

West 104th Street

FEBRUARY 2025

BLOCK ASSOCIATION

From Blustery to Blooming

Neighbors and helpers pitch in to plant 1200 foxtrot tulip bulbs

Photos by Lynn Max and Larry Stern



On a cold November morning, laying the groundwork for spring. From top left: Mary Pat Draddy, Mary Jo Gennaro and Steve Akeson; helper Kristin with Katharine Randall and a sack of bulbs; Julie Weisman; Mary Jo Gennaro and Mary Pat Draddy; Larry Stern with bulbs.

Letter From the President

By Steve Zirinsky

Over the last few years, I've watched our Block Association grow in wonderful ways. We have more swag, more vendors at the Yard Sale, and an incredible increase in participation, especially during the Yard Sale. It's been exciting to see how much the community



Steve Zirinsky and Buddy

comes together. However, I still feel there are many people on the block who might not be fully tapping into the many benefits our association offers.

Like anything in life, the more you put in, the more you get out. While everyone enjoys the security guard, the flowers, and the other amenities, the true rewards come when you actively participate. This isn't something you can experience at Lincoln Center, at the movies, or at the theater. Our Block Association is a unique opportunity—one that you can't find just anywhere—and it's what makes us special.

We want to invite you to join us this year for several exciting events:

Early June: Come together with neighbors for an amazing food-tasting experience, organized by the Columbus Amsterdam Avenue BID. It's a great chance to meet new people, enjoy delicious food, and explore what our neighborhood has to offer.

Annual Meeting: This coming spring (date to be determined) will feature a fascinating presentation by the Manhattan Topographical Office. They will share early maps of the area, some dating back to colonial times. There is a treasure trove of historical documents to explore. This is an exclusive presentation that has

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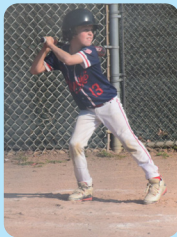
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Contributors to the February Issue: Jennifer Jones, Mary Koval, Nancy Lian, Lynn Bender Max, Hanna Rubin (editor), Larry Stern, Pam Tice, Sharon Waskow, Steve Zirinsky. Newsletter designer: Brian Hajjar. Advertising: Jennifer Jones.

Letter to the Editor: A Sport Fan's Request



Hi Neighbors,
 My name is Nico Stampur and I am 8 years old. I love collecting sports cards and memorabilia and am trying to build my collection. If you have any cards or memorabilia that need a good new home or are just taking up space in your apartment or storage unit, and would like to donate to me as I build my collection, I would be very grateful. I love sorting them, learning about the players, teams and the past.

You can contact me by calling my dad's phone at 917 513-3781 and I will come scoop the old shoe box, binder, bag, or container they are collecting dust in.
 Thank you very much!
 -Nico

W 104 ST BLOCK ASSN FINANCIAL REPORT

2024 Year End Financials

Starting Balance: \$19,735.35

Income	\$69,447.76
Dues	\$26,552.43
Co-op Contribution	\$10,684.06
Contributions	\$7,693.95
Newsletter Ads.....	\$1,134.00
Merchandise	\$3,273.97
Activities.....	\$1,618.00
Year End.....	\$17,880.19
Credits	\$611.16

Expenses	\$69,644.77
Guard Service	\$39,504.60
Tips.....	\$620.00
Newsletter	\$2,892.06
Printing Costs	\$425.31
Supplies	\$328.19
Beautification-Tulip	\$10,677.35
Rodent Control.....	\$838.34
Merchandise.....	\$2,181.86
Activities.....	\$2,079.21
Year End.....	\$8,775.18
Website.....	\$35.99
Operating/IT	\$1,068.54
Legal/Acct.....	\$218.14

Closing Balance: \$12,775.19

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An Elegant Landmark

Hosteling International's New York locale has a storied history and a famous architect.

By Pam Tice

The gracious Victorian building on Amsterdam Avenue at West 103rd Street has a long history in our neighborhood. Today, it serves as the city's "official" youth hostel, housing young international and American travelers.

The building was erected in 1883 as The Association for the Relief of Respectable Aged Indigent Females, a charity started in the early 19th century by women concerned about elderly women who had no family to care for them. The Association built its first Asylum in 1838 on East 20th Street but outgrew that space and looked uptown for a larger accommodation. The Upper West Side was growing, helped by the development of the Ninth Avenue El.

A Refuge for \$1000

The Asylum was managed by a Matron under rules developed by the female Board of Managers. Women accepted for residence had to show proof of their respectability, evidenced by recommendations. They had to bring their own bedding and furniture, all of which would become the property of the Asylum.

They paid a specified amount to enter, starting at \$50 in the 1840s and gradually increasing to \$1,000, and had to turn any property they owned over to the Association. By the mid-20th century, a monthly fee was charged. The Matron had numerous rules to follow, including keeping the fire going, a lamp lit all night, overseeing food preparation, and a main meal at midday. She was also to dispense "spiritous liquor" if a doctor recommended it.



