



OCT 31 PLG Halloween Parade

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

NOV 1 LMA Fall General Meeting

Church of the Evangel on Bedford Ave. (between Hawthorne and Winthrop Sts.), 10 a.m. – noon. There will be nominations for open positions on the LMA Board.

NOV 4 Election Day

So what if it's a midterm election? Pundits say it's going to be one of the most important elections in recent history. Get out and vote!

Carole Schaffer, Empress of PLG's House & Garden Tour, Dies at 73

Just at press time, the *Echo* learned that Carole Schaffer, who fastidiously orchestrated the annual Prospect Lefferts Gardens House & Garden Tour for many years, has died.

Carole died of heart failure after eight days under care in a hospital.

A retired registered dietician and nutritionist and longtime Lefferts Manor Association board member, Carole lived with her husband, Arthur, in an exquisitely restored Midwood I brownstone for 38 years.

A memorial service is set for Sunday, October 19 at 11 a.m. at the Green-Wood Cemetery Chapel at 25TH St. and Fifth Avenue.



New PLG Merchants Association Seeks a More Beautiful and Vibrant Flatbush Avenue

by Shelly Kramer and Desmond Romeo

Beautifying Flatbush Avenue—along with a number of other quality-of-life improvements along Prospect Lefferts Gardens' central corridor—is the driving agenda of a new and energetic merchants association.

The Parkside Empire|Flatbush Avenue Merchants Association began meeting in December of 2013. We each came with our own visions of what we thought would make Flatbush Avenue from Parkside Avenue to Empire Boulevard a vibrant merchant strip.

Given that for the last 17 years FEPMA, the previous merchant association, had not complied with various NYC filing requirements, the city revoked its permit for a street fair in 2013. So in order for the community to have a street fair again within the Flatbush commercial corridor, we needed to form a new association. Learning from the methods of the old group, our new association, with members of various backgrounds, hopes to create a melting pot of ideas and tools to reach our goals.

The executive board of the new group consists of: President Desmond Romeo, owner of Dr. Cuts; Executive Vice President Shelley Kramer, owner of Play Kids; Secretary Joyce David, Esq., principal attorney at the Joyce David Law Office; Treasurer Jesse Gomez, partner in Gomez & Gomez, an accounting, business services and tax preparation firm; and Advisor to the Board Dale Charles of the Pratt Area Community Council (PACC).

The group is focused on four goals:

- Beautification of Flatbush Avenue between Empire Boulevard and Parkside Avenue
- The kick-off of a "Buy Local Campaign"
- The resumption of the street fair in the summer of 2015, and
- Working with our local merchants to preserve their businesses and build relationships with residential community leaders and other community organizations.

As echoed in our consumer needs survey that was conducted this spring, the merchants and our consumers are tired of the trash on Flatbush Avenue. We've met with NYC Department of Sanitation to address getting more garbage bins within our commercial corridor; how to address "dumping"; and what we as merchants need to do to initiate an Adopt-a-Bin program, which traditionally has decreased fly-away litter. We are working toward trash- and graffiti-free storefronts with greener tree pits lining the commercial corridor.

One program we will initiate soon is a "Shopping Passport" that will encourage the community to shop locally this holiday season. Local shoppers can earn points towards



Four-fifths of the new Merchants Association executive board, (left to right) Dale Charles, Advisor; Shelley Kramer, Vice President; Desmond Romeo, President; Joyce David, Secretary. Missing from the photo is Treasurer Jesse Gomez.

a one-time discount or special promotion whenever they present their passport to a participating business. This program will be in effect November 29 through December 31, 2014. Special holiday shopping events are planned for November 29 and December 13–14. The Shop Local campaign is in partnership with the

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HOUSING PRICES SHINE LIGHT ON A CHANGING PLG

by MILFORD PREWITT

Evidence of a changing Prospect Lefferts Gardens: A bartender who lives on a lower floor of an Ocean Avenue apartment building and works at one of Prospect Lefferts Gardens' newest dining venues recently told this story to a patron:

Awakened one August morning by male voices coming from the rear courtyard of her building, she looked out to see her super with three men in business suits. One of the suits said to the super, and she paraphrased: "How are we going to raise the rent on these people or your salary if you don't clean this place up [referring to the cluttered, debris-filled courtyard]?" Her rent had already risen \$200 and she feared another increase to come.

That same month, a stately four-story brick-and-limestone home on Midwood I sold for \$2.3 million, breaking PLG's all-time record for home resales.

Meanwhile, Douglas Elliman, the real estate brokerage, reports that the median price of a townhouse in "emerging neighborhoods" like PLG, Bed-Stuy and Crown Heights, is up 86 percent, to a whopping \$1.85 million, in annual comparisons that ended in September.

The *New York Times* played a role in the spring with a gushy, front-page article in its Real Estate section with a headline proclaiming, "Prospect-Lefferts Gardens Is 'On the Map.'"

