



Mauricio Gonzalez, head of the Marine Biology Research Program, with his NY Harbor SEALS, aboard the vessel, Privateer. Photo courtesy of Maura Smotrich.

Working Towards an Ecological Edge in East Harlem

Maura Smotrich

The past year has been an exciting time of discovery for CIVITAS and the Urban Assembly NY Harbor School with the commencement of a collaborative study to determine the viability of restoring an Ecological Edge in East Harlem. Taking a few steps backward, CIVITAS released its Vision Plan for the East River Esplanade in February 2015, identifying a section of waterfront in East Harlem that is seemingly well suited for reconstruction as a living shoreline or ecological edge. In fact, historically this section of Harlem River shoreline consisted of marshlands and creeks that flowed out to the Harlem River, but were subsequently filled in to accommodate industrialization and the

need for navigable channels in the 20th Century. One need only look across the Harlem River to the restoration of the Randall's and Wards Island shorelines to imagine what once was. With this image in mind, it is possible to visualize how beautiful the Manhattan side of the Harlem River could be if it were restored in a similar manner. Moreover, while a history of alterations may have transformed East Harlem's soft edge into a hard edge along the Manhattan side of the Harlem River, the area is still low lying. Fundamental hydrologic forces still affect the landscape through flooding during heavy rain and storm surge, and the effects of sea level rise and climate change will only exacerbate these risks. Restoration of a resilient ecological edge will mitigate these conditions, in addition to serving as an educational and recreational waterfront edge for an under served community.

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Left: Rebecca Robertson, President and Executive Producer of the Park Avenue Armory. Right: David Danois, President of Danois Architects.

2016 CIVITAS Benefit & Honorees

Emily Kain

On March 3rd, 2016, CIVITAS will host its Annual Benefit at the Americas Society. The August Heckscher Honorees for Community Service are The Park Avenue Armory and its President and Executive Producer Rebecca Robertson, as well as The Corn Exchange Building and its architect Danois Architects.

Rebecca Robertson has served as President and Executive Producer of The Park Avenue Armory since 2006. She is currently leading the \$210 million restoration of the historic Seventh Regiment Armory and its revitalization as a nonprofit cultural center.

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CIVITAS is a non-profit organization concerned with the quality of life on the Upper East Side and in East Harlem. Since 1981 CIVITAS has worked to improve the urban environment, advocating for better land use, zoning and urban transportation, clean air and water, and public access to the waterfront. Visit us at www.civitasnyc.org.

Letter from the Executive Director



It is bittersweet for me that this is my last Letter from the Executive Director. I will be leaving CIVITAS this winter to start a new chapter of my life as a parent. CIVITAS is a unique organization. Focusing on quality

of life issues on the Upper East Side and in East Harlem, the organization's efforts go far beyond our zoning and Esplanade initiatives. From supporting the removal of abandoned newsrack boxes, to advocating for the Second Avenue Subway in East Harlem, to documenting the condition of street trees in our neighborhood, CIVITAS works to shape the future of our communities.

As the Executive Director, I have experienced how much passion the Board, staff and our supporters have for improving our neighborhoods. It is inspiring to see everyone pitch in and lend their help with our mailings, with outreach for initiatives, and with ensuring we have a successful benefit. Thank you to all of our supporters and volunteers. You help make CIVITAS great, and with your support we will continue to make significant strides in the community for decades to come.

I would like to welcome our new Executive Director, Jameson Mitchell, and I look forward to continuing at CIVITAS as a volunteer.

I hope everyone enjoys the CIVITAS Benefit on March 3rd. ●

Emma

Emma Marconi Bologna

An Easy Switch to LED Lightbulbs

Isabelle Silverman

Today's LEDs provide us with everything we want from a light bulb:

- Choice between warm and colder lighting;
- Substantial savings in electricity costs (LEDs use 80% less electricity than incandescent bulbs);
- Time saving and convenience (LED bulbs last up to 20 years);
- Availability of dimmable LEDs (older dimmer switches may need to be replaced for compatibility. Check packaging for "dimmable");
- Safety and comfort: Unlike halogen and incandescent bulbs that radiate substantial heat, LEDs are cold to the touch, avoiding skin burns and saving money on air conditioning.



