



# NORWOOD NEWS

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**INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:**  
**THE BRONX'S RAT PROBLEM | PG. 4**



**BRONX BARRIERS:**  
**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT CRISIS | PG. 9**

## THE CAMPAIGN TO DOWNZONE

*Community Board 7 backs downzoning of Mosholu Pkwy.*



Photo by Adi Talwar

**MOSHOLU PARKWAY NORTH** by Van Cortlandt Avenue East (pictured) is among the streets community activists hope to have downzoned to stymie large scale development.

**By DAVID CRUZ**

A grassroots effort to limit height restrictions for new buildings along Mosholu Parkway crossed another hurdle as city officials agreed to consider examining downzoning efforts along the parkway next year. The move comes amid Community Board 7's independent zoning study of two neighborhoods within its

borders as a way to preserve its character while stemming further development.

The group won a victory at the latest CB7 Land Use/Housing Committee meeting on Feb. 15 when the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP), charged with determining the character of neighborhoods across the five boroughs, assured the com-

munity it will assess the look of the neighborhood. A motion presented before the full board at its Feb. 28 meeting was passed, with board members agreeing to revisit the proposal by the fall. The board first needs to finalize another separate independent study it had commissioned last November.

"In five months it's been

turned from what some called a nonstarter to a mayoral issue," civil activist Anthony Riveccio, who proposed the idea for a blanket rezoning of Mosholu Parkway and its immediate side streets, told the Norwood News.

The plan, backed by local legislators and residents, looks to prevent overdevelop-

*(continued on page 15)*



**CVS to Close in March**  
**pg 3**



**Fordham Nonprofit**  
**Looks Out for Teens**  
**pg 7**



**State of the Bronx**  
**Blasts City and Trump**  
**pg 8**



**Out & About**  
**pg 14**

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## IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

## Norwood Issues Brought to Mayor's Attention at Bronx Town Hall

By WENDY JOAN BIDDLECOMBE

Although Mayor Bill de Blasio's town hall meeting was held in the Kingsbridge neighborhood of the Bronx, the mayor heard from Norwood residents, who brought issues of parking and overcrowding to his attention.

Throughout the event, held at In Tech Academy on Tibbett Avenue and moderated by Councilman Andrew Cohen, the mayor addressed Bronxites' questions on national issues as well as local concerns, including immigration, healthcare and education.

"This is a city where we're passionate people. When you look at the tabloids, you look at the news, there's a lot of feeling, a lot of emotion. And I think we can safely say good news doesn't travel as fast as bad news. But we have a lot to be proud of," the mayor said in his opening remarks.

De Blasio touted key issues of his administration, including record-high graduation rates, expanded pre-K enrollment and neighborhood policing, and Vision Zero efforts to decrease traffic-related fatalities. De Blasio then fielded questions for the next two hours and 20 minutes.

Community Board 7 Member Lowell Green, who chairs the parking and transportation committee, used her question to the mayor to instead make a statement on the district's congested streets.

"I've lived in this neighborhood 30 years," Green said. "When I moved in, I was the only woman in my building who had a driver's license. Now everyone in this room has a driver's license, and if you have kids you probably have two cars, or three. Parking is impossible in this neighborhood."

Green worried that while construction of new housing is under way in Community Board 7, particularly Bedford Park and Norwood, parking lots are not being planned, an issue that the mayor noted he



Photo by Wendy Joan Biddlecombe

**MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO** takes questions at a town hall meeting on Feb. 22.

was not previously familiar with.

De Blasio commiserated with Green, telling her that he watched the same problem develop in his Brooklyn neighborhood over the years. The mayor said it's important to expand and "keep mass transit as appealing as possible" as more people move into an area. De Blasio mentioned the citywide ferry service that is set to launch later in 2017 (which will connect to Soundview in the southeast Bronx), a proposed light rail line that will run from Astoria, Queens, to Sunset Park in Brooklyn, CitiBike expansion (which is not available in the Bronx), and expanded Select Bus Service.

"I don't have the perfect answer," de Blasio said.

Meantime, Community Board 7 Chair Adeline Walker-Santiago urged de Blasio to commit to downzoning Mosholu Parkway as a way to preserve the green corridor and combat an area that she called "candy land" to developers. The mayor did not directly respond to her request (see front page story for more information).

The town hall was far less contentious than other town hall style gatherings held across the country last week as federal lawmakers visited their home districts during a recess. The audience clapped as the mayor plugged his

successes and were enthusiastic when one audience member asked the mayor to commit to a Bronx greenway, and when another asked the mayor to divest from any other institution that lends to the now revived Dakota Access Pipeline plan.

The mayor also reiterated New York City's commitment to being a safe haven for those who immigrate illegally or overstay their visas.

"When you hear those words ['sanctuary city'], a lot of people interpret them different ways. I interpret them through the perspective of the NYPD," de Blasio said. "This city made a decision long ago ... that said if you've got a city with a proud immigrant tradition and millions of people are here from other countries, including as many as half a million that are undocumented ... we have to find a way to communicate and all work together."

De Blasio added that the goal of his administration is to not make New Yorkers fearful of going to the police or other city agencies because of their legal status.

"The NYPD is not going to be turned into immigrant enforcement agents. We refuse to do it," De Blasio said later in the evening. "We know what we will do, and what we won't do."

## Public and Community Meetings

**COMMUNITY BOARD 7** committee meetings will be held on the following times at the board office, 229A E. 204th St. at 6:30 p.m. or unless otherwise noted: Public Safety & Quality of Life Committee on March 2; Education, Youth & Libraries Committee on March 2 at 7:30 p.m.; Senior Services Committee on March 8; Parks and Recreation Committee on March 8 at 7:15 p.m.; Traffic and Transportation Committee on March 9; Veterans Committee on March 9 at 7:30 p.m.; Environment & Sanitation Committee on March 14; Health & Hospitals Committee on March 14; and Housing, Land Use and Zoning Committee on March 14 at 7:30 p.m. For more information, call the board office at (718) 933-5650.



# CVS Pharmacy To Close in March

By DAVID CRUZ

Customers at the CVS Pharmacy at 310 E. Gun Hill Rd. at Perry Avenue in Norwood were shocked to learn that the store is about to close its doors.

