

## Bronx urban renewal zone gets its Palace of the Sun

Palacio del Sol, a 124-unit mixed-use, affordable housing apartment building in the Melrose Commons section of The Bronx, has opened as the largest and newest project in that urban renewal area.

Magnusson Architecture and Planning designed the property, located on Melrose Avenue between 156th and 157th streets, for developers Nos Quedamos/We Stay and L&M Equity Participants, Ltd.

Rents in this affordable housing development will accommodate tenants who earn up to 60% of the Area Median Income.

Palacio del Sol, or "Palace of the Sun," is a departure in affordable housing design. Its architecture transcends the visual expectations that have limited traditional design for such properties.

Positioned at the southernmost edge of the urban renewal area, Palacio functions as a "gateway" to the Melrose Commons community, a fact that MAP Architects took to heart in developing a design scheme for the building.

"We chose the three colors of brick for the facade to harmonize with the existing palate of the diverse neighborhood," explained Magnusson. "This variety helps to break up the massing, which keeps the building – one of the largest in the area – from becoming overwhelming."

In addition to its residential component, the building contains 13,035 s/f of commercial space, which will be used for a supermarket – a unique feature in a neighborhood populated with smaller markets and bodegas.

The property will also house a 2,650 s/f headquarters for Nos Quedamos, the community organi-



Palacio del Sol

zation whose efforts helped establish Melrose Commons as an urban renewal area in the early 90s.

Palacio del Sol's dramatic corner entry is its most notable architectural feature. MAP Architects developed it in close collaboration with the late Yolanda Garcia, founder of Nos Quedamos. The recessed entry to the building creates a small piazza on the corner, which encourages residents and visitors to participate more fully in the community's street life.

Palacio's ground floor includes a distinctive lobby, a spacious community room and a security office. The laundry room has direct access to a private outdoor space, as well as a view of the children's play area. On-site parking is provided for 47 cars. The property also has tree-lined sidewalks and lawn space, which provide both privacy and a buffer from street and traffic noise.