



# Park Slope Civic Council **CIVIC NEWS**

September 2010 Volume LXXIII, No. 1 [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org)

## Make Your Mark in Prospect Park

### *Civic Council Sponsors Design Contest for Entrance Gateway at Third Street*

**A**t the intersection of Third Street and Prospect Park West sits one of the more modest-looking entrances into Prospect Park. Sure, two statues of oversized panthers stand high atop pedestals at either side of the entrance, but even more visible are the sad twin barricades and a large, unfriendly DO NOT ENTER sign in front. The Park Slope Civic Council now hopes to change the look of this valued entryway and bring a new architectural element into the park.

The Civic Council is sponsoring a design competition to create an attractive, contemporary, welcoming, symbolic entry gate for Prospect Park that could replace the existing movable barriers at this spot. The design must also address the needs of pedestrian and bicycle access, restrictions on cars in the park, and emergency/Parks Department requirements.

Anyone interested in the contest can submit designs now through Oct. 25, and winners will be announced on Nov. 15. Entry fee is just \$20 for Civic Council members, \$35 for nonmembers. The winner will earn a \$2,000 prize, while two runners-up will each get \$500.

“People have been complaining about the decrepit look of the barricades, especially now that they seem to be permanently at the Third Street entrance,” says Gilly Youner, second vice president of the Civic Council, architect, and organizer of the design challenge. In addition to improving the aesthetics of the entrance, “we’ve set



up this competition to get people in Park Slope and surrounding areas involved with the Civic Council’s work, especially in something creative for both newcomers and long-time residents.”

The Third Street entrance plays a key role in the daily life of Prospect Park, particularly for people in Center Slope. Many prized attractions are just a short stroll or jog away, including the Third Street Playground, the Long Meadow, Litchfield Villa,

*see Make Your Mark on page 6*

---

## **New Council President’s Goals: Diversity, Sustainability, Fun**

**M**any people meet Michael Cairl for the first time as he sits on the stoop of his North Slope brownstone, rather than at a meeting of some local organization. “It’s great to sit and relax there on my ‘front porch’ on a nice day or evening, see people go by, feed the dogs, and watch the passing parade,” says Cairl, the new president of the Park Slope Civic Council.

“Park Slope is so much defined by the quality of that street life,” he adds. “People walk a lot, there are chance encounters every day. The neighborhood has a very human scale that’s best appreciated on foot, so it’s important that the very special street life we have be recognized and be nurtured.”

A member of the Civic Council for the last six years, Cairl was able to help nurture that aspect of Park Slope life as chair of the Council’s Livable Streets Committee since 2007. The group

started as a reworking of the old Transportation Committee, after Council First Vice President Lauri Schindler and others chose to take a broader view of what comprises the streets — “the life of the streets and everything that makes it up, and not being so narrowly focused on a bike lane here or a bus route there.”

One of the committee’s biggest achievements, he says, has been the Council’s Forum on the Future of Fourth Avenue, held earlier this year, “in terms of the quality of discussions, the quality of presentations, and the fact that we were able to change the format so people would sit together and really interact.”

The Council held the gathering in part to help encourage new voices from the community when discussing the developments along the avenue. More activity has begun to bubble since the

*continued on next page*

forum: improvements to the subway station at Ninth Street, which the Civic Council has been spearheading; plans for planters and perhaps trees along the avenue; and, with funding from Assemblywoman Joan Millman, elimination of one left turn lane at Union Street, which was filled in to create a much safer pedestrian crossing. Plans are now in the works for more Civic Council events that will further this progress.

Cairl's success with Livable Streets is somewhat ironic, considering that at first he was hesitant to take the position. "When Ken Freeman, my predecessor as president, asked me to take this on, I have to admit it was with some reluctance, because transportation is my thing. But this would be a learning and growing experience, and it was."

