

Next scheduled issue:
Saturday, May 4

The Main Street **WIRE**TM

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

News updates on *Website NYC10044* www.nyc10044.com



Memorial Blossoms A flowering cherry tree surrounded by flowers and a single bench, with a plaque to be unveiled Sunday at 2:00 p.m., are the elements of a Residents Association memorial to Islanders lost on September 11. A roster of dignitaries, religious leaders, and performers will highlight the event, arranged by Vicki Feinmel, a RIRA delegate from Island House.

RIOC Board Now Agrees on a Park at Southpoint, Says Labate

In a dialogue with Southpoint Park advocate Shirley Margolin at Thursday night's RIOC Board meeting, Board Chair Marybeth Labate said that the current RIOC Board is in general agreement that Southpoint should be reserved as a park.

Labate said, "I don't think I could have said two years ago that there was unanimous support on the Board that there should be a park there, and a big chunk of that land be devoted to a park. I can say that now, very comfortably and confidently. But the big sticking point as it is with every difficult issue is, as Rob [Ryan, RIOC President] said, this is a

See **Park**, page 10

First Southtown Building Rising at Rate of About Two Stories a Week

by Robert Laux-Bachand

Thirty trucks a day are delivering concrete, and every workday a crew of about 80 is taking this raw material and giving final shape to Roosevelt Island's other half, Southtown.

Building No. 1 of Southtown, 215 apartments that will house Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center employees and their families, is rapidly rising at the south end of Main Street. By August 1, the structure should be topped out at 16 stories, according to Scott Weiss, project manager for AMEC, which is overseeing the work for the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation.

Construction of Building No. 2, 180 units for Cornell Weill Medical College, is being staged at about three weeks behind the first building. Brickwork and window installation will start in the summer even as both superstructures are going up, Weiss said. The projected date for completion of the buildings, he said, is "right on the cusp of summer to fall of 2003."

The general contractor, Monadnock Construction, Inc., of Brooklyn, is a partner of The Hudson Companies, which is developing the nine-building, 2,000-unit project along with The Related Companies.

Monadnock and its project manager, Greg Bauso, have so far avoided any major disruptions of Island activities. A huge crane that lifts buckets of concrete was delivered about two weeks ago on a barge from New Jersey, via the east channel of the East River. "It was docked out at the oil dock across

See **Southtown**, page 8



As seen from inside the Southtown site this week, Building #1 has risen five stories-plus. More photos on page 8, and in color on *Website NYC10044* at www.nyc10044.com.

RIOC Board

Conflict Over Blackwell Minischool Space Gets Hot-Potato Treatment

by Dick Lutz

A rift between the Lilies Christian School and the Roosevelt Island Youth Program over the future of the Blackwell minischool broke into the open Thursday night at the meeting of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) Board of Directors.

Both entities want the space.

The Youth Program claims it by virtue of a promise made years ago by RIOC, reinforced by periodic assurances over the years. Its director, Charles De Fino, says it has taken nearly ten years to raise the funds necessary for the expansion, but that he now has commitments in place – at least for the present – for the necessary funds. There is a concern, however, that a major part of a \$750,000 commitment could be lost if

See **Minischool**, page 8

Garden Club Keeps Faith With Community Gardens Movement

by Robert Laux-Bachand

A plot of land you can call your own in the middle of the city: that is the allure of the Roosevelt Island Garden Club. Its garden in Octagon Park is a patchwork of 139 individual pieces but, with a little effort, it can be decoded as a quilt-map of the community.

The garden is deceptive. Occupying less than two acres, it seems bigger because of a trick of perspective – the jumble of miniature landscapes framed in the distance by the towers of the East Side.

Age is a greater illusion. The garden is barely ten years old, but parts of it, grown into jungle and chattering with birds, would have appealed to the wilder instincts of Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of Central and Prospect Parks, who had little use for flower beds.

Other plots may owe their inspiration to "Crockett's Victory Garden," or to the traditions of the Pacific Rim, formal European estates, or the Mediterranean – or to the hardware aisles of the Home Depot on Northern Boulevard. The Stars and Stripes flutter here, as do the colors of Australia and Puerto Rico. Flowers, especially roses, provide an element of unity. Climbing, bedding, and shrub roses are in bloom throughout most of the growing season, and the rose garden managed by Marjorie Marcallino is one of the garden's focal points. Daffodils, irises, lilies, zinnias, marigolds, and mums exert succeeding claims to dominance.

Several of the club's leaders were among the first residents of Roosevelt Island. They arrived at a time when the community garden movement was sprouting in New York City (the Green Guerrillas take credit for the first garden, at Bowery and Houston, in 1974). This movement – postwar, post-Whole Earth – acquired an ambitious agenda that in-

cluded reclaiming abandoned lots, stabilizing neighborhoods, and improving air quality and biodiversity.

The club here maintains connections to Green Guerrillas and other gardening groups, and to the Roosevelt Island Tree Board. But what was once a movement has become a program, and a network of hundreds of community gardens, supported by federal grants, has been sponsored since 1995 by GreenThumb, part of the City Parks Department.

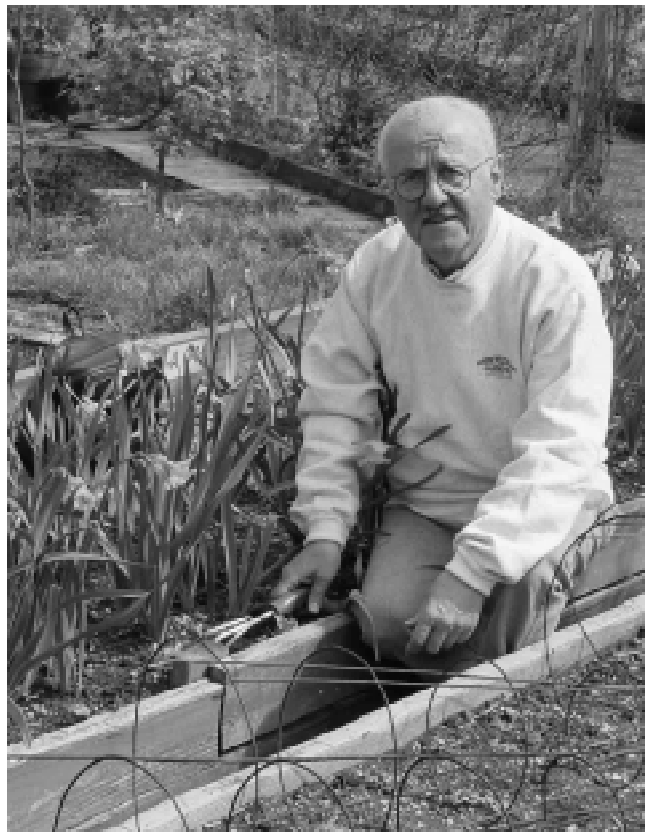
In the early days, though, Roosevelt Island offered something even better: benign neglect. Consider one of the early efforts here, Schwayri Park.

Basically, it was a slab of concrete with a flagpole. In 1984, that was all that remained of the New York Fire Department's garage-like Bureau of Training administrative building. Scattered across this slab, dirt was exposed in various geometric shapes where stairwells, for example, may have been located.

This was enough to ignite the visionary spirit of Dr. Ali Schwayri, a medical doctor who moved here in 1977 and is now the president of the Garden Club. He is also a sharp-eyed scavenger, and the City's water-tunnel construction project provided plenty of cast-off timbers and other materials.

Schwayri and some of his friends hauled timber to the slab and constructed raised flower beds over the exposed soil. They cleaned up the site, built benches out of railroad ties, and in no time, it seemed, the Island had a colorful oasis overlooking the East River, due west of the post office. Schwayri, who has a photo album devoted to this project and labeled *My First Garden – 1984*, called it Metamorphosis Park. But in 1985 his friends put up a plaque that

See **Garden Club**, page 6



Dr. Ali Schwayri was at work in his plot last weekend. He has served a total of seven years as president of the Garden Club.

Main Street as Box Canyon

Amazing. *Amazing* how many people are only now noticing the effect of the Southtown building now going up just south of Main Street’s missing turnaround.

