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BIG DEAL

A Good Example as a Neighbor?

By [JOSH BARBANEL](#)

FOR several years, tenants at [Manhattan](#) House, the huge landmark white brick apartment complex at 200 East 66th Street, have complained bitterly about noisy construction, dust, debris and environmental hazards as many of the 581 apartments in five connected towers were renovated and converted to condominiums.

In the last few weeks, even as dozens of new owners closed on apartments, tenants have been considering whether to go to court again about damage they say was deliberately done by sponsors to drive tenants out.

But perhaps there is room in this tough Manhattan street brawl for a kinder, gentler approach. Property records filed last week show that in early November, Jeffrey Hollender, a businessman who travels the country lecturing business leaders on corporate responsibility and cooperation, and his wife, Sheila Hollender, paid \$2.2 million for a 12th-floor two-bedroom apartment at Manhattan House.

Mr. Hollender, a native New Yorker, moved to [Vermont](#) where he developed a business, Seventh Generation, a company that describes itself as selling “authentic, safe, and environmentally responsible products for a healthy home.” The company, of which he is the president and “chief inspired protagonist,” did about \$100 million in sales last year.

What matters most in business, Mr. Hollender says, is not growth, quarterly profits and shareholder value, but good corporate citizenship.

“We must ensure that the practice of corporate responsibility is spread to every sector of society,” Mr. Hollender said in a statement a few weeks ago. “Now is not the time to retreat in fear, but forge ahead to create a better and brighter world for all.”

Rafael Urquia II, a lawyer who has led a Manhattan House tenant group through several bumpy years, said of his neighbor-to-be, “There’s some irony in that.”

Mr. Hollender had speaking engagements on the West Coast last week and did not respond to several requests for comment.

Adam Leitman Bailey, a lawyer for the tenants’ group, would not comment on the conflict.

Dolly Lenz, the broker at Prudential Douglas Elliman who heads the sales effort at Manhattan House, said that the developers had been acting responsibly in carrying out the conversion.

She said she didn’t think the complaints were “anything at all unusual.” “It is the tenant-owner thing that

always happens in a conversion,” she said.

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