



**Southside United  
HDFC - Los Sures®**



**St.Nicks Alliance**

*Where Opportunity Grows*

TO:

State Senator Brian Kavanagh  
Assemblyman Joseph Lentol

FROM:

Juan Ramos, Southside United HDFC Los Sures  
Michael Rochford, St. Nick's Alliance

April 30, 2020

We are disappointed that we were unable to achieve our mutual goal during the recent State Budget session to preserve the affordability and rent levels of hundreds of new affordable housing units in Williamsburg and Greenpoint. We now ask that you introduce independent legislation as soon as possible to address this issue and keep new “affordable housing” actually affordable to people who live in our community.

The stakes are high. Without a legislative fix, instead of hundreds of new units being made available to families of four earning less than \$85,000 (or 80% of AMI), they will now likely be made available to families of four earning less than \$139,000 (or 130% of AMI). Rents on those units will nearly double, from \$1550/month for a two bedroom to \$3063/month.

Accounting for the community preference that requires 50% of new affordable units are first made available to the residents of the local community board, this means that hundreds of local families in dire need of high quality affordable housing in Brooklyn's Community Board 1 who were counting on these long-planned, low-income apartments will now be forced to look elsewhere, most likely far from their neighborhoods.

This isn't a theoretical policy discussion -- at 1 South First Street in Williamsburg there are 66 completed affordable apartments sitting vacant in the midst of a housing crisis and skyrocketing unemployment, that are stuck in limbo because of this situation. Across the City, developers prefer to develop affordable units at the higher AMIs, because they collect more rent on the units and they enjoy a longer tax abatement period under 421a. In this instance, we have a developer who has agreed to try to develop the units at lower AMIs under the old 421a program but because of an unintended consequence of last year's rent laws, they are no longer able to build under this scenario.

The developers have given us a deadline of this summer to try to correct this unintended consequence legislatively, or else they will move forward with changing their affordable programs to comply with the new 421a instead of the old 421a, dramatically increasing the AMIs and rents. And there are hundreds more affordable apartments in the pipeline at Domino and

Greenpoint Landing that are threatened with dramatically increased rents and affordability levels that would benefit from a simple legislative action.

There is a proposed legislative fix, which was circulated to your offices last November, in advance of budget season, that would allow developers in Williamsburg and Greenpoint to charge market rate rents on their market rate units under the old 421 a, preserving the enormous gains made under the new rents laws, but allowing these affordable programs to proceed as planned with lower rents and affordability levels.

It would be a big win for this community if this proposed change became law as soon as possible. If not, it would be an outrage to see these affordable rents and AMIs skyrocket when a solution with no known downside was overlooked.

There are already too many new “affordable units” being developed in Williamsburg and Greenpoint that are out of reach for most local residents. When we advocated on behalf of large scale upzonings in Greenpoint and Williamsburg, we did so with an understanding that affordable apartments generated would be truly affordable to our constituents.

Thank you for your attention. We are happy to meet and discuss this issue with your offices at a convenient time.

Sincerely,



Juan Ramos, Southside United HDFC Los Sures



Michael Rochford, St. Nicks Alliance