



NORWOOD NEWS

Vol 30, No 13 • PUBLISHED BY MOSHOLU PRESERVATION CORPORATION • JUNE 22-JULY 5, 2017



INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:
IS RENT TOO HIGH? | PG. 4



SEE PICTURES:
FAMILY FITNESS FEST AT OVAL | PG. 8

\$2MIL FACELIFT FOR WHALEN PARK

Renovations to turn 'Sitting Park' into traditional playground



Photo by Reggie Francois

(L-R) BRONX PARKS COMMISSIONER Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, Councilman Andrew Cohen, New York City Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver, Bronx Deputy Borough President Aurelia Greene, Community Board 7 Chair Adaline Walker-Sanitago, and Community Board 7 Parks Committee Chair Barbara Stronczer break ground on renovations for Whalen Park.

**By DAVID CRUZ,
DEVIN DAE TUCKER,
and REGGIE FRANCOIS**

When news broke that Whalen Park would finally undergo a nearly \$2 million facelift, it jogged the memories of members of the Face-book group dubbed "Growing

Up on 204th Street in the '50s, '60s and '70s."

"I used to walk through that park with my grandmother and brother, Eddie," wrote Mary McNally DiFederico. "We would feed the pigeons a long time."

Louise Comiskey wrote she

"still can picture the group of older people sitting on the benches taking in the sun, even in the winter."

When Dorothy Jacobs Serafini lived in Norwood, she would ride her bike into the park tucked within Perry Avenue between 205th and 208th

streets next to the Mosholu Library. She remembered feeding the birds and learning how to knit there.

For Eileen Whalen Lennon, the daughter of Henry A. Whalen, the man for whom the park is named, the park

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Mosholu Preservation Corporation (MPC)

3400 Reservoir Oval East

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Phone: 718 324 4998

Fax: 718 324 2917

E-mail: norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org

Web.: www.norwoodnews.org

Publisher

Mosholu Preservation Corporation

Executive Director of MPC

Melissa Cebollero

Editor-in-Chief, Norwood News

David Cruz, dcruz@norwoodnews.org

Accounts Receivable

Dawn McEvoy

Proofreader

Judy Noy

Regular Contributors

David Greene, Adi Talwar

Contributors

Miriam Quinones, Deborah Cruz,

Reggie Francois, Devin Dae Tucker

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IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Plan Looks to Preserve Small Business Sector in Kingsbridge Heights

By REGGIE FRANCOIS

Members from different advocacy groups and small business owners took to the steps of City Hall June 14 to speak on the lack of legal protections for commercial tenants and access to affordable spaces within their neighborhoods. This also includes the neighborhood of Kingsbridge Heights, where an impending ice hockey center in the Kingsbridge Armory threatens the existing commercial landscape, according to local shopkeepers.

Christian Ramos, a member of the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition and vice president of the Kingsbridge Road Merchants Association, is originally from Ecuador and has been living in the Bronx since 2001. He opened his shoe

repair store in 2004 on Kingsbridge Road, a block and a half from the massive armory. "I don't have a problem with my landlord," said Ramos, "but I'm scared when they want to change everybody in the area, pushing everybody out. I'm scared to be out of business."

Talk of small businesses being ousted in Kingsbridge Heights came shortly after the city announced it had pegged the Kingsbridge National Ice Center Inc. to repurpose the long empty Kingsbridge Armory. Developers have since inked a community benefits agreement that stipulates it will not place competitive stores inside the Armory.

Ramos' group was joined by various organizations including the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD) and several independent street vendors through the Street Vendor Project, a membership-based project that highlights the growing vendor population in New York City. The groups have launched United for Small Business, aiming to improve protections for small businesses.

Armando Moritz-Chapelliquen, a campaign coordinator with ANHD,



Photo by David Cruz

CHRISTIAN RAMOS, a Kingsbridge Heights store owner (front row 2nd from right), speaks at the rally at City Hall.

led the rally at City Hall. "Residential tenants have a certain number of protections. Commercial tenants don't have anything outside of their lease, and that's a huge disparity," he said. "That's when we formed the coalition and put together a list of concerns, recommendations and demands to call on the city to take action."

Saving small business stands as an issue in Brooklyn.

In a 2016 City Council joint hearing by the Committee on Small Business and Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises, Sue Wolfe, a building owner and member of the Atlantic Avenue Local Development Corporation, testified that small business owners either must give up their business or officially purchase their commercial space. "We cannot continue to replace small businesses with chain stores, banks, [and] real estate agencies," Wolfe said. "It takes away from the charm, the neighborhood feeling, and the neighborhood amenities such as [laundromats], dry cleaners, delicatessens, bookstores."

Another common concern among storeowners is obtaining a long-term lease, which often makes it easier to secure a commercial bank loan. "Any merchant cannot continue to run and

manage a business without a lease," Ramos said. "If you go to the bank for a loan and you don't have a lease, they're going to deny your application."

Lenah Afridi, policy coordinator for equitable economic development at ANHD, highlighted key issues that Bronx commercial tenants tend to face. Some landlords have been known to reject an existing commercial tenant's lease renewal without much of a say from a store owner. "One of the biggest issues that folks in the Bronx are telling us about is that there are tons of vacant spaces that people can't rent," Afridi said. "And rehabbing those spaces is incredibly expensive, so people can't afford to do it."

ANHD proposes a commercial development fund to aid low-income, minority-centered small business owners across the city. It is similar to the affordable housing model, where the city subsidizes a portion of a tenant's rent based on their income.

Having the city officials enact legislative change for small business owners is a first step for United for Small Business.

"After this meeting, my hope is for somebody to hear our voice," Ramos said. "Elected officials need to make sure we have regulation."

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 committee meetings are held on the following dates at the board office, 229 E. 204th St., at 6:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted: Economic Development, Community Relations & LTP meets on June 27; and Website, Acknowledgement & Media meets on June 28. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

Seven Injured in Perry Avenue Fire

By DAVID GREENE

Many residents from 3050 Perry Ave. came back home the day after a two-alarm fire tore through three apartments and injured seven, including four children.

