



## **Cooperators United for Mitchell-Lama**

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Mitchell-Lama cooperatives are the quiet heroes of the social housing movement.

The Mitchell-Lama cooperative program has 62,000 apartments, mostly in New York City. Mitchell-Lama residents, of whom many are seniors, vote. Of the rental Mitchell-Lama developments that were created, approximately two-thirds have departed the program, considering the relatively low obstacles for individual landlords. Many of those former Mitchell-Lama rentals suffer high rents and poor management. But only about 10% of the original Mitchell-Lama cooperatives have exited the program.

MITCHELL-LAMA COOPERATIVES are not-for-profit housing developments for middle-and low-income New Yorkers. Our communities were created in the post WW II building boom to provide housing in our cities. Construction lasted from 1955 to 1975. Large urban communities; Co-op City in The Bronx, Rochdale Village in Queens, Amalgamated Warbasse and Lindsay Park in Brooklyn, Village View in Manhattan. Our sizes range from under 100 apartments to 15,000 units. Most function quite well acting as stable anchors for their surrounding communities. Many developments are home to multiple family generations: grandparents, mothers, fathers, children and even more. The family network is one of our strengths. We stay in our developments, few leave.

We need help. Our buildings are aging and need serious capital investment: elevators, roofs, façade, windows, required energy upgrades, concrete work for sidewalks, garages, parking lots, and plumbing. Our operating budgets are overwhelmed with rising costs in utilities and the doubling of insurance bills in the past few years.

Plus, many have run into a unique obstacle that as a resident leaves, and vacates their apartment, the management must restore the apartment. Frequently, a fifty to sixty year old apartment may have had a few coats of paint, but the kitchen appliances and cabinets are falling apart. The cooperative corporation does not have the money to restore the apartment and therefore does not sell the apartment for months; in some cases years. The co-op loses its major source of income with vacant apartments.

There are solutions to this high vacancy rate and the need for big money for capital improvement. The supervising agencies (HPD & HCR) need to modify their rules to allow speedier renovations. The State and City have to step in and not just provide much more opportunity for low interest loans for capital improvements but also more staff to process these loans. It can take two years to process the paper as the building languishing under scaffolding and bridging because exteriors are falling and need repair.

Please, do not abandon Mitchell-Lama the way the Feds abandoned NYCHA. Private vendors are not the answer. Both the State and its cities have invested a great deal in ML with past low interest loans, tax subsidies and abatements. Our success is because the Mitchell-Lama model is a not-for-profit model.

With serious financial investment prioritized, our Mitchell-Lama cooperative homes will continue to house new generations of New Yorkers for another seventy years and beyond.