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**MEDIA CONTACT:** [publicaffairs@culture.nyc.gov](mailto:publicaffairs@culture.nyc.gov); 212-513-9323

**NYC DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS SELECTS HESTER STREET COLLABORATIVE TO CREATE NEW YORK CITY'S FIRST-EVER COMPREHENSIVE CULTURAL PLAN**

*Launching in September, development of the plan will incorporate intensive public input and an in depth evaluation of the city's cultural assets into a roadmap for supporting the entire cultural community and increasing culture's positive social and economic impact for New Yorkers throughout the city.*

*City will seize opportunity to create a long term framework for promoting greater equity, access, diversity, and vibrancy, and expand opportunities for residents to access and participate in the city's rich cultural life.*

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**New York** – The NYC Department of Cultural Affairs announced today the selection of Hester Street Collaborative (HSC), a respected New York City-based nonprofit organization focused on community-driven design, planning, and development to take the lead in creating the City's first ever comprehensive cultural plan. Over the course of the next year HSC will partner with DCLA to spearhead efforts to assess the reach and impact of the city's existing cultural assets. The team will solicit the public's input to develop a clear picture of the experiences, values, and priorities of New Yorkers from all walks of life. Together with a broad range of research, data, and mapping, this input will be used to create a long term plan for cultivating and supporting art and culture throughout the city. The overarching goals will be to maintain New York's role as an international beacon for the creative community and expand opportunities for residents and visitors to engage with the city's unparalleled cultural assets. The initial plan will be released in summer 2017.

"New York City has always been an international hub for arts and culture, from our diverse community of artists to our world-class cultural institutions," said **Mayor de Blasio**. "With this comprehensive cultural plan, we will work with New Yorkers to gain a deeper understanding of our city's rich cultural landscape and develop ways to better reflect the diversity of our city in the arts. We are excited to work with Hester Street Collaborative to create a plan to ensure that New York City remains a vibrant cultural capital for all."

"This innovative plan will help this city continue to be the most culturally diverse in the world," said **Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. "With community input, we are empowering those that help keep the essence and color of this city alive. I want to thank the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Administration and our partners in government for their commitment to keeping our city's cultural community vibrant."

“New York is the largest local funder of art and culture in America, with a proud history dating back to the 19th century of providing residents with access to transformative cultural experiences” said **Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl**. “Culture is good for the soul, good for our communities, good for the economy, and we owe every New Yorker an opportunity to weigh in on what’s important to them when it comes to supporting this critical part of life in the city. Hester Street Collaborative has wide ranging experience working with neighborhoods across New York on plans that reflect local priorities, while providing a steady platform and far reaching vision for how to create more dynamic, successful, and inclusive communities.”

“New York City is the cultural capital of the world, and with strategic, thoughtful planning, we can ensure that all New Yorkers have meaningful engagement with the arts,” said Council Majority Leader and **Cultural Affairs Committee Chair Jimmy Van Bramer**. “That’s why Council Member Levin and I sponsored legislation to create New York City’s Cultural Plan, to evaluate our strengths and lay out a blueprint for increased access and opportunity in every neighborhood in the city. I look forward to working with Hester Street Collaborative, the Department of Cultural Affairs, and cultural partners across the five boroughs to develop a plan that will ensure our city’s cultural vibrancy for years to come.”

“Our City is a beautiful mosaic that reflects our history, values, and culture,” said **Council Member Stephen Levin**. “I sponsored the Cultural Plan with Majority Leader Van Bramer so that our City would have a clear strategy of how to thoughtfully nurture and sustain the cultural heart of all our communities. I am certain that with Hester Street Collaborative at the helm, the Cultural Plan will be robust and forward-thinking.”

For the last fourteen years, Hester Street Collaborative (HSC) has worked as an advisor to communities throughout New York City to develop transformative plans and projects through inclusive, participatory processes. HSC’s team of planners, architects and community organizers works with residents, community-based organizations, small businesses, city agencies, and elected officials to develop innovative community engagement tools that maximize resident input. That input is paired with research, data and analysis, ensuring meaningful civic engagement, optimal community benefit and implementable results. Most recently, HSC has collaborated with residents in Manhattan for the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan, completed in February 2016. Additionally in July 2016 Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts NY (NOCD-NY), which will support HSC in the development of the plan, convened a citywide roundtable that brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to explore the successes, challenges and opportunities for using arts and culture to heal and transform New York City’s public housing communities. For the NYC cultural plan, HSC will be supported by other locally-based experts including NOCD-NY, James Lima Planning + Development, and House of Cakes Design, BJH Advisors, and Leah Meisterlin.

