



A UNION OF CITIZENS

1457 Lexington Avenue
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www.civitasnyc.org

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CIVITAS *events*

Film Screening and Forum on Neighborhood Businesses

On May 4 more than 75 people attended a CIVITAS forum to discuss small locally owned businesses and the challenges they face to survive. Taking place in the landmark Veterans Room of the Park Avenue Armory, the evening consisted of a documentary film screening, panel discussion and reception.

As CIVITAS president Joseph Walsh said in his introduction, the problem of small businesses closing is particularly acute on the East Side. According to a recent survey reported in *Our Town* newspaper, 175 retail vacancies currently exist in

the neighborhood's commercial avenues between 59th and 96th Streets. At least 7 of those empty storefronts are located in the five-block stretch of Second Avenue south of 96th Street where subway construction has been underway since 2007.

The evening opened with remarks from Deputy Borough President Rosemonde Pierre-Louis, who spoke about initiatives underway in the borough president's office to save "mom and pop" stores.

Virginie-Alvine Perrette, an Upper East Side native and filmmaker, introduced her documentary *Twilight Becomes Night*. Released in 2008, the 30-minute film is

an exploration of the important role that locally-owned businesses play in our culture and quality of life. Among the neighborhood stores detailed in Ms. Perrette's film were the beloved—and now-closed—Madison Avenue businesses: Michael's Children's Haircutting Salon and M+E Hardware.

Following the film, expert panelists provided responses to the film and discussed solutions for this ongoing



problem. The panel included: Matthew Bauer, president of the Madison Avenue BID, Sham Mustafa of NYC Business Solutions, Vicki Weiner of the Pratt Center for Community Development and Carlton Brown, Full Spectrum of NY real estate development firm. Mr. Brown is the 2009 Recipient of the CIVITAS August Heckscher Award.

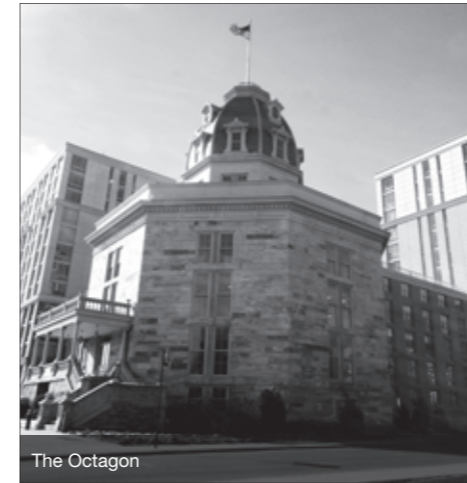
Contact CIVITAS to find out more about saving locally owned retailers in New York. ●



CIVITAS NEWS

A Union of Citizens for the Upper East Side and East Harlem

Summer 2009



The Octagon

From 'Madhouse' To Green Living

Roosevelt Island's Octagon Gets an Eco-Friendly Makeover

Andrew Lyubarsky

When Charles Dickens visited New York City in 1842, he paid a visit to the newly constructed Blackwell's Island Lunatic Asylum (on what is now Roosevelt Island.) At the time, he remarked that the "building was handsome, and remarkable for a spacious and elegant staircase." Designed by renowned architect A.J. Davis, the distinctive octagon-shaped main building was built on the principle that a positive living environment could rehabilitate the mentally ill. That being said, nineteenth-century reports vary as journalist Nellie Bly called the asylum a "human rattrap" when she visited 40 years later. The facility was finally shuttered in 1955 and rapidly fell into disrepair. By the 1970s when it was placed on *continued on page 6*

Green Renovation in Harlem

Roberta Hodgson



Hannah Purdy, Walsh & Purdy Architects

Architect Hannah Purdy in partnership with Greenstreet, an eco-friendly construction company, designed one of the first green residential renovations in Harlem, creating a stunning transformation of an abandoned historic rowhouse.

Purdy, who was born on a farm in West Virginia, graduated from Yale School of Architecture in 2002. In 2007, she and a classmate started Walsh & Purdy Architects with an office on the Lower East Side.

For Purdy, "the greenest project is to work on an existing building which holds so much embedded energy." So she was particularly pleased when her clients, two young

television actors, explained their wish to create a home in an environmentally friendly way.

