



NORWOOD NEWS

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SPECIAL REPORT

THE VANISHING HOMEOWNER



Bronx homes, purchased by LLCs or outright demolished, pose threat to wealth-building housing market for owner-occupants

Photo by Adi Talwar

THE PROPERTY ONCE situated at 265 E. 203rd St., built in 1920, was recently torn down several months after developer Peter Fine purchased the home.

By **DAVID CRUZ**

At the Bedford Mosholu Community Association (BMCA) meeting in October, its president, Barbara Stronczer, announced the news with some resignation: another private home came down in the neighborhood.

This time it happened at 208 E. Mosholu Pkwy. S. near East

203rd Street, an aged rooming home owned by Arian Borici up until 2017, according to building records. In a few years, an eight-story apartment building will rise, thanks to the neighborhood's decades-old zoning laws that allow for taller buildings across the community's intricately tight streets. The

home came down the same time as 3008 Perry Ave., just a few houses down, was bulldozed. There, what was once a 3-story home will be replaced with an 8-story, 33-unit property.

To the detriment of BMCA, it's another home that's gone to developers, as the story of Bedford Park, built as a suburban

neighborhood, goes, slipping away from the neighborhood once remembered. For Stronczer, who's lived in the neighborhood for decades, the trend began after the 2011 rezoning. And it's nothing she's ever seen.

In the Bronx, traditional home ownership has always faced challenges: Incomes of res-

idents in the borough fail to keep up with rising housing costs, while black and Hispanic families have a hard time getting low-interest loans. Now, since the 2008-2009 foreclosure crisis, a wave of buyers, from individual "house flippers" to investors and developers, are snapping up

(continued on page 14)

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IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Norwood Man, Imprisoned for 38 Years, Becomes the Face for Early Release

By MICHAEL TURAY

Jose Saldana was 27-years-old when he was arrested and found guilty for attempted murder of an NYPD sergeant in 1980. He was sentenced to 25 years to life, a conviction that would change his life forever.

Saldana served his sentence at Green Haven Correctional Facility in Dutchess County. From behind bars, Saldana, 66, who lives in Norwood, watched inmates around him grow old and eventually die.

In January 2018, roughly 38 years later, Saldana, was released from prison at the age of 65 after being denied parole four times. Saldana was given a second chance and is among a select few of elderly prisoners who managed to make it out of the New York State prison system. He was reunited with his wife Rosa, who has lived in Norwood for the past 30 years. Saldana through his trials and tribulations, isn't keeping quiet over what he finds to be problematic in the system, inmates who die from old age. The average age of death for inmates is roughly 58.

He's now the director of Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP), a non-profit organization that strives to end mass incarceration while advocating for early release of prisoners serving lifelong sentences. It's the same group--which his wife Rosa was affiliated with-- that helped him get out of prison. The group's founder, Mujahid Farid, passed away in 2018. Before his death he appointed Saldana, who was working as a community organizer for RAPP, as the new executive director.

"I was in shock. The RAPP members and the other two founders sup-



Photo by Adi Talwar

JOSE SALDANA SERVES as executive director of Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP).

ported the decision. They all made commitments that they would help and we would lead as a family. Almost a year now since he passed away, we have grown tremendously and we have actually surpassed his expectations," said Saldana, speaking to the *Norwood News* from his home that doubles as his satellite office.

Saldana was raised in Spanish Harlem. He was sent to prison for his involvement in the attempted murder of Sergeant Patrick Pellicano, the result of an investigation involving a stolen car that Saldana rode in. A trial found Saldana never fired a weapon that nearly killed Pellicano. In prison, Saldana made use of his time, becoming something of a mentor to younger folks.

"As I grew, I helped others grow, we call that passing the torch. When we see the younger guys coming in, we try to develop programs, a curriculum based on what helped us," said Saldana.

Saldana earned his associate de-

gree and spearheaded a number of restorative justice and victim awareness programs while in jail. He had his fair share of parole meetings and knows how the system was set up for him to be continually denied parole.

Saldana has personally experienced a lack of seriousness by those on the state parole board to consider granting parole to inmates over the age of 65. Saldana, for instance, had been denied parole four times. For each denial, Saldana had to wait another two years before meeting with the parole board again.

"You have former prosecutors, former detectives, former cops, former deputy sheriffs, people who think of arrest and prosecute. Now you are asking them to evaluate whether someone should return back to their family or community," said Saldana of those administering his parole hearings.

RAPP is doing everything it can to vouch for parole reform. The group has pushed for two bills, the Fair and Timely Parole Act which would make it difficult to deny parole based on the type of crime and the elder parole bill, which would grant more hearings for those who are aged 55 and above. According to RAPP, of the 10,000 people incarcerated in the NYS Prison system, 20% of the population are aged 50 or older.

"Last legislative session we had historical firsts. The elder parole bill is closer to my heart because every day I speak about it, I'm reminded of the people who passed during my decades of incarceration. The bill passed the [Crime Victims, Crime and Correction] Committee in the [Assembly] and it passed in the Senate. A bill of this nature has never passed both houses," said Saldana proudly.

Public and Community Meetings

COMMUNITY BOARD 7 will hold its general board meeting on Nov. 26 at 6:30 p.m. the Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. CB7 committee meetings will be held at 229A E. 204th St. at 6:30 p.m. on the following dates unless otherwise noted: Executive Committee meets on Nov. 21. For more information, call (718) 933-5650.

The **BEDFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION** meets on Dec. 4 at 8 p.m. at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. S. For more information, email bedfordmosh@verizon.net.

The 52nd Precinct's **BUILD-THE-BLOCK** meeting for residents living in Norwood and Bedford Park will be held on Nov. 26 at 6 p.m. at Tracey Towers, 40 W. Mosholu Pkwy. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.

The **52ND PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** holds its monthly meeting on Nov. 21 at Serviam Heights Hall, 2848 Bainbridge Ave., from 7 to 9 p.m. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week we asked readers their plans for Thanksgiving, what's on the menu, and how they hope to spend the day.



Well, my plans are to visit my sister, her husband and family, and my other sister and her husband and family up in White Plains. I'll have some turkey and watch the football game. It's either Dallas or Detroit. And of course will have all the trimmings.

Robert Rowe
Morrisania



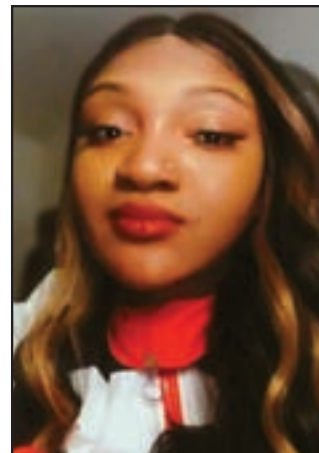
I'll probably be at home. Yes, I hope to be eating on Thanksgiving Day; my vegan Thanksgiving with Portobello mushrooms and cranberry-orange relish and cauliflower rice and a glass of grape juice. And will have a great time, no matter what we do.

Lisa-Marie Mulligan
Bedford Park



I am going to my auntie's house. It's a pretty long ride, but I get to see the whole family and I'm thankful for that. My aunt is a great cook and everyone helps with the side dishes that are delicious. My favorite is cranberry sauce with turkey.

Harley Ayala
Throggs Neck



I'm lucky enough to have a lot of friends and family that invite me to join them on that special day, so I will be house-hopping and I'm looking forward to putting smiles on the faces of the people I care about. I usually look forward to the turkey, but seeing how I recently turned vegan, I'm looking forward to my mother's homemade baked mac and cheese. I am thankful for making another year, considering Thanksgiving is a day after my birthday this year.

Charles Starting
Former Fordham Resident



This year I will be going to visit my cousin at her new apartment. It will be her first time having family over. I'm looking forward to seeing the family as well as having turkey, mashed potatoes, and gravy. Thinking back, Thanksgiving was the only time I cried while stationed in Iraq. It's certainly good to be home.

Chris Perkins
Norwood



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NEWS BRIEFS

Torres Donors

In his pursuit to win the 15th Congressional District seat, Councilman Ritchie Torres is facing intense pressure to return campaign donations from a billionaire known for making racist remarks. In a joint statement by several pro-immigrant groups, including Make the Road New York and VOCAL-NY, Torres was called out for accepting \$11,200 in donations from Dan Loeb, a billionaire who once said that State Senate Majority Leader Andrew Stewart-Cousins has done “more damage to people of color than anyone who has ever donned a hood” referencing the Ku Klux Klan. Assemblyman Michael Blake, another challenger in the 15th Congressional District race, has also pressed Torres to return the money, calling the acceptance “outrageous.” Torres told the Daily News, “[N]one of us... should ever be defined by one comment we made in our lives.”

SCOTUS Reviews DACA

The U.S. Supreme Court is now hearing arguments over whether the Trump Administration had the right to terminate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy, which allows undocumented immigrants to stay in the United States if they arrived to the country when they were children. About 30,000 DACA recipients, also known as “DREAMers” live in New York City. A decision from the high court on DACA is expected somewhere between January and June 2020. Mayor Bill de Blasio said supporters of DACA are in a “strong position,” believing the Supreme Court Justices are “more attuned to what the American people are thinking than maybe we all admit.”

Panic Button Bill

The mother of Lesandro “Junior” Guzman-Feliz, who was brutally murdered last year by

Bronx Residents Air Out Grievances on Proposed Express Bus Cuts

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Hundreds of residents in the Bronx turned out at a town hall meeting in Riverdale to let MTA representatives, led by Craig Cipriano, acting president for the MTA Bus Company, know that service cuts to express bus service to Manhattan is unacceptable.

