'Greenest Block In Brooklyn' Title Planted on Sterling I

A young woman already in the history books with record-breaking, subfreezing temperatures and three snowstorms seems the perfect time to dream about Prospect Lefferts Gardens’ summer palette: pretty flowerbeds, whiskey barrels blossoming with color, luscious tree canopies and beautifully manicured streetscapes.

According to the judges who dispense the Brooklyn Botanic Garden’s Greenest Block Award, those visuals of summer beauty were best expressed in 2013 by Sterling I (the block between Bedford and Washington Avenues), which won the honor in July.

Sponsored by the GreenBridge—The BHG’s horticulture division that actually runs the contest—the award not only celebrated the block’s talent in green-thumbed homeowner attempts, but in receiving the top prize, the award retained in PLG for the second year in a row. In 2012, Lincoln II, between Rogers and Bedford Avenues, won the top prize (its second time in the winner’s circle in four years).

Add the home gardeners and amateur landscapers in Sterling I’s Gardening Committee to that well-earned adage that persistence is the key to success. In 2012, they raised nearly $2,000 in a fundraiser to buy plants and whiskey barrels and solicited the help of a few professional gardeners who live on the block to get plants at wholesale rates. A second fundraiser in 2013 helped finance the greening effort.

The dynamo behind the block’s success was the Gardening Committee head, longtime resident Claudia Lofft. Along with other members, Lofft organized the fundraiser specifically to compete in the contest, distributed leaflets with gardening and yard care tips and organized with near military efficiency a block-long distribution system for the whiskey barrels, flowers, and mulch.

Other vital committee members included: Sharon Sandiford, Debbie Wayman, Everlein Cook, Mary Morris, Christine Granderson, Maxine Thomas-West, Sandra Skoblar, Ysmin Ramirez, and Lorraine Wilson, whose garden is featured on the GreenBridge contest winner website.

Before formally forming a Gardening Committee, Sterling I had competed eight of the nineteen years the award has been around, getting honorable mentions a few times. After the committee was formed, the block’s best showing was its fourth place finish in 2012, an achievement that inspired the neighbors to pull out all the stops in 2013.

It would be an effort that would pay off with the Grand Prize as Sterling I beat out some 200 other blocks and picked up a $100 check to keep the block beautiful. But winners of the top honor are not allowed to compete the next year. So look for Sterling I to repeat their victory in 2015.

It’s easy to see why the judges selected Sterling I. At the height of the summer when the canopy from the street’s block-long row of sycamore trees is lush and green and its iconic whiskey flower barrels are ablaze with color and plant diversity, only a Mondrian landscape is more rapturous.

But behind the physical beauty, the support of nearly every neighbor on the block was also key to victory, said Carmen Martinez, president of the Sterling I block association, which is more formally known as the Sterling St. B&W Block Association.

"This just goes to show what you can do when neighbors all pitch in and lend their creativity and sweat to the common good," Martinez said. "We came close in the past. Finally!"

In winning the 2013 prize, some neighbors even took on a whimsical, theatrical approach, like longtime resident Alicia Boyd, whose yard stood out more than most. She used high-heeled boots as flower planters on her stoop and entranceway sidewalk. Many local publications included shots of her home in their coverage, including the Daily News and Channel 12.

PLGers Demand Zoning Changes To Halt Tall Buildings

If you’ve been encased in a block of ice for the past months, you missed the opening of the Samuel J. & Ethel LeFrak Center at Lincoln Center, a $254 million complex. In mid-December, now-former Mayor Michael Bloomberg presided over the ribbon cutting and then stepped from the Brooklyn Academy of Science and Environment, pictured above, as well as little ones from PS 80, were among the first to hit the ice.

Over to the north end of the Lincoln Road Park entrance, the LeFrak Center is open every day, weather permitting. You can rent skates and helmets and purchase a season pass. For hours, rates and all other information, go to: prospectpark.org/about/lakeside

The claimants are led by the Prospect Park East Neighbors (PPEN) and include Prospect Lefferts Gardens Neighborhood Association, The Flathub Tenants Coalition and several PLG residents.

The plaintiffs point out that the building, to be located at 666 Flatbush, would be the tallest on or near the borders of Prospect Park. The Hudson Cos. began clearing the site in early February, demolition the former family medical center and the rear parking lot that had operated there. Such building heights are already not permitted by zoning codes in Park Slope, Windsor Terrace, and Prospect Park South, all of which—like PLG—border the park.

