

## **ARTs East New York, Jan 11, 2017, 6:30-8:30pm**

What is the commitment and accountability of the cultural plan? Agencies must return to the document that they've adopted.

Going over the issues of the plan...

### **Neighborhood Identity**

- Cultural identity within communities. Interplay of cultural identity in the neighborhood with the broader city, especially as culture becomes more homogenized.
- Arts are universal- without it we lose our spirit

### **Other issue: Senior citizens**

- People come to senior centers for the food, 2-6pm. We need spaces to walk. And to craft. There are closets full of supplies, but no programming to take advantage of those supplies. It's about sustainability of programming. There's a perception among seniors that, if you make noise about a problem, you're going to be chastised.
- Access to senior centers as much as cultural centers and schools.

### **Arts and Education**

- Arts should be present in the classroom by requirement, plus Friday evenings, Monday mornings. It's an important mode of expression and communication.
- At my former grade school, I returned to visit my art teacher who taught me the clarinet to discover that she is now teaching the first grade because there's no funding for arts. She helped me grow as a person. Art has helped me understand that East New York means a lot to me.
- We should all have the same access to art in schools in all neighborhoods, not only the select neighborhoods. People around the city should have the same access to arts education (not currently equitable).
- In ARTs East New York's experience through CASA, there are so many stories of prioritizing STEM over art.
- It's required. And art can innovatively be integrated into other subjects.
- Arts percolating into other subjects. Art makes STEM better.
- Most people end up with a less than second grade arts education (out of current public school).
- There should be a requirement that you have to take and pass art, much like requirements to pass gym. Culture priority- no diploma without arts and service requirements.
- Mandate community-facing art programs. Schools can partner with orgs where you are required to help sustain the community. Partnering can help schools understand the field's actual existing non-profit capacity. Arts East NY CASA program- there's the ability

for local non profits to help staff schools arts programs and use the resources they have there, but schools have to change their approach and allow for that.

- We're relying on schools systems that no longer have music classes. I'm saddened that my nieces and nephews have no ability to take up an instrument.
- Much like the senior citizen example of supplies in closets, instruments sit unused. There's a theme here. When you shift teachers, you also lose dormant materials investments. It's about wasting of our already acquired resources.
- We can do something as a community to help support the school system. We can demand resources for schools/DOE and for cultural orgs.
- It's about civics. The DOE has a blueprint for art in all schools, but it's not accountable through funding. Are they following the curriculum?
- Can we have a team to look at what's being met in arts education and who's being held accountable?
- DOE has an arts person in each borough. Need to find out who that is.

#### Teens

- Kids are so wound up under the constraints of the classroom that they need directed therapy and catharsis, which art does so well. In libraries, a dedicated, segregated teen spaces prevent teens from having to negotiate with adults. I have to leave because of the noise.
- It's not just about space, but access to resources to make art and inspiration – how do you get them the tools they need?

#### New Lots library

- Why don't they have the book Great Gatsby the local library? We don't even have one copy of a very standard canon book, but there are many at smaller libraries in other communities.
- This puts a disproportionate, undue burden on the neighborhood, requiring them to go through extra effort to access cultural resources that are a given in other neighborhoods.
- New designs to try to rebrand libraries as community spaces don't mean removing books! The library is prioritizing tech training, but there's a literary gap there in actual books on offer and disparity of cultural offerings that way.
- There is a space on the upper floor of the New Lots Library that sits empty, is underutilized.
- With a priority for youth to concentrate on technology and STEM under the presumption that they'll give under-resourced kids skills for career advantage, people don't seek out more liberal approaches to education, like checking out books. This approach to education doesn't let people dream. "The only way to see the invisible is to do the impossible."

