

Plans underway to restore Prospect Cemetery

BY IVAN PEREIRA

To the naked eye, Prospect Cemetery may look like a worn-out graveyard covered in ivy, but according to Cate Ludlam, president of the Prospect Cemetery Association of Jamaica Village, the site is an important fixture in the history of Queens.

Ludlam, along with the help of the Greater Jamaica Development Corp., plans to give residents access to this important space, located within York College's campus, with a massive renovation project that is in the planning stages.

The 4.5-acre cemetery, which dates back to the 17th century, has not been properly maintained for years and several of the headstones have been damaged by vandals, according to Ludlam.

"If all of the stones were standing where they were supposed to, you'd see more stones in the grave-

yard," she said.

The civic has contracted a landscape architect who will come up with an overall design for the cemetery this fall. Ludlam said one of the first things that will be done will be to clear the large growth of ivy that has developed over the land, which is home to several species of birds.

"It will enhance the landscape and we will see this as a place of history," she said.

The renovation, funded by more than \$1 million in grants collected by Greater Jamaica from several sources, including Borough President Helen Marshall, will also restore the damaged headstones. Ludlam said there are anywhere between 3,000 to 3,500 graves in the land and many have no marker to show the burial site.

"If you died in Jamaica in the 1600s, this is where you were buried," she said.

In September, the Chapel of the Sisters, in front of



Renovations are in the works to restore Prospect Cemetery to its historic splendor.

Photo by Ivan Pereira

the eastern entrance to the cemetery, reopened after a major renovation by Greater Jamaica. The chapel was built in 1857 by Ludlam's ancestor, Nicholas Ludlam, in honor of his three daughters, who are buried in the cemetery.

York College now uses the interior of the chapel, which has been dedicated as the Illinois Jacquet Performance Space, for musical performances throughout the year.

Ludlam said she would like the cemetery to also be

used for students of all ages so they can get a hands-on lesson on Queens history.

"This is the final resting place of families who built Jamaica," she said. "It's the final resting place for soldiers who fought for freedom. It's the final rest-

ing place of slaves, masters and shopkeepers."

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