



## Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association, Inc.

### 2015 Annual Report

*2015 was another incredible year for Banana Kelly. What follows is a review of our accomplishments during the year and a brief look at what is in store for 2016.*



- ✓ *Affordable Housing - In 2015 we completed rehab of the Simpson Dawson buildings and neared completion at College Avenue. We were appointed by Manhattan Housing Court to take over a troubled building in the East Village. We continued our work with other CDCs on creation of a new, joint entity and much more.*
- ✓ *MSC Program - In 2015 we continued our services to families with developmentally disabled family members. Currently, we provide services to consumers in the Bronx and Upper Manhattan.*
- ✓ *RAP/Supportive Housing - This was our 18th year of providing a Supportive Housing Rental Assistance program. RAP assists formerly homeless and long-term disabled individuals with rental subsidies and support services.*
- ✓ *Case Management – We ensure that Banana Kelly residents receive all available services, provide linkage to other supportive programs, and work with residents to prevent eviction due to circumstances beyond the control of our residents.*
- ✓ *Green Infrastructure - In 2015 we expanded the use of the Intech21 Energy Monitoring system at our Simpson and Dawson buildings. And at Dawson we also instituted an environmentally friendly pest control protocol and a green cleaning system. We continue to expand our most ambitious ‘green’ infrastructure and garden project in the rear yards of the five buildings along Kelly Street.*
- ✓ *Community Organizing – Our community organizers expanded our resident leadership through increased representation and participation in our Resident Council, Kelly St. Block Association, and youth work at Banana Kelly High School. At all levels, our resident leaders inform Banana Kelly’s program development/monitoring, assist with internal policy development, and engage in city-wide advocacy and campaign efforts to preserve and expand affordable housing.*
- ✓ *ESL - We continue to partner with New York City Communities for Change to provide ESL classes to our residents. Over 100 attended our classes. We began a GED program.*
- ✓ *Summer Camp and After School - After another successful Summer Camp and After School program Banana Kelly has made preparations to increase participation and involvement by area children.*
- ✓ *Interns and Fellows - In 2015 we had the honor of having 4 interns and fellows assisting us in our outreach, organizing and environmental efforts.*

**Pictured Above: 2015 Meet & Greet Honorees include Andrew Giglio and former Councilmember Maria del Carmen Arroyo here pictured with Harold DeRienzo (second from left), Councilmember Vanessa Gibson (second from right) and Assemblymember Michael Blake (at right). Public Service Award recipient, HPD Dep. Commissioner Anne Marie Hendrickson was unable to attend.**

**Affordable Housing:** Our focus on preserving and expanding our affordable housing portfolio continued in 2015. Banana Kelly now oversees over 1,240 low-income housing units. Our College Avenue rehab consisted of three buildings with 63 housing units, had accumulated over 700 building violations, and was previously owned by a slumlord that Bill de Blasio, as Public Advocate, referred to as the city's worst landlord. For this project we brought in Wavecrest Management and FC Equities to assist in the nearly \$1million needed to secure title, pay municipal arrears and make emergency repairs. While performing a total rehab, residents were temporarily relocated to other buildings within the Banana Kelly and Wavecrest portfolios. As of December 2015, the project was nearly 75% complete and will be ready for all relocated tenants to return to their homes early 2016.



Simpson during rehab.

We became involved in 755 Dawson and 914 Simpson Street several years ago, when the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development foreclosed on these two buildings. Through the city's Third Party Transfer program we stabilized the buildings, took title and closed on financing in 2014.

At 755 Dawson Street the redevelopment was successfully completed at the end of 2014. The Simpson building, larger and more involved, had to undergo a more extensive rehab, which was completed at the end of 2015. Residents from both projects were able to move back into their newly renovated apartments in 2015. These buildings meet all of the "green buildings" requirements of HPD. The Simpson building has five handicapped-accessible units. Both have a great group of residents who will enjoy truly affordable rental housing for decades to come.

