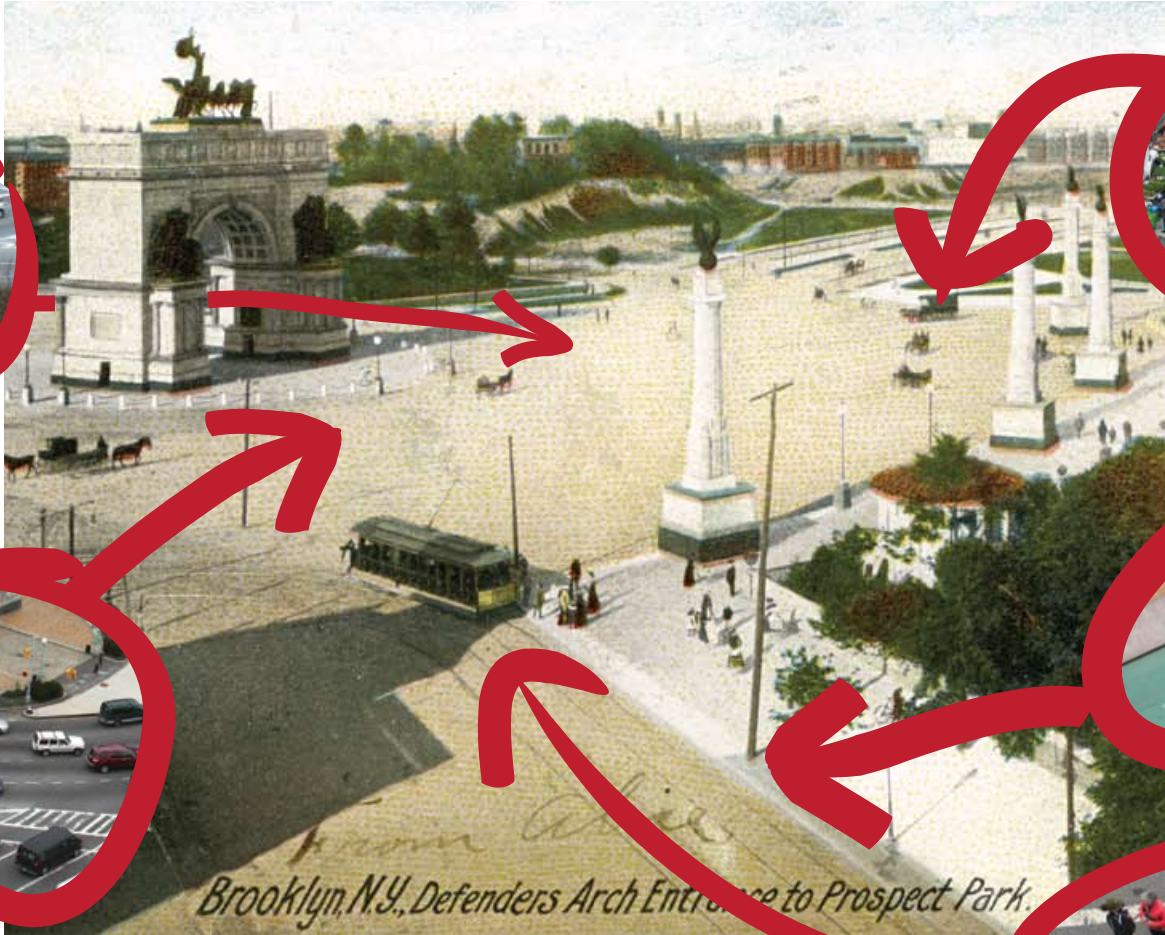
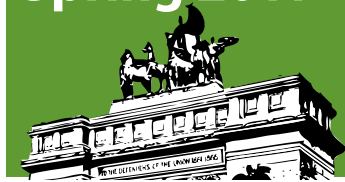


# Civic News

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

Spring 2011



*Brooklyn, N.Y., Defenders Arch Entrance to Prospect Park.*

## Building Our Livable Streets

How can we work together to create a more engaging street  
and a more vital community?

plus ...

A Journey Around and For Park Slope

A Safer, Grander Army Plaza

Council Endorses Café Quiet Bill

# What Makes Park Slope a Community?

**In the space** of one week in March, I had two very different experiences of community, right here in Park Slope. The first was the Civic Council’s annual forum, this year focusing on “Growing a Business in Park Slope.” A capacity crowd of some 150 people came to the historic Montauk Club to listen to a wide range of prominent local business-people and then share knowledge and ideas with others at their tables.

*Do you own or rent?  
Where do you live in  
the Slope? Regardless of  
the answers, everyone  
has an equal stake in  
our community.*

There were a lot of new faces that evening and a high level of positive energy in the room. This was the building of community among people who were mostly strangers to one another. The Civic Council and the people who joined us at the forum are eager to harness that evening’s energy into lasting relationships and new initiatives. This is no small task, but it is a positive challenge well within

our abilities and an investment in our community well worth making.

