



VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

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Jackson Heights
Beautification Group

Jackson Heights – “A Garden in the City”

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Shake Off Winter, Jump Into Spring With JHBG

by Len Maniace

The curbside glaciers were nearly gone as this was being written, leaving behind the cigarette butts and accumulated litter from more than two months. Ahh, springtime in New York. Anyway, congratulations, you have made it through one of the coldest Februarys in history, and January was not a lot better.

JHBG wants to help you shake off the cabin fever, so we are inviting you to join us on our various spring-cleaning, weeding, planting and mulching projects. Look for details in this newsletter, in our monthly e-newsletter, on our website and on our Facebook page.

We think this issue tells the tales of the progress made by Jackson Heights over the last 25 years or so, and also the development pressures it faces. One story describes a crisis faced by many co-ops here in 1990: their betrayal by the managing company that was their trusted link to the developer who planned and built Jackson Heights.

The company, Queensboro Management, stopped paying co-op bills, including real estate taxes. Many co-ops lost thousands of dollars. Finally the firm was convicted of falsifying business records. In the end, the co-ops organized, recovered and Jackson Heights rebounded stronger than before. Also in this issue are two stories detailing a threat to our neighborhood and the integrity of its landmark status from overbuilding.

There has been some good news since our last issue: more fine performances by JHBG's Jackson Heights Orchestra, and the move of a neighborhood fixture, Armondo's Restaurant, to a new home on Northern Blvd. at 73rd St. from the fire-damaged Bruson Building. On the other hand, a spectacular fire damaged a portion of a major apartment building on the northeast corner of 80th St. and 37th Ave. Two were injured and renovations are now under way.

(con't. p. 2)

JH Scrutinizes 5-Story Planned in Historic District

By Dan Karatzas

Jackson Heights residents are raising concerns over a plan to turn a one-story commercial building along 37th Ave. into a five-story structure, a project that would need Landmarks Preservation Commission approval.

The proposal would preserve the one-story moderne brick building on the northwest corner of 37th Ave. and 85th St., and add four floors of residential construction. The new construction would be set back from 37th Ave., but built out to the property line on the street and for most of the building's rear.



84-11 37th Ave.

Community Board #3's Landmarks and Land Use Committees reviewed the proposal for 84-11 37th Ave. in preparation for issuing formal comments on the plan to the commission. The building is in the Jackson Heights Historic District.

The plan was criticized at a meeting of the two committees on Feb. 25 at the Renaissance Charter School. Some residents said it would block air and light from nearby buildings. They also said it would set a dangerous precedent threatening other one-story commercial buildings and turning 37th Ave. into a canyon. The overall effect, they maintained, would depart dramatically from the concept of a garden apartment and garden home community that won landmarking more than two decades ago.

(con't. p. 5)

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In Memoriam

JHBG would like to recognize the passing of Vincent Cosentino, proprietor of Vincent’s Hair Salon, on 37th Ave. and 76th St. He was an integral part of the fabric of Jackson Heights for decades, and his friendly face will be greatly missed. He passed away on Feb. 3, 2015. JHBG sends their deepest condolences to his wife and to his entire family.

The JHBG Facebook Page and E-Newsletter

By Lila M. Stromer and Julia McInnis

Did you know that the Queens Borough president, along with other organizations, is seeking a Queens Poet Laureate? Or that there is a food tour of South East Asia, Latin America and places in between on April 11? Or that the Garden School, located on 79th St., has a Debate Team that took the top prize at a seven-hour regional middle school competition, and is now heading to the finals in Tarrytown on April 16? Are you sorry that you missed the two concerts given by the Jackson Heights Orchestra on March 8 (in Astoria) and March 11 right here in Jackson Heights?

(con't. p. 11)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(con't. from cover)

We are proud of JHBG’s expanded monthly e-newsletter, edited by JHBG board member Julia McInnis and the ever-improving *Views from the Heights*, edited by Lila M. Stromer.

Looking ahead, here are some spring activities in what we think will make this our best year to date:

* We will be working in the mini-gardens surrounding the growing number of street trees in Jackson Heights. We will also be working in our gardens along the west side of 69th St., especially between 35th and 37th Aves. and at Junction Blvd. and 34th Ave.

* JH-SCRAPS, our community composting center, located at the corner of 35th Ave. and 69th St., not only allows you to get rid of your food waste in an environmentally sustainable manner, but it also provides the opportunity to volunteer and to learn more about composting.

* Our citizen tree-pruner squad and helpers will be out trimming street trees to encourage healthy growth. We hope to increase the number of certified citizen tree pruners when Trees New York, a nonprofit organization, brings its training program here this fall.

* Our anti-graffiti team will be out removing tags and other unwanted scrawling from buildings and fixtures around JH.

Greening Jackson Heights means more than making the neighborhood look better; it means making our neighborhood and city a more environmentally sustainable place. More thriving trees cool our streets and the homes alongside them, reducing the need for air conditioning and decreasing energy use, which in turn reduces air pollution and decreases our contribution to global warming.

Of course we have many other activities. For a list, please see our *JHBG Gets It Done* poster in this issue.

Getting involved in JHBG’s many activities is one way to build a more democratic community. It is a chance to work with your neighbors in this amazingly diverse neighborhood and expand your circle of friends. What is more, if you have a young child, your involvement is a great lesson in citizenship.

If you would like to volunteer, please let us know what interests you at volunteer@jhb.org.