“It’s like a *wall*,” somebody said this week, voice rising. “I had *no* idea it would be like *this!*” said somebody else.

Such comments go a long way toward clarifying the true *power* – so-called – of the press. There’s an incredibly strong temptation to say, *Told ya... Told ya once, told ya twice, told ya again.* The WIRE published plots and photos which, we thought, made clear the result we’re seeing now: the existing community visually walled off by Southtown’s first building.

RIRA’s Planning Committee missed it a few years ago. RIOCI didn’t see it, or didn’t want to.

But Attorney Bob Chira saw it, spoke of it, raised funds, and went to court. So did Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development, which waited until the last minute while the Residents Association failed to negotiate something better, then took it all the way to the State’s top court, which refused to correct a mish-mash of blunders by judges in the lower courts.

Let’s pause here and learn, for once, from history.

The present Southtown design, while the work of its developers (who understandably pursued their own interest), is also the product of the travesty of governance under which Roosevelt Island operates. Three of the four RIOCI Board members who voted for the present design are gone now. Only David Kraut remains to answer for his vote, along with Patrick Stewart and Susan Whittaker, who were resident-observer members of the RIOCI Board at the time (and have since been elevated to full voting status.)

And another RIOCI Board member, Frank Angelino, resigned from the Board shortly after getting a committee of residents he headed to say *yes* to the proposed Southtown *developer team* while assuring them they were *not* saying *yes* to the specific *plan*. Angelino then claimed to the RIOCI Board that the committee – the Capital Planning and Development Committee, which has not met since – had also approved the specific design. (You can read the relevant transcript on-line at <http://www.nyc10044.com/wire/2003/cpdctran.html>.)

The point of the history is that three of four Board members who were instrumental in bringing us the current version of Southtown are gone. They were non-resident and not accountable to residents. And the resident members – also unelected – never spoke out against it.

So the message of this bit of history is sledge-hammer blunt: If you weren’t aware that RIOCI was building us a box canyon, be aware, at least, of this: What you now belatedly lament came about because a largely non-resident RIOCI Board followed the lead of a non-resident patronage-appointee RIOCI President.

The message in this bit of history is that a locally-elected RIOCI Board responsive to the community’s power at the ballot box is *long* overdue. It could happen in this legislative session, but maybe not without your expression of support. So call the Governor’s office (681-4580; fax 681-4643), or Assemblymember Pete Grannis (860-4906; fax 996-3046), or Senator Olga Mendez (860-0893; fax 831-0530). Leave a message (or send a fax) that you’ve had it with box-canyon minds running Roosevelt Island, and that you want political-patronage appointees replaced with professional community management hired and supervised by a Board of elected residents, not occasional visitors who foul things up, then disappear.

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Published by **The Main Street WIRE**
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531 Main St. #413, NYC10044

News (212) **826-9055**
Urgent news **1-917-617-0449**
Advertising (212) **751-8214**
Circulation (212) **935-7534**
Fax (212) **755-2540**
e-mail Editor@MainStreetWIRE.com
in association with **Website NYC10044**
www.nyc10044.com

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To the Editor:

I’m responding to Abraham Hassan’s letter in the April 6th issue of *The WIRE* regarding the Manhattan Park shooting. I agree that offering opinion without revealing your identity steals credibility from that opinion. However, newspapers print letters with “Name Withheld” all the time; it is common practice, often done with good reason.

Hassan claims that Charles De Fino was quoted out of context in his comments quoted in the March 9 *WIRE*, and De Fino has made the same disclaimers. However, Hassan then makes the exact same claim previously quoted by De Fino dismissing Jamon Walker, the shooter, and his victim as, “not bad guys trying to hurt anybody” who, “got caught up in a bad situation, and made a terrible decision afterward.”

Premeditation is not the only criteria for committing criminal acts. Walker had an illegal gun; a felony. He carried it on the street; a felony. And, he shot Jahi Young and wounded him and has, rightly, been charged with a felony. I would note also, that one of possibly three shots fired missed its target and broke a laundry-room window. Would the same claims be made of being misunderstood had one or more shots struck a child on the street or looking out a window?

No one has the right to settle grievances with a weapon. Poor impulse control doesn’t justify a criminal act. Like most of us, I’m sure the shooter is a fine fellow when not provoked. Unlike most of us, he acted with lethal intent on a public street to settle a beef. If Main Street, Roosevelt Island, is not to resemble Deadwood or Dodge City, we must condemn violence when it happens and not attempt to justify it. “Stuff happens” only when “stuff” is rationalized into acceptability.

Sherie L. Helstien

To the Editor:

I fully agree with Ali Al-Za’tari, whose letter appeared in the April 6 *WIRE*. Yes, we do need some bus service to the Broadway-Steinway Street area.

Surely something should be arranged. This Island is fine for people who own cars, as they can just drive to where they want to shop. It’s different for those of us who, being disabled or elderly, or both, because there are so few stores on Roosevelt Island.

What are we supposed to do when we need a pair of shoes, or some household item that wears out, and there are no stores here that sell them? A bus taking such people to these areas would be a Godsend. It doesn’t have to be every day, at least once a week would be fine.

The Shopper’s bus two days a week is fine, as far as food shopping goes. Since we don’t live by bread alone, and can’t do without other necessities of life, I wish something could be arranged for this, too. I respectfully request a service like this, as do many people who can’t travel by public transportation.

Dorothy Cusce

To the Editor:

As I walk to the subway each morning I get more upset by the minute. Our Island has been ruined and changed forever as the first building in Southtown goes up, With hundreds of architectural options, how is it that we end up with a building that totally cuts off our views? I’m not talking about views from people’s apartments, I’m talking about being able to see in the distance while you are on Main Street. We will no longer see the bridge, or the Tram. We will no longer get any light. We will have to look up to see the sky. We will now be living in a cave. How could this have been the only choice? How could anyone have supported this? Thanks, RIOCI, thanks to the Board, and particularly [Resident RIOCI Board members] Patrick Stewart, David Kraut, and Susan Whittaker for ruining our Island forever by supporting this development.

Vicki Feinmel

To the Editor:

I wish to express concern about the financial hardship the Roosevelt Island Tramway employees endured during the recent extended shutdown (November 2001-March 2002). As I understand it, American Tramways laid off most of the Tram staff, offering no pay and no health benefits. These workers endure the scorching heat of summer, the (normally) frigid days of winter and do so almost invariably with courtesy and patience. I am sorry that they had to sustain such a loss, due to no fault of their own, and urge RIOCI to advocate on their behalf for reimbursement of lost wages and benefits.

The Rev. Lynne A. Grifo

To the Editor:

I so enjoyed Steve Marcus’s wonderful letter in the last *WIRE*. I conclude that RIOCI staff members sit in their offices asleep all day.

But surely they must be conscious when they walk to their office on Main Street, which has been strewn with papers for 13 months.

I wrote Governor Pataki about this in June and received a reply in July from a staffer (who thought I was a man) who confirmed that it was RIOCI’s job to clean the streets and that it was engineer Vincent Kopicki’s specific responsibility. A copy of this letter was also sent to Kopicki.

Did RIOCI or Kopicki stir from their sleep? Of course not. Pataki appointed these overpaid carpetbaggers to make our Island a garbage dump. And Pataki had the nerve to say, at the end of the St. Patrick’s Day Parade, “New York is the most wonderful place in the world” – a lie since he didn’t add, “except Roosevelt Island.” Our 9,500 residents, our workers, visitors, and tourists know the facts.

And, furious because we didn’t vote for him, Pataki has violated the General Development Plan by withholding our mandated subsidies for at least five years as he tries to bankrupt us.

My question is: Why have we been paying State income taxes all those years? One look at Main Street and you’ll see it’s time for a strike.

Frances Salten

To the Editor:

On behalf of the Public Safety Advisory Committee, I would like to inform your readers that the February, 2002 report, written by Dr. Joan Dawson, was released to the public prematurely. This report was for internal review only, by the RIOCI Board and our Public Safety Advisory Committee members.

