



Lawyers Alliance for New York

Connecting lawyers, nonprofits, and communities

Volunteer Attorney Accomplishment for Internal and External News

Date: June 10, 2011
Name of Attorney: Mal Serure and Anna Stern
Name of Firm: Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP
Client Served: Settlement Housing Fund ('SHF')

Accomplishment: Successfully negotiated a commercial lease for SHF's housing development fund corporation, thus helping to ensure the success of an affordable cooperative.

Specific Case Highlights: Settlement Housing Fund ('SHF') is a leading not-for-profit developer of affordable housing in New York City. Since 1969, SHF has created economically and ethnically diverse affordable housing and neighborhood amenities, developing 56 projects with over 8,700 apartments for more than 25,000 low- and middle-income residents. The organization also incorporates commercial space and community programs for children, young adults and families that provide opportunities for educational success and upward mobility.

In 2002, SHF and its development partner, Urban Homesteading Assistance Board ('UHAB'), with assistance from Lawyers Alliance, formed Shuhab Housing Development Fund Corporation ('Shuhab') to develop 10 tax-delinquent buildings that it had acquired through the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development's Third Party Transfer Program. SHF planned to convert these buildings to cooperative ownership. Once accomplished, the buildings would result in 400 units of affordable cooperatives. Last year, the organization approached Lawyers Alliance for assistance with negotiating commercial leases for three retail spaces in one of Shuhab's acquired buildings in Harlem.

Mal Serure and Anna Stern of Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP volunteered to assist SHF in this venture. The Willkie team successfully drafted the commercial lease form and negotiated the terms of a combined lease for two of the retail spaces. As a result, the building now contains a brick oven pizza restaurant and a gelato café, thus adding to the economic vitality of the Harlem community and its residents.

SHF's Associate Director and General Counsel Lee Warshavsky commented that the Willkie team was fantastic, having performed an enormous amount of work in a very short period of time. According to Lee, the team "skillfully negotiated the terms of the lease in order to best protect [SHF's] interests and the interests of the affordable cooperative," adding that the organization is very grateful to the Willkie team and Lawyers Alliance.

About Lawyers Alliance for New York: Lawyers Alliance for New York is the leading provider of business and transactional legal services for nonprofit organizations that are improving the quality of life in New York City neighborhoods. Our network of pro bono lawyers from law firms and corporations and staff of experienced attorneys work together, delivering expert corporate, tax, real estate, employment, and other legal services to community organizations. By connecting lawyers, nonprofits, and communities, we help nonprofits to develop affordable housing, stimulate economic development, and operate vital programs for children and young people, the elderly, recent immigrants, and other low-income New Yorkers. Each year, the staff attorneys at Lawyers Alliance and more than 1,400 volunteers serve more than 600 clients.

Inquiries: Please contact Marketing and Communications Coordinator Emily Crossan at 212-219-1800 ext. 233 with questions or requests for additional information.