



# Rebuilding a Vibrant and Sustainable East Harlem Center Priorities Report

Prepared by  
**HESTER** <sup>ST</sup>

for  
 **Children's Aid**  
Every step of the way

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## PURPOSE

This report is prepared by Hester Street for Children's Aid and their stakeholders in East Harlem. It is intended to be a summary of the community engagement process about rebuilding of the East Harlem Center to date. It will also serve as a guide for the Community Advisory Committee as it offers guidance to Children's Aid leadership during the construction period. This report captures the program, service, and spatial priorities of the engagement process participants. In addition to these priorities, Children's Aid leadership will also need to consider what is fiscally feasible and sustainable. The organization's Board of Trustees will also be engaged to assess their priorities and guidance as Children's Aid leadership moves forward with the rebuild of the East Harlem Center.

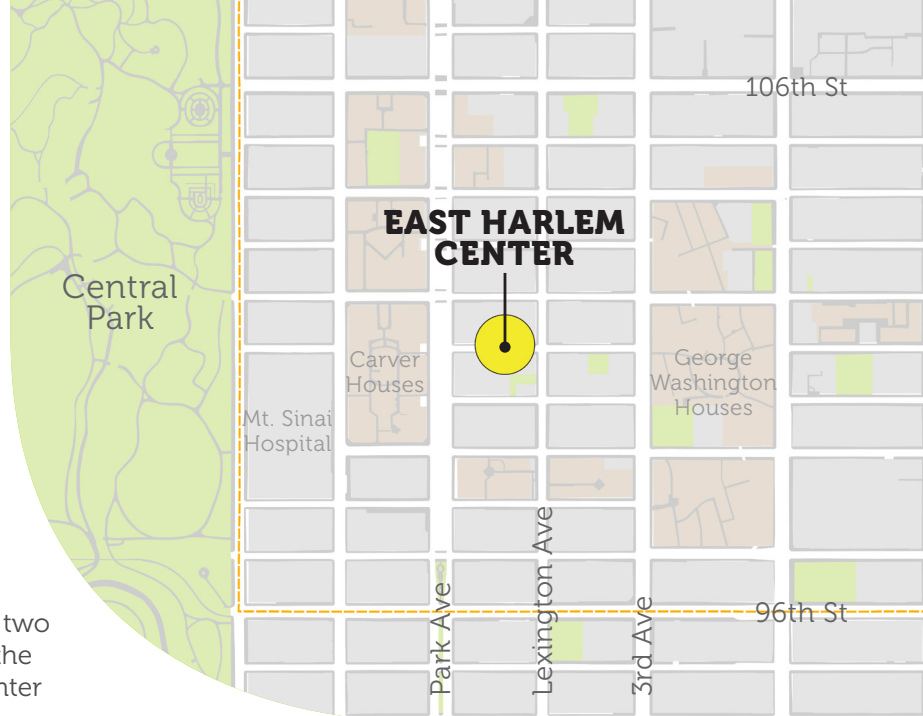




# INTRODUCTION

## EAST HARLEM CENTER HISTORY

Children's Aid first began services in East Harlem in 1953 in a storefront on 100th Street between Park and Lexington Avenues. It was then called the Children's Aid Society East Harlem Family Service Center and offered both social and legal services. The building, which was constructed in 1925, was a Jewish community center that assisted immigrant families with temporary shelter and in adapting into New York. The current site opened in 1956, two years after Children's Aid leadership purchased the property, and was renamed the East Harlem Center Boys & Girls Club.



## EAST HARLEM CENTER TODAY

For more than 60 years, Children's Aid has served the East Harlem community, and their commitment to the children, youth, and families of East Harlem remains unwavering. Children's Aid is rebuilding



their East Harlem Center to better meet the needs of the local community and ensure their services continue to reach families for generations to come. The existing building is nearly a century old. It needs infrastructure repairs, including a new roof, heating and air conditioning systems, ramps for wheelchairs and strollers, and rewiring to support the technology needs of program participants and staff. However, it is more financially feasible to rebuild than repair to ensure the building is up to code—for example, making the building accessible to those in wheelchairs. Children's Aid is committed to rebuilding a center that will continue to provide high-quality programs

and necessary services, and has engaged their youth, families, staff, and neighbors to conceive what types of programs are needed most and what spaces might best host those programs.

Since it first opened, the Children's Aid East Harlem Center (Center) has functioned as a community anchor and second home to hundreds of children, adolescents, seniors, and their families over multiple generations. The Center—located at the intersection of Lexington Avenue and 101st Street—provides high-quality early childhood education; after-school programming; summer camp; creative arts and dance activities; services for deaf and hard of hearing children, youth, and families; sexuality education; counseling; and other social services to the East Harlem community. The three-story building (plus basement) features a multi-purpose gym with an accessible rooftop, a playground, and basketball courts, all of which are heavily used six days a week.

In 2017, the Center served nearly 700 youth through a variety of programs. Currently, a total of 58 children are enrolled in Children's Aid early childhood education programs in East Harlem. In 2017-18, 220 school-aged children enrolled in after-school programming in East Harlem; 102 of those get their programming in the Center. A total of 220 students between the ages of 5-14 attend summer camp. The Center's deaf and hard of hearing program serves more than 100 children, youth, and family members throughout the year. In addition to children and youth programming, 50 parents and other adult neighbors are enrolled in the Center's GED course, and 10 receive computer instruction. This listing of services does not include

1. Office of the NYS Comptroller. *An Economic Snapshot of the East Harlem Neighborhood*. 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/osdc/rpt9-2018.pdf>
2. *East Harlem Neighborhood Plan*. 2016. Retrieved from: [http://www.eastharlempian.nyc/EHNP\\_FINAL\\_FINAL\\_LORES.pdf](http://www.eastharlempian.nyc/EHNP_FINAL_FINAL_LORES.pdf)
3. *What Works for Health*. 2016. Retrieved from: <http://whatworksforhealth.wisc.edu/program.php?t1=206t2=66t3=82&id=337>



other annual and more frequent community activities and celebrations that take place at the Center, such as the Brides March, Mobile Mexican Embassy, a Youth Fair, and the hosting of several Community Board 11 meetings.

