

# NORWOOD NEWS

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## RENT HIKE SPIKE FOR WEBB AVE. TENANTS?

*Kingsbridge tenants could pay \$500 more in rent after bldg. upgrades*



Photo by Adi Talwar

**CYNTHIA SCOTT, A TENANT** at 2400 Webb Ave. in Kingsbridge, holds the MCI notice listing the number of projects completed by Goldfarb Properties, the building's owner.

**By DAVID CRUZ**

The exterior of 2400 Webb Ave., an eight-story building tucked behind Fordham Hill Oval Cooperative, showed significant signs of improvement. New

terraces, a high-tech intercom system and modern mailboxes were welcome enhancements for residents.

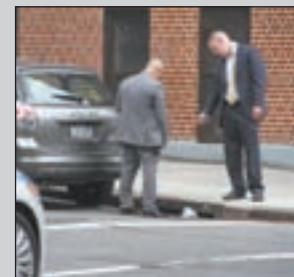
But tenants may collectively foot the bill, totaling

\$3.4 million, through a Major Capital Improvement (MCI), a policy that passes the costs of upgrades of general spaces to tenants. If approved, some tenants could be on the hook for as

much as \$500 more monthly rent, according to notices mailed in March. Tenants admit any proposed MCI rent exceeds their budgets, and are now reconsidering  
*(continued on page 19)*



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**EDITORIAL****A Bedford Park's Longstanding Plea for a Park Paid Lip Service**

There's a photo buried in the *Norwood News* archives taken over a decade ago, but completely relevant today. It's that of an abandoned hatchback vehicle, its windows shattered and bodywork charred, found blocking the entrance to a rundown city-owned lot on Decatur Avenue and Oliver Place. By the looks of it, the vehicle plowed into the space, and was left to rot.

The photo of the lot, which residents have long hoped would become a playground, was taken circa 2000. Sadly, had the picture been taken today, you could hardly tell the difference—the lot's condition has stood virtually the same. And despite pleas from neighbors to see it revamped into a much-needed playground, no movement has been evident. It's as though time remains frozen there.

The ignorance by the powerful on this issue is disgraceful. Kids play among the tiny wasteland (as did their parents), where addicts are known to shoot up and the homeless find a temporary refuge. The blight adds to the perception that a largely minority, working-poor community with no nearby amenities is left behind even as tales of a Bronx on the mend continue.

For a time, the efforts of Sally Young, a neighborhood resident, achieved results. The large piles of garbage dumped by restaurant employees ceased. Cleanup events were sponsored, though the outreach merely put a Band-Aid on a nagging wound. The real cure is investment in this eyesore.

Local lawmakers suggested converting the space into a playground, a good start. But for some reason, this medium-sized plot has long been a bureaucratic hot potato. Two city agen-

Photo courtesy *Norwood News*

**THIS PHOTO TAKEN** circa 2000 shows a car abandoned at Oliver Place and Decatur Avenue. Community residents have long pressed for the space to become a park.

cies have expressed reasons why it can't be done: the New York City Environmental Protection Agency said there's underground infrastructure it needs direct access to, while the Department of Parks blames the impasse on the park's inclined design. Plus, the \$4.5 million estimate to convert the space to a playground has hampered any advancement. Blame can be passed around. One building abutting the space has an addition, which Parks said creeps into their space. The only way to move, Parks says conveniently, is by convincing the owner to reduce his space.

Community Board 7 have since taken up the matter, yet again, urging city agencies to act. But the Board's role as an advisory panel has its limitations. Still, their attempts at fixing it are admirable, far exceeding those of agency heads who think lip service is

currency for getting a pat on the back.

It's up to elected officials to really drive change and see this space turned into a much-needed playground, a refuge for kids where recreation is scant. There should be jungle gyms to stimulate the blood vessels, a sprinkler system to keep them cool in summer, and a meeting point for burgeoning friendships. At the very least, perhaps elected officials can arrive at a compromise to this complicated issue—perhaps a well-manicured Greenstreet with a concrete staircase leading to the other side of Oliver Place and Mar-ion Avenue.

When Community Board 7 convenes in September, it's incumbent upon them to turn up the volume on fixing the derelict park. Hopefully a photo of children running happily can replace one of an abandoned car.

**Norwood News Takes Five, Returns Late August**

As has been the case for several years, the *Norwood News* will be getting its second wind through a scheduled hiatus running through Aug. 18 when we return to publishing our award-winning publication.

But don't expect full production to stop. We're working on some neat projects for our readers during the break, including:

A neighborhood survey asking residents what are some issues facing the neighborhood. Our team will fan out on the streets of our readership with a questionnaire during the break.

A new and improved website with mobile capability.

We'll still maintain our online presence by regularly updating our website, [www.norwoodnews.org](http://www.norwoodnews.org).

So check back each day, and if you have any thoughts you'd like to share, send them to the editor-in-chief, David Cruz, at [dcruz@norwoodnews.org](mailto:dcruz@norwoodnews.org).

Also, we're gearing up for a Back-to-School edition when we return. To reserve ad space in this special issue, contact Vivian Carter at (718) 324-4998.





# Letters To The Editor

## Fixing Parking

The ability to find a legal parking spot on the streets of the Bronx is becoming more difficult every day. There is a way to increase parking by approximately 10 percent for those who live in the area and have registered New York plates.

Drive down any local residential street in the Norwood area and you will discover that about one out of every 10 cars occupying a legal parking space has a license plate registered in another state. Particularly Pennsylvania, Florida, Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Jersey. The owners of these vehicles have chosen to insure their vehicles in another state because the insurance rates are cheaper, it's more difficult to be towed as a scofflaw and some have suspended NYS driving licenses that does not allow them to register a vehicle in New York State. They should not be allowed to take up parking spaces for those who live in the area and register their vehicles in New York State.

We can clear up those parking spaces by simply adding a parking regulation on parking summonses that state "No Parking on Residential Street/Out of State Plates" fine of \$65 or so. This particular ticket can be enforced by an aggressive tow program. This enforcement has the potential of bringing millions of dollars into the city that can be used for affordable housing and after school programs.

Drivers of out of state registered vehicles still have many options where to park. They can park their vehicles in a garage or parking lot. They can park in a business district with commercial vehicles or they can simply pony up the money like the rest of us.

JM (Full name withheld upon request)

Norwood

## Care Packages to Haiti

Two years ago, I went on one of my many summer trips to Honduras,

my mother's native country, which inspired my purpose in life. I want to volunteer for the Peace Corps but right now I'm focused on my project. This trip was unique because it was the longest I have ever stayed in Honduras. My mother's friend, who is a teacher, invited me to her school in San Pedro Sula to teach her students English. I was not excited about the idea because it would mean that I would have to leave my air-conditioned room, but finally I decided that some fresh air is a requirement during summer vacation.

I did become excited when I got there. The kids were immediately very cheerful. The teacher begged me for teaching supplies. There was nothing on the wall to motivate learning. The students were hot, exhausted and could not focus well. I noticed that some students wore torn school pants and used strands from mops as a belt. Their teacher introduced me as their English teacher for the day and gave me control of the class!

It's amazing how children are able to hide their problems behind a bright

smile. I found out that one of the students was a teenager like me but still in the third grade and did not have a supportive family. Local gangs took advantage and tried to recruit him. I also noticed the students were much more independent than me which was embarrassing because I'm older than they are but still depend on my mother for most of my necessities. This was when I realized how lucky I am to attend a private parochial school, have a supportive family, and the protection of my basic needs.

