

Next issue
in 2 weeks –
Sat., Apr. 22

The Main Street WIRE™

26th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



Residents held up protest signs last week as RIOC convened a Board meeting with an agenda item that would lease Gallery RIVAA to a Dunkin' Donuts/Baskin Robbins franchisee. After DHCR Commissioner Judith Calogero announced the matter would be deferred, a resident presented a box of donuts to her and RIOC President Herb Berman, saying, "You eat them. We don't want them." An unusually large crowd was at the Thursday morning meeting – 103 residents.

Back From the Great Donut War of '06, RIOC Juggles Gallery, Retail Space Needs

The RIOC Board of Directors deferred action last week on a plan to lease space now occupied rent-free by Gallery RIVAA to a Dunkin' Donuts/Baskin Robbins franchisee. Facing 103 residents, many of whom carried signs supporting RIVAA's wish to stay in its present location (the former Bigelow Pharmacy space at the northeast corner of Rivercross), Board Chair Judith Calogero announced the Board would not act on the proposed lease to the franchisee. She said the reason was, in part, that RIOC had not been able to reach officers of RIVAA to discuss the change and offer the gallery other space on the Island.

The whole episode almost happened under the radar, during a three-week gap between issues of *The WIRE* but, by Monday, a *WIRE* e-mail bulletin had spread the word that the action was on the Board's agenda, being considered, and RIVAA quickly mounted a campaign to keep the space that had

been renovated for it under the RIOC Presidency of Robert H. Ryan. Supporters turned out, some unaware that RIOC was making an offer of alternative space, some concerned that members of the Roosevelt Island Visual Arts Association might not be able to muster the manpower to convert a replacement space into a gallery of the same quality. Protesters also pointed out that, because RIOC now requires community groups to

Housing Tenant Ownership at Island House Is Stalled as Bureaucracy Does Its Thing

by Dick Lutz

What's holding up the deals for tenants to become owners in Island House and Westview?
Who's holding up the deals?
The path to resident ownership is downright simple and obvious – or distressingly complex and obscure – depending on who's making the judgment.
The downright simple and obvious version is represented by a path that the Island House Tenants Association (IHTA) laid out in a letter of intent (the "LOI," in the shorthand language of *the deal*):

Work out a price, get an engineering report to figure out what repairs are needed and whether those are cause for an adjustment in the price, get a ground-lease extension agreement from RIOC, make a deal on taxes, find mortgage money, and 3, 2, 1, *launch* – and get most of it done – right up to asking tenants to vote on it – by April 30.

A more complex and difficult version is embodied in a kind of *Special Case of Murphy's Law* that seems to apply to anything and everything in New York real estate and is compounded massively when the *special situation* of Roosevelt Island is involved – the Island being New York City property leased to New York State and managed by appointees of the governor through an authority-like public-benefit corporation with its burden of patronage appointees and political agendas and financial interests that have to be satisfied. And, of course, there's the further *special situation* of the buildings, being State-sponsored affordable housing that has come of age and is eligible to leave the Mitchell-Lama program.

But there's more:
• There's a lawsuit. The Sheldrake Organization, once steering the deal from the owner side of the sell/buy equation, is now suing the owners.

• And there's an argument about the Island's General Development Plan (GDP). Does the GDP somehow prohibit market-rate sales that will come out of any plan in which the buildings move out of the State's Mitchell-Lama affordable-housing program?

• And then, of course, there's RIOC – the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation – and its special relationship with a real-estate agent who has the authority – or may not have the authority – to push the deal along.

By late last week, the deals seemed thoroughly stuck. The April 30 expiration of arrangements in Island House's LOI, which in January was three whole calendar pages away, was and is suddenly near, a mere handful of days away.

The Lawsuit

The Sheldrake suit came about when Charles Lucido, who manages the owner partnerships, concluded that Sheldrake had failed to meet contractual deadlines. Sheldrake would become the purchaser of the buildings, the original contracts said, paying \$44.5 million for Westview and \$49 million for Island House, after getting a ground-lease extension agreement from RIOC by an "initial outside date" of May 30, 2004. Why a ground-lease extension? Because leases on the land under the buildings will expire early in 2028. That's too short a time to satisfy lender requirements for multi-million-dollar mortgages.

That "initial outside date" could be extended, said the contracts and amendments, in exchange for "extension down payments" by Sheldrake to the sellers – \$350,000 for an extension to September 30, 2004, \$400,000 for another to March

1, 2005, \$750,000 to December 31, 2005, in the case of Island House. There were similar arrangements in the Westview contract.

When Sheldrake missed payments, Lucido considered the deal off. As the language of the contract puts it, "Failure of Purchaser to... timely pay the respective Extension Down Payments... shall constitute defaults by Purchaser." Lucido began discussions on his own deal to sell to the tenants.

In response, Sheldrake filed suit: "The parties all fully recognized that it would be difficult to predict the timing of obtaining the various consents and approvals from the government agencies and lenders... All of the parties involved were aware of the inherent, and unique, difficulties and obstacles at the heart of the transactions... Notably absent from the contracts are any provisions making the closing dates 'Time of the Essence.'" Sheldrake is asking for damages of \$100 million in the suit.

Even though Sheldrake is not suing either tenant group, the lawsuit against the owning partnerships is a sci-fi-size fly in the ointment that could gum up the gears as the tenant groups and the owners try to move toward a deal. Lenders able to provide massive mortgage funding are sure to be reluctant to commit to a purchase that could be derailed in court or held up for years. RIOC has also reportedly cited the suit as a reason for delay.

If the suit is quickly dismissed, Sheldrake will be firmly out of the picture. But IHTA leaders fear that some compromise might be worked out that will bring Sheldrake back into the picture. The alternative – waiting out protracted court proceedings – is also dangerous, in their view: It could make Lucido, who is 72 and would like to retire, antsy to make a sale at a pace that wouldn't suit careful movement toward resident ownership.

The GDP Argument

When conversations with the Sheldrake Organization went badly, the Westview tenant organization took an aggressive stance. It advanced the argument that provisions of the Island's General Development Plan (GDP) – part of the lease between City and State – require specific proportions of affordable housing in Northtown. It calls for this breakdown of housing:

- 20% for persons and families eligible for Federally-assisted public housing;
- 20% for persons and families eligible to benefit [from] section 236 of the National Housing Act;
- 35% for families eligible to occupy limited profit housing financed under Article 2 of the New York State Private Housing Finance Law;

And, most critically, market rate:
• 25% for persons and families who can afford conventionally financed and fully taxpaying units.
The key point in a lawyer letter opposing Sheldrake was that, without a plan to preserve Westview's
See **Housing**, page 14

Briefly...

- **No F-train service to Manhattan this weekend**, 12:01 a.m. Saturday through 5:00 a.m. Monday.
- RIOC is trying new routing for the many **school buses** that have been tying up Main Street morning and afternoon, as they discharge and board students of The Child School/Legacy High School. They will now use the west promenade in the morning (7:15-8:30), and the east promenade in the afternoon (1:00-3:30). "All pedestrians should exercise caution on the seawalls during these hours," RIOC says in an advisory.
- PS/IS 217 is looking for **Career-Day** speakers – presenters who will tell fifth through eight-grade students about their careers: educational requirements, pay, a typical work day. It'll end with a luncheon. Want to tell kids about your career on Friday, June 9? Call Guidance Counselor Susan Cohen at **212-980-0294**, ext. 3230.
- Faculty housing at NYU is providing a co-ownership financing package for staffers buying at **Riverwalk Landing**, now starting construction in Southtown. Literature gives estimated prices starting at \$490,000 for one-bedroom units (700-800 square feet), \$705,000 2br (1000-1100 sf), and \$945,000 3br (1400-1500 sf), with NYU carrying 30% of the purchase price. The NYU literature projects completion in July, 2007.
- There's a **Starbucks** coming to Roosevelt Island, to be located in the storefront at the southwest corner of Riverwalk Place, just above the subway, with outdoor seating, according to David Kramer of the Hudson Companies – opening in three to four months.
- The New York Foundation for Senior Citizens wants to recruit Roosevelt Islanders as **volunteer ombudsmen** to visit seniors residing at Coler-Goldwater. To volunteer or get more information, call **212-962-2720** or e-mail Lpetta@nyfscitcop.org.
- A three-year project to renovate the **Roosevelt Island Bridge** will keep traffic open as the span is updated. A meeting Wednesday, April 19, at 8:00 p.m. in Good Shepherd Community Center will include a detailed presentation on the City Department of Transportation plan for the work.

The Editorial Page

Embrace the Dream

To become resident owners of their buildings, residents of Island House and Westview must navigate an uncertain sea of financing, regulations, arrangements, and negotiations. The Rivercross cooperative, in removing itself from the Mitchell-Lama program, will face similar challenges.

To succeed, they'll need help from many points of the compass – lending institutions, legislators, lawyers, engineers, City and State government, *and RIOC*. Those entities will have to be deliberate and determined advocates for the American dream of home ownership that these residents embrace and deserve to enjoy. They will need to set aside political agendas, think creatively, focus on the goal, act selflessly, put ego aside, and accentuate the positive.

The positive in these deals is a more stable village of owners, each an empowered stakeholder in this community of powerful shared values.

The potential downside is grievous to contemplate. Let too many deadlines pass and the rental buildings could wiggle out of Mitchell-Lama control and into the realm of dwellings that are simply unaffordable. Adjust the crossbars on the t's too repeatedly, re-dot the i's too many times – and the dream could be dust.

Everybody involved needs to act expeditiously to move things along.

RIOC, for example, should give up a demand that it collect an advance on its legal costs before permitting serious lawyer-to-lawyer discussions of the acceptable terms of a deal and the conditions that will lead to the necessary extension of the leases for the ground under the buildings.

Those concerned deeply about keeping Roosevelt Island housing affordable must recognize that the buildings, in the hands of their residents, are far more likely to stay affordable than if they are sold off to private investors.

Everyone – *everyone* – has to get behind the worthy goal and difficult process of shepherding these deals to ultimate fruition, finding ways to remove roadblocks, and finding ways to avoid erecting them in the first place.

We reassert that *it can be done*. Roosevelt Island will be a better place – a better home – when it has been accomplished.

We urge all involved to be the best they can be, nurture the process, and make it happen.

Legacy

It's hard to imagine that anybody working at RIOC actually awakes in the morning trying to figure out how he will make residents' lives less pleasant when he gets to work. Oh, there's the passive-aggressive clerk or two, erecting roadblocks instead of clearing them away. But, for the most part, we're prepared to believe that RIOC wants what's best for this community – as long as other agendas can be satisfied along the way.

The problem, of course, is that they don't live here, and they don't easily empathize with the value system of residents, or think as residents do. So we understand they may be surprised to learn that people here value art over calories and unique mom-and-pop stores over cookie-cutter chains and franchises.

RIOC has capable people, many likely to leave this Island by early next year. We hope that, before they go, they will impose resident values on the legacy they put in place.

DL

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To the Editor:

Just what we always wanted: Instead of the pharmacy that served all of us in Northtown so well, RIOC forced that tenant out and he sold his business to Gristede's, a location not as convenient to most of Northtown's residents. Now, instead of a beautiful art gallery, we will have a fast-food "joint" serving junk-food donuts and coffee!

Thank goodness we have such competent folks at RIOC, looking out for our interests. The Starbucks is a bit more sensible, but it will probably fail due to a lack of sufficient population. Still, there is wireless communication possible in the Starbucks!

Robert Chira

To the Editor:

Dunkin Donuts? Starbucks? Baskin-Robbins? Seems we already had a coffee/pastry/ice cream shop on the Island, but didn't they close them down? Oh right, they were the Mom-and-Pop shop that's well on it's way to being extinct.

Hey, let's shut down the hospitals (the patients can find some other place to stay) and turn them into malls instead. Anyone for a glorified Bed and Breakfast Inn at the Blackwell house? After all, who cares about history? Or art galleries, for that matter?

Roosevelt Island is becoming a mini-Manhattan. So much for our "best kept little secret."

Denise Larocque

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

While I'm sure your Public Safety Department people are looking forward to having a tacky Dunkin' Donuts franchise on Main Street, I am appalled by the idea. Replacing a cultural icon like Gallery RIVAA with this ghetto-like blight is criminal.

There are plenty of other places to put an eyesore like DD/BR. How about by your house in Red Hook? How about over by Octagon? Or, how about on the other land you sold out from under us for pennies, Southtown? Let them take it. What's that? They don't want it, either? Haven't you screwed us, our neighborhood and our Island enough?

I wish I could say you were simply a buffoon, but unfortunately you're much more dangerous than that. Your malignant, agenda-driven decisions will be something the long-time residents will have to endure for years, long after you and your Governor are gone.

However, at some point in your life (hopefully while your Island "legacy" is still fresh in your mind) you may feel like your assets are being mismanaged, that you're being swindled, that someone unqualified – who you didn't select – is making life-altering decisions for you without your consent. In those times, think of us, think of karma, and remember this Herb, payback's a bitch.

Damon LaScot

To the Editor:

I have an idea: Next time anybody from RIOC wants a coffee or a coke or a croissant or a smoke, all the merchants on Main Street who are operating without a lease should refuse them service and tell them to go to Manhattan. Then, when they can't board the bus or train or Tram because they're packed to the doors, maybe they'll see the community has needs that aren't being properly addressed.

Name Withheld

Letters

To Herb Berman and the RIOC Board of Directors:

I am writing to express my opposition to RIOC's proposed plans to close Gallery RIVAA. It is my understanding that the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation plans on voting to replace Gallery RIVAA with a Baskin-Robins/Dunkin' Donuts at the northeast corner of the Rivercross building.

