



Helen Rosenthal

Council Member, 6th District



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Dear Neighbors,

This is a terrible, troubling time for our nation. Last week we had three straight days of senseless murder: first Alton Sterling and Philando Castile, both at the hands of police officers, then five police officers in Dallas.

All seven lives were precious and irreplaceable. They were family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors. The inequities in our country run deep and have endured. They are structural and systemic and must be addressed.

Let us honor the lives lost by committing to a society where all people are valued and respected – and all people who take a life, face justice in court.

Knowledge is power, and there are several ways you can get empowered as an engaged resident of the Upper West Side. Over the next few weeks, our office, in collaboration with others, is holding information sessions for small business owners and residents of buildings owned by Pine Management. Community Board 7 is sponsoring an informational session about the proposed new west side entrance of the American Museum of Natural History. Additional events of interest include participating in a NYPD survey about police body cameras – see below.

District News

Small businesses have an uphill battle to climb when it comes to staying in business, particularly on the Upper West Side, where rents rise at a dizzying pace. To make life easier for small business owners, my office will start hosting regular **small business workshops** in partnership with the NYC Department of Small Business Services. Our first one is scheduled for Monday, July 18 from 3pm-7pm, and it will be a great opportunity for small businesses to learn about lease negotiations, neighborhood best practices, and business violations. The Departments of Health, Environmental Protection, and Sanitation as well as pro bono business attorneys will be on hand to answer questions, and participants can sign up to speak to a pro bono attorney. [See the flyer for details.](#)

Our neighborhood's high market values can incentivize some building owners with rent-regulated tenants to find ways to move those tenants out and bring in market-rate tenants. While most building owners abide by the rules that guide rent regulated apartments, several tenants in buildings owned by Pine Management have contacted my

office about harassment by the building owner. We're co-hosting a **meeting for residents of Pine Management** with Council Member Mark Levine and Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell. Taken together our districts have 38 such buildings. We invite Pine Management tenants to learn their rights and speak to housing lawyers from the Legal Aid Society, Housing Conservation Coordinators, and the NYC Commission on Human Rights. The meeting will be at the Goddard Riverside Bernie Wohl Center at 647 Columbus Avenue at 91st Street. [See the flyer.](#)

Citi Bike will expand to 110th Street in August, adding 18 new stations. The Department of Transportation (DOT) will also shorten three stations south of 86th street, which will return a few parking spaces back to the neighborhood. You can see the full list of changes in this [letter](#) and [map](#) from DOT.

If you get stuck in an elevator, stay safe and stay put. The most dangerous thing you can do is leave a stalled elevator before FDNY arrives. The Department of Buildings (DOB) recently launched an elevator safety campaign after five people died last year while trying to leave a stalled elevator. Learn more in this piece in the [Daily News](#), and spread the word.

There's a new scam going around: scammers call claiming a need for a large sum of money – demanding bail money for a relative or collecting debt from a utility company or the IRS – and ask residents to put thousands of dollars onto an iTunes gift card. **Please know that utility companies and government agencies will never contact you demanding immediate payment by iTunes gift card**, and do know that anyone who has the number on an iTunes gift card has access to the funds on the card. You can learn more about the scam through [this flyer from the NYPD](#).

The NYPD wants your input on its body camera program before assigning 1,000 cameras to police across the City as part of a one-year pilot. The NYPD and the Policing Project at the NYU Law School are accepting input through July 31st. You can access the questionnaire [here](#).



Helen, disability advocate Lori Podvesker, and kids at the second annual Disability Pride Parade (July 10, 2016).