The fire, which happened in the late evening hours of June 15, was the talk of the neighborhood.

Perry Avenue resident Sonia Gonzalez heard screams moments before the sounds of several dozen emergency vehicles converged on the block. "I saw the flames when they started to blow out the front windows and some people were on the fire escape and they climbed down and the firemen went up," Gonzalez recalled. "I just know one family in that building, and thankfully, they are fine. The firemen did a great job; they were very quick."

The massive response by police and fire officials began moments after the blaze broke out on the a six-story residence's third floor, impacting the fourth. Crews cordoned off Perry Avenue between East 204th Street and Mosholu Parkway North, a neighborhood comprised mostly of two-family homes and residential properties, many facing the parkway, as they contained the fire. Families and neighbors waited a block away from the fire as crews took just over an hour to bring it under control.

Residents say children cooking on a stove may have caused the blaze, but that could not yet be verified as of press time. None of the victims suffered life-threatening injuries and the fire remains under investigation.



Photo by David Greene

A WORKER BRINGS IN a sheet of plywood to board up windows damaged in fire at 3050 Perry Ave.



Photo by David Greene

A WOMAN WHO apparently escaped the fire wearing one shoe sits on a curb as a crowd gathers at the northeast corner of Perry Avenue and East 204th Street.

According to a man who identified himself as the super of the building, three apartments in the building were severely damaged.

The American Red Cross of Greater New York reported that it had provided temporary housing for four residents, relocating them to Queens.

The night after the fire, Nilka Hernandez returned to her third-floor apartment with two of her three children, only to find her apartment and her new \$1,500 furniture set destroyed by water damage. Hernandez was unable to get to the Red Cross office in Manhattan in time and was forced to spend the night with a friend.



Photo by David Greene

AT LEAST THREE apartment units were destroyed in the fire.

Her daughter Angie and her granddaughter were also staying with a family member. Angie recalled, "I was buying something and I came back home and I see everybody was outside and I called my mom, and then the fire started coming out the windows. I said, 'Oh my

God, this is crazy.'"

Late Friday night Angie was concerned that the temporary housing was in Queens, adding, "I can't go to Queens because I work in New Jersey. I have to go to work, what do they want me to do? Right now, I just can't do that."

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week we asked readers their thoughts on a recent public hearing by the Rent Guidelines Board to determine whether to increase rents, despite already indicating it will raise rents by 1 to 3 percent once it's official.



Tenants need to know that there's a [Department of Housing Community and Renewal] office in every borough. The one in the Bronx is at One Fordham Plaza, on the second floor. There you can find out if they are violating your rights when you move into an apartment, you can find out how much interest the landlord can charge when you move out or when they make repairs and if the building is insured or if they're hiking up your rent too much. And I think that's something that's important for the public to know. I do think the hike is fair.

Monica Hester
Belmont



They should raise it at least a percent or two because the cost of everything is going up, but not too much; not more than two and a half percent. You can see in Home Depot that everything is going up. Property tax, water; everything is going up to maintain property. I'm just looking at both sides of the issue. It shouldn't be like that. Have the hearing and then vote and decide.

Quan Lei



Well, that doesn't make any sense to me. I've been in the Bronx for five years and nothing gets done. It almost seems as if they want it that way. Doing real politics is saying everything without doing a thing, it's how politics works. I agree with the increase because the cost of living in New York does go up and the landlord needs to make repairs. What I don't understand is why my hot water has been off for the last three days, how come no signs are put up or [why] we're not given any notice.

Alan Craig
Concourse Village



I am totally against that and urge everyone to call our council members, [Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.], and all the other officials and tell them there should be another hearing because this is unfair. They are taking away half of the funding for seniors and young children in the Bronx as it is. We need people to get together.

Kathleen Dunlea
Riverdale



I think it should be up to the people, but now they're taking the power out of the people's hands. They are taking away our freedom of speech. People should have a say because we put those officials in office, but once they get into office they forget about the people. I do think it's too much. It's just like the train [fare]: it keeps going up and you don't see any difference. There's only one thing that goes up and never comes down, and that's inflation.

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Kiss Goodbye: Beso Lounge Closes

By REGGIE FRANCOIS

A popular bar lounge in Norwood had its final hurrah the weekend of June 9, closing its doors after management couldn't agree on a lease renewal deal with the building's owner.

Gino Pacheco, owner of Beso Lounge, said the nighttime bar underwent renovations for three years and had been promised a lease for five more years. Despite the owner buying the building for more money, Pacheco negotiated the lease in hopes for a similar lease deal he had when he first opened the business.

"My rent was about \$3,400, and they doubled it so it was about \$6,000," Pacheco, 35, said. "We agreed. We were making business."

But the building owner had pulled out of lease negotiations, leading to the lounge's closing, according to Pacheco. It's unclear what led talks to break down.

Located at 320 E. 204th St. near the corner of Hull Avenue, Beso (Spanish for "kiss") Lounge celebrated seven years in business. Guests shared their special moments with Open Mic Night on June 8 at the establishment.

A late May post on the lounge's Facebook page thanked customers for their "loyalty and support throughout the last seven years."

From the time it first opened, Beso Lounge positioned itself as a staple in the community and supporter of causes. In February, the lounge hosted an auction for singles in support of autism research. "I see all the single people complain that they're single — so here's their chance to catch a date and help people at the same time,"

Pacheco said about the event in a *New York Daily News* article published afterwards.

The lounge also participated in Summer Streets, or Weekend Walks, the city's push to integrate communities and local businesses through a block party-style gathering.

Anthony Rivieccio, 54, has been living in the Bedford Park area for 40 years. As the founder of the Northwest Bronx Democrats, a local political group, Rivieccio said he was involved with the opening of Beso Lounge, serving as a member of the East 204th Street & Bainbridge Avenue Merchants Association, a merchant organizing group.

"I was surprised it closed for the reasons it did," Rivieccio said. "It's affecting our whole Bronx strip in the same way [it is] in the Kingsbridge area with the [Kingsbridge] armory."

Brenda Caldwell-Paris, president of the 52nd Precinct Community Council, said Beso Lounge has sponsored the council's annual Fellowship Recognition Breakfast and Open House in the past. The council had held Christmas parties every year at the lounge.

