

OCT 28 Ice Skating at Lefrak Center Begins

Another ice skating season opens at the beautiful Lefrak rinks in Prospect Park. On weekdays, the facility is open 9am–5:15pm (extended until 9pm on Fridays) and admission is \$6. Saturdays, 11:30am–9pm, \$9; and Sundays, 11:30am–5:15pm, \$9. Skate rentals and lockers also available.

OCT 29 PPA Halloween Haunted Walk and Fair

Lookout Hill, the highest point in Prospect Park is home to the Prospect Park Alliance's 37th Annual Halloween Haunted Walk. Ghouls and goblins lurk behind the trees, ready to provide a silly scare! An adult should accompany young children. After some chills and thrills at the Haunted Walk, enjoy more Halloween fun at a spooky fair on the Nethermead. Noon–3pm Rain or shine.

OCT 31 PLG Halloween Parade

An annual tradition! The "Safe Halloween Parade" sponsored by the 71st Precinct starts at 5pm at the corner of Rutland Road and Flatbush Avenue and winds throughout the neighborhood.

NOV 5 LMA Fall General Meeting

At Church of the Evangel on Bedford Ave. (between Hawthorne and Winthrop Sts.), 10am–noon.

NOV 8 Election Day

Finally. You know what you have to do.

Diplomat and Humanitarian Lived on Rutland I for 60 Years Dr. Lamuel Arnold Stanislaus, Co-Founder of West Indian Day Parade, Dies at 95

The Honorable "Sir" Lamuel Arnold Stanislaus, who was widely acknowledged as one of the three founders of the West Indian Day Parade in Brooklyn, has died at the age of 95.

A dentist, diplomat, internationally recognized human rights activist, advocate for Caribbean Islands freedom and top-ranking

United Nations official, Dr. Stanislaus lived on Rutland I with his family for 60 years.

He was born in 1921 in Grenada, West Indies and migrated to the U.S. to attend college at Howard University in Washington, D.C. where he earned a bachelor degree in 1948, graduating magna cum laude. In 1953 he earned a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree and practiced dentistry for 32 years.

In 1952, he married the love of his life, the former Beryl Ross, who would bear him five children, who, in turn, would go on

to produce eight grandchildren. Beryl and he celebrated 64 years of marriage just this past August.

In 1985, the Prime Minister of Grenada, the Honorable Herbert A. Blaize, appointed Dr. Stanislaus to be the island nation's ambassador to the UN.

Stanislaus expanded his role to become a voice for all small Caribbean and Latin American nations that were trying to break the yoke of European and American control.

He gave several trenchant and piercing addresses at the UN about the economic and political hardships developing nations—then called the Third World—faced at the hands of Western powers.

His strident advocacy, not only for Caribbean countries but also for women's rights, put him in the spotlight at a number of international conferences that led to his appointment as the Grenadian ambassador to the UN and later, a one-month stint as president of the General Assembly.

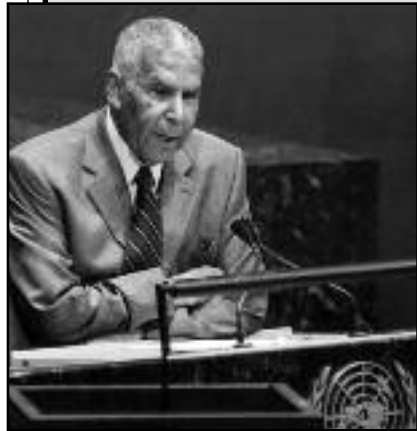
Stanislaus became involved organizationally with the Caribbean carnival in New York after Caribbean celebrations in Harlem—founded in the 1930s—were discontinued and the festivities were reborn in Brooklyn in the 1960s, under the leadership of Trinidadian immigrant Rufus Goring. Along with Carlos Lezama, later head of the West Indian American Day Carnival Association, Stanislaus and Goring are recognized as the three founders of the parade.

He was the recipient of several professional, civic, political and humanitarian awards including his being named a Commander of the British Empire by the Queen of England in 2013. In February 2016, he was recognized under Grenada National Hero's legislation and received the prestigious designation, Knight Commander, which entitled him to be called "Sir Lamuel-KCNG."

