

# The LEOTA ~ the newsletter of The Land's End One Tenants' Association

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- ◆ Meeting minutes
- ◆ Brief history
- ◆ Landlord's offering
- ◆ We need you!

## RECAP!

### of April 21st and April 28th General Tenant Meetings

**The** April 21st meeting—apart from the disruptions—was quite informative, and many tenants offered useful and spirited input.

AARON GONZALEZ, President of LEOTA, described the key points of Independence Plaza North's (IPN) deal, that was recently struck between IPN's tenant association, and their landlord, Lawrence Gluck. IPN is a large Mitchell-Lama development located in TriBeCa that faced a buy-out much like ours that could have resulted in steep rent increases for IPN's more than 1,300 tenants. The negotiations resulted in an agreement that was mutually beneficial, and we hope to model our negotiations after their success. Enhanced Vouchers are available to two-thirds of the tenants, and a modified Rent Stabilization model is available for the remaining tenants who weren't eligible for Vouchers. More detailed information on the IPN agreement is available online at <http://www.ipnta.org>. A summary of key points will be available in the next newsletter, or a copy of the agreement can be picked up at the LEOTA office.

### Lobbying

BARBARA JETER, Vice President, spoke about the great turn out for the Bus Trip to Albany, and commended the tenants for their participation. Barbara also stressed the importance of being a registered voter, as this is the basis of political power. Elected officials are more likely to listen to a registered voter—and they check!—than a non-registered voter.

### Coalition-Building

Barbara also solicited help from the tenants in building a larger coalition of Mitchell-Lama developments with a Section 236 subsidy, and presented a list of six other developments in the process of buy-out just like us.

### Visit to Comptroller

Our Director of Research, CAROLINE POON gave a summary of items discussed at the New York City Comptroller's Office. Caroline pointed out that there are many potentially creative solutions

to the issue of affordable housing as referenced by Comptroller William Thompson's report "Affordable No More," however tenants must become politically active to submit pressure on our elected officials so they may enact some of these measures.

### Fundraising

JOYCE LEE, Treasurer, informed tenants that members who have donated to the Legal Fund will be receiving statements shortly. The statements will confirm the amount donated, and show the total amount raised.

### Meeting of Lawyers/Intentions of Landlord

Vice-President MARC RICHARDSON laid out the general intentions of our landlord as expressed by our landlord's lawyer in a meeting that took place between our respective lawyers on April 9th, as detailed in the article on page 3. (see **Round 1**)

### Nominations

Unfortunately, there weren't any new Nominees for any Office on the Board. However, some tenants did step forward and offer their much needed assistance.

(Continued on page 2)

**Elected officials are more likely to listen to a registered voter—and they check!**

## DID YOU KNOW...?

**If** you are a *Fair Market Value Renter* you are being subsidized too! You **are not** paying *Market Rent*!

Q. What is the difference between *Market Rent* and *Fair Market Rent*?

*Fair Market Rent* is the price of rent set by the office of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) every year. The landlord cannot ask tenants to pay more than this amount.

*Market rents* have no restrictions. The landlord can ask you to pay as much rent as the rental market can bear.

Q. What can happen when our landlord opts out of Mitchell-Lama?

If you are not eligible for Enhanced Vouchers, your rent may increase by more than 50%! The price of rent will be subject to whatever rents the landlord wishes.

(Continued from page 1)

## Recap of April 28th General Tenant Meetings

The April 28th General Tenants meeting went well, although fewer tenants attended than previous meetings. The same group elected to the initial Steering Committee were again elected to the Lands End One Tenants Association on April 28th. Tenants voted for the same slate of officers with a few minor changes to the specific Officers.

As the group was significantly smaller, most of the meeting was held in a question and answer format, focused on the upcoming negotiations with our landlord, and our specific demands. We all care deeply about what could happen to us. It is extremely upsetting, and many of us are emotional and need an outlet for our frustrations. However disruptive or heated the situation may become, we are all neighbors, and we must stand together as neighbors. We cannot afford to be sidetracked from saving our apartments.

