The Lefferts Manor Echo is published by The Lefferts Manor Association. Please send comments or article ideas to editor Milford Prewitt at milfordprewit@aol.com. The Echo reserves the right to edit or omit article submissions. We thank the contributing writers, photographers, graphic designer Ken Diamond, copyeditors Lucia Haring, Rina Kleege and Sandra Skoblar for their help creating this issue. This is the Final issue of the Echo for 2012. We wish you all a joyous holiday season and a healthy and prosperous 2013.

Lincoln Road’s $50 Million Mixed-Use, Mid-Rise Project Is Back on Track

by Jeanne Baron

The sprawling 26,000-square-foot, L-shaped lot that sits above the subway station at Lincoln Road will soon be one of the largest mixed-use developments to come to Prospect Lefferts Gardens in years. It’s a $50 million project that resurfaces in part a smaller version of what had been envisioned as a 20-story residential glass tower before being derailed by the financial collapse of the Great Recession in 2008.

In the newest incarnation, the project unfolds as 135 units of residential rentals, two retail spaces and one giant space exclusively available to community organizations such as churches, doctors’ offices, schools, non-profits and a daytime social center for seniors.

The builder behind the nine-story complex is Tom Anderson, the founder of Anderson Associates. The company has been preserving and changing the building landscape of Brooklyn for a quarter of a century—not always without controversy.

Anderson’s 16-story condominium development on Union Street near Grand Army Plaza faced down a 2007 lawsuit, according to a New York Times article from September of that year. Neighbors alleged the luxury hi-rise violated historic preservation standards, and they won their first round in court. Eventually, Anderson won on appeal.

But the architect-turned-developer says he prizes design as much as the bottom line, and his projects have been lauded in the press as much as criticized. He has rehabilitated historically significant buildings in Cobble Hill, Prospect Hills and Bedford-Stuyvesant, to name a few, and brought to the Brooklyn market both affordable and luxury housing.

This time around, Anderson’s development on Lincoln Road won praise from Community Board 9 member Michael Cetera, himself an architect.

“Most developers come with a box,” Cetera says. “They pull a model out of their desk drawer. But in this case, they’ve been very creative.”

Cetera is both impressed and relieved that the project required not a single zoning change. Fitting the project into the existing zoning laws suggests it will bring few overt changes to the neighborhood while providing more than 100 units of low-to-moderate-income housing.

Cetera explains.

But Cetera expects the project will also beautify the block, one of PLG’s most drab looking corridors. “If you live right there you might notice, it’ll be busier.”

The plan calls for a mix of studios as well as one- and two-bedroom apartments. The architect points out that the exterior will be made of thin panels of a composite product that fuses glass fiber with concrete or plastic cement, and adds structural strength to the building.

The development features two levels of parking garage, gym, laundry room, roof deck, café, two courtyards, and two entrances—one on Lincoln and another at Flatbush and Lefferts Avenues.

“In 35 years on the board, it’s the most ambitious project I’ve seen,” Cetera beams. “It could enlighten the community and revitalize the dead-end streets in that area.”

The longtime Brooklyn designer says he’s especially happy about the 6,000 square feet of community space.

“We think it’s a great space,” he says. “It’s full of light and faces the tracks. We’d love to see it used for a pre-school or day care.”

This project is receiving a much warmer welcome than the previous proposal to build a 20-story glass condominium tower in the same location. That project met with heated criticism from neighbors who complained that it was out of character with the neighborhood’s prevailing architectural style. Others supported the project, hoping that it would attract more mainstream retail options and add life to the neighborhood.

But this project is getting better reviews. A post at Curbed.com spotlights the low rise of the building and the affordable housing it will add to the local market.

Anderson Associates has applied for funding through a program of the Housing Development Corporation, or HDC. Its New Housing Opportunities Program requires 40 percent of the housing be affordable to low-income families. The rest of units must be affordable to middle-income families, which will result in rents about 30 percent below market.

“We are several steps away from the end of the approval process,” Anderson explains. “We are 95 percent done but we’ve been at that point for a couple of months.”

The final stage of the permitting process can be painstakingly slow, but Anderson says they are on track to break ground before the end of 2012 and that if all goes as planned, the building will be open to rent by spring 2014.

Jeanne Baron is a real estate agent with the Crownen Group and lives in Clinton 2.

