

Listen Up Folks!

*By Steven Skyles-Mulligan,
CRDC President*

Fun as it is to comment on the national scene and to play in the fields of history, every so often it's time to turn our attention closer to home and tend the garden. This is one of those times.

A couple of weeks ago, we had a general membership meeting on the topic of Hudson Yards. This is something that should concern all of us, as whatever is done on this seemingly vast, currently open space will compete for resources with the rest of Chelsea, strain our infrastructure and put pressure on our way of living. CRDC Vice President Lynn Kotler worked very hard to organize an interesting program with Anna Levin, co-chair of the Community Board 4 Land Use Committee.

Anna was interesting and very informative about what's going on – and is likely to go on – in the northwest portion of our little corner of the world. Unfortunately, few CRDC members turned out to hear what she had to say.

We have had disappointing showings for good speakers on other occasions and there is always a great flood of good ideas for getting more people to attend meetings. Most of these ideas start out with “you should...” In a community group like CRDC there is no “you”; there is only “we.” When we had a conversation at the October membership meeting about changing our approach from monthly meetings to bigger, splashier, less frequent affairs, there

was tremendous objection. Yet, only a small number of those who objected showed up for November's meeting.

Let me put it bluntly: if we collectively want something to happen, if we want a forum to be available, if we want our club to go on, then we collectively have to join together to make it happen. Part of this is an oft-written story about responsibility, duty and dedication. But another part of it is a not-yet-written story about opportunity, new challenges and exciting ways to stretch both collective and individual horizons.

We're up for the challenge and we can meet it together. What's your role? What can be your contribution? What excites you? Why are you involved? There are many questions and many different answers. The exploration process is fun and the accompanying growth will be amazing. I invite everyone to come up with some thoughts on what we can do together to bring a new vitality to our half-century old club.

Hurry, hurry, step right up...

Speaking of stepping up, it's time for club officer and executive committee nominations for 2008. Elections will be held on January 26, 2008. Names must be placed in nomination by the conclusion of our December membership meeting in order to appear on the ballot, although we can take some nominations from the floor on the night of the annual meeting.

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GENERAL MEETING

THURSDAY

DECEMBER 20, 2007 • 7:00 PM

Hudson Guild

441 West 26th Street

(btwn 9th & 10th Aves.)

AGENDA

“Hudson Guild Today”

Guest Speaker: Brian Saber
Executive Director

**Nominations for 2008 Officers
and Executive Committee
Members-at-Large**

Club Business Meeting to follow

CRDC's Kathy Kinsella Wins, Again

Kathy Kinsella, former District Leader and long-time CRDC member, was reelected Superintendent of Highways for the town of Rhinebeck in Dutchess County. Two years ago Kathy led a slate of Democratic candidates that swept the town for the first time in decades.

It's obvious that Kathy has a positive established record and is respected by the voters. I'm sure we can expect even bigger things from her in the coming years. Congratulations Kathy (our very own Madam Macadam)!

Here's How To Start The New Year Right!

By: Gloria Sukenick, Chair, CRDC Housing Committee

FLASH! SEE LAST PARAGRAPH FOR LATEST!

From Friday's edition of *The New York Times*:
"... 421-a tax program, was started in the 1970's to spur housing of all sorts."

I clearly remember the 1970's and '80's when homeless population was soaring and landlords were using the most egregious—not to mention frequently illegal—methods to empty apartments. So if someone were to ask me about the truth of the assumption that if you build enough housing, you will ultimately increase the amount of affordable housing, I would say the answer is obvious ... NO!

In Chelsea, one looks around, to see "luxury" buildings rising up one after the other, while our longtime residents disappear. At the same time, new stores—offering items available to those with hefty bank accounts and very high end tastes—are replacing small neighborhood businesses.

Finally, there's an opportunity to get the affordable housing we need in our gentrifying neighborhoods, so let's not blow it. Support Intro 490, the Palma bill.

A City Council bill (Intro 490) sponsored by Councilmember Palma calls for 30% of new development to be affordable to families earning no more than 50% of the median income (family of four earning up to \$35,000 a year) in order to qualify for the 421-a tax break. That housing must be *at the site*, not in some distant neighborhood, and it must remain permanently affordable. Finally someone has learned something from the displacement produced by Mitchell/Lama developments that have privatized and exacerbated the housing crisis.

Those 421-a tax breaks should be related to community benefit and address the dire shortage of affordable housing; developers would surely make a substantial profit without the tax incentive. Those tax dollars now available to developers of market rate housing could be used to create affordable housing and the Palma bill offers a real opportunity to do this. Let's not waste it: support the bill that offers some real hope of sustaining neighborhoods and building the housing needed by low and moderate income families

FLASH... here's the scoop. Wednesday 12/20 the City Council voted on the reform of the 421-a tax

abatement program. The Palma bill did create some improvements in the Quinn bill. Now the next push will be at the State level. The state will have the final say and if we're organized we can push for even more of an opportunity for the development of affordable housing.

