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Steve Croman Figures Prominently in New York Times' Housing Crisis Series



Croman tenants rally outside the Manhattan Supreme Court in June of 2016.

[The New York Times](#) just rolled out a multi-part series investigating New York City's broken system ostensibly meant to protect rent regulated housing. One of the featured players in the series is landlord/convicted felon Steve Croman, who owns many buildings on the Lower East Side.

The Times reports:

(Rent regulated) apartments — seen as the scourge of landlords and the salvation of struggling New Yorkers — are at the center of a housing crisis that has swelled the ranks of the homeless and threatens to squeeze all but the affluent from ever-wider swaths of the city. But even as Mayor Bill de Blasio has made adding more affordable housing a signature pledge of his administration, the system that protects the city's roughly one million regulated apartments is profoundly broken, a New York Times investigation has found.

In one story, reporter Kim Barker revisits Steve Croman's formative years as a real estate investor in Lower Manhattan. He purchased his first building, 221 Mott St., in 1992. "Within a year of Mr. Croman's first big purchase, the rent-stabilization laws started crumbling," noted the Times, in the face of relentless lobbying by the real estate industry. The tactics used against rent stabilized tenants are well-known on the Lower East Side and Chinatown:

*Mr. Croman recruited a certain kind of tenant: college students, young Wall Streeters, people who cycled through quickly, enabling repeated vacancy increases. Mr. Croman pressured longtime tenants, first offering minimal buyouts, then bringing frivolous eviction suits and harassing them with nerve-racking construction, according to tenants and advocates. Once empty, the apartments moved through the renovation mill, emerging as glass-and-exposed-brick confections, often with cramped bedrooms, primed for more roommates and higher rents. In 1998, *The Village Voice* named him to its 10 worst landlords list.*

In that first building, all 11 apartments were regulated in 1992. Today there are 18 apartments, and all but two are market-rate. Croman did eventually go to jail after pleading guilty to mortgage fraud. He was sentenced to just one year, and is set to be released next month.

Last week, local advocacy groups and tenants in Croman's building staged a protest on the Lower East Side. They're determined to keep the pressure on the notorious landlord, who may have received a legal slap on the wrist, but who still controls a large real estate empire . [We'll have more about the local rally this week.]

Meanwhile, you can read the Times' investigation [here](#).

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