

A photograph of a worker in a red shirt and blue jeans standing on a red metal fire escape against a brick building. The worker is holding a white rope. In the background, there are windows with signs that say "Crystal".

# University Neighborhood Housing Program

*Creating, Preserving & Improving Affordable Housing  
Serving the people of the Northwest Bronx*

**January 2009 – June 2011**

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*And a special thank you to all of our May 2010  
Bronx Ale House Fundraiser attendees!*

## SPRING AFFORDABLE HOUSING FORUMS & PANELISTS

### Envisioning the Future of the Red Zone (2009)

Roger Hayes, *UNHP Board (MODERATOR)*  
Raquel Batista, *Northern Manhattan Coalition for  
Immigrant Rights*  
Nancy Biberman, *WHEDCo*  
Peter Mosbacher, *Amalgamated Bank*

### New York City's Multifamily Housing in Distress (2011)

Roger Hayes, *UNHP Board (MODERATOR)*  
Doug Apple, *NYC HPD*  
Ray Adkins, *Fannie Mae*  
Susanna Blankley, *CASA New Settlement Apartments*

# Multifamily Development

One way University Neighborhood Housing Program creates and preserves affordable housing is as a developer of low and moderate income housing projects. In association with our

neighborhood partners, UNHP developed two large affordable housing refinance and renovation projects in 2010 and 2011 known as Rose Hill Apartments and West Farms Housing.

## Rose Hill Apartments

UNHP joined forces with Rosehill Housing Management Corporation to refinance Rose Hill Apartments (*pictured at right*) with rehabilitation funding from Low Income Housing Tax Credits via JPMorgan Chase and the Richman Group. Renovations included new windows, public areas, roof, boiler, kitchens, and bathrooms. Rose Hill Apartments is a low income senior citizen (HUD Section 202) housing project originally developed by Fordham University in 1985.



The December 2009 Rose Hill Apartments ribbon cutting included staff and board members of UNHP. Pictured at right are Joseph Muriana, Nayda Alejandro, Brian Byrne, and Jim Buckley, along with resident Mildred Thompkins and Marc Jahr representing the permanent lender, the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC).

Rose Hill's senior citizen residents, who graciously put up with the year-long construction, came to the dayroom (*pictured above*) to celebrate the completed renovation of their home. The 119 units of low income senior housing are located on the edge of Fordham University's scenic Rose Hill campus.

## West Farms Housing

West Farms is an eight building, 526 unit, Section 8 affordable housing complex built in 1973. UNHP is partnering with Fordham Bedford Housing Corporation (FBHC) to acquire and

renovate the fully occupied complex. HUD is providing rental assistance and the City's Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD) joined efforts with HDC, Enterprise Community Partners and JPMorgan Chase to provide \$91 million in financing and tax credits to accomplish the job. As developers and sponsors, UNHP and FBHC will oversee the green renovation of the property including new boilers, bathrooms, kitchens and public areas. We will also rebuild four playgrounds on site for the tenants and their families.



# Multifamily Research and Organizing

Our biggest success in the past three years towards preserving affordable housing is not an actual housing development, but rather the creation and use of a housing database: the Building Indicator Project (BIP). The BIP is a weighted database that uses violations, liens and other data to score properties in physical and financial distress. The database originally included only properties in the Bronx, but now includes more than 62,000 multifamily buildings with at least 5 residential units in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan.



Pictured above is a UNHP Multifamily Assistance Center (MFAC) meeting where we collaborated with banks to gain improvements in distressed properties. UNHP has distributed and discussed BIP data with multifamily mortgage lenders since 2007, observing improvements in properties where the bank follows-up with the owner to address physical and financial distress.

In 2010, UNHP began sharing BIP data with community groups throughout the City. Thanks to financial support from Enterprise Community Partners, these organizations have used the BIP data to identify, strategize and organize in problem

buildings across four boroughs, greatly extending the reach of our research work.



The Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition used BIP data to help identify distressed properties for organizing campaigns to win major improvements in building conditions. Pictured above are Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., Council Speaker Christine Quinn, and Councilman Fernando

Cabrera with tenants and community leaders seeking repairs and new ownership in the Milbank properties, a portfolio of 10 properties defaulted on by a private equity investor.



Gregory Lobo Jost, UNHP's Deputy Director and Building Indicator Project creator, is pictured above presenting at our 2011 forum on *NYC's Multifamily Housing in Distress* at Fordham University. The forum and corresponding report outlined the increases in financially and physically distressed properties in NYC and our work through the BIP and MFAC to collaborate with lenders, public agencies, regulators and foundations to improve conditions in these properties.

## Letter from Commissioner Cestero

Former HPD Commissioner Rafael Cestero (*pictured here with staff from FBHC and UNHP in 2009*) wrote to us before leaving this position in March 2011:

“UNHP’s commitment to creating, preserving, and financing affordable housing in the Northwest Bronx has had a far-reaching impact, helping to advance HPD’s work citywide. Today, UNHP has emerged as a thought leader on multifamily housing distress—a key issue facing all boroughs of New York City. In fact, UNHP set the stage for HPD’s Proactive Preservation Initiative, the agency’s most comprehensive approach yet to identifying and addressing troubled buildings in NYC.

