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Roosevelt Island Building to Be Solar Powered

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NEW YORK, New York, May 15, 2003 (ENS) - The 147 acre Roosevelt Island in New York's East River will soon feature a solar powered multi-family apartment building. The Octagon Park Apartments will incorporate 500 new apartments, including 100 affordable apartments, the restored historic Octagon building, and a new ecological park on the site of the former Metropolitan Hospital. The project is expected to start construction late this summer, with new residents starting to move in late in 2004.

The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) announced today that the Octagon Park Apartments will receive up to \$250,000 in funding to support the installation of photovoltaic panels that will generate solar electricity for the building. The decision marks the second green building award to the project this year, following the announcement of \$6 million in Green Building Tax Credits from the New York Department of Environmental Conservation in February.

"Solar panels are a cost-effective solution to managing electricity costs. Octagon Park Apartments will not only save on electricity costs, but become more energy independent," said NYSERDA Acting President Peter Smith. "NYSERDA's programs offer the technical and financial assistance necessary for most alternative energy projects, which ultimately helps the customer save on energy bills and improve New York's environment."

The Octagon Park Apartments plans to install a set of solar panels, mounted flat on the roof, that will generate up to 50 kilowatts, enough to power common areas, including lights, mechanical systems, and elevators. The photovoltaic panels are an important part of the project's "Green Building" designation, according to the project's developer, Bruce Becker of Becker and Becker Associates of New Canaan, Connecticut.

"The panels won't be apparent by looking at the building, but they will reduce electrical demand significantly - especially on sunny summer days when demand is highest and the electrical grid is most stressed," said Becker.

In addition to solar electricity, other green features include a geothermal well field, which uses the constant temperature of groundwater to both heat and cool the building, as well as super-insulated windows, walls, and roof.

Natural gas fired microturbines will generate additional electricity and provide hot water for the well field and the building's domestic hot water needs. The improvements will help make the building more than 35 percent more energy efficient than the new State Building Code requirements.

Named Welfare Island in 1921 when the City of New York purchased the it from the Blackwell family, the long, narrow island was transformed into an island for municipal institutions such as prisons, poor houses, and nursing homes.

In 1969, the New York State Urban Development Corporation signed a 99 year lease with New York City to develop the island, using a master plan that called for a mixed income community of 20,000 people living in 5,000 units in a traffic free environment. The island was renamed Roosevelt Island in 1973, and the first residential complex opened in 1975.

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation was created by the New York State Legislature in 1984 as a public benefit corporation charged with maintaining, operating and developing the island.

Becker pointed out that Roosevelt Island, from its inception as a community, has been a leader in environmental practices, up to the Island's pursuit this year of low emissions buses, and he said that the Octagon project is intended to continue this tradition.

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