

## Protestors demand Vacca joins horse-drawn carriage ban

BY JAIME WILLIAMS

Demonstrators from the animal rights group NYCLASS want Councilman James Vacca to support pending City Council legislation to ban horse-drawn carriages in the city.

The group said they are targeting Vacca because he sponsored legislation several years ago to change the carriage industry.

The handful of protestors assembled outside his office on January 12 and urged the councilman to "Keep your promise to the animals."

But Vacca said the previous bill he supported was more about the humane treatment of the carriage horses and did not have the same potential for job losses.

The councilman said he cares about animals greatly and does have concerns about the horses being treated humanely.

But the current legislation, which would provide avenues for carriage drivers to get green cab medallions, does not yet have his blessing.

Jose Bhuiyan, an organizer with NYCLASS, said the bill offers an opportunities for the drivers in an outdated industry to get 21st Century jobs.

"We know its not politically feasible for councilmembers to vote for this with out an alternative," said Bhuiyan.

But Vacca said he feels the current bill doesn't adequately address the threat to employment.

"I think this could end up  
*Continued on Page 4*

# VIOLENT CRIME DOWN IN 2014

BY JAIME WILLIAMS

The borough's crime statistics hit an important milestone this year.

"This year, for the second straight year, the number of murders in the Bronx was lower than 100, a level of success in policing this borough had not seen since the early 1960s," said Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. in a statement.

"This would not be possible without a deeply committed, highly professional police force like the NYPD, working hand-in-hand with the citizens of our borough and our city"

In addition to the good news across the borough in 2014, there were a few significant improvements locally in the year-end reports from the 45th and 49th precincts.

**45th Precinct**

Overall crime in the four-five was up just slightly in 2014—2.5 percent, said commanding officer Captain James McGeown, but crime in the precinct is still down about 10 percent in the past three years.

A big part of the overall uptick was attributed to a rise in identity theft and scams, said McGeown.

The precinct saw a 54 percent increase in identity theft and fraud (there were 56 cases this year), and reports of scams were up 300 percent (28 in 2014 vs. 7 in 2013.)

The crime prevention and community affairs officers have been working hard to spread the message to residents, who should take care protect their personal information.

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## Three Kings Celebration

Senator Jeff Klein and Assemblyman Luis Sepulveda hosted the second annual Three Kings Day celebration on Sunday, January 11 at the Church of the Holy Family in Castle Hill. The celebration included a performance of the story of the Three Kings, played by (l-r) Luis Cruz, Edwin Garcia, and Cesar Diaz. More photos on page 7

Photo by Laura Stone

## Comfort Inn rising along Third Avenue

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

The construction of a hotel within close proximity to the Third Avenue Bridge and the Harlem River waterfront is in progress.

The half acre parcel currently under construction at 2471 Third Avenue, located between East 135th and East 136th streets, will be a new Comfort

Inn by Marriot, according to the borough president's office.

The site, which was formally an abandoned gas station, was originally purchased by Jiten LLC in 2009.

Shortly after the deal was made, it was reported that there was a plan in place to build a six-story Fairfield Inn.

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# Homes to replace longtime Throggs Neck restaurant

**BY JAIME WILLIAMS**  
 The former Charlie's Inn restaurant and bar in Throggs Neck has recently been demolished to make way for three 2-family homes along Harding Avenue.  
 The restuarant, owned for decades by the Gallagher family, closed its doors in 2007 and has sat vacant for years.  
 Charlie's Inn was a popular meeting place for neighborhood residents, and its loss was felt when the business shut down, said Throggs Neck Home Owners Association president Lynn Gerbino.  
 "We went there all the time," said Gerbino.

"It just felt like home."  
 The restaurant hosted meetings and events for local veterans organizations and the St. Patricks Day Committee, she said, in addition to being the go-to place to commemorate milestones.  
 "Everybody went there to celebrate," said Gerbino. "Baptisms, birthdays, communions, everything."  
 It was sad to see the site lay vacant and in disrepair for years, and Gerbino said she's glad that the redevelopment is moving forward. The new private homes will be a big improvement for the area.  
 The construction per-

mits for the lots between Balcolm and Graff avenues were filed by Royal Engineering, P.C. based in Queens.  
 Councilman James Vacca has been keeping an eye on the project, and said his only concern with the development so far is making sure the buillders provide the minium of three parking spaces per two-family home.  
 A two-family home can add four or more cars to the already existing parking problem, he said.  
 "If you live in that part of Throggs Neck, people will attest to the necessity of adequate parking," said Vacca.



