



VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

Volume 25, No. 1
Quarterly
Fall 2014
Jackson Heights
Beautification Group

Jackson Heights – “A Garden in the City”

President’s Message

Changing the map of Jackson Heights, and beyond, this fall

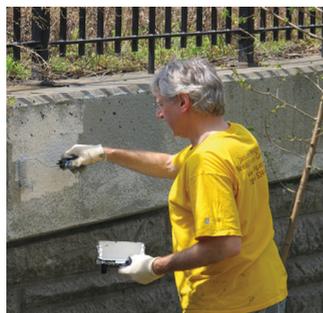
By Len Maniace

I hope you’ve all had a summer as wonderful as the weather. JHBG has a pretty wonderful fall planned for you, one filled with fun and important events. We hope you will get involved.

But first we want to catch you up on what we did this summer. We were especially busy greening Jackson Heights. We worked to improve the soil around trees up and down 37th Ave., installed tree guards around nine street trees, and continued our planting projects at 34th Ave. and Junction Blvd. and along 69th St. We also brought you our 11th successful season of Summer Sundays in the Park, our music and performance series.

Now on to the fall. The next few months will see big progress in changing the map of Jackson Heights, making it greener and more pedestrian-friendly.

We expect the NYC Parks Department to unveil plans later this fall for improving and **expanding Travers Park** to include the 78th St. Pedestrian Plaza and Staunton Field. This follows several community planning events



for the expanded park held over the last year. JHBG has worked with other groups and Councilman Daniel Dromm for several years to make this happen.

The city will reach out to Jackson Heights to hear what we want the 37th Rd. pedestrian plaza, known as **Diversity Plaza**, to look like. This has been a more difficult project. Some nearby merchants initially opposed the plan, and, because it’s located in a

busy commercial district, the plaza demands more maintenance. Through Friends of Diversity Plaza, JHBG has worked to create programs for the space (such as the Summer Solstice music and arts festival), and we are helping to plan its future. Jackson Heights residents and businesses will be able to participate at the Saturday, **Oct. 11 Visioning Session**, sponsored by the NYC Transportation Department, which runs from 2 to 4 p.m. (location to be determined). We hope you will attend.

On Friday, Oct. 31, JHBG holds its **annual Halloween Parade**, which has been described as the city’s largest children’s Halloween Parade, or the city’s second-largest Halloween Parade. We expect another success, so why not come out and make it JH’s most successful Halloween Parade. It begins at 5 p.m. at 37th Ave. and 89th St., and ends at 37th Ave. and 76th St.

Throughout the fall we’ll be working to make JH a more environmentally sustainable place. We had a tree give-away and perennial swap on Sept. 20 at our community composting center, JH-SCRAPS, which is located at the southwest corner of 35th Ave. and 69th St. We’ll also be working along 37th Ave. and elsewhere to help our street trees survive and thrive, as well as planting barren areas around the neighborhood with perennials and shrubs. (For details see the JHBG calendar in this issue.)

We want to mention one city project and a major global event that line up with JHBG’s overall goals. It’s been hard to miss the speed bumps that the city has been installing around Jackson Heights. A related project involves extending sidewalks into crosswalks by several feet. Both have been shown to make streets safer for pedestrians. (*cont’d on p. 2*)

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President’s Message (*cont’d from page 1*)

We’ve been working with Make Queens Safer for nearly a year to make **Jackson Heights a pedestrian-friendly place.**

A major march to demand action on climate change, The People’s Climate March, launched this week’s important climate events in the city. This march and events are meant to show huge public support to avert catastrophic global warning in advance of international climate negotiations that start this fall.

We hope to see you at these events.

“The Earth has music for those who listen.” — George Santayana



**Meet the Newest
 Members of the
 Board:**

Rodrigo Salazar
 Julia McInnis &
 Melissa Zavala

Rodrigo Salazar is originally from the city of Manizales, in Colombia. He started volunteering with JHBG three years ago, and became a board member earlier this year. He organizes cleaning and planting events around Jackson Heights, and handles much of the group’s social media. As the group’s photographer, he uses his camera to show the beauty and failings within our surroundings. He also uses his passion for photography to record the diversity of our beloved neighborhood. Rodrigo believes that beauty is a daily communal effort, and we can truly use more help - ANYTHING HELPS. To become a member or to donate, go to jhbg.org/donate or see the last page of this newsletter.

