Lefferts Manor ECHO
{ FALL 2024 }

Parapet Inspections, What?

By Roberta Woelfling

A flyer delivered to Lefferts Manor residents in August mandating "parapet inspections" generated anxiety and discussion among neighbors, including LMA board members. To clarify and correct information presented on this flyer, LMA did some research and contacted the Office of Community Engagement & Programming as well as the Structural Engineering Compliance division at the NYC Department of Buildings (DOB). Here's what we learned:

Beginning January 1, 2024, every building owner must have an observation of the parapet on their building performed in accordance with the requirements of the New York City Administrative Code. This requirement applies to all buildings with parapets fronting the "public right-of-way," regardless of height, with the exception of detached 1 or 2-family homes and building with a fence or barrier preventing access to an exterior wall. The observation must include close-up inspections of the the entire parapet, which can be conducted from a fire escape or roof.

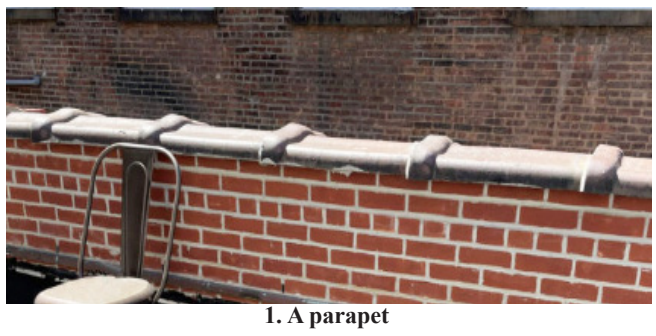
What exactly is a parapet? The city defines a parapet (1) as the part of any wall entirely above the roof line. It's typically found in flat-roof construction, and regardless of whether it's on the front, side or rear of the house, it is subject to an inspection if it faces the public right of way.

What is considered the public right of way? The parapet is considered to be part of the public right of way if a member of the public who is not associated with the property can freely walk up to the facade of the building, regardless of whether or not the exterior wall is on private property. Buildings with a continuous barrier within a perpendicular distance from the exterior wall that is equal or less than half the height of the exterior wall must be inspected. A front stoop is considered in the public right of way, whereas a driveway behind a gate is not.

Do I have a parapet, or just a cornice? A cornice (2), a common feature of Lefferts Manor brownstones, is a projecting horizontal assembly that crowns a wall. A cornice is not the same feature as a parapet, and thus is not subject to the same inspection regulations. However, a cornice can be mounted to a parapet wall (3), in which case the regulations would apply. Thankfully most of the cornices in our neighborhood do not fall into this category.

What next? If you believe you have a parapet that qualifies for the parapet inspection, you should reach out to a professional who is competent to inspect parapets, such as a bricklayer, building superintendent, handyman, mason or an architect, engineer or inspector working for a New York State-authorized insurance company.

Keep in mind that you do not have to send these observation reports to the DOB. Instead, homeowners must maintain the reports for at least 6 years and make the reports available to the DOB upon request. Additionally, there is no civil penalty for failure to comply, according to a DOB commissioner of enforcement, but in the event of an incident, the building owner would be expected to produce the report and face a violation should they not have one.



1. A parapet

2. Cornices

3. A parapet (brick) over a cornice (white)

Photos: DOB/Martin Friedman/Roberta Woelfling

All Politics of New Development Is Local

By Suki Cheong

Over the last decade, headlines about rezoning in our neighborhood and the battles between developers and community entities abound. There has been news coverage over a new luxury tower construction on Flatbush Avenue, a rezoning struggle on Fenimore Street, and perhaps the most high-profile of these stories: the fight between the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and a developer who initially sought to build two 39-story towers adjacent to the green space, a fight that seemingly came to an end in November, as the developer changed course on the project.

If you haven't been following these issues closely over the last ten years, you might be wondering: "What's all this about?" "Why are all these big changes happening in our community?" "Do I have a say?" What all these headlines have in common is they concern land use issues. The legal process for government to make changes to land use is called ULURP – short for Uniform Land Use Review Procedure. It begins with community boards: local representative bodies consisting of up to 50 volunteer members appointed by the borough presidents and local council members. Community boards, beginning with their land use committees, cast advisory votes on land use and ULURP matters, among other local issues. Next, the borough president in the affected borough writes an advisory recommendation. Then the city planning commission, consisting of 13 salaried members appointed by the mayor, borough presidents and the public advocate vote on the ULURP application. Their recommendation is then passed to the City Council, consisting of 51 elected members who cast a binding vote on land use applications. Finally, the Mayor has the right to veto a council vote, which rarely happens.

