

SERIAL DISCRIMINATORS LIST

**Who is locking New Yorkers
with housing vouchers out of
the rental market?**

OCTOBER 2023

**UNLOCK
NYC**

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Voucher holders impacted by SOI discrimination held a protest in front of Avenues Real Estate in October 2022.

ABOUT US

Unlock NYC is a tech nonprofit led by women who have experienced housing discrimination due to our rental assistance vouchers. We help New Yorkers record phone calls and create a paper trail when landlords illegally turn them away. We connect them to government agencies and other resources so they can exercise their rights and find housing. Our data enables advocates, attorneys, and the City to understand trends, develop policies that protect tenants, and open doors for more New Yorkers. We work to create a housing landscape free of discrimination, where landlords and brokers fear the social and financial costs of discriminating against voucher holders.

We would like to thank the following collaborators for their support on this project:

- **Neighbors Together** and their members, for being a leader and co-conspirator on source of income discrimination issues in New York City
- **VOCAL-NY and Open Hearts Initiative**, for organizing New Yorkers to end homelessness and for their participation in the Serial Discriminators release
- **JustFixNYC**, for being a data partner, granting Unlock NYC access to their Who Owns What API, and offering advice on landlord network mapping
- **Fair Housing Justice Center**, for investigating and filing enforcement actions against numerous entities on the Serial Discriminators List
- **New York State Office of the Attorney General**, for accepting complaints from Unlock NYC and opening an investigation into entities on the Serial Discriminators List
- **Little Mendelsohn, P.C. & National Law Homelessness Center**, for pro bono legal advice
- **Students at Queens College in Urban Studies 371**, Community-Based Research, taught by Dr. Eric Goldfischer in Spring 2023, for their research support

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Source of income (SOI) discrimination, the practice of denying housing to tenants with rental assistance vouchers, is the most pervasive form of illegal housing bias in New York City.¹ Despite its prevalence, SOI discrimination is not systematically tracked at the city level, nor is its impact on communities experiencing housing precarity. Since 2018, nonprofit organizations Neighbors Together and Unlock NYC have worked with New Yorkers who use housing vouchers to document and report SOI discrimination. Not only has this approach been successful in helping hundreds of individuals secure housing, it has also led to the creation of a one-of-kind crowdsourced dataset about SOI discrimination in New York City. When working with our members impacted by SOI discrimination, one question frequently comes up: who is locking New Yorkers with vouchers out of the rental market? And how can we hold them accountable for breaking the law and perpetuating homelessness?

This Serial Discriminators List was made possible by the 500+ New Yorkers who shared 1,800+ tips of suspected SOI discrimination across all five boroughs and every City Council district. Combined with open data about property ownership and building conditions, this collection

of stories allowed Unlock NYC to analyze and pinpoint “serial discriminators,” which we define as real estate entities that have been reported over ten times for allegedly discriminating against voucher holders between 2018 and 2023.

In releasing this Serial Discriminators List, we seek to put a spotlight on the actors behind our homelessness crisis. Too often, politicians use scapegoats, such as asylum seekers, to justify bloated homeless shelters and generate divisive narratives. Voucher holders are blamed and penalized for “not trying hard enough” to find housing under crushing deadlines. In this report, we provide a background on our data sources and methodology, and profile a series of real estate entities that make up our dataset’s serial discriminators:

LANDLORDS AND CORPORATE OWNERS:

1. Philip & Mark Goldfarb | Goldfarb Properties: 31 reports
2. Jonathan Wiener | Chestnut Holdings: 31 reports
3. Parkchester: 17 reports
4. Adam & Richard Parkoff | The Parkoff Organization: 12 reports

BROKERAGE FIRMS:

1. Queens Apartment Realty: 40 reports
2. Bruma Realty: 30 reports
3. Keller Williams: 30 reports
4. Avenues Real Estate: 27 reports
5. Corcoran Group: 22 reports
6. Compass: 17 reports
7. My Space NYC: 15 reports
8. Highline Residential: 15 reports
9. ABBA Real Estate Associates: 15 reports
10. Premier One Realty LLC: 15 reports
11. M.N.S Real Estate NYC: 14 reports
12. Living New York: 14 reports
13. Finders NYC: 14 reports
14. Bond NY: 13 reports
15. Bohemia Realty Group: 13 reports
16. EXP Realty: 12 reports
17. Voro LLC: 12 reports
18. Urban Pads NYC: 11 reports
19. Winzone Realty: 11 reports

Our message to discriminators, our community members, and enforcement partners is the following:

- **If you are a voucher holder experiencing discrimination, you are not alone.**
- **We won’t tolerate discriminators.**
- **Source of income discrimination is a racial justice issue, and intersects with other forms of injustice.**
- **New York can be a national leader in ending source of income discrimination.**

This Serial Discriminators List was made possible by the 500+ New Yorkers who shared 1,800+ tips of suspected SOI discrimination across all five boroughs and every City Council district.

¹ NYC Commission on Human Rights, “Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Report.”

INTRODUCTION

While SOI discrimination has been illegal in New York City since 2008,² and in New York State since 2019,³ discrimination against New Yorkers with housing vouchers persists and perpetuates housing inequality.⁴ What’s more, brokers and landlords have developed increasingly sophisticated mechanisms to deny voucher holders. While real estate ads used to frequently state “No programs,” real estate agents are now turning to more deceitful tactics, such as ignoring prospective tenants once they reveal their voucher.⁵ Left underenforced, SOI discrimination prolongs homelessness, excludes families from high-opportunity areas,⁶ exacerbates segregation,⁷ and negatively impacts both physical and mental wellbeing.⁸

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Voucher holders are often in a race against the clock to find an apartment before their voucher expires and penalized if they fail to secure housing in the allotted timespan. This predicament is deeply unfair given the hostility of the housing market towards voucher holders. In this report, we name a total of 23 “serial discriminators,” which we define as entities that have been reported over ten times for suspected SOI discrimination between 2018 and 2023. We then profile the top discriminators in each category, corporate landlords and brokerage firms. This research builds off our February 2022 report, “An Illusion of Choice: How SOI discrimination and voucher policies perpetuate housing inequality,” and our 2023 interactive map of SOI complaints.

In creating this inaugural Serial Discriminators List, we seek to shift the blame from tenants experiencing discrimination to the serial discriminators who keep doors shut. Our message is loud and clear:

If you are a voucher holder experiencing discrimination, you are not alone.

Hundreds of voucher holders have already taken action and used their voice to call out discrimination – and you can too! Together, we are building a movement to end

discrimination. This report would not be possible without the thousands of tips we’ve received, which allowed us to analyze trends and identify serial discriminators. Take action today by reporting discrimination with Unlock NYC (weunlock.nyc/start).

We won’t tolerate discriminators. Unlock NYC works closely with fair housing partners to inform investigations through data-driven insights, and we will continue to do so for as long as our community is impacted by SOI discrimination. As this report details, many of the entities on the Serial Discriminators List are already facing active litigation for denying voucher holders. Furthermore, the four corporate landlords on the list not only deny voucher holders, but are known agents of gentrification and housing insecurity. Collectively, they have deregulated hundreds of rent-stabilized apartments and have evicted hundreds of families from their homes.⁹ These are the very mechanisms that displace families into homelessness and increase the need for rental assistance vouchers.

SOI discrimination is a racial justice issue, and intersects with other forms of injustice. Nationwide, half of voucher holders are Black, and one in five are Hispanic/Latinx.¹⁰ Research suggests that SOI discrimination may serve as a proxy for racial discrimination.¹¹ As such, SOI discrimination can exacerbate systemic racism in the housing market, and

curbing this practice is critical to ensure equal access to housing opportunities.¹² In addition to being a racial justice issue, SOI discrimination also disproportionately impacts women, the elderly, and the disabled.¹³

New York can be a national leader in ending SOI discrimination. Thanks to its thriving grassroots movements, New York has been a leader in many domains to advance social justice, from having some of the most robust tenant protections in the country to enacting a far-reaching, comprehensive Human Rights Law. Until recently, New York City had not dedicated enough resources to enforcing SOI discrimination, but with new funding allocated in the 2024 budget, this is starting to change.¹⁴ With innovative strategies and a strong fair housing landscape at both the city- and state-level, New York can be a trend-setter in eradicating SOI discrimination, and pave the way for other states to follow suit.