Indeed, Cairl has been interested in transportation and transit since he was "'yea high.' I loved riding the subway, the noisy old buses, and I made my father take me down to where they were building the Verrazano Bridge every Sunday." He was born in Park Slope's Methodist Hospital in 1956. His mother was a Brooklyn Dodgers fan; his father, a New York Giants fan. "Sometimes I wonder how the two of them ever got together, but they actually met at a Pfizer picnic in Steeplechase Park."

His family moved to Long Island in 1963 but still had relatives in the Slope, including the great aunt whose brownstone Cairl now owns. He went on to attend Fordham University and Columbia University, worked in the Pentagon for Navy procurement, then moved back to New York for an opportunity with a Queens-based defense contractor.

That company "decided to diversify into nondefense areas, including the rail market and projects for NYC Transit." For the last decade, Cairl has focused solely on transit. Currently, he is handling oversight of light-rail projects in Norfolk, Va., and Salt Lake City on behalf of the Federal Transit Administration.

Since returning to his home borough, one of Cairl's most heartfelt memories has been the entire neighborhood coming together to honor Squad 1 on Union Street after Sept. 11, 2001. "I saw so many of my neighbors come out along Seventh Avenue for a candlelight vigil for the victims and for the firefighters," he says. "It's important for the community to come together like that when we need it."

With all that in mind, Cairl wants to help the Civic Council

develop a sense of community. "One of my big goals as president is to grow the membership and make it more diverse, to make people throughout the community not only more aware of who we are and what we do but also to take part in it themselves or form new initiatives on their own."

The new president is very interested in reaching out to parts of the community that are often hard to engage in civic efforts, such as younger residents or people who might not have English as their first language. "I think we tend to be defined, rightly or wrongly, as a group of white middle-aged homeowners in the Center Slope," he says. "We really need to act decisively to broaden our membership."



***'One of my big goals as president is to grow the membership and make it more diverse.' — Michael Cairl***

The Fourth Avenue Forum was an example of that effort. "One of the most gratifying things besides the big turnout was all the new faces." Based on that sort of result, "there seems to be a desire in previously untapped parts of the community to have an organization they can identify with, even if they can't do a lot. An organization that will take the desire to do something with Fourth Avenue, say, or do battle with subway or bus service, or engage in practical sustainability measures."

Cairl is very excited about the Council's recently formed Sustainability Committee. One idea the group is exploring to cut down on the local waste stream is by getting tote bags into people's hands and reducing the demand for plastic bags. "That's a simple, low-tech, very achievable thing," he notes, "and we need to be doing more of that."

Transportation remains an important issue for Cairl. The majority of people living in Park Slope do not own cars, so there are many modes of transportation here than even a lot of other cities have. "Add to that, in the past few years, the cycling community has very successfully transformed from just being a recreational activity to a vital mode of transportation, and a very sensible and economical one. We've seen the mix of how people get from point A to point B, and it has become much more complex."

In addition, engaging streets serve as a gathering place in the neighborhood, something that needs to be maintained. "It's one of the things that makes this neighborhood so attractive."

Cairl is very active in leadership roles with many other organizations throughout the community: the Grand Army Plaza Coalition, the Brooklyn Greenway Initiative, the Gowanus Community Stakeholder Group, LAMBDA Independent Democrats, and Independent Neighborhood Democrats. He is also an avid biker, photographer, foodie, and jazz junkie. Cairl shares his house with his partner and five curious cats.

"As a son of Park Slope," he says, "being Civic Council president would be both a huge honor and a big kick. I have every intention that we will have fun working on the Council. To me, this is a great accomplishment for someone who takes his neighborhood seriously and calls it home."

"At the end of the day, if we're moving forward and accomplishing these broad goals, it'll be a good thing for the Civic Council and a very good thing for Park Slope." — David Herman

**Not Just Another Pretty Face!**  
From Teacher to Lawyer to Real Estate Ace.  
Let's get together to see where it leads.  
So we can address all your Real Estate Needs.

