

New ferry stop adds an option for No. 7 riders

BY BILL PARRY

After completing an environmental review, the city announced that Long Island City's second ferry landing will be located along the promenade of Gantry Plaza State Park about a hundred feet south of Anable Basin.

The LIC North ferry landing will begin operating next summer with Citywide Ferry Service for more than 4,000 riders a day, making it the highest projected ridership outside of Manhattan, city Economic Development Corporation President Maria Torres-Springer announced Monday.

"While we know New York City has the best mass transit system in the country, the century-old system is really running up against its limits," she said. "The waterfront is growing quickly in neighborhoods that have been transit starved."

Long Island City has several bus lines but relies mainly on the No. 7 subway line, which operates at capacity, especially for strap-hangers traveling to Manhattan

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Hevesi offers fix for homeless crisis

State assemblyman's plan would ward off evictions by providing rent subsidies

BY BILL PARRY

A state lawmaker from Queens has unveiled a new fiscally and socially responsible plan to re-

verse the growing homeless crisis in the city and the state.

State Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi (D-Forest Hills) rolled out his Home Stability Support plan,

which would keep families in their homes and save taxpayers millions of dollars with a state-wide rent supplement for individuals and families facing eviction,

homelessness or loss of housing due to domestic violence or hazardous living conditions.

"Having a stable home serves as a platform for people to become better parents, employees, and members of the community," Hevesi said Tuesday. "Tens of thousands of New Yorkers and their children currently don't have that foundation. The Home Stability Support is an effective, fiscally responsible solution. By providing the adequate rental assistance to families now, we can keep tens of thousands of people in their homes and save taxpayers millions of dollars."

Prior to 1975, the vast majority of individuals on public assistance had their rents paid in full. However, in 1975 New York state created a shelter allowance schedule, which is a series of regulatory limits based on districts, family size, and whether or not heat is included in the rent.

As a result of inaction by the state government, the shelter allowance has failed to keep up with the rising cost of housing. For a household of three, the current shelter allowance ranges from \$264 to \$447 per month, whereas

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RUNNING TO REMEMBER



On the grounds of St. Michaels Cemetery in East Elmhurst, Calla McGarvey, 7, competes in the annual two-mile Remember Me Run, which honors first responders who died on 9/11.

Photo by Kimberly Avalos

Queens high schools make list of city's best

BY PATRICK DONACHIE

Queens high schools occupied three of the top 10 spots in a list of the best high schools in the city, with Townsend Harris High School in Flushing earning the top spot.

The annual list was created by the New York

Continued on Page 14



Elected officials and staff of Queens Legal Services celebrate the organization's new facilities in downtown Jamaica. Courtesy of Queens Legal Services

Queens Legal Services opens office

BY PATRICK DONACHIE

Queens Legal Services is finally moving into a new space to serve its clients after decades of operating in a group of offices that were in disrepair. The new space at 89-00 Sutphin Blvd. in downtown Jamaica will be an office for the orga-

nization's more than 70 attorneys, paralegals, social workers and advocates.

The grand opening of the new offices on the fourth and fifth floor of the building was celebrated last Friday with a ribbon-cutting that included elected officials, community leaders, and staff of the Queens Le-

gal Services, including Director Jennifer Ching.

"Every year, we serve thousands of New Yorkers in crisis — families facing eviction, victims of domestic violence and trafficking, disabled veterans cut off from life-saving income — all of whom deserve a

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Street parade honors Hindu god Ganesh

