

Dec. 8, 2013

CNG

Willets shops face deadline to go or stay

BY ALEX ROBINSON

Willets Point business owners mulled difficult decisions this weekend as the first relocation deadline passed.

The city offered a payment of 12 months rent to any business owners who relocated off city-owned land in Willets Point by Nov. 30. The City Council passed a \$3 billion plan in October that would see the blighted area, occupied for years by auto repair shops and some manufacturing businesses, redeveloped into a commercial, retail and residential site.

Some business owners took the relocation deal and moved on with or without a new location. More than 30 businesses have relocated, signed a lease elsewhere or are close to doing so, said the New York City Economic Development Corporation.

Johnny Yaqubi owned Johnny's Auto Body and Repair Shop for 10 years before he accepted an offer to relocate.

"What choice do I have?" said
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Downtown Jamaica conducts campaign to lure restaurants

BY RICH BOCKMANN

Downtown Jamaica is hungry — to the tune of \$428.5 million.

The area's economic development leaders met property owners, brokers and restaurateurs Tuesday to showcase more than a dozen sites primed to house restaurants looking to tap into

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A rendering shows what a planned retractable roof would look like sitting atop Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Rendering courtesy USTA

Movie biz gets rush from back lot

Kaufmann Studios in LIC launches first outdoor sound stage in the five boros

BY BILL PARRY

Film and television production in New York City got a powerful upgrade Tuesday when film executives joined political leaders

for a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Kaufman Astoria Studios' new back lot.

The 34,800-square-foot outdoor soundstage, the first in the

five boroughs, is being counted on to generate greater revenue and more jobs for New York.

"Today is a celebration of a vision coming true," Kaufman

Astoria President Hal Rosenbluth said. "The back lot is an exciting new development for the film and television industry in New York as well as for this area of Astoria."

The new facility was created when an entire block of 36th Street between 34th and 35th avenues was de-mapped and leased to Kaufman Astoria Studios two years ago.

U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), who pressed the National Parks Service to extend the lease for the street from 40 to 99 years, said, "It's a game-changer for New York. I like to see New York be No. 1 in everything and we are getting there. Hollywood watch out!"

State Sen. Michael Gianaris (D-Astoria) added, "The street closure was a long time coming. A decade ago the film industry was leaving New York. They'd shoot New York street scenes in Toronto. We saved and revitalized the industry."

New York City Film Commissioner Katherine Oliver pointed to an important benefit of the

Continued on Page 12

EN GARDE



State Sen. James Sanders crosses swords with a member of the Inner City Fencing Team during a community Thanksgiving dinner in Far Rockaway, a tradition that began last year following Superstorm Sandy.

Photo by Alex Robinson

USTA unveils new roof plans

BY ALEX ROBINSON

The United States Tennis Association announced the first phase of a \$500 million plan to renovate the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center to the Queens Borough Board

Monday night.

Construction will begin in February on a new retractable roof for the facility, said Danny Zausner, the chief operating officer of the National Tennis Center in Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

He described the roof as an "an umbrella that can open and close."

"That work will be done in three phases and sandwiched in the middle of those phases will be two US Opens, 2014 and 2015," he said.

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FDNY breaks ground on boro EMS site

BY RICH BOCKMANN

One day after a Metro-North Railroad train derailed in the Bronx, killing four passengers and injuring dozens of others, the head of the FDNY said the department's EMS bureau was laying the groundwork to be prepared for future emergencies in Queens.

"The shovels in the ground are the ceremonial first step," Fire Department Commissioner Salvatore Cassano said as officials broke ground Monday on the city's newest EMS station at Queens Hospital Center.

When construction is completed in two years, the 13,000-square-foot Hillcrest Station 50 will be the heart of the borough's emergency medical team, housing up to 100 EMTs and paramedics as well as the specialized response vehicles so critical in emergency situations.



Officials break ground on a new EMS station at the Queens Hospital campus, where the borough's emergency team was originally headquartered some 80 years ago.

Photo by Christina Santucci

ations.

