

# West 104<sup>th</sup> Street

MARCH 2026

BLOCK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

## Out in the Cold

Even multiple snow storms couldn't keep the neighborhood indoors this winter.



Above: Intrepid joggers; below: snowman in the works. More snow photos page 5.



## President's Letter

The secret sauce is....

By Steve Zirinsky

**T**he block we live on is not just made of brick and stone, but of people.

The yard sale in the fall transforms the block from a stretch of brick, asphalt, and brownstones into something alive—into a feeling that is hard to put into words. However, if you have participated in the yard sale—as a vendor, a buyer, or even just someone passing by—you know exactly what I



Steve Zirinsky and Buddy

mean. In those moments, neighbors become friends, conversations spill onto the sidewalk, and the ordinary turns into something special.

The Block Association exists to knit all of this together, weaving people, places, and shared moments into a true community. That is what makes our block different from those without an association. It is the security guard who knows and greets everyone by name, the flowers we plant together, and the events we host throughout the year. This year, we hope to do even more—sidewalk curb cafés, events with Uptown Cinema, painting and cleaning up Broadway, and other gatherings and events that bring us together.

This community is not just the large co-ops.

Not just the condos.

Not just the brownstones.

Not just the rentals.

It is all of us.

But none of this happens on its own. It requires funding, energy, and participation. It takes neighbors willing to give their time, share their ideas, and contribute what they can.

For those who have contributed before, I don't have to convince you—you already know the difference your support makes. For those who have not, please consider contributing—whether through a donation, volunteering your time, or sharing your ideas. Every contribution matters. Every hour helps.

We also want people to think creatively about other ways we can all connect as a community. Your energy and participation can help make our block even stronger and more vibrant.

Together, we can continue to make our block not just a place we live, but a community we are proud to call home.

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Riverside branches make a sinuous pattern in the snow on 2/23/26.

**2025 W 104th St. Block Assn Financial Report**

**Starting Balance: \$12,775.19**

**Income \$88,703.76**

Dues .....	\$28,389.86
Co-op Contribution.....	\$16,143.40
Contributions .....	\$2,922.84
Fundraiser Beaut.....	\$6,592.93
Rodent Fund .....	\$600.00
Newsletter Ads .....	\$1,280.00
Merchandise .....	\$4,427.38
Activities.....	\$1,041.40
Yard Sale .....	\$27,080.95
Credits .....	\$225.00

**Expenses \$77,313.08**

Guard Service .....	\$41,442.48
Tips.....	\$600.00
Newsletter.....	\$2,747.38
Printing Costs.....	\$155.04
Supplies .....	\$138.91
Beautification.....	\$13,959.14
Rodent Control .....	\$2,145.93
Merchandise .....	\$2,957.53
Activities.....	\$967.24
Yard Sale .....	\$9,409.54
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Operating/IT .....	\$1,059.91
Legal/Acct.....	\$1443.81

**Closing Balance: \$24,165.87**

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Martin Mann ..... 309 W 104

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Hanna Rubin ..... 315 RSD

Gary Waskow ..... 320 RSD

Julie Weisman ..... 315 RSD

Nancy Lian (ex officio) ..... 320 RSD



# Holiday Train Scenes Enchant Block

A resident makes magic with winter scenes in his windows

By Joyce Mann

**T**ake a stroll down the north side of West 104<sup>th</sup> Street in December and your eye will be caught by three ground floor windows that have been transformed into miniature snow scenes. Rob Youllar (with support from his wife Molly Fergus) is the creator of the enchanting Alpine train scenes on view every Christmas season via his three front windows at 309 West 104<sup>th</sup> Street.

“My dad was a Long Island Railroad conductor, so trains have been part of my life since I was a child,” Youllar says. “My father collected Lionel trains and ceramic houses for the train set that went under our Christmas tree every year. When I was 6 or 7 years old I wanted my own set, so my dad purchased some small scale trains for me. As a matter of fact, every December 26<sup>th</sup> my dad and brother and I rode the Long Island railroad to Herald Square first thing in the morning because Macy’s put all their ceramic train houses on sale for half price, so we added to our collection for the next year.”

