

CreateNYC: What We Heard
Office Hours with the Commissioner
Mott Haven Library, Bronx
5/23/17

GENTRIFICATION AND DISPLACEMENT

- **Is there any quantifying the economic value of arts community in each borough?** A Jazz Quartet moved next to me, which means that the price of space/housing is going to rise in my neighborhood. If we can quantify the diaspora, can counter by regulating development in response? Artist data is fodder for development. There should be some economic protections for these values. As developers build, they should have to take into account listings for artists/arts orgs looking for homes. For example, Upbeat NYC youth orchestra organization always looking for a home.

DCLA: SIAP found that low-income neighborhoods that had arts and culture were safer, healthier, had better school outcomes...social benefits. It's an argument for investing in those neighborhoods. Think of ways to invest and thriving in place. What could the city do? Citywide agencies are involved in meetings. But how do markets work in the United States? DCLA has mechanisms for affordability for artists, but we don't set the policy for real estate development.

- **Housing, practice space affordability, Ronnie.** Is the goal to educate policy? With artist affordability as an issue identified in the plan, with 90% reporting that affordable housing is important, that's also about neighborhood character. How is displacement being addressed? The example of people wanting arts activities close to home doesn't seem to address the housing issue.

DCLA: Affordable Real Estate for Artists (AREA). DCLA can build affordable studio space. HPD builds housing. PS 109 was built with tax credits, but DCLA helped fund studio spaces on the lower floors. El Puente runs the space in Williamsburg Library and that's an example of a group we want to support to thrive in place.

- **Wording/language influences special preference to artists versus housing in general.**

DCLA: There's talk even within the arts community of not giving preference to artists in relation to residents in general. In the housing plan, 200,000 units of affordable housing are offered, there's legal challenges to artists getting preference.

Community Land Trusts:

- **Bronx South Unite.** There's high attendance in the Bronx because we feel both possibility and threat with high real estate pressure/wave. We've seen things go the way of Williamsburg and would like see things done differently. One thing that you have in

the draft is “support for CLTs”. It’s not a silver bullet, but we’ve organized one here in Mott Haven and are trying to convince the city to pass ownership of a specific building owned by NYC Health & Hospitals (which we’ve coined the “Hearts building”) precisely to house and offer venues for different organizations. Can serve artists network and address issues of affordability. One way DCLA could help would be to support and encourage communities to organize around CLTs - open space, performance, exhibit venues. Organizations are starved for funds. You should convince the Mayor to actually let the community speak. In 200 years, the city’s housing affordability units will be gone. Alternatives like CLTs remove land from the real estate market, as a protection.

- **Linda Cunningham.** We’re aware we’re sitting on the cusp of a massive gentrification program. Artists and arts get targeted from both sides. If developers support us, we’re bad. And we need to support the community because they need us. How are we actually going to survive? The South Bronx CLT is a massive community effort, but which could also include potential art spaces, theaters, etc.. How can we get a hold of that building?
- **UpBeatNYC.** When asking where the organizations doing the work are, the CLT building is another way that we can feel supported. Groups are in the hallways of spaces, not necessarily with a room to themselves. In a shared space, you’re connected to other organizations. Not just a home...larger than the sum of its parts. And also a forum to fight against displacement.
- There’s so much potential in the organizations that are already existing, but need better access to do this work. We need the city to say yes to this. The Heats building has a history of Young Lords using it as a service space. There have been visioning sessions, there’s a lot of build up around this.

DCLA: We’re hearing a lot of desire for that sort of co-space. We have capital money available for these sorts of projects.

- **Can DCLA get involved even before the capital stage?**
 - There’s potential for inter-agency partnership. What happens after you have the capital project? General operating/general programming. Inter-agency partnerships would go so far if DOE, DOH, Parks could help our programs grow. – Rosalba, Pregones
 - Could this be presented to DOH as a health argument?
 - NYFA grants for South Bronx Unite to build a feasibility and proposal. Also, institutions like Juilliard and Carnegie are more interested in diversity in the arts and more willing to listen to small organizations. There’s a lot of momentum at that level, a lot of opportunities. It’s now time to speak up and have a seat at the table.

