

Neighborhood Stories

Comprehensive Renovation Yields Major Improvements at 2280 Grand Avenue



Since Chestnut purchased and renovated the building at 2280 Grand Avenue in the Bronx, both the building and the neighborhood have seen drastic improvements.

When Chestnut Holdings purchased the building at 2280 Grand Avenue, it did not have a functioning boiler or elevator, and the electrical wiring was in such poor condition that the lights and power went out on a daily basis. There were multiple leaks in the roof and the trash compactor had not been cleared out, seemingly in years.

The building also lacked security as the front door had been destroyed and there was no way of controlling who entered. As a result, the hallways and common areas were covered with graffiti and filled with people who didn't live in the building, including prostitutes and drug dealers who also congregated in empty apartment units. Tenants were afraid to leave their apartments and even to walk in and out of the building. The basement, despite being filled with garbage, had been turned into an illegal underground nightclub of sorts. Additionally, a local gang was raising chickens in the basement and using the space to stage illegal cockfights.

Turnaround Begins

Chestnut began the turnaround process in December 2000 with a team of over 40 people who immediately set about making major renovations to improve the building. The Chestnut team, led by Superintendent Armando Lantigua and with protection from additional security staff, invested in the installation of a new boiler, providing tenants with hot water, and also replaced the electrical wiring throughout the entire building for consistent lighting. Chestnut's team also fixed the elevator, repainted all the hallways and cleared out trash from various areas in the building.

Most importantly, the Chestnut team installed a sturdy front door and security system, including cameras in public areas, which limited access to the building solely to tenants and their guests. The sidewalk and windows, as well as the broken stairs to the courtyard, were repaired. Chestnut worked nearly around the clock for 9 months to complete these major renovations as quickly as possible in order to provide a safe environment for tenants.

Coordinated Effort with Police, Elected Officials

With the new security system in place and the building more secure, Chestnut was able to work with the local police precinct to gradually remove the drug and other illicit activities out of the common areas and away from the building. The nightclub in the basement was shut down, and the cockfighting was stopped. Coordinated efforts with the police and local elected officials successfully reduced crime and dangerous activity in the building, and helped provide a safer environment for tenants.

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- **Cesar Morales**, Chestnut
Field Manager

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A Different, Safer Place

Chestnut still owns and manages the building at 2280 Grand Avenue – now a very different and much safer place to live as a result of the team effort. The hallways are safe, brightly-lit and clean, and the tenants have working electricity, lights, and hot water. Tenants have reached out to the Chestnut team to express their gratitude for the building renovations and note that they feel safe and pleased with the clean building and freshly painted halls and apartments.



“When Chestnut bought the building, this section of Grand Avenue in the Bronx was very dangerous,” Chestnut Field Director Sefik Gunes says. “No one wanted to park their car on that street because they would come back a short time later and find it completely stripped. There were generally no cars on the street at that time.”

The neighborhood also underwent a remarkable change after Chestnut became a part of the community. In addition to significantly reducing the crime and drug use in and around 2280 Grand Avenue, Chestnut’s work on the building had a positive impact on the neighborhood. From fixing the sidewalk in front of the building to planting flowers around the entrance and in the courtyard, Chestnut’s improvements were noticeable. Other landlords who managed buildings on the street approached Lantigua to ask how Chestnut was able to turn around and drastically improve such a difficult and crime-ridden building. Taking a cue from Chestnut’s approach, other buildings on the street gradually began to improve as well and the local police precinct continues to play a role in reducing crime. Today, Gunes says, “You can barely find a place to park on the street anymore. It’s turned into a safe and quiet neighborhood that families and our tenants are proud to call home.”

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About Chestnut Holdings

Chestnut Holdings of New York is a family-owned real estate investment and property management firm with a 15-year track record of successful, responsible and reliable management. Chestnut is a hands-on owner-manager that acquires, manages and improves multifamily properties throughout New York City. Chestnut purchased its first building in the Bronx in 1997, and still owns that property today – a testament to the firm’s long-term commitment to enhancing and effectively managing its properties. Chestnut also works to make a positive impact in surrounding neighborhoods by providing cleaner, safer housing options and reliable service to tenants at reasonable rental rates.

