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NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING FROM WHEDCO

By Howard Giske

On Wednesday, January 14th, WHEDCo, a non-profit organization, celebrated the completion of a fully green apartment complex of rental units for low-income and formerly homeless families in the Bronx. The complex is called Intervale Green, on Intervale by Freeman St. and is conveniently located near the #2 and 5 trains in the Bronx. Intervale Green's motto is that it is wired for the internet and planned for energy conservation. In fact, it is estimated that the building achieves a 20-percent reduction in energy use over an ordinary residential building. The complex is fully finished and is about to become home to 400 low-income and formerly homeless New Yorkers. The building has modern sculptures outside and in the lobby and apartments and there are plenty of insulated windows and light for a high aesthetic standard for affordable housing.

It was great to get a sneak peek at the beautiful, green, and affordable design of WHEDCo's Intervale Green, taking a tour with Mr. Davon Russell, a program VP of WHEDCo. I also got a chance to talk to a tenant moving in soon. Ms. Tiffany is a single mom who also has a full-time job. Making ends meet is difficult with having to pay rent and day care. Tiffany says the neighborhood is not bad with lots of shopping nearby, and she is really impressed with her apartment. The rent which is over \$900 is not very low,

but it is substantially lower than that of other apartments available that are not new. The staff of WHEDCo is happy to work with her and other tenants to make sure that they can manage their budget.

WHEDCo's design standards for Intervale Green reflect the organization's belief that living somewhere beautiful can have a profound impact on a family's mental and physical health. The complex includes ½ acre of vegetation in courtyards and on the roof. Residents will enjoy green roofs for vegetables and gardens, and the neighborhood will enjoy a dramatic public sculpture garden. Built with environmentally friendly and healthy materials, Intervale Green will be the largest high rise affordable housing buildings in New York State to achieve the coveted Energy Star certification.

Respecting the architectural legacy of the borough, the building is designed to reflect traditional Bronx building features such as red brick, decorative cornices, stone and ironwork, and multiple courtyards. The common areas display carefully chosen, high quality tile, wood, and marble, while the apartments boast lots of lighting, and imported high-end ceramic tile kitchen surfaces. The kitchen in the apartment I saw was small but had dark stone counter-tops and modern appliances.

Every family will be given a computer and each apartment will be wired for



high-speed internet access to bridge the digital divide. Additionally, WHEDCo recently launched www.movingday.org which is an interactive website to help furnish each apartment, and will provide ongoing services to help families settle into their new communities. Go to this website and you can make a donation to buy new furniture for a family moving in to this lovely building.