



Affordable Housing Development Is a Priority at Lawyers Alliance

One of the greatest endorsements for the work Lawyers Alliance staff and volunteers perform is the number of clients that return to us for legal assistance year after year. Community Access, Inc. has been a wonderful example of that loyalty, using our in-house and pro bono services since 1983 on a variety of projects, including governance issues, business ventures, property acquisitions, commercial leases, housing development, joint ventures, and, when needed, dissolutions of affiliates.

Affordable housing projects are reaching fruition with the aid of low-income housing tax credits and government funded loans

Community Access, Inc. was founded in New York State in 1974 in response to the mass release of patients from psychiatric institutions. The founders mobilized to help these former patients to find housing and jobs and rebuild social ties in a humane attempt to restore stability to their lives. The organization currently serves approximately 1,600 consumers by providing social services, transitional and permanent housing, peer-to-peer counseling and job-training services.

While sectors of the New York real estate market continue to wrestle with the effects of the recent downturn, affordable housing projects are reaching fruition with the aid of low-income housing tax credits and government funded loans.

In 2007 Lawyers Alliance pro bono lawyers and staff began helping Community Access with the development of a new permanent housing facility on Vyse Avenue in the Bronx. With the help of volunteer attorney **Lester Bliwise**, then of Sutherland Asbill and now at Seyfarth Shaw LLP, they negotiated a contract of sale signed in January 2008 and acquired a parcel of real estate. The closing on the purchase took place in October that same year.

The project, which was designed by SLCE Architects LLP, will house individuals diagnosed with serious mental illness. Mega Contracting Group LLC is the general contractor. Funding for the 64-unit project with a \$15.2 million development budget was provided through a low-income housing tax credit investment of \$3,750,939 syndicated through the National Equity Fund and a \$10.3 million mortgage loan from the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York. An additional grant for

program costs of \$250,000 was provided by the New York State Office of Mental Health. A contract with the New York State Office of Mental Health will cover operating costs and the costs for the social service staff.

Through our Pro Bono Housing Works program, which allows our volunteers to participate in discrete phases of a housing project, Lawyers Alliance enlisted the help of volunteers from Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP to provide legal assistance during the financing phase. Associates **Peter DiConza**, formerly of Skadden and now at Citi, and **Sara Saylor** assisted in the negotiation of the limited partnership agreement with the National Equity Fund.

Co-counseling on the project from Lawyers Alliance were an in-house volunteer, **Max Von Hollweg**, and Senior Staff Attorney **Hedwig O'Hara**. Dewey Fellow **Tim Knox** assisted throughout the pre-closing and at the closing on the financing that took place on December 21, 2010. Construction is expected to be complete in the winter of 2011-2012.

Housing projects like these are a mainstay at Lawyers Alliance. They allow our volunteers to participate in sophisticated transactional work while providing expert legal services that furthers the work and mission of our nonprofit clients. For more information on getting involved in one of our affordable housing projects, contact Hedwig O'Hara at hohara@lawyersalliance.org or (212) 219-1800 ext. 226.



Shown in an architect's rendering, Community Access, Inc. is developing 64 units of housing for individuals with serious mental illness.