

*As Seen In...*

# REAL ESTATE WEEKLY

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## Designing between a rock and a hard place in the Bronx

BY JOHN MAJESKI

Building lots marked by a 25-foot-high rock formation aren't thought of as ideal spaces.

But the Meltzer/Mandl architectural firm has come up with what company president Marvin H. Meltzer calls a "very intriguing solution."

The design for the planned Roscoe C. Brown Jr. affordable housing complex in the Bronx incorporates the rocky terrain as the base of the building – with a lobby carved out of it. The rock is visible at street level, forming a "vertical rock garden."

Led by project manager David J. Stewart, the firm's challenge was coming up with an innovative design that would work within not only the site condition but also the budget of its client, The Phipps Houses Group. Fighting the rock would have proved to be a near-futile attempt, Meltzer said.

"Taking out the rock is very expensive," he noted. "Millions of dollars. That's a lot of rock and so we said, 'Let's try to make a way to use it.' We can make it sort of a feature."

And builders will be charged with doing just that. A rendering

shows the rock near the lobby sliced into by supports.

The result is a seamless transition between artificial structure and natural environment.

The city recently approved the 279-unit project and construction is slated to begin in August or September, said Efrain Perez, of

Meltzer/Mandl. Perez said the site, 3952 Third Avenue near 172nd Street, consists of 253,582 s/f of residential space spread amongst studios, one-, two- and three-bedroom units.

Three commercial spaces totaling 6,100 s/f are slated for the ground floor. Matthew Kelly, vice

president of Phipps, said building within the rock outcropping added to the project's \$80 million cost, though he was unable to say how much. Before Phipps took over, the property was vacant and owned by the city.

Twenty percent of the units will be set aside for those earning 40%

or less of the median income, while the remaining 80% of the units will be reserved for those earning 60% or less than the median income, Kelly said.

Construction, being handled by New York-based Mega Contracting, will be completed by June 2010.



The Roscoe C. Brown apartment building will incorporate an existing rock outcropping into the structure.