

LAND USE COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES

September 4, 2019

Committee Members Present

Wayne Benjamin, Chair
Christopher Ventura, Assistant
Chair
James Berlin
Osi Kaminer
Cindy Matos
Nicholas Martinez

Committee Members Absent

Steve Simon

Board Members Present

Public Members Present

Vivian Ducat

Public Members Absent

Staff: Paola Garcia, Shinelle Paniagua

Guests: Artist Ryan Desso, Paul J Heinstezstein, Alexander Campos, Margaret McQuade, Barry Dunlevy, Josephine (?), Alix Gerber

- 1) The meeting of the Land Use Committee (“Land Use” or the “Committee”) of Community Board 12 Manhattan (“CB12M”) was called to order with quorum present at 7:04 PM. Chair Benjamin greeted guests, welcomed Committee members and recognized Chris Venture as the Committee’s new Assistant Chair. Committee members introduced themselves.
- 2) **Update by Hispanic Society of America on capital improvement plans and planning process:**
Margaret McQuade, Assistant Director and Curator of Decorative Arts, Hispanic Society of America (“HSA” or the “Hispanic Society”), and Alex Campos, Development Officer, presented the Committee with an update on HSA’s latest capital improvement plan; an update was previously presented to the Committee in December 2018. Ms. McQuade provided background on HSA. HSA was founded in 1904 by Archer Milton Huntington who bought property from the Audubon Estate to build a cultural arts complex. The first structure built was for HSA; Huntington invited other cultural institutions to also erect buildings. The cultural arts complex, Audubon Terrace, is a New York City Historic District. HSA occupies three of the Audubon Terrace buildings, including HSA’s original Main Building, the former Museum of the American Indian building, and the North Galleries building. HSA has the most significant collection of Hispanic art and culture in the United States.

For the past decade the Hispanic Society invested in upgrading its facilities in phases. From 2009 to 2016, it renovated the Sorolla Gallery, restored the Main Building facades and replaced the Main Building’s copper roof. The roof replacement project was recognized in May 2019 by the New York Landmarks Conservancy with a Lucy Moses Award for historic preservation.

The Committee was briefed on HSA’s new phased strategic architectural plan (the “Phased Strategic Architectural Plan” or the “Plan”). The Phased Strategic Architectural Plan will update HSA’s buildings to current museum standards as well as improve the visitor experience, expand programming, and make the collection more accessible to wider audiences. The Plan consists of three phases including renovating space within the former Museum of the American Indian to create a special exhibit gallery (the “Special Exhibit Gallery”), restoring Audubon Terrace, and updating mechanical systems in the Main Building. The Special Exhibit Gallery will, for the first time, provide the Hispanic Society with space to mount special and revolving exhibits. Renovation of the exterior terrace will make it accessible and more inviting.

Advancing the Special Exhibit Gallery is a priority and will be the first of the Plan. Renovation of the exterior terrace will likely be the second phase. Restoration of all or part of the terrace may proceed in parallel with work on the Special Exhibit Gallery since the building that in which it will be located is entered from the terrace and neither the building entrance nor the terrace is accessible.

In August 2019 HSA announced its architects for the Plan. The team includes Beyer Blinder Belle, Selldorf Architects, and Reed Hilderbrand Landscape Architecture.

The Committee was advised that total costs associated with the Plan is not yet finalized, the first two phases are expected to cost at least \$7,00,000, and the City of New York has already committed \$1,500,000 in capital funds to support the Plan.

After further discussion a motion was made (Vivian) and Seconded (Osi) supporting HSA's Phased Strategic Architectural Plan and urging the City to allocate additional funds. The motion passed with the following votes.

	<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstaining</u>
LU Committee Members	7	0	0
Board Members	0	0	0
Members of the Public	2	0	0

3) **Old Business**

No Old Business

4) **New Business**

- i) Barry Dunlevy raised a concern about bicycle riding on sidewalks and was referred to the Public Safety Committee meeting in the adjacent room.
- ii) Chair Benjamin advised that Andrea Kornbluth, Curtis Young and Jay Mazur are no longer members of Land Use. Andrea has schedule conflicts; Curtis was appointed Chair of Public Safety.
- iii) Chair Benjamin also advised that he was invited to attend a meeting on September 5th at which new historic districts in Inwood will be discussed and will report back to the Committee in October on the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:49 PM.

Submitted by Chris Ventura