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz moderated the Nov. 18 meeting with Councilman Andrew Cohen, both of whom represent Norwood, to discuss prospective cuts to Express bus service that include the BxM4 that goes to Manhattan. In the MTA's final bus network redesign report, the BxM4, among four other lines, is included on the list of “least financially efficient,” and is proposed to have its service cut on weekends. The bus will also run every half hour, but end service at 7:30 p.m. instead of 10:30 p.m.

Edgar Ramos, chair of Community Board 7's Traffic & Transportation Committee who was present at the meeting, sees the reduction of Express bus service as having a spill-over effect into subway service that is already overcrowded.

“Early in the morning—that 4 train, that D train—you don't have seats as it is and [the MTA] is trying to eliminate options for people trying to get down to the city which I don't think is going to be helpful to the community,” Ramos said.

Ramos also announced to the crowd that they could make their voices heard again on Nov. 26 when CB7 holds a meeting at the Bronx Library Center with MTA officials present to hear from residents. There's also a meeting scheduled for Nov. 25 from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. in Norwood's Moshulu Parkway station.

who police say are members of the Trinitarios, is supporting a bill that would create a pilot program that pays back small businesses for the cost of buying and installing a panic button system that automatically connects to the NYPD in case of emergency. Lesandro was killed outside a bodega in Belmont. His mother, Leandra Feliz said the bill drafted by Bronx Councilman Mark Gjonaj, “could save lives.” Eligible bodegas must be open seven days a week and operate 24 hours a day.

Yankees Merch

The New York Yankees, Nike and Major League Baseball reversed a policy it was about to implement that would have kept longtime mom-and-pop stores near Yankee Stadium from selling Yankee merchandise. Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.



Photo by José A. Giralt

A TOWN HALL meeting on proposed service cuts to MTA Express bus routes into Manhattan draws hundreds to the meeting on Nov. 19.

The MTA has also identified the BxM2, which traverses the entire Riverdale neighborhood north to south into Manhattan, as a least efficient route in the borough. According to the MTA's final bus redesign report, the BxM2 has a fare box recovery ratio of “30 percent or less, indicating that they are highly subsidized and costly to operate.” That means the MTA has to find other sources of revenue beyond fare collection as a means to maintain a route. The agency is now peeling back service, ending it at 3 p.m.

One person speaking at the meeting directed her comments to the MTA representatives and described the cuts as “draconian.” “We moved into Riverdale because we were promised to have good transportation

in and out of Manhattan. To cut off southbound at three o'clock is cruel and totally unacceptable,” she said.

The meeting was part of a public outreach effort by the MTA shortly after its release of the final redesign report. The state-operated agency looks to vote on a plan before changes are implemented in mid-2020. More outreach events are scheduled.

MTA representatives reminded the crowd there's more time to voice concerns and that they are still receptive to feedback from local communities impacted by these proposals.

When Dinowitz pointed out the strong turnout on a rainy evening he reminded the MTA, “People in our community care, they show up, they come out, and we want to make sure that the right outcome takes place.”

said the decision averts a financial disaster for merchants operating in the 161st Street Business Improvement District.

“As I have always said, if you want to do business in the Bronx, you have to do business with the Bronx,” said Diaz.

Bronx-Linked Drug Bust

Attorney General Letitia James and the New York State Police announced a 168-count indictment charging nine people, including three from the Bronx, for their roles in an alleged cocaine and methamphetamine smuggling operation, seizing more than four pounds of cocaine, one pound of methamphetamine pills, three loaded handguns, and two high-capacity ammunition feeding devices. The year-long probe netted alleged dealers and traffickers in Dutchess

County, Bronx County, and the State of Florida. The Dutchess County component of the case centered around several businesses in Poughkeepsie, including a pizzeria, café, and barber-shop. Kareem Devaughn, Sean Willingham, and Jamal Wimbus, all from the Bronx, face charges.

Lion Lady Arrested

Police have finally caught up to the so-called “Lion Lady,” weeks after a viral video showed her jumping over the lion exhibit at the Bronx Zoo to get closer to the wild animal. Myah Autry, 30, was charged with two counts of criminal trespassing for entering the exhibit. She was arrested on Nov. 6 at Brooklyn's Barclays Center after calling detectives to reveal where she would surrender, according to WNBC. Autry has since been banned from entering the zoo.

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Photo by David Greene

THE CHASE BANK at 3169 Bainbridge Ave. underwent quick renovations shortly after its neighboring branch at East 204th Street closed.

It's Official: Norwood Business Strip Down to Two Full-Service Banks

By **DAVID GREENE**

After having made an announcement several months ago about closing, the Chase Bank branch at 311 E. 204th St. shut its doors on Oct. 22. It would have celebrated its 14th year of business in the neighborhood next month. Residents now see only two full-service banks open in the business strip.

One longtime Chase customer claimed the bank did tell customers that they would be closing at the end of October. The *Norwood News* reported on the bank's impending closure over the summer.

Another customer recalled the "verbal warning," recalling but admitted to never receiving a date. The longtime resident said of the closing, "It's unfortunate, because [the location] was so convenient." The customer added, "Going to the other bank could take me out of my way, but it depends on which way I'm coming from." She

walked away with the thought of having to walk up Bainbridge Avenue in winter's sleet and snow.

Residents east of East 204th Street must now traverse the block-and-a-half up a steep incline to another Chase branch at 3169 Bainbridge Ave., where the main teller and customer service section of the bank were temporarily closed on Oct. 25 as nearly a dozen workers were observed ripping out walls and tearing out light fixtures. The bank's ATM machines were open to customers, and after a quick remodeling of the bank, the branch was reopened in early November. There is another Chase location at 3408 Jerome Ave.


The Chase branch still open on Bainbridge Avenue joins the Capital One Bank at 3159 Bainbridge Ave., putting the number of full-service banks in the Norwood business district adjoining East 204th Street and

Bainbridge Avenue to two. While the Bank of America branch at the corner of East 204th Street and Perry Avenue officially closed a few months ago, their ATM machines in the vesti-

bule can still be accessed by customers.

After repeated questioning, Chase declined to discuss the decision for the closure, or if any layoffs took place.





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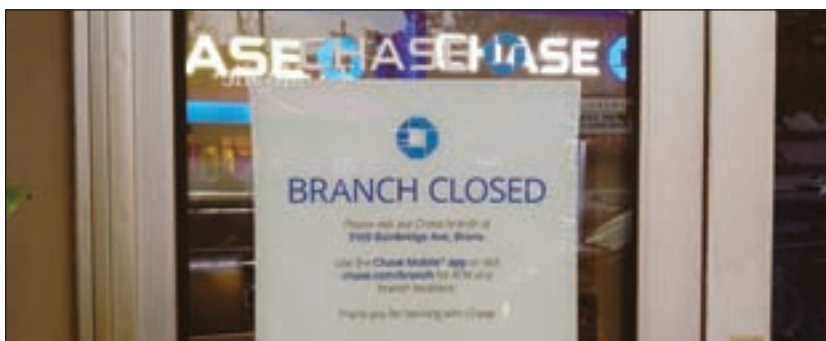


Photo by David Greene

A SIGN AT the now-closed Chase Bank branch at 311 E. 204th St. encourages customers to visit the branch at 3169 Bainbridge Ave.

CRIME FILE

By DAVID CRUZ



Stabbing Near Mosholu Library

An argument between two men in front of the Mosholu Library ended with one of the men stabbed. The incident happened on Oct. 21 at around 5:40 p.m. when the library was still open, according to police. The 25-year-old victim got into an argument with a man that escalated into a physical confrontation, which then led to the victim getting stabbed in the abdomen. The attacker took off on foot, heading north on Bainbridge Avenue. The victim, meantime, was rushed to St. Barnabas Hospital and was listed in serious condition. The 52nd Precinct has since tweeted a wanted photo of the suspect. A police source said the suspect (below) is known to officers. He is described as dark skinned and wearing glasses.



Jerome Ave. Store Robbery

Cops need help identifying a man (above) wanted for questioning in a robbery that occurred at the Jerome Variety Store at 3404 Jerome Ave. at around 10:15 a.m. on Oct. 26. The suspect went inside the store and demanded free items and was quickly

denied by a store employee. The suspect then produced a knife, demanding cash. The employee took \$150 out of the register and gave it to the perpetrator who then took off. The employee was not hurt. The alleged thief was described as dark skinned, and last seen wearing a dark blue hoodie with USA and an American flag thereon, dark pants and dark shoes.



Train Attack

Cops are on the hunt for a man (above) who attacked a woman on board a northbound #5 subway train at the 180th Street station on Oct. 22 at around 5 p.m. when the two got into an argument. The spat soon became physical, with the man punching the victim about the body. The woman left the train, while the perpetrator stayed, according to police. The victim was treated for injuries at the scene. The suspect is described as white, 40 to 50 years old, 5' 8" tall and 140 pounds. He was last seen wearing a blue zippered jacket, dark pants and dark shoes.