I'm writing this article in hopes that you'll help me collect and send books and teaching supplies back to Honduras. I will be able to promote my project during Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy's Barefoot Dancing series on Thursdays, through Aug. 6 at Van Cortlandt House Museum 6:30 p.m. Please bring notebooks and other books when you come.

Karen Agurcia

## Strange Calls

I live at Kittay House (a home

for the aged in Kingsbridge), average age 85. I have been plagued for six years by someone who calls four times/day, then hangs up. The police and Verizon just laugh when I ask for their help. "Hey, live with it." They call from a blocked number. Verizon used to block these calls for free—now they want \$4/month to do it.

I surveyed many members of Kittay House and found many others reporting harassing telephone calls. Can't Verizon, as a public service to seniors, change their policy?

For an aged senior citizen, many in wheelchairs, this is basically torture. Verizon is one of the most successful and richest companies, yet they refuse to budge. Is \$4 per month going to bankrupt them?! Why did they drop the free program of blocking unwanted calls, which come from blocked phones, so you cannot identify the caller? They are aiding and abetting this telephone harassment, and should be held liable!!!!

Donald Pollack

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## INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE

This week we asked readers if the city should decriminalize public urination, changing the penalty of those caught in the act to getting a summons, in light of talks on the matter between the NYPD and the City Council.



I agree with that because anytime you have to use the bathroom and go to places like some Burger Kings or McDonald's, you're not allowed to use the bathroom. Even when you take the train and have to use a bathroom, there's no bathroom available. They have the key to the bathroom but we can't use it. The MTA locks all of the bathrooms in all the stations. You shouldn't go to jail. The city should provide more public restrooms in the street.

**Ismael Figueroa**  
Hunts Point



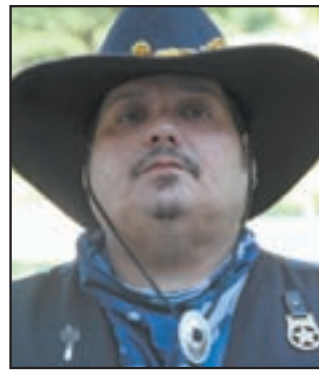
I think they shouldn't do that because it's a quality of life issue and bad behavior should not be dismissed. I do think that it will lead to a misconception of people thinking that it's all right to start doing this kind of stuff. So first it's urination and eventually people will think that stealing something or drinking in public is not that bad. It can lead to more serious issues down the road and it's a quality of life issue for the neighborhood.

**Kevin DeMatteis**  
Norwood



I have mixed feelings about it because sometimes you have to go and there's nowhere to go, but I think it's fine if you find a secluded area where there's nobody around and you do it. I don't think it's a problem. But I think if you do it on people's property or if people can see you, it's a problem. I think the city should place public restrooms in the more busy areas.

**Rodney Wimberly**  
Norwood



Well I can understand the summons because the city makes money from summonses. I live here in Norwood and across the street is a beautiful park. With everything they do to beautify the park, why do you have people urinating and defecating in the park? That's disgusting. We as Americans lead good clean lives. We work to have good things. I agree the penalty should be strong, it should be mandated. They shouldn't go to jail, but the penalty should be a strict monetary penalty. If you suffer a penalty, you won't do it again and the money can help the schools and it can go back into the system.

**Adolph Santana**  
Norwood



It's common sense. It would be a way for the city to get some revenue. It should be a summons and not to throw somebody in jail and waste tax dollars, so yes, it should be a summon-able offense. Yes we do need more public restrooms.

**Henry Ramirez**  
Bedford Park

**Editor's Note:** Have an idea for an Inquiring Photographer question? Send suggestions to [dcruz@norwoodnews.org](mailto:dcruz@norwoodnews.org).



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# Tenants Demand Repairs From Kingsbridge Landlord, Mull Lawsuit

By JASMINE GOMEZ

The stems of a greenish, moldy plant were seen protruding from the bathroom ceiling cracks inside a Kingsbridge apartment belonging to a tenant named America. In the kitchen, packing tape covers a water pipe while green mold settles on her living room wall.

At another apartment inside the same building, Auri Aguilera, a tenant, deals with a gaping hole on her bathroom ceiling. She's made repeated attempts to call for repairs. Crews do come, only to perform shoddy work.

America and other tenants at 2675 Creston Ave. in Kingsbridge consider themselves victims of a notorious slumlord who has ignored making improved conditions in their homes and are now considering a lawsuit.

Tenants have complained that the building owner, Ved Parkash, has left the building to deteriorate, forcing them to make numerous calls to 311 that often still leaves issues unresolved. In one last attempt to get Parkash to cooperate with them without the help of the courts, tenants have been organizing with the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition, and the Urban Justice League to move forward with repairs in their homes.

Tenants sent a demand letter to Parkash listing repairs and violations they want completed and resolved. Parkash did respond, requesting a schedule on when tenants are available for crews to make repairs, but tenants still feel hopeless.

If tenants see that the landlord has not completed repairs, they'll proceed filing a lawsuit.

Parkash was listed in the 100 Worst Landlord List site compiled by New York City Public Advocate Leticia James. A look at the city Housing Preservation and Development agency's site shows of the 145 violations at Creston Avenue, 22 are deemed class C, the most problematic. Class C violations range from lead-based paint hazards to a rat nuisance in the laundry room.

The lack of progress on issues at the apartments has left some tenants to make their own repairs and purchases. Aguilera, for instance, resorted to renovating her kitchen with her own money. "...[T]hen she still gets a rent increase every two years without anyone coming to fix anything," said Aguilera's daughter, Cecilia.

Despite the lack of livable conditions, tenants can still face a rent hike every two years, depending on the status of their apartment.

"Sometimes what happens is, the demands are not met even though the landlord has been put on notice of what the demands are and so a way to try and address it and have more authority of course is to start a case in housing court," said Keriann Pauls, a lawyer with the UJC.

"Just fix it the right way so that we don't have to keep going through this... No one has stopped paying rent. My mother pays her rent religiously and she has a hole in her ceiling" said Cecilia.

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Photo by David Cruz

**A SMALL PLANT** grows though the water-stained cracks in one first floor tenant's ceiling at 2675 Creston Ave. in Kingsbridge.

# St. Ann's Church to Close July 31

By DAVID CRUZ & JASMINE GOMEZ

Norwood's Catholic churches are undergoing major changes, as one church is expected to close while another has seen the reassignment of its pastor.

For the last few months, the community braced for the closure of the Shrine Church of St. Ann's on Bainbridge Avenue, a historic parish that includes a Catholic school. Lack of finances had put the church on a closure list by the Archdiocese of New York. St. Ann's will merge with St. Brendan's Parish at 333 E. 206th St.

Though July 31 will be its last day, parishioners are expected to take part in the church's last Feast of St. Ann's, a celebratory festival enjoyed by hundreds.

Mass is scheduled July 26 at 5 p.m., followed by a procession in which the statue of St. Ann, a token symbol of the church, will be transferred to St. Brendan's Parish.

The feast, preceded by a Novena—9 successive days of public or private prayer, commemorates St. Ann, the mother of Mary, and grandmother to Jesus Christ.

St. Ann's parish opened Christmas of 1927 by Cardinal Patrick J. Hayes, coinciding with a population boom in the neighborhood.

But even before the closing, parishioners have heard that St. Ann's lead pastor, Fr. Francis Scanlon, had already been reassigned to a church in Yonkers.

Norwood residents were also surprised to hear St. Brendan's pastor George Stewart was relocated to Our Lady of Victory Church in the Claremont section of the Bronx.

