THE Morningsider

Number 3 August-September 2020



Home

Affordable Housing Issue

Also Inside:

- COVID: Now What?
- Survey: Tell us What's Important to You
- Supporting our Local Businesses
- Community Fund Awardees
- *Morningside Lights:* Luminaries
- Virtual Town Hall: September 21 @ 7pm

1 Line Commentary

Priorities

The reversal of plans for in-person undergraduate classes this fall by Morningside Heights academic institutions was a major development in our neighborhood. It was the right decision and we're thankful for it, especially as COVID continues to spike at schools across the country.

Because fewer students will be in our neighborhood in the coming months, our local businesses require greater community support. We are developing a plan to address this need.

These issues reinforce our vision of communities as interdependent ecosystems. MHCC continues to engage with diverse stakeholders to represent the many perspectives on our blocks. These voices must be expressed and understood, if we're going to claim to be a real and healthy community. **Please complete our Community Survey here by September 14, so we have the widest possible input from neighbors. Responses will inform our 9/21 Town Hall.**

Following is an overview of a critical element of our ecosystem — affordable housing. In describing it, we also offer proposals for protecting and improving our shared home in New York.



Best-Dressed in Morningside Heights
August 2020:
Julien François on Broadway

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The Morningsider

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Local Engagement

Comments & Questions

Thanks for your vigilance in our neighborhood. Susan S.

Great improvement, but you still need to include more diverse voices. Danny M.

I look forward to staying connected. Matthew P.

I'm interested in volunteering locally. Layla M.

You can submit your comments and questions here.

Calendar

As public health guidelines allow, MHCC will plan events to foster connections and engagement within our community.

Our next event will be a Virtual Town Hall: Monday, September 21, 7pm.

Registration is required here.

Please let us know your thoughts in advance via our Community Survey here by September 14.

Volunteers: A Critical Role

The vast majority of MHCC's work is carried out by volunteers. These are local residents, business owners, employees, students, and even visitors. We are grateful to them. If you'd like to become involved, please let us know here. We guarantee a meaningful experience and great networking.

And...Action!

- REPORT COVID violations by Columbia personnel here or call (866) 627-3768.
- PLEASE complete the 2020 Census, here, Accurate counts are critical.
- PLEASE register to vote here and apply for an Absentee Ballot here.
- Our new Community Survey is here. PLEASE participate by September 14.
- REGISTER for our Virtual Town Hall (9/21, 7pm) here.

Feature:
Home is Where the *What* is ?

Let's cut to the chase: Affordable housing in Morningside Heights is in a dire situation.

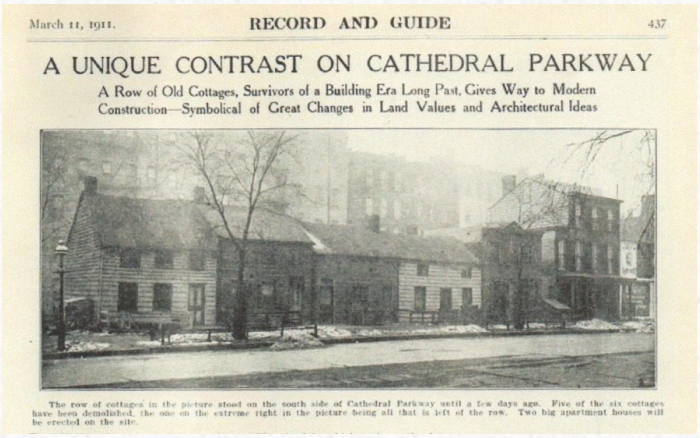
Local residents say it. Community advocates say it. Elected officials say it.

We've known this for years, if not decades. So, what are we going to do about it?

This is a national experience. It has manifested in New York in particularly pernicious ways because of the excesses of our real estate culture. As one after another luxury tower rises, old New Yorkers and recent arrivals struggle against a stacked deck that often favors a growing population of international part-time residents paying a million dollars for studio apartments.

This is the free market — an immutable aspect of our DNA. Can it be moderated? Does it supply what we want for New York? For Morningside Heights? What are the roles of government regulation and local activism in its transactions?

In 2020, we appear to be approaching an inflection point in our struggle for balanced development. With more than a dozen nearby institutions competing for space and prominence, our community has been in the eye of the storm of this issue for as long as anyone can remember.


