



NORWOOD NEWS

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**INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:
CHARACTER OF JGH-BID | PG. 4**



**SEE PICTURES: SPRING EGG HUNT
AT OVAL PARK | PG. 8**

HOW BIG DO YOU WANT YOUR BUILDING?

CB7 preliminary zoning study pushes for smaller residences



PAULA CAPLAN (R), urban planner hired by Community Board 7, briefs audience members on preliminary findings and suggestions to a study that looks to rezone parts of Bedford Park and Kingsbridge Heights.

By DAVID CRUZ

For residents attending a presentation on the feasibility of downzoning two neighborhoods in the northwest Bronx, tech-heavy jargon such as “Floor Area Ratio,” “compliance,” and “sky exposure plane” admittedly caused confusion.

“Is this too complicating?” asked Paula Caplan, an independent urban planner hired

by Community Board 7 to study the possibility of downzoning the two neighborhoods and present her ideas to the city.

Residents answered “no,” with some shrugging their shoulders. A handful responded “yes.”

Such is the subject of zoning, a topic that, if presented dryly, can confound and perplex the general public, leading many adrift. But zoning

serves as a blueprint for the size and type of building, posing serious implications to the overall look of a neighborhood and how many people it can accommodate. Zoning amendments, or codes on how wide and tall buildings can be in given neighborhoods, blanket the five boroughs.

So the question, when stripped of its arcane phrases is simple: How tall do you want buildings in your neighbor-

hood to be? Do you want more high-rises? Low-rises? Do you want to see more apartment buildings? More stores?

“All I could say in plain English is we do not want any more buildings,” Lynette Arroyo, a Community Board 7 member and Kingsbridge Heights resident, who prefers to see more commercial establishments, said.

The rest of the audience
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3400 Reservoir Oval East
Bronx, New York 10467
Phone: 718 324 4998
Fax: 718 324 2917
E-mail: norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org
Web.: www.norwoodnews.org

Publisher

Mosholu Preservation Corporation

Executive Director of MPC

Melissa Cebollero

Editor-in-Chief, Norwood News

David Cruz, dcruz@norwoodnews.org

Accounts Receivable

Dawn McEvoy

Proofreader

Judy Noy

Regular Contributors

David Greene, Adi Talwar

Contributors

Miriam Quinones, Deborah Cruz,
Wendy Joan Biddlecombe

Interns

Christine Owusu-Ampaw, Dylan Croll,
Adeline Hanssen

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EDITORIAL

Bring Zoning Down to the Essentials, and More Will Come

Have you ever had a conversation on what zoning is as it relates to New York City? Unless one is an urban planner, I doubt many can give a comprehensive version of the power behind zoning.

In a nutshell, zoning governs how neighborhoods look across the city using a set of regulations or zoning codes that tell developers what's allowed to be built in a neighborhood. Understanding the nitty gritty aspects of zoning poses major hurdles for anyone looking to gain control of their neighborhood's fate, and it was pretty evident at a special Community Board 7 Land Use/Zoning and Housing Committee meeting on April 19 when its presenter, Paula Caplan, paused to determine whether anyone understood her presentation. Some flat out said "no." Others had questions. One or two out of several dozen guests said "yes."

The meeting focused on the feasibility of downzoning parts of Bedford Park and Kingsbridge Heights, with the former under siege by developers looking to cramp tiny Bedford Park streets with even more buildings. If one looks back on their history, many will see that Bedford Park was not intended to be a mini-metropolis, but a "planned suburban community for middle-class families developed in the 1880s after the model of the renowned London suburb of the same name," according to a write-up by the New York Landmarks Conservancy. For anyone who's traveled up and down those streets, it's unconscionable to add more housing to congest the neighborhood.

Kingsbridge Heights is a different story. Many suspect the neighborhood will be the next hot commodity once the Kingsbridge National Ice Center is built (still holding our breath on that one). Those beautiful three-story detached homes falling within the zon-



File Photo

KINGSBRIDGE HEIGHTS COULD be next in line when it comes to overdevelopment, due largely to the impending Kingsbridge National Ice Center at the Kingsbridge Armory (background) seen from Davidson Avenue.

ing study could be compromised, with developers offering buyouts to homeowners and erecting enormous structures.

The Department of City Planning continues to argue that downzoning a portion of Bedford Park would simply put the majority of the buildings, "out of zoning," a distinction that ultimately means nothing. No penalties are incurred for a building that was once zoned for a particular size and type of building.

Is any of this confusing? It can be. And we suspect it's one reason why no one shows up to these meetings that are vastly important.

The big question when it comes to zoning is: how does one learn about this? City Planning does have a robust website that breaks down all kinds of zoning that serves as the development bible, but understanding the terminology can take some time. And it's unclear whether the majority of New Yorkers are prepared for the many headaches that come with grasping the minutiae.

Well, maybe not. Though the Com-

munity Board 7 meeting was well publicized, only familiar stakeholders were on hand to hear the presentation. And that's a shame. Elected officials should make it a greater priority to bolster these meetings, as they can help solicit fresh input. While Councilman Andrew Cohen was indeed there, we didn't see Councilman Fernando Cabrera or a representative come to the meeting. That's disappointing.

But then again, would it matter if more residents are on hand for a zoning meeting? Not unless they're fully aware of the power behind it.

So perhaps boiling it down to the essentials is key to galvanizing residents to take part in the process. And it starts with a question: How big or small do you want your building to be and what type of building do you prefer? Perhaps peeling off the intimidating layers of zoning, and re-introducing it as a "What's in it for me" argument, can help encourage fresh faces to attend these meetings where it seems everyone is in some echo chamber.