The Youllars are also avid skiers, traveling to Vermont every winter. Especially memorable for them was visiting Colmar, a storybook village in the Alsace region of France where they shopped at the famous Christmas markets. They also have skied a few times in the Alps. “Those visits and experiences almost definitely inspired our window exhibits, I am sure,” says Youllar.

The Youllars moved to West 104<sup>th</sup> Street five years ago. That first year, Rob hoped to use some of his classic childhood trains but they were 40 years old. The engines were shot and the wheels kept falling off. So he bought new engines and new sets and used those. He hopes to re-introduce those classic trains next year since he recently bought parts to repair them.

In the beginning Youllar didn’t know if anyone even noticed the Alpine



The silver engine making the circuit.

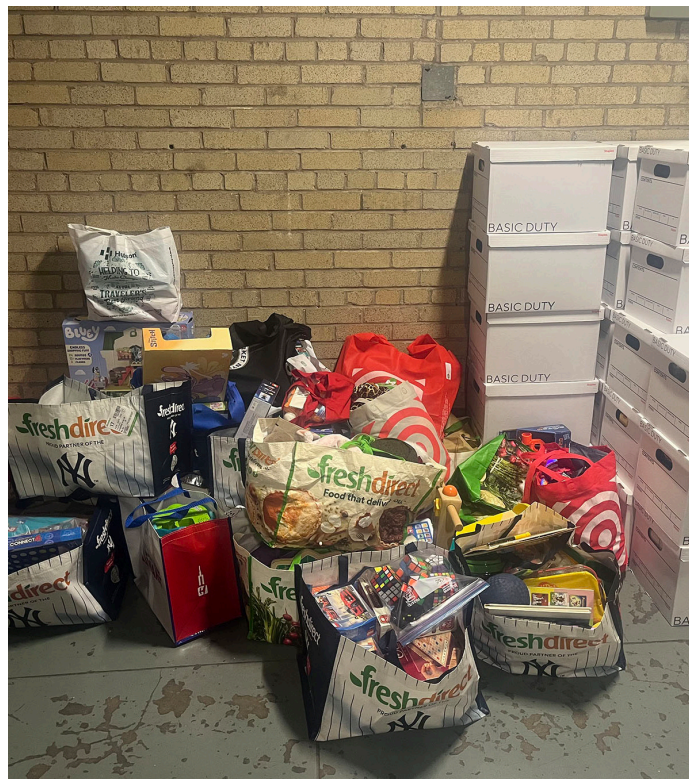
setups, but a card from some 309 neighbors telling him how delightful and charming the scene was encouraged him to continue. He does vary the trains on a regular basis all the time, using the silver engine set because it is the most reliable if the family leaves town for a few days.

In recent years he installed side curtains to frame the Alpine scenes, added white velvet fabric to mimic snow, and even built a special wooden platform inside his apartment so the train could run at eye level when viewed from the street. He has expanded the tracks to run through two windows, so the train runs on a loop into their living room, then through and back out into the second window. This year the scene included a ski lift and next year a chair lift will appear as well.

As you can imagine, it takes him many hours to just assemble all the materials and a full day to install everything, but he enjoys the creativity of it and the nostalgia, and now their 2-year-old daughter Etta can continue to enjoy it for years to come, as will our entire neighborhood.

## Block Food and Toy Drive a Success

The Block Association’s sixth annual Holiday Food and Toy Drive drew a robust response from block residents. Generous contributors donated 19 boxes of food and more than 20 bags of toys. The Block Association partners with City Harvest to collect the food donations for local pantries and soup kitchens. Toys go to WomanKind, Not4gotten NYC and Toys for Tots. Big thanks go to volunteer coordinator Peter Littlewood and BA Board Member Jennifer Jones for organizing.



