



## Letter from the Executive Director

### Celebrating FAC at 45 Years!

Dear Supporters, Partners, and Friends,

It's been a great year as we've celebrated 45 years of Fifth Avenue Committee's impact!! We've had a chance to reflect on the past, think ahead to our goals for the next 45 years, and celebrate with partners and community members. In the spring, we hosted our 45th Anniversary Benefit and Awards Reception at BAM where we recognized JPMorgan Chase for their support in funding our newest affordable housing project, Sunset Ridge, and presented the Brooklyn Housing Justice Champions with the Power award for their resilience in battling a predatory equity landlord. Summer saw our annual community BBQ where we gathered with friends and neighbors in our backyard at the FAC Center and focused our attention on FAC's work to support local leaders addressing climate justice issues such as air quality and extreme heat, and the dire need for more affordable housing. Plus, we enjoyed great food, live salsa music by Tempo Alegre, and of course, plenty of dancing!



This fall, we celebrated 45 years of service with the panel, "Effective Leadership: Advancing Equity & Ensuring Impact in Evolving Communities." Past and present leaders of our organization discussed how FAC has evolved to meet the community's changing needs while keeping equity at the center of our work. During the discussion, former Executive Directors and Board members reflected on how FAC maintained clear values and a commitment to our roots as organizers and community builders



as the organization entered the housing development space. New York City Controller and former FAC Executive Director, Brad Lander, remembered that there was an "insistence on building inclusive community - [you] could already see gentrification undermining the special diversity here and there was a commitment to be organizing to prevent [further] displacement." This sentiment holds as true today as it did then. In 1978, FAC was fighting against redlining and disinvestment in the community. Today, we are battling gentrification

and displacement. But for 45 years, we have been dedicated to this work, with racial justice at the center of our approach to create a more just, inclusive and equitable New York City. We have developed over 1,300 affordable homes with 1,600+ on the way. We are connecting low- and moderate-income homeowners to solar energy. We are working with local leaders, leading organizing campaigns for tenants' rights and equitable neighborhood development. And we are supporting hundreds of immigrants and asylum seekers through our Adult Education classes and supportive services. New York is at an inflection point. For New York City to thrive and remain true to the values it represents around the world, it must be a place where people of all backgrounds can put down roots, build their lives, and pursue their dreams. As we look ahead to the next 45 years, we look forward to continuing this crucial work, using interconnected strategies to advance a vision for an equitable, inclusive and just New York City where all people can thrive. Thank you for being in this fight with us.

Siempre pa'lante,

Michelle de la Uz  
Executive Director

# TRANSFORM

## Our Impact

This year we...

- Reached over **6,000** New Yorkers with our comprehensive services and programs.
- Provided Adult Education classes in ESOL, GED, and our Bridge program, which helps students enter career pathways, to **993** students.
- Provided subsidies to **13** low and moderate income homeowners to help them install solar energy in their homes.
- Screened over **2,000** affordable housing lottery applicants.



FAC Adult Education students in CDL class



Solar panel installation

# BUILD

## Promoting Inclusion

Ensuring 2,000 Affordable Units Get Built in Gowanus



At Governor Hochul's Press Conference in July  
Photo credit: Governor Hochul's office

The November 2021 rezoning of Gowanus includes 3,000 units of critically needed permanently affordable housing including 2,000 units created through the City's Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) program. Those 2,000 MIH units were at risk due to the expiration of the 421a tax abatement program in 2022 which requires housing projects to complete construction by June 2026. Due to lingering pandemic related construction impacts, staffing issues at government agencies involved in overseeing key aspects of construction and environmental remediation, as well as tightening credit conditions connected with regional bank failures, the June 2026 deadline threatened those 2,000 affordable housing units. In collaboration with our partners at the New York Housing Conference, members of the Gowanus Oversight Taskforce, and other allies, FAC worked quickly to educate the public and elected officials about the potential loss of those 2,000 units if a workable solution was not found. Michelle de la Uz, FAC's Executive Director, published an Op-Ed in City Limits, appeared on NY 1's Inside City Hall, and was quoted in early June by Gothamist and in other publications advocating for a solution. Our advocacy resulted in a real victory this summer, when Governor Kathy Hochul announced a Gowanus 421a pilot replacement program specifically designed to protect the 2,000 units of affordable housing planned for Gowanus. Michelle de la Uz participated in the Governor's executive bill signing and said "The executive order is a timely solution for Gowanus, but it also points to the need for ongoing methods to ensure the viability of affordable housing in New York."

