

# Atlantic Currents

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Atlantic Avenue Betterment Association Newsletter

www.atlanticavenuebkn.org

## No, to a Bigger Jail

While other boroughs are seeing prison sites sold and moved or closed, Brooklyn is facing the prospect of having its Atlantic Avenue House of Detention (HOD) redeveloped to accommodate more than double its inmate population. With crime on the decline for the past 17 years and down 71% since 1993, AABA opposes any increase in prison population at the HOD site.

This summer the NYC Department of Corrections (DOC) plans to issue a Request for Expressions of Interest to developers for the HOD site. According to DOC Commissioner Martin F. Horn, the jail will be expanded and 24,000 square feet of retail will be added along Atlantic Ave., Smith St. and Boerum Pl.

### Why Spend \$240 Million?

According to Commissioner Horn the additional beds in Brooklyn are needed to compensate for a phasing out of Rikers Island cells. But advocates for alternative programs to incarceration question the policies of locking up people unnecessarily; in fact, Brooklyn's DA Hynes has the most programs in the City to keep nonviolent offenders out of jail. Local civic organizations see no justification for adding 960 more beds to HOD's 756 and wonder if money is driving the redevelopment. Citing \$1.6 billion in DOC's budget, the Commissioner reports that \$240 million has been made available for HOD redevelopment; \$50 million has already been spent in the past 12 years.

## Municipal Art Society Nixes Ratner's Plan for Atlantic Yards

"In its present form, the Forest City Ratner plan does not work for Brooklyn," so says the Municipal Art Society (MAS). At a special meeting on June 15 that local elected officials and a host of civic organizations, including AABA, agreed to sponsor, MAS president Kent Barwick addressed the design of the proposed Ratner project before an audience of more than 500 neighbors in the Hanson Place Methodist Church. MAS believes Forest City Ratner's plan to develop the Atlantic Yards would "overwhelm the surrounding neighborhoods" and "choke the streets." To access the MAS presentation, go to [www.mas.org/contentlibrary/Atl\\_Yds\\_Presentation.pdf](http://www.mas.org/contentlibrary/Atl_Yds_Presentation.pdf).

### Don't Choke the Streets

MAS supports developing the railroad yards but is against the Ratner plan, citing excessive height and number of skyscrapers — the plan's proposed "8.7 million square feet = 23 Williamsburgh Savings Banks." MAS's presentation identifies five proven principles for good development in New York City: "Respect the existing neighborhoods"; "don't eliminate streets"; "create a real public park"; "promote lively streets"; and "don't choke the streets." All the principles, local neighborhood organizations agree, have been ignored in Mr. Ratner's plan.

### Neighborhoods Deserve a Role

Mr. Barwick also asserted that neigh-

borhoods should play a "meaningful role" in the planning process. The Mayor and Governor plan to overrule the City Charter and the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), depriving the local community of any input. Thus community groups have been limited to protesting and reacting. As of this writing, the community is waiting to see the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

## Fight for Your Brooklyn Rally

**Sunday, July 16, 2pm**  
at the Grand Army  
Plaza entrance to  
Prospect Park

**Come fight  
Ratner's Skyscraper  
City & Arena!**

*You can* make a difference!

*Organized by*  
**Develop Don't  
Destroy Brooklyn**

*AABA is a co-sponsor.*

## BBPDF Is Suing for a Real Park!

The Brooklyn Bridge Park Defense Fund (BBPDF) is suing to stop the development of luxury housing in Brooklyn Bridge Park and to reinstate the 2001 community-based park plan. The lawsuit asserts that if the present plan goes forward it will create the first public park in NY State to have private housing inside park borders. For more information, go to <http://parkdefense.org/>.

Eight civic organizations, including AABA, and the Sierra Club NYS Chapter support the lawsuit—a test case to prevent privatization of public land, which is a violation of the Public Trust Doctrine that could change how parks are run.

### Park as Private Front Lawn

The current park plan under Empire State Development Corp. (ESDC), a state authority devoted to business develop-

ment, not parks, proposes an 85-acre development with publicly accessible open space. But the reality is that the so-called open space will be the front lawn for six residential skyscrapers.

### A Sweetheart Deal

On June 21 in State Supreme Court, ESDC lawyer David Paget claimed that the park and the housing were merely separate parts of the same project. In fact, money to maintain the land will be generated by private condo owners and managed by a private contractor—thus privatizing the park. BBPDF lawyer Robert Chira argued that the State should hand over all documents, including the annual budget relating to maintenance and operations, which ESDC is using to justify housing in the park.

Building luxury housing in the park

will be a sweetheart deal for developers, like Robert A. Levine, who bought the former Jehovah Witness printing plant, 360 Furman St., and then without any public process had it added inside the park boundary. Mr. Levine can now benefit from legislation recently passed in Albany, awarding further abatements when tax payments are applied to "park" maintenance. Under this arrangement, the City loses revenue, and we, as taxpayers, essentially will be subsidizing luxury housing.

### Hear Case Ruling

The City has joined ESDC as an interested party in the lawsuit. On August 2, Judge Lawrence Knipel will rule in Supreme Court in Brooklyn on the motion as to whether ESDC must release its documents.

# Keeping Up with a Changing Avenue

## A Safer Boerum

Crossing at Atlantic and Boerum is going to be a little safer. The Boerum Place streetscape project will make improvements from Adams St. to Atlantic; construction should start in the fall and take 9 to 12 months. New measures include bike lanes as well as wider medians with plantings and neckdowns at intersections, recommended in AABA's 1999 "Fill The Gap" study.

