



VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

Volume 26, No. 1
Quarterly
Autumn 2015
Jackson Heights
Beautification Group

Jackson Heights – "A Garden in the City"

Jackson Heights Beautification Group's Good Neighbor Award

JHBG and Good Neighbors Get It Done



Join us in honoring the people who make
Jackson Heights a better place to live.

Saturday, Sept. 26, 2015 / 5pm-8pm
The Community United Methodist Church
81-10 35th Avenue

Editor's Take

By Lila M. Stromer

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

It's September, and the summer is over (at least officially, if not weather-wise). JHBG has been active all summer, taking care of street trees, gardening, painting benches in front of the post office, putting in tree guards to protect the street trees, sponsoring the JHO concert in Travers Park—not to mention Summer Sundays in the Park—and leading the Historic Weekend, among many other activities. Not only that, but there's also been a lot of activity for the upcoming Good Neighbors Awards on Sept. 26 (see Leslie Ellman's article on p. 9 and cover of this issue).

September has always been a bit of demarcation for me as a good time to evaluate where I am for the year. Did I accomplish much (or anything?!) that I planned way back in January? What of those goals ... or new ones ... do I have for the final quarter of the year? Maybe it comes from going back to school when I was a kid. Clothes shopping for school, first new experiences in the classroom and talking to classmates about what I did over the summer. So, this September as I take a look over my shoulder, I realize that this is my fourth newsletter as the editor. A year ago when I started I had no idea what I was doing. This year I can't say that I'm a whiz at it yet, but it's nice when not everything is brand new with a learning curve at every moment.

On that note, I'm not the only one who is a bit smarter and better than before. Len Maniace, JHBG board president (see his article on the facing page), tells us how Jackson Heights is doing better, from lower crime rates to the Green Market, and a whole lot in between.

Melissa Zavala writes of the tree census conducted by the city; the third one in 30 years. That means every decade the city gets smarter about the trees that do so much for us. If you saw people out and about this summer deeply interested in the trees, it was probably one or two, or "tree," volunteers helping collect the data that will help the city—and JHBG—care better and smarter for the street trees. You can read her story on p. 8.

Of course, some things need more help to become better, such as Diversity Plaza. Shekar Krishnan and Len Maniace double-team to explain the plaza's history and about the changes that are needed ... and hopefully arriving soon ... to make Diversity Plaza a more pleasant part of Jackson Heights. Shekar's and Len's articles are on p. 4.



Travers Park is another site that will need help and time to make it a better place. The city is moving forward with expansive plans that will finally give Jackson Heights a park, given

that while we have lots of trees, our only public green space is at St. Mark's Episcopal Church. While I deeply appreciate that St. Mark's makes its grassy courtyard available to everyone—especially people like me who have none of our own—having a lawn, lines of trees and tables added to Travers Park will give residents a place to sit on hot summer nights and for friends and families to gather for picnics and socializing at least three months a year ... and four if you like sitting outside in winter! To read about some of the plans, see my article on p. 7 (and a schematic plan supplied by NYC Parks on p. 6).

There are also two cases that JHBG is watching closely, both of which would make life better. The first is whether 84-11 37th Ave. will be retained as a one-story building (see Gloria Daini's article on p. 9) and if the plans for Willets West mega mall are permanently stopped (see John McCaffrey's story on p. 5).

Of course, part of looking back means looking ahead. And what's ahead? JHBG's 25th annual Halloween Parade! Check out the Save the Date poster on p. 11 and watch the JHBG website for more information. One big change: the parade starts at noon to meet police precinct requirements. If you get there at the usual starting time, it'll be over and that would not be a treat! And also check out all about the Jackson Heights Orchestra's upcoming concerts and call for members on p. 12!

Until next time ...

