



NORWOOD NEWS

Vol 31, No 6 • PUBLISHED BY MOSHOLU PRESERVATION CORPORATION • MARCH 15-28, 2018

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NORWOOD LOCAL HITS BRICK WALL

It's resident versus developer at Webster Avenue project



Photo by Adi Talwar

DARRELL BURGESS AT his home on Webster Avenue. Behind him is the ongoing construction project that's inconvenienced him.

By **NIAL RIDGLEY**

Wooden two-by-fours jut out and over the backyard where children used to play, a giant pit has been dug in the basement, and fast food odors from a nearby restaurant creep straight into a three-story home owned

by Darrell Burgess of Norwood.

It's been quite the living nightmare for Burgess, whose struggles stem from construction of a building addition owned by Edward Khalil, the developer of an impending six-story

structure that rests at 3103 Webster Ave. by East 204th Street and just across from another building under construction by The Doe Fund. The pair of buildings are the result of a major 2011 rezoning of Webster Avenue that accommodates

larger buildings, and a source of Burgess's headaches.

Khalil's project looks to add at least four floors to the existing property that's home to La Nueva Estrella restaurant. And crews have been work-

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Vol. 31, No. 6

Norwood News is published

bi-weekly on Thursdays by

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IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

KNIC Founder Reaffirms Commitment to Build Project

By DAVID CRUZ

Kevin Parker, founder of the Kingsbridge National Ice Center (KNIC) project, told community stakeholders at a closed-door meeting today that the massive project is under way despite being stalled for four years.

The meeting, held at Concourse House just blocks from the Kingsbridge Armory, the expected home of the center, was organized by State Sen. Gustavo Rivera.

"I felt confident going into the meeting and I feel much more confident after I left the meeting that the project is going forward," Rivera told the *Norwood News* several hours after the meeting wrapped up. "Is the [project] happening tomorrow? Sadly, no."

Much of the discussion ranged from the complexity of this massive, \$350 million project. It included recent financing KNIC received and the processes involved during pre-construction phase, which include detailed architectural maps drafted for such a big project. "It was about putting all the pieces together," said Rivera of the meeting.

Those invited to the meeting included signatories of the Community Benefits Agreement between KNIC and community representatives, and members of the Armory Community Advisory Board were on hand.

Rivera, a staunch supporter of the KNIC project, defended the closed-door format of the meeting, telling the *Norwood News* the community is represented by the signatories and members of KNIC's Community Advisory Council (CAC).

Councilman Fernando Cabrera, who represents the district where the project will be, did not receive a formal invitation. He was instead represented by a CAC member who he appointed.

Representatives from KNIC have had a frosty relationship with Cabrera after they accused him of using his position as a key vote for the project on the New York City Council to ask for funds for a defunct not-for-profit tied to Cabrera weeks before the Council approved the project in 2013. Cabrera has long denied this happened.

Rivera, on the other hand, has a friendlier relationship with KNIC representatives. In early 2016, he hosted an open forum to discuss the status of the project.

Since 2016, KNIC has made progress in the project, securing a state loan to begin its first phase, which hasn't started yet. The group was approved for the \$138 million state loan, which allowed it to seek a construction loan.

The project has also been met with a litany of legal issues between former principals of the project and New York City, which refused to activate the 99-year lease to KNIC until it secured financing.

As the community awaited answers, they barely saw Parker attend community meetings. He was instead represented by colleagues, including NHL legend and KNIC president, Mark Messier.

A source familiar with the genesis of the meeting said there was very little information disseminated on the project's status for quite some time, prompting community stakeholders to ask for the



Photo by David Cruz

KEVIN PARKER OUTSIDE CONCOURSE House before entering the meeting that lasted two hours.

meeting. KNIC's legal team kept citing the subsequent lawsuits as one reason it had stayed mum on the project, according to the source.

Parker did not speak to the *Norwood News* before entering the meeting.

"He could've walked away a whole bunch of times and he hasn't," said Rivera. "And from what he told us today, he won't."

Editor's Note: See *Inquiring Photographer* on page 4 for resident opinions.

Can a Community Board Ban You? Yes and No

By DAVID CRUZ

Community Board 7 has once again banned a rancorous community activist after he raised his voice at a recent Veterans Committee meeting.

Anthony Riveccio was banned by Board District Manager Ischia Bravo after lashing out at the board for changing a planned breakfast honoring veterans. Riveccio had been banned by the two previous district managers, inspiring

one of them to erect a divider between the waiting area and where employees sit.

The incident opened the question of whether a community board, a government entity on the ground level, can ban a resident. The answer is yes and no.

The *Norwood News* reached out to George Freeman of the Media Law Resource Center, who said a resident can't be banned if their grievance was

"content-based." "[T]hat is, retaliation for what he said," said Freeman. "The board can't legally do that."

There is a but. "If [the board] claims, with validity, that he's a distraction, then they might be able to [ban him]," said Freeman.

The borough president's office, which holds governance over the 12 community boards, did not respond to requests for comments.

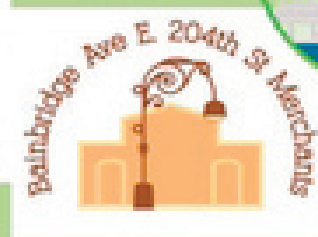
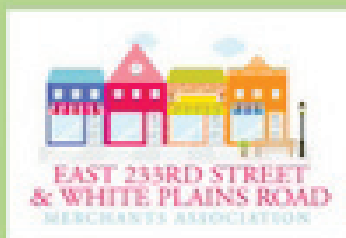
Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 will hold its general board meeting at the Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. inside the auditorium, on March 20 at 6:30 p.m. CB7 committee meetings are held on the following dates at the board office, 229 E. 204th St., at 6:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted: Economic Development Committee meets March 27; Community Relations & Long Term Planning Committee meets on March 27 at 7:30 p.m.; and Website Acknowledgment and Media Committee meets on March 28. For more information, call the board office at (718) 933-5650.

The **52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meets on March 22 at 7 p.m. at Scott Towers, 3400 Paul Ave.



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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week we asked Kingsbridge residents their thoughts on the re-development of the Kingsbridge Armory which has now languished for years, and a recent behind-closed-doors meeting.



Well, I always thought that people should be notified at any time and there should always be an open door for any comments. If you're going to do it under the table, then it's not worth it. And if you're going to spend \$500 million, help the homeless first. Hell no! I don't want an ice skating rink here. They need to make it a building for homeless people, something for the homeless.

