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# Community Board No. 2

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*Anatole Ashraf*  
*Chairperson*  
*Debra Markell Kleinert*  
*District Manager*

**November 17, 2025**

## **Arts & Cultural Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes**

***This meeting was teleconferenced using Zoom***

### **Committee Members Present:**

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

### **Committee Members Absent:**

Anatole Ashraf  
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  
Leonard Klipper, Hunters Point Parks Conservancy  
Melissa Velasquez, Flushing Town Hall  
Natalie Bedon, Flushing Town Hall  
Caron Atas, Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts New York  
Tom Oesau, Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts New York  
Angel Hart, LIC Partnership

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

### **Hunters Point Parks Conservancy**

The Chair introduced Leonard Klipper from Hunters Point Parks Conservancy, an advocate for arts and cultural initiatives. Mr. Klipper shared details about the Photoville exhibition in Hunters Point Park, including each exhibit's subject matter, the artists, and what each exhibit expresses. He provided the following information:

- Mr. Klipper serves as the treasurer of the Hunters Point Parks Conservancy board and led efforts to bring Photoville to Hunters Point Parks.
- Over the last three years, Photoville has appeared in the park in various capacities.
- Photoville began in 2011 in Brooklyn. It is an annual citywide open-air photography festival that has evolved over time. It was originally a container-box festival, and since the coronavirus pandemic, it branched out to include new formats for displaying photographic exhibitions, including its 6-by-6 cubes.
- This year, Hunters Point Parks Conservancy, with a budget-minded approach, brought selected works from the Brooklyn festival, including its flagship Photoville exhibits, to Hunters Point Parks in a modified format.
- Hunters Point Parks Conservancy, in partnership with NYC Parks' Public Art Division, launched three photo cubes.

#### 1. Pieces of You

- Produced by Lauren Carmara, a self-taught artist.
- Her work bridges photography and fine art using meticulously cut paper that transforms everyday people into bold, graphic portraits rich in depth and symbolism.

#### 2. Dear Bernard - Letters to our Senior Dogs

- Produced by Angelic Briones, a Peruvian-born and New York City-raised storyteller.
- This exhibition highlights the love between New Yorkers and their senior dogs.
- Ms. Briones was inspired in 2022 when she photographed her senior dog, Bernard, who was showing subtle yet undeniable signs of aging. This work includes photographs of 50 dogs and their human family members. It opens hearts to the beauty of senior dogs and underscores the importance of advocating for our most faithful companions.

#### 3. Mister Rogers, Is Your Neighbor Worth Loving?

- This work features a photograph of Mister Rogers taken by Lynn Johnson, a National Geographic contributor who specialized in photographing the human condition. The exhibition focuses on Mr. Rogers' life and his message that every child has value.
- With the colder weather, the exhibits provide passive programming.
- They will remain installed for about two months.

- Mr. Klipper noted that since the Hunters Point Parks Conservancy board appears receptive to Photoville becoming an annual occurrence, he hopes to incorporate more local artists and expand open-call opportunities in the future.
- Ms. Batan, the Chair, noted that the committee can assist by promoting similar installations, helping to build an unveiling around future work, and exploring the possibility of extending the exhibit’s display into late winter and early spring.

### **Flushing Town Hall**

Melissa Velasquez and Natalie Bedon, of Flushing Town Hall, spoke about grants for artists and organizations. They shared a PowerPoint presentation (Attachment 1) that includes more details on funding, grant purposes, and eligibility requirements. They provided the following information:

- Queens Community Arts Grant
  - Funding ranges from \$1,000 - \$7,500.
  - The grant provides support to community-based organizations, groups, and collectives to hold arts and cultural projects or activities for the public in Queens to enhance the cultural climate in communities and neighborhoods where they live and operate, and to make arts accessible to all.
  - The project must include a public component and be held in Queens in 2026.
  - The applicant must have an active and legal street address in Queens (PO boxes are not accepted).
  - The nonprofit organization must have been active and in existence for at least one year.
- Artist in Queens Grant
  - The grant supports individual artists living in Queens in creating new work in a community setting. These grants highlight the role of artists as important members of the community, as they enhance the cultural climate in neighborhoods where they live and work.
  - Applicants must be at least 18 years old.
  - Applicants cannot be enrolled in a full-time degree or certificate-seeking program during 2026.
  - Applicants must be current Queens residents (proof of residency is required).
  - The grant has a community engagement requirement. The project must engage with a segment of the community through a public program, such as an exhibition or performance that is open to the public, and/or include community involvement in the development and creative process of the artists’ project.
- Queens Grant
  - The \$10,000 grant will provide operational support. There are 25 organizational grants available. The grant can be used to cover expenses such as staff salaries, space or office rent, or 2026 program expenses.
  - Applicants must be a Queens-based performing arts organization, or a multidisciplinary organization with performing arts as a core focus or component of its mission and identity.