Editor's Take

By Lila M. Stromer

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

Spring is around the corner, and everyone is gung-ho for the warmer weather. The change in seasons has the same effect on me as New Year's. I ask myself: What am I looking forward to? What have I accomplished? What remains to be done? As a still-relative newbie to both Jackson Heights and this paper, I'm eager to see the work JHBG has done to beautify our community and to write about it in 2015.

I am looking forward to the things I took for granted last spring – and before I really knew of JHBG. I am also eager to see the tulips rise out of the ground from the bulbs JHBG and volunteers planted throughout JH. There will be the bright yellow daffodils, the best harbinger of spring, that JHBG and Girl Scout Troops 4315 and 4297 planted. Seeing the trees start to green along 37th Ave. will be a source of pride, as I helped water them this past summer, along with a small brigade who carried buckets of water up and down the street. I got a bit wet but had a fabulous time and met some lovely neighbors.

I'm particularly looking forward to the Historic Weekend, scheduled for June 13 and 14. It is at this event last year that I got to know more about JHBG and the people who make the group so active. My husband, Joe, was not available for the garden tour, but I was thrilled to discover how lush JH truly is. The gardens are little pieces of heaven, especially when you do not have one. I talked to Joe about every garden, and the beauty of the landscapes and flowers. We took the architectural tour together, and realized again how lucky we are to have landed here.

If you have a garden, consider registering for a free tree on April 12 at JH-SCRAPS, the compost center run by JHBG. To find out how to register with the New York Restoration Project, see Evie McKenna's **Springtime Fruit Tree Giveaway** (p. 10).

One event we landed upon by accident in 2014 was a concert in Travers Park, and again saw how JHBG makes this community, well, a community. We enjoyed the music of the Jackson Heights Orchestra at a Summer Sunday in the Park concert... while enjoying lemon-lime ices from a little cart with a bicycle bell. It felt so much like summer should feel, but often does not. This summer Joe and I will attend more concerts, which are scheduled to begin June 21 and last for nine consecutive Sundays. I see quite a few lemon-lime ices in my future.



One of the major changes to watch in 2015, of course, will be the Bruson Building, which suffered that massive fire in April 2014. An important part of the community for more than 70 years, everyone is interested in what businesses will fill it. See **The Bruson Building: What's Next?** (p. 6) on what has transpired to date. That is not the only building JHBG is watching. As Dan Karatzas reports in **JH Scrutinizes 5-Story Planned in Historic District** (cover page), JHBG is working with the Landmarks Preservation Commission on the requested build-out of 84-11 37th Ave., from a one- to five-story building. You can find JHBG President Len Maniace's concerns in **Dangerous Precedent: Wave of Bigger Buildings** (p. 5).

Spring is also a good time to give a nod to Queens in general. In the "New York City" edition of Lonely Planet, Queens was chosen as the No. 1 Best in the US 2015 destination. An article in the Feb. 16, 2015, issue of the New Yorker highlighted the mural painted on a wall outside of I.S. 145 ("Writing on the Wall"). The cover of the Jan. 15–21, 2015, issue of Time Out screamed in bold letters, "All Hail the Queens: A Love Letter to New York's Hottest Borough." Yet, with all this attention, the June 2014 report by Exploring the Metropolis Inc., "Queens Performing Artists and Workspace," under the Queens Workspace Initiative, found that throughout the borough, the performing arts – music, theater, dance – lack performance space, rehearsal space and overall funding.

While Queens is on the rise, clearly there is more to do. Spring is the best time to look forward and take action steps to make the rest of the year the best it can be.

Until next time...



Composting for a Greener Neighborhood

By Lenny Olsson and Melissa Zavala

Beyond waste diversion and the savings associated with it for local government, the benefits of composting at the neighborhood level are varied. Previously in the *Views from the Heights*, we highlighted some of the overall benefits to composting, particularly in terms of waste management. In this follow-up article, we outline the uses of finished compost and its positive environmental impacts. Cities face many environmental challenges, including poor soils, compacted earth, extensive concrete coverage and polluted soils. Regularly adding compost to infrastructures such as tree pits can work wonders for our street trees. This is just one example of the varied uses for our locally produced, environmentally sustainable compost. This, so far, has been the main use for the finished compost produced at JH-SCRAPS.

Street trees lead a hard life. They grow in isolation from other trees and plants, in depleted soils and in small plots of soil that make a regular studio apartment seem like a Chateau four-bedroom apartment. Dogs and other city wildlife use their little patch of dirt as a convenient bathroom. Some even have garbage bags regularly stacked up against them awaiting Sanitation for pick up. Residents



walk by, sometimes unaware of the trees, using the tree pits as a way of sidestepping traffic. Though trees can blend into the

landscape, in some ways taking on a type of invisibility, the advantages they provide city residents are important to note. Besides cleansing our air, trees provide welcome shade and breeze during the warmest months of the year, and add a beauty to our streets. Trees have been shown to provide people with distinct healthful benefits like quicker recovery time when present outside hospital windows and reducing asthma in neighborhoods that have high rates. Their presence outside apartment windows is a coveted sight, even improving real estate values. Additionally, a very important service acknowledged more recently is their value as storm water retention systems.

