

## BEACH SHOPPING CENTER: Revitalizing a Key Part of the City

Adam Ifshin thinks Peekskill is a city rich in potential—and he’s putting his money behind his beliefs, pumping millions of dollars into re-creating the Beach Shopping Center.

His effort is one in a series of multi-million dollar projects that are making Peekskill a more attractive, vital, and energetic community in many different ways. Though such efforts as the Louisa Street Ball Field, Lincoln Train Station Museum, and the new Main Street Art Lofts may seem to be separate, they’re all part of a focused, concerted effort to bring prosperity to Peekskill.

Getting the attention and respect of businesspeople such as Ifshin is a crucial part of the revitalization campaign. Ifshin

is president of Tarrytown, New York-based DLC Management Corporation—and he has long and intimate knowledge of Peekskill’s business history. His retailing roots in the city go back for generations.

On Ifshin’s wife’s side, her parents operated a store in the Beach Shopping Center from the early to mid-1970s through the 1980s. So when Ifshin heard that the Beach Shopping Center was for sale at a reasonable price, he decided to take action. “We’re in the business of re-energizing and re-creating shopping centers,” Ifshin says.

At the Beach Shopping Center, this re-creation is occurring on a geographic scale. *Continued on page 4*

## KILEY CENTER RESOURCES STILL AVAILABLE

**Programs offered at the Kiley Center will still be available despite the fact that the facility is undergoing an intensive renovation over the next nine months.**

For the convenience of the youths that utilize the facilities, the Department of Parks and Recreation has found substitute locations just a short distance from the Kiley Center itself. “We’re using the Neighborhood Center and we’re using Oakside Elementary School, and between the two sites we’ve been able to maintain our programs,” says Francis Brunelle, director of city services.

Though the Kiley Center is owned by the Peekskill Housing Authority, not the City of Peekskill, the Department of Parks and Recreation provides all the programs the Center offers. Brunelle estimates that about 60-100 children a day will utilize the center during the cooler winter months. Children aged six through 18 are welcome. All of the programs are offered on a “drop-in” basis. Youths simply need to show up at the program locations and sign in.

**A detailed table of activities is available on page 6. For more information, call 734-PARK (7275).** Four supervisors will monitor activities throughout the week. Because only one substitute facility will be open at a time, the number of staffers needed to keep programs going is the same as if the Kiley Center was still open, Brunelle says. “There will be table games and board games at the Neighborhood Center. Drill team, track, basketball and similar activities are being held at Oakside,” Brunelle says.

## Making Peekskill the Better Choice

First of all, I’d like to wish Peekskill a happy 350<sup>th</sup> birthday. According to many of our local historians, Jan Peck established the trading post that eventually became our city in 1654.



By Mayor John Testa

I’m sure there’s going to be a lot of exciting activity celebrating that important anniversary—including new research that may allow us to exactly pinpoint the date of Peekskill’s birthday.

One thing we can say for certain, however, is that even after three and a half centuries, Peekskill continues to grow and change. Some of the most important evolution is happening at the Beach Shopping Center.

You may have noticed a lot of activity at the Beach Shopping Center in recent

months, as a place that once had significant difficulties is revitalized and transformed.

In this issue we’ll take a look at what is happening at the Beach Shopping Center today and at how it will look in the future. We’ll welcome a new resident to the South Street and Central Avenue Art Lofts, and took a look at how much of a success that program has been.

We’ll learn about the extensive training that goes on in the Peekskill Police Department so that its officers can better serve and protect the public. You’ll find some advice on dealing with the snow here and an update on the steps we’re taking to take care of our City’s youth while the Kiley Center is being renovated.

Once thing is certain: a lot of important companies are deciding Peekskill is a place well worth investing in. After reading this newsletter, I think you’ll agree they’re making the right choice.

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# World Class Talent **MAKES PEEKSKILL HOME**

**Alain Vaes is the king of "The Nutcracker." There are few ballets anywhere that are more beloved or more famous. And if you go to see a performance of "The Nutcracker" at one of any number of the best ballet companies on the planet, chances are the sets and costumes have been designed by Vaes.**



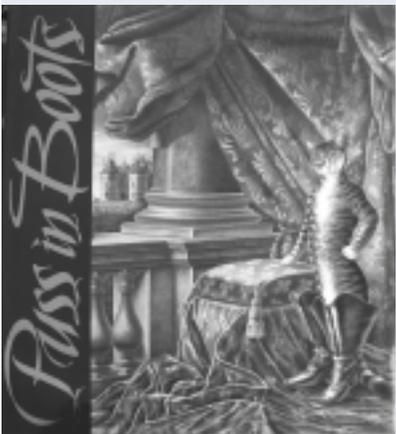
By any measure, Mr. Vaes is a major artist. He is also a Peekskill resident, and proud parent of six-year-old daughter Annabelle. Vaes doesn't live just anywhere in Peekskill. He is one of those who met the rigorous qualifications required to purchase one of the new art lofts on Central Avenue and South Street.

