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Jan. 3, 2016

Your Neighborhood – Your News®

A CNG Publication Vol. 5 No. 1

UPDATED EVERY DAY AT BROOKLYNDAILY.COM **CNG**

N'town Creek dirtier than Gowanus Canal

BY COLIN MIXSON

The filthiest waterway in Brooklyn isn't the Gowanus Canal — it is Newtown Creek!

So says the only man who could possibly know for sure: Christopher Swain, the one person in history to successfully swim both toxin-filled inlets.

And he made the announcement minutes after emerging from the so-called water of Newtown Creek — which he swam from end to beginning (or beginning to end, depending on how you look at it) last Wednesday.

"That's definitely the worst water I've ever been in. Not even a question," Swain told this paper before going on a "This is Spinal Tap"-inspired speech about just how filthy the waterway is. "Everything is turned up to 11. The petroleum was at 11, the sewage

Continued on page 10

A TWEE SPACE



THE ANDERSONIAN AESTHETIC: If you fancy yourself a Wes Anderson aficionado, stop by Videology on Jan. 3 for Royal Tenenbaums bingo, where the name of the game is to spot some of Anderson's most used visual and plot devices to fill up your card and win a free drink.

Photo by Jason Speakman

Wes Anderson bingo at Videology

BY DENNIS LYNCH

Oh, Tenenbaum!

Fans of quirky films will burst out with B-I-N-G-O while watching "The Royal Tenenbaums" on Jan. 3 at Videology, when the bar and screening room's Wes Anderson Bingo night focuses on the director's film about genius siblings Chaz, Richie, and (adopted) sister Margot. The game is to spot certain unmistakably Andersonian visual and plot devices and fill up bingo cards with them, but

Continued on page 10

He's Russian in!

BY LAUREN GILL

Privyet, neighbor!

Russian billionaire playboy Mikhail Prokhorov will take full control of Barclays Center and the Nets after buying out Atlantic Yards developer Bruce Ratner's stake in both for \$1.7 billion, and nearby residents say they

hope the new landlord will respond quickly to their gripes about noise, trash, and traffic.

"I've seen a lot and I've lived through a lot and quite frankly some of the issues that are going on now I don't think need to be necessary," said Regina Cahill, who lives 400 feet



File photo by Paul Martinka

Russian billionaire playboy Mikhail Prokhorov has full ownership of Barclays Center.

Trump Village's co-op d'etat

BY MAX JAEGER

They've got a dog in this fight.

The president of one of Coney Island's largest private apartment complexes broke the law when he tried to muscle out disabled residents who rely on service animals, federal prosecutors claimed this week. Igor Oberman, who headed the co-op board at the 1,144-unit Trump Village co-op in Brighton Beach, dogged three disabled residents — including a

veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder — when they exercised their rights to own pets that sooth their stress, the suit filed Dec. 23 states. The complex has a no-pet policy, but it must make exceptions for people who can demonstrate a medical need, a federal attorney said.

"Emotional support animals provide critical care and therapeutic aid for people with disabilities," Vanita Gupta, a lawyer with the U.S. Attorney General's Civil

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VALE RISING: The William Vale Hotel will soon begin accepting bookings from visitors looking to stay in luxury Williamsburg digs. Photo by Stefano Giovanni

Resort town

Huge luxury hotels headed for Williamsburg in 2016

BY ALLEGRA HOBBS

Call it Club Bedford!
Williamsburg is now an international tourist attraction, says a hotelier, and a new wave of huge luxury hotels are set to hit the once-hipster 'hood starting in 2016 to cater to the influx of gawking globetrotters.

"Williamsburg is extremely hot," said Sebastian Maingourd, the general manager of the 183-room William Vale Hotel, which is set to open in April and begin accepting reservations by the end of this month. "If you go to France right now and you talk about Williamsburg, it's really a brand."

The futuristic 21-story lodging, which started shooting up on Wythe Avenue between N. 12th and N. 13th streets less than a year ago — right near from the Wythe Hotel, which first ignited the first boutique boarding-house boom in the neighborhood — will boast a rooftop park and pool, plus a ballroom and several restaurants.