Superstorm Sandy Gives Many PLGers a Deeper Appreciation of Thanksgiving Day

Story and photos by Milford Prewitt

Thanksgiving Day 2012 came with an extra serving of thanks in Prospect Lefferts Gardens. As the rampage of Superstorm Sandy—the worst natural disaster to hit the Northeast in 40 years—tragically devastated neighborhoods near and far, memories of waking up Tuesday morning, October 30, were accompanied for many with a deeper appreciation of the words lucky and grateful.

For the night before, the fury of Sandy was laying waste to many New York neighborhoods as if they were the targets of war. As the rampage of Superstorm Sandy—the worst natural disaster to hit the Northeast in 40 years—tragically devastated neighborhoods near and far, memories of waking up Tuesday morning, October 30, were accompanied for many with a deeper appreciation of the words lucky and grateful.

For the night before, the fury of Sandy was laying waste to many New York neighborhoods as if they were the targets of war. In a fateful twist, it was largely family members and friends of PLGers who lived in the storm path who suffered to be razed.

Gino and Mary Sela, the affable owners of Gino’s Trattoria on Flatbush, have been living with one of their sons ever since.
Rutland Road’s Retired Aerial Photographer, Ray Raman

by Jackie Myers

Before the Sandy storm hit Google Earth, there was Ray Raman. Right above a sofa in his brownstone’s Rutland Road living room is the pose: a near-post-sized, framed, black-and-white photo he shot of Prospect Lefferts Gardens from an airplane many decades ago at the beginning of his long and successful career as an independent photographer. It is an amazing image given the technological photographic limitations at the time. This image, in many ways, symbolizes Raman’s distinctive and creative photography who excelled in shooting industrial, commercial, fashion and aerial images. He photo-documented various New York neighborhoods; worked for such well-known companies as American Express, Everseid and Lane Bryant; and scored several movie and television shows, as three and presidents (one of them Korea’s).

Now 81, the primarily self-taught photographer, aviation enthusiast, pilot, accomplished organ player and Brooklynite regrets that he never finished college. To this day he speaks to his success, “If you can’t afford it, go to college right after high school and stay there.” A robust, lean and handsome man who looks far younger than his years, Raman played bit parts in six movies including the films Bruce Willis and Denzel Washington hit, The Siege. After his mother and father died in close succession while he was a very young child, Raman ended up being reared by his maternal grandmother and an aunt in Cedar Manor, Long Island. When he was 15, they moved him to Brooklyn where he ultimately went to Boys High School in Bed-Stuy. There he became a standout gymnast, sang in the choir and learned to play the organ skillfully, with an artistry he performs to the delight of family, friends and neighbors to this day.

What brings him much pride is being honored with an Alumni Association Award from Boys High School, where as a teen he discovered photography and found his passion for aviation. He is also proud of receiving the Cradle of Aviation Museum Award along with many other professional honors.

After graduation, Ray attended Brooklyn College for two years, joined the National Guard and served four years in the Air Force, part of it during the Korean War. At the beginning of his service, he landed a position as a photographer at Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas and flew in and fell in love with the backyard decks strewn over the property, the couple is worried that it may be several months before life returns to normal.

“I thought I was going to die that night,” Mary says with a shudder, recalling the event.

NYU graduate student and content editor Brian Buonincontri, who moved to a Flatbush Avenue apartment back in the spring, attempted to walk to his parents’ Howard Beach home the night Sandy made landfall. His mother had a tri-fold, fancy phone case to tell him that water was pouring in through the front door. His father is a firefighter and was a first responder the night of the storm.

Buonincontri says he grabbed a flask and was planning to hike across Brooklyn to help his mother. He had only walked five blocks when the winds forced him to consider another way. He was able to catch a locally-based cab and took it all the way to the airport 24 hours earlier. All the shingles on the roof of his neighborhood, rising waters and a police cordon would not let the cab proceed.

Undaunted, Buonincontri says he walked up the block. By the time he made it to his parents’ home, the water was chest height.

“It was the scariest (explinatory deleted) Halloween I can home test,” he declares. “My parents lost everything. But at least they are safe.”

Closer to home, in one of those freak-of-nature acts that only high winds can cause, the adjoining backyards of five Lincoln a homes sustained extensive damage to their wooden stockade fencing when a tree limb broke, went airborne like a missile, and punched out the same center panel of each yard’s fence as if shot by a marksman.

