

She Puts the Bloom in Bloomingdale

NYC Bloomingdale Conserv. Project WSN 5/7/64

The names Bloomingdale Conservation Project and Barbara Oliver have become synonymous on the West Side.

For the past two years Miss Oliver has been the indefatigable director of the Project, tackling big and small community problems with the verve and élan of a torero waving a red cape at the oncoming hulk of city life in all its nefarious forms.

Most West Siders have heard of the Bloomingdale Conservation Project, but many don't know what it really is and does. In 1959 a group of people felt that help was needed to "stabilize and conserve" the section of the Bloomingdale neighborhood which runs from the south side of 104th Street

to the north side of 96th Street and from Riverside Drive to Amsterdam Avenue. But the Horches and the increasingly aware community continued giving additional financial support. During these two years Miss Oliver was doing the homework which ultimately led to the directorship of the project.

After getting her B. S. in Sociology and Economics from Long Island University, she worked as Housing Advisor for the Department of Welfare. This entailed inspecting buildings, securing apartments for families and emergency accommodation for disaster victims, as well as working with the rent commission. At the same time she was taking courses in Public Administration at N. Y. U. Soon help was needed at Bloomingdale, and Miss Oliver became the assistant director.

In 1962 Miss Oliver moved into the area and became director of the project. What little free time she had to read or sew was soon taken up by

meeting after meeting. Besides carrying on with housing problems and the now famous Riverside Play Group, new projects have blossomed under her calm leadership.

Last year's Festival at Douglass Houses made enough money to pay several teenagers to escort children down to the Play Group in Riverside Park and back again. The Festival will be repeated this year on June 24th through the joint efforts of Bloomingdale Neighborhood Recreation Committee, Park West Village and Douglass Houses.

There is also a gardening project afoot which will allow children and adults to adorn one or two sections of the park with plants and flowers.

The city contract expires this June 30th, and Miss Oliver fears there will be a cut in their financial support due to other city commitments. Her only hope is that it won't be too big.



JACK BURNETT PHOTO

to the north side of 96th Street and from Riverside Drive to Amsterdam Avenue.

A pilot project was underwritten by Mr. and Mrs. Louis Horch of the Master Institute, who donated \$20,000 for each of the two years and office space at the Institute.

The project's goal was to "enforce city housing laws, provide more lowcost housing and influence landlords to do more than scotch-tape repairs."

They worked at integrating the community both racially and economically. In 1961 the city realized the value of the work done by the project, and took over the bulk of the financial burden: a contract was signed between the Housing and Redevelopment Board (HRB) and the Bloomingdale Conservation Project, now formally known as Bloomingdale Neighborhood Conservation Association, Inc.