

TenantAid — NYC Housing Legal Help App

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One-sentence: TenantAid is a bilingual (English/Spanish) mobile + web app that provides NYC tenants with plain-English legal explanations, an AI legal-chatbot for triage and next steps, automated form generation, and one-tap referrals to NYC legal services — built for privacy, accessibility, and public-interest impact.

Why it would impress Rep. Jerry Nadler: focuses on housing justice, tenant protections, legal transparency, ADA/linguistic accessibility, partnerships with legal aid, and measurable outcomes for oversight and policy.

1. Core Features (MVP → stretch)

- AI chatbot for legal triage.
- Legal jargon simplifier.
- Tenant rights library.
- Referral network to NYC legal aid.
- Fillable legal templates.
- Privacy-first design.
- Optional data dashboard for policymakers.

Stretch:

- OCR for notices.
- Calendar reminders.
- Secure messaging with lawyers.
- Multilingual expansion.

2. User Journeys

- Chatbot triage (detects issue, explains rights, suggests next steps).
- Document explainer (uploads, OCR, highlights deadlines).
- Education modules + template generation.

3. Data Sources

- NYC.gov tenant pages, HPD, 311.
- NY State housing laws.
- Legal Aid Society & partner orgs.
- Cornell LII, NYS Courts resources.

4. Legal & Ethical Guardrails

- Disclaimers (not legal advice).

- Immediate escalation for high-risk cases.
- Data minimization & encryption.
- Retention limits.
- Accessibility (WCAG 2.1 AA).

5. Architecture Overview

Frontend: React + React Native

Backend: Node.js (Express/Fastify)

DB: PostgreSQL

AI: RAG with curated NYC housing law KB

OCR: Tesseract/cloud OCR

Storage: Encrypted S3-compatible

Auth: OAuth/Anonymous sessions

6. AI Pipeline (RAG)

1. Curate NYC/NYS housing law nodes.
2. Sanitize + entity extraction.
3. Retrieve top-k docs via embeddings.
4. Prompt model with sources.
5. Filter hallucinations + enforce citations.

7. Example User Flow

"My landlord changed the locks" → chatbot → clarifies facts → plain-English summary → immediate steps + NYC legal aid referral → optional repair request template.

8. Partnerships

- Legal Aid Society, Neighborhood Defender Service.
- NYC311 / HPD data integrations.
- Community tenant orgs.
- Law school clinics for review.
- City/federal policymakers for reporting.

9. Privacy & Safety

- Explicit consent & data deletion options.
- Redacted analytics.
- Secure storage & transport.

- Bias & fairness tests.

10. Social Impact Metrics

- Tenants helped by borough.
- Evictions prevented (via partner data).
- Languages used (accessibility measure).
- Number of legal referrals triggered.
- Policy insights for NYC officials.

11. Phased Development

1. Knowledge base + partner agreements.
2. Core AI + OCR prototype.
3. Frontend MVP.
4. Legal validation + pilot.
5. Neighborhood launch.
6. Iterate + scale.

12. Policy Pitch (for Nadler)

“This app reduces barriers to justice for NYC tenants by translating legal rhetoric into plain English, connecting people to legal services, and providing policymakers with anonymized data to target interventions.”

Civil rights focus: ADA, language access, privacy, measurable justice impact.