Charlie's Inn on Harding Avenue has been demolished to make way for a 3 two-family homes.  
 Community News Group / Jaime Williams



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# Bronx GOP donates golf \$\$ to needy veterans

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

Needy veterans will be getting help thanks to a generous donation from a borough political organization.

The Bronx County Republican Party has announced that it will donate one quarter of the proceeds from a golf outing held in September 2014 for the creation of a Veterans Welfare Fund, confirmed the party's county chairman John Greaney.

The fund will be administered through local Throggs Neck organization Bicentennial Veteran Memorial Park, Inc., said local veterans advocate and Theodore Korony American Legion Post #253 member Pat Devine.

A check presentation for \$3,870.60 is scheduled for the Throggs Neck Veterans Parade Dinner at Rino's Restaurant on Saturday, January 17, said Devine, who founded the 501(c)(3) organization that is going to be a conduit for the funding.

Devine sees the donation as the start of an all-purpose fund that can be used to help veterans, and their families, who are in need of assistance.

"There is a need out there, and people don't see it," said Devine. "Our organizations will get a phone call, and people will ask if there is any money for something and there is not. This fund will fill a gap."

He added: "Even though you cannot do everything, certain things you can do. You can make sure that people have a Christmas gift, or have food on the table. There are a lot of things like this that we don't see. We take it for granted."

Devine explained that it was Greaney's idea to create the fund, and he said that other political organizations and groups are welcome to contribute.

"(Greaney) started this, and he came through with it," he said.

Help to veterans is one

of the strongest elements in the Bronx GOP's outreach since he took over as chairman in 2013, said Greaney, adding that he has created a veterans committee within the county party.

"The specific uses and the application process, we have not gotten into yet," said the chairman of the new fund. He noted that the group has another golf outing coming up on Monday, May 18.

Bicentennial Veteran Memorial Park, Inc. is a good vehicle for the program because it has been in existence for 30 years, he said, adding that the fund will be used to benefit all veterans.

"We thought it was so much nicer giving the money directly to the veterans groups who will develop the policies and procedures to help the needy," said Greaney. "We will assist in doing fund-raisers, and hopefully other organizations will start learning and do the same."



A non-profit founded to help establish Bicentennial Veterans Memorial Park in Throggs Neck will serve as a financial vehicle for a new veterans fund. Community News Group / Photo by Patrick Rocchio

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# Violent crime down in 2014

from Page 1

"That's something we address at almost every community meeting," McGeown.

Theft of unattended property was also up about 19 percent, which McGeown attributes to the new malls. While people are shopping, people get distracted and put their purses and bags down.

While malls pose a new challenge for the precinct, an old problem has seen some improvements—car thefts were down about 17 percent this year.

"We've always had that as one of the major complaints," said McGeown.

Burglaries were also down 10 percent, and there was one particular bright spot in this year's numbers.

"There were no murders in the 45th Precinct," said

McGeown.

## 49th Precinct

Overall crime in the 4-9 was down 7 percent in 2014, said commanding officer Captain Timothy McCormack.

But the decrease in overall crime over the past two years is more dramatic—31.9 percent.

The precinct did see an increase in the number of murders—from two to six. Half of the murders were domestic violence cases, two others were narcotics related.

"We're looking at the underlying causes of domestic violence and drugs, and focusing on those two aspects," said McCormack.

Car thefts were up about 20 percent this year, with the majority of cars stolen being Honda Accords and Civics.

The issue is not new, said McCormack, and it persists partially because the hospitals in the area create a transient community with many people coming and going.

"Vehicular crime is something we always have to work on," said McCormack.

But the precinct saw significant decreases between 2013 and 2014 in the categories of robberies (210 vs. 179), felony assaults (218 vs. 183), and burglaries (232 vs. 190).

The precinct had some successes in the past year, said McCormack, and the officers will continue to work hard to bring down the number of crimes.

"Reducing violent crime is the objective of the command," said McCormack. "One homicide is one too many."



