

News from the Hill



The Boerum Hill Association is a volunteer organization of residents of Boerum Hill. We seek to preserve and enhance the unique qualities of our neighborhood through advocacy, education and community building. Visit us on the web at www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org

September 2007

Volume 2, Issue 1

Brooklyn House of Detention Update

Members of the Board:

Sue Wolfe, President
Joel Potischman, Vice President
Crispin Roven, Treasurer
James Forrester, Secretary
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Genevieve Christy
Jacque Cook
Ellie Hanlon
Trudy Katzer
Howard Kolins
Leslie Lewis
Hannah Mason
Matt Rogers
Anders Thomsen
Sophie Truslow
Sarah Wikenczy
Boaz Weinstein

Board meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month from September through June at 7:00pm in the Mugavero Center.

www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org

The road to hell is indeed paved with good intentions. For many years residents and business groups working to improve Boerum Hill dreamed of retail on this dreary stretch of Atlantic Avenue that could “close the gap” between the shops and restaurants of Brooklyn Heights with those of Boerum Hill. This desire was heightened as the neighborhood improved with the arrival of the Courthouse apartments and the YMCA. However, it now seems this vision has been framed as a Faustian bargain. The potential plan now includes two commercial/residential towers and an expansion of the jail that would double its size and population.

On June 21st, the BHA held a general meeting so neighbors could hear from, and ask questions of, Corrections Commissioner Martin Horn. He stated his goals regarding the reduction of the population of Rikers Island and the desire to expand the Brooklyn HOD to lessen the detrimental environmental effects of bus travel as well as facilitate the interaction of families and attorneys with the prisoners.

Richard Bearak, from the Borough President’s office, explained that the HOD has the right to reopen the jail. Further, the HOD has the right to expand the facility and the budget to do so. The Borough President’s office expressed its interest in solutions for closing the retail gap on Atlantic Avenue and making the jail less visible by adding the additional buildings.

Boerum Hill residents were not in favor of any expansion and many would like the facility to close permanently. Public officials against expansion include City Council Member David Yassky, State Senators Velmanette Montgomery and Martin Conner, State Assembly Member Joan Millman and Congressman Adolphus Towns.

Recently the HOD stakeholders group sent a letter to the NYC Economic Development Corporation requesting copies of the RFEI (Request for Expression of Interest) responses from developers interested in expanding the current jail and adding commercial and/or residential and retail additions to the site. The HOD stakeholders group includes the Boerum Hill Association, the Atlantic Avenue Betterment Association, the Atlantic Avenue LDC, Residents of State Street, Residents of 53 Boerum Place Condos and Brooklyn Vision.

The Stakeholders group is determined to see the RFEI responses so that it can be part of any discussion and planning regarding this site. It is essential for the neighborhood to be informed about this ongoing process. An expansion of the HOD would have a tremendous affect on our quality of life. Boerum Hill continues to change in so many positive ways – this only heightens the importance of making smart decisions regarding the HOD and this site. Please contact the BHA if you want to get involved.



The reopening, and possible expansion, of the HOD looms large in our future.

Connect

Check out the Boerum Hill Information website at boerumhill@yahoo.com
This is a great way to stay in touch with your neighbors and

A special thank you to State Assemblywoman Jill Millman for her support and guidance, and to the State of New York for the financial support that made this newsletter possible.

Visit us daily at
www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org

Boerum Hill Calendar 2008

The third annual calendar theme
is

The Gardens of Boerum Hill

It features the beautiful gardens
of Boerum Hill, including
gardens (private and public),
decks, sidewalk displays,
window boxes and more.

BUY A CALENDAR TODAY

At

OPALIA—362 Atlantic Ave
GRDN—103 Hoyt Street
DIG—479 Atlantic Ave
GUMBO—493 Atlantic Ave
STERLING PLACE— 363 Atlantic
Brooklyn Store at Borough Hall

JOIN THE BHA NOW!

Go to
www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org

And click on
“Membership Form”
in the left column

Individuals—\$25
Family—\$40
Senior—\$15
Other discounts available

Important Contact Numbers

84th Police Precinct, Community
Affairs: 718-875-6850

City Council Member, David Yassky
718-875-5200

State Senator, Velmanette Mont-
gomery, 718-643-6140

Assemblywoman, Joan Millman, 718
-246-4889

Congressman Ed Towns, 718-855-
8018

Friends of Douglass/Greene Park

The Friends of Douglass/Greene Park, now a 501 c(3) thanks to JoAnne Simon's work, is a group of interested neighbors committed to refurbishing the large park on Third Avenue and Nevins Street (between Douglass and DeGraw). If you are not clear on exactly where that is, you may know the park for the well maintained pools just north of Union St in Gowanus - the only patch of underused recreation space between the river and the slope. It is our mission to revitalize it and extend its use to the greater community.

