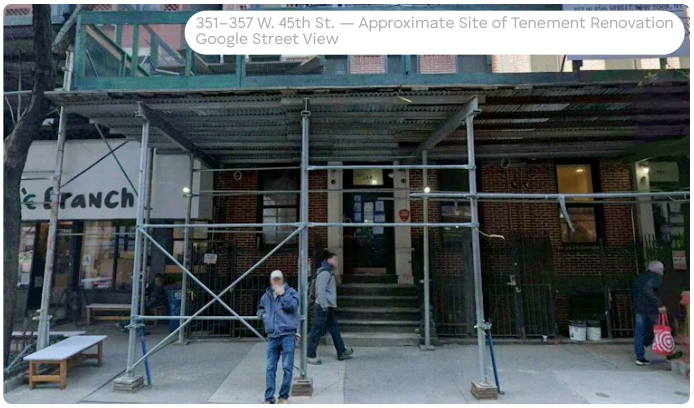
New York City / Real Estate & Development

NOTORIOUS LANDLORD'S HELL'S KITCHEN TENEMENTS REBORN AS AFFORDABLE HOUSING

By Quinn Mercer **Published on October 29, 2026**



Four crumbling tenement buildings on West 45th Street that spent years under the ownership of one of New York City's most notorious landlords have been transformed into affordable apartments for longtime tenants and families leaving the city's shelter system. The buildings at 351-357 West 45th Street, between Eighth and Ninth Avenues in Hell's Kitchen, were previously owned by Steve Croman before nonprofit Services for the Underserved stepped in.

According to W42ST, the five-story walk-ups have undergone a transformation described as a $54 million project, though earlier reporting pegged the renovation budget at a lower figure. Services for the Underserved, known as S:US, acquired the properties in June 2024, according to New York YIMBY, paying $20 million for buildings that had accumulated hundreds of housing

violations after years of tenant protests and legal action.

Years of Neglect Under a Notorious Landlord

The conditions inside the buildings were dire for years. Issues ranged from mold and loose bricks to infestations of rodents and pigeons, the same New York YIMBY report notes, and the city filed 24 lawsuits against the buildings' management, including six specifically over failures to provide heat and hot water. By the time S:US took ownership, only 10 of the 80 rent-stabilized units in the four buildings remained occupied.

Croman's reputation as a landlord was already well established before S:US acquired the properties. The New York State Attorney General announced in 2017 that Croman was required to pay $8 million into a tenant restitution fund as part of a consent decree. Tenants, neighborhood advocates and elected officials had pressured the city over the buildings' deteriorating conditions in the years leading up to the sale.

A Renovation Plan Years in the Making

Plans filed with Manhattan's Community Board 4 described an 80-unit supportive affordable housing development, with the renovation covering replaced roofs and structural beams, electrified heating systems, and modern ventilation, per the same New York YIMBY account. At the time, urgent repairs were underway, with full renovation expected to begin in late fall.

How the 80 units would ultimately be divided has been described differently across project documents. The board's letter stated that 69 units would go to New York City Human Resources Administration shelter referrals, with 11 remaining rent-stabilized units reserved for

existing tenants. A separate account from S:US described 70 of the unoccupied units as reserved for homeless families using CityFHEPS vouchers. S:US also signed a 40-year regulatory agreement with the city's housing preservation department to keep the four buildings affordable for decades to come.

The renovation had been targeted for completion by summer 2026, according to New York YIMBY's January 2025 report.

The project lands amid a broader housing crunch for New York's homeless population. The number of longer-term New Yorkers in shelters rose 11.5 percent in a single year, climbing from 65,640 in December 2023 to 73,219 in December 2024, according to the Coalition for the Homeless. The same report found that only 2,063 newly constructed units affordable to extremely low-income households were completed citywide in 2024, and just 3 percent of people forcibly removed from streets and subways in the first nine months of that year were placed into permanent housing.

Against that backdrop, the conversion of four once-derelict Hell's Kitchen buildings into supportive affordable housing puts vacant, formerly rent-stabilized units to use while serving displaced tenants and families exiting the shelter system.

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