## Our Impact

This year we...

- Built **134** new units and preserved **8** units of affordable housing.
- Advanced a development pipeline that includes **1,600** units of affordable housing, Universal Pre-K classrooms, and a public park.
- Provided and managed affordable, safe and healthy housing for **964** low and moderate income tenants.

## Sunset Ridge

Welcoming Seniors to their New Home

FAC is proud to announce the completion of Sunset Ridge, our 100% affordable housing project for low-income seniors with Universal Pre-Kindergarten space on the ground floor. The project includes a new nine-story building and two newly renovated adjacent townhouses, with a total of 83 units. More than half of older New York renters are rent burdened, meaning they are paying more than 30% of their income – often a fixed income – on rent. The main building will also house five new Universal Pre-Kindergarten classrooms for 90 preschoolers to be run by the New York City Department of Education. FAC received over 40,000 affordable housing lottery applications and is finalizing the leasing of the apartments. FAC's Property Manager, Vania Merino said "It's been rewarding seeing people so happy to move in. One woman cried because she couldn't believe this was real. She was so happy that she had her own apartment."



Miguel Salcedo, a new resident of Sunset Park described Sunset Ridge as being "a very peaceful place. I really like the environment and how peaceful the neighborhood is. My apartment is big and spacious, and the building is beautiful." After migrating to the United States from the Dominican Republic 38 years ago, Miguel has lived in various neighborhoods in New York. He had been living with his daughter, Bianca in Queens for several years. He recently retired from his job at Citarella, and decided it was time to have his own space. Bianca explained, "Rent in New York is crazy for a person who is retired, so I started helping him apply for housing lotteries for the elderly. Now he has rent he can afford. The apartment is perfect and accommodating for a senior living on their own and the natural lighting is beautiful".

Janice Walker, another new tenant said, "I love my apartment. I have views of the water and New Jersey and a view of Manhattan from my living room". Janice fell on hard times when she lost her apartment in 2017. After a two-year stint in a shelter, Janice moved into a new apartment. "The apartment was nice until I moved in," she said. "My daughter's ceiling caved in, and water started entering the apartment. We were never able to get help, so we decided to leave." Entering back into the shelter system, Janice applied for the Sunset Ridge housing lottery, with the help of a social worker. "Since moving here, my mood is much better. I'm much happier. I go to the senior center in the building every day because they have activities, and they serve lunch. I have a lot of positive things going on. I love it here".

Reflecting on the project, Michelle de la Uz, FAC's Executive Director, stated "FAC is so proud to have created 134 new affordable homes in two separate Sunset Park projects in the last two years. The demand for affordable housing is profound, especially in Sunset Park where displacement pressures continue to increase and to threaten this vibrant community. Sunset Ridge is a home that the older adult residents can be proud of and has the support they need on-site".

## Sunset Park Apartments & Library Completion

FAC is excited to announce the completion of Sunset Park Apartments and the opening of the Sunset Park Library! This project was a partnership between FAC and the Brooklyn Public Library to redevelop the heavily utilized but outdated branch into a 21st Century expanded library with 49 affordable apartments above. It is the first project to combine 100% affordable housing with a new, expanded public library in NYC and addresses multiple community needs. We were thrilled to hold a ribbon cutting on November 15th, 2023, marketing the official opening of the library.



