

## THE 44<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PROSPECT LEFFERTS GARDENS House & Garden Tour

Sunday, June 1, 2014 • Noon-5PM

SPONSORED BY The Lefferts Manor Association

Visit the Stately Homes of Historic PLG

- \* Nine stops including complimentary refreshments at the Lefferts Gardens Montessori School
- \* Complimentary wine tasting at 65 Fen Wines
- \* Discounts at neighborhood restaurants and merchants
- \* Neighborhood stoop sales \* Exhibitions by artists from The Dorsey Gallery and PLG Arts

Opportunities to gather ideas and resources from homeowners and professionals including:

Roberta Woelfling ARCHITECT George John BUILDING CONTRACTOR

TICKETS/\$20 IN ADVANCE AT:

Play Kids 676 Flatbush Ave. | 65 Fen Wines 65 Fenimore St.

Tip of the Tongue 43 Lincoln Rd.

Trixie's Pet Supplies 575 Flatbush Ave.

Tugboat Tea Company 546 Flatbush Ave.

and online, <http://2014plghouseandgardentour.eventbrite.com>

TICKETS/\$25 ON TOUR DAY AT:

Tip of the Tongue 43 Lincoln Rd.

[NOTE: No children under 12 except infants in front packs only]

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL: 718-462-0024 OR 718-284-6210

E-MAIL: [plghousestour@gmail.com](mailto:plghousestour@gmail.com) VISIT: [leffertsmanor.org](http://leffertsmanor.org)

WE NEED YOUR PARTICIPATION

**Tour Guides** Volunteers are needed to work 2½ hour shifts and will receive a free tour ticket in return for participating. To volunteer, contact Carole Schaffer at 718-462-0024 or [acschaffer@juno.com](mailto:acschaffer@juno.com)

**Donations** of cookies, brownies, cakes, cupcakes, muffins, etc. are needed. Bring them to 218 Rutland Rd. on Sat., 5/31, Noon-2PM or to the Lefferts Gardens Montessori School, 527 Rogers Ave. on Sun., 6/1, 11:30AM-Noon



### Prospect Park Zoo Mural Restoration Nearly Finished

After a three-year restoration, the Prospect Park Zoo mural at the north entrance of the Q/B subway station is nearly finished, thanks to the artists of the Crown Heights Youth Collective. The Lefferts Manor Association was one of several groups that helped finance the project. The picture above is a detail from the much larger work.

## Landlord Abuses, Excessive Rent Hikes Accompany Opposition to Luxury High-Rise

by MILFORD PREWITT

Some landlords in Prospect Lefferts Gardens, looking to fatten their rental incomes with the anticipated arrival of a 23-story luxury residential tower on Flatbush Avenue, are allegedly making life miserable for some longtime tenants and business owners.

Even as a coalition of neighborhood associations, lay citizens and lovers of Prospect Park has teamed up to fight the 626 Flatbush high-rise in court, decrying the building's height and the shadow it will project, other residents say the project threatens to displace them or render them homeless.

Based on their two-minute comment limit at a public forum on April 7 that was intended to take the neighborhood's pulse about the controversial project, several speakers told horror stories of landlords who are already jacking up rents, violating rent-control terms and executing so-called emergency repairs making their units unlivable.

The town hall-style meeting at John Hus Moravian Church on Ocean Avenue drew a standing-room-only crowd of about 400 residents. The hearing at times sounded more like housing court than a community railing against a controversial high-rise construction project in a neighborhood dominated by four-to-six story buildings.

Not one person spoke in favor of the development.

There were several disturbing stories and personal anecdotes by longtime PLG residents—mainly senior citizens or immigrants fearful about their legal status—in rent-controlled apartments who claimed their landlords are harassing them in order to make them move.

One elderly woman, who said she is the primary caregiver of a young grandchild and who thought she was protected by rent-control laws, said her landlord waited until she went on a trip before demolishing and rendering her apartment unlivable under the guise of an emergency plumbing repair. She is now living with friends.

"It's that building," she spewed. "That building is making these landlords think they can do anything."