Stephanie Cunha, a spokesperson for CVS, confirmed this location will close on March 4, citing “a business decision.” This information conflicts with what several CVS managers told residents about this location, which was that the store will close on March 18.

“Customers will not experience any disruption in service,” Cunha said in a statement, adding the CVS Pharmacy at 732 Allerton Ave. will continue to “provide convenient pharmacy services to our customers.” There the pharmacy can “quickly and easily transfer their prescriptions to any other CVS location.”

Outside the Gun Hill pharmacy, Hilda Nieves, a 21-year resident widened her eyes over the news. “Don’t tell me that,” Nieves said, lugging two bags full of groceries from the CVS. “This CVS is great. This is the only pharmacy I go to. Please don’t close it.”

Nieves’ attachment to the store was comparatively greater than Anthony Albaladejo’s, a Norwood resident ready to walk into the store with his friend Justine Rosario. “The CVS store itself is a good store, the pharmacy’s kind of iffy,” Albaladejo said.

For now, the pair will have to settle for the CVS store on the opposite end of Norwood at Bainbridge Avenue by East 206th Street, which is the closest CVS location to 310 E. Gun Hill Rd., to grab their deals.

Elvia Leon, another Norwood resident walking out of the Gun Hill store with two bags full of items, finds the Bainbridge Avenue location too far to take the walk.

In the last few months, several businesses within reach of the CVS on East Gun Hill have closed. While the Gjonaj Realty and Management Office shut its doors, Joseph’s Pizzeria and Restaurant at the northwest corner of Gun Hill Road and Perry Avenue temporarily closed, but plans to reopen. Meanwhile, the facility at the northeast corner of Gun Hill and Perry will open as a dental office.



Photo by David Cruz

**A VOLUNTEER WORKS** the table at last year’s flea market organized by the Bedford Mosholu Community Association.

## BMCA Gears Up for Yearly Flea Market

By ADELINE HANSSEN

For the past few weeks, the Bedford Mosholu Community Association (BMCA) has amassed books, appliances, toys and other knickknacks from community members in the hopes it can resell them at its annual flea market slated for March 4.

“It is a good day for the community and for the Bronxites who are looking for bargains,” said Barbara Stronczer, BMCA’s fifth and longest-serving president.

The BMCA receives a wide range of donations for the market—from small portable TVs and exercise equipment to whole sets of dishes. Members of the BMCA run the flea market, setting up tables and managing event volunteers. The NYPD Explorers from the 52nd Precinct also come to help, manning a table, with some Explorers carrying oversized purchases home, said Stronczer.

The flea market serves as the only money-making venture for the BMCA, which uses its profits to cover its yearly overhead expenses that include its rent and monthly

“It is a good day for the community and for the Bronxites who are looking for bargains.”

--Barbara Stronczer,  
BMCA president.

mailers. It has been a tradition for more than 30 years.

“I feel once a year is enough to ask people for money,” said Stronczer.

The BMCA is in its 42nd year. Led by Stronczer, the BMCA serves Bedford Park with help from volunteers committed to sustaining a quality standard of living for its residents.

Their projects include the maintenance of a small garden along Webster Avenue, park cleanups and monitoring commercial and residen-

tial developments in the neighborhood. During the election season, the BMCA invites official candidates to their meetings so members can learn about their policies and positions on local issues. In 2016, the BMCA successfully fought to get the lease renewed on the local post office on Webster Avenue.

“Bedford Park and Norwood is still a safe convenient place to live and we hope to keep it going that way,” said Stronczer. “It is going to be very important for us in the future to make sure that we get improvements in our infrastructure, such as more schools, better transportation, more sanitation, better maintenance in our parks.”

The BMCA will host its flea market on Saturday, March 4. The event will take place at Saint Mary’s Orthodox Church of India (corner of Bedford Park Boulevard and Decatur Avenue) from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

“Please come to flea market!” said Stronczer. “You will find a bargain, I am sure.”



# INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



**This week we asked readers if incidents like the man who died when he came in contact with a rat are being under reported or is this a growing epidemic?**



I think it's been under reported. I think a lot of times incidents happen. Even if you're not bitten, the rats are there and it's been a problem for New York City, especially here in the Bronx. We need more politicians to bring this issue to Albany for funding. I didn't know that rat droppings could kill you. I know that people do have allergies and they can get very sick, and maybe this will help to shed light on the issue.

**Charlie Carrero**  
Westchester Square



I think it's the beginning of a new epidemic because we've had rats forever. People may have died, but even more people may have been infected by it including homeless people. They should do an investigation into why people died. I think they should do an extreme extermination. They know what they should do, they have to do it everywhere because rats are like fleas and they breed everywhere.

**Evelyn Wallace**  
Norwood



I do think it's being under reported. It's also been known that when rat droppings come in contact with the top of a can of soda and if you don't rinse it off before you drink from it that could happen as well. So every time I buy anything, I wash it off good with soap and water and then I drink from it. I don't go near rats and I don't know how they got in contact with them on the Grand Concourse. Of course more money, but we also need everyone to pitch in. It can't just be a few buildings, it has to be everyone in the neighborhood.

**Valerie Vlado**  
Bedford Park



There was a guy playing golf next to a rat hole so the rat came up and went up the leg of his pants. He managed to get the rat out, but two weeks later he died. I believe it's being under reported. The problem has been around but people didn't know about it. So now it's coming out because there's more rats in the streets now. So if you get a rat in your house and you touch the poop, you will get infected because it will go through the pores of your skin and goes into your bloodstream and you get infected. They need to invest more money on rat control and poison.

**Juan Enamordo**  
Concourse Village



I think the poison could possibly kill people too. I don't see much news about rats, but the rat problem is certainly not being covered in the news. I see a lot of them at the train station. From time to time, maybe once a year I would see a story about rats.

**Derek Saldivar**  
Pelham Parkway

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# Investigators Probe Garage Collapse in Bedford Park

By **DAVID GREENE**  
and **DAVID CRUZ**

Investigators are looking into how a public indoor parking garage in Bedford Park collapsed, seriously crushing a number of vehicles and leaving at least one owner unable to claim his car.

Police, fire and paramedics were dispatched to DR Parking, located at 3000 Jerome Ave. near Bedford Park Boulevard at just after 6 a.m. on Feb. 19. Officials say there were no injuries, with workers managing to escape. Investigators from the Office of Emergency Management and the Department of Buildings (DOB) were investigating.

Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority reported that number 4 trains were running at a reduced speed past the area to prevent any further collapse, causing subway delays in both directions for several hours.

One church on the block was forced to cancel Sunday service.

Vehicle owners were kept back by metal barricades manned by several police officers. Among the



Photo by Miriam Quinones

**THE COLLAPSED CEILING** crushes this taxi parked at the DR Parking garage at 3000 Jerome Avenue by Bedford Park Boulevard.

unlucky is one owner who only went by Edmond, who's still waiting to retrieve his vehicle. "I still have no idea what's going on," Edmond said.

James, a Rhode Island man who runs an electronic business in New York, was among the lucky ones able to drive his Rodeo out of

the garage Sunday evening. "I left my car here last night. The car is fine, nothing happened to my car," James said. "They didn't tell me anything, but they just released my car according to the police officer's instructions." He added that he's a regular at the garage, which never had any problems until to-

day. "It was a building infrastructure problem. This building may be a hundred years old or more," James said.

The DOB, which regulates structures, did not issue a full vacate order, though an emergency response team was dispatched to assess the collapse.

The garage had 100 parking spots and charged \$11 per day or \$225 for the month.

According to DOB records, the building has complaints or violations dating back to 1940 and currently has 11 complaints. In 2003 the owner was cited for having parking attendants fix a hole in the concrete. In 2010 Con Edison reported stray voltage was coming from a window guard, and in 2012 the owner paid a \$1,500 fine for "failure to certify correction of (an) immediate hazardous condition."

Staffers at Councilman Andrew Cohen's office were working with 15 vehicle owners in assisting with getting information from the FDNY and DOB as it becomes available.

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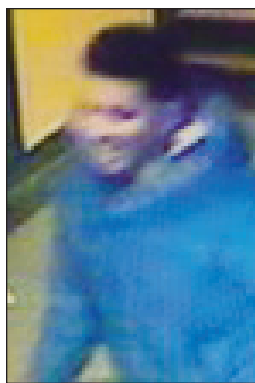
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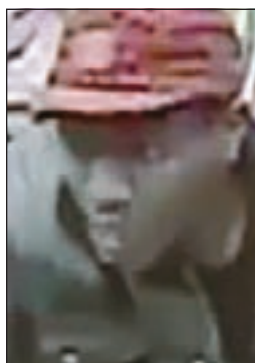
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## CRIME FILE By DYLAN CROLL



### Cellphone Thief on The Run

An unidentified man (pictured above) is wanted for questioning in connection with a robbery that happened in Fordham on Feb. 5. Police say the victim, 25, was walking her dog in front of 11 W. 183rd St. when a thief approached her from behind, pushed her to the ground, and grabbed her cellphone, headphones, and hat before fleeing on foot. The perpetrator, captured in surveillance footage is described as a Hispanic man around 5'10" tall and last seen wearing a blue jacket and light colored pants.



### Knife Wielder

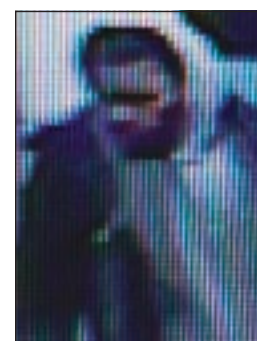
An 18-year-old victim is recovering from stab wounds he received from a knife-wielding suspect pictured above. Police say the suspect entered a bodega within the 52nd Precinct's borders just before 3 a.m. on Feb. 21, making threatening gestures at the

clerk. He was seen holding a knife in each hand. The victim, who was off screen, was stabbed in the shoulder and taken to a hospital, according to police. The suspect (pictured) is described as black, and last seen wearing a black jacket, and a red baseball cap.



### Power Tool Burglars On the Loose

Police need the public's help in identifying two men (pictured above) who broke into the basement of a residential house on Creston Avenue, where they stole power tools before fleeing. The burglary occurred on Feb. 16. The men were caught on surveillance, each seen wearing a dark hooded jacket and winter cap.



### Cash Snatcher Wanted

Police need help in tracking down a man who stole cash from a 60-year-old woman. The incident happened at a grocery store on Feb. 3, when the perpetrator (pictured above)

snatched the cash from the unsuspecting victim's left hand and fled the location on foot. The man, captured on camera, was black, last seen wearing a black jacket, grey hoodie, blue jeans, and tan boots. He is estimated to be roughly 25 to 30 years of age.



### Bx3 Bus Robber

A woman has been labeled a person of interest by the NYPD for a robbery of a cellphone that happened on Dec. 4. Police say, the incident happened near 2521 University Ave. inside the Bx3 MTA bus. That's where the unidentified woman hit a 25-year-old victim in the face, snatched her cellphone out of her hand, and fled. The victim was not seriously hurt. The perpetrator (pictured above) is described as either black or Hispanic with short hair. She was last seen wearing a red hooded jacket and blue jeans.

*Anyone with information on these incidents may call the NYPD's Crime stopper hotline at 1-800-577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish, 1-888-57-PISTA (74782). All calls are strictly confidential.*

# Fordham Nonprofit Looks to Reverse Course for Today's Youth

By DAVID CRUZ

A few months ago, Johannys Cuello, 18, could barely speak to someone confidently, let alone hold her head up in the process. Just as daunting was deciding how to apply for college. She didn't know where to begin. "I didn't even have a college I wanted to apply to," Johannys said.

That went ditto for Johannys' high school classmate Kissy Guity, 17, who juggles dreams delivering babies or running a business.

These rites of passage were something familiar to Vera Galeas, 58, who by day works at the Family Learning Center at Montefiore Health System. After all, Galeas was a latchkey kid.

"I was welcomed with zero support," Galeas told the *Norwood News*. "I literally came home to a dark, sad-looking apartment. And I had no idea where to go, what schools were better than others. There was nobody to help."

This time, through a nonprofit she belongs to called Niño de la Caridad Foundation, Galeas is turning the knob and opening the doors for young people like Johannys and Kissy. For Galeas, who serves as the group's program and fundraising manager, it's her way of mentoring the borough's vulnerable youth by introducing them to services that can change the course of their lives. Two mentors are available to prepare students for



Image courtesy Google Maps

**MENTEES MEET AT** Dr. Denise Nuñez's office at 557 E. Fordham Rd. each Wednesday.

college, a process that involves studying for SATs, touring colleges, and unraveling the archaic financial aid process.