In This Issue

| | |
|--|----|
| Editor's Take..... | 2 |
| President's Message | 3 |
| A Leading Voice for Diversity Plaza..... | 4 |
| Jackson Heights' Tale of Two Plazas..... | 4 |
| Court Victory for Park Advocates..... | 5 |
| Changes Are Coming to Travers Park | 7 |
| Trees Count! JHBG Supports Tree Census 2015..... | 8 |
| Jackson Heights to LPC: Reject Taller Building..... | 9 |
| JHBG and Good Neighbors Get It Done..... | 9 |
| JHBG Calendar of Events..... | 10 |
| JHO Players and Friends Present Two Afternoons of Bach..... | 12 |
| JHO Accepting New Members..... | 12 |
| JHBG Gets It Done..... | 14 |
| Membership Form..... | 15 |

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Len Maniace

Is life getting better or worse in Jackson Heights? We New Yorkers are supposedly pretty gloomy about life in our city these days. Nearly half polled said the quality of life in NYC was worse and the same amount, 48 percent, believed crime “was a very serious” problem, according to Quinnipiac University pollsters.

Perhaps New Yorkers were suffering from memory loss or cranky from the heat, but here are a few facts. The city had 333 homicides in 2014, the fewest since modern recordkeeping started in 1963. That would have been unimaginable in 1990 when homicides peaked at 2,262. Yes, killings are up 10 percent this year,* but it’s not the first uptick in homicides since crime began plummeting. This year, overall serious crime is down nearly 5 percent.

In Jackson Heights, the picture is better. The 115 Precinct reports no homicides this year through Aug. 9, compared with three for the same period last year. Overall, serious crime was also down 9 percent.

But lots of things go into a community’s quality of life. When it comes to education, local businesses, the environment and the arts, life is looking up here. In recent years, Jackson Heights has seen two new public schools open and a third is coming to 69th St. and 34th Ave., site of the former White Castle office. More delicious, independently owned restaurants are opening. Two chain clothing stores opened last year and another is on the way, but I’ll make the case that in this particular instance this is good; they fill an unmet need here and will reduce the need to hop in a car to go shopping.

On environmental issues, Jackson Heights is doing well. More trees are being planted and JHBG volunteers are helping them grow and thrive. A few dozen of us glimpsed this success recently when we participated in the city’s third decennial tree census. JHBG is also turning wasted spaces into gardens, and the city’s Department of Environmental Conservation will soon create a few dozen curbside gardens. Known as bioswales, these specially designed tree pits absorb torrents of rainwater from curbs that otherwise would overwhelm sewage treatment plants, leading to the dumping of untreated waste into nearby waterways. (Take a whiff of Flushing Bay, especially at low tide, to understand the problem.)

Our Green Market, which JHBG worked to bring here, is thriving, providing fresh food to all, including low-

income folks who can tap into various government programs there. The city’s Green Markets not only provide healthy food, but they also protect open space and keep the region’s farms in business. And to complete the cycle, JHBG runs a community composting center, JH Scraps, to turn fruit and veggie waste into healthy soil.

New York City unveiled two major open-space improvements in recent months: a plan for a renovated and expanded Travers Park at 78th St. and 34th Ave. and a dramatically improved Diversity Plaza at 37th Rd., between 73rd and 74th Sts.

As for our built environment, Jackson Heights residents love our architectural heritage. Most recently they argued against a development plan to turn a one-story building into a five-story structure in the Historic Landmark District. JHBG is working with Council Member Daniel Dromm to expand the landmark district to cover more of the planned community created by Jackson Heights developer Edward A. MacDonald.

JHBG continues to sponsor culture in our community. Our 12th season of Summer Sundays in the Park brought an assortment of music to Travers Park, and we’ve established a partnership with the Queens World Film Festival to screen movies locally. JHBG’s Jackson Heights Orchestra is a huge success, attracting new musicians and larger audiences as it tackles more challenging musical works.

JHBG and volunteers were also busy this summer with the installation of seven new tree guards around recently planted street trees; we refinished four benches outside the post office and weeded its overgrown front gardens; and JHBG partnered with Trees New York for a watering program to help Jackson Heights’ street trees survive this hot, dry summer.

I’m happy to say JHBG has had a big role in many of these accomplishments, and later this month we will honor those who have contributed to making Jackson Heights better. We are holding our Good Neighbor Awards dinner on Saturday, Sept. 26, and hope you will join us.