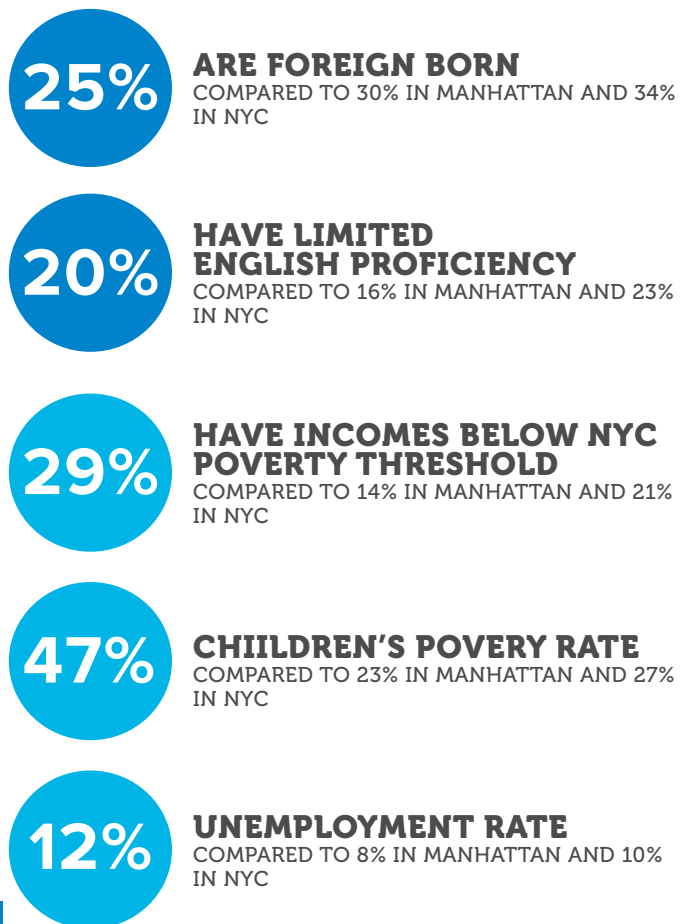
The Center provides much-needed recreation space, programs and amenities in a neighborhood where 29% of residents and nearly half of its children live below the poverty line.<sup>1</sup> Its basketball courts and playground are important community assets in East Harlem, where residents have far less access to open space than residents of other NYC neighborhoods. Excluding Randall's Island or Central Park, East Harlem only has 0.77 acres of open space per 1,000 residents in comparison to 1.50 acres of open space per 1,000 residents across the city.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, studies from around the country have illustrated that community

centers such as this one can play an important role in improving community health, decreasing youth violence and social isolation.<sup>3</sup>

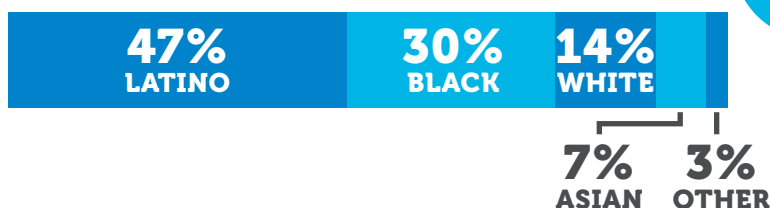
Community love and appreciation for the Center is evident in the hand-made posters that decorate its walls and the constant buzz of activity in the hallways. The Center is staffed by dedicated individuals, many of whom have worked here for decades. It shines through the laughter of parents as they gather while they wait for their little ones to finish their programs, and from the sweaty faces of youth enjoying a game of basketball during camp on hot summer days. The importance of the Center in the community is unquestionable.

## NEIGHBORHOOD OVERVIEW

East Harlem is a neighborhood in Community District 11, which has a population of about 121,700 and includes Harlem, Randall's Island Park, and Wards Island Park. East Harlem is located in northeast Manhattan and borders Central Park and Central Harlem to the west, the Upper East Side to the south, the East River to the east, and the Harlem River to the north—just across from the South Bronx. Most of its residents are Latino or African American. East Harlem, also called El Barrio, is known for its rich Latino culture and history. The neighborhood includes 89 public schools, four public libraries, 54 hospitals and clinics, and 36 parks. Manhattan Community Board 11 has identified increasing affordable housing, improving the quality of schools, and unemployment as the neighborhood's most pressing issues.



### RACE + ETHNICITY







## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



# \$34,400

compared to \$69,659 in Manhattan  
and \$52,259 in NYC

## REBUILDING THE EAST HARLEM CENTER

In the spring of 2018, Children's Aid leadership announced the sale of a large portion of the Center's open space to a private developer, as well as the temporary closing of the Center for its complete rebuilding.

The decision to sell a portion of the Center's property, including the outdoor space, stemmed from two critical factors. First, New York City community organizations like Children's Aid are under financial stress because the amount the city funds for services does not approach the actual cost of delivering those services—nor does it pay for the community center upkeep. This was especially true at the East Harlem Center. Second, Children's Aid performed an organization-wide real estate and financial analysis which revealed that the Center's building needed extensive physical improvements. This land sale is part of an organization-wide strategy to restructure property holdings and leases across New York City with the overarching goal of continuing the provision of high-quality services, while addressing deferred maintenance, in a fiscally balanced manner.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



