

Trash heap has its own Twitter

BY COLIN MIXSON

Call it a trash-tag.

A Park Slope school has been cultivating a permanent pile of garbage on its Fourth Street sidewalk for several years, and the mound of rubbish has become so notorious, there is now a Twitter account dedicated to documenting the sight — not to mention the smell.

“It stinks,” said the 25-year Park Slope resident behind the Twitter handle Park Slope Pile, who spoke with the paper on the condition of anonymity. “It gets so big, cars run over bags blown off the pile.”

The social media watchdog posts regular photos of the pile outside the John Jay Educational Campus at Seventh Avenue — which houses the Secondary School for Law, the Secondary School for Journalism, Park Slope Collegiate, and Millennium Brooklyn High School — where janitors toss their detritus directly onto the street, according to locals.

The waste is usually dumped in plastic garbage bags, but often doesn't stay that way, according to locals.

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IRON CIRCLE: The subjects of Tahir Karmali's modified photos are adorned with reclaimed materials taken from Nairobi trash heaps. Tahir Carl Karmali

WIRED FOR ART

Exhibit paints artists as cyborgs

BY PHIL SMREK

They can be rebuilt — stronger, faster, artsier!

A Bushwick photographer depicts Nairobi artists as superhuman cyborgs in a new exhibit opening in Dumbo on Feb. 4. The Kenyan-born creator of the “Jua Kali” exhibit says that his fanciful images provide a view of his home country that stands in contrast to many media portrayals.

“I’ve always wanted to depict Nairobi as this fantastic place with characters that can achieve anything — and moreover, depict my country differently from what you see in the media,” said Tahir Karmali. “Nairobi is a growing metropolis that has created revolutionary technology and solutions for the African continent.”

The show takes its title and

inspiration from the Kenyan capital's informal economy of laborers who provide goods from reclaimed waste material — much of it electronic waste from the United States. The words “Jua Kali” — Swahili for “fierce sun” — refers to the scorching daytime conditions under which they work.

The 29-year-old photographer scoured through Nairobi junk yards and trash heaps to select items that resonate with his theme, such as spark plugs, electrical wiring and hard drives. He immediately photographed each bit of refuse against a sheet of white paper.

He also photographed members of city's creative class, including dancers, painters, entrepreneurs, and musicians, applying a tribal face paint

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Pre-K spot panned

BY DENNIS LYNCH

Two separate community panels gave the city an F for its plan to build a pre-school next to a Gowanus Expressway off-ramp in Bay Ridge on Jan. 20.

The School Construction Authority wants to build a 108-seat, city-run pre-kindergarten on 86th

Street and Gatling Place, but a community board committee and the local education council panned the plan during two meetings last Wednesday evening. Education honchos claim the Department of Transportation can quell the raging traffic coming off the

Continued on page 6



THE MANE EVENT: Andre Agassi will return to the court at Barclays Center — minus this amazing hairdo.

Barclays serving up tennis

BY LAUREN GILL

Tennis, anyone?

A quartet of retired champions will break out their old sweatbands at Barclays Center in December for the arena's first-ever tennis event, and the veterans say they can't wait to make a racket in the borough of Kings.

“I’ve always loved Brooklyn and can't wait to get back there,” said Andy Roddick, who won the 2003 U.S. Open and retired in 2012.

Roddick will face off against fellow aces Andre Agassi, Jim Courier, and James Blake in the final round of the Power

Shares Series — a nationwide circuit for former icons.

The four legends will compete in two one-set semifinal matches, then the winners will go head-to-head in a one-set championship match.

Kings County hasn't
Continued on page 8

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Blind in taxes

Bushwick bar has in-house accountant

BY ALLEGRA HOBBS

If tax season drives you to drink, this could be the accountant for you!

A Bushwick bean counter is setting up shop inside an experimental cocktail bar next month, serving up completed 1040s alongside wacky mixed drinks — and, he hopes, shaking up his occupation's uptight image in the process.

"I am probably on the edge of some bell curve," said certified tax guru Shane Mason.

Starting in February, Mason will peddle his financial expertise to patrons at so-called cocktail "laboratory" Yours Sincerely — which serves nitrogen-infused beverages in beakers — three nights out of the week through the annual April 18 apocalypse.