Now comes new research on Brooklyn's home resale trends that draws an even straighter line between PLG's rising housing costs and its evolution as a hot neighborhood.

According to research by Halstead Property released in August, PLG was seventh on a list of 33 Brooklyn neighborhoods to experience the highest year-over-year percentage increase in home resale prices. Average home resales here rose 46 percent, to \$979,564, in half-year annual comparisons ending in June (see chart below).

The number of deals in PLG, or transactions, was also up on a six-month, year-to-year basis, to 41 from 35 a year ago—a 17 percent increase.

Of the top 10 neighborhoods ranked by percentage increase in average home resale price, PLG's rate exceeded Sea Gate's, at eighth place, up 37 percent, to \$595,279, on two transactions; Prospect Park South, up 35 percent, to \$852,500, on eight transactions; and Windsor Terrace, up 31 percent, to \$1,324,100, on 35 transactions.

Park Slope, Prospect Heights nor Crown Heights made the top 10.

Ditmas Park was 33rd on the list. It was the only neighborhood where average resale prices fell—down 15 percent, to \$963,464—on 14 deals, actually an increase of two.

Williamsburg North was the top leading gainer in home resale values, up 68 percent, to \$2.07 million.

Keith Mack, a Corcoran broker who has lived in PLG for nearly 20 years, says the increased numbers in home resales here is being driven in part by affluent buyers who now cannot find what they want in Brooklyn Heights or Park Slope.

"Some top neighborhoods are destinations where the prices were already high," he notes. "Take Brooklyn Heights: only eleven homes were for sale in the first half of 2014. But who is the buyer?"

Wall Street types, people who made money in the market, hedge fund investors. If they wish to live in Brooklyn Heights, and there are only eleven homes for sale, that area is going to have a lot of bidding wars. And the folks who lose those wars are going to look elsewhere. And Lefferts benefited from that.

"There is more of an upside when you purchase for \$2.3 million in an up-and-coming neighborhood than when you purchase at the top of the market for \$7 million in a destination."

The *Times* article and other media's reportage about the changes here are also fueling newcomer interest, Mack believes.

"Those articles lend a lot of credence to what real estate agents tell their clients when we are promoting Lefferts," he explains. "It's hard for any neighborhood in Brooklyn to compete with Lefferts on transportation. And the biggest assets are Prospect Park, the Zoo and the Botanic Gardens. Not too mention that the people who live here are friendly and good neighbors."



This brick-and-limestone on Midwood I sold for \$2.3 million in August.

Milford Prewitt

Residential Sales*

	AVERAGE PRICE			NUMBER OF SALES		
	First Half 2013	First Half 2014	Change	1st Half '13	1st Half '14	Change
Williamsburg North	\$ 1,236,556	\$ 2,073,667	68%	9	15	67%
Manhattan Beach	738,458	1,170,055	58%	12	19	58%
Carroll Gardens	1,743,147	2,684,825	54%	17	29	71%
Brooklyn Heights	3,802,500	5,763,182	52%	6	11	83%
Columbia St./Waterfront Dist.	1,122,500	1,648,200	47%	2	10	400%
Prospect Lefferts Gardens	668,964	979,564	46%	35	41	17%
Sea Gate	435,250	595,279	37%	2	14	600%
Prospect Park South	631,000	852,500	35%	3	8	167%
Bushwick	429,262	572,059	33%	203	226	11%
Windsor Terrace	1,011,118	1,324,100	31%	38	35	-8%

* Ranked by percentage increase in average sale price. Source: Gregory Hym, chief economist, Halstead Property, LLC

Urban Planner Warns: Neighborhood Unity is Paramount in Rezoning

by Milford Prewitt

Vastly outnumbered, the 300 Spartans of ancient times fought the good fight, beating the mighty Persian army in all of their battles until they were ultimately annihilated thanks to a traitor.

Brooklyn neighborhoods that want to change their zoning laws have a lot in common with those warriors. Despite being outpowered politically and financially, community groups will win a few battles in the form of injunctions, fines, and restraining orders and

get empathetic media attention.

But in the end "big money developers and their political cronies will get what they want," said Hunter College urban planning professor Tom Angotti.

But it is not a hopeless fight if residents of a community unify and organize in sufficient numbers to send a signal to City Hall and local politicians, he argued.

"You've got to try everything when it comes to pushing an alternative zoning proposal," Angotti lectured. "But

we know that one sure-fire move for winning a new rezoning plan is through politics. If your local elected officials want it, they'll get City Hall's attention because it wants to give the local representatives something, which means City Hall gets something in return.

"So the more you unify and organize, the more power a community exerts, the less power the City Planning Department has because they take their orders from City Hall."

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ECHO: How long have you lived here and how did you discover the neighborhood?

SCOTT: We've been on Maple Street for 11 years. I knew about the neighborhood because we had some friends who lived on Midwood Street who we visited with some frequency. I loved it then and thought this would be the perfect neighborhood for us.

What made you say that?