Stanislaus was a confidant of Shirley Chisholm, also a PLG resident, the first African-American woman elected to Congress and the first black candidate to launch a serious bid to become president. He also was affiliated with Governors Mario and Andrew Cuomo, who walked with him in the parade.

Dr. Stanislaus died September 18 at the MJHS Hospice Center in Brooklyn with many of his family members at his side.

Survivors include his wife, Beryl; children Lamuel Jr., Galen, Karen, Eugene and John; seven grandchildren; three siblings and a sister-in-law.



Dr. Lamuel Arnold Stanislaus addressing the General Assembly of the United Nations in the late 1990s.

PLG Confronts a Great Divide

Neighbors Clash on Rezoning and Development; Agonize about Affordability and Displacement

by MILFORD PREWITT

The seemingly innocuous and benign need to update Prospect Lefferts Garden's zoning codes, upgrade its infrastructure, and protect the local environment is dividing community leaders and activists—both of whom have the neighborhood's best interests at heart.

PLG's gentrification, the housing affordability challenge, and the displacement of small businesses and residents by rent hikes, are tangentially related to whether or not a rezoning study can help ease the neighborhood's growing pains.

But many view such a study suspiciously.

The issue pits neighbor against neighbor and has hamstrung local Community Board No. 9—the entity most responsible for green-lighting a rezoning study—for nearly two years, and the organization shows little sign of passing a resolution anytime soon.

Although CB9 asked the Department of City Planning in 2014 to study the neighborhood's rezoning needs, it has struggled to pass a resolution to finalize the project due to internal discord among members, a series of voting mistakes, and bungled public hearing notices. Even now, CB9 is without a chairman as a result of the resignation of the short-tenured Demetrius Lawrence (due to demands of a new job), the third chairman in less than three years.

The internal dysfunction of CB9 was pounced upon and publicized by CB9's most vocal antagonist to rezoning, Alicia Boyd, founder of the Movement to Protect the People (MTOPP).

Boyd, who was recently acquitted by a jury of obstructing governmental administration, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct following a fiery shouting match at a CB9 meeting in May of last year, charges that rezoning is a prelude to the wholesale construction of high-rise towers throughout the neighborhood and the beginning of the end of its unique architectural and historical residential character.

She claims all of PLG is in peril of being overdeveloped. Her perspective is as someone whose Sterling I backyard abuts Empire Boulevard—one of the main corridors including Flatbush, Washington, Franklin, Rogers, and Nostrand avenues—that she says city planners are eagerly eyeing to upzone.

She says upzoning for high-rise construction is only done in neighborhoods that are largely occupied by people of color, that white middle-to-upper income communities are rarely upzoned.

"This is the densest area in Brooklyn," she says. "and it's predominantly black. They only do these kinds of studies in black communities where they want to upzone. Can you imagine the pressures on our infrastructure if in the next few years 100,000 people move here?"

[City census figures say PLG is the third-most dense.]

"The Prospect Park subway platform during the morning rush is already packed now. Can you imagine what that will look like in the future?" she added.

While he did not address Boyd's racial allegation directly, Winston Von Engel, director of the Brooklyn Office of the DCP, implied that a community's desire for zoning changes and not its racial composition, informs where the agency conducts its studies.

"The decision whether or not to change the zoning of a neighborhood depends on the goals of the local community and is at the discretion of the local community board, Borough President, City Planning Commission and the City Council member," he insists.

How It Began

The touchstone to all of this agita was the sudden and unimpeded permits, rapid construction (just two-years in the making) and now leasing of the 24-story Parkline luxury apartment tower at 626 Flatbush, the first residential high-rise to be built in PLG in decades.

Although neighborhood groups and community activists condemned the building's (continued on page 4)



The north side of Sterling Street, whose backyards border Empire Boulevard, is the virtual line in the sand for opponents and advocates of rezoning and development.

City and Nonprofit Partners Offer Low-Interest Home Improvement Loans

by PAM GLASER

Squeaking soft floorboards. That annoying ceiling drip when it rains. Missing bathroom tiles. Unreliable plumbing and electrical wiring from WWII. Those are but a few of the many and expensive home improvement projects that can take a big bite out of a homeowner's budget.

So you go to a bank to inquire about a home repair loan only to find you don't qualify or the rates are too high.

Then again, you might empathize with and wonder how to help a cash-strapped, elderly neighbor on a fixed income whose home is becoming an eyesore.