Community boards, as we know them today, were formed in the 1960s in response to calls for more representative local democracy. Robert Moses was at the height of his power as chair of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, which he used to push urban renewal and highway construction plans without input from the residents of affected neighborhoods. The need for this representation remains clear, particularly as paid lobbying activity has grown with the city's economy to eclipse the voices of concerned citizens. Lefferts Manor is represented by Community Board 9, which stretches from Ocean Avenue in the west to Utica Avenue in the east, Clarkson Avenue in the south to Eastern Parkway in the north.

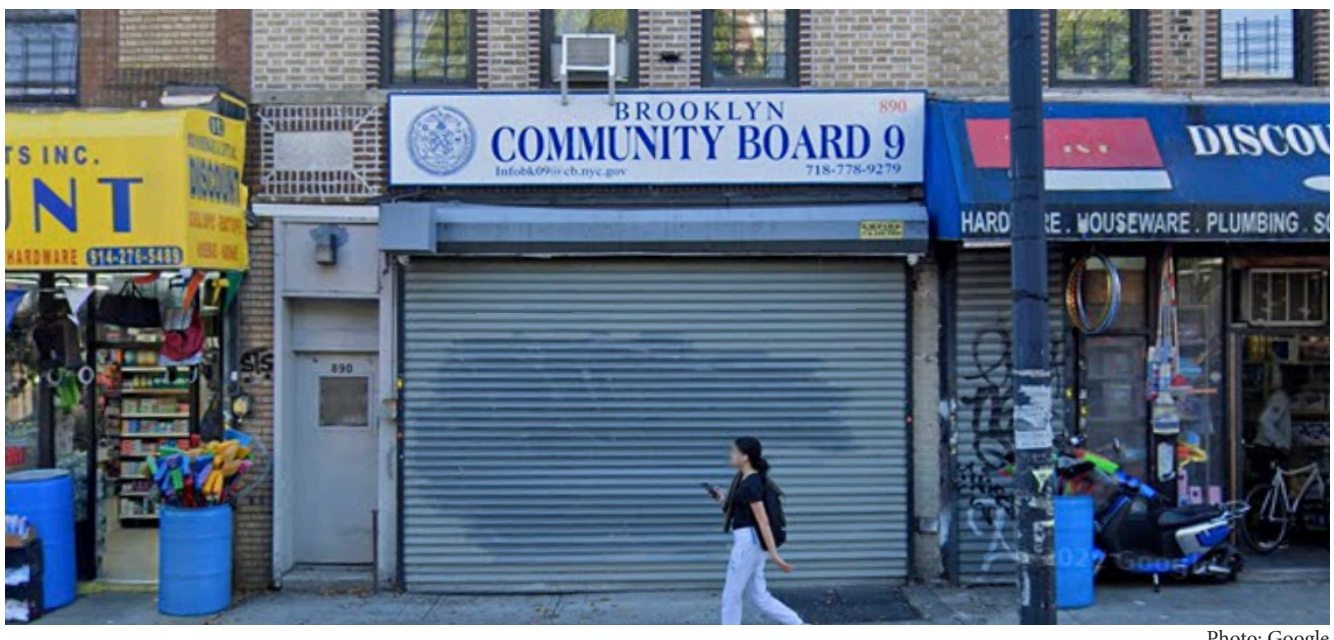


Photo: Google

However community board land use committees don't just vote on individual applications for zoning changes on certain sites or blocks, whether initiated by developers or community groups. They also make pro-active recommendations on land use planning in their districts. The zoning resolution outlines the need to plan for sufficient housing, commercial space and community facility space, as well as to protect residents and businesses from hazardous or objectionable influences, to protect the character of neighborhoods through limits on height and density, to provide for light and air, and to protect city tax revenues.

How does a land use committee like Community Board 9 make determinations about these factors? Primarily, the board looks to hear from the public during designated public hearings or monthly committee meetings. They also look at demographic data from the census, the Department of City Planning and other city agencies on population trends, income and demographic trends, housing vacancy rates, numbers of units being built etc.