The Vale is a few blocks from the also imminent nine-story, 160-room Williamsburg Hotel at N. 10th Street. The self-described "urban resort" is slated to include no less than six bars — including a nightclub in the basement and a cocktail bar inside a water tower on the roof — according to a Bedford and Bowery report.

It will open in the spring.

Across the street will be the nine-story, 175-room Hoxton Hotel — an outpost of a chain that started in Shoreditch, London's answer to Williamsburg — which broke ground a few months back.

Further afield, the M500 is currently rising behind the Kelloggs Diner at Metropolitan and Union avenues. The wedge-shaped building will crest at 14 stories, housing 188 hotel rooms, restaurants, and rooftop tennis and basketball courts, in addition to some residential units, according to plans filed with the city.

And All Year Management is planning a seven-story, 112-key hotel at White and McKibbin streets. The architect revealed new designs for the as-yet-unnamed property this week — which show a boxy white lodge balanced atop a graffiti-covered warehouse — and will include a shopping mall, restaurants, and bars, as first reported by Arch Daily. Those plans are still pending.

More hoteliers may soon have to look beyond Wythe Avenue to set up shop in the nabe — Mayor DeBlasio plans on making it difficult to open lodgings in specific district earmarked for industrial businesses, and one such zone covers Kent and Wythe avenues between N. Ninth and Dobbin streets.

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Tall order D'town

Final City Point building will rise 57 stories

BY LAUREN GILL

Now they're really getting to the point!

A 57-story tower will be the final component of Downtown's City Point mega-complex, according to plans the developer filed with the city earlier this month.

Luxury real-estate firm Extell purchased the site at Willoughby Street between Albee Square West and Flatbush Avenue Extension for \$115.5 million earlier this year. The builder will fill the behemoth high-rise with retail space and some 500 residential units, according to a New York Times report.

Construction is slated to begin in 2017 and wrap up by 2020 — at which point the 692-foot building may be the tallest in the borough, unless a rival builder can finish the 1,000-foot “super tower” it is building on the neighboring block first.

The swanky skyscraper will be the third of three residential towers planned for the mammoth under-construction City Point project on Fulton Mall, which will also include stores and offices.

Here is the latest on what else you can expect and when you can expect it:

7 DeKalb Avenue

The 19 story-building — the shortest of the three towers — is expected to open in winter 2016, and will include 200 below-market-rate units alongside 50 market-rate rentals.

A whopping 88,500 people applied to nab one of the so-called “affordable” units, according to a spokeswoman for developers Acadia and Washington Square Partners. Those apartments will go to households earning between \$18,515 and \$142,395 annually, depending on the size of the unit and number of people living there, with rents ranging between \$500 and \$2,455 a month.

The building will include a gym, kids' playroom, and lounge — but residents will have to pay extra to use them.

City Tower

This 48-story high-rise is still under construction, but residents will begin moving in next month, according to a spokeswoman for developer the Brodsky Organization.

The tower will include 440 market-rate units over 24 floors. Pads on the market right now are priced between \$2,350 for a studio and \$4,550 for two-bedroom units.

For their moolah, residents will get to luxuriate on two roof-top decks



GOING UP: (Above) 7 DeKalb Avenue, left, and City Tower, right. (Below) Developers have brought on a number of big names to beef up its shopping center at City Point, including Trader Joe's.



and play on a sky-high indoor basketball court.

Retail

The mammoth six-level City Point mall at the base of the building is scheduled to begin opening piece-by-piece next year.

Discount fashion department store Century 21 is slated to open its four-story shop in April, according to a Commercial Observer report. Indie cinema chain Alamo Drafthouse will begin screening cult classics and

mainstream releases across its seven screens around June, followed by a Target outlet and Trader Joe's in July, per the report.

The property's much-hyped sprawling subterranean food hall — which will house dozens of vendors, including the first ever outpost of the Katz's Delicatessen — should open by September, alongside smaller ground-floor retail stores in corridors running between Fulton and Gold streets and Flatbush Avenue, according to the Observer.



