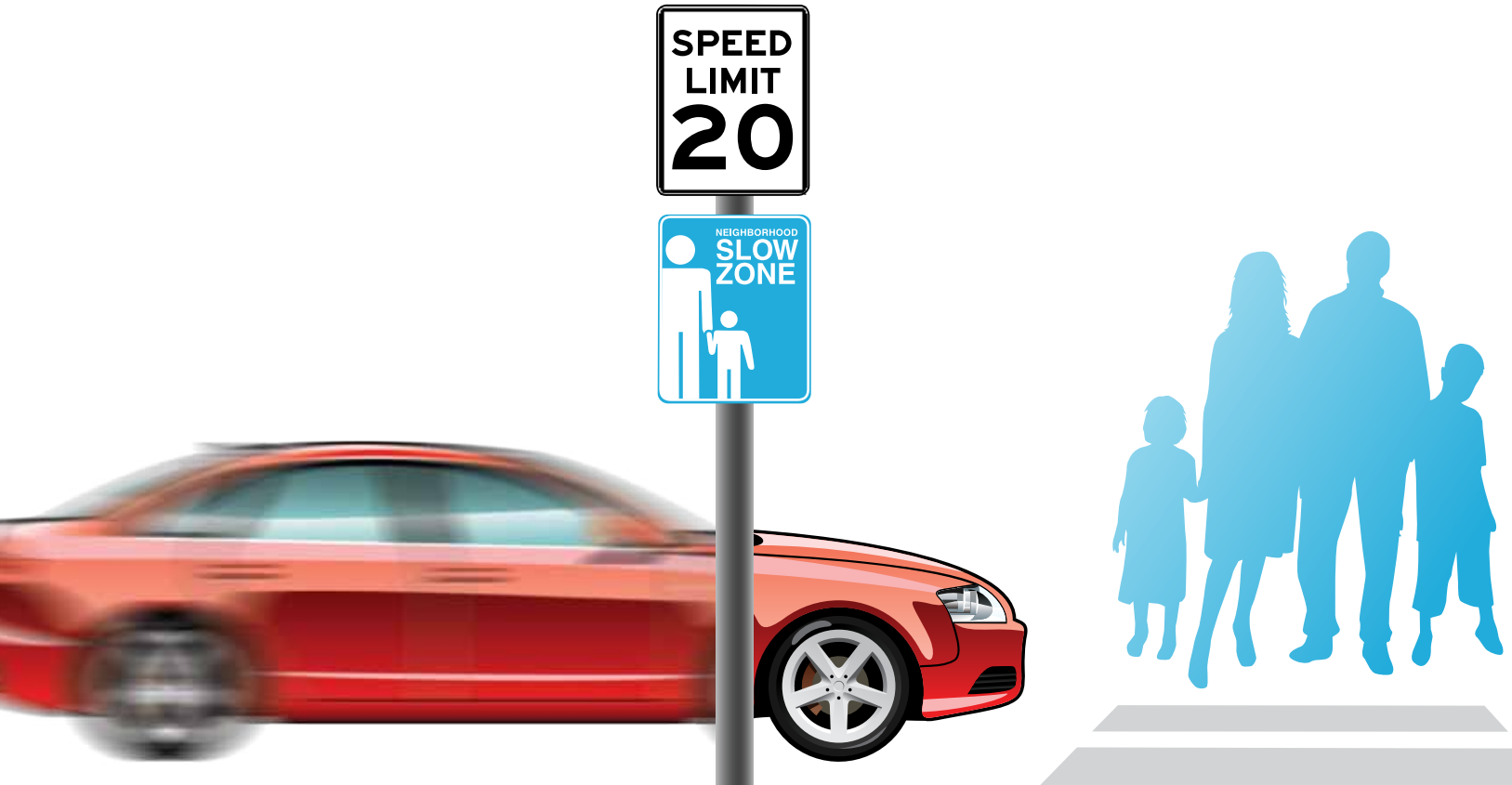


Civic News

The Newsletter of the Park Slope Civic Council | www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org

Winter 2012



Can Slow Zones Work in Park Slope?

The Civic Council and the community explore how to build safer streets

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Can Slow Zones Work in Park Slope?

Live long enough in a densely populated part of the city like Park Slope and you're bound to become frustrated with some aspect of traffic. Whether it is cars speeding or doing U-turns, bicyclists running through red lights or traveling on sidewalks, or pedestrians not looking both ways before they cross a street (a good idea even on a one-way street), the use of our streets seems not just chaotic but anarchic.