- Applicants must have an operating budget of \$25,000 or less in the most recent completed fiscal year.
- Submission deadlines for the three grants are December 18, 2025.
- Ms. Velasquez shared that applicants who applied to the NYFA Queens Arts Fund can also apply to the Flushing Town Hall Grant.
- Flushing Town Hall Grants: <https://www.flushingtownhall.org/grants>
- For any Flushing Town Hall grants: Melissa Velasquez at [mvelasquez@flushingtownhall.org](mailto:mvelasquez@flushingtownhall.org)

Ms. Bedon provided details about the Queens Cultural Mapping Initiative, including how data was gathered, how users can interact with it, and other resources associated with the initiative. She shared the following information:

- The NY Council of the Arts approached Flushing Town Hall to lead the initiative.
- Throughout the year, she worked with another community coordinator and conducted over 150 interviews with artists, cultural workers, and community leaders across Queens to gather information about the arts and culture industry in the borough, including the challenges it faces.
- The map is digital and includes information on about 112 arts and cultural organizations in Queens, providing information about them.
- There is an open submission process; organizations that are not on the map but have a physical space in Queens can fill out a form to add themselves.
- The map includes a filter function to tailor searches, including whether organizations have galleries.

Link and contact details to learn more about the Queens Arts & Culture Map:

Natalie Bedon at [nbedon@flushingtownhall.org](mailto:nbedon@flushingtownhall.org),

<https://flushingtownhall.github.io/QueensArtsMap/>

- Another resource Flushing Town Hall developed is the executive summary, which is a condensed version of a longer report. The executive summary is available online and provides additional details about the project, including how information was gathered, survey details, and information about community town hall events held throughout the process.

Link to the executive summary: [https://flushingtownhall-](https://flushingtownhall-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/fthshare_flushingtownhall_org/EfUmvxqosXxEreGCA83IGEABR5x7ltSp_TFoGD2XCoZS_Q?e=nVdvL5)

[my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/fthshare\\_flushingtownhall\\_org/EfUmvxqosXxEreGCA83IGEABR5x7ltSp\\_TFoGD2XCoZS\\_Q?e=nVdvL5](https://flushingtownhall-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/fthshare_flushingtownhall_org/EfUmvxqosXxEreGCA83IGEABR5x7ltSp_TFoGD2XCoZS_Q?e=nVdvL5)

- The longer report will be released in a few weeks and will be around 70 pages.
- The Chair noted that in response to the OneLIC rezoning earlier this year, the committee created its own map of the district to show how many arts and culture groups would be affected by the zoning footprint. She shared that she would be happy to share the document, as there are at least 120 known arts and culture entities within the zoning footprint and several dozen more in the periphery.
  - Link for information on the map arts and culture entities in OneLIC rezoning footprint:

[https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=11hGEnYv4qX4mXB5byruUu\\_9mG9O4Upg&ll=40.75093058483371%2C-73.93747284999999&z=1](https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=11hGEnYv4qX4mXB5byruUu_9mG9O4Upg&ll=40.75093058483371%2C-73.93747284999999&z=1)

### **Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts New York**

Caron Atas and Tom Oesau, of Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts New York (NOCD-NY), discussed a mapping project NOCD-NY created, including the inspiration behind the idea and the importance of cultivating relationships in the arts sector. They shared a PowerPoint presentation (Attachment 2) and provided the following information:

- During the 2009 financial crisis, they realized that to survive, they needed to work across sectors and strengthen formal and informal community networks, and that connecting strong neighborhood networks would strengthen them.
- Fifteen years later, they had the opportunity to conduct participatory action research to learn more about how networks function in their communities, including their social impacts and how they build cultural ecosystems. Through participatory action research in five different neighborhoods, they learned a great deal.
- They learned that relationship-building is a skill and that it is possible to codify ways to do so in communities. They also explored different models of cross-sector partnerships and found that stories and culture are essential to community activism.
- In addition to hearing from people's experiences on the ground, they created a virtual map to help cultivate relationships, not just to visualize who is doing community cultural work, but to provide opportunities for people to connect around cross-sector collaboration, advocacy, and the sharing of resources.
- They created a map that serves as an individual connection map, designed to connect individuals and visualize the broader cultural ecosystem from the neighborhood level to the national and even international levels. It helps users exchange resources, understand what others have to offer, build partnerships, and organize and advocate together.
- The map is a living system; people will join regularly and can revise their listed relationships or networks. It also reveals the depth and intricacy of these networks.
- The map includes a filter function that allows users to filter by the type of work people do, including artistic disciplines, such as dancers or musicians. Multiple filters can be applied at the same time.
  - Link for information on Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts New York's map: <https://www.nocdny.org/community-network-map>
  - Link to Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts New York's website to learn more: <https://www.nocdny.org/cultivating-neighborhood-networks>

### **LIC Partnership**

Angel Hart provided the following information:

- A mural was installed a few weeks ago, after having received a grant from the Community Commissions at DOT in 2018. LIC Partnership worked with DOT on this

project, and DOT selected a local New York City artist to install the mural. The mural is located underneath the Queensboro Bridge, on Vernon Boulevard at the corner of Queens Plaza South, and near Queensbridge Park.

