

Submitted on- 1/30/2017

Name of Event - The Loss of Cultural Facilities and Sanctuaries in the Lower East Side: CHARAS

Date of Event - 1/17/2017

Location of Event - 710 East 7th Street, NY, NY 10009

Borough – Manhattan

Event Host/s or Sponsor/s - Loisaida Inc, Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

Event Contact/s - libertad@loisaida.org, alejandro@loisaida.org, andreajordillo@gmail.com

What type of engagement was this? - Organizing meeting to preserve CHARAS

How many people attended the event? (Overall) - 75- 100

Who were the attendees? - NYC Residents, Seniors, Parents / Guardians / Caregivers, Foreign-born / Immigrant Community, Youth (18-25 yrs), Artists and culture bearers (e.g. visual artists, musicians, poets, dancers, performers, etc.), Creative workers and makers (e.g. crafts people, weavers, carpenters, jewelry designers, etc.), Arts Administrators, City of New York Employees, Educators / Teachers / Teaching Artists, Business Community (e.g. small business owners, merchants associations, BIDs, etc.), Social Entrepreneurs

Please provide some demographic details about the attendees - The group was all ages, races, ethnicities, genders, and classes.

What activities/ material from the CreateNYC Toolkit did you use to engage people? - Infographic (Understand what NYC's cultural planning process is all about), Issue Areas Poster (Prioritize topics and questions that are most important to you), Represent My Community Worksheet (Identify cultural experiences, assets, and needs in your neighborhood)

Briefly describe any other activities, strategies or materials that you used to gather input - The event was focused around gathering input on the future of the iconic and influential PS64 CHARAS. We took the opportunity of so many stakeholders gathering to channel input through the surveys.

What issues did you touch upon in your discussions?

Neighborhood character (Prevent displacement of culture and communities through planning and community development)

From the issues above, what did the group prioritize? Please describe.

Loss of cultural venues for underrepresented artists.

From the issues above, what connections were made between issue areas, if any? Please describe.

There was a connection between equity, access and inclusion and affordability for artists. City agencies must be transparent about what constitutes public benefit. In this case, and in many cases, dormitories should not be considered public benefit as they disrupt infrastructures of communities. "Dorms for hire" where beds can be rented to anyone claiming to be a student run against the preservation of neighborhood character and valuable cultural resources.

Synthesis of Event

The issue of how vacant or underused community facilities have played a role on the dismantling and “de-culturalizing” economic dynamic of historical Latino Core Neighborhoods comes to the foreground as neighbors and community partners discuss the future of PS.64/ CHARAS El Bohio. The group discussed strategies to convert them into cultural resources that strengthen and fully represent the historical and diverse fabric of the Lower East Side. Councilwoman Rosie Mendez presented on the political and legal processes for defending the space, one of the original founders Chino Garcia presented on its original founding, and State Senator Brad Hoylman also was in attendance.

From your overview, what were the key recommendations from your discussion that can inform the cultural plan? Please describe.

Deed restrictions on the building included a caveat which allow the owner to sell the property to be used as a dormitory for universities, for which there is little public benefit to the existing community. Tighten up rules around dormitories. Private schools prevent mixed use operations that are beneficial to communities and larger pools.

Alternative uses for cultural facilities and resources include: safe place for kids and after school summer camps, nutrition education, sustainability initiatives, explore the b-corp model, spaces for equity and inclusion for transgenerational groups, satellite clinics for AA groups, building a base of knowledge for the histories that have been avoided/underrepresented, centers to promote immigrant families, affordable studio and gallery space, space for orchestras to rehearse.

Please share quotes and stories that help illustrate key points from your discussion

"Church is the only family oriented cultural venue left. We need a secular cultural venue for ALL ages. Centers are too segmented by ages. We need something for everyone. Using seniors as volunteers would form a network that would connect with other programs.", "Cultural music programs for all ages"

How do you want to share the CreateNYC Toolkit responses with us?

Scan/ click photos and email them to CreateNYCresponses@gmail.com

Message to the CreateNYC team

Thank You!

Submitted on- 3/31/2017

Name of Event - Residents and Community Focus Group: Loisaida

Date of Event - 2/7/2017

Location of Event - 710 east 9th street, New York, NY 10009

Borough – Manhattan

Event Host/s or Sponsor/s - Loisaida Inc. Center

Event Contact/s - andreajordillo@gmail.com, libertad@loisaida.org

What type of engagement was this? - Focus Group/ Discussion

How many people attended the event? (Overall) - 15- 30

Who were the attendees? - NYC Residents, Seniors, Parents / Guardians / Caregivers, Foreign-born / Immigrant Community, Youth (18-25 yrs), Artists and culture bearers (e.g. visual artists, musicians, poets, dancers, performers, etc.), Creative workers and makers (e.g. crafts people, weavers, carpenters, jewelry designers, etc.), Arts Administrators, Educators / Teachers / Teaching Artists, Business Community (e.g. small business owners, merchants associations, BIDs, etc.), Social Entrepreneurs

Please provide some demographic details about the attendees - 50/50, older/young, male/female, majority long-time residents, one small business owner (casa adela), several people running social service organizations such as Vision Urbana, Casa Victoria (senior center), and Thrive Collective (local youth arts organizations), CB3 chair, former director of Loisaida Inc (1970s). Majority of the participants are long-time and active base of the community's organization.

