

MO'S THE MAN OF THE HOUSE

CLEANUP HITTER: Former Met Mo Vaughn is looking to buy a broken-down housing project in Brownsville for \$21 million and promises to spend another \$20 million to rehabilitate it.



Ex-slugger's \$21M deal to buy projects

By RICH CALDER

Former Mets slugger Mo Vaughn is hitting a home run for the hundreds of families of a notorious Brooklyn housing complex. A bankruptcy judge is expected later this week to approve a \$21 million deal for Vaughn and business partner Eugene Schneur to buy the dilapidated, crime-plagued 385-unit Noble Drew Ali Plaza on New Lots Avenue in Brownsville. The deal was brokered by the development's tenants association, which had sued former landlord Abdur Rahman Farrakhan in 2002 after he served eviction notices on 125 families so he could use the site as an "emergency" homeless shelter and collect \$5.8 million annually in government subsidies. The ex-ballplayer said he and his partner plan to shell out another \$20 million to \$23 million towards renovating and adding massive security upgrades. "We know it is going to be a challenge, but it is one we're up to and that I believe will be gratify-

ing for all the tenants when we are done," Vaughn said. Tenants claim that Farrakhan's neglect during his decade-long ownership often left them without heat and water. They said their apartments had cracked walls, faulty piping and roach infestation. A lack of security also led to at least three murders there in the past three years, along with drug trafficking and vandalism, they said. Like NBA legend Magic Johnson, Vaughn has focused his energy on helping revive economically distressed communities after retiring from pro sports. Vaughn and Schneur's company, OMNI New York, has already bought and rehabilitated 1,200 units of distressed housing in the metropolitan area, including three projects in The Bronx and another in Brooklyn's East New York. Schneur said tenants can expect to see "everything from new roofs to new elevators to new lobbies." But he said the first goal will be

adding 300 surveillance cameras and providing new security guards. As the case against Farrakhan dragged out in court, the slumlord filed for bankruptcy. With the assistance of Councilman Charles Barron (D-Brooklyn) and the Legal Aid Society, the tenants took it on themselves to find a new owner. Legal Aid Society lawyer Mimi Rosenberg, who represented the tenants association in court, called the expected sale "unprece-

dent" based on several factors, including the tenants' involvement in tracking down their new landlord. Tenants association president Paulette Forbes said she is confident Vaughn and Schneur will "honor their promises" to rehabilitate the property, keep the housing "Section 8" (federally subsidized for low-income people) and "affordable," and not evict existing tenants to make way for homeless shelters. rich.calder@nypost.com

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