Older cities like New York were developed with a combined sewage overflow system. Following a storm, excess rain washes down the pavement into the sewer system. When this system becomes overburdened, it is released into the surrounding waterways, along with residential sewage. Due to the compacted nature of

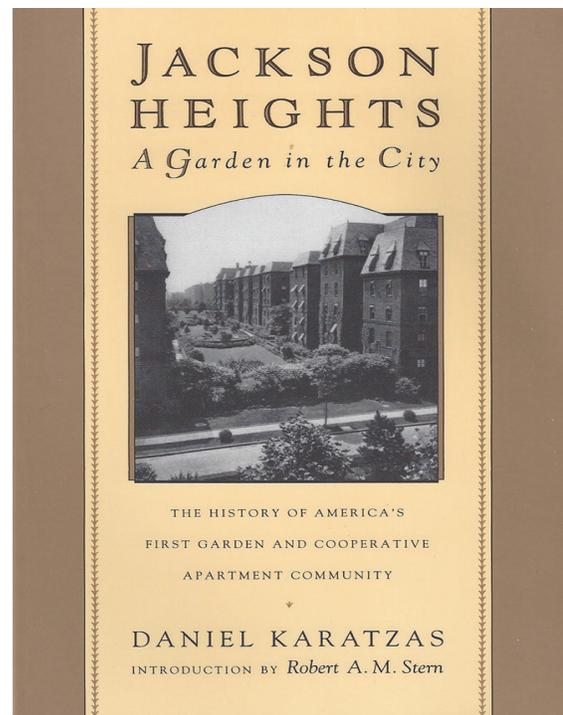
tree-pit soil, water tends to run off the surface into the sewer system. Compost is known to enhance the water retention ability of soils. By adding our compost to the neighborhood tree pits, we not only provide the trees with nutrients, but also with the ability to store more water within it, thereby reducing the amount that ends up in the sewers and providing more water for a tree's roots to access.

JHBG's compost has been used to help plant life in Diversity Plaza, Travers Park and along 37th Ave. One of our goals is to provide every tree pit in Jackson Heights with this natural bounty at least once.

You can do your part by saving your food scraps (see the Sept. 2014 *Views from the Heights* for what is and is not compostable) and bringing them to JHBG's composting center, JH-SCRAPS, every Saturday between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. during the winter months, and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. when the weather warms up. The center is located at 69th St. and 35th Ave., under the BQE. If you have any questions on composting, write to jhscraps@jhbg.org.

Historic Weekend: Scheduled for June 13 & 14

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



JH Scrutinizes 5-Story Planned in Historic District (con't. from cover)

In their PowerPoint presentation, the property owner's representatives presented a revised version of the one they gave in 2014. Gone were the balconies and their shiny metal parapets, features that would likely raise eyebrows at the commission. Among other changes, the plan calls for 40 apartments instead of 53, and 36 parking spaces instead of 16. Air conditioning systems would be placed on the roof and also on the rear façade, facing one of the four Roosevelt Terrace buildings.

The building's height remains essentially the same, however.

The representatives said their proposal was in character with the adjacent six-story structure built several years ago, which did not need Landmarks approval because the original building on the site was destroyed by fire.

At least one more CB#3 committee meeting is expected before the proposal goes before the full board at a formal hearing where the public can comment. After this, the proposal would go before a public hearing at the Landmarks Preservation Commission, where the public can also comment.

The commission would determine whether it is acceptable to allow for this type of development in the Jackson Heights Historic District. It is the ultimate arbiter as to whether our historic district maintains its unique character — a character the commission carefully described in detail in our 1993 designation report — or to depart from that vision.

As such, your role in this process is crucial. Make sure that your voice is heard, both at the meeting where this proposal is presented to the full board of CB#3 and especially when it is heard before the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Contact information for the Landmark Preservation Commission, CB#3 and the two City Council Members can be found on page 13 of this newsletter.

Dangerous Precedent: Wave of Bigger Buildings

By Len Maniace

The Jackson Heights Beautification Group opposes the plan to turn a one-story commercial building along 37th Ave. into a five-story structure, and we urge the Landmarks Preservation Commission to reject it.

The JHBG Board of Directors voted unanimously against the plan at its March 4 meeting. We agree that this plan would set a precedent endangering the many one-story buildings along 37th Ave., allowing them to be built out to their maximum height under current zoning, generally six stories.

This proposal would dramatically alter the nature of the Jackson Heights Historic District, which was so designated in 1993 in large part because of its balance of density and the preservation of air and sun.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission's designation report said this about the neighborhood developed by the Queensboro Corporation:

“The Queensboro Corporation's planned community at Jackson Heights was recognized at the time of its development as one of New York's important centers of new housing concepts, particularly the 'garden apartment,' and many of the ideas and features explored there are now standard for middle-class housing... Today [that is 1993], Jackson Heights continues to be a vibrant community which, because of its overall design, planning and integration of open space, as well as its high degree of intactness, has a strongly defined sense of place.”

We want to be clear: We do not oppose additional housing if done incrementally in Jackson Heights. But given the combination of New York City's torrid real estate market and the area's current zoning, Landmarks' approval of this plan would open the Historic District to a land rush.

There are other areas of concern about the plan and those that would follow it. The proposal calls for more than double the amount of parking than required by the city in a transit-accessible neighborhood. This development and others like it would add more cars to congested streets. They also would bring many more students to area schools — which despite a huge effort to build new local schools — are still crowded.

We urge you to oppose this plan. Let Community Board #3, the Landmarks Preservation Commission and other city officials know how you feel.