On Saturday, Jan. 21, more than 75 people came to a meeting, organized by the Park Slope Civic Council, to learn about a New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) initiative called neighborhood slow zones. These zones, as described on NYCDOT website, "are a community-based program that reduces the speed limit from 30 mph to 20 mph and adds safety measures within a select area in order to change driver behavior. The ultimate goal of the Neighborhood Slow Zone program is to lower the incidence and severity of crashes. Slow Zones also seek to enhance quality of life by reducing cut-through traffic and traffic noise in residential neighborhoods."

For some time, the Civic Council has been involved with livable-streets initiatives; indeed, the mission statement of the Civic Council's Livable Streets Committee focuses on "the richness of [Park Slope's] street life." To help fulfill that mission and learn more about traffic calming in another community, in October a group of Civic Council members went to Hoboken, N.J., where a 20-mph residential speed limit is in place. At the same time, NYCDOT was putting a pilot neighborhood slow zone into the Claremont neighborhood in the central Bronx. With the experience of the Hoboken visit, the Civic Council decided to organize a community meeting about slow zones.

A week before our January meeting, several Civic Council members and others went to Claremont to see the pilot project first-hand. This "boots-on-the-ground" look

at the community and at the measures NYCDOT put into place to mark entrances to the zone, and the streets within it, was very informative.

Claremont is a mostly residential, low- to moderate-income community just south of the Cross Bronx Expressway and just west of the Bronx River. A ridge runs roughly northeast to southwest through the middle of the neighborhood, giving it a hilly character. The pilot slow zone is bounded on three sides by commercial streets, and most of the streets within the zone are one-way, approximately the same width as Park Slope's streets. NYCDOT has marked the entrances to the slow zone with pavement striping and signs. Within the zone, "20 MPH" is painted in the travel lane, and speed humps have been installed in several places.

After seeing images of the Claremont project in a presentation at the community meeting, participants were asked whether these measures gave a different sense of place — in other words, a feeling that the reduced speed limit made the streets safer to use by pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. Considering that the field trip to the Bronx took place on a cold Saturday with few people or cars out, it was difficult to ascertain. Several people at the meeting expressed dissatisfaction with the physical elements of the Claremont neighborhood slow zone, including speed humps, excessive signage, ugly pavement striping, and loss of parking.

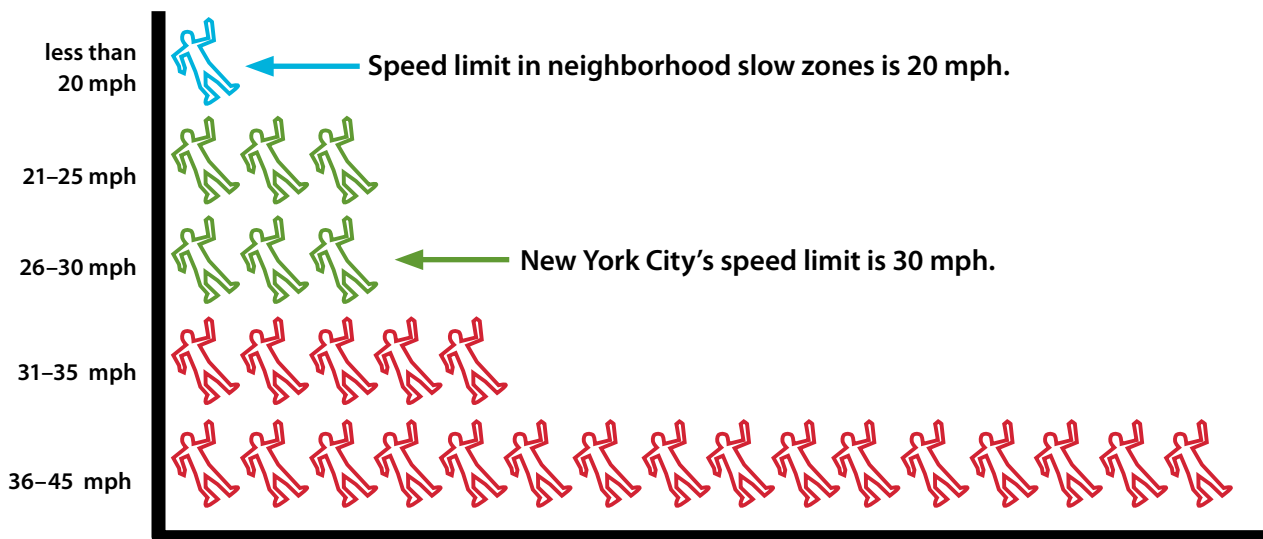
Many attendees cited the lack of enforcement of existing traffic laws as a major factor contributing to unsafe conditions on our local streets. A show of hands requested by one of the participants, however, showed that nearly everybody at the meeting supported a reduced residential speed limit.

Surveys prepared by the Civic Council were handed out at the meeting to investigate opinions further. Forty-nine people filled them out. Results will be included in a meeting report to be posted on our website (www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/



The city's first neighborhood slow zone in the Claremont section of the Bronx, bounded in blue on the map, was put into effect last November. Map from Google Maps; photos by Michael Cairl.

