

# Civic News

The Newsletter of the Park Slope Civic Council | [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org)

Spring 2012



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# Wanted: Better Transit, Sensible Transportation, and Safe Streets

**Some 100 people** came to the Prospect Park Residence on a recent Thursday evening to learn about the New York City Department of Transportation's proposal for an unprotected, two-way bike lane on Plaza Streets East and West. At the meeting, jointly organized by Community Board 6 and 8's transportation committees, one participant claimed that the primary mode of transportation in Brooklyn is cars, and that the city ought to facilitate rather than inhibit car movement.

The first part of that proposition is inaccurate; over the years, Census data have shown a clear majority of households in Brooklyn do not own cars.

The second part of the statement is nonsense, ignoring major and obvious changes in transportation choices in recent years. It supposes that streets are like plumbing, not public space, and the city's job is to make sure the plumbing flows freely regardless of what is sent down the pipe.

The proposed bike lane would differ from Prospect Park



*Cars, bicycles, and pedestrians are all vying for scarce street space.*

West's protected lane in that there would be no parked cars to separate it from the travel lanes. Cars would continue to park on Plaza Street as they do now. (The two full community boards will take up this proposal soon.) Discussion was lively, and even traditional bike-lane supporters had legitimate criticisms of what was on offer. If there was one point of consensus, it was that congestion is a serious problem — progress in how we all view the issue.

There are now more cars on the street, but bicycles have also become a significant part of the transportation mix. Contrary to what another participant at the meeting said, people do commute by bicycle and in increasing numbers. Stand on Bergen Street or the Manhattan Bridge and see for yourself. Sensing a demand to travel locally by bicycle, the city is about to launch a bike-share program similar to those in Washington, D.C., Montreal, and other large cities (see page 9). And there are not only more cars and bicycles but also pedestrians vying for space. Streets will not and should not be made wider, but they must be safe for all users.

Moreover, part of the essence of urban life is that streets are indeed public space, and certainly not the exclusive preserve of motor vehicles. The streets in Brownstone Brooklyn and many other neighborhoods in the city were laid out before motor vehicles even existed. Today, our streets accommodate more cars than they did 50 years ago and many other users, too: trucks, buses, and bicycles. New development puts even more demands on our streets: more motorists, more delivery trucks, more people using "alternative" modes of transport (such as bicycles), and more pedestrians going from place to place.

How are the city and the community to balance all these demands for scarce street space? The city and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority should make it attractive for people to take public transportation or a bicycle, or go on their own two feet, to work, shopping, worship, or recreation. That means more transit service and a good, hard look at how to make transit service — especially bus routes — serve people better.

Street safety is also key, but in the end it's the responsibility of street users. A concerted education campaign — focusing on the rules of the road for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians — would go a long way. Some well-targeted enforcement is needed, but that can go only so far, even if police resources were unlimited.

There's more. In 2007 the Park Slope Civic Council endorsed Mayor Bloomberg's proposal for congestion pricing and insisted that other congestion mitigation measures be considered, such as residential permit parking. I believe the Civic Council will have the opportunity to consider these again in the near future.

This past January, the Civic Council and the Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council (PHNDC) held a forum on DOT's initiative to institute neighborhood slow zones; a few weeks later, the Civic Council and Park Slope Neighbors submitted an application for a slow zone in Park Slope.

On March 31, some 50 residents from all over Brooklyn — hardly any of them "usual suspects" — took part in the BK Gateway Transportation Workshop, organized by Councilmember Letitia James and the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, and co-sponsored by the Civic Council, PHNDC, and others. The workshop's breakout groups looked at pedestrian safety, bicycles, traffic, and mass transit, and came up with a well-informed look at traffic and transportation problems in Brownstone Brooklyn and beyond. Those of us at the workshop envision the "takeaway" to be a set of proposals to elected officials and a request for a comprehensive transportation study for Brooklyn.

Clearly there is a lot going on. The Civic Council is engaged in traffic, transportation, and safety issues on several fronts. We are looking to our members and the community at large to become informed about these issues and to join with us as we work on a community approach to them. We must have informed, comprehensive, and continuing input to government agencies and elected officials about these issues. These concerns affect everybody in our community, and I look forward to engaging the community constructively and productively.

Watch this space for news about future meetings to get this going. Be part of a community push for better transit, sensible transportation, and safe streets. Join the Park Slope Civic Council.

— Michael Cairl is president of the Civic Council.



# Greening and Growing on Fourth Avenue



**At the turn** of the last century, Fourth Avenue was a large, tree-lined boulevard. Since then, it's seen many big changes. After the Fourth Avenue subway line was built in 1915, the street's character became more industrial; eventually it transformed into a multilane urban thoroughfare with many chain stores and auto-repair shops. The next development was, literally, more development — the construction of new and often-nondescript buildings, after local rezoning in 2003 and 2005 allowed for greater building heights.