2 NYC Commission on Human Rights, “Source of Income Discrimination.”

3 New York State Attorney General, “Source-of-Income Discrimination.”

4 TakeRootJustice and VOCAL-NY, “Vouchers To Nowhere”; Unlock NYC and Neighbors Together, “An Illusion of Choice: How Source of Income Discrimination and Voucher Policies Perpetuate Housing Inequality”; Unlock NYC, “Mapping SOI Discrimination in NYC.”

5 Unlock NYC and Neighbors Together, “An Illusion of Choice: How Source of Income Discrimination and Voucher Policies Perpetuate Housing Inequality.”

6 Cunningham et al., “A Pilot Study of Landlord Acceptance of Housing Choice Vouchers.”

7 Lindsay, “Report: Discrimination, Flawed Search Process Hurting Housing Assistance Recipients.”

8 The American Psychological Association, “The Impact of Discrimination.”

9 JustFix, “Find Other Buildings Your Landlord Might Own.”

10 Oneto et al., “Protecting Housing Choice Voucher Holders from Discrimination.”

11 Scott and Uprety, “In the District, Source of Income Discrimination Is Race Discrimination Too – Equal Rights Center”; Tighe, Hatch, and Mead, “Source of Income Discrimination and Fair Housing Policy.”

13 Bluthenthal, “The Disproportionate Burden of Eviction on Black Women.”

12 National Low Income Housing Coalition, “14-1 Advancing Tenant Protections.”

14 NYC Housing Preservation & Development, “City Commits \$3.1 Million to Combat Source-of-Income Discrimination and Reports Progress Made on ‘Where We Live NYC’ Fair Housing Plan”; The New York City Council, “Executive Budget Hearing, Civil & Human Rights Committee, File #: T2023-3397.”

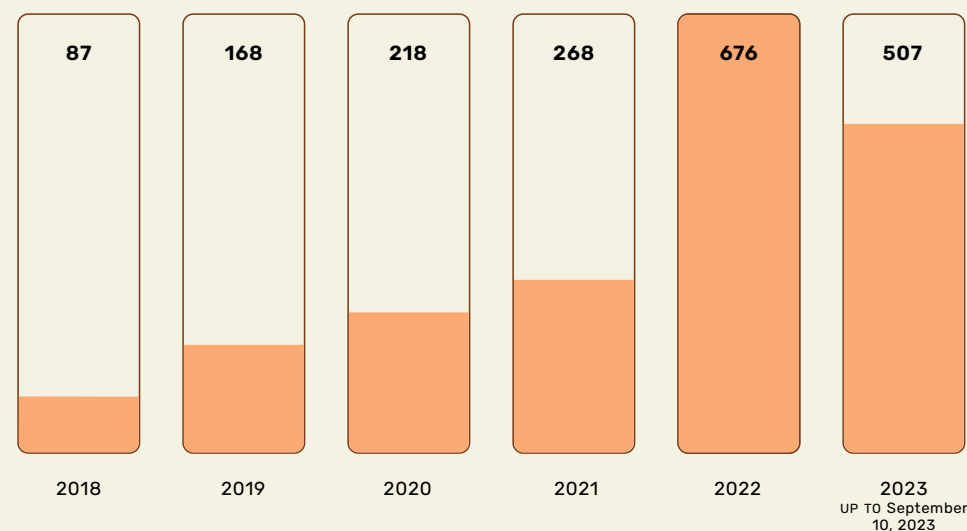
DATA SOURCES

CROWDSOURCED DATA

Since NYC’s Open Data Law was enacted in 2008, many government-maintained datasets regarding the quality and safety of housing have become available to the public, including data about building violations, evictions, and sale transactions.

Despite the prevalence of SOI discrimination, the City of New York does not comprehensively track, measure, and analyze how SOI discrimination impacts the lives of New Yorkers. Since 2018, Neighbors Together and Unlock NYC have developed tools that allow New Yorkers to report SOI discrimination, first through a Google form and in-person housing seeker workshops hosted at Neighbors Together (2018 - 2021), then through a user-friendly chatbot co-designed by Unlock NYC and voucher holders (2021-present). The resulting crowdsourced data is unique and offers a window into the experiences of New Yorkers facing SOI discrimination during their housing search.

The primary dataset used in our Serial Discriminators analysis includes over 1,800 crowdsourced discrimination reports, collected between April 2018 and September 2023 from more than 500 New Yorkers with housing vouchers. Each data point documents an instance of suspected SOI discrimination reported by members of Neighbors Together and Unlock NYC users. Analyzed in aggregate form, the data offers insights that reveal patterns of discrimination, from geographical hotspots to repeat offenders. With the growing distribution of Unlock NYC’s digital chatbot since 2021, the number of SOI discrimination reports received by our organizations each year has increased. The majority of reports in our dataset were received in the last 18 months.



Number of SOI discrimination reports collected by Neighbors Together & Unlock NYC, January 1, 2018 - September 10, 2023

PUBLIC DATA SOURCES

In addition to this crowdsourced dataset, we analyzed publicly available data sources to map networks of ownership, made available to us in a streamlined format through JustFixNYC’s [Who Owns What API](#) and [nycdb](#), a centralized database maintained by the Housing Data Coalition. These include:

- Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) [Multiple Dwelling Registration](#)
- Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) [Registration Contacts](#)
- Department of Investigation (DOI) [Marshall Evictions](#)
- Eviction filings data from the New York State Office of Court Administration and PLUTO19v2 via [nycdb](#)
- Department of Finance (DOF) data on [rent-stabilized](#) units and [tax breaks](#)
- Automated City Register Information System (ACRIS) [property records data and deed registration](#)
- Standardized addresses via NYC Department of City Planning’s [NYC GeoSearch API](#) and [Google Developer API](#)
- Borough-block-lot (BBL) numbers via [NYC GeoSearch API](#) and [NYC GeoClient API](#)

METHODOLOGY: MAPPING OWNERSHIP NETWORKS & BROKERAGE FIRMS

STEP 1. TENANT-GENERATED REPORT.

Using Unlock NYC's chatbot*, tenant inputs information to report SOI discrimination:

- address of listing (note: Address field auto-populates using [Google Maps API](#) to minimize errors)
- date of denial
- incident description
- denial tactic
- screenshot or URL of listing
- evidence of discrimination (screenshots of SMS or e-mail conversations, phone recording)

LANDLORDS:

STEP 2A. OPEN DATA INTEGRATION.

Using the address field and the Department of City Planning's [NYC GeoSearch API](#), we generate a standardized address and a BBL (borough-block-lot number) for each new report that enters our database:

- Standardized address
- Borough-block-lot-number
- Using the BBL and JustFixNYC's [Who Owns What API](#), we pull the ownership information associated with the BBL:
 - Owner(s)
 - Corporation name
 - Business address
 - Portfolio size

*For a detailed description of how reports were collected by Neighbors Together prior to Unlock NYC's chatbot, please see the Methodology section of [An Illusion of Choice](#). These 517 reports account for a little over a quarter (28%) of the total dataset (1,846 reports).

STEP 3A. SUMMARIZE DATA.

Once each address in our database has been matched with ownership information, we summarize our data to identify trends and repeat offenders. Certain corporate landlords do not always list the precise address of their building on the apartment listing. This is the case, for example, for Goldfarb Properties. In those cases, we included reports that did not include an exact address, but that reported the URL [www.goldfarbproperties.com](#) as the listing site. The summary process involves both automated and manual data cleaning.

BROKERS:

STEP 2B. INVESTIGATIVE RESEARCH.

Using information derived from the listing, such as the broker name and phone number, our team at Unlock NYC conducts research to identify which brokerage firm the broker belongs to and adds this information to the tenant's report.

STEP 3B. SUMMARIZE DATA.

We summarize our data to identify trends and repeat offenders.