# Bardekova Ensemble Presents Norwood and Fordham Concerts



Photo by Vivian Carter

**THE BARDEKOVA ENSEMBLE** includes (l-r), Richard Paratley (flute), Ellen Bardekoff (oboe), Nancy Vizza (horn), Samit Shah (bassoon), and Akari Yamamoto (clarinet). The group bows at intermission at the Sunday, July 12 performance at Woodlawn Cemetery's Woolworth Chapel.

By VIVIAN CARTER

The Bardekova Ensemble, founded in the Bronx more than 30 years ago, continued its melodious quest to bring free concerts to Bronx residents, regardless of age or socio-economic status, with two programs at landmark Bronx venues this past week.

On Sunday, July 12, the group's quintet, composed entirely of wind instrument performers, filled the majestic Woolworth Chapel at Woodlawn Cemetery with the classical sounds of groundbreaking European composers Mozart and Rossini. Guests also enjoyed some

musical compositions of George M. Cohan and Irving Berlin, two famed American composers whose final resting places are on the Woodlawn grounds. Closing the performance was the group's rendition of Scott Joplin's "The Entertainer." Breezes wafted in to cool the ornate space filled with audience members enjoying the ensemble's repertoire.

Ellen Bardekoff, a schoolteacher and oboist, leads the ensemble. She was driven to form the troupe after realizing Bronxites often forego a trip to Manhattan to hear classical music.

On Wednesday, July 15, the ensemble offered another free performance at the Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse. They will be back at Woodlawn on Sept. 20, offering another live performance for the community.

Performances by the Bardekova Ensemble are funded by Bronx Council on the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts Decentralization Program, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, Greater NY Arts Development Fund, The Music Performance Trust Fund of the American Federation of Musicians, and private donations.

## Tech Updates and More for CD7, Thanks to BP Capital \$\$\$

By EMMANUEL ANOKYE

Schools, senior centers and neighborhood colleges within Community District 7 have received a swell of capital funding from Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., part of \$34 million in allocations by his office.

"My office's allocations in Community Board #7 will fund critical technology and infrastructure upgrades to some of our borough's finest education institutions, create over 100 new units of affordable housing," Diaz said, "I am proud to

have been able to provide this funding to so many worthy institutions in this year's capital budget."

Community District 7 is home to the neighborhoods of Norwood, Bedford Park, Kingsbridge, Fordham and University Heights.

Of the pot of millions of dollars, \$550,000 went towards Lehman College for renovations towards upgrading Carman Hall and the addition of a multi-media lecture hall. Jewish Home Lifecare House will receive a half million dollars to replace an HVAC air handler,

while \$500,000 will go towards Bronx Community College for a renovation within their new EOC headquarters. In addition, Fordham Bedford Serviam Heights will receive \$500,000 for developing 103 units of mixed income housing.

Diaz has also funded \$175,000 for Kingsbridge International High School for construction, and \$75,000 towards both Celia Cruz Bronx High School of Music for new laptop computers, and International School for Liberal Arts for upgrades within their technology area.

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# Fordham Hill Oval Welcomes New Board

By TATYANA TURNER

The gated community known as Fordham Hill Oval welcomed a new board of directors, ending a hostile saga sparked by some dissatisfied cooperative owners of the sprawling complex.

The election for the new board was held on June 8, with nine new board members voted in. The new board members are Myrna Calderon, vice president; Sheila Hurdle, secretary; Elizabeth Tillman, treasurer; and general board members Marlene Connor, Milton Francis, Douglas Henry, Israel Ruiz, Jr. and Dr. Pereta Rodriguez. Dr. Nancy Alvarez will serve as the new board president, replacing eight-year president Desiree Pilgrim-Hunter, who was accused of mismanaging the board. Calls and emails to Pilgrim-Hunter went unanswered.

Alvarez said, "I think the new board members are wonderful and diverse and we work together well. I hope to make Fordham Hill the community it once was."

In early February, tenants of the



Photo by Tatyana Turner

**NEW BOARD MEMBERS** at Fordham Hill Oval gather together before their meeting (l-r) Douglas Henry, Milton Francis, Dr. Pereta Rodriguez, Myrna Calderon, Sheila Hurdle, Elizabeth Tillman, Marlene Connor, and Israel Ruiz, Jr. Seated is the new board president, Dr. Nancy Alvarez.

Fordham complex held a meeting to work on replacing their board members who they believe were illegally voted in since there was not enough voting members, or quorum, to move forward with an election. Much of the anger was directed at Pilgrim-Hunter, who tenants felt approved an increase on shareholders' cable and

maintenance fees to their monthly bill with little to no notice.

Shareholders were also trying to get rid of Argo Real Estate Management, who tenants believe mishandled the buildings' finances, delayed construction on the outside of each building and warehoused vacant housing units, claims the firm vehe-

mently disputed. Tenants wanted to see improvements within the nine-building complex, but were met with lengthy delays. Argo Management has long argued the corporation is in good financial standing. Although Fordham Hill Oval has new board members, the complex is still managed by Argo. A representative for Argo Management did not return a request for comment.

With the help from the law firm of Santamarina & Associates, shareholders were ready to start the process of finding a new board they felt would better represent the building and form stronger communication between the 1,116 co-op residents and the board of directors.

Frank Murillo, a resident at Fordham Hill Oval said, "I feel very happy about the new board because they are no nonsense folks and have the toughness to face the many challenges a complex of this size will inevitably be faced with." Murillo led tenants in a protest earlier this year to expose the mismanagement of the previous board.

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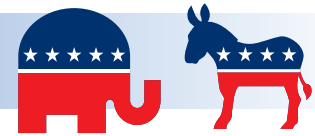
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# THE BRONX BELTWAY

By DAVID CRUZ



## BDCC Dinner

What a night at the Bronx Democratic County Committee (BDCC) dinner July 16 at Marina del Rey in Throggs Neck! The political intrigue was kicked up a notch not because of the soiree's numbers or the bevy of lobbyists and unions in attendance (labor unions were well represented, given all the hootin' and hollerin'), but from feuding politicians, Mayor Bill de Blasio, and Governor Andrew Cuomo, who made scheduled appearances, although the two coincidentally did not cross paths.

Assessing the situation, it's pretty clear de Blasio and Cuomo purposely avoided being present at Marina del Rey simultaneously. Cuomo came in first, reinforced his Democratic ties implicitly so as to call out anyone who thinks otherwise, and slipped out the kitchen before reporters hounded him. In all, he was there no more than 20 minutes. De Blasio, on the other hand, stuck around to glad-hand guests and pose for pictures. Many long-

time Bronx Dems seem to be holding their cards to the chest, dodging any hint they were taking a side.

But more noticeably, we look at the Cuomo/de Blasio arc as two divorcees pining for the attention, or as one seasoned political observer put it, "joint custody," of their favorite son—Speaker Carl Heastie, still basking in the afterglow of his ascension to speaker. Each publicly thanked Heastie for his leadership and coming through the clutch for assuming the Speaker post in February, and for being a true ally. No side is saying anything about how each benefits, but it's clear Heastie is critical in any upcoming election.

Heastie's caught between a de Blasio and a Cuomo, which serves him well as neutrality can only raise your stock value. One ingrained politico, who asked not to be named, preferred to call Heastie "the most needed" politician. Another Bronx pol cautioned Heastie not to take a side, saying it would be "inadvisable" for him to do so.

Some other observations at the soiree:

De Blasio speaking privately to former Bronx Democratic County Committee executive director Ischia Bravo. The five-minute conversation lasted long enough for reporters to prod de Blasio's flack, who shed little light into the private chat.

An appearance by former Assemblywoman Naomi Rivera palling around with her dad, Assemblyman Jose Rivera, and (boyfriend?) Tommy Torres of Brooklyn. Could Ms. Rivera be mounting some future campaign?