The second incident was at Community Board 6’s town-hall meeting on the reconfiguration of Prospect Park West. For the moment, please let’s leave aside our opinions about the design itself. A reporter for *The New York Times* who covered the hearing overheard one resi-

dent opposed to the plan asking another who supported it whether she lived on Prospect Park West and owned her own home. The answer to both questions was “yes.” The real response, or at least a follow-up, should have been “What difference does it make?”

It’s disturbing that a question like that was asked at all. Regardless of whether one owns or rents, or where one happens to be on Park Slope’s diverse socioeconomic scale, everyone has an equal stake in our community. Period. But as unsettling as that question was, it was also unsurprising.

A resident just west of Fourth Avenue wrote me not long ago to register her opposition to the forthcoming reopening of a long-closed subway entrance on the east side of Fourth Avenue between Ninth and Tenth Streets. She said it would divide the community and she didn’t want “people in Park Slope telling us what to do.” I replied that the Civic Council had championed the restored entrance for the entire community, as it would reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles at that busy intersection as well as bring new life to that part of Fourth Avenue.

What is it that makes a community when it is so diverse as to appear diffuse? People and businesses move here, stay here, and leave here for countless reasons. There’s a sense of Park Slope being a good place, something many people want to be part of. We can look out our windows and perhaps see Prospect Park or busy Fifth Avenue or the smiling facade of an old school built by the City of Brooklyn — and it is all part of this place. We can be in a civic organization, a church, or the Food Coop (or not), and it is all part of this place. We can be a newcomer and listen to long-timers tell how it was impossible to get a mortgage in Park Slope in the 1960s, or how parts of Fifth Avenue were an open-air drug market well into the 1990s. We can walk into the rebuilt Armory on Eighth Avenue and scratch our heads in amazement that it could have been derelict for so long. All this is continuity and change rolled into one. And we are *all* part of it.

The Park Slope Civic Council is working hard to build community. For years, the Civic Council was seen as an uphill-of-Seventh Avenue group. No more. We embrace all of Park Slope’s parts — and all of its voices.

Join with us — your neighbors — to build the community. Be part of a new generation organizing our annual House Tour, for instance (turn to page 7 for details on this upcoming popular event). Join our energetic and effective drive to expand the Park Slope Historic District. Become part of one of our other initiatives, among them livable streets, sustainability, and Fourth Avenue’s future. Be part of the buzz. You’ll meet some great people, whether they’re “like you” or not, whom you probably never knew before. Help shape the change that occurs every day, in plain sight. Join the Park Slope Civic Council.

— *Michael Cairl is the president of the Civic Council. Send ideas and comments to [civicnews@parkslopeciviccouncil.org](mailto:civicnews@parkslopeciviccouncil.org).*

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# Civic News

The newsletter of the



**PARK SLOPE CIVIC COUNCIL**

Spring 2011 | Volume 73, No. 3

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

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## Building Our Livable Streets

What is the essence of Park Slope? The answer might be found on our very livable streets. They are our gathering place, where we meet our neighbors, help each other out, and share our strengths. In the future, we'll have to work hard to build on this asset, creating an even more engaging street and a more vital community. We sought out six local leaders and advocates to learn how we, as neighbors, can accomplish that goal.

page 4



## A Journey Around and For Park Slope

Imagine a tour that's fun, inspirational, and educational — and that benefits organizations throughout our community. Well, you don't have to imagine: It's the annual House Tour. **Plus:** the recipients of the Civic Council's community grants, made possible by last year's tour.

page 7



## Comment

page 2

**What Makes Park Slope a Community?** Should your voice in the community be determined by whether you own or rent, or where you happen to be on the local socioeconomic scale?

## News & Notes

page 9

**A Safer, Grandier Plaza** Coming this summer to Grand Army Plaza: safer driving, easier pedestrian crossings, and more cycling connections, thanks to improvements from the city's Department of Transportation.



**Official Business: Bylaw Changes, Trustee Nominations** The Civic Council has proposed a series of additions to our bylaws, and has nominated several new trustees and a new treasurer for the upcoming year.

**Civic Council Endorses Bill for Café Quiet** Assemblymember Millman has put together a bill that would help maintain the peace for neighbors of backyard restaurants and bars.

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for supporting  
the Park Slope Civic Council:



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**ON THE COVER:** An old postcard of Grand Army Plaza, mailed out in 1907, with some modern-day additions that make it part of Park Slope's livable streets. Postcard from and photos by David Herman.

# Building Our Livable Streets

*What is the essence of Park Slope? The answer might be found on our very livable streets. They are our gathering place, where we meet our neighbors, help each other out, and share our strengths. Healthy street life encourages us to walk around, ride a local bus, and cycle. In the future, we'll have to work hard to build on this asset, creating an even more engaging street and a more vital community. Civic News sought out six local leaders and advocates to learn how we, as neighbors, can accomplish that goal.*

## Our streets, our largest shared space

The concept of livable streets has many meanings simply because there are many ways of living. First of all, can a street accommodate the various needs and desires of the community? A truly livable street is one that efficiently moves people — because transportation is a primary purpose of streets — and creates a pleasant environment for those moving at a slower pace or even standing still. Our streets, our largest shared public space, need to be places where we all feel safe to travel, relax, play, and linger.

