

Terwilliger Center for Housing



Designed by Dattner Architects, 425 Grand Concourse integrates into the urban fabric while maintaining a striking presence as the tallest building in its vicinity. (Andy Ryan Photography Inc.)

CASE STUDY: 425 GRAND CONCOURSE

BRONX, NEW YORK

LOCATION:

425 Grand Concourse,
Mott Haven
Bronx, New York

OPERATOR:

Trinity Financial and
MBD Community Housing
Corporation

PROJECT TYPE:

Mixed-use, Passive House–
certified, affordable and
mixed-income housing
development

PARTNERS:

Trinity Financial, MBD
Community Housing
Corporation, CUNY Hostos
Community College,
Damien Family Care Center,
BronxWorks, Dattner
Architects, New York City
Housing Preservation and
Development, New York
State Energy Research
and Development Authority
(NYSERDA)

UNITS:

277 residential units

SIZE:

310,000 square feet

COST:

\$178 million

COMPLETION DATE:

June 2022

PROJECT WEBSITE:

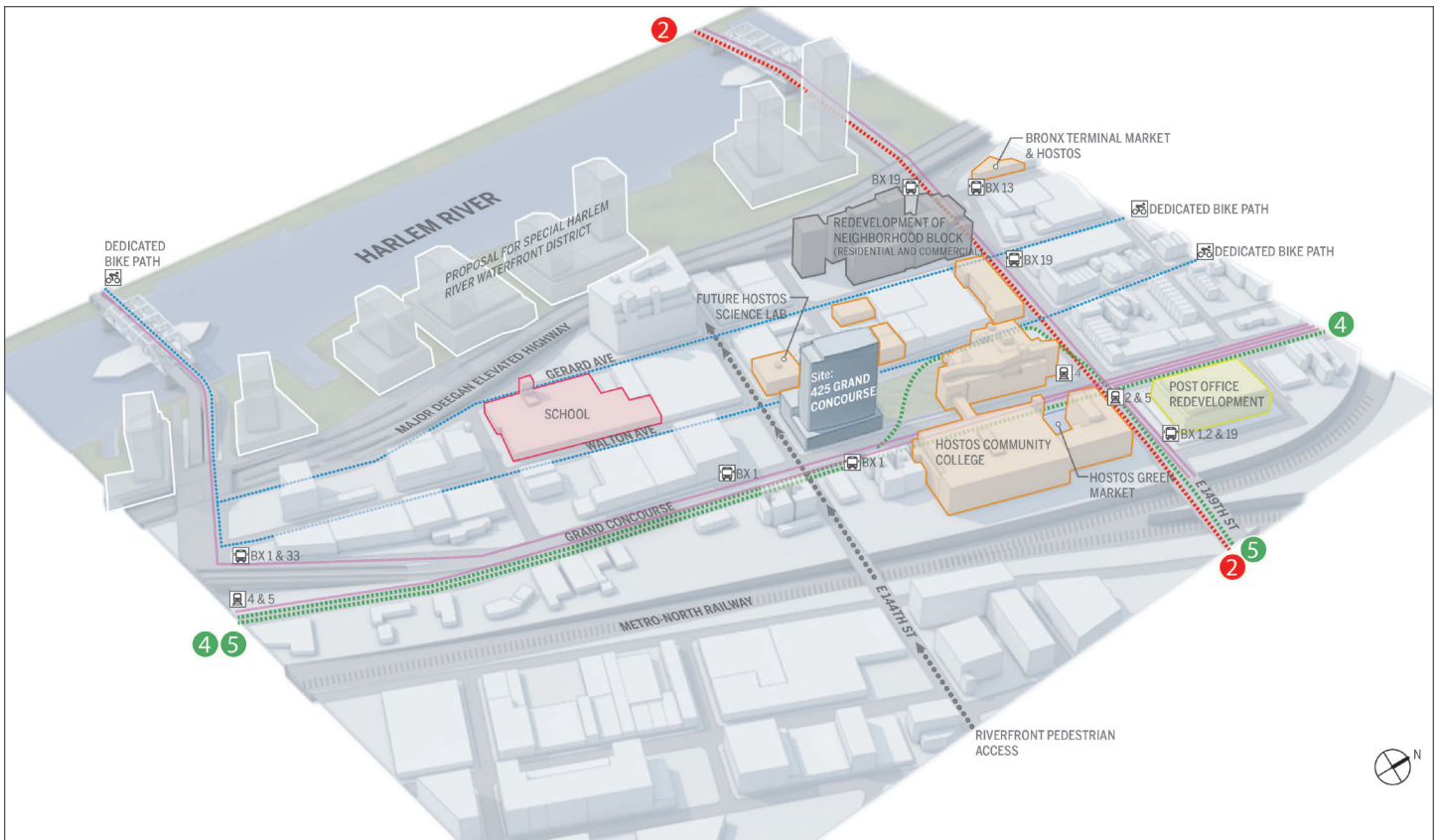
[https://www.425grand
concourse.com/](https://www.425grandconcourse.com/)

