

Next issue
in 4 weeks:
Sat., Aug. 30

The Main Street WIRE™

28th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



In recent years, cormorants have been seen diving for fish around the Island. The population now seems to have grown. Islander Richard Marshall took these shots just off the tip of Southpoint Park.

Racquet Club Considering Plan for a Sports and Social Center at Tram Plaza

by Dick Lutz

Skip Hartman has an idea for Roosevelt Island that turbocharges his enthusiasm, which normally is merely *supercharged*. He'd like to expand his Roosevelt Island Racquet Club into a sports and social center that could ultimately cost as much as \$180 million.

Actually, it's more than an idea. It's a *plan* – a plan that he's spent about \$85,000 working out with the help of a New York architectural firm, Peter L. Gluck & Partners, and other specialist firms.

The plan, which consists of several stages, phases, options, and alternatives, would involve RIOC's Sportspark property in the relatively near term, and the Steam Plant in the longer term, looking

forward the greater part of a decade. It could get started with as little as an expansion of tennis facilities, and grow to include an indoor/outdoor swimming pool and – *perhaps*, one day – a small conference hotel.

While it's premature to guess at the likely impact on transit, most of the current Racquet Club traffic is against the morning flow – that is, *to* the Island in the morning.

Hartman's plan is contained in a feasibility study forwarded to RIOC President Steve Shane on July 7 and made available to *The Main Street WIRE* during an extended interview eight days later.

"I think what this study indicates is that this property, developed in the right way, could become a major social center, not just for Island residents, but for a larger group of people. Right now, it's a tennis center, but not a social center even for the people who come from Manhattan and Queens, because we have no place for them to hang out." The problem, he says, is space.

But during the administration of Governor George Pataki, with Herbert E. Berman at the helm of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, the land on which the Racquet Club sits was put into play by real-estate consultant Paul Mas, as RIOC struggled to evaluate its holdings and the remaining Island properties that might be developed. "Paul Mas called me and told me, 'Don't be surprised if you see a map circulating with your property up for sale.'"

Mas's property offering suggested that the Sportspark, the Steam Plant, and the Racquet Club's tennis bubbles might be replaced by something like a "big-box retail" operation – perhaps Best Buy or P.C. Richards. Islanders were alarmed by the thought of all that traffic, but the ideas devel-



Skip Hartman

oped no traction in development or mercantile circles.

Meantime, something was happening to indoor tennis in New York City – particularly Manhattan. "Tennis is disappearing in New York City because of development," Hartman told *The WIRE*. "The land is just too valuable. If you look at a chart of tennis development from 1970, you'll see that in 1970 there were 20 or 25 indoor courts. By 1985, it had peaked. There were about 150 serving the New York market. Today, there are something like 90. It could grow again, but it'll never get back to 150." The Roosevelt Island Racquet Club is absorbing indoor players squeezed out of the Manhattan market.

"The Sportspark land is one of the last parcels of land where tennis and a social-recreational facility may actually be the highest and best use of the property – not just a placeholder until something better comes along," Hartman said. The architects and engineers hired to flesh out the details of his idea and consider their feasibility, told

See **Racquet Club**, page 6
Illustrations, pages 6 and 7

Developer, Returning After Ten Years, Wants to Build the Island's South End

by Dick Lutz

A developer claiming to have won the right to develop portions of Roosevelt Island south of the Queensboro Bridge has provided *The Main Street WIRE* with a plan that envisions replacing Goldwater Hospital with high-rise apartment buildings. It's an ambitious project that, if fully realized, would stretch from the Tram station into Southpoint Park. It's called *The Riviera at Roosevelt Island*. The developer has registered rights to the *Riviera* name for waterfront



Stephen S. Jemal

communities, and says he has his financing in place.

But in another *Riviera* project, in Brooklyn, the developer is being sued by a business associate, and he himself recently threatened a lawsuit against a blogger.

Stephen S. Jemal, principal in SSJ Development, LLC, of Brooklyn, was last seen on Roosevelt Island in 1998 and 1999, during and after the RIOC administration of Dr. Jerome Blue, putting forward a plan for a twin-tower Marriott Hotel on Southpoint Park. (See nyc10044.com/wire/1819/wire1819.html.)

"I won the RFP in May of 1998," Jemal told *The WIRE* in a telephone interview last week. But RIOC President Steve Shane says there was no RFP (Request for Proposals) issued in 1998 – that Blue's administration actually issued an RFQ (Request for Qualifications) – and neither a "winner" nor an approved plan emerged from the process. (Shane comments further in his column; see page 2.) And *WIRE* archives from the period indicate that the RIOC Board never voted on the plan.

More recently, the RIOC Board,

its chair, and RIOC have repeatedly assured residents and politicians that all of Southpoint Park is set aside as parkland. In addition, the Trust for Public Land (TPL) is now preparing for park development, with intense help from RIOC. A portion of the TPL project includes land included in the SSJ plan as "Development Site 3."

Jemal told *The WIRE* that he has not been in touch with RIOC President Shane. "I was hoping that he would reach out to me, and that the community would reach out to me, as well," Jemal said in a telephone interview.

Jemal's claim came to light after the *RooseveltIslander* blog (RooseveltIslander.blogspot.com) quoted from a *Daily News* report about an SSJ waterfront development in Brooklyn called *The Riviera*, and

See **SSJ**, page 15
Illustrations, page 14

WIRE Mounting "Pioneers Project" to Capture Memories of Island's Early Days as a Residential Community

The Main Street WIRE plans to document the early residential history of Roosevelt Island from the viewpoint of the families who "pioneered" the community in the 1970s.

This "Pioneers Project," which will lead up to the Island's 40th anniversary as a New York State housing project on what had previously been known as Welfare Island, will consist of several sessions of reminiscing by early residents, and will be published as a series of four-page "take-outs" in the center section of the newspaper.

Early residents will be asked to provide photographs and other memorabilia to illustrate the articles.

The project will be conducted by former *New York Times* reviewer Jennifer Dunning, who will edit transcripts of the sessions for *WIRE* publication.

Early residents interested in participating, or residents who wish to nominate early residents for participation, are asked to call *The WIRE* at 212-826-9056 or e-mail editor@MainStreetWIRE.com with contact details (name, phone number, address, and e-mail address, if any). The newspaper is also soliciting involvement through fliers and posters, starting in the coming week.

After publication in *The WIRE*, the sessions and

photographs will be compiled into a book, expected to be on sale in time for observances of the 40th anniversary.

"This project was originally conceived in August of 2001," said *WIRE* editor and publisher Dick Lutz. "It went on the shelf in September of that year when the Twin Towers were attacked. Since then, there has not been enough person-power available to mount the project. I'm delighted that Jennifer Dunning has agreed to play the major role in assembling these sessions, moderating them, and editing them for publication, both in *The WIRE* and as a book. The 40th anniversary provides a terrific incentive to get the job done. I regret that, over the past eight years, the Island has lost so many of the pioneers who could have contributed so much. It's important to get it done now, before more first-hand memories are lost."

A Manhattan Park resident, Barbara Allen, has volunteered to provide additional management experience to the project.

The first sessions will be scheduled for September and October. A video component is being considered, with a view toward making a tightly edited and highly visual version of the sessions available for showing on the Island.

Briefly...

- Tenants at **Island House** and **Westview** are gearing up for a major protest August 12 and 13 at 4:00 p.m., when DHCR will conduct hearings on proposed rent increases in the neighborhood of 75%.
- Housing advocate and historian **Richard Wade**, one of the Island's very early residents, died last week. See page 17.
- RIOC will hold a **public hearing on the Tramway upgrade** plan on Tuesday (August 5) at 10:00 a.m. in the community room at 4 River Road.
- RIOC and Public Safety will be giving away **bike helmets** to the community's kids on Thursday, August 14, in Good Shepherd Plaza, from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. All kids have to do is bring a bike and a parent.
- RIOC President Steve Shane has had an appraiser work up fair-market-value estimates on **Main Street's storefronts** – the beginning of a process that could eventually result in some new businesses moving in. The process is extended, Shane says, because of the requirements of the Public Authorities Accountability Law.
- Four **subway station escalators** – between the street and the lower mezzanine – will be out of service for a month starting Monday, August 25. The two escalators that remain will be running in the up direction.
- The **Fourth of July Fireworks** at Southpoint produced a profit of \$12,857 for RIOC, on ticket sales of \$104,708. Expenses ranged from \$1,000 for a fire-breathing act to \$9,399 for chair rental. (Details are on line with this issue of *The WIRE* at nyc10044.com.)

The Editorial Page

Again, Transit

It's clear that Roosevelt Island's toughest problem – near-term, medium-term, *and* long-term – is mass transit. That may be true of New York City as well – and, quite possibly, the region as a whole. But *our* focus is Roosevelt Island – and the special problems *we* face as a small island community dependent upon our neighbor islands and the surrounding area for a completeness of life in culture, commerce, and political strength. That dependency requires ready and reliable mass transit. And in New York City, when you talk mass transit, you're talking the MTA and the subway system that ties it all together. For us, it is more important than it is for almost any other part of the city that the MTA receive proper funding, get its act together, and start working on the solutions we need to keep Roosevelt Island from becoming a failed footnote in the grander metropolitan story.

We already know that our Tramway will always have capacity limitations. As important as it is as a symbol and a supplement, it is not the solution we will need when Southtown is built out, with the buildings under construction now occupied, and three more to come that haven't yet broken ground. Ferry service, when it comes, will be nice. But it will be expensive even if heavily subsidized, and as much as it will help, it is also likely to be a supplement, at best.

And buses unavoidably go the long wrong-way-around, an inappropriate solution, especially at rush hour.

The long-range plans for Roosevelt Island are not limited to the final build-out of Southtown, as problematic as that will be transit-wise. Southpoint Park will generate traffic. We may get an FDR Memorial. And we know that New York City is contemplating a somewhat distant future replacement of the Goldwater

Hospital structure with housing that is likely to be well over 1,000 apartments (perhaps over 2,000). And this issue of *The WIRE* anticipates something, over the next decade, that could turn the Sportspark area into an attractive haven, both social and sports.

Long-term, yes. But mass transit solutions – subway, that is – require planning that looks forward by *decades*. That's planning that is not likely to keep up with the pace of profit-driven commerce.

It means that some serious consideration of the long-range future is needed – perhaps a mass-transit summit that considers what will be needed decades hence, what it will cost, how to fund it, and where to place it on the ladder of priorities demanding both attention and money.

It's not just a Roosevelt Island problem. But it is a greater problem for this Island community than for the rest of New York City. If this community is to remain viable and flourish, some official *attention must be paid*, and soon.

DL



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We are continuing our love affair with mountains this summer. Sherie, her sister Judy, and I just returned from the Green Mountains of Vermont, and we are taking off for Denver and the Rockies in just a few weeks. We had hoped to attend the Democratic Convention there, but both timing and tickets proved to be insurmountable obstacles. I expect we'll watch Obama's "stadium" speech on television, along with just a few billion others.

Summer Screenings

Did you attend the second of the RIOC free outdoor movies? *A Bee Story* was great fun for children of all ages. For a few minutes prior to the start of the featured attraction, I thought that the Roosevelt Island film, *A Necessary Music*, would be included as a selected short subject, a characteristic of moviegoing in my youth. It was not to be, however, and the few minutes of the opening scene acted as a teaser for the full showing, promised for the August 9 screening. Come see your neighbors do their thing.

RIOC's Erica Wilder again has planned this summer pleasure. Erica has just started some time off for maternity leave, and we offer her, her family, and her daughter-to-be our very best wishes.

Semi-Annual Rant

Usually, twice a year, the garbage on our sidewalks and promenades gets to be more than I can bear. There is no way RIOC can keep up with the mess, and I don't see either the NYPD or Public Safety issuing summonses for littering. We do many things better than the rest of the Big Apple. Must dumping trash on our streets be one of them? RIOC invested \$80,000 in those ubiquitous red trashcans, and we can help justify the expense by using them.

At these times, I again offer a modest proposal: What if every Roosevelt Islander – man, woman or child – made it his business to pick up one (just one) piece of trash *every* time s/he sets shoe leather on Main Street? Just one potato chip bag from in front of the M&D Deli. Just one ATM receipt from the NYNB Bank. You get the picture. We can make a difference when we work as a community; the February RIOC

Start of August 2008, mid-summer.

1. **Board of Directors:** Next meeting September 11 at 4:30 p.m., town hall meeting to follow. No word yet from the Mayor's office as to the remaining two seats. A full agenda is anticipated after the summer hiatus, with many capital projects ready to go into execution after RFPs and much business of RIOC.

2. **Southpoint:** (a) **Renwick Ruin:** Work by the outside contractors is making good progress, removing the most endangered portions of the walls, numbering the stones, and palletizing them for the future. Shoring and interior work to follow. (b) **Green Rooms/Wild Gardens:** The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is completing the environmental analysis to permit step one to go forward. Should be on Board agenda for September 11 meeting.

(c) **FDR Memorial:** The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute (FERI) group, having secured additional financing commitments from the city, is seeking further approvals from the state and federal agencies having jurisdiction. FERI has requested RIOC to consider the proposal, again, before FERI spends lots of money on the application process, and to have the Board issue a conditional, non-binding resolution of willingness to proceed, in the same manner as previously utilized for the Octagon, Southtown, and other Island developments with identifiable progress milestones. The item should be on the Board's September meeting agenda.

3. **Tram:** RFP was published in June and a bidders' conference held July 15, 2008. The usual expected suspects appeared. Responses are due September 2. Empire State Development Corporation's Board approved funding of the state appropriation of \$15 million, and a public hearing thereon is scheduled for Tuesday, August 5, in the 4 River Road community room at 10:00 a.m.

