

## The Most Important Election You Never Heard Of

### VOTE TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

This is directed primarily to our neighbors who are registered Democrats, although it is of importance to all of us. Manhattan is overwhelmingly Democratic, so being a Democratic politician here confers some benefits and power.

This is an off-year and there are virtually no elections in Manhattan, except for two hyper-local elections downtown here for District Leader, a volunteer party position, whose duties primarily involve getting out the vote and ensuring that the polling sites are working effectively on election day.

However, district leaders also endorse candidates and this grants them some influence and authority, which they can either use or abuse.

There is a district leader race on both the west and east sides of our neighborhood.

On the west side, we have for **District Leader John Scott**, a community and parent activist.

**John Scott's resumé is impressive.** For example:

- founding member of the beautiful Washington Market Park in TriBeCa
- first Chair of the community board's Youth Committee
- currently serves on the NYS Assembly Task Force on School Overcrowding
- past president of his buildings' tenant association



State Senator Dan Squadron (left) endorsing John Scott

**John Scott, is endorsed by almost all our local elected officials, as well as by Jim Stratton, co-founder of the SoHo Alliance, and Sean Sweeney, the current director.**

Scott is running against the incumbent district leader, David Reck, who, in his capacity as both district leader and a member of the community board, has become the waterboy for developers and club owners who would wreck havoc on our community.

(continued on page 3)

## BIDDING Wars

An investor-driven effort by corporate real-estate developers wants to establish a quasi-governmental agency in SoHo with the power to tax us. Their goal is to bring in yet more tourists in order to boost their bottom line, while giving themselves greater control and influence to determine SoHo's future course.

Mega real-estate firms like Newmark, Aurora Capital, Thor Equities and a handful of others are attempting to set up a so-called Business Improvement District (BID) on Broadway between Canal and Houston Streets.



BIDs generate their revenues by taxing property owners to pay for the BID's "services" and high salaries. If a property owner doesn't wish to pay this tax, the city can foreclose on the property. To avoid that, the property owners usually will pass the tax on to the tenants, who are forced to pay these additional taxes for essential City services for which they have already been taxed, like sanitation.

BIDs were established in the 1980s to invigorate depressed business districts, like Times Square and Union Square. They were needed and worked well there. However, SoHo is by no means a depressed commercial district in need of improvement. On the contrary, even the real-estate websites of the BID's promoters boast how vibrant and thriving SoHo is.

### Why is the BID crew pushing this scheme?

Ostensibly promoted to help clean up the trash on Broadway, the SoHo BID promoters actually allocated more money for tourism and CEO salaries than for street cleaning. Why? Simple: more tourists means more foot traffic; more foot traffic means more shoppers; more shoppers means more sales; more sales command higher rents; higher rents produce even greater profits for the real estate developers. How convenient.

What do we get in return? More crowds, more congestion, more noise, more stress on our infrastructure; and worst of all, less power for us to determine the future direction of our neighborhood.

These mega realty corporations will force upon SoHo any proposal that will increase their profits, even if it is detrimental to our

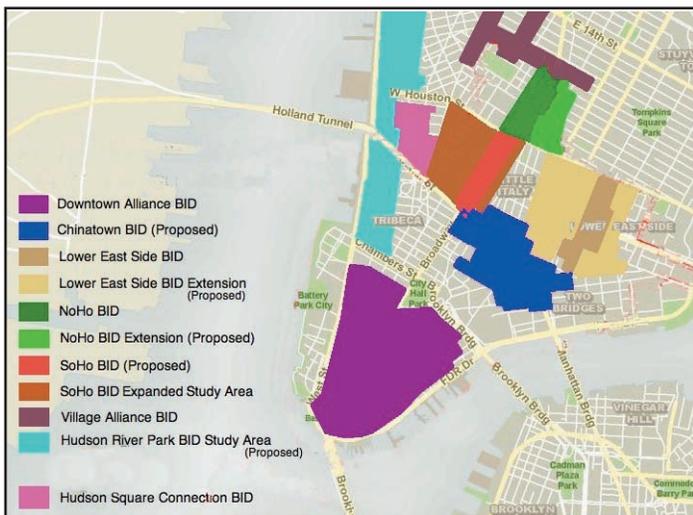
(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1: BIDDING Wars)

quality of life and our best interests. They don't live here or work here, except as developers.