The table collecting funds for the BDCC seemed to be extremely spooked by the Bronx Beltway's question of how much money it had raised that night, despite it being a matter of public record.

Big nod to BDCC boss, and "rising star" as Cuomo put it, Assemblyman Marcos Crespo for drawing numbers. Kudos to BDCC's honorees as well. Not sure if the next political powwow, Abrazo Dominicano on July 24, will invite the same political intrigue, but we'll be watching.

## Bratton the Closer

Top cop Bill Bratton can be quite jovial and friendly to general reporters who chronicle his tenure during de Blasio's reign, but this time he took several snarky shots at reporters questioning his Summer All Out program on July 15. The program has added a contingent of new officers in problem precincts.

Bratton took some of the questions to be presumptuous—one had asked if paid meals to cops is an ethical breach ("Let's get real. Let's get real."). One Bronx reporter inquired whether the Summer All Out program was a ploy for mass traffic ticketing.

"That might be what you're seeing," Bratton told the reporter, drawing a burst of laughs from an audience observing the news conference. "Who are you? That's your opinion. Good luck to you. That's not what they're doing."

Ouch.

His stance with the media did earn some praise from Mayor de Blasio, who was at the news conference. Appearing to ease the tension,

de Blasio joked, "If this were a baseball team, Bratton would be The Closer."

"He just, like – he just shuts that down," said de Blasio.

"That" was interpreted as any question police brass feel is inappropriate. The role of reporters is to ask probing questions, not make attempts at gotcha journalism or seeing anyone clam up.

## How They All Do?

In our last column, The Bronx Beltway reported on how much clout Bronx State Senators have in Albany, promising more on how they stacked up against the rest of the city in number of floor votes achieved. You may remember the Bronx scored 68 floor votes. We ran the floor votes by borough, thanks to dynamite *Norwood News* summer staffers Jade Chandler and Emmanuel Anokye, and here they are:

- Manhattan state senators with 19.
- Queens state senators with 80.
- Brooklyn state senators with 131.
- Staten Island with 91.

Clearly, the Bronx fared fourth when compared to the rest of the city. Brooklyn's first place was largely achieved by retired cop turned career politician Senator Martin Golden, a Republican, who racked up a whopping 71 floor votes. Not too far behind was Staten Island Republican state senator Andrew Lanza, with 70 floor votes. But Democratic Senator Tony Avella scored the most floor votes of any Democrat in the city, grabbing a recorded 53 floor votes during the January-June session. It does help Avella to be part of the Independent Democratic Conference, operated by Sen. Jeff Klein.

Still puzzling is the Bronx, despite having an IDC president and Assembly Speaker, placing fourth in the city. Guess the State Senate is still a far-flung dream for Bronx Democrats. It'll have to wait as Republicans are the dominant party.

**Editor's Note:** *The Norwood News is taking a breather the first half of August so expect a column to appear on the website, [www.norwoodnews.org](http://www.norwoodnews.org).*

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## Man Wounded on Hull Avenue

A 21 year old man was shot in the shoulder during the overnight hours of July 12 in front of 3291 Hull Ave. in Norwood, within the 52nd Precinct.

Police spokeswoman, NYPD Detective Annette Markowski, said, "The victim was sitting in front of the location when an unknown male approached and fired three times, striking the victim one time in the shoulder." The victim was transported to a local hospital, where he's expected to recover.

The suspect was described as a black male, approximately 6 feet tall and 170 pounds. Police say the gunman fled westbound on East 209th Street towards Perry Avenue.

One resident of the block who declined to be identified said, "There's always gunfire on this block, that's why I don't hang out."

The Five-Two is one of 10 precincts across the city under the Summer All Out initiative introduced by police headquarters. Latest NYPD figures show there have been 18 shootings within the 52nd Precinct so far this year, as opposed to 14 the same time last year.

--By David Greene

## Reservoir Task Force Holds First Meeting, Calls for Bridge Access

By NORWOOD NEWS

The Jerome Park Reservoir Access Task Force held its first meeting at the Van Cortlandt Jewish Center, reviewing plans and objectives for the scheduled Aug. 6 meeting with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection Agency over a pilot access program. Committee members agreed that one step in a more permanent access program would be to open up the reservoir's dividing wall to the general public.

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, whose district covers the reservoir, said that given the good condition of the walkway, it needed very little upgrade to make it a usable space for the public. When asked about the cost of necessary new fencing, he said, "I don't think it would be that expensive and if necessary I'm sure elected officials could work that out." The reservoir's dividing wall, which was built in the mid 1980s, would create a direct pedestrian link between Sedgwick and Goulden avenues.

Gary Axelbank, the community's representative on the Task Force, pointed out that as far as security goes, opening up the 'bridge' would actually



Photo by Adi Talwar

**CYNTHIA SCOTT, A TENANT** at 2400 Webb Ave. in Kingsbridge, holds up the MCI notice listing the number of projects completed by Goldfarb Properties, the building's owner.

make the community more secure since it would provide more direct access for a large swath of the Bronx to the borough's emergency evacuation site at Lehman College.

The five task force members in attendance were Dinowitz, Axelbank, Fr.

Richard Gorman, CB8 Chair Dan Padernacht, and Dan Donovan, who represented the Borough President's office. Nine community members also attended. They agreed to meet one more time prior to the meeting with the DEP.

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## New 52nd Pct. Numbers Show Crime Drop

By DAVID CRUZ

Overall crime at the 52nd Precinct is finally coming down, thanks to the NYPD's Summer All Out initiative, reversing a trend that's troubled residents in Norwood in recent months.

In the span of three weeks, the precinct covering Norwood, Bedford Park, Fordham, Kingsbridge and University Heights has seen a pushback on violent offenses, with overall violent crime showing a near 15 percent drop. Summer time is usually a bellwether for crime—the higher the temperatures, the more hostile an environment.

The Five-Two received 12 extra officers in June after officials at One Police Plaza announced the Summer All Out initiative, which takes officers out of administrative roles, to problematic streets. They're joined by newly assigned rookie officers, supervised by a senior officer. In all, 330 officers have been deployed to the streets.

NYPD Commissioner Bill Bratton, at a July 15 news conference updating reporters on the initiative, said other crime-fighting tactics, such as more overtime for officers and more police personnel, have helped curtail crime.

Bratton joined Mayor Bill de Blasio at Cardinal Spellman High School in Baychester to unveil “One City: Safe and Fair Everywhere,” a new crime fighting strategy that puts more cops on the beat. The program places a heavier emphasis on community policing, where officers are more enmeshed and interactive with the community. De Blasio, who's implemented tangible changes to the Police Department's

method of policing, urged residents to “get to know the officers who patrol your streets.”

“Officers are going to get to know you. You need to get to know them. Take time to share information,” said de Blasio. “Take time to show them where there are problems and give them leads. Give them a sense of what needs to be addressed, and they will appreciate that.”

From June 21 to July 12, the Five-Two recorded 143 crimes, down from 168 the same time a year ago. Leading the crime drop are robberies, now reduced to 30 from 43 the same time a year before.

“[W]ith the continued support of the community, we can increase our communities' safety and sense of security,” said Inspector Nilda Hofmann, commanding officer of the 52nd Precinct. This has contributed to a slightly lower overall crime rate this year, with 1,060 reported crimes versus 1,071 the year before, amounting to one percent fewer crimes.

