

126th Street Harlem African Burial Ground Memorial and Mixed-Use Project

Briefing for Community Board 11

April 17th, 2024

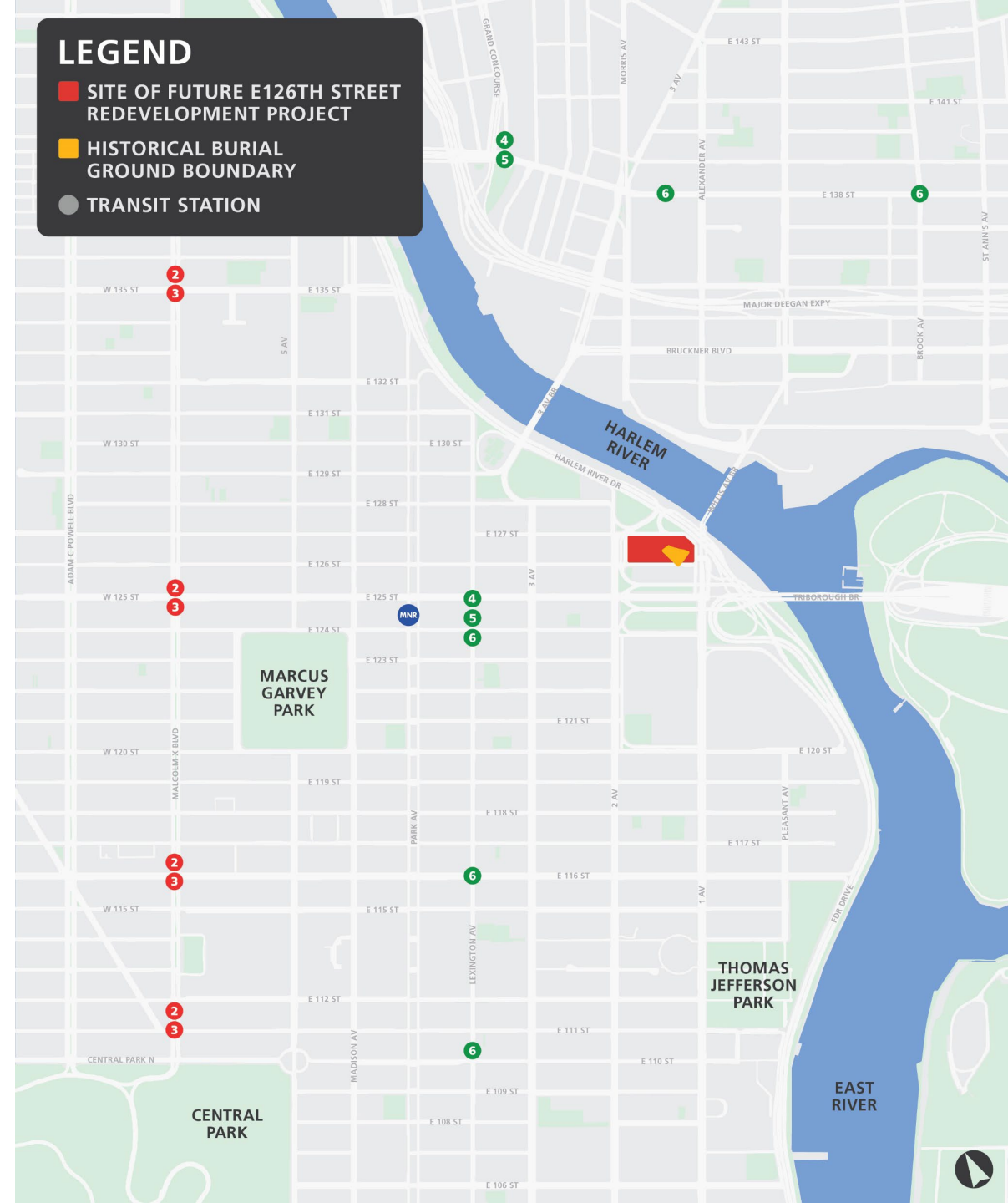


Agenda

- Background & History
- Project Overview and Vision
- Recent Progress
 - Public Announcement
 - Community Townhall
 - Archaeology
- Engagement Update
- Next Steps

Project Location

- 2460 2nd Avenue in East Harlem (MN Block 1803, Lot 1)
 - City-owned, full-block site
 - Occupied by decommissioned MTA bus depot; MTA has transferred ownership to EDC
- A portion of the site is the historic Harlem African Burial Ground (HABG)