Coming to the rescue is the City of New York and a network of local nonprofit housing partners that are offering a variety of low-interest home repair and improvement loans to low- and moderate-income homeowners.

Senior citizen homeowners are the target beneficiaries of The NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and The Parodneck Foundation. The two have partnered up in the Senior Citizen Homeowner Assistance Program (SCHAP). The loans help seniors make necessary home repairs. A maximum of \$40,000 is available for single-family homes. (For homeowners of two- to four-family homes, a maximum of \$30,000 per dwelling unit is available).

How SCHAP Works

To qualify, the owner must be at least 60 years old and have been an owner-occupant of a one- to four-family home for at least two years. Homes must have property and liability insurance currently in force. The applicant's annual household income cannot exceed

\$76,125 for a one-person household, \$87,000 for a two-person household or \$97,875 for a three-person household. Income adjustments are made for larger households.

Depending on the homeowner's circumstances, terms will vary from a no-interest deferred loan to a fully amortizing 3% loan. All loans are payable upon the sale of the house or if the owner moves out of the house or dies.

If there is someone on the deed who is under 60 years of age, all of the owners would sign the mortgage (to enable HPD's recapture of public funds at death of the primary applicant, sale of home, or transfer of title) and the senior would sign both the mortgage and the note. Those with very low incomes, can pay nothing, and get a lien on the property for the (continued on page 4)



Remembering Viola Gourdet

Loving Wife, Generous and Caring Neighbor, Community Leader, and Big Smile Giver

by MILFORD PREWITT, editor of *The Echo*

Six years ago on one of those gorgeous summer afternoons that come around every now and then—when low humidity blunts the heat and giant popcorn-shaped clouds float by at a snail's pace—I saw my dear friend Vi Gourdet sitting on the front steps of her Rutland I home.

I had just put *The Echo* to bed and was walking down her street when I spotted her, and crossed over for what I assumed would be a few minutes of chat. It ended up being much longer than that, a timeless sharing of a lazy afternoon, shooting the breeze with one of the most beautiful souls I'd befriend for too short a time.

I never lived in the South, but spending time with her that afternoon reminded me of Nikki Giovanni's "Alabama Poem." She describes the elders in some Southern town sitting on their porches making fun of the young students attending the "institute" down the street, but unconnected to everyday life. In our case, it was more like a big sister teasing and being teased by a little brother.

Vi died about a year ago this summer. She was 73 and had spent 2012 through 2015 sustained on machines following a stroke.

Her passing a year ago went unreported in *The Echo*. This memoriam is not a make good in response to the many mutual friends, neighbors and readers who wondered why we had never noted the transition of such a beloved neighbor. Rather, this is one lucky man's attempt—with lots of ink and paper at his disposal—to express the lasting gratitude that she entered my life and became a fast friend and defender of this neighborhood.

My wife, Renee, had gotten to know Vi from the Lefferts Manor Association where they both served on the board. I did not meet her or her husband, Frank, until a holiday house party almost a decade after we had become residents of Midwood I.

But we immediately clicked and made up for lost time.

We were foodies, and with other neighbors, we even formed a short-lived cooking club to show off our culinary prowess and expertise once a month. We were often the first in line to support any new restaurant that opened its doors in the 'hood (or anywhere else in Brooklyn for that matter).

As a former business reporter in the restaurant industry, I once profiled Sirio Maccioni, the award-winning restaurant owner of the legendary Le Cirque. He was so impressed that he thanked me by treating my wife and I to dinner at the famed restaurant—"and be sure to bring some friends."

We instantly asked Vi and Frank to join us and they rewarded us with the most unusual and beautifully elegant wine-bottle opener. That gift still graces our kitchen.

In the early morning hours of Wednesday, December 8, 2012, Frank recalls Vi waking suddenly and complaining of a headache. She dashed to the bathroom for an aspirin where she apparently suffered a stroke, then went into a coma from which she never awoke.

Vi met Frank some 40 years ago when they both worked as new hires as vice presidents at Citibank. Frank was instantly smitten and wanted to know his colleague far better than co-worker, but Vi rebuffed his advances, mainly because she was engaged.

"But I knew it was not going to last," Frank boasts, "and so I waited." And so he did and he was rewarded with her hand in marriage in 1971.