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The Gilded Age's Richard Morris Hunt

After almost choosing a site on Park Avenue between East 78th and 79th Streets, the Association's Advisory Committee, a group of gentlemen under the direction of former New York Governor and Senator Edwin D. Morgan, found the property on Tenth Avenue. Perhaps due to the social connections of Mr. Morgan and his wife Eliza who chaired the Board, Richard Morris Hunt was chosen as the architect for the building. He was the first American architect to attend the L'École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. On his return to New York, he established his practice and was soon designing the homes of the wealthiest citizens of New York. The Vanderbilt mansions on Fifth Avenue are gone now, but the homes he designed in Newport, Rhode Island, and the Biltmore Estate in North Carolina are still standing. He also designed the base of the Statue of Liberty, and the original front façade of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The original Association building did not cover the whole block. In 1908, Mrs. Russell Sage made a large gift, and the building was extended down to West 103rd Street, adding more rooms and a chapel for worship, complete with Tiffany windows. Censuses covering the neighborhood show the population of the Asylum staying steady at 100 to 110 residents, a Matron, and about 25 employees, from a cook to a laundress to an "ash-man" when the rooms had individual fireplaces, and, later, nurses. Many women residents were eventually buried at a gravesite in the uptown Trinity Cemetery. A few of their ghosts linger in the building today.



Saved from Slum Clearance

During the period of "slum clearance" in the 1950s, the Association Residence was nearly lost as Frederick Douglass Houses was developed and built. By the late 1960s, after Medicare and Medicaid became the funding source for elderly care, the building did not meet the standards set, as its wooden staircases and parquet floors were deemed unsafe. The Association decided to tear down the building and build to meet the new standards.

The Lure of a Local Landmark continued from page 3

And then an interesting series of events began. A Columbia University student in the new Historic Preservation program chose the building for a project on landmarking and got it listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The students rounded up other New York preservationists, many neighbors, and soon everyone rallied around “Save the Hunt Building.”

The Association Board fought back. However when the students and their legal advisors found that if Federal funds would be used to demolish a building on the National Register, there had to be an Environmental impact statement. They initiated a lawsuit that slowed the process down. The Association could not sustain the operation of the residence and in 1974 moved the last of the women to another facility.



A resident's room in an undated photo

The building stood empty and then became vandalized. The City of New York became the owner and almost tore it down. In 1983, the City gave it local landmark status. Then, the neighborhood went to work to see what it might be used for and how to finance a restoration. After several years, in early 1990s the building came back to life as a youth

hostel operated by the American organization of the global non-profit Hostelling International.

The youth hostel now stands as a neighborhood institution, housing young travelers, hosting community events, and providing employment for many local residents. The building itself adds a graceful note to Amsterdam Avenue.

Pam Tice is a member of the Program Committee of the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group which has a longer blog post about this building on their website: www.upperwestside.org. She served as the Executive Director of the Hostel from its opening in 1990 to 1999.

Letter From the President continued from page 1

not been seen by the general public, one that you won't want to miss. You will find out where the pond and stream are on our block as well as where the original shoreline was.

Lobby Sits: In the coming weeks, we'll be holding informal “lobby sits” in the larger buildings around the block. This is a great opportunity for residents to get to know one another and members of the Block Association board, as well as learn more about the association.

Raffle Table: A great way to meet the block and get the “vibe” of the neighborhood is to help us sell raffle tickets in the run-up to the Yard Sale. We will be raffling in September, and the Yard Sale this year will be on Sept 27th.

On another note, our Free Compost Pail Initiative has been a tremendous success. Initially, I received a dozen pails, but demand was so high that I had to order 48 more! Please remember to use the pails as intended to help keep our block clean and green.

On the subject of rat control: The use of composting cans and placing the curbside garbage pickup in containers rather than plastic bags has made a significant difference. This area has become a lot less interesting to the rats. This is the way forward—finally—on this problem.

The Block Association is what we make of it. It's only as strong as the participation of our residents. The more you engage, the more we all benefit. I hope you'll join us in making this another fantastic year for our community.

Oh, and don't forget your dues! Thank you for your continued support!

See you on the block!

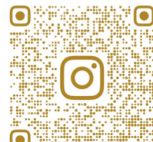
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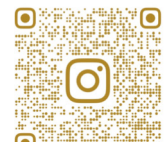
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Under Winter's Spell

Photos by Stephen Helman, Jennifer Jones and Larry Stern



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Pro Planet Options for Uncertain Times

A founder of It's Easy Being Green shares her tips.

By Sharon Waskow

We're living in uncertain times for the planet. It seems clear that mitigating the effects of climate change is not a top of mind issue for our current federal administration. You can read a quick summary of the executive orders so far that the greatest impact on climate on the Columbia University Law School website. And locally, the Department of Transportation recently issued a threat to end congestion pricing because the agency believes it hurts business.

