

SBH to construct a 314-unit affordable complex



The groundbreaking for 4511 Third Avenue on Monday, September 19 was a time of celebration for those who made it possible.
Photo by Silvio Pacifico

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

Two new apartment buildings will offer residents attractive amenities.

A groundbreaking was held on Monday, September 19 for the apartment buildings containing 314-units total on the SBH Health System campus that will feature accommodations geared toward reducing health inequalities.

The \$156 million affordable housing complex at 4511 and 4439 Third Avenue is to include a 'teaching kitchen' where community can learn to cook nutritious meals and a rooftop garden for growing produce.

Residents are also expected to enjoy comprehensive wellness programming such as smoking prevention and nutrition.

Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr. hailed the development for combining housing and healthcare, and for its public-private partnership.

"This project is a perfect fit for our borough's ongoing positive transformation," said Diaz, adding that he was glad to contribute \$1 million in capital funds for the building and congratulated St. Barnabas and developer L+M Development Partners on the groundbreaking.

The borough president said that projects like this one are building a different mindset among residents so they can be healthy and take part in the growth in the borough.

Dr. David Perlstein, the new president and CEO of SBH Health Systems, also referred to as St. Barnabas Hospital, said that many of the issues that their medical teams deal with are related to their patients not living in safe housing, and by creating safe housing they can increase wellness.

"This to me brings it all together and says let's address all of the issues

that are problematic for patients and that keeps them from addressing their health," said Perlstein, adding "The idea is that you can't take care of an individual unless you are going to address all the holistic things that go with it."

The housing is located across Third Avenue from the hospital making it much easier to address health needs in a holistic way, and the teaching kitchen will be used by SBH Health System personnel to gain knowledge so that they can more effectively speak to patients about nutrition, said Perlstein.

Senator Gustavo Rivera, Assemblyman Victor Pichardo, various state and city officials, and Ron Moelis of L+M Development Partners spoke during the groundbreaking.

Past SBH CEO Dr. Scott Cooper had been conceptualizing the project for a long time, said Moelis, adding that L+M had built a similar type of project in post-Katrina New Orleans that SBH Health Systems visited before deciding to begin on their own.

SBH Health Systems' president said that 50 of the units in the building would be set-aside for high-frequency Medicaid users as part of a NYS Department of Health's Medicaid Redesign Team, said Perlstein.

The complex is 100% affordable. As part of the mix, 95 units will be set aside for supportive and non-supportive housing for the formerly homeless.

The project is funded by a host of sources, including \$71.1 million bonds and a mortgage loan from NYS Homes and Community Renewal.

Targeted completion date for the project is in 2018, stated an SBH spokeswoman.