



# The Boerum Hill Bulletin

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](http://www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org)

January/February 2008

Volume 3, Issue 1

## House of Detention Looms Even Larger! The Plan To Expand! By Howard Kolins

### Members of the Board:

Sue Wolfe, President  
Joel Potischman, Vice President  
James Forrester, Secretary  
Doug Barnes  
Genevieve Christy  
Jacque Cook  
Christian Haag  
Ellie Hanlon  
Trudy Katzer  
Howard Kolins  
Leslie Lewis  
Hannah Mason  
Matt Rogers  
Anders Thomsen  
Sophie Truslow  
Sarah Wikenczy  
Boaz Weinstein  
Rose Weber, Treasurer (non-board member)

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

[www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org](http://www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org)

The BHA membership year is from January 1 to December 31. Members in good standing as of June 1 may vote in the

to get to Riker's Island. Reopening and expanding the jail will alleviate this situation and reduce costs for the city as well as reduce air pollution from bus travel.

In response to the Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) sent out last spring, only one unnamed developer submitted a proposal that was subsequently deemed "non-responsive" by the Economic Development Corporation (EDC). Other developers contacted felt the project was not of interest. As a result several ideas were considered including a jail expansion in tandem with new a court house or, less likely, a school at the corner of Boerum Place and State Street.

Eventually this boiled down to three options. The first is to re-open the jail as-is at 800 beds. The second is to work with the community to build a new jail tower and create 30,000 sq. ft. of

On January 2, 2008 an HOD follow-up meeting took place at Borough Hall. In attendance were Marty Markowitz, Corrections Commissioner Martin Horn, various elected officials and the concerned Community Stakeholders group which includes the 53 Boerum Place Board, Atlantic Avenue Betterment Association, Atlantic Avenue LDC, Boerum Hill Association, Brooklyn Vision Foundation, Cobble Hill Association and the State Street Houses.

retail space along Atlantic Avenue and Smith Street. The third option would expand the jail and could include construction of a tower for a school (the court tower was rejected due to lack of space while the school idea was floated as a trial balloon). Commissioner Horn was very clear about his desire to expand the jail to 1,500 beds saying that only a call from his boss, Mayor Bloomberg, would alter the expansion path.

This is when various elected officials offered their views. State Senator Velmanette Montgomery expressed her continuing skepticism about the need for expansion. She and State Senator Martin Connor have opposed this from the start.

### Commissioner Horn was very clear about his desire to expand the jail to 1,500 beds

The Commissioner is seeking to address the communities' concerns about the reopening of the jail while pursuing his goal of creating a "mixed use" building that will "add value to the community." Remember that two years ago the community asked if the building could be renovated in some manner that would "close the gap" on Atlantic Avenue by adding retail on the first floor of the jail.

Commissioner Horn reminded the attendees that 25% of the city's total jail population of 14,000 is from Brooklyn. Currently these prisoners travel from Riker's to Brooklyn for their court appearances and the families of these prisoners often travel 2 hours

City Council Member David Yassky stated that the addition would be "a negative for the neighborhood" and that the offered retail didn't appear to be enough of a gain. However, building a new school might be an interesting option that could be explored.

State Assembly Member Joan Millman said "we might have been better off if the jail had never been closed." She has been very clear in her opposition to the expansion and offered to speak with the Mayor about the neighborhood's position.

Sandy Balboza, AABA, spoke against the expansion of the jail and its impact on the neighborhood as did Bill Harris, of CB2, who cited specifics regarding State Street residents. Judy Stanton, Executive Director of the Brooklyn Heights Association, stressed the need to address long standing issues of prisoner delivery that need to be solved even if the jail reopens "as-is." Sue Wolfe, President of the Boerum Hill Association, called this a "major concern" for the adjacent residents.

Commissioner Horn responded that he could address some of these concerns if the jail expansion happens. Many of these problems need coordination with NYPD, an agency which he does not oversee or control. (continued on page 7)

Visit us daily at  
[www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org](http://www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org)

**Boerum Hill Calendar 2008  
Is now available**

**The Gardens of Boerum Hill  
At  
Apple Gourmet Farm,  
GUMBO and Sterling Place**

## Safety Tips from Leslie Lewis

Board member Leslie Lewis is President of the 84th Police Precinct Community Council. He reminds us that while our neighborhood continues to be effectively policed to stop crime, to ensure your personal safety, it is important to remember the following .