In February of 2015, we were asked by our partners at Urban Justice Center to take on the role of court appointed administrator of a building in the East Village where tenants were being harassed and subject to illegal rents. We took over the building in early February, 2015 and immediately began to provide building services, legalize rents, issue legal/rent stabilized leases, and rent out vacancies. By the time of the court discharge us as 7A Administrators in mid-October, the building was financially viable, with legal tenancies, and residents who were prepared to protect themselves in an area that is a hotbed for speculation, tenant harassment and rent gouging.



Green Cleaning at Dawson

At our 783 Beck Street building, we performed comprehensive weatherization and property assessments to determine the condition of the building's roof, windows and exterior brick work; we replaced the boiler and performed much needed upgrades on the elevator. Based upon an energy audit and our

advancing of the required equity funds (about \$30,000), we were able to leverage over \$130,000 in energy improvements, which, in addition to a new boiler, also included roof insulation and energy efficient appliances and fixtures throughout the building.

At 1084 Home Street we began a comprehensive weatherization assessment to determine the building's energy needs, along with the overall condition of the building's exterior envelop. We anticipate 1084 Home Street will be weatherized in 2016.



New Lobby at Simpson

At 850 Longwood Avenue, we were able to leverage about \$230,000 in weatherization funds with about \$39,000 in equity for work needed there. Among other items, every window at 850 Longwood Avenue was replaced, addressing a major cause of the building spending far above industry averages on heating in the past.

At 788 Fox Street we commissioned a Property Condition Report, which formed the basis for a HUD RAD (Rental Assistance Demonstration Program) application, which we intend to prepare in 2016. Also in 2015 we continued our involvement at 580 Southern Blvd. and completed a scope of work and bidding process

for redevelopment work, including window replacement and new boiler. We hope to see this work completed in 2016.

During 2015, we negotiated the exit of our for-profit partner at 830 Fox Street, a 4% HDC tax exempt bond deal. And although we were successful in that negotiation, the syndicator, WNC, declined to accept our organization as replacing the guarantor partner for this project that is in the seventh year of operation. Recently, we have come to agreement with two other JOE NYC participants – MHANY and St. Nicks Alliance—and proposed to WNC that the three not-for-profit organizations take over as co-managing members/guarantors for the project. We received HPD and HDC's approval, and hope to get WNC on board early in 2016.

In 2015 we responded to HPD's RFQ for the ANCP and TPT/Cooperative program. We began discussions with HPD to allow for a demonstration program in East Harlem, working with Picture the Homeless and the New York City Community Land Trust Initiative. We hope to see this project come to fruition over the next two years and see this as a major bulwark against the rampant speculation and displacement occurring in East Harlem.

Finally, we continued our CDC 4G effort, now known as JOE NYC, where Banana Kelly and about 10 other community development corporations agreed to consolidate our collective housing portfolios so that we can better compete with the private



Staff at a Bldg. Supervisor's event; with Kyle Bragg, 32BJ.

sector and stem the further loss of not-for-profit housing to the private sector, which, for the past 10 years, has consumed thousands of such units from struggling not-for-profits. We hope to see the first of our projects transferred to the JOE NYC in the first quarter of 2016, and we are looking to do this through a community land trust model.



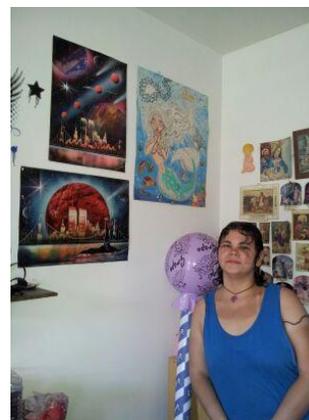
Exploring partnership with Local 372 of DC 37 to access our supportive services.

