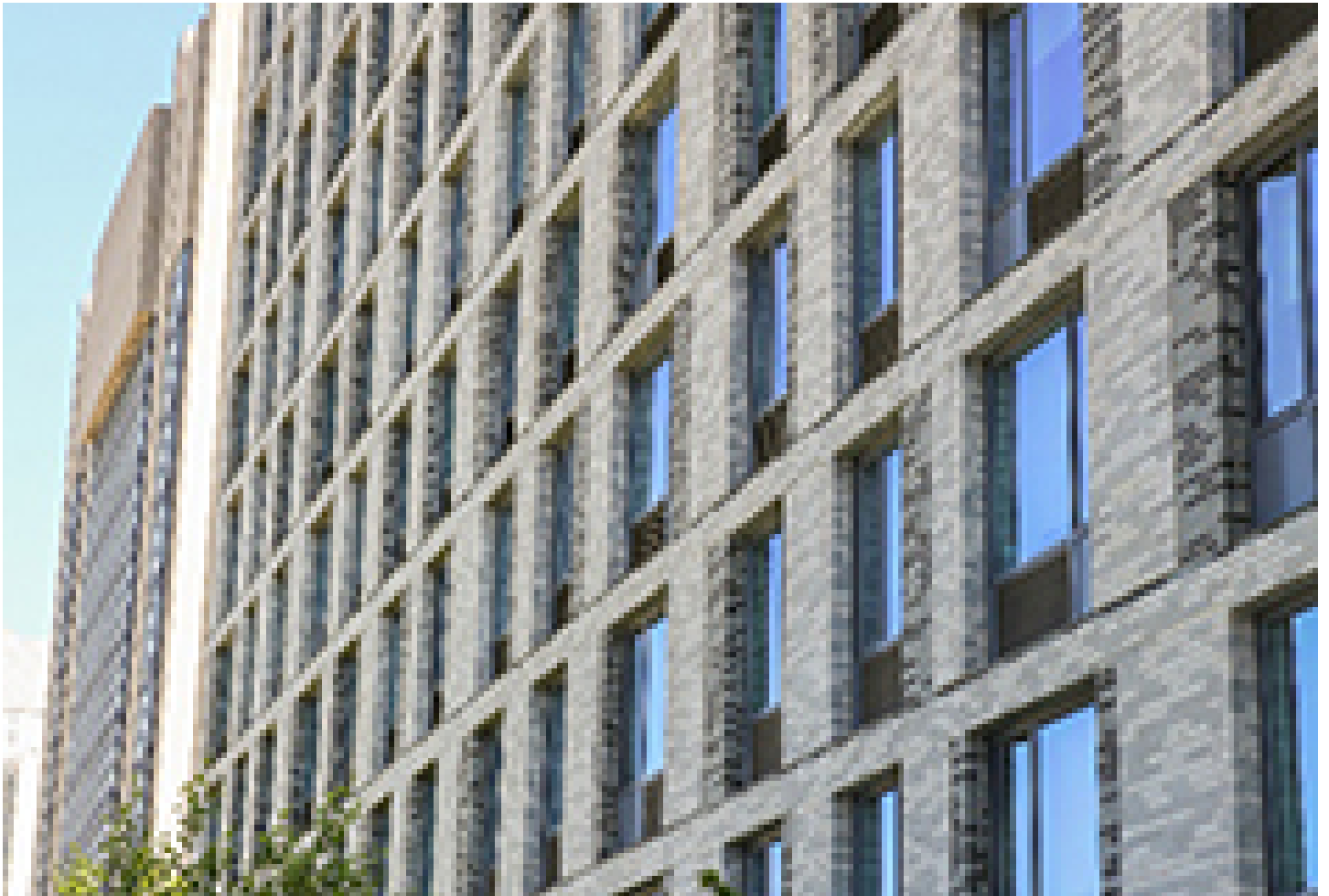




The New York Foundling opens 17-story supportive housing complex

June 11, 2024 - Owners Developers & Managers



Manhattan, NY The New York Foundling marked the completion of a major affordable and supportive housing complex in Harlem that will become a new model for helping youth who are aging out of foster care and exiting the shelter system.

