



NORWOOD NEWS

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'SUPER' NEWS FOR STAGG BLDG. TENANTS

Live-in super now resident at Bedford Park Manor, say Stagg Group owners



Photo by José A. Giralto

ZXAVIER SIMPSON, (L), a tenant at The Bedford Park Manor, speaks at the Community Board 7 Housing, Land Use, & Zoning Committee meeting on March 12. Seated (r) is Javier Monroy, property manager at the Stagg Group.

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

After an unrelenting pressure campaign on the owner of 2985, 2987, and 2999 Webster avenues to provide a live-in super to respond to complaints quickly, tenants finally got one, rectifying one of their big-

gest complaints spoken about over the last few months.

In a growing list of complaints by tenants against the Stagg Group, owner of the three-building complex, collectively known as Bedford Park Manor, many of those

revolved around the lack of an on-site super to attend to maintenance and repair issues in a timely manner. Austin Graham, director of business development at the Stagg Group, said, "We want our tenants to know that we listen to

every complaint and have addressed their biggest concern, a live-in super." The super will work from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and will be on call for 24 hours.

The Bedford Park Manor opened in April 2015 as the
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IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Struggling Kingsbridge Heights Strip Could Get Leg Up With Small Business Bills Package

By EMILY SUZANNE LEVER

With evictions of business tenants on the rise across the city, particularly in the Bronx, City Council members looked toward solutions during a meeting of the Committee on Small Business on March 18.

And the benefits could be felt in Kingsbridge Heights' financially squeezed business corridor.

In a preliminary budget hearing, the committee discussed some bills aiming to protect commercial tenants by passing laws similar to those protecting residential tenants. Other proposals focused on information-gathering, such as a proposal for a database tracking empty storefronts.

"These businesses are key to the ability to start a new life and eventually enter the middle class. But this is under threat," Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal, one of the authors of a package of bills aimed at strengthening the small business sector, said in a statement ahead of the hearing.

In a city that's gotten even more expensive, City Council members have sought to add greater protections to the small business sector. One law on the books currently protects business tenants: a 2016 law that defines and prohibits commercial tenant harassment. But adding to that law is urgent, according to Christian Ramos, president of the Kingsbridge Road Merchants Association.

"Thank God we have one law, but that's a little baby thing," Ramos told the *Norwood News* in a previous interview. "It's baby steps. We need a lot more."

Several Kingsbridge Heights merchants currently have no leases from their building owner.



Submitted by Emily Suzanne Lever

THIS GRAPH DETAILS the number of commercial tenant evictions for every 100 businesses in New York City. The Bronx leads with four evictions out of every 100 businesses.

The bills come as the number of commercial evictions since January 2017 inches toward 4,000, even as residential evictions are down overall, according to city data. The Bronx averaged four evictions per 100 businesses—a rate twice as high as Brooklyn and Queens, which were the next most-affected boroughs—according to *Norwood News* analysis of city and U.S. Census data.

Rosenthal's bill, which would require the city Department of Small Business Services (SBS) to create and maintain a database of empty storefronts, follows years of complaints by advocates that vacancies are a blight on commercial thoroughfares.

Manhattan Councilman Mark Levine introduced a bill for free legal representation for small business tenants facing eviction—a measure similar to the Universal Access Program, which, in the neighborhoods where it has been implemented so far (in the Bronx, the 10457, 10462, 10467 and 10468 zip codes), guarantees free legal counsel to any tenant in housing court.

SBS Commissioner Gregg Bishop

highlighted at the hearing the difference legal services can make, saying, "The conversation changes when a lawyer is present." The city currently offers free legal services to small businesses, but only to the point before the parties go to court. Small business owners who are already in court cannot use these city services.

While bills introduced in committees are just drafts and not finalized, Levine's bill currently covers lessees, or commercial tenants with a signed lease—a crucial source of power that small businesses all over the city lack, especially in some parts of the Bronx like the

Kingsbridge Road and Jerome Avenue corridors.

"A lease is the biggest deterrent to harassment or displacement," Gregg said. "If a landlord doesn't want to issue a lease, under state law there's nothing we can do to make them."

Councilwoman Vanessa Gibson, who represents the Concourse, Highbridge, Morris Heights, Morrisania, and other areas affected by the Jerome Avenue rezoning plan in 2018, said that tenants without leases need protection too. She argued the city should stop tenant harassment before legal action such as eviction takes place. "There's a whole village of businesses that have been known to be harassed by their owners," Gibson said at the committee.

To that end, Gibson introduced a "certification of no harassment" bill, which would require commercial landlords to prove they have not harassed their tenants in order to get permits from the city Department of Buildings for major construction work. A pilot program for a similar measure for housing launched earlier this year, on Jerome Avenue.

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 committee meetings are held on the following dates at the board office, 229A E. 204th St. at 6:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted: Environment & Sanitation Committee meets on April 2; Education, Youth & Libraries Committee meets on April 3; Traffic & Transportation Committee meets on April 4; Housing, Land Use & Zoning Committee meets on April 9; and Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs Committee meets on April 10. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 hosts a Public Safety Forum at St. James Park Recreation Center, 2530 Jerome Ave., on April 6 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

The **52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meets March 28 at Cosmopolitan AME Church, 39 W. 190th St., at 7 p.m. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.

The **BEDFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION** meets April 3 at 8 p.m. at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. So., Apt. B1 (lobby floor). For more information, email bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.

Norwood's Muslim Community Reacts to New Zealand Attacks

By **EMILY SUZANNE LEVER**

Over 9,000 miles away from New Zealand, the murder of Muslim worshippers in the town of Christchurch had resonance in one of the Bronx's Muslim communities.

A killer who expressed white supremacist beliefs targeted two mosques full of congregants during Friday's March 15 prayers in Christchurch, New Zealand and appears to have live streamed himself shooting dozens of people. The anti-Muslim attack, in which a reported 49 people were murdered, was deeply felt worldwide—including in Norwood, home to a significant Muslim community.