"Some of our parents, they know how to read and write, but when they get all these papers, some of them don't know English," Galeas said. "So the youth stay behind."

The nonprofit program, which is free for all, was created in 2015 by Dr. Denise Nuñez, 46, a pediatrician from the Children's Hospital at Montefiore with a private practice in the neighborhood of Fordham. One of the more

impoverished sections of the Bronx, Fordham struggles with a low high school graduation rate and a high, though gradually declining, teen pregnancy rate.

Caring for kids should be approached holistically, according to Dr. Nuñez, whose firsthand account of young people's struggles and vul-

nerabilities in the Bronx is all too real and regular. It was at her Fordham practice, where 1700 teenage patients are seen yearly, where Dr. Nuñez treated one promising student athlete who eventually turned to drugs, losing his college scholarship. She then began to probe young people, realizing that a prospective future is not as seriously considered as she hoped. "That's when I sat down and I said, 'I need to do something different,'" she said.

For now, Galeas's workload includes securing grants to maintain the program, scout a location (for now, they're operating in Dr. Nuñez's clinic off hours each Wednesday), raising the group's profile, and recruiting local students from DeWitt Clinton High School, MS 80, and Bronx Leadership Academy High School to join the program. Her pitch is simple: "We have programs to make your lives better."

Progress seems tangible. Johannys and Kissy are college bound. Kissy has even found herself being undecided over which of three colleges she plans to go, a victory unto itself.

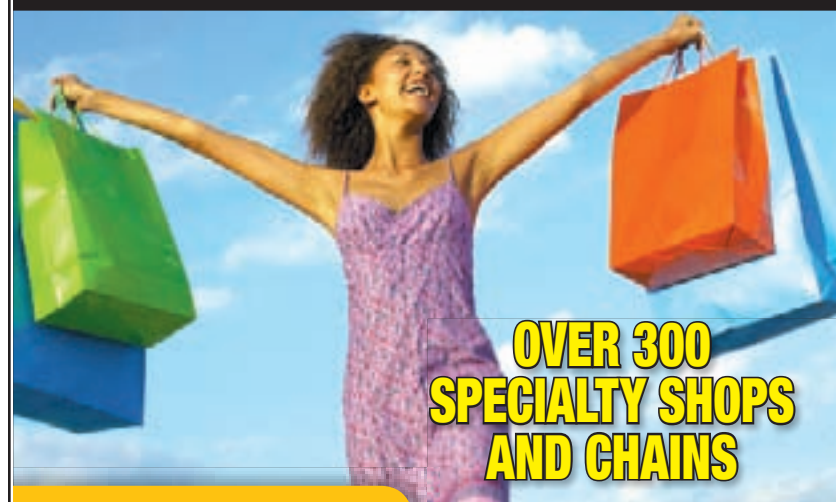


Photo courtesy Niño de la Caridad Foundation

**(L-R) DR. DENISE NUÑEZ**, founder of the Niño de la Caridad Foundation, and mentees Johannys Cuello and Kissy Guity, and Vera Galeas, the group's program and fundraising manager.

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# State of the Bronx

## *Bronx BP Ruben Diaz Jr. takes aim at de Blasio, attacks Trump*

By DAVID CRUZ

Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. once again lightly dabbled with the prospect of becoming mayor of New York City in his latest annual State of the Borough Address.

Discussing citywide issues, he took aim at both Mayor Bill de Blasio and President Donald Trump.

Diaz's eighth annual speech, delivered at JFK High School in Marble Hill, drew 89 rounds of applause during his 47-minute delivery, as he summed up a number of the borough's achievements, while it was light on new, lofty initiatives.

Diaz was short on new proposals, while adding to previously announced proposals, which had included installing a deck atop a 13-acre train yard in the South Bronx for redevelopment, and a \$50 million infusion of capital monies for the rebuilding of the Orchard Beach pavilion.

Diaz soon went on the offensive, attacking the city's response to the homelessness crisis, poor quality of life at city housing project, and attempts to rezone a large swath of Jerome Avenue with little input from its working poor residents.

On the upside, Diaz noted some of his own accomplishments, including the rollout of an online grocery program for food stamp recipients, and the introduction of an HIV/AIDS education and training program called "HIV and Me."

As in previous speeches, Diaz played his role as borough booster, mixing development with progress, stressing the creation of new jobs, new properties, and a renewed interest in living in the Bronx. He conceded that "life is certainly not perfect in our borough and our city."

He struck a less conciliatory tone towards the city, chiefly aiming at Mayor de Blasio, who is running for reelection.

A January poll by Quinnipiac University showed 35 percent of supporters approve of de Blasio's run for mayor compared to Diaz's five percent showing. And unlike last year's speech, where he hinted at a run for mayor, Diaz sidestepped the prospect this time, leaving it unclear whether he is not ready with citywide recognition or campaign cash to run this year.



Photo by Adeline Hanssen

**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT** Ruben Diaz Jr. (at podium) runs down the borough's list of accomplishments during his speech at JFK High School.

Waiting it out, however, could see him facing a large field of candidates for the 2021 election.

Still, Diaz didn't let de Blasio off the hook. Diaz criticized the mayor directly for ignoring the need for increased seats at city high schools. "We still await his response," Diaz said in his speech, noting he had personally written to him about the problem.

The borough president did praise the mayor's wife, First Lady Chirlane McCray, for her work in expanding services for the mentally ill.

Name dropping, a key tactic in Diaz's prior speeches, remained a hallmark in this speech. He once again praised his Albany ally, Governor Andrew Cuomo, who last month approved a \$108 million to developers of the Kingsbridge National Ice Center, a mega project that would cast Diaz as an influential politico should it advance. The project, which was approved by the Council in December 2013, has faced a number of setbacks in the years since then.

"Let's hurry up and let's get it done," Diaz said, earning a loud round of applause.

Diaz did not spare President



Photo by Adeline Hanssen

**PROTESTERS OUTSIDE JOHN F. Kennedy High School** before the Bronx Borough President's speech.

Trump, blasting his immigration policies that have instilled fears among undocumented immigrants.

