

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 27, 2021

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Passive House at 669 St. Marks Avenue Breaks Ground

Construction has begun at 669 St. Marks Avenue in Crown Heights: a new multifamily Passive House project awarded \$238,920 by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) Buildings of Excellence Round 1 competition. The design and development team broke ground under a clear sky the morning of April 20th, with a limited in-person attendance and broadcast to a larger remote audience. The hybrid ceremony saw appearances from Councilmember Robert Cornegy, who represents the City Council district where the building is located; Greg Hale, Senior Advisor at NYSEDA; as well as members of the owner and the design and construction team.

Reuben Pinner, Building Owner and COO of RYL Development Group, opened the ceremony with a thank you to NYSEDA and the project team: “We are very excited to build this project, which will allow the tenants to enjoy the benefits of living in style, luxury, comfort, and most importantly, an energy-efficient building. We hope that this and all other passive housing projects in NY become mainstream and standard practice. We see a large need to help reduce our carbon footprint and are very pleased to be able to do so with this new project.”

Greg Hale, NYSEDA Senior Advisor, spoke to the development challenges of building for climate change and the future, citing the State’s 85x50 carbon reduction goal, “We need to get to an entirely carbon neutral building stock throughout New York state by the middle of this century. Now how do we do that? We’re looking at part of the solution right here.” He stressed the importance of electrification of the energy grid, which will make electrifying buildings a major part of the climate solution. “This building is ahead of its time. NYSEDA’s \$40 million Buildings of Excellence competition is all about amplifying the voices of these projects that are ahead of their time today, and getting to the point where this is business as usual development tomorrow. High performance construction is the right choice for the climate, but also the right economic choice. When you set Passive House as a fundamental project goal at the beginning, as the developer did here, the project team can deliver a high performance, low carbon building at roughly the equivalent cost of conventional construction and there are a lot of benefits on the other side: it’s not just the energy savings; the living spaces will also be better, healthier and more comfortable with active ventilation, and they will be quieter. You’ll be able to retreat inside, shut the city noise out, and have your own serene living space. So another thing we are doing at NYSEDA is working on raising consumer awareness of all of these benefits to increase demand for Passive House buildings. You can build at roughly the same cost but get a better return on your investment by building to this quality.”

Cycle Partner and Project Manager, Caitlin Martusewicz, extended gratitude to the design and development team: “It takes a team to design a building that performs to Passive House standards. There are many who contributed to the success of this design, starting with Massimo Cocco, but extending through Reuben and the ownership team, Steve Halpern from Compass who was instrumental in developing the pro-forma, and our team of engineers and construction advisors who assisted through design: SET Structural Engineers; EP Engineering, Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing Engineering; Passive House Academy, our Passive House Certifier; PHB Catalyst Group, who provided pre-construction CM services; Our expeditors, EPAC and Pine New York; and 475 Building Supply who helped with our specs.”

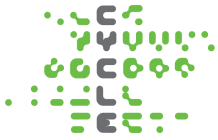
Alex Fagan from EP Engineering on the design team thanked the project team, “especially Tony and Caitlin who we’ve spent a lot of time working with. EP has a strong focus on sustainability and green design, so it was a pleasure to work with a team who shares our goals and especially on a building as special as this project.”

Learn more about this project by visiting **c-ap.net**

For more information about the Buildings of Excellence Design Competition:

<https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/Multifamily-Buildings-of-Excellence> For more information about Passive House Construction:

https://passiv.de/en/02_informations/01_whatisapassivehouse/01_whatisapassivehouse.htm



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Cycle Principal, Tony Daniels, thanked everyone in attendance: “I started Cycle in 2007 with the idea that we would one day be designing buildings like this one, so I can say that literally, this project for me is a dream come true. I live here, just a short walk away, and have so looked forward to seeing this building built. As architects, we cannot help but design for the future, since what we put here today will be here tomorrow.”

He also introduced Councilmember Cornegy, noting his work in the development of some of the most impactful green building legislation in the country, the Climate Mobilization Act.

Councilmember Robert Cornegy expressed his support for the project: “There’s a new wave of construction in Brooklyn, as chair of the councils’ committee on housing and buildings, I’m determined to make sure we can build sustainably and safely for the benefit of our entire community. That’s why I introduced and the city enacted legislation to reform the city’s energy conservation code. So, I appreciate the care that was taken in building 669 St Marks, which utilizes the best of environmental sustainability.” He applauded the building’s attention to providing comfort for residents with passive shading and individual outdoor spaces, and stressed the importance of this type of work in the city, “I would like to commend Masmore Corporation and Cycle Architecture & Planning for their vision to make this new building possible. As our planet faces the ever greater dangers of climate change, we’re faced with many challenges of how to build sustainably. Not only to fight greenhouse gases, but also to support economic justice. This building shows and teaches me that with good design and a thoughtful follow through, we can build a more beautiful, just and sustainable Brooklyn.”

Caitlin Martusewicz wrapped up the event with some final remarks, “it’s been an honor working with a team so focused on and dedicated to making buildings better, where meeting Passive House standards and considering the project’s overall resilience and quality have been taken as givens, not premiums. It has been an immense learning opportunity and an actual joy to work together with this specific team to optimize this building’s design and performance and it is beyond exciting to be here today to celebrate what is to come with this building.”

The team is already planning the mock up details we know we need to work through to hit our performance targets, and in the continued spirit of collaboration, we will continue to share the lessons we learn on this project with not only the local building team but with the community at large through upcoming construction building tours, contractor training opportunities, online virtual tours, and through a virtual project log that will be accessible on Cycle’s website.

And finally, this project would not have been possible without the vision, the unrelenting passion and belief that quality building and energy efficiency are the new business as usual, this of course being the mantra Massimo Cocco has instilled in the project from its inception.”

Learn more about this project by visiting **c-ap.net**

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