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## **NYNP** New York Nonprofit Press

### **WHEDco Gets \$175K Cultural Innovation Grant from Rockefeller Foundation**

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The Women's Housing and Economic Development Corp. (WHEDco) received a \$175,000 Cultural Innovation Fund grant from The Rockefeller Foundation this month. The funding will go towards two years of cross-cultural performances to be presented by WHEDco's Bronx Music Heritage Center (BMHC), with the goal of increasing community pride and access to the arts in the South Bronx.

The BMHC will preserve and promote the area's extraordinary but largely forgotten cultural legacy, and help germinate new Bronx-based work. Fifty years ago, cutting-edge music proliferated in the South Bronx; Donald Byrd, Herbie Hancock, Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker, Tito Puente, Machito, the Chantals, and others launched their careers here. In the 1970s, as arson, redlining, and disinvestment decimated the area, a new generation of local innovators—including Grandmaster Flash, Cold Crush Brothers, KRS-ONE, and many others—sparked the Hip Hop movement.

BMHC is slated to open in WHEDco's new Bronx Commons development in the Melrose neighborhood in 2015. With performance, rehearsal, and archival space, BMHC will serve as a hub for celebrating and disseminating the influential musical forms that have roots in the Bronx. While the site is being built, BMHC has begun its programming with live performances, educational programs, archival work, and the opening of a "Pop Up Shop" called the BMHC Laboratory. Housed in a storefront at WHEDco's Crotona East development, the BMHC Lab is a center for incubating new work, cultivating a community of artists, and bringing together audience members.

"We are immensely grateful to The Rockefeller Foundation for their generous support," said WHEDco President Nancy Biberman said. "The BMHC will allow us to draw on local talent to restore the rich music heritage of the South Bronx, creating a cultural destination for visitors and a vibrant community of opportunity for residents."

The Rockefeller Foundation grant is just one of three major leading grants that are fueling the development of BMHC programming. In May, the Kresge Foundation awarded WHEDco \$150,000 in support of its BMHC concert series honoring Bronx musicians, cultural events,

engagement of local musicians, scholars, and community leaders, and the building of a Bronx music archive. Also in May, the New York Community Trust made a \$50,000 grant to support BMHC educational programming, bringing hands-on arts experiences and mentoring to Bronx youth. In June, via its Working Capital program, Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation provided a three-year commitment of \$225,000 in grants and soft loans to support WHEDco's development of the Bronx Commons site as well as programming in advance of the BMHC. The New York City Council has also made a \$2.5 million capital appropriation towards building Bronx Commons (total building costs will total \$138 million).

Bronx Commons will be a 361,000-square-foot mixed-use campus featuring over 250 affordable, LEED-certified apartments for families and live/work space for elder musicians; a 6-12 grade school; a rooftop farm; and public green space. It will be the final site developed in the Melrose Urban Renewal Area, a 30-block area in the South Bronx with a large concentration of city-owned property and a history of neglect and blight going back to the 1970s.