

## Mixed Income Housing in New York City - Transforming Lives Every Day

By Caren Abate, Director of Housing, New York City Field Office



*Community Access, Cedar Ave, Bronx*

This month marks the four-year anniversary of the opening of the first OMH-funded mixed income housing development in New York City. Sponsored by Community Access and located at Cedar Avenue in the Bronx, studio apartments for persons with mental illness are fully integrated with other affordable housing units for non-disabled persons. Today, there are nine OMH mixed income residential buildings operating in New York City and twenty-nine under development; a further six sites are being evaluated.

Mixed income housing refers to supportive housing which includes both apartments for individuals with serious mental illness and apartments for non-disabled individuals, couples and families. On-site staff provide supportive services and link residents to an array of community-based treatment and social services. The buildings include amenities such as front desk security, outdoor recreation, roof garden, gym, computer room, laundry facilities, and common areas for socializing. Some of the newer projects have urban gardens in which residents can grow their own flowers and vegetables.

These developments are built using a variety of financing, including OMH bonds, low income tax credits, other City or State agency funding streams and conventional bank financing. Each project uses a different combination of funding sources.

In addition to debt service, OMH provides service and property operating funds to the non-profit agencies that sponsor the housing. The construction is designed to be energy efficient, with an emphasis on durability and low maintenance.

(Continued)



**Office of  
Mental Health**

The key elements of mixed income housing are:

- Housing is fully integrated; consumers live in buildings in which a majority of apartments are not reserved for persons with mental illness;
- Consumers have the same rights and responsibilities as any other non-disabled tenant; there are no special lease provisions or “house rules” for those with a disability;
- Consumers can access services based on their needs and preferences; services can be adjusted as these needs change over time;
- Housing is not time limited; consumers can stay as long as they fulfill the terms of their lease;
- Consumers have access to on-site support staff; some staff may be peers who have themselves experienced living with a mental disability; and
- Consumers pay 30% of their income for rent and utilities.



*ACMH, East 144th Street, Bronx*

The growth of mixed income housing demonstrates OMH’s commitment to create permanent supportive housing for individuals formerly living in State facilities, acute care hospitals, residential treatment facilities, adult homes, nursing homes and shelters.

Moira Tashjian, Statewide Director of Housing and Support Service for OMH, describes mixed income housing as an equal experience for all. “Consistent with the U.S. Supreme Court’s Olmstead Decision, mixed income housing increases opportunities for people with disabilities to live integrated lives in the community.”

OMH recently had the opportunity to speak with an individual living at Hull Avenue in the Bronx, which is operated by Postgraduate Center for Mental Health. These apartments are a mix for individuals living with mental illness, formerly homeless families, and affordable units for individuals and families. Bart, 53, has lived at Hull Avenue for almost 3 years. Prior to this, he lived at an OMH licensed residence and before that, he spent time in the Bellevue men’s shelter and psychiatric inpatient hospitals.

“[Living at Hull Avenue] allows me to be my own person and follow my own recovery with support from the team when I need it. I can afford the rent, the team here is capable and helpful and I can come and go to my appointments as needed,” said Bart.

(Continued)



**Office of  
Mental Health**



*ACMH, East 144th Street, Bronx*

Concern for Independent Living’s mixed income building on East New York Avenue in Brooklyn is another great example of how mixed income housing fits well and is accepted by the larger community. Many of the tenants living at the East NY Avenue residence previously lived at the South Beach or Kingsboro Psychiatric Centers.

“This building has helped transform people’s perceptions and attitude towards individuals living with mental illness. It is so wonderful, so normalizing to see children, pets, individuals and families all in the same lobby going about their day,” said Elizabeth Lunde, Associate Executive Director for Concern for Independent Living. “Both the affordable and supportive housing tenants have told me that this is the nicest apartment they have ever had.”



*ACMH, East 144th Street, Bronx*

“Concern for Independent Living continues to provide outstanding, progressive and well-equipped housing for our clients. At every level, from top administration to line workers, Concern staff seem interested and motivated to provide the best care in the most open and accepting environment,” said Dr. Roseanne Gaylor, Executive Director of South Beach Psychiatric Center. “Concern has clients integrated into their communities and supports them. This type of housing is ideal for maintaining our clients in the least restrictive settings and normalizing their life experience.”