

# Combined Annual Report for 2007 and 2008

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

### **HORACE MANN HOUSE**

In the spring of 2007, the Preservancy Board became aware that Horace Mann School was proposing demolition of a small white house on its property. There was some evidence that the house might be part of an early settlement that grew up around the Van Cortlandt mansion. The Preservancy requested the school to allow the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission to inspect the house, to determine if it was

worthy of further study and preservation. This was done, and the Commission determined that the house was not historically significant.

### **RIVERDALE FERRY**

In December 2007, the Riverdale Ferry Coalition presented to the Preservancy Board the coalition's proposal for a feasibility study for high-speed ferry service between Riverdale and lower Manhattan.

The Preservancy responded to the coalition with support for the study, and asked specifically that the study

1. examine the potential of the ferry, as a new mode of transportation in the area, to produce a measurable reduction in carbon emissions, and
2. address preservation of the natural features along the river, particularly around the ferry dock, and the impact of ferry service on the river and its living resources.

### **PUTNAM LINE RECREATIONAL PATH**

The Preservancy continues to monitor and support development of a recreational path along the Putnam Line – an unused rail line running north-south through Van Cortlandt Park and southward, parallel to the Major Deegan Expressway.

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

### **NEW YORK CITY'S PLANYC2030**

In 2007, the Mayor's Office of Long-term Planning and Sustainability announced a city-wide planning initiative designed to address the growth needs of New York City to the year 2030. The plan addresses the areas of land, water, transportation, energy, air, and climate change. Residents of the city were invited to contribute local perspectives to the development of planning strategies.

The Preservancy submitted to the mayor's planning office a comprehensive discussion of the ways PlaNYC2030 augments or in some cases contradicts the vision and needs of Riverdale's communities, with emphasis on sensitivity to the Special Natural Area District and historic resources, but with a broad view of the functionality and community character of the whole of Bronx Community District 8. Our statement includes suggestions for addressing deficiencies in local services or infrastructure or amenities in ways that would further the goals of PlaNYC2030. The statement is viewable on the Preservancy's website.

### **HENRY HUDSON PARKWAY SCENIC BYWAY**

The Preservancy's HHP SB task force continues to work for the preservation of the parkway's historic, cultural, scenic, and natural features. A project by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council to have the parkway designated a scenic byway has been in hiatus, awaiting completion of a NYC Department of Transportation safety report. Nevertheless, the task force saw the following accomplishments in 2007/2008:

- New York City DOT agreed to substitute parkway-appropriate materials in its rehabilitation of five overpasses in the Bronx, including wooden guiderails and ornamental fencing in place of chain link.
- The private owners of the collapsed retaining wall incurred significant additional expense to replicate its façade as a significant feature of the parkway.
- The full Manhattan Borough Board passed a resolution reaffirming its support for the Scenic Byway and its goals.
- The New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) began to evaluate the parkway between W. 125<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan to Yonkers for eligibility for listing in the National Register. (The parkway below 125<sup>th</sup> Street is already listed in the Register.) A report by the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), which was sponsored by the Preservancy several years ago and funded by NYMTC, will satisfy the documentation requirements of the application.

### **HUDSON RIVER VALLEY GREENWAY**

Sections of the Hudson River Valley Greenway are completed or under development in Manhattan and Westchester. A Bronx link for the greenway is in an early phase of planning.

Funds became available in 2005 for a new planning study for the Bronx link of the Hudson River Valley Greenway. A consultant was selected in 2008. The Preservancy will participate in the planning study as a member of the consultant's Technical Advisory Committee and as an ex officio member of the Friends of the Hudson River Valley Greenway in the Bronx.

## **Provide information**

### **WEBSITE**

The Preservancy website includes a great deal of background information and complete descriptions of the current status of the policies and projects shaping the community. In 2007, two new topics—historic preservation and living green—were added to the website.

The historic preservation pages were created after the landmarking by the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission, in 2006, of Fieldston as a historic district. Users can

access the designation reports and maps of the Fieldson and Riverdale historic districts as well as a report on individual properties either designated as historic or worthy of further study within the community.

The living green page provides users with simple steps they can take to reduce the environmental impacts of their day-to-day activities. Links to more in-depth information are also included.

### **MONTHLY SERIES OF ARTICLES IN THE RIVERDALE PRESS**

On Earth Day 2007, the Riverdale Press launched *Sustainable Riverdale*, a monthly series on environmental sustainability by the Riverdale Nature Preservancy.

Articles focused on energy, water, transportation, landscaping, food choices, recycling, and other popular environmental topics, with an aim to relate broad global discussions to local decision making and personal lifestyle choices. Many themes were tied to the issues addressed by PlaNYC2030.