The suit is the most visible effort to date to draw attention to PLG’s lack of contextual zoning codes designed to regulate building heights and to pressure elected officials and regulators to create the necessary zoning rules to forbid unsightly, sun-blocking tall buildings.

The Prospect Park Alliance, while not co-plaintiffs in the suit, is also opposed to the project and is working with the community to petition for contextual zoning in PLG.

The Hudson Cos., which describes itself at its website as a community-supportive and environmentally sensitive construction company, says it was saddened to learn of the community’s opposition.

“We are disappointed that opponents of development in the green-block building resorted to a lawsuit against an as-of-right project that will bring over fifty affordable units to the neighborhood,” says Alison Novak, vice president of The Hudson Cos. and the project manager at 666 Flatbush. Noting that demolition has already begun, Novak says she does not expect the suit to delay the company’s timetable.

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The First African American Airline Attendant Reflects on Life as an Activist and Pioneer

by Pia J. Raymond, LMSW

residing in Patio Gardens for more than a decade, Ruth Carol Taylor has left a lasting imprint on civil rights for women and African Americans in Brooklyn and beyond. This creative, dynamic thinker and organizer began her journey to civil rights in her native Massachusetts. In her youth, Taylor’s father moved the family to a farm in upstate New York where she developed a love of snakes. She later taught children how to safely handle snakes and, for many years, kept a pet snake in her Brooklyn home.

At a time in the United States when discrimination was legal, Taylor faced the world with the same confidence and tenacity that she exercised with snakes. Inspired by her mother, who was a nurse, Taylor applied to and was admitted to Elmira College, later graduating from the Bellevue School of Nursing as a registered nurse.

She followed in her mother’s footsteps for a few years until an unlikely but exciting career change presented itself. The New York Urban League was behind a national effort to pave the way for African American women to become flight attendants, and, loving a challenge, Taylor jumped at the opportunity and applied.

“I stepped into the picture at a certain time,” she reflects. “I was a New England person with good references, background, looks, ability to speak well and no cost in the teeth.” Selected from a pool of 800 African American applicants, Taylor was hired in 1957 by Mohawk Airlines, generating international headlines as the first black female attendant of a game-changing event in the world of business and civil rights. For Mohawk Airlines, Taylor’s hiring would be among the cutting-edge company’s many “firsts.” (According to Wikipedia, Mohawk was a regional carrier that operated in the Atlantic and Great Lakes regions. It would also be the first domestic carrier to use passenger jets in its fleet and the first to employ computers for reservations. Due to name changes, mergers over the decades, Mohawk Airlines today is known as the forerunner of US Airways, now a division of American Airlines Group.)

Taylor’s passion for people and international travel sensitized her to how all people were essentially the same and wanted the same freedoms and respect. But despite her unkindness and the enlightenment of Mohawk management in hiring her, the company forced her to resign when she married six months after landing the job. At that time, all airlines had a mandatory policy that flight attendants were to remain single.

Taylor and her husband had a daughter, Cindy, and lived in both the Caribbean and London. The dismissal from Mohawk and the bungooning civil rights movement compelled her to become an activist and a journalist.

While writing for an Afro-Caribbean magazine based in London, Taylor promised the editor that she would get an interview with President John F. Kennedy. Although that interview never happened, Taylor did meet the president in the East Room of the White House, where they were photographed by official photographer Conklin.

After London, the family moved to Barbados, where Taylor founded the country’s first professional nursing journal. It was also in Barbados that Taylor had a son, Larry, before returning to New York in 1977, where and when she co-founded The Institute for Interracial Harmony.

“Then one only race, the ‘brownish’ (sic) race that consists of people of varying colors or hues,” she says. “Her activism and fervor for civil rights became personal one day when her son, Larry, was snuggled and the police treated him as anything but a victim. ‘Rather than getting the police’s support, because of his hue,’ Larry was treated as if he was the perpetrator,” Taylor recalls.

But from that unfortunate encounter came Taylor’s ground-breaking work, The Little Black Book: Black African Male Survival in America. She initially wrote the guide in 1985 for her son, but made it her life’s work to widely distribute the pocket-size manual.

In 2008, she was lauded by the New York State Assembly for her accomplishments, activism and community involvement.