We recognize the public’s interest in our findings and will release a final report for public review shortly.

Doryne Isley
General Manager
RIHMC

The Public Safety
Blotter for April 1-15
is now available on
Website NYC10044 at
www.nyc10044.com

Letters deadline for
May 4 issue: Apr. 30

Letters received after the
deadline will be considered on
a space-available basis

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters to the Editor, to the community, and to/from officials. Publication on a *Name Withheld* basis will be considered, but the writer’s name, address, and *phone number* **must** be provided for verification and for our records. **Preferred methods of submission:** By e-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com (ASCII text preferred or use any wordprocessing software, but no MSWord files with macros), or PC-standard 3.5-inch floppy disk left at 531 Main Street for *The WIRE*. **Alternatives:** Typed, double-spaced copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to (212) 755-2540. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered if brief, but we cannot take telephone dictation of letters. **All letters are subject to acceptance and to editing for length and clarity.** We recommend observing a maximum length of 300 words, but will consider longer letters if their content merits the required space.

Strecker Restoration Wins Award

The New York City Transit Authority has won an award from the New York Landmarks Conservancy for its adaptive restoration of Strecker Laboratory, which was turned into a power substation through the design work of Page Ayres Cowley Architects, which shared the award.

Built in 1892, Strecker was unique as a pathology laboratory, built for post-mortems on



Photos: Page Ayres Cowley Architects, LLC

Once again, Roosevelt Island is garlanded with petals of white and pink and we count ourselves fortunate to live here. Our kids (and whether or not we are parents, they are all our kids) are tearing up the base paths with the start of Little League season and they look terrific in their uniforms. In springtime, hope seems reasonable and the future is full of that commodity.

This Sunday, RIRA will dedicate a plaque commemorating our lost neighbors from September 11. We will assemble at 2:00 p.m. behind the Chapel of the Good Shepherd at the site of a flowering cherry tree we planted last fall. Refreshments will be served and there will be music, with Island vocalists, Juanita Fleming and Deborah Drucker, offering selections. Our City Councilmember, Speaker Gifford Miller, and our Assemblymember, Pete Grannis, will share the occasion with us. There will be representatives of our affected families and of the Fire Department present. What distinguishes us from the impersonal, anonymous neighborhoods of Manhattan is the close sense of community found here. We need to come together, all of us, to share this moment of closure. Please make it your business to join us for this special time.

In the February 23 issue of *The WIRE*, I mentioned my discussions with New York City Transit Authority president, Lawrence Reuter, when I met him at the NYC Transit Riders Council, 2002 President's Forum. I made a pitch to include our Tram in the MetroCard system. He received the idea cordially and enthusiastically. I took that expression of interest to the RIOC Board of Directors, and they "commissioned" me to arrange a meeting between Reuter, RIOC President, Rob Ryan, and myself.

That meeting took place on April 8. It included RIOC's Chief Financial Officer, Pat Siconolfi; TA senior vice-president for MetroCard operations, Tom Savage; and their government and community relations person, among other Transit Authority reps. Two things were clear: Everyone in the room thought that the use of the MetroCard on the Tram was an idea whose time had come. And no one wanted to pay for it. President Reuter pled poverty, noting the \$250 million deficit the Transit Authority posted last year. I asked how those funds were made up, and Reuter said they came from City and State subsidies.

I pointed out that the Tram is paid for entirely by revenues raised on Roosevelt Island, is subsidized by no governmental entity and that the Transit Authority would derive revenues from the Tram without any responsibility to pay for its operation or maintenance. We appealed to Reuter with the MetroCard slogan, "One City, One Fare," which is a lie without the inclusion of our Tram.

The current RIOC budget calls for \$2.7 million in direct Tram operating costs, including \$1.9 million in management fees, paid to American Tramways. Offsetting these expenses are an estimated \$1.2 million in revenues from the fare box, down \$240,000 from last year, resulting in a loss of \$1.5 million. RIOC has added \$502,000 in indirect costs to this Tram budget, which correspond to the \$650,000 allocation of

prisoners and others who died on Blackwell's Island, as the Island was named at the time.

The Lucy G. Moses Award is the Landmarks Conservancy's highest honor. The building, which is at Southpoint, can currently be viewed only by looking over the fence from the south end of Goldwater Hospital, but the Roosevelt Island Historical Society hopes to arrange for visits to the exterior on the Fourth of July, when Southpoint is open for the annual fireworks event.

Extensive additional background on Strecker is available on *Website NYC10044* at www.nyc10044.com/wire/2218/streckbg.html; additional photos will be available soon, in color, on the website.



administration expenditures from last year's financial statement. These are an accounting artifact with no real implications for the cost of operation.

What seems clear to me, and the point I repeatedly made, was that Tram ridership would increase the day the MetroCard was offered. Anyone working or going to school on the East Side of Manhattan, and that includes our huge United Nations population, would be able to avoid the morning rush hour crush on the F train by riding the Tram and transferring, *free*, to any East Side subway or bus. In addition, the first two buildings of Southtown that are rearing their heads over the remaining trees of Blackwell Park, are leased to two York Avenue hospitals for their employees to live in. Those hospital workers will surely prefer to ride the Tram to and from their jobs.

There are two facets to these negotiations. One is the initial capital cost of installing the MetroCard machinery. The other is the loss at the fare box accruing from the sharing of revenue between RIOC and NYCTA. Pat Siconolfi and I traded ideas with Mr. Savage as to how lost revenue, for both RIOC and TA, caused by fares for multiple trips accruing only to the first farebox, might be shared. Our Tram has fewer riders in a year than the Transit Authority carries in a day, and we made the point that the loss of revenue is more acute for RIOC, with its \$11 million operating budget, than for NYCTA and its billions. I think some serious horse-trading can find solutions to this side of the equation.

The more serious sticking point is the start-up cost of somewhere between \$700,000 and \$850,000 (the numbers change daily) to pay for magnetic-card readers, etc. While this capital cost can be amortized over time, it may take an infusion of government funds to make this fly. I am burning up the electrons asking our elected officials to help find those funds. If you want to use your MetroCard on the Tram, I urge you to telephone Lawrence Reuter at **718-243-4321**, Thomas Savage at **718-243-8881**, and Rob Ryan at **212-832-4590** and implore them to use their connections to find the funds and make this happen.

When I had breakfast with candidate Mike Bloomberg last summer, he made it clear that he supported the MetroCard for the Tram. That was then, and this is now, and I'm fully aware that City and State finances have changed since 9/11, making Roosevelt Island an even lower priority than usual. I would have preferred to address this problem when the City is flush. But this opportunity presented itself now, and I must strike while the iron is hot. While I'm quoting clichés I would remind you that the squeaky wheel gets the grease, so when you see Gifford and Pete on Sunday, tell them we need their support on this issue.

The Roosevelt Island Tramway is an integral part of New York's commuter transportation network. We are as entitled, if not more so, to the MetroCard as any private Queens bus line. Making that argument has been easy and has met with no impediments. Convincing the powers that be that our City and State taxes should pay for Roosevelt Island services has been more difficult. Happy Income Tax week!

The RIRA Column



Matthew Katz
RIRA President
e-mail: matthewkatz@rcn.com

COMING UP

Compiled by *WIRE* staff – Fax information to 755-2540
e-mail ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com
or click on the e-mail link at www.nyc10044.com

All month, Rivercross Window Gallery, *Let's Not Forget*, works of William West displayed in tribute to Our Fallen Heroes, presented by the Mother Earth Committee.

Sat., Apr. 20, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., **PTA Flea Market** at the Farmer's Market; outside, weather permitting, or in the school.

Sat., Apr. 20, 7:30 p.m., **Main Street Theatre & Dance Alliance** presents *Steps in Time*, its third annual dance project. \$10 chair, \$5 mat seating for children 10 and under. Reservations recommended: **371-4449**.

Sun., Apr. 21, 2:00 p.m., **Dedication Ceremony** to unveil plaque honoring Roosevelt Island victims of the September 11 World Trade Center tragedy, Good Shepherd Plaza (grove area at west end of Chapel).