March 11, 1911. RECORD AND GUIDE 437

A UNIQUE CONTRAST ON CATHEDRAL PARKWAY

A Row of Old Cottages, Survivors of a Building Era Long Past, Gives Way to Modern Construction—Symbolical of Great Changes in Land Values and Architectural Ideas

The row of cottages in the picture stood on the south side of Cathedral Parkway until a few days ago. Five of the six cottages have been demolished, the one on the extreme right in the picture being all that is left of the row. Two big apartment houses will be erected on the site.

1911: Industrial



1955: Post-Industrial



2020: Global Financial

In Morningside Heights, we're both more susceptible to and aware of the housing market's ravages because of the double nature of these institutions. They have become master developers and own the majority of our neighborhood's apartments buildings. Simultaneously, these prestigious centers of thought continuously polish and present the gems of their liberal conceptions with an authentic and well-intentioned grace.

Affordable housing discussions embody eternal debates on capitalism and the social contract. We won't resolve them here. We can, however, develop a better understanding of the ways housing issues play out in our neighborhood. And we can continue developing a common view of how we're going to manage these dynamics moving forward. This we must do in answering a question based on the old adage: Home is where the what is? Will it be heart or profit? In this increasingly nuanced world, can it be both?





Amsterdam Avenue, 1969—2020

Our neighborhood has experienced several housing cycles over the past century. The corner building in the image on the left was demolished shortly after this photo was taken, victim of a master plan to develop senior housing in Morningside Heights.

Local activists defeated the plan and preserved several adjoining buildings, some of which became homes to squatters who remain today.

The plot where the building once stood is now a widely supported GreenThumb garden. This could only have occurred through years-long efforts by local residents completely committed to preserving the fabric of our neighborhood.

Dates & Data

Income and Housing Costs:

New York City

In **1901**, the average annual income in New York was $675 and 24% of income covered housing costs.

In **2019**, average annual income in the City is $63,000 and housing costs consume 40% of income.

Median Rent, 2016: $1,648

U.S. Department of Labor,
CNBC,
City-Data.com

Demographic Data:

Morningside Heights (2019)

Ethnicity:

- White: 46%
- Hispanic: 23%
- Black: 14%
- Asian: 13%
- Others: 4%

Median Age: 31 years (influenced by large student presence; parts of our neighborhood are also Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities)

Wikipedia—NYC Dept. of City Planning, City-Data.com

Major Housing Types:

Morningside Heights

Owned

Housing Cooperative

(includes Housing Development Fund Corporation units as affordable units)

Condominium

Rental

Market-Rate

(Includes Mandatory Inclusionary Housing apartments as affordable units)

Rent-Regulated

- Rent-Controlled
- Rent-Stabilized

Public Housing

Socioeconomic Data:

Morningside Heights (2016)

Population: 32,000

Median Income: $82,000 (approximately 60% of households reported below this amount)

Wikipedia—City-Data.com

Let's look at the experiences of local residents in basic human terms. Following are narratives on the impacts of affordable housing policies in our community.

From the outset, there is debate: What is considered affordable? The answer depends on whom you ask. There is no universal definition of the term.

The first way to assess local homes is by whether they are owned or rented. On the rental side, we have market-rate and rent-regulated units and these, in turn, consist of a number of subcategories.

On the other side of the ledger are co-ops and condominium units, which became more prevalent several decades ago, as a result of economic conditions, the rise of rent regulation, and incentives aimed at stabilizing challenged neighborhoods.

Morningside Heights walks a fine line in supporting a diverse population. This balance is becoming very difficult to maintain.



The Housing Activist: Tom Kappner

I arrived here from Peru in the fall of 1962 to attend Columbia College, Class of '66. I had chosen Columbia because it was in New York. As I walked the streets during Freshman Week, I knew I had made the right choice. I moved out of the dorms as soon as I could. In those days it was easy: I slipped a building super five bucks and he let me know when an apartment was available. It was extremely affordable. I paid less than $100 when I moved in.

In that era, this neighborhood was a fantastic, vibrant mix of people. I immediately fell in love with it. People from all over the world lived here. Ethnically and economically, it was a real mix. We had Wall Street brokers, doctors and lawyers, and also people who worked at the university — facilities and janitorial staff members. We had hospital and postal workers...everybody lived here side by side. That kind of mix you found very rarely in the city. What made it special here was that people intermingled on a daily basis.

I soon realized that the neighborhood was in transition. Beginning a decade before and continuing into the sixties, Columbia and the Rockefeller-funded Morningside Heights, Inc. was engaged in a massive campaign of evictions, transforming a viable and healthy community into a sterile, institutional enclave. The brutality with which this was being carried out played a pivotal role in the events of '68. On a personal level, it was an extremely painful process, as I knew many of those being evicted as friends and neighbors.