We were living in a Park Slope apartment with two small kids and a dog and we wanted more room for them. It was a nice place and a great neighborhood, but we wanted to find a house somewhere where we had friends and started looking for a house here. Housing here was so affordable.

What do you like about living here?

I don't like it. I love it! I like walking and biking to the park. I've always liked the mixture of people and the families here. I like that my neighbors and friends come from such interesting backgrounds and are doing interesting kinds of work. There're just creative people all around. Also, I like how pretty this neighborhood is. I think some of the most beautiful blocks in the city are here. Also, there's such a feeling of peace and quiet here.

How long have you been a critic at the Times?

My first day was January 1, 2000.

How'd you get your start there?

Like most people in journalism, my career was shaped by a series of accidents. I started out as a freelance book reviewer and I worked on the staffs of various magazines. I went to graduate school for English and American Literature thinking I'd become an academic. But I was always interested in criticism and branched out to journalism, reviewing books and television. Then I wrote a piece for Slate.com about Martin Scorsese. It was the first piece I had written for them, but some editors at the *Times* saw it and plucked me out of nowhere. It just so happens that the *Times* was looking for movie reviewers.



Do you recall your first movie review for the Times?

Absolutely. *My Dog Skip*. It was the first movie I was assigned and it has a special place in my heart: a kids' movie about a kid and his dog. Turned out that January is really a slow time of the year for movie releases as nothing important comes out then and all the nominated movies are already out. Yet, I probably revised it a dozen times or more before I filed it.

Speaking of childhood, what was your favorite movie as a kid?

The Sting. I probably saw it when I was 8. It was hard to follow and a lot of it went over my head, but I was so excited by it and its complicated plot. But I really loved it. I also loved Woody Allen's early movies as a kid. *Take The Money And Run* and *Sleepers* especially.

How many movies would you say you see in a day? A week? A month?

It varies from week to week. But averages about five to six movies, 300 in a year. Fall is the busiest season by far. September to December is when the Oscar movies come out. Summer is less busy because the blockbusters tend to crowd out the competition. The busiest months are probably April, May, September and October. Christmas is a nightmare.

Times' Movie Critic A.O. Scott Gives Life in Lefferts Four Stars

Echo Interview by MILFORD PREWITT

Remember your college counselor's last piece of advice before graduating: "Find something you love to do and you'll never work a day in your life." A.O. Scott could be the poster boy for that piece of wisdom. Literate, introspective, and a superb wordsmith, Scott is one of the two chief movie critics for the *New York Times*. (The other is Manohla Dargis.) But more than having a dream job, Scott says he loves his young family and the life they share on Maple I. Along with wife Justine Henning, a teacher and private tutor, the rest of the Scott clan includes son, Ezra, 18 and daughter, Carmen, 15.

Do you ever fear burning out?

If I ever got to the point where I wasn't excited about going to the movies; if I thought that as an art form movies were in decline; if I thought that all the great movies have already been made, that would be a sign that it's time to give this up. I think of my late friend Roger Ebert whose enthusiasm never diminished over 50 years. He sat down at every new movie with the thought that this could be special, that I might see something wonderful.

What's your favorite movie for sheer entertainment?

The Godfather I and II. I never get tired of watching it and anytime I'm channel surfing and it pops up on cable, I will stop and watch. I never get bored watching it. But I have to say a close second would be *Singing In The Rain*. It is one of the most purely entertaining movies ever made.

What would you say is the best-scripted movie?

Sullivan's Travels. The first five minutes of that movie are awesome and have to be some of the best dialog and writing. I think a lot of the early Hollywood comedy classics are also well written. [The website IMDb says *Sullivan's Travels*, released in 1941, is about a director of escapist films who travels the country as a hobo to learn about life.]

What would you say is the best-casted movie?

Again, you got to go back to *The Godfather*.

One reads a lot about Hollywood's days being numbered. That with Netflix making its own movies, the popularity of television and cable serial dramas and comedies, and this summer being one of the worst ever at the box office, what's the future of the movie business?

It's an industry and an art form that is always evolving. For more than 100 years, people have been buying a ticket, to go into a theater, to see a movie. And at every stage where technology changed the business, there were critics predicting the extinction of the business. When sound was added in the 1920s, that was going to kill it. Color was going to kill it. Television was going to kill it. VCRs were going to kill it. Now you don't even have to go to a theater to watch a movie; the movies come to you. There is video-on-demand. There's streaming video, YouTube, Hulu, Netflix. One thing is true: we are in the middle of a big shift thanks to digital technology. Digital has overtaken film and that reduces the cost of movie making. The barriers to entry are not as high. Digital technology has changed the way we make and watch a movie. Of the 30 films on the main slate of this year's New York Film Festival, only one is being projected from a film print. All the others are digital.

Is that good or bad?