"We are just praying for everybody," said Mohammed Shuaib Uddin, a pharmacist at the People's Pharmacy in Norwood. "As a human being, we know we are not forever in this world. We should live peacefully and die naturally, not like this."

While the killings rattled the community, many were also angry at the way the events had been reported in the media and were being discussed by the public.

"People are calling him a shooter and not calling him a terrorist," said a local teenager whose name is being withheld. "People use the word terrorist for Muslims, but if they're non-Muslim, they don't call him a terrorist."

New York City is no stranger to violence against Muslims. In August 2016, an imam and his assistant were shot at point-blank range while walking home from the mosque in Ozone Park, Queens.

Norwood's two masjids, or mosques—one on Perry Avenue, and another space on East 206th Street—remained open for prayer on Friday, despite the possible risks. There were no police parked outside at the East 206th Street mosque, unlike other mosques that had seen a more prominent police presence.

"They are continuing," said a Norwood resident who identified herself as Ms. Ahmed. "It is not to stop. They are continuing doing their prayer."

"We are just praying for everybody. As a human being, we know we are not forever in this world. We should live peacefully and die naturally, not like this"

—**MOHAMMED SHUAIB UDDIN, PHARMACIST
PEOPLE'S PHARMACY,
NORWOOD**



Photo by Emily Suzanne Lever

THE SOON-TO-OPEN NORTH Bronx Islamic Center in Norwood at East 206th Street and Rochambeau Avenue.

Have an Opinion On What You've Read in Our Paper?

The Norwood News loves, welcomes and encourages letters to the editor.



Write To:
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Editor-in-Chief
Norwood News

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Letters should be 400 words max, and include writer's name. Anonymous letters will not be published, but names will be withheld upon reasonable request.

INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week we asked readers if students should be accepted into specialized high schools on the basis of one test, or should the acceptance process be changed completely?



Yes, I think it should be based on more than one test or maybe even something other than a test like overall grades. Some kids volunteer, maybe the extra work they do. Anything that shows how far they've been educated and what they know. Someone can recognize how good one is without the basis of a test. They should even look at a student's interests.

Richard Berroa
Mt. Eden



Yes, I feel like the middle schools that we go to, to prepare for this test aren't really preparing us enough so I feel the state that funds the schools should get us better textbooks and better teachers. Yes, admission should be based on other things, they should look into that.

Safina Davis
Pelham Parkway



I believe acceptance should be based on a number of things. however, I do think we're focusing too much on the issue. Why is it there is a minimum of these specialized high schools? Why can't we have more of these high schools all over the borough? They should be investing money in our schools like they should be, the money is always there, like for all of these buildings going up, but nobody is talking about infrastructure.

Maros Sierra
Van Cortlandt Park South



I believe specialized high schools should take into consideration many factors, such as grades from the past year, community work and associations as well as their test score and an essay done by the student on why they chose a particular school as well as their career goals. Teaching myself for many years, I know that not every student is a good test-taker or are skilled in writing. The collaboration of all of these methods would give more students a fairer chance and would bring a more diverse selection of students to each school.

Bailey Provetto
Country Club



I think a student's grades, extracurricular activities, and achievements are a better indication of a student's potential and abilities than a singular test. Also, based on the recent college admission scandal where proctors were paid off and hired stand-ins who took the exam, a single exam is susceptible to corruption. Lastly, students should strive to success in all the various parts of their academic lives, not strive to pass a single test that may impact the rest of their lives.

Roxanne Delgado
Pelham Parkway



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At E. 204th Street and Bainbridge Avenue, Changes to its Retail Landscape

By SHA-NIA ALSTON

Change is always a constant at commercial strips, and the line of small businesses along Bainbridge Avenue and East 204th Street is no exception.

The last 12 months have seen changes at the corridor; from construction of new housing and office space, to the expansion of some businesses, to the establishment of new ones. All this comes amid the ongoing presence of empty storefronts that yearn to be occupied.

The vacancies are certainly on the mind of Daniela Beasley, program manager at Mosholu Preservation Corporation (MPC, publishers of the *Norwood News*), who conducted a Commercial District Needs Assessment on Bainbridge Avenue, East 204th Street, and neighboring Webster Avenue, examining the overall business trends and needs of the neighborhoods.

In her assessment Beasley found a lot of room for growth for new opportunities as well improvement on the old, saying that a number of businesses requested help with marketing their businesses to the neighborhood while also helping to re-negotiate their commercial leases. The initiatives are being helped by grant funding MPC secured through the New York City Small Business Services.

The assessment also found a total of 14 commercial businesses along Bainbridge Avenue and East 204th Street that still remain vacant, have the potential to be filled. While these storefronts remain empty, current ones have either expanded or conformed to current demographics.

Crazy Fruits, a smoothie bar that originally sold its drinks at Sal's Pizzeria & Restaurant, is an example of this. Now they have their own storefront on Bainbridge Avenue near East Van Cortlandt Avenue. They credit most of their growth to producing a product that is in high demand. According to several local business owners, customers are demanding healthier options along the corridor.

"They look for these healthy things themselves. A lot of people come to us with different recipes," Kirv Coylot, co-owner of Crazy Fruits, said.

Now Crazy Fruits has over 100



Photo by Adi Talwar

AT THE CORNER of East 204th Street and Hull Avenue in Norwood a construction crew member clears what was once McDwyer's Pub.

recipes including acai bowls, which was one of many customer suggestions. Their selection joins the number of Mexican-inspired juices and smoothies that provide a variety of health benefits that ward off obesity, illness, and poor skin.

Crazy Fruits is joined by La Casa De Frida, a restaurant that opened in 2012. Sandra Esclant, the owner, seeks a more family-friendly vibe to the Mexican fusion restaurant. She also hopes to create an atmosphere where patrons will stop by a first and second time to the point where they "know you by name." La Casa De Frida comes as the number of residents of Mexican descent steadily increases in Norwood. Population estimates show Mexicans make up 16 percent of the residents of Norwood.