From the '60s into the '80s, Columbia bought most of the residential properties, more than half the buildings in Morningside, to evict tenants and make room for faculty and students. It was also "improving" the neighborhood, ethnically and economically. Columbia's iconic provost at that time, Jacques Barzun, who contributed to the Core Curriculum, famously said, "It was the University's mission to rid the neighborhood of the 'undesirables'." Their messaging at that time focused on drug addicts and prostitutes.

They did live around here in what was then known as Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels, which were essentially low-income housing, but the majority of people in those buildings were upstanding and hardworking — just trying to make a living.

Soon it was our turn to face eviction. In 1967, shortly after my wife and I were married, we received a notice that we had six months to vacate the premises. We realized we too were "undesirables." We were just starting out in life, with no money to afford higher rents or buying into a co-op, so we put to use the organizing skills we had learned in a voter registration drive in the South during the Freedom Summer of 1965. We organized a block association representing the ten residential buildings on the square block between Broadway and Amsterdam and 121st and 122nd Streets. We did everything we could (legally and extralegally) to oppose Columbia's acquisition of our homes. We swore we would not move unless they carried us out of our apartments horizontally.

1968 was key for us because it brought a sudden halt to the University's efforts to expand. While Columbia's drive was put on hold, our association and other community groups organized a city-wide coalition of tenants who successfully appealed for legislation, under the Emergency Tenants Protection Act of 1980, that grandfathered in residents who were in occupancy at the time their buildings were bought by large institutions like Columbia.

After a long and exhausting fight, we and a few hundred are still in our homes.



The American Dream on 122nd Street: Betsy Lind

It comes down to preserving democracy.

An avid reader, Betsy Cangelosi-Lind has been devouring Ron Chernow's Hamilton biography and is struck by the book's relevance to her current life in Morningside Heights. (Alexander Hamilton built his Northern Manhattan homestead one mile north of our neighborhood. He lived there with his wife — nicknamed Betsey — and seven children.)

"We have to support each other, as neighbors and citizens," she says. "That's what I'm getting from the book. This starts with having an affordable place to live."

Lind literally and figuratively bought into the "American Dream" in our neighborhood in 1982. That year, she and her fellow tenants established a city-chartered housing cooperative and purchased the building in which they were living through New York City's Housing Development Fund Corporation program.

Becoming shareholders in their building on 122nd & Amsterdam was a life-changing event for this group of low– and moderate-income young adults. It enabled them to remain in our now gentrifying neighborhood. Through this sense of security and the skills they learned, they became a steady presence in neighborhood improvement initiatives.

HDFCs emerged during the "Bronx is burning" era as a way of preserving local housing stock and stabilizing communities challenged by growing crime rates, abandoned buildings, and other local problems. They were designed as inducements for local residents to remain in their communities while clearing the rolls of city-owned real estate.

"In our case, the brothers who owned the building died while owing back taxes on our property and the city took ownership of it," she says.

"We learned of HDFCs and received training on the program from the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board, lodged in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine at the time."

“We are living proof that the experiment worked,” says Lind. “We’re still here, but our community now faces major challenges related to the high cost of living locally.”

This shift began in the decade after Lind’s home purchase. It has been exacerbated in Morningside Heights by local institutional expansion and the arrival of luxury residential buildings throughout Northern Manhattan. To her benefit, Lind’s previous landlord anticipated these events and stipulated he would not sell his property to any local institution.

“He wanted the building to remain community-owned and affordable,” she says.

While HDFCs may seem too good to be true, the program must be seen in context: It emerged during a time of severe social and economic challenge in New York. Purchasing homes this way requires massive amounts of responsibility and work in building management, administration, and rehabilitation. For Lind and her fellow shareholders, it was akin to holding a very immediate, demanding, and unpaid second job.

Still, the program was revolutionary when established and remains a viable, through increasingly elusive, way of preserving affordable housing. According to city records, there are close to 26,000 HDFC units across the five boroughs today.

“I’m grateful for the opportunity we had to become homeowners in Manhattan,” says Lind. “I don’t know where we’d all be right now if this hadn’t emerged for us back then.”

Lind is an active member of several neighborhood organizations. She serves on the Morningside Heights Community Fund committee, which supports local groups providing services to residents and other community members. In addition, her passion for history (kindled by her HDFC experience) is expressed in her volunteer work with the Morningside Heights Historic District Committee, on whose board she serves.