Last weekend was the second annual Disability Pride Parade, a chance for New Yorkers with disabilities to celebrate their community in a festive and inclusive space. The Administration added to the celebration by announcing a new initiative, [AccessibleNYC](#), a collaboration among dozens of City agency to **reduce barriers so people with**

disabilities can more easily access City services. I'm happy to announce that City agencies are already incorporating accessibility contacts on flyers for City events in accordance with my bill that became law earlier this year, [Local Law 28 of 2016](#). In addition, City agencies that don't yet have a Disability Service Facilitator are actively hiring them now, as required by the other bill in my accessibility package, [Local Law 27 of 2016](#). These laws and the AccessibleNYC initiative bring us one step closer to a more fair City for all New Yorkers.

And for parents of children with accessibility issues entering high school, please note that the printed version of the 2017 New York City High School Directory contained **incorrect information about the accessibility of some schools**. The [online version](#) has been corrected and contains an accurate list of accessible high schools. In addition, the Department of Education (DOE) is hosting an info session for parents on Monday, July 18 at 6:30pm at Hunter College at 695 Park Avenue (between 68th and 69th Streets). [Learn more](#).

We promised we'd keep you posted about any upcoming meetings regarding the new Science Center at the American Museum of Natural History. The next one, requested by Community Board 7, will be an **informal meeting to learn about the public review process** before the Landmarks Preservation Commission meeting in the fall (date to be determined). The meeting will be on Thursday, July 21 from 7pm-9pm at the Museum. Enter at 77th Street between Central Park West and Columbus Avenue, and RSVP to 212-769-5246 or GilderCenter@amnh.org. You can learn about this and upcoming meetings on the Museum [on my website](#), and you can [see the flyer here](#).

City Hall



Helen, Assembly Members Dick Gottfried and Linda B. Rosenthal, Council Member Mark Levine, Public Advocate Letitia James, and advocates rally for affordable housing outside of City Hall (June 27, 2016).

As mentioned above, some building owners harass rent regulated tenants to make way for market rate tenants. Construction as harassment is a major issue – in our neighborhood and across the City. The **Construction as Harassment Task Force**, a coalition of several City and State agencies, elected officials, the Rent Stabilization Association, the Real Estate Board of New York, the Urban Justice Center, MFY Legal Services, Housing Conservation Coordinators, the Legal Aid Society, the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD), and many more, met recently to begin a collaborative process to identify ways to target this serious issue. I'll let you know our

results when they're ready. In the meantime, if you have experienced harassment from your landlord, please contact my Director of Housing Services, Anna Gago, at (212) 873-0282 x. 204, agago@council.nyc.gov, or stop by my office on 87th and Columbus.

Rent-stabilized households pay an average of 36% of their income on rent. That means the average rent-stabilized tenant is rent-burdened by federal standards, despite living in "affordable" housing. In June the Rent Guidelines Board (RGB) issued a rent freeze on one-year lease renewals and a 2% increase on two-year renewals for leases renewed from October 1, 2016 - September 30, 2017. However, the Rent Stabilization Association (RSA), which represents landlords of rent-stabilized apartments, is now **contesting RGB's decision in court**. Tenants who renew their lease before October 1 are still covered under the renewal rates issued last year.

Housing advocates recently [released a report](#) proving that [over 8,000 NYC apartments have been taken off of the market by Airbnb](#). The report validates our suspicion that Airbnb's financial incentive for people to rent out apartments illegally as hotel rooms, has had a **serious impact on the availability of affordable housing**. In fact, [today U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein, Brian Schatz, and Elizabeth Warren called on the Federal Trade Commission \(FTC\) to investigate home-sharing services like Airbnb](#) to investigate whether they limit the stock of housing and drive up rent. They also call on the FTC to investigate racial discrimination. Airbnb makes north of \$20 million annually from these illegal rentals. It comes as no surprise that Airbnb ignores City and State laws by allowing people to rent out entire apartments for less than a month. Sharing an apartment, by renting out a room with the leaseholder or owner present, is legal (and, I support it). It would be so easy for Airbnb to follow the law and not allow people to rent out their entire apartment, putting the leaseholder or owner at risk of eviction. I will continue to work with my colleagues in City and State government to keep housing affordable and available to New Yorkers.

Warmly,



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