Elderly Man Beatdown

The NYPD needs help identifying two young men (shown top right) wanted for beating a 70-year-old man on board Jerome Avenue's Mosholu Parkway subway station. Police say it happened on Oct. 20 around 2:30 p.m. when the victim entered the station and was approached by the two men. It's unclear why the man was subsequently attacked, with the two men dealing blows to the victim's body before taking off on foot. Nothing was taken, according to police. The first suspect is identified as dark skinned, in his late teens to early 20s, and was

last seen wearing a blue hoodie, dark pants, and dark shoes. The second suspect is described as Hispanic, in



his late teens to early 20s, and was last seen wearing dark long sleeves and dark shorts.



Anyone with information in regard to these incidents is asked to call the NYPD's Crime Stoppers Hotline at 1-800-577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish, 1-888-57-PISTA (74782). The public can also submit their tips by logging on to the CrimeStoppers website at WWW.NYPDCRIMESTOPPERS.COM, or on Twitter @NYPDTips. All calls are strictly confidential.

Health Official Spreads the Word on Fentanyl as the Drug Keeps Killing People

In a sign the opioid crisis is still affecting the neighborhoods surrounding Norwood, a second overdose prevention presentation was given within the last six months at the 52nd Precinct Community Council meeting.

The presenter this time, Gavi Liebovitz, a drug awareness and overdose prevention coordinator, presented a slideshow explaining how to help someone who has overdosed on an opioid.

As popular as opioids, an assortment of different painkillers, has become, it is the introduction of fentanyl, a synthetic form of painkiller that has increased greatly the amount of people dying from overdoses. Originally prescribed to people at the end of their life and very rarely, fentanyl has found its way into illegal drug trafficking.

"It's 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine and heroin," Liebovitz said.

It's even found its way into non-painkiller drugs. Liebovitz recounted a story from a detox center where a person entered for an addiction to Xanax, an anti-anxiety drug, and tested positive for opiates with fentanyl because they had bought it

illegally on the street.

"We're finding that all kinds of drugs are being laced with it [fentanyl]," said Liebovitz. In the latest published report by the New York City Health Department for the first quarter of 2019, there were 331 overdose deaths citywide. More than 80 percent of those involved opioids.

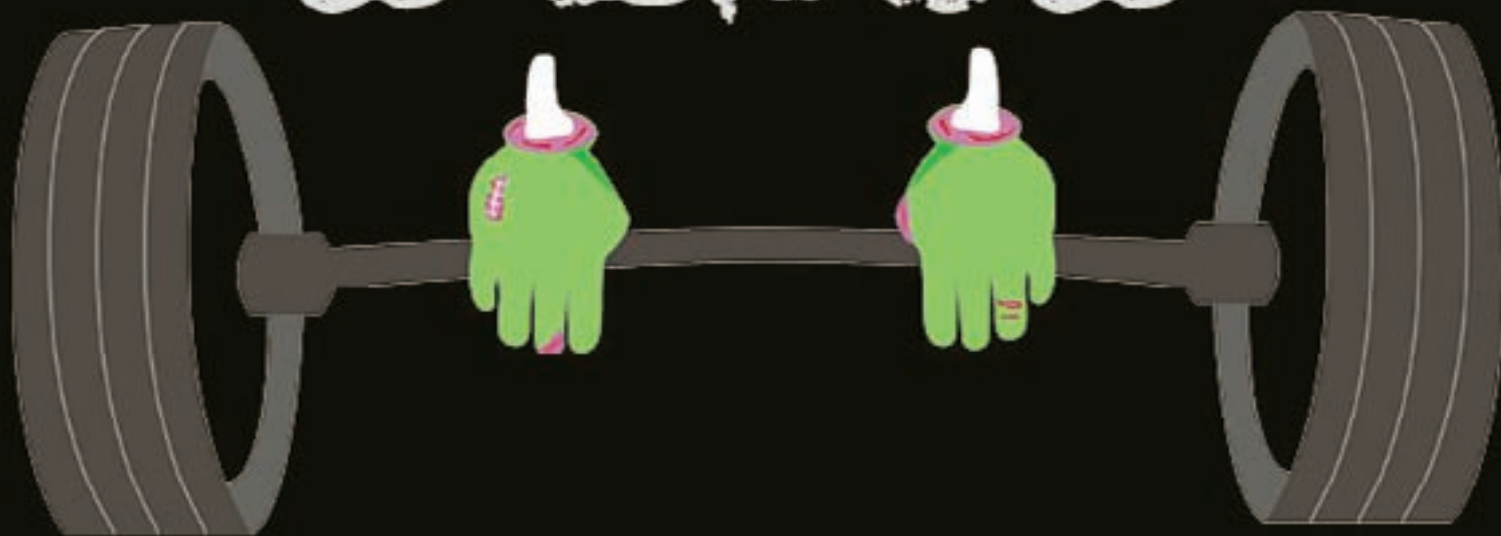
Within the borough, the South Bronx has the highest rate of overdoses with 50 to 59.9 deaths per 100,000 residents. The north-west Bronx has 20 to 29.9 deaths per 100,000 residents.

Although the Bronx is only the fourth most populous borough, it led the city in overdose deaths from January to March of 2019 with 84.

Opioid prevention programs like the one Liebovitz conducts, seeks to get everyday New Yorkers involved in saving lives from overdoses. By training more people in the use of naloxone, also known by its brand name Narcan, the most common medication used in reversing an opioid overdose, Liebovitz hopes the Bronx can see its number of deaths from overdoses decrease.

—José A. Giralt

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Revered Catholic Statue Packs the Pews at St. Patrick's Home

By JONATHAN CUSTODIO

Rosary prayers hummed as residents of St. Patrick's Home Rehabilitation and Health Care Center made their way into the service hall for a day honoring Our Lady of Fatima, more commonly known as the Virgin Mary, whose statue arrived during the early morning hours of Nov. 13 as patrons celebrated Mass.

For the home's administrator, Kathleen Meyer, the arrival of the bust represents a major honor, and a big get for the home. The Archdiocese of New York had advertised the availability of the statue in *Catholic New York*, advising anyone interested in having it shown off at its institute to contact them. Meyer put in a request to have the statue brought to the home at 66 Van Cortlandt Park S. in Van Cortlandt Village. The Archdiocese of New York honored the request two weeks after she inquired.

"We were so honored to get it," said Meyer, soon wheeling a few residents into the elevator. "I know it traveled throughout the Bronx and all over Yonkers."

"Every year since I can remember, we had the whole month dedicated to her," says pastoral care assistant Maria Ordóñez, who has worked at the home for 14 years and grew up worshipping Our Lady of Fatima in a northern region of Spain that borders Portugal.

"It gives me peace when I see her."

The statue of Our Lady of Fatima, which originally hails from Portugal, sports a golden crown and has both a rosary and scapular wrapped around its clasped hands. A necklace that carries a small round object hangs around the collar, which Ordóñez believes represents the weight of the world around its neck. On the statue's pedestal, a sign warns residents not to touch the bust because they will feel its touch instead.

This is the second time the home was able to obtain the statue, though there are 12 other identical versions of it around the world that are ushered around different houses of worship.

The home, which has provided care for the aged and infirm and is run by carmelite nuns, has 264 beds available for residents such as Estelle Carbonara, 87, a lifelong Bronx native who has lived at the home for the last seven years. "I like the fact that I can come down to the chapel any time day or night," says Carbonara, who watched the mass from her bedroom to keep her 101-year-old roommate company. "When you think about it, you're practically living in the church."

Catholicism teaches the belief that the Virgin Mary ascended into heaven after bearing Jesus Christ through immaculate conception.



Photo by Jonathan Custodio

OUR LADY OF FATIMA (c) rests perched upon a pedestal after receiving a bevy of prayers and blessings from residents.

City Takes Steps to Improve Safety at Shelter. But Where's the Data?

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Peace officers trained by the NYPD have been assigned at the Jerome Avenue Men's Shelter (JAMS), but it's unclear whether it has made a difference since city data provided shows an overall decline of crime around shelters in the Bronx.

Previously, the 200-bed men's shelter for the mentally ill had contracted a security team of eight guards from a private company to ensure safety at the facility. The new peace officers from the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) are overseen by NYPD and are considered better trained to deal with security issues including arrest procedures and restraining techniques.

Earlier in the year CB7 was looking into the addition of DHS peace officers and asked the 52nd Precinct for data on incidents at the shelter before making a decision on the implementation of the better-trained peace officers.

The *Norwood News* recently requested the same data from DOH and received a written response ex-



File photo by José A. Giralt

PEACE OFFICERS ARE now charged with maintaining safety at the 3600 Jerome Ave. Men's Shelter (pictured) following complaints received by Community Board 7.

plaining that the precinct only reports precinct-wide data and is not specific to any one facility.

But the data shared does reveal certain trends within the 52nd Precinct. For example, arrests at

DHS facilities within the command are decreasing. In the first three quarters of 2018 there were 10 arrests but only six for the same time frame in 2019.

DHS also points out that city-

wide arrests at shelters by NYPD are down 17 percent in the first half of 2019, compared with same period last year, with the majority of arrests comprised of misdemeanor offenses.

Meantime, CB7 is worried over a petition by Care for the Homeless, the healthcare service provider for the shelter, for an Article 28 designation that would allow it to serve people from outside the shelter.

CB7's district manager, Ischia Bravo, says that the board is in favor of a clinic to serve the residents of the shelter but questions the need to take in non-residents when there is Montefiore Health System's Moses Campus and North Central Bronx Hospital nearby.

"We are sensitive to the needs of New York's most vulnerable population, but we have questions and need to see some data on why it makes sense to set up a clinic open to all when there're two big hospitals so close," Bravo said.