THE FINAL PRODUCT: Anderson says Bloom Again Bklyn creates and distributes around 100 arrangements made out of old flowers each week.

Photo by Louise Wateridge

Heroes rescue doomed blooms for seniors

BY LAUREN GILL

It is all in the delivery!

A Cobble Hill woman is saving doomed flowers from local stores and turning them into free bouquets for local nursing homes — a scheme she says is as much about having an excuse to visit the oldsters as it is posies themselves.

“The whole idea is not to just drop off flowers but to engage with people who don't necessarily get visitors or flowers and bring them something beautiful,” said Caroline Anderson, founder of Bloom Again Bklyn.

Anderson collects flowers that would otherwise be thrown away from Trader Joe's and Opalia Flowers in Boerum Hill twice a week and transforms the aging buds into elegant bouquets with the help of volunteers.

The organization prepares and delivers more than 100 arrangements each week to two nearby nursing homes — Cobble Hill Health Center and Hopkins Center For Rehabilitation and Health Care in Boerum Hill — and the residents have really blossomed to the idea, Anderson said.

“The residents have told volunteers it reminds them of their childhood, it enlivens their day, perks up their spirits, and makes it worthwhile to get up,” she said.

And visitors to the old folks homes say they also



SEED OF AN IDEA: Caroline Anderson started Bloom Again Bklyn in 2014 and has since enlisted many local volunteers to create and deliver flower arrangements to nursing homes.

Photo by Louise Wateridge

love seeing the vibrant additions to the otherwise austere facilities.

“It really makes a nice difference in a place where there's not a lot of color,” said Stuart Post, who visits a friend at Cobble Hill Health Center every day.”

Anyone can volunteer, and those who do will get a lesson in how to trim stems and create bouquets. The outfit also hosts workshops for schools and companies, where youngsters and professionals learn how to construct the perfect bunch of flowers then deliver them to the homes.

Volunteer at www.bloomagainbklyn.org.

Gone on a fender bender

Police: Drunk guy caused four-car wreck in Bensonhurst

BY DENNIS LYNCH

Police arrested an underage Bensonhurst man on drunk-driving charges after he allegedly blew a red light, slammed his minivan into a police cruiser, and caused a four-car pile-up on 24th Avenue in the early-morning hours of Dec. 28.

The man was driving toward Stillwell Avenue around 4:30 am when he ran a steady red light and hit a transit division police cruiser crossing 24th Avenue at 84th Street, police said.

The driver lost control after the crash, and his van careened into oncoming traffic, where it hit a parked Chevy Trailblazer, knocking the sport-utility vehicle into another parked car, a police report states.

Emergency responders took the two people in the minivan and the two police officers in the cruiser to Lutheran Medical Center, officials said. One officer suffered injuries to the mouth and the other to the leg, a police report states. The minivan driver got a gash to the head, and the passenger's legs were hurt, police said. All four are in stable condition, according to officials.



HEAD-ON: A man driving a minivan blew a red light and smashed head-on into a police cruiser and then into two parked cars on Dec. 28, according to police. Officers arrested the 20-year-old driver for allegedly driving drunk.

Photo by Mark Mellone

Police gave the 20-year-old man a sobriety test and charged him with driving recklessly under the influence, failing to obey a traffic signal, and underage drinking, court records show.



Bound and snagged

BY DENNIS LYNCH

Police are hunting for two guys who tied up a Sixth Avenue store clerk and robbed her at gunpoint on Dec. 17.

The pair made off with nearly \$14,000 in cash after binding a 38-year-old clerk and emptying the register, according to police.

The duo ducked into a store at the corner of 45th Street around 2:30 pm, police said. One forced the clerk to the back of the shop and tied her up while his accomplice—strapped with a silver handgun— took \$800 from the register and grabbed a

lock box containing \$13,000, officials said.

One was wearing a brown jacket, blue jeans, and brown boots—the other was wearing a black jacket, black hoodie, blue jeans, and brown boots, a report states.

The clerk was not injured in the robbery, officials said.

