

**Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee**  
**February 7, 2017– Board Conference Room**  
**530 W. 166<sup>th</sup> St., 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, NYC 10032**

**Committee Members Present:** Osi Kaminer (Assistant Chair), Daryl Cochrane, Natalie Espino, Barbara Frazier, Richard Lewis, Karen Taylor; **Excused:** Elizabeth Lorris Ritter (Chair), Mitchell Glenn; **Absent:** Domingo Estevez; **Board Member Present:** Richard Allman; **Staff:** Paola M. Garcia. **Also attending:** Christopher Noel & Jennifer Hoppa, NYC Parks; Mike Fitelson, United Palace of Cultural Arts; Trish Anderton; Joana Castro, NoMAA; Ian Nicholson; Paul Kittas; Allegra LeGrande; Annmarie Aquino; Sara Fisher, Friends of Inwood Hill Park/Northern Manhattan Arts & Culture; Steven Harris, Inwood Canoe Club; Veronica Liu, Word Up/NMAC.

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**Welcome, Opening Remarks and the Agenda.** Osi Kaminer called the meeting to order at 7: 10 pm. Due to the length of two presentations it was agreed to change the order of items on the published agenda.

**Presentation by Jenifer Hoppa, NYC Parks Department’s Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator** Progress is being made on soliciting input for the \$30 million dollar High Bridge Park Redevelopment.

- Excellent attendance at the second public workshop on January 31<sup>st</sup>, given competing community events being held (70 Attendees compared to 140 at the first workshop)
- More than \$30 million dollars have been identified from the first meeting and there is now a need to determine priorities – even for future funding/planning;
- Two phases were identified: Phase I, related to access and connectivity (north end from W. 181<sup>st</sup> to 190<sup>th</sup> Streets and at the southern end with the Aventures playground); Phase II involves a revised Master Plan for the 130 acres of parkland;
- Phase I and Phase II will be presented to the Committee by NYC Parks at our next meeting (March 7<sup>th</sup>).

Discussion ensued on the Park’s Capital Tracker program and the progress of projects in our district, their current level of funding, and their accounting. For information on individual projects, visit: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/planning-and-building/capital-project-tracker#Manhattan>. Specific questions were raised regarding the nature center and programming, all of which had been previously discussed and answered in other meetings. This included a possible ‘community liaison group’, FEMA, NYC’s Vendex system and the procurement process. See previous PCA minutes for this information. Other projects noted: Piping for water has started in Inwood Hill Park and a lane will be closed at West 218<sup>th</sup> Street and Sid Hornstein will be at the Highbridge Recreation Center on February 28<sup>th</sup>. There was some interest in how to extend Highbridge into the Harlem River Drive area and the general response was that this topic was a DOT matter.

**Presentation on Universal & Accessible Design by Chris Noel, NYC Parks Accessibility Coordinator** There was an immediate distinction made between accessible design and universal design. **Accessible Design** is “a design process in which the needs of people with disabilities are specifically considered. Accessibility sometimes refers to the characteristic that products, services, and facilities can be independently used by people with a variety of disabilities. Accessibility as a design concern has a long history, but public awareness about accessibility increased with the passage of legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which mandated that public facilities and services be fully accessible to people with disabilities.” (See <https://www.ada.gov/> for information and technical assistance.) **Universal Design** is “a broader concept that is defined by The Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University as “the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.” (Details: <https://projects.ncsu.edu/www/ncsu/design/sod5/cud/>.) Prime examples of universally designed products we are most familiar with in the city are sidewalks with curb cuts and doors that automatically open when a person moves near them. They benefit people with disabilities, parents with baby strollers, delivery workers, and others. NYC Parks exclusively used this concept in the presentation that followed. For more information, see <http://www.washington.edu/doit/what-difference-between-accessible-usable-and-universal-design>.

Not mentioned in this presentation was the distinction of useable design: “Usable Design like accessible and universal design, usable design serves to create products that are easy and efficient to use. Usability has been defined by the [International Organization for Standardization](#) as the “effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction with which a specified set of users can achieve a specified set of tasks in a particular environment.” Usability engineers test the ease at

which users can learn to operate a product and remember how to do so when they return to the product at a later time. **Unfortunately, people with disabilities are not always included in usability tests.** Therefore, many products that perform well in usability tests are not accessible to people with disabilities. Increasingly, accessible and universal design considerations are being addressed by usability professionals.