Bravo added that the full board will vote on Nov. 26 on whether to support the measure for the Article 28 clinic.

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BRONX
 CONNECTIONS

FACES OF GUN
 VIOLENCE

Part 2 of 5

The Norwood News, in partnership with WFUV radio and BronxNet Television, presents a five-part series on the impact gun violence has had on Bronx neighborhoods and the people who live in them.

Shootings Abound in the City, But It's Barely a Legal Gun Owner's Fault

By BRIANNA LYMAN of



New York State's gun laws are notorious for being some of the toughest in the nation. But in New York City, legally obtaining a gun permit for use in the city could be even more challenging, thanks to century-old gun laws that apply to this day.

And the city appears to favor these laws as a means of curtailing any gun-related incidents. So far, it looks like they've worked as 91 percent of all gun-related incidents in New York City have involved an illegal handgun from 2011 to 2015, according to a 2016 study by then New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman.

The strategy can be a frustrating experience, leading many to seek greater relief.

In 1911, following an uptick in crimes, most notably a murder-suicide near Gramercy Park, New York State passed the Sullivan Act, requiring all handguns be licensed under the authority of the local police department. Two concepts—a “shall issue” and “may issue”—were adopted.

New York counties opt for “shall issue,” where they must issue a handgun license to any person who satisfies the specific criteria determined by each individual jurisdiction. Excluding New York City, most applicants are granted their license by way of village or town justice or judge.

New York City handgun permits are granted under “may issue,” meaning the Police Department—under the authority of the police commissioner, who is appointed by the mayor—at its sole discretion, gets to choose whether it will issue a concealed carry license.

“There’s heavy political ramifications based on whoever’s holding these two positions,” says James Condoluci of Sure Shot Consulting, which helps New Yorkers apply for

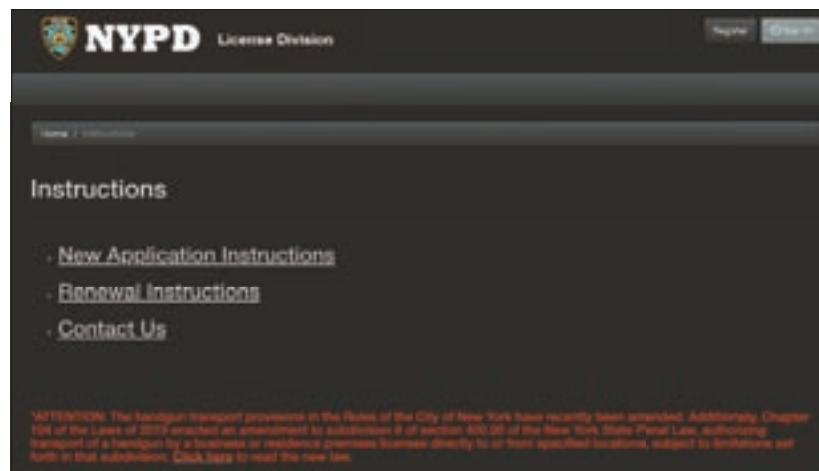


Image courtesy NYPD

APPLICANTS LOOKING TO obtain a handgun through the NYPD's License Division must register first on its website (pictured).

a handgun permit, of the influence from the police commissioner and mayor. Condoluci is a retired member of the NYPD who spent three years working in the NYPD's License Division.

Hiring Consultants

The process for obtaining a handgun permit in New York City is convoluted, often leading prospective legal gun owners to enlist the help of a consultant. For Condoluci, such a move is useful.

“Any time you’re lacking specific knowledge in a particular area, if you don’t have the experience, you seek out those who do ... you could be highly educated, holding multiple degrees, speaking 19 different languages, but if you never had experience with this particular process it can be daunting and intimidating, even more so with the City of New York than other municipalities,” says Condoluci.

Unlike applicants filing outside New York City, where decisions are made four months on average, those filing in the City seeking a firearm license are subject to high fees and waiting periods that take on average six months. While the fee for pistol permits vary by county, New York City’s fee is much higher by comparison, charging applicants \$340 for

the application, and an additional \$88.25 for fingerprint fees. The cost of getting a city pistol permit becomes costlier when receiving help from a consultant, which can cost up to an extra \$1,000.00, depending on the permit.

Types of Permit

New York City does not offer handgun permits to just anyone. Those seeking a permit in New York City are typically issued only one of two licenses—a premise or a full carry business license—though there are seven categories. The premise license is issued by the NYPD's License Division for an individuals' residence or business. This means that the handgun must remain on the premises listed on the license. A premise licensee can transport the handgun so long as it's stored separate from the ammunition and kept in locked containers.

The full carry business license allows licensees to carry their weapon on them at all times. Licensees are subject to additional scrutiny by the license division's commanding officer. Applicants must satisfy the “proper cause” stipulation, which requires the applicant provide proof of their need for this permit. But gun rights activists

say the stipulation's language is vague. Under NYS Penal Code 400 (2)(f) applicants can be granted a permit “when proper cause exists for the issuance thereof.” “Proper cause” cannot be based on the applicant's perception of possibly being exposed to extraordinary personal danger.

“It needs to be corroborated by actual crime reports committed against you or your business. There's nothing in the state statutes, or local or federal for that matter that say you have to be a victim of a crime to actually be entitled to this license,” says Condoluci. “By placing those demands on the applicant they're almost saying that.”

Condoluci says this “proper cause” clause is “oppressive and unreasonable” and is at the broad discretion of the NYPD License Division.

“It is in part fueled by its ability to manipulate existing loosely written applicable state statutes, of which shall continuously fail to decisively identify fundamentally pertinent handgun license terminology,” says Condoluci. “They are further empowered to do so via an age-old vested authority of both existing state and city constitutions.”

Despite Condoluci's take on the “proper clause” stipulation, he still supports the NYPD's efforts to control who gets their hands on a gun.

“I’m actually advocating for the department. I’m very selective on the people that I choose to move forward with simply because I spent 17 years on the street prior to going inside working for the license division. I take what I do very seriously, therefore just by having that initial interview and conversation I can pretty much decide, based on the conversation that we had, if I choose to go forward or just simply recommend them to someone else or be honest with them and say ‘there’s nothing I can do for you’” says Condoluci.

Woman to Woman



ARTIST MILLIE HAY poses in front of her artworks on display at The Green House Gallery 315 in Bedford Park. Hay is a self-taught clothing artist known for her use of African fabrics.



(L-R) BILL AGUADO of El Foco, Inc., with Woman to Woman art gallery curator and artist Rafaela Santos, and Nestor Daniel Perez Moliere at the art gallery.



THE WOMAN TO WOMAN event drew a sizable crowd to The Green House Gallery 315 admiring the works on display.



ARTIST LISA D. WADE (r) stands in front of her artworks as an admirer looks on at her display.



DARYL MYNTIA DANIELS (left) poses in front of her paintings that draw a link between "societal beauty standards and mental health across the African Diaspora," as her bio reads.

Artworks conveying African diaspora, African fashion, or just abstract ideas were on display on Nov. 15 for an art exhibit dubbed "Woman to Woman: A 2019 Collective," where artworks exclusively crafted by women were on display.

It was curated by Bedford Park local Rafaela Santos, herself an artist, who converted part of her home into the Green House Gallery 315. This is Santos' third art show at the gallery.

"It was a way to sort of bring the community together and have them enjoy the space," said Santos, who already had dreams of sharing her home with the community. She recalled a moment when she was vying to secure the deed to the home, writing to the previous homeowner that the home "seemed very quiet, but it looked like at some point had a lot of love and laughter and that we would like to bring that back."

Santos looks to plan another event inside her home in March. The current show runs through Nov. 23. Gallery hours are Friday and Saturday from 4 to 8 p.m.

Check out the photos by Miriam Quinones.

SPECIAL REPORT: FIGHTING THE F

(continued from page 1)

properties, reaping big profits and making the dream of homeownership simply that—a pipe dream—for more and more residents. Even middle class residents are being forced to move or rent, cut off from building long-lasting generational wealth.

Demolished Homes

Catherine Clarke of University Neighborhood Housing Program (UNHP), a social services nonprofit, has noticed the green fences surrounding once 1- to 4-family homes cropping up in Bedford Park and portions of Kingsbridge Heights as of late. All she has to do is walk outside her office that rests at the corner of East 196th Street and the Grand Concourse, a nexus where development has become the norm.

“Those are areas where it’s very difficult to understand data-wise, or even through official documents, what is happening,” said Clarke.

Clarke and her team took note of the high number of homes purchased that were later demolished or under construction, compiling their findings in a report dubbed, “Is the Bronx Building? Look for Yourself.” Clarke’s report—using public records—showed close to 50 projects under construction within Community Boards 7 and 12. Fourteen of the 43 properties surveyed in the report that are now being primed for residential construction within Community Board 7 were once homes, according to an analysis of the report’s figures that had used public records. Finding the actual buyers proved difficult for UNHP; others impossible for them.

Bedford Park and Kingsbridge Road have long been zoned for homes as high as 14 stories, drawing ire from residents who claim the existing resources—schools, the local 52nd Precinct, and sanitation services—cannot handle the population boom.