"And I think that was never more evident than what you saw in the Bronx yesterday at the train derailment," Cassano added. "The members of the EMS command and fire performed so admirably, removing patients so quickly in order to save lives, and I

think that's a testament to the commitment and dedication that the members of this department have."

The commissioner said the department constantly trains for the types of situations that occurred Sunday when the Grand Central-bound train jumped the tracks just outside the

Spuyten Duyvil station in the Bronx. Officials said four passengers died, including a nurse from Woodside.

Cassano said he believed lives were saved by the city's response, and as the department is called on more and more — the FDNY responded to a re-

cord 1.3 million calls last year — it becomes increasingly important to invest in infrastructure.

"It's staggering the amount of work we do," he said. "We respond to more calls in a month than most cities do in an entire year, and it shows that our members need the best tools and the best facilities at their disposal."

Some eight decades ago, when EMS operated under the city Health and Hospitals Corp., the borough's emergency team was headquartered at the Queens Hospital campus, but after EMS merged with the FDNY, the training operations were moved to Fort Totten.

For the past six years EMTs and paramedics have been working out of several trailers on the campus, and Cassano said the new \$19 million facility will provide enough space for training

and bloodborne-pathogen decontamination areas and its central location will cut down on response times to areas stretching from Little Neck to Howard Beach and from Forest Hills to Jamaica.

"With these resources strategically here, they will be much more prepared to respond as needed anywhere in the borough, reducing response times and furthering our life-saving mission, he added.

Over the past dozen years, the city has opened 11 new EMS stations and Abdo Nahmod, chief of the FDNY's EMS bureau, said "this is by far going to be the jewel of our EMS bureaus."

Reach reporter Rich Bockmann by e-mail at rbockmann@cnglocal.com or by phone at 718-260-4574.

Whitestone resident competes in national 'Light Fight'

Kevin Lynch uses more than 300,000 bulbs in Christmas display that brings cheer to neighborhood

BY ALEX ROBINSON

A Whitestone resident known for extravagant Christmas lights is now vying to have the best display in the country.

Kevin Lynch, a retired firefighter, decorated his house with more than 300,000 lights for ABC's "Great Christmas Light Fight," which premieres Monday at 9 p.m.

"This is my hobby. Some people build airplanes. I do this," he said. "I don't do drugs. I do lights. That's my motto."

Lynch started putting up his light displays 18 years ago, when he first moved into his home and noticed his neighbor, Bill, had white Christmas lights up on his house.

"I thought I could put some lights on the house. Why not?" Lynch recalled.

The next year Lynch put up a few more lights. The year after that Bill put up more lights. They

continued to one up each other for years afterward.

"And that was it. I just kept going," said Lynch. "Then I had a little girl — a daughter — and that was it. I went crazy then as you can see."

Lynch's house now attracts people from all over the neighborhood to bask in his bright lights.

Not a single foot of his house goes untouched by Christmas decorations of some sort. Speakers boom Christmas music from his house and a TV screen projects images of Santa Claus through one of his windows. Lynch went as far as to dig up his front yard to bury wires that light the dozens of molds and figurines that populate his lawn.

"It's a labor of love and I have to do it every year. There are so many people looking forward to this."

Lynch refrained from telling TimesLedger Newspapers how much it costs him to light his



Kevin Lynch is competing in ABC's "Great Christmas Light Fight," which premieres Dec. 9 at 9 p.m.

Photo by Alex Robinson

house every year.

"It's not about the electricity and what it costs me. This is my gift to people," he said.

It has usually taken Lynch six to eight weeks to put his lights up in years past, but he only had

21 days to complete the display for the competition. He worked from 8 a.m. to 1 a.m. every day putting his lights up until the deadline of Nov. 6.

"It was like running a marathon. I never ran a marathon, but

now I know what it's like. I was done. I lived on coffee and espresso."

Lynch had some help from his wife, Tina, his daughters Tori and Tara and his son Timothy.

Their home was judged against three others in Georgia, California and Virginia. Judges Michael Moloney and Sabrina Soto, of "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," judged contestants' homes on lights, display and holiday spirit. The winner of the show will get \$50,000.