Even more important, we hope you will help us in our mission to make Jackson Heights the greenest and friendliest neighborhood in New York City, truly a small town in the big city. We especially need volunteers who can write for our various communication vehicles—both print and electronic—and individuals

(continued on p. 13)

A Leading Voice for Diversity Plaza

By Shekar Krishnan

Diversity Plaza stands on the cusp of dramatic change. The Department of Transportation is to about to redesign this space, bringing important public resources, including trees, special lighting fixtures and durable street surfaces. Formed in 2011, this “little plaza with a big message” is the gateway to Jackson Heights. Among the leaders trying to create an inviting town square on what was previously 37th Rd. is a merchant whose business fronts the plaza: Agha M. Saleh.

Saleh, his wife Shazia Kausar and daughter Fatima Baryab are the cofounders of SUKHI New York. SUKHI stands for Social Uplift, Knowledge and Hope Initiatives. Within Jackson Heights and beyond, SUKHI advances its mission of “integrating diversity into one nation.” It’s a family endeavor, for which all three have devoted much effort. By overseeing multicultural and interfaith religious festivals, Community Board meetings, candlelight vigils and other events, SUKHI plays an essential role in ensuring that Diversity Plaza reflects the neighborhood’s vibrancy. Saleh and Kausar, both immigrants from Pakistan, where they still remain active in civic causes, own Café K2. It is an inviting neighborhood spot for hot chai and snacks. Its location on Diversity Plaza enables Saleh and his family to be its eyes and ears.



Agha M. Saleh

Since its inception, Diversity Plaza has suffered from a problem plaguing many open spaces in NYC: inequitable public resources. In affluent commercial districts, surrounding businesses and property owners can pay for the maintenance of pedestrian plazas, but those resources are not available in Jackson Heights. Saleh has stepped in to fill this void. Working closely with elected

officials, Friends of Diversity Plaza, Neighborhood Plaza Partnership and JHBG, he has attended to the daily concerns of this space.

Council Member Daniel Dromm said that without Saleh’s efforts, the plaza would not have come this far and its future would be less promising: “By co-organizing festivals and music performances through the year, Mr. Saleh and his family highlight the rich, diverse set of cultures that make Jackson Heights such an exciting place in which to live.”

Shekar is the chair of Friends of Diversity Plaza. JHBG has been a member of the coalition since its creation.

Jackson Heights’ Tale of Two Plazas

By Len Maniace

The municipal gift of two pedestrian plazas was bestowed upon Jackson Heights a few years back as part of a city-wide program to create more open space and make our pedestrian-oriented city more livable. Though the plazas were created by the same city program and are in the same neighborhood, they seem to be worlds apart.

The 78th St. Plaza, also known as the 78th St. Play St., is the “good” plaza. It’s alongside a park, features free programs, including concerts and movies, and is home to the popular Green Market. It is supported and used by a cross-section of our community: men and women.

Diversity Plaza, on 37th Rd., is the “problem” plaza. There’s too much garbage; most local merchants neglect it; and among those who inhabit the plaza are a few who appear to be mentally ill and prone to violence. Its users are overwhelmingly men, and here’s why that earlier point is important: studies show that the absence of women is a sign of trouble in public places and usually means they are perceived as unsafe spaces.

Since its creation, people have said the Diversity Plaza is a failure and it should be abandoned. Aside from the fact that returning cars to 37th Rd. won’t solve these problems, JHBG believes that would be a terrible mistake. Across our city there are many examples of troubled public spaces that were revived. You don’t need to look far. Travers Park, right next to 78th St. Plaza, is one. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, that park was in worse shape than Diversity Plaza.

Parents who brought their kids to Travers Park needed to sweep up needles, broken glass and dog feces before their

offspring could play in the graffiti-filled space that was devoid of nature. Shabbily dressed, mentally ill individuals slept on mattresses hidden among timber walls that were part of the play equipment. One morning, parents arrived to find a burned mattress and wall. This was in the bad old days of the city, when a JHBG volunteer was greeted by a frequently out-of-uniform park employee who rarely left the park house with: “I don’t know why you do this. It’s only going to get messed up again.”

But rather than abandon it, Jackson Heights, and eventually the city, stepped in to save Travers Park. Parents formed JHBG’s Friends of Travers Park. Every Saturday and Sunday morning, they cleaned the park and removed graffiti; and council members corralled money for renovations. Soon Travers Park improved, faster than many



Queens World Film Festival at Diversity Plaza

other city parks. It got even better and bigger when the city’s finances improved, the Parks Department became better managed and JH residents rallied around the need for more park space.