I am a firm believer that the arts play a critical role in this state's economy. Replacing Gallery RIVAA will only serve to hamper any economic objectives that you may wish to achieve through this action. I have been contacted by residents on the Island who object to losing this cultural institution, and cannot understand why Gallery RIVAA faces possible eviction when there are a number of other vacant storefront properties available.

The haste with which this issue has been brought forth leaves little room to have an honest and open discussion between RIOC and the residents of the Island. I stand with the residents of Roosevelt Island in opposing any plans to close the doors to Gallery RIVAA. Furthermore, I strongly urge you to vote in favor of keeping RIVAA at its current location, or putting a hold on a final decision until the concerns of the community have been appropriately addressed.

State Senator José M. Serrano

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

Exactly what is the plan in your mind as to what the Roosevelt Island community should be? What is the gain for the residents when you dismantle RIVAA?

From the standpoint of residents, you seem to be intent on tearing the community fabric into shreds.

What you are doing is bringing scorn on and hatred for the Pataki Administration and all who are part of it.

David J. Bauer

To the Editor:

As a resident of three years who is not lucky enough to have subsidized rent or a co-op, I am once again appalled at the backward way that the Island responds.

There are many residents on the Island who would be happy to buy more goods and services if available. But here is the problem with the residents and RIOC – everything closes or is "shut down." There is no longer a bar – so we are forced to have a drink at the Trellis (fine, but it closes early), no longer pizza, no place to sit and have coffee and wi-fi.

See **Letters**, page 16

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters to the editor, to the community, and to/from officials. *Name Withheld* publication will be considered, but the writer's name, address, and phone number **must** be provided for verification and for our records; *letters submitted anonymously will not be published*.

Preferred method of submission: E-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com (plaintext e-mail format preferred, or attach a file), or on a PC-standard 3.5" disk left at the desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*.

Alternatives: Typed copy left at 531 Main Street, but allow extra time before deadline for typesetting. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered, if brief, but we are not able to take telephone dictation of letters. **All letters are subject to acceptance and to editing for length and clarity.** Recommended maximum length, 300 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

Letters deadline for Apr. 22 issue: Tues., Apr. 18
Letters received after deadline considered on a space-available basis.

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

I'm thankful for the e-mailed information about Tram schedule changes and bridge closures.

However, as I've already pointed out and you acknowledged at the time, e-mail advisories shouldn't be limited to information that everyone can get in advance, without e-mail – not to mention that only a minority is affected by Tram schedule changes between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. or weekday bridge closures, which is all I've *ever* heard about through RIOC advisories.

Again, what I would like to get from an e-mail advisory is, to be instance, being informed before I leave my office that I won't be able to ride the tram home and I have to use an alternative – instead of having to go to the Tram and walk up the stairs before finding out it was no use going there.

Another example is the F-line shutdowns, this weekend and last. Not before we're on the bus or at the station do we find out there's no way we'll be on time wherever it is we're going. Isn't that something RIOC does or could know about, and don't you understand that's the kind of information Islanders really need to receive by e-mail, both at home and at work?

Back in February of *last* year, RIOC wrote to me that my suggestions would be acted upon. I quote Catherine Johnson's e-mail dated February 10, 2005: "In addition to advisories for scheduled downtime, we will be notified by the Tram operator whenever the Tram is down – even if this is for a very short time. We will send an advisory when we are notified it is down and another one as soon as we are notified the Tram is running again." ... to which you personally added, "See, it can sometimes work."

How about starting now?
Claude Lestelle

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

It appears that nothing really gets accomplished on Roosevelt Island unless there are numerous complaints. I have informed the doorstation at 625 Main Street that one of the sewers is backed up. There is water running down the emergency driveway. As RIOC stated, this is the responsibility of the Department of Environmental Protection.

I would think that, since this is dirty water coming out of the sewer and a school next door, something would have been done about this, but it's been weeks and, with the weather starting to get warmer, this could cause a smelly situation.

As I recall, last year you also were going to look into the situation of the yellow school buses that tie up Main Street every morning when the people who live here are trying to get to work. The Red Buses not only get delayed waiting for the school buses to clear, but now the Red Buses also go down to Octagon Park, thus causing residents to be late for appointments and work. It appears that the Red Buses are no longer timed with the Tram.

It would be nice to have these items addressed.

Rosemary Dringus

The writer relayed this response, received from Herb Berman:

There is a schedule, Public Safety is initiating a new plan to control the yellow bus problem, DEP was notified and our engineers are aware of the sewer problem. I just had a corneal transplant and hence I can not use the e-mail process with ease for the time being. Please excuse my brevity.

First I want to thank all those who extended their good wishes to me after my recent surgery. I have been making a steady recovery and expect to be back at full speed in the near future.

Now that may be viewed as a mixed blessing by some of those who have been complaining about whether Gallery RIVAA was being pushed out of its Main Street storefront in favor of a Dunkin’ Donuts that has expressed an interest in the space. Since facts ought to count for something in public debates, let me report directly to you about the controversy.

As RIOC Board Chairwoman Judy Calogero said last week, the fact is that RIVAA leaders know that RIOC offered them the gallery space they currently occupy with the expressly stated proviso that they could remain there rent-free until we had a tenant that wanted the space.

The fact is also that RIOC officials tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to get in touch with RIVAA’s president in the days leading up to the meeting to discuss providing the arts center alternative space at 503 Main Street, a far more visible location in the first storefront on the Manhattan side as you walk north from the Tram and subway.

Another fact is that RIOC has long supported RIVAA, whether in providing the free rent on Main Street or providing RIOC staff to do sheet rocking and other infrastructure work on the mezzanine level at Sportspark for use by RIVAA – again rent free – on behalf of working Island artists. .

Because RIVAA leaders were unavailable for discussion, and because we wanted to pursue further discussions with

Dunkin’ Donuts, the item scheduled for the March 30 RIOC Board meeting was tabled. We are now in the process of engaging both RIVAA and Dunkin’ Donuts in further talks to resolve this controversy which has been fed by misinformation, whether intentional or accidental.

The WIRE attempted to link our move to rent out the space to Dunkin’ Donuts to a change in State law that went into effect on Saturday, April 1, requiring State authorities and public-benefit corporations such as RIOC to maximize return on its assets. But this is totally besides the point, since RIOC has already been operating as a financially self-sufficient corporate entity and is in fact a model for other authorities and public benefit corporations around the State that will now have to do the same.

That self-sufficiency is not an option, but a mandate. It is why we must insist on standard business practices in ensuring that retail establishments

pay their rent. It does not lessen our commitment to supporting RIVAA in its continuing presence on the Island, as is evidenced by our encouragement to the developer of the Octagon project that he make available free gallery space within that project when it is completed.



Herbert E. Berman, President
Roosevelt Island Operating Corp.
e-mail: HBerman@rioc.com

Residents who subscribe to *The WIRE*’s e-mail bulletin service followed last week’s Gallery RIVAA / Dunkin’ Donuts situation as it developed, from first information to conclusion.
To subscribe, send an *AddMe* e-mail to editor@MainStreetWIRE.com.

I seldom have anything complimentary to offer about the way RIOC manages our community affairs, but I’m sure that most residents are relieved that its Board opted to defer a decision on evicting the RIVAA gallery to make room for a Dunkin’ Donuts. However, the reprieve may be shortlived. RIOC meets again this week, and may very well choose to approve this lease before this column goes to press.

This plan is unfortunate on so many levels.

RIOC has always been good to our local organizations, providing support to the Historical Society, Gallery RIVAA, the Cultural Center, the Senior Center, the religious organizations, etc. These organizations all deliver crucial social

and spiritual services that really comprise the very heart of our community. RIVAA, the Roosevelt Island Visual Arts Association, is no less vital, not only to the very many who have worked so hard to make these premises so attractive and stimulating, but to the whole community

that can enjoy the many exhibits and varied programs that they offer, and to passers-by who can appreciate the excellent storefront displays.

I find it hard to believe that the potential lessees insisted that this be the only site on Roosevelt Island that they would consider. I wonder if anyone explained that evicting the Gallery would already start them off on a bad foot. I wonder if they were offered any other sites.

Other comments I’m hearing from residents focus on the wisdom of putting fast-food chains on the Island. They’re concerned that we’ll lose our uniqueness, local character, and ability to ever become the “destination point” that will bring people to the Island. Still others wonder why, in this health-conscious day and age, with childhood obesity reaching epidemic proportions, we would want to encourage kids to eat doughnuts. And residents are also wondering how, from an economic perspective, these newcomers will survive. The bulk of the population leaves the Island during the day and we already have merchants on the Island who offer many of the same products. I guess that’s for Dunkin’ Donuts marketing department to analyze, but we’re not looking forward to seeing any more storefronts left vacant by failed businesses.

RIOC Board Chair Judith Calogero made a number of reasonable points in her announcement deferring this decision. It is true that RIVAA leaders “know that they were provided space rent-free along Main Street with the express proviso that they would vacate once a commercial tenant wanted to lease the space.” Of course, RIOC has the power to evict any entity occupying their premises without a lease. That doesn’t mean they should exercise that power.

She also points out that, “Financial self-sufficiency is not just a nice idea, but essential for the fiscal stability that makes everything we do on Roosevelt Island possible. We must generate enough income to maintain the Island, create a fund for future maintenance and development, protect past State investment, and meet fiduciary obligations to bondholders.” Residents have repeatedly asked for real numbers on how much RIOC needs to be “self-sufficient.” We were promised self-sufficiency by Rob Ryan when he inked the Southtown deal, and Herb Berman has said many times, even

in his column, that the Island is self-sufficient right now, and the last two annual financial statements bear that out. However, if capital accumulation is so crucial, why is RIOC planning to give the rights to build the last five Southtown buildings for a pittance? Nor was any mention of self-sufficiency made when they gave all the available school space to the Child School for \$4 per square foot per annum (although, at least, this school is a worthy benefactor). The mantra of self-sufficiency seems to be invoked or ignored at random. It certainly shouldn’t be the only principle of community governance. If RIOC were to axe all the services that don’t turn a profit, they’d start with Public Safety (at over \$2 million/year) and they’d close down the Tram. Again, I am calling on the Board to engage in a public dialogue on how much money they think we need, and what ways we intend to get it. Certainly, this is the best way to get public buy-in on any painful sacrifices that we’ll be asked to make.

A few additional notes: Child School buses now drive on the west promenade in the morning and the east promenade in the afternoon. Clearly, traffic on Main Street has become a problem. It’s not a problem the residents didn’t anticipate before the Child School came to the Island; nevertheless, it’s one we now have to deal with. I commend RIOC for recognizing the problem and trying to solve it. However, these new routes are the wrong solution. When the school was first proposed, one of the first questions asked was,

“Where will the school buses go?” We were assured at that time that the promenades would not be used. I and other RIRA Council members have already heard numerous complaints about how dangerous this is. Particularly in the afternoon, kids are milling around the moving school buses at the area by Eastwood and the baseball field. This new route is the wrong answer. It needs to be changed before, heaven forbid, a child gets hurt in this pandemonium. If RIOC doesn’t care about the safety of the kids, then perhaps the risk of monumental

lawsuit in the event of a tragedy of this nature will sway them to quickly remedy this matter. In the interim, please try to keep your kids away from this area, even though it will be increasingly more difficult as the weather gets warmer. Also, make your feelings known to Herb Berman at HBerman@rioc.com.

Finally: On April 19, Community Board 8 will have its Roosevelt Island public meeting at the Good Shepherd Community Center at 6:30 p.m., and the Department of Transportation will discuss plans to upgrade the Roosevelt Island bridge in the downstairs room of the Chapel later that night, at 8:00 p.m.

I’ll be away on vacation for then next few weeks, see you in mid-May!



Steve Marcus, President
Roosevelt Island Residents Assn.
e-mail: SteveAtRIRA@verizon.net

COMING UP

– This Weekend –

No F-train service to Manhattan all weekend, 12:01 a.m. Saturday to 5:00 a.m. Monday. Service *from* Manhattan to Roosevelt Island is expected to be normal.

Vernissage 5 show, Gallery RIVAA, featuring the works of two dozen artists. Gallery hours Wed. & Fri., 6-9 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Exhibition continues to April 16.

Open Workshop Performance by the Main Street Theatre and Dance Alliance musical theater workshop class, **Sun., Apr. 9**, 3:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. \$7 (mat seating under 10 years, \$5). Reservations, **212-371-4449**.

– The Coming Week –

Town Hall Meeting on the War in Iraq, with Rep. John Murtha, author of the House Resolution calling for withdrawal, sponsored by Rep. Carolyu Maloney, **Mon., Apr. 10**, 12:00 noon, Community Unitarian Church, 40 E. 35th Street (Park/Madison). Free. For information, call **212-860-0606**.

– Future Events –

Free Lifeguard Training for youth 15-20, **Mon. through Fri.**, April 17-21, 11-5 daily, with certification after one week. *Registration deadline is Monday, April 10*. Participants required to be strong distance swimmers. Applications available at the PS/IS 217 Beacon program operated by the Roosevelt Island Youth Program. For information, call **212-527-2505**.

Community Board 8 meeting, **Wed., Apr. 19**, 6:30 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center.

Roosevelt Island Bridge Renovation Meeting with the City Department of Transportation, **Wed., Apr. 19**, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Book Discussion Group, **Thur., Apr. 20**, 6:30 p.m., at the Library. *Bodega Dreams* by Ernesto Quiñonez.