Photos by Michael Shain



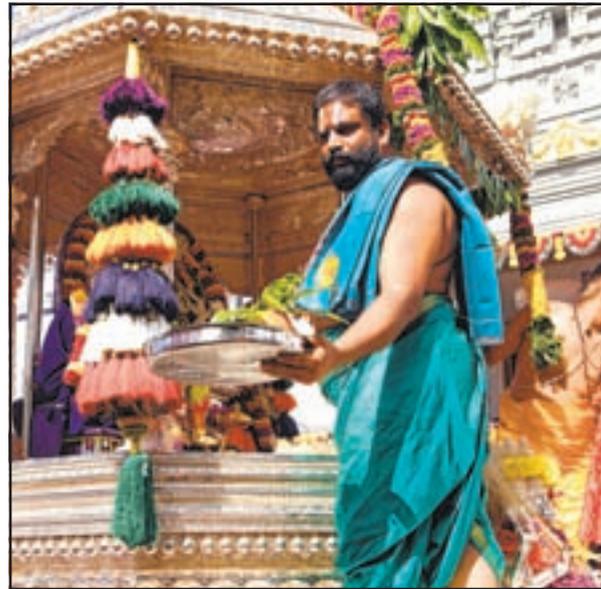
A silver chariot carried a statue of the elephant-headed god Ganesh through the streets of Flushing for the Sri Ganesh Chaturthi festival procession. The parade drew more than a thousand people.



Children grab a rope attached to the chariot, symbolically pulling it along. A pick-up truck does the real work.



The chariot is so tall that temple workers use poles to lift phone lines out of the way.



Food is offered to the priests on the chariot to be blessed.



Dr. Uma Mysorekar, a retired physician and the president of the Hindu Temple Society of North America, directs the parade.



Many of the Hindu Temple's priests and elders chose to make the mile-or-so march without shoes to show their respect.



Breaking out the phone for a selfie along the parade route.

Phipps Houses bails on Sunnyside project

Intense opposition from community, Van Bramer dooms affordable-housing development

BY BILL PARRY

More than 200 anxious residents of Sunnyside gathered Sunday at the Queen of Angels Parish Center for a panel discussion on the over-development of western Queens. They were united in opposition to the Phipps Houses plan to build 209-units of affordable housing on a parking lot at 50-02 Barnett Ave., a project that was to have its first hearing before a City Council subcommittee hearing Tuesday.

Herb Reynolds, the president of the Sunnyside Gardens Preservation Alliance, distributed fliers declaring the need for a "big turnout of neighbors" at the public hearing. It wasn't necessary.

Phipps Houses withdrew its rezoning application with the city Monday,

City Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer (D-Sunnyside) announced. Van Bramer vowed to block the plan after a year of intense public opposition.

He cited the height of the building, its unaffordability, the developer's refusal to make changes based on community feedback during the yearlong process and concerns with maintenance at the Phipps Gardens Apartments across Barnett Avenue.

"I welcome this decision," Van Bramer said Monday. "All along, I've asked for Phipps to address issues at the 472-unit complex they own and operate across the street from the proposed new building. Last week, Phipps CEO Adam Weinstein did meet with tenant leaders. I thank Adam for doing so and will continue to work



Phipps Houses withdraws its rezoning application a day before the City Council's first hearing on the controversial affordable housing plan in Sunnyside.

Courtesy of Phipps Houses

together to make sure these issues are addressed. And I'll continue to speak with all parties concerned making sure that the voices and concerns of my constituents are paramount as we discuss the future of this

community."

The City Council would likely have voted against the project next week in keeping with protocol to follow the decision of the area's representative. The de Blasio administration

strongly backed the project and the mayor had a "polite but firm" conversation with Van Bramer two weeks ago.

"Let's not mince words: This is bad for our city and for working families strug-

gling to pay their rent," de Blasio spokeswoman Melissa Grace said after Phipps Houses pulled out. "No community, certainly not one with 7,000 people wait-listed for affordable housing, should lose a development like this."

It was a second defeat in two months for de Blasio's plan to expand below-market-rate housing under the new Mandatory Inclusionary Housing policy. Van Bramer, who said he got more feedback from residents and neighbors on the Phipps project than on any other issue in his 6 1/2 years on the City Council, suggested the mayor's strategy may have backfired in Sunnyside.