What activities/ material from the CreateNYC Toolkit did you use to engage people? - Presentation (Share what NYC's cultural planning process is all about), Infographic (Understand what NYC's cultural planning process is all about), Issue Areas Poster (Prioritize topics and questions that are most important to you)

Briefly describe any other activities, strategies or materials that you used to gather input - We used a self-designed questionnaire as an icebreaker and then guide questions to facilitate break out groups on topic areas. At the end we did a report back.

What issues did you touch upon in your discussions?

Equity (The rights of all people everywhere to develop their practice and traditions), Access (Distribution of and participation in cultural activities throughout the city), Citywide coordination (Arts and culture across City agencies), Neighborhood character (Prevent displacement of culture and communities through planning and community development)

From the issues above, what did the group prioritize? Please describe.

Loss of cultural venues for underrepresented artists.

From the issues above, what connections were made between issue areas, if any? Please describe.

They made the connection about the issue/solution of convening city agencies to facilitate better transparency around budgets/funding/general bureaucracy and holding those officials accountable to those they represent. They also concluded that more concentrated power at the neighborhood level should be facilitated; expanded public civic education (especially to college students in the LES). Community relations/agreements/boundaries must be in place, particularly as universities expand their reach and influence in neighborhoods. One group spoke extensively on tourism as equity--specifically the need for protections of the LES ethnic festivals and the Giuliani era criminalization of ethnic manifestations and traditions in public space. These celebrations, they argue, allow for the cultural expressions through (especially) music which have been deadened through the process of displacement and gentrification. The Loisaida Festival was mentioned in particular as one of the last vestiges of public celebration of the Latino footprint and contributions to the neighborhood. An occasion for many ex-residents to return and use as a reunion, as well as an opportunity for old-timers and newcomers to participate in equal measure.

Synthesis of Event

We facilitated an opportunity as icebreaker for participants to philosophize on their cultures and neighborhood. We asked participants to describe their relationship to the neighborhood and asked them to consider whether or not the Lower East Side has a bigger burden to represent and enforce a right to culture because of its history as gateway to immigrant communities and its role as an internationally recognized visibility platform for alternative culture and arts. All respondents responded with overwhelming affirmation. We then moved on to discussion key topics summarized below:

Key Topic 1: Community self-determination

Lessons:

1. Need for reciprocity and respect from new people and industries who come into the area without giving back. How many of our people are employed in the creation of all the art that comes into our neighborhood?
2. Across the board support for the de-centralization of decision making of how funding increases are allocated in the district and prioritize under-represented designations and groups.
3. Policies should support POC-led collaborative spaces that foster social justice goals, historical awareness, constructive communication and engagement between long-term residents and newcomers (gentrifiers).
4. There's a need and emphasis on creating strategic partnerships among artists, activists, businesses, and policymakers to discuss and activate arts and culture roles in strengthening communities.

Key Topic 2: Neighborhood Character/ Place-keeping of Core Communities Lessons:

1. Obstacles are in place that prevent the neighborhood from expressing its character: a. Excessive bureaucracy. Change the balance of power and build up institutions and events that reflect belonging b. Criminalization of cultural expressions. Contest the serial efforts to criminalize otherness—such as improvised drumming sessions in public parks—in favor of a view that sees them as an extension of the

neighborhood and the city's social fabric. Formalize the permitting processes for the performative nature of community to be expressed through recurrent expressions in public space.

2. Asset-based solutions should be a guiding methodology for development across the board. Use the mechanisms in place: CBs, city agencies to facilitate and bolster indigenous practices of resilience and development (garden activities, consider artistic potential in civil workers, veterans, residents).

3. Expand the narrow definition of sanctioned arts and culture that focuses mainly on traditional European arts to include neighborhood character, organizations and groups working outside those traditions and diversity of expressions such as food, fashion, gardening, rumba.

From your overview, what were the key recommendations from your discussion that can inform the cultural plan? Please describe.

1. Provide dedicated revenue sources (base-line operating funds) to increase and stabilize a diverse and inclusive arts sector based on a neighborhood ecosystem that is invested in growing and preserving local/grassroots culture.

2. Develop an arts, culture, and equity chapter in long-term general plans or comprehensive plans of municipalities by mapping under-recognized cultural assets, resources, and lays out cultural investment along with cultural preservation strategies

3. Invest in shared media platforms for small cultural organizations with emphasis on: community outreach, tools for coordination of information on neighborhood arts activities, event pages, blogs and translation and the creation of artist and cultural organizations registries. The Borough Arts Councils should be required to find ways to integrate those networks into traditional institutional information resources.

4. Develop a community oversight council with elected rather than appointed members to insure that increased arts and culture allocations to neighborhoods reflect a balance of cultural groups and organizations serving local communities.

5. Invest in mentoring/career development for working-class youth in arts and culture in programs run by organizations and leaders that fully reflect the diversity and potential of their participants.

6. DCLA should fund capital equipment grants as it is done for programmatic grants to address technology blockage and digital divide that exists in working class Latino communities with the aim to energize and democratize the creation, distribution and consumption of work from local creatives and emergent Latinx artists.

7. DCLA should fund cultural collaborations with the social service and social justice sector (environmental, education, health and legal systems) connections to learning communities, mentorships, technical assistance and civic engagement.

8. Use arts and culture as an organizing mechanism to deliver development that reflects priorities of low-income communities and communities of color. Incorporate arts and culture into community development design processes and have artists of color and cultural organizations leading community design processes.

