



FDR Hope Memorial Rendering  
Expected completion date December 2020

# RIOC NEWS

Community, Identity, Conversations & Innovations

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## BLACKWELL HOUSE What is Old is New Again

Blackwell House, the two-story landmarked structure located at 500 Main St., is situated in an area that encourages the community and visitors alike to gather, play, and relax in the surrounding open space; and within the nearby Blackwell Park. The house sits on a 1,920 sq. ft. footprint and is named after the family who farmed and maintained the island in the late 1680's. It is one of the oldest farmhouses in New York City and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Throughout the years, the house served as residential quarters for local almshouse wardens and hospital directors, and was used for small community celebrations in the 1970's.

In September 2017, 10 years after the renovation of the exterior was completed, construction commenced on the interior of the house and included the installation of new ceilings and doors, repairs to the staircase and flooring; installation of new mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems; as well as the installation of a new ADA access ramp. During construction, the exterior and parts of the porch both showed signs of deterioration in some areas and received a minor facelift as well. Overall, the work revealed deficiencies throughout the structure that were addressed, preserving the uniqueness and historic features of the home, bringing it close to its original state.

Once open, areas of Blackwell House will become home to some of the island's historical treasures, records, and archives. It will be used to tell the history of Roosevelt Island through exhibition, including images of the island's landmarked structures and buildings, no longer standing, as well as community stories and experiences. The first floor will be open to the public during specified days and hours of the week for viewings and tours. We look forward to inviting the community to a socially distanced ribbon cutting ceremony in the next few weeks.

To view updated Blackwell interior renovation photos, go to: [rioc.ny.gov/176](http://rioc.ny.gov/176)



## DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHT

### Capital Planning & Projects

The Capital Planning & Projects (CPP) department, which consists of both RIOC staff and LiRo, (an architecture, engineering and construction firm) our Owner's Representatives, facilitates the design and construction of all new capital projects on the island. These projects revolve around the safety and quality of life for all residents and visitors of Roosevelt Island. With the assistance of the LiRo field superintendents, the team is able to competently assess all work done on project sites to ensure that it is done in compliance with the safety protocols set forth by the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA), as well as all regulatory and code requirements of the respective contract documents.

*Continued on back cover >>*





## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

**Altheria Jackson**

**Title:** Assistant Vice President of Programs & Operations

**Department:** Operations

**RIOC Employee Since:** January 2019

**Areas of Responsibility:** Information Technology (IT), Horticulture/Grounds, Maintenance, Communications & Community Affairs, Organizational Effectiveness & Special Projects

**Years of Experience:** 14 Years

### ***Describe your role and how it pushes forward the ideals of RIOC.***

My current role at RIOC is the Assistant Vice President of Programming and Operations. My objective is to always assess operations from different angles because this allows me to tackle challenges with different perspectives. My professional philosophy is to constantly elevate the status of all department outcomes, while ensuring that we work efficiently. The journey in meeting these expectations requires a needs-based approach of identifying what the staff requires to improve their work and collaborating with them to create those results through initiatives. Initiatives are only successful through proper training and education, which I believe is a practice that should be implemented throughout all organizations.

### ***How do you balance making challenging decisions while valuing the input from department managers?***

Time management is an instructional tool valuable to decision making. Being available for my team shows that decisions are made at a group level and not exclusively by leadership. I think it's important to know that some decisions are based on programmatic goals and expectations; but it's equally important to listen to input from my managers' needs and ideas – because they may have more insight of department logistics that I may not have. This approach ignites an autonomy in my staff that promotes trust and productivity. Allowing space for difficult and constructive dialogue creates a bond between my team and I, which better supports the work and the vision we are all executing.

### ***What impact would you like to have on RIOC?***

I would like for my impact in the corporation to be recognized through my teamwork and spirit. I value having a good attitude and being able to navigate and manage different leadership-styles and personalities. Being adaptable has contributed to my ability to help so many people and connect them with the answers and resources they needed in order to grow at the Corporation. A strong personality trait that I would like to be remembered for is my ability to research and find out answers. "She coached me and offered me nothing but respect," is what I want to be remembered for.

### ***How do you identify the needs of the corporation through program quality?***

"Preventive Management" is a style that I use when analyzing my departments because it allows me to look at our projected goals and our trajectory towards them. I use hindsight in scoping trends or alerts that might interrupt the completion of any department's objective. I analyze the impact it may have on the Corporation externally and internally. When you are constantly assessing, you are always examining and challenging best practices to better fit the overview of your department. I anticipate certain scenarios and check-in with my leadership to see if my approach is correct; and whether it will help with creating preventative solutions that can prepare us to perform more successfully and efficiently.