Darrell Edwards



An ice skating rink would be better for the public. We already have stores; we need something new for the community. It's been vacant for a long time, of course they're trying. Yes, it's going to happen if they work it out. The people need something here.

Oscar Barabondka



My husband and I are residents of the area and we figure that if they open it he will be able to get some type of job there. But it's been a long time and no one's heard anything, so when is this going to happen? A lot of stores are closing up and the rents are going up, so what's going on? I don't like the idea of closed-door negotiations. Why are they going undercover? And why don't they let the people in the area know what's going on? It's shady.

Traci Dixon James



I think they should move the homeless in there. [T]here are so many homeless people out here and they need help. A lot of people out here need help. There's no reason for them to make this an ice skating rink. For what? Maybe with other types of recreation for kids as well. It's been many, many years and we don't hear anything anymore, that's why I don't know what's going on anymore. The building is just standing there doing nothing. I don't think the skating rink is a good idea, sounds like trouble to me. But if it helps the kids it's a good thing and I'm with that.

Dawn Johnson



I think they should do something with this already, because it's not doing anything for the community. I think it should be used for the public and it should be turned into a skating rink. But it's too big for just a skating rink, so maybe it could be turned into a plaza with a movie theater and shopping center, something useful for the community. Housing the homeless in the basement isn't a bad idea. With what happened in Puerto Rico, they should talk about making it a disaster shelter.

Midalia Dominguez

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Mosholu Parkway Eyed For DOT Add-Ons

By MARY MELLON

The city Department of Transportation (DOT) is in the early stages of devising a plan to improve pedestrian safety at the intersection of Paul Avenue and Mosholu Parkway.

DOT representatives met with residents and members of the Community Board 7 Traffic and Transportation Committee recently to discuss their assessment of the issue and propose changes. According to data included in the presentation made on March 1, over the past five years there have been 16 injuries and one fatality in the vicinity.

The DOT describes the intersection of Paul Avenue and Mosholu Parkway as bustling with action. DeWitt Clinton High School and Bronx High School of Science create heavy pedestrian traffic, with the 4 train and buses adding to the busy vibe during the morning and rush hours. There are connections to the Major Deegan Expressway (1-87) and Saw Mill River Parkway, as well as major institutions such as Montefiore Medical Center. The DOT believes the intersection is marred by unprotected pedestrian spaces, substandard bus stops, and the risk of head-on collisions.

sions.

For Mosholu Parkway and Paul Avenue, the DOT wants to add a pedestrian island to shorten crossing distances, a concrete sidewalk extension with landscaping, and a concrete bus boarding island with a painted sidewalk extension. They want to install pillars for safer left turns, paint pedestrian space with flexible delineators, and change parking restrictions to make room for buses. For bicycle network upgrades, the DOT proposed upgrading the signed routes to shared lanes on Paul Avenue between West 205th Street and Mosholu Parkway, to distinguish between traffic and bike lanes.

For Mosholu Parkway and Sedgwick Avenue, the DOT wants to create another northbound lane between Paul Avenue and West Gun Hill Road, essentially creating a third lane.

Many residents the *Norwood News* spoke with agreed that the area is already safe. They did not seem aware of any safety concerns.

The DOT hopes to begin simple changes this summer, but implement complete changes the following summer.



Image courtesy city Department of Transportation

AMONG THE CHANGES in the DOT's proposal include creating a dedicated left turn only lane onto Sedgwick Avenue from Mosholu Parkway.

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Curbside Organic Collection Expands

The city Department of Sanitation is expanding its organics collection service in the Bronx.

Roughly 30,000 more residents, including those living in Norwood, will be included in the program, according to the agency. The service collects food waste, food-soiled paper, and yard waste from tenants, converting it into compost or renewable energy, and simultaneously helping with pest control.

Currently, over 3 million New Yorkers have access to these services, but Sanitation wants to make food scrap recycling available to all New Yorkers by the end of the year. Participants simply put their food scraps, food-soiled paper and yard waste in durable locking bins, which keep out rats, raccoons, and other animals. Such materials, also referred to as “organics,” create greenhouse gases when they decompose in landfills. Turning them into compost or renewable energy is good for the environment as well.

Home and building owners interested in the program can receive free bins and collection services by visiting on.nyc.gov/request-organics. Non-profits and city agencies, including churches, community centers, food pantries, soup kitchens, and libraries are also starting to get involved.

—Mary Mellon

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BMCA Flea Market Draws Treasure Seekers

SCORES OF RESIDENTS stopped by the Bedford Moshulu Community Association for its annual flea market aimed at filling the tiny coffers for the 42-year civic groups. Some pricey items were up for sale for some unbeatable costs. Photos by Miriam Quinones



(ABOVE) A RESIDENT browses at the fine dining table at the flea market held in the basement of St. Mary's Orthodox Church on March 10.



(LEFT) RAFAELA SANTOS, an artist and BMCA member, shows off her impressionistic artwork she donated for the event's raffle.

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Suspected Jewel Thieves Wanted in Fordham



Two men (pictured) are wanted for questioning in a case involving a stolen \$8,000 watch from a Fordham jewelry store.

Police say the theft happened on Feb. 19 at around 3:45 p.m. They say one of the suspects was inside 13 W. Fordham Rd. looking at a watch. Once the suspect was allowed to look at the watch, the employee let the suspect's accomplice inside.

The suspect holding the watch quickly ran out the store along with his accomplice holding the door open, police say. Both men took off in an unknown

direction with the pricey watch.

No one was hurt.

Police describe the first suspect as Hispanic, around 30 to 40 years old, standing at 5' 10" and weighing 180 pounds, last seen wearing all white clothing. The second suspect is described as a Hispanic in his 20s or 30s, standing at 5' 11" and weighing 170 pounds. He was last seen wearing all black clothes.

Anyone with information is asked to call Crime Stoppers and (800) 577-TIPS. All calls are kept confidential.

—David Cruz

Illegal Parking Takes a Back Seat Following Crackdown

By DAVID CRUZ

Van Cortlandt Village residents are getting their spots back!

After months of illegal parking on Goulden Avenue by commercial vehicles for a litany of reasons, a major crackdown by the 52nd Precinct at the behest of electeds saw plenty of those

vehicles not come back.

Goulden Avenue is close to Van Cortlandt Village's heavy residential population, making those spots a premium. When a major, months-long Con Edison project on Sedgwick Avenue saw a number of spots reserved exclusively for work trucks, it squeezed

parking even more.

"Parking is one of the most contentious issues that I hear about from my constituents," said Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, the area's legislator who urged the Five-Two to issue a crackdown. "There is hardly enough parking for the people who live in our

community, let alone for commercial enterprises who just want to save a couple bucks on their parking expenses."