Officers outside of the 45th Precinct station house on Barkley Avenue. File photo

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## Protestors demand Vacca joins horse-drawn carriage ban



Protestors outside Councilman James Vacca's office want him to support legislation to ban horse-drawn carriages in the city.

Community News Group / Jaime Williams

From Page 1

with people losing jobs," said Vacca.

The councilman's other reservation about the current bill concerns the historic nature of the horse-drawn carriage industry.

"Tradition's no reason to keep an inhumane industry alive," Bhuiyan.

Vacca said he thinks there could be some compromise by making the industry more humane or limiting it's scope.

"I don't think wiping out the industry is the answer," he said.

It seems the protestors outside his office won't have much effect on Vacca's decision making process.

"I'm not going to be swayed by them," he said.

"I think the issue should be studied outside of demonstrations."

He still has plenty of time to examine the issue, since the current bill is pending while an environmental impact study is conducted. It will be several months before a hearing or vote on the bill is held.

Fellow Bronx Councilman Andy King has made up his mind on the subject. He was listed as a sponsor on previous legislation, but has changed his stand.

"I do not support the ban on horse and carriages," he said. "I do not see any justifiable reason to do away with an industry that has been an exciting part of New York City's history and

employs more than 400 – just because someone says so."

He said one reason, among others, is that he doesn't understand the argument that the horses are a danger to the public because they can become spooked by cars, yet police horses don't fit into that category.

"And besides, we have a whole lot of issues in New York to address other than an industry that has done nothing but enhance the love and enchantment of New York City."

Councilman Ritchie Torres recently told Capital New York that he is undecided on the legislation, and is frustrated by the amount of time and attention the issue has garnered.



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# City Island wins on-line nabe poll

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

City Island won an on-line contest as the best neighborhood in New York City, but make of it what you will!

The island community was recently named as 2014 Best Neighborhood of the Year as winner of the Curbed Cup on ny.curbed.com, a real-estate news site that is part of Curbed.com, after a surge of online voting propelled it past Long Island City, the semi-finalist, by a tally of 1135 to 989.

The seaside nabe was just one of two Bronx communities, the second being Mott Haven, that ny.curbed.com placed in competition against one another in a March Madness-style vote that was eventually narrowed down being the east Bronx enclave and the red-hot Queens community. Mott Haven was eliminated in the first round.

The contest was not meant to be taken too seriously, but was described

by ny.curbed.com co-editor Jessica Dailey as a way of looking back on the stories that made news on the website in 2014. Several developments on the island were written up in 2014 by the news site, including a condo development and the City Island Bridge design.

"People get really excited about voting on neighborhoods and comparing neighborhoods, and it is just part of our end-of-the-year look-back content," she said.

She added that the awards are not literal, tangible awards, and that no actual honors are bestowed.

It was also clear, she said, that there was a campaign going on to push the island nabe up in the rankings.

Local activist, John Doyle, City Island Civic Association corresponding secretary, said that he hopes the enthusiasm that some islanders showed in participating in the for-fun poll

would translate into some community engagement.

"It's nice to see that Bronxites and City Islanders came together to vote in an Internet poll," said Doyle. "I would ask that this activism continue past their mouse-pads and into the next meeting of the Civic Association. Our community has its challenges like any other, and I hope they can direct their collective talents to this endeavor."

The business community liked the publicity, said City Island Chamber of Commerce vice-president Paul Klein. It saw the neighborhood get featured on a major metropolitan television news program.

"Any publicity we can get is good publicity, and certainly something as advantageous as being voted the best neighborhood in New York City," he said.

The vote, while appeared to be just for promotional purposes of the news site, could possibly improve



City Island won an online contest called the Curbed Cup as 2014 best neighborhood in the city. File Photo

the real estate market and bring more tourists, said Barbara Dolensek, CICA second vice-president.

Dolensek said that she was interested in the remarks people left while voting on the ny.curbed.com

site while voting, with one interesting remark noting to the effect that Long Island City has received huge influxes of private money for construction, while the City Island community remains largely unchanged

except for a few projects. She also said that there was a comment on the site, which the Bronx Times also located, about how proud the City Island community was to be a part of the Bronx.

## Locust Point variance fight gains steam

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

More evidence of the Locust Point community's resolve in fighting a zoning variance was evident this week.

