

IMPACT REPORT

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BUILD UP

JUSTICE NYC

Grounded in community.
Advocating for all.

OUR MISSION

Build Up Justice NYC advances economic and racial justice by providing community-centered free civil legal services to low income New Yorkers across all five boroughs. We leverage the power of the law to challenge structural inequities in public systems, policies, and practices—creating a lasting impact in the lives of our clients and the neighborhoods they call home.

Dear Friends,

The past year has been exciting and transformative for our organization. After nearly 60 years of being known and respected as Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, we proudly launched our new name and brand—**Build Up Justice NYC**—on July 1. This new identity more accurately reflects our citywide impact and our mission to strengthen communities, challenge systemic injustice, and create pathways to equity through high-quality legal advocacy.

In our final year as Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, we handled over **5,800 cases** that impacted more than **9,500 New Yorkers**, a **13% increase** from the previous year. From renters and homeowners to survivors of domestic violence and small business owners, our work not only provided critical legal protections but also created ripple effects across communities citywide.

We also celebrated several key milestones: welcoming our **100th staff member**, expanding our housing practice into Queens, and launching a Wills & Estates practice to help low to moderate income families to preserve generational wealth and build financial stability for future generations. Beyond the courtroom, we continued to drive systemic change—shaping policy, testifying at public hearings, and advocating for reforms to protect tenants, prevent foreclosures, and safeguard civil rights.

Evictions have surged citywide to pre-pandemic levels. With just **44% of tenants receiving legal representation**, the risk of displacement is rising and undermining the stability of marginalized communities. The need for our services has never been greater. Thanks to the dedication of our staff and the partnership of supporters like you, Build Up Justice NYC is rising to meet this critical moment with strength and purpose.

Together, we are building up justice—one client, one case, and one community at a time.

Onward,



Jessica A. Rose, Esq. | Executive Director



Art by Kween Ka\$h

Our Programs

FORECLOSURE PREVENTION

We help families protect their homes—their most important financial asset—by providing legal representation, securing critical debt relief, and by holding scammers and predatory lenders accountable for unscrupulous practices that primarily target older adults and communities of color. Our work preserves homeownership and helps families build generational wealth.

LOW INCOME TAXPAYER CLINIC (LITC)

Our tax clinic resolves disputes and reduces debt for income-eligible New Yorkers, often saving clients thousands of dollars. With pro bono partners and bi-weekly clinics, we provide relief and financial stability to those who need it most.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

We support survivors with comprehensive legal and social services—securing safety, justice, and stability for clients and their families.

WILLS & ESTATES

We help New Yorkers plan for the future by providing legal guidance on wills, powers of attorney, and other estate matters. We help clients to protect their assets, ensure their wishes are honored, and bring peace of mind for themselves and their families.

PRESERVING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

For nearly 60 years, we've fought to keep tenants in their homes. From eviction defense to tenant organizing, we help New Yorkers to assert their rights and secure safe, affordable housing.

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We strengthen small businesses and nonprofits—the backbone of New York City—through free legal services, lease assistance, and guidance for worker cooperatives, nonprofits, and advocacy groups. By providing these services, we help communities grow more resilient and equitable and ensure that they continue to thrive.

“

You are an asset to the community, and I greatly appreciate the help & care. It's good to know there is someone there to help if needed.

— S. H., CLIENT

”

