

Atlantic Currents

Atlantic Avenue Betterment Association Newsletter

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No Slam Dunk

The Downtown Brooklyn Development Plan is so big that it will change the character of Downtown if it goes forward as proposed. AABA testified against the complex plan with three urban renewal areas, in which the City can condemn and seize private property through eminent domain.

The Downtown Plan is being pushed by the City because of jobs lost to New Jersey over the past decade. However, today these same back office jobs are moving to off-shore locations, such as Southeast Asia.

300 TO 600 FEET HIGH

The plan's proposed rezoning—which would allow commercial and residential towers to soar 300 to 600 feet, four parking garages and an arena with an additional 3,000-car garage—makes no commitment to the infrastructure required to absorb such development. In addition the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) does not consider the many other development projects already underway here, nor does it address issues important to the community, including traffic, historic preservation, mass transit, permit parking, pedestrian safety, eminent domain and public financing.

OPEN AND PUBLIC

The Downtown Brooklyn Coalition, made up of community groups (including AABA) surrounding the development sites, is calling for a comprehensive planning process that examines more than the piecemeal study, presented by the EIS, which fails to consider how to protect jobs and businesses or how to address the effect of years of demolition and construction on the economic climate of Atlantic Avenue.

AABA supports an open, public process for all downtown development. Such a process requires a community task force, working in tandem with local neighborhood groups, to ensure that the community remains viable.



An overflow crowd (top) attended the Feb. 26 AABA meeting on the Downtown Brooklyn Development Plan. Speakers (bottom from left) are Heloise Gruneberg, president, Brooklyn Vision and AABA membership director; Hardy Adasko, senior vice-president, NYC Economic Development Corporation; Winston Von Engel, deputy director, Brooklyn City Planning. Sandy Balboza, AABA president, moderated. State Senator Velmanette Montgomery, not pictured, also presented her views.

Pier into the Future

Brooklyn's waterfront needs to be developed carefully and thoughtfully. The entire harbor is currently under study by local, state and federal governments. Planning for the future of the waterfront must consider the findings of all these studies.

AABA is requesting a comprehensive public planning and review process of Piers 6-12 at the foot of Atlantic Avenue. We advocate that any recommended plan promote mass transit and its accessibility, improved transportation and street design and better pedestrian access to the water-

front, including a bicycle/pedestrian Greenway to connect with already existing parts of the City's Greenway.

As for Pier 6, AABA wants it to be planned and developed as part of the Brooklyn Bridge Park (the southern entrance off the Avenue). Among its park-related uses, the pier is an ideal site for future ferry service connecting with a trolley, bus or light rail loop to downtown retail, business, cultural and educational locations; tour boats and historic vessels could dock as well.

Investigation into the possible uses of the piers should not be subject to hasty decisions by some special interest groups. There is too much at stake!

Help from DA Hynes

Kings County District Attorney Charles Hynes told AABA that crime is down and will stay that way, thanks to innovative alternative sentencing programs introduced by the DA and others. During a Feb. 4 meeting with AABA, Hynes said he is taking a special interest in crime on Atlantic Ave. He backs the permanent closing of the Brooklyn House of Detention and wants to be an active member of

the Coalition to Close the Jail, made up of community groups, including AABA, elected officials and the Downtown Development Corp. (developers).

The DA vowed to prosecute permit-parking abuse by city workers. He further offered to see that those arrested along the Avenue for crimes—such as credit card fraud, counterfeiting and shoplifting—are prosecuted. Mr. Hynes also promised to investigate ongoing criminal activity reported at the Atlantic Transitional Center.

What's Current?

The secret's out! Called "a dense, rich, chocolaty cake" with "icing thick and fudgy" (*The New York Times*, Wed., Nov. 5), the famous chocolate cupcakes—made by **Downtown Atlantic Bakery** pastry chef Fran Sippel—received more attention at Macy's Herald Square's Great Chefs series on Dec. 30.

Click your heels and find yourself in **Mac-J Kids Shoes** (formerly Little Eric Shoes) at **226A** Atlantic.

Jelly mixes with Butter. The new **Butter** is at **389**—two stores in one.

Scratching your head over your child's birthday party? Design it at **Creative Arts Studio** (718-797-5600).