The Main Street WIRE – Next issue, **Sat., Apr. 22, 2006**. (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an *AddMe* message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Advertising Deadline:** Ads in the paper, Thursday, Apr. 13; decision on circulars/inserts for *The Bag*, Mon., Apr. 17; they are due

Thur., Apr. 20. **Future issues:** May 6 and 20, June 3 and 17, July 1, July 29, Aug. 26, Sept. 9 and 23, Oct. 7 and 21, Nov. 4 and 18, Dec. 2 and 16. **News phone, 212-826-9055**; urgent matters **917-617-0449**. **Phone** for display and classified advertising placement and information, **212-751-8214**. **To list your organization’s Island-related event in this column**, e-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com, or leave it, addressed to *The WIRE*, at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street; provide a telephone number for follow-up questions. There is no charge for such listings.

CB8 Speaks TV show, **Tue., Apr. 25**, 7:00 p.m., TimeWarner Cable channel 34. Topic/guests to be announced.

Community Board 8 Housing Committee Forum on household emergency preparedness, **Wed., Apr. 26**, 6:30-9:00 p.m., Hunter College School of Social Work, 129 East 79th Street (Park/Lex), auditorium. Information: **212-758-4340**.

Exhibit Opening: Island Schools of Art, **Sat., Apr. 29**, 4:00 p.m., Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main Street, featuring artwork from the students of PS/IS 217, The Child School/Legacy High School, and the Roosevelt Island Day Nursery.

Damn Yankees, presented by the Main Street Children’s Theatre, **Fri., May 5** through **Mon., May 8**, times to be announced. Reservations, **212-371-4449**.

Senior Center

Monday 9:30, Yoga 10:30-11:30, English as 2nd Language 10:30, Blood Pressure Screening 12:30, “Oldies” Movies 1:00, Computers 1:00, Tai Chi	5:00, Healthy Body & Mind 7:00, Pokeno (RISA)
Tuesday 9:30-1:00, Free Tax Help (last day: Tue., Apr. 11) 10:00, Get Stronger Bones 10:30, Shoppers’ Bus 2:00, Bingo 2:00, Painting & Sculpting 6:00, Ballroom Dancing 7:30, Games (RISA)	Thursday 10:00, Get Stronger Bones 10:30, Creative Arts 12:30, Movie 7:00, Dance
Wednesday 9:15, Stay Well 10:30, Computers 10:30, Shoppers’ Bus	Friday 9:30, Yoga 10:30, Computers 1:00, Bridge 7:00, Games (RISA)
	Saturday 7:30, Bingo (RISA)

Special Events

Tue., Apr. 11, 7:00 p.m., General Meeting
Wed., Apr. 19, Atlantic City trip
Mon., Apr. 24, Mohegan Sun trip (7:30 a.m.)

Home-delivered meals: **212-744-5022**, ext. 1203



There is no charge to list Island events here. E-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com or leave information at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. Please provide a phone number for possible follow-up.

The RIOC Column

The RIRA Column

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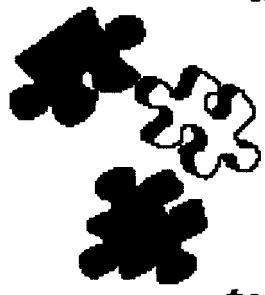
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Young Architects from Across the World Ponder a Question:



SOCIAL-CULTURAL LANDSCAPE



Nina Baniahmad's top-award design would install a series of ramps at Southpoint.



by Bret Senft

Polite, black-suited security guards at the door of the Center for Architecture at 536 LaGuardia Place near Bleeker Street on a recent warm night. And past the guards, a diverse crowd of hundreds of hip, young designers and architects on three levels of open space and high ceilings, colorful design plans and drawings of varying projects from different parts of the world on the walls and tables in the rooms. An international buzz to the event as, downstairs, the crowd assembled for a panel discussion and awards ceremony featuring the winners of an “ideas competition” presenting theoretical projects for developing Southpoint on Roosevelt Island – young architects from France, Switzerland, and the United States.

“Southpoint: From Ruin to Rejuvenation (The Roosevelt Island Universal Arts Center)” is the longish title for the competition organized by Emerging New York Architects (ENYA), a group of young architects within the American Institute of Architects (AIA), New York Chapter. The concept, open to those in the field less than a decade after graduation, was to create hypothetical designs for the development of Southpoint, plans that would include the James Renwick Smallpox Hospital ruin and, according to the competition’s accompanying exhibition publication, “a multi-use facility that would accommodate both performing and visual arts. Designed with the entire Roosevelt Island constituency

in mind, the competition was tailored to fit two Island organizations” – namely, the Roosevelt Island Visual Arts Association (RIVAA), and the Coler-Goldwater nursing facility, serving as “clients” for the architects. There were over 300 entries; 63 were chosen for the exhibition; they are on view at the Center for Architecture until June 17. The award winners received prize money totaling \$11,500.

The publication notes that the success of an ideas competition “comes from the critical mass of entries and their ability to inspire a community through the sheer number of innovative alternatives.” Hopefully, the community was inspired last September, when RIVAA and Coler-Goldwater sought to raise awareness of the forthcoming competition by hosting an Island exhibition of ENYA’s 2004 competition – theoretical designs for an East River boathouse – as well as artwork from RIVAA and Coler-Goldwater artists. A number of architects attended the opening reception, including the subsequent Southpoint competition first prize winner, Nina Baniahmad, an Austrian, who flew in from Paris for the

event and stayed to tour Southpoint, meeting with residents to study the community and its requirements for the site.

As Baniahmad, other award winners, competition organizers, and judges took their places on tall, red-lacquered designer stools at the front of the room to begin the evening’s discussion, Theodore Liebman – chief of architecture thirty years ago at the Urban Development Corporation, which built Roosevelt Island, hiring Philip Johnson for the master plan and other architects for the buildings – stood tall in the throng and feigned strong bemusement at the winning projects.

“I was there at the beginning,” said the white-crowned, mustached architect and planner, now principal of his own firm, The Liebman-Melting Partnership. Of Roosevelt Island’s descent into market-rate apartments and condominiums, and the loss of the original plan’s goal of mixed-income housing, Liebman said with a smile, “I can tell you, we had a wonderful idea in the ’70s, and everyone since then has been messing it up – by introducing more

and more high-income housing. They keep changing the mix in that direction. And that’s what upsets me the most.” As for the surrounding displays of theoretical plans for Southpoint, he added good-naturedly, “I’m a little ‘disappointed’ by this evening, because it has omitted the Louis Kahn memorial of Franklin Roosevelt. And who could have done better than he? And I selected Kahn in 1974 to create the memorial.”

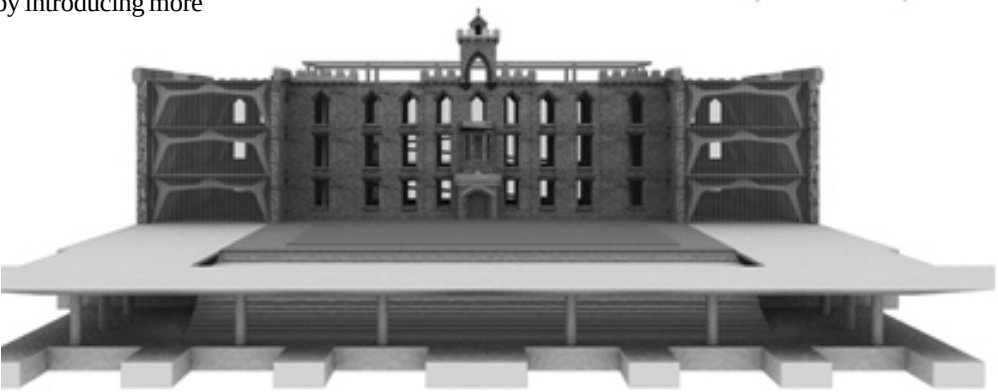
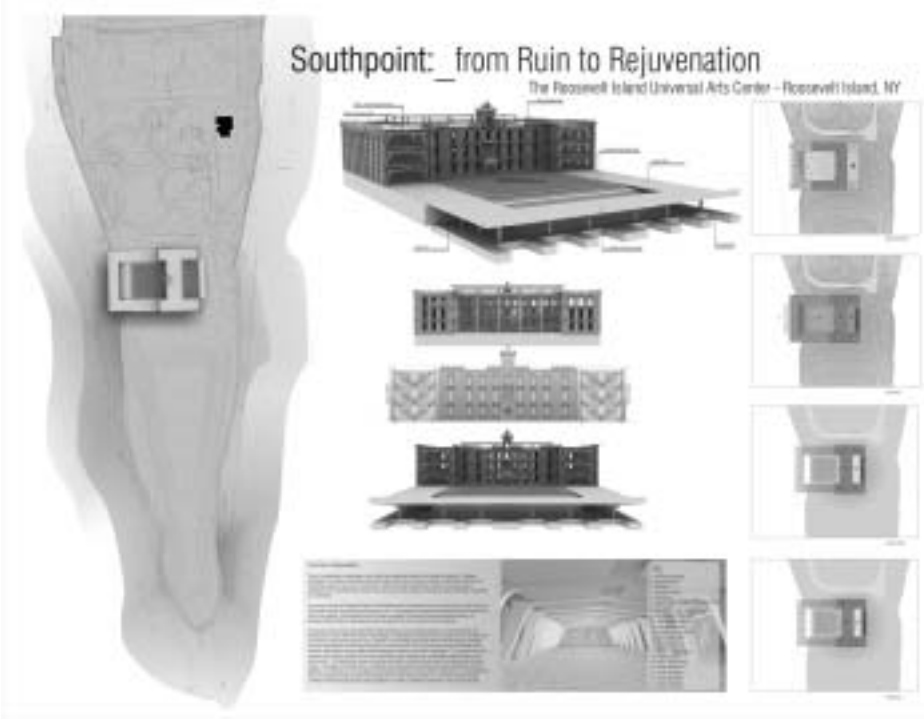
The crowd was called to order, and the panel discussion began with comments from the award winners.

Historic Preservation Award winner and New Yorker Eric Brodfuehrer’s concept embraced the hospital ruins, with a platform leading directly from the building to the west shore. “The drive behind my project was to stabilize the building for a new entity to come

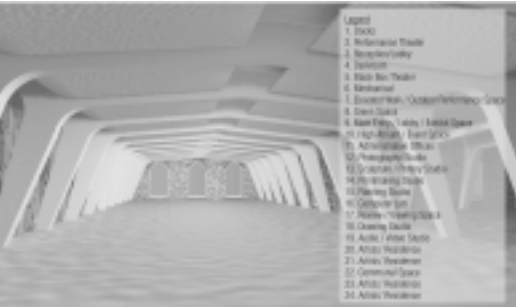
in. For it to grow, it needs to be connected” to the City across the river. His plan calls for ferry service to Manhattan.

New Yorkers Dominic Leong and Brian Price won third Prize. Their design builds out from the shoreline with art and gallery barges, and rooftop leisure-scapes and sculpture parks.” Said Leong, “Our project addresses the problem in terms of cultural accessibility.” The site is isolated, yet close to Manhattan. “So we had to ask how they could be connected. So there was an overlap between bridging City, art, and nature.” A series of curving bridges links Southpoint to Manhattan and Queens. “We wanted to provide architecture with an operational aspect to it, rather than being picture-postcard iconic.”

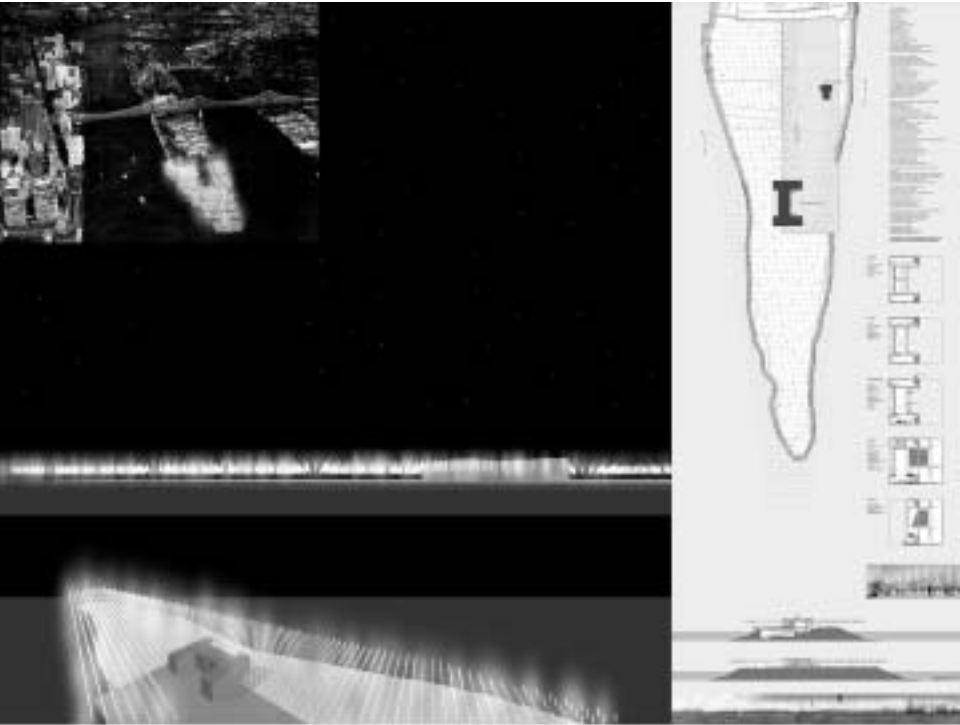
From Basel and Zurich, Switzerland, second-prize winners Oliver Brandenberger, Stephan Buehrer, Jose Bento, Celine Guibat – calling themselves a “Swiss-French/Swiss-German Swiss Mix design team –



Historic Preservation Award



Given Carte Blanche, What Would We Do With Southpoint Park?



