

Atlantic Currents

The Atlantic Avenue Betterment Association Newsletter

Fall, 2003
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Developing New Concepts

For nearly a decade, AABA has worked with elected officials, City Planning and other city and state agencies as well as developers to improve the retail environment on the Avenue. Our efforts are starting to pay off. With all the new construction—1,500 new residential units being built—stores and restaurants will benefit from the influx of new residents and additional retail sites.

Our long-term goal to reconnect Atlantic Avenue's severed shopping strip by revitalizing The Gap (between Smith and Court) is finally within reach:

◆**No More Blank Walls.** Two Trees Development Corp. is excavating the site of the former parking garage on Atlantic at Court to accommodate a 12-story building with 325 apartments, street-level retail, a YMCA



Right, Two Trees' plan for Atlantic/Court; below, the new Eckerd's at Court; and left, the rendering for the Shaya B. building at Smith.

with swimming pool and an underground garage for 500 to 700 cars.

◆**No New Blank Walls.** Also at

Atlantic and Court, the new Eckerd's is ready to open. The large blank wall, originally planned, has been replaced with display windows thanks to John Genovese, of Genovese Drugs, who responded to pressure from AABA and Councilman David Yassky.

◆**Specialty Food Market Needed.** Developer Shaya B. has broken

ground, in the Hoyt-Schermerhorn urban renewal area, at Smith and Atlantic after negotiating with the MTA about construction procedures next to the subway. AABA advocates a specialty food market for the ground floor. The 108-foot-high building will house 50 residential condominiums, commercial space and underground parking.

◆**Priority: Ground-floor Retail.**

Work at Atlantic and Bond has resumed; the foundation is nearly completed for a mixed-use building. Ground-floor retail will be topped with 15 market-rate apartments.

◆**Apartments All Around.** North of Atlantic, at Boerum and State, Lou Greco is developing 99 luxury apart-



ment units with an 88-car garage. Across the street Brooklyn Law School is erecting a large dormitory—more than 220 feet high.

Development in the two other sites in the Hoyt-

Schermerhorn urban renewal area will begin soon. Look for market-rate and affordable housing, including townhouses on State Street.

Six 19th-century buildings at 94-104 Atlantic are being converted to condos—57 studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units. The site, long vacant, will be ready in November.



Jail House Blues

The Brooklyn House of Detention closed in June. Crime is down, and in a cost-cutting move Mayor Bloomberg moved all prisoners to Riker's Island.

AABA advocates permanently closing the jail, located in The Gap separating the Avenue's shopping strip. As a member of a broad-based Coalition to pressure the Mayor, AABA is working with elected officials, civic groups (Boerum Hill, Brooklyn Heights and Cobble Hill Assns., Atlantic Avenue and South Brooklyn LDCs) and the Downtown Brooklyn Council (developers).

During this year's Atlantic Antic, the Coalition distributed fact sheets about the advantage of closing the jail and redeveloping the site. Close to 1,000 neighbors signed on with the Coalition to receive updated mailings about the jail. Anyone interested in joining that list or receiving a fact sheet, contact Sandy Balboza, 718/852.7418.

Everyone is urged to call 311 and ask the Mayor to close the jail permanently.

Target: Permit Abuse

AABA's recent study, financed by City Councilman David Yassky's office, found that city workers use bogus permits for commuter parking at meters, hydrants and other illegal spots along Atlantic Avenue and environs. Major offenders are Court Officers, NYPD, Corrections and Transit agencies.

This abuse is bad for small businesses: shoppers cannot park and storeowners cannot unload merchandise. In addition, the City loses about \$80,000 per year in parking meter revenue in this area alone. Study findings will be presented to DOT, the Police Dept. and the Mayor's office. AABA and Councilman Yassky are pushing for a No Permit Zone for Atlantic and side streets.

This newsletter is made possible by public funds provided by State Senator Velmanette Montgomery and City Councilman David Yassky.

Who's Doing What?

Looking good. AABA added five new tree guards thanks to a grant from the **Hoyt Street Association**.

Helping us light up! A \$2,300 grant from **Con Edison** funded printing for fall/winter Avenue shopping guides.

Thanks! **Councilman David Yassky's** \$5,000 grant will help fund AABA's ongoing projects.

Out damn spot! **AABA** and **Brooklyn Borough Hall** worked with Graffiti Free NYC, sponsored by NYC Economic Development, to remove flyers from Avenue lamp posts.

Good, better, best. *New York* featured **Layla** in a May "Best Bets." **but-ter** was an August "Best Bet."

New York Sun found "stylish finds" at **Town & Country Antiques**, **darr**, **Rico**, **Circa Antiques** and **Olde Good Things**.

Spotlight! *The Sunday Daily News*, Sept. 7, ran enticing photos of **Brawta**, **Breukelen** and **Downtown Atlantic**.