Percentage of pedestrian fatalities among all vehicular crashes vs. car speed



One “body” is a single percentage point. Source: Literature Review on Vehicle Travel Speeds and Pedestrian Injuries, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

slow-zones) along with an audio file of the meeting and a proposal for a Park Slope neighborhood slow zone. We eagerly solicit comments from the community on these documents.

The Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council, a meeting co-sponsor that worked with the Civic Council to organize and publicize the event, has put a proposal for a Prospect Heights slow zone on its website, www.phndc.org.

So where do we go from here? First, NYCDOT will entertain slow-zone applications from civic associations, business improvement districts, local community boards, and elected officials, with a stated deadline of Feb. 3. NYCDOT has indicated that a proposed neighborhood slow zone should be approximately a quarter square-mile (around five blocks by five blocks); be primarily residential; avoid wide, major streets, and industrial and major commercial areas within the zone; and have strong boundaries, such as highways, large parks, elevated trains, dead ends, and major streets. NYCDOT will not implement every slow-zone application, nor will they will not set up any zone without approval from the local community board.

Second, while the people at the meeting wanted a lower residential speed limit, it was clear that there had to be a much larger “toolbox” of traffic-calming measures than those used in Claremont, which were put in quickly and at low cost. Some participants wanted speed humps; others did not. Midblock chicanes or “neckdowns” might be installed where there are fire hydrants or other existing no-parking zones, which would force traffic to slow down. In many places there are too many traffic signs; elsewhere, not enough. Other

measures are also available, many of which appear in a Traffic Calming Primer developed for the Downtown Brooklyn Traffic Calming Project (downloadable from the Civic Council’s website or at bit.ly/traffic-calming-primer).

Of course, every physical measure has advantages and disadvantages that need to be weighed, and some basic education is needed. For example, many drivers are unaware that the city speed limit is 30 mph. And the need for consistent and visible enforcement cannot be denied. The Civic Council has long had an excellent relationship with the Police Department’s 78th Precinct, and we are sensitive to the fact that their resources are limited. This might well be the time to urge our elected representatives to increase the size of the Police Department to allow for more enforcement.

Whatever form further traffic calming takes in our community, the Civic Council will remain actively involved in promoting it, to ensure that our community’s streets are safe for all users.

The Park Slope Civic Council thanks the meeting co-sponsors for their support: City Councilmembers Letitia James, Brad Lander, and Stephen Levin; Congregation Beth Elohim; P.S. 10; Park Slope Neighbors; Park Slope Parents; the Parents Association of Brooklyn Millennium High School; and the Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council. We also wish to thank the organizations that helped publicize the Jan. 21 meeting: Brooklyn Spoke, P.S. 39, P.S. 321, the Park Slope Fifth Avenue Business Improvement District, Streetsblog, and Transportation Alternatives.

— Michael Cairl is president of the Civic Council.



Midblock chicanes or ‘neckdowns’ are one option to force traffic to slow down. Photo: Richard Drdul.

Learn more about slow zones and traffic calming

Civic Council’s website: www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/slow-zones

NYCDOT Neighborhood Slow Zones Pilot Study: bit.ly/Claremont-pilot

The New York City Pedestrian Safety Study & Action Plan:
on.nyc.gov/NYC-ped-safety

The NYC Street Design Manual: on.nyc.gov/street-design

Downtown Brooklyn Traffic Calming Primer: bit.ly/traffic-calming-primer

Next page: A report from our community meeting

Taking It Slow at Community Meeting

In the midst of the year's first winter storm, residents of Park Slope and nearby communities got together not to complain about falling slow, but to explore how to take it slow.

Some 75 people came to the Civic Council's community meeting on neighborhood slow zones on Jan. 21, held at Congregation Beth Elohim. They learned what a 20-mph slow zone would mean for the community; heard from officials both local and from Manhattan; saw presentations on the four-month-old zone in the Bronx and on Park Slope traffic; and discussed if, how, and where zones and other measures should be set up in the community.

Civic Council President Michael Cairl welcomed everyone to the meeting, then introduced elected officials in attendance, starting with one of the meeting's co-sponsors, Councilmember Brad Lander. "Most of the calls to our office are on traffic safety," Lander said. "Getting traffic to slow down, especially in front of schools, homes, churches, and synagogues, is very important."

Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, who joined Lander at the meeting, recalled the conference he recently hosted at John Jay College, "Transportation 2030: A Five Borough Blueprint." "We are

not getting speeding under control," he said. "What we decide here will have an impact on all five boroughs."

