Help Your Tree “Neighbors” Flourish This Summer

by Colleen O’Connor-Grant

Whoever coined the term “tree-lined streets” must have been thinking of Prospect Lefferts Gardens, whose blocks have been shaded for more than a century by a luscious canopy of trees. The diversity of elm, cottonwood, maple, beech, and oak trees that line our blocks when in full summer bloom casts the kinds of hues, lights and shadows that even a Matisse can’t catch. But our “neighbors” are facing a precarious situation and will need your care this summer.

Following one of the driest winters on record—which has prompted the state’s climatologists to declare a Level 1 drought alert (the least severe drought warning) — the soil in the beds of street trees did not receive adequate moisture. The key to possessing a real potential for a hot, drought-like summer would create dry, hard-packed tree beds and would put our friends in peril.

The roots of street trees are a home in the soil underneath the tree bed. If the roots can’t locate adequate water in that soil, they’ll grow (continued on page 2)

Play Kids, PLG Toy Store With a Conscience, Gets Citywide Recognition

by Susan Fox

Tiny tots and taller tykes in Prospect Lefferts Gardens have a new destination where they can expand both their toy collection and their social circle. Play Kids, our neighborhood toy and specialty store, was thankful for something to do on his first day home with his daughter, says Carl. Greg Winter, a new father visiting Play Kids for the first time with his 13-month-old daughter Josephine, was thankful for something to do with her on his third day of paternity leave from the New York Times. Daunted by the inclement weather on his first day home with his daughter, he declares. Content with their experience, he vowed to bring Josephine back the following week.

Play Kids is a toy store and specialty store, which has been recognized by the New York City toy association as “New York’s Best Toy Store” in the year’s New York magazine’s “Best of New York” issue. Of the recognition Shelley says, “I’m shocked. I’m honored. With play kids, we are thankful for something to do with our family.”

The new “Kids” on the block shot to the top of the New York City toy store heap when just four months old. In March they landed a coveted distinction as “New York’s Best Toy Store” in this year’s New York magazine’s “Best of New York” issue. Of the recognition Shelley says, “I’m shocked. I’m honored. With Play Kids, we are thankful for something to do with our family.”

The surveys show a yawning gap in median household incomes in PLG as many blocks become peppered with homes boasting $200,000-plus household incomes while a far larger number of neighboring families are barely earning a living wage.

In analyzing PLG’s portrait in the new census studies, the government researchers say their computations methods cannot be manipulated to make specific projections of communities. But census tracks covering the ten states, cities and counties are aggregated.

The Echo reserves the right to edit or omit article submissions. We thank the contributing writers, photographers, graphic designer Ken Diamond, story editor Susan Fox and copy editor Lucia Haring for their help creating this issue. ©2012 Lefferts Manor Association.
City Commissioner Edna Wells Handy Loves the Life on Rutland 2
by Erin Kaplan
Edna Wells Handy, Commissioner of New York City’s Department of Citywide Administrative Services, has a rich career working at the federal, national, and now city level. She has spent 36 of those years in Prospect Lefferts Gardens.

Edna moved to the neighborhood with her husband in April 1936, shortly after the birth of her first child. She found the area so welcoming that she realized her career was progressing in a way that was too demanding for her family life.

When she was six months pregnant, a friend recommended the park’s public hospital. She began her career as a prosecutor, eventually becoming General Counsel and Vice President for Legal Affairs at the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation, moving her fully into the operations of City government. It oversees hundreds of millions of dollars in back-office and shared operations and is a key part of our effort to consolidate City operations, make them more efficient and less costly.

“My charge to Commissioner Handy is very straightforward: search for new ways to do more things for less money. Don’t be afraid to take risks and seize opportunities to take innovative new approaches.”

Edna's children have all moved away from the neighborhood, but they don’t wor...
Dreamers, aspiring home renovators and restorers, do-it-yourself-enthusiasts, old-house buffs, and the just plain curious will have a full day exploring the ten impressive stops on this year’s expansive 42nd Annual House & Garden Tour.

Doors will open at noon allowing you to peer into private rooms that display a wealth of design ingenuity. Some have been painstakingly restored to their original glory and some have been made light and airy with contemporary flair. All are outfitted with stylish modern amenities and adventurously decorated to exhibit the eclectic tastes of their owners.

Owners’ collections of unusual artwork, antiques, period furnishings, family heirlooms, pottery, and globally acquired objects will add to your enjoyment. A variety of private rear gardens will be in bloom and also open for visiting.

Tour homes are located on Midwood Street, Rutland Road, Chester Court and Bedford, Parkside and Clarkson Avenues. Pick up ingenious “how-to” advice and resources from some of the designers, architects, contractors and homeowners who will be available to answer your questions. Here are brief descriptions of each stop on this year’s tour:

- An early 20th-century semi-detached three-story wood frame house, with a slate masked roof and a charming front porch, boasting a serpentine 1911 townhouse where every square inch of space is effectively utilized and natural light from a roof shaft is maximized. It sports a chef’s kitchen, marble bathroom and custom oak bookshelves in keeping with the home’s vintage Arts and Crafts woodwork and stained glass.

