



Today's News Wednesday, August 22, 2012

## Diaz Sr.'s 'Badge of Honor'

State Sen. Ruben Diaz Sr., still in the hospital after knee surgery, said he would wear his last-place ranking by the New York State Business Council as "a badge of honor." The Business Council released its annual voters' guide, naming Diaz as the least business-friendly member of the Senate. The rankings were scored based on how each member voted on a series of bills, including the state budget Diaz opposed because, he said, it would cut too many government services for his Bronx constituents. "I was elected to protect my community," said Diaz, who scored 25%, while every Senate Republican was listed as 90%. The Business Council, he sniped, is more interested in "buying New York" than protecting it.

## DiNapoli and Schneiderman Who?

For Tom DiNapoli and Eric Schneiderman, anonymity is a mixed blessing. A Siena poll yesterday showed that a majority of New Yorkers still have no idea who their comptroller and attorney general are, let alone whether they approve of the job they both are doing. But Siena's Steve Greenberg said that DiNapoli and Schneiderman shouldn't worry too much. Comptrollers and attorneys general usually become known only if they do something illegal, he said. "Voters aren't in love with them, but they don't hate them either." Carl McCall and Eliot Spitzer, former comptroller and attorney general, respectively, were also largely anonymous throughout their first terms, Greenberg added.

## Department of Bad Timing

The city's bike-share program may be delayed a year due to a software glitch, but that won't stop advocacy group Transportation Alternatives from throwing a party for the postponed program. "Celebrate Citi Bike" will be held Aug. 23 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Roulette in Brooklyn. "Join us for drinks, dancing and a celebration of the wonderful ways Citi Bike will change New York City when it launches," the invite stated. The event was scheduled in July, long before Mayor Michael Bloomberg postponed the launch until March 2013. But the party will go on, even without its guests (no Citi bikes will be available at the event, a spokesman for TA said).

## New Drawbridge Planned for Mill Basin

After two malfunctions in the span of a month, the city Department of Transportation will replace the Mill Basin Drawbridge with one that is taller and, it is hoped, less accident-prone, a spokesman said. The bridge became stuck in the up position on July 27 and Aug. 11, snarling traffic on the Belt Parkway in both directions. "A taller replacement bridge is currently in design as part of a larger program to replace seven bridges along the Belt Parkway, and we are currently replacing electrical components on the existing bridge," the DOT spokesman said. "This project is part of \$5 billion in bridge replacement and rehabilitation by the administration."

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## In defense of parking lots

A sprawling parking lot in Chelsea or lower Manhattan today may be the linchpin for high-density redevelopment in the future, argues a new report from Columbia University's Center for Urban Real Estate. It's an unconventional conclusion that suggests more parking lots and garages in the city may ultimately enable larger, environmentally friendly buildings. "If you're a policymaker, it's not necessarily a good idea to prohibit the development of future parking lots or limit existing ones," said Jesse Keenan, the center's research director. "[Otherwise] we are foreclosing the future potential of more efficient developments."

The study, which was commissioned by parking-garage operator Edison Properties, examined redevelopment projects that have occurred in Manhattan south of 59th Street and downtown Brooklyn between 1996 and 2010. It found that some 20% of all redeveloped land in those projects had previously been parking lots.

Additionally, developments whose land once included parking lots tended to have greater rates of building density, ranging from 16% more square feet in lower Manhattan to 46% more square feet in midtown. Keenan said that parking lots effectively served as soft sites for these projects, enabling developers to acquire parcels around them to create larger lots for construction. Those in turn have the potential to be denser, more sustainable projects.

"It's like playing chess or checkers," Keenan said. "If you fill in all the playing spots now, then you can't make your next move. You can't accomplish the goal of winning the game."

The report concludes the city should promote land assembly districts in Manhattan—groups of property owners who agree to sell their land collectively to developers—that include new parking allowances.

Vicki Been, who directs the Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy at New York University, expressed concerns about the proposal. "Without a sharper focus on why the private market would fail to result in the efficient level of land development, it is not clear that this 'solution' is aimed at the right problem," she said.

## At A Glance

**MOVING UP:** George Fontas has been named a senior vice president at Capalino+Company, where he will oversee the government-relations firm's public-sector funding and public-policy efforts. He has worked there since 2006.

**YOUNG GUNS:** Manhattan Young Democrats hosts the group's fourth annual "Young Gets It Done" gala tonight at 1OAK, 453 W. 17th St., starting at 7 p.m. RSVP to Kat Kane at (646) 761-9717.

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