The 47th Precinct, a neighboring stationhouse serving Woodlawn, Wakefield, Williamsbridge, Baychester, Edenwald, Olinville and Fishbay, is also another precinct with extra troops under the Summer All Out program. It reported three shootings in the first half of this summer, compared to 10 during the same time in 2014, a 70 percent drop.

**Editor's Note:** Go to [www.norwood-news.org](http://www.norwood-news.org) for the latest updates on crime in the neighborhood.



Photo by David Cruz

**MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO**, flanked by NYPD Commissioner Bill Bratton (left) and 47th Precinct Community Council President Elizabeth Gill, announces the “One City: Safe and Fair Everywhere” on July 15.



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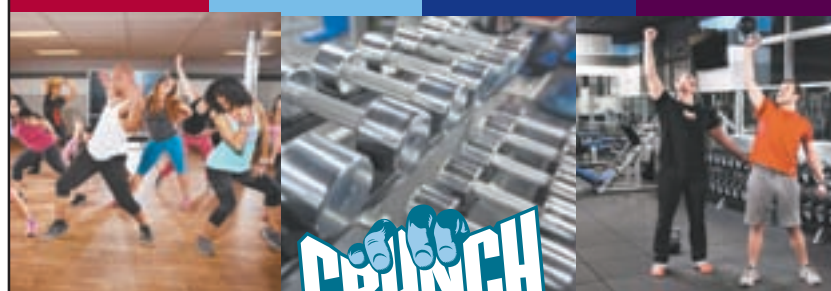
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# NORWOOD NEWS

## S N A P S H O T S



Photo courtesy Office of Councilman Andy King

**BRONX ELECTED OFFICIALS** meeting recently with U.S. Virgin Islands Governor Kenneth Mapp (left) in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. Lawmakers include (r-l) Councilman Andy King, Bronx Deputy Borough President Aurelia Greene, Bronx Democratic Party Chairman and Assemblyman Marcos Crespo, Assemblyman Victor Pichardo, and Councilwoman Vanessa Gibson. The topics included economic realities and the islands' desire for a stronger voice in the continental United States.



Photo courtesy Hip to Hip Theatre Company

**A FREE PERFORMANCE** of Shakespeare's comedy "The Merry Wives of Windsor" is coming to Van Cortlandt Park on July 25. Since 2007, the award-winning Hip to Hip Theatre Company has been presenting outdoor plays each summer in parks and non-profit gardens in the metro area. This is the acclaimed company's first foray into the Bronx. Children's activities begin at 4:30 p.m., and the play starts at 5 p.m. at the red steps south of the Van Cortlandt House Museum. Picnics during the performance are welcome! (See Out & About on page 18 under "Onstage.")



Photo by Miriam Quin

**THESE MONTEFIORE ASSOCIATES** show off their works of moss art at a presentation hosted by Montefiore Medical Center on July 16. The hospital's Fine Art Program launched its Summer 2015 Gallery in the Gardens on East 210th Street. The moss murals create an imaginary garden that promotes green spaces, nature and a positive vibe for Montefiore's patients. Manning the table is artist Natalie Collette Wood.



Photo by Miriam Quin

**MOVIEGOERS GATHERED AROUND** to watch "Back to the Future" at Williamsbridge Oval Park on July 17 for free. There was popcorn being served, with plenty of folks taking advantage of both. The event was sponsored by the Jerome-Gun Hill Business Improvement District, the Mosholu Preservation Corporation and the New York City Parks Department. On July 30, the Movies at the Oval will feature "Grease" at 8 p.m.



Photo by David Cruz

**MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO** announces up to \$10 million investment in free high-speed broadband service for five NYCHA developments in the city as part of the federal government's Connect Home initiative. De Blasio (at podium), Counsel to the Mayor Maya Wiley (far left), New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito (right), and U.S. Secretary of Housing & Urban Development Julian Castro made the announcement at Mott Haven Houses on July 16.



Photo by Jade Chandler

**ROYAL DOLLAR IS OPEN** for business. The newest store at 2987 Webster Ave. quietly opened in early July at the Bedford Manor, owned by The Stagg Group. Merchandise includes housewares and party items.



# Be Healthy

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Number of Men, Women and  
Children in the US in need of an  
organ transplant.  
(Source: Montefiore Medical  
Center)

Vital  
Stats

## National Minority Organ Donor Awareness Week, August 1-7

National Minority Donor Awareness Week, celebrated annually from Aug. 1-7, is a nationwide observance to honor the generosity of multicultural donors and their families, while also underscoring the critical need for people from diverse communities to register their decision to Donate Life as organ, eye and tissue donors. To raise awareness for this important issue, Montefiore Medical Center will be holding a series of events throughout the Bronx. A single donor can save or heal the lives of more than 50 people.

While people of all ages and ethnicities can save and enhance lives through donation, organs are matched to recipients by a variety of factors—such as blood and tissue type—which can vary by race and ethnicity. While skin color is not a barrier when it comes to

organ donations and transplants, the odds of a transplant being successful are much greater when a minority recipient receives an organ from a minority donor.

Currently, 121,000 men, women and children in the United States are in need of a lifesaving transplant. Largely due to the rarity of donation opportunities, only about 28,000 organs are transplanted each year. As a result, 21 candidates die each day for lack of a donor. Minorities make up 57 percent of the men, women and children on the national organ transplant waiting list even though they account for 36 percent of the total population.

*Why is it important for minorities to become donors?*

Many of the conditions leading to the need for a transplant—such as diabetes and hypertension

— occur with greater frequency among minority populations.

Ethnic minorities are in desperate need of more organ and tissue donors. There are more than 69,000 minority individuals (this number includes Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, American Indians, Pacific Islanders and people of multiracial descent) registered on the U.S. organ transplant waiting list.

According to the United Network for Organ Sharing, successful transplantation often is enhanced by the matching of organs between members of the same ethnic and racial group. For example, any patient is less likely to reject a kidney if it is donated by an individual who is genetically similar. Generally, people are genetically more similar to people of their own ethnicity or race than to people of other races.

*Is there a greater need for any particular organ among minorities?*

Kidneys are at the top of the list. Approximately 63 percent of those waiting for kidney transplants are minorities. Currently, more than 63,000 minority individuals are waiting for kidney transplants. For these patients, the lack of available organs means longer waiting periods on transplant lists, more time spent on dialysis and sometimes death.

*How can someone become an organ, eye and tissue donor?*

Visit [www.donatelife.net/register-now](http://www.donatelife.net/register-now) and click on New York State. You can also donate through the New York Department of Motor Vehicles when you renew your driver's license.

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# Economic Gardening Can Bloom in the Bronx

Economic gardening is an intriguing concept that has been used to create jobs and help increase revenue in local communities across the United States. Much like a garden that gradually grows, successful businesses need tender care to assist in their growth.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Bronx's unemployment rate was 8.9 percent in March 2015, compared to Brooklyn with 6.7 percent. Economic gardening focuses on creating jobs by supporting existing local businesses. Bronxites are badly in need of locally created jobs, which can lead to increased sales tax revenue and lower unemployment. This economic development philosophy puts Bronx local entrepreneurs first.

This concept was first launched in Littleton, Colorado in 1989, producing a 71 percent increase in employment and three-fold increase in sales tax revenues that exceeded any other initiative in the area. All of this occurred without any tax incentive to entice outside businesses

to migrate. The majority of Littleton resources was focused on small business growth within their own local community. The Bronx is primed for this type of economic development.

For an economic garden to be successful, it requires strong connectivity or networking skills, marketing research, community and workforce development and infrastructure. Connectivity is critical to growing a successful Bronx economic garden.