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 committee meetings are held on the following dates at the board office, 229 E. 204th St., at 6:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted: Executive Committee meets on May 2; Public Safety & Quality of Life Committee meets on May 4; Education, Youth & Libraries meets on May 4 at 7:30 p.m.; Environment & Sanitation Committee meets on May 9; Health & Hospitals Committee meets on May 9 at 7:30 p.m.; Senior Services Committee meets on May 10 at 5:30 p.m.; and Parks and Recreation Committee meets on May 10; For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

The **BEFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION** will meet on Wednesday, May 3 at 8 p.m. at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. So., Apt. B1. For more information, email bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.

The **52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** will hold its monthly meeting at Serviam Gardens, 321 E. 198th St., on April 27th from 7 to 9 p.m. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.

Where's the Mail Getting Stolen in the NW Bronx?

By DAVID CRUZ

A 16-year-old boy was placed in cuffs on April 15 for allegedly stealing mail by feeding a glue-covered rope into a mailbox at 2549 Jerome Ave., a scheme commonly known by the NYPD as mailbox fishing.

Mailbox fishing continues to roil the NYPD, with at least several cases reported twice a week. In every case, thieves fish out mail filled with personal checks, money orders or gift cards, out of mailboxes, hurting the pocketbooks of victims sending a monetary gift or trying to pay rent. The latter has resulted in victims being sent to Housing Court as landlords think the victim is skipping rent payment.

The *Norwood News* obtained data from the NYPD showing where mailbox fishing incidents have occurred within the 52nd Precinct, covering Norwood, Bedford Park, Kingsbridge Heights, Fordham, and University from the beginning of 2016 until now. Police recommend avoiding mailboxes that have been regular targets.

Many of the reported thefts have happened at night or in areas where foot traffic is scarce. Several hotspots include West Fordham Road and Jerome Avenue, east Kingsbridge Road and Grand Concourse, and 1-7 E. Fordham Rd. where four or more mailbox fishing incidents have occurred. In four instances, fishers have also targeted the mailbox in front of the Mosholu Post Office at 3464 Jerome Ave., within the commercial corridor of the Jerome-Gun Hill Business Improvement District in Norwood.

Residents and employees relied on the post office as the safest way to drop off mail.

"I wouldn't use the boxes from outside, except in my building and the post office," Yvonne Foulks, a resident at nearby Tracey Towers, said. "Come here, you're better off."

Leo Trevino, an employee of Montefiore Health System, also drops off mail at the post office exclusively, never bothering to slip in mail inside an outdoor box. "I've always thought, 'Hey, anyone can come at night do anything and take whatever is in there,'" Trevino, who hadn't heard about the scheme until the *Norwood News* told him, said.

"I feel a lot safer dropping my mail off at the post office," Susan Diaz, another frequent visitor of the post office, said.

The United States Postal Service

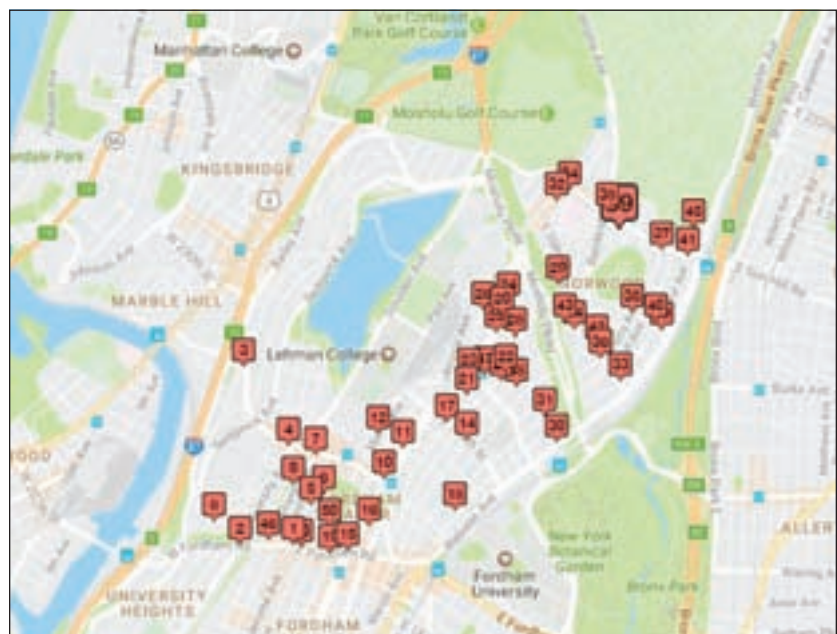
has so far replaced some of the common swing door mailboxes with a slit cover mailbox, making it tougher for thieves to easily fish out mail. The *Norwood News* had asked for locations where new slit-cover collection boxes can be found within Norwood's 10467 zip code, but were denied answers.

Xavier Hernandez, a spokesperson for USPS, said postal officials "regularly monitor all collection boxes to ensure the safety of the mail for the public." He added, "When evidence suggests that a collection box may be vulnerable to crime, that box may be removed or modified to protect our customers."

Meantime, police recommend residents take their mail straight to the post office or hand it to mail carrier.

"If we stop leaving our mail inside these post boxes, they're gonna fish and come up with nothing," Detective June Cortez, with the 52nd Precinct's Community Affairs Unit, recently told an audience at the Community Board 7 general board meeting.

Editor's Note: An interactive map showing the locations of which mailboxes were the target of thieves



Map developed by BatchGeo

THIS INTERACTIVE MAP features 50 locations where mailbox theft has occurred. An interactive map can be found at www.norwoodnews.org.

can be found at www.norwoodnews.org. The *Norwood News* has put in a request through the Freedom of Information Act for the locations of mailboxes with the new slit covers. Three slit-cover mailboxes in the local area

that we know of are located at the southeast corner of Jerome Avenue and Gun Hill Road, corner of East 207th Street and Perry Avenue, and the corner of 207th Street and Decatur Avenue.

WHERE MAILBOX THEFT HAS OCCURRED

The NYPD provided a list of 50 locations along with number of incidents where mailboxes have been tampered with from early 2016 until mid-April this year.



