

# FORT GREENE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

HISTORIC FORT GREENE BROOKLYN

NOVEMBER 2009

The Fort Greene Association is devoted to historic preservation, neighborhood and park enhancement, as well as cultural, economic, and housing advancement. To find out more, become a member, or to volunteer, visit our website [www.HistoricFortGreene.org](http://www.HistoricFortGreene.org)

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## NEXT FGA MEETING:

**Monday, November 16,  
7:30 pm.**

Light Refreshments at 7pm.

**Topic: Real Estate: What's Hot and What's Not and Bringing Up a Kid in Fort Greene**

The Real Estate market has been all over the map. Get your bearings with a discussion on the current trends in the Fort Greene market. Bringing up a child has never been easy. Come participate as parents and experts give tips on raising a kid locally. Plus all the goings on in Fort Greene, and don't forget to come meet your neighbors at 7pm.

## LOCATION:

Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, 85 S. Oxford Street (corner of S. Oxford & Lafayette Ave.)

Meeting Room, entrance on South Oxford Street

*All are welcome to attend, homeowners & renters alike.*

## OUT OF SCALE PROJECT THREATENS THE HARD WON R6B DOWNZONING OF FORT GREENE AND CLINTON HILL

### Community Members Organize to Prohibit Developer's Plan to Upzone Residential Street

*Written by John Katsos and Seendy Fourn\**

New York State Senator Velmanette Montgomery recently hosted a meeting on October 15, 2009 to discuss a controversial proposal by CNR Health Care Network Inc. [CNR] to build a 71-unit independent living facility for low income seniors. CNR is looking to build the project at 86 Lefferts Place in Clinton Hill. Lefferts Place, a 3-block long residential street that is tucked away between Fulton and Atlantic Avenues, is known for its architectural richness and diversity. In addition to Italianate, Greek Revival and Romanesque 19th and 20th century townhouses, Lefferts Place is also the home of two original freestanding suburban villas.



For years the residents of Lefferts Place have been fighting to maintain the architectural history and integrity of their block. In December 2006, the residents won a battle to protect the freestanding villa located at 70 Lefferts Place, the Elwell House, from destruction in order to build a 25-unit luxury condominium. The residents were able to get the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission to grant landmark status and protect the Elwell House. Most recently, in July 2007 the residents of Lefferts Place were also successful in having Lefferts Place included in the contextual rezoning of approximately 86 blocks in Fort Greene and Clinton Hill. As a result, Lefferts Place (between St James and Classon Avenues) currently has a zoning designation of R6B, which requires lower buildings (maximum of 50 feet high) and smaller floor-to-area ratios (maximum of 4.0).

In July 2009, CNR held a meeting with the members of the Lefferts Place Civic Association [LPCA] to garner support from the community for their project. CNR made it very clear during the meeting that they would abandon any efforts to move forward on the project if the community did not support it. It was only through its

own investigation that the LPCA learned that CNR was looking to upzone Lefferts Place to R7A from R6B since their project did not comply with the current zoning designation of Lefferts Place.

In August 2009, the LPCA issued a letter to CNR and its local representatives and politicians setting forth its opposition to CNR's project.

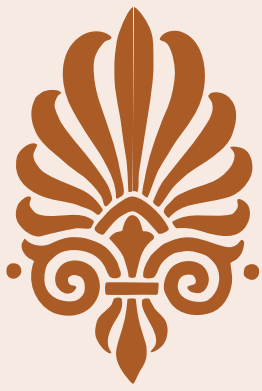
An R7A zoning designation would allow CNR to build a building as high as 80 feet as opposed to the 50 feet restriction which is currently in place. The R7A zoning designation also allows for a maximum floor-to-area ratio of 4.6. This would mean that Lefferts Place, a residential street, would have the same commercial zoning designation as Atlantic, Fulton and Myrtle Avenues. The zoning change would clearly adversely impact all of the residents on Lefferts Place. It would significantly increase Lefferts Place's population density, as well as increase vehicular traffic and commercial activity.

Changing the current zoning designation for Lefferts Place would not only jeopardize the scale and harmonious streetscape of this street but would also set a bad precedent for other brownstone communities that are active in

preserving the character of their neighborhoods. Developers would be able to sidestep current zoning laws and restrictions regardless of the community's efforts and desires. What kind of message is being made when the 2007 zoning change that was unanimously endorsed and supported by local politicians and representatives is not upheld by those same politicians and representatives against an influential developer.



> *Continued on next page*



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## Out of Scale Project Threatens the Hard Won R6B Downzoning of Fort Greene and Clinton Hill

*Continued from front cover.*

The end result of the October 15th meeting stands as follows. None of the elected representatives officially took a stand in regards to this project as they will not provide an "official position" until a proposal is formally submitted to the NYC Department of City Planning or the Board of Standards and Appeals. However, several politicians have already met with CNR to discuss the specifics of the project and have previously worked with CNR on similar projects. The members of the Lefferts Place Civic Association and the Lefferts Place Block Association along with support from the Fort Greene Association,



the Society for Clinton Hill and other local community groups spoke unanimously against any CNR proposed up-zoning of Lefferts Place to R7A.