Sun., Apr. 21, 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., **Main Street Theatre & Dance Alliance** presents *Steps in Time*, its third annual dance project. \$10 chair, \$5 mat seating for children 10 and under. Reservations recommended: **371-4449**.

Mon., Apr. 22, 8:00 p.m., **Toastmasters**. Information: **759-0396**, **755-7285**.

Tue., Apr. 23, 7:30 p.m., **114th Precinct Community Meeting**, Riccardo's, 21-01 24th Avenue, Long Island City. For car-pool ride, call **752-6819**.

Fri., Apr. 26, 10:00 a.m., **Arbor Day Tree Planting**, sponsored by Roosevelt Island Tree Board, East River Seawall facing Queens, near the Roosevelt Island Bridge.

Fri., Apr. 26 (and every Friday), 7:00-9:00 p.m., **Sketching Sessions** offered by Roosevelt Island Visual Art Association, 546 Main Street, 12th floor. Fee.

Sat., Apr. 27, 10:00 a.m., **What's Next? Career Development for Mothers**, seminar led by Dr. G. Lipton, sponsored by Island Kids, 536 Main Street community room. \$20. Information: **758-8408**.

Tue., Apr. 30, 7:00 p.m., **Community Board 8 Roosevelt Island Committee**, Chapel of the Good Shepherd; topics include air quality and drug trafficking on Main Street.

May 1-31,. Rivercross window exhibit by the Roosevelt Island Tree Board.

Wed., May 1, 8:00 p.m., **Residents Association Common Council Meeting**, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Sat., May 4, next issue of *The Main Street WIRE*. **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., Apr. 26; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., Apr. 29, with materials due Thur., May 2. **Future issues** generally every two weeks as follows: May 18, June 1, 15, and 29 (Fourth of July issue), July 27 (reduced summer schedule), Aug. 24, Sept. 7 and 21, Oct. 5 and 19, Nov. 2 (pre-election issue), 9 (post-election), and 23, Dec. 14 (holiday issue). **Phone/fax** for news, **826-9055/755-2540**; phone/fax for advertising inquiries, **751-8214/755-2540**; to list your organization's Island events here (no charge), fax information to **755-2540**, or e-mail ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com.

Thur., May 9, 9:30 a.m., **RIOC Board of Directors Meeting**, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Public session normally resumes at 10:30 a.m.

Mon., May 13, 8:00 p.m., **Toastmasters**. Information: **759-0396**.

Tue., May 14, 6:30 p.m., **Rockin' and Lullin'**, a children's concert featuring sing-along, play-along music and movement for children 5-12, Library. Free.

Wed., May 15, 6:00 p.m., **PTA Spaghetti Dinner**, PS/IS 217. All school families invited.

Thur., May 16, 6:30 p.m., **Shoji Hagiwara in Concert** on the shakuhachi (Japanese bamboo flute), Library.

Sat., May 18, 10:00-12:00, **Spring Tree Walk**, sponsored by the Tree Board, Lighthouse Park; led by Bob Bealin, State Forester. Free transportation from Main Street near the General Store.

Sun., May 19, 12 noon, **Senior Day** and **25th Anniversary of the Roosevelt Island Senior Center**, at the Senior Center, 546 Main Street.

Tue., May 21, 6:30 p.m., **Book Discussion**, *Cold Mountain* by Charles Frazier, Library. Advance registration required.

Tue., May 21, 7:30 p.m., **Manhole and Coal-Chute Covers**, presentation of the Roosevelt Island Historical Society with historian Diana Stuart, on decorative cast-iron artwork on manhole and coal-chute covers in the City; Island House Community Room, 555 Main Street. Free.

Mon., May 27, 8:00 p.m., **Toastmasters**. Information: **759-0396**, **755-7285**.

Senior Center

Monday
10:30, **Blood Pressure Screen**
12:30, **"Oldies" Movies**
12:45, **Arts & Crafts** (RIDA)

Tuesday
10:00, **Jazzercise**
1:30, **Games** (RISA)

Wednesday
9:15, **Stay Well Exercise**
10:00, **English as 2nd Language** (beginner)
11:00, **English as 2nd Language** (intermediate)

Thursday
10:00, **Tai Chi**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
12:30, **Movie**

7:00, **Dance Class**
Friday
9:00, **Citizenship**
10:00, **English as 2nd Lan-**

guage (beginner)
10:15, **Yoga Stretch**
11:00, **English as 2nd Language** (intermediate)
7:30, **Lotto**

Saturday
7:30, **Bingo** (RISA)

Special Events

Mon., Apr. 22, 12:30, Volunteer Recognition Party
Tue., Apr. 23, Luncheon Trip
Wed., Apr. 24, 10:00, Medication Management Lecture
Tues., Apr. 30, 12:30, Birthday Party

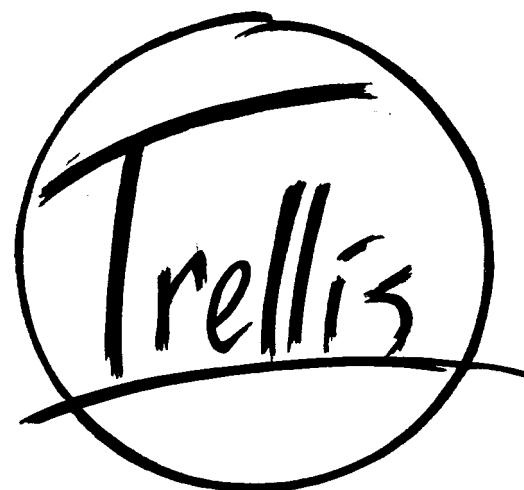
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- Call for Details •



The Weather...

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See you at Trellis...

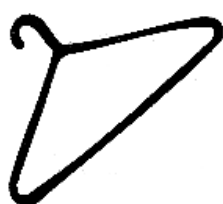
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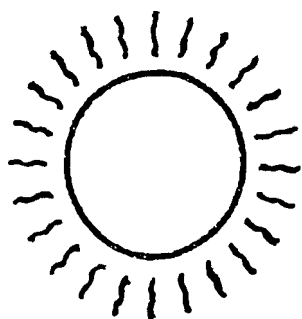


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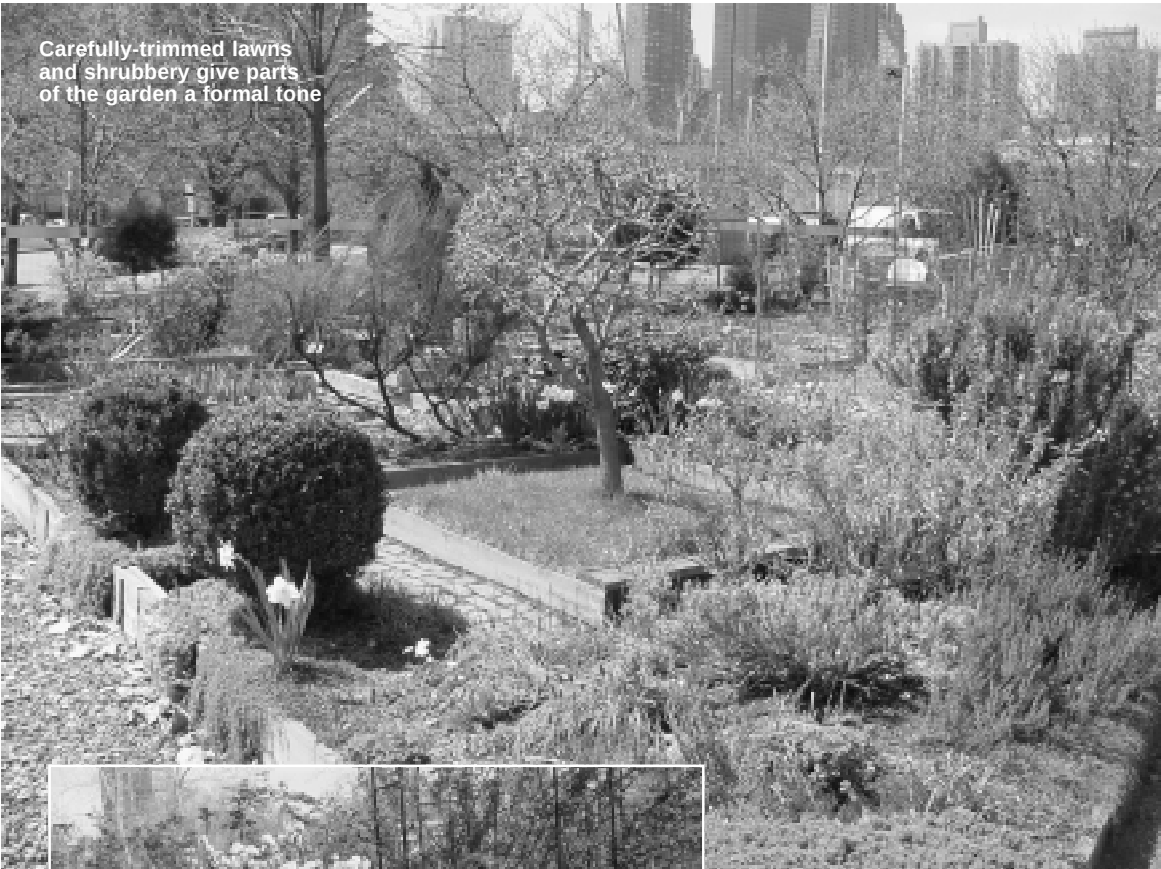
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The Island’s Garden Club Has an Active Present and...