- **Other city-owned or affiliated sites:** At 139th Street, a former MTA power center, a ConEd building. 15 years ago, the city would have been more hesitant. But we now have charts and the city might be more reticent.

DCLA: If you have the successful model, that can spur citywide. I think it's one of the most promising proposals.

- There's a CLT at Cooper Square, mostly focused on affordable housing. Also Fourth Arts Block.
- The Lincoln Recovery Center has captured all of our imaginations and want it strongly on your radar. The heterodyne. If you ask us for a model, we'll accept that challenge.

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

- **Historic preservation/designation.** The Bronx retains unique character and heritage. But we operate in silos and that doesn't help us advance. Bronx neighborhoods can't celebrate arts and culture partly because there's no visibility of historic districts and landmarks. I think designation is important. We have visitors who are coming here, but our own residents don't have knowledge of what exists here. Why aren't we celebrating? Signage helps celebrate. On one side, historical significance. On the other, how can we better expose what's happening around arts and culture/events in the community?
- **Mott Haven Historic District Association, Samuel Brooks.** "Preservation, pride and prevention." It's an ongoing battle to get the historic district designation. NY1 just did a piece. It's going to happen. My primary interest is, "I'm not going to sit idle when my neighbor Maria can't pay her rent. We should be able to support her being on the map of things to do."

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER AND CITYWIDE COORDINATION

- **Support local, support the Bronx. Educate local business owners.** How do we activate the corridor? If you see this new foot traffic, this is how you take advantage and not get the short end of the stick. SBS. If we just let that happen, shame on us.
- **What about community gardens? They're cultural hubs, have cultural meaning and need cultural support.** As an example, there's a collaboration with Green Thumb. It's a network of 18 gardens and rooftop gardens. There has to be cultural investment oriented towards these types of organizations. CDA and youth department used to supply, but it has disappeared. There's an opportunity to make an investment and get communities together to support it. As an intermediary, South Bronx Unite.

- **Help support community centers in NYCHA communities.**
- **There are a host of cultural anchors: community gardens, boxing rings, bodegas, botanicas. But separate with funding. Christine Licata, Bronx Museum.** There's a valuable report named *City Anchors* by CityLore. What are the ways that we can offset burdens?

DCLA: Has anyone else done it? Nashville has done it through procurement. They don't do it through grants, do it through pyramids. Intermediary, like borough councils, but assumes they have their ear to the ground.

CITYWIDE COORDINATION

- **How does this relate to technology? Danielle Jackson.** I know that there's a federal effort to bring the internet to public housing developments.

DCLA. There's an effort within the administration, but it's under Department of information Technology.

- **I'm concerned about climate education and mitigation and the role of arts and culture integrated into a resiliency program.** Fortifying coastlines. Mitigating our carbon emissions. Based the Percent of Art model, is there room in the cultural plan for a funding stream for environmental awareness? There isn't an awareness among communities and affects the dialogue and how to address the issues.

DCLA: There's a coalition of cultural organizations teaching kids about science. Urban Advantage, at almost half of the schools in the city. Based on NYU study. Also experimenting with artists in residence at city agencies. DCLA/ORR resiliency project in Red Hook, Brooklyn. Percent for Art is a capital project, so a project would have to be a "thing" rather than education. Note to participant: speak to Alicia Gruillon, Percent for Green.

HEALTH OF THE SECTOR

- **Support Arts and Cultural Networks, Bill Aguado.** I'm a longtime advocate of financial support. To what extent is the plan going to assure that community-based intermediaries can support local artists to strengthen networks in the community and the city? For example, we need a real commitment to workforce development for artists. In an example from the past, a former councilperson proactively warned the cultural community about a new housing development, advocating for artists to apply for spaces. It's a necessity to have a buy-in from other city agencies. There are other priorities at other agencies.