Councilman Andrew Cohen, who represents the area where the infractions happened, called the problem "consistent and alarming."

On top of the squeeze, residents noticed plenty of abandoned cars left behind on Goulden Avenue. Among them was an RV that took up at least two and a half spots. Combine that with the other taxicabs, truck cabs and other motorhomes, and residents were left with very few options.

Despite an aggressive ticketing blitz by the 52nd Precinct, cars were still left behind. Commercial vehicles simply shrugged at the number of summonses.

So the Five-Two went with plan B: towing. After towing three vehicles and doling out 95 tickets since January, residents have noticed more available spots along the stretch. The precinct has since been patrolling the area to ensure those spots are available for residents.

"The NYPD's repeated efforts have given our streets back to the community," said Cohen in a statement.

The Office of Senator Jeff Klein also assisted.



Photo courtesy Nat Salomon

THESE TYPES OF vehicles can no longer be parked on Goulden Avenue, according to officials.

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The Legal Challenge to Desegregate the City

By DAVID CRUZ

Just what would become of a plan to rezone a large chunk of Jerome Avenue remains to be seen. The New York City Council's Land Use Committee voted to approve the rezoning on March 6. The rezoning paves the way for developers to build as much as 4,000 units of affordable housing by changing zoning rules between 184th and 167th streets, allowing for buildings as high as 19 stories.

It's now cleared to go to the full New York City Council, which could approve or reject the rezoning come March 21. If it goes through, city policy dictates that the existing residents along Jerome Avenue can reap the rewards of new affordable housing, should they match the federally-outlined area median income guidelines required to apply.

Technically, their chances of getting approved for an affordable unit are greater than outside residents, thanks to the city's community preference policy, which prioritizes existing residents for affordable housing over new residents. Jerome Avenue cuts through a large swath of mostly poor neighborhoods that include Fordham South, University Heights, Morris Heights, Mt. Eden, and Highbridge. The neighborhoods are predominantly Hispanic.

Carmen Vega-Rivera, a seasoned activist who's influenced some measure of tenant protections for Jerome Avenue residents ahead of the impending rezoning, has praised the policy. After all, with long-term residents enduring years of subpar quality of life, priority for a new unit towards current residents is the least the city could do. That can be seen as a good thing, but it does relegate them to one neighborhood.

To Craig Gurian, an attorney specializing in housing discrimination, prioritizing one group over another only promotes segregation in a city that, while overwhelmingly diverse, stands as one of the most ethnically divided. While not intentional, community preference becomes a double-edged sword that spawns the debate on whether community integration or neighborhood preservation matters the most.

Gurian doubles as executive director of the Anti-Discrimination Center, a nonprofit that responds to discrimi-

nation practices. He's in the middle of a lawsuit against New York City claiming community preference promotes decades-long segregation. New York City presently ranks as the second most segregated city, next to Milwaukee, Wisconsin as highlighted in an analysis of 2010 census data by the University of Michigan.

Gurian represents three African-American women who applied for housing in 2015 but were ultimately denied. The neighborhoods they had applied to for new affordable housing fell in predominantly white areas of Manhattan.

The city's community preference policy is to blame, according to Gurian. The provision, enacted during the Koch administration of the 1970s and early 1980s, serves as an anti-displacement measure when new affordable housing is built. Should developers accept tax subsidies to build affordable housing from the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), they're required to conduct a lottery via the agency's Housing Connect lottery system. Since 2002, the city has mandated that half the units be earmarked for the existing community while the other half is reserved for New Yorkers living outside the neighborhood. They include city employees, the physically disabled, and sometimes the homeless.

Critics like Gurian argue the lottery is not so much an arbitrary construct but a caste-style system that keeps the cycle of segregation spinning. This means that a family living outside the neighborhood but attempting to move in through an affordable housing apartment has less of a chance than a current family living in the neighborhood. This setup of exclusion is worsened when factoring in race.

In a city where at least 60 percent of neighborhoods are ethnically separated, community preference arguably slows the process of integration violating the 1968 Fair Housing Act. Gurian claims the city has blatantly ignored federal provision, a bi-product of President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" platform that barred municipalities from discriminating against anyone attempting to rent, buy, or secure finance

for housing.

"Separate is not equal. The fact that the policy gives a black resident of a black area a better chance and a white resident of a white area a better chance does not make it equal," said Gurian.

Community preference poses problems for residents attempting to live in so-called "neighborhoods of opportunity," comprising better schools, lower crime, and more amenities at a resident's disposal, argued Gurian. With odds already stacked against them given the sheer volume of applicants at a time when the affordable housing stock is crunched, new residents vying for a spot have it even worse.

"[O]ur complaint invariably means that the benefits of being an insider—that is being in the community district area—go to the dominant racial group, and that makes for an uneven playing field in terms of the chances to compete," said Gurian.

While community preference is the official term, Gurian prefers to label it "outsider-restriction," given the limits on residential mobility.

"Where people are now has been shaped very heavily by decades and decades of intentional discrimination," said Gurian. "It's not as though sometime in 1957 all the African-American families in New York City got together and said, 'You know, let's all just move to Jamaica and central Brooklyn and Harlem.' There were restrictions where people can move to."

Without residential mobility, families remain stuck. Studies suggest that segregated cities, particularly those with a high number of minorities, present barriers towards socioeconomic mobility. Segregated neighborhoods also produce poor health outcomes, fewer job opportunities, mistrust of the police, and low graduation rates as outlined in continued studies by the NYU Furman Center, which tracks the societal impact of housing trends.

If one were to assess how deeply segregated New York City currently is, they can look at the breakdown of the 59 community districts spread across the City. In an analysis by the *Norwood News* using the city's Community District's Profiles website, 11 of the 59 community

districts have 50 percent or more African-Americans than any other racial segment. Twelve more community districts have Hispanic families comprising 50 percent or more of the population. Another 17 community districts have white families making up 50 percent or more of its population.

In court papers, Gurian blames much of this ongoing discrimination on political pressure by residents who've framed the segregation argument as preserving neighborhood character and keeping the status quo. "[T]his outsider restriction policy is one manifestation of that overarching policy and that's illegal—being influenced by those who want to maintain a particular racial flavor," Gurian said.

Thomas Angotti, an urban planner and retired professor from Hunter College, said one reason for this affordable housing lockout is "vote chasing," where politicians, under pressure from the current community to keep any affordable housing project from entering a neighborhood, bow to their needs in exchange for staying in office.

