



STATEN ISLAND SPECIAL DISTRICTS BACKGROUND AND GOALS

April 2020



Staten Island Special District Boundaries – three districts

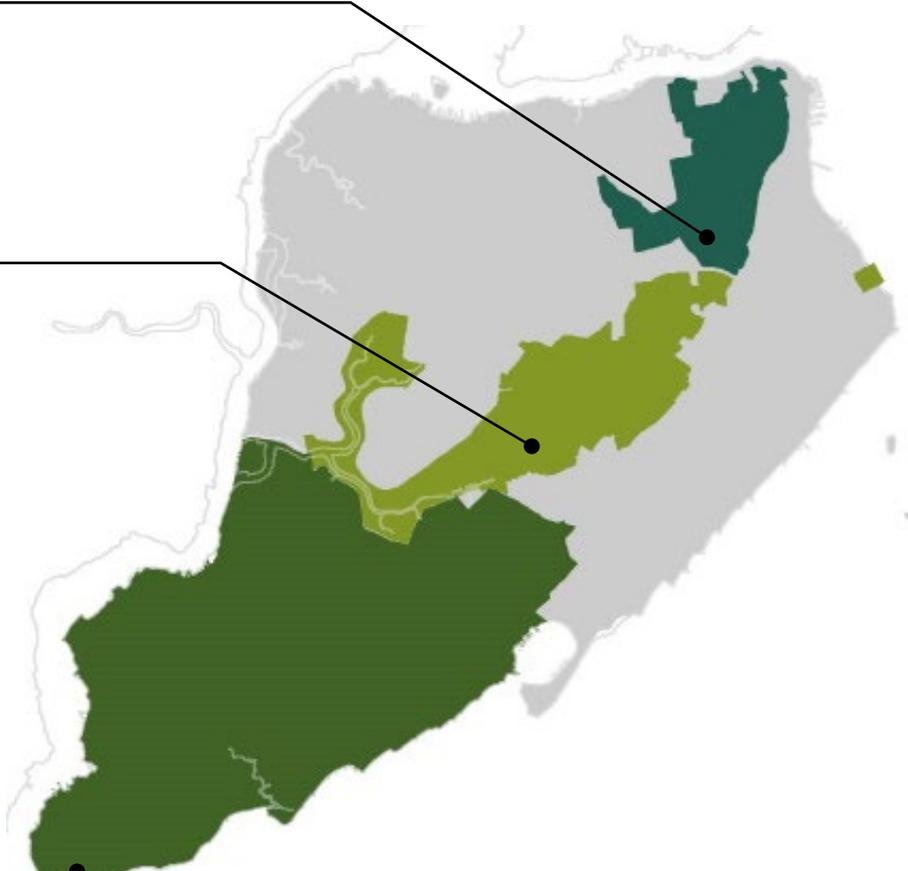
Special Hillside Preservation District (HS) | 1987

- Silver Lake
- Grymes Hill
- Tompkinsville
- New Brighton
- West Brighton
- Ward Hill
- Randall Manor
- St. George

Special Natural Area District (SNAD) | 1974

- Todt Hill
- Emerson Hill
- Lighthouse Hill
- Shore Acres (NA-3, 1977)

In the early 1970s, environmental conservation was at the forefront with the adoption of the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act. The increased pressure of development in largely undeveloped areas on Staten Island, that were recently connected via Verrazano Bridge, and support for the national environmental regulations were the primary impetus for creating the Special Districts on Staten Island to guide development that is balanced with natural resource preservation.