Lynch will not know if he won the competition until the day the show airs. The show's producer filmed the Lynch family being told they won the competition and then filmed them being told they lost.

"Win or lose, it was a great experience," said Lynch.

Reach reporter Alex Robinson by e-mail at arobinson@cnglocal.com or by phone at 718-260-4566.

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Lawyers say feds can't prosecute ex-GOP honcho as public official

BY RICH BOCKMANN

Lawyers for Vince Tabone, the former co-chairman of the Queens Republican Party who was charged earlier this year in a public corruption scheme, are arguing their client was too low on the totem pole to be prosecuted as a public official.

Tabone was indicted in May on three counts of conspiring to defraud the city's Republicans by allegedly selling off Queens' mayoral nomination to state Sen. Malcolm Smith (D-St. Albans) for a sum of \$50,000 in federal court in White Plains, N.Y.

Along with Tabone and Smith, the FBI arrested City Councilman Dan Halloran (R-Whitestone), Bronx GOP Chairman Jay Savino and two others from Rockland County in the suspected bribery scheme.

In a letter sent to U.S. District Judge Kenneth Karas of the federal court in White Plains dated Nov. 27, Tabone's attorney argued that under state law only the highest-ranking member of a party committee is considered a public official.

"Clearly, the New York state Legislature perceived political party chairman as potentially having considerable influence and power over public or state action," wrote attorney Grant Lally. "Less influential individu-



Lawyers for Vince Tabone argue state law does not recognize the former co-chairman of the Queens Republican Party as a public official.

Photo by Christina Santucci

Toward the end of September Ragusa, representing the Queens GOP, signed an amicus brief supporting Tabone's motion to dismiss the charges.

But in early November Ragusa filed another letter, saying he received the brief during a time when the county party was going through an election and he was undergoing treatment for a serious medical condition.

Ragusa said he did not have time to read the brief over carefully, and upon looking it over he withdrew his support.

Last month Savino pleaded guilty to all three charges Tabone is facing.

Reach reporter Rich Bockmann by e-mail at rbockmann@cnglocal.com or by phone at 718-260-4574.

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Muppets take Astoria with programs for the holidays⁵

The Museum of Moving Image to build awareness of Jim Henson gallery, which opens in 2015

BY BILL PARRY

The Museum of the Moving Image in Astoria is shifting into full Muppet mode for the holiday season with a series of screenings and puppetry workshops for children.

From Dec. 21 through Jan. 1, the museum, at 36-01 35th Ave., will feature "Emmett Otter's Jug-Band Christmas," including behind the scenes footage every day at 1 p.m.

On Dec. 8, a special screening of the film will include guest speakers paying tribute to Muppet creator Jim Henson's colleagues who died earlier this year: producer Diana Birkenfeld and the puppeteer Franz "Faz" Fazakas.

In addition, kids can take part in a series of puppetry workshops where they will be taught how to make their own puppets

with Henson's techniques. The workshops cost \$10 for materials. It is all part of a new monthly series called "Jim Henson's World," programming designed to raise awareness that the museum will be home to a permanent Muppets gallery in 2015.

"It's a very big project," curator Barbara Miller said. "I've been assessing the Henson collection that was donated to the city by his family. It has over 200 puppets, costumes, props and storyboards. It is the most significant collection the museum has ever acquired. The totality of his work is incredible."

The programs and monthly events associated with "Jim Henson's World" are also part of the museum's fund-raising effort.

"We've raised \$3.25 million for the exhibit so far," Executive Director



The children's movie classic "Emmett Otter's Jug-Band Christmas" will screen at the Museum of the Moving Image throughout the holiday season.

Photo courtesy Jim Henson Co.

Carl Goodman said, "but we still have a way to go before we hit our target of \$5 million."

A program is in the works in which donors can

sponsor individual puppets that will be part of the exhibit.

The very high-end donors will have a puppet made in their likeness

made by Henson's people," said Goodman, noting Mayor Michael Bloomberg has one of himself after a personal donation.

