



Fifth Avenue Committee
Our Community. Our Future.

Winter 2022-23

Advancing Economic,
Social & Racial Justice Since 1978

NYC's First 100% Affordable Housing Project with Public Library Branch Welcomes Residents



Tenants began moving into Sunset Apartments and Brooklyn Public Library is building out the library space.

In the fall of 2022, FAC completed Sunset Apartments. The project includes 49 apartments affordable to low- and moderate-income families, including formerly homeless residents. It is the first project in New York City to combine 100% affordable housing with a new and expanded public library branch. FAC has partnered with the Brooklyn Public Library to develop this new facility for one of the city's most heavily used branches. The project responds to the neighborhood's deep need for affordable housing and is the first affordable housing for families to be built in the community in 20 years. Through the city-run lottery process, FAC received over 60,000 applications. FAC's Executive Director, Michelle de la Uz, said "We are proud to have created a first-of-its kind model project, that responds to two critical needs – safe, healthy and affordable housing, and space for a modern and expanded public library, which is a vital community resource." Bill Yates, FAC's Director of Housing Development, stated "We're particularly happy with how well the building has come out. The apartments have wood floors and kitchen cabinetry, and oversized windows. It will be a fantastic home for our new tenants, and FAC is excited to welcome them."

Mary Yao has lived in Sunset Park all her life, and she and her mother had lived in the same apartment for 30 years. Mary described how it was infested with roaches and mice. "The landlord didn't turn on the heat on time, and "was always asking us 'when are we going to move'?" She likes her new apartment's big windows, with sunlight coming in, and the laundry room on her floor. "It feels good," she said. "It's a new beginning." She's also looking forward to the new and bigger library space and says "I got my first library card there. Now I could go there every day."

(cont'd on page 4)

Innovations in Adult Education

FAC's Adult Education staff are always listening to and learning from the communities they serve. This year, we've launched several new programs to meet communities' emerging needs. FAC was fortunate to receive new and increased funding from NYC Councilmember Shahana Hanif and the New York State Education Department to support this growth. In Kensington, we've started a new class, co-designed with Bangladeshi community residents. With knowledgeable and skilled staff, we are offering an integrated and contextualized English language sewing class. Participants work together to learn the art of sari making while gaining English language and digital literacy skills, opportunities for civic engagement, and experience in micro-enterprise development. The class, held at PS 179 in Kensington, is open for enrollment and no sewing experience is necessary. Brian Mendes, FAC's Director of Adult Education, observed that "Thanks to added support from the city and state, we have been able to expand our programs in direct response to the needs and desires of the community."



FAC's Adult Education Kensington students participate in the integrated English language sewing class

The expansion of digital literacy instruction across all our classes is in direct response to our students' expressed needs and preferences. After developing an online banking curriculum in partnership with Capital One, we recognized how valuable internet safety and instruction in the use of online financial tools was for our students. As a result, we've added these components to all our digital literacy classes. Digital literacy classes are now offered both virtually and in person. Students who need digital devices such as a tablet, hotspot, or Chromebook benefit from our device lending program. We also encourage all residents who qualify to take advantage of New York's Emergency Broadband Benefit and the US Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) to reduce their internet bills. Brian notes that "together, these strategies are helping us address a multitude of needs including connectivity, financial literacy, and digital skills building". To learn more about the city's broadband benefit go to: <https://access.nyc.gov/programs/affordable-connectivity-program/> or call the ACP support center at 877-384-2575.

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

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Tenants Successfully Fight for their Homes

This year, FAC has continued to support tenant associations and coalitions fighting for fair treatment and to maintain a safe, affordable place to live. One of those groups supported by FAC is the 99th Street Tenant Association who FAC began working with in the fall of 2020 due to a lack of gas at the property. That foundation of tenant leadership proved critical when a fire broke out in November of 2021, displacing more than 15 tenants. Over the course of the past year, the tenants at 99th Street continued to band together. Tenants who were able to remain in their apartments provided updates to those who had been displaced. FAC and its partners helped tenants learn about their rights, mediated with the landlord and building super, and TakeRoot Justice provided legal support. "It was a relief the way the tenants came together and supported one another" said Laura Biderman from the 99th Street Tenant Association. Ramona Messina of the 99th Street Tenant Association said "Jared from Fifth Avenue Committee provided a great sense of security and support throughout the whole process. After dedicated work from everyone, including organizing work from tenants, a housing preservation action, and public pressure, the tenant association was successful, and tenants moved back into their homes this fall.



99th Street Tenant Association Leaders pictured with NYC Councilman Brannan, FAC Executive Director and Organizer at Fall Bash in November 2022

FAC also supported the Greenbrook Tenant Coalition this year. Formed in 2021, the coalition's campaign intensified in February of 2022 when they testified in front of the US Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs about their experiences living in rental properties owned by corporate landlord Greenbrook Holdings, LLC. Greenbrook tenants have been fighting against mass evictions, massive rent increases, lack of maintenance, and illegal rent deregulations across 100+ properties in Brooklyn. In their testimony, they also shed light on the broader issue of private equity landlords within NYC.