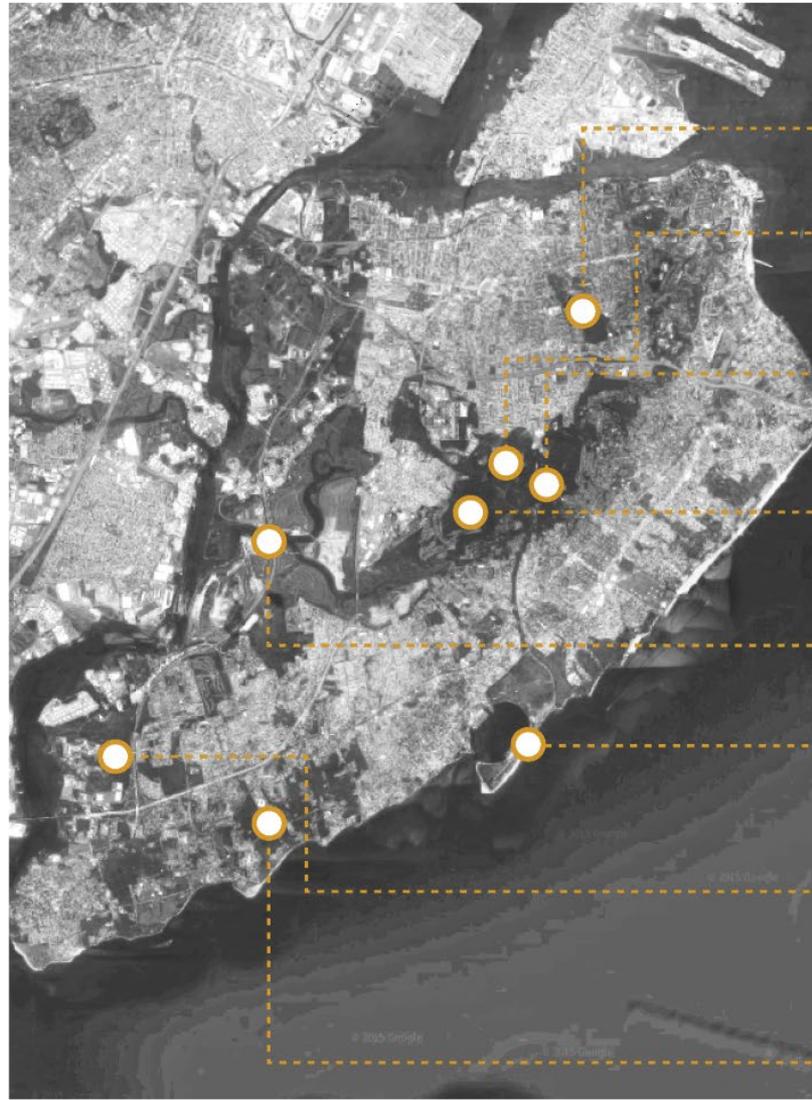
Special South Richmond Development District (SRD) | 1975

- Tottenville
- Charleston
- Rossville
- Sandy Ground
- Woodrow
- Bay Terrace
- Annadale
- Eltingville
- Arden Heights
- Great Kills
- Prince's Bay
- Richmond Valley
- Pleasant Plains

Major Natural Assets In Staten Island



Special Districts are connected to and support the broader ecological assets across the borough



CLOVE LAKE



BLOOD ROOT VALLEY



HIGH ROCK



LATOURETTE



FRESHKILLS



GREAT KILLS



CLAY PIT PONDS



WOLFE'S POND



When and Why were these districts established?

Special Natural Area District

The Special Natural Area District (SNAD) was established in 1974 as the first special purpose zoning district to protect natural features such as aquatic, biologic, botanic, geologic, and topographic features within the mid-island neighborhoods of Staten Island. In 1977, SNAD was expanded to include the Shore Acres neighborhood located in the northeastern portion of Staten Island. SNAD regulations were updated once again, in 2005, to create consistency with the Special Hillside Preservation District (SHPD) regulations.



When and Why were these districts established?

Special South Richmond Development District

The Special South Richmond Development District (SSRDD) was established in 1975 as an overall development plan for 12,000 acres of largely undeveloped land in the southern portion of Staten Island. The purpose of the district was to coordinate development and services, protect and maintain natural features such as trees and topography; avoid destruction of irreplaceable natural and recreational resources and to ensure that new development was compatible with existing communities.



When and Why were these districts established?

Special Hillside Preservation District

Building upon the goals of the SNAD, the Special Hillside Preservation District (SHPD) was established over a decade later, in 1987, to guide development in the sensitive slopes of the Serpentine ridge in the northern eastern portion of the Island. Since the Hillside district was created after SNAD, it was able to codify some of the best practices learned.



Neighborhood Character: Best Practices resulting from current rules



- Variety of planting and ground cover
- Tree-lined and bucolic neighborhoods
- Retaining walls and development blends harmoniously with natural topography

Why This Text Amendment Is Needed

In our experience reviewing applications over the past 40 years, hearing from stakeholders, understanding the latest environmental science, and access to LiDAR technology, we see the need to modernize the special districts to incorporate new information and codify best practices, ensure more consistent outcomes and thoughtful development that preserves the most important natural resources and contributes to the community's character.

