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Rockabill Development Completes Preservation and Rehabilitation of Affordable Workforce Housing Portfolio in Glendale, Queens

Extensive renovations, guaranteed affordability and new management have proven instrumental in helping residents weather the COVID-19 pandemic

Queens, New York (February 6, 2021)—Rockabill Development, a leader in providing development and financial services, to the affordable and supportive housing community, and Selfhelp Community Services today announced the conclusion of a \$5 million effort to preserve and rehabilitate 72 apartments in the Glendale section of Queens. The project is the first to be completed under the city’s Neighborhood Pillars Program, which assists community-based non-profits and mission-driven organizations in safeguarding the affordability of existing buildings.

“We are very proud to have taken a non-regulated property and protected its affordability for current and future generations in Glendale,” said **Niall J. Murray, Managing Partner and Founder of Rockabill**. “This project was truly a team effort, from our residents who trusted us to enter their homes at the height of the pandemic, to our contractors who went to great lengths to accommodate at-home learning and communicate every step of the way.”

“The success of this project and our collective perseverance in the face of exceptional challenges proves that New Yorkers are the most resilient, brave, and committed people there are,” added Murray.

“We are thrilled to see the first project completed under Neighborhood Pillars accomplish exactly what it is set out to do – lock-in affordability and security for families and communities. Neighborhood Pillars was designed to support non-profit and mission-driven partners looking to acquire properties for affordable housing, providing stability that is more critical than ever in the wake of COVID-19,” said **HPD Commissioner Louise Carroll**.

“We are so proud of our dedicated partners Rockabill, ConRock and Selfhelp for seeing this project through despite very challenging conditions,” added Carroll.

“The rehabilitation and preservation of these 72 homes will bring a greater stability to the Glendale community, while paving the way for similar efforts across the city under the Neighborhood Pillars Program,” said **HDC President Eric Enderlin**. “The completion of this project while we work through the challenges of the pandemic is a true testament to the devotion of our partners and strength of this community.”

“Selfhelp Community Services is thrilled to celebrate the completion of the rehabilitation and preservation of these 72 apartments in Glendale, Queens,” said **Evelyn Wolff, Executive Director, Selfhelp Realty Group**. “It’s a privilege to be part of the City’s first completed Neighborhood Pillars Programs and Selfhelp’s first preservation deal. Access to safe, affordable, and stable housing is part of any strong and vibrant community, and the ongoing pandemic amplified these needs.”

“We are grateful to the residents for their support and patience during the renovation process, and to our partner Rockabill Development, along with the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, the Housing Development Corporation (HDC), and Council Member Robert Holden for their work to ensure long term affordability for these tenants,” added Wolff.



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Located at 71-15, 71-21, and 71-27 65th Street, Rockabill and co-owner Selfhelp acquired the three, four-story apartment buildings in April 2019 through the New York City Acquisition Fund. Prior to the acquisition, residents faced rent increases on an average of \$469 per month due to the mix of unregulated and rent-stabilized units in the buildings.

In line with the goals of the Pillars Program, Rockabill worked with the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), the Housing Development Corporation (HDC), and Council Member Robert Holden on a Article XI exemption to provide all residents with rent-stabilized leases—including those who did not have one previously.

Under the terms of the 40-year agreement, 11 homes will be affordable for individuals and families earning no more than 50 percent AMI; 10 homes for those earning no more than 70 percent AMI; 24 homes for those earning no more than 85 percent AMI; 18 homes for those earning no more than 105 percent AMI; and 8 homes will be affordable for those earning no more than 120 percent AMI. Of these units, 36 will be permanently affordable and 15 units have been set aside to serve the formerly homeless.

The Glendale Neighborhood Pillars project has had more of an impact than Rockabill and Selfhelp originally anticipated, with improved affordability, stable ownership and new management proving integral in helping vulnerable residents weather the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now that the project is complete, residents benefit from upgraded apartments, including new bathrooms; the building's outdated cloth wiring has been fully replaced to ensure reliable electricity; new windows were installed to improve energy efficiency; violations were cured; and work to address aging infrastructure—from facade repair to new roofs—will ensure the properties remain operationally viable for generations to come.

Adapting during COVID-19

General contracting firm, ConRock Construction, was midway through an extensive tenant-in-place capital improvement campaign when the project was halted by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Once ConRock was granted essential status to resume work, establishing a robust communication channel between ownership, the residents and the construction team became paramount.

“Rehabbing-in-place in the age of COVID-19 was a reminder of how important clear and cogent communication with residents is to our success,” said **Bill O’Connor, Co-President, ConRock Construction**. “A pandemic is not something that you can plan for or run a calculation on, but we got through this by leveraging technology to foster collaboration between construction crews, building teams, ownership and tenants, keeping everyone safe while getting the job done.”

In addition to exceeding all city regulations related to site safety plans, temperature checks, and social distancing measures, ConRock adopted a hands-on, human-centered approach to managing the project during such a difficult time, including:

- Created a mobile app to improve how on-site teams complete superintendent daily log and advanced COVID-check in procedures
- Altered construction schedules to not to disrupt at-home learning for school age children in the buildings
- Continued only with work in common areas and building exteriors until the city reached Phase 4



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- Posted weekly notices with construction schedules and progress updates
- Hired a resident to serve as an on-site tenant relations coordinator to address any construction or COVID-related concerns
- Established a dedicated phone number and answering service operated by Selfhelp to address tenant needs and assist with benefits, food deliveries, and in-home case management, as well as facilitate communication with high-need or elderly tenants
- Hired a porter to ensure advanced cleaning protocols, especially for high touch surfaces

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About Rockabill Development

Rockabill serves the affordable and supportive housing development community by providing a variety of development and financial consulting services. The firm's development arm, Rockabill Development, acts as joint venture development partner, providing financing support and industry expertise to project owners looking to develop affordable and supportive housing. Rockabill Development also acquires, preserves and repositions existing multifamily properties.

About ConRock Construction

ConRock Construction LLC is a full-service construction management and general contracting company. ConRock Construction was founded out of its principals' awareness of the scarcity of tenant-in-place construction expertise and the soft skills necessary to execute those renovation plans in the affordable housing preservation industry.

About Selfhelp

Selfhelp Community Services was founded in 1936 and provides a broad set of services to more than 20,000 elderly, frail, and vulnerable New Yorkers each year, while remaining the largest provider of comprehensive services to Holocaust survivors in North America. We offer a complete network of home care and community-based services with the overarching goal of helping seniors live with dignity and independence and avoid institutionalization.