They moved to Prospect Lefferts Gardens in 1975, initially on New York Avenue in an apartment building. They bought the place on Rutland I a few years later after getting a tip from her former father-in-law that his girlfriend was sick of climbing the stairs and wanted to sell the house.

Vi was active at Bed-Stuy's Shiloh Baptist Church. Frank, who is Catholic, frequently worshiped with Vi at Shiloh. A congregant who followed in her family's footsteps, she earned a reputation as a loving mentor to young women on matters of dress, comportment around men, and what it means to be a woman. She also took on volunteer roles assisting the pastor. Dozens of fellow churchgoers, neighbors, family and friends spoke lovingly of her at Vi's wake.

Over their many years together, Frank became Vi's personal techie. "She was not very comfortable with computers," he chuckles. "So I became her secretary."

Vi served five years on the LMA's board, and was given a community service award by former Borough President Marty Markowitz upon her resignation.

Frank says disconnecting the machines that kept her alive was the toughest decision he has ever made.

His advice to others facing the same crossroads: talk to as many people as possible.

"My advice is to talk with everyone," he says, "doctors, pastors, family and get what they have to say and be sure to have a prognosis for the future.

"If it is not positive, then you are going to have to make a tough decision. It was four years later, and I had to make that decision."

But Frank admits hope often stayed his hand.

"I thought the day would come when she would wake up and be her old self," he says. "I mean, I visited her at the hospital nearly every day and she didn't look sick or incapacitated."

Vi was buried in Green-Wood Cemetery in a verdant and luscious plot beneath a beautiful shade tree.

I attended her burial and the weather that day was as beautiful as it was when I saw her joking and smiling on her stoop so many years ago.



Church of the Evangel, Listed in the National Registry of Historic Places, Turns 109

Parishioners at Church of the Evangel, now listed on both the State and National Registry of Historic Places, celebrated its 109th anniversary in September. Located on the corner of Bedford and Hawthorne Avenues, the architecture of the church stands out as a beautiful example of the Late Gothic Revival from 18th century England. The prodigious research of the late Vera Banks, a 27-year member of the church who served as secretary and a self-appointed church historian, was chiefly responsible for the placement on the historic places list.



Above: In September, Church of the Evangel members joined to celebrate the house of worship's 109th anniversary.

Right: The congregation posed on the same steps in 1960.



The borough president issued a proclamation declaring the day would be named after her birthday. Her fellow church congregants celebrated her life and Christian devotion. Admiring neighbors and the Rutland II Block Association dedicated their annual block party to her.

But it was a signed letter from the White House that truly symbolized how much the life of centenarian Vera Biddle has meant to the community and the nation.

President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama jointly penned a birthday greeting to the 60-year resident of Rutland II that read in part: "As you celebrate this extraordinary milestone, we hope you reflect on the many memories you have made over the past century.

Your generation has shown the courage to persevere through depression and war, and the vision to broaden our liberties through changing times. We are grateful for your contributions to the American story and we wish you all the best for the coming year!"



Ms. Vera wears one of her trademark Sunday hats

The President and First Lady Salute Neighbor Vera Biddle's 100th Birthday

by Pia Raymond

Born September 1, 1916 in Grenada, B.W.I., Vera is a cultured pearl of the community, a dynamic personality much admired by her neighbors, and beloved for her quick wit, community involvement and perseverance.

Ms. Vera—as many neighbors and friends affectionately call her—hailed from a prominent Grenadian family known as the Hosten(s). She became a nurse in Grenada and dreamed of taking her medical education as far as she could take it.

She came to the United States in 1951 at the age of 35. Although she didn't have any children, she had an uncanny ability to connect with young children and they with her; even youngsters new to the neighborhood act as if she were one of them. Her kinship with children was a special bond that fueled her

passion for helping others and shaped her professional life as a nurse and midwife.

"I helped a lot of children come into this world, but I didn't have any of my own," she says.

She met Philadelphia native Walter Biddle on Long Island, they married in 1954 and moved to Rutland II in 1956. She believes she was the first person of Caribbean heritage on her block at the time.

