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## UPTOWN NEWS



Preconstructed modules are placed one on top of each other at Broadway Stack, a 28-unit apartment complex being built in Inwood. A final rendering of the Inwood building shows how the stack modules will work. Photo and rendering by Gluck+

# Prefab(ulous)!

## Unique Inwood complex being built with modules

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BY THE end of the summer, upworkers can live in a Lego house — the city's first cast-concrete-and-steel, multi-story prefabricated building.

Broadway Stack is a 28-unit, moderate-income apartment complex built with 56 prefabricated modules. The modules were assembled all site at a former subway car factory and then shipped to Inwood, where they are being stacked to form a seven-story tower.

"It's an exciting alternative method of construction," said Stack's architect Peter Gluck. "As the country urbanizes, there is more and more need for modern and low-cost housing, and this is a response."

Prefabricated, modular construction is having a New

York "It" moment. In Brooklyn, Bruce Ratner has broken ground on a SHoP Architects-designed modular building that would be the world's tallest.

Work is also in progress for ARCHITECTS' My Micro NY, the winner of Mayor Bloomberg's contest for ergonomically designed apartments.

But prefab housing used to have a negative connotation. "In America, there's a stigma attached to prefabrication," said Allison Arieff, author of "Prefab," and editor and content strategist at a San Francisco-based urban planning institute, "People picture trailers and mobile homes."

But prefab design isn't limited to cheap, ugly and identical boxes.

"It can really look like anything," said Gluck. "I don't think these apartments look

cookie-cutter; they're totally different from each other."

Builders and architects like prefabricated housing because it allows more control over a project.

And using the prebuilt units dramatically reduces the duration of construction, which in turn reduces costs associated with insurance, labor and rental equipment.

According to Stack's developer, the project saved 15% compared with more traditional construction, and the work will finish five months less for a ground-up apartment building.

"The quality is superior because construction is all done in a controlled, interior space as opposed to outside where you have to deal with the cold, wind and other elements," said Gluck. Architects and developers love

it, but union workers don't. At Ratner's Brooklyn tower, plumbers — already snarling from reduced wages on prefab jobs — are suing over alleged safety violations.

Prefab may be hot right now, but it isn't new.

Arieff traces prefab housing back to 1624 when wood panels were shipped from England. Sears sold prefabs by mail order, and Buckminster Fuller was interested in mass-produced, efficient housing that could be easily assembled and disassembled.

"Prefab is a very cyclical thing; it comes and goes every 10 to 20 years," said Arieff.

But the creators of Broadway Stack think this time it's going to stick around.

"It's here to stay," said Brown. "It makes too much sense to ignore."