## OFFICER OF THE MONTH

**Anastasia Aquart-Morgan**

Youth Officer, Anastasia Aquart-Morgan, has been with the Public Safety Department for five years and has been an asset from the very beginning. Her passion for law enforcement drives her to continuously seek ways to improve herself and others. She is the "go-to officer" and is non-stop, always helping others, regardless of their rank. Officer Aquart-Morgan takes on responsibilities above and beyond her job description and can handle any task given to her, big or small.

During the month of September, Officer Aquart-Morgan was assigned to Bicycle Enforcement Patrol. She has been diligent in educating and enforcing bicycle safety. Throughout September, she interacted with over 1,000 bicyclists. She advised on bicycle safety and has issued over 500 warnings and admonishments to bicyclists for minor violations. Officer Aquart-Morgan has also written over 40 summonses for various bicycle and vehicle violations.

Being very knowledgeable, and handling every emergency call with professionalism and respect, Officer Aquart-Morgan is pleasant and kindhearted. She quickly earned the respect and trust of her colleagues by just being herself. Please say hello to Officer Aquart-Morgan next time you see her around the island!



# GREEN CORNER

## Spotlight on Roosevelt Island for Climate Week 2020!

On Wednesday, September 23rd, Roosevelt Island community members spoke up during the Engaged RI initiative's presentation for Climate Week 2020, an annual United Nations and NYC sponsored global summit.

The presentation entitled, "How a Small Grant Helped a Community's Sustainability Efforts Even During A Global Pandemic: Six SDG Transformations and Drawdown Solutions," recapped a year of engagement. In large part, thanks to a Cornell University Office of Engagement Initiative's grant, Cornell Tech received to promote environmental understanding on the island. Cornell Tech, RIOC, RIRA, and islanders agreed that being inclusive and accessible were key to making good things happen. "My advice to other kids out there is take care of your neighbors, we're all in this together," said Anthony Longo, Jr., age 9.

Sharing takeaways from Engaged RI's pre-pandemic happenings, such as the Zero Waste launch event, as well as the Eco-Ambassador and Nature Meet Ups, it was clear that partnerships between building managers, residents, businesses, as well as City and State stakeholders are needed to tackle solutions. At the Youth Matters! event In March, students from the Beacon program and the R.I. Youth Center were introduced to inspiring entrepreneurs and RIRA's Adib Mansour also guided youth to share essays, including the Youth Center's Aseel Idris who wrote, "If we take care of our island, the earth will start getting better. We take care of it and in return it takes care of us." All are welcome to connect, share ideas or take action by visiting Engaged RI at: [sites.google.com/site/engagedri/home](https://sites.google.com/site/engagedri/home)



## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

### Cyril Opperman

**Title:** Director of Transportation

**Department:** Transportation

**RIOC Employee Since:** 2011

**Areas of Responsibility:** Bus Operations, Bus Garage, Tram Operations, Warehouse

**Years of Experience:** 32

**Describe your role and responsibilities here at RIOC, as well as your process when managing the needs of your department.**

My main responsibility is to keep our passengers safe. I do that by being a 19A Examiner for the Department of Motor Vehicles. I make sure I keep the bus operators in compliance with any necessary testing, training, and other requirements. One thing about my position is that I have done this job for a long time. When you have a lot of experience you can train people to do the job better and safer. I am constantly juggling how I can be a better manager for my team, while also maintaining the compliance controls we have set.

**How do you coordinate the day-to-day operations?**

When I come in the morning, I have an extensive checklist that I go through and

ensure are completed. It is instrumental in achieving my goals for the day. When I arrive, I check-in with the manager of Motorgate Garage to see if anything is needed or how I can support her. I check-in with Joe Marino, Manager of Buses and Mechanics. We see how the buses are operating and who's on the road. It's important to check all the administrative points, like attendance and the DMV license notification application. I'm also responsible for the timeliness and locations of the Red Buses and updating the Red Bus app, NextBus. Our department goes over conditioning reports every day to make sure buses are working well and pass inspection for use. I coordinate with the Tram as well to get updates on their operations. Each day I patrol to help my drivers with any immediate needs.

**Explain the equipment maintenance and upkeep of the Red buses.**

I require that every bus goes through our Preventive Maintenance program, alongside our Dolphin application (used for routine maintenance). Every month our buses undergo undercarriage checks for the purpose of identifying any repairs that may be needed, such as problems with the wheels or the exhausts. Work orders are then generated to facilitate prompt repairs and a fast result. A record of the repair is then added into the Dolphin application, and it is shared with the Department of Transportation (DOT).



