

Rockabill Consulting Secures \$22 Million for St. Francis Friends of the Poor to Finance the Rehabilitation of Three SRO Buildings in Chelsea

Deal will preserve all three buildings as 100% permanent supportive housing, continuing the legacy of the first NY/NY agreement under which they were created in the 1980s

NEW YORK (July 10, 2023)—[Rockabill](#), a leading consultant and development partner for the affordable and supportive housing industry, today announced that it has secured \$22 million in financing on behalf of its client [St. Francis Friends of the Poor](#), a nonprofit that pioneered the permanent supportive housing movement in New York City.

“It’s an honor to be trusted by St. Francis Friends of the Poor to help structure and execute such a transformational transaction,” said **Katie Devine, Principal, Rockabill**. “After 40 years of serving the most vulnerable, highest-need New Yorkers, St. Francis truly deserves this infusion of capital and subsidy, which allows them to perform a substantial rehabilitation project and bolster their operating income and reserves for many years to come.”

“We’re thankful to our partners at HPD, NYSERDA and NYCEEC for recognizing the importance of this special supportive housing program and investing so generously in its future,” she added.”

“With this vital support, we can continue our work empowering formerly homeless men and women living with mental illness to reclaim their lives and thrive as valued members of the community,” said **Christina Byrne, Executive Director, St. Francis Friends of the Poor**. “St. Francis Friends of the Poor extends our gratitude to HPD, NYSERDA and NYCEEC for this substantial investment in our work and for our partnership with Rockabill without which this would not have been possible.”

“Housing is essential to all New Yorkers. Supportive housing pioneers like St. Francis Friends of the Poor have provided a lifeline to New Yorkers in need for decades, and with the help of the City and State partners, we’re able to advance their mission to support those suffering from homelessness and mental health issues for decades to come,” said **HPD Commissioner Adolfo Carrión Jr.** “By ensuring the proper support and care for our most vulnerable neighbors, along with much needed sustainable building upgrades, we are protecting the wellbeing of New York City as a whole.”

St. Francis Friends of the Poor operates three single room occupancy (SRO) buildings in Chelsea which will be substantially renovated and modernized as a result of \$21 million in financing from [New York City Housing Preservation and Development](#) (HPD), \$1 million through the HPD-NYSERDA [Retrofit Electrification Pilot](#) and a zero-interest predevelopment loan through [NYCEEC’s](#) partnership with NYSERDA and HPD. It is also anticipated that St. Francis Friends of the Poor will execute a new HAP contract with HPD and receive 24 units of Project-based Section 8 in the coming months.

Located at 125 East 24th Street, 155 West 22nd Street and 148 Eighth Avenue, the 255-unit portfolio provides 100 percent permanent supportive housing to formerly homeless individuals living with severe mental illness, primarily schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorders. Originally operated as hotels until they were [acquired by three Franciscan Friars](#) in the 1980s, the properties have not undergone a full rehabilitation in over 40 years.

Notably, none of the 255 units have previously been registered for rent stabilization by the New York State Department of Homes and Community Renewal (DHCR) and despite the ability to charge market-rate rents, the organization has never charged tenants more than \$285 per month. Moving forward, all units will be registered with DHCR, existing tenants will continue to pay their current below-market rent and new tenants will pay 30 percent of their adjusted gross income.

The new funding from HPD will allow St. Francis Friends of the Poor to undertake a wide range of improvements to building exteriors, mechanical systems and dwelling units. Building parapets and facades will be repaired and restored, along with the full replacement of windows, doors and roofs. Oil and gas boilers will be replaced with more efficient natural gas units and St. Francis Residence II on West 22nd Street will be converted to 100 percent electric with state-of-the-art VRF units, water heaters and pumps.

Nearly 70 communal bathrooms and half-baths across the three buildings will be renovated to meet ADA compliance and improved to better serve an aging population. Dwelling units will receive new doors, resilient flooring and LED lighting. New pedestrian paving around the properties and ADA accessible entrances will further enhance the safety and well-being of St. Francis's residents.

The architect is OCV Architects and the General Contractor is ConRock Construction, LLC.

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About Rockabill Consulting

Rockabill is a preeminent consultant and development partner in the affordable and supportive housing industry. Primarily serving the not-for-profit community, our expertise lies in both the renovation and preservation of older affordable developments and in raising debt/equity and subsidy capital for new affordable and supportive developments. Since our inception in 2007, we have helped create and preserve over 12,000 homes for low-income families, those struggling with mental illness, and seniors in New York.

About St. Francis Friends for the Poor

For more than 40 years, the St. Francis Residences have successfully supported those who have not otherwise had long-term success in managing their psychiatric illness and staying safely housed. Each residence is staffed by an interdisciplinary care management team consisting of case managers, medical and psychiatric staff, activities coordinators, entitlements

specialists, and building management, who ensure that tenants receive the services they need in order to live in independent housing. Services at the properties are primarily funded through service contracts with the NYC Department of Homeless Services and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.