"The mayor's involvement here was not helpful," Van Bramer said. "His comments about me helped to

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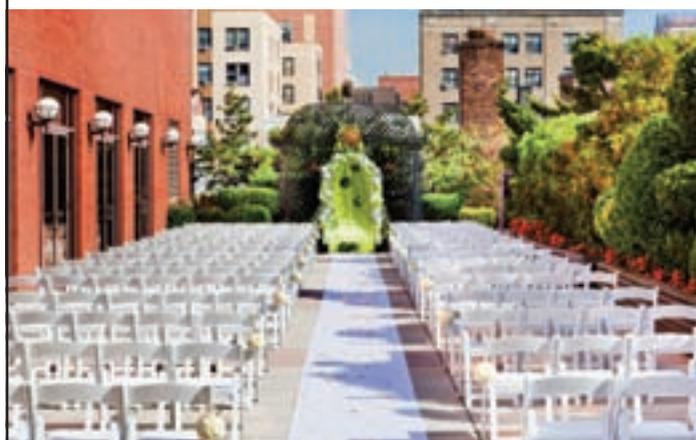
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6 PA briefs boro on LGA

Officials explain gridlock caused by construction

BY BILL PARRY

Two senior Port Authority officials assured elected and community leaders at Borough Hall Monday that the traffic gridlock caused by the reconstruction of LaGuardia Airport is being addressed. Queens Borough President Melinda Katz requested a briefing after travelers were forced to leave vehicles and make a mad dash through traffic on foot in order to make their flights Aug. 22.

"There were some operational changes that were made," Richard Smyth, project executive, LaGuardia Airport Redevelopment Program, said. "Once we got beyond the initial stumble, we have been able to maintain a clean operation."

Smyth said the initial problem began with the re-configuration of roadways especially at the 94th Street Bridge entrance to the airport. The traffic signal controls were not reset by the contractors.

"Once it went south it took us a couple of days to catch up," Smyth said. LaGuardia Gateway Partners CEO Stewart Steeves blamed weather issues for creating unusually heavy volume at the airport that day, something that Smyth said he was not contradicting.

"There were storms that Sunday that caused over



LaGuardia Airport G.M. Lysa Scully (l) and Port Authority Project Executive Richard Smyth answer questions at Queens Borough Hall about traffic gridlock caused by the massive redesign.

Photo by Bill Parry

a hundred cancellations into Monday," Smyth said. "Also that day there was a security breach. Also, Monday Aug. 22, is one of our busiest summer travel days of the year."

To combat that perfect storm Aug. 22, the Port Authority and LaGuardia Gateway Partners are employing a new traffic mitigation plan with a mobile command station with 10 PA police officers with radios monitoring and managing traffic patterns. Shuttle services, alternative parking and a new cell phone lot have been established and the taxi stand has been moved away from the main terminal.

"All in an effort to get cars and shuttle buses away from the airport frontage so traffic doesn't back up into the community," LaGuardia Airport General Manager Lysa Scully said. There is also a compre-

hensive customer outreach program in place providing updates on changes to shuttle buses, MTA bus routes, roadway conditions and ground transportation, she continued.

"The message has gone out and that is don't drive to the airport, and I think that message is working," Smyth said. Community Board 3 Chairman Steve Kulhanek agreed that the airport needed to be reconstructed.

"But the impact falls directly in East Elmhurst and the relationship between LaGuardia, the Port Authority and the community is not the greatest," he said. "I've watched as people use our neighborhoods for parking. East Elmhurst doesn't exist to be annexed by the Port Authority. The complaints are real. It's impacting our quality of life and it's not fair. When does it stop?"

HomeGoods coming to Bay Terrace soon

BY GINA MARTINEZ

HomeGoods is finally coming to the Bay Terrace Shopping Center. The store, which sells a wide variety of affordable home decor, is set to open in mid-October.

HomeGoods replaced a 25,000-square-foot Barnes & Noble bookstore, whose closing caused outrage in the community when it was first announced last year. The Bay Terrace bookstore was the last remaining Barnes & Noble in Queens after the Forest Hills location shut its doors. It was eventually replaced by Target.

According to HomeGoods, the new Bayside store will open Oct. 16 at 8 a.m. The store is expected to hire 65 full and part-time employees.

Bayside residents tried to save the Barnes & Noble.

Resident Vasiliki Gliagias started an online petition on change.org called "Do not close the Bay Terrace Barnes & Noble retail location!" last year when the news of the bookstore's final days was announced. The petition had 3,247 supporters, just short of its 5,000 goal. On the page Gliagias urged Cord Meyer Development, which owns the Bay Terrace Shopping Center, to negotiate with

Barnes & Noble on a leasing deal.