1. Light is the enemy of criminals and darkness is their friend. Let there be light! Turn your stoop lights on after dark!

2. Always keep your pocketbook in sight in front of you, NEVER hang it behind you, over your chair in a restaurant or in a stroller while shopping.

3. When out walking or shopping, carry only the money and credit cards that you will need for the day.

4. It is a good practice to distribute your cash and other valuables in more than one pocket on your person. If you were robbed this could cut your losses.

5. Try not to be in a position to tempt a predator. If you think you might be all alone on the street at 4 a.m., take a taxi home. Despite

the positive crime stats there will always be predators out there looking for a victim.

6. Never leave any temptation for vandalism on the seat of your automobile. Something that may have little value to you, like an old coat, can invite a \$250.00 repair for a window broken by a thief who would like to explore its pockets.

*The 84th Precinct Community Council meets the third Tuesday of every month, September through May, in different locations. Look for flyers in the neighborhood or posted on [www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org](http://www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org) and [www.boerumhill@yahoogroups.com](mailto:www.boerumhill@yahoogroups.com)*

## Quality of Life Issues by Doug Barnes

### Residential Sanitation Enforcement Routing Hours Have Changed

Mayor Bloomberg recently signed a new law changing the times when it is possible to receive a summons for a dirty sidewalk (including 18 inches into the street) or a "dirty area", which includes non-sidewalk areas. They are now hard-coded by the new legislation at 8-9 a.m. and 6-7 p.m.

The theory behind this legislation is that at least some people will be able to come home and clean their sidewalks before the second enforcement period. However, those people who don't make it home before 6 p.m. are now more than twice as likely to have something dropped or blown on their sidewalk by 6 p.m., and are therefore more likely to get a ticket.

### How to Report Graffiti

The City Council passed a law in 2005 that provides for penalties for owners of commercial buildings or residential buildings of six or more units who do not clean up graffiti after receiving notice from the city. If the owner signs a waiver, and the graffiti is accessible, the city will clean it up for free. A commercial building includes any building that has a store or office in it.

Using 311 is the only sure way to get a graffiti complaint into the process so that the new law will be applied. However, the 311 operators will often take a "police quality of life" complaint and not a "graffiti cleanup request, non-owner" complaint. If they say anything about the police, or the precinct, or quality of life, repeat your request, and if they persist, ask to speak to a supervisor.

When you make the call, be sure to provide any information that's needed about viewing the graffiti. For instance, if it's on a roller door for a store, make it clear that it can only be observed when the store is closed. If it's on the back of a building, provide the address of the actual building that has the graffiti on it, but then also provide the "additional address" of the parking lot, vacant lot, etc. from which the graffiti can be viewed. That is, the primary address is the one that is going to be looked up to provide notice to the owner, but the additional address is provided to the enforcement people who go to see if the graffiti was removed after the notice is sent.

Check out [www.nycblight.org](http://www.nycblight.org) for more information about these and other topics.

**GENERAL MEETING  
February 13th at 7:00 PM  
BELARUSAN CHURCH  
At the corner of  
Atlantic Ave. and Bond St.  
QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES**

**Times Plaza Post Office - 11217  
Sanitation Department  
Department of Environmental Protection (noise)  
NYPD 84th Precinct  
Mayor's Community Assistance Unit (graffiti)  
Health and Mental Hygiene (rats)**

Representatives from these organizations will be on hand:

## The Annual Hoyt Street Association Plant Sale returns May 3rd & 4th by Martin Sticht

Time flies, and the latest iteration of the annual Hoyt Street Association Plant Sale is almost here! This year's sale will be held on Saturday, May 3rd, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday, May 4th, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Location: The garage behind 110 Hoyt Street, at the corner of Pacific. The sale, whose origins go back more than 25 years, is an eagerly awaited neighborhood event for customers and volunteers alike. Profits from the sale support the Hoyt Street Garden and the Hoyt Street Association Community Funding Project for non-profit organizations operating in Boerum Hill.

We will have a very wide variety of annual bedding plants (impatiens, petu-



nias, marigolds and many, many others), container/window box plants (geraniums, vinca vine and many others), perennials (hostas, ferns, bleeding hearts, etc.), selected small shrubs and herbs. Some plants like sun, some like shade, and others could care less.