LED Lightbulb. Source: thinkprogress.org.

When replacing incandescent or CFL bulbs, look for the following criteria to achieve the desired lighting:

- **Bulb shape and size:** compare to your old bulb and check the size that fits your light fixture.
- **Brightness, measured in lumens (lm):** e.g., a 460 lumens LED bulb is the equivalent of the old 40 Watt bulb, and 800 lumens replace the old 60 Watt bulb.
- **Warm vs. cool lighting (light color), measured in Kelvin (K):** e.g., 2500-3000K is "warm white" light for bedrooms, living rooms. 3500-4100K is "bright white" for kitchens and bathrooms.

LED bulbs are more expensive to buy than incandescent bulbs but New Yorkers will quickly start saving money due to the substantial electricity savings with LEDs. New York City electricity prices are among the highest in the country and our dense living leads to bulbs being used longer per day. Read the LED packaging information carefully and you will find the right bulbs. Remember to return old CFL light bulbs (spiral bulbs) and old compact fluorescents to the hardware store as they contain mercury. ●

CIVITAS Welcomes Our New Executive Director

Jameson Mitchell, the new CIVITAS Executive Director, earned a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of California Santa Cruz and is currently completing a Masters in Urban Planning at Hunter College. After graduating from college, Jameson worked as the Marketing and Administrative Coordinator for Jordan Ramis PC, a law firm in Portland, Oregon. He wrote and published press releases, brochures and newsletters, coordinated outreach events, implemented successful social media campaigns, and played a key role in rebranding the firm and redesigning their website.



Jameson Mitchell, Incoming Executive Director.

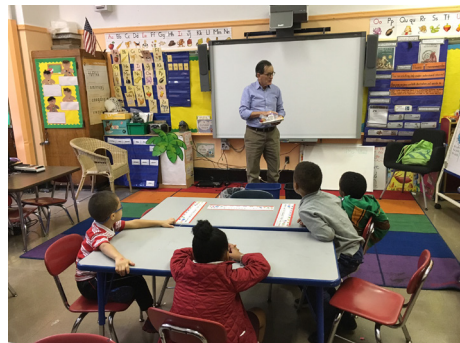
Upon moving to New York, Jameson worked with CIVITAS East River Esplanade stakeholder The Waterfront Alliance on their Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines. During his internship at The Waterfront Alliance, Jameson conducted outreach with Manhattan community boards raising awareness of the waterfront guidelines. He helped coordinate the 2015 Waterfront Conference in addition to maintaining The Waterfront Alliance's case study database, researching and generating reports on new developments, climate change preparedness, and city zoning codes and regulations. Most recently, Jameson was the Project Manager at Trees New York where he directed the organization's 2014 and 2015 Young Urban Forester programs, directly managing the environmental education staff and 33 high school interns. As Project Manager, he frequently served as spokesperson for the organization, and served as a liaison with city agency representatives, elected of-

ficials, civic leaders and community boards. Jameson designed an environmental curriculum, taught Trees New York's Citizen Pruner courses and supervised volunteer tree events in East Harlem, the Upper East Side, Upper West Side, and Greenpoint. Additionally, he has experience writing fundraising campaigns and maintaining grant budgets.

"I'm excited to join CIVITAS," said Jameson. "I'm looking forward to working with the Board, our staff, and the community to further the organization's initiatives and improve quality of life in the Upper East Side and East Harlem."

The CIVITAS Board of Directors is confident Jameson will continue the successful work of our previous Executive Directors, and will help expand the influence of CIVITAS within the Upper East Side and East Harlem communities. Please join us in welcoming Jameson to CIVITAS.