He added that 150,000

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S. J. Jung ends hunger strike

MinKwon Center president fasts to promote immigration reform

BY ALEX ROBINSON

Doctors insisted S.J. Jung, a Flushing business owner and president of the MinKwon Center for Community Action, end an eight-day fast for immigration reform last week in Washington after he experienced stomach pain and severe dehydration.

Jung participated in the "Fast for Families" with other activists in a tent outside the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C., in an attempt to push Congress to pass reform to give illegal immigrants a path to citizenship. The group called off its fast Tuesday.

"I lost about 15 pounds down there, and my stomach was empty, but my heart is full of hope and renewed commitment," Jung said after he returned to Flushing last week. As an American I believe we should pass immigration reform."

The U.S. Senate passed an immigration reform bill in May that would give undocumented immigrants legal status and a path to citizenship. Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) introduced the bill, which was written by a bipartisan group of senators known as the "Gang of Eight."

The bill, however, was never brought before the House of Representatives for a vote.



Activist S.J. Jung (far l.) speaks to U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez (far r.) during his fast to promote immigration reform in Washington, D.C. Photo courtesy Minkwon Center for Community Action.

"Now is the time for action. I would like to see [House Speaker] John Boehner bring immigration reform to a vote this year in the House or to clearly articulate a timetable for immigration reform," Jung said.

Immigration reform is a cause close to Jung's heart since he immigrated to the United States from South Korea in 1986 at the age of 22 before eventually becoming an American citizen. He said he knows firsthand what immigrants are going through.

"I was fasting as an immigrant and I was also fasting as an American. It was one small way for me

to share the pains and sorrows of so many separated families and deported immigrants," Jung said. "I was there as an American as I believe immigration reform isn't just a moral imperative — it's an economic one."

Labor leaders, evangelical pastors, White House officials and more than 30 members of Congress from both parties have visited the fasters.

Many high-ranking government officials also came to visit the site of the "Fasting for Families" tent, including Vice President Joe Biden, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Secretary of Labor Tom

Perez.

Jung is currently recovering from his fast, which he ended Nov. 25 after a visit to the emergency room. Doctors warned Jung continuing the fast could potentially be very dangerous for his health.

Jung's fellow fasters held on until Tuesday and received a visit from President Barack Obama, who voiced his support for them, the day after Thanksgiving. The last four members of Jung's group to break their fast were immediately replaced by eight new activists who vowed to continue the fight.

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City ignored CB 11 in school vote: Chair

BY ALEX ROBINSON

December meeting of CB 11 Monday.

CB 11 Chairman Jerry Iannece lambasted the city schools chancellor for ignoring Bayside's opposition to building a new elementary school on 48th Avenue and showing a lack of respect for the community board.

Iannece went on a tirade against Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott for a letter he sent finding fault with him after the raucous May meeting where many community members decried a proposal to build the new elementary school on the lot occupied by Keil Bros. Garden Center in Bayside. The City Council approved the controversial project for a 416-seat school last month.

"To go out there and disrespect me and malign a community board chair the way he did was outrageous," Iannece told the

"I'm very upset. The community board was disrespected," Iannece said. "Our voices were not heard. They went out there and made this decision without us."

In his letter to Iannece, Walcott contended members of his staff were shouted down by "an out of control group" at the heated meeting with the city School Construction Authority. He also claimed community members threatened city staff.



CB 11 Chairman Jerry Iannece (l.) listens as City Comptroller John Liu (r.) issues his final report to the community board.

Photo by Alex Robinson

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Driver charged in crash that killed Glendale man

BY CHRISTINA SANTUCCI

Susan Sisini said she was still trying to come to grips with the death of her husband four days after the popular musician was killed in a Howard Beach car crash.

"I never pictured myself as a widow at 36 years old," she said.

Jimmy Sinisi, 37, had been behind the wheel of a 2001 Saturn, at 159th Avenue and 98th Street, when the vehicle was struck by a 2006 Ford sedan, allegedly driven by James Celauro, 23, according to cops.

