



*Donovan Richards
Queens Borough President*

Community Board No. 2

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*Anatole Ashraf
Chairperson
Debra Markell Kleinert
District Manager*

December 9, 2025

Arts & Cultural Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes

This meeting was teleconferenced using Zoom

Committee Members Present:

Karesia Batan, Chair
Eric Narburgh, Vice Chair
Anatole Ashraf
Kenny Greenberg
Pia Rahman
Akello Thomas

Committee Members Absent:

Lisa Charles
Stephen Cooper
Ryan Smith

Arts & Cultural Affairs Public Members Present:

Edjo Wheeler

Community Board 2 Staff:

Debra Markell Kleinert, District Manager

Guests:

Edjo Wheeler, Culture Lab
Tess Howsam, Culture Lab
Dirk McCall de Paloma, Sunnyside Shines
Angel Hart, LIC Partnership
Andre Irving, Cucala Dance
Isabella Bustamante, Teen Art Salon
Cheryl Chan, Sculpture Center

Karesia Batan, Chair of the Arts and Cultural Affairs Committee, welcomed everyone to the committee meeting.

Sunnyside Shines

Dirk McCall de Paloma, Executive Director of Sunnyside Shines, provided updates on Sunnyside Shines' recent activities and upcoming events. He provided the following information:

- Sunnyside Shines installed all their holiday lights, and a lighting ceremony was held in November. He noted that the lights attached to the billboard above Kora Bakery will be relocated further up the block.
- Sunnyside Shines partnered with Sunnyside Community Services to host Holiday Markets on December 14, 2025, and December 21, 2025. There will be dozens of local vendors and merchants at the event.
- Mr. McCall de Paloma shared that Sunnyside Shines 2026 event calendar may be released in January. They plan to combine the Sunnyside Night Market with several events, including Asian American and Hispanic heritage events and SunnyPride.
- The Lily Gavin Memorial Women's History Breakfast will take place in March 2026.
- The Sunnyside Cultural Initiative will return, with dance and music programming at Lowery Plaza and Bliss Plaza on Thursdays at 5:00 PM.
- Mr. McCall de Paloma will be reaching out to Andre Irving of Cucala Dance and other dance performers to set up dance classes.

Updates from the Committee Chair

Karesia Batan, the Chair, provided the following updates:

- Community Board applications will be open from January 5 to February 13, 2026. She encouraged individuals interested in arts and cultural affairs to apply to join the Board.
- She spoke with representatives from Queens Economic Development Corporation (QEDC) and LaGuardia Community College, who expressed interest in promoting arts and culture during the 2026 World Cup.
- The deadline for the Flushing Town Hall Grant is December 18, 2025. Link to apply: <https://www.flushingtownhall.org/grants>
- A call for a Writers Residency at the Lewis Latimer House has been released. The residency is a memoir-writing workshop open to applicants. Link to learn more: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DR47gllkQYD/>
- Council Members Keith Powers and Erik Bottcher introduced a bill in November to specify that public housing programs with preference for artists do not violate laws against occupation-based discrimination. Following the recently-passed OneLIC rezoning, the Chair expressed interest in exploring how the committee can leverage this proposed legislation to advocate for affordable housing for artists, including inviting guest speakers to a future Arts and Cultural Affairs Committee meeting to provide additional information on the bill.

- The Asian American Arts Alliance has grant applications for projects focused on Asian American stories across disciplines. While programming typically takes place in Flushing or Chinatown, applicants are not required to live in those areas to be eligible. The deadline for the grant is February 2026.
- A tracker has been created for the arts and culture transition committee for the upcoming mayoral administration, which includes representation from MoMA PS1. The Chair shared that it may be worth considering contacting members of the transition committee to receive updates. Link to learn more about Mayor-Elect Zohran Mamdani's Arts and Culture Transition Committee : <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/zohran-mamdani-names-arts-culture-transition-committee-1234763481/>

LIC Partnership

Angel Hart of LIC Partnership provided the following information:

- Ms. Hart invited the committee meeting attendees to the LIC Partnership and LIC BID Annual Meeting on December 10, 2025. Event link to RSVP: <https://www.longislandcityqueens.com/event/lic-partnership-and-lic-bid-annual-meeting-2/>
- LIC Partnership is planning its Lunar New Year Celebration and will hold an info session next week to learn what different organizations in the Partnership are planning for the celebration.
- The Chair spoke about identifying potential mural locations and creating murals on business roll-down gates. Ms. Hart noted that LIC Partnership has an internal mapping of sites whose owners have given semi-permission or expressed interest in participating in the initiative, and that she can share this information with the Chair.
- A new regulation will take effect in July 2026 and may impact roll-down gates, as it will require businesses to replace fully solid gates with gates that are at least 50 percent see-through. Additional information on this regulation can be found on page 20 - 21 of the article: <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/sbs/downloads/pdf/neighborhoods/storefront-guide.pdf#:~:text=City%20law%20requires%20that%20all%20new%20and,allow%20customers%20to%20window%20shop%20after%20hours.>

Cucala Dance

Andre Irving of Cucala Dance provided the following information:

- A Student Performers Workshop will take place on December 13, 2025, at P.S.199 in the auditorium, with the showcase beginning at 6:30 PM. The event will be bundled with children's programming, followed by a holiday party at Cucala's dance studio.