**ARLENE GREENDLINGER**  
Real Estate LLC

Tel (718) 857-5360  
Fax (718) 623-3323  
[www.arlenegreendlinger.com](http://www.arlenegreendlinger.com)



**Low Commission • High Profile • Undivided Attention**

# News and Notes for the Civic Minded

## Fall Celebrations

You can help beautify your neighborhood at the Fall Civic Sweep, one of the Park Slope Civic Council's most popular events. This year's edition takes place on Sunday, Oct. 17, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., beginning at M.S. 51 on Fifth Avenue between Fourth and Fifth Streets.

Volunteers will get together to paint over graffiti, mulch trees, plant daffodil bulbs, rake leaves, and pick up litter, among other projects. Greg's Express will be at the Sweep to accept your old



televisions, computers, and other unwanted electronic devices for recycling. The Civic Council will supply all the tools and have refreshments at the ready. Vincent Cross & Good Company will also be on hand for some great bluegrass music.

The Sweep is taking place alongside the fifth annual Harvest Festival, at the Old Stone House in nearby Washington Park, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

There will be farm stands, pony rides, a petting zoo, face painting, monster making, music, and more. The Old Stone House, the Park Slope Farmer's Market, the Civic Council, and Park Slope Parents are sponsoring. If you want to help out at this all-volunteer festival, e-mail trustee Susan Fox at [susanfoxpsp@gmail.com](mailto:susanfoxpsp@gmail.com).

## Grant Season

The Civic Council is now accepting applications for grants to be awarded to local groups for projects in the arts, education, youth programs, and civic improvement that benefit the Park Slope community. The grants are funded by the Civic Council's annual House Tour.

Two types of awards are available: regular grants, up to \$500, that can be used with existing resources or as seed money for new projects; and one Community Builder grant, approximately \$2,000, to help a new project of special merit.

Deadline for applications is Oct. 11. For more information and an application, go to [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/Grants](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/Grants).

## Keeping an Eye on Atlantic Yards

The construction of Atlantic Yards will have huge impacts on the many neighborhoods it borders. The Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council is launching a "Construction Watch" that will collect important data about those repercussions. The Civic Council is one of the community organizations cosponsoring the initiative.

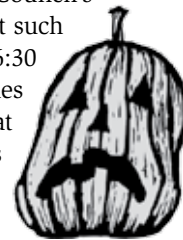


This initiative will coordinate volunteers to monitor changes in air quality, noise, or traffic. The information acquired will be used to engage government agencies overseeing the project's implementation to ensure they are doing their job effectively. The watch will also put solid information about the project's effects on neighborhoods in the hands of elected officials and community boards.

Contact Peter Krashes at [pkashes@earthink.net](mailto:pkashes@earthink.net) for details.

## Boo! Boo, I Said!

Get ready for a fun Halloween 2010 in Park Slope for the whole family. The main event for Oct. 31 will be the Civic Council's Annual Children's Halloween Parade, the largest such march in the nation. This year's route starts at 6:30 p.m. at Seventh Avenue and 11th Street, continues up Seventh, turns left on Third Street, and ends at the Old Stone House, where the revelry continues until 9 p.m.



The Civic Council's Halloween Costume Contest will take place before the parade, at 4 p.m., in front of the Secondary School for Law, Journalism, and Research, at Seventh Avenue between Fourth and Fifth Streets. Costume categories range from "best theme" to "best use of materials."

The Civic Council, the Park Slope Chamber of Commerce, the Park Slope Farmer's Market, Park Slope Parents, the Old Stone House, the Fifth Avenue BID, and the Puppeteers' Co-operative are teaming up to make the festivities magical and memorable. Interested in volunteering? E-mail [halloween@parkslopeciviccouncil.org](mailto:halloween@parkslopeciviccouncil.org).

## New News Is Good News

*Civic News* and the Civic Council's website will be undergoing some new developments over the next few months. The October newsletter, for example, will be online only; the next print edition will appear in a new format later this year. Watch for updates at [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org).