Police ask anyone with information to call Crime Stoppers at (800) 577-8477. The public can also submit tips by logging onto the Crime Stoppers website at www.nypd-crimestoppers.com or by texting tips to 274637 (CRIMES) then entering TIP577.

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Dancers battle cancer

BY DENNIS LYNCH

Dancing has never been so healthy! Hip-shakers young and old wowed the crowd to raise money for breast cancer at the Brooklyn Dance Center's Season of White show at Cavallaro Junior High School on Dec. 20. And the audience really synced up with the idea of giving back during the holidays, the head of the dance theater said.

"People liked the fact that they could give this gift around the holidays," said dance center director Gail Kroog. "It was as gift to the cause."

Pros with the Benjamin Briones

Ballet and the all-senior Rhythm and Style tap-dancing troupe joined the center's young ensemble dancers on stage. The dance center's Belly Mystics group mesmerized the crowd with their midriiffs, and belly dancer Gina Healy closed out each of the show's two acts with folk medleys alongside singers Angello Olivieri and Bil Kurz. Dance center teacher and disc jockey Mr. Kid spun records during the show.

Organizers raised roughly \$1,000 for the Brooklyn chapter of the American Cancer Society's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk. A center dancer's

recent breast cancer diagnosis moved Kroog to donate proceeds, she said.

The dancers rallied around the cause, Kroog said — Benjamin Briones Ballet and Rhythm and Style hopped right on board when they heard the performance would aid the fight against breast cancer, and that made for an electric show, Kroog said.

"Everyone — from the young dancers with the groups up to the tap dancers in their late 80s — they were all super enthusiastic about," she said. "It was a great experience for everyone."



ELEGANT: Performers mixed music and movement to raise money to fight cancer during Brooklyn Dance Center's "Season of White" show at Cavallaro Junior High School on Dec. 20. Photos by Steve Solomonson

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TOW-TAL RECALL

City hauling illegally parked cars after complaints

BY COLIN MIXSON

They're giving it the old one-tow punch.

Officials are waging a towing campaign to rid a Coney Island Avenue auto body shop of illegally parked cars.

Jalopies line the sidewalks around Lenny's Auto Service at Guider Avenue, creating a hazard for pedestrians and blocking traffic, locals say. But the business owner claims the cars aren't his and says he's thrilled tow jockies are hauling the heaps.

"When the cops come they say, 'I'm towing this car, that car,' and I say, 'Tow it, it's not mine,'" said the auto shop owner, who identified himself only as Robert and claimed independent salesmen were leav-

ing the clunkers on the pedestrian-prone pathway to attract potential buyers. "Unfortunately, I get the heat for this, because the cars are getting parked on my sidewalk. So if you see cars parked illegally, no plates on it and it's right next to my business, the cops come to me."

But the tire-fixer's excuse falls flat, because the city requires business owners take responsibility for their own sidewalks, a local pol said.

"Those cars are on his property, and it's been an ongoing issue," said Councilman Chaim Deutsch (D-Sheepshead Bay). "How can someone deny that it belongs to them when it's on his property?"

The cars have been thorns in locals' sides for years — Deutsch's

office has recently fielded dozens of calls from locals who say workers routinely leave autos on the sidewalk and make the hectic nexus of local streets and interstate ramps even worse, the pol said.

"That intersection is very busy and dangerous," said Deutsch, who recently got the Department of Transportation to re-jigger lanes at the confluence of traffic lanes. "We want to make sure people can walk on the sidewalks properly."

The city cut Guider Avenue to two lanes in each direction, so workers at Lenny's must be more considerate, because double-parking cars on the Guider Avenue side of the body shop narrows the street to just one lane of traffic, a local said.



AN IMPASS: Cars block the sidewalk and create a hazard for pedestrians, locals say.
Photo by Louise Wateridge

"If we're going to have the situation with DOT, everybody has to work together, and Lenny's has to work with us," said Community Board 15 member Shari Kaplan. "They have to tell their customers they can't park here, and they have to be considerate of the new traffic pattern. That's the bottom line."

Deutsch and 61st Precinct commanding officer Capt. Winston Faison recently hammered out a

plan to make tow trucks a constant presence at the dent-fixer, Deutsch said.

