

New condos on the way, tenants worry

East Village, Upper West Side owners say they're converting buildings into one-family units.

MANHATTAN Tenants at some rent-stabilized apartments are being pushed out by building owners who say they want to turn the structures into one-family residences. Many residents fear, however, that the owners are actually trying to cash in on the city's condo craze.

Tenants at 47-49 East 3rd St. in the East Village won an injunction preventing Catherine and Alistair Economakis from evicting them from the 15-unit, 104-year-old structure, pending a judge's ruling. On the Upper West Side, Jill and Marc Smilow are trying to clear the 10-unit building at 26 West 87th St.

"The [rent stabilization] law says an owner can claim one or more apartments, but we say that doesn't mean they can take an entire building out of rent stabilization," said Stephen Dobkin, a lawyer representing the East Villagers.

Barry Paddock, a 3rd Street resident who pays \$950 for his 375-square-foot apartment,

“It makes me livid. When you take over a big building, seven or six stories, or even a smaller one, whole lives are turned upside down.”

CITY COUNCILWOMAN GALE BREWER,
WHO REPRESENTS THE UPPER WEST SIDE

believes the Economakis family wants to turn the building, which sold for nearly \$1 million, into condos.

"We think it would be easier to blow up this building then convert it into a single-family home," Paddock said. Rose & Rose, the law firm representing the Economakis family, did not return calls for comment.

"You can buy a rent-stabilized for about half the price of a non-stabilized building," said lawyer Sam Himmelstein, who represents the tenants on the Upper West Side. A 23-unit rent-stabilized building at 12 East 72nd St., whose tenants he represents, sold for \$5.5 million but could have fetched \$23 million if it were unoccupied, he said.

Himmelstein recently won a motion for "pre-trial discovery" to question the Smilows about their intentions.

"Some of these landlords are legitimate and some aren't," he said. "But how do

you disprove what someone is going to do in the future?"

Harry Getzov — an 87th Street tenant — doesn't think the Smilows will move in.

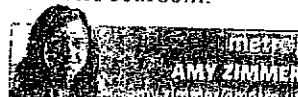
"They have to mirror the language of the law, but my guess is they want to get people out so they can make more money," Getzov said. He pays \$1,000 a month and said the Smilows bought the building for \$2.9 million.

"We are definitely trying to convert the building into a one-family home for our own family," Jill Smilow said, before declining further comment citing the litigation.

"What's happening to our brownstone is happening to a number of brownstones in the area," Getzov said. "We're not poor people; we're middle-class, but I'm not going to spend \$850,000 on a one-bedroom."



TENANTS AT 47-49 East 3rd Street are fighting the owner's plans to get them out and turn the building into a one-family



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