You can find JHBG's letter to the Landmarks Preservation Commission on page 12, along with the contact information for the involved parties. Please take the time to have your voice be heard.

The Bruson Building: What's Next?

This expanded article is based on an e-newsletter update published in January.

By Lila M. Stromer

The Bruson Building on 37th Ave. will retake its place as an integral part of the JH community after the horrific 5-alarm fire that destroyed it on Apr. 21, 2014. What will fill the space is the big question.

Jackson Heights residents do not lack ideas for the businesses they hope will fill the burned-out shell.

Food stores (particularly Trader Joe's), restaurants, a community meeting space, a local version of the shop-filled



Bruson Building during reconstruction

Chelsea Markets, a rooftop community garden and a performance space were just a few of the visions offered by the 200-plus people who attended a Jan. 22 meeting on the building's future. Neighbor-

hood residents also were clear about what they did not want in the four-story building: fast food restaurants, 99 cent stores or chain stores.

Held at the Jewish Center and sponsored by Sen. José Peralta, the meeting was also attended by Craig Bruno, a trustee of the Joseph Bruno Trust, owners of the building.

Bruno said reconstruction, which began a few months previous to the meeting, would take another year to complete and it was too soon to know who the new tenants would be. Its former tenants included several popular restaurants, a business college, a Queens social service agency and a pharmacy, among others.

Though he does not live in JH, Bruno attempted to reassure residents, saying he would not want to fill the building with businesses he personally would not want to live near.

Many of the residents wanted specific answers from Bruno, which are not yet possible, and many questioned whether Sabre Real Estate, the company hired to find the new tenants, was being proactive enough in its search, or

simply being reactive, particularly after several responses that businesses should call Sabre if they are interested. This made several participants stand up to ask if the real estate company was initiating any contact with potential companies or only waiting for companies to contact them.

A letter from Dec. 10, 2014, sent by Council Member Daniel Drumm to Sabre, was read out loud. In part, it reads: "According to recent press reports, the owners are specifically looking for large chain stores, banks and restaurants such as Popeye's, McDonald's and Burger King as potential new tenants...I believe that the community would greatly benefit by having the opportunity to patronize businesses that provide products and services not currently available in the area." That was clearly and frequently reiterated throughout the meeting by attendees.

Bruno was able to state that the footprint of the building would not change: it would remain a 4-story building, but would be AAA-rated with a sprinkler system and a new central cooling system on the roof. He also said that both union and non-union workers are on the job site. To make it more conducive for renters, the plan is to keep the building as a blank box, and internal walls will be built after tenants are found. The Joseph Bruno Trust is aiming to have the tenants lined up by Sept. 2015 and the building operational by early winter 2016.

Peralta said his office would provide progress reports on social media, including jacksonheightslife.com. As of this writing, this writer has not seen postings.

When Peralta was contacted for updates for this article, he said, "There are several negotiations going on at this time. The owners of the building and our office are reaching out to potential tenants and looking at all the possibilities."

All in all, it is too soon to know what is going to fill the Bruson Building, but JHBG will remain active in trying to find out what might be coming down the pike.



Armondo's Italian Restaurant survived the fire at the Bruson Building. Its owner, Jerry Crisci, reopened the JH fixture at 73-16 Northern Blvd. on Feb. 14. His website is www.armondositalianrestaurant.com.

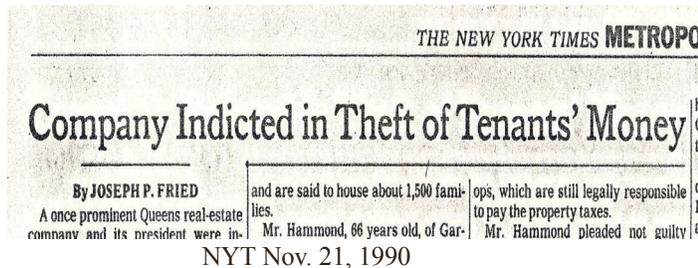
A Close Call for Jackson Heights Co-ops

The Queensboro Houses Association (QHA) and JHBG have been closely linked since their beginnings. Mike Crowley, the founding father of JHBG, was also a shareholder in a Queensboro co-op, as were most early JHBG members. The initial reason for forming QHA, however, was a far cry from the founding of JHBG.

By Gloria Daini and Len Maniace

The word spread rapidly, and sent shivers through many who lived in Jackson Heights that winter 25 years ago: Queensboro Management, the trusted management company for most of the neighborhood's historic original co-ops, had serious money trouble.

Life in Jackson Heights, and across New York City, was shaky enough. Graffiti and piles of garbage sprouted overnight and crime was on the rise; "cocaine capital" often preceded the words Jackson Heights in news reports. Was this the final straw? The 80-year-old company – started by Edward MacDougall, the man who planned and built this distinctive garden community – had failed to pay real estate taxes and other bills for dozens of co-ops.



For how long this had been going on, no one knew. This much was clear: The neighborhood had been betrayed by the organization on which it depended to maintain and manage much of its housing. It was as if children suddenly learned their parents were swindlers.