Please share quotes and stories that help illustrate key points from your discussion

"I think the LES has a bigger burden to enforce a right to culture, which includes food, language, music,

and arts. Culture is very broad. Loisaida has contributed to the Puerto Rican community, the Latino community. The origins of Spanglish came from the Lower East Side—AmeRiCan. It informed the rest of the world. The food we had. Clinton Street had a wonderful cuchifritos shop for 30 years and it's gone now because it couldn't afford the rent. Now it's just a bodega. So I'm happy to see Casa Adela represented here. As a staple of the importance of community rights to culture." – Jeremy Del Rio

"Loisaida was the first center I got a paycheck from when I was 16. I got involved with a theater and arts program, prior to that, I didn't understand what theater was. They taught me the skills, which was transferable. From arts, I have personal experience of going in with that and equipping young people, and even elders. [...] I think a right to culture is a right to breathe. But also the existing population has a right to culture. When the population is being moved through gentrification, we have a right to have a culture because we were here for a while. Any population for that matter." – Eric Diaz, Vision Urbana

"When you're talking about a right to culture, it's both historical and current. To me what resonates is that we always sit on this fine line between that. There's always that about preserving and also celebrating what has come before, and the constant dynamic change on culture that we all create." – Jamie Rogers, chair of CB3

"I've been a resident of this neighborhood for 45 years. I fell in love with this neighborhood. I was a daycare teacher for 35 years. I retired and became a chef. I've been involved with many cultural organizations in this neighborhood. [...] My house becomes a place for cultural artists, I come from a warming tradition in Puerto Rico. La alma de este barrio is that. People sharing, with action. One inspiration for me to be like that is Adela. In terms of the rights to culture, I think it's a birthright, and I am an example of that." – Pepe Flores

"Gentrification hasn't helped us. And it makes our job more challenging. Our young people will have to carry that torch. I hope that the money, or whatever they do [the city], really goes to the things that need to be done. I've seen it in this neighborhood. We have poverty pimps and culture pimps. They just benefit themselves. Wolves in sheep's clothing." – Pepe Flores

"[In the 70s & 80s] You had a bunch of artists who created an organization, but could not present their art as the culture of the community, so they had to cloak it as service programs, and community development. But in between, they would do salsa at soul's plaza. All of that. It was hidden. People worked in these agencies and they did their cultural and artistic work as part of everything, while they were helping people get housing. They didn't see the separation, but funding sources did. That is the reality of an organization like Loisaida. In the culture that we live, you have to fit into a box. [...] We may not fit in all of these boxes, but the best box I have is a means to uplifting a community. The bottomline is that the nature of being able to talk about a right to culture is embodied in the word respect. I see this a lot in our young people." Elizabeth

How do you want to share the CreateNYC Toolkit responses with us?

Toolkit not used

Message to the CreateNYC team

Thank You!

Submitted on- 3/30/2017

Name of Event - Artists and Cultural Workers Focus Group

Date of Event - 1/26/2017

Location of Event - 710 east 9th street 10009

Borough – Manhattan

Event Host/s or Sponsor/s - Loisaida Inc. Center

Event Contact/s - libertad@loisaida.org, andreajordillo@gmail.com, alejandro@loisaida.org

What type of engagement was this? - Focus Group/ Discussion

How many people attended the event? (Overall) - 15- 30

Who were the attendees? - NYC Residents, Seniors, Parents / Guardians / Caregivers, Foreign-born / Immigrant Community, Youth (18-25 yrs), Artists and culture bearers (e.g. visual artists, musicians, poets, dancers, performers, etc.), Creative workers and makers (e.g. crafts people, weavers, carpenters, jewelry designers, etc.), Arts Administrators, Educators / Teachers / Teaching Artists, Social Entrepreneurs

Please provide some demographic details about the attendees - This focus group was a mixed crowd of people between 25 years old and 60 years old. Mostly Puerto Rican ethnicity, but also some other Latino/a/xs and one participant from Portugal. Majority have strong connection to the Lower East Side/Loisaida. Income/class was equally dispersed. We had an employee of El Museo del Barrio, CUNY Cultural Corps, Lincoln Center, local artists from different fields: musicians, dancers, writers, theater.

What activities/ material from the CreateNYC Toolkit did you use to engage people? - Presentation (Share what NYC's cultural planning process is all about), Infographic (Understand what NYC's cultural planning process is all about), Issue Areas Poster (Prioritize topics and questions that are most important to you)

Briefly describe any other activities, strategies or materials that you used to gather input - We used a self-designed questionnaire as an ice-breaker and then guide questions to facilitate break out groups. At the end we did a report back.

What issues did you touch upon in your discussions?

Equity (The rights of all people everywhere to develop their practice and traditions), Access (Distribution of and participation in cultural activities throughout the city), Social & economic impact (The role of arts and culture in an equitable economy and healthy communities), Affordability (Live, work and presentation space for artists), Art in Public Space (How public art and artists are selected), Citywide coordination (Arts and culture across City agencies), Neighborhood character (Prevent displacement of culture and communities through planning and community development)

From the issues above, what did the group prioritize? Please describe.

Inaccessibility of information distribution; inequitable distribution for promotional materials Unleveled playing field regarding affordable spaces; how to have input in determining the use of those public/city owned indoor/outdoor spaces Channel for community uses of underutilized space and public space with terms of participation laid out; Lack of clarity around cultural budgets of other city agencies beyond the DCA

From the issues above, what connections were made between issue areas, if any? Please describe.