Recycling at PS38



Gorman Reilly presenting to the students of PS38. Photo courtesy of Isabelle Silverman.

This fall CIVITAS continued our school cafeteria recycling initiative at PS38 in East Harlem. We implemented our four-week recycling program with the assistance of the PS38 Principal, its Sustainability Coordinator, and GrowNYC. CIVITAS staff and Board members first gave classroom presentations to students in PreK through 5th grade, detailing the how-tos and importance of recycling. We then volunteered for four weeks in the cafeteria during the lunch periods helping students recycle and training the new PS38 Green Team. Thank you to the students, teachers and staff of PS38 for your commitment to improving our environment.

PS38 is the fourth school CIVITAS has worked with and we are looking to increase recycling in additional schools on the Upper East Side and in East Harlem. If you would like CIVITAS to meet with your school's principal, sustainability coordinator, or PTA to discuss our program, please email CIVITAS at jameson@civitasnyc.org.

Open House New York 2015

On October 17, 2015, CIVITAS Executive Director Emma Bologna and Esplanade Project Manager Maura Smotrich led a tour of the East River Esplanade featuring key nodes in the CIVITAS Esplanade initiative. The tour started at 96th Street, where we examined the possibility of community boat storage under the FDR overpass. Thank you to East River Crew, a nonprofit boating group that joined our tour and displayed one of their boats for discussion. The tour continued with a conversation about the CIVITAS/Harbor School ecological edge experiment, the temporary reopening of Pier 107 in East Harlem, and a potential land bridge from Thomas Jefferson Park to the Esplanade. As these nodes continue to evolve we look forward to hosting additional tours of the Esplanade this spring and summer.

Asphalt Green Thanks CIVITAS

Many local residents on the Upper East Side received a card from Asphalt Green thanking CIVITAS, local elected officials and the Mayor for their support in moving the Marine Transfer Station ramp. CIVITAS is committed to working with the Community Advisory Group for the MTS site to ensure the ramp is moved. ●



Asphalt Green Thank You Card. Photo courtesy of Asphalt Green.

To learn more about our current work, visit our website: www.civitasnyc.org

CIVITAS Celebrates Two Great Landmarks

Gorman Reilly

The Park Avenue Armory

The Park Avenue Armory, occupying the entire block between 66th and 67th Streets, is one of New York City's finest architectural, historic and cultural landmarks. Completed in 1881 with funds from a public subscription, the Armory at its inception housed the fabled Seventh Regiment of the New York State National Guard, often referred to as the "Silk Stocking" Regiment. It was the first volunteer militia to respond to President Lincoln's call for troops at the outset of the Civil War. During the Gilded Age its members came from New York's most prominent families, including the Vanderbilts, Van Rensselaers, Roosevelts, Stewarts, Livingstons and Harrimans.

Designed as a military facility by architect Charles W. Clinton (himself a veteran of

the Regiment), the Armory also served as a center of social life for the very wealthy until the time of the First World War. The building includes the vast 55,000 square foot drill hall, an engineering marvel of its time, which has the look of a 19th century European train station. It remains one of the largest unobstructed interior spaces in New York City. Equally important is the splendid array of period rooms at the front of the building along Park Avenue—Reception Rooms on the first floor and Company Rooms on the second floor. These rooms were designed by prominent masters of the American Aesthetic Movement, including Louis C. Tiffany, the Herter Brothers, Stanford White, and Potter & Stymus. They have been hailed by the New York City Landmarks Commission "as the single most important collection of 19th century interiors to survive intact in one building."