Among the residents of the brand new, 17-story residential tower at 126 West 126th St. are 70 young people leaving foster care and the shelter system moving into 51 supportive housing apartments. The homes come with extensive on-site services to support their independence, from counseling and therapy to mentorship and job training. The program has a remarkable success rate: for each of the past four years, 95% of young people in The Foundling's scatter-site supportive housing have successfully transitioned within two years to living independently, whether in market rate or traditional income-restricted homes they may qualify for.

The new housing is part of a large mixed-use development project known as the Urban Empowerment Center. On Harlem's 125th St., the Center will bring the new headquarters, museum and institute for the National Urban League, offices for One Hundred Black Men of New York, the Studio Museum in Harlem, the United Negro College Fund, and Virginia Union University; and retail, including a Target and a Trader Joe's. The project's development partners are BRP Companies, L+M Development Partners, Taconic Partners, and The Prusik Group.

Financing for the project came from New York State, Goldman Sachs, Santander Bank and Redstone Equity Partners.

"Our hands-on program provides safe, affordable housing and critical services, including job training and support, that help put young people on track for healthy and fulfilling lives as adults. This is how we break the cycle of homelessness for these young people," said Melanie Hartzog, president and CEO of The New York Foundling, one of the city's oldest and largest human services organizations. "Easily accessible and centrally located, this supportive housing project represents a new model that builds a bridge from foster care to independent living. I thank governor Kathy Hochul and all of our incredible project partners for helping us bring this much needed project to the heart of Harlem."

"The New York Foundling was created more than 150 years ago to serve infants and children who were at risk of falling through society's cracks. Their enduring ethos is encapsulated in this \$93 million supportive housing development, which sits at the heart of the new Urban Empowerment Center," said RuthAnne Visnauskas, commissioner of the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal. "We know that the young people moving into this tremendous building will have the support they need to grow confidently into adulthood. I am proud of the role the state has played in financing this mixed-use development, the ingenuity and vision of our partners, and the determination that governor Kathy Hochul consistently displays in seeking solutions to our shared housing crisis."

"ESD is proud to partner with The New York Foundling to open this amazing new supportive housing project in the heart of Harlem, that is a key feature of the broader Urban Empowerment Center on 126 Street. Quality housing and economic development go hand-in-hand and The New York Foundling's unique approach combines housing access with programs that promote economic opportunity – unlocking the enormous personal potential of these young, resilient New Yorkers," Empire State Development president, CEO and commissioner Hope Knight said.

"Supportive housing is essential for promoting the health and well-being of young adults transitioning out of foster care as they work toward independence. governor Hochul and our partners at HCR recognize the positive impact stable housing combined with essential services can have on young people's lives and we congratulate The New York Foundling on the successful completion of this much-needed project," Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance commissioner Barbara Guinn said.

"As a youth in foster care, you never know where you'll end up or how you'll end up. But now, with

support from The New York Foundling and New York State, I have a safe space to lay my head – and in the heart of Harlem where you walk outside and are instantly inspired. I’m grateful for this wonderful opportunity. I plan to make the most of it,” said Venessa Riley, a resident of The New York Foundling’s Harlem supportive housing program.

About 1,000 young adults, 18 to 26 years old, age out of foster care in New York City each year. Many are at risk of homelessness and face obstacles finding housing, securing employment, completing school, and building a support system to guide them forward. Supportive housing residents are provided with affordable and fully furnished apartments, and they are paired with The Foundling staff who guide them in achieving financial, academic, and vocational goals.

Over 500 applicants have been received for the 51 apartments in one development, underlying the immense need for these homes, which are funded by the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative.

Harlem Supportive Housing Program Highlights:

- Supportive housing units for 70 young people: 19 two-bedroom, 22 one-bedroom and 10 studio apartments.
- Support services include coaching, mentoring, and referrals to evidence-based treatment and community-based organizations.
- Building amenities include The Foundling offices, a fitness center, laundry room, resident lounge, outdoor terrace and bike storage.
- Rents range from \$666 for a studio up to \$1,478 for a two-bedroom; cost of rent is dependent upon monthly income. Housing vouchers are welcomed.
- Easy access to 125th St. business district, the A/B/C/D/2/3/4/5/6 subway lines, major bus routes and Metro-North.