"We've done an excellent job of reducing accidents," State Senator Eric Adams added later in the meeting. A model can be set, however, "if we go to the 20-mph mark and [create] safe streets where motorists and pedestrians can both use the streets safely."

"The challenge we have is how do we make sure that [drivers] know [20 mph] is the rule, for people who live here and people outside the zone," said Councilmember Stephen Levin, another co-sponsor. "There has to be enforcement," a sentiment that drew much applause.

The Civic Council organized the meeting toward a goal of making streets more livable for all users — drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists. Neighborhood slow zones would limit traffic in a small, mainly residential, self-contained area to 20 mph, a much safer speed for pedestrians crossing the street (see chart on previous page).

After a description of what slow zones are and how the proposal process would work, Cairl led a presentation on the Civic Council's field trip to the Bronx neighborhood of Claremont, site of the city's first such slow zone — "food for thought" about how the program might be set up in our community. (For further details, see "Can Slow Zones Work in Park Slope?" on page 2; the presentation will be posted on our website as well.) He also introduced a film from Streetsblog

in which Senator Adams and members of the Civic Council and Transportation Alternatives joined Rod King, director of the United Kingdom's 20's Plenty for Us campaign, to explore how such a speed limit might work in Park Slope. (Visit bit.ly/streetsblog-film-pswalk to view this informative film.)

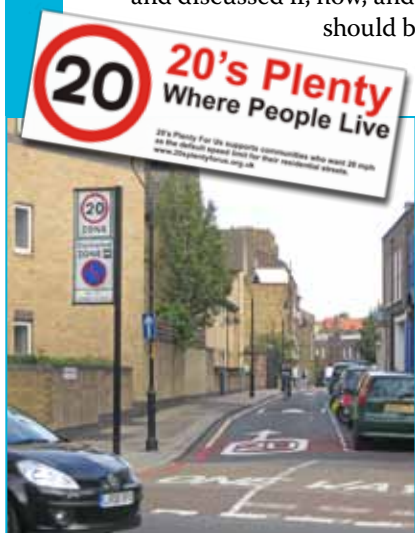
Daniel Murphy, executive director of the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District, led a question-and-answer session that explored community ideas and concerns over the program. Many issues were raised, among them using speed humps to control speeds; including neighborhoods surrounding Park Slope in proposing slow zones; timing streetlights better; involving public schools in the process; improving pedestrian awareness while crossing the street; and increasing traffic enforcement. One man asked for a show of hands for those in favor of some sort of slow zone; a majority of attendees supported the idea.

"This meeting is just the beginning of the process for neighborhood slow zones," Murphy said. "Even with any application, the conversation will continue" in the community.

Surveys were handed out at meeting's end. About two-thirds of attendees completed the questionnaires, the results from which will be used to guide any local slow-zone proposal to the city's Department of Transportation, under whose aegis this community-based program falls. "It's great to see this level of interest in safer streets," Cairl said.

(The full report from the meeting and more documentation, audio, and video are available on our website, www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/slow-zones.)

— David Herman is editor of Civic News.



Some 7 million people in the United Kingdom live in slow zones, spurred by the 20's Plenty for Us campaign. Photo: Michael Kodransky, via Flickr.

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How Would You Build a Better Community with \$1 Million?

Over the last few months, civic-minded Brooklynites have been busy meeting and reviewing a wide range of ideas for capital-budget projects in Park Slope and surrounding communities. They are taking part in City Councilmember Brad Lander's participatory budgeting process, which allows citizens to suggest how their tax dollars should be spent and vote on the proposals.

Lander — along with fellow Councilmembers Melissa Mark-Viverito, Eric Ulrich, and Jumaane Williams — is helping to make history, as this effort is the first time councilmembers are dedicating a portion of their discretionary funds to such an open process as participatory budgeting. Residents joining in the process are expected to review and decide on which projects to recommend in March, with implementation and monitoring of these efforts to begin the following month.

Lander has dedicated approximately \$1 million toward participatory budgeting this year. (Some \$6 million will be made available to projects in all four Council districts.) He launched the process for District 39 in October 2011 by holding five neighborhood assemblies. On Oct. 5, more than 150 Park Slope residents came to the Old First Reformed Church on Seventh Avenue to share ideas, propose projects, brainstorm, and debate their neighborhood's future. Facilitators then formed small groups in which attendees could discuss and document each capital expenditure idea, no matter how kooky or ambitious. Some residents then volunteered to act as "budget delegates" — constituents who took responsibility for turning the nascent, organic ideas into concrete proposals.

The councilmember's office organized the proposals from all five assemblies into a comprehensive spreadsheet that was presented at the first general delegate meeting, on Nov. 6 at P.S. 230. At that meeting, budget delegates played a creative game of *Jeopardy* to learn more about the City Council budget and how capital expenditures are allocated. Each participant also received *Introduction to the Budget Delegate Role*, a manual that explained the criteria for evaluating ideas and outlined the types of projects eligible for capital funding.