**How have transportation needs changed during the pandemic?**

The needs have changed significantly for us. As part of our health and safety routine, the buses are sanitized twice a day to ensure optimal service. I make it a priority to inspect the buses thoroughly with my team; and frequently reinforce the seriousness of COVID-19. Through these interactions, they feel supported and motivated to get the job done while preserving their safety and health as well as the safety and health of the community. I am beyond proud of my team, especially the Red Bus operators who I consider to be the unsung heroes of the pandemic. They have committed themselves to providing a reliable and impeccable service throughout this time. As we continue to move forward, my team is constantly receiving new information on better COVID-19 management; and observing trends to adapt our cleaning methods as needed, for the prevention of future spikes.



Cornell Tech Graduate Roosevelt Island hotel (left) and Verizon Executive Education Center (right)

# COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT

## Cornell Tech Fall Update

The fall semester at Cornell Tech is now underway! The campus has adopted a hybrid model for learning, with mostly virtual classes and some limited opportunities for in-person engagement. Students have moved into The House; and Cornell Tech has developed

robust COVID-19 protocols on their website at [tech.cornell.edu/coronavirus](http://tech.cornell.edu/coronavirus).

The campus welcomed its very first class of Urban Tech students as part of the Jacobs Technion-Cornell Institute's Urban Tech Hub in August. The Urban Tech Hub was launched to foster innovations and entrepreneurs that will make cities more livable and adaptable through technology. Founding director, Michael Samuelian, will work with students to address major challenges facing cities including climate change and social inequality. This fall, the students will be working on projects related to COVID-19 recovery in NYC to support reopening strategies for the city.

The Verizon Executive Education Center and the Graduate Roosevelt Island hotel are nearing completion and they hope to have more information on the progress of these buildings for the community later this fall. In addition, The Café ([the.cafe.tech.cornell.edu](http://the.cafe.tech.cornell.edu)) has remained open throughout the spring and summer and, in keeping with NYC guidelines, it is now open for indoor dining at reduced capacity.

Cornell Tech looks forward to continued engagement with Roosevelt Islanders through the Community Conversations series, which is now virtual. Neighbors can hear about groundbreaking work and research directly from Cornell Tech's expert faculty. The campus's work with PS/IS 217, the community collaborations in the MakerLAB @ Cornell Tech and various Roosevelt Island organizations -- including the Roosevelt Island Senior Center, NYC Health + Hospitals/Coler, RISA, and Engaged Roosevelt Island ([sites.google.com/site/engagedri/home](http://sites.google.com/site/engagedri/home)), among others -- are also ongoing and moving online as much as possible. For more information, visit [tech.cornell.edu](http://tech.cornell.edu).

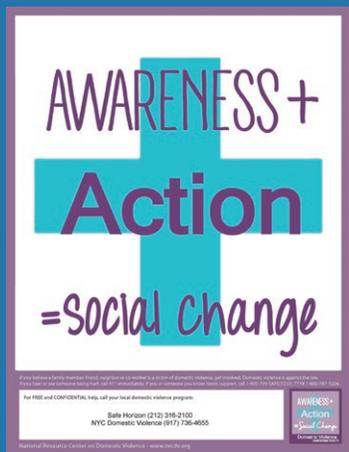
## Capital Planning & Projects *(continued from front cover)*

In the last year that LiRo has been a part of CPP, projects such as Blackwell House, Seawall Railings, McManus Field, Lighthouse Bridges and the AVAC system, have been successfully completed. Currently there are six active projects in construction, which are all proceeding as per the latest reviewed schedule. These projects are also being performed within their estimated budgets.

Construction began on the Southpoint Park Shoreline Restoration Project on July 6th of 2020. Deemed essential, this construction will repair the crumbling east and west seawalls which will in turn render more resiliency and protect the island from future storms. The shoreline will be enhanced while also taking into consideration the natural wildlife and environment. Currently construction is proceeding as planned, with an estimated completion date of December 2021. Due to the nature of this project, LiRo has a full-time, dedicated field superintendent on site to guarantee that all contractual requirements are met. RIOC also hired a third-party inspector to verify that the construction is being performed in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations.

# OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

To learn more, go to: [opdv.ny.gov](http://opdv.ny.gov)



## WHAT'S Happening

Upcoming Island Events:

- RI Senior Center Food Pantry  
Fridays, 4:00-6:30 PM
- Food Scrap Drop Off  
Saturdays at the Farmer's Market, 9:00 AM-2:00 PM
- RIOC Virtual Board Meeting  
Thursday, Oct. 22, 5:30 PM

