



Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association, Inc. 2013 Annual Report



What a fantastic year 2013 was for Banana Kelly. The year was significant for a many reasons including the launching of new programs, hiring new staff, gaining new supporters, and providing new benefits that offer long term rewards for and impact on our community. The following is a review of our accomplishments during the year and a brief look forward into 2014.

Affordable Housing: Our affordable housing portfolio continues to expand. Banana Kelly now oversees 1,200 low-income housing units. In March, with the completion of the re-development of several buildings along Kelly Street, we held a ribbon cutting ceremony attended by our partners, the city's housing commissioner, other government officials and Kelly Street residents. Having succeeded in taking over these properties through a court order, we brought in WFH Advisors as partners and completed renovation in 2012. Substantial renovation work was done to these buildings as we worked closely with the residents to make sure they had the ongoing ability to pay rent and ensure return to their homes while construction was preformed.

After our successful experience at Kelly Street, we began a new project on College Avenue.



Partnering with Wavcrest Management and FC Equities, we successfully wrested control from the former, owner and are working to preserve 63 affordable units for the residents of these three buildings. Both these projects were, at different times prior to our involvement, #1 on then Public Advocate and now-Mayor Bill de Blasio's worst landlord list. While the College Avenue project is still being structured, we are pursuing a third such rescue effort of a building on Jackson Avenue. Unfortunately, here in our section of the South Bronx,

there is no shortage of buildings with intolerable living conditions. Working with our partners (Mothers on the Move on Kelly Street, CASA/New Settlement on College, and U-HAB on Jackson Avenue) Banana Kelly will continue in our efforts to take these distressed, over-leveraged properties out of the speculative market so as to preserve them as affordable housing; doing

whatever possible to improve the conditions to help stabilize the properties, preserve tenancies and, in the process, prevent homelessness.

MSC Program: In 2013 we were able to increase our services to families with developmentally disabled children, complemented by the formation of the expanding Parents Council. Our Medicaid Services Coordination Program continues to grow and now currently serves close to 130 consumers. After preparing individual service plans (ISPs) for each family, our staff follows with extensive tracking and monitoring; our staff serves as facilitators for all services our consumers are eligible for, as well as training adults in the family to be advocates themselves. Given the spectrum of developmental disabilities, each consumer's ISP is customized. For example, some form of independent living would be viewed as being optimally successful for one consumer, whereas completing college could be viewed as optimally successful for another. Operating this program through the NYS Office of People with Developmental Disabilities, we expanded our reach and began to serve former Willowbrook class residents, with close to 20 currently being served.



RAP Program: For the past 16 years we have also administered a Supportive Housing Rental Assistance Program funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. The program, which targets homeless and disabled individuals and families, has both a rental subsidy and a supportive services component. The supportive services component requires extensive case management, monitoring and the development and updating of ISPs for each of the RAP participants. In 2013 we served 37 families who were homeless and have at least one family member with a physical and/or developmental disability. We continue to see this program as invaluable to the families we serve, however it is becoming a challenge to expand this program under new HUD regulations, but we continue to persevere due to the program's importance to the participants.



Case Management Services. 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 imminent homelessness. Our staff assists these families with 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: In the area of Green Infrastructure and Energy Conservation we have made substantial progress. Working with the New York City Soil and Water Conservation District we completed our first two Green Infrastructure projects at 970 Prospect Avenue and 750 Bryant Avenue, both were operating at full capacity during the 2013 growing season. Through these projects we not only seek to harvest rain water, but also use the projects for community building through resident organizing around backyard gardening and

passive recreation activities sponsored by groups of organized residents themselves. In the Spring of 2013 we began two new projects. The first, at Home Street is our first in an area that faces the street, promising challenges but also opportunities. The second, at 5 buildings along Kelly Street, represents our largest such project to date. In partnership with Workforce Housing Advisors, and with funding received from TD Bank and the NYC DEP, the project includes the installation of green roofs, rain harvesting, green walls, extensive garden and more. We are excited about these green projects and plan to complete their installation by the Summer 2014.



