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SoBro development is affordable, green

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

By John Maierski

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

The new 138-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.”

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 continued on Page 1B.

Decline in 2009

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are expected to take the biggest hits in 2009 thanks to 21% and 70% drops, respectively. Healthcare, facilities and public safety will export net revenue drops at 15% and 33%, respectively, in 2009.

The upside is that the design of all government that activate has helped stabilize stabilization costs.

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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.

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