

B'KLYN INFERNO LANDLORD AN INFERNAL LANDLORD: BUYERS

By ALEX GINSBERG

September 7, 2006 -- The controversial Brooklyn landlord whose Greenpoint waterfront property burned down earlier this year under mysterious circumstances has run into more trouble - furious owners say the luxury DUMBO condos he sold them are deathtraps.

An \$18 million lawsuit filed Tuesday in Brooklyn Supreme Court by 38 residents of 50 Bridge St. names Joshua Guttman and four other corporate and individual defendants.

According to the papers, the six-story converted warehouse suffers from a leaky roof, crummy ventilation, weak water pressure and almost non-existent insulation - and nearly all the problems have been tied to documented violations of city building codes.

"This guy built a piece of junk," said lawyer Adam Bailey. "He's basically ruined these people's lives."

Banking executive Darren Karp thought he was getting a dream home when he purchased his sixth-floor duplex for just under \$900,000.

"One month after we moved in, immediately, the roof is leaking, puddles in the living room, damage to the furniture and the floor," said Karp, 41.

The residents hired an independent firm to study the building's problems. It found, among other violations, that many "ventilation" ducts lead to dead ends rather than the outside air.

Perhaps most disturbing is the fact that the sixth floor, which was added to the existing structure, sits atop a cockloft - an unobstructed, building-wide open stretch through which fire would spread quickly.

"This guy was sent by the devil," said Bailey, who will be in court in two weeks to seek to remove Guttman from the condo's board.

Records reveal that Guttman's properties in Brooklyn have been involved in at least five other fires since 1992, not counting the most recent blaze on the Greenpoint waterfront. Four were considered suspicious.