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What's going on with:
2575 Palisade Avenue, Riverdale, The Bronx
June 17, 2015

PROJECT

Pool repair

PARTICIPANTS

David Lipson, senior managing director for Century Management Services

Harry Amer, board president

Christopher Payan, architect and board member

Renzo Verastegui, an associate at Mueser, Rutledge Consulting, an engineering firm

Mario Sciacca, president of Etna Contracting, contractor

BUDGET

Between \$500,000 and \$600,000



2575 Palisade Avenue, Riverdale, The Bronx / Photo credit: StreetEasy

The co-op's pool was quite literally slip, slidin' away.

The 142-unit co-op, at 2575 Palisade Avenue in the Riverdale section of the Bronx, is a paradise of sorts - at least according to Harry Amer, a resident since 1980 and board president since 1982. "Everybody has a beautiful view of the Hudson River and the Palisades," says Amer. "There are no buildings to the west of us, [just] a greenbelt, the trees, and Metro North train rails. Other than that, you feel like you're more in the country than in New York City."

Yet the seven-member board found it had trouble in paradise - trouble with a capital 'T' and that rhymes with 'P' and that stands for pool.



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The steel pool was installed more than 60 years ago "probably when [the co-op] was built," Amer notes, and it had a life expectancy of about 45 years. Problems began occurring about seven or eight years ago, when it began experiencing what one observer called "settling problems." When the super inspected the pool, he noticed that the soil underneath was getting washed away. In other words, with the soil eroding, the pool, located at the top of a hill overlooking the Metro North railroad, was moving - incrementally, it is true, but still moving.

"We've put in work over the years to stabilize it," says David Lipson, senior managing director for Century Management Services, who has supervised the co-op for 15 years. "There were a lot of repairs [needed] on the metal shell and support steel underneath. Gravel was also added underneath to stabilize the soil, so it wouldn't slide down into the river."

What made repairs so tough was the pool's proximity to both the cliff and the building. "It's behind the building, which occupies almost its entire frontage, at an elevation three or four stories below that of the street," explains Ed Pass, a board member. "A two-level garage under the building goes down two stories below grade. But this is still a story or two higher than the pool area directly behind it."

In addition, access through the garage was problematic because the driveway leading into it rests not on ground, but on the ceiling of its lower level, which extends under the roadway. A ramp inside the garage leads from upper to lower levels. Weight on that driveway is limited to passenger cars or pickup trucks. This one-lane driveway occupies the entire open space on the south end of the co-op's property. On the north end, a narrow slot of space behind the front garden leads to a retaining wall's sheer two-story drop. This is followed by steeply sloping ground and a set of stairs, which lead to the pool level.

"We had about five or six interviews with construction companies and engineering firms," recalls Amer, "and nobody came up with a suggestion [for what to do]. Nobody really wanted the job because of where our pool is located. There'd be absolutely no room to get any equipment in and it would be very difficult to [bring] in materials."

Then an architect, Christopher Payan, joined the board. Working with Renzo Verastegui, an associate at Mueser, Rutledge Consulting, an engineering firm, Payan devised a means to stabilize the site, which slopes steeply down to the Hudson, and thus put the pool, literally, on

firmer territory. "Instead of a wholesale demolition of the pool, only its floor was removed," explains Pass. "The slope of this floor followed the contour of the site with most of it resting on the ground. Because there was no access to the underside of this steel floor, there had been no ability to maintain it, and it suffered the greatest corrosion over its 50-year life."

The contractor for the job, Mario Sciacca, president of Etna Contracting, was selected via sealed bids, not because he was the least expensive - he wasn't - but because he had a good track record of completing jobs on time with a minimum number of change orders.

"He was very ingenious in doing the concrete work," Lipson says of Sciacca. "He opened up a section of the wall in the [underground] garage, and they went through that way, pumping the concrete through there."

"Because it was 400 feet from the location of the pool to the street, we had to [do that], two stories up, with a crane," Sciacca notes. "All the debris had to come out that way and all the new material came in [through] there, and the concrete was pumped at 400 feet. The first three feet of the pool from the floor up is all concrete, and then the remaining [part] is steel."

Around the pool, an apron of wooden decking floats over the site on an elevated steel frame, disguising what is largely an above-ground pool. These steel walls were retained, and after the floor was cut out, they served as the form within which a new concrete floor was poured.

The job started in September, took a weather break when winter hit, and finished one week after Memorial Day. Amer reports that the cost would have been, for the removal, renovation, and installation of a new pool, a minimum of \$1.5 million. The cost for repairing it was much less: between \$500,000 and \$600,000, which came from the reserves. "We [had] refinanced a couple of years before," says Lipson. "We anticipated the capital work that would be needed."

- Tom Soter

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