A number of issue areas overlapped, specifically around neighborhood character, accessibility, equity, and city-wide coordination.

In preserving neighborhood character and preventing displacement the group discussed, identified, and proposed:

Lack of living archives and platforms for oral histories, lack of multi-generational venues that facilitate culturally specific inclusion within and among different age groups.

Lack of infrastructure within city agencies and universities to facilitate civic engagement and awareness of historical imprints of neighborhoods for students/transient populations.

Lack of inclusion of different disciplines, especially music, as essential to ethnic culture of communities.

Accessibility and Equity greatly overlapped. Participants discussed, identified, and proposed:

They prioritized problematizing the unlevelled playing field between large and small scale cultural organizations across the board.

In the same vein of neighborhood ecologies (above), there is perception of artists as un-embedded from communities and the realities of encroachment of real estate speculation.

Under equity the group identified two subsets: information equity (the fact that communications teams/promotions and marketing are severely overburdened and could be leveled by city management; and the issue of scale and pipelines for artists of color.

Addressing these issues, overall, requires city-wide coordination:

The group also expressed valuing the culture of distinct neighborhoods could be met by transparency of cultural budgeting among city agencies in order forth to be public accountability and benchmarks of equitable allocation of funds.

Realigning artists and cultural workers to corresponding needs of small businesses and manufacturers.

Synthesis of Event

Key Topic 1: Holding institutions accountable to their own public missions and stopping the public funding of exclusion.

Lessons:

A) Accountability

Boards cannot have connection to real estate, and should have term limits.

Qualifications of the board that must have alliance/credential to arts.

Community leadership [ensure that is it multi-generational] must have advisory position to large public institutions.

Commit to leadership development in communities of color.

B) Redefine value and criteria for culture.

Important spaces to protect: Puerto Rican bookstore, bodegas, grocers.

Lottery for community spaces as there is for affordable housing [coalition happening on all community boards under way => 421 tax break to add the spaces.

Including and enfranchising the cultural labor of 'non-artists' and diversity of expressions.

Key Topic 2 : Make equitable use of public space for artists that values the labor of communities of color.

Lessons:

Artists flourish in garden spaces (Loisaida is a garden district), but artists need a transparent and empowered mediator (can be CBOs such as Loisaida Inc. that already represent these relations) that will advocate and get funding to help place artists strategically in gardens. Facilitate and bolster this structure to reimagine gardens as living arts beyond places of passive engagement.

Green thumb forbid sales in the gardens (can lose your license)—rule does not consider the benefit of this, consider changing these regulations, especially as they relate to criminalization.

Reverse the legacy of zero tolerance policies and desire to protect real estate values from local forms of art expression.

Public space should be for public benefit and artists would be strategic in achieving that goal if the city would ease permitting and production processes on CDFs, CBOs and make it available for these relationships to flourish. Presence of embedded artists and cultural workers in the public realm is crucial to the survival of local cultures.

Realigning artists and cultural workers to corresponding needs of small businesses and manufacturers since many artists have commercial leases for their working studios in industrial areas, and commercial rents have no regulations.

Physical presence and active participation is essential beyond the digital sphere just as quality of life has a direct relationship with every citizen's right to culture. Activate vacant or under-utilized government owned spaces through recurrent use for cultural expressions that reflect a broad audience inclusive of age, ethnicities and educational components.

Key topic 3 : Consolidate a method to facilitate equitable distributive information.

Lessons:

Who controls public info: 1. Private and corporate investors 2. Grassroots organizers control community information 3. Educational and historic institutions. Ads and subways, streets and roads must be reserved for full funding/ city subsidies.

At least a percentage set aside to local orgs; rotational management on neighborhood basis.

Media funding: conscious representation of culture and heritage, budget for comms and evaluations that have been historically underrepresented.

Criteria to assess and liaise with communities when CIGs/ other arts orgs pitch projects.

Funded outreach that is relevant to the organic methods of communication between and among communities (ie: pay seniors to do outreach for public events/programs).

Reciprocity for use of community consulting; possibly have this in-house (get recognition and funding for this).

Commodification of public spaces and walls is both a symbolic and physical continuation of serial displacement of local cultural expressions.

From your overview, what were the key recommendations from your discussion that can inform the cultural plan? Please describe.

Encourage artists to present and develop original work at community spaces rather than traditional venues, thereby expanding the basic mission of those spaces.

Encourage artists to collaborate more among themselves through grants that support collaborative workshops at POC-led collaborative work spaces that value traditional technologies and practices as much as high-tech resources and equipment.

Offer funding and tech support for free artists certification programs with a focus outside the benchmark arts.

Tap into energy of spontaneous local cultural expression, such as rumbas in parks on Sundays within a given time frame, and create opportunities for local celebratory manifestations that create social cohesion and well being.

New land-use development projects should contain language to protect cultural specificity, reflects neighborhood ecologies, as a result of open, community-based planning processes.

The city should provide lotteries for community space in addition to “affordable housing” (421 tax break).

Subsidize Con Ed rates for non-profits that provide low cost rehearsal and production space.

Access to city-administered advertisement platforms such as NYC LInk for small cultural organizations with low marketing budgets.