4. **Park and Restroom facilities:** The facilities to be located at Lighthouse Park are ordered and in fabrication, but timing of delivery and installation has slipped because the Department of Transportation (DOT) work on the bridge requires special permitting to deliver the heavy load. We have ordered the engineering for site preparation and made arrangements for porta-sans to be available in the interim. We are increasing the frequency of trash collection, especially on weekends, to try to keep things orderly. Cooperation in using the receptacles will be a big help.

Board election is a case in point. So, will you join me and help keep our community clean?

RIOC Board Election

Speaking of the election, you may have assumed that the story was over, with the appointment of three elected Islanders to the RIOC Board of Directors in June. Not so. The New York City Office of Appointments continues to interview the remaining winning candidates, prior to the Mayor offering his recommendations to Governor Paterson for two further appointments. The summer is a slow season for the State legislature, but the new Senate Majority Leader, Dean Skelos, has announced a special Senate session on the morning of Friday, August 8, and, should the Governor approve the Mayor's recommendations by then, it is just possible that the Senate will vote the necessary ratification of the appointments. The Senate is unlikely to meet again until the winter. Therefore, there are time constraints on Hizzoner Mayor Mike, and the head of the Committee on Appointments, Andrea Davis, should they choose to meet this deadline. Rest assured that the group who brought you last winter's election is monitoring events with great interest and anticipation.

Emergency Planning

Guess what: Roosevelt Island is... well, an *island*. We have no fire department, no NYPD precinct, no emergency rooms, and few emergency resources should the unthinkable happen here or in the city. Islanders have come together to create a CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) secondary response team and, also, a better-trained and -equipped primary response group called RISAR (Roosevelt Island Search See **RIRA Column**, page 12

5. **Octagon Ferry Dock:** Studies for required work and permitting under way. We met with city officials at the Economic Development Corporation and DOT to determine what modifications to the piers might be necessary to accommodate. Initial environmental assessment papers received, and are being studied in preparation for next steps with the Octagon developer and the city to include designating RIOC as the lead agency in the environmental review process.

6. **Fourth of July:** Big success, by almost all accounts, for the more than 5,000 who came under RIOC's auspices. Kudos to Mike Smith, Erica Wilder, Public Safety, Grounds, and the rest of the events staff for bringing it off. Could have had better weather, but even RIOC can't control everything! Erica has now gone off on maternity leave, and we wish her well in this new endeavor. The responses to questions at the *Ask Erica* site on RIOC's web page are being handled on an interim basis by Erica's assistant, Karen Webb.

7. **Playing Fields:** Engineering work on replacement of drains and playing surfaces is going forward. Should be on the Board's 9/11 agenda for an RFP. Please note that after October 1, the scheduling of off-Island groups for use of the fields has been rearranged so that only Islanders will have access to Capobianco Field for open unscheduled time during the week.

8. **Open Swim:** RIOC has hired a lifeguard for the new Open Swim hours at Sportspark, Monday to Friday, 6:00 a.m. to 9 a.m. So far, a small crowd is showing up, including several seniors. Please come and enjoy doing your morning workouts in the pool.

9. **RISAR:** RIOC staff met with officers of Roosevelt Island Search and Rescue (RISAR) and representatives of the State Department of Health. In response, RISAR revised its request to be only for activities for which it is presently licensed, submitting a budget request of \$6,500 from Public Purpose Funds. RISAR has submitted a letter of approval from See **RIOC Column**, page 12

The RIRA Column



Matthew Katz, President
Roosevelt Island Residents Association
e-mail: MatthewKatz@verizon.net

The RIOC Column



Steve Shane, President
Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation
e-mail: SShane@RIOC.com

COMING UP

– This Weekend –

Between the Notes, an exhibit of Buddhist instruments, including bamboo flutes, windchimes, and bells, with traditional music notation; prepared by Gerald Starlight, continues through Aug 7 in the display window, New York National Bank, 619 Main St. ▷

Open Swim Hours, 6am-9pm daily, for all ages, Sportspark. Adults \$5, children \$3, seniors & infants, free.

Inventions continues at Gallery RIVAA through Aug 24. Gallery hours **Sat-Sun** 11-5, **Wed & Fri** 6-9. ▷

Music Outdoors at Trellis, *Tex Allen*, tonight (Sat Aug 2), 6-10pm.



– The Coming Week –

Tramway Hearing, Tue Aug 5, 10:00 a.m., Community Room, 4 River Road.

Music Outdoors at Trellis, *Nick Russo Trio* (classic jazz), **Fri Aug 8**, 6-10pm.

Music Outdoors at Trellis, *Jon Christopher* (smooth jazz), **Sat Aug 9**, 6-10pm.

Outdoor Movie, *Monster House*, Sat Aug 9, 8:20pm, Firefighters Field (near the Tram). Blankets, lawn chairs, and picnics welcome.

– Future Weeks –

Island House Rent Determination Hearing, Tue Aug 12, 4-6pm, Good Shepherd Community Center.

Westview Rent Determination Hearing, Wed Aug 13, 4-6pm, Good Shepherd Community Center.

Music Outdoors at Trellis, Fri-Sat Aug 15-16, 6-10pm.

Book Discussion – *Book of Illusions* by Paul Auster, Thu Aug 21, 6:30pm, New York Public Library Roosevelt Island branch. Books available at the branch library here.

Music Outdoors at Trellis, Fri Aug 22, 6-10pm.

Shakespeare in the Park, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Sat-Sun Aug 23-24, 4pm, Eastwood Amphitheater.

Music Outdoors at Trellis, *Jim Malloy Trio* (classic jazz), **Sat Aug 23**, 6-10pm.

Music Outdoors at Trellis, *Jon Christopher* (smooth jazz), **Fri Aug 29**, 6-10pm.

The Main Street WIRE – Next issue (summer schedule) **Sat Aug 30**. (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an *AddMe* message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Advertising Deadlines:** Ads in the paper, Thu Aug 21, decision on circulars/inserts for *The Bag*, Tue Aug 26; they are due Thu Aug 28. **Additional issues in 2008:** Sept 13, 27; Oct 11, 25; Nov 8, 22; Dec 6, 20. **2009 schedule:** Jan 17, Feb 7, 21; Mar 7, 21; Apr 4, 18; May 2, 16; June 13, 27; July 4, 25; Aug 29, Sep 12, 26; Oct 10, 24; Nov 7, 21; Dec 12. **2010:** First issue early in January; thereafter, every two weeks. **News phone, 212-826-9055**; urgent matters, **917-617-0449**. **Advertising**, display and classified: **212-751-8214**. **Music Outdoors at Trellis, *Art Lillard*** (classic jazz), **Sat Aug 30**, 6-10pm.

Residents Association Common Council meeting, **Wed Sept 3**, 8pm, Good Shepherd Community Center (lower level); meetings are open to all, and begin with an opportunity for residents to address the Council.

Music Outdoors at Trellis, *Kristin Seely* (smooth jazz), **Fri Sep 5**, 6-10pm.

Music Outdoors at Trellis, *Sherry Wagner* (classic jazz), **Sat Sep 6**, 6-10pm.

RIOC Board Meeting, Thu Sept 11, 4:30pm, Good Shepherd Community Center. Town-hall meeting, at end of formal session, for resident comments and questions.

Music Outdoors at Trellis, *Kristin Seely* (smooth jazz), **Fri Sep 12**, 6-10pm.

Book Discussion - *Catch 22* by Joseph Heller, Thu Sep 18, 6:30pm, New York Public Library Roosevelt Island branch. Books available at the branch on the Island

Music Outdoors at Trellis, *John Christopher* (smooth jazz), **Sat Sep 24**, 6-10pm.

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.

Senior Center

Monday
9:30, **Hawaiian Hula**
10:30, **English as 2nd Language**
11:00, **Tai Chi**
12:30, **“Oldies” Movies**
6:00, **Yoga**

Tuesday
9:30, **Get Stronger Bones**
10:30, **Blood Pressure**
10:30, **Shoppers’ Bus**
2:00, **Bingo**
2:00, **Paint & Sculpt**
7:30, **Games (RISA)**

Wednesday
9:30, **Yoga**
10:30, **Computers**
10:30, **Shoppers’ Bus**
7:00, **Pokeno (RISA)**

Thursday
9:30, **Get Stronger Bones**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
11:00, **Gardening**
12:30, **Movie**

Friday
9:30, **Yoga**
10:30, **French Class**
1:00, **Bridge**
7:00, **Games (RISA)**
Saturday
7:30, **Bingo (RISA)**

Special Events
Stop ‘n’ Shop, Tue Aug 5, noon
Flea Market, Sat Aug 9, 9am-5pm
Aqueduct Flea Market, Tue Aug 12, 11am
Atlantic City trip, Tue Aug 19
South Street Seaport, Thu Aug 21, 11am
Flea Market, Sat Aug 23, 9-5
City Island, Tue Aug 26, noon

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

Letters

To the Editor:

Like many people on Roosevelt Island, I have questions and concerns about our transportation issues, but nobody ever seems to have the answers. Then last week, not once but *twice* as I was running to the F train, I bumped into Mr. Cryhten Langhorne from the MTA. He’s the superintendent in charge of approximately 13 subway stations between Queens and Manhattan, including Roosevelt Island, and he had all the answers.

I asked him about the escalators – for example, when they’re off and we’re climbing the steps to get home, why does it take so long to restart them? He said that, once an outage is reported, a safety protocol must be followed, and it takes time. That makes sense – safety first.

I honestly didn’t have a clue when we talked about the pigeon problem around the turnstiles. He explained the complications involved in resolving that – working with animal-rights organizations, etc., but they’re aware of it and trying to find a solution.

We also walked outside the Roosevelt Island station, where I pointed out that, every time it rains, the water runs off the roof and lands like a little waterfall on your head right where they sell newspapers every morning, directly in front of the entrance to the station, and you always get soaked. Again, unless you live here or commute here, there’s little chance you’d know about some of these things.

So, after 12 years on Roosevelt Island wondering who do we talk to at the MTA, for the first time ever I was really impressed by Mr. Langhorne because he recognizes we live in such a unique place, an Island in the middle of the East River in New York City, with its own specific issues.

Finally, he gave me his direct number and permission to share it with others on Roosevelt Island in case anybody else wanted to contact him about anything else: Cryhten Langhorne, **718-334-8426**. He’s a really busy person and can’t always return all calls immediately, but does get those messages and does appear to care.

Kurt Wittman

To Public Safety Chief Guerra:

I want to thank Public Safety for help in getting me back to my apartment. I am a disabled person whose electric scooter was damaged by riding on the walk on West Drive by Motorgate.

Since I cannot walk, Officer Cortez responded to a call made by a RIOCI employee whose name I did not get. Officer Cortez immediately put his bike in the bus garage and pushed me back to my apartment.

I congratulate the office for dispatching the officer in a timely manner. He showed me care and compassion, and the ability to analyze the situation quickly and act on it to my full satisfaction.

God bless Officer Cortez.

Jim Bates

Dear Mr. Bates:

Thank you for your e-mail. I always enjoy receiving e-mails illustrating the courteousness and professionalism of our officers. The officer who assisted you was Officer Wilson Toro. He is one of eight officers recently trained in Bike Patrol. I’m glad he parked his bicycle and was able to help you. Rest assured he will be advised of your e-mail.

Keith Guerra

Director of Public Safety

To the Editor:

This summer we have been troubled by some young girls who frequent the Toddler Playground in groups of four or more.

My little granddaughter was told to get off, and then the girls took over the swings. When my daughter-in-law protested, the girls told her that this was New York City and “we have no rules.” They also made remarks like, “This is a free country so rules are made to be broken.” When I was there and told the girls that they should not bully the little kids, they told me that they would tell their mother about me, then went away on their bicycles.

Sometimes they are accompanied by a woman who told me that she was a nanny. Mary Poppins was quick to spring to the defense of the girls and joined them in their verbal attacks.

Something should be done to prevent large children from taking over facilities designed for much younger kids.

Diana Keyt

To the Editor:

On the Fourth of July at 11:00 p.m., driving home with my family, and I had the very unpleasant experience of being denied access to my home by NYPD because they were letting off Roosevelt Island all the cars of people who attended the fireworks show.

Together with tens of other very frustrated residents, I had to wait on Vernon Blvd. for about 45 minutes to an hour. It was almost midnight when we were finally allowed to park our cars at Motorgate.

It is extremely important to mention that cars were coming off the Island, one lane of the Roosevelt Island Bridge, going to the Island, was completely open, free, and unused – just *blocked* by NYPD, which later opened that lane.

That being said, I want to express my frustration (as well as that of fellow residents who experienced the very same unpleasant situation) over the extremely poor management and organization of the fireworks event. I assume that the main responsible party for this was RIOCI, together with the City and NYPD.

It is understandable that RIOCI wants to make money (to fund their fat paychecks) by charging extravagant ticket prices for an otherwise free event, but it is not understandable that this event was organized carelessly, deeply and greatly disturbing the life of Roosevelt Island residents.

This was rude, unprofessional, and disturbing for all those who had to wait on Vernon Blvd. to go home at such a late hour.

Mircea Nicolescu

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters of local interest to the community, and to/from officials. Requests for *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*. Recommended method of submission: E-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com or submit on a CD left at the desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. If you e-mail, *expect a confirming response* and, if you don’t receive one, *resend* and call 212-826-9055 to alert us that it’s been sent. Alternatives: Typed copy left at 531 Main Street; allow extra time for typesetting. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered, if brief. We are not able to take telephone dictation of letters. All letters subject to acceptance and editing for length and clarity. Recommended maximum length, 350 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

To the Trellis Waitstaff:

I missed you during the recent closure. And I know you suffered along with us as we were finding our #1 lunch-dinner-and-after-meetings hangout closed for too many days.