Neighbors say she is always eager to impart her wisdom to those who ask for it. Easily recognized for the many fashionable hats she wears to church, Ms. Vera has worshipped at Church of the Evangel about as long as she has lived in the neighborhood. On Sunday, September 4, the congregation honored her for her years of support and devotion to the church and her faith. She was joined by a host of friends and family, some of whom travelled internationally to celebrate the occasion

Two weeks later, the Rutland II Block

Association celebrated Ms. Vera and her centennial at their annual block party. Ms. Vera, who still cooks, presented some of her dishes at the affair, delighting her neighbors.

The highlight of the party was seeing the thrill in her eyes when Borough President Eric Adams presented a proclamation recognizing her centennial lap around the sun as "Vera Biddle's 100th Birthday Celebration Day in Brooklyn, U.S.A."

Ms. Vera is sound of mind, quick-witted and didn't need her glasses to read out loud BP Adams' proclamation.

But she got misty-eyed when a young boy who she didn't know blessed her at the street party and wished her more years to come.

Ms. Vera says she is crazy about crossword puzzles and often stays up until two or three in the morning completing them.

Having outlived a husband, her siblings and other family members of her generation, she is not so sure why she has lived to such an exalted age.

"I guess it was God," she says. "Having faith helps," adding, "If there are little kids in your life, you are truly blessed. Be thankful."

Determined Sisters Set Taqueria El Patron Mexican Grill on Growth Track

The naysayers predicted that Taqueria El Patron Mexican Grill was going to be a short-lived enterprise that probably wouldn't make it through a year.

On the surface, their suspicions were justified. But they didn't know the resolve and confidence of owners Ana Prince or her sister, Brenda Castellanos. Both are native Guatemalans.

What the skeptics saw was a new Tex-Mex restaurant without a liquor license debuting at the same ill-fated, 51 Lincoln Road address where, in the recent past, three popular eating places had all closed, largely due to bad tenant-landlord relations.

But the sisters have not only overcome the odds and acquired a liquor license; they have even expanded the business into the adjacent, long-empty lounge that had once been Prospect Lefferts Garden's hottest bar, Lincoln Park Tavern. As a result, El Patron inherited the convenient inside door that links the restaurant and the lounge, making it



Co-owner Ana Prince takes a break before the dinner rush.

easy for guests and staff to come and go between establishments. Full table service is available on both sides.

"I just had faith this was going to work out," Prince says. "I knew it was going to take hard work and good food and good service."

Prince first came to 51 Lincoln as a server at the Tex-Mex eatery Enduro back when Jimmy Mamary, now the owner of the local Bluebird and Burger Mexicano, owned the place. She met her firefighter husband, Dominic Prince, at Enduro and after seven years of marriage, they are expecting their second child. Dominic was born and raised in PLG. The couple now lives in Seagate.

Prince was a sassy and funny server during the Enduro days, but she fell out of favor with management and was let go.

Castellanos says she and her sister had been looking for a small space to open a restaurant together and were determined to find a spot in PLG. After learning of the vacancy, they contacted the landlord—the same one who many blame for the closings of Lincoln Park Tavern and K-Dog & Dune Buggy, both big favorites of neighborhood at the time.

"We were looking for a new home and spot to open the business when the landlord called and asked us to meet her here one morning," Castellanos says, "and it just happened."

"We got a decent lease and this past July, we got our liquor license, a little more than a year after we opened. And the landlord has been great with us. We have no complaints."

Prince says she has no ill feelings toward Mamary and doesn't see Burger Mexicano as a competitor despite serving the same kind of menu.

"I wouldn't say his food is better than mine or mine is better than his," she says. "Our food is different. We both are part of this great neighborhood and we both want to do a good job."

She says she is looking forward to renovating the establishment, but that will probably occur after she gives birth to her son, due this November.

The restaurant serves nearly 40 different kinds of burritos and soft- and hard-shell tacos. There are another dozen or so enchiladas on the menu and a variety of salads.

The full bar features a vast assortment of margaritas and beers. A signature house drink this summer was the Bulldog, a plain margarita served in a jelly jar with a miniature bottle of Corona beer turned upside-down inside of it.

Taqueria El Patron Mexican Grill operates from noon to 11 p.m. Sunday through Thursday. It closes at midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.

PLG's Vinyl Music Lovers Can Go Old-School at Record City

by Milford Prewitt

Ian Clark doesn't consider himself ahead of a trend or worry about being behind the times. What he does know is that in the month since he opened his vintage record store, Record City, on the corner of Fenimore Street and Flatbush, his timing couldn't be better for PLGers who want to hear their music old-school, on a turntable.