“These are ways of giving back and paying it forward” she says, laughing at her obvious quotes. “Community development depends on a sense of shared ownership by local residents. Without that, we become another stretch of soulless high-rises and chain stores.”

Lind is committed to supporting local work to preserve affordable housing in Morningside Heights. Though HFDCs are no longer common in the area, they are one way local residents have fought to maintain our community’s cultural diversity.

“Our homes are expressions of the values of this nation,” says Lind, adding a touch of idealism to her very practical experiences as a local homeowner and advocate.

Asked if HDFCs are a relevant example of affordable housing, she is clear in her response.

“Of course,” she says. “This is one way people have been able to afford staying here and maintain Morningside Heights as a real community. As a historical neighbor, Hamilton would have approved.”



The Great Hollowing-Out: Linda

Linda (last name withheld) wonders what the city will look like in ten years.

Actually, she knows.

“We’re becoming a shell of the New York I grew up in,” she says. “On the one hand, we’ve got very wealthy people buying luxury co-ops and condos they don’t occupy full-time. Meanwhile, a lot of working New Yorkers can’t afford current rents and are being forced out of their homes. We’re on the path to becoming a movie set.”

During the worst days of the pandemic, we had hints of what this might look like. It was decidedly dystopian.

Linda was born in New York in the mid-1960s to parents who immigrated from South America. Her family moved into the apartment she still occupies in 1975. Because of concerns over succession rights to this rent-stabilized unit, she is unwilling to share her full name.

Unfortunately, her fears are well founded.

“One of my neighbors was intimidated by the institution which owns our building,” she says. “He was a legal ward of his grandparents but after they died, he was threatened with eviction by the landlord’s lawyers and he made the decision to move out. His grandparents had been living here for 30 years, but he didn’t have the resources or mindset to engage in legal proceedings. It was a tragedy and many of my neighbors still talk about it. He wasn’t the only person here this happened to.”

Conversations with other residents of Linda’s building confirmed these details. Their opinions of the institution in question have been largely influenced by these and other events over the years. A palpable sense of caution permeated their descriptions of interactions with the institution.

Rent-regulated apartments are among the rarest of New York treasures. Though state laws passed in 2019 introduced greater protection for tenants, concerns over the disposition of these homes continue across Morningside Heights. One issue is whether and how the new laws apply to local institutions, which own the majority of our neighborhood's rental units.

"It's going to get worse," says Linda. "We're in an era of community decline because the basic building block of any neighborhood — housing — is so hard to find or stay in."

This is an intergenerational issue. In the rent-regulation arena, it is defined by how apartments become the homes of tenants not included in unit leases.

Linda views these issues as systemic and based on outdated social and cultural views.

"Succession rights were based on antiquated views of family structures," she says. "The laws have adapted to account for non-traditional families and I'm glad for this evolution. However, many people fighting for the right to stay in regulated apartments often feel they're engaged in an uphill battle."

During a recent event organized by a Morningside Heights neighborhood group, broader issues came to light. Community relations by Morningside Heights institutions was a common concern. Another was the growing wealth disparity in the neighborhood.

"It's the cliché of the perfect storm," says Linda. "We've got these major schools in our area, who haven't always acted in the best interest of local residents. When you add that to the gentrification we're seeing, and now a pandemic and recession, things are looking pretty bleak."

Still, Linda is committed to staying in her home. This is pure pragmatism.

"Where else would I go?" she asks.

There is also a moral aspect to her outlook.

"I grew up here and I want my son to do so, as well," she says. "We define this neighborhood and have contributed to it in so many ways. We belong here. We are a community and we need to do everything we can to keep it that way."

Reminded of her dire predictions on the great hollowing-out of New York, she pauses for a moment.

"Yes, it's headed in that direction, but the story isn't over," she says.

"We are the only ones who will restore and preserve this place as a home. If we don't, who will?"



The Community Board Member: David Hanzal

As a member of Manhattan Community Board 9's Housing, Land Use & Zoning Committee, David Hanzal brings years of practical experience to local housing policy discussions. It's not a role he ever imagined for himself but his own struggles against an abusive landlord cast him in it and he has embraced the opportunity fully.

"A lot of local residents don't understand their rights," he says. "I feel I can play a role in helping them to learn how the legal system can protect them."

This has become a critical need throughout New York City. It is particularly relevant in Morningside Heights because of the twin-influences of local institutional expansion and the rise of high-end real estate development in Northern Manhattan. If tenants have long been an afterthought in the minds of many local landlords, in the 2020 New York real estate arena, they seem more like nonentities or worse, a drain on fat profit margins.

