

HABITAT

BRICKS & BUCKS

Seeing Through a Massive Window Replacement Project

Bill Morris in [Bricks & Bucks](#) on December 27, 2017

[Brooklyn](#)



New windows are coming to the Clinton Hill Co-op in Brooklyn

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There was a major house-cleaning at the **Clinton Hill Cooperative** in January 2016. The 16-member board, which includes seven sponsor-backed members, got an infusion of new blood. And after years of mismanagement, a new management company, **Charles H. Greenthal/MGRE**, was brought in. The new board members promptly discovered they had inherited some pounding headaches.

First, the **heating systems** in the 1,200-unit co-op's 12 brick towers were in such abysmal shape that they were wasting \$200,000 a year. Second, staff **payroll** was out of control. And third, the bids that the former board had received for replacing all 7,000 of the co-op's **windows** were, to put it kindly, a mess.

"The place was in horrendous shape," says **Steve Greenbaum**, director of property management with Greenthal. "Our whole team came in and put a full-court press on that property."

One of the first jobs was to rewrite the specs for the window replacements and seek new bidders. “We worked through the numbers and narrowed it down to two bids,” says **George Switzer**, an architect who is among the recently elected board members. “We did factory visits and site visits – of jobs the companies were working on and jobs they’d completed. It came down to the personalities of the two companies. **Kelly Window Systems** [of Farmingdale, Long Island] is a family-run company, very folksy and informal. Also, they both manufacture and install their windows, so we would have one point of contact. There wouldn’t be any delays or finger-pointing between the manufacturer and the installer.”

The board was able to pay for the \$5 million job out of its reserve fund, but the board’s **Capital Improvements, Energy and Sustainability Committee**, which was running the window-replacement project, kept pushing to improve the deal.

“We could have been more efficient, but we decided to study some things in depth,” says Switzer, who sits on the committee. “We did an 11th-hour side study on the most energy-efficient windows, including **European brands** that give better performance.”

The 12 towers were built during the Second World War to house workers at the nearby **Brooklyn Navy Yard**. Since half of the co-op’s buildings are now in the **Clinton Hill Historic District**, winning approval of the **Landmarks Preservation Commission** for the European windows might have proven dicey. So the board stuck with the original double-pane, insulated windows and “thermally broken” aluminum frames, which are designed to prevent heat or cold from penetrating the frames and entering the buildings’ interiors. But the board managed to negotiate two major improvements: Kelly agreed to use a more **energy-efficient sealant** between the window frames and walls at no extra cost; and the company offered to add a **heat-resistant coating** to the windows for just \$50,000.

“We got a major improvement in the solar-heat gain – how much heat penetrates the glass,” Switzer says. The addition is expected to pay for itself many times over in savings on cooling costs.

That kind of long-term thinking has also guided the board’s approach to other capital improvements, most notably to the wasteful heating system. For years the buildings had been plagued by overheating, so the board spent \$325,000 to replace 500 steam traps and numerous non-functioning pumps – money that will be recouped in less than two winters through reduced heating bills.

“A big thing we’ve done with our **capital improvements** is to be aware of the cost benefits,” Switzer says. “Our heating system was in terrible shape because the previous board spent as little money as possible. You’re better off looking at the big picture.”

Installation of the co-op’s 7,000 windows will begin shortly after New Year’s Day.

PRINCIPAL PLAYERS – MANUFACTURER AND INSTALLER – *Kelly Window Systems*. MANAGEMENT - *Charles H. Greenthal/MGRE*.

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