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# Helen Rosenthal

Council Member, 6th District



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Dear Neighbors,

This month we've seen a series of wins for our community. After years of frustration around helicopter noise, the community got a chance to speak out about the issue at a City Council hearing before the Administration and members of the tour helicopter industry. The Department of Transportation answered the call for a northbound protected bike lane in the neighborhood, which would likely go on Amsterdam Avenue and would definitely make the streets safer for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. The American Museum of Natural History hosted a public meeting on their expansion plan and heard public comment. Read below for more details on these events and others, and I hope you and your family have a wonderful Thanksgiving.

## DISTRICT NEWS

Last week the **American Museum of Natural History (AMNH)** gave a **presentation of their expansion plan** led by the architect, Jeanne Gang, and key Museum staff involved in the design and planning of the new space. I am grateful to the Museum for walking the community through the design and taking public comment afterwards. This was an informal meeting and was not part of the official review process, which will include public hearings held by Community Board 7, the Parks Department and the Landmarks Preservation Commission. My office will help get the word out with dates and locations of these meetings once they are set. You can read my statement from that evening [here](#), and you can learn more about the presentation from [DNA Info](#) and the [West Side Rag](#).

As many of you know by now, the DOE and CEC were not able to come to a consensus on **rezoning our school district**. Therefore, just as was the case for families over the past three years, we do not expect any change to the reality that there will be a waitlist for PS 199 in 2016. The other elected officials and I have asked repeatedly for resources and support for PS 191 and it is unconscionable that it hasn't happened for the families in that school. I am confident however that with our new PS 191 principal, Lauren Keville, we are now on the right path. The undeserved designation of PS 191 to the persistently dangerous list should not stand in the way of moving

forward. I call on the DOE and CEC to come together and focus on an aggressive plan forward that alleviates overcrowding at 199 once and for all, strengthens PS 191, and advances the opening date of PS 342 to 2017. I believe each of these three schools, along with PS 452, can successfully serve the southern portion of our district.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) presented their plan to bring a **northbound protected bike lane** to the Upper West Side last week, most likely on Amsterdam Avenue. I am grateful to DOT for responding to letters from myself, Council Member Mark Levine, Community Board 7, and other advocates calling for a protected northbound bike lane to complement the southbound protected bike lane on Columbus Avenue and shorten the distance to cross Amsterdam Avenue. If you missed the presentation, you can view it [here](#). The next step for the plan is a Community Board 7 Transportation Committee vote, which has not yet been scheduled.

The Upper West Side experienced **two pedestrian fatalities** in early November: the first at 64th and West End Avenue and the second at 109th Street and Columbus Avenue. The police arrested the driver of the second collision, a cab driver, and charged him with failure to yield. Since the collision was by a cab driver who caused a fatality due to a moving traffic violation, it triggered Cooper's Law (Local Law 27 of 2014); the cab driver's taxi license was suspended, and if he is found guilty of failure to yield, his taxi license will be revoked. These two tragedies are a powerful reminder that our work to improve street safety is far from finished and should include better hours for taxi drivers, so they're not a risk to themselves and others, and more 24/7 speed and red light cameras to enforce traffic law.



Some of the team behind the 2015 Senior Food Bag Program (from left to right): Shula Warren from Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer's office, Terry Kobel, Connie Kosner, Helen's Chief of Staff Marisa Maack, Helen, Rochelle Shereff, Hyacinth Brea, and Sarah Snook (November 11, 2015).

The **Senior Food Bag Program** is possible thanks to the hard work of a team of dedicated volunteers, some of whom are shown above. This year they packed and delivered 2,160 bags of fresh fruit and vegetables to seniors across the neighborhood. Thank you all for making the 2015 season a success!

In response to resident requests to our office, the **DOE Fund began a new route** at the end of October: 96th-106th Streets on the west side of Broadway and 70th-75th Streets on both sides of Broadway. The men in blue are now cleaning these

streets five days a week. Let my office know if you see a difference, and give us your suggestions for future routes by emailing me at [Helen@HelenRosenthal.com](mailto:Helen@HelenRosenthal.com).

If you need assistance during the **open enrollment period for Medicare**, please see Cheryl in my office on Monday or Tuesday afternoons from 2pm-6pm. Cheryl is a social worker with experience working on Senior issues and healthcare. We also continue to partner with JASA and have a senior services social worker, Patricia, in the office every Monday from 10-3pm. Cheryl and Patricia are great resources for SCRIE, DRIE, Medicare, and social services available for seniors.

In addition, the Medicare Rights Center and I are holding a **Medicare Enrollment Awareness Event** on Wednesday, December 2, from 4pm-5pm at B'nai Jeshurun Synagogue (257 W 88th St, between Broadway and West End Avenue). Join us to learn about changes to Medicare taking place in 2016, and get connected to programs that help pay the costs associated with Medicare. [See the flyer.](#)

The **IRT Powerhouse** on 59th street and West End Avenue is being considered for landmark status. [I'm proud to support the designation](#), which would preserve a monument to the New York City subway system and a part of the legacy of famed NYC firm McKim, Mead, & White. You can read more about it in [my recent op-ed in the West Side Spirit](#).

On Sunday I held a **Council Member on the Corner** event, and I got a chance to speak to over two dozen of you about issues that matter to you, including lost parking and late night noise from film shoots, the luxury condo development that will be built on Amsterdam between 68th and 69th with no community input, and overcrowding in local schools. I look forward to holding another Council Member on the Corner once the weather gets warm next Spring. In the meantime, if you need to reach me, feel free to email me at [Helen@HelenRosenthal.com](mailto:Helen@HelenRosenthal.com).