Community Outreach and Organizing: In 2013 Banana Kelly experienced a resurgence in our community outreach efforts. We hired two community organizers to work to establish and facilitate tenant associations in our 50 buildings, creating the space for lasting tenant engagement in building-related concerns. These resident-led groups work to problem-solve collectively by working with property management and other local stakeholders to address common concerns. Our organizers support these efforts and

work to facilitate them by connecting tenants to resources and information. An impressive ten buildings started their tenant associations this year: *750 Bryant Ave, 770 Bryant Ave, Kelly Street, 744 Beck Street, 783 Beck Street, 830 Fox Street, 859 Longwood, 911 Longwood, 1244/1246 Westchester*. These buildings join an active network of members in Banana Kelly buildings working hard to improve conditions and help foster a more active neighborhood through meetings, community-building events, and celebrations.

Residents Council. The Resident Council is the strategic body established to build leadership capacity of our residents. The Council is a member-led group of residents structured to be a bridge between the management and staff of Banana Kelly and residents of Banana Kelly buildings. The idea is to establish the Resident Council as the mechanism for our residents to develop the leadership capital and the strong internal function in order to create a platform for collective capacity and social cohesion. By the end of 2013 there were approximately 15 residents on the Resident Council. One of the first issues the Council chose to address was the crisis of affordability hitting our neighborhood, an issue affecting the community at large where

nearly 50% of people pay over half of their income in rent each year. The Resident Council has been working to educate themselves and our residents about the situation by reaching out to other groups, attending events, and connecting individual stories to the wider political context of the gap between wages and rents. To that end, the Resident Council organized their own workshop to educate the community further about these issues, while also growing their membership base. In 2014, the Resident Council will continue to expand their work in the community while also setting up committees to forge a strong connection between Banana Kelly, our residents and the community at large.



Simpson Dawson. On October 29th, 2013 the City of New York acting through the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) officially set aside Low Income Housing Tax Credits from its 2014 allocation to Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association, Inc. We are very proud to be the recipient of these tax credits and will use them for the rehabilitation of 41 units of housing for the Simpson Dawson Third Party Transfer Project located in the heart of the South Bronx at 914 Simpson Street and 755 Dawson Street. In all, the project will receive an investment of over \$11 million, including over \$5 million in Low Income Housing Tax Credits, allowing Banana Kelly to provide much needed decent, affordable housing for decades to come.



English as a Second Language. In partnership with the New York City Communities for Change, Banana Kelly operates an ESL program that currently serves close to 70 adults from the neighborhood. In our community there is a growing need for English language programs. Over the next several years we intend

Summer Camp. Using the National Baseball Hall of Fame's sports-themed curriculum, we introduced the young people of our South Bronx community to a program that supplements what they are learning in their academic studies with the unique integration of sports-learning, culture and arts. During this past summer we utilized this curriculum in our Summer Camp, a mix of education presented in an engaging manner, programs with wide cultural exposure and physical recreation. It was a first in the city, and for the country in that we utilized a sports-centered curriculum developed through the National Baseball Hall of Fame. The children not only learned about the many resources available at the Hall of Fame, but also came in contact with their first ever video conferencing technology. You can imagine the wonder in the children's eyes when they realized that they were able to interact with the educator, ask questions and



receive answers in real time *but* that she was hundreds of miles away. In 2014 we intend to expand the summer program into a full year after school program offered to area children.

to grow the program to reach more of our community residents by offering additional times that classes are offered.



AmeriCorps Member and Interns. This past year Banana Kelly was fortunate to have two interns and one AmeriCorps member as part of the Banana Kelly family. Through our partnership with LISC New York, we received a slot for an AmeriCorps member to work to build community at the Betances Houses in the Mott Haven neighborhood. One of our interns was an exchange student from Germany who helped us with our Green Infrastructure projects, particularly the planning process on Kelly Street. Our LISC Cashin Fellow intern was with us for the summer and helped structure our community outreach efforts.

With the help of our friends, consumers and funders we look forward to making 2014 an even better year. Looking ahead we will work to build on our past successes and continue to take on new challenges, specifically those that expand the supply of affordable housing, provide employment opportunities and expand necessary services for the most vulnerable among us. Ultimately Banana Kelly's success is defined through the people we represent and serve. Thank you for all your support and assistance.

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