Cops have been towing from in front of Lenny's for about a year with little effect, but the recent push seems to be working, the auto shop's owner said.

"More cars show up, more cars get towed," he said. "It's less now. The dealers realize their cars are getting towed."

TRUMP

Continued from page 1

Rights Division, said in a statement. "The department will continue to enforce fair housing laws to ensure that housing providers make reasonable accommodations for individuals who rely on assistance animals in their homes."

Oberman tried to evict U.S. Army veteran Eugene Ovsishcher and his wife in 2012 after they proved he was entitled to a service animal to alleviate his post-traumatic stress disorder. A court threw out the case because Trump Village accepted rent from the Ovsishchers after terminating their lease, according to the Dec. 23 civil complaint.

Another resident complained in 2013, and federal housing officials forced Trump Village to allow service animals and submit board members to federal Fair Housing Act training. Oberman, a Soviet-born attorney, took the training — and then waged a cold war against residents in retaliation,



Oberman

File photo

tion, the suit alleges.

Prosecutors claim Oberman, a controversial Council also-ran, used his influence on the board to withhold parking spaces from disabled residents who successfully resisted the co-op's unlawful attempts to remove them for possessing service dogs. The feds also allege he retaliated by kicking Ovsishcher's wife off the development's board of directors "for commencing legal proceedings against the corporation."

The co-op's management office declined to comment on ongoing litigation. Oberman did not return requests for comment.

BARCLAYS

Continued from page 1

from Barclays on Flatbush Avenue and claims the neighborhood is now plagued by rowdy fans who she has seen urinating on sidewalks.

Prokhorov says he will uphold the so-called "community benefits agreement" Ratner's operation signed when it began working on the sprawling Prospect Heights mega-development and arena — which pledges to work with local groups to create community events, host regular meetings to talk through issues with residents, and give away some free game tickets, amongst other provisions.

"We remain fully committed to community programs that were created as part of the arena," said Prokhorov, whose group Onexim Sports and Entertainment bought a 45-percent stake in the arena in 2009.

A spokesman for Ratner's

Forest City Enterprises said the agreement is legally binding and should carry over to the new landlord without a hitch.

"The transition will be so seamless you won't even know it's a transition," said Joe DePlasco.

But some locals say they *want* to see a difference — they say the massive sports and entertainment complex isn't doing enough to address the problems it has wrought on the surrounding area since arriving three years ago.

"Past agreements regarding arena operations have proven to be unsuccessful in maximizing the visitor experience without encroaching on area residents," said a letter locals sent to the state before the deal closed, demanding it vet the sale and beef up the agreement to ensure more security guards, trash cans, parking enforcement, and an open log of residents' complaints and how they are be-

ing addressed.

Local pols — including Councilwoman Laurie Cumbo (D-Fort Greene), state Sen. Velmanette Montgomery (D-Fort Greene), and Assembly members Walter Mosley (D-Fort Greene), Jo Anne Simon (D-Cobble Hill), and James Brennan (D-Park Slope) — made similar demands ahead of the sale.

But now the deal is done, Cahill said she just hopes Onexim is open to meeting with neighbors and making those changes of its own volition.

"The goal moving ahead is to have a dialogue to discuss all of these issues and find out what is a reasonable solution so life can sort of return to a point where everything isn't getting disrupted," she said.

Forest City will continue developing the rest of the 16-tower project formerly known as Atlantic Yards — and now called Pacific Park — alongside its Chinese government-owned majority partner Greenland.



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But more than this, now is a wondrous time to discover or re-discover this exceptional catering hall. After a stunning re-modeling of their the grand ballroom, management recently spared no expense when they completely re-did the facility's grand lobby as well as the luxuriously appointed bridal suite, now done up with marble and granite accents for a look of timeless elegance.

They match the walls of marble and granite in the ballroom — which itself sports one of the largest chandeliers in all of Brooklyn — giving you just a brief inkling into what they have in store for you and your guests. Come and see the grandeur for yourself.

