

Bronx Community Board 8
Report of the Special Committee on the Hudson River Greenway
June 9, 2015

Committee members: Chair Bob Bender, Phil Friedman, Laura Spalter

What follows is a brief summary of the Special Greenway Committee's activities and progress. We have also included our recommendations. Please check the committee minutes and Board website for additional details.

Introduction and Context

On **June 10, 2014** Community Board 8 passed a resolution endorsing a mixed use, recreational Greenway along the Hudson River extending from Spuyten Duyvil to Yonkers. The resolution called for "engineering and other feasibility studies to be conducted by appropriate agencies along the length of the proposed Greenway in Riverdale to determine the best location for an all-river route located west of the Metro North tracks."

The resolution also acknowledged constraints voiced by Metro North Railroad (MNR) regarding their present and future needs, Track 6, and the importance of stabilizing and protecting the shoreline from flooding and future weather events. Metro North responded to our resolution in a letter dated October 29, 2014. MNR stated its support for the Board's resolution, and willingness to work with the committee on "mutually beneficial improvements along the shoreline in Riverdale."

On **September 10, 2014** the Board passed a resolution creating a Special Committee for the Hudson River Greenway. The special committee exists for a term of one year. Its purpose was to carry out the goals established in the June 2014 resolution. Our mandate was to work "In cooperation with local residents, community groups, elected officials, government agencies, the affected rail companies, and any other stake- holders in order to further the goal of creating a Hudson River Greenway."

Outreach to Stakeholders

- Five public meetings were held.
- Participation: Community groups included Friends of the Hudson River Greenway/KRVCDC, Riverdale-Spuyten Duyvil Coalition, Riverdale Nature Preservancy, Riverdale Community Coalition, Along the Hudson Homeowners Association, Friends of Spuyten Duyvil and others.

- Representatives for Councilman Cohen, Senator Klein, and Assemblyman Dinowitz reported at each meeting.
- Institutions: The committee met with private property owners Dan Rheingold, president of the Hebrew Home for the Aged, Dr. Charles Flynn, president of the College of Mount St. Vincent, and Commodore Ted Conover, from the Riverdale Yacht Club. All support the Greenway, but require specific criteria for access and security.
- Three site visits at Riverdale Station and 254th St.
- Using city maps and information gleaned from Block and Lot data, letters were sent to private homeowners and buildings closest to the Greenway regarding the Greenway.

Outreach to Elected Officials and City/State Agencies

- Letters sent to Senator Schumer, Congressman Engel, Senator Klein, Assemblyman Dinowitz, and Councilman Cohen requesting funds for an engineering and feasibility study.
- Letters sent to the following agencies to introduce our committee and ask for guidance: NYS and NYC DOT, DEC, Parks Dept., DEP
- Letter to NYMTC during comment period on their final plan in order to clarify Board's position opposing widening streets, construction of cantilever on the Henry Hudson Bridge, loss of parking, construction through Riverdale Park.
- In January, letters sent to Senator Klein and Assemblyman Dinowitz requesting that a portion of the state's 5 billion dollar surplus be used to stabilize the waterfront in Riverdale to protect Metro-North's Hudson Line, and at the same time incorporate an all-river Hudson River Greenway into the project's design.
- Meeting with Metro-North Railroad officials.
- Meeting with Congressman Engel re federal funding for greenway

Progress Report

Subsequent to our February 25th meeting with Metro-North officials, the committee was informed that "Metro-North is willing to look at options that would involve stabilizing our embankment along the Hudson River in order to accommodate a trail along the shoreline. As such, Metro-North will draft a scope of work and cost estimate to conduct such a study. We will then provide that information to Community Board #8 so that a funding source for such a study can be identified and secured in order to proceed with such a review."

We are pleased to report that Senator Klein has promised \$250,000 for Metro North's Scope of Work. The monies will go directly to MNRR. However, to date the budget has not been finalized, so we await final word.

Bronx Community Board 8 has connected with the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (BOEDC). BOEDC has offered to serve as a conduit for funds as the HRG proceeds toward implementation.

Next Steps

There are many challenges surrounding implementation of a recreational greenway, particularly because of its proximity to Metro North Railroad, and limited East-West access.

The following (partial) list notes several areas that require further study and much perseverance:

- Obtaining funding and grants
- Environmental Reviews and obtaining DEC and other permits
- Private ownership issues and Riparian rights (Yacht Club)
- Cost of purchasing recreational easement (Mt. St. Vincent)
- Establishing a Lead Agency, Operation and Maintenance of the greenway

Recommendations

The committee looks forward to working with MNRRA as the scope of work progresses. We recommend that the Special Committee on the Hudson River Greenway be renewed to continue our work. We hope to work with stakeholders to develop a plan that will meet their needs while fulfilling the community's expressed desire for a recreational riverfront greenway.