Monthly reports issued by Queensboro Management showed nothing amiss; bills seemed to be getting paid and the management documents listed itemized cancelled checks. When in rem real estate notices were received, some shareholders at Linden Court contacted the Queens district attorney, and an investigation was launched. [According to law.com, in rem is defined as "adj. from Latin 'against or about a thing,' referring to a lawsuit or other legal action directed toward property, rather than toward a particular person."] Co-op residents were furious, and things began to happen quickly. They went to Queensboro Management's headquarters on 37th Ave. and 82nd St., to pick up their corporation documents and whatever was left after the DA took files from the offices.

The panicked co-op residents came together to find ways to pay unpaid bills and to re-establish credibility with contractors, utilities and New York City agencies. Committees of volunteers from the Chateaus, the Colonials, the Greenbrier, the Greystones, the Willows, as well as the Elm, Hampton, Hawthorne, Laurel, Linden and Plymouth Courts were formed to tackle different issues. The cost of meetings and room rentals were met by passing the hat. Communications were hand-delivered (no email back then), and copies of documents were made at committee members' workplaces. Out of this chaos and confusion, these once placid co-op residents organized to form the Queensboro Houses Association. The newly organized group estimated each building owed between \$10,000 and \$15,000 on real estate taxes alone. To make matters worse, a city Department of Finance official said the co-ops would be charged a 19 percent penalty for each year of nonpayment.

Daily and weekly newspapers began reporting on the scandal. In April 1991, Queensboro Management and its president, William Hammond, pleaded guilty to falsifying business records. QHA then instituted a civil lawsuit against Atlantic Bank, which resulted in a precedent-setting decision in its favor. The partially recovered funds were divided among the parties to the suit once the lawyer's bill was paid.

With QHA's guidance, the co-ops learned how to manage themselves, which stabilized the neighborhood. Since then, QHA continued its work to share information and assist member cooperatives. The group issued several editions of the "Directory of Professional Services and Suppliers," with listings considered reliable by QHA members. QHA held workshops, provided information and offered guidance on co-op issues and legislation. The group joined with Jackson Heights Beautification Group (formed two years earlier in 1988) on a number of issues to improve the neighborhood.

QHA is at a crossroads. The generation that has been at its helm is aging. Its leaders believe there is still a need for this kind of information-sharing organization, and are seeking ideas for the form it should take for its continuity. They have reached out to JHBG for help, and hope to begin a neighborhood conversation on which aspects of QHA's work ought to be continued. If you are interested in exploring this issue, please contact volunteer@jhb.org.

Gloria Daini is president of the Queensboro Houses Association. Len Maniace is JHBG president.

JHBG Spring 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), 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@jhb.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. (spring hours are 10 a.m.–2 p.m.). JH-SCRAPS is JHBG's composting location. For info on what is compostable, write to jhscraps@jhb.org.

April

- **Sun., Apr. 12: Fruit Tree Giveaway** at JH-SCRAPS.
- **Sat., Apr. 18, Tree LC***: Care for street trees, 10 a.m.–noon. Meet at 80th St. and 37th Ave.
- **Saturday Green Zone**: Care for gardens, 10 a.m.–1 p.m. **4/4: 37th Ave. and 73rd St.**, tree workshop.; **4/11: P.S. 69**, landscaping, meet at 37th Ave. and 78th St.; **4/18: 37th Ave.**, tree work, meet at 37th Ave. and 80th St.; **4/25: Leverich Cemetery.**

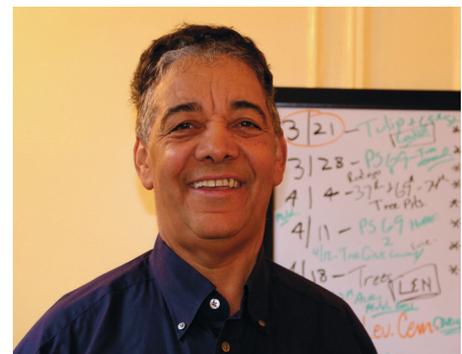
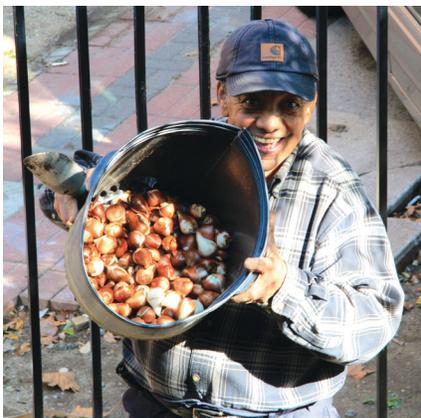
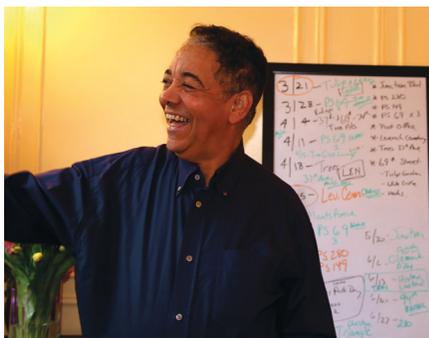
May

- **Friends of Travers Park/Tree LC/Green Zone** at Travers Park, starting at 10 a.m. Date TBD.
- **Sat., May 16: Jackson Height Orchestra Concert**, St. Marks Church, 3:00 p.m. This is a fundraiser featuring JHO members and friends. There will also be local soloists and small ensembles. The cost is \$20, with a wine and cheese reception to follow.
- **Saturday Green Zone**: Care for gardens, 10 a.m.–1 p.m. **5/2: P.S. 69**, planting; **5/9: P.S. 280 and P.S. 149**, planting; **5/23: Manuel De Dios Unanue Triangle**, at Roosevelt and 83rd St.; **5/30: Junction Blvd. and 34th Ave.**

