

# BRONX TIMES

## Energy Star-approved high-rise in Highbridge first in nation

by Antoine Craigwell

The first Energy Star-rated high-rise building in the nation officially opened in Highbridge on Thursday, September 28.

Although many of the apartments have been occupied since July, high-ranking state officials, developers, and two residents snipped a swath of red ribbon to celebrate the five-story, 54-unit, affordable apartment building at 1212 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

"The first thing to put out is that this program is the first multifamily high-rise project that has been labeled Energy Star," meaning it is 20% more energy-efficient than comparable buildings, said David Lee, project manager for the Environmental Protection Agency. "We're looking at this building and other buildings in New York to see how to expand this nationally to other cities."

To achieve an Energy Star rating, a building's construction has to include energy-saving materials and just prior to certification, a door-blower test is conducted to determine if any open areas exist in the exterior and interior walls, and windows. All appliances, light bulbs and operational equipment also have to bear the federal government's Energy Star label.

In addition, the Highbridge building boasts advanced insulation, double-paned windows, low-flow bathroom fixtures, motion-control sensors, a belt-driven elevator that uses about 45% less energy than standard elevators, and downsized boilers that use about 87% less energy than conventional boilers.

"We try to do things to improve people's lives and take it to the next



City and state officials join new residents at the ribbon cutting for the first Energy Star-rated multifamily high-rise in the nation, located at 1212 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

— PHOTO BY ANTOINE CRAIGWELL/AC

level by setting higher standards in the quality of affordable housing," said Martin Dunn, president and CEO of Dunn Developers, which built and will manage the building with Beulah HDFC.

The result of a partnership with the Department of Energy, the EPA and the state Department of Housing and Community Renewal, the building is also affordable, with two-bedrooms costing around \$645 and one-bedrooms around \$535.

DHCR provided \$6.7 million in tax credits for the \$10.2 million project, in exchange for an agreement

that the developers provide units to people earning \$35,000 or less, said Commissioner Judith Calogero. The agency also signed an agreement with the developers that over the next 10 years, they will build 9,000 units for people with special needs, including the chronically homeless.

In this project, 10 studio apartments were made available to highly functional developmentally disabled people in conjunction with the Office of Mental Health and Retardation.

"We try to serve the most vulnerable people in the community, especially those with developmental dis-

abilities and people who are moving out of group homes to live in their own homes," Dunn said.

One of the residents, Jonathan McKie, who has a developmental disability and receives aid from the Office of Mental Health and Retardation, said: "This has been a dream come true to live on my own. It's nice and quiet living here."

Resident Nereida Figueroa said she moved into the building with her four children in July after living in a mice-infested and violence-plagued apartment along Webster Avenue. She now pays \$645 a month for a two-bedroom, whereas she used to pay \$634 a month for a studio.

"It's a great improvement to be living here, looking at where I was before," she said. "The building I was living in, there were always fights and my kids were afraid to come out of the apartment."

She added that her 3-year-old son's asthma has not acted up since they moved.

One added benefit of the building's unprecedented energy efficiency is that each resident's utility bill is cheaper. Figueroa said her Con Edison bill has dropped from about \$200 a month to between \$80 and \$90.

Many of the energy improvements were made possible by a \$200,000 investment from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. Architect Saky Yakas said the agency would monitor energy savings over the next three years.

Added Shaun Donovan, commissioner of the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development: "This project says that low-income people deserve the best, good design and energy efficiency."