The Bronx saw a number of downzonings around that same period, with the neighborhoods of Country Club, Spencer Estates and City Island, all largely white, pseudo-suburban sections of the Bronx, downzoned following City Council approval. That was thanks to the Department of City Planning's (DCP) Low Density Growth Management Area zoning text amendment mandating suburban-like settings to remain so.

In a sworn deposition in August 2017, Vicky Been, then HPD commissioner and now faculty director of the NYU Furman Center, said the city supports community preference as an anti-displacement measure and denies it reinforces segregation. She also said the policy helps attract affordable housing so long as there's a benefit to the existing community.

"[N]eighborhoods throughout the City and their elected representatives often resist approving land use actions required to allow greater density or site affordable housing because of concern about the other types of burdens that development may impose," said Been in the deposition.

The measure is also supported by Mayor Bill de Blasio, who conceived the Housing New York plan that looks to build or preserve 300,000 more units of affordable housing through rezoning proposals. At a news conference in January this year that announced the city's ongoing commitment to securing affordable housing, de Blasio supported the idea of keeping families where they are.

"[P]eople want to live in their own neighborhoods and close to their loved ones, their friends, their houses of worship, their kids' schools," said de Blasio, adding that "if you ask the people who want to live in their own neighborhood, they obviously need some right to do that."

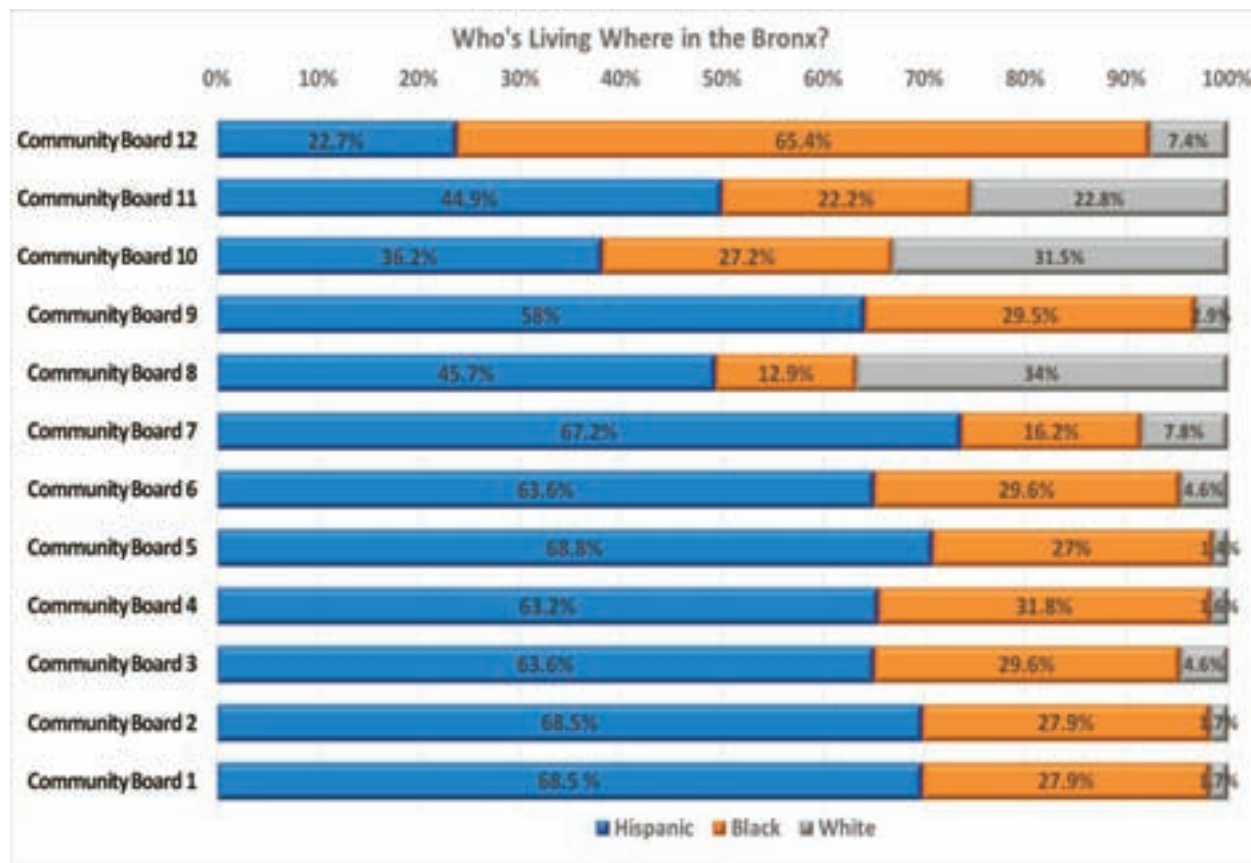
In a follow-up interview, Gurian questioned the logic of de Blasio's comments, pointing to the sheer number of applicants bidding for affordable housing. "Why are there 60,000 people applying to a lottery? They couldn't all be from the same district," said Gurian, referencing the large number of applicants that typically apply to an HPD-financed affordable residence.

Getting a clear sense of the segregation issue through the lottery system has been a challenge for Gurian, who's filed a motion asking a judge to unseal a city-sanctioned report outlining the ethnic breakdown of who's applying to the housing lottery. A decision is now pending.

The case also blames the city for further enabling segregation by downzoning largely white areas where homeownership abounds. The 2005 downzoning in parts of central and southern Staten Island, a largely white area of New York City, for instance, banned the construction of multiple-dwelling housing, lowering the chance of affordable housing that would have allowed low-income residents to move in.

Today, largely white areas have not seen any major rezoning that include an affordable housing component. This is in stark contrast to minority neighborhoods, where at least six predominantly Hispanic and black communities are under current rezoning consideration, potentially seeing a higher concentration of low-income affordable housing within that area.

Gurian has sued for a setup similar to this in Westchester County, where a chunk of municipalities passed zoning laws that effectively kept minorities from low- and middle-income backgrounds out. This came despite the county accepting \$50 million in funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to encourage racial desegregation and economic mobility. The case ended in settlement, with the county promising to build 750 affordable units in high-income neighborhoods.



borhoods.

Community preference as it relates to affordable housing means more to Carmen Vega-Rivera, than the promulgation of upzoning in largely minority neighborhoods that are ethnically segregated.

Notwithstanding her aggressive activism for equity along Jerome Avenue, Vega-Rivera admits she has attempted to return to her childhood home of the Lower East Side through Housing Connect. It hasn't worked out. She has been on and off the waiting lists and has been constantly denied.