June

- **Sat. June 13, Tree LC***: Care for street trees, 10 a.m.–noon. Meet at 84th St. and 37th Ave.
- **Sat., June 13 and Sun., June 14: Historic Weekend**, garden and architectural tours of the Historic District.
- **Sun., June 21** (for 9 consecutive Sundays): **Summer Sundays in the Park**, Travers Park. Check for performer details.
- **Saturday Green Zone**: Care for gardens, 10 a.m.–1 p.m. **6/6: 90th St.**, tree surrounds; **6/20: 94th St. and 35th Ave.**; **6/27: P.S. 280**

* Tree LC will be scheduling other weekend tree-care events depending on need, such as the amount of rain. Please check for details each weekend.



JHBG gratefully recognizes the tireless work of Rafael Rodriguez, who single-handedly planted more than 5,000 bulbs last spring and summer, which will beautify Jackson Heights this year. This is just some of the work he does with JHBG. As a volunteer gardener, he is at the heart of what JHBG accomplishes each year.

JHBG Dog Park

by Susan Phillips and Lila M. Stromer

One of the things you may not know about JHBG is that it has a Dog Park – formally known as the Jackson Heights Canine Recreation and Entertainment Wonderland – with approximately 120 human members and 135 dog members. The Dog Park is maintained and cleaned by its members, because, as with all things JHBG, this is volunteer-run. The dogs, of course, simply love playing there! The JHBG subcommittee is called JH Crew

The Dog Park, which is located at 69th St., between 34th and 35th Aves. (underneath the BQE), was founded in May 2010. To join the park you must fill out an application, and you must provide proof of up-to-date immunizations for your dog.



There is no charge to become a member to the use the Dog Park, but it is recommended that you make a donation to JHBG to help defray operating costs.

You can find the 2014–15 application at <http://tinyurl.com/q8rhdkr>. Please note that along with proof of current immunizations, you will need to submit proof of a NYC dog license The rules of the Dog Park and a release of liability are included with the application form.

If you have any general questions about the Dog Park, or questions on the status of your application, please send an email to dogrun.jh@gmail.com.

Once your application is accepted, you are welcome to use the park. The park is usually busiest between 6:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. during both the week and on weekends.

While the website may not have the most current information, JH Crew also maintains an active Facebook page ([facebook.com/JHdogpark](https://www.facebook.com/JHdogpark)). The page is not only a great way for members to post pictures of their dogs playing, but their owners can set up times to meet up at the park. Members say this is a great way for both doggies and owners to play together. It is also a great way to find out news and information on the Dog Park, as well as other JHBG events.

New Instruments Bring Happiness to I.S. 230

By Susan Latham

Student musicians at the Magnet School for Civics in the Community Intermediate School 230 are enjoying new instruments recently donated by The Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation. The school received three clarinets, three trumpets, two alto saxophones and one drum set, collected through the WQXR New York Public Radio Instrument Drive held last spring. All the instruments were refurbished for free by Sam Ash Music Stores, which worked in partnership on the drive with WQXR and Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation.

“What a great addition to our school!” said I.S. 230’s Principal Ronald Zirin. “We have had no funding for new instruments and minimal funding for instrument repairs for the past eight years, so these instruments are a critical component of resource acquisition.”

I.S. 230 has a robust music program, with three full-time music teachers who provide instruction in band, guitar and chorus, as well as general music classes. The programs nurture budding musical talent: Approximately 12 percent of the school’s graduating students are accepted into New York City’s specialized high schools, including Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts in Manhattan and Frank Sinatra School of the Arts in Astoria.

“The grant from The Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation is a tremendous morale booster for our school,” said music teacher Robert Diefenbach. “It improves the learning experience for our students, who benefit from playing better instruments, and allows the music teachers to focus on teaching instead of repairing instruments.”

It is hoped that the donation will also help to leverage additional musical instruments for the school.

If you have a musical instrument in good condition and you would like to donate it to I.S. 230’s music program, please write to RDiefenbachiii@schools.nyc.gov.



Students from I.S. 230 / Halloween Parade 2014

From the Partnerships for Parks

JHBG is happy to introduce Bin, the new coordinator from the Partnerships for Parks.

By Bin Feng Zheng



I am the new Queens Outreach Coordinator, covering Community Board Districts 3, 4, 6, 7 and 11. For those unfamiliar with the Partnerships for Parks' numerical designation, these areas include JH, Elmhurst, Corona, Flushing, Forest Hill, Rego Park, and College Point, among others.

I grew up in Manhattan's Chinatown, an area short on green spaces. I went to public school in the city and went to college in Vermont. Growing up in a crowded city is why I went to a small liberal arts college in a rural setting. At Middlebury College, I became interested in how our natural environment can positively affect our lives. I am interested in languages; I believe it is important to be able to communicate with people in their own words, which why I speak Mandarin Chinese, Spanish and English. I am also interested in the intersection between community organizing, environmental education and government services. What excites me about my job are the people and friends I have made, being outside, and the simple act of planting a seed.