Listening intently to her plight were Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, State Senator Kevin Parker, and City Councilman Matthieu Eugene, as the woman pleaded: "I called everybody, every public official and nobody has done a thing to help me. Please help me!"

The woman appeared to exchange contact information with community group leaders at the end of the meeting.

Other speakers, both commercial and residential tenants, say their landlords are shortening their leases and tacking on huge increases if they deem to renew.

"What is going on is that they know the market rents here are going to rise when that building opens and they are striking now," said a small-business owner who may have to vacate PLG. He said his landlord has already informed him that he wants a substantial increase in rent when his lease terminates this fall. Other business owners with months to go before their leases expire said their landlords don't even show them the courtesy of returning their phone calls to begin negotiations.

Shelley Kramer, co-owner of the husband-and-wife team behind Play Kids toy store, told the elected officials that several merchants along Flatbush have formed a business association and that a key concern is untenable rent increases.



The town hall meeting at the Moravian Church was filled to capacity.

Kramer says one way landlords are getting away with rent hikes is by shortening the length of leases.

"Our members who run the hair salons and the nail places know this neighborhood is changing and their landlords are taking advantage by shortening the leases," she said. "We are not pointing fingers at anyone, but we just want fairness."

Gentrification, real estate speculation and the media's discovery of PLG are eroding the quality of life in the neighborhood, not making it better, said one man who identified himself as a longtime Fenimore St. resident.

"It's painful to see neighbors you knew for 30 or 40 years get priced out of the neighborhood," he said. "And to think, this is only the beginning."

Few speakers' testimony drew as straight a line between the project and their quality of life more than a mother of five who noted: "My kids' doctor was in that building and now he has moved away," referring to the family medical clinic razed to clear the construction site.

The lawsuit to halt or modify the scale of the project is still awaiting the judge's ruling. Meanwhile the developer, The Hudson Cos., has cleared the site and has broken ground with a projected finish date in the summer of 2016. Despite the vocal opposition, Hudson executives told the *Echo* that many residents have communicated their silent support and best wishes for the project.

## Chester Court Resident Reflects on Block Becoming Independent Historic District

by Leslie Wright

Stroll down Flatbush amidst the clamor of traffic and vibrant street life, take a right onto Chester Court and step into another world.

Historic Chester Court, the quiet and cozy quasi-village of 18 identical neo-Tudor-style row houses, is very close to becoming an independent Historic District.

The tiny block is one of New York City's most unique streets: It is one of the few cul-de-sacs in the entire city and is popular with dog walkers, kids mastering their biking skills, street ball games and, for better or worse, motorists who enjoy the easiest U-turns in Brooklyn searching for rare parking spaces.

The homes on Chester Court were designed by Peter J. Collins and constructed by his company, the Brighton Building Company, in 1914 and 1915. Collins was both a Brooklyn Commissioner of Buildings and an architect of note who designed nearly 50 buildings in the Prospect Lefferts Gardens Historic District and many more in the Park Slope Historic District.

My family moved to Chester Court almost two years ago and we are part of the latest wave of generational change on the block. Like many of my neighbors, we purchased our home from a family who had owned the house for nearly 50 years. Several families have been on the block for more than 20 years and one neighbor remembers playing on the block in the 1950s as a child when her family lived in a nearby apartment building.

For a tiny enclave, Chester Court is home to a

wide range of people from all walks of life. Several writers, an acclaimed chef, a retired NYC school teacher, a handful of lawyers, the PR guru at a major fashion magazine, at least one doctor, an elementary school custodian, a muralist, plus loads of kids and teenagers live there.

Some of its more famous past residents include Colson Whitehead, the Pulitzer Prize-nominated novelist and 2002 MacArthur Fellowship recipient; actor David Hart, known best perhaps for the TV series, *In the Heat of the Night*; WPA muralist Abraham Lishinsky, the designer of all the wonderful birdhouses in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden; and, at least according to (wholly unsubstantiated) urban legend, actor Paul Giamatti.

The corner of Chester Court and Flatbush Avenue as it looked more than a century ago.

Photo courtesy of The New-York Historical Society.