Specializing in Park Slope since 1987



**WARREN LEWIS**  
REALTY ASSOCIATES LTD.

**Marc W. Garstein**  
*President*

**Ellen Blau**  
*VicePresident*

Ryan Abraham, Marcie Bachar, Terry Baum, Tom Curtis, Lisa Garcia, Katinka Goertz, Sue Hagen, Jennifer Hero, Michelle Herrera, Virginia Hunter, Aaron Isquith, Dee Joseph, Michele Kaye-Kertesz, Margaret Laurens, Judith Lief, Luis Martinez, Justine McLaughlin, Judith Rivera Schneider, Ron Saltarello, Lori Snerson, Jennifer Thompson, Jack Walsh, Ben Wartofsky

*Please call for a no-obligation  
home valuation and market analysis*

**123A 7th Avenue, Park Slope,  
Brooklyn, New York, 11215**

**Sales 718.638.6500 Rentals 718.638.0632 Fax 718.638.4603**

**[www.warrenlewis.com](http://www.warrenlewis.com)**

# New Trustees Come on Board

The Park Slope Civic Council is governed by a Board of Trustees — 30 members elected to shape the organization’s future course and its role in the community. (One trustee is appointed by the Council’s Executive Committee.) Each trustee has a three-year term in which he or she can help make a difference.

This year, eight new trustees were elected, with another one appointed, to join their colleagues who continue to serve on the board: Michael Cairl, Lauri Schindler, Gilly Youner, Eric McClure, Judith Lief, Alexa Halsall, David Alquist, Robert Braun, John Casson, Robert Eidelberg, Joan Emerson, Susan Fox, Bernard J. Graham, Craig Hammerman, Nelly Isaacson, Kyle Johnson, Tom Miskel, Melinda Morris, Sarah Murphy, Greg Sutton, and Candace Woodward.

Here is the new trustee class of 2010:

After spending more than 20 years working on Wall Street, **Bob Gilbert** recently launched a company that retrofits one- to four-family homes for greater energy efficiency. He brings that diverse experience to his role as co-chair of the Civic Council’s Sustainability Committee. “We hope to educate the community on how to live in an environmentally friendly way,” Gilbert says.

In addition, he’d like to see improved traffic patterns that are more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly, greater support of local merchants, and better landscaping along the Slope’s commercial strips.

Gilbert has lived in the Slope since 1991, and joined the Civic Council 10 years ago “to learn more about what is happening in the community. I’m glad I can contribute now as a trustee.”

A resident of Park Slope for 30 years, **John Golobe** is eager to use his skills as a teacher to help the Civic Council communicate to the public its positions on a wide range of complex issues.

The Council’s “advocacy of our common interests makes it possible to resist the encroachment of developers and moneyed interests,” he says. “The many events it sponsors bind the community together and foster a pride of place.”

For Golobe, that pride of place is one of the neighborhood’s defining characteristics. It’s also a big reason why he joined the Civic Council five years ago, “when Atlantic Yards threatened to cast its shadow over Park Slope.” Today, Golobe wants the Council to continue to be proactive in its advocacy for the community.

A lifelong Brooklynite, appointed trustee **David Herman** was first inspired by Park Slope in 1992, watching “a beautiful sunset over Ninth Street and the Gowanus as I was waiting for a friend before a Celebrate Brooklyn concert.” He moved here less than a year later.

Since then, he has enjoyed much of what helps define this community — “Prospect Park and the Central Library, easy access by mass transit and bicycle, the architecture, and the neighbors, to name a few.

“The Civic Council has had such a vital role in keeping these aspects of everyday life here so great,” adds Herman, a graphic designer, editor, and photographer. As editor and designer for *Civic News* and the Council’s webmaster, he hopes to

spread that message and get more people involved.

“I love so many things about Park Slope,” **Isabel Hill** says, including “the small-scale buildings, the fact that my neighbors own businesses on Seventh Avenue, the incredible park at our doorstep, and the great mix of people and their backgrounds.”

Hill has worked in Brooklyn for 25 years as an urban planner and architectural historian, but “very little of that has involved my own neighborhood.” After joining the Council earlier this year, she became more involved in Park Slope as well, on the Historic District Committee and the design competition for the Third Street Entrance to Prospect Park.