Hanzal's journey to active involvement in neighborhood affairs was initially motivated by the challenges he faced in staying in his Manhattanville rent-regulated apartment beginning in 2014. Since then, he's become an expert in housing issues and, at one point, became a full-time volunteer at People Against Landlord Abuse and Tenant Exploitation—PA'LANTE, a well-regarded local tenant advocacy group. The organization's acronym is Spanish slang for "forward," an ethos Hanzal has adopted in his CB9 work.

Originally from Minnesota, he's become a solid Manhattanite, integrating with the local community, even as he leads an international education consulting firm.

"CB9 encompasses Morningside Heights, Manhattanville, and Hamilton Heights, neighborhoods with distinct identities and needs," he says. "My education work translates well to my efforts on the board; in both roles I deal with diverse outlooks and priorities."

His prognosis of the current affordable housing situation in Morningside is grim.

"We're in a dire situation," he says. "Local affordable homes have been an endangered species for decades and the structures in place now seem on the verge of collapsing."

Still, he maintains a commitment to doing what he can to help local residents in rent-regulated apartments, describing recent New York State legislation on tenant protections as a step forward.

"It's not enough, but it's movement in the right direction."

Asked for advice to local affordable housing tenants, he offers a checklist of tasks everyone concerned about the issue should complete:

1. Get your apartment's rent history as soon as possible.
2. Talk to your neighbors about establishing a tenant association and begin attending local meetings with government representatives, CB9, local nonprofits, and other groups working on housing issues locally.
3. Document every interaction with your landlord, every rent payment you make, and every maintenance issue in your apartment.
4. Keep up with local and state news on policy proposals, new legislation, and the neighborhood real estate market.
5. Familiarize yourself with legal assistance programs, even if you don't need them now. Knowing who to call if an issue arises is a good way to be ready.

"These are just some common-sense things local rent-regulated tenants can do to give themselves a fighting chance if their landlord begins threatening their residency," he says.

Asked about structural approaches to preserving affordable housing, Hanzal seems cautiously optimistic.

"First and foremost, rezoning is needed in Morningside Heights. I'm glad that is now on the table with Council Member Levine and Speaker Johnson, because of MHCC's critical role in that effort," he says.

"I watched local protests against the construction of the (luxury residential building) Vandewater on 122nd Street and thought there was a chance to block the project. I was wrong. Morningside Heights needs to rezone as soon as possible. This is just the beginning of what could arrive in the neighborhood."

Reminded of MHCC's zoning challenge on the project, he acknowledges it was a good fight.

"We need to be ready to organize again," he says. "Really, it's a process that should never stop. Always, always, always be organizing. This struggle will flare up again soon."



Elected Officials Speak Out

Then-Public Advocate Tish James: *We come together as a community, to rise up against those who would seek to divide us. No tall buildings — I'm with Morningside Heights.*

State Senator Brian Benjamin: *This* [rent control] *is about fundamental fairness, fairness to our seniors who have worked so hard, who have played by the rules, who deserve to retire with dignity and respect, and not to be price-gouged every step of the way.*

State Assembly Member Danny O'Donnell: *If you're an institution in our neighborhood who gets to have no taxes, you owe something to the community that surrounds you. We don't live in* [these developers'] *neighborhood, they come to OURS.*

Borough President Gale Brewer: *That is why we're here today…every single building built has got to have permanent affordable housing.*

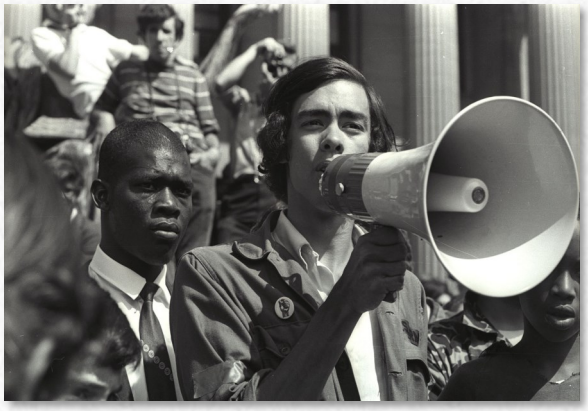
City Council Speaker Corey Johnson: *I look forward to working with all of you, with this amazing community, with your council member to get this* [rezoning] *done.*

City Council Member Mark Levine: *I'll just say it really bluntly: We are under assault right now in Morningside Heights, with threats of overdevelopment from top to bottom and we've got to preserve what's beautiful and historic and human-scale about this neighborhood and we can do that, absolutely.*

Summary & Proposals

Like the immutable laws of motion, affordable housing in Morningside Heights has been defined by the constant interplay of opposing forces: For every action, there is a reaction.