Julia McInnis, is a Jackson Heights native whose earliest memories of the neighborhood include exploring its many leafy nooks with her sister and their friends. She is a graduate of Trinity College, and works as the associate producer for the documentary filmmakers D. A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus. She is also an ambassador for the environmental group Riverkeeper. After graduating from Trinity, Julia returned to Jackson Heights and joined the Green Agenda, one of JHBG’s many initiatives. She was inspired to get involved with the group so that she could take part in preserving the area’s green spaces. She participates in tree care and garden maintenance events, and helps organize the semiannual It’s My Park Day community cleanup in Travers Park.

Julia joined the board in May. In this role she is expanding the organization’s relationship with the merchant community and helping manage JHBG’s digital outreach. She is responsible for the monthly e-newsletter



and will be adding new features to the website to foster a dynamic dialogue among the organization, its members and the greater Jackson Heights community. She believes that taking an active role in JHBG will preserve what makes Jackson Heights unique and create new opportunities for its future.

When not perusing the Jackson Heights Green Market stands, she can be found at her favorite new neighborhood restaurant, Black Thai.

“Autumn is a second spring, when every leaf is a flower.” — Albert Camus

Melissa Zavala is a long-time resident of Jackson Heights, moving to the neighborhood from Woodside in the mid-1980s and returning after getting married in 2000, and recognizing its unique qualities. While other areas have their own beauty and character, none parallel the neighborly feel that JH possesses with its long-term residents and long-standing neighborhood businesses, like Jahn's Diner and local organizations like JHBG. While the neighborhood has undergone a number of changes in the recent past, it remains a place friendly for new arrivals. These factors make



for a pleasant mix of people and locales that keep the area especially vibrant and the neighborhood aesthetics exciting.

Jackson Heights makes an appealing home for an urban anthropologist. Because it's a place where diverse ethnic and cultural groups can thrive and is also one of the areas in Queens promoting hands-on environmental stewardship, joining the board has been a useful way to contribute to the neighborhood's environmental maintenance. Melissa teaches anthropology at The City College of New York—CUNY. Her research focuses on environmental ecology and explores techniques for building and improving ecosystems in New York City. In particular, she investigates the work of ecological management in parks around the city and how techniques for eradicating nonnative species and enhancing biodiversity are being applied to complex parkland spaces, like the now-defunct landfill at Fresh Kills on Staten Island. Thinking about nature in the city and sustainability has led her to focus her attention on tree stewardship and waste reduction through composting. Along with other composting volunteers, Melissa helps operate JH's own composting center—one of the many projects supported by JHBG. She hopes to expand the gardening efforts to make Jackson Heights an ever-greener neighborhood.

“There is a neighborhood fabric here”

Jackson Heights: Its Architecture, Nature and People

By Marc Donnelly

I'm an architect, so I'm quite aware of how building structure and design, and what surround them, affect the feel of an area, which is why, for example, Greenwich Village and Williamsburg and the Upper East Side are so different from each another.

In summer 2013, my wife Julia and I wanted to move from Manhattan because we wanted more space, peace and quiet. As Julia and I walked through Jackson Heights for the first time, looking for that new area to move to, we were struck by the care that was made to make this a true neighborhood. Block after block, whether it was the brick five- or six-story apartment buildings, the two-story houses or the various public buildings and stores, we couldn't help but notice the level of detail. We saw that so many of these buildings are variations on a theme, such as the brick patterns, from the English and Flemish, to a herringbone with varying brick types and orientations. There were no towering high-rises; just buildings carefully designed to create a livable community.

We felt so comfortable during that first trip that we decided this was the neighborhood we wanted to move to. But what has made us fall even more in love with the neighborhood is not just the historical vision from the past but that the vision continues today. There is a neighborhood fabric here that we didn't find elsewhere, created from the different yet cohesive buildings and



stitched together with all the different species of trees that line the streets. And just as with the buildings' varying brick patterns, the trees have variations in the shapes and patterns of their leaves, from simple, to compound, to

opposite, and to alternate layouts. We started to notice all of this even on that first day. We couldn't help but notice how the buildings fit together so well and how the lovely canopy of the trees protected us from the hot sun. And as we walked throughout the blocks, it occurred to us that along with the variation of patterns in the buildings and the trees and leaves, Jackson Heights offered variations in another important part of the neighborhood: its people. The variations in nationalities, languages, culture, and age also made a lasting first impression. *(cont'd on p. 6)*

Editor's Take

by Lila M. Stromer

Welcome to this issue of *Views from the Heights*.

