



Report From Executive Director Robin LeBaron

What are we going to do about Starbucks?

You know the story. An “up-and-coming” neighborhood makes the headlines as Starbucks announces its first local beachhead in response to changing demographics and wealthier residents. Chain stores follow, and the neighborhood’s economy, as measured by the vigor of commercial activity, improves. But in the process, locally-owned small businesses are crowded to the margins.

We don’t have a Starbucks in East Harlem yet, but we can all imagine this scenario playing out. The East River Plaza project, already well into construction, will bring a Home Depot and a Target to the neighborhood.

New development on East 125th Street will bring new retailers, most of them national chain stores. Luxury apartments under construction throughout the neighborhood will create a potential market for businesses that target relatively affluent customers.

All of this will mean increased competition for our existing small merchants.

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Hope Introduces Revitalization Project Along Lexington Avenue “Gateway” Business District

On Tuesday July 8th, Citi Community Scholar Julie Caracino held a community meeting to inform local business and property owners about the New York State Main Street Program, a matching-grant program from the state Department of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) that is being administered locally by Hope Community. This program is designed to strengthen the state’s traditional main streets and local commercial districts by revitalizing community storefronts and building facades, renovating affordable housing units, and improving streetscapes.

During the meeting, Caracino explained how participating building owners, property owners, and commercial tenants in the “Gateway” area, which is the area designated along Lexington



Storefront of Mainstreet Grant Applicant DKDA Beauty Salon on East 103rd Street

Avenue between 102nd and 105th streets and on 103rd and 104th streets between Park and 3rd Avenues, would be eligible for reimbursement of 50% of total qualified project costs for up to \$50,000 for building renovations and up to \$10,000 for façade improvements.

The presentation at Hope Community was the beginning of a summer-long campaign to disperse the \$200,000 main street grant to local business and property owners in the East Harlem Gateway Area. Over the summer, the project management team met with dozens of neighborhood property owners and merchants to answer questions and help process applications.

Caracino also surveyed neighbors for ideas on how best to allocate the program’s \$25,000 streetscape component for neighborhood



East Harlem Cafe on Lexington Avenue

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East Harlem Voices: Documenting Local Issues of Interest



LISC Intern Rosemarie Barker with Video Consultant Mario Najera at UFCW Local 1500 Conference

editing software, the vigorous instruction covered all the basics of the video narrative model.

With some rudimentary skills under their belt, the team hit East Harlem and related locales throughout the summer, interviewing residents and advocates on such issues as affordable housing, deteriorating supermarkets and disparities in healthy foods.

The result of their first effort is a five-minute segment featuring WE ACT Sustainability Coordinator James Subudhi's July 10th presentation on healthy food disparities in Upper Manhattan, as delivered at UFCW Local 1500's "Building Blocks" Food Policy Conference.

As more videos are produced, the web-based project will serve as a communication hub that will engage, mobilize, and contribute to the identity

and shared histories of East Harlem residents. In addition to video interviews, the "East Harlem Voices" social network will also host blogs, discussion forums, and photo albums.



Additionally, Hope Community will gather, analyze, and post information on local real estate trends and affordable housing policies to help community leaders, housing activists, and non-profit housing developers methodically approach development and displacement issues. "Ideally, the project will advance efforts to mitigate the impact of gentrification on our neighborhood," explained Ortiz.

For more information, visit: <http://eastharlemvoices.ning.com>.

"East Harlem Voices," Hope Community's new web-based communications project, got off to a great start this past summer with help from a dynamic and dedicated team of local correspondents.

Communications Manager Marina Ortiz and LISC Intern Rosemarie Barker underwent an intense three weeks of video documentary training with consultant Mario Najera, an independent filmmaker. From field shoots to Final Cut

Harlem River Park Task Force Members Tour Bronx Zoo Compost Station

On July 9, Hope Community's Eve Valenzuela toured the Bronx Zoo Composting Comfort Station with the Harlem River Park Task Force to research the environmentally sound lavatory as an option for the Manhattan waterfront recreational area.