# 31%

**of residents 25 or  
older have earned a  
bachelor's degree or  
higher**

compared to 60% in Manhattan  
and 36% in NYC

### References:

1. Manhattan Community District 11. *Statement of Community District Needs and Community Board Budget Requests: Fiscal Year 2018*. 2018. Retrieved from: [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/community/community-portal/statement\\_needs/mn11\\_statement\\_2018.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/community/community-portal/statement_needs/mn11_statement_2018.pdf)
2. NYC Department of City Planning. *Community District Profiles. Manhattan Community District 11*. 2018. Retrieved from: <https://communityprofiles.planning.nyc.gov/manhattan/11#main>
3. NYC Department of City Planning. *Info Brief: NYC's Foreign-born, 2000 to 2015*. 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/about/dcp-priorities/data-expertise/nyc-foreign-born-info-brief.pdf?r=1>
4. Office of the NYS Comptroller. *An Economic Snapshot of the East Harlem Neighborhood*. 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/osdc/rpt9-2018.pdf>
5. Citizen's Committee for Children of New York, Inc. Data from 2016. <https://data.cccnewyork.org/data/map/96/child-poverty#96/a/3/146/22/111>



Program participants of all ages, their families, and staff at the Center expressed anger and frustration about the lack of information and transparency regarding this decision, which will impact the lives of thousands. Following a series of heated community discussions, Children's Aid leadership brought in third-party facilitator Hester Street to support them in hosting a series of discussions with Center participants and the community. Hester Street (HST) is a community planning, design, and development nonprofit with technical expertise in community-driven engagement processes.

The goals of the process were:

- **Listen** to Center participants and the surrounding community about what they love the most about the Center and what components should be improved.
- **Commemorate** the legacy of the Center and ensure the most valued programs and spaces remain in the new building.
- **Gather ideas** and inspiration for spatial and programmatic interventions that respond to the needs of a diverse set of stakeholders.
- **Share information** about the construction timeframe and be transparent about all decision-making considerations, as well as potential opportunities or obstacles.

## ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Prior to May 2018, Children's Aid made several mistakes in its engagement with the East Harlem community and was not transparent about the challenges it faced in operating the Center or the decisions made to address those challenges. As a result, Children's Aid hired HST to lead an inclusive community engagement process.

From May to August 2018, Children's Aid and HST engaged hundreds of program participants, their parents, community members, and stakeholders, including Community Board 11 representatives and local elected officials. Through a combination of bilingual, large-format meetings; small focus groups with parents, youth, and staff; as well as an interactive art project with youth, Children's Aid and HST had the opportunity to hear the concerns and feedback from a broad cross-section of those impacted by the Center's temporary closing. The youth art project will celebrate the legacy of the Center during construction and will be part of the new building.

The first workshop in May asked participants to brainstorm what they love and want to grow in the Center, as well as what new programming and spaces need to be created. Children's Aid and HST also collected input on the engagement process and timeline. The second workshop, held in June, focused on values that bring people to the Center and a deep dive into which programming and services are most needed. The third community workshop focused on how people physically flow through the different Center activities and how they would organize spaces in the new building.

While most stakeholders were angry and saddened by the loss of outdoor space and anxious about the extended period of decentralized service and program offerings during the construction period, the engagement activities revealed a palpable excitement about the possibilities a new Center could provide with more space, modern technology, improved accessibility, and enhanced common areas. Takeaways from the multi-pronged engagement process are as follows:

## PROCESS

- Multiple stakeholders—staff, youth, parents, and community members—**appreciated the structure of the summer engagement activities**. Small-group discussions allowed for many voices to be heard, and meeting report backs were a useful reference for those unable to attend a meeting.
- **Expanded and more intentional outreach** for workshops and distribution of meeting report backs would have ensured a wider reach of stakeholders.
- **Multiple formats and types of engagement activities** allowed specific age groups and stakeholder groups the opportunity to share priorities specific to their program and service needs.





## PROGRAMS + SERVICES

- Families value the **academic excellence, family support, and sense of community** that the Center provides through all the individual programs it offers.
- Educational, leadership development, and arts programs are essential** and must continue in the new Center, as well as during the construction period.
- Youth users **deeply value both the Centers' programs and the life lessons** such as kindness, respect, and equality that the staff impart on them daily.
- Parents expressed a desire to **increase parent workshops as well as job training, readiness, and skill development** programs in the new Center.
- Participants expressed the need **for increased mental and medical health referral capacity** for families and youth participants.

## SPACE + FEATURES

- Incorporate multi-purpose open space** into the new building for recreation, programs, and gatherings.
- Increase staff office and workspaces** on all floors to ensure constant supervision of participants as well as easy access to program spaces and classrooms.
- Incorporate **flexible classroom spaces** that can serve multiple programs, as well as **enclosed or semi-enclosed small-meeting spaces** for private conversations between staff and participants of all ages.
- Create 'home bases'** for programs to create continuity as well as minimize daily shuffling for children and staff.
- Establish spaces for specific age groups**, such as a teen center and a family friendly room for parents and toddlers.
- Augment and improve the Center's most well-used and loved spaces** - art room, computer lab, and kitchen.

## ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE







## Rebuilding a Vibrant and Sustainable East Harlem Center

After each of the public workshops, HST created summaries that outline participant feedback (see appendix). Below are main takeaways from those documents arranged into the four main groups that use the Center: youth, parents, staff, and community members.

### YOUTH

- Prioritize sports and recreational space, especially open space for basketball, picnic tables, and play streets in the summer
- Provide separate space for teens to hang out
- Create more space for STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) education

### PARENTS

- Provide health facilities on site
- Provide computer classes for their children who attend the Center and for adult learning as well
- Retain staff because Center participants and families have built relationships with them

### STAFF

- Include space for Center participants and families to wait and lounge
- Create flow and provide help to move food, teaching supplies, etc. from one space to another
- Ensure the new building has ample storage space for all programs and divisions
- Communicate and be transparent about the ongoing construction and opening of the new space

### COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Hold more special events to bring community together
- Add cooking and nutrition classes
- Create programming that supports immigrant families and community