DATA DICTIONARY: DEFINING DENIAL TACTICS

When we first launched our Unlock NYC chatbot in January 2021, we only tracked a few denial tactics that were prevalent at the time: explicit denials, ghosting, credit score, income requirements, and discriminatory ads. Over time, we have expanded and refined what we track based on the emerging tactics we see on the ground. Discriminatory brokers and landlords continuously adapt their tactics to fly under the radar, and we are able stay ahead of the curve thanks to our community's reports. Below, you will find our expanded denial tactics dictionary, which was last updated in August 2023.



Voucher holders impacted by SOI discrimination held a protest in front of Avenue Real Estate in October 2022.

SERIAL DISCRIMINATOR	A real estate entity that has been reported over ten times for SOI discrimination between 2018 and 2023
NO VOUCHERS	Explicit denials, such as “the landlord doesn’t take vouchers” or “no programs”
GHOSTING	Not responding after a prospective tenant mentions their voucher
INCOME REQUIREMENTS	Setting minimum income requirements, such as “you need to earn 40x the rent.” As long as a tenant’s voucher covers the rent of the apartment they are applying for, they cannot be subjected to income requirements, nor required to provide a guarantor.
CREDIT REQUIREMENTS	Setting a minimum credit score, such as “must have credit above 750.” Tenants whose vouchers cover 100% of the rent cannot be rejected based on their credit score.
FEES & SCAMS	Tacking on arbitrary holding fees, overcharging for application fees, or attempting to scam a voucher holder; for example, requesting a \$1,000 holding fee for a unit
PRICING	Manipulating the price of the apartment to put it out of reach of voucher holders; for example, changing the price of an apartment immediately after a voucher holder inquires about it
UNIT AVAILABILITY	Telling the voucher holder the unit they are interested in is no longer available, or that no apartments are available at this time
STEERING	Attempting to influence a tenant’s neighborhood or community choice based on their status as a voucher holder (example: “there aren’t a lot of voucher holders in that neighborhood. Have you tried East New York? You might be more comfortable there”)
BAIT AND SWITCH	Advertising photos for one apartment, but upon contacting or coming to the viewing, showing the voucher holder a totally different (usually worse) unit
ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUE	Denials that have to do with administrative red tape, application delays, or apartment inspections. For example, a broker tells a voucher holder “don’t even waste your time, this apartment won’t pass inspection.”
OTHER FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND/OR DISRESPECT	Discriminating based on race, sexual orientation, disability, family size, or other protected class; and/or disrespecting prospective tenant using derogatory, insulting language
OTHER	Anything not captured in the above categories - tactics constantly change, and we strive to update these as we keep up. We exhaust all categories before flagging a report as “Other.”

SERIAL DISCRIMINATOR PROFILES: LANDLORDS

#1. PHILIP & MARC GOLDFARB | GOLDFARB PROPERTIES



Philip Goldfarb, Managing Principal at Goldfarb Properties. Image source: [Facebook](#)

CORPORATION NAME
Goldfarb Properties

OWNERS
Philip Goldfarb, Marc Goldfarb

OF DISCRIMINATION REPORTS
31

LAST REPORTED
July 2023

KEY DENIAL TACTICS
Income requirements, Ghosting, Pricing

GEOGRAPHY
The Bronx and Far Rockaway, Queens

ACTIVE LAWSUITS
Yes

Founded in 1953, Goldfarb Properties operates over 6,000 apartments across New York City and its surrounding suburbs.¹⁵ The Goldfarb New York City portfolio contains 26 properties, clustered primarily in the Bronx and the Rockaways (Queens), as well as three properties in Manhattan.¹⁶ Philip and Marc Goldfarb are the owners of Goldfarb Properties, with Philip Goldfarb typically listed as the “Head Officer” for these properties, and Marc as the “Officer” or “Head Officer.”¹⁷ Marc Goldfarb is also listed as the Managing Partner at Goldfarb Properties on LinkedIn.¹⁸ They advertise their properties as “luxury apartments” in “the most desirable neighborhoods,” catering to an upscale demographic.¹⁹

Numerous lawsuits have been filed against Goldfarb Properties for claims of repeated discrimination against prospective tenants based on their lawful source of income, in violation of the New York City Human Rights Law. In *Goode v Goldfarb Properties, Inc.*, the Fair Housing Justice Center and Housing Works sued Goldfarb for explicitly denying a client with an HIV/AIDS Service Administration (HASA) voucher in 2015.²⁰ While that case was settled with an agreement that Goldfarb Properties would not discriminate against voucher holders, testing conducted by FHJC in the aftermath of the settlement demonstrated that the company increased its minimum income requirements to exclude HASA clients.²¹

Goldfarb has a diversified toolkit for turning down voucher holders. Imposing strict minimum income requirements seems to be Goldfarb’s preferred gatekeeping practice; of the 31 instances of alleged SOI discrimination received by Unlock NYC, 22.9% reported income requirements as the issue. Several prospective tenants described how they were told their vouchers would not cover the full price of the apartment, despite applying for apartments with rents well below their voucher payment standards.

The firm’s website currently states that housing voucher holders whose subsidies cover 100% of the rent are not subject to minimum income and credit scores, but

those who pay a portion of the rent must still make 43x the rent and have a minimum 650 credit score.²² In *Spooner et al v. Goldfarb Properties, Inc. et al*, FHJC argued that this practice effectively bars most Section 8 and HASA tenants from qualifying for their apartments.²³ FHJC teamed up with the private law firm Emery Celli Brinckerhoff Abady Ward & Maazel LLP (ECBAWM) in 2018 to file the lawsuit in federal district court, challenging the legality of Goldfarb’s minimum income requirement.²⁴

Another key tactic in Goldfarb’s arsenal appears to be manipulating the price of the apartment to put it out of reach of the voucher holder, which accounts for 14.3% of the reports sent to Unlock NYC. For example, a specific Goldfarb strategy Unlock NYC has observed is that they tend to price apartments just dollars above the payment standard after taking utility allowances into account. Using the utility allowance helps mask this practice to avoid detection. Furthermore, multiple reports described how the price of an apartment unit suspiciously went up immediately after the prospective tenant revealed their voucher.

In addition to imposing income requirements and manipulating the price of apartments, 17.1% of reports indicated that Goldfarb Properties ghosted the prospective tenant after finding out about their voucher. While ghosting accounts for a substantial portion of reports, it does not represent the lion’s

share of suspected SOI discrimination for this entity. Goldfarb’s diversified denial practices indicate a level of sophistication that not all other serial discriminators have developed.

SOI discrimination is not Goldfarb’s only unsavory practice. Notorious for living in a suburban Westchester mansion while his tenants suffered deleterious housing conditions,²⁵ Philip Goldfarb was investigated in 2015 for unlawful evictions and tenant harassment in the Bronx, including cutting off elevator access for elderly tenants and for leaving tenants without gas service 29 consecutive days.²⁶ Since 2007, the Goldfarb Properties portfolio has had a net loss of 111 rent-stabilized units, and since 2017, the owners have filed an alarming 2,709 eviction cases and executed 132 Marshal evictions.²⁷ Goldfarb seems to go by the corporate landlord NYC playbook: pushing out long-time and rent controlled tenants through egregious conditions, harassment, and evictions, and attempting to attract cash-paying gentrifiers.

SPOTLIGHT ON WAVECREST GARDENS

One of the one most reported apartment complexes in Goldfarb’s portfolio is Wavecrest Gardens, located on the eastern end of the Rockaway peninsula. Advertised as an oceanfront community where tenants can “relish the influx of eateries & artistic movements inspired by the Rockaway surf culture,”²⁸ Wavecrest Gardens

¹⁵ Goldfarb Properties, “Luxury Apartments NYC | NYC Apartment Rentals.”

¹⁶ JustFix, “Who Owns What: Philip & Marc Goldfarb.”

¹⁷ JustFix.

¹⁸ LinkedIn, “Marc Goldfarb LinkedIn Profile.”

¹⁹ Goldfarb Properties, “Luxury Apartments NYC | NYC Apartment Rentals.”

²⁰ Remnick, “Suit Accuses Landlord of Discriminating Against Tenant With AIDS.”