As visitors learned, the Bronx composting station is a green facility that uses natural daylight, recycled water collection from the roof, and eco-friendly soap and dirt ("gray" water). With only 3-6 ounces of water per flush, the odor-less toilet uses 95% less water than standard lavatories by mixing water and soap into foam. When the toilet is flushed, the deposit is carried to the underground waste-composting system, which is filled with peat moss and pine shavings (bodily waste is then relocated to the composting site, where it is broken down by insects, fungi,



Exterior (top) and interior (bottom) of Composting Rest Station at the Bronx Zoo



and other natural decomposers). After several biological processes, the waste is converted into topsoil or fertilizer.

Since the system conserves a great deal of water, each unit/container can handle about 180 flushes per day. If the projected use remains consistent, removal of the agricultural end product will not be necessary for another three years.

Financially, composting is more cost-effective than the previous traditional rest room system. Total construction cost for the Zoo's facility was \$1,000,000 dollars with a yearly maintenance fee of \$10,000 dollars.

Members of the Harlem River Park Task Force enjoyed the tour and hope to incorporate a similar system in their own park.

Hope and Bluestone Close on Construction Loans for Calvert-Lancaster Project

On June 27th, Hope Community and the Bluestone Organization closed on a construction loans for two East Harlem mixed-income housing cooperatives. These buildings will provide 56 units of low, moderate, and middle-income housing.

The buildings are located on Madison Avenue between East 118th Street and East 119th Street, and on Lexington Avenue between East 117th Street and East 118th Street. Construction on the sites will begin this fall.

The original sites for these projects were transferred to Hope and the Bluestone Organization through last round of the city's Cornerstone program. The sites were enlarged through the acquisition of three additional parcels of land from private owners.

Hope and Bluestone are also building 23 units of affordable rental housing on land from the Cornerstone program. The four sites for this project are scattered between



1885 and 1889 Lexington Avenue: the Future Site of One of Hope's Cornerstone Projects

East 116th Street and East 122nd Street, and between Park and Third Avenues.

Hope is aware of the strong need for family-sized housing in East Harlem. As a result, most of the units in both the homeowner and the rental projects have two or three bedroom.

The project includes many "green" features, including East Harlem's first "green roofs," high-efficiency boilers, insulation, low-flow shower heads, and environmentally friendly construction materials. Through this project, we are also ensuring that the community garden on the southeast corner of Lexington and East 118th Street will be preserved in perpetuity.

To preserve East Harlem's architectural heritage, the façades of the newly constructed buildings will be similar to existing buildings in East Harlem. The project will create a number of new retail units to enliven the ground floor.

Construction on the project is expected to take approximately 18 months. Marketing for the cooperative units will begin in late 2008, so if you are interested in purchasing a high-quality, environmentally-friendly East Harlem home, watch for the next edition of the *Hope Herald* for details.



Site Map of Hope Community's Cornerstone Site 7 Locations in East Harlem

Riding for Peace: East Harlem Youth Take to the Streets

Hope Community's August 21st "Riding for Peace," an annual procession and block party for youth-violence prevention was a great success with over one dozen youth and half a dozen adults riding bicycles, scooters, and skateboards through the streets of East Harlem to the amazement of local bystanders.

Accompanied by the 23rd Precinct's Officer Frank Galindo and other NYPD escorts, the street tour began around 10:30 am on the corner of 106th Street as participants rode up Third Avenue to 116th Street, then crossed the busy commercial corridor turning on Lexington Avenue and ending on 109th Street where a day-long block party was just getting started.

Among the more interesting riders attracting attention along the way were a lone tricyclist and an older, married couple with matching Schwinn bicycles.

After crossing the "finish line" in front of Hope's Ortiz-Wittenberg apartment complex, participants



Residents on skateboards, bikes and scooters parade up Third Avenue during Hope Community's 2nd Annual "Riding for Peace" tour on August 21st.

were greeted with cheers and rewarded with an eco-friendly paper bag filled with an apple and water. The fun was only getting started, as the youth continued to coast along on their bikes and skateboards up and down the sectioned-off street.

Co-sponsored by Fidelis Care, the day long block party attracted hundreds of neighborhood youth with such fun activities as a huge, air-filled Bouncing House, and a female clown who entertained over 200 children with face painting, balloon art and cotton candy.



Magical Productions Entertainment's female clown offers free face painting, balloon art, and cotton candy to local youth.

In addition to the fun and games, there were lots of information and services, including free registration with the NYPD's Safe Child Program and safety information provided by the Manhattan District Attorney's Outreach Office.