I was the Greening Western Queens Community Coordinator with the Partnerships for Parks from January to November 2014. I helped build, grow and sustain nine street tree stewardship groups covering Long Island City, Sunnyside, Woodside and Astoria. The Partnerships for Parks led 43 tree-care stewardship and greening events in summer 2014, drawing 895 volunteers. Activities ranged from planning local green spaces, to simple tree care, to advanced perennial planting (more than 1,000 trees were planted), to growing its stewardship network. Concurrently, I supported the visioning efforts of my teammates because the Partnerships for Parks considers what each community needs to become an independent stewardship entity and to successfully transition the resources and relationships to our community leaders. My goal is to continue to be a part of the growing community of volunteers and professionals who actively work to bring more green spaces to our beloved city.

Springtime Fruit Tree Giveaway

By Evie McKenna

On April 12, from 10 a.m. until noon, you can pick up a free fruit tree at JH-SCRAPS. Yes, the tree is entirely free.

It is recommended that you register for your tree approximately two weeks prior to the event on the New York Restoration Project website. According to that site, only a limited quantity of trees will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Though the trees are free, there are some rules in obtaining one. You must agree to plant the tree in one of the five boroughs, and agree to properly care for and water it. You must also plant the tree in a place where you have permission and not on public property, in city parks, on balconies, in containers or on roofs.



Pine tree mulch will also be available by the bag from JH-SCRAPS for your street trees. This mulch is from the Travers Park Mulchfest in January.

JH-SCRAPS, JHBG's composting center, is located just under the BQE near 35th Ave. and 69th St., at the edge of Jackson Heights and Woodside. The trees are donated, so there are no specific details on which trees will be available until closer to the date. As an example, though, last fall JH-SCRAPS gave away Regina Sweet Cherry trees, which seem to have survived the winter so far, and should dot the city this spring with gorgeous cherry blossoms and possibly edible fruit later this summer. You can find specific information on this year's project and register for a tree at www.nyrp.org/treegiveaways.

Thanks to Million Trees NYC and New York Restoration Project, and to Toyota USA and TD Bank, our local sponsors.

You, JH and NYC's Million Trees Project

By Len Maniace

For those of you who are keeping score, New York City's Million Trees program is closing in on its goal of making our city a greener place: the number of trees planted recently stood at 949,092.

JHBG has been a partner in this program to make our city more environmentally sustainable, and we will continue to do so long after the one-millionth tree is in the ground. Please join us.

For the last four-plus years, we have requested the planting of new trees, and even more important, taken care of existing and newly planted trees. As a matter of fact, our efforts – called Tree LC – have been recognized several times by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. We will be out taking care of our street trees soon after this winter's glaciers retreat, helping our trees thrive so they cool our streets, and soak up air pollution and the sounds of honking cars.

Trees also help absorb water from snow melt and rainstorms, which regularly overload the ability of sewage treatment plants to handle waste water; when that happens, untreated sewage floods into nearby creeks and bays, tainting our waters. That overflow provides Flushing Bay with its characteristic scent at low tide.



Watch our Facebook page (facebook.com/JHBGNY), website (JHBG.org) and other communication tools for exact times and places, and check out the Calendar on page 8 of this issue. We hope to see you out there! To volunteer, please contact us at volunteer@jhbg.org.

Be A Part of Our Tree LC Group

JHBG's Tree LC team will meet the third Saturday of each month, usually starting around 10 a.m. The Tree LC team takes care of the street trees.

Be A Part of Our Gardening Group

Starting in March the Green Zone will be working every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. We have many projects planned, including:

- Total overhaul of the P.S. 69 garden over four week-ends.
- Build a flower garden at 69th St. and 34th Ave.
- Continue the garden at 34th Ave. and Junction Blvd.
- Work on tree gardens around street trees along 37th Ave.
- Expand the garden along 69th St., between 37th Ave. and 35th Ave.
- Install new tree surrounds around Jackson Heights.
- Continue the gardens around P.S. 149 and P.S. 280
- Work on tree gardens on 94th St. and 95th St., between 37th Ave. and 35th Ave.
- Keep Leverich Cemetery clean.

The JHBG Facebook Page and E-Newsletter

(con't. from p. 2)

You can stay up on all the news that is Jackson Heights (and even other parts of Queens) on the JHBG Facebook page at facebook.com/JHBGNY. Feel free to visit that page to know what is going on around town, and also "like" it to let us know that you appreciate staying apprised of all things JH and JHBG.

In addition to its quarterly newsletter, JHBG sends out a monthly electronic newsletter. The e-newsletter contains the most recent upcoming events and volunteers activities, especially for our neighborhood planting, gardening and tree-care groups. In addition to announcing new volunteer projects and noteworthy neighborhood events, the e-newsletter also features short articles that highlight important issues in the community. Recent stories include what occurred at the community meeting about the Bruson Building and on tree-pruning training classes offered by the city. If you would like to receive the monthly e-newsletter, visit www.jhbg.org to subscribe. Additionally, if you would like to contribute articles or events to the e-newsletter, send an email to Julia McInnis at views@jhbg.org.