These BIDs have huge budgets and considerable influence in City Hall. In fact, a BID document obtained under the Freedom of Information Law(FOIL) reveals this shocking admission: “{our BID will} win seat at the table with City Hall; otherwise {we'll have to} go through community board.”

What real-estate developer wants to deal with a pesky community board, where SoHo has a powerful and influential voice? Go directly to the politicians to get things done the old-fashioned



way, avoid democracy and the community's concerns. Colored areas show existing or proposed BIDs in our community. Cleaning services, security and local autonomy have been handed over by the City to private corporations in over half our district.

### How is the BID approved?

At the start of the process, the BID promoters are supposed to distribute “ballots” to every property owner.

However, in a system ripe for fraud, there is absolutely no requirement that the BID provide certified proof-of-mailing, or proof of property ownership, or confirmation of receipt, or a time limit to return the ballot.

It is only when the SoHo Alliance learned that dozens of property owners reported never having received a ballot did we realize that something is rotten in SoHo. Not surprisingly, the BID crew got their ballots and voted for the BID. However, only a fraction of the Broadway property owners voted for the BID, and that vote is skewed because high-end commercial buildings, which the BID crew primarily own, get weighed more heavily in the voting process. Not very democratic; in fact, it sounds downright feudal.

Even more undemocratic is the fact that a condo unit, being a single tax lot, gets one vote. A coop building, also being a single tax lot, gets one vote. So, a condo building with 40 units gets 40 votes. However, a coop building with 40 units would only get one vote. How undemocratic is that? Whatever happened to one person-one vote?

To make matters worse, in order to voice opposition to a BID once the process has begun, opponents must search for an Ob-

jection Form, file the Objection at the office of the City Clerk, accompanied by a *notarized* title deed, and must do all this in less than thirty days.

On the other hand, besides gross lack of oversight and safeguards when distributing the ballots, yes-ballots need not be notarized, no title deed is required, and there is no time limit to return the ballot. This double standard is a disgrace and possibly illegal.

### Voting Fraud?

In a shocking revelation, using the FOIL request, we were able to obtain the yes-ballots that purportedly showed support for the BID.

In what appears be a case of blatant voting fraud, at 40 Mercer, the new luxury building on Broadway and Grand with 41 residential tax lots (and thus 41 ballots), a condo sponsor who supports the BID, although apparently not authorized by the condo's by-laws to do so, submitted only a single ballot in support of the BID but with 41 yes-votes ascribed to it. The FOIL revealed that most of the condo owners do not live in New York, or even the United States. So, it is likely that there was never a real vote regarding the BID by the condo owners.

Yet City Hall and the BID crew, without questioning, accepted this single, dubious ballot - hook, line and sinker - counting it as 41 votes in favor of the BID. In fact, of 96 total votes cast in favor of the BID, this spurious condo ballot accounted for 41 of them, or 43%. How crooked it that?

Some have suggested that the district attorney launch a fraud investigation to get to the bottom of this. It would be a good idea, throwing some transparency onto this scam and perhaps civil penalties for the perpetrator.

### Today Broadway... Tomorrow All of SoHo

Don't assume this BID won't impact you!

The FOIL documents and BID promoters' own words reveal the true intent is to spread this scheme throughout all of SoHo and beyond.

**Their master plan is to control the entire area from Houston to Canal, from Lafayette to Sixth Avenue.**

How would you like to pay additional taxes to reap more profits for these guys?

How would you like to have this crew dictate what gets done on your block?

How would you like to cede power and control over to these interlopers?

### Why doesn't the BID crew just sweep their own sidewalk?

The law requires landlords or store owners to keep the sidewalks clean or else face fines. We already pay taxes to receive cleaning service from the Sanitation Department. ACE, the organization that for nearly 20 years has swept Broadway, has ceased doing that, claiming they are not receiving enough voluntary contributions from the landlords/businesses on Broadway to pay for the cost.

Further investigation reveals that the majority of the real-estate developers pushing the BID have either ceased contributing to ACE or have never contributed a dime.

It costs less than \$160,000 to clean Broadway for a year. Yet the

(continued on page 4)

## Mammoth NYU Expansion

NYU used to be a fine university. It still is. However, under the supervision of its board of trustees, it has increasingly become a real-estate behemoth, taking over large parts of the Village, as well as some space in SoHo and NoHo.