Over the past two years, there has been another round of action related to planning, which should bring yet another change — this time for a greener, more diverse, more accessible Fourth Avenue. And the Park Slope Civic Council has been at the forefront of those activities.

In 2010, the Civic Council worked to bring neighbors, businesses, and other stakeholders together to plan for the avenue's future (a successful public forum that March, followed by an informative walking tour eight months later). Today, we have the Forth on Fourth Avenue Committee (FOFA), whose membership reflects the goal of preserving, promoting, and improving the Fourth Avenue community from Flatbush Avenue to the Prospect Expressway. The roster includes residents who've been here for decades and new arrivals, home and building owners, tenants, representatives of local civic organization, gardeners, and government officials.

A broad spectrum of concerns connect people to FOFA — pedestrian and bicycle safety, traffic calming, street greening and gardening, support for affordable housing, preservation of key local institutions that have helped define the neighborhood, and recycling.

The Civic Council is not the only one to realize that a transformation of Fourth Avenue is on its way. In 2011, Borough President Marty Markowitz established the Fourth Avenue Task Force, a community-based coalition of stakeholders along the boulevard's entire length (from Flatbush to Shore Road in Bay Ridge). FOFA is well-represented in the task force's committees (Medians and Beautification, chaired by Civic Council President Michael Cairl; Transportation and Safety; and Times Plaza). Our involvement helps us to see the "big picture," provides an opportunity for discussions with public officials involved in planning, lets us exchange ideas with activists from other neighborhoods, and sometimes helps us anticipate issues for future community forums sponsored by the task force in our neighborhood.

The idea of a coalition of communities has helped FOFA flourish. In the past, plans for Fourth Avenue were shaped by the perception that the thoroughfare was only a boundary for Park Slope, which limited community involvement. Instead, we have found greater organizing success in emphasizing that Fourth Avenue is a shared space among local neighborhoods and intersecting streets. Residents and businesses in Park Slope, Boerum Hill, and Gowanus all hold a vested interest in making the avenue more livable.

The potential success of this strategy emerged with a program proposal developed by Grace Freedman, president of the Saint Marks Place Block Association. The project, covering Fourth Avenue from Bergen to Degraw Streets, focused on bringing together local organizations and merchants in a six-block greening effort that would include tree care and installation of window boxes. FOFA members reached out to block associations and organizations on both sides of Fourth, and were able to create a broader base of support. The Fourth Avenue Task Force's Medians and Beautification Committee subsequently endorsed this so-called "pilot project."

Spin-offs from the pilot project have been numerous: **'Good Neighbor' identification.** FOFA is developing an awards program for businesses, organizations, and residential buildings that help with greening efforts on Fourth Avenue. Decals will showcase a participant's efforts in improving the neighborhood.

**Support to expand tree maintenance.** Several FOFA members have already taken street-tree stewardship courses. As our first community-based project, FOFA surveyed current tree placement along Fourth (between Bergen and President Streets), then submitted a proposal for fund-



At top, a rare sight of lush trees on Fourth Avenue, across from the P.S. 133 building project. Most of Fourth Avenue is lacking such greenery, and the majority of tree beds need work from neighbors and volunteers like those at the Spring Civic Sweep.

ing tree-bed support to the MillionTreesNYC Stewardship Corps. A brochure now in development will explain what residents and businesses would gain from taking care of their trees — economically, aesthetically, and environmentally. In addition, FOFA hopes to provide tree guards (a sturdy, inexpensive design is now being researched) at locations where someone is willing to assume maintenance, and help a first cultivation effort with plantings, mulch, and other resources. (You can learn how to adopt a street tree at [www.milliontreesnyc.org](http://www.milliontreesnyc.org).)

**Civic Sweep on Fourth Avenue.** The Civic Council's Spring Civic Sweep in April was a perfect opportunity to test the impact of working on tree beds as an organizing tool, and FOFA decided to clean, cultivate, and plant at President Street, Butler Place, and St. Marks Place during the Sweep (see page 9).



**Volunteers and other neighbors left their own ideas on how to build a better Fourth at the Civic Sweep.**

**At top: FOFA's new logo.**

Community partnerships. Thanks to the pilot project, the MillionTreesNYC proposal, and the Civic Sweep, FOFA created partnerships that included the Saint Marks Place Block Association, the Butler/Baltic Block Association, the Fifth Avenue Committee (which maintains a number of residential buildings on or near Fourth Avenue), the Warren–St. Marks Community Garden, Bears Community Garden, the Boerum Hill Association, Slippery Slope Farm, the Gowanus Conservancy (through Film Biz Recycling), and Build It Green. GreenBridge, at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and the Green-Wood Historic Fund became resources for tree-care advice (and the latter for free wood-chip mulch). We are also exploring a collaboration to build planters with Brooklyn Woods, which helps unemployed and low-income New Yorkers start careers in skilled woodworking.

