



# RIVERDALE NATURE PRESERVANCY

## Annual Report 2010

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The Riverdale Nature Preservancy is a non-profit 501(c)3 membership organization in Community District 8 in the northwest Bronx, New York City. We are organized for the purpose of protecting the natural and historic features and the neighborhood character of this unique part of New York City. Our neighborhood has retained much of the steep topography and treed landscape, and the rustic features of the area's first roads and settlements, because of visionary protections of earlier generations of residents, because of our low-density and Special Natural Area District (SNAD) zoning and because of the landmarking of historic districts and individual buildings in the area.

## Activities

The Preservancy **monitors local development** projects to ensure full compliance with zoning and historic preservation regulations. We **initiate and participate in long-term planning and preservation** projects, to ensure that community needs are heard and met, and to protect and enhance Riverdale's superb natural environment and community character. We also **provide information**, through community meetings, written materials and our website, to enable local residents to be active and engaged in environmental and planning issues.

## Monitor Local Development

### PRESERVANCY HIGHLIGHTS THE NEED FOR STUDY OF INDIAN POND BEFORE DEVELOPMENT PROCEEDS

In the fall of 2010, three new houses were proposed for a large property in the heart of Fieldston. The property borders Indian Pond, a natural source of fresh water for wildlife, and a focal point in the community that is visited by dozens of residents and local school children daily, possibly totaling over 10,000 visitors each year.

As noted by the Preservancy and others in the community, the development represents both the most significant new additions to the Fieldston historic district since its designation in 2006, and implementation of the amended SNAD regulations since they were approved by the New York City Council in 2005. The combination of the Landmarks Preservation Commission's review

of any changes to the existing and proposed buildings within the district, and under the SNAD provisions the modification of these significant natural features only at the discretion of the City Planning Commission, provides a powerful and positive effort to maintain the value and character of this notable Bronx neighborhood.

The Preservancy supported preserving the environment for reasons of design, hydrology, wildlife habitat, and public use.

In testimony and in writing to Bronx Community Board 8, the Preservancy urged that design of the new houses conform to the design strategy of existing residences, which uses architectural elements to make the buildings appear to be only two stories tall. The Preservancy also urged that storm water management during and after construction be thoroughly described, that the botanic environments on the property be clearly identified and reestablished as rapidly as is reasonable, as required by the Special Natural Area District zoning, and that equipment staging and erosion control ensure maximum protection of topsoils, water quality in the pond, and vegetation including low-growing species and roots of larger species.

At the end of 2010, the project was on hold.

#### PRESERVANCY URGES CONSIDERATION OF COMMUNITY IMPACTS AND NATURAL FEATURES BY AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION WISHING TO MAKE CHANGES TO ITS CAMPUS

In the fall of 2010, the Salanter Akiba Riverdale Academy on West 254<sup>th</sup> Street proposed expanding parking on its campus, enlarging the caretaker's house and changing the vegetation on the campus.

At community board presentations on the proposed changes, residents and members of the Preservancy board questioned the school's attention to stormwater from the additional paving and removal of trees due to the enlarged house. In addition, the community and the Preservancy also iterated long-standing concerns about how increased traffic and trash generated by the campus were affecting the community.

The school was asked by the Community Board to respond to community concerns, and as 2010 ended, the school was doing so.

## Initiate and participate in long-term planning and preservation

PRESERVANCY SEEKS LISTING IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES FOR THE HENRY HUDSON PARKWAY, FROM NORTH OF 129<sup>TH</sup> STREET TO THE CITY LINE.

The Preservancy achieved a significant milestone in its effort to preserve the Henry Hudson Parkway when, in February 2009, the entire Henry Hudson Parkway – from West 72nd Street in Manhattan to the city line at Yonkers – was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2010, the Preservancy began to develop an application package for the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Park Service to have the section from West 129<sup>th</sup> street to the City line officially listed in the register. The section to the south is already listed. The application is being developed with the encouragement of the SHPO and is expected to be approved.

The application will require updated maps and history, an expanded inventory of significant features, and additional photographs. National Park Service and City Parks Foundation grants, totaling \$9,340, are already in place. The Preservancy will apply for an additional small grant of approximately \$5,000 from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Additional costs to assemble the document may total \$2,000 to \$2,500 and will be paid for by the Preservancy.

PRESERVANCY DISTRIBUTES QUESTIONNAIRE ASKING RIVERDALE RESIDENTS FOR THEIR PRIORITIES AND THEIR EXPECTATIONS FOR THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY GREENWAY

In late 2010, planning consultants released their priorities for the routes and river crossings of the Hudson River Valley Greenway in the Bronx. In the next stage of this planning project, the consultants will do in-depth analyses of the selected alternative, including order-of-magnitude construction costs, an illustrative site master plan and several rendered cross sections.

To ensure that the Preservancy continues to represent its members' interests and concerns in this process, the Preservancy designed a questionnaire asking members about their current bicycling and walking activities in Riverdale, if and how they envisioned using the Greenway, and the Greenway features they considered most important. The questionnaire was distributed with the annual membership appeal in December 2010, and an electronic version was emailed to the Preservancy's email mailing list and posted on the Preservancy's web site.

The Preservancy will use the results to inform future public statements on the consultants' recommendations.

## PRESERVANCY CONTINUES TO MONITOR PROGRESS ON TRANSFORMING THE OLD PUTNAM RAIL INTO A RECREATIONAL CORRIDOR

In October 2010, Bronx Community Board 11 approved acquisition of land along the Old Putnam rail line and mapping it as parkland. At its public hearing on December 1<sup>st</sup>, the City Planning Commission had questions about the design. It is hoped that the Commission will be satisfied with the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation response and will vote in January.

The Preservancy has supported this project from the beginning as a way to provide needed green space and recreational facilities in the neighborhoods through which the Putnam Line passes, and expects to be active in the planning process once it is underway.

## Provide information

### PRESERVANCY IS A MAJOR SUPPORTER OF THE FIRST ANNUAL RIVERFEST CELEBRATION IN RIVERDALE

June 2010 saw the first annual Riverfest celebration in Riverdale, a day of fun for families and anyone interested in access to the Hudson River. The Preservancy was a major supporter of Riverfest 2010 as well as a participant. The fair was an opportunity to publicize the Preservancy's activities and distribute the Preservancy's current publications – a booklet on SNAD regulations, and sets of the Preservancy's Riverdale Press series—Living Green. Four new households were added to the Preservancy mailing list.

### DESPITE MORE STRINGENT ZONING AND INCREASED FINES FOR REMOVAL, RIVERDALE CONTINUES TO LOSE TREES

SNAD advocates in Staten Island as well as members of the Preservancy are concerned about a conflict of interest that exists when arborists are asked to ascertain the health of trees which they would then be hired to remove if they reported that the trees are a hazard.

At year's end, the board agreed to invite Riverdale's Councilman to a dialogue on how resolve this conflict.

Annual Financial Statement – 2010

**REVENUE (\$)**

Contributions/Membership dues	\$ 11,621.00
Interest/Other	3.40
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 11,624.40</b>

**EXPENSES (\$)**

Accounting Fees	\$ 1,100.00
Other Consultant Fees	7,175.00
Administration Expenses (Annual meeting, automobile charges, bank charges, meeting room fee, office supplies, postage, tax filing fee, phone)	3,482.68
Project Expenses	264.35
Contributions	2,000.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 14,022.03</b>

**Surplus/Deficit** **\$ - 2,397.63**

**Starting Fund Balance** **\$ 28,609.74**

**Ending Fund Balance** **\$ 26,212.11**