

West 104th Street

JUNE 2022

BLOCK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

A Dash of Color



Vibrant, hardy Dragon Winged Begonias were planted in the block's tree gardens on May 14. The Block Association's Planting Committee—Mary Jo Gennaro, Lynn Max, Larry Stern and Alex Grannis, selected the pink and red flowering plants to brighten the block's 21 tree gardens this summer because they are sturdy and flourish both in bright and partial sunlight. The Block Association worked with Urban Explorations to plant some 43 trays of the begonias. This included replacing and replenishing lost soil in each tree garden, and mulching the beds. Two weeks before the planting, the Block Association had Bartlett Tree Experts come and deep feed each of the block's 20 trees.

Save The Date! The Yard Sale Is Coming on Oct. 1!

The days are longer. The sunsets linger. It's time to start planning the Block Association's signature event, the annual Yard Sale. On Saturday, October 1, the block will fill with more than 60 vendors selling everything from vintage Depression-era glass to children's toys. It's a day of live music, fun, amazing finds, and delicious food.

The secret of the Yard Sale's success is neighbors like you. Rent space for a table (\$65) to sell all that pandemic-related kitchen gear—goodbye, breadmaker! Or get rid of knick-knacks and extras (paging Marie Kondo). Go to www.bloomingtondale.org, the Block Association website, to fill out a rental form and nab your space now.



Morning shoppers at the 2021 Yard Sale

Looking for a good read? Browse the Yard Sale's book table, an extraordinary collection of classics and contemporary finds, cookbooks and childrens' favorites. Want to get rid of all those bestsellers piling up beside your bed? The book table will be accepting donations from September 15-29. Please bring books in good condition to the lobby of 320 Riverside Drive.

And the celebrated What-a-Bargain table also will begin taking donations on September 15. This is another great way to declutter while supporting West 104th Street. Please see upcoming block flyers for donation process details.

And there's more. The block's amazing home chefs make the bake table a feast of treats. The Silent Auction features gift certificates from local restaurants, stores, and museums to bid on, as well as great--and unusual items—from oil paintings to orange juicers. And the 50/50 raffle means someone will walk away a big winner!

The Yard Sale has been a block tradition for 31 years. Like our neighborhood, it's welcoming, quirky, and relaxed. Drop by for a few minutes—or a few hours. We'd love to say hi.

The Rat Patrol Returns, see page 6.

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Contributors to the May Issue:

Hayley Elszasz, Mary Jo Gennaro, Stephen Helman, Lynn Bender Max, Hanna Rubin (editor), Larry Stern, Gary Waskow, Sharon Waskow, Steve Zirinsky. Newsletter designer: Brian Hajjar

WEST 104 BLOCK ASSN FINANCIAL REPORT

APRIL 2022

OPENING BALANCE	\$42,283.73
Income.....	2,425.22
Dues.....	1,994.72
Ad fees.....	430.00
EXPENSES	3,054.38
Guard Service	3,054.38
CLOSING BALANCE	\$42,654.57

Neighborhood Wishes

We asked West 104th Street residents what improvements or changes they would like to see in our neighborhood. We'll share their suggestions over the coming issues.

"Have all residents co-operate in the battle against rats by investing in rat resistant garbage receptacles and keeping them closed after use. Quickly cleaning up in front of your building any loose garbage on the sidewalk, especially after garbage collection."

—Larry Stern

"Walking home from shopping on Broadway, I find it hard to cross the street mid-block because the cars are parked so close together that I cannot get by. The problem is made worse in winter or on days when the trash bags are out. I live on the north side of West 104th. Double-parking on the street makes it impossible for emergency vehicles to get through. Parking on both sides of the street combined with deliveries or trash pickup also makes it impossible for emergency vehicles to get through."

—Ira Gershenhorn

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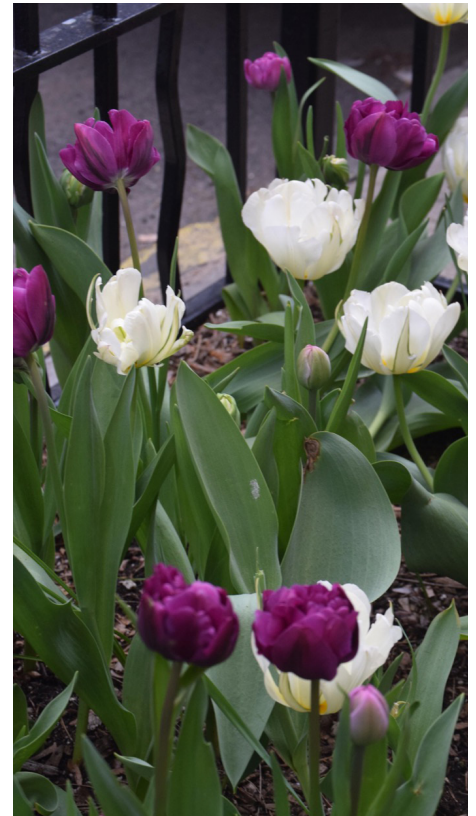
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Bloomingdale in Bloom

The Dutch settlers called our neighborhood Bloemendaal or “valley of flowers.”



Top: Flowering Crabapple in Riverside Park; tulips in front of 895 West End Avenue; Below, Yoshino Flowering Cherry in Straus Park; Kwanzan Flowering Cherry on West 106th Street.



The Rat Patrol Returns

The Block Association has begun a special effort to control rats.

By Steve Zirinsky

Dealing with rats has never been easy, as the rat population has made it more than evident these past few months on the south side of the block, so the Block Association is taking action. It is a multifaceted approach, partnering with several New York City agencies and the block community in an effort to make the rats feel most un-welcomed by stopping the availability of food.

