Common Ground opens green housing for low-income

On Wednesday, June 2, New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development Commissioner Rafael E. Cesterio, Department of Homeless Services Commissioner Seth Diamond, Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., and Common Ground held the official opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony for The Brook at 255 East 148th Street. The 180-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 R. 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 City Housing Authority’s supportive housing initiative, the City has financed nearly 3,000 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.”

Within The Brook, 130 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 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 Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. “The Brook will bring together a wonderful mix of people, the formerly homeless and others with special needs in this beautiful LEED Silver building that we achieved through a $500,000 capital grant from my office. It is buildings like this that help assure The Bronx is the ‘greenest borough’ or any more of our community. 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.”

“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 leader in developing supportive living along with BronxWorks to help with the transition to independent living.”

Total development cost for the project was $17,100,000. HPD provided a $17,100,000 low-interest loan (100% AMI) and $500,000 in funding. The Borough President’s office also provided a $500,000 award to fund green construction. The NY State Housing Finance Agency (NYHFA) provided $52,100,000 in tax-exempt bond financing during the construction period. The latter of credit bank during construction was Wells Fargo, JPMorgan, and Capital Corporation.

The Bronxcentre provides permanent financing of $31,256,555 in 4% low income tax credit equity. Other sources of funds included NY State Homeless Housing Assistance Program (HHAP), the Bronx Housing Development Corporation (HDC), the City of New York’s Home Loan Affordable Housing Program, Common Ground green contribution, and deferred developer’s fee.

The Brook offers 90,000 square feet of building and 24-hour security.

The Brook is located at 255 East 148th Street, and the building’s manager is George A. Strickler. The building was designed by Architect Alexander Gorlin Architects, the general contractor is Muntz Construction and Development Corporation.

The common ground is the Brooklyn Housing Alliance, which is the primary developer, in partnership with the City of New York, the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, the New York State Housing Finance Agency, and the New York City Housing Authority. The building was designed by Architect Alexander Gorlin Architects, the general contractor is Muntz Construction and Development Corporation.

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