Emergency responders were called to the accident scene at about 1 a.m. and took Sinisi to Jamaica Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Celauro, of South Ozone Park, was arrested and charged with vehicular manslaughter and driving while ability im-

paired, the NYPD said. He allegedly blew through a stop sign at the intersection, smashed into Sisini's car, jumped the curb and hit two parked cars before crashing through a fence and coming to a stop on a lawn, according to the criminal complaint filed by the Queens district attorney's office.

When a police officer gave Celauro a breath test, his blood alcohol was allegedly measured at .068, the complaint said. The state legal limit for drunk driving is .08.

Susan Sinisi said she and her husband's family will push for the maximum punishment if Celauro is convicted.

"This is not a person who should be out and about and out and driving. This is a menace," she said. "The person that hit Jim's car the other night took my partner."



Jimmy Sinisi is shown performing with Wordy Bums.

Photo courtesy Eric Terzo Photography

Susan Sinisi said she first met her husband, who would have turned 38 Dec. 11, as a teenager in Woodhaven through her brother.

"I read his poetry before I ever met him and I fell in love with his poetry," she said. "When I finally met him, I was head over heels in love."

Years later when she was 25, they reconnected at a pub on Jamaica Avenue.

"That was just the beginning of the most wonderful 11 years of my life," she said. "He is absolutely the love of my life."

Jimmy and Susan Sinisi had recently settled in Glendale after having

to move out of Old Howard Beach following Hurricane Sandy.

"We felt lucky. While we lost pretty much all of our worldly goods, Jimmy was able to recover the hard drive from his Mac," she said, adding that they had several bags of clothing and friends and family to stay with until they

could find someplace else to live.

During the day, Jimmy Sinisi worked as a law clerk, but he was also a prolific musician, his wife said.

Friends at Neirs Tavern in Woodhaven, where Sinisi frequently played shows with his band, Wordy Bums, and often came to eat chicken wings, remembered him as a happy, respectful man.

"Jimmy always went out of his way and did things for people," said the tavern's chef, Daniel LaRosa.

LaRosa said the band had a unique sound that combined hip-hop and rock.

"There was nothing that Jim liked better than to get on stage and spit his lyrics and show the crowd what he was made of," his wife said.

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Some 319,000 residents of Queens battle hunger

BY PHILIP NEWMAN

More than 319,000 people in Queens live in households without enough food, although the borough trails the Bronx, which leads New York City in what a family advocacy agency calls “food insecurity.”

“The economic downturn and Superstorm Sandy ripped the bandages off the festering wounds of hunger and poverty in New York City,” said Joel Berg, executive director of the Coalition Against Hunger.

In the Bronx, the number of those short of food is 417,119, followed by Brooklyn at 251,960 and Manhattan at 227,506.

The survey does not include Staten Island, which the coalition said had a population too small to produce an accurate survey.

“Low-income people especially face a tidal wave of pain,” Berg said. “Now that the recession is officially over and the floodwaters have receded, we can easily see that New York is still suffering from a tale of two food cities. While the wealthy have better gourmet food than ever, one in six neighbors is struggling against hunger. The recent federal SNAP — Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly food stamps — cuts will make all of this much worse.”

This year an average of 1.5 million people, including one in four children, lived in city households without adequate food. In the Bronx, which leads New York City in overall poverty, nearly half the children (48 percent) live in homes where there is not enough to eat.

“The release of this new data further underscores the critical need for nutrition programs like SNAP,” U.S. Rep. Joseph Crowley (D-Jackson Heights) said. “Millions of



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the homeless.

- A total of 38.6 percent of the agencies reported a decrease in private funding for food in the past 12 months.

- 43.6 percent reported spending personal money on occasion to support feeding programs.

- 45.2 percent reported having to turn away the needy, reduce the amount of food to each person or curtail hours of operation because of a lack of money.