The bartender turned bookkeeper first dreamed up the idea of mixing his master's degree with booze while slinging drinks at the bar's sister restaurant Dear Bushwick, where he and his bosses joked that he should conduct business out of the eatery's bathroom.

But years later, the team realized that maybe spiking the hard slog of personal finance with some hard liquor was not such a bad idea.



CRUNCHING NUMBERS: Stacy Grenia digs into her finances while sipping on a delicious on-tap cocktail at Yours Sincerely.

Photo by Jason Speakman

"Filing your taxes is really boring," said bar owner Julian Mohamed. "So why not come here and get mildly drunk?"

Mason's help doesn't come on the house — patrons will have to cough up \$135 an hour for the service through February, and the rate will climb over time to encourage procrastinators to get ahead of the game. March filers will have to shell out \$150, while folks who put it off until April will pay \$175.

But the consultation does come with a free drink, Mason said, as well as the chance to sort out

your 1099s and W-2s in style.

"The biggest difference is that you're not in an office in Midtown that is pumping white noise through the speakers," he said. "Also you are drinking an amazing cocktail."

Get tax advice from Shane Mason at Yours Sincerely (41 Wilson Ave. at Melrose Street in Bushwick, www.yourssincerely.co). Feb. 1–April 18. Mondays and Tuesdays 8–10 pm, Sundays 6–10 pm. \$135–\$175, though freelancers and other more complicated cases may have to pay more.



Snow day!

The snow from Jan. 23's Winter Storm Jonas seems to have melted away as quickly as it blew in. The squall was New York's second-largest snowstorm, according to the National Weather Service, dumping 27 inches of snow on the borough. Here, Norman the dog, 11-year-old Jessie Principe, and 12-year-olds Piper McGraw and Mira Principe hit the slopes in Prospect Park.

Photo by Paul Martinka

Space out

Pol mulls parking ban as swipe at controversial bus depot

BY COLIN MIXSON

A local pol wants to ban parking on a Bergen Beach street in the latest effort to fight a controversial bus depot there.

Residents have complained for years that employees from First Dawn Transit on E. 69th Street have been harassing neighbors and leaving loud, smoky buses idling on local streets. Lately, Bergen Beachers have a new gripe — the depot's drivers are parking their personal cars a block from the depot and trashing the street, one neighbor said.

"They just throw the garbage out of the car door, so it's disgusting over here," said E. 69th Street resident Rose Troman. "They leave their breakfast on the side of their cars when they park."

So state Sen. Roxanne Persaud (D-Canarsie) is lobbying the Department of Transportation to ban park-

ing on E. 69th Street between Avenues X and Y — but she's still working out the legality, she said.

"I'm asking whether it can be done," Persaud said. "I'm not asking them to do anything illegal just because we want to block the bus company from the street."

Even if Persaud is successful in outlawing parking on that stretch of E. 69th Street, finding somewhere else for the bus drivers to park may not be easy. The senator wants drivers to leave personal vehicles inside the depot, but it can't hold buses and cars at once, necessitating a daily shuffle where workers would first park outside the depot, empty the depot of buses, and then move their cars inside the lot before driving their bus routes, she said, admitting a less convoluted scheme would be better.

"It will become a cumbersome process," she said.



WHEN'S SHOW TIME?: New owners will gussy up the Shore Theater, shown here before Hurricane Sandy ripped apart the iconic (and landmarked) sign. File photo by Gregory P. Mango

A SHORE THING!

Developer buys Coney's landmarked Shore Theater, will reopen space as an entertainment venue

BY COLIN MIXSON

They're shoring it up!

A developer bought Coney Island's long-neglected Shore Theater and plans to restore the 90-year-old landmark to its former glory, the buyer's legal counsel confirmed.

"The people of Coney Island can start looking forward to an amazing theater," said lawyer Igor Oberman. "They don't want this to be just a seasonal venue — it will be for all seasons benefiting not only tourists, but the people here year-round."

Jasmine Bullard, daughter of People's Playground land baron Horace Bullard, sold the icon to Pye Properties for \$20 million last week, the Coney Island Blog first reported.