Marc Donnelly mentions in his article that he moved to Jackson Heights from Manhattan, and Melissa Zavala mentions in her board bio returning here from other areas of Queens. I too came to Jackson Heights from another area, but in my case it was Chicago. Although I was a New York (state) person my whole life, I moved to Boston after college. With me went my boyfriend, Joe, who had grown up in a small town in upstate New York. We lived in Boston for 11 years, made great friends and married just before moving to Chicago. We liked Chicago so much that we stayed for 19 years, even buying a condo to really plant our roots. I became the condo association's "gardening committee" (and Joe became First Assistant and Sherpa of Soil), taking care of the container garden that was my brainchild after a lovely communal deck had been built. Joe and I selected the containers, which were put away each autumn and became old friends each spring. We selected the plants each year, deciding by color and flower size and pattern. The garden got better each year as I learned which plants like the sun the deck received, neither withering nor burning to a crisp. However, a few years ago we started to talk about moving back to New York but this time to the city. We put off the move for two years for various reasons, but on New Year's Eve, heading into 2013, we made a pact. NYC in 2013 or bust.

Over those two years we made several trips to NYC. One day we scoped out most of Brooklyn ... we were on and off the subway all day, and by bedtime we were exhausted but wiser about Brooklyn. We did the same thing with Queens. We kept a list of what we liked and didn't like, and put areas in Yes, No or Maybe columns. Each trip we'd revisit the Yes and Maybe areas until we had only a Yes column. The Yes areas of Brooklyn eventually moved to the No column, and the top Yes area of Queens became Jackson Heights. We fell in love with the brick buildings, but we really fell in love with the trees. The week we were here in 2013 to find an apartment was



brutally hot, but the trees offered shade and got the sun out of our eyes. The gardens in front of buildings were in bloom. We were lucky to have friends who live in a building we liked, and there was a rare empty apartment. As we weren't sure we would get it, for two days we saw apartments in other areas because we were imminently moving from Chicago and had to give the soon-to-be hired movers some ... any ... address in NYC. Then luck came our way again when the broker called to say it was ours.

We've been here a little more than a year. We love that this neighborhood is so diverse. We like being able to walk to a major grocery store but then have so many "mom and pop" stores, too. Walking down 37th Ave., we notice the older people with their aides or adult children, and young mothers walking right next to them with little kids. We love that there are so many people walking their dogs; we believe a pet-friendly neighborhood is a plain-friendly neighborhood. We like that shop owners, like Sami Dib of Juju's Bagels Café, were so welcoming, even from our first happenstance in finding his delicious shop. We lived in Boston a long time, and in Chicago even longer. This time, we hope not to move again.

I became the editor of the newsletter only recently, and I'm still a fairly new resident. Please let me know if there are any topics you'd like to know about, or if you'd even like to write an article yourself. JHBG is an all-volunteer organization, so there are all sorts of opportunities to do something you love or do something you want to learn. In this issue check out upcoming JHBG events (like the Halloween Parade!), and how you can lend a hand in keeping Jackson Heights the wonderful neighborhood that it is. If you'd like to become a member of JHBG or donate to support the work that we do, please use the membership page at the end of this newsletter. You can reach me at JHViews@gmail.com. Until next time. ...



VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

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Jackson Heights Beautification Group
PO Box 720253
11372-0235

General: info@jhb.org
Newsletter: JVViews@gmail.com

Editor

Lila M. Stromer

Writers and Photographers

Marc Donnelly
Daniel Karatzas
Len Maniace
Lenny Olsson
Rodrigo Salazar
Melissa Zavala

Graphic Design

James Stonebraker

Halloween Poster Design

John Cebollero

JHBG Board of Directors

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Nuala O'Doherty, First V.P.*
John McCaffrey Jr., Second V.P.*
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JHBG Gets It Done!

