

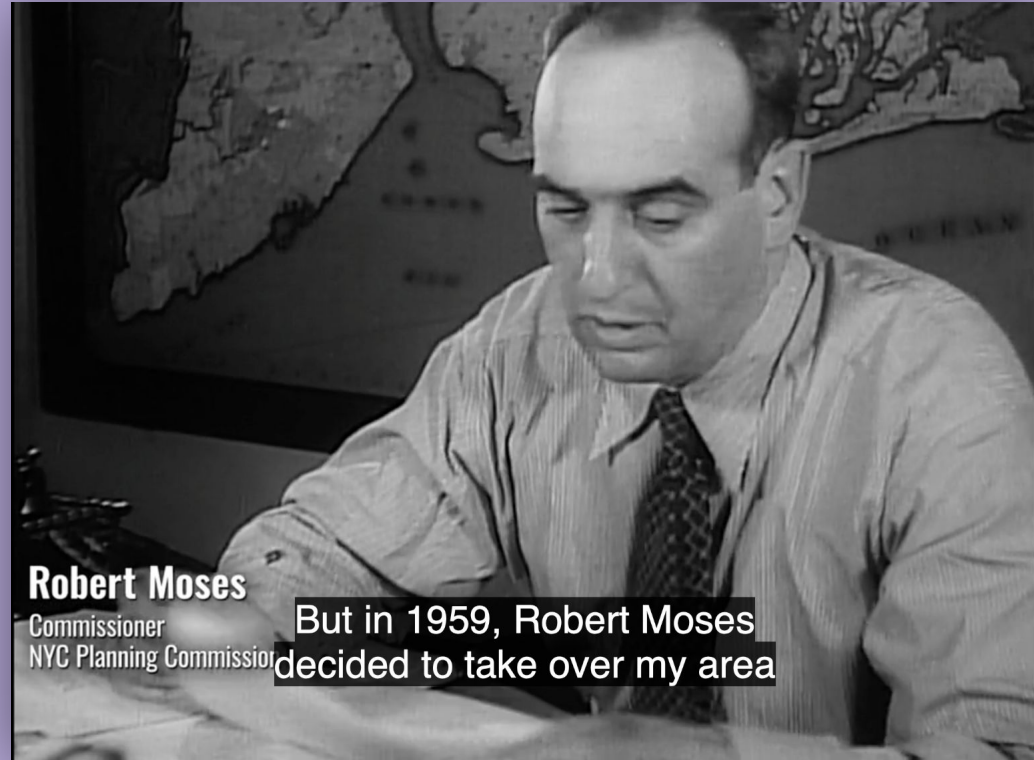
Securing a Right to the City: Cooper Square & the Community Land Trust Movement

Tayma Hasan

Urban Studies 402

Gentrification

- Jason Hackworth (2002) defines gentrification as “the production of urban space for progressively more affluent users.”



Robert Moses

Commissioner
NYC Planning Commission

But in 1959, Robert Moses
decided to take over my area

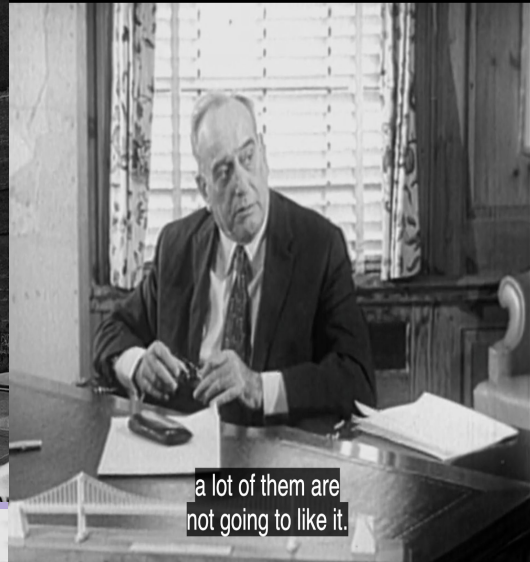
(Anderson & Joseph, 2023)



