

## **Empire State Development News**

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## **NY EMPOWERMENT ZONE BOARD FUNDS PROJECTS**

### **Funds slated to stimulate cultural growth in Upper Manhattan**

The New York Empowerment Zone Corporation (NYEZC) Board of Directors today approved two grants totaling \$250,000 for programs aimed at stimulating cultural growth in Upper Manhattan.

Among the grants awarded were a \$100,000 grant to the Board for the Education of People of African Ancestry in Harlem and a \$150,000 grant to the Visual Arts Research and Resource Center Relating to the Caribbean, Inc. in Midtown.

#### Board for the Education of People of African Ancestry (BEPAA)

Founded in 1992 by Dr. John Henrik Clarke, the Board for the Education of People of African Ancestry educates and promotes the history of people of African descent. The mission of BEPAA is to stimulate and support the advancement of African culture through BEPAA's core scope of work with the community. BEPAA is located in The Clarke House, a historic brownstone that is a gathering place for cultural inquiry and learning about the historical contributions of people of African descent throughout the Diaspora, and offers conferences, lectures, workshops, tours, exhibitions, youth programming and Dr. Clarke's publications.

BEPAA is in the preliminary stage of a multi-year facilities project beginning with structural repairs and upgrades to its building, as further BEPAA programming is predicated on the structural soundness of the brownstone. This capital improvement project is estimated to cost \$300,000. The NYEZC Board of Directors approved a \$100,000 grant to support a facilities management plan—a plan that will provide an objective, external review of the brownstone with appropriate recommendations—and hard costs associated with the roof, chimney, egress and windows in the Phase I capital improvements.

Support from NYEZC will extend the legacy of an important historical figure to the Harlem community. BEPAA has also secured funding support from the New York State Assembly and the New York Landmarks Conservancy (NYLC) to support Phase II and Phase III.

#### Visual Arts Research and Resource Center Relating to the Caribbean, Inc. (CCCADI)

Founded in 1976 by Dr. Marta Moreno Vega, the Visual Arts Research and Resource Center Relating to the Caribbean, Inc. (also known as Franklin H. Williams Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute or "CCCADI") was one of New York City's first organizations to focus on the cultural contributions of people of color and remains the leading African Diaspora cultural organization in New York. CCCADI's mission is to expose and educate general audiences about the cultural expressions of the African Diaspora as manifested through visual arts, film, literature, music, dance and the study of traditional belief systems. Its annual programming is built on a foundation of artistic and community-based initiatives that incorporate a full range of African-descendent perspectives. CCCADI also provides authentic research, fosters dialogue and promulgates cultural experiences about the African Diaspora to communities around the globe.

CCCADI's headquarters is a townhouse located in Midtown West in Manhattan. The majority of the organization's programs and events do not place at CCCADI's current headquarters because of space constraints. Due to the age, width and general configuration of the facility, CCCADI is unable to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for access by the disabled.

Inability to comply with these requirements poses a serious threat to continued future funding from public sources. In addition, the building's physical configuration precludes continued programmatic growth. Finally, the neighborhood demographics have changed to such a degree that the constituency served by the CCCADI is no longer found in the surrounding community.

In order to address the physical limitations of the current facility, CCCADI is working with the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to rehabilitate and redevelop a decommissioned firehouse located on East 125<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan as a community and cultural facility. The NYEZC Board of Directors approved a total of \$150,000 in grants to support this \$5.5 million project; \$100,000 will be made as a direct investment, while \$50,000 will be made available as an incentive upon CCCADI's demonstration of securing a matching grant in the same amount.

The New York Empowerment Zone Corporation is a subsidiary of Empire State Development, New York's chief economic development agency. ESD also oversees the marketing of "I LOVE NY," the State's iconic tourism brand. For more information, visit [www.nylovesbiz.com](http://www.nylovesbiz.com).

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