

Riverdale Nature Preservancy
P.O. Box 239
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Annual Report
2000

In 2000, the Preservancy's agenda was dominated by reorganization of the Preservancy Board of Directors and by participation in the development of Community Board 8's 197-a Plan.

Reorganization

Early in the year, the Board adopted revised by-laws and retained the services of a part-time consulting program director. Most significantly, the Board restructured itself into working task forces that would address the various issues of concern to the Preservancy, with guidance and approval of the full Board. Initially, fifteen task forces were created, reflecting on-going, site-specific issues and broad planning initiatives.

The revised by-laws provided that the Board could expand from the existing 19 members to a total of 33 members. The Chairman stressed that new board members should be willing to contribute time to working on one or more task forces. In February, 2000, 8 new directors were elected to the Board.

197-a Plan

Community Board 8 held a public hearing on the Draft 197-a Plan on March 9, 2000. The Preservancy made a statement to the community board at that meeting and submitted a written statement in the form of a letter dated April 5, 2000.

The April 5th letter congratulated the Community Board on the Plan, entitled *Community District 8 2000: A river to Reservoir Preservation Strategy*. Additionally, the Board expressed interest in working with the Community Board to complete the Plan and implement its recommendations. Through the letter, the Preservancy continued to advocate for the recommendations it considered most important, as summarized below:

Strengthen Special Natural Area District regulations

The Preservancy agreed with the Plan's assessment that Special Natural Area District regulations should be strengthened, and referred to the Preservancy's legal memorandum, submitted to Community Board 8 on January 22, 1998, which proposed new zoning language.

Extend the SNAD

The Preservancy concurred with the proposed extensions of the SNAD.

Zoning Changes in the R1-2 District of the SNAD

While the Plan recognizes the need for further protections of neighborhood character in the SNAD, the Preservancy iterated its belief that neighborhood character will be protected more effectively by changing the FAR in the R1-2 district of the SNAD to 0.4 than by rezoning any or all of the SNAD to R1-1. The letter referred to the Preservancy's letter of May 25, 1999 to Charles Moerder, Chairman of the Land Use Committee of CB8, which provided a detailed analysis of existing conditions and alternative rezoning scenarios.

Community facility development rights

The Board joined with Community Board 8 in supporting the DCP's effort to formulate revised Community Facility regulations. With regard to Plan language addressing community facilities in the SNAD, the Preservancy supported the proposal that facilities currently existing in the SNAD file a statement setting forth their existing expansion potential, thereby vesting their expansion rights, and upon drawing on those rights, show that either there will be no adverse community impact or that negative impacts can be mitigated. However, the Preservancy believes that these requirements alone will not adequately limit facilities in the R1-2 district, and that the Preservancy's proposal to limit FAR to 0.4 in the R1-2 district would do a better job of maintaining community character. The Preservancy disagreed with the Plan recommendation that new owners of community facilities or new community facilities be permitted to apply for expanded development rights through the Special Permit process.

Exemption of properties from SNAD review

The Preservancy restated its position that the exemption should be eliminated, not simply lowered as proposed in the Plan.

Scenic View Districts, Special Hillside Preservation Districts, Landmark Districts
Proposals for these preservation actions were all supported as presented in the Plan.

Trails

The Preservancy restated its position that a bicycle trail through the Bronx that would connect Manhattan with Westchester should be designated and marked with appropriate signage. We continued to urge that development of the Putnam Line as a multi-use nature and bike trail be given high priority. Until the Putnam trail is completed, we suggested that a temporary bicycle trail be formally designated either over the Broadway Bridge and northward along Broadway or over the Henry Hudson Bridge and along Riverdale Avenue.

Trails (continued)

With regard to the Hudson River Valley Greenway trail, the Preservancy wholeheartedly supported the Plan's recommendation for a pedestrian route along Palisade Avenue. However, we questioned the safety of the segment north of W. 254th Street and noted that stone walls and other landscaping features constrain what can be done to improve safety. Alternatively, we suggested that the pedestrian path run along Palisade Avenue between W. 232nd Street and W. 254th Street, then run along W. 254th Street to Riverdale Avenue, and along Riverdale Avenue into Yonkers. We restated our opposition to a bicycle trail through Riverdale Park, and strongly recommended that the Park be maintained in its natural state.

Waterfront access

The Preservancy reiterated its position that the impacts of a park at Riverdale Station on the local community should be evaluated before any final recommendations are made. We also stated our belief that any park should be designated for passive enjoyment of the river and implemented with extensive consultation with the community.

Social Services

The letter conveys the Preservancy's belief that the Plan should mention the voluntary service organizations which make Riverdale and Kingsbridge such vibrant, caring and healthy neighborhoods.

As the Department of City Planning (DCP) reviewed the Plan, it requested additional information from Community Board 8. To reduce the cost of responding to the DCP's request, the Community Board asked whether the Preservancy could supply any of the requested information. The Preservancy agreed to provide Community Board 8 with responses to the DCP's questions regarding proposals for the SNAD.

Individual Development Projects

The Preservancy monitored developments at the *Hebrew Home for the Aged*, *Horace Mann School*, and *Riverdale Country School*.

Chapel Farm. The Preservancy is committed to preserving the Chapel Farm property in its natural state. Specifically, the Preservancy submitted a letter to Community Board 8 making two points: the present developers had not provided a tenable plan for delivery of materials, or for residents' entrance and egress, and they have not provided assurance that there is the economic support to complete the project. By year's end, the plan had not received certification from the Dept. of City Planning.

Hoffman School Property. Single family detached homes will be built on part of the property. Although the development is within zoning regulations, the Preservancy negotiated with developers for entrance and egress to the site from 256th street.

Annual Financial Statement - 2000

REVENUE (\$)

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|---|------------|
| Contributions/Membership dues/ Foundations | 34,899 |
| Interest/Other | <u>111</u> |

TOTAL REVENUE **35,010**

EXPENSES (\$)

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Program Director Salary/Expenses | 358 |
| Accounting/Legal Fees | 4,360 |
| Other Professional Fees | 4,294 |
| <u>Administrative Expenses</u> | <u>9,074</u> |

TOTAL EXPENSES **18,086**

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|------------------------------|------------------|
| Surplus/Deficit | \$ 16,924 |
| Starting Fund Balance | \$ 61,529 |
| Ending Fund Balance | \$ 78,453 |