



MID-MARCH, 2022

"NEWS & UPDATE"

Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

MVUT continues to assist tenants who have fallen behind in rent due to either a loss of income, or an increase in expenses due to Covid-19. As of this writing we've helped submit **over 250 ERAP** applications and assisted in another **nearly 200** with uploading various documents in their ERAP applications. Despite news to the contrary, we're still processing ERAP applications. If you know of tenants who you think may be eligible for ERAP assistance, have them call Andrew Aguilar at (914) **699-1114 Extension 304**.

Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP)

Great news from the State legislature as both the Senate and the Assembly increased funding for the NPP in their respective "one house" bills, from \$12.8 million to \$14.5 million! The NPP is MVUT's largest funding source and provides us with a large portion of our operative expenses. We'd ask that our members and friends call their respective Senator and Assemblymember and thank them for their support for increased funding for the NPP, and for their continued support in negotiations with the governor in the final bill. To find further information and notify your Senator and Assemblymember you can go to the Neighborhood Preservation Coalition's (NPC) website at NPCNYS.ORG/advocacy/contact-your-legislator. For Mt Vernon tenants your State legislators are Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow (914)667-0127 and Senator Jamaal Bowman (718)547-8854. CALL TODAY!

Ending of Pandemic

We're hopeful that the Covid-19 pandemic may be winding down. The pandemic seriously impacted our programs at MVUT. Prior to the pandemic, MVUT would host monthly General Membership meetings in our office at 7:00pm on the first Tuesday of each month. At those monthly membership meetings we'd go over problems that individual tenants were experiencing, building-wide issues affecting tenants, policy issues MVUT is dealing with and announcements of upcoming events regarding housing and issues impacting low-to-moderate income residents. We'd like to try to re-start our monthly general Membership Meetings on April 5. We'll sending an announcement specifically regarding this meeting, but please mark your calendars and try to attend. Depending upon attendance and participation, we'll decide whether to continue "in-person" meetings at this time.

Another issue that the pandemic severely impacted and limited was our building organizing. "Organizing the Unorganized" has always been a hallmark of our program delivery services. We've always felt that an

organized and educated tenancy is the best defense against landlord abuse and official neglect. It's of paramount importance for all tenants to know their rights, how to utilize them and what steps to take to satisfy their objectives. Through our building organizing, we assist tenants within buildings to learn their rights and form effective Building Associations to improve their conditions, lessen landlord harassment and possibly reduce their rent. Similar to the General Membership meetings in our office, tenants for the most part have NOT wanted to meet, even within buildings, during the pandemic. We're hopeful that as we start to leave the pandemic behind, that we can get back to scheduling Building Organizing meetings to address some of the growing needs that tenants are facing. Call the office (914) 699-1114 if you'd like to schedule a meeting in your building.

Right to Counsel (RTC)

MVUT has been working on getting a "Right To Counsel" bill on both the county and state levels. We encourage our members and friends to support both campaigns by calling your respective County and State legislators and lobbying them to support the respective bills. Under the Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP) piece above, we provide contact information about the state legislators. On the County level Mt. Vernon tenants should call Tyrae Woodson-Samuels (914) 995-2837. For others, you should call the League of Women Voters (914) 949-0507 to find out who your County Legislator is. On the State level MVUT has helped secure co-sponsorship by virtually all of the Westchester Legislative Delegation on the Statewide Right to Counsel bill (S6678A/A7570B). We're enclosing a one-page Fact Sheet of "The potential benefits and estimated cost of an eviction Right to Counsel outside of New York City". Feel free to copy this Fact Sheet and get it to others in your building, or if your need more call the MVUT office at (914)699-1114.

On the reverse side of the "Right to Counsel" Fact Sheet we've copied a February 22, 2022 Journal News Article "Rents in U.S. Reach Insane Levels". We certainly agree!!! Please support MVUT with a generous contribution at this time. Thank you.

I appreciate all of the valuable work MVUT is doing for tenants. I'm enclosing my donation of
_____ \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$200 _____ Other

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

SUPPORT TENANTS' RIGHTS!