Please share quotes and stories that help illustrate key points from your discussion

“The Downtown Latinx is more a network, like a series of bridges, that will ensure that the latinx arts community here thrives. I think that physical spaces are important too. To be 1,000 percent honest, Loisaida, this block right here, is the only place in lower Manhattan where I feel Latino.” - Anthony

“How I understand the Lower East Side now is through art historical research lenses. I’m more familiar with groups that have disappeared and are not really recorded in the history books. So when you mention seminal figures, I think of people like Spiro Movement, which was a black arts movement, Umbra, a black poet’s movement, Epoxy group, a mix of Chinese—mainland and Hong Kong—, I think of basement workshop, the murals, City Arts, Judson group. The garden movement as a starting point as a historical

place where experimentation happened during a very turbulent time in New York. This area reminds me of that. People just have to take care of themselves build that culture.” - Antonio

“It’s somewhat invisible—I feel invisible as an artist in this neighborhood. It’s nothing that I’ve done. But as a warrior or cultural advocate for Latino presence, my art form has never been a place where that has penetrated. My primary art form has been modern dance and ballet. When I was growing up here, there were opportunities for someone like myself to have what was to be considered an academy style training. You start as a child, as an apprentice, and you go through the ranks, and you tour with the company. And I did that. It was through the Henry Street Settlement, which housed the company, which was an international and touring company. The company life is very isolating, so I was very hungry for a taste of what was happening in la calle. When I was in the 1970s, performing for heads of states in the opera houses across the country in a time of such conflict, I was performing for the ruling classes, and I knew that none of my community could afford, or even know about such tickets. Those kinds of conflicts have been a theme in my life. One of the reasons I am happy about this, is to name it and claim it. Presente, as we say.” --Thea

“I believe there is a problem with perception. In my lifetime, Tato, and others, were seen as part of the community. Now, this dominant, commercial culture sees the artist as exceptional, not your neighbor. Our ability to access resources to our educators and artists are then jeopardized.” --Thea

“I think of where we are accessing our information. Where are the people that are creating in our neighborhoods? How do we create a living archive of that? And what best platforms to be used?” --Sofia

How do you want to share the CreateNYC Toolkit responses with us?

See Attached

Message to the CreateNYC team

Thank You!

Submitted on- 4/3/2017

Name of Event - Loisaida Town hall on the Cultural Plan

Date of Event - 3/1/2017

Location of Event - 107 Suffolk Street, New York, NY 10002

Borough – Manhattan

Event Host/s or Sponsor/s - Loisaida Inc. Center, The Clemente Center

Event Contact/s - libertad@loisaida.org, andreajordillo@gmail.com

What type of engagement was this? - Town Hall

How many people attended the event? (Overall) - 30- 75

Who were the attendees? - NYC Residents, Seniors, Parents / Guardians / Caregivers, Foreign-born / Immigrant Community, Youth (Under 18 yrs), Youth (18-25 yrs), Artists and culture bearers (e.g. visual artists, musicians, poets, dancers, performers, etc.), Creative workers and makers (e.g. crafts people, weavers, carpenters, jewelry designers, etc.), Arts Administrators, Educators / Teachers / Teaching Artists

Please provide some demographic details about the attendees - The town hall convened around 40 key stakeholders. We had a number of resident organizers, artists, musicians, educators, cultural workers, as well as a handful of teens from the Vision Urbana youth mentorship program. We partnered with an NYU Steinhardt graduate class on “Contemporary Art and Community Practice”, and had a handful of those students facilitate the process and transcribe the conversations. There was also representation from local cultural and non-cultural organizations such as The Clemente, Teatro Sea, Teatro La Tea, The New Museum among others.

What activities/ material from the CreateNYC Toolkit did you use to engage people? - Presentation (Share what NYC’s cultural planning process is all about), Infographic (Understand what NYC’s cultural planning process is all about), Issue Areas Poster (Prioritize topics and questions that are most important to you)

Briefly describe any other activities, strategies or materials that you used to gather input - This town hall convened a general audience at the Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center, where the committee put together a presentation for those unfamiliar with the cultural plan process. We also put the work of participation in relation to the cultural history of Loisaida to guide the working groups into processing mechanisms that acknowledge that history and the fate of Latino/a/xs and their role in the art-historic Downtown arts scene. We grounded the attendees’ participation in the context of the cultural history of Loisaida to guide the working groups into processing mechanisms that acknowledge Latino/a/xs historic role in the Downtown arts scene.

What issues did you touch upon in your discussions?

Equity (The rights of all people everywhere to develop their practice and traditions), Access (Distribution of and participation in cultural activities throughout the city), Social & economic impact (The role of arts and culture in an equitable economy and healthy communities), Affordability (Live, work and presentation space for artists), Education (Increase arts education in public schools and ensure that curriculum is culturally relevant and diverse), Art in Public Space (How public art and artists are selected), Citywide coordination (Arts and culture across City agencies), Neighborhood character (Prevent displacement of culture and communities through planning and community development)

From the issues above, what did the group prioritize? Please describe.

The group split into two: one focused on coalition building by small cultural organization and individuals around media and communications, and the other focused on what the city can do through policies that balance cultural funding inequities. Both groups saw neighborhood character and the protection of Loisaída's legacy as a cultural creation and distinct ecosystem as a basic premise to re-define the arbitrary definition of what constitutes legitimate art as one more aligned with the experiential cultural assets that build community and maintain historical memory.

The first group spoke extensively about the politics of difference: the relation between online and offline life and the level of direct participation associated with both, the importance of including veteran artists in practice, rather than celebration, and the importance of person-to-person organizing. They stressed that this should be reconsidered as criteria for funding as it had been in the past, and can be crucial to the goal of equity.