So, for the month of August, I’m going to double my tips, and I hope others will join me in doing so.

I missed your courteous and prompt service, your friendly smiles, and those second and third cups of coffee that magically appear just when they are needed. I hope a couple of weeks of double-the-tips will help you know that I and your other patrons really appreciate you.

David Bauer

To Trellis:

Welcome back! As a longtime resident and patron of the diner, I think we have been friends long enough that I can say... get it together!

It’s time for you to take a step back and think about how you will move forward in serving your dedicated patrons in the future. There are obviously inherent problems going on in your kitchen and restaurant in general. As a regular customer, I can appreciate how hard it must be to meet the needs of this diverse community. Granted, the Health Department can be particularly strict, but that can’t be used as an excuse because we all deserve a healthy and safely-made meal, no matter where we eat.

This is your time, Trellis... your time to show your customers and your employees that you are dedicated to us all, our safety and well-being, just as you have shown in the past with your warm ads and open doors. It’s time for you to do the right thing. The economy has been challenging, we can all relate to that, but I think I can easily say, that you have to take it to the next level. No one will argue with moderate price increases if it means that the money will be used to *upgrade* the kitchen and food... it will come back to you four-fold.

With the influx of new residents, the demand for a quality diner is greater than ever.

The residents of Roosevelt Island deserve better. If people are willing to pay for sushi, we certainly can pay a couple of dollars more for a great burger that is made in a safe place and served by lovely people.

Good luck...we will all be watching.

Cynthia Schultz

To the Editor:

This is to support Robert Chira’s perceptive and well-detailed transit commentary (*The WIRE*, June 28), which we think is an urgent concern to all the residents of Roosevelt Island, and to those contemplating residing here with us. We believe the reason prompting those responsible for the projected building of three more towers in Southtown is simply thoughtless greed, without concern for Roosevelt Island’s entire community. Without a firm, detailed commitment by the MTA to resolve the issues described by Mr. Chira, it is worse than senseless – it is totally irresponsible to go ahead with the construction of further residences on the Island.

Marvin & Irene Mondlin

Letters deadline for August 30 issue: Tuesday, August 26. After deadline, letters considered on a space-available basis.

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Available for Residents
Permitted Out

OCTAGON							
	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
10am							
11am							
noon							
1pm							
2pm							
3pm							
4pm							
5pm							
6pm							
7pm							
8pm							
9pm							
10pm							

FIREFIGHTERS							
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7pm							
8pm							

Sportspark and Playing Fields Fill out application available at rioc.com/generalapp.htm. No permit needed, and no charge, for groups of 15 and under, but permit holders get priority on a reserved field. To check field availability and permit fees, call Donna Masly at 212-832-4563.

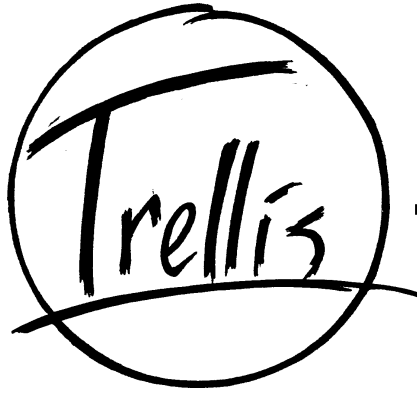
Octagon Park Tennis Courts Annual-permit form at rioc.com/2008/tennisrules.htm. Adults, \$100; age 18 and under, \$10; 62 and over, \$20; Instructors, \$200. Courts open year-round at dawn and close at 10:30 p.m., seven days a week.

Barbecues Free, first come, first served. To plan a special event using the grills, at Lighthouse Park, Southpoint Park, and near Manhattan Park, call Donna Masly at 212-832-4563. Permit and fee required for reservations.

Diving for Breakfast



This cormorant was on the hunt in the east channel early Wednesday morning.



To My Good Friends on Roosevelt Island

Unfortunately, there have been some terrible rumors traveling around the Island with regard to the Health Department inspection that took place recently at Trellis. I want to address your concerns directly.

As the owner of this restaurant for more than 12 years, I have dedicated myself to providing a clean, affordable, and friendly environment for all residents. Upon my arrival here, I found myself quickly falling in love with the beauty of the Island, and with its residents. The Island has become my home, and the residents have become my family.

Throughout the years, I have continuously supported every organization, young and old, and have enjoyed doing so. However, today it saddens me to think that anyone would

believe I could be capable of putting this *family* I have adopted in danger. Under no circumstances, intentionally or unintentionally, would I ever harm any member of my Roosevelt Island family.

I have been in this business for 37 years, and have provided a clean and safe restaurant to you for 12. ***In those 12 years, there has never been a case of anyone getting sick from the food provided by Trellis.*** Please be assured that I will continue to provide a safe and clean restaurant for the people of this community. I ask that you place your faith in me.

All of us at Trellis appreciate both your business and your loyalty.

Kaie Razaghi and the Trellis family

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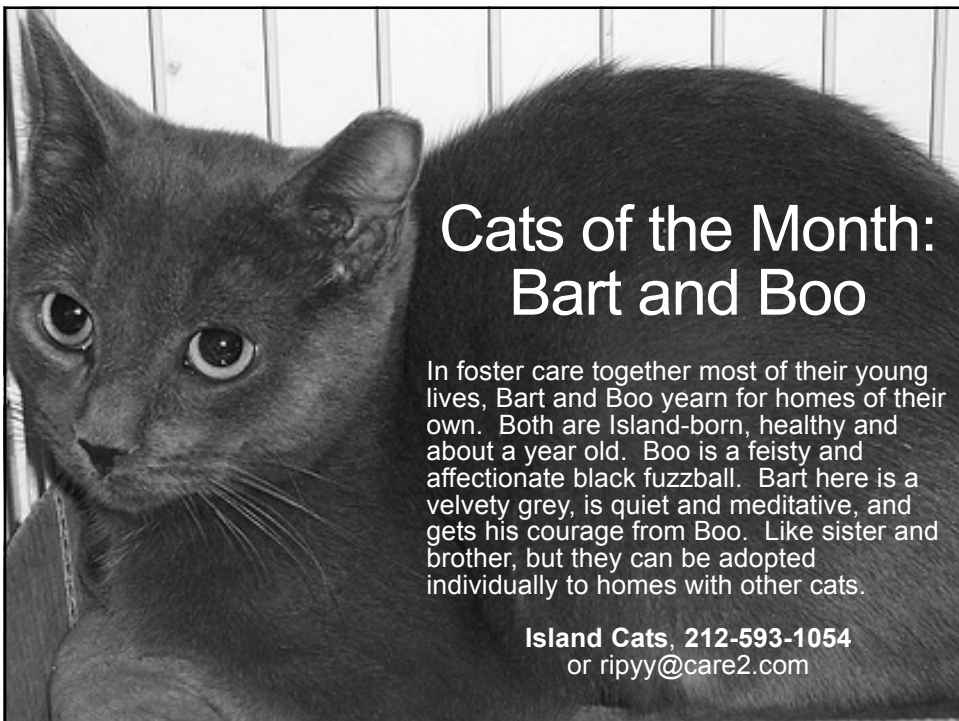
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Cats of the Month: Bart and Boo

In foster care together most of their young lives, Bart and Boo yearn for homes of their own. Both are Island-born, healthy and about a year old. Boo is a feisty and affectionate black fuzzball. Bart here is a velvety grey, is quiet and meditative, and gets his courage from Boo. Like sister and brother, but they can be adopted individually to homes with other cats.

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Progressing Through Several Phases, Hartman’s Plans for a

Racquet Club from page 1

him that renovation of Sportspark probably wouldn’t be a good idea. The building is in trouble, structurally. Fixing it, they said, could cost \$9 million to \$11 million – just about what it would take to start from scratch. And fixing it up would probably *preserve* some difficult problems rather than solving them.

So Hartman would like to take over the land occupied by the Sportspark, demolish the building, and take the three parcels – the tennis bubble property, the Sportspark property, and ultimately the Steam Plant property – through a phased development that could take 10 years.

While the architects have worked out five different approaches, each with multiple options and some alternatives, and any chosen approach would be executed in multiple phases, no single approach has yet settled into Hartman’s mind as the most likely.

Most of the plans start with demolition of the Sportspark building, at a cost of \$560,000 to \$2.2 million. One course of action would then replace it with four tennis courts and a “multi-activity area” covered in winter by a seasonal bubble, a modest fitness facility, and locker rooms. Estimated cost is \$2.8 million to \$3.4 million. Soon thereafter, a swimming pool would be added, covered in winter, open in summer (\$958,000).

In a second phase, the smaller of the current tennis bubbles would be removed and replaced with a more permanent structure (\$9 million to \$10.1 million) containing eight tennis courts, an event space with kitchen, and social space.

Phase Three would replace the larger tennis bubble with a more permanent structure housing 12 courts, a clubhouse,

and offices. Hartman says, “I’m not in the hotel business,” but adds, in describing this third phase, “If a hotel operator were really salivating over the opportunity, a 300-room, 11-level hotel could then be built on the Sportspark parcel of land. Rooms on the south side of such a hotel would look out over Goldwater Hospital at the Manhattan skyline.

Finally, in a fourth phase, which Hartman sees as at least eight years away, the Steam Plant could be renovated at a cost of \$13 million to \$19 million, and set up to provide bowling, badminton, soccer, gymnastics, parking, and perhaps a steam museum that would draw school groups and others interested in the early technical history of the Industrial Revolution. In one Phase Four alternative, an ice skating facility with hockey rink could be erected next to the renovated Steam Plant building.

Well short of Phase Four, says Hartman, “You would have a social center, with an outdoor social dimension.” In Phase Four, he says, “I love the idea of a Steam Museum. The power plant already has a lot of stuff that would contribute to the museum.”

Hartman’s formal name is Lewis H., though everybody knows him as *Skip*. At 68, he’s had over 40 years of experience in recreation and the tennis business (and owns several facilities in Manhattan). Two charities that he founded provide after-school recreational programs for 400 schools in New York City. Ideas for the Roosevelt Island parcels

that sit under and adjacent to the Queensboro Bridge got little attention in the early years of the Racquet Club on Roosevelt Island. It opened in 1992, just as tennis began a dive in popularity that lasted three years when baby-boomers started hitting 50 years of age. “Ball sales, nationally, went down 30% in two years,” Hartman remembers. “Then, it remained flat from 1995 to 2003. But in the last four years, tennis has been on an upward climb.” It now gains about a million players a year, he says, but he attributes the far stronger growth at the Roosevelt Island Racquet Club to the loss of indoor courts in Manhattan.

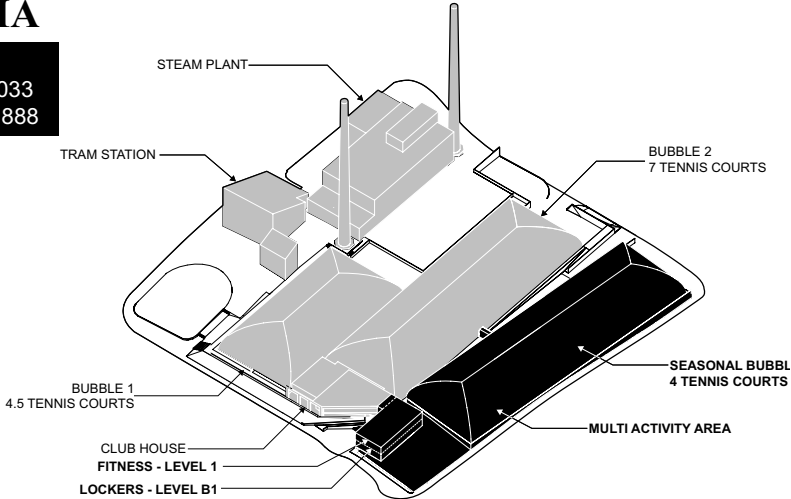
Hartman’s vision for a larger and more diverse facility here led him to seek a lease extension on revised terms when he negotiated with RIOC earlier this year. His new lease gives him 38 years (up from 23), so that even if the new feasibility study results in another entrepreneur taking over the indoor tennis business here, a buyout will be more lucrative. Unlike the old contract, it lays out specific terms under which Hartman’s operation could be ousted. Were it to happen, it would be based on the potential of 38 years of earnings, not just 23. “Should the Island decide to do an RFP as the result of this study, or other things, we have agreed to be bought out. There was a financial incentive to us not only to do this study, but to put the entire business at risk, because we would get a fairer – you might say larger – buyout.”

At this point, however, the idea is just a feasibility study, and it will take action by the RIOC Board, at a minimum, for it to move forward. Judging by Hartman’s enthusiasm, he’ll soon put some serious effort into that.

The HCK plan envisions several phases, most with alternatives. Starting with a simple replacement of the Sportspark in Phase IA (upper left diagram, below), the facility could progress through phases over a period of years, eventually putting a small hotel on the Sportspark property (Phase III, upper right diagram) and taking over the Steam Plant for a bowling center, parking, and an ice-skating rink next door (lower right diagram).