**DIY tree guards.** Rather than wait a while for requested tree guards from the Parks Department to become available, committee members have taken the initiative, experimenting with do-it-yourself approaches for such guards. A visible, workable design will show passersby that formerly garbage-strewn tree pits were being transformed into cared-for tree beds. One FOFA member tried out a simplified wood and rope approach; subsequently, Build It Green donated salvaged metal railings, which were used in a second round of DIY designs.

**Local artist support.** In March, FOFA supported a workshop that explored how local artists might contribute to the pilot project. Minuette Le, a graduate student at Parsons–The New School for Design, organized and led the workshop. With more than 25 attendees, the gathering was successful in engaging new people to talk about Fourth Avenue improvements. Also, three new people from the meeting joined FOFA.

The committee has also backed local groups in their site-specific improvement efforts. For example, the old KFC site on Fourth and Warren Street (soon to be a McDonald's) has been a growing eyesore. Due to pressure from local residents (especially on St. Marks Place), violations have been issued for the site. Representatives from the Saint Mark's Block Association had a preliminary discussion about the



site at Borough Hall in February; the Borough President's office is now going to set up a meeting with McDonald's management and community groups, including FOFA and

Park Slope Neighbors. The biggest concerns are that a drive-through entrance on Fourth is not reinstituted and that the site is properly maintained.

Clearly, many of FOFA's initial efforts have centered on tree-related greening. Well-kept, clean tree beds are a sign that residents and businesses care for their community and want to see it thrive. To build on our accomplishments, the committee is also considering other projects beyond just tree care, such as identifying possible locations for traffic-calming efforts (bulb-outs, for example), recommending bench locations for the Department of Transportation's CityBench program, and developing ideas for more effective and aesthetic use of the medians.

Future projects can be as diverse as the imagination and energy of FOFA members allow, and we welcome new people and ideas. Take part in the conversation about your community, and help envision a better Fourth Avenue now and in the future. You can join even if you don't live or work near the avenue — a healthy, vibrant Fourth means a stronger community for us all.

FOFA meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7:45 a.m. at the Brooklyn Lyceum, Fourth Avenue and President Street. For more information about the committee's work, visit our website, [parkslopeciviccouncil.org/fourth-avenue](http://parkslopeciviccouncil.org/fourth-avenue), or e-mail us at [fofa@parkslopeciviccouncil.org](mailto:fofa@parkslopeciviccouncil.org).

— *SJ Avery and Elise Selinger are co-chairs of the Forth on Fourth Avenue Committee.*

Photo by Judy Janda



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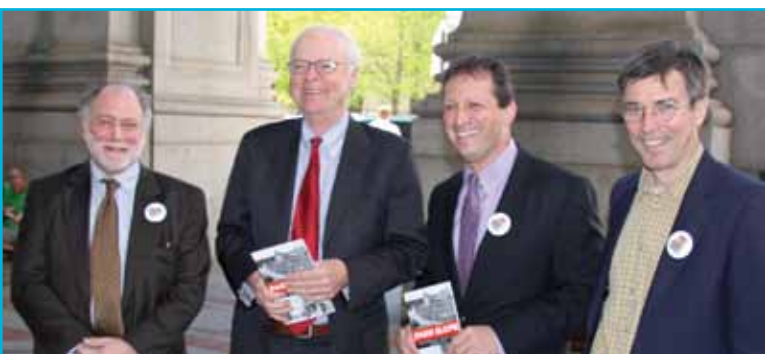
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*It's Official:*

# South Slope Is Now Historic

The Landmarks Preservation Commission has voted unanimously to approve an expansion of the Park Slope Historic District, making it the largest such zone in the city.

The April 17 vote grants historic-district protection to 580 buildings in the South Slope, giving “long overdue recognition” to this part of the neighborhood, said Peter Bray, chair of the Park Slope Civic Council’s Historic District Committee. The expansion reflects five years of advocacy and outreach by the Civic Council, which has entailed efforts by dozens of volunteers and the full support of its elected officials.



At the historic vote were (from left) Civic Council Historic District Committee Chair Peter Bray, LPC Chair Robert Tierney, City Councilmember Brad Lander, and Civic Council trustee David Alquist.

The extension stretches from approximately Seventh Street to 15th Street, from Seventh to Eighth Avenues, and along 15th Street from Eighth Avenue to Prospect Park West and Bartel Pritchard Square. (The new extension includes the Pavilion Theater, whose owner sought to exempt it from the district, thereby ensuring the building’s survival.) The expanded district now totals 2,575 protected buildings, surpassing the 2,315 structures in the previously largest historic district, in Greenwich Village.