A Community Board 10 Housing and Zoning Committee meeting that was to have discussed the request to override some existing zoning rules was postponed on Tuesday, January 6 because revised plans on the housing had not been submitted for board review, said CB 10 district manager Ken Kearns.

But the community came out in masse at the Locust Point Civic Association's own regular meeting that same evening, board members said.

The crowd, numbering up to 100 people, unanimously voted to oppose a developer's plan to build more houses than permitted through a zoning variance for property on Longstreet Avenue between Glennon and Hatting places, said outgoing LPCA president Al Belifiore.

"It was good to see the community come out to the meeting," said Belifiore, who remains on the LPCA board. "The community doesn't come out unless we have major problem on our hands. We usually get the same 15 to 20 people at our general meeting. We had close to 100 people tonight."



This undeveloped land in Locust Point is the subject of a possible variance.

Community News Group / Photo by Patrick Rocchio

Belifiore said that reasons that the community is opposing the plan is an already overburdened sewer line servicing the tight-knit neighborhood, concerns about the population density and overdevelopment.

If anything is built in the neighborhood, he said, the community would prefer that it take the place of an existing home without adding more houses.

"We have enough houses in here right now," the president said, adding

"the community is very much against the variance, and we don't really want anything put there."

A local developer, John Comer, has informed the LPCA that he plans on seeking a variance for 5 two-family homes on a parcel that would normally allow the construction of 2 two-family home under the area's current R3-1 zoning.

According to Kearns, the Housing and Zoning Committee meeting was

postponed because the developer had yet to submit plans to the board that complied with the city resiliency recommendations. Previous plans had been submitted by the developer, but the community board objected, said Kearns, because the area where the property is located, with a water-view of Hammond Cove, was in an area affected by Superstorm Sandy.

The board is still waiting to see new drawings that should include storm aspects, Kearns said. Requirements set forth by a 2013 New York City Zoning Code change require homes to be taller in areas prone to flooding.

"We have problems because the houses are not going to be consistent with the resiliency requirements," said Kearns, adding that the board should take up the concerns once a revised set of plans are on file.

The board is also concerned about the lack of compliance with the R3-1 zoning, the relatively high prices of the homes, and the nearness of the homes to wetlands, said Kearns.

The Department of Buildings had already turned down a previous building application for this site because it did not comply with zoning, he added.



# WINTER AT THE BRONX ZOO

The Bronx Zoo is showcasing its winter-loving creatures now that the temperature has dropped below freezing. Animals like snow leopards enjoyed last week’s snowfall.



Two snow leopards.

Photo by Julie Larsen Maher at the Wildlife Conservation Society



An Amur tiger.

Photo by Julie Larsen Maher at the Wildlife Conservation Society

## BARTOW-PELL CHAMBER MUSIC

As a kick-off to the new year at the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, the museum is presenting an ongoing Winter Chamber Music Series. The first concert in the series of chamber music, which features a relatively small group of performers, was held on Sunday, January 11. Classical music artist Jay Kauffman performed. Kauffmam, who has had critical successes on stage from San Francisco to Shanghai, is also a published composer.



Ellen Bruzelius of the Bartow-Pell Museum and chamber music performer Jay Kauffman.Photo by Aracelis Batista

## KLEIN DONATES TEXTBOOKS TO P.S. 107

Senator Jeff Klein and Assemblyman Marcos Crespo visited P.S. 107, located at 1695 Seward Avenue, to donate over 2,000 textbooks and e-readers to students for the holidays on Tuesday, December 23. The giveaway event included a special holiday performance by the school choir, followed by Senator Klein visiting grades K-5, and taking a tour of the school’s library and science laboratory.



Senator Jeff Klein visited P.S. 107 to donate more than 2,000 textbooks and e-readers to students on Tuesday, December 23.

Photo courtesy of Senator Jeff Klein’s office

## ILCHS SENIORS MAIL APPLICATIONS

Last month, seniors from International Leadership Charter High School, located at 2900 Exterior Street, marched to the Kingsbridge Post Office to mail in their college applications. The ILCHS ceremony included many scholars who are destined to become the first members in their families to attend college, as well as a brief speech by Dr. Elaine Ruiz-Lopez to celebrate this exciting student milestone.