Chester Court has long had its own block association. Thanks to this engaged group, Chester Court has a fully refurbished wall at the end of the block, new sidewalks, a couple of new sidewalk trees protected with new tree guards and a beautiful absence of graffiti.

The Chester Court Block Association's biggest current project is trying to get the 18 row houses designated as an independent historic district by the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Ironically, Chester Court was included in Prospect Lefferts Gardens' original application for historic designation back in the 1970s—the Chester Court houses share the same history and architectural significance as the neo-Tudor houses on Rutland I—but because Chester Court is not contiguous with the balance of Prospect Lefferts Gardens, the LPC did not include Chester Court as part of the landmarked district.

Now, with the support of Community Board 9, Councilmember Matthieu Eugene, PLGNA, the Lefferts Manor Association and the Historic Districts Council, Chester Court has been deemed eligible as a potential independent historic district.

The LPC has recognized that "closing the doughnut" between the PLG and the Ocean on the Park historic districts is very much worth consideration. Landmarking is a long process, now further complicated because of the change of mayoral administration. The Chester Court residents are all crossing their fingers that the second time will be a charm and that our charming little village will be protected.

Leslie Wright is an attorney who lives on Chester Court with her husband Mason, and son, Henry.

# A Day to View Irresistible Interiors and Gorgeous Gardens

BY TOUR ORGANIZER **Carole Schaffer** ✨ It's that time of year again when neighborhood doors and garden gates open for your enjoyment and exploration at the 44th annual edition of the Prospect Lefferts Gardens House Tour. This year's June 1 tour includes homes, their gardens and the Lefferts Gardens Montessori School.

The selections demonstrate the diversity of architecture within our community—limestones, brownstones, brick and frame houses—in a variety of styles popular at the turn of the twentieth century. All exhibit a wealth of original detail infused with modern conveniences and some have embraced more contemporary flair.

## A sampling of some of the tour stops:

- An 1898 Romanesque Revival/Neo-Renaissance style four-story limestone and Roman brick townhouse reveals a fabulous contemporary floor-through garden level housing a spacious kitchen/family room with projection TV, copious built-in storage, and half-bath. Elegant vintage light fixtures and a wealth of intact original woodwork and decorative stained-glass grace the floors above.
- A 1910 limestone two-story townhouse features museum quality oil portraits of family members dating back to the mid-19th century; a fabulous south-facing, light-filled kitchen with ingenious storage that opens out to a balcony; and a private deck off the second floor.
- A 1922 "in-progress" freestanding Flemish-bond brick home, with an elaborate triangular central portico and carriage house, displays exquisite leaded-glass windows and a marble fireplace. Reconfigured areas now create two grand spaces: a master bedroom/office oasis with adjoining serene spa bath, evoking an Impressionist "Monet-like" feel, and an open dialog between the dining room and kitchen.
- The parlor floor and rear garden of a picturesque circa 1914-15 neo-Tudor row house on a charming cul-de-sac awaiting landmark designation. It retains its Mission-style

brick fireplace, decorative foliate plaster ceiling molding and handsome leaded-glass windows.

- The top-to-bottom renovation of a three-story 1908 brownstone. Its garden floor and basement exhibit a totally modern ambiance—airy and bright where custom cabinetry keeps everything hidden behind closed doors. A mullioned glass wall with sliding door makes the rear garden the focal point. On the floors above, mid-century furnishings are paired with vintage decorative woodwork and elaborate fretwork. Four skylights flood the third floor with sunshine.
- A former trash-strewn 60 by 100-foot vacant lot is being transformed by community residents into a multipurpose garden and community gathering space. This is now a fully functioning garden, with raised beds and a "hoop house" for nurturing seedlings, growing organic fruits and vegetables and teaching children about growing their own food.
- A turn-of-the-twentieth century semi-detached wood frame house, with a charming sun porch and generous front and rear gardens, showcases a vintage tin ceiling with wide cove molding and a winding staircase to the upper floors. Although still a "house-in-progress," a bathroom and kitchen have been refreshed in keeping with their past.



