



Quarterly Report By Hope Executive Director Robin LeBaron

The *Hope Herald* gives a lot of coverage to Hope's many photogenic projects – ribbon cuttings, youth programs, celebrations, Our property management operations, by contrast, get less coverage, because they don't usually lend themselves to photo ops. But property management is the single most important thing that Hope does; our mission is not only to create affordable housing, but to preserve it in as good condition as possible for the benefit of the people who live in it and for the East Harlem community at large.

So, this spring, as the trees along East 104th Street come into bloom and Yvonne re-opens the Modesto Flores garden, the Hope staff, under the direction of Acting Director of Property Management Regina Mendoza and Maintenance Manager Sam Gonzalez, have been focusing on many projects to improve our buildings. Some of these are routine; others are new. Highlights include:

Refinancing of "Year 15" Projects:

Two of the first rehab projects that Hope undertook with Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit funds have reached their 15 year tax credit period. We have

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Go Green East Harlem Cookbook Tour a Local Success

Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer has spent the last six months talking about his eating habits. In an effort to promote a more wholesome diet and lifestyle amongst local residents, the Borough President has worked diligently to promote the Go Green East Harlem Cookbook, a compilation of healthy recipes contributed by East Harlem restaurateurs and community residents. The cookbook is part of a broader, community-based sustainability initiative, Go Green East Harlem.

In addition to free lectures at public schools and local bookstores, the Borough President has co-sponsored



*Borough President Scott M. Stringer and
Carmen Vasquez at Cemi Underground*



*Carmen Vasquez being interviewed
for CUNY-TV's "Nueva York" program*

food-tasting events throughout the neighborhood and has handed out thousands of free copies of the bilingual publication to East Harlem residents.

The first glimpse of the cookbook was during a January 22nd steering committee meeting at North General Hospital, where recipe contributors such as Hope's Carmen Vasquez and Executive Director Robin LeBaron each received a complimentary copy of the cookbook, and discussed plans for upcoming neighborhood events.

Stops along the tour have included a book-signing at Cemi Underground Bookstore on February 1st, during which Carmen Vasquez and fellow recipes contributor Wanda

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been working with the city to refinance these projects and secure loans to make a number of necessary capital improvements, including façade work, kitchen cabinets, and, for two of the buildings, new roofs.

Energy efficiency improvements:

Through NYSERDA, a New York State program that promotes energy conservation measures in residential buildings, we are “greening” one of our properties on East 115th Street. During April and May we will be installing energy efficient lighting and refrigerators, water-saving showerheads, improvements to the heating system, and a new, highly insulated roof.

Roof to basement inspections: We have been systematically going through the public areas in each of our 72 properties

to identify and address all maintenance and capital needs issues. These reports will form the basis for a new multi-year capital plan.

Violations clearance: Working with the city housing department (HPD), we are going through seven of our buildings to ensure that these properties are clear of violations.

Software integration: It may not sound exciting, but software is essential for successful property management. Over the past year we have integrated our new Yardi software into many different facets of daily property management and fiscal operations, and we will continue to find new ways to use this very effective software over the coming year.

Referral services: With a recession on the horizon, we want to work with tenants who are having difficulty making

rent payments because of job loss or other circumstances. Hope’s community relations staff work closely with a number of community organizations to help tenants obtain any available form of support, from rent support to childcare to continuing education. We welcome help and assistance from all of our community partners at identifying services and resources that would benefit the residents of Hope buildings.

Our ultimate goal is a model housing portfolio in two senses of the term. First, we intend to meet and exceed industry standards when it comes to traditional measures of success at property management, such as rent collections, vacancy rates, vacant apartment turnover time, and so on. But as we do this, we will not lose sight of our larger mission: to maintain our buildings as islands of decent affordable housing that will resist the tides of gentrification forever.

“Go Green East Harlem! Seminars for Supers” Task Force Tests Green Cleaning Products in Hope Buildings

On April 11, Council on the Environment of NYC Outreach Coordinator Christina Salvi met with Hope Community’s Craig Harty to introduce an entire line of green cleaning products and brand new, environmentally friendly mops and cleaning rags donated by the Shaklee Corporation. Harty and other maintenance employees were then asked to use the “Get Clean Starter Kit” exclusively for several weeks.

As part of the program’s Integrated Pest Management strategy, participants also received a high-powered vacuum used by exterminators that can reach into crevices and can pick up roach eggs. The vacuum also has a HEPA filter that holds in dust and is beneficial to asthmatics.

One week later, Salvi’s Go Green Committee partner, Ed Lauth, returned to the Hope building along with Shaklee distributor Carol Froehlich-Hull to review their experience.

Craig Harty and other facility managers then participated in a discussion on their



Hope’s Craig Harty (center) is surveyed after testing green cleaning products

use of the green cleaning products at the April 24th session of the Go Green East Harlem! Seminars for Supers.