Economic gardening can help Bronx businesses find affordable spaces to rent, employees that they will need to get started, and most importantly, early-stage fund-

ing. In addition, Bronx networking events allow entrepreneurs to meet with investors and others interested in nurturing entrepreneurship and cultivating business-to-business connections and resources to feed their growth.

Extensive market research will provide Bronx entrepreneurs access to baseline and custom market research, market profiles, and site selection assistance. This type of resource can improve the growth of entrepreneurs by assisting them in advertising and promotional activities, while informing them of public policies and key community issues.



**MARCIA CAMERON**

There are many agencies/organizations in the Bronx that offer some type of technical assistance to small businesses. However, George Acevedo, the director of the Bronx Women's Business Resource Center, states that "There are additional resources that are needed, namely the infrastructure for upcoming businesses to find healthy "soil" for entrepreneurs to plant their seeds."

Many local businesses have expanded over the years and opened new locations throughout the Bronx; MetroOptics is one that comes easily to mind. MetroOptics' four locations are locally owned and create jobs locally, all of which benefits the Bronx local economy. Wouldn't it be great to develop more local businesses that are invested locally? Let's start practicing economic gardening in the Bronx, and together we can reap the benefits.

*Marcia Cameron, MBA,EDFP, is a candidate for certification as a certified Economic Developer (CEdD) through the International Economic Development Council.*

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# Fordham Road BID a Star This Summer

The Fordham Road Business Improvement District (BID) continues to focus on the beautification of public spaces with the start of the Fordham Plaza renovation and the recently completed Bryan Park (intersecting Fordham and Kingsbridge roads). We are also ramping up our sanitation efforts to ensure that Fordham Road is clean for everyone to enjoy! This summer, we are hosting a record number of seasonal outdoor events including our film festival, sidewalk sales, and Fordham Fever Fridays. Our goal is to engage the Fordham Road community through these events.

Fordham Fever Fridays are in full swing! On Aug. 7, at Muller Park & Plaza (located at Fordham Road and Creston Avenue), is the first-ever beach party event with dunk tanks, giveaways, and beach-themed activities for all to enjoy. For our Sept. 4 and Oct. 2 Fever Fridays, our activities will be food truck and fantasy sports draft-themed respectively. Make sure to check our mobile app for more specific updates. In addition,



Photo courtesy Fordham Road BID

**AN OUTDOOR FILM** festival screening the movies "Annie" and "Ghostbusters" will take place at the newly built Bryan Park. It's part of the Fordham Road Business Improvement District's continued aim of beautifying and engaging its community.

tion, our sidewalk sale campaign will continue through Aug. 27-29, Sept. 17 and 19, Oct. 22 and 24 and Nov. 28. Shop Fordham Road on these dates between noon to 7:00 p.m., when merchants will be displaying their specialty sales of merchandise outside

their storefronts.

Our outdoor film festival is back and will feature three spectacular movies: Annie (2014) on July 24 at 8:30 p.m., and Ghostbusters, our two-night special feature, on Aug. 21 and 22 at 7:30 p.m. All the movie events

will take place at the newly renovated Bryan Park, an urban green-space for all to enjoy. We will also be having fun activities prior to the start of our movies for the whole family. Mark your calendars and join us for a night under the stars.

We are improving Fordham Road, non-stop, for our shoppers, merchants, and most importantly our community. For more information about these events and more upcoming events, visit our newly redesigned website at [www.fordhamroadbid.org](http://www.fordhamroadbid.org) and check us out on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/fordhamroadnyc](http://www.facebook.com/fordhamroadnyc)) and Twitter (@fordhamroad\_NYC). You can also download our brand new Fordham Road app with updates about what's going on at Fordham. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, feel free to reach out to us on our social media platforms, call us at (718) 562-2104, or send us an email at [info@fordhamroadbid.org](mailto:info@fordhamroadbid.org).

We hope to see everyone enjoying our exciting Fordham Road events and supporting our local Bronx businesses!

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# Auto Mechanics Bracing for Exodus Along Jerome Avenue

By WILLIAM MATHIS

As the city undergoes the outreach phase of a large-scale plan to rezone the southern end of Jerome Avenue, its large swath of mechanic shops are beginning to stage an exodus.

"Once news of the rezoning came out, that's it," said Pedro Estevez, president and founder of the United Auto Merchants Association (UAMA), a union representing mechanics around the city. "Hell broke loose." Already this year, 11 repair shop operators have come to him looking for help to relocate their businesses he said, after landlords refused to renew the lease or drastically increased the rent.

Estevez noted nearly all of the more than 900 members and affiliates of the UAMA lease space for their businesses while many have no signed leases. He fears that with rezoning, more auto businesses will have no choice but to close as property owners opt for more lucrative residential rental and development opportunities. "Rezoning is removing," he said.

The news came during a meeting between city officials with the Department of City Planning (DCP) and members of UAMA. The meeting addressed



Photo by William Mathis

**PEDRO ESTEVEZ, PRESIDENT** and founder of the United Auto Merchants Association, (gesturing) speaks with city planners from Department of City Planning, Paul Philips (far left) and Jessica Ortiz.

worries over the proposed rezoning. It's been one of several meetings that discussed the plan, with the city leaning towards changing zoning laws for 73 blocks of Jerome Avenue, which cuts through several low-income neighborhoods of the Bronx.

City officials arrived with a presentation about the planning process, but audience members kept their concerns about the uncertain future of their businesses front and center throughout.

Estevez set a confrontational tone for the evening in his opening remarks given in both English and Spanish. "They will have to change the zoning to be residential," he said. "This means that people will have to abandon their places."

"The city promises and promises and then removes people," cautioned Marco Neira, 56. He recently moved his auto repair business to the Bronx after he was forced out of the Willis Point section of Queens by a similar rezoning effort by the city. He said that over 300 auto workers lost work at repair shops in Willis Point. Forty-five managed to reopen in the Bronx.

Audience members also expressed distrust of the city's push to create affordable housing in the area. "Affordable housing's not for us," said Liz Thompson, a retired health worker. "It's not affordable."

City officials explained that the rezoning plan is only in the study phase, with no specific dates or certainty of how the rezoning will take shape. According to city officials, the area being studied stretches two miles, from 167th to 184th streets, covering the neighborhoods of High Bridge, Mount Eden, Mount Hope, University Heights and Morris Heights. The communities are home to 345,000 res-

idents and 3,700 workers.

Jessica Ortiz, a city planner with DCP, assured guests that even under rezoning, the city has no authority to remove people from already existing businesses. Ortiz highlighted a similar rezoning of 80 blocks of Webster Avenue in the Bedford Park and Norwood areas as an example of success. "New residential uses have come into the area," she said. "But auto uses have remained."

"We want to understand from you, what kind of services you need," Manny Dominguez, executive director of NYC Business Solutions for the Department of Small Business Services, said to the crowd.

But listening was not enough. The crowd repeatedly raised the issue that an impending rezoning will force out auto businesses or otherwise have negative effects on their businesses.

Estevez proposed that the city develop what he called an Industrial Business Zone, specifically zoned for auto repair and similar businesses. This would, he said, create a secure area for auto businesses where they would not have to worry about the threat of future rezoning plans.

But the city was in no place to make promises on outcomes. "The purpose of today is dialogue, to understand your needs," said Robinson Hernandez, Deputy Commissioner with the Department of Small Business Services. "The solution will come later."



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## NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

### Community Resource Fair

NYC Council Member Andy King will host a free Community Health and Resource Fair on Saturday, Aug. 8 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 940 E. Gun Hill Rd. There will be mobile health and legal vans, health screenings, exhibits and resources from community agencies and non-profits, music, giveaways, refreshments and activity for people of all ages. For more information, call (718) 684-5509.

