

Business Improvement District Focus Group

Tuesday, April 25, 2017; 3 – 4:30pm

Location: Manatt, Phelps, and Phillips, 7 Times Square

Facilitators: Katie Lyon and Daniel Rojo

Art in Public Space

- Citywide coordination of art in public space is too decentralized, and the bids are not sure what role DCLA plays
- DCLA should manage public art projects, not transit engineers. BIDs want to work with one agency for public art
- Permitting needs to be streamlined because it is too expensive and timely to navigate the permitting process. Many BIDs avoid working with the city for public art because of how complicated, timely, and expensive the process is
- BIDs want to work with existing cultural programs/events, like Make Music New York, and partner with Mayors Office of Media and Entertainment (MOME)
- 100 Gates Program is tangible evidence that public art projects are essential and make public space more lively and reflective of community and character
- Reinstate temporary public art on construction fences, and partner with landlords/ vacant retailers to create temporary public art. Bids expressed desire to work with local landlords to help them understand that robust public art can help attract tenants. Accessible data about the economic impact of public art can help to make this case.
- There should be a centralized calendar of New York City cultural programming
- City should get behind a program to put art in underpasses

Neighborhood Character

- Arts and culture can be used to elevate neighborhood history and narratives
- The demise of brick and mortar retail is changing neighborhood character. Retailers across the board are seeing increased vacancies. How do we get these groups to view ground floor retail differently so we can use ground floor vacancy for temporary art/cultural space? 135 Montague Street in Brooklyn Heights is an example of a BID reaching out to a vacant property owner in order to create temporary public art
- Culture is both an attraction for people, and an expression of the neighborhood. We want to use art and culture to brand our neighborhood as a creative place. However, at the end of

day we are in the BID business, so we need to link programs back to brokers and tell a story about leasing space. The rise of TAMI is helping arts and culture for this reason.

- In East Midtown, a lot of property owners buy collect, and display art. Can we work with these property owners to utilize that art in public spaces and not just in lobby's and offices.
- Community facility incentives helped mitigate the displacement of the cultural community. City should focus on co-working/incubator spaces, and live-work spaces. We need to prevent NYC from becoming a city of presenters but not artists. We need to focus on space for creative output
- Percent for art needs to be community focused, and should be allowed to fund residences and culture that positively impacts communities on the ground
- Music series and cultural programming can be used to drive foot traffic to retailers impacted by heavy construction
- There is an opportunity for multi-leveraged funding/marketing. Perhaps work with NYC & CO and MOME, although one bid mentioned that NYC&Co membership fees are too high
- Explore storefront artist residencies
- Churches and senior centers can serve as great partners for cultural programming
- Need to make sure that vendors in public plazas are self-sustaining and that they don't impinge upon existing restaurants/vendors in the neighborhood.

Recommendations/Key Takeaways:

- Reduce barriers and streamline permitting for public art
- There is an opportunity for the City to work with BID's and local partners to activate underutilized and vacant space, as well as construction sites
- Citywide coordination is too decentralized; need one agency to take the lead on permitting and funding of arts/culture
- Bids are disconnected from city agencies and DCLA in particular. DCLA should work to better plug BID's into cultural ecosystem; perhaps create borough DCLA ombudsman that BID's can reach out to
- Citywide coordination for the support of the arts is too decentralized, needs to be consolidated, particularly with regards to the funding and approvals process
- Culture should be seen as an avenue for preservation or revitalization of neighborhood history



- There needs to be one consolidated place where the city organizes information about cultural events and support for culture
- The city should work to provide data about how public art/cultural programming positively impacts retailers and landlords, as well as general data about the economic impact of arts and culture in New York City
- There should be a long-term city cultural Czar not attached to one administration so that the City can have a long term cultural plan
- Percent for Art should be expanded to include artist in residencies and cultural programming that positively impacts local communities
- The city needs create more affordable artist work space or NYC will become a city of just presenters