"The Queens community is in disbelief that a 25,000-square-foot bookstore so important to the community with activities for students and children, an incredible book selection, and a refreshing Starbucks corner could ever shut down," she wrote. "It is an atrocity to rid the largest borough of New York City of its most popular bookstore. Queens's 2 million residents will no longer be able to partake in browsing and purchasing novels at their leisure. Bookstores will have been a thing of the past."

David Deason, vice president of Barnes & Noble Development, released a statement on the closing of the Bayside location.

"Despite our best efforts to secure lease extensions at both our Forest Hills and Bayside Barnes & Noble locations, the respective property owners

decided to lease to other tenants," he said. "When our lease came back up for renewal, the property owner notified us that they chose a tenant who was willing to pay rents far in excess of what we were willing to pay."

But months later it seems the community is adjusting and is ready for the new store. Warren Schreiber, president of the Bay Terrace Community alliance, said there is a lot of anticipation in the neighborhood.

"From what I understand people are excited," he said. "They're looking forward to its opening. HomeGoods is very popular and I think they're going to do very well, especially on its opening day, Oct. 16. I'm pleased to have them in the neighborhood as it seems everyone is. There's nothing negative about it. I certainly hope they do well and become a good neighbor."



HomeGoods will soon open at the former site of Bay Terrace's Barnes & Noble.

Photo by Michael Shain

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DiNapoli presents report tracking Jamaica's growth



State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli (c) at the Queens Library Central Branch.

Photo by Patrick Donachie

BY PATRICK DONACHIE

State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli called Jamaica "an evolving neighborhood" that has seen robust growth in recent years, according to an economic snapshot of the Greater Jamaica Area prepared by his office.

DiNapoli presented the report at Queens Central Library at 89-11 Merrick Blvd., accompanied by Queens Library CEO Dennis Walcott, Borough President Melinda Katz and other elected officials.

"It helps to build on successes, and to create an agenda to move forward," DiNapoli said during the press conference. "We're seeing diversity of employment and business growth in many areas."

The rates of population growth, business growth and increases in the median household income all exceeded the citywide rate. DiNapoli said Jamaica was the second most-populated neighborhood in the city, and immigrants now made up 41 percent of the population, compared to 18 percent in 1980.

The number of businesses in the area increased by 39 percent over 20 years, with particular strength in social assistance, business services, food services and hotels. Most of the 69 businesses with 100 or more em-

ployees were in the health care, retail or transportation fields.

DiNapoli acknowledged Jamaica had been particularly hard hit by the recession, losing 2.5 percent of its jobs in 2009. Employment levels improved by 2012 but dipped again in 2013, with the area losing three times as many jobs as were lost in the recession. However, the comptroller said employment had neared the pre-recession level by the end of 2015.

Household income increased by 11 percent in 2011, although state Sen. Leroy Comrie (D-St. Albans) noted that households may have four or more incomes contributing to the total. According to the report, 12.5 percent of Jamaica households were in apartments with more than one person per room, a higher rate than the borough and the city.

City Councilman I. Daneek Miller (D-St. Albans) said while Jamaica was a transportation hub with six Long Island Rail Road lines passing through the Jamaica station, the price of a ticket was often cost-prohibitive for residents in southeast Queens. He said everyone needed to work to help longtime residents stay in the area despite increasing rental prices.

"We want to ensure that

those who have endured, who have been here three, four or five decades... that they are here to enjoy this growth," he said.

The housing crisis continues to plague Jamaica, according to the report. Home prices in 2014 were 20 percent lower than in 2008, and a previous report by DiNapoli found that more than half of the mortgages that had been issued in 2006 were subprime.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo also announced Wednesday that the state would invest \$69.5 million into the Jamaica LIRR station, including the construction of new platforms and tracks. The new platform would include heated waiting areas, Wi-Fi and USB charging stations.

As a surprise at the end of the presentation, DiNapoli presented Earl Simons, the director of community relations for York College, with a check for \$6,805 that came from unclaimed funds the college had not retrieved.