DCLA: We can't give to artists directly, but can give to borough arts councils and they can re-grant. In terms of professional development, a proposal is looking at pooling resources, like insurance, joining unions, building a sustainable life for yourself.

- **Operating Support, Bronx Children's Museum, Takisha Dozier.** We're the only borough in the city without a children's museum. Operating as a museum without walls, on the go: "The purple bus." We see 15,000 kids a year and have five after school programs without a physical space! We'll be located in the old powerhouse building, groundbreaking next month. We're fortunate to have capital funding from DCLA, but it's a struggle for the operating support to match the capital.

EQUITY

- **Distribution of resources, funding artist directly.** Look at ways that the spread of the money can be much broader and put that directly into the hands of artists. Increase the amount of money going to individual artists and arts organizations, identifying that there are certain neighborhoods and identities that aren't getting an equitable amount of money.
- **There has to be a fiscal change between the CIGs and community-based cultural organizations.** That's one way to distribute this among local cultural groups. Pregonas has existed at the local level, but the city has never made that fiscal equity available to them. Rosalba responds: We partner, and that's how we do this.

DCLA: The CIG includes organizations that are not The Met. They have a very important role to play as well. But even within the CIGs group, institutions of color aren't getting as much. CIGs face \$40 million in energy costs. There's a green initiative is to get those costs down. We need to find ways to get money to organizations that are in areas of the city that aren't getting enough money and to communities of identity that aren't specifically tied to geography. It's not us against them. There are ways to think about CIGs in a more equitable formula. One of the biggest things that has changed distribution is, through the Bloomberg administration, opening the door for capital money. For example, Pregonas' building came from capital money through our agency. Capital money was a big step in democratization.

- **So many wonderful cultural organizations are not 501c3s, but are some of the most important cultural anchors. They need access to funding**

DCLA: The way we can fund non-501s are through borough arts councils.

- **Where are some of the projects you've done in the Bronx and how are you going to support the areas where our communities have been underserved?** I am a parent of a child with special needs. Programs for her don't exist. What are we committing to do that are here, so that we don't have to travel so far?

DCLA: A few modes: Are there particular projects that need to be funded that are capital eligible? Existing examples include Pregones and Mindbuilders. Also, looking for affordable studio space. Finally, with funding, we're going to be looking for areas and communities that are underinvested. We're a funding agency, we don't initiate a project.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: TRANSPARENCY AND FOLLOW-UP

- **What kind of accountability mechanisms are there? How are you going to follow up? What's going to be accepted and what not?**

DCLA: The plan is the result of City Council legislation. City Council oversight, Jimmy Van Bramer and Steve Levin. There a Cultural Plan Citizen Advisory Committee, who we have to report to over the next five years. The Tracker. Also, the plan engagement process has taught us that hearing from you is valuable, so Commissioner's Office Hours will be continued once a month, focused on issues/communities.

- **Are there any plans to share the asset mapping identifying arts and organizations that were done in the plan engagements?** Groups can use it to connect with one another. People can find out about one another and connect. For example, BCA did its own asset mapping exercise alongside CreateNYC that has made the connection between arts and culture with social services. South Bronx Unite can map and be geographically smart.

DCLA: Those maps don't exist. Too much information is not worth it. How do you make it useful?

FEDERAL CONTEXT

How will the plan change or respond to funds coming at the federal level?, Danielle Jackson, Bronx Documentary Center:

DCLA: We have to fight, get actively involved in not allowing it to happen. Cultural boards are politically diverse. We have the biggest budget and want to see how to get that better distributed, but we're doing it in the shadow of other major cuts that could happen. If we're looking at cuts for culture, we're looking across the board. Have to fight in other sectors, too, to maintain the budget. The city only gets 7-8% of budget from the feds. But it gets a lot from the state, which severely challenged by these cuts.

Do you feel that cuts are serious enough to put the plan on hold?