Susan Garone, left, works her plot. Summer-like weather has hastened the growing season this year.



Club President Schwayri calls Vaughn Englesley, above, the “Robert Moses of the Garden Club. One of his creations is a solar-powered fountain.

Garden Club from page 1

gave this short-lived space its proper due: “Schwayri Park.”

Nancy Cruickshank, the club’s secretary, was another of those who literally hit the ground digging when she came here in 1976. She recalls her first plot as being on a “ground-up roadbed” in a community garden that was laid out on a field of rubble north of Westview. “We were like squatters,” she said. There were about 70 to 80 gardeners in those days, and Cruickshank, who went on to become one of the club’s first presidents, said that nearly everybody was intent on planting vegetables. She also remembers the devastation she felt as the bulldozers rumbled through and leveled the remnants of the original community garden to prepare for Manhattan Park.

The Central Nurses Residence Site

By that time, in the later ’80s, the club had already relocated to a site that Cruickshank and others remember as “very big and very beautiful.” It was south of the Central Nurses Residence (CNR), a Depression-era structure that was torn down last year to make way for Southtown. Photos and maps in the collection of Island historian Judith Berdy show that the CNR grounds had been elaborately landscaped, with a tennis court, a reflecting pool, and shaded drives. Those features seemed to have been overtaken by nature when the club re-established itself there.

Schwayri, his friend Vincent Russo, the club’s current vice president, and others who did the heavy lifting at this garden still comprise the nucleus of the club. John Dodge, an artist, laid out the wheel-spoke configuration of the plots—a design that was transplanted to Octagon Park. Marcallino created a rose garden. John Richards, a carpenter, helped to execute the design in both gardens. Sammy Rodriguez was a pillar of the work force. Ann Hollowell, the club’s long-time secretary, kept everything organized, and in later years, Peter Jungkunst, as president, is credited with bringing the administration up to date.

At the Nurses Residence site, Schwayri and Russo fashioned artworks that lent whimsical touches to the picnic areas and other open spaces. A painted plywood wind decoration, carved with a hacksaw, was mounted atop a large rotating file tray salvaged from the Nurses Residence. Concrete core samples bordered the plots. The men also built an open-air gazebo frame, in part from pieces of PVC tubing, as a centerpiece of a bird sanctuary.

The Present Site

The club was forced to move again when the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation embarked on its first, unsuccessful effort to develop Southtown. Some of the club’s constructions, including rose arbors, survive as elements of the present garden, which opened in 1992. Unlike the earlier gardens, however, this one was developed in the full glare of governmental regulation. An Island task force worked with a landscape architecture firm, Weintraub & di Domenico, that was chosen by RIOC to design Octagon Park.

The community garden was a key element of the plan from the beginning, as is clear from Berdy’s records. Public access was one of the ground rules; that is why the garden is open to the public for limited hours on weekends during the summer. And eight plots, in four enclosures with raised planters, were built to accommodate gardeners in wheelchairs. But the club’s desire to expand to 200 plots was thwarted because the City, which retained control of the water-tunnel construction site, put in two air shafts instead of one, Berdy said. Plans for a “Hanging Garden” overlook never materialized, nor did a lawn that opened onto the East River, connected by a promenade to the Island’s thoroughfare. Now it’s a Promenade to Nowhere. In the end, only 9 of the 15 acres of Octagon Park were developed.

The most distinctive feature of the garden is an old-fashioned poplar in the middle of the picnic area. “I trimmed that when we moved in there,” said Schwayri, who at 62 is retired from his medical work. “I climbed on a ladder, which

Garden Club Basics

The Roosevelt Island Garden Club is not in the habit of generating publicity, but neither is it a secret garden. Here is the dirt:

Membership: 133. Nearly all of the gardeners are Island residents, and an estimated 35 to 40 percent were members before the club moved to its current location. You can apply for a plot if you are a New York State resident. The lack of a local residency requirement ties in with the club’s wish to be available to the staff at Coler-Goldwater Memorial Hospital.

Dues: \$35 a year, payable April 1. After that date, if you haven’t paid your dues, the club will start looking to replace you.

Signing up: Write to Box 127, Roosevelt Island, 10044. The phone number that was posted on the garden gate is long out of service. A different box number was published in a listing of Island organizations last month. That was wrong, too.

Getting in: The waiting list, which the club describes as “long,” has averaged about 12 to 15 candidates in recent years. About six plots open up each year, and they are given out in order of sign-up. There is an exception: Members who relinquish their plots when they move away are put on the top of the waiting list if they return to the Island.

Tools: The shed south of the garden contains a collection of vicious mattocks that are capable, in the right hands, of pulverizing the toughest clay or turf. These tools may be of limited use in a raised bed, but just about every other digging, cutting or screening instrument is also stocked there and maintained in beautiful condition by Sammy Rodriguez, a long-time gardener. So you don’t have to keep a shovel in your apartment.

Standards: There is no overt prohibition on any plant, although *Cannabis indica* would probably get you into big trouble, and not just with the Garden Club. Trees are problematical and officially banned, although small apricot and fig trees and such coexist happily with smaller plants. But you can’t take a plot and then let it go to weeds, which will spread rapidly and greatly annoy your neighbors. The club tries to keep close tabs on “unworked” plots and will kick you out.

Award Winners: The club honors its best gardeners. Last year, the blue-ribbon winners were Julie Lipp, for landscape garden, and Nicholas Ortiz for vegetable garden.

was foolish of me, about 15 feet up.”

The club has a good deal with RIOC. There is no fee for use of the site, no payment for water. The tradeoff, however, seems to be what the gardeners consider rather indifferent treatment. They were upset last year when RIOC turned off the water in October, earlier than usual. As it turned out, the 2001 growing season never ended, and water could have been continued for at least another month. Monarch butterflies lingered here in November. There were late-arriving honeybees—a rarity in the Northeast because of mite infestations—working the oregano through the first week of December. Rosemary bushes and arugula bloomed in January.

Vandalism and thefts are probably the club members’ greatest worries. Several security measures were discussed at the club’s annual meeting last month, but the club really depends on alert and dedicated patrolling by the Island’s Public Safety Department to protect the garden. The five-foot anodized aluminum fence, a wavy decorative element of Weintraub’s design, is no deterrent.

One longtime member said all of his peaches were stolen last year. Some of the vandalism was obnoxious: Hoses slashed, beds of greens flooded, flowers destroyed.

Little Leaguers have even been a problem. Trees planted along the perimeter of the garden haven’t been able to snag all of their left field homers.