Esclant also plans to expand the business by adding a backyard area where people can sit outside and enjoy their meals.

Resident Joe Martinez has seen his fair share of change in Norwood's commercial strip on Bainbridge Avenue leading into East 204th Street.

Current retailers have replaced some of Martinez's earlier childhood favorites, which included James Sneaker Store on Bainbridge Avenue between Perry and Hull avenues. Now, the store has been replaced by a T-Mobile. Change can be a good thing, according to Martinez.

"We miss the stores because of the nostalgia purposes, but when it comes down to it, you're going to pay your phone bill at T-Mobile, you're

gonna get your dog food from Beny's, you're going to open your savings account at Chase," Martinez said, referencing the number of current businesses at the strip.

Salvatore Mirro, owner of the 36-year Hillside Meat Market on Bainbridge Avenue, has noticed these changes. Mirro adapts to the needs of new clientele by answering questions and offering suggestions, especially as it pertains to ever-growing Middle Eastern community. Back in the 1990s, residents of Irish descent dominated Norwood.

"A lot more businesses are coming in; a lot of different people. I believe it is good for the neighborhood," Mirro said.

These days, any hint of Irish culture along the strip has virtually vanished. At the corner of Hull Avenue and East 204th Street, green boards have covered the now-closed McDwyer's Pub, one of the last Irish holdouts in Norwood. The pub had been in business for more than 50 years.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Speed Camera Expansion

The State Legislature passed a bill to expand the use of speed cameras in New York City school zones intended to encourage drivers to ride with caution through school zones. “This is a huge victory for safe streets,” New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said. “We applaud the Assembly and the Senate for helping us tackle avoidable tragedies on our streets by dramatically expanding our speed camera program. This is another key tool that we will use to aggressively pursue Vision Zero and to save lives across the city.” A total of 750 school zones in New York City will receive speed cameras, which will operate Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. The city will be tasked to install signs giving notice that a speed camera is in use.

—David Cruz

Torres Congressional Run?

Councilman Ritchie Torres is considering running for congress against Congressman Jose Serrano, who announced he will not run the 15th Congressional District seat in 2020. Torres would potentially run in 2020 Democratic primary. He was elected in 2013, serving as the first openly gay candidate elected to office in the Bronx. Torres currently represents the 15th Council District and the Council’s progressive caucus. He confirmed his interest in running to the New York Post recently, saying “Stay tuned!”

—Sha-Nia Alston

Norwood’s Fight Against MCIs

The Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition, and other tenants rights groups rallied on March 26 to put an end to Major Capital Improvements (MCIs) at 3425 Gates Pl. in Norwood. MCIs are rent increases that landlords can put on rent-stabilized homes and apartments following big construction projects such as the installation of boilers, windows, and roofs. The issue comes amid the looming

Fire Knocks Out Three Businesses in Busy Fordham



Photo by Miriam Quinones

FIREFIGHTING TEAMS SPEND more than two hours fighting the blaze at 2467 Webster Ave. that was reported at 12:45 p.m., and put out by 3 p.m.

By DAVID CRUZ

It was a dramatic scene on Webster Avenue near Fordham Road as crews battled a raging fire that destroyed a 24-hour Laundromat and several other businesses.

The fire happened at noon on March 22, with fire crews saying it began at Express Laundry, a 24-hour Laundromat at 2467 Webster Ave. that’s been there for nearly 20 years. Fire crews were spotted on the ladder hosing down the property that included a Domino’s Pizza. A beauty parlor, deli store, and a locksmith busi-

ness suffered some flooding damage. Fire could be smelled as far away as Lehman College. More than 160 firefighters and EMS personnel responded to the blaze that was under control at around 3 p.m. Winds did not help firefighters take out the blaze faster.

Traffic was closed off on busy Webster Avenue between Fordham Road and East 188th Street.

Two firefighters sustained minor injuries. Fire marshals are investigating the cause of the fire.

Additional reporting by Miriam Quinones.



Photo by David Greene

WHAT REMAINS OF Express Laundry at 2467 Webster Ave. and Domino’s Pizza following the four-alarm blaze.

fight in Albany to reform the state’s rent laws that impact the Bronx.

—Sha-Nia Alston

Urban Planner Sought

Despite a budget to hire an urban planning consultant, Community Board 7 still has been unable to fill the role they put out since February. The consultant will help “document, monitor, and analyze trends in housing and economic development” for

the board covering Norwood, Bedford Park, Fordham, Kingsbridge Heights, and University Heights. “Obviously, we want someone with specific skills in urban planning because if I have to walk them through it, it defeats the purpose of us paying them,” said Ischia Bravo. An urban planning consultant was hired two years ago to determine whether parts of Bedford Park and Kingsbridge Heights can be down-zoned.

—David Cruz

It’s The Bronx Postponed

Organizers for “It’s The Bronx,” aimed at showcasing the borough’s cultural arts scene, postponed their anticipated event two days before it was scheduled to launch. No explanation was given, and there’s been no reschedule date. The organizers were behind the popular “Bronx Night Market” that kicked off last summer.

—David Cruz



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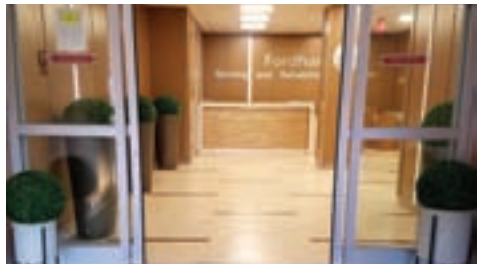
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- On-Ste Dialysis (Wormen's & Morningside)

Campaign for More Norwood Spots Results in Progress

By DAVID CRUZ, SHA-NIA ALSTON,
And ALONDRA VASQUEZ

Parking remains a challenge for Norwood residents and employees who work in the neighborhood. But a campaign led by Councilman Andrew Cohen was able to chip away at one of the top issues that have long plagued the north Bronx community.

