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DESIGN TRUST FOR PUBLIC SPACE, STATEN ISLAND ARTS, AND STATEN ISLANDERS UNVEIL INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A MORE LIVABLE, CONNECTED NORTH SHORE

NEW YORK, NY (Wednesday, March 29, 2017) – Last night at a community forum in Stapleton, Staten Island, the Design Trust for Public Space and Staten Island Arts unveiled a preliminary set of design and policy recommendations outlining strategies for neighborhood revitalization, sustainability, and equitable economic development for Staten Island’s rapidly growing North Shore. This forum kicked off the first of a series of stakeholder feedback sessions to be held this spring, as part of the Future Culture: Connecting Staten Island’s Waterfront project.

A team of Staten Island residents, cultural producers, civic activists, small business owners, and city experts worked together to create this integrated system of ideas, tools, and resources that cultural organizations, civic groups, landowners, public agencies, developers, businesses, and other stakeholders can use to strengthen the cultural community, revitalize the North Shore, and interconnect its neighborhoods and the waterfront to the rest of Staten Island and New York City. This event marks the beginning of a larger public conversation to determine key priorities among the community’s initial recommendations.

“We need spaces to retreat, think, and be creative,” said Rashida Ladner-Seward of Universal Temple of the Arts, a member of the Future Culture Community Working Group. “The North Shore is an outpost of progressive ideas, ethnic diversity and creative energy,” added Deborah Davis, also a Community Working Group member and a graphic designer living in Staten Island.

The Future Culture strategies specifically address ways to:

- Foster and amplify local culture (increase public presence, promote exploration, broaden and deepen support for the arts);
- Connect and enhance neighborhoods (celebrate the waterfront, activate underused open space, improve the experience of transportation infrastructure, develop and preserve built spaces for culture).

Future Culture will open new doors for everyone. Artists will be able to access and use new spaces, including key public- and privately-owned sites and storefronts, for the production and presentation of their work. Public and private sectors will have the tools to help them plan, operate, and sustain cultural activities to enliven and connect their properties to the area’s neighborhoods. NYC agencies will have a cultural plan to complement the Bay Street Corridor rezoning in 2017-18, the citywide cultural plan, and other agency initiatives.

Specific recommendations include: a) forming a North Shore Cultural Station, a cultural committee, an investment fund, and a fellowship program; b) determining sites, resources, and sponsors for large festivals, events, performances, ongoing programming series, and educational programming that prioritize collaboration with immigrant- and heritage-based organizations and groups; c) creating a map of local cultural assets and wayfinding strategies to encourage local exploration beyond the ferry terminal and connecting public- and privately-owned sites to routes of discovery; d) preserving and enhancing the identity of town hubs and the maritime culture; e) reconceiving piers as new, dynamic public spaces where historic vessels can be moored and used for educational, recreational, and cultural programs; and f) creating enhanced, connected, high-performance green spaces that promote urban ecological diversity, foster resiliency, and safeguard direct access to the water’s edge; among many others. To see the entire set of initial recommendations, please visit: http://designtrust.org/projects/future-culture/activities-and-outputs/
“While we want to define the North Shore as a destination and home, we do not seek to homogenize it. When looking at the environments along Bay Street, we are interested less in underscoring the idea of a unified Bay Street Corridor and more in amplifying the diverse nodes and creating enriched connections,” said Margie Ruddick, Future Culture Urban Design Fellow. “The upland communities of the North Shore have in the past been separated from the waterfront. Stronger connections from Bay Street to the waterfront could be encouraged by using arts and culture to energize the many fenced-off blocks and the elevated train.”

These initial recommendations will be further refined and detailed over the next few months through a series of feedback sessions with community stakeholders. The final plan will be released in fall 2017 in conjunction with exhibitions at Staten Island Arts’ ArtSpace gallery and the Alice Austen House. The project will also inform the creation of a series of pilot projects that will test the recommendations at specific locations in the North Shore.

“The arts touch us in remarkable ways, create meaning and purpose enriching our lives and bringing us together. Often overlooked, the cultural sector is also a tremendous source of jobs and educational opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds. Future Culture has brought all stakeholders to the table to think together about what we all want in the North Shore and how we can utilize the soft-power of the arts to get there,” said Elizabeth Bennett, Executive Director, Staten Island Arts.

“With Future Culture, we've harnessed the power of the arts and quality public space to lift up the rich and diverse cultural heritage and human capital of Staten Island. We are drawing on local knowledge and civic engagement to produce a common understanding and shared purpose among Staten Islanders, private stakeholders, and public agencies about the future of North Shore that is vibrant and benefits everyone,” said Susan Chin, FAIA, Hon. ASLA, Executive Director, Design Trust for Public Space.

**Future Culture: Connecting Staten Island’s Waterfront**

*Future Culture: Connecting Staten Island’s Waterfront* is a project of the Design Trust for Public Space in partnership with Staten Island Arts. The project has the participation and support of NYC Department of Small Business Services through the Neighborhood 360 initiative, NYC Economic Development Corporation, and developers including BFC Partners, Ironstate, New York Wheel, and Triangle Equities. [http://designtrust.org/projects/future-culture/](http://designtrust.org/projects/future-culture/)

**Future Culture Community Engagement**

An intensive six-session working group was organized to develop the recommendations in concert with the community. The working group was composed of seventeen dynamic individuals living or working on the North Shore who were full of on-the-ground expertise and ideas for improving the area. Its members were photographers, painters, sculptors, makers, community organizers, activists, small business owners, history buffs, arts administrators, and composers of different professions, ages, ethnic backgrounds, and interests. Some were lifelong Staten Islanders; others had landed on the North Shore as adults, relocating from other boroughs, states, countries, and continents. The group got feedback on the feasibility of their ideas from the Design Trust Fellows, visiting civic activists and cultural organization representatives.

This team also participated in a number of events to discuss the recommendations with other community members. Engagements included—but were not limited to—a visioning session for the Maritime Education and Recreation Corridor (MERC), an open-house event at Staten Island Arts, a Van Duzer Street Civic Association meeting, and an artists’ grant workshop at Staten Island Makerspace.

Finally, a survey was circulated to over ninety organizations engaged in arts and community programming to assess the cultural landscape and determine needs. The survey collected information about how organizations are accessing, producing, and planning future cultural uses and programming along the North Shore waterfront.
**Staten Island Arts**
Staten Island Arts (formerly the Council on the Arts and Humanities for Staten Island or COAHSI) is Staten Island’s arts council, a service organization that provides resources to individuals and organizations in the arts, cultural, and humanities sector. Our mission is to cultivate a sustainable and diverse cultural community for the people of Staten Island by: making the arts accessible to every member of the community; supporting and building recognition for artistic achievement; and providing artists, organizations, and arts educators the technical, financial and social resources to encourage cultural production. [http://statenislandarts.org/](http://statenislandarts.org/)

**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. Our work can be seen, felt and experienced throughout all five boroughs—from parks and plazas to streets and public buildings. The Design Trust [saved the High Line structure](http://designtrust.org/), jumpstarted NYC’s first custom-built [Taxi of Tomorrow](http://designtrust.org/), developed the [Community Design School for Flushing Meadows Corona Park](http://designtrust.org/), and created the city’s first comprehensive [sustainability guidelines](http://designtrust.org/) that became the precursor to Local Law 86 and PlaNYC, now OneNYC. [http://designtrust.org/](http://designtrust.org/)

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