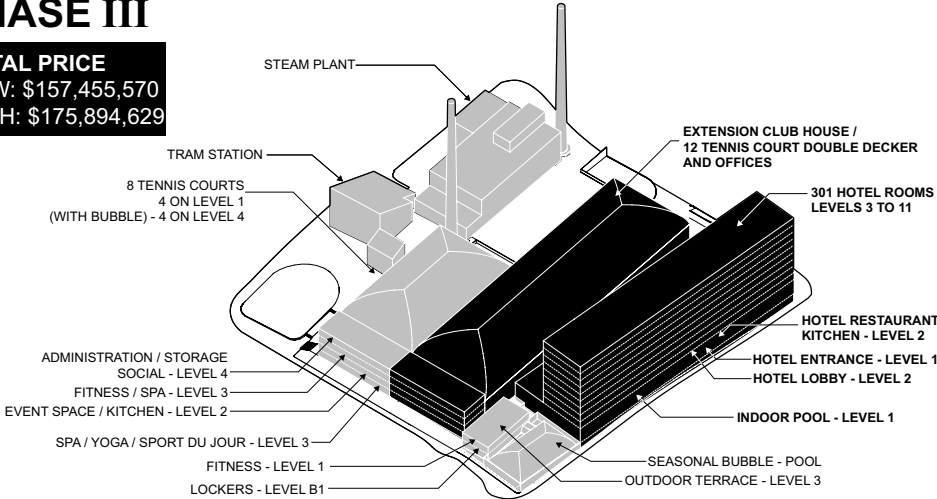
PHASE IA

TOTAL PRICE
LOW: \$ 3,401,033
HIGH: \$ 5,669,888



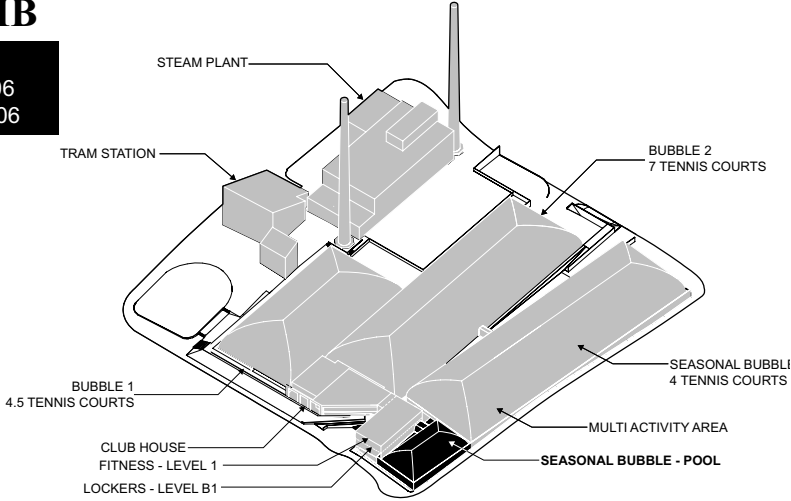
PHASE III

TOTAL PRICE
LOW: \$157,455,570
HIGH: \$175,894,629



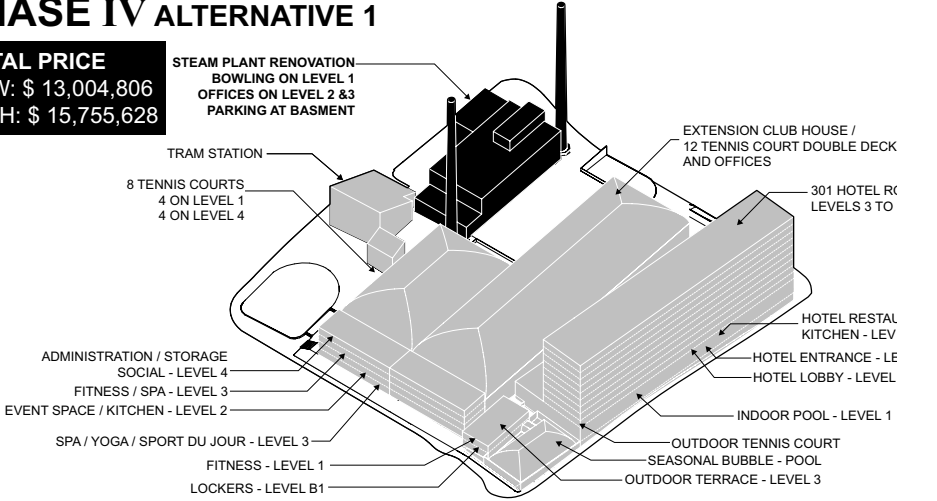
PHASE IB

TOTAL PRICE
LOW: \$ 957,706
HIGH: \$ 957,706



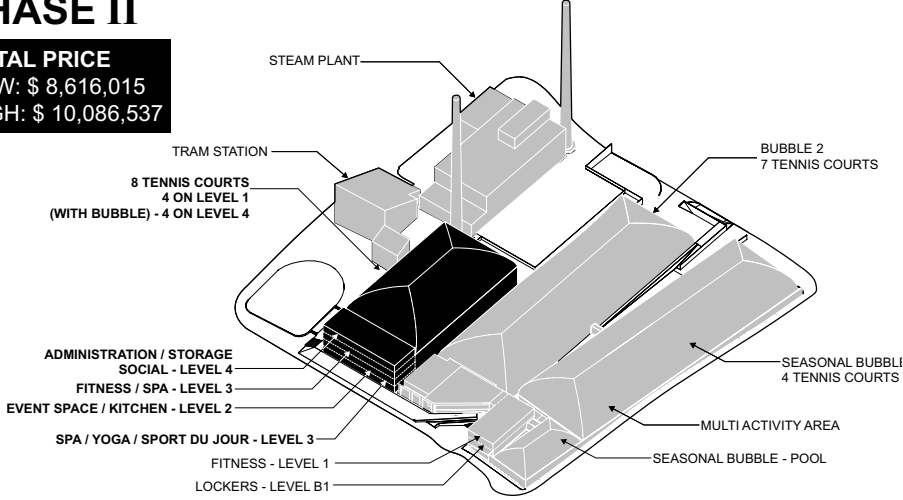
PHASE IV ALTERNATIVE 1

TOTAL PRICE
LOW: \$ 13,004,806
HIGH: \$ 15,755,628



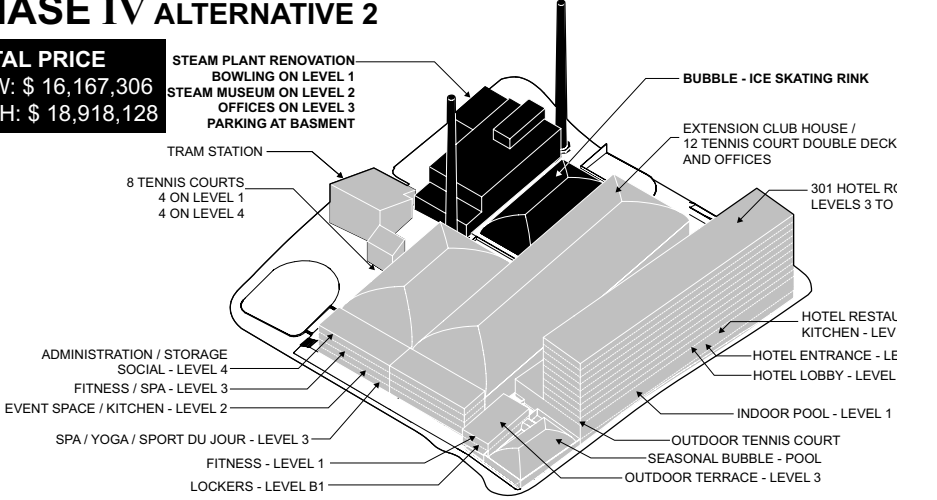
PHASE II

TOTAL PRICE
LOW: \$ 8,616,015
HIGH: \$ 10,086,537

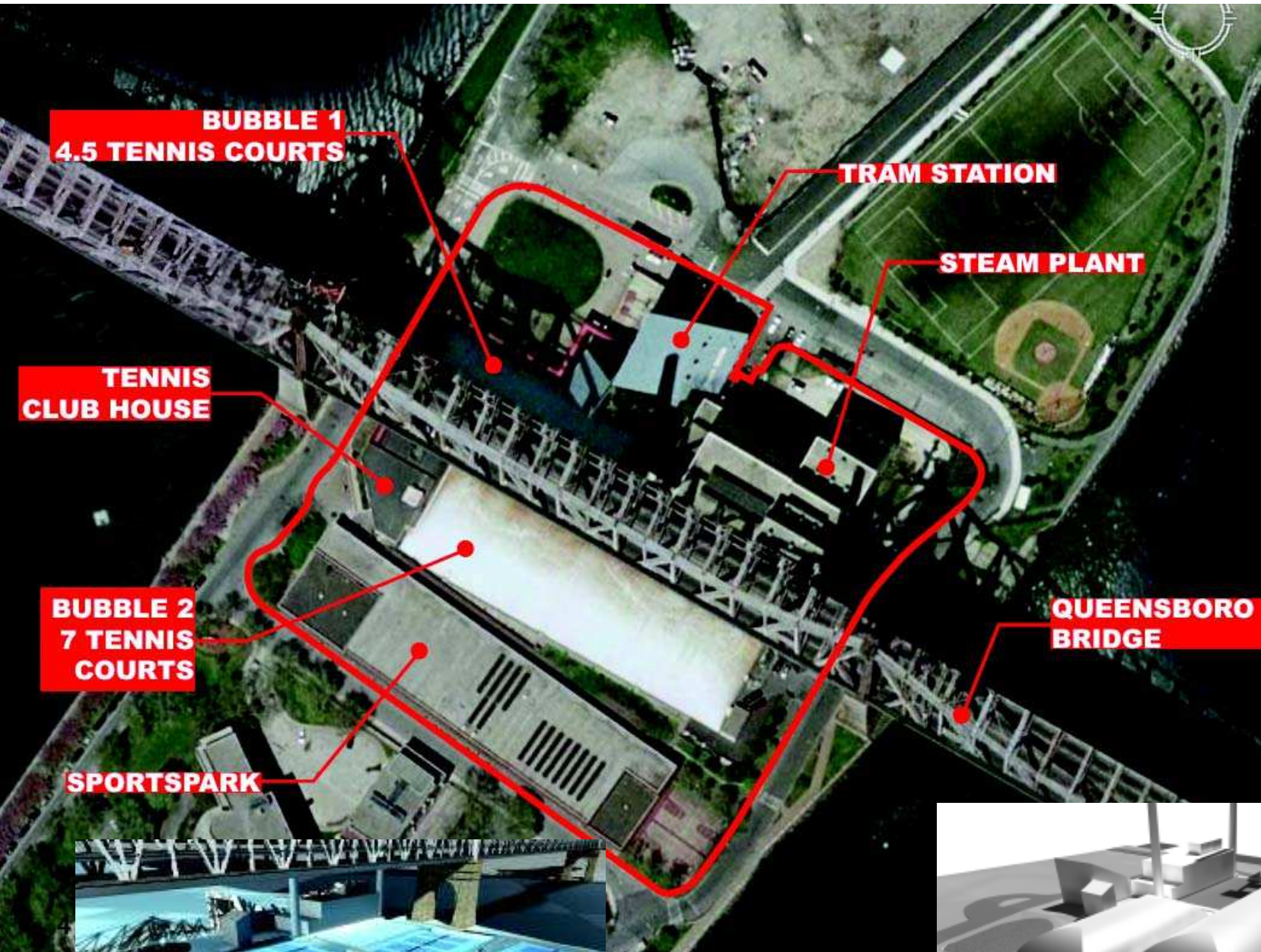


PHASE IV ALTERNATIVE 2

TOTAL PRICE
LOW: \$ 16,167,306
HIGH: \$ 18,918,128

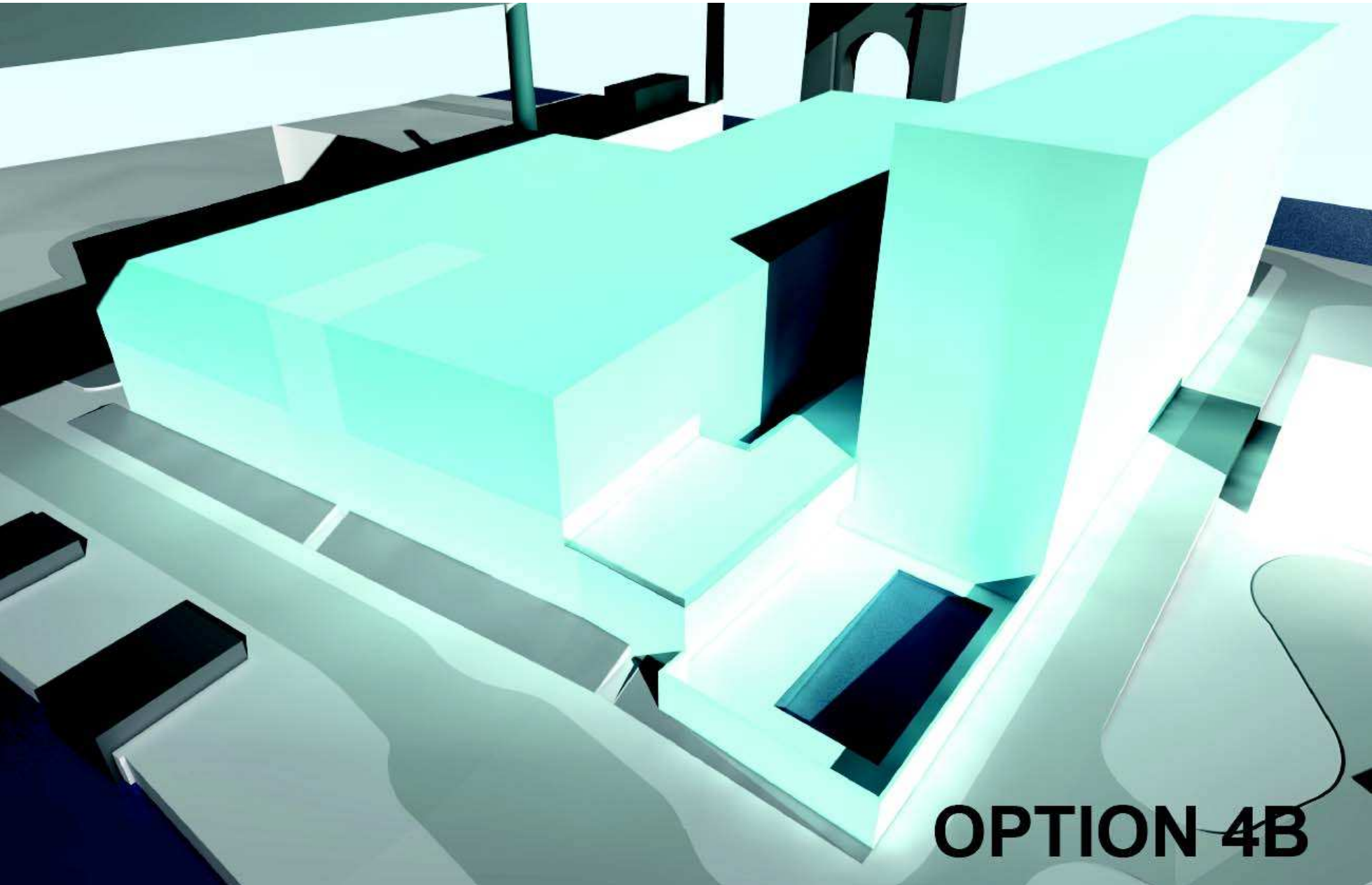
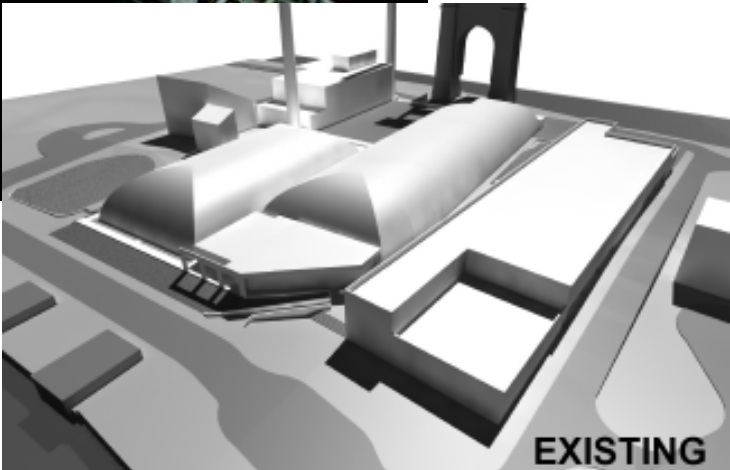


Sports and Social Center Could Take Years to Become a Reality



The site considered in the Racquet Club study covers the Sportspark, existing tennis bubbles, and Steam Plant.

These properties and more are part of a separate plan by SSJ Development (separate story, page 1) that, unlike this one, was not sanctioned by RIOC.



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Translation: Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the light of the holy Shabbat.

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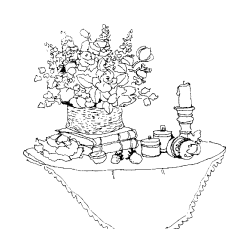
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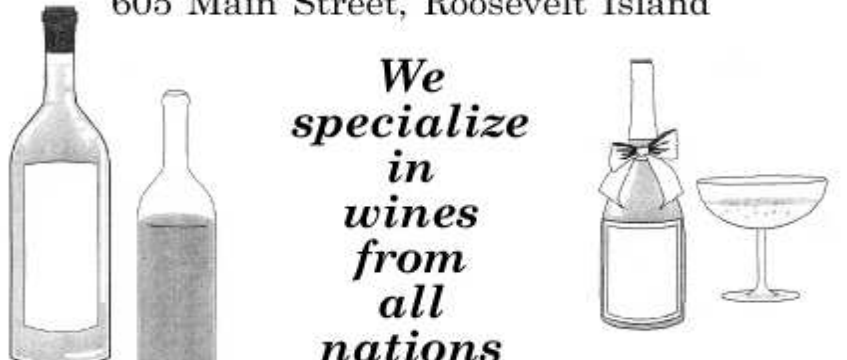
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Roosevelt Island's 4th of July



Photography by Paul Hakimata

July Fireworks Festival 2008



Roosevelt Island on the Web

Compiled by Rick O’Conor
rooseveltislander.blogspot.com

- RIOC President Says No Riviera or Other Roosevelt Island Residential Development After Completion of Southtown – tinyurl.com/6c4ely
- New York 1 Thinks Roosevelt Island Is An Oasis in the Middle of the City – tinyurl.com/55nq4r
- Roosevelt Island 360 Analyses Proposed Metro Card Fare Increase – tinyurl.com/598o66
- NYC Waterfront Video Documentary Trailer via Municipal Arts Society – tinyurl.com/6xctet
- Roosevelt Island 360 reviews Tram and Blackwell Circle Traffic Patterns – tinyurl.com/5mka9o
- Blogger Roosevelt Island Dogs Reports on New Seating Bench for Dog Run – tinyurl.com/5egh7v
- Date Spaces lists Roosevelt Island as #4 on Top Ten List of Best Outdoor Dates in NYC – tinyurl.com/5gwbj7
- Seattle Times Lists Starbucks To Be Closed – Roosevelt Island Not On List – tinyurl.com/5ueht3
- Blogger Walking Off the Big Apple Thinks Roosevelt Island May Be the New Paris – tinyurl.com/6lcaw9
- YouTube – Roosevelt Island Jazzmobile concert – tinyurl.com/5h5zqj
- Manhattan Park Rents 35 units to Manhattan Marymount College – tinyurl.com/56qxc9
- WNYC Radio Host Brian Lehrer’s interview with Waterfront Advocates from Waterfront Alliance – tinyurl.com/6em9w7
- Picture of FDNY Training Site on Welfare (now Roosevelt) Island via Roosevelt Island Historical Society – tinyurl.com/5rpb4z
- Blogger Every Person In New York Draws Picture of Man on Roosevelt Island Tram – tinyurl.com/6cl9bv

Email suggestions of other web links to rooseveltislander@gmail.com



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Service Advisories

F

No Disruptions This Weekend

Sat Aug 2 - Mon Aug 4
2008 Week 31

Planned Weekend Disruptions

Aug 9-11 (No Qns Svce)
Aug 23-25 (No Manh Svce)
Aug 30-Sep 1 (No Manh Svce)
Sep 6-8 (No Qns Svce)

Disruption Tally

14 Weekends Disrupted
30 Total 2008 Weekends

RooseveltIsland360.com

Lappin Secures City Funding for Seven Island Organizations

Councilmember Jessica Lappin has provided \$86,300 for Roosevelt Island groups in the city’s fiscal year 2009 budget. The groups and amounts are:

- **Roosevelt Island Day Nursery**, \$10,000 for scholarships for low-income students.
- **Roosevelt Island Historical Society**, \$5,000 for staffing and operations of the Visitor Center, housed in the kiosk at Tramway Plaza on the Island.
- **Roosevelt Island Disabled Association**, \$6,000 for trips.
- **Roosevelt Island Senior Center**, \$30,250 for the *Seniors Have More Fun* program, including yoga and computer classes.
- **Orphans International**, \$5,000, which will support a program at the Child School for lessons about the lives of orphaned children in Haiti and Indonesia.
- **PS/IS 217 Parent-Teacher Association**, \$20,000 for programs that include the band and ballroom dancing lessons.
- **Roosevelt Island Youth Program**, \$10,050 to expand the music program and extend the hours of the computer room.

“I’m very proud to have been able to support so many wonderful organizations operating on Roosevelt Island,” Councilmember Lappin said. “Each group provides a service that will enrich and better this community.”

The WIRE Is Seeking Back Issues

To make *The WIRE’s* on-line archive complete, we are seeking copies of the following issues. Please call **212-826-9056** or e-mail editor@MainStreetWIRE if you can lend them for scanning.
1996: 11/1. **1997:** 3/27, 5/2, another May ’97 issue for which the date is unknown, 6/14, 7/4, 9/6, 9/20, 10/24, 11/1, 11/15, 11/22. (The issues can be returned to the lender after scanning.)

RIRA Column from page 2

and Rescue). Also responding to this need, RIOC convened a contingency planning group some years ago that, off and on, has attempted to enhance our self-sufficiency in the face of adversity. RIOC’s Mike Moreo chaired the group, and included representatives of both state and city Emergency Planning, housing management, Public Safety, the RIOC Board, and, of course, RIRA. He held the last meeting about 15 months ago, and Public Safety Director Keith Guerra, who has taken over responsibility for emergency planning and for the group, informs me that he anticipates resuming these meetings in late September or early October. Thanks, Keith, there’s plenty to consider.

Bridge Update