"Forty percent of all Bronx residents were born in another country, and we embrace this diversity wholeheartedly," said Diaz. "Without our amazing immigrant population, we would not be what we are today."

Diaz was not spared criticism outside the school by union officials, claiming he's done little to convince construction firms to hire union members to do the work at a new afford-

able housing project affiliated with St. Barnabas Hospital. "We're hoping he supports us," John Cumberland, a union officer from the Local 580 Ironworkers union, said. "Saying and doing are two different things."

"Maybe he could sit down with these developers and try to help them create careers for these people instead of jobs that last until the building's open," Patrick Bonici, a member of Local 7 Tile, Marble and Terrazzo, said.

Diaz was unavailable to speak to the press shortly after his speech.





# BRONX BARRIERS:

## Low Voter Turnout

Part 2



*The Norwood News and WFUV continue their five-part series profiling different types of challenges impacting the Bronx.*

By ANTHONY ALI of



Voter turnout remains a challenge during New York City elections. In the Bronx, that problem is amplified, consistently lagging when it comes to voter turnout, according to figures. And with a mayoral election coming up later this year, it begs the question: Why aren't more Bronx voters heading to the polls?

### Multiple Challenges

It's a question city Councilman Ritchie Torres of the 15th Council District had posed back in 2014. His answer: low civic engagement, with Bronx residents simply shrugging at the process.

"A lack of teaching civics is a real void in public education," Torres said at a news conference in 2014 announcing funding to boost civic engagement among young people. "We have the lowest rates of voter participation and it's no accident that the Bronx has more challenges than the rest of the city."

Torres tied low civic engagement to low voter turnout, where a lack of valuing the process of resolution through participation has decreased attendance at the polls.

In the meantime, a consensus by those interviewed found their votes simply don't count even as they cast them.

"Bronx voters are apathetic," says Gail McLean, a long time resident of Kingsbridge Heights who votes regularly. "They're not really believing the system works for them."

Riverdale voters Rick and Danielle Bonaface agree. "There's definitely a lot of apathy," Danielle says. "Some people feel it's already decided or that it doesn't make a difference."

State Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz represents the 81st Assembly District, including Riverdale and Fieldston - two Bronx neighborhoods with high levels of civic engagement. He agrees with McLean to an extent.

"The fact that this year, the candidate who was elected President got almost three million fewer votes than the candidate



Photo by Anthony Ali

**ASSEMBLYMAN JEFFREY DINOWITZ** Talks to WFUV about the state of voter turnout in the Bronx.



File Photo

**NORWOOD RESIDENTS STAND** outside a polling site waiting to cast their ballots in the presidential race, which doubled as a shot in the arm for voter turnout in the Bronx. More than 358,000 Bronx residents voted in the 2016 presidential election, compared to more than 316,000 who voted in the 2012 presidential election.

that wasn't could potentially jade some people," says Dinowitz, referring to the presidential race between Donald Trump, a Republican, and Hillary Clinton, a Democrat. "But there is no reason people in the Bronx should feel that way more than people in areas with higher turnout."

Instead, he points to more systemic issues, such as voter registration, where same-day registration doesn't exist in New York. Instead, New Yorkers must register to vote at least 25 days before an election.

For New York primaries, that window

is even tighter. According to the New York Board of Elections, one must change party affiliation 25 days before the last general election. For example, the deadline to register with a party for this year's mayoral primaries in September was on Oct. 14, 2016 - nearly an entire year before that election.

These days, Torres thinks there's more to it than institutional barriers. "I think if you remove these barriers, I think you can improve voter participation at least at the margins," he says.

"But again, the laws are the same every year and the voter participation varies. There's something else at work. It's not only cynicism, but a sense that local politics are less important than national politics."

The numbers support his theory. Voter turnout during the mayoral and presidential elections in the Bronx stood at 19.8 percent and 52 percent respectively, well below the average when compared to the city's overall voter turnout, with 26 percent of voter turnout for the presidential election and 52 percent for the mayoral race, according to figures from the New York City and New York State boards of election.

### The Solution

Combating a mix of cynicism, laws, and a perceived lack of importance can be easier said than done, but there are solutions on the table.

One of them comes from Torres himself. He is the lead sponsor of a so-called "voter shaming" bill that would send eligible voters in New York voting history cards, showing when they voted in elections.

"The intent is to notify," says Torres. "If you confront people about their voting records, they're more likely to vote with greater frequency."

More conventional efforts to increase voter turnout are under way. The Vote Better NY campaign supported state legislation that would approve early voting, same-day registration, and voter-friendly ballots.

"With initiatives like this, you make the process more accessible, then that makes everyone's participation that much greater," says Crystal Joseph, the vice president of the League of Women Voters in New York City, one of the groups behind the campaign.

Though the bills are pending, Dinowitz says voters need to do their part in pressuring legislators to pass the bills. "We have many problems in the Bronx," he says. "And our ability to address those problems is related to how strong we are in terms of our votes."



# Immigration Attorneys Visit Norwood To Offer Advice to Foreign Born

By DEBORAH CRUZ

With fears of deportation engulfing immigrant communities, an information session addressing those concerns was organized, with a veteran immigration lawyer telling a Norwood crowd to get organized.

Sharron Williams, a former Norwood resident who now runs the California-based JINA Immigration Legal Services, led the Feb. 23 workshop at Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center. She reiterated the uptick in raids launched by agents from Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE), which have rattled communities comprised of the foreign-born.

For immigrants to get ahead of this, Williams ran through some of the many visas that the government offers, as well as some that might be discontinued given the tough immigration policies issued by the new Trump Administration.

"Staying inside and hiding out is not going to help. Research what your rights are, that is critical," said Williams. "Have the phone number of an immigration lawyer, make a family plan to take care of your children and the elderly. It is important to get everything in order. It could be chaos if you don't."

The veteran lawyer urged the audience to get themselves to an immigration lawyer to take their issues into their own hands. "It has gone from a time of hope to a time a terror," Williams said directly.

The workshop, sponsored by Councilman Andrew Cohen, attracted residents from the neighborhood, along

with a Spanish translator helping Williams.

"Know the status of your situation. It's important to know if you've been ordered deported because if you're walking around with an outstanding order of deportation, then you are immediately removable," Williams said sharply. "Too many people don't know their status and are scared. When they get the notice of deportation, the best thing for them is to go to court."

