

# Vital Brooklyn: A Comprehensive Approach to Community Health, Building Affordable Housing and Creating a Sustainable Future

**New York State Homes and Community Renewal**  
Rental Housing: Encouraging New Production

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**HFA:** NYS Homes and Community Renewal

**Title:** Vital Brooklyn: A Comprehensive Approach to Community Health, Building Affordable Housing and Creating a Sustainable Future

**Category:** Rental Housing **Subcategory:** Encouraging New Production

## **Vital Brooklyn:**

### **A Comprehensive Approach to Community Health, Building 4,000 Units of Affordable Housing, and Creating a Sustainable Future**

Of the five boroughs that make up the City of New York, Brooklyn is already the most populous and is rapidly gaining a skyline that rivals Manhattan. Rezoning and tax incentives spur investment that is altering the profile, demographics, affordability, housing stock, and amenities in neighborhoods across the borough. Yet, in the ten neighborhoods that make up central Brooklyn, inequities of every variety persist. The challenge is to address this endemic inequality holistically while providing new opportunities for residents and creating ethical, targeted and purposeful investment.

The \$1.4 billion Vital Brooklyn initiative is New York State's comprehensive community development initiative that focuses on eight integrated areas of improvement: community-based health care; affordable housing; open space and recreation; healthy food; education; economic empowerment; community-based violence prevention; and resiliency. The tailored initiative includes the seamless development of a comprehensive ambulatory care network, co-located in the affordable housing developments to improve the connection between health and housing with a focus on preventative care.

Currently, residents of central Brooklyn are faced with higher rates of obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure, limited access to healthy foods or opportunities for physical activity, an aging and inadequate supply of affordable housing, high poverty levels, high rates of violence and crime, wide economic disparities due to unemployment, and inadequate access to high quality health care and mental health services.

Meeting these challenges and transforming lives in these disadvantaged neighborhoods is the goal – and the opportunity to make these changes real is at hand.

#### **Linking Housing to Healthy Living**

New York State Homes and Community Renewal (NYS HCR), along with other state agencies, fully engaged the community in this transformation; the residents of central Brooklyn participated in shaping this holistic model for community development and wellness. The creation of 4,000 new affordable apartments is the lynchpin that connects and integrates the plan.

Across New York City the rental vacancy rate hovers at 3 percent, compared to 7 percent nationwide; residents of central Brooklyn pay approximately half of their total household income on rent alone — compared to 32 percent of household income statewide. It is well-known that rent burden can have a deleterious effect on health and life decisions, forcing people to choose between paying the rent or paying for medicine or even food. In addition, there is a need for supportive housing including homes for seniors, homeless individuals and families, and accessible housing. Vital Brooklyn is seizing the opportunity to embed new housing into an existing State-run healthcare system made up of Interfaith Medical Center, Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center, and Brookdale University Hospital and Medical Center, recently unified as the One Brooklyn Health System.

In mid-2018, NYS HCR kicked off the housing component of Vital Brooklyn, issuing the first of two planned Request for Proposals to develop four out of eleven underused sites on the grounds of Brookdale and Interfaith Medical Centers. The successful bidders, announced by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo in November 2018, will collectively create more than 2,700 100-percent affordable homes in central Brooklyn including apartments and supportive services for people who are developmentally disabled, individuals aging out of foster care, and chronically homeless families. At the same time, the Governor announced the release of a second request for proposals to construct affordable homes on seven additional parcels of land controlled by the State, owned by One Brooklyn Health, and the Health Science Center at Brooklyn Foundation.

**Affordable Housing RFP: More than 2,700 Permanently Affordable Apartments**

**Brooklyn Developmental Center: 2,400 apartments including 207 units for formerly homeless individuals and families, 185 units for intellectually and developmentally disabled individuals, 156 units for seniors**



Apex Building Company, L+M Development Partners, RiseBoro Community Partnership and Services for the Underserved (SUS) will develop the 2,400 unit Jamaica Bay Landing. Forty-five percent of the homes will be available to households earning up to 50 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), including 207 units for formerly homeless individuals and families; 185 units for intellectually and developmentally disabled individuals; and 156 units for seniors. All units will be available to households earning below 80 percent of AMI. Jamaica Bay Landing will include workforce development and outreach to place community residents in construction jobs to develop the Project.

Seven community partner organizations will provide job training and entrepreneurship programs. The Project is based on 'blue zones' planning, modeled after communities worldwide that have the longest lifespans, and includes 11.3 acres of public open space consisting of a retail main street, civic plaza, garden corridor, residential courtyards, a maritime grove fitness loop and productive zones.

**Interfaith Broadway Site C: 57 apartments affordable to a variety of income levels, and on-site services for seniors and chronically homeless families**



Longstanding Brooklyn non-profit CAMBA will build 57 apartments affordable to a variety of income levels, with on-site services for seniors and chronically homeless families. The development will feature 24-hour security, bicycle storage, community and fitness rooms, Green Building features that promote healthy living and save energy such as rooftop solar panels, ENERGY STAR Appliances, and more. A Community Facility Annex in a nearby building will provide residents with access to a workforce development training center, Community Supported Agriculture drop-off point for healthy food, and Neighbors Together meal delivery for elderly residents. In addition, CAMBA will develop customized on-site service plans in financial literacy, job-readiness, healthy living, and substance abuse. There will also be opportunities for residents to engage in movie nights, arts and crafts, as well as service provision LGBT Elders. The Project will also contain a 5,000sf co-located primary care center and mental health outpatient program, with services available for residents.

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**Brookdale Hospital Site B: 152 apartments affordable to a variety of income levels, and on-site services for the developmentally disabled and individuals aging out of foster care.**

Vital Brookdale, LLC, a joint venture among MDG Design + Construction, Smith & Henzy Advisory Group, and the Foundling Group has been selected to develop a 152-unit complex that will provide supportive services to developmentally disabled residents and to individuals aging out of the foster care system living in another subset of the apartments. Services will include meal planning and nutrition, socialization assistance, and computer use training, among other supports. The development will feature a computer room, a kitchen for cooking classes, and entertainment and community rooms. It will house a variety of community facility uses which will include a Community Foods Program with a Greenhouse and an Education and Job Training Center. There will be outdoor space on the ground, second and fifth floors, along with a community garden, outdoor seating, playground, and a dog run. The entire surface of the rooftop will contain solar panels to generate electricity onsite, providing environmental benefits and cost-savings. On the ground floor the Project will contain an 18,000sf ambulatory care center which will provide cancer imaging. The development is also located directly across the street from the Brookdale Medical Center, and residents will have access to all hospital services.



**Interfaith Herkimer Site A: 119 affordable homes for seniors, including a set aside for frail and elderly seniors who will receive on-site supportive services**



Federation of Organizations, a nonprofit community-based social wellness agency that provides health, supportive and housing services on Long Island and in New York City, will create 119 affordable homes for seniors, including a set aside for frail and elderly seniors who will receive on-site supportive services. Space on the ground floor will be used for food assistance programs. Social workers, case managers and nurses will also operate on site. A 6,000-square-foot ground floor primary care center operated by the Bed Stuy Family Health Center will serve residents and the community. A terrace on the second floor will have seating and offer exercise classes, and another on the seventh floor will feature an urban farm. The

building will be constructed to Passive House Standards and will include solar shades and a green roof. On-site the Project will contain a 6,000sf Primary Care Center with services available to all residents; the Project is also located across the street from the Interfaith Medical Center, and residents will have access to all hospital services.