

Bob Friedrich is Co-President of the PCCC.
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This Co-op's Energy-Efficiency Scorecards Doubled as Wallpaper

By Amy Sara Clark

When Bob Friedrich, board president at the sprawling Glen Oaks Village co-op, began looking out for the co-op's inaugural batch of energy-efficiency scorecards earlier this month, he thought he would get 12, one for each section of the garden-apartment complex in northeast Queens.

But he underestimated, just a bit.

"We start getting, every day in our email boxes, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80 scorecards, and I realize what's going on," Friedrich says. "They're giving us a scorecard – literally – for every apartment address." Glen Oaks Village consists of 134 two-story buildings sprinkled across 110 grassy acres, and it's home to some 3,000 families. Each unit has its own address and a front door that opens onto the sidewalk. The only common space is the on-site management office. Buildings that fall under Local Law 95, part of the city's Climate Mobilization Act, must post their energy-efficiency scorecards prominently in a common area every year by Oct. 31. The scorecards contain a letter grade and a numerical ranking, which position a building's energy efficiency relative to similar buildings nationwide. "By the letter of the law," Friedrich says, "we would literally have to post about 1,000 to 1,500 scorecards. I call it scorecard wallpaper. We just don't have the room in the management office to post that many scorecards."

Before the wallpaper hangers got busy, Friedrich discovered a solution. Garden apartment complexes like Glen Oaks Village can comply with Local Law 95 at the "campus" level and get a single energy-efficiency scorecard for the entire co-op. Glen Oaks is in the process of trying to change the co-op's designation. In the meantime, the co-op is posting one scorecard for each of the 12 sections of the complex and keeping the rest of the scorecards in a binder in the management office.

Glen Oaks' "scorecard wallpaper" is just one example of the glitches that have come with the implementation of Local Law 95. "It's the first year of the new law and there's a lot to figure out," says Jeannine Altavilla Cooper, director of energy analysis for New York at Bright Power, an energy-efficiency consulting company that has worked with more than 1,500 buildings to comply with the city's Local Law 84/133 and Local Law 95, including Glen Oaks Village. "The labels were released on Oct. 1 and have to be posted by the end of the month. So it's a quick turnaround time. There have been a lot of questions." Andrew Rudansky, press secretary at the city's Department of Buildings (DOB), says he can't comment on Glen Oaks Village specifically, but he points to information from the Environmental Protection Agency: "Multiple-family residential properties are eligible to receive an Energy Star score at the campus level, in which case multiple buildings on the campus would have the same campus score."

Switching Glen Oaks Village's designation to campus would solve the scorecard wallpaper problem, but it won't alleviate Friedrich's larger concerns about the new law. He contends it uses a regressive formula that favors the wealthy and puts undue burden on middle- and working-class shareholders, and the algorithm doesn't do enough to take a building's resident density into account.

"It's all wrapped in a wonderful sounding 'Green New Deal,' and I think the intentions may be good," Friedrich says. "But the scary part is that down the road there might be hefty penalties that working-class communities like mine can't afford."