Participants were also presented with additional information on “green” cleaning products, whose ingredients were contrasted with the many harmful chemicals contained in many ordinary household cleaners.

Working under the Go Green East Harlem umbrella, the Council on the Environment of NYC has sponsored “Seminars for Supers,” a series of free monthly workshops designed to provide alternative maintenance techniques to property managers and superintendents in the community that help reduce a building’s impact on the environment.

The topics selected provide a holistic approach to healthy living conditions

and a clean environment. The seminars are designed to address the concerns of both supers and tenants, helping to create a bridge that can lead to a nicer living environment for tenants and a better workplace for maintenance staff.

For more information on the Seminars for Supers, call (212) 788-7989.

NYS Senator José M. Serrano Convenes Working Group to Investigate Local Supermarket Closures

Last February, New York State Senator José M. Serrano convened a task force of local residents, merchants, union representatives, industry representatives, and city officials to address the growing crisis of supermarket closings in East Harlem. According to *Latin Week NY*, the neighborhood has lost seven supermarkets in the past year. The latest casualty was the Pioneer supermarket on Madison Avenue at 111 Street, whose owner was forced to close the 17-year-old business when the rent was doubled.

The task force is currently in the process of compiling and forwarding specific data on local supermarket closures to Ben Thomases, the Food Policy Coordinator for Mayor Bloomberg. According to the Senator's Chief of Staff, Brian Levinson, "Part of the engagement process will be to plan a bigger community-wide forum in early June. We need landlords and industry representatives to understand how much support there is for new supermarkets -- and healthy food! -- in East Harlem."

Senator Serrano will continue holding monthly meetings at Hope Community. For more information call (212) 828-5829.

Excerpts from State Senator José M. Serrano's April 3rd Testimony before the NYS Council on Food Policy

"Supermarkets are closing in East Harlem. The reasons are varied and hard to define precisely, but it lies somewhere in the nexus between rising rents, higher food prices and increasing energy costs which effect everything from refrigeration to lighting to deliveries. The skyrocketing cost

of doing business in East Harlem has recently caused multiple supermarkets to close their doors. A spate of further closures looms just over the horizon. We are looking at a public health crisis of dangerous proportions. The supermarkets that are able to provide a wide variety of fresh and nutritious food at reasonable prices cannot afford to do business in our community any longer. East Harlem already has some of the highest rates of preventable diet related diseases in the city. I dread the social cost of having the remaining healthy options driven out.

"Some of our constituents are determined to eat healthy and are willing to make lengthy trips in order to get nutritious food. However, for many of our elderly and disabled residents that is not

an option. In one striking example, a neighborhood resident was carrying her groceries back from the market when she had a heart attack. She used to shop at a nearby Pioneer Supermarket, which closed in February."

Visit www.nyssenate28.com to read the rest of the Senator's testimony.



The Associated Supermarket at Lexington Avenue has been closed since January 2008.



Participants at the April meeting of the task force convened by State Senator Jose M. Serrano.

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Cookbook Tour a Local Success



Local restaurateurs Jose Galarza and Roberto Ayala proudly display their cookbook recipes

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Latchman joined Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer in a discussion about their respective contributions.

Ms. Vasquez then joined East Harlem Cafe owner Michelle Cruz and other Hope staff at the publication's official launch party at the Museum of the City of New York on January 23rd.

On February 27th, CUNY-TV's "Nueva York" producer José Luis Orbegoza interviewed Carmen Vasquez about her involvement in the Borough President's initiative during a segment videotaped in and around Hope Community's main office along East 104th Street. The interview was then broadcast over Channel 75 throughout the month of April. The segment is also available online at www.cuny.tv.

Everyone was a winner at El Museo del Barrio's February 27th "Food Tasting Contest," which featured recipes by Hope Community's Carmen Vasquez and

other "Go Green East Harlem Cookbook" contributors. Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer greeted guests as they sampled and then graded local dishes prepared with the support of chefs from La Fonda Boricua and El Paso Taquería.

Hope Community then hosted a special presentation of the "Go Green East Harlem Cookbook" at Carlos Rios Senior Residence on March 4th. Dozens of tenants and local residents were in attendance as the Borough President discussed his initiative and handed out copies of the publication.

On April 22nd, the Borough President and his cookbook contributors helped kick-off a "Going Green" celebration at Macy's Herald Square Cellar. The week-long event included cooking demonstrations by Roberto and Jorge Ayala from La Fonda Boricua Restaurant, Melba Wilson from Melba's Restaurant and Brian Ghaw from Savoy Bakery in East Harlem.

For more information on the Go Green East Harlem initiative, call (212) 531-1609.

Hope Community Staff Transitions

Hope Community welcomed a few new staff members this season and bid farewell to a few others. Here's a quick rundown.