Second prize: A massive array of light poles, “shiny at night, scarfed in daytime.”



created “a new sky...made out of a vertical grid composed of metallic poles, regular and precise, shiny at night, rigorous and scarfed in daytime,” as it states in the publication. Translation: converting Southpoint into a glowing ‘lantern’ of crossing light poles, said Guibat, which is “open to the spirit of New York and centered on the ruins of the past.”

The top award, known as the ENYA Prize, went to Nina Baniahmad. Her design begins at the Queensboro Bridge and travels along the eastern side of Southpoint, using a series of ramps that diverge into porches or rooms as the structure moves along. “The point is to provide an esplanade, a pathway to Southpoint, starting from the bridge, where an elevator brings people to ground level, taking them along the eastern side — instead of the western side, where a lot of patients are on that path,” she said. There are parklands in and around the ruins. The competition brief called for artists’ housing, “but I adjusted that to include housing for ex-patients, too, with an enclosed garden.” She added, “It could be a new social and cultural landmark for New York. My project is more of a pathway to Southpoint, and the site is perfect because it is adjacent to the southern hospital with many patients, many of them in wheelchairs. And Roosevelt Island is an ideal place for it, because it is losing more and more of its identity with social justice. That’s why I call my project, ‘The Social-Cultural Esplanade of Roosevelt Island.’”

Two of the seven-member jury attended the panel discussion: Beth Tauke, associate professor of architecture at SUNY Buffalo, and Tad Sudol, architect and RIVAA president. Asked her opinion of Baniahmad’s modern, flowing esplanade design, Tauke said: “I think the winner is conservative, from the Universal design point of view, meaning you design with everyone in mind, regardless of age, mobility, etc. But in her case, she used the convention of the ramp — the ultimate component of Universal design — in a new and exciting way.”

Sudol recalled that when ENYA

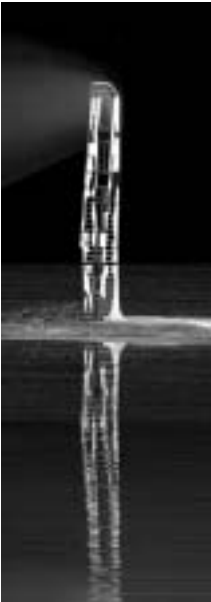
approached RIVAA on using Southpoint as the site for the competition, “we started to talk about different ideas, and we asked artists in both hospitals, north and south, to contribute work — and we saw great talent there. And we included that work in our RIVAA exhibition last September. So the middle of the Island met the ends of the Island” because of this Southpoint competition. Of the jury selection process, held at the Center for Architecture in late January, he said, “All 300-plus entries were here, and some of the design boards were on the floor. Each of us had to pick ten — so I missed some. I missed the second-prize entry, for example! But the first prize

was the most sophisticated drawing there.”

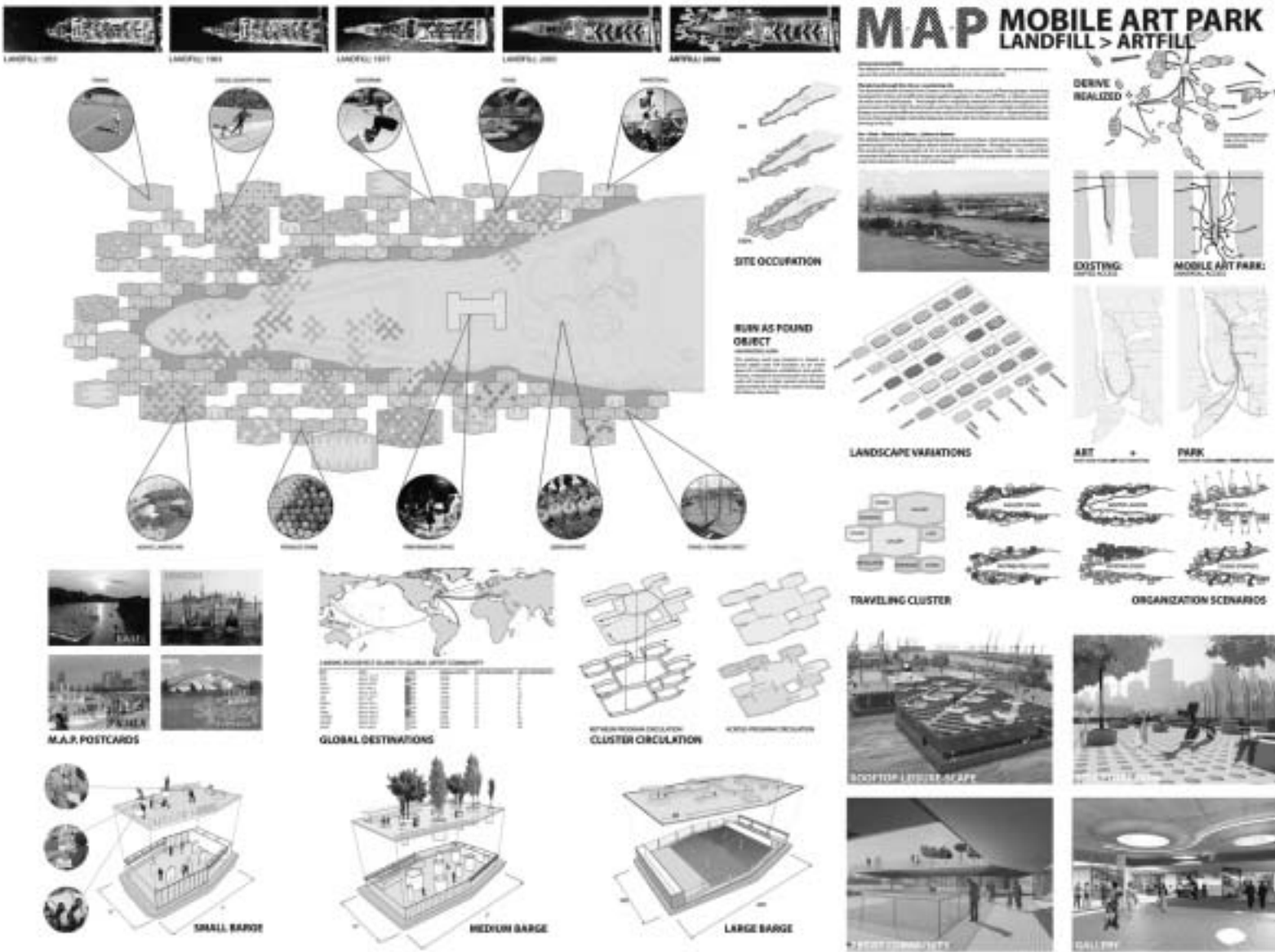
The panel discussion ended, and the winners were given their award certificates. Afterward, standing off the main room in a hallway filled with a thick, jostling, crowd of young architects, and lined with drawings and planning boards of theoretical Southpoint developments, Tauke noted the unique emphasis on social justice in the competition — by both the organizers and entrants — addressing quality-of-life issues for marginalized populations. Above the din of downtown conversations, she said: “I don’t mean just disabilities, but various economic and racial

groups, age, gender equity — allowing people with all those factors to live together in this community. The other jurors came with their own ideas of social justice, but it was on everyone’s mind. And I have to say I have never been on a juried competition where it was such a key component of the evaluation process for the jury. If the design did not incorporate some concept of social justice, it did not make the grade. There had to be that aspect to it.”

Student Prize:
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Third Prize





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Musical Workshop Sunday

Students in the Main Street Theatre's musical theater workshop class will perform tomorrow (Sunday, April 9) at 3:00 and 6:30 (see *ComingUp*, page 3 and ad, page 4).



Signs of Spring

Buds appearing and bulbs being changed.



Rivercross resident and longtime resident Essie Owens exhibited her artwork last month at the Sunrise Civic Center in Sunrise, Florida.



Donuts from page 1

in response to concerns expressed about the future of RIVAA’s continuing occupancy of its current rent-free home, and discussions we have had with Dunkin’ Donuts about taking that space on a leased basis. We are removing that item from today’s agenda, in part because leaders of RIVAA have been unavailable for discussion this week and in part because we are in further discussions with Dunkin’ Donuts about its plans.

“I do want to address the issue and the furor, no matter how ill-informed, that has been generated, that has drawn some of you to this meeting today.

“Facts are important, and it is facts that have received short shrift in the one-sided debate over RIVAA during the last several

days.

“The fact is that RIVAA leaders know that they were provided space rent-free along Main Street with the express proviso that they would vacate once a commercial tenant wanted to lease the space. That tenant has now emerged in Dunkin’ Donuts.

“The fact is also that RIOC officials tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to get in touch with RIVAAS’s president this week to talk about providing alternative space at 503 Main Street, a far more visible location in the first storefront on the Manhattan side as you walk north from the Tram and subway.

“And the fact is that comments by some that RIOC was moving quickly because of a new State law going into effect this Saturday re-

quiring authorities and State-created public benefit corporations such as RIOC to maximize the financial return on their assets is utterly irrelevant. RIOC already operates as a financially self-sufficient corporate entity and is in fact a model for what the new law is directing other authorities and public-benefit corporations to accomplish.

“What is relevant is that that same new law will require going out for public bid for actions such as renting out the Main Street commercial space under the control of RIOC. The market forces will play a greater role in determining what will go into that space, or any other vacant space along Main Street, than the desires of some residents to control their surroundings.

With the change of seasons, residents will again be seeing Nancy Brown on Main Street – but something will be missing. She explains:

This was my Misty. She was my baby, my sweetheart, my love, my favorite companion. She was the best dog in the world; I told her that all the time. From the time she was a little puppy, nine and a half weeks old, she never did anything wrong. She didn’t chew on the furniture or shoes or cry at night or bark too much, and she was housebroken from day one. She lived with me for over 12 years, and every one of those days were precious to me. She made me laugh and she made me smile, and she gave me unconditional love. Everywhere I went, Misty came with me – even to church, where she sat behind me in my chair through the entire Mass and never made a sound.

She was so smart, so clever. She knew when it was time to go out, or time for her cookie, or time for dinner. She even knew when it was time for her eye medicine, and let us know. She listened to everything I said to her, looking me in the eyes and not turning away until I was finished talking to her. And she understood it all.

Misty was one of a kind, very special to me and to everyone who knew her, and now she is gone and I miss her so very much and would do anything to have her back so I could laugh and smile again. Be happy, my Misty, run around, play with your friends and eat all the cookies your little heart desires. I miss you very, very much and think of you all the time and I remember how happy you made me and what a wonderful baby you were. You were the best! I’ll always love you and I’ll never forget you, never, ever!

Nancy Brown



“RIOC has been a consistent and ongoing supporter of RIVAA, and will continue to be.

“In addition to the free rent, RIOC did the majority of infrastructure work to the current space to prepare it for occupancy, and continues to provide RIOC staff free of charge to work on electrical changes, remodeling, and other activities. RIVAA contributed painting and general cosmetic changes to suit their needs. In addition, RIVAA has benefited from a \$100,000 public purpose grant from the corporation to support their work. More recently RIOC has issued a permit to RIVAA for use of the mezzanine space at SportsPark that they have unfettered access to for their artists to work on large works of art. RIOC installed new exterior doors, sheetrocked the interior and repaired damage to the ceiling and wall areas to make it usable. In return, RIVAA is to provide a series of art instruction programs to the community.

“RIOC has also worked with Becker and Becker to encourage the developer of the Octagon project to make free gallery space within the Octagon. RIVAA and the residents will benefit from that opportunity..

“Financial self-sufficiency is not just a nice idea, but essential for the fiscal stability that makes everything we do on Roosevelt Island possible. We must generate enough income to maintain the Island, create a fund for future maintenance and development, protect

past State investment, and meet fiduciary obligations to bondholders.

“That self-sufficiency requires that we apply standard business practices to all of our operations, including the rental of stores along Main Street. It is worth repeating that while private entities own the apartment buildings on Roosevelt Island, it is RIOC that retains the street-level retail.

“The fruits of that self-sufficiency are all around us, whether it is new parkland at Octagon and Southpoint or the renovated elevator at Motorgate.”

Eastwood

 from page 1

without a long-term lease. We use the occasion of ground lease negotiations to move owners toward protecting existing tenants, and in the Eastwood case we seem to have succeeded. It bodes very well for the future. Those of us who were motivated to move here by the original vision will continue to be able to afford to live here. It is as vital a thing as I can imagine.”

Now three more buildings face similar hurdles in moving from Mitchell-Lama status to private financing. Island House has hit a snag in its accelerated plan (report on page 1), parallel to a path Westview must follow. Rivercross, the cooperative, is working on its own privatization plan and closely watching developments in the Island House/Westview cases.

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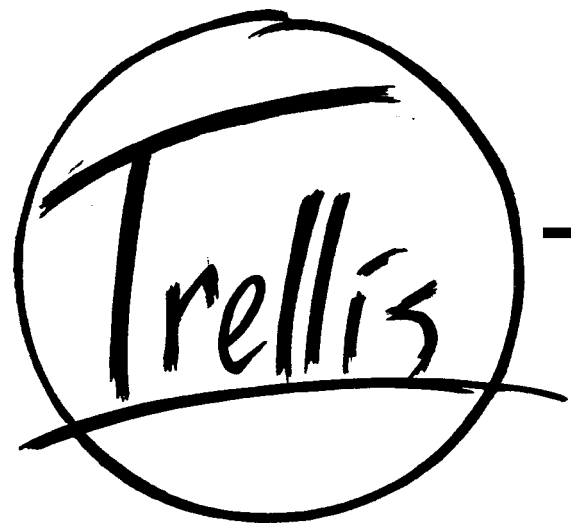
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by Denise Raimi
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And – The Roosevelt Island Day Nursery was born!