West Fordham Road and Jerome Avenue (4)	East 205th Street and Villa Avenue (1)
West Fordham and University Avenue (2)	2974 Valentine Avenue (1)
West Kingsbridge Road and Heath Avenue (1)	East 204th Street and Valentine Avenue (1)
West Kingsbridge Road and University Avenue (1)	100 East Mosholu Parkway North (1)
2549 Jerome Avenue (2)	East 201st Street and Webster Avenue (1)
West 192nd Street and Jerome Avenue (1)	East 201st Street and Marion Avenue (1)
44 West Kingsbridge Road (1)	3464 Jerome Avenue (4)
2400 Webb Avenue (1)	East 204th Street and Decatur Avenue (3)
2543A Grand Avenue (1)	East Gun Hill Road and Jerome Avenue (3)
East Kingsbridge Road and Grand Concourse (7)	East 207th Street and Perry Avenue (3)
East 196th Street and Grand Concourse (4)	East 204th Street and Perry Avenue (2)
East 196th Street and Morris Avenue (4)	East Gun Hill Road and Perry Avenue (3)
1-7 East Fordham Road (5)	East Gun Hill Road and Bainbridge Avenue (2)
East 198th Street and Bainbridge Avenue (2)	200 East Gun Hill Road (1)
East Fordham Road and Grand Concourse (2)	East 207th Street and Decatur Avenue (1)
2558 Grand Concourse (1)	East Gun Hill Road and Decatur Avenue (1)
East 198th Street and Valentine Avenue (1)	East 205th Street and Bainbridge Avenue (1)
2679 Decatur Avenue (1)	East 206th and Mosholu Parkway (1)
Creston Avenue and East Fordham Road (1)	3155 Rochambeau Avenue (1)
East 205th Street and Grand Concourse (7)	3574 Decatur Avenue (1)
East 199th Street and Grand Concourse (3)	49 West Fordham Road (1)
East 201st Street and Valentine Avenue (2)	2950 Grand Concourse (1)
Grand Concourse and Bedford Park Boulevard (2)	2980 Briggs Avenue (1)
East 206th Street and Grand Concourse (2)	3235 Parkside Avenue (1)
East 204th Street and Grand Concourse (1)	50 East 191st Street (1)

With the recent closings of several popular stores in Norwood, we asked residents what types of stores the community needs.



I think the neighborhood could use a gym and some more clothing stores. I just moved out here, maybe a movie rental store.

Millie Sanchez
Norwood



Of course I noticed the stores closing. The butcher shop is not the same as they used to be. I don't think the quality of the products is there because they no longer have the clientele of the community, so there's not as much traffic to the store. So there's less business. We could use another bar. I'd also like to see an authentic deli. There's only one now by the D train, and there used to be a bunch of them. There are bodegas on every block, but not a real deli. They're just not around here anymore. Maybe a barbershop.

Kevin Jones
Norwood



I know Popeye's closed a few months ago and the nearest one now is on Jerome Avenue. There are only Chinese restaurants and Spanish restaurants, so I think we need more variety. Maybe an Applebee's or another chain restaurant.

Joel Ferrer
Norwood



I'm not really from the area, but I'd like to see more diverse restaurants. I see a lot of grocery stores and the supermarket a few blocks up. So they should have more restaurants. I don't know if there's a library around here, but that would be really nice.

Mardeen Cortorreal
Fordham



I've noticed a lot of closings here on Jerome [Avenue]; I imagine it's the high rent. It shouldn't be that expensive, but there is a lot of business here. How about that ice rink? A basketball court within walking distance would be nice, there's none in Van Cortlandt Park. The school doesn't even have one; you have to go across East 205th Street. Maybe some more name brand clothing stores, like the stores along Pelham Parkway. Maybe a thrift shop. We have plenty of drugstores and bodegas.

Avery Lopez
Norwood

NYBG

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Also, easy to reach by the 2 Train to Allerton Avenue

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN



A Merger at The COVE, Courtesy of DREAM!

By ADELINE HANSSEN

Covered in student artwork and colorful murals, a renovated basement located between Knox and Gates Places in Norwood serves as the center for Community Organized with a Vision of Excellence (COVE), a local nonprofit that will be home to Dare to Revitalize Education through Arts and Mediation (DREAM!) when the two nonprofits merge this summer.

"The combination just makes us a more powerful unit," said Aisha Norris, who doubles as co-founder of DREAM! and program director of The COVE.

The merger of the two nonprofits is somewhat of a no-brainer. The COVE was founded by the Knox Gates Neighborhood Association (KGNA) and a group of local teens in 1988 to keep teens out of trouble. Today, The COVE's daily operations are managed by the DREAM! staff. The COVE provides after-school and summer programs for teens, including programs in the media and visual arts, video production, web design and health and wellness classes. On Saturdays, The COVE provides martial arts and cosmetology classes.

"It's basically a neighborhood-based program that serves the young people



Photo by Adeline Hanssen

AISHA NORRIS (L), co-founder of DREAM! gives a thumbs up alongside fellow DREAM! co-founder and COVE member Lyn Pyle.

here in Knox-Gates," said Lyn Pyle, co-founder of DREAM! and member of The COVE's and the KGNA's boards of directors. Pyle plans to maintain The COVE's strong connection to the neighborhood, which plays a vital role there, she says.

From a financial standpoint, the acquisition of the COVE by DREAM! gives it an advantage should it seek more foundation grants. DREAM! is the bigger operation of the two, serv-

ing 12 schools across the Bronx by leading workshops in creativity, confidence and mediation. According to Norris, the "fund-raising landscape" has changed significantly over the years, and the absorption could help keep The COVE afloat.

"Most grants have a cap. They have a minimum that the organization has to be, for lack of a better word, worth," said Norris. "There are a lot of foundations who are no

longer funding effective, small programs."

According to Pyle, both nonprofits will benefit from the acquisition, adding, "The teaching-artists that work at The COVE also work at DREAM!, so everything has already been interconnected."

