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## COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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### ARTS & INSTITUTIONS AND PARKS & WATERFRONT JOINT COMMITTEE

Nov 4, 2021

The Parks & Waterfront and the Arts & Institution Committees of Community Board #2, Manhattan, held a joint meeting on Thursday, Nov 4, 2021 at 5:30 P.M. via Zoom.

There were 17 panelists and 8 attendees.

The meeting covered one topic:

1. Representatives of Little Island (Pier 55) presented an update on the park's first season.

#### **Arts & Institutions Committee:**

**Board Members Present:** Robin Rothstein, Chair; Chris Dignes; Coral Dawson; Ivy Kwan-Arce; Rocio Sanz; Georgia Silvera Seamans

**Board Members Absent with Notification:** Susan Gammie

**Public Members Present:** Stacey Georgen; Kristin Marting

**Public Members Absent with Notification:** Jonathan Slaff

#### **Parks & Waterfront Committee:**

**Board Members Present:** Rich Caccappolo, Chair; Susanna Aaron, Vice-Chair; Coral Dawson; Chris Dignes; Matthew Metzger; Shirley Secunda; Frederica Sigel; Kristin Shea; Georgia Silvera Seamans

**Board Members Absent with Notification:**

**Public Members Present:**

**Public Members Absent with Notification:** Nancy Brous; Elizabeth Gilmore; Sharon Woolums

**Other CB2 Board Members Present:** Ryder Kessler; Michael Levine; Brian Pape

#### **1. Update by the Little Island team**

Trish Santini, Executive Director, presented slides and images showing an overview of Little Island's first season of programming along with a comprehensive summary of data related to total number of visitors, ticketed events, artists employed, performances, etc.

Two colleagues, Michael Wiggins, Director of Engagement and Education, and Farida Lecoin, Education and Community Relations Coordinator joined her.

Santini described the first season as a “vigorous summer” and an “emotional summer” as the city was re-opening at the same time, especially in their initial weeks, and as many of the artists were performing for the first time in many months.

In addition to sharing data on all the human beings that got to enjoy the park in its first season, Santini wrapped up the presentation by sharing photographs taken of wildlife – species of birds and bats – that also discovered Little Island as a welcoming habitat.

What follows is a summary of some of the data and takeaways they have begun to review.

### **Visitation and 2021 Overview:**

#### Total number of visitors to date:

- 1.3M visitors to date

#### Average summer visitation:

- 8,000 to 9,000 visitors during the week
- 11,000 to 12,000 visitors per weekend day
- Highest visitation day was 19,630 on July 4<sup>th</sup> (due to good views of fireworks)

- Timed entry was used, but is now stopped and will not be required again until spring
- Performance and food & beverage service is now finished for the season
- Education programs will be run in November and December
- Winterizing of the park has begun
- Audio tour of the park’s landscaping is available via a QR code displayed outside of Little Island. This is available all the time

#### 2021 Programming:

- 1260 artists performed this summer
- 510 performances (for many performers, this was their first time back to performing live post-COVID)
- 64 ticketed amphitheater events (i.e., Broadway Inspirational Voices; Shana Taub & Friends; Tina & Friends, et al. These events included 38 free ticketed events in August
- Over 32,000 free tickets were distributed to the community, including partners: DYCD, DOE, Hudson Guild, P.S. 33, Westbeth, and more

"NYC Free" was an event that took place for four weeks from August 11-September 5. An outside producing team curated the event, which included 460+ artists and 160 performances. Barry Diller supported the festival in response to COVID-19 and in recognition of the need for artists to get in front of an audience again, to pay more artists, and in celebration of revitalizing the city and the New York City community.

Little Island is now taking applications for “Perform in the Park” for the 2022 season. Perform in the Park is Little Island’s open call “for performers who can channel New York’s iconic spontaneity and energy, and bring that spirit of life to Little Island’s dynamic stages and spaces, surrounded by nature, water, and city views.” The submission period for 2022 is through December 3, 2021 for artists 18 and over. Over 70 artists

that performed at Little Island this past season came through this process. A press release was sent out to announce that the submission period was open. And the network of artists already associated with Little Island also helps to spread the word via social media so the artistic community and arts organizations are aware.