When gardeners get together, there is talk of barbed wire, a photo ID system, higher fencing, and security cameras—measures that have, for one reason or another, seemed to be unfeasible. But most of the gardeners know they occupy this space as a matter of public privilege. Cooler heads prevail, those who realize that many of their Island neighbors are on the other side of the fence, willing to take their chances, and just waiting to get in.

Besides, there’s no place else to go, and no likelihood that the present garden will be able to expand. “This is our permanent site, hopefully,” Schwayri said.

... A Storied History...



Vincent Russo, left, and Dr. Ali Schwayri greeted Rudolph Giuliani at the gardens in 1989, when Giuliani made his first, unsuccessful run for mayor.



Members of the Garden Club built garden art from found objects. Here, stones are mounted on sections of drainpipe in a sculpture called *The Gardener's Family*.

Large areas of the gardens at the Nurses Residence were open spaces set up as picnic areas and a park.

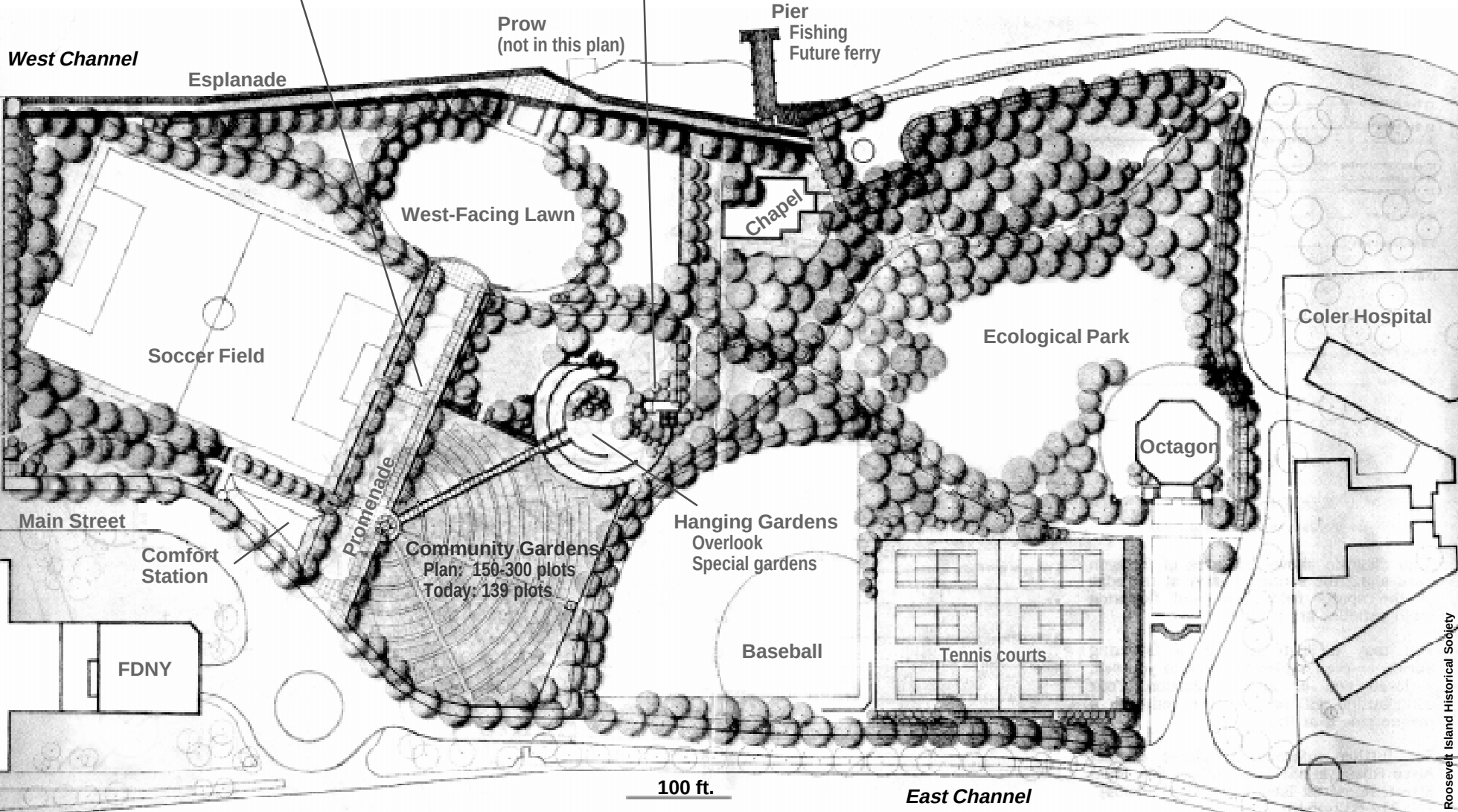


John Dodge's design for the gardens at the Nurses Residence consisted of radiating spokes. This view is from the focal point, looking north toward the Nurses Residence, which was demolished last year to make way for Southtown.



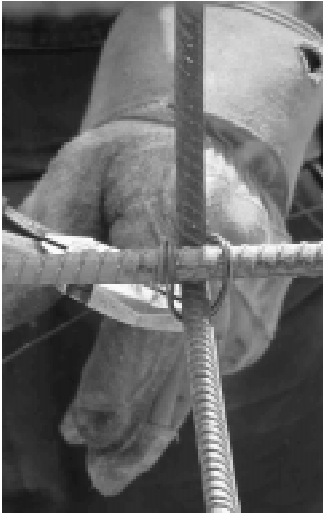
Older photos from the collection of Dr. Ali Schwayri

The Promenade dead-ends at a fence



Much of a 1990 plan by Weintraub & di Domenico has been realized in the area north of Manhattan Park; much has not. Plans to rehabilitate the Octagon as the centerpiece of an apartment building will reduce the size of the ecological park and make it essentially a courtyard; the Promenade ends at the west edge of the gardens; and two towers associated with Water Tunnel #3 occupy space once envisioned as a hanging garden. In addition, the developers of the Octagon apartments have proposed building a parking structure where the tennis courts are, with courts on its roof.

A floor at a time, Southtown Building No. 1 rises...



Reinforcement bar – rebar – is built to shape on the Southtown site. Rebar crews like the one at upper left form it, then wire it together. The shapes are then transported to the building, where they are embedded in concrete to form columns and floors.



Extensive additional photo coverage, in color, on Website NYC10044 at www.nyc10044.com

Southtown from page 1

from the power plant,” Weiss said. “We drove it up that small section of Tram road right into the gate, which is across from the Tram station.”

A storm-sewer connection, which cuts across the West Service Road, is about one-third done and caused some detours, but the remaining work “is essentially in the grass line,” Weiss said, and won’t affect vehicle traffic.

On the northeast border of the site, the Tot Lot has been fenced off as workers connect the Island’s garbage collection system, AVAC, to the new buildings. That work is two-thirds done and the playground should reopen about the beginning of May, Weiss said.

The AVAC line is “connected from Buildings 1 and 2 all the way down to the east esplanade,” he said. “Now we have to follow up and come up north with it and connect with the existing line, where it terminates just behind Blackwell House.”

One element of Southtown that hasn’t gone according to schedule is the large sports field in the southeast corner of the 19-acre site. Work started on it a year ago, but what was once a field of green is now an expanse of dirt. The change became visible to residents after the Tram resumed service last month.

Weiss said the landscaping subcontractor tore out and threw away the sod on the field after it failed to take hold. Weather was the main factor, he said.

“We had a very dry summer, and when you place new dirt over an existing surface, it has to settle out. It was very hot, it was very dry, and the subsurface didn’t settle down the way we had wanted it to. The contractor agreed to pull up all the sod, regrade it, and put down new sod. This is at their cost, it’s at no additional cost to RIOC,” Weiss said.

He was asked when the problem became apparent.

“As we had additional rain, we were just getting an inconsistency of compaction throughout the field,” Weiss said. “You got mild undulations through the field. We attempted to roll it out, water it and roll it out. It didn’t work, so the contractor said, ‘Listen, I’m just kicking it around for months and months, I’ll just rip it up and put in new sod.’”

The new sod is supposed to be installed at about the end of the month.

RIOC President Robert Ryan said, “The thing is, we want to do it right. And when it

does open, it’s going to be a magnificent field.”