²¹ Fair Housing Justice Center, “Opening Acts,” February 21, 2018.

²² Goldfarb Properties, “FAQ.”

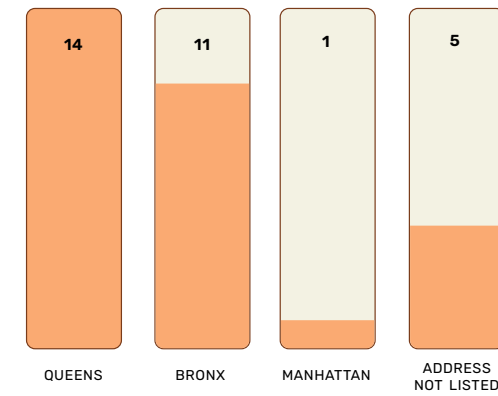


Map of Goldfarb properties reported by housing voucher holders

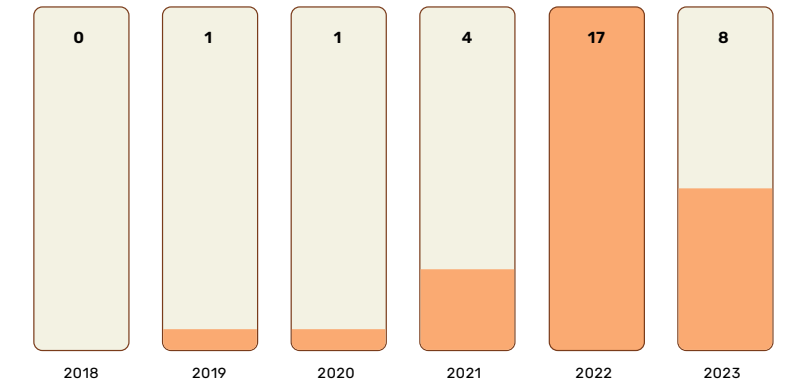


Pictures of Wavercrest gardens Complex, Outdoor & Indoors. Source: Apartments.com

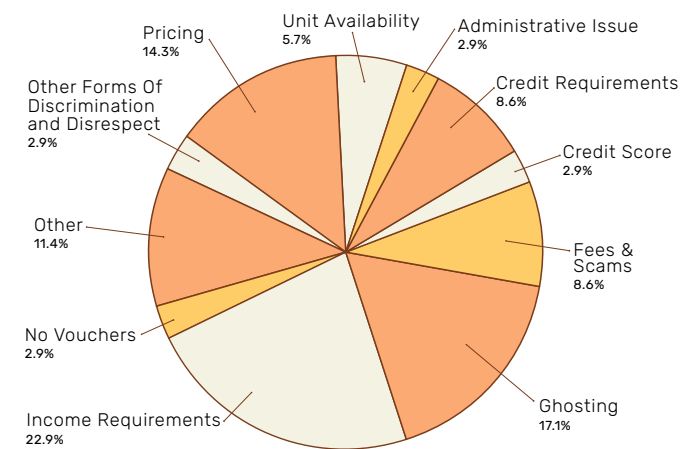
Ironically, while Goldfarb Properties has developed sophisticated mechanisms to prevent tenants receiving government assistance from living in its properties, they themselves do not shy from receiving government tax subsidies.



Goldfarb Properties SOI discrimination complaints received, by borough.



Goldfarb Properties SOI discrimination complaints received, by year



Goldfarb Properties Denial Tactics

offers apartments within the reach of voucher holders' payment standards. Yet, SOI discrimination remains a barrier to moving in. Voucher holders have reported this apartment complex 14 times for allegedly turning them down through a variety of tactics. Wavercrest Gardens is not only a discriminatory apartment complex, but also a violent site of evictions - the address 20-50 Seagirt Boulevard is the Goldfarb building with the most evictions filed and executed since 2017.²⁹

Ironically, while Goldfarb Properties has developed sophisticated mechanisms to prevent tenants receiving

government assistance from living in its properties, they themselves do not shy from receiving government tax subsidies. In fact, some of the units at Wavercrest Gardens are part of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program (LIHTC), a government tax incentive for developers to provide affordable housing to low-income families.³⁰ While Goldfarb is benefiting from this developer incentive, they find creative ways to keep the very families who the LIHTC program is designed for out of their developments.

23 Fair Housing Justice Center, "Opening Acts," February 21, 2018.

24 ECBAWM, "Property Manager Sued for Disability & Source of Income Discrimination."

25 Smith, "Landlord Phillip Goldfarb Lives in a Nice Suburban Home While His Buildings Have Many Violations."

26 Rocchio, "Klein Calls for Investigation into Goldfarb Properties after Pelham Parkway Stop Work Order - Bronx Times."

27 JustFix, "Who Owns What: Philip & Marc Goldfarb."

28 Goldfarb Properties, "Rockaway Rentals."

29 JustFix, "Who Owns What: Philip & Marc Goldfarb."

30 Novogradac, "LIHTC Properties in New York District 5."

#2. JONATHAN WIENER | CHESTNUT HOLDINGS



Jonathan Wiener, Founder & President of Chestnut Holdings.
Image source: [The Real Deal](#)

CORPORATION NAME
Chestnut Holdings

OWNERS
Jonathan Wiener, Founder & President

OF DISCRIMINATION REPORTS
31

LAST REPORTED
December 2022

KEY DENIAL TACTICS
Ghosting, Income requirements, No vouchers

GEOGRAPHY
Manhattan, Brooklyn, The Bronx

ACTIVE LAWSUITS
Yes

Jonathan Wiener is the Founder & President of Chestnut Holdings of New York, Inc.,³¹ a real estate investment and property management firm in New York City that owns and manages 129 buildings with a total of 5,668 units.³² Their main office is located in the Bronx,³³ and the firm is one of the largest owners of rent-stabilized units in the Bronx.³⁴ Since it is a family-owned company, numerous employees come from the Wiener family.³⁵ Most of Chestnut Holdings' properties are in the West Bronx, concentrated in neighborhoods along the Grand Concourse corridor.³⁶ Chestnut Holdings also owns a smaller concentration of properties in Crown Heights.³⁷

Voucher holders have reported Chestnut Holdings for suspected SOI discrimination on numerous occasions, and the company was already featured as a serial discriminator in our February 2022 report, An Illusion of Choice. Based on Unlock NYC data, the most reported denial tactic is ghosting (55.3%), followed by explicit denials (13.2%) and income requirements (10.5%). Additionally, Chestnut Holdings has faced multiple lawsuits since 2018 from NYC Legal Services and the Fair Housing Justice Center for refusing housing to tenants with vouchers.³⁸ Interestingly, Unlock NYC has not received new reports about Chestnut Holdings since December 2022, suggesting that

Not only do they repeatedly discriminate against voucher holders, Chestnut Holdings is also one of the worst evictors in New York City.

the onslaught of lawsuits may have effectively deterred them from discriminating for now – or perhaps, they have simply fine-tuned their tactics to fly under the radar.

Not only do they repeatedly discriminate against voucher holders, Chestnut Holdings is also one of the worst evictors in New York City. Since 2017 they've filed over 4,200 evictions – of which 317 were executed³⁹ – which has landed them on the NYC Worst Evictors List multiple years in a row.⁴⁰ They are also infamous for deregulating rent-stabilized apartments and forcing tenants to live in hazardous conditions. Since 2007, they have reduced the number of rent-stabilized units in their portfolio by about 400.⁴¹ The firm also came under fire for imposing onerous non-rent fees on tenants' bills, such as appliance, legal, damage, and other miscellaneous fees,⁴² and for violating the city's lead laws.⁴³ All around, it appears that Chestnut Holdings evicts, deregulates and discriminates, and undermines the health, safety, and housing stability of hundreds of New Yorkers.

31 "Chestnut Holdings."

33 "Chestnut Holdings."

