

# **GODDARD RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY CENTER**

---

**2023 – 2024  
Report**

# OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

The Goddard Riverside Community Center Law Project (“Goddard Riverside Law Project”) provided direct legal services, community legal education, and pro se assistance to over 1750 people residing in New York County during the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year. Given our focus and expertise on SRO housing, our office has always prioritized providing assistance to tenants living in SRO housing that are at risk of eviction. SRO tenants are also more prone to harassing tactics by landlords who take advantage of low-income SRO tenants refusing to provide services and neglect properties.

Goddard Riverside's Law Project serves low-income individuals and families who live in SRO buildings on the West Side of Manhattan from 14th Street to 220th Street, and apartment tenants who live on the upper west side, focusing on the Manhattan Valley, West Harlem areas who live in zip codes 10025, 10026, 10027 and 10031. Our target population is low-income individuals and families, including frail and mentally and physically disabled older adults, immigrants, and the most vulnerable populations living in SRO housing and apartments. Approximately 40% of the program’s clients are Spanish-speaking.

The Goddard Riverside Law Project provided direct legal services to 568 people this year. Direct legal services include legal representation, brief advice, as well as counsel, and advocacy. While helping 568 households by providing direct legal services to one tenant, our services affected 1000 tenants. The Law Project provided community legal education and pro se assistance to more than 1,231 people over the year.

During the 2023-2024 contract year, the Law Project reached more than 1000 people through presentations at community events, know your rights trainings, local building events and provided pro-se assistance to 197 individuals.



**Service Area:** Manhattan

**Population Served:** Low-Income Individuals and Families

**Staffing Full Time Equivalents:**  
 Total Staff: 17.35    Lawyers: 10  
 Paralegals: 2        Others: 5.35

## DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES

**Case Example #1, Housing:** Mr. H first contacted our office in early 2021 because the owner had started a holdover case against him alleging he had no right to remain in the unit after the old tenant of record had left. Mr. H came to our office seeking assistance and after some research our office believed that the unit was a rent stabilized SRO (single room occupancy) unit and that the owner was illegally alleging it had been deregulated. We intervened in the holdover case and alleged that he was a permanent tenant with rent stabilization rights.

After extended litigation we were able to get to an agreement where Mr. H was recognized as an SRO tenant, his rent substantially lowered from \$2250 to \$750, and almost two years of unpaid rent and use and occupancy was waived. Through our representation we secured an affordable rent stabilized SRO tenancy.

**Case Example #2, Housing:** Ms. E has resided in the neighborhood for over 40 years and raised her family in her unit. She came to the Law Project for help in obtaining extensive repairs needed in her unit, where her young grandchildren reside, after many years of neglect by the landlord despite her pleas.

Ms. E began withholding rent and the landlord subsequently sued the tenant of record, her deceased husband in a nonpayment proceeding in housing court. Ms. E retained the Law Project to represent her as Jane Doe in the proceeding.

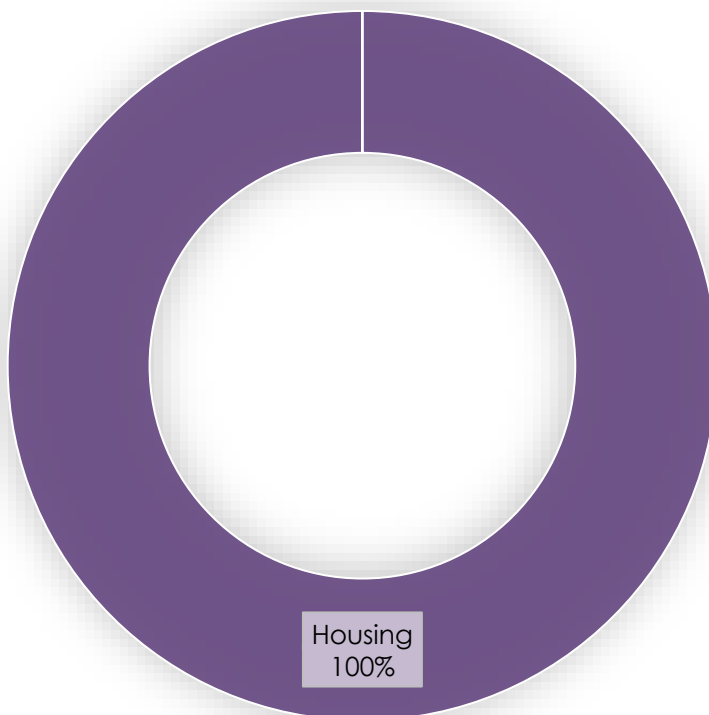
However, because the Tenant of Record was her deceased husband, our office had to litigate the proceeding two-fold, first to prove succession and get a lease in Ms. E's name and next to resolve the nonpayment and ensure the landlord ameliorates the many uninhabitable conditions existing in her unit.