Well, with a digital camera and laptop, you can make a movie. But there is a loss in terms of the aesthetic quality when compared to film, the range of colors and the light density. Some of that has been lost even though the craft elements have been simplified and cheapened. I don't want to generalize if it is better or worse, but in any evolving art form there is progress and there is loss and I think we will look back one day and see that films were so much more beautiful than we realized.

As a critic, are your reviews intended to help moviemakers make a better product or are you offering advice to consumers?

The critic is always on the side of the audience and what I'm trying to do is get a conversation going. Every now and then, I get a letter from someone in the industry saying my review helped them make money. But that's not what I'm about. I put it out there for people to consume and enjoy.

What's your writing process?

I tend to procrastinate—to think, research, muse—until deadline gives me no choice but to write, and then I let it all out in one painstakingly composed draft.

Was there a review you had trouble composing, where it just wasn't coming together?

White Ribbon by Michael Haneke. While I was impressed with the filmmaking craft, I objected strongly to the themes and ideas. So I both admired and detested it, which is a hard kind of ambivalence to convey to readers. I didn't want them to avoid seeing it—I really thought they should—but I also wanted them to hate it. [A 2009 German-made, black-and-white, mystery-suspense movie, IMDB says *White Ribbon* deals with child abuse and its cover-up in a rural German village right before WWI.]

Anyone ever tell you that you have a vague resemblance to the actor Paul Giamatti (who used to live on Chester Court)?

Yes. I'm never sure if it is a compliment.

Rutland Road Architect Designs Novel Housing Project at Kings County Hospital

by JANE VON MEHREN ■ Rutland I's John Woelfling likes using mass transit to move between the sites of buildings he is designing. John, a partner at Dattner Architects in Manhattan, is very busy working on housing: senior housing in Riverdale; supportive housing in the Bronx; and various affordable housing projects in Brooklyn.

"It is incredibly rewarding to meet someone and to know that I have made a difference in that person's life because of what I do," he says of his work.

Now he is embarking on a housing project that won't require him to take mass transit. In fact, he can walk to work, as the project is literally a few blocks away.

As first reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, Dattner Architects is designing an affordable residential building on Kings County Hospital's campus. The exact site is on Winthrop Street where a long-abandoned building once housed a psychiatric ward. That building is in the process of being torn down to make way for what will be known as CAMBA Gardens II, named after the Church Avenue Merchants' Business Association, the developers of the project.

It will provide affordable apartments for 293 families. CAMBA will also provide social services designed for the residents. The other partners include the New York Health and Hospitals Corporation, which owns the land, and various city and federal agencies that are providing capital dollars for the construction of the \$96 million building as well as subsidies to operate it.

John and his colleagues looked at trying to save the original building, but it proved too difficult to retrofit the floor plan. There was also its legacy in the neighborhood: the psychiatric wing had once housed Son of Sam, for example.

"It's a big, difficult job to take that building down, but it's really the right way to redevelop the site," John says. "It permitted us a lot more flexibility; we get a lot more units of housing onto the site."

When it opens in 2016 the building will feature an inner courtyard and stepped roofs, including one on the upper level for the use of the residents. "We have a really interesting architectural design that respects the zoning, respects the context of the neighborhood—the lower scale residential to the east, the larger institutional scale to the west."

The team very much wanted the design to be environmentally responsible and even at the competition stage John says, "we did think about sustainable design—and how to make it really integral into the building."

The new building's orientation and large windows take advantage of its exposure to partially heat the building in winter, while solar shades cool it off during summer.

Urban architecture is a far cry from John's childhood in rural Connecticut and Pennsylvania.

When he came to New York in 1992 with a BA in architecture from Virginia Tech, the city was a shock. "I was a complete fish out of water," he recalls of his first few weeks here.

He landed a job at Rafael Vinoly Architects, in the architectural model shop, where he used the carpentry skills that would be essential once he moved to PLG. A few months later, he began his architectural career at the firm Architecture & Furniture. There he met Roberta, now his wife and a current LMA board member.

After a short stint at a corporate firm, John joined Dattner Architects in 1997, becoming a partner in 2003.

MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

In 1999, it came time for the Woelflings to buy a home.

"Both Roberta and I knew that we wanted to buy a place that we could put our own imprint on."

And for John, who grew up watching his father and uncles renovate and build around their own homes, it was also very much a family tradition.

Like many Manor residents, they had never heard of it before, but unlike most, they found their house on the first and only day of house hunting.

Disappointed in houses in Park Slope and Windsor Terrace, their broker mentioned a fixer-upper on the other side of the Park. They were intrigued. Although the owner was not home, they drove over to check out the house on Rutland I.

Its Tudor details were painted mint julep and kelly green, which "stuck out as a unique thing on this unique block," and it felt right. They came back the next day and saw the inside—blue shag carpeting, mirrored walls and flake board paneling—and loved it. Within a day, their offer had been accepted.

The couple spent the next three years renovating. While they hired specialists to work on the windows, roof, boiler, oil tank and custom woodworking, they did everything else themselves. "We have the scar tissue to prove it," John says.