- Otherwise in Queens:
 - One in 10 of Queens residents lived in “food insecure” households totaling 319,764 in the period 2010-12.
 - In 2006-08, 11.58 percent of Queens children had inadequate food.
 - One in 13 of Queens seniors lived in food inadequate homes in 2010-12.
 - In 2006-08, one in 15 Queens seniors had too little food.
 - In 2010-12, more than 43 percent of soup kitchens and food pantries reported not having enough food to meet demand.
 - 86 percent of agencies reported an increase in number of people served over the past year, with 72.7 percent of them families with children. They included large numbers of immigrants, seniors and

- State Sen. Jose Peralta (D-East Elmhurst) said “taking food off the plates of the needy to fatten the rich is not the American way.”

Reach contributing writer Philip Newman by e-mail at timesledgernews@cnglocal.com or phone at 718-260-4536.



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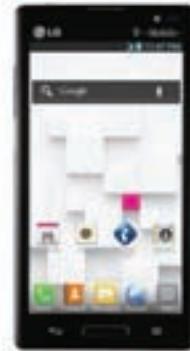
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Black Friday Deals

Shoppers flocked to borough stores for deals the day after Thanksgiving. (Clockwise from top l.) Youngster Destiny Gates, 5, shopped until she dropped at a table in Queens Center. She is accompanied by Shatoya Harris (l.) and D'Asia Hair; customers arrive early and brave the bitter cold in front of the Best Buy store on Northern Boulevard in Long Island City; the line starts in the parking lot at Flushing's Sky View Center; people pack Queens Center; Maria Abiles picked up an electronic keyboard for her 10-year-old daughter Marleen Abreu; and special discount coupons are handed out inside the Elmhurst mall.

Photos by Steven Malecki, Alex Robinson and Christina Santucci



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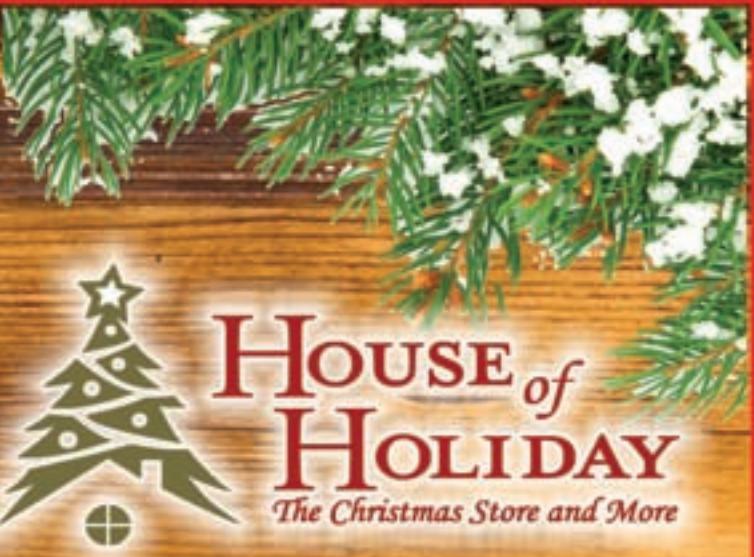
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Boro's stalled work sites show little change: Study

BY RICH BOCKMANN

At an empty construction site along Roosevelt Avenue in Woodside, plans to erect a five-story residential/commercial building have been stalled since 2009, one of 165 properties across the borough that have remained in limbo over the past five years.

And while shelved projects in Brooklyn and Manhattan are increasingly finding new life, the number in Queens—which has the second highest number of stalled sites in the city—has shown little improvement over the past year, according to a new study.

The borough had 164 stalled construction sites as of November, down less than 3 percent from a year earlier, according to a study released last week by the New York Building Congress.



A new study shows little change in the number of stalled construction sites in Queens over the past year.

Photo by Rich Bockmann

Brooklyn, which has the second-highest number of stalled sites, saw a drop of 17 percent while Manhattan's plummeted 26 percent and Staten Island's fell 10 percent. The Bronx was the only borough to see an in-

crease in stalled construction sites, up 65 percent.

"In our annual construction forecast report released in October, we estimated that residential construction spending will double between 2012 and

2015," New York Building Congress President Richard Anderson said. "That rosy outlook was based largely on the fact that a number of luxury developments, which were shelved during the Great Reces-

sion, have come roaring back to life."