- A remarkable top-to-bottom renovation—designed and largely accomplished by its two “hands-on” architects—in a formerly neglected neo-Tudor townhouse devoid of original detail or a fire in the 1970s. The exciting results are contemporary, yet respectful of the original 1894 design. Lots of surprises await.

- An 1899 Romanesque Revival brick and limestone home reveals a breathtaking new upon kitchen overlook- ing the tranquil rear garden. Custom-crafted warm cherry wood cabinets with aged and dark moldings pay tribute to the home’s past while 21st century amenities and organized storage abound.

- A circa 1890 limestone townhouse features should- er height wainscoting graced with a dramatic brass-headed plaster relief depicting cherubs at work. Ruppen with photographs and impressive artwork, the house also evolves nostalgically for bygone days with its elegant original light fixtures, furnishing, an antique game table and an Art Deco oak desk.

- A well-crafted 1920s neo-Gothic townhouse showcases flawless designer Bette Cunningham’s private rear garden. Set in custom-built stone inner, the space features Japanese winterine, a raised flowerbed and a slate waterfall. The garden is further enhanced by a patch of cloud white Annabelle along with a unique variety of vines, perennials and shrubs.

- The wildly engaging, stunning, and fun 1915 neo-Tudor townhouse of much-published interior designers John Loecke and Jason Oliver Nixon unfolds adventurously painted and upholstered antiques, an eclectic assort- ment of light fixtures, generous use of wallpaper, and globally acquired objects that come together to tell an uplifting life and design story. “Your home is your temple,” the designers like to say. “Collect what you love and it will work together.”

- A stately 1899 limestone reveals the floral-throw floor and office kitchen and the house kitchen of a professional chef. Vintage furnishings and original artwork passed down from family or combed from flea markets, auctions and antique stores complement the home. A magnificent neoplastic full of family mem- orabilia, made by the bride’s mother to commemorate the wedding, hangs above the piano. The rear garden, once only an abandoned mass of weeds, now blooms with flowers, shrubs and trees.

These neighborhood restaurants and merchants are extending special Tour Day-only offers to tour goers who show their PLG House & Garden Tour Ticket/Guidebook:

- Inkwell Jazz Comedy Café, 408 Rogers Avenue Soul food kitchen offers 20% off on lunch, dinner and drinks, near-7PM.

- Lincoln Park Tavern Restaurant & Bar, 51 Lincoln Road Until 1PM, 25% discount (minimum purchase $50).

- Mango Seed, 757 Flatbush Avenue Caribbean diners in restaurant/bar offers 20% off food and drinks, 11AM–9PM.

- Monk’s Trunk Children’s Consignment, 23 Hawthorne Street 20% off any new or gently used children’s book or toy, 11AM–4PM.

- Play Kids, 675 Flatbush Avenue Awarded Best Toy Store 2012 by New York magazine. Large selection of locally sourced and eco-friendly items. 15% discount on total purchase. 11AM–5PM.

- Smiley For Every Sistah In You, 591 Flatbush Avenue 20% off any new or gently used children’s book or toy, 11AM–6PM.

- Tafari Tribe Globe Trade, 593 Flatbush Avenue 20% off any new or gently used children’s book or toy, 11AM–6PM.

- Smile For Every Sistah In You, 591 Flatbush Avenue 20% off any new or gently used children’s book or toy, 11AM–6PM.

- Trixi’s Pet Food, Supplies & Accessories, 575 Flatbush Avenue 10% discount on all products, 11AM–6PM.

Couples’ Thirty-Year Restoration Creates Stunning Showcase for Family’s Art

by Marcia Lloyd

“Two you are crazy,” said Veronica Nassy’s father, a master woodworker who knew craftsmanship—out the lack thereof—when he saw it. He was responding to his daughter’s request to look at two houses on Midwood Street in perfect condition. “Then I saw this? You have a perfect house in Park Slope.”

That was sixty, Carla, 12-year-old son, and owned two other rental properties in 1911 townhouse where every square inch of space is effectively utilized and natural light from a roof shaft is maximized. It sports a chef’s kitchen, marble bathroom and custom oak bookshelves in keeping with the home’s vintage Arts and Crafts woodwork and stained glass.

A remarkable top-to-bottom renovation—designed and largely accomplished by its two “hands-on” architects—in a formerly neglected neo-Tudor townhouse devoid of original detail or a fire in the 1970s. The exciting results are contemporary, yet respectful of the original 1894 design. Lots of surprises await.

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Family Grows While Restoring a Parkside Beauty

by Nicole Fabi

There’s something about buying and restoring a neglected old house that grows on you. As your family grows it morphs and molds to the changing house and in turn the decreasing-you. We hope you enjoy visiting it on the tour.

When my husband, Blaise, and I moved into our Parkside Avenue home in September of 2008, our little boy, Marius, was one and a half years old. We have since had a second child, Lucía, and have become very involved in the community. We also have done significant renovation work on our home.