Our office turned over succession documents evidencing Ms. E's right to

**1,000**  
people  
benefited  
from

**568**  
legal cases  
closed

## CASES BY LEGAL PROBLEM AREA



succeed to the unit and was given a rent stabilized lease in her name. Our office then negotiated an abatement of two months' rent in satisfaction of her warranty of habitability claims, and settled the nonpayment with a timeline for repairs.

Though the Landlord defaulted on the initial timeline, our office continued advocating on Ms. E's behalf and the repairs are now underway. We also provided Ms. Edmond with information on DHCR forms "Notice to Owner of Family Members Residing With The Named Tenant in the Apartment Who May Be Entitled to Succession Rights/Protection from Eviction", as she was concerned about preserving their home for her family who co-resides in the unit with her. The Law Project was successfully able to maintain Ms. E's long term tenancy in her unit.

---

## OTHER LEGAL-RELATED SERVICES

The Law Project has undertaken a multipronged outreach campaign with the goal of providing information on landlord and tenant's rights and responsibilities; helping people to understand the Housing Court process, the rent stabilization code and legal rent enforcement; informing residents about community housing services and resources available; and teaching tenants how to get repairs done and otherwise enforce their rights. The Law Project's target population for these events are in low-income individuals and families who live in SRO buildings on the west side of Manhattan and rent regulated buildings in the Manhattan Valley and West Harlem area of New York City.

We provide self-help materials and support to tenants to advocate for themselves. We conduct monthly tenant union meetings in which tenants, tenant leaders, and staff tenant organizers discuss various housing issues, conduct Know-Your-Rights trainings, as well as helping to facilitate tenant association meetings in various buildings in our catchment area where we support tenant groups who are trying to advocate for better housing conditions and address concerns of tenants with their landlord.

In this fiscal year, the Law Project participated in 96 presentations at community events, know your rights trainings, and local building events and reached more than 1300 tenants through these events. The Law Project's target population for these events are all low income individuals and families living in SRO buildings

197

people  
benefited from  
**Pro Se  
Assistance**

1,034

people  
benefited from  
**Community  
Legal  
Education**

# IMPACT CASES

The Law Project currently represents a group of fourteen tenants in an HP action against a landlord that was listed among the New York City Public Advocate's "100 Worst Landlords of 2023 Watchlist."

After long litigation and a number of Consent Orders that were not adhered to by the landlord, our office has moved for contempt.

The Law Project currently represents a group of eight tenants in an HP action against an owner after a vacate order was placed after a fire in the building. The landlord failed to make repairs pursuant to a court ordered consent order and our office is now seeking to file a contempt motion for failure to correction the violations.

The Law Project signed retainers with approximately eight tenants to represent them in an administrative proceeding where a hotel owner applied for a Certificate of No Harassment with the apparent intention to convert this single-room occupancy building to luxury apartments. The owner had engaged in extensive and often unpermitted construction that had rendered most of the building uninhabitable.

The Law Project worked directly with the eight tenants and consulted with several more to oppose the CONH application. The Law Project filed written opposition to the owner's CONH application and with our advocacy efforts, the application was denied. The owner must now engage in a cure process to be able to change the building in the manner it wants, which will, inter alia, require it to preserve the current tenants' rights and maintain a certain number of units in the building as affordable units.

The Law Project represented 12 tenants in an HP action to secure repairs in their rent-stabilized building. The tenants had been long neglected and ignored by management when they reported concerns about conditions in the building. The tenants formed a tenants' association, wrote formal demands to management, and ultimately brought a lawsuit in which the Law Project

## All Impact Cases

- Evelin Baldera et al v. 140th Street LLC et al, Index No. L&T 301538-23/NY
- Department of Housing Preservation and Development et al v. 117 West 147 LLC, et al, Index No. L&T 312476/22
- Petition for Administrative Review in re Alicia Anthony et. al., v. Sendell Realty LLC DHHCR Docket No.: HP-410084-OM
- Bintou Diomande, et. al., v. Genesis TPT Harlem, et. al., Index No. LT: 303738/23
- Initial Determination Upon Application for CONH Application No. 94/2022

represented the tenants. The Law Project advocated for a consent order forcing management to make long needed repairs throughout the building. 205 W 115th St

