

Housing
for the
People!

United
Tenants
of Albany

REINVEST
IN ALBANY'S
COMMUNITIES

Housing
4 ALL

TENANTS
RUN THIS
CITY

HOUSING
4 PEOPLE
NOT PROFIT

LESS
RENT
MORE
CONTROL

FIT
TENANTS
INTO
THE BUDGET

KEEP
THE
COMMUNITY
SAFE
&
ACCESSIBLE

AFFORDABLE
HOUSING
NOW

UNITED TENANTS OF ALBANY

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

OUR
HOMES
OUR
POWER

35% of
renters in
Albany are
rent burdened

THE
RENT
IS TOO
DAMN
HIGH

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ABOUT UNITED TENANTS OF ALBANY



Maria & Roger Markovics met at a rent strike in 1969, while attending college in Michigan. Two years later, they moved to Albany and worked at a storefront crisis center called the Providence House. In 1973, they founded United Tenants of Albany.

UTA was created to address substandard living conditions, housing discrimination, high rents, lack of renter protections, and a popular desire for tenant empowerment. Since its inception, UTA has combined direct services, community organizing, and policy advocacy to address the anti-tenant status quo.



For 50+ years, UTA has built power in our community and brought change not just to Albany, but all of New York State. Essentially every NY tenant protection passed since 1973, UTA has played a role in crafting and advocating for. All the while, UTA has also played community defense, supporting tenants in crisis with rental assistance, tenant and court advocacy, and housing counseling services.

It is with this history in mind that UTA continues its work in developing fighting tenant unions, advocating for tenant protections, defending tenants facing displacement, educating tenants about their rights, assisting tenants in overcoming homelessness, and empowering tenants to demand fair & dignified housing!

OUR MISSION

The mission of UTA is to protect tenants' rights for safe, decent and affordable housing, with special emphasis on those who have the greatest need or who experience the most severe problems and to promote the development and preservation of more affordable housing.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Crista Edroi
Court Advocate



Bebhinn Francis
Tenant Organizer



Mehr Sharma
Tenant Organizer



Emma Hollins
Tenant Advocate



Tyquazia Gause
Intake Coordinator



Dorothea Ross
HPP Coordinator



Ariel Kenny
Housing Counselor



Jennifer Krstovich
Executive Assistant



Canyon Ryan
Executive Director



Shatiqua Pannell-Hyndman
Deputy Director

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LaGrone; Matt Drescher; Laurie
Buitrago; Ian Butler.

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Academic Community Engagement and Nonprofit
Excellence & Transformations.

YEAR IN REVIEW

2024 began with a handful of educational meetings and community canvasses to alert eligible tenants of the year prior victory. At the end of 2023, the City of Albany allocated \$75,000 to conduct a vacancy study, the second step in bringing **rent control** to our City. In the first two months of the year, we hit hundreds of doors, recruited dozens of volunteers, and held three informational sessions about rent control.

However, the year also began with a loss. In March, the Albany County Legislature unexpectedly voted against the **Eviction Prevention and Intervention Collaborative (EPIC)**. The program was designed to assist tenants in eviction court, 2-5% of which have representation, compared to 90%+ of landlords.

Even though the Request For Proposal went through a review process, the proposal lost by one vote. Those opposed claimed it was “too biased” in supporting tenants at-risk of homelessness by not giving support to the landlords pursuing evictions. EPIC did eventually pass, albeit with no in-court assistance provided to either party.

Despite this setback, tenants achieved a significant win in April. After five years of struggle, NYS finally passed **Good Cause Eviction**, with a mandate applied to NYC renters and the ability for other localities to opt in to the protection. In June, the City of Albany did just that, becoming the first municipality to secure the protections, setting a maximal standard for the following 12-and-counting localities across upstate New York!

Meanwhile, UTA was canvassing rent control eligible tenants, and began working with the tenants at Danker Village. After the complex was purchased by Cass Hill Development, tenants received notice of between \$150-and-\$650 rent increases. As the rent control study slogged on, Good Cause became our tool of **empowerment**. Because Good Cause limits rent increases and the landlord’s ability to pursue no-cause holdover evictions, tenants were in a better position to collectively bargain for fair rent adjustments without fear of reprisal.

The Danker Village Tenants Union were the first to use the new protection, and dozens of families facing significant rent gouges were able to limit rent increases to less than 8.45%. Unfortunately, for many, it was too late. Because the Mayor never signed the law, it had to expire into effect. During this period, many rent increases went into effect, devastating tenant households and disarming the tenant union in the process.