You have surely noticed the slipcovers with which the Department of Transportation thoughtfully has sheathed the Roosevelt Island Bridge towers. Here’s the latest from the Department of Transportation: “The Roosevelt Island Bridge project is still on schedule. The [sand] blasting work in the West Tower was completed on Friday, July 18, and only painting will be progressed [sic] there now and should be completed by the end of this week (weather permitting). Following the completion of painting, the tarps and scaffolding will be removed from the tower. That will mean that the only [sand] blasting remaining on Roosevelt Island will be below the roadway just west of the visible bridge, which will take place following the replacement of the rest of the deck. Additionally, the tower blasting operation will move to the east tower (Queens Side) and that should be completed by mid-August (weather permitting).

The next phase of deck removal and replacement will begin shortly, which will mean there will be noise associated with that work. The traffic pattern will change slightly to accommodate this stage of the work but the number of lanes and times of operation will not. The deck replacement work will be ongoing into this winter.”

Tidal Energy (RITE) Project Update

Did you know that our friends at Verdant Power, the outfit attempting to create a commercial source of sustainable, non-polluting electricity from our East River tidal estuary, was a sponsor of the Fourth of July fireworks extravaganza? Well, they were. We’ve not heard much from them since they encountered unexpected technical glitches installing those massive turbine propellers last year, but company president Trey Taylor has offered the following plans for the completion of Phase 2 of the RITE Project, a test array of turbines: “Our new rotors have been successfully tested at DOE’s [Department of Energy] National Renewable Energy Lab in Golden Fields, Colorado. Two of these new rotors are planned for re-installment, during the week of September 8. We then will resume our operational tests and continue our environmental monitoring. Later this year, we plan to file for a FERC [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission] commercial license to install between 30 and 40 turbines (1 to 1.5 MW) of installed capacity, which would constitute the first stage of our Phase 3 commercial build out. We are hopeful that our license will be granted in timely fashion, thus allowing us to begin the build out of this first stage during 2009.” He added that this newspaper and I would

be informed with the specific dates of the re-installation of the two rotors when that is determined. This is state-of-the-art technology at a time when even the federal government is waking up to the threats to our world environment. It’s very exciting.

Update Denied

You may recall a Town Meeting in 2006 at which representatives from the NYC Department of Environmental Protection explained the process whereby concentrated sodium hydrochlorite would be trucked onto the Island in transit to the valving station at Shaft 15B of City Water Tunnel #3, located adjacent to Octagon Park. This is essentially liquid bleach, but at a 10-15% strength as compared to Clorox at 3-6%. The purpose is to disinfect the tunnel and water supply on its way to end users in Queens and Brooklyn. There were questions as to the environmental impact of trucking this corrosive material (which could burn skin and dissolve clothing) in two- to five-thousand-gallon tanker trucks over our bridge twice a week, and storing it 500 feet underground in two 3,800-gallon tanks. The community also raised questions as to how much acreage would be allocated for a clear security perimeter from the Island real estate we had once been told would be returned to us for recreational use. I’ve not heard back from my DEP contacts and, in fairness, it has been only 10 days since I inquired. Also, the activation of the disinfection system is not planned until 2011. However, we should be kept abreast of any changes in plans should a response from this community be called for, and I will continue to ask the questions you raised two years ago. Stay tuned.

RIOC Column from page 2

the Regional Emergency Medical Services Council of New York City (REMSCO), and, in response, RIOC delivered its conditional letter of approval, explicitly setting forth the requirements before RISAR is permitted to commence operations on the Island, primarily being in full compliance with all of the Department of Health licensing requirements.

10. **Movie:** The changing of the site for the outdoor movie from Southpoint to Firefighters Field has created some squawking (but then, what doesn’t?), but by most reports, the crowd was larger than previously attracted, the weather (unaffected by locale) was perfect, the noise from ambient sources was a non-issue, and a good time was had by almost all. The facilitation of attendance by seniors, handicapped, and families at a much more accessible spot is the reason for the change. So far, so good. Next feature – *Monster House*, Saturday, August 9, 8:20 p.m.

11. **Blackwell turnaround:** The change to the traffic island to improve pedestrian safety is completed, and lighting of the American flag is functioning.

12. **Commercial Spaces:** To try to comply with the very inapt requirements of the Public Authorities Accountability Act, we have engaged an appraiser to give an opinion as to Fair Market Value (FMV) of the store spaces. When RIOC receives the FMVs, it will seek Board authorization to publish RFPs for the various spaces, inviting the variety of ser-

vice establishments that might be useful on Main Street to respond. Upon receipt, RIOC will review the proposals with the Real Estate Advisory Committee of the Board, seek input from RIRA, and then, depending on the proposals, proceed through the rest of the process towards leasing. Stay tuned.