A sure sign that a street is living up to its full potential is when pedestrians can do anything — catch the subway or bus, shop locally, chat with a neighbor, play a game of tag, take a rest — without its transportation functionality compromising their experience. Unfortunately, streets are only so big. How can we make room for all the living we want to do on them?

To fit these many uses, we have to change the way we currently think of our streets, as storage facilities. Free, on-street private vehicle parking should be allowed only after we have made space for the essentials. We can increase safety and visibility at intersections by reducing parking at corners and building curb extensions that limit the distance between corners. We can encourage quiet, nonpolluting cycling by building a connected network of protected paths and providing abundant bike parking in on-street corrals. We can add amenities such as streetside cafes and pleasantly landscaped plazas for everyone's enjoyment. We can do all this and more, but only if we have space. Just because someone has a metal placeholder — a.k.a. a car — does not mean they should be able to claim something that belongs to all of us.

We should all work toward a more equitable distribution of street real estate, because when a street is a place people want to be, neighborhood ties are strengthened and businesses benefit. Sponsor a block party or attend a Summer Street event to see how joyous a street can be when people are the priority. Encourage the

Police Department to enforce moving violations so we are all safe on the street. Attend community hearings on proposed changes to street infrastructure to help shape streets that are functional and enjoyable. Your community will thank you!  
— *Joanna Oltman Smith is a full-time mother and local safe-street activist in Park Slope.*

## Make our public realm very livable and friendly

I am proud to live in a city that understands investing in public transportation and livable streets is a key to a strong economy, a foundation for broadly shared prosperity, and a sustainable future. Park Slope is one of the local centers of this kind of thinking, and sees a vibrant public realm as the foundation of a strong community.

Our streets and sidewalks are one of our most important public spaces. We use them every day to get to work and school. They are vital places of commerce for small business. They are where we meet friends, exercise, recreate, stroll, and enjoy our neighborhoods.

In Park Slope, it's easy to get to know your neighbors because everyone spends so much time outside, even when there is 2 feet of snow on the ground. As a Park Slope resident for almost two decades, I'm constantly running into old friends (and making new ones) while on the street with my family and while at work in the neighborhood. Without a vibrant and safe public realm, these kinds of chance meetings would have little hope of occurring.

Many of the projects I have been working on while in office would further enhance the neighborhood. I am working with community groups to create pocket parks and small green spaces with places to sit and socialize. I am proud to have the opportunity to work with the Civic Council and Borough President Markowitz to plant more trees, protect the one we already have, and install enhanced tree pits that get more water to trees and reduce sewage runoff.

I would also like to see more events where we occasionally make streets into temporary public space. The Halloween and baseball parades on Seventh Avenue, the Pride Parade, and block parties are some of the best days in our community — and remind us of how precious our public space is.

Park Slope is a special place because of the things that make our public realm an extraordinarily livable and friendly place. Our community is doing a great job creating complete and livable streets that accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers. I want to continue to work with local residents, businesses, and other stakeholders to make local streets safer and more pleasant.

— *Brad Lander is city councilmember for the 39th District, which includes Park Slope and many nearby communities.*



Photos by David Herman



### Livable streets are what you make them

Livable streets are created by the people who live on them. During my tenure as borough president, this concept has guided much of what we have done for neighborhoods across Brooklyn, and of course in Park Slope.

As the advocates for their residents, block associations are one of the best tools neighborhoods have to help realize their concept of a livable street. The block-association movement was born in Park Slope some 40 years ago, when homeowners and newcomers banded together to fight urban blight, graffiti, and crime. Today, in addition to sponsoring block parties, Brooklyn's ultimate summer rite, block associations tackle neighborhood improvement issues, including greening efforts, historic preservation and contextual zoning. At our 10th Annual Federation of Brooklyn Block Associations event in April, more than 100 association leaders came together to meet with agencies and share strategies for making their blocks more livable.

My office has teamed up with block associations to advance local green efforts by co-sponsoring the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Greenest Block Competition. Over the past 10 years, Park Slope block associations have consistently received top honors for their efforts.

In 2004, we created the Neighborhood Beautification Fund, a program that allows blocks associations to apply for gorgeous wrought-iron tree guards on their residential streets. More than 35 Park Slope blocks have taken part in this program. In addition to protecting our precious trees and adding much elegance to a streetscape, these tree guards encourage local gardening efforts. The program is also good for the environment: Enlarging the size of the tree pit from 5 by 5 feet to 5 by 9 feet makes for healthier trees, decreases sidewalk damage caused by tree roots, and dramatically reduces polluted storm-water runoff into New York Harbor.

We have also been proud to partner with local residents to protect your neighborhoods. My office has supported, through the city land-use process (ULURP), the efforts of local groups to "downzone" your area, a process that helps ensure streets maintain consistent structures and maintain their character.

Never forget that livable streets are what you make them. Every neighborhood has a different vision of what they want their street to look like, and I am proud to be a partner in helping you turn that vision into a reality.