Norris and Pyle plan for DREAM! to adapt successful pilot programs first introduced by the COVE. These include young men's and women's support groups, which offer a place for teens to have frank conversations about issues like drug abuse, peer pressure and family life.

The COVE will benefit from DREAM! resources, including a staff of teaching artists, a board of directors, access to more equipment like digital cameras and editing software, more internships and a larger budget. With this larger budget, Norris and Pyle hope to offer larger stipends to The COVE participants, dubbed "youth producers." Currently, they receive a \$60 weekly stipend as an incentive for their involvement and creative work in The COVE programs.

The merger will be finalized in July.

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Comments Sought For Softened Penalties at Parks

The city Department of Parks wants comments from park goers over a plan to change or reduce penalties for misdemeanor offenses.

Aligning with the city's Criminal Justice Reform Act, the proposed rules are intended to keep people from entering the system for low-level infractions and getting a criminal record as a result. Some misdemeanors that could be brought down to violations include entering the park after closing, disobeying signs, or riding a bike where not permitted. "Our parks should be fair and just spaces," said NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver. "These updated rules will keep our parks safe, while also ensuring that New Yorkers' futures are not detrimentally affected by minor lapses in judgment. We welcome the public to share their feedback during the comment period."

Those wishing to have their comment put on the record can email rules@parks.nyc.gov. A hearing on the proposed rules will be held Monday, May 22 at 10 a.m. at the Chelsea Recreation Center, 430 W. 25th St. in Manhattan.

--David Cruz

Oval Park May Get Grant From Walt Disney Co.

Your votes are needed for Williamsbridge Oval Park to secure a \$20,000 from the Happiest Place on Earth.

The park, at the epicenter of Norwood, is competing with two other parks for the funds as part of the Meet Me at the Park, an initiative between the Walt Disney Company and the National Recreation and Park Association. The funds would go directly to Oval Park's Summer Sports Experience initiative, where kids learn unique sports skills by trained staffers.

The public can vote for this project by texting WBOVAL to 35350.

See *Neighborhood Notes* on page 13.

--David Cruz



Photo by Christine Owusu-Ampaw

SKATERS ARE LEFT to ride on the walkway in Williamsbridge Oval Park. Getting a skate park in the Oval is an endeavor over a decade in the making.

Nearly Three Years, Oval Skate Park Project Yet to Start

By DYLAN CROLL
and DAVID CRUZ

When it comes to a skate park project that hasn't begun, the progress, or lack thereof, particularly miffs the Norwood Council Member who earmarked funds to build it more than three years ago.

"If I could build it myself, I would," Councilman Andrew Cohen, who allocated \$750,000 in capital funds to the New York City Department of Parks to build the skate park, told the *Norwood News*.

The proposal to build the skate park was hailed by neighborhood skaters who've longed for an appropriate space to perfect their skating skills. Indeed, a vision for the skate park stretches back to 2004, where clergy joined forces with neighborhood kids to lobby Community Board 7 for a skate park. A dog run was ultimately preferred, though 10 years later, local Community Board 7 came around and supported a skate park.

Save for Cohen's allocation, nothing's been built, leaving enthusiastic young skateboarders with no designated space for their activity and underscoring the lumbering and complex process of capital projects that take years to see through.

Richard Carrara, 18, was one of the first teenagers to initially get involved with the project and meet with the board. He has been skating at Oval Park since he was nine and offered input with the skate park's initial design.

Carrara, who's competed abroad

and won several competitions in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, is frustrated that he often has to commute to parks outside the Bronx to practice. "I personally feel like if it was another borough, the park would have been done a very long time ago," Carrara said.

The holdup, it seems, boils down to contractors who've pulled out of the project during the bidding stage, with two contractors failing to adhere to procurement guidelines. This once again puts the project back to the beginning of step 3 of 4 in the capital project process. In the case of the skate park, the Department of Parks has given a winning contractor until August to accept the terms of the contract. If they withdraw, the process starts all over again.

When asked about the project, Cohen also expressed displeasure with its drawn out pace saying, "It was one of the first projects I funded as a councilmember." He added, "My job is to get the funding. It's the Parks Department's job to deliver."

Cohen has since introduced a bill that looks to increase greater transparency on city projects.

To reaffirm its commitment to stem any delays in projects, the Department of Parks made substantial hires to address these issues. For instance, 55 of the staff hired between 2014 and 2015 were primarily design professionals to clear the backlog of fully funded projects. In 2016, 28 resident engineers were hired to help oversee the increasing number of projects



File Photo

COUNCILMAN ANDREW COHEN

entering construction. Presently, the agency is handling some 500 capital projects.

"New York City Parks has taken on more projects and finished them faster," a spokeswoman said of the agency.

Many Norwood residents, despite waning confidence in the Parks Department's ability to deliver, remain hopeful. Adolescents are not the only demographic who are waiting for the park to finally come to fruition. A skateboarder who went by Phil, has been skating at the Williamsbridge Oval Park since he was 12 years old. That was 33 years ago.

Having recently undergone multiple surgeries to repair a damaged ACL (knee ligament), Phil knows his skating days are limited and so he hopes to profit from the park one day if he can. "I hope I get to skate at the park here before I am least, 50, maybe 55," Phil said.

Bx10 Service Increasing Following Complaints

By DAVID CRUZ

The MTA is rolling out an extra roundtrip bus on the overly congested Bx10 line, following commuter complaints addressed to its local assemblyman.

Its southbound route starts at Riverdale, making 51 stops before reaching its last stop at 206th Street and Bainbridge Avenue in Norwood. Commuters were vocal over the line's constant congestion, which slowed service down.

The complaints went to the MTA and to Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, whose district covers Norwood and Riverdale. In a statement, Dinowitz called the bus route a "lifeline for Bronx commuters with limited public transit options." Bus service stands as the primary public transportation the further north Bronx commuters travel.

