

Housing lottery winners selected for Melville co-op units

July 13, 2016 By Valerie Bauman valerie.bauman@newsday.com

(Credit: Newsday / Valerie Bauman)



Dozens of people packed a small room at Huntington Town Hall on Tuesday as officials pulled names from a barrel and announced the winners of an affordable housing lottery for a co-op on Ruland Road in Melville.

Jacqueline Guerriero, 45, grinned widely and thrust her hand in the air when officials called her name. Her daughters, ages 7 and 4, clapped and bounced in their seats before engulfing Guerriero in an embrace that was more tackle than hug.

“I’m so happy, because right now we’re living in a one-bedroom for all of us,” she said, gesturing toward her husband, Christopher, and children, who have shared a cramped Hempstead apartment since 2011.

The family won a spot at the Highland Green Residences, which will have 117 limited-equity co-op units, including 39 two-bedroom and six three-bedroom units. The remaining units are one bedroom, and there are no age restrictions.

The 105,000-square-foot project, and the inclusion of the larger units, is part of the Town of Huntington’s settlement of a more than decade-old legal fight related to affordable housing for minorities.

The NAACP had argued that an earlier proposal would have discriminated against minorities and families because it allowed for only one-bedroom, for-sale units instead of multi-bedroom rental homes that would attract families.

For Guerriero and other lottery winners, it’s an opportunity for a completely different life — and one that includes some privacy.

“Every day I say to myself, ‘I can’t live like this,’ ” Guerriero said. “I need my own room. These kids need their own room.”

Huntington Supervisor Frank P. Petrone conceived the project’s co-op structure. It’s a compromise that will provide an affordable option to families that do not want to buy a condo, while also satisfying neighbors who want a bigger commitment from new community members than rentals provide.

Instead of owing rent or a mortgage, residents will pay a monthly fee that will cover their share of the development’s property taxes and maintenance costs, as well as the \$10.8 million tax-exempt bond used to finance construction. For a one bedroom, the fee ranges from \$1,106 to \$1,500; for a two-bedroom unit the fee is \$1,322 to \$1,794; and a three-bedroom co-op comes with a fee of \$1,517 to \$2,063.

Residents can build equity in the property with the money that goes toward financing the bond and can take some of their investment with them when they leave.

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