OWNER:

Trinity Financial and
MBD Community Housing
Corporation

CONTACT:

Thomas Brown, Vice
President, Trinity Financial



425 Grand Concourse is a 26-story, 310,000-square-foot Passive House–certified development located in the Mott Haven neighborhood of the Bronx, New York. (Courtesy of Trinity Financial)

Project Overview

425 Grand Concourse is a 26-story, 310,000-square-foot Passive House–certified development located in the Mott Haven neighborhood of the Bronx, New York. It was developed by Trinity Financial in partnership with MBD Community Housing Corporation. This project arose from a 2015 request for proposal issued by New York City’s Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to transform a city-owned site that formerly housed PS 31, a historic school demolished after falling into disrepair.

The primary objective of the project was to address critical community needs: housing affordability, food access, health care, and educational opportunities. The development includes 277 affordable and mixed-income housing units, a supermarket, a

29,000-square-foot CUNY educational facility, a community health center, and a cultural space. The project’s focus on sustainability, equity, and community revitalization has made it a transformative investment in a historically underserved area.

Planning and Design

The planning process for 425 Grand Concourse centered on balancing urban density with livability and sustainability. The building’s orientation minimizes shadowing on Evelina Antonetty Playground and other adjacent open spaces. Design elements, such as the north-south sculptural massing and sunshades, maximize energy efficiency while maintaining aesthetic appeal.

Passive House standards guided the project, ensuring a highly insulated, airtight envelope and energy-efficient building systems. Early collaboration with engineers, contractors, and sustainability consultants allowed for seamless integration of these features, reducing costs and improving construction efficiency.

In addition to residential spaces, the development incorporates community-gearred facilities, including retail, health care, and cultural spaces, addressing multiple local needs in a single, integrated structure.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

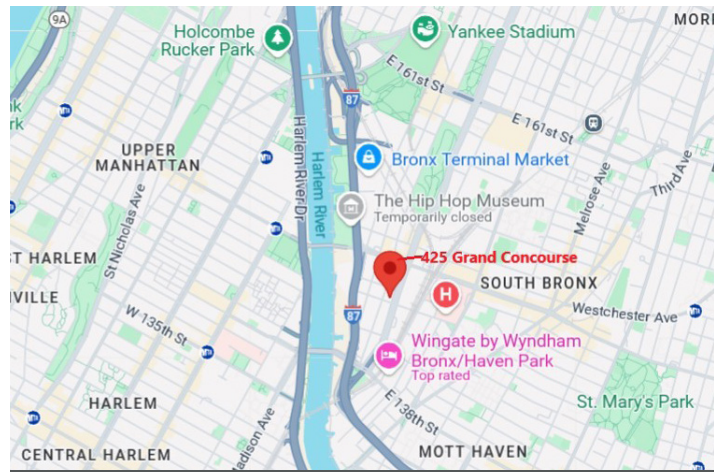
The building features a two-story brick-clad podium supporting a 26-story tower with gently curving massing and distinctive high-performance sunshades. Designed by Dattner Architects, the development integrates into the urban fabric while maintaining a striking presence as the tallest building in its vicinity.

Amenities include landscaped rooftop terraces, a fitness center, bike storage, laundry facilities on every floor, and community spaces such as a resident lounge and clubrooms for events. Large high-performance windows provide ample natural light, while the building's facade incorporates metal panels over ample mineral wool insulation, ensuring a balance of aesthetics and sustainability. The ground floor houses essential services, including retail spaces and cultural and health care facilities.

The project's density exceeds 135 units per acre, significantly higher than the surrounding neighborhood average of 17 units per acre. The building's location, adjacent to public transit, playgrounds, and community institutions, enhances its accessibility and functionality for residents.

