



**Habitat for Humanity - New York City Advocacy E-Newsletter
January - February 2009 - Issue No. 29**

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1. Habitat-NYC News

Habitat co-founder Millard Fuller dies at 74

The co-founder of Habitat for Humanity International, Millard Fuller, has passed away. Fuller was taken to a Georgia hospital after he complained of chest pains; he died on the morning of February 3rd.

In life, Mr. Fuller was an inspiration to millions; his deeds will inspire millions more in generations to come. Please help us commemorate his legacy by visiting our online memorial. You can read the remembrances of Habitat family partners, volunteers, and staffers who worked beside him. We encourage you to submit your own stories as well.

http://www.habitatnyc.org/millard_fuller/

Join us for Habitat for Humanity of New York State's Advocacy in Albany Lobby Day!

Join Habitat for Humanity of New York State for a press conference on the steps of the Capitol Building to urge the Governor and the State Legislature to baseline last years housing budget and create a true Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

Tuesday, March 10 at 9:45 AM.

[Click here](#) to learn more. To RSVP, contact Paige Bellenbaum at 212.991.4000 x312 or pbellenbaum@habitatnyc.org.

2. City Housing News

NYCHA to receive \$423 million in federal aid

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) is expected to receive \$423 million in new federal assistance from the recent stimulus package. The funding will help NYCHA address a long maintenance backlog, including problems with its aging fleet of elevators.

"Repairing Public Housing with Stimulus Cash"

by Cindy Rodriguez

Feb. 27, 2009

<http://www.wnyc.org/news/articles/125112>

City offers 50% match on tax refund savings

The New York City Department of Consumer Affairs Office of Financial Empowerment is offering a match of up to \$250 to low-income consumers who open a new bank account with a portion of their tax refund. For eligibility requirements, please follow the link below.

Habitat-NYC advocates for better regulation of the financial services used by our family partner homeowners. We are a proud partner in the city's financial education and outreach efforts.

SaveNYC Account Program details:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/ofe/html/poverty/save.shtml>

Council Speaker Quinn proposes bill to crack down on foreclosure scams

The Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project, the Center for New York City Neighborhoods, Legal Aid, and South Brooklyn Legal Services joined City Council Speaker Christine Quinn in announcing a new bill to require the registration of distressed property consultants in New York City.

Foreclosure rescue scams by for-profit consultants are a growing problem nationwide, and the new bill will help New York fight back by tracking company performance and banning operations run by persons convicted of mortgage fraud.

Council Office of Communications

Press release

Jan. 16, 2009

http://council.nyc.gov/html/releases/01_16_09_cq_foreclosures_intro.shtml

3. State Housing News

New York State will have 70,000 foreclosures in 2009, CRL says

The Center for Responsible Lending has issued new predictions on foreclosure numbers: 2,400,000 nationwide in 2009, with 70,000 in New York State. This would be a statewide increase of about 21% year-over-year.

"State by State Foreclosure Factsheets"

Center for Responsible Lending

January 2009

<http://www.responsiblelending.org/issues/mortgage/quick-references/state-by-state-foreclosure-factsheets.html>

State contemplates new rent regulations

The State Senate is considering reforms to strengthen rent stabilization, including a repeal of vacancy decontrol and changes to the Urstadt Law, which preempts local regulation of rent stabilization. On Feb. 2 the Assembly passed 10 bills that provide for these and a variety of other pro-tenant reforms.

"Stabilization Mobilization! Landlords Sound Warning"

by Eliot Brown

Feb. 3, 2009

<http://www.observer.com/mobile/article/81966>

4. Federal Housing News

Federal stimulus package includes major funding for housing

The final version of the new federal stimulus package signed into law on Feb. 17 provides a large amount of funding for affordable housing, including:

- **Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP):** \$2 billion for acquisition and redevelopment of vacant properties.
- **Public Housing Capital Fund:** \$4 billion for public housing capital projects, including \$1 billion for energy-efficiency improvements.
- **Assistance to Section 8 properties:** \$2.25 billion in assistance to project-based Section 8 properties, including \$250 million for energy efficiency improvements.
- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG):** \$1 billion in additional grants for CDBG.
- **Rural Housing Insurance Fund:** Includes \$200 million to support an additional \$11.5 billion in USDA section 502 loans.

- **National Service:** The bill includes \$200 million for the AmeriCorps and VISTA programs at the Corporation for National and Community Service. Habitat for Humanity International employs one of the largest groups of AmeriCorps volunteers in the United States.
- **Homeownership Tax Credits:** The bill forgives repayment requirements for the first-time homebuyer tax credit created in last year's federal stimulus package, increases the maximum credit amount to \$8,000 and extends the credit through December 1, 2009.
- **Weatherization Assistance Program:** Increases qualifying income from 150 percent to 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline and increases the allowable assistance from \$2,500 to \$6,500 per unit.

Thank you for all your calls and emails showing support for housing funding in this legislation - you helped retain funding for the Neighborhood Stabilization Program! Thanks to your help, Habitat affiliates around the country will be able to renovate hundreds more homes.

