

Sustainability House Tour: It May Already Be Too Late!

When this issue of the Civic News went to press, there were still tickets available to the Civic Council's Sustainability House Tour on May 18, but you need to ACT NOW! The Tour sold out last year, and many would be ticket buyers were disappointed.

As was the case last year, we have a great collection of brownstones and other houses where the owners have made a permanent commitment to environmental sustainability, with rooftop solar, heat pump HVAC systems, radiant heating, super-thermal insulation, triple-glazed windows, and other advanced technologies. We even have at least one completely passive, off-the-grid home! Check that out!

Not only do these homes sport this amazing technology, they are also great places to live! What could be more fun than wandering through someone's gorgeous home and imagining what it's like to live there. And meeting the owners who actually do live there! People have been doing that on the Park Slope Civic Council House Tour since 1959, believe it or not.

Tickets are just \$50 per person, and much of the proceeds go to annual grants the Civic Council awards to local arts and cultural organizations that are supporting, nurturing and preserving what's great about our neighborhood. It's the Civic Council's own version of "sustainability." Again, the Tour is on Sunday, May 18, from 11am to 3 pm.

In a new feature this year, we've arranged for two fabulous local bars to throw open their doors for sort-of an "after-party" for everyone on the Tour. From 3 pm on, you can join Civic Council members and House Tour hosts at either Greenwood Park on 7th Ave between 19th and 20th Streets or at Brewer's Row on 7th between 3rd and 4th Streets. Hope to see you on the Tour!

New Initiatives: PSCC Expands Community Engagement

The Park Slope Civic Council (PSCC) is excited to introduce several new events and initiatives this year, all carefully aligned with our mission to promote the health, vitality, and character of the Park Slope neighborhood. Our goal is to advocate for the interests of residents, businesses, and other community stakeholders. Based on feedback from our members and trustees, we recognize that Livable Streets is one of the most pressing concerns in our community. Ensuring pedestrian and cyclist safety remains a top priority for us this spring and beyond.

Livable Streets: A Renewed Focus on Safety: Laurie Chaumont, the new chair of the Livable Streets Committee, has played a pivotal role in strengthening our focus on bike and pedestrian safety. In collaboration with Good Neighbors of Park Slope, the Livable Streets Committee is working alongside the Department of Transportation (DOT) to enhance safety measures for pedestrians, cyclists, and e-bike riders in Park Slope and neighboring communities.

We are proud to participate in the DOT's "Train the Trainer" Outreach Program, which has seen success in other neighborhoods. In a unique development, instead of being led by DOT employees, our organization has been selected to pilot this initiative, setting the stage for future volunteer-driven programs across New York City. At a kickoff meeting this winter, members of the Park Slope Civic Council and Good Neighbors of Park Slope learned about the DOT's outreach strategies for promoting safer cycling. As part of this initiative, PSCC will co-host two pop-up safety events on April 19 and April 27, alongside DOT

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President's Letter Spring 2025

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As I reflect on my first year as President of the Park Slope Civic Council, I am reminded of the diverse visions that each of my predecessors brought to this role. While we consistently anchor ourselves in our mission, the heart of our work takes many forms.

Initially, my primary desire was to safeguard the smooth operations of a council that has thrived for years. However, it quickly became clear to me that my true passion lies in strengthening our sense of community and facilitating genuine engagement among residents of Park Slope. I am committed to creating opportunities for shared experiences that unite us for a common purpose.

I am thrilled to report that our membership is on the rise, and today, the importance of community connections is more vital than ever. We are striving to reach even more residents. Through our community initiatives, events, issues and advocacy, we aim to foster a profound sense of belonging, one that resonates throughout Park Slope.

This year, we have introduced several new initiatives while also revitalizing our longstanding traditions. Our Walking Tour and Architectural Seminars have not only educated participants but also deepened our appreciation for the rich history that surrounds us. Our self-defense classes have empowered residents, helping to create a safer environment for all.

We have taken meaningful strides in strengthening partnerships with various city agencies. Our collaboration with the Department of Transportation exemplifies this, as we work together to promote bicycle and e-bike safety awareness in our community, something that's particularly relevant as we embrace sustainable modes of transport. We are excited to partner with the Prospect Park Alliance on a "Day of Cycling" on May 31st.

Our initiatives continue to evolve, and I am proud of how we have enhanced our successful events such as the semi-annual Civic Sweep. Each Civic Sweep is more impactful and meaningful, with

last fall's collection of warm-weather gear for local shelters showcasing the extraordinary generosity of our neighborhood. This spring, we will launch a food drive, responding to the needs of our community. Additionally, due to the overwhelming feedback from our Sustainable House Tour last year, we are excited to reintroduce a gathering space after the event—a chance to connect and share ideas.