— *Marty Markowitz has been Brooklyn borough president since 2002.*

Park Slope Civic Council

### How do you want to experience your neighborhood?

What makes a livable street? It has a human scale: You walk or bike to the market, or stroll comfortably with your dog. Livable streets offer a sense of place and community. When people think of Park Slope, they think of brownstones, small shops, trees, and strollers — perhaps it's a cliché to Park Slopers, but a lot of communities wish for such positive associations, so celebrate the livable-streets foundation you already have.

What I love about advocacy is that for any issue, there's a group of people for whom it's a priority, often to the point of expertise. A livable street is made up of many elements — activate that local network and see which of your interests commonly apply to livable-streets goals, so more people can contribute. In my neighborhood, we've got experienced advocates for open space, traffic calming, etc. Having everyone at the table is essential; after all, we're not talking "transportation infrastructure" — this is about how people feel in their neighborhood.

Before you meet with city or elected officials, though, make sure you have consensus around a tangible platform. Develop a list of problems, solutions, and "wish-list" items. More street trees? Historic street lamps? An anti-graffiti campaign? City agencies, elected officials, and community leaders can then jointly develop an action plan. Be prepared to participate at every stage, and make sure to celebrate and thank the appropriate people for each step forward.

The stronger the network, the broader the knowledge base — and speaking with one voice makes all the difference. There hasn't been a city transportation commissioner more supportive of the ideals of livable streets than Janette Sadik-Khan. Now is the time to think about how you want to experience your neighborhood — and now is the time to make it happen.

— *Teresa Toro is a native Brooklynite, and served as Transportation Committee chair for Brooklyn Community Board 1 for eight years. She currently lives in Greenpoint.*

### It's about finding a balance

The judgment of Donald Appleyard's seminal 1981 book, *Livable Streets*, was simple yet startling: The hegemony of the automobile on urban streets was killing American cities.

Appleyard, a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, studied San Francisco streets of similar geometry and design that varied in one significant way — the amount of traffic they carried. He learned that the social effects of

traffic volumes were pronounced. People living on lightly traveled streets had more than three times as many friends on their blocks as did people on heavily traveled streets, and they tended to gather more frequently and spend more time on their blocks.

And he discovered that residents of light-traffic streets defined their “home territories” much more broadly than their high-traffic counterparts, identifying their entire blocks as home, not just their apartments or buildings.

His science makes sense on a gut level. Busy streets full of honking cars — whether speeding or gridlocked — just aren’t pleasant. They push us away, confine us to our quarters, or make us hurry along. Conversely, calm, quiet, well-balanced streets draw us in, make us want to linger, and encourage us to hail our neighbors from our stoops.

That, at its essence, is what the idea of the livable street is all about. It’s not about banning cars, but finding a balance and sharing streets equitably among pedestrians, drivers, cyclists, and transit-users. Initiatives like road diets, protected bike paths, dedicated bus lanes, and pedestrian plazas are

all aimed at creating “complete streets” — safe and accessible for everyone.

While most of us likely don’t spend a lot of time thinking about what makes a street livable, we know one when we experience one. That innate sense came out in full force

in the spring 2007, when the city’s Department of Transportation floated the idea of altering Park Slope’s Sixth and Seventh Avenues from two-way flow to one-way. Our community spontaneously rose up in united, visceral opposition, overwhelming a public meeting and flooding DOT with thousands of petition signatures in just a few days.

And that sense of what makes our streets livable is paramount to why so many of us consider walkable, bikeable, transit-accessible Park Slope such a pleasant and desirable place to live.

— *Eric McClure is the treasurer of the Park Slope Civic Council and a co-founder of Park Slope Neighbors.*

### It starts with the individual

I grew up in a very different Brooklyn than today. It was the 1970s. **FORD TO CITY: DROP DEAD** screamed the headlines. People were leaving the city in droves. Only us stalwarts were left behind to rebuild.

Our streets and sidewalks were extensions of our homes. We lived outwardly. We gathered on porches and stoops to socialize and play. We rode our bikes in the streets without helmets and played punch ball and kick the can. Cars were a relatively minor nuisance. These were the days before terms like *road rage* existed. Before iPods and Blackberrys, before

even Sony’s Walkman. People paid attention. They interacted in surroundings they could not control. And people were more aware.

My parents taught me how to walk down the sidewalk. Youngsters were expected to yield the sidewalk to their elders. People held doors, helped neighbors carry packages, and may have even greeted strangers. We swept, even washed down our sidewalks. These were things we were taught at home, lessons reinforced at school and in the community. And if you stopped to chat with a neighbor, you’d often lean against their fence or join them on their stoop. You certainly wouldn’t hog the whole sidewalk to yourself. That would have been rude and inconsiderate.

So whatever happened to that sidewalk etiquette? In today’s jacked-in world, we carry our inward, private lives around with us and move from place to place, cut off from our surroundings. At least one legislator has suggested making it illegal to wear headphones while crossing the street. Whenever we have to start legislating common sense, we’ve clearly fallen down as a society. When did being “social” become so dependent on electronic devices? When did walking down a sidewalk become so complicated, fraught with obstacles, obliviousness, and unpredictable behavior? When did driving become more offensive than defensive?