### Bird Watching at VC Park

Van Cortlandt Park features free bird walks Saturdays from 8 to 9:30 a.m. until November. Meet at the Nature Center, 246th Street and Broadway. For more information, contact Joseph McManus at McManus638@aol.com.

### Scholarship Fund

The Janice and Paul Kessler Scholarship Fund is accepting applications for scholarship assistance. Any student accepted into an

accredited university or college and is, or planning to obtain a degree in the area of wildlife management, is eligible for the annual scholarship. Application requests may be sent to The Janice & Paul Kessler Scholarship Fund, c/o Bridget Kessler, P.O. Box 485, Newport, NY 13416 (along with a stamped, self-addressed legal sized #10 envelope), or downloaded at [www.keesslerscholarshipfund.org](http://www.keesslerscholarshipfund.org). The completed application must be returned to the committee by Sept 1.

### Daycare Provider Workshop

NYC Small Business Services is offering a free 30-hour business growth training class in the Bronx for licensed home-based daycare providers on Saturday mornings starting in September, both in English and Spanish. Register at an information session Thursday, Aug. 13 at the Concourse House, 2751 Grand Concourse from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 933-2539.

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# Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

## EDITOR'S PICK

### Free Concerts at the Oval

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz and the Bronx Council on the Arts present free: **Orquesta SCC**, featuring salsa music, Aug. 5; and **New York Skyscrapers and Friends**, performing contemporary pop, jazz, funk, R&B, soul and rock, Aug. 11; both from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Williamsbridge Oval (rain location: recreation center's 2nd floor multi-purpose room). For more information, call (718) 543-8672 or (718) 515-2495.

## Onstage

• The Bronx Arts Ensemble presents **Also Tango**, featuring dancers and singers, July 26; **Glitter and Gold 18th Century Baroque Masterpieces**, Aug. 2; and **String Breezes in the Woods**, featuring classical music, Aug. 9, all at 2 p.m. in Van Cortlandt Park's Rockwood Drive Circle (rain location is VC Park's Vladeck Hall, 74 VC Park So. at Hillman Avenue), and at 4 p.m. at Fordham University. Also presented is **A Golden Oldies Summer Celebration**, Aug. 14 at 6 p.m. in Pelham Bay Park, Middletown Road and Stadium Avenue (rain location is International Caterers, 3243 Ampere Ave.). For more information, call (718) 601-7399.

• Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents **Formell y Los Van Van**, featuring a band from Cuba performing Afro-Cuban, disco and funk, Aug. 8 (tickets are \$45 to \$60); and salsa performances by **Tito Rojas, Puerto Rican Power** and **Yan Collazo**, Aug. 15 (tickets are \$50 to \$65); both at 8 p.m. For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

• New York City's Hip to Hip Theatre Company presents Shakespeare's "**The Merry Wives of Windsor**," free, July 25 at 5 p.m. near the red steps south of Van Cortlandt House Museum, blocks from 242nd Street and Broadway, preceded by a free children's program, "**Kids and the Classics**," an educational workshop at 4:30 p.m. Bring blanket, low chair and picnic fare. For more information, call (718) 490-3954.

• City Parks Foundation presents SummerStage Kids free performing arts events, all at 10:30 a.m.: At Van Cortlandt Park's Sachkerah Playground, Jerome Avenue and Gun Hill Road: **City Parks PuppetMobile**, July 23, and **Erik Zeidler's New York Wild**, July 30; At Poe Park, Grand Concourse at 193rd Street: **Lucky Bob**, July 24; **Moona Luna**, July 31; **Teatro SEA**, Aug. 7; and **City Parks PuppetMobile**, Aug. 14; and At VC Park's southwest playground, VC Park South and Broadway: **Ebony Hillbillies**, Aug. 6, and **Hybrid Movement Company**, Aug. 13. For more information, call (212) 360-8281 or (212) 353-9585.

• The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents **Women in Jazz**

performed by the New Amsterdam Musical Association, Aug. 8 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org).

## Events

• Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. will be grand marshal at the **Bronx Dominican Day Parade** along the Grand Concourse from East Tremont Avenue to East 166th Street on July 26 beginning at noon. For more information, visit [paradadominicanadelbronx.org](http://paradadominicanadelbronx.org).

• Mosholu Preservation Corporation and Jerome-Gun Hill Bid present **Movie Night**, "Grease," July 30 at 8 p.m. at the Williamsbridge Oval. Popcorn will be served. Bring lawn chair and blanket. If inclement weather, movie will be rescheduled. For more information, call (718) 324-4946.

• The Fordham Road Business Improvement District presents **Movie Night**, "Annie," July 24 at 8:30 p.m. preceded by games and activities for kids from 6 to 8 p.m., at Bryan Park, East Fordham and East Kingsbridge roads. For more information, call (718) 562-2104.

• Elected officials announce **Abrazo Dominicano in New York**, celebrating Dominican heritage, July 24 from 7 p.m. to midnight, at Maestro's Caterers, 1703 Bronxdale Ave. For more information, call (718) 991-3161.

• The public is invited to **Boogie on the Boulevard**, Aug. 2, 9 and 16 on the Grand Concourse from 161st to 167th streets, from noon to 4 p.m. The streets will be closed to traffic. Events include music, activities and programs hosted by art, cultural, civic, health organizations and artists. For more information, visit [bronxmuseum.org/boogieblvd](http://bronxmuseum.org/boogieblvd).

• Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse (corner of East 193rd Street) presents **High Bridge: Rebirth of the Harlem River**, featuring photographs celebrating the High Bridge, through July 25, Tuesdays through Saturdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Artists' Talk, July 25 from 2 to 4 p.m. For more information, call (917) 584-6626 or (718) 365-5516.

Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse (165th Street), presents free **First Friday**, Aug. 7, 6 to 10 p.m. For more information, call (718) 681-6000.

• The public is invited to ride the free **Bronx Culture Trolley**, which transports visitors on the first Wednesday of every month (except January and September), to free Bronx hot spots. Trolley night starts with a 5 p.m. reception at the Longwood Art Gallery at Hostos Community College, 450 Grand Concourse (at 149th St.). From there, the trolley departs at 5:30, 6:30 and 7:30 p.m. Next ride is on Aug. 5. Riders can get on and off at any scheduled stop and spend as much time as they wish at any or all of the featured venues. For more information and a detailed schedule, call (718) 931-9500 ext. 33 or log on to [www.bronxarts.org](http://www.bronxarts.org).

• Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Butterfly Habitat Hat, to learn about and sketch butterflies, then make a butterfly habitat hat filled with flowers and insects, July 25 and 26; Marvelous Mushrooms, to hunt for mushrooms, then create a planetarium, Aug. 1 and 2; Sounds of Nature, to make a drum or wind chime, then join a musical troupe, Aug. 8 and 9; and Green Bugs Gathering, to study insects, then make some from various materials with movable parts, Aug. 15 and 16; all in WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also scheduled is **Outdoor Music Wednesdays**: July 29 - Hilliard Greene and the Jazz Expressions; and Aug. 5 - Militeri Tucker & Bombazo Dance Co., performing Caribbean-African music; on the grounds from 7 to 8 p.m. (bring chair, no blankets; free with admission to grounds). 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.

## Exhibits

• The Bronx Museum, 1040 Grand Concourse at 165th Street presents **Wild Noise**, featuring visual arts exchange between Cuba and the United States, through Aug. 16. For more information, call (718) 681-6000.