Budget delegates then broke off into several different committees, covering parks and recreation, transit, public safety and sanitation, education, streets and sidewalks, cultural and community facilities, and the environment. Participants exchanged information and held brief discussions with facilitators from Lander's office.

Since November, facilitators and budget delegates have been meeting in their committee groups. They have spoken to city agencies and toured the many neighborhoods of Council District 39, which includes parts of Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, Park Slope, Kensington, Borough Park, and Windsor Terrace. Delegates are faced with the challenge of choosing proposals that best meet the needs

of a diverse community spread over a rather large area of the borough.

Committee delegates are now in the process of figuring out which proposals are feasible, ensuring the proposals are eligible for city capital dollars, calculating the costs, and turning the hundreds of ideas into about 30 solid proposals (four or five per committee) to put on the ballot for a vote in March by residents of Lander's district.

The process has generated some very concrete, reasonable ideas, Lander noted, such as improvements in schools, in parks, on streets, and at subway stations.



The idea behind participatory budgeting is not just to foster transparency in discretionary spending, which has often been plagued by scandals in the City Council. The process will also allow people from diverse neighborhoods to meet, exchange ideas, and take concrete action to improve their communities. The hope is that the new process of funding will lead to greater civic participation and a more politically involved constituency that has a better understanding of neighborhood needs.

For more information, visit the Participatory Budgeting in New York City website, at pbnyc.org. You can also receive updates about local projects at bradlander.com/pb/signup.

— Joni Kletter is a participatory budgeting delegate for District 39's Parks and Recreation Committee and its Parks Improvement Subcommittee.

The State of Shopping Local

Last year was a rough one for businesses across the country. So how did Park Slope's small businesses and commercial districts fare in 2011? And what can we expect in the year to come?

When the current recession began, owners and customers of locally owned stores, bars, and restaurants in communities like Park Slope believed they would be largely immune to the challenges that businesses felt elsewhere. For instance, the average home sale in Park Slope is just under \$1 million — an indicator of the kind of disposable income in our neighborhood that could keep our commercial districts healthy, even in a recession.

Unfortunately, this assumption turned out to be largely untrue. According to the blog *Here's Park Slope* (at www.heresparkslope.com), more than 50 small businesses closed

Survey that will help the Park Slope Chamber of Commerce address some of the concerns neighbors have about the avenue. (The Chamber of Commerce is a coalition of small-business owners on Seventh Avenue and neighboring streets.)

The survey is on the organization's website, www.parkslopechamber.com, and is open to everyone through early February. The Chamber of Commerce encourages residents to take part and help create a brighter future for Seventh Avenue.

Finally, love it or hate it, the Barclays Center arena is on its way. According to the North Flatbush Business Improvement District, the vacancy rate actually increased to 12% along the avenue in 2011 as rents rose in anticipation of the crowds that will soon be generated by sporting events and concerts. The BID has been working with property owners to fill some of these vacancies, and anticipates a 6% vacancy rate or less by the end of 2012.

Over all, 2011 was a complex year for local businesses and commercial districts, but all signs seem to point to a stronger 2012.

— *Mark Caserta is a small-business, web, and social-media consultant. He works with*

both the Park Slope Fifth Avenue BID and the Park Slope Chamber of Commerce (Twitter: @markcaserta.)



Retail changes in Park Slope: Talde and Kos Kaffe have opened, while neighborhood mainstay Leaf and Bean recently closed.

in the neighborhood over the last 12 months alone. Some — like Aunt Suzie's Restaurant on Fifth Avenue, and Leaf and Bean on Seventh Avenue — have closed after more than 20 years in business. (You can read about Aunt Suzie's in our interview with owner Irene LoRe on the next page; Leaf and Bean is currently looking for a new location.)


Clearly, Park Slope's consumers were cutting back and making difficult decisions about how to spend their income, just like everyone else.

Despite the bad news, there are many positive indicators of a bigger, better year for 2012. According to the Park Slope Fifth Avenue Business Improvement District, the commercial vacancy rate along the avenue dropped steadily over the course of 2011, from more than 10% in January to approximately 7.7% in December. While a number of shops closed in early January 2012, new businesses have moved into or are rebuilding many of those vacant sites.

In addition, according to the Park Slope Patch website (at parkslope.patch.com), Park Slope shops saw a significant uptick in sales this holiday season, bringing them a much-needed income boost. This is great news in a time when big-box stores and online retailers provided deep discounts to consumers. Shopping local is not dead after all.

