



Protecting vulnerable New Yorkers with climate-ready homes

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Thanks to a suite of new bills and benchmarks passed at both the city and state levels in recent months, New York now has one of the most aggressive and ambitious plans to combat climate change in the nation.

That's good news for every New Yorker, but it deserves especially close attention from those of us concerned with the housing affordability crisis — not just because our industry can and will be at the vanguard of sustainable development, but because climate change threatens to make that crisis even worse.

New research from the Center for American Progress released earlier this month highlights the risks climate change poses for America's affordable housing stock, with the report calling extreme weather a “crisis multiplier.”

Hurricanes, floods and other disasters do not impact all structures equally.



Superstorm Sandy ravaged NYC

Older homes and rentals with weak infrastructure with inadequate resiliency measures bear the brunt of the damage, and are more likely to be affordable housing for low-income residents.

Those buildings are not only more likely to experience extreme damage during disasters but are also more likely to be demolished rather than repaired after the fact. This further reduces the

already meager affordable housing stock and means that those already struggling to find a decent, affordable home will disproportionately suffer as the crisis intensifies.

This is not merely an esoteric or theoretical discussion in New York.

After Superstorm Sandy ravaged the five boroughs, Westchester and Long Island, the area was “able to regain a sense of normalcy.”

But as the report cited earlier noted, “many low-income elderly and disabled residents in public housing buildings were stranded in their apartments for weeks.”

It is critical that we do everything we can to stop this from happening again.

The New York Times noted several weeks ago that the affordable housing industry will be at the vanguard of sustainable development. Progress begins by creating environmentally-friendly buildings that limit emissions and are efficient in their use of energy — two methods that help combat climate change and make natural disasters less likely to occur in the future.

The good news is that our industry is already taking significant steps forward.

Consider Park Avenue Green, a 15-story, 154-unit complex recently completed in the South Bronx.

That building, which reserves a significant portion of its units for formerly homeless individuals and families, is the largest North American building to earn the Passive House certification for energy efficiency.

The development team accomplished this by using cutting-edge technology to reduce energy costs, limit waste, and minimize air pollution a significant issue for a community whose residents, especially young children, disproportionately suffer from asthma.

Bronx Commons, a soon-to-open affordable housing building in Melrose, is also setting a new standard for sustainability.

Its 428-panel rooftop Solar PV installation is the largest such installation on an affordable housing project in New York City.

Like Park Avenue Green it will set aside a significant number of units for formerly homeless families and individuals as well as domestic violence victims.

These projects clearly demonstrate that the future is already here. And they are just the beginning.

Across New York State affordable housing developers are changing the conversation on sustainable development: whether that is with efficient energy design, low-emission buildings, or improved storm resiliency measures. This is good news for all New Yorkers.

But we can't take anything for granted. As we continue to take steps to combat climate change, it's critical that we create the type of housing is both affordable and provides families with the peace of mind that their new home will still stand after the storm.

Link: <https://rew-online.com/2019/08/protecting-vulnerable-new-yorkers-with-climate-ready-homes/>