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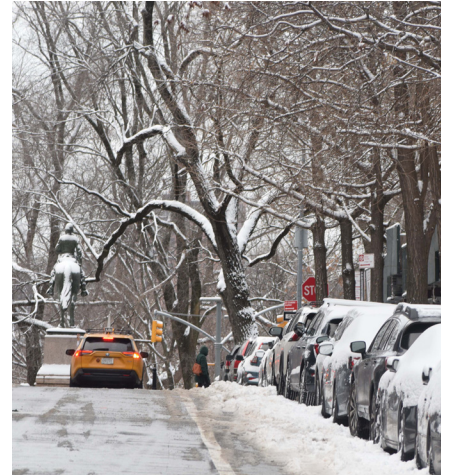
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# Winter Whites

Snowstorms in January and February brought a special magic to the neighborhood.



Clockwise from upper left: 103rd Street entrance to Riverside Park; sledders in the park around 105th Street; taxi on snowy West 106th Street; tree transformation; snow cat meets snow dog; Ryan the corgi; snow cloaks the statue of Shinran Shonin, a 13th century Buddhist teacher, which stands in front of the Buddhist Church. The statue has survived more than a storm. It was one of the few artifacts to survive the bombing of Hiroshima.



# New Containerization Program Comes to Neighborhood

By Sharon Waskow

Though they haven't yet reached our block you may have noticed the big permanent Empire bins on 111th between Riverside and West End Ave. Recently Renee Cho, a member of the local environmental group It's Easy Being Green published an article in the group's enews explaining the thinking behind the movement to shift garbage collection to these new containers. This article is a summary.

## What is containerization?

The placing of garbage into secure bins instead of trash bags, which are routinely ripped open by rats and other pests as they pile up on sidewalks. Large permanent bins are called Empire bins.

## When did containerization become policy?

In November 2024, the NYC Sanitation Department mandated that all residential buildings with less than 10 units put their garbage into secured and latching individual bins, 55 gallons or less. Depending on how many residential units they serve, buildings can choose between 45-, 35- and 25-gallon sized bins. Buildings with 10-30 residences can opt for individual bins or the larger Empire bins. Empire bins hold 4 cubic yards (793 gallons) of waste.

## What is the purpose of containerization?

In 2023 the rat population of NYC was estimated to be 3 million. Plastic bags of trash left on sidewalks offered rats a field day and a threat to public health. Since containerization rules went into effect, reported rat sightings

decreased 20.4% (20,025 reports 12/24-11/25 as opposed to 25,230 in the same time period 12/23-11/24).

## Are there drawbacks?

Empire bins sit on the street and are picked up by DSNY's new automated side-loading trucks. As a result, they displace parking spaces in a city where finding on street parking is already a challenge. One DSNY report suggests that placing bins in all boroughs could displace 100,000 parking spaces because people are not allowed to double park near bins. Some residents also complain about the aesthetics of these large grey bins.

## What are some environmental benefits of containerization?

The automated trucks work more efficiently than sanitation workers tossing bags into the trucks. The trucks, which usually run on diesel fuel, are not idling for as long on the streets. As a result, they use less fuel and emit less air pollutants and climate warming gases.

When plastic garbage bags are left on the sidewalk and eaten into by rodents or birds, plastic litter can make its way into the environment, eventually degrading into microplastics. Wind and rain transport these microplastics into storm drains and ultimately into our waterways.

*Sharon Waskow is the leader of It's Easy Being Green, a local environmental group.*



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# Cinema for the Community

The group behind the Metro renovation launches two local film series to raise awareness.

By Beth Krieger and Joyce Mann

The Uptown Film Center (aka Upper West Side Cinema Center), the nonprofit that was formed to purchase and transform the former Metro Theater is hosting two film series this winter/spring to raise awareness of the initiative and to show the kind of programming they expect to mount. The West 104<sup>th</sup> Street Block Association is a sponsor of the film series, providing publicity and other non-financial support to the group. In return, Block Association members receive a discount to the organization's film screenings.