A full copy of the Jamaica report can be found on the comptroller's website at <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/>.

Reach reporter Patrick Donachie by e-mail at pdonachie@cnglocal.com or by phone at (718) 260-4573.

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State holds hearings on cease-and-desist zones

BY MARK HALLUM

The New York Department of State held hearings Sept. 14-15 to determine the need to re-establish cease-and-desist zones in Queens to protect residents from real estate brokers and salespeople whose tactics are perceived as overly aggressive.

These sales strategies often target the elderly and pressure homeowners to sell their properties at below market rate by telling them property values will drop. A cease-and-desist zone would prevent this by keeping a list of homeowners who have formally elected to stop receiving fliers, phone calls and other real estate solicitations.

According to state Sen. Tony Avella (D-Bayside), a cease-and-desist zone existed in northeast Queens from 1989 to 2014. Once this expired, the solicitations

began again. Residents testified at the hearing that letters, fliers, phone calls and even door-to-door salesmen are commonplace in various neighborhoods.

"The law states that once a cease-and-desist zone is created it is still the option of the property owner to voluntarily decide whether or not they want to continue to receive these solicitations or whether they choose not to receive such solicitations. I believe this is straightforward and recognizes the rights of both the real estate professional and the homeowner and balances both of their interests in engaging in their profession and protecting their right to privacy" Avella said.

Last week's hearings were tame in contrast to a previous hearing in April, which Avella said was overrun with real estate brokers, agents and sales-



The Dept. of State held two hearings, one at PS 115 in Bellerose and the other at Bayside High School, to gauge the need for the reinstatement of a cease-and-desist zone for real estate solicitors. AP

people posing as residents against cease-and-desist zones. Of the 38 people who testified, 11 were non-real-estate solicitors, all of whom described real estate solicitation to be extreme, Avella said in a news release. One of the residents giving testimony against cease-and-desist was a former president of the Long Island Board of

Realtors, but Avella said she testified as one of his own constituents.

"Many of the real estate agents who spoke last night (in April) had little to no understanding about what they were commenting on," Avella said. "They were simply there because they were asked to and it was clear that mob mentality

allowed no room for clarity. Ironically, some even suggested that rather than a blanket ban on solicitation, we allow homeowners to put their address on an opt-out list. Well, I suppose I need to thank them for their unintentional support because that's exactly what cease-and-desist zones do."

State Assemblyman Da-

vid Weprin (D-Fresh Meadows) and Councilman Barry Grodenchik (D-Oakland Gardens) said constituents in their district have experienced aggressive sales tactics from brokers.

"All too often, my constituents face tactics that involve aggressive and continuous solicitations in the form of unwanted calls, visits and mailings from real estate brokers and salespersons" said Weprin.

"Seniors are frequently targeted and at times pushed into selling their homes. Residents should have the right to simply state that they are not interested in selling their homes without having to deal with repeat solicitation," Grodenchik said.

Written testimony can be submitted to the Department of State until Sept. 30 for residents who did not have the opportunity to attend the hearings.

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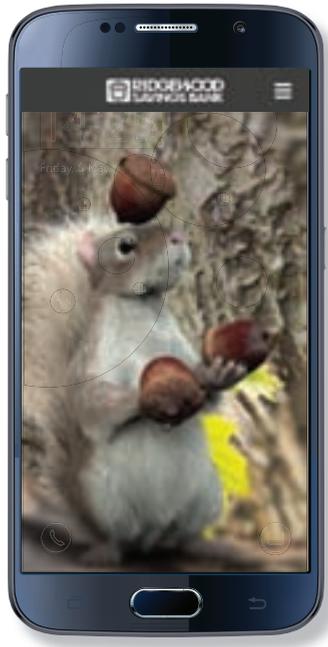
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Hevesi

Continued from Page 1

actual average rental costs for two bedroom apartments -- suitable for a three-member family -- ranges from \$658 to \$1,608 per month, according to Hevesi, the chairman of the Assembly's Social Services Committee.

His HSS plan would cost \$11,224 per year for a household of three in New York City. Meanwhile, the cost of shelters in New York City is \$38,460 for a family with children. The net savings for taxpayers in \$27,236 per year.

