



# Brooklyn Daily Eagle

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## New Supportive Housing Complex Occupies Former St. Mary's Hospital

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CROWN HEIGHTS – Concern for Independent Living, a leading nonprofit provider of supportive housing, held a ribbon cutting last week to officially open the Rochester Avenue Apartments, bringing an innovative supportive housing development and more than a dozen new jobs to the area.

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 Rochester Avenue Apartments is located within 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. "Kudos to Concern for Independent Living and their partners for taking the dilapidated St. Mary's Hospital site and turning it into supportive housing for dozens of low-income Brooklynites who previously lived in shelters and state-run facilities," said Borough President Marty Markowitz. "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."

"When Concern purchased this site," said Ralph Fasano, executive director of the organization, "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.



Seen at the ribbon cutting for Rochester Avenue Apartments are (left-right): Elizabeth Lunde, associate director of Concern for Independent Living; Ralph Fasano, executive director of Concern for Independent Living; Michelle George, district manager of Brooklyn Community Board 8; Councilwoman Darlene Mealy; Borough President Marty Markowitz (holding the oversized scissors); Earnest Langhorne, director of downstate development, NYS Homes and Community Renewal (partially hidden); Daron Tubian, senior VP commercial real estate and community development, Bank of America Merrill Lynch; and Greg Watson, regional director, NYS Homes and Community Renewal.  
Photo by Jung Chin

Concern for Independent Living purchased the site at 151 Rochester Ave. in order to develop an OMH-licensed single-site supportive housing residence. Concern promised to create 17 local jobs and won 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.

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.

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