

Mayor Bloomberg and Chase Join Bronx Council on the Arts to Announce Its New Home

Priya Lopes on 04 6, 2011

Chase Donates \$850,000, 5,200-Square-Foot Former Branch Building to be Non-Profit's New Headquarters in Westchester Square in the Bronx

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Chase Retail Financial Services CEO Charlie Scharf today joined Bronx Council on the Arts Executive Director Deirdre Scott to announce a new home for the cultural organization. Chase has donated a former Washington Mutual branch building at 2700 East Tremont Avenue – valued at \$850,000 – to Bronx Council on the Arts, giving Bronx residents a new arts and cultural center in Westchester Square. Renovations on the 5,200 square-foot building – which is nearly double the size of the organization's current space on Hone Avenue – will be completed in 2012. Mayor Bloomberg was joined at the site of the new headquarters for the announcement by Congressman Joseph Crowley, Council Member James Vacca, Cultural Affairs Commissioner Kate D. Levin and Small Business Services Commissioner Robert W. Walsh.

"For 50 years the Bronx Council on the Arts has supported New York City's arts community with its wide-ranging programs – from art handler training to the Longwood Arts Gallery – and developed dynamic partnerships among Bronx arts institutions and businesses that attract visitors from across the city and around the world," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Thanks to the philanthropic leadership of Chase, and the incredible focus and dedication of Joe Crowley and Jimmy Vacca, this public-private partnership will make an enormous difference in the Westchester Square community, while allowing the organization to expand its programming and serve even more artists, arts organizations and audiences."

"This tremendous donation to the Bronx Council on the Arts is a sustaining gift that creates a solid foundation for BCA as we head into our next 50 years," said Bronx Council on the Arts Executive Director Deirdre Scott. "Because of the powerful support from Chase and New York City, our new headquarters will become a nucleus for arts-affirming activities throughout the Bronx. With the continued support of our local and City allies, as well as partnerships in districts such as Westchester Square, BCA at 2700 East Tremont will expand the borough's cultural potential. Part of our vision is to leverage cultural assets to enhance the quality of life for the nearly 1.4 million residents of Bronx County and to stimulate commercial exchange. I envision our new headquarters becoming an anchor for this type of cultural energy and growth."

"As the largest bank in the Bronx, we are pleased to help out our neighbors by putting this building to another good use," said Charlie Scharf, CEO of Chase Retail Financial Services. "We appreciate everything the Bronx Council on the Arts has done for this community and know they will continue doing great things for residents in this much bigger space."

"For nearly 50 years, the Bronx Council on the Arts has been the hub of culture and the arts in our community. Now, with its new home, the BCA will be able to continue thriving, growing and serving the Bronx," said Congress Member Crowley. "I was happy to have played an active role in making this donation come to life and, on behalf of the Bronx, I want to thank Chase for this wonderful donation. This new space will not only benefit the BCA, but the entire Bronx community."

"With this generous donation, the Westchester Square community and the entire Northeast Bronx will finally get the premiere cultural space they deserve," said Council Member Vacca. "For over five years, I have been working with merchants, residents, and community organizations such as the Bronx Council on the Arts to reestablish Westchester Square as the commercial and cultural hub it once was. The new BCA headquarters is essential to that vision, and I want to thank Mayor Bloomberg, Congressman Crowley, and Chase for investing in the future of the Square."

In addition to providing a new headquarters for BCA, the new building will feature a gallery and boutique for local Bronx artists and artisans. It will also house a flexible space for performances, readings and exhibitions for use by arts organizations and the local community.

The former Washington Mutual bank branch – which Chase received when it acquired WaMu’s banking operations – consolidated to the nearby Chase branch across the street. A long-time supporter of Bronx Council on the Arts, Chase worked with local elected officials and community groups to donate the property to the non-profit organization – instead of selling it. In addition to this donation, Chase has provided \$1.5 million to Bronx Council on the Arts over nearly 20 years, supporting programs such as the Arts Handler job training program and the Bronx Trolley. Chase is the largest bank in the Bronx providing financial services to consumers and businesses through 45 bank branches and more than 160 ATMs. Over the past five years, Chase has contributed over \$11 million to Bronx-based non-profit organizations and charitable programs.

Bronx Council on the Arts is celebrating almost 50 years as a private, non-profit membership organization. Recognized nationally as a leading arts service organization in providing cultural services and arts programs, Bronx Council on the Arts serves a multicultural constituency of almost 1.4 million residents. The organization provides an array of services to 6,500 artists and more than 300 arts and community-based organizations. Programs are supported, in part, by public funds provided by the Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council. Programs include:

- The Art Handler Training Program, a job-training and placement program for underemployed and unemployed residents and artists of the Bronx and NYC, which has successfully trained over 250 art handlers.
- The Bronx Cultural Card offers cardholders discounts and promotions at selected Bronx arts and cultural venues, businesses, and dining establishments.
- The 3rd Annual Fair @ The Square, a day-long street fair and festival in Westchester Square on Saturday, May 14, featuring art exhibits, family activities, and the Bronx Culture Trolley. Sponsored by Westchester Square merchants, Owen Dolen Park and partners.
- The First Wednesdays Bronx Culture Trolley and Culture Trolley Saturdays (thematic trolleys on specified Saturdays) provide riders the opportunity to travel via a replica of an early 20th-century trolley car to several Bronx cultural attractions, dining establishments and entertainment venues along the South Bronx Cultural Corridor of the lower Grand Concourse. The next Trolley tour is Wednesday, April 6 and stops will include Pregones Theater, Bronx Museum of the Arts, Gordon Parks Gallery & Cultural Arts Center, BronxArtSpace, and the Bruckner Bar and Grill.
- The Greater New York Development Fund, BRIO (Bronx Recognizes Its Own) Fellowships, and the Bronx Writers Center Fellowship, competitive grant programs funded by the Department of Cultural Affairs that award small Bronx-based arts organizations and/or individual artists for public programs and art projects.
- Longwood Art Gallery at Hostos Community College, one of New York City’s oldest and longest running alternative spaces which presents solo and group art exhibitions in various media and through interdisciplinary projects that connect artists and communities within and beyond the Bronx.

The Association of Merchants and Business Professionals of Westchester Square has as its mission to foster the stabilization, commercial revitalization and economic growth of the commercial corridor and surrounding community of Westchester Square. The organization is finalizing the creation of a Business Improvement District in the Westchester Square commercial corridor. The proposed BID boundaries encompass East Tremont Avenue from Montgomery Place to Westchester Avenue and Williamsbridge Road from Westchester Avenue to Eastchester Road. The BID is expected to begin providing services in early 2012.