**We only have 6 months until October 2004 before the landlord exits the Mitchell-Lama program.**

### Additional Comments

Issues of communication were brought up by multiple tenants. Floor monitors are not getting

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## Questions and Answers Session

### Q. Can the landlord choose to stay in the Mitchell-Lama program?

There is no incentive for the landlord to remain in the Mitchell-Lama program, particularly considering the Real Estate boom in New York City. It is far more attractive and lucrative for the landlord to sell the building and raise the rents.

Mayor Bloomberg and others have proposed legislation that seeks to extend Rent Stabilization regulations to Mitchell-Lama's that opt-out.

### Q. Can the City or State use some of the creative solutions from the *Affordable No More* report by Comptroller William Thompson?

Yes or No, that's really a question for the City or State to answer definitively. However, that said, after reading the Comptroller's report, you will find that it is his very strong assertion that the City, State, and the Private Sector have it within their collective ability to solve this problem, through the use of creative financing that would increase a landlord's incentive to stay in the Mitchell-Lama program, or create other viable solutions that would either prevent displacement, or provide for the adequate relocation of affected tenants.

### Q. Is tenant ownership an option?

The landlord has indicated that they aren't currently selling the building, however, since no offer has been made that question will have to be posed.

### Q. Can we demand that no rent increases be granted until all requested repairs have been done, or most repairs done?

We as tenants can make any demands that we wish, however we all must remember that a negotiation is a two-way street, so for everything we ask for we may have to give up something.

information to tenants, for a variety of reasons: from their lack of information, lack of floor monitors, tenants not opening doors, tenants not being home, and also, lack of initiative. We hope this Newsletter will encourage people to participate in any way possible, as volunteers are the only way to distribute information efficiently.

If you are not receiving information, please take the initiative and call (212 566-5079), fax (212 566-5098), email (info@leota.org), or drop in during office hours (Wednesday evenings, lobby office) to ask your questions. You do not have to wait for information to come to your door. This is your home—and this is your fight, too. We must have more tenant participation in order to provide the amount and quality of services we all feel

we need and deserve.

\* \* \*

## ROUND 1 OF NEGOTIATIONS HAS BEGUN!

On April 9th our lawyer, Barry Mallin, representing the tenants of Land's End One, met with Martin Siroka, the lawyer representing our landlord.

In this preliminary discussion our landlord (via the lawyer) outlined the following general offerings for consideration (no details or timelines yet provided):

- ⇒ Ownership and Management of Land's End One will remain the same.
- ⇒ They estimate that 87% of the tenants will be eligible for Enhanced, or "Sticky" Vouchers.
- ⇒ The remaining 13% will be offered a deal resembling rent-stabilization.
- ⇒ Repairs will be made to the building, including the balconies.
- ⇒ Landlord requested specific details regarding Major Capital Improvements (MCI), or general repairs, for review.



**For more information  
log onto  
[www.leota.org](http://www.leota.org)  
or write to  
[info@leota.org](mailto:info@leota.org)**

## WE NEED YOU!

Work with the Land's End One Tenants' Association (LEOTA) to negotiate a better deal, communicate to tenants, attend meetings, lobby for affordable housing, and assist our neighbors with lobbying.

LEOTA Board Members are volunteers, and tenants just like you. Volunteer a few hours a week, or every other week—any assistance is appreciated.

You can help by:

- ⇒ Answering Phones/Making Phone calls
- ⇒ Staffing the Tenant's Meeting Room (Wednesday evenings)
- ⇒ Attending meetings and events
- ⇒ Fundraising
- ⇒ Providing ideas and input
- ⇒ Researching
- ⇒ Miscellaneous projects.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE LOWER EAST SIDE.

**The** Lower East Side, a neighborhood built by immigrants throughout America's history, once housed African Americans freed from slavery, immigrants from Ireland during the potato famines, and Jews, Germans, Italians and many more seeking better lives for their families from their native lands. The Lower East Side was built by working-class inhabitants.

Throughout the 1950s, city planners and others pushed for middle-class redevelopment of working-class districts (slums). Many older, working-class neighborhoods were targeted for this urban renewal, resulting in thousands of (mostly immigrant and minority) families to be relocated from one poor neighborhood to another, or to the city's public housing units.