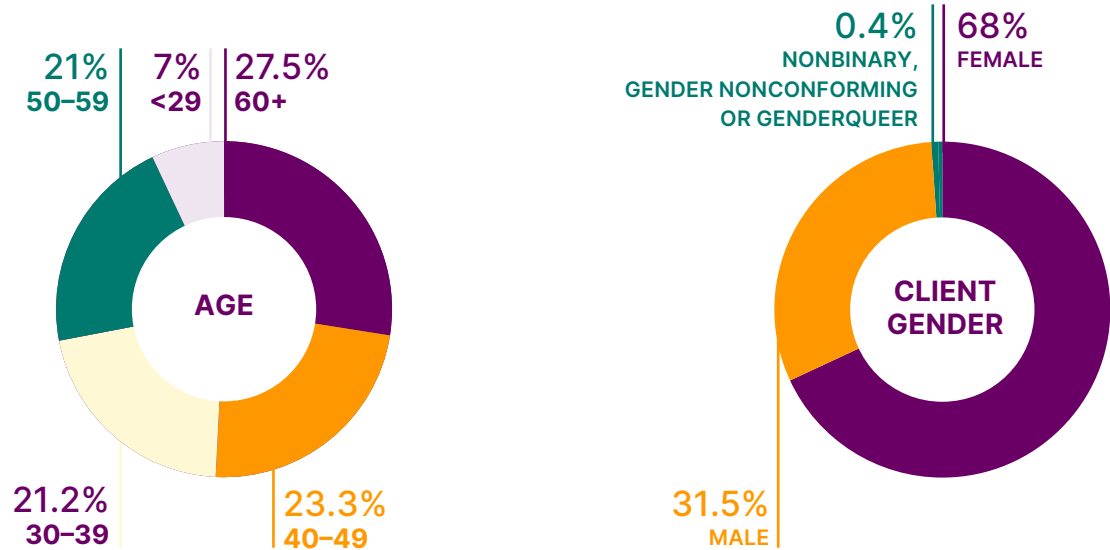
By the Numbers



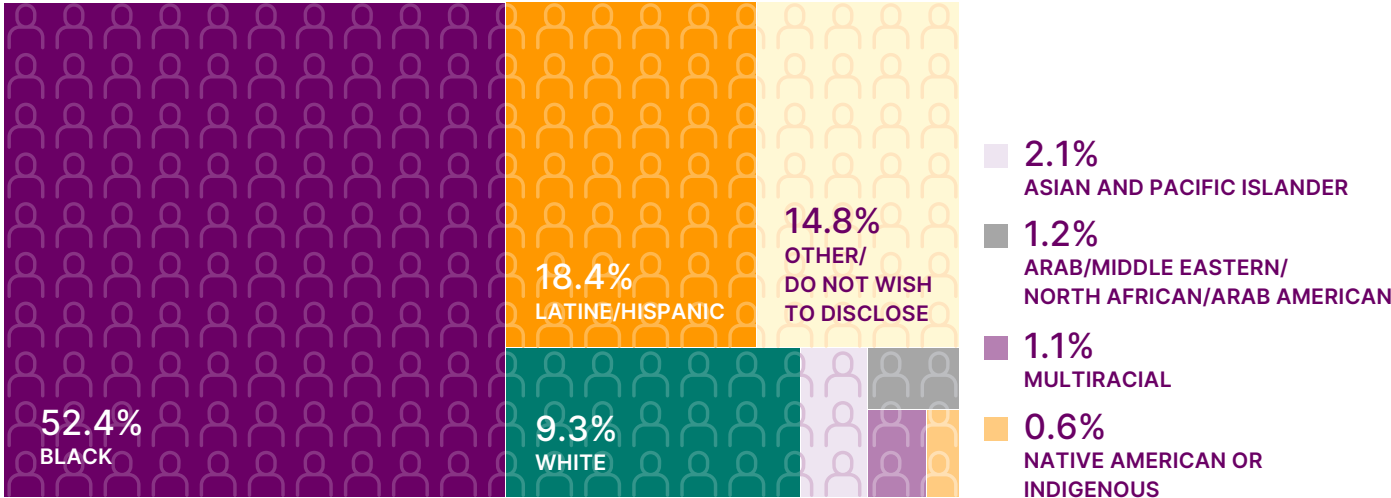
We ensure every client can access our services in the language that feels most comfortable. Over the past year, we served clients in the following languages:

Aguacateco Albanian American Sign Language Arabic Armenian Bengali
Cambodian Chinese/Cantonese Chinese/Mandarin Creole Croatian English French
French Creole Georgian German Greek Hebrew Hindi Hungarian Japanese Korean
Nepali Other Panjabi Polish Portuguese Russian Serbocroatian Spanish Tagalog
Thai (laotian) Turkish Ukrainian Urdu

Who We Served



CLIENT RACE AND ETHNICITY



Build Up Justice NYC helps homeowners and tenants in court and in City Hall



BUJNYC's Alex Knipenberg (L) and Will Greenberg with Council Member Nantasha Williams at City Hall on the day our title clouding bill passed.

In April, Build Up Justice NYC celebrated a major policy victory with the passage of Int. 1086-A, a bill we helped craft in collaboration with Council Member Nantasha Williams. The legislation, now law, requires the Department of Finance (DOF) to notify property owners within 30 days whenever a deed or mortgage-related document is recorded for their property.

The bill addresses a growing issue called “title clouding” in which scammers file documents in an attempt to “cloud” or obscure the rightful ownership of a home. These scams can lead to devastating consequences for homeowners, including barriers to accessing financial assistance or even loss of property.

Our advocacy on this legislation was driven by real cases that we encountered where homeowners were blindsided by fraudulent filings. Prompt notification by the DOF gives the homeowners the opportunity to respond quickly, safeguard their property title, and preserve ownership of their homes.

“When we don’t have protections in place for homeowners, they can easily fall prey to scams that can deprive lifelong New York City families of their homes,” said Tamara del Carmen, Senior Program Director of the Consumer & Economic Advocacy Program. “We were proud to work with Council Member Williams on this legislation, and I know it will have an immediate impact on the clients we serve and the city at large.”

Luis

Luis is a lifelong New Yorker and was the first in his family to become a homeowner. He bought his home in Ozone Park more than six years ago and dreamed of living there with his family for good—he considered it his “last stop.”

In 2012, Luis had been forced to retire after suffering a serious injury at work. Since then, he and his family have relied on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to keep his family financially stable.

But when the pandemic struck, Luis missed an appointment with the Social Security Administration. As a result, his SSI benefits were cut off for a year. While he was working to get his benefits reinstated, his wife was diagnosed with cancer. During this challenging time, his mortgage lender initiated foreclosure proceedings, threatening the foundation of the family’s security and adding to the immense stress they were already facing.

Luis applied for relief through the NYS Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF), hoping for a grant to pay off his mortgage arrears and save his home, but his application was denied. It was at this point that he connected with Build Up Justice NYC. Our team stepped in to help and was able to secure HAF funding to pay off his mortgage arrears. We then negotiated a settlement with Luis’s lender to resolve the foreclosure action and keep his family in their home. Thanks to these efforts, Luis and his family are no longer living under the weight of uncertainty.

“I told my kids, ‘We’re not going anywhere,’” Luis said. “I sleep in peace now.”



Build Up Justice NYC 1968–2025

1968 | Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A (BKA) opens its doors during the War on Poverty. The original offices were known as Williamsburg Legal Services, East New York Legal Services, and Brownsville Legal Services.

1973 | helps tenant advocates establish Southside United HDLC (Los Sures) and partners with the organization and tenant associations to fight slumlords and create affordable, tenant owned co-ops.

1974 | assists in the formation of the Brownsville Community Development Corporation (BCDC), the first CDC created under the federal anti-poverty initiative.

1978 | sues the NYC Housing Authority in the landmark case Williamsburg Fair Housing Committee v. NYC Housing Authority, successfully challenging racial quotas that reserved 75% of South Williamsburg public housing units for white residents despite more than 90% of applicants being non-white.

1982 | in partnership with BCDC, successfully advocates for NYS to open healthcare capital funding to nonprofits, not just hospitals, paving the way for expanded healthcare access statewide.