Their house has been one of the featured must-sees on the annual Prospect Lefferts Gardens House & Garden Tour in the past. Today they share the home with 11-year-old twin daughters, Daisy and Sophie, and six-year-old son, Walker.

Dattner Architects has a foundation in civic architecture. "Our work is really about taking our city and improving it, as best we can," John remarked about the firm.

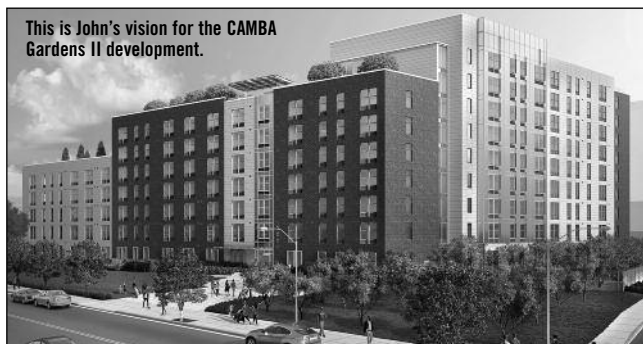
That mission is a key reason John went to the firm in the first place. Building in the city is extremely challenging and John has learned how to make the best of limited budgets, tight site constraints, challenging technical and regulatory issues. The clients he works for include government agencies, not-for-profits, supportive housing developers, and institutions such as the New York Public Library, YMCA, and the New York City School Construction Authority.

Given his work, John has a unique perspective on the controversial residential tower going up at 626 Flatbush Avenue: "It's complicated to build anything in New York City and the designers that are working on the higher rise buildings are doing the same thing, playing by the same rules [as I am]....I think if you are going to play by the rules that's ok. It's hard enough to get anything built. But to then try and change the rules after someone has gone through and taken the right steps and done what I think is the right course of action, I think it's unfair to do that."

It's not that he isn't sympathetic to some of the issues that have been raised about the building, but he notes: "if you want to change the rules, then change the rules by getting together a grass-roots movement and having the zoning primer, and get everyone educated."

But as he points out, limiting density goes against Mayor de Blasio's goals for affordable housing. "He's got some pretty high aspirations—200,000 units in the next 10 years—I wish us all luck in trying to achieve it."

Jane von Mehren is a literary agent at Zachary Shuster Harmsworth and a freelance editor and writer at Jane von Mehren Associates. She has lived on Rutland Road with her husband and son for 14 years.



This is John's vision for the CAMBA Gardens II development.

PLG's Dining Scene, Not Yet a Full Plate, Is No Longer a Bare Cupboard

In a neighborhood where the restaurant scene and nightlife were, until recently, only slightly more lively than Green-Wood Cemetery's, Prospect Lefferts Gardens is coming alive with new eating places and music options. And the morning isn't doing too bad, either. Gentrification may have its share of haters in PLG, but one of the positive outcomes is that it encourages local entrepreneurs and restaurateurs to risk capturing some of that new money with new joints in which to drink and eat out and enjoy live music. The coffee shop/bakery/breakfast/brunch café scene is the most prolific menu category so far, with four relatively new establishments. But a couple of hot bars and grills are also in the mix. Here are some mini-profiles of the new spots:

All photos for this story by Milford Prewitt.



Blessings co-owner Will Francis (left) with chef, Subashish



Cinnamon Girl is becoming known for its vegan options.



The exterior of the new gastro-pub, Midwood Flats, evokes a Brooklyn of an earlier era.

Blessings Café

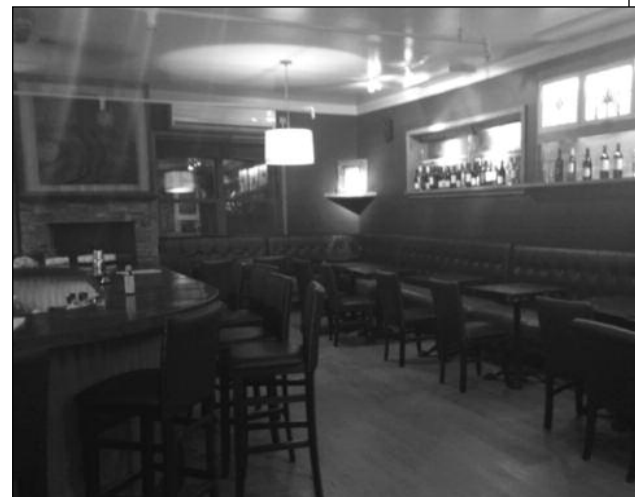
663 FLATBUSH AVE. AT HAWTHORNE AVE.

Opened this past spring by the husband-and-wife team, Will Francis (an herbalist) and Liliana Bonafini (an actress), Blessings is a roomy coffee shop and bakery with a busy breakfast and brunch trade. It boasts an outdoor dining section and a trained chef, Subashish, who comes up with a beguiling selection of sandwiches, soups and salads. It seats about 30 people indoors.