The walls of Taylor’s Patio Gardens apartment showcase photos and articles chronicling the rich history that she has helped to shape. Taylor spends much of her time in her apartment, with her mind and passion fully engaged. She makes prolific use of the Internet to voice her opinions and observations at her blog, “Carol Taylor Wood.” She was also a major caller on the recently cancelled but popular progressive radio talk show “Talk Back With Hugh Hamilton” on listener-supported WBAI-FM.

“When I’m asked if I am still disseminating my ‘Little Black Book’ in the war against cohesion, I ask: ‘Are they still killing our black children?’”

The most recent edition of The Little Black Book can be purchased through contacting Taylor directly.

At eighty-three years old, the activist is now a proud grandmother of her son, Tyler, and her namesake granddaughter, Taylor Grace.

She still accepts speaking tours and engagements and wants the world to continue “realizing, recognizing and acknowledging the beauty of diversity.”

Visit Carol Taylor, RN at: carolrayword.blogspot.com

Contact her at: carolrayword@gmail.com

The Raymond is a board member of the Lefferts Manor Association, serves as a vice president of the Lefferts Manor Merchants Association. A lifetime resident of the Manor, she lives with her family on Maple I.

A first, the valiant effort by the Department of Transportation to make the 54-foot width of Flatbush Avenue in PLG more user-friendly for motorists and safer for pedestrians did everything except what it intended to do.

Traffic actually worsened and pedestrian safety had never been more imperiled as swarms of motorized, dollar van drivers and jawwalking pedestrians engaged in a ballet of chaos.

That was in November when the DOT had finished its Flatbush Congested Corridor Project, a complex series of lane consolidations, reduced parking spaces, and no-turn options at certain intersections. All the way from Empire Boulevard to Nostrand Avenue, motorists and pedestrians who used to navigate in a labyrinth of lanes were now confronted with new traffic patterns, missing lanes from Empire Boulevard to Nostrand Avenue, short-tempered motorists, dollar van drivers intended to do.

“Project,” a complex series of lane consolidations, reduced parking spaces, and no-turn options at certain intersections. All the way from Empire Boulevard to Nostrand Avenue, motorists and pedestrians who used to navigate in a labyrinth of lanes were now confronted with new traffic patterns, missing lanes from Empire Boulevard to Nostrand Avenue, short-tempered motorists, dollar van drivers intended to do.

But minus the intrusion of discourteous dollar van drivers and a major water main break in late November, there are signs that what the DOT had hoped for is beginning to pay off.

The most prominent changes are to the Flatbush Avenue lane markings. DOT traffic studies showed that the previous two travel lanes were too difficult to use and added to congestion. Drivers had to change lanes frequently to avoid delivery trucks, double-parked cars, drivers waiting to make left turns, or dollar vans taking on or letting off fares. These factors made slow traffic and long waits.

Less bad? The DOT said yes. So it removed one traffic lane in each direction, but created a shared center median with left-turn-only queues. It widened new travel lanes and parking lanes. In addition, during the 7 to 10 a.m. morning rush there are no-stopping restrictions in the second northbound lane.

In addition to lane markings, the DOT also put in place changes to intersections in our neighborhood. At the Empire Boulevard intersection, for example, west-bound traffic no longer sees the concrete right-hand-turn-only divider, as it is replaced with a regular through-turn lane, and the savings in space allowed for a shortened crosswalk for pedestrians. For south-bound traffic the right lane has become a right-turn only, and for eastbound traffic the right lane has been removed.

Another important change is at Lincoln Road and Flatbush. There pedestrian safety was the focus. A new north crosswalk runs straight across the whole intersection, while the tip of the gas station island has been extended nearly twenty feet or more to direct car traffic away from the crosswalk.

What’s most novel is that the awkward and unsafe left turns from Lincoln Road onto Washington Avenue—which often left pedestrians with the uneasy thought they could be hit in the back blinded by a left-turning car—are no longer permitted. Only left turns onto Flatbush from Lincoln are permitted.

Finally, to eliminate the clumsy right-turn congestion at Parkside, five parking spaces were removed at the corner and a dedicated right-turn lane was installed from the space savings.

In addition to traffic changes, the DOT has also been working with businesses to improve parking rules, schedules and business deliveries. DOT hopes that smarter loading/unloading parking schedules can reduce double parking by trucks, while also leaving more hours available for lawful car parking.

