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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**HABITAT FOR HUMANITY – NEW YORK CITY TO BREAK GROUND  
ON 41-UNIT AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMPLEX IN OCEAN HILL-BROWNSVILLE**

**THIS THREE-BUILDING COMPLEX WILL BE:**

- **LARGEST MULTI-FAMILY COMPLEX EVER BUILT BY A HABITAT AFFILIATE**
- **HABITAT-NYC’S GREENEST BUILDINGS, DESIGNED TO LEED STANDARDS**



The largest—and one of the greenest—multifamily complex ever created by a Habitat for Humanity affiliate is rising on a long-vacant lot in Brooklyn’s Ocean Hill-Brownsville neighborhood.

Habitat for Humanity – New York City broke ground today for the \$13 million, 41-unit complex of affordable condominiums, which will meet LEED certification—the highest standard of green building. This innovative complex is part of a national pilot program for green homes, sponsored by the U.S. Green Building Council.

“Today marks the beginning of a new era for Habitat-NYC and Habitat affiliates across the nation,” said **Josh Lockwood**, Acting Executive Director of Habitat-NYC. “In the face of New York City’s crushing housing shortage, Habitat-NYC is adapting our volunteer building model to a large-scale project.

“In the face of an energy crisis and global warming, we must build homes that are affordable, energy-efficient, healthy and sustainable,” he said. “These homes will help our future homeowners save money, protect their health, help revitalize the neighborhood and help our planet.”

Joining in the ceremony were public officials, funders, Habitat homeowners, volunteers, community leaders, green industry leaders and many other New Yorkers working on this initiative. They included film stars David Basche and Alysia Reiner; Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz; New York City Council Member Erik Dilan; Marilyn Gelber, Independence Community Foundation; Wendell Walters, HPD Assistant Commissioner for Housing Production; and Ms. Viola Greene-Walker, District Manager of Community Board 16.

Brooklyn Borough President **Marty Markowitz** said, “Brooklyn is proud home to everyone from everywhere, and I commend Habitat-NYC for recognizing not only that affordable housing is key to preserving the diversity that makes Brooklyn strong, but that we grow ‘smart’ when we grow ‘green.’”

“By developing vacant city-owned land over the past two decades, New York City has successfully revitalized neighborhoods that were once written off and abandoned,” said HPD Assistant

Commissioner for Housing Production **Wendell Walters**. “Now that the challenge of abandonment has been met and the supply of city-owned land is nearly exhausted, we are faced with the challenge of affordability. By continuing to provide subsidies and developing new tools, the city is addressing affordability through Mayor Bloomberg’s 165,000-unit New Housing Marketplace Plan, the largest municipal affordable housing initiative in the nation’s history.”

**Marilyn Gelber**, Executive Director of the Independence Community Foundation, said: “This innovative development represents an important milestone for Habitat-NYC as it expands its urban reach to provide ever more homes for working New Yorkers. Our \$820,000 grant to this project provides a capstone to the \$5 million partnership with Habitat-NYC we began in 1998. We could not be more proud than we are today to see how far Habitat has come in creating an urban model for New York City that produces well-designed homes that are beautiful, “green” and affordable.”

“The real estate boom has created a crisis in housing affordability for thousands of low- and moderate-income families who have called this borough their home, and that is why I am pleased with the development of 41 units of desperately needed housing stock by Habitat for Humanity,” said Council Member **Erik Martin Dilan**, who is Chair of the Housing and Building Committee (D-Brownsville).

He also stated, "He also stated, "the value of green houses improves energy-efficiency, lowers home energy and gas bills and improves our quality of life, making this a win-win for the residents of Brownsville."

Film and TV star **David Basche**, who lives in a green home in Harlem, came out to lend his support to the Habitat-NYC homes. "When you make environmentally conscious choices for your home, you're doing more than building green—you're building the future," he said. "Being a part of this new movement in this country is exciting, and I'm proud to be known as green, along with Habitat for Humanity."

**Daniel Martin**, President and CEO of the Housing Partnership Development Corporation, said, “We are delighted the Housing Partnership is reinforcing the accomplishments of Habitat-NYC by matching this worthy developer with sources of funding for affordable housing. Here in New York City, the challenges of past years were the preservation and rehabilitation of abandoned and deteriorated housing stock. Today’s challenge is to find available land for new homes, and then to develop them at a cost that is affordable for the hard working families who are the backbone of our society. I’m proud to say that this housing is one of the best examples of our partnership.”

Under the name Brokers Build, a group of real estate brokers is working to raise \$1 million to fund one of the Atlantic Avenue buildings. “As real estate brokers in New York City profiting from an unprecedented luxury condominium boom, our goal is create an affordable housing boom as homeownership is the cornerstone to participating in the American Dream,” said **Stan Ponte**, Chairman of Brokers Build and President of Coldwell Banker Previews International. “Families are required to supply ‘sweat equity’ by participating in the building of their own home, which eliminates the down payment hurdle and allows hardworking families to become home owners for the first time.”

A complex of three, four-story buildings, the Atlantic Avenue residences will contain a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom condos. Future homeowners must earn between 45 to 80 percent of the city’s area median income (\$35,450 to \$56,700 for a family of four) and be willing to work at least 300 hours per adult to help build their homes.

This project is financed with:

- \$7.3 million construction loan from Citibank
- \$1.64 from the New York State Affordable Housing Corporation
- \$400,000 from the Brooklyn Borough President’s Office

- \$820,000 from the Independence Community Foundation
- \$5.5 million in sales revenues
- The remainder is being raised through corporate, foundation and individual gifts

The city's Housing Preservation and Development Department sold the half-acre site to Habitat-NYC for \$13.

Designed by Dattner Architects, this project is registered in LEED for Homes, a green building pilot program sponsored by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). The condominiums will include ENERGY STAR appliances and lighting fixtures, high-efficiency boilers and energy-efficient windows. Construction materials will be non-toxic and sustainable, and the site will be landscaped with drought-resistant plants and permeable paving.

By participating in LEED for Homes, this complex will help the USGBC create best practices, set standards and promote green building practices among mainstream homebuilders. Homeowners will be able to save an estimated 30 to 40 percent or on their utility bills, which will help to keep their homes affordable.

Construction is expected to be completed in 2009. Sales prices for these condos will be based on the incomes of the future homeowners and are expected to range between \$70,000 and \$160,000.

Ocean Hill-Brownsville is home to more than 85,000 people. According to the local community board, affordable housing is one of the most pressing needs in this community, where the median household income is \$20,714 and one in four residents spends more than half of their income on housing. Fewer than 16 percent of all Ocean Hill-Brownsville residents own their homes. These 41 Habitat-NYC homes will increase the supply of affordable housing in this area and help revitalize the neighborhood.

*Habitat-NYC transforms lives and our city by uniting all New Yorkers around the cause of decent, affordable housing. With the help of an average of 10,000 volunteers every year, Habitat-NYC has built more than 170 affordable homes in the five boroughs of New York City.*

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