

## Foreclosure prevention clinics to assist Stamford, Norwalk homeowners

By MATT KIERNAN Times Staff Writer  
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STAMFORD — A nonprofit housing advocacy group announced Tuesday the return of foreclosure prevention classes to help Norwalk and Stamford residents who are living in fear of losing their homes.

The clinics, hosted by the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, will start Wednesday in Stamford and continue on May 21 in Norwalk and June 18 in Bridgeport.

“We’ve had some small progress forward in the economy. It’s getting a bit stronger, but a number of homeowners are still struggling with their homes,” Mayor David Martin said in the Mayor’s Office Conference Room at Stamford Government Center.

Martin was joined by state Sen. Carlo Leone, state Rep. William Tong, Connecticut Fair Housing Center managing attorney Jeffrey Gentes, Rev. Robert W. Perry of Union Baptist Church and Rev. Carl McCluster of the Shiloh Baptist Church in Bridgeport for the announcement.

According to Martin, many people do not know of the best ways to keep their homes when they are facing foreclosure.

“These foreclosure clinics are meant to present the information so that the people know where to turn to, how to go through the process and how to best resolve their issues,” Leone said.

At the local clinics, an attorney from Connecticut Fair Housing Center will educate homeowners with any type of mortgage difficulty on how to represent themselves in court.

Attendees will learn about federal and state resources that are available from the Department of Banking and a state Judicial Branch mediator.

Visitors may also meet one-on-one with local volunteer attorneys to discuss their individual situations.

In addition, they will receive copies of the manual “Connecticut Fair Housing Center’s Representing Yourself in Foreclosure: A Guide for Connecticut Homeowners.”

The classes are free and do not require registration.

“We’ll be respectful of your privacy and very conscious of that it takes effort to come out of your house and come to the clinic,” Gentes said.

The state’s Judicial Branch reported in February that from July to December 2013, there were 1,201 foreclosure cases in mediation from homeowners living in municipalities between Greenwich and Westport.

In 2013, there were 488 homes in the process of foreclosure in Stamford, but resulted in zero home foreclosures, according to statistics released by the real estate sales publisher The Warren Group.

“The economy here is so reliant on the financial industry and given the financial industry’s struggles, starting in 2007, 2008, we had so many people’s income reliant on the financial industry, and we had so many folks that crashed,” said Gentes.

Leone said the idea of losing a house can be “scary” to residents, and that the information they receive is not always accurate.

Tong and Leone co-chair the state General Assembly’s Banking Committee, which addresses legislation related to foreclosures.

“It’s a traumatic scenario to go through and if you know don’t how to do it you can easily be overwhelmed,” Leone said.

The foreclosure prevention classes have been held in Bridgeport, Norwalk and Stamford since February 2011.

Over the last three years, they have served more than 450 homeowners.

“This isn’t an issue that just effects the cities, this effects the county as a whole,” said Gentes.

Stamford’s foreclosure prevention class will be hosted from 6-8:30 p.m. in the Stamford Government Center 4th floor cafeteria at 888 Washington Boulevard.

*The Hartford-based Connecticut Fair Housing Center is a statewide nonprofit dedicated to eliminating discrimination in housing through education, research and advocacy, according to its website.*

*For more information about Connecticut Fair Housing Center’s clinics, visit [www.ctfairhousing.org](http://www.ctfairhousing.org) or call the center at (860) 263-0731.*