

<https://nypost.com/2024/06/08/us-news/nyc-woman-93-left-broke-despite-owning-a-10-unit-brooklyn-building-family-claims/>

NYC woman, 93, left with no money despite owning a 10-unit Brooklyn building, family claims

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A Brooklyn immigrant's \$4 million nest egg is off-limits when she needs it most during her final years because of ineffective court-appointed guardians, her family contends.

Aleksandra Chodowiec, 93, arrived in the U.S. from her native Wroclaw in western Poland by herself in 1973 at the age of 43. She worked two jobs, in an envelope factory and cleaning Manhattan offices.

In just two years, the industrious Chodowiec saved enough dough to purchase what should have been a golden ticket: a five-story rental building with eight apartments and two commercial units in Greenpoint.



Aleksandra Chodowiec worked two jobs to save enough to buy the building in the 1970s, her family said. Courtesy of Aleksandra Chodowiec



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Chodowiec’s affairs became subject to a state guardianship proceeding in 2018, after a family dispute erupted over her care, records show.. Helayne Seidman

“She escaped from communism, which she hated,” said her son-in-law, Andrzej Szymanik. “She came to New York because she always wanted to come to America and fulfill her American dream – which she did!”

Chodowiec plunked down an \$8,000 down payment on the Java Street building.

The \$70,000 investment is now worth more than \$4 million, court records show.

But now Chodowiec suffers from dementia, and the income from her lucrative property that could pay the constant care she needs is nowhere to be found, her relatives charge.

The elder woman’s affairs became subject to a state guardianship proceeding in 2018, after a family dispute erupted over Chodowiec’s care, records show.

Property guardian William Ellerton was eventually appointed by a Brooklyn judge to oversee the Java Street building, where Eva and Andrzej control one of the commercial units and other relatives live in some of the apartments.



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Chodowiec came to the United States alone in 1973 from her native Poland. Courtesy of Aleksandra Chodowiec

Ellerton, who was paid \$25,000 in 2020 for “temporary” work on the case before he was appointed as property guardian, has a range of powers authorized by the court, including paying for Chodowiec’s home health aides; charging fair market rent for the Java Street apartments, and establishing a budget.

It’s unclear how much Ellerton is paid to oversee the case.

But Szymanik, 71, contends that after years of oversight Ellerton has failed to rent out the units, and takes months to reimburse him and Eva for Chodowiec’s expenses — even her adult diapers.

One two-bedroom unit could rent for \$3,000 to \$4,000 a month, according to court papers. The building used to generate \$100,000 income annually, claimed Szymanik.

He claims Ellerton has ignored prospective tenants who want to rent spaces, including a local baker interested in one of the commercial units.

“He wanted to rent it and he called many, many times and got no response,” Szymanik contended.



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The building needs substantial renovation, Ellerton told The Post.

“To produce income on an apartment, I’d think you have to fix it up,” he said, noting one of the available units was occupied by a rent-controlled tenant who died after more than three decades there, leaving it in dire need of repair.

Ellerton said he's been waiting months for a judge to approve his requests to work with a real estate attorney and broker to determine the future of the building and that the family is opposed to selling the property.

“Among other things, I asked was for the court to address various issues including whether it should be sold,” he said, adding that the Szymaniks don't pay rent on the commercial unit they occupy.

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