"My daughter had a birthday party there," Caldwell-Paris said. "It's always a friendly environment. It's always a safe environment."

Pacheco also co-owns Lexa Bar & Garden with Eli Garcia. It is located at 357 E. 204th St., diagonally across from Beso Lounge. "I opened Lexa to create an environment that wasn't so upbeat," Pacheco said. "[It's] more of a chill vibe." Pacheco said if another opportunity arose to open a bar or



Photo by Reggie Francois

BESO LOUNGE, AT 320 E. 204th St., opened in 2010.

restaurant, he would seize it. He and Garcia have already scouted a site for another eatery on Broadway, lobbying local Community Board 8 in Riverdale for approval, according to

sources.

Pacheco and Garcia plan to remain part of the neighborhood merchants association, where Garcia serves as president.

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Farmers Market Opens at Fordham Plaza for Trial Run

By DAVID CRUZ

Freshly grown vegetables and baked goods from as far away as Goshen, New York are up for sale at Fordham Plaza, part of the newly opened farmers market along the Fordham Road Business Improvement District (BID).

And if the 29-week trial run works out, the greenmarket will be managed by BID managers. It's a model similar to the robust greenmarket established in Manhattan's Union Square. "We like the Union Square concept. That's what we'd like to build here," Wilma Alonso, the BID's co-executive director, said.

For now, the BID will co-manage the 1.7-acre mall with the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT). "This is going to be one of the premier public spaces in New York City," Nivardo Lopez, DOT Commissioner for the Bronx, declared.

A handful of vendors were on hand for the market's inaugural day on June 7, which also saw a ribbon cutting. The greenmarket signifies the unofficial reopening of Fordham Plaza, which was reconstructed by DOT in part-



Photo by David Cruz

(L-R) **MICHAEL HURWITZ**, DIRECTOR of GrowNYC's greenmarket; Wilma Alonso, executive director of Fordham Road BID; David Rose, chair of Fordham Road BID; Nivardo Lopez, Bronx DOT Commissioner; Rafael Moure-Punnett, deputy chief of staff for Councilman Ritchie Torres; and Jessica Douglas, operations manager for GrowNYC, cut the ribbon for the greenmarket at Fordham Plaza.

nership with the city Department of Design and Construction. It also responds to the neighborhood's needs

for fresher produce to a neighborhood where locally grown fruits and vegetables are lacking.

Ground broke in 2015, with crews erecting a café building on the plaza facing Fordham Road, among other features. A swath of empty concrete space was rebuilt, accommodating an estimated 20 vendors. Three kiosks, currently vacant, were also built. The reconstruction of the plaza was part of a \$34 million facelift, which also saw the city create new bus loops to ease congestion in a heavily clogged Bronx artery.

The project also saw the Fordham Road BID taking a more hands on role in the plaza. Though it's on city property, the city DOT intends to award the BID a one-year contract to manage the plaza, leaving it in charge to decide which concessionaire will occupy the permanent stands. For Alonso, the ideas of what to do are just flowing.

"We want to do some food, probably something seasonal just to add some flavors, so we can have different stuff in different seasons. But also we were thinking about doing something like a gift shop so we promote the Bronx, work with Bronx Beer Hall, they have a gift shop there. Put in some items that promote Fordham Road," Alonso said.

The BID and DOT partnered with the nonprofit GrowNYC, which manages the Union Square greenmarket,

to bring vendors to Fordham Plaza. Participating vendors are part of GrowNYC's network of farmers who grow their goods from as far away as Pennsylvania. With the Bronx considered a food desert lacking a significant number of nearby supermarkets, GrowNYC hopes to fill in the gap.

"People love the transformation of cement into vibrant centers of activity," Michael Hurwitz, director of GrowNYC's greenmarket programs, said.

Editor's Note: *The farmers market is open every Wednesday through Dec. 27. Hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.*



Photo by David Cruz

VENDORS FROM RIVERHEAD, NY are among those doing business at the greenmarket at Fordham Plaza.

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CRIME FILE

Cops Warn Ford Drivers To Secure Their Vehicles Following Rise in Thefts

The 52nd Precinct saw seven car thefts in May, and police say Ford vehicles are the prime target.

"There's a lot of parts on Fords that are valuable like catalytic converters," Deputy Inspector Peter Fiorillo, commanding officer of the Five-Two, said at the recent community council meeting.

Ford motorcycles equipped with expensive Econoline headlights are also being swiped [in large numbers], Fiorillo said. "I'm expecting to see that go up more now that we're in motorcycle season," he said. "That's something we have to look out for."

Honda and Nissan vehicles are also being targeted.

The 5-2, which covers Norwood, Bedford Park, Fordham, Kingsbridge Heights, and University Heights, usually sees car break-ins and thefts along Bailey Avenue, between Kingsbridge Road and Sedgwick Avenue. One vehicle was taken from a garage. It's unclear exactly where the thefts have occurred.

--David Cruz

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Bronx Man Guilty in Killing of Rival Near Daycare Center

A jury has found a Bronx man guilty in the murder of a rival drug dealer in front of a daycare center in Crotona Park almost two years ago.

"As a unanimous jury found, Ruben Pizzaro (pictured above) shot and killed David Rivera in broad daylight in front of a daycare center in the Bronx," Acting U.S. Attorney Joon H. Kim said in a statement.

Rivera, 24, was gunned down in front of the daycare center near 175th Street and Crotona Avenue on Nov. 24, 2015.

Pizzaro, known by associates as "Chullo," was a member of a street gang that sold cocaine and crack cocaine near 180th Street and Arthur Avenue near Belmont, according to authorities.

Pizzaro's gang was engaged in a turf war with Rivera's between August 2015 and January 2016, leading to several violent shootings in late 2015. One of those gunfights was in the vicinity of a Bronx middle school. Another was for a non-fatal shooting in Manhattan's 34th Precinct on New Year's Eve 2015.

A tip received by the 46th Precinct Detective Squad led to Pizzaro's arrest at 3015 Kingsbridge Terrace. Pizzaro attempted to dodge police by escaping through a second-story window, but was eventually caught.

