

**Chair Report**  
**November 19, 2020**  
**General Board Meeting**

***In the Midst of Wave 3 of the Pandemic, with Hope on the Horizon***

The past months has been a busy one, with our budget priorities submitted, changes at the West Harlem Development Corporation, and of course, a rather big election! Congratulations to President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris! I hope that they can access the transition resources that they are entitled to by law and begin working to get the ongoing coronavirus pandemic under control. While I am deeply disturbed by the undemocratic attempt by the current President to deny the results of the election, I have faith that we can still come together as a country and begin to heal our nation and our economy.

What does worry me are the increasing rates of positivity rates in COVID tests in our ZIP Codes, particularly 10031. We have seen an over 50% increase in positivity rates (from ~2.1% to 3.36%) since the end of October. I want to implore everyone to continue to stay vigilant in taking precautions around COVID-19. Continue to wear a mask anytime you are outside your apartment and avoid gathering indoors with people other than members of your household, including and especially in bars and restaurants, where people regularly take their masks off to eat. Socializing with others should be done outdoors, on the street or in a park. Free testing with no appointment necessary is available 7 days a week at the Department of Health site at 21 Old Broadway on W 126<sup>th</sup> Street. While we have had good news on the vaccine front in recent days, no vaccine has been approved by the FDA yet, and it will be some time before everyone receives the vaccine necessary to get immunity from COVID and stop the pandemic.

I also wanted to note the departure of Kofi Boateng from the role of Executive Director of the West Harlem Development Corporation. The WHDC is undergoing a restructuring, and during the interim it will be lead by Acting Director Zead Ramadan, a former Chair of CB12. While many on CB9 have had disagreements with the WHDC in the past, particularly around its decision to invest over \$1.5 million in a development in CB10, I look forward to working with Zead Ramadan, Chair of the WHDC Board Milton Tingling, and everyone at the WHDC to make sure the corporation begins this new chapter with increased transparency and closer cooperation between CB9 and the WHDC. It is especially important that CB9 step up to the plate and deepen its involvement with the WHDC, given that CB9 negotiated the Community Benefits Agreement from the Columbia Manhattanville Expansion that created the WHDC. It is our duty to ensure that the benefits that the Community Board fought so hard for are spent in a way that maximizes the benefit to those in West Harlem most affected by the expansion.

As we head into the holiday season, we still have an enormous amount of work to do to make sure that the City agencies that received our budget prioritizations are given as much supporting information as possible. The City's fiscal situation remains uncertain, given the lack of COVID relief to states and municipalities from Congress. This fiscal uncertainty, together with unemployment levels above 15% in zip codes 10031 and 10027, mean that our neighborhoods must come together to support those of us suffering the most from this pandemic and ensure that we will have a brighter future on the other side.

Your Chair,

Barry Weinberg

### ***Schools Closing Again, and Indoor Dining and Gyms Likely to Follow***

New York City schools are preparing to close once again as the City's positivity rate exceeds 3%. While schools be returning to all-remote learning as of November 19, schools will remain open for food distribution as School Meal Hubs. Information on sites and hours for food distribution can be found at [schools.nyc.gov/freemeals](https://schools.nyc.gov/freemeals)

It is likely that indoor dining and gyms will also be forced to close in the coming months. To follow updates on all aspects of reopening, continue to monitor <https://forward.ny.gov/reopening-new-york-city>.

### ***COVID Wellness Walk with NYC DOHMH, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer Assemblymember Al Taylor, State Senator Robert Jackson, and the Office of Congressman Adriano Espaillat***

Community Board 9 held a wellness walk yesterday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, along Broadway from W 135<sup>th</sup> to W 155<sup>th</sup> Streets in collaboration with the NYC Department of Health and many of our elected officials. We distributed masks and hand sanitizer along with information about the rising COVID infection rates in the area, and also distributed signage and supplies to the businesses along the route. The event was a tremendous success, and a big thanks is owed to Health & Environment Committee Co-Chair Miriam Aristy-Farer and former CB9 Chair Padmore John for helping to organize the event. The success of the event is an indication of the deep need in our community for more PPE and education, and CB9 may in the future look to do another such walk.

### ***Manhattan DA's October 17 Gun Buyback at Bethel Gospel Assembly at 1832 Madison Ave***

The Manhattan District Attorney's Office held a no-questions-asked gun buyback event on Saturday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, from 10am to 4pm at Bethel Gospel Assembly, at 1832 Madison Avenue on E 120<sup>th</sup> Street. The DA and NYPD recovered 19 revolver, 17 pistols, 4 rifles, 1 shotgun, and 7 other guns for a total of 48 firearms taken off the street from approximately 40 members of the community. The DA was offering \$200 prepaid cards for handguns or assault rifles and is offering \$25 for rifles, shotguns, and airguns. Social distancing guidelines will be adhered to during the event. No ID was required.