At the bus stop at the corner of East 206th Street and Rochambeau Avenue, Jasmin Leonardo, 18, and her twin sister Janells, cheered the changes. "We won't have to worry about waiting for a bus mad long and everything," Jasmin, who routinely takes the bus to visit her grandmother, said.

Hector Colon, 30, an employee at the

"[T]he money they [charge], I think it's pretty reasonable to increase the service."

-- Maria Mihaylova,
bus rider

Van Cortlandt Golf Course, called the Bx10 too slow, calling news of the increased bus service "great."

Meantime, Maria Mihaylova, who just finished leaving her physical therapy appointment, called the increase the right thing to do considering the rising MTA fare costs. "[T]he money they [charge], I think it's pretty reasonable to increase the service," said Mihaylova, who had a roll of quarters handy for the bus fare.

By the summer, the MTA plans to monitor whether more buses should be added in the fall. The extra bus has started running on April 18.

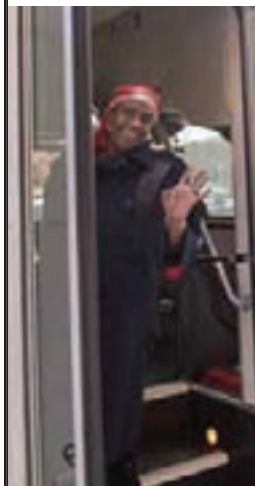


Photo by David Cruz

RIDERS BOARD THE Bx10, which has increased service following complaints.

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when I have a family here?"*

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Spring Egg Hunt at Oval Park

All photos by Deborah Cruz

YOUNG CHILDREN AND their parents hopped about Williamsbridge Oval Park on April 15 for the annual Spring Egg Hunt hosted by the New York City Department of Parks, Friends of Williamsbridge Oval, Mosholu Preservation Corporation, Jerome-Gun Hill Business Improvement District, and New York Cares.

LET THE EGG hunt begin! Pictured above, kids sprint for the many candy-filled eggs spread about the Oval's multi-use field.



THESE KIDS SPRING up and down towards the finish line in a good old potato sack race.



SOME FAMILY MEMBERS get into the spirit of the Spring Egg Hunt, having decked themselves out in rabbit ears for a family portrait.



AN EASTER-THEMED event can't be complete without a visit from the Spring Bunny, who gets hugs from these youngsters.



A MULTI-COLORED parachute covers these kids having a great old time under it.



WHAT'S A HOLIDAY event without a face painting station? Here, this child gets dolled up in green.

NORWOOD NEWS

S N A P S H O T S



Photo courtesy Bronx Borough President's Office

(L-R) BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT Ruben Diaz Jr.; Cardinal Timothy Dolan; Bob Unanue, President of Goya Foods; Dianne Johnson, Division Director, Catholic Charities; and Kevin Sullivan, Executive Director of Archdiocesan Catholic Charities; come together on April 13 to announce a donation of 300,000 pounds of Goya food for local pantries, just in time for Easter.



Photo courtesy Montefiore Health System

JESSE PALMER, NATIONAL Pediatric Cancer Foundation spokesperson, poses with patients at the Children's Hospital at Montefiore during a visit to launch a new Safety Net Grant Program that offers financial assistance to advanced cancer patients for treatment-related costs.



Photo by Miriam Quinones

A MURAL BEARING the face of "A Bronx Tale" actor, director, and screenwriter, Chazz Palminteri, can be spotted at the corner of East Fordham Road and Hughes Avenue. The unveiling happened on April 19, with a visit from Palminteri, who plays mobster Sonny in the film. Mural artists are Mike A. and Ron Rundo.



Photo by Miriam Quinones

AN ACTOR PORTRAYING Jesus Christ carries the cross in a reenactment of the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday. St. Philip Neri Church hosted the street procession on April 14, which drew several hundred parishioners.



Photo by David Greene

A REENACTMENT OF the Stations of the Cross by St. Brendan and St. Ann's Church on Good Friday sees an actor portraying Jesus suffering on the ground as he's flogged by a group of actors portraying Roman soldiers.



Photo by Miriam Quinones

DANIEL CHEVEYO, A volunteer with Friends of Mosholu Parkland, finds a home for these plants at a cleanup event on April 22 sponsored by the volunteer group.

"Villa Gardens" to Bring 52 Affordable Units to 204th Street and Villa Avenue

By WENDY JOAN BIDDLECOMBE

Excavation is under way to bring 52 units of affordable housing to Bedford Park by mid-2018, continuing the trend of more neighborhood development.

Ground broke on the complex at 16 E. 204th St., at the corner of Villa Avenue, just east of Jerome Avenue, earlier this year.

Galaxy General Contracting Corp., which develops properties throughout the five boroughs, is planning to call the mixed-income rental building "Villa Gardens."

As standard practice, those hoping for an apartment will need to enter a lottery through the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development. Richard Sica, Galaxy's vice president, said the city usually starts advertising the lottery about nine months before the apartments are estimated to be completed. Per HPD rules, Sica noted that 50 percent of the residences will be allotted for residents in Community Board 7, which covers Norwood, Bedford Park, Kingsbridge Heights, Fordham, and Univer-



Photo by Wendy Joan Biddlecombe, rendering courtesy Galaxy General Contracting
A BEFORE (PHOTO) AND after (inset) look at Villa Gardens, now in its first stage of construction.

sity Heights.

Eligibility is determined based on percentages of the Area Median Income (AMI), which is \$90,600 for a family of four, \$81,600 for a family of three, \$72,500 for a family of two and \$63,500 for an individual, according to 2016 numbers. Of the 52 units, 25 percent of

the apartments will go to families that earn 60 percent of the AMI, or \$54,360 for a family of four; 27 percent of the apartments will go to families making 80 percent of the AMI, and the remaining apartments will go to individuals or families earning 90 percent of the AMI.