The living room of a Midwood Street home featured on this year's historic house tour. Photo provided by Brown Harris Stevens.

## Untouched for 40 Years, Lincoln Road Home's Restoration Blends Classic with Contemporary

by *Jeanne Baron*

Being a veteran homeowner and experienced at renovating and decorating, Monique McClure saw the potential in the Lincoln Rd. home she would ultimately buy the first time she laid eyes on it in 2009.

"No one had done a thing to it for 40 years," she recalled. "It was infested with bugs, there were holes in the walls and there was a whole wall of smoky mirrored glass in the living room. My contractor couldn't believe people had been living in it."

But McClure was undaunted by the challenge of making the large home even roomier and comfortable enough for her father, a retired physician, to move from Evanston, Ill., to live with his daughter and grandchildren. She saw that the dining and kitchen area could be transformed into an open plan to give her a bigger sense of space, which she so loved in her Park Slope loft.

McClure, a corporate attorney, had been searching exclusively in Prospect Lefferts Gardens to find her next home ever since she took her son to a friend's birthday party here.

"I brought my son to a birthday party on Maple Street and I couldn't believe it," she said. "I was following Google Maps and turned into this beautiful neighborhood I had never seen before."

Though McClure loved her modern loft in Park Slope, the fourth floor walk-up was never going to work for her dad, who walks with a cane. She knew she wanted a house and remembered the architectural beauties in PLG.

"I knew from past experience buying houses in Brooklyn that I wanted to pick a neighborhood and focus. So I started driving around Lefferts all the time. It took a year but I found what I wanted."

When it came to renovating and decorating, McClure sought a balance between the home's age and modern aesthetics. She took care to select lighting fixtures, tile treatments and wall colors that "honor the home's historic value" while opening the space for a contemporary atmosphere, striking a balance between the ornament of the architecture and her minimalist sensibilities.

Her father's baby grand piano needed a home, so the living room has been styled as a music room. His art collection is on display and his Mission-style furniture complements Monique's collection from her time spent in India working in finance.

"I'm so happy with how it turned out," she said. "My goal was to let the house retain its natural beauty. As soon as the decades of paint was removed from the wood details all over the house, everything just came together."

About to start a family and eager for a living space larger than their Alphabet City apartment, Mary Berger and her husband, Randy, thought they'd find what they were looking for in brownstone Brooklyn.

So they scoured Prospect Heights, Fort Greene and Bed-Stuy until one day Mary, rushing to her last open house on a long day of open house visits, stepped foot for the first time in a Flatbush neighborhood she had never heard of.

She found her way to Rutland Rd. where she became enamored by the size, features, and rich wood detailing of a century-old home. She then pleaded with the owners to stay open later so Randy could see the place too.

That was in November of 1999 and what was initially love at first sight has evolved into a much beloved home, lovingly restored and full of life.

"I thought I must have gotten lost," Mary said. "But when I walked onto Rutland, the tree-lined street full of brownstones, and then saw this house, I begged the owners to let my husband come late to see it."

"I loved the big old windows and the



Fancy that: The McClures' Lincoln Rd. house blends an office with a bedroom.

## Fourteen Years Later, Love at First Sight Becomes a Cherished Family Home

by *Milford Prewitt*

details," she said. "The fireplaces, the woodwork, the high ceilings, old sinks and plenty of room. After a Manhattan apartment, it felt enormous."

But the best was yet to come: the rapture of the neighborhood.

"We learned about the neighborhood over time," she said. "To us, the warm, neighborly community is the best part about PLG. We love being able to sit on our stoop, chat with whoever

walks by and let our kids hop over the back fence to play."

The kids are 14-year-old Sam; 11-year-old Annie; 9-year-old Maisy; plus 6-month-old Franklin, a sheepdog puppy. Mary is a preschool special education teacher and Randy is a securities lawyer.

PLG's 44th House Tour is the second time the Bergers have opened their home for the event. But the house has been carefully renovated, both

cosmetically and structurally, since the first go round.