Bluebird

504 FLATBUSH AVE. AT LEFFERTS AVE.

Jim Mamary, the same owner of LPT on Lincoln Rd. and a half-dozen other popular restaurants around Brooklyn, has brought his talent for unit location and rustic-design-on-a-budget to Bluebird. It opened in late September in a 2,000-square-foot space that had previously been an illegal nightclub. It's hard to sum up the menu at this writing, but the establishment, still in its soft-opening phase, is shaping up to become a sports-themed American Grill and has seasoned chefs at the helm. A sure-fire hit on the still-evolving menu promises to be the seven-hour grilled beef brisket, prepared daily on the premises outdoors regardless of the weather. The grill is part of the outdoor dining space: a large, 40-seat, terrace-like plateau that overlooks the Prospect Park subway stop and is bordered by an old stone parapet that is not only cool to look at, but it will keep guests from falling on the tracks, some 30 feet below. Live music, private parties and karaoke will be offered in a large basement space in the coming weeks. Upfront on the first floor, more private party space will be available with a pool table and flat-screen TVs.



The inviting interior of Jim Mamary's new establishment, Bluebird.

Cinnamon Girl

583 FLATBUSH AVE. NEAR MIDWOOD ST.

Debuting this past summer, Cinnamon Girl is part of a three-unit chain that's based in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The coffee, tea and bakery chain also features a commissary and boasts that outside of the bagels, everything else on the menu (minus packaged goods)—about 70 percent of the menu—is prepared fresh every day. Open until 9 p.m. most nights, Cinnamon Girl joins a growing list of restaurants competing for the breakfast and fresh-baked goods segment with great coffee and pleasant customer service.

Gratitude Café

499 ROGERS AVE. AT MIDWOOD ST.

The parents of three children, the husband-and-wife team Annalisa Riordan and Richard Otto—both of whom worked for years as waiters—vowed that if they ever opened a restaurant, it would be kid-friendly and accommodating. "I know what it is like lugging kids around when you want to eat out," Annalisa said. "So we wanted to open a place that was totally kid-friendly." To that end, Gratitude features a dedicated kids space and even piano and art lessons for youngsters four to six years old. Boasting an organic, locally harvested menu (to the extent that is possible), Gratitude has been open since December and owes a lot of its origin to Kickstarter, the Internet investment pool where strangers invest in start-ups they believe in.



Annalisa Riordan co-owns the new Gratitude coffee shop with her husband, Richard Otto. The couple has lived on Midwood 3 since 2008.

Midwood Flats

569 FLATBUSH AVE. AT MIDWOOD ST.

Since opening at the end of September, Midwood Flats has been as hot as Georgia asphalt on a scorching summer afternoon. Standing-room-only crowds, virtually until its 2 a.m. closing, Midwood Flats is high evidence of the pent-up desire for something to do in the evening and early morning in PLG. (It stays open until 4 a.m. on weekend nights.) The creation of lifelong friends and restaurant developers Kal Narvilas and Chad Casey (whose name many will recall as the co-owner of Tugboat Tea Co.), Midwood Flats is a gastro-pub, a European-style beer-and-spirits emporium with unusual sandwiches, soups and salads. The centerpiece dinner option is the lobster roll. The biggest complaint so far: "I live in Patio Gardens, right across the street, and can't even get in the place."

PLG Arts/Inkwell Café

408 ROGERS AVE AT STERLING ST.

PLG Arts long jazz collaboration continues this fall and winter. But the group is also scheduling classical recitals in private homes. See the story on page 4 for more information.

LPT Staff and Patrons Raise Donations to Bury Murdered Cook

Staff and loyal customers of the Lincoln Park Tavern raised more than \$3,500 to cover burial costs and help the family of Juan Carlos Luna-Juarez, an LPT cook who was stabbed to death on September 7 during a botched robbery.

Juan Carlos, 23, and his brother, Angel, 24, missed the last bus after closing the restaurant and were walking to their Bedford-Stuyvesant home when they were attacked by a gang of young men. Five assailants were charged with murder, robbery and weapons possession.

An ongoing fundraising campaign to help Angel, who spent several days in the hospital with stab wounds and cannot work while recovering, and the family, has been set up at www.juanfund.com.

Halloween is always a big event in Prospect Park. This year the annual scarefest will feature a carnival for kids, a food truck rally, haunted carousel rides, and the big Haunted Halloween Walk on Lookout Hill. Events will be held Saturday and Sunday, October 25–26. For the complete schedule go to: www.prospectpark.org/calendar/event/halloween-14



With No Opponent, Jesse Hamilton Guaranteed to Succeed Eric Adams to 20th District State Senate Seat

After an 11-month vacancy in the 20th District State Senate seat formerly occupied by current Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, Jesse Hamilton, a lawyer, community leader and collaborator of Adams's is guaranteed to succeed him.