In addition to its iconic brownstones, the South Slope includes the Ansonia Clock Works, once the world’s largest clock factory, as well as blocks of rowhouses for the workers who produced its famous clocks. LPC’s action, said Bray, celebrates “not only an important part of the city’s storied industrial past but also the contribution that sensitive adaptive reuse can make toward preserving its vitality and historic character.”

Protections afforded by the designation went into effect after the vote (learn more about those rules at [on.nyc.gov/lpc-information](http://on.nyc.gov/lpc-information)). City Council approval of the new district, the next step in the process, is virtually assured.

“We are honored to have the Landmarks Preservation

Commission recognize our historic and unique neighborhood,” said Councilmember Brad Lander, a long-time supporter of a larger local historic district. “These are some of the most beautiful streets in New York and, with today’s vote, we know they will be enjoyed by generations to come.”

This expanded historic district could not have come about without the Civic Council’s leadership, the sustained support of all of our local elected officials, and the involvement of hundreds of homeowners who did not want to see Park Slope’s character sacrificed for the new development that has swept through nearby blocks.

The next phase of the expansion effort is focusing on blocks in the North Slope, which include many of the neighborhood’s oldest structures.

The historical and architectural integrity of Park Slope remains an ongoing concern of the neighborhood, Bray noted. “Hundreds of additional buildings above Fifth Avenue deserve to be incorporated into a much larger Park Slope Historic District. The Civic Council will not rest until it achieves its goal of preserving the historic character of our neighborhood.”

To learn more or get involved, visit our Historic District page, [parkslopeciviccouncil.org/historic-district](http://parkslopeciviccouncil.org/historic-district).  
— Peter Bray chairs the Historic District Committee and is a Civic Council trustee-nominee.



The expansion to the historic district is outlined in red.



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# Changing Lanes

**If you walk**, run, bike, or even drive in Prospect Park, you'll notice some changes over the next few weeks to the configuration on Park Drive, thanks to a task force set up to improve safety for all users of this precious green space.

The city's Department of Transportation recently repaved and restriped the drive between Park Circle and Ocean/Parkside Avenues with new lane markings and symbols, following recommendations by the Prospect Park Road Sharing Taskforce. DOT will resume reconfiguring the rest of the Park Drive in early May and expects to be finished by the end of the month. The new arrangement creates one full, dedicated lane for pedestrians (on the left) and another for cyclists (in the center), rather than the existing setup

of a single shared lane when the drives are open to car traffic, and only the right lane for cars and trucks instead of two lanes.

Prospect Park will still remain open to car traffic 7–9 a.m. on the East Drive, and 5–7 p.m. on the West Drive, Monday through Friday.

The task force, a government-community coalition, was convened by Prospect Park Administrator Emily Lloyd to examine how the full range of park users (including runners, walkers, competitive cyclists, and recreational bikers) could safely share the drives, and what measures could be implemented to foster the safe use of the Park Drive for everyone.

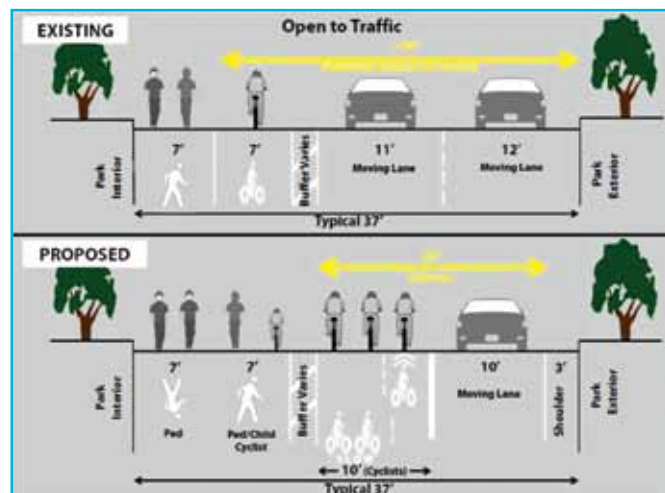
A wide range of stakeholders were included in the task force: Borough President Marty Markowitz, City Councilmember Brad Lander, the Department of Parks and Recreation, DOT, the Fellowship for the Interests of Dogs & Their Owners (FIDO), Jack Rabbit Sports, Kissena Cycling Club, the Park Enforcement Patrol (Brooklyn), the Prospect Park Alliance Playground Committee, the Prospect Park Community Committee (which counts the Park Slope Civic Council as a member), Prospect Park Residence, Prospect Park Track Club, the 78th Police Precinct, and Transportation Alternatives.

The coalition met several times, including a public meeting in November to solicit community input, and developed recommendations that were reviewed by the Parks Department and DOT.