At East 202nd and East 203rd streets by East Mosholu Parkway, four 1- to 4-family homes were knocked down to make way for two massive buildings by the Brooklyn-based nonprofit developer CAMBA. The co-owner of the lot, Peter Fine, purchased the row of homes, partnering with CAMBA to usher in two affordable/supportive housing properties financed by city subsidies. Fine is a fixture in the world of New York real estate, owning at least 56 apartment buildings in the Bronx through his Atlantic Development Group LLC.

In recent months, Fine has expanded his footprint even more in the neighborhood by purchasing four more 1- to 4-family homes from homeowners on East 203rd Street, between East Mosholu Parkway South and Valentine Avenue, adjacent to the pending CAMBA project. Fine, through various limited-liability corpo-



Photo by Adi Talwar

ELIZABETH QUARANTA OF Bedford Park (pictured) has been bombarded with offers to sell her three-family home, one of the few remaining owner occupied homes in the neighborhood.

rations (LLC) with mailing addresses in Brooklyn, obtained permits to demolish the homes. It’s unclear what types of properties will rise, though he has been in the business of building high-rises. A spokesman for Fine said there are no definitive plans for the properties, though an announcement will be made once it happens.

Last month, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Geoffrey S. Berman, filed a lawsuit against Atlantic Development Group over claims his buildings are not in compliance with the Fair Housing Act, specifically over access into the buildings. An attorney representing Fine, told *Westfair Online* the case is without merit.

Whatever is built in those properties, it appears Fine will have the upper hand given the existing zoning laws that dictate what gets built in that neighborhood. Community Board 7, which serves the area, attempted to stymie that development by introducing amendments that would downzone the area. Those attempts failed, with planning officials arguing that the bulk of the neighborhood’s buildings are compliant with the zoning laws.

“They’re taking their directives from the Mayor’s Office who wants to build, build, build,” said Stronczner.

It doesn’t help that on top of the zoning laws, the area is not marked as an historic district that limits development. For its part, BMCA is looking to reverse that through its Six to Celebrate designation, where the Historic Districts Council is helping to preserve the character of the neighborhood. The group, which lobbies the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and touts its involvement in the creation of over 100 historic districts in its 49-year history, puts a spotlight each year on six neighborhoods it considers important to New York archi-

tecture, culture and history and in need of preservation. In a statement, HDC described Bedford Park as an “elegant and diverse residential community” with a “bucolic character.”

But until that happens, Bedford Park homes are ripe for being picked off.

“There is a very wide perception, we’ve heard it said the Bronx is the next Brooklyn. So there’s a wide perception that there’s a lot of up value in the Bronx and people are testing that,” said Clarke. “Norwood and Bedford Park are great places to test the market because they’re thriving neighborhoods. You have more working class and more middle class people; you have the train, they’re pretty stable neighborhoods, the crime rate is pretty low. It’s a little secret, but they’re really desirable neighborhoods.”

Fix and Flip

Identifying buyers isn’t so easy given the rise of 1- to 4-family properties being purchased through LLCs, commonly known as shell companies. LLCs, which costs \$200 in New York State to form, often make purchases on behalf of individual investors. LLCs shield the identities of buyers, making impossible to trace, while insulating them from lawsuits. Federal officials have long criticized the nature of LLCs since they pose the potential of using illegitimate funds to purchase homes, creating a mechanism to launder money.

The Center for New York City Neighborhoods (CNYCN), a nonprofit engaged in research and housing advocacy, has noted the rise of LLC-purchased homes. In the last decade, LLC-purchased homes have doubled, reaching a high in 2017 in the five boroughs when 18 percent of home purchases were done through LLCs, according to the center’s report that examined the 10-year aftermath of the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis.

“Investor purchases are now at a higher level than where they were in years leading up to the foreclosure crisis,” said Caroline Nagy, deputy director for policy and research at CNYCN. “Additionally, the increase in investors is making it much harder for average New Yorkers to be able to afford and purchase a home mostly because they’re driving the price up and also because they tend to deal in all cash. Most people need mortgages to buy homes so it’s really difficult for [individuals] to compete with LLCs or corporate investors, just because even if they can compete on price, the financing makes the investors that much more competitive.”

In Norwood, for instance, a group of investors tied to former Goldman Sachs financier George Welde purchased 3259 Decatur Ave., a three-family home a year after the original occupants – Luz Catano and Mercedes Galdamez – foreclosed. The home was priced at \$340,000, falling within the range of what a middle-class family in New York City could afford to buy. After the group flipped it, the property was sold to Monsur and Moynul Miah, a Queens couple who’ve rented out the property after \$227,800 in renovations, according to city documents. Records show they purchased the home for \$749,000 (the real estate website Zillow inexplicably shows it sold for \$2.6 million), easily taking this home off the working class housing market. Monsur Miah did not return requests for comment.

Just over a half mile from Decatur Avenue, rehab work is under way at 306 E. 206th St. The home fell into a state of disrepair when its owner, Martin Brennan, occupied the home. Brennan, who died in 2018, had purchased the home in 2007 for



THE HOME THAT once stood at 3008 Perry Ave. is now being planned and bulldozed. An eight-story unit is now being planned.

FLIPPER'S MARKET IN THE BRONX

\$300,000, but later filed for bankruptcy. The home was eventually purchased for \$580,403 by Raston LLC in December 2018 through a lien sale, a near 100 percent markup from what Brennan paid. Raston LLC financed its mortgage through Bayport Funding LLC, a firm specializing in “Fix and Flip” investments.

From 2017 to June 2019, there have been 39 home sales of which 13 were purchased by LLCs in Norwood, according to a *Norwood News* analysis using data provided by AATOM, a real estate research group. Norwood falls within the 10467 zip code. Within that zip code, but outside of Norwood, 482 homes were purchased from 2017 through June 2019 of which 143 were purchased through LLCs, according to the data.

Another report by CNYCN entitled “How Real Estate Speculators Are Targeting New York City’s Affordable Neighborhoods,” showed 17 percent of home sales in Williamsbridge/Baychester were deemed “flips” in 2017.

CNYCN reserves the term “flipping” for home buyers who buy and sell a home in less than a year. The LLC with the most purchases from 2017 to June 2019 in the Bronx, according to the AATOM data, is 1908 Hunt Avenue LLC, which executed 21 transactions of 1- to 3-family homes across the Bronx. An analysis of the data shows the LLC flipped at least 16 of the 21 homes it rapidly purchased from March 2017 to June 2019, taking homes that ran on average \$359,306 from its original price and selling them at an average \$619,175, nearly double the cost. Of the 16 homes, two received renovations that included the installation of solar panels. Even so, 1908 Hunt Avenue LLC pulled in a total of \$3.9 million in profits within a year and a half



Photo by Adi Talwar

RAFAELA SANTOS (PICTURED) has owned her home in Bedford Park for a decade. She too has received solicitations from realtors looking for her to sell.

span. Records show the representative to be Neil Smith. He did not respond to requests for comment.

Though Bedford Park and Norwood have seen a wealth of activity, the epicenter of LLC-purchased properties in the Bronx was found within Community Board 12, a district largely comprised of suburban-esque neighborhoods that’s predominantly home to black homeowners, according to CNYCN. There, 97 of 153 sales at prices affordable to a buyer at New York City’s median income in 2018 were investor buyers, translating to mean 63 percent of total home sales that would have been affordable to a family with the city’s median income went to investor buyers, according to the Center. The neighborhood also saw the most foreclosures compared to the rest of the borough in the last 10 years, with 7,000.

Much of why LLCs are the preferred method of doing business stems from its versatility for members, according to Nataly Goldstein, an attorney specializing in LLCs. “You could change the rules of the LLCs, the assets of the LLC, the proportion of profits and losses that each member gain just by drafting and re-drafting the document, which doesn’t get recorded. So there are no recording fees there. So it’s a pretty cheap and easy way to be flexible in the management of LLCs.”

As for disclosing the names behind LLCs, Goldstein notes it’s “counterproductive” to do so as it could open them up to lawsuits. “If you were to publish who the actual members are, then you’re exposing exactly to the liability that you’re trying to protect yourself from,” said Goldstein.

Speculators Amok

Much of why Williamsbridge has been swept up by investor buyers could be from its swell of homes available in the neighborhood.

And many of the transactions don’t happen through traditional home buying involving other homebuyers, but aggressive sales pitch tactics from real estate firms.

Residents living within Williamsbridge confirmed it, pointing to the barrage of mailers from realtors they receive and routinely throw out. One resident who went by Yvonne G., said realtors usually “leave cards. They leave stuff at the door. They call on the phone.” “They’re not really interested in living in the home,” said Yvonne of the realtors, pointing to the lack of care renters have put on homes in her neighborhood. “People who don’t own homes, they don’t take care of the homes.”

A few houses down, Douglas B., another homeowner, has taken note over the litany of solicitations he’s spotted. The pattern is troubling for Douglas, who believes the conversion of owner-occupied homes to rentals leads to less neighborhood vigilance. “A lot of private residences ... got people living there that don’t care. When you could see somebody walk down the street and just throw garbage because they don’t have to ever sweep up in front of their house, that tears down a community,” said Douglas. “It’s all about the money.”

Back in Bedford Park, Elizabeth Quaranta, a homeowner living within moderate income means, stands among those who won’t sell, warding off continued pitches from developers who’ve encouraged her to “name her price.”

“I do get text messages about selling the property. And I also get people out on the porch; they come through the gate and they ask me if I’m willing to sell the house,” said Quaranta, who lives next door to a property purchased by a group of investors who’ve attempted to convince her to sell as they oversaw renovations.