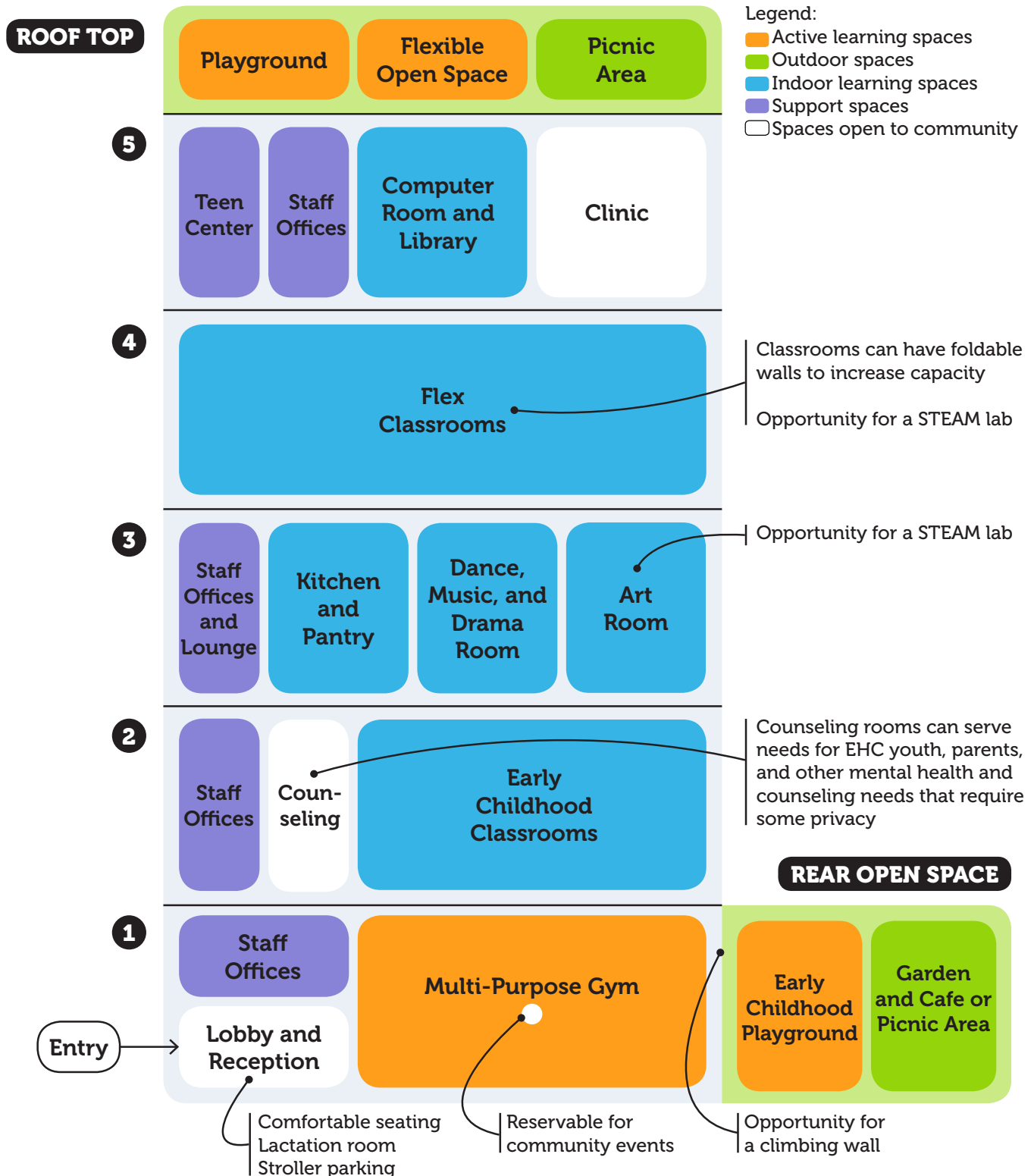




# PROPOSED SPACE

The diagram below is a synthesis of spatial needs as identified by Center youth, parents, staff, and community. Reflecting the most commonly raised needs, this diagram will serve as a guide for the design of the new East Harlem Center. As the process continues, the Advisory Committee will support Children's Aid leadership in prioritizing programs and services for the new center based on need and what is fiscally feasible. While the diagram demonstrates the priority spaces and programs from the engaged stakeholders, Children's Aid leadership will need to make final decisions based on what is fiscally feasible and sustainable and best meets the organization's mission and values.

For more information, please visit: <http://childrensaidnyc.org/rebuild>





## NEXT STEPS

As the initial community visioning concludes, Children's Aid, in collaboration with local elected officials and Community Board 11, will establish a Community Advisory Committee to help guide the process through financing, design, and construction. The 15-member committee will be comprised of a cross-section of community stakeholders and staffed by Children's Aid leadership.

The goals of the Advisory Committee are to ensure the rebuild plan is:

- responsive to the needs of East Harlem children, youth, and families;
- aligned with Children's Aid's mission, vision, and values; and
- financially viable for generations to come.

The Advisory Committee will collaborate with Children's Aid to organize community meetings to provide pivotal updates on the Center rebuild to the broader East Harlem community. They will meet quarterly and provide feedback and guidance and ask any questions to Children's Aid leadership on design updates and construction.

Throughout the construction period, Children's Aid will commit to being transparent about updates, opportunities, and roadblocks as they arise. The initial community visioning process has underlined the importance of constant and clear communication with Center participants and the surrounding neighbors, and Children's Aid is committed to a rebuild that has the support and partnership of all stakeholders.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Children's Aid has an opportunity to rebuild a financially strong and welcoming East Harlem Center and to rebuild relationships with their neighbors through a commitment to transparency and collaboration. As Children's Aid moves forward with the sale of the outdoor space of the Center and with the reconstruction of the new building, they should consider the following recommendations:

- 1 **Ensure clear and transparent communication** about next steps, roadblocks, or changes in timeline with staff, Center participants, local elected officials, Community Board 11, and the East Harlem community at large using multiple avenues (print, organizational website, social media, email list, etc.).
- 2 **Establish a Community Advisory Committee** representative of a broad cross-section of Center and community stakeholders that will meet quarterly to hear updates on the project's progress and advise Children's Aid on project direction, outreach, and communication strategy. Quarterly meetings will result in meeting notes that will be posted on the Children's Aid website (<http://childrensaidnyc.org/rebuild>) to ensure transparency.
- 3 **Organize and broadly publicize semi-annual community events** and activities that continue to foster community relations and assure the local community of Children's Aid's long-term commitment to the neighborhood.
- 4 **Organize quarterly staff meetings and team-building activities** for decentralized East Harlem Center staff to ensure that relationships across departments/divisions continue to be cultivated through the construction period.