“After many years of discussing, planning and finally constructing, we are now able to witness the transformative moment of awarding a young person the keys to their own apartment. Through the efforts of local elected officials, public and private partnerships and a great deal of luck, we can now celebrate these well-deserving individuals who have earned this opportunity after waiting in some instances years to enjoy their own safe, stable environment that they can call their own. This will afford them the sense of independence and security they have long awaited. Everyone is deserving of quality affordable housing, and I am proud of the efforts I helped to bring negotiating the level of affordability to keep this project accessible to middle- and low-income residents,” said New York State assembly member Inez Dickens. “I would like to thank The New York Foundling’s Melanie Hartzog, Division for Home and Community Renewal’s Commissioner RuthAnne Visnauskas, the Office of Temporary Disability assistance, commissioner Barbara Quinn and the National Urban League for collaborating on this project of hope, right here on Harlem’s famed 125th St.”

“This housing will change lives – that’s not an overstatement. Youth aging out of foster care are some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers and connecting them to a safe place to live with wraparound services is the first step to a stable future,” said Manhattan borough president Mark Levine. “Thank you to the New York Foundling and New York State for the partnership that made this possible, and I look forward to seeing how the building’s residents thrive.”

“I am so pleased that The Foundling’s program has found a home here in Harlem. Their Supportive Housing program provides an essential service to many young people in need of support, and we are thrilled that we will soon be able to welcome its residents – our new wonderful neighbors – into our Museum when it reopens. There, they will be able to engage with, and experience the great power of art within our community,” said Thelma Golden, director and chief curator of the Studio Museum in Harlem.

“Today, as we celebrate young people building futures in Harlem, we at UNCF are celebrating our 80th anniversary. As part of this amazing development project, UNCF will be returning to Harlem, where our story began in 1944, and where we will continue to bring together allies from all backgrounds to uplift our nation’s HBCUs and students,” said Diego Aviles, vice president, Northeast Division of the United Negro College Fund.

“This transformative housing project in Harlem is a beacon of hope and a testament to the power of community and collaboration. At Virginia Union University, we are committed to empowering young people, and our involvement in this project aligns perfectly with our mission to nurture and produce leaders who are prepared to create positive changes in their communities. The comprehensive on-site services offered, such as job training and mentorship, are crucial for fostering independence and resilience among youth transitioning out of foster care. We are proud to be part of this initiative, which not only supports these young adults in their journey towards

independence but also enriches the Harlem community as a whole,” Dr. Hakim Lucas, president, and CEO of Virginia Union University said.

“We’re excited to celebrate this milestone alongside the New York Foundling and all development partners involved at a time where the delivery of affordable housing offerings is critically needed across the greater Harlem community and New York City as a whole,” said Andy Cohen, Managing Director at BRP Companies. “With an added focus on our youth population aging out of foster care, this development aims to provide residents with the resources needed to foster upward mobility and opportunity, and we’re proud to be part of what this project represents.”

“This partnership with the New York Foundling brings the type of high-quality housing and comprehensive supportive services that young people need to thrive upon exiting either the shelter system or foster care,” said Lisa Gomez, CEO of L+M Development Partners. “Projects like this are particularly exciting because they go beyond creating affordable homes – they help foster stronger communities where residents are set up for success. We are grateful for Governor Kathy Hochul’s leadership and to our partners for helping to bring this vision to life.”

In addition to the new Harlem development and with the support of New York State, The Foundling already operates three supportive housing programs in Brooklyn, including two scatter site programs in 20 buildings and serving 40 young people across 33 apartment units. Of 48 youths, 46 have successfully transitioned to independent living within two years.

In September 2022, as part of New York State's Vital Brooklyn Initiative, The Foundling opened Vital Brookdale, its first model supportive housing development, in Brownsville. The complex's 160 deeply affordable apartments include 36 homes for young adults aging out of foster care and New Yorkers with developmental disabilities, two groups that often experience steep obstacles to living on their own. Besides Vital Brookdale and 126 W. 126th Street, a third similarly modeled supportive housing project – where youth are housed together rather than in scattered buildings – operated by The Foundling and funded by New York State is being planned for the Bronx.

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