Today, if we stop to smell the roses, it’s often to take a flower pic for our Facebook page. When I see how much time some people spend behind the camera, it occurs to me that they are capturing moments that they are not even a part of — voyeurs trapped inside electromagnetic bubbles of their own creation. What will it take to burst the bubble? Legislation cannot be the answer.

It starts with the individual, with the thought, with the awareness. It starts with sharing the idea with our family, friends, and fellow travelers. If we make our streets and sidewalks safer, more attractive, and more livable, they can once again become our greatest civic spaces where societies are formed and communities solidified.

Try this — the next time you go for a walk, enjoy the walk. Leave your iPod home and let your surroundings be your soundtrack. And don’t forget to smile.

— *Craig Hammerman is district manager of Brooklyn Community Board 6, a Park Slope Civic Council trustee, and child of Brooklyn’s streets.*

### Now it’s your turn

Do you want to have a voice in this discussion? The Civic Council’s Livable Streets Committee has long been an advocate in the community for a more robust street life, from modifications around Grand Army Plaza to a more responsible future for Fourth Avenue and beyond.

We encourage you to join this conversation and shape your community. The committee and its recently founded Fourth Avenue-centric subcommittee **FORTHONFOURTH** meet every third Thursday morning of the month at the Brooklyn Lyceum. (The next meeting is May 19, 7:30 a.m.) E-mail [livablestreets@parkslopeciviccouncil.org](mailto:livablestreets@parkslopeciviccouncil.org) for more information.



An excellent primer on livable streets and our city’s policies is available from the city’s Department of Transportation. To download a copy of

*World Class Streets*, head to the DOT’s website at [www.nyc.gov/dot](http://www.nyc.gov/dot).



# A Journey Around and For Park Slope

**Imagine a tour** of Park Slope that's fun, inspirational, and educational — and that benefits organizations throughout our community. Well, you don't have to imagine, because it's coming up soon: the Civic Council's annual House Tour.

The 52nd edition of the always-popular self-guided house-to-house journey will explore the South Slope, an area currently under review to be included in an expanded Park Slope Historic District. The tour will be on Sunday, May 15, noon to 5 p.m., and starts from P.S. 107 (Eighth Avenue and 13th Street). There, tour-goers can pick up the required house brochure and shoe covers. The event will conclude at 5:30 with "South Slope 1900: Lives and Times," an illustrated lecture by architectural historian Francis Morrone at the Park Slope Jewish Center, Eighth Avenue and 14th Street.

Tickets can be purchased online, at local retailers, and on the day of the tour (visit [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/house-tour](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/house-tour)). Proceeds from the tour fund the entire Civic Council's grants program, which provides thousands of dollars each year to local schools, organizations, and non-profit programs.

"We have a real variety of beautiful houses on the tour this year," said Candace Woodward, a Civic Council trustee who has been organizing this event for several years. On the tour, people "will realize that Park Slope isn't just traditional brownstones." For example, an 1890s carriage house has been trans-

formed into a dramatic, contemporary 4,000-square-foot loft with large windows and skylights. Highlights include a stunning kitchen area, abstract paintings by Maria Louisa Pacheco, and a handsome American Indian hanging. A doorway leads to an inviting patio and abundant vegetable garden.

There will also be an outstanding example of green living at an 1858 wood-frame communal living home. Geothermal heating and cooling, recycled floor boards, and a lovely garden watered by the home's own well through underground drip hoses are a few of its earth-friendly features. An impressively grand Chambers Stove presides over the kitchen.

Another stop is an 1893 Romanesque Revival home, which sat vacant for 35 years before the current owners purchased it. Walking into the parlor of the house, you'll see a beautiful example of a Bradbury & Bradbury papered ceiling, Anaglypta wainscoting, and an old Victrola. A rare oil painting of Marilyn Monroe hangs in the front bedroom. The charming kitchen, featuring a coal stove and original pine plank flooring, leads to a brick patio with dogwood and cherry trees.

A 1903 Flemish Renaissance home featuring Steve Mumford paintings of Iraq War scenes and a stunning photograph of the Na Pali Coast by Peter Lik plus a Victorian period stop at a 1901 Romanesque Revival house are also among the domiciles on the tour. Each is a major point of interest for Woodward.

"I also think the talk following the tour will be fascinating," she added, as it will explore how residents of the area both rich and poor worked, learned, lived, and had fun at the turn of the previous century. Lecturer Morrone, a three-decade Park Slope resident himself, was recently named by *Travel + Leisure* as one of the 13 best tour guides in the world for the trips he leads with the Municipal Arts Society.



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Known for such books as *An Architectural Guidebook to Brooklyn* and *The Park Slope Neighborhood and Architectural History Guide*, he has a new work coming out in June, *The New York Public Library: The Architecture and Decoration of the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building*.

Advance tickets are available for \$20 online and at select local retailers (see our website for details as well as rules for the tour), and \$25 the day of the event.

**Granting awards**

The money earned from the House Tour goes back into the community to fund annual grants for a diverse group of ac-

tive, creative nonprofit organizations that contribute to our community's diversity and vitality.