At community meetings to assess what is going on, many residents expressed concerns that the new single traffic lane will be totally blocked by a double-parked car, delivery vehicles or dollar vans. Officials said while there are no guarantees, the new rules may mitigate the problem. Most agreed that police enforcement would be critical, but were uncertain how tough the police would be.

Another new complication: the new lines painted on the road surface have almost entirely faded. The most likely explanation is that the recent cold temperatures caused the paint not to adhere properly. No wood yet when DOT will address the situation.

Bill Butts is a resident of Flatbush and a longtime member of the board of the Lefferts Manor Association.
Talented, Hard-Working Partners Make Tip of the Tongue Café a Crowd Favorite

by Joan Kelley

Leaving through a November issue of New York magazine, an article on the best new bouchies caught my eye. There, placing second in the overall rankings, was the espresso cheesecake bouchie from our very own Tip of the Tongue. I made a quick dash to 41 Lincoln Road to try one for myself!

While there, I met the owners, Eric McIntyre and Scott Fagan, who were kind enough to share their story with the Echo. Not only are the men partners in business, but they are also married soul mates and the parents of an adopted son, two-and-a-half-year-old Jake.

Both Scott and Eric trained at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY. Scott immediately began working as a freelance chef with private caterers (with the idea he’d like to open his own) while developing recipes for the South Beach and Zone diet books. He also did food writing for magazines such as Savour and Greeting Light. Scott started Tip of the Tongue Catering out of their Park Slope apartment ten years ago. As it grew, they moved the business into a commercial kitchen in Long Island City, Queens. Meanwhile, Eric worked for three-and-a-half years in the pastry department at Manhattan’s prestigious fine-dining restaurant Eleven Madison Park before joining Scott at the catering company. Eric explained how their café came to be: “We’d talked about opening a brick-and-mortar business for years, a retail venue that would feature our baking and pastry work—Scott does the savories; I do the pastries. When we moved into Lefferts Gardens five years ago, we began putting together our business plan, seeking investors and looking for retail space.”

Tip of the Tongue opened Memorial Day weekend and was an immediate hit! All of their pastries, except the bread, are baked fresh on-site, using Eric’s recipes. Most of the savory items are prepared in their much larger catering kitchen and delivered to the café daily.

Their coffee roaster is Fortyweight Coffee located in Ithaca, NY, which sources its beans from a handful of free-trade distributors in East Africa, Latin America and the Pacific Rim. From each location, they offer a variety of beans and roasts that change regularly, allowing Tip of the Tongue to offer an interesting and eclectic coffee menu.

Wow. A successful catering business and the café, which is open seven days a week! How do they manage it all?

So far it’s going well, they said. The response from their neighbors/customers has been positive and supportive.

“We follow a strict schedule by having ongoing meetings to carefully plan our days and weeks,” Eric revealed. “We also have a two-and-a-half-year-old at home, so we really try to stick to the schedules we set. However, there are always curve balls that require us to be flexible.”

Noticing that they had a Special Order Thanksgiving Pie Menu available, I asked them whether they had any plans to extend the catering side of their business to the neighborhood via the café.

“All our cakes are available for special order in three sizes: eight, ten and twelve inches,” Scott said. “We also offer our catering services, as well as our catering space for on-site events. In September, one of our customers held his fortieth birthday party here after we closed one Friday night.

“We’ve catered three other events off-site through the café as well. We are also rolling out a holiday pastry menu that includes confections, holiday cakes and holiday cookies.”

As for the future, much is on the partners’ culinary horizon.

“Now that we’re entering the colder season, we have just rolled out steak cut out meat with maple syrup, dried fruit and nuts, a potato mushroom soup, a New French hot chocolate, spiced cider. For the holidays we’re adding a chocolate peppermint cake, black rum Bundt cake, and spiced cake with eggnog buttercream, coconut cream pie, peanut brittle, chocolate peppermint bark, toffee bark, candied almonds, and holiday cookies.”

Yum! And stay tuned for “gluttonous coffee.”

Joan Kelley, a music business executive, and her husband, Dennis Kelly (submariner of the IWM website), have lived in the neighborhood for ten years.

Santana Premium Hand Rolls Top Quality Cigars on Nostrand Avenue

by Adrian Leber

For those wanting to savor a well-crafted, well-aged cigar in a friendly setting, Prospect Lefferts Gardens’ Santana Premium Cigars is the place to go.

