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## Roughin' it to roofin' it

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Sheryl-Ann Peters' occupation was never televised.

But unlike Occupy Wall Street protesters — who recently seized a vacant East New York home and moved in a homeless family — her housing takeover was entirely legal.

Peters became a first-time homeowner last month thanks to an affordable-housing program for neighborhoods hardest hit by the housing crisis.

The city bought the vacant, foreclosed, three-bedroom in St. Albans, Queens in August 2010 for \$266,833 under a federal housing program. It added \$177,190 worth of renovations, bringing the total worth to \$444,023.

Then it sold the house for only \$300,000 to Peters, a school-bus driver originally from Trinidad and Tobago. She had applied to the affordable-housing program last year and closed the deal last month.

Now she and son Kai, 2, have a house with a big yard on Quencer Road to call their own. "The first thing I did was pray. Then I did a complete cleaning job," she said.

Before mopping the floors and unpacking the boxes in her new home, Sheryl-Ann Peters got on her knees.

The program, overseen locally by the city Department of Housing Preservation and Development, aims to answer 94 more prayers.

About \$59 million in city, state, federal and private money is being used to buy 95 vacant and foreclosed homes. — and sell them to income-eligible buyers. For example, a family of four can't earn more than \$98,000.

So far, three homes have been sold and 17 more are under contract.

Prospective homeowners recognized a good deal when they saw one.

"My front yard is huge and I have a nice driveway now," said Betty Miller, 44, who paid just \$250,000 for her 2,600-square-foot, four-bedroom home in Jamaica that she moved into this Thanksgiving.

"Now I don't have to deal with a landlord — why should I make him rich?" said Miller, a school-safety officer who pays about as much in her mortgage, \$1,100 as she was paying to rent in Canarsie.

Her dream house is finally sinking in.

"When I got the key, I knew this was real. There was no turning back," Miller said.

That's a powerful feeling, said Salvatore D'Avola, executive director of Neighborhood Restore, the nonprofit operating the nationwide program for the city.

"Home ownership is a way for people to control their own destiny and have a stake in their community," he said.

More information about the program may be found here: [www.neighborhoodrestore.com/homeowner.html](http://www.neighborhoodrestore.com/homeowner.html)

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