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SoBro development is affordable, green



A photo of the recently completed Intervale Green in the South Bronx.

By JOHN MAJESKI

The weather may have been frigid, but the reception to Intervale Green was anything but icy.

The new 128-unit eco-friendly affordable-housing development in the South Bronx held an open house last week and visitors could be heard making positive remarks about the finishes and the amenities.

Women's Housing & Economic Development Corporation, a nonprofit community organization, is behind Intervale Green, which bills itself as the largest Energy Star-certified multifamily high-rise building in the United States. The \$39 million building will serve low-income and formerly homeless families. It replaces a vacant brownfields site.

Officials say an energy savings of 33% will be achieved in the structure thanks to a number of measures: A green roof will store rainwater, air-sealed apartments will cut down on energy waste and low-flow fixtures will conserve water use. Non-toxic paints, sealants and adhesives are used throughout the seven-story building to improve air quality while more than 40

trees were planted along the street outside. And tile that otherwise would have hauled to the landfill was donated for the project.

The building, at Intervale Avenue and Freeman Street, gives a nod to traditional Bronx architecture with its use of brick, courtyards and decorative iron and cornices.

"You won't find an affordable housing building anywhere that has cornices," said Nancy Biberman, WHEDCo founder and president. "To me, it's like the icing on the cake."

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a more pleasant living experience in a place that has a "profound impact on their lives." And it also likely means that the units are more cared for. "I believe you don't need a deed to own it," Biberman said.

WHEDCo4 was awarded the city lot in 2005.

Shortly after breaking ground, a host of contamination was found that had to be remediated, Biberman said, setting back the project about a year. Construction of Intervale Green and the adjacent Louis Nine House — The Louis Nine House includes nearly four-dozen units for youngsters aging out of foster care and is co-owned and operated by the Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter — was finished last month.

Funding for Intervale Green was obtained from a variety of city sources, plus the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, the Home Depot Foundation and Enterprise Green Community, which runs a national green building program for low-to-moderate-income housing.

Intervale Green was the first building in New York to join the Enterprise program. Residents will no doubt benefit from more affordable heating bills, officials said.

"Environmentally friendly housing like Intervale

Making sure the \$39 million project was visually appealing was important, Biberman said, adding details were included such as local art in the public areas and placing pendant lighting and ceramic backsplashes in the individual units.

"It's a mindset of, 'Pretend you're the one living there,'" Biberman said. Often the thought process in the affordable housing market is to keep it as inexpensive as possible.

But Biberman said making the units nicer gives residents

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vice president of Enterprise Community Partners, Inc. and director of the New York office, said in a prepared statement.

In an effort to "bridge the digital divide," WHEDCo said each unit at Intervale Green will be equipped with a computer and low-cost Internet access.

The project also includes commercial space on the first floor.

Tenants have just begun to move into the building, which features one-, two- and three-bedroom units.

Decline in 2009

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are expected to take the biggest hits in 2009 thanks to 20.2% and 19.2% drops, respectively. Healthcare facilities and public safety will experience the smallest dips at 3.6% and 3.5%, respectively, in 2009.

Come 2010, almost all nonresidential sectors will register decreases, though not as bad as in 2009, according to the survey. The only sector in 2010 to show a gain will be amusement/recreation, at 1%.

The upside is that "the downturn in nonresidential activity has helped stabilize construction costs