Last year got off to a rough start on Seventh Avenue with the loss of a private maintenance contract, which created a lot of negative press about dirty sidewalks and overflowing trash cans. The merchants of Seventh Avenue ended 2011 strong by distributing a District Needs


Photos by David Herman



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Looking Back at 25 Years of Nourishing Park Slope

When Irene LoRe opened the restaurant Aunt Suzie's almost three decades ago on Fifth Avenue, the street was not nearly as fashionable as it is today. The avenue has changed a lot in that period—more restaurants, more shops, and greater need for services among business owners. With a desire to address those needs for her neighbors and the community, LoRe — who moved to Park Slope in 1972 — helped establish the Park Slope Fifth Avenue Business Improvement District in 2009, and retains her position as the organization's head.

On Jan. 1, 2012, she ended her successful run of Aunt Suzie's, closing the doors one final time. *Civic News* caught up with her recently to discuss her long tenure on the avenue — what she will miss and what's next for the intrepid LoRe.

Civic News: What originally drew you to opening a restaurant?

LoRe: A midlife crisis — plus I found myself out of a job. Like every Italian, I think I am a wonderful cook, so I thought that is what I should do, open a restaurant. The first was in Bensonhurst.

What was it called?

Aunt Suzie's.



Who is Aunt Suzie?

My mother's name was Asunta, which got Anglicized as Suzie.

Did your mother ever have a chance to see you open the restaurant?

No, she passed in 1981. I opened the restaurant in Bensonhurst in 1982

How did you pick the location on Fifth Avenue?

I lived in Park Slope, and I knew it was a great neighborhood. Back then, Seventh Avenue was the main street. I knew people were afraid to come down to Fifth — and didn't come down — but I also knew it had to happen.

I picked this spot on Fifth because it was Center Slope, and it was bigger than many other spaces because it had an extension.

I am sure there have been many, but what stands out as a highlight of your years on the avenue?

Well, when I opened, I had this vision in my mind to do an intimate place with pictures, sort of re-creating an old kitchen table. We always had big tables — to welcome families, everybody. I didn't know it was going to work until I opened. And then I realized I nailed it. I created a business that honored family and community.

The neighborhood has changed a lot since you first opened. What has stayed the same?

Park Slope always seems to have a fantastic share of people who are interested in community life.

What has changed about owning a restaurant?

When I opened up, there were few to no restaurants on Fifth. Now every several blocks or so, there's dozens.

Also, regulations have made it extremely difficult to operate a business in New York City. Our city is at the bottom nationally in terms of the ease of running a business. When you are running a microbusiness — a mom-and-pop or, in my case, mom-and-mom — we don't have staff to help us take care of the problems, and the burden falls on us. It becomes monumental to deal with city agencies. It costs the owners a great deal of time, anxiety, and money.

What will you miss most about running a business?

I'll miss the customers. I will also miss the hyperactivity of

continued on next page

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Toys for Tots: Another Great Season for Community Spirit

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of people in and around our community, the Park Slope Civic Council collected 1,500 toys during this year's annual Toys for Tots gift collection, breaking the previous record number of 1,100 toys.

Such community spirit helped brighten the holiday season for many local children and their families in need, who received the gifts through Christian Help in Park Slope (CHIPS), DWA FANM (Women's Rights in Creole), Project Reach Youth (PRY), Red Hook Lions, and Saint Augustine's Church Food Program.

"When the toy collection started this year, I had no feeling as to what our donations would be like," said Tom Miskel, event chair and longtime Civic Council trustee. "As time passed, though, the amount of toys grew. By Jan. 6 [the last day for collection], the number of donated toys had grown to more than 1,500, exceeding our record number from last year. I wish to thank all of my elves and 'elfettes' for their continuing support, helping us to reach as many children and families as is possible."

This 17th annual collection drive also marked an extraordinary amount of cooperation among businesses and organizations throughout the neighborhood.

The Civic Council appreciates the help of every storefront and institution that agreed to be gift collection centers: Astoria Federal Savings (two branches);

Back to the Land Natural Foods; the Church of St. Saviour; Citibank (on Seventh Avenue); the Community Bookstore; Dram Shop; Elizabeth Pongo Fitness Studio; Evan Breth Progressive Podiatry; Greenwood Baptist Church; La Bagel Delight; Little Things Toy Store; New Millennium Real Estate; Assemblymember Joan Millman's office on Smith Street; North Flatbush Avenue Business Improvement District, and various stores along Flatbush Avenue; Orrichio Anderson Realty; Park Slope Armory — YMCA Sports Complex; Prospect Park YMCA; St. Francis Xavier R.C. Church; Scottadito Restaurant; and Shaw Real Estate.



The Civic Council also wishes to thank everyone who donated a gift and all of the volunteers who worked so hard to make the latest Toys for Tots the best ever. **n**

Looking Back

from previous page

running a restaurant. In the restaurant world, there is only the present tense. We exist for the customer in the present tense. The past translates into being prepared. The future, getting repeat customers. But we need to get it all right in the here and now. It is a challenge.