Seniors from ILCHS marched to the Kingsbridge Post Office to mail in their college applications last month.

Photo courtesy of ILCHS

## SCHOOL CHILDREN HONORED BY UCHC

Recently, local school children were honored at Union Community Health Center’s academic challenge ceremonies, which are located at 2021 Grand Concourse. At the ceremonies, school children were recognized by Union’s pediatricians for their achievement and improvement inside the classroom, an event that the Union takes part in during the winter and spring marking periods.



School child Jesus Mazyck recieves his ‘Certificate of Achievement’ award from Union Community Health Center pediatrician Dr. Winipee Phupakdi at the Union’s academic challenge ceremonies.

Photo courtesy of Union Community Health Center’s Academic Challenge



# Three Kings Day Celebration

Senator Jeff Klein and Assemblyman Luis Sepulveda hosted their second annual Three Kings Day celebration on Sunday, January 11 at the Church of the Holy Family in Castle Hill.

The celebration included a children's performance of the story of the Three Kings.

(1) Senator Klein (left) with the young performers, the Three Kings, district leader Julia Rodriguez, District Attorney Robert Johnson, Assemblyman Luis Sepulveda, and emcee Jose. Photo by Laura Stone



(2) Amber Mohvir played Mary. Photo by Laura Stone



(3) The three Kings were played by (l-r) Luis Cruz, Edwin Garcia and Cesar Diaz. Photo by Laura Stone



(4) The Three Kings present gold, frankincense and myrrh to Mary and Joseph. Photo by Laura Stone



(5) Angels Jannalee and Jocelyn Hidalgo, Kiara Lecaro, with shepherd Jade Gutierrez behind. Photo by Laura Stone





# CB 10 Hart Island park vote expected

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

It appears that Community Board 10 will debate the merits of two new City Council bills about jurisdiction of the city's Potter's Field on Hart Island.

The CB 10 Parks and Recreation Committee meeting hearing on Monday, January 12 included a lively discussion about two bills currently before the City Council's Fire and Criminal Justice Committee that seek to transfer the primary jurisdiction of Hart Island from the Department of Correction to the Parks Department.

The matter has been referred to a full-board by the Parks and Recreation Committee in a unanimous vote on January 12. A committee vote was not taken because a quorum was not present.

A group of local activists from City Island Civic Association want to see the island transferred to Parks because they believe it would prevent Hart Island, off the coast of the shoreline community, from being used as a full-time prison, said CB 10 district manager Kenneth Kearns.

Currently, inmate labor buries bodies at the city's Potter's Field on the island, the location of approximately one million graves, for only 16 hours a week.

This City Island activists' concerns are complemented by those of the advocacy group Hart Island Project, whose lead-



Community Board 10 chairman Martin Prince (c) listens to Melinda Hunt of the Hart Island Project during a parks and recreation committee meeting on Monday, January 12. The future of Hart Island was on the agenda.  
Community News Group / Photo by Patrick Rocchio

ers believe that having the island made a park would make it easier for people to visit relatives and friends buried there.

At the meeting, CB 10 chairman Martin Prince expressed his reservations about transferring jurisdiction, in effect saying he would prefer to work with the existing framework to make the situation more workable for people who want to

visit the island.

"My belief as chairman is that we work within city agencies, we try to get productivity out of those agencies, and advocate for the people who live within the board," said Prince, adding that he believes this means advocating for the deceased on Hart Island.

"We know that in dealing with city

agencies, in city transfers a lot can get way off track and the situation can become much worse," he added. "I don't believe that our dead deserve to be politicized, they need to be revered."

Prince said that it is easy to say transfer jurisdiction of Hart Island to the Parks Department, but asked what happens once it is under the department's purview.

One of the advocates for the transfer, CICA corresponding secretary John Doyle, said that all of the Bronx's City Council delegation supports the bills advocating the transfer. The primary sponsor of the bills is Queens Councilwoman Elizabeth Crowley.

"We have done all of the leg work," he said. "We are just looking for an up or down vote on this."

Melinda Hunt of the Hart Island Project believes that a 100-acre park, as opposed to a facility run by the Department of Correction, would be more inviting and welcoming to grieving families who visit graves on the island.

She pointed out that many parks were once potter's fields, including Washington Square Park, Madison Square Park, Wards Island, and Randall's Island.

