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## From the Ground Up

One of Orange County's leading land developers, Jonah Mandelbaum, President of Warwick Properties Inc. and Founder of MJJ Builders Corp., began his professional life in the diamond industry. Now working to offer affordable housing to residents across the region, Mandelbaum's focus is less on the stone and more on the setting.



Although the transition from precious stones to rental properties may seem odd, Mandelbaum's work in home development started with his involvement in a family-owned cabinet company. From this work, a hobby for land development and construction for the rental market developed into a fulltime career. In 1984, Mandelbaum settled in Warwick, New York, and set about establishing his development company, MJJ Builders Corp.

In 1990, Mandelbaum was joined in the venture by Donna Applegate, President of MJJ Builders Corp., who brought with her years of experience in architecture, engineering, and real estate. Working together, Mandelbaum and Applegate transitioned the vision of MJJ from the design and construction of single-family homes to also include the development of affordable housing for seniors. Having worked together for 21 years and married for 16 years, Mandelbaum and Applegate work together to bring vital housing to residents across Orange County.

### Meeting Seniors' Needs

"MJJ entered the development industry by focusing on providing affordable housing for seniors—which was a huge need in the Hudson Valley area," explains Mandelbaum. "To this end, we built high-quality, well-constructed homes that seniors and families would be proud to live in."

For the senior market, Mandelbaum and Applegate sought not only to give elderly residents a place to call home, but also a community in which to be involved. The complexes constructed by MJJ have proven to be more than simple homes for an aging population. Instead, the communities developed by the company focus on providing residents with an experience, not just a roof over their heads. Hosting community-wide gatherings and social events, MJJ's residences provide an enriching and enjoyable setting.

### Family-Friendly Housing

One of the most defining aspects of MJJ is the company's ability to anticipate and accommodate changing trends in Orange County. Awareness and adaptation have allowed the company to cater to changing populations while still providing reasonably priced, quality housing. Recently, the Hudson Valley has seen a rise in small families requiring housing. MJJ owns numerous properties in Orange, Ulster, and Sullivan counties to accommodate the population boost.

"It is absolutely essential to identify where the needs for affordable housing are and work to meet and exceed local requirements," explains Mandelbaum. "Remaining aware of the communities around us has enabled our company to accommodate and account for growing populations and the needs they have."

While providing housing for families relocating to the Hudson Valley, MJJ has worked to ensure the wellbeing of these families and the communities as a whole.

"Providing affordable housing starts with caring for individual tenants, but moves beyond that to a commitment to communities as a whole," says Mandelbaum. "It is important to focus not only on the quality of home you provide residents but also the resulting quality of life they will have. Offering our developments in thriving, growing communities allows our

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*"It is important to focus not only on the quality of home you provide residents but also the resulting quality of life they will have. Offering our developments in thriving, growing communities allows our tenants to enjoy where they live and become active in helping these areas expand."*  
—Jonah Mandelbaum, President of Warwick Properties Inc. and founder of MJJ Builders Corp.

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tenants to enjoy where they live and become active in helping these areas expand."

### A Developing Vision

For MJJ, the work of providing affordable homes is an ongoing mission. Communities continue to evolve, and the needs of populations are consistently changing. □To this end, MJJ is looking forward to greater opportunities to assist in the growth of Orange and surrounding counties.

Despite the recent economic recession felt nationwide, MJJ has continued to grow, directly promoting the development of the counties served by the company. As our nation begins to turn an economic corner, MJJ continues to fill a vital position as a provider of homes in an expanding market.

"In good times or bad, the value of a roof over your head can never be diminished," Applegate says. "As our country works its way through the current housing and economic crises, MJJ will still be developing homes, offering people the residences they want and deserve."

### Investing in Local Growth

MJJ Builders Corp. is in a unique position among development and construction companies in New York. Like other companies, MJJ is responsible for the physical growth of Orange County's neighborhoods and residential areas. The difference, however, lies in MJJ's investment in local economies. By providing housing for labor forces and seniors, MJJ has helped boost local economies by increasing a need for basic amenities, including grocery stores, health services, and schools. Placing residences in close proximity to hospitals, schools, □and workplaces, MJJ has allowed for convenient, comfortable living for renters.

"With each community we establish, an influx of residents utilizing local services follows," explains Mandelbaum. "The benefits □of this increased population are widespread and impact residents, community leaders, local companies, □and so on. A domino effect begins, and communities as a whole are the benefactors."