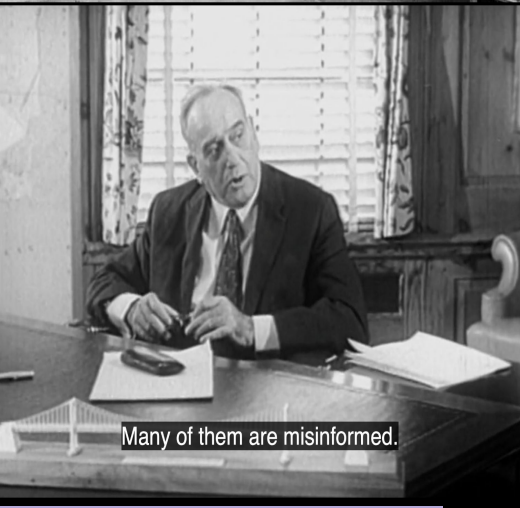
MOSES: If you have to move a lot of people out of the way of



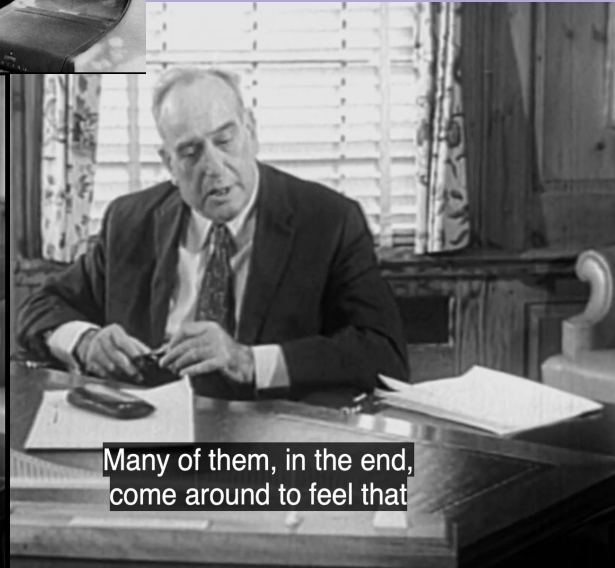
a big housing project or a slum clearance project,



a lot of them are not going to like it.



Many of them are misinformed.