At a point in history when it's possible that folks under the age of 30 have never seen a long-playing vinyl record or a 45 rpm outside of a movie—let alone a turntable, also known as a record player—Record City is attracting music lovers of all generations.

Nielsen Research shows that Clark is on to something.

Record purchases have been rebounding for the past several years and sales of turntables are inching up, too. In 2015, new record purchases reached 11.9 million units in the U.S., up nearly 30 percent year-over-year. And while CD album

"More people are getting turned on to records. I think the reason why is that in the age of digital music there is a lack of connection with the physical object that tells you what you are listening to or who the musicians are."

sales are off 11 percent and digital album sales are down 3 percent, those formats together are still ten times larger than vinyl transactions.

But those numbers do not faze Clark. "More vinyl is being made all the time," he says. "They are pressing more and more records and there is a backlog at the pressing plants. The infrastructure just can't keep up with demand."

From Record City's vantage point, Clark argues that young adults and teenagers are spearheading much of that demand.

"I can't begin to tell you how many times in the course of a week 15-year-olds, 19-year-olds or 25-year-olds—people who grew up in the so-called Digital Age—shop in here," he says, "and they have turntables, too."

"More people are getting turned on to records and I think the reason why is that in the age of digital music there is a lack of connection with the physical object that tells you what you are listening to or who the musicians are," he says. "Handheld digital devices and cellphones don't give you that kind of connectivity to the artists."

He says the other factor that may be boosting record sales is that many people believe vinyl has a "smoother, warmer" sound.

Clark has been buying and selling vintage records for nearly 20 years. He is also a DJ and owner of the reggae record label, DKR, whose office is located at Empire Boulevard and Rogers Avenue.

Record City opened in early September in the space formerly used as a lounge by 65 Fen, the wine store. It's a spare, minimalist atmosphere whose rows of packed record bins and wall-mounted record covers of prized collectors' items are both inventory and décor elements. He says he and Michael Campbell, 65 Fen's owner, are planning to do a wine tastings and music pairing event in the near future.

Clark, who confesses his favorite kind of music is reggae and considers himself an expert in the genre, breaks down his current inventory this way: about 20 percent is reggae; 15 percent is soul and R&B; 15 percent is jazz; and the balance is rock, world music and hip hop.

A Park Slope resident, Clark says he travels near and far to look at people's collections, usually along the East Coast. The store does not close while he is on the road. Colleagues fill in for him.

"I look at what people have and break it down into different piles of what I think I can sell it for and make a cash offer on the spot."

He says he once paid a couple of thousand dollars for a reggae collection.

He says less than pristine record jackets will not kill a deal so long as the vinyl inside is decent. He points to a prized album by the Afrobeat superstar Fela that he is selling for \$25. The jacket is a bit chewed, but the vinyl is close to mint condition.

"It's a cool album that's hard to find," he says. "That rarity makes it valuable."

But in most cases, he adds, it's rare for the vinyl to be in great shape while the jacket is damaged.

What about scratches?

"Well, it's the same thing," he says. "If it is a particular record that a lot of people want, then I can make a deal and price it down accordingly. But if it's a standard record that is pretty widely held, I don't buy those."

Several years ago, Clark paid \$450 for a record-cleaning machine. It does not remove scratches, but it does clean well enough to improve the sound quality of vinyl.

Clark says he enjoys what he does for a living, working for himself in a business he loves.

"Having your own business is scary," he says. "There are always cash flow issues and days that are longer and harder than others," he admits. "It's not always straightforward. But I would take this over an office job anytime."

Record City is open every day from noon to 8 p.m.



Record City proprietor Ian Clark among his stacks of vintage wax.

New York State Senate Inducts Pia J. Raymond Into 2016 Class of "Women of Distinction"



The inexhaustible Pia Raymond, a lifelong resident of Lefferts Manor whose business ventures, community leadership roles, and mentorship projects are second only to her starring role as a wife and mother of two, was honored with the 2016 "Women of Distinction" tribute. Raymond, who recently added author to her resume, was one of 30 women around the state whose local senators—Sen. Jesse Hamilton (pictured with the honoree above) in Pia's case—selected them for the special honor. In addition to being a Lefferts Manor Association board member, member of Community Board No. 9, president of her family's long-running trophy store, and a licensed social worker, she is also the founder of Creating Legacies, a family-oriented program intended to tighten family bonds through fun-filled recreational and educational activities.