Culture Lab

Edjo Wheeler and Tess Howsam of Culture Lab provided the following information:

- Anyone in attendance at the committee meeting who donated \$50.00 to Culture Lab's end-of-year campaign was invited to Culture Lab's Supporter Soirée on December 11, 2025.
- Free Sunset Jazz takes place every Friday at 8:00 PM.
- Sounds from the Gallery, a free concert series held in Culture Lab's front gallery takes place on Saturdays.
- On December 14, 2025, Culture Lab will host Brooklyn Raga Massive, featuring local musicians, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM in the front gallery.
- Culture Lab has sold over 100 art pieces, and profits have been given directly to artists. People can buy artwork at Culture Lab to support artists.
- Culture Lab is accepting submissions for an Emergence Artists Residency. Submissions are open until January 4, 2026. The residency is a year-long residency in which residents spend nine months developing new work. Link to apply: <https://www.culturelablic.org/emergenceartistresidency>
- They will be hosting a LIC-focused art exhibition featuring past and present artists who have lived or worked in Long Island City. Culture Lab is requesting people to submit art from artists who have helped make LIC what it is today. The submission deadline is in 2026. Artists based in LIC may submit their own work or nominate others' work. Link to apply and learn more about this opportunity: <https://www.culturelablic.org/artist-opportunities>
- Culture Lab, in partnership with LIC Partnership, launched *The Frame*, a newsletter that organizations can subscribe to. LIC Partnership has access to certain resources such as buildings; the Partnership encourages organizations to become members to obtain benefits that come with membership. Edjo noted that the newsletter helps present a unified voice for arts and cultural organizations. Link to Culture Lab's newsletter: <https://www.culturelablic.org/theframe>
- The Chair shared that she is working with Culture Lab to have Queensboro Dance Festival and Culture Lab host an Arts and Real Estate event to coincide with Culture Lab's exhibition that honors past and present Long Island City artists. This will provide an opportunity to highlight that the arts and culture sector is comprehensive.

Teen Art Salon

Isabella Bustamante of Teen Art Salon provided the following information:

- Ten students across New York City are in the second year of their fellowship program, and they are receiving pre-professional development in the arts.
- Teen Art Salon is considering returning to LIC Arts Open after nine years.

Additional Committee Updates

Committee Members provided the following information:

- Ms. Batan, the Chair shared several updates from a meeting hosted by the Office of Queens Borough President Donovan Richards, where representatives from all Queens Community Boards were invited to discuss arts and cultural affairs in the borough. Event details and topics discussed at the meeting include the following:
 - Eight of the fourteen community boards were in attendance, and two have dedicated arts and culture committees.
 - There was a discussion about having another borough-wide meeting at Borough Hall. This event could provide an opportunity for artists to interact with their respective community boards and with other artists.
 - Event attendees expressed interest in having access to more spaces for public art, as well as additional mechanisms to secure funding for it.
 - There was also discussion of the need for rehearsal and gathering spaces, as well as information on how to help artists become city vendors.
 - Another topic discussed was the need for increased support and infrastructure for Open Streets so artists can activate these spaces.
 - Participants said they would like increased liaising with city agencies, especially those with arts programs, and ensuring that community boards are informed about available arts and cultural resources.
 - The Chair is considering reaching out to the Borough President's office to gauge the possibility of creating a key list of arts and cultural institutions in each community board district, as some event attendees were unsure which entities are located within their districts.
 - She is hopeful that another borough-wide arts and cultural meeting can take place at the Borough President's office in the first quarter of 2026.
 - The Borough President's office will distribute minutes from the meeting to District Managers; the CB2 District Manager will be able to share them with board and committee members thereafter.
- Mr. Narburgh, the Vice Chair, shared that MoMA PS1 received a generous grant that will fund free admission for all visitors for the next three years.
- The Chair added that, with warmer weather approaching and with the contacts provided by Mr. McCall de Paloma, organizing outreach to business owners to install murals on their properties, as well as creating a short list of muralists within the district, may be potential initiatives the committee can work on.
- The Chair reiterated the importance of engaging with communities in CB2 in Woodside, Sunnyside, and Maspeth. The committee also discussed increasing outreach and cultivation efforts, ideas included using a cultural map for OneLIC, to help with outreach efforts.
- The Vice Chair shared that the Historic Districts Council (HDC) has experienced staffing changes, which may delay the release of findings from its Landmarks SURvey. He noted that there few responses, and while it is planned to close in January, they may extend it to promote participation in the new year.

- The Vice Chair added that he hopes to reconnect with HDC in January to explore alternative methods for gathering information, such as qualitative outreach or working at a grass-roots level.
- Ms. Batan, the Chair, noted that the committee may have new opportunities for involvement in Queens with upcoming investments, including the construction of a casino, a soccer stadium, and new housing.
- The January committee meeting could serve as a meet-and-greet for potential new community board members to interact with the Arts and Cultural Affairs Committee.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by,

Rafael Nava