"I gave them a list, and they made good on it," Cohen said, to the city Department of Transportation, which moved ahead with the traffic regulation change.

It's at the quiet section on Putnam Place between East Gun Hill Road and Reservoir Oval East where the DOT removed a "No Parking Monday/Friday 8 a.m. - 6 p.m." restriction, replacing it with a less severe "No Parking Monday/Thursday 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m." sign.

Last year, Cohen examined the lack of parking for himself, finding that Norwood not only had a lack of spots but potential spots were not being used due to outdated signage. Cohen followed up with the DOT, which led to the new spaces opening.

Though the new spots can be welcoming to the neighborhood, it's not a quick fix to the daily challenge of finding one.



Photo by David Cruz

DOT OFFICIALS INSTALLED a "No Parking Monday/Thursday 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m." sign (inset) at Putnam Place between East Gun Hill Road and Reservoir Oval East, which replaced the "No Parking Monday/Friday 8 a.m. - 6 p.m." sign.

From Reservoir Oval to Gates Place, scouring for a spot can be a time-consuming endeavor. In one parking horror story, Cohen heard of a driver forced to sleep in their car because they couldn't secure a spot.

Cohen hopes to ensure parking is more accessible in Norwood. "I am going

to continue to look on a spot by spot basis. I think that can make a difference," Cohen said.

Weekdays are so problematic, employees around the neighborhood find themselves moving their vehicles on what is supposed to be their lunch break. Or even having to park in inconvenient spaces or

pay a fee for garage parking.

Emma, a hospital employee spent 90 minutes looking for parking. It was so bad that not only did she have to park by Van Cortlandt Park, she then had to walk 20 minutes from her space to work.

A Norwood resident stood in disbelief when learning about the new public parking spots made available in Putnam Place. He said, "You look around for parking at night and you end up going upstairs at daylight." While shaking his head "no," he was unaware of any new public parking spots around the neighborhood.

Israel Gonzalez, another resident, shared the difficulties he has with finding parking spaces in the area. He was aware that Putnam Place had new parking spots made available for the public. But he said that doesn't change anything because he eventually has to park on Jerome Avenue, several blocks away from Putnam Place.

"The problem is that the hospital is there, and the school is there and during the weekdays the nurses, doctors, and teachers start looking for parking spaces and when you look for a spot during the afternoon you won't find a parking spot."

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Mixed Martial Arts Registration Starts:

Monday, March 25th for Member
Wednesday, March 27th for Non-Member
Classes are 1x week or 2x week for 8 weeks
Prices Starting for Member: \$65

Group Swim Registration Starts:

Registration ends on March 10th
Classes are 1x week for 8 weeks
Member: \$90; Non-Member: \$120

Salsa Registration Starts:

Monday, April 8th for Member
Wednesday, April 10th for Non-Member
Classes are 1x week for 8 weeks
Member: \$96; Non-Member: \$144

Alvin Ailey Dance Registration Starts:

Monday, May 6th for Member
Wednesday, May 8th for Non-Member
Classes are 1x week for 8 weeks
Member: \$80; No-Member: \$120



**new settlement
community center**



NORWOOD NEWS

S N A P S H O T S



Photo courtesy Bronx Borough President's Office

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT Ruben Diaz Jr. (at stand) leads a rally opposing the proposed site of a new detention center in the Bronx that's part of a larger plan to close Riker's Island. Diaz lamented at the March 24 rally at City Hall that the site is inappropriate, and that another empty lot near the Bronx Criminal Courthouse, is a more suitable spot. The plan is now going through the lengthy public review process.



Photo by José A. Giralt

CARDINAL TIMOTHY DOLAN, archbishop of New York (second from right), poses with parents and staff during a visit to the Monsignor Boyle Head Start Program in Norwood on March 14.



Photo by Miriam Quinones

AT MOSHOLU MONTEFIORE Community Center's third annual SpringFest, aimed at showcasing some of the offerings at its center, three-year-old Sohelys Planco, makes a stress ball using sand and a balloon. The family-friendly gathering also featured a bounce house, arts and crafts, and support from local elected officials.



Photo by José A. Giralt

COUNCILMAN RITCHIE TORRES (second from right) promotes the partnership with Urban Unbound, providing free tax preparation for residents of his district, on March 15. This is the fifth year of their partnering and so far this tax season they have prepared 208 federal tax returns totaling \$385,000. Flanking the councilman are (l-r) Mildred Teller, Bishop Mitchell G. Taylor, founder and CEO of Urban Upbound; and Joanna Esposito. Teller and Esposito had their taxes prepared through the program.



Photo courtesy Bronx Borough President's Office

WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT was on display at a panel discussion at Fordham University in celebration of Women's History Month. (L-r) Deputy Bronx Borough President Marricka Scott-McFadden, state Sen. Alessandra Biaggi, Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez representing Norwood, and Assemblywoman Karines Reyes. Biaggi, Fernandez, and Reyes received honors by the Bronx Borough President's Office, which organized the event on March 21.



Photo courtesy Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District

ERIC PARKER, (R) BUSINESS outreach liaison with the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS), educates a manager at the local discount store on Jerome Avenue on March 20 over city rules and regulations relating to the small business sector. SBS spent the day stopping at several stores along the Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District to offer an update.



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BRONX CONNECTIONS: THE HEALTH IMPACT

Part 3 of 5

The Norwood News, WFUV Radio, and BronxNet Television present a five-part series on health-related struggles affecting residents of the Bronx.

Urgent Care Offers Lower Costs and Wait Times, But at a Price

By JULIA ROSE HERMAN of



As urgent care centers pop up across the Bronx, Dr. Barry Baker, a private practitioner, prefers the traditional physician-patient model. But it doesn't mean he doesn't keep one foot in the urgent care trend.

