



## The Community Builders celebrates ribbon cutting of Beach 21st project

August 23, 2022 - Design / Build



New resident Jasmine Jenkins and New York City mayor Eric Adams cut the ribbon on Beach 21st, The Community Builders' mixed-use affordable housing development in Queens.

Queens, NY The Community Builders and mayor Eric Adams marked the completion of two major projects transforming downtown Far Rockaway with 224 affordable homes and major infrastructure upgrades enhancing street safety, climate resiliency, and quality of life completed ahead of schedule. Together, the two projects brought \$234 million in investment to downtown Far Rockaway—delivering on key commitments from the “Downtown Far Rockaway Roadmap for Action,” a comprehensive plan released in 2016 to revitalize the neighborhood and improve quality of life for local residents.

“These projects exemplify what it means for New York to become a ‘City of Yes,’” said mayor Adams. “This is the kind of community-led and community-supported investment we want to see more of and a prime example of government working the right way for the people of this city—getting this done ahead of schedule and under budget. Today is a great day for the Rockaways and another great day of ‘getting stuff done’ for New Yorkers.”

Led by the NYC Economic Development Corp. (NYCEDC), the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), and the NYC Housing Development Corp. (HDC), the \$120 million project—called Beach 21st—transformed vacant city-owned land into a new, 100% affordable, mixed-use development project with 224 affordable homes near the Far Rockaway-Mott Ave. subway station.

Supporting access to vital transit, daycare, and jobs, the building offers apartments affordable to New Yorkers earning between 40 and 80% of area median income, with 23 homes with on-site services reserved for New Yorkers who formerly experienced homelessness. The building includes on-site laundry, a fitness room, and a rooftop terrace with a walking track, as well as 28,000 s/f of retail and community space, including a day care center.

Carried out by the New York City Department of Design and Construction (DDC), in partnership with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT), the \$114 million infrastructure project was originally estimated to cost \$139 million and require seven years, then promised to the community in three years, and now has been delivered three months ahead of the promised three-year schedule and \$25 million under budget. The project includes critical street safety improvements, including the addition of more sidewalks, landscaping, and green infrastructure. It also includes upgrades to 25 blocks of stormwater draining to help reduce the flooding risk from heavy rain.

A new, 15,000-foot pedestrian plaza will offer community space maintained by DOT, the Rockaway East Merchants Association, and the Horticultural Society of New York for events, seating, greenery, bike racks, and a public restroom.

In total, the work included:

- More than two miles of new storm sewers and 88 new catch basins to alleviate flooding,
- More than two miles of new curbs,
- 101,000 square feet of new sidewalks,
- 10,000 feet of existing sanitary sewers replaced with new pipes,
- 10,000 feet of aging water mains replaced with new pipes, and
- A net gain of 71 new trees for the neighborhood.

The infrastructure project received the Award for Excellence in Design from the New York City

Public Design Commission in 2017. DDC is also building the new Far Rockaway Library for Queens Public Library in the same community, which is anticipated to open next year.

These critical improvements were informed and supported by the Downtown Far Rockaway Working Group, a team of community members, businesses, and nonprofits, along with local and state elected officials. They created the Downtown Far Rockaway Roadmap for Action in 2016, which spurred a rezoning that prioritized affordable housing and support for area businesses.

“NYCEDC worked with the community, our city partners, and The Community Builders to transform vacant city-owned land at Beach 21st Street into a new mixed-use development that supports affordable housing and access to vital transit, day care, and jobs,” said NYCEDC president and CEO Andrew Kimball. “The project further delivers on the mayor’s commitment to an inclusive economic recovery. We thank the mayor, our city partners, the local elected officials, and community members for working with us to prioritize affordability and quality-of-life improvements for New Yorkers who call the peninsula home.”

“This is a great day for Far Rockaway. These affordable units — when partnered with great community space and \$114 million in streetscape improvements — represent a game-changing moment for this community,” said New York City Department of City Planning director and City Planning Commission chair Dan Garodnick. “Congratulations to borough president Donovan Richards, The Community Builders, and all of our partner agencies that helped to make this possible.”

“Seven years ago, I convened the Downtown Far Rockaway Working Group to develop a \$288 million roadmap for this community’s revitalization and reverse decades of deliberate disinvestment. I could not be more proud of the life-changing progress we are delivering for the families of this neighborhood in the form of housing, open space, education, and beyond — it truly is a new day for Far Rockaway, where its residents are finally being heard loud and clear,” said Queens borough president Donovan Richards Jr. “The culmination of this tireless work is the creation of thousands of affordable housing units — including the 224 affordable units being announced today, along with a day care and tens of thousands of feet of community space — along with \$114 million worth of street safety and green infrastructure upgrades. It’s been one of the great honors of my career to bring this game-changing project to life alongside the litany of community stakeholders, elected officials, and city agencies like EDC and HPD, as part of our collective push to rejuvenate one of our city’s most dynamic and diverse neighborhoods.”

“Opening the doors to Beach 21st marks a milestone for housing and economic opportunity on the Rockaway peninsula,” said Jesse Batus, director of development, The Community Builders. “We are proud to deliver new, quality, affordable homes for 224 families and 28,000 s/f of commercial and community space, including a day care center. I extend my deepest thanks and a well-earned congratulations to our partners, stakeholders, and neighbors who made this development possible, including Mayor Eric Adams, Queens Borough President Donovan Richards, the Downtown Far Rockaway Working Group, our funders, and most especially the residents of Beach 21st.”

“The Beach 21st Street development led by The Community Builders is another shining example of the revitalization of Far Rockaway and the commitment the city is making to a more equitable place for all New Yorkers to be proud to call home,” said Kevin Alexander, president and CEO, Rockaway Development and Revitalization Corp. “What continues to inspire my team is the effort The Community Builders, Mega Group, and Building Skills made in getting local residents trained and certified to be employed on the site during the darkest days of the pandemic. We look forward to working with The Community Builders in their newest role as a Far Rockaway community stakeholder.”

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540