HEAT SEEK

Impact Report

2015-2016

Letter from the Executive Director

Noelle Francois

Now that winter is upon us, I am excited for this season...and cannot wait for it to be over. My colleagues and I are eager to set in motion several programs to concentrate our efforts in the neighborhoods and buildings where our sensor data is most valuable. We've come a long way since our early BigApps days, and have built both a game-changing piece of technology and a thoughtful, data driven program to match it. I'm proud of the partnerships we've developed with attorneys, community organizers, and perhaps most importantly, the City of New York, all of whom use our sensors to serve some of the city's most vulnerable tenants.

But let's be honest, winter is the worst. What I'm really looking forward to is the end of heat season, when we'll get to see the outcomes of our hard work: the pictures that emerge from our data advocacy, the people who have had their heat restored, the cases that were litigated effectively, and the bad landlords who were held accountable.

As we look forward to lots of work this winter, I'm thankful to have a strong team to get it all done. In this new phase in our life as an organization, we give thanks for the work of our outgoing Chief Technology Officer and co-founder, William Jeffries, who has stepped down from his position to pursue other work. William will continue to be part of the Heat Seek family, as he moves to the Board of Advisors and works with technical volunteers. While we will miss his humor, dedication, and care for tenants and team members, I continue to give thanks for William's lasting contribution: building and supporting our technology to provide low-cost temperature sensors and an online application for at-risk tenants and their advocates.

As William takes his leave, we welcome a new Director of Programs, Anthony Damelio, to our team. Anthony brings a background of organizing, work in housing issues, and a focus on program development and evaluation. He has been integral to our work, both this spring in evaluating our pilot from last year, and throughout the summer as we developed our programs for this upcoming winter. Come see him and the rest of the team at our home at Beespace, the premier non-profit incubator in midtown where we've taken up residence until the end of 2017.

Please keep an eye out for updates from Heat Seek, as we deploy our sensors in late fall with our partners and begin this exciting winter!

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“Upon seeing Heat Seek data, the landlord and his attorney agreed to waive all rent claims and provide a rent-stabilized lease.”

ATTORNEY,
BRONX

Keeping the Heat On in New York City

In New York City, landlords are obliged to maintain apartments heated within certain temperatures. Last winter, the city received over 200,000 heat-related complaints from 37,000 unique buildings, concentrated in lower-income neighborhoods throughout Upper Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. And yet, less than 4% of those complaints resulted in a violation. Thousands of New Yorkers are freezing in their homes, with few resources to get the heat turned up.

Heat Seek works at the intersection of innovative technology and tenant advocacy to provide new tools in the fight to maintain affordable housing in New York City. A non-profit organization that empowers lawyers, organizers, and city officials, we provide low-cost, web-connected temperature sensors to tenants facing heating abuse and harassment, and we conduct analysis of both temperature data and citywide data to provide new ways for advocates to target and reach at-risk tenants.

Begun in the winter of 2014 through a collaboration between tech entrepreneurs and social justice advocates, Heat Seek tracks temperatures inside the apartments of struggling New Yorkers by building an economical temperature sensor and an online app.

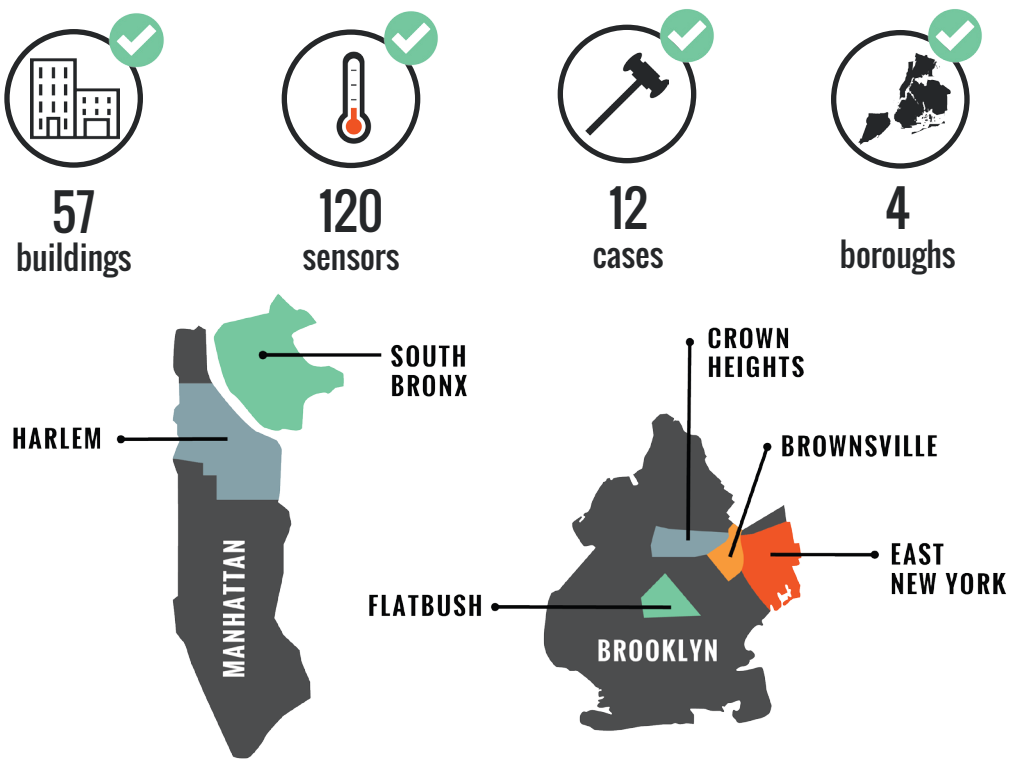
At the intersection of innovative technology & tenant advocacy

Expanding our Impact

In the fall of 2015, Heat Seek NYC set out to achieve an ambitious goal: install temperature sensors throughout the boroughs of New York City, so that tenants who lack legal heat are able to hold their landlords accountable. Grateful for the financial support of our partners, Heat Seek was able to design and purchase 120 sensors, a 90% increase from the previous winter, which enabled us to achieve results for New Yorkers.

As of 2016, Heat Seek has deployed sensors in 57 buildings across four New York City boroughs, with a heavy concentration of sensors serving communities in Upper Manhattan, East Brooklyn, and South Bronx. As our reach grows, our focus remains on tenants who are willing and able to bring legal action in housing court - particularly in neighborhoods that are at high risk of economic and demographic displacement like Harlem, Crown Heights and East New York.

In 2016, 12 cases were litigated, representing more than 20 of our buildings. In eight of those cases, tenants received positive settlements such as rent abatements and legally binding pledges from landlords to provide heat.



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“Your heat sensor is a godsend; it gave me a sense of power and peace of mind.”

TENANT,
WEST HARLEM

Our Leadership Team

Executive Director Noelle Francois comes to Heat Seek from a background in social justice, with a focus on housing policy and community development. She holds a Master of Public Administration from New York University and Bachelor of Arts from the College of William and Mary.

Director of Programs Anthony Damelio brings years of experience in non-profits focused on poverty and housing issues. He holds a bachelor's degree from Fordham University and a master's from Yale University and comes most recently from work on issues of homelessness in Atlanta, GA.

Composed of a variety of professionals in New York City, Heat Seek's nine-person Board of Directors provides strategic oversight and support for fundraising, visioning, and governance.

Heat Seek is grateful for the dedicated support of countless volunteers, many of whom donate their technical expertise in hardware and software engineering, data science, law, and business development.

HEAT SEEK
NYC

heatseek.org