

For Immediate Release: March 31, 2015

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Center for NYC Neighborhoods Launches Tracker To Alert Homeowners To Tax Lien Sale

Interactive map at cnycn.org/taxliensale allows communities and stakeholders to assess the risk of their neighborhood, help neighbors get off the sale list

NEW YORK, NY – The Center for NYC Neighborhoods today launched a new web-based tool that tracks the 16,000 one- to four-family homes on the NYC Department of Finance’s 60-day lien sale list: cnycn.org/taxliensale. Every year, the Department of Finance sells the liens of properties that have unpaid debts – including property taxes, water bills and other charges – which can result in an increased financial burden for families already behind on their bills, and even result in foreclosure. The Center’s tax lien tracker shows users how many households in each Community District and City Council District have liens that are currently scheduled to be sold.

“The Center for NYC Neighborhoods is dedicated to preserving and protecting affordable homeownership,” **said Christie Peale, Executive Director**. “The tax lien sale could put thousands of families in danger of foreclosure. Our tracker allows community members and stakeholders to see the number of homes with tax liens in their neighborhood, bringing awareness to the issue and helping them mobilize and alert their neighbors of their options – payment plans, special exemptions, and more – before the sale.”

“The Center’s tax lien tracker makes valuable data accessible to the public, allowing homeowners and local stakeholders to get an accurate picture of the foreclosure risks in their area,” **said HPD Commissioner Vicki Been**. “Identifying and addressing the issues before they reach a point of no-return is critical in the fight to prevent foreclosure and the destabilizing effect it can have on families and communities. The work of the Center in providing the counseling and services needed to help New Yorkers keep their homes is critical to the City’s mission of preserving and strengthening the stability of our neighborhoods.”

"As affordable housing becomes an increasingly scarce commodity for many New Yorkers, it is encouraging that resources are readily available to help hardworking families remain in their homes," **said Council Member Donovan Richards**. "The tax lien tracker offers invaluable insight into the financial difficulties that lower density communities may be facing while coupling the data with invaluable information and support. I commend the Center for NYC Neighborhoods for working on behalf of those most likely to face home insecurity, and addressing this systemic issue."

“The priority for the Department of Finance is to resolve delinquent tax situations with property owners before liens are sold. The City only sells liens when owners fail to respond to our notices by making payment or entering into a payment agreement. We are encouraged by the efforts of the tracker, which may help to reduce the number of liens being sold.” **Sonia Alleyne, Press Officer for Department of Finance.**

The Department of Finance’s annual tax lien sale is scheduled for May 15, 2015. Once a tax lien is sold to a third-party collection agency, the company can add fees and high interest of up to 18% onto the debt. Paying the debt can become overwhelming and unpaid tax liens may eventually lead to foreclosure. The Department of Finance sends five notices to homes at risk before the sale.

Seniors, disabled individuals, or veterans, relatives of veterans, or active-duty military personnel, may qualify for an exemption by submitting the Exemption Eligibility Checklist or Military Request for Relief available on the Department of Finance website by May 14th. All others can enter into a payment plan of up to ten years with the City. Payment plans with the City are more affordable than payment plans with a collection agency. All payment agreements with the city must be finalized by May 14th.

Homeowners seeking help to obtain a payment agreement or complete exemption forms can call 311 to be connected to the Department of Finance. Outreach events for homeowners are being held citywide. A full list is available at nyc.gov/liensale.

About the Center for NYC Neighborhoods

The Center for NYC Neighborhoods is committed to preserving and protecting affordable homeownership in New York. Established by public and private partners, the Center meets the diverse needs of homeowners across the five boroughs. The Center and its Network Partners offer high-quality housing counseling and legal services, free of charge, to New York homeowners. Visit cnycn.org for more information.