On top of his murder charge, Pizzaro, 25, faced a litany of other charges, including drug dealing and weapons possession. He faces the possibility of life in prison when sentenced.

"The prosecution of this type of gang and drug violence helps make our communities safer, and we are committed to that," Kim said.

--Devin Dae Tucker

Fake Cop Wanted

The NYPD needs the public's help in identifying a man allegedly impersonating a police officer at least three times since February. The man (pictured below) is described as Asian, between the ages of 22 and 27 years old, and has struck within the local 52nd Precinct.

Police say the suspect last struck in June, allegedly approaching a 23-year-old man in front of Bronx Community College at 2155 University Ave., taking the victim's phone and fleeing in a white, four-door sedan.

His other two incidents had him spotted outside the Bronx. Police say the suspect first groped a 24-year-old woman's breast after meeting up with her to buy two cell phones off her Craigslist ad in February. At 63rd Street and Columbus Avenue in Manhattan, he showed her a badge before taking off in the white sedan.

The man also met with a 16-year-old boy in mid-April at 200 Eastern Pkwy. to sell a cell phone through Craigslist. After showing his badge, telling the boy he was a police officer, the man took the boy's phone and left in the sedan. The car had New Jersey license plates.

The NYPD's Crime Stoppers Hotline is available for anyone with relevant information at (800) 577-TIPS (8477) or, for Spanish, 1-888-57-PISTA (74782). People may also share information at www.nypdcrimestoppers.com or by texting their tips to 274637 (CRIMES) then enter TIP577. All contacts are kept confidential.

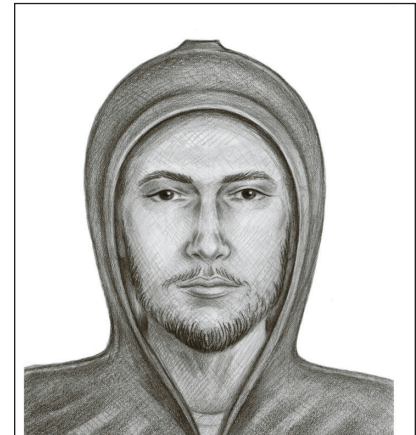
-- Reggie Francois



Sex Perv on The Loose

Police have released a sketch of a sexual predator, currently on the run after allegedly attempting to sexually assault a woman near the New York Botanical Garden.

The incident happened during the late hours of May 29 between 11 p.m. and 1:30 a.m. in the area of Moshulu Parkway and Southern Boulevard, according to police. The suspect approached the 29-year-old victim and struck up a conversation. They eventually walked to a nearby park where the



perp exposed himself and offered cash to the victim in exchange for groping him, according to police.

The woman refused, stalked off until the man grabbed her, unbuttoning her pants. A struggle ensued where the suspect grabbed her shirt and chest. The man then took off in the park.

The attacker is described as a male Hispanic, 26 to 28 years old, standing between 5' 9" and 5' 11", thin build, with a beard. He was last seen wearing a gray hooded sweater, gray sweatpants and black sneakers.

Anyone with information is asked to call the NYPD Crime Stoppers Hotline at (800) 577-TIPS(8477). All calls are kept confidential.

--David Cruz

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Family Fitness Festival

Heavy rains didn't deter organizers from holding this year's Family Fitness Festival, held at Williamsbridge Oval Park on June 17. The three-hour event promoted the benefits of healthier lifestyles for Bronx families. Sponsors included Mosholu Preservation Corporation, Tiga Pediatrics, Montefiore Health System, Jerome-Gun Hill Business Improvement District, Mision Cristiana El Calvario, Morris Heights Health Center, and Friends of Williamsbridge Oval. Photos by Miriam Quinones.



A ZUMBA INSTRUCTOR leads a class at the Oval's multi-use field despite a light rain.



SHEILA SANCHEZ, PRESIDENT of the Friends of the Williamsbridge Oval, jumps rope at the festival.



JASON CARABALLO, COMMUNITY & Government Relations manager for Montefiore Health System, shows off this free giveaway—a hand towel bearing the Montefiore logo. He gets an assist from Sheila Sanchez (r), president of Friends of the Williamsbridge Oval.



COOKS WITH WELLNESS in the Schools, a nonprofit promoting healthy eating in public schools, hosts a cooking demonstration at the festival.



EMPLOYEES FROM NORTH Central Bronx Hospital present a table showing the dire consequences of becoming obese. Healthy foods, such as fruits, are the better route, they say.



THIS CHILD GETS dolled up in face paint, a hallmark of the Family Fitness Festival.

Opinion

Acknowledge Oval Park's Milestone

By FRANK DA CRUZ

Williamsbridge Oval Park -- or simply "The Oval" -- turns 80 this September. It's Norwood's epicenter on the map and in our hearts. It was built between 1934 and 1937 on the site of an abandoned reservoir by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, which was also responsible for countless other landmarks all over New York City and the entire country.

The park opened on Saturday, Sept. 11, 1937, with a ceremony featuring Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, Bronx Borough President James Lyons, and WPA administrator Howard Peckham addressing a crowd of 2000 in bleachers constructed for the occasion along the southeast edge of the athletic field.

During the Great Depression the WPA put millions of unemployed Americans to work building parks, playgrounds, schools, libraries, post offices, highways, bridges, tunnels, airports, and countless features of our landscape that we take for granted today. In the Bronx alone, the New Deal is responsible for the building of Orchard Beach, the Triborough and Whitestone bridges, the Henry Hudson Parkway and Bridge, the Moshulu and Hutchinson River Parkway extensions, the Arthur Avenue and Bronx Terminal Markets, the Lehman and SUNY Maritime college campuses, and several public schools.

Not only did these New Deal projects provide work for thousands of unemployed Bronxites during the Depression, they left us with resources that we never would have had otherwise; especially the parks, playgrounds, and pools that would normally be at the bottom of any city's budget priorities. Oval Park was a massive project costing \$1.5 MILLION (\$27 million in today's dollars) and employing hundreds of people across four years. (Did you know the Recreation Center is made of granite quarried and cut in Oval Park itself?)

