

# Press Release

## CONTACT:

Allison E. Marino  
The Community Builders  
857-221-8661  
allison.marino@tcbinc.org

**The Beacon, a collaboration between The Community Builders and Ascendant Neighborhood Development, receives NYSERDA Buildings of Excellence Award**

***Competition Highlights Model Projects to Bring Low-to Zero Carbon Multifamily Buildings to Scale in New York State***



*Photo Caption: Brian Backscheider, senior development project manager with The Community Builders (third row, left), Derek Gaskill, senior development project manager at Ascendant Neighborhood Development (not pictured) and Vera A. Voropaeva AIA, project architect & firm associate with Paul Castrucci Architects (third row, second from left) accepted the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA's) Buildings of Excellence on behalf of The Beacon project team.*

April 3, 2024 – (New York, N.Y.) – The Community Builders and Ascendant Neighborhood Development are pleased to announce that The Beacon in East Harlem, N.Y. was recently selected a winner in the fourth round of New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA's) Buildings of Excellence competition for the design of a low-carbon emitting multifamily building. The Beacon was selected for its carbon neutral performance,

profitability, ability to be adopted broadly, and for creating a healthy and safe living environment for residents.

This competition supports Governor Kathy Hochul's nation-leading climate goals outlined in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act), which place New York state on a path to economy-wide carbon neutrality and mandates an 85 % reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

"The Community Builders is honored to collaborate with NYSERDA in our shared mission to forge a brighter, cleaner, and more sustainable future for residents of affordable and mixed-income housing," **said Jesse Batus, TCB's Regional Vice President of Development for NY/NJ.** "With NYSERDA's invaluable support and commitment to environmental stewardship, TCB will advance greater energy efficiency, a commitment to resilience, and an elevated standard of clean living for our residents at The Beacon in East Harlem."

"Our ongoing partnership with NYSERDA has been pivotal in integrating innovative energy solutions into our projects, ensuring that our buildings not only provide quality housing but also contribute to a greener, more sustainable future," **said Chris Cirillo, Executive Director + President of Ascendant.** "The recognition from the Buildings of Excellence program reaffirms our commitment to pushing the boundaries of affordable housing development. Together we're building communities that thrive."

TCB and Ascendant's winning project, The Beacon, will feature 281 affordable homes and serve as a community hub for local not-for-profit organizations, with a focus on preservation, enhanced community connections, and sustainability, as well as resident and community health and wellness. The Beacon's highly efficient, sustainable and resilient design is centered on reconnecting and repairing the social fabric of the community. The development will provide programming centered on community needs, including health and wellness, educational opportunity, economic empowerment, and social/emotional growth across generations to serve the community's diverse needs.

The Beacon's project team is a collaborative effort between The Community Builders and Ascendant Neighborhood Development Corporation, a longstanding community-based organization serving Central and East Harlem for over 35 years. Overseeing the design process is Paul A. Castrucci Architects, a New York-based firm renowned for its dedication to sustainability, equity, and community values. Their services prioritize the development of new buildings with Passive House and Net Zero certifications whenever possible, in addition to the environmentally conscious rehabilitation of existing structures. MaGrann Associates, an esteemed energy efficiency and green building consulting and engineering firm headquartered in New Jersey is providing vital design, certification, and compliance support, particularly in the residential new construction and multifamily retrofit markets, driving increased levels of energy and sustainability performance.

The Buildings of Excellence Competition, launched in March 2019, is a \$58 million initiative that has awarded 65 exemplary multifamily new construction demonstration projects to date. Within the initiative, \$2 million in Early Design Support funding has been awarded to architecture and design firms to enhance capabilities to design toward carbon neutral standards. It is the only competition of its kind, with the awarded projects becoming part of a comprehensive data collection effort that will help determine how to cost-effectively deliver superior performing buildings that will serve as an essential building block of a carbon-neutral future and advance the design and construction of multifamily buildings. The Competition is administered by

NYSERDA with the support of an advisory council comprising a cross-section of experts from the design, real estate and sustainability sectors with partners including American Institute of Architects New York State, ASHRAE and The Real Estate Board of New York.

For a complete list of the winning projects statewide, please visit NYSERDA's Buildings of Excellence website at: [www.nyserda.ny.gov/boe](http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/boe).

**NYSERDA President and CEO Doreen M. Harris said,** "As we press toward New York's ambitious Climate Act goals, projects like 413 E. 120th St. demonstrate how forward-thinking approaches can help us reduce emissions from buildings while providing safe, and healthy housing to our state's most vulnerable residents. We congratulate Assembly OSM on this and commend them for combining low-carbon and highly energy efficient technologies that provide meaningful benefits to the residents and surrounding community through this project."

This project will also provide comprehensive data on design, construction and cost that can be analyzed and shared to increase the number of carbon neutral buildings in New York State. For a complete list of the winning projects statewide, please visit NYSERDA's Buildings of Excellence website at <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/all-programs/programs/multifamily-buildings-of-excellence>.

### **About The Community Builders**

The Community Builders' mission is to build and sustain strong communities where all people can thrive. Our mission-driven businesses work with partners to develop, finance and operate residential communities, neighborhood amenities and opportunity programs for families, seniors and adults with disabilities. Since 1964, we have advanced housing equity through award-winning affordable and mixed-income communities and our pioneering Community Life model for resident success. Today, our ownership and management portfolio include over 14,000 apartment homes including 1,293 units in New York state, including Park Haven in The Bronx, which received a NYSERDA Buildings of Excellence Round One Award. Anchored by offices in Boston, Chicago, Columbus, New York and Washington D.C., we operate across 15 states.

### **About Ascendant Neighborhood Development**

Ascendant's current 690-unit portfolio comprises 28 buildings ranging in size from four to 94 apartments, featuring a mix of newly constructed and rehabilitated structures. Ascendant's ongoing collaborations with NYSERDA have been instrumental in integrating cutting-edge energy solutions into their developments, with initiatives such as the Energy Master Plan and participation in the RetrofitNY Pledge. Looking ahead, the organization's development pipeline is robust, with plans to add 2,146 additional apartments, including 600 in new construction projects and over 1,500 through rehabilitation of existing buildings. These projects, slated to start construction in 2024 and 2025, represent Ascendant's ongoing commitment to expanding affordable housing options across Northern Manhattan in alignment with NYSERDA's objectives for sustainable development.

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