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**THREE LARGE MURALS BRING CULTURAL HERITAGE TO LIFE
ON THE WALLS OF HARLEM RIVER PARK**

Community, City and State Entities Partner to Illustrate the Rich History of Harlem

The Harlem Community Development Corporation (Harlem CDC) announced today that large scale murals are coming to life in Harlem River Park this summer. The designs— selected by Harlem CDC community advisor Harlem River Park Task Force— are being mounted on three east-facing overpass walls of the Harlem River Drive between 132nd and 142nd Streets. The 135th Street wall in particular will offer thousands of suburban Metro-North rail commuters a vibrant welcome to Harlem as they cross the Harlem River on their morning commute into Manhattan.

The murals will depict the artistic and literary icons, architecture and heritage of the East Harlem and Harlem communities. The icons being depicted include: the Apollo Theater, artist Romare Bearden, singers Ella Fitzgerald and Celia Cruz and poet Julia De Burgos.

“Harlem River Park is a dream that’s been a long time coming,” said City Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito, whose East Harlem district includes the southern end of Harlem River Park. “I’m excited by the promise shown in the preliminary designs, and by the opportunity to welcome commuters to Manhattan with a splash that says something about who we are as a community,” Mark-Viverito added.

The designs are to be applied to brick canvases as large as 100 feet long and 17 feet high by three teams of teen-aged apprentice artists from the community, under the guidance of teaching artists from the [Creative Arts Workshops for Kids](#) (CAW). A fourth CAW Mural Project team will be painting a wall on the “African Square” plaza facing the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building at 125th Street and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard.

CAW is a non-profit that uses visual and performing arts to teach life skills to children and teens while enriching communities. CAW’s Summer Art Works program, run in conjunction with New York City’s Summer Youth Employment Program, hires teens to execute large-scale community art projects including painting murals, designing and building community theatres and constructing mosaic benches.

“In addition to teaching job skills, a primary goal of CAW’s summer job program is for teens to make permanent public art in their communities,” said CAW executive director Archana Nagraj. “We are absolutely thrilled that this year’s projects will allow so many to see the vibrancy of Harlem’s culture.”

The Mural Project is the first of its kind in New York City to receive permission from the New York State Department of Transportation to paint on the walls supporting the roads it controls.

“Harlem River Park is a wonderful addition to the green ribbon that is growing along New York City’s waterfronts,” said New York State Department of Transportation Acting Commissioner Stanley Gee. “These murals offer a unique opportunity to involve the local community in beautifying the walls of the Harlem River Drive ramps. And because the walls are on the park grounds, the murals can be painted safely by the fledgling artists,” Gee said. “The children and CAW are doing fantastic work; the State Department of Transportation is proud to have provided the canvas for their dreams,” Gee added.

Harlem River Park is being built by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, in cooperation with Harlem CDC and consultation with the Harlem River Park Task Force, a coalition of 34 community, citywide, and regional organizations convened and directed by Harlem CDC Director of Planning Thomas G. Lunke.

In addition to the Mural Project, Phase I of the park (from 132nd to 138th Streets) includes a reconstructed river edge, new trees, lawns, decorative paving and a mosaic tile work that also serves as a children’s spray shower. Phases II and III, which will extend the park to 145th Street, will feature a walkway along the new, eco-friendly water’s edge treatment ([Designing the Edge](#)), and is scheduled to open later this summer.

Harlem Community Development Corporation, a subsidiary of Empire State Development Corporation, serves the greater Harlem community through planning and implementing a range of community development and revitalization initiatives for restoring Upper Manhattan as an economically stable and culturally vibrant community. For more information on Harlem CDC and its role in the Harlem River Park Task Force, please visit http://www.harlemcdc.org/Planning/planning_hr_park.htm.