



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10
215 West 125th Street, 4th Floor—New York, NY 10027
T: 212-749-3105 F: 212-662-4215

BRIAN A. BENJAMIN
Chairperson

ANDREW LASSALLE
District Manager

May 11, 2017

Mr. Tom Finkelpearl
Commissioner
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs
31 Chambers Street, 2nd Floor
New York, New York 10007

Dear Commissioner Finkelpearl:

Re: Letter of Support for Studio Museum in Harlem (Studio Museum) Expansion Project

Manhattan Community Board 10 (CB10) recognizes the historical value of the Studio Museum to Harlem's residents and visitors since it was founded in 1968 by a diverse group of artists, community activists and supporters. Originally located in a rented loft on Fifth Avenue, just north of 125th Street, the Studio Museum in Harlem has been an important part of the 125th Street landscape and commercial corridor since 1979 when it moved into its current location at 144 West 125th Street. CB10 is aware of the growth of the Studio Museum since the renowned Architect J. Max Bond, Jr. led its first renovation effort in the later 1970's and when in 1985 the Museum expanded into an adjacent vacant lot known as 142 West 125th Street.

Since that time, and over the past two (2) decades, CB10 recognizes the continuing efforts of the Studio Museum to expand its museum and viewing spaces by adding additional gallery space, lobby space, a theater and an expedition space. Having so expanded its physical spaces, CB10 recognizes the continued growth of the Studio Museum in its programs, activities and community engagement. The Studio Museum is recognized and known throughout the world for its "catalytic role in promoting the works of artists of African descent." It has been accredited by the American Alliance of Museums since 1987 when it became the first Black or Latino institution to gain such recognition.

The Studio Museum now seeks to expand further and has come before both the Arts & Culture and Land Use Committees to provide pertinent information regarding its plans to engage in a major capital improvement of its present premises covering 142-144 West 125th Street. Each of the aforementioned committees were provided with extensive materials and a "virtual reality" presentation of what the Studio Museum will look and feel like after this major capital expansion takes place. In addition, the senior most staff of the Museum presented its plans to bring about greater community engagement in its programs, exhibitions and use of its expanded space. One

important visual highlight of the plans of the Studio Museum for its expansion is the opening of its façade to allow the community and visitors to see from street level what is taking place inside.

The Studio Museum is asking for the support of CB10 as it moves forward with its expansion plans. While CB10 cannot at this time take any formal position on the question of Land Use, it is recommended that the Community Board offer to the Studio Museum its support in the form of a letter which recognizes a partnership in the pursuit of a *better Harlem* over the past several decades; our mutual understanding of the value and connection of the museum (and its display and promotion of arts & culture) to the continued economic growth and vitality of the 125th Street corridor and the community at large and to the educational benefits and value of the programs and activities of the museum.

At its May 2, 2017 General Board meeting Manhattan Community Board 10 voted in support of the recommendation that such a letter be given to the Studio Museum in Harlem with an understanding that we take no position at this time on Land Use and that any further support and approval will be subject to a fuller and more complete vetting by the appropriate CB10 Committees, our Executive Committee and the General Board as well as with greater community engagement and involvement overall. The vote passed unanimously with a vote of 32 in favor, 0 opposed with 0 abstentions.

If you have any questions please feel free to reach out to CB10's District Manager, Andrew Lassalle, at 212.749.3105 or at alassalle@cb.nyc.gov.

Sincerely,



Brian A. Benjamin
Board Chairperson
Manhattan Community Board 10