

Atlantic Currents

The Atlantic Avenue Betterment Association Newsletter

Summer, 2003

Marketing Atlantic

AABA's new marketing study, funded by Independence Community Foundation and implemented by Michael Berne of MJB Consulting, sees the Avenue's future in top-of-the-line merchandise, first-rate customer service and unified advertising. Mr. Berne points out that merchants need to organize (and think of) themselves as a unit for marketing purposes — to start thinking like a team.

The study, released in mid-June at a press conference, hosted by Downtown Atlantic restaurant, suggests that

▶ Atlantic Avenue market its own specific identity—the place to go for unique, stylish and eclectic goods—in order to develop a retail niche.

▶ Merchants be encouraged to refer customers to other stores, share knowledge and expertise, and keep consistent hours.

▶ First-rate customer service is critical for top-of-the-line merchandising.

▶ Atlantic Avenue needs more, especially family-oriented, restaurants, bars and cafes to establish the corridor as a regional shopping strip.

▶ Upscale merchandise helps offset the low level of pedestrian traffic east of Court and the high non-retail

usage of Avenue storefronts. The surrounding neighborhoods, including an estimated 1,500 new residential units, offer a growing market for furniture, housewares, lighting, and fashionable adult and children's clothing.

▶ Signage is essential. With visible and unique signage, motorists will see, and likely remember, the variety and distinctiveness of the shops here.



Merchants, neighbors and officials representing politicians and corporations joined AABA for the unveiling of its market study and new shopping guide at a press brunch at **Downtown Atlantic**. From l to r, Kenny and Mary Chase, **Brooklyn Heights Bike Shop**; Charlene Heyliger, **Gourd Chips**; Edwin Perez, **Better Carpet Warehouse**; Mike Berne; Sandy Balboza; Michelle Wagner, **Little Eric Shoes**; Stuart Post, Independence Community Foundation; and Ellen Wolfson, **In Days of Old**.

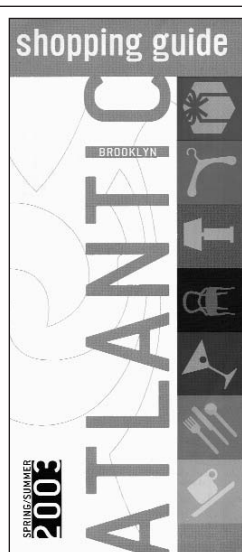
For more information on the study and AABA's funded signage initiative (with grants up to \$500), contact Sandy Balboza at 718/852/7418.

The Guiding Force

The spring/summer 2003 shopping guide — produced by AABA and designed by Four Eyes Productions — is out! The redesigned guide is user-friendly with an easy-to-use map. The store directory and alphabetical index are color coded. Photos show off the stylish and diverse shopping here.

AABA's shopping guide is an important tool for developing a unique identity for Atlantic Avenue. The guide will continue to be updated and 10,000 copies distributed twice a year at BAM, the Marriot Hotel, MetroTech, DUMBO, and shops along Atlantic Avenue, Smith and Court Streets.

A companion piece, AABA's Historic Walking Guide, is available at Circe Antiques, 377 Atlantic.



DOT Ignores Own Study

Department of Transportation (DOT) Assistant Commissioner Michael Primeggia made it clear on June 23 at a Borough Hall Task Force meeting that results from DOT's own commissioned study on Traffic Calming would not influence its decision-making.

AABA and community groups point to the independent study, which makes a strong case for reinstating 24-hour parking on Atlantic Ave. Restoration of 4-7pm parking is essential for merchants as well as pedestrians, who feel unsafe with speeding cars traveling at curbside.

"The introduction of operational measures like LPIs [Leading Pedestrian Intervals, which give pedestrians a short head start] and 24-hour parking, and physical measures like neckdowns on intersecting streets will improve pedestrian conditions on Atlantic Ave."

The study also found "wherever the heavily trafficked Flatbush Ave. meets another road carrying a high traffic volume substantial congestion ensues." This happens at Atlantic and 4th Aves., thus: "An evening peak period parking restriction serves to increase [Atlantic's] ability to store queued vehicles, but not its traffic capacity." In other words during rush



The race to 4th Avenue, and then the wait. hours (4-7pm), cars can speed for three blocks of Atlantic with an extra curbside lane only to mass at the 3rd and 4th Ave. intersections where congestion builds.

AABA has long advocated that the 4-7pm parking restriction is part of Downtown's traffic congestion problem, not a solution. Now with the study supporting this claim, AABA plans rally elected officials and community groups to challenge DOT's untenable position.