On for Fenimore a, a large branch was blown onto the porch roof of ESP executive and author Ronnie Jones’s wood frame home. She was visiting a sister in Connecticut at the time, and a neighbor, who heard a loud crash during the storm, went outside and texted her a photo of what had happened. The branch damaged her gutters and destroyed the original porch bannister and a fence she had installed just a few months earlier. All the shingles were blown off by the wind. The house was sodden. It was flooded and already lost limbs in previous storms.

“But they [the city] just refused,” she laments. “Oh a happy note, my neighbors came over the day after and cut the tree off my porch so I could get in and out of the house,” she says, beaming. “I love this neighborhood.”

Returning the favor, Jones published her first novel, “The Magnetic Fields’ album “Love at the Bottom of the Sea.”

Michael is a retired police officer and Kevin works for CBS as a videographer and editor. After the war, he moved back to Brooklyn and lived at Manor, Long Island. When he was 14, they moved to a Flatbush Avenue apartment back in the front door. His father is a firefighter and was a first responder the night of the storm.

Buonincontri says he grabbed a flask and was planning to hike across Brooklyn to help his mother. He had only walked five blocks when the winds forced him to consider another way. He was able to catch a locally-based cab and took it all the way to the airport 24 hours earlier. All the shingles on the roof of his neighborhood, rising waters and a police cordon would not let the cab proceed.

Undaunted, Buonincontri says he walked up the block. By the time he made it to his parents’ home, the water was chest height.

“It was the scariest (explinatory deleted) Halloween I can home test,” he declares. “My parents lost everything. But at least they are safe.”

Closer to home, in one of those freak-of-nature acts that only high winds can cause, the adjoining backyards of five Lincoln a homes sustained extensive damage to their wooden stockade fencing when a tree limb broke, went airborne like a missile, and punched out the same center panel of each yard’s fence as if shot by a marksman.

On for Fenimore a, a large branch was blown onto the porch roof of ESP executive and author Ronnie Jones’s wood frame home. She was visiting a sister in Connecticut at the time, and a neighbor, who heard a loud crash during the storm, went outside and texted her a photo of what had happened. The branch damaged her gutters and destroyed the original porch bannister and a fence she had installed just a few months earlier. All the shingles were blown off by the wind. The house was sodden. It was flooded and already lost limbs in previous storms.

“But they [the city] just refused,” she laments. “Oh a happy note, my neighbors came over the day after and cut the tree off my porch so I could get in and out of the house,” she says, beaming. “I love this neighborhood.”

Returning the favor, Jones published her first novel, “The Magnetic Fields’ album “Love at the Bottom of the Sea.”

Michael is a retired police officer and Kevin works for CBS as a videographer and editor.
Ramagi Pizzeria Brings Cozy Italian Dining to PLG's Southern Edge

A mini-restaurant hub is taking root on Rogers Avenue at Prospect Lefferts Gardens’ southern edge with the crowd-pleasing reception of Ramagi Brick Oven Pizzeria.

Ramagi opened in February on Rogers Avenue between Winthrop and Hawthorne Streets, going head-to-head in the same menu category with a franchise outlet of Papa John’s right across the street. One block away from Fenimore and Hawthorne is a mom-and-pop Caribbean bakery and café that seems to do pretty strong, all-day business.

As a Bedford afficionado offering a packed desert traveler a tall glass of cold water, Ramagi is a welcoming and hospitable delight and the first eatery in that section of Rogers to offer table service. An airier but less hectic and less prosperous sibling to Flatbush Avenue, one-way Roger Avenue abounds with traffic, vehicular traffic and few pedestrians. Eateries along this strip are scant and few exhibit Ramagi’s level of style and service. Yet, the restaurant’s owners say business is good and growing thanks to word-of-mouth kudos about the place.

Moreover, Ramagi is a engaging website with high production values akin to Manhattan dining. Check it out at ramagipizza.com/videos.html.

Ramagi’s offerings also accentuate the curious diner. Situated between the entrance to a apartment building and a hair salon, its bold, black awning features the Ramagi name carved in stainless steel relief while its partially-frosted plate glass front etched with the name echoes the sign above. It brings to mind the carpe diem sign that might grace the entryway.

The cozy eating area, with its dark wood tables, bar-height ledges and soft pendant lighting, easily serves as a pit stop for a customer grabbing a quick slice or as a comfortable dining room to settle in for a meal with table service. A counter topped with a glass display case replete with pizza choices cordons off the food preparation area.

The menu features about 12 family-size pies and toppings between $2 to $3. The baked ziti pizza comes in at $2.50, the house’s signature Ramagi pizza is $3.45, and a BBQ chicken pizza is $3.65. Traditional pasta entrees range from $6 to $10 and include penne à la vodka, shrimp fettuccini Alfredo, spinach cheese ravioli and lasagna al forno.