13. **Development proposals:** (a) As promised in consideration of the extension of its license, the Roosevelt Island Racquet Club (RIRC) has produced a variety of proposals for development of the space now occupied by the tennis bubbles, Sportspark, and the Steam Plant, with many combinations and permutations. RIOC is studying the proposals, and invited RIRC to share the proposals with *The WIRE* so that there can be a publication to the community. If there is a favorable response at several levels and, following the formal opportunity for the community to be heard, Board action following a land use disposition process, an RFP would be published to solicit competitive responses, which will then be evaluated before final action.

(b) At the same time, and apparently totally by coincidence, an article appeared in the *Daily News* setting forth the details of a project to be known as the Riviera at Roosevelt Island, to be developed by SSJ Development, LLC. Completely ignoring the present status of Green Rooms/Wild Gardens, Goldwater Hospital, Sportspark, and

the RI Racquet Club, the fanciful project is absolutely out of left field, has never been broached to this President of RIOC, and does not, even remotely, resemble a fly speck on the horizon. The hysteria that followed is absolutely unwarranted. Were the Goldwater campus ever to be developed, it could only be many years (decades?) away, after consolidation with Coler and the solution of the present transportation/infrastructure problems following a full blown ULURP/SEQRA assessment. Unless you really like blue, do not hold your breath for this one.

14. **Bicycle Safety & Helmet Day:** Public Safety has announced that on Thursday, August 14, from 3:00-6:00 p.m. at Good Shepherd Plaza, RIOC will be handing out *free* bicycle helmets to the kids in the community. All they need to do is come with a bicycle and a parent, and they will receive one at *no charge*.

15. Finally, I just heard the **Governor’s dire predictions** about the state’s economy and budget deficit. RIOC has already reduced its operating budget by the requested 3.8%, by not filling a couple of authorized positions. At this writing, we do not have any further directives, but would not be surprised by more requests for austerity. While RIOC does not draw on the state budget, RIOC is nevertheless a state agency and will be in compliance with state policy.

Mark Ponton, Late of the RIOC Board, Says the Planned Tramway Update Is Simply Unnecessary, Based on Test Results

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation will hold a public hearing Tuesday (August 5, 10:00 a.m.) on the planned upgrade of the Tramway, in the community room at 4 River Road. Former RIOC Board member Mark Ponton was among those who considered the upgrade, but he objected to the plan. *The WIRE* interviewed him last week to find out why.

The WIRE: You object to the replacement of the Tramway. Tell me why.

Mark Ponton: My major objection is taking the Tram out of service to replace it when quantitative analysis has shown that there's absolutely no reason to do so. We're spending \$15 million of the state's money, assuming it's still around when we need it, and \$10 million of the Island's money, which we certainly could use for other things, and we're disrupting the daily lives of thousands of people – all in spite of totally objective analytical data, provided by three of the world's finest engineering firms, showing that nothing major is wrong with the Tram at all. Given ordinary maintenance, it should last for years to come. The prediction of how long it will last has not been made, but everything we've examined shows a significant remaining life.

I don't care much about spending the state's money. I do care about needlessly spending \$10 million of ours. And most of all, I disagree completely with the idea of negatively impacting peoples' daily lives just because we feel like it, instead of it being necessary for some remedy or to correct some deficiency.

The bottom line is that there's no need to replace the Tram.

There is a need to do about 70 small things, which I describe as scraping up the crumbs from the table. Things like an electric fuse box that hasn't been used for 20 years and should have been removed. Or a little bit of concrete that's cracking. They don't affect safety or reliability, but they do indicate a lack of attention to detail. And our supposed Tram management company, and our RIOC people who are supposedly watching the Tram management company, should have had these fixed. But we don't need to race out and call 911 and say, "Holy smokes, we need a new Tram."

Q: If we leave safety aside, the reasons being given for replacement have to do with reliability and concern about the longevity of what's there, and you feel none of those are compelling issues.

MP: Not only are they not compelling issues, they're simply not issues at all.

If I take the conclusions advanced by Parametrix, the firm RIOC has had in place for some time, their conclusion is that everything is wrong with everything and has to be replaced immediately. Those are my words, but that's the essence of it. But the supporting data they offer is zero. Absolutely, totally zero.

Thornton-Tomasetti, whom I brought in, concluded nothing is wrong with anything and, from what we can see, it's difficult to even produce a prediction of the foreseeable future when anything might be wrong. Their supporting data was visual observation by skilled personnel; video camera observation of internal areas Parametrix said we couldn't examine without destroying the equipment being examined; magnetic particle testing, which is a universally accepted means of detecting cracks in metal; and ultrasonic testing of the cables and the hanger-arm pin.

When three companies like Thornton-Tomasetti, Pitkin, and Hardesty and Hanover say there's nothing wrong with anything, it's probably a good idea to pay attention.

When I got the preliminary report from their office, I got the three of them together, and I asked them, *What can we do to make the Tram safer?* Instantaneously, the answer came back, *Nothing. The Tram is as safe as this type of vehicle can be. There is nothing even suspect, and the odds of anything happening to the Tram are less than you getting hit by lightning.*

Q: What about the cables - the track cables in particular?

MP: We examined the cable. We found only one area in one cable where there were several cracks, none of them even a minor safety hazard.

Q: These are tiny breaks in the tiny wires that make up the cables...

MP: Yes. The cable is made up of a group of wires that then are spun into a small rope called the strand, which is then spun into a cable or a rope.

The manufacturer of the cable has a very specific set of circumstances in mind, and a very specific set of specifications to do the job the rope is designed to do.

We found in the analysis that we did for all of the rope that we could test, which is everything except those parts that were right above the saddle – we found several individual cracks – one here, one there, which means nothing. In one of the ropes, we found 14 cracks, but they were not close enough together to produce any danger at all. These 14 cracks caused a possible loss of 1.25% of the theoretical breaking strength of the cable. Anybody with any cable experience will tell you that's a so what? There's no worry there.

I then asked the same question about reliability. I got the same immediate answer – that the Tram was an extraordinarily reliable device and there was essentially nothing to be done to make it more so.

Q: Let's talk about reliability. With the Island's population increasing and the subway's capacity at morning rush-hour having been reached, you don't want to have the Tram down. Most recently, there was a week-long slipping of the track rope, but there have been other times when the Tram has been down because it needed this, that, or the other. The argument for a separated system, as I heard it, is that you can have one side of the system still running while the other is down for whatever work is to be done. That increases your reliability in terms of being able to be in service at all times – or almost all times. I think they said downtime would be very low – just one or two percent at most, with the new system.

MP: What we have now is a "jigback," which operates like a clothesline. The system with two separated sides is called a "funifor."

There's no question that two cabins that can operate independently can provide more availability than two in a tandem system, but the real question is, how much are we really increasing availability?

To find that out, I took the downtime records that RIOC had been keeping for the last seven years.

I divided the downtime into three types. One type we have no control over simply involves pushing a restart button to cure it. For instance, there are times when we've had to shut down the system because of lightning, or because of some terrorist threat, or something like that. No sense in thinking that the new system would do any better, so I just said, that's a tie game. Toss that aside.

Another category is scheduled maintenance, virtually all of which can be done between 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m.

Q: Don't some of those things have to be done in daylight?

MP: None of the information I have would indicate that, but there may be some city operating code or union regulation that would mandate the hours in which this type of work can be done. We'll certainly respect that, but, even if we kept it in the time segments that it's in now, it wouldn't affect the numbers much at all.

The final category is downtime, where we have no control over the occurrence, and we need to get things fixed as quickly as possible. Over a seven-year period, I think there

were 27 or 37 such instances. In my analysis, I conceded, the existing Tram cannot fix any of those. In that comparison, it loses.

So now, the question becomes, what are those, and how long do they last? I took RIOC's own data and, after correcting some errors they acknowledged were in it, I asked, how many of these occurrences would there be, statistically, based on historical data? The answer came out to be one a year. And how long would the interruption last? The data say 30

minutes.

So we're going through this escapade, hugely disrupting the daily lives of thousands, in order to avoid what statistics show would be one occurrence of a half-hour duration once per year. That's what the actual record shows for the last seven years of the Tram.

We're going through all this to eliminate, in all likelihood, one event per year lasting 30 minutes.

Q: Presuming all that is correct, it seems we're left with the \$15 million that is available right now, which RIOC says may not be available next year or, perhaps more importantly, at the crisis moment when it's needed in the event of an unpredictable total Tramway failure and shutdown. An outsider might say it's a waste of state money. But looking at it from the perspective of a Roosevelt Islander, one might say, wait a minute, we've got a 30-year-old Tram – will it last another 30 years and, if we don't think it will and we can all agree that economic times are going to get harder and harder, should we not therefore take advantage of this moment of having more than half of the price of a new Tram available from the state?

MP: I have long since given up caring about the \$15 million, except to the extent that it leads us down the path of doing something we don't need to do.

But the \$15 million is, in round numbers, about one ten-thousandth of the state budget. So imagine that a year from now, we call our politicians and say, *OK, we're ready, we have to replace the Tram now.* What politician do you think would say, *I can't get that money for you, but don't worry, come back and vote for me next year.* What politician do you think would ever do that? And what political party do you think would ever take out an infrastructural part of the New York City transportation system – for one ten-thousandth of the state budget?

Q: Let's talk about possible consequences if we don't do it. If we're comparing a new Tram that would last 30 years with asking the old Tram to last another 30, is there any sense that the old Tram might suffer an age-induced multiplying of its problems or their frequency? Any feeling that it's a good idea to do this because 30 years from now the existing Tram will be 60 years old?

MP: I don't think the answer has to do with whether the Tram is 30 years old or 30 seconds old.

The issue is, is the Tram capable of doing today what it

was put in place to do 30 years ago? With the tests we've done, the answer is a resounding yes. Does that mean nothing will ever go wrong? No. But if you go by historical data, the likelihood is that something may happen. If it does, it'll happen once in a year, and if it happens once in a year, it'll last 30 minutes. That's what the statistical data show.

But let's assume that my calculation is 100% wrong. That says that, instead of having one incident of 30 minutes duration in a year, we're going to have two. Or one will be 60 minutes long, instead of 30. Is that worth taking the Tram down for a year and having all this inconvenience? It certainly isn't, in my book. But maybe other Islanders would say yes. I'm not arguing to have or not have a new Tram. What I'm arguing is what I've said from the very beginning: Whatever we do, it ought to be justifiable and explainable to the average person with the right perspective in simple language, and it should be supported by credible data. All the credible data I've seen says that we don't need to replace the Tram now.

Q: What about obsolescence, say, 29 years from now?

MP: Yes, some people will bring up the issue of obsolescence of certain parts, like for instance, the electronics. They'll say that the manufacturers who make those parts will, for lack of a marketplace, discontinue manufacture. And we won't be able to replace some parts. But there are a couple of easy remedies. The first is to predict which may fail in the next 10 or 20 years and buy a replacement right now. The second is to get one of the top electrical engineering firms to look at the system and give us some insight as to where they could get a part replaced if we needed to. There are firms with the same expertise and international reputation as Thornton-Tomasetti. A simple phone call can get them here to give us the advice we need.

Then, there are the "consumables" – things that are designed to wear out in service, because of the job they do or because they protect a more costly part with which they come in constant contact. When these parts need replacing, they simply get replaced. But you don't buy a new house because your electric mixer stops working. You replace that one piece of equipment.

Q: The new system has to be designed so that both cabins are never on tower 1, and never on tower 3, at the same time, because neither of those towers was built to support two at once.

MP: Right. There must be a guarantee that those cabins can never be simultaneously on tower 1 or tower 3. We have that guarantee right now with a jig-back system. With the proposed system, we'll have to make sure that the cabins are prohibited from arriving at towers one and three at the same time. The safest way is to build up towers 1 and 3 to the same capacity that tower 2 has. That's time and money, but is really the only way you can guarantee that everything will be okay in case of a simultaneous arrival. It wouldn't surprise me at all to see Thornton Tomasetti insist on that approach.

Q: You've made the Board aware of your concerns?

MP: Yes, in January when I wrote a memo to Shane. I copied the Board on that.

Q: What about other residents? Do you think they agree, or understand your points?

MP: I don't know. If they do and they think it's OK, then I'm wasting my time and energy. If they don't, then they ought to ask for a complete objective explanation of what the alternatives are, and what they're getting in return for their money and their disruption.