The rebirth bodes well for the People's Playground, which area businesses and political leaders have been pushing to become a destination in the winter as well as summer, according to one neighborhood booster.

"This is wonderful news," said Boardwalk impresario and Coney Island U.S.A. founder Dick Zigun, who has long advocated for the ailing theater. "If Coney Island is on a trajectory to go year-round and build hotels, you have to have nighttime entertainment and that's the place to do it, at a landmarked Broadway-equivalent theater."

The building has been vacant for decades and fell into serious disrepair, and Pye is still determin-

ing what it will take to make the theater show-worthy again, Oberman said.

"They're still in the assessment phase," he said. "The property has been derelict for many years, so right now they're doing structural studies, and trying to understand the physical condition of the building."

The theater was built in 1925 as the Loew's Coney Island, according to historian Charles Denson. It housed vaudeville acts in its heyday, he said. The Brandt Company took it over in 1964, and the theater started showing X-rated movies in 1972 in a last-ditch attempt to lure audiences. Kansas Fried Chicken mogul Horace Bullard purchased the property in 1978 hoping to convert it into a hotel

and casino, but the state decided against allowing gambling in the People's Playground. The land baron put the building up for sale and let it sit derelict for the next several decades, drawing criticism from Coney Island advocates as the structure deteriorated and became an encampment of homeless people. Bullard died in 2013, and a 2015 announcement that the city would scoop up other derelict Coney Island properties that passed to his family reignited calls to seize the property through eminent domain.

It's not the first historic Loew's theater to be pulled off the historical scrap heap — the Kings Theatre in Flatbush reopened last year after the city hired a theater group to restore the iconic venue.

Police: Man shot neighbor while showing off his gun

BY DENNIS LYNCH

A Sunset Parker allegedly killed his neighbor while showing him a handgun in their 45th Street apartment building on Jan. 23.

Police responded to the apartment near Eighth Avenue just before 8 pm last Saturday night, law enforcement sources said. Officers found Zdzislaw Golabek, 37, with a gunshot wound to the head in an apartment belonging to the 32-year-old man they later arrested, police said. Paramedics pronounced the victim dead on the scene, officials said.

The two lived in separate apartments in the same building, police said.

Initial media reports claimed the victim shot himself during a drunken game of Russian roulette. But the suspect later told officials



AT THE SCENE: Police investigate the slaying. Photo by Paul Martinka

that he thought the gun was unloaded and pointed it at his neighbor's head and pulled the trigger as a joke, according to a police spokeswoman.

Police are charging the man with manslaughter, but the investigation remains open, she said.

There's an app for that!

Sunset Park business group's all-in-one program lets users shop local, order food from their phones

BY DENNIS LYNCH

They "swiped right" on Sunset Park.

The Sunset Park Business Improvement District created a smartphone app, providing local business contact info, notifying users of community events, and even letting them order food from area restaurants. Nationally popular apps such as crowd-sourced business reviewer Yelp, coupon-hunting aid RetailMeNot, and food-delivery giant Seamless offer similar services, but the Sunset Park app puts the disparate services in the same place with a hyper focus on Fifth Avenue, the business improvement district's leader said.

"Ours is a community app more than just a way of ordering from a restaurant or business," said executive director Renee Giordano. "You can get everything through it, like coupons and events notifications. With the other ones, you'll find things not just in your local neighborhood. This way people can find info about a business while they're walking around Fifth Avenue."

Staffer Eduardo Artica designed the free app — available for Apple and Android devices — to include a growing list of more than 500 shops between 38th and 64th streets. The business group has been building a free wifi network in the



neighborhood over the last three years — mainly as a public service — but the business group realized it could use the increased connectivity to boost area businesses, Giordano said.

"We thought that once we had it, we needed to use it," she said.



APPY DAYS ARE HERE!: (Left) The app has a simple interface allowing users to search a directory or browse categories. (Above) The Sunset Park Business Improvement District's executive director Renee Giordano shows off the group's new technology, which a staffer developed.

Photo by Georgine Benvenuto

About 120 people have downloaded the app since the association launched it in November, Giordano said. The business group may offer Mandarin and Spanish versions if the English one does well.