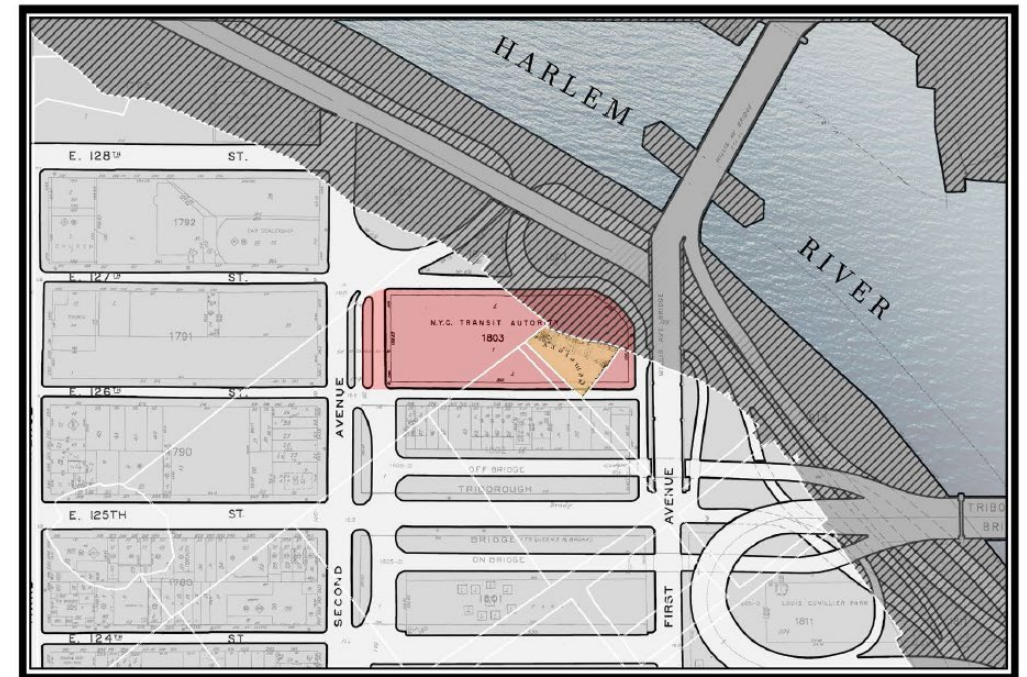
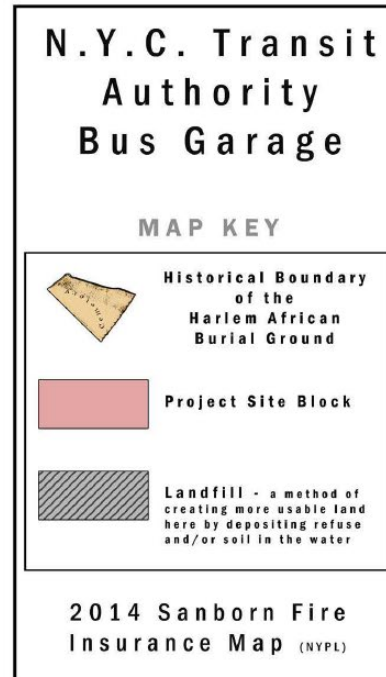
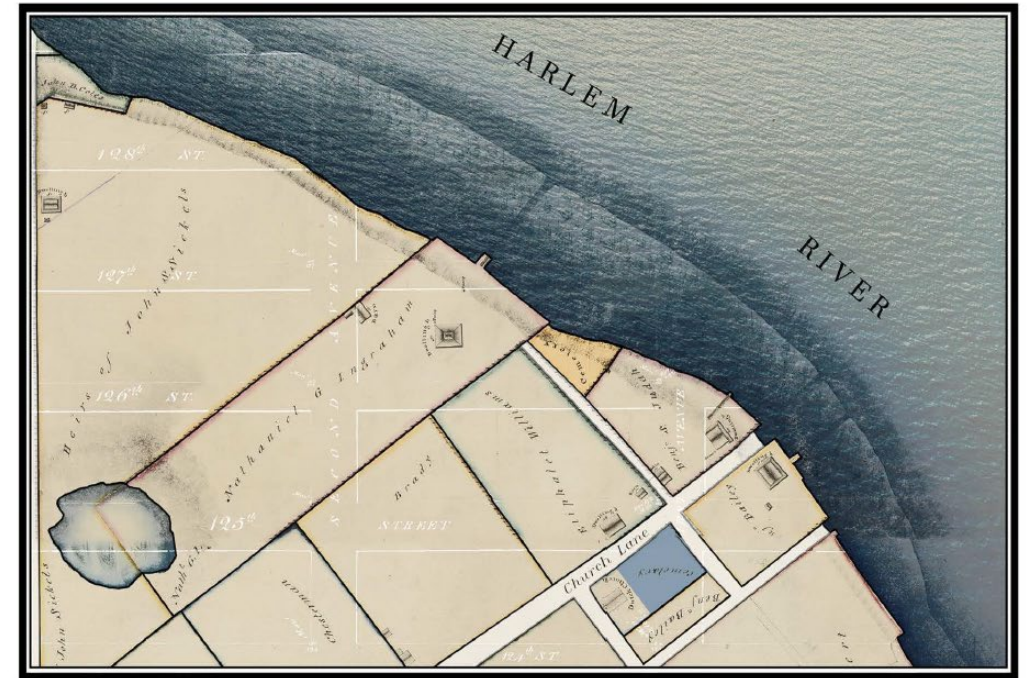
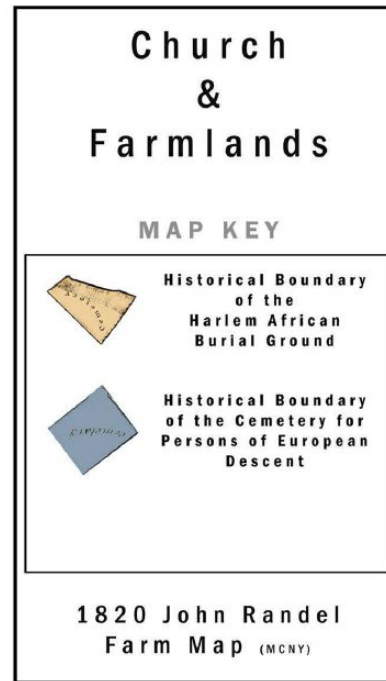
History

