

Neighborhood Plaza Partnership Focus Group
March 24 2017

Jackson Heights, Queens

Introduction by NPP, Introductions around table:

Corona Plaza - Queens Museum

Forsyth Plaza

Brownswill Plaza

Friends of Diversity Plaza - 37th and 73rd

Jackson Heights - Queens Alliance - 78th Plaza

Putnam Triangle - Fort Green / Clinton Hill Plazas

Avenue C Plaza - Brooklyn

Pitkan Avenue - BID

Parkside Plaza

AAFE, DOT, FAB Alliance (Fort Green BID), Hunter Arts and Public Policy

DCLA introduction

HSC introduction to CreateNYC - How is culture defined in the context of programming in public plazas? Cultural programming through CBO partnerships. Green Markets, Book Swaps, Performances, Social Services & Emergency Planning, Youth-Family Focused activities, block parties and festivals (with social justice lens), space for inter-cultural exchange, engaging immigrant communities and social justice, fashion shows, parades,

- Learn from others
- Partnerships with other community orgs
- Civic Engagement - social justice
- Social, Community services - resource needs
- Spaces for diverse resident interaction - immigrant, family use heavily

- How to support and facilitate community-based programming and use of public space in your neighborhood? What is the role of the City agencies (DCLA, DOT, Parks, SBS) in facilitating this?
- What do YOU need? Resources?
- What are some challenges and successes in the management of your Plaza? What can we collectively learn from these experiences? How can we codify this for the wider city?

Facilitated Discussion and Recommendations:

Prerana: It is about money, not not necessarily about new money - like the SPARC or Su-Casa Initiatives, can DCLA create a special category for re-grants through the Arts Councils to access DCLA funds for art in public plazas. Frame plazas as public venues for performances and create opportunity, through specific grant, to financially support this program.

Similarly, Council Immigrant Initiative. NPP to provide more information to group about CDF grants.

Eirik: groups contact plaza managers seeking performance spaces, a grant program specific to plazas (site-specific or rotating to sister plazas) could foster artists and cultural groups doing more work in plazas and can bridge the divide.

NPP to help organize a coalition of plaza partnerships.

Sonya and X: Plaza managers are mostly volunteer, we don't have knowledge of more nuanced issues

- Standard wages for artists
- Insurance requirements (for DOT) - this is outside of our normal maintenance budget
- Concession agreement requires RPF process, our local Merchant Assoc. doesn't have the capacity to do this, and we don't have the time.
 - Any transactions on the site are not allowed with concessions agreement - process is burdensome

Recommendation >> collective, block buying of insurance across plaza.

Phillip: since we are a BID, our general operating budget is much higher than normal plaza management issues.

Artist Fees are an issue, what can DCLA do facilitate connection between public spaces and artists who have community based practice? LMCC has a good model - give grants to artists directly, and then the artist seeks out space. Scale this to all Arts Councils? Develop into a specific **Cultural Plazas Grant Program**.

Example: St. Paul, MN - artist deployments program, similar to the UNI, but 20 of these on a registry and the logistical, administrative infrastructure (permits? etc.) managed by the City or by Local Arts Councils.

Partnerships with local CBOs: some groups are better than others, planning, cleaning, marketing, permit application

- ex. girl scout troupe wants to sell cookies on sidewalk, we charge them \$25 to complete the SAPO permit (not good!) and partnerships with these small groups is a consistent source of income to manage and maintain our 78th Street Plaza.
- For the Parkside Plaza - As plaza manager, we are not always as included in the coordination of events on our plaza as we'd like. We are outside of a subway and many people hold events or installations in our plaza without us knowing or approving.
 - SAPO approves, with NYPD and CB - as manager you do not have Y/N say. Figure out better system to coordinate how to stay consistently aware and organized about event programming

Phillip: Smaller groups have a bandwidth issue - when partnering with plazas, it becomes very difficult to collaborate with some of these partners as they do not have capacity and do not

necessarily know how to take their program outside into a plaza (marketing, set up, adaptation, etc.)

How do you do your partnerships for your plaza programs?

- networking
- understanding the needs of the different partners
- build advantageous relationships with larger orgs to support partnerships with smaller orgs with less capacity

How important is it to work with local partners?

- The need to promote the artists and CBOs in your neighborhood is important as a community - this helps support the artists work in other spaces. But we won't turn anyone away.
- As an artist, it is difficult to navigate the system, interested in building connections with plaza managers, orgs hiring teaching artists, etc.
- We are open to working and networking with everyone, especially cross-promotion between local / Borough plazas. Create a system of communication (facebook)
- Local Community Board has a registry of local artists and CBOs, this could be scaled up across other CBs.
- Create Resource Pool across Plaza Managers?
 - How can this be facilitated - NPP?
 - Need to find someone who can make fliers, build a website, etc. at low costs.

Different Plazas have different Identities. Some are trying to diversify relationship to neighborhood partners, community participation, more open or not? **How has arts and cultural programming helped you achieve these goals in your plaza?**

- Tap into neighborhood groups that already exist - yahoo or google groups and pool resources
- Parents with young kids are very interested in the public spaces in the neighborhood, organize and concentrate efforts

NPP contract with DOT, all plazas need to undergo a survey twice per year, do you have any questions you'd like to see added to the survey?

- Survey on Club House (Marcus Garvey Apts) - fitness, nutrition, financial or entrepreneurial literary. Arts and Cultural resources were not desired.
- In Fort Green - volunteers from ManPower, always do event surveys
 - e.g. Yoga was not successful, film recommendations

Dante: Brownsville Multi-Service Center, reached out to these centers to table during events (whether related or not) to have the plaza full of resources. This creates a networking focused plaza and connecting local CBOs and artists to community, social service orgs and resources.

Murals in the plaza and around the neighborhood, connecting the plaza to the neighborhood through arts and cultural programming. We worked with GroundSwell to have paid internships, we came up with 50% of the funding, they bring the other half and run the program: including artists, scaffolding licensing,

Pitkin Ave BID: we needed art in our neighborhood and I felt the BID could be the place to do this. The commercial district is owned and manager by people not in the neighborhood, but people who have commercial real estate.

We hooked into an NEA Our Town Grant with Groundswell, DOT and others - the next BID over continued on the work.

Cynthia (Ave C): We are looking to have a mural, but we don't have a lot of accessible space.

Andrew: Urban Art Program, DOT can help build capacity and navigate the City processes, but we also need support in this.

For those in BIDs or local business groups, how are you succeeding in engaging them in seeing the value of local plazas. At Parkside Plaza, we are struggling to have the businesses on Flatbush Ave to engage and support the plaza. Merchant Assoc and BID are struggling to work together.

We work with young people to do outreach in-person and on social media.

You can do sponsorship through your maintenance contract - follow up with DOT.

Registry connecting Plaza Managers to each other, connection Plaza Managers to local artists, following up with DCLA around funding support, connecting plaza network to one traveling arts program throughout the city to activate many plazas with lower overhead.