RESIDENTIAL LIVABILITY

The design prioritizes resident well-being through spacious, light-filled apartments with energy-efficient appliances and thoughtful layouts. Each unit features filtered air supplied by energy recovery ventilation



The development includes 277 affordable and mixed-income housing units, a supermarket, a CUNY educational facility, a community health center, and a cultural space. (Google Maps)

systems, reducing allergens and improving air quality—a critical consideration in a neighborhood with one of the highest childhood asthma rates in the country.

Shared amenities, including landscaped terraces, provide spaces for relaxation and recreation. Communal facilities such as laundry rooms are distributed throughout the building for convenience and to minimize elevator usage. The inclusion of free broadband wi-fi ensures connectivity, supporting residents' educational and professional needs.

Sustainability

425 Grand Concourse was, until recently, the largest Passive House–certified project in North America, consuming 70 percent less energy for heating and cooling than conventional buildings. Its high-performance building envelope, energy recovery ventilation, and advanced HVAC systems significantly reduce heating and cooling loads.

Other sustainable features include low-flow water fixtures, efficient lighting, and electric stoves. The building's design enhances resilience, maintaining the interior temperature during power outages and providing emergency power for critical systems as well as basic shelter-in-place systems, such as potable water supply, building-wide wi-fi, elevators,

security, and access control. These innovations align with New York City’s carbon neutrality and resiliency goals and set a benchmark for environmentally responsible affordable housing.

The project achieved certifications from PHIUS+ 2015 and Enterprise Green Communities, highlighting its commitment to both environmental and social sustainability.

Construction Process

Construction of 425 Grand Concourse began in December 2019, presenting several unique challenges that required innovative engineering and project management solutions. One of the primary hurdles was the site’s proximity to New York City subway tunnels and the project’s location on a rock ledge, which required close coordination with the Metropolitan Transit Authority and added complexity to foundation work.

The development team worked closely with structural engineers to design a foundation system that avoided any impact on subway infrastructure while supporting the weight of the 26-story Passive House–certified building.

Another major challenge was the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic during construction, which disrupted supply chains, created labor shortages, and necessitated new health and safety protocols.

The team also had to comply with Federal Aviation Administration restrictions due to the building’s height and location under LaGuardia Airport’s flight path. This required the installation of rooftop beacons and adherence to strict regulations regarding the tower’s height.

In addition, concurrent city redevelopment efforts at the adjacent Evelina Antonetty Playground meant that construction activities needed to be carefully coordinated to ensure public safety and avoid conflicts between projects.



425 Grand Concourse was, until recently, the largest Passive House–certified project in North America, consuming 70 percent less energy for heating and cooling than conventional buildings. (© Albert Vecerka)

Community Context

Mott Haven, a historically underserved neighborhood in the Bronx, faces significant health and socioeconomic challenges, including lack of fresh food options and high asthma rates. The development directly addresses these issues by providing a supermarket, health care center, and educational facility.

The Damien Family Care Center offers accessible primary and dental care, targeting uninsured or underinsured residents. The CUNY Hostos educational facility supports low-income students through financial aid and academic programs, fostering long-term community development.



The design features spacious, light-filled apartments with energy-efficient appliances. (Andy Ryan Photography Inc.)

Community Engagement

Extensive community engagement shaped the project's design and amenities. Through listening sessions and partnerships with local organizations, the development team incorporated feedback on affordability levels, service needs, and community facilities.

Partnerships with BronxWorks and other local groups ensured effective service delivery, while collaborations with city agencies facilitated rezoning and construction approvals. These efforts built trust and aligned the project with community priorities.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS ABOUT SHADOWS AND DEVELOPER ADAPTATIONS

One significant community concern during the planning process for 425 Grand Concourse was the potential shadow cast by the proposed building on adjacent open spaces, particularly Evelina Antonetty

Playground. Residents and stakeholders expressed apprehension that the proposed structure would limit sunlight in the park, affecting its usability and enjoyment for local families and children.

To address these concerns, the development team, including Trinity Financial and Dattner Architects, made strategic adaptations to the building's orientation and design. The building's massing was also adjusted to minimize shadow impacts on the playground and nearby public spaces. By orienting the tower to reduce shading, the team ensured that sunlight would continue to reach the playground during key hours of the day.

These modifications not only addressed community concerns but also demonstrated the developer's commitment to designing a project that balanced density with livability, preserving the neighborhood's quality of life while meeting the city's broader goals for mixed-use, transit-oriented development.

Project Innovation

The project’s combination of sustainability, affordability, and community-centered design sets a precedent for urban development. Features such as sunshades, high-performance windows, and advanced HVAC systems are tailored to address local challenges, including pollution and noise.