"We like Bedford Park, it's a strong neighborhood with ... transportation accessibility," Sica said of the developer's decision to build in the area, adding that his company was impressed with the "good tenant mix" when they opened 170 E. Mosholu Pkwy. a few years back.

Community Board 7's chair Adaline Walker-Santiago did not return multiple requests for comment on the project.

City records show the property was purchased for \$783,000 in 2013.

There is a large blue Chase Bank sign at the construction site, and a bank representative told *Norwood News* that the development is being financed through an affordable housing loan.

"Our Community Development Banking arm supports affordable housing and economic development projects in low- and moderate-income communities, specializing in multi-family rental housing, commercial real estate and home ownership," Erich Timmerman, a spokesperson with Chase, said.

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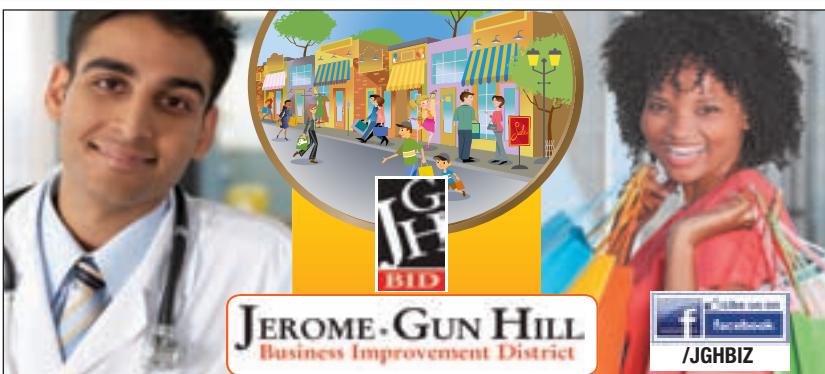
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TRIPS

Kancella's Travel & Tours presents "Tour 2017"

Jonah The Spectacular Show at the Sight & Sound Theater in Pennsylvania on Saturday, May 20. \$169 per person includes buffet dinner; Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic, Aug. 25: 8 days and 7 nights; all inclusive, \$1,789 per person. Use our easy layaway plan. Noah's Ark in Kentucky. 3-day weekend. \$389 per person includes admission to Noah's Ark and Creation Museum on Friday, Aug. 18; Las Vegas, Nevada. 5 days and 4 nights.

\$889 per person at Tropicana Casino, Friday, Aug. 25;

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A 3-bedroom apt. for rent in a private house. Bruckner Boulevard and Elder Avenue section. Working only. \$1500 rent. For more information, please call Eddie at (718) 757-5485.

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE OF FORMATION OF LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY. NAME: Kingston Eight Project Management Consultants, LLC. Articles of Organization were filed with the Secretary of State of New York (SSNY) on 1/17/2017. Office location: Bronx County. SSNY has been designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail a copy of process to the LLC, United States Corporation Agents, Inc., 7014 13th Avenue, Suite 202, Brooklyn, NY 11228. Purpose: For any lawful purpose.

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Free Paper Shredding

AARP New York will be hosting a free paper shredding event at the Bronx Borough Hall, 851 Grand Concourse, on Wednesday, May 3 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Community members can bring up to three bags of documents to be shredded. For more information, visit www.aarp.org/nystop-scams.

Bronx Day in Albany

Residents can sign up for a free bus ride for Bronx Day in Albany by April 28 for the May 1 trip. Events include live entertainment at the Hart Theatre Lounge at The Egg from 4 to 8 p.m. For more information and to reserve a seat, call (718) 409-0109.

Williamsbridge Oval Contest

The Williamsbridge Oval

is up against two other NY area parks for a \$20,000 grant for sports programming and other activities this summer. Residents are encouraged to vote at www.nrpa.org/beinspired or by texting WBOVAL to 35350. Voting deadline is April 30.

Immigration Services

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

Paid Work Training

New York City Small Busi-

ness Services is accepting applications for anyone interested in 300 hours of paid, work experience installing reflective rooftops. For more information or employment, email cool-roofs@sbs.nyc.gov, call 311 or log on to www.nyc.gov/sbs.

Tax Lien Removal

For those delinquent on water and tax bills and already received a warning letter from the New York City Department of Finance, the deadline to remove oneself from the NYC Tax Lien Warning List is May 11. For more information, visit nyc.gov/liensale or call a foreclosure prevention counselor with the University Neighborhood Housing Program at (718) 933-2359 to schedule an appointment.

5-Boro Bike Tour

40 miles of NYC streets will be totally free of cars on May 7 to allow 32,000 cyclists of all skill levels to ride through all the boroughs, with proceeds funding the largest free urban bike education program of its kind in the world as well as more than 50 charity fund-raising partners. Riders come from every state and many countries, and will be entertained along the route by 25 acts from disco to hip-hop to folk and modern dance. Participants must pick up rider packets at Bike Expo New York (May 5-6). For more information, and to register, visit <http://www.bike.nyc/events/td-five-boro-bike-tour/>.

MetroCard Bus/Van

Buy or refill your MetroCard at a MetroCard bus

or van at the following locations on every second and fourth Friday of each month: Fordham Road and Grand Concourse from noon to 2 p.m.; Fordham Plaza, Third Avenue and Fordham Road from 2:30 to 4 p.m.; and Van Cortlandt Village, 3887 Sedgwick Ave., from 9:30 to 11 a.m.; and every fourth Monday at Scott Tower, 3400 Paul Ave. from 1 to 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 330-1234 or 511.