## Arthouse Dream

Led by film executive and Columbia professor Ira Deutchman, the nonprofit hopes to preserve and transform the historic theater into a five-screen arthouse featuring movie classics, foreign films, documentaries, and first-run independent films. The new center would also include an education center and a café/lounge. The nonprofit raised the funds to buy the property—\$6.9 million—with donations and generous grants from foundations, New York State's Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature, as well as more than 500 individual donors.

The successful purchase of the theater was announced in April 2025. In October 2025, the organization rebranded itself as the Uptown Film Center, with a goal of raising another \$29 million for the construction project. The goal is for the Uptown to reopen in 2028. So far, the nonprofit has raised 30.5% of its total budget, including the building purchase. They have already applied this year for significant state and city grants, and say they will continue to “relentlessly knock on doors.”

## Film Series Launch

While the nonprofit's leadership is working hard on construction plans and ongoing fundraising, they are equally committed to bringing cinema to the community now—even without a theater. From February through May, the nonprofit is hosting two separate pop-up series—one at the Leonard Nimoy Thalia called “Science on Screen,” and the



Left: rendering of the new Uptown Film Center; right: poster for “Tales of the Immigrant City”

**Members of the West 104<sup>th</sup> Street Block Association are entitled to discount tickets (code 100block2026). For details and tickets, go to [uptownfilm.org/calendar](https://uptownfilm.org/calendar)**

second at The New York Historical titled “Tales of the Immigrant City.” The Science on Screen series was underwritten with funds secured by Assemblyman Shaun Abreu. Several local block and neighborhood associations (including the West 104<sup>th</sup> St. Block Assn) have signed on as co-sponsors for both film series. Each of the films is accompanied by an expert speaker, filmmaker or academic. A summer pop-up series is also planned,

with several films being shown outdoors—including one in partnership with the Riverside Park Conservancy. The schedule and locations will be announced later this spring.

The nonprofit has urged local residents to get involved with the project. Here are several ways to do that:

1. Make a gift and be a founding donor! Financial donations of any size are welcome. Find ways of giving at [uptownfilm.org/donate](https://uptownfilm.org/donate).
2. Host a fundraiser for friends/neighbors. Contact [info@uptownfilm.org](mailto:info@uptownfilm.org) to find out how.
3. Sign up for the Uptown Newsletter to find out the latest news on the construction and upcoming events: [uptownfilm.org/mailling-list](https://uptownfilm.org/mailling-list)
4. Spread the word to friends and neighbors by forwarding newsletters about the project. Talk about it whenever you can! Read more about the campaign timeline: [uptownfilm.org/uptown-campaign](https://uptownfilm.org/uptown-campaign)

## New Member Joins Block Association Board



Julie Weisman has joined the West 104<sup>th</sup> Street Block Association Board. A native New Yorker, Weisman was born in Brooklyn and grew up in Whitestone, Queens. She and her husband Stephen Friedman moved onto the block to 315 Riverside Drive in 2022. A year after they moved, they adopted their corgi Ryan.

Weisman loves living on the block. “I was surprised as how friendly people are. My experience up until I moved to this block were people just

rushing around. While her daughters were growing up, Weisman and her husband lived in Tenafly, New Jersey. She still works in Newark running a family business that makes vanilla and other flavorings.

Living beside Riverside Park has made the transition back to the city easier. “Riverside Drive is bucolic,” she says. “I love how there are always groups of people who regularly congregate on the benches. Also, it’s a privilege to be steps away from trees and flowers and grass.”

## NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

### BABYSITTING

Experienced and eager block resident looking to babysit days, nights, and weekends. I'm a lifelong Upper West Sider and rising University of Michigan Senior. Looking forward to connecting, and please reach me on my cell at 917-834-3603.

### 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.

### MEDICARE & AARP/UNITED HEALTH CARE MEDICARE PLANS.

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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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](mailto:steve@zirinskyarch.com)

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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**

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