



Common Ground hosts ribbon cutting for 190-unit LEED certified building

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On June 2, New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development commissioner Rafael Cestero, Department of Homeless Services commissioner Seth Diamond, Bronx Borough president Ruben Diaz, Jr., and Common Ground held the official opening and ribbon cutting ceremony for The Brook at 455 East 148th St. The 190-unit, \$43 million building will expand the extensive portfolio of supportive and affordable housing that Common Ground provides in the New York metropolitan area.

The Brook was developed under the city's New Housing Marketplace Plan (NHMP), which was launched by Mayor Michael Bloomberg in 2003. The Plan, to build or preserve 165,000 units of affordable housing by 2014, has resulted in more than 100,000 units financed to date. Through contracts such as High Needs 2, New York New York III, and other supportive housing initiatives, the city has financed nearly 3,100 units of supportive housing since 2005.

"This is our first building in the Bronx," said Tim Marx, executive director of Common Ground. "Like all of our housing, it will act as a catalyst for community revitalization while also supporting our mission to end homelessness."

The building architect is Alexander Gorlin Architects; the general contractor is Mountco Construction and Development Corporation.

Within The Brook, 120 units are reserved for formerly homeless adults, including those with special needs, and 70 units are reserved for low-income single adults from the South Bronx. Common Ground's service partner, BronxWorks (formerly Citizens Advice Bureau), will provide on-site social services through a team of social workers and other professionals.

Says BronxWorks executive director Carolyn McLaughlin, "We are pleased to join forces with Common Ground in this very important venture. The Brook represents the next step in our comprehensive approach to eliminating street homelessness in the Bronx."

Later this year, Common Ground will also celebrate the opening of two additional buildings that it developed to provide supportive housing - in Brownsville, Brooklyn and on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, adding 335 more units of affordable housing, for a total of more than 2,700 units created or managed by Common Ground in New York City.

"I am pleased to see yet another green building open in our borough," said Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. "The Brook will bring together a wonderful mix of working people, the formerly homeless and others with special needs in independent, supportive housing in this beautiful LEED Silver building that was achieved through a \$500,000 capital grant from my office. It is buildings like this that help assure The Bronx is the 'greenest borough.' Common Ground's track record of developing innovative housing for our neediest residents throughout the New York metropolitan area is why we are proud to have Common Ground in The Bronx."

"For the formerly homeless who are working to put their lives back on track, the necessity of a safe, stable and affordable home can not be overstated," said HPD Commissioner Rafael E. Cestero. "Wrapped in a supportive environment with the resources and the assistance these individuals need to reach their true potential, the Brook is a safe haven where second chances can begin in earnest. Today's ribbon cutting is the manifestation of our Administration's investment in the future of these tenants and this City - one that will serve to strengthen the community and pay dividends well into the future. Thanks to the support of DHS, and partners like Common Ground and BronxWorks we are able to continue our mission of creating a stronger, more diverse, and sustainable New York."

"The Brook will further our goal to help more individuals return to independent living," said Homeless Services Commissioner Seth Diamond. "Through this supportive housing facility clients will be able to receive the services needed to develop important life skills, gain confidence and move towards self-sufficiency. Common Ground has been a pioneer in the development of supportive housing and along with BronxWorks a leader in the fight to end homelessness- both equipping individuals with the resources necessary to live with dignity and independence in the community. We are proud to partner with them in their efforts."

Brian Lawlor, president and CEO of the NYS Housing Finance Agency and Commissioner of the NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal, said, "We are very proud to join with Common Ground and our partners in the State and City to finance the Brook Avenue Apartments. Providing affordable housing for the homeless is one of top housing priorities of the Paterson administration and we are honored to finance the 189 housing units that have been created at Brook Avenue."

Total development cost for the project was \$43,275,653. HPD provided a \$17.1 million low-interest loan (HOME & HOPWA funding). The Bronx Borough President's office also provided a \$500,000 award to fund green construction. The N.Y. State Housing Finance Agency (HFA) provided \$22.3 million in tax-exempt bond financing during the construction period. The letter of credit bank during construction was Bank of America. JP Morgan Capital Corporation provided permanent financing of \$18,205,555 in 4% low income tax credit equity. Other sources of funds included NY State Homeless Housing Assistance Program (HHAP), Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program, Common Ground green contribution, and deferred developer's fee.

The new, 90,000 s/f building boasts a 2,400 s/f community event space available to neighborhood residents and organizations, a large courtyard garden, computer lab, fitness room, on-site laundry and 24-hour security. Environmentally sustainable features include a green roof, a state-of-the-art high efficiency building management system to control temperature, light and motion sensors, low-VOC paints and materials and high-efficiency boilers.

The Bronxchester community, where the Brook is located, is the site of a number of new affordable housing projects funded by HPD and the City's Housing Development Corporation (HDC). Overall, in the Bronx, under Mayor Bloomberg's New Housing Marketplace Plan, 31,779 affordable housing units have been financed, including 5,604 in Community District 1, where The Brook is located. Of these affordable units, 5,099 are homeownership and 26,680 are rentals. A total of 15,488 of the units in the Bronx are newly constructed, including The Brook.