Mr. Hamilton beat fellow lawyer and former school administrator Rubain Dorancy in an ugly and bitter primary election campaign in which both men tried to get the other candidate kicked off the ballot.

Hamilton won with 9,090 votes to Dorancy's 4,189. He will run unopposed in the general election as there is no Republican challenger slated to run.

Urban Planner: Unity is Paramount in Rezoning

(continued from page 1) An internationally-recognized scholar who brings a progressive, community-first approach to urban planning, author of several academic and lay books on the topic and a former government planner for New York City, Angotti led a workshop at Tafari Café back in August on ways to rezone building codes.

About 70 people attended the meeting, most of them members of community groups or lay citizens who are outraged by the height of the 23-story residential tower going up at 626 Flatbush and who want to bring contextual zoning to Prospect Lefferts Gardens.

Contextual zoning limits the heights of new buildings, thereby preserving the architectural heritage of low-rise communities. The law exists in every neighborhood bordering Prospect Park except PLG.

"But to make all that happen, you got to unify, you got to organize and you got to put pressure on your local elected officials," Angotti coached.

The battle lines have extended to PLG's northern edge in recent weeks where activists and community groups are protesting plans to upzone Empire Boulevard from Flatbush to Nostrand Avenues. They fear that if Empire Boulevard is upzoned, it will accelerate gentrification, displace low-income families, increase congestion and squeeze the energy and sewerage grid.

The dispute reached such frenzy at a recent Community Board 9 meeting that what was thought to be the board's rescinding of their previous support for a study to rezone Empire Boulevard is in doubt after Borough President Eric Adams called the vote "invalid." Adams, who supports Mayor de Blasio's ambitious plans to build or preserve as many as 200,000 affordable housing units in the next 10 years, supports residential tower projects as long as they provide a percentage of homes for low-income families.

At times during the workshop, Angotti sounded like a government whistle-blower with a new identity in the Witness Protection Program appearing on a "60 Minutes" exposé, so virulent and candid were his attacks against his old employer, the Department of City Planning. In fact, Angotti alleged, that DCP was so in the pockets of developers and green-lighted so many projects that staffers came to refer to the agency as the "Department of Real Estate."

"They really don't have your interests at heart or community preservation as a goal," he charged.

He said the complex chain of review—where rezoning proposals can go through months, if not years, of CDC overviews, community board hearings, borough president approval, city council hearings and back again to CDC before the mayor weighs in—is designed to frustrate community groups and aid developers.

"You can be sure that no developer who intends to fight a rezoning proposal or who seeks a change in zoning codes are going to go through the expense and effort unless they know they will not get a veto," Angotti stated. "They want to have all of their ducks lined up....When Bloomberg was mayor, he reviewed 130 rezoning changes on behalf of developers. Know how many were turned down? Zero!"

He warned the audience that PLG has a lot of similarities with Williamsburg before that neighborhood was "discovered."

"There is a scam that DCP and the developers tell a neighborhood when they are ready to gentrify it," he said. "It's called the 'mixed-use scam' and they way it works is that we are going to build all of these mixed-use projects with affordable housing.

"But that scam has been disastrous in Williamsburg," he charged. "It has been totally transformed and gentrified and if you were economically fragile, Williamsburg is no longer your home because the scam is low-income folks can't live there."

Angotti urged people to take lessons from history, particularly how communities successfully fought planning czar Robert Moses 60 years ago when he campaigned to build a highway from the Hudson River to the East River, a plan that would have obliterated Greenwich Village, the West Village, the East Village, Soho and TriBeCa.

"Communities fought him and won," he said. "In the East Village, they deeded the buildings and the land to community land trusts so that nothing can be built there except low-income housing.

"It takes time and it takes patience, but once people get connected to the places they live, you've got to put in the time and the sweat and you can survive."

LMA Join's Blogger's Campaign To Refurbish Flatbush's Metal Trees

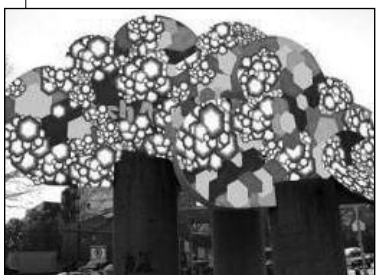
Longer than anyone can remember, those metal and concrete tree sculptures where Flatbush and Ocean Avenues merge with Empire Boulevard have been an eyesore of the highest order.

The first neighborhood landmark people see when traveling south on Flatbush into PLG, the corroding, neglected and chipped sculptures are hardly the "welcoming committee" they were intended to be when installed years ago.

Two years ago, Tim Thomas, the blogger of the popular QAT PARKSIDE, made it a personal crusade to transform the dilapidated structures. He took on the MTA and the DOT—

whose property the trees sit on—and sought financial support. The LMA was happy to make a sizable donation.

As a result, artist David Eppley and some local middle-schoolers who are helping him now have the financing to make over the trees with 1,500 brightly-colored vinyl hexagons. Work is expected to begin in the spring.