Its success demonstrates the replicability of high-rise Passive House standards in large-scale developments, offering a model for environmentally and socially responsible housing.

Housing Affordability and Unit Mix

While all 276 units developed under the project are income restricted (excluding the building superintendent), 425 Grand Concourse serves a range of income levels. There are no market rate units within the project. Seventy-two percent of units are reserved for households earning below 80 percent of the area median income (AMI), while 28 units are allocated for formerly homeless individuals. The project was developed under LIHTC “Income Averaging” up to 70 percent AMI. The weighted AMI average of the 166 LIHTC units was 48.38 percent AMI.

AFFORDABILITY LEVEL	NUMBER OF UNITS	PERCENTAGE	MONTHLY RENT LOW (\$)	MONTHLY RENT HIGH (\$)
At or below 30% AMI	28	10	362	650
Between 30 and 60% AMI	83	30	215	927
Between 60 and 80% AMI	55	20	1,003	1,760
Between 80 and 120% AMI	41	15	1,212	2,121
120% AMI+	69	25	1,532	2,676
Total units	276	100		

UNIT MIX	OVERALL UNIT CONFIGURATION				TOTAL
	STUDIO	1 BR	2 BR	3+ BR	
At or below 30% AMI	5	9	9	5	28
Between 30 and 60% AMI	13	28	28	14	83
Between 60 and 80% AMI	9	18	20	8	55
Between 80 and 120% AMI	6	14	13	8	41
120% AMI+	12	23	23	11	69
Total units	45	92	93	46	276

425 GRAND CONCOURSE: PROJECT PRO FORMA

NAME	425 Grand Concourse
LOCATION	425 Grand Concourse, Mott Haven, Bronx, New York
PROJECT TYPE	Mixed-use, Passive House–certified, affordable and mixed-income housing development
NUMBER OF UNITS	277 residential units
SIZE	310,000 square feet

CONSTRUCTION FINANCING

SOURCE OF FUNDS		TOTAL (\$)
HDC first mortgage (tax exempt bond)	NYC HDC	76,465,000
HDC Mix & Match Subsidy	NYC HDC	20,775,000
HPD Mix & Match Subsidy	NYC HPD	52,509,051
LIHTC equity and deferred fee	TD Bank and Redstone Equity Partners Trinity Financial and MBD Community Housing Corporation	18,319,784
NYC Resolution A funds	NYC City Council and Bronx borough president	1,000,000
Developer equity	Trinity Financial and MBD Community Housing Corporation	453,447
Deferred reserves	NYC HDC	1,298,390
Deferred and accrued interest	NYC HDC	7,259,195
Total sources		178,079,867

PERMANENT FINANCING

SOURCE OF FUNDS		TOTAL (\$)	PER UNIT (\$)
HDC first mortgage (tax exempt bond)	NYC HDC	41,610,000	150,216.61
HDC Mix & Match Subsidy	NYC HDC	20,775,000	75,000.00
HPD Mix & Match Subsidy	NYC HPD	52,509,051	189,563.36
LIHTC equity	TD Bank and Redstone Equity Partners	45,839,730	165,486.39
Deferred developer fee	Trinity Financial and MBD Community Housing Corporation	4,586,891	16,559.17
NYC Resolution A funds	NYC City Council and Bronx borough president	1,000,000	3,610.11
Developer equity	Trinity Financial and MBD Community Housing Corporation	4,500,000	16,245.49
Deferred and accrued interest	NYC HDC	7,259,195	26,206.48
Total sources		178,079,867	642,887.61

USE OF FUNDS	TOTAL (\$)
Acquisition (land and improvements)	1
Soft costs	56,136,868
Hard costs	121,942,998
Total uses	178,079,867

Innovative Financing

The project's \$178 million budget was financed through a mix of public and private funding sources, including tax-exempt bonds, low-income housing tax credits (LIHTCs), and NYSERDA grants. Additional funding came from city and state subsidies, as well as local contributions from elected officials.

An innovative financing structure divided the building into eight condominium units to accommodate the requirements of various funding streams. This approach minimized financial risk while maintaining affordability and sustainability. Despite the high upfront costs, the project demonstrated the economic viability of Passive House standards in large-scale developments.

HPD/HDC Mix & Match Subsidy is offered by New York City's HPD and the Housing Development Corporation (HDC) to support the new construction of mixed-income multifamily rental projects. In these projects, 40 to 60 percent of the units are at low-income rents affordable to households earning up

to 80 percent of AMI and the other 40 to 60 percent of units have rents affordable to moderate and/or middle-income households earning up to 120 percent of AMI. Projects must have a range of affordability tiers.