Perhaps more significantly, Oval Park -- like all New Deal projects -- has continued to employ people ever since. Sarah Bishow, Oval Park's Recreation Center manager, says the center normally has 10 full-time employees (mainly recreation and fitness trainers) and that on any given day, anywhere from a handful to 100 Parks

Department employees and/or contractors are at work on the grounds. Multiply that by all the other New Deal sites to get an idea of the real value of public investment.

Norwood was once home to mainly those of Jewish, Irish, and Italian descent. Today it's one of the city's most diverse neighborhoods. All nationalities, races, ages, cultures, and religions come to Oval Park. To play, to socialize, to exercise, to relax; for romance, for picnics, and for special events. I believe that it's one of the best utilized spaces in the whole city, every nook and cranny is used... except the bocce court! Everybody gets along, everybody watches out for everybody else.

To illustrate, I asked Ms. Bishow for an anecdote. Usually nothing bad ever happens in the park, but one day a drunk man was yelling at a Bangladeshi lady in full Niqab who was with her children in one of the playgrounds: "Get out of this country, you don't belong here," etc. A man came to the Rec Center to report what was happening. Ms. Bishow and a PEP officer accompanied him back to the playground. The lady was terrified that they were coming to arrest or deport her but her children (who could speak English) explained that the people in the park were upset that she was being harassed, because everybody here respects everybody else and everybody is welcome in the park, except the abusive man, who was politely escorted out.

In 2015, Williamsbridge Oval was added to the National Register of Historic Places. But there is no WPA plaque on the center or anywhere in the park, so visitors have no idea how the park came to be. The same is true for all the other New Deal sites in New York City. People today should know that there was a time when government worked for ordinary people and not just for the rich and powerful. For that reason I believe the most fitting observance of Oval Park's 80th birthday would be to put up the plaque that has been missing all these years.

To learn more about the New Deal in the Bronx, search "Bronx New Deal" in Google.

Frank da Cruz is a Norwood resident.



Photo courtesy Bronx County Historical Society

AN AERIAL VIEW of Oval Park circa 1950. The park opened 80 years ago.

HEALTH CHECK

Rethink Your Drink for Summer

By ANEKA WYNTER
and LIZ SPURRELL-HUSS

Trying to beat the heat in the hot summer months can be hard work, but staying hydrated doesn't have to be. Hydration is one of the easiest and most effective ways to stay cool, and making healthy beverage choices is important. It's one reason why Montefiore Health System's Office of Community & Population Health launched "Rethink Your Drink" to help you make better drinking choices. Here are some easy thirst-quenching tips to help you stay hydrated while avoiding sugary drinks that can lead to weight gain and tooth decay:

1. Reusable water bottles are the latest fashion trend, especially for the summer. Whether you have a desk job, or are always on the go, it's good to keep one within arm's reach. This way you're more likely to take sips throughout the day without too much effort. Remember: every sip counts!

2. Feeling hazy or frazzled and want to feel more alert? Grab a cold

glass of water; it's a simple healthy way to snap out of that midday slump.

3. Want to add some flavor to your water? Try adding slices of fruits (oranges, lemon/lime, cucumbers, or even a splash of 100 percent fruit juice).

4. Unsweetened teas are also a refreshing way to cool off in the summer. Add a few drops of honey if you prefer some sweetness.

5. Seltzer, club soda, or sparkling water with a splash of 100 percent juice makes a great bubbly treat for beating the heat.

Your body depends on water to survive. Every cell, tissue, and organ in your body needs water to work properly. Staying hydrated is key for a safe summer. Whatever you do, take water with you!

For more information on how you can Rethink Your Drink and stay hydrated this summer, contact Aneka Wynter at MHSI@montefiore.org or call (347) 418-4738.

Source: Montefiore Health System's Office of Community & Population Health

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Drawn to Inspire: Stencil Art Courtesy of BCCS

By DEVIN DAE TUCKER

Six graders from Bronx Community Charter School (BCCS) are taking on a year-end street art project, creating stencil art to be displayed around Norwood. They feel their artworks will have a powerful impact on the community. "I think any time kids have an opportunity to do something authentic and real in their own community, the benefits are huge," said Kendra Sibley, sixth grade teacher at BCCS leading the class. "It is incredibly empowering to them to know that their work is appreciated and that their voices can be heard." Students were able to incorporate their stencil art with a message they felt was meaningful. They spray painted their work on walls and sidewalks, and even painted the stencils on bags and shirts. Their work served to encourage residents to think or be inspired, according to Sibley.

Along with providing inspiration, students felt that their messages were not only important to

the community, but also conveyed personal struggles their families are experiencing. Some of these personal stencils included messages on the pre-school-to-prison pipeline, feminism, immigration and equality.

"Many of the political messages were chosen because the students have really strong feelings about what they see happening politically in our country right now," Sibley said. "They are afraid of how policies will affect their families, and they see injustice in the way people are being singled out and vilified."

Student Amaya Morales-Robinson was among those who created a personal stencil on feminism. "I'm a girl and I'm a feminist, and my stencil says 'Feminists Slay,' she said.

The school began this community art project after they were connected with artist and Bronx native Justin Jung. "People use many different mediums for their artwork and their messages," Jung said. "You can make a lot of creative stuff

like that."

Sibley connected with Jung, studying his style, which led kids to ask questions about how he began and what he hoped he got out of his work. "We all looked at images of his art and he talked about how he got into street art and said that he liked putting his work out there for a big audience of people," Sibley said.

Jung has visited the school several times to talk about his work and the impact of stenciling, while offering the students a space to present their stencils. "He likes interacting with the community that way," Sibley said of Jung. "He was very encouraging and the kids really enjoyed hanging with him while they put their work on the wall."

The students' original stencils were created to make residents think or laugh and to display a positive message within the community. Their work can be seen near the Mosholu Library on East 205th Street.

"We're activists," the students shouted.