Join us for another Family Day for **Saturday, Oct. 20**. We have lots of activities planned, including Pilates workshops, music performances, skateboard events and more. Watch for flyers!

In the meantime, you can stop in and visit *Homage*, the skateboard store on Smith at Bergen and meet the owners, Michelle and Jose, both active on the Friends board. They have sponsored skateboard events and contests at the park and will be at our October event.

The Friends of Douglass/Greene Park welcomes you — become a volunteer - here's a wonderful opportunity to build a park in Brooklyn. Go to info@friendsofdouglassgreenepark.com

Trash Talk

Last year we noticed an absence of trash baskets at intersections that once had them on all four corners. The Department of Sanitation is now in the process of replacing baskets on many streets.

Urban legend credits the baskets disappearance as theft for the purpose backyard trash burning, barbequing or even sanitation workers just tossing them into the trucks! We simply wonder where they go when they are so vital to keeping the streets clean.

The BHA Board supports the Departments efforts for cleaner streets and sidewalks. We ask you to consider “adopting” a basket. This means taking a modicum of responsibility for the basket nearest your home, especially on a corner. You can contact the Department when you see the basket is full and if you are more motivated, you can place the green trash bags supplied by the Sanitation Department in the basket and swap them out when the basket fills. Call Sanitation supervisors: 718-768-4128 (best time to reach them is 6:00AM!).

If this is not your (garbage) bag, we remind you to keep your sidewalk clean and your trash or recycled items neatly packaged for pick up.

84th Precinct Community Council Meetings

Board Member Leslie Lewis is the Criminal Justice Liaison in the Brooklyn Borough President's Office. As President of the 84th Precinct Community Council he holds meetings the third Tuesday of most months. These meetings are a great way to meet with, and honor, New York's finest. You can speak with Police officials about crime and they will immediately respond.

Holding the Council Meetings in varied neighborhoods within the Precinct Community enables residents to familiarize themselves with their community, get to know their neighbors, and get a better understanding of the quality of life concerns in that neighborhood and how they can deal with all these issues.

Transportation to and from the meetings will be provided by the NYPD within the precinct community. Just phone (718) 875-6850 to arrange transportation.

Come and interact with the Department in this relaxed setting. Refreshments are served. Locations vary so make sure you look for flyers or check out the egroup below where you can see Leslie's posting of the monthly flyer.

The next meeting will be held on October 16th at the 84th Precinct, 301 Gold Street. Other meetings will be held on November 20th and January 15th at locations to be announced.

The Next Newsletter

Future Newsletter topics will include features on shops and restaurants in Boerum Hill. Suggestions and submission for articles, as well as a more catchy name for the newsletter, are welcome.

Editor—Howard Kolins, (hkolins@aol.com)

**We Welcome These
New Shops to
Boerum Hill**

KYOTO
115 Smith Street

**LUCKY
BRAND
JEANS**
135 Smith Street

HOMAGE
151 Smith Street

Trixie & Tilda
Children's Clothing
407 Atlantic Avenue

Saki SUSHI
176 Smith Street

**MARATHON
BANK**
Atlantic Avenue and Bond St.

THE NASCENT
Nevins and Bond Streets

**Brooklyn Bean and
Tea Company**
353 Atlantic Avenue

Donna da Vine
378 Atlantic

Exit 9 Gift Emporium
127 Smith St.

Flight 001
132 Smith St.

President's Message

In the third year of my presidency of the Boerum Hill Association I am delighted to report that our neighborhood is thriving as we continue to deal with the challenges of the growth of downtown Brooklyn.

Our talented and very active volunteer BHA Board members work for you and me on the many issues that arise in our urban neighborhood. Our mission is to be advocates for and preserve the quality of life of Boerum Hill. We maintain working relationships with our internal and surrounding neighborhood associations to be a strong, positive voice on issues that are important to all of us. We will continue to keep you informed and ask your support as we move forward into 2008.

Sue Wolfe and her husband Joel have lived in Boerum Hill since 1975 and raised their daughter here. She has been an active member of the BHA, serving on many committees including co-chairing the biennial Boerum Hill House and Garden Tour, a board member of the Atlantic Avenue Local Development Corp., and the Mary McDowell Center for Learning.