A visit to the Hart Island by a delegation from the City Council is being planned for Friday, January 16, said Hunt.

## NY Rising to correct shoreline dangers

BY PATRICK ROCCHIO

The state will spend at least \$3 million to make the east Bronx waterfront more storm resilient.

After months of meetings, a committee of community members from a broad stretch of east Bronx waterfront, from Harding Park to City Island, decided on which projects to fund with the money provided by statewide storm resiliency effort NY Rising.

At the local effort's fourth and final open house at Providence Rest on Tuesday, January 13, committee members explained their reasons for funding or recommending 12 projects to increase protection of coastline communities in the wake of major storms.

Among the efforts fully funded through the NY Rising program, using money provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, are:

- a community recovery plan to enhance coordination with existing New York City resources (\$325,000)

- improvements to the waterfront Locust Point Civic Association building, including upgrades to emergency power and electrical, as well as an installation of a lift (\$700,000)

- making up to three vulnerable coastline street endings more storm resistant in order to protect low-lying waterfront communities and present opportunities for increased public access and amenities (\$1.85 million)

- developing Edgewater Park's North Tower Firehouse as a community gathering place in case of emergencies, with improvements to make the building more secure in the face of storms (\$1 million)

- upgrading a pumping system in Edgewater Park to decrease the chances that control panels and electrical systems would be damaged in a weather event like Superstorm Sandy (\$150,000)

Other projects partially funded are a study of Westchester Creek with an eye towards more community access, and street improvements in Ferry Point.

The east Bronx Waterfront was a bit different from some other NY Rising areas, said Tom Jost, the project manager for the east Bronx committee, "because it covered a greater geographic area and spanned many communities."

Jane Protzman, co-chair of the east Bronx effort, was a strong proponent of the storm



NY Rising East Bronx Waterfront Planning Committee member John Doyle (r) speaks to Frank Molinari about one of the featured projects at an open house on Tuesday, January 13. Photo by Walter Pofeldt

recovery plan because she felt that it would benefit her City Island community, which she said can lack centralized communications. She stressed that all of the communities have similar needs.

Committee member and Community Board 10 vice-chairman John Marano said that one of his ideas that did not make the NY Rising cut was use of alternative energy to provide backup power throughout the area studied in case of storm emergencies.

"If we had solar energy backing up the power grids, our sub-pumps would not go out and our basements would not get flooded," he said.

Chrys Napolitano, also a committee mem-

ber, said that it was just good to get everyone from the sprawling east Bronx shorelines together to discuss storm resiliency.

"If nothing else, it gave us some unity," said Napolitano.

Councilman James Vacca commended the volunteer committee members on their work, and their government partners, while explaining that much of the coastline along the waterfront in his district is vulnerable.

"The reality was this was a grassroots effort because all of you came and gave input," the councilman said to the committee.

NY Rising was an initiative started by Governor Cuomo. Local committee chairwomen were Protzman and Valerie Wilson.



# Residential lofts to be built on Alexander Ave.

BY STEVEN GOODSTEIN

Another residential building is being constructed in the rapidly developing neighborhood of Mott Haven.

A new loft project has been announced for 136 Alexander Avenue, a vacant site located between East 134th Street and Bruckner Boulevard, alongside the Major Deegan Expressway.

The four-story residential loft building is expected to feature a cafe on the first floor with outdoor seating as well as rooftop decks, and will attract more residents to the neighborhood in an attempt to revitalize Alexander Avenue and the Mott Haven neighborhood.

It has not yet been confirmed if the elevated building will include either five or six units.

Each of the units will include modern bathrooms, kitchens and floors, along with 13 to 14-foot high ceilings. Central air will be provided to each apartment unit.

This property, owned by Alexander Avenue Lofts LLC, is just one of the Mott Haven properties that the development company has transformed into residential housing.

Recently, a similar four-unit building was built on 55 Bruckner Boulevard by Alexander Avenue Lofts LLC, continuing the

company's trend of attempting to lure a new breed of residents to the neighborhood. Two more properties on Alexander Avenue are also planned for development.

The 55 Bruckner Boulevard property also includes a public restaurant on the ground floor which is temporarily being used as a pop-up coffee shop named the Mix Cafe.