Our job, as community members and advocates, is to influence the magnitude and direction of these forces in the interest of protecting our homes. Certainly, those who seek institutional development and maximum profit in our neighborhood will also do everything in their power to harness this ongoing tension.



1968: The past is...

The larger question becomes whether equilibrium can be established and maintained in our community and the answer is, only through consistent and organized engagement.

Our plateau in Northern Manhattan has long been contested space. To the extent our neighborhood's development over the past century can be seen as a singular arc, a main theme has been the contest between institutional expansion and community resilience. There have been nuances: Local businesses have been influenced by both sides and institutional affiliates have often identified with community interests. These subtleties continue and offer important settings for community-wide discussions.

In retrospect, the Columbia protests of 1968 were a culminating point in institution-community relations. They resonate with the multi-faceted challenges of 2020:

- Shared efforts to oppose questionable institutional policies emerged among students and members of the Morningside Heights community;
- Long-simmering local, national, and international forces converged to shape events in our neighborhood;
- A distinct shift emerged in university policies as a result of organized resistance by diverse local stakeholders with a clear vision of shared ownership in decision-making.

The complex and far-reaching influences at play today represent a new chapter in the ongoing story of Morningside Heights. With the dangers they present come opportunities to establish greater awareness and cooperation among relevant constituents. This can only occur through the willingness of all parties to consider a shared vision for the future.

A Three-Point Plan for Balanced Development



2020: prologue

Over the past several years, MHCC has developed insights and priorities in accomplishing its mission of limiting luxury overdevelopment, promoting local affordable housing, and maintaining the character and quality of life of Morningside Heights.

The following proposals represent reasonable and attainable approaches to future development aimed at preserving our neighborhood as a diverse and vibrant community. MHCC efforts on these fronts have been underway since 2014 and strong alliances with relevant stakeholders have been established to advance them. In our good-faith assessment, these common-sense proposals promote the best shared outcomes for local institutions, developers, and residents.

1. **Permanently preserve existing rent-regulated units** in institution-owned apartment buildings
2. **Rezone Morningside Heights** to maintain local architectural context and include affordable housing in new residential construction
3. **Negotiate Community Benefits Agreements** in new real estate developments to support community life

MHCC AFFORDABLE HOUSING RESOLUTION 2019

1. Vacancy decontrol should no longer apply to all apartments rented to non-affiliates in institutionally-owned buildings. These apartments should be rented to people earning no more than the Area Median Income for Community Board 9 ($60,021 as of 2018). These tenants will continue to receive the rent and tenure protections of rent stabilization.

2. 30% of units in buildings newly constructed by the institutions in Morningside Heights should be set aside for people earning no more than the Area Median Income for Community Board 9 ($60,021 as of 2018).

Many factors combine to influence the nature of our shared space. We end our assessment of affordable housing by returning to the experiences of Tom Kappner, whose efforts to preserve his home have lasted more than half a century.

His "Modest Proposal" to permanently preserve rent-regulated apartments in institution-owned buildings has become an MHCC Resolution.

"This is not a revolutionary idea," he says. "It's an affirmation that we are inextricably linked in Morningside Heights and we all have something to offer."

Morningside *Lights*



People, sites, and history that make us one of the best neighborhoods in America.



Laura V. Lewis was born in Puerto Rico and raised on the Lower East Side. She recently retired as a Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York. She has lived in Morningside Heights for 45 years. "The richness of racial, ethnic, and economic diversity here enhanced my ability to render judicial decisions with a broader vision of societal needs."



"Tightrope Walker" is a haunting sculpture located in front of Columbia Law School. It commemorates the service of alumnus **William Donovan**. As founder of the U.S. Intelligence Services, his legacy embodies our community's vastly diverse influences.

People Against Landlord Abuse and Tenant Exploitation (**PA'LANTE**) is a leading local tenants' rights organization . Their highly effective work on behalf of local residents is legendary.





The oldest building in our neighborhood, the former **Leake & Watts Orphan Asylum** was build in 1843. For generations, it housed children and offered training in a variety of trades.

Janoff's Stationery has been a mainstay in Morningside Heights for decades. If you need it, they have it. The current owners took over in 1980 and have served countless local residents and students. Like many other shops in our neighborhood, they deserve our full support during the current challenges.



Over the past century, our community's greatest challenge has been balancing the sometimes divergent priorities of its members. Achieving equilibrium requires the active cooperation of everyone who lives, works, or studies here.