Yelp sells personal data to third parties and food-delivery app GrubHub uses aggre-

gate data for its own marketing endeavors, but the Sunset Park app doesn't sell users' personal information — or even ask for it, Giordano said.

"Sometimes the others have to sell their info — that's how they make their money — whereas we don't need to do that," she said.

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City is cruisin' for a bruising'

Locals: Bike path to Flatbush Ave. bad idea

BY COLIN MIXSON

Critics say people will die if the Department of Transportation moves on a plan to build bike paths connecting Marine Park and Flatbush Avenue before fixing the avenue itself.

Transportation honchos are gearing up to create lanes linking the green space to a stretch of Flatbush Avenue between Hendrickson Place and the avenue's knotted nexus with the Belt Parkway. But authorities made a wrong turn sending neighborhood two-wheelers toward the six-lane speedway, one local leader said.

"We are preparing a path into a pit of danger," said Marine Park Civic Association president Bob Tracy. "They're going to come around that bend, and they're going to die."

Officials plan to create bike lanes on E. 38th Street, Avenue V, Hendrickson Street, and Hendrickson Place leading to Flatbush Avenue.

Transportation department-issued maps state that the destination section of Flatbush Avenue is a bike path — though there aren't any actual lanes or markings. The department plans to create some in the future, but it hasn't re-



WATCH OUT! A Flatbush Avenue cyclist rushes to cross a Belt Parkway ramp as a car bears down upon him. Locals fear the city is encouraging such risky behavior by building a bike path from Marine Park to Flatbush Avenue. Department of Transportation

leased specific designs, and officials first want to build the Marine Park connector, a representative told Community Board 18 on Jan. 20.

Board members fear the agency will put bike lanes directly on Flatbush Avenue, and they tabled a vote whether to support the Marine Park connector until they see a plan for the avenue that doesn't include bikes on the street, a board employee said.

"We will never, in any

way, endorse bike lanes on Flatbush Avenue," said district manager Dorothy Turano. "They figured they could have gotten phase one voted through, so they could start it, and then they'll come back to us with phase two in the fall — we're concerned they're not going to live up to their word, and [they'll] put the lanes on Flatbush Avenue."

The new bike paths are part of a project linking Marine Park to the greater Jamaica Bay Greenway.

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Battle of Bash Beach

Pro wrestlers to rumble at Southern Brooklyn church

BY COLIN MIXSON

Call it Bash Beach!

New York City's greatest grapplers will converge on St. Finbar Church in Bath Beach on Feb. 5 for a battle of epic proportions. The conflict between the Herculean bruisers of Five Borough Wrestling will determine the mightiest brawler in town.

"We're going to find out who's the best wrestler in New York," said Troy Thompson, 23, a Marine Park native who founded Five Borough Wrestling. "There will be a ton of action."

The local professional wrestling league, which has staged monthly bouts for the last two years, has all the features of televised national leagues, including over-the-top characters, finishing moves, and stories that pit heroic "faces" against villainous "heels."

Thompson records the drama that occurs outside of the ring for the Five Boroughs Wrestling Facebook, so that newcomers to the



BATH BEACH BRAWL: St. Finbar Church in Bath Beach will become a battleground on Feb. 5, when fighters with Five Borough Wrestling compete in a clash of titans. Here, wrestler Kevin Matthews performs his signature move, the Ego Driver, on his opponent.

body-slam scene can catch up on the ongoing conflicts behind the ring's bone-crunching mayhem.

"I'll put up a video so, even if you're new, you can get caught up on the

storyline, and say, 'Oh I remember, they hate each other,'" said Thompson.

At the "Standing Tall" brawl on Feb. 5, the biggest beef will be between defending champion Brian My-

ers, who once competed for World Wrestling Entertainment, and Bay Ridge challenger Kevin Matthews. The two have an on-again, off-again friendship that has soured into pure hatred over their competition for the championship belt.

"We were friends once, then enemies, then friends, and now we're enemies again," said Matthews.

Fans at these match ups are notoriously vocal about their love — and loathing — of the wrestlers, and fighters are forced to roll with the proverbial punches if they hope to survive the limelight, according to Matthews.