To this end, the Department of Sanitation has agreed to allow the block to participate in a pilot program that will allow use of trash cans with integral lids to store the plastic bags of garbage left at curbside for pickup. This is being instituted over the next few weeks. Also, efforts will be made to keep the garbage waiting for pickup at some distance from the tree wells.

Additionally, the Department of Health has baited the tree beds and adjacent brownstone areas and will be monitoring them for the summer. The agency will issue violations for buildings not maintaining their trash. The baiting only works if the rats eat it, which



only happens when more attractive food options are not available.

Now, for the community part. The Block Association is installing a specialty rat adverse mesh, that will not harm the trees, in one tree bed that has a bad infestation. We may well place the mesh in two or three more if the installation is deemed successful. The mesh makes it more difficult for the rats to excavate and make their burrows. We have also planted mint in the tree beds, since rats are supposed to be adverse to the scent.

Additionally, the Block Association wants to encourage everyone to use the composting bins that get placed outside for pickup every couple of days. These organic waste bins are secure and effective in keeping food from the rats, and helps long term with the reduction of edible waste.

Additionally, the Block Association is helping the owners of certain brownstones to get proper garbage cans.

Will these efforts work? Probably no single effort will succeed on its own, but taken together, they will likely have an impact.



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Annual Meeting Features Fire Department Safety Presentation A few simple steps can save your life

The West 104th Street Block Association held its annual meeting on May 12 via Zoom. In addition to board elections and reports from the president and treasurer, Captain Jerry Rocca of the New York City Fire Department gave a fire safety presentation. Here are highlights of the safety tips he shared.

- Don't use water to put out a kitchen grease fire. Smother it with a pot lid or baking soda, which is the same chemical used in fire extinguishers.
- Get a fire extinguisher for your home, and keep it in an accessible place—not the kitchen where you may have trouble reaching it if a fire starts.
- Don't use an extension cord for anything that makes things hot—like a microwave—or cold, like an air conditioner. Always plug those appliances directly into an outlet.
- In a fireproof building, it is very difficult for a fire to get out of an apartment. It's safer, if you are in another apartment, to shelter in place. Buildings that are 7 stories or taller are generally fireproof.

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Around the World on Amsterdam Avenue

Local restaurants take you on a delicious, continent-skipping journey.

By Hayley Elszasz

By my count, there are about 30 restaurants located between 101st and 107th streets on Amsterdam Avenue. This diverse selection includes cuisine from North and South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia – from Mexican to Ethiopian, Vietnamese to Dominican. You can truly sample the globe a few blocks from West 104th Street.

I took a walk down this busy street to talk to some of the owners, chefs, and waitstaff at a selection of Amsterdam's establishments. Below, you'll find just a sample of what's on offer (listed in alphabetical order).

Arco Cafe is on Amsterdam Avenue between 103rd and 104th, where it has been since 2014. This is my neighborhood pick for regional Italian specialties; it showcases the cuisine of Sardinia, where Arco's owners are from. The menu includes homemade pasta dishes, as well as salads, meaty mains, and desserts. Staffers say the most iconic dishes to try include mallorreddos and fregola, pasta varieties that may be new to those of us not versed in Sardinian cooking. Pasta dishes cost about \$20 each, and main courses run from \$19 (chicken) to \$37 (skirt steak). If you can make it for lunch, they offer a special: an appetizer and main for \$21! The mid-sized restaurant offers outdoor seating and fresh pasta that you can take home and cook.

Awash is a celebrated neighborhood establishment between 106th and 107th, first opened in 1994. You can try their excellent Ethiopian in an indoor or outdoor setting. First visitors should order a sampler platter, which comes in either vegan or meat varieties (\$20 during dinner or \$13 for lunch) to try a range of popular dishes. While you're there, I would also recommend ordering an Ethiopian coffee or tea.

Makana, serving Hawaiian on 106th Street and Amsterdam, is a vacation in a bowl. This restaurant is more casual than the others— they mostly serve bowls and tacos – but ino less exciting. According to a staffer, the most popular

dishes to try are the Loco Moco (beef patties) and the Kalua Pig bowls. Entrees are priced at about \$12-14, making it a great choice for a quick meal or takeout.

Mayan Bistro – on Amsterdam between 101st and 102nd – is the newest kid on the block. Despite its name, this restaurant specializes in American bistro food. According to their chef, who is from Mexico, "everything is good!" Mayan Bistro services lunch, brunch, and dinner. They have indoor dining and a few tables outside as well; they also offer discounts for Columbia students, firefighters, and police officers. Entrees are priced at about \$20. According to a sign outside, they offer free coffee and juice along with brunch on weekends (at least for now!)

Tropical Sensation is my pick for frozen margaritas and island flavor. This Dominican restaurant, on Amsterdam between 106th and 107th, is also quite long-lived: it has been serving up meat,



seafood, vegetable dishes, and cocktails since 2008. The owners are from the Dominican Republic. A member of staff I spoke to told me they specialize in mofongos, which are mashed plantains that come with either meat or seafood. However, people often come here for the margaritas, she said. Entrees run from \$15-30. There is seating outside if you want to take your frozen drink in the open air.

**A roundup of
Broadway restaurants
will be featured in an
upcoming issue.**



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The block association board meets once a month (now via Zoom). We enjoy having residents attend the meetings. Please let us know if you would like to attend one and we will send you an invitation. steve@zirinskyarch.com

Contribute to the Newsletter
 Interested in writing or photographing for the West 104th Street Block Association newsletter? Have suggestions about what to cover in the neighborhood? Want to share block news, suggest a profile, send a photo? Please send an email to Hanna.Rubin@verizon.net. Your ideas are welcome.

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2022 3rd Quarter Dues:

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