

# Urban Outdoors

No. 100 – April 23, 2004

Working for a more Humane New York

## **OUR 100<sup>th</sup> ISSUE**

Urban Outdoors has been praised as hard-hitting journalism, and an indispensable information source about the present and future of our urban infrastructure and environment. Our brand of “personal journalism” reflects the common view of our city as seen from the street, not from a boardroom or even a taxicab window. Our 10,000 plus readership includes civic activists, park professionals, elected officials, journalists, health professionals, environmentalists, sports enthusiasts,, transportation professionals, city, state, and federal staffers, bicyclists, walkers, educators, immigrants and natives to our city.

Our interest in New York City does not begin or end in Manhattan. All boroughs are outer boroughs. We reach into the thoughts of all New Yorkers with ideas about making our city a healthier and more humane place. For this, our 100<sup>th</sup> issue, we put away our pen-as-sword side, and encourage our readers to join Neighborhood Open Space Coalition (NOSC) and Friends of Gateway (FoG) in some of the very real things that we do. Pick a program that seems like fun to you--whether it is about changing public policy, greening our city, partying, or joining us for a walk through a neighborhood that you haven't visited. By taking part NOSC/FoG activities or those of the many the programs organizations featured in a typical Urban Outdoors, you are expanding your knowledge of New York and opening the door to personal growth and exploration.

### **BETTER STREETS AND WATERFRONT GREENWAYS FOR STATEN ISLAND**

To build a more healthy and humane environment perhaps we have to start with our largest public space--the streets, waterfronts, and transportation corridors of the city. In New York City the predominant goal of our street system is to move vehicles quickly from destination to destination. The price of poor planning for pedestrians has been a more sedentary and obese America and a host of health problems that are a drain on our happiness and productivity, and also resulting in too many tax and insurance dollars spent on fixing people up rather than keeping them well.

Governmental health agencies are seeking interventions that can turn this situation around. On Thursday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, a workshop will point to ways that simple changes in our urban landscape can lead to safer conditions for people on foot, a more lively community, and increased local tourism in the many heritage areas of Staten Island. In addition to a safer streetscape, the workshop will include information on bringing the East Coast Greenway through New York along the Staten Island North Shore Greenbelt. In Staten Island, this trail can include the most historic areas of the island, allowing visitors to see the old New York that they will not find in Manhattan.

Meet us on the lower “ground level” exit of the Staten Island Ferry at 5:30 PM for the an observational walk to the workshop. Or just show up at the Staten Island Institute for the workshop at 6 PM. An earlier and separate workshop with an overlapping focus will be held at Staten Island Borough Hall at 2 pm. Each workshop will take approximately 1½ hours, will contain overlapping but somewhat different content and will include a participant input segment.

The New York Bicycling Coalition (NYBC), Neighborhood Open Space Coalition (NOSC) and The North Shore Waterfront Greenbelt are sponsoring the program with funding made possible by the Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC). We thank Borough President James P. Molinaro and the Staten Island Institute for Arts and Sciences for their assistance with this program. RSVP: [nybc@nybc.net](mailto:nybc@nybc.net) or 212-228-3126

### **PLANT A TREE IN BROOKLYN**

OK, the tree seedling will be planted in a large flowerpot in Brooklyn. When it grows big enough to survive somewhere in our urban environment it will be transported and rooted in the ground. The Gateway Greenhouse Education Center, a program of Friends of Gateway (FoG), works with NYC school children on an almost daily basis. If you can organize a group to help create a greener future for NYC, give us a call; we would gladly schedule a special day for you. A day at the Gateway Greenhouse Education Center makes a great family, scouting, community garden, company or church outing. We provide a group activity that just about everyone can do. The Barbeque grill is waiting, all you have to do is bring the food. (212-228-3126).

The Gateway Greenhouse Education Center is less than 100 feet from Jamaica Bay at the end of the entrance road to Floyd Bennett Field (part of Gateway National Recreation Area); last stop on the Q35 bus before the Marine Parkway Bridge. You can catch the Q35 at Flatbush Avenue/Brooklyn College Station of the #2-train. On May 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, we are hosting adult volunteer days at the greenhouse, the temporary home of more than 3000 young trees and shrubs in pots.