While the early years of their occupancy saw the usual painting, plastering and stripping, the Bergers waited until their children were older to really turn their home into a contemporary but comfortable living space without sacrificing the original Victorian, century-old features.

The centerpiece of the renovations was converting the basement into a spacious family and entertainment room, freeing up the first floor for a formal dining space and parlors "with no TV."

"Hopefully, we're done with the renovations," Mary said. "[We] have always wanted a dining room table that could fit our extended family and we finally got one—eleven feet long!"

"We love having a home where the family/TV room is not the focus. Our kitchen is where we spend the most time and now, it is a pleasure because we have the space to hang out there."

Another key addition was a second full bathroom on the bedroom floor, attached to Mary and Randy's bedroom.

"All five of us sharing one bathroom was not ideal," she said.



Left: The large open kitchen features a glass wall leading to the backyard.

Right: The Berger family restored the ornate wood features of the parlor staircase and landing.

Photos of Lincoln Rd. and Rutland Rd. interiors by Martin Friedman.



### Can't Get Enough?

Present your PLG Tour brochure at the Boerum Hill House Tour and your ticket there will be just \$10! But you'll have to hurry—that tour is also on June 1st, (from 1 to 5PM).



These neighborhood businesses are extending special Tour Day-only (unless otherwise noted) offers to tour goers who show their PLG House & Garden Tour ticket/guidebook:

### Blessings Herbs, Coffee & Florist

633 Flatbush Avenue (between Hawthorne and Winthrop Sts.)  
A free dessert with your brunch order. Offer good 9:30AM-3PM.

### Fenimore One

65-67A Fenimore Street (just off Flatbush Ave.)  
65 Fen Wines Join us for a complimentary tasting 4-6PM  
Delroy's Café & Wine Bar Wine and tapas | PLG Outpost Provisions/beer  
5-10% discount across the board. Offer good Noon-7PM.

### Gino's Trattoria & Brick Oven Pizza

548 Flatbush Avenue (between Lincoln Rd. and Maple St.)  
25% discount on a minimum purchase of \$10. Offer good until 11PM.

### King of Tandoor

600 Flatbush Avenue (between Midwood St. and Rutland Rd.)  
10% discount on table service, take-out or delivery. Offer good until 10:30PM.

### Kings County Nurseries

625 New York Avenue (between Rutland Rd. and Fenimore St.)  
Download a 10% discount coupon at kingscountynursery.com for use on an in-store purchase of \$20 or more (excludes landscaping). Good anytime.

### Nykkis Boutique

Dress Design/Tailoring at 620 Flatbush Avenue (opposite Fenimore St.)  
20% discount on any alteration. Offer good Monday, June 2, 10AM-8PM.

### Play Kids

676 Flatbush Avenue (at the corner of Westbury Ct.)  
Named "Best Toy Store 2012" by New York magazine.  
15% discount on one toy or book purchase. Offer good 10AM-5PM.

### Smile For Every Sistah In You

581 Flatbush Avenue (at Midwood St.)  
Women's Afro-centric clothier is offering a 25% discount on all purchases.  
Offer good noon-5:30PM.

### Tafari Tribe Globe Trade

593 Flatbush Avenue (between Midwood St. and Rutland Rd.)  
Purveyor of fine art wear is offering a 15% discount on all purchases.  
Offer good noon-9PM.

### Tip of the Tongue, Baked & Brewed

43 Lincoln Road (between Ocean and Flatbush Aves.)  
A free brownie with the purchase of any coffee drink. Offer good 8AM-7PM.

### Tugboat Tea Company

546 Flatbush Avenue (between Lincoln Rd. and Maple St.)  
A \$1.75 small coffee is yours for only \$1.00. Offer good 8AM-6PM.

### Tour Day Exhibit at The Dorsey Art Gallery

553 Rogers Avenue (between Fenimore & Hawthorne Sts.)  
featuring artists from Dorsey Gallery and PLG Arts

The Dorsey Art Gallery, established in 1970 by the late Lawrence Peter Dorsey, is the oldest, continuously-active, black-owned art gallery in New York City.  
At right, a detail from a painting by Tyrone Gather (Dorsey Gallery)