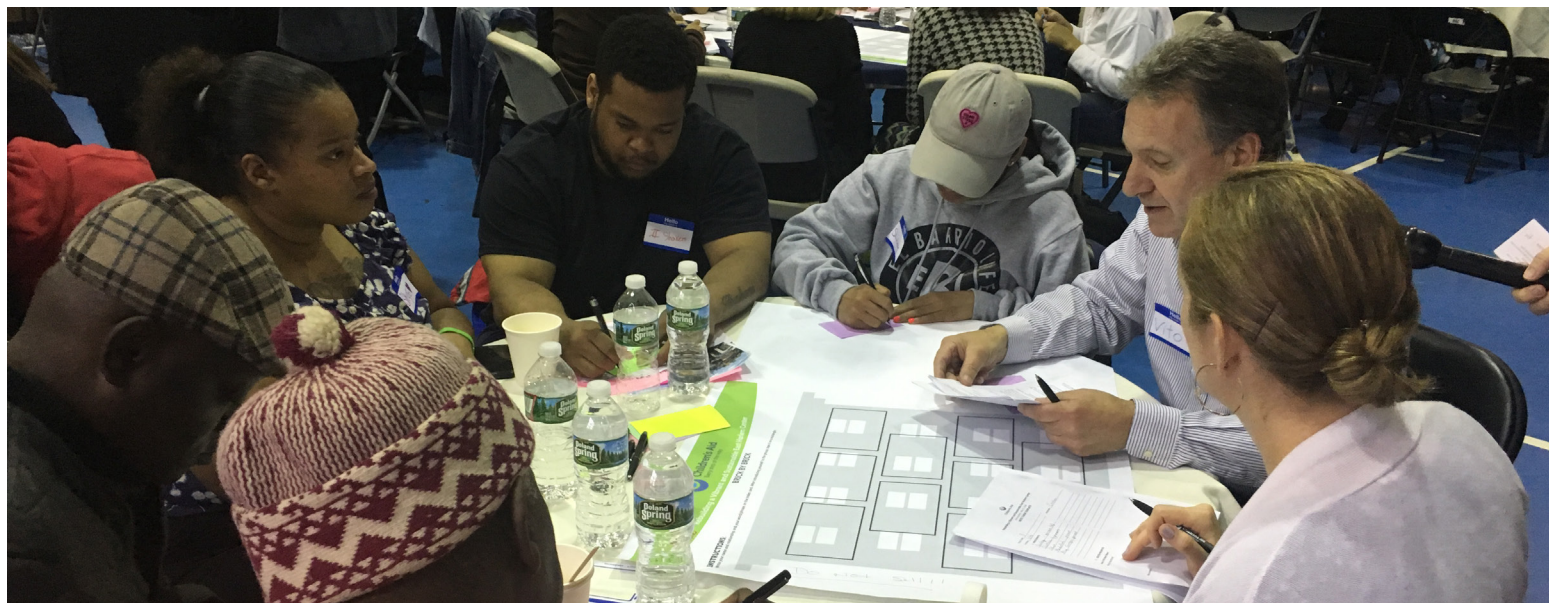


# **APPENDIX**

# EAST HARLEM CENTER PARTICIPATORY DESIGN MEETING #1: REPORT

MAY 12, 2018

## OVERVIEW



Children's Aid values its partnership with the East Harlem community and recognizes the critical role that the East Harlem Center plays in the lives of local residents. Therefore, Children's Aid is engaging the community in a series of workshops to garner input into the East Harlem Center rebuild plan and to ensure open communication with the local community moving forward. At the first workshop on May 12, Children's Aid staff worked with more than 60 East Harlem Center staff, participants and their families, local elected officials, and other key stakeholders over the course of three hours to share information about their redevelopment plans and to gather ideas for the programming and design of the new building. Children's Aid will hold two additional workshops during the summer to share information as it develops and to gather additional community ideas for the new center.

The meeting began with a presentation on key activities to date related to the East Harlem Center rebuild plan. Participants were then able to provide input into the rebuild plan in small group activities. In the first activity, they introduced themselves and chose one word or phrase they would like to see reflected in the new center. In the second activity, they talked about what they love about the current center, and they imagined what current programs should be brought back and what new programs should be created. In the final activity, they reviewed the community engagement plan and provided input on the process. There was a report back after the second activity, and at the end of the meeting, representatives from each group shared their big takeaways with the rest of participants.

### MEETING AGENDA

- Welcome, introduction, and ground rules
- Activity 1: Introductions
- Activity 2: Your center priorities
- Activity 3: Overview of the engagement plan
- Wrap up + Next steps

### Who attended?

- Parents of children who use the center
- Youth Participants
- Members of the East Harlem Center
- Elected Officials
- Community Board 11 members
- Local residents
- East Harlem Center Staff
- Children's Aid President & CEO, board members and central staff

### Languages Spoken:



- English
- Spanish
- American Sign Language (ASL)



# EAST HARLEM CENTER PARTICIPATORY DESIGN MEETING #1: REPORT

MAY 12, 2018



## Key Takeaways

### General

- Overall, people felt that the discussion in small groups was productive and made it easier to feel heard.
- Publicly share summaries after every workshop and focus group so that the public can stay informed.
- Make sure local business owners, churches, fire department, and other community institutions are included in outreach efforts.
- Continue to reassure the community that the East Harlem Center will be rebuilt

### Programming/Design Input:

- After-school, early childhood, arts and cultural programming and recreational activities are essential.
- Increase education on technology.
- Create programs to support family health and mental wellbeing.
- There is a need for public/open space in the new center to take the place of the basketball court that was sold.