### **JOIN A COMMUNITY GARDEN**

At its best, Community Gardening is a social pastime that serves as a point of entrance to the larger life of neighborhood affairs. The best gardens host neighborhood parties, concerts, outdoor movies and activist meetings. Even if it is not that good, gardening in groups is often the only way to have a piece of ground of your own in NYC to provide fresh flowers or flavorful vegetables for your table.

NYC’s largest community garden is also at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn. Each gardener has a generous 10’ by 20’ foot space to mold into his or her dream landscape. Additional garden space is available at Gateway locations on the Rockaways and on Staten Island. NYC. Most NYC Gardens are far less generous with the limited land that they have to work on. The NYC Housing Authority hosts a huge gardening program at their many sites around the city. GreenThumb, a program of NYC Parks, can connect residents with local gardens operated by Parks (212-788-8075). Land Trust gardens are

public gardens on land owned by private non-profit groups. For membership opportunities in land trust gardens call Trust for Public Land (212-677-7171) or New York Restoration (212-333-2552)

Neighborhood Open Space Coalition continues to provide low-cost liability insurance for many NYC community gardens. Friends of Gateway provide free trees and shrubs. FoG is working to increase its inventory of plants that stay green-all-year.

## **PARTY WITH US!!**

It doesn't take a lot of street smarts to know that 2004 will be a difficult year for small non-profit organizations. Traditional funding sources are tighter, and the 9-11 disaster continues to focus attention away from the neighborhoods and toward big projects in the city center. The NOSC board of trustees, recognizing the challenges, is again organizing a "fun raising" party (this year at a Brooklyn Heights brownstone) to honor urban environmental heroes and raise rent money so that we can continue our work.

Honorees will include City Planning Commissioner Amanda Burden, for helping to elevate the NYC Greenways system to the level of Mayoral policy, Edward (Ned) Ames, the Mayoral Representative to the Hudson River Greenway, and Ivan Vamos, a retired Assistant Commissioner of State Parks who spark plugged the NYC Greenways System and still stays engaged as a Board Member of the NYS Bicycle Coalition.

The event will include soft music, drinks, great finger food and opportunities to meet, greet and schmooze and a sunset walk on the Brooklyn Heights Promenade. Invitations are to be sent by mail, so call 212-228-3126 to register your address or just mail a check to NOSC with the words "fundraiser" in the lower left corner. The party is on June 24th, and tickets are \$100 each for NOSC members, \$135 for non-members.

## **TAKE A WALK, NEW YORK!**

Take a Walk, New York! Is NOSC/ FoG's effort to develop a vocal constituency for public space from within the health community and an effort to break sedentary behavioral patterns with a program of urban adventure walks to destinations throughout NYC. The program recognizes that for most people, a physical activities regimen must stimulate all the senses. Walking introduces people to unfamiliar neighborhoods and parks while providing the exercise that almost everyone can do. Walking in groups is a social exercise that introduces people to one another with the lubricant of a shared experience.

The program is a partnership between the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Neighborhood Open Space Coalition. Our public spaces can provide behavioral changes that are truly sustainable. For Additional Information:  
[www.walkny.org](http://www.walkny.org)

## **UPCOMING WALKS:**

**Sunday, May 23, 2004. 10 AM. Red Hook Waterfront Prowl, Brooklyn.** Dave Lutz will lead us on an exploration of the future Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway and a neighborhood on the cusp of major change. We will see civil war era industrial architecture, one of Brooklyn's largest sports parks, an urban farm, community gardens and residential buildings that sometimes have a small town feel. *Take the F or G trains to Smith-9th St. station. Meet at street level. Bring snacks and water.*

**Saturday, June 19th. Bronx Family Health Walk** with Montefiore Medical Center will possibly include visits to normally pay-to-visit public spaces. Check walkny.org for more info in early June.

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Please help support the work of NOSC-FoG and the publication of this newsletter by contributing \$50 or whatever you can afford. Go to our website or <http://www.guidestar.org/partners/networkforgood/donate.jsp?ein=13-3081501> and join NOSC/FOG today.

URBAN OUTDOORS is the monthly newsletter of Neighborhood Open Space Coalition and Friends of Gateway. It reports on citywide public space issues and the work of hundreds of local civic groups that take an interest in the spaces. To be removed from the list reply with "remove" in the subject header. To add someone to URBAN OUTDOORS list: visit the subscription area of <http://www.treebranch.net/>.

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