Having created costumes and scenery for more than 30 important ballets, Vaes has been praised and profiled in papers from *The New York Times* to *The Anchorage Daily News*. He has also written or illustrated seven acclaimed children's books. His paintings are in great demand; his graphics work has appeared in some of the nation's leading publications; and he is even doing textile design. Vaes is also one reason why experts nationwide consider Peekskill's art loft program to be a significant success. "Artists are the shock troops of revitalization," says John Crosby Freeman, one of the nation's leading experts in historic preservation, and residents such as Vaes are all any community could ask for.

**A globally respected talent, Vaes was drawn to Peekskill by the opportunity to get a space that seemed virtually designed to fit his needs. Compared to the apartments available in New York, it was very spacious. Just as important, the space had a broad expanse of windows that provided light of such legendary quality that it inspired an entire group of painters known as the Hudson River School. "My space in the city was way too small," Vaes says. "I love the space here. It has everything I need—a high ceiling, relative quiet, and beautiful light."**



A number of other factors also drew Vaes to Peekskill. He enjoyed the city's urban edge, and very much appreciated that he would be living in a community of his peers—a group of artists who made most, if not all, of their livings by working in their chosen fields. "There is definitely a community of artists here. It is nice to meet other artists and easy to meet them, and we have a good little community within the artist's lofts here. Everybody knows everybody, and they are very friendly and open and helpful," Vaes says. Events such as the Open Studios days provide an even better chance for artists to meet each other and build relationships, Vaes says. Because of all this, he's finding Peekskill to be a much more companionable place than New York City was, even though Manhattan has a far larger total number of artists. "I didn't have that sense of community in Manhattan. I was sort of isolated in a small studio."



**RENOWN IN MANY FIELDS.** Whether he's designing costumes for The New York City Ballet, doing highly regarded textile designs, or illustrating and writing children's books with a unique and gorgeous twist, Alain Vaes is an artist to be reckoned with.

Getting into the art lofts wasn't easy. A jury of highly qualified experts carefully evaluated each applicant. There were a number of reasons for this. For a structure such as the art lofts to have its full, transforming effect, those who occupy it must be of the highest caliber possible. The world of professional artists is not a large one, and word of mouth travels fast. Once a community gets a reputation for drawing in and nurturing high-quality talent, a positive, self-reinforcing cycle is created that brings in more and more residents with strong reputations and successful careers. This gives the city itself a good name as a place for artists to live and work.

Vaes found out about the art lofts from a fellow artist. "I was looking for a space to work and a friend called me and mentioned the art loft so I called right away," he says. He put down his money almost immediately, and is well satisfied with his choice. "This is all very basic urban policy, a strategy that has worked all over the New York area," Vaes says. "It's nice for a town to have a community of artists. It historically brings business to a community. The artists bring galleries, and that brings people around. Look at what happened in SoHo and Williamsburg and other places. Eventually, the whole area turns into a better place." By maintaining and supporting the art lofts concept, Peekskill is tapping into a trend that is transforming the entire Hudson Valley, Vaes says. "It's great that they're building new studios. I'm sure the word is spreading around a bit and that new artists are planning to come to the community. With the Dia Museum in Beacon, the whole area is moving in a new direction," he says.

If Peekskill stays focused and disciplined and continues to make certain the highest quality artists possible move into its new spaces, the city can't help but keep on its positive path, Vaes says. "They say this is the friendly town, and that's just what I've found it to be," he says.

# SNOW

## Working Together to Temper Nature's Wrath

By David Greener Director of City Services, Bureau of Public Works

**Dealing with snow is one of the toughest tasks facing Peekskill residents and city employees alike.**

Peekskill is a small, tightly packed place. Simply figuring out where to put all the snow that sometimes covers its streets is a very challenging, difficult task. Snow removal is the source of some of the most stinging citizen complaints about city services. Yet if we all work together as a team, we can resolve many of the problems that snow brings and help keep our citizens satisfied and enable our city workers to become more efficient and productive.

Peekskill has an entire fleet of vehicles dedicated to snow removal. There are five large, two-man trucks that clear main and secondary roads. These are dedicated snow-plow-only vehicles. There are two smaller vehicles at the Department of Public Works and another two at Parks and Recreation. These go into dead-end streets and other difficult-to-reach areas.

There's nothing personal about which streets get plowed first. Plows work on specified routes that give higher traffic streets top priority, and go down from there. Main Street, Crompond Road, North Division, Highland Avenue, and Maple Avenue are the key entry routes to the city and thus the ones that get the most attention, so that traffic can flow in and out of the city. Top secondary routes include Union Avenue, Elm Street, Depew Street, Park Street, Hudson Street, Nelson Avenue, Westchester Avenue, Frost Lane, and Lockwood.

Driving a snowplow is difficult, demanding work. City employees often find themselves working 16 hours at a time as they pilot their vehicles through terrible weather in near-zero visibility, doing a frequently dangerous job.

We also try and make certain that we have easy access to the streets, and that the streets themselves are safe to drive on. We do not intentionally plow in driveways, but the snow that we're removing from the street is plowed to the side along the curbs and driveways.