My husband and I moved back to New York for his job. He works for a hedge fund, while I own an environmental commodities brokerage firm and work from home. When we were looking for a home, we toured several neighborhoods in Manhattan, New Jersey and Brooklyn.

Our priorities were space (at least three bedrooms), light, proximity to a park, and proximity to my husband’s job. In the end, this four-story, two-family, 1900 limestone had everything we wanted: four bedrooms, a backyard, a large basement with storage, a rental unit, a flat roof for a future deck, a whole block from Prospect Park, close to four subway lines and a forty-minute commute for my husband.

When we first saw the house, the home had its own original wood detail but much of the work previous owners had done, including newly renovated kitchen and bathrooms, was done so poorly as to be both financial and safety liabilities. Toilets weren’t properly connected to pipes, electrical work was downright dangerous, bathrooms had no water-proofing and appliances were improperly installed. The list went on and on.

Our first projects were an overhaul of the rear bedroom and a gut of the kitchen and adjoining skylight that had opened up to the outside (cold!), and building a proper pantry inside a tiny room off the dining room, a shoe closet near the front door, and a wrap-around built-in bookshelf in the living room.

Soon we started updating all the doorframes, baseboard and window frames were painted, and replaced the awful old, low-to-the-ground, ios with solid pine doors including old-fashioned leaded glass knobs. We erected a built-in maple day bed in the front bedroom and replaced the heat/vent fans with modern high-efficiency units. We also insulated every wall and the attic.

In 2011, we tackled the dark, dimmest and narrow kitchen with a thor-ough renovation to create a truly useful, efficient and well-designed chef’s kitchen. We installed chandeliers, fixed the heating by moving the poorly routed ducts, added maple cutting boards. We tripled the amount of storage, upgraded appliances to the top of the line, installed a gas slide-in, 5-burner stove serviced by a wall-mounted “pot-filler” faucet and flanked it by two thick maple cutting boards. We installed cedar fencing, a granite patio, antique lighting fixtures, electricity and even replaced the old ladies’ bathtub with a Jacuzzi. Halogen tub and pop accents. The performances are zero-chlorine and zero-missing.

Lefferts Manor

The current NYC Poverty Guidelines consider $40,499 poverty for a family of four and $42,711 for an individual. According to the study, nearly one in five New Yorkers, or 19 percent of the city’s 8.2 million persons, lived in poverty in 2010—a record not seen since the Depression.

Kalya aware of the income gap dividing not only PLG, but also the entire nation, Rep. Yvette D. Clarke March introduced the Adjusting for Income Disparity Act of 2012. The bill addresses the danger of income inequality and makes as a key provision, among many others, the annual adjustment of the Bush tax cut long com-dened by some economists for favoring the rich and deflecting trillions of dollars from government coffers.

never before has class differences become so marked, she says. “PLG has always been a mixed income community, but with the economic downturn there is a widening of the gap between the haves and the have-nots, the 99 percent and the 1 percenters, she says. “We have always had a diverse collection of professional and middle class and upper class and working class families in the same geo-graphical boundaries.

“Those who don’t live here are never going to know what this neighborhood is all about,” she says. “We have always had a diverse collection of professional and middle class and upper class and working class families in the same neighborhoods. If they could move here, they could be part of this community.”

PLG’s 2010 CENSUS PROFILE

Income Inequality Widens in PLG

Inequality Widens in PLG

Income

Inequality

Widens in

PLG

(continued from page 1) to make a single economic geography.

Therefore, the Echle will use just two of the neighbor-
hood’s eight censuses to show the prevailing trends. But those two censuses track 13 adjoining-square blocks that make up the heart of the Lefferts Manor Historic District. Both include a mixture of apartment buildings (both with Section 8 housing), condos, co-ops, and mil-

lion-dollar single-family homes.

One tract, dubbed CT798.01, covers Flatbush to Bedford Avenues between Lefferts and Fenimore Streets. The other, CT800, covers Lefferts Avenue to Rutland Road between Bedford and Nostrand Avenues.

The following table shows the income trends.

Total Number of Households

Median Household Income

$20,000

$50,000

$75,000

Households

76

815

458

Households

83

726

406

For a stronger community, join the Lefferts Manor Association

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1 (we) subscribe to LMA’s efforts to improve our neighborhood as a community of historic, landmarked, single-family homes.

Dues: $20.00 per household or $50.00 per senior citizen household

NON-RESIDENT FRIENDS

1 (we) support the work of the LMA and would like to contribute to their efforts.

NAME

TELEPHONE

E-MAIL

Enclosed is my check for $_________ $_________ $_________.

Home: _________ 718-_________ 718-_________ 718-_________

Dues cover January through December 2012. You may also pay 2013 dues at the same time. Make checks payable to Lefferts Manor Association. Send payment and form to: PO. Box 250-440 / Brooklyn, NY 11221 or drop in the mail slot at 214 Rutland Rd., 102 Rutland Rd. or 25 Mayfair St.

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Vice President

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Mary Miller

Treasurer

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