Order forms will be distributed door-to-door (two per building) throughout Boerum Hill in mid-April. If you submitted an order form in the last three years you'll automatically be mailed one. Anyone else wishing to receive an order form by mail can contact Martin Sticht--see below for details. You need not order in advance via an order form--you can just stop by on the weekend. However, you save money by ordering and also are assured of getting what you want. (The order form is only for annuals and container plants, and only for those that we can be reliably sure of getting from our vendors. There will be lots of other annuals whose uncertainty of availability precludes their being listed on the order form.)

Volunteers are needed to distribute flyers in mid-April and to perform other tasks from Thursday, May 1st to Sunday, May 4th. Have fun and make new friends!

Contact: Martin Sticht at 718-643-0857 or email at [thegreenman217@aol.com](mailto:thegreenman217@aol.com).

## Times Plaza Post Office Pledges To Improve by Howard Kolins and Wanda Fleck

A recent rise in the number of complaints about our Postal Service resulted in a new online survey by BHA's VP Joel Potischman. Armed with these disappointing statistics, our neighbors Sarah Crichton and Wanda Fleck met with two representatives from the Brooklyn Postmaster's office on January 25th. In attendance was Archie Warner, Manager Customer Service Operations and Andrea Burrows, Customer Relations Coordinator, Brooklyn Customer Services. Robert Perris from Community Board 2 and a member of the Customer Advisory Council sat in.

Mr. Warner thanked them for the feedback, from which "frustration was evident." He explained that sometimes he and his staff members are not aware of the bad service in a post office. To address concerns, issues, ideas, and to implement positive change in the Brooklyn Post Offices, a Customer Advisory Council (CAC) was formed in April 2007. It will comprise USPS personnel and customers of the community.

Mr. Warner said that the current facilities of the Times Plaza Post Office are rented, and obsolete, and a search is underway for a better space.

Sarah addressed the package handling system which is, by all accounts, completely broken down. Mr. Warner will go to the Times Plaza PO to look at the package problem, and package handling clerks will be given additional training. The parcel department will be streamlined after the current problems have been identified.

Wanda addressed the attitude of the clerks, which had received near-unanimous criticism in the feedback from the community. It was deemed highly unprofessional and poor. The Brooklyn Postmaster has personally spoken with each clerk about this issue, and there will be job-related repercussions if no improvements are made, or if improvements turn out to be of a temporary nature.

A current supervisor will be directed to be accessible to customers, which means she will be in the lobby between 9 AM and 4:30 PM. The manager, Mr. Hector Cuervas, will receive additional training, and will relieve the supervisor when necessary. In addition, the postage dispensing machine in the lobby is scheduled to be replaced as it is currently obsolete.

An agreement was reached that the entire community will look for the promised changes in the post office, and will promptly report any prob-

lems. Such a report should contain the name of the clerk (all clerks are required to wear name tags) and/or the clerk's ID from the receipt. By the same token, exceptionally good service should also be reported, with the clerk's ID. As Wanda Fleck will be the intermediary between the Boerum Hill community and Mr. Warner and Ms. Burrows of the USPS, all comments about the post office should be sent to her.

It was furthermore understood that if improvements fall short of expectations, or are not maintained indefinitely, this matter will be brought before the press, the politicians, and the Postmaster General in Washington DC, Mr. John E. Potter. Mr. Warner and Ms. Burrows will receive copies of all communications within the Boerum Hill Yahoo Group about the Times Plaza Post Office.

VP Joel Potischman said, "The BHA wants to see Times Plaza become dramatically more responsive to the community. We want very large improvements in package delivery, line length/speed, upkeep of the post office lobby and machines, and professionalism and efficiency of the post office staff. We want promises of improvements to be measurable, and we want to be clear on timeframes and next steps should promises not be met. But above all, we want to work with Ms. Burrows. If they are not getting a realistic budget, hiring approvals, whatever, we have long offered to leverage the community to help get them whatever they need to fix these constant problems. We are not looking to blame or fight Ms. Burrows, as these problems preceded her arrival by decades. But we will need her as a partner to finally solve them."

We all hope this dialogue will bring long sought improvements to the Times Plaza Post Office. Look for an update in the near future.

## House of Detention (continued from page 1)

Jo Anne Simon pressed the Commissioner on security issues related to prisoner delivery through the single sallyport. The Commissioner responded with details regarding different security protocols for his department and the NYPD. For example, guns are not allowed into DOC jails. Therefore, prisoners escorted to court by the NYPD can not enter via the underground jail tunnel, so Boerum Hill residents often will see shackled prisoners on the streets and sidewalks.