Who should join community boards? Anyone who is active in other community groups where they regularly hear from their neighbors about needs and concerns, is observant of their surroundings and is not afraid to speak up can make a valuable contribution at community board meetings or serving on committees. Knowledge of zoning, historic preservation and government agencies and programs is useful, but also graphic design, coding, accounting, legal, writing, social media and finance. But don't let a lack of specialized knowledge deter you from participating in your local community board or public hearings when you have concerns about your quality of life or government proposals. Common sense is often the best antidote to nonsense.

Community Board 9's land use committee meets once a month at the board offices at 890 Nostrand Avenue. Other committees including transportation, youth and education, and public safety also meet monthly. CB9 looks forward to seeing more of its neighbors at community board meetings!

Suki Cheong is chair of Community Board 9's Land Use Commitee

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This Fall, Don't Clean Up Your Garden

By Jackie Harrison

This fall, the best thing you can do for your garden and street trees is to leave the leaves. Warmer and less snowy winters are now the norm for us. To help our gardens and street trees cope with these changes we need to be sure their root systems have winter protection. This essential protection is provided for free by the gardens and trees themselves, by means of fallen leaves.

The term 'leaf litter' is confusing, because leaves should not be thought of as litter at all! Fallen leaves suppress weeds while naturally fertilizing the soil as they break down. The fallen leaves create healthy soil and protection for the plants, while also providing critical habitat for beneficial insects. Here in PLG those looking for winter protection among the fallen leaves includes the swallowtail butterfly, fritillary butterfly, Isabella tiger moths, Polyphemus moth and luna Moths. They spend winter in the leaves in chrysalids, cocoons or as caterpillars. Native bees, lady beetles, fireflies (to name a few) also utilize the leaf layer and burrow down into the top few inches of soil for winter protection.

None of these benefits are possible with exposed topsoil. Without a protective covering, soil can be leached of nutrients from the sun, is more susceptible to erosion times of heavy rain, and does not offer plants and trees a protection layer to lock in moisture and help stabilize temperature for their root systems. If you just do not like the look of the leaves in your garden or tree, be sure to add a layer of compost and/or mulch.

You can have too much of a good thing. Leaf layers over 3 inches risk choking plant material in garden beds and especially street trees. Once the leaf layer gets about 3 inches high it's best to relocate the remaining leaves to another garden bed or your NYC compost bin. Try to keep a 1-inch buffer and don't pile material against large tree trunks. Trees like to have their roots protected but their trunks kept clear. Leave your leaves!

Jackie Harrison is a co-founder of Harrison Green, a Brooklyn-based landscape design firm, and resident of Lincoln II

105 Years Later, LMA Mission Hasn't Changed

By Melissa Smith

Founded in 1919, the Lefferts Manor Association is a neighborhood homeowner's organization that was created to maintain and improve its historic neighborhood, preserve its one-family covenant, and bring neighbors and community together.

More than 100 years later, this mission has not changed. While LMA continues to serve the core blocks within Lefferts Manor, it also now reaches deeper into the surrounding areas of Prospect Lefferts Gardens and Flatbush, partnering with like-minded people and groups for the betterment of life in this coveted enclave of Brooklyn.

As a volunteer organization, LMA provides services and hosts events to benefit local residents, and nearby neighbors. The volunteer Board of Directors meets monthly, and is dedicated to conducting such services as:

- Arranging periodic cleanups to help keep our neighborhood graffiti and litter-free
- Attending local precinct and community board meetings to keep on the pulse of security and community concerns and issues
- Corresponding with local elected officials on a regular basis to maintain a two-way line of communication so each is readily available to offer support
- Organizing the annual house tour as a celebration of the beauty of the houses of Lefferts Manor and greater PLG area and to showcase our neighborhood to others
- Beautifying and unifying our blocks by planting flowers in the spring on every block, and distributing seasonal holiday wreaths to members in December
- Partnering with other involved and active groups in the neighborhood to support their missions
- Hosting annual meetings, social and cultural events to keep all informed while bringing people together
- Preserving and documenting the history and development of this unique area of Brooklyn

For more information about our organization, or to become a member, please reach us at LeffertsManorAssoc@gmail.com or join our Facebook page @LeffertsManor

Membership & Wreaths

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You will get a free hand-delivered holiday wreath this year with payment of your 2024 dues. Registration is due no later than Tuesday, December 2nd to be guaranteed a wreath. Dues cover January through December.

