

# Lincoln Center

## Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts Launches Initiative to Make Amsterdam Avenue Side of Campus More Welcoming

### Invites Public Input to Reimagine the Area to Promote Equity, Access Initiative Continues Series of Projects Core to Institutional Transformation

New York (June 6, 2023) – Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) today announced an ambitious undertaking to work with local community members and stakeholders across New York City to reimagine the Amsterdam Avenue side of its campus.

This undertaking is a continuation of the organization’s [commitment to change](#), actioning bold projects across the Lincoln Center campus that marry artistic work and civic service, all with a commitment to expanding equity, including: expansion of free artistic programs; designing and implementing a new Choose-What-You-Pay ticketing model for a variety of LCPA events at venues including Alice Tully Hall and David Geffen Hall; the reopening of a newly redesigned David Geffen Hall; and working with partners across the city to host blood drives, food banks, graduations, naturalization ceremonies, and more.

The initiative aims to break down barriers, physical and otherwise, between Lincoln Center and local community and audiences, exploring how the Amsterdam Avenue side of the Lincoln Center campus can be made more accessible, welcoming, and inclusive to create a greater sense of belonging.

The campus was originally developed as part of an “urban renewal” project in the 1950s that razed the nearby San Juan Hill community. The initiative will be undertaken in close collaboration with community partners and constituents to ensure it has a lasting and positive impact.

“The Lincoln Center campus is iconic, and one of the jewels of New York City. Just as we have enhanced our programming by making it more accessible to everyone, this process will engage the community on envisioning how we can create a beautiful and architectural welcome to our neighbors to the west, assuring that the campus beckons to everyone to come enjoy our offerings,” said **Katherine Farley, Chair of the Board of Directors of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.**

“We’re enormously proud of the work we’ve done on the East side of our campus, including our project to reimagine David Geffen Hall,” said **Henry Timms, President and Chief Executive Officer of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.** “Now is the time to apply the same level of thoughtfulness and rigor to our West, which needs to be reimaged to better welcome our neighbors. We look forward to learning about all ideas.”

“I have spent the last 22 years performing at Lincoln Center, and as a Black artist I am keenly aware of the power and importance of having the history and contributions of all communities to this campus acknowledged, embraced, and celebrated,” said **Misty Copeland, Board Member at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts**. “I am proud to be a part of an institution committed to bringing the past, present, and future together in a spirit of solidarity and inclusiveness.”

The **Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF)** is a Founding Partner of this visionary process, continuing their support of many initiatives vital to transformation at Lincoln Center, including [\*Summer for the City\*](#) and [\*Legacies of San Juan Hill\*](#).

“We at SNF are most appreciative of the opportunity to be able to contribute to this very thoughtful and exciting project,” said **SNF Co-President Andreas Dracopoulos**. “We share a common vision with Lincoln Center for providing access for all to welcoming, high-quality public space permeated by the arts and their power to uplift, inspire, and bring us together.”

“It’s a breath of fresh air to have Lincoln Center engage with the community so early in this process. Community Board 7 welcomes this rare opportunity to work with Lincoln Center and all our neighbors to better knit these world-class artistic resources into the fabric of the Upper West Side,” said **Manhattan Community Board 7 Chair Beverly Donohue**.

“As a lifelong resident of this area and someone who grew up in San Juan Hill, I welcome this collaborative exploration of making the Lincoln Center campus more accessible,” said **Maria Guzman, Tenant Association President of Harborview Terrace (NYCHA)**. “The arts should be part of everyone’s lives. All my neighbors should feel welcome here.”

“I’ve lived in NYCHA housing most of my life—both at Amsterdam Houses and Addition. I raised my two children in NYCHA housing and I continue to be an active advocate for the children and senior citizens in our Amsterdam community,” said **Patricia Ryan, Vice President of the Tenant Association of Amsterdam Addition**. “Speaking for my fellow residents and neighbors, we welcome and support Lincoln Center’s initiative to be more accessible and inclusive to our local community.”

“Kicking off a participatory process makes a lot of sense and I commend Lincoln Center for spearheading this effort. By grounding this process in an understanding of the history of San Juan Hill and Lincoln Square, and guided by community feedback, I’m hopeful this will result in recommendations that will open access on the Amsterdam Avenue side that make sense for the neighborhood. I remember meeting older residents of Amsterdam Houses who had been displaced from San Juan Hill. Their stories and experiences are critical to establishing a strong foundation to a more inclusive future within the community spaces that serve this neighborhood,” said **Council Member Gale Brewer**.

“Lincoln Center belongs to every New Yorker, and it’s important that we ensure that all feel welcomed to experience the performances and art that is created there,” said **Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine**. “I invite the community to be vocal participants in the upcoming public input process, and look forward to seeing a plan take shape in the future.” “I’m excited about Lincoln Center’s initiative to reimagine its campus along Amsterdam Avenue to help welcome more visitors from the neighborhood, including NYCHA tenants and local schools. I look forward to working with tenants, Community Board 7, and other stakeholders to help make this project a reality,” said **State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal**.