"With the crowd Troy gets, if you suck, you're going to get crucified," the wrestler said. "They'll chant 'Don't come back,' and shove a middle finger in your face."

For Matthews, a born-to-wrestle brawler who started training at age 16, his cockiness and devil-may-care attitude turned

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THAT'S ONE IDEA: The city wants to make a pre-kindergarten at the Gowanus Expressway's 86th Street off-ramp.

Photo by Jordan Rathkopf

PRE-K

Continued from page 1

expressway, but local leaders say drivers are too unpredictable, so the site ain't right for Bay Ridge's young and bright.

"When drivers are trying to get home or to work, they blow through the lights," said District 20 Community Education Council member Sheila Higginson. "There's no way to ensure it's not a safety hazard for the kids."

The intersection averaged one crash per month in the last four months, according to law enforcement figures. One resulted in injury and another as the result of speeding, records show.

Safety concerns aside, the site is gross — a litter-laden embankment between the city-owned building and the off-ramp is a den of rats, and workers will have to regularly battle the rodents to keep them at bay, according to another leader who worked in the building when Community Board 10's office was there.

"We asked many years ago when we were there that they pave that grassy area to prevent the rat burrows there," said district manager Josephine Beckmann.

And fumes from the

highway would wreck young lungs — board members could not open the windows at the former headquarters, because so much noxious exhaust wafted up from the Gowanus Expressway, another critic said.

"I'm very familiar with the site, and it's a nasty, nasty site," said Bob Hudock, the board's education committee chairman.

The School Construction Authority will conduct air quality studies in the coming months, and it could install filtration systems to keep smog out of the building, a representative told community board members.

But the school isn't even necessary — some Ridge pre-Ks had empty desks this year, and the city plans to create more than 500 new district seats by the end of 2017, education council president Laurie Windsor said.

The city filed plans to build a pre-K on the same 92nd Street block as a notorious flophouse last month.

Mayor DeBlasio is aggressively working to make good on his campaign promise to provide pre-K to more than 73,000 city kids by the time school started last September.

Enrollment topped out at just over 65,000 this year — up from 20,000 in 2013, according to a September announcement.



Tahir Karmali

TOUGH AS NAILS: The artistic subjects in Tahir Karmali's exhibit embody the resilience of Kenya's "Jua Kali" laborers.

ARTISTS

Continued from page 1

to them before the shoot. He then combined the photos digitally, adorning his subjects with gears, wires, and circuit boards.

The resulting mix of human and machine results in "characters that are somewhat superhuman," he said, reflecting the heroic challenges the artists face in Nairobi.

"Through their talents they overcome obstacles presented to them economically. For me it sym-

bolizes perseverance and resilience that the Jua Kali workers embody," he said.

The enormous final images, each three feet tall, have a rich color that almost looks painted.

Karmali, who is pursuing a Masters degree in photography at the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan, plans to return to Kenya after graduation.

"Jua Kali" at *United Photo Industries Gallery* [16 Main St. at Water Street in Dumbo, (718) 801-8099, www.unitedphotoindustries.com]. Opening reception Feb 4 at 6 pm. Exhibit runs until March 26.