# Gowanus Oversight Task Force

## Keeps the Public Engaged and the City on Track Towards Equitable Development



After years of advocacy, the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice (GNCJ), a coalition organized by FAC and others, won significant commitments from the City as part of its Gowanus rezoning. These include over \$400 million in investments in renovations for local public housing, and for sewer infrastructure, along with many other funding commitments benefiting the local community. Now, local stakeholders have begun the hard work of making sure that these commitments come to fruition. In addition to winning improvements for the neighborhood, GNCJ

won the creation of the first-ever community-controlled Oversight Task Force for a rezoning, which enables community members to hold the City accountable for the 56 Points of Agreement (POA). The Gowanus Oversight Task Force (GOTF) includes local residents, public housing tenant leaders, and local community organizations and businesses, including FAC. Its committees on Housing, Sustainability and Resiliency, Open Space and Waterfront Access, Economic and Workforce Development, and Public Infrastructure work with City agencies to ensure commitments are advancing. GOTF also helps the public stay informed and engaged, through quarterly public meetings and a publicly available tracker to chart progress towards the City's commitments. Nilda Lino has lived in Gowanus Houses for 30 years. "I remember back in the day when no one wanted to live here," she says. "Now everyone wants to live here." She learned about the rezoning at a resident meeting in her building, decided to join the GOTF, and is now a member of the Housing Committee. Through her work, she hopes to see the commitments become reality - completed renovations in NYCHA, a cleaner Canal thanks to sewer infrastructure, and resources for people to open their own businesses. "The experience has been eye-opening," she says. "I didn't know how these decisions are made. When we plug in, we have a better understanding, and can share ideas about what we want to see in our community"

To stay up to date with the GOTF's work, visit <https://www.gowanustaskforce.net/>.

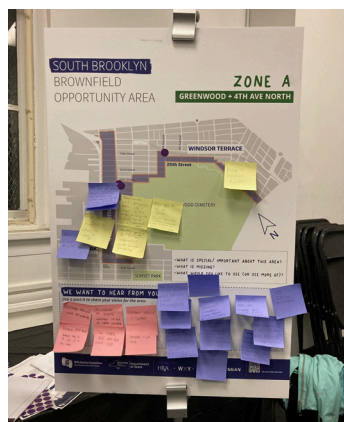
# Community Based Planning

## Envisioning New Uses for Underutilized Sites in Sunset Park & Windsor Terrace



Take a walk around Sunset Park, or Windsor Terrace, and you'll see parks, schools, homes and small businesses. Depending on where you walk, you may also see vacant or underused land which may be a brownfield or contaminated site. With support from the NYS Department of State, FAC has launched a community-based planning process to envision how those sites can help to meet the community's current needs. Our South Brooklyn Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) project has brought together diverse residents and

local stakeholders from Sunset Park and Windsor Terrace to gather input about proposed redevelopment of these sites that aligns with community needs and priorities. The BOA project is led by a Steering Committee made up of local residents, business and nonprofit leaders, local elected officials and city and state agencies. The Steering Committee created three guiding objectives for the process: Development without Displacement; Public Land for Public Good; and Connected Communities. In September, we were excited to host our first BOA community visioning session. Over 55 participants joined the event, and circulated across stations where they viewed maps and discussed ideas for three zones: Greenwood and 4th Avenue North, 4th Avenue South; and 39th Street and 63rd Street, which has significant transit infrastructure. The key themes which emerged from the event included needs for affordable housing, improvements in transportation, including subway station, pedestrian and bike infrastructure, public and green space and safety. FAC and the BOA team will build on this work which includes hosting two more public sessions by March 2024. To learn more and get involved, visit <https://fifthave.org/southbrooklynboa/>.



### Financial Coaching

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

# POWER

## Our Impact This year we...

- Provided individual counseling to **328** tenants to prevent evictions.
- Organized **34** tenant associations to prevent displacement and promote housing stability.
- Provided leadership development and support to over **50** local leaders.
- Organized **169** residents in organizing activities for accountable and equitable development.



Tenants organizing for lower rents at the Rent Board Guidelines hearing



Tenants rallying for their rights.