The Law Project represented tenants in an administrative proceeding with DHCR. The landlord filed an application with DHCR seeking to increase the rent of its rent-stabilized tenants. The landlord was seeking an increase of over \$300 per month for our clients. The Law Project was successful in limiting the collection of the MCI to no more than 2% annually, in accordance with the HSTPA enforcing their rights as long term rent-stabilized tenants. 13 W 103 PAR



## TECHNOLOGY

Staff are part of a few different listservs including the housing tenant advocates listserv, LEAP, and RTC Coalition. Using these listservs as a resource is tremendous to productivity enhancement, often providing quick answers to questions that might otherwise take hours to obtain. Often times housing trends and legal strategies are shared and discussed by a wide range of practitioners.

Staff also use LegalServer and Powerbase to manage casework, building outreach, community events, and organizing. Our office has been using LegalServer since 2015, but over the last couple of years year we spent some time investing in reconfiguring our LegalServer database to better capture information that we collect by working with a consultant. We are continuing that work now by making additional improvements to our database to make the intake process more efficient and collect correct information.

During the 2020 year and due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, our office has shifted to remote work. This has pushed our program to become more technologically advanced. Since April 2020, we have incorporated using Microsoft TEAMS and Zoom for meetings. Our office has purchased

laptops for the staff to be able to continue to work remotely and have upgraded the server in our office to be able to connect to SharePoint so that staff can easily access documents from the office on their laptops at home. Additionally, our office has transitioned to electronic document storage as a way to protect confidential client information and records as well as provide access to case files and documents remotely. Most of our cases that were held in a physical storage location were moved to a cloud based system where we can more easily access old files electronically. The Law Project is also exploring ways to integrate the document storage program to the Legal Server database for better integration and to have more efficiency in the work flow of our cases.

## IOLA TECHNOLOGY GRANT

The additional technology grant allowed the Law Project to purchase additional laptops. These laptops are being used by our student interns and other volunteers. Rather than relying on them to use their own laptops to access our databases and conduct research and writing, we now ask volunteers and student interns to use our laptops to conduct all work related to our clients.

Additionally, we have been exploring with our LegalServer consultant to improve the LegalServer website for our office including making upgrades on certain reports and the intake process and document management within LegalServer.

## PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

The Law Project hosts law students for summer internships each year. The Law Project usually hires 3-4 law student interns in the summer who work closely with an attorney on particular cases. Often times, law student interns are able to conduct certain legal intakes on their own (under the supervision of an attorney) and provide advice to tenants.

The Law Project also works closely with law students from Columbia Law School's Tenants' Rights Project in which we partner with the law school and accept law students volunteers. Law student interns work closely with our staff attorneys and provide support with legal research, drafting pleadings, trial preparation and document review, all of which enlarges our capacity to assist more clients. Our program has a practice order from the Appellate Division that permits



us to supervise law students. Law students often shadow attorneys in housing court and during other client interactions, including intakes, client appointments and depositions.

We also participate in NYLPI's summer associate program in which summer associates from private law firms are placed with our organization to volunteer their time. Each summer, we host three to four associates for a two-week period. For these placements, we often times ask them to work on long form memos on housing issues and trends we are seeing.

We are also exploring our involvement in the NYS Attorney Emeritus Program to identify where we can increase volunteers for our office to take and work with retired attorneys who can volunteer to take on additional cases or volunteer their time to provide pro se assistance to increase our capacity.

This past fiscal year, we connected and coordinated for a group of tenants that our office was working with to be represented by Davis Polk where a landlord filed a frivolous lawsuit in supreme court claiming that the tenants were creating a nuisance and causing damage to the building claiming over two million dollars in damages. Davis Polk agreed to represent the tenants pro bono after we were able to connect with Davis Polk and after learning more about the unscrupulous landlord.

Our office also seeks and encourages tenant leaders that we work with to volunteer their time and help the tenant organizers in our office on the various city and statewide coalitions and campaigns that our office is a member of. Many of the tenant volunteers conduct phone banking, reaching out to other tenants to engage with on the program, and come out to rallies, lobby days, and other public events.