Owner Fay Santana hails from Tamboril, a city in the Dominican Republic famous for cigar production. He grew up in the lush tobacco fields owned by his father, where he acquired a love for the cultivation of tobacco and the art and craft of cigar manufacture. This background influenced him to open Santana Premium Cigars in 2010.

The unassuming shop sits on the west side of Nostrand Avenue between Lincoln Road and Maple Street. Right across the street is the well-manicured garden of St. Francis of Assisi Church and down the block lies the popular Barbarian restaurant, Culpepper’s.

Walking into Santana’s, a visitor first sees a glass cabinet full of cigar accoutrements: cutters, pencils, lighters and humidifiers. Just beyond this cabinet is a large walk-in humidor filled with a diverse mix of cigars. Most, if not all of them are hand rolled in the store. It is relatively rare, even in New York, to have cigars made on the premises.

A cigar tobacco is encased in a tobacco leaf wrapper, which imparts a significant part of the flavor. Santana uses a variety of wrappers from around the world, including Arapiraca (from Brazil), Havana (from Cuban seeds, made in the Dominican Republic), the rich and dark Indonesian, and the smooth and mild Connecticut wrapper. The fillers come from the family’s plantation in the Dominican Republic and from Nicaragua. Cigars are available in a variety of shapes and sizes, including torpedos, Churchills, coronas, and robustos.

Fine cigar making requires a high degree of artisanal skill, and Santana relates that he has been able to ensure his quality by hiring seasoned craftsmen to do his blending and rolling. Initially, it was his cousin Francis, who came to Santana Premium Cigars after a career at the famed tobacco company, Davidoff. Now, it is Ulyses, also from Davidoff and a protege of Francis. Both men, says Santana, have enough renown that middle-eastern royalty have flown them in for private events.

In the back of the store there is a comfortable lounge area, with overstuffed couches and chairs, and two large-screen televisions. A broad range of customers— including physicians, lawyers, businessmen and police officers—can often be found here in a state of happy relaxation, watching a game of basketball, football, soccer or curling.

The customer base reflects the diversity of Prospect Lefferts Gardens. Santana’s draws an ethnically varied crowd, with cigar lovers coming from the nearby Hasidic community as well as from Long Island. Santana’s dense West Indian, Caribbean and African American base. Although most of the customers are men, women frequently stop in and enjoy a smoke. I’ve been to Santana Premium Cigars before, and enjoyed myself. This time there was no different, and I was impressed with the flavor and balance of the cigars, as well as the evenness of the burn. If you’re a cigar smoker, you must visit.

Adrian Leber is a New York City public defender who has lived on Sterling Place for fourteen years.

Gastropub Coming to the Neighborhood

That long vacant storefront on the corner of Flatbush and Midwood will become a gastropub featuring upscale pub food and bar concept when a gastropub opens there this summer.

Community Board No. 9’s Public Safety Committee gave its “enthusiastic support” in granting a liquor license to veteran multi-concept restaurateur Kalkin Narvilas. As first reported January 29 at the website DNAinfo New York, Narvilas intends to change the character of food service in PLG and along Flatbush with a European-style gastropub featuring tapas, kebabs, high-end whiskies and a novel menu centered on unusual sandwich combinations, soups and salads.

“We’re going to have a lobster roll on a pretzel bun, and some short rib sliders,” Narvila told the NYC-centric website. “We’re going to have 24 craft lines and high-end whiskies and tapas with a focus on local New York breweries and distilleries.”

As an LGM parent myself, I wholeheartedly echo the sentiments of Michelle and Jeanne. Since our daughter’s entry into the pre-school, my husband and I had hoped that we would be able to replicate the experience at the elementary school level. We are glad that our hopes have turned into reality.

For more information on LGM’s elementary school, email: lgm@lgm.org.
PLGers File Suit to Stop 23-Story Rental; Demand Zoning Changes (continued from page 1)

“We’ve been through this before and what usually happens is that once people see the finished product, all of this criticism dies down,” she says. “I think it is really going to be a beautiful building that complements the neighborhood and just as they probably said the same thing about [6-story] Patio Gardens sixty years ago. Neighborhoods change.

“It’s easy to say we could have done a shorter building but it would not have been economical. Another thing that people should know is that the building is going in a commercial corridor—outside of Flatbush Avenue, off the sidewalk. It’s not going in the heart of the historic district.”

