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COMMUNITY BOARD ELEVEN

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Economic Development, Culture & Tourism Committee
Tuesday, April 14, 2015, 7:00 p.m.
Bonifacio Senior Housing
7 East 116th Street, New York, NY 10035

*****Minutes*****

- Present: Diane Collier (chair), Holley Drakeford, Judith Febbraro, Jose Grajales, Marissa Mack, Celia Ramirez, Debbie Quiñones, Jose Altamirano, Mia Brezin (staff)
- Excused: Vincent Torres, Yma Rodriguez
- Absent: Jose Garza, Amie Petrucci-Kyros, Edwin Marcial
- Guests: Michelle Gavin, Steven Brown, R. Gibbs, Flora Forbes, Juan Pagan, Sawn Sanders, Onel Hidalgo, Alexis Sabator

Meeting called to order by committee chair Diane Collier.

1. Presentations/Discussions

- a. Presentation on Building Skills New York's affordable housing construction skills program

Steven Brown, Executive Director, presented on Building Skills' program, which provides construction industry training specifically for affordable housing development. The goal is to create career pathways in the affordable housing construction industry for those who live in the communities served by affordable housing. Building Skills' focus is shifting to soft skills training with local nonprofits, including Positive Workforce and Strive, as well as creating a skills database for easier job referrals. Their jobs are non-union but have a starting wage of \$15/hour.

The committee asked about those applying without any skills. Mr. Brown described their process of referring unskilled workers to different subcontractors so they can get on the job training, and then, if they are successful and interested in further education, they are eligible for classroom training. The Chair asked about the ECHHI project and local hiring, and Mr. Brown said they would be happy to participate and identify candidates.

- b. Presentation on The Africa Center's plans and vision

Michelle Gavin, Managing Director, presented the vision for the Center's focus: arts/culture, policy, and commerce. There will be 10K square feet of gallery space, along with a performing space and a screening room for films. There is also a proposed café on the ground floor, and Ms. Gavin is open to local hiring and using a local business in that space. The Center's Board is 60 percent African and very young. They are currently

focused on finishing fitting out the space, budgeting, and then beginning to fundraise. Ms. Gavin is seeking community advisories, and welcomes input and suggestions from our Board. The concerns from the committee were ensuring that Museum Mile would be extended up to 110th Street; how the space in front of the Center would be used; if the Tito Puente statue would still be placed there; and that the Center will incorporate Latino and diaspora views into their work.

c. Presentation on NYCHA Resilience Outreach's sustainability and local hiring

Dawn Sanders, Director of Operations, presented on NYCHA's Resident Economic Empowerment and Sustainability (REES) program. REES is currently hiring residents to improve the sustainability of their developments. FEMA recently gave NYCHA \$3B (the largest FEMA grant ever) to increase resiliency and Ms. Sanders is advocating for East Harlem residents gain these employment opportunities. Ms. Sanders will be returning in May for a longer presentation, and in the meanwhile she encouraged committee members to lobby HUD to increase the resident hiring cap past \$46K.

2. Old Business

- a. Debbie reported on the survey she is developing to gather information on public opinion and desired programming at the Julia de Burgos Cultural Center. The information found can be used to drive the discussion with the Hispanic Federation at the May meeting. The Committee discussed sharing the survey on social media, the website, the Board's listserv, and sending it out to community groups. The goal is 100 replies.

3. New Business

- a. Statement of District Needs and Neighborhood Study

The committee discussed issues that should be included in the Statement of District Needs and considered in the Neighborhood Study.

Economic Development:

- Helping the businesses affected by the explosion on 116th Street- increasing foot traffic in the area, questions about the current status of money/funding
- Business Improvement District (BID)- CD11 is the only district without one, and we want one. What is the current status of the proposed 116th Street BID?
- We don't have a Workforce I Center in our district.
- Safety and transit improvements on Park Avenue should be beautified with mosaics or other art, and could be incorporated into a walking tour, in addition to other general neighborhood beautification.
- The committee is happy with the Corn Exchange Building renovations and NHEMA creating a public plaza under the Metro North viaduct.
- Local businesses have questions and need support around how to do taxes, training, licensing, book keeping, receipts, getting loans, and the benefits/process of becoming MWBE certified.
- Banks need to invest more in underserved communities, including East Harlem, especially in regards to credit counseling and loans.
- Developers need to meet CB11's local hiring and training targets.

Culture and Tourism:

- Creating designated cultural corridor(s) is the top cultural priority.

- Cultural corridor suggestions: Institutions along 106th Street, connect to river and the 107th Street Pier, and then connect to Randall’s Island: “Culture Island”
- The committee supports CCCADI, which is opening in September, becoming a CIG, and they will support The Africa Center’s gallery becoming a CIG as well.
- Increased support for the upper part of Museum Mile from the City.
- The Julia de Burgos Arts Alliance is supposed to be the arts alliance for East Harlem and advocate for the local arts.
- Reinstate the program that provides one percent of development funding for public art.
- All of these cultural measures should be used to attract tourism.
- Increased support/funding from Destination NYC.
- La Marqueta should be a destination and redeveloped along its entire length.
- The committee stated that they want it “like it used to be but modern times” and are envisioning a cultural hub and food court.

4. Announcements

- a. Diane announced the Small Business Breakfast forum, and the Committee discussed rescheduling it for June to allow more time for outreach.

5. Adjournment

- a. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.