The second group mostly focused on funding equity issues and what the city could do from a policy perspective. They began by identifying core values of Loisaída's cultural legacy that could be translated into an equity driven representation of the neighborhood's cultural ecosystem. Some of the values listed were: Immigrant friendly, LES DIY Spirit, Respect, Reciprocity, Open Community Spaces, Community Muralism, Sweat Equity, Grassroots, Community Building/Organizing, Preservation, Historical Awareness, Build on both Old and New, Reclaiming, Urban Ecology Experimentation, Proactivity, Participation, Consistency, Collaborative Spaces, Sharing of Resources.

From the issues above, what connections were made between issue areas, if any? Please describe.

The following statements are catalogued under main issue area discussed. Themes of Accessibility, Equity, and Inter-Agency Collaboration overlap in many of the issue areas below:

1) Neighborhood Character Points:

Discussion about guidelines and/or mechanisms to ensure local artists and small cultural organizations have their voices heard.

Discussion about decentralizing decision-making regarding how funds (including increases in funding) are allocated in the district.

Discussion about the need to reclaim the community's "ignored cultural and community assets" and the lack of community centers for children to learn new and traditional arts.

Discussion about the need to preserve the community spaces, and cultural spaces that are being lost, and that are essential for a sense of well-being, social connections, and civic organizing. It is particularly important to provide platforms for the older generations (inclusive of those who have already moved away

or have been displaced); moreover, these platforms need to be considered as a formal component of a preservation program.

Discussion around the idea that the neighborhood's cultural assets are intrinsic to its identity; and that artists are best positioned to make these assets visible, affirming the community's history and dynamism, and in doing so, bringing the community closer together.

2-Public Space Points:

Discussion about how the virtual/digital sphere is not sufficient in terms of cultural and community activism. Being physically present, and maintaining active participation, are essential.

Discussion concerning how parks and open spaces should reflect the cultural practices, histories, and usages, of their surrounding communities.

Discussion about how ethnic street festivals -such as the Loisaida Street Festival- should be more prioritized for funding, since they provide multiple cultural access points, as well as unique opportunities of cultural participation.

Discussion on the effects of expanding the basic mission of community spaces, such as public gardens, and about encouraging artists to develop and present original work in them, rather than just in traditional venues.

Discussion on how residential market-rate real estate developments should be required to include performance and recreational space accessible to all the community. The city should not keep condoning the segregation of class and cultural assets segregation in what used to be majority working-class neighborhoods.

As expressed in previous focus groups, public spaces should be for public benefit and the DCLA-funded CDFs should be allocated a portion of public spaces for direct advertising, marketing and PR. Latino/a/x working-class communities engage in civic and cultural activities primarily person to person. While online marketing is much more affordable, this obstacle impedes our ability to reach audiences and residents.

3-Media Justice/ Information Equity:

Discussion on who gets to control the message and narratives about Puerto Rican and Latino/a/x communities? It is important that we get to generate our own story, histories, and narratives. Who tells our story? Who controls the message? How can we empower ourselves by creating and distributing our own narrative?

Discussion about how the neglected histories and legacies of New York City's Latinxs need to be properly documented, and interpreted, in a 'living archive'/community-centered archive format. Current historical narratives, housed in mainstream institutions, libraries, and archives, are incomplete, and non-inclusive; they also simplify and whitewash the diversity and rich texture of New York City's history.

Discussion on how archives can be actively used as learning tools for city and community's marginalized youth populations, and affirm social and cultural identities through these pedagogical strategies.

Discussion on how to amplify our voice in order to leverage policy and/or confront vested interests that promote or exacerbate structural inequities.

Discussion on the need to recognize the value of organizing (and active participation), and not just valuing programming (and passive consumption).

Discussion on the need for more tech partnerships that facilitate tech access.

Discussion on the value of providing youth leadership training, and of incorporating media and other creative skill-building strategies.

4-Coalition Building/ Resource Sharing:

Discussion on the value of small organizations working together as part of a mutually beneficial ecosystem, and not as part of a zero sum dynamic. Promoting the sharing of resources, and tapping into existing networks.

Discussion on how policies should support Latino-led or POC-led collaborative spaces that foster just relations and historical awareness between long-term residents of the neighborhood and newcomers.

Discussion about the importance of encouraging community businesses and education to participate in amplifying a community voice of cohesion.

Discussion on how to organize around NYU, and the potential friendly role this major research institution can play in respecting community needs, and offering reciprocity to the surviving neighborhood's social ecology. Related to this, the group talked about the need for new urban pedagogies. Provide more support for organizations to work collaboratively rather than compete for the same funding.

5- Funding Equity:

Discussion on how smaller organizations do not have the resources to hire lobbyists that can influence policy and decision-making.

Discussion on who (people or organizations) get to define what the arts are, and who measures the cultural engagement of low-income residents outside of standard institutional confines

Discussion about how funders can bring together complementary resources in non-transactional ways, and on the importance of developing new ways to assess the value on issues derived from aesthetics, justice, health, economics, and the environment.

Discussion on the need to operationalize and optimize art-for-social-change grant making strategies.

Discussion on the need to share skills between arts and social justice funders, optimizing the development of strategies, and the measurement of social impact.