“The NYC Cultural Plan project offers an opportunity to build on our City’s incredibly rich arts and cultural history, to celebrate and continue a legacy of dynamic and diverse creative expression, and to increase access to the arts for all of New York’s communities,” said **Betsy MacLean, Executive Director of Hester Street Collaborative**. “Our team is looking forward to working together with DCLA, the City Council, and New York’s many cultural organizations and institutions to engage New Yorkers in the development of an implementable plan that lifts up the role of arts and culture in all aspects of urban life -- from public health to equitable development to neighborhood preservation and more! We’ll work to leverage the cultural wealth of our city, as well as the deep knowledge of arts institutions, community-based organizations, educators, artists and residents throughout the five boroughs to shape New York City’s first ever comprehensive cultural plan.”

For the cultural plan, HSC’s approach to developing the plan will include an assessment of the arts and culture landscape as well as the social and economic impact of the arts and its intersection with health, science, education and other fields. Existing studies, precedents, and neighborhood-level data will form the basis for comparative analyses and resource mapping. Most importantly, the HSC team will develop innovative, interactive engagement tools to successfully engage an expansive and inclusive mix of New Yorkers and ensure that their needs and priorities guide the cultural plan.

The creation of the cultural plan will be executed in close collaboration with the Citizen’s Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC is comprised of appointees from a broad array of cultural and artistic organizations and practices, and other related fields. It is charged with advising DCLA on the development and implementation of the plan, which will address several topics related to cultural activities in the city, including the availability and distribution of cultural activities in the five boroughs, the relationship between cultural activities and social and economic health and welfare, housing and workspace needs of artists, and increasing arts education and cultural activities in public schools. The CAC is chaired by Ben Rodriguez-Cubeñas, Chair of the Cuban Artists Fund, Vice Chair of DCLA’s Cultural Affairs Advisory Commission, and Program Director for Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Charles E. Culpeper Arts and Culture Program . Members of the committee were appointed by Mayor de Blasio, the City Council, and Borough Presidents.

“We have an unprecedented opportunity to create a vibrant comprehensive Cultural Plan for New York City that will build on our rich cultural history and lay the foundation for expanded opportunities for artists and audiences throughout the five boroughs,” said **Ben Rodriguez- Cubeñas**.

#### **About the Cultural Plan**

Passed by New York City Council and signed into law by Mayor de Blasio in 2015, Local Law 46 establishes the requirements for New York’s cultural plan, which must address several topics related to cultural activities in the City, including: the availability and distribution of cultural activities in the five boroughs, the relationship between cultural activities and social and economic health and welfare, housing and studio needs of artists, and increasing arts education and activities in public schools. The legislation also requires DCLA to establish a Citizens’ Advisory Committee, which will advise the development and implementation of the plan, and will review DCLA’s biannual reports on the progress of the plan – which are also required by the legislation. The plan itself will be reviewed and revised every ten years as necessary, and the CAC will be dissolved after making recommendations following its review of the second biannual report, or after five years.

#### **About Hester Street Collaborative**

Hester Street Collaborative provides participatory planning, design and development technical assistance throughout New York City. Founded in 2002, their mission is to provide the tools, information and inspiration communities most need to participate meaningfully in the shape of their built environment. They specialize in developing inclusive, innovative, hands-on community engagement tools that build community capacity and result in concrete community benefits.

HSC is involved in a number of transformational, community-driven projects throughout the city. Currently, they are working with local groups to design and develop much-needed community facilities in Corona, East New York, Mott Haven, Clinton Hill and the Rockaways. In addition, HSC is working on community-driven planning initiatives in many re-zoning neighborhoods including East Harlem, Bushwick and Staten Island, and on major resilient infrastructure projects in Red Hook and Lower Manhattan.

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