Ramagi is a family business co-owned by the father-and-son team of Raul and Martin Gimenez. The black-oven pizzeria, this newcomer to the area also offers appetizers, creative salads and a regular selection of blackboard specials. The cuisine reflects the family’s Italian roots, but the Gimenez clan actually hails from Argentina. Throughout the years they have moved between their ancestral lands and the United States.

The affable, elder Gimenez, the ever-present host and manager. Surprisingly, he was formerly a machinist. Once the owner of a machine shop in Argentina, he also worked in the U.S. making aeronautical parts, some even for the space shuttle Columbia. Martin, the chef and visionary, studied pizza-making in Salerno, Italy, designed the décor, and chose Ramagi’s location. Currently living in Long Island, Martin worked in PLG for 10 years and fell in love with the area.

While the name Ramagi sounds convincingly Italian, it is a truly American moniker created from the initials of two letters of each of the owners’ first names. (Martin’s sister, Gisella, who does bookkeeping for the restaurant, contributes Ramagi’s final syllable.)

Currently business is “very good,” says Raul, so much so that they’re planning to open another Ramagi elsewhere in Brooklyn in the near future.

Reid Gensler, the co-owner of Ramagi, welcomes right on Rogers Avenue.

Local Entrepreneur Turns His Barbershop into Jus Fishy

When his new fish and chips joint, Jus Fishy, opened in July, people were eager to give owner Tyro Matthew a hearty welcome to the neighborhood. But it turns out he has been here longer than most of his customers—some 20 years.

Hailing from Trinidad, Matthew opened up the new restaurant in the same space that he previously owned and operated for use of retail space. Barbershop into Jus Fishy

This coming spring the Audubon Center in Prospect Park will be closed on weekends. The Prospect Park Alliance (PPA), which operates the public! No other situation is acceptable.

Contact with Marty Markowitz’s office and State Senator Eric Adams to apprise them of the neighborhood’s concerns. At minimum, I think Mr. Markowitz’s suggestion should be taken under advisement.

Eric Adams at 718-284-4700 or voiceofconcern@aol.com; Assemblymember James Brennan at 718-788-7221; and Emily Lloyd, president of the Prospect Park Alliance, at ep@prospectpark.org or 718-965-8951.

Other standouts on the menu this writer learned from frequent guests waiting on their orders are the salmon burger and the curious steamed fish, like shark and snapper.

It’s pretty simple. The unique restaurant will try a place where food is simple and end up asking on the way out, “how could someone mess up something so simple?”

Jus Fishy is not one of those places.

Tyro’s philosophy is country food that is healthy. Supporting that ethos, he offers punches, which are traditional icons for health in Trinidad: channa, peanut, pumpkin, sea moss and gar, even alligator could taste great.

Other standouts on the menu this writer learned from frequent guests waiting on their orders were generous and simply put, cooked well.

Clearly Tyro enjoys what he does.

Tyro Matthew is on all about the new fish on the menu. Everything is made to order so it’s hot and fresh. The signature offering of fried whit- steak and fries were cooked perfectly, crispy with heaps of deliciously fresh fish which was flaky and seasoned just right of spicy. Priced at $8, it’s a bargain. Even the steaks fries, which under less-talented hands can turn cold, mushy and taste less, had a light dusting of oregano and salt that tasted perfect.

Don’t be surprised if you find yourself searching everywhere for every morsel of fish by chasing down the small, crumbly pieces that fall between the fries.

To try the crab burger, too. At $10, it comes with sides of sweet potatoes and corn, both equally delicious. Topped with pineapple, cooked onions and a “secret sauce,” the crab was sweet, rich and not too hearty. The bun is whole-grain wheat that added to the sweetness, spiked by the topings. The servings of the sides were generous and simply put, cooked well.

When told that this reviewer lived in New Orleans for two decades and that alligator is on the menu, Tyro Matthew was sweet, rich and not too hearty. The bun is whole-grain wheat that added to the sweetness, spiked by the topings. The servings of the sides were generous and simply put, cooked well.

Other standouts on the menu this writer learned from frequent guests waiting on their orders were generous and simply put, cooked well.

Clearly Tyro enjoys what he does.