Many of them, in the end, come around to feel that

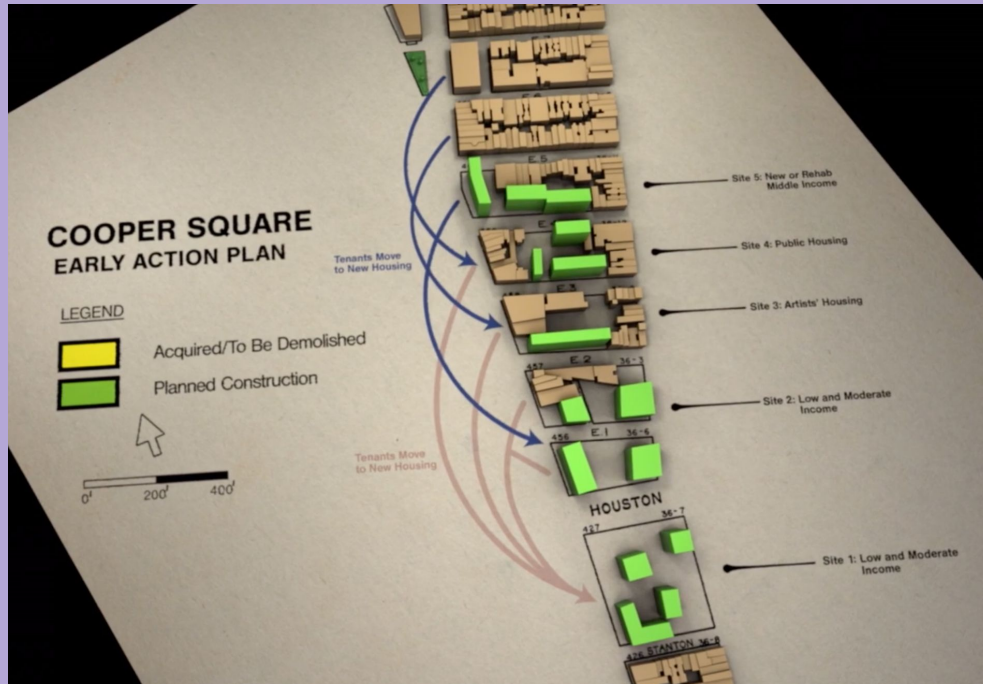


you've done them a great service.

Cooper Square Committee 1959



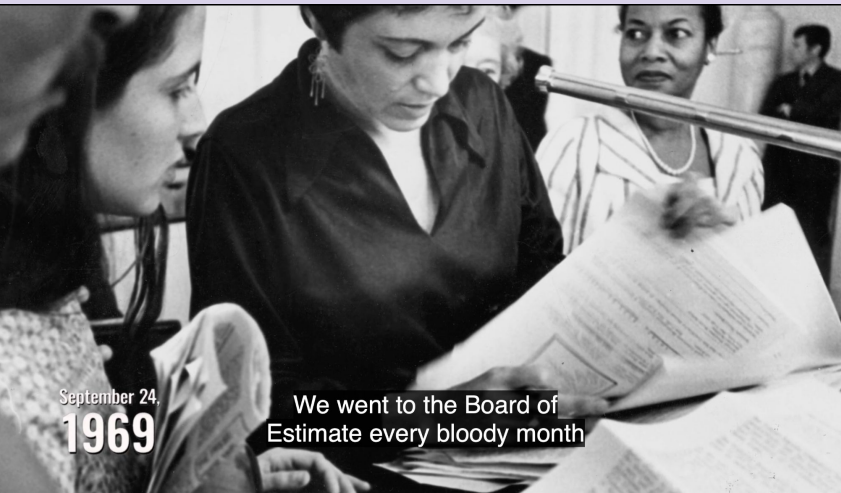
“We want urban renewal, but we want it to benefit the people in the neighborhood, not victimize them.”
- Frances Goldin



1961: This plan that took one year to complete did not succeed.

1965: Robert Moses offered the vacant lot on Houston Street, which was the foundation of the Alternate Plan, to Louis DeSalvio, an assemblyman representing the LES, and his Catholic organization, the San Gennaro Association, to build middle-income housing instead of the CSC's proposed public housing.

Community Organizing



September 24,
1969

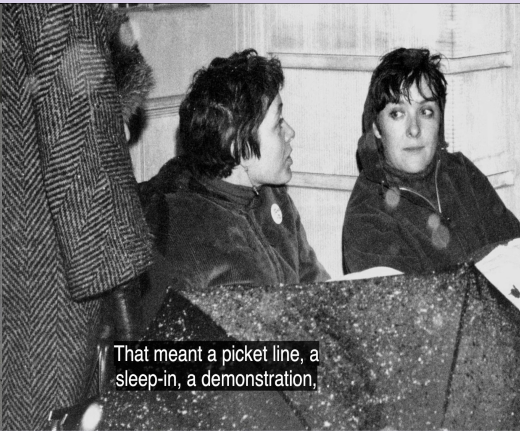
We went to the Board of Estimate every bloody month



After refusing to give up their land in a Board of Estimate meeting and gaining support from people at the meeting, their land was retrieved in 1970.



FRANCES: Usually we'd bring bags full of dead mice and rats



That meant a picket line, a sleep-in, a demonstration,

tion Authority Chairman William pairman's hard hat and then an road but also for his political
Rosen, LIRE president Walter earner, the governor replied:
Sollage, Jr. and Anthony raplows, and signed a slip re- "Well, it won't hurt."

