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Advanced Mixed-Use Project Wins New Jersey State Environmental Award

By Barbra Murray, Contributing Editor

Jersey City, N.J.–Hoboken Brownstone Company has just become a recipient of the 2010 Governor's New Jersey Environmental Excellence Award, an honor earned for the developer's Van Leer Place project, which involves the conversion of a seven-acre brownfield site in Jersey City, N.J., into a progressive, energy-efficient mixed-use property. The first phase of the development carries a price tag of $50 million.

Van Leer Place will sprout up at 110 Hoboken Avenue, the onetime home of the Van Leer Chocolate Factory, which shuttered its doors in 2001. The transit-oriented development will encompass 480 residences and 7,500 square feet of retail space in two adjacent six-story structures and, perhaps most important of all, the progressive energy-efficient elements that helped Hoboken Brownstone garner the Environmental Excellence Award in the category of Innovative Technology.

"We investigated energy-efficient building science with many professionals in the field, including architect Michael McDonough, whose focus has been on green design since he began his practice in the 1970s," Daniel Gans, principal with Hoboken Brownstone, tells *MHN*.

Designed to operate as a high-performance facility, the mixed-use property will include such features as a geothermal test well, which has proven successful as an integrated alternative energy delivery system in a dense urban setting. Van Leer Place will also incorporate Insulative Mass Wall Technology (IMW) using Aerated Autoclaved Concrete, energy recovery ventilation and renewable energy to create a highly insulated enclosure capable of thermal storage, all of which will substantially reduce carbon missions. The IMW-based construction, along with a balanced ventilation system with energy recovery capacity and alternative energy sources such as solar hot water, will all combine to make Van Leer Place an exceptionally sustainable development.

"This is the tripod of what we consider important features of an energy-efficient design," says Gans. Ultimately, the cutting-edge green attributes will result in 50 to 90 percent energy savings over traditional buildings.

As is evident in the development process for Van Leer Place, the State of New Jersey is very much onboard the energy-efficiency bandwagon. Hoboken Brownstone's project is being constructed as a NJ Energy Master Plan Technology Demonstration Project, and is being financed in part by a $3.6 million grant from the Public Service Electric and Gas Company (PSE&G) through its Energy Efficiency Economic Stimulus Program. The program has the stamp of approval from the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities as a method of promoting energy efficiency and economic growth, as well as creating jobs.

"What helped us get the grant is the multifamily aspect of the project and the fact that the technology is proven," Gans notes. "PSE&G didn't want new technologies that are so far out there that they wouldn't be applicable here in the U.S. They do not want to wonder if you are going to be able to pull it off; they want a valid concept that they know can be pulled off, not a hope that the technology will function properly."

Hoboken Brownstone looked to Europe when researching the Van Leer Place endeavor and found that the technologies it plans to employ at the development are definitely proven, and have been for quite some time. "Europe is 20 years ahead the U.S. in energy-efficient building construction," he says. "We haven't focused on it but that's where we're going, and ultimately, codes are going to force us this way."