**RAP Program:** Our Supportive Housing Rental Assistance Program (RAP) which is funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, continued to target homeless and disabled individuals, has both a rental subsidy and a supportive services component. Over the past year we remained on target to assist over 30 families who were homeless and have at least one family member with a physical and/or developmental disability. 2015 saw tremendous success: the program secured slots for two additional families (a small number for sure,

but big when considering the difficulty in administering this program and the expense demanded – requiring us to provide matching funds). In addition, we managed to ensure that all of our RAP consumers retained their housing and were paying their allotted share. What is more, through our services, we increased the employment rate of our consumers by 15%. All in all, a very successful year.

**MSC Program:** Our Medicaid Services Coordination Program continues to serve the most vulnerable of our neighbors, serving over 120 consumers. This year we expanded our outreach to include local churches, schools and other community institutions to offer more services to more families. And not only are we providing our services in the Bronx, but our program serves consumers living in upper Manhattan. We continue to reach out to our residents who are in need of assistance, mostly to prevent eviction and homelessness. All who seek help have access to our case management services, where we work to ensure receipt of all available services and provide linkages to other supportive programs.

In 2015 our MSC program helped many individuals with developmental disabilities achieve their goals. One of our many MSC success stories involves a mother who was searching for a MSC program for her daughter who has cerebral palsy and moderate intellectual disability. The daughter recently graduated from high school and was in need of a program that both provided the services she needed and was conveniently located. After several months in our program mother and daughter expressed relief and gratitude to us because our program not only helped her secure a job (and a pay check), assisting staff and making copies at a local small business, but she has achieved her goals by becoming more independent and feels as though she has become a useful member of her community. It brings her a great sense of accomplishment to bring a small income home to help her mother.



An Artist is born

Both the MSC program and the RAP program have gone through some staffing changes in 2015 that will continue into 2016. Stephanie Dos Santos assumed the leadership of the unit in November of 2015, and some other staff are being re-assigned internally in an effort to better integrate our resident support services.

**Case Management Services:** We continue to reach out to our residents who are in need of assistance, mostly to prevent eviction and homelessness. Every resident of Banana Kelly buildings has access to our case management services, where we work with each to ensure receipt of all available services and provide linkages to other supportive programs. The goal of this program is to provide stability and preservation of tenancy by preventing homelessness or rapid re-housing of families experiencing homelessness. Our staff assists these families with entitlement screening, securing the services needed to remain in their apartments, be that by re-applying for Section 8 assistance or accessing available entitlement programs. This is challenging and at times frustrating work, particularly because South Bronx residents on the whole, including many of our own residents, pay a disproportionately high percentage of their incomes for rent and lack information on available supportive services. But as difficult as it is, we are proud that we have been able to effectively assist so many residents in retaining their tenancies.

**Green Infrastructure:** We remain committed to advancing environmental and “green” programs as a part of all of our work. We are most interested in continuing our groundbreaking work of combining environmental and social programs, particularly where a rain harvesting system (intended to help eliminate harmful combined sewer overflows in times of heavy rain) is combined with garden projects that permit residents to take over newly created public spaces for community purposes and to promote healthy eating/living practices. These programs remain a big part of our work because they serve both environmental needs and promote our community building agenda through the establishment of shared space and gardening activities.

Planting at Home Street



Residents participating in a garden workshop

At our Home Street building we completed the installation of a green space in the courtyard's open area located just within the entrance to the building. The green elements include large wooden planters, rain water collection and irrigation systems, trellises, and of course plantings. Our existing green infrastructure projects at 970 Prospect and 750 Bryant remain in operation and were heavily utilized during spring, summer and fall.

And at our largest and most ambitious project – Kelly Street Garden – we had our second successful harvest,

involving neighborhood youth and the elderly in the care, maintenance and harvesting of the garden produce. Of course, the rain harvesting system in place there and in our other buildings helps meet the City's long term environmental objectives of eliminating combined sewer overflows while also providing rainwater for the garden. Moreover, we have created a platform for residents to self-direct neighborhood transformation efforts, which have resulted in a revived block association (not active since the 1960s) and other collective activities.

Harvesting greens!