9 Arrested in Row Over Renewal Plans

By STEPHEN WALLACE

Nine shouting persons were arrested at City Hall yesterday after they disrupted a session of the Planning Commission on a urban renewal plan for the Cooper Square section of Manhattan.

One woman was arrested in a morning incident and five women and three men were arrested later after a recess.

All were members of the Cooper Square Development Committee & Businessmen's Association and the Lower East Side Coalition for Human Housing, sponsors of the plan.

What the Plan Is
The renewal plan calls for construction of low and middle-income apartment developments in the Cooper Square area bounded by Stanton St., Fourth St., Third Ave. and Second Ave.

An injunction restraining the Planning Commission from making a decision on the plan at this time was obtained in Supreme Court Sept. 8 by Local Planning Board 3, a planning



More Arrested
"There is no tomorrow for us, she said. "That's why we're taking this action. We're going to be heard or no one is going to be heard today." She persisted until Elliott called in the police. There was a struggle.

Mrs. Goldin ripped the microphone from the stand. Several other protestors rushed to the



Federal and State Delays

- Even though the City obtained properties to carry out their Alternate Plan, Nixon's moratorium on public housing in 1973 prohibited them from using federal subsidies, leading to the CSC relying on state funding.
- However, the City was nearly bankrupt and underwent planned shrinkage, a policy under President Nixon and Mayor John Lindsay which cut back on housing and firefighting services, causing low-income neighborhoods to become destroyed due to the City tearing down buildings, arson, drug use, housing abandonment, trash, and crime.
- 30-36,000 apartments a year were lost

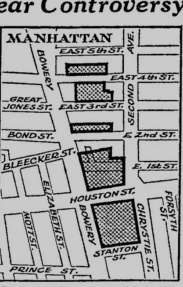
(Anderson & Joseph, 2023)

Project in Bowery Is Approved Following 10-Year Controversy

Board of Estimate Supports Cooper Square Plans for New Apartments

By IVER PETERSON
After more than 10 years of planning, changes and heated controversy, the Board of Estimate yesterday unanimously voted final approval of the Cooper Square Development Plan to revitalize six large parcels near the Bowery south of Cooper Square.

The project will provide more than 1,000 apartments for low-income and middle-income families. Several hundred supporters of the plan packed the board's City Hall chamber to cheer each affirmative vote by the eight-member board after more than three hours of impassioned testimony on the project. No funds have yet been allocated for the project, although it is estimated that site acquisition alone will cost slightly more than \$5-million. Federal, city and state funds will finance the building of low-income sub-



The New York Times Feb. 14, 1970
Cooper Square development marked by shaded areas.

units and about 100 middle level apartments. The second stage also includes construction of shops, a day-care center, and other community facilities, according to the plan. The plan also envisages the acquisition of two smaller parcels adjoining the target development area.

TODAY IS TOMORROW'S LAST 9 DAYS!
FRANCE'S MOST VALUABLE EXPORT—SARLIS, THOMAS & NIENKOR presents DIRECT FROM PARIS
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\$7.95, 7., 6., 5.
SAT. E.V.O.
\$9.95, 9., 8., 6.
WED. THUR. FRI. SAT. @ 8:30
\$5.50, 5., 4., 3.
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TODAY 2 & 7:10 P.M. & 7:30 P.M.
"THE SOUND OF A DEFERRED DREAM"
LINDA CENTER PLACE
"THE ULTIMATE ENTRANCE"
"THE SOUND OF A DEFERRED DREAM"
LINDA CENTER PLACE
"THE ULTIMATE ENTRANCE"
"THE SOUND OF A DEFERRED DREAM"
LINDA CENTER PLACE

