

Canarsie Civic Associations Asked for Housing Help

By Craig McGuire

Community leaders throughout Canarsie came together at a recent meeting of the South Canarsie Civic Association to address the re-emergence of illegal real estate steering practices in the neighborhood.

Mary Anne Sallustro, president of the civic association, said she was aware of numerous cases of homeowners being approached by realtors and urged to sell their houses below market value, usually because of some imaginary impending calamity.

Sallustro was joined by representatives from various other Canarsie civic or-

ganizations, each feeling the effects of the improper solicitation.

"We've been collecting information about these realtors," said Dr. Murray Kiok, executive director of the Hebrew Educational Society. "We'd like to know who's doing it because it is illegal."

Sallustro explained, "This particular area is under a court order prohibiting steering."

Seaview Estates Tenants Association President Mark Fertig said, "We've received reports of unscrupulous real estate agencies instilling fear for a profit motive."



Melba Brown, president of the E 105 St. Block Association, expands on the positive aspects of Canarsie.



Neil Stoller, president of the Paerdegat Civic Association, urges residents to report any incidents of illegal solicitation by realtors in the area.

"We can control steering to some extent, but not [all] steering," explained Paerdegat Civic Association President Neil Stoller. "The only ones in a position to steer are real estate agents."

While the voice of the community groups dominated the meeting, the realtors' viewpoint was present.

City Realty agent Linda Feld firmly stated, "I, and every salesman at City Realty, do not steer or illegally solicit."

"I am a successful real estate salesperson and resident of Canarsie for 38 years," explained Feld. "Almost all of the staff at City Realty are homeowners in the Canarsie area."

"Illegal soliciting is spreading because of the vacancy rate in Canarsie," explained Stoller, a resident of Canarsie for 25 years.

"This community is still viable," he added. "Why do you think people are so eager to move in?"

"Illegal solicitation is the prostituting of this neighborhood by real estate agents," said Edward Cinnirella, representing the Farragut Redwood Civic



Seaview Estates Association President Mark Fertig reports on "unscrupulous" realtors in the area.

Association. "There's a lot of money for them to make if we let them."

"Why are all of the realtors bringing in only blacks? I'm sure the blacks want an integrated neighborhood as well," said Cinnirella. "The best thing I see happening is a truly integrated neighborhood."

When each speaker had finished the floor was opened for public discussion.

"Get to know your neighbor," said South Canarsie Civic member Gerry Weiner, citing racism and fear as the real problems.



South Canarsie Civic Association President Mary Anne Sallustro welcomes Canarsie residents to a recent meeting at the Hebrew Educational Society.

"If you're going to put your houses up for sale, put them up for the right reasons," said Weiner.

"Maybe there's something wrong with me, but I'm not fearful when I leave my house," said Seymour Weiner, also a South Canarsie member. "We have no intention of leaving Canarsie."

Canarsie was recently profiled in the New York Times Real Estate section in an article entitled, "A Place That Attracts Other New Yorkers." The article, which called Canarsie "a neighborhood with a small town feeling," was a source



Representing the Farragut Redwood Civic Association, ed Cinnirella tells residents that illegal steering is the "prostitution" of Canarsie by realtors. Photos by Craig McGuire

of pride for many of the speakers.

Canarsie is no stranger to the problems caused by illegal steering practices.

In the summer of 1991 there were several racial incidents in Canarsie, including the firebombing of the Fillmore real estate office in apparent retaliation for its showing properties in Canarsie to blacks.

Sallustro said hers and other Canarsie organizations would be gathering information and compiling a list of violators to be made available to the community and submitted to area legislators.