In some cases, men have arrived unan-

nounced during the early afternoons, not to pitch but to snap photos. “They’ll take a picture, or they’ll take out a little notepad and they’ll write things down, and then they’ll walk away. I guess that’s their way of scouting out the neighborhood?” said Quaranta.

Rafaela Santos, another Bedford Park homeowner, gets solicitations too. She doesn’t bother saving any of them as many simply keep forwarding her letters that appear to be handwritten, only to find them pro-forma. In some cases, she’s received fliers reading “we also have investors who are willing to purchase properties.”

“More often than not I just throw them out because they become quite a [lot],” said Santos, saying that she’s been solicited in person by a woman purporting to be a new resident. “She seemed quite persistent in asking a lot of questions about the neighborhood, so I started wondering if it was true—if she actually moved in the neighborhood.”

That solicitation came from Lucy Alvarez. In a telephone interview with the *Norwood News*, Alvarez defended the practice. “I receive over here a thousand of [those letters]. If it doesn’t apply to me I just throw away,” said Alvarez. “That’s the way people do business. We ask, ask, ask, and sometimes they say yes. If it’s not, then throw away. There is no problem for that.”

Her next-door neighbor, Marilyn Villamar, a 50-year resident of Bedford Park, gets business cards and newsletters. “You’re constantly inundated with junk like that,” said Villamar. “Sometimes you get these phone calls. [I’m] saying, ‘How did you get this number?’”

Santos and Villamar plan to stay in their home. Santos expressed concerns that more and more properties are simply being bought out, including 3008 Perry Ave., which she characterized as “sad.” Villamar concluded simply that “money talks.”

Solicitating, it seems, is common practice that could easily yield major returns.

“It sounds like a lot of work to target people one on one, but just think of the profit,” said Nagy. “Sometimes these people, by getting people who aren’t selling their homes on the market they can get a home for several hundred thousand dollars below the market, and then when they flip it that’s all profit. So, all you have to do is get one or two people and you’re making hundreds of thousands of dollars.”

In many instances, representatives of LLCs—relying on a list of homeowners on a tax liens list compiled by the city (as of September this year the Bronx ranks third in the number of 1- to 4-family homes with a tax lien)—spend the day canvassing neighborhoods, scouting for

(continued on page 27)



Photo by Adi Talwar

at the corner of East Mosholu Parkway was recently for the property.

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MMCC Thanksgiving Day Food Giveaway Draws Dozens



Photo by Michael Turay

COUNCILMAN ANDREW COHEN (pictured) visited the two-day food giveaway event at Mosholu Montefiore Community Center on Nov. 14. The 1st day of the giveaway event took place on Nov. 12.

By MICHAEL TURAY

With Thanksgiving Day on the horizon, it's the time of the year where generational recipes will be prepared and plates will be filled. Unfortunately for some, Thanksgiving groceries can be hard to come by, but last week the Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC) hosted their annual Turkey Giveaway Event, filling a need for underserved Bronx residents.

MMCC board members along with their loved ones all came out to lend a hand to dish out Thanksgiving goodies during a two-day giveaway event that saw lines of residents waiting to get a bird and some trimmings to go with it. In the basement of the community center nearly 200 people lined up for pantry goods, canned foods and a turkey courtesy of MMCC. Roughly 400 meals were donated in total.

Councilman Andrew Cohen, who's contributed to the many causes MMCC embraces including

the center's food pantry, was also in attendance to help out and interact with those who were present. The majority of the recipients live locally and come from low-income backgrounds. They were all excited to receive the holiday goodies. Volunteers directed recipients from room to room where they were able to stock up on canned peas, stuffing, cranberry sauce, and other Thanksgiving Day specialties. More than 1,500 families registered for the food pantry.

"It's a great feeling. We're all about healing the world and giving back to the community and Mosholu Montefiore Community Center does that in so many ways from little children up through seniors," said MMCC Board of Directors president Robert Weiss in an interview with News 12 the Bronx.

This was MMCC's first holiday giveaway of the season.



Photo by Michael Turay

BRONX RESIDENTS STAND in line waiting to receive a generously donated turkey courtesy of Mosholu Montefiore Community Center.



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By THE CURTAIN SHOP

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The friendly staff at The Curtain Shop will greet you with a hello, find out about your needs and then expertly walk you through solutions and options. Many of the staff have been with the shop for more than 20 years and their dedication and professionalism is readily apparent in the pride that goes into helping you. This business is owner operated, so important details are never overlooked. The large 4,000 square foot first floor is packed with displays showing you just how your new purchase will look.

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Venture upstairs and you'll find small appliances, yarn, lamps, lampshades, pots/pans and

hundreds of gadgets. There are dozens of wall clocks and the gift counters are stocked with ceramic and glass gifts for any occasion. There are vacuum cleaner displays, Rubbermaid products and all the tools you will need to prepare a wonderful meal.

Don't just take our word for it, stop by and see for yourself. The Curtain Shop is located in the heart of New Rochelle's bustling downtown. Be sure to check out one of the many great restaurants within walking distance of the shop. In addition, the shop has neighbors like jewelry shops, a huge consignment store (right next door), a C Town supermarket, a furniture shop and much more. Find out why shoppers have been coming to The Curtain Shop since 1976. Visit us at 541 Main Street in New Rochelle.

Street parking is available, major bus routes pass by all day and it's just two blocks from the Metro-North Railroad. Hours are Mon-Fri 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thurs 9 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Sat 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Sun 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., starting Nov. 24 through Dec. 22. Call us at (914) 636-8794 or visit us at curtainshop.com.



Photo courtesy The Curtain Shop

THE CURTAIN SHOP at 541 Main Street in New Rochelle, NY has been selling its brand of shades and curtains since 1976.

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PI: Dr. Erin Hazlett MIRB#: 01708

Bronx VA Medical Center/IRB Approval/ 6/6/19 to 6/5/20

Ahead of the US. Census Count, Bronx Democrats Form Another Club to Ensure a Proper Tally



Photo by José A. Giralto

OSWALD FELIZ (4TH from left) stands with the seven other members of the newly-formed Northwest Bronx Democrats for Change and is joined by Congressman Adriano Espaillat (r) after being sworn in on Nov. 17 in Fordham.

By **JOSÉ A. GIRALT**

Democrats in the Bronx added another club on Nov. 17 to grow their political power in the borough. Formally known as Northwest Bronx Democrats for Change, the group is led by Oswald Feliz, a housing lawyer and Democratic district leader for

the 78th Assembly District.

Locally, Feliz has been involved in representing the tenants of Bedford Park Manor in their dispute with the owner, the Stagg Group, over living conditions including broken elevators, bug infestation, and water damage inside apartments.

The group was formed, according to Feliz, in response to a larger threat than just local landlords failing to deliver on basic services.

At the swearing-in ceremony attended by Bronx Democratic Party chair and Assemblyman Marcos Crespo and Norwood

Congressman Adriano Espaillat, Feliz mentioned President Donald Trump as a threat to the community. “We need to make sure that we are organized, and we are engaged so we can successfully defend ourselves against any attacks by the current administration,” Feliz said.

The upcoming 2020 Census is of particular interest to Feliz as a point where the local needs intersect with federal governance. “We need to make sure that every single person is counted so we can have fair representation in Washington [D.C.] and throughout the country,” he said.

Feliz will be joined by seven other members in the group

Rachel Miller-Bradshaw will serve as first vice president and wants the group to push for meaningful change in the Bronx and beyond. “We are not a status quo group, I didn’t join for that,” said Miller-Bradshaw. “We want to be a do-action group and we want to be very effective so that the community really sees good results,” she added.

Some have wondered whether another political action group is needed in this part of the Bronx. For example, the Louella Hatch Democratic Club which also serves the northwest Bronx and has been associated with Councilman Fernando Cabrera, share many of the same goals as Feliz’s group, namely, to increase civic engagement, expand voter registration, and promote Democratic Party values.

Anthony Riviuccio, whose own political club nearly bears the exact same name as the newly formed club, is not concerned that another political group is organizing in the Bronx as long as they learn to work collaboratively and not see each other as competitors.

“This is now the third or fourth [political] club in the Fordham Kingsbridge area,” Riviuccio said. “Maybe this club can enhance the others.”

Editor’s Note: Riviuccio is a contributor to the Norwood News.



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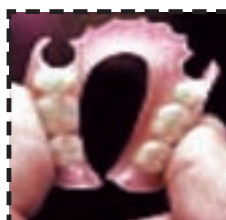


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Extra! Extra! Bronx Local Lobbies for Newspapers Across School System

By DAVID CRUZ

The availability of school newspapers across the the New York City system are spotty at best, with just a handful of them publishing a weekly or monthly publication.

For Dawn Hunter, a Riverdale resident who teaches at City College Academy of the Arts in the Inwood section of Manhattan, the creation of a paper used as a tool for understanding media literacy in her English class made sense. It became an instant hit.

“We want the kids to have a voice, and we also want them to deepen their thoughts and have them speak out and seek the truth,” said Hunter, who found that teens heavily rely on social media to get their news.

She and her colleague, Dennis Mihalsky, an ESL teacher at the school, have been taking on the ambitious goal of lobbying other schools across the city, including the Bronx, to create a school newspaper of their own. It’s part of the [Students Disrupting campaign](#) that Mihalsky founded, which involves surveying teachers to gauge interest in starting a paper in their school. The newspaper, should teachers agree to form one, would be adapted

as part of the English curriculum.