In the spirit of fun and community engagement, we are adding a Dog Costume Parade to our Halloween festivities, recognizing the special bond many of us share with our furry friends.

If you have a great idea or suggestion, contact me at president@ParkSlopeCivicCouncil.org. Together, we can work to enhance the vibrancy of our beloved Park Slope.

Warm Regards,

Donna Stein, President
Park Slope Civic Council



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Incorporated 1938.

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The Park Slope Civic Council is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization

Spring Sweep Now Even More Fun

The Park Slope Civic Council will be hosting its annual Earth Day Spring Civic Sweep on Saturday, April 26th from 10 am - 2 pm in front of the Old Stone House on 5th Avenue between 3rd and 4th Streets.

For the first time, we are offering children's programming, run by NY Kids Club, including an art project and live music, from 10am to noon.

Please join us for a day of neighborhood clean-up, litter pick-up, tree bed care information and learning about the Civic Council, too! We will also have e-waste recycling with the Lower East Side Ecology Center.

This popular community effort makes Park Slope cleaner and greener - and nicer! We are also collaborating with Camp Friendship, which distributes food to over 500 households in need including food deliveries to homebound seniors. We are collecting canned goods, non perishable foods, and diapers. Please check expiration dates before donating food.

RSVP to volunteer with us on our website.



PSCC President Donna Stein and Trustee Ken Stevens with some of the clothes collected during the Fall Civic Sweep. Photo credit: Jed Meyer

2024-25 Civic Council Community Grants

After a hiatus due to the pandemic-related suspension of the Park Slope Civic Council's House Tour, the PSCC Community Grant Initiative was relaunched in the fall, 2024.

Applications were evaluated on their responsiveness to the needs of the Park Slope community and the merits of the program proposals. Since funds for these grants were raised through the 2024 PSCC Sustainability House Tour that focused on environmental sustainability, projects that included improving the environment or environmental sustainability education were given preference. We considered requests for specific projects as well as general operating expenses. Grants were evaluated by the Community Grants Committee, led by trustees Deborah Lauter, Michael Feinberg and Liz Schienes. We are delighted that the grants reflect a broad spectrum of our community, from children to teens to seniors. Grants were awarded at the PSCC meeting January 9, 2025.

PS282 Tree Expansion: PS 282, in collaboration with Brooklyn Seeds, is expanding and connecting four tree beds and installing educational signage to teach students and the community about Brooklyn trees and native plants. The garden, located around the school along 6th Avenue and Berkeley and Lincoln Place, has a goal of 70% or more native plants



One of the tree beds to be renovated at PS 282. Photo courtesy of PS 282.

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Community Grants

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The garden provides students hands-on learning and activities, encouraging healthy eating, teaching responsibility and patience, developing math and science skills, and highlighting the importance of taking care of the environment. The grant will be used to remove concrete stones in three tree beds, which will help reduce flooding and create better living conditions for street trees.

6/15 Green, Supporting Arts in a Community: 6/15 Green, a Community Garden on 6th Avenue and 15th Street is famed for its beautiful weeping willow tree, named a NYC Great Tree in 2024. The Civic Council's grant will fund artist fees to bring a greater quality and diversity to the garden's arts program and support local artists. The grant will help pay artists who perform during Open Garden NYC Weekend and Make Music Day on the Summer Solstice.

Community Help in Park Slope (CHiPS): Community Help in Park Slope, aka CHIPS, has served the neighborhood as a food pantry and soup kitchen for over 50 years. An increased number of migrants and asylum seekers has strained resources for its six-day a week soup kitchen and twice weekly pantry bags. The Civic Council grant will provide food for neighbors in need of assistance.

PS 107 Farm Stand and Garden: PSCC's grant will fund expansion of the existing garden at PS 107, on Eighth Avenue and 14th Street. It will also support the weekly farm stand, which sells organic produce from the Greenmarket at low cost, to PS 107 families and the local community. Students will plant seeds, care for their plants throughout the growing process and help spread the word about the value of eating organic food.

Community-Centered Environmental & Visual Arts at BAX:

Brooklyn Arts Exchange (BAX) offers a School Break Program, during public school breaks, incorporating visual arts enrichment focused on environmental and community care. Our grant will be used for both individual and collaborative creative projects using recycled and found object materials, with site specific inspiration drawn from their community partner, the Old Stone House. Visual art projects in collage, sculpture, and assemblage that transform everyday items and natural materials into unique artworks, will foster environmental awareness and a sense of responsible stewardship.

Jaguars Double Dutch & Stunt: The Jaguars athletics program at the John Jay Educational Campus has a Stunt team and a Double Dutch team. The PSCC grant will go towards support for the outside trainers needed to teach the advanced skills needed for these high school sports.

