



Fifth Avenue Committee
Our Community. Our Future.

Winter 2021-22

Advancing Economic,
Social & Racial Justice Since 1978

Historic Wins for Equity, Inclusion and Resilience in Gowanus

Over several years, FAC and our Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice (GNCJ) partners have actively organized to ensure that the city's planned rezoning of Brooklyn's Gowanus neighborhood will further fair housing, and environmental, racial and economic justice. Gowanus will be the first majority white, upper income community to be rezoned under Mayor Bill de Blasio's administration. After many meetings, discussions, petition signings, rallies and actions, we are thrilled to share the news that the city has agreed to GNCJ's top demands to ensure equitable outcomes for the community.



November 10 Press Conference announcing Points of Agreement, outside City Hall Park

The NYC Department of City Planning certified the rezoning in April, enabling it to enter the city's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) process. Brooklyn's Community Boards 6 and 2 then held a first-ever hybrid public land use hearing in early June, attended by more than 100 people in person and virtually. Throughout the afternoon and into the evening, residents testified in support of GNCJ's demands. The demands included: funding for capital needs of NYCHA housing in Gowanus, the creation of a Gowanus zoning task force with local oversight, and careful management and on-going monitoring of stormwater and wastewater to prevent combined sewage overflow (CSO) events. In a show of force later in June, GNCJ members and supporters organized a press conference at Gowanus Houses Community Center to speak out about their demands.

See more detail on the press conference here: <https://www.gncj.org/recentnews>.

FAC helped commission New York City's first racial equity report about a city-sponsored neighborhood rezoning, developed by Professor Lance Freeman of Columbia University and the NYC Council Land Use staff. (See the full report here: <https://bit.ly/GowanusRER>). The landmark study examines the current and historic racial, economic and housing conditions in Gowanus and how the areawide rezoning of the neighborhood will impact it. **The study found that the proposed rezoning, which includes 950 units of 100% affordable housing at FAC's Gowanus Green project and an additional estimated 2,000 permanently affordable housing units created through Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) would effectively increase racial integration and counter local exclusionary development trends.**

(cont'd on page 4)

FAC's Strategic Plan

FAC has a new strategic plan! The plan represents 18 months of work on the part of our Board of Directors, leadership, staff, program participants, leaders and tenants, partners and supporters. We are proud of the result and excited to set the plan in motion. Check out a summary detailing our key impact goals—advancing racial justice, building community power and integrating our comprehensive programs—as well as the organizational investments we will make to meet them.

[\(https://fifthave.org/strategic-planning/\)](https://fifthave.org/strategic-planning/).

Rental Assistance: Helping Tenants Stay in their Homes



Rosario, Brooklyn Tenant United/Inquilinos Unidos de Brooklyn activist, on the far left, joined by Eulogia, in red, and other tenant activists, NYS Senator Zellnor Myrie and FAC & NHN Executive Director, Michelle de la Uz at a rally against predatory landlords.

Rosario is a Colombian immigrant and longtime active participant in our Brooklyn Tenants United/Inquilinos Unidos de Brooklyn tenant organizing. She worked as a cleaner and was a proud union member. Due to a work-related accident, Rosario now relies on disability benefits as her main source of income. During the pandemic, many of her family members in Colombia became severely ill with COVID, and relied on her for financial support. Rosario struggled to make ends meet, and was unable to pay rent. Our staff worked with Rosario to help her apply for the NYS Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), which provides support to tenants unable to pay rent due to COVID. With our help, Rosario received 7 months of back rent payments. New York State's eviction moratorium, enacted to respond to COVID, has been extended through January 15, 2022. For help applying for other rental assistance contact FAC at (347) 844-0220.

Donate to help Fifth Avenue Committee continue its important work in 2022! Visit bit.ly/givetoFAC.

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Fifth Avenue Committee is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and all donations are 100% tax-deductible.

Supporting Adult Learners to Reach their Goals During the Pandemic



HSE Graduate, German

Our Adult Education Program provides classes including English for Speakers of Other Languages, High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation, and the Sunset Park Bridge Program, which provides contextualized English instruction to prepare students for careers in commercial driving and cable installation. Each year, we serve over 500 students from more than 24 countries of origin.

During the pandemic, we transitioned to offer virtual classes, and found that many students who had faithfully attended in-person sessions were suddenly unable to participate. Some had

limited experience with computers, while others had little access to technology. Over the 18 months of virtual learning, our dedicated Adult Education team addressed these issues. They provided students with equipment, and the coaching they needed to build digital literacy skills. We created a tablet and hotspot lending program, and new training materials for both students and instructors to boost digital literacy skills.

The pandemic also changed the environment for students pursuing their HSE diplomas. New York State offered a waiver program, which allowed teachers to recommend that students be awarded their diploma if they had passed at least three required exams. Our staff actively reached out to former students who qualified for this waiver. They re-enrolled these former students, helping them to finally reach the goal of earning diplomas. As a result, almost 70 students received their HSE diplomas – one of the largest numbers of graduates in FAC's history!