"This is my favorite area of the Bronx - it's an up and coming neighborhood filled with active and creative individuals," said Joshua Weissman, owner and president of Alexander Avenue Lofts LLC, who has been involved in residence development in the Bronx since 1999. "This area is a very hip and diverse community in an underserved but blossoming borough, within close proximity to Manhattan."

"I expect Alexander Avenue to be the scene of the night life in a few years," said Joshua Weissman.

The area is serviced by two major thoroughfares, the Major Deegan Expressway and the Bruckner Expressway. Access to the Third Avenue and Robert F. Kennedy bridges also enhance the project's marketability.

"As an advocate of the south Bronx, we want to attract Manhattan residents to visit this area," said Sid Miller, former owner of the Haven Heights Group, a real estate com-



The four-story residential loft on 136 Alexander Avenue will include a public cafe on the ground floor with outdoor seating as well as rooftop decks upon completion. Community News Group / Steven Goodstein

pany that had specialized in south Bronx real estate for 25 years.

"Unfortunately, people from Manhattan won't travel to the south Bronx just for dinner. That is why we eventually want people to move there because once they become residents, it will lead to them getting involved in the resurgence of the neighborhood," he added.

"This is exactly what this area of the Bronx needs - more residents and more residential housing at a low price," Miller

added.

The South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation was also pleased to hear of the future residential development on 136 Alexander Avenue which is expected to be completed in August 2015.

"This is an neighborhood on the rise - it's a diverse, hip community," said Neil Pariser, former senior vice president of SoBro. "When it comes to improving the south Bronx and areas alongside Bruckner Boulevard, the more the merrier!"

## The 49th Precinct celebrates 30th anniversary

BY JAIME WILLIAMS

A local police precinct celebrated an important milestone last week.

Thursday, January 8 marked the 30th anniversary of the opening of the 49th Precinct on Eastchester Road.

The anniversary celebration at the station house was attended by Police Commissioner William Bratton, the precinct's past commanding officers, police officers and community leaders.

The Four-Nine was founded in 1985 after a strong push from community leaders to provide Community Board 11 with a precinct. Previously, the 43rd Precinct covered the southern part of the board up to Pelham Parkway, while the 47th Precinct was responsible for the area north of Pelham Parkway.

This created communication problems while trying to police the board, said



NYC Police Commissioner William Bratton with current 49th Precinct Commanding Officer Timothy McCormack, past commanding officers, and Bronx borough commander at the precinct's 30th anniversary celebration. The precinct's first captain, Ben diGregorio, is pictured standing in the center, to the right of Bratton.

Photo courtesy of Vic DiPierro

long-time board member Joe Reda, who was instrumental in the precinct's development.

Reda and former board chair Dom Castore, who headed up the Morris Park

Association at the time, wanted to know why the board didn't have its own precinct like other community boards in the city.

They, along with other local politicians, commu-

nity and union leaders, pushed for meetings with the police commissioner to get the precinct.

Then came the issue of finding a site for the station house, which they sought

to put in the middle of the community board. The project was brought to the NYC Health and Hospital Corporation, and a parcel from the Jacobi Hospital property was acquired for the development.

The first proposed site was on the corner of Pelham Parkway and Eastchester Road, but advocates including Reda thought it would take away from the beauty of the parkway, leading to the choice of the current site at 2121 Eastchester Road.

Overall, the process took at least two years, said Reda.

"It took a lot of hard work and meetings."

But all that effort and time was worth it, and the community was very happy to have their own precinct.

Reda became the first president of the precinct's community council, ushering in a new era of community-police relations in the neighborhood.

That relationship between community members and the police was the unofficial theme of the anniversary ceremony, said current precinct community council president Joe Thompson.

Commissioner Bratton and others at the ceremony praised that strong relationship and highlighted it as an achievement of the precinct, said Thompson.

"They recognize the close affinity the police department and the community have here," said Thompson.

Current commanding officer Captain Timothy McCormack, the 14th commanding officer of the precinct, said he will continue to build on the successes of commanders who came before him.

"The community and police have worked together to make this a better place to live and a better place to work."



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# Oral history project to archive residents' recollections

BY JAIME WILLIAMS

Got a story to share?