Tyro Matthew is on all about the new fish on the menu. Everything is made to order so it’s hot and fresh. The signature offering of fried whit- steak and fries were cooked perfectly, crispy with heaps of deliciously fresh fish which was flaky and seasoned just right of spicy. Priced at $8, it’s a bargain. Even the steaks fries, which under less-talented hands can turn cold, mushy and taste less, had a light dusting of oregano and salt that tasted perfect.

Don’t be surprised if you find yourself searching everywhere for every morsel of fish by chasing down the small, crumbly pieces that fall between the fries.

To try the crab burger, too. At $10, it comes with sides of sweet potatoes and corn, both equally delicious. Topped with pineapple, cooked onions and a “secret sauce,” the crab was sweet, rich and not too hearty. The bun is whole-grain wheat that added to the sweetness, spiked by the topings. The servings of the sides were generous and simply put, cooked well.

When told that this reviewer lived in New Orleans for two decades and that alligator is on the menu, Tyro Matthew was sweet, rich and not too hearty. The bun is whole-grain wheat that added to the sweetness, spiked by the topings. The servings of the sides were generous and simply put, cooked well.

Clearly Tyro enjoys what he does.

Tyro Matthew is on all about the new fish on the menu. Everything is made to order so it’s hot and fresh. The signature offering of fried whit- steak and fries were cooked perfectly, crispy with heaps of deliciously fresh fish which was flaky and seasoned just right of spicy. Priced at $8, it’s a bargain. Even the steaks fries, which under less-talented hands can turn cold, mushy and taste less, had a light dusting of oregano and salt that tasted perfect.

Don’t be surprised if you find yourself searching everywhere for every morsel of fish by chasing down the small, crumbly pieces that fall between the fries.

To try the crab burger, too. At $10, it comes with sides of sweet potatoes and corn, both equally delicious. Topped with pineapple, cooked onions and a “secret sauce,” the crab was sweet, rich and not too hearty. The bun is whole-grain wheat that added to the sweetness, spiked by the topings. The servings of the sides were generous and simply put, cooked well.

When told that this reviewer lived in New Orleans for two decades and that alligator is on the menu, Tyro Matthew was sweet, rich and not too hearty. The bun is whole-grain wheat that added to the sweetness, spiked by the topings. The servings of the sides were generous and simply put, cooked well.
Stop-and-frisks—or "rousses" in police slang—are widely criticized by community activists, religious leaders, elected officials and defense attorneys despite the Department’s ardent reliance and strident defense of the practice in reducing crime and getting guns off the street. And while the Department’s defense is a primary opponent, some compliance that in some cases stop-and-frisks can ruin lives when events spiral out of control as fear and tempers rise. In fact, the tragic police killing of an unarmed African merchant, 23-year-old Amadou Diallo, in 1999, not only exemplified how fast events can get out of hand, but his death is the catalyst behind why the NYPD reports stop-and-frisk numbers in the first place.

About one year after Diallo was shot at 49 times—with 11 bullets striking him—by four plainclothes police officers in the Bronx when he mistook their waltz for a gun during a stop, the City Council enacted a law that required the NYPD to report every stop-and-frisk, precipitated by precinct, every quarter. It is those numbers that the NYCLU used to compose its annual report, which was released this past summer. For the first and second quarters of this year, the NYPD reported that stop-and-frisks were down 34 percent from a year ago and that 890 weapons—200 of them handguns—had been taken off the streets.

Beyond the strong criticism from a number of constituencies including civil rights leaders, parents, and even the United Nations, the declining trend also follows the federally approved, class-action lawsuit in August against the city for using race as the main trigger for police stops of civilians.

In fact, the tragic police killing of an unarmed African merchant, 23-year-old Amadou Diallo, in 1999, not only exemplified how fast events can get out of hand, but his death is the catalyst behind why the NYPD reports stop-and-frisk numbers in the first place.

About one year after Diallo was shot at 49 times—with 11 bullets striking him—by four plainclothes police officers in the Bronx when he mistook their waltz for a gun during a stop, the City Council enacted a law that required the NYPD to report every stop-and-frisk, precipitated by precinct, every quarter. It is those numbers that the NYCLU used to compose its annual report, which was released this past summer. For the first and second quarters of this year, the NYPD reported that stop-and-frisks were down 34 percent from a year ago and that 890 weapons—200 of them handguns—had been taken off the streets.

Beyond the strong criticism from a number of constituencies including civil rights leaders, parents, and even the United Nations, the declining trend also follows the federally approved, class-action lawsuit in August against the city for using race as the main trigger for police stops of civilians.