Chong is not swayed by Novak’s defense: “No, it’s just going in the middle of two historic districts, and right in the backyards of the historic Chester Court houses,” Chong countered. “Not to mention the beautiful early 1900s Art Deco and limestone Beaux arts apartment buildings on Flatbush Avenue.

“At a meeting with homeowners on Chester Court, the developer stated that the reason they felt it was optimal for them to build a taller, narrower building was that they would get higher rents for high floor apartments with great views.”

Although PPEN is in favor of development, the neighborhood needs contextual zoning immediately, Hogeland argues. “We need contextual zoning in PLG, and right away, because there’s a massive-scale development frenzy going on right now,” he argues. “I think there’s an egregious inequity at work here, and I hope our representatives will address it immediately to get the neighborhood the protections we deserve.”

Politicians Join the Opposition
At the most recent LMA general meeting back in early November, the 626 Flatbush project was the centerpiece of the agenda and was scorned by nearly all who chose to speak up.

During a PowerPoint presentation about the project, Chelsea’s executive director outgoing Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz was in favor of the project. But new Brooklyn Borough President-elect Eric Adams fumed when he learned during Chelsea’s presentation that the project was proceeding against the neighborhood’s wishes and still had public financing.

“It’s almost as if your tax dollars are being used against you,” Adams said at the meeting, without necessarily stating his position on contextual zoning. Presumed in the same meeting to put forth legislation for a moratorium on tall buildings in PLG, Councilman Mathieu Eugene deflected the pressure by claiming that zoning code changes require legislation, not a moratorium on tall buildings.

With demolition already underway, Novak says she expects excavation for the tower will begin by spring. The Hudson Cos.’ plans call for the total construction time to be about two years, with the first tenants to move in by the summer or fall of 2016.

The Sharing Economy Comes to PLG by Alan P. Berger
No doubt you’ve heard of or maybe have even used the services of Zipcar, Airbnb, the bike-sharing program CitiBike and TaskRabbit. These are all examples of the “sharing economy,” or the collective consumption economy.

This growing movement recognizes two incommensurate truths. First, we don’t have unlimited resources and we need to find ways to consume less. Second: We already possess a lot of stuff that we could be using a lot more than we currently do. The sharing economy ultimately asks: Wouldn’t it be great if we could go down the street for something we need rather than have to buy it or do without it?

The advantages of the sharing economy are many:
- It saves time and money
- It’s a great way to meet your neighbors and know more about people in your neighborhood
- It saves time and money
- Reduced production of goods decreases our use of everything from raw materials to energy
- Consumers get greater access to virtually every good they’d like, through a sharing economy, we can avoid products and services that they never had before.

In November, a sharing goods and services program kicked off in Prospect Lefferts Gardens by a group of area residents. It’s through the website Neighborhoods (neighborhoods.net) and sponsored by PPEN. The website, which sites can register for free and sign up for the Flatbush, giving access to all the goods and services that participating PLG neighbors are already offering on the site.

Once registered, neighbors will also be able to request any good or service they need or want. And it’s all free — there’s little incentive to run a business with the service and participants make all the arrangements, be it the offering lender or the receiving borrower.

What kinds of products and services might be listed at Neighborhoods?

The shortlist would include virtually every merchandise category one could find at Amazon. There’s construction and building tools; all manner of electronics and home office equipment; computers; kitchen devices such as food processors, mixers, and blenders; musical instruments; recreational equipment like bikes and skis; snow blowers; garden equipment; and, much more.

Alan P. Berger is a self-employed social entrepreneur and consultant who has lived on Lincoln Rd. for three years and in PLG for six.

A Letter to the Manor

PLG State Assembyman Karim Camara pledged his solidarity with the community opponents and vowed to work with his city and state colleagues to create “contextual zoning, community notification, and a greater commitment to affordable housing, particularly when taxpayer dollars are used for development.”

Novak, the Hudson Cos. project manager, confirms that the company is not using union labor on the project. She says during a construction but some fifteen years ago which was spawned mainly by union strikes, developers like the Hudson Cos. found non-union contractors whose talents, skills and experience were equal to or better than union contractors.

“So not only do these contractors bring skill and quality, but because they are non-union, they bring down the cost of projects and make better use of a very limited labor pool.”

With demolition already underway, Novak says she expects excavation for the tower will begin by spring. The Hudson Cos.’ plans call for the total construction time to be about two years, with the first tenants to move in by the summer or fall of 2016.