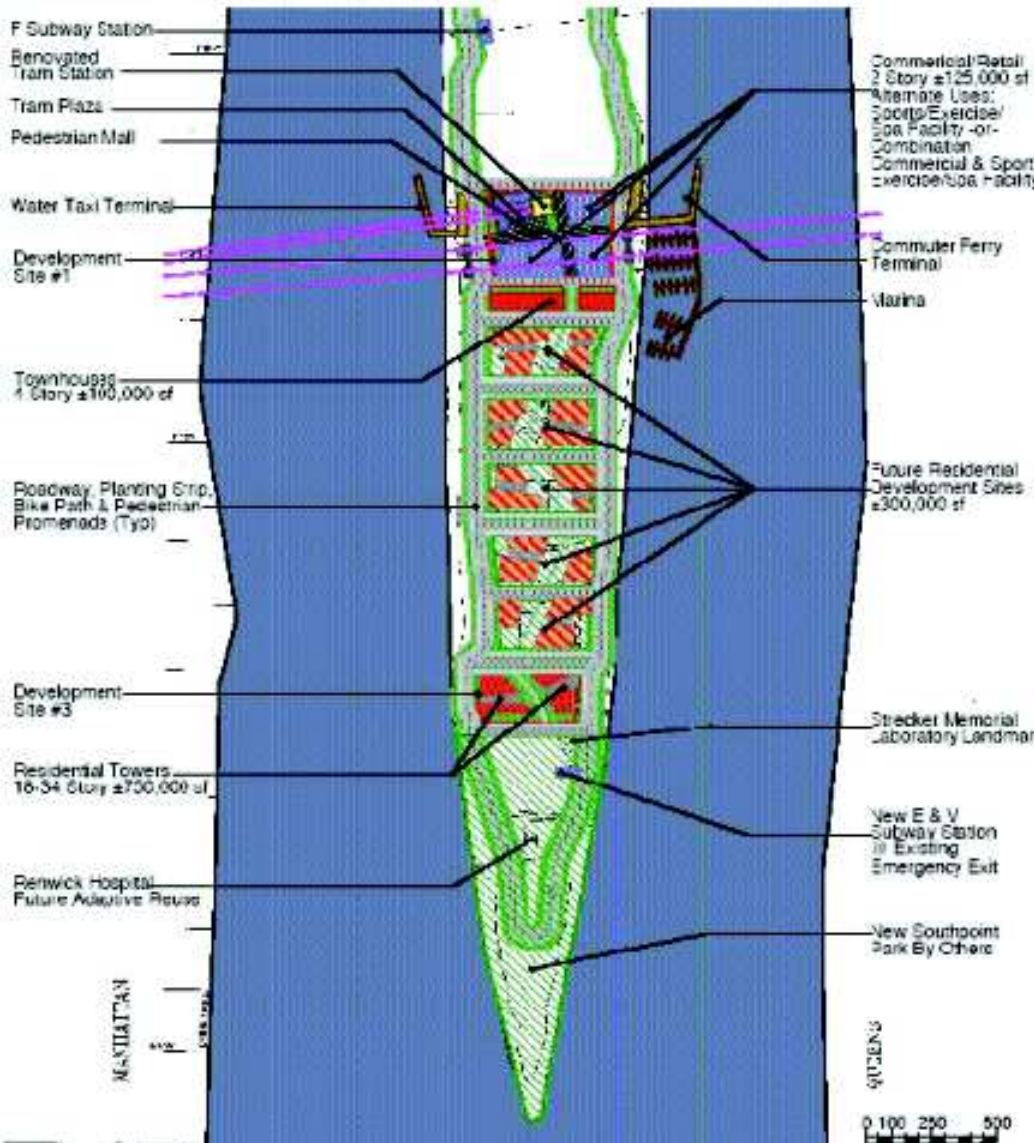
Stephen Jemal's Proposal for The Riviera at Roosevelt Island...



Stephen Jemal's enthusiasm for his Riviera at Roosevelt Island idea is balanced by the skepticism of those, like RIOC President Steve Shane, who give it no chance of ever happening. But many who follow the New York real estate scene consider it inevitable that the south campus of Coler-Goldwater Hospital will one day be released for development. The aerial photo at right shows why developers will want the property: The potential for luxury housing with outstanding views is apparent. Transit capacity would be an issue, but the Jemal proposal envisions a subway stop below Southpoint Park where a tunnel already carries E and V trains. While that notion has been discounted by many who cite the MTA's constant financial difficulties, there is a possibility that, at some future time, the pressure for housing may become so great that a new subway station begins to look feasible.

A portion of what Jemal envisions in his proposal, below, is situated on parkland that RIOC has committed to a plan advanced by the Trust for Public Land (Development Site #3 on the map at lower right).

The rendering at the top of this page suggests one possible configuration of residential towers for the Goldwater site, though this rendering trespasses on land RIOC has said will remain parkland forever. The SSJ plan includes no specifics as to the number of apartments that might be built if the plan ever became a real possibility.



...Shows Why Developers Will Covet the Goldwater Property

SSJ from page 1

mentioned a Roosevelt Island component.

In 1998 and 1999, residents reacted strongly against the hotel towers that Jemal proposed, a fact he acknowledges. The feeling was that the traffic they would generate, and their size, would overwhelm the rest of the Island. But the new plan is much larger. It encompasses facilities and land from the Tramway to part of the north end of Southpoint Park. The SSJ website (ssjdevelopment.com) includes the sentence, “The Riviera at Roosevelt Island will actualize a long standing vision residents have had for the entire southern portion of the island.”

Starting from the south end of Jemal’s plan, the Southpoint parkland involved is the site of the demolished City Hospital, which once spanned the Island on a 2.3-acre site just south of the west-to-east road below Goldwater. “On this site SSJ proposes two residential apartment towers,” reads the plan, in which “A variety of 1, 2, 3, and 5-bedroom apartments would be provided,” ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 square feet. The height of the towers is not specified, but in illustrations provided by SSJ, they are at least several stories tall.

North of that is the 17-acre Goldwater Hospital site, which would hold the largest component of the SSJ project, consisting of multiple high-rise apartment buildings. As to the possibility of it being built anytime soon, RIOC’s Shane commented, “The city’s plan is to move Coler (north campus) patients to Goldwater (the south campus), then rebuild and expand Coler. Finally, all the patients could be moved to the Coler site. Only then – and I think this would take 10 years or more – could something actually happen on the Goldwater property.” The city controls the Goldwater site, through its Health and Hospitals Corporation. *The WIRE* reported on long-range plans to replace Goldwater with housing in last summer’s Fourth of July issue (on line at nyc10044.com/wire/2721/wire2721.html). Although the land is now considered too valuable for a hospital site, and a prime location for housing if the Island’s mass-transit capacity can be increased dramatically, the city has not yet taken any formal steps toward replacing it with housing. However, when Mayor Bloomberg’s appointments staff interviewed this community’s elected nominees for the RIOC Board of Directors, the candidates were asked about how they would feel about additional development on the Island, with specific reference to the Coler and Goldwater hospital properties.

Immediately north of Goldwater, the property is occupied by the Sportspark and the tennis bubbles of the Roosevelt Island Racquet Club, an HCK Recreation facility whose lease RIOC just renewed going out more than 30 years (separate story, page 1), and for which HCK owner Skip Hartman has plans. Those plans, like Jemal’s, extend to include the Sportspark and the Steam Plant. Jemal’s plan envisions enclosing the Tram station on three sides with glass, and offers this description of the intended result:

“SSJ Development proposes creating a vibrant and lively community centered on the Aerial Tram and the newly created transportation hub. Anchored by a new ferry terminal on each side of the island, a new pedestrian promenade is proposed just south of the tram. The newly created Tram Plaza would serve as a town square.” The proposal further calls for “renovation of the tram terminal,” “a new commercial/retail zone” with a “multiplex theater, a sportsplex, and a Whole Foods style market... On the east channel a marina with boat slips for non-commercial pleasure boats is envisioned...” On the south side of this site, SSJ proposes a row of four-story townhouses facing south [toward] the new residential community.”

Overall, says the SSJ plan, “The Riviera at Roosevelt Island provides a vision for the entire southern portion of the island. With its amazing views, tranquil setting, close proximity to Midtown, yet haven from the city’s intensity, this site is by far the most desirable, glorious and unparalleled piece of land in the city. Yet, it remains frightfully underdeveloped, under-utilized and for the most part uninviting to the island population and the public at large.” About the largest parcel, Goldwater, the proposal says, “SSJ sees the development of this site in conjunction with the other sites as the proper means of planning for the good of the island as a whole. Rather than develop this area in a piecemeal fashion with no coherent master plan, the entire southern portion of the island requires a vision. SSJ Development is providing that vision...”

Regarding the Renwick Ruin, the landmarked 1850 small-pox hospital in Southpoint Park, the SSJ proposal says, “...it continues to deteriorate. SSJ would undertake the stabilization and renovation of this majestic but delapidated (sic) structure. It proposes an adaptive reuse such as a boutique hotel with spa and conference center...” But RIOC is already stabilizing the ruin on the heels of a wall collapsing in December.

Without discussion of how it would be funded, the SSJ proposal speaks of creating a subway station under Southpoint Park where the E and V lines now pass from Queens to Manhattan. There is a rudimentary emergency exit there now, though the SSJ proposal suggests there are also platforms in place. Without additional subway service, it is not likely that a plan of the magnitude put forward by SSJ could pass the necessary environmental impact reviews.

The SSJ proposal book is on line with this issue of *The*

WIRE at nyc10044.com/wire/2821/wire2821.html.

When Jemal returned *The WIRE*’s calls, he started the conversation by asking, “Are you pro-development or anti-development?” He repeatedly said that his plan is in accord with the Island master plan prepared by legendary architect Philip Johnson and his partner, John Burgee. In a rapid-fire description of what he has in mind, he decried the lack of development, claimed he had won the right to develop Southpoint Park in 1998, and said Goldwater patients are “suffering” in a sub-standard facility. “The only developer who has not moved forward after winning an RFP is me,” he said, later adding, “I feel the residents of Roosevelt Island are being abandoned. I have my financing in place and I’m ready.” He attributed his failure to build to “constant regime change” at RIOC – “Blue, Ryan, Berman, and – who’s the new one? Right, Shane. Four regimes, three governors later, Pataki, who did we have then? Yes, Spitzer and now, of course, Paterson... I was designated in 1998. It was on the RIOC website.” As evidence of this, a Jemal aide offered an article that appeared in *Real Estate Weekly* in November of 1999. The article mentions “conditional designation,” but it appears the only source for the information in the article was SSJ Development. In any case, while Blue often attempted to take actions independent of the RIOC Board, there was no vote on final designation by the Board.

“I would hope that your article could help reignite and maybe get some advocates that live on the Island to join with me so that we can take Southpoint and finally put it where it needs to be,” Jemal said. “There should be a promenade all the way around. There shouldn’t be that hospital functioning the way it is with all those cars parked around it.”

Later, Jemal said, “This needs to be done in concert. This cannot be done, one end against the other end. It’s one end working *with* the other end. We are not rivals, we should not be adversarial. A project of this magnitude – this is billions of dollars – I’m talking about pumping billions into Roosevelt Island, and it has to be done in concert and in total cooperation with all concerned... Why should [residents] not have celebrations there [at a rehabilitated Renwick Ruin]? Why shouldn’t they on July 4 be able to enjoy a concert in an amphitheater? Roosevelt Island is positioned for exactly that, yet, because of politics and constant regime change, nothing ever gets done. And the only shot at getting it done is with an advocate like *The WIRE* and the residents joining with me to push for this to happen. I have the money, the vision, the desire, the passion. I’ve spent the time. I have 12 feet of files on this project. I have assembled a world-class team to pull this off.”

Jemal’s team, as presented in the book describing his Roosevelt Island project, includes these firms:

- Brennan Beer Gorman Architects. Louis Hedgecock of that firm told *The WIRE*, “We are not involved in that project.” (On Thursday, SSJ said Brennan Beer Gorman “may continue to play a role.”)
- Gregory H. Ginter, Architect. Ginter told *The WIRE*, “I have since moved to California. That book is not current. I am not involved.”

Also listed are Valentino Associates; BTA Building and Developing, Inc.; Republic First Bank; and the Sunshine Group. None was reached for comment. The SSJ book then goes on to list 27 “Additional Team Members” such as “Smallpox Hospital stabilization,” “Legal” (twice), “Architect of record,” and “Construction Estimates.” At least some appear to be placeholders for team members to be specified later.

Legal Troubles

Meantime, in Texas courts, Stephen Jemal and Sharon Jemal are being sued for \$5.5 million by two investment companies that are sources of financing for his Brooklyn project. It is unclear how this might affect his plans in Brooklyn, let alone the “vision” for Roosevelt Island, which are not likely to become even a possibility for some time to come – if at all. On Thursday, a Jemal aide said that negotiations toward settlement are making progress.

FTC Order

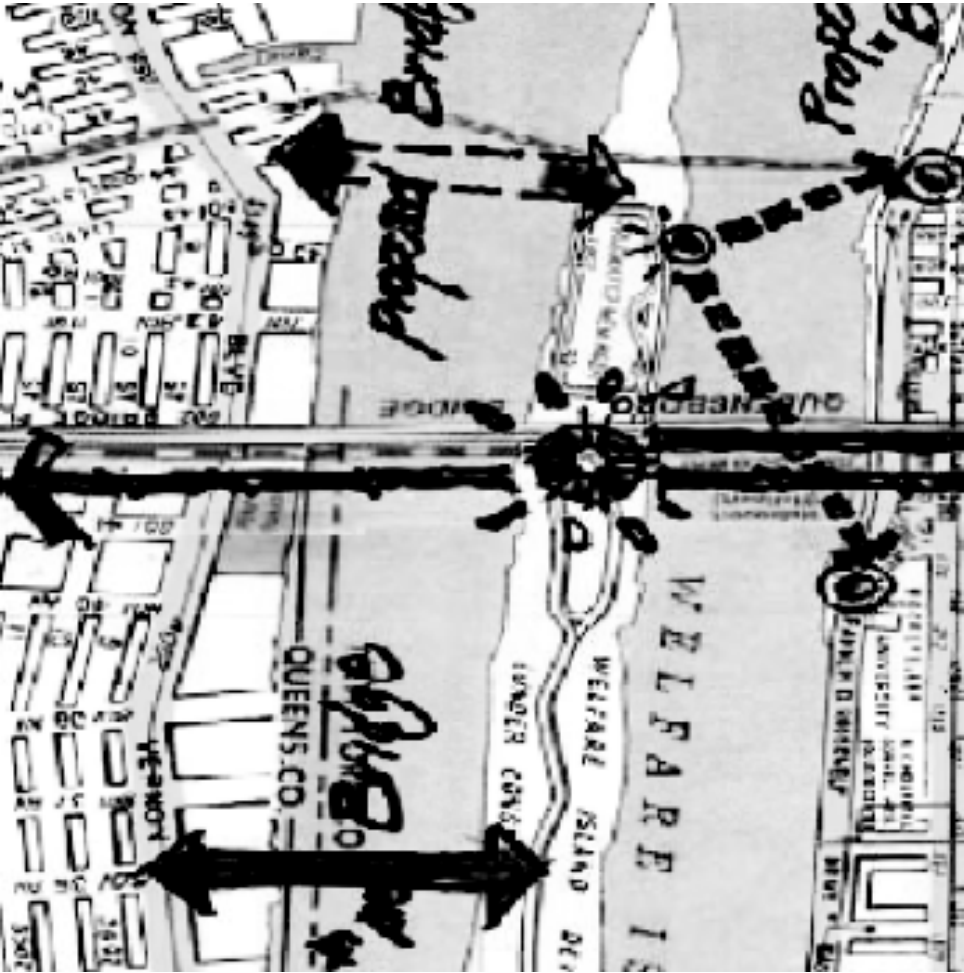
Five years ago, Jemal was among those named in a settlement with the Federal Trade Commission. An FTC press

release issued at the time says that Tecnozone, Inc., was selling devices purporting to have been proved, in testing by European universities, to provide protection against radiation emissions by cell phones and computer monitors. The FTC said the claims of device effectiveness, as well as the claims of testing, were “false and unsubstantiated.” Tecnozone agreed to pay \$85,000 in “consumer redress” (see www.techlawjournal.com/alert/2003/11/17.asp).” (It should be noted that a settlement of this kind is not an admission of guilt.)