One of our HSE graduates, German, reflected "Even though my classes were virtual, I learned so much and built new computer skills along the way. This is an excellent program and my teachers pushed me to study hard, giving me the tools I needed to go far." He is proud to have achieved his HSE diploma and now plans to continue his education by going to college.



FAC Solar Installer Trainees

FAC Solar Accomplishments

FAC is installing solar on its portfolio of affordable housing buildings in South Brooklyn and Queens. In 2021, we installed 182.5 kilo watts on seven of our properties. FAC and our partners are also training and placing local residents into jobs in the solar industry in the process. Solar energy provides 25-30% of the total energy needs for these buildings and reduces the carbon footprint of our properties while reducing utility costs for tenants and the properties so the buildings can remain affordable for generations to come. <https://facsolar.org/>

Tenant Leaders & Electeds Rally Against Predatory Landlords



Tenant leaders from Greenbrook Partners properties joined by U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer, NYS Senator Brian Kavanagh, Zellnor Myrie, Jabari Brisport and NYS Assemblymembers Jo Anne Simon, Robert Carroll and NYC Councilmember Brad Lander at rally denouncing Greenbrook's practices.

In the last year, Greenbrook Partners, a real estate firm, bought 70 Prospect Park West, along with more than 100 other local buildings. Since then, tenants have experienced harassment, flooding and lack of heat and hot water. Greenbrook has neglected repairs, not renewed leases, and not recognized rent stabilized tenants' rights, in an effort to displace current tenants and raise rents. FAC tenant organizers have been working with tenant leaders for more than a year and helped tenants rally in October, urging the Texas Permanent School Fund, an investor in Greenbrook, to divest. US Senator Chuck Schumer, NYS State Senators Zellnor Myrie and Jabari Brisport, Assemblymembers Jo Anne Simon and Robert Carroll and NYC Councilmember Brad Lander attended to support the tenants' campaign, along with Housing Justice for All and Stabilizing NYC, a coalition that FAC belongs to which helps tenants hold predatory equity landlords accountable. (See more detail on the event here: <https://bit.ly/GreenbrookRally>). FAC continues to work with multiple tenants' associations to help them fight to stay in their homes, and to advocate for Good Cause Eviction, a bill which would provide broader tenant protections statewide.

158 New Homes for Low Income Seniors Complete



Northeastern Towers Ribbon Cutting



Northeastern Towers Annex



*Joyce Thomas,
Northeastern Towers Annex resident*

This year, FAC partnered with the Northeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and Mega Development to complete the Northeastern Towers Annex. This new building in Jamaica, Queens features 158 affordable apartments for low-income seniors with 50% of the apartments allocated for residents from Queens. The building is 100% affordable and 56 of the units are set aside for formerly homeless seniors. We held a ribbon cutting ceremony with our partners in July, at the site.

Joyce Thomas, one of the residents, says, "My apartment is very nice...it changed my life a lot. I feel like myself! Knowing that when you're here alone, you don't have to wonder who's there...this is really, really helpful to me."

The site includes several amenities including a community room, exercise center, computer room, social services office, laundry, television lounges, and a rooftop terrace. Thank you to all our partners who have made Northeastern Towers Annex possible!

Tax Season Is Around The Corner!

FAC's Community Services team will provide free tax preparation services in partnership with Grow Brooklyn. To qualify, people with dependents must have a 2021 income of less than \$65,000, and single individuals must have incomes of less than \$55,000. Small business owners and consultants with expenses under \$5,000 are also eligible. Beginning mid-January 2022, contact us at (347) 844-0220 to schedule an appointment.

Supporting Small Businesses During the Pandemic

The last year has been challenging for small businesses, as they adapt to COVID-related regulations. FAC has 28 commercial tenants, most of whom are minority- and women-owned small businesses. We've worked with our tenants to help them afford their space, and sustain their businesses. Bogota Latin Bistro has been a FAC tenant since 2005. Owners George Constantinou and Farid Ali are active with High Road Restaurants, an organization committed to equitable workplace practices.

George reflected "COVID was scary for us. We have a large indoor dining space, and often serve big groups. People weren't getting together in groups through COVID. We pivoted, focused on delivery, takeout, and outdoor dining and stayed open. Having FAC as a landlord made a difference." With funding FAC received from NeighborWorks America, we provided a rent abatement for Bogota. With this support, and their creativity and hard work, Bogota continues to provide delicious food, and helps keep 5th Avenue's commercial corridor active and vibrant.