The recommendations provide safety and predictability for all users of the Park Drive. "We decided that the only workable solution was for each group of users to have a lane and only one lane, throughout the day," said Lloyd. Each group — pedestrians, both walkers and runners; cyclists, Rollerbladers, and skateboarders; and motorized vehicles — has their own dedicated lane at all times.

The changes will be rolled out in two phases. In the first, beginning in early May, DOT will remove the existing lines and icons, and stripe the lanes with the new designations and icons. The current regulations will remain in effect until the work is completed in late May. (The only exception is the already reconfigured section.) Phase 1 addresses several areas.

- Crossing: encourage pedestrians to cross at crosswalks and on the "green," and make all crosswalks highly visible.
- Educational outreach: foster stop on "red" for everyone.
- Predictability: assign one permanent use to each lane;



extend green phase of traffic lights during traffic hours to maintain level of service; emphasize one-way use for bicycles (counter-clockwise); and reinforce with outreach, pavement markings, signage, and ongoing enforcement.

In the fall, the task force will reconvene to review the effectiveness of phase 1 and consider further steps. In this second phase, DOT will conduct a feasibility study of pedestrian-activated traffic lights, review crosswalk and traffic-light locations, pursue placement of additional park benches around the Park Drive, and study the feasibility of a jogging lane on the park landscape.

These changes, along with public outreach and enforcement, are expected to create an environment where everyone can use the park's roadways safely for themselves and others.

The Prospect Park Alliance's website offers details on the changes, at [bit.ly/prospect-park-drives](http://bit.ly/prospect-park-drives).

Photo by David Herman

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# Explore Park Slope's Inner Beauty

The 2012 edition of the Park Slope House Tour will give you a chance to see the architectural beauty that awaits inside the North Slope's historic homes.

This self-guided walking tour of seven homes takes place Sunday, May 20, noon to 5 p.m. Advance tickets are \$20 each, available through our website and at various merchants and realtors listed at [parkslopeciviccouncil.org/house-tour](http://parkslopeciviccouncil.org/house-tour). Tickets will be available on the day of the tour for \$25 each only at our starting point, the Berkeley Carroll School, 181 Lincoln Pl. between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, where brochures and shoe covers will also be distributed.

Please note the tour's rules: no children under 10, except for infants in front packs; no smoking, food, or drinks; no photos or videos of any kind; and no large backpacks.

Following the House Tour at 5:30, architectural historian Francis Morrone will narrate a slide show at the Montauk Club on "Brooklyn Lost and Found." He will describe significant Brooklyn buildings that have been demolished and new Brooklyn architecture worthy

of recognition. House Tour tickets are required, and seating is limited.

Funds raised at the House Tour go toward the Civic Council's Grants Committee to fund projects at local schools, charities, and cultural institutions. Your participation in this year's event will help ensure funding for our 2013 community grants.

Here's a peek at four of the homes on the 2012 Park Slope House Tour.



Two pairs of fluted Corinthian columns separate the parlor floor of an 1889 Queen Anne; antique furniture and Persian Bakhtiari and Turkish tribal rugs are also on view. The rear garden is beautiful and serene, with a center slate patio, tiered planting beds, and a lion's head wall fountain. An espaliered Blue Atlas Cedar takes center stage.



Splendid views of Manhattan and the Statue of Liberty can be found on the fifth-floor roof deck of an 1882 Neo-Grec. This home is a work-in-progress — the most recently completed project is the streamlined kitchen with stainless-steel appliances. An unusual, not-to-be-missed feature of this home is a light shaft from a skylight down to the floors below.

Photo by Michael Cairl



Originally the library of our 1887 Renaissance Revival, this handsome kitchen features mahogany woodwork; the dumbwaiter is now a pantry. Elsewhere on the parlor floor are unusually fine plasterwork, beautiful parquet floors, an exceptional high Victorian fireplace mantel, and an original gas chandelier that has never been converted to electricity.



In this late 1870s Italianate home, a major renovation and 10-foot extension have resulted in an open, sleek, and contemporary kitchen with cherry cabinetry and large-windowed dining room. Beyond the windows is a deck, where roses and lilies grow. Just out of sight is a wonderful collection of colorful wall-mounted lizards from Mexico.

**Purchase tickets:**  
[parkslopeciviccouncil.org/house-tour](http://parkslopeciviccouncil.org/house-tour)

## Appellate Division's Unanimous Decision: ESDC Must Revisit 2009 Atlantic Yards Plan

In a **strongly worded** rebuke to the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) and Forest City Ratner Companies (FCRC), the State Appellate Division ruled to uphold a lower court's decision that approval of Atlantic Yards' 2009 Modified General Project Plan violated New York environmental law. The initial ruling, made last July by State Supreme Court Justice Marcy Friedman, ordered ESDC and FCRC to revisit the 2009 plan, which extended the build-out of the Atlantic Yards project from 10 to 25 years. Her ruling also called for additional environmental analyses from ESDC and FCRC to determine how the effect of extended construction on surrounding neighborhoods could be minimized.