"YOU CAN TALK!"
LINDA CENTER PLACE
"THE ULTIMATE ENTRANCE"
"THE SOUND OF A DEFERRED DREAM"
LINDA CENTER PLACE

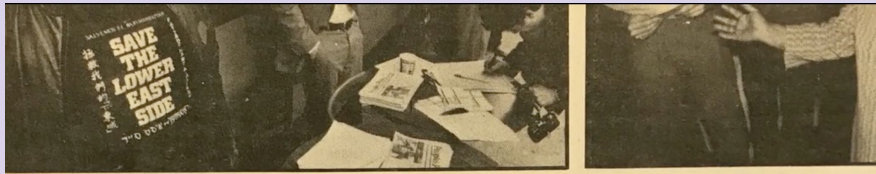
White House Said to Plan Freeze on Public Housing

Special to The New York Times
WASHINGTON, Dec. 22—The National Housing Conference said today that it had learned that the Nixon Administration was planning an 18-month "moratorium" on all new construction under the public housing and interest-subsidy programs administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The freeze would affect the construction of new public housing and interest-subsidy programs administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

CITY SAYS IT ACTED ON TICKET FIXING
We have no more public housing.

In 1978, Ed Koch was elected mayor of New York and he did not help Cooper Square's cause either. Since the City owned all the abandoned buildings, Koch's policy was to offer the vacant buildings and land to speculators waiting for land values to increase.



Despite Long Odds, Neighbors and Friends Vow to Continue the Fight:

Real Estate Boom on Second Avenue Means Death for Long-Time Restaurant

By BRIAN O'DONOGHUE
After 37 years of offering the finest in Italian-Italian hospitality, it looks like Second Avenue's Orchidia restaurant will soon lose a victim of rising rents. But supporters of this East Village landmark won't disappear without a fight.
"We survived the Hippies, the Yuppies and the Junkies, but this landlord may get us."

36-hours-a-day, nine-days-a-week," the restaurant manager reckoned, "to pay that kind of rent."
For Maria Pidhorodecky, owner of the Orchidia, the landlord's demand presents a very personal bottom line. "It's the end," she says, "the end of me." At the age of 58, she is "too old to go to work anyplace else," to use Pasternak's words, "and too young to retire."

Sunday, February 5th, the Orchidia's defenders plan to set up a picket line in front of Weisner's residence at 911 Park Avenue. "We're going to hand out 'Know Your Neighbor' letters," Fran Goldin announced. "We'll also be carrying a coffin with the names of Weisner's other victims." Concerned East Village Shopkeepers will be in the picket line wearing bags over their heads, she said.

In the 1980s, gentrification was prevalent in the Lower East Side because students and artists needed affordable housing, so art galleries took the place of small businesses. By the 1990s, however, art galleries and longtime small and family businesses, like restaurants, could not persevere due to higher rents as a result of the revival of the real estate market, increasing gentrification.



The Alternate Plan Continues

- In 1984, the first affordable Cooper Square apartments were developed in dedication to Thelma Burdick using project-based Section 8 subsidies, but the entire plan was not implemented.
- Cooper Square residents continued to demonstrate and refuse to give up their land, but they needed funding. That is when they shifted their objective from creating public housing to establishing affordable housing for their community. Over the course of seven years consisting of many meetings, the **CSC revised their Alternate Plan which had to include luxury housing for it to be accepted.**



Their revised plan with HPD in 1986 compromised on their initial demands, letting the City construct mostly market-rate housing on two vacant lots located on the north and south sides of Houston Street. In return, **the CSC would have 20 to 25% low-income housing on those lots and funding to rehabilitate the old law tenements Cooper Square residents were living in.**

Community Land Trust (CLT) and Mutual Housing Association (MHA)

- Marty Berger, the Committee's lawyer, gave them the idea of a community land trust for **permanent affordability**.
- After years of studying different housing models, the Cooper Square CLT was officially established in 1994 by the CSC and the Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association (MHA) was initiated in 1991, which is supervised by the CLT.
- The Cooper Square CLT board is made up of about 15 members, including a couple residents and people who are passionate about its cause, such as community residents or housing advocates, like Tom Angotti (Lee, Alex. Personal interview. 24 March 2023).
- Since the CLT owns the right to the land, it prevents wealthy developers from using eminent domain or other policies to take it away.
- The MHA is a cooperative and the owner of the Cooper Square buildings, made up of two-thirds tenants and one-third CLT members, people who vowed to never sell the buildings for profit. The MHA takes care of maintenance, bookkeeping, budgeting, and other technical responsibilities (Lee, Alex. Personal interview. 24 March 2023).