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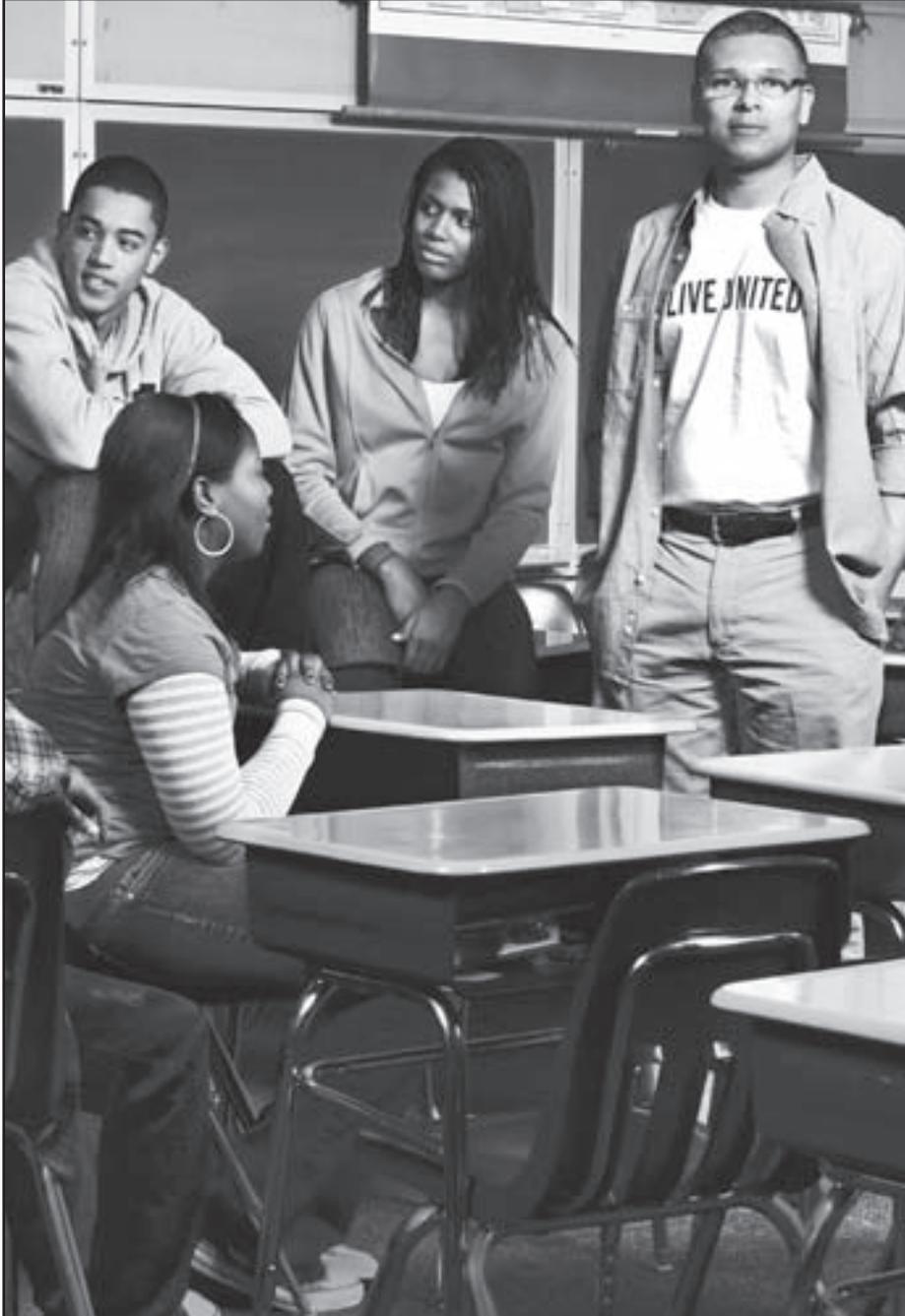
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WHAT A DUMP: Park Slope resident and John Jay High School alumnus Pete Colgan says his former school needs to clean up its act, and that if it were anybody but a school, the offender would be getting fines aplenty for throwing trash on the street. Community News Group / Colin Mixson

TRASH

Continued from page 1

ing to one guy who lives directly across from the heap — the bags frequently rip open, covering the road in litter and sending streams of liquid “goo” flowing past the curb, he said.

“Sometimes it’s food, and sometimes it’s flowing down the street as a bunch of mixed up goo,” said Stuart.

The school is allowed to leave bags of trash on the pavement on Tuesday and Friday evenings in anticipation of pickups the following day, said a Department of Sanitation spokeswoman. But neighbors say the putrid pyramid is basically perennial, and typically returns as quickly as it is hauled away.

The pile is so persistent, it is also memorialized in other online mediums — the scrap heap is visible in every Google Street View photo at the address dating back to 2007.

Neighbors claim complaints to the schools, 311, and other city agencies have not made a difference.

One community leader says he worked with education and sanitation officials two years ago to find an appropriate place for a dumpster outside the campus after fielding numerous complaints about the mound. But they couldn’t locate enough space for a trash receptacle, and so the pavement pile remains.

“There just isn’t room for it,” said Community Board 6 district manager

Craig Hammerman.