SUPPORT AFFORDABLE HOUSING !!

SUPPORT MVUT !!!

THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND ESTIMATED COST OF AN EVICTION RIGHT TO COUNSEL OUTSIDE OF NEW YORK CITY

Statewide Right to Counsel ([S6678A](#) / [A7570B](#)) strengthens Right to Counsel in New York City and **guarantees the right to a free lawyer to ALL tenants facing eviction across New York State**. To estimate the total cost of a statewide Right to Counsel, we worked with Stout to produce an analysis of the cost associated with providing free legal representation for **tenants outside New York City**. Combining the outside New York City cost estimate with an updated cost estimate for an expanded Right to Counsel in New York City gets us to the total statewide cost. Our estimated minimum total cost of providing Right to Counsel to tenants statewide is on our website at righttocounselnyc.org/statewidertccost.

Once enacted into law, statewide Right to Counsel will be phased over several years. The benefits and cost of Right to Counsel outside New York City included in this fact sheet **would happen at full implementation**. For the complete cost analysis and more research on the benefits of Right to Counsel outside New York City, read the full report at bit.ly/RTCCostStudyOutsideNYC

BENEFITS

- Approximately **46,600 tenant households** outside New York City would receive legal representation under a statewide eviction Right to Counsel.
- Approximately **97% of tenants who appear in eviction court would benefit from Right to Counsel**. With dedicated funding to community organizing and outreach, the percentage of tenants that accept free legal representation will likely be closer to 100%.
- Right to Counsel makes it harder for landlords to use evictions as a tactic to harass and displace tenants. Implementation of a statewide eviction Right to Counsel could **decrease eviction filings outside New York City by at least 19%** (over 5 years at an annual decline of 5%, starting in year 2). Eviction filings may decrease more (such as in New York City where they dropped by 30%) or less depending on the effectiveness of implementation and the state's commitment to tenant organizing and outreach about the Right to Counsel.
- When a tenant doesn't appear in court, the judge can issue a default judgment, which allows the court to issue an eviction warrant. A statewide eviction Right to Counsel would reduce the number of default judgments outside New York City, with an **expected 32% decline in default rates**.
- Implementing a statewide eviction Right to Counsel would likely **save New York state and local governments millions of public dollars** (over and above the cost of providing the Right) that would otherwise be spent on shelter, emergency room costs, homelessness services, and more. Like most cities and states with an eviction Right to Counsel, New York State could see cost savings of \$3 - \$6 per dollar invested in Right to Counsel. For example, Stout estimated that Baltimore could save \$3.06 per dollar and the state of Maryland could see cost savings of \$6.24 per dollar (Baltimore City plus Maryland), from the same investment in an eviction Right to Counsel.

COST

- **\$144 million - \$200 million** is the estimated cost of providing an eviction Right to Counsel to ALL tenants (with no income restrictions) outside New York City.



The Journal News

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shortages that at the start of the pandemic made a preexisting shortage of new homes even worse, leaving an estimated shortfall of 5.8 million single-family homes, a 51% leap from the end of 2019, Realtor.com said.

And potentially compounding all of this is the increasing presence of investors.

A record 18.2% of U.S. home purchases in the third quarter of 2021 were made by businesses or institutions, according to Redfin, as investors targeted Atlanta, Phoenix, Miami, Charlotte, North Carolina, and Jacksonville, Florida — popular destinations for people relocating from pricier cities.

Hale said the increasing presence of investors is a factor in rent hikes, but only because they have pricing power due to low vacancies. "I don't think that's the only driver," she said.

Most investors aren't tied down by rent control. Only two states, California and Oregon, have statewide rent control laws, while three others — New York, New Jersey and Maryland — have laws allowing local governments to pass rent control ordinances, according to the National Multifamily Housing Council.

And laws in some states like Arizona actually restrict local jurisdictions from limiting what landlords can charge tenants.

In Tucson, Arizona, the mayor's office said it has been deluged with calls from residents worried about rent hikes after a California developer recently bought an apartment complex that catered to older people and raised rents by more than 50%, forcing out many on fixed incomes.