The unanimous Appellate decision, on April 12 by a panel of five judges, was a significant victory for the Park Slope Civic Council and other community organizations sponsoring the BrooklynSpeaks initiative. The coalition has challenged ESDC agreeing to more than double the project construction schedule without analyzing its effect on nearby communities. In legal filings, the groups contended that ESDC's approval had been rushed through in order to help FCRC meet a Dec. 31, 2009, deadline for issuing its arena bonds with tax-exempt interest.

"ESDC's actions saved the developer hundreds of millions in interest payments," said Michelle de la Uz, executive director of the Fifth Avenue Committee, "but at the cost of thousands of units of affordable housing being delayed for decades. The Appellate Division ruling gives the governor an opportunity to put the project's public benefits back on the schedule promised."

ESDC has not announced whether it

will honor the court decision and move forward with the supplemental environmental impact statement, or try instead to have the latest ruling overturned by the New York State Court of Appeals.

In addition to calling for accelerated construction of affordable housing on buildable lots within the Atlantic Yards footprint, the BrooklynSpeaks sponsors have advocated that the state government create a subsidiary dedicated to overseeing the Atlantic Yards project, with a board that includes outside directors.

Learn more about BrooklynSpeaks



or donate to support the coalition's legal effort at [www.brooklynspeaks.net](http://www.brooklynspeaks.net).

— *Gib Veconi is a member of the board of the Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council.*

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### Block Party Time

Interested in holding a block party this summer? Get an application into the city's Street Permit Activity Office soon — requests must now be made 90 days before your event. These and other changes to the process are helping to streamline the permitting system, which is now all-electronic. Head to the office's website to learn more, at [on.nyc.gov/street-permit](http://on.nyc.gov/street-permit).

# A Civic Sweeping Success

**On a fine spring** Saturday, volunteers picked up litter, performed tree care, listened to bluegrass, attended a tree-care workshop, had their soil tested, and learned how to make delicious fruit juice with a bicycle at the Civic Sweep, the Park Slope Civic Council's semi-annual clean-up and beautification event. From our "headquarters" in front of the Old Stone House/J.J. Byrne Playground, they picked up tools, supplies, and our giveaway plants, and then went off to make Park Slope cleaner, greener, and more beautiful.

Our thanks to the many people and organizations far and wide who helped out on April 21:

All the volunteers — students from Millennium Brooklyn High School and from Park Slope Collegiate with their principal Jill Bloomberg, the Fifth Avenue Committee, Women's Shelter at the Armory, families from P.S. 39, a group of Girl Scouts, and residents of Fourth Avenue, as well as other individuals.

Sarah Dougherty and Andrew Newman of Million-TreesNYC, who taught us the value of the beautiful trees in our neighborhood and how to care for them.

Gerard Lordahl and Julianne Schrader of GrowNYC, who tested our soil and made us laugh with their demonstration of how to make fruit juice with a bicycle.

Our supersponsor, New York Methodist Hospital; our media sponsors, Park Slope Parents and Park Slope



Neighbors; and those that provided funds or supplies: 1-800 Mr. Rubbish, Leopoldi Hardware, the Gowanus Nursery, Park Slope Shipping and Copy Center, the Park Slope Day Camp, and Tarzian Hardware.

The Park Slope Food Coop, which provided working members and tools.

La Bagel Delight, which donated free bagels, and Emily Isaac, owner of Trois Pommes Patisserie, who donated free coffee!

State Assemblymember Joan Millman and Jo Anne Simon, Democratic Leader for the 52nd District, for stopping by.

And let's not forget the anonymous mom who sang a great "Wabash Cannonball" with Vincent Cross and his bluegrass group Good Company.

— *Candace Woodward is a member of the Sustainability Committee and Civic Sweep organizer.*

## And on Fourth Avenue ...

The Forth on Fourth Avenue (FOFA) Committee's effort to bring the Spring Civic Sweep to Fourth Avenue was a huge success, with 17 tree beds brought into care (at President Street, Butler Place, and St. Marks Avenue). The tree beds were cleaned, cultivated, planted, and mulched, and had the now-familiar FOFA DIY tree guards installed. FOFA members got a lot of positive feedback from passersby on the avenue, some of whom stopped to help while many signed up to be on the committee's mailing list.

In addition to the friends FOFA members enlisted for help, a special thank you goes out to the following people and organizations for their aid:

Harvey Jaswal from Build It Green helped devise a temporary tree-guard solution by donating more than 100 salvaged metal railings and design a DIY tree-guard prototype.

FOFA member Joe Ciccone generously donated his bolt cutter and time to cut the metal railings to size.