BMCA Honors 5-2 Comm. Council Prez

BRENDA CALDWELL-PARIS, PRESIDENT of the 52nd Precinct Community Council (r), holds up a surprise honor she received from Barbara Stronczer, president of the Bedford Mosholu Community Association (l). The civic group honored Caldwell-Paris for serving as a productive bridge between community and the NYPD. "Through the efforts of [Ms. Caldwell-Paris], we have a good relationship with our local police department," said Stronczer. "[Ms. Caldwell-Paris] makes sure that our needs, our issues, are heard."



Photo by David Cruz

CB7 Takes Bus Tour

FOR THE THIRD year in a row, residents and members of Community Board 7, which covers Norwood, Bedford Park, Fordham, Kingsbridge Heights, and University Heights, took a daylong bus tour through the community on June 3. Members visited the Project Renewal Transitional Housing on Villa Avenue and Serviam Gardens on East 198th Street before taking a tour of Williamsbridge Oval Park, where they met with Parks Department officials. The tour also took residents to the Valentine Varian House on Bainbridge Avenue, the Croton Water Filtration Plant, BronxNet Studios at Herbert H. Lehman College before ending at the Bronx Library Center on East Kingsbridge Road.

Photo by David Greene



Photo courtesy Kendra Sibley

STUDENT STENCIL ARTISTS from the Bronx Community Charter School (standing l-r): Francisco Santos ('We're All Equal'), Amaya Morales-Robinson ('Feminists Slay'), Unwana Udotai ('Walls Can Be Climbed'), and Makenzie Mitchell ('Challenges Can Be Beat'), pose alongside classmates (crouching l-r): Allyn Rosario ('Stronger Together'), Alex Fermin (Banksy-inspired stencil), Manuel Garcia ('Be Brave'), and Joshua Santiago ('Laugh More'), in front of a wall featuring their stencil work.

Greener Days and Healthy Lifestyles at DeWitt Clinton HS

By DEBORAH CRUZ

Therainy weather couldn't keep DeWitt Clinton High School students or volunteers from venturing out and planting 35 fruit trees along the school's garden as part of a project to broaden healthier lifestyles in Norwood.

Raymond Pultinas, the teacher and coordinator of the daylong event, applied for a grant from The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation three years ago. This year they were awarded a grant through Vitafusion to begin the massive planting. The initiative is part of a broader effort to encourage healthier lifestyles in a borough that's still struggling to reverse the unhealthy trend.

Pultinas, who's taught at the Norwood school for 25 years, characterized the new trees as part of an "edible forest." "[W]e expect to grow food on a number of levels," he said. "We see this as a part of a bigger vision," referring to the planned trail around the perimeter of the campus. The school received a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts to make



Photo by Deborah Cruz

VOLUNTEERS PLANT THIS small tree on the grounds of DeWitt Clinton High School.

it happen. The project will create a half-mile trail across the campus, connecting them to the impending James Baldwin Outdoor Learning Center.

While this is the first year this particular project is being done, there have been different projects around the school that support a healthier and greener community. "Vitafusion is the corporate

side of it, but the fruit tree planting foundation were the ones who gave us the trees and we got a number of community members out here," said Pultinas, pointing to the dozens of volunteers who came out to support the project.

Partnering with The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation, Vitafusion launched the "Fruit Tree Planting Project," which aims to

plant 10,000 fruit trees both domestically and internationally in underserved communities to promote a healthy lifestyle.

"We have already started here as well as Uganda. We have a commitment to plant 10,000 trees each year," said Laurie Kirschner, director of marketing for Vitafusion. "Everywhere we go, we plant a whole food tree orchard. Two trees together actually provide enough oxygen for one person to live off."

"In about eight to 10 years, there will be whole fruit production, so this is a long term investment, not just for the kids but also for their kids," said Rico Montenegro, head arborist for Vitafusion.

Amid the planted trees and light drizzle, Arianna, a student from Pultinas' class, helped dig a hole big enough to plant a small tree. "Before this class, I didn't know much about this," said Arianna, 17, a senior, who was laying out compost around a few apple trees. "This is a lot of hard work, but it's so worth it," she said.

Sweeter Than Springtime

By THE CHORUS AT PS/MS95X, THE SHEILA MENCHER SCHOOL

Seven years ago, under the direction of Eileen Rivera, assistant principal and choral director for the PS/MS 95X chorus, a musical group was born. The purpose is "to bring an aesthetic to the students who would not necessarily have it, and to instill a love of music."

Students learn about musicality, musicianship, lyric interpretation and history, as well as character building and dedication. Auditions are open to fourth through eighth graders. Ninety percent of those entering at an early grade remain with it until graduation. The group becomes an in-school family where the younger students learn from the older ones, and the older ones learn how to be mentors. Principal Serge Marshall Davis applauds the program and its contribution to

the arts at the school. Graduating eighth graders love the program and look back on what they have accomplished.

Peggy Chen, a chorister since fourth grade, finds that she has "improved herself musically and been exposed to new genres and all kinds of different musicians." She predicts that the skills she "gathered in the chorus" will follow her as she grows up, including "distinguishing sounds and listening as well as respect and character building."

Other eighth graders, including Matilda Badji and Camille Diaz, have grown as musicians. Matilda has "learned to hold the notes better, learned to harmonize and learned ear training." Camille feels the experience has helped her as a performing artist, particularly the aspect of singing before different audiences.

Songs are carefully selected from

different periods, cultures and languages. For example, they have presented country, hip-hop, ballads, pop music and patriotic songs sung in Italian, Swahili, Spanish and Haitian Creole. They strive to take on the cultural flavor of authentic foreign language songs and pieces from different locations in the United States.

The selections typically have positive social messages, such as the reggae style, "One Day," by Matisyahu, that one day as a society we will learn not to hurt one another, and the Lady Gaga hit "Born This Way," to encourage tolerance.

They are currently working on the Dixie Chicks's poignant "Travellin' Soldier," which tells the tale of a young soldier going off to war, not coming back and the pain of the loved one who cries for him.

Ms. Rivera explained that as an

adult, music helped to develop her critical thinking and math. Singing "is an outlet. You can always turn to a song, to re-set you, to put you back in the right mood." She says that "working with the students is a great joy." Anything worthwhile takes discipline, which is crucial to teaching: the discipline of the art as well as the discipline of students being personally responsible and consistent. She characterizes her students as hard-working, focused and sweet.