Greenmarket
Halloween Parade
JH SCRAPS Compost Center
Landmark Advocacy
Tree LC
Holiday Lighting Ceremony
Historic Weekend Tours
Summer Sundays in the Park Concerts
Green Agenda for Jackson Heights
JH CREW dog park
Friends of Travers Park
78th Street Plaza & Garden
Garden School Athletic Field Purchase
69th Street Green Zone
Candidate & Issue Town Hall Meetings
Landing Lights Ball Field Restoration
Make Music New York
Jackson Heights Orchestra
Graffiti Removal
Garden Club
Community Awards
Views from the Heights newsletter
Jackson Heights Art Contest
Local history books -
Jackson Heights:
A Garden in the City,
Jackson Heights:
From Ice Age to Space Age



**Jackson Heights
Beautification Group**
Founded in 1988
www.jhb.org
info@jhb.org

Jackson Heights: Its Architecture, Nature and People (cont'd from p. 3)

After looking at apartments in those six-story buildings, we found the right place for us last October. Now, the trees make the way back to Manhattan for work enjoyable and the way home so welcoming. We're still discovering new details in the architecture or a new leaf shape in a tree. We joined JHBG to help care for the very trees that made us want to move here.

The streets of Jackson Heights have given us special feelings throughout the four seasons that we've now lived here. In the fall, we marveled at the contrast between the brown-red-yellow leaves and the red or gray buildings. In the winter, and yes, even during this last one, we loved the snow covering the branches. In the spring, we were warmed when the blossoms started to color the streets and the wintry gray disappeared. And this summer we walked under the shade of green and leafy branches, and not just on a sidewalk of empty concrete. Together, the buildings and trees stitch together a neighborhood we are so glad to call home. We look forward to many more seasons here, with the buildings, trees and people that make this a very special place to live.



The ABCs of Composting

By Lenny Olsson and Melissa Zavala

With opportunities to compost most food scraps becoming more prevalent and easier, particularly in Jackson Heights, there is less reason *not* to start separating your food scraps and diverting them from the main municipal waste stream. When done regularly and properly, you can decrease your waste output. Additionally, starting now means you'll have an easier transition to the city's composting program, which is set to start in 2015. Here is what you can compost now at JH-SCRAPS (Jackson Heights Scraps Collection for Revitalizing the Area's Poor Soils).

Greens:	Browns:
Vegetables	Crushed eggshells
Fruit	Dry cornhusks & cobs
Coffee grinds & tea leaves	Coffee filters & tea bags
Bread	Dry cut flowers
Cereal	Tree leaves
Boiled rice & pasta (no oils)	Stale spices & seasonings
Yard waste (no invasive weeds)	Dead potted plant material

You need to avoid including meats, dairies and fats, such as beef or chicken, animal bones, cheeses, and oils or grease.

The reason this is important is because meat, bones, dairy products and fats attract the unwanted attention of rodents and vermin. They also tend to smell far worse than fruits and vegetables, making composting an unwelcome activity to nearby neighbors. Oils and grease do not decompose at all, but instead smother the bacteria needed for healthy decomposition and create an anaerobic (airless) process that exacerbates smells. In order to remain good neighbors, JHBG keeps JH-SCRAPS clean and tidy, closely manages the smells and uses rodent-proofing in our bins.

There are other items to avoid that are not often considered, but which need to be removed from your scraps to improve the quality of the finished product. These include: staples on tea bags, nylon tea bags,

metal twist ties, rubber bands and stickers on fruit. These items never decompose; and if mixed into the compost they can't always get sifted out prior to application around the neighborhood. Additionally, they can leach chemicals, like lead from the glossy chemicals on stickers; and once spread around the neighborhood as finished compost, they turn into litter, making garden beds and tree pits look less appealing than they should after adding fresh compost and mulch.

Other items to keep out of your composting are invasive weeds because their seeds can be spread when the compost is used, so they will proliferate around the neighborhood.

Worried about having rotting food in your kitchen? Don't be! There are many commercially available containers for short-term storage that minimize the smells and keep liquids from leaking out. Small composting pails, with optional charcoal filters, can be purchased online or from many gardening stores. Many of these are no larger than cookie jars, so space isn't an issue. You can also use items you would normally consider "garbage" for storage—

anything from large yogurt tubs, wax-coated cardboard like milk cartons or take-out containers. And if you have nothing else available, you can use plastic bags, from reclosable food bags to grocery bags. Many people prefer to place their containers in the freezer to further safeguard against smells and decrease the amount of fluid created by the process of decomposition, especially in the summer when scraps tend to break down faster.

If this article has piqued your interest, or you have any questions, e-mail us at jhscraps@jhbg.org or visit us every Saturday between 10 a.m.–2 p.m. (during the winter between 11 a.m.–1 p.m.) at the JH-SCRAPS composting site located at 69th St. and 35th Ave., under the rails adjacent to the BQE. Please also bring your scraps along! You will have to begin composting soon, so why not start now? By giving your scraps to JHBG, you're helping keep the trees and flower beds in Jackson Heights alive and beautiful.