**When it comes to actually doing some snow removal of your own, following a few basic rules will make all of our lives easier, and help keep you from removing the same snow from your driveway over and over, or getting a ticket.**

**1. IF YOU HAVE A SNOW BLOWER, DO NOT BLAST THE SNOW** from your sidewalks or your driveway into the city streets. This is illegal, and the Peekskill Police Department will be watching for such violations.

**2. GET YOUR CAR OFF THE STREET OR ON THE SIDE OF THE STREET.** As soon as it begins to snow, get your car in your driveway if you have any space at all. If you have to park in the street, follow the alternate side of the street parking rules. If you don't have access to a driveway, stash your car in one of the city lots. We'll do everything we can to give you a break on parking. Illegally parked cars will almost certainly get tickets or be towed if their location is preventing plows from operating. We've handed out more than 250 snow rule violation tickets so far. Leaving your car on the street on a snow day doesn't just make you vulnerable to tickets. You'll probably still get snowed in, and you'll also be at risk of having your car hit by someone else who is having trouble driving in the snow.

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## *Snow Angels:* **A RESOURCE FOR EVERYONE**

**This winter, if you need an angel, call the Peekskill Youth Bureau.**

Every year many people die or are seriously injured shoveling snow. In addition, some seniors and differently abled people are simply unable to shovel snow. This means they may wind up getting tickets and that potentially hazardous situations may exist on the sidewalks in front of their homes.

To help keep that from happening, the City of Peekskill has created the Snow Angel program. Established by the Peekskill Youth Bureau, Snow Angels gives the city's kids a chance to be of service to the community and offers Peekskill's residents a welcome service to help them manage the rigors of home ownership.

"We do it as a community service project for the Youth Center and the kids," says City Youth Advocate Daryl Francis, who manages the Snow Angels program. He keeps a list of those who need services and matches them up with appropriate youths to help get their jobs done.

"There is a group of teenagers that are members of the Peekskill Youth Bureau," Francis says. "We also have a running list of different seniors at different housing complexes that need our help in shoveling snow. When it snows, we'll call them."

Access to the Snow Angels isn't limited to those on the list. Anybody can call 734-2051, extension 2186, and request help. They will get the work they need done at no charge, though tipping is permitted.

There are some limitations to the Snow Angels program. "The program only runs Mondays through Fridays. It's pretty much when the Center is open because we have to bring the kids to the places and bring them back," Francis says.

Plans are in the works to expand the Snow Angel program in the spring and provide help to those in need with yard work and even housekeeping, Francis says. "We have six to eight youths that are involved," he says. "Their reward is being able to help their community."

# A BIG REPAIR



## WITH NO DISRUPTION

PHOTO CAPTION. Need photo captions. culvert was replaced with a state-of-the-art five foot by 16-foot cast concrete box culvert. The new box culvert will be able to handle enormous.

Last summer the City of Peekskill got some very disturbing news. It seemed that a sewer running under Route 9 had ruptured and was leaking almost pure effluent into the Hudson River.

Such a situation was both a health risk and environmentally damaging. It also put the city under threat of extremely heavy fines from state and federal authorities. A rapid response was essential—and that's exactly what happened.

First, the Bureau of Public Works performed emergency repairs that rerouted sewage from the broken line back into the system. Then the city sought out bids for doing the repairs from reputable local and regional contractors.

Fourmen Construction had already done some excellent work for the city. The company won the contract not only because it put in the lowest bid for the project—just \$394,000, when other companies wanted more than \$1.25 million.

Another attractive aspect of Fourmen's bid was the way they were going to deal with the problem. The broken sewer line ran right under the Louisa Street entrance and exit for Route 9. Before the exit had been built, the line was only about five feet deep. After the exit was completed, the line was under more than 15 feet of dirt, rock, and rubble.

Many of the bidders wanted to deal with the broken line by digging a trench all the way across Route 9. This would have been both tremendously expensive and had a horrendous impact on traffic.

Fourmen followed a different strategy. Using advanced digging technology they bored out the old sewer line, widened the path, and then pulled a tough, flexible plastic sleeve through it. This sleeve is both enormously durable and can withstand tremendous weight.

So instead of a project taking months and sending floods of traffic through the streets of our city, the Louisa Street sewer was repaired in a few weeks at a third of the initial projected cost.

It took some creative thinking, but it worked—at a significant saving in time, money, and effort.

## CITY OF PEEKSKILL Key Government Meetings

### FEBRUARY

- 9 Common Council Committee of the Whole
- 10 Zoning Board of Appeals
- 10 Planning Commission
- 17 Committee of the Whole
- 23 Common Council
- 16 Zoning Board of Appeals
- 26 Historic & Landmarks Preservation Board

### MARCH

- 1 Committee of the Whole
- 4 Historic Preservation Advisory Commission
- 8 Common Council
- 9 Planning Commission
- 15 Committee of the Whole
- 10 Common Council
- 18 Zoning Board of Appeals
- 13 Planning Commission Work Session
- 22 Common Council
- 25 Historic and Landmarks Preservation Board