



# RIGHT-ON-RED TURNS

LOOKING FOR WAYS TO DECREASE TRAFFIC, STATEN ISLAND LAWMAKERS ASK FOR A STUDY TO DETERMINE IF IT'S FEASIBLE TO IMPLEMENT RIGHT TURNS AT RED LIGHTS ACROSS THE BOROUGH. **A2**

## TOTTENVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

# City breaks ground on new John Drennan Field House

The \$24.3 million state-of-the-art athletic facility honors the school's late football coach and FDNY hero.

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New York City officials broke ground Thursday on a new athletic field house at Tottenville High School, named in honor of the school's former football coach and FDNY Capt. John Drennan, who was killed in the line of duty in 1994.

On Thursday, New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) President and CEO Nina Kubota joined education leaders, elected officials, community leaders, members of the FDNY, Tottenville Football Alumni Association, and the Drennan family to break ground on a new \$24.3 million state-of-the-art athletic field house at the Huguenot school.

According to the SCA, it will be named the John Drennan Athletic Field House, in honor of the former Tottenville varsity football coach who perished from injuries suffered while fighting a fire in Manhattan.

"This field house has been years in the making, a true reflection of perseverance, collaboration and community, pride, and we're so grateful to see it finally becoming a reality," said Principal Gina Battista. "... Today's groundbreaking is not only about a building, but about what it stands for — dedication, teamwork and legacy. Captain John J. Drennan embodied all of these values. The late Father Mychal Judge, the beloved FDNY chaplain, once shared that after Captain Drennan's passing, Mrs. Drennan said she wanted the city of New York to celebrate John what a hero he had been, and what a great husband and father he was. And that's exactly what we're doing here today, celebrating a hero, a coach, a husband, a father and a member of the Tottenville family, whose courage and leadership continue to inspire generations of Tottenville student athletes."

The new 9,420-square-foot facility will include modern locker rooms, bathrooms, showers, a training room, film room, and equipment storage space. Additional amenities will include a concession stand and public restrooms, including a gender-neutral bathroom.

"This field house is the embodiment of one of SCA's key objectives — to provide



City officials break ground Friday on Tottenville High School's new athletic field house, named in honor of the late football coach and FDNY hero John Drennan. Annalise Knudson, Staten Island Advance photos



A portrait of the late John Drennan.



Student athletes attend the ceremony.

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Tottenville High School Principal Gina Battista

## MIDLAND BEACH

# Street flooding near New Creek Bluebelt to be addressed

Project set to begin in 2027 will add storm sewers and improve drainage to reduce flooding for Midland Beach residents.

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A project to enhance infrastructure near the New Creek Bluebelt will improve roadway drainage and reduce flooding for thousands of Midland Beach residents.

On Thursday, the Department of Design and Construction hosted the first public meeting for the next phase of the New Creek Bluebelt project, which transformed an existing waterway into a natural piece of infrastructure that helps guide rainwater from the surrounding streets out to the lower New York Bay.

"The Bluebelt program builds, preserves and enhances natural corridors to reduce flooding, improve water quality and create open green spaces all across Staten Island.



Midland Beach streets frequently flood during storms. Staten Island Advance

Bluebelts have worked tremendously well in areas in need of flood mitigation and protection across this particular area of Staten Island and other parts [of the borough]," said Joseph Kardos of NV5, the technical design consulting firm working on the project. Earlier parts of the New Creek Bluebelt

project saw the transformation of a former creek-turned-dumping ground into an open space that helps protect the surrounding area from heavy rainfall. Now, the city plans to install new storm sewers in the surrounding neighborhoods to connect to the New Creek Bluebelt, allowing water to flow from flood-prone streets to the bluebelt and then out into the bay.

"While the Bluebelt is already built for this area, the connecting storm sewer network for [New Creek] still needs to be constructed and that is a key part to this project. So once complete, this system will reduce standing water, lessen flooding and create a more connected, efficient drainage network for nearby neighborhoods," Kardos said.

The multi-block project area is generally bounded by Boundary Avenue to the west, Father Capodanno Boulevard to the east, Hunter Avenue to the north and Midland Avenue to the south. Kardos explained that his team has collected detailed data on the existing infrastructure and built a digital model to simulate how rainwater

## NEW DORP

# Assemblyman wants to restart secession movement

Small group gathers to hear Republican Sam Pirozzolo read his "Staten Island Independence Declaration."

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A Staten Island elected official said Friday that he's ready to lead a charge to consider — once again — whether the borough should become an independent city.

State Assemblyman Sam Pirozzolo (R-Mid-Island) held an event at the corner of Richmond Road and New Dorp Lane to generate interest in an updated review of Staten Island secession, as well as to read his own "Staten Island Independence Declaration."

"We the citizens of Staten Island declare, when in the course of civic events it becomes necessary for one borough to dissolve the political bonds which have connected it with a distant and unresponsive government, we should declare the causes which impel us to seek separation," reads the start of Pirozzolo's document.

Pirozzolo had published a video on social media inviting the public to join him at the event, which follows decades of conversation about Staten Island forming its own city, most recently in 2023 when Borough President Vito Fossella said his office would fund a new study to learn what an independent Staten Island would look like.

In the 1990s, a local referendum found that 65% of Staten Island voters supported secession, but implementation was opposed by the city government and was blocked by the State Assembly. Years later in 2019, then-Councilman Joe Borelli (R-South Shore) also introduced a set of bills to study the feasibility of secession, with support from another Republican state lawmaker, Assemblyman Michael Reilly (R-South Shore).

Although Friday's event closely follows the mayoral election of democratic socialist Zohran Mamdani, Pirozzolo railed against policy positions of past, current and incoming city leaders.

Despite some reservations about Mamdani, most of Staten Island's Republican elected officials have expressed hope for a collaborative relationship with the incoming mayor, while still vowing to "fight" for Staten Island "values."

Friday's event took place at the former site of the Rose and Crown Tavern, where the Declaration of Independence was first read by British soldiers on Staten Island in 1776. Pirozzolo drew parallels between the revolutionaries' grievances in that moment and those he stated against modern city governance, including a judge's recent decision to throw out a City of Yes lawsuit, and what he characterizes in a

## ST. GEORGE

# Man found shot in car

A 30-year-old man was found Friday shot in a car in a parking garage next to the courthouse in St. George; police suspect it was a suicide attempt. **A2**

## EPSTEIN FILES

# Prosecutor appointed

A federal prosecutor has been appointed to examine the relationships between deceased sex offender Jeffrey Epstein and several prominent Democrats. **A5**