RIOC officials were reluctant to speculate on an opening date, although they said that spring sodding should produce better results.

There are no firm dates, either, for the future development of Southtown beyond Buildings 1 and 2. “I don’t know if they’ll come right after,” Ryan said, referring to Buildings 3 and 4. “We’re working on those deals, but there’s no deal done. We’ve got a ways to go.”

In the meantime, Southtown’s infrastructure will be developed – the extension of utilities, the new Main Street, Weiss said.

For the foreseeable future, too, the influx of construction workers represents the cutting edge of new customers for some beleaguered Main Street businesses. The anecdotes are promising. John Melia, RIOC’s vice president for community affairs, said: “I do see, every morning, obviously the low guy on the gang coming back with 40 or 50 coffees in a big cardboard box. So, they are patronizing the Island merchants.” And the workers have been a presence in various businesses.

But Weiss said the merchants had so far failed to respond to an invitation from Bauso to submit a proposal “to either provide food to the site or come onto the site with the provided foods from your store, so our guys don’t have to walk up.”

That, officially, seems to be where the situation stands, one that may still hold an opportunity for local merchants. As Weiss said, “RIOC would have to issue a permit for somebody to come on-site to provide food, and as far as I know that has not happened.”

As Weiss said, work at the site normally runs from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and both he and RIOC officials noted that the standard construction shift in the city is from 7:00 to 2:00.

“They can’t work after hours or on Saturdays without a permit from the building department,” Weiss said. “Even with an after-hours permit the latest you can work is 7 o’clock, 7 to 7. But it’s selective. The permit from the DOB is very selective, so you indicate a certain amount of days; if something like that would happen we would notify the community.”

Weiss is quite conscious of the DOB these days because inspectors from the Department’s enforcement unit “are here just about every other day” to check on the project, a presence that he characterized as unusual, compared to other jobs. Some Islanders have complained about the noise and work hours at the site. But, as Weiss noted, the work has continued unabated.

Minischool from page 1

the Youth Program cannot soon demonstrate possession of the space.

Lilies School claims the space by right of present occupancy on a month-to-month basis, but its principal and owner says that the uncertainties brought on by the Youth Center’s claim on the space have made it necessary to seek a formal commitment from RIOC so that parents of its students will not have to worry about where their children will attend school starting in September.

According to Elsie Obed, who heads the school, parents of the 35 children in the school became concerned when told by De Fino that the Youth Program would be “taking over” the space by September, 2002. She told the RIOC Board that the uncertainty is what motivated her to seek a longer-term commitment for the facility.

In a non-binding straw poll requested by RIOC Board Chair Marybeth Labate, the RIOC Board expressed its general sentiments on the matter. She asked, “Are we prepared to tell the Lilies School they will have this space in September, until next June, unless we can find them alternate space?” Four members said “yes,” that the school should have some general assurance; they were Labate, Kevin Fullington, Leo Kayser, and Joan Dawson.

Three members said “no” to that question – Patrick Stewart and David Kraut (both residents), and John Mannix. Both Kraut and Stewart said the Youth Program had made many presentations to the RIOC Board and had been asked, repeatedly, for more information, implying the Youth Program was getting “the runaround.”

Steve Kaufman, a Youth Center Board member, told the RIOC Board that, without some assurance the Youth Program will have the necessary space, it cannot maintain a hold on City funds now committed to the Youth Center’s expansion. “It’s not the Youth Center’s fault that it is now April,” said Kaufman in a clear suggestion that the RIOC Board has dragged its feet and has created the uncertainty faced by both the Lilies School and the Youth Program.

The resolution before the RIOC Board, on which no formal vote was taken, proposed to give the Lilies School a guarantee of the space through June, 2003, unless other space were made available for its use. The school currently serves 35 children, about three-quarters Island residents. Obed made the point that some families have continued to send their children to the school after moving off the Island.

When Labate invited Obed to speak briefly in support of her request for a one-year assurance of occupancy, resident Al “Grandpa” Lewis asked to be allowed to speak, as well, and the issue of rights to the space was joined: “It borders on the scandalous,” Lewis said, “that this community has no Community Center” for youth. He then presented his view of how the space was pre-empted for use by the Lilies School.

“The previous head of RIOC, Dr. Jerome Blue, who many residents here opposed, decided, in my opinion, in retribution [for resident opposition], to give a sweetheart deal to a minister with dubious accreditation – a church, an office, and the school... I am opposed to recertifying the school’s use of the space because there is better use for the community of that space than what it’s being used for now.”

David Kraut picked up the point: “At the time [the school was given the space], those of us who were aware of the [past promises to the Youth Program] were concerned. And now, as could easily have been anticipated, there are two groups asking for the space.”

Kraut continued, “The Youth Center has repeatedly come before this Board and, every time, someone on this Board has seen fit to demand something else, to say, ‘Go away and come back with more detail.’ So now we seem to be on the verge of guaranteeing this building to this church group for another year.” Kraut compared the Lilies enrollment with the Youth Program serving “a thousand Roosevelt Island children,” adding, “And just like that we’re going to tell [the Youth Program] that for another year we’re going to turn this building over to someone else, and meanwhile, if they don’t get a lease from us they’re going to lose about half the money.”

Stewart expressed essential agreement with the points made by Kraut. He said he had been intending to abstain on any vote, not having enough detailed information to make a decision but, after listening to Kraut, had decided he would vote against committing the space to Lilies. He called upon RIOC and the RIOC Board to find a way to resolve the conflict and satisfy the space needs of both organizations.

Labate, on the other hand, spoke of the immediate need of the Lilies School to give reassurances to parents that their children’s educational needs will be met next school year. She said the Youth Center could continue its service to the community in its present space while some means is sought to resolve the space requirements it has. She observed that it would probably be easier to move Lilies into alternative space, given the size of the student body – 35 now, and doubling next year, according to Obed – versus the size of the population served by the Youth Program.

Dawson characterized the plan to give Lilies assurances of the space for another year as a “compromise.” She said, “It is terribly unjust in April to close a school with no place to go, to close it and say, ‘Too bad.’”

Kayser expressed doubt about the Youth Program’s claims of committed funds, and told his fellow Board members that he would be loath to evict the school and then perhaps find that the Youth Program did not actually have the funding to take over the additional space. Mannix likened the disagreement over the space to a “schoolyard fight” between Lilies and the Youth Program. “I don’t want to be in the position of saying one program is good, the other is bad.”

At one point during the meeting, Obed told the Board members that a spontaneous fire drill conducted by De Fino in the Youth Center, without a notification to the school, had disrupted the school. The incident was referred to obliquely during the course of the meeting as a manifestation of the escalating conflict between De Fino and Obed.

De Fino did not speak during the meeting. Kaufman, who serves as treasurer of the Youth Program, responded to all questions on behalf of the Youth Center. He told the RIOC Board, “Twelve years ago this agency made a commitment. It took ten more years to get the [necessary] funding. We had a firm funding commitment in place, which we presented to this Board in July. This proposal by the Youth Center has been raised and presented since July. When we come with the funding, we get a runaround for six months. This is unfair to the children of Roosevelt Island.”

Asked if any of the committed funding had been withdrawn, Kaufman responded, “The City funding has been at risk since 9/11. But I can’t confirm that we have lost it [or still have it] until we have a lease.”

For her part, Obed seemed to indicate she would have been happy continuing to use the Blackwell minischool on a month-to-month basis, but she told the Board, “I have been provoked to this place [of asking for a commitment]. When Charlie De Fino met a parent in the street and said, ‘Find someplace for your children. I’m taking over this building in September,’ I brought my case here.”

Kaufman and other residents suggested that the Lilies program could relocate to the church at Octagon Park where the Redeemed Christian Church of God conducts services, but Obed said the space was not suitable for school use. She said the congregation started by Pastor Olu Obed is still renovating the church, which was a dark near-ruin until the congregation began work on it several years ago.