When the couple bought the house at 128th Street and Fifth Avenue, it had been totally gutted and vandalized. Copper pipes had been removed, and there were no doors or windows—save the quirky half-moon-shaped window under the front gable. The structure's handsome brick façade was reasonably intact, and its stepped roof gable reflected the Dutch Revival style that swept New York in the late nineteenth century. Needless to say, the home and its next door twin had immense street appeal. *continued on page 3*



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Letter from the President

CIVITAS has devoted our Summer 2009 newsletter to bringing attention to eco-friendly design and construction that is happening in our community. In this densely developed part of Manhattan, remarkably few green projects have been brought to fruition. Among the most successful have been careful renovations of historic structures, such as the Octagon on Roosevelt Island and a Harlem rowhouse on 128th Street. To stem the tide of climate change, sustainable building technologies used in both projects will need to become the standard in all future development.

As an advocate for quality of life on the Upper East Side and in East Harlem, CIVITAS is raising awareness for the issue in our neighborhood. For our March 5 benefit, we honored two leaders in the field of sustainable development, real estate developer Carlton Brown and architect Bruce Fowle. Furthermore, we are working with the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation to advocate for more street trees, which beautify, provide natural habitat and cool down our streets and sidewalks. You can see the fruits of this collaboration on Third Avenue between 82nd and 96th Street.

In our latest newsletter, there is a new look for CIVITAS. Our board and staff have been working with Pratt Institute's Design Corps, a pro bono program that matches up graphic design students and non-profit organizations.

And be sure to check out the CIVITAS In Action column for an overview of our recent projects. We encourage you to get involved.


Joseph Walsh

CIVITAS is a union of citizens concerned with the quality of life on the Upper East Side and in East Harlem. Since 1981 CIVITAS has worked to improve the urban environment, advocating for better land use, zoning and urban planning, affordable housing, public transportation, clean air and water, and public access to the waterfront. **visit us at www.civitasnyc.org**

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New Trees on Third Avenue

In summer 2008, CIVITAS worked with the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation to advocate for more street trees on Third Avenue. Originally, Parks staff had located only one suitable spot between 87th and 91st Street until CIVITAS members walked the avenue with them. The project, which is part of the City's MillionTreesNYC initiative, was then extended to the entire stretch between 82nd and 96th Streets.

We are delighted to report that as of May 2009 more than 100 locust, oak and pear saplings have been planted in this 14-block area. As our tree planting efforts are not new, CIVITAS applauds the city's new streamlined approach to using public funds for digging tree pits and planting new trees. In the early



Janis Eltz admires a new sapling on Third Avenue

2000s, CIVITAS raised more than \$75,000 through the Manhattan Borough President's Office and private funds to dig tree pits, plant saplings and install more than 60 tree guards on East 86th Street. ●

Do you have an open spot for a tree on your block? If so, call CIVITAS at (212) 996-0745 or visit www.milliontreesnyc.org.

12 Tips on Turning Green

1. Conserve lighting energy by eliminating unnecessary bulbs and converting switches to dimmers or occupancy sensors.
2. Inspect weatherstripping throughout the building to make sure drafts are not present. Add extra insulation to exterior walls and ceilings, if possible.
3. Check to make sure hot water heaters are not set above 120 degrees.
4. Consider adding exterior solar shading on south or west facing windows to prevent unwanted heat build-up during summer.
5. Use ecologically responsible cleaning products for maintenance.
6. Designate space for bicycle and recycling storage.
7. As finishes age and need to be replaced, use environmentally friendly materials like natural linoleum instead of vinyl composition tile. Use paints that have no or very low levels of toxic volatile organic compounds (VOCs).
8. Consider adding hot water heating panels to roof tops. They are less expensive and have faster payback than electric panels.
9. Add a simple, modular green roof to slow down storm water and provide insulation and reduce surface temperature.
10. Leave unoccupied spaces, like electrical rooms, garages, and trash rooms at low temperatures during the winter, just above freezing to prevent pipes from bursting.
11. When demolishing portions of existing buildings, recycle the construction debris. Buy used products when possible.
12. Change single pane windows to double pane (thermopane). In the building envelope, most energy is lost and gained at windows. ●

—Colin Davis

Green Renovation in Harlem



The 19th Century rowhouse (far left) was restored with eco-friendly technology

continued from cover

The renovation of the 3,200 square foot structure into one duplex for the client and two rental apartments was budgeted to cost, according to the architect, "well under a million." That being said, both the design and construction process were documented in *Dwell* and *Gotham*, and many windows, electrical and plumbing fixtures were donated by manufacturers hoping to use the high profile project for publicity.

