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# MacQuesten breaks ground on Mount Vernon project

by Colleen Wilson | April 2, 2015 10:40 am



*Construction is underway on The Modern, an 11-story mixed-use building in Mount Vernon.*

At the recent groundbreaking ceremony for an affordable housing project in Mount Vernon, state Sen. Ruth Hassell-Thompson admitted something about the first time she met the housing developer: “I was not very nice.”

Hassell-Thompson said she was reluctant about the meeting because of “big disappointments” she had experienced in past projects throughout her 15 years as a state senator.

“A lot of people talk about affordable housing — and it’s trash,” she said. “They need to do more than meets the standards because this is the residence of people and their families, children, the elderly, the infirmed and people want to be proud of where they live.”

The 11-story mixed-use building, called The Modern, comprises 98,000 square feet. It will have 80 affordable rental apartments and 9,400 square feet of commercial space on the first two floors. All apartments are wheelchair accessible, and 22 are designated for people with disabilities. Amenities include 89 parking spaces, rooftop recreation space and a laundry facility.

When meeting Rella Fogliano, president of MacQuesten Development LLC, Hassell-Thompson said she wanted to be tough, expected Fogliano to answer all of her questions and wanted to be sure that she knew “my working definition of what affordable meant.”

And when asked if the senator thought Fogliano got the message, Hassell-Thompson responded, “No, she came with it.”

Fogliano, whose company bought the property for \$2 million in 2011, said she had kept an eye on the property for many years partially because of its close proximity to her office building and also because of its great location.

“This is such a sweet spot,” Fogliano said. “We’re three blocks away from the Bronx. Fleetwood a little bit to the north,” and, she added, “It’s a perfect location for something medical.”

Talk swirled at the March 27 groundbreaking event of how the commercial part of the building will be used, with the possibility for medical offices discussed.

Fogliano said using the real estate for health care is “greatly needed in this community if it’s going to be vibrant” and said it could be the future for “revitalizing a former industrial area.”

The project cost is \$31.5 million, with funding coming from various state agencies including \$6.9 million from Homes and Community Renewal, \$4.4 million from the Office of Mental Health through MacQuesten’s nonprofit partner Community Housing Innovations and \$3.9 million from Bank of America through a Department of Justice fund, according to a MacQuesten spokesman.

Construction started in December and the facility, at 130 Mount Vernon Ave. and a block from the Mount Vernon West Metro-North station, is expected to open in fall 2016.

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