Look for upcoming articles on the various benefits of diverting your food scraps from faraway landfills to put to use enriching local soils, as well as more details on the composting process.



*Families and friends
keeping
Jackson Heights
beautiful*

The 24th Annual
Jackson Heights
HALLOWEEN PARADE



**FROM 89TH TO 76TH STREETS ON 37TH AVE.
FRIDAY OCT. 31 5 PM**

**SPONSORED BY THE JACKSON HEIGHTS BEAUTIFICATION GROUP
CO-CHAIRS JOHN McCAFFREY JR., NUALA O'DOHERTY AND EDWIN O'KEEFE WESTLEY**

JHBG Fall 2014 Events Schedule

Unless otherwise noted, events are 10 a.m.–1 p.m. every Saturday through Thanksgiving.

Join us! You don't need to stay the whole time, but we do meet rain or shine.

Every Saturday – bring your composting to JHBG's JH-SCRAPS, 69th St. and 35th Ave., from 10 a.m.–2 p.m. (winter hours are 11 a.m.–1 p.m.).

September:

Saturday, Sept. 27 – Tree LC: tree pruning or trip pit rehab. Location TBD, 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 27 – Green Zone: tree garden planting, 94th St. and 35th Ave.

OCTOBER

Saturday, Oct. 4 – Tree LC: tree pruning or trip pit rehab. Location TBD. 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 4 – Green Zone: fall cleanup at P.S. 280, 35th Ave. and 94th St.

Saturday Oct. 11 – Green Zone: clean out trash and mulch tree limbs at historic Leverich Cemetery, Part III, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. The cemetery is behind Legends Bar on 35th Ave.

Saturday, Oct. 18 – It's My Park Day: work TBD, Travers Park.

Saturday, Oct. 25 – Green Zone: cleanup at 34th Ave. and 69th St.



Friday, Oct. 31 – Halloween Parade, starts at 37th Ave. and 89th St. and ends at 37th Ave and 76th St. Line up starts at 4:30 p.m.; parade starts at 5:00 p.m. This is the second-largest Halloween Parade in NYC!

November:

Saturday, Nov. 1 - Tree LC: planting bulbs and cleanup of 75th St. Mall, and possible planting of shrubs.

Saturday, Nov. 1 - Green Zone: planting daffodil bulbs at P.S. 149, 34th Ave. and 93rd St.

Saturday, Nov. 8 – Green Zone: bulb planting and leaf cleanup at 35th Ave. and 69th St., 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 15 – Tree LC: tree pruning or trip pit rehab. Location TBD, 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 15 – Green Zone: leaf cleanup at tulip garden, 37th Ave. and 69th St., 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 22 – Green Zone: leaf cleanup, 34th Ave. and Junction Blvd.

December:

Holiday Lighting Ceremony – Date TBD

JH-SCRAPS is open year-round. JH-SCRAPS is JHBG's composting location. For information on what is compostable, read the article in this issue or write to jhscraps@jhb.org.

JHBG Meets with the Landmarks Preservation Commission

By Daniel Karatzas

Earlier this year JHBG President Len Maniace and Director Daniel Karatzas met with Councilman Daniel Dromm and his chief of staff, Vincent Maniscalco, to discuss issues related to the Jackson Heights Historic District, including:

1. Reaching out to commercial property owners and their tenants who have violated the Landmarks Law
2. Reviewing the proposed extension of the Jackson Heights Historic District that was submitted by JHBG in 2011 to the Landmarks Preservation Commission
3. Discussing threatened buildings, including the many one-story commercial buildings along 37th Ave., the La Mesa Verde Apartments on 90th St. and the former Jamaica Savings Bank building on Queens Blvd.

Over the year of our talks, Mayor de Blasio named a new chair, Meenakshi Srinivasan, to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). This motivated Dromm to arrange for JHBG to join him and Maniscalco in a meeting with Chairperson Srinivasan, along with Jenny Fernandez, the LPC's Director of Intergovernmental and Community Relations. The goal was to acquaint Srinivasan with Jackson Heights and the issues our built environment faces. In addition to discussing the topics outlined above, JHBG provided Srinivasan with an updated Request for Evaluation for the extension of the Jackson Heights Historic District and a "position statement" regarding additions to or demolition of smaller commercial buildings along 37th Ave.