NYU last year announced plans to add 3 million square-feet of new construction in the Village. The Empire State Building is only 2.7 million square-feet by comparison.

NYU has refused to heed the advice of local electeds and community leaders to build elsewhere. In fact, Community Board 1, which covers the Financial District area, has implored NYU to erect its new buildings in that fast-developing neighborhood. NYU adamantly refused, offering no good reason.

NYU's massive build-up will undoubtedly affect us in SoHo. Most disturbing for us is the proposal to build several new buildings on the two "super blocks" that NYU obtained years ago as part of a 1950s Urban Renewal project, which extend from Houston to West Third Streets, and from Mercer to LaGuardia Place.

In order to complete this construction project, NYU needs to gain title from the City for the strip of public land on Mercer Street running from Houston to Bleecker that currently contains the dog run, a children's playground, and a small green sitting area.



1) 40-story hotel on LaGuardia, current site of Morton Williams supermarket; 2) multiple buildings along Mercer Street between Houston & Bleecker; 3, 4) two buildings to be built on current garden at Washington Square Village Houses.

If the city hands over the public space, the university will demolish its Coles Gym and replace it with a huge building ranging from 14 to 17 floors. NYU also plans to demolish the Morton William supermarket on LaGuardia Place and replace it with a 40-story hotel/residence hall.

Finally, NYU wants to wedge in two additional new buildings in the green park space in the middle of Washington Square Village, the low-rise apartment complex south of Washington Square.

The proposal is in the review process of the community board

and the City. The SoHo Alliance will keep you posted on future meetings and developments if you send us an email at [info@sohoalliance.org](mailto:info@sohoalliance.org). For more detailed information, visit the website for the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, [gvshp.org](http://gvshp.org)

*(continued from page 1: Vote Tuesday, September 13)*

The incumbent **Reck's resumé is horrendous:**

- he was just one of two people on the community board to **vote in favor of the SoHo BID,**
- he has repeatedly **voted for liquor licenses** for noisy late-night bars or clubs in SoHo.
- he scuttled negotiations between several community boards opposed to the insane shoehorning of three sanitation districts onto one tiny lot near Spring and West Streets, **bringing 145 Sanitation trucks rumbling through and polluting our neighborhood.**
- **he opposed and ridiculed community efforts** to force Donald Trump to obey the zoning laws when operating the Trump SoHo hotel, and has crusaded for multiple liquor licenses for Trump's project.

For the sake of our community, it is time to get rid of this incumbent.

If you live west of Crosby Street to the Hudson River, please **be sure to vote for John Scott for District Leader on Tuesday, September, 13.**

**On the east side of SoHo,** basically east of Crosby Street, another district leader contest will be on the ballot.

Community activist **Paul Newell** is the candidate **for male District Leader.**

Born in the neighborhood, Newell is a seasoned activist and was an Obama delegate to the 2008 Democratic Convention. Paul is a founding member of NY Neighbors for American Values, a coalition dedicated to preserving diversity and religious tolerance. During Hurricane Irene, Newell served as a site supervisor at an emergency shelter on the Lower East Side.

**Jenifer Rajkumar,** candidate **for female district leader,** a graduate of Stanford Law and University of Pennsylvania, has experience as a civil-rights lawyer and was lead counsel on whistleblower lawsuits against corporate fraud. Jenifer's work experiences include the National Women's Law Center and the ACLU.

**Rajkumar and Newell's opponents** are so lacking in performance that we find it difficult to list a single thing they have done for us.

East SoHo voters, please **vote for both NEWELL & RAJKUMAR on Tuesday, September 13,** to ensure we are represented by progressive and energetic young leaders, who are **endorsed by numerous local elected officials as well as SoHo activists Sean Sweeney and Jim Stratton.**

To be on our mail list, contact us at  
[info@sohoalliance.org](mailto:info@sohoalliance.org)

(continued from page 2: *BIDDING Wars*)

like Rubenstein Communications to attempt to sell us their scheme. We challenge the BID promoters to simply sweep their own sidewalks or pay someone to do it, like the rest of us do. We don't need a power grab by the BID to keep our sidewalks clean.