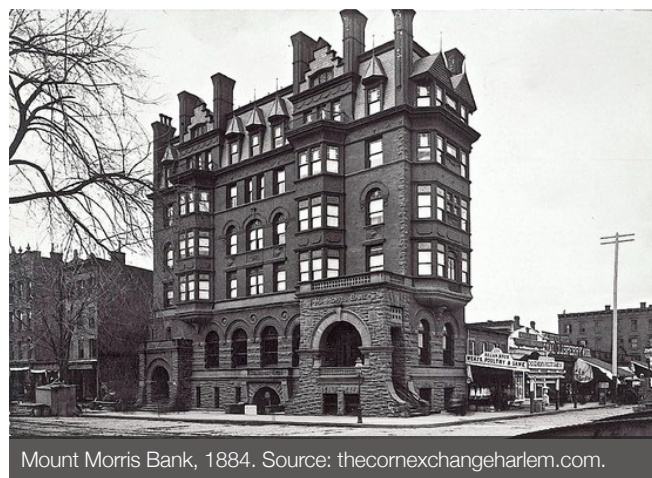
Sadly, the Armory was allowed to fall into a state of extreme neglect and deterioration. In 2000 the World Monuments Fund declared it to be among the "100 Most Endangered Historic Sites in the World". It was about this time that a small group of public-spirited citizens, including Wade Thompson, then

CEO of Thor Industries, Inc., and Elihu Rose, a real estate entrepreneur and respected military historian, mounted a heroic campaign to save this great treasure. Their vision, determination, and fund raising efforts resulted in the creation of a conservancy to restore, care for, and revitalize the Armory. It is now acclaimed for presenting works of unconventional artists and performers that could not be mounted in traditional performance halls and museums. The Armory still maintains a military presence, housing various units of the National Guard. At the same time it continues to maintain a homeless women's shelter within its confines, and now serves as an educational resource for many hundreds of public high school students.

Concurrent with the development of its artistic and other programs, the Armory has undertaken an ongoing \$200 million restoration project under the direction of the internationally recognized architectural firm of Herzog & de Meuron. The goal of this multi-year project is to reinvigorate the Armory's original design while stabilizing, preserving and renewing the building for future generations.



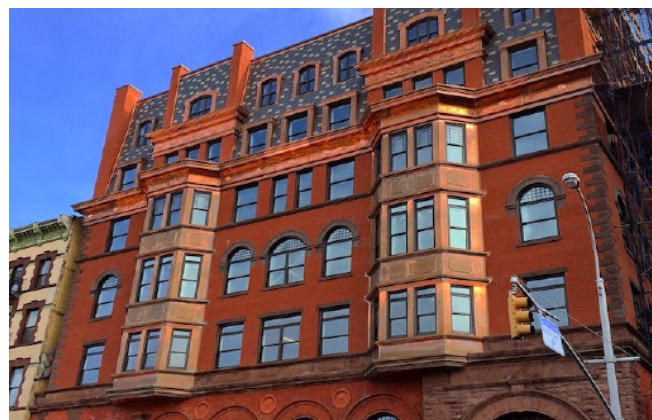
A 19th-century woodcut looking across Park Avenue at 66th Street. Source: nytimes.com.



Mount Morris Bank, 1884. Source: thecornexchangeharlem.com.



Photo of the recently restored Park Avenue Armory façade by James Ewing. Source: armoryonpark.org.



The Restored Corn Exchange Building. Source: harlembespeke.blogspot.com.

The Corn Exchange Bank Building

Farther up Park Avenue at 125th Street, in the heart of East Harlem, stands the newly preserved and restored Corn Exchange Bank Building. This is another architectural treasure that was allowed to fall into disrepair – and almost disappear – before being saved for future generations. It is a rare example of the Queen Anne style of architecture, located at a busy transportation and commercial crossroads of the city.

The architects, Lamb and Rich, conceived the structure, completed in 1884, as a mixed-use building. The ground floor and basement were occupied by the Mount Morris Bank and the four floors above were residential flats. The apartments – called “The Morris” – were completely separated from the banking portion of the building, but barely lasted two decades. In the early 1900s the apartments were converted to office space. Over the years structural changes were made. By 1890, in accordance with expansion plans of the original architects, the building was doubled in size, using the adjacent lot on Park Avenue.