Hill, a resident here for 18 years, also says the Halloween Parade “has always been a favorite event for me so I am signing up to help on that, too.”

**Josh Levy** has lived with his wife and children in Park Slope since 2004, going from renter to homeowner to investor in Park Slope real estate. Compared with other neighborhoods he knows, “the people are friendlier; the streets are quieter and safer; and the restaurants, cafes, boutiques, and bars rock. And we have block parties!”

Levy hopes to help address a range of concerns, including better social services and improved parking. He sees the Council as an organization dedicated to “the preservation and advancement of what we all love about our community.”

As for why he joined the Council, he believes that “since I live here, drive — and park — here, bike here, send my kids to school here, and also invest here, I may as well get involved. After all, if not this, what?”

The **Rev. Dr. Daniel Meeter** spent his childhood in Brooklyn. When the Old First Reformed Church on Seventh Avenue asked



Some of the new trustees, clockwise from upper left: Gilbert, Herman, Hill, Meeter, Murthi, Sokil Milnikiewicz, and Welch.

BROWNSTONE  
MANAGEMENT

Trustworthy Service People

Managing over 60 properties over 6 years, we've done it all. From cleaning and handyman services, thru bathroom and complete apartment renovations, our experienced team is ready to work for you.

BrownstoneMgt.com

Lic#1344044

Free consultation:  
718.499.6030

him to be its pastor in late 2001, "I was thrilled to come." He joined the Civic Council after he arrived: "I believe in civic participation," he says, "and I want my church to be connected."

One aspect of community life he is interested in is how transient people seek roots and community. There should be "better awareness and honesty that our Park Slope way of life requires an immigrant underclass. [Also,] how can our community be more hospitable to the poor among us?"

As pastor, Meeter says, he has an eye for the ethics and economics of our community. "But I do love old buildings," he adds, "and I think preservation and aesthetics are very important — and spiritually connected."

In addition to his work as a database design consultant, **Chandru Murthi** received a master's degree in environmental planning in 2004 from Pratt Institute, focusing on "green" buildings. That experience will help in his role as co-chair of the Council's Sustainability Committee. "I hope the committee will provide ideas that will help us live a greener lifestyle."

This community, he says, "represents the perfect urban environment of density and convenience of services without being too crowded — easy walking environment, good transit, many entertainment venues, and good public and private schools."

A Park Slope resident for nine years and a Council member for two, Murthi lives with his 12-year-old son, whom he hopes will lead a suitably sustainable lifestyle when he's grown.

**Cathy Sokil Milnikiewicz** moved to Park Slope from Vermont in 1991. She, her husband, and their two children have enjoyed the many benefits of living in the Slope. "As a trustee, I want to help ensure that other young families continue to enjoy raising children here as much as we did.

"As an educator," she continues, "I feel particularly passionate about education, especially our public schools." Sokil Milnikiewicz now teaches at Bard High School Early College, a vibrant public high school on the Lower East Side that formed out of a partnership with Bard College.

As a pedestrian, biker, driver, mother, and gardener, Sokil Milnikiewicz will also work on the Council's Livable Streets Committee.

"I came to Park Slope 15 years ago because it was affordable and it had — and hope it still has — a strong LGBT community," says **Rebecca Welch**. "I stayed because it fit."

Welch works for a local nonprofit that supports small-business and community development, with an emphasis in the "green-collar"/sustainability sector. She would like to help Park Slope lead the city in such areas as accountable development, small-business support, cutting-edge sustainability projects, and educational opportunities for young residents and students.

Welch will be working with the Livable Streets and Sustainability committees. "I would like to be an advocate for the community — especially on behalf of its most marginal residents and most incipient and inspired leaders."



