

Starrett City housing preserved under new deal by sellers

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[Starrett City](#) will remain a bastion of middle-class housing for another generation - but the same forces that threatened it still loom over tens of thousands of other subsidized apartments.

[New York](#)'s real estate boom has given building owners incentive to take buildings out of subsidy programs like Mitchell-Lama and Section 8 and charge market rents.

Those fears led federal housing authorities last year to block a proposed \$1.3 billion sale of Starrett City in southeast Brooklyn, saying that the price was too expensive to allow rents to stay low.

Starrett City is now formally known as Spring Creek Towers.

In a deal hailed Monday by officials who helped broker it, Starrett City's owners have agreed to sell the 34-year-old complex to a buyer who can keep it affordable for its 14,000 residents.

"You can find ways to preserve the affordability," said [Sen Chuck Schumer \(D-N.Y.\)](#). "Don't just throw up your hands and say it's inevitable. If you have committed local, state and federal governments, the owner will realize they have to keep the project affordable."

Hundreds of residents in the multi-ethnic community turned out to celebrate the announcement.

"They said they're going to keep Section 8 for 20 years," said Caraballo Milagros, 69, who pays \$209 a month for her two-bedroom apartment. "That is very good for us. My income is very low. It's expensive anywhere else."

Whoever buys Starrett City will be able to build up to 1,000 more apartments on the property, but the existing 5,881 units will remain in Mitchell-Lama and maintain other subsidies for at least 20 more years.

In the last two years alone, though, the owners of an additional 5,683 apartments in other parts of the city have taken their buildings out of Mitchell-Lama - spreading a Starrett City-sized loss of affordable housing across 22 smaller apartment complexes, the [Urban Homesteading Assistance Board](#) says.

"There are so many other buildings that are vulnerable right now," said [Amy Chan](#) of the group Tenants and Neighbors. "If government cares about Mitchell-Lama the same way it cares about Starrett City, something really needs to be done about all these other buildings."

The city has lost more than 42% of its Mitchell-Lama units since 1990, and at least an additional 11% of apartments in complexes with Section 8 subsidies, according to studies by [Tom Waters](#) of the [Community Service Society](#).

Housing advocates believe up to 10% of the city's million-plus subsidized apartments are at risk in those programs.

The city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development recently blocked two proposed sales of Mitchell-Lama buildings with 300 apartments, saying the new owners could not have kept the rents affordable.