Park Slope Singers Community Chorus: The Park Slope Singers, a 33-year-old community chorus, charges its members dues to cover rent, the cost of music, and compensation for its director and an accompanist. The grant will fund scholarships for singers. The chorus performs next June 21, 3pm at Old First Reformed Church, 729 Carroll Street.



Music under the famous weeping willow.
Photo courtesy of 6/15 Green



CHIPS volunteer prepping food for the soup kitchen.
Photo courtesy of CHIPS

Major Step Forward on Historic District Expansion

By Timothy Gilles

The Civic Council's longstanding request for an extension to the Park Slope Historic District received a boost in March when City Council Member Shahana Hanif formally requested Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Sarah Carroll to undertake a survey of the area suggested by the Civic Council for inclusion in the Historic District.

The area is bounded by (and includes) 7th Avenue, 7th Street, 6th Avenue and Union Street, previously identified by Landmarks Commission staff as deserving of inclusion in the District.

In her letter to Chairperson Carroll, Council Member Hanif cites the Civic Council's belief that the extension is needed "to preserve the integrity, historic character and beauty of an architecturally and historically significant area."

Following up on and reinforcing the Council Member's letter, the Civic Council wrote to the LPC Chair citing a number of reasons for extending the Historic District. "Without Historic District protection, building alterations to stoops, façades, windows, cornices, roof lines, and other external features threaten to compromise irrevocably the uniqueness and historical significance of this area. Moreover, the lack of restrictions on adding vertical and horizontal extensions has increased the profit incentive for developers to destroy affordable housing and create luxury residences."

The letter said there are a number of examples of buildings on the blocks in question that formerly had three or four floor-through, affordable apartments where developers vacated the tenants, added another floor vertically, extensively modified a façade and made numerous other changes to the building's historic character to convert the building to two luxury units, or even one.

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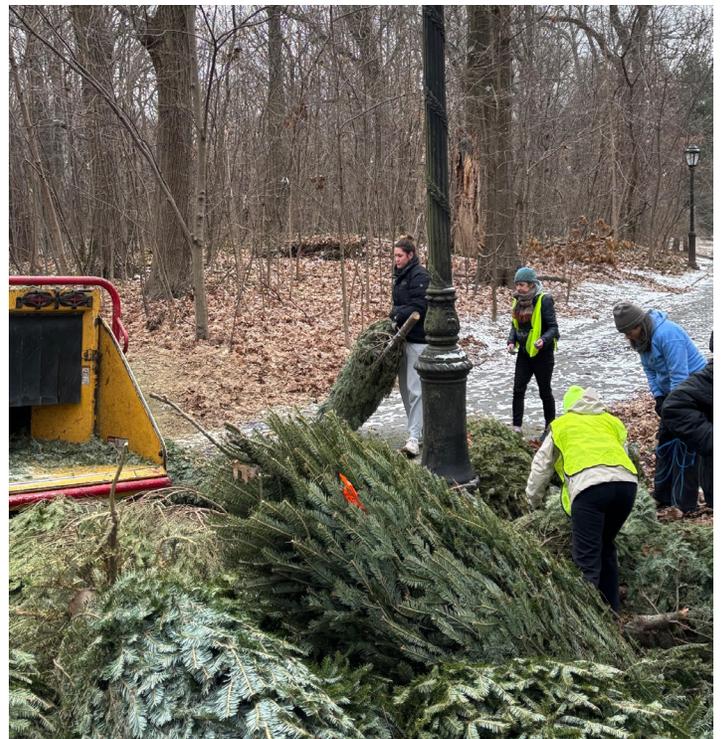
Bigger Than Ever: Mulchfest 2025

Mulchfest, held on January 11th was a tremendous success. Over 20 volunteers from the Civic Council joined other volunteers and Prospect Park staff at the 3rd Street entrance to Prospect Park, mulching over 1000 discarded Christmas trees.

PSCC rented a truck to pick up trees from around the neighborhood, then used the truck to carry mulch around Park Slope and spread it on tree beds on 7th and 5th Avenues.

Diverting all those Christmas trees from landfills and turning them into mulch is a big win for the environment.

The Civic Council, as an active member of the Prospect Park Alliance Community Committee, has committed to a minimum of two actions a year in partnership with the park. We have chosen Bike Day in Prospect Park: A Community Celebration of Safe Cycling for our next collaboration. Email events@parkslopeciviccouncil.org to help on May 31st with our next park event.



Volunteers helping load the chipper at Mulchfest. Photo credit: Jed Meyer

PSCC Gives Back

For several years, the Park Slope Civic Council has run toy donation drives throughout Park Slope. We place collection boxes asking for new toys and books for children, which we then distribute to nearby shelters and NYCHA housing.