- LIC Partnership is beginning to plan the Lunar New Year celebration for next year and will be in touch soon.

Link for information about the mural: <https://www.longislandcityqueens.com/long-island-city-partnership-unveils-bee-present-a-new-public-art-mural-celebrating-nature-community-and-connection/>

### **Culture Lab LIC**

Edjo Wheeler provided the following event information for Culture Lab LIC:

- Sunset Jazz takes place every Friday at 8:00 PM.
- There is a concert inside the gallery every Saturday at 8:00 PM.
- There is a comedy night every other Thursday.
- Culture Lab is in the middle of its New Works Festival, where two of the four artists in residence have completed their residence. Artists are given space for nine months to develop brand-new work, which they then present to an audience. Artists keep all of the revenue from ticket sales. This is part of Culture Lab's Residency Program.
- Edjo Wheeler encouraged everyone to visit Culture Lab. He also shared that he wants to find ways to invite other arts organizations to attend each other's openings.
- Culture Lab was nominated for several awards.

Vote for arts and cultural organizations in the Best in Queens Poll:

<http://bestof.qns.com/voting/#/gallery?group=525341>

### **Committee Updates**

Eric Narburgh, Vice Chair, provided the following updates:

- The Asian American Arts Alliance is offering \$1,500 arts grants and will hold an info session on November 18, 2025.  
Link for grant information: <https://www.aaartsalliance.org/opportunities/what-can-we-do-bcf836a5-a593-4136-80f0-d356d3f607fc>
- Arts. Culture. Queens has issued the final report of their work. They have an Instagram account where people can receive updates on implementation and the next steps that will follow from their work. Link to the report: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cUKoVntnnsTgr6BUxFWNlhj76G2PlaF/view?usp=sharing>
- The Vice Chair attended a New Yorkers for Culture and Arts meeting with the Ventures Theater Fund, where attendees discussed navigating the health insurance environment, and artists shared that they are seeking support. He noted that a guidebook was created for theater workers, including information on navigating health insurance, accessing resources, and seeking additional support.

- Venture Theater Fund worked with Entertainment Community Fund: <https://entertainmentcommunity.org>
- United Hospitals Fund: <https://uhfnyc.org/publications/publication/riskier-business-an-updated-guide-for-dramatists-and-theater-workers/>
- *Riskier Business: A Guide for Dramatists and Performing Arts Workers on Finding Affordable Health Coverage and Care*. Visit [www.venturous theaterfund.org/health\\_insurance](http://www.venturous theaterfund.org/health_insurance) for more information or contact Ben Pesner: [Ben@VenturousTheaterFund.org](mailto:Ben@VenturousTheaterFund.org).
- Ms. Atas shared that there is a Cultural Organizing for Community Change citywide gathering on December 6, 2025.
  - Link for event information: [https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cultural-organizing-for-community-change-2025-registration-1830830576539?aff=oddtcreator&fbclid=IwY2xjawOIlCZleHRuA2FlbQIxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjlwMzcxNzgz4MjAwODkyCGNhbGxzaXRIAjMwAAEe4qgWxqHyS9eMP2371JzXa-b0BBM9BZijWPUT5JrzZWZvZVVO4LwisQsfli8\\_aem\\_2kfCs73nnNNuByJ520c9pQ](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cultural-organizing-for-community-change-2025-registration-1830830576539?aff=oddtcreator&fbclid=IwY2xjawOIlCZleHRuA2FlbQIxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjlwMzcxNzgz4MjAwODkyCGNhbGxzaXRIAjMwAAEe4qgWxqHyS9eMP2371JzXa-b0BBM9BZijWPUT5JrzZWZvZVVO4LwisQsfli8_aem_2kfCs73nnNNuByJ520c9pQ)
- Ms. Batan, Mr. Narburgh, and Christine Hunter, Chair of the Land Use Committee, visited the Bliss Theater site with the developer and an individual reclaiming materials from the site to potentially incorporate them into future development at the location. The Vice Chair is grateful for developer's receptiveness to commemorating the Bliss Theater's history.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by,

Rafael Nava