

Preserving the history of the Real Estate Board of New York

By GAIL O. MELLOW, PRESIDENT, LA GUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

As readers of *Real Estate Weekly* surely know, the legacy of a city can be revealed through its buildings.

Examining the evolution of land use, property ownership, design trends, and building codes reveals the people who have lived, worked, and constructed a city — serving as threads that together make up a city's tapestry of where it came from, what it is today, and indeed, even offer suggestions about what its future may hold.

I am thrilled that the Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY) has asked LaGuardia Community College to house its invaluable collection, one that tells a unique story in the building of our city.

The collection and its vast records from the late 19th century through today, will be housed with the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives. A focal point of New York studies, the Archives serves as a repository of collections that illuminate the social and political history of our complex city.

The foresight and vision of REBNY President John H. Banks will enable historians, policy makers, urban planners, journalists, and students to draw from its resources when searching for understand-



Photographs such as this one of a REBNY board meeting in 1920 will be archived at LaGuardia Community College

ing about the development of this great city that more than eight million of us are fortunate to call our home, and which millions more visit each year to work, learn, and explore.

The REBNY Collection will exist alongside the mayoral and personal papers of nine former New York City mayors, as well as the records of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), the New York City Council, and the additional collections of the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives.

Having the REBNY collection together with NYCHA records will tell a robust story of how millions of homes have been built across the city.

Coupled with the mayoral papers of La-

Guardia, Wagner, Lindsay and Koch, along with the City Council records, it'll be possible to examine the city's transformation over time — through records of real estate developments, legislation, reform, and policy changes.

REBNY's collection is a historian's dream. We'll be able to examine how parts of the city rose from the ashes, the conflicts and challenges the city has faced as areas were developed.

The story of our city's growth will be

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reflected in the REBNY Diary and Manual, produced annually about changes in building codes, zoning updates, and more. And it's in the more than 300,000 property cards that show the various houses and buildings located in Manhattan over a period of 80 years — who owned them, sales prices, when they changed hands, and more.

At LaGuardia, REBNY's archival documents won't be locked away behind a closed door. Many of these documents will be digitized, allowing the documents to live both online to ensure global access, and in the physical space at the Archives on our campus located in Long Island City, Queens.

Our students, guided by faculty, will benefit tremendously from the incredible and unique opportunity to study original documentation revealing how this city responded to economic and social change — furthering their understanding of our city's history, and how it links to their current lives. It becomes an intellectually alive process — showing the students that they're a part of history.

And I see the story of our students reflected in REBNY's collection.

Looking at the REBNY documents, you see that New York City wasn't pre-ordained. It was built by ambitious, smart and visionary people. I think that's what you will see as our students interact with

these documents, and begin to share the knowledge that the collection reveals.

LaGuardia Community College students are primarily low-income, and many are recent immigrants or otherwise disadvantaged. Very often they're balancing their college classes with work and raising children or supporting extended family. They struggle, and they need grit to manage their many responsibilities.

My hope is that REBNY's collection will inspire some of our students to contribute to creating and maintaining a vibrant city by becoming the builders, and the creators of our neighborhoods.

By helping bring this collection here to LaGuardia, REBNY will be able to inform the storytellers — the students, historians, journalists, and others — who will tap this collection and make it come alive for future generations

We encourage builders and developers in New York City, who also contributed to shaping our great city's history, to consider donating their collections to the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives so that future generations can learn from their stories.

Those interested in doing so should contact Archivist Douglas Di Carlo at (718) 482-5065 or ddcarlo@lagcc.cuny.edu.

Finally, congratulations to REBNY, 122 years and counting — a milestone by any measure — and to the 2018 honorees.



JOSEPH P. DAY
1910



DOUGLAS L. ELLIMAN
1935



JAMES LANDAUER
1965



ROBERT TISHMAN
1975



SEYMOUR DURST
1979

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Legal Line a valuable member resource

For over ten years, REBNY Broker Counsel Neil B. Garfinkel, Esq. has been hosting the REBNY Legal Line.

The Legal Line is available to REBNY members on a daily basis and is one of the most valuable services that REBNY offers.

Garfinkel has been an indispensable resource to any member needing legal and real estate brokerage information.

He also teaches REBNY continuing education courses and free-for-members seminars, in addition to regularly assisting in interpreting issues regarding current events in today's real estate world.

This year, the Legal Line averaged 212 phone calls and emails per month, an eight percent increase over last year.

This continued communication between REBNY's Broker Counsel and its members has created a collaborative forum, fostering a dialogue on longstanding issues involving real estate ethics, the law of agency, RLS syndication, advertising, and licensing.

Garfinkel also continued to issue the very popular Legal Line Question of the Week, a weekly e-newsletter distributed to REBNY members, which addresses a legal question pertaining to our industry and gives an in-depth and concise explanation of the issue.

This year, the Question of the Week addressed a variety of residential and commercial brokerage topics, including laws pertaining to fair housing, rent stabilization, independent contractor agreements, and licensing reciprocity.



NEIL GARFINKEL



REBNY's Continuing Education course on Wednesday, November 1, 2017, led by REBNY's Broker Counsel Neil Garfinkel of Abrams Garfinkel Margolis Bergson, LLP.