Lisa Alpert and Art Presson at Green-Wood Historic Trust arranged for the donation and delivery of beautiful mulch; workers Adam and Jorge helped supervisor Clifford Rose with the actual delivery at the three FOFA sites.

Chief Klingler of the Department of Sanitation gave us permission for a Friday afternoon drop-off of mulch.

Anthony Mazzamuto, administrative department manager at Lowe's, arranged for the donation of perennials and annuals for the tree beds.

The Ivy Garden contributed plants and bottled water. Gerard Lordahl at GrowNYC loaned tools and gloves. Warren—St. Marks Community Garden and the Garden of Union lent hand tools, wheelbarrows, and garden volunteers for the day.

Working members from the Park Slope Food Coop and volunteers from the Fifth Avenue Committee helped with work on the Fourth Avenue sites.

— *Grace Freedman, Elise Selinger, and SJ Avery contributed to this roundup.*

## Share and Share a Bike

**Set to launch** this July, New York City's new bike-share program is possibly the biggest new transportation development in the city since the subway. The system will be similar to existing successful plans in London and Paris. Alta Bicycle Sharing, which operates systems in Boston and Washington, D.C., will manage our system as well.

While those programs have about 600 and 1,200 bikes, respectively, New York's will dwarf them both, with 10,000 bicycles at 600 stations in Manhattan and Brooklyn.

On March 15, local residents, members of Community Board 6, and staff from the Department of Transportation gathered at the Old First Reformed Church for a Bike Share Community Planning Workshop, a chance to learn more about and help shape New York's bike sharing plan.

There's no word as of yet on exactly how stations will be split between the two boroughs nor how many will be slated for Park Slope. Community members at the workshop, however, requested sharing spots everywhere from alongside subway stations and schools to in front of major business areas and the edge of Prospect Park. DOT even brought along a bike-share bicycle, letting residents quite literally kick the tires and see just what they'll get to ride beginning this summer.

So what's next for bike share? DOT will compile residents' suggestions and return to Community Board 6 in May with a more specific list of locations. While no one can say with any certainty where stations will be located as of press time, one thing is for sure: Bike sharing is going to be big.

— *Doug Gordon blogs about bicycling, livable streets, and sustainable transportation at BrooklynSpoke.com.*



## Official Business:

# Nominations for Civic Council Trustees

**The Civic Council** has nominated six new trustees for the upcoming year. The current Board of Trustees is scheduled to vote on these nominees at the Trustees Meeting on Thursday, May 3. The general membership may vote on this slate of nominees at the Civic Council's General Meeting, Thursday, June 7.

**Peter Bray** founded and directs the New York City Financial Network Action Consortium, a nonprofit that strengthens the delivery of affordable financial services for low-income households throughout the city. His community development career has also involved developing affordable housing and needed facilities in the South Bronx in the 1980s and 1990s. Since 2007, he has chaired the Civic Council's Historic District Committee, working with a highly dedicated group of volunteers to obtain the Park Slope Historic District's first expansion since it was established in 1973. With family roots in Park Slope extending back 80 years, he is passionate about preserving its history, streetscapes, and quality of life.


**Joni Kletter** is a union side labor and employment lawyer who has lived in Park Slope for six years. She loves to Rollerblade, bike, and play with her French bulldog Chachi in Prospect Park. She volunteers for the Civic Council's Historic District and Outreach Committees, and serves as a public member for Community Board 6's Parks and Recreation Committee. She is also involved with local politics, and recently volunteered as a delegate to City Councilmember Brad Lander's Participatory Budgeting Team (see article on the next page).

A Massachusetts native, **Kim Maier** has been happy to call Park Slope home since 1984. As the director of the Old Stone House and Washington Park, she has worked with the OSH board, the community, the Department of Parks and Recreation (Brooklyn), and our elected officials to see through nearly \$9 million in park improvements during the past six years, as well as to create year-round educational and cultural events at the Old Stone House and the park. Maier lives on Third Street with her husband, Presley. Their daughters Kate and Emily are graduates of P.S. 321 and M.S. 51.

Born and raised in Park Slope, **Thomas Miskel** became involved with local issues in the 1970s, working with his block association and on efforts to set up the Park Slope Historic District. Joining the Civic Council in the 1990s, he is a past president of the organization, and currently chairs the annual Toys for Tots collection drive and works on the Scholarship Committee. He also serves as first vice president at Community Board 6, where he chairs the Transportation Committee and serves on two others (Landmarks/Land Use; and Public Safety/Environmental Protection/Permits and Licenses); sits on the Prospect Park YMCA's Board of Managers; and is Veterans Committee co-chair at the 14th Street Armory. A graduate of St. Saviour's Grammar School, he wrote a history of the parish upon its centennial in 2005.