In an attempt to find a solution, residents of Lefferts Place suggested an alternative site for this project which would be within one block of Lefferts Place at the underdeveloped corner of Fulton Street and Classon Av-

enue. This location would revitalize this area and would give seniors easy access to subway and bus lines running along Fulton Avenue and Crispus Atticus Park. This project would also take advantage of the recent contextual zoning enacted in 2007 which was put in place to allow for affordable housing projects such as this. It would set an example for all residents of Fort Greene and Clinton Hill, that the 2007 rezoning really does protect the architectural landscape of our community while at the same time developing neighborhoods that have been neglected in recent history.

As of today, CNR has not made any final decision in regards to this project. However, we will continue to organize support to ensure that this plan to up-zone Lefferts Place does not occur.

*\*John Katsos is the President of the Lefferts Place Civic Association and Seendy Fournon is the Vice President of the Lefferts Place Civic Association.*

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Reach thousands of Fort Greene households in the mail, via email and on the web by underwriting the FGA Newsletter.

For next sponsorship availability date and for details call 718.875.1855

Newsletter by Abby Weissman

## Chair's Notes by Paul Palazzo, FGA Chair

A year ago I took on the responsibility of Chairperson of the Fort Greene Association and what a year it has been. From the exuberant election of November to the financial crisis which still stings much of Fort Greene it has been a year of extremes. Highs and lows for sure but along the way some progress as well; thanks are in order.

After an effort launched by the FGA four years ago, neighborhood residents got some relief with the enactment of reduced alternate side of the street parking regulations. We thank Councilperson Tish James and Community Board 2 in making this change happen as quickly and smoothly as it did.

The beloved, mysterious, and historically important Admiral's Row has been partially saved. We can only hope that a savvy developer will recognize the value of

retaining all of the structures in an adaptive reuse plan for future generations. For this we should thank FGA partner The Historic Districts Council for their guidance and efforts in attaining this important victory.

The FGA had a greater presence in the neighborhood with FGA funding of youth organizations like the Pit Bulls and the Tillary Park Foundation as well as our numerous visits to the Farmers Market on Saturdays. This credit and thanks goes to the stalwarts of FGA Board who without their support and efforts none of this could happen.

Highs and lows but always moving forward. Fort Greene. The Fort Greene Association.

*Happy Thanksgiving to All and as always, we'll be seeing you soon and don't forget to keep in touch.*

## Greenlight Bookstore: A Neighborhood Effort

Anticipation has been building for months over the empty storefront at the corner of Fulton and South Portland. First, there was the foot traffic in and out of the space in June. Then, in July, the paper came off the windows to reveal a wide open space with a lone, new bookshelf against one wall. And finally, the sign went up in the middle of the summer - *"Coming Soon! Greenlight Bookstore."*

"Hi. We can't wait!" said so many Fort Greene residents popping their heads into the store this summer" Jessica told me with a gleeful smile. "The support of the Fort Greene community from the FGA to the local 'community lenders' to our landlord Sammy Brahimi is the story of how Greenlight came into being."

In response to a survey conducted by the FGA's Retail Committee in the fall of 2007, 74 percent of the 380 respondents listed a bookstore as the #1 retail need in the neighborhood. Shortly thereafter, an article appeared in the Brooklyn section of The Daily News about a young entrepreneur named Jessica Stockton-Bagnulo who had won the Brooklyn Public Library's *"Power Up!"* business-plan competition

with a proposal to open an independent bookstore in the borough. When FGA Retail Committee board member Carolyn Mayers-Williams spotted that article, all the pieces started to fall into place.

When you talk to Jessica and her co-proprietor Rebecca Fitting, they beam as they tell you how independent booksellers across the country are saying theirs is a model for how to keep these stores alive. "Even our loan officer from the World Trade Center Small Business Recovery Fund was amazed at the outpouring of the community. With the evidence in hand from the survey results, the kickoff party last September and the local literary community, he said, 'Everybody tells me their business has the support of their neighborhood, but you are the first people to back it up.'"

Greenlight bookstore will carry new books in all categories fiction, non-fiction, children's, history, culture, cooking, and travel. They will stock graphic novels, reference guides, books in French and Spanish, and sell cards, journals,



By Michael Gross

magazines and eventually some children's toys. And Greenlight will host many events, with an emphasis on local authors. One of the first will be a celebration of the New York Review of Books 10th Anniversary

on November 13th with Fort Greene literary glitterati Jhumpa Lahiri, Edwin Frank, and Matt Weiland.

"This is a general bookstore that will have something for everyone," Jessica said. "Furthermore, we want to listen to the neighborhood over the next few months and adapt what we sell to meet their needs. Come on in and tell us what you want."



Greenlight Bookstore is located at 686 Fulton Street at the corner of South Portland Avenue and can be found online at [greenlightbookstore.com](http://greenlightbookstore.com).