In 1913 the Mount Morris Bank became a branch of the Corn Exchange Bank. The branch continued to operate until the mid-1960s. The property, abandoned by its owner, was taken over by the city in tax foreclosure in 1972 and remained uninhabited. In 1993 the Landmarks Commission declared the building a landmark, noting that the structure had kept its “architectural integrity to a surprisingly high degree.” Not for long. In 1997 a fire destroyed the mansard roof and the two floors enclosed by it. In 2009 the city was compelled to demolish all but the basement and main floor for safety reasons.

Artimus Construction, one of Harlem’s most active developers, purchased the property in 2012 and proceeded to return the building to its original glory. The design by Danois Architects, approved by the Landmarks Commission, is not intended to be an exact copy of the original, but rather strongly suggestive of it. The revitalized Corn Exchange Bank Building provides two floors of retail space and five levels of office space above. It has been awarded LEED certification and is ready for occupancy. ●

Second Avenue Subway, Phase 2

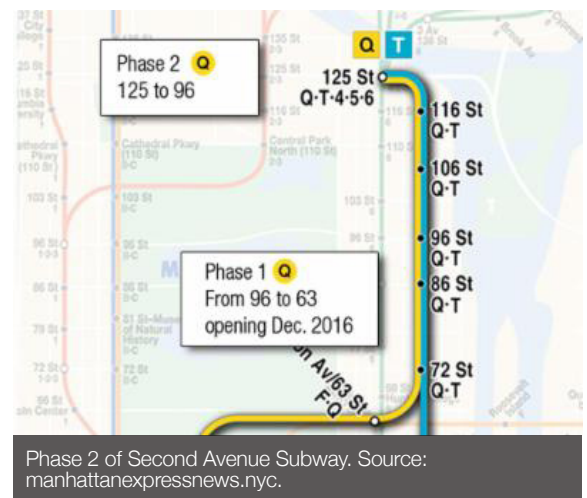
Willa Hutner

In late October of last year Governor Cuomo and Mayor de Blasio came to an agreement on funding a large shortfall in the Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s (MTA) Capital Plan for 2015-19. For its part, New York State added \$9 billion to the capital program while New York City increased its participation to about \$2.5 billion. The MTA removed \$1 billion from its program, essentially the cost of proceeding with Phase Two of the Second Avenue Subway, i.e. the stretch running from 96th Street to 125th Street. Perhaps the biggest contributor – and loser – was the transit-riding public of the East Side, which was not present at the table.

The reaction was immediate. On November 3rd, State Assemblyman Robert J. Rodriguez convened a group of elected officials, transit, labor, and community representatives to protest the slashing of funds for Phase Two, calling the action indefensible and unfair. Demand was made for immediate and full restoration of the slashed funds. Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer spoke of the terrible message that would be sent if the project is completed on the affluent Upper East Side, only to be stalled as it nears East Harlem, one of New York City’s lowest income communities. Echoing Martin Luther King, Jr., Assemblyman Rodriguez said that the Board’s decision defers the dream of people in East Harlem.

The Second Avenue Subway has had a long and consistently troubled history. In the 1920s, a six-track super-subway was designed to provide capacity adequate to replace both the Second and Third Avenue Elevated Railways. In 1942, the Second Avenue El was torn down, City Hall promising a subway beneath it. Voters passed a \$500 million transit bond issue in 1951, most of it slated for the new line. The Board of Transportation authorized the line for completion in 1957-8. (The MTA was not yet formed; that would take place in 1968.)

The new line wasn’t built. The Transit Authority found the overall subway system’s rehabilitation needs so great that transit bond



funds would have to be used for maintenance, not new construction. At the time, the Third Avenue El was providing some relief from overcrowding on the Lexington Avenue Line, but it too was demolished in 1955. This left the East Side with only one subway line.

The project was launched again in 1968, with three non-contiguous sections built. But the city’s financial crisis made it necessary to move the target date for completion to 1986. Thereafter, Mayor Beame effectively killed the project by leaving it out of a six-year transit program.