Synthesis of Event

We started this town-hall meeting with pizza and an introduction. Eddie Conde, a long-time local percussionist, provided an invocation with a performance of Afro-Caribbean drumming that not only "cleared the air" but created an inviting space for community discussion. We reported back to participants on the progress of our engagement, and an overview of the cultural plan, especially as it relates to the Latino/a/x Lower East Side/Lower Manhattan, and POC-led communities. We broke out into two groups. Some of the key discussions were centered on developing a more layered understanding of the intersection of art and social change for funding reform to strike a balance between the creative dynamism of unpredictable outcomes, and the rigor of measurable demands. The City needs to envision a new model of metrics criteria based on long term initiatives and preservation of the cultural integrity of neighborhood established by legacy residents in order to enable progress in how structural racism plays out in the non-profit arts & culture world.

Lessons:

It was agreed that there must be a shift from the current practice of dissecting and fragmenting cultural work in communities of color into separate spaces/boxes, i.e. of education, healthcare, human rights, or arts.

It was recognized that all of these issues above (culture, education, healthcare, human rights, the arts) are intrinsically connected and tied to one another.

There was agreement on the need to validate action at every level, and a need to recognize that our work is interconnected in an ecosystem that embraces change.

There was general agreement about how the question of “social impact” is fundamentally inseparable from the act of creativity. Creativity and its effect on the world are bound together, therefore art and impact have to be recast as being interdependent rather than at odds.

The group also concluded that there is a need for more responsive and accurate techniques to measure participation; and that these must look beyond the focus on benchmarked arts disciplines, passive audiences, and formal arts venues.

From your overview, what were the key recommendations from your discussion that can inform the cultural plan? Please describe.

Metrics/ Funding Reform:

It is proposed that metrics need to change to consider longer period time frames, preferably as unrestricted general operating support, with the inclusion of community based organizations using cultural practices, and also emergent artists.

2. It is proposed that if an entity has demonstrated good leadership and accountability, there should be investment in that entity’s administrative capacity over time, so as to support the development of the human resources needed to cultivate individual donors and other sustainability strategies.

3. It is proposed that the value of culturally-specific arts organizations should be measured differently, and in ways that reflect the organization’s organic relationship with the communities they serve, for example:

-Considering qualitative evidence of how the CBO values the existing leadership in the community they serve.

-Considering how the CBO promotes narratives that affirm the leadership and cultural legacies of that community.

Neighborhood Ecosystem:

1. It is proposed that the city targets tourism tax revenue, workforce development, small business administration, community economic development, and 1–2 percent of infrastructure to public arts funds, etc. to invest in arts and culture facilities and programming in low-income communities and communities of color.

2. It is proposed the city include lotteries for performance and recreational community space in addition to “affordable housing” (421 tax break)

3. It is proposed for the city to decriminalize cultural expressions of otherness in public spaces—such as improvised drumming sessions in public parks—in favor of a view that sees them as an extension of the

neighborhood and the city's social fabric. A permitting processes for the performative nature of community to be expressed through recurrent expressions in public space should be formalized.

Media Equity/ Communications/ Visibility:

1. It is proposed the creation of a dedicated fund to archive the work of marginalized immigrant and migrant art practitioners residing in NYC.
2. It is proposed that there must be support for public humanities projects that fund living archives, renewed historical interpretations and public interpretation of neglected legacies of Puerto Rican and Latinx cultural and civic contributions to neighborhood identities and NYC. These initiatives should be led by partnerships between culturally competent scholars, CBOs with access to vernacular archives and relevant institutions willing to provide the technical capacity for the formal archival process.
3. It is proposed that neighborhood ecologies need resources for media production, resources that today are granted almost exclusively to large institutions, and earmark such funds for community-based purposes.
4. It is proposed that leadership training must be made available, as well as resources to incorporate media and other creative skill-building assets.

Organizing and coalition-building:

1. Support and fund advocacy organizations that help build awareness and civic engagement around justice-oriented, neighborhood ecosystems-level reforms.
2. Support grantees' efforts in transforming programs into scalable policies beyond local efforts. Give grantees space and room to work collaboratively with other organizations.
3. Increase access, capacity, and knowledge to use technology in low-income communities and communities of color by:

-Supporting Artistic Residencies and Incubators that accommodate collaborative projects with elements of community participation.

-Coalition-building between different scales of community based and culture organizations to create culturally relevant means. Use technology to engage public input from underrepresented communities. - Increase technology access and knowledge for low-income communities and communities of color to tell their own narratives.

-Fund project proposals that are at the intersection of technology, art, and social justice.

-Employ youth of color to use media to create dialogue around equity and community planning

Culture and Technology Education:

1. Create sustained funding for cultural education. The DCLA must formalize a relationship to DOE/BBI/DYCD to facilitate cultural education that is outside of the museum education model. See Loisaída's programs such as the Young Lords Exhibit, which drew more than 20 classroom visits in a 4 month time-frame. These initiatives should not be simply programmatic, but baseline and institutional. The funding guidelines should be flexible enough to allow for innovation through cultural and artistic approaches.
2. Engage youth in neighborhood planning and design processes through relevant school curricula that build capacity and increase economic opportunities to underserved youth of color. Make transparent the budgeting of arts and culture within the DOE to equitably oversee partnerships with CBOs.

3. Support community centers where children can learn new and traditional arts anchored in pride and self-esteem as well as in economic development efforts.
4. Develop school internships and summer workforce programs in cultural, community-based arts industries targeting disadvantaged and disconnected youth with high drop-out rates in high-unemployment communities.
5. Strengthen Community Development Block Grant uses for instrumental effects of arts and culture.