When the 78th St. Plaza was created several years back, it immediately benefitted from the two decades of work and experience. Joining JHBG in making the plaza an attractive place is the plaza’s manager, the Jackson Heights Green Alliance, another nonprofit group.

There are many signs that this history is repeating in Diversity Plaza. It’s become a peaceful gathering place for many when events from around the world top the news. Cultural events, including music, films and children’s events, regularly occur. The plaza also features holiday tree-lighting ceremonies with music and a make-your-own-ornament party.

A team of organizations supports the plaza. JHBG is working with Friends of Diversity Plaza, an alliance of individuals, organizations and local residents, and SUKHI

(continued on p. 13)

Court Victory for Park Advocates

By John McCaffrey

The battle to stop the Willets West mega mall in Flushing Meadows–Corona Park picked up back-to-back victories in a state court and at City Hall over the summer.

The state Appellate Division in early July reversed a lower court decision that had given a green light to the relentless commercial appropriation of parkland. Then last month the New York City government split with the developer, declining to pursue the most recent ruling to the Court of Appeals. That leaves the developers, the Queens Development Group—the owners of the Mets and the Related Companies—alone in its appeal to the state’s highest court.

That court could decline to hear the case.

JHBG is part of the suit against the mall as a member of the Queens Civic Congress, which represents numerous civic associations. Other plaintiffs in the legal action against the mall are State Sen. Tony Avella and the City Club of New York.

The Queens Development Group proposes to build a 1.4 million-square-foot mall and garage adjacent to Citi Field, on 47 acres that is officially designated as parkland. City officials brokered a deal to give away the land, worth an estimated \$1 billion, for \$1. The developers based their case on a 1961 administrative code that allowed Shea Stadium and its parking field to be built on parkland.

In a Sampson versus Goliath matchup, the developers hired former state Court of Appeals Chief Judge Judith Kaye to argue their case. A state Supreme Court decision deemed the project legal in August 2014.

The recent Appellate Division ruling overturns that decision. The four-judge panel voted unanimously that state law requires any alienation or removal of parkland to be authorized by the state legislature. No reasonable reading of the administrative code, the appellate court found, either contemplated or gave permission for a shopping mall unrelated to the stadium to be in the park. “The public trust doctrine is clear that any alienation of parkland must be explicitly authorized by the legislature,” the ruling said.

Paul Graziano, one of the plaintiffs, was quoted in local newspapers saying the appellate court’s decision

(continued on p. 13)



Changes Are Coming to Travers Park

by Lila M. Stromer

Neighbors learned on July 18 of the long-awaited (but not finalized) changes that are coming to Travers Park (including Rory Stauton Field and the 78th St. Plaza) starting in 2017. City officials and Council Member Daniel Dromm told the gathered crowd at Travers Park about the changes, and had several schematic plans on display, including the one on the previous page. They spoke of, among many planned changes, removing the basketball courts and planting a raised green lawn, removing the chain link fences to give a more open feel and planting trees in their place, adding tables under the trees for quiet places to read and families to picnic, and adding built-in seating for concerts and events. Council Member Dromm explained the changes will alter the fact that Jackson Heights has some of the least green space in any of the boroughs.

The following information is from Meghan Lalor, of NYC Parks. She did specifically point out that this project is still in the design phase, so this is *not* a final plan. The city expects to move to procurement in spring 2016.

The design intent is to blend Staunton Field and 78th St. Plaza with the existing footprint of Travers Parks to create a seamless transition from park edge to the neighborhood to benefit the community through a contemporary design with a classic structure. The design will increase the green space while being mindful of durability and sustainability.