UNHP’s Building Indicator Project inspired HPD to create our own measures of financial and physical distress and enabled HPD to better monitor our portfolio of HPD-assisted



properties. The BIP has also allowed HPD to forge partnerships with banks holding distressed assets by coordinating the sale of distressed loans to preservation purchasers. The light UNHP shines on the troubled portfolios of even the strongest banks has been a critical component in the success of HPD’s Overleveraged Properties Initiative.”

# Renovating and Lending Green

Preserving affordable housing by refinancing and renovating existing housing projects in the Bronx is an important part of how UNHP works to achieve our mission. In partnership with Dougert Management Corporation, UNHP was able to renovate 10 expiring tax credit buildings in 2009 and 2010 while insuring their long-term affordability. The tax credits that had originally allowed for the renovation of these buildings in the 1990s had expired after 15 years. University Neighborhood oversaw the ownership transfer and new renovation work that protects the habitability and affordability for the 273 low and moderate income families who call these buildings home.

Thanks in part to federal stimulus funds, UNHP was able to utilize the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition's (NWBCCC) Weatherization Assistance Program to obtain grant funds to upgrade the properties using the latest green technology. A combination of weatherization funds and building reserves allowed for the installation of roofs, boilers (*pictured below are a pair of gas fired high efficiency steam and hot water boilers*), windows, energy efficient lighting, sidewalk repairs and energy star appliances.



As a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), UNHP also provides low interest loans from our three community development loan funds. We provided pre-development loans to the Rose Hill, Serviam Gardens and West Farms projects helping to improve 886 units of low income housing.



UNHP Executive Director Jim Buckley convened the discussion at our 2009 Earth Day Water and Energy Conservation Briefing (*pictured above*). The briefing was attended by 30 individuals from a variety of private and nonprofit companies that manage affordable housing in the Bronx. Panelists presented information

on water and energy issues highlighting ways to reduce energy costs and some of the new technology available. The briefing also included the latest information about water and sewer rates as well as grants and financing options for new improvements.

UNHP and Bronx affordable housing managers and owners are in the forefront of green renovation and innovations to properties. Our neighborhood partner, Fordham Bedford Housing Corporation, completed the green construction and renovation of Serviam Gardens, a 243 unit low income senior housing complex, in 2011. FBHC, UNHP and other local developers also use green upgrades as part of the daily maintenance



of their properties such as switching to low VOC paint, installing rainwater collection systems and investing in new technologies for older buildings such as solar-thermal hot water systems.

The West Farms project complies with the Enterprise Green Communities Criteria, a set of energy-efficiency standards that New York City recently adopted for all affordable housing properties. At left, a construction worker at West Farms inspects the new energy-efficient boiler that will be installed for use

in 2012.

UNHP also installed three white roofs on affordable housing properties and enrolled a number of older multifamily buildings into the Con Edison Multi-Family Energy Efficiency Program to install lighting packages,

insulation and other weatherization measures. Additionally, we worked with the NWBCCC's Weatherization Assistance Program at Rose Hill Apartments to install energy efficient lighting, refrigerators and air conditioners and helped fund the new boiler.

# Free Tax Preparation Program

In response to the prevalence of high-cost Refund Anticipation Loans in our west Bronx neighborhoods, UNHP launched our Free Tax Preparation Program in 2008. The program has grown from serving 146 clients in our first year to 800 clients in 2010 and 1,082 clients in 2011. While UNHP coordinates the program, provides staff, recruits volunteers, supervises their training and does outreach and scheduling of appointments, we also rely on our partnerships with Fordham Bedford Community Services (FBCS) and ARIVA to make the tax program a success. ARIVA, a financial education Bronx non-profit, provides the training and site supervision, while FBCS provides the computer lab and valuable staff support.

In addition to our two partnering organizations, the program also benefited from the help of students from both Fordham University and Manhattan College who became IRS certified Volunteer Income Tax Assistants (VITA). Fordham Leadership Academy High School students in the Capital One Student Banker Program also provided assistance with the initial intake of clients. In 2011, 42 students were trained as tax preparers and 16 students volunteered as intake counselors performing a total of 830 volunteer hours. These student volunteers (*pictured below*) received real world experience to complement their education while serving the communities surrounding their schools.



Photo: Bill Denison

Pictured above, UNHP Financial Director Johanna Kletter and Tax Program Assistant Matthew Ladd help a senior in preparing forms at one of our mobile tax days at Rose Hill Apartments in 2010. UNHP increased the number of mobile days from four in 2010 to six in 2011 in an effort to assist more low income seniors file their taxes.

Pictured below, staff and volunteers work to assist clients at the Heiskell Technology Center, our primary tax site.



