

Rustic LES Owner Alleges Steve Croman's Harassment Tactics Led to Its Demise

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More information is coming to light regarding the shutter of **Rustic LES** a couple weeks ago (<http://www.boweryboogie.com/2014/08/rustic-les-ridge-street-shutters-vacate-order-issued/>). You'll recall that owner Yassir Zraouli was forced to close his Moroccan bistro at 124 Ridge Street thanks to Vacate and Stop Work Orders issued by the Department of Buildings. The building itself is a Steve Croman property, and as you might imagine, shady dealings are to partially to blame.

Another Croman Casualty.

Croman is known more for harassment of residential tenants rather than commercial. Indeed, State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman launched a probe (<http://www.boweryboogie.com/2014/07/slumlord-steve-croman-investigation-state-attorney-general/>) to investigate the controversial tactics employed by this hated landlord. Not only that, some of his tenants are suing.



Zraouli tells us that Rustic LES was “met with a series of issues, and the owner reneged on many contractual obligations citing construction delays and outside agency interference.” The business also suffered from the never-ending renovations in the apartments above. Water damage, sign-obscuring scaffolding, and unannounced asbestos abatement collectively hurt business to the point of no return. The whole fiasco has reportedly strained the livelihood of Zraouli’s family.

A brief timeline of events at 124 Ridge Street:

- February 2012 – lease signed with Steve Croman (9300 Realty) for the commercial space, which included storefront, basement & partial backyard/ courtyard area.
- July 2013 – scaffolding placed directly over Rustic LES signage without any advance notice.
- August 2013 – notice of asbestos abatement posted without alerting any tenants. A collection bin was placed in the backyard during operational hours, thereby jeopardizing employees’ and patrons’ health and well-being.
- September to October 2013 – Croman began construction on building. Contractors demolish both front and back buildings down to studs and removed roof from front building. Renovation stalls under these conditions for the next 9 months. The unfinished roof leads to severe leaks, especially during inclement weather, damaging property and stock, and led to mold eventually growing in multiple places.

- August 2014 – demolition resumes, resulting in stop work order and a vacate demand on commercial tenant.