Issues & Campaigns

Community Survey: Your Input Needed!

During the current challenges, MHCC is seeking greater input and involvement by community members. **Please let us know your views by completing our brief Community Survey here by September 14.** These will inform the agenda of our Virtual Town Hall, to be held on Monday, September 21 at 7pm. Please register here.

MHCC has engaged in a number of campaigns over the past several years and will continue organizing on behalf of our diverse community, based on the input of our neighbors. Please visit our website to learn more about our efforts in the following areas:

- **Rezoning our neighborhood** to ensure balanced development and expand affordable housing
- **Proposing permanent preservation of existing rent-regulated apartments** in apartment buildings owned by local institutions
- **Engaging with local institutions and real estate developers** to expand affordable housing and reinforce the interests and safety of community members. (You can join our Health & Safety Corps, described last month, here.)
- **Improving access at the 1 Line 125th Street subway station** through the installation of elevators
- **Supporting efforts to expand our neighborhood's Historic District designation** by the Morningside Heights Historic District Committee



COVID Impacts

Our recent work to influence COVID reopening plans by local academic institutions raised awareness of this issue through direct engagement with community members, seven local schools, our elected representatives, and the media. We're grateful to our neighbors for participating in our letter-writing campaign to institutional and government officials.

These voices were essential in expressing widespread concern over the return of students this fall. We must remain engaged on local COVID plans and policies.

The baseline objective is to keep everyone — local residents, business owners and employees, and students — safe. Violations of public safety regulations by Columbia personnel can be reported here or by calling (866) 627-3768. We value our relationships with students, faculty, and staff and wish only to reinforce the health of our entire community.

Support for Local Businesses

Morningside Heights' local businesses are an essential element of our community. They are a main aspect of our character and quality of life. Because undergraduate students will not be returning to campus this fall, they face significant challenges, which were already present due to COVID and the national economic downturn.

We must rally to support our "mom-and-pop" shops and will initiate a new campaign to provide assistance to them. The perspectives and priorities of local business owners and employees are THE critical requirement in developing a plan. Input by other community members is also essential. We will collectively discuss the current challenges at our Virtual Town Hall and will invite local business owners and employees to a planning meeting to ensure we have a solid understanding of their views as we develop a shared approach. In the meantime, please buy local.

Morningside Heights Community Fund

By securing Community Benefits Agreements with local institutions and real estate developers, MHCC has established a community development fund to support local groups providing services in our neighborhood.

The MHCF is administered by the New York Community Trust, a venerated philanthropy with which we are breaking ground through this arrangement.

Please contact us here for information on the Fund and plans for future grants.

After conducting an initial Request for Proposals, we are excited to announce the following first round of awards of $5,000 to each group below.

- Broadway Community
- St Mary's Episcopal
- Legal Outreach
- American SCORES New York
- Behind the Book
- The Reading Team
- Harlem Wellness Center
- Brotherhood Sister-Sol



Congratulations to these great organizations and thank you for your local commitment! We will detail their programs more fully in our next issue.

News & Resources



Articles of Interest

Bank Street Bookstore to Close After 50 Years -- Westside Rag

Corpus Christi School to Close -- Patch

MHCC Raises Concerns Over Columbia COVID Students Return -- The Gothamist

Columbia History of Policing in Morningside Heights -- Columbia Spectator

COVID Survey Results -- Should Schools Re-Open? -- The Patch

Inwood Rezoning -- Upheld By Court Over Community Objection -- The Real Deal

Students Pledge Safe Return, But Not All On Board -- Columbia Spectator (MHCC cited)

Columbia Students Frustrated Over Quarantine Rules and Costs -- Columbia Spectator

Columbia Pressures Faculty for In-Person Instruction -- The Gothamist (MHCC quoted)

Open Streets Could Facilitate Social Distancing -- Columbia Spectator (MHCC cited)

Local Precinct Twitter Comments Provoke Reaction -- The City (MHCC quoted)

Email Pressuring In-Person Teaching Sparks Faculty Backlash -- Columbia Spectator

Vaccine -- Affluent First, West Harlem Will Have to Wait -- Columbia Spectator

Barnard Quarantine Students Pay for Hotels, Meals, etc. -- Columbia Spectator

OpEd: Columbia No-Hugging Enforcement Will Be Challenging -- Columbia Spectator

MHCC OpEd: Columbia Must Consider Locals in Reopening -- Columbia Spectator

Columbia Moves Undergrad Instruction Online in Fall -- The Gothamist (MHCC cited)

Columbia Pushback Came from Several Groups (MHCC highlighted) -- Westside Rag

Columbia Entirely Online for Undergrads -- Columbia Spectator (MHCC credited)

Resources:

Morningside Heights community members have access to a wide array of resources that can be of great assistance to residents, business owners, employees, and students.

