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Roosevelt I. Real Estate Agent Replaced

By JOSEPH P. FRIED

The State Urban Development Corporation, dissatisfied with the apartment-renting pace in the "new town" it is building on Roosevelt Island in the East River, has quietly replaced the major real-estate firm it had engaged to rent and manage the project.

The change underscores some of the continuing problems the controversial state agency has experienced in seeking to fashion a new community out of the scrub and blight of the former Welfare Island.

The community is currently scheduled to have a total of 2,100 apartments in four housing sections. Although the first group of 400 apartments—the upper-middle-income Island House—opened for occupancy nearly a year ago, only 215 apartments have been occupied in it, as of last Friday, a U.D.C. official reported.

Leases for 14 more Island House units have also been signed by families who have not moved in.

More Aggressive Marketing

In addition, 265 leases have been signed for two other sections that have not yet opened for occupancy, and for which renting began in recent weeks. They are the 361-unit Westwood, also for upper-middle-income families, and the 1,000-unit Eastwood, for low-

income and moderate-income tenants.

The fourth section, a 378-unit, upper-income cooperative called Rivercross, is not ready for sales.

The real-estate company that has been replaced is James Felt Realty Services, Inc. In explaining why the change was recently made, a U.D.C. spokesman said that agency officials believed "a more aggressive marketing job could be done."

Two real-estate firms are replacing Felt—J. I. Sopher and Company to handle the renting and ITT Service Industries Inc. to handle the management function.

Officials of the Felt concern declared that any lag in the Roosevelt Island renting pace was not their fault. Instead, they cited delays in construction and development of the new town that were not their responsibility and that, they said, made renting difficult.

Waiting for the Tramway

"You still have no shopping and no tramway, so why do you want to have people live there?" said Susan Heath, Felt's sales director for Roosevelt Island.

She was referring to the fact that even though more than 200 families were living in the new town, none of the planned shopping facilities had been opened yet, and an aerial tramway to connect the island with Manhattan had also still not been put into service.

"These delays have made people take a second look at the island," Miss Heath said.

Sidney Rivkin, vice president of the Felt company, said, "We felt we were doing a superb job in view of the difficulties."

Robert Dormer, the Urban Development Corporation's general manager for field operations, acknowledged these difficulties when he said that the agency expected a renting "pickup" when the tramway was opened.

Meantime, a Bus Service

The tramway opening, postponed several times in recent months as the cable cars have been installed and tested, is now expected next month. Mr. Dormer said it will provide a five-minute, 50-cent connection with Second Avenue and 60th Street.

Meanwhile, the only way to travel to and from Roosevelt Island is over a bridge linking it with Long Island City in Queens.

Mr. Dormer said negotiations were under way for supermarkets and other stores, but that it was "difficult because the operators want to have occupancy [by apartment tenants] first and we want the stores now."

Bus service is being provided in the meantime so that island residents can shop in nearby Astoria, Queens. Many residents of the new town have praised living there, despite the current inconveniences.