Some specific issues are:

- Existing review process for development sites impose **significant time and cost burdens for homeowners** and other small property owners.
- Existing rules don't adequately consider the **broader ecological context** and allow a property owner to modify natural features through **site-by-site review by the CPC**.
- Science and best practices around environmental protection have evolved since the Special District rules were adopted ~40 years ago, but **the rules have not been updated**.
- Existing rules are unclear on which natural features to preserve and result in **unpredictable outcomes** for homeowners and the community.

Staten Island Community Input In Developing The Proposal

To create the proposal, DCP has worked with stakeholders and conducted significant research since 2015

Ongoing coordination with other agencies:

- Department of Buildings
- Department of Parks and Recreation's Natural Resources Group
- Natural Area Conservancy
- Department of Environmental Conservation
- NYC Fire Department
- Department of Environmental Protection
- State Department of Environmental Conservation

Staten Island Working Group Members:

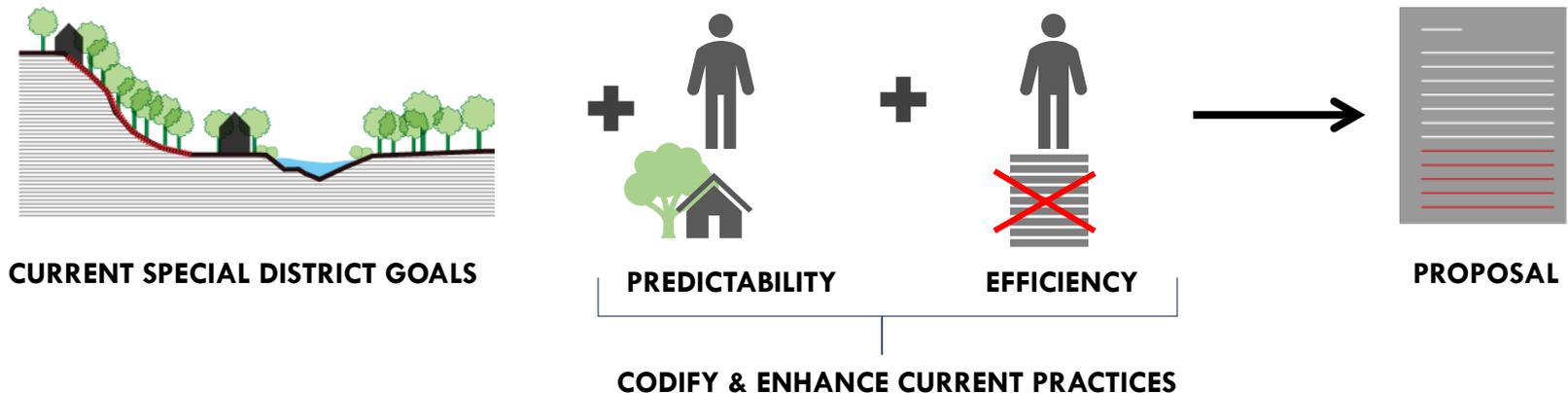
- SI Community Board 1
- SI Community Board 2
- SI Community Board 3
- Serpentine Art and Nature Commons Inc.
- SI Taxpayers Association
- SI Borough President's Office
- SI Chapter- American Institute of Architects
- SI Building Industry Association
- NYC Parks – Natural Resources Group
- Protectors of Pine Oak Woods
- Westervelt Civic Association
- Department of Buildings
- Professional Landscape Architects and Planners



Project Principles For The Proposed Update

With community input, DCP has established the following principles to guide the proposal:

- Create a **homeowner-friendly** regulatory environment with robust as-of-right rules for the development of homes on small lots that also protect significant natural features
- Enhance and protect the neighborhood character of the districts, with **greater predictability** of development outcomes
- Strengthen and **clarify** regulations for smaller properties and focus City Planning Commission (CPC) review on larger sites that have a greater impact on natural resources and the public realm





For further information on the proposal you can email us at:

SSpecialDistrictsUpdate@planning.nyc.gov