"I don't call it a lottery, I call it 'gatekeeping,'" said Vega-Rivera, who lives in the Concourse section of the Bronx. "They have all these barriers, and all these obstacles whether you're re-entry, whether you've served [jail] time."

Even if a judge were to rule in favor of Gurian, the lottery system will still need work towards equity. Angotti notes that bureaucratic policies beyond community preference have kept New Yorkers out of certain neighborhoods. Much of those policies start when applying through the HPD lottery.

"You have to have a bank account. Well, many people don't have bank accounts because of bank redlining. They don't have access to banks. If you ever got stopped and frisked, you got a record and because stop and frisk is pervasive, has been pervasive in minority communities, that disqualifies a lot of people from even entering the lottery," said Angotti. "And you need to have a credit record. That means you need to have a credit card, you never could have

missed a payment, and you have to go through a very rigorous screening before you will even get selected and that could be a year, two years, or more. So the whole process of distributing the housing units needs to be reformed, not just community preference."

Gurian could also have gained a greater sense of the segregation issue had the federal government kept to a time frame that ordered officials across U.S. cities to outline how they're adhering to the Fair Housing Act and integrating neighborhoods. The rule became effective during the Obama administration.

In January this year, the Trump administration extended the deadline well past the year 2020.

Editor's Note: The print version of part one of this series did not explicitly state that the New York City Council vote on the Jerome Avenue rezoning was still pending.

This series is made possible by a fellowship from Marguerite Casey Foundation, which supports low-income families in strengthening their voice and mobilizing their communities to achieve a more just and equitable society for all.



Letters To The Editor

NOT SO AFFORDABLE

Mayor Bill de Blasio long ago proved to be a fraud on the issue of income inequality, giving all city workers real money pay cut contracts. Now he's showing his disdain for the poor by proposing "affordable" housing that's not affordable to them.

His proposal was detailed in *Norwood News* editor David Cruz' rather verbose article in the March 1-14 issue. To sum it up briefly, 19-story buildings of allegedly affordable housing will be built in an area that has a large number of poverty stricken people of color. They will be geared toward families of three making \$51,540 a year.

But a third of the area's families of three makes less than \$20,000 a year. So they can forget that housing. Plus, the new buildings will "improve" the neighborhood to the point that landlords will raise the rents of the tenants living in the old buildings. This will force out those who cannot afford the rent hikes. No wonder de Blasio plans to build more homeless shelters. His policies will create more homelessness.

Richard Warren
Norwood

The Bronx Food Fight

Part 2 of 5

For SNAP Beneficiaries, a Refuge When Falling Short

The Norwood News, in partnership with WFUV radio and BronxNet television, continue its five-part series on food insecurity issues impacting the Bronx and its residents.

By KACIE CANDELA of **90.7 WFUV .org**

"I come here when the food in my house runs out and I don't have enough money to buy more," said Altagracia Peña, a regular at Part of the Solution (POTS), a food pantry and community dining room serving Fordham, Bedford Park, and its surrounding Bronx communities.

POTS is a one-stop-shop for the food insecure and those who need a stable mailing address, access to showers or haircuts, and free legal services, said Jack Marth, the director of programs at POTS. "We try to help anyone who comes to the door for the first time. In the last calendar year, we had close to 7000 unique households use our pantry services," Marth said.

Many of POTS's clients are also on the federal supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP). POTS is found within Congressional District 13, where 29.6 percent of households receive SNAP benefits to help cover the cost of groceries. But many have found SNAP to be insufficient, and unable to last through the next month when benefits are replenished, forcing many to rely on food pantries to fill the gap.

"SNAP isn't adequate to meet people's household needs. That's where our pantry comes in. It's a supplement, not a solution. Increased SNAP benefits would better allow people to choose how they spend in the grocery stores, which is a much more efficient way to distribute food," said Marth.

POTS's food pantry is set up like a grocery store, with aisles for dry and canned goods and a wall of refrigerators for meats, dairy and perishables. POTS follows a point system based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) MyPlate nutrition guidelines, meaning clients can't spend all their points on one food category, such as grains.

Clients lean on POTS after they've stretched their monthly SNAP allowance as far as it will go, Marth noted. "We see patterns, especially in our dining room," he said.

A family of four receiving the maximum amount of SNAP benefits gets \$640 a month to purchase groceries, which breaks down to about \$20 a day,



Image still courtesy BronxNet

KACIE CANDELA OF WFUV Radio speaks with Jack Marth, director of programs for POTS.

or about \$7 per meal. At the beginning of the month, that money is loaded onto a debit-style electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card. The recipient can only use it to purchase food items such as bread, produce, milk and meat. They cannot buy hot food, household supplies, medicine, alcohol, or tobacco products. SNAP benefits can be used at participating supermarkets, bodegas, and farmers markets.

Other clients at POTS don't receive SNAP at all due to immigration status. "If there's no one in the household who has documentation, or if they are undocumented and they're recent immigrants, there are all sorts of rules that restrict even documented immigrants from accessing benefits," Marth said.

But many qualifying SNAP recipients receive less than the maximum amount, said Dr. Mary Beth Combs, associate professor of economics at Fordham University. "What you get depends on your net income per month," Combs said. "The government expects every family receiving SNAP to spend 30 percent of its own resources on food. So they calculate whatever 30 percent of your net income is every month and subtract it from the maximum monthly

allotment."

For a family of four that has one full-time wage earner working 40 hours a week at minimum wage, their monthly SNAP allotment is reduced by about half because of their additional income.

According to Dr. Combs, those who would argue against increasing SNAP benefits view it as "a supplement to what people are already spending, and should incentivize spending money on nutritional foods."

But others would argue the limitations on SNAP mean money that fills the program gap do not go towards toiletries, cleaning products, or essentials like electricity or heat.

"I think there's a misimpression for folks who don't use SNAP that they think it's only for the most poor in our society, people on welfare, retired people with low Social Security or disabled folks," Marth said. "Many people who use our pantry work, but their wages are low. I oftentimes say that almost everything we do is a rent supplement program because housing costs are so extreme. A lot of our households are paying 60 to 100 percent of their cash income on rent."

The federal government has now proposed changes to the program that include the reduction of SNAP in favor of a so-called "Harvest Box"—a delivery of shelf-stable goods. Brandon Lipps of the USDA told the Associated Press SNAP recipients would still receive roughly 60 percent of their benefits to spend at grocery stores, particularly on the produce they won't be getting in the Harvest Box.