Deborah

Deborah has called Inwood home her entire life. When she had her first child, she was shocked to discover that there were no affordable childcare options for low income working families in the neighborhood. Determined to fill this gap, Deborah founded Little Seedlings—a high-quality, nurturing childcare center that families could actually afford. Word spread and the business quickly became successful, allowing Deborah to expand and open a location in the building where she grew up.

But this legacy was nearly lost when Deborah had to close the centers during the pandemic. At the same time, a series of unexpected crises, including a massive sewage backup, pushed Little Seedlings into debt and Deborah was unable to pay the rent. With her landlord threatening eviction, Deborah found herself facing the prospect of losing the business she had built for her community and turned to Build Up Justice NYC for help.

It was vital to Deborah that Little Seedlings stayed open and that every one of her employees kept their jobs. She worked closely with BUJNYC’s team to negotiate a new lease with no rent increases for three years, providing her with a path out of rental debt.

Thanks to the expertise of our team, Little Seedlings not only survived, but is thriving. Deborah now manages six locations across Manhattan, each serving different age groups and the needs of low income working families. She is currently working on opening a seventh location. And Deborah is thrilled to be able to celebrate this success with her full team by her side.

“It was a huge relief. I’ve had the same employees for the last 12 years,” Deborah said. “I’m not a business without them.”

Red Hook Gardens Tenants Demand Justice

Our team helped organize the residents of Red Hook Gardens to publicly demand repairs and fair treatment from building management, Carroll Gardens Association (CGA).

For months—years, in some cases—tenants across the four-building complex have been dealing with leaks, mold, roach infestations, holes in the floor, and missing mailboxes. CGA plans to demolish and rebuild the entire complex but has neglected repairs in the meantime, leaving residents stuck in deteriorating apartments and with no information or timeline about the impending development.

The protest drew media attention and pressured CGA to make some of the much-needed repairs. Our team continues to advocate relentlessly for safe, dignified housing for all residents of Red Hook Gardens.

“Supporting rent-stabilized tenants in organizing is essential because collective action enables them to defend their rights, fight landlord harassment and unfair rent hikes, and advocate for stronger tenant protections and comprehensive housing policies.”

—Johnny Rivera
SENIOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH SPECIALIST & ORGANIZER



TOP: Angela, a tenant at Red Hook Gardens, joins her neighbors to demand repairs from their landlord. **BOTTOM:** BUJNYC Tenant Organizer Johnny Rivera speaks to the press outside Red Hook Gardens.

1982 | assists in establishing the Bethlehem Baptist Academy (currently d/b/a as Trey Whitfield School) in East New York.

1986 | partners with LatinoJustice PRLDEF to represent PS 16 parents in litigation challenging the Board of Education’s plan to create a segregated wing for Hasidic Jewish girls. The Second Circuit Court of Appeals ultimately rules the segregation unlawful under federal civil rights laws.

1987 | participates in a pilot homelessness prevention project which demonstrates that eviction prevention is more effective in preventing homelessness than shelter placements and plays a key role in implementing and expanding the program, laying the foundation for Universal Access to Counsel (aka Right to Counsel) in housing court.

1997 | helps Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (CHLDC) and parent leaders establish the dual-language Cypress Hills Community School (CHCS). Over the next two decades, we represent CHLDC and CHCS to secure a permanent school and advocate for its construction and operation by the School Construction Authority and DOE.

2001 | files its first anti-predatory lending lawsuit, marking the beginning of a series of complex litigation efforts against the unscrupulous institutions engaging in practices that target economically marginalized homeowners—a fight that continues today.

2006 | represents Mobilization Against Displacement, a coalition of major housing groups in Williamsburg-Greenpoint, in advocating for inclusionary zoning during the rezoning of the waterfront. The effort ensures at least 30% of the new apartments are affordable, leading to the construction of over 10,000 affordable units.



Council Member Chi Ossé leads a rally for the FARE Act outside City Hall, backed by BUJNYC and other supporters of the Bill.