While Christine Salvi of the NYC Council on the Environment played the "recycling game" with youth and adults, representatives from Union Settlement, the Randall's Island Sports

Foundation, and other groups spent the day handing out useful information on their programs and services.

Hope staff, meanwhile, busied themselves grilling and serving over hundreds of hot dogs and handing out ice-cold soft drinks and ices throughout the day. The afternoon was capped off with contemporary DJ music provided by Hope's resident DJ, staffer George RioFrio and friends.

Scenes From Roger Cabán's Poetas Con Cafe



Top to bottom: among the 2008 featured performers were Américo Casiano Jr (June), Eugene Rodriguez (July) and Carmen D. Lucca (August)

Brodie Enoch: Rebuilding Hope Community's Tenant Associations One Doorbell at a Time

I can remember preparing for my first tenant meeting a few days after arriving at Hope Community. We were scheduled to meet with tenants from 8 East 110th Street. I'd heard a few stories about the building and really didn't know what to expect, so I went door-to-door introducing myself.

It became apparent that the tenants had already banded together to ensure that their building remained as safe and secure as possible.

They are amazing. All I have to do is post a flyer about an upcoming meeting and they show up in mass. It does not matter where the meeting is. If it has to do with their building, they will show up.

If they want to discuss an internal issue, they will notify their neighbors and all we have to do is provide a meeting space. Unless there is a problem that needs an answer from Hope, I am not even needed. As their tenant leader, James Barrow says, "If we need you we will get in touch."

I've come to find out that Hope Community has scores of tenants who are deeply involved in and passionate about what happens in and around their buildings. Part of my responsibility as a community/tenant organizer is to bring tenants together to form associations and I am proud and excited to report that since my arrival here at Hope Community,

there have been 21 new tenant associations formed.

If you want to see what a tenant association can accomplish, just look at what the residents of Ortiz Wittenberg have done under the leadership of President Freddy Soto.

See how the residents of 2291 ½ Second Avenue have dealt with internal issues under the leadership of Ms. Gandy.

Look at how 8 East 110th deals with neighboring construction issues that affect their building.

Check out tenants of 237, 239 and 241

East 115th Street, who are telling the people who hang out in front of their buildings "enough is enough."

And definitely visit 24 East 109th Street to see how Peaches Crawford decorates the entire building each and every holiday.

They also have parties for the kids and regularly celebrate Mother's and Father's day. Recently, the East 109th-110th Street Block Association sponsored a July 4th Block party on 109th between Madison and 5th that attracted over 400 people.

I could go on and on about the great things that the tenant associations are doing. If you're the tenant of a Hope building and you don't have a tenant association don't worry I'll be knocking on your door really soon.



Community Organizer Brodie Enoch (left) discusses safety issues with Hope Tenant

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Hope Community's 2008 Annual Gala Held at Terence Cardinal Cooke



On May 22, Hope Community held its 39th Annual Gala on the 10th Floor Terrace of the Terence Cardinal Cooke Health Care Center, with magnificent views of Central Park.

"The theme for this year's event, "Breaking New Ground," reflects our ongoing commitment to creating new



Local playwright Eugene Rodriguez served as the Master of Ceremonies, while vocalist Beverly Harden sang several spiritual hymns.

Each year, the agency celebrates the productive collaborations that have been instrumental in its successes and recognize outstanding individuals that



The evening was coordinated by event planner Eve Valenzuela, and hosted by Hope Ambassadors (volunteer staff). Sound engineering was provided by George RioFrio with music by DJ John Morales, while artists Sir Shadow and Angelo Romano contributed select pieces for a silent auction. In-kind raffle and decorative donations were



affordable housing and community arts projects to bring about positive development in East Harlem," explained Board Chairman Roger Cabán.

The evening kicked off with some mellow music by Junior Gonzalez y su Trio Los Borincanos. Opening remarks



have committed their vision and talents to building a better East Harlem.