The rent on a one-bedroom apartment in the complex went from \$579 to \$880 a month, an increase legal under Arizona state law.

Arizona Sen. Krysten Sinema decried the increases during a recent Senate Banking Committee hearing, saying Arizona's rapidly growing housing costs have been a "major concern" of hers for years.

Nationally, Hale, the Realtor.com economist, expects rents to continue to rise this year, but at a slower pace, thanks to increased construction.

"Improving supply growth should help create more balance in the market," said Hale.



Krystal Guerra, 32, said her landlord gave her less than a month's notice that her rent would go up by 26%, forcing her to move out. REBECCA BLACKWELL/AP

Tied to rising inflation

R.J. RICO
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Krystal Guerra's Miami apartment has a tiny kitchen, cracked tiles, warped cabinets, no dishwasher and hardly any storage space.

But Guerra was fine with the apartment's shortcomings. It was all part of being a 32-year-old graduate student in South Florida, she reasoned, and she was happy to live there for a few more years as she finished her marketing degree.

That was until a new owner bought the property and told her he was raising the rent from \$1,550 to \$1,950, a 26% increase that Guerra said meant her rent would account for the majority of her take-home pay from the University of Miami.

"I thought that was insane," said Guerra, who decided to move out. "Am I supposed to stop paying for everything else I have going on in my life just so I can pay rent? That's unsustainable." Guerra is hardly alone. Rents have exploded across the country, causing many to dig deep into their savings, downsize to subpar units or fall behind on payments and risk eviction now that a federal moratorium has ended.

In the 50 largest U.S. metro areas, median rent rose an astounding 19.3% from December 2020 to December 2021, according to a Realtor.com analysis of properties with two or fewer bedrooms. And nowhere was the jump bigger than in the Miami metro area, where the median rent exploded to \$2,850, 49.8% higher than the previous year.

Other cities across Florida — Tampa, Orlando and Jacksonville — and the Sun Belt destinations of San Diego, Las Vegas, Austin, Texas, and Memphis, Tennessee, all saw spikes of more than 25% during that time period.

Rising rents are an increasing driver of high inflation that has become one of the nation's top economic problems. Labor Department data, which covers existing rents as well as new listings, shows much smaller increases, but these are also picking up. Rental costs rose 0.5% in January from December, the Labor Department said last week.

demand as young adults continue to enter the crowded market.

Whitney Airgood-Obyrcki, lead author of a recent report from Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies, said there was a lot of "pent-up demand" after the initial months of the pandemic, when many young people moved back home with their parents. Starting last year, as the economy opened up and young people moved out, "rents really took off," she said.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, rental vacancy rates during the fourth quarter of 2021 fell to 5.6%, the lowest since 1984.

"Without a lot of rental vacancy that landlords are accustomed to having, that gives them some pricing power because they're not sitting on empty units that they need to fill," said Danielle Hale, Realtor.com's chief economist.

Meanwhile, the number of homes for sale have been at a record low, contributing to ballooning home prices that have caused many higher-income households to remain renters, further upping demand.

Construction crews are also trying to

That may seem small, but it was the biggest increase in 20 years, and will likely accelerate.

Economists worry about the impact of rent increases on inflation because the big jumps in new leases feed into the U.S. consumer price index, which is used to measure inflation.

Inflation jumped 7.5% in January from a year earlier, the biggest increase in four decades. While many economists expect that to decrease as pandemic-disrupted supply chains unravel, rising rents could keep inflation high through the end of the year since housing costs make up one-third of the consumer price index.

Things have gotten so bad in Boston, which has nearly overtaken San Francisco as the nation's second-most expensive rental market, that one resident went viral for jokingly putting an igloo on the market for \$2,700 a month. "Heat/hot water not included," Jonathan Berk tweeted.

Experts say many factors are responsible for astronomical rents, including a nationwide housing shortage, extremely low rental vacancies and unrelenting

Rents in US reach 'insane' levels