

PROJECT, PART OF LARGER MELROSE COMMONS, IS SLATED TO OPEN IN MELROSE IN 2019

Bronx Commons wins Richman Group award

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Photo courtesy of WHEDco

An artist rendering of Bronx Commons facing Elton Avenue between East 162nd and East 163rd streets.

By Patrick Rocchio

A local community-based organization won an award recently for a new development rising in Melrose.

Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation, along with builders BFC Partners, received a 2017 Creating a Dynamic City Award from the Richman Group for the Bronx Commons, currently under construction in Melrose.

Nancy Biberman, of WHEDco, accepted the Aspirational Communities Award, which honors significant projects that either broke ground or opened in the past year, on Wednesday, May 17.

Several developments in New York City received awards from the Richman Group, which according to Biberman helped raise money for Bronx Commons by selling tax credits.

An essential part of the project, which includes 305 affordable housing units and an arts-based community center in 426,000 square feet, is a music performance space that WHEDco hopes to make a destination, said Biberman.

The Bronx Music Hall is expected to be a 16,000 square foot, state of the art performance venue with a 300 seating capacity, she said.



“This building can really be a catalyst for economic activity that can benefit way more people,” Nancy Biberman, WHEDco, CEO speaking about Bronx Commons.

“It is designed to be a multi-purpose venue that...a musician or band would be thrilled to perform in,” said Biberman.

The WHEDco CEO said that she feels the music hall will fill a niche in the community.

Her organization is looking to attract restaurants to the project’s retail space, with the hopes of creating a destination, expanding on the idea of WHEDco’s existing Bronx Music Heritage Center, which celebrates the music contributions of local communities, past and present.

“The objective of Bronx Commons, aside for providing beautiful apartments and cultural activities, is to get people to come and spend money in the neighborhood,” she said.

She added: “This building can really be a catalyst for economic activity that can benefit way more people.”

This development completes the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area, mostly spearheaded by Nos Quedamos over the past quarter century.

Bronx Commons is in the vicinity of Elton Avenue and East 162nd Street. It is expected to be completed in 2019.

Delays in securing financing for the project allowed for WHEDco to test out much of the kind of programming it wants to bring to the Bronx Music Hall through BMHC.

The center, ongoing for about five years, seeks to highlight the Bronx musical heritage from doo-wop to salsa to hip-hop.

BMHC has had scores of performances and amassed a wealth of knowledge, she said.

“We were able to satisfy ourselves that there was really an appetite out there that if we build it, people will come,” she said.

Edwin Págan, Bronx Culture Collective program manager, a project under the Nos Quedamos umbrella, said that he believes the community will enjoy the music hall.

“(WHEDco) will just be doing what they have been doing for the past five or six years only on a larger scale,” said Págan of BMHC, adding that the organization will now have “a bigger spotlight.”

In a previous Bronx Times story, Don Capoccia, BFC Partners principal, said he believes that Bronx Commons “will have a powerfully positive impact on local families.”

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