Please share quotes and stories that help illustrate key points from your discussion

Eddie: As an artist, people ask me to give my services for free. You also want money. I teach privately. Its nice when an organization can hire people to do this. At the cultural center on 11th and 12th, I received free conga lessons for many years. I then taught for free. I was teaching at 18. Throughout the years, organizations wanted you to give and give, but you can always do it for free. Its nice to get grants, but when do we come self-sufficient? We have to work on this. We have to make it happen. We are always waiting for hand outs.

Karina- Where did we end up with this disparity of funding and how can we redefine it? Jose- the answer here is both complex and simple. It is that way because of historical racism Liz- Ever since the 60's this has been a problem. Block grants have been hidden. Funding streams aren't the same as they were before- It is an apartheid system of funding, a pork barrel way of funding. It's not a matter of more money, it's a matter of allocation. We are talking about fair share values. There is nothing wrong with us having to claim a larger part of the budgets. There is also a lack of trust and respect in terms of how our organizations are viewed. They don't think we're good administrators; they have a relational environment with the larger orgs. Who've been dealing with them for decades

Anita- I was a deputy director at one of the 33 CIGs. We need to have a common vocabulary e.g. diversity does not equal inclusion Diversity=invited to the dance, Inclusion= asked to dance

Shaun: I think there is a necessary shift in how evaluation is defined. That's longer work – I think you can force accountability if you shift policy. If you change the framework – long-term relationships need to be invested. It can't be based on a program. It should be operating budgets. Programs are fast and short term. Metrics need to be changed. Demographics included – those need to shift in terms of evaluation. That's a policy shift. The use of frequency of contact opposed to thousands of people as a measure.

Angel: I think that it should be made clear that there is a feeling out there that while the city must correct its structural double standards and finally value, support and correct the underfunding of Latino communities and their cultural output, the city must also know when to back off and take a more laissez faire approach. There is a time for everything, and the idea is not to have the city mediate on every aspect of the arts/culture/community dynamics to make it stale and technocratic. For example I saw how neighborhood participation and community input was completely marginalized during the Bloomberg years by treating us as consumers rather than citizens. And how the decades long ritual and cohesive Caribbean expression of Rumba in the park was criminalized during the Giuliani days. At times the city would act best by not intervening, not tipping the balance, and taking a hands off approach.

Ed: I lived in Loisaída for 15 years in the 80s and 90s till the turn of the century and I witnessed the big changes in the neighborhood but one thing remained constant, the vitality and importance of the unique racial and cultural mosaic of the neighborhood that was essential to everyday life and the explosion of institutions like Loisaída, CHARAS, the Nuyorican Poets Café, the Agueybaná Bookstore, and so many other short-lived, and long term spaces of cultural creation.

I saw how well-meaning community activists partnered with residents, formally and informally to create the aesthetic that today is recognized as Downtown. In spite of the considerable forces that conspired to take away our public and private spaces of art creation, the spirit of the neighborhood never died and lives on in places like the Loisaida Center, in public housing community centers, in the community gardens and even the walls that are reserved for memorial murals. While our numbers have been somewhat reduced by gentrification, we are still here in large numbers and we need to work with like-minded cultural creators and institutions that want to preserve the low-rise, DIY spirit of community arts by local groups and prevent the Lower East Side from becoming a museum of no-longer-with-us idealized ethnic and racial minorities, banished to forgotten memories of boarded-up tenements.

How do you want to share the CreateNYC Toolkit responses with us?

I have not used the toolkit in my event

Message to the CreateNYC team

thanks for letting us submit with an extension!

How do you define a Downtown Latinx Arts Creative?

A network of residents, organizers, activists, businesses and arts/cultural organizations participating in conversations, actions, exhibitions, festivals, and other arts-inclusive events that preserve the Downtown Latinx Community.

Groups of Latinos sharing art.

Recovering/uncovering – inside/outside

An alternative to traditional naturalist aesthete of preculture in NYC.

In order of priority (from 1 to 5), please number the factors considered in your definition (above):

	1	2	3	4	5
Place of residence	1	1	2	1	2
Style/aesthetic	1	3	1		3
Place of exhibition/presentation	2	1	2	1	1
Place of work (day job)	1	1		2	2
Bilingual/bicultural	2	1	1	1	2

Who or what are the seminal figures and/or movements of Downtown Latinx culture?

Loisaida Inc, Nuyorican Poets Café, Pedro Pietri, Pedro Albizu Campos Cetner, Henry Street Settlement

Nuyorican language, aesthetics, performance.

Latinos, underserved, underrepresented as a collective.

Pedro Pietri, spoken word.

Community garden movement, umbra, epoxy group, city arts workshop, Judson group, Nuyorican poets

Nuyorican poets, Maria Dominguez, Eddie Figueroa, Adal Maldonado, Bimbo Rivas, Papoieto.

Has their influence spread to the point that location is not essential?

No. Loisaida is the only place I feel Puerto Rican in Manhattan. Can we *preserve* our Latinx Hxstory without preserving our Indigenous Hxstory? We need a Latinx archive in Loisaida?

Yes, dissemination has occurred, the acculturation has penetrated the academy and that's important, and I think beneficial, but location, location is important, vital.

Yes, because of digital age.

In text year, but as a place downtown is still tied to those figures/movements. New immigrants from central/south America.

Their work transcends neighborhood—published and exhibited internationally.