Dr. Baker, who has an office in Throggs Neck, always knew he wanted to go into private practice. "I saw an ad in *The New York Times* 'Practice for Sale'—I contacted the husband and wife who owned the practice and they were on Castle Hill Avenue. They were practicing for 49 years and we got to have a nice relationship, and that's how I ended up in the Bronx," said Dr. Baker.

"What makes my situation ideal is I'm the only doctor in this office. It's always best to stay with the same provider so that the provider knows you and he understands your problems and your family situation so he can follow through and make things a lot easier and understand your situation," said Dr. Baker.

Dr. Baker is something of a rarity. About 15 years ago, he wanted to start offering patients care whenever they needed it. He began accepting walk-ins, formalizing it in 2012 when he put a sign outside his office reading, "Urgent Care Walk-ins Welcome." He is not an urgent care doctor, but unlike regular physicians, he will see patients that same day if they need it urgently.

According to Dr. Baker, it is very uncommon for doctors to see patients on the same day they need care. "They like to keep to a schedule and sometimes it makes other patients who have an appointment unhappy that walk-ins go in before them," said Dr. Baker, who also manages his current load of regular patients.

For Julius Chen, an associate professor at Columbia University Mail-



Photo still by BronxNet Television

DR. BARRY BAKER, who has a medical practice in Throggs Neck, outlines the way he practices medicine as urgent care facilities rise in popularity.

man School of Public Health, urban area residents value convenience, low wait times, and the option to get care wherever and whenever they want. Given the ubiquitous times they are open, urgent care appeals to patients afflicted with basic illnesses, such as a cold, which can be treated quickly. It also helps lower wait times at emergency rooms.

The flipside, according to Chen, lies in the inherent short-term relationship between urgent care doctors and patients. "You basically walk into the urgent care clinic and see whatever doctor happens to be in that day. They treat you and you leave. But there's no guarantee that that information will be provided to your primary care physician, or to other specialists," said Chen, referring to test results, diagnosis, prognosis, or other pertinent information.

According to Chen, this poses a problem for diagnosing and treating chronic illnesses. "Primary care physicians are the ones who are able

to deliver continuity of care," Chen said, opening up the potential for being misdiagnosed or not receiving accurate treatment.

Urgent care, however, has so far worked for Theresa, a patient at City MD Urgent Care in Fordham who declined to give her last name, and fits into this category. Theresa came down with the flu and opted for urgent care instead of going to her primary doctor's office. She said she went to urgent care because "it's quicker." Her primary care doctor "takes too long to give me an appointment," she said. "So, urgent care is the best thing they ever made, honestly."

Lontrina Kinsey is another Bronx resident who goes to urgent care for its convenience. She has gone "more than seven times because I have an asthmatic baby and another bouncy baby boy. And sometimes if he is coughing or something like that, then I feel my parenting nervousness. So I'll just go there, checkup and clear them of anything. It's very

good."

Data collected by The Urgent Care Association shows "a median of 35 percent of patients seeking care at urgent care centers are unaffiliated with a primary care provider or medical home" nationwide.

Dr. Baker said when he gets a call from an urgent care facility regarding one of his patients he provides the information they need on the spot. "But the patient's medical record, X-rays and laboratory results are not usually available to the urgent care facility. "So if they do go to an urgent care facility I usually recommend that the urgent care facility send the patient back to me where I have access to many laboratory tests and information, so there can be continuity of care," said Dr. Baker.

The US Census Bureau estimates 11.1 percent of Bronx residents are uninsured, lowering their chance of having a primary care doctor. That number has been steadily decreasing since 2013 as more Bronx residents become insured.

What's increasing is a greater push for a so-called "patient-centered medical home," where one provider is "at the center of your treatment and can kind of direct your course of care," said Chen.

"Urgent care clinics don't really fall into that model. They're more like a one off. You just happen to have some sort of injury or some type of immediate health need and you go there and get treatment and you don't really interact with that urgent care clinic again," said Chen, adding there's very little follow-up and no developing relationship.

According to Dr. Baker, patients prefer speed of care over quality of care. "I think that the neighborhood has become younger and they're not family-based as much as they use to be. And patients want to be treated very quickly and appropriately," he said.

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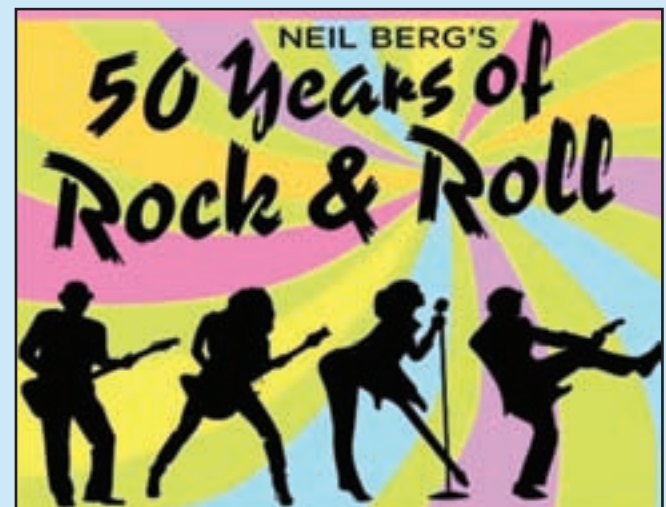
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BRONX CONNECTIONS: The Impact of Legal Weed (Part 1 of 2)

The Norwood News, WFUV Radio, and BronxNet Television present a two-part report on the debate to legalize recreational marijuana use in New York State.

By JULIA RIST and THERESA SCHLIEP

of



In 2003, 17-year-old Anthony Posada was thrown against a wall and held at gunpoint by two plainclothes NYPD detectives in Jackson Heights, Queens. With no uniform, Posada initially thought he was being robbed by two men.

"The feeling of powerlessness was stunning," Posada said. "It was paralyzing. My experience with law enforcement up to that day was already one where I couldn't say or do anything."

