities or they may be unfamiliar with the rules," said Tom Waters of the Community Service Society, an anti-poverty group.

Landlords have been known to charge exorbitant fees or allow units to rot to force out low-income immigrant tenants so they can boost the rent for new tenants, affordable housing advocates said.

In a city that is losing about 60,000 low-rent units a year, neighborhood groups are on the front lines in the battle to retain affordable housing.

Here's a look at how three neighborhoods are coping.

## East Harlem

Filiberto Hernandez, 34, has had to wait months for his leaky bathroom ceiling to be repaired. He said he fights his landlord, but some of his neighbors do not know their rights and end up moving out.

"The landlords are rich multi-



Asian Americans for Equality will soon renovate the apartment on Henry Street, left, just as it did with another home on Hester Street, above. (Katya Pronin)

before he sold the properties last year. Now the group, comprising about 400 tenants, is suing the units' new owner for charging tenants for repairs or appliances they were never given.

## Chinatown

Chinatown recently saw the price of buildings with five or more units skyrocket higher than any other neighborhood in the city, boosting the cost of these properties by 42 percent from 2005 to 2006, according to an NYU survey. "We're bleeding existing afford-

millionaires, and then there are many poor people in El Barrio without resources," Hernandez said.

Landlords in East Harlem have been trying to force their lower-income, immigrant tenants out by letting apartments fall apart and later

charging higher rents in the gentrifying neighborhood, advocates said.

For the past four years, Movement for Justice in El Barrio has fought one particular landlord, forcing him to repair hundreds of units in 47 East Harlem buildings

	MEDIAN MONTHLY RENT	POVERTY RATE
Bushwick	\$730	32.9 percent
Chinatown	\$716	25.1 percent
East Harlem	\$529	36.9 percent
New York City	\$860	19.2 percent

Source: Fuman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, State of the New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods 2007

able housing every day," said Thomas Yu, of Asian Americans for Equality.

The group buys up apartment buildings, refurbishes units and rents them to lower-income residents for \$1,000 a month or less.

Asian Americans for Equality is fundraising to defray repair costs, which can reach up to \$50,000 a unit. The group hopes that their efforts also will work to combat severe overcrowding, prevalent in the immigrant community.

## Bushwick

Gladys Puglla has gone without electricity in half of her home for more than three months until the city forced her landlord to fix it. She's now fighting her landlord for charging more than allowed for her rent-controlled apartment. Meanwhile, she fears another rent increase.

"Can you imagine? I'm going to move my son and my daughter together, and I'm going to rent my room," she said.

Like many immigrant Bushwick residents, Puglla did not know her rights until she began attending meetings held by Make the Road New York, a group that helps tenants fight landlords.

## Vito feels heat to announce plans

By David Freedlander  
dfreedlander@am-ny.com

Disgraced Staten Island Congressman Vito Fossella gave no indication he'll step down over the weekend even as Republican leaders called on him to make a decision by today and local editorial boards demanded he resign.

Headlines were abuzz over the weekend with ru-



Fossella

woman, Susan Del Percio, said that the congressman has made no plans.

"Congressman Fossella appreciates any support of

mors that the six-term Republican legislator was determined to seek re-election in November. Fossella's spokeswoman,

so many people but he has not made any decision about his future," Del Percio said.

Fossella was arrested in the early morning hours of May 1 with a blood alcohol level at nearly twice the legal limit. It was later revealed that he was living a secret life in the Washington, D.C. area with his mistress and their 3-year-old daughter.

## On track

**1** Shuttle buses replace trains between Chambers St and South Ferry, 12:01 a.m. to 5 a.m. Tue to Fri.

**4** Manhattan-bound trains skip Kings-bridge and Fordham rds and 183 St, 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wed to Fri.

**6** Pelham Bay Park-bound express trains run local from 3 Ave to Hunts Point Ave,

noon to 3 p.m. Wed to Fri.

**7** Manhattan-bound express trains run local to Queensboro Plaza, 9 a.m. to noon Wednesday.

**D** Trains run in two sections: between 205 St and Bedford Park Blvd, and between Bedford Park Blvd and Stillwell Ave, 12:01 a.m. to 5 a.m. Tue to Fri.

**F** Downtown trains skip 23 and 14 sts, 12:01

a.m. to 5 a.m. Tue to Fri.

**J** Queens-bound trains run express from Myrtle Ave to Broadway Junction, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wed to Fri.

**G** No trains between Court Sq and 71-Continental aves, 8:30 p.m. to 5 a.m. Mon to Fri.

**N** No trains between 57 St-7 Ave and Queensboro Plaza, 12:01 a.m. to 5 a.m. Tue to Fri



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