The HPD/HDC subsidy is to be paired with other eligible public and private sources. A borrower must be a Housing Development Fund Corporation either alone or in partnership with nonprofit entities, for-profit developers, limited partnerships, corporations, trusts, joint ventures, or limited liability companies.

Resolution A provides discretionary capital grants from New York City Council members and borough presidents to support housing development and preservation projects, particularly those with significant affordable housing components. Nonprofit developers and providers are eligible to apply, with funding amounts starting at \$500,000 per project and \$35,000 per unit for non-City-owned properties. Funded projects must serve the community for at least five years, comply with green building standards and prevailing wage requirements, and adhere to existing City agreements.

Marketing and Performance

The project's marketing emphasized its affordability, sustainability, and extensive amenities. The overwhelming response of 65,000 applications for 277 units underscores the demand for affordable housing in New York City. Leasing was conducted through NYC's affordable housing portal, ensuring equitable access and compliance with local regulations.



Landscaped rooftop terraces are among the amenities at 425 Grand Concourse. (Andy Ryan Photography Inc.)

Lessons Learned

Early community engagement. Engaging with the community early in the planning process helped align the project with local needs and build trust among stakeholders. By holding listening sessions and incorporating feedback on affordability, amenities, and services, the development team ensured the project resonated with its future residents. This proactive approach reduced resistance during the approval process and created a stronger sense of ownership within the community.

Integrated design processes. Collaboration among architects, engineers, and sustainability consultants from the outset allowed for efficient integration of Passive House standards and other design goals. This approach minimized costly redesigns and ensured the building's features—such as airtight construction and energy-efficient systems—were seamlessly implemented. Early involvement of the general contractor also mitigated potential delays, aligning construction practices with the design intent.

Sustainability as a standard. The success of Passive House standards in this large-scale development demonstrates their feasibility for other urban projects. Features like energy recovery ventilation, high-performance windows, and a thermal envelope not only reduce operating costs but also enhance tenant comfort and resilience. By showing that sustainability can coexist with affordability, the project sets a precedent for environmentally responsible development.

Balancing complexity with simplicity. Dividing the financing into eight condominium units allowed the team to meet the diverse requirements of funding sources without compromising the project's vision. This innovative approach to structuring finances reduced risk and streamlined management. Creative problem-solving is essential when navigating complex funding landscapes.

The value of resilience. Incorporating resilience measures, such as emergency power systems that also serve shelter-in-place loads, and heat-retaining building envelopes, provided peace of mind for residents while addressing vulnerabilities exposed by past disasters like Superstorm Sandy. These features ensure the building remains livable during power outages and extreme weather events. Developers should prioritize resilience in future projects to improve safety and long-term operational viability.

Affordable yet aspirational design. By maintaining design standards comparable to market-rate housing, the project ensured that residents feel a sense of dignity and belonging. Elements such as natural light, local artwork, and thoughtful layouts elevated the building's quality while remaining cost effective. This demonstrates that affordability does not need to come at the expense of aesthetic and functional excellence.

Replicability of innovations. The project's success provides a replicable model for other high-rise Passive House developments in dense urban environments. By documenting challenges, solutions, and cost-saving measures, the team has created a roadmap for scaling sustainable design in future affordable housing projects. Sharing these insights with the broader industry fosters innovation and progress.

Conclusion

425 Grand Concourse stands as a model of sustainable, equitable, and community-driven urban development. By integrating affordable housing with essential services and cutting-edge sustainability features, it transforms not only the built environment but also the lives of its residents. As one of the largest Passive House projects in North America, it sets a benchmark for the future of resilient and inclusive urban growth.

About the Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 48,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 84 countries.

The extraordinary impact that ULI makes on land use decision-making is based on its members sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. Each year, thousands of events, both virtual and in person, are held in cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at uli.org. Follow ULI on [X \(formerly known as Twitter\)](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

About the Terwilliger Center

The mission of the Terwilliger Center for Housing is to ensure that everyone has a home that meets their needs at a price they can afford. Established in 2007 with a gift from longtime member and former ULI chairman J. Ronald Terwilliger, the Center's activities include technical assistance engagements, forums and convenings, research and publications, and an awards program. The goal is to catalyze the production and preservation of a full spectrum of housing options. [Learn more.](#)

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