

PRESERVATION FINALIST

L+M Development Preserves 625 Units in Brooklyn

The Marcus Garvey development spans 10 blocks.

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By [Donna Kimura](#)

Built in the early 1970s, Marcus Garvey Village sought to demonstrate how architecture could help address the challenges faced by low-income communities. The massive 625-unit complex was praised for its resemblance to student co-ops, but much of its hopes faded as the community fell into disrepair over the years.



Brooklyn, N.Y.

When L+M Development Partners acquired the property in 2014, around 80 apartments were vacant. Many of these vacancies were not leasable due to their dismal condition, and major repairs were needed throughout the development, which spans nine city blocks in Brownsville, a historically poor neighborhood in Brooklyn.

“I describe the community as a high-rise turned on its side,” says Jeffrey Moelis, director of development at L+M. “It was built at a time when the city planners were thinking that low-density, low-income housing was the solution.”

His firm has given the Mitchell-Lama property a second chance through a multimillion dollar capital improvement program. The developers addressed the site’s deferred maintenance, including renovating the apartments, upgrading the infrastructure, and increasing security throughout the property. The rehabilitation also included the transformation of underutilized outdoor space into 28,000 square feet of new parkland.

To help with the project's energy needs, the team installed one of the largest solar-power arrays at an affordable housing development in the state and teamed up with Con Edison to install a battery and fuel cell system, enabling the property to generate 30% of its electricity on site. It also brought in social services for residents, including an after-school program and summer camp.

In addition, L+M improved the property's financial state and ensured its long-term affordability by utilizing the federal Rental Assistance Demonstration component 2 program, which provided 20 additional years of project-based Sec. 8 vouchers for over 85% of the units. The other apartments serve families with tenant-based vouchers and/or households with incomes at or below 60% of the area median income.

The \$189 million project, which utilized low-income housing tax credits, was financed with the help of public and private partners, including Wells Fargo and Citi Community Capital.

PROJECT DETAILS

Developer: L+M Development Partners

Architects: Curtis + Ginsberg Architects and GDSNY

Major Funders: Citi Community Capital; Wells Fargo; New York State Homes and Community Renewal; New York State Housing Finance Agency; New York State Energy Research and Development Authority; Con Edison