The presentation covered nearly a hundred examples in photos with universal designs that have been successfully deployed at several parks, playgrounds and beaches throughout the city with considerable aesthetics. These included accessible decks, ramps, handrails, accessible surfacing, attention to signage levels and fonts, mobile beach mats for wheelchair, accessible tables with accessible lips, elevated comfort stations in high storm and flood prone areas, accessible ball fields and dugouts, multiple training bars at different heights and rotary hand grips for kids, ADA sandpit mounts and ADA swings. A more holistic approach was also shown throughout the photos that included mood-elevating colors, artwork, shrubbery and other design challenges that took inspiration from local landscapes. The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) has released **ACCESSNY**, the City's first-ever report on the state of people with disabilities and interagency plans to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities across the five boroughs. See [http://www.nyc.gov/html/mopd/downloads/pdf/ACCESS\\_NYC\\_updated.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/mopd/downloads/pdf/ACCESS_NYC_updated.pdf) or <http://www.nyc.gov/html/mopd/html/home>. For more info contact <https://www.access-board.gov/> or [Christopher.noel@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:Christopher.noel@parks.nyc.gov) or (646) 632-7344.

**Presentation on the Uptown Arts Stroll by Joana Castro, Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance (NoMAA)** This annual event is month's long arts festival that promotes the work of local artists in all disciplines, and the many community attractions in Washington Heights, Inwood and West Harlem during the month of June. Planning is underway and the deadline for submissions for the annual poster contest is February 24<sup>th</sup>. An honorarium of \$1,000 is this year's prize to the winning artist. See <http://www.artstroll.com/2016/11/15/call-for-artists-2017-uptown-arts-stroll-poster-contest/> for more information. A few events of potential interest were also announced:

- **Nights at Sugar Hill:** 'Amor y Tango' with Daniel Binelli and Polly Ferman - Thursday Feb. 16<sup>th</sup>, 6pm-8pm.
- **Inwood Parks grant information session:** The Partnerships for Parks Inwood Parks Grant Program, made possible by Columbia University, provides grants of \$500 to \$15,000 to community groups and nonprofit organizations for small NYC Parks-approved physical improvements, events and programming in Inwood Hill, Muscota Marsh, and Isham Parks. The deadline is March 1<sup>st</sup>. An information session will be held on Wednesday, February 8<sup>th</sup> from 7:30pm to 8:30pm For general information and details on all arts and cultural events see the latest issue of the NOMAA newsletter <http://www.nomaanyc.org/2017/02/nomaa-newsletter-9-february-2017/>

**Presentation by Mike Fitelson, Executive Director, United Palace of Cultural Arts (UPCA)** Mr. Fitelson, gave a slideshow presentation on what he called a marketing, branding, and promotion piece that showed the building's legacy. "The United Palace has anchored Northern Manhattan for 87 years – where it first served as a vaudeville ad movie theatre, next a church, and now it a spiritual and cultural arts center." It is also one of the five "Loews Wonder Theaters still standing in the greater NYC area. There are three major components of the United Palace operations:

- A spiritual component under the aegis United Palace House of Inspirations (UPHI), a religious corporation;
- An Arts and Cultural component under the aegis of UPCA, a 501 (c3) nonprofit; and
- A for-profit venue for a variety of shows and events at the United Palace.

Mr. Fitelson discussed the UPAC mission and their five primary performance events (dance, movie, music, student performances and an artist lobby series). In the past four years attendance has nearly doubled to 15,553 in 2016 with over forty different calendar events and venues last year. A special thanks was given to Lin-Manuel Miranda for his contributions to the performing arts at UPCA. A copy of Mr. Fitelson's electronic presentation will be distributed to committee members and will reside in the board office as well. A list of future events at the United Palace was later presented. For more information, visit <https://unitedpalace.org/blog>

The meeting was adjourned at 9:54 pm.