“The walls that once divided the Lincoln Center campus from the greater community are finally coming down,” said **Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal** (D/WF-Manhattan), Chair of the Assembly Committee on Housing. “In the 1950s, Robert Moses had San Juan Hill declared a slum, displacing thousands of Black and brown West Side families from the community to make way for what is now Lincoln Center, building a physical barrier between the performing arts center and the community. Today, that barrier is nothing more than a relic of a shameful past. I am thrilled that Lincoln Center has committed to examining its history by redesigning its campus to be more inclusive of its neighbors and to further build community on the West Side. I look forward to being a part of this worthy effort.”

“Lincoln Center is embarking on a long overdue effort to reflect inclusion and welcome within the architecture and infrastructure of their spaces, and I commend them for starting this process by hearing from the local neighborhood,” said **Congressmember Jerrold “Jerry” Nadler** (NY-12). “As a champion for the arts, it is critical for a healthy society that all New Yorkers are able to access the arts which Lincoln Center has made strides in doing through their programming as a local artistic and civic hub.”

“We are thrilled Lincoln Center is taking a next step to go beyond an understanding of its history to truly reckon with its past, making real, physical changes to its campus to follow through on the in-depth conversations they’ve been having both internally and with people throughout the city,” said **Cultural Affairs Commissioner Laurie Cumbo**. “We’re proud to support this project, which will help move us all in a forward direction that aligns with Lincoln Center’s efforts to welcome all New Yorkers, and our broader goal of creating a cultural sector that reflects and connects with the diverse communities that call our city home. I encourage all New Yorkers – particularly those who live nearby – to engage in this exciting process.”

“Community engagement is key to all of our projects at Parks, and I’m thrilled to see Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts engaging New Yorkers in exploring a new vision for Amsterdam Avenue,” said **NYC Parks Commissioner Sue Donoghue**. “I look forward to working in partnership with the Lincoln Center team and the community as we reimagine this area together.”

“The Lincoln Square BID is so pleased that Lincoln Center has decided to reimagine the “back of house” along this stretch of Amsterdam Avenue and make it more welcoming for all who live and work in the strong residential community west of Lincoln Center’s campus,” said **Monica Blum, President of the Lincoln Square Business Improvement District**. “This collaborative, community effort will make the Amsterdam Avenue side of the Lincoln Center campus open and inviting to all visitors and supports our mission of making this amazing neighborhood clean, safe, vibrant, and welcoming. We look forward to working closely with Lincoln Center and our other partners on this ambitious and necessary initiative.”

Among the goals of the initiative are to:

- Physically transform Lincoln Center’s Amsterdam Avenue side to extend welcome to communities approaching from the west.
- Better serve close neighbors, including residents of New York City Housing Authority campuses at Amsterdam Houses and Addition, and students of LaGuardia High School of Music and Performing Arts and the six high schools at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Educational Complex.
- Create an improved performance park to meet artistic and community goals.
- Commemorate the history and public memory of San Juan Hill and historic Lincoln Square.
- Collaborate closely with neighbors, partners, and constituents to ensure a broad array of stakeholders have a voice in the process, allowing for a lasting, positive impact.

Through a robust participatory planning and public engagement process, LCPA will solicit broad input from the public and local community to create greater access up and down its Amsterdam Avenue side. LCPA is leading the process in collaboration with the award-winning architecture, urban design and planning firm NADAAA; and the nonprofit firm Hester Street, which has an established track record of building relationships with people that are historically and currently marginalized from civic decision-making.

Neighbors and NYCHA residents, elected officials, advocates, community groups, nearby educational institutions, and members of the New York City community will all have opportunities to voice their ideas, interests, questions, and feedback throughout the process.

“The Amsterdam Avenue side of our campus brings to mind a fortress. Our goal is to show up in a different way,” said **Shanta Thake, Ehrenkranz Chief Artistic Officer of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts**. “The arts teach us many things – top of mind, the importance of listening with open minds and hearts. We look forward to doing so as this process moves forward.”

### **An ongoing commitment to a more equitable future**

To honor the communities of that neighborhood, LCPA has invested in several major projects that shine a light on this important history and celebrate its significant cultural impact. These include the [Legacies of San Juan Hill](#) digital hub, a collaboration with the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College (CENTRO) and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, as well as a series of [events and exhibits](#) that engage with this history from a multitude of perspectives.

Years in the making, [Legacies of San Juan Hill](#) features scholarly essays, articles, multimedia, and a series of live events from a diverse slate of contributors. It is a resource that will grow over time.

The initiative also recognizes that more inclusive programming across Lincoln Center's outdoor venues requires updated facilities to improve audience experience and access, which will allow the institution to continue to usher in new audiences. Among those programs are the annual [Summer for the City](#) festival, which this year includes hundreds of free events and thousands of artists performing across Lincoln Center's 16-acre campus. The 2023 edition also includes a temporary transformation of the campus by [Summer for the City](#) Visual Director and Tony Award-winning artist Clint Ramos, who will transform its public spaces with playful designs that include a 10-foot disco ball on Josie Robertson Plaza.

