



Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

530 West 166th St. 6th Floor, New York, NY 10032
Phone: (212) 568-8500, Fax: (212) 740-8197

Richard R. Lewis, Chairperson
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

October 7, 2019

Dr. Mitchell A. Codding
Executive Director & President
Hispanic Society Museum & Library
613 W. 155th Street
New York, NY 10032

Re: Supporting the Hispanic Society of America's Phased Strategic Architectural Plan

Dear Dr. Codding:

At the General Meeting on Tuesday, September 24, 2019, with a vote of 39 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention, Community Board 12 Manhattan, passed a resolution supporting the Hispanic Society of America's Phased Strategic Architectural Plan and urging all elected officials who represent Washington Heights and Inwood to assist the Hispanic Society to secure capital grant funds to facilitate implementation of the plan and encouraging the Hispanic Society of America to include restoration of deteriorated sidewalks on West 156th Street in the scope of and continue to provide it with updates on progress with the planning, design and implementation of the Phased Strategic Architectural Plan.

Whereas: The Hispanic Society of America (the "Hispanic Society") was founded by American scholar and philanthropist Archer Milton Huntington in 1904 as a free library, museum and educational institution containing objects of artistic, historic and literary interests. Its mission is to collect, preserve, study, exhibit, stimulate appreciation for, and advance knowledge of works directly related to the arts, literature, and history of the countries wherein Spanish and Portuguese are or have been prominent spoken languages. Today the Hispanic Society is the most significant collection of Hispanic art and culture in the United States. Over the past decades, the Hispanic Society has expanded its educational and outreach programs, including concerts, lectures, and workshops both within its facility and at various schools and other sites throughout the community; and

Whereas: The Hispanic Society is in Washington Heights and is housed in the Audubon Terrace complex, a New York City Historic District located at Broadway between West 155th Street and West 156th Street. While three of the original institutions located at Audubon Terrace have moved away, the Hispanic Society has remained and, demonstrating its commitment to Audubon Terrace and Washington Heights, expanded its footprint. It occupies three of the Audubon Terrace buildings including the Hispanic Society's original Main Building, the former Museum of the American Indian building, and the North Galleries building (collectively "The Buildings"); and

Whereas: For the past 10 years the Hispanic Society has demonstrated a clear commitment to remaining at its current location within Community District 12 and invested in upgrading its facilities in

phases. From 2009 to 2016, the Hispanic Society completed the full renovation of the Sorolla Gallery and the restoration of the Main Building facades; more recently the Main Building's copper roof was replaced. In May 2019 the roof replacement project was recognized by the New York Landmarks Conservancy with a Lucy Moses Award for historic preservation; and

Whereas: The Hispanic Society is now undertaking a phased strategic architectural plan (the "Phased Strategic Architectural Plan" or the "Plan") to that will help shape its future by updating the Buildings to current museum standards, improving the visitor experience, expanding programing, and making the collection more accessible to wider audiences. The Plan includes three phases – the long-awaited renovation of space within the former Museum of the American Indian to create a special exhibit gallery (the "Special Exhibit Gallery"), restoration to Audubon Terrace, and interior renovations to the Main Building. The Special Exhibit Gallery will provide the Hispanic Society for the first time with space to mount special and revolving exhibits. Renovation of the exterior terrace will make it accessible and more inviting. Interior renovations of the Main Building will focus heavily on updating outdated building systems; and

Whereas: The Hispanic Society's Trustees have commendably established the Special Exhibit Gallery as a priority; it will be phase one of the Plan. Renovation of Audubon Terrace will likely be the second phase. However, since the building that will house the Special Exhibit Gallery is entered from Audubon Terrace, and neither the entrance or the terrace is accessible, work on all or part of the terrace renovation may proceed in parallel with work to create the Special Exhibit Gallery; and

Whereas: To develop the Phased Strategic Architectural Plan, the Hispanic Society will work closely with a team of architects and community focus groups. Outreach to community focus groups commenced this summer and is ongoing. In August 2019 the Hispanic Society announced its architectural team for the Plan, including Beyer Blinder Belle, a firm with extensive experience in restoration and integrating contemporary buildings within historic context; Selldorf Architects, a firm specializing in enhancing the experience of art and education that has worked on numerous museums, in New York City and internationally; and Reed Hilderbrand Landscape Architecture, a firm that has completed projects for museums and higher education institutions and whose work seeks to connect daily life to beauty, ecological health, public engagement, and resilience; and

Whereas: The City of New York has allocated \$1,500,000 to the Plan, but additional City capital and private funds are needed to advance the Plan, the first two phases of which are currently estimated to cost \$7,000,000 or more to complete; and

Dr. Mitchell A. Coddling

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Whereas: Representatives of the Hispanic Society met with the Land Use Committee on September 4, 2019 and with the Parks and Cultural Affairs Committee on September 10, 2019 to present an overview of the Plan. It is imperative that the Hispanic Society's facilities are upgraded to ensure its continued vitality, to permit visitors to fully appreciate the breadth and depth of its

world-renowned collection, and to enable the Hispanic Society to engage wider audiences. Now, therefore be it

Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan enthusiastically supports the Hispanic Society of America's Phased Strategic Architectural Plan and urges all elected officials who represent Washington Heights and Inwood to assist the Hispanic Society to secure capital grant funds to facilitate implementation of the plan; and be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12-M encourages the Hispanic Society of America to include restoration of deteriorated sidewalks on West 156th Street in the scope of and continue to provide it with updates on progress with the planning, design and implementation of the Phased Strategic Architectural Plan.

Sincerely,



Richard R. Lewis
Chairperson

cc: Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Hon. Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate
Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Comptroller
Hon. Brian Benjamin, State Senator
Hon. Robert Jackson, State Senator

Hon. Al Taylor, Assembly Member
Hon. Carmen De La Rosa, Assembly Member
Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member
Dr. Margaret Connors McQuade, Assistant
Director & Curator of Decorative Arts