

New Events, Initiatives for Veterans Across the Borough

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New events and initiatives for our nation's veterans were held across the borough Monday, including readings, workshops, performances, and the announcement of new affordable housing for those who have served.

For the first time ever, the Brooklyn Public Library hosted "Saluting Our Veterans Day" at its Central Branch. The day's activities included a resource fair for veterans to network with local employers and connect with critical social services, read-aloud sessions where children and veterans are paired together to read children's books addressing the issue of service, a flag-folding ceremony, veteran testimony and oral history recordings throughout the day, and a performance from the United States Navy Band.

"We wanted to do a series of programs with the public that would let our veterans know that the library is for them," said Nick Higgins, Director of Public Outreach for the Brooklyn Public Library. "The idea, though, is not just to do a bunch of events on Veterans Day, but embark on a series of recurring initiatives that could use the library as a bridge between the veteran community and the general population."

An example included former Captain Luis Carlos Montalvan, author of a children's book about his relationship with his service dog, called *Tuesday Tucks Me In*, which he read aloud to children.

Further east in Crown Heights, real estate developers, city planning agencies and affordable housing and veterans' advocates announced the opening of Utica Place, a mixed-used project at Utica Avenue and Lincoln Place. The new development consists of two buildings: a 12-story affordable rental building and a four-story commercial building that includes community facility space and a daycare center.

"Utica Place is a new addition to this community and will offer affordable, quality housing," said Ron Moelis, CEO and Founder of L+M Development Partners, the main developer behind the initiative. "Providing homes for veterans was a priority for us and a way to say thank you. It has brought new retail to Crown Heights, and space for St. Matthews Church, a longtime institution in this community. Together, Utica is not just about new housing; it's about being part of the neighborhood."

The residential building will provide 87 units of new affordable housing for low-income New Yorkers, of which 26 units are specifically reserved for veterans. The veterans will receive a full range of supportive services from Jericho Project, a New York City based

nonprofit, including social services and employment counseling, plus an onsite Veterans Services Coordinator to provide assistance to residents.

“Today we celebrate the opening of important affordable housing to serve those who put their lives at risk to serve our country,” said HPD Commissioner Vicki Been. “Too often, veterans and their families struggle to find a safe, affordable place to call home upon their return.”

The development includes 7,000 square feet of new community space for St. Matthews Roman Catholic Church, a long-standing presence in the Crown Heights community. St. Matthew’s Roman Catholic Church is located at 1123 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, NY. The site on which the new Utica Place development was constructed was originally built as a rectory for the St. Matthew parish. The building was then extensively remodeled as a school circa 1912, but was officially shuttered in the 1970s. The community space will house the church’s community services, including tutoring and after-school activities.



A Rendering Of Utica Place (Via L+M Partners)

Additionally, the project includes 38,000 square feet of commercial space occupied by Blink Fitness, Deals and Brooklyn Kid’s Academy resulting in the creation of 89 new, permanent jobs and helping to activate the surrounding streetscape.

Apartments in the development are available to households with incomes at or below 60 percent of area median income (AMI), or an annual income between \$18,618 and \$50,340 depending on household size. Of the 87 units, 18 units have a preference for veterans earning less than 40 percent of AMI, or not more than \$23,520 annually. Income levels are calculated annually by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In addition to the 18 units, 8 VASH units will be available, which are project-based vouchers for homeless veterans provided by the U.S. Department of

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and referred by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Rents for Utica Place range from \$494 and \$785 for studios, \$844 for one-bedrooms, \$1,022 for two-bedrooms and \$1,175 for three-bedrooms. The City of New York requires that all city-subsidized apartments be rented through an Open Lottery System to ensure fair and equitable distribution of housing to income-eligible applicants. The lottery for Utica Place closed on May 13, 2014 and the project received over 38,000 applications.

The project was developed by L+M Development Partners in partnership with Bell Urban LLC and the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), Housing Development Corporation (HDC) along with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and partners. The total development cost for Utica Place is approximately \$26.5 million. HPD provided \$1.2 million in City Capital and \$2.3 million in HOME Funds. HDC provided \$13.3 million in Tax Exempt Bonds and \$5.6 million in subsidy from its corporate reserves. Bank of America acted as the lender.

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