For a full list of the package's provisions, see ProPublica's chart and analysis at:
<http://www.propublica.org/special/the-stimulus-plan-a-detailed-list-of-spending>

HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan announces commitment to National Housing Trust Fund, new foreclosure prevention plan

On Feb. 16, in his first public speech since confirmation as the new secretary of HUD, ex-HPD head Shaun Donovan said that President Obama's promise to fund the National Housing Trust Fund would be fulfilled. Indeed, Obama's executive budget for 2009 includes \$1 billion in funding for the NHTF.

On Feb. 18, Mr. Donovan and President Obama announced a \$75 billion rescue plan for homeowners with unaffordable mortgages called Making Home Affordable. The plan provides incentives for servicers and banks to make loan modifications to reduce homeowners' monthly payments. Details were published on March 4, and are available at <http://www.financialstability.gov/makinghomeaffordable/>.

The Office of Thrift Supervision and House Banking Committee chair Rep. Barney Frank have called for banks to voluntarily halt foreclosure proceedings until the new plan is in place. Citibank, Bank of America, and JP Morgan Chase have all heeded the request.

"Obama throws \$75 billion lifeline to homeowners"

by Mark S. Smith and Alan Zibel

Feb. 18, 2009

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090218/ap_on_go_pr_wh/obama_home_foreclosures

"New HUD Chief Calls for Transparency"

by Cody Lyon

Feb. 16, 2009

http://www.globest.com/news/1348_1348/newyork/176941-1.html

"OTS Calls for Foreclosure Halt"

by Bryant Ruiz Switzky

Feb. 11, 2009

<http://www.bizjournals.com/washington/stories/2009/02/09/daily46.html>

House Democrats consider mortgage modifications in bankruptcy courts

A vote in the House is expected on or after March 5 on a bill to give bankruptcy judges the authority to modify mortgage terms, including the power to require lenders to reduce the amount of principal owed. The legislation is a key part of the Obama administration's housing and recovery plans.

"Dem spat delays mortgage relief bill in House"

by Julie Hirschfeld Davis

Feb. 26, 2009

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iGMLvMppMioFUgJfMW0VofiDcy6gD96JGF6G1>

"House to Try Again to Let Judges Alter Mortgages"

by Carl Hulse

March 4, 2009

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/05/business/05cramdown.html>

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac extend eviction freeze

The two giant housing finance agencies will not evict residents of foreclosed single-family structures under government ownership until March. Fannie and Freddie are also allowing former owners to lease their properties at market rents if they would like to remain longer.

In addition, the two agencies are participating in the Obama administration's new Making Home Affordable plan, and are assisting those with Fannie and Freddie-backed mortgages with refinancing and modification options.

In related news, Freddie Mac has announced that it requires \$15 billion in additional federal support, due to a loss of nearly \$60 billion for 2008. The firm's CEO, David Moffett, will resign effective March 12.

"Freddie, Fannie Extend Eviction Freeze Until March"

by Dawn Kopecki

Jan. 30, 2009

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=a7INRK.nOrqc>

"Chief of Freddie Mac resigns"

by The New York Times

March 2, 2009

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/03/business/03freddie.html>

Pre-owned home sales increase in December; new home sales plummet

Sales of pre-owned homes rose 6.3% in December as buyers picked up deeply discounted properties in the South and Midwest.

Sales of new homes for the year were down almost 40% from 2007.

"Pending home sales post increase of 6.3% "

AP

Feb. 3, 2009

http://www.usatoday.com/money/economy/housing/2009-02-03-pending-home-sales_N.htm?csp=34

"NEW RESIDENTIAL SALES IN DECEMBER 2008"

US Census Bureau News

Jan. 29, 2008

<http://www.census.gov/const/newressales.pdf>

5. Housing Research

City housing stock up, vacancies down in 2008

The NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development has released the preliminary results of the New York City Housing Vacancy Survey for 2008. Since the survey was last taken in 2005, the city's total stock of housing units increased by a record 2.1% - but available total vacancies fell by about 0.2%.

"Selected Initial Findings of the 2008 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey."

Dr. Moon Wha Lee

Feb. 10, 2009

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/hpd/downloads/pdf/Selected-Findings-2008-HVS.pdf>

Addressing the Foreclosure Crisis

The NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy has released comprehensive recommendations for communities dealing with the foreclosure crisis.

"Transforming Foreclosed Properties into Community Assets"

Furman Center

December 2008

http://furmancenter.org/files/FurmanCenterWhitePaper_TransformingForeclosedPropertiesIntoCommunityAssets.pdf

Housing Ideas for the Obama Administration

The Center for an Urban Future (CUF) has released a list of policy proposals for improving the lives of working New Yorkers. Their housing policy advice includes full funding for NYCHA and its Section 8 voucher program; more supportive housing; and new regulations on mortgages for multifamily buildings to prevent "predatory equity" purchases.

"50+1: A Federal Agenda for New York City"

Center for an Urban Future

January 2009

http://www.nycfuture.org/images_pdfs/pdfs/AFederalAgenda.pdf

Habitat for Humanity - New York City transforms lives and our city by building quality homes for families in need and by uniting all New Yorkers around the cause of affordable housing.

This message was sent to members of Habitat for Humanity - New York City's Housing Justice Action Network. If you were forwarded this e-mail and would like to join our mailing list, please [click here!](#)

If you share the mission of Habitat-NYC and would like to support our work with a financial contribution, please go to <http://www.habitatnyc.org/donate.html> to find out how you can help us help others.