**Goddard Riverside** has a few important events coming up. Their annual [Book Fair](#), which raises money for Goddard's work to support seniors, children, the homeless, and tenants, will be on Saturday, November 21 - Sunday, November 22. Goddard is also hosting a [Thanksgiving Meal](#), free and open to all, on Thursday, November 26 from 12pm-3pm. If you'd like to get involved, Goddard is looking for volunteers, food donations, and monetary contributions. [Learn more.](#)

## CITY HALL



Helen speaks at a rally against tour helicopter noise with Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Congressman Jerry Nadler, Council Members Carlos Menchaca (*not pictured*), Margaret Chin (*not pictured*), and Paul Vallone (*not pictured*), State Senator Daniel Squadron (*not pictured*), and advocates (November 12, 2015).

Last week [we had a first hearing](#) on two bills sponsored by Council Members Carlos Menchaca, Margaret Chin, and me to **limit tour helicopter noise**. The Economic Development Corporation (EDC), which oversees the City's heliports, offered disappointing testimony: they depended on an industry-funded report for the economic impact of helicopter tours; they came with no new solutions nor willingness to require noise standards with monitoring; and they refused to provide additional information to help move the ball forward. I was grateful to have the support of several elected officials who have been tackling this issue for years, including Congressman Jerry Nadler, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, and State Senator Daniel Squadron, and local groups including the Inwood Noise Action Committee, the Governor's Island Alliance, the Brooklyn Heights Association, and DC37. You can watch the hearing [here](#).

A few weeks ago the Council Committee on Mental Health, Developmental Disability, Alcoholism, Substance Abuse, and Disability Services heard my three bills to **expand access to civic and cultural events for people with disabilities**. It was the first City Council hearing ever to have a hearing loop, American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter, and CART services to accommodate people with hearing loss, people who are deaf who use ASL as their first language, and people who are deaf who use written English as their first language. Advocates who testified gave great ideas to improve the legislation. For example, one ASL interpreter pointed out that, like interpreters of spoken languages, ASL interpreters have specialties like medical vocabulary or legal vocabulary and therefore are not interchangeable. You can read written testimony for the hearing and watch the video [here](#).

New York City and State pension funds together invest over \$8 billion in companies that mine, drill, and produce **fossil fuels**. The value of these companies is highly dependent on their untapped reserves of coal, oil, and gas, but governments around the world are acting to keep fossil fuels in the ground to prevent climate catastrophe. In other words, the value of fossil fuel companies are about to plummet rapidly, and we must protect our city and state pension funds from fossil fuel investments before it's too late. I joined forces with State Senator Liz Krueger and Assembly Assistant Speaker

Felix Ortiz, who are leading the issue at the State level, to write an [op-ed that ran in Crain's](#).

In a Council committee hearing in April, construction workers on City-funded projects described experiencing racism and sexual abuse on the job, in addition to wage theft. I am deeply disturbed that the City continues to fund projects using contractors with a history of illegal and abusive treatment towards their own workers. Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and I introduced a bill to **protect construction workers on City-funded projects**. It would require the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to [create a list of preferred contractors, which takes into account construction conditions and incidents of wage theft](#). It would also require HPD to track construction conditions by developer and contractor, and it would create an ombudsperson position within HPD to respond to such construction conditions. You can learn more about the issue in the [New York Daily News](#), [City & State](#), and [Labor Press](#).



Helen speaks at a rally with Council Members Ydani Rodriguez and Mark Levine, Assembly Member Deborah Glick, and housing advocates about combating the illegal practice of converting apartments into hotels (October 30, 2015)

A few weeks ago the Council Committee on Housing and Buildings had a hearing on legislation by Council Members Ydani Rodriguez, Mark Levine, and myself to curtail **illegal hotels**, or [the use of apartments as hotel rooms](#). Airbnb made clear they have no interest in preventing their users from breaking New York City law, taking housing off the market, providing unregulated and potentially unsafe conditions, and incentivizing warehousing and landlord harassment. Airbnb also spread misinformation by offering residents to testify in support, who do not in fact break the law and would not be impacted by the legislation under consideration. Airbnb's reference to helping the middle class is duplicitous when many of their rentals take affordable housing for the middle class off of the market. Several housing groups and residents testified in support of the bills, including ANHD (the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development), Goddard Riverside, the Cooper Square Committee, HCC (Housing Conservation Coordinators), the West Side Neighborhood Alliance, and Churches United for Fair Housing.

Right now over half of all City-contracted human services workers (health care services, early childhood education, etc.) earn less than \$14 an hour. Due to their low

income, many human service workers are eligible for the same services they provide in their professions, such as food stamps and homeless shelters. My November Contracts Hearing topic was about **raising wages for workers who provide city services through human services contracts**. While the Mayor added funding to bring wages for these workers up to at least \$11.50 an hour, I believe we need to raise all city workers' wages to \$15 an hour. You can learn more about the hearing in coverage by [Gotham Gazette](#).

We had a first hearing on my bill to **make all New York City school buses use B5 biodiesel**, or diesel with at least 5% biofuel. I'll continue to work with the Administration to move this bill forward and reduce the amount of dirty diesel used by City-contracted school buses. There's no reason our kids should be exposed to dirty pollution inside the school buses. You can learn more about the hearing in [Politico](#).

Warmly,

Helen.



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