Bill Harris told the group that the neighbors feel "punished" due to the lack of interagency coordination regarding these issues as well as parking permits and illegal parking. He strongly called for the creation of a Task Force to address these long-time abuses.

The Commissioner restated his goal of expanding the jail and adding the 30,000 sq. ft. of retail space. To do so will require one year for the design phase followed by two to three years of construction. If a school were to be added, that construction would most likely be

added at a later date and would be built by the School Construction Authority.

The meeting concluded with the Stakeholders determined to coordinate their efforts to reach the Mayor via our elected officials to stop any expansion of the jail. Again, the desire to have retail on Atlantic Avenue and to address the long-unresolved quality of life issues remains the collective goal.

## Dean Street Distress by Howard Kolins

Richard Schaedle and his wife have been residents of Dean Street for over 12 years. He says one perennial problem that defies solution is the pile of garbage behind PS 261 that soils Dean Street. The annoying situation includes ripped open garbage bags, soiled sidewalks, rats running through open garbage and the smell of the stench during warm weather.

Richard has contacted Councilman David Yassky and Assemblywoman Joan Millman who have made calls to the school principal to press for a solution. Richard Schaedle comments, "What's really distressing is the fact that money allocated to the rebuilding of the schoolyard did not address this problem. Dumpsters positioned on school property like those at PS 29 and schools in Park Slope would

easily solve this blight."

He asks you to call the offices of the elected officials previously mentioned (see box on this page for those numbers) and also Superintendent Joel Klein's office at 212-374-0200. Inform them of this foul and unsightly situation that needs to be solved.

### Visit us on the Web

[www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org](http://www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org)

Constantly updated with news, stories and blog posts on Boerum Hill, Atlantic Yards, And the House of Detention. See our calendar of neighborhood events and submit your own.

### Important Contact Numbers

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

City Council Member, David Yassky 718-875-5200

State Senator, Velmanette Montgomery, 718-643-6140

Assemblywoman, Joan Millman, 718-246-4889

Congressman Ed Towns, 718-855-8018

## Neighborhood Tutoring by Steve Shooman

Gowanus In Unity Tutoring Program's basic goal is to give students individualized help with their schoolwork using volunteer tutors from the community. We feel that the one-on-one environment allows the tutor to get to know the student, and the student's academic needs.

Other objectives are to:

- Provide a structure in which students can learn the importance of promptness, appointment responsibility, calendar management, and respect for their tutor's time.
- Bring the ethics and work habits of the adult workplace into the consciousness of the student.
- Expand the range of societal values to which a student is exposed.
- Coordinate and supplement the help they already receive at school and at home.
- Reduce the sense of isolation that some residents of public housing have about the residents of the surrounding "brownstone neighborhoods".
- Reduce the discomfiting misconceptions that some residents of surrounding neighborhoods feel about nearby public housing residents.
- **MOST IMPORTANT:** Students and tutors learn from each other.

The Boerum Hill Association and the Gowanus Community Center in conjunction with Gowanus Houses of the New York City Housing Authority sponsor the tutoring program.

Tutors must like to work with children and have basic skills in school subjects. Most students are generally between the ages of 8 and 17. Little preparation is necessary because it is the student's responsibility to bring schoolwork or other material in which help is needed.

You can contact me at [sshooman@att.net](mailto:sshooman@att.net) or 718-522-5746, if you are interested, or have any questions about tutoring. If you cannot tutor but would like to donate used computers, cash, etc. that is also appreciated.

## Update on Atlantic Yards by Genevieve Christy

NY State Supreme Court Justice Joan Madden rejected the lawsuit brought by 26 community groups including BHA. The lawsuit challenged the validity of the environmental impact statement as well as the developer's assertion that the development centered on a privately owned arena is a civic project and thus allows use of eminent domain. Madden was not persuaded by the community's allegations that the EIS failed to take a hard look at the environmental impacts, did not consider alternative development plans and wrongly condemned non-blighted neighboring blocks thus turning them over to the developer. DDDDB, the lead plaintiff, is drafting an appeal of the decision.