### Next Step, and What You Can Do

The community board has already voted against the creation of the SoHo BID. This autumn, the BID will go to the City Council for a vote. Our City Councilmember, Margaret Chin, could likely get it defeated.

However, Ms. Chin, although she has done good things for SoHo in the twenty months she has held office, has refused to support our calls to reject the BID. In fact, at a 2010 meeting where the BID met with landlords, businesses and coop/condo owners, she called on us to support the BID. Who knows why! Since then, she has managed to make the BID a bit more palatable to us, which we appreciate. But palatability is not what her constituents want.

At Chin's town-hall meeting in March, some 150 SoHo business owners and residents vigorously voiced opposition to the BID. Fewer than a handful supported it. Why Councilmember Chin doesn't follow the wishes of her constituents is beyond our ken.

If you want to assist our effort to stop the BID, please send us your email address at [info@sohoalliance.org](mailto:info@sohoalliance.org) and we will keep you apprised of future meetings regarding the BID and at what point to petition Councilmember Chin as well as Speaker Christine Quinn to reject it.

Also, there is a group working with us defeat this BID, the **SoHo NO BID Committee**. Please visit their website at [sohonobid.wordpress.com](http://sohonobid.wordpress.com) to learn more and greater details on the BID scheme, and how to help stop it.

Finally, unlike the expensive BID consultants and promoters, we at the SoHo Alliance are all volunteers, collecting not a dime for our efforts.

But there are expenses, like printing, computer, website and utility costs, as well as consultation with lawyers and others. In fact, if this BID were to pass, there is a general consensus to file a lawsuit based on the undemocratic and unconstitutional nature of the BID. If we pursue this legal route, we need funds to fight the BID power grab. Any help that you can provide now will be deeply appreciated.

---

### SoHo Needs YOU!

SoHo is under-represented on the community board. This is regrettable, since elected officials and government agencies often rely on the boards for guidance and input in making decisions affecting neighborhood policy.

It requires attending about three evening meetings a month, on committees dealing with community planning issues like zoning, landmarking, liquor license or sidewalk café applications, street fairs, social service initiatives, public park improvements, or transportation infrastructure, to list just some examples.

Members find it rewarding as well as personally enriching, while providing an invaluable service to our community. Contact us at [info@sohoalliance.org](mailto:info@sohoalliance.org) for details on how to apply.

## Counterfeit Gangs on the Defensive

Tourists and thrifty shoppers have been flocking to Canal Street for several years now to purchase cheap counterfeit handbags and watches. We shall not discuss the propriety of that.



Psst! Prada... Coach... Cocaine?

However, this illegal trade introduced a violent criminal element into our neighborhood. Eventually, aggressive street-hustling gave way to threats directed at SoHo residents who objected to these peddlers selling in front of their homes. In one instance, one thug physically assaulted a resident who asked him to move away from his front door. Another peddler threatened to "put a bullet in the head" of a resident who objected to the hustling on his block. Other residents reported the counterfeit peddlers also graduated to selling cocaine as well as counterfeits.

Working with the Mayor's Office, the SoHo Alliance has made a dent in this problem. Stores catering to the counterfeit trade have been padlocked, landlords renting to the counterfeiters have been heavily fined, and many peddlers arrested. We shall stay vigilant.

It is still not completely crime-free, but the illegal scene on Canal Street has noticeably improved in the past few months. We shall stay vigilant.

---

## Alliance Thwarts High-Rise Office Plans

The SoHo Alliance has apparently been successful in fighting back a proposal by outside developers who sought to change the zoning in the southeast section of our neighborhood, the area around Lafayette and Canal Streets. Their plan was to promote high-rise commercial construction in our low-rise neighborhood.

Earlier this year, there was talk at the Chinatown Working Group, a newly-formed association of activists and shareholders from the areas to the east of SoHo (not just Chinatown), to change the zoning in Chinatown in order to prevent overdevelopment and displacement there. Fine.

However, to compensate for this proposed down-zoning in Chinatown, the big developers in the group attempted to up-zone southeast SoHo, without even having the courtesy or wisdom of informing the SoHo Alliance or SoHo property owners of their intentions.

When we got wind of the proposal, we strongly objected to it, requesting that they leave our zoning alone and asserting that if SoHo needs its zoning changed, it will come from within SoHo, not from without.

That was over six months ago, and having heard nothing further, we believe the proposal is dead.