## Input on Engagement Process

- Produce a discussion summary after every meeting and focus group and make sure the community has access to it
- Conduct outreach to ensure different community institutions provide input, such as the police, fire department, health centers, religious groups, schools, and businesses.
- Make sure meetings last at least 1-2 hours
- Move youth focus group closer to the beginning of the process
- Schedule meetings early in the morning, after picking up kids, or on the weekends
- Provide childcare and food for kids at meetings
- Hold a focus group for deaf and hard of hearing

# EAST HARLEM CENTER PARTICIPATORY DESIGN MEETING #1: REPORT

MAY 12, 2018

## Programming People Love

### GENERAL YOUTH PROGRAMMING



Early childhood programming for kids from 0-5 years old

After-school education and tutoring

Summer programs

Keystone (teen leadership) program

Summer youth employment

### EDUCATION



Technology and STEM programs

College bound program

Scholarship programs

Support for immigrant parents such as GED, computer classes, ESL, job readiness

### COMMUNITY



Fun events like BBQs and block parties

### ARTS



Graphic design and other visual arts

Drumming

Performing arts

### HEALTH



Indoor and outdoor recreation

Nutrition

Mental health support

## Programming People Need

### GENERAL YOUTH PROGRAMMING



Internship program for teens

### EDUCATION



Financial literacy for all ages

### HEALTH



Fitness program for youth and seniors

Onsite clinic with full health services for children

Pre-diabetes testing

Drug and alcohol counseling



## Spaces people love

- Rooftop space
- Basketball courts
- Playground
- Community closet – revolving clothing collection for families in need
- Music Studio
- STEM Lab
- Kitchen
- Bathrooms

## Spaces people need

- New gym
- Auditorium
- Dedicated space for teens
- Music room
- Computer lab
- Community garden
- Space for community partners so they can contribute to programming and services
- Solar panels
- Elevators



# EAST HARLEM CENTER PARTICIPATORY DESIGN MEETING #2: REPORT

JUNE 18, 2018

Children's Aid continued to work with the East Harlem community to envision the future East Harlem Center at a public workshop on June 18. Over the course of two hours, we focused on the programs and services that the East Harlem community wants to prioritize in the new building. The community offered excellent ideas and feedback that will help us design an East Harlem Center for the next generation.

More than 40 East Harlem Center family members, youth, local community members, Children's Aid staff, elected officials, and other key stakeholders attended. The community workshop is the second of three public workshops that Children's Aid will hold throughout the summer. Children's Aid also held two focus groups for parents on June 6.

## UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

✓  
**May 12th**  
Community  
Workshop  
Process &  
Program  
Brainstorm

✓  
**June 6**  
Family  
Focus  
Groups

✓  
**June 18**  
Community  
Workshop  
Program  
Priorities

**July 18**  
Community  
Workshop  
Space + Design  
Priorities  
6:30-8:30PM

**July-  
August**  
Youth Focus  
Groups

**Sept. 8**  
Community  
Celebration  
+ Release of  
Priorities Report

**NEXT WORKSHOP!**

### What the day looked like

- Welcome, introduction, and framing
- Entrance Activity: Prioritize spaces and programs
- Discussion of factors to consider, trade-offs, and the construction timeline
- Activity 1: Values – Why I come to the East Harlem Center
- Activity 2: Trade-Offs – Program your own East Harlem Center
- Wrap up + Next steps

### Languages spoken:

- English
- Spanish



### Who attended?

- Parents of children who use the center
- Youth participants
- Members of the East Harlem Center
- Elected officials
- Community Board 11 members
- Local residents
- Children's Aid President & CEO, board members, and staff



### June 6 Parent Focus Groups

#### What we heard

- Keep staff because they have built relationships with families and children
- Create programming and services that will allow students to grow within the center - not outgrow the space
- Create events for staff, parents, and community to interact
- Provide support to keep up with modern technology
- Create a safe and beautiful space
- Provide resources and support for mental health and substance abuse issues

# EAST HARLEM CENTER PARTICIPATORY DESIGN MEETING #2: REPORT

JUNE 18, 2018



## Key Takeaways

### General Comments

- Provide support and programming for families – it will enable children to take advantage of the programs.
- Create programming that is connected – for example: job readiness and financial literacy.
- Offer critical educational support, recreation programming, mental health resources, and job preparedness that position youth for lifelong success.

### Activity 1: Why do I come to the East Harlem Center?

#### Priority reasons:

- Family Support
- Academic Excellence
- Community

### Activity 2: Trade-Offs – Program your own East Harlem Center

#### Service priorities for each program area:

##### Early childhood

- Workshops for parents
- 3rd teacher in classrooms
- Family advocacy

##### After-school and summer camp

- Open recreation
- Go!Healthy/Nutrition
- Arts & crafts

##### Teens

- Youth employment
- Literacy
- Scholarships

##### Adult, parent, and community

- Programming for immigrant families
- Family life and sex ed workshops
- Adult basic computer classes

##### Health and wellness

- Substance abuse counseling
- Mental health/therapeutic counseling
- Onsite health clinic



# EAST HARLEM CENTER PARTICIPATORY DESIGN MEETING #3: REPORT

JULY 18, 2018

## OVERVIEW

Children's Aid continues to work with the East Harlem community to establish a vision and plan for the rebuilding of the East Harlem Center. On July 18, we focused on the types of spaces that will best match the programs and services most important to the community. The community offered excellent ideas and feedback that will help us design an East Harlem Center for the next generation. More than 40 East Harlem Center family members, youth, local community members, Children's Aid staff, elected officials, and other key stakeholders attended. The July community workshop was the third session in a summer engagement process that will culminate with the release of a final report on September 8. The report will be a guide for a community advisory committee that will continue to work with Children's Aid through the design and construction phases of the rebuild.

## UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

✓  
**May 12**  
Community  
Workshop  
Process &  
Program  
Brainstorm

✓  
**June 6**  
Family  
Focus  
Groups

✓  
**June 18**  
Community  
Workshop  
Program  
Priorities

✓  
**July 18**  
Community  
Workshop  
Space + Design  
Priorities

✓  
**July-  
August**  
Staff and  
Youth Focus  
Groups

**Sept. 8**  
**11am-5pm**  
Community  
Celebration  
+ Release of  
Priorities Report

**UPCOMING  
EVENT!**

### What the day looked like

Welcome, Introductions, and June 18 Recap  
Activity 1: Day in the Life in the East Harlem Center  
Activity 2: Build Your Own East Harlem Center  
Large Group Report Back  
Next Steps + Closing

### Languages spoken:

- English
- Spanish



### Who attended?

- Parents of children who use the center
- EHC youth participants
- Elected officials
- Community Board 11 members
- Local residents
- Children's Aid President & CEO, board members, and staff

### GENERAL COMMENTS

- There needs to be more space for dropping off, picking up, and waiting.
- There were a lot of suggestions for a connected library and computer room.
- Flexible classrooms should be able to combine into one large classroom. This could also be used as a multipurpose room for slightly larger events, such as film screenings, lectures, and presentations.
- Spaces where privacy is needed should be set apart from areas that will draw a lot of activity and foot traffic.
- There needs to be enough space to hang out and mingle, including a dedicated space for teens.
- If the roof had shade or an enclosure, it could be a flexible space for multiple uses such as special events, parent yoga classes, teen activities, etc.
- Staff offices and workspaces should be distributed on every floor.
- Participants also suggested that there should be a basement that can be used as a general storage area.

# EAST HARLEM CENTER PARTICIPATORY DESIGN MEETING #3: REPORT

JULY 18, 2018

## Activity 1: A day in the life in the East Harlem Center

### Youth

- Most common activities are sports and recreation, learning, and mingling
- While they do some waiting between activities, they often go straight into programs after being dropped off

### Parents

- Most time spent dropping off/picking up, hanging out, and at gatherings/special events
- Most participate in a lot of activities in a single visit, but do not spend much time waiting
- Mingling happens between many different activities

### Staff

- Spend a lot of time in every activity except for sports
- Mingling mostly happens at the beginning or end of their work day
- Need to be able to get help with challenges before and after many different activities

### Community Members

- All have been to a gathering or special event when they visit the center, and usually partake in other activities before
- Mostly spend time mingling or at a gathering or special event
- Don't spend much time waiting

## Activity 2: Build your own East Harlem Center

### Top choices for each space:

#### ROOFTOP

- Playground
- Other suggestions: pool, greenhouse, dance studio,
- teen room, playground for older students, flexible outdoor space with shade

#### FIFTH FLOOR

- 2-4 flex classrooms
- Staff offices
- Art room
- Other suggestions: teen lounge, reset room, pool, library, STEAM lab, mental health /dentist

#### FOURTH FLOOR

- 2-4 flex classrooms
- Staff offices
- Dance/music/drama room
- Other suggestions: computer room, flex classroom for games or STEAM, counseling rooms, medical clinic, staff lounge, kitchen

#### THIRD FLOOR

- 1-2 flex classrooms
- Staff offices
- Computer room/library
- Other suggestions: art room, kitchen, counseling rooms, comfy couch room, crying room, teen lounge, conference room, gym

#### SECOND FLOOR

- **Early Childhood Classrooms required on Second Floor**
- 2-4 flex classrooms
- Staff offices
- Art room
- Other suggestions: teen lounge, reset room, pool, library, STEAM lab, mental health /dentist

#### FIRST FLOOR

- **Gym required on First Floor**
- 4 Early Childhood classrooms
- Staff offices
- Other suggestions: family room, early childhood playground, lactation room, playroom, kitchen

#### OUTDOOR AREA

- Playground
- BBQ and picnic area
- Rock climbing
- Other suggestions: garden, sports activities area



# EAST HARLEM CENTER PARTICIPATORY DESIGN YOUTH ENGAGEMENT: REPORT

JULY 30, 2018

## OVERVIEW

Children's Aid engaged youth from their Summer Youth Employment Program and summer programming in the spatial and program design of the new East Harlem Center through a focus group and a three week public art project. On July 30, over 20 youth shared what their typical day at the Center is like through an interactive activity. Then, they filled out a questionnaire about what they value most about the Center. They also chose a silhouette that represents what Children's Aid values they relate to the most. Working in pairs over three weeks, they cut out and paint life sized wooden silhouettes of youth that will be installed outside the construction site of the new Center. These activities are part of the summer engagement process that will culminate with the release of a final report on September 8. The report will be a guide for a community advisory committee that will continue to work with Children's Aid through the design and construction phases of the rebuild.



## SURVEY RESULTS

### What helps you succeed?

- Education and homework help
- Extracurricular activities (not sports)
- More space

### Top things you've learned

- Values like kindness, respect, and equality
- College preparation
- Teamwork

### What does success mean?

- Achieving goals
- Self sufficiency
- Hard work paying off

### Most important values

- Creativity
- Respect
- Teamwork

## A DAY IN THE LIFE ACTIVITY: What we heard

### General:

- We would like to go on more trips
- We would like more visits to movie theatre
- Vending machines should be added in the new Center

### Playing sports:

- Swimming pool
- Updated and larger gym
- Make the roof a fitness center and enclose it
- Add a jungle gym or an exercise room

### Waiting:

- Only one binder has everyone's timesheet, so it takes a long time to sign-in for our summer work shifts
- No AC in classrooms where you have to wait, and some windows don't open
- Add a TV in the lobby

### Creating:

- More music programs
- Bigger art room
- Add more tables so don't have to split big classes.