- The concrete sidewalk along 34th Ave. will be expanded to create a pleasant forecourt linking the avenue to the park with benches. This area will provide breathing space to the congestion of the Green Market and provide resting and gathering spaces.
- Travers Park's multipurpose field will be transformed into a great lawn, with welcoming entrances of arced concrete paths around the lawn and seating areas bordering it. Flowering trees will frame the arc of the lawn.
- The internal (transition) plaza will act as the spine that connects Travers Park, 78th St. Plaza, Staunton Field and 79th St. In the center will be a planting bed for seasonal flowers and a location for temporary art. All along the plaza new street trees will be added. The plaza will split into three "rooms":
 - The central room will be a performance area with stadium seating to take advantage of the grade change from the plaza to Staunton Field. The performance space can be a theater in the round or a stage can be set up on Staunton Field.
 - The next room maintains access for the private garages and provides a location for the Department of Transportation's Plaza Program requirement of movable tables and chairs.
 - Moving toward Northern Blvd., the next room will be an active space. This is a popular place for parents picking up their children from the Garden School before heading into the park.
- The city is proposing eliminating two handball courts to create a multipurpose area for activities such as volleyball or tricycle riding.
- Adjacent to the multipurpose area will be a new concrete accessible ramp leading to a comfort station.
- The play area adjacent to the spray shower will be expanded with equipment for all age groups.
- The multipurpose paved area of Travers Park will be relocated to Staunton Field, which will have new asphalt installed and will be lined with shade trees in permeable pavers. The field will be multipurpose to accommodate tennis, kickball, sports, etc. The entrance on 79th St. will be relocated, reinforcing the connection from 77th St., Travers Park and 78th St. Plaza.

Trees Count! JHBG Supports Tree Census 2015

By Melissa Zavala

“One, Two, Tree” and “We demand a *treecount!*” read two of the catchy subway ads announcing the third decennial NYC tree census. Why does the city need to count its trees, and why does it do so every ten years?

The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation has outlined the value of this census as a management tool on its website: “The tree census is an important scientific, technical, and educational effort. The results enable us to characterize our street tree population in terms of its structure, function, and value.” The website explains that information is used in strategic decision making based on “the composition, condition, and distribution of street trees” and to educate NYC citizens about how street trees make our “communities cleaner, healthier, and better places to live and work.” The census also quantifies “street trees in terms of environmental services and property values.”

Prior to the first official census conducted in 1995, the only available information was based on what was referred to as a “drive-by” survey conducted in 1989, followed by statistical sampling completed in 1992. The Giuliani administration, in office at the time, only had a general overview of the city’s urban canopy. Volunteers working with city personnel counted trees and compiled information such as the conditions of the street trees, which species did best under what conditions and tree totals across neighborhoods. This information was entered into a database that enhanced the local government’s knowledge of our urban forest beyond species distribution.

The city has since learned more about the tough conditions of urban settings that make tree survival especially challenging. The average life span of street trees is just seven years. The reasons for such short lives are varied: small tree pits leave little room for root expansion; there are harsh drought conditions from a lack of water due to erratic rainfall and extreme summer heat; and human-induced conditions that include excessive salt use in the winter time, allowing dogs to urinate in tree pits and pedestrian and pet traffic that compacts the soil and thus prevents water absorption and retention. Add to these air and soil pollutions, and even car collisions, and it is easy to see why trees face short and difficult lives. All of these factors necessitate active tree stewardship from local residents, which is why tree survival is of such importance to JHBG.

Yet for how difficult and short their lives are, the annual benefits provided by trees are enormous. These include energy savings (along with other quantifiable money values), air quality improvement, storm water retention and aesthetics. This spurred the Bloomberg administration to support the MillionTreesNYC program, whose ongoing goal is to see one million trees planted.

New technological features were added to this year’s tree count, including a custom app called TreeKIT and a lightweight tablet, which allowed for the instant uploading of data. Beyond knowledge from just how common London planetrees are (thanks to Robert Moses’ preference for them) to the 70 most common species found around our streets, this year’s census will serve to fine-tune details like tree location, previously documented by listing addresses closest to each tree. TreeKIT allowed details such as sidewalk conditions, signs of stewardship, existence or lack of tree guards, as well as problems such as metal grates and stones in tree pits constricting roots. Using a measurement wheel, volunteers measured the separation between trees on each block edge and the distance from street corners. Volunteers also measured tree circumference and, armed with identification guides, noted leaf patterns (such as shaped like a “hand” or “spade”).



JHBG’s commitment to environmental matters made participation in this endeavor a highlight of the summer. With five events held in July, including two training sessions, 65 volunteers counted 51.8 percent of the neighborhood’s blocks: that translates into 1,782 individual trees counted. As of the writing of this article, a second round of events in late August is expected to complete the remaining portion of block edges, and the census should be completed at the end of September. Findings will be reported in a future issue of the *Views*, so stay tuned!