35 ZoomInfo, "Chestnut Holdings: Employee Directory."

37 JustFix.

32 JustFix, "Who Owns What: Jonathan Wiener."

34 Brand, "Bronx Tenants Still Locked Out of Homes 18 Months After Fire."

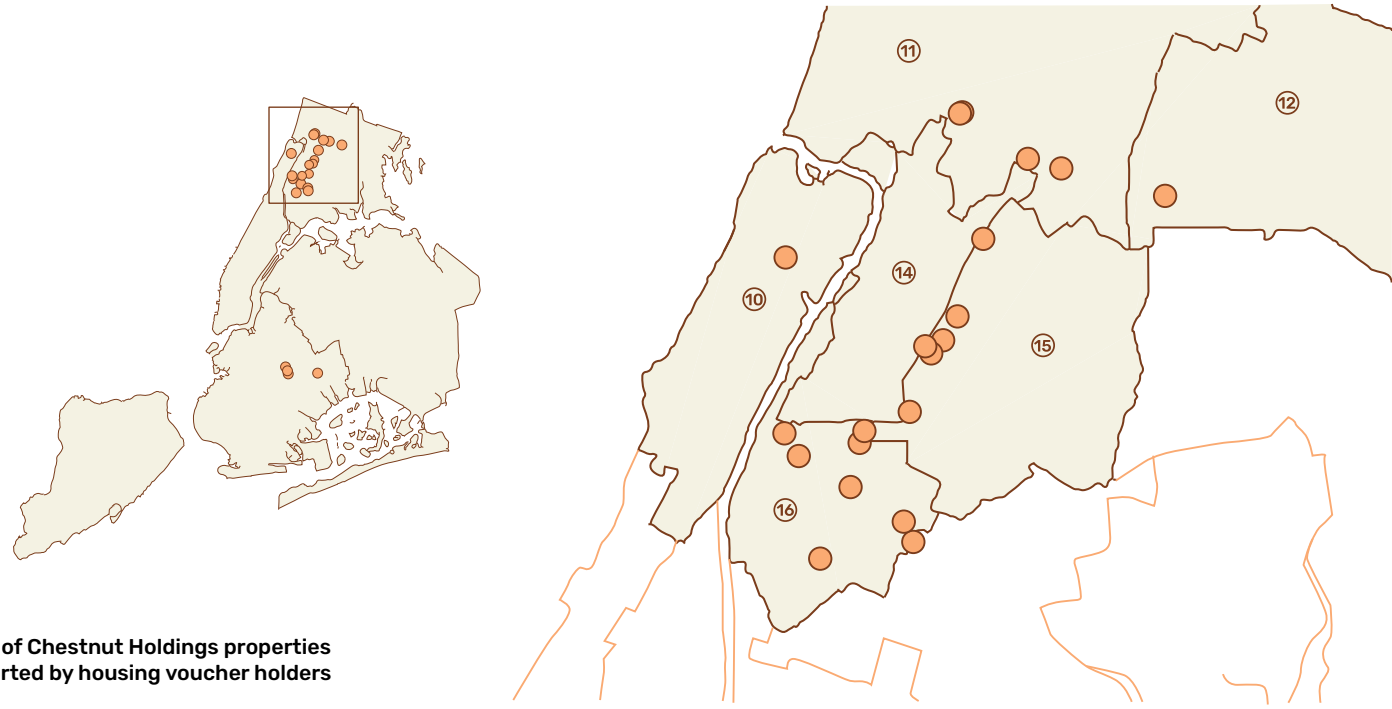
36 JustFix, "Who Owns What: Jonathan Wiener."

38 Goldberg, "Struggling NYers Sue Real Estate Group for Refusing Vouchers"; Legal Services NYC, "Tenants Sue Chestnut Holdings, Brokers for Source of Income Discrimination by Denying Housing to Tenants with Vouchers"; Fair Housing Justice Center, "Voucher-Holders Ghosted After Being Assured 'We Are a Fair Housing Opportunity Real Estate Firm.'"

39 JustFix, "Who Owns What: Jonathan Wiener"; Project, "Who's Trying to Evict Tenants during the COVID-19 Pandemic?"

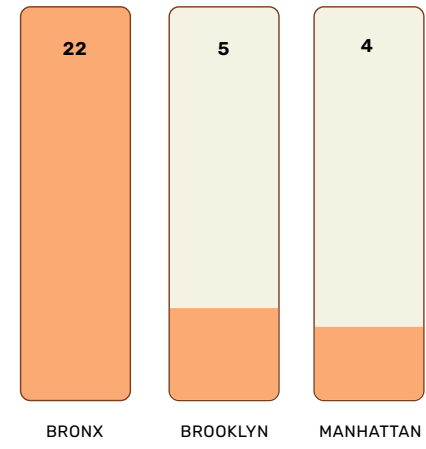
40 Project, "Who's Trying to Evict Tenants during the COVID-19 Pandemic?"

41 JustFix, "Who Owns What: Jonathan Wiener."

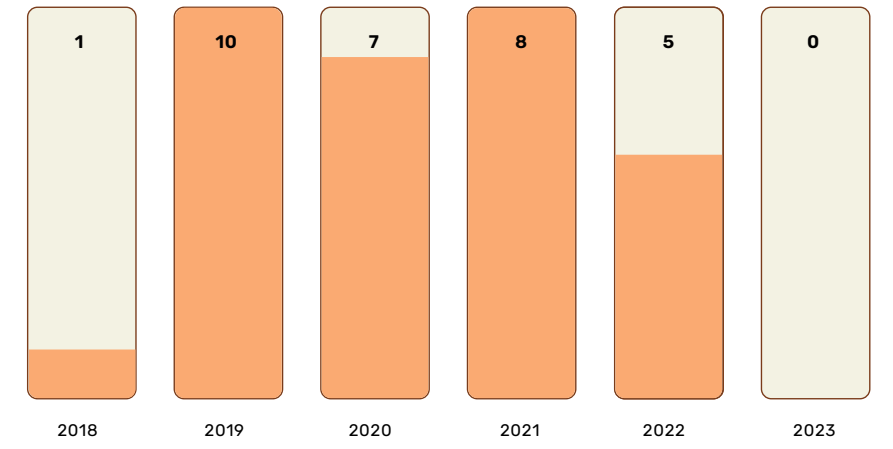


Map of Chestnut Holdings properties reported by housing voucher holders

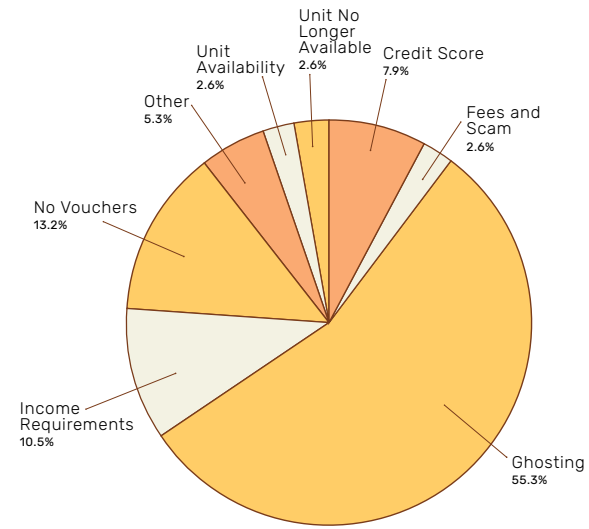
All around, it appears that Chestnut Holdings evicts, deregulates and discriminates, and undermines the health, safety, and housing stability of hundreds of New Yorkers.



Chestnut Holdings SOI discrimination complaints received, by borough



Chestnut Holdings SOI discrimination complaints received, by year



Chestnut Holdings SOI discrimination complaints received, by borough.

42 Project, "Who's Trying to Evict Tenants during the COVID-19 Pandemic?"; Markman, "A Call to Ban Landlords' Non-Rent Fees to Tenants."

43 NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development, "Attorney General James and HPD Take Action to Protect Children and Families from Lead Poisoning in NYC."