The current situation, barring reconsideration by any of the agencies involved, is this: Phase One of the Second Avenue Subway is expected to be complete in late 2016 or early 2017. From that point, work on Phase Two will be limited to environmental, design, and real estate work, as well as preparation for preliminary construction work. This will be funded by the \$535 million dollars not cut from the project. Some of the work on the proposed extension has already been done, namely two tunnel sections built in the 1970s north of 96th Street, but its impact on the total cost will be minimal. Stations are planned for 106th Street, 116th Street and 125th Street.

The MTA does not expect to start actual construction on Phase Two until the 2020-24 Capital Plan, at best. When and if completed, the total cost for Phase Two is expected to be \$5.5 billion or more. Still on the boards are plans for further extension of the line to the Lower East Side (Phase Three) and Downtown Manhattan (Phase Four). We continue to wait. ●



NY Harbor School SEALs, Melanie Smith, Cldy Isadoro & Grace Carter. Photo courtesy of Maura Smotrich.

Working Towards and Ecological Edge in East Harlem continued from cover

After consultation with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), the regulatory agency responsible for overseeing the health of marine habitat in the city's waters, it was determined that a prediction of aquaculture uplift is needed to obtain permission to fill in part of the river to restore a living shoreline.

This precipitated the need for CIVITAS to partner with an academic institution for the purpose of both discerning existing marine habitat conditions and predicting scenarios for aquaculture uplift at the proposed site. The first phase of the experiment is measuring the baseline marine conditions along the East Harlem shoreline in the Harlem River from approximately 100th to 116th Street. The second phase will test both the materials that are used to construct an ecological edge, and the spatial complexity of the site, which can be an important aspect of design for this kind of shoreline treatment. The hope is that a properly designed and conducted study will result in data that supports the restoration of an ecological edge as the resilient shoreline treatment of choice to replace this section of deteriorating, hard-edged Esplanade.

CIVITAS and the Harbor School worked hard all spring and summer designing and implementing aspects of what we have coined the Ecological Edge Experiment. Data collection boat trips have taken place at least once per month, and Harbor School students are in the process of compiling and analyzing the data that has been collected under the leadership of their teacher and head of the Marine Biology Research Program, Mauricio Gonzalez.

Information showing the progress of the study can be found on the Harbor SEALs website at www.harborseals.org.

CIVITAS and the Harbor School team have also been putting together a document called the Quality Assessment Project Plan, or QAPP, essentially a guide delineating how the experiment is designed and being implemented. Professionals from within

the marine biology world are typically part of an extended QAPP team and serve as objective advisors to assess how the experiment is designed and carried out. The advisors use their professional perspective to help guide the process in the right direction.

CIVITAS and the Harbor School are grateful to Kate Boicourt (Hudson River Foundation), Susan Maresca (DEC), and Jim Tripp (Environmental Defense Fund) who have volunteered to be the three QAPP advisors for this experimental study. CIVITAS has also become a steward of the site, and successfully nominated the site to become a part of the New York New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program's Comprehensive Restoration Plan. Inclusion in the Comprehensive Restoration Plan represents an agreement between Harbor Estuary Program Partners about which sites are a pri-



NY Harbor SEALs releasing a Neuston Tow for plankton collection into the water. Photo courtesy of Maura Smotrich.

ority for acquisition or restoration. According to the Restoration Work Group, this list is intended for use by multiple state, federal, non-governmental, and private groups, enabling all of them to take a more active role in coordinating and advancing restoration and acquisition goals with stakeholders throughout the estuary. With more government attention being paid to the value of re-introducing facets of nature back into our cities and the parallel effort of working toward more resilient New York City shorelines, CIVITAS is on the cusp of helping to usher in positive change along

the East Harlem waterfront. CIVITAS is very excited that this has literally put the site on the map! Check it out at: www.urbanresearch-maps.org/crp/map.html. ●



From Left to Right: Maura Smotrich (Esplanade Project Manager, CIVITAS); Kate Boicourt (Restoration Program Manager, HRF); Captain Michael Abegg (NY Harbor School); Mauricio Gonzalez (Head of Marine Biology Research Program, NY Harbor School). Photo courtesy of Maura Smotrich.