"Shopping gold mine." The upcoming May issue of *Renovation Style* discovers Atlantic, featuring **Bark, City Foundry, A Cook's Companion, Kimera, Nova Zembla, Rico, Silk Road Antiques, Time Trader Antiques** and **Willie's Antiques**—with a nod to good eating at **Damascus Bread & Pastry, Downtown Atlantic Restaurant, Flying Saucer** and **La Bouillabaisse**.

Three years! **Silk Road Antiques, 313**, celebrated with a lecture on *gongshi*—Chinese scholar's rocks—on Feb. 28/29.

Housewares old and new! **Town & Country Antiques, Darr, Rico, Circa Antiques** and **Olde Good Things** were seen in *The Sun*, Sep. 4.

It's "stroller gridlock" at **Café boo bah, 298**—*The New York Times*, Dec. 31.

Biting into Brooklyn. *The Brooklyn Paper*, Jan. 10, featured **Bacchus, Bedouin Tent, Brawta Caribbean Café, Jubb's** (to open soon), **Meson Flamenco, Moroccan Star, Shinjuku, Soul Spot, Tripoli Restaurant** and **Peter's Waterfront Ale House**.

Online. New merchant's e-group: atlanticavenuemERCHANTS-subscribe@yahoo.com

Jane's New York (TV 4, Feb. 28) spotlighted **Bob Diamond** and **Atlantic Ave.'s historic tunnel**—"hidden treasure."

Special thanks! to **State Senator Velmanette Montgomery, Assemblywoman Joan Millman, Councilman David Yassky** and **Two Trees Management Co.** for generous fiscal support.

We're updating **AABA's shopping guide** for spring/summer. Notify Sandy Balboza (718/852-7418) of any additions or changes by Mar. 15.

Email bkissam@mindspring.com with information for this column.

Discover the Newest Wave of Stores

Maleeka, 327 Atlantic Ave., 718/596-0991, www.maleekasami.com, Tu-Su 12-7pm ★ Discover arts from Pakistan. Designer Maleeka has created a stylish, yet homey ambience to display embroidery, sterling silver jewelry, baskets, silk scarves, even whimsical dog-jackets and colorful "truck art." She features reproductions of embroi-



dery on traditional shawls; her family is helping to restore this ancient art in her native Pakistan. Much to see here!

Zoila, 73 Hoyt Street, 718/596-5438, M-Sa, 7-7pm ★ *Opening soon.* Named for Martha Johnson's grandmother whose cooking she admired, this

cafe offers take out or eat in. Johnson, formerly a chef at Whole Foods, offers an appetizing menu: soups, salads, light dinners—vegetarian and meat. Baked goods include croissants, breads, muffins, cookies, brownies. Coffees and teas.

Café boo bah, 298 Atlantic Ave., 718/935-9773, www.cafeboobah.com, everyday 9am-8pm ★ It's "kid-centric"; primary colors rule, and a giant abacus amuses young visitors. Walls have



been prepared for chalking, crayon-drawing and attaching legos and magnets. Two neighborhood moms wanted a place where "parents can feel sane and kids happy." Mostly organic food with coffee, tea, cocoa, juices and more.

The Buzz along Atlantic

AABA is sponsoring a new program to deter crime before it can happen. Shopkeepers, especially those working alone, are encouraged to team up—to get a buddy.

Buddies call their buddy/ies if they are uncomfortable about a customer and use code words, and their buddy can come to their store or call 911. And they can alert buddies to any suspicious people on the block.

Buddies, with similar open hours located on the same or close blocks, work best together. With the buddy system there is a chain reaction to alert storekeepers to suspicious activity on the Avenue. For more information or to participate, contact AABA president Sandy Balboza.



From left, State Senator Velmanette Montgomery stands with Nancy Cogen and Tammy Johnson outside their store, **The Melting Pot**. The sign is one of many funded by AABA's ongoing signage program, made possible with state funds from the Senator.

AD-ING UP

Chaired by Frances Carroll, **Silk Road Antiques**, AABA's merchant committee funded an ad campaign, designed and donated by Four Eyes Productions, for the year-end holidays in *The Brooklyn Paper*, *Brooklyn Heights Press* and *Courier*.

PLUS TOURISM

AABA is a partner in the Borough President's tourism initiative. The new **Tourism and Visitors Center** is open on the ground floor of Borough Hall, 209 Joralemon St. The Center, which features AABA's Atlantic Avenue shopping guide and historic walking guide, is a resource to help market Brooklyn.