



Caribbean Life

[October 8, 2011](#)

INNOVATIVE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING WITH JOBS ATTACHED

Concern for Independent Living, a leading nonprofit provider of supportive housing, held a ribbon cutting Oct. 6 at the Rochester Avenue Apartments, an innovative supportive housing development bringing more than a dozen new jobs to the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn.

The project was made possible with support from the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH), NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR), the Federal Home Loan Bank of New York, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, the Community Preservation Corporation (CPC), Richman Housing Resources; Astoria Federal Savings; the borough of Brooklyn, New York City and Brooklyn Community Board 8.

The 65-unit complex is located on the site of the former St. Mary's Hospital, which was closed in 2005 due to financial difficulties. The site became a neighborhood eyesore until it was purchased in 2008 and renovated by Concern for Independent Living for supportive housing.

The project offers supportive housing for dozens of low-income Brooklynites who previously lived in shelters and state-run facilities.

"Not only did the Rochester Avenue Apartments project deliver on the promise of creating new jobs, but it demonstrated how public-private partnerships can find creative ways of transforming 'blight into light' in our most vulnerable neighborhoods," said Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz at the ribbon cutting.

"We promised the community we would transform this blighted property into a community asset, create jobs in the neighborhood and strengthen the fabric of the area by building a community garden and shared spaces.



“Rochester Avenue Apartments does all of that as well as create a beautiful and supportive living environment for formerly homeless individuals. I want to thank our partners in government and our not-for-profit and for-profit lenders for making this dream a reality,” Fasano said.

“Our new residence will allow many people who were originally from the area but living in shelters or state-run facilities to return to the community and live meaningful lives.”

Concern for Independent Living purchased the site at 151 Rochester Ave. in order to develop an OMH-licensed single-site supportive housing residence with the support of Community Board 8.

The five-story former hospital has been turned into a residence with 65 studio apartments for low-income individuals recovering from mental illness. The residents include formerly homeless individuals and persons exiting OMH’s state residency system. All units are wired for high-speed Internet access, cable and telephone. The building features multiple lounges, a computer room, exercise room, dining hall and rooftop garden.

The site also includes a large garden that will be developed with the community so neighbors can grow healthy fruits and vegetables. In addition, Comfort Foods, an area business that provides employment opportunities for the formerly homeless, will provide daily meals for Rochester residents.

Michael F. Hogan, Commissioner of the NYS Office of Mental Health, said, “It has been a pleasure to work with our partners, Concern for Independent Living, NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR), the Federal Home Loan Bank of New York, Bank of America, the Community Preservation Corporation (CPC), Richman Housing Resources, the Astoria Federal Savings; Borough of Brooklyn, New York City and Brooklyn Community Board 8 on this project. This is a win-win for the community creating both supported housing and jobs.”

Darryl C. Towns, Commissioner/CEO of New York State Homes and Community Renewal, said, “Concern for Independent Living has illustrated the positive impact high-quality supportive housing can have on neighborhoods. Rochester Avenue Apartments will not only make it possible for formerly homeless people and people with disabilities to return to the place they call home, this development creates jobs and turns a distressed property into a beautiful asset. This is an example of what Governor Cuomo is committed to achieving by redesigning the way New York drives



economic growth. As a Brooklyn native, I am proud that HCR played a part in a transformational development that will make Crown Heights a more vibrant place to live. I congratulate Concern and welcome the residents to their new home.”

Daron Tubian, Senior Vice President and Head of Credit Products in Community Development Banking at Bank of America Merrill Lynch in New York, said, “We are proud to provide project financing for Concern for Independent Living and its partners to transform this formerly abandoned property into a vibrant supportive housing development for the community and beyond. At Bank of America Merrill Lynch, we believe in investing in communities and their people. We look forward to working with Concern in the future to help provide housing and support community oriented services for individuals with disabilities.”

Michael Lappin, President and CEO of The Community Preservation Corporation, said, “Given the current economic climate, the need for supportive housing developments has never been more critical. Projects like Rochester Avenue Apartments are vital to sustaining the renaissance taking place in Crown Heights. Since the inception of its Special Needs Housing Program 10 years ago, CPC has provided more than \$113 million in financing for housing and program space for more than 1,250 people with physical and mental disabilities not only in New York City but also throughout New York State.”

Michelle George, District Manager of Community Board 8, said, “We are pleased to have Concern for Independent Living in our community. They turned an eyesore dilapidated building into something the community can be proud of.”

The total development cost for The Rochester Avenue Apartments was \$24.56 million. Financing included \$10 million in federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits issued by HCR and syndicated through Richman Housing Resources, a \$13 million OMH grant, a \$900,000 grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank of New York in partnership with Astoria Federal Savings, a \$6.5 million Bank of America Merrill Lynch construction loan and \$13 million in permanent financing from CPC.

About Concern for Independent Living

Concern for Independent Living, Inc. is a non-profit agency committed to helping low income persons and persons with disabilities to live in the community with dignity and enhanced opportunities through the provision of housing and support services. Concern is one of the largest housing agencies of this kind in New York State, currently serving approximately 620 individuals and families in over 200 locations. Concern offers a variety of housing options with individualized support services designed to support personal growth and independence.