A statewide program started in 1955, the introduction of the Mitchell-Lama program offered some welcomed relief to low-income families. The Mitchell-Lama program offered tax breaks and low-interest loans to developers in exchange for keeping buildings affordable for 20 years. Each new development, despite being under the same Mitchell-Lama program, had unique terms to their contract, besides varying start dates. Now that 20 years has passed, these contracts are expiring, giving owners the right to opt out of the program—and, in some cases, dramatically raise rents.

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**Lands End One Tenants' Association**

**ELECTED OFFICERS**

Aaron Gonzalez.... President  
 Barabara Jeter..... Vice-President 1  
 Marc Richardson.. Vice-President 2  
 Caroline Poon..... Director of Research  
 Aloma Newton..... Director of Fundraising  
 Joyce Lee ..... Treasurer

**APPOINTED BOARD MEMBERS**

Jim Jannuzzi..... Community Coordinator  
 Daisy Echevarria.. Board Coordinator

**STAFF**

Kam Santos ..... Correspondence Support  
 Sari Howell ..... Graphic Designer  
 Floor Captains ..... Logistical Support

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**LEOTA Mission:**

The Land's End I Tenants Association is a non-profit organization, dedicated to preserving safe and affordable housing for the tenants of Land's End One, through legal action, raising public awareness, and lobbying our elected public Officials.



**A Brief History** (Continued from page 3)

For more than half a century, developers have sought to “revitalize” or “upgrade” the Lower East Side, and many other parts of the city. “Revitalization” generally results in gentrification, where the neighborhoods are rebuilt, but merchants and new properties of wealthier people displace the working-class residents. However, now that Mitchell-Lama contracts are expiring in the Lower East Side, developers are able to infiltrate the community. Due to the varying terms of each Mitchell-Lama contract, coalition-building among multiple Mitchell-Lama properties is proving difficult. Each building or property has its own unique battle to face.

Land's End One is the oldest of a five-building complex, and many tenants are the original tenants of 26 years ago, when the building opened.

**We have made our landlord wealthy enough to buy out of their mortgage.**

In that time we have become a part of the fabric that makes up this community, a community that is in danger of being ripped apart by gentrification. Our status as low-income families, then and now, helped our landlord to get reduced loans to purchase this property. We were a good investment then, but now that the housing market has improved and there is no legal binding contract to keep our community intact, we are no longer a good investment.

However, what prevents this from happening to us again in 25 years, once we've moved to another community, if there are no laws to protect us? Our landlord has an obligation to us and the community, as we have made our landlord wealthy enough to buy-out their mortgage. The City and State of New York owes working-class citizens the right to preserve their long-standing communities by ensuring they keep housing safe and affordable.

**Please join LEOTA in this fight to preserve the affordability of our homes, and the integrity of our communities!**

**The NEXT MEETING...**

Will be Announced Shortly.

**Meanwhile**, join us for Cantonese lessons every Sunday in the Tenant's Room from 10am-12pm.

Sessions are \$20 each or 6 sessions for \$90. Learn dictionary usage, language structure, daily conversation and more!

For more info call Penny at 917 208-3955 or LEOTA at 212 566-5079 or [info@leota.org](mailto:info@leota.org)

**(All proceeds will be donated to the Lands End One Tenants Association Legal Fund.)**

**Every Wednesday is Tenant Activity Day!** Starting at 7:00pm, every Wednesday we will be collecting donations. Keep the suggested amount in mind, however donate whatever you can! To learn more about how you can help save your home, or to simply get answers to your questions, please come down and talk to your TA Board in the Tenant Meeting Room after 8:30pm. Please help us extend our operating hours, volunteer to man the Tenants Meeting Room, and provide information. **Or contact us:**

- Phone: 212-566-5079 Fax: 212-566-5098
- Aaron Gonzalez: [agonzalez@leota.org](mailto:agonzalez@leota.org) or Marc Richardson: [mrichardson@leota.org](mailto:mrichardson@leota.org)
- Drop-in: Wednesdays after 8:30 pm, or slip a note under the Tenant Meeting room door anytime.