SAFE Disposal

The New York City Department of Sanitation will host a SAFE Disposal Event (Solvents, Automotive, Flammable, Electronics) at the Orchard Beach Parking Lot on May 13 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. where these items can safely be discarded, as well as medical items and paints. For more information, call 311.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Power Walk at NYBG

Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, Children's Hospital at Montefiore and J Train Wellness invite the public to join the B'N Fit Annual Power Walk to Wellness at the New York Botanical Garden on May 6 at 9 a.m. rain or shine (\$10 p/p; raise \$50 and walk free). Event helps educate the community about how to promote a healthy lifestyle and prevent the adverse effects of obesity. Registration is at 8:30 a.m. Whoever raises the most in donations receives \$100 gift card and a B'N Fit trophy. Meet at Everett Garden Gate school group entrance. For more information, call (718) 882-4000.



File Photo

B'N FIT, SPONSORED by the Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, Children's Hospital at Montefiore and J Train Wellness, takes place on May 6 (see Editor's Pick for more details).

Onstage

Lehman College's Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W., presents the following performances: **Doo Wop & Rock 'n' Roll**, April 29 (tickets: \$45 to \$55); and **Hip Hop Fever**, May 6 (tickets: \$45 to \$60); both featuring a variety of performers; and **Orquesta Aragón & Orquesta Broadway**, (tickets: \$50 to \$65; \$100/VIP); all at 8 p.m.; and **Mariachi Los Camperos**, May 7 at 7 p.m. (tickets: \$25 to \$40; \$10/age 12 and under). 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

Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, 3450 DeKalb Ave., holds its **Spring Fest**, April 30 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Events include an open house, carnival, and program demos and discounts, and featuring an after school program art show. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.



Photo courtesy Lehman Center for the Performing Arts

A DOO WOP musical event headlined by various artists is scheduled for April 29 (see Onstage for details).

The Fordham BID is holding its **Mother's Day Sidewalk Sale**, May 11 to 13 from noon to 7 p.m. between Washington and Jerome avenues, where businesses will display seasonal merchandise. For more information, call (718) 562-2104.

The Lehman College Art Gallery, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents free **Family Focus**, April 29 from 10 to 11:30 a.m., to construct and create a bouquet of flowers using tissue paper and other craft materials. All materials are included; walk-ins are welcome. For more information, call (718) 960-8731.

Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) presents **Run for the Wild**, April 29, at 8 a.m. for individuals and at 8:45 a.m. for the family fun run/walk, followed by zoo activities including rock climbing wall, music and dancing, face painting, and more. Prizes are awarded to those who meet fundraising goals. Tickets: \$50/adults; \$40/ages 3 to 15; \$40/age 65+ (includes parking and admission); adults and

seniors must raise at least \$30 to participate. For more information, call (347) 840-1242.

The New York Botanical Garden presents **Daffodil Celebration and Wine Weekend**, April 29 and 30, featuring springtime flowers and local wines including demonstrations and presentations (tickets: \$10; \$38/non members; includes souvenir wine glass, all-garden pass, access to Enid Haupt Conservatory, tram tour, and more). Events include **wine tasting** from various wineries and refreshments from noon to 5 p.m.; **live music** by Milton featuring bluegrass and folk, hourly from noon to 4 p.m.; and **guided tours** from the native Plant Garden entrance hourly from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. For more information and a detailed schedule, call (718) 817-8700.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Barking Up a Wave Hill Tree, to rub tree barks with wax crayons and paper to create designs, April 29 and 30; and Climate Kites Parade, to design a paper kite followed by a parade, May 6 and 7; both in the WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also scheduled: on the grounds, free, on April 29: **Junior Arborist Station**, for ages 5+, to wear harnesses and hardhats and to ascend into a maple tree, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.; and **Cooking Demo**, at 2 p.m. 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.

Library Events

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for children: **Hands-On Projects at 4 p.m.**: (ages 7 to 12; preregistration required),

Magic Wand Reading Craft, April 27. Adults can attend: **documentary**: screening of "Fordham SDS," followed by discussion, April 27 at 5 p.m. All may enjoy **Bronx Book Fair**, May 6 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. with events including **Family Time**, 1 to 1:45 p.m. featuring reading aloud and crafts (each child attending will receive one free book); **Mother's Day Card Making**, 2 to 2:45 p.m.; and **Musical Performance**, 6 to 6:45 p.m., featuring Jackie Flowers Quartet. For more information and a detailed schedule, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

The Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children: **Greenhouse Exploration**: (ages 5 to 12), weather permitting, to hang out in the back yard to play and help maintain the garden, plant seeds, compost, water plants or do craft, May 10 at 3:30 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy: **film**: "Sing," May 6 at 1:30 p.m. Adults can attend: **Knitting Circle**: Thursdays at 3 p.m. For all: **Free Poetry Workshop**: to read and write original poetry for all levels of experience, Saturdays from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., through May 13. 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, April 28 and May 5; and **Preschool Story Time and Craft at 11:15 a.m.**: (ages 3 to 5), featuring books, puppetry, dramatics, crafts and flannel boards, May 4 and 11. Adults can attend: **Computer Basics at noon**: May 4 and 11. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by May 1 for the next publication date of May 11.

How Big Do You Want Your Building?

(continued from page 1)

hasn't wrestled much with the topic: they want zoning rules changed so that any new buildings don't overstuff the neighborhoods. It's that kind of stratagem that drove CB7 to commission the study in the first place. Over the last few years, Bedford Park has attracted a litany of developers largely due to its abundance of transportation and nearby amenities, contributing to what residents believe is congestion in a narrowly constructed neighborhood.

Any more construction, residents suspect, can put more strain on neighborhood schools and trains, which have become severely overcrowded. Those observations ran counter to Caplan's findings, which saw the population decrease in the last five years, according to US Census data Caplan compiled of Bedford Park.

Kingsbridge Heights, intended to be the neighborhood home of the impending Kingsbridge National Ice Center, is still a way from new development, but weary residents believe development is waiting in the wings. Caplan zeroed in on three blocks that comprise the side streets near Kingsbridge Road. Caplan told the audience, based on preliminary findings she presented to the community on April 19, that yes, it's possible to downzone.

