

A Corporate Landlord Got \$191 million from New York City. Its Tenants Got Eviction Notices.

By Ezra Nielsen



Flatbush Gardens is a housing complex with 2,500 apartments.

Jeannite Prince, 55, won her two-year eviction case against her landlord Clipper Realty in October. But she's still terrified of being removed by force from the apartment in Flatbush Gardens in Brooklyn where she has lived since 2016.

During the pandemic Prince cared for Covid patients before herself falling so ill she needed an oxygen tank to breathe. Her partner died from the virus. When she couldn't pay rent the threat of the marshall's knock, and the imminent homelessness it portends, was very much real.

Prince is one of hundreds of tenants Clipper has recently tried to evict from Flatbush Gardens despite receiving a \$191 million tax break from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development in 2023 to prevent homelessness. The deal also stipulated that Clipper would

invest \$25 million in needed repairs at the development. But two tenants and a housing advocacy group said they have not seen any of those repairs.

Clipper, which did not respond to repeated requests for comments, is a publicly traded company worth some \$1.3 billion with property holdings throughout New York City. David Bistricker, the company's founder and CEO, has appeared on the Public Advocate's [Worst Landlords Watchlist](#) multiple times for various reasons. He also appeared on the [Worst Covid Evictors](#) list. And in 2007, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development secretary [blocked](#) his company from buying the affordable housing complex Starrett City in East New York – over concerns the company would raise rents and evict tenants.

Nearly 20 years later, Clipper's actions at Flatbush Gardens occur as the [rate of evictions](#) rises across the city and the nation. The increase is the result of the Covid-era moratorium being lifted in 2022 and inflation making it more difficult to pay rent, according to Juan Pablo Garnham at the Eviction Lab.

In September Shahelle Martinez, a community organizer with the Flatbush Tenants Coalition, started a petition against Clipper. She demanded it cease evictions and instead negotiate payment of arrears. When Martinez started her petition Clipper had filed for eviction against 350 tenants; since then that number has risen to more than 450, according to court records.

Martinez said Clipper files its evictions so fast it's difficult to keep up with them. One tenant nearly forfeited her case, Martinez said, when Clipper filed two separate petitions against her in the same week for the exact same amount of money. The tenant didn't respond to the second filing right away because she didn't realize it was in fact distinct from the first one.

The evictions have no consequences for Clipper, according to Martinez.

"They just keep getting money," she said. What's more, she added, Clipper is incentivized to evict because when units become vacant the organization Bridging Access to Care, which also could not be reached for comment, pays them \$2,000 to \$6,500 to house other vulnerable New Yorkers.

Clipper received the tax break from the city despite the company having accrued nearly 3,000 housing code violations for issues like lack of heat and hot water, leaks, mold, peeling paint and rodent and roach infestations, according to the NYC Housing Preservation and Development's [website](#).



Carol Mitchell and Jeannite Prince at Flatbush Gardens.

Ahmed Tijani, HPD’s first deputy commissioner, did not address the issue of Clipper’s barrage of evictions in an interview. But he did say that it was unacceptable for the company not to follow through on the required repairs. “We would have an issue with people not committing to their compliance with the program,” he said, referring to the Article XI agreement that gave Clipper the tax break in the first place. No oversight appears to exist other than a report Clipper itself fills out and files each year.

Carol Mitchell, 54, has lived at Flatbush Gardens for 30 years and is used to the company’s lack of responsiveness.

“Right now, the oven is not working properly,” she said. “And when I make a report and they come, they go, ‘Oh well, they don’t have anything better than this.’ Are you kidding me?” Mitchell said that the sink in her bathroom is broken, the paint is peeling throughout her apartment and her 9-year-old son cut himself on a cracked window pane.

Jeannite Prince, the tenant who won her eviction case against Clipper, concurred. She and Mitchell stood next to each other on one of the pathways at Flatbush Gardens. “I have mold in my apartment,” Prince said, “and I get no service whatsoever.” Both tenants agreed that Clipper never responds to their phone calls or emails.

“Nothing will get done unless you go to court,” Mitchell said.