Hudson Yards Bids Are In

by Andrew Berman, CRDC member

The bids are in for development of the Hudson Yards, the huge railroad yards along 11th Avenue between 31st and 33rd Street, where Mayor Bloomberg originally tried to put a Jets/Olympic Stadium. Unfortunately, the bids appear to be pretty horrible: enormous luxury housing and office developments. More than 10 million square feet of space is likely to be built on the railyards—roughly the equivalent of five Empire State Buildings. Each bid would generate a differing amount of affordable housing and in some cases this is not clear. Across the board, it seems to range from nonexistent to measly compared to the overall bulk of development at the site. Is that the best we can hope for from one of the largest pieces of undeveloped land in Manhattan, right on our doorstep?

The mega-projects currently being discussed will no doubt greatly increase traffic on our already overburdened streets, and burden other infrastructure like schools, mass transit, and hospitals. And yet there is no real plan for mitigating any of these impacts.

In many ways, it makes sense for the MTA to simply seek the highest bid for the site, and to then use the money towards mass transit, which is its mandate. But the MTA is not the only decision-maker here: the eastern railyards, from 10th to 11th Avenues, had to be rezoned by the City Planning Commission and the City Council to allow massive private commercial and luxury residential development. The western railyards, from 11th to 12th Avenues, which the bids are now in on, will require the same for these plans to move ahead.

It's bad enough that we are going to get so little that's good out of the railyards, but we are also going to get so much that is bad—so much more traffic, overcrowding, and diminished per capita public services. The City and the MTA have consistently said that it's impossible to just build affordable housing over the railyards due to the expense. And yet throughout Brooklyn and the Bronx in the 1970's, thousands of units of low-, moderate-, and middle-income housing were built over MTA railyards. Is the way the railyards are being developed the result of a lack of resources or a lack of political will?

Big Blue Wave Continues to Spread Across New York and the Nation

Thomas P. Schuler, CRDC District Leader

The results of the off-year elections in both New York and the nation continue to demonstrate the strength of the Democratic Party and point to the prospect of major gains across the country when America votes next November. While no national races were on the ballot, a reflection of the state and local races that did take place show the big blue wave continues.

The Nation

Political junkies focused on the statewide races in Kentucky, Louisiana and Mississippi, and legislative races in New Jersey and Virginia. Democratic Lt. Governor Steven Beshear scored a landslide win over incumbent Republican Ernie Fletcher. Beshear and the statewide Democratic ticket led a near sweep of all offices and increased their majorities in the state legislature. Democrats ran strong throughout the state even with race and gay baiting by the Republicans in the campaign's final hours. The results are seen as a sign that Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell may be in for a rough ride next year when he is up for reelection.

Even though Democrats lost the Governor's race in Louisiana, they were able to maintain control of the state legislature despite Republicans' best efforts and a nationwide effort by conservative groups in swing districts. Also in Louisiana the Democrat candidate for Lt. Governor was reelected, along with the candidate for Attorney General. These results, demonstrate that Democrats can still win statewide and helps the candidacy of Senator Mary Landrieu, who is considered the only endangered Democrat seeking reelection next year.

Democrats scored impressive wins in legislative races in Virginia, Louisiana, and New Jersey. The Virginia race was an intense battle with Democrats looking to take control of the State Senate for the first time in nearly a decade. This is important in that it will give Democrats a say when redistricting takes place after the 2010 census.

Overall in a somewhat quiet election cycle Democrats once again proved they can win. Even in long-time red states Democrats proved their staying power and rode the donkey to victory. With 2008 is right around the

corner, the political climate appears to remain a dark shade of blue.

New York State

The results of the November elections show a blue wave continuing to spread across New York State. Results from Long Island, through the Hudson Valley, and into the upstate region showed Democrats winning races throughout from Buffalo to Baldwin and all points between in what one political observer called "a rough night for Republicans in New York State."

Going into the election, Republicans had tried to make an issue of Governor Spitzer's plan to allow undocumented workers to obtain drivers licenses. Voters throughout the State showed they were smart to fall for the GOP's divisive tactics. Some of the more notable victors for the Democrats included Rich McNally, District Attorney for Rensselaer County (this happens to be the power base of Republican Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno!) McNally's win, along with a near sweep of Council candidates for the City of Troy, show Bruno's grasp on power is slipping.

Democrats registered victories big and small in cities and towns throughout the State, notably: a Democratic sweep in the town of Islip in Suffolk County; keeping a Democratic majority in the Nassau County Legislature despite a strong Republican effort; and victories that give Democrats super majorities on the Suffolk, Westchester, and Rockland County legislatures. In addition a Democratic candidate defeated the incumbent Republican as District Attorney of Rockland County. Several northern Westchester County towns swung Democratic and the entire slate of State Supreme Court Judge candidates swept in the lower Hudson Valley in this once Republican bastion. Other wins included mayors of Utica and Niagara Falls, and the County Clerk of Erie.

These wins demonstrate the confidence that voters have in the Democratic Party and bode well for continued success in 2008 when we will attempt to pick up the two seats needed for control of the New York State Senate and preserve the Congressional seats won in the 2006 Big Blue Wave. Oh yes, we'll have that Presidential contest, too.

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Chelsea, Madison Sq., Flatiron, Rosehill



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Our nominating committee will be determining the number of at-large seats and the list of offices to be filled, as well as pre-screening candidates. If you are interested in running—or in nominating someone else to run—please let me know in writing (email: steven@evokestrategies.com, or via postal mail c/o the Club) before December 15, 2007. It's a great way to make a contribution—and to get involved.

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