### Mingling/Hanging Out:

- Add a cafeteria so we wouldn't have to go to another school for food, especially when it's raining.
- Need a lounge area for adults (not just kids) with comfortable seating
- We would love a teen lounge

# EAST HARLEM CENTER PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

## STAFF ENGAGEMENT: REPORT

### OVERVIEW

Children's Aid is using targeted engagement to solicit detailed feedback from its East Harlem Center staff. In addition to their participation in the three large community workshops held over the summer, 37 staff members also filled out in-depth surveys and 18 took part in a focus group on August 9. The survey questions revolved around spaces in the Center, workplace features, and programming. In the focus group, they described their typical work day and participated in a group activity: Build Your Own East Harlem Center. These activities are part of the summer engagement process that will culminate with the release of a priorities report on September 8. The report will be a guide for a community advisory committee that will continue to work with Children's Aid through the design and construction phases of the new East Harlem Center.

### STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

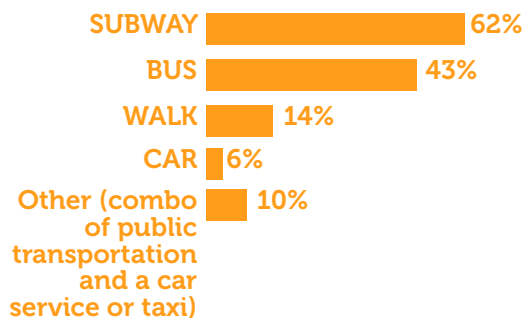
What does the East Harlem Community need the most?

- Teen Programs
- Job Training
- Adult Education
- Health Screenings



### WORK LIFE

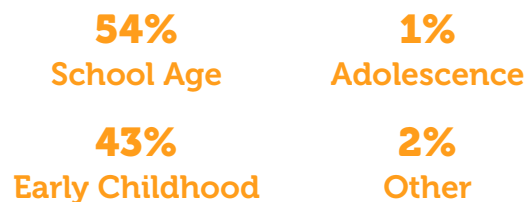
#### HOW EAST HARLEM CENTER STAFF TRAVEL TO WORK:



#### WHAT THEY LOVE THE MOST ABOUT WORK:



#### STAFF SURVEYED WORK IN THESE PROGRAMS:





# EAST HARLEM CENTER PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

## STAFF ENGAGEMENT: REPORT

### WHAT WE HEARD ABOUT THE EXISTING CENTER

#### WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO PRESERVE?

- Outdoor space (gym, playground area, BBQ)
- Art room
- Dance space
- Gym
- Sense of community
- Staff
- Classrooms
- Computer room
- Programs
- Play streets in the summer

#### WHAT AREAS NEED TO BE IMPROVED?

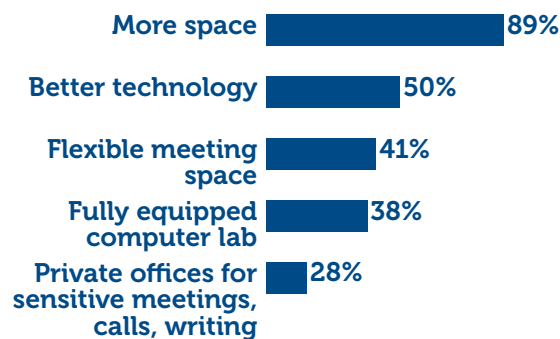
- Staff work area
- Larger classrooms
- Building infrastructure such as plumbing
- Restrooms
- Storage space
- ADA accessibility
- Improved technology
- Spaces for teens
- Program spaces (classrooms, art room, dance room)
- Rooftop open space

#### WHAT SPACES ARE UNDERUTILIZED OR NOT NEEDED?

- Roof area
- Kitchen
- Gym
- Basement flex room
- Morning computer room hours

### WHAT STAFF WANTS FOR THE FUTURE EAST HARLEM CENTER

#### MY IDEAL WORK SPACE WILL HAVE...



#### WHAT WORKPLACE FEATURES ARE NECESSARY FOR THE CENTER'S PROGRAMMING?

##### Rooms

- A large kitchen
- Private offices
- Computer lab
- Family and play room
- Workspace for teachers to write, plan, and prepare for lessons
- More restrooms, including restrooms for toddlers
- Art room
- Library
- Teen lounge
- Auditorium with large stage
- Large gym
- Flexible space

##### Storage

- Storage lockers or lockable cabinets
- Shelving in the art room reserved for supplies and projects that are being worked on

##### Other features

- Improved technology such as projectors, smart boards, and building-wide wifi
- Bulletin boards and white boards
- Elevator
- Large windows

#### WHAT WORK SPACES ARE MOST NEEDED?

1. Computer lab
2. Private office
3. Small/medium conference room

# EAST HARLEM CENTER PARTICIPATORY DESIGN STAFF ENGAGEMENT: REPORT

## A DAY IN THE LIFE ACTIVITY: What we heard

### General Needs

- Closet for bags and jackets
- Teen lounge
- Wifi that reaches all floors
- Bathrooms on each floor
- Teachers need help moving food and supplies from floor to floor. An elevator and carts to roll things around so teachers don't hurt themselves is necessary. Also important to make the kitchen close to where it will be needed.

### Classroom needs

#### Cooking & nutrition

- Bigger kitchen with basic amenities like sink, fridge, oven
- Pantry
- Plenty of electrical outlets
- Classroom that can accommodate classes for children or adults

### Art room

- More storage space in classrooms for supplies
- Computers
- Copy machine
- Sink

### Dance room

- Mirrors for kids to see themselves dance
- Blue mat
- Small office to keep dance trophies and outfits

### Staff offices

- Space to have lunch without interrupting others
- Staff lockers
- Extra storage for supplies and teaching materials





**For more information:**  
Email: [eastharlem@childrensaid.nyc](mailto:eastharlem@childrensaid.nyc)  
Web: <http://childrensaidnyc.org/rebuild>



**Children's Aid**  
Every step of the way