"Some problems with the Harvest Box that come to mind are the long-term health ramifications, short-term dietary needs, and the issue of autonomy and dignity," Dr. Combs said. "The proposal to date does not include fresh or even frozen fruits and vegetables—things most nutritionists would say are essential to a healthy diet."

"The second issue is that there are a lot of kids in our country that have tree and peanut allergies, and lots of processing plants in our country are also processing foods that contain tree nuts or peanuts," Dr. Combs said. "Having a Harvest Box arrive in your house when the government may not be able to guarantee there wasn't cross-contamination is a really serious issue for families where someone in the household has allergies."

Lipps told the Associated Press that SNAP recipients can buy fresh produce that's not in a Harvest Box at their local grocery store. But according to a 2008 report from the New York City Department of City Planning, most of the Bronx has a high need for supermarkets, making access to fresh, nutritious food a challenge. Nine out of 12 community districts in the borough fell short of the city's average supermarkets to population ratio.

To address the needs of SNAP recipients in food deserts, the USDA is piloting a program that allows beneficiaries to use their EBT card to order groceries directly to their home from online retailers such as Amazon, FreshDirect, and Wal-Mart. FreshDirect, which moved its distribution hub to Hunts Point, is now delivering to SNAP recipients in two zip codes in the South Bronx as part of the program.

"SNAP is a huge resource, but it in no way meets the needs of the community," said Marth.



HEALTH CHECK

Start Your Stop Smoking Plan

By **CINDY MENDOZA**

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), tobacco use through smoking is the most preventable cause of premature death in the United States. Tobacco use can lead to nicotine dependence. There is no safe way to use tobacco. Smokers have a higher risk of developing many serious health problems such as respiratory disease, lung cancer, heart disease, and stroke. Using tobacco in cigarettes, cigars, pipes or hookah are all equally harmful and stopping is the best way to start getting healthy.

Start your stop smoking plan with **START:**

S = Set a quit date.

Choose a date within the next two weeks, so you have enough time to

prepare without losing your motivation to quit. If you mainly smoke at work, quit on the weekend, so you have a few days to adjust to the change.

T = Tell family, friends, and co-workers that you plan to quit.

Let your friends and family in on your plan to quit smoking and tell them you need their support and encouragement to stop. Look for a quit buddy who wants to stop smoking as well. You can help each other get through the rough times.

A = Anticipate and plan for the challenges you'll face while quitting.

Most people who begin smoking again do so within the first three months. You can help yourself make it through by preparing ahead for

common challenges, such as nicotine withdrawal and cigarette cravings.

R = Remove cigarettes and other tobacco products from your home, car, and work.

Throw away all of your cigarettes, lighters, ashtrays, and matches. Wash your clothes and freshen up anything that smells like smoke. Shampoo your car, clean your drapes and carpet, and steam your furniture.

T = Talk to your doctor about getting help to quit.

Tobacco dependence is a condition

that often requires repeated treatments. Your doctor can prescribe medication to help with withdrawal symptoms. To assist you, there are also many helpful treatments and resources for quitting available over the counter at your local pharmacy. Some of those remedies include nicotine patches, lozenges, and gum.

Use **START** to stop smoking today!

Cindy Mendoza is a tobacco specialist for Montefiore Health System's Office of Community and Population Health.

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Monte Heads to Albany



Photo courtesy Montefiore Health System

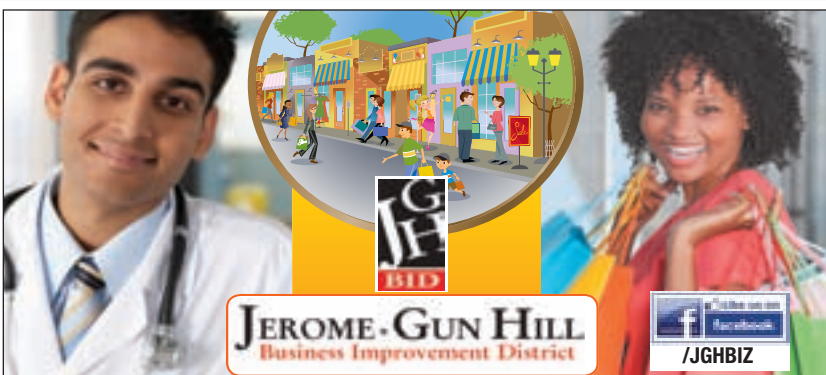
MONTEFIORE MEDICAL CENTER was well represented at the annual SOMOS el Futuro ("We are the Future") Conference in Albany on March 12. Stopping for a quick photo in front of the hospital's logo are (l-r) Montefiore's senior director for community and government relations Melissa Cebollero, government relations manager Mariela Salazar, New York State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, Montefiore's assistant vice president for community and population health Nicole Hollingsworth, and community relations manager Jason Caraballo.

Special Visit at PS 94



Photo by Niall Ridgley

SUPERBOWL CHAMP FOR the New England Patriots Malcolm Mitchell hangs out with students from PS 94 Kings College School in a special visit the NFL running back paid on Feb. 27. Mitchell spent the day reading to kids at the Norwood school as part of a tour plugging his children's book, "The Magician's Hat"



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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

GEDs and Paid Internships

Mosholu Montefiore Community Center offers the following for young adults ages 18 to 24: free classes and tutoring sessions to prepare for the exam to get their GED (orientation/registration sessions are held every Thursday at 3512 DeKalb Ave.); and 14-week paid internship to those who are not employed or enrolled in school, to receive training and workshops. For more information or to make an appointment, call Jessica Acevedo or Perlita Mendez at (718) 652-0282.

Free Tax Filing Assistance

Free tax filing is available for families whose total income is \$54,000 or less or individuals who make \$30,000 or less at the following locations: Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, 3450 DeKalb Ave. (appt: Dewayne Lee

at (718) 882-4000 ext. 209 or email DLee@mmcc.org; and SUNY Bronx Educational Opportunity Center, 1666 Bathgate Ave. (appt: (718) 530-7019). Applicants must bring a W2 and/or 1099 form or any other proof showing income, government-issued ID, social security card or ITIN number for self, spouse and dependents, a 1095 health form or health insurance statements and bank account information for those looking to have their tax refund direct deposited. Appointments are required.

Tax Help

Free tax preparation services are available at University Neighborhood Housing Program, 2715 Bainbridge Ave., with help from students from Manhattan College's O'Malley School of Business. The service is only available for qualified families with an income of \$54,000

or less and individuals with a gross income below \$30,000. Services are available, by appointment only, as follows: Wednesdays from 1 to 6 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (718) 933-2539.

Free Colonoscopy Screenings

Free colonoscopy screenings are available at St. Barnabas Hospital, 4487 Third Ave., to those ages 50 and older. No insurance is required. A colonoscopy determines whether any cancer symptoms are present in the body. For more information or to schedule a free colonoscopy, call (718) 960-9040.

College Fair

A free college fair is set for March 23 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) Bronx borough office, 2500 Halsey St. Representatives

from more than 100 colleges and universities will be present. No registration is needed for parents, though large groups must register at this link: <http://bit.ly/2HEpwGi>.

Scholarship Program

The National Puerto Rican Day Parade is accepting applications for its 2018 National Scholarship Program. The program will award a \$2,000 scholarship that will go towards college education. Applicants must be of Puerto Rican descent, have a 3.0 or higher grade point average, a high school senior or freshman through junior at a two- or four-year college/university, and have a proven track record of volunteer work or community service. Previous scholarship winners are eligible to apply. The deadline is March 30. For more detailed information or to apply, go to www.nprdpinc.org.

Pre-K Applications

Pre-K applications are available for families with children born in 2014. Families who submit a Pre-K application by the March 30 deadline will get an offer letter in May 2018. To apply, go online at nyc.gov/prek, call 311 to be directed to the New York City Department of Education, or visit the Family Welcome Center at 1 Fordham Plaza, 7th floor, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays or 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Fridays.

Heating Assistance

Sign up to receive free heating assistance through the New York State Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP). Eligible households can receive assistance of up to \$725. A family of four with a yearly income of \$53,482 can still qualify for help. For more information about eligibility, and to sign up, call (212) 331-3126.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

MMCC Spring Fest

Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, 3450 DeKalb Ave., holds its 2nd annual Spring Fest, March 24 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Events include open house, games, program demos, discounts, snacks and activities, and featuring an art show. For more information, call (718) 882-4000.

Onstage

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents **Chamber Music Concert**, March 17 at 2:30 p.m., featuring the Celia Cruz High School Orchestra. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Lehman College, 250 Bedford Pk., Blvd. W. presents free **concert** featuring members of the Lehman Chamber Players performing classical music, March 17 at 2 p.m. in the Music Building's Recital Hall, 3rd floor. For more information, call (718) 960-8247.

Lehman College's Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd. W. presents **National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba**, March 18 at 4 p.m. Tickets are \$25 to \$45; \$10/12 and under and seniors. For more information, call (718) 960-8830.

Lehman College's Lovinger Theatre, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents **Women's Empowerment Summit**, March 24 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. featuring powerful women sharing their secrets of financial independence and success. Breakfast and lunch provided. For more information, call (718) 933-5650 or (917) 640-1003.

Pregones Theatre, 571-575 Walton Ave.,

presents **Papo Vázquez Quartet**, March 17, **Rubi Rock & Rolí Neoyorquino**, March 24 (conversation with Rubí, March 23 at 1:30 p.m.); and **International Contemporary Ensemble + UpBeat NC**, March 31; all at 8 p.m.; and **Adam Jackson**, March 18 and **Ensemble Suite Iberia**, March 25; both free at 3 p.m. Tickets (non refundable) are \$15/rows B&C; \$30/advance online sales only; \$50/at the door; 25% off regular admission for members. For more information, call (718) 585-1202.

Hostos Community College, 450 Grand Concourse, presents **Legendary Cuban Voices**, March 23 at 7:30 p.m. in the Repertory Theatre. Tickets are \$25; \$5/ students. For more information, call (718) 518- 4455.

Events

Lehman College's Lovinger Theatre, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents **Women's Empowerment Summit**, March 24 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. featuring powerful women sharing their secrets of financial independence and success. Breakfast and lunch provided. For more information, call (718) 933-5650 or (917) 640-1003.

Williamsbridge Oval presents free: **Tiny Prints**: Baby and Toddler Program, Mondays 11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. and Fridays 12:15



File Photo

MMCC IS GEARING up for SpringFest, celebrating all the offerings on hand at the Norwood community center (see Editor's Pick for more information).



File Photo

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 will honor distinguished women at its second annual Women's Empowerment Summit (see Events for details).

to 1:15 p.m.; and **Spring Egg Hunt**, free (for ages to 11 years), March 31 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Events include egg hunt, carnival games, helmet distribution, arts & crafts, relay races, and visit from Easter bunny. Bring a can of food for donation to local pantry. For more information, call (718) 543-8672.

Bronx River Art Center (BRAC) presents art workshops at Bronx Community Board 6, 1932 Arthur Ave. (East Tremont Avenue), 4th floor, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. (for ages 6 to 12) and 2 to 4 p.m. (for teens and adults), as follows: **Drawing**, March 17; and **Sculpture**, March 24; (\$8/youth; \$10/adults; \$15/parent/child). For more information, call (718) 589-5819.

Mosholu Montefiore Senior Center, 3450 DeKalb Ave. offers **Model Seder**, March 28. For more information, call (718) 798-6601.

The COVE presents its **Youth Producers and Fashion Designers Showcase**, March 23 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Metropolitan College of New York 463 E. 149th St., 1st floor. Events include film and fashion projects, show and dinner. For more information and to RSVP, visit www.dare2dreambx.org.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Suminagashi and Orizomegami Papers, to learn Japanese art of paper marbling and dying, March 17 and 18; and Palisades in Plaster, to make your own sculptural rock formation or tint or color it to make a gem, March 24 and 25; both in the WH House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Grounds admission is free until noon Tuesdays and Saturdays all year. For more information and a schedule of events including tours and walks, call (718) 549-3200.

Bronx County Historical Society presents free lecture, **Dress and Undress: Women's Clothing During the American Revolution**, featuring clothing worn by upper, middle and lower classes during the 18th century, March 16 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Museum of Bronx History, 3266 Bainbridge Ave. (208th Street). For more information, call (718) 881-8900.

Exhibits

New York Botanical Garden presents **Orchid Show**, through April 22, in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory. Music and performers are featured on March 17 from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (\$28/members 21 years+; \$38/non members). For more information, call (718) 817-8616.

Bronx Documentary Center, 614 Courtlandt Ave., presents exhibit **"Father Figure: Exploring Alternative Notions of Black Fatherhood,"** through March 31, Thursdays

and Fridays 3 to 7 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays 1 to 5 p.m. For more information, call (718) 993-3512.

The Bronx County Historical Society presents **What Lies Beneath - Cemeteries of the Bronx**, through April 8, at the Museum of Bronx History, 3266 Bainbridge Ave. (208th Street). For more information, call (718) 881-8900.

Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse (at 165th Street), presents **Gordon Matta-Clark: Anarchitect**, and **Susannah Ray: A Further Shore**, both through April 8. For more information, call (718) 681-6000.

Library Events

The Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for children: **Hands-on Projects**: (ages 5 to 12; preregistration required): Flower Book Making, March 15; Bunny Basket Making, March 22, and Sun Collage Making, March 29, all at 4 p.m.; and Bag Making, March 18 and Bookmark Making, March 25, both at 3:30 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy: **Donate to the Dogs**: National Puppy Day is in March. Create toys to send to puppies at North Shore Animal League. Library has supplies or bring an old T-shirt or towels to donate, March 19 at 5 p.m.; and **film**: "Spider-Man," March 30 at 3:30 p.m. Adults can attend: **Microsoft Word 2010 for Beginners**, March 22; and **Computer Basics**, March 27; both at 2 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

The Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children: **Crafty Fridays at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), crafts, March 16 and 23; **Toddler Storytime at 10:30 a.m.**: (18 to 36 months), interactive stories, action songs, fingerplays and crafts, March 22 and 29; and **STEM: Kids Science at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), March 20 and 27. Teens/young adults can enjoy: **Craft-eens! at 3:30 p.m.**: Crafts on Wednesdays, (all materials are provided), March 21 and 28; and **film**: "Wonder," March 24 at 1:30 p.m. Adults can attend: **Knitting Circle**: Thursdays at 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

The Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road), offers for children: **puppetry**: (ages 5 to 12), "The Three Ancient Myths and My Annoying Sister," March 15 at 3:30 p.m.; and **film**: "Walle, Walle," about a lonely robot, March 24 at 2 p.m. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by March 19 for the next publication date of March 29.

Norwood Local Hits Brick Wall

(continued from page 1)

ing directly above Burgess's property since.

For months, Burgess has grappled with Khalil, the city Department of Buildings (DOB), and even the city Department of Health (DOH), engaging in a tiff rife with he-said-he-said moments, daily inconveniences, and the study of construction law.

With negotiations to resolve the issue at an impasse, the dispute may be headed to court, with Burgess saddled with mounting legal debt.

"I hope you can afford [your lawyer's] fees," Khalil wrote to Burgess in a recent text message following the breakdown of a proposed agreement that would have allowed Khalil to legally allow construction workers to enter the space of his property to perform work.

Burgess filed his first complaints almost immediately after construction, as work had already begun to shake his building at all hours. It worsened from there, as more and more construction-related issues surfaced.

Licensing

Typically, any developer who expects some construction work to spill over to a resident's property must get a legally binding license that's approved by the homeowner, in this case Burgess, and signed off by the DOB.

But Burgess, who's expanded his skillset into real property law, says that never happened. And he's entitled to it.

"They have to protect your property. I use my backyard," Burgess said. "My daughter uses my backyard. She plays, she dances. I use my backyard, I work on bikes; I have a basketball court back there. If you wanna use it, we gotta find some middle ground."

According to Burgess, in an initial good faith meeting last year, Khalil said he was unaware of the licensing process, later hinting that he often slipped neighboring property owners from his previous proj-

ects a couple hundred dollars in exchange for accessing their property. Burgess claims that Khalil's understanding of the legal process crystallized the moment lawyers got involved. "Now all of a sudden, lawyers involved, he understands what licensing means," said Burgess.

Burgess has since filed DOB complaints related to the encroachment, with one grievance related to a restaurant duct that ventilated food odors into his home.

Underpinning Fears

The initial meeting proved to be a smoke screen from Burgess's vantage. At the meeting, Burgess was promised construction plans and that no underpinning—a process that reinforces a home's foundation to prevent it from collapsing—would take place. Underpinning, often utilized when construction of a nearby structure could cause neighboring foundations to shake, can potentially devalue a home.

When Burgess began to suspect underpinning took place, he took the advice of a surveyor he hired and checked his property after noticing a large pit was being excavated along the side of his house.

He went to the Bronx borough DOB office and was able to obtain building plans for the construction, which suggested that Khalil's company had underpinned the property. Speaking with the *Norwood News*, Khalil said all the plans should be publically available and asserted that no underpinning took place.

Burgess returned to the DOB in late October and was able to personally meet with Bronx Borough DOB Commissioner Werner deFoe.

"[H]e says, 'No, they would never do this, why would they [do this]?' So he is looking through his big ol' fancy computer and he says, 'Oh. I think they underpinned your property,'" said Burgess.

When the *Norwood News* recounted Burgess's version of events to the DOB, an agency

spokeswoman clarified no underpinning happened and that the notation was a mistake on an old building permit application.

Deadlock

Burgess drafted up a settlement that would allow Khalil to perform work on his property. Burgess spent about \$12,000 in lawyer's fees for it. Khalil showed initial interest in the deal, but weeks later rejected it. Burgess claims this shift was spurred by Khalil's displeasure at a clause requiring Khalil to remove scaffolding by a certain date or face a fine. Khalil disputed Burgess's version of events telling the *Norwood News* he actually declined over Burgess's request, comparing it to Burgess demanding 'ransom money.' Currently, parties stand deadlocked as a stop work order is in place until Khalil makes an effort to protect Burgess's roof from the rising construction.

But the stop work orders haven't really stopped work at all. Construction has since

reached six stories despite orders that were filed to cease construction when the building was only at five stories. DOB violations and civil fines have come and gone, and multiple stop work orders have been summarily dropped after quick and, Burgess believes, suspect inspections by Manhattan based Building Enforcement Safety Team (BEST) squads, who report to the DOB.

"I would like to go to court. The problem with that is that gets very expensive... my lawyer says when you go to court that's going to cost you, you know, another \$10,000," said Burgess. "But in one sense I want to go to court because I want them to explain to a judge how they got to the sixth floor."

For now, Burgess remains convinced his home was underpinned, going so far as to dig through his tile and into the dirt in an effort to discover the underpinning. He couldn't afford the \$10,000 an engineer might charge.



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The Academy of Mount .st. Ursula

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For over 162 years, AMSU has been offering an exceptional Ursuline education to young women in grades 9-12. We challenge students to respond to the call to scholarship, leadership and service. All lessons and activities are infused with the values of Catholic education, rooted in the Gospels.

AMSU remains strongly committed to its programs in Academics, Arts and Service. Academics: The Class of 2017 earned nearly \$17.5 million in academic scholarships and 100% of them were accepted to college. Arts: Classes in visual arts, music, theater and media are required. Service: Each student must perform at least 10 hours of service each year. We encourage all of our young women to be leaders in society, and they do!



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