Mihalsky was compelled for such an endeavor after learning that so few schools, about one in 10 according to estimates he picked up from the *New York Times*, have a school newspaper. The report found the Bronx has the fewest number of school newspapers. “That’s when I realized that this needs to be something that should be brought to all of the schools in New York City to have the same effect and the same positive outcome that it had on our school,” said Mihalsky, who plans to accurately quantify the number of schools without a newspaper.

Some Bronx schools that once published a paper no longer do, including the Celia Cruz Bronx High School of Music and Bronx International Charter School.

At the City College Academy of the Arts, students applied to each position at the newspaper. Their stories—much of them hard-hitting, including an exposé on delays in replacing old backboards with ones purchased two years ago—were published in the paper’s inaugural edition dubbed *The Claw*.

For Hunter, the paper’s purpose is multi-prong, giving students a chance

to improve their writing and literacy skills, while exposing journalism’s influential power in promoting change. Students were also given carte blanche to venture outside the classroom searching for their stories.

“We saw kids who didn’t work in their class actually sitting down and writing, and typing, and researching,” said Hunter. “And it built community in the class too. We felt also that kids who mainly weren’t getting along all of a sudden everybody was getting along. It was amazing.”

Mihalsky agreed, noticing a dramatic change in some students’ engagement on journalism. “They were writing stories that they were interested in. It was going just beyond them just wanting to get a good grade. They were actually wanting to just see their name and their



Photo courtesy Students Disrupting

DAWN HUNTER (C) WITH her colleague and Students Disrupting founder Dennis Mihalsky (r), and colleague Jenna Young. Hunter and Mihalsky have partnered to introduce a newspaper to their school. They intend to replicate its successes to other schools across the city.

story and their work in a printed version of what every student was going to be reading.”



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Members: \$80; Non-Members: \$120



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Thursday, November 7 for Non-Members
Classes are 1x Week for 8 Weeks
Members: \$300; Non-Members: \$350



Preventing Type 2 Diabetes Can Happen With These Steps

By THIARA PEREZ

Diabetes is a chronic condition in which the body is unable to properly break down the sugar found in food and beverages consumed. This can lead to too much sugar remaining in the bloodstream. Diabetes can be managed, and there are many steps you can take to lower your risk of diabetes. Over time, if not well managed, diabetes can cause serious health problems including blindness, loss of a limb, kidney disease, stroke, and heart disease.

Type 2 diabetes is the most common type of diabetes, which leads to the body not properly using or not responding to the insulin the pancreas produces to control the sugar in your bloodstream. This is also known as insulin resistance, a term doctors sometimes use when talking about diabetes risk. Type 2 diabetes generally develops because of lifestyle

and genetics.

Recent data from the Global Burden Disease Project shows that diabetes was one of the leading causes of illness in New York State. In New York City, the Bronx has the highest prevalence of diabetes and it continues to increase over time.

A simple blood test can determine whether you have diabetes or prediabetes, which means that your blood sugar is higher than normal but it is not high enough to be diagnosed with diabetes. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 84.1 million adults in the United States have prediabetes, this is equal to 1 in 3 people; and 90 percent of these people are not aware that they have it. Some risk factors that may put a person at a higher risk for prediabetes, according to the CDC, include:

- Being overweight

- Being 45 years or older
- Having family history of type 2 diabetes
- Having high blood pressure
- Being sedentary (not exercising)
- Having history of diabetes during pregnancy, often called gestational diabetes

The good news is type 2 diabetes can be delayed or even prevented. If prediabetes is present, making small lifestyle changes can help to avoid or delay type 2 diabetes in the future. These lifestyle changes include:

- Exercising regularly
- Losing weight

Eating a balanced diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and

good fats, but not too much sugar or unhealthy fats

If you meet any of the risk factors previously mentioned and are at a higher possibility for prediabetes and type 2 diabetes, it is important to get regular screenings; talk to your provider about getting tested. Montefiore offers a free diabetes prevention program for its patients to help them achieve a healthier lifestyle; you can ask your Montefiore provider to see if you qualify. Talk to your doctor and take charge of your health.

Thiara Perez is an outreach supervisor for Montefiore Health System's Diabetes Prevention Program.

Monte Hails School-Based Clinic at IS 98



Photo courtesy Montefiore Health System

THE MONTEFIORE SCHOOL Health Program recently celebrated the opening of its 31st school-based health center with a ribbon cutting at the Herman Ridder Campus located at IS 98 in Crotona. Teams of primary care providers, mental health specialists, dentists and community health organizers provide comprehensive care for 42,000 children in elementary, middle and high schools throughout the Bronx.

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NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

Trail Volunteer

Sign up to join the Van Cortlandt Park Alliance's Volunteer Trails Restoration Crew for Dec. 7 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The service helps train volunteers to work alongside trails professionals to develop skills in various areas of trail construction while improving the trails in Van Cortlandt Park. For more information, and to sign up, contact john@vancortlandt.org. Must be 18 years of age to join.

Toy Drive

The Bronx Zoo is accepting donations of unwrapped toys for its annual toy drive to distribute to local veterans and active-duty members of the military and their families. Anyone donating an unwrapped will receive a free ticket to the Bronx Zoo or New York Aquarium. Visit www.bronxzoo.com for more information.

Literacy Fair

The Children's Hospital at Montefiore hosts a literacy fair on Nov. 26 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., featuring book giveaway offers for children under age five, registration for a New York Public Library card, and reading awareness table. A book vendor fair takes place from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Both events take place at 3415 Bainbridge Ave. For more information, call the Family Learning Place at (718) 741-2357 or email familylearningplace@montefiore.org.

Canned Food Donation

The office of Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz is hosting a canned food drive through Dec. 11 to support two local food pantries for the holiday season: Kingsbridge Heights Community Center and St. Frances of Rome Food Pantry. Canned fruits and vegetables, cereals, dried beans, rice, tuna, coffee, teas, canned juices, powdered milk, Jell-O, and soups will be accepted. Donate food at 3107 Kingsbridge Ave. from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 796-5345.

Tenant Help

The Mayor's Public Engagement Unit will have members of its tenant support unit on hand to inform tenants of their housing rights and connect with a range of free resources to address landlord harassment at the following dates, times, and locations: Nov. 30 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the New York Public Library Sedgwick Branch at 1701 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.; and Nov. 26 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the NYCHA Customer Contact Center, 478 E. Fordham Rd.

Compost Leaves

Residents living in Norwood, Bedford Park, Fordham, Van Cortlandt Park, University Heights, and Kingsbridge Heights can have their collected tree leaves picked up by the New York City Department of Sanitation. Leaves must be placed in a brown bin, paper lawn and leaf bag, or yard waste only bin, and left out at the curb after 4 p.m. on Nov. 30. For more information, call 311 or visit nyc.gov/leafcollection.

Book Sale

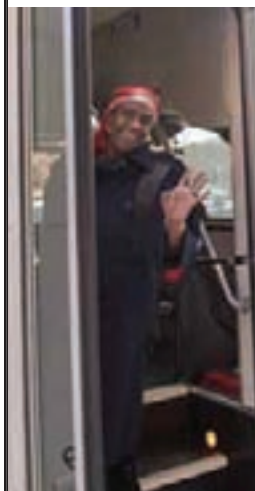
Sistas & Brothas United and Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition host a book sale at 103 E. 196th St. on the following days: Thursdays and Fridays from 4 to 6 p.m.; and Saturdays and Sundays from 12 to 4 p.m. Book genres include short stories, dramas, fiction, horror, kids' books, and more. For more information, call (718) 584-0515.

Crib Bumper Exchange

Parents and caregivers can dispose of their crib bumper pads—known to cause injury to infants or possibly death—in exchange for a baby sleep sack at the Administration for Children's Services' (ACS) Bronx office at 2501 Grand Concourse, fourth floor. It's recommended to call the Bronx ACS office at (718) 933-1212 ahead of receiving the sleep sack. For more information, go to www.nyc.gov/safesleep.

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Out & About

Compiled by JUDY NOY

EDITOR'S PICK

Celebrate Thanksgiving

Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez, State Senator Jamaal T. Bailey, and Councilman Andy Cohen invite the public to the following free Thanksgiving events on Nov. 25:

Turkey Giveaway – 4 to 6 p.m. at North Central Bronx Hospital, 3424 Kossuth Ave. RSVP by Nov. 22 to (718) 519-4860.

Community Dinner– 6 to 9 p.m. at Lexa Bar & Garden, 357 E. 204th St. RSVP to (718) 409-0109.

Events

The Jerome Gun Hill Business Improvement District hosts its annual **Holiday Tree Lighting** on Dec. 4 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the corner of East Mosholu Parkway and Jerome Avenue. Free toys for children, holiday shopping guides, pictures with Santa, and hot cocoa will be offered (while supplies last). For more information, call (718) 324-4998.

The Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center offers free art in painting, collage, sculpture or drawing each week as follows: **Studio Art from 5 to 6 p.m.:** Nov. 26, Dec. 3 and 10; and **Toddler Studio Art from 11 a.m. to noon:** Nov. 28, Dec. 5 and 12. Also scheduled free is **Winter Wonderland:** Dec. 14 from 12:30 to 2:30 featuring holiday arts & crafts and music.

For more information, call (718) 543-8672 or (718) 515-2495.