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The lavish party room, which can be made intimate enough for parties of 100, or grand enough to host a spectacular of up to 400, is marked by a central chandelier that will take your breath away. It is the focal point for a magnificent space done up in sophisticated pinks and reds, with mirrored accents that lend a touch of infinity to the already expansive area.

The re-done, picture perfect bridal room is large, romantic and very feminine, accommodating up to 15 in easy comfort, with wall-to-wall mirrors.

Ideal photographic locales are assured in this world of environments, which also includes an intimate private garden area, a uniquely designed water fountain, as well as a host of fine, white wrought-iron work.

Can even Paradise become better? Of course it can. And they proved that when they totally renovated the large lobby area, adding a regal touch to this space, as well.

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Our service is top flight, with the uniformed staff a longtime part of the Paradise family. These are full-time professionals who know their business; not weekend teens learning the trade.

And when it comes to the food, the chefs are world class. Whatever you can find in the cookbooks, they can serve at the table. They offer an added expertise in all manner of ethnic cooking. Add to that everything is cooked from scratch right on the premises to assure the highest in quality control.

Don't you want to celebrate those once-in-a-lifetime days in Paradise?

The catering office is open Tuesday through Sunday, 1 – 9 p.m. Note that the facilities are also available during the weekdays for all types of social meetings and functions.

For the further convenience of your guests, Paradise also can provide free valet parking.



PREPPED FOR A SHOWDOWN: Community Education Council 21 members Aisuluu Santbaerd, Heather Ann Fiorica, Umekul Soom Butt, and Anne Polizzi oppose a plan to increase enrollment at charter school Coney Island Prep, because they fear the publicly funded, privately run school will use growing enrollment to justify taking more space at IS 303, where Prep's middle school is co-located.

Photo by Jordan Rathkopf

A school rivalry

Watchdogs fight Coney Island charter expansion

BY DENNIS LYNCH

They want to send this plan back to the chalkboard.

The state must deny a controversial, co-located charter school's request to boost enrollment, thereby preventing it from taking more space from public schools, education watchdogs say. Coney Island Preparatory Charter School aims to revise its charter to allow 84 more students, but members of the District 21 Community Education Council fear the publicly funded, privately run organization will use a growing student body to justify expansion in the public school buildings it occupies.

"As they over-enroll, those kids need to go somewhere, and they're just going to take up more of the public school classrooms," said council vice-president Anna Lembersky. "We will have to give them space, because they did not properly account for enrollment."

Coney Island Prep houses its elementary and middle schools within IS 281 and IS 303 respectively — parents sued to block the latter co-location in 2011, but the prep school prevailed. If the state allows the enrollment boost, it should only affect the prep's high school, which is not co-located in a public school building, according to a letter the council sent the city last month.

The Department of Education and



ROOM FOR DOUBT: Community members fear that granting Coney Island Prep's request to increase enrollment will give it an excuse to take up more space at IS 303 where the charter's middle school is co-located.

Photo by Jordan Rathkopf

Coney Island Prep refuted the council's notion the charter revision is precipitating a land-grab, arguing the requested revision would only memorialize the current number of students enrolled with Coney Island Prep — not bring more students into the school.

"This change is not taking additional space from the district schools there," an education department spokesman said. "It's just a revision to recognize the number of students actually enrolled in the charter school."

The council and the district's superintendent moved their offices out of IS 303 to make room for new pro-

grams at the public Rachel Carson High School, which also operates out of IS 303's campus, but the council's leader believes she would not have had to move if Coney Island Prep wasn't taking up space.

"If Coney Island Prep wasn't located there, Rachel Carson would have had room to expand without offices being moved," said council president Heather Fiorica.

The Department of Education will make a recommendation to the state Board of Regents this month — after that, the board will decide whether to grant the charter revision.

INN DOUBT

New hotel proposed for Gravesend manufacturing zone perplexes locals

BY COLIN MIXSON

They're trying to bring a little hospitality to this inhospitable Gravesend block.