**12**law students volunteered **1,500** hours**2**other volunteers volunteered **350** hours

# SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

**LEAP:** The Law Project is a co-founder of LEAP, a coalition of legal services providers that includes The Bronx Defenders, Make the Road New York, Urban Justice Center, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, Housing Conservation Coordinators, CAMBA Legal Services, MFJ Legal Services, Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, The Door Legal Services, Catholic Migration Services, VOLS, Take Root Justice, Neighborhood Defender Services of Harlem, and Brooklyn Defender Services. The LEAP groups coordinate and work together to conduct staff trainings for our programs, make and accept legal referrals, share best practices, co-counsel on various types of litigation, and work together to increase the quality and accessibility of civil legal services in New York City.

**Right to Counsel Coalition:** Our office is also a member of the Right To Counsel Coalition which first campaigned to get legal representation for tenants facing evictions in housing court. In March 2020, the Right To Counsel Coalition had a major victory after campaign in the state to place an eviction moratorium due to the Coronavirus. Currently, our office is on the steering committee of the Right To Counsel Coalition which is working to increase the accessibility to legal services in Housing Court eviction proceedings in New York City and New York State.

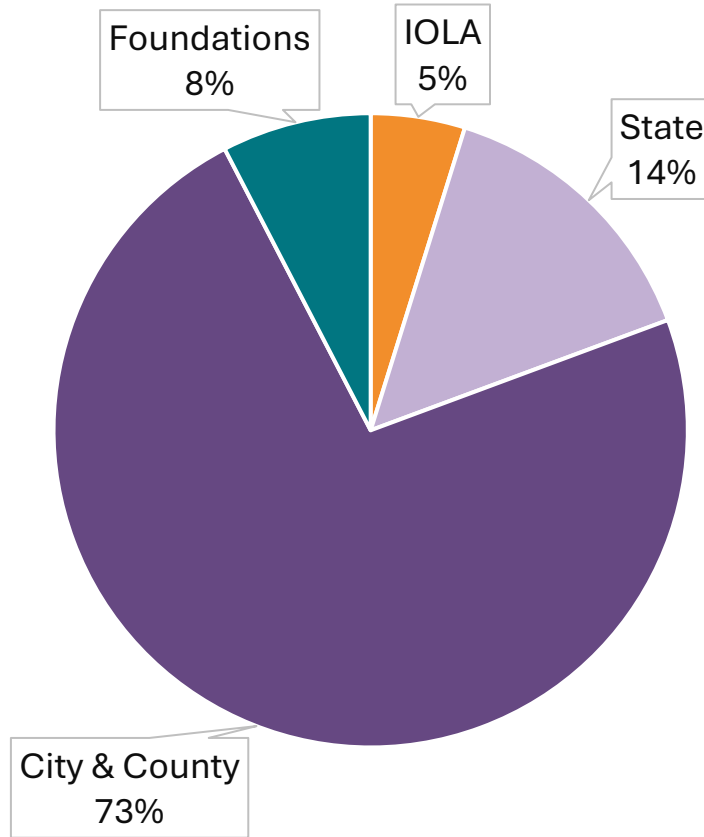
**Housing Justice for All Coalition:** The Law Project is also a member of the Housing Justice for All Coalition which campaigned and for stronger rent stabilization and tenant protections. In 2019, it achieved a major victory with the new changes in the rent laws providing stronger protections for tenants in rent regulated housing. Most recently, it achieved another victory by getting the Good Cause Eviction law signed into law by Governor Hochul.

**Rent Guidelines Board:** The Law Project also participates in the Rent Guidelines Board process with other LEAP organizations to advocate for lower rent increases in rent stabilized apartments and SRO (single room occupancy) units and will coordinate with SRO tenants to testify and participate at committee hearings. At the most recent preliminary hearing, there was a preliminary vote for zero percent increases for SRO units which our office advocated heavily for.

**Other:** Additionally, we participate in other coalitions such as the Stand For Tenant Safety/Anti-Warehousing Coalition and Campaign Against Illegal Hotels (CAIH), and where we collaborate and work together with other organizations by sharing strategies, trends we are seeing neighborhood by neighborhood and sharing referrals for different services.

# CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING

## \$ 2,028,160.57



<b>IOLA Funding</b>	<b>\$ 97,500.00</b>
<b>City &amp; County Funding</b>	<b>\$ 1,481,312.57</b>
<b>State Funding</b>	<b>\$ 294,848.00</b>
<b>Foundations</b>	<b>\$ 154,500.00</b>