Recycled and Energy Saving Elements

To ensure the structure would meet strict environmental standards, Purdy specified radiant heat produced from tubes of hot water under the floor. This technology allows the floors to act as radiators and heat bodies rather than inefficiently circulating hot air through heating ducts. Radiant heat was more expensive to install than other options, but low energy costs make it cheaper in the long run, Purdy said.

Where possible, Purdy used recycled materials such as: recycled glass for counter tops; recycled Caesar Stone on wall surfaces and natural materials like slate and soapstone for floors and counter tops.

The standard double pane windows with low emittance glass, Purdy said, were "as good as you can get" and were installed in each room. However, Purdy advised "they must be carefully installed with foam installation." Because of the house's orientation, solar panels were not practical.

Taking advantage of the dropped ceiling, energy efficient fluorescent bulbs were placed along the soffits to send a subtle ceiling light on the textured walls.

For the floors, Purdy chose bamboo, but now thinks oak would be a good choice if sustainably harvested in New York State. She noted that most bamboo floors are imported from China and added to the project's carbon footprint impact.

Although Purdy is emphatically in favor of green roofs in New York, a city dominated by flat roofs, the rowhouse's peaked roof did not offer this opportunity.

A Groundbreaking Project

Commenting on why green renovations were not more common, "I think many contractors are unsure how to proceed with some eco-friendly construction choices," said Purdy. However, in this instance, the owners of the Harlem townhouse did their research and took the initiative to find a green contractor.

Purdy has suggested that "the public has been fearful of delving into the unknown. It is an educational issue. Gradually, eco-friendly construction will be seen as an attractive, practical choice, not just a return to bad seventies architecture."

Michael Craig with Greenstreet said that "the construction trade has been slow to set aside the tried and true. That's changing. Customers are becoming aware of how healthy and high-performance building practices create attractive living spaces."

"Just wait five years," he said, "green building will be the norm. President Obama's leadership in the environment and tax incentives are changing the dynamics."

Not all of Purdy's projects are so earth-bound. In 2008 her firm received state arts funding to organize a spring kite flying contest for architects and designers. Wind power, design, low cost and aesthetics...it's enough to set the mind soaring. ●

More information about this renovation is available at <http://www.dwell.com/videos/building-green-in-harlem.html>.



The home's master bedroom and signature half-moon window. Photo credit: © John Lei, 2009



Party attendees



Jean Pettibone, Diane Phillpotts, Steven Narker



Bruce Fowle



Musicians at the benefit



Brenda Levin, Paul Selver



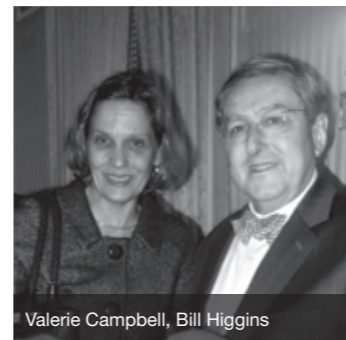
Sally Schubert, Nelson Alvarado



Michele Kidwell, Paco Argiz



Jamie Gibbs, Mrs. Stephen Kellen



Valerie Campbell, Bill Higgins

2009 Benefit Goes Green

CIVITAS highlighted sustainable design and development at the March 5 benefit at the Americas Society.

More than 200 guests attended to see the August Heckscher Award for Community Service presented to Carlton Brown, chief operating officer of Full Spectrum of NY real estate development firm, and Bruce Fowle, senior partner of FXFOWLE architecture firm. Both recipients were selected for their leadership in bringing more eco-friendly buildings to New York.

Honorary co-chairs for the fundraiser were Mrs. Stephen Kellen, Stephen Lash and Steven Narker. The benefit co-chairs were Jamie Gibbs, Diane Phillpotts, Genie Rice, Sava Thomas and Felipe Ventegeat.

