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'Madoff of landlords' close to plea deal in fraud case

By Rebecca Rosenberg

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Steve Croman, right, after posting bail

Photo: Stephen Yang

A notorious Manhattan landlord who [the state attorney general likened to Bernie Madoff](#) is close to reaching a plea agreement on his mortgage-fraud case, his attorney said Tuesday.

"We are working diligently to try and resolve this matter on a global basis and hope to be able to do so by the next court appearance," said high-powered defense lawyer Ben Brafman of his client Steven Croman as they left the courtroom.

Croman, 49, and his mortgage broker pal Barry Swartz, 53, were greeted by about 30 protesters as they entered Manhattan Supreme Court.

Croman and Swartz allegedly filed false paperwork inflating the rental income on mortgage documents to score more than \$45 million in loans, according to the office of the State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, who is prosecuting the case.

The defendants face more than a dozen counts of grand larceny, scheme to defraud and other charges.

The AG's office is also suing the embattled landlord in civil court for using an ex-cop turned private investigator to intimidate tenants out of their rent-stabilized apartments.

Croman built his real estate empire by buying up buildings filled with rent-regulated tenants. He then embarked on an aggressive campaign to convert the low-income apartments into expensive market-rate units through buyouts and harassment, according to the AG's office.

The landlord's son Jake found himself in the spotlight last year when he was [recorded berating an Uber driver](#) at the University of Michigan, which he attends.