The Bronx Zoo features the **Return of Holiday Lights**, Nov. 21 through Jan. 5, Sundays to Thursdays from 5 to 9 p.m., and Fridays and Saturdays from 5 to 10 p.m. Included are carolers, costume characters, train rides (fee), lantern safari, animated sculptures, light show in Astor Court every 20 minutes, and nightly ice carving demonstrations. Tickets: \$29.95/adults; \$22.95/children; \$28.95/seniors. There will be an Ice Jubilee featuring an ice bar, ice throne, ice slide from Dec. 21 to 31 excluding Dec. 24 and 25, and an ice carving competition on Dec. 28 from 6 to 9 p.m. For ticketing and a full schedule of activities, visit bronxzoo.com/holiday-lights. For more information, call (718) 220-5100.

A Clean Look for Devoe Park



Photo courtesy Rachel Bradshaw

A GROUP OF community residents rolled up their sleeves to clean up Devoe Park in Fordham on Nov. 16. Formally known as Friends of Devoe Park, the group hauled out trash, raked leaves, and swept up parts of the massive park.. The group also received help from officers at the local 52nd Precinct and residents from the Bowery Residents Committee.



File photo by Miriam Quinones

LAST YEAR'S JEROME Gun Hill Business Improvement District holiday tree lighting celebration saw a visit from Santa Claus! More information on this year's tree lighting event can be found in our Events section.

Woodlawn Conservancy holds free **Trolley Tour**, Nov. 21 from 2 to 4 p.m. at Woodlawn Cemetery to historic gravesites including Sir Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Celia Cruz and more. Also scheduled is **Woodlawn's Illuminated Angels Trolley Tour**, of statues and stained glass windows featuring supernatural beings, Nov. 30 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. (meet at 5:15 p.m. at the Woodlawn Conservancy, Woodlawn Cemetery at Jerome and Bainbridge avenues; preregistration required; \$20/ members; \$25/non members). For more information and to preregister, visit www.WoodlawnTours.org or call (718) 920-1469.

St. James Recreation Center, 2530 Jerome Ave., offers a variety of **adult and senior programs** through Dec. 21. For more information or a detailed listing, call (718) 367-3657.

The Van Cortlandt Park Alliance features **Bird Walk** on Nov. 23 from 9 to 10:30 a.m. led by NYC Audubon experts. Meet at the southeast corner of the Mosholu Avenue park entrance. For more information, write info@vancortlandtorg.

Comité Noviembre presents free **National Puerto Rican Artisans Fair & Book Expo**, Nov. 23 from noon to 7 p.m. at Hostos Community College's 3rd floor cafeteria, 450 Grand Concourse. Artisans United for Puerto Rico is raising funds to help artists/authors who travel from Puerto Rico to participate in this event to help offset their traveling expenses. Please donate to GoFundMe fundraising campaign. For more information, visit www.prida.org.

Wave Hill, a Bronx oasis at 675 W. 252nd St. in Riverdale, offers **Family Art Projects:** Si Se Puede, to learn about the United Farm Workers Union, then create a dream farm maze to meander through, Nov 23 and 24; and Symbiosis Scenes, to create a diorama to highlight your favorite plant or animal partnerships, Nov. 30 and Dec. 1; both in the WH House 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.

Exhibits

The Museum of Bronx History, 3266 Bainbridge Ave. (208th Street), presents **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.

The Green House Gallery, 315 E. 201st St. presents **Woman to Woman, a 2019 Collective**, Nov. 22 and 23 from 4 to 8 p.m. The public is invited to attend.

Library Events

Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd., presents for ages 5 to 12: **film:** "Land Before Time," Nov. 22 at 4 p.m. Teens/young adults can enjoy **film:** Nov. 23 at 3 p.m. Adults can attend: **Bronx Arts Ensemble:** poetry readings and music, Nov. 23 at 2:30 p.m.; and **film:** "Easy Rider," Nov. 30 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 579-4244/46/57 or visit www.nypl.org.

Mosholu Library, 285 E. 205th St., offers for kids: **Crafty Fridays at 3 p.m.:** (ages 5 to 12): crafts, Nov. 22 and 29; **Toddler Storytime:** (ages 18 to 36 months): stories, songs, fingerplays and crafts, Nov. 25 at 11 a.m.; and **STEM: Kids Science:** (ages 5 to 12): Nov. 26 at 3 p.m. (Building). Teens/young adults can attend **film:** "Aladdin," Nov. 30 at 1:30 p.m. Adults can join: **Knitting:** Thursdays at 3 p.m. For more information, call (718) 882-8239.

Jerome Park Library, 118 Eames Pl. (near Kingsbridge Road), offers for adults: **Computer Basics:** Dec. 5 at noon. For more information, call (718) 549-5200.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING TO ALL OUR READERS!

NOTE: Items for consideration may be mailed to our office or sent to norwoodnews@norwoodnews.org, and should be received by Nov. 25 for the next publication date of Dec. 5.

The Vanishing Homeowner

(continued from page 15)

desperate homeowners willing to sell, or simply bombard them with mailers.

Quaranta's also received an email from another would-be buyer, Tali Isufi of Propco Holdings, offering to buy her home. "Propco Holdings already owns over \$100 million worth of properties in Bronx and we're interest[ed] in buying new properties," wrote Isufi in an August email to Quaranta. "Please let us know if you are interested in selling and we'll send you an offer right away. Additionally, if you have other properties in Bronx that are for sale, we might be interested in them as well."

This prompted Quaranta to respond with a lengthy explanation on why she won't sell. "[He] actually responded within seconds, and he wrote, 'Interesting response,'" said Quaranta.

Propco Holdings is based in Queens, though its footprint is large. On its website, it promotes investors to pump investments into Opportunity Zones, defined as low-income communities in need of investments through Opportunity Funds that offer tax incentives to long-term investors.

"It is hoped that this program will lead to neighborhood and business district revitalization as well as encourage entrepreneurship in the Opportunity Zones. Examples: Gentrification of distressed areas," read the website. "New Housing developments. Expansion funding for business, New developments in underdeveloped areas, e.g. shopping centers, manufacturing plants, business offices."

Nearly half the Bronx is carved out into opportunity zones. Isufi from Propco Holdings did not return an email or phone call seeking comment.

Quaranta's stream of letters, emails, and text messages offering money for her home could work against speculators. New York State's "no solicitation zone" bars speculators from flooding neighborhoods with notices.

But Quaranta's not sure there's enough buy-in from the community. "I think they see the dollars," said Quaranta of her neighbors.

"It's not illegal to get someone to commit someone to sell your home for much less than what it's worth, but it is amoral, it's wrong, and it's something we really want more resources for community members to fight back against," said Nagy. "It's taking advantage of people's desperation. A lot of people who are in trouble don't know that they can get help. Help is available, that it's free, that could actually keep them in their home."

State Senator Jamaal Bailey—whose district covers Norwood, Bedford Park, and Williamsbridge—agrees that homeowners at the end of their rope are fueling these investments.

"The prices of the house is an upward trajectory. The 1- and 2-family homes are priced way higher than they should be in this neck of the woods and that's because you have these speculators that are trying to offer all cash deals for these buyers," said Bailey. "When somebody comes in front of you, and waves X amount of dollars in front of you and you're

still under water from the foreclosure, your concern, rightfully so, [is] about making sure your family's okay and taken care of."

Finding Solutions

Sustaining the owner-occupied housing market is possible, and has been done in the last few decades, according to Clarke of UNHP. She points to owner-occupied homes built within Community Board 6, a district that falls southeast of Bedford Park and Norwood. There, community-based planning—a term commonly used by the city Department of City Planning that envisions the future of neighborhoods through collaboration with existing residents—made that a possibility, thanks to New York City Housing Partnership. The initiative saw the nonprofit group acquire empty lots along Crotona Parkway for private contractors to build 2- to 3-family homes.

"The homes are still very well maintained, and the owner gets some rental income and they appear to be owner-occupied as well," said Clarke, adding homeownership could thrive even more if the city placed a greater interest in subsidizing affordable homeownership. "It is a shame that we are losing homes and I do think a conversation needs to happen that [asks] what is it that we want to do?"

On the legislative front, state lawmakers have either introduced or passed bills aimed at reducing rapid home purchases by anonymous buyers. One of the new provisions makes the names of home buyers available through a request via the Freedom of Information Act.

Another tactic proposed is a Flip Tax Bill that would impose a 20 percent tax on properties sold within one year and a 15 percent tax on properties sold after one year but less than two years after the purchase. The bill was introduced in February, but tabled in committee to the relief of groups such as the Landlords New York group that suspected the bill would be "forgotten" about and "fade into obscurity." A representative for the group did not return an email seeking comment.

Bailey said he's supportive of the Flip Tax bill proposed by Brooklyn state Sen. Julia Salazar, suspecting the wave of home flipping will cause another "unnatural" housing bubble that's "going to pop back on us."

Quaranta, meantime, will continue to ward off any more solicitations, unlike her neighbors who've succumbed to offers. Quaranta—despite being offered \$1.5 million for her home—intends to stay.

"They're removing the option of people who want to buy homes," said Quaranta of speculative buyers. "It would be a great option to own a home and take in the fact that there is this community and neighborhood where you have that opportunity to own something. They're forcing these buildings with rentals. I don't see co-ops going up. I don't see condos. I see rentals, rentals, rentals. They're changing the geographic footprint here. And they're doing it without the rest of the community agreeing with it. It's almost like they took over."

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