Mr. Brown has been a long time proponent of bringing eco-friendly building technologies

to urban communities. His firm developed two of New York's first green condominium buildings, 1400 Fifth Avenue and the Kalahari on West 116th Street.

An architect, Mr. Fowle is at the forefront of sustainable design. His projects include 4 Times Square and the Helena, which were among the first LEED-certified buildings in New York. Mr. Fowle was also a charter member of Architects/Planners/Designers for Social Responsibility and instrumental in organizing New York New Visions after the 2001 terrorist attacks.

The Americas Society on Park Avenue was a fitting locale for CIVITAS' 2009 benefit. The Beaux Arts former mansion and New York City landmark was saved in the 1960s when neighbors objected to its demolition and raised money for its purchase and restoration.●



Jeanne McAnaney, Melanie Coronetz



Nataliya Konyeva, Dena Richardson, Melissa McKay



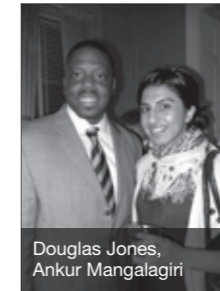
Hatice Morrissey, Genie Egerton-Warburton, Kathy Doyle



Gorman Reilly introduces the honorees



Benefit refreshments



Douglas Jones, Ankur Mangalagiri



Claude Bloch, Bruce Fowle, Fred Bland



Councilmember Jessica Lappin



Genie Rice, Carlton Brown



Jackie Keber, Lucy Cary, Caroline King



Hunter Armstrong, Councilmember Daniel R. Garodnick



Matthew Twist, Daphne Matalene, Laura Ferris, Natasha Brown



Diana and Joe Rowan



Lo van der Valk, Joanne Seminara, Robbie Hodgson



Susan Allen, Nina Jones, Genevieve Christy



E.J. McAdams, Kathleen Ruen, Claude Bloch



Felipe Ventegeat, Gorman Reilly, Carlton Brown, Bruce Fowle, Genie Rice, Hunter Armstrong

From 'Madhouse' To Green Living

continued from cover the National Register of Historic Places and designated a New York City landmark, the Octagon was a ruin of its former glory.

In the early 2000s, when developer Bruce Becker of Becker + Becker began work on the site, there was little more than "eight walls with rubble inside" remaining. The Octagon's beautiful domed roof, which the Landmarks

Preservation Commission had once called "remarkable for its geometric clarity and for its picturesque beauty" had been destroyed by several fires, and the two wings of the old hospital had been demolished. Within the span of several years, Becker + Becker was not only able to reconstruct and restore the original asylum building as the centerpiece of the Octagon Park Apartments project, but to



The historic Octagon and new apartment wings

create one of the few LEED Silver-certified buildings on the East Side of Manhattan, on the site of the old hospital buildings.

Energy Efficiency and Recycled Materials

In terms of energy use, the building is more than 35% more efficient than what is currently required by the NYC building code. In addition to reducing the carbon footprint of the building, this lowers energy costs for tenants significantly, in many cases by over \$100 each month. To combat loss of heat, the building features double pane, argon-filled windows, natural gas-fired condensing boilers, and a heat recovery system that captures heat from shower and dishwasher water. The building is also outfitted with a photovoltaic solar panel system on the roof, which provides electricity for the common areas. At one point, this constituted one of the largest arrays of panels on any residential building in New York City.

The building is also credited for using sustainable, recycled, and local building materials. According to the developer, over 40% of the construction materials come from recycled sources, including the structural steel, acoustical tiles and insulation. More than half the materials used in the construc-

tion were manufactured within 500 miles of the site. All of the wood floors and stair treads in the restored Octagon building were salvaged from other locations, and cabinetry in the building was fabricated from recycled wheat husks or sunflower seeds. The development also features an "ecological park" which is billed as providing open space for the public.

In a 2007 *Multihousing Professional* article, Becker states that "in all our decisions, we've tried to be environmentally responsible and found it not only has inherent value, but is also an attraction from a marketing perspective. We have a lot of very passionate environmentalists in the building." Indeed, the project has received a "Green Apple" award from the DEP and EPA for its design, as well as several awards for its historical preservation significance.