(continued on p. 13)

Jackson Heights to LPC: Reject Taller Building

By Gloria Daini

Nearly 60 neighborhood residents attended a public hearing in August to oppose redevelopment of 84-11 37th Ave. in the Jackson Heights Historic District. Everyone is now awaiting a ruling on the plans to build a four-story structure above the existing one-story building.



84-11 37th Ave.

Residents opposing the project presented more than 1,700 petition signatures as well as several hundred letters and e-mails to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) at the hearing held in the Municipal Building in downtown Manhattan.

Also presented in opposition of the plan was a joint letter to the LPC chair from Rep. Joseph Crowley and cosigned by state and city officials representing Jackson Heights. A letter from Queens Borough President Melissa Katz, was also read. Council Member Danny Dromm headed the line of opposing speakers saying, “The Commission should honor the vision of the original planners of the Jackson Heights community, the intent of the 1993 Landmarks Preservation designation and the broad community opposition to this plan.”

Daniel Karatzas, who heads JHBG’s Architecture Committee, described the unique character of the historic district and how low-rise commercial buildings contribute to the intended plan. He also explained how the Jackson Heights Historic District differs from other historic districts in NYC.

Gloria Daini, president of the Queensboro Houses Association, described the commercial strips of Jackson Heights, noting the “village feel” of the area. She stated, “This proposal is a negation of the principles upon which Jackson Heights, in the words of the Commission, ‘continues to be a vibrant community with a high degree of intactness and a strongly defined sense of place.’ It is out of character with the neighborhood, is out of scale for
(continued on p. 12)

JHBG and Good Neighbors Get It Done

By Leslie Ellman

Jackson Heights has been highlighted in the *New York Times* quite a bit recently, in fact, as recently as May 20 and June 16 of this year. In both of these articles, our neighborhood is extolled as an affordable and diverse alternative to Manhattan and Brooklyn. Our historic district and inventory of co-ops are featured as reasons to live here. However flattering these articles are to those of us who live here, they do seem to leave out a major factor that makes Jackson Heights the great place it is: the people who live here!

Of course we do have beautiful co-ops and gardens and a rich history, and all of these things make our neighborhood great, but the one factor that makes our neighborhood the best in New York City is our residents!

That is why, on Saturday, Sept. 26, Jackson Heights Beautification Group will host the **Good Neighbor Awards** at



the Community United Methodist Church, including dinner, music and prizes. We will be honoring our neighbors who quietly work all year toward the goal of improving where we live. Just like JHBG, these honorees have been “getting things done” working in a variety of ways such as ensuring the cleanliness or environ-

mental wellness of the neighborhood, working with youth, advocating for the preservation of our historic district and the list goes on.

We will be taking a moment to highlight the individuals, businesses and even co-ops that work tirelessly to ensure that Jackson Heights continues to be the best place to live and work in all of New York City. We hope to see you there to share in the celebration!

The Good Neighbor Awards Dinner
Community United Methodist Church
81-10 35th Ave.

September 26, 2015, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Tickets are \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door

You can buy tickets at Espresso 77, Table Wine, the Sunday Green Market or on the JHBG website (jhb.org). Advanced tickets can be purchased until September 24.

JHBG Autumn 2015 Events Calendar

JHBG invites your participation in the following events. Stay the entire time, part of the time, offer your expertise, or learn something new! JHBG provides the tools, and volunteers of all ages are always welcome. **Watch our Facebook page ([facebook.com/JHBGNY](https://www.facebook.com/JHBGNY)), our website (jhbg.org) and our other communication tools for times, locations and any changes to the following.** We hope to see you out there! To volunteer, contact us at volunteer@jhbg.org.

JH SCRAPS is open year-round

Every Saturday bring your scraps to JH-SCRAPS, 69th St. and 35th Ave. between 11 a.m.–1 p.m. JH SCRAPS is JHBG's composting location. For info on what is compostable, write to jhscraps@jhbg.org.

September

- Sat., Sept. 26, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.: **Good Neighbor Awards Dinner**, with music and raffle. Community United Methodist Church, 81-10 35th Ave. Purchase tickets at Espresso 77, Table Wine, the Sunday Green Market or on the JHBG website (jhbg.org). Tickets are \$25 in advance (purchased by Sept. 24) and \$30 at the door.

