

South Bronx Affordable-Housing Project to Include Concert Hall

Bronx Commons developers say \$11.4 million music venue will seek to encourage new generation of artists



A rendering of the Bronx Music Hall. Developers behind the Bronx Commons, an affordable-housing project, say they expect the 300-seat music venue will serve to unite the community. *PHOTO: WXY AND LOCAL PROJECTS*

By **CHARLES PASSY**

Most residential real-estate developers package their buildings with a range of amenities, from fitness centers to community rooms.

But the developers behind the Bronx Commons, a 305-unit affordable-housing project slated for the South Bronx, have a different idea in mind: They are adding a concert hall to the mix.

The developers, WHEDco and BFC Partners, say the 300-seat venue, which they are dubbing the Bronx Music Hall, will serve to unite the community, including both the residents within the complex and those in the immediate neighborhood.

That is because music has long played a vital role in Bronx history, say the developers. The borough isn't only the birthplace of the hip-hop movement but also a place where genres as diverse as Latin jazz and doo wop have thrived.



A rendering of the interior of the Bronx Music Hall. Completion for the housing complex, including the hall, is slated for 2019. PHOTO: WXY AND LOCAL PROJECTS

“The memories are still vivid,” said Nancy Biberman, founder and president of WHEDco, a nonprofit housing organization that has developed other residential projects in the borough. Ms. Biberman said that the goal of the venue will be to celebrate that past—she plans to feature an exhibit about Bronx musicians within the hall—but also to encourage a new generation of artists who call the borough home.

Musicians from outside the Bronx will appear at the hall as well, Ms. Biberman said: “It will be run like a world-class performance venue.”

A ceremony is slated for Friday to mark the groundbreaking of Bronx Commons, a project that has been in the works for a few years and ties in with the city’s mission to create more affording-housing units.

The complex, which is largely being funded with city and state money, will cost \$160 million, with \$11.4 million of that being earmarked for the hall.

The Bronx isn’t lacking in musical venues, with full-scale concert halls at Hostos Community College and Lehman College. Still, by virtue of its smaller size, the Bronx Music Hall could fill an important void, said Tony Holmes, a manager with the Bronx Council on the Arts.

A 300-seat venue “will cater to that independent” cultural niche, said Mr. Holmes.

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