YEAR IN REVIEW, CONTINUED

When the City of Albany budget negotiations began in October, UTA **advocated for \$125,000** to either defend the vacancy study if it identified a vacancy rate of below 5% (which would mean we could opt in to rent control) or re-do the study if it found a vacancy rate of above 5%. That month, the vacancy study was finally released, identifying a vacancy rate of 8.33%, meaning Albany could not opt in to rent control.

After fruitful debate, the Albany Common Council compromised and allocated \$125,000 for a **housing initiative**, not limited to re-doing the vacancy study. This was welcome as, just a few days later, Poughkeepsie's vacancy study was overturned, making it the 3rd successful legal challenge against a locality's study and 7th failed study (of 8 total!) since the ability to opt in was granted to all NYS localities.

Recognizing the innate vulnerability of cities seeking rent control, UTA and our base decided it was time to make a **strategic pivot**: Forgo rent control in the city of Albany and begin advocating for a state law that would eliminate the vacancy study requirement and increase rent control eligibility, and utilize the \$125,000 to support tenants in Albany who are at risk of, or displaced due to, poor conditions, and hold negligent landlord accountable.

A week after this decision was made and UTA began consulting Council Members, the Mayor vetoed the \$125,000 from the city's budget, decrying the attempt to re-do the vacancy study, and blaming Inclusionary Zoning for the housing crisis. UTA advocated for a **veto override** by the Council, which was secured December 16.

As we all know, 2025 harbors many unknowns. No matter what changes are to come, UTA remains committed to defending and expanding tenants' rights to safe, dignified, and affordable housing.



DIRECT SERVICES



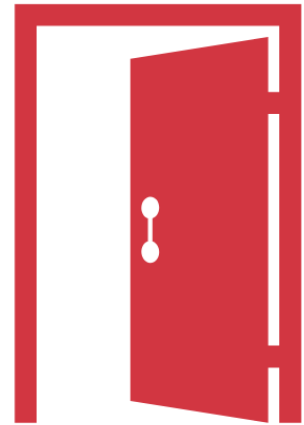
Our Housing Counselors distributed **\$532,275** in emergency rental assistance to support **278 households** at risk of homelessness, or to overcome homelessness!



Our Court Advocate assisted over **425 households** during their eviction proceedings, with 85%+ achieving their desired outcome!



30+ tenants used upstate NY's first right of action, helping tenants sue their landlords for repairs, rent abatement, money judgements, temporary shelter, moving expenses, and more!



We supported over **1,000 tenants** who simply walked into our office!



Our team conducted **3,300** intakes, representative of **7,466 tenants**!



We received and responded to over **6,600** calls!

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING & IMPACT



Livingston School Apartments Tenant Association Members

- **60 volunteers** knocked on **3,000+ doors** for rent control with **300 tenants signing up** to stay informed on the campaign.
- Held **four general interest constituent meetings**.
- Conducted **14 trainings for community-partners** on tenants' rights.
- **Tabled** at 12 community-based events to spread knowledge of tenants rights and ongoing campaigns.
- Advocated for the development of **low-income housing on Colvin Ave**, overcoming significant Neighborhood Association opposition.
- Supported the establishment of an **Albany County Housing Trust Fund**, championed by our friends at the Affordable Housing Partnership. This will help preserve, secure, and develop affordable housing across the County.
- Secured **\$125,000 to support a City of Albany housing initiative**.



UTA Delivering Good Cause Eviction Mailers



UTA was recognized at the 32nd
Annual Citizen Action's Jim Perry
Progressive Leadership Awards!

TENANT ORGANIZING

Rent Control Rally Before a
Common Council Speak Out



- Mobilized tenants to **demand Albany adopt Good Cause Eviction**, making it the **first city to opt in** under the strongest rubric possible.
- Helped develop the **Danker Village Tenants Union**, which successfully prevented dozens of rent hikes using Good Cause Eviction.
- Worked with **Livingston School Apartments Tenant Union members** to secure accessibility demands, office space, and repairs.
- Assisted a **62-lot mobile home community** in Colonie bring a **Supreme Court lawsuit against their landlord for illegal rent hikes**.
- Conducted 13 **door knocking and tenant organizing** trainings.
- Worked with the Poor People's Campaign to develop the **Albany Homeless Union**.