No More Broker Fees

Build Up Justice NYC was proud to support the passage of the FARE Act last year, a bill championed by Council Member Chi Ossé that puts an end to mandatory upfront brokers fees for prospective renters in New York City.

Under the new law, the party who hires the broker, typically the landlord, is now responsible to pay all fees. This commonsense reform makes apartment hunting significantly more affordable and equitable for tenants across the city, many of whom were previously burdened by thousands of dollars in fees just to secure housing.

We were proud to join the Council Member and other supporters of the new law to celebrate its passing in November and were thrilled when it went into effect this past summer, providing real relief to tenants across all five boroughs.

“
I cannot overstate the superior and splendid
service I received because of the fantastic
guidance and goodwill from my attorney!
— W. M., CLIENT”



Dominique

Dominique is a single mother who has lived in an apartment in East New York with two young sons for more than ten years. Both of her sons have disabilities. Dominique was working two jobs just to make ends meet. But when she was unexpectedly laid off from one of her jobs, her financial situation unraveled. Unable to pay her full rent, she paid what she could, but arrears began to accumulate. As the debt mounted, so did Dominique’s fear of eviction. Her greatest concern was for her sons, who would face immense hardship if they were forced to leave their long-term home.

Dominique did everything she could to stave off eviction. She applied for rental assistance through One Shot Deals (OSD) from the NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA), but her application was denied more than a dozen times. When Dominique tried to resolve the denials, she was thwarted by unhelpful agency staff and a confusing bureaucratic process that was difficult to navigate.

Dominique found her way to BUJNYC, and our advocates immediately jumped in to work. They helped Dominique reapply once again for benefits, and with expert advocates by her side through every step of the process, her application was finally approved just one day before the payment deadline. Dominique received \$10,000 to pay off her rent arrears and was able to stay in her home with her boys.

“As a single mom with two kids, there are no real other apartment options out there for the three of us to live in,” Dominique said. “With Build Up Justice NYC, I felt less alone.”

2007 | represents Make the Road by Walking in its merger with the Latin American Integration Center forming Make the Road New York, a statewide membership organization.

2008 | expands our nascent foreclosure prevention and deed theft services in response to the subprime mortgage crisis and subsequent recession.

2012 | represents Bedford-Stuyvesant Community Health Center (BSFHC) in the acquisition and construction of a new four-story, 38,000 square-foot medical facility.

2015 | launches the Low Income Taxpayer Clinic to help low income clients resolve tax-related issues, including disputes with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

2016 | becomes (to our knowledge) the first nonprofit in New York to successfully use a Chapter 11 bankruptcy for a foreclosure client. After the client could not qualify for Chapter 13, our team pursued Chapter 11, enabling her to keep her home and resolve the foreclosure.

2017 | becomes a provider for the city’s new Right to Counsel program, which guarantees all New Yorkers representation in housing court.

Our Work Is Vital—Pay Us On Time

This past May marked one year since our Executive Director, Jessica Rose, was elected Co-Vice President of the New York Legal Services Coalition (NYLSC) Board of Directors and Co-Chair of its Legislative Advocacy Committee. In this leadership role, Jessie has played a key part in advancing the coalition’s legislative advocacy in Albany, most notably the contracts bill.

The legislation, championed by State Senator Shelley Mayer (S. 7001) and Assemblymember Amy Paulin (A. 7616), aims to address chronic delays in contract payments to nonprofit organizations, who are often forced to wait months for payments from the state, pushing many to take out loans to maintain operations. Key details of the current bill include allowing more contracts to use a streamlined renewal process, providing automatic advances on contracts within 30 days of contract execution, and requiring agencies pay the interest for any bridge loans taken out while waiting for payments. Build Up Justice NYC worked hard with members of the NYLSC to advocate for the bill, successfully advancing it through the Senate and Assembly. We advocated strongly for the Governor to sign the bill so that organizations like ours can avoid persistent cash flow disruptions caused by delayed state payments.

