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# Helen Rosenthal

Council Member, 6th District



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Dear Neighbors,

Our hearts and prayers go out to the family of 2-year-old Greta Greene, who lost her life after being struck from debris from the facade of the Esplanade. The Department of Buildings (DOB) quickly installed a sidewalk shed to protect pedestrians, and they are currently conducting an investigation into the accident. I am anxious to review their findings. This is a deeply troubling event, and I am working with DOB to ensure this building is made safe as soon as possible for everyone on our streets.

## DISTRICT NEWS

Save the date: my **Open House** will be on Sunday, June 14 at my district office. There will be food, music, and good cheer - don't miss it!

Check out the **New Taste of the UWS**, sponsored by the Columbus Avenue BID. Get your tickets [here](#).

The **Senior Food Bag** program is back, and this year it will begin in June and continue through November. If you belong to a senior center, please check with that center to get details on how the program will work at that location. If you do not belong to a center but live within District 6 and would like to participate, you may do that through the Goddard Riverside Community Center located at 593 Columbus Ave at 88th street. Program information is included [here](#), or you can reach out to Marisa Maack at (212) 873-0282 x. 200 or [mmaack@council.nyc.gov](mailto:mmaack@council.nyc.gov) to learn more. If your building did not participate in the program last year and is interested, my office is happy to come and speak with residents about the program. This is a great opportunity for seniors to have fresh produce at reasonable prices and recipes to take best advantage of that great local produce.

2.5 million New Yorkers live in rent-regulated apartments, but we continue to lose our stock of affordable housing through **vacancy decontrol**. I joined Jose Lopez from Make the Road New York and Thomas Waters from the Community Service Society (CSS) to speak about the issue on a recent episode of BK Live. [Watch the video.](#)



Recently the Department of Finance (DOF) sent letters to over 5,700 low income seniors and people with disabilities announcing they would **reduce or remove their Rent Freeze (SCRIE / DRIE) benefits**. Several colleagues in the Council and I [called for a moratorium](#) on the change until DOF provides more information, including the increased rent cost for each tenant and a possible appeals process.



Thank you to the 350+ people who came out to my second annual **Town Hall!** I was so pleased to announce the winners of Participatory Budgeting funding and thank those volunteers that worked on the process. The winners are: Mobile Food Pantry for the West Side Campaign Against Hunger (*1,163 votes // \$250,000*), Hudson Greenway Bike Safety Improvements in Riverside Park (*873 votes // \$200,000*), Crosstown Bus Countdown Clocks (*840 votes // \$240,000*), and Athletic Turf Field at MLK High School (*781 votes // \$300,000*). I was honored to be joined by U.S. Senator Charles Schumer, U.S. Congressman Jerrold Nadler, NYC Public Advocate Letitia James, and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer. If you missed the event, you can [watch the video](#). My office will continue to post answers to the most popular [audience follow-up questions](#) as we receive answers to them from City agencies.



A few weeks ago my office and the West 80's Neighborhood Association held the first ever **Love Your Tree Day** event on the Upper West Side, it was a great success. The two-part event included an evening of talks and a day of volunteering to clean and plant flowers in the tree beds that line our streets. It was a pleasure to work with Melissa Elstein, secretary and founding member of the of the West 80's Neighborhood Association, who wrote about her experience in the [West Side Spirit](#).

The **District 3 Green Schools Group** is an all-volunteer organization of public school parents who promote sustainability in our local public schools; I was proud to honor them last month with a [Proclamation at City Hall](#). Their composting pilot program in 2011 was particularly successful: they reduced landfill garbage by 85%, and the Department of Sanitation used their pilot to expand the program throughout the City.



**Rats** continue to plague the Upper West Side, so it's exciting to hear that the Mayor wants to expand the Health Department's Rat Reservoir Program. The pilot program targeted a few small parks on the Upper West Side and reduced rats by 85%; the expanded program will cover more small parks in our neighborhood, including the remainder of the Broadway Malls. I joined the Health Department's rat expert Caroline Bragdon to [speak to NY1](#) about the expansion.