#3. PARKCHESTER PRESERVATION COMPANY



Morton L. Olshan, Founder & Chairman Emeritus at Olshan Properties: [Getty Images](#)

CORPORATION NAME
Parkchester Preservation Company

OWNERS
Co-owned by investment firms Olshan Properties and O'Connor Capital

OF DISCRIMINATION REPORTS
17

LAST REPORTED
June 2023

KEY DENIAL TACTICS
No vouchers, Income requirements, Ghosting

GEOGRAPHY
Parkchester neighborhood (The Bronx)

ACTIVE LAWSUITS
Yes

With 12,271 apartments spanning 171 buildings in the southeast Bronx, Parkchester is one of the largest privately-owned affordable housing developments in the country.⁴⁴

Parkchester has a storied past. When it was first developed by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (MetLife) in the 1930s, this multifamily apartment complex was for “whites only.”⁴⁵ It wasn’t until 1968, when MetLife had to sign an “Open Occupancy Pledge” - after the New York City Commission on Human Rights ordered it to do so - that the complex became racially integrated.⁴⁶ That same year, shortly after integration began, MetLife sold the complex in its entirety to real estate tycoon, Henry Helmsey, who proceeded to letting the complex decline.⁴⁷ Plagued by years of mismanagement, vacancies, deteriorating conditions and a failed condominium conversion, the complex was then rehabilitated and restructured in the 1990s with the support of a nonprofit finance company, the Community Preservation Corporation (CPC).⁴⁸ The CPC successfully advocated for Parkchester to be exempt from all property tax requirements for 17 years, and brought on private investors to buy shares of the complex.⁴⁹ In 1998, two real estate investors, Morton L. Olshan and Jeremiah W. O’Connor, acquired 6,300 unsold condo units at Parkchester, about half of the apartments at the complex.⁵⁰ Today, Olshan Properties and O’Connor Capital co-own and operate the rental portion of Parkchester through the Parkchester Preservation Company.⁵¹

Parkchester has stayed true to its exclusionary roots. Voucher holders have reported Parkchester numerous times for their discriminatory practices. While the most reported tactic is explicit “no voucher” denials (31.6% of reports), these have become

less frequent over time, giving way to more elusive subterfuges, such as ghosting and using restrictive income requirements (each account for 21.1% of reports). Parkchester has also been sued multiple times for SOI discrimination. In 2016, the Fair Housing Justice Center filed an administrative complaint with the NYC Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) against Parkchester for its exclusionary income requirements; CCHR went on to charge Parkchester in 2017 for developing practices that disqualify voucher holders.⁵² In 2022, a Manhattan Supreme Court Judge sided with a single mom who sued Parkchester for denying her housing because she did not meet the \$63,000 minimum income requirement, despite the fact that CityFHEPS covered 100% of her rent.⁵³ The plaintiff in this case - *Olivierre v. Parkchester* - is represented by Housing Works and Emery Celli Brinckerhoff Abady Ward & Maazel LLP. Multiple lawsuits against Parkchester are still pending.

Parkchester has a storied past. When it was first developed by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (MetLife) in the 1930s, this multifamily apartment complex was for “whites only.”

44 Lappin, “CityViews.”

45 Conde, “Parkchester 80 Years Later”; Parkchester, “History of Parkchester - Affordable Apartments in The Bronx.”

46 Conde, “Parkchester 80 Years Later.”

47 Conde; Parkchester, “History of Parkchester - Affordable Apartments in The Bronx”; Lent, “The Evolution of Parkchester - A Successful Experiment in Living.”

48 Lappin, “CityViews.”

49 Lappin.

52 NYC Commission on Human Rights, “NYC Commission on Human Rights Charges Five Large Landlords and Brokers Controlling Approximately 20,000 Units Citywide with Discrimination for Repeatedly Refusing to Accept Housing Vouchers.”

53 Brand, “Bronx Rental Complex Must Accept Housing Vouchers, Judge Rules.”

50 Lorincz, “Olshan, O’Connor Capital Break Ground on Bronx Affordable Project.”

51 Lorincz; Olshan Properties, “Parkchester - Bronx, NY”; O’Connor Capital Partners, “Parkchester.”



Map of Parkchester properties reported by housing voucher holders



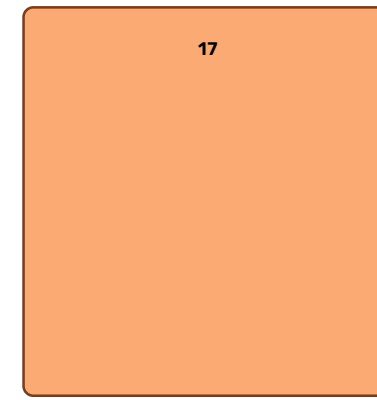
Parkchester complex (outdoors).

Source: [Parkchester Police Department](#)

Parkchester complex (indoors).

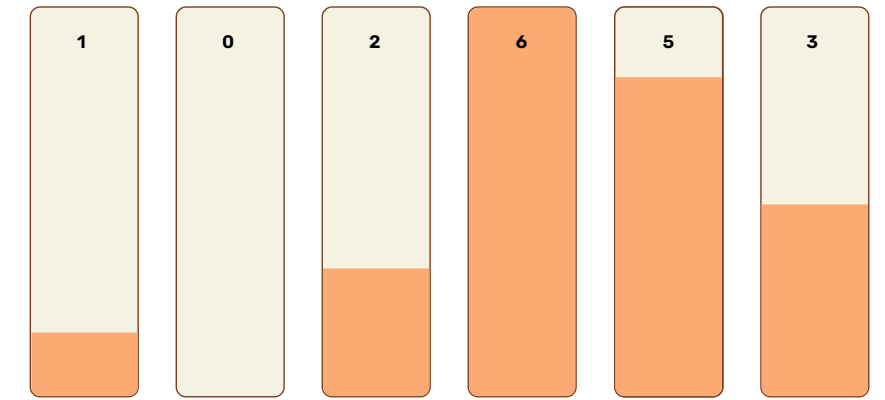
Source: [Parkchester NYC](#)

Parkchester has stayed true to its exclusionary roots. Voucher holders have reported Parkchester numerous times for their discriminatory practices.



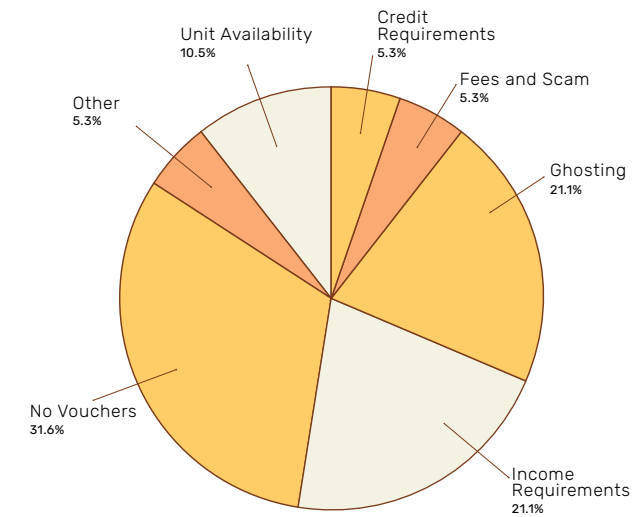
BRONX

Parkchester SOI discrimination complaints received, by borough



2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023

Parkchester SOI discrimination complaints received, by year



Parkchester Denial Tactics

#4. ADAM PARKOFF

THE PARKOFF ORGANIZATION



Adam Parkoff, Principal at The Parkoff Organization. Image source: [CUNY TV via Youtube](#)

