

## 2 nonprofits try blending artists and seniors

Arts group founded by Anita Durst teams up with the Mid-Bronx Senior Citizens Council to offer creative types inexpensive apartments in return for work in the community.

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chashama, a nonprofit started by a member of the Durst clan to connect artists with free or discounted commercial real estate is jumping into the residential arena with a small pilot program.

It is working with the nonprofit Mid-Bronx Senior Citizens Council to provide discounted apartments to 10 artists who agree to volunteer in the community. Under the arrangement, the tenants would receive up to a 15% discount off the rent in exchange for volunteering for 20 hours a month at one of the programs run by the Council, which include a senior center, day-care center and an after-school program. The apartments will be in one of the 28 buildings with a total of 900 units owned by the Council. Monthly rents there range from as much as \$886 for a studio, to \$1,325 a month for a three-bedroom. The two nonprofits are in the midst of selecting the artists and hope they will move into the Council housing in September.

"There is a great need for artist housing in New York," said Anita Durst, who founded Chashama in 1995 and who never worked for the eponymous real estate firm chaired by her father, Douglas.

She said the opportunity to expand into the residential realm hadn't presented itself until she started talking about the idea with the Council's leadership. Ms. Durst said the program is starting small because it is vastly different from anything Chashama has done to date.

"The artists have to have a desire to work in the community," she said. "We are putting people into programs that already exist."

The Council is willing to offer the discounts because it believes having the volunteers will benefit not only those who use its services but also the entire neighborhood. It also already has a connection with the arts. The Council owns the landmarked Andrew Freeman Home on the Grand Concourse that regularly hosts arts exhibits.

"We think the artists will add a positive element to our programs," said Walter Puryear, project manager at the Council.

Mr. Puryear added that he hopes an influx of artists can help transform the South Bronx.

"Just look at what happened in Williamsburg and Greenpoint," he said.



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