JHBG's Letter to the Landmarks Preservation Commission

The Jackson Heights Beautification is unequivocally against the approval of building alterations that would allow for the expansion of residential and/or commercial buildings in the Jackson Heights Historic District. We are particularly concerned about 37th Avenue being lined with six-story (or taller) buildings. Here is why:

First, Jackson Heights was developed as a planned "Garden Suburb" by the Queensboro Corporation between the two World Wars. Since Jackson Heights was **planned**, new buildings will only serve to destroy its innovative planning, scale, sense of place and "neighborhood feel" - **the core rationale behind the Landmarks Preservation Commission's designation**. From the 1993 designation report:

"The Queensboro Corporation's planned community at Jackson Heights was recognized at the time of its development as one of New York's important centers of new housing concepts, particularly the "garden apartment," and many of the ideas and features explored there are now standard for middle-class housing. ... **Today (that is 1993), Jackson Heights continues to be a vibrant community which, because of its overall design, planning and integration of open space, as well as its high degree of intactness, has a strongly defined sense of place.**" (pg. 5) *October 19, 1993 Landmarks Preservation Commission designation report for the Jackson Heights Historic District.*

Second, although built more densely than most other Queens neighborhoods – with more apartment buildings than houses - the Queensboro Corporation was careful to make sure that the commercial district along 37th Avenue in Jackson Heights was appropriately scaled. Through the 1940s, taller mixed-use residential and commercial buildings were clustered only around adjacent subway stops at 82nd and 90th Streets. The blocks east, west and in-between were mostly filled with one-story commercial buildings. This strategy helped prevent 37th Avenue from becoming a canyon of tall (for our neighborhood) buildings creating a dark shadow-filled commercial district. The Queensboro Corporation consciously moved its commercial district from under the elevated train running along Roosevelt Avenue, to 82nd and 90th Streets and a more light-filled 37th Avenue.

"The district is among the earliest areas in the city in which the commercial thoroughfares were planned to complement and integrate with the residential buildings by using the same architectural styles or by incorporating features of adjoining residential buildings into their designs." (pg. 5)

"Although 37th Avenue had originally been planned for commercial development, by and large it developed later than the commercial block of 82nd Street, for the most part in the late 1930s and 1940s. **Its commercial buildings are mostly one- and two-story groups** of the kind often called "taxpayers," these buildings all have stores on the avenue and the corner storefronts generally wrap around to the side streets, where additional storefronts also may be found. There are several apartment houses fronting 37th Avenue which were designed to have continuous storefronts along the avenue frontage, and corner storefronts in those structures generally extend to the side streets, as well." (pg. 36) *October 19, 1993 Landmarks Preservation Commission designation report for the Jackson Heights Historic District.*

A major objective in designating the Jackson Heights Historic district was to preserve the "human scale" of our innovative and remarkably intact community. Tall buildings lining our commercial thoroughfares will destroy that scale. We want the character of our historic district maintained, and allowing one-story commercial buildings to be turned into to six- or more-story commercial and residential towers will destroy that. And once one commercial property owner is allowed to expand their existing building on 37th Avenue, all of the others will want to do likewise, and our appropriately scaled commercial district, one that complements our residential housing stock, will become a cavern of tall buildings.

We ask that the Landmarks Preservation Commission deny proposed expansions of designated buildings that will serve to destroy our scale and planning - key reasons behind the landmarking of the Jackson Heights Historic District over twenty years ago.

This may technically be a "rooftop addition," however, that term obfuscates the truth. This proposal will increase the

building square footage by 400% (confirm #s). This is not a small addition, set back far enough from the street not to be visible, on, say, a brownstone on a quiet block in Brooklyn Heights. This supposed “addition” quadruples the size of the building adding over 30,000 (confirm) square feet of bulk and destroys the light, air and ventilation for 35-50 85th Street and all of the residents and shoppers walking nearby. This is four stories plus mechanicals being added to our commercial district that will set a terrible precedent in the Jackson Heights Historic District.

Quantify what is on all of the blockfronts in the JHHD, and those from Bway to 77 Streets and 88 to Junction.

If you allow this, there will be no more light, air and ventilation along 37th Avenue. Please remember that this is not simply one “addition,” but a precedent-setting Trojan Horse, which, if allowed by you, will destroy the character and planning of the JHHD’s commercial district. Your approval of this one “addition” will likely result in all of the other property owners with one-story commercial buildings turning them into five- or six-story mixed used towers – creating a canyon – for us, at least in Queens – down the core commercial street in the Jackson Heights Historic District. Is this what you, the LPC want for us? If so, why did you landmark us in the first place, if out-of-scale development that serves to destroy the rationale for our historic district that you authored, is now deemed acceptable?

Remember, this is not just one decision for one “addition.” This proposal is an historic-district-destroying design, and if approve it you are setting us up for more and more decisions that will destroy the character of the JHHD.

JHBG urges you to contact the following parties:

To Contact the Landmarks Preservation Commission, use this URL:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/html/contact/contact.shtml>

From this page we suggest you click on “send an email to the Chair” under Contact the Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Online.

To Contact the Community Board #3:

82-11 37th Ave., 6th Floor
Jackson Heights, NY 11372
718-458-2707
Communityboard3@nyc.rr.com

To Contact Our City Council Members:

Daniel Dromm
37-32 75th St.
Jackson Heights, NY 11372
718-803-6373
ddromm@council.nyc.gov

Julissa Ferraras
32-33A Junction Blvd.
East Elmhurst, NY 11369
718-651-1917
jferreras@council.nyc.gov



VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

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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: _____

Email 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@jhb.org.



Jackson Heights
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Dated Event Material Please Deliver Promptly!
VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

Free Tree Giveaway April 12
at JH-SCRAPS!

Read inside for more details.

Historic Weekend is coming: June 13 and 14!