George & Farid, Bogota Latin Bistro owners pictured alongside one of their drinks and restaurant. Photo Credit: Bogota Latin Bistro

Sunset Park Brooklyn Public Library & Affordable Housing Lottery

The Sunset Park Library and Affordable Housing project has 49 affordable apartments, a laundry room, and a 2nd-floor roof deck in addition to a new, expanded public library. The affordable housing lottery for the project launched November 9th and is accepting applications through January 13, 2022. For detail about eligibility requirements for the apartments, see our web site: <https://bit.ly/SunsetParkad>

To apply for the lottery, go to <https://housingconnect.nyc.gov/PublicWeb/> - Housing 2.0 website. If you need help with creating a Housing 2.0 profile to apply for the lottery, contact us at (347) 844-0220.

Sunset Park Bridge Program



Sunset Park Bridge program students in the classroom & training to become CDL drivers

The Sunset Park Bridge Program serves low-income, non-native English speakers by providing the opportunity to earn a Commercial Driver's License with Red Hook on the Road or receive certification in cable installation with Brooklyn Networks. Applicants looking to enhance their English language skills can expect the program to involve industry-specific vocabulary as well as instructions and exams that use English words and phrases not typically seen in ESOL classes. In partnership with FAC's Adult Education Unit and Brooklyn Workforce Innovations, the Sunset Park Bridge Program recruits students throughout the year.

Requirements include:

- Aged 21 years and over
- Basic English Skills
- Valid US Driver's License for 2 years (4 points/ 1 suspension max; no DUI/ DWI)
- New York State residence and eligibility to work in the US

For more information call 929-732-1021 and visit www.fifthave.org.

Introducing Barrio Solar!

Barrio Solar is FAC's new program with Neighbors Helping Neighbors and Solar One to provide low- and moderate-income households with access to renewable energy. The program provides educational and financial assistance to New York City low- and moderate-income homeowners to install solar on their homes. Qualifying homeowners will receive subsidies towards the cost of solar installations on their homes. Barrio Solar supports homeowners in the installation process from start to finish.

To find out if you're eligible and get support, go to:
<https://herecomessolar.nyc/barriosolar/>.

FAC's New Website Is Here!

Check it out at www.fifthave.org.

Historic Wins for Equity, Inclusion and Resilience in Gowanus

(cont'd from page 1)

GNCJ continued organizing throughout the summer and fall, and, with our allies Councilmembers Brad Lander and Stephen Levin, successfully won commitments from the de Blasio and future administrations to ensure equitable results for local residents. These include: funding for comprehensive renovations of all units at NYCHA developments Gowanus Houses and Wyckoff Houses, at an estimated cost of \$200 million; increased on-site requirements for stormwater management to prevent Combined Sewer Overflow and a \$174 million upgrade to sewer infrastructure; and a commitment from all city agencies to regular reporting and senior agency staff participation in a Community Oversight Task Force. On November 10, 2021, we held a press conference to announce the Points of Agreement. Michelle de la Uz, our Executive Director, said "The Gowanus rezoning is different. It's different because we put inclusion, equity, the environment, NYCHA tenants, accountability, and justice at the center of this rezoning. It's different because GNCJ's dynamic multiracial coalition of NYCHA tenants, affordable housing, environmental, industrial and arts advocates and civic and religious leaders came together with our incredible Councilmembers Brad Lander and Steve Levin in partnership. We would not back down until we secured GNCJ's top demands and in that process we built trust in each other and an expectation that the Adams administration and our next Councilmembers will follow through on these hard-fought commitments. A sincere thank you to Councilmembers Lander and Levin. GNCJ couldn't have accomplished this without you. A thank you too to Mayor de Blasio and his team. This is a rezoning the administration can be proud of," said Michelle de la Uz, Executive Director of Fifth Avenue Committee (FAC).

The rezoning will also include over 3,000 units of permanently affordable housing, including FAC's Gowanus Green project. The project — the redevelopment of 5.8-acres of historically contaminated and underutilized land into a remediated, thriving, mixed-use residential community—will transform the site of a former manufactured gas plant into a resilient community that provides deeply affordable housing and reconnects the surrounding neighborhoods to each other and to the Gowanus Canal. Gowanus Green includes:

- 950 units of 100% affordable housing
- At least 50% of new rental homes for extremely low and very low-income households at or below 50% area median income (AMI), including at least 15% for formerly homeless households
- No more than 40% of rental housing will be available to moderate income households between 80% - 120% AMI
- Dedicated supportive housing for the disabled and formerly homeless individuals as well as for seniors aged 62 and older
- Affordable homeownership for moderate income households
- A public school, a 1.5-acre public park and significant neighborhood-serving retail and community space

FAC and GNCJ will continue organizing to ensure that the Gowanus rezoning results in a more equitable and diverse community. We encourage you to get involved! To learn more, go to: <https://www.gncj.org>.

To stay informed about FAC's work, follow us on Twitter @FACbrooklyn, like us on Facebook @FACbrooklyn, and our website at www.fifthave.org for updates!