Despite receiving unanimous support from the Senate and Assembly, Governor Hochul vetoed the bill at the end of the year. BUJNYC and the NYLSC remain committed to this vital issue and will continue to advocate for passage of legislation responsive to it in the next legislative session.

| Art by Kween Ka\$h



2017 | launches the Commercial Lease Assistance Program with NYC Small Business Services to represent small business owners across the city to negotiate and secure commercial leases.

2018 | CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY.

2019 | represents Make the Road New York in the financing, acquisition, and construction of its Corona, Queens community center, which opens in February 2025.

2021 | adds social workers to its staffing model to create a more holistic approach to its legal representation.

2023 | launches a Domestic Violence practice to represent survivors in family court. Provides services including orders of protection, child custody, and child and spousal support, helping survivors build a safe path forward for themselves and their families.

2024 | opens the first office in Queens, launching its first ever eviction defense and tenant advocacy practice outside of Brooklyn.

2025 | hires 100th full-time staff member—an organizational record. The team represents low income New Yorkers in every council district.

2025 | launches a Wills & Estates practice to provide wraparound services to clients—including aging homeowners—seeking to pass on assets to the next generation.

2025 | The organization is renamed Build Up Justice NYC, officially communicating its citywide presence and ushering in an exciting new chapter.

2025 Year in Review

TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE BENEFIT

We hosted our annual benefit Together for Justice—our last as Brooklyn A—on April 30th at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Guests, including law firm sponsors, elected officials, and community partners, were inspired and moved by our three client honorees who proudly shared their stories of resilience in the face of economic insecurity and systemic injustice. We were also proud to recognize pro bono partner McDermott Will & Schulte for their generous contribution of time and expertise that enables us to help even more New Yorkers in need. The event highlighted our mission to advance equity, combat systemic racism, and expand access to justice for all New Yorkers.



Errol Louis of NY1 leads a panel discussion with our client honorees on the stage at BAM.

*Together For
Justice*

NEW WILLS & ESTATES PRACTICE

We were proud to launch a Wills & Estates practice at Build Up Justice NYC last year. Made possible through new funding from the NY IOLA Fund, the program provides essential document preparation services, including last wills and testaments, living wills, health care proxies, and more. We also assist with probate and administration petitions. By adding these tools to the Consumer & Economic Advocacy team's portfolio, we're expanding our ability to help low and moderate income New Yorkers protect generational wealth and plan for the future with confidence.

A BIG SMALL BUSINESS MONTH

In celebration of small business month in May, our small business team was out across the city spreading the word about our services. The team kicked off the month by participating in the NYC Small Business Expo at the Javits Center, where they connected with hundreds of small business owners and shared information about the Commercial Lease Assistance program and other resources. Later in the month, the team participated in the two-day SBS Small Business Month Expo, offering in-person consultations throughout the event. In total, our small business team engaged with nearly 1,000 individuals in May, making it one of our most impactful outreach efforts of the year.

More Impact Work from Build Up Justice NYC

Staff across Build Up Justice NYC are always eager to fight for legislation that can help our clients. Whether we're advocating for legislation that will improve justice for New Yorkers or demanding funding for vital services, our team never backs down from supporting necessary change. Here are a couple other highlights from our work this year:



Codify HOPP

The Homeowner Protection Program (HOPP) is a critical source of funding for foreclosure prevention legal services across New York State, including Build Up Justice NYC. A bill introduced last year aimed to codify this funding into state law, eliminating the need for providers to fight for its inclusion in the budget each year. We joined Attorney General Letitia

James, Assemblymember Michaelle Solages, and other lawmakers in an October press conference to urge the Governor and state leadership to support the codification bill. The Governor added \$40 million in HOPP funding this year, and we hope this is a meaningful step towards codification and that guaranteed funding continues to grow.