Grants recipients for the 2010–11 grants cycle were announced at the April Civic Council Trustees meeting. A total of \$5,600 was given to eight groups.

The largest, a Community Builder grant of \$2,000, was given to the P.S. 39 Parent's Association, for "Edible Community: A Learning Garden for P.S. 39 Students." The school plans to construct an on-site learning garden, where students will grow edible plants and study botany through activities intended to develop their appetites for fresh food and foster environmental responsibility. The grant will fund installation of planting beds and irrigation and composting systems, along with the purchase of supporting classroom materials.

Regular grants, each worth \$500 except where noted, were announced for:

**GALLOP Horse Show**, to fund an event this June in Prospect Park that demonstrates the skills of people with disabilities. This noncompetitive horse show will display what the children have learned.

**BRIC Arts | Media | Bklyn (\$600)**, for Celebrate Brooklyn honoraria for storytellers at the Ezra Jack Keats Family Concert. The show, which features celebrity storytellers who read the works of the children's book author prior to the concert, has

become an annual tradition and the centerpiece of Celebrate Brooklyn's family programming.

**Chocolate Chip Chamber Music**, for Education Day program and guide. Chocolate Chip Chamber Music introduces young children to live ensemble music in an enjoyable and playful way. Funding will help the organization print teachers' guides and develop a web page to extend the concert experience into more classrooms.

**Park Slope Parents for Climate Protection**, for speaker honoraria, publications, and information packets. The organization's goal is to educate parents on the causes and implications of global warming, and work toward passage of climate protection legislation. The grant will be used for guest honoraria and publicity for Eco-Drinks events (each a brief talk followed by a question-and-answer session and letter writing on climate issues).

**BAX/Brooklyn Arts Exchange**. BAX provides support for emerging performing artists, arts education for Brooklyn youth from low- and moderate-income families, and teaching residencies in Brooklyn public schools. BAX also produces an annual season in its theater. Our grant will subsidize tuition for five preschools to attend Arts Education Professional Development Workshops that BAX conducts.

**P.S. 321 School Garden**, for a tensile triangle shade system and picnic tables. The garden, called Plantville, has been quite successful since original funding last year. The new grant will fund a learning center with benches, tables, and shade structure to create a more accessible and functional space adjacent to the garden, accommodating maximum class size as needed.

**Friends of Douglass/Greene Park, Inc.**, for Gowanus Grind III. The Douglass Greene Park is a recreational gem on Third Avenue and Douglass Street in an area of the community where there is little open space. The grant will pay for a skateboard instructor and awards at this springtime event, which attracts users, new and old, to the park.

The application process for Community Builder and regular grants begins every year in early October. For more information, e-mail [grants@parkslopeciviccouncil.org](mailto:grants@parkslopeciviccouncil.org), or sign up for Civic Council e-mail updates at [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org).

— David Herman



**Nearly \$6,000 in Civic Council grants went to local groups.**



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# A Safer, Grander Plaza

**Coming this summer** to Grand Army Plaza: safer driving, easier pedestrian crossings, and more cycling connections, thanks to improvements from the city's Department of Transportation.

Representatives from the agency presented these changes and a construction schedule at the Grand Army Plaza Coalition's annual meeting, held on April 16 at 1 Grand Army Plaza. "GAPCo is a forum for stakeholders in the area to discuss issues of concern in the city's premier public plaza," said chair Rob Witherwax. The alliance brings together cultural organizations, residents around the space, community boards, block associations, and elected officials, including the Park Slope Civic Council, a founding member.

One of the biggest changes will be a new traffic signal and barrier on the west side of the plaza. This setup will remove a now-dangerous traffic merge of vehicles heading south on Flatbush and Vanderbilt Avenues with those driving around the circle to meet Union Street and Prospect Park West.

The DOT's plans also include new signals, traffic islands, and crosswalks at the plaza's northern end, where Flatbush and Vanderbilt meet. On the south end, site of the greenmarket every Saturday, gravel treatment and granite blocks will improve this much-used space and more clearly separate it from the adjacent roadway. A similar treatment will also be added to the area between the arch and the steps to the Bailey Fountain in the plaza's center.

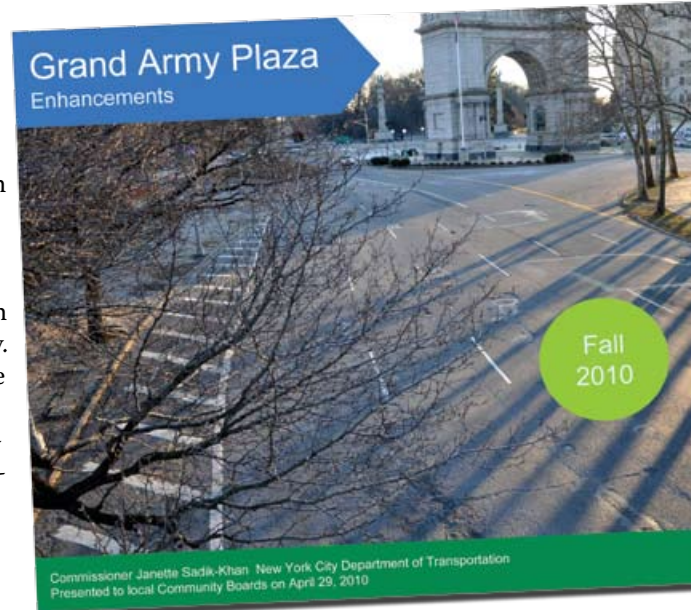
Protected bike lanes will be installed coming off Union Street, which will help fill in gaps in the current cycling network.