### **A purposeful and inclusive community planning process**

To allow for stakeholders across New York City to voice their ideas and help shape the initiative, LCPA is launching a robust participatory planning and engagement process that includes:

- Implementing a comprehensive and strategic community engagement plan that proactively invites neighbors and stakeholders.
- Facilitating a variety of public events (i.e., workshops, walking tours, surveys, etc.) to create inclusive and accessible opportunities for diverse stakeholders to be involved.
- Communicating periodic updates to the public about the process along the way.

“What we choose to prioritize and how we make decisions are enormously important to our commitment of being an ever-more welcoming home for all New Yorkers,” said **Leah C. Johnson, Executive Vice President & Chief Communications, Marketing, and Advocacy Officer at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts**. “It’s paramount that we invite our neighbors into the conversation as we look to reimagine the Amsterdam Avenue side of our campus, alongside interrogating our founding history. We are looking forward to bringing people together and learning from our neighbors throughout this process.”

### **Upgrading the campus experience for all**

The participatory planning process will explore possibilities along the entirety of the Amsterdam Avenue side of the Lincoln Center campus, weigh community and stakeholder

priorities, and determine the scope of the initiative. Potential sites for exploration include Damrosch Park, in collaboration with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (especially how it is accessed at the southwest corner of the campus); the campus entrance at the northwest corner; and the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts terrace and Amsterdam Avenue entrance.

In addition to the initiative's primary goal to extend a greater sense of welcome and improved access to communities to the west, a significant priority is to upgrade aging infrastructure, including:

- Heating and cooling systems.
- Power and data distribution
- Public and back-of-house restroom facilities.
- Access for the artists, audiences, and community members.

Improvements to these systems are essential for the campus's resident organizations, will provide better service to operators and audiences, and increase efficiency to meet contemporary sustainability standards.

### **Call to action**

LCPA is calling upon New Yorkers to get directly involved by offering feedback through [LincolnCenter.org/series/planning-process](https://lincolncenter.org/series/planning-process) and by participating in workshops, walk-shops, focus groups, surveys, and tabling at select programs during the 2023 edition of *Summer for the City*.

*Imagery may be accessed [here](#).*

### **About Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts**

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) is a cultural and civic cornerstone of New York City. The primary advocate for the entire Lincoln Center campus, our strategic priorities include: fostering collaboration and deepening impact across the Lincoln Center resident organizations; championing inclusion and increasing the accessibility and reach of Lincoln Center's work; and nurturing innovation on stage and off to help ensure the arts are at the center of civic life for all. LCPA presents hundreds of programs each year, offered primarily for free and choose-what-you-pay, including many specially designed for young audiences, families, and those with disabilities.

### **About NADAAA**

NADAAA is an architecture and urban design firm led by principal designer Nader Tehrani, winner of the American Academy of Arts and Letters' 2020 Arnold W. Brunner Prize, member of the Cooper Hewitt, and a newly elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Tehrani leads the studio with partner Arthur Chang, AIA who also leads the office's fabrication workshop NADLAB.

NADAAA has evolved over three decades as a multi-disciplinary practice dedicated to bridging design disciplines; from landscape to urbanism, architecture to interiors, and industrial design to furniture. With an eye towards integrated thinking, the office enters the discourse on technology, aesthetics, and building protocols as part of a holistic process. Rather than focus on typology, NADAAA's portfolio is built on process, with examples of institutional, academic, housing, commercial, retail, and civic projects.

Design excellence is core to NADAAA's pursuits. The firm boasts 19 Progressive Architecture Awards, 4 American Architecture Awards, 4 Chicago Athenaeum Awards, and an AIA Cote Top Ten Award. NADAAA is a 2017 Moriyama RAIC International Prize Finalist and a 2017 Marcus Prize for Architecture nominee. NADAAA consistently places among the top design firms in Architect Magazine's annual ranking of US design firms and has been selected as top firm three years in a row.

### **About Hester Street**

Hester Street is an urban planning, design and development nonprofit that works to ensure neighborhoods are shaped by the people who live in them. Hester Street offers planning, design, and community development technical assistance to community-based organizations, government, and other institutions in order to foster more equitable, sustainable and resilient neighborhoods and cities. With projects in nearly every zip code of New York City, and a history of deep collaboration to engage NYCHA residents, Hester Street is uniquely positioned to lead community engagement for the Lincoln Center's initiative.

\*\*\*

FOLLOW LINCOLN CENTER ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

Facebook: [facebook.com/LincolnCenterNYC](https://www.facebook.com/LincolnCenterNYC)

Twitter: [@LincolnCenter](https://twitter.com/LincolnCenter)

Instagram: [@LincolnCenter](https://www.instagram.com/LincolnCenter)

TikTok: [@LincolnCenter](https://www.tiktok.com/@LincolnCenter)

**#LincolnCenter**

###

### **For more information, please contact:**

Isabel Sinistore

[isinistore@lincolncenter.org](mailto:isinistore@lincolncenter.org)

212-671-4195

BerlinRosen

[lincolncenter@berlinrosen.com](mailto:lincolncenter@berlinrosen.com)