A Great Divide

(continued from page 1)

out-of-character height, the developers succeeded only because PLG's zoning codes have not kept up with the times. Unlike Park Slope, Windsor Terrace or Ditmas Park which also border Prospect Park, PLG does not have contextual zoning which limits new construction roughly to the predominant building heights in the neighborhood.

In an interview with the *Echo* a year ago, Von Engel said the developers of the Parkline did nothing shady or underhanded in its construction. He said they had a right under existing zoning to build to 24 stories, but he also complimented the community board for listening to its constituents and come to the decision to ask the DCP to



conduct a land use study to prevent future buildings of the Parkline's size.

Mayor de Blasio's campaign to build or restore 200,000 units of affordable housing and Borough President Eric Adams's vow to support the mayor in that effort also influence how DCP goes about its duties, Von Engel admitted.

But Boyd remains suspicious. She asserts the city's rezoning studies and affordable

The new Parkline development has one-bedroom apartments even on lower floors leasing for nearly \$2,800 per month.

housing goals will ultimately be to the detriment of local residents, particularly when it comes to assuring that local infrastructure—sewer lines, transportation, schools, train stations—is strengthened to accommodate the needs of an increasing population.

"They will start out saying we will listen to you that our role is completely advisory but in the end they do what they want," she says. "And the environmental and infrastructure assessment doesn't occur until after the people come."

Looking at the rapid affluence of Williamsburg as a case in point, Boyd says that the area's main subway line, the L train, will go out of service for a year and a half starting in 2019 because city planners failed to anticipate the huge surge in population. The MTA says the closing is due to rehabbing needed because of damage from Superstorm Sandy.

Helping the Community

Some residents say the activists who are fighting CB9 may be hurting the community and are blind to the

emerging economic realities of life in New York City today.

Alex Ely, a sales strategist for an Internet company and a co-op owner on Lefferts I for 12 years, has been monitoring the rezoning brouhaha closely. He says he wishes opponents of rezoning would reconsider their positions.

"Activists should help direct resources, not reject them," Ely says. "And as it relates to upzoning of neighborhoods, it's happening all over the city."

As a cautionary tale, Ely pointed to what happened in Washington Heights earlier this year when activists succeeded in getting a City Council decision to reject a rezoning plan for a particular lot of land. As a result of blocking the rezoning, the developer actually acquired more leeway to build a 255-unit building with no affordable housing. Had the new zoning passed, the developer would have had to include affordable units in a larger building.

But Boyd says she has no interest in working in the system, let alone joining CB9.

"There are some people who work in the system and those who work outside," she says. "I work outside 'cause it gives me more freedom to challenge people who are being dishonest."

Boyd dismissed criticisms that some of her advocacy is self-serving, given that her backyard abuts Empire Boulevard—one of the main corridors she says is slated for upzoning.

"There's nothing wrong with someone protecting their backyard," she says. "But my position goes further. I was pushed out of a gentrified neighborhood years ago [Boerum Hill]. I watched it change. I saw what happened to friends and family and I don't want to go through that again."

New Census Numbers Spotlight Who Owns, Who Rents in PLG

The recently opened Parkline apartment building at 626 Flatbush is the first high-rise residential tower to open in Prospect Lefferts Gardens in decades.

Hotly contested in court by community groups and homeowners who opposed the project's 24-story height in a neighborhood dominated by four-to-six story buildings, the Parkline brings 254 new housing units to the market.

With one-bedroom units leasing for nearly \$2,800 a month on just the 7th floor—nearly as much as a monthly mortgage for a \$600,000 home—the project's affordability has rankled many. However, there are also 50 units designated as affordable.

But new U.S. Census Bureau numbers on housing in Prospect Lefferts Gardens shows that PLG has always been a renters' market with homeownership making up a small percentage of total households.

According to the data from PLG's nine census tracts for 2014, the 38,317 people between Empire Boulevard and Parkside Avenue (north-to-south boundaries) and Prospect Park to New York Avenue (east-to-west borders) made up 15,099 households, down 1 percent from the 2010 Census. Of that number, 12,647 households were rental units and 2,452 were owner occupied.

