



<https://www.communityfund.nyc/fromrootstoarts>

Bronx River Houses | Site Summary

[The Children's Arts & Science Workshops, Inc.](#) was founded in response to the teachers' strike in 1968. Concerned for their children's education and safety, parents in Washington Heights set up temporary classrooms in a local church. There, community volunteers conducted classes during the day and provided After-school services. The initiative proved so successful that at the strike's end, the decision was made to continue after-school programming and weekend workshops specializing in dance, music, and visual arts... and the rest is history! In 2024, we have ~25+ sites operating across Uptown and the Bronx. We were created to engage at-risk youth in a range of age-appropriate programs and activities that will increase their self-esteem and confidence, and prepare them to participate fully as productive members of society.

Location: Bronx River Community Center, [1619 East 174 Street, Bronx NY 10472](#).

Existing Programs include after-school and evening activities run by the Children's Arts & Science Workshops, Inc., senior programs (Acacia network), and access to parent/family support services. Activities offered to youth are centered around science and arts, recreation, social-emotional learning and literacy.

Facilities: Over 10,000 square feet of space, the Bronx River Community Center is equipped with over 7 classrooms, an indoor gym with a stage for performances, an outdoor stage area, a fully equipped Mac lab, a large cafeteria, a kitchen, a game room, a recording studio and much more. Within these facilities, you will have access to most spaces for programming, and there is storage for art materials and areas of opportunity to present art throughout the spaces. Some neighboring organizations include the CORE Family Enrichment Center; the Bronx River Alliance and more. *The residency-dedicated space is flexible and will be discussed with the site partner.*

Site Background & Resident Feedback: Bronx River Houses was developed in the early 1940s. It currently has over 3000 residents across 9 buildings. The population is composed primarily of Hispanic, Afro-Latino, and African-American resident populations. The development has blossomed into a thriving epicenter of creativity and community engagement. While the Bronx River Housing Development boasts a rich and multifaceted history, its cultural significance transcends mere brick and mortar. From impromptu performances to organized events, the development pulses with the rhythms of breakdancing, art, and hip-hop music. Recognizing the untapped potential of Bronx River, initiatives like the artist-in-residence program seek to amplify its hidden treasures, shedding light on its vibrant cultural landscape and empowering residents and outsiders alike to acknowledge and cherish its intrinsic value.

Notable figures from the development include football player Darren Carrington and lead singer of Chiffons, Judy Craig.

PHCF and partners engaged residents in surveying and community brainstorming. Bronx River Houses residents identifies the following areas of interest:

- dance,
- painting, and
- creative technology

Residents noted that art programming can take place in and outside the community center in different play spaces (playground, basketball court). Some community needs mentioned include youth programming, education, and employment, and health and wellness. Other considerations for art programming include creating something new or innovative, and making use of existing resources.

Some historical or cultural aspects mentioned to be highlighted include the community center, indigenous history, Starlight park, being the home of hip-hop and residents that have been living in the Bronx River for a long time.

Words to describe art include: *contributed, creative and open, cultured, excited, happy, entertained, inspired, hopeful, acknowledgment (community getting attention that it deserves), proud, cozy, comfortable, peaceful, good, wonderful, amazing, alive*

Other notable interests included fashion, film/photography, music, performance/theater. Community needs also mentioned included environmental justice, older adult/senior support, outdoor beautification, and food justice, intergenerational programming, and food justice, NYCHA privatization.

Some takeaways from the event:

- Residents mentioned music and talent show
- Be known as a family oriented project
- One challenge is that the community “doesn’t get seen” as it should
- Not each building is the same/different art at each entrance
- Photography, dancing, singing, basketball, food, design colorful backgrounds (red-orange-yellow, green-blue-purple, pink)
- Bio-public art + bio building material showcase
- Showcase art from community
- Intergenerational art classes/inclusive
- Resident poetry slam
- Address certain challenges/bring awareness: section 8, housing stigma/crisis, discrimination
- Healthy homes art
- AI art show/digital gallery
- Open studio for all mediums
- Healthy affordable housing and living, reducing use of toxic materials.