Construction work will begin in June at various points in the plaza. Major work, some of which will have to take place in the daytime, will stretch from Independence Day to Labor Day. The only traffic diversion will be a small one at the north end in July, said DOT design coordinator Terra Ishee, to allow for construction of the traffic barrier.

The plan DOT put forth was very similar to one presented in 2010 (see the May 2010 issue of *Civic News*), but with modifications suggested by the community, said Chris Hrones, the DOT's Downtown Brooklyn construction coordinator. "DOT has been excellent about coming to the community, discussing its ideas, and getting proper signoffs," Witherwax added.

The biggest change from last year's concept is that DOT will not be moving ahead with a separated bike-lane upgrade for Plaza Street, said Josh Benson, director of bicycle and pedestrian programs, "due to concerns from the community that DOT will address." Witherwax expects GAPCo to do more community outreach and get more ideas on this aspect of the project.

The new DOT plan will be presented to Community Boards 6 and 8 over the next



**This summer's modifications in the plaza build on the recommendations made in last year's DOT report.**

few weeks for their approval.

Another improvement will be the return of a former Grand Army Plaza resident. The monument to Abraham Lincoln, which decades ago had been moved to Prospect Park's Concert Grove and wound up facing the back of Wollman Rink, will be returned to the plaza sometime over the next 12 months. The move, said Eric Landau of the Prospect Park Alliance's government relations office, is part of the construction of Lakeside Center, the rink's replacement. The statue, he noted, will be at the very northern end of the plaza, directly across the street from the John F. Kennedy memorial, "so we will have a 'conversation' between the two leaders."

Also at the meeting, the local cultural partnership Heart of Brooklyn announced plans to develop a wayfinding system in and around Grand Army Plaza. "We want to improve movement of people between institutions and around the community," said Ellen Salpeter, Heart of Brooklyn's director. Requests for proposals for the signage system will be going out soon; the goal is to have the system in place by fall 2012.

— David Herman

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## Official Business: Bylaw Changes, Trustee Nominations

**The Civic Council** has proposed a series of additions to our bylaws, and has nominated several new trustees and a new treasurer for the upcoming year.

Trustees will vote on these items at the next Trustees Meeting, on Thursday, May 7. The general membership can vote at the Civic Council's General Meeting, which will be held on Thursday, June 2.

### Nominees

#### Treasurer

After spending more than 20 years working on Wall Street, **Bob Gilbert** recently launched Brooklyn Green Home Solutions, a company that retrofits homes for greater energy efficiency. Gilbert has been a Civic Council member since 2000, and last year became a trustee, co-chair of the Sustainability Committee, and Historic Districts Committee member — roles he will keep in addition to the task of overseeing finances.

#### Trustees

**S.J. Avery** is retired from the health and nonprofit social service sectors. She has lived in Park Slope for almost 35 years, and currently works with Civic Council's FORTHONFourth subcommittee and with the Butler/Baltic Street organization as part of the community task force focusing on the new construction of P.S. 133.

**Darryl Cook** is a professor of architecture for the City University of New York and a senior partner in the Brooklyn-based design firm Cook + Keating. For 10 years, Cook has made Park Slope his home. He is an avid cyclist and a supporter of Prospect Park events and activities, and is involved in several Brooklyn civic projects.

**Carole Gould** has been infatuated with Park Slope since arriving in 1980. She was an involved parent during the 28 years that her three sons attended the Berkeley-Carroll School. A former tax lawyer and columnist for *The New York Times* Sunday Business Section, Gould will be ordained as a rabbi on May 8. She leads a Shabbat minyan (service) at Congregation Beth Elohim, is a member of the Park Slope Jewish Center, and serves as student rabbi/educator at Union Temple.

**Lyn Hill** is vice president for communication and external affairs at New York Methodist Hospital, where she has been employed for 24 years. Hill is active in many organizations both as a Park Slope resident and as a hospital representative, including the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, the Human Services Committee of Community Board 6, the Park Slope Child Care Center, and the Greater Brooklyn Healthcare Coalition. She previously served as a Civic Council trustee for about 20 years,

and is currently co-chair of the Council's Committee on Trustees.

**Josh Levin** is a recent transplant to Park Slope, locating to the Fourth Avenue corridor after graduating from the University of Colorado with a master's degree in urban and regional planning in 2008. He volunteers for the Civic Council's Livable Streets and Outreach Committees, and serves as a public member for Community Board 6's Transportation Committee and the Municipal Art Society's Urbanist Advisory Committee.