CORPORATION NAME

The Parkoff Organization, often listed as New Park Management LLC

OWNERS

Adam Parkoff, Richard Parkoff

OF DISCRIMINATION REPORTS

12

LAST REPORTED

August 2023

KEY DENIAL TACTICS

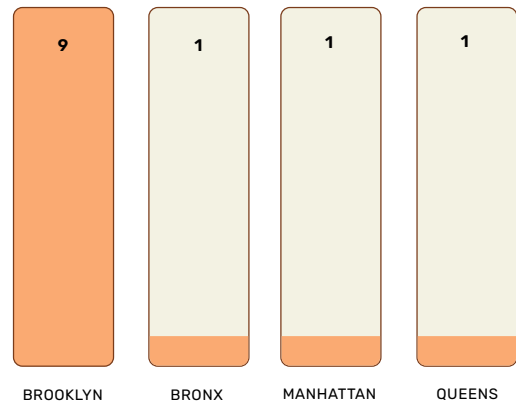
Ghosting

GEOGRAPHY

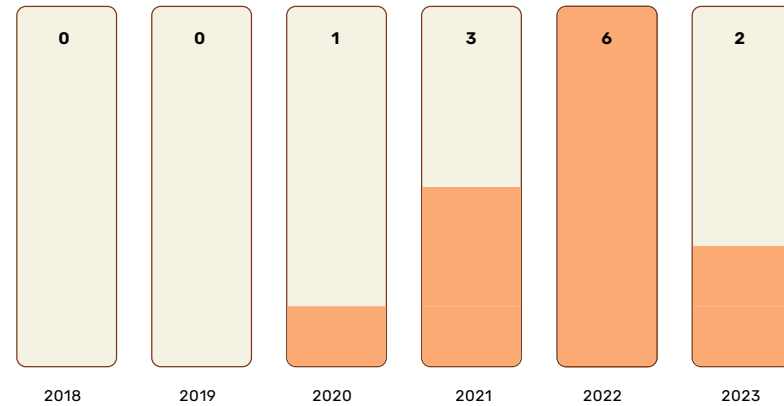
Brooklyn, Manhattan, Bronx, Queens

ACTIVE LAWSUITS

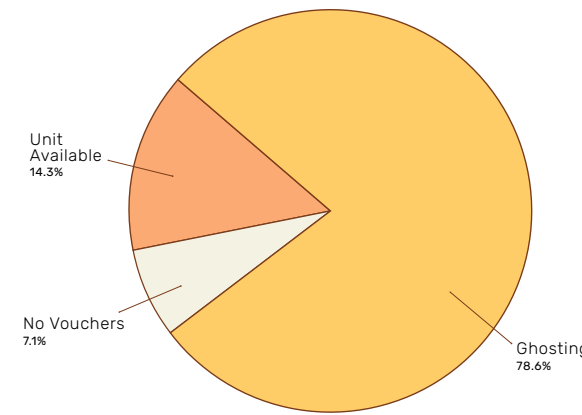
Unknown



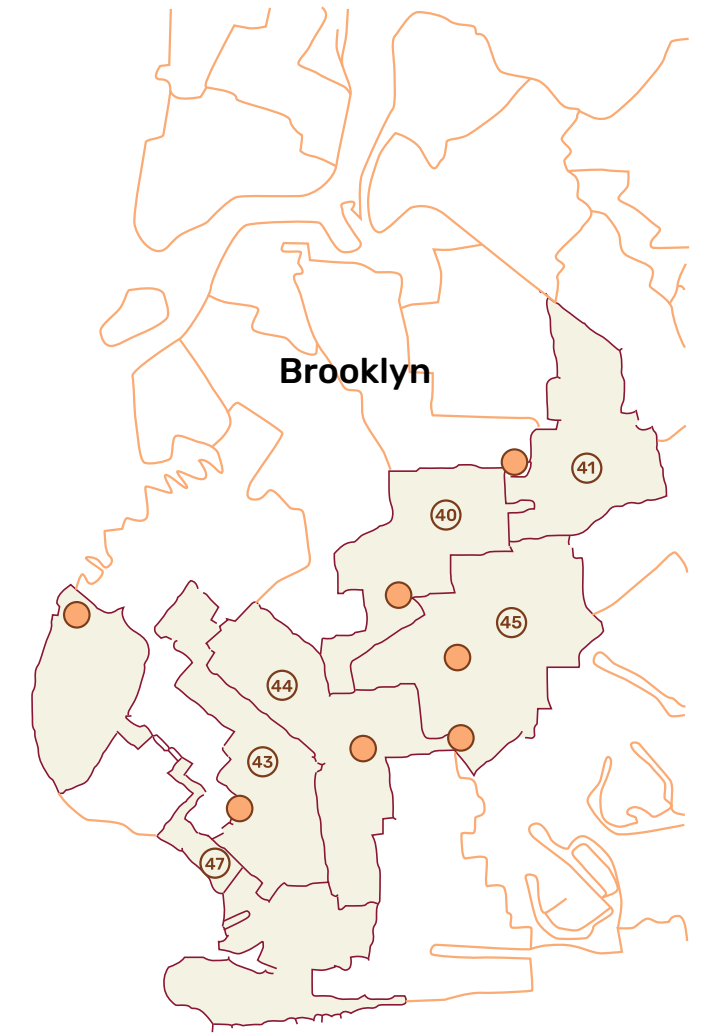
Parkoff Organization SOI discrimination complaints received, by borough



Parkoff Organization SOI discrimination complaints received, by year



Parkoff Organization Denial Tactics



Map of Parkoff properties reported by housing voucher holders

The Parkoff Organization is a Long-Island based real estate firm led by Adam and Richard Parkoff that owns 65 buildings scattered across Brooklyn, Manhattan, the Bronx, and Queens, with an estimated 4,000 rent-regulated apartments.⁵⁴ In 2017, the Fair Housing Justice Center sued the Parkoff Organization on the basis of racial, source of income, and family status discrimination.⁵⁵ That same year, a group of tenants sued Parkoff for illegally deregulating four buildings in Manhattan and the Bronx that were under the J-51 tax incentive program.⁵⁶ Since then, the Parkoff Organization has continued to discriminate against

housing voucher holders. The properties that have been reported to Unlock NYC for SOI discrimination are primarily clustered in South Brooklyn, and the most common denial tactic reported is ghosting (78.6%). Like other serial discriminators, Parkoff not only denies housing to voucher holders, but ruthlessly deregulates rent-stabilized apartments and evicts tenants. Since 2007, Parkoff has deregulated over a hundred rent-stabilized units, and in the last six years, they have filed 1,131 evictions, and hired NYC Marshals to execute 69 evictions.⁵⁷

54 JustFix, "Who Owns What: Adam Parkoff"; The Real Deal Staff, "Parkoff Picks up Portfolio Previously Owned by Donald Trump's Brother."

55 Fair Housing Justice Center, "Opening Acts," October 16, 2017.

56 Pilgrim, "More Tenants Sue Parkoff Organization for Alleged J-51 Abuse."

57 JustFix, "Who Owns What: Adam Parkoff."

SERIAL DISCRIMINATOR PROFILES: BROKERAGE FIRMS

#1 QUEENS APARTMENT REALTY, A.K.A CONTACT REALTY



Contact Realty storefront.
Image source: [Mapquest](#)

BROKERAGE NAME
Queens Apartment Realty

PRINCIPAL BROKER
Siani Yoav

OF DISCRIMINATION REPORTS:
40

LAST REPORTED
September 2023

KEY DENIAL TACTICS
Ghosting

GEOGRAPHY
Citywide, with a heavy footprint in Queens

Siani Yovi is the license holder for Queens Apartment Realty, a real estate brokerage firm located in Forest Hills, Queens that also goes by Contact Realty.⁵⁸ Brokers associated with Queens Apartment Realty show apartments in all five boroughs, with listings advertised primarily on Streeteasy, but also on Zillow and Trulia. Unlock NYC users have reported Queens Apartment Realty 40 times since January 2021. The most reported tactic is ghosting (80% of reports).

58 Open Gov NY, "Siani Yoav • Queens Apartments Realty LLC • 104-35 Queens Boulevard, Forest Hills, NY 11375."

#2 KELLER WILLIAMS NYC



Ilan Bracha, Founder and former Chairman at Keller Williams NYC.
Image source: [PIX11](#)

BROKERAGE NAME
Keller Williams NYC

PRINCIPAL BROKER
Ilan Bracha (Founder and Chairman, 2011-2020), Rich Amato (Operating Principal)

OF DISCRIMINATION REPORTS:
30

LAST REPORTED
August 2023

KEY DENIAL TACTICS
Ghosting, No vouchers

GEOGRAPHY
Citywide

Keller Williams is a real estate franchise headquartered in Austin, Texas. As of 2022, it had 1,100 offices worldwide and was considered the largest real estate franchise by sales volume.⁵⁹ The Keller Williams NYC office opened in 2011. In 2020, after several tumultuous years including a lawsuit over unpaid rent, co-founder Ilan Bracha sold Keller Williams NYC; the Midtown branch was consolidated with the Tribeca branch.⁶⁰ Ilan Bracha is now an agent with the Corcoran Group.⁶¹ Unlock NYC users have reported Keller Williams agents 30 times, with the most common denial tactic reported being ghosting (50% of reports), followed by explicit denials (20%).