The plainclothes detectives found a small amount of marijuana in Posada's pocket. Posada was then taken to the local precinct and spent the night in jail before his hearing. Posada said the detectives were looking for any excuse to arrest him.

"There was no probable cause," he said. "I was just another Latino going down the street at the wrong time and place."

Now, as the debate rages over whether New York State should be next to legalize marijuana—with Governor Andrew Cuomo hinting over the possibility the measure is not completely removed from the budget due April 1—Posada believes there is a major racial disparity in marijuana arrests and charges. He's seen it for himself as the supervising attorney for the Bronx-based Legal Aid Society's Community Justice Unit, where he helps clients facing the same marijuana-related charges as he did when he was 17. The majority of his client base is black and Hispanic.

Posada said legalizing marijuana could change things for the better, but it's not a quick fix. "Legalizing marijuana will not get rid of practices within policing that are blatantly racist, but it would take away one of those tools that contributes immensely to that," Posada said.

"Marijuana Arrest Capital of the World"

Many see the legalization of recreational marijuana as a criminal



Photo by BronxNet Television

(L-R) WFUV RADIO hosts Theresa Schliep and Julia Rist lead a forum on BronxNet Television dubbed "The Impact of Legal Weed" on March 21, interviewing state Sen. Jamaal Bailey, special associate counsel for The Bronx Defenders Eli Northrup, Bronx Community 11 member Joseph Thompson, and Dr. Chinazo Cunningham of Montefiore Health System's Internal Medicine Department.

justice issue. Despite generally proportional marijuana usage rates, blacks and Latinos are more likely to be arrested or issued summonses in the United States for marijuana possession. The same goes for New York City where Mayor Bill de Blasio announced last year the city issue summonses instead of making arrests for marijuana possession, except those who have past arrests or convictions.

Despite the decrease in marijuana-related arrests in 2018, the majority of those issued summonses for marijuana possession among blacks and Hispanics rose by the end of the year. Before the city's announcement to end marijuana arrests, 81 percent of those issued summons were black and Latino. After the announcement, the same group accounted for 88 percent of summonses, according to NYPD data.

The NYPD said reductions in arrests and summonses is progress towards making the city safer. "The NYPD has dramatically reduced arrests and summonses for marijuana-related offenses. This new policy is an important step toward less intrusive enforcement while we continue to drive down crime to record lows

and New York City remains the safest big city," said an NYPD spokesman via email.

And although the number of arrests went down, the portion of blacks and Hispanics increased from 88 percent to 91 percent.

Summonses and arrests generally have the same results: fines, court appearances, and jail time for repeat offenders. Eli Northrup, associate special counsel for The Bronx Defenders, a nonprofit legal service for low-income residents, says the results of enforcement are not limited to those specific infractions. Convictions can lead to problems in immigration, housing, and family courts.

"If you have these convictions on your record, they can prevent you from moving forward," he said. Northrup said he recently had a client who was unable to get housing because of a marijuana conviction from 2014. The bulk of clients represented by The Bronx Defenders are black or Latino. Northrup said a lot of his cases involve marijuana offenses.

With the marijuana Bronx Defenders wants records sealed so these offenses can't follow their clients. This policy position reflects those of many in the New York State Legislature, as

well as citywide office.

Marijuana's Micro-Economics

Some advocates and lawmakers also want to see the tax revenue reinvested back to communities damaged by over-policing. Jag Davies, communications strategist for Drug Policy Alliance, a non-profit organization dedicated to ending the war on drugs, said his organization wants to avoid the corporatization that the tobacco and alcohol industries went through.

"[W]e need to make it easy for people in those communities to have access to the legal marijuana industry so they can get jobs and own businesses," said Davies.

Drug Policy Alliance has advocated for a micro-licensing structure, which would give licenses to small business marijuana growers. Davies said the policy would allow people who have been harmed by the drug war to participate in the economic benefits of legalization.

Local officials said they're aware of racial disparities in the enforcement of marijuana laws. Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark says she and other Bronx prosecutors are continuing to work on reducing the criminalization of marijuana, whether it's legal or not.

"[U]ntil a change in the Penal Law occurs, when an arrest is made for marijuana possession and burning cases, I have instructed Assistant District Attorneys in my Office to decline to prosecute the arrest when only a marijuana charge appears on the complaint, and then direct the police officer to issue a summons," said Clark, adding that expunging past marijuana related charges is important because of the unequal enforcement of marijuana possession.

"This helps us move forward by improving public safety, reducing collateral consequences, and creating a fairer and more equitable criminal justice system," she said.

Editor's Note: A televised forum dubbed "The Impact of Legal Weed" produced by BronxNet Television, in partnership with Norwood News, and WFUV Radio, can be seen at www.bronxnet.org.

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Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, 3450 DeKalb Ave. offers free tax return service Mondays through Fridays from 4 p.m. Those who made \$54,000 or less in 2018 and have children, or \$30,000 or less without children, qualify for the free service. For more information or to make an appointment, call (718) 882-4000.

Participatory Budgeting

The next round of workshops on Participatory Budgeting, where residents can decide how \$1 million in capital funding should be spent in the 11th Council District, takes place on the following dates and times for residents living in Bedford Park and Norwood: Sister Annunciata Senior Center, 243 E. 204th St., April 3, noon to 1 p.m.; M.S. 80, 149 E. Mosholu Pkwy. N., April 3, 1 to 3 p.m.; Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., March 30, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and April 2, 2 to 7 p.m.; Williamsbridge Oval Park Recreation Center, 285 E. 205th St., April 6, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.; and Tracey Towers, 40 W. Mosholu Pkwy. So., April 1, 4 to 6 p.m. and April 4, 2 to 6 p.m. For more information, call (718) 549-7300.

Hydration Workshop

A free workshop for ages 60 and over on the importance of staying hydrated as a way of avoiding falls that cause fatal and non-fatal injuries takes place at St. Barnabas Hospital, 4th floor, Center for Comprehensive Care, 4422 Third Ave., April 9 at 9 a.m. For more information and to register, call Wilma Diaz, RN at (718) 960-8988.