This year, Hope board and staff honored NYS Senator José M. Serrano, NYPD 25th Precinct Commanding Officer Captain Edward A. Cabán, NCB Capital Impact Director Jay Marcus, Museum of the City



also made by Addy's Hair Salon, Con Edison, Dimitri's Garden Center, Don Pedro's Restaurant, Exotic Fragrances, JPMorgan Chase, Legacy Magazine, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Prevention Magazine, Ricardo's Steak House, Senior Health Partners, Inc. and WellCare Health Plans, Inc., and the



included an invocation by Our Lady Queen of Angels parishioner, Carmen Villegas, while the keynote speech was delivered by Denise Notice-Scott, Managing Director of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation.



of New York Government & Community Relations Director Kathleen Benson, and Spanish-American artist Angelo Romano. Also honored were Board Member Ann Henderson and Stephen Starensier, Hope's Director of Real Estate Developer.



Yes Network. As always, there was also drinks and great food, with a generous buffet and dessert tables, this year catered by Terence Cardinal Cooke's in-house executive caterer, Harry Guerra of Morrison Senior Dining.

“Gateway” Revitalization



103rd Street Subway Station: The Heart of East Harlem’s “Gateway” Business District

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improvements such as trees, planters, trash receptacles, bike racks, benches, and other gateway elements.

Hope Community staff is currently in the process of reviewing applications from owners who responded to the project manager’s outreach.

As the streetscape improvements will be enjoyed by everyone in the community, the agency is open to suggestions for environmental and visual improvements to the Gateway area. As part of the process, Hope will hire a local architect in this fall and hold a public design charrette to help determine the streetscape elements.

During the application process, Hope Community received 13 submissions (three applications for building renovations and eight for façade improvements), 11 of which were approved by the Main Street Advisory Group, a collaboration between Hope staff, members of Community Board 11 and the East Harlem Chamber of Commerce.

Hope is currently in the process of distributing grant funds to approved applicants, and looks forward to continuing the program in 2009 with another round of funding from the State Department of Housing and Community Renewal. For more information, visit www.hopeci.org or contact Julie Caracino at (212) 860- 8821 ext.144.

Executive Director Statement September 2008



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It’s not that we don’t want a better business climate in the neighborhood. We want more people visiting East Harlem’s historic treasures, more people shopping at our stores, more people staying to eat and drink at our outstanding restaurants.

We just want to make sure that local businesses have opportunities to benefit from the rapid changes that East Harlem has been experiencing.

This summer Hope Community launched our East Harlem Main Street Revitalization Program to provide assistance to locally-owned small businesses in the area along Lexington Avenue between East 102nd and East 105th Streets (also on 103rd and 104th streets between Park and 3rd Avenues).

The program provides matching grants to businesses (and property owners) to fund improvements to their storefronts, including new awnings, lighting, signage, planters, energy conservation measures, and handicapped accessibility improvements. It also allows for improvements to building facades, including storefronts.

The idea behind the program is that by improving the physical appearance of the area and the shops, visitors will be more likely to visit, stop, and spend money.

Studies indicate that better storefront accessibility, with visible and accessible window displays, better lighting and more greenery generally lead to higher sales and increased property values for property owners and merchants.

To put it another way, the matching grants provide local businesses with an additional resource to compete against better-financed rivals entering the area.

The program also provides grants to local property owners to renovate vacant apartments so long as they are willing to maintain the apartments for low-income households for a seven-year period. It also provides refunding opportunities for renovation of vacant storefronts.

The physical improvements made through the revitalization program are funded by a Main Street grant from the New York State Department of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR).

The Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone (UMEZ) has generously provided Hope with a grant to fund the considerable staffing costs associated with running the program.

Hope’s mission is to serve and support East Harlem’s long-term residents. While we focus mostly on providing affordable housing, we are also proud to be able to provide support to small merchants, who represent an important part of the future of this community.

Hope Community, Inc. Invites You to the 2008

Annual Fall Festival

Monday, October 13th, 11 am - 4 pm
East 104th Street (Lex./3rd Aves.)

- * **Sidewalk Chalk Drawings**
- * **Face Painting, Clowns and Balloon Art**
- * **Puppet Show, Arts & Crafts**
- * **NYPD Operation Safe Child Registration**
- * **Live Entertainment**
- * **DJ Music and Open Mic. Poetry**
- * **Health and Social Services Information**
- * **Free Food for Children Under 12**
- * **Snacks and Refreshments on Sale**



Interested Vendors, Call (212) 860-8821, Ext. 117 or 143 to Register
(Free Registration for Nonprofit Organizations).