

Greening Low-Income Housing

An interfaith coalition of more than 90 congregations is greening low-income housing in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City. Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement (HCCI) is celebrating the recent opening of David and Joyce Dinkins Gardens, a new, green affordable housing development. Nicknamed “The Dinkins,” the 85-unit development features an environmentally friendly Green Grid Roofing system. This system will reduce energy costs and urban “heat island” effect, as well as providing sound insulation and storm water management. Rain water harvested from the roof will be used to irrigate the property’s landscaping and community garden, and to clean the front sidewalks of the building. Other green features include sun shading and an in-plank ventilation system. “We will see great savings in water and sewer rates, which have gone through the roof in New York,” said Lucille McEwen, President and Chief Executive Officer of HCCI.

Not only will the green innovations save money, they also reflect an active step toward environmental justice. “Green affordable housing is important for low-income residents, who suffer disproportionately from high energy costs and environment-related health issues, such as asthma and high blood lead levels,” said Abby Jo Sigal, Vice President and Director of Enterprise New York, a non-profit provider of affordable housing and a partner in the project.

The Dinkins paves the way for the integration of sustainability and affordability. “Dinkins Gardens is the new model for affordable housing,” said Jonathan Rose of Jonathan Rose Companies, co-developer of the project. “Green projects like these are tremendous investments in the future of the community. By integrating social services, job training, affordable housing, green design and quality architecture, we’re modeling what the future of affordable housing can be.”