### Education Programming & Employment:

Wiggins presented an overview of Little Island's successes in the realms of education and employment. Little Island aims to create high-quality experiences for those they employ. Part of their mission is caring about the future of those that come through their hiring processes and what their next step is. For example, the first intern they hired took a part-time Visitor Experience job at Little Island. He was able to learn, earn money and experience art at Little Island. It became his "home". Little Island looks forward to providing more opportunities and paths like this to more people.

### Educational Programming

- "Creative Breaks": Weekly art-making activities for all ages – 70 workshops
- "Little Library": Encourages visitors to read in the park. Conducted with partners Teatro SEA and The Free Black Woman's Library – 10 sessions
- "Teen Night": In partnership with The Door for the first season. Teen showcase in The Glade on Friday nights. Little Island plans to branch out further to other groups similar to The Door next season now that the first season proved successful. – 8 shows
- "You're Never Too Old to Play": Acting for adults at Westbeth. Conducted by Little Island Artist-In-Residence Pig Pen Theatre Company

Upcoming family programming includes:

- November 10<sup>th</sup>: Creative Break with North American Indigenous Center of New York
- December 10<sup>th</sup>: Holiday Gospel Sing-along with Stonewall Chorale in partnership with Greenwich House
- Fall/Winter Field Trips: Schools are encouraged to visit Little Island for gatherings and sharings

### Employment

- Little Island is committed to engage, educate and employ via its three-part pathway of internships, fellowships and employment. A sampling of highlights thus far:
- 13 interns have worked 120 hours each
- 6 Departmental Fellows have worked 300 hours
- 1 intern has been hired as a Visitor Experience host
- 1 intern was hired as a Programming Fellow
- 1 fellow was hired as an Employee Experience Assistant
- 3 Porters hired via Center for Employment Opportunities
- 1 Custodian and 1 Employee Experience intern hired through MAC Access Consortium (people with disabilities)
- 2 VE Hosts hired through Lower East Side Employment Network
- 10 of Little Island's seasonal employees are CUNY students or alumni
- Usher Program launches 2022

### Questions / Answers / Comments

- Noise concerns and security issues were low, despite the first weeks being intense. Timed entry really helped. Even when it was really lively, the space never felt overcrowded or unsafe. There was definitely a difference late night on the weekends, but their team figured out how to manage that

challenge. No noise complaints were registered with neighbors. However, they learned about how sound travelled through the space while multiple events were going on.

- Biggest Learnings:
  - How moving it was for viewers / attendees to see the creative process, the artistic process, in real time since there is no backstage area and there is no rehearsal time. There was great respect and acknowledgement and appreciation by those who wandered into such a dynamic space at such times.
  - Regarding programming: It was a very robust season with a lot of turnover. Looking to the future, they will likely look to provide more opportunities for each artist to perform more than once or twice; however it is a balance between artists having the opportunity to perform more while not compromising so much that this limits the number of artists that can participate and they can maintain their depth and breadth of programming.
- Budget: The year isn't over yet, but they are on budget so far and will be happy to return to share more clarity on where the budget landed. Monitoring this is important to the community board in the event that one day this group is no longer there and another group comes in to do their own programs.
- Busiest times: Weekend days between 10:30A.M. and Noon (timed entry started each day at Noon). Staff tracked a count every hour to determine what they could anticipate regarding attendance on any given day. The busy times altered after Labor Day. Weekends were still busier, but there was generally more evenness. It is hard to predict if they will see the same busy patterns next spring/summer since we have not yet experienced the full return of tourism yet.
- The board appreciates the partnerships that Little Island formed with our local arts groups, acknowledging the fact that there is already a lot of art-making going on in the community, and being open to these groups engaging with Little Island's programming.
- How can CB2 support Little Island moving forward? As "amazing as CB2 is, it turns out that Mother Nature was the biggest challenge for Little Island" (i.e., major storms coming in 30 minutes prior to a performance). However, Wiggins requested that the board reach out to him so he knows what the community is talking about and what the community cares about.

For more information about Little Island, visit: <https://littleisland.org/>

For more information on employment opportunities visit: [www.littleisland.org/employment](http://www.littleisland.org/employment)

For more information on Perform in the Park submissions visit: <https://littleisland.org/submissions/>

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Rothstein  
Chair, Arts & Institutions Committee  
Community Board 2, Manhattan

Richard A. Caccappolo  
Chair, Parks & Waterfront Committee  
Community Board 2, Manhattan