

MAKING TURN

Glimpsing at refurbishments of buildings

By CHRISENA COLEMAN

Daily News Staff Writer

A tree once grew in a dilapidated building in Bedford-Stuyvesant, but now the Renaissance Apartments have been brought back to life.

And if seeing is believing, there are plenty of pictures to prove it.

Larry Racioppo, a city Department of Housing Preservation and Development staff photographer, documented these and other changes.

The before-and-after pictures are on display at the Museum of the City of New York as part of an exhibit called, "Landscapes of Hope: Rebuilding New York City's Neighborhoods."

It runs through June 27 and features a series of 60 photos that capture the transformation of crumbling buildings to new housing, of garbage-filled lots to beautiful rowhouses.

"The Renaissance building was a wreck when I first saw it," said Racioppo. "It was hard to see the beauty the first time I visited the place. It wasn't until it was cleaned up and had a face-lift that a person could truly appreciate it."

The photographs profile changes in neighborhoods in Brooklyn, central and East Harlem, and the South Bronx.

Each section of the exhibit presents a detailed look at the efforts made by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development to bring life back to blighted neighborhoods.

There are black-and-white and color photographs that include panoramic views and interior shots. One photograph shows a vacant lot on Marion St. in Bedford-Stuyvesant that was filled with old tires. Now there are 16 single-family homes on the same lot.

Department Commissioner Richard Roberts said the agency is enthusiastic about the exhibit because it gives people a chance to see the progression of neighborhoods throughout the city.

"This wonderful exhibit will provide the public with a better understanding of New York City's comprehensive housing and community redevelopment programs," said Roberts. "It will offer an enriched perspective of the city's vibrant and prospering neighborhoods."

In many communities, hope has replaced despair as the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and its many partners rebuilt and redeveloped inner-city neighborhoods.

Between 1970 and 1987, the city lost 335,000 housing units to abandonment. An additional 86,000 vacant and occupied



HOWARD SIMMONS/DAILY NEWS

PHOTOGRAPHER Larry Racioppo looks at his work at Museum of the City of New York with museum program organizer Kathleen Benson. Below, Nostrand Ave. building before renovation (l.) and after (r.).



units were foreclosed on for nonpayment of taxes and placed under city ownership.

Many of the residents who remained behind did not feel safe because their streets were isolated from businesses and no longer a part of a thriving community.

The city has allotted more than \$4.5 billion to rehabilitate and reconstruct housing units in the city. Racioppo, a native New Yorker who grew

up in Sunset Park, said this exhibit was the perfect opportunity to highlight revitalized neighborhoods.

The department has worked in partnership with hundreds of neighborhood-based organizations and community developers throughout the city.

"It is wonderful to watch the city change," Racioppo. "I've been in the city all my life, and I got a rush to be a part of this project."

FOR THE BETTER