In 1976, a group of Roosevelt Island parents worked together to start a much needed pre-school on the Island. For the first three years, the school functioned under the umbrella of the Good Shepherd School and went through three different directors. In 1979, the school was incorporated into the Roosevelt Island Day Nursery (RIDN). Sara Seiden, who had run her own nursery school in Forest Hills, and was running a day-care center at Kingsboro Community College, saw an ad in the newspaper looking for the right person to run this promising school and help Roosevelt Island build a community. Sara was the person chosen to make this a real community school. For 26 years she ran RIDN. She was essential to making the school into the wonderful place it still is today.

The Day Nursery was first located in 545 Main Street with three classrooms, and two additional classrooms in what were then known as the Blackwell School buildings. When Manhattan Park opened in 1989, the school had seven classes. In 2000, the school moved to 4 River Road where it is today.

Since the school opened in 1976, Roosevelt Island has been through many changes, and there have been other options for day care and pre-school, but the Day Nursery stands out from anything else the Island offers. Its quality is certified by the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC), whose accreditation indicates that RIDN meets the highest standards in cognitive, emotional, and social development. The head teachers are all highly qualified; each holds a Master's degree in early childhood education.

The Day Nursery's goal is to help children grow emotionally, socially and intellectually in a warm and supportive environment which reflects the best features of our ethnically, culturally, racially, and economically diverse Roosevelt Island community. The aim of the pre-school program is to provide young children with well-supervised work and play experiences that will prepare them for kindergarten. The school also provides guidance in assessing any special needs children might have.

RIDN continues to thrive due in part to much support over the years from the Roosevelt Island Operating Corp (RIOC) and the Agency for Children's Services (ACS). A large part of the school's funding



Taylor Jones as a three-year-old Day Nursery child, and at 18; he graduates in June from the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts.

Throughout this article, people in uncaptioned photos are identified by text adjacent to their pictures.

comes from Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) funding which is provided by the Department of Education. There is also added support from alumni families and friends of the Day Nursery.

Joshua Resnick started Pre-School at RIDN in 1979.

His mother, Terri Dancik, was very active in the school and had a hand in hiring Sara Sieden as the director. Josh's younger brother, Seth,



started at the Day Nursery in 1982, and their twin brothers, Jed and Micah, started in 1987. Each of the Resnick boys went from pre-school through kindergarten at RIDN.

Their father, Dr. Jack Resnick, says, "The Day Nursery was central to our lives on Roosevelt Island. Sara Seiden created a warm, caring environment that let our children thrive. Each of my four sons still counts one of his early childhood peers among his closest friends."

Joshua, now 30, is an emergency room doctor and part of a venture capital firm specializing in health care. He and his wife Elana, and their baby daughter Nicole, live in Boston, Mass. Seth, now 27, graduated in June from the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine and is currently a resident in psychiatry at Bellevue Hospital here in New York. Jed, 21, is on leave from his senior year at Brown University. He is on the road with the national tour of the Broadway musical, *Rent*, in



which he plays one of the lead roles. Micah, also 21, is also on leave from his senior year at Brown. He is working on a kibbutz in Israel.

In 1982, after researching pre-schools in Manhattan, Rita Meed enrolled her first daughter Jessica at RIDN. "Unlike most schools in New York, there was no pressure about admissions, which helped create a wonderful atmosphere," says Meed. "It was an exceptional school. They took kids from all over the world and fit them into a community." Meed remains friends today with the people she met through the Day Nursery.

When her daughter Chava was enrolled at the school in 1985, Meed remembers there being 15 countries represented in her daughter's class. "I loved the pot luck dinners where there were so many dishes from all different countries," she recalls, "and the teachers were very devoted and caring. Not to mention, there couldn't have been a better location in the world for our children's school." Now 24, Chava is teaching second grade at the Heschel School, and she was accepted for a Master's program at Fordham University. Jessica Meed, 27, got her Master's degree in public health at Baruch College, and is now a PhD candidate at N.C. Chapel Hill. Their younger brother Jonathan, who attended the Day Nursery starting in 1995, is now a

freshman at Stuyvesant High School.

Bobbie Slonevsky remembers why she sent her son Alex, then 3, to RIDN in 1982. "The school had a very good reputation, both for the internationalism, and the preparation for grammar school. They also did incredibly creative things with the children.

"I remember a project – they took the children out for a walk on the Island every day, and then they mapped out where they walked. Then, the children built a replica of the Island based on their explorations, with blocks, cardboard, leaves, etc. They even reconstructed the Tram! It was quite exceptional."

Alex, now 26, is a graphic designer working in Soho. Hara Slonevsky, 23, is completing her undergraduate degree at Hunter Col-



lege. Hara started at the Day Nursery in 1985. She still has her cookbook from the school, and she remembers making all the recipes. Hara says her favorite memory from the Day Nursery is "Mommy Marcia."

Marcia Ellis started working at RIDN as an assistant teacher in 1984, and she has been there ever since. "Marcia is such a significant part of our community. She is always cheerful and upbeat, and all the children adore her," said Lynn Marfey, the current Day Nursery Board chair and mother of Day Nursery alumni Aren, room C student Jason, and future Day Nursery student Dylan. Ellis, originally from Jamaica, had been living in Nairobi for 12 years where she began working in pre-schools when her own children were enrolled. When asked what has kept her at the Day Nursery for 22 years, Ellis replied, "I just love the environment. It's so good and nurturing. And I could never leave the children. I absolutely love each and every one of them."

Vicki Garavuso started teaching at RIDN in 1979, her first head teaching position after finishing her Master's degree in Early Childhood Education. She stayed at the Day Nursery until 1989 when she left to get her second Master's degree in Educational Leadership. Garavuso is currently working for City College at the Center for Worker Education. She is head of the undergraduate Early Childhood Program. She says RIDN is special because it really puts children and families first. "The faculty is highly educated, and they are on the cutting edge of good practice. They are consistently developing themselves and bettering themselves."

Garavuso explains that early childhood education is very differ-



Twenty years after he attended RIDN, Dagen Uhle is a 23-year-old philosophy/engineering major at the University of Colorado.

ent from other types of education, and that it is important to have teachers who are specialists in the field. "Not all pre-schools have such specialists," Garavuso states. She says she even brings her own college students to RIDN to observe "because it's so wonderful." Garavuso's own daughters, Vivianna and Peri Pignetti both attended the Day Nursery. Vivi, 25, attended the school from 1985 to 1987. She has traveled extensively in Europe, Asia and South America since graduating from NYU in 2003, and is now applying to graduate school for Psychology. Peri, 21, attended the Day Nursery from 1988 to 1991. She is a student at the University of Vermont. She is currently in Urbino, Italy studying Italian. Peri has remained close to many of the friends she made at the Day Nursery.

Valentina Lugo is one of the friends Peri Pignetti is still in touch with. Lugo remembers learning how to read while she was at RIDN. Her early education started her on her path that has led her to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) where she was granted a full scholarship. Lugo, 20, is currently a Junior at MIT. She is majoring in Aerospace/Astronautical Engineering.

Pat Sememza began teaching at RIDN in 1980, which was her daughter Adrienne's second year at the school. She had just completed her Master's in early childhood education at Bank Street College. Semenza was at the Day Nursery for 8 years. She then taught kindergarten at PS 217 for eleven years before retiring. Her retirement didn't last long, however. After only a few months, she was asked to sub for a week or two at the Day Nursery. This is Semenza's third year back at the school. "I love everything about the school," she says. "It's a wonderful place to work. I love how the teachers respond to each other, and how they respond to the children. It's a wonderful place to be."

Adrienne, 30, graduated from Laboratory Institute of Merchandising in New York. She is working for a company that gives jobs to people in need, in Jacksonville, Florida.

Ruhi Kabir, Semenza's assistant teacher in the Pre-K class at the Day Nursery, also returned after a long absence. Kabir started teaching at RIDN in 1987, the same year that her son Shahryar started pre-K.



She was at the Day Nursery for three years before her family moved to Iran and then to Europe. Kabir taught for 6 years at the International School in Vienna. In 1997, she moved back to Roosevelt Island, and returned to the Day Nurs-



Emmanuel Jackson at 3 (left). Now 21, he's working and going to college.

ery. When asked why she came back to the school, Kabir replied, "I love the philosophy of the school, and I love the people – both the staff and the families. The school is very open to new ideas, which makes it very special." Shahryar, 21, will graduate this year with a degree in economics from Hamilton College in Clinton NY.

Helke Taeger is the administrator at RIDN. She began working in the office in 1986, when her younger daughter Kitri Miller was enrolled at the school, and she has been at the Day Nursery for 20 years. "At first I stayed at the school because it was so convenient for me – with my children being at school there, and then at the public school on the Island. But I really like the work, I like the people I work with, and I really like the kids," says Taeger. "I have seen amazing changes in the school over the years; there are fewer kids per classroom, there is a floater teacher who is active in all of the classrooms, and the teachers at the Day Nursery are top caliber. In the early years, Roosevelt Island was a very exotic destination for most people (teachers), but Sara worked incredibly hard to make this a top-notch nursery school, and she succeeded," she adds. Taeger's older daughter, Piri Miller, 28, attended RIDN from 1981 through 1985. She is now attending Welsley College on a full scholarship, and will graduate next year with a degree in Psychology and Philosophy. Her sister Kitri, 23, will graduate from SUNY/Stonybrook in May with a double major in Psychology and Biology, and a minor in English. She plans to go to graduate school and get a PhD in Physical Therapy.

One of the truly unique qualities of the school has always been its internationalism. "We have had students from so many countries around the world," says Seiden. "Off the top of my head I can remember: Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Columbia, Holland, Japan, China, Korea, Morocco, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iceland, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil, Somalia, Kazakhstan, Egypt, Bangladesh, Yugoslavia, Serbia, Pakistan, India, Cameroon, Mali, Mongolia, Rwanda, Angola, Djibouti, Bolivia, Namibia, Peru, Korea, and Finland."

Alex Gherardi was enrolled at RIDN in 1988, two years after his older brother Robert started, and two years before his younger brother Sebastian started. The Day Nursery is where Alex first met his best friend, Kei Kurobe, the second of five siblings from Japan who



Proudly Counting Its Graduates in the Thousands



Sara Seiden and her successor, Diana Carr

also attended the school. In 1996, the Kurobe family moved from their apartment in Island House back to Japan. Kei missed the States and his friend Alex. In 2001, Kei moved back to Roosevelt Island to live with the Gherardi family so he could finish school. Alex, now 20, went on



to get a scholarship to the State University at Stony Brook, where he is now a junior. Kei, also 20, is currently in San Francisco where he attends a cooking college. This summer, Alex and Kei will travel to Japan together. It will be Alex's first trip to Japan.

In 1989, Jeanne Raichle, a Roosevelt Island resident, had just received her Master's degree in early childhood education when she visited the Day Nursery. She was very impressed with the school's staff, as were they with her, and she began an eleven-year stint as a head teacher there. In 2000, she went back to Bank Street to get her Master's in special education. She is now working as a Special Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT) in New York City. Raichle has been in a lot of pre-schools in the City, and according to her, RIDN is one of the best. "The curriculum is developmentally appropriate, which is so important, and not so common. And the teachers know how to talk to the children. They allow them to be who they are, yet they appropriately challenge them."

Dana Cotton (then Harary) grew up on the Island, and in 1989 she

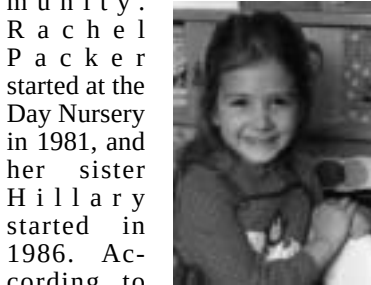


Dounya Dironi at 3 and at 20 as a sophomore at Clark University.

began her career at RIDN as an assistant teacher and a floater. She taught at the Day Nursery for six years, except for one year at another school. She came back when she realized, as she puts it, "No place could compare with the Day Nursery." She remained at the school until 1995 when she gave birth to her first daughter. Cotton returned to RIDN in 2001 when she started an Introduction to Pre-School program. This program continues to run at the Day Nursery. Cotton's two daughters, Alexis (11) and Victoria (8) also attended RIDN for Pre-School. Cotton is currently enrolled in a dual degree graduate school program working towards a Master's degree in Science Education from Bank Street College and a Master's in Social Work from Hunter College School of Social Work.



Barbara Packer said that she moved to Roosevelt Island so her children could live in a neighborhood where they could walk to school and develop relationships with the other children in their community. Rachel Packer started at the Day Nursery in 1981, and her sister Hillary started in 1986. According to Barbara, "The school provided a warm and supportive environment where the children could explore their worlds. It gave them a great head start." Rachel, 28, is a graduate of the University of Miami. She is living in San Francisco and works for the Lymphoma/Leukemia Soci-



ety. Hillary, 23, graduated from the University of Michigan, and is living in New York and working for the Civilian Complaint Review Board.