How a Community Land Trust (CLT) works

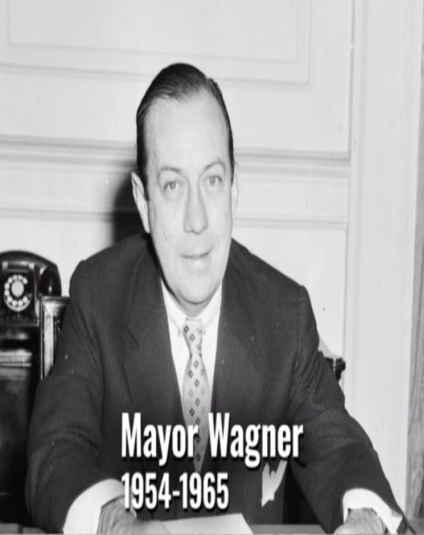
Buildings are owned by
the people (shareholders).

Land is owned by the CLT.

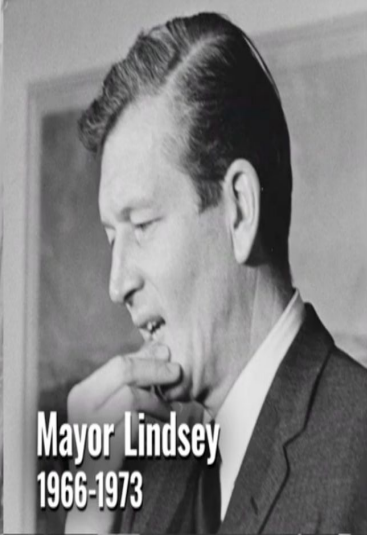
Buildings are owned and used by
organizations, businesses, and individuals.

The CLT owns the land and works to ensure
it is used in ways that benefit the community.