The meeting coincided with a 52nd Precinct Community Council meeting, which hosted immigration attorneys from the Bronx District Attorney's Office. Miriam Bell-Blair, an assistant district attorney and head of the DA's Immigration Affairs Unit, encouraged attendees to report crimes regardless of status. "We're not the federal government," said Bell-Blair. "And we do not call ICE to say, 'This person lives on (East 204th Street), can you pick them up?'"

Keeping with a hardline pro-immigration policy pushed by Mayor Bill de Blasio, a major critic of President Donald Trump's immigration policy, the NYPD emphasized that it is not colluding with ICE agents in rounding up illegal immigrations.

"We are the police, we are not immigration, we are not ICE, we are not border patrol," said Det. June Cortez, with the precinct's Community Affairs Unit. "We do not deport people. We want them to come forward to make a report and not be scared, even if you're a victim of a crime. Please step forward."

*Additional reporting by David Cruz*



Photo by Deborah Cruz

A SPANISH INTERPRETER (r) works with veteran immigration attorney Sharron Williams at a know your rights information session.

# Congressman Espaillat Opens Bronx Office



Photo by Miriam Quinones/Caption by Christine Owusu-Ampaw

**CONGRESSMAN ADRIANO ESPAILLAT** (r) talks with a guest at an open house for his new office at 2530 Grand Concourse in Fordham on Feb. 22. Espaillat, who won the seat in the 13th Congressional District, follows through on a campaign promise to build an office within the Bronx portion of the district. Voters say the congressional district previously had little representation in the Bronx. The office number is (718) 450-8241.

# Exhibiting Dominican Pride



Photo by Miriam Quinones/Caption by Christine Owusu-Ampaw

**MILLY SOSA** AND her dance partner, Genual, show off some moves in a Dominican Heritage Month Celebration, which was held by Congressman José E. Serrano and Congressman Adriano Espaillat on Feb. 21 at Lehman College in the Music Building. This event included local entertainment and the honor for community leaders who work with Diaspora in the Bronx.



# Cuomo: Keep Affordable Care Act

By ADELINE HANSSEN

At a rally with shades of presidential ambitions, Governor Andrew Cuomo declared that Democrats are not going to let Republicans win when it comes to doing away with the Affordable Care Act.

Cuomo, rumored to make a run for the White House in 2020, addressed the powerful 1199 SEIU at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in Pelham Parkway/Morris Park on Feb. 22, rallying rank and file union members.

He used his platform to criticize the Republicans' position, taking a definitive stance on health care policy. According to Cuomo, New York faces a \$3.7 billion loss to the Medicaid program should the elimination of ACA take shape. This would leave three million New Yorkers without health insurance, according to Cuomo. He asserts that action must be taken to preserve the current healthcare system.

"We say that healthcare is a human right and it doesn't depend on whether you're rich or whether you're poor or where you live," said Cuomo at the rally.

Cuomo's talking points weren't all about healthcare. Transitioning to other federal issues that could hurt New York, Cuomo shifted to education, adding the state is battling for more funds for public education. "Why?" asked Cuomo. "Because there are too many failing schools out there. Especially in poorer urban communities."

Cuomo emphasized the division between households earning below and households earning above \$125,000 a year. According to Cuomo, those making more than \$125,000 do not understand the need for public education and universal healthcare, which low income individuals and families view as a necessity.

Cuomo referenced his own foreign heritage when addressing the New York immigration population. He discussed their fear of deportation and their fear of being separated from their families. "The other side doesn't see this. They don't come from a community that has large immigrant populations, but we do," Cuomo said.

Cuomo also addressed Democrats in Congress directly, urging them to fight back against Republican policy. According to him, this is what Republicans have done during democratic presidencies, and what democrats should now imitate. "It's time to get principal and remember who you are; and who sent you there; and who you represent..." he said.

"While they're in Washington trying to tear down what we built, we're going to build it stronger in New York," he said.

It wasn't hard for some to catch on to Cuomo's aspirations for the White House. At the beginning of the rally, a supporter shouted, "Cuomo for President."

"Don't be starting trouble now," said Cuomo with a smile.

## Celebrating Black History Month



Photo courtesy Office of Senator Gustavo Rivera

**SENATOR GUSTAVO RIVERA (I)** poses with Mouhamed Kaba, an organizer from the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, who received a proclamation during a Black History Month celebration at St. Simon Stock School in Fordham Heights on Feb. 25. The weekend event acknowledged the contributions immigrant communities have made to the Bronx. Congressman Jose Serrano, representing a large swath of the South Bronx, co-sponsored the event.

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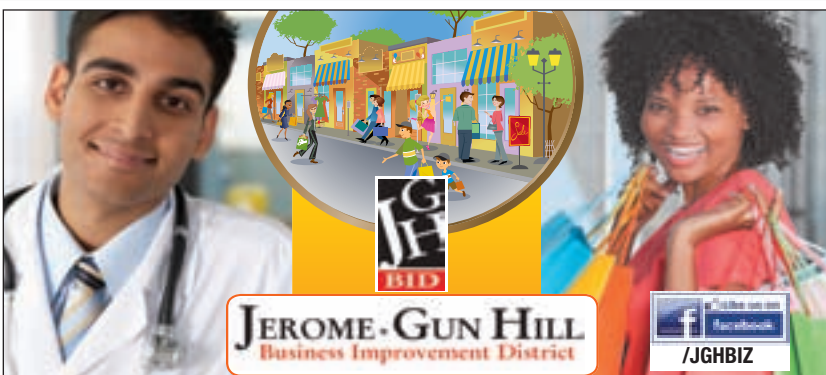
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Photo by Miriam Quinones

**GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO** pumps up members of 1199 SEIU at a rally urging the federal government to keep the Affordable Care Act.



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### SAVE THE DATE - RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Bedford Park Congregational Church, located at 201st Street and Bainbridge Avenue, will hold the following 2017 Easter services:

**Ash Wednesday, March 1, 7:30 p.m.**

**Palm Sunday, April 9, 11 a.m.**

**Maundy Thursday, Thursday April 13, 7:30 p.m.**

**Good Friday, Friday, April 14, 11 a.m.**

**Easter, Sunday April 16, 11 a.m.**

All are welcome to join us in worship. For more information, call (718) 733-3199.