"We are the people who stayed on Roosevelt Island and decided not to move largely because we studied pre-schools and didn't find any with the same quality and the same level of diversity as RIDN," says Julia Ferguson, who was active in the school along with her husband Jerome Dutilloy, while their two daughters attended from 1998 through 2005. Sarah, now in middle school at the United Nations International School (UNIS), benefited greatly from her two years at the Day Nursery, according to her mother. "She loved the music and movement classes with Sarah Seiden and Debbie Orenstein, and is still active in music today."

Laura, in kindergarten at UNIS, "showed a quantum leap in her development," according to Ferguson. "In fact, she was helped in learning French because of the open and active awareness of home languages fostered in the school." Ferguson is grateful to the Day Nursery because "it was an international pre-school that gave both of our children a very solid foundation in early language development, social and emotional skills, pre-reading, pre-writing and number sense. It also provided a community base of friends with whom my children will be in touch throughout their lives."

Ellior Marcus started at RIDN in 1986. In 2002, her Day Nursery class had a reunion. Her mother, Nurit Marcus, had this to say, "The Roosevelt Island Day Nursery, with its gentle and soft approach and teaching techniques, provided a safe and enriching learning environment in which the children strengthened their ties. As parents, we were happy to have such a solid social and educational base for our children. No wonder that so many of these young adults are still close friends today!" Ellie, 23, after serving in the Israeli army for two years, is currently completing her degree in Political Science at Tel Aviv University.

Buffy Kommatas has been a teacher at RIDN since 1990. She began as a part time floater when her daughter Demie began her second year at the school. In 1991, she



started as an assistant teacher. "I have so much fun working at the Day Nursery," says Kommatas. "It's so great to watch the children grow, and see them all grown up on Main Street."



Nana Paturet (two left photos) at 3 and 15 (in the 10th grade at Laguardia High School) and Marius Paturet at 4 and 14 (Stuyvesant High, 9th grade).



Diana Folla at 3 and 14 (left photos) and Leo Folla at 3 and 11. She's on her way to Laguardia Performing Arts High; he's in the 5th grade at Lower Lab School.

ment (i.e. teaching teachers) at Bank Street College for four years. "I love the diversity of the Day Nursery," says Britton, "and I love the sense of community between the staff and the families. It's really something."

Britton's assistant teacher in Room B is Sali Pitanga. Pitanga started at RIDN in 2001 as a substitute, and then she taught the Introduction to Pre-School class. In 2002 she worked as a floater. She left to teach at a school in Manhattan for a couple of years, and was very disappointed. "I thought all schools were like the Day Nursery. Once I left, I realized I was wrong. When I heard the Day Nursery had an open position for this year, I came right over and begged to come back," she says with a laugh. According to Pitanga, the diverse population

See Day Nursery, page 12



A 2002 Reunion of former Day Nursery kids. Most were born in 1983 and came into their first Day Nursery class (top photo) already familiar with one another from their experience in the Terrific Two's coop and the toddler program. The Day Nursery provided a safe and enriching learning environment in which they strengthened mutual ties. Front row, left to right: Christina Kirkman, Ellior Marcus, Sara Vehling, Elizabeth Daley, Elena FitzPatrick. Standing, left to right: Ilana Blumberg, Kitri Miller, Marc-Henri Jean-Baptiste, Hiro Nishimori, Eytan Alon, David Cohen, Lauren Kanfi, Niel Herman, Peter Kaplan.

Congratulations,
Roosevelt Island Day Nursery
from the
Slonevsky Family
Bobbie, Alex and Hara



Rivercross
congratulates all our
Day Nursery graduates!

Congratulations and a
Heartfelt Thank You to
The Day Nursery
And especially to
Sara Seiden
Your impact on this Island’s children –
and especially on my four boys –
is immeasurable
Jack Resnick, M.D.

Day Nursery from page 11
at the Day Nursery and the teaching philosophy can’t be matched anywhere. “I am so excited to be back here.”
Debra Orenstein started a movement program at RIDN in 1995, the same year that her son Seth Vacirca was enrolled at the school. “The teachers were certified and dedicated and they were so wonderful,” Orenstein remembers. “They were my colleagues as well as my son’s teachers. The care that went on there – heart, soul, body and kishkas was above and beyond the call of duty.” Orenstein also remembers how the school incorporated families into their curriculum, “I’ll never forget my Italian father-in-law coming to the school to make pizza with the kids. My son never forgot it either.”



The current director of RIDN is Diana Carr. According to Orenstein, “Diana is incredible. I worked as a SEIT at the school more recently. Diana’s energy level never wanes. I have seen how the teachers have each child work to their own full potential. Every child is on task with what is developmentally appropriate to them. I can’t imagine a better place to send your child.”
After eleven years as a teacher at RIDN, Carr has taken on the additional responsibility of director. It is the first time anyone has held both positions. Carr says it is both challenging and gratifying. “Sara created a very strong school with a very strong program. There is a feeling at the school that everyone is committed to the school and committed to the families. It’s a wonderful feeling to

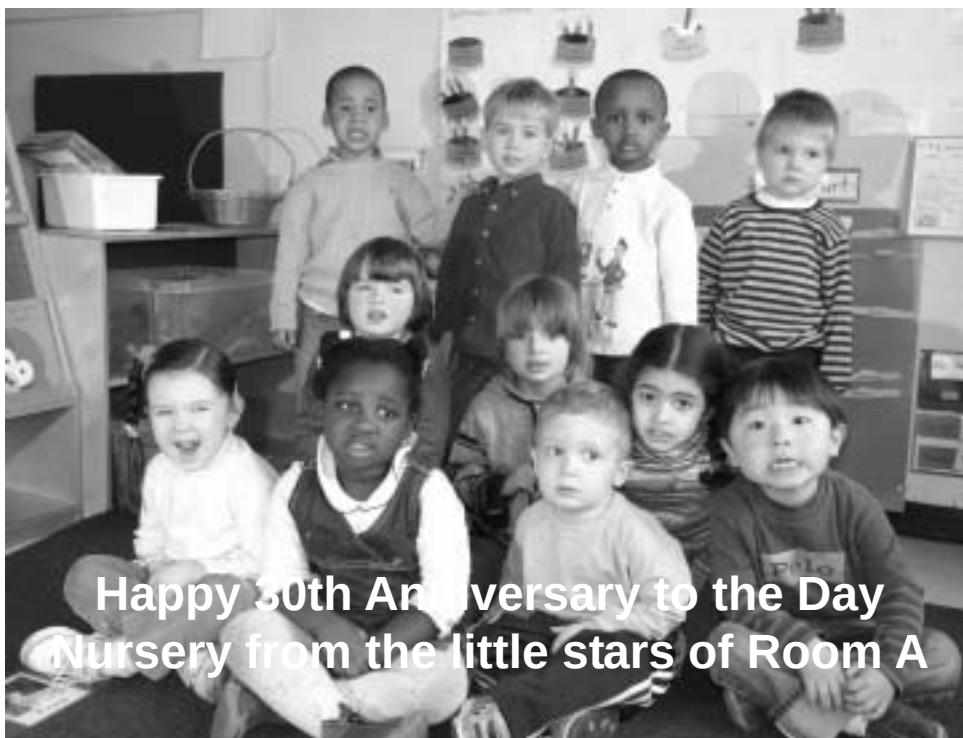
come to school where the things that are valued are the things that should be valued,” she says. “And the community is unique. There are people from all over the world who come together and are so open to the community experience.” Carr says that by the time their children finish the program, people really feel connected to the school. She says it feels really different from any other school. “Parents are constantly commenting on how wonderful it is that their children make friends with children from so many different cultures.”
Carr also acknowledges the support that has been given to the school, “We understand that it’s become more and more difficult for families to afford quality programs for their young children, and it’s heartening to know that there are organizations such as RIOC and our other funding sources that recognize that need and are willing to make a commitment to the children.”
Since RIDN opened in 1976, there have been approximately 2000 children enrolled in the school. For 30 years, families have joined together in this unique community that the Day Nursery has provided. There are such wonderful memories of all the alumni, and such warm feelings toward the school and the staff. Their hope is that the Day Nursery will continue to bring a wonderful educational experience to families for many, years to come.



Illece Shaw at 3, and at 20 as a sophomore at Laguardia Community College.

It’s been a privilege
to have been the director of the
Roosevelt Island Day Nursery
and to have worked with the
wonderful families of Roosevelt
Island for 26 years.
Sara Seiden

Congratulations to the
Roosevelt Island Day Nursery
on its 30th Anniversary!
The Foley-Silbert Family



Congratulations,
Roosevelt Island Day Nursery!

30 years

Joan Pape and Dagan Uhle

Congratulations to the
Roosevelt Island Day Nursery
on its 30th Anniversary!

Katherine Teets Grimm, M.D.
and Staff

*Congratulations to the
Roosevelt Island Day Nursery
on its 30th Anniversary!*

Lawrence Itskowitch, DDS

Congratulations to the
Roosevelt Island Day Nursery
on its 30th Anniversary!

Past Board Members
Mary Cestare
Virginia Chambers
Jérôme Dutilloy
Marie-Pierre Falys
Julia Ferguson
Kristen GoldMansour

We congratulate the
Roosevelt Island Day Nursery
on its 30th Anniversary!

The Parent Board of Directors:

Joe Bell	Lynn Marfey
Maria Elisaia	Deena Merlen
Marcia Ellis	Denise Raimi
Iris Ewing	Annelies Traas Scicluna
Chehrazad Mamri Kaplan	Lucie Umulisa

Housing from page 1

contribution to the GDP proportions, a sale to Sheldrake should be disallowed.

State Assemblymember Pete Grannis, who represents Roosevelt Island and has been a determined advocate for residents and their affordable housing here, signed on to that argument. Other politicians backed the position, as well.

A Grannis aide, Tony Morenzi, says, “When you go back to the GDP, there’s no more room [in the equation] for market-rate units.” That’s because over 800 units in Manhattan Park rent at market rates. The GDP allowance for market-rate units – 25% – would allow for just over 800. What’s more, Eastwood has now left the Mitchell-Lama program and the landlord intends to rent vacated units to newcomers at market rates. In short, the GDP’s allowance for 25% of Northtown units to be market-rate units has been used up.

“We want all that information on the table so everybody knows what they’re dealing with – so everybody knows what they’re doing,” Morenzi told *The WIRE* on Wednesday. “That’s the unknown factor: What happens after you come out of Mitchell-Lama, in terms of the GDP? We have no answers from RIOC or from DHCR.”

Tenant leaders speculate that Grannis has dug in his heels on the issue and put the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) on notice. Its head, Judith Calogero, chairs the RIOC Board of Directors. Asked whether Grannis has pressured Calogero to stall its own or RIOC’s negotiations with tenants, Morenzi says, “We have no control over her.” Even so, tenant leaders are convinced that the Westview letter and Grannis’s stance have become a giant shadow over tenant negotiations with RIOC on an extension of the ground leases in a tenant purchase of the buildings.

The attorney for Island House, Stuart Saft, says he can’t understand the worries about the GDP. “If Island House’s deal with Lucido goes through, every single tenant will have the opportunity to buy their apartments or remain as a rental tenant, paying what they’re paying now. The deal doesn’t change the demographics or percentages in any way whatsoever. This has nothing to do with the GDP. We structured the deal so that every solitary tenant could remain in place.”

Asked about the potential for the allowed percentage of market-rate apartments to be exceeded by likely market-rate sale of apartments, Saft said, “In order to fund the cost of carrying the apartments of the tenants who aren’t going to buy and want to remain at their current rent, we need to sell 25 vacant apartments at market, which is money that will then be used to fund the shortfall on those other apartments. We are talking about only six percent of the apartments. That doesn’t significantly change the Northtown percentages.”

Saft says the position Morenzi outlined “says that we’re not going to let this plan, which allows some 375 tenants to become owners, go through. Come June 30, these 375 will no longer be protected by the Mitchell-Lama law, and I want to know what any public official will [then] do to protect these tenants. I know what I’m doing – I’m attempting to make it possible for them to buy their homes at a reasonable price or be able to continue to rent. But the alternative is that every one of these tenants will have to move come July 1.”

Saft continues, “Let’s come up with a solution to this problem.

Ignoring it is not the solution. It’s not going to go away. They’re betting on a court determination and there’s no certainty that they’re right. If Tony Morenzi is wrong in his interpretation of the GDP, 375 tenants are out on the street. Their blood is on his hands.”

There’s also the problem of decay. The buildings are now a generation old – leaky in places and in general need of repair, updating, and some aggressive upkeep. That work, goes the tenant argument, is not possible under the restrictive provisions governing Mitchell-Lama buildings, but would become possible with income from fees charged against apartments being sold at market prices. Some see “privatization” (the term applied to removal from Mitchell-Lama because building mortgages are then privately held rather than State-backed) as a “save the building” necessity.

In the past, the GDP has been amended by agreements signed by the RIOC president and the City’s mayor. That could happen again – the 25% limit on market-rate housing in Northtown could presumably be increased or swept away with the strokes of two pens. But Morenzi speculates that Mayor Mike Bloomberg, who has been working to increase the City’s stock of affordable housing recently, would be loathe to agree to such a change. Others suggest that Governor George Pataki, who is believed to favor privatization, might be able to persuade the mayor that he should go along with moderate-income tenants wanting to claim their piece of the American homeownership dream.

Time may be a factor. While Pataki might back any RIOC move to loosen up the 25% market-rate clamp, there’s no guarantee the next governor will do so.

But would anyone take action if market-rate rentals or purchases drove Northtown’s percentage of market-rate units over 25%? How would the GDP provisions be enforced? Since the GDP is a contract between the City and the State, only the City would have contractual standing to sue. Would the City sue if the number reached 26%? Or 27%? Or wait until it reached 30%? Would it seek a restraining order to prevent market-rate rentals of vacated apartments in Eastwood? For the owner of Eastwood, where government funds supplement tenant payments for some 80% of the units, it wouldn’t matter a great deal.