The situation is starting to smell like a double standard, say neighbors — if a home or store dealt with their trash the same way, the sanitation department would lay down the law.

“It shouldn’t be there just because it’s a school,” said Pete Colgan, who lives nearby on Fifth Street, and attended John Jay in the 1950s. “If it was me, or anybody else, we’d get a ticket.”

A Department of Education spokeswoman said only that it would dedicate extra training, support, and resources to the schools’ custodial staff, and that the agency would work with sanitation to address the neighborhood’s concerns.

WRESTLING

Continued from page 6

the crowd’s antipathy into outrageous support, he said.

“I was a bad guy forever, and I kept giving all these gestures to the crowd. I would pretend to jerk off when they gave me the middle finger, and shoot snot rockets, and they thought

it was awesome,” said Matthews. “So I became a good guy, but I never switched off my antics.”

The title fight is hardly the only draw to the Bath Beach rumble, which will feature six one-on-one and two-on-two matchups, plus an apocalyptic 30-man free-for-all, with a new wrestler entering the stage every 30 seconds in a bid to hurl the competition

out of the ring, Thompson said.

“The free-for-all is the big selling point for the evening,” said Thompson. “It’s the first one we’ve ever done, and it should be pretty crazy.”

“*Standing Tall*” at *St. Finbar Church [138 Bay 20th St. between Benson and Bath avenues in Bath Beach, (718) 236-3312]. Feb. 5 at 8 pm. \$20 (\$30 front row).*

TENNIS

Continued from page 1

hosted a significant tennis match since the

U.S. Pro Tennis Championships at the Terrace Club in Flatbush in 1935.

PowerShares Cup at Barclays Center [620

Atlantic Ave. at Flatbush Ave. in Prospect Heights, www.barclayscenter.com]. Dec. 3 at 7 pm. Ticket info to be advised.

Sittin' kitty!

Windsor Terrace cops, civilians save young cat trapped under car

BY COLIN MIXSON

This engine was really purring!

Heroic Windsor Terrace students, motorists, and a pair of police officers joined forces to rescue a hapless 2-month-old kitten that ran inside the wheel of a running car on Ocean Parkway on Monday afternoon — saving both the cat and the drivers' faith in humanity.

"The community was unbelievable, and the two cops, it was so nice to see the police officers do a really wonderful job," said Geraldine Cassone, the Windsor Terrace resident whose car became a temporary refuge for the frightened fur ball, and is now its adoptive parent. "I'm so happy to be a New



WHEELY BRAVE: Officer Christopher Ranelli attempts the daring rescue of the unnamed feline. NYPD

Yorker after the experience I had today."

Cassone says the high-stakes ordeal began at around 12:35 pm, at the service road leading from Park

Circle onto Ocean Parkway, where she spotted the little lady scurrying through traffic and slammed down on the brakes.

The kind-hearted driver leapt from her vehicle and beckoned for the wayward feline with open arms, but the rascal went for the wheel-well of her 2010 Subaru Outback instead.

And that is where she stayed for more than 20 minutes, as Cassone, passers by, and drivers stuck in gridlock behind her kitty-laden crossover tried in vain to urge the cat from its rubbery refuge.

Eventually, Cassone corralled a few high-school students to help roll the car over to the curb — relieving the pent-up traffic and



AMERICAN HEROES: Officer Christopher Ranelli, Officer Kenia Marte, and good Samaritan Geraldine Cassone with the cat all safe and sound. NYPD

catching the eyes of Officers Christopher Rinelli and Kenia Marte, who rushed over to lend a hand.

The cops then worked diligently for two-and-a-half hours to liberate the mini mouser, eventually using a jack to lift the car up and grab the grungy gal

from underneath, according to Cassone. At one point, Rinelli was literally on his back in the snow straining the save the kitty, she said.

"He was lying on the ground trying to get it," said Cassone. "They were just unbelievable."

Cassone — a pet lover

who formerly owned a three-legged dog and a squirrel monkey — says either she, or any one of her three kids, will now adopt the kitten, which is still unnamed.

"She's beautiful," she said. "She's going to get a good home at my house or with one of my children."

