

Brooklyn Downtown Star

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American Dream a Reality on Vernon Avenue



By Phil Guie

A hard-working, single father cut the ribbon to his dream house last Wednesday in a ceremony attended by his family, elected officials, and representatives of the public and private sector.

Eleazor Moreno, who has lived in Brooklyn for roughly 23 years, qualified for the brand new, three-family townhouse through the combination of an income ranging between \$38,700 and \$75,000

annually and a bank loan.

His new residence, located at 85 Vernon Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant, is part of the Marcy New Homes Development, an affordable housing-for-ownership initiative being built by TNS Development Group Ltd/Great American Construction Corporation, with support from Housing Partnership Development Corporation (HPDC).

So far, seven of 31 planned three-family townhouses have been built, said a source from HPDC. Moreno, his son Hector, Eleazor's girlfriend Juanita, and her family moved into the house's primary three-bedroom unit last month, and his sister Patricia will be renting the two-bedroom apartment in the basement.

"My dad's been waiting for this for a long time," said the teenaged Hector, standing in front of his new address last Wednesday. "It's a great experience to see him achieve the dream of having his own house."

Moreno, who works as a kitchen supervisor at the Millennium Broadway Hotel in Manhattan, readily agreed. "This is the dream of my life because I never had a house," he said, while giving visitors a tour of his freshly painted living room and kitchen.

During the ceremony, attended by over 50 people, borough politicians alternated with officials from TNS/Great American, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), the New York State Affordable Housing Corporation (AHC), and HPDC heaping praise upon the project, which \$1.395 million in AHC subsidies helped pay for.

State Senator Velmanette Montgomery, who represents central Brooklyn, said she was particularly moved by the project's exterior aesthetics, featuring brick and pre-cast concrete to help them fit in with the rest of the neighborhood.

"This really speaks to your respect and regard for people already living here, and those who will be neighbors from this point forward," she said.

Meanwhile, Shaun Donovan, commissioner of HPD, which contributed subsidies for the project, acknowledged Bedford-Stuyvesant is undergoing "an incredible renaissance" of late, after years of being considered downtrodden.

However, he said many of the individuals who helped bring the area back are now being pushed out by rising rents. The mayor's plan to create 165,000 units of affordable housing across the city, which the Marcy New Homes development is part of, will help retain those individuals, he said.

Due to the use of AHC subsidies, monthly rent for the two rental units in Moreno's townhouse cannot exceed a total of \$2,198, or be raised more than two percent a year for a period of ten years, according to a press release.

Speaking on behalf of HPDC, Daniel Martin, the agency's president and CEO, said their agency's mission is to create workforce housing that benefits neighborhoods like Bedford-Stuyvesant, and that the public subsidies helped reduce the cost of construction.

In addition, Noemi Vega, director of Homeownership and Sales for the same agency, talked Moreno through the process that led to home ownership, which took up to four years to complete.

"Mr. Moreno has been a pleasure to work with," she said. "His determination to provide a better life for his family is truly inspiring, and I am thrilled that he is so happy with his new home."

Finally, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, who also contributed to the project, congratulated Moreno and Marcy New Homes' other new homeowners, who will now have the benefit of seeing their property values increase.

"The 'Brooklyn Renaissance' is only real if everyone benefits," Markowitz said. "That's why we have to use every tool we've got to make sure everybody has a chance to stay and raise a family here in Brooklyn."

As for Moreno, he thanked everyone who supported him during the past four years, including his mother, who unfortunately died before the dream was culminated.

"Thank you, New York, for everything," Moreno said. "I am very happy for all of my family."

PHOTO CAPTION:

1. (From left to right) New York State Affordable Housing Corporation director Dominic Martello, Brooklyn State Senator Velmanette Montgomery, new homeowner Eleazor Moreno, Borough President Marty Markowitz, and TNS/Great American Construction Corporation vice-president Samuel Gaccione were among those who took part in a ceremonial ribbon-cutting for Moreno's new house.

2. (From left to right) Noemi Vega, director of Homeownership and Sales of the Housing Partnership Development Corporation, Moreno's girlfriend Juanita, and Moreno himself in their new three-bedroom apartment, which includes a living room and (3.) pristine kitchen.