



Fuel the Need

Affordable housing blooms on a Bronx brownfield.

For 60 years, the 0.62-acre site off a busy road in the Bronx was a Shell gas station. Soon it will house hundreds of people in a seven-story, 120,000-square-foot apartment building with a Staples store on the ground level. Woodmere, N.Y.-based Arker Cos. started construction on the \$27 million affordable housing project last fall, after winning support from the New York State Brownfields Cleanup Program. When the gas station property was put up for sale, Arker saw the site's potential based on its location: It sits in a commercial district along a heavily traveled road with several five- and six-story apartment buildings nearby.

With the help of remediation attorneys, Arker sailed through the state approval process and won brownfield remediation credits. The project also received government financing through tax-exempt bonds and the sale of housing tax credits.

Called White Plains Courtyard, the building will have 100 apartments—six three-bedrooms, 44 two-bedrooms, 44 one-bedrooms, and six studios—when completed in early 2007. Monthly rents will start at \$562 for households earning between \$27,000 and \$37,000 per year.

While affordable housing is needed in the area, it wasn't easy to design. "The biggest challenge was designing a soundproof building and creating a façade that breaks the monotony of a long block," says Hugo Subotovsky of New York City-based Hugo Subotovsky AIA Architects.

He used techniques such as including orange and tan bricks to give the project character and provide a modern look that fits into the neighborhood. To help keep street noise down, Arker installed laminated glass.

The building's final design is important to Arker officials, who keep the projects they build. "We are very proud of the fact that if one were to stand on the street and look at any of our buildings, it would be impossible to discern the tenants and their income levels," says Sol Arker, a principal of the company. "That is why we think our buildings look so good." —Erin Massey **IM**