According to the Building Congress, the city's overall 12 percent drop was highlighted by a number of large-scale projects in Manhattan, where the number dipped below the 100-stalled-sites mark for the first time in more than three years.

In Queens, about 40 percent of the sites are planned for residential projects, while another 48 percent are listed as vacant, meaning the developers have acquired the land and obtained construction permits but have not started work.

In early 2009, the city Department of Buildings created a Stalled Sites Unit to track stalled construction, and later that year the city passed legislation that allows developers to keep their permits active while maintaining safety condi-

tions on their sites.

Work permits lapse if construction at a site is suspended for more than a year, but under the stalled sites program owners and developers can renew their permits for up to four years if they create in-depth safety plans for their sites.

Anderson said the sites have the potential to play a role in Mayor-elect Bill de Blasio's agenda to make the city a more affordable place to live.

"While the numbers are certainly moving in the right direction citywide, there's still plenty of work to do in terms of activating construction at hundreds of long-dormant sites, especially in the city's outerboroughs," Anderson said. "Mayor-elect Bill de Blasio has vowed that housing will be a priority for his administration. This list of stalled sites might be the perfect place to begin."

Willets

Continued from Page 1

Yaqubi.

But he did not have a new location yet when the city came to take the keys to his business. The city will pay him \$14,000, which was the equivalent cost of 12 months rent for Yaqubi.

"That's what they said, but I have not gotten paid yet," he said.

Yaqubi has not found a new location for his business and was not sure where he would relocate.

The city also evicted several businesses Friday as the deadline loomed.

Blas Olivares owned his auto body repair shop for 20 years before the city forced him to vacate his store Friday. Olivares claimed he recently had a meeting with a city lawyer in which he was told he could stay until Dec. 31.

"I'll try to go to another place, but we don't have any place to take the business," he said.

Olivares said he would put his belongings in storage for now until he figures out a new location.

A group of 52 business owners, represented by an organization called the Sunrise Cooperative, are closing in on a deal with the city to



Johnny Yaqubi stands in front of his auto body repair shop in Willets Point. Yaqubi owned the shop for 10 years before agreeing to sign a relocation agreement with the city.

Photo by Alex Robinson

relocate together. The group is in negotiations with a large facility in Hunts Point, and is also looking at locations in Astoria, Maspeth and Brooklyn.

"Everyone said you won't get anything from the city," said Sergio Aguirre, an organizer for the group. "We know this isn't the best agreement with the city, but it's something. It was this or nothing."

Aguirre acknowledged the new location will not be the same, but will be better than relocating separately.

"It's going to be good for us be-

cause there's a lot of customers who come into Willets Point because of the price," he said. "We had the best prices in New York for auto repairs. We'll only have a portion of the customers in our new location, but we'll rebuild that again."

Several business owners have also vowed to stay in the hope that a better deal will be reached with the city. Bijy Kumar, who has owned a business that sells wheels and rims for 11 years, said he has no plan to relocate anytime soon.

He has not even thought about where he would go.

Studio

Continued from Page 1

new facility, saying "this will lessen the burden on neighborhoods throughout Queens because now they can just film the scenes here."

Most of the assembled officials credited the studio chairman, George Kaufman, for taking over an abandoned property in 1980 and building an empire. Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in a statement "in that time he's generated \$1.1 billion to the state while creating hundreds of thousands of jobs."

In remarks that were shorter than the standing ovation that preceded it, Kaufman said, "I knew that we had the potential to turn this neighborhood into a thriving production, arts and cultural district for the city, and I'm proud to see that vision is a reality today."

City Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer (D-Sunny-side), who played the role of emcee for the ribbon-cut-

ting event, grew up on 44th Street and would bicycle past the area with his sister Kim.

"This area was dormant. No people and no business and now the neighborhood is thriving," he said.

Kaufman Astoria Studios is the anchor of the new cultural hub that now includes the Museum of the Moving Image, the Frank Sinatra High School of the Performing Arts and the Queens Council on the Arts.

"From a dormant industrial building, Kaufman Astoria Studios has built a world-class institution that has helped Queens become Hollywood East," said Van Bramer. "The addition of New York City's first-ever outdoor soundstage puts Astoria on the map when it comes to producing blockbuster movies in the United States."

