

# VILLAGER

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## 'Mission accomplished' on park, BID broadens focus

BY ALBERT AMATEAU

The Union Square Partnership entered 2011 with a thriving retail environment and a record of major accomplishments, including the completion of the plaza at the north end of Union Square Park, new trees on side streets and a new plaza with a chrome-plated statue of Andy Warhol.

"Building on the success of the past three decades, 2010 was our best year yet," said Jennifer Falk, executive director of the partnership.

"Working together with our community partners, the Partnership team accomplished an incredible amount, including streetscape improvements throughout the district and in the park with new seating areas. We expanded our core services, with increased sanitation hours and new uniforms for the teams. We are committed to making the coming year an even better one, and we thank the community for their vote of confidence and support of our work in the district," Falk said.

At its annual meeting on Mon., May 16, at the W Hotel, at 17th St. and Park Ave. South, the Partnership will install Lynne Brown and Carole Sobin as co-chairperson of the U.S.P. board of directors. Brown, who also serves as president of the U.S.P. Business Improvement District (BID) board of directors, is a senior vice president of New York University. Sobin is secretary of Consolidated Edison, Inc.

Both Brown and Sobin became interim co-chairpersons in January when Danny Meyer and Eric Seiler stepped down after serving as co-chairpersons since February 2006. Meyer and Seiler will remain on the BID board of directors.

The Partnership added four new board members: Bruce Blank, president and chief executive officer of Paragon Sports; Robert Frost, president of Signature Partners; Gregg Schenker of ABS Partners, and Kathleen Dore, a residential member of the U.S.P. board.

The reconstruction of the north plaza of Union Square was completed in December 2009 to the delight of visitors. The new 15,000-square-foot playground, triple the size of the old one, also opened in December 2009 to great reviews.

"We have a new public plaza that opened this year," Falk said, noting the March 30, 2011, opening of the public area between 17th and 18th Sts. on the east side of Broadway. The Public Art Fund sponsored the installation of Rob Pruitt's 10-foot-tall statute of Andy Warhol, whose renowned Factory locations were at 33 Union Square West and at 860 Broadway. The statue will remain on view at 17th St. and Broadway until Oct. 2 of this year. Although designated as temporary, the new plaza along Broadway is expected to become a permanent feature of the cityscape.

New seating areas, including tables and umbrellas, have been installed at the "Mother and Child" fountain on the west side of Union Square Park, as well as at the center and western lawns and in front of the renovated pavilion at the north end of the park. A total of 360 chairs, 90 bistro

tables and 10 bright green and blue umbrellas now enliven the park.

In May 2010, the Partnership sponsored its annual spring planting, adding 1,389 perennials, 506 annuals and 241 shrubs to park beds, along with nine hanging flower baskets on park lampposts. In addition, 10 large planters now enhance the entrance to the refurbished pavilion.

The Department of Parks has received several proposals to operate the seasonal restaurant in the pavilion, but has not yet designated a winner. A department spokesperson on Wednesday said only that a designation would be made soon.

A major project last year was the renovation of 56 steel tree pits along 14th St., including aerating and fertilizing the earth in each bed. A second phase of the project will begin this spring with 45 more tree pits spruced up throughout the district.

With millions of people traveling to and from Union Square each year, the Partnership supplements city sanitation services and has increased the hours of the district's Clean Team, which now begin at 6 a.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m. on weekends.

Summer in the Square, a free weekly program that runs on Thursdays from June to August, features music, dance, fitness and children's programming.

The Partnership's 2010 community opinion poll showed that 94 percent of the people surveyed felt the Partnership's efforts to clean, promote and beautify the district were successful and 96 percent said they were pleased at the overall quality of life in the area.

Despite the soft economy, the Partnership celebrated a successful 2010 business year. Nordstrom, the national department store, opened its first shop in Manhattan last year — Nordstrom Rack, the chain's discount outlet — on 14th St. between Fourth Ave. and Broadway. Citibank also opened a flagship branch on 14th St.

"The district had a commercial vacancy rate below 3 percent last year," Falk said. Forty new businesses opened in the district in 2010, she added.

"We're extremely proud of our teams, and we're committed to making this year better than ever," said Falk, who in January celebrated her fourth year as executive director of the Union Square Partnership.

*'We are committed to making the coming year an even better one, and we thank the community for their vote of confidence.'*

*Jennifer Falk*



*File photo*

**Rob Pruitt unveiled his new Andy Warhol sculpture at 17th St. and Broadway last month.**



**Last month, Jennifer Falk, executive director of the Union Square Partnership (at left of back row) joined Boy Scouts from Manhattan Troop 662, who earned their merit badges by spending a Saturday morning sprucing up Union Square Park for spring as part of National Volunteer Week. The scouts prepared flowerbeds for plantings and cleaned up debris inside the park. Whole Foods Market provided snacks for their community service.**