$25 per household, $15 for seniors. Extra wreaths are $12.

HOW TO ORDER MEMBERSHIPS?

1. Order online with credit card. This is the preferred method. There is a $1 service fee. Go to leffertsmanor.org and click on membership link on right side. Then hit the SHOP NOW button.

2. If unable to pay online, mail or drop off dues to 50 Maple with name and address noted. Cash accepted or check made payable to Lefferts Manor Association.

Help us attach bows and distribute wreaths.

Meet your neighbors at 10am Saturday, December 7th in the driveway at 50 Maple for a fun holiday work party. Rain date is Sunday, December 8th. Come join us!

Remembering: Alisa Greene-Lunn

By Doris Greene

Alisa Greene-Lunn passed away at her home at 62 Rutland Road on August 15, 2023 at 62 years of age from pancreatic cancer. She was married to Patrick Lunn Sr., and they were the parents of three sons: Patrick Jr., Michael and Noah. The family moved to Prospect Lefferts Garden in April 1997 where they raised their three sons who have now grown into fine young men. Alisa knew most of her neighbors on the block and was loved by all who were saddened by her sudden passing. Alisa was employed at N.Y. Methodist Hospital in Park Slope for over 31 years as an registered nurse and case manager. She retired in June 2023 after her diagnosis. She is survived by her husband, three sons, her mother Doris Greene, her sister, nephew and niece and many other relatives and friends including her beloved N.Y. Methodist family. We love and miss her so much.

After 5-Year Hiatus, House Tour Returns to Prospect Lefferts Gardens

By Roberta Woelfling

Organizers were unsure about what to expect for PLG's 50th house tour as it had been five years since the last one. On top of this, Park Slope's tour moved from their long-standing mid-May date to the same Sunday as ours. Luckily June 2nd was a lovely day (perhaps a tad too warm), and folks must have been craving such an event because just under 450 tour goers made the rounds! It was very heartening to see the lines at the check-in table on Lincoln Road and the steady stream of people strolling the sidewalks moving from house to house. For reference, attendance varies year-to-year, but the range is 350-550 so we were right in the middle. Not bad considering we had the added competition! (FYI, to speed up & facilitate check-ins, an additional table will be added next year!)

There were eight amazing houses on tour, and we can't thank the homeowners enough for being willing to clean and open up their homes! The reports from tour goers were glowing... lots of oohs and ahs, so we hope it was a rewarding experience. The "Lefferts Lounge" refreshment stop was lucky to be situated in a lush back garden, well-appointed for entertaining. We are grateful to Melinda Allison for allowing access to it (and the kitchen!). Two local, community-minded wine and spirits shops added to the fun. DRINK poured glasses of chilled rosé, and Little Mo mixed up a variety of Daisy Cocktails for tasting. And what goes with refreshments? Live music... Lefferts Lounge featured pianist Grant Richards & bass player John Simms who served up some jazzy tunes for all to enjoy. Both are also local PLGers.

One stop on tour was the home of former LMA board member and house tour organizer, Mary Miller. She had intended to go to the other houses but had so much fun greeting and talking to the wide variety of visitors, that she never made it out! For Mary, the spontaneous conversations of the House Tour are an unexpected benefit. In terms of the folks enjoying the tour, Mary noted that there were plenty of locals/regulars in attendance, but she was very excited by how many younger people (relative term) there were, including many from far outside our neighborhood. The word must be out that our tour is the friendliest.

Photo: Roberta Woelfling

And finally, without volunteers, there would be no tour. Their willingness to sign up to be a tour guide, help set up refreshments, or work the check-in table, is much appreciated. This year it was a tougher than usual to find enough people. There had always been a healthy list of repeat volunteers, but over time many have moved away or are no longer able. Moving forward, we need your support and encourage neighbors to help recruit friends and family, in Lefferts Manor, PLG and beyond! And if you want to be on the tour, or know someone who might be interested, let us know. Contact us at LeffertsManorAssoc@gmail.com for more information.

Lefferts Manor Association

Dues are $25 per household or $15 per senior citizen household. Dues cover January through December 2024.

Pay online by clicking on membership link at LeffertsManor.org or go to Lefferts-Manor-Association.square.site.

Or make checks payable to Lefferts Manor Association. Send or drop-off payment with your name, address and contact info noted to:

Linda Leon, 50 Maple St., Brooklyn, NY 11225

Note NEW drop-off address!

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