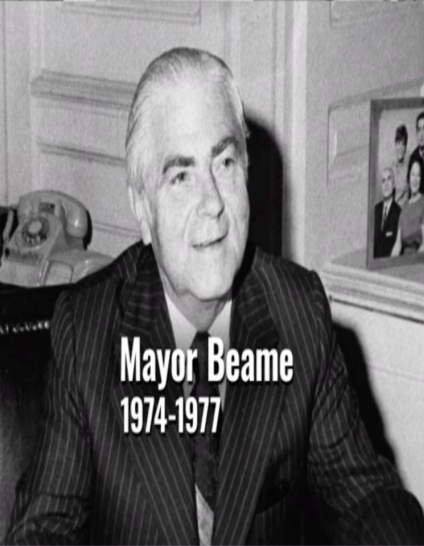




Mayor Wagner
1954-1965



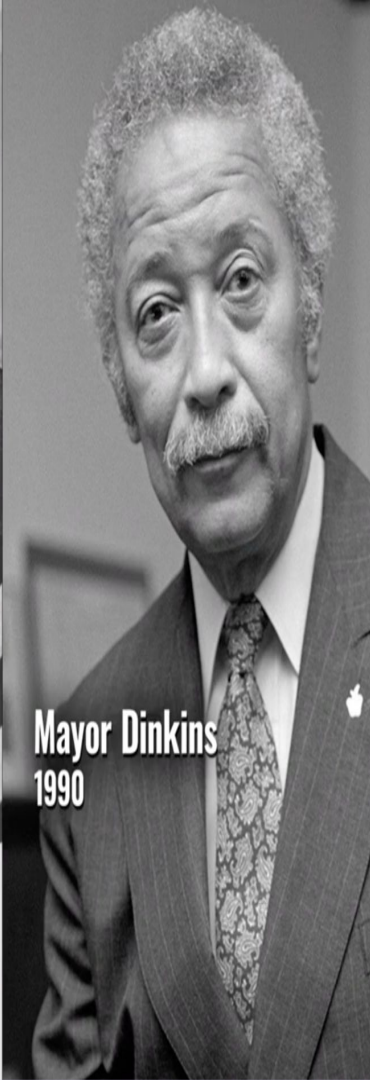
Mayor Lindsey
1966-1973



Mayor Beame
1974-1977

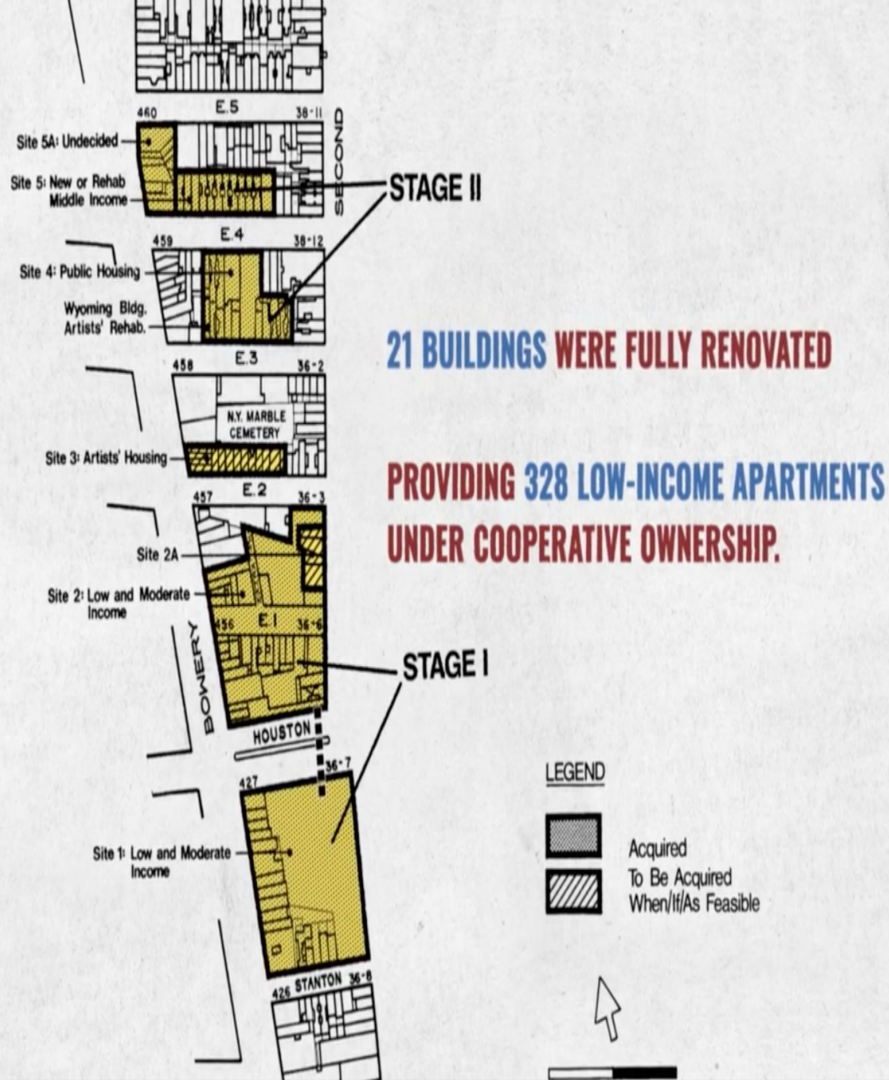


Mayor Koch
1978-1989



Mayor Dinkins
1990

The election of David Dinkins, the first African American mayor and the fifth mayor the CSC encountered, made the Cooper Square CLT and MHA possible as he strongly supported community jurisdiction over land (Angotti, 2007). Dinkins signed a Memorandum of Understanding in October 1990 transferring city-owned buildings to MHA and CLT ownership for one dollar each. He devoted \$32.8 million for Cooper Square's rehabilitation, costing about \$50,000 for each apartment and taking about 12 years to complete.