**Free Apple Diagnostic!**  
**The Mac Support Store**  
**Brooklyn's First Apple Authorized Repair Shop**



**Mac and iPod Repair • Data Recovery • New Macs for Sale**

**168 7<sup>th</sup> Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue**  
**Brooklyn, NY 11215**  
**718-312-8341**

9–6 weekdays, 10–4 Saturday • [www.macsupportstore.com](http://www.macsupportstore.com)

**PROTECT YOUR MOST IMPORTANT ASSET YOUR "REAL ESTATE"**



- **Qualifying Risks:** Brownstones, Row Houses, Condominiums, Cooperatives Or Apartment Buildings
- **Over 37 Years of experience** and more than 20,000 clients Insuring habitational and Commercial real estate
- **Risk service, Innovation, Lower cost**
- **One stop shopping** Property, General Liability, Equipment Breakdown, Directors and Officers, Follow Form Excess Liability and Commercial Umbrellas Available
- **Underwritten with A + XV Admitted Carrier**
- **Now Writing in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut**

**BROWNSTONE AGENCY INC.**

**32 Old Slip New York, NY 10005 212-962-5620**

**800-865-5452 in New Jersey**  
[WWW.BROWNSTONEAGENCY.COM](http://WWW.BROWNSTONEAGENCY.COM)

**Make Your Mark** *continued from page 1*

and the Picnic House. Bicyclists on the new Prospect Park West bike lane use this entry often to begin their rides around the park's drives. This entrance is busy from dawn to dusk.

Most vehicles, however, cannot enter the park at Third Street, as the city's Department of Transportation has closed the entrance to all car traffic even during rush hours. Only emergency services and the Parks Department can gain access at Third Street. Hence the need for the current movable — if unattractive — barriers and imposing traffic signage.

Design submissions must meet the needs of these users. Also, any gateway design must use durable materials, and be safe and sturdy enough to withstand significant weather. The new gateway should be economical to construct (less than \$2,000 for each unit) and made of nonpolluting, preferably recyclable or reclaimable materials.

The contest, Youner notes, is open to all ages and disciplines. "I would encourage anyone to enter. This is more about the end

result and not the presentation, so if you're not an artist, you can still put together a good design without any sort of fancy rendering."

The panel of judges for this design competition draws from the fields of architecture and landscape design, as well as the Civic Council and Parks Department: Sally Gil, an artist in Park Slope; Laurie Hawkinson, partner, RA, Hawkinson Smith-Miller Architects); Marc Littlejohn, product designer; Aaron Naparstek, of Streetsblog, Park Slope Neighbors, and Grand Army Plaza Coalition; Nancy Owens, ASLA, LEED AP, and principal, Nancy Owens Studio LLC; Josephine Pittari, senior vice president of operations for Prospect Park; Rob Witherwax, coordinator, Grand Army Plaza Coalition; Gilly Youner, RA and Civic Council second vice president; and Christian Zimmerman, vice president of design and construction for Prospect Park

"We would hope enough people enter the competition so that we can fund construction of a prototype," Youner says, "or get a grant to build the design and test it." If the Parks Department likes the model, "perhaps it could be used as a prototype for barriers around the park."

— David Herman

For full details, an application, and many important resources, go to [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/prospect-park-gateway](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/prospect-park-gateway).



TYPICAL SIDE VIEW  
SCALE 1/4"=1'-0"




**Kathy Azbell, LMSW**  
*Director of Community Outreach*

**Quality Senior Living**

[www.prospectparkresidence.com](http://www.prospectparkresidence.com)  
One Prospect Park West • Brooklyn, NY 11215-1613  
718-622-8400 • Fax: 718-622-8449  
[kazbell@generationsms.com](mailto:kazbell@generationsms.com)

## Beating cancer is a team effort




**Dr. David Dosik,**  
*Co-Chief of Hematology Oncology*

**Dr. Han Ashamalla,**  
*Vice Chairman of Radiation Oncology*

**Dr. Katherine Economos,**  
*Director of Gynecologic Oncology*

New York Methodist has some of the city's top oncologists – and treatment facilities that are second to none. We offer routine screenings, and if cancer is diagnosed, our board-certified physicians work with you to determine a treatment that best meets your needs and suits your lifestyle. Our spacious new Park Slope Infusion Center provides same day treatment for people needing chemotherapy and other forms of infusion therapy. Working together, we'll keep you a step ahead of the disease.