Reach reporter Bill Parry by e-mail at bparry@cnglocal.com or by phone at 718-260-4538.

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USTA

Continued from Page 1

The new roof, which will be completed by August 2016, will be 190 feet at its peak and will provide cover from snow. "The intent of the roof would be that the US open would still be an outside tournament... it will still feel like you're playing tennis in an outdoor court, because you will be," Said Zausner.

"It still is an outdoor stadium. It just has a canopy above it."

**It still is an outdoor stadium.
It just has a canopy above it.**

Danny Zausner
Chief Operating Officer

The City Council approved the USTA's plan to expand in Flushing Meadows Corona Park after it promised to give \$10 million to maintain the park space in July.

The USTA's plan involves a 0.68 acre extension, which will accommodate increased retail and office space along with the reconstructed facilities and new stadium.

new grand stand will stand on its own and will have its own infrastructure.

The USTA has also planned to build a new Louis Armstrong Stadium, but has not finished design work on it yet.

Jamaica

Continued from Page 1

millions of dollars in unmet demand for dining options.

"I'm imagining you're here because you have some interest in opening up a restaurant in a new location — maybe in Jamaica," said Mark Lohbauer, a consultant who surveyed the shopping habits of visitors to the area.

"But, of course, you've got hundreds of other choices right here in the five boroughs of the city. You could go anywhere," he added. "Why should you be thinking about coming to Jamaica?"

What is unique about downtown Jamaica, Lohbauer said, is that the Greater Jamaica Development Corp. and the Jamaica Center Business Improvement District are heavily involved in filling out the area's ground-floor space.

"They bothered to treat their district much like a mall," he said "and they intend to manage it much like a mall."

Within the past year, GJDC has made deals to bring to the area a 160,000-square-foot department store and a 210-room hotel with 5,000 square feet of retail and space on the second floor for a 200-seat restau-



Research consultant Mark Lohbauer highlights the untapped demand for restaurants in downtown Jamaica.

Photo by Rich Bockmann

rant.

The nonprofit development corporation expects that early next year one of its partners will cut the ribbon on a 100-unit, mixed-use building with 4,500 square feet of retail space and GJDC is closed to inking a deal to bring a 410-unit project with 120,000 square feet of retail space to Archer Avenue.

The Jamaica Center BID has

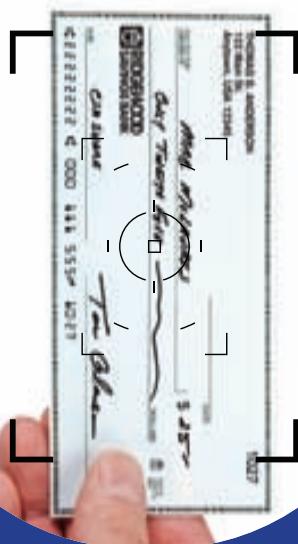
been active, too, organizing events like an annual fashion show and collecting data aimed at highlighting the area's economic potential.

Yet despite the 86,000 shoppers, college students, workers and commuters who pass through the district each day — and the thousands of residents who bypass the area for those with more ample dining options — downtown Jamaica has only three sit-down restaurants: Sangria's on Sutphin Boulevard, Applebee's on Jamaica Avenue and CityRib on Parsons Boulevard.

Lohbauer said those surveyed rank full-service restaurants, cafés, bistros and specialty food stores as the kinds of establishments they would like to most see downtown.

Katie Mirkin, the BID's retail development associate, highlighted a few properties that would be good for a restaurant, including a newly renovated building across from the Supreme Court with 1,200 square feet of retail space below four floors of office space.

"You kind of have that in-house clientele waiting — I'm waiting — for something of a more healthy option," she said, showing that active management style Lohbauer spoke of earlier. "Chiptole, Panera. That's just my own preference."



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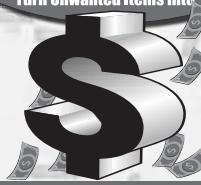
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