



## A Model Home

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There are changes afoot in the South Bronx. If developers of the recent \$1.5 million energy overhaul have their way, the Urban Horizon's building on East 168<sup>th</sup> Street will soon be a model for large-scale, affordable housing complexes around the country seeking to capitalize on "creative financing" and energy-saving retrofits.

"If a nonprofit in the South Bronx can do it, others can do it, too," Rebecca Eigenbauer, the director of housing development for WHEDco, the nonprofit that owns and runs Urban Horizons, [tells the Wall Street Journal](#).

Located in one of the city's poorest zip codes—where the average income of a family of three hovers around \$29,000—Urban Horizons offers reasonable rental units (about \$567 per month according to Eigenbauer) along with an onsite preschool, health clinic, and commercial kitchen. Originally constructed in the 1920s, the site was originally the home of the Morrisania hospital before it was forsaken in 1976. After a \$23 million overhaul, the building was reopened as a 132-unit, low-income apartment complex in 1998.

Over the last several years of operations, Nancy Biberman (WHEDco's president) tells the *Wall Street Journal*, Urban Horizon Administrators realized that in order to cut costs, they would have to rethink their energy use. With utility costs over a third of the project's yearly budget, change was needed . . . quickly.

After a complex-wide audit that analyzed usage on every floor and in every unit, the overhaul began. With the help of a Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation grant (\$25,000 a year for three years) and a \$50,000 loan, initial renovations began with the installation of new, energy-efficient fixtures (including refrigerators, toilets, and ventilation systems) and rewiring of the commercial kitchen. Pipes throughout the building were also sealed, and a CHP unit was installed on the roof.

The CHP unit—powered by natural gas—lights the common areas of the building, with excess energy used to power boilers. While the system is waiting final approval from Con Edison and the Department of Building before going live, Biberman anticipates that the \$430,000 systems will generate an average savings of \$89,000 per year. Those savings, combined with reduced energy demand through the

renovations' and retrofits, should result in a 28% reduction of utility costs—a total estimated savings of \$164,448 annually.

Twice as efficient, reduced CO2 emissions and resident energy bills reduced by 6% (at a time when utility costs citywide rose 8%), Urban Horizons is certainly on track to become a model for future urban retrofits and energy efficiency renovations.