Developers are planning to erect a four-story hotel next to a rail yard, a cement silo, and an auto body shop on an industrial strip of W. 13th Street in Gravesend. But respite-seekers shouldn't expect to get much shut-eye on the manufacturing-zoned, dead-end block, a local worker said.

"It's very noisy," said Brooklyn Motors auto-body worker Allan, who but declined to give his last name. "There's a train yard over there, so there's going to be trains coming in and out at night. There's a body shop, cement trucks, and they start work pretty early. So if they want to sleep in, that's not the best place," he said.

Long Island developer Grovesend Realty LLC aims to build a four-story, 59-room hotel on W. 13th Street near Avenue Z, plans filed with the city on Dec. 23 show. A basement level will include a breakfast room and storage, records show. The news was first reported by real estate blog Yimby.

Developers filed the plans just over a month after Mayor DeBlasio announced he was seeking a moratorium on hotels in ar-

reas zoned for industry.

The new hotel will rise higher than surrounding buildings, save a cement factory silo, and give tourist unparalleled views — of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Coney Island Rail Yard and the nearby Shore Parkway, Allan said.

"It's definitely going to be a bad view, all they're going to see are train tracks," he said.

The distance separating the planned lodge and the rail yard is less than a football field, but patrons will have to walk half a mile to get to the nearest subway station, city maps show.

This isn't the first hotel to come to south Gravesend's industrial sprawl. The new development will offer some competition to the nearby Sleep Inn on Stillwell Avenue between Avenue Z and Shore Parkway — local workers could only guess what competition they're vying for.

"I don't understand why they're building another hotel here when there's a Sleep Inn on the corner," said a man who worked nearby. "It's a really crappy neighborhood. This doesn't make any sense."

The developer didn't respond to a request for comment.

— with Louise Wateridge



ENJOY YOUR STAY: A new hotel development in Gravesend has locals scratching their heads. The area is surrounded by noisy industry, and offers views of a rail yard and cement factory. Photo by Louise Wateridge



School builds Lego class

BY ALLEGRA HOBBS

Everything is awesome at Greenpoint's PS 34, where students get to play with Lego bricks during class.

The Norman Avenue elementary school puts its pupils through a five-week program that teaches engineering via the beloved Danish toys, and the forewoman of the classroom construction site says the kids can't believe their luck.

"It's a lot of fun," said Shanti Crawford, who has the amazing job title of Lego Program Coordinator. "When I walk in with a bunch of Legos, I have the feeling

of being like Santa Claus."

The courses are designed to teach kids how machines work. First graders build simple robots with working gears, second graders construct spinning wheels and axles, and third graders put together pulleys. Crawford walks the youngsters through the basics, then lets them go wild creating one-of-a-kind contraptions.

Next year, the pioneering program — which kicked off around a year ago — will expand to fourth and fifth graders, who will learn computer programming. The older kids who will team up with middle

schoolers from Williamsburg's IS 318 to create original robots out of Lego Mindstorms kits.

And in what is a truly cube-ist exhibition, the first and second graders' own creations are currently on display at the Greenpoint Library. Drop by the children's section to check out their hockey-playing robots, catapult cars, and other wacky inventions.

PS 34's Lego creations are on display at the Greenpoint Library [107 Norman Ave. at Leonard Street, (718) 349-8504, www.bklynlibrary.org/locations/greenpoint/].

BLOCK HEADS: (Above) Kids of Greenpoint's PS 34 build simple machines out of Lego bricks. (Center) Ariana Rivera and Dawid Pietuszewski show off their Lego creation. (Left) PS 24's contraptions on display at the Greenpoint Library.

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CREEK

Continued from page 1

was at 11, the industrial weird smell is at 11, the floating trash is at 11. It's cartoonishly bad and palpably worse in every way than the Gowanus."

The daredevil diver described his latest bath in toxins in vivid detail at a press conference that followed the pungent plunge, and related spectacles that included poop mixed with leaves and a tea bag, along with Coney Island whitefish (that's condoms) and "a lot of trash."

"Right away when we got onto the water, the smell of poo was so strong I actually started to feel like I was going to vomit, and that didn't happen on the Gowanus," Swain explained. "And then as we started, I noticed there were literally chunks of poo in the water, floating."

