

**PENN SOUTH: HOW LABOR UNION FINANCING, URBAN RENEWAL,
SUPERBLOCK CONSTRUCTION, AND A COMMUNITY CENTERED
COOPERATIVE HAS ENSURED AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN CHELSEA
FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS**

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ABSTRACT

Community planning and urban renewal, while today commonly considered a misstep in planning in light of scholars like Jane, contributed significantly to the creation of historic preservation planning, as it is understood today. Yet currently, many of these large-scale urban renewal projects, which were heavily protested against, are hitting their fifty-year mark, and are vulnerable to the very same type of development that spawned them. One such housing development is the Penn South Cooperative, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in the summer of 2012. Funded mainly by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), it is one of the few remaining cooperatives that still provide housing to low and middle-income families in Manhattan. Although Penn South was undertaken as a large-scale utopian project, it is the tight knit community that has allowed it to simultaneously flourish and retain its affordability. This thesis is an account of Penn South's struggle to keep its rent and carrying charges affordable. It chronicles the attempts of the Mutual Redevelopment Houses, Inc., board to construct the cooperative while dealing with high spikes in the budget due to various disasters with equipment and labor. It also tells the story of Penn South's tenants, whom continually show their dedication to establishing a community based on affordability. Lastly, the thesis seeks to offer possible partners and methods of retaining affordability.