Hevesi also anticipates savings on related services such as emergency room visits, law enforcement costs, housing court costs, and programs and shelters for runaway youth. Just preventing the process of eviction has the potential to save taxpayers millions of dollars.

A recent analysis by the New York City Bar Association found that preventing the evictions of



Assemblyman Alan Hevesi introduces a plan designed to combat the growing homeless crisis while saving taxpayers millions of dollars. Courtesy Hevesi's office

roughly 5,000 households could save \$251 million a year in New York City alone.

Last month, the city hit a record of 59,373 people in shelters. This comes at a time when New York leads the nation with its homeless population, which includes more than 130,000 children statewide, according to Hevesi. He is working with advocates

to gain support for HHS among state officials and policymakers ahead of the 2017 legislative session and budget negotiations.

"We currently face the most severe homeless crisis since the Great Depression," Hevesi said. "I look forward to partnering with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to implement the Home Stability Support."

Ferry

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during the morning rush. Trains are packed by the time they get to LIC.

"Just look how crowded the Vernon-Jackson station is, it's already beyond capacity," state Sen. Michael Gianaris (D-Astoria) said. "People have to wait on stairs to get on the platform to eventually get on the train. One needs only look around to see a new building going up every day and with it another thousand residents and there's going to be more development on the north side of Anable Basin as well. We look forward to continuing even more great ways for people to get around rather than wait for the 7 train to show up, which is an adventure for anyone who is trying to do it."

City Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer (D-Sunnyside), who has railed against the No. 7 for years, agreed.

This is one of the fastest growing communities in all of New York City, and one of the most desirable communities to live in, and so therefore there are certain pressures that get placed on transportation infrastructure," he said. "Getting to and from Manhattan and other parts of the city become increasingly important, and the 7 train simply can't handle everyone. And few rides are as pleasant as a ferry ride along the East River."

Not everyone was pleased with the location. Rob Basch, the president of the Hunters Point Parks Conservancy is worried about increased foot traffic trampling through the gardens. "And we're concerned with the horn blaring," he said. "If the ferries have to back out of the landing, the law requires four blast's of the ship's horn. That would be quite a lot every half hour."

One state lawmaker

was concerned about the environmental impact on the park. State Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan (D-Ridgewood) fired off a letter to Torres-Springer last October saying the location "is not the best use of " scarce public green space.

"After having some concerns and reservations about placing a second ferry stop, I believe that with the cooperation of both city and state agencies we can continue to expand ferry operations while preserving both park land and green space for the communities," Nolan said. "I will continue to monitor this situation to ensure Gantry Plaza State Park is not negatively impacted this arrangement."

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

Phipps

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get my community riled up, and that was not conducive to working out a deal."

Phipps Houses declined to comment, but during a visit to the TimesLedger Newspapers offices in May, President and CEO Adam Weinstein warned what might happen if the zoning request was denied.

"There are users that would buy this property for its market value that would provide for something that's worse than what's there," he said. "It could be obnoxious, generate traffic, it wouldn't bring the amenities we bring and it wouldn't put eyes on Barnett Avenue and bring life. It could be pretty awful and that's the reality."

Meanwhile, the community is asking more of Van Bramer, who is majority leader and chairman of the Cultural Affairs Committee. During the panel discussion called "Jobs, Homes & 'Hoods," residents were asked to sign a petition urging Van Bramer to call a committee hearing on the small business and arts crisis in western

Queens, where commercial rents double and triple overnight, forcing out mom & pops, artists and cultural institutions.

Panelists urged the Council to pass the Small Business Jobs Survival Act, a bill languishing in the City Council since the '80s, which would provide lease protection to all commercial renters in the city. Kirsten Theodos, the lead advocate of TakeBackNYC, declared the future of the Queens economy is in danger without the legislation.

"It's already game over in Manhattan, but it's not too late for Queens," she said.

Steve Null, the author of the bill, urged the residents to speak up for the mom & pops.

"Small business owners are not politically active because they're taking care of business, they have no voice in politics so they need you to support this bill," Null said. "It will restore the American Dream for all of these mom & pops or else they're finished."