For Island House and Westview tenants attempting to privatize, however, the limits in the GDP – and even a slight potential for legal action against market-rate sales and rentals – could hobble attempts to get the mortgages necessary to buy either building.

In short, it appears a change in the GDP could be necessary to remove legal clouds over any significant number of market-rate sales or rentals at Island House and Westview – and therefore necessary to set the financial table for tenant ownership.

RIOC

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, in its role as developer and manager of the State’s project here, is also a factor likely to delay privatization efforts past Island House’s end-of-April deadline.

There’s RIOC’s queasiness over setting upon a course that could open the door to litigation, but that’s not all. When negotiating real-estate deals with developers or potential purchasers, RIOC asks those developers to pay RIOC’s legal costs. In a letter to Charles Lucido, RIOC has billed his owner groups for over \$32,000 in legal

costs the Sheldrake Organization had agreed to pay. RIOC has also asked for an additional \$50,000 against which future legal costs will be charged. The Lucido-IHTA letter of intent passes such costs on to the tenant group. With its own legal fees to pay, and no resources to draw on except tenant contributions, Island House isn’t able to raise the \$50,000 to support RIOC legal work, leaving aside the question of the short time available and the “blank check” nature of the demand. (Rivercross has also been asked for such funding before RIOC will discuss privatization.)

Saft, the attorney for Island House tenants, told *The WIRE* on Wednesday, “I’m rather shocked that something that certainly is in the best interests of the Island and the residents in Island House is being held up by the inability of the tenants to pay almost \$100,000 before RIOC will even speak to its constituents.”

Tenants point out that RIOC has several lawyers on staff, and that RIOC staff is ultimately paid by Island residents. They suggest that RIOC should not be asking tenants to fund work RIOC is in business to do. On Monday, resident RIOC Board member David Kraut agreed to suggest to the RIOC administration that the fees be collectable on the back end of the deal – after mortgage money and other funding for the deal is in place.

Whether RIOC will ultimately accept a deal excusing the owner (and through the owner, the tenants) from an immediate advance payment for legal fees remains an open question as this issue of *The WIRE* goes to press. So far, RIOC’s negotiators have shown a reluctance to allow the tenants’ attorney to attend discussions without having its own legal representation at the table, and won’t send its attorney to the table without an advance payment. RIOC therefore makes the controlling decisions on whether meaningful RIOC-tenant negotiations will happen, and no deal is likely to get written without the lawyers at the table.

Kraut expressed concern about the timing. “The Island House [leadership group] and the owner agreed to an extremely accelerated schedule, as these things go,” Kraut told *The WIRE*. “It called for a major, complicated, multi-year, multi-million dollar ground lease to be negotiated within 90 days, among at least three and as many as seven major stakeholders, all fielding a full battery of lawyers. I thought the agreement was an unrealistic proposition when I heard of it, and said so publicly. Be that as it may, RIOC is committed to the protection of residents during the conversion process, and so I shall do everything I can to accomplish the April 30 deadline.”

Meanwhile, judging by the reports of resident leaders who have tried to move things forward, there’s at least some measure of disarray at RIOC. Leaders of the Island House Tenants Association (IHTA) said that, at one point, RIOC President Herb Berman referred IHTA to real-estate consultant Paul Mas. (As part of a overall real-estate advisory and sales deal, Mas has agreed to advise RIOC on deals for the residential buildings.) Apart from difficulties in simply getting a return phone call from Mas, the tenant leaders say that at least one RIOC lawyer has told them that Mas is “too far ahead of the Board” on real-estate discussions and that it might be unwise to rely on his representations in meetings.

Frustration

Tenant leaders like Dorothy Davis, who heads IHTA, have found the delays frustrating – even

threatening, given the short time remaining before a deal is to be in place.

It’s not certain that Lucido, representing Island House owners, will grant an extension of the LOI past its April 30 expiration. That means that every lost day in which negotiations don’t occur, or the project doesn’t move forward, produces increased worry that the deal will die. Lucido says he has potential outside buyers interested in the properties. The fear is that with a coming June 30 expiration of a one-year waiting period (triggered a year ago by notice to DHCR that Island House would be removed from Mitchell-Lama), Lucido will privatize and sell to one of them. If that happens, a new owner would be free of DHCR supervision and free, presumably, to raise rents and take a chance that the GDP will be altered or that other action or inaction will allow the increased charges.

Tenants have hoped that wouldn’t happen, of course. One possible barrier has been the expiration of the ground leases in 2028. The question goes, *Why would a buyer take on a building whose ground might become unavailable in 22 years, when financing would have to run for 30 years or more?* There are two possible answers, says Lee Edelman of IHTA. One is that a buyer may have adequate resources to do the deal without a mortgage, and be willing to take a chance on getting a ground-lease extension. Another is that if a new owner doubled rents, he could make an adequate return on the investment even if the land became unavailable in 2028. That means a new owner could take on the buildings without any guarantee regarding extension of the ground lease. Edelman speculates that once a new owner had possession, sometime between now and lease expiration, a lease extension would be worked out. On that basis, he says, a well-backed buyer could take the chance: Buy the corporation that owns the buildings, increase rents to insure a good return regardless of the 2028 expiration of the lease, leave ground-lease negotiation for later, and then consider an extended ground lease a bonus when and if it is negotiated with some future RIOC administration.

Island House leadership is so frustrated at the lack of progress, and so feeling the threat of the April 30 deadline in the LOI, that the IHTA chair, Dorothy Davis, wrote angrily to DHCR Commissioner Judith Calogero last week. She quoted a January 28 *WIRE* editorial which encouraged progress on the deal, saying, “It can be done,” *The WIRE* opined, suggesting that “there’s reason to believe RIOC will do all it can.”

“Apparently not,” says Davis’s letter. “After meeting with Herb Berman [and Mas] on February 22 and being told by both of them that RIOC is very much interested in working something out... and then meeting with Mas on February 24, we haven’t moved a hair’s width forward toward consummating this deal!” The letter goes on to note, in capital letters, “the clock is ticking.”

“We can’t even bring our attorney to the table,” Davis’s letter continues. “RIOC won’t allow [that] because they are tying us up with a financial issue that has nothing to do with us” – that issue being the requirement that the building owners pay RIOC’s legal costs. “This means that RIOC expects the IHTA to pay \$50,000 in order for our attorneys to come to the table to even start talking... Yet we are the ones who are supporting the salaries of all government officials and entities involved!”

Davis’s letter to Calogero, cop-

ies of which went to a battery of public officials and to *The WIRE*, goes on to criticize Assembly-member Grannis. “We have not heard a word of outrage from our State government representatives.” It says Grannis skipped a scheduled meeting and delegated Morenzi, to meet with IHTA officers, and, “All Tony Morenzi could talk about was the GDP and how there is no precedent.” It continues, “He knows RIOC is stalling us.”

To Calogero, Davis wrote, “We have even tried to set up an appointment to meet with you, as well. We were told you couldn’t do so during the month of April – knowing full well that our deadline is April 30. How preposterous!”

Davis’s letter raises the spectre of the June 30 privatization date. That is tied to the April 30 expiration of the LOI because there are additional steps necessary after RIOC gives the OK to a ground-lease extension: A tax deal with the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC), a mortgage, and then a month of resident discussion and education before a vote.

\$81,000,000

Westview’s situation parallels that of Island House, though it is running behind its neighbor building. Its Task Force has no letter of intent with Lucido, and no agreed-upon price. At Westview, there is a concern that the price IHTA has agreed to, \$81 million, could influence the price Westview tenants will have to pay for that property, when Sheldrake initially was to pay just \$93.5 million for both buildings.

The \$81 million figure in IHTA’s LOI with Lucido is not necessarily final. At \$200/square foot, substantially above the \$121 Sheldrake was to pay Lucido’s investors. Nothing in the letter is necessarily binding, because it’s just an agreed-upon framework for a process leading to a deal. But it does stand out when held against a total purchase price for both buildings of \$93.5 million (later, with amendments, \$98.5 million).

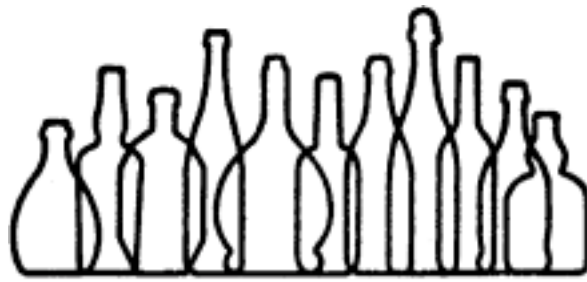
Geof Kerr, the IHTA’s numbers man, told *The WIRE*, “We’ve had hints from RIOC that we might be paying too much.” Indeed, there are some indications that RIOC is reluctant to push the deal along because of the price.

But there may be reasons for the \$32 million difference having to do with an existing mortgage and other factors. Lucido told *The WIRE* that the market had changed upwards and that the price to Sheldrake reflected seller expectations that Sheldrake could put a final deal together rather quickly, whereas a greater span of time will be required in a sale to tenants, which also involves greater risk of failure. Attorney Saft points out that the \$81 million price is much lower than what Sheldrake was asking tenants to pay.

April 30 Target

As for Island House’s April 30 deadline, Lucido told *The WIRE* this week that he’s “prepared to work with the tenants in every reasonable way to accomplish what we mutually want to accomplish.” But he points out, “There are parties out there interested in buying the property. We are most interested in seeing the tenants do well, but if any of the major stumbling blocks don’t get resolved... I’m concerned that if it is too difficult for the tenants to get it done, we may be back in the posture of looking at one of the many [potential buyers] we’ve been contacted by about the property.”

Ruefully, he adds, “We’re also saddled with litigation. Unless it goes away, we are prevented from doing anything with anyone.”



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Letters

from page 2

I welcome Baskin Robbins/Dunkin’ Donuts! The gallery can move to a space that has been empty for years, since its primary use is meetings and to display art. The art is great – love walking by – but the Gallery closes early, as does everything on the Island except Gristede’s. For those of us who get home after 8:00 p.m., the Gallery is just space wasted. Move the gallery to one of the other buildings.

Also: I cannot believe how bad the Island merchants are at marketing their services to visitors. On any given weekend morning, we have hundreds of tourists to the Island that only come to ride the Tram, see the view and maybe take a stroll around. Wouldn’t it be smart if Trellis put a sign at the Tram, “Come have brunch and see the Island,” or when the sports teams come to the Island, that there was some place they could eat and have a drink before they leave?

One of the problems with this Island that I love is that residents who have been here for so long have neglected to see the world change around them. They haven’t lived anywhere else; so why would they want things to be better? Newer, hip, more convenient, more services, *any change!* The other problem is those who have moved to the Island this decade: Most are U.N., so they don’t really get involved; or reside in the two hospital-worker buildings and never voice an opinion because they know they are not staying long, either.

Instead of some waste-of-time campaign against coffee and ice cream, how about a campaign to get rid of RIOC and the company that is deciding who gets leases for commercial property? Maybe if I paid half the rent that I do, and was able to park wherever on the Island that I wanted, or at least park on the [Motorgate] roof for less money, or if anyone ever gave me a straight answer about how to join the Garden Club, then I, too, would really care about a gallery that ten people use.

Also, this fear of losing the income diversity on the Island is ridiculous. Look around – most residents have been living in their apartments and co-ops for years and those rents were set *many, many* years ago and never reevaluated based on growth of income or children moving out. So you tell me how it is possible that a rent-subsided tenant can buy a building, or the owners of the co-op drive very expensive cars. We have a lot of expensive cars in the garage and, trust me, they are not all residents of Manhattan Park or Southtown buildings. So the economic diversity is going away, but the ethnic and cultural diversity is here to stay.

Karen L. Martinez

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

I do not think that a Dunkin’ Donuts/Baskin Robbins ice cream store is appropriate. As a physician and professor of medicine seeing at first hand the huge increase in obesity and diabetes in our population, particularly in our teenagers, why a government agency would increase the exposure of the young to such peril is beyond me. To add junk-food shops to the Island shows crass indifference to the documented health perils and it places a need for rental income above peoples’ need for good health habits. You have it in your power to do good as opposed to the expedient. Why burden the young with the ultimate consequences of a decision that should weigh heavily on your conscience? I believe you know better.

Alvin I.Goodman, MD

Editor’s note: Two letters e-mailed by the following writer were recently caught in *The WIRE*’s spam filter. While we don’t normally publish two letters from one sender in an issue, both are published here because each was delayed. As a general rule, *The WIRE* publishes all resident letters received, unless the senders are unknown (see *Letters Policy*), they are libelous, contain an inappropriate personal attack, or otherwise fail to meet reasonable standards. **When received by e-mail, letters are acknowledged.** If you send a letter and receive no acknowledgment, please call the newspaper: **212-826-9055**.

To the Editor:

I want to bring to your attention my thoughts regarding the recent Rivercross lottery process. At this point, this whole thing looks to me (and possibly to others too) like a big scam, just intended to make somebody rich.

Let me explain: In an article in *The WIRE* last fall, we found out that about 1,800 applications were sent out to those interested to apply. If we assume that only 1,000 applications were returned accompanied by the \$150 money order, simple math tells us that this process raised \$150,000. Now, we all know that the lottery was organized for about 400 new places on the waiting list, which means that those who did not win supposedly got their money back.