Privacy in Name Changes

Build Up Justice NYC was proud to sign onto letters of support for S.2431 / A.3925, a bill that would extend privacy protections to judicial name-change proceedings. Currently, when a New Yorker changes their name for reasons other than marriage, divorce, or adoption, their former name is still easily searchable in court records. This poses

serious risks for transgender, queer, and other vulnerable communities who depend on privacy for their safety and well-being. This bill would extend privacy protections to all judicial name-changes and be a meaningful step toward protecting the rights and dignity of the LGBTQIA+ community.



Community Land Act

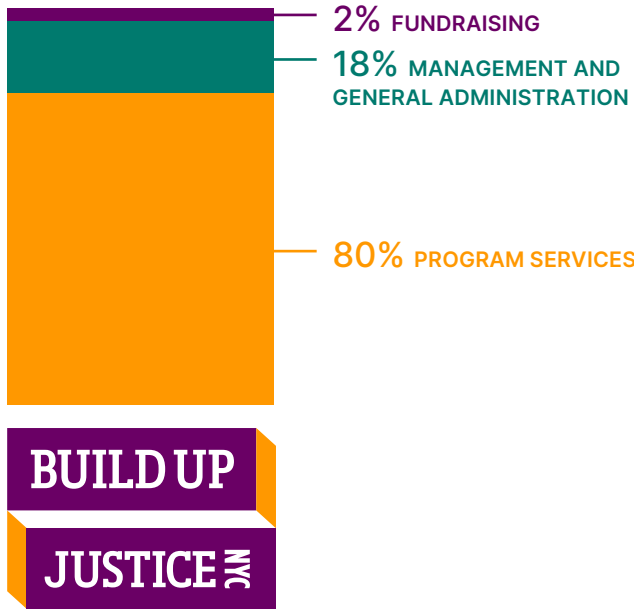
Build Up Justice NYC has been a longtime supporter of the Community Land Act, a package of bills in City Hall that is designed to prevent displacement and give New Yorkers more agency in the housing market. The bills include the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (Intro 902), Public Land for Public Good (Intro 78), the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Resolution (Res 374), and a resolution to Abolish and Replace the NYC Lien Sale. We championed these measures this year and joined allies at City Hall for rallies to push the legislation forward.



BUJNYC staff join a rally in support of the Community Land Act which, if passed, would make NYC more affordable.

FY 2025* Financial Summary

WHERE YOUR MONEY GOES



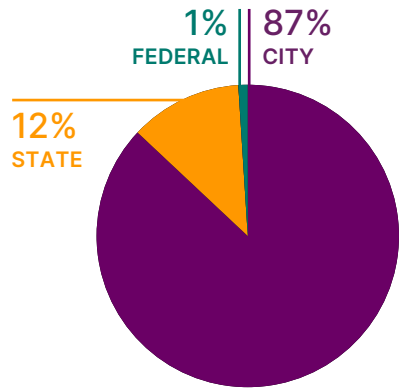
REVENUE AND SUPPORT

Government Contracts & Grants	\$15,140,528
Contributions	\$602,516
Special Events	\$60,217
Program Fees	\$151,250
Other Income	\$476,094
TOTAL	\$16,430,605

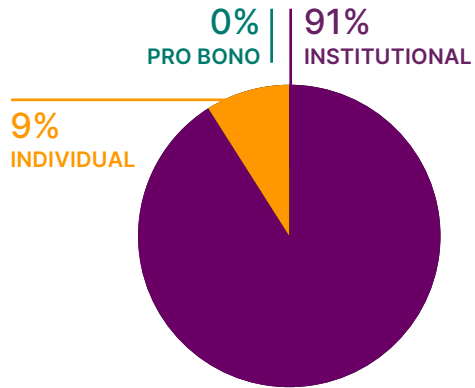
EXPENSES

Program Services	\$12,865,593
Supporting Services	\$3,342,790
TOTAL	\$16,208,383
Change in Net Assets	\$222,222

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS AND GRANTS



CONTRIBUTIONS



* 7/1/2024 – 6/31/2025

Pro Bono Partners

Build Up Justice NYC celebrates our pro bono partners whose expertise and dedication makes a meaningful difference in the lives of our clients. Their volunteerism amplifies our impact and reflects our shared commitment to justice, equity, and opportunity for all New Yorkers.