## FGA Grants Putting Your Donation Dollars to Work

Written by Mary Priebe



Pit Bulls - Lloyd Rodriguez coaching FG Bisons Tiny Mites



The popular Fort Greene Park Halloween Festival

The Fort Greene Association continues to support local groups working to enhance our community in any number of ways. It is just one of the ways in which your donation dollars go directly back to your Neighborhood.

The FGA was a proud supporter of the **Tillary Park Foundation Sports Day** held on Saturday October 24th. The Tillary Park Foundation under the direction of Daryl Barlow has been working to make the park a vibrant, positive place of recreation for Fort Greene residents who use the park near the Manhattan Bridge. This year's "Sports Day" included soccer, tennis and golf clinics as well as a racing car display.

The **Tillary Park Foundation** also salutes the FGA for helping drive up the votes for their bid to be one of the winners of the Nike *"Back Your Block grant."* A big thanks to all those who clicked through the FGA eBlast to vote for the kids of the Tillary Park Foundation.

The FGA continues its partnership with the **Brooklyn Pit Bulls Pop Warner Football Teams**. Through our local connections, the FGA was able to get weight equipment donated to the Pit Bulls. Items donated included Olympic flat and adjustable benches and twin tier

dumbbell racks. Pump it up, Pit Bulls.

On the field the Brooklyn Pit Bulls are having a great season. They are fielding four divisions this year, **Mitey Mites, Junior Pee Wees, Junior Midgets** and **Midgets**. Three of the four divisions will be competing for the NYC Pop Warner Championship, with two divisions already clinching the number one seed for the championship. The championships will be played Saturday November 7th, at Poly Prep Country Day School, here in Brooklyn.

And finally in Fort Greene Park the FGA proudly sponsored **the Fort Greene Park Conservancy's 10th Annual Halloween Festival**. Families from all over Fort Greene paraded into the park for free hay wagon rides, pumpkin painting, and seasonal activities.

Please think of our local youth groups and organizations when you hear of corporations or well supplied schools excessing equipment or supplies. Contact me at [mary@HistoricFortGreene.org](mailto:mary@HistoricFortGreene.org) if you have any lead on anything that could be useful to our community groups and community centers.



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### NEWSCENES

**EN Restaurant & Bar** 277 Cumberland Street at Lafayette Avenue, (apparently) opening soon. If you have been wondering about this long-in-the-works site, have a look at what's happening there. The window treatments are quite interesting and the bar looks good.

Sip of something anyone? No phone yet but keep your eye on this newest spot.

And, just across the avenue, the 40-year old "**Lafayette Grocery & Dairy**" will be having an interior renovation. Good for them. Stay tuned as this stalwart provider of services to the neighborhood reinvents itself. Best of luck.

**THE LITTLE FLOWER SHOP IN THE PARK** 154A Vanderbilt Avenue at Myrtle Avenue, 718 935-1144. A family business. If you're lucky you'll be greeted by a little charmer who helps her parents run the shop. A neighbor picked up a bouquet with which she was very pleased. Arrangements for all occasions. Stop by, wish the whole family success.

**GREENLIGHT Bookstore** 686 Fulton Street (corner South Portland), phone 718 246-0200). Bookmarks at the ready. Many in Fort Greene have been waiting anxiously for the opening of this much desired addition to our merchant mix and will be happy as they settle in. We'll be interested in the cleverly designed shelves circling the columns as well as the reading matter therein.

Co-proprietors Jessica Stockton Bagnulo and Rebecca Fitting bring 25 years combined experience in the book industry, their vision of an independent bookstore and lots of energy and enthusiasm to make a success of it. We look forward to open doors and wish you all good fortune.

#### NEW BABY

Arrived October 9, 2009 at 2:50 pm, weighing 8 pounds, 20 inches, a son, Shinnosuke Otohei Blackshear, to Yuka and Mark Blackshear. Mother, baby and father are doing well. Congratulations and a happy life to all.

We are coming into the most important shopping weeks of the entire year, the ones with the greatest potential for profit for our business community - Fulton/Lafayette - Dekalb - Myrtle Avenue. With tremendous variety - for home, family, fashionistas, pets, friends and don't forget yourself. Many of our merchants offer gift certificates - just ask or phone to check. They're easy, quick and fit everyone. Our neighbor merchants and all of us will have a happier holiday. **Shop Fort Greene FIRST.** Enjoy the coming season!

We invite you to submit items for NEWSCENES, inclusion by editor's decision. For any mistakes herein, we apologize.

Contact dorris gaines golomb at [dorris@historicfortgreene.org](mailto:dorris@historicfortgreene.org)

#### Fort Greene House Tour 2010

Take a tour through history, without leaving the neighborhood.

**Save the Date:** Sunday, May 2, 2010  
Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact [HouseTour@HistoricFortGreene.org](mailto:HouseTour@HistoricFortGreene.org).

Reach thousands of Fort Greene households in the mail, via email and on the web by underwriting the FGA Newsletter. For next sponsorship availability date and for details call 718.875.1855