### Proposed Changes to Bylaws

#### 1. Changes Approved at July 2010 Board Meeting

*a. Change "Nominating Committee" to "Committee on Trustees" in every instance.*

i. Proposal. Change "Nominating Committee" to "Committee on Trustees" as follows: in Article V, Section VII (two instances); in Article VI, Section I (four instances); in Article VII, Section V (one instance); Article XII, Section I (one instance); and Article XIII, Section II (one instance).

*b. Announcement of Members of the Committee on Trustees.*

i. Background. The activity of the Committee on Trustees will be ongoing, not limited to election season.

ii. Proposal. In Article VI, Section I, change the following sentence: "The members of the Nominating Committee shall be announced in the March issue of the Civic News" to read "The members of the Committee on Trustees shall be announced in writing to the membership."

*c. Communications.*

i. Proposal. In Article IX, Section IV, change "An annual budget for the Civic News shall be included in the proposed budget" to read "An annual budget for communications, including the Civic News, shall be included in the proposed budget."

#### 2. Additional Proposed Changes

*a. Number of Board Meetings*

i. Background. The amount of business before the Civic Council requires that a regular meeting be held in March in addition to the annual forum.

ii. Proposal. In Article V, Section III, change "at least 9 meetings" to "at least 10 meetings."

*b. First Terms for Trustees*

i. Background. The Committee on Trustees has introduced a mentor-protégé program for new trustees. In order to strengthen this program and provide a way for the Board to review the progress of new trustees, it is proposed to divide the first three-

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## Civic Council Endorses Bill for Café Quiet

**Many new restaurants** and bars opening in and around Park Slope are bringing with them a popular dining trend: eating and drinking in their backyards, often late into the night. What can neighboring residents do about the noise that arises from those festive spaces?

Assemblymember Joan Millman has put together a bill that would ensure those outdoor spaces close by or before midnight. The Civic Council endorsed the measure at its Trustees meeting in early April, which affects cities with more than 1 million people.

The bill, an amendment to the state's alcoholic control law, would require bars with open rear yards within 500 feet of a home — as well as rooftop bars less than 10 stories above an adjacent residence — to close by midnight on Fridays and Saturdays, and 11 p.m. on other nights, according to Michael Czaczkes, the assemblywoman's community liaison who spoke at the meeting.

"The bars can still stay open till 4 a.m., but everything would have to move indoors" by 11 or midnight, added Regina Cahill, president of the North Flatbush Business Improvement District. The BID also supports the Millman bill, "which balances the interests of commercial owners and residents." The act, No. 4667-A, also prevents amplified music in the open area and requires that there be only waiter service — i.e., no bar — in that space.

The next step for the bill is a hearing before Community Board 6's Permits and Licenses Committee, which took place after press time. Assemblymember Millman is looking for a State Senate sponsor of the bill. Contact [czaczkesm@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:czaczkesm@assembly.state.ny.us) if you have any questions.

year term into two: a first year during which the new trustee will be in the mentor-protégé program, coached by the mentor, and evaluated by the Committee on Trustees, and two succeeding years, together comprising three years.

ii. Proposal.

1. In Article VII, Section V, Paragraph A is hereby restated as follows: The term of each class of trustees shall commence with their election and continue for one year until the next annual meeting or the election or appointment of their successors. Unless the trustees in their first year resign or are removed in accordance with these Bylaws, they shall be on the ballot for re-nomination on the advice of the Committee on Trustees.

Those trustees who are re-elected at the end of their first year shall have a term commencing with their election and continuing for two years until

the second next annual meeting or the election or appointment of their successors.

Those trustees who have completed three years on the board shall be eligible to serve for an additional two consecutive three-year terms.

At a regular or special membership meeting, only full members in good standing, in person, shall be allowed to vote. The use of proxies is expressly prohibited.

Voting at the annual meeting for the election of officers and trustees shall be done by voice vote unless a majority of those members present request a written ballot.

2. In Article VII, Section V, Paragraph B, delete "three consecutive terms" and in its place insert "nine consecutive years."

[Note: Complete bylaws can be found on our website, [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/bylaws.](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/bylaws.)]

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# Civic News

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## A Day at the Sweeps

**Our thanks to** the more than 100 hard-working volunteers who gave their time to spruce up our community at this year's Spring Civic Sweep. Adults and children from Park Slope and beyond joined together on Sunday, April 10, to plant, clean, and learn what makes our neighborhood special.

We'd also like to express our appreciation to sponsors of the Sweep: supersponsor New York Methodist Hospital; 1 800

Mr. Rubbish, which coordinated free electronics recycling at the Sweep; Leopoldi Hardware; Park Slope Copy Center; Park Slope Day Camp;

Park Slope Food Coop, whose members worked shifts at the event; Tarzian Hardware; and tb shaw realty. Also helping out were Vincent Cross and Good Company, with some fun bluegrass entertainment, and NYC Compost Project in Brooklyn, for their composting demonstrations.

To learn more about the day's events or the fall edition of the Civic Sweep, head to [www.parkslope-civiccouncil.org/civic-sweep](http://www.parkslope-civiccouncil.org/civic-sweep). 