



**Contact:** Colleen Mulcahy, for LISC  
312-342-8244 or c.mulcahy@sbcglobal.net

## **Troubled veterans find help and home in the Bronx**

*LISC, Citi join forces to support The Bridge's new housing for homeless, mentally ill vets*

NEW YORK (Oct. 28, 2014)— A new housing development in the South Bronx is helping chronically homeless veterans move from shelters and street corners to safe, decent apartments where they can finally get the social services they need.

Nestled on a quiet stretch of Bathgate Avenue in the shadow of St. Barnabas Hospital, Bridge Gardens is now home to 17 veterans, most of whom are battling significant mental health problems. The six-story building is a refuge from their long, painful struggle, and an example of what it takes to help veterans reclaim their independence.

“Veterans need more than a warm bed on a cold night,” said Natalie Abatemarco, managing director of Citi Community Development, which helped fund Bridge Gardens in partnership with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). “Through our military-veteran initiative, Citi Salutes, we strive to create supportive housing developments like Bridge Gardens, which give veterans a chance to recover their health, learn new job skills, and connect to counseling services.”

The project is the latest effort from The Bridge, a 60-year-old local nonprofit focused on the needs of mentally ill New Yorkers. Among its range of programs and services, the group operates 18 supportive housing projects. Bridge Gardens is its first veterans building, and it has another veterans project in development.

“It took nearly \$6 million in federal, state, city and private support to build Bridge Gardens, on what was once blighted, vacant land,” said Susan Wiviott, CEO of The Bridge. “There is 24/7 on-site support at the project, including a social worker who oversees case management, funded by the City,” she said.

Supportive housing for veterans is one of the most complex, difficult kinds of real estate development, according to Debbie Burkart, who directs LISC's national *Bring them HOMES*, veterans initiative, a joint effort between LISC and its nonprofit investment affiliate, National Equity Fund (NEF). “But, it is also among the most effective. Their military backgrounds make veterans particularly responsive to the program structure of places like Bridge Gardens. In funding this effort, we are funding their changed future.”

Burkart noted that national efforts to help homeless veterans are succeeding thanks to ramped up supportive housing development, but that many more facilities are needed.

“Too many veterans are haunted by PTSD, dragged down by failing health, and crippled by loneliness and loss—all exacerbated by years on the streets,” she said. “But, they can and do overcome those challenges when they get the right kind of help. We’re grateful that organizations like The Bridge and Citi are committed to helping them turn that corner.”

To date, the LISC/NEF *Bring them HOMES* initiative has supported 2,500 units of permanent supportive housing for veterans.

### **About LISC**

LISC combines corporate, government and philanthropic resources to help nonprofit community development corporations revitalize distressed neighborhoods. Since 1980, LISC has invested \$13.8 billion to build or rehab 310,000 affordable homes and apartments and develop 51 million square feet of retail, community and educational space. For more, visit [www.lisc.org](http://www.lisc.org).

### **About Citi**

Citi, the leading global bank, has approximately 200 million customer accounts and does business in more than 160 countries and jurisdictions. Citi provides consumers, corporations, governments and institutions with a broad range of financial products and services, including consumer banking and credit, corporate and investment banking, securities brokerage, transaction services, and wealth management.

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### **About The Bridge**

The Bridge is a leading mental health, rehabilitation and housing agency now in its 60th year of working with New Yorkers with serious mental illness, substance abuse disorders and HIV/AIDS, as well as the homeless. It serves close to 2,300 men and women each year in its housing programs and at its headquarters, where it offers mental health and substance abuse treatment, vocational training and job placement, on-site health care and creative arts therapy. The Bridge is unique in offering a comprehensive array of services under one umbrella organization.