### HELP WANTED

Apply now to work as a full-time community development professional, community organizer or planner for the Jerome-Gun Hill Business Improvement District, under the Neighborhood 360° program. Applications are due March 12. For more information, and to apply, go to [www.nyc.gov/360fellows](http://www.nyc.gov/360fellows).

### FOR SALE

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## NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

### Coat Giveaway

A coat giveaway will take place on March 4 beginning noon at the corner of East 204th Street and Decatur Avenue. For more information, call Sgt. Chaplain Sandra Pabon at (212) 729-9468.

### Health Screenings

Free HIV/HEP C testing and mammogram screenings will be offered on March 18 from 1:30 to 5 p.m. at the Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood, 2975 Bainbridge Ave. For more information, call Br. Talibudeen at (718) 208-5996 or Umm Bashirah at (917) 636-0346.

### "Oscars" for Local Libraries

Nominations for best library based on exceptional service can be submitted at [www.nyclibraryawards.org](http://www.nyclibraryawards.org), or in person at any local library

through March 13. Five libraries will be chosen for a \$20,000 prize, and another five will receive \$10,000.

### Snow Laborers Sought

NYC seeks emergency snow laborers to help remove snow and ice from bus stops, step streets, and other locations throughout the city this winter. Interested applicants must be at least 18, eligible to work in the USA and capable of performing heavy physical labor. Registration is at the DOT garage, Bronx Yard, Mosholu Avenue and Broadway (Van Cortlandt Park), weekdays from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Bring two small photos (1-1/2" square), original and copy of two forms of ID, and SS card or Tax ID number. Hourly salary is \$15; and \$22.50 after 40 hours are worked in a week.

### Free NYS Tax Filing Assistance

The NYS Tax Department is hosting free online tax return filing for individuals or families in the Bronx with Federal adjusted incomes of \$64,000 or less. Online assistance is offered from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Eastchester Library (1385 E. Gun Hill Rd.) on select Wednesdays and at the Melrose Library (910 Morris Ave.) on select Fridays. For more information and a detailed schedule, visit [www.tax.ny.gov](http://www.tax.ny.gov).

### Free Tax Filing Service

Free income tax preparation for qualifying residents is available at University Neighborhood Housing Program (UNHP) on select Wednesdays and Saturdays through April 18 by appointment only. Tax preparers can also review your credit report, provide financial

advice, and freeze your rent. Applicants must have all tax documents available before meeting with tax preparer. To learn the qualifications and to schedule an appointment, call (718) 933-2539 or [www.unhp.org](http://www.unhp.org).

### Free Tax Service at MMCC

Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, 3450 DeKalb Ave., offers free tax preparation services for families with an income of \$34,000 and under and individuals with income \$30,000 and under, Tuesdays through Fridays (call for times). For more information and details regarding required forms, and to make an appointment, call (718) 882-4000 ext. 209.

### Free Tax Service

Free tax services for individuals earning less than

\$54,000 are available at Councilman Ritchie Torres' office, 573 E. Fordham Rd., on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from noon to 7 p.m., and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Appointments are required. To schedule an appointment, call (718) 842-8100.

### After the Arrest Workshop

The Bronx District Attorney's Office, 198 E. 161st St. (3rd floor Litigation Training Room), will host a free workshop offering an overview of the arrest-to-arraignment process in Criminal Court on March 29 from 5:45 to 8 p.m., including an understanding of Central Booking and the Complaint Room. For more information, call (718) 590-2272 or to RSVP, call Robert Barnes at (718) 838-7461 or email [barnesro@bronxda.nyc.gov](mailto:barnesro@bronxda.nyc.gov).

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# Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

## EDITOR'S PICK

### Flea Market

A giant flea market sponsored by the Bedford Mosholu Community Association will be held at Saint Mary's Orthodox Church of India (corner of Bedford Park Boulevard and Decatur Avenue) on March 4 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Offered will be a variety of new and used items in addition to homemade cakes and cookies, raffle, and refreshments. For more information, call (718) 367-2230.

### Onstage

The NY Botanical Garden presents **Magical Thailand - A Journey With the Somapa Thai Dance Company**, March 4 and 5 at 1 and 3 p.m. in Ross Hall. For more information, call (718) 817-8700.

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents **Chamber Music Concert**, featuring the Celia Cruz Bronx High School of Music's Chamber Orchestra and more, March 11 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org).

Lehman College's Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents the following performances: **Five Irish Tenors**, presenting a Salute to Ireland, March 5 at 4 p.m. (tickets: \$25 to \$45); **The Habana Boys**, featuring four tenors performing arias and popular songs, March 11 at 8 p.m. (tickets: \$25 to \$40); and **The Russian National Ballet**, performing "Romeo & Juliet," and "Carmen," March 12 at 4 p.m. (tickets: \$25 to \$45) (\$75/all VIP tickets, and \$10/under 12); and **Forever Freestyle 11**, featuring a variety of performers, March

4 at 8 p.m. (tickets: \$55 to \$65; \$100/VIP). VIP tickets include pre-concert wine and hors d'oeuvres reception and the best seats in the house. For more information and to RSVP, call (718) 960-8833.

### Events

A **Veterans Suicide Prevention Informational Evening** will take place on March 9 at Christ Church Riverdale, 5030 Henry Hudson Parkway at 6:30 p.m. A light kosher meal will be served. RSVP is required. For more information and to RSVP, email Melanie Scott at [rivveto@outlook.com](mailto:rivveto@outlook.com).

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a **corned beef and cabbage dinner** at St. Philip Neri, 3025 Grand Concourse on March 12 at 1 p.m. Monsignor O'Brien will be the guest of honor and music will be provided by Sean Moloney. For more information, call (718) 733-3200.

The Bronx Arts Ensemble presents a free **Jazz Workshop for Young Musicians** with Jay Hoggard, March 3 at 10 a.m. followed by an 11:30 a.m.



Photo courtesy Joshua Bright/Wave Hill

**WAVE HILL WILL** feature a jazz performance by Ray Vega on March 5 (check out details under Events).

**concert** with the Jay Hoggard Quartet performing ballads, bop, and blues, at Bronx Community College's Gould Auditorium, 2155 University Ave. For more information, call (718) 601-7399 or visit <http://bronxartsensemble.org>.