The Harlem African Burial Ground dates to Harlem's earliest days

- 1660: Nieuw Haarlem is chartered by the Dutch on indigenous land with Low Dutch Reformed Church as founding church.
- 1869: Prompted by northward expansion of the city, church leaders begin transferring human remains of white Europeans to new plots. Those buried in the HABG are left behind.

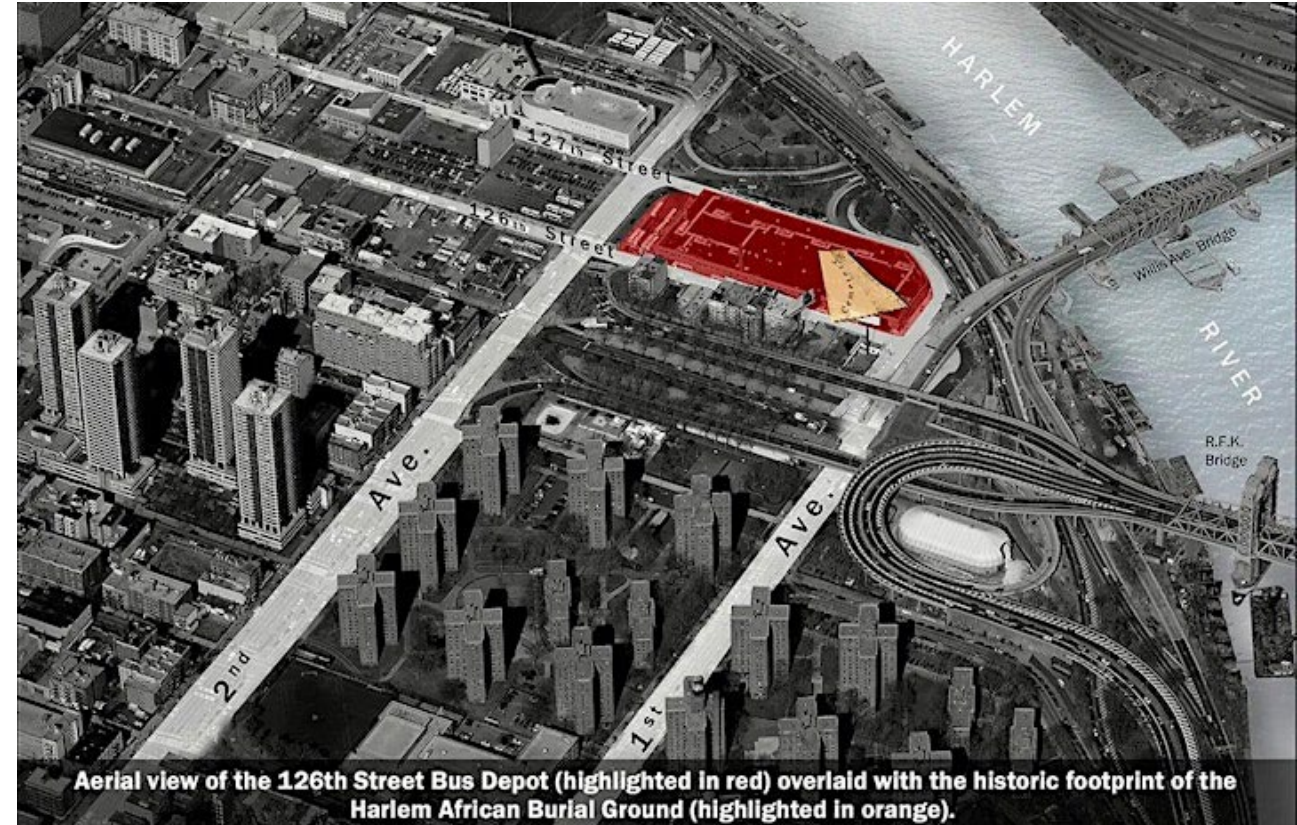
Several uses occupied the site of the Harlem African Burial Ground