Half the buildings have a storefront business so the commercial income made from the businesses goes towards the maintenance of all the buildings. The commercial spaces under the Cooper Square CLT makes it possible for small businesses to exist and thrive because of the low rents as opposed to other commercial spaces in gentrified neighborhoods (Lee, Alex. Personal interview. 24 March 2023).

Renovations completed in 2003-2004.

Commercial Businesses



Renaming West Fourth Street "Frances Goldin Way."



Issues/Concerns with CLTs

- Most residents are old and Cooper Square CLT lacks elevators
- Shareholders illegally subletting their apartments
- Professionalization of CLTs - losing their foundational motives and losing the “community in Community Land Trust” to meet grant requirements and get needed funding (Williams, 2019).
- Maintenance costs
- Land/rehabilitation is expensive and CLTs need funding
- Doesn't produce tax revenue for the City (not luxury housing or businesses)
- Limited Equity Gains



Benefits of CLTs (according to interviews/webinar)

- Residents have disposable income
- Long term affordable housing/ good structure unlike Mitchell-lama and TIL buildings - “somebody making close to nothing can pretty much survive” (Lee, Alex. Personal interview. 24 March 2023).
- Cannot be sold on open market unlike HDFC coops
- Residents do not have to leave their neighborhood/ no displacement
- Minority owned businesses are safe
- Reduce foreclosure, vacancies, turnover, delinquencies
- Social equity
- Reduce homelessness
- Better housing than unmaintained shelters and hotel rooms that City spends billions on
- City does not have to be responsible The City does not want to be a landlord”



Important aspects needed for CLTs to succeed

(according to interviews/webinar)

- Many buildings - to achieve **economies of scale** as it makes the trust more secure with a large reserve fund that can be used to fix any issue occurring in one of the buildings without draining the reserves. Arroyo says that the way to keep CLTs affordable in perpetuity is to acquire more buildings, for example, if one building needs a new boiler or roof, all 22 buildings would pool their funds to help the building that needs it, alleviating financial burdens (Arroyo, Willie. Personal Interview. 28 April 2023; Lee, Alex. Personal interview. 24 March 2023).
- Responsibility/Accountability
- Healthy boards (good structure)
- Transparency
- People thinking collectively
- People who have connections to elected city and state officials and attorneys and knowledge of financial practices
- A system of checks and balances so people do not take advantage of the trust
- Educating more people on CLTs



Legislation for CLTs: The Community Land Act (CLA)

- **Abolish Tax Lien Sale**
- **Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (COPA) / Int 0637** - gives CLTs and mission-driven nonprofits the right of first refusal to buy multifamily buildings before any other developer or purchaser. Sponsored by City Council Members Carlina Rivera and Erik Bottcher.
- **NYS Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) / Int 0038** - allows tenants to purchase the building they live in. Sponsored by New York State Senator Zellnor Myrie.
- **Public Land for Public Good Bill / Int 0196** - transfer city-owned land to CLTs and not-for-profit developers for affordable housing. Sponsored by Council Member

NYC Community Land Trust Initiatives



East Harlem/El Barrio Land Trust was influenced by Cooper Square CLT, acquired four buildings for one dollar each with residential and commercial space.

The former Cooper Square MHA director, Valerio Orselli, founded This Land is Ours, a new CLT in Lower Manhattan that is part of the Sixth Street Community Center (SSCC). TLIO seeks to convert two underutilized NYCHA parking lots, which it has air rights to, into affordable housing with 50% community preference to residents and 76 units for low-income senior housing with features that older buildings lack, such as elevators, energy efficient rooftops, community spaces on the ground floor, making it ADA compliant (Lee, Alex. Personal interview. 24 March 2023). As they bring in more buildings, This Land is Ours will also help the Cooper Square CLT with finances.



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