## Library Events

• The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for children: **Reading Aloud at 11 a.m.**: (ages 3 to 8), to enjoy picture books, M/W/Th/F;

**Hands-On Projects at 2 p.m.**: (ages 7 to 12): Superhero Costume Making, July 23; Superhero Frame Making, July 30; T-Shirt Making, Aug. 6; Jewelry Box Making, Aug. 13; Hero Fan Making, Aug. 20; and **films**: Tuesdays at 2 p.m. For teens/young adults, there is: **films at 5 p.m.**: July 24 and 30. For adults, there is: **Performance Reading**: Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird," in the style of radio drama, including music, July 25 at 2:30 p.m. Adults are invited to sign up for a free **Adult Summer Reading 2015** and submit reviews at [www.summerreading.org](http://www.summerreading.org) or in the library by 5 p.m. on Aug. 28. Prizes will be awarded to the four individuals who read the most books and post/submit reviews. Winners will be announced on Aug. 29 at 2:30 p.m. This program is open only to those who select the Bronx Library Center as their local library. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org).

• The Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children: **Toddler Story Time at 10:30 a.m.**: (ages 18 to 36 months), songs and rhymes, July 23 and 30; **Be a City Hero at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), free hands-on science workshop, July 23 and 30 (advance in-person registration required); **Read Aloud Story Time at 2:30 p.m.**: (ages 4 to 6), July 27 and 29; and **Fire and Ice**: (ages 3 to 12), live science show, Aug. 14 at 2 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy film: "The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies," July 25 at 1:30 p.m. Adults can attend **Free Computer Classes**: to learn email and basic computer information, Wednesdays, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

• The Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), offers for kids: **Be a City Hero at 2 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), free hands-on science workshop, July 23, 30, Aug. 6, 13; **Get Active Fridays at 2 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), dance and zumba, July 24, 31, Aug. 7, 14; **Movies at noon**: (ages 5 to 18), July 29 and Aug. 12; **Kids Pajama Party** (ages 18 mos. to 12 years), Aug. 17 at 6 p.m.; and **Sensory Friendly Music and Movement Concert**: (ages 18 months to 12 years), summer reading celebration, turtle dance music; kids play instruments, Aug. 18 at 2 p.m. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

**NOTE: The Norwood News will be on hiatus until Aug. 19. Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to [norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org](mailto:norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org), and should be received by Aug. 10 for the next publication date of Aug. 20.**



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# MCI Rent Hike Considered for Webb Ave. Tenants

(continued from page 1)

their stay there despite the building's condition.

On a wider scale, the MCI, officials and tenants assert, is part of a systemic pattern of underhanded tenant abuse by the building's landlord--Goldfarb Properties, a real estate firm with 12 properties across the Bronx. The firm's true intentions, Webb Avenue tenants argue, is to drive them out, a suspicion powered by the removal of fire escapes in that same building three years ago. The firm filed for an MCI under review by the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), a state agency that rejects or approves MCIs. Goldfarb Properties, through its representative, has denied the allegations, calling them "false and unfounded."

"As with all of our properties, the building-wide improvements are based on the needs of each individual property," said the representative via a statement.

Webb Avenue tenants have since considered legally challenging the MCI rent, according to Senator Gustavo Rivera, whose district includes the property. His office also coordinated counsel for the tenants. They've also met with tenants from other buildings owned by Goldfarb Properties, holding closed-door meetings with the New York Attorney General's Tenant Harassment Prevention Task Force arranged by Senator Jeff Klein, representing most of eastern Bronx. The task force is now investigating whether Goldfarb Properties breached tenants' rights.

"We said 'okay, this is another test, a challenge that we have to fight and beat this back,'" said Michael Stanton, president of Webb Avenue's Tenant Association. "If [they're] able to impose that significant increase, it's going to mean...a lot of people are going to find other places to live."

## System-wide Issues

At the meeting, Webb Avenue tenants were joined by residents of 2160-2166 Matthews Ave., a seven-story building in Pelham Parkway. Tenants there dealt with a



Photo by Adi Talwar

**THE INTERIOR OF** 2400 Webb Ave. features a spruced up lobby, mailboxes and new surveillance systems after a \$3.4 million renovation by property owner Goldfarb Properties. Tenants suspect Goldfarb Properties of trying to root them out.

stream of inconveniences that included inoperable elevators, which many suspected were shut down to deliberately root them out. This led to tenants, some infirm, using stairs.

Three tenants would die while service stopped, including one who fell down the stairs while using a walker. Another sickly tenant would stay confined to his apartment, refusing to walk down the stairs. He would later pass away, not knowing he had lung cancer. Judith Bratnick, a Matthews Avenue tenant leader, went so far as to allege that inoperable elevator service led to their deaths.

"You're building on improvements," said Klein of landlords. "But you don't inconvenience tenants where the tenants can't even live in their own apartments, or use the building or its services."

In 2012, Webb Avenue tenants were uprooted after Goldfarb Properties hired construction crews to detach the building's fire escapes to upgrade them. This prompted the FDNY to issue a vacate order. Tenants made accommodations to live elsewhere, using cash vouchers provided by Goldfarb Properties.

## Rent Increase

In its MCI filing, Goldfarb Properties requested Webb Avenue tenants pay \$85 more per room inside

their individual apartment. Bathrooms, dining and living spaces were categorized as rooms, according to MCI notices Webb Avenue tenants received. Those living in apartments in the building's spacious D line would face a \$500 increase.

"I am very, very suspicious of any rent that goes up \$250 to \$500 as they're reported in this building," said Rivera.

The Webb Avenue residence is home to marginally middle class, rent-regulated tenants, who pay a preferential rent below \$2,500. Some tenants have inched close to that threshold, potentially compromising their rent status should an increase take effect. State laws allow landlords to impose market rate rents if an apartment's current rent exceeds \$2,500, signaling a deregulated apartment. But come Oct. 1, the threshold will increase to \$2,700, following the passage of the state's rent protection laws in June.

An empty unit can be even more advantageous. Vacancy bonuses clear landlords into raising rents upwards of 20 percent once a unit becomes available. Klein said he suspects Goldfarb Properties have played a game in forcing out tenants to fast track bonuses. He's since drafted legislation barring landlords from benefitting off any vacancy bonus should they be con-

victed of tenant harassment.

For his part, Rivera sees MCIs as largely problematic, and has introduced legislative reforms of the MCI process, which he considers a "perverse incentive" for landlords. But tenants are entitled to contest any MCI application to the DHCR, who reviews written complaints and renders a decision.

"To me it seems like it's a way for a landlord who owns a building to get various improvements so they don't need to pay them," said Stanton. "It's just a way for them to say, 'Let me fix my building, I can put them on the back of the residents.'"

## Future of the Bronx

2400 Webb Ave. lies on the outskirts of Kingsbridge, a neighborhood that's seen a number of real estate transactions happen since developers announced the construction of the Kingsbridge National Ice Center. The center, to be built at the Kingsbridge Armory, is pegged as a harbinger of a resurging Bronx. But it has also sparked talk of gentrification, becoming a touchstone topic in recent years, as landlords hedge their bets in luring more high-income earners in place of the marginalized. For Goldfarb Properties, the firm said the KNIC project had "no bearing" on fixing 2400 Webb, planned since 2011.

An even bigger argument has been that with a more attractive Bronx, tenant harassment may indeed increase in the long-term, with landlords exploiting vacancy bonuses to fast track the deregulation of an apartment.

Regardless of the borough's future, tenants are reconsidering staying where they are. Ada Sanchez, a social worker and mother, is unsure where she'll live after Aug. 31. After reviewing her finances, Sanchez realized \$500 more in rent would be too much. "Not that the MCI's not important," she said, "but technically I have no place to live come August."



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