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CITY EDITION

Ex-Met builds on reputation;

Big Mo Vaughn sets sights on renovation of Bronx apartments while championing Bloomberg leadership

BY DAN JANISON. STAFF WRITER

Former Mets first baseman Mo Vaughn is making a play for home of a different kind.

The beefy ex-sluggger has gone into the housing business - part of a venture to take over two Bronx rental buildings neglected by a prior owner and fix them up under a government program.

Vaughn joined Mayor Michael Bloomberg to announce the \$28.6-million deal at the Thessalonica Court apartments in Mott Haven.

While it was a city event about a business transaction, Vaughn also sounded a bit like he was endorsing Bloomberg for re-election.

"Mayor Bloomberg truly cares about affordable housing and the people of New York City," Vaughn said, adding that the city was "fortunate to have him as our mayor."

How far those words might take Bloomberg in the home borough of the Yankees is anyone's guess. But tenants who attended seemed pleased at the deal - it keeps rents low and guarantees repairs. They applauded.

Vaughn, who's been active in charity work, said that one year ago he found his way to City Hall, exploring ways to "give back" to the community.

He ended up teaming with his lawyer Eugene Schneur in the firm Omni Llc. The \$28.6-million loan through the city's **Housing Development Corp.** helps fund \$5 million to renovate 300 run-down apartments. Officials said Omni and co-developers put up \$3 million toward the arrangement. Rents are to be held at the current average of \$270 per month.

Vaughn conceded he's had no experience in real estate. But partners in the deal involving the Thessalonica and Brookhaven apartments include D&F Consultants, whose principals are Peter Florey and Leonard D'Amico, both involved in Queens housing ventures.

D'Amico, son of Queens County Clerk Gloria D'Amico, has received court-assigned building management work in recent years. Florey has been involved in housing in the Rockaways.

Another corporation involved, Mill Plan Properties Llc, has the principals Robert Bennett, Shawn Horwitz and Scott Kotick.

"We're preserving affordable housing for the next generation of New Yorkers," Bloomberg said.