To find the doctor who's best for you, call **718-499-CARE** or visit [nym.org](http://nym.org).



Member  
New York-Presbyterian Healthcare System  
Affiliate: Weill Medical College of Cornell University

**THE FINEST PHYSICIANS...  
THE FINEST HEALTH CARE.**


# BROWN HARRIS STEVENS

Established 1873

## Libby Ryan

*Senior Vice President*

Specializing in civilized and discreet  
Brooklyn real estate transactions



718.399.4103 • [lryan@bhsusa](mailto:lryan@bhsusa)

[BrownHarrisStevens.com](http://BrownHarrisStevens.com)

# A 'Cinderella' Story on Berkeley Place

This summer, a "For Sale" sign appeared in the front courtyard of 211 Berkeley Place. While the four-story house may look like many other brownstones on the block, it occupies a unique place in the modern history of Park Slope. This house helped launch the turnaround of our neighborhood from one in decline to the vibrant community we know today.

My wife and I first learned about 211 Berkeley Place (between Seventh and Eighth Avenues) in 1966, when we read about it in *The New York Times*. The house, which according to the article had been vacant for several years, was purchased for \$15,000 by the Brooklyn Union Gas Company. What the article did not mention was that the company made the purchase mainly to help solve its own business problem.

At that time, many gas customers were moving out of the city, often leaving empty buildings behind. As the company couldn't dig up its pipes and join the exodus to the suburbs, its only hope for growth was to encourage economic development and increased gas consumption in its service area. This led to its decision to show how dilapidated structures could be transformed into up-to-date residential and commercial structures that used a wide range of gas appliances. The brownstone on Berkeley became the first of its "Cinderella Projects."

At the time Brooklyn Union purchased 211 Berkeley Place, Park Slope seemed to be in an irreversible decline. Fifth Avenue was known not for its restaurants as it is today but for its drug dealers. A bar bereft of customers could be found on almost every block on Seventh Avenue. Many of the original one-family row houses that had been converted into rooming houses to serve Navy Yard workers had few tenants. People were beginning to move to the suburbs and increasingly abandon Park Slope.

After acquiring 211 Berkeley Place, the company evicted the resident pigeons and rodents, and transformed the brownstone into two handsome duplex apartments. While taking care to preserve many of the brownstone's Victorian details, the company installed heating and air-conditioning systems, grills, patio heaters, exterior entrance lights, fireplaces, ovens, and burners — all fueled by gas, of course — in both apartments. The *Times* article also mentioned that the Park Slope Betterment Committee would be conducting a walking tour of the neighborhood. After taking this tour, my wife and I decided to buy a house in Park Slope.

Evelyn and Everett Ortner, Joe Ferris, and a few other like-minded individuals established the Betterment Committee to preserve their historic neighborhood. They realized that unless people began to purchase, renovate, and move into houses in Park Slope, its decline would be impossible to reverse. In order to attract people to the neighborhood, the committee began to conduct walking tours that not only introduced people to the community but also showed them houses that were for sale, had been recently purchased, or were being renovated. The tours drew attention to Park Slope's confluence of attractions: handsome historic row

houses on attractive tree-lined streets; spacious homes that could be purchased and renovated at a reasonable cost; proximity to Brooklyn's principal cultural attractions; access to several subway lines for a quick and inexpensive commute to Manhattan; a welcoming group of homeowners who were new to the neighborhood; and the opportunity to participate in an enticing adventure.

Even with these advantages, there were many obstacles to renovating a house in Park Slope in the 1960s and 1970s. Our parents and friends thought we were crazy for buying a dilapidated house in a declining neighborhood. Park Slope was redlined, which meant very few financial institutions were willing to provide mortgages and homeowners insurance. Most of the houses were in need of a great deal of work — and few of us realized how difficult renovations would be. We had to deal with lead plumbing and electric wiring that had been installed when Edison was alive. There were layers and layers of lead-based paint, carcinogenic and flammable paint stripping products, and other materials such as joint compound that contained asbestos. Nonetheless, houses priced from \$15,000 to \$35,000 seemed such a bargain that purchasing and renovating a Park Slope home appeared to be well worth the risk.