59 Novak, "As Housing Market Shifts, Layoffs Hit Keller Williams in Austin."

60 Manrodt, "Ilan Bracha Sells Keller Williams NYC."

61 Bushor, "Ilan Bracha Joins Corcoran's East Office."

#3 BRUMA REALTY



Bruma Realty storefront.
Image source:
[Google Maps](#)

BROKERAGE NAME
Bruma Realty, LLC

PRINCIPAL BROKER
Shmaya Haskel

OF DISCRIMINATION REPORTS:
29

LAST REPORTED
June 2023

KEY DENIAL TACTICS
Ghosting

GEOGRAPHY
Bronx & Upper Manhattan

Shmaya Haskel is the principal broker of Bruma Realty, LLC, a real estate brokerage firm in New York City.⁶² Bruma stands for Bronx and Upper Manhattan, which is where they operate. Their main office is located in the Bronx. Bruma has worked with Chestnut Holdings to advertise and facilitate the rental of their apartments.

The Bruma Realty website claims that “Shmaya has extensive experience with navigating the ever changing process of Voucher housing programs and is regularly teaching agents and landlord how to take more of such deals through the hoops and red tape, to the finish line and assist more needy NY’ers in obtaining permanent housing through networking with local non profits and case workers. Year after year this has led to more and more people being housed through Bruma Realty.”⁶³

This statement appears to be in direct conflict with the experiences of voucher holders. Bruma Realty has been reported to Unlock NYC 29 times, with their primary means of discrimination being ghosting (67.7% of reports). In addition to ghosting, several voucher holders reported that when they inquired about beautiful apartments listed on Bruma Realty’s website, they were shown much less desirable units, which could be examples of steering or bait and switch. Several others were told that by Bruma agents that they had no units available for voucher holders. Bruma Realty’s discriminatory behavior is also visible on their Yelp page, where users have accused Bruma of ignoring them after disclosing their voucher. In March 2023, the Fair Housing Justice Center sued both Chestnut Holdings and Bruma for ghosting voucher holders.⁶⁴

⁶² Bruma Realty LLC, “New York City Real Estate Agents: Shmaya Haskel (Haskewich).”

⁶³ Bruma Realty LLC.

⁶⁴ Fair Housing Justice Center, “Voucher-Holders Ghosted After Being Assured ‘We Are a Fair Housing Opportunity Real Estate Firm.’”

#4 AVENUES REAL ESTATE



Itay Gamlieli,
CEO at Avenues
Real Estate.
Image source:
[Homes.com](#)

BROKERAGE NAME
Avenues Real Estate

PRINCIPAL BROKER
Itay Gamlieli

OF DISCRIMINATION REPORTS:
27

LAST REPORTED
September 2023

KEY DENIAL TACTICS
Ghosting

GEOGRAPHY
Citywide, with a focus on
Manhattan and Brooklyn

Itay Gamlieli is the CEO of Avenues Real Estate, a brokerage firm headquartered in Midtown, with branches in Williamsburg, Upper East Side, Chelsea, East Village.⁶⁵ Brokers working with Avenues Real Estate are notorious for ghosting voucher holders (75% of reports), and one broker was also reported for insulting a voucher holder through racist comments. In several cases, voucher holders described being ghosted for multiple days, and then told the unit they inquired about was no longer available. Voucher holders impacted by Avenues Real Estate’s discriminatory practices protested in front of their headquarters in October 2022, chanting, “Avenues Real Estate, why do you discriminate?” and directly confronted some of the employees at the office.⁶⁶ Unlock NYC users have reported Avenues Real Estate 27 times since January 2021.

Voucher holders impacted by Avenues Real Estate’s discriminatory practices protested in front of their headquarters in October 2022, chanting, “Avenues Real Estate, why do you discriminate?”

⁶⁵ Avenues Real Estate, “New York City Real Estate Agents: Itay Gamlieli.”

⁶⁶ Unlock NYC [@weunlocknyc], “We’re out in Front of Avenues Real Estate Protesting Their Discriminatory Practices. Brokers with Avenues Have Been Reported to @weunlocknyc over 10 Times for Ghosting Voucher Holders in the Last Few Months. Enough Is Enough! <https://t.co/Rcb8K9z2DN>.”

#5 THE CORCORAN GROUP



The Corcoran Group, Bed-stuy storefront. Image source: [Google Maps](#)

BROKERAGE NAME
Corcoran Group

PRINCIPAL BROKER
Pamela Liebman

OF DISCRIMINATION REPORTS:
22

LAST REPORTED
August 2023

KEY DENIAL TACTICS
Ghosting, Income requirements

GEOGRAPHY
Citywide

The Corcoran Group is an international real estate franchise that was founded on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, which has grown to over 4,500 agents and 110 offices.⁶⁷ Out of the 19 SOI complaints received about The Corcoran Group by Unlock NYC, 61.5% reported ghosting, and four reported income requirements. The Corcoran Group was one of 88 firms sued in 2021 for discriminating against Section 8 voucher holders, as part of a sweeping investigation by the Housing Rights Initiative.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ The Corcoran Group, "The Corcoran Franchise: Brand Overview."

⁶⁸ "Lawsuit Accuses Major Real Estate Firms Of Discriminating Against Low-Income New Yorkers With Housing Vouchers."

#6 COMPASS



Compass, Williamsburg storefront. Image source: [Google Maps](#)

BROKERAGE NAME
Compass

PRINCIPAL BROKER
Robert Reffkin

OF DISCRIMINATION REPORTS:
17

LAST REPORTED
September 2023

KEY DENIAL TACTICS
Ghosting, No vouchers

GEOGRAPHY
Citywide

Compass is a major real estate company, with 28,000 agents working in 72 markets across the country.⁶⁹ Compass was one of 88 firms sued in 2021 for discriminating against Section 8 voucher holders, as part of a large-scale investigation by the Housing Rights Initiative.⁷⁰ Compass then settled with the New York State Attorney General, agreeing to wave broker fees for applicants with Section 8 vouchers, to incentivize agents to place voucher holders into apartments, and to better train their agents with regards to source of income protections.⁷¹ Of the 17 SOI discrimination reports received by Unlock NYC, 31.6% reported explicit denials, and 47.4% reported ghosting.

⁶⁹ Compass Real Estate, "About Us."

⁷⁰ "Lawsuit Accuses Major Real Estate Firms Of Discriminating Against Low-Income New Yorkers With Housing Vouchers."

⁷¹ New York State Attorney General, "Attorney General James Stops Real Estate Company Compass from Denying Housing to Low-Income New Yorkers."



Voucher holders impacted by SOI discrimination held a protest in front of Avenues Real Estate in October 2022.

DISHONORABLE MENTIONS – 15 REPORTS AND UNDER

- My Space NYC: 15 reports
- Highline Residential: 15 reports
- ABBA Real Estate Associates: 15 reports
- Premier One Realty LLC: 15 reports
- M.N.S Real Estate NYC: 14 reports
- Living New York: 14 reports
- Finders NYC: 14 reports
- Bond NY: 13 reports
- Bohemia Realty Group: 13 reports
- EXP Realty: 12 reports
- Voro LLC: 12 reports
- Urban Pads NYC: 11 reports
- Winzone Realty: 11 reports

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HOUSING
IS CASH

MY \$\$\$
VOUCHER
IS CASH

HOMELESSNESS IS
AT A RECORD HIGH
DISCRIMINATORS ARE
THE REASON WHY

Voucher holders impacted by 602 discrimination held a protest in front of Avenues Real Estate in October 2022.