Veteran Organizer Joins Community Relations Staff



On January 14th, Brodie Enoch (pictured above), joined Hope's staff as a Community Organizer. Through a persistent door knocking and phone calls, Brodie has helped establish tenant associations in over one dozen Hope buildings and has been an active member of the East Harlem Anti-Displacement Task Force.

Maria Ramos Moves Upstairs



On February 12th, Hope's part-time receptionist Maria Ramos (above left) made a vertical move by accepting a full-time position with a neighboring tenant, Union Settlement Home Care, Inc.

Hope Welcomes New Chief Financial Officer



On March 27th, Hope's Executive Director Robin LeBaron and Deputy Executive Director Carmen Vasquez surprised Hope's new Chief Financial Officer Marie Iammateo (above right), with a welcome basket filled with fresh fruits and snacks. A financial management professional with over 25 years of experience, Marie now manages all aspects of the agency's finances and accounting.

Mary Maldonado Dials 911



Assistant Property Manager Mary Maldonado made a bold move by taking a position as a dispatcher for the Pennsylvania state police. We wish Mary all the best.

Hope Bids Farewell to Iris Marines



On April 8th, Hope staff threw a farewell party for Property Manager Iris Marines (above center), who is retiring after six years of service. In addition to lots of good company, Iris was treated to lunch and strawberry shortcake cake. Hope Community wishes Ms. Marines all the best.

Jaritzza Taveras to Represent Borough President Stringer



Activities Coordinator Jaritzza Taveras (pictured above), has accepted a position with the Manhattan Borough President's Office to serve as a Community Affairs Liaison to Community Boards 11 and 12. We wish Jaritzza all the best and look forward to working together to improve the quality of life for East Harlem residents.

Highlights of Community Events



Hope Community's annual Three Kings Day dinner was held on January 4th at Carlos Rios Senior Residence where tenants were treated to a traditional Caribbean style buffet. Also in attendance were board member Haydee Areizaga and Hope Executive Director Robin LeBaron (above), and Deputy Executive Director Carmen Vasquez (below), who sang a few Bomba/Plena songs with vocalist Eddie Karimbó y Su Orquestra.



El Museo del Barrio's 31st Annual Three Kings Parade on January 4th featured a 30-foot float (above left), music bands, and assorted live camels and sheep parading throughout East Harlem. Hope Community's Carmen Vasquez (above right), joined hundreds of other participants in the 31st annual event.



On January 23rd, Hope's Carmen Vásquez (pictured below with local business owners and community leaders) attended the annual luncheon of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce at the Crystal Room in Taino Towers. Speakers during the event included NYC Council Member John Lui and Borough President Scott M. Stringer.



Hope's Board of Directors enjoyed a catered meal at its January full board meeting courtesy of Terence Cardinal Cooke Health Care Center. Facility administrators have graciously accommodated all the board's monthly meetings at the health care center during Board Chair/President Roger Cabán's four month rehabilitation period following a car accident. Pictured above, top row from left: Mr. Joe Brown Vice President of Public Relations, Deputy Executive Director Carmen Vasquez, Karol Robinson of Norris, McLaughlin & Marcus (center), Terence Cardinal Cooke staff member. Center Row: Robin LeBaron, Haydee Areizaga, Lisa Otterbeck, Bill Ofenloch. Last Row: Roger Cabán.





SSA MARK-VIVERITO
YORK CITY COUNCIL MEMBER
8TH DISTRICT
io-East Har

Hope staff took part in a number of affordable housing events, including Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito's Three Kings Day housing rally (above left), and a January 19th City Hall press conference (right), at which NYC Council Member Tony Avella and Picture the Homeless announced the introduction of a comprehensive legislative package to encourage the development of vacant and abandoned properties in NYC.



On March 15th, Carmen Vasquez (above left), attended the 5th Annual New York State Women of Excellence Award Celebration at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture where Governor Designate David A. Paterson honored Karen Boykin-Towns, Majora Carter, Brooke Ellison, Sharon Joseph, Gail Richards, Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples, Mary Elizabeth Pettit, Courtney Ramirez, and Dr. Marta Moreno for their service.



On March 5th, Hope's Executive Staff held an afternoon discussion on urban development and financing with a delegation of African women (pictured above) interested in hearing about the East Harlem agency's affordable housing best practices. The delegation was visiting New York City as part of the United Nations' Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT).



Save the date!

2008 Annual Gala and Community Service Awards

May 22nd, 2008

Please join us this year, along with nearly 400 of our partners, community leaders, and tenants as we celebrate our recent accomplishments and future projects.

Thursday, May 22nd, 6:00 – 10:00pm
Terence Cardinal Cooke Health Care Center
1249 Fifth Avenue, 10th Floor
New York, NY

For more information, call 212.860.8821, Ext 123