Greenbrook Holdings used the pandemic as an opportunity to purchase over 100 buildings in Brooklyn and used investments by the Texas Permanent School Fund to purchase these buildings. Following the purchases, Greenbrook Holdings began displacing and harassing tenants in order to raise rents and increase profits. As a result, the Coalition developed a campaign to pressure institutions to divest from Greenbrook Holdings and met with elected officials including US Senator Chuck Schumer, NYC Comptroller, Brad Lander, local Assemblymembers Jo Anne Simon, and Bobby Carroll, State Senators Jabari Brisport and Zellnor Myrie, and NY Senate Housing Chair Brian Kavanagh. Additionally, the coalition testified in front of pension fund organizations which invested in the purchase of the properties. Through their advocacy, the coalition raised enough awareness that a major financial investor, Grovesnor, withheld \$33.4 million. In October, NY Attorney General Letitia James and the Tenant Harassment Prevention Task Force announced a settlement with Greenbrook Holdings for engaging in unlawful practices in managing its buildings. As a result, Greenbrook will pay \$100,000 in penalties to the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), credit \$7,500 to every current tenant who moved into ten of their worst buildings on or before July 1, 2021, hire external monitors to oversee construction activity and compliance, and correct hundreds of violations across 22 of the most egregiously managed buildings within 60 days of signing.



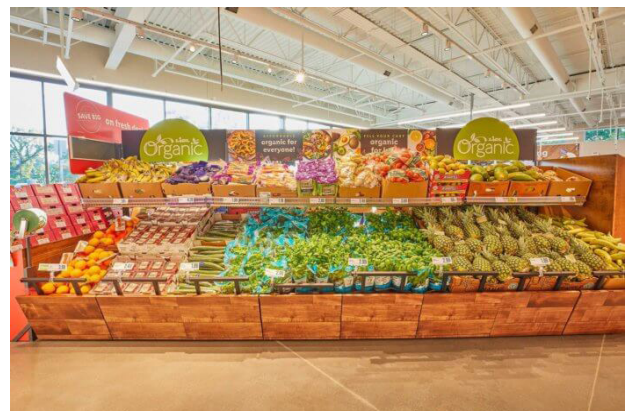
Tenant leaders from the Greenbrook Tenant Coalition at a rally denouncing Greenbrook's practices

Tax Season Is Around the Corner!

Fifth Avenue Committee will be providing free tax preparation services in partnership with Grow Brooklyn. To be eligible for this service, people with dependents must have a 2022 household income of \$72,000 or less, and single individuals must have an income of \$50,000 or less. Small businesses owners or those who are self-employed with expenses of \$5,000 or less are also eligible. Call us at 347-844-0220 by mid-January 2023 to schedule an appointment.

Lidl Supermarket Coming to 120 5th Avenue as Part of Community Benefits Agreement

FAC worked with local partners and residents to secure a community benefits agreement (CBA) as part of the redevelopment of the former 5th Avenue Key Food site at 120 5th Avenue in 2017. As part of that agreement, Lidl, an affordable, full-service grocery store, will open a new store on the site of the former Key Food on Fifth Avenue, as part of a new mixed-use development that also includes 25% affordable housing. The original grocery store was a community organizing win in the 1970s that led to FAC's formation. In 2016-17, when the site was slated for redevelopment, FAC worked with residents and the developer to ensure this important amenity would remain available.



The inside of a Lidl supermarket, known for its quality produce and reasonable prices. Photo courtesy of Brooklyn Paper

Community Oversight of the Gowanus Rezoning



Councilmembers Restler and Hanif and NYC DCP Chair, Dan Garodnick at a Press Conference Announcing Gowanus Oversight Task Force Facilitation and Launch

FAC's work to ensure an equitable rezoning of the Gowanus community continues. FAC's organizing with the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice (GNCJ) resulted in winning an agreement from the City, in response to their key demands. Released in November 2021, the agreement includes provisions for over \$450 million dollars of improvement for area public housing, public infrastructure, new affordable housing, open space, as well as the creation of the community-controlled Gowanus Rezoning Oversight Task Force. The task force is the first of its kind in NYC and represents a new approach to ensure that the city honors the points of agreement and the many commitments it contains. In October, it was announced that James Lima Planning + Development (JLP+D) will serve as the facilitator for the Task Force process. FAC Executive Director, Michelle de la Uz applauds the choice, noting that, "Ben Margolis of JLP+D has been engaged in the Gowanus rezoning process since the beginning and is committed to the community and holding the City accountable for its many commitments as part of the rezoning". FAC looks forward to working alongside them and other community members on the Task Force.



Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice members, Community Board 6 District Manager, Racioppo, with CM Hanif, DCP Chair Garodnick and James Lima and Ben Margolis from JLP+D following Press Conference in Oct. 2022

Sign up for a Financial Coaching Session

FAC's Financial Coaching helps local residents to build their skills and plan for their financial future. Our Financial Coach provides one-on-one assistance with creating budgets, managing personal finances, and meeting financial goals, with the goal of establishing healthy financial habits and creating generational wealth. To learn more about FAC's Financial Coaching service, visit our website, call 347-844-0220 or sign up for a free session at <https://bit.ly/FACCoach>.

Helping Local Homeowners to Access Solar Energy

FAC's Barrio Solar program helps low- and moderate-income homeowners to implement solar energy. With partners Neighbors Helping Neighbors and Solar One, we provide homeowners with free home assessments, subsidies to pay for implementation, and a buyers' club to reduce costs. We began in the last year, and 20 homeowners are now in the process of implementing solar. Cecilia, a school nurse, and her son have lived in their home in Sunset Park for 16 years. She says "Solar is the clear choice for the future. With the help from Barrio Solar it's not nearly as expensive as I thought it would be. And now my electricity bills have gone down." Flore, a Coordinator at the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence, has lived in the city for 16 years and became a homeowner in 2021. She says she has always wanted solar panels, if she could afford it, and "the subsidy definitely helped to make it affordable". She's looking forward to having her panels installed. "I'll save money and increase the value of my home," she says. "And I like that it's good for the environment. It's not just benefitting me." For more information about the program, go to www.barriosolar.com.



Barrio Solar homeowner Flore pictured in front of her home

Celebrate FAC's 45th Anniversary with Us!

Fifth Avenue Committee is celebrating 45 years fighting to advance economic, social, and racial justice in New York City!

We look forward to sharing information about events celebrating our 45th year.



Fifth Avenue Committee
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Summer BBQ: Celebrating and Hearing from local Congressional and State Senate Candidates



Daniel Goldman, recently elected Congressman for District 10 answers questions from local public housing leaders at the FAC Summer BBQ

This August, FAC brought back our Summer BBQ – an event that is an important opportunity to open our space and welcome our incredible supporters, tenants, tenant leaders, and neighbors. At this year's event, we also welcomed local candidates who were running for the recently redrawn Congressional District 10 and State Senate District 26. With the August primary falling just a few days later, the BBQ presented an opportunity for tenant leaders to ask questions and community members to hear directly from the candidates. District 10 candidates Daniel Goldman, Yuh-Line Niou, Carlina Rivera, and Jo Anne Simon and State Senate District 26 candidates Andrew Gounardes and David Yassky discussed their positions on NYCHA Preservation Trust, modernization plans for public housing, universal rental assistance and their position on Good Cause Eviction in NY State, among other positions. The candidates discussed what legislation they will push for to protect tenants and the affordable housing they count on.



State Senator Andrew Gounardes Answering Questions and Neighbors Dancing at FAC Summer BBQ



Apply for the Federal Emergency Housing Voucher

Fifth Avenue Committee's affiliate Neighbors Helping Neighbors can help landlords to apply for the Federal Emergency Housing Voucher, which provides long-term rental assistance to eligible households. Participating as a rental owner will allow you to benefit from guaranteed monthly rent payments and low vacancy rates. To learn more about the Emergency Housing Voucher, request a personal consultation <https://bit.ly/HousingVoucher>.

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A three bedroom unit located on the 8th floor of the Sunset Park Apartments building

(cont'd from page 1)

Krystal Negron, a nurse's assistant at a local hospital, has lived in the area since coming to New York from Puerto Rico 13 years ago. She's now moved from the one-bedroom apartment she shared with her three children to a three bedroom in Sunset Apartments. "I love everything about the place," she said. "It's two blocks from the subway, and my kids can't believe they get to have their own rooms. And I wasn't even expecting the view. We can see the Verrazano Bridge, the Statue of Liberty and half of the city. The sunsets are so beautiful."

Another new tenant, Taina Bobe has always lived in Sunset Park. The two-bedroom she shared with her three kids had become too expensive. She's glad she can stay in her community. "It's just home," she said, of Sunset Park. "My kids go to school here, my family's here." About her new three-bedroom apartment, she said "It's so new and bright. The kids have more space. Being able to give that to them makes a big difference." She added "It's probably the first time that I saw an affordable housing project in this area ever. It's a big deal, and something good for the people in this neighborhood."

Affordable Senior Housing Lottery Information Sessions Coming Soon

FAC's affordable senior housing project at 408 63rd Street in Sunset Park will provide 83 new units of affordable senior housing with on-site social services by Bay Ridge Center, a community room, TV room and multiple laundry rooms in addition to five new Universal Pre-Kindergarten classrooms. Applicants must be 62 or older to qualify.

The lottery information sessions for this project will be coming soon. Check out our website at <https://fifthave.org/> for updates on this project and contact 347-844-0220 for one-on-one assistance to create a Housing Connect 2.0 Profile online to apply.