Arturo Sanchez, a 20-year member of CB 3, and a former professor of City Planning, has fought the expansion of the 82nd Street

Partnership from Jackson Heights into Corona, a move that would make it the largest Business Improvement District in the city.

"All the working class immigrant communities aren't being displaced, they are being permanently expelled to make way for privatization and the big chain stores," Sanchez said. "Long Island City and Flushing are growth clusters just like Lincoln Center and Columbia University were. Have you ever been to the Upper West Side? It used to be the Jets vs. the Sharks and now the gentrification is complete."

Astoria resident Mitch Waxman, a historian with the Newtown Creek Alliance, became an anti-gentrification activist following the 2006 blackout in western Queens which claimed two lives.

"The infrastructure just isn't prepared for the amount of people who are on their way," Waxman said. "This is our community and right now we have a bunch of people who don't live here who are developing it for us. How is this good for Queens?"

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Schools

Continued from Page 1
Post. Out of the 40 schools tracked, 13 of them are located in Queens. It was the most of any other borough besides Manhattan, which took 16 of the slots on the list.

According to the Post's list, nearly 6,000 students from across the city applied to Townsend Harris for 306 freshman seats last year. The classes are all honors, at the Advanced Placement or College level, with research opportunities at Queens College, NYU and Rockefeller University, according to the Post.

The Post determined the listings by weighing a number of factors, including a school's four-year graduation rates, the number of students taking AP exams as well as the percentage of students who score a passing grade on those exams, the number of students taking SAT tests and the average score on those tests, and the percentage of students who



Maspeth High School was one of the 13 Queens schools on the New York Post's list of top 40 high schools in the city.

scored above an 85 on Regents exams.

The Baccalaureate School for Global Education in Astoria was listed at No. 4. Scholars' Academy, which is located in Rockaway, was listed at No. 5. The average SAT

score at the latter school was over 1,700.

One of the newer schools on the list was Maspeth High School, located at 54-40 74th St. The school opened in 2011 and has a graduation rate of 97 percent. The Post listed

it 27th in the list of the 40 best schools. All of the students at Maspeth take four years of Latin, according to the Post.

Several schools in northeastern Queens made the list, including Benjamin N. Cardozo High School in Bayside, which came in at No. 20, Francis Lewis High School in Fresh Meadows, which came in at No. 22, and Bayside High School, which was included in the list at No. 34.

The Queens Gateway to Health Sciences Secondary School, located next to Jamaica's Queens Hospital Center at 160-20 Goethals Ave., was included at No. 25. The school, which boasts a 95.5 percent graduation rate, includes four years of science and math and a program in which students work alongside medical professionals, according to the Post.

Reach reporter Patrick Donachie by e-mail at pdonachie@cnglocal.com or by phone at (718) 260-4573.

Legal

Continued from Page 1
dignified and welcome space," she said at the opening. "We are so grateful to our local representatives for providing the capital support, which has enabled us to serve our neighbors in a professional setting and with cutting-edge technology that increases our efficiency and efficacy."

The new Queens Legal Services Community Law Center was funded with \$813,000 in combined capital funding from the Queens Borough President's office as well as the City Council. There will be nine languages spoken on-site as well as instant phone and video interpretation services for any client.

Queens Legal Services is a part of the Legal Services of New York City, which began in 1967 as the Community Action for Legal Services. The organization specializes in protecting its clients from bankruptcy, predatory lending, and affordable housing crises, as well as an array of other

issues. The Queens department covers civil rights, disability advocacy, workers' rights, domestic violence cases, HIV advocacy and the rights of veterans, immigrants, and the LGBT community, among others.

The department's reach extends beyond Jamaica. Councilman Peter Koo (D-Flushing) said attorneys who offer legal services for the organization were an "outstanding partner" with the Flushing community, thanks to monthly workshops about tenants' rights and services held at his offices.

"By extending critical lifelines of support to struggling individuals and families during their time of greatest need, Queens Legal Services helps create a level playing field for those who find themselves facing the often unfamiliar and daunting territory of the courts," Koo said.

The legal assistance hotline is open all five weekdays from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m., and can be reached at (917) 661-4500.

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