### ***Free City COVID Testing at 21 Old Broadway***

The coronavirus continues to spread in New York, albeit at a greatly reduced rate compared to the spring. New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation offers free coronavirus testing at the clinic at 21 Old Broadway at W 126<sup>th</sup> Street 7 days a week, Monday-Sunday, from 9am-7pm. No appointment is necessary. Please call 844-NYC-4NYC if you have any questions. Help us keep coronavirus in check and keep your friends, neighbors, and family safe. It pays to get tested!

### ***Get Your Flu Shot!***

Flu season has unfortunately arrived. This year it is more important than ever to be vaccinated for the flu so as to avoid getting sick and requiring medical attention, which may further expose you to COVID. Per the DOHMH, "Flu vaccines are widely available at doctor's offices, pharmacies, community health clinics and through employer-sponsored programs. Most health insurance plans cover flu vaccination without a co-pay." Many of the drug stores in our area offer flu shots with no copay and with no

appointment necessary. To find the nearest location offering flu shots near you, you can go to <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/flu-seasonal-vaccination.page>

### ***We Want Your Feedback on the RKO Hamilton Theater Redevelopment Proposals***

On July 21<sup>st</sup>, CB9 hosted a virtual town hall on the future of the RKO Hamilton Theater. We heard updates from two developers with proposals to redevelop the landmarked site: Omni and BRISA. Omni currently has site access and has signed an option with the current owners. Both proposals call for putting steel beams through the portion of the building that houses the theater seating and stage and building affordable housing on top and on an adjacent site on W 147<sup>th</sup> Street that is currently vacant. Both proposals also contained space for performing arts groups. As a reminder, any redevelopment of the site would almost certainly require zoning variances and Landmarks Preservation Commission approval, which means CB9 must essentially support the project.

To view the town hall, please view the RKO Hamilton Forum on our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/114421275273320/videos/3113309588788450>.

After watching the Forum, please fill out our feedback survey with your reactions to the proposals and priorities for the site at <https://mcb9.us4.list-manage.com/track/click?u=779f2781842681ac8df8c613d&id=97c001cbd3&e=88a45640df>

### ***October 24<sup>th</sup> CB9-Wide Team Up to Clean Up West Harlem***

Manhattan Community Board 9, led by the indefatigable Signe Mortensen in collaboration with community groups across the district, organized a West Harlem-wide community cleanup on October 24<sup>th</sup>. Thank you to all who came out and #teameduptocleanupWestHarlem! The Department of Sanitation has reduced trash bin collection in our area by about 70%, and we have been trying to involve our neighbors in helping to keep our streets clean. We will continue to petition for increased pickup services from DSNY, but we will also continue to support grassroots efforts to clean up our community like those of Hamilton Heights Cleanup Crew.

### ***Task Force on Drug and Crime in Southern Hamilton Heights***

Manhattan Community Board 9 will be initiating a community task force to work with local homelessness outreach teams, substance abuse service providers, youth enrichment and employment organizations, and the NYPD to address the growing issue of violence related to drug dealing in the southern portion of Hamilton Heights, roughly from W 135<sup>th</sup> to W 145<sup>th</sup> Streets. The rise in shootings in the area over the past year or two, as well as the recruitment of our community's young people into the drug trade, is unacceptable and must be addressed. If you live in the area or are from an organization that would like to help address the issue, please email [info@cb9m.org](mailto:info@cb9m.org) with the subject "Hamilton Heights Drug Task Force" to get involved.

### ***Int 1849-2020 and 1852-2020 for Fire Safety Measures in Film Locations***

After the tragic death of firefighter Michael Davidson in the fire at St. Nick's Pub in 2018 during a fire on the set of the movie *Motherless Brooklyn*, there has been substantial effort to ensure that no similar deaths or fires occur again on a film set. Ilana Mercado, Chair of the CB9 Film and Television Task Force,

has been dealing with the issue for the past two years, and was able to submit testimony at the virtual meeting of the City Council Committee on Fire and Emergency Management on Monday, October 19<sup>th</sup> at 10am in Virtual Room 1, where Ints 1849 and 1852 were considered. The bills would require the designation of a film production fire safety manager and the filing of blueprints of sets with the FDNY, respectively. To view the video of the meeting, please go to <https://council.nyc.gov/> and click on the hearing information at the bottom of the page. We are hopeful that these bills can pass the full City Council before the end of the year.