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New York1 of 12
Lower Manhattan's
Big Shift2 of 12
Honoring 9/11
With Art3 of 12
Cancer Center
Nears in N.J.

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Database Tracks 'Affordable' Units

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GET ALL OF WSJ.COM: **SUBSCRIBE NOW - GET 2 WEEKS FREE**By **LAURA KUSISTO**

A new database providing the first comprehensive picture of New York City's more than 171,000 "affordable-housing" units finds that one-quarter of the units could begin charging market rates in the next five years without renewed subsidies.

The funding for affordable housing in the city is provided by a hodgepodge of agencies at all levels of government. A single affordable-housing project can depend on several types of federal, state and city funding.

Until now, information on the housing units was similarly disjointed, with each agency keeping its own database, so there was no city-wide view of existing affordable housing and when units could charge market rates.

The city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development, city Housing Development Corp., state Homes and Community Renewal and the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development have contributed data on their respective programs.

New York University's Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy compiled the information into a single database called the Subsidized Housing Information Project. It will be available to the public on the Furman website beginning Thursday.

More than 62,000 affordable-housing units in the city have begun charging market rents over the past few decades and subsidies for tens of thousands more are set to expire by 2015. The Bloomberg administration has made it a priority to maintain as many affordable-housing units in the city as possible, preserving more than 81,000 units since 2003.

But the lack of data has hampered those efforts, city officials said. "This allows us to think systemically about the timing of expiration of units," Housing Preservation and Development Commissioner Mathew Wambua said of the new database.

The database shows about 11,000 affordable-housing units could expire in the next few years without any way to renew them because they are part of programs that no longer exist.

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