Two other lawsuits are still in the works. A 2nd district court ruled against owners and residents in the footprint who challenged the use of eminent domain. This decision is being appealed to the US Supreme Court. The project cannot go forward until this lawsuit is decided. A third lawsuit, brought by tenants in rent-stabilized apartments, claims that the developer's plans, which do not provide for relocation of evicted tenants, are inadequate. A challenge to a recent decision in favor of the developer will be made to the Court of Appeals.

Forrest Taylor, the recently appointed ombudsman for the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC), has begun to hold meetings with community groups. On January 8 Taylor answered questions at a meeting organized by the Council of Brooklyn Neighborhoods (CBN). Taylor described his two major responsibilities as bringing community issues back to the ESDC and keeping the project on track. One new avenue of communication will be through a new Community Advisory Committee (CAC) whose members will be appointed by elected officials. The CAC, Taylor said, "will meet at least quarterly." Taylor confirmed that details of financing, which has both state and city components, have not been finalized, including specifics of housing subsidies and payments in lieu of taxes. Taylor will soon move his office to 55 Hanson Place. He can be reached at 212-803-3133 or 866-923-5315 or email [ftaylor@empire.state.ny.us](mailto:ftaylor@empire.state.ny.us).

Subsidies for FCRC from the NYC Council are being questioned. Council Members David Yassky and Letitia James have proposed an amendment to withhold subsidies and tax breaks for the Atlantic Yards project. Christine Quinn has voiced strong opposition to similar subsidies for Madison Square Garden.

The Carlton Avenue Bridge has been closed to enable the ESDC to make improvements to the rail yards below. The hastily announced closure has raised concerns about inadequate plans for re-routing traffic and providing appropriate alternate routes for the fire department which uses the bridge regularly. Elected officials' requests to Forrest Taylor to hold an open meeting prior to the closure were denied. During the closure, which is expected to last

two years, traffic will be rerouted along Pacific Street between Vanderbilt and Sixth Avenues.

The UNITY group has issued a new version of their alternative plan for developing the rail yard site. The plan revised to reflect input from a community workshop includes construction of 2.5 million square feet compared to roughly 9 million in the Forest City Ratner (FCR) proposal. Unlike the FCR plan, there is no arena and there are no closed streets, and existing buildings neighboring the yards are preserved for re-use. The UNITY 2008 plan emphasizes that there are realistic alternatives for the site which preserve community values and avoid many of the negative impacts in the FCR plan. The new plan can be seen at [www.unityplan.org](http://www.unityplan.org). Another workshop for community input will be sponsored by CBN on March 1st at the Belarusian Church (Atlantic and Bond.)

Security concerns were voiced at a press conference in December about the lack of an adequate buffer between the glass-walled arena and the intersection of Atlantic and Flatbush. A similar layout of the newly-built arena in Newark has led police to close streets during events. David Yassky, Bill DiBlasio and Letitia James were among attending officials who voiced concerns, calling for more transparency and changes to the current plan. (Forrest Taylor in a later meeting said that the NYPD has reviewed the current FCR plan, deems security adequate and does not plan street closures during events. No details or further explanation was provided.)

Goldman Sachs has downgraded the stock of Forest City Enterprises, citing increases in costs for construction and borrowing that make its development projects less profitable. In the changing economic climate and tightening credit squeeze it seems highly likely that, irrespective of the lawsuits, substantial changes will be made to the current development plan.

## The BHA Hosts The Annual Holiday Party by Howard Kolins



*BHA President Sue Wolfe demonstrates her festive holiday spirit to Borough President Marty Markowitz.*

Another joyous Holiday Party was hosted by the Boerum Hill Association on December 8th at the Axelle Fine Arts Gallery while a simultaneous children's party took place at the St. Nicholas Cathedral on State Street. At Axelle nearly 100 revelers shared their pot luck meals demonstrating the true spirit of the season. Board members Ellie Hanson and Howard Kolins chaired the festivities at the Gallery and former board member Marc Tremitiere bravely chaired the children's party for the second year.

This local tradition brings old and new residents together for an annual celebration of our community. Boerum Hillers get to show off and share their culinary skills ranging from crudités, to poached salmon, to incredible desserts. Those without kitchen skills are enlisted to bring beverages and bottled holiday spirits. Everyone is invited and welcome. This is truly a wonderful way to mix with old friends and make new ones.

A special thank you to Bertrand Delacroix for sharing the Axelle Fine Arts Gallery and welcoming our neighborhood into this wonderful space. Also thanks to this year's Santa, BH Board Member Anders Thomson.