Legal Action

Jemal himself recently threatened legal action against a blogger.

Two weeks ago, the blogsite GerritsenBeach.net posted an article mentioning Jemal’s legal difficulties and those of other members of the Jemal family and, within days, received a letter from a Philadelphia law firm threatening legal action because the blog’s “entire publication leads the reader to the conclusion that Mr. Jemal is ‘less than reputable...’ The attorney’s letter demanded that the blogger “remove the entire publication... immediately, as well as any reference to same in Google or any other search engine/blog,” and continues, “We will also require that your company and its employees enter into a non-disparagement agreement with Mr. Jemal... Finally, we require that you pay Mr. Jemal an immediate settlement payment of \$20,000,



The Jemal proposal envisions a second bridge to Queens, at the top of this map.

which will cover his legal fees and will act as additional consideration to induce him not to file suit.” The letter gives the blogger until noon on July 21 to accept the terms. The terms were not accepted by the deadline, nor was the posting removed. There is no word on what action may have followed the passing of the deadline.

A website carrying similar information reached an accommodation with Jemal, adding statements modifying an original posting.

In December 2007, *The New York Sun* reported that Amalgamated Bank had provided Jemal with a \$100 million construction loan for properties in Brooklyn, which the bank confirmed on Tuesday. Last month, the *Daily News* quoted a Brooklyn real estate agent as calling Jemal “a genius.” The paper has since reported on Jemal’s threat of action against the blogger.

The Wiz

The SSJ book on *The Riviera at Roosevelt Island* describes Jemal, who gives his age as 50, in glowing terms. “He has a deep love and respect for the environment, the history of the neighborhood, and the impact of future growth. Originally Mr. Jemal was one of the founding partners of ‘Nobody Beat’s [sic] The Wiz.’ His marketing genius helped catapult the company to the 13th most recognized brand name in the country, with annual sales exceeding \$1.5 billion. At the same time, he developed his foundation in real estate, by personally developing over 6 million feet of retail space around the Northeast.

“Since selling The Wiz, Mr. Jemal won the bid for the development of South Point on Roosevelt Island in New York City, personally developing the master plan of one of the largest residential projects in New York City. It is comparable to Battery Park City and the new TimeWarner complex... Mr. Jemal is ranked by *Real Estate Weekly* as the pre-eminent waterfront development expert.”

RIOC President Steve Shane was surprised at seeing the SSJ proposal for Roosevelt Island.

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PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the New York State Urban Development Corporation, doing business as the Empire State Development Corporation ("ESD" or the "Corporation"), pursuant to Section 16(2) of the New York State Urban Development Corporation Act (Chapter 174, Section 1, Laws of 1968, as amended) (the "Act"), has adopted a General Project Plan (the "Plan") with respect to the RIO-C-Aerial Tramway Improvements and Modernization Capital Project (the "Project"), at the Directors' meeting on July 17, 2008. Copies of the Plan are available without charge to any person who shall make a request for the same at the office of the Corporation. The Corporation will file such Plan in the office of the New York County Clerk, 60 Centre Street, Room 161, New York, New York 10007 and with the Clerk of the City of New York, 1 Centre Street, 2nd Floor South, New York, New York 10007. A copy of the Plan is also on file at the principal office of the Corporation, 633 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10017, and is available for inspection by the general public Monday through Friday, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

The Project includes the modernization of the Roosevelt Island Aerial Tramway by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation of the State of New York. Total Project costs are expected to be approximately \$25,000,000. ESD proposes to make a \$15,000,000 grant to the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation of the State of New York to assist in the financing of the Project.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE, that, in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Act, a public hearing, open to all persons, will be held by the Corporation at the Community Room, 4 River Road, Roosevelt Island, New York 10044 on Tuesday, August 5, 2008, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., to consider the Plan.

DATED: July 21, 2008
New York, New York

New York State Urban Development Corporation
By: Eileen McEvoy, Corporate Secretary



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Island Pioneer

Dom Sciallo, Omaha Beach Survivor, Recalls the Island of 1977

by Jennifer Dunning

Everybody knows Dominic Sciallo, though maybe not by name. He is the slender, kind-faced nonagenarian glimpsed having dinner at Trellis with his friend, Linda Egan, or inspecting the plants that thrive luxuriously in the patio garden of the Senior Center on Main Street. An inherent part of Island life, Mr. Sciallo is indeed known by everybody.

As the Island fills with newcomers, longtime residents take on a special importance, embodying not only the Island’s history but also the life stories that belong to them alone, even as they weave like threads into the fabric of everyday Island life. Look into Sciallo’s gentle eyes and it is possible to see something of the boy who ran away from home in East Harlem. The World War II veteran is there, too, the young soldier in the first infantry division who knew instinctively to duck into a bomb crater on Omaha Beach, living to fight other battles as others fell around him, picked off by Germans hid-

ing in the cliffs beyond.

Hovering, too, in those eyes is the 59-year-old man who, newly arrived on the Island in 1977, looked around and saw the need for a place for seniors to congregate, and proceeded to create one. He had followed his brother to the Island, moving into the apartment in Eastwood where he lives today. “I do my job,” Mr. Sciallo says. “That’s it. No bragging.”

He is not interested in talking about his childhood. Mr. Sciallo achieved a closure of sorts to his wartime experiences when he received eight medals earned during the war and presented to him by Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney in a 2004 ceremony at the Senior Center. “She made it up from Washington,” Ms. Egan recalls, still impressed. But the memories of war crowd in, some prompting a grin and others a shudder all these years later.

He enjoyed the ladies of Southampton, he recalls, and still smiles at the disinclination of Foreign Legionnaires to be interrupted in

their lovemaking as young American soldiers burst in unknowingly on them in a house in Tunisia. But he cannot forget the bodies strewn along Omaha Beach, or the bulldozers that swept them up eventually. “We couldn’t get off the beach,” he says, returning, several times in a recent conversation, to the sight of the bulldozers.

It was often cold, and bitterly so when he was badly wounded and his fighting career ended suddenly, just before Christmas 1944. It was then that he lost much of his hearing. But the Big Red One, as his division was called, survived to fight another day. It hadn’t occurred to him, or the young men who enlisted with him, that they would return. “We were going to be drafted anyhow,” he said. “We figured we wouldn’t come back. It was the war, sweetheart.” He added that war is always hell, wherever it occurs. “I think we made a big mistake in Iraq. Somebody goofed up. I don’t know if it was Rumsfeld or Bush. And the young are expected to rectify it.



Dom Sciallo’s son mounted long overdue medals and ribbons that Dom received in 2004 for service in World War II, including the Bronze Star.

“People say, ‘This is bad, this is bad.’ I say, ‘Well, we made a mistake. Let’s get out of it.’ Though we can’t just pull out.”

He was pleased when he and Ms. Egan were approached by moviegoers at a screening of *Saving Private Ryan*. “People in the theater found out that he was on Omaha Beach,” Ms. Egan said. “They came up to shake hands and ask what it was like.” But there are times, Mr. Sciallo admits, when he finds himself a little down. “I go home and yell at myself. ‘Dominic, you’re crazy! What’s the matter with you? What are you thinking?’ And it fades away.”

His wife, Miriam, died in 1990. His son, Jeff, lives in South Carolina, and was a proud attendee at the medal ceremony. And Mr. Sciallo has many friends on the Island. But he saddens a little, uncharacteristically, when he thinks of the ways in which his beloved Senior Center has changed over the years.

The year 1983 was a good one for the Center, when it was outfit-

ted with furniture being discarded by the Roosevelt Hotel during renovation. There were potluck parties. But that was also the year when Mr. Sciallo, six times president of the organization, signed a contract with a food supplier to take over Center meals. A little of the heart seemed to go out of the organization.

The Island has changed, too. “Now everyone seems to have their own little group,” Mr. Sciallo said. “We are not as social as we were then.” He has long dreamed of establishing a younger auxiliary group for the Center, whose members would come to know the Island’s seniors better. “I’d like to get people to converge on Roosevelt Island instead of away from it.”

Mr. Sciallo smiled. “I’m a dedicated senior. Always have been, always will be. I’m almost 91. I’m keeping up. I’ve always taken good care of myself. I get up in the morning and make the best of the day.”

Richard C. Wade

Richard C. Wade, the distinguished teacher, political advisor, and pioneering urban historian, died on Friday, July 18, at his home in Rivercross, where he had lived since 1976. He was 87.

Wade was the author of three books on the culture, sociology, and politics of American cities. He edited the 25-volume *Urban Life in America* series published by the Oxford University Press. His first book, *The Urban Frontier*, published in 1959, was based on his dissertation at Harvard University. It challenged prevailing theory by claiming that cities like Pittsburgh, Louisville, and Cincinnati played a much greater role than farmers and pioneers in opening up the American West. Other books included *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860* and *Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis*, which was written with Harold M. Mayer.

Wade was an influential teacher at the University of Chicago in the 1960’s, applying social-science theory to the study of cities. He was named a distinguished professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, where he taught from 1971 to 1994. He also taught at Oxford University in England in 1974-75.

He founded and was the first president of the Urban History Association. He served as Chicago Housing Commissioner from 1967 to 1971, and chaired the New York Governor’s Commission for Historical Preservation, 1974-78. He also chaired the New York Governor’s Commission on Libraries from 1989 to 1993 and was troubled by the degree of adult illiteracy he encountered on his travels for the commission. Liane Thomas Wade, his widow, said that he was at work on the creation of a blog on illiteracy just before his death.

Wade relished the push and pull of American politics, managing Robert F. Kennedy’s upstate campaign for the New York Senate in 1964 and serving as a leading strategist for the presidential campaign of George McGovern in the New York primary. He took a keen, shrewd interest in the Obama-McCain contest.

Born in Des Moines, Iowa, and raised in Winnetka, Illinois, Wade earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in history at the University of Rochester, where he taught after receiving his doctorate from Harvard in

1956. He was also an avid athlete, playing championship-level tennis in high school and competing in collegiate basketball, baseball, and track and field at Rochester. He was proud of those accomplishments.



Listed in his resume are his participation in the “National Intercollegiate Tournament in Princeton, as a Freshman... Strategy sessions with silver-haired man in yellow shirt, Albert Einstein... and citing “1943 Senior Day athletic highlights: first in tennis, placed in board & high jumps, stole a base in baseball...”

A stimulating, challenging mix of brisk idealism and caustic humor, Wade was a familiar presence in Roosevelt Island life. He was a vocal, sometimes hilarious opponent of privatization of Rivercross and the Island’s other Mitchell-Lama housing. Seemingly impervious to the cold, he strode across Good Shepherd Plaza in the dead of winter, a tall, scarecrow-thin figure whose white hair and unjacketed cotton shirt blew freely in the coldest winds. No subject seemed too small or large for him to tackle over white wine at Trellis, where he had a succession of favorite tables, at which he would read and write for hours, looking up to smile and wave when passing Island residents and workers caught his eye. “He felt he wrote well there,” his widow said.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by four stepchildren who grew up on Roosevelt Island. They are Andrew Whittaker of New York City; Erica Whittaker of Windsor, England; Harmon Chapman of Pompano Beach, Florida; and Alan Chapman of Norwalk, Connecticut.

In his report, *Libraries in the Service of a Free Society*, published in 1991, Wade wrote: “The traditional function of libraries, like schools, has been profoundly democratic: that a free society assumes a literate and informed citizenry; that no one, for any reason, should be denied access to the cultural resources of this or any other country; that the records of Federal, state, and local governments are and ought to be available to the public; that every issue, no matter how controversial, deserves a fair reading; that the right to learn and improve is an essential part of what it means to be an American.”

—Jennifer Dunning

Births



Zalman and Nechama Duchman have a new daughter, Mushkie, born July 3. She comes into the world with two siblings ready to greet her – Mendel and Bentzion.



Taren Hastings and Cliff Mangual have a new daughter. She is Gule Calyse Mangual, born July 1 and weighing 7 lb., 2 oz.

Send birth announcements to editor@MainStreetWIRE with digital photo and appropriate information, or mail photo and information (with return address and phone number) to *The WIRE*, 531 Main Street #413, Roosevelt Island, NYC10044.



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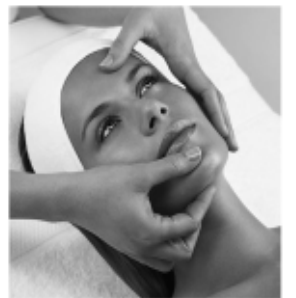
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