What your advice to Park Slope's next Irene LoRe?

Be prepared to work harder than you have ever worked in your life.

In addition to directing the Fifth Avenue BID, what's next for you?

I don't know. Check in again soon. **n**
— *Rebecca Welch is a trustee of the Civic Council.*

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Much Ado about Mulchfest



Mulchfest in Prospect Park 2012 was another holiday success for the Park Slope community. Residents brought thousands of trees to the Third Street and Park Circle entrances of Prospect Park over the sunny and warm weekend of Jan. 7 and 8, which were then converted into mulch for parks and gardens.

Co-sponsored by the Park Slope Civic Council's Sustainability Committee in partnership with the Prospect Park Alliance and 1-800-Mr. Rubbish, the annual event brings the community together in an effort to collect postholiday trees and turn the "waste" into something more environmentally friendly. People gather trees from across the neighborhood to the collections sites; one family even rented a ZipCar pickup truck and helped bring the trees to the park.

People could also take home ground cover — in biodegradable bags, of course — for their own gardens. Working hard during the entire event, 1-800-Mr. Rubbish was instrumental in transporting



the trees from our neighborhood corners up to the park for mulching using their hybrid truck.

Our thanks go to everyone who volunteered in the event, including members of the Park Slope Food Coop, Bishop Loughlin High School, Brooklyn Tech High School Red Cross Club, New York Cares, Yale Alumni of New York City, Leon Goldstein High School, New York City Police Department Explorers, Girl Scouts Troop 2450, and Poly Prep High

School. Many "unaffiliated" hard workers also dragged a tree to Prospect Park or to their nearest corner for collection.

Mulchfest in Prospect Park is one of many projects coordinated by the Sustainability Committee. Interested in getting involved and building a greener community? Meetings are held every third Monday of the month (visit our calendar at www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org to confirm dates), or e-mail sustainable@parkslopeciviccouncil.org.

Photos by David Herman

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Thanks, New Members

We would like to welcome the following members who recently joined the Civic Council:

Stacy Cooper

Elizabeth and Ethan Finkelstein

Richard and Rosalie Schoeller

Park Slope Food Coop

You, too, can become a Civic Council member and help build a stronger community. Turn to the back page or visit parkslopeciviccouncil.org/joinus to learn more.

In Brief: 78th Precinct, Historic District, Meetings

A New C.O. for the 78th

The new commanding officer for the 78th Precinct, which includes Park Slope, joined the Civic Council at our most recent Trustees Meeting, Jan. 5 at New York Methodist Hospital. On his new job for just three weeks at the time of the meeting, Captain Michael Ameri said he's done a lot to learn about Park Slope.

He noted several concerns in our neighborhood, among them crime in Prospect Park and incidents involving neighbors coming home from work, traffic and other quality-of-life issues ("they play a bigger role here while in another precinct they may not be an issue"), and theft of electronic devices such as iPhones and iPods.

The captain has been a member of the Police Department for 18 years. Before arriving at the 78th, he was the commanding officer of the Queens Vice Enforce-

ment Division of the Organized Crime Control Bureau, and before that in charge of the Brooklyn North Narcotics Module.

"Most of our problems are solved with the help of people in the community," he said. "The more information that flows in [to the precinct], the more successful we will be."

Historic District Update

Also at the monthly Trustees Meeting, Peter Bray discussed the ongoing efforts to expand the Park Slope Historic District. Good news is expected midyear for the South Slope when the Landmarks Preservation Commission formally designates the expansion area, said Bray, who chairs the Civic Council's Historic District Committee.

Outreach efforts are now well under way to include more of the North Slope in the district. On Dec. 20, committee members met with Councilmember Stephen Levin — whose district includes the area under consideration — and presented him with some 200 signatures of homeowners on petitions in favor of northern expansion. Two days later, Levin and Council-

member Brad Lander met with LPC Chair Robert Tierney to "show that they and the North Slope community want this to move forward," said Bray.

Committee members also brought the petitions and detailed research on 700 North Slope buildings to the LPC, and met with agency representatives in late January to discuss the proposed expansion area.

The Historic District Committee will continue with its work to include the North Slope in the Park Slope Historic District, one of the city's first such districts. To learn more about our efforts or get involved, e-mail historic.district@parkslopeciviccouncil.org.

About Trustees Meetings

The Civic Council's Trustees Meetings take place the first Thursday of every month from September through June, and are open to everyone. Join us for a meeting: Learn more about your neighborhood, and help keep Park Slope a vibrant, active community.

Details can be found on our website, parkslopeciviccouncil.org/calendar. 