The New York Public Library is currently collecting 'Voices from East of Bronx Park' as part of an oral history project that will archive stories from the neighborhoods of Allerton, Pelham Parkway, Van Nest and Morris Park.

The oral history initiative, which has previously visited Greenwich Village and Harlem, is being facilitated by the neighborhoods' library branches.

The oral history project is the first of its kind in the area.

"We're making history by recording history," said Alexandra Kelly, outreach services coordinator for the NYPL.

The library will be conducting the project through May, which means there is still time for local residents to get involved both by interviewing others and by telling their own stories.

Community Board 11 has been an early supporter of the project, and district manager Jeremy Warneke has taken it upon himself to make sure their stories have been recorded.

He's been interviewing board 11 members, some of whom have been a part of the board since the 70s, in order to capture their rich stories and acknowledge the work they've done over the years.

"It's about putting the community board on the map, and who better to do it than those who live here and volunteer



At the Pelham Parkway-Van Nest Library: (l-r) staff member Jhenelle Robinson, branch manager David Nochimson, and NYPL Outreach Services coordinator Alexandra Kelly.

Community News Group / Jaime Williams

here?" said Warneke.

One of those board members is Vincent Prezioso, a long-time member who moved to Morris Park with his family in 1939.

Prezioso, 81, told Warneke about what the neighborhood was like 70 years ago,

when he attended P.S. 83.

"It was all farmland," said Prezioso. "It was a different kind of society."

At that time, West Farms was the borough's hub, and you could rent rowboats in Bronx Park at 180th Street.

Prezioso said he was glad to hear about the project, and thinks the resulting archive will be valuable.

"It should be on record how the Bronx was in the 30s and 40s," he said.

Interviews with residents like Prezioso illustrate the unique history of the area, said Kelly.

"His individual story epitomized the drastic change in these neighborhoods," she said.

The library is continuing to do outreach for the project, and Kelly is hoping the final archive will have a diverse group of stories that represent the neighborhood's past.

"If people don't step up, if they don't take part, where is the history going to go?" she said.

There will be a community meeting for current and interested participants at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 28 at the Pelham Parkway-Van Nest Library.

For those interested in the history of the area, a screening of the documentary 'At Home in Utopia,' about the history of the Allerton Coops, will be held at the Allerton Library on Saturday, January 31 at 1 p.m.

To learn how to participate in the oral history project as either an interviewer or interviewee, contact Alexandra Kelly at (212) 621-0552 or [AlexandraKelly@nypl.org](mailto:AlexandraKelly@nypl.org).

Interviews from the project can be found at [oralhistory.nypl.org](http://oralhistory.nypl.org).

## Comfort Inn rising along Third Avenue

From Page 1

However, the project was put on hold so that an environmental cleanup of the soil could be conducted.

"This area was a polluted property that dragged the neighborhood down," said Neil Pariser, a consultant for the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation.

"Building a hotel will benefit the area in many ways, and it brings (SoBro) one step closer to their primary goal, which is to develop every piece of land possible in the south Bronx."

Once the property was cleaned up, the construction of a four-story, 84-unit residence along with 22 parking spaces began.

The foundation for

the hotel was set in October 2013, although the hotel's expected completion and opening have not yet been confirmed.

Completed construction of the \$12 million hotel, will greatly improve the neighborhood's business and economics, especially if it draws tourists and residents from other boroughs to the area.

"We hope it brings tourism to the Bronx," said Marlene Cintron, president of the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation.

"This hotel has potential - with hotel rooms very close to Manhattan, and certainly, this residence is a future indication that people are intested in investments regarding properties in the south Bronx. It's a

great deal."

SoBro was also in agreement that the hotel would bring both jobs and visitors to the area.

"This hotel will bring approximately 50 new jobs to this area of the Bronx," said Jamila Diaz, assistant vice president of community business services for SoBro.

The south Bronx, home to long-time landmarks such as the Clocktower and the History Channel billboard and which also includes great views of Manhattan, lacked a hotel.

Nightly room rates are expected to range from \$120 to \$140.

All Borough Group Service Inc., Jiten LLC, and Community Board 1 were not available for comment.



The site on 2471 Third Avenue, located between 135th and 136th streets, will be a Comfort Inn by Marriott when construction is completed.

Community News Group / Steven Goodstein



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