Aug. 10 *Daily News* called **Antiques Room**, **Breukelen**, **butter**, **Circa Antiques**, **A Cook's Companion**, **Dany**, **darr**, **Melting Pot**, **Rico**, **Scarlet Ginger**, **Silver Tao**, **Bacchus**, **Brawta Caribbean Cafe**, **Caravan Restaurant**, **Downtown Atlantic**, **Flying Saucer**, **Moroccan Star Restaurant**, **Peter's Waterfront Ale House**, **Shinjuku Japanese Restaurant**, **Soul Spot**, **Damascus Breads & Pastry**, **Heights Chateau Wines**, and **Sahadi** "the next wave" of urban chic.

Spilling over. **A Cook's Companion** is now in a bigger shop at 197 Atlantic.

New art on Atlantic: **Bruno Marina Gallery** just opened at 372 (formerly site of **Rico**, now at 384 Atlantic).

An August *TimeOut New York* recognized **Breukelen** as "The Best Place to Melt Your Plastic" and **Scarlet Ginger** for "Best Shopping Bag."

New web address (**Finetune Pilates studio**): www.finetunepilates.com.

MJB Consulting's **Atlantic Avenue Marketing Study** (commissioned by AABA) is in the Brooklyn Business Library at Cadman Plaza.

A new magazine, **BKLYN**, highlighted **Rico** and **KEA Carpets & Kilims** in the first edition.

Please email comments or material for the newsletter to AABA Newsletter Editor Betsy Kissam bkissam@mindspring.com

Something New

The Yoga Lab, 388 Atlantic Av., 718/858.3265/theyogalab@yahoo.com M-F 9am-8pm; Sa-Su 9am-7pm Amidst a waterfall, dry brook and mural, you'll find classes in Hatha, Vinyasa and Ashtanga yoga—also workshops for



teachers, massage, even yoga accessories. Director Cher Meli and owner Ingrid Gayle stress "staying authentic," meaning proper breathing and meditation. Check out the Sunday evening "restorative" yoga classes (all levels).

Hope Veterinary Clinic, 390 Atlantic Av., 718/852.4219, M-Tu, Th 9am-7pm, W 9-6, F 9-5, Sa 10-3 Medical director Kristine Young, DVM, and practice director Juliet Sternberg, CSW, have established a bright, airy clinic:



full of surprises. They offer hospice care, a dental suite, hydrotherapy for arthritic and allergic dogs, counseling—even a corner for cat adoption, coordinated with local rescue groups.

Orphan Couture, 490 Atlantic Av., 718/855.9169, W-Su 12-6pm Val Levine thinks of the fabrics she uses to make her totes and handbags as "orphans": beautiful, vintage and recycled. She sells ready-made and takes custom orders. Also featured: Nancy Giallombardo's skirts, dresses and shirts.



Boosting Business

Frances Caroll of **Silk Road Antiques** hosted AABA's first networking party in her store in August. Working together to boost business is something she believes in, AABA promotes, and the recent AABA marketing study by MJB Consulting seconds.

It's all about sharing knowledge and expertise, referring shoppers and thinking as a team. And it's starting to happen on Atlantic...In a display in **Silver Tao's** window is a piece of furniture from Silk Road Antiques. Both stores have an Eastern focus. At Silk Road, shoppers interested in kimonos or pillows learn about Silver Tao and all who comment on the furniture at Silver Tao discover Silk Road Antiques.

Coupons Made for Walking

Michelle Wagner's shop, **Little Eric Shoes**, is in Brooklyn Heights/Cobble Hill; at the other end of Atlantic, in Boerum Hill/Fort Greene, is **Gumbo**. Both stores are for children. By giving her customers coupons for Gumbo, Ms. Wagner motivates shoppers to visit the other end of the Avenue, and vice versa. "All the stores here are unique," she says; "we're not competing." Elissa Jane Mastel of **Urban Monster** agrees. If five new stores selling baby things opened, she adds, it would mean more people shopping here. Urban Monster along with some other new boutiques—**Jelly**, **Kimera** and **Scarlet Ginger**—have created a promotional web site—www.brooklynboutique.com. "I only wish more people worked together," she says.

Helping Out!

Many Atlantic Avenue restaurants and bars made the night of the 2003 blackout a little easier for all of us.

In some ways the night was more like a "big block party," said Frank D'Accordo whose restaurant **Downtown Atlantic** accommodated tired travelers with cups of ice, a place to rest, bathroom and battery-operated radio to help sort out the confusion. By 10pm, the restaurant sold out of desserts, soda and bottles of water.

Dwayne Wright and his co-workers at **Hoyt Street Deli** brought out chairs and milk cartons for the foot-weary and opened their bathroom until 11:30 pm; they made sure all who wanted bottles of water got them, making due when change ran out. **Brooklyn Grill** served cold food, and **Peter's Waterfront Ale House** kept "happy hour" (lower prices) all evening.