The chorus is a popular, sought-after group and sings at holiday events, arts festivals, in-school events such as Moving-Up Ceremonies, Respect for All Week and their own concert. Currently they are singing at Springtime events--and their music, like the enchantingly sweet "Preciosa," a song Ms. Rivera learned from her father in Puerto Rico, is, by all accounts, sweeter than springtime.



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TRIPS

Resorts Casino, Atlantic City: Sunday, June 25, 2017, at 9 a.m. from East 163rd Street and Southern Boulevard; Lake Compounce Amusement Park & Water Rides, Connecticut: Saturday, July 8, 2017, at 9 a.m. from East 163rd Street and Southern Boulevard. For more information, please contact Eddie at (718) 757-5485.

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Sen. Bailey Office Hrs. At MMCC

Constituent service hours by the office of state Sen. Jamaal T. Bailey are now available at Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC), 3450 DeKalb Ave., every first and third Wednesday of every month from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and every second and fourth Wednesday from 1 to 5 p.m. For more information, call (718) 547-8854.

Citizenship Help

Free, confidential help in obtaining citizenship and immigration information services is available via phone through CUNY Citizenship Now! through June 23 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. There will be numerous languages available. For English/multilingual services, call (212) 444-5968; for Spanish, call (212) 444-5964; and for deaf/hard of hearing, call 711.

Excelsior Scholarship

Applications for the state Excelsior Scholarship, offering tuition-free scholarships for SUNY and CUNY students, are available to those whose families make up to \$100,000 annually. To be eligible, students must be New York State residents, plan to attend a SUNY or CUNY two- or four-year college, take 30 credits per year (including summers and winter session), among some of the requirements. The deadline is July 21. To learn more, and to apply, go to hesc.ny.gov.

LGBTQ Needs Assessment

An assessment survey on the needs of the Bronx's LGBTQ community can be filled out online at <http://bit.ly/2so1TJB>. Hard copies of the survey are also available throughout the borough's 12 community boards, with the closest at Community Board 7, 229A

E. 204th St., weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call (718) 590-3500.

Preserving NCBH

Volunteers are needed to join the Bronx Healthcare Coalition, which seeks to ensure North Central Bronx Hospital remains a public hospital. For more information and to join, email Bxhealthcoalition@gmail.com.

Bird Walks

Free bird walk tours, sponsored by Councilman Andrew Cohen with guides provided by the New York City Audubon Society and Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy, are scheduled for every Saturday from now through July 29 from 8 to 9:30 a.m. at the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy. Meet at the VC Nature Center. For more information, contact Joseph McManus at mcmamus638@aol.com.

Housing Assistance

Free housing assistance on topics relating to tenant harassment, denial of repairs/services, evictions, overchargers, and more are available at the office of Assemblyman Victor Pichardo every Thursday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 2175 Jerome Ave., Suite C. For more information, call (718) 933-6909.

Immigration Services

Free immigration services ranging from naturalization, citizenship, visa renewals, and information on DACA are available by appointment at the office of Councilman Ritchie Torres, 573 E. Fordham Rd. (entrance on Hoffman Street) Mondays and the first and third Wednesday of every month from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (718) 842-8100.

Literacy Initiative

The New York City De-

partment of Education has announced a reading initiative where students from grades kindergarten through second grade can receive 11 different books from 40 different book titles. For more information, contact your child's school principal.

Community Garden Program

A free 16-week education, skills-building and community development program through community gardening activities is available only for those who are on probation or recently released from prison. Participants must be committed to completing the program. For more information, call Rachel Schneider of the Hawthorne Valley Farm at (518) 672-4465, ext. 236 or email rachel@hawthornevalleyfarm.org.



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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Horses and K9 Dogs, Oh My!

The public is invited to the 52nd Precinct's 3rd annual Open House Meet and Greet on June 23 from 3 to 6 p.m. at 3016 Webster Ave. On hand will be officers and executive staffs, civilian staff and special units as well as horses and K9 dogs. In addition, there will be giveaways and refreshments. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.



Photo courtesy Wave Hill

KIDS GET INTO the summer season by creating a "Butterfly Hat" at Wave Hill (see more under Events).

Events

NYC Department of Parks presents **Movies Under the Stars**. Films are scheduled as follows: June 24 - "Sing," at Van Cortlandt Parks's Indian Field, 4222 Van Cortlandt Pk. E.; June 28 - "August Rush," Williamsbridge Oval Park; and June 29 - "Beat Street," at Devoe Park, West Fordham Road at Sedgwick Avenue. Movies begin at dusk. Bring blanket. For more information, call 311 or visit nyc.gov/parks.

Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy presents **Barefoot Dancing**, featuring demonstrations and teaching, on the VC House Lawn from 6:30 to 8 p.m.: June 22 - West African; June 29 - batucada drumming; and July

6 - Bulgaria music & dance. For more information, call (718) 430-1890.

The Bedford Park Congregational Church, 311 E. 201st St., will hold a **summer lawn party** on June 25 at 1 p.m. There will be a raffle and refreshments will be served including hamburgers, hot dogs, assorted salads and desserts (\$10/adults/teens; \$5/kids). For more information, call (718) 733-3199.

Bronx County Historical Society offers **Guided Walking Tour of Norwood**, June 24 at 11 a.m. for about two hours. Included are Museum of Bronx History, Bronx County Archives, and other neighborhood jewels. Tour begins at the Mosholu Parkway #4 train station on Jerome Avenue. (\$10/

members; \$20/non members). For more information and to RSVP, call (718) 881-8900.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Butterfly Habitat Hats, to see them, sketch them, then make a hat filled with flowers and insects, June 24 and 25; and Nature's Canvas Bags, to create images on a canvas bag using fabric markers, July 1 and 2; both in the WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also scheduled is **Pollination Headquarters**, to see butterfly and insect displays, on the grounds, June 24 and 25 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and **Elsa Nilsson Quartet**, featuring a variety of music, July 5 at 7 p.m. on the grounds (\$10/ticket; \$6/students/seniors 65+; \$4/ages 6 to 18). Grounds admission is free until noon Saturdays and Tuesdays all year. For more information and a schedule of events including tours and walks, call (718) 549-3200.