In its second year of operations, the garden was able to feed well over 150 adults and children free, wholesome meals featuring garden-grown produce. At the bi-monthly Chef in the Kitchen workshops facilitated by residents who live on the block, the garden helped create a culture of reciprocal teaching/learning. Residents hosted over 16 special events as well as 'Harvest Tables' where the garden committee was able to distribute food 241 times during 2015. Residents logged over 800 volunteer hours dedicated to garden maintenance; hosted over 150 visitors at neighborhood beautification events and garden workshops; and harvested and distributed over 650 pounds of carbon-reducing fruits and veggies to neighbors—for free—in an area with poor air quality and limited access to affordable healthy food. The Kelly Street Garden engaged 5 summer youth interns; held demonstration workshops in gardening, composting and environmental/social justice issues. And diverted to compost an estimated 300 lbs. of organic material that otherwise would have gone to a landfill.

**Community Organizing:** In terms of fostering resident engagement, our community organizers continue to expand the Banana Kelly Resident Council. The Council is composed of our residents, both current and former, and engage in advocacy and organizing around self-identified issues that relate to the expansion and sustainability of affordable housing in the South Bronx. This past year the Council organized community-building events including workshops related to housing issues such as the rent freeze, the mechanics of affordable housing, and the cluster-site shelter policy. Our organizers have facilitated resident involvement and attendance at several forums and actions on issues related to the Mayor's affordable housing plan, laws governing rent in the city, and shelter policies. The Council also worked closely with our Executive Staff to improve the management of our portfolio and this past year we ratified bylaws that creates a process for our residents to join the BK Board of Directors. Our team formalized a relationship with Banana Kelly High School and buildOn. We created a mural around the "school to prison pipeline" perceived phenomenon, which can be seen on the corner of Home St and Westchester. For the 2015-2016 school year, our organizers facilitate bi-weekly sessions with students to examine



Banana Kelly's Resident Council

school discipline policies and explore ways that students can develop better relationships with their administrators. Finally, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Kelly Street Block Party was held in August, with over 150 neighborhood residents attending. This event could not have been possible without the hard work of our Kelly St Block Association, which works to foster and expand a sense of community on “Banana Kelly” St. The group will continue to provide workshops, events, and meetings for residents to become more involved in their community.



ESL Students at the end of the semester

**English as a Second Language.** In partnership with the New York City Communities for Change, Banana Kelly operates an ESL program that in 2015 served close to 100 adults from our neighborhood. In our community there is a growing need for English language programs. Over the next several years we intend to grow the program to reach more of our community residents by offering additional times that classes are offered. Finally we began the process of offering a GED/TASC prep program for our adult population.

**Summer Camp and After School.** Our 2015 Summer Camp was a mix of education presented in an engaging manner, programs with wide cultural exposure and physical recreation. Close to 65 children enrolled in the camp where they visited museums, libraries, zoos, had cook-outs, spent an afternoon at the beach, listened to guest speakers on a wide range of subjects and generally had fun in a learning environment. In September of 2014 we expanded the summer program with a full year after school program offered to area children. Over 30 children attend the first Banana Kelly Afterschool program during the 2014/2015 academic year. We began small with just over 30 children enrolled last year, we are looking to serve as many or more children in 2015-2016.



Summer Campers at the Bronx Zoo



**AmeriCorps Member, Fellows, Apprentices and Interns.** This past year Banana Kelly was fortunate to have two AmeriCorps volunteers as part of the Banana Kelly family. Through our partnership with LISC New York, we received a slot for an AmeriCorps member to help us with outreach without building portfolio and throughout our catchment area. We also were fortunate to be a part of the Morgan Stanley Fellows and the Cashin programs,

PANY's Apprentice program and an intern from our exchange program with Marburg University in Germany.

With the help of our friends, consumers and funders we look forward to making 2016 an even better year. Looking ahead we intend to continue to save and rehab much needed affordable housing units, of course, but also to impact the restoration of neighborhoods plagued by blight, neglect, abuse, drugs, crime and desperation by residents with no viable housing choices, through a stronger resident base, stronger ties to other community development corporations and a stronger local business community.

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## We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the following

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