October

- Sat., Oct. 31, starting at noon: **Halloween Parade!**

November

- Sun., Nov. 15, 4 p.m.: **JHO Players and Friends** perform J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos. St. Joseph's RC Church, 43-19 30th Ave., in Astoria. \$20 at the door/\$10 under age 21. Wine and cheese reception immediately to follow.
- Sun., Nov. 22, 4 p.m.: **JHO Players and Friends** perform J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos. St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 33-50 82nd St., in Jackson Heights. \$20 at the door/\$10 under age 21. Wine and cheese reception immediately to follow.



Pat Glunt, Founder and Conductor of the Jackson Heights Orchestra

SAVE THE DATE!

JHBG's 25th annual

HALLOWEEN PARADE

is coming on October 31!



Note: The Parade starts early this year at 12 NOON

The route is from 89th Street to 76th Street on 37th Avenue

Watch for more information on the JHBG website and posters around town!

JHO Players and Friends Present Two Afternoons of Bach

by Pat Glunt

Mark your calendar and don't miss this wonderful event. Members and friends of the Jackson Heights Orchestra will be performing J. S. Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos* nos. 4, 5 and 6 in two separate concerts. The first will be Sunday, Nov. 15 at 4 p.m. at St. Joseph's RC Church in Astoria and the second will be Sunday, Nov. 22 at 4 p.m. at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Jackson Heights. The concerts will cost \$20 at the door and everyone is invited to a wine and cheese reception immediately following each concert. Tickets for anyone under 21 will be \$10. The orchestra operates under the banner of the Jackson Heights Beautification Group. All proceeds will benefit and support the orchestra. Enjoy a relaxing Sunday afternoon and bring your friends!

For questions about these concerts, please write to Pat Glunt at jack.hgt.orch@gmail.com.

St. Joseph's: 43-19 30th Ave., Astoria
St. Mark's: 33-50 82nd St., Jackson Heights

And would you like to become a member of the Jackson Heights Orchestra? Read the next article!

JHO Accepting New Members

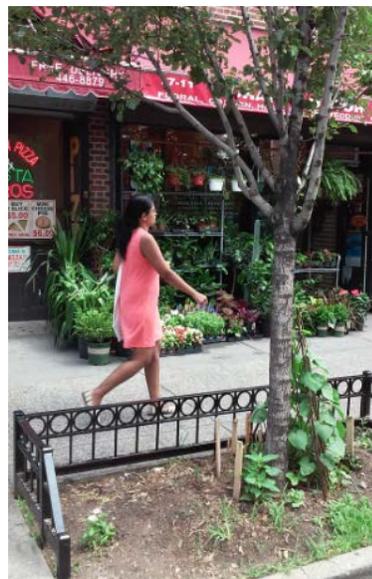
By Pat Glunt

The Jackson Heights Orchestra will be starting rehearsals for its upcoming fourth season in October. Rehearsals are scheduled for Tuesday nights at the Community United Methodist Church, and the first concert will be December 9. The orchestra is looking to increase its membership, so if you or anybody you know might be interested in joining, please contact Pat Glunt at jack.hgt.orch@gmail.com. Please include information about what instrument you play, musical training and experience.

The JHO is an adult community orchestra and operates under the banner of JHBG. Its members are volunteers. Members must be able to commit to Tuesday night rehearsals and scheduled performances, willing to be prepared and have a sense of humor. We like to work in an atmosphere that encourages musicians to play their best and have a good time. So, for a good time on Tuesday nights, come join the JHO!

News from the JHBG Electronic Newsletter

JHBG recently paid for the installation of seven new tree guards on 37th Ave., bringing the number to a grand total of 16, after the nine JHBG put in last year. As recommended by NYC Parks, JHBG is focusing on young trees, which have a high mortality rate, in part because pedestrian traffic stamps down soil, which prevents water and air from reaching the roots. The tree guards keep pedestrians out and allow JHBG and volunteers to potentially turn each tree pit into a mini-garden.



Jackson Heights to LPC: Reject Taller Building

(continued from p. 9)

the area, drastically alters an existing structure and would set a dangerous precedent for other buildings along a commercial strip in this unique historic district.”