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## Financial Education

In conjunction with Credit Where Credit is Due, UNHP organized five five-session financial education workshops in both English and Spanish for Bronx residents. In the past two years 97 people attended these sessions (*pictured below*) as well as a number of one time workshops and special financial

education presentations. UNHP also worked with Signature Bank to provide a nine-session first time investor class for 13 participants. Signature provided a \$750 match for investment to each participant, pictured below with their completion certificates.



# Homeownership Preservation

Just as the BIP indicates that the highest level of distress for multifamily buildings is in the Bronx, our borough also had the city's highest rate of foreclosures for 1-4 family homes in 2010. UNHP created the Home Owner Outreach Database (HOOD) to identify homeowners who may be at risk for foreclosure using water and sewer and property tax lien records. UNHP shares the HOOD with other community groups and uses it as an outreach tool in the northwest Bronx to assist homeowners through local homeowner resource fairs.



At one such fair in 2010, UNHP collaborated with Councilman Fernando Cabrera on outreach and more than 60 residents attended. In addition to being able to receive free kits and applications from the NWBCCC Weatherization Assistance Program (*pictured above*) and foreclosure prevention counseling from the West Bronx Housing and Neighborhood Resource Center (WBHNR) and the Parodneck Foundation, homeowners were also able to work one-on-one with Department of Environmental Protection staff (*pictured below*). These staffers were able to review billing issues, create payment plans and schedule leak inspections with homeowners on the spot.



Tax and water and sewer arrears are often an early indicator of financial distress for homeowners and can threaten ownership through a lien sale. DEP Deputy Commissioner Joseph Singleton also attended the fair and spoke with homeowners.



Since 2009, UNHP has reached 250 homeowners and neighborhood residents through five resource fairs where community members received immediate one-on-one assistance and scheduled follow up appointments. Pictured above, the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) provided information at our 2009 Community Resource Fair, which alone drew over 100 neighborhood residents. This fair offered financial education workshops, information on banking services, legal assistance and foreclosure prevention counseling.

UNHP has brought the services of many groups to our resource fairs to assist Bronx residents including Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights, the Association for Energy Affordability (AEA), the NYC Office of Financial Empowerment, ARIVA, and NYC Business Solutions. Some of the financial institutions that have participated include Ridgewood Savings, JPMorgan Chase, Apple Bank, Amalgamated Bank, Capital One, Checkspring Bank and the Neighborhood Trust Federal Credit Union.



UNHP Program and Outreach Coordinator Jumelia Abrahamson (*pictured above*) welcomes a homeowner to a neighborhood resource fair in 2009. UNHP provided 79 referrals for counseling to our local partner, WBHNR, as well as other counseling groups across the City.

# Message from the Director

The threats to quality affordable housing continue to grow, but so has our commitment to our longstanding mission: the creation and preservation of affordable housing. We have continued to serve our home base in the Northwest Bronx in a variety of ways, including lending low-interest funds to affordable housing projects, refinancing and renovating local properties, as well as providing financial education, foreclosure prevention assistance and free tax preparation for Bronx residents. Our research and policy work on affordable housing has had an impact in our home neighborhoods in the Bronx while affecting housing policy in all of New York City.

In the past few years, the Building Indicator Project has become a vital source of information for community organizations, city agencies and lenders in the effort to monitor housing conditions around the City of New York. This work has led to other

collaborations with organizations around the City that have produced benefits on both a local and citywide basis.

To paraphrase another frequently used line about certain financial institutions, our neighborhoods are “too important to fail”. Our partners have put millions of dollars into preserving neighborhoods. Our neighbors have put millions of hours and unlimited energy into reclaiming these neighborhoods. All of this has contributed to supporting hope for the future for the families living in these neighborhoods. This hope will not be crushed.

We realize that the success of our work is based on our ability to work with allies in the private, public and non-profit sectors. We look forward to continuing and expanding that effort in the months and years ahead. We hope that you will join us in that effort.

- Jim Buckley, June 2011

*UNHP Deputy Director  
Greg Lobo Jost receives  
the Ally of the Year  
Award from the North-  
west Bronx Community  
& Clergy Coalition in  
2011, presented by  
Coalition Board  
Member Heidi Hynes.*



*UNHP staff and  
interns share a few  
pints at the Bronx  
Ale House fundraiser  
in 2010.*

*795 Garden Street,  
one of UNHP's early  
community owner-  
ship projects, will  
undergo a series of  
green retrofits in the  
coming year.*



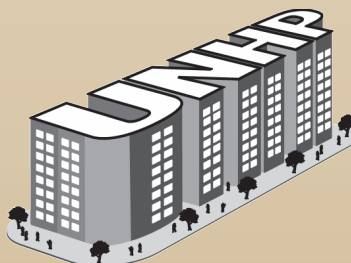
*The intake team at our  
2011 tax preparation  
program takes a quick  
break from greeting  
and registering clients.*

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