Photo Taken After Albany Became the First Municipality to Opt In to Good Cause Eviction

UTA-ASSISTED TENANT DATA

UTA received 6,600 calls on our hotline and conducted 3,300 intakes in 2024. That's 300 more calls than last year, and 1,000 more intakes.

What is the average household demographic & composition?

- The 3,300 intakes represent 7,466 individuals - 4,568 adults and 2,898 children.
- 1,536 households had children in the home, with the remaining 1,764 households composed of adults.
- 1,258 households seeking assistance were single individuals.
- 2,293 (69%) intakes identified women as the Head of Household.
- 2,112 (62%) identified as Black, African American, or Mixed; 792 (24%) identified as White 264 (8%) identified as Other; while the remaining 132 (4%) households identified as Asian or Native American. Of those, 426 (13%) of households identified as Hispanic or Latino.
- 1,269 (38%) intakes identified household members as people with disabilities.
- The average Head of Household is 43 years old.

What are tenants' average income?

- 363 (11%) households had no income to report.
- Excluding those without income, the average household income was \$2,163 per month.
- With an average household size of 2.26, that means the average household has an income below 30% of the Area Median Income, qualifying them as "extremely low income" families.
- 35% of households had an income below the federal poverty level.

Terms of Tenancy:

- 60% of tenants had a fixed-term lease.
- 33% of tenants had a month-to-month tenancy.
- 7% of tenants had another arrangement.
- 30% of tenants had lived in their apartments for less than 1 year.



UTA-ASSISTED TENANT DATA

How much is rent?

- About 25% of tenants had subsidized rents. 10% of tenants lived in public housing, meaning the remaining 15% had section 8 or similar tenant-based subsidies.
- Including subsidized rents, the average household paid \$992 per month.
- Excluding subsidized rents, the average tenant paid \$1,175 per month.
- The median rent was \$1,000 per month.

Where do the tenants live?

- 70% of tenants lived in the City of Albany.
- 5.6% of tenants were actively homeless.
- 5% of tenants lived in Troy, 4.6% lived in Cohoes, 4.2% lived in Watervliet, with the remaining 10.6% of tenants residing primarily across the Capital Region.

Top 5 reasons tenants contacted UTA:

- Help with Back Rent (35%)
- Court & Eviction (26%)
- Help with Moving (12%)
- Code & Habitability Issues (6%)
- Problems with the Landlord (5%)

How did tenants hear about UTA?

- Friends, Family, and Neighbors (45%)
- Online (20%)
- Government Institutions (18%)
- Other community-based organizations (17%)
 - Albany Community Action Partnership;
 - Legal Aid Society of Northeastern NY;
 - Trinity Alliance of the Capital Region;
 - Catholic Charities Tri-County Services;
 - And more!



YEAR TO COME

- Distribute emergency rental assistance to **prevent at least 250 evictions** across Albany County.
- Assist a minimum of **425 tenants** in the City of Albany during eviction proceedings.
- Help tenants file at least **35 claims against their landlords** for repairs, rent abatement, money judgements, and more!
- Develop **more community partnerships** and conduct **more tenants' rights trainings** across Albany County.
- Establish a **Fair Housing Office** to protect tenants across Albany County from discrimination.
- Develop **more autonomous tenant unions** and begin building the 'Capital Region Tenants Union'.
- **Expand Good Cause Eviction protections** to other localities in the Capital Region.
- Secure **more tenant protections** in the City of Albany, specifically related to poor conditions and displacement without due process.
- UTA will be co-leading the Housing Justice For All campaigns for **rent control expansion** and the **Housing Access Voucher Program**.
- UTA will be serving a two-year term as a **steering committee** member for Housing Courts Must Change.

Additional Thanks to the Coalitions we Work With, Our Partners, and Our Friends



Housing for All



**Right to
the City**



**HOUSING
JUSTICE
FOR ALL**



**ALBANY COMMUNITY
LAND TRUST**



**affordable
housing
PARTNERSHIP**
of the capital region, inc.
HOMEOWNERSHIP CENTER

THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS



Albany County
Rural Housing Alliance, Inc.

BANK OF AMERICA
"Frederick McDonald Trust"



Division of Criminal
Justice Services



Homes and
Community Renewal



FEMA Emergency Food &
Shelter Program

John D. Picotte
Family Foundation



Office of Temporary
and Disability Assistance

The Review
Foundation

Three Generations of the
Matthews' Family



The Winnie Fund