A City Record for Safety

At a press conference held in the waning days of last year, Mayor Bloomberg came to Grand Army Plaza to proclaim 2011 "the city's safest traffic year in the more than 100 years since records were kept."

Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan and Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly joined the mayor at the Dec. 29 press conference to release some impressive statistics for traffic safety: As of Dec. 27, there were 237 traffic fatalities in 2011, 40% fewer than in 2001. Included in the 2011 numbers were 134 pedestrian fatalities in crashes with vehicles, an all-time record low and a 31% reduction since 2001; 47 senior pedestrian fatalities, a 27% reduction since 2001; and a record low of only three child pedestrian fatalities. Bicycle fatalities have held within the same range over the last decade, despite bike ridership quadrupling during that time period.

The new record lows come as the Department of Transportation has undertaken numerous safety engineering initiatives and public education efforts around the city, and the Police Department has implemented aggressive enforcement programs — all to reduce dangerous speeding, combat drunken driving, and calm traffic. Grand Army Plaza is representative of those efforts, where a new safety redesign was installed in October (see the fall *Civic News* for details). The latest improvements at Grand Army Plaza are expected to build on the nearly 40% reduction in crashes in the plaza over the last three years due to previous safety upgrades.

Head to on.nyc.gov/2011-traffic to read more about the year in New York City traffic safety.

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Coalition Calls for Continued Review on Atlantic Yards

Last July, State Supreme Court Justice Marcy Friedman ordered further environmental review of Atlantic Yards, in light of the Empire State Development Corporation's 2009 approval to extend construction from the original 10-year span to 25 years. In September, ESDC and developer Forest City Ratner chose to appeal that decision rather than re-examine the plan. On Jan. 13, sponsors of the BrooklynSpeaks coalition filed legal documents in response to that appeal, in order to ensure a proper evaluation of the megaproject's construction.

"ESDC and FCRC have, in effect, asked the court to believe that when the agency approved increasing the construction duration from 10 to 25 years, it didn't expect the developer would actually use the extra time," said Gib Veconi of the Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council, a petitioner in the case. "The lower court didn't buy that, and we don't think the appellate court will, either."

The Park Slope Civic Council is one of several community organizations that sponsors BrooklynSpeaks, which also includes the Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council and the Pratt Area Community Council.

"Brooklyn needs Governor Cuomo to step in to end the cycle of litigation, and get this project to deliver on its promises," said Deb Howard, executive direc-

tor of the Pratt Area Community Council. "It's time to move beyond the past failings of the ESDC, and focus on building the affordable housing and providing the jobs the community so desperately needs — now, not in 25 years."

Responding to ESDC and Forest City's claims that Friedman attempted to second-guess the agency's review, BrooklynSpeaks attorneys Albert K. Butzel and Jeffrey Baker wrote: "This is a case where the agency acted irrationally to cover up what it knew to be an unsupported analysis and decision. The Court ... fulfilled the classical role of the judiciary in calling ESDC to account and requiring it to reevaluate the impacts of the Atlantic Yards Project in good faith and in accordance with the law."

State legislators from communities surrounding Atlantic Yards previously called on ESDC to comply with the court order to reconsider the modified plan. In an August 2011 letter to ESDC head Ken Adams from Assemblymember Hakeem Jeffries and signed by Assemblymember Joan Millman and State Senators Eric Adams and Velmanette Montgomery, the officials point to troubling facts. "More than seven years have passed since Atlantic Yards' announcement, and almost five years have passed since its original plan was approved. In that time, we have seen the promises of affordable housing and local jobs move nearly a generation into the future," they wrote.

(Hakeem, Adams, and Assemblymember Karim Camara held a press conference on Jan. 22, calling on the developers to follow through on their promise of affordable housing and thousands of jobs that would come with the project. Read more about the press conference at brooklynspeaks.net/adams-jeffries-camara-press-conference.)

The legislators also noted other critical changes introduced with the 2009 modified plan, including the extended use of the site for 1,100 surface parking spaces and the removal of project elements intended to reduce the impact of locating an arena in a residential neighborhood.

Visit www.brooklynspeaks.net to learn more about all developments concerning Atlantic Yards.

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The newsletter of the

 **PARK SLOPE CIVIC COUNCIL**

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Organized as the South Brooklyn Board of Trade in 1896, the Park Slope Civic Council is one of the oldest civic associations in Brooklyn. We identify and address quality-of-life issues important to the community; create and support projects geared to improving and protecting the neighborhood; and assist local nonprofit organizations that benefit those living and working in Park Slope. Our many ongoing programs include the Halloween Parade, the Civic Sweeps, community forums, and a holiday toy drive. Our annual House Tour raises thousands of dollars for neighborhood initiatives. All are welcome to join. To learn more about us, go to www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org.

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