- 1885-1917: Beer garden and casino
- 1917-1918: 15th New York National Guard Infantry Regiment barracks
- 1918-1945: Movie studios
- 1945-1962: Third Avenue Railway Company trolley barn; Current depot built in 1947
- 1962-2015: MTA/NYCT 126th St bus depot



Project Overview

- In 2009, The Harlem African Burial Ground Task Force (HABGTF) is founded to advocate for a memorial. The successor of this group is the **Harlem African Burial Ground Initiative (HABGI)**
- 2015: MTA decommissions bus depot and vacates site
- 2015–2016: NYCEDC is asked to lead the redevelopment project and commissions a first-phase archaeological investigation, which uncovers over 140 human remains on the site
- 2017: CB11, Manhattan Borough President, City Planning Commission, and City Council approve land use actions
- Rezoning **ULURP approved Sept. 2017** for outdoor memorial, indoor cultural education center, housing ($\geq 524K$ SF; 80% affordable), and retail/commercial, memorialized in POA;
 - Process included **\$30M in HIF funding** for archaeology, memorial and cultural center



Aerial view of the 126th Street Bus Depot (highlighted in red) overlaid with the historic footprint of the Harlem African Burial Ground (highlighted in orange).

Harlem African Burial Ground Initiative

- The Harlem African Burial Ground Task Force was founded in 2009 to advocate for a memorial
- The successor of this group is the Harlem African Burial Ground Initiative (HABGI), which includes:
 - **Rev. Dr. Patricia A. Singletary**, Pastor Emerita of Elmendorf Reform Church (co-chair)
 - **Melissa Mark-Viverito**, former District 8 Councilwoman and City Council Speaker (co-chair)
 - **Sharon Wilkins**, former Manhattan Deputy Borough Historian and former President of the NY chapter of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society
 - **Melinda Velez**, former New York City Council Legislative Assistant for Melissa Mark-Viverito
- EDC has partnered closely with the HABGI on this project since 2015, including to determine a vision for the redevelopment project, guide archaeological work, and co-host community events



NYC / EDC



Recent Progress



Archaeological Work

- The next step for this project is to complete a **new phase of archaeological work** in close consultation with the HABG Initiative to determine **complete distribution of human remains across the site** and **recover, protect, analyze, and store** them.
- Site management led by **Armand** who is subcontracting **AKRF** for archaeology. Same team who conducted the 2015 investigation
- AKRF have included two **Black bio-archaeologists** with expertise in human remains of African descent, Dr. Rachel Watkins and Dr. Aja M. Lans, on team and secured academic partnership for fieldwork support
- Next Steps
 - Planning: **Q1-Q2 2024**
 - Fieldwork: **Q2-Q4 2024**
 - Lab analysis & reporting: **Q4 2024 – Q3 2025**