In 1974, after extensive research by the Ortners, the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission designated about one-quarter of Park Slope a historic district. Today, we do not have to deal with neglected houses very often. However, we now find that inappropriate, often shoddily built new buildings and out-of-keeping renovations are appearing in nonlandmarked blocks in our community. This is why the Park Slope Civic Council has made expanding the historic district's boundaries a top priority.

Thanks to the work of the Council's Historic District Expansion Committee, Phase 1 of this effort — encompassing more than 600 buildings in the South Slope — is currently being considered by the LPC to be included in a larger historic district. The Committee is also about to begin work on Phase 2, which will extend protection to 600 buildings in the North Slope.

And 211 Berkeley Place, after sheltering the same two families for four decades, will soon become the home of a new generation of residents. The Park Slope story continues. — *John Casson*

More information on the Historic District Expansion Committee is available at [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/historic-district](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/historic-district).



123 Seventh Avenue · Brooklyn, NY 11215  
[www.parkslopecopy.com](http://www.parkslopecopy.com)

M-F 8:30-7:00  
Sat 10:00-6:00  
Sun 11:30-5:00

PHONE: 718 783 0268  
FAX: 718 622 8373  
[orders@parkslopecopy.com](mailto:orders@parkslopecopy.com)

# CIVIC NEWS

Park Slope Civic Council  
729 Carroll Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11215  
*Return Service Requested*



**PERIODICALS  
POSTAGE PAID  
AT BROOKLYN, NY**

## The Park Slope Civic Council

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, go to [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org).

### Trustees

Michael Cairl, *President*

Lauri Schindler, *1st Vice President* • Gilly Youner, *2nd Vice President*

Eric McClure, *Treasurer* • Judith Lief, *Recording Secretary*

Alexa Halsall, *Membership Secretary*

David Alquist, Robert Braun, John Casson, Robert Eidelberg, Joan Emerson, Susan Fox, Robert Gilbert, John Golobe, Bernard J. Graham, Craig Hammerman, David Herman (appointed), Isabel Hill, Nelly Isaacson, Kyle Johnson, Josh Levy, Daniel Meeter, Tom Miskel, Melinda Morris, Sarah Murphy, Chandru Murthi, Cathy Sokil Milnikiewicz, Greg Sutton, Rebecca Welch, Candace Woodward.

The next Trustees Monthly Meeting is on  
**Thursday, Oct. 7, 7–8:30 p.m.**

**New York Methodist Hospital, Executive Dining Room**

This meeting is open to everyone. Please review our new rules for presentations at meetings, available at [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/presentation\\_rules](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org/presentation_rules).

## Join Us!

Sign up online at [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org),  
or mail this form and a check to Park Slope Civic Council,  
729 Carroll Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Household: \$40

Senior Citizen: \$20

Nonprofit Organization: \$30

Business/Professional: \$100

Patron: \$100

Benefactor: \$250 or more

Address questions to [mail@parkslopeciviccouncil.org](mailto:mail@parkslopeciviccouncil.org)  
or call 718.832.8227

**Civic News:** David Herman, Editor/Designer ([editor@parkslopeciviccouncil.org](mailto:editor@parkslopeciviccouncil.org)); Judith Lief, Copy Editor

CIVIC NEWS (ISSN 0031-2169) (USPS 114-740) is published monthly from September to June for \$40 per year, including membership, by the Park Slope Civic Council Inc (founded April 14, 1896, as the South Brooklyn Board of Trade), 729 Carroll Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Civic News, c/o Alexa Halsall, 729 Carroll Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215.

We welcome submissions. Articles, images, and suggestions submitted become the property of the Park Slope Civic Council upon acceptance for publication. Send unsolicited materials and photos to Editor, Civic News, 729 Carroll Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215, or to [civicnews@parkslopeciviccouncil.org](mailto:civicnews@parkslopeciviccouncil.org).