Bedford Park

The studied area of Bedford Park—a baseball mound-shaped neighborhood covering the Grand Concourse between East 201st and East 204th streets, and extending east toward Moshulu Parkway service road—is largely zoned as an R8, which allow for 8- to 10-story buildings. Caplan proposed any new buildings, where detached private homes make up a chunk of the properties within the neighborhood, should only be three or four stories, which translates to R5B and R5D zoning distinctions.

The commercial area included in the Bedford Park study, concentrated at the Grand Concourse and East 204th Street, could house more commercial space, according to Caplan, who based her recommendations on testimonials by residents at a brainstorming session last November. She proposed keeping that area an R8 so it that new commercial buildings can be taller, changing the zoning distinction from its current C1-3 to a C2-3, which allows for buildings as tall as nine stories.

Kingsbridge Heights

The studied area of Kingsbridge Heights hasn't undergone too much change, but residents are hedging their bets and believe the neighbor-

hood will become a critical construction area given its proximity to the Kingsbridge Armory, which will be home to the Kingsbridge National Ice Center. Caplan and her team focused on Kingsbridge Road between Sedgwick and Creston avenues, and the streets between West Kingsbridge Road and East 190th Street. The area, with R6, R8, and C1-2 zoning distinctions, makes up a mix of detached homes, six-story residences, and low-rise commercial stores.

Caplan presented options for the studied area broken down into three areas. While the residential blocks between West Kingsbridge Road and East 190th Street would see reduced zoning requirements, going from seven-story properties to four-story properties max, or in technical terms changing the zoning from an R6 to an R5B or R5D, Caplan proposed two options that called for taller commercial properties along the area of East Kingsbridge Road between Jerome and Creston avenues. West Kingsbridge Road between University and Jerome avenues should have taller commercial properties, according to Caplan.

Neighborhood Feedback

When it comes to rezoning, most residents the *Norwood News* spoke with were unaware of the study, along with its subject matter. Of the nine residents approached to be interviewed for this article, three had

opinions, though there was little understanding of zoning. Indeed, zoning, its terminology, or principles, is not exactly taught anywhere.

Fatima Komoni, who's been living on Briggs Avenue in Bedford Park for 12 years, has found conditions to be "regular" pointing to nothing that's inconvenienced her quality of life. The Albanian-born resident said music is kept to a minimum, making it a "nice neighborhood." A block and a half up, Wendell Davis, a 22-year resident of Bedford Park, hopes the community "stays the same," and would not want to see too much development in the area.

But one Bedford Park resident, a retiree from the hotel trade who did not want to give his name, welcomed more development in the neighborhood, adding this is how neighborhoods "grow up." He conceded that should more high-rises make their way into Bedford Park, that an underground parking facility come with it.

"What Happens Now?"

Community Board 7 will get the results of the final study sometime in the summer, and present it to the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP), which enforces zoning distinctions. While the community was sold on downzoning the neighborhoods, much of their strategy was given away to the agency

since the DCP representative, Shawn Brede, was there to hear it out. His position, as conveyed and formed by DCP in May 2016, was that rezoning the studied Bedford Park area is impossible since it would put the bulk of the buildings "out of compliance." When it comes to downzoning Bedford Park, Brede emphasized that DCP does "not think a downzoning in that area makes sense based upon the standards for which we've gone through many times."

At a news conference announcing a plan to allow three-year-old children to enroll into Universal Pre-K, Mayor Bill de Blasio pointed to a "free market" that dictates where developers build, which puts a strain on city services, such as school seats.

"[A]lthough we don't control exactly what type of development happens everywhere against, sort of popular understanding, I think a lot of New Yorkers think we literally can choose where every building goes," de Blasio said. "No. It's a free enterprise system. There's a lot of opportunity for people to make those decisions within the zoning. But we watch the trends and we adjust to where we put the school space."

Editor's Note: The Norwood News has a video presentation recapping the meeting on its website, www.norwoodnews.org.

Mayor Bill de Blasio's Comments on Zoning

Mayor Bill de Blasio (pictured right) was asked by the *Norwood News* whether, with neighborhoods like Bedford Park and Norwood facing a construction boom, the city can handle keeping up with demand for city services, such as school seats. This was his full response:

"First of all, remember how much of this city, because of zoning, people have an opportunity to develop as is, as of right. A lot of development happening is not because of rezonings or proposed rezonings, it's working under the existing rules. We try to constantly adjust the supply of school seats accordingly. And I think the School Construction Authority has done an amazing job. They used to be an agency that bluntly was kind of slow; they've now become an agency that's pretty damn fast in the scheme of things and have produced new affordable housing at a rapid clip, and I think our existing plan is 40,000-plus in the capital plan. More coming, and they're moving fast. So the big answer is we are, we, although we don't control exactly what type of development happens everywhere against, sort of



Photo by David Cruz

popular understanding, I think a lot of New Yorkers think we literally get to choose where every building goes. No. It's a free enterprise system, there's a lot of opportunity for people to make those decisions within the zoning. But we watch the trends and we adjust to where we're putting more school space. We're going to keep doing that with great intensity, we're making a huge investment. But that being said, we came to a very strong, strategic decision, particularly after having had the experience of Pre-K, that the highest impact investment we could make on

our schools was at the youngest level, and that must be a priority. It's think about, in terms that any, anything, any endeavor, any business, you invest your money where it's going to have the biggest impact. So, when we looked at it, we knew we had a model that worked with Pre-K, we knew we had a lot of areas where there was some available space we could work from or those community-based organizations that are already doing three-year-old work, or the religious schools and the charter so we knew we were confident we could get a strong start. But we knew it would take some new building as well. We came to the conclusion that was a fundamental strategic priority. So we're going to do that while making a big commitment to addressing broader, overcrowding issues. I think it's fair to say this is something we will be at for decades, honestly, because this is a city that's growing to 9 million people over the next few decades. So honestly, the City of New York will be building new school capacity every year, I guarantee you for the next quarter century to catch up with the demand that will be growing in this city.



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