Save Our Streets (SOS) presents **Healthy Lives Healthy Community**, June 24 from noon to 3 p.m., at Union Avenue between 163rd and 165th streets. SOS is a community based effort to end gun violence. Events include medical truck for health checkup, health vendors, giveaways, refreshments, and miscellaneous children's activities including two bouncy houses, face painting, and magician. For more information, call (646) 448-9131.

The Women's Housing and Economic Development Corp. (WHEDco) holds its free **outdoor street fest**, June 23 from 2 to 6 p.m. on Louis Niñé Boulevard between Southern Boulevard and Jennings Street. Events include an all-day DJ, health screenings, live performances, face painting, refreshments, raffles, arts and crafts, as well as local foods and merchandise vendors. For more information, visit www.whedco.org

Library Events

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for children: **Hands-On Projects at 4 p.m.**: (ages 7 to 12; preregistration required), Paper Plate Watermelon Making, June 22; and Plate Beach Ball Making, June 29. Teens/young adults can enjoy: **The Organic Orchestra**: summer reading program to learn how to create music with other participants and become a beat box orchestra, June 28 at 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

The Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for teens/adults: **Craft-eens!**: Different craft projects each Wednesday at 3 p.m., June 28 and July 5. Materials will be provided. Adults can attend: **Knitting Circle**: Thursdays at 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

The Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), offers for children: **Kids Get Active Fridays at 2:45 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), dance moves on the Wii game console, June 23 and 30; **Preschool Story Time and Craft at 11:15 a.m.**: (ages 3 to 5), featuring books, puppetry, dramatics, crafts and flannel boards, June 29; **Pedro Animal Falls in Love**: (ages 3 to 12), puppet play with audience participation, performed in Spanish or bilingual, June 28 at 3 p.m.; and **What is Transportation**: (4-part series for ages 3 to 12), to learn how we get around by land, air and water, in addition to hands-on activities including creating boats and airplanes, July 5 at 11:15 a.m. Adults can attend: **Computer Basics**: June 29 at noon and 6 p.m. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by June 30 for the next publication date of July 6.



File Photo

YOUNGSTERS PET A POLICE HORSE at a family-friendly gathering organized by the 52nd Precinct (see Editor's Pick for more information).

\$2Mil Rehab for Whalen Park

(continued from page 1)

served as an oasis, a refuge for residents living in the once predominantly Irish community. A natural canopy of trees shields rows of benches canvassing the park, earning the name "Sitting Park." "That park meant a lot to a lot of people," Lennon, who grew up within walking distance of the park, said. "It had a lot of good memories for a lot of people."

The elder Whalen is remembered as a go-to resident for concerns impacting the neighborhood. When a four-alarm fire broke out at a store on East 204th Street and Perry Avenue (currently the site of a McDonald's), Whalen convinced residents to make donations for victims.

The incident and donation campaign inspired Whalen to form the Norwood Civic Association, while also doubling as the head of the parish council. A World War II veteran, Whalen was also credited for convincing the federal government to open the James J. Peters Veterans Administration Medical Center in Kingsbridge Heights.

Whalen passed away in 1973. The park was renamed after him a year

later.

New Beginning

Officials and community organizers gathered on June 13 to officially break ground for the new renovations. "We want to make sure it's multi-generational," said Mitchell Silver, commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks, speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony. The improvements are intended to revitalize the 'dilapidated' park. In the last few years, the park stood as a rest stop for the homeless and a place of business for drug dealers. "[N]ow they don't have a home here anymore," Deputy Borough President Aurelia Greene, in attendance, said. "The community is taking back this park."

The park is expected to include game tables, a playhouse, climbing rocks, a bicycle rack, a spray shower and a water fountain, according to park officials. Park crews plan to reconfigure the layout of the benches, moving them to the perimeter of the fence.

The project is something of a hold-over from the Bloomberg Administra-

tion, which had fronted \$552,000 to fund the project. The rest came from the Bronx Borough President's Office, which chipped in \$425,000, and from former Councilman Oliver Koppell, who earmarked \$820,000. While the project was proposed nearly seven years ago, it's unclear why it had been delayed for so long.

For residents who've called Norwood home for decades, the improvements couldn't come soon enough.

"We've needed this for a long time," Betty Arce, a longtime resident and member of Friends of the Williamsbridge Oval Park civic group. "I always used to come to this park and I've enjoyed it, but in the last couple of years it's been neglected and unfortunately it hasn't kept up with the times."

David Lundy, 72, has been living in the surrounding area for 22 years. "I'm proud of this park," said Lundy. "I love it because I'm in this park every day." Its location is also convenient for Lundy, who prefers Whalen Park to Williamsbridge Oval Park that's farther away. The natural canopy of trees Whalen Park offers is also a benefit for him.

Whalen Park is one of 61 parks that have benefitted from a \$42 million initiative that has been dedicated to park renovations from fiscal years 2010-2017.

Park projects have served as a priority for Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., whose 2017 Fiscal Year capital budget sets aside \$14.3 million, or 15 percent, for park projects. It's his largest allocation ever.

"I really feel like there is just a dynamic energy in Bronx parks," said Councilman Andrew Cohen, Koppell's successor representing Norwood. "The new design really reflects modern thinking in parks and this is going to be great resource for the community."

The design was born out of input from residents during the scoping phase of the project.

Lennon, who's since left the neighborhood, said she'll miss the bench layout, though she understand the new design "is what the people there want." She added, "It's an upgrade for the neighborhood, and that's what's really important."

The project is projected to be complete by June 2018.

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212.788.7964



I SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT
to take pride in my heritage,
without being told to *go back to my country.*

YOU DO HAVE THE RIGHT.

If you feel you've been a victim of discrimination based on your immigration status or heritage, **we can help.**

#YouHaveRightsNYC
NYC Commission on Human Rights
Chair/Commissioner
Office of the Mayor

Call **718-722-3131** to speak with a **NYC Commission on Human Rights** representative or report it at **NYC.gov/HumanRights**



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