For a comprehensive list of public and private resources, please visit our page here.



This month, we highlight New York State Assembly Member Danny O'Donnell.

Assembly Member O'Donnell has been a strong advocate on local issues in our neighborhood, in which he's lived since 1990. Among his initiatives have been the designation of Morningside Heights as a Historic District, opposition to local luxury overdevelopment, Criminal Justice reform, expanded access to health care services for local residents, and preservation of rent-regulated apartment in our district.

He chairs the Committee on Tourism, Parks, Arts, and Sports Development and is currently a member of the Committees on Codes, Education, Environmental Conservation, and the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force.

Relevant to affordable housing, he has been an active supporter of MHCC efforts to rezone Morningside Heights.

Thank you, Assembly Member O'Donnell!

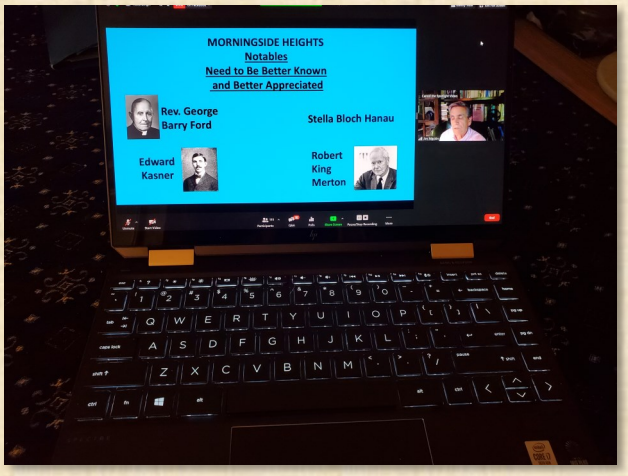


Tech Corner:

Using Zoom to Stay Connected

by Ian Franzen

In this age of social distancing, many clubs, conferences, and meetings are going digital. Zoom, a video-conferencing program with over 300 million daily meeting participants, is one of the most popular ways to do this. Zoom will run on your phone, computer, or tablet but you can also call into meetings on your phone.



How do I download and set up Zoom?

You can start by downloading Zoom (see below). You only need the free version. If you've received an email invitation to a Zoom meeting, click the link that says, "Join Zoom Meeting." If you're using Zoom for the first time, the links below will take you to a website where you can download the program or app, depending on which device you 're using.

On an iPhone or iPad: Go to the Apple App Store and search for "ZOOM Cloud Meetings." Click "Get" to download and install the Zoom app.

On an Android phone or tablet: Go to the Google Play App Store and search for "Zoom Cloud Meetings." Click "Install."

On a computer: On the Download Center website, click "Download" in the "Zoom Client for Meetings" section.

Note: After Zoom is downloaded, you must install it onto your computer.

How do you join a meeting?

After you install Zoom, there are a few different ways to join a Zoom meeting. You can click the link in your invitation email, go to the Zoom website and enter the meeting ID, or dial into the meeting on a phone.

How do I mute my mic?

If the microphone has a red line through it, you are muted. Click the button again to unmute yourself if you want to talk in the meeting. If the microphone has no red line through it, you can be heard in the meeting. Zoom will only allow one participant to talk at a time and the person talking will be highlighted in a yellow square.

How do you leave a meeting?

Click the "Leave Meeting" button on the bottom-right corner.

Ian Franzen is a web-designer living in the neighborhood who loves writing about technology and website design. He runs College Web Pro, a digital marketing agency.

Back-Page Diversion

July's winners correctly identified **Hungarian Pastry** as the shop depicted in Anne Grossman's illustration. They each won $10 gift certificates to Hungarian. (Great shop profile in the *Times*, by the way!) Congratulations:

- **Lenore Jaffe**
- **Carolyn Jackson**
- **Nancy Tonik**
- **Ian Franzen**
- **Irene Chang**
- **Carol Whitby**

We planned on five winners, but the final correct entry came from someone who volunteered to write an article in this month's issue.

August Diversion

This month, we're playing trivia.

What institution originally occupied the grounds of the iconic structure pictured at right?

Thanks to Robert Hunter for the beautiful painting. His work can be seen here.

The first three people to submit the correct answer will receive special tours of these grounds, including the remnants of the original institution.