## CITY HALL

*Below is a description of the legislation that I have been working on over the last month.*

The New York City Fire Department (FDNY) has a shockingly low rate of **women firefighters**: less than a half of one percent. Meanwhile, 13% of San Francisco's firefighters are women, 15% of active duty U.S. military are women, and 17% of New York police officers are women. Last week the Council passed my bill, co-sponsored with

Council Member Elizabeth Crowley, [requiring the FDNY to publish online the demographics of people applying to become firefighters](#). We expect this information to help us to better understand the barriers to entry for women and minorities. [Read the press release](#).



The Council recently passed my resolution against the **Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)** and fast-track approval from Congress. While the President may get the bill passed, I am proud that our City announced loud and clear that our local laws should not be subject to the bottom line of major corporations and that the American people deserve to know the contents of such important legislation before it is voted on.

Businesses in Manhattan between 96th Street and Chambers Street with an annual rent of at least \$250,000 currently pay an additional tax, the **Commercial Rent Tax**, which is a serious burden for small businesses. Council Member Dan Garodnick and I will introduce a bill to raise the threshold to \$500,000 in annual rent so fewer businesses are impacted by this discriminatory tax. You can read more about our bill in the [Wall Street Journal](#).

39% of the City's jail population at any given time are in jail because they cannot afford **bail**. Most are accused of non-violent crimes, such as possession of marijuana or jumping a turnstyle. Due to backlogs in court hearings, New Yorkers who cannot afford bail may sit in jail for months or even years. Even relatively short stays in jail can wreak havoc on the lives of detained men and women, who may lose income from losing work, cannot care for their children or other family members, miss school, and may lose their place in a homeless shelter. I introduced a bill that would require the City to [post a quarterly report online on the length of stay and bail amount of all people held in City jails](#), and my bill had a hearing in the Committee on Fire and Criminal Justice Services earlier this month. To learn more, [watch the hearing](#) and [read the press release](#).

**Voter turnout** in New York State is consistently one of the lowest in the country, and youth voting in New York State and New York City is lower than that of any age group. Elections shape our everyday lives, and by 2020, the millennial generation will comprise

just under 40% of all eligible voters nationwide. Last week Council Member Ben Kallos and I introduced a resolution calling on the State to pass A2529 (Assembly Member Brian Kavanagh) / S857 (State Senator David Carlucci), which would allow 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote and would require local boards of education to adopt policies to promote voter education and registration. To learn more, [read the resolution](#) and the [press release](#).

I have heard from countless UWS residents and members of the Community Board on their frustration around the inadequate ability for public input and **lack of transparency from the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC)** particularly when developers are asked to make changes to their building proposals. Right now it's the policy of the LPC to require developers modifying landmarks to present their plans in front of the local community board, but under a different commissioner, that policy could easily change. Last week I introduced a bill that would [make that policy law](#). In addition, developers often make significant changes to their plans after their first presentation to the LPC -- once the community board has already given their input; my bill would require developers to inform the community after they make significant changes to their plans (significant changes would include a change in footprint, increase in height, or a significant change in the exterior design elements or materials). I am grateful to the Community Board 7 Preservation Committee and the West End Preservation Society for their support on this bill. To learn more, [read the press release](#).

Last month I mentioned my bill that would require the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH) to [publish an annual report on case dismissals](#); I hope this will lead to fewer unnecessary health violations for restaurants and a better understanding of why fines for some building violations get paid without the problem ever being fixed. I recently hosted [an episode of Manhattan Neighborhood Network \(MNN\)'s Represent NYC](#) to talk about how these issues with Shafaq Islam at the Urban Justice Center and James Versocki of the New York State Restaurant Association.



Hope you had a safe and happy Memorial Day!

Warmly,

*Helen.*



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