Black households that rent dominate the market, accounting for 9,368 households. Blacks were also the dominant owner-occupants, making up 1,723 households.

Whites accounted for 1,936 rental households and 542 owner-occupied households. Hispanic households rented 1,252 apartments and were owner-occupants of 146 homes. Asians made up 340 rentals and 58 homeowner households. People who identified as mixed race or two or more races, or identified as Native American made up the balance of PLG's households.

Low-Interest Home Improvement Loans

(continued from page 1)

total amount of the work, due only when he or she leaves the house.

One of the benefits of the SCHAP program is that the owner gets support throughout the loan and construction process: If the Parodneck Foundation finds that the applicant is eligible, a staff member will inspect the home and evaluate the necessary repairs and/or improvement work.

The staffer prepares a scope of work, which is sent to the applicant, and the applicant then presents the scope of work to at least two licensed contractors and requests free written estimates. Once the contractor is selected and all documentation is complete, the loan is closed and the mortgage is recorded. Then repairs can begin.

A SCHAP staff member will visit the home several times during construction to verify that the rehab meets approval. Payments are then authorized and released to the contractor.

For more information about SCHAP, the requirements, loan process, and services, or to request an application, please call Parodneck Foundation at 212-431-9700, ext. 313.

Other Loans for Seniors

Through the NYC Home Improvement Program (HIP), senior citizens looking to fix-up their places can also qualify for loans as large as \$30,000. Among eligible home improvement projects are masonry, roofing, plumbing, boilers, furnaces, and rewiring. In some cases the city can help handy owners pay for materials to do the work themselves.

The city provides a grant that reduces a bank's interest rate to 2.5% or 5%, depending on the borrower's income. For example, to qualify for a 2.5% loan, a single person household can have an income no higher than \$50,750 (but for a 5% loan, your income can be as high as \$88,800) and a two person household can have an income of no more than \$58,000 (but for a 5% loan your combined income can be as high as \$101,500).

Income adjustments are made for larger households. The term is five to ten years. To learn more, e-mail homerehabloan@hpd.nyc.gov or call 212-863-6429.

Two More Options

The nonprofit group Neighborhood Housing Services of New York City provides the following direct, low-interest home improvement loans to owners of one- to four-family homes:

- Emergency Repair Loans: Up to \$10,000 to correct health- and safety-related emergency situations such as roof leaks, water main breaks or heating system repairs.
- Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Core Loans: For large repairs and renovations.

If you are interested in learning more about these loans, please contact Citywide NHS at 212-519-2500 or go to the nearby NHS of East Flatbush on 2806 Church Avenue, near Nostrand, 718-469-4679.

Pam Glaser lives with her family on Rutland II and is a board member of the Lefferts Manor Association. She is also the director of Neighborhood Education and Outreach at the NYC Dept. of Housing Preservation and Development.



Local Painter Dan Freeman Exhibits at Tugboat

Dan Freeman, a prominent realist and abstract painter who uses "storytelling to carry reality in a painting," will be exhibiting original works of art at Tugboat Tea Co. on Flatbush Avenue through mid-November.

Entitled "iPad Paintings & Gicleé Prints," the longtime Sterling 1 resident captures the current political climate with three highly stylized and colorful portraits of the presidential candidates using a fine art digital printing technique known as gicleé. Other works in the exhibit bring to mind Van Gogh's floral still-lives. The exhibit is co-sponsored by PLGArts. For more information on Freeman, visit his website at www.danfreeman.org.



For a stronger community, join the

Lefferts Manor Association

MANOR RESIDENTS:

I (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 \$10.00 per senior citizen household

NON-RESIDENT FRIENDS:

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

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ + \$ _____ = \$ _____
DUES ADD'L CONTRIBUTION TOTAL

Dues cover January through December 2016. Make checks payable to **Lefferts Manor Association**. Send payment and form to: Martin Friedman, 214 Rutland Rd., Brooklyn, NY 11225 or drop in the mail slot at 214 Rutland Rd.

Echo Seeks Home Distributors for Non-Manor Blocks

The *Echo* is seeking help distributing copies on blocks that are in PLG but not in the Manor. If you or someone you know would like to volunteer, please contact the editor at milfordprewitt@aol.com.

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