DCLA: No. The plan is going to be announced in July. Our current budget is finished before then. It's for the most part a perspective/vision document for the future. The orgs that are going to be most impact from NEA cuts are communities of color.

COMMENTS ON WHAT WE HEARD PROPOSALS

THEMES

Connectivity

- The plan needs to exemplify interconnectedness throughout the sector, across issue areas, and most importantly between New Yorkers living and creating in the city.

Support for the arts, sustaining our culture

- Arts are targeted from both sides – by developers as a vehicle for displacement and gentrification and by community as leaders of gentrification and displacement.
- The arts need to be uncoupled from economic development at the local level. The arts need to be allowed to exist for the sake of creation, expression, and social/community wellbeing.
- The answer is community land trusts (CLTs).
 - Models of this are Fourth Arts Block (FAB) collaboration with Cooper Square Committee CLT/MHA
 - The City (and State) must stop selling property to for profit developers. Divert this land into CLTs for equipped community-based / local organizations to own, operate, manage for cultural uses.

EQUITY

- How is the cultural plan moving away from CIG vs. CDF funding inequity? The equity recommendations only mention increased support to CIG. What about increased support to community-based arts organizations? Where is the equity in that?

SOCIAL & ECONOMIC IMPACT

- #2 Support the employment and ongoing professional development of New Yorkers from diverse communities **and organizations employing diverse groups.**
- More information about SIAP – this is a standalone in the proposals and doesn't make sense as is.
- Resiliency and sustainability could have a larger footprint in the proposals.

AFFORDABILITY

- Emphasize and commit to community land trusts – this model allows communities to define and develop their own cultural practices.

CITYWIDE COORDINATION

- Continue office hours – and meet people where they are, all around the city.
- Overall, this section is much lighter than it should be. DCLA needs to advocate for buy-in from other City agencies. Plan should position DCLA as an arts advocate within the City.
- Citywide coordination should call on arts and culture as fundamental to community social wellbeing and growth. Culture is related to health outcomes. SIAP demonstrates this.

ARTS, CULTURE, AND SCIENCE EDUCATION

- What is the sustainability of models like Urban Advantage? How will these continue to be supported and remain accessible?

HEALTH OF THE CULTURAL SECTOR

- How will you develop mechanisms to support established 501c3 organizations?
 - Arts councils?
 - What about other spaces that don't currently get cultural funding – such as Green Thumb community gardens?

ART AND CULTURE IN PUBLIC SPACE

- Actively encourage, support, and strengthen public space as vital places for creative expression and community building
 - Add #2 Actively encourage and support diverse programming in community gardens.

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

- Map more inclusive data – build out locally with community partners. We need a map of all the arts and cultural assets in communities. Northern Manhattan is so often left out mapping – such as on SpaceFinder.
- Why aren't housing issues captured here? Neighborhood character is about affordability. Community displacement or cultural preservation are issues of affordability (cause and effect).
- More emphasis on the role of historic district council(s) – Preservation, Procurement, and Pride!
- Engage communities and other local partners, to together source data on cultural mapping. We need maps of cultural assets, that communities can access – not for developer use.
 - Small steps to start are community-based signage, similar to landmark signage, sites. Allow the local community and stakeholders to mark their significant history and culture through recognized signage, supported by the City.
 - Collaboration with HPD, DCLA, and arts councils
- Ensure that the support of neighborhood-based arts and culture enables existing communities and cultures to thrive:
 - #3 recommendation about Neighborhood 360 in the south Bronx
 - #4 recommendation about supporting cultural anchors – expansion of exploring mechanisms to support 501(c)(3) organizations that are relevant to the neighborhood culture.
 - What does it mean to program alternative spaces – this is not ONLY nightlight spaces, these are also long standing cultural spaces – community radio, music venues, religious centers, community cultural centers(i.e. Sesame Flyers or Caribbean library center in Flatbush, Brooklyn)
 - Look to Nashville, TN for notes on supporting cultural explicit groups / organizations which are alternative models