Octagon Park has struck a balance between sustainable design and landmark preservation—a necessary achievement as historic New York City buildings are retrofitted for new 21st Century demands. ●

Andrew Lyubarsky is a 2009 CIVITAS intern through Columbia University's Communities in Action program.



Roosevelt Island from the aerial tramway

What is LEED?

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is an internationally recognized certification system that measures how well a building or community performs across several metrics: energy savings, water efficiency, CO2 emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality, and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts. Buildings can qualify for four

levels of certification: certified, silver, gold and platinum.

Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, LEED provides building owners and operators a framework for identifying and implementing practical and measurable green building design, construction, operations and maintenance solutions. ●

From the U.S. Green Building Council website: www.usgbc.org



CIVITAS *in action*

Bringing CB8 in Line with other NYC Contextual Zoning Districts

With a coalition of Community Board 8 members and neighborhood groups, CIVITAS is working to reduce the negative impact that community facility expansions can have on neighborhood quality of life. The Community Board 8 (CB8) district permits greater development potential—known as floor area ratio—for mid-block community facilities (such as schools and houses of worship) than any other New York City neighborhood. When mid-block contextual zoning on the Upper East Side was approved in the 1980s, higher FAR was intended to be temporary to accommodate a few develop-

ment proposals that were underway. More than 20 years later, the inequitable policy is still on the books. The proposal is awaiting certification at the NYC Department of City Planning. Our efforts have included meetings with Borough President



Ruppert Playground

Scott Stringer and Councilmembers Daniel Garodnick and Jessica Lappin.

Liquor License Sought for Third Church of Christ, Scientist

CIVITAS presented testimony at two Community Board 8 meetings to object to the Rose Group Park Avenue's application for a liquor license for 583 Park Avenue, the Third Church of Christ, Scientist at 63rd Street. Since striking a deal with the historic church in 2006, the catering company has been host to late night parties with upwards of 1,000 guests, blocking the sidewalk and creating a traffic nightmare. Citing the catering hall as an inappropriate "accessory"



Third Church of Christ, Scientist

commercial use in the residential neighborhood, CIVITAS commends Community Board 8 for voting in opposition to the Rose Group's license. In December 2008, a federal judge barred the NYC Department of Buildings action to revoke the church's 20-year lease with the catering company. The city has announced that it will appeal the decision.

Access to Randall's Island Recreational Facilities

CIVITAS is participating in Go Green East Harlem and Department of Health efforts to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to Randall's Island. Among the issues raised by CIVITAS is the need for an additional new pedestrian bridge linking East Harlem and the island sports and recreational facility. Also being explored are reasons the existing East River pedestrian bridge at 103rd Street remains closed for much of the year. The engineering study of the proposed new bridge is linked to www.civitasnyc.org.

Ruppert Playground

News broke in April that a tower is planned for what is now the Ruppert Playground and tennis court (92nd Street between Third and Second



Read about the May 4 film screening and forum on Page 8. Above: Sham Mustafa speaks with a guest at the screening.

Avenue). The city agreement to maintain this location as open space expired in June 2008—opening the door for the owner, The Related Companies, to redevelop the site. The zoning allows for up to a 40-story building at this mid-block lot. When CIVITAS was formed in 1981 to fight for a required Environmental Impact Statement for the Ruppert project, the neighborhood's insufficient

recreational space was cited as a concern. As development has increased on the Upper East Side in the past twenty years, demand for parks and playgrounds has only increased.

Second Avenue Subway Station Entrances

CIVITAS has met with neighborhood groups and elected officials to discuss station entrance alternatives for

the Second Avenue subway. One of the study's guiding principles is that station entrances at 96th, 86th, 72nd and 63rd Street should be located at corners incorporated into existing buildings and not positioned to increase sidewalk congestion. Furthermore, CIVITAS has encouraged MTA to incorporate small footprint retail uses into ancillary mechanical and ventilation buildings whenever possible. A draft of the project report is on www.civitasnyc.org.

Bus Rapid Transit

CIVITAS is participating in an advisory committee organized by the Department of Transportation, MTA and Manhattan Borough President's Office to explore bus rapid transit on First and Second Avenues (between 125th Street and South Ferry). ●