David Eppley's concept to transform the "trees" on Flatbush Ave. is gaining local financial support.

PLG Arts' Busy Fall Schedule Showcases Author Readings, Chamber Music, Inkwell Jazz Shows

by Rina Kleege

PLG Arts is like The Little Engine That Could: chugging along through the energy of its volunteer board of directors and other volunteers. The group promotes the arts, supports local artists, and builds community as it celebrates the vibrant creativity of the residents of Prospect Lefferts Gardens and surrounding Brooklyn neighborhoods.

This is the group whose posters you've seen around the neighborhood, advertising the ongoing jazz series at the Inkwell Jazz Comedy Club on Rogers Avenue, art shows at Tugboat Tea Company on Flatbush Avenue, and a membership drive party at the Dorsey Gallery on Rogers Avenue.

Since its founding in 2006, this local nonprofit group has increased the number of board members to eight and increased its general membership while embarking on an expanded event program. Initially, visual arts exhibits, jazz performances, and *Daydream*, a children's version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, were the major activities. Then Art Mart (the arts and crafts fair on Lincoln Road) and the pop-up Neighborhood Show (a visual arts exhibit with more than 3,000 visitors in four weeks) brought the group additional notice.

"PLG Arts is always on the lookout for new members and business supporters," says Hollis Headrick, co-president, "and we're also looking to expand our base of volunteers to help run our existing programs or propose new ones. We are very appreciative of our business supporters, who offer discounts to our members."

PLG Arts has expanded its roster of activities to include two new series: chamber music and literary readings, announced Rina Kleege, the other co-president of the group.

The next Meet-the-Author reading will feature Martha Southgate, a Brooklyn author of four books, including *Third Girl from the Left*, which is currently being adapted into a movie starring Kerry Washington and Viola Davis; and Darcey Steinke, PLG resident whose new novel, *Sister Golden Hair*, is being published this month. The reading is scheduled for October 30. The series is hosted at the Inkwell Jazz Comedy Café.

"I've always talked about getting involved in the neighborhood," says volunteer Mike Hudson, organizer of the series, "but for years it was mostly just that—me talking about it but not doing it.

Now, volunteering with PLG Arts has given me a chance to do something for the neighborhood and work with the folks who help make the PLG a great place to live."

"PLG is home to an amazing number of novelists, poets, editors, journalists and other people who treasure the written word. The Meet-the-Author series is a cool way to tap into that talent and enthusiasm," Hudson continues. "The first event was a big success. We drew a



PLG Arts presents the Brooklyn Guitar Quartet on October 26.

big crowd and people let us know they wanted more. So we're putting together events for the fall and winter."

"We welcome these readings at the Inkwell," beams PLG Arts Treasurer Byron McCray and owner of the club. "They bring in a completely new crowd that doesn't usually attend our regular jazz and comedy nights, and we are happy to support the arts."

The next chamber music concert will be held October 26 featuring the Brooklyn Guitar Quartet in a PLG home (check the website for details: www.plgarts.org).

"The Chamber Music Series brings classical music to our area in a way that's accessible to all residents, thanks to the generosity of PLG homeowners who host the concerts," says volunteer Anne Dearth, organizer of the series, which debuted in the spring of 2014. "The concerts reflect the varied music scene in New York City, with diverse performers playing traditional classical music and new works."

Two jazz nights at the Inkwell are also scheduled in October, and PLG Arts' visual arts exhibits continue at Tugboat, with "Repre: International Representational Painters" opening on November 1. "Keep your shoes on," Kleege cautions, "so you're ready to go out throughout the fall!"

For more information about PLG Arts programs and volunteer opportunities, visit www.plgarts.org.



Martha Southgate



Darcey Steinke

This Year's 'Greenest Block' Top Honor Slips Past PLG

Three of the past four years, a block in PLG has won the "Greenest Block in Brooklyn" award, a coveted borough-wide honor that recognizes neighbors whose green thumbs are without peer in gardening, landscaping and related streetscapes. GreenBridge, the horticulture and environmental stewardship program of the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, awarded Brooklyn's Greenest Block of 2014 to a block of Macon Street in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

But PLG still made a strong showing. Lincoln Road II—a two-time top winner and the block to beat in 2015—came in third place. Last year, Sterling Street I took the top prize.



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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:

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Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ + \$ _____ = \$ _____
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Dues cover January through December 2014. Make checks payable to Lefferts Manor Association. Send payment and form to: P.O. Box 250-640 / Brooklyn, NY 11225 or drop in the mail slot at 214 Rutland Rd., 163 Rutland Rd. or 25 Maple St.

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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Melvin Hunter 718-282-8403

www.leffertsmenor.org

LEFFERTS MANOR ECHO
Milford Prewitt, Editor ... 718-287-3392
milfordprewitt@aol.com
Ken Diamond, Designer, artpatrol@aol.com
Dennis Kelley, Webmaster,
LeffertsSupport@gmail.com