

AFFORDABLE FOREVER!

(STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Let's face it, our ethnic and economic diversity defines life in Brooklyn. And these days everyone, including elected officials from Marty to Mayor Bloomberg, knows that building and preserving the affordable housing that makes diversity possible is the city's most pressing challenge.

Through his New Housing Marketplace Plan, the Mayor has pledged to create 165,000 units citywide as part of his ten year initiative, and has contributed to bringing nearly 67,000 units online so far. Here in Brooklyn, Marty (whose political roots are in tenant advocacy), has not only funded projects like Habitat for Humanity's largest, greenest project ever, which broke ground in Brownsville this year, and the green, 80-unit Atlantic Terrace complex to be developed by the Fifth Avenue Committee in **Fort Greene** (see rendering, p.1), he was instrumental in pioneering what is now citywide

policy that when developers seek any zoning change from the city, they be provided with incentives to make at least 20% of proposed units affordable. In the case of rentals planned for Atlantic Yards, the Community Benefits Agreement guarantees 50% affordable (or approximately 2,200) units, and in **Greenpoint-Williamsburg**, Marty made sure that waterfront developers benefiting from rezoning will be held to that 20% standard—and thus, in combination with affordable housing being built on city-owned land, 3,000 of the 10,000 new units projected for the area will be affordable.

The fight to save affordable housing continues at the 5,881-unit **Starrett City**, which remains the nationwide model for successful, affordable, diverse urban living (see our article on tenant association president Marie Purnell, p. 12). When the complex on Jamaica Bay was put up for sale in 2006, tenants, housing advocates and elected officials voiced their outrage. To date, no buyer has received the necessary federal and state approval to finalize the \$1.3 billion plan, and residents, officials, and community activist groups such as New York ACORN vow the battle to save Starrett City isn't over yet.



◆ Myrtle Avenue apartments: affordability at its best

Just a few blocks from Starrett City, a creative approach to preserving affordable housing by developers Apollo and Taconic has resulted in the sale of condos at MeadowWood at Gateway to moderate-income families. The complex's 19 buildings, which occupy 21 acres along Flatlands Avenue in **East New York**, were originally constructed as the Fairfield Towers as part of the Mitchell-Lama subsidized housing program. After an unrelated failed co-op conversion, many units and the grounds were left in squalid condition, so these recent efforts are a real blessing. The nearly 1,000 renovated apartments will range in price from \$100,000 to \$340,000, and existing residents will be offered special financing, discounts and subsidies in order to purchase their units. The developers hope the project—one of the largest affordable home-ownership in the city—will not only provide affordable housing, but

reinvigorate the surrounding neighborhood and all of East New York.

Recently, Marty, who in 1971 organized the **Flatbush** Tenants Council, which grew into Brooklyn Housing and Family Services, has been proud to support affordable housing initiatives like the recently opened Myrtle Avenue Apartments developed by NEBLDC and Dunn Development (pictured above). Add this to the nearly 100 affordable units that will be part of BAM's new mixed-use dance center, the approximately 350 units at the former BRIG site in **Clinton Hill**, the 152 units at the **Coney Island Commons**, and 217 supportive residences, including half for those working in theater or related trades at Schermerhorn House in **Downtown Brooklyn**, and they begin to add up.

"These ambitious affordable housing initiatives show the power of creative thinking, says Marty, "and prove that public-private partnerships can work for Brooklyn." He adds however that "compared to the scale of the shortage, these advances are still just a drop in the bucket, which is why we need to elect a president next year who sees affordable housing as a top priority. That will be a tremendous help in making sure the Brooklyn Renaissance truly works for everyone."