## Action 84

The 84<sup>th</sup> Precinct Community Council urges you to attend the next meeting on

**Tuesday, February 19, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.**

**In BOERUM HILL**

Held at the

**BAPTIST TEMPLE**

**360 SCHERMERHORN STREET**

**BROOKLYN, N.Y. 11217**

Presentation

**NYPD BOMB SQUAD**

ALSO

**COP OF THE MONTH AWARD**

**TRANSIT POLICE REPORT**

**PRECINCT CRIME REPORT ACTION AND RESULTS**

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**BRING YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS - REFRESHMENTS  
WILL BE SERVED**

**TRANSPORTATION WILL BE PROVIDED BY THE POLICE  
DEPARTMENT TO AND FROM THE MEETING. CALL COMMU-  
NITY AFFAIRS 718-875-6850 TO ARRANGE TRANSPORTA-  
TION**

## Brooklyn Heights Association Annual Meeting

**Tuesday, February 26th 7:30 pm – 9:30 pm**

St. Francis College Auditorium

180 Remsen Street

The keynote speaker will be NY Times "NYC" columnist Clyde Haberman, "What is the future of life in NYC?"

## President's Message by Sue Wolfe

Dear Neighbors,

One of the many concerns we have in and around Boerum Hill is the lack of 'open space'. The BHA, with a grant from the JM Kaplan Fund, hired the firm of Prentiss, Preiss, Shapiro to look for 'open space' in Boerum Hill. No surprise - the conclusion was - there is none!

However, right down the road (Nevins Street) there is the underutilized park located from Nevins St. to Third Ave. and Douglass St. to Greene St. called "Thomas Greene Park" which includes the "Double D Pool".

We, along with the surrounding neighborhoods of Carroll Gardens, Park Slope and Gowanus have formed the "Friends of Douglass/Greene Park, Inc."

Our goal is to have a public process determine what we (the stakeholders) want in a renovated park. We are working with our local Council members: David Yassky, Bill deBlasio & Sara Gonzales; Borough President Marty Markowitz and the Brooklyn Parks Department to eventually have a terrific park that will be a destination for all of us in the years to come.

Watch for our web site, currently under development. Look for more information online at [info@friendsofdouglassgreenepark.com](mailto:info@friendsofdouglassgreenepark.com)

## Thoughts on a loss by Howard Kolins

Like many people, I moved to Boerum Hill to enjoy its small town feel yet be close to the "city" I worked in. The warm inviting four-story brick buildings, tall trees, backyards, small shops and restaurants all contributed to my desire to plant my own roots, build a great life and raise my family. We all seek our own paths in life. Here was the place for me to walk that path and intersect with other walkers.

One walker was my neighbor, Heath Ledger. We did not speak at he passed with his daughter in her stroller as I walked my son to the bus stop. He looked like any other haggard dad who had gotten little sleep that night. Maybe the morning air would finally get her to doze off.

I smiled and rooted for him in his life. A young father building a great career. Looking for the same mix of sunlight and sidewalks that I had sought 20 years ago.

I work in the arts and I admired him. He was a handsome actor who had consciously made the right choices. Ones that had given him challenges rather than just easy money. He looked for parts where he could test his capabilities and then he surprised everyone with a role that showed he knew where all the life's pain, confusion and loss resided. He became an artist; one who we wanted to see again and see him succeed.

He moved to the "city" to walk another path. I'm sure the folks in the neighborhood saw him as just another dad. Another role he would have played brilliantly.

## The BOERUM HILL HOUSE TOUR is June 1st!

The biennial Boerum Hill House Tour will take place on June 1, 2008 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The tour is a great opportunity for all of us to showcase our unique community and a great way to see how your neighbors have preserved and transformed their homes. Come share the energy, excitement and creativity that makes Boerum Hill a great place to live.

We are currently seeking donors, contributors and advertisers. Volunteers for positions ranging from publicity, to catering and hosting are also needed to staff the event. It takes many hands to make this event a success so please don't hesitate to join in. There is no better way to get to know your neighbors than working on a community event.

Contact co-chairs Janet Liles, [janetliles@mindspring.com](mailto:janetliles@mindspring.com), or Howard Kolins, [hkolins@aol.com](mailto:hkolins@aol.com), for more information.

**NEED A NEW  
TREE PIT GUARD?**

We can get a discount if we collect 10 orders!!!