Images: 2015 archaeological investigation

Harlem Week Public Announcement

- On **August 15th 2023**, NYCEDC and the Harlem African Burial Ground Initiative announced:
 - Next phase of **archaeology work**
 - Introduced the archaeology team
 - Release of **Education & Engagement RFP**
 - HABGI co-hosted **Townhall event**
- Took place front of the 126th Bus Depot, in partnership with HABG Initiative
- Attendees included community members, advocacy groups, and local electeds such as **CM Ayala, AM Gibbs, BP Levine, Senator Cleare, CM Espailat**



Community Townhall Event

- On **September 18th, 2023** NYCEDC hosted a **community townhall event** in collaboration with the HABGI Initiative
- The event was open to the public, and served as an opportunity for the Harlem community to **meet the archaeology team** (Armand, AKRF, Dr. Rachel Watkins, Dr. Aja Lans)
- Included a presentation that went through the history of the project and an overview of the scope of upcoming archeology work, followed by **a Q&A portion** where EDC staff and members of the archeology team answered audience questions



Education & Engagement Scope of Services

- The selected consultant will work with NYCEDC on **18-month education and engagement campaign** to deliver high-quality community events and raise awareness at a local and national supporters to restore honor, dignity, and respect to those buried at this sacred site.
- The Education & Engagement Plan will tell the historical, social, and present-day story of the Harlem African Burial Ground through **age-appropriate curriculums and programming** that engages Harlem students, **multimedia content**, and a series of public events beginning **Summer 2024**.



About the Team



Bridge Philanthropic Consulting

- Full-service **project management, marketing, and communications firm** with extensive consulting experience in the public and non-profit sectors committed to social justice
- Certified MBE; the project team for Education and Engagement scope are all local Harlem residents.



Harlem Cultural Archives

- Dedicated to preserving, collecting, and sharing **materials documenting Harlem's remarkable and varied multicultural legacies**, including its storied past, as well as its continuing contributions to the City and State of New York

Recent Engagement

Press Release

NYCEDC Announces Major Milestone in Memorialization of Harlem African Burial Ground

By NYCEDC | MAR 13 2024
press@edc.nyc | (212) 312-3523



The archaeology team and the Harlem African Burial Ground Initiative after NYCEDC's community tour on March 13, 2023. From left to right: Dr. Aja M. Lans, Dr. A. Michael Pappalardo, Dr. Rachel Watkins, Dr. Elizabeth M. Viverito, Dr. Patricia A. Singletary, Barbara Armand Kushner, Sharon Wilkins, Shamsell Abdill, and Melissa Slocum.

NYCEDC Selects Bridge Philanthropic to Lead Education and Engagement Campaign to Raise Awareness About the Historic Harlem African Burial Ground



CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY
AT THE HISTORIC HOME CHURCH OF THE HARLEM AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

Sunday Afternoon at Elmendorf

A JAZZ, GOSPEL & BLUES CONCERT AT HARLEM'S OLDEST HOUSE OF WORSHIP

REFORMED CHURCH, 171 EAST 121ST B/T THIRD & LEX
MARCH 3, 3:30 P.M.

TE MONTAGUE EXPERIENCE WITH ANTOINETTE MONTAGUE (VOCALS),
DANNY MIXON (PIANO), MELISSA SLOCUM (BASS) & A.C. LINCOLN (TAP)

THE MET Black History Month Community Reception
Thursday, February 29, 2023, 6–8 pm

You are cordially invited to celebrate Black History Month at The Met. Enjoy drinks, light bites, music, and private viewings of *Africa & Byzantium*, *The Harlem Renaissance and Transatlantic Modernism*, and *Afterlives: Contemporary Art in the Byzantine Crypt*.

Did you know there is an African burial ground in East Harlem dating back to Harlem's chartering?



harlemafricanburialground

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Harlem African Burial Ground Initiative

Founded in 2009 by community leaders, the HABGI advocates for awareness and memorialization of the Harlem African Burial Ground

edc.nyc/project/east-126th-harlem-african-burial-ground-project + 1

Next Steps

- **Archaeology Fieldwork** to begin summer 2024, culminate in archaeology report
- **Education and Engagement** consultant led work to begin spring 2024, report to be released upon completion of contract
- Following the release of both reports, EDC will release a **Request for Proposals for a cultural operator** for the memorial

Thank you!

Email: harlemafricanburialground@edc.nyc