- Akerman LLP
- Brown Rudnick LLP
- Cozen O'Connor
- Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP
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- Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP

TO BECOME A PRO BONO PARTNER, CONTACT:
Ndukwe Agwu, Chief Legal Officer &
General Counsel at nagwu@buj.org

Partner Organizations

Over the past year, Build Up Justice NYC hosted and participated in **104 events**, reaching **3,103 community members**. We are grateful to our partners whose collaboration and dedication help us advance justice and equity every day.

- Accompany Capital
- Bridgestreet Development Corp.
- Canarsie Merchants Association
- Cannabis Means Business
- Citizens Bank
- Crown Heights North Association
- Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation
- DIME Community Bank
- Fifth Avenue Committee
- Grow Brooklyn
- Inwood Merchant Association
- JASA
- Jerome Avenue Revitalization Collaborative
- The Legal Aid Society
- Legal Services NYC
- Live From The Bronx
- Neighborhood Housing Services of Jamaica
- Neighborhood Housing Services of Queens
- Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition
- NYC Small Business Expo
- NYC Small Business Services
- RiseBoro
- WHEDco



BUJNYC’s Kindra Dunston with longtime partner Senator Roxanne Persaud at a resource event in Brooklyn.

Elected Officials

Build Up Justice NYC is deeply grateful to our partners in elected office, whose leadership and collaboration have advanced justice and equity in the communities we serve. We are especially grateful for the critical funding they have been able to secure to support our mission and enhance our impact.

STATE SENATORS

- Leroy Comrie*
- Roxanne Persaud*
- Zellnor Myrie
- Jabari Brisport

ASSEMBLY MEMBERS

- Latrice Walker*
- Khaleel Anderson
- Marcela Mitaynes
- Stefani Zinerman
- Monique Chandler-Waterman
- Lester Chang

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- Rita Joseph*
- Chris Banks*

* Partners who secured discretionary funding to support our work.

Institutional Donors

Build Up Justice NYC is grateful for the generous support of our foundation and corporate partners, which enables us to continue our work seeking justice for low income New Yorkers.

FOUNDATIONS AND CORPORATIONS

- BankUnited
- Center for New York City Neighborhoods (CNYCN)
- Citizens Bank
- DIME Community Bank
- Esquire Bank
- Mother Cabrini Health Foundation
- New York Bar Foundation
- Ridgewood Savings Bank
- Santander Bank
- Trinity Church Wall Street Philanthropies
- Venable Foundation

Donors

Thank you to the individuals, law firms, and other partners who donated generously to Build Up Justice NYC last year.

\$25,000

- Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP

\$10,000–\$15,000

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Donors are listed alphabetically within each giving level, based on cumulative support for the year. While we’ve worked hard to ensure this list is accurate, we sincerely apologize for any errors and invite you to reach out to kdunston@buj.org so we can make corrections.

\$1,000–\$2,499

Anonymous Donor (1)
Cypress Hills Local
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Yoselin Genao Estrella
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Just-Tech
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Many thanks to **Greater Nexus**
for their donation of event space.

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“Our work is rooted
in service—service to
individuals, families,
and communities who
deserve fairness and
stability. I am proud to
serve on the board of
an organization that
delivers real, tangible
impact while never losing
sight of the people at the
center of its mission.”

— **Gavin A. White**
BOARD MEMBER

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Ndukwe Agwu
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Jenn Flores
Chief Operating Officer

Tamara del Carmen
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Tiffany Femiano
Program Director
Preserving Affordable Housing—Queens

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Tricia Lendore
Program Director
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