#### Access/Perceptions

- People don't know that they deserve to make the extra effort.
- Access to city resources: In the City there are areas that are left out, even when the resources previously existed the staffing is what is missing.
- There's a reluctancy among neighborhood residents to approach arts and culture. An ARTs East New York story of passersby peeking through ARTs East New York and asking, "Is this for us?" and still walking away, thinking it wasn't. With some of the programs we have, still tricky to get people to come to them. AENY tries to get out on the street to eliminate walls and barriers. How do you get people to feel welcome and feel ownership?
- There's an info gap. We need help in better communication: "THIS IS FOR YOU!" There are existing programs people don't know about, what's the disconnect and where does that happen?
- i.e. Live on Livonia, people in Brownsville Library not knowing that the Brownsville Heritage House is just up the stairs.
- With AENY outdoor ReNew lots project, there is still a barrier- people still wouldn't come in just because of the fencing or look. How can people feel things are for them after a long history of being policed away from ownership, being taught it's not for you? Even that sense of being in a lot off the sidewalk is a psychological barrier
- Based on SES status, rights of access are never taught and many arts and cultural organizations frankly are deliberately exclusionary.
- It's incumbent upon us to create a conversation about who's allowed access. Children are taught they're not worthy. Change approach that trickles down. A renaissance in thought flourishes. Teaching kids "basic things."
- Space isn't unlocked for people- how do we know about the space and who can run it- senior centers with locked craft cabinets, schools with locked music rooms and art supplies. Spaces locked up are asking people to make extra efforts to access things that were already given to them.
- Marty Markowitz had so many events at Brooklyn Borough Hall, offering all types of cultural access. I (a senior) used to be invited to more cultural events. I was on lists to all kinds of cultural fairs, Irish, etc, at Borough Hall and I went. Now I don't get invites. People need to be invited to events to share culture.
- Transportation: maybe Metrocards to get of the borough and experience other resources.
- But it's tricky: when we give too much power to political entities/issues, it gets dictated. Institutional arts and culture, neighborhood culture...as long as there is more! And an exhibition of people that look like us. This becomes the fabric of the community.
- A number of years ago, I passed Schenck Ave and Livonia with my kids and passed a bunch of vacant lots on the way to school. I thought, "What does this say to a child about their community?"
- We need an inherent climate: galleries, gardens and diminishing the barriers.
- Neighborhoods are also segregated. Attract people from other parts of the city.
- "Arts and culture as a magnet of the community."
- We need a fund for a marketing, promotion, advertising campaign. "You are welcome here." "Go look for it." Attracting different kinds of people and different ages. How do we interplay within the local community, or with the broader city?

- Brownsville Community Partnership did the “Best of Brownsville” photo series that was controversial.
- Question of “Can we have nice things?”
- We have to deal with the real threat of gentrification. Why all of a sudden? When things are being funded, the response is a skepticism. It’s socialized. Schools can be a conduit for what art and culture can do for the nature of neighborhood character.
- We need help for local orgs to do outreach- what are good strategies and methods. Are there better ways to talk about who has access to art.
- Once something comes in, we’ve seen places lose their culture. It’s about informing about what’s coming, it’s use and its origins. Making neighborhoods better, but sensitive in awareness, “pass it on” to expand reach. How it’s being communicated. Share our history, make sure that people know about the history of arts and culture in this community.
- Knowing what the local art and cultural networks are. Sharing knowledge. And experience with different local cultures. How to share our knowledge and connections- how do people find out about jobs and resources, like the things that could be used if they were known.
- Community gardener- I want to go to workshops but they’re in the Bronx which is too far to travel, sometimes city wide resources are located geographically in one borough or another and it’s hard to get to them even if the content is useful.
- There are resources in the neighborhood with expertise and they should be capacitated. Identify what exists already. Mapping assets (**more opportunity for discussion in future conversations**).
- Give people enough time to attend events, let events be planned early enough for news to spread.
- BRIC Courses- come to this community. Many are about advertising and marketing, surveys, how to control the narrative and invitations and message. Change how things feel, so people feel invited.
- New Programs should pair up with existing programs to help build connections, non profits should work together to help capacitate one another, like ARTs East New York’s “Painting in the Garden” series. Need continuous, sustainable funding.
- Need staff to help us access grants and funding- not teaching but people who can do it, so that our time is well spent.
- How does DCLA score to moderate structural access to money? Grants should develop new types of scores that help emerging groups have equal chances to access awards - the process currently prioritizes sophistication, and can exclude people who might be great (example English as second language).
- Who has an accessible funding application process? BAC does a good job with this kind of grant. And Blades of Grass, they could be good resources for more equitable application processes.