Donate Blood

The American Red Cross hosts blood donation drives in the Bronx on the following dates and times: Fordham University, 2691 Southern Blvd., April 2, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sacred Heart Church, 1253 Shakespeare Ave., April 7, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.; and Pelham Academy, 2441 Wallace Ave., April 9, 2 to 7 p.m. A blood donor card or driver's license or two other forms of ID are required at check-in. Individuals age 17 and over, weighing at least 110 pounds and generally in good health may be eligible to

donate. For more information or an appointment, call (800) 733-2767.

Fellowships

Applications for the Empire State Fellowship, which prepares professionals for careers in policymaking, are now open until April 1. Eligibility requirements include a commitment to live in Albany for the duration of the fellowship, have five years of professional work experience, and no experience working in the legislative or executive branch of New York State. For more information, go to <https://on.ny.gov/2J7HoOh>.

Right to Counsel

Right to Counsel (RTC)—which assigns a free attorney to those sued for eviction in housing court and in NYCHA termination of tenancy hearings and who are income eligible—is available to tenants who live in Bronx zip codes 10457, 10467, and 10468. If a tenant is not income-eligible, they have the right to a one-off legal consultation or advice session. Tenants facing eviction or harassment from management can call Nova Lucero at the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition for support at (917) 952-5494.

Crime Victims Support

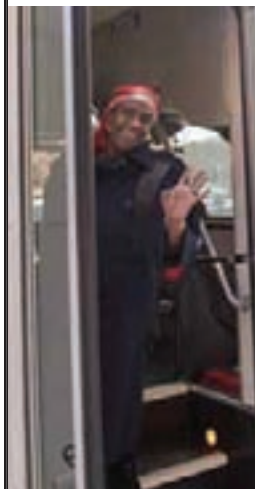
Crime Victims Support Services, a 501(c)3 group at 1138 Neill Ave., offers victims help in navigating the criminal justice system. Free confidential services include claim assistance, case follow-up, crisis counseling, and victim advocacy. The group accepts donations. For more information, call (718) 823-4925.

Free Legal Services For Immigrants

Low-income immigrants can receive free legal advice from volunteer attorneys through the New York State Liberty Defense Project and Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York. For more information, visit CatholicCharitiesNYProBono.org or call (800) 566-7636. If you are interested in volunteering, visit catholiccharitiesny.org.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, Senator Jamaal Bailey and Councilmember Andrew Cohen invite the public to a Norwood Town Hall meeting on April 4 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Montefiore Medical Center Cherkasky Auditorium, 110 E. Gun Hill Rd. For more information, call Dinowitz's office at (718) 796-5345.

Onstage

Williamsbridge Oval presents free theatre, Shakespeare's "*The Tempest*," in the Rec Center, April 11 at 7 p.m. RSVP bronxacf@parks.nyc.gov. For more information, call (718) 543-8672.

Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents **Celia Cruz H.S. Orchestra** performing chamber music, March 30 at 2:30 p.m.; and **Celia Cruz H.S. of Music Jazz Band** performing jazz on April 3 and 10, both at 6 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Lehman College's Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents **Ruben Sings Luther**, featuring Ruben Studdard singing Luther Vandross hits, March 30 at 8 p.m. (tickets \$25 to \$75/VIP); **Swan Lake**, ballet performed by the Russia National Ballet, March 31 at 4 p.m. (tickets \$25 to \$45; \$10/under age 12); and **Frankie Negro, Roberto Blades and Brenda K'Starr**, performing salsa, April 6 at 8 p.m. (tickets \$50 to \$100/VIP). VIP tickets include best seats and preconcert wine and hors d'oeuvres at 6:30 p.m. in the Havana Café.

For more information, call (718) 960-8833.

Lehman College's Department of Music, 250 Bedford Pk. Blvd., W., presents free: **Lehman Chamber Players Concert**, featuring singer and musicians performing classical works, March 31 at 2 p.m. in the Music Building's Recital Hall on the 3rd floor; and the **21st Annual Day of Percussion**, featuring the Lehman Percussion Ensemble and students from the Royal Irish Academy of Music, March 28 at 2 p.m., in the Music Building's Hearth Room on the 3rd floor. For more information, call (718) 960-8247. Also scheduled is **Life of Galileo**, play with original score, March 28 to 30, at 7 p.m., in the Speech and Theatre Building's Studio Theatre (tickets \$10; \$8/with CUNY ID; free/Lehman students with valid ID. For more information, visit lehman.edu/theatredance.

Bronx Arts Ensemble presents **Bronx Salon** with trombonist Weston Sprott and BAE players performing Baroque music followed by informal discussion and refreshments, April 7 at 2 p.m., at Weintroth House, 700 W. 247th St. (\$50/advance; \$60/at door). For more information, call (718) 601-7399.



Photo courtesy Lehman Center for the Performing Arts
"AMERICAN IDOL" WINNER Ruben Studdard will perform some of R&B singer Luther Vandross's greatest hits at Lehman Center for the Performing Arts (see Onstage for details).



File photo

THERE'RE PLENTY OF offerings lined up at Mosholu Library (see Library Events for more information).

Events

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects**: Unfurling Field Journal, to make handmade journals, March 30 and 31; and The Epic of an Eel, to learn about eels' annual migration and to create puppet theatre; April 6 and 7; both in the WH House, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also scheduled in the WH House on April 6 are **Meet the Eels**, to see live eels, from 1 to 1:30 p.m.; and **Nature Talk**, to hear about and see live eels, at 2 p.m. In addition, there is **Concert** with trumpeter and composer **Josh Lawrence** and his musician ensemble **Color Theory**, April 7 in the WH House at 2 p.m. (tickets \$28/includes grounds admission; 10% discount/WH members; \$12/ages 8 to 18 (info: ext. 251). 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.

