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Chair's Report Full Board Meeting June 17, 2008 Chair Robert Rodriguez

This month we took a very important vote on an unprecedented project, the East 125th Street Development. As you know our board gave the development a conditional disapproval. The East 125th Street Development Community Taskforce continues to meet on this issue. In my capacity as Chair of the Taskforce I will continue to fight to ensure that our requests do not go unheard. At this month's taskforce meetings we discussed issues around the Cultural Component and LEED requirements. Meetings will be ongoing and while the board is out of session for the summer the taskforce is not. I am hopeful that in September we will be reporting that the development is stronger and the community benefits are plentiful, meetings are open to the public and we encourage all to attend and follow this major development in our community.

Last week I had the pleasure to sit down with some of our new members to welcome them to the board. I would like to thank Deycy Avitia, Alvin Johnson, Monica Tavares and Nadine Verna for taking time out of their busy schedules to meet with me. To the new members who were not able to make I hope to meet with you for an informal conversation very soon as well. I would also like to thank our Vice-Chair Debbie Quinones for setting up the meeting and attending as well.

Along with Vice-Chair Debbie Quinones, I met with Hunter College President Jennifer Raab. The meeting was requested by Hunter College and was in regards to their preliminary plans to relocate their schools of Social Work and Public Health to a site in East Harlem. This initial meeting was a great opportunity to learn more about their plans and is just the first step in what I believe has the potential for a great partnership. As the plans progress I will be asking representatives from Hunter College to come in front of our Board and Committees so that we may begin a more detailed discussion about what this partnership will look like.

East Harlem's Festival season is in full swing now. I had the great privilege to attend the 116th Street Festival. Even though the heat was unbearable I saw a great turnout and a lot of happy faces. The festival proceeded without incident and I am confident that the same will be said for all other festivals that will be occurring later this summer.

Also as we reach our summer recess I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on some of our accomplishments this year. For example, this year has been a huge year for development and urban planning in our district. We completed a very thorough analysis of the 125th Street Rezoning and submitted a resolution that would have seen some truly groundbreaking zoning changes. As part of the rezoning, we negotiated an agreement with the developers of Harlem

Park that will bring improvements to local ball fields as well as employment opportunities for our local residents. In addition we saw a zoning variance for the Mt. Sinai Center for Science and Medicine. We still do not know the result of the variance application but we are confident that the Board of Standards and Appeals will see the wisdom in our resolution. This year also saw us take a vote on the East 125th Street Development. I truly believe that our thoughtful resolution will lead to a development that is more community oriented and will yield community benefits that will assist our entire community.

This was also a busy year for us in terms of hosting events. The first ever Arturo Schomburg Awards was a fantastic event that I look forward to duplicating for years to come. Our first award recipients, Congressman Charles B. Rangel and the late Marie Dickson will make it a tough twosome to top but we will try. We also hosted our 5th Annual Arts Festival and while the weather did not cooperate it was still a successful event. This year we also held our first annual East Harlem Arts Symposium. The event was well received and we expect to continue the work and discussions that were started there. The Seniors Forum was also held this month and we thank all those who turned out and who worked tirelessly to make it happen. I thank all the committee chairs and members for their hard work and dedication throughout the year, and encourage everyone to prepare for the year ahead.

I hope everyone enjoys their summer. East Harlem is a great place to be all the time but it gets a special energy in the summer. I look forward to seeing all of you at the various events that take place throughout July and August and I am excited to get back to work in September.