In the end, Labate’s view seemed to hold the day, though without a formal vote. She repeatedly said she felt the school deserved a firm answer that would give parents of its students an assurance that they would have their physical facility available in September at the start of the school year. RIOC President Robert Ryan made a commitment that he would seek to get some assurance from City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, who represents the Island, that the Youth Center’s expansion funding would not go away if the program had to wait a year to occupy the Blackwell minischool.

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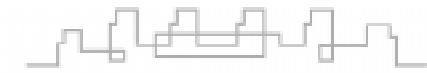
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by Seth Kaufman

SPORTSWIRE

BASEBALL Saturday, April 13, was opening day for the Youth Program’s Little League season and was a tremendous success. With beautiful weather and competitive games, the baseball season started off with a bang.

Minors: The first game of the day featured a scoreless tie between the Royal team, coached by Joe Vacirca and Zach Russem, and the Red team, coached by Joe Strein and Marc Diamond, in a game marked by airtight defense. Asher Russem and Ian Kleinfeld collected hits for the Royal team, while Zachary Strein picked up a hit for the Red team.

There was more scoring in the second game, with Glen Pinks’ Navy team defeating the Green team, coached by Charles Abdul and Mark Henderson, 10-8 in a very tight, exciting game. Navy was led by the hitting of Justos Burgos, Alexander Pinks, and Daniel Ruiz.

Majors: The first Major League game between the Navy team, coached by Mark and Nicole Van Nostrand, and the Green team, coached by Abe Tordjman, was a close, well-played game that ended with Navy defeating Green by a 7-4 score. The Navy team was led by Eyosyas Tadesse, who pitched a complete game in his first Major League start. Jimmy Elias, Steven Morabito and Kenny Pizzaro keyed the attack for the Navy team, with two hits apiece. For the Green team, Anass Dorani and Alex Beola each had two hits and Thomas Herlihy added a triple.

In the second game, the Royal team, coached by Patti Stueber, defeated the Red team, coached by Jim Armenakis and Tim Johns, by a 16-5 score. The Royal team was led by Neal Stueber, who pitched five innings in picking up his first victory of the year. Shabaka White hit a three-run home run for the Red team highlight of the afternoon.

Seniors: The Senior A team, playing in the East River Baseball Association, won a doubleheader last Saturday. In the first game, the Seniors, behind the complete-game pitching of Jose Marte, defeated the CYO Tornados by a score of 16-3.

In the second game, the Seniors defeated the Yorkville 1 team, 4-2, in a tight struggle that was decided when Scott Davis hit a game-winning, two-run home run in the bottom of the sixth inning, to break a 2-2 tie. Alex Gherardi pitched a complete game for the Senior team, and Deshawn Pearson hit a home run.

The standings after the first week are:

Minors		Majors	
Navy	1-0-0	Navy	1-0-0
Red	0-0-1	Royal	1-0-0
Royal	0-0-1	Green	0-1-0
Green	0-1-0	Red	0-1-0

Renovated, Bakery Re-Opens

by Anusha Shrivastava

Long before noon Thursday of last week, the free donuts and coffee were gone.

The first 200 customers who walked through the door at the newly-refurbished bakery had just been given a treat, courtesy of Grandpa Al Lewis, who said: “This is a family trying to run a business for the community. We should support them.”

Clusters of red, white and blue balloons had been pasted on the shiny glass panes. The neon signs in the storefront shone. Inside, workers, attired in newly-introduced yellow tees with red caps to match the decor, took orders. A colorful *Welcome Back* sign hung above the counter. Black, white and red molded-plastic chairs and tables brightened the room. Residents settled down with a paper and their morning coffee, enjoying the familiar aroma of fresh baking.

“Can I kiss you?” asked Nettie Peduto, an Islander, even as she leaned forward to peck Eleazar Canales, owner Enrique’s brother, on the right cheek. “Congratulations,” Peduto said to the somewhat puzzled, yet pleased man, as she walked out the door with a freshly-baked loaf of Italian bread. “I’m pleased you are back.”

Clearly, the bakery, closed by the Department of Health since January 28 due to an expired license and a few health violations, had been missed. Fay Vass said as much, sipping coffee with a group of friends. “I missed this place. It looks great now.” She pointed to the new display cabinets, freshly laden with an enticing array of iced cakes, Black Forest pastries and chocolate-chip cookies.

“We worked very hard to re-open because people kept asking us when we would finish the painting and open the bakery,” said Canales, speaking on behalf of his brothers Enrique and Hugo, his sisters Jasmine and Sandra, sister-in-law Sharon and nephew Jonathan, all members of the family who work at the bakery. “We work in shifts,”

said Canales, who had been at the store since 2:00 that morning. Apart from their labor, the family has invested nearly \$30,000 to

paint the bakery and buy new machines and furniture.

Before the re-opening, the family invited a Pentecostal pastor from Manhattan to bless the premises. “These are very religious and very clean people,” said Mercedes Lugo, a regular customer and a friend of the family. “I am ecstatic that they are starting their business afresh with all kinds of fruit salads and yogurt with fruit and all that.”

On the new menu, there’s a Greek salad, a field salad, a greens-and-gorgonzola salad and even a mozzarella-and-red-pepper salad. “We will have all kinds of wraps in the next three weeks,” said Canales. “There’ll be more soups and sandwiches, too. All home-made.”

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Park from page 1

very expensive endeavor. So I think we’re part of the way there with your help.

“I think we all agree that that is an extremely valuable piece of land that needs to be preserved for a park. I think the next huge hurdle, and it will be huge, is finding the resources to do it. But I think the approach that we’re attempting to take, in looking for development opportunities when we can, looking to generate revenues when we can, I think that’s really the only way we can approach it at this point.”

At another point in the meeting, Labate said a deposit made with RIOC as part of a proposal to build a twin-tower Marriott Hotel at Sothpoint had been returned to SSJ, the proposing developer.

Tennis Ladder Play Starts May 1

The 2002 Challenge Ladder of the Roosevelt Island Tennis Association (RITA) will get under way Wednesday, May 1. The Ladder provides a ranking of players and the opportunity for participants to challenge players just above or below them in ability, and arrange matches. A computer system regularly re-ranks players in the ladder system. Those who play at least eight matches during the season are eligible for post-season trophy events, scheduled in September and October.

Prerequisites for participation are an Island tennis permit, issued by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, which makes application forms available 24 hours a day at Public Safety (or, during business hours, at 591 Main Street), and RITA membership, which costs \$20.

The RIOC tennis permit provides players with access to the Island’s courts in the Octagon Park area, whether or not they join RITA.

RITA membership provides the opportunity to enter various events, clinics, and tournaments sponsored by the organization. They include Saturday round-robin doubles play and holiday picnics. RITA also sends out regular mailings. RITA membership-application forms are provided as part of the permit applications available from RIOC.

For questions about the Challenge Ladder, RITA membership, or general questions about tennis on Roosevelt Island, contact Michael Kolba at (212) **980-3811** or at mkolba@aol.com, or Jan Buenner at jan.buenner@db.com.

Main Street Theatre in Time-Travel Project This Weekend



Steps in Time The cast of the Main Street Theatre and Dance Alliance’s original dance project, *Steps in Time*, goes back to the Wild West in this number. Performances are scheduled today (Saturday) at 7:30 and tomorrow at 2:00 and 7:00. Reservations are available at **371-4449**.

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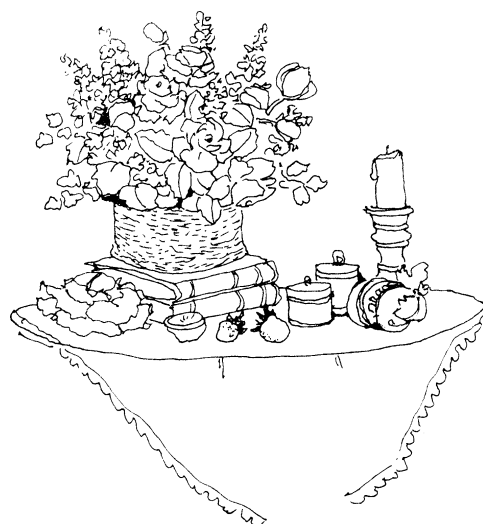
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