



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JESSICA CHAIT
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

July 29, 2025

Matthew Keller
Black Spruce Management LLC
80 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1201
New York, NY 10011

**Re: Illegal Activity, Building Service and Condition Issues Update
308, 310, 318, 320, 322, 324, 326, 328, 330, 332, 334, 336, 338, 340 West
49th Street - Black Spruce Management, LLC**

Dear Mr Keller,

At Manhattan Community Board 4's (MCB4) Housing, Health, and Human Services (HHHS) Committee meeting on July 1st, 2025, the Committee received an update from Christian Banovich from Nieuw Amsterdam Property management on the illegal activity and building problems at 308, 310, 318, 320, 322, 324, 326, 328, 330, 332, 334, 336, 338, and 340 West 49th Street.

At its regularly scheduled Full Board meeting on July 23, 2025, MCB4 voted 40 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible, to request more information regarding the progress of addressing building services and condition issues across the 14 buildings in this portfolio.

Background

At the HHHS Committee meeting on March 6th, 2025, HHHS received a presentation from the HK49-54 Block Alliance regarding the ongoing illegal activity and building service and repair problems at a group of buildings on West 49th Street between 8th and 9th Avenues. The Committee had a discussion with Christian Banovich, and building issues were discussed in further detail. HHHS requested multiple steps be taken to

address building issues, detailed further in the attached letter¹. The discussion at the July 1st HHHS meeting provided an update on the status of these issues.

Updates from Nieuw Amsterdam Property Management

Squatters

- The squatter in 328 W 49th, 2RE was evicted on June 27th, 2025. There are no more squatters in any of the buildings.

Building Conditions and Maintenance Issues

- Of the 678 open HPD Housing Code violations, 381 have been successfully cleared. As of July 1st, there were 541 open violations across all buildings. As violations have been cleared, new ones have been issued.
 - The owner asserted that there are concentrated numbers of violations in units that are not providing access and that have ongoing holdover actions.
- Boiler repairs have been made to address repeated issues with lack of heat and hot water.

Building Security

- All building security cameras have been upgraded and are now operational, and pertinent video footage is shared with NYPD.
- All building intercom systems have been repaired with the intercom wiring now embedded in the walls to prevent tampering. Therefore, all intercom systems in all buildings are now functional. Multiple notices were sent to tenants to ensure they are registered on the new intercom system.
- Vacant apartments are inspected weekly to ensure no squatters or illegal activity occurs.
- The front door at 328 W 49th has been replaced.
- All roof doors are being assessed to ensure they are self-closing with a push bar and not accessible from the outside.

Tenant Communication

- Management has increased communications with tenants regarding building upgrades, staff changes, contacting management, and submitting work orders.
- Communications have also been posted in residential lobbies.
- Black Spruce will provide MCB4 with the latest communication shared with tenants.

Building Cleaning and Maintenance

¹ [6.26.25 Letter to Black Spruce Management re: W 49th Street Building Problems](#)

- In general, for each building portfolio, Nieuw Amsterdam Property Management has a dedicated super, maintenance staff and porters. For this portfolio, the property manager now has a reduced portfolio so greater attention can be paid to this site. Further, he visits the sites multiple times a week and reports to the office. An additional porter has been assigned for the West 49th Street buildings, and maintenance staff from other portfolios have been temporarily reassigned to the West 49th Street portfolio to manage the backlog of repairs.

Communication with Elected Officials

- Nieuw Amsterdam has been in contact with Councilmember Erik Bottcher's office, providing detailed updates about addressing conditions at the West 49th Street buildings

Needed Social Services

- The owners receive referrals for homeless tenants, but do not have a dedicated social service provider for this portfolio. It is unclear what degree of social services, if any, are provided to the incoming social service needing tenants by the referring agency.
- Referrals are received from city agencies including DHS, HRA, HPD, and other referral sources including Anthos, Gay Men's Health Crisis.

Committee Discussion

MCB4 thanks Nieuw Amsterdam Property Management for returning to the HHHS Committee with updates showing positive steps in addressing the numerous issues facing these 14 buildings on West 49th Street. As part of the meeting, the Committee had a discussion which yielded the following requests.

Building Security

- Squatters were accessing units by entering units from the roof. Please seal the vacant unit windows from the inside using plywood until they are rented to ensure the overall security of the building and prevent illegal access.
- Please provide the number of vacant units across the buildings.
- Please provide confirmation that fire escape windows that were screwed shut for security have been made operable. Fire escape windows provide a second means of egress for the fire escape and cannot be screwed shut. That action is illegal and not code compliant.

Building Conditions and Maintenance Issues

- Please provide MCB4 with a monthly list of the issues that have been addressed and resolved.

- Please provide air conditioners for any social service referred tenant.
- Please provide a detailed list of open violations with a schedule for repairs to clear all building violations.
- The owner asserted that they were advised by their landlord-tenant attorney that they could not take any action to secure access for repairs for tenants who are subject to a pending holdover action. That information is not correct. MCB4 asks the owner to make motions for access orders to correct HPD violations as part of those ongoing holdover actions. That process is standard and customary in Housing Court.

Tenant Communication

- Are there regularly scheduled meetings between Black Spruce and tenants to address outstanding issues?
- Please provide MCB4 with a copy of the communication that is shared with the tenants.

Safety Concerns of Tenants

- 54 tenants have been working with Housing Conservation Coordinators (HCC) to detail the comprehensive outstanding repairs and building issues that Black Spruce has to remedy. HCC has stated 7 tenants moved out of the buildings, either due to unsafe conditions or failure to make repairs.

Needed Social Services

- Per the Regulatory Agreement, there must be no fewer than 50 units leased to Eligible Homeless Tenants, who are referred to the owners by HPD, Department of Homeless Services (DHS), or another referral source approved by HPD. The owners have noted issues with referrals, particularly with reviewing referrals for tenants to see if they are suitable for independent living. Further, there are tenants who require social service tenants, and MCB4 repeats the request to address this need through identifying a social service provider that can be contracted to provide social services for tenants in order to make them succeed in their new homes.
- Please describe, in detail, the referral process for homeless tenants. There is an ongoing information gap regarding the referral process for this group of buildings. Please describe in detail all referral sources and which sources provide ongoing social services.

Conclusion

MCB4 appreciates the updates provided by Mr. Banovich, which show serious efforts to address the multiple issues surrounding building conditions and maintenance, building security, and open HPD violations that were outlined in the letter dated June 26, 2025.

However, there still remains a lack of clarity around the HPD violations, the social service referrals, and tenant communication. MCB4 requests that Nieuw Amsterdam Property Management return to the HHHS Committee meeting scheduled for September 4th, 2025, to answer questions raised, provide information, and to please provide these in writing one week prior to the September 4th HHHS meeting. MCB4 will also invite HCC and tenants from the building to get a comprehensive update from all parties involved.

Sincerely,



Jessica Chait
Chair

Manhattan Community Board 4



Joe Restuccia
Co-Chair

Housing, Health,
And Human Services
Committee



Maria Ortiz
Co-Chair

Housing, Health,
And Human Services
Committee

cc: Nicole Simmons, Assistant Commissioner, NYC HPD
Hon. Brad Hoylman-Sigal, NYS Senate
Hon. Tony Simone, NYS Assembly Member
Hon. Erik Bottcher, NYC Council Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
Housing Conservation Coordinators