

Boogie Down Booth highlights Bronx genres

BY JAIME WILLIAMS

The Boogie Down Booth is back on Southern Boulevard.

After last year's placement of the music installation under the elevated train at Freeman Street, the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corp. revealed a second iteration of the piece on Tuesday, July 14.

The new booth, near 174th Street and outside Seabury Park, was created in partnership with NYC Parks, and features speakers streaming music from Bronx artists, as well as seating and solar-powered lighting.

"Public art brings people together in new and imaginative ways," said Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver about the project. "The Boogie Down Booth offers an interactive, engaging experience for New Yorkers of all ages."

The booth includes community bulletin board to learn about local events, and a mural wall painted by middle and high school students from the adjacent East Bronx Academy for the Future and youth from the Children's Aid Society, who will host community events at the booth.

The installation, which recycles much of the material from the previous booth, will be open until July 2016.

Community participation in the creation of the booth was important to designer Chat Travieso, as is their continuing interaction. Its position facing the sidewalk encourages this, he said.

"It acknowledges some of the most dynamic places are the streets themselves," said Travieso.

The installation is designed to honor the heritage and culture of the Bronx.

"I hope the booth is a place where people of the community can come together and celebrate the rich musical history of the Bronx," said Travieso.

The playlist, curated by the Bronx Music Heritage Center, covers a variety of genres born in or inspired by the Bronx, including salsa, jazz, Afro-Caribbean, hip-hop, Garifuna, and blues, as performed by local artists. It functions as both a celebration and an education.

"The Bronx is the birthplace of hip-hop and the borough of salsa, but it's much, much more," said BMHC director Elena Martinez.

The center was founded in 2010 by WHEDco, a community development organization that provides sustainable, affordable housing in the neighborhood.



Local musicians Alex Kwabena Colon-Olanian (l) and James Lovell preform Garifuna music at the unveiling of the second Boogie Down Booth on Southern Boulevard at 174th Street on Tuesday, July 14.

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WHEDco has encouraged economic development in the neighborhood through grassroots efforts, said community development director Kerry McLean.

"What we saw was the opportunity to support and promote the commercial corridor," said McLean.

The first Boogie Down Booth, originally part of the Design Trust for Public Space's 'Under the Elevated' project, sought to address resident's complaints including loud

noise and poor lighting from the train in an innovative way, while celebrating the neighborhood's assets.

The new booth will create a destination in the neighborhood to encourage foot traffic, said McLean, and will stand as an example of arts as a tool for economic and community development.

"It's really the intersection of urban planning, art and community development," said McLean.