The Bronx Federation of Teachers, 2500 Halsey St., will host a **college fair**, March 31 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for high school students and counselors, featuring college prep workshops, information on admissions, financial aid, exams, and more. Schools are required to complete an online group registration form by March 24 at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/bronx-uft-college-fair-tickets-31665059044> (password: UFT). For more information, call (866) 509-5921 or (914) 943-9345 (cell).

The Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood, 2975 Bainbridge Ave., presents **National Women's History Month**, March 18 from 1:30 to 5 p.m. Events include free HIV/HEP C testing, guest speakers, and a scanvan mobile for mammogram testing for women ages 40 and older who have not had a mammogram in the past year. Free hot meals will be distributed. For more information, call (718) 208-5996 or (917) 636-0346.

**Wave Hill**, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: A Living Wall, to make paper collages using colors, then participate in a green wall group installation project, March 4 and 5; and Amour for Armor, to make armor from up-cycled materials and colored aluminum foil, March 11 and 12; both in the WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also scheduled is **Concert: Ray Vega Latin Jazz Quintet**, March 5 at 2 p.m. in the WH House (\$28; \$22/member; \$15/ages 8 to 18; \$12/child member; info: ext. 251). 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.

information, call (718) 817-8700.

The Bronx Documentary Center, 614 Courtlandt Ave. at 151st Street, presents **Whose Streets? Our Streets!**, a photo exhibit through March 5, Thursdays and Fridays from 3 to 7 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m., featuring New York events from 1980 to 2000. For more information, call (718) 993-3512.

### Library Events

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents the following for children: **Hands-On Projects at 4 p.m.:** (ages 7 to 12; preregistration required), Handprint Duck Making, March 2; Baby Chick and Nest Craft Making, March 9; and Shape Bird Making, March 16. Adults can attend: **film documentary**: "How Sweet the Sound: The Blind Boys of Alabama," about a gospel quartet, March 4 at 2:30 p.m.; and **Microsoft Word 2010 for Beginners**: March 3 at 2 p.m. 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 adults: **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, March 3 and 19; **Preschool Story Time and Craft at 11:15 a.m.:** (ages 3 to 5), featuring books, puppetry, dramatics, crafts and flannel boards, March 2, 9 and 16; and **Homework Desk Help at 3 p.m.:** (ages 5 to 12), March 6, 8, 13 and 15. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

### Public Service Announcement

**Daylight Saving Time** begins Sunday, March 12 at 2 a.m. Turn clocks forward one hour.

**NOTE:** Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to [norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org](mailto:norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org), and should be received by March 6 for the next publication date of March 16.



File Photo

**SUPPORT THE BEDFORD** Mosholu Community Association by stopping by its annual flea market on March 4 (see Editor's Pick for more details).

### Exhibits

The NY Botanical Garden presents **The Orchid Show**, through April 9, at the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory. For more



## The Pressure to Downzone

(continued from page 1)

ment by changing current zoning distinctions. Mosholu Parkway, the tree-lined roadway that divides Norwood and Bedford Park, presently holds R5, R5B, R6B, R7B, and R8 zoning distinctions, allowing buildings to go as high as 10 stories on side streets and upwards to 17 stories on main roads. Rivieccio has lobbied the city to mandate construction of any new buildings to conform to an R5 zoning distinction, or buildings that only go as high as four stories, keeping the look of the neighborhoods intact.

With Bedford Park and Norwood piquing the interests of developers, residents have sought to maintain its overall character by limiting the height. In some cases, as community activist Samelys Lopez sees it, the community should “make a concerted effort to protect the character of our neighborhoods and should consider cataloging buildings and structures in our community that should be granted historic preservation landmark status to ensure that they will not be displaced by market forces.”

So far, interest in the neighborhoods has increased, with developers

working their way into Bedford Park’s intricate network of streets. Along East 202nd Street near Briggs Avenue, for instance, developer Peter Fine purchased a two-story property with interest in building a much taller building within a narrow street. The news prompted residents to convince Community Board 7 to hire a consultant to conduct a study of the neighborhood and nearby Kingsbridge Heights, hoping a formal report delivered to DCP can convince them to lower the zoning codes.

### Homes at Stake

An analysis by the *Norwood News* found there to be 233 two- to three-story homes that occupy land on or around Mosholu Parkway, between East Gun Hill Road and Webster Avenue, and several side streets that include East 201st Street, Perry Avenue, Bainbridge Avenue, and Decatur Avenue on each side of Mosholu Parkway.

East 201st Street, west of Mosholu Parkway, stands as the most suburban-esque portion of Bedford Park, given its line of two- to three-story homes that occupy the neighborhood. That portion, with pockets of the

neighborhood deemed an R7B and R8 zoning district, which allow for seven- to 17-story buildings, could see the most drastic changes should current zoning remain. Proponents of downzoning fear developers will offer homeowners hefty buyouts to vacate the property, clearing developers to build taller apartment buildings, thus altering the look of the neighborhood and congesting it.

### Mayor’s Town Hall

A week after the committee meeting, Community Board 7 took their message to Mayor Bill de Blasio at a town hall meeting organized by Councilman Andrew Cohen. Adaline Walker-Santiago, the Board’s chair, pressed upon de Blasio to endorse the downzoning.

“Our board is like Candy Land to the developers,” Walker-Santiago told the mayor. “Every time we have a meeting, once a month in Land Use [Committee], it’s filled with developers coming in telling us what plans they’re taking.”

De Blasio’s response offered little in the way of whether he would back the proposal come next year. Sidestep-

ping a response specific to the downzoning question, de Blasio focused instead on development that would place schools in newly built developments. “Sometimes that works,” de Blasio said. “Right across from City Hall, there’s a big tall skyscraper with a school in it.”

Whether he backs the proposal or not, de Blasio needs to first win reelection this year should he back the proposal.

So does Cohen, whose district covers Norwood and Bedford Park. Though he’s left it up to residents to determine the neighborhoods’ future, Cohen would be the deciding factor should the downzoning proposal advance to the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) since Council Members usually honor the position of its local members.

Through a spokesperson, Cohen remained passionate about preserving the eclectic nature of streets surrounding Mosholu Parkway, though he didn’t elaborate further.

*Additional reporting by Wendy Joan Biddlecombe. Research by Adeline Hanssen.*

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