How can we maintain the progress we have made in cleaning up our air and water, reducing plastic pollution, combating food waste and improving the health of all our citizens? It's Easy Being Green (IEBG) believes that individual actions add up to help the planet. Consider adopting one or two new habits to be on the solutions side of climate change:

- Air dry your laundry to reduce reliance on electricity. Invest in a folding drying rack
- Take public transportation, walk or bike when possible
- Eat less meat and dairy. Their production contributes to greenhouse gas emissions.
- Bring your water bottle or reusable mug everywhere, every day.
- Patronize the food shops in our neighborhood participating in the BYO container program (Cool Fresh Juice Bar, Broadway 101st, Zelma's Cafe at Broadway 101st, Metro Diner, Broadway 100th, Health Nuts, Broadway 99th.) See a full list of participants on the IEBG website. Join a climate action group. Consider joining the IEBG team. Write to us at itseasybeinggreen.uws@gmail.com. You can be involved as much as your available time permits. Consult one5c.com for other pro-planet habit change ideas.

Advocate for environmental laws on the city and state level. Here are a few examples:

- The Plastic Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act S1464/A1749 will make producers of plastic packaging pay for the pollution they create in New York State. Some of its goals are:
- Reduce plastic packaging by 30% gradually over the next 12 years
- Require producers of plastic to pay fees to cover municipalities' costs of waste management and recycling and to make grants supporting reuse and refill projects

Read more about it here: <https://www.beyondplastics.org/press-releases/plastic-industry-albany-lobby-day-1-28-25/> Write or call your

NYS Assembly person or Senator to tell them to co-sponsor this law and make sure it is brought up for a vote this session.

Contact Micah Lasher 212-866-3970 lasherm@nyassembly.gov
Senator Cordelle Cleare cleare@nysenate.gov 212-222-7315.
Brad Hoylman-Sigal hoylman@senate.gov (212) 633-8052

The Hydration for All Act proposes to put 500 water refill stations in all boroughs of NYC. Read more about it here: <https://nyc.surfrider.org/campaigns/NYC+Hydration+For+All+Act/> Write your city councilmember to urge them to co-sponsor this bill and/or to bring it up for a vote. Contact Council Member Shaun Abreu's Legislative office -Phone: 212-788-7007, email: district7council@nyc.gov


Vote with the environment in mind. Mayoral elections are coming up. Become familiar with the candidates' policies, proposals and voting records on the environment. Attend mayoral candidate forums and ask questions. Read the candidates' positions on the environment.

Sign up to receive the monthly It's Easy Being Green newsletter to keep abreast of environmental information and actions you can take. Subscribe at itseasybeinggreen.org.



Holiday Food and Toy Drive Draws Robust Reponse

The Block Association's fifth annual Holiday Food and Toy Drive once again drew strong participation from block residents. Thanks to their generous contributions, the block contributed 20 boxes of food to City Harvest, which stocks food pantries all over the city. Several women's shelters divided up the 15 bags of toys that were collected. Special thanks goes to 320 Riverside Drive resident Peter Littlewood, who once again organized the effort, and to Block Association board member Jennifer Jones, who helped coordinate it with block buildings.



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BLOOMINGDALE AGING IN PLACE (BAiP)

Bloominplace.org
BAiP is an intergenerational volunteer network of neighbors working to help older residents to continue living at home safely and comfortably. BAiP sponsors social and cultural activities, provides educational tools, and a helping hand for those in need through its Neighbor-to-Neighbor (N2N) program. The latter takes the form of providing help going places, running errands, light shopping, accompaniment at home or outdoors, and information. If you want to contact N2N for this kind of assistance, or to talk about volunteering, e-mail: N2N@bloominplace.org, or call: 212.842.8831 to leave a message with your contact information. Either way, a BAiP member will respond promptly.

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I am a BAiP member and licensed independent agent with the AARP/United Health Care Medicare plans. I am happy to help you understand Medicare and Medicare plan options (no cost). Please feel free to contact me at (cell) 914-419-5499 or (email) susanmschorphd@gmail.com.

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Publicize your neighborhood service (babysitting, dog walking, apartment cleaning, etc.) free in the newsletter and on our web site for one year, renewable. To submit an ad mail/deliver this information to Hanna Rubin, Hanna.Rubin@verizon.net.

For our records:

Your name and mailing address

For publication: Your name, contact method (phone or email address), description of your service

The block association board meets once a month. 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

Pay Your Dues Online

Visit the Block Association's website for epay options. Use the QR code below to access online dues payment.



Check Your Junk Folder

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2025 1st Quarter Dues:

Please allocate my contribution to:

___ Security ___ Beautification ___ Social ___ Newsletter ___ Board Decision (Suggested amt: \$43.75/quarter or \$175/year)

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(For internal use only. The Block Assn. will not sell, exchange, or lend your e-mail address to any outside parties.)

Suggestions for the block: _____

Make checks payable to West 104th Street Block Association Inc.

Please send to our vice-president, Mary Jo Gennaro, 315 Riverside Dr., Apt. 7C, NY NY 10025 or leave with one of the following:

M. Mann: 309 W. 104, Apt 3A

A. Grannis: 895 West End Ave.

G. Waskow: 320 RSD, Apt. 8G

M.J. Gennaro, 315 RSD, Apt. 7C