Len Maniace, president of JHBG, said commission approval would endanger the many one-story buildings along landmarked 37th Ave. “Given intense real estate pressures, that approval would unleash a wave of development that would sweep along 37th Ave., with new structures generally built to maximum height, under current zoning of about six stories,” he said.

The developers were asked by the LPC to provide additional information about other multistory buildings in the area. The commissioners were especially interested in the original intent for the low density of the 37th Ave. commercial strip. It is not unusual for the LPC to ask for more information to be presented at a future meeting. It was suggested that LPC members visit the Jackson Heights Historic District to gather more information for their decision. JHBG will continue to follow this issue and keep you informed.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(continued from p. 3)

who can help administer our busy volunteer organization. Other qualifications? We need people who can work as part of a team, sharing ideas and communicating with your colleagues. You can join us by writing to volunteer@jhbg.com and putting *JHBG team* in the subject line.

*All crime stats are from NYPD CompStat program available at http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/crime_prevention/crime_statistics.shtml

Jackson Heights' Tale of Two Plazas

(continued from p. 5)

New York, a group founded by local merchant Agha M. Saleh. Also on the team is the Neighborhood Plaza Partnership, a program of the New York Horticultural Society, which manages several other neglected plazas around the city, and it has the devoted support of Council Member Daniel Dromm.

Now, New York City plans to invest several million dollars starting next year to turn the homely street into a full-scale pedestrian plaza, with trees and other plantings, special lighting, new seating and the resurfacing of the street and sidewalks.

That doesn't mean the plaza will be perfect. The point is that turning around troubled places takes time and effort, by community members and groups, merchants and city government. If we stay with it, Diversity Plaza can be a welcoming gateway to Jackson Heights, filled with greenery and people enjoying food from local restaurants, music and movies. It won't be easy, but things that are worthwhile rarely are.

Court Victory for Park Advocates

(continued from p. 5)

by the judges, "is very difficult to overturn; it's pretty ironclad." Graziano further stated that the developers' rationale that development on parkland was needed to complete the adjacent Willets Point residential and commercial development "was proven wrong in the decision. This shows that the taking of public land cannot be used for private gain."

It is unlikely the state legislature would approve the private taking of 47 acres of parkland without a replacement. But stranger things have happened, especially in Albany.

Despite the Appellate Division's decision, the fight is not over. One of the biggest stakeholders is New York City. The City Council had approved a \$3 billion redevelopment plan for Willets Point proper in 2008 to clean up the "Iron Triangle," populated for decades by used-car parts dealers and repair shops. The developers contend that the mega mall is a critical component of the redevelopment plans. Public reports note that Council Member Julissa Ferraras-Copeland indicated interest in reopening negotiations to see if the city can get a better deal. How that impacts the park, JHBG doesn't know.

In the hotly contested race for the now vacant District 23 City Council seat, one of the candidates proposed a Parkland Protection Act, which would prohibit the sale of and construction on parkland without a super majority approval by the City Council. The question is: Are there any current council members willing to sponsor such legislation?



The end of another successful season of Summer Sundays in the Park

Trees Count! JHBG Supports Tree Census 2015

(continued from p. 8)

Some facts about NYC's tree population include that the top 10 street tree species, in order from most to least numerous, are London planetree, littleleaf linden, Norway maple, green ash, callery pear, red maple, honeylocust, silver maple, pin oak and ginkgo.

The last census found 592,130 street trees in total, which was a rise of 19 percent from the 1995-96 census.

Trees throughout Jackson Heights continue to need our care. To volunteer as a JHBG tree steward, send an e-mail to volunteer@jhbg.org with *tree care* in the subject line. We'd love to have you join us!



VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

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Jackson Heights Beautification Group
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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.jhbg.org
info@jhbg.org

Membership Form for Jackson Heights Beautification Group

Your annual donation/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—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 11372

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.



Jackson Heights
Beautification Group, Ltd.
P.O. Box 720253, Jackson Heights, NY 11372

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Dated Event Material Please Deliver Promptly!

VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

**Jackson Heights Beautification Group's
Good Neighbor Awards dinner is on Sept. 26!**

And JHBG's *Halloween Parade* is on Oct. 31!

Read inside for more details on both events.