However, to my amazement, *all* the persons I know who applied to the lottery, did win this, which is against all mathematical and probabilistic laws. Don’t you think this is strange, to say the least? Not to mention the way results were announced (I did call the office several times, being told that the results will be sent out before Thanksgiving, then after Thanksgiving, then around Christmas, etc.)

Now, figure this: All the winners did receive letters telling them they won, with two numbers on them, which made it kind of impossible to determine your place on the waiting list. I did call the Rivercross office and I spoke with Mr. Mitchell Hammer, who explained to me that the two numbers on my letter (and on everybody’s letters) do not mean anything, because the company who organized this lottery “screwed up” and, in reality, the order on the waiting list, is a third number, totally different, but unknown to the winner. Then I wrote (certified mail return receipt) to the Rivercross Office, requesting a letter with my correct number on the waiting list at the present time. A few days later, Mr. Hammer called me and advised that he cannot send me a written piece of paper with my number on the list, as I requested him to do, and as I believe I should be entitled to, considering that I did pay \$150 for this. He did tell me over the phone my current number on the list, which sure enough is totally different from the two numbers on the letter I received when I was told that I won the lottery.

So what is this all about? Why this total lack of transparency? Why did *all* applicants win the lottery (this is how it looks)? Who cashed in all the money from the applicants? What is going to happen with the winners, when the building will go out of the Mitchell-Lama program, which seems to be about to happen very soon?

Mircea Nicolescu

Mitchell Hammer, Rivercross General Manager, responds:

Whereas everyone this gentleman knows may have been selected in the lottery, there were many who were not. A total of 575 applications were received and 365 were selected and placed on the waiting lists.

The \$150 fee, which was approved by DHCR, went to pay for the services of Election Services Corporation, the company that ran the lottery, and to pay for the newspaper ads. If the building ever privatizes, the Board at that time will have to decide if they want to refund these fees. My guess is that they will.

The letters contained fill-in-the-blank lines for two numbers. One was simply an identification number which would aid the person and us in finding them on the automated list, and one was the position in the lottery. When they filled out the letters, they switched the numbers. As a result, I got numerous calls asking “how could my position on the list be 1,242?”

In addition, some of our wait-lists still have people on them from previous lotteries. Example: Although the letter may have said you were the fourth person selected in the 2005 lottery, you may actually be in tenth position on the list for that apartment size because we still have six older names ahead of you. This led to some confusion.

As per DHCR, the list and its contents are not available. All we can do is tell someone on the list their position.

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

I want to bring to your attention an incident which took place at Sportspark Swim Center, Saturday, March 11, around 2:00 p.m., which involved what I assume are two RIOC employees.

Essentially I went there with my ten-year-old son and a few friends (all Island residents) and their children – Mrs. Ana Papp and daughter (8), Mr. Radu Bass and sons (7 and 9), and Mr. Foued Aouchette and son (9) – to enjoy an afternoon at the pool. Our day was completely ruined by those two individuals in charge of the pool at the time.

Here are the facts:

At the pool’s door, we had to purchase tickets. I did purchase one for my son and me (I intended to swim), and my friends wanted to purchase tickets for their children only, because none of them (my friends) intended to swim. The lady with the tickets indicated that it is mandatory that everybody purchase a ticket regardless if he/she uses the pool or not.

In other words, my friends were not allowed inside the pool, to sit on the benches there and watch their children swim unless they bought tickets. The lady invoked the regulations, which were clearly printed there, and which did not specify that non-swimmers had to purchase tickets. She indicated that those were the directions she received from her management, and later indicated that it is impossible to monitor who is going to use the pool or not, therefore, everybody must pay. Needless to say, the pool was empty at that time.

The regulations displayed at the entrance clearly specify that “All infants (3 and under) must have one-on-one supervision with a paying adult” while “all children (4-17) must be accompanied by an adult, with no more than 4 children per 1 adult” – no mention whatsoever about paying for somebody who does not use the pool. It is important to mention that another friend (Mr. Vladimir Moraru) was already swimming, and he previously of-

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

I am depressed. Once again RIOC has not missed an opportunity to swallow its wing-tips and further alienate this community. I’ve just come from the March 30 “special” or “emergency” RIOC Board meeting convened in part to address the proposed Baskin-Robbins/Dunkin’ Donuts use of the space currently occupied by the RIVAA art gallery. Hundreds of irate, sign-carrying residents attended to protest the eviction of this facility built with the sweat-equity of the artists collective that founded it, only to learn that the question was tabled for another time. What a brouhaha! What a waste of stomach linings!

We learned of this turn of events only three days before when the meeting agenda (that included a Board vote on the lease) was posted, so the RIVAA leadership was truly blind-sided. We learned that RIVAA President Tad Sudol was “unavailable” to meet with sales rep Paul Mas, a semantic choice of words that sounds as if Tad declined that meeting. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth; he was simply out of town on business.

RIOC pays for (I should say, Roosevelt Island residents pay for) the services of a public relations consultant, Robert Liff, who might have suggested an alternative to this precipitate agenda item, had he been consulted. Of course, only common sense, not a PR guru, was needed to see that delaying the vote, perhaps to the April 6 RIOC Board of Directors meeting already scheduled, might have allowed time for Mr. Mas to meet with the RIVAA leadership and perhaps produce some consensus with that group. But no, RIOC again demonstrated its tone-deaf capacity to further widen the rift when a touch of (un)common courtesy could have saved the day.

Herb, you’ve said that your job doesn’t have a PR component, but I think you’re wrong. The Roosevelt Island Chamber of Commerce surveyed the community some years ago as to the perceived needs for goods and services on our commercial strip. Why don’t you and Mr. Mas consult that survey? Wouldn’t it be putting the horse before the cart to find out first what Islanders need and try to fulfill those needs rather than opening the bidding to any and all comers? RIOC and this community will certainly not always agree but when it’s possible, easy, and in everyone’s best interests to communicate in a timely and meaningful way, why not do so? Until that day, tempests in a teapot like today’s meeting will continue unnecessarily and I will remain depressed.

Matthew Katz

To the Editor:

I write as a member of RIVAA, hoping that our gallery may continue to occupy the space that it has now. Much love and work has gone into making this a first-class art gallery, with a growing list of admirers from all over the City as well as Roosevelt Island, along with being a space that has hosted many community events of interest to all residents.

The question remains, how to make Roosevelt Island a destination? The RIVAA Gallery is already a destination for some visitors. There are some other aspects of Roosevelt Island and some recent and not-so-recent events that have changed the impressions that the Island gives to visitors and residents alike. With the demise of the lovely open field that was previously in front of the old Nurses’ Residence, and which is now covered over with the Southtown development, a visitor’s first impression is no longer, “Wow! Open areas and trees! Kids playing soccer!” but instead is pretty much just “more buildings.” That’s OK, of course, but the open-spaces-and-isn’t-this-place-great-for-the-kids atmosphere has gradually declined and another, different personality is taking shape, with both advantages and disadvantages.

Additionally, with the disappearance of the little bakery, the pizzeria, and the sports bar, and, oh yes, the marveous and top-notch Friday and Saturday night outdoor music at Trellis, the community now has become totally just a bedroom community. Nice place to maybe... bicycle. Again, that’s OK, of course, but it has made this place not even a *little* competition for an East Village or other Manhattan neighborhood treat for the eyes, ears, and all senses. Will Dunkin’ Donuts change that? I doubt it. (And, in major disagreement with many folks I know, that proposed ugly piece-of-cement Roosevelt monument that has been promoted for Southpoint will never bring people here in droves.)

Roosevelt Island residents often have their fantasies about this place, but sadly, in my humble and sometimes misplaced opinion, *Dark Water* got it kinda partially right.

Rebecca Musgrave

ferred his help in supervising the children, therefore the four-children-one-adult rule was met; we were two paying swimming adults, and 5 paying children).

After useless arguments, Mr. Bass decided to pay, the other two persons did not, and all of us paying adults and children went inside.

It is important to mention than none of us received a ticket / receipt for the money paid, and I assume that is illegal. It is everybody’s guess how much of the money charged that day (or any other day) goes to RIOC, or in the pockets of the individuals in charge of the pool, or in anybody’s pockets, since there is no control of the money received from swimmers.

Another big surprise inside the pool: The lifeguard was limping due to a surgical procedure on his leg, thus making it impossible for him to save somebody’s life if an accident occurred. This is not acceptable; it’s illegal to have a crippled lifeguard on duty.

A few minutes later into our swimming session, the lifeguard became

violent, started screaming at us, and decided that we had to leave the pool. After telling us, “You don’t tell me how to run my pool,” he announced, “I quit,” went inside the office, leaving the pool unattended, got dressed, and then went outside to the hallway while swimmers were still in the pool, unattended. At this point, the lady came inside, telling us, “I have no lifeguard, I close the pool, you have to leave.”

There was another man with a child and a lady with her daughter swimming in the pool at the time. We all had to leave, after just seven minutes in the water. Some of us got our money back, some did not.

We all demand an explanation about how a situation like this is possible, that RIOC review its regulations and the staff’s rude attitude and disrespectful behavior towards customers. Is this the way RIOC wants to treat Island residents?

Mircea Nicolescu, Radu Bass, Ana Papp, Vladimir Moraru, Foued Aouchette

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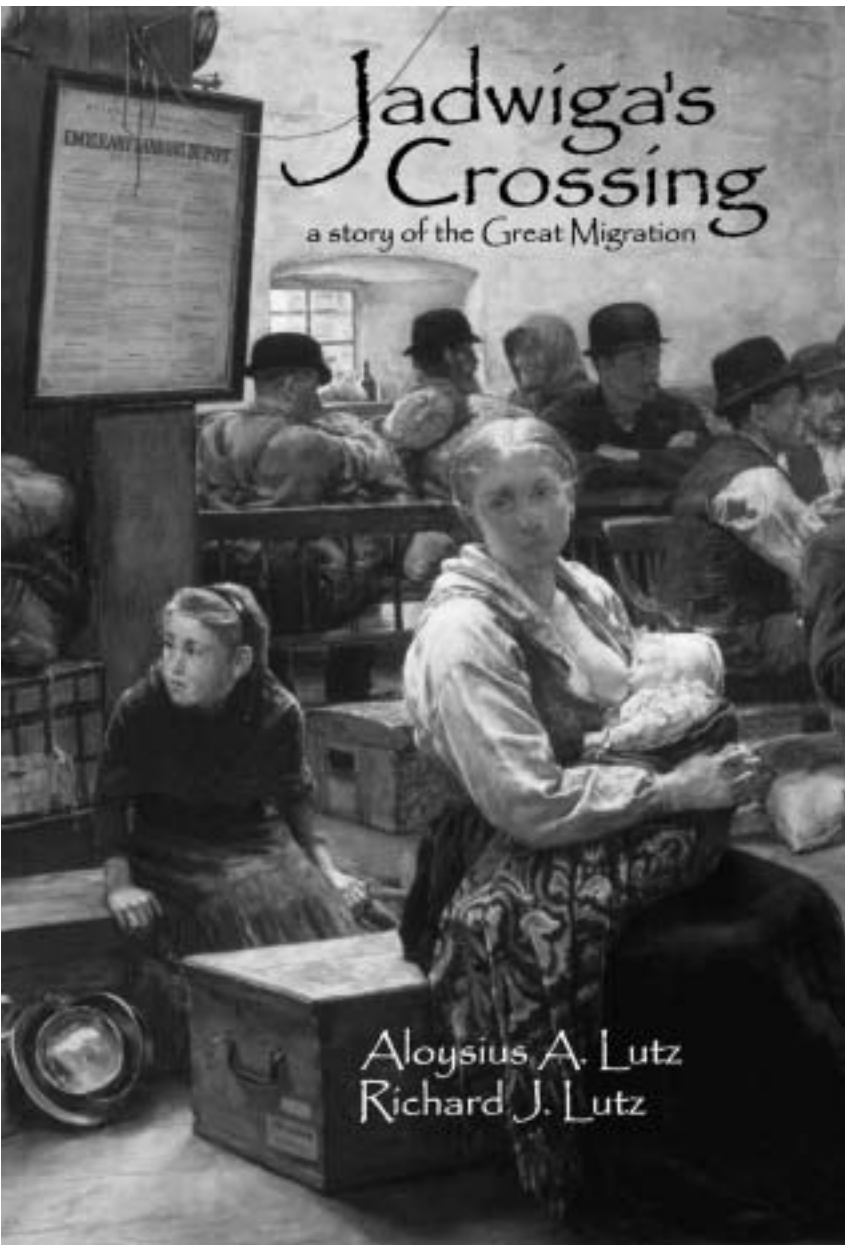
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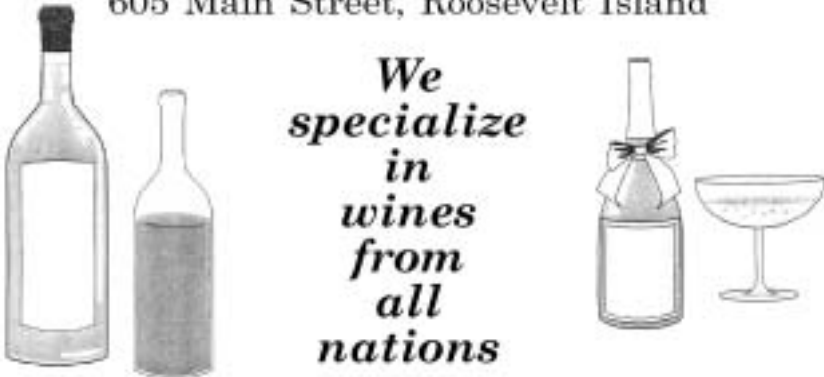
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