The Buzz

No more blank walls: Genovese drugstore is enlarging its windows. The modification to its renovation of the building at Atlantic/Court "makes it more consistent with surrounding architecture," says AABA president Sandy Balboza. After seeing plans calling for tiny windows starting 7 feet above ground, she contacted City Councilman David Yassky to ask for help in arranging a meeting with John Genovese, the company real estate director. The result: display windows are coming down to within 2-1/2 feet of the sidewalk.

A Break from Jail?

What's in store for the Brooklyn House of Detention now that the Mayor's budget has closed it to prisoners — at least temporarily? AABA is petitioning the Mayor to permanently close the behemoth that helps separate the western and eastern corridors of Atlantic's burgeoning shopping strip.

Additionally with a coalition of community groups, AABA is initiating a letter-writing campaign to pressure the City to stop the current capital improvement program and remove construction barricades, currently obstructing the sidewalk. The coalition is requesting an RFP (Request for Proposals) for the site so that local developers will be given a forum to present creative reuses for this prime location.

Gearing Up

Sidewalk scaffolding surrounds the municipal garage at the corner of Court/Atlantic—the first step in the demolition (expected to take 12 weeks) and subsequent construction of a mixed residential-commercial high rise with underground parking and street-level retail space. Completion date is fall 2004, says developer Two Trees Management Company.

Who? What? Where?

Top design. **Kea Carpets & Kilims** and **Rico** were part of Brooklyn Design, the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce's first-ever (juried) show of Brooklyn-based manufacturers and designers.

Shop talk. Newly opened **Darr** was featured in the June 12-19 *TimeOut*.

A Trolley Grows in Brooklyn!
AABA's video collaboration with the Brooklyn Historic Railway Association

They Keep On Opening...

FemSurge, 79 Atlantic Av., Tu-Sa 10:30am-5pm & by appointment, 718/797-8797 www.femsurge@yahoo.com
It's all about "holistic women's health and wellness." Everything is organic—the store carries its own label herbs as well as herbal tinctures, vitamins, soy protein powder. "We combine comprehensive professional consultation with therapeutic remedies of herbs, herbal tonics, nutritional supplements and body work." Ask about "goddess nights" when practitioners of acupuncture and reiki, and massage therapists, offer free demonstrations.

The Soul Spot Restaurant, 302 Atlantic Av., M-Su 11am-11pm, 718/596-9933 www.soulspot302.com
This tiny restaurant, with just a couple of tables and little ambience, caters to a take-out crowd, and it caters too. It calls itself "the classic



soul of New York." Interested in black-eyed peas and rice, collard greens (without meat), candied yams, baked salmon, southern dipped fried chicken, curry goat, oxtail, fried catfish, jerk chicken? If the answer is yes, check it out as soon as possible.

Sir, 360 Atlantic Av., Th-Sa 12-7pm, Su 12-6pm, 718/643-6877
Joanna Baum, who designed for

Tommy Hilfiger and Polo, wanted to create a combined work-and-display space for her "subtly deconstructed, but feminine" fashions. You'll find her



at work on her unique creations, some original, some reworked vintage clothing (even pocketbooks and shoes) and some just vintage. Because she notices people often "shop in couples," she features designs for women and men, even a few books and art—"things that inspire."

Silver Tao, 394 Atlantic Av., W-Su 12-7 pm, 718/422-7700
Suzan Silver, formerly of Kimera, offers "a custom design service" featuring contemporary design. What makes her store unique is her focus on Chinese, Japanese and Indian textiles. Her new home furnishing collection includes pil-



lows, duvet covers and window treatments; she also features fashion accessories, such as handbags and wraps, and vintage Japanese kimonos and obis.

to bring trolleys back can be seen at www.brooklynrail.com/streaming%20video.htm

Bigger is better. **Designer Rico Espinet** is expanding his store **Rico** with a second site at 384 Atlantic.

Tall tales. **Hoyt Street Garden** is sponsoring free storytelling for children of all ages on Thursday evenings in summer. No rain dates. 718/232-2206.

Happenings! Craft classes with the Crafty Sisters on July 19 and book club with authors Anika Nailah, Dianne

Marbury, Vivian Perry and Denise Brown Hinton on July 26 at **Zawadi Gift Shop**.

AABA is continuing its graffiti maintenance along the Avenue.

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

This newsletter is made possible by public funds provided by State Senator Velmanette Montgomery.