Contact hkolins@aol.com  
For more info

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**BECOME A MEMBER OF THE BOERUM HILL ASSOCIATION**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

*Your contact info will never be shared or sold, and you may opt out of any communications at any time.*

**Yearly Membership** (open to all residents of Boerum Hill)

- \$25 – Individual
- \$15 – Individual Senior/Student/Low-income
- \$40 – Family
- \$25 – Family\* Senior/Student/Low-income

**Business Supporters** (listed on BHA website, newsletters, and other publications)

- \$125 – Business Donor
- \$250 – Business Sponsor

**Contributions** (Not a resident or business owner? Or checked a box above but still want to do more? Contributions of any size are always welcome and help support the important work of the BHA)

- + \$100 "Good Neighbor
- + \$250 "Neighborhood Hero!"
- + \$\_\_\_\_\_ Other

The BHA membership year is from January 1 to December 31. Members in good standing as of June 1 may vote in the June board election. All others, including business supporters, may not vote but are welcome at all BHA events and activities.

\* Family memberships (2+ adults in the same household), are entitled to two votes. Individual members receive one vote.

**Contribute Your Talent and Energy - Join your neighbors who volunteer to work on BHA activities and community priorities. Identify your areas of interest.**

- Atlantic Yards
- Block Captain (help distribute BHA notices on your block)
- Boerum Hill History
- Community Events (meetings, holiday party, house tour)
- Greening & Neighborhood Beautification
- Land Use (development, zoning, building noise)
- Land marking
- Membership (recruitment, member services)
- Newsletter
- Public Relations and Communication (neighborhood calendar, block associations, press releases, etc.)
- Parks and Playgrounds (improving Douglass/Greene Park)
- Quality of Life (public safety, sanitation, recycling, noise)
- Technology (website, email, online tools)
- Traffic and Transportation (transit, parking, etc.)
- Tutoring (homework help to neighborhood youth)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Make your check payable to the Boerum Hill Association. Mail this form and the check to the Boerum Hill Association, P.O. Box 020583, Brooklyn, NY 11202**



Boerum Hill Association

P.O. Box 020583

Brooklyn, NY 11202-0583

## Boerum Hill History by Erik Fortmeyer

Very few people know today that there was once a Grand Opera House in Brooklyn just off the northern edge of Boerum Hill. It was built with high plans for bringing quality theater to Brooklyn in 1881 and evolved over time into "The People's Opera House" before it was closed down forever in 1919.

Elm Place off of Fulton and east of Hoyt was laid out around 1848 as Brooklyn began to expand east of today's Borough Hall. The only significant building in the area until then was the Fleet Mansion built in 1819 on the north side of Fulton. Elm trees had been planted in the area, giving the new street its name.

A brownstone church was completed in 1864 for the Elm Place Congregational Church until it burned in 1880. The site was sold in early 1881 to a local politician and insurance agent along with two popular stage variety actors who noted that several different streetcars passed Elm in both directions nearby. They spent \$105,000 to construct the new 2,200 person capacity brick theater standing 65 feet wide, 140 feet deep, and 80 feet high. A large rose window with stained glass of Shakespearean characters and 14 decorated columns highlighted the building's front portico while the entrance was composed of a ticket box on the left and an attractive ladies parlor and toilet room on the right. An engine powered the electric lights and a steam boiler in the basement provided the heat. Fire safety was a high priority inside including wall flues to vent off excess heat from the stage floodlights. The stage itself was 71 feet wide and 42 feet deep with all the modern appliances for moving scenery and a vertical lift of the curtain which was decorated with a painting of the Yellowstone Park mountains. Tickets were very reasonably priced for the time ranging from 15 to 50 cents.

The theater changed hands shortly after opening, but was run successfully for many years providing light opera, ballet, and popular theater plays. It was additionally liked for its good ventilation and cool interior temperatures. The sad demise of the Grand Opera House began in 1890 when A.I. Namm began building his department store behind on the corner of Hoyt and Fulton. *Namm's* grew and relentlessly expanded until finally it purchasing the theater in 1919. It was demolished and the site incorporated into a new Namm's six-story extension. *Namm's* and *Loeser's* merged in 1952 and left for the suburbs in 1957 selling the old building to A&S which demolished the southern portion the next year to build the current 600-car parking garage.

**The BOERUM HILL HOUSE TOUR is June 1st.  
Experience this great neighborhood event!**

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