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Rendering of Corn Exchange Building by Danois Architects.
Source: danoisarchitects.com.

Creative Time, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Lincoln Center Festival.

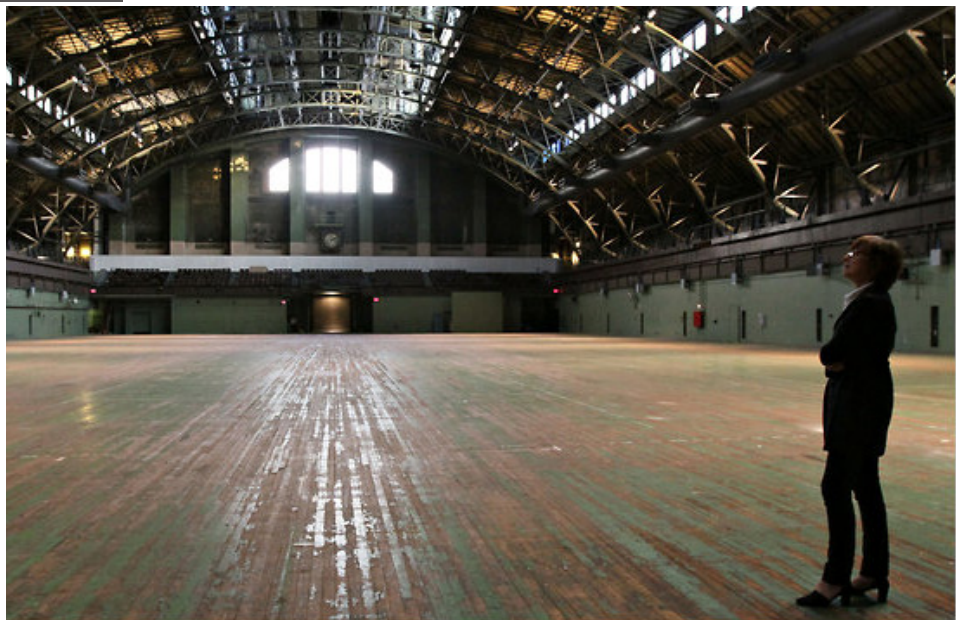
Danois Architects, established in June of 1996, is a minority-owned, award-winning architectural and planning firm. Over the years, the firm has acquired expertise in the development of housing of various types: community facilities, educational, religious, commercial, transportation, historic restoration, and urban revitalization projects. Danois Architects successfully completed many projects for the City of New York, State of New York and the federal gov-

ernment, during which they have effectively worked with the NYC Landmark Preservation Commission. The firm's plan for the Corn Exchange building was not intended to be an exact copy of the original, but rather strongly suggestive of it.

For more information about the history of these two buildings, be sure to read the article on page 4, entitled *CIVITAS Celebrates Two Great Landmarks*. CIVITAS is thrilled to honor these two buildings and the people who are giving new life to history in our communities. We hope you can join us in celebrating all of our achievements and hard work! ●

2016 CIVITAS Benefit & Honorees continued from cover

She was part of a team that successfully established a Conservancy to restore a unique structure and to initiate cutting edge artistic productions, in addition to outstanding programs in historic rooms. Her team successfully dismissed 11 lawsuits, engaged community opponents in becoming part of a solution to NIMBY issues, and accepted the homeless women already housed there and upgraded their living space. December 2010 marked the Armory's first full season of artistic programming, including productions of visual art, dance, theatre and music that were all deemed "outside the box" for a conventional theatre or museum. Robertson has also been responsible for the important collaborations with other major cultural institutions throughout the city, such as The Art Production Fund,



Rebecca Robertson in the Park Avenue Armory Drill Hall. Source: nytimes.com.