## Assistance with Medicaid Re-Enrollment & SNAP Benefits

As of April 2023, the federal government has withdrawn all emergency COVID funding. As a result, the state has discontinued its automatic Medicaid re-enrollment provisions, and all current Medicaid recipients will have their eligibility re-evaluated. If you are a Medicaid recipient, contact the Medicaid hotline at 888-692-6116 to confirm the recertification date. For help with recertification or to enroll in free or low-cost health insurance, contact FAC's Community Services hotline at 347-844-0220. For a list of benefits counseling available through our Community Services, scan the QR code.



# TRANSFORM

## Our Impact

This year we...

- Helped **341** low and moderate income New Yorkers to access public benefits.
- Provided free tax prep services to **260** low and moderate income New Yorkers.
- Provided financial coaching to **624** low and moderate income New Yorkers.



2023 Tax preparation session

## Free Tax Preparation Services

FAC will provide free tax preparation services in partnership with Grow Brooklyn, Inc. To be eligible for this service, people with dependents must have a 2023 income of \$80,000 or less, and single individuals must have an income of \$56,000 or less. Small business owners or those who are self-employed with expenses of \$35,000 or less are also eligible. Call us at 347-844-0220 by mid-January 2024 to schedule an appointment.

## Living Our Values

### Supporting New Arrival Asylum Seekers

FAC is proud to join with the many other community-based organizations (CBOs) helping to meet the significant needs of the tens of thousands of asylum seekers who have recently arrived in New York City. In 2023, our Adult Education department collaborated with local schools and other CBOs to provide English language classes to over 100 new arrivals in Sunset Park and Park Slope. Many newcomers have also enrolled in our other classes, including Basic Education, High School Equivalency and digital literacy. In addition to teaching classes, our staff have helped students with other immediate needs, such as collaborating with a legal services provider to help them complete initial asylum applications and enrolling



their young children in early education programs. FAC also co-hosted an immigration workshop for newly arrived asylum seekers and participated in a local Asylum Seekers Resource Fair to provide screening for public benefits. In the coming months, we will reach out to Venezuelans who have been granted Temporary Protected Status, and other newcomers who have secured work permits to join our Bridge program, which provides contextualized English instruction to help students enter career pathways through training with our workforce development affiliate, Brooklyn Workforce Innovations.

English class for newly arrived immigrants held at Public School 124 in Brooklyn in May 2023 with Councilmember Hanif and Michelle de la Uz, FAC Executive Director.

## Organizing for Justice

### Tenants Fight for Their Rights & Their Homes

Rosanna Castellanos has lived in her apartment on 44th Street in Sunset Park with her husband and son for 20 years. In 2019, she and her neighbors learned that their landlord planned to de-regulate the building, meaning that their rents would significantly increase, putting many of them at risk of displacement. They reached out to FAC's affiliate, Neighbors Helping Neighbors, to help them stay in their homes. NHN worked with the tenants to join together, learn about their rights, and get representation from Brooklyn Legal Services. After years of organizing, in 2023, the tenants won their case. All 28 units in the building will remain under rent stabilization. Reflecting on the experience, Rosanna said she was grateful for NHN's support, and that "Es necesario que los vecinos nos organizamos. Si no nos organizamos como grupo, no vamos a lograr las cosas." [English translation: "It's necessary that neighbors organize. If we don't organize as a group, we won't achieve our goals."] Aura Mejia, NHN's Organizing and Advocacy Manager, said "We know that we're losing affordable units in a very aggressive way. So keeping those 28 units in a community that's facing gentrification is a great win." NHN is strategically working to address similar situations in the neighborhood. They've identified buildings with the same landlord as the 44th Street tenants, and have started organizing tenant associations there. Aura explained "We have to keep fighting to protect the tenants, and keep providing workshops so that tenants have the knowledge to fight back."



Rosanna Castellanos, far left, with 44th Street neighbors

To stay informed about FAC's work, follow us on Twitter & Facebook @FACbrooklyn, follow us on Instagram @fifthavenuecommittee, and LinkedIn @FifthAvenueCommittee. Visit our website at [www.fifthave.org](http://www.fifthave.org) for updates!