## Watch Out

The City is ticketing *legally* double-parked delivery trucks along our Avenue. AABA alerted police, who say they will educate their officers; till then, know the law. Trucks can legally double-park ("during such hours that stopping, standing, or parking is not prohibited") so long as they are "...expeditiously making pickups, deliveries or service calls, provided there is no unoccupied parking space or designated loading zone on either side of the street within 100 feet that can be used for such standing...."

## Bank On It

The Cobble Hill Association reports the Landmarks Preservation Commission is allowing a six-story apartment building to be constructed on the Independ-

dence Savings Bank parking lot, granting developer Two Trees Management a 10-foot variance over the historic district's height limit. However, the historic bank building and its adjacent annex at Atlantic and Court will remain as is. There is a "for rent" sign in the retail space in the new Court House development across the street, perhaps indicating that the bank no longer intends to move there.

## Bad for Business

In May at a City Council Small Business Committee Hearing, AABA outlined obstacles that Avenue merchants face:

- 4 to 7pm parking ban
- Permit parking abuse by city employees
- Ticketing legally parked delivery trucks
- Ticketing merchants and restaurants for placing sidewalk signs, inches beyond the 3-foot limit from their establishments
- Loss of Sunday metered parking.

## Good for Business

There was so much foot traffic on the Avenue on ArtWalk Sunday, June 4, that Robert Wilson kept his shop **Sterling Place**, 363 Atlantic Ave., open an extra hour and a half. "Overall sales doubled," he says. Letichia Mulzac, **Home & Abroad**, 487 Atlantic, also saw a sharp rise in foot traffic—"a lot of new faces."

Like many stores, both exhibited artwork and held receptions for their artists as part of ArtWalk 2006 weekend.

Owner David Marshall showed the "very beautiful" South American bird prints of Paul Greenfield—son of local resident Lenore Greenfield—in the **Antique Room**, 412-416 Atlantic.

Karen Zebulon reports her store **Gumbo**, 493 Atlantic, was filled with people as were the sidewalks. "Sunday was phenomenal," she says, and in spite of overcast, drizzly weather, "Saturday was very good, too." Her suggestion: extend ArtWalk over two weekends.

## New Faces Join AABA Boards

AABA's Executive Board added two new members: **Barbara Clurman**, Silk Road Antiques, and **Terry Urban**, AABA's representative on the Council of Brooklyn Neighborhoods (focusing on the Environmental Impact Statement for Forest City Ratner's Atlantic Yards Plan). And two new members joined the Advisory Board: **Thomas Chardavoyne**, executive director of Gowanus Canal Community Development, and **Eric McClure**, community activist, involved in issues affecting downtown Brooklyn, and co-founder/president of Park Slope Neighbors.

## Hot New Stores on Atlantic

**Hollander and Lexer**, 358 Atlantic Ave., 718/797.9190, Tu-Sa 12-8pm, Su 12-6pm ❖ This men's clothing and accessory store was opened by the owner of Darr (across the street) "to fill a need." Selling well-made stylish casual clothes, it features the Rag & Bone clothing line for jeans connoisseurs. And there's lots more to discover, like the Rogues Gallery one-of-a-kind re-dyed T-shirts, rugged outdoor wear by Filson, leather goods, footwear and more.

**Butter Outlet**, 103 Bond St., 718/260.9033, 7 days 12-7pm ❖ Looking for a break on Butter's distinctive designer fashions? Check out the



new Butter Outlet around the corner on Bond St. Have a look at the "good deals" on "past-season" merchandise.

**Triple Happiness**, 433 Atlantic Ave., 718/852.4929, W, Su 12-6pm, Tu-Sa, 12-7pm ❖ Seasonal clogs, custom-made clogs, patterned clogs, colored clogs—it's all clogs (and some boots)



here. Mix and match to create your own unique pair of clogs. The store carries the *Hoyt & Bond* label (designer: Elizabeth Beer). Kids' clogs: \$48; adults' clogs: \$85; and boots: \$210.

**Dig**, 479 Atlantic, 718/554.0207, W-F 1-6pm, Sa 1-7, Su 11-6, gardendig.com ❖ Topiary dogs and cats. Unique pots: domestic and Asian. Plants for indoors and out. There's a lot worth your attention in this new gardening spot. Owner Chuck Dorr can help you with fencing, decking, custom-built flowerboxes, installation as well as planting your actual garden—depending on how much help you need.

## Making Waves

**Y**um. Attendees of the summer Fancy Food Show at the Javits Center will be tasting some Middle Eastern delights at avenue shops, including **Sahadi Importing Co.**, 187-189 Atlantic, and **Damascus Breads & Pastry**, 195 Atlantic.

Gourmet music for ArtWalk 2006. **A Cook's Companion** (197 Atlantic) featured 5 violins, painted by artists and auctioned to benefit the Brooklyn Symphony.

Barbecuing? Check out **A Cook's Companion** says *July Weekend* magazine.

**Opalia Flowers**, 362, is "making Atlantic Avenue flower" says *Brooklyn Heights Press*.

Bon appetit. Chef Jean Marc Hardy (**Jolie**, 320 Atlantic) shared his recipe for French beef roast, Apr. 8 *The Daily News*.

Sotheby's on Atlantic? **Circa Antiques**, 377 Atlantic, passed for Sotheby's backroom for an upcoming promo on cable TV.

"Next Stop: NYC." Subway/bus ads will encourage New Yorkers to visit our neighborhood — one of 15 targeted for a City fall marketing campaign for "Metro-Card Deals." Participating AABA members: **Artez'n Gifts & Gallery**, 444 Atlantic, **Circa Antiques**, 377, **Dig**, 479, **Home & Abroad**, 487, **Johnny Rocco**, 426, **Melting Pot**, 492, **Pomegranate Looms**, 152, **Silk Road Antiques**, 313, **Sterling Place**, 363, and **Tarragon**, 407.