The Riverdale Press is an award-winning weekly newspaper in Riverdale with a circulation of 14,000. The series ended in March 2008.

### **COMMUNITY FAIRS**

The Preservancy participated in environmental and civic community fairs sponsored by several organizations within the community. Several new members joined the Preservancy at each fair.

### **PRESERVANCY ANNUAL MEETINGS**

The Preservancy uses its annual meeting as a forum for expert-led discussion of current environmental or planning issue of importance to the community.

#### **2007 Annual Meeting**

The 2007 annual meeting presented a panel of experts in climate change. Presentations focused on ways individuals can reduce their carbon footprint. The panel included:

- Larsen Plano, Green Building Consultant, Community Environmental Center.
- Rick Cherry, founder and CEO, Community Environmental Center.
- John Johnson, Bronx Coordinator, Council on the Environment of NYC, Recycling Office.
- Todd Forrest, VP of Horticulture, New York Botanical Garden.

- Leslie Boden, Baum Forum and Riverdale Community Supported Agriculture.

Mr. Plano noted that doing the environmentally-correct thing is seldom easy, seldom cheap, and never absolutely clear. Mr. Cherry offered that the equation for determining what is feasible is changing, and that calculations must emphasize long-term survival not short-term economic gain. Each speaker demonstrated how personal choices in daily activities such as home maintenance, solid waste management, gardening, and food choices relate to an individual's carbon footprint.

### **2008 Annual Meeting**

Our 2008 Annual Meeting focused on the complexities of waterfront redevelopment and the importance of informed community advocacy.

Riverdale is a waterfront community. The Hudson River bounds the community to the west, and the Harlem River bounds it to the south.

According to the Municipal Art Society, New York City's "shoreline is changing faster than at any other time in New York's history". In 1992, New York City issued a comprehensive waterfront plan titled *Reclaiming the City's Edge*. The report acknowledged the decline of the industrial waterfront and identified numerous opportunities for parkland, public access easements, and environmental restoration along the city's shorelines.

Within this context, over the past 10 years, Riverdale's waterfront has seen construction of a new waterfront park at the Riverdale Metro-North train station, planning for a shorefront greenway, a proposal for ferry service between Riverdale and downtown Manhattan, and a proposal for a power converter on the Spuyten Duyvil triangle. In each case, the Preservancy has brought the community's perspective concerning community character and environmental protection to project discussions.

The annual meeting began with a showing of the film "City of Water", a 30-minute documentary directed by Jasper Goldman of the Municipal Art Society and produced by Roland Lewis of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance. The film:

...explores the aspirations of public officials, environmentalists, academics, community activists, recreational boaters and everyday New Yorkers for a diverse, vibrant waterfront...  
([www.mas.org/cityofwater](http://www.mas.org/cityofwater))

After the film, Jennifer Stark-Hernandez, Water Front Organizer with the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, led a discussion about NYC waterfront policy.

### **NATIVE PLANT DEMONSTRATION GARDEN**

In the spring of 2008, the Preservancy began discussions with the NY Public Library, the Riverdale Neighborhood House, and the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation regarding a partnership to create a demonstration native plant garden in Riverdale. The project sought to combine design and planting assistance of the Dept. of Parks' Greenstreets program, a site

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on Library property, and volunteer garden maintenance from the Neighborhood House teen program.

The use of native plants is an important yet simple way to reduce pollution of the Hudson and Harlem Rivers and summertime water use. Furthermore, the Special Natural Area District zoning regulations require the use of native plants in many building and landscaping projects. A model garden can illustrate to homeowners how to create and maintain a sustainable garden and encourage planting such gardens throughout the area.

At the close of 2008, discussions were ongoing.

## Recognition

### **GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARD**

The Preservancy received Riverdale Neighborhood House's Good Neighbor award at RNH's annual meeting on January 15, 2008.

Annual Financial Statement – 2007

**REVENUE (\$)**

Contributions/Membership dues	\$ 18,360
Interest/Other	1,675
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 20,035</b>

**EXPENSES (\$)**

Accounting Fees	\$ 1,810
Consulting Fees	12,538
Administrative Expenses	4,115
Project Expenses	107
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 18,570</b>

<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>\$ 1,465</b>
<b>Starting Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$ 32,783</b>
<b>Ending Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$ 34,248</b>

Annual Financial Statement – 2008

**REVENUE (\$)**

Contributions/Membership dues	\$ 14,318
Interest/Other	839
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 15,157</b>

**EXPENSES (\$)**

Accounting Fees	\$ 1,860
Consulting Fees	12,600
Administrative Expenses	2,550
Project Expenses	448
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 17,458</b>

<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>- \$ 2,301</b>
<b>Starting Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$ 34,248</b>
<b>Ending Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$ 31,947</b>