Swain's swim through the revolting creek, where city pipes routinely purge thousands of gallons of raw sewage whenever it rains, was particularly nasty thanks to the fact it showered the day before, and the rain continued on and off Wednesday.

During his swim through the Gowanus in October, Swain was surrounded by a frothy concoction of emulsified grease, fats, and oils, which he likened to the soapy layer of a bubble bath.



VICTORY: Christopher Swain stands triumphant, if a bit stinky, on the bank of Hunters Point following his 3.1-mile swim down the length of the Newtown Creek. Photo by Louise Wateridge

The same greasy foam wasn't in Newtown Creek, but he said the stink of sewage was strong throughout and that oil pollution was much more prevalent, especially around the creek's headwaters near the Grand Street Bridge in Greenpoint.

The daredevil diver got a mouthful of water at two points during the nearly three-hour swim, forcing him to rinse his mouth with hydrogen peroxide, and oily water slipped through his goggles and got into his left eye, causing a burning sensation.

Swain says he's not eager to get back into the creek, but that's exactly what he's going to do sometime in January.

The latest swim saw Swain navigate the Newtown's East Branch tributary, and the creek proper. However, he still plans on

swimming English Kills, Dutch Kills, Whale Creek, and Maspeth Creek, the creek's four remaining branches.

The daredevil dove in to draw attention to the waterway and galvanize the support necessary clean it up.

"What I'm concerned about is a situation where it drags out for a long time and we end up with a partial cleanup," said Swain. "The finish line for the cleanup needs to be the same as Gowanus, in that it's safe to swim every day."

The creek, named a federal "Superfund" site in 2010 is one of the most polluted waterways in the northeast, containing a toxic mix of chemicals that have leaked from its industrial banks in both Brooklyn and Queens for more than 150 years.

— with Louise Wateridge

BINGO

Continued from page 1

that is no walk in the park in a crowd of self-styled Anderson experts, said Videology's events director.

"Our Wes Anderson Bingo nights tend to have more winners than any others, people really know his movies in and out," said Austin Kim. "It's probably not the best way to watch it for the first time, but it's going to be a ton of fun if you're an aficionado."

The event uses a handy Wes Anderson bingo card created by Forrest Wickman, a writer at Slate.com and used with permission. Spot a precocious child? A title card in yellow? A character played by Bill Mur-

ray? You are three spots closer to winning — and getting a free drink!

Once there is a winner, everyone clears their card and starts over. Instead of a traditional bingo caller, the event has judges, who roam the screening-room-turned-bingo-hall to check cards and settle disputes, such as which characters count for the "childish adult" square.

Videology also runs similar weekly bingo games for cult classic television series like "Twin Peaks" and "Arrested Development." A series generally offers more opportunities to fill in bingo cards than a film does, said Kim, but Anderson's films are an exception. Nearly every shot in "The Royal Tenenbaums" features one

of the elements that Wickman has singled out on his bingo card, so there will no shortage of opportunities to fill up a winning card, Kim said.

"Anderson is the guy that it really works with, he can really pack them in," Kim said. "In the first 10 minutes of 'The Royal Tenenbaums' you can hit everything."

Fans tend to pack Videology's 60-seat screening room quickly, so Kim advises aspiring bingo players to grab a ticket in advance or show up early.

Wes Anderson Bingo: The Royal Tenenbaums at Videology | 308 Bedford Ave. at S. First Street in Williamsburg, (718) 782-3468, www.videologybarandcinema.com. Jan. 3 at 8 pm. \$10.

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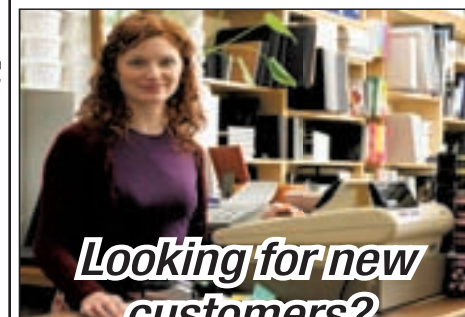
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