Atlantic Yards Continued...The Next Phase

The COUNCIL OF BROOKLYN NEIGHBORHOODS is a coalition of recognized diverse community groups active in Community Boards 2, 3, 6, and 8. CBN is comprised of 40 community organizations that have joined together to ensure meaningful community participation in the environmental review of the proposed Atlantic Yards development in Prospect Heights. At a press conference on September 17th they presented to one and all the concerns of the community regarding the ESDC's failure to provide an ombudsman as well as the ESDC's failure to engage the community.

This lack of promised governance structure along with the project's request for additional tax breaks continue to trouble many members of our community.

To stay informed on this tremendously important issue, visit the following websites: www.brooklynspeaks.net or www.CBrooklynNeighborhoods.homestead.com or www.Developdontdestroy.org

Our neighbor— a chat with Tony Gonzalez by H. Kolins

For many years I've run to **Tony's Hardware** at **181 Smith Street** for items ranging from light bulbs to cement to paint brushes. Every time I get a wave of recognition and a nod from the owner Tony Gonzalez. The head nod is a very Brooklyn thing. Sort of a "I know you" gesture. Well, I don't *really* know Tony but I somehow knew he'd lived here all his life. So I asked him to sit down with me and talk about living and working in Boerum Hill. Few residents can match his perspective from over 50 years of living and working in Boerum Hill

He grew up on Warren Street where he remembers a childhood filled with typical Brooklyn pursuits such as stickball, skully and just hanging out with lots of other kids. All under the watchful eyes of stoop sitting parents. When not playing on the street he was getting educated at PS 261. As a young teen, he was already working in a grocery store and hardware store thus beginning his sales connections to the neighborhood.

He might not be a business owner if it weren't for the support of his wife, Maria. Tony speaks of her with great love and respect and credits her for encouraging him to take the chance. There's another instance here of the Brooklyn head nod and hand wave acknowledgement. It seems Tony had an eye on an attractive young woman who worked in a Smith Street travel agency but their contact was confined to a nod and a neighborly smile. He says he saw her every day for 10 years—just smile and nod. He was visiting his mother in a little town Puerto Rico when Maria strolled by. After the expected "What are you doing here?" conversation was completed Tony knew this had to be a sign of something that was meant to be. After 17 years of marriage, Maria can now be found behind the counter offering change to customers and continual support to Tony and the business. Their 15-year-old daughter, Gabrielle, and an apartment on Pacific Street completes the Boerum Hill connection.

Of course, half a century brings a lot of changes. Tony can remember when Smith Street was mostly candy, grocery and shoe stores as well as social clubs and furniture stores like J. Michaels and Shelley's. He described the changes with only a whiff of nostalgia as he accepts change as part of what is meant to be. Having said this, he has the perspective of a small business owner and hopes that Smith Street continues to be able to support the independent restaurants and shops that make the street lively.

Tony sees the baby strollers that come into his store as an indication of the replenishment of life and energy in Boerum Hill. He welcomes everyone and tries to have whatever you need or recommend another store that has what little he doesn't carry.

It was a pleasure to find out more about the man behind the head nod and wave salutation. Tony's contributions to Boerum Hill as a father, a husband, and a business owner are the things that make this a truly nice place to live.



Boerum Hill Association
 P.O. Box 020583
 Brooklyn, NY 11202-0583

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE BOERUM HILL ASSOCIATION

Yearly Membership (Open to all residents of Boerum Hill) or join online www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org/join

Individual	\$25	Individual (Student/Senior/Low Income)	\$15	Business Donor	\$125
Family	\$40	Family (Student/Senior/Low Income)	\$25	Business Sponsor	\$250

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone (day): _____ Phone (eve) _____ email _____

Tell Us What Matters To You . The BHA is a volunteer organization. Join your neighbors and contribute your talents to the issues that interest you. (Circle each area of interest)

- | | |
|---|---|
| Atlantic Yards | Public Relations and Communication (Press releases, block associations) |
| Block Captains (organize and communicate with your neighbors) | Parks and Playgrounds (improving Douglass Greene Park) |
| Boerum Hill history | Public Safety |
| Community Events (meetings, holiday party, house tour) | Quality of Life (Sanitation, recycling, noise) |
| Greening and Neighborhood Beautification | Technology (BHA Website, email , online tools) |
| Land Use (Development, zoning, building reuse) | Traffic and Transportation (transit, parking, etc) |
| Landmarking | Tutoring (homework help for neighborhood youth) |
| Membership (BHA outreach, member services) | Other _____ |
| Newsletter | |

Make your check to the **Boerum Hill Association**. Mail this form and the check to Jacque Cook, BHA Membership Chair, 234 Wyckoff St. 11217.