This year, with our new Holiday Initiative chair, Kenetta Clark, we had more locations than ever, resulting in hundreds of gifts for children throughout Brooklyn. These businesses, along with the 78th Precinct, hosted collection boxes from late November through late December: Little Things Toy Store (which also offered a 10% discount on toys purchased for donation), Upkeep Medspa, Starbucks, Community Book Store, Tarzian Hardware, NY Kids Club, Prudential at Industry City, U-Haul Moving & Storage of Park Slope, which donated our collection boxes.

We also hosted our annual Holiday Party with the 78th Precinct and Pastor Johnson at the Baptist Church on Lincoln Place. Dozens of kids and their families enjoyed pizza, snacks, desserts and drinks, with each child receiving gifts from our Holiday Toy Drive.

For teens who have aged out of most toys, we asked members to donate money, and we used these generous donations to provide teens in shelters with gift cards so they could shop for what they needed and wanted. We also connected with a guidance counselor at MS 447 and provided gift cards to middle schoolers in need.

More Ways We Gave: In partnership with the 78th Precinct and Target's Heroes and Helpers Initiative, we distributed gift cards to kids ages 10-16. This special event allowed officers and first responders to connect and shop alongside the kids in an atmosphere filled with joy.

On December 12th, we spread holiday cheer by donating toys at a Story Time event at the Atlantic Terminal through Santa Land. And on Christmas Day, we attended a party at a shelter and gave out presents to children and teens. Look for our Holiday Initiatives, which will ramp up in the fall.

Historic District

(cont. from page 5)

"We fear the neighborhood and its striking streetscape face a 'death by a thousand cuts' if these unregulated alterations are allowed to continue," the Council said, noting that many of the brownstones were designed by prominent Brooklyn architects.



Classic row houses excluded from current Historic District.
Photo credit: Judy Antell

The Council also said it supports the Landmarks Commission's announced goal of increasing landmarking designations in deserving neighborhoods that have been overlooked, and they believed the Commission had adequate staff resources to undertake the requested survey without compromising that important goal.

The Council pledged to canvass the blocks in question to ascertain the extent of neighborhood support. Portions of these blocks were canvassed several years ago, and support was high. "We feel confident that a significant majority will continue to be supportive," the Council said in its letter.

The Historic District has long been an extremely high priority for the Civic Council. It was behind the initial designation of the District in 1973 and extensions in 2012 and 2016. In all instances the LPC cited the Civic Council for its leadership and advocacy on behalf of the neighborhood.

New Initiatives

(cont. from page 1)

representatives. The DOT will provide scripts and educational materials that have proven highly effective in teaching the community about the Rules of the Road. These field experiences will prepare us to run our own safety pop-ups at critical intersections throughout Park Slope.

Bike Day: A Community Celebration of Safe Cycling

On May 31, the Park Slope Civic Council, in partnership with the Prospect Park Alliance and Bike New York, will host Bike Day in Prospect Park: A Community Celebration of Safe Cycling from 2:00–5:00 PM at Bartel Pritchard Drive. A Virtual Kickoff will be held on May 28, featuring Bike New York's Rules of the Road class on Zoom. We are grateful to our growing list of participating organizations: Kissena Cycling Club, New York Cycle Club, Good Neighbors of Park Slope, Transportation Alternatives, 78th Precinct, Workers Justice Project, Councilmember Shahana Hanif's Office, and New York Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist Hospital. Stay tuned for more details and special giveaways!

Empowerment Through Self-Defense

As part of our commitment to community safety, we are offering self-defense training to equip residents with practical skills in case they encounter threatening situations. This spring, we launched a free two-part self-defense series in collaboration with The Center for Anti-Violence Education:

1. March: We held a virtual session on “De-Escalation & Safety,” which helped participants identify stress signals, navigate potential threats, and practice boundary-setting techniques.

2. April 26: An in-person training, “Empowerment Self-Defense 101”, from 2:45–4:45 PM at PS 321 Gymnasium, 180 7th Avenue. This hands-on class will teach fundamental blocks and strikes, as well as strategies to maintain distance and enhance muscle memory for responding to physical threats. This session will take place immediately after Civic Sweep—we encourage participants to sign up in advance at events@parkslopeciviccouncil.org.

Through these initiatives, the Park Slope Civic Council continues to foster a safer, stronger, and more connected community. We look forward to seeing you at these events and working together to make Park Slope an even better place to live and thrive.



Dangerous biking on pedestrian paths in Prospect Park.
Photo credit: Judy Antell

Park Slope Sustainability HOUSE TOUR

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**May 18, 2025
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Proceeds support small grants to neighborhood arts and cultural organizations.

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