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They're rising up for low-rise

To fight mayor's plans, Boerum Hill group wants bigger historic district

BY LAUREN GILL

Call it brown-stonewalling.

A Boerum Hill civic group is mounting a campaign to expand the neighborhood's historic district in order to protect more of its charming 19th-century row houses from the city's impending upzoning plans.

Mayor DeBlasio wants to loosen restrictions on the height and shape of new buildings in the area, which the residents worry will encourage developers to raze the handsome old homes and erect ugly new ones — forever changing the character of a neighborhood they have a sworn duty to protect.

“Our job is to preserve the quality of life in Boerum Hill,” said Boerum Hill Association president Howard Kolins, who lives in the proposed extension and presented the expansion plan at the group's quarterly meeting last week. “We're trying

to extend the protections of the historic district and create a mindset that preserves this unique, century-old housing stock.”

In the current historic district — which encompasses around 250 houses in the area bounded by Hoyt, Nevins, Pacific and Wyckoff streets — any new construction has to conform to a local lookbook, and must be okayed by the city's landmarks commission.

The civic group wants to expand the landmarked region further towards Smith Street and down to Warren Street, roughly doubling its size.

The city already rezoned those areas in 2011 to impose strict height caps of five stories — seven stories in a few areas — and rules that new buildings have to sit flush with the neat row-houses that currently dominate the area.

But under DeBlasio's proposal — part of his grand plan to increase the city's affordable housing stock — developers will be able to build another five feet, or half a story, higher there. In some patches, they would be allowed to go an extra 15 feet up if they include some housing for old folks.

The new rules would also allow builders to push new houses back from the street — ostensibly to accommodate courtyards and fancier facades, but residents worry the extra leeway will open the door to all sorts of crazy new designs that clash with the existing streetscape.

“It was unclear and left open the possibility that building could be extended in an unknown way,” said Kolins.

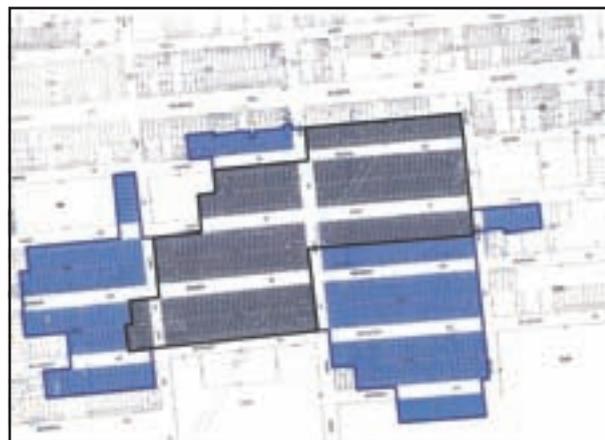
The extension is something the group has wanted for years, Kolins says — even without DeBlasio's

changes, there is nothing currently stopping developers from knocking down the old houses, nor replacing them with modern designs and building materials. But the looming legislation has given residents and supporters renewed purpose.

“It does make me nervous that this area doesn't have landmarked protection” said Councilman Steve Levin (D-Boerum Hill), who says he backs the expansion and will look into providing funds for the research needed to create a compelling case for it to happen.

But it is unlikely that everyone in the area will be so enthusiastic, said one local leader, because owning a landmarked home makes remodeling an expensive pain in the butt.

“Making exterior renovations to properties in historic districts are more expensive,” says Community



PREVENTATIVE STEPS: Civic-minded Boerum Hill residents hope annexing more buildings in the historic district will protect them from development and zoning changes. Boerum Hill Association

Board 2 district manager Rob Perris. “There are extra steps that you have ... and that inherently builds in more time.”

But the civic group is determined to try. Kolins said the next step is to meet with homeowners in the proposed expansion, then set about investigating and documenting the history of the buildings there, which it will eventually have to present to the local community and the landmarks commission.

In all, he predicts the whole process will take three to five years — roughly how long it took before the city agreed to expand Park Slope's historic district in 2012.

Meanwhile, DeBlasio also has to win over officials to his plan. The scheme has proven unpopular with the majority of Brooklyn community boards — and those in other boroughs — but Council members will ultimately decide in February.



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