**Jeff Roth** is the director of grant monitoring for the New York City Fire Department, and serves as the battalion operations officer for the 1-258 FA, New York Army Reserve National Guard in Queens, N.Y., with a rank of major. He is a gradu-

ate of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University with a master's degree in public policy and urban planning. He has served in various organizations as a volunteer, currently with the advisory group for the Financial Clinic's Fellowship Program. He has lived in Park Slope since he arrived in New York City five years ago, and recently helped support the neighborhood's application to the Department of Transportation's Slow Zones initiative.

**Joe Rydell** has lived in Park Slope for nearly three decades. During that time, he spent 15 years working in the entertainment industry as an actor, producer, and casting director. Currently, he is a clinical social worker, and a psychotherapist in private practice. He has been an active volunteer for the Civic Council, has worked on the House Tour for many years, and is a member of the Livable Streets Committee. For the past 10 years, his volunteer involvement has been significant at both schools his son has attended, the Berkeley Carroll School and the Brooklyn Prospect Charter School. 

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# And the Budget Winners Are ...

**Seven diverse projects** — helping local students, trees, composters, pedestrians, and library users — were voted to share in almost \$1 million of funding from Councilmember Brad Lander in a new budgeting process that involved the entire community.

This participatory budgeting process allows citizens to propose how their tax dollars should be spent and then vote on the proposals.

The projects in Lander's 39th Council District receiving the most votes were: bathroom renovations at P.S. 124, \$150,000; Brooklyn neighbors composting, \$165,000; Council District 39 tree planting, \$100,000; technology upgrades and improvements at P.S. 154/P.S. 130, \$140,000; Prospect Park pedestrian pathway rehabilitation, \$205,000; fixes to pedestrian hazards at the Prospect Expressway, \$200,000; and library resources and community space at the Brooklyn Public Library's Kensington branch, \$80,000.

Lander and City Council colleagues Melissa Mark-Viverito, Eric Ulrich, and Jumaane Williams brought the concept of participatory budgeting to the citizens of their districts. Locally, Lander appropriated approximately \$1 million of his discretionary funds toward the process.

After Lander and his staff held five general assemblies throughout the district and received hundreds of ideas from residents, some 100 community members volunteered as budget delegates. The delegate committees were charged with reviewing, researching, and developing the nascent ideas into about 20 concrete proposals for a ballot. Working in teams, the delegates toured the neighborhoods of District 39, calculated costs, talked to residents, and met with representatives from city agencies.

On March 14, a participatory budgeting expo was held at the Park Slope Armory. Delegate committees pooled their artistic talents, and with markers, glitter, tape, and a lot of creativity, they presented the final proposals to residents of the 39th District. As curious neighbors wandered around the room, budget delegates showed off their proposals and played the role of grassroots political lobbyists, hoping to convince voters that their project was worthy of a vote. (A list

of all the proposals and videos presentations is available at [bradlander.com/participatory-budgeting-ballot-projects](http://bradlander.com/participatory-budgeting-ballot-projects).)

During the weekend of March 31, more than 2,000 District 39 residents came out to vote, each one selecting five out of the 20 proposals. Everyone in the district was eligible to vote, regardless of immigration or voter registration status.

**Overall, participatory budgeting was a huge success.**

The seven projects receiving the most votes will be prioritized for funding as part of the city's fiscal

year 2013 budget, which will be adopted in June.

Overall, participatory budgeting was a huge success for District 39. In addition to meeting more of their neighbors, Park Slopers experienced what the *New York Times* called "revolutionary civics in action," a form of hyperlocal democracy. We are all winners, but as a delegate who introduced and designed one of the winning proposals — for pathway rehabilitation in Prospect Park — I can say that it feels great to get the winning votes!

— *Joni Kletter was a participatory budgeting delegate for District 39's Parks and Recreation Committee and its Parks Improvement Subcommittee, and is a Civic Council trustee-nominee.*

## Help Our Trees

**The thousands of trees** that the city planted this spring need our help. There has been so little rainfall in recent months that the saplings throughout Park Slope may not make it through the summer unless they are watered frequently. Watering is often overlooked as an important part of ensuring the survival of a young tree. A sapling needs to be watered regularly for the first two years in order to develop the root system that it needs to protect itself during periods of drought.

Why should we water these fragile saplings? As the MillionTreesNYC program points out, "Trees help clean our air, and reduce the pollutants that trigger asthma attacks and exacerbate other respiratory diseases. They cool our streets, sidewalks, and homes on hot summer days. Trees increase property value, and encourage neighborhood revitalization. And trees make our City an even more beautiful and comfortable place to live, work, and visit."

Please help the saplings in Park Slope survive. Water them today.

# Civic News

The newsletter of the

 **PARK SLOPE CIVIC COUNCIL**

Spring 2012 | Volume 74, No. 3

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*Cover Photos:* David Herman (Fourth Avenue, South Slope) and Michael Cairl (House Tour)

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](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org).

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