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Contact: (DOT) (212) 839-4850
Contact: (Design Trust) Ozgur Gungor, (212) 695-2432 x6, ogungor@designtrust.org
Contact: (WHEDco) Emma Woods, (646) 200-5303, emma@berlinrosen.com

NYCDOT AND DESIGN TRUST LAUNCH “THE BOOGIE DOWN BOOTH” IN THE BRONX AS PART OF UNDER THE ELEVATED PROJECT

Innovative collaboration with WHEDco’s Bronx Music Heritage Center seeks to activate public spaces under bridges, highways, subways and rail lines.

The NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Design Trust for Public Space today unveiled “The Boogie Down Booth,” the second prototype for the Under the Elevated project in collaboration with the Bronx Music Heritage Center (BMHC) of the Women’s Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco). Located at the Freeman Street station bus stop underneath the 2/5 subway tracks in the Bronx, this temporary resting spot provides solar-powered lighting and directional speakers playing Bronx artists’ music to enhance the space beneath the train tracks. The community, including the Southern Boulevard Merchant Association, provided guidance on the design and function of the installation through multiple workshops. It serves as a test to make the area a more hospitable place for community residents and visitors and has attracted support from the NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS) through a competitive Neighborhood Challenge grant.
DOT officials were joined by Executive Director of the Design Trust Susan Chin, WHEDCo Founder and President Nancy Biberman, and SBS Deputy Commissioner Michael Blaise Backer.

“DOT’s partnership with the Design Trust is leading the way to improving the conditions beneath elevated infrastructure citywide, transforming these once under-used spaces into invaluable neighborhood assets,” said DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg. “I’m pleased that the ‘The Boogie Down Booth’ on Southern Boulevard in the Bronx is continuing our successful series of collaborations with neighborhood groups like WHEDco and helping to bring innovative programs to communities across the city.”

The temporary installation on Freeman Street and Southern Boulevard celebrates the rich culture of the Bronx expressed through music. The speakers installed at “The Boogie Down Booth” play tunes by local artists, including Grammy-recognized musicians, to counteract the sound pollution caused by trains above the street and the surrounding traffic. The playlist, which was compiled by WHEDCo’s Bronx Music Heritage Center (BMHC), reflects the thriving music born in or inspired by the Bronx. Although over 10,000 live music seats in dozens of clubs and theaters in the neighborhood have been lost over the years, artists from a wide array of cultural backgrounds make the Bronx their home and create new music in the borough. There are plans by WHEDCo for two additional booths to be installed at a different location on Southern Boulevard and in Melrose, where the BMHC’s permanent home will be housed, providing multiple points to listen to Bronx music in the neighborhood. The installation also encourages users to share their thoughts on how the underused area can be improved. People can leave comments online via email – ute@designtrust.org – and social media through using hashtags– #UnderTheElevated and #Bronxmusic.

“For communities to thrive, they need beautiful public spaces, safe streets, and access to arts and culture. The Boogie Down Booth, where community members can listen to Bronx artists’ music curated by WHEDco’s Bronx Music Heritage Center, creatively combine all three, helping to transform Southern Boulevard under the elevated train into a more vibrant commercial district filled with the music, energy, and people of the Bronx,” said Nancy Biberman, President & Founder of the Women’s Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco).

The installation at the Freeman Street station, which will be installed through September 15, 2014, is the second of several that will be developed as part of the Under the Elevated initiative led by the Design Trust for Public Space. The citywide effort is aimed at developing strategies for maximizing the function, use, and spatial qualities of the millions of square feet of space underneath NYC’s bridges, and elevated highways, subways, and rail lines. The temporary installations will pave the way for a systemic change across the city that will transform the environment around its vast transit infrastructure.

“At the perfect juxtaposition of new housing, businesses, increasing local workforce, and empowered local organizations, the Bronx is ready to reclaim the neglected space under these elevated train tracks, while highlighting its rich and diverse musical heritage. I’m proud to see the
realization of The Boogie Down Booth, which marks a major headway in the Under the Elevated project that may prove to inspire solutions for various pressing issues around the city’s transit infrastructure, such as air quality, lighting for safety and sound amelioration,” said Design Trust Executive Director Susan Chin, FAIA.

About the Bronx Music Heritage Center
Rebuilding the South Bronx takes more than physical buildings. The Bronx is the birthplace of thousands of musicians and entire music genres, and was once home to some of the best performing arts spaces in the City. Today, too many communities have limited access to cultural resources and events. WHEDco is celebrating the rich history and creative spirit that defines Bronx music – from jazz and salsa to R&B and hip hop – at the Bronx Music Heritage Center, which will have a permanent home in our newest Bronx Commons mixed-use housing development.

About the Women’s Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco)
WHEDco is a community development organization founded on the radically simple idea that all people deserve healthy, vibrant communities. We build award-winning, sustainable, affordable homes – but our work is not over when our buildings are complete. WHEDco believes that to be successful, affordable housing must be anchored in strong communities that residents can be proud of. WHEDco’s mission is to give the South Bronx access to all the resources that create thriving neighborhoods – from high-quality early education and after-school programs, to fresh, healthy food, cultural programming, and economic opportunity.

About The Design Trust for Public Space
The Design Trust for Public Space is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the future of public space in New York City. Our projects bring together city agencies, community groups and private sector experts to make a lasting impact—through design—on how New Yorkers live, work and play.

About the NYC Department of Transportation
New York City Department of Transportation’s mission is to provide for the safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible movement of people and goods in the City of New York and to maintain and enhance the transportation infrastructure crucial to the economic vitality and quality of life of our primary customers, City residents.

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