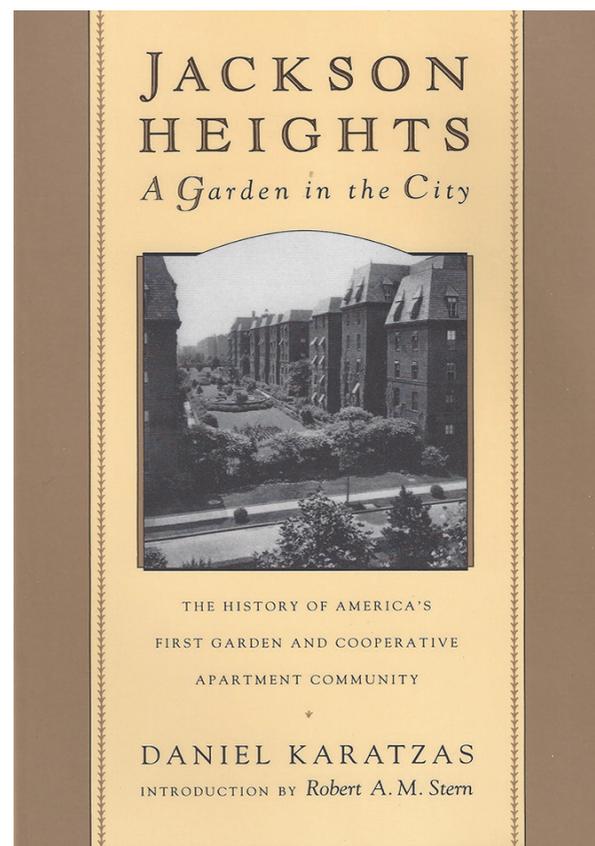
Our rationale for the extension of the Historic District is simple: many buildings of similar quality and contemporary with those already landmarked were left out of the 1993 designation. We are hopeful that the LPC will agree with us and devote the necessary resources to expanding our district.

As the owner of the property at the northwest corner of 85th St. and 37th Ave. approached Community Board 3 with a proposed expansion of its one-story

commercial building, JHBG, along with many concerned residents, has been focusing on this issue. To put it simply, JHBG believes that significant additions to or the replacement of existing buildings along 37th Ave. violates the core reasoning behind our having been landmarked in the first place. We, along with Dromm, clearly communicated to Srinivasan that the planning concepts outlined by the 1993 designation report preclude 37th Ave. from being turned into a canyon of six-story (or taller) buildings. Both Dromm and the Historic Districts Council provided letters of support opposing the approval of dramatic building alterations and expansions, especially along 37th Ave. We will keep you posted.

"Jackson Heights ... is a unique community that deserves the time and attention of not just those who care about architecture, but resident, merchants, and visitors, as well!" — Daniel Karatzas

To read more about the history of Jackson Heights, you can purchase "Jackson Heights, A Garden in the City: The History of America's First Garden and Cooperative Apartment Community." You can purchase this book around town, such as at Espresso 77, or online at amazon.com.



Membership Form for Jackson Heights Beautification Group

Your annual membership in JHBG helps us fund neighborhood activities, demonstrates your commitment to a better community and permits us to be your voice in the revitalization of Jackson Heights. Your support is important to the future of our neighborhood. JHBG is 100 percent volunteer-run; there is no paid staff. JHBG is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, and your contribution is tax deductible.

Please make checks payable to: Jackson Heights Beautification Group.

You will be mailed a receipt for tax purposes.

Please fill out this page and return it with your payment to:

JHBG — Membership
Box 720253
Jackson Heights, NY 11572

1. Please circle membership level

Individual—\$25

Business—\$50

Sustaining—\$100

Patron—\$250

Benefactor—\$500

Sponsor—\$1,000

Other _____

2. Please print the following:

Name: _____

Address (include apt. #): _____

City/State/Zip: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Optional: Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

3. Are you interested in being contacted about any of the following JHBG activities? If so, please circle the appropriate one(s).

Clean street

Friends of Travis Park

Garden Club (including flower planting)

Graffiti Busters

Halloween Parade

Newsletter and/or Website

Town Halls

Membership Building

Historic Weekend

Other: _____

4. Suggestions or Comments:

THANK YOU! If you have any questions or concerns, contact JHBG at 718-565-5344 or at info@jhbg.org.



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VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS – FALL 2014

JHBMG HALLOWEEN PARADE !

OCTOBER 31, starting at 5:00 p.m.

See the Poster Inside for the Details