The city's first responders, including NYPD, FDNY, EMS, and the Red Cross, will be honored by Teddy Cars, The Barber Factory and thisistheBronX at a **Family Day for the City's First Responders**, April 2 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Those members and their families will get free haircuts and significant discounts towards the purchase of cars, as well as a range of auto service benefits at the Barber Factory, 4131 Laconia Ave. (across from the 47th Precinct). The general public will be offered discounted haircuts. Hero awards presented by Teddy Cars will be awarded to recognize and honor each distinguished public service organization for their dedication in the Bronx and City. Everyone is invited. For more information, call Gary Axelbank at (917) 576-0341.

Exhibits

The Museum of Bronx History, 3266 Bainbridge Ave., presents exhibition, **The Bronx Goes to the Movies**, April 11 to Oct. 6 (opening reception on April 11 from 4:30 to 7 p.m.). For more information, call

(718) 881-8900.

Bronx River Art Center (BRAC), 1087 E. Tremont Ave., presents **River Rising**, through June 30, featuring an exposition of science, art and technology, located in Starlight Park. For more information, call (718) 589-5819.

The Museum of Bronx History, 3266 Bainbridge Ave. (208th Street), presents **Women's Suffrage and New York City: A Centennial Celebration**, through April 11; and **His Muse: The Women of Edgar Allan Poe's Life**, through April 7. Also scheduled is **A History of the Bronx Latino**, ongoing. Hours: Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays 1 to 5 p.m. For more information, call (718) 881-8900.

Library Events

Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for children **film**: (ages to 12 years), April 2 at 4 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy **A Beginners Course in Magic**: Learn magic tricks with everyday objects, April 11 at 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for children: **Crafty Fridays at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), crafts, March 29 and April 5; **Toddler Storytime at 11 a.m.**: (ages 18 months to 3 years), interactive stories, action songs, fingerplays, and crafts, April 1, 4, 8 and 11; and **STEM: Kids Science at 3 p.m.**: (ages 5 to 12), Sound, April 2 and 9. Adults can enjoy: **Knitting Circle**: Thursdays at 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Place (near Kingsbridge Road, offers for adults: **Computer Basics at noon**: April 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 April 1 for the next publication date of April 11.

'Super' News for Stagg Bldg. Tenants

(continued from page 1)

first affordable housing complex following the 2011 rezoning of Webster Avenue. The rezoning was intended to usher in affordable housing into a neighborhood once largely reserved for auto mechanics.

Barbara Stronczer, president of the Bedford Mosholu Community Association (BMCA) remembers when the buildings opened in 2015. "I toured the buildings back then and they were lovely," said Stronczer.

The Stagg Group has firmly planted itself in neighboring Norwood, building two properties in the area, including Norwood Gardens, where a ribbon cutting is expected to take place on April 9. Stagg is also building its signature property at the corner of the Grand Concourse and Van Cortlandt Avenue East near East Mosholu Parkway. The building is dubbed the Mosholu Grand.

Initial repair and maintenance issues came to Stronczer's attention through a local merchant and became more apparent when an outspoken tenant, Zxavier Simpson, attended a BMCA meeting in October. As a civic group promoting quality-of-life issues in the neighborhood, Stronczer directed Simpson—one of the more vocal tenants in the building who would bring a handful of tenants to BMCA meetings—to make his concerns known to Community Board 7.

Among the concerns was a spotty surveillance system, shoddy repair work, and an unease at the building caused by tenants Simpson said were mentally ill and improperly supervised by the transitional nonprofit agency that relocated them there.

Over the last several months, the *Norwood News* has followed the complaints of tenants and reactions from the Stagg Group, culminating in a tense confrontation at the last Community Board 7 Housing, Land Use, & Zoning Committee meeting on March 12. Stagg representatives heard harsh words from board members reminding them that they needed to provide a live-in super given the size of the three properties comprising Bedford Park Manor. News of the live-in super came two days after protestations from Simpson, who was at the meeting.

"I'm happy for it," said Simpson of the live-in super in a telephone interview with the *Norwood News*. "I'm going to be open to what's going on." But he admitted that the live-in super is just a first step. "We still have to watch them [The Stagg Group]. We have to make sure they keep their promises," he said.

But this was not your standard form of tenant organizing, according to Sally Dunford, executive director of West Bronx Housing, who credits media coverage and Stagg's concerns over whether this would damage its relationship with the community. "It's not tenant organizing, but it got him what he needed," said Dunford of Simpson's approach in a telephone interview with the *Norwood News*. She conceded that Simpson's ability to draw institutions proved effective.

"Just because it's something I wouldn't have done doesn't mean it wasn't effective. It was," said Dunford, who defines tenant organizing as drawing greater numbers, about 15 or 20, to fight for improved conditions.

As for the Stagg Group, they hope that recent changes will demonstrate to tenants that their concerns are being addressed. In addition to the live-in super, Stagg Group representatives have "walked each building, [and] knocked on every door with a maintenance request form," according to Graham. They have also set up tables in each lobby where tenants can register for the online portal requesting repairs and report any concerns.

As a way of adding greater security—one of the ongoing complaints—Javier Monroy, Stagg's property manager, is also working with a locksmith to improve the locks on the side and front of the buildings, change the push bar for all exit side doors, and adjust the front door locks and door arms, according to an email from the Stagg Group.

"Every tenant should feel safe and listened to," Graham said. He's hopeful that these changes will reset the relationship button between tenants and the management group. "We look forward to a new chapter with the whole Bedford Park complex."

Tenants of Bedford Park Manor agreed to update the housing committee at the May meeting with a progress report. John Snider, the committee chair who presided over the March 12 committee meeting, sought to hold The Stagg Group accountable, though true ownership of reporting basic problems will rest